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Whose Identity? The Responsibilities of Museums in the Representation of the Past and Present

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Whose Identity?
The Responsibilities of Museums in the Representation of the Past and Present

Stephanie Allen

A DEPARTMENT HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY
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Other:

Whose Identity?

The Responsibilities of Museums in the Representation of the Past and Present

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04/21/2010
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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the nature of cultural identity as represented in, and connected to museums and the artifacts they contain. In particular, I will focus on the different ways anthropologists, archaeologists and many museums approach the problem of representation within a museum setting. Based upon a review of the literature within the fields of anthropology, museum studies, and archaeology, I will discuss how cultural identity is constructed and represented in a museum setting, demonstrating that the collective identities of both those who view archaeological collections, and the descendants of those represented may be influenced by the information they receive. Using examples of Pre-Columbian art collections (in particular, Olmec, West Mexican, Maya and Aztec cultures) at six museums in Texas and Mexico City, I will examine the messages projected to the viewer through the layout, organization, displays, and text of exhibits on Pre-Columbian cultures. I will argue that these messages are conveyed to the public in an attempt to influence or guide the viewer to certain conclusions about the culture. In so doing, a museum is participating in the creation of a mythology surrounding that culture. In my concluding remarks, I propose, based on the way visitors assimilate information, the adoption of a specific communication model intended to reduce these kinds of messages, which may very well be unintentional. I also suggest ways in which museums can work together with various stakeholders, including indigenous communities, the general public, archaeology and academia for the purposes of sharing cultural heritage in a more ethically responsible and representative manner.

Personal Note

I want to start off with an attempt to acknowledge my own personal biases. I started this project with *the intention* of uncovering the hidden meanings within museum text, and so went into this *looking* for such concealed messages. But, despite my conclusions, I realize that each person will see what they wish, have their own opinions, and draw their own conclusions on such complicated issues as cultural representation. My background in anthropology greatly influences my outlooks and perceptions, playing a large role in the shaping of my argument.

Introduction

Museums are social institutions, with the self-proclaimed goal, as can be seen in most of their mission statements, of educating the public on the history of our own as well as other people's cultures. Based on these kinds of statements, for the purposes of this discussion, I will take it for granted that most museums adopt this kind of educational goal. Museums, thus, come in all shapes and sizes, from natural science museums to museums of art, and from children's museums to those geared towards adults. Museums can be places of learning, where people go to experience and immerse themselves in another culture without actually having to travel anywhere (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 12-18; Hooper-Greenhill 1994: 54-68). But what kinds of messages or information are museums really presenting to the public? What effect do these messages have on the public perceptions of other cultures, particularly those very different from their own? One category of message involves the idea of group or cultural identity. Museums are sites for "the play of identity, [with displays] involved in defining the identities of communities—or in denying them identity" (Karp et. al., 1992: 19). How museums display objects or depict different cultures has a profound impact on how those cultures are perceived, and in some cases, how they see themselves. In fact our own culture and biases can then be discerned from how we portray these cultures in a museum setting.

All museums present a specific point of view, even if they do not do so overtly (Knudson et al., 1999, 238), and museums are not just places for storing artifacts but places for people (Knudson et al., 1999, 238). Presumably, this social function provides visitors with “. . . a new sense of perception” (Knudson et al., 1999, 238), or a new outlook on the world. Physical objects play a critical role in creating this perception through helping us relate to other cultures, and museums have certain responsibilities when presenting these “cultural goods” (Knudson et al., 1999, 248) that assist us in realizing new outlooks. These responsibilities include to, “. . . collect and preserve the past, record and educate the present, and provide perspective and inspiration for the future” (Knudson et al., 1999, 248). Education, thus, is a necessary goal of museums and one that demands close attention. Even though the responsibilities of museums and anthropology, in which I include archaeology, include education, the differences between these disciplines occur in their conceptualization of what responsible representation is, and how it is supposed to occur. Below, I will discuss the distinctions between these two viewpoints and provide some suggestions for reconciling them.

A Critique of Museum Representation of Other Cultures

There are many different ways museums address the problem of representation, with a divide existing between those museums focused on aesthetics (mainly art museums containing unprovenanced material) and archaeology museums (mostly containing material that is a result of scientific excavations). The museums that tend to concentrate on representation solely as it relates to aesthetics show little emphasis on cultural significance for the past or present. From a museum perspective, this often touches on some controversial issues concerning ownership and repatriation, and this brings up the question of who should own or have access to information from other cultures. While fascinating topics, I do not have room to address them here.

In general, cultural material is stored in what is known as “encyclopedic museums,” museums containing objects from cultures around the world (MacGregor, 2009, 40-43). Because of some of the concerns with ownership of the material remains of the past, many museums claim their collections have significant impacts in terms of a “universal humanity” (MacGregor, 2009, 40-43). This idea of a “universal humanity,” however, reflects a Western-centered perspective. It argues that objects should be held in trust for all humanity because they are of value to everybody. MacGregor states:

This ideal has nothing to do with national ownership, although inevitably it is aided by a past of national wealth and imperial power. That cannot be denied. But such wealth and powers are an inheritance that can – and should – very properly be put at the disposal of the whole world. And it is surely more important now than ever to insist that the world is one and that we who work in museums are doing something to shape the citizen of ‘that great city, the world.’
(MacGregor, 2009, 54)

However, this concept gives preeminence to the “tourists” who vicariously experience other cultures, who tend to be from the wealthy areas of the world, rather than to the cultures whose material is on display, who tend to be more “primitive” cultures from developing areas (Castañeda, In Press, 2). Many scholars such as MacGregor are genuinely concerned about illustrating how the entire world is interconnected and related. But, they tend to ignore the very unequal relationships that have historically existed (and still exist today) between the cultures who are exhibiting large amounts of materials in their museums, versus those whose cultures are represented in these museums. It seems to me that rather than banding together under the banner of “humanity,” people organize and define themselves on the level of cultures, based on the ties they feel with members of their immediate cultural group. This is why we feel we have more in common with people who share similar traditions and practices with us rather than peoples whose cultural customs may seem unusual or different from our own experiences.

Although museums do divide groups of people through the designation of different cultural groups, by placing them in discrete wings or galleries, they tend to ignore organization based on cultural similarities and instead focus on the artificially-constructed contemporary notion of nations. Many museums seem to concentrate on the idea that nations foster a sense of identity through association with the past, claiming that all people within a nation's borders can lay claim to the same cultural heritage (Mulvaney, 1985, 90). For example, the inscription on a sculpture in front of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City reads: "The Mexican nation erects this monument in honor of the great cultures that flourished during the pre-Columbian era in regions that now form part of the Republic of Mexico. In the presence of the vestiges of those cultures, contemporary Mexico pays tribute to indigenous Mexico, in whose expression it discerns the characteristics of its national identity" (Mulvaney, 1985, 86). This institution is run by INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History), the agency that runs all archaeological sites and museums in Mexico, illustrating the close connections between the government and the identification with the past. While acknowledging its indigenous roots, the Mexican government still assumes that all modern Mexicans are heirs to the cultural history represented in their "national identity" (Mulvaney, 1985, 86). This makes the assumption that the national identity created by nation states is the unifying principle of people, rather than their original separate and distinct cultures.

This is a contentious issue because many indigenous groups feel removed from the nation in which they live through their persistent marginalization within the dominant society. This feeling of removal, I can only presume, increases even more when it is translated on a global scale into the idea of a "universal heritage" that supposedly reflects the cultural history of the world, and yet only presents the ideologies of those in power. Brown, as well as some other museum professionals, rail against critics who label museums as locations of colonial or political meaning-creation, stating that colonialist ideas or ideas of cultural superiority were problems in the past, but are no longer relevant to museums (2009,

148-149). Brown argues that indigenous peoples today (and indigenous-rights activists) are “a force to be reckoned with” because of the repatriation of objects, specifically citing collaborative cooperation between museums and indigenous peoples as a result of NAGPRA [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act] (2009, 149-150). Others, like Appiah, state that it is not a “duty” of museums to be responsible to the original cultures or descendants of those cultures because their cultural material belongs to all people (Appiah, 2009, 83). But, when institutions promote the ideal of “universal humanity” or “universal heritage,” we must remember that they are the ones that already own the cultural material of other cultures; museums are operating within a system where they have the power and indigenous cultures do not.

An Anthropologist’s Approach to Museums: A Focus on Context and Meaning

Anthropologists and archaeologists (those of whom work on ancient cultures in the Americas are trained as anthropologists) often focus on the disparate power relations that manifest in museums. Subsequently, they have a different outlook on the purposes of museums and how relations between scholars and indigenous cultures should operate. They focus on the unequal power relations exhibited in museums, and the greater need for collaborative efforts between indigenous peoples and scholars, be they anthropologists or museum professionals. For instance, Crew and Sims detail, from an anthropological perspective, how museum exhibits are used to validate current modes of thinking because people want to be assured that the history they have learned is, in fact, the “correct” version of history (1991, 162-163). Museums serve to perpetuate this mindset through the way they set-up exhibits. One example is in two of early American houses, installed in the National Museum of American History (Crew and Sims, 1991, 163). They are utilized to preserve people’s images of what these kinds of houses are “supposed” to look like, as well as their overall image of the past, while ignoring “the authentic,” or what they actually looked like (Crew and Sims, 1991, 163). They, in effect, create a reality.

Museums represent their interpretation of the objects on display and the past as “fact” and the public takes this at face value because the museum holds a certain amount of authority in our society.

Indigenous communities are often adversely affected by such practices. Arden mentions how modern Mexican culture tends to suppress the indigenous history in favor of the imaginary Western construction of their past: “Part of this struggle has been the appropriation of the past, where ancient monuments and archaeological sites have been made into the history of Mexicans instead of the history of the indigenous population of México” (Arden, 2002, 380). In order to overcome such inequalities, anthropologists and archaeologists attempt to bridge the gap between indigenous peoples and Western scholars through such efforts as community museums. The example of the Union of Community Museums in Oaxaca illustrates collaboration between archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and indigenous peoples in an effort to create a space that accurately reflects the indigenous peoples’ conceptions of their own history rather than being forced to rely on only a Westernized perspective (Camarena and Morales, 2007, 322).

Migration away from indigenous villages and cultural homogenization has been detrimental to the identities of indigenous groups, but, Camarena and Morales argue, greater communication and the introduction of community museums (in areas that desire such institutions) have greatly helped this problem (2007, 323). This reaffirms their cultural identities and allows for indigenous communities to have the experience of representing their own culture how they wish, focusing on aspects of their lives they deem most important rather than concentrating on the viewpoints of Westerners. They accomplish this through involving communities in the creation of exhibits and hiring community guides and folk artists to further enrich the educational experience (Camarena and Morales, 2007, 338). Through this Union of Community Museums, multiple communities (indigenous and mestizo alike) have been able to better communicate and discuss their goals and desires (Camarena and Morales, 2007, 340).

While these kinds of group initiatives and community museums take steps to close the gap between Western scholars and indigenous communities, they are not without criticisms or problems. The “. . . drive for control of cultural representations—reflected in the rise of local heritage museums...has brought new voices to the museum world, ...[but] they confront many of the same problems as their predecessors , with equally mixed success” (Brown, 2009, 146). Some scholars, like Brown, criticize community museums in their “rejection of anything reminiscent of conventional scholarly depth or detail” and their treatment of all indigenous groups in the same manner (Brown 2009, 156). There have also been internal problems with maintaining these types of institutions because of factors like continuously revolving leadership, which makes it difficult to muster continued support for certain projects (Camarena and Morales 2007, 336).

The cultural identity of a group can be defined in many ways. Camarena and Morales make sure to recognize that any given person may subscribe or identify with multiple groups, meaning that they may have many different identities (Camarena and Morales, 2007, 341). Kreamer talks about how certain places as well as objects can evoke strong emotional reactions in people because they activate a public memory (2007, 460). She also acknowledges that each individual person “brings our own experiences, insights, and memories to our encounter with artifacts” (460), forcing us to realize that each person relates to objects in a different way and assigns different meanings to those objects . “This sense of identification allows us to make objects our own and to feel, on some level, a relationship – whether positive or negative – with inanimate things” (Kreamer, 2007, 460). In my opinion, this is the main importance of museums: they function as locations for these kinds of important emotional and culturally-significant interactions.

According to anthropologists and archaeologists, the notion of the formation (and the continual reformation) of identity in relation to ancient peoples is one with great value to modern populations (Castañeda, 1996, 106). Castañeda discusses how independence from Spain set off a movement to forge

a new national identity in Mexico, where Maya ruins became places to be “discovered and explored” (1996, 108). The Mexican government increasingly viewed the current indigenous Maya as having forgotten their roots and that they needed to be reminded of the illustrious culture from which they came; ironically, it was the Europeans doing the reminding (Castañeda, 1996, 108-109). This directly relates to the set-up of museums and their role as creators of meaning for objects where they, whether consciously or unconsciously, make the assumption that indigenous cultures are less capable of representing their history than Westerners. Museums engage in these activities without even realizing it, in a process by which “The Museum itself provides a hierarchized series of locations, primarily defined by the exhibit. A location is constituted by a subject-object relation between tourist and display, which is constructed in the form of a gaze” (Castañeda, 1996, 204). This gaze of the viewer holds a kind of power over the cultures on display.

Anthropologists thus see the idea of a “universal heritage” as a complete fabrication. Castañeda states that museums are set-up the way they are because, historically, “the politics of museum collection was based on the appropriation of antiquities of global south nations and expatriation to metropolitan centers” (In Press, 2). Castañeda, in fact, discusses the “*universal citizen-subject*,” which assumes a “social fiction of a universal (archaeological) patrimony belonging to or derived from humanity or universal civilization” (Castañeda, In Press, 4). This provides certain, privileged people (those in “Western” countries and those in large metropolitan areas) the right to view and use all cultural property, regardless of what region of the world or what culture it comes from. Bennet argues that museums function as “differencing machines” through their focus on the “*exhibitionary complex*” (2007, 46). Museums serve as a social sorting mechanism, restricting access to knowledge to certain groups, which in turn, helps to maintain the current social stratification. They function to represent and reinforce the existing structures of domination, colonialism, and nation-building. These structures are disguised through the presentation of material as if it were empirical fact and entirely scientifically-

based. They accomplish the perpetuation of this unequal system through socializing individuals, especially children, giving them a very specific and narrow outlook of the world and their place in it (Castañeda, In Press, 3-4).

Anthropologists and archaeologists further notice when examining some museum exhibits how there is little concern for anything not related to aesthetics. One example is of an exhibit at Stoke-on-Trent City Museum and Art Gallery in 1987 called “Palaces of Culture: the Great Museum Exhibition” that looked at the messages of their ceramic collection and how it was “concerned solely with the aesthetics of the forms and designs of the artefacts, rather than the work of the potters who had made the plates and dishes. Thus the suffering of the women workers through lung diseases caused by the materials used in production, although well documented, was ignored” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 117). Hooper-Greenhill makes the point that there is nothing inherently wrong in looking at the aesthetics of a piece, but if that is the *only* way such objects are ever viewed, and if this narrow outlook persists for decades (as it has done), then a museum can be charged with exclusion and bias in its representation (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 118). Of course, this might also go back to the idea that museums housing unprovenanced objects are sometimes unable to determine much information about them. But, even so, “the museum is operating within a particular ideological framework that has the social function of supporting, and in fact constructing, the ‘natural’ authority of those who know about objects in this way, which appears ‘academic’ and ‘specialist,’ but which ultimately has the function of creating historical myths and sustain the powerful and disenfranchise the others” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 118).

Why Context is Important: Cultural Identity and Museums

Like the notion of nations, cultural identity is also a social construction. The past is, however, strongly connected to the present through the importance of cultural roots in a group’s notion of its

own present identity. Adler and Bruning provide a useful definition of identity as fluid rather than static, mentioning how different groups will define identity in different ways, leading to clashes and misunderstandings between groups, especially between indigenous groups and “Western” cultures (2008, 45). It is the ongoing interaction between groups that necessitates the constant reevaluation of a group’s identity, and “Cultural entities, especially those in transition, require continuous edification through symbols and tradition, and the material past provides valuable symbols for this purpose....A unique archaeological past allows groups to distinguish themselves from others, to demonstrate legitimacy through cultural continuity, to contribute to a sense of communal pride, and to take credit in the successes of the past through association by descent” (Jacobs, 2009, 84). There might also be other modern implications based on the idea of a “confirmed” cultural identity such as in the areas of land rights and access to healthcare or education. Cultural identity, therefore, is an extremely important notion.

Because we cannot know how ancient people actually defined their culture (especially in relation to outsiders), the identification of remains with current cultures is a completely subjective act, in many times depending on current politics (Jacobs, 2009, 93). Yet, “Since most archaeological sites are located near (or underneath) modern populations, the relationship between the present and the past is immediate and intense” (Derry and Mallory, 2003, 179) for local people. This connection is direct and often powerful, but it is often hard to determine what role museums play in the negotiation of identity. “Although we are familiar with the way in which advertisements, for example, select and manipulate images of material objects in relation to their associative and relational potentials, it is not understood that the ways in which museums ‘manipulate’ material things also set up relationships and associations, and in fact create identities,” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 6). According to Foucault, as stated by Hooper-Greenhill, “it is no longer their identity [material things] that beings manifest in representation, but the

external relation they establish with the human being.’ The stories of man, life, and civilization were to become more important than the physical identities of material things.” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 198)

Who gets to determine these stories and their meanings? A museum “projects its own political views by interpreting and presenting the material past that it controls and from which it descends” (Jacobs, 2009, 96). Museums engage in their own rationality through the rigid structure applied to objects and cultures (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 20-22). This can be seen as imposing a standard of rationality onto a whole range of other cultures that may not be organized upon what we assume as an underlying principle, a given “rationality.” Hooper-Greenhill uses the ideas of Michel Foucault to explain the multiplicity of museum relationships as well as the subject-object relationship in terms of power and control (1992, 9-11). Our very system of organization and categorization has resulted in a specific view of the world, one that can only be understood through the knowing of something’s function (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 18). All of this results in a, “safe and uncontentious history” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 20) that ignores the plurality of viewpoints that could enrich a museum exhibit.

Communication and the Production of Messages

There are three main players in the game of exhibition: the makers of cultural objects, the exhibitors, and the viewers (Baxandall, 1991, 37). Everyone is a product of their own cultures, and each of these three groups has their own set beliefs and perspectives (Baxandall, 1991, 37). The area where these groups come into contact is the “space” between the objects and their labels (1991, 37). This “space” is how the viewer takes what information is provided on the labels and interprets it, creating a way to make sense of the objects in relation to what the viewer already knows. “Given information about goals (or functions), resources, and circumstances, the viewer will construct an intentional description of the object for himself. And deprived of these pieces of information, he probably will make

them up” (Baxandall, 1991, 39). This demonstrates how important the communication process is, especially if we want the public to get accurate information about different cultures.

Museums engage in both the “. . . production of intentioned messages through exhibitions, displays, events, posters, leaflets and other forms of communication” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 3) and the production of unintentional messages. Museum text, especially, plays a large role in how cultures are represented to museum visitors. McManus demonstrates that visitors are reliant upon the language used in the presentation of an exhibit (1991, 39). Text, she claims, represents the spoken word of the curators, whose job is to educate the public (McManus, 1991,39). For instance, seven out of ten visitors exhibit “text-echo” or repeat the same phrasing as used in the text when proceeding through an exhibit (McManus, 1991, 40). Coxall, through examining a series of museum texts, was able to discover the construction of a social hierarchy for immigrants, with Jewish people often described as living in “ghettos,” Malaysians and Chinese living in “colonies,” and Europeans, like Germans and Russians, living in “lodgings” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 123). She makes the point that the authors of such labels are not, necessarily racist, they just present these views unintentionally (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 123). This might stem from the use of primary sources and the desire to be historically accurate, which could then result in the unintentional transfer of racist (or colonial) ideas from those primary documents into the modern language (Hooper-Greenhill,, 1994, 123). Certain words, including “savagely” and “violently,” carry specific meanings with certain connotations (Coxall, 1991b, 9). This significantly influences how people interpret a given piece of information (Coxall, 1991b, 9) since language has a kind of power to shape thought, direct perception, and present a particular view of the world (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 115). What people say (and even what they don’t say) can reveal their opinions, attitudes, and assumptions. The interpretation of the text depends on the context in which the word is being used, but you can see how different words could carry different symbolic weight in reference to a culture. If the majority of visitors are going to use the same language as on the labels and text panels (the “text-

echo”), museums need to carefully examine their texts to make sure what is intended is actually what is being portrayed about a culture (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 124).

Methodology of the Paper

Using the above framework on the formation of cultural identity in museums, I investigated a range of case studies focusing specifically on the display of Pre-Columbian artifacts in Texas and Mexico City by going to six museums displaying permanent Pre-Columbian collections. Due to the relative convenience of their locations in Texas, I visited the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. I also visited the Museo Nacional de Antropología and the Museo Del Templo Mayor in México City. For each of these institutions, I looked at the size of the on-exhibit Pre-Columbian collection, what types of artifacts are represented (those traditionally associated with “high” or “low” art), the number of Pre-Columbian cultures included (and in what proportions), the organization of the exhibit (i.e. chronologically versus thematically), and the types of visual tools included (videos, computers, dioramas, reconstructed buildings, etc.). I also documented the textual information provided to the public about the collections and the represented cultures, focusing on general text panels (excluding individual object labels). I conducted a content analysis study on this text, looking in particular at the vocabulary and categories used to describe each culture. I wanted to know how well these institutions function in representing the diversity of Pre-Columbian groups and their cultural traditions, and what differences could be seen between the art-oriented U.S. institutions (with predominately unprovenanced material) and archaeology-oriented Mexican institutions (with predominately provenanced material).

Case Studies

Houston Museum of Natural Science

The permanent Pre-Columbian collection at the Houston Museum of Natural Science consists of three areas labeled the “World of the Maya,” “The Aztecs and their Neighbors,” and “Ancestors of the Andes.” I concentrated on the first two sections (which contain approximately 150 artifacts), excluding the South American cultures, simply based on their geographic locations and the need to limit the scope of the project. The cultures represented include Tlatilco, Chupicuaro, Colima/Jalisco/Nayarit, Teotihuacan, Classic Veracruz, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Cholula/Puebla, Huastec, Toltecs, Aztecs, Olmec, and Maya. Despite this range, the exhibit ultimately focuses on the Aztecs, treating them as if they were the crucial Pre-Columbian culture to which all the other cultures led up. The exhibit is organized chronologically, with a large time-line at the entrance to the exhibit illustrating the general chronological progression of the represented cultures. The artifacts are further grouped together based on their general area of origin. For instance, Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit cultures are consistently lumped together because they all come from the same general region of West Mexico. Because of the prohibition against photography, I unfortunately, am unable to include images of this exhibit.

The walls of these two areas are painted a dark grey color rather than sticking to beige and white backgrounds. The concept of the Aztec culture as the supreme Pre-Columbian culture is further projected through the physical arrangement of the exhibit, with the Aztec section separated from the “World of the Maya” area through a raised architectural structure made to resemble part of a crumbling temple. This temple-like structure (supposedly representing the Templo Mayor) is decorated with stylized painted designs. It is obviously not a replica, just a generalized decorative device. As a backdrop for this “temple” and the artifacts from the Aztec culture is a large painted mural of what the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan might once have looked like. This places an emphasis on the Aztecs and the site of Tenochtitlan. In the Maya section, on the other hand, there is a floor-to-ceiling replica of an archway.

There is no accompanying text, so there is no way to know for sure what site it is from or even if it is Maya. None of the other represented cultures have any architectural details like this.

The range of technology used within this Pre-Columbian exhibit includes one computer display and two videos. The computer display, centrally located in the Maya area, has 4 different sections discussing: 1. Jaguars and their significance to the Maya as protectors of cacao trees, 2. The history of chocolate (mentioning the Maya, Aztecs, and Europeans), 3. New World foods (and the Spanish “explorers” taking these back to Europe, where they revolutionized the European diet), and 4. Agriculture (mentioning *chinampas*, which is the Aztec method of agriculture, and terracing, the method used in the Andes). The two videos in the central, raised Aztec area are on the “Legacy of Lost Realms,” which illustrates the progression of earlier cultures to the Aztecs, and the other on “The Aztec Realm,” which talks about the importance of Tenochtitlan. The two videos are located within the “Templo Mayor” structure in the “Aztecs and their Neighbors” area, and are obviously devoted to the importance of the Aztecs. When watching these videos, it becomes even more apparent that they are alluding to an evolution of cultures culminating in the Aztecs. The “Legacy of Lost Realms” video even details the evolution of settlement forms and cultural traditions that led up to the Aztecs. The computer display, on the other hand, is located in the “World of the Maya” area. The four previously-mentioned topics allow visitors to explore their own interests, but it was noteworthy that several of the sections focused on the Aztecs despite the location of the display in the Maya section. It was a useful educational tool, but it still positioned the Aztecs in a place of prominence in relation to other Pre-Columbian cultures.

Textual Analysis

In my textual analysis of the Houston Museum of Natural Science (See Appendix II for transcriptions), I started by looking at the general statement for the exhibit, which includes all indigenous North and South American cultures. It states:

The John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas is dedicated to exploring and understanding the rich cultural traditions developed over thousands of years of Native American history. The Hall celebrates the origins, diversity, and remarkable accomplishments of Native peoples of the Americas. We recognize the foresight of A.T. "Cap" MacDannald whose collection forms the foundation of the North American Galleries.
June 12, 1998

This statement says nothing about education, and it categorizes every one of the indigenous culture groups represented in this hall as "Native American." As will be noted in more detail below, the HMNS is concerned with engaging viewers with the artifacts on display. The fact that their introductory statement excludes any reference to education and treats all indigenous groups as if they are essentially the same is misleading. It misrepresents their goals and the diversity of indigenous groups.

Within the Pre-Columbian section, the main text panels are situated on triangular stands. There is also one label per case listing what is in the case, as well as some information about the artifacts. In looking at the specific language used, I once again noticed that the Aztecs are the focus. The word "Aztec" appears 20 times within the text while the word "Maya" appears 11 times, and Colima, Jalisco, Nayarit, the Mixtecs, and the Zapotecs only appear once. The Olmecs, Chupicuaro, Huastec, and Toltecs are not even mentioned. This text demonstrates a definite prioritization of the Aztecs in favor of any other group. In reference to the Aztecs, language such as "capital" (used twice), "heart of an empire," and "the Aztec virtue of calm dignity" (each used once) emphasize the greatness of the Aztecs while such strong phrases with very positive connotations rarely accompany discussions of the other cultures.

Despite this, the HMNS does a good job of using language that does not make any of the cultures seem primitive. The text refers to the "early Maya" who had "city-states" that "grew powerful" or to the "Early cultures from West Mexico." They do not use the words "town" or "village," instead employing language such as "empire." However, everything seems to be couched in terms of the Aztecs, with other cultures only being mentioned in reference to their relationship to the Aztecs. For instance, one label reads

The Tarascans were hereditary enemies of the Aztec Empire. Their culture may have derived from South American migrants over 2,000 years ago. They did not rise to help the Aztecs against the Spanish, and were conquered in turn by invading Europeans.

This in fact, makes it seem like the Tarascans deserved their defeat to the Spanish (one of only two references to the Conquest) because they did not assist the Aztecs. Another example can be seen in the text, “Monte Albán provided rich plunder for Aztecs in gold, textiles, and cacao for chocolate,” making it seem like the only thing worthy of note about the incredible city of Monte Albán was that they had some rich goods for the Aztecs to take. On the other hand, the text of the HMNS places very little emphasis on sacrifice, war, or rituals, common themes that are often the focus of discussions on Pre-Columbian cultures. Thus, in some areas, they seem to provide a well-rounded look at the cultures as well as a balance between description of objects and a discussion of contextual meaning.

This exhibit also makes an excellent effort to engage the reader with the material. For instance, in the “World of the Maya” area, one label reads “Each culture had different stories about dogs, turtles, iguanas, snakes, and frogs. How many animals can you identify in this display?” This direct address to the reader gives it a more interactive feel. Another way of engaging the visitor is through the emphasis on chocolate. The word “chocolate” appears four times throughout the exhibit, each time on a different label. And, as noted above, an entire section of the interactive computer display is devoted to chocolate. This is a technique of the HMNS to try to appeal to something people know and like. Who wouldn’t want to learn more about something as delicious as chocolate?

Finally, this exhibit references current people, the descendants of ancient Pre-Columbian cultures, several times. Examples such as “To the Maya people who live in the area today, the jaguar is a patron of cacao (also known as chocolate)” and “Today, the Tarascans maintain a unique culture . . . ,” make note of the fact that there are still current Maya and Tarascan peoples. One of the most striking examples from the text, in my opinion, is “When Europeans claimed the New World, Maya civilization

changed. Yet traces of the old customs, dress, and language remain among millions of Maya-speaking people today. Maya history is still in the making.” This emphasizes the vibrant cultural traditions of the current peoples, while indicating that there was no mysterious vanishing of indigenous peoples after the arrival of the Spanish. Of course, statements such as these must be taken with a grain of salt because tying the contemporary people to the past might also make them seem more “primitive” in the eyes of outsiders today. In addition, the idea of “change” strictly in relation to Europeans takes power away from the Maya, who were therefore no longer in control of their own culture and were forced to change without any say in the matter. This might be improved by the inclusion of multiple kinds of sources such as colonial documents and indigenous codices to represent multiple points of view.

San Antonio Museum of Art

The San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA) has five rooms, or sections, devoted to Pre-Columbian art in the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art (**Image 1**). The first room is the Patricia Galt Steves Gallery (**Image 2**), which has an introduction to the Pre-Columbian art collection and the Latin American folk art collection, and provides general information on the history of Central and South America. The folk art collection resides in a gallery directly next to the Pre-Columbian rooms; together they form the overarching Latin American Collection at SAMA. The four rooms that follow the Patricia Galt Steves Gallery are specifically geared towards Pre-Columbian artifacts, with each room having a different regional focus. There are a large number of artifacts (about 350 total) from a wide range of cultures, and the exhibit is organized so as to represent a general chronology of the Pre-Columbian cultures. The first of these rooms (**Image 3**) represents the Tlatilco, Colima, Jalisco, Nayarit, Maya, and Chupicuaro; the second room focuses on “The Classic Maya” including some Zapotec and Mixtec objects; the third room contains a conglomeration of artifacts including objects from the Classic Veracruz culture, Huastecs, Mixtec, Aztec, Manibi culture of Ecuador, the Atlantic Watershed Zone from

Costa Rica, Tarascan, and Tolima culture of Columbia; and the fourth room focuses on “The People of the Andes,” a geographic region that I will not be addressing here. Each culture is then further separated from the others via the cases, grouping items from like cultures together, with only a few cases having multiple cultures combined. A large number of cultures are represented, but information is only actually provided about a few of the “primary” cultures. Overall, the exhibit seems to generalize the ancient Pre-Columbian cultures, while emphasizing their separateness from the viewer.

The first introductory gallery is interesting because of its’ educational purpose. It has a wall-sized illustrative and comparative timeline, which does an excellent job of demonstrating how Pre-Columbian cultures compare to other civilizations around the world with regards to cultural developments. There are even two large collages of modern indigenous peoples (**Images 4 and 5**), perhaps an attempt to show that these groups, or the descendants of these groups, have a vibrant cultural tradition even today. The walls of this room are covered in text panels and quotes, providing a general look at the history of the collection as well as discussing the continued existence of many of these cultures, connecting the ancient galleries to the modern Latin American folk art gallery. This dimly-lit room also contains eight non-operating videos, with a sign on the wall stating that the gallery is under renovation. I, like many other visitors, took this at face value, assuming this meant that, eventually, they would be restored to their former functioning glory. In an interview with one museum employee, however, a different story emerged. They stated that the video displays had some technical difficulties, but, instead of continually paying for them to be fixed (or paying to replace them), their superior decided that they would leave them as is. According to this individual, the superior felt they were an “eye-sore” and therefore should not be replaced with functioning videos again. Despite the fact that these tools were engaging individuals, particularly children, with the cultures and providing a wider context for the objects, the superior did not want to pay to have them repaired, resulting in the almost complete shutdown of the gallery (Personal communication with museum employee, 11/19/09). This

represents the lack of recognition of a museum professional of the need for different types of engaging educational tools to captivate and make the public more interested in Pre-Columbian cultures.

This Pre-Columbian exhibit provides few visual tools to allow people to make sense of the objects on display. There are no decorative elements or reconstructions to bring the exhibit to life. There are no paintings or images of what life might have been like for these ancient peoples. One text panel at the start of the first room has a very general map of the area where many of the Pre-Columbian cultures lived, but there is no delineation between areas controlled by the different cultures (**Image 6**). A couple of text panels in the third room demonstrate, respectively, a site plan of Teotihuacan and a drawn diagram of the talud-tablero style of architecture, but you have to really be looking for them in order to notice them. In fact, I noted that the text panels have neutral colored backgrounds that make them blend into the wall. The neutral-colored walls provide a sterile feel and make it known to the viewer that he/she is *separate* from the art and the cultures that created it while the text panels, situated in out-of-the-way locations, do not encourage the viewer to read them. This arrangement forces a viewer to actively hunt for the text, and thus makes it very easy to miss them altogether.

In addition, each of the cases holds either one object or a series of objects all distinctly separate from each other (**See Image 3**). There is nothing that ties the artifacts together because the focus is on each object individually, not how they operate as a whole. This approach is justified by many museums throughout the world through a desire to eliminate all external distractions and concentrate the viewer's attention solely on the individual object before them, resulting in art "appearing out of time, or beyond time" (O'Doherty, 1986, 7-8). The seeming timelessness of the art represents a separation between viewer and object, a desire to venerate "the masterpiece" while making it more difficult for individual people to relate to the object (O'Doherty, 1986, 9).

Textual Analysis

The idea of separation between viewer and object is furthered through the text panels. In the first introductory gallery, the purpose of the SAMA collection is laid out on the first text panel:

The Nelson A Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art is dedicated to serving as an important cultural resource for the City of San Antonio, which is a major link between the United States and Latin America. It is the Museum's hope that this Center will contribute to a better understanding of the art, history, literature, religions, and cultures of our Latin American neighbors.

Through my textual analysis of SAMA (See transcriptions in Appendix III), I will determine how well it meets this goal of public education. The text in the Patricia Galt Steves gallery tends to generalize the Pre-Columbian cultures, but it also does a good job of illustrating how the past and present are connected, even providing a tangible link through material objects. For example one text panel states,

During Pre-Columbian times, carved and molded figures served as effigies of the dead, images of shamans and the gods....After the arrival of the Europeans, these practices were prohibited, but new practices took their places. Figures continued to be created, but they related to the new order of Roman Catholicism in the form of *crèche* scenes and statues of the saints.

This type of statement does an excellent job of illustrating the continuation of these cultures beyond the arrival of the Spanish. The text in this room also specifically defines what they mean by "Pre-Columbian," with "The Pre-Columbian Period in Latin America is defined as the time before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, in A.D. 1492," indicating the use of this word simply as a reference to the general timeline. It must be remembered, however, that the area where these text panels are located appears to be shut down (with dimmed lights). This discourages individuals from entering and looking at the text. In fact, when I was documenting the text, several people walked by, poked their heads into the gallery and then continued on their way, not bothering to stop and see what treasure-troves of information were inside. I can only presume this was because of the appearance of being closed off.

Overall, the text in the other rooms does a good job of relating one culture to another, illustrating how inter-cultural influences operated. For instance, “The art of the Zapotecs shows a blending of influences from both Teotihuacán and Maya art. In some carvings at Monte Albán, Teotihuacanos appear as visitors talking with Zapotec warriors. Archaeological data confirms the hypothesis of cultural exchange, with evidence of a Zapotec residential area within the city of Teotihuacán.” Even though this type of interaction is mentioned, the text emphasizes the Olmec’s role of “Mother Culture” with statements such as “The Olmec set the cultural patterns for virtually all of the great Mesoamerican cultures that followed—Teotihuacán, the Zapotecs, the Maya and the Aztecs.” However, although the Olmec are discussed in such glowing terms, they are mentioned to be “farmers who lived in villages” whose “largest towns probably had populations in the thousands.” The use of the terms “villages” and “towns” evokes the mental image of small rural communities, yet, then the text almost contradictorily states that “These urban areas included ceremonial or administrative centers with palaces, pyramids, plazas, ball courts, drainage systems, and water reservoirs,” alluding to a larger city than the word “village” implies. This differs from the fact that the Maya are mentioned as living in “city-states” and cities while Teotihuacan was “the first real urban area in Mesoamerica.” The text, therefore, seems to place these cultures on an evolutionary continuum beginning with the Olmec and progressing through the Maya and Teotihuacanos.

Some generalizations do occur in the Pre-Columbian galleries such as in this example: “Ancient Latin Americans developed great cities and built elaborate temples and palaces. They created a calendar system, and were aware of astronomical phenomena. They lived in competing city-states that warred over territory and resources and they had extensive trade routes that allowed them to move goods over long distances.” This makes it seem like each of these cultures were all, basically, the same with little to differentiate them when, in reality, the cultural diversity among these cultures was profound. They did have similarities, but they should not be reduced to those similarities. Only some of these cultures are

even specifically discussed. The Maya are mentioned 18 times, the Olmec 12 times, the Zapotecs 10 times, the Aztecs 8 times, and the Toltecs 4 times. Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit are only mentioned once despite the large number of objects in this collection from these 3 areas, and the other cultures with material represented (Tlatilco, Chupicuaro, Classic Veracruz, Manibi, Tolima, and Tarascan) are not discussed at all.

This exhibit does not do a very good job of representing multiple aspects of life for ancient Pre-Columbian peoples. For many of the cultures depicted here, there is an emphasis placed on ritual and war, with the repeated use of the words “sacrifice,” “ritual,” “ceremonial,” and “war.” This holds true for SAMA’s description of the Olmec, the Maya, the Zapotecs, the peoples of Teotihuacan, and the Aztecs. This very specific focus does not give a well-rounded impression of these cultures. This might have been improved if the same approach to the introductory gallery (such as the use of quotes) had been extended to the rest of the Pre-Columbian rooms. In fact, considering the information provided in the Patricia Galt Steves introductory gallery, there is a surprising lack of information throughout the other four areas. They barely even mention the Conquest, with only 2 references to the Spanish (one being how, after the Spanish, the indigenous peoples were never able to regain their power and the other being how the Spanish were aided by Aztec subject provinces). In addition, one text panel even states that the Maya died out: “The demise of the Maya in the eighth and ninth centuries remains a mystery. Theories for their decline include the increasing ecological stress put on the environment.” This completely contradicts what their introductory gallery insinuates about the continued thriving of many indigenous cultures.

One thing of further note is that this is the only Texas institution I looked at that acknowledges that the Aztecs are “also known as Méxica.” Mexica is the name the Mexicans have for the Aztecs. Considering the earlier lack of concern for current populations, or descendants of the ancient Pre-Columbian cultures, this may or may not reflect a concern for being culturally sensitive about word

choice. But, individual labels for objects within cases, on the other hand, rarely have any information at all beyond a donor, the general date, a name for the object, and the culture of origin (if known). When more information is provided, it is generally just a visual analysis of the object, including a description of the symbols or figures without any discussion of what they meant to the culture that created the object. This possibly ties in with the fact that these institutions are displaying material that is out of its original context, and, because of this, the museums know very little about the objects.

One of the strengths of the SAMA exhibit is the two replicas of ancient codices (**Image 7**), the Dresden codex and the Codex Féjérváry-Mayer, situated in the second and third rooms, respectively. The accompanying text and diagrams describe some of the symbology present, communicating something to the viewer about how to interpret these objects. But it is interesting that these detailed descriptions only accompany the facsimiles of these documents, while most of the actual ancient objects displayed in the surrounding cases have little if any textual or visual information accompanying them. This gives the viewer no real way to position them within a framework or make sense of them within the context of their own culture.

Dallas Museum of Art

The A.H. Meadows Gallery at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) contains the “Ancient Art of the Americas,” including material on Central and South American cultures throughout four rooms. The first three rooms have predominately Peruvian material. The fourth room is the only one that focuses on Pre-Columbian cultures in Mesoamerica. The cultures represented include the Olmec, West Mexican cultures (Mezcala, Jalsico, Colima, and Nayarit cultures), Tlatilco, Chupicuaro, Teotihuacán, Veracruz, Aztec, Mixtec, Zapotec, and Maya. A large amount of information and artifacts (approximately 100) are placed into this one room. The room is further divided into different areas with text panels giving the viewer an idea of what regions and cultures are being exhibited where. However, it is difficult to

determine visually where one culture stops, and another begins. The room is painted a light grey color, and there are few visual tools to assist the viewer in understanding what they are seeing. While the lack of videos or computers may be a function of funding, space, or other factors, there are also no paintings, pictures, or drawings on any of the walls except for a couple of very small images of maps at the bottom of some of the large text panels. These are difficult to see and provide very little information on the regions or cultures **(Images 8 and 9)**.

This exhibit is arranged with a central demarcated area surrounded by a corridor with cases both imbedded into the walls and placed upon pedestals around the edges **(Image 10)**. Within the central area is exhibited all of the Maya objects **(Images 11 and 12)**, while all other represented cultures are pushed to the periphery of the corridor. This presentation seems to prioritize the Maya in relation to the other cultures. Although, through my textual analysis of the DMA (See transcriptions in Appendix IV), I was surprised about the relatively equal representation of the various Pre-Columbian cultures. Despite the lack of an introductory panel for the Pre-Columbian room, there was a large amount of text, which stands out against the grey walls, that presents a broad range of information.

Textual Analysis

The idea of chronologically organizing the exhibit is continued with the first main textual panel on “Mesoamerica,” which makes the divisions of “Paleo-Indian period,” “Archaic period,” “Formative period,” “Classic period,” “Early Postclassic period,” and “Late Postclassic period.” This panel generalizes to some extent in reference to the “culture history of Mesoamerica,” but it also makes note that Mesoamerica covers “a vast cultural area...which...as a whole experienced relatively similar developments,” listing the modern nations that encompass the region. There is, however, a significant tendency to mention certain cultures above others. The Maya are referenced 16 times, and the Olmec are mentioned 15 times. But, the Aztec, Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit cultures are only cited three times

while the Mezcala area is mentioned twice and Tlatilco, Chupicuaro, Teotihuacan, and Zapotecs are not discussed.

Overall, the main text panels use very egalitarian language, adopting the term “civilization” or “culture” to refer to each group and “center” or “capital” for major urban areas. None of the cultures are referenced as living in “villages” or “towns,” and no one culture is subsumed under another. In addition, the text does not emphasize any one particular aspect of life such as religion or war. This gives a well-rounded account of these Pre-Columbian cultures. The individual labels, on the other hand, only provide basic information such as the date, material, and the donor of the objects in the case.

The text is, overall, very visitor-friendly. Certain phrases or words are defined, making it easier for visitors to understand and place in a larger context. For instance, “The culture area of West Mexico encompasses two major areas, the modern state of Guerrero in the south, particularly the middle reaches of the Balsas River, and the states of Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit to the north.” This description allows for visitors to get a better idea as to what the term “West Mexico” really means. Of course, the inclusion of a map illustrating this information would have also been a useful visual tool.

In addition, the DMA manages to incorporate some artistic analysis into an overall description of the culture, doing an excellent job of synthesizing art history and a more archaeological context. One instance of this appears on a text panel on Teotihuacan: “Although the individual elements of Teotihuacán art can seem static and impersonal, the characteristic repetition of these standardized forms creates an overall impression of harmony.” This kind of synthesis is a good step in reconciling the museum and anthropological viewpoints. Another interesting note is that the DMA acknowledges that they do not have all the answers, that they are not necessarily the ultimate experts that the public often sees them as when visiting a museum. For instance, in one text panel, they state “Broad outlines of different local traditions can be discerned in the ceramics, but much work remains to be done before the cultures that produced these objects can be fully understood.” This alludes to the ongoing process of

research and investigation as well as the fact that these objects have been removed from their original context. If they had remained in their context, there would be fewer questions surrounding them. But, the fact that this museum acknowledges that there is information that they just don't have yet, in contrast to most museums not even addressing this issue, is an excellent step in having more open communication between museums and the public.

Some of the language intentionally romanticizes the represented cultures in phrases like "The mysterious collapse of the great cities." On the other hand, I understand this is the kind of engaging language that gets visitors interested in learning the material. But, it seems like they leave some important information out. For instance, they never once actually mention the Spanish, and they only reference the Conquest once. Overall, however, they do a good job of trying to be neutral through the phrasing of their text. An example of a well-written text that tries to be culturally accurate and sensitive is:

The dual ideas of divinity and kingship embodied in Olmec art united Mesoamerican peoples of different cultures and languages in a common vision of the world that transcended local politics. The masks and images both exalted and defined Olmec kingship, emphasizing the obligation of the ruler to serve his people as shaman, incarnation of the creator god, rainmaker, and protective warrior. (Text panel on the Olmec)

This illustrates how a sentence can be worded to sound neutral, without implying that there is any kind of outside judgment being placed on the Olmec by the museum. It also emphasizes the importance of knowing how an object was used and the kinds of important messages about kingship that can be conveyed through Olmec art. As mentioned for the previous case studies, though, the inclusion of a variety of sources would have enriched the exhibit further.

The main problem with the text from this museum concerns the issue of modern peoples. There is a lack of any mention to modern descendants of these Pre-Columbian cultures, and there is the inclusion of this phrase in reference to the Maya culture: "It endured for nearly 2,000 years, from about

400 B.C., when the first kings raised temple-mountains in royal cities such as El Mirador and Cerros, until 1697, when the Spaniards defeated King Kan_ Ek of the Itzá at Tayasal in the Petén region of Guatemala.” This implies that the Maya culture came to an end, that the Maya are not a thriving culture even today.

Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth

The permanent exhibit of Pre-Columbian artifacts at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth is very small, containing only 10 objects. All of these objects are positioned on one side of the entrance hall. They come from the Huari (Peru), Colima, Mixtec, Olmec, Xochipala, Maya, and Zapotec cultures. They are all displayed either on the wall or in a case with objects from other Pre-Columbian cultures **(Images 13 and 14)**. There is no separation between the different Pre-Columbian cultures represented or even a unifying theme to explain the organization of the objects and their arrangement within the cases. The focus seems to be on the aesthetics of the objects with the intention that viewers look at them solely as art objects. The Kimbell appears to just pick a few “good” pieces to put on display as representative of their cultures and yet provides little information on those cultures **(Images 15 and 16)**. In fact, directly across the hall are objects (displayed in the same fashion as the Pre-Columbian collection) from African cultures. This presentation and organization portrays an interesting image of all these cultures, linking them to one another yet setting them apart from the European permanent collection, which gets its own gallery rather than part of an entrance hall. It would appear, based on the organization of this museum, that the Kimbell is projecting a very specific, “Western” image about non-Western cultures.

Everything is displayed on the neutral backdrop of the beige walls, and there are no paintings, drawings, videos or other visual aids for the Pre-Columbian collection, or any other collection from what I could tell. There are also no large descriptive text panels providing general information on the regions of origin for these objects or their associated cultures. Instead, there are just individual text labels in the

cases, describing the decorative and symbolic motifs of each object with limited mention of the significance of the objects.

Textual Analysis

My content analysis of the text (See transcriptions in Appendix V) from the Kimbell demonstrates that the individual labels for each piece provide descriptions of the piece with language that praises the specific objects as representative of their particular cultures. An Olmec standing figure is claimed to be “monumental in its impact,” while a Maya vessel is given the adjective “celebrated.” A figurine of a seated woman from Xochipala is even “modeled with remarkable sophistication,” emphasizing its uniqueness. Yet, within the text, there is generally only a description of the object on display. By itself this is not necessarily a bad thing; we want good descriptions of objects. But, since there is absolutely no other sources of information within this exhibit to educate the public on the Pre-Columbian cultures represented or even any general information on the region, it falls very short in educational goals. Instead, the language used on the labels seems more like a way for the museum to validate themselves and their importance through the ownership and display of these significant or “celebrated” objects.

In a closer look at the text, the language seems to focus on a few very specific themes. First are the religious, ceremonial or ritual aspects of these Pre-Columbian cultures. The text repeatedly uses the words “shamanism,” “ceremonial,” “sacrifice,” and “ritual,” emphasizing the religious aspect of life while almost ignoring many others such as trade, economics, or politics. The text also seems to prioritize the importance of warriors, battle, and honor, with many references to bloody items. In a label for a “Vessel with a Procession of Warriors”, the words bloody, bloodied, or bloodletting are used repeatedly:

The leader of the party may be the figure wearing a full jaguar pelt and wielding a **bloody** weapon. The person in front of the captive wears a costume of cloth and paper strips studded with **bloodied** medallions; he has a spiny **bloodletter** in his headdress and may be responsible for carrying out the **bloodletting** rituals.

This just seems a little excessive to emphasize the “blood” aspect to the nature of ancient Maya ritual four times in the span of two sentences. It is made even more noticeable because the exhibit has only ten artifacts. Such repetition of words stands out more in an exhibit of this size than it would in a much larger exhibit.

In addition, while the word “town” is never used and the word “village” is only used once, as a whole, each cultural group is only ever referred to as a “culture.” This is a fairly neutral term, but they rarely use stronger words. Only once is the word “civilization” used, and “empire” is never mentioned. The use of the term “civilization” is, in fact, only in reference to the Maya. This quite possibly means nothing, but why is it the Maya culture that gets classified as a “civilization” while the other cultures represented do not? This may have to do with the fact that the Kimbell collection contains more Maya objects than material from other Pre-Columbian cultures. This might also explain the strong prioritization of the Maya throughout the text. The Maya are mentioned a grand total of 23 times, with the Olmec mentioned 8 times, the Zapotec five times, Xochipla twice, and Colima and the Mixtec only once. Therefore, there is a strong emphasis on the Maya culture both in the amount of discussion and the words chosen to discuss the cultures.

Overall, the language tries to idealize or dramatize these past cultures while not really giving a well-rounded glimpse into them. There is no attempt to use multiple sources of information, and they seem to prioritize the Maya to some extent. Despite the focus on certain themes and the focus on description, they do make an effort to provide some information on deity impersonation, bloodletting rituals, war, the Underworld, scribes, rulers, and certain gods. While they do not allude to any kind of evolution of cultures, there is no effort to connect anything together or to really differentiate the beliefs of one culture from another. It makes it seem like each culture exists in isolation from each other. In addition, the language used does not really engage the visitors. It does not explain terms, pose questions, or phrase things to facilitate visitor understanding of the material. A further note is that the

Kimbell does not mention the Spanish or the Conquest at all. I do not know if this was a deliberate exclusion, but it almost seems like they are simply ignoring this monumental event for indigenous cultures. There is also not a single reference to the fact that descendents of these cultures are still thriving today. There was obviously no concern with their opinions on the representation of these ancient cultures, and this exhibit presents a very specific Westernized view of ancient Pre-Columbian cultures.

Templo Mayor Museum in Mexico City

This museum is attached to the actual archaeological site and the remains of the Templo Mayor, which is the ceremonial center for the ancient Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. There are three maze-like floors with different levels, a large number of rooms (12), and a total of approximately 8,000 pre-Columbian artifacts (according to one museum employee). Most of the museum contains artifacts directly from the adjacent ruins of the Templo Mayor, so the artifacts are mostly Aztec. There is one room that is a conglomeration of other cultures (Mixtec, Mezcala material from Guerrero, and Teotihuacan), but each of these cultures is explained as having a specific influence or trading relationship with Tenochtitlan. Each of these cases is explicitly labeled with information panels above providing specific information on each culture.

The visual tools in this exhibit are extensive. Upon entry into the museum, the first thing you notice is a huge scale model of the entire city of Tenochtitlan. Next, there are signs directing you as to the “preferred” path to take through the exhibit. It first goes through a history of the site and the archaeological excavation (including methodology), then proceeds into the rooms displaying objects, with each room based on a theme. The walls of each room or area are painted purple, blue, and other bold colors (**Image 17**), giving the exhibit a very different kind of feel than the sterile/neutral environment of the traditional art museum. Throughout the museum, there are lots of models of

different parts of the site (**Image 18**) with a large amount of description and explanation. A huge map provides the visitor with a visual look at the extent of the Aztec empire, illustrating specifics such as their trading relations with their neighboring cultures (**Image 19**).

The artifacts displayed in this museum are mostly Aztec, with rooms focused on different themes having to do with Aztec culture or beliefs. For instance, one room is dedicated to the God Huitzilopochili while another is devoted to the importance of agriculture. The agricultural section includes information on agricultural resources, the methods of agriculture for the Aztecs (**Image 20**), and the significance of different plants and the representation of them on various objects. In addition, one level is all about the time of the Spanish conquest and is filled with Spanish and indigenous objects displayed side-by-side, found both from the Templo Mayor site and from the nearby Metropolitan Cathedral. This type of side-by-side display illustrates the similar use of objects between the two traditionally antagonistic groups. Finally, on the bottom floor, there is a special tribute to the Mexican presence in Guerrero with 45 cases of Mezcala objects.

This museum utilizes a great deal of creativity in their display of cultural material. For instance, if objects were excavated together, such as from an offering (**Image 21**), the Templo Mayor places them together as one display. They do not present each object separately, in their own special cases; rather, they display the objects how they were actually discovered, in their depositional context. Other types of displays include interesting use of light or life-size models. A large round stone with the image of the goddess Coyolxauhqui (**Image 22**), for instance, is displayed so that different colored lights shine down upon it, reflecting the original pigments (which no longer survive). Another example can be seen in the section devoted to agricultural activities, where a model of an open marketplace is set up with life-sized mannequins that display baskets of fruits, vegetables and other goods for sale (**Image 23**). This display even has murals on the walls to further the marketplace illusion. These types of engaging and thought-provoking displays are repeated throughout the entire museum.

This museum also exhibits a range of technology in their representation of ancient Aztec culture. In the lobby of the museum, there is a viewing area with a video (subtitled in English) discussing the history of the Templo Mayor site using historical, colonial, and archaeological sources. It even mentions how preserving indigenous history is important, stating that it helps the current indigenous people. A total of five interactive computer displays (with options of English or Spanish subtitles) are dispersed throughout the museum, one on the ground floor and two on each of the other levels. Each presents different information connecting to the material in their associated room. One computer display, in the room devoted to the god Tlaloc, is all about the gods and their significance for the ancient peoples. Another talks about the cyclical nature of life and death, what that meant to the Aztecs, the different levels of the underworld, and sacrifice, illustrating the very complicated nature of the ancient Aztecs belief system rather than focusing on the stereotypical bloodthirsty nature of the Aztecs. It seems like the museum is trying to demonstrate that there are multiple sides to Aztec culture. The remaining computer displays, however, were broken when I visited with no indication of how long they had been broken or if they were to be fixed. Although I do not know the specifics of the situation, these videos seem like a wonderful resource for visitors and should be repaired as soon as possible.

Textual Analysis

The desire to represent multiple sides to the Aztec culture can be further witnessed through my content analysis of the main text panels (See transcriptions in Appendix VI). First, however, I want to mention that most of the text panels were written in Spanish. After transcribing this text, I translated it into English based on my knowledge and an online translator program (<http://www.spanishdict.com/>), and thus the wording may not be exact. Therefore, while I will discuss the language used for the Templo Mayor, I will not pay as much attention to specific semantics. Instead, I will summarize the general gist of the statements. For each of the quotes I do use, I will mention if they are an English translation

provided by the museum (actual text) or whether I provided the translation (translation) with the aforementioned assistance.

Since this museum is mainly archaeological in nature (due to its attachment to an archaeological site), it focuses a great deal on the phases of excavation and the on-site research. Due to the fact that the objects are still mostly in their original context, or were excavated in-situ, the museum has the advantage of knowing much more about the objects and therefore can relay that wealth of information more easily to the viewers. In addition, there are many text panels distributed throughout the exterior of the site, along a pathway that goes from the entrance of the complex (where you purchase tickets), through the actual site and to the entrance of the museum. Even though they are not situated physically inside the museum, since they are part of the entire complex, I document these texts and included them in my analysis. These exterior panels were already translated into English.

There are a huge number of text panels in this museum. This is a large institution, and there seems to be a focus on providing information to a visitor. In fact, there seems to be more of an emphasis placed on the information than on the physical objects, with text throughout the museum relating stories and myths that further explain the significance of objects rather than focusing specifically on the way in which an ancient artist drew a mythological figure (as one example). The walls, in addition to containing large text panels of information, also include numerous relevant quotes from colonial sources and codices. These represent an attempt to present multiple sources of information as well as different views of Mexica history rather than relying solely on the possibly biased accounts of the Spanish. I focused on these large text panels, but there were individual labels (usually one per case) that provided further information about the significance of the objects within the cases.

The Templo Mayor museum refers to the Aztecs as the Mexica and focus a good deal of attention on them. In fact, the Mexica are mentioned about 130 times in the text of the Templo Mayor. This is unsurprising given that it is a site-specific institution devoted mainly to the Mexica. The Guerrero

people, because of the special tribute gallery on the main floor, are mentioned 42 times, and the Mezcala and Teotihuacan peoples are discussed six and five times respectively in the room dedicated to trade and outside interactions. I also find it interesting that rather than referring to a “Mesoamerican” or “Pre-Columbian” history, the Mexican people refer to the Mexica as being a part of a “Pre-Hispanic” tradition. The text mentions the term “Mesoamerica” but only in relation to the geographic region of Central America rather than referring to unifying cultural traditions. I do not know what the significance of this might be.

Overall, the museum emphasizes scientific and contextual information . For example, in reference to the Coyolxauhqui stone, one exterior text panel states

Through painstaking microscopic study, we can now appreciate the Coyolxauhqui in its full glory with its original colors. However, keep in mind we can only approximate the intensity of the colors in this reconstruction. (actual text)

This type of statement does an excellent job in explaining the current state of an artifact, as well as mentioning that the museum does not have all the answers. Additionally, comments such as “The archaeological material of biological nature is an excellent source of information, but traditionally little used; it provides the ability to understand new aspects of the lifestyle of the prehispanic peoples” (translation) illustrate the Templo Mayor’s general interest in further investigation into Mexica culture.

The text in the Templo Mayor presents both war and sacrifice in a very specific light. In the Tribute to Guerrero exhibit on the first floor, the text emphasizes the use of blood sacrifice in the social realm rather than the religious, even connecting the act to the “. . . need to secure payment of taxes. Thus, it became for them a livelihood activity as important as agriculture” (translation). Submission and then sacrifice was all a way to gain control of specific economic resources like copper, gold, cinnabar, feathers, skins or gemstones. Even though such activities are mentioned, the museum does not place undue amount of attention on them. The religious or ritual side of life is spoken of in conjunction with other aspects of life, and there is the feeling that while it was extremely important, even vital, for the

Mexica, it is not the sole focus of the culture. Words like “primitive” or “native” are not used or are rare; while stronger words like “might” and “powerful” (actual text) are common. Words referring to conquering mainly occur when referencing the Mexica’s conquering of other people, with their own conquering by the Spanish greatly downplayed. They therefore are presenting a specific view of the past, one that falls in line with trying to create a more positive view of the Mexica culture.

In the room devoted to the Spanish conquest and later settlement of Mesoamerica, the text focuses a great deal on miscommunications between the two groups based on language barriers and the incomprehension of two very different cultural systems and two very different modes of thinking. In fact, the text focuses on Cortes’ trepidation in visiting the “great Lord [Moctezuma] and the wonderful city [Tenochtitlan]” (translation) rather than the often-mentioned fear and awe of the Mexica towards Cortes and his men. The text also emphasizes how it was due to the alliances Cortes made with enemies of the Mexica, in addition to firearms, that allowed the defeat of the Mexica. Quotes on the wall mention the “massacre” of the “unarmed” people (translation), with the Spanish killing everyone, even people carrying water or innocent farmers. This demonstrates the violence of the Spanish as well as the civilized nature of the Mexica; the museum is definitely making their standpoint in favor of the Mexica known.

In addition, the interconnectedness and interdependency of different Pre-Columbian cultures is mentioned even though the majority of the artifacts in this museum come from the Templo Mayor site and are thus mainly Aztec (or Mexica). One example of this interconnectedness is demonstrated through this quote: “These architectonic elements, like the braziers adorned with the face of Tlaloc, reflect the influence of the Toltecs, whose style was copied by the Mexicas four hundred years after they settled in the valley. “ (actual text). The current impact of this cultural interconnectedness between the Mexica and other Mesoamerican cultures is still being felt with one text panel in the Tribute to Guerrero exhibit stating:

Mezcala style is one of the most valuable pre-hispanic traditions and popularity has reached the black market in antiquities, which is why they have drawn a lot of fakes over several decades. Therefore, the collection was recovered from the Templo Mayor takes on special significance because its authenticity is certified. Although it is unclear whether these objects came to Tenochtitlan as a tribute or otherwise, they are a testimony to the significance of the region occupied today by the state of Guerrero to the Mexica (actual text).

This kind of relation of the past to present issues (modern-day looting and forgery) is even better able to engage visitors by relating this material to modern day.

There are some specific descriptions of objects, but they are always accompanied by a discussion of the contextual and symbolic significance of the object to the Mexica. There is an emphasis on the need to know the context of an object in order to really understand the meaning behind it. So, as a museum directly related to a specific archaeological site and founded on the concept of context, the Templo Mayor creatively utilizes technology, models, textual information and a range of interesting display methods to engage visitors and help them understand the nature of the ancient Aztecs (or Mexica). It is a particularly interesting case because it can be seen as representing the ancestors of the current Mexican people. So, this institution would have a vested interest in ensuring that the image of their ancestors is as accurate or as well-rounded as possible.

Museo Nacional de Antropología

Another museum with such a vested interest is the Museo Nacional de Antropología, which has an enormous amount of material, the largest collection of Pre-Columbian material in the world. It has 9 (out of 23) exhibit halls specifically pertaining to Pre-Columbian groups (with many rooms and thousands of artifacts per hall) situated around a main courtyard, with galleries and exhibits branching off of that. Some of them are connected inside the galleries, so you can get from one exhibit to another without going outside (**Image 24**). The exhibit areas are entitled “Preclásico en el Altiplano central”

(focused on the Preclassic and Formative time period), “Teotihuacan,” “Los toltecas y su época” (The Toltecs with objects from Cholula, Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, Xochitécatl, Teotenango), “Mexico” (Aztec) “Culturas de Oaxaca” (Cultures in the Oaxaca area), “Culturas de la costa del golfo” (Cultures of the Gulf Coast including the Huastecs and Mixtecs as well as several cultures I’ve never even heard of), “Maya,” “Culturas de occidente” (displaying material from Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, the Tarascans, the Chupícuaro, and the Olmecs), and “Culturas del norte” (including the Tolteca-Chichimecas and several cultures as far north as the southern US). There is an extraordinary range of cultures represented in this museum.

The exhibit halls are organized mostly in chronological order counterclockwise around the central courtyard, going in order as listed above. Within each hall, objects are organized by chronological periods and by theme. The chronology always begins with the Preclassic and progresses through the Postclassic, the decline of the particular civilization, or the arrival of the Spanish. The thematic organization can be seen through the grouping of materials in cases according to a particular topic or theme. In the first exhibit, for instance, there is material from Tlatilco, and, in one of the cases from this exhibit, there is a text label discussing deformities accompanied by 11 ceramic figurines displaying various deformities along with one actual deformed skull. This type of organization occurs in each section of every exhibit in the MNA. Each hall is painted a different bright color such as red, green, blue, purple and brown as a further way to visually separate halls as well as provide an interesting backdrop for the objects. Each hall, and then the various thematic and chronological divisions within each hall, is defined through the text panels located in prominent positions on the walls.

While the first floor houses all of the Pre-Columbian or “Pre-Hispanic” cultural material, the second floor houses the ethnographic collection. This includes cultural material from the current peoples of Mesoamerica, specifically focusing on the indigenous groups, the current descendents of the ancient cultures. In fact, these displays are situated directly above the material of their direct ancestors.

Because of their location on the second floor, however, I feel like these collections do not receive as many visitors, nor do they get as much attention overall. I find this to be particularly unfortunate given that, based on the text I did read in the ethnographic section (not documented), I got the impression that it was important for many modern indigenous groups to identify with their past because it plays a large role in their current identities. The ethnographic collections are arranged so as to present as a very obvious and tangible way to connect the past and the present, illustrating how important it is for some of the modern groups to identify with their ancient roots.

The physical set-up of the exhibit includes the interior galleries as well as exterior areas. Some of these exterior areas have large-scale reproductions or models of cities or specific aspects of a culture, such as with the reconstruction of a traditional “I” shaped ball court outside the Toltec exhibit (**Image 25**) or the scale model of Teotihuacan outside the Teotihuacan exhibit. Even more reproductions and models were displayed inside, like with the reproduction of the façade of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent from Teotihuacan (**Image 26 a & b**). This includes the reproduction of a burial that was really found within the temple back behind the reproduction as if it was actually inside it. I noticed another example in the reproduction of Pakal’s tomb in the Maya exhibit (**Image 27**). This kind of creative use of reproductions is extensive throughout this museum (**Images 28-31**). A further educational and decorative tool used by the MNA is large, modern murals of ancient life (**Image 32**). They occur in almost all of the exhibits, such as the one in the “Sala Preclasico (Altiplano Central)” area, which depicts ancient indigenous peoples engaged in daily activities like hunting, cooking, eating, etc.

In addition to visual displays, the MNA uses a wide range of technology to educate the public. One such example is light-up models, where you push a labeled button and the corresponding area on a map lights up (**Image 33**), illustrating where that location is (whether it be a general region, a specific site, or even a particular building). A series of descriptive videos (some in English, some in Spanish) are sprinkled throughout the museum. They range in topics from focusing on the different cultures,

different aspects of certain cultures, like the ballgame, or difficulties in dealing with ancient cultures in the modern day (such as trying to move and install some of the monumental sculpture pieces in the Toltec area). Finally, there are special displays throughout the museum that have their own narration. One example is a large display in the Tlatilco area that creatively illustrates the archaeological context of objects by recreating the excavation site (**Image 34**). Directly next to this area was an isolated narration of the excavation where different parts of the exhibit would be lit when being discussed by the recorded narrator.

Textual Analysis

Many of the issues presented in the example of the Templo Mayor case study also hold true for the National Anthropology Museum. Most of the text panels in this museum were already translated into English. I, therefore, trusted that the museum curators and other staff members knew what they were doing in their translations of the text and therefore did not document the Spanish version of any of the text panels. A few panels throughout did not have English translations, so I translated them in the same manner as the text panels from the Templo Mayor (See transcriptions in Appendix VII).

The MNA has a tendency to use the term “Mesoamerica” in referencing the geographic region while using the term “Pre-Hispanic” when discussing multiple cultural groups from that region. Again, I do not know what the significance of this might be. In my textual analysis of the MNA, I discovered that there are a series of panels in the beginning area that generalize some of the cultures (like with the reference to a “Mesoamerican pantheon” of deities or “The ballgame developed as a characteristic of the Mesoamerican cultures.” But, the text seems to focus more on the general timeline as far as the developments of such things as sedentary life and agriculture. Then, they go on to mention how these kinds of developments allowed for advancement, as in how villages were able “to experience a demographical growth and settlements became towns” and “basic Mesoamerican patterns – which would give place to the great civilizations – were formed.” This growth of settlement sizes is mentioned

several times in the general panels, but never once throughout the rest of the text does it mention or allude to one culture “evolving” or leading into another. Therefore, no one culture seems to be prioritized in this respect. Looking at the sheer number of times cultures are mentioned, however, demonstrates a certain emphasis on some cultures over others. The Mexica are discussed 80 times, the Maya 65 times, the Teotihuacanos 55 times, the Oaxaca culture 42 times, and the Mixtecs 34 times while the Olmecs were mentioned 19 times, the Huastecs and Tolteca-Chicimecas 15 times, the Toltecs 13 times, the Tarascans eight times, Jalisco six times, Sinaloa and Nayarit five times, and the Chipicuario twice. This definitely draws more attention to some of the more well-known groups (possibly to draw more people in). But, I must admit, even though some cultures are referenced much more often than others, every single culture is discussed at least a couple of times. There are none that are simply left out. Interestingly, in the Mexica gallery, the phrase “The Mexica and their neighbors” is repeated a few times, seemingly generalizing the cultures who resided near the Mexica. This might, however, be a way of illustrating the profound influence of the Mexica on these other cultures, but, nevertheless, the museum should be careful about the types of generalizations they draw. Otherwise, they could portray the idea that these different groups are homogenous when each culture has its own unique set of cultural traditions that should be appreciated in their own right.

Since cases are organized on themes, based on architecture, economics, cults, agricultural practices, trade, materials used, etc., many text panels reflect this. There is often one label for a whole case of objects, discussing how the objects are related. For instance, one case strictly devoted to wooden objects states;

Wood: Wood was a fundamental element in these groups’ life; unfortunately, very few wooden archaeological objects have been preserved to the present time, as this material is organic and thus, perishable. However, through the great quantity of tools (made of stone, teeth, and animals horns) used for working with wood that have been found in archaeological expeditions, one can conclude that the material was used in home building and furniture manufacture, in the making of other tools, and in the creation of sculptures.

Examples of wooden sculptures, raw wood fragments, and pieces of wooden tools are displayed to illustrate this text, providing visual examples to facilitate the understanding and perhaps even later retention of this information. The larger text panels on the wall serve to provide more generalized information on certain aspects of the culture being discussed.

One interesting note about the MNA is that the text defines terms that may be unfamiliar to visitors, as, for example, in the text: “walls were of wattle and daub, or in other words, of interwoven branches covered with mud.” This definition makes the text easier to understand to viewers who may be unfamiliar with the term “wattle and daub.” Other specialized jargon that may not be readily familiar to viewers is described such as the corbelled arch and its importance to the Maya. Many other museums don’t even mention this important Maya invention, much less describe it in an understandable way. Beyond this, the text often situates things in more modern terms so visitors can more readily understand and relate to them. For instance, the phrases “specialized mass production” or “commercialization” allows modern viewers to better understand how the manufacturing and trade of such objects worked. It also makes these cultures sound more advanced.

The text of the MNA emphasizes the physical size of ancient settlements. Instead of interchangeably using the words “villages,” “cities,” and “towns,” they seem to indicate an actual progression as far as size of the settlement, usually even providing approximate numbers for the population residing there. Referring to Maya cities, one panel states, “they housed up to five million inhabitants, who formed part of a complex political system of settlements.” All cultures are referred to as “civilizations” or “empires,” with even the Olmec honored with the designation “earliest of Mesoamerican civilizations.” Monte Albán is referred to as a city that “for more than a thousand years, it was the center of Zapotec culture.” Also, when words such as “villages” are used, their influence or power is emphasized, as in this phrase: “caused certain villages – which functioned as power centers- to become great settlements where religious, administrative, and exchange activities were carried out.”

And, later, different cities are referred to as “influential” or “great,” all with positive connotations relating to power. When talking about the decline of cities, the text does not talk about the “collapse” or disappearance of the peoples; instead, it focuses on how these centers “declined politically” and the people moved someplace else. This museum also uses some specific terms such as “k’uhul ajaw” (or ‘divine king’), a person whose power and influence is emphasized in his having “vanquished other rulers.” This use of specific Maya words, I think, adds a unique and interesting dimension to the experience of learning about other cultures. The specific choice of words is used deliberately by the MNA to illustrate the influence of Pre-Columbian cultures.

Instead of just describing an object, the text actually provides a deeper analysis as to the meaning of the materials for the original cultures. A label at the MNA states “Objects made of shells which represented a symbol of fertility and power, were worked with highly elaborate techniques, to produce utility goods and decorations used both in life and in death.” This combines both description and contextual meaning to allow for a fuller understanding of shell objects. Another example can be seen in the description of the “idealized man” where “Anthropomorphic representations in Teotihuacan reveal a stereotyped and idealized vision of man. In contrast to what we find in other Mesoamerican cultures, sculptors did not attempt to immortalize their rulers in stone.” They not only describe what it is that is represented before the visitor, but they inform them of the significance of it. Each culture is spoken of in great detail, many of which have their own specialized galleries, with discussions of all aspects of life: art, music, politics, religion, economy, etc. A text panel on the ancient Maya states:

This hall displays an important collection of pieces from ancestral Maya communities, which allows us to appreciate different stages and scenarios of their world. Here may be found testimonies of their everyday life, political and social organization, and their knowledge, customs, and traditions regarding trade and militaristic thought. In addition there is material evidence of the profound religious meaning underlying a number of ritual practices and that simultaneously defined the traits and significance of their architecture and art with endurance and existence. The visitor may also see the vestiges of a writing system

that contains the secrets of community memory and time in its structure.

As you can see, no one aspect of the Maya culture is emphasized. They seem to want to present a more overall, complete image of society and life for this ancient culture rather than prioritizing any one aspect.

The text focuses on the accomplishments of Pre-Columbian groups, stating things like “Their advances in numeracy required the invention and use of the mathematical concept of zero centuries before the Europeans learned it from the Arab scholars.” They also demonstrate such descriptive phrases as “The extraordinary wall painting used as decoration reveals wonderful realism and color” to further shed light on the accomplishments of early Pre-Columbian (or Pre-Hispanic) cultures (**See Image 28**). They even mention how the Spanish admired the size and organization of Cempoala, the first indigenous city they came to. The Mixtecs are called the “great and unequalled metalworkers of Mesoamerica.” The text of the MNA focuses on the ingenuity and creativity of indigenous cultures, and leads to a greater admiration and respect for these cultures. Their legacy is described as being pivotal, with

One of the most important ancient Mexican contributions to mankind the world over is maize. This extraordinary vegetable, domesticated by new world farmers, sustained the development and flourishing of all Mesoamerican cultures.

This connects the advancements of Pre-Columbian cultures to the rest of the world, illustrating their profound, wide-ranging influence.

Like the Templo Mayor, the MNA focuses on interactions between cultures rather than looking at each culture in isolation (regardless of whether or not each culture is separated into different galleries). One text panel states, “In regional cultures, the development of trade networks and knowledge exchange nets encourages and unified beliefs.” This, rather than indicating the homogenous nature of these cultures, illustrates the cultural interactions occurring throughout the region. The text

repeatedly makes the point, for almost every culture discussed, that inter-cultural and inter-regional interactions were extremely important. Teotihuacan is described as developing “a trading system that embraced almost every region of Mesoamerica, including places as far away as the Maya area, the modern state of Guerrero, and the area around the Gulf of Mexico.” The influential nature of these interactions is reflected in the material evidence, such as buildings like the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan or smaller objects which were traded throughout the region (**Image 35**). Instead of focusing solely on the violent interactions such as war, they focus on trade and cultural influence. These more violent interactions are, of course, present and are discussed in great length with some cultures like the Mexica, but not every culture is placed into that kind of hostile framework. “[R]elations between Teotihuacan and the Mayan cities,” for instance, ‘were of reciprocity, not domination.’ In fact, a general discussion of pottery during the Formative period illustrates how cultural interactions have enriched the art of these Pre-Hispanic cultures: “contact among different regions was translated into a richness of forms, colors, and decorative techniques in pots, with which new fashions or styles were achieved.” This is an excellent example of how the greater the knowledge of a culture, the easier it is to decipher and make sense of the artistic tradition of that culture.

The Spanish are described in a very specific manner at the MNA, consistently referred to as “conquerors” or “conquistadors” who “marauded.” The text insinuates that the golden age of Pre-Hispanic art came abruptly to an end with the Spanish arrival. For instance, “That historical period and the cultural processes it involved were abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the Spaniards and their conquest of the lands and the native inhabitants they encountered.” Such language presents a very violent image of the Spanish. This idea is furthered when Indigenous peoples are described as fleeing from the “subjugation” and “colonial exploitation” of the Spanish. It is interesting that the Mexica are portrayed as nothing but welcoming to the Spanish, giving them all kinds of gifts, only to be betrayed

and “robbed” by the Spanish. Text panels on the Mexica relate the story of Moctezuma and emphasize how:

Cortes, a skilled soldier and cunning expert in human psychology, took advantage of Moctezuma’s hesitation and made alliances with the Totonacs and Taxcalteca, enemies of the Mexica. During the advance, he carried out a brutal attack at Cholula to terrify the emperor. Moctezuma received him in peace and housed him in the city. Shortly afterwards he was taken prisoner and forced to swear allegiance to the King of Spain, Charles I.

They go on to discuss the “massacre” of the nobles in the Great Temple. Despite this, when discussing the significance of the ballgame to the Mexica, I found it interesting that they described how the “European conquerors” were “surprised” by the skill of the ballplayers, indicating that there was some respect for the Mexica. In an interesting turn, though, some of the MNA text places some of the Pre-Hispanic cultures on par with the Spanish in the respect of war-like behavior. For instance, “After this conquest, the Mixtecs’ power was extended across the region, subjecting other Zapotec populations and eventually dominating the Western part of the valleys.” This is, perhaps, a way to illustrate that it is not just the Spanish who could engage in these kinds of powerful and often brutal activities, but Pre-Columbian cultures could as well.

Text at the MNA discusses themes that aren’t even touched upon in many other museums, such as differential representation of men and women, or the lives of common people and how they differed from lives of nobles or kings. They also mention aspects of life after colonization, such as the fact that “some deities were disguised under the guise of Catholic saints.” This is a fascinating piece of information, one that might intrigue many visitors. Also, in a discussion on the city of Teotenango, after it was conquered by the Spanish, one label reads “Some of the Matlatzinca and Mexica remaining on the hill were forced to abandon it and move to the new colonial town of Tenango del Valle,” further demonstrating what happened to these groups after colonization. Finally, a text panel specifically devoted to the conquest states:

The Franciscans and Augustinian monks Christianized the area. Acknowledging the mastery of the Indians in different crafts, they assigned them Christian subject matters in line with their craft specialties and the natural resources available. Thus, to this day places offer a unique creativeness, evidence of the ancient social and religious organization of these peoples.

This particular statement not only acknowledges that the Spanish were able to “conquer” the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica with religion as well as firearms, but it complements the skills of indigenous craftspeople, while stating that modern indigenous groups draw heavily from their cultural roots. It paints both the Spanish and the indigenous peoples in a slightly different light.

The MNA talks about descendents of ancient cultures and the continuation of certain traditions in text such as

El Volador was a rite focused on a tree, from which four figures representing birds descended, symbolizing the descent from the sky to the earth. This ceremony is still performed by several indigenous groups on the coast; they associate it with a conception of fertility, by integrating the birds, symbolically inked to the sun, as taking its fertilizing power to the earth.

Even architecture has a long tradition, with early village construction for the Zapotecs serving as a “prototype for popular housing as it exists to this day.” These kinds of statements further illustrate how the past is intricately connected to the present. Even though the people of Mexico City likely identify with the Mexica more readily than with some of the other ancient cultures, they do not prioritize them when speaking of other cultures. For example, the Tarascans are described as being “the only people to oppose the great expansion of the Mexica. In the 15th century they made several attempts to conquer them but were defeated each time. This deepened the respect other communities held for the Tarascans.” The Mexica, likewise, are depicted as an incredibly strong, war-like group, but they are not shown as being some kind of culmination of Pre-Hispanic cultures. The Mexica’s appropriation of elements of the past is illustrated in the following passage:

[T]owns and cities from Mesoamerica's past...were considered prototypes of power and knowledge; the Mexicas sought in this glorious past the roots of their own identity, and they excavated the ruins of those Prehispanic capitals to obtain valuable objects: masks, jars, stone figurines, etc., which they made Mexica by adding elements that emphasized the link between the past and their particular present.

This serves to present the Mexica as "heirs to the ancient civilizations, validating their expansion and their military domination." This feeling might even extend into the present, explaining the strong feelings of connectedness and continuity between the current Mexican people and the Mexica, who are now the ancient civilization from the "glorious past."

The MNA also emphasizes context when speaking of an object. One example is the text that states "true understanding is possible only through knowledge of the ideology of the society that produced it." This kind of outlook reflects the general treatment of information in the MNA. They employ a variety of sources to provide further evidence for these cultures including Spanish colonial documents, ancient texts, myths, oral history, etc. Examples include the Toltec Chichimec History, "oral traditions handed down from the remote past and collected by sixteenth century chroniclers," pictographic documents, codices, and other accounts that provides the stories of these people a more personal feel. This seems to be the overall goal of the MNA. They intentionally use very specific language and representation of Pre-Columbian cultures to project a message about these cultures as well as their modern descendents to museum visitors.

Comparisons and Conclusions

Although each of the museums discussed has an overall purpose of education, they are also creating a "mythology," a framework of meaning, that present a message about Pre-Columbian cultures through their permanent exhibits of material culture. The museums in Texas, where the overwhelming majority of objects have come from private collections and lack provenance, have a tendency to

generalize the Pre-Columbian cultures, or to prioritize one cultural group that happens to dominate their collection (such as the Aztec at the HMNS). Most of them are organized chronologically and reflect some kind of evolution of cultures, which is a very Western perspective. These museums also provide few, if any, engaging educational tools (such as models, computer displays, etc.) for visitors to interpret the artifacts they see before them. There is, overall, an idea of separateness that is reflected through the physical display of objects. The objects are separated from one another through relegation to separate cases and separated from the viewer through both the “objective” presentation and the lack of information provided about them. Thus, the visitor is then further separated from the culture that created the objects because of their lack of understanding of that culture. These institutions thus create the mindset that the cultures on display are something “other,” fundamentally different from the viewers, a mindset furthered even more through the mainly sterile environment presented by these museums through the neutral colors of the walls. The museums focus on the aesthetics of the objects rather than the actual provenance or context for the object, so without a framework in which to place the objects they see, viewers are lost as to how to understand them.

Through the text provided, the Texas institutions deemphasize the need to relay information to the viewer, especially contextual information. They tend to place large text panels in out-of-the-way locations, or almost make them blend into the background. Even labels for individual pieces lack relevant information, usually focusing on only the most basic of information (again, likely because the context is unknown). The text that is provided continues the themes of generalizing cultures by lumping them together, the prioritizing of a specific group, or focusing on a specific theme such as ritual warfare or sacrifice. Alternatively, they refer to the different Pre-Columbian groups with language that places them on an evolutionary continuum or ties them to “primitive” modes of life through the use of words like “village” as opposed to “city,” or discussing war rather than the advances of the culture or their trade activities. They generally provide little cultural information, and what information is provided is

written in such a way as to prioritize a Western viewpoint of history. Specifically, most of the Texas institutions either ignore the violence of the Spanish during the Conquest or they claim that the indigenous people were never the same, insinuating in some cases that they completely disappeared or died out. In fact, there is a general lack of consideration for modern descendants of these ancient cultures, and how they wish their own history to be displayed and represented to viewers. Most of these museums do not even mention that there are current descendants of ancient Pre-Columbian cultures.

Meanwhile, the museums in Mexico City present Pre-Columbian cultures in a very different manner. Their exhibits are organized around both a chronological and thematic basis, demonstrating the importance of understanding objects in relation to one another. To help facilitate this understanding, they use a wide range of technologies and creative display techniques to interest and educate viewers. They creatively use light-up models, videos, computer displays, replicas, murals, and maps. Unlike the examples from Texas, the Templo Mayor and the MNA paint each gallery a different color such as red, green, blue, purple or brown to provide a more visually interesting backdrop but also to help provide visitors with a sense of where material from one culture stops and the next one starts.

The sheer number of text panels in each of these museums dwarfs the number in all of the Texas museums combined. Granted, both the Templo Mayor and the MNA are extremely large institutions, but, overall, there seems to be much more of a focus on relaying information to a visitor than in many of the Texas institutions. The text of these institutions describes both the aesthetic and cultural importance and significance of the objects, putting them into an overall context and providing viewers with the information needed to really understand the material cultural before them. The ways objects are physically displayed in the Templo Mayor Museum are very different from the institutions in Texas. For instance, if objects were excavated together (**see Image 21**), institutions like the Templo Mayor place them together as one display in their depositional context. In both the Templo Mayor and the MNA the technique of side-by-side display was widely used to emphasize a point that was then

further explained in the text. For instance, the side-by-side display of Spanish and indigenous artifacts in the Spanish colonial level of the Templo Mayor demonstrated how both groups used similar kinds of objects for similar purposes.

Despite their emphasis on provenanced objects, these museums still create a mythology, although a different kind of mythology. This can be seen clearly in the text. Overall, there is an emphasis on a well-rounded look into each culture rather than focusing on just one aspect, such as ritual. These museums focus on the accomplishments and advancements made by the Pre-Columbian cultures. The text of the MNA focuses on the accomplishments of Pre-Columbian groups, stating things like “Their advances in numeracy required the invention and use of the mathematical concept of zero centuries before the Europeans learned it from the Arab scholars,” a statement not likely to be found in US museums. The text further demonstrates the inter-connectedness of all the Pre-Columbian groups, emphasizing positive interactions such as trade and gift-giving, not just war activities. They have a tendency to illustrate Pre-Columbian cultures with more respect, utilizing words and phrases with more positive connotations. For example, the Tarascans are described in the MNA as being “the only people to oppose the great expansion of the Mexica. In the 15th century they made several attempts to conquer them but were defeated each time. This deepened the respect other communities held for the Tarascans.” This is a very different representation of the Tarascans than in the DMA, which emphasized the fact that they did not ally themselves with the Mexica and were subsequently conquered by the Spanish. They also use words like “civilization” and “empire” much more often than more slighting terms like “village” or “town.”

The Mexican museums additionally place importance on the scientific processes and research involved in excavating or analyzing the artifacts, creating an overall story that viewers can better understand and relate to. They additionally try to present a more balanced view of history through the use of many different kinds of sources, both documentary and not. Often, it seems, objects are used to

support the information in the text rather than the text being used to describe the objects (although this is common as well). Lastly, the extreme importance of these ancient Pre-Columbian cultures to their current descendents is often prioritized. The video in the Templo Mayor, for example, discusses how current indigenous people, the descendents of these ancient groups, benefit from the preservation of history. This is a connection that is usually completely ignored or not addressed by Texas museums. Perhaps because of the location of the current Mexican peoples in the same place as their Mexica ancestors, they feel an even greater kinship to them. The Mexica, for instance, struggled with the constant sinking of the land due to the location of the city on a lake (as evidenced in the several layers of flooring found on the patio of the Templo Mayor), a battle the people in Mexico City are still fighting today with regards to their more modern buildings. Immediate connections like this make the current Mexican people able to relate to their Mexica ancestors on a very personal basis, one that is presented to them through these museums. This illustrates how the past and the present are connected through pervasive and fascinating traditions.

Despite my polarized depiction of these museums, both the more archaeological Mexican museums and the more artistic Texas museums have a mixed record concerning object display and the representation of Pre-Columbian cultures, with both positive and negative attributes. For instance, the grey colored walls of the HMNS and the DMA allow the text panels to stand out against the background, making them more visible and drawing more attention to them. The HMNS's attempt at including more informative and engaging display techniques such as reconstructions and the interactive computer (while, not as informative or as accurate as they could be), make good strides towards more accurate representation. Even SAMA's introductory gallery, with its' wealth of information, is very good at presenting information to viewers. If they would make the room appear more open to the public (and consider fixing their video displays), it could serve as a very useful educational tool. Additionally, not all of the texts in these institutions were biased and one-sided. As noted above, there were many examples

of text that presented information in a more neutral or even a positive way, without generalizing Pre-Columbian cultures or placing them on some kind of continuum. The DMA and HMNS even provide a good balance between description of the objects and a discussion of their contextual meaning. And, unlike any of the other museums including those in Mexico City, the DMA even acknowledges within their text that they do not have all the answers, that they are not necessarily the ultimate experts that the public often sees them as when visiting their museum.

The Mexican museums also have some negative points. Both the Templo Mayor and the MNA institutions focus a great deal on the Aztec (or the Mexica); one can only presume because of their close proximity to Tenochtitlan, the Mexica capital. The MNA, for instance, also focuses a great deal of attention on the Maya, Teotihuacan, and Mixtec cultures in their text panels (as can be seen through the number of times they are mentioned). This relegates the cultures other than the “main” ones to relatively minor roles. These two museums also tend to generalize the Pre-Columbian cultures in some cases, much like the Texas museums, when referencing the chronological developments of certain settlement patterns or advances in agriculture. They also present a very specific view of the Conquest and the Spanish. The Templo Mayor is more diplomatic about it, demonstrating that there were misunderstandings between the two groups while the MNA positioned the Spanish as horrible invaders who murdered the innocent indigenous people. This type of outlook that the MNA portrays is what I mean when I say a “creation of a mythology.” Any group of people can be made to appear in a certain way depending on the language you use to present them. This is an inevitable aspect of museum representation, but, as you can see from the above examples, museums can choose to go about doing this in many different ways.

Some may criticize my choice of museums, stating that I chose mainly art museums in Texas and mainly archaeology-related museums in Mexico, potentially skewing my results based on the locations of these institutions. While this is true, it must also be acknowledged that these were where the Pre-

Columbian collections were located. If there were Pre-Columbian cultures represented in anthropology or archaeology museums in Texas, I would have visited those institutions. However, there are very few anthropology or archaeology museums in Texas (the exceptions being Museum of the Americas in Weathersford or the International Museum of Cultures in Dallas), and none of them focus on Mesoamerican collections. It is, in fact, very telling that *all* of the Pre-Columbian collections in Texas reside in art or natural science museums, while the Mexican state has decided to place their objects in archaeology museums. This was a deliberate decision, one that seems to reflect the fact that these museums are run under the umbrella of INAH and a different outlook concerning the importance of provenance and the continued relevance of these ancient Pre-Columbian cultures to the present.

As can be seen in my case studies involving the representation of Pre-Columbian cultures in Texas and Mexico City, museums often take different approaches. Some institutions provide the visitor with almost no information in order to let them draw their own conclusions about the objects and therefore the represented cultures. Others narrate a very specific story, intentionally steering the visitor to view objects in a way that presents a culture in a certain light, whether they be in favor of a more “Western” perspective or a more indigenous perspective. Overall, for all of these museums, I have determined there is a great need for communication and discussion between the cultures being represented in the museums (such as many indigenous cultures or their descendents) and the museum professionals who create the representative framework for exhibits. If museums are in a position to determine how a cultural group is perceived, especially by a public that may not know much about the culture whose material they are viewing, they have a responsibility to provide as much information as possible and in a way that makes obvious their own viewpoint or acknowledges their own biases.

Suggestions for Museums

Most critiques of museums do not provide concrete suggestions for the improvement of exhibits (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 3). Despite the problems enumerated above, there are some practical suggestions that museums can adopt for the improvement of museum representation. Sullivan and Childs, for instance, claim that three things need to happen (2003, 34). First, there needs to be more education and training of museum professionals and anthropologists (including archaeologists) in the opposing fields to force both groups to recognize what perspective the other is coming from, as well as making everyone realize the limitations and problems inherent in the two fields (Sullivan and Childs, 2003, 34). Secondly, there needs to be an increased number of curatorial jobs, given the vast quantity of material that is expected to be curated (Sullivan and Childs 2003, 34). And, finally, there needs to be more interaction between archaeologists and curatorial staff, especially more collaboration throughout the general course of work in their fields (Sullivan and Childs, 2003, 34). These steps would facilitate greater communication and understanding while decreasing the continuous blame one side places on the other.

Of course, it is impossible to put something on display without imposing some kind of construction on it. Meanings do not inherently exist within objects, so in order for them to be understood, there must be some kind of interpretive information presented (Coxall, 1991a, 92). “The display and interpretation of collections not only educates and fascinates, but influences and, in some cases, reinforces current stereotypical attitudes.” (Coxall, 1991a, 92). For example, Castañeda notes the kinds of impressions tourists get when visiting archaeological sites, confusing what has been reconstructed to what is in its “natural” state (1996, 104). This is the same kind of impressions visitors get upon viewing museum exhibits. They believe that the way they see objects in a museum is how they would have appeared to the people using the object, but, for the most part, this is a false impression.

Museums, therefore, have a responsibility to be very clear about which messages they are trying to communicate, and the implications that these might have for their visitors (Coxall, 1991a, 93).

Gurian argues that museums have preconceived notions about visitors and their capacity for learning and breaking away from traditional outlooks on history, thus consciously or unconsciously limiting their learning potential (1991, 176). She claims underserved groups, such as minorities, do not visit museums because they, and their outlooks, are not accommodated (despite the supposed goals of museums) (Gurian, 1991, 184). This is important because visitors use “learning as a vehicle for building personal identity” (Falk, 2009, 59) while approaching different situations from various social and cultural backgrounds. “[E]thnicity forms an integral part of personal identity. Possessing an ethnic assignment allows people to divide “us” from “them,” to structure intricate social interactions, and to determine their place in an increasingly complicated world” (Jacobs, 2009, 85). The concept of ethnicity is very much tied into the concept of cultural identity, and both should be major concerns to museums.

Historically, though, it has been Western cultures to define who the “us” is. Now, through indigenous rights groups and efforts such as community museums, indigenous groups are standing up to say “wait, why can’t we be the ‘us’ also?” Considering the history of discrimination and marginalization that has occurred against such cultures, can we, as a “Western” or “majority” culture, deny them that right? We must also remember that “[C]ultures cannot be considered as static entities” (Jacobs, 2009, 86), so why do we continually treat them as such? Museums have recognized that they need to focus upon “target groups,” mainly in the context of attracting these groups to visit a museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 84-85). Why can’t indigenous groups be seen as one of these “target groups”? Museums are complex places of identity construction, and our emotional attitudes toward objects or thoughts reflect this identity (Falk, 2009, 71). I propose museums -- and not just community museums but all museums, start trying to represent more of a plurality of viewpoints in their representation of

other cultures, which would better accommodate the indigenous groups whose culture is presented in museums.

Museums can accomplish this and assist their visitors in making sense of the material through creative displays and educational tools. Information must not only be informative but also thought-provoking in order to truly engage the viewer in relating to the objects and the culture (Baxandall, 1991, 33-34). This is reflected in the institutions such as the Houston Museum of Art, the Templo Mayor, and the Museo Nacional del Antropología that apply a variety of creative ways to convey messages to museum visitors with reconstructions, models, videos, computer displays, dioramas, and other interesting and engaging displays. Instead of being seen as “eye-sores,” video and computer displays should be recognized for their potential. But, especially in the case of technology, these tools must be adequately maintained. Otherwise, museums will run into the same problems as SAMA and the Templo Mayor where they have broken displays that are not fulfilling their educational purpose. Other creative tools such as dioramas and models, as demonstrated through many of the case studies, visually demonstrate ideas and concepts as an alternative method for assimilating knowledge.

In addition, people tend to relate more strongly to artifacts if they are put into an understandable context. Knudson et al. state that an object placed inside a case on its own is seen in a very different way than an object set up as a part of a scene, which physically demonstrates the use and meaning of the object (1999, 249). Even the “proximity of things to one another perhaps has more authority, more readable meaning than the things themselves” (Crew and Sims, 1991, 163). The style of representation can either empower or disenfranchise visitors; this is a deliberate choice on the part of museums in order to represent “their own superiority and their right to an exclusive domain” (Gurian, 1991, 177). Displays such as those in the Templo Mayor, which place objects in their original context,

allow visitors to draw conclusions for themselves, providing them with more of the interpretive power in the situation.

McManus presents a communication model for those working in a museum that contrasts to the traditional three-part sender-message-receiver model most museums operate under (McManus, 1991, 41). The older model relies on the ability of the visitor to “accurately” interpret whatever message is being passed along, and if there are any problems in doing this, it is the fault of the visitor, or receiver (McManus, 1991, 42). On the other hand, McManus proposes a model that incorporates “linguistic and psychological understandings,” claiming that it is not always the message so much as the process of communicating that is important (McManus, 1991, 43-44). So, museums should envision the viewer as a partner in the communication process rather than just a passive recipient of information. The lack of this dialogue and understanding is what leads to frustrations and miscommunications (McManus, 1991, 43). Therefore, the adoption of this new communication model could lead to more positive and even profitable interactions.

There should also be more of a specific focus on museum text, with museums more aware of the placement of text panels and labels as well as what information this text conveys. Coxall claims that there needs to be more of a focus on the meaning of the information in a museum label (1991a, 85). She states that we must recognize the socially-constructed nature of the underlying ideologies of language that we take for granted if we want to stop perpetuating them (Coxall, 1991a, 88). Gurian discusses how museums try to justify their reputations as “civilized” places of learning through either the use of little text, which allows the educated person to interpret for himself/herself, or through complex language, which requires a certain level of education to interpret (Gurian, 1991, 185-186). Finally, Gurian suggests label-writers approach the practice of writing object labels in a way that does away with the implied

power relations between museum professional and visitor, even, perhaps spreading the “ownership” of cultural knowledge to the visitors (Gurian, 1991, 183).

The very idea of the museum, itself, is a myth because even though the public sees museums as objective centers of knowledge, they museums just present yet another construction of reality (Coxall, 1991a, 92-94). The fact that the actual, physical object is displayed with the text gives the text a greater authenticity and creates the assumption that it is “truth.” “Objects are the result of social processes, many of which have been exploitive and conflictual. In museums, this is ignored or disguised by placing the objects in an apparently neutral and factual framework created and sustained through the words which contextualize them” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 116). In fact, “It often creates a past that seems harmonious, productive, and comfortable. It frequently produces a present that maintains the existing power relations, where only unquestioning voices are allowed to speak” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 116). This means that the Western view of history is always reinforced while the voices of the indigenous communities and their descendents who are often deeply connected to the material culture on display are not acknowledged.

Therefore, more thought and deliberation needs to go into the planning and writing of museum labels and text panels while remembering that “the scholarly interest of the curator should seek to maintain the integrity of the subject matter” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 135). If museums only represent certain aspects of these ancient cultures or do not ensure that accurate information is provided to the viewer, how can they claim to be truly educating the public? There are many different perspectives other than just the often-represented Western viewpoint of many museum exhibits and their curators. Hooper-Greenhill states “There are a number of ways of presenting information other than in the words of the curator. Words can be drawn from the results of oral history, from documents, from poems and from a wide range of sources” (1994, 120). She even mentions how these alternative sources of words have a “poignancy and immediacy” that adds to the exhibit (Hopper-Greenhill, 1994, 121). This has

already been demonstrated through a look at the Templo Mayor and MNA institutions in Mexico City. In addition, while I have not had the time to address it here, there is a great amount of literature available on the “readability” of museum texts. The general gist of which is that the use of specialist vocabulary and long, complicated sentences makes visitors not want to read the text as they progress through an exhibit. Because of this, they miss out on a lot of really interesting information and the opportunity to learn about another culture. One suggestion would be to follow the advice of some of these scholars (like Coxall, 1991b) and make museum text more “readable” and accessible to viewers. Additionally, Hooper-Greenhill also mentions how text writers need to remember how the text will be positioned within the exhibit, as an object itself that operates within a set environment and plays a role in controlling space and the flow of people, setting the pace and the mood of the exhibit (1994, 135). The importance of museum text cannot be neglected.

Communication to the public via text and displays is extremely important, but scholars often neglect to address the fact that museums can also function as a “disabling” institution where various departments within a museum work independently with little team-work to set up an exhibit (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 47). The lack of communication can result in misunderstandings and mistakes between different departments. “In this model the curators, as exhibition-generators, play the role of power-broker. They define the content and the message according to their own point of view, without taking into account the views of the other departments or of the audience” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 47-48). Most of the time, there is no way for the audience (or even other departments) to leave feedback or voice their own opinions or reactions to an exhibit, making it impossible for further conversation or future improvement (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 50). Museum curators are also the people that are really knowledgeable about the cultures being represented, but they are increasingly forced into management roles instead of engaging more in active research, conservation, and exhibition design (Sullivan and Childs, 2003, 20). Therefore, they are not really engaged in the entire process of representation and are

often pressured into dealing with more managerial duties rather than concentrating on the complete and accurate representation of cultures. “Hand-in-hand with the understanding that those whose history and culture is being represented have a right to be part of the construction of that representation has come the development of the idea that effective communication can sometimes only work as a two-way process” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994,21). Therefore, communication is important not only between museums and represented cultures but between museum departments and between museums and visitors as well.

I would like to point out that, despite my critical analysis of these particular museums, not all “Western” museums are oblivious to other points of view or are unconcerned with the information they provide to the public. For example, for an exhibition on Caribbean history in the mid-1980s at Leicester Museum, a native Caribbean historian provided the texts of the exhibition (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 210), which is an excellent example of how the specialist knowledge of someone from a represented culture was used for the benefit of all involved. The public presumably received a more well-rounded look at Caribbean culture, expanding their knowledge base. The Caribbean historian got to not only make sure his culture was represented accurately but could then claim to have engaged in the prestigious activity of writing text for a museum exhibit seen by a large number of people. The museum got a chance to network with a scholar from another country while presenting themselves as the type of institution that is actively concerned with what people in other countries have to say (rather than only being focused on a very “Western” perspective of history). Following this example has the possibility of benefiting many museums.

Practicalities

I must admit that creating a more ethically-responsible representation of cultures might seem like a daunting or even impossible task for many institutions for a variety of reasons. First, I realize

visitors can only take in so much information at any given time. I, for one, was inundated and overwhelmed with information when visiting the museums for my case studies; there is no way I could tell you about every culture represented if I had not taken copious notes and documented all of the text. But, if the information is not even presented, visitors do not have the option of reading it, or learning from it. And, even worse, if it is presented in an inaccurate or very culturally biased way, what little information a visitor will remember will likely be wrong or very narrow in scope. This reinforces certain common stereotypes about cultures. For instance, if a museum portrays the Aztec, or the Mexica, as a blood-thirsty group who did nothing but engage in war and sacrifice that is precisely the message the public will take away from the exhibit. If there is no discussion on the importance of trade or how a refusal to pay taxes to an Aztec merchant was seen as an affront against the empire, and therefore deserving of vengeance, the visitor is missing out on a vital piece to the puzzle in a greater understanding of the Aztec culture. What kind of conclusions would this lead people to draw about the current Mexican people if they associate strongly with their Aztec roots? Even further, if those same individuals later return to the museum, they will continue to assimilate even more such inaccuracies or biases presented by the museum and internalize them as “fact.” Most of the times, museums do not acknowledge that they do not have all the answers or that their interpretation of the cultural material may not be the only possible interpretation. If they did, perhaps it would force visitors to look at museums in a new, slightly more critical light.

As Crew and Sims state, the themes museums can represent are limited by the types of objects in their collections (1991, 165). This is a valid concern, but it seems to me that museums use this concern as an excuse for maintaining the status quo. As I mentioned before, a greater focus on researching the current extent and importance of collections in museums would contribute a huge amount of information. I do, however, understand that staffing and resource limitations might prove restrictive, but I still believe that museums could make a better effort of accurately portraying the

cultures whose material cultural they hold. Museums do face the additional problem, though, of reconciling the representation of a story about one group of people with their increasing need to appeal to a wider, international audience to support tourism (Kreamer, 2007, 461). This is made vividly clear when looking at a specific exhibition of contemporary Hispanic artists that began at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, TX (Livingston et al., 1991, 104). Livingston et al. discuss the difficulties involved with organizing an exhibition that represents many different cultures, trying to avoid both being too encyclopedic and too narrow in scope (1991, 106-107). There were abundant criticisms of the exhibit. In New York, for instance, the Puerto Rican community claimed there wasn't enough Puerto Rican art represented while, in Los Angeles, people decried the exclusion of the politicized Chicano art movement (Livingston et al., 1991, 112-113). There was even a criticism that "the exhibition took Hispanic art from its community roots and thus transmuted or somehow distorted its character" (Livingston et al., 1991, 112) despite the fact that many Hispanic artists believe their inclusion into mainstream art is a triumph (Livingston et al., 1991, 113). Other critics focused on the word usage, signaling out the usage of the word "Hispanic," seeing it as homogenizing and as an attempt to clump all Hispanic cultures together (Livingston et al., 1991, 115). The curators, on the other hand, justified the word choice as the least incorrect word to represent all of the artists who were included in the exhibition (Livingston et al., 1991, 116). This debate illustrates how different groups have different outlooks and priorities when it comes to the representation, artistic or otherwise, of a culture. We must acknowledge that the agency of the individual plays a big role in interpretation (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, 57) and that there is no one correct solution to the issue of representation. There remains, however, a need to represent alternative perspectives in museums (Kreamer, 2007, 461).

Wylie claims archaeologists are both exploiters of the cultural resources of indigenous groups and protectors of it, having to balance these two roles. She also states that the "defining goals [of archaeology] should be to enrich our understanding of cultural diversity and affinity" (2000, 139). I

argue that museums also need to acknowledge their own dual roles and take steps to cooperate with anthropologists, archaeologists, and indigenous communities to foster an environment of responsible representation of other cultures. This will benefit each group, but especially the public, by providing them with more information that reflects a multiplicity of views, enriching their knowledge base and hopefully allowing them to form their own identities with an eye towards recognizing and appreciating the identities of other groups. "Museums, in common with all other social institutions, serve many masters, and must play many tunes accordingly. Perhaps success can be defined by the ability to balance all the tunes that must be played and still make a sound worth listening to." (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 1)

Appendix I (Images)

Image 1

Entrance to the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art from SAMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, November 14th, 2009)



Image 2

Patricia Galt Steves Gallery of SAMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, April 2, 2010)



Image 3

First Room in Pre-Columbian gallery at SAMA, illustrating the layout of the room and the set-up of cases (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, November 14th, 2009)



Image 4

Collage of indigenous peoples of Latin America from SAMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, November 14th, 2009)



Image 5

Collage of indigenous peoples of Latin America from SAMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, November 14th, 2009)



Image 6

Map of Pre-Columbian cultures from SAMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, November 14th, 2009)

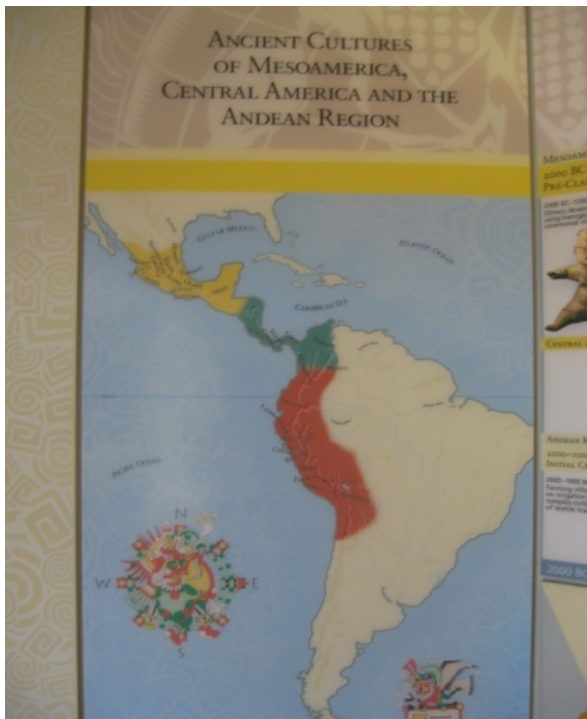


Image 7
Codex facsimile at SAMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, November 14th, 2009)



Image 8
Example of a small map and drawing at the base of a text panel at the DMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, December 30th, 2009)

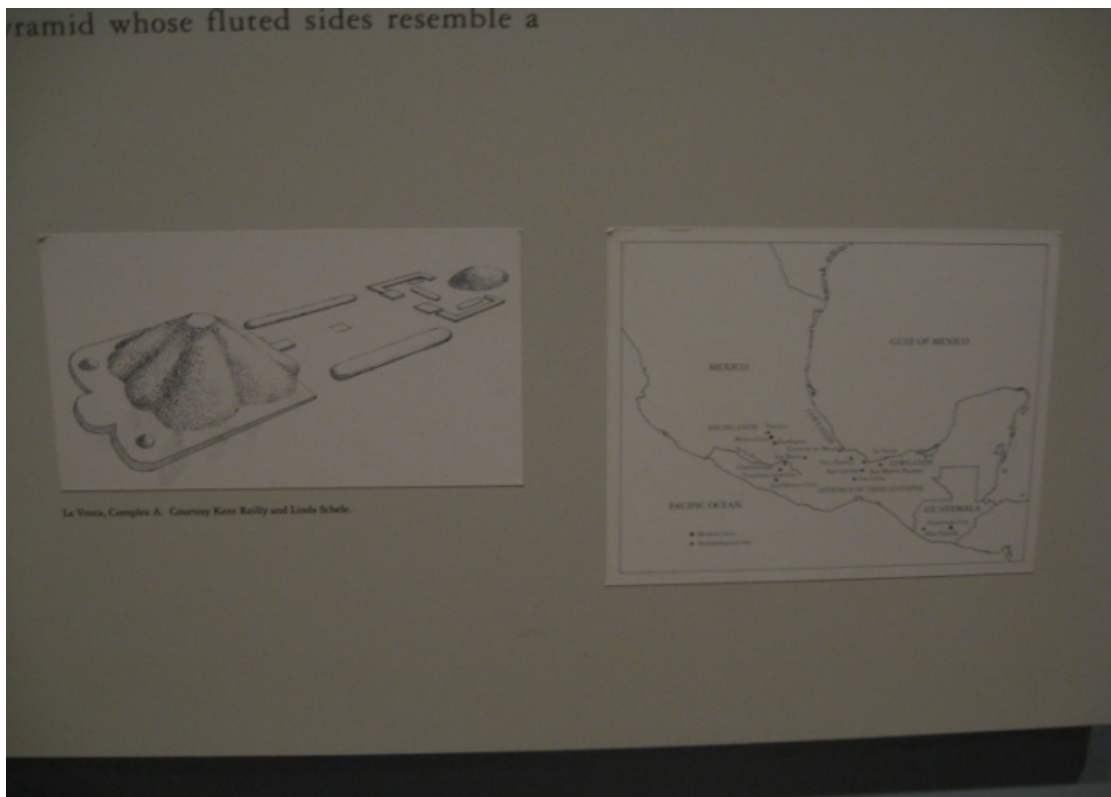


Image 9

Example of a small site drawing and a photo at the base of a text panel at the DMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, December 30th, 2009)

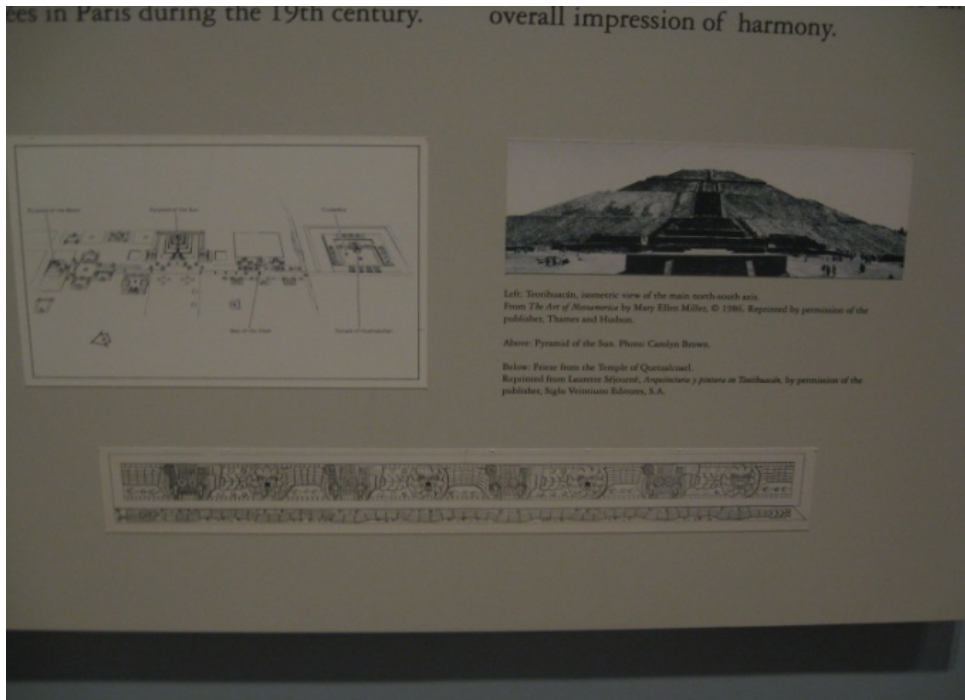


Image 10

Pre-Columbian room of DMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, December 30th, 2009)



Image 11

Right side of the interior room containing all Maya artifacts at the DMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, December 30th, 2009)



Image 12

Left side of the interior room containing all Maya artifacts at the DMA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, December 30th, 2009)



Image 13

Display of Olmec and Chupicaoro artifacts with no relationship to each other at the Kimbell (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 2nd, 2010)



Image 14

Display of Maya artifacts, presented as if separate from one another at the Kimbell (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 2nd, 2010)



Image 15

Large Ceramic Incensario from Monte Alban displayed on its own individual pedestal at the Kimbell (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 2nd, 2010)



Image 16

Maya relief, displayed on its own, against the neutral backdrop of the wall, at the Kimbell (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 2nd, 2010)



Image 17

Brightly-colored entryway into one exhibit at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010)



Image 18

Model of the main building of the Templo Mayor and its construction levels at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010)



Image 19

Large-scale map of trading relationships of the Mexica at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010).



Image 20

Model of agricultural practices of the Mexica at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010).

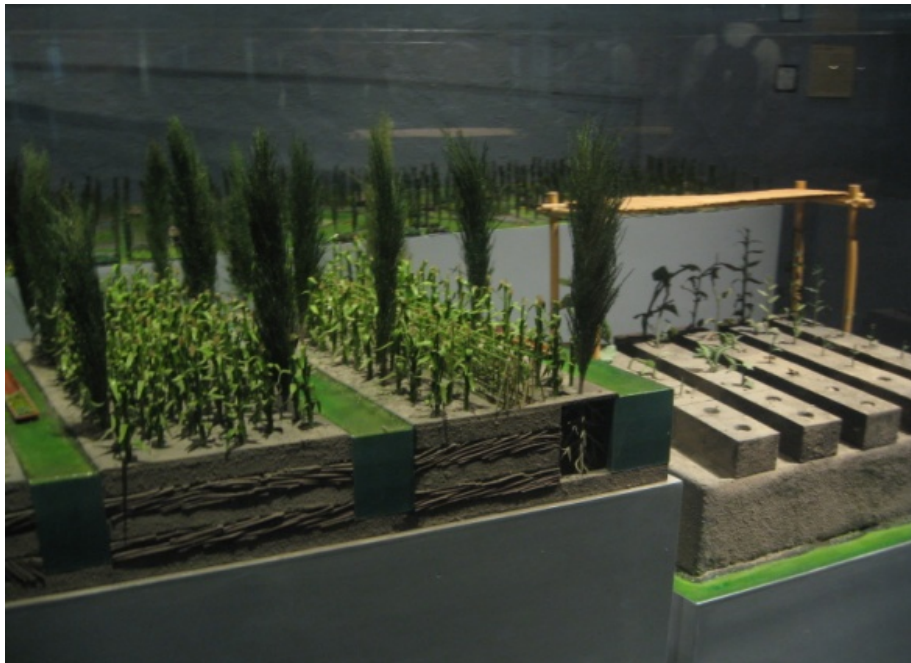


Image 21

Display of a collection of artifacts excavated together from an offering at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010).



Image 22

Stone of Coyolxnuhqui displaying original pigmentation through colored lights at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010).



Image 23

Model of a market at the Templo Mayor Museum (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010).



Image 24

Central Courtyard of MNA that each gallery branches off of (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 4th, 2010)



Image 25

Recreation of an “I”-shaped ballcourt from Mesoamerica at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 5th, 2010).



Image 26 a & b

Reconstruction model of the façade of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 5th, 2010).



Image 27

Model of Pakal's Tomb at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 6th, 2010).



Image 28

Wall of the MNA painted to look like a Maya mural (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 6th, 2010).



Image 29

Reproduction of a tomb of a nobleman at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 5th, 2010).



Image 30

Minature model of a large Pre-Hispanic marketplace at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 5th, 2010).



Image 31

Recreation of a Mexica commoner's house at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 6th, 2010).



Image 32

Modern mural depicting ancient life, specifically, a ballcourt game at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 6th, 2010).



Image 33

Creative light-up display demonstrating important areas around Lake Texcoco at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 5th, 2010).



Image 34

Recreation of excavation site at Tlatilco, showing artifacts in their depositional context at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 5th, 2010).



Image 35

Map demonstrating the trade of the Mexica through the placement of actual artifacts on the map at the MNA (Photograph by Stephanie Allen, January 6th, 2010).



Appendix II: Text Transcription from Houston Museum of Natural Science

John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas

Main sign: “The John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas is dedicated to exploring and understanding the rich cultural *traditions* developed over thousands of years of *Native American history*. The Hall celebrates the *origins*, diversity, and remarkable accomplishments of *Native peoples* of the Americas. We recognize the foresight of A.T. “Cap” MacDannald whose collection forms the foundation of the North American Galleries. June 12, 1998”

Text on first of the 2 cases: “The Jaguar: The standing jaguar is a replica of a *Pre-columbian* statue discovered at El Baul in Guatemala; a site where large cacao orchards once grew. The monument is dated from 600 to 900 A.D. To the Maya people who live in the area today, the jaguar is a patron of cacao (also known as chocolate). Jaguars are the largest *native* land animal in Mesoamerica, while pumas are the largest *native* animals in South America.” And “Animals held a special place in the Americas before Columbus arrived. They served as friends, food, and the source of fables told to children. Each *culture* had different stories about dogs, turtles, iguanas, snakes, and frogs. How many animals can you identify in this display?”

“The World of the Maya”: “One of the oldest groups in the Americas still flourishes today- the Maya. These people of the jungles, mountains, and grasslands inhabit a large area of Mesoamerica, including parts of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras.

The *early* Maya cleared the forest for homes of wood and pyramid temples of stone by 200 B.C. From 250 to 500 A.D., large kingdoms arose. The cities were ruled by royal families who claimed descent from the gods.

The Maya *city-states* grew *powerful* in the *Classic Period* from 600 to 900 A.D. But by the Tenth Century A.D., the *Old Empire* cities declined. The jungle reclaimed the *ancient* stone temples. The Maya population became concentrated in the Guatemalan Highlands, the Yucatan Peninsula, and the Atlantic Coast of Belize from 900 to 1500 A.D.

When Europeans claimed the *New world*, *Maya civilization* changed. Yet traces of the old customs, dress, and language remain among millions of Maya-speaking people today. *Maya history* is still in the making. “

“The *ancient* Maya made *ceremonial* knives from obsidian and flint. They carved scepters of *power* into ornate shapes we call ‘eccentric flints.’ Many of the knives were chipped into *symbols* of Maya gods. Flint was revered as the fire-making stone. These special knives were often left as *offerings* in temples and tombs.”

“The Aztecs and their Neighbors”

“The Aztec *city* was the *heart* of an *Empire* stretching across Central Mexico. By 11519 A.D., the Aztec *capital* of Tenochtitlan was rich. Built on an island, the *city* flourished on the bounty of nature. Birds and fish were caught in the surrounding lakes. The Aztecs built aqueducts for fresh water. Corn, squash, tomatoes, and cotton grew in fertile valleys of the *Empire*.

When the Aztecs constructed a new temple over the old one, they placed *objects* from all the people of Central Mexico in the temple walls. Following the war between the Aztecs and the Spanish, the temple was destroyed.

Our setting for the story of the Aztecs is a reconstruction of the ruin of the Templo Mayor (The *Great Temple*) with *artifacts* displayed from their neighbors. Against the back is a mural of the Aztec *city* in its prime. Today, it is known as Mexico *City*.”

“The Tarascans were hereditary enemies of the Aztec *Empire*. Their *culture* may have derived from South American migrants over 2,000 years ago. They did not rise to help the Aztecs against the Spanish, and were *conquered* in turn by *invading* Europeans. Today, the Tarascans maintain a unique *culture*.”

Next case over is filled with ceramic trumpets created to look like conch shells and this text: “Trumpets mad of conch shell are found in most *Pre-columbian* societies. They were sounded for *important* events. They were such *important symbols* of *rulership* that clay trumpets were made to resemble shell when supplies of the real conch were not available.”

“*Objects* for the journey after life were placed in underground shaft tombs built by people of *ancient* West Mexico. The tombs held pots and clay masks. Figurines of men and women, called wedding couples, are also found in the tombs of Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima.”

Next display case has a large urn with a series of small *decorated* bowls from Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit. Text: “Major feasts were held many times during the year by Pre-Hispanic people in *ancient* Mexico. *Early cultures* from West Mexico made clay bowls resembling hollowed out gourds, cut in half. Big urns were often made to look like stacks of large gourds.”

Next case has 3 wedding-couple figurines from Nayarit; text: “A cup of chocolate and a rubber ball are wedding gifts held by a marriage couple. Such figures identify the dress and customs of the Nayarit people of the East Coast from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.”

Next case beyond the video contains a Nayarit ballgame scene with text: “The first ball game in the Americas probably took place over 2,000 years ago. This Nayarit scene from 200 B.C. in West Mexico shows a rubber ball, with a ball court and players. Rubber first came from trees found in the *New world*.”

Next case has 10 figurines and one vessel from Chupicuaro, Nayarit, and Tlatilco with: “Decorated bowls and graceful figurines mark the earliest known *cultures* of Central Mexico, dating back to 1000 B.C. Though little is known about the people who made them, they are believed to have spread the knowledge of *agriculture* and *native* religion.”

Focal point is a display case with an Aztec skeletal deity with text: “The Aztec skeleton represents Tlahiuzcalpantecuhtli, a god associated with the Venus star and the Feathered Serpent, Quetzalcoatl. The Aztecs believed he devoured people out late at night. Such images were also used to teach children obedience. A test called thermoluminescence confirms this *artifact* was made in the *early* 1500’s.”

“Statues of a young girl and boy show the Aztec virtue of calm *dignity*. Aztec education in the calmecac, or school, emphasized discipline. The boy represents a young warrior, while the girl is Chalchiuhtlicue (‘she of the Jade Skirts’), the goddess of rivers and lakes.”

First case displays a Cholula urn with skull and Aztec coiled feathered serpent (the later of the two had been removed from repair) along with text: “The feathered serpent, one of the oldest gods of the *ancient* world, *symbolized* the realms of the earth and the sky. Known as Quetzalcoatl, Aztec stories tell how he brought corn out of the mountain to feed humanity. Quetzalcoatl personified wisdom and invention. The *city* of Cholula, near the Aztec *capital*, was his home.”

Next case has a necklace, 3 vessels, and 3 musical instruments (rattle, flute, and bone rasp) (all Aztec) along with text: “Like in the Aztec *city* included large markets where music was played and corn tortillas were cooked. Religious beggars waved copal incense in containers with long handles to clean the air. Chocolate was also sold in the market, served with chili peppers and honey.”

First case holds 2 Zapotec figures and one Mixtec tripod plate with text: “The *city* of Monte Alban was built as a pyramid fortress by Zapotecs between 700 B.C. and 700 A.D. It was later occupied by Mixtec warriors. Monte Alban provided rich plunder for Aztecs in gold, textiles, and cacao for chocolate.”

Next case has 3 vessels from Teotihuacan and one incensario from Teotihuacan along with: “The people who built the *city* of Teotihuacan left clues about their lives in the ruins of their homes and temples. Scientists can trace the clay of each pot found back too its *original* source. An amazing network of *ancient* factory sites and trade routes has been revealed.”

Next case has two masks and one incensario from Teotihuacan with text: “The faces of Teotihuacan appear on the lids of incense burners and stone masks once used to cover mummy

bundles. The figure on the clay lid has double earspools and a stylized butterfly nose ornament, which are insignia of high rank.”

Next case has 2 vessels and 10 fragmentary stone figures all from Teotihuacan with text: “Teotihuacan was the largest *city* in the *New world* between 100 B.C. and 900 A.D. At its peak, it contained 125,000 people. Tlaloc was a principle god. His frog-like eyes and snake staff *symbolized* rain and lightening. The Aztecs continued to *honor* Tlaloc centuries later. They revered Teotihuacan as ‘the *City of the Gods.*’”

Next case has a collection of 36 “*Mesoamerican*” tools of copper, chert, flint, obsidian and stone (not differentiated based on *culture*) with text: “*Native American* technology depended on stone tools and the expert chipping and flaking of obsidian and flint. Stone tools were used to build huge pyramids, carve monuments, and construct houses. Metal-working techniques to fashion copper, gold, and silver were introduced from South America.”

Next case has one incensario from Esquintla, Guatemala with text: “Burial urns in the *style* of Teotihuacan were prized in trading *centers* as far away as the Pacific coast of Guatemala. Human ashes were placed in the bottom of the urn, with an elaborate lid. The nose plaque on the face and on the bottom of the urn are butterflies.”

Last case in the Aztec section has an incense burner, 2 plates, a warrior figure, a carved hacha, a carved yoke (all from Veracruz) and one urn and 3 figurines from Remojadas and Huastec *cultures*; one inscription for all of this: “The *power* of nature was revered by *ancient* people of the Gulf Coast. The fire-wrinkled face of the Old God is a reminder he was called Lord of the Volcano. A carved snake forms a stone yoke. The image of a cross-section of a conch shell was painted on *objects* to *honor* the wind god.”

Appendix III: Text Transcription from San Antonio Museum of Art

SAMA (Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art)

Continuity and Change

Latin American Art, like art from other parts of the world, is constantly changing to meet the needs of those who make and use it. Shifting social, political and economic environments, as well as availability of new materials and ideas are usually the engines of change. Sometimes change is radical and represents a total departure from earlier forms of expression. At other times, change is more subtle, carrying forward important artistic elements from generation to generation.

Continuity and change can be seen in the forms of sculpted figures and masks created in Latin America. During pre-columbian times, carved and molded figures served as effigies of the dead, images of shamans and the gods. Masks served in transformational rituals, to honor the dead and to strike fear in the hearts of enemies. After the arrival of the Europeans, these practices were prohibited, but new practices took their places. Figures continued to be created, but they related to the new order of Roman Catholicism in the form of *crèche* scenes and statues of the saints. Masking was reintroduced through morality plays sponsored by the church, and these practices continue into the present. In the twentieth century, the cultures of Latin America have responded yet again to change by creating folk sculpture for the export market and modern sculpture whose function is purely artistic.

Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art

Welcome to the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art! This Center has been established to house the Latin American collections of the San Antonio Museum of Art and to serve as a national center for the study of Latin American culture. Even before the Museum opened in 1981, its parent organization, the San Antonio Museum Association, in response to the rich cultural heritage of our city, made a firm commitment to collecting art from Latin America. Since that time, the collection has grown significantly with important gifts, including the Nelson A. Rockefeller and Robert K. Winn collections of Mexican folk art, and the Elizabeth Huth Coates collection of pre-columbian art.

The 30,000 square foot Rockefeller wing houses the Latin American collection, which spans four thousand years of Latin American history in four main galleries. On the first floor you will find the Meadows Gallery of Pre-columbian Art and the Robert K. Winn Gallery of Folk Art. The second floor contains the Robert Barclay/Margaret Barclay Goldsberry Gallery of Spanish Colonial and Republican Art, the Robert J. Kleberg, Jr. and Helen C. Kleberg Gallery of Modern

Art, and the Claire and J.Y. Golden Gallery for temporary exhibitions. The Patricia Galt Steves Orientation gallery and the Russell Hill Rogers Atrium are located on the first floor.

The Nelson A Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art is dedicated to serving as an important cultural resource for the City of San Antonio, which is a major link between the United States and Latin America. It is the Museum's hope that this Center will contribute to a better understanding of the art, history, literature, religions, and cultures of our Latin American neighbors.

Latin American Before Columbus

The Pre-columbian Period in Latin America is defined as the time before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, in A.D. 1492. Although this period encompasses thousands of years of history in a wide geographic area, the most important centers of cultures developed in two regions—Mesoamerica (the region we now know as Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador) and the Andes mountains in South America. Central America served as a crossroads between these two larger culture areas.

Recent evidence suggests that the first inhabitants of the Americas crossed a land bridge or traveled along coastal waters from Asia approximately 30,000 years ago. By 2000 B.C. they settled into village life, developing agricultural methods that allowed them to domesticate edible crops such as corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, and chili peppers. By 1500 BC. the Olmec culture was developing in Mesoamerica, and Pre-Ceramic cultures were emerging in the coastal valleys of the Andes.

Latin America become dominated by these emerging centers of high culture The Olmec set the cultural patterns for virtually all of the great Mesoamerican cultures that followed—Teotihuacán, the Zapotecs, the Maya and the Aztecs. The Andean cultures had their roots in the early cultures of Chavín de Huantar, and then the Moche. Ancient Latin Americans developed great cities and built elaborate temples and palaces. They created a calendar system, and were aware of astronomical phenomena. They lived in competing city-states that warred over territory and resources and they had extensive trade roots that allowed them to move goods over long distances.

Religious life involved sacrifice to the gods, who served as the source of regeneration and fertility. As with all highly developed cultures, artisans created objects of beauty for the establishment of authority, for devotional use, and for simple ornamentation. A vast majority of the objects on display in this gallery came from ancient burial sites and served as grave goods for the deceased. Pottery and ornamentation covered their faces as they passed into the afterlife.

The Olmec and Pre-Classic Cultures: Roots of Mesoamerican Culture

The earliest true civilization in Mesoamerica was the Olmec. It was centered in the east coast region of southern Veracruz and northern Tabasco with outposts far to the north and south, defining the boundaries of Mesoamerica. The Olmec, Mesoamerica's "Mother Culture," flourished between 1800 B.C. and 250 B.C. and laid the groundwork for the civilizations that followed, such as the Maya, the Zapotecs, and the people of Teotihuacán.

Olmec archaeological sites contain evidence of hieroglyphic writing, human sacrifice, a ritual ball game, an early calendar system, long-distance trade routes, and many other cultural traditions that carried forward to later periods. The Olmec were mostly farmers who lived in villages and relied on corn as their primary crop. The largest towns probably had populations in the thousands. These urban areas included ceremonial or administrative centers with palaces, pyramids, plazas, ball courts, drainage systems, and water reservoirs.

The Olmec were known for their monumental stone sculpture, including giant heads carved from basalt boulders. Other artworks were quite small and were carved in stone or created from clay. Works of art were most often human, animal, or godlike forms. The two major themes that emerge in these artworks—kingship and shamanism—reflect an interest in emerging power structures and the journey of the soul after death.

Contemporaneous with the Olmec, regional styles of pottery from the Late Pre-Classic to Early Classic period have been discovered in Western Mexico in the states of Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit. These ceramics were found in deep shaft tombs and show human and animal figures in a wide variety of activities. Sculptures have been found of musicians, dancers, warriors, acrobats, mourners, women and children, and amorous couples. There are figures eating, drinking, gathering, processing, and carrying water, even figures being carried on litters, or palanquins. The Mezcala River region in Guerrero also developed a figurative sculpture tradition in this period.

The Classic Maya

During the Classic Period, the Maya lived in city-states throughout southeastern Mexico and Guatemala. The inhabitants of these Maya cities spoke related but locally differentiated languages they shared an ancestral background with the Olmec and were in contact with their sister city of Teotihuacán in the Valley of Mexico. Through recently deciphered hieroglyphs, we know that these city-states competed for power through warfare. Rival rulers were captured and sacrificed to the gods. Kingship passed along family lines, and regional power structures were the result of military prowess as well as marriage alliances.

Maya cities, like the Olmec ones before them, typically included pyramid-shaped structures, which contained corbel-vaulted chambers, courtyards, and raised plazas. Ball courts were included in their public areas. The pyramids often contained tombs of important people and were carved with hieroglyphs and sculptures of warrior kings. The raised public areas were connected to smaller residential groupings, or villages, by stuccoed causeways that spanned low swamplands. Simple homes were made of post and thatch and were generally grouped around courtyards. What the largest structures were—temples, palaces or bureaucratic buildings—is not clear, but they were covered with carved panels, or stelae, showing royal portraits, hieroglyphs, and the symbols of power associated with kingship.

The art of the Maya includes many portraits of rulers who are frequently shown with their ancestors—legitimizing their rule. Sculpture, pottery, walls, benches, door jambs, and vaults were painted with bright colors on stuccoed surfaces. Royal families were well educated in the arts. The sons and daughters of kings were depicted as scribes, with paint brushes in their headdresses. Painted books, or codices, were created that illustrated Maya traditions and history. The demise of the Maya in the eighth and ninth centuries remains a mystery. Theories for their decline include the increasing ecological stress put on the environment as well as the stress of warfare—either internal to the Maya realm, or with some outside force.

Maya Temple Mounds

The Maya built beautiful pyramid-shaped temples. These ritual and administrative complexes served areas as large as a hundred square miles. Pyramids were tombs for the nobility, and often included not only the deceased ruler, but other sacrificed humans and luxury goods as well. The dead were buried deep inside the pyramid, while rituals were conducted by priests in the structures on top. Temples were ornamented, inside and out, with painted, stuccoed sculpture. Inscribed stone portraits of rulers were often placed in the ground in front of the pyramids. In fact, we know from one of these inscriptions that the king of Palenque in A.D. 683 had his own tomb designed and built before his death.

Pyramids were often rebuilt over and over again by successive generations. The earliest examples are small, becoming larger in the Classic Period with more and more elaborate decoration. Roof combs and corbelled arches were added, and the decorative patterns show the faces of gods with monsterlike jaws.

Quote on this same text panel:

“This concept of the temple as a raised reliquary, inaccessible to mortal man, impressive in its aura of mystery and veiled in clouds of incense, helps us understand the symbolic function that the roof combs served in Maya religious architecture.”

The Cloud People of Monte Albán

The Zapotecs called themselves the “Cloud People.” The Classic phase of their culture developed between about 100 B.C. and A.D. 200 and continued until the eighth or ninth century. Their political center was an impressive archaeological site known as Monte Albán, located at the confluence of three valleys near present day Oaxaca, Mexico.

Monte Albán is a ceremonial center on the flat top of a mountain. This location was strategic, but there was no natural source of water on the site, indicating that a complex system of water transportation must have been developed by the builders. One of the earliest structures on the site is the Temple of the Danzantes, which glorified the power of the state with a series of stelae, or carved slabs of stone, showing victims of conquest. The axis of the plaza points to specific stars, as does a similar structure found thirty-one miles to the east at Cabellito Blanco. These sites, like the plaza at Teotihuacán, were some of the earliest structures built according to astronomical phenomena.

The Zapotecs had both writing and calendar systems. Their architecture reflects Mesoamerican styles with pyramidal tomb structures and a centralized ceremonial or administrative zone. Male and female deities connected with fertility and agriculture were depicted in the art. Grave goods included gray clay urns decorated with deities. Quetzalcóatl, the feathered serpent; Tlaloc, the Teotihuacán rain god; and others are shown in elaborate costumes and headdresses. The Zapotecs were skilled at working jade and other stones.

Monte Albán was culturally influenced by Teotihuacán, but it is unlikely that it was actually dominated by this sister city. The art of the Zapotecs shows a blending of influences from both Teotihuacán and Maya art. In some carvings at Monte Albán, Teotihuacanos appear as visitors talking with Zapotec warriors. Archaeological data confirms the hypothesis of cultural exchange, with evidence of a Zapotec residential area within the city of Teotihuacán.

Teotihuacán: An Urban Culture

Located near present-day Mexico City, Teotihuacán emerged as a city-state between 100 B.C. and A.D. 150 and thrived until A.D. 650. It was the first real urban area in Mesoamerica, and at its height was one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of 150,000 to 200,000 within about nine square miles. This dense population would have required a complex social organization with many specialized trades such as priests, architects, craftsmen, and artists, in addition to farmers.

The first temple in Teotihuacán, the Pyramid of the Sun, was built on an elaborate series of caves and was dedicated to the Great Goddess. From the cave entry, a site line off to the west was directed at the constellation of the Pleiades during the zenith, forming an east/west axis.

This was crossed by a perpendicular axis that ran between the Temple of the Moon and the Temple of the Plumed Serpent. This grid was the basis of all city and neighborhood planning in Teotihuacán.

Virtually every architectural surface in the city was decorated with painting. Fresco paintings of gods, ritual processions of humans and animals, sacrifice and warfare in red, yellow and blue pigments covered both public and residential buildings. Stylistically, the sculpture of Teotihuacán was massive compared to Maya pieces: the pottery beautifully painted in a variety of designs and colors, often with human or animal faces in three dimensions. Obsidian was finely crafted into objects that were used in graves.

Although the ethnic identity of the people of Teotihuacán remains a mystery, it is clear that they shared cultural characteristics with the Olmec, as well as with other subsequent cultures developing in Mesoamerica. The organization and wealth of this great city must have been impressive to neighboring city-states in the Maya, Zapotec and Veracruz areas. Teotihuacán was burned and pillaged in approximately A.D. 650. Although it continued to be occupied until the arrival of the Spanish in the fifteenth century, the city never regained its former power and glory.

The Post-Classic Period: Aztecs, Mixtecs and Toltecs

After the decline of the Classic Period in the eighth and ninth centuries, there was a period of political disunity in Mesoamerica, resulting in confusion and cultural disintegration. Classic sites such as Teotihuacán, Monte Albán, Tikal, and Palenque were abandoned. Lesser regional sites emerged where the remaining elite may have migrated.

Near the ruins of Teotihuacán smaller cities developed at Cacaxtla, Xochicalco, and Cholula. The Mixtec cities of Mitla and Yagúl emerged after the decline of the Zapotecs at Monte Albán. The Huastecs became powerful in northern Veracruz at El Tajín, and the Toltecs emerged in Tula and Chichen Itzá.

In these new regional sites, elegantly designed palaces were built around interlocking courtyards and painted with scenes that showed a combination of styles and written scripts. As people migrated to new centers of power, there was a blending of artistic and architectural styles. They referred back to styles at Teotihuacán, but also included influences of the Maya. Pottery designs were modeled into clay, and some pieces seem to have been mass-produced.

Another regional development occurred in the far north, near the border of what is now New Mexico. The Casas Grandes civilization developed there, in the crossroads between the Toltec and Pueblo-style houses but had many Mesoamerican cultural traits. They worshipped Quetzalcóatl and participated in the ritual ball game. They traded feathers and exotic birds to

the Pueblo in exchange for turquoise. The Casas Grandes people probably shared a common ancestry with the Toltecs and Aztecs.

The Aztecs of Tenochtitlán

The Aztecs, also known as Méxica, claimed to be from a mythic land called Aztlán, probably corresponding to northwestern Mexico. In A.D. 1345, they established themselves on an island in Lake Texcoco, and called their capital Tenochtitlán. Ultimately their political influence extended as far south as El Salvador. By A.D. 1500, the population of Tenochtitlán had reached 200,000. The city was known for its extensive waterworks, causeways and “floating gardens.” It was divided into four residential precincts with an adjacent ceremonial area.

Gods revered by the Aztecs included Huitzilopochtli, god of war, fire and sun; Tlaloc, god of rain and earth; and Quetzalcóatl, the feathered serpent. Other lesser gods were worshipped for fertility and agricultural success. Images of the gods were erected in temples and covered with blood as a means of worship. The mythological stories of Aztec religion are depicted in sculpture and pottery. Complex featherwork and goldwork were also practiced.

In A.D. 1519 Hernán Cortés’ soldiers marched into Tenochtitlán. War ensued, and after a series of battles in which the Spanish army was aided by some of the Aztec’s subject provinces, the Spaniards prevailed. Within a hundred years of the Spanish arrival, over eighty percent of the native population had died of warfare, starvation, and diseases brought by the Europeans.

Central America: A Pre-Columbian Crossroads

Central America benefited from being the fertile crossroads between the cultural giants of Mesoamerica and the Andean cultures, but it also developed artistic traditions of its own. Ceramic and metal works from this region show a truly masterful exploration of design elements and form.

The earliest ceramics found in Central America are from the period around 3000 B.C. Between this time and 300 B.C., people lived in small farming and hunting villages and used slash-and-burn techniques of farming. Population density increased rapidly, and the dead were buried in shaft or chamber tombs. Pottery was created by a coil and scrape technique and was usually decorated with simple two- or three-colored designs of animal and geometric shapes.

During the Classic Period, when Mesoamerica became urbanized with the rise of Teotihuacán and the Maya (100 B.C.-A.D. 800), Central American ceramics show increasingly complex design motifs including abstracted frogs, birds, lizards, snakes, crabs, anthropomorphic figures, and mythic humans. Scholars have interpreted these dynamic human/animal figures to be shamans. These design motifs may have referred to masculine and feminine forces in the universe, as

well as to astronomical forces observed in the heavens. Graves of the elite during the period between A.D. 600 and A.D. 1000 contain painted ceramics, stone-sculpted mutates, jade axes, textiles, gold jewelry, breastplates, helmets, and other types of luxury goods. Painted pottery designs reached a climax of sophistication and complexity during this period.

When the Spanish arrived in Central America in the 1500s, they described a social organization based on locally competing tribes, or chiefdoms. Society was stratified, with chiefs and subordinate chiefs at the top and captive slaves at the bottom. Specialist craftsmen created pottery, textiles, metal and featherwork, and other objects were used for their magical and protective powers in healing, as well as for personal and architectural ornamentation.

Appendix IV: Text Transcription from Dallas Museum of Art

Mesoamerica

Mesoamerica, or Middle America, is a vast cultural area that encompasses most of what is today central and southeastern Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize, and the western areas of Honduras and El Salvador. This region is bordered by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and is blessed with a remarkable range of climates that reflect its varied geography. Towering volcanoes, rugged mountain ranges, and high valleys contrast with dense jungles, swampy lowlands, and desert plains.

The culture history of Mesoamerica, which continues to unfold through the discoveries of archaeologists and scholars, is divided into periods of time during which the area as a whole experienced relatively similar developments.

Paleo-Indian period (12,000-7000 B.C.)

Small bands of nomadic foragers migrated southward into Mesoamerica from the deserts of North America and settled into the high valleys. As the environment became increasingly warm and dry, game animals became ever more scarce. People relied upon a wide variety of plant foods to supplement a dwindling supply of meat.

Archaic period (7000-1500 B.C.)

Bands of cultivators settled into all parts of Mesoamerica and established networks of long-distance exchange through which all the important plant foods were gradually distributed. By the end of this period, village farming life was common throughout Mesoamerica. Corn, beans, squash, and chiles made up a common diet.

Formative period (1500 B.C.- A.D. 150)

The earliest governments appeared during this period, integrating local economies with regional ones, and helping reduce the risks of disaster—flood, drought, pestilence—faced by farming societies. By the end of the Formative period (also called the Preclassic), there were grand centers and cities throughout the core area of Mesoamerica.

Classic period (A.D. 150/300-650/900)

Highly sophisticated civilizations matured during this period, interacting with each other and sharing a complex economy. The success of the Classic forms of government led to imperial expansion and wars. The mysterious collapse of the great cities, which marks the end of this era, is still a subject of controversy.

Early Postclassic period (A.D. 650/900-1250)

Smaller, quite sophisticated, and militarily ruthless societies emerged in the wake of the Classic collapse to reestablish cities and empires during this period. The artistic traditions of the Mixtec and Huastec flower at this time.

Late Postclassic period (A.D. 1250-1519)

The last great empire of Mesoamerica, that of the Aztecs in highland Mexico, rose just before the arrival of the Spaniards. City life flourished throughout Mesoamerica in this period.

The Olmec

Mesoamerica's first highly developed civilization, which archaeologists have named Olmec, emerged about 1500 B.C. in two distant areas of Mexico—the central highland valleys (particularly in Morelos and Guerrero) and the lowland forests of the south and east (particularly Veracruz and Tabasco). There the Olmec built the earliest planned ceremonial centers in Mesoamerica and carved the first monumental stone sculpture. The widespread locations from which the Olmec obtained material resources represented a significant portion of Mesoamerica: magnetite for iron-ore mirrors came from the Valley of Oaxaca, obsidian for cutting tools from Orizaba Volcano near Puebla and from Guatemala, and jade and greenstone from Guerrero and Guatemala.

The Gulf coast center of La Venta, which was prominent from 1000 to 500 B.C. (during the Middle Formative period), is an island in a swamp west of the Tonalá River, which divides the modern states of Veracruz and Tabasco. La Venta was probably Mesoamerica's first state, and its population at that time is estimated to have been 10,000 people. The major complex on its 500-acre site replicates the Olmec cosmos in architectural form. At the southern end is a man-made earthen pyramid whose fluted sides resemble a volcanic cone. This massive structure, which is more than 100 feet tall and incorporates about 100,000 cubic yards of dirt fill, approximates the shape of the Olmec creation Mountain. Immediately north of the mountain is the ball court, the place where the ancestral gods were sacrificed and reborn. North again is the Three-Stone-Place, the hearth of heaven, where the current cycle of creation was reset after the great flood. North of this is a basalt-pillar monument, mythological First father's House in the North, symbol of the present world he placed in order.

La Venta is also the source of an astonishing volume of stone sculpture: altars or thrones; the first vertical slab monument, or stela; colossal heads that are the hallmark of the Olmec style; and refined figures and celts carved from jade and other greenstone. The dual ideas of divinity and kingship embodied in Olmec art united Mesoamerican peoples of different cultures and languages in a common vision of the world that transcended local politics. The masks and images both exalted and defined Olmec kingship, emphasizing the obligation of the ruler to serve his people as shaman, incarnation of the creator god, rainmaker, and protective warrior.

West Mexico

The culture area of West Mexico encompasses two major areas, the modern state of Guerrero in the south, particularly the middle reaches of the Balsas River, and the states of Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit to the north. Most of the objects associated with these areas were made during the period 500 B.C. to A.D. 500.

The Guerrero style called Mezcala, after the local name for the Balsas River, consists of small-scale abstract stone sculpture depicting human figures, masks, and temple-like buildings. The emphasis on stone sculpture suggests an interaction with the Olmec, and the basic axe-like shape of many Mezcala figures resembles the elliptical form of Olmec celts. Objects of pure Olmec style have been found north of the Balsas River, and the mountains of the area probably were a source of jade and greenstone for the Olmecs.

A distinctive set of burial customs was present in the Colima-Jalisco-Nayarit area from at least 250 B.C. the characteristic shaft-and-chamber tombs consisted of a vertical shaft some 10 to 60 feet deep that connected to an arched chamber either directly or indirectly by means of lateral tunnels. The revered dead were accompanied by offerings of pyrite mosaic mirrors, conch-shell trumpets, and large-scale hollow ceramic sculptures of humans and animals. Although these vary in style from area to area, they have in common a distinctive vitality that derives in part from gesture and pose. The humanness of these figures suggests that the societies they represent were less rigidly class-structured than those of other areas of Mesoamerica. Religion seems to have centered around the shaman or intermediary between the human and spirit worlds, and figures that resemble warriors may well have been present to defend the soul against the powers of the underworld.

Shaft-and-chamber tombs do not occur elsewhere in Mesoamerica, but they are characteristic of Andean cultures to the south. This and ceramic features such as the stirrup spout and highly burnished surfaces suggest possible contact between West Mexico and the Pacific coast of South America, particularly northern Peru and Ecuador. Despite the quantity of objects from the Colima-Jalisco-Nayarit area in museum and private collections, few shaft tombs have been scientifically investigated. Broad outlines of different local traditions can be discerned in the ceramics, but much work remains to be done before the cultures that produced these objects can be fully understood.

Teotihuacán

Teotihuacán has been called the first true city of the New world. This planned urban complex flourished in a pocket of the Valley of Mexico, some 30 miles northeast of Mexico City, during the period 150 B.C.-A.D. 750. At its peak, around A.D. 600, Teotihuacán was one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of perhaps 200,000 people. The city occupied almost nine square miles and had 5,000 structures, of which 2,000 were residences. We do not know who the people of Teotihuacán were, what language they spoke, or what name they gave their city. The Aztecs, who associated the center with the creation of the world, called it Teotihuacán, "place of the gods."

Teotihuacán was the first metropolis in Mesoamerica to be built on a grid plan, a design that the Aztecs would imitate centuries later. The Ritual way (the Avenue of the Dead), a grand sequence of stairways, platforms, and sunken courts, marks the main north-south axis: one proceeds northward from the Citadel (Ciudadela) and the Temple of Quetzacoatl at the

southern end to the monumental Pyramid of the Sun, and then, to the Pyramid of the Moon on axis with Cerro Gordo, the sacred mountain. This concourse was more than a mile long, exceeding any comparable urban space in Europe until the creation of the Champs Élysées in Paris during the 19th century.

During the third century A.D., construction of religious architecture on a grand scale ceased, and the emphasis shifted to residential buildings. Spacious apartments of stone and adobe, with mural-painted rooms surrounding open courtyards, housed extended families and people of similar occupations or rank. Recent excavations have provided evidence of a sewer system and of canals that brought drinking water to the compounds.

The city was a major market center that seems to have had merchant bases or “colonies” at Maticapan in Veracruz and Kaminaljuyú in Guatemala. Merchant and warrior ambassadors from Teotihuacán established a strategic presence in the Maya city of Tikal between A.D. 200 and 400, and the Tikal ruler used Teotihuacán war divinities and military regalia in imperial conquest. Although Teotihuacán was probably a stratified society with powerful rulers, it does not seem to have had a dynastic kingship.

Nature, fertility, sacrifice, and war were the primary themes of Teotihuacán art, themes expressed most eloquently in the fresco painting of murals and ceramic vessels. Although the individual elements of Teotihuacán art can seem static and impersonal, the characteristic repetition of these standardized forms creates an overall impression of harmony.

Veracruz

The state of Veracruz forms an arc along Mexico’s Gulf coast some 500 miles long and 30 to 100 miles wide. Basically tropical and often mountainous, this region was a geographical and cultural link between Teotihuacán in the highlands of central Mexico and cities in the Maya Lowlands to the southeast. It was also part of the principal sea-level route that led north along the Gulf to what is now the southeastern United States. There are hundreds of known pre-columbian sites in this area, yet few of them have been formally excavated. Olmec centers from the Formative period are located in the southern part of the state, while the Postclassic flowering of the Huastec culture occurred in the northern region. It was the central area, however, that produced the art and architecture that are distinctively Veracruz in style.

During the Classic period, south-central Veracruz was the source of a lively ceramic tradition that depicted costumed figures on scaffolds, warriors in military regalia, youthful figures with smiling faces, and deities. Excavations at El Zapotal recovered near-life-size ceramic sculptures: seated skeletal image of the Lord of death, called Miclantecuhtli, and thirteen female figures representing the Cihuateteo, women who died in childbirth. In this region, the ball games inspired the creation of portable stone effigies of actual objects that were used to play it—U-shaped stone belts or waist protectors (yokes), axe-form stones (*hachas*), and palmate stones

(*palmas*). The carved decoration on these pieces often includes a pattern of interlocking scrolls that is the hallmark of the Classic Veracruz style.

The city of El Tajín, which flourished between A.D. 600 and 1100, dominated the art of the north-central area. Its innovative architectural style is distinguished by the use of niches, waterproofing through the application of asphalt, and the construction of archlike ceilings using a cement shell. The city's primary buildings were stuccoed and painted in one or more colors depending on the time period and the function. Eleven ball courts have been discovered so far at El Tajín underscoring the importance of the ball game at this site.

Although the Mesoamerican ball game had many different forms, it was consistently played with a solid natural rubber ball hit with the hips. The game was generally considered more ritual than a sport. Gods, too, were thought to lay it, and this it represented an appropriate means of contacting the supernatural. Men, usually of elite status, played the game, but the gods determined the outcome. At El Tajín the ruler Thirteen Rabbit used the ball game to celebrate his conquests and reaffirm his sovereignty. The series of six relief sculptures in the South Ball Court recorded the ceremonies, sacrifices, and response of the gods that authorized his kingship.

The Maya

Maya civilization encompassed 200,000 square miles of foothills, rain forests, and plains in the national territories of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. It endured for nearly 2,000 years, from about 400 B.C., when the first kings raised temple-mountains in royal cities such as El Mirador and Cerros, until 1697, when the Spaniards defeated King Kan_Ek of the Itzá at Tayasal in the Petén region of Guatemala.

Within this vast territory, the Maya created several distinctive regional expressions of their civilization. The southern Lowlands witnessed the rise of great dynastic kingdoms. The Northern Lowland Maya chose another path during the Classic period and established governments in which councils shared power with kings. The Maya of the highlands of Guatemala created yet another variety of civilized life in which hieroglyphic writing played only a minor role. Transcending the diversity were common understandings of religion and philosophy which distinguished the Maya ethnically from other highly developed civilizations in Mesoamerica.

The Maya refined and extended the concept of the god-king. Maya kings were masters of soul-force, of holiness (*ch'ul*), and were responsible for maintaining the balance of birth, death, and rebirth demonstrated in cycles of mythological and historical time. When these resplendently costumed kings appeared before their people in ritual performances, they embodied the ancestral gods of Maya creation, from whom they channeled power into the world of man so that rain would fall, crops would grow, enemies would falter, and children would prosper.

Maya civilization was fundamentally urban, and its major centers harnessed the abilities of artists, scribes, astronomers, architects, and engineers. Maya cities were capitals of kingdoms, each ruled by a hero king whose authority derived from direct communication with gods and ancestors. Maya kingdoms maintained grand alliances for purposes of war and trade. The central plazas of Maya cities frequently rang with noisy celebration marking the birth, accession and death of a king. Among the most powerful of Maya cities was Tikal in the department of E Petén in Guatemala. There, in A.D. 695, King Hasaw-ka'an-k'awil celebrated his military victory over the king of Kalakmul by reshaping the city's ancestral temple-mountains into three great pyramids that represented the first Three-Stone-Place where First Father was reborn as Maize on creation eve. The king's ambitious architectural plan echoed that of the earlier Olmec center of La Venta.

Appendix V: Text Transcription from the Kimbell Art Museum

Mexico, Colima, El Chanal, Mixtec style,

Postclassic period, 900-1521

Rain God Vessel

c. 1100-1400

Polychromed ceramic

Acquired in 1974

This spouted vessel in the form of a crouching figure represents an important aspect of Mesoamerican religious practice—deity impersonation—by which the gods were brought directly into the world of experience. The disguise portrayed in this piece is a double one, however: warrior and rain god. In the ancient shamanistic Traditions of western Mexico, this crouching figure is a shaman warrior, positioned as if ready to leap. He holds a club in his right hand and has a shield attached to his left wrist; his entire head is engulfed in an animal-head helmet resembling a coyote. These are all appurtenances of the warrior, yet the small size of the weapon and shield suggest a fight more symbolic than real. The mask covering the face is the other element in the double disguise, and relates directly to deity impersonation. The ringed eyes, long fangs, and mustache markings are traits of the rain god, worshipped widely throughout Mesoamerica from about Olmec times onward.

Mexico, Olmec culture,

Middle Preclassic Period, 900-400 B.C.

Standing Figure

c. 900-400 B.C.

Jadeite

Acquired in 1981

The Olmecs produced the first complex culture in Middle America. Their settlements saw the establishment of the first sacred centers composed of plazas, mounds, and pyramids; and the ceremonial centers contained colossal basalt sculptured heads that portrayed secular leaders as well as deities. Representations of deities include human-animal composites of jaguars, harpy eagles, snakes, and crocodiles. The artistic style that the Olmec developed continued for centuries without radical variation. The forms are generous, with substantial mass defined by simplified, boldly flowing contours. Details are limited to those essential for image and content recognition. Figures tend towards the androgynous; heads are large, probably to emphasize their importance, and bodies are short and stocky.

This carved figure is a quintessential work of Olmec culture. Despite its small size, it is unusually monumental in its impact. The lifelike proportions and subtle musculature of this

figure epitomize the sensitivity of Olmec jade carving at its finest. Although their function and purpose are not understood, numerous extant examples of this kind of figure suggest they had an important ceremonial function for the Olmec.

Mexico, Guerrero, Xochipala,
Early Preclassic period, 1500-900 B.C.

Seated Woman

c. 1500-1200 B.C.
Ceramic
Acquired in 1971

The Xochipala figures are named after the remote West Mexican village near which all known examples have been found. The style is one of extraordinary physical presence and naturalism for its period. Characteristic of this regional style are anatomical details rendered with consummate skill: fully modeled eyeballs with pierced pupils, parted lips revealing two rows of teeth, finely worked feet with fanned toes, and delicately incised hair fashioned into a stylized arrangement. This figure embodies all of these traits, and though small in size, is modeled with remarkable sophistication, especially in the intent facial expression, articulated coiffure, and delicately fringed shawl, all accentuated by the extreme simplicity of the dress. Its success in capturing the spirit and physical presence of an actual woman inevitably raises the question of whether it was intended, in some sense, to be a portrait.

Mexico, Usumacina River Valley, Maya culture, Late Classic Period A.D. 600-900

Presentation of Captives to a Maya Ruler

c. A.D. 785
Limestone with traces of paint, Acquired in 1971

This carved relief probably served as a wall panel inside a Maya building or as a lintel over an entrance. It depicts the presentation of captives in a palace throne room, indicated by swag curtains at the top of the panel. The five figures are the Yaxchilan king, seated at top left, his *sahal* (a military chief) on the right, and three bound captives in the lower left. The glyphic text which gives a date of 23 August 783, records the capture of a lord and a sacrificial bloodletting three days later under the auspices of the king. The three prisoners may be scribes; the one in front holds a "stick-bundle" associated with Maya scribes, and all three wear headdresses with *hun* (book) knots. All figures but the leftmost captive are identified by name. The inscription on the throne front, of special interest, is carved with the king's name and titles; the glyphs are inscribed in reverse order, from right to left.

The name of the artist responsible for sculpting the relief appears on the vertical panel for four glyphs under the *sahal's* out-stretched arm. Signed works of Maya art are rare, and the signature in this relief suggests that it was considered of great value in its time.

Mexico, Usumacinta River Valley, Maya culture, Late Classic period, AD 600-900

Vessel with a Procession of Warriors

C. AD 750-800, Polychromed ceramic, Acquired in 1976

This vessel depicts a parade of warriors after a battle. The naked figure is a captive who is being led by an elaborately dressed warrior for sacrificial display. The leader of the party may be the figure wearing a full jaguar pelt and wielding bloody weapon. The person in front of the captive wears a costume of cloth and paper strips studded with bloodied medallions; he has a spiny bloodletter in his headdress and may be responsible for carrying out the bloodletting rituals. The fourth person wears a feathered cape and the petal cap characteristic of secondary figures.

Illustrative vessels such as this fine example hint at the richness of Maya mural painting, most of which was painted on perishable materials and no longer survives.

Guatemala, Maya culture, Early Classic period, AD 250-600

Tripod Vessel with Lid

c. AD 400-500, Ceramic with stucco and polychrome pigments, Acquired in 1997

The art of the Maya is principally the art of the ruling elite. Vessels were made to honor and commemorate once-living rulers and to venerate their gods and ancestors; these objects, laden with power and symbolism, were then buried in tombs alongside their royal or noble owners. Much of the pottery found in Maya tombs was made especially to accompany the soul on its journey through the Underworld, Xibalba, a watery world that could be entered only by sinking beneath water or by passing through a maw in the surface of the earth. Funerary vessels of the Early Classic period (A.D. 250-600) often represented the watery surface of the Underworld and its inhabitants, shown either in narrative scenes or in processions.

The stuccoed body of this vessel is delicately painted with images of four chimerical creatures, each with a feathered, snake-like neck and head, a body containing the head of an aged divinity that may be Pawahtun (the god of the end of the year, and bearer of the sky and earth), spondylus shells for "wings," and bird feet. Each figure is distinguished from the others by a different form of decorative "wing" and by colors that indicate its directional orientation. The cover is adorned with a small sculpted head, Maya in profile, having distinctive ear and nose plugs and an elaborate coiffure. The six glyphs on the cover represent a standard dedicatory verse found on ritual drinking vessels. The iconography, inscription, and very high quality of this vase all suggest that it was a ritual vessel containing the Maya chocolate drink, to be placed in the tomb of a nobleman.

Possibly Mexico or Guatemala, Maya culture, Late Classic period, A.D. 600-900

Codex-Style Vessel with Two Scenes of Pawahtun Instructing Scribes

c. AD 550-950, Ceramic with monochrome decoration Acquired in 2004

This celebrated vessel depicts two scenes with the deity Pawahtun a principal god of Maya scribes, in animated lessons with young disciples. The Pawahtun is recognizable by his aged features and his netted headdress with a brush wedged into the ties. In one scene, the Pawahtun is holding a pointer and reading from a folded codex placed in front of him. As he looks directly at the two individuals seated in rapt attention in front of him, he recites the bar and dot numbers attached to a speech thread which may represent a date. In the second scene, the Pawahtun hunches intently forward and taps the ground as he speaks to two similarly attentive pupils, an Ah k'hun (a keeper of the holy books), who wears a turban with the bundle of quill pens stuck into the top, and a second figure with a goatee. The Pawahtun's spoken words appear as a group of glyphs connected to a speech thread that emanates from his mouth, which may be interpreted as "receive my bad omens."

The Codex style takes its name from a small group of vessels painted with scenes of great realism in very fine monochromatic lines on cream backgrounds by artists who must have been primarily painters of codices, the folding-screen books that the Maya made from bark paper coated with stucco. These codex-style ceramics give an excellent idea of the high elegance and extraordinary delicacy that must have characterized ancient Maya books, none of which has survived from the Classic period.

Guatemala, Maya culture, Late Classic period AD 600-900

Standing Ruler

c. AD 600-800, Ceramic with traces of paint, Acquired in 1984

The surviving works of Maya civilization range from the smallest objects to great edifices. Among the small-scale artworks of the Maya are many exquisite ceramic figurines only a few inches high. Despite their diminutive scale, these are also among the most fully realized of Maya sculptures in the round. This figurine vividly evokes a Maya lord costumed to impersonate a dynastic ancestor. The rectangular device over the mouth, along with the shield in one hand and the now-missing spear in the other, closely resemble the accoutrements of the nine ancestral figures in the sarcophagus chamber of Palenque's Temple of the Inscriptions. He figure's wide belt once supported a backrack of feathers, and his knee-length apron is marked with a symbol of the World Tree, the central axis of the Maya world. Elements of the complex costume below the headdress recur in other portrayals of Maya rulers; they define and reiterate his rank, and his position in the cosmos.

The role of these figurines in Maya beliefs and ritual is not clear, but their common appearance in Maya burials suggests a ritual function of some importance. Here the royal associations of the subject may indicate a rite performed by the king and commemorated through the making of this figurine.

Mexico, Oaxaca, Monte Albán IIIa, Zapotec culture, Early Classic period, AD 250-600

Urn in the Form of Cociyo, God of Lightening and Rain

c. AD 400-500, Ceramic, Acquired in 1985

The primary capital of Zapotec culture was the ceremonial site of Monte Albán (in the modern state of Oaxaca), where the Zapotecs worshipped a complex pantheon of nature gods. Zapotec culture is divided into four stages, each associated with the style of gray-ware effigy urns they placed with their honored dead.

This urn represents Cociyo, the Zapotec god of lightening and rain, identified by an amalgam of facial elements forming a powerfully sculpted mask. The stepped, two-part forms enclosing the eyes represent clouds and, by extension, the precious water needed to grow crops. The doubly plugged nasal extension is a development from earlier snouted deity elements that combine jaguar and snake allusions—the roar of the jaguar with the reverberation of thunder. The three fangs that protrude from the snout cover a bifurcated tongue, like the almost invisibly flashing tongue of a snake; the snake's tongue symbolizes the lightning bolt. The broad mouth with drawn-back lips is derived from Olmec prototypes, among which would have been images of the baby rain god. The rest of the dress is as much that of a priest as of a deity, with the large disk-shaped earplugs and the knotted collar of high rank. The striations of the cape may be intended to represent feathers. The kilt is decorated with a wavelike pattern; with three attached tassels at the bottom. The ensemble thus echoes the various natural phenomena of a tropical mountain thunderstorm.

Appendix VI: Text Transcription and Translation from the Templo Mayor Museum

Templo Mayor Trascipciones:

El exterior del Templo Mayor:

The Templo Mayor Project

On February 21, 1978 the monumental sculpture of the goddess Coyaxauhqui was discovered. Two months later the Templo Mayor Project began. Its three phases have combined interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches.

Phase I: Collecting information from archaeological and historical documents on the Templo Mayor.

Phase II: Excavating the Templo Mayor. Different phases of the building were uncovered in addition to an abundance of information from the 150 offerings discovered there.

Phase III: Interpreting the excavated materials with the support of historical sources. A number of lines of research were pursued, while others have continued to the present. Over 30 university theses and dissertations, about 300 publications, and numerous exhibitions that have traveled worldwide have helped to spread current knowledge about the Mexicas.

Research continues every day. The Urban Archaeology Program was begun in 1991 to conduct salvage archaeology where construction is to take place within the area once occupied by the ancient ceremonial center of Tenochtitlan.

Thanks to this Project, our knowledge about the heart of the Aztec city is growing.

Templo Mayor

Durante el siglo XV, los mexicas se conformaron como un Estado expansionista, donde el tributo, el comercio y la agricultura formaron la base de su economía. La ciudad de Tenochtitlán, fue el centro político y rector del poder mexica. Estaba compuesta por cuatro barrios y cruzada por innumerables calzadas, canales, plazas y templos. Se calculo que en su apogeo, la ciudad llego a tener alrededor de doscientos mil habitantes.

El Recinto Sagrado era la plaza que constituía el centro de Tenochtitlán, ahí se desarrollaban gran parte de las principales actividades políticas y religiosas del pueblo mexica. En el centro de dicha plaza, se ubicaba el Templo Mayor, dedicada a los dioses de la lluvia y de la guerra, Tlaloc y Huitzilopochtli. Este edificio era el centro ceremonial más importante del mundo mexica.

Las excavaciones en el área del Templo Mayor comenzaron en 1913. Pero hasta 1978 en que se encontró, de manera inesperada, el monolito de Coyolxauhqui, dio inicio el Proyecto Templo Mayor. Desde entonces se ha mantenido la investigación interdisciplinaria en el sitio de forma permanente.

English Translation:

During the fifteenth century, the Mexica formed as an expansionist state, where the tribute, trade and agriculture formed the basis of its economy. The city of Tenochtitlan, was the political center and dean of Mexica power. It was composed of four quarters and crossed by numerous roads, canals, squares and temples. It is estimated that at its height, the city came to be about two hundred thousand inhabitants.

Sacred Site E was the square and the center of Tenochtitlan; there were developed many of the major political and religious activities of the Mexican people. In the center of this plaza, stood the Temple dedicated to the gods of rain and war, Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. This building was the most important ceremonial center of the Aztec world.

Excavations in the area of the Temple began in 1913. But until 1978 when the monolith of Coyolxauhqui was found, unexpectedly, began the Templo Mayor Project. Since then, the interdisciplinary research has been maintained at the site permanently.

El Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlán es el lugar en donde real y simbólicamente se asentaba todo el poder mexica; lugar sagrado donde se reactualizaban s principales mitos nahuas.

Lo primero que hacen los mexicas al asentarse en Tenochtitlán es construir el templo a su dios. Se establece de esta manera el “centro” u ombligo, es decir el espacio sagrado del que partían las cuatro divisiones de la ciudad. Se reproduce el orden cósmico, la visión que el mexica tiene del universo, considerando al Templo Mayor como centro fundamental.

El pueblo mexica, por medio de la guerra y bajo la tutela de Huitzilopochtli, expandió sus dominios a casi todo el territorio de Mesoamérica e impuso tributo a los pueblos sometidos.

Las exploraciones arqueológicas del sitio se inician en este siglo con Manuel Gamio en 1913-1914 y da a conocer por primera vez la ubicación del templo en la esquina de Seminario y

Guatemala. Estas excavaciones fueron ampliadas por Cuevas en 1933 y por Moedano y Estrada Balmori en 1948, quedando al descubierto una parte del sitio.

El 21 de febrero de 1978, con el descubrimiento de la Coyolxauhqui, el hallazgo precipito el interés que ya existía por excavar el principal edificio de los mexicas o aztecas: El Templo Mayor.

Las últimas excavaciones arqueológicas concluidas en 1982, nos han permitido penetrar a etapas mas antiguas del templo, que ni siguiera las últimas generaciones de mexicas conocieron.

English Translation:

The Temple of Tenochtitlan is the real place where symbolically all the power rested for the Mexica; sacred place where main Nahua myths were reactivated.

The first thing to settle in Tenochtitlan, Aztecs had to build the temple to their god. Thus establishing the "center" or navel, which is the sacred space of that divided up the city into four divisions. It reproduces the cosmic order, the vision that Mexico has of the universe, seeing the Temple as the central hub.

The Mexican people, through war and under the guidance of Huitzilopochtli, expanded his control almost throughout Mesoamerica and imposed tribute on conquered peoples.

Archaeological explorations started at the site in this century with Manuel Gamio in 1913-1914, and he brings you the first time the location of the temple was known, at the corner of Seminary and Guatemala. These excavations were extended by Caves in 1933 and Balmori Moedano and Estrada in 1948, excavating a portion of the site.

On 21 February 1978, with the discovery of Coyolxauhqui, there was a rush, finding that interest already existed for digging the main building of the Mexica or Aztecs: The Temple. The latest archaeological excavations, concluded in 1982, have enabled us to penetrate the oldest temple steps, which not even the latest generations of Mexico know.

Thirty Years of archaeology on Templo Mayor:

Over the last 30 years, the Templo Mayor Project and the Urban archaeology Program have together provided information about the Mexicas and their contemporaries whose vestiges have been found in a wide array of excavated offerings and other archaeological materials.

Different specialists have participated in this study, including archaeologists, biologists, physical anthropologists, physicians, and chemists, among others. They have considerably expanded current knowledge of these communities from diverse perspectives, including DNA analyses of bones; studies of shell remains; research on production techniques; studies of buildings, pigments used in sculpture, architecture and its components, flora and fauna; classification of the offerings and their contents; and the location of buildings within the ancient ceremonial area of Tenochtitlan.

Also materials from colonial and modern eras recovered by the Urban Archaeology Program allow us to understand the development of the sacred area of the ancient Tenochtitlan and the way it evolved into the site known today.

As a consequence, almost seven centuries of the history of what was once the center of the Mexica universe and what is today the center of Mexico City have been studied by the Templo Mayor Project.

Coyolxauhqui (1113)

On this spot, Electric Company workers came upon the sculpture of the goddess Coyolxauhqui on February 21, 1978.

The sculpture refers to the mythical battle between the solar powers of Huitzilopochtli and the nocturnal ones of the moon goddess, Coyolxauhqui.

This sculpture is one of the masterpieces of Mexica culture, along with the Sun Stone or Aztec Calendar, the Tizoc Stone, the Coatlicue, and the recently discovered Tlaltechtlí goddess.

Originally brightly polychromed, the Coyolxauhqui was placed at the foot of the stairs to the upper part of the Temple, crowned by the sanctuaries dedicated to Huitzilopochtli side. In this way, the Templo Mayor became the place where major myths and all civil and religious powers were brought together.

Today the Coyolxauhqui is exhibited inside the Templo Mayor Museum, while a copy occupies its former location.

Coyolxauhqui Regains its Color

Specialists from the Templo Mayor Project have been recording and conserving remains of mural painting at the archaeological site and of pigments on sculptures and other objects found in offerings. Recently, the Coyolxauhqui sculpture was submitted to in-depth examination and analysis by experts from the Templo Mayor Project. They obtained important data regarding the original colors of its decoration and later structural damage to the stone.

At first, the only color visible was red, because the ancient Aztecs used lime base covered with red as a background for the other colors. Gradually, the almost imperceptible colors emerged and they were the same known from throughout the Templo Mayor: red, ochre, blue, white, and black.

Through painstaking microscopic study, we can now appreciate the Coyolxauhqui in its full glory with its original colors. However, keep in mind we can only approximate the intensity of the colors in this reconstruction.

Coyolxauhqui and Templo Mayor, 30 years reconstructing the past

Thirty years ago, the round sculpture of Coyolxauhqui, one of the masterpieces of Mexica art, was found on February 21, 1978. No one ever expected all the surprises that would surface following the appearance of this monument. A month later, the Templo Mayor Project began its first season of excavations, which came to an end in 1982, after the remains of the main temple of ancient Tenochtitlan were uncovered, in addition to five other buildings from its sacred precinct and its eastern boundary.

During this fieldwork, 110 offerings were found. They contained more than 7,000 artifacts that are still the focus of research by diverse teams of specialists. With the materials from the excavations, the Templo Mayor Museum was opened on October 12, 1987. Its staff continues to investigate, protect, and spread awareness of the rich cultural heritage from the site. The museum's collection has grown with materials from five additional excavation seasons of the Templo Mayor Project, the work of the Urban Archaeology Program (started in 1991), and excavations begun in March 2007 to the west of the temple on the site of the Ajaracas House.

The National Institute of anthropology and History (INAH) and the Templo Mayor Museum are proud to celebrate 30 years of work by sharing the results of our efforts with you. Welcome to this exhibition, where you can see the latest discoveries and studies on the cultural legacy of the Templo Mayor and the sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan.

Construction Phases of the Great Temple

The Great Temple, just as many constructions in the Sacred Precinct of Tenochtitlan, was expanded on numerous occasions. According to historical sources, it was rebuilt on par with the expansion of the Mexica Empire. In addition, the city suffered ongoing floods and earthquakes, and the subsoil of the island-city was constantly settling. This forced the Mexicas to raise the level of their constructions to prevent their buildings from sinking.

Seven different times, the temple was completely covered with construction fill composed of mud and stone. Each time the former structure was covered by a new building of larger dimensions and of better quality. On five additional occasions, only the main façade was expanded. During the inauguration of each new building, war captives from kingdoms conquered expressly for the event were sacrificed.

Due to this construction methods, the earliest stages were never seen by the Spaniards, nor by the last generations of the Mexicas.

The goddess Tlaltecuhтли monolith. The Templo Mayor Project: Seventh Season (2007-2009) (1122)

A new field season began in March 2007 and is estimated to be completed in three years or less. A multidisciplinary team of experts from the INAH and other centers in Mexico and abroad will focus on seven lines of action: make a 3-D computerized map; prepare a 3-D scan of the plan formerly occupied by two colonial houses; geophysical study of buildings; microchemical analysis of hotspots of ritual activity in the area; registration of mural painting; detailed study of the Tlaltecuhтли sculpture; excavation of the area where it was found.

The aim of the last line is to determine the sculpture's stratigraphic positioned the context of associated constructions to shed greater light on its functions and meanings. Historical, iconographic, and archaeological evidence suggest it was a funerary monument covering the tomb of a Mexica ruler, cremated and buried with rich offerings in or at the side of a building called the Cuauhxicalo said to be to the west of the Templo Mayor.

The Destruction of the Great Temple (1129)

After the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521, the Great Temple was almost completely destroyed and the houses of two conquerors, the Avilla brothers, were built atop its ruins. In 1566, these brothers were arrested along with Martin Cortes, son of conqueror Hernan Cortes, for conspiring against the Spanish crown.

The Avila brothers were sentenced to death and were beheaded. Their houses were demolished and salt was cast on the land in fulfillment of the sentence handed down against them. The property remained abandoned for many years and it was used as a trash heap. Carved in the 16th century, the plaque seen here narrated the events of this tragedy.

Some time later, the right to use the land of the Avila properties was granted to the Universidad Real y Pontificia (Royal and Pontifical University) to construct their main quarters. However, this project was never carried out and the lands later passed into the hands of different owners. In 1928 the bookshop Liberia Robredo was opened here, which was later transferred to Jose Porrua and his sons in 1934.

Stage IVb

Axayacatl was the sixth tlatoani or lord of Tenochtitlan (AD 1469-1481). At the beginning of his reign, he ordered the second expansion of only the main façade of the Great Temple.

It is worth noting the four magnificent serpent head sculptures next to the stairway. Two serpents with enormous undulating bodies can be seen at either end, still displaying remains of the original coloring.

In the middle of the north side of the platform, dedicated to Tlaloc, there is a Frog Altar. These animals are associated with the rain god. On top of the altar, there is a small shrine devoted to this god. On the Huitzilopochtli side, there is a slab carved with serpents, set into the stairway. At the foot of the stair, there is a copy of the Coyolxauhqui monolith.

The Center of the Universe

The Great Temple was the Mexica sacred space par excellence. The most important rituals were enacted here, including those dedicated to their gods, the naming of their leaders, and the funerals of the nobility. The Mexica architects designed the Great Temple as the center of their model of the universe, where the horizontal plane converged with the vertical plane.

The horizontal plane was aligned with the four cardinal points or directions of the universe. The Great Temple was located at the point where these two axes crossed. On the vertical plane there were three celestial levels, the earth, and the nine levels of the underworld. The diagram shows the position of the Great Temple.

The birth of Huitzilopochtli and the death of Coyolxauhqui

According to ancient myth, the goddess Coatlicue was sweeping at the top of the hill named Caotepec. She picked up a ball of feathers and placed it next to her womb. When she tried to find it, she realized she was pregnant.

When her daughter, the goddess Coyolxauhqui found out, she decided to join forces with her brothers, the stars, and put an end to their mother's life. Huitzilopochtli, still in Coatlicue's womb, learned of the plot. He told his mother not to worry, that he would defend her. Huitzilopochtli was born a grown man and, armed with the fire serpent, he decapitated Coyolxauhqui, whose body fell down the hillside.

In the Great Temple, as in the myth, a victorious Huitzilopochtli is found at the top of the structure, while Coyolxauhqui, represented by a stone monolith lies dismembered at the foot of the same temple.

Stage IV

Moctezuma I, the fifth Mexica tlatoania, ruled from AD 1440 to 1469. At this time, the Mexicas consolidated their military and economic might. In this period, the Great Temple was completely revamped and enlarged.

The general platform, adorned with enormous braziers and serpent heads have been preserved, as well as remains of the first level of the base of the pyramid and part of the stairways of the main façade.

A representation of the goddess Coyolxauhqui, displaying her torso and mutilated extremities made of stucco-covered tezontle, was found under the floor where the Coyolxauhqui monolith was found in 1978. On the back part of the platform, an inscription reading "1 Rabbit" was found, probably corresponding to the year AD 1454.

Stage III

The Great Temple was enlarged on all sides during the reign of Itzcoatl, the fourth Mexica tlatoani ("great speaker" or ruler). This probably occurred around AD 1431. During his rule, the Mexicas began to gain power through alliances and warfare.

Eight sculptures were found in a row leaning against the stairway of this stage. Exact replicas have been set in the place where they were found and the originals may be seen in the museum.

Two of the eight figures have their arms crossed over their chest. The six remaining have one closed fist forming an opening. Due to the lunar nose ornament that some of them wear, they have been interpreted as representations of the *hiznahuas* or “stars,” siblings of Huitzilopochtli and Coyolxauhqui.

Drainage Channel

Under the metal walkway, there runs an open duct lined with bricks. It is a water channel built around 1900, which crosses beneath the modern-day street of Guatemala. The construction of these public works cut right through the Great Temple, destroying all building phases in a path about 2 m (6 ft) in width. At this time, it is believed that the Great Temple was completely buried beneath the Metropolitan Cathedral and nearby structures, because what is visible today was excavated after 1978.

Huitzilopochtli Shrine

The Great Temple had two shrines on top; the one on the south side was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the god of warfare and patron deity of the Mexicas. Its interior housed a bench with a small altar where an image of the god must have been placed. According to historical sources, it was made of seeds.

This shrine was the most sacred site in Tenochtitlan, where the funerals of the most important Mexica dignitaries were held. Their cremated remains were deposited in funerary urns beneath the floor.

The Techcatl or black tezontle sacrificial stone set in the floor is where human sacrifice was carried out, offering the victim’s heart as divine food to the sun. In the last steps of the platform base, there is a small stone head and the symbol “2 Rabbit” probably corresponding to the year AD 1390.

Stage II

During the period from AD 1375 to 1427, Tenochtitlan was dominated by the kingdom of Azcapotzalco.

Stage II is one of the oldest phases of the Great Temple. It was built around AD 1400, perhaps during the reign of Huitzilihuitl. The only remnants of this phase that have been discovered are

a part of the pyramidal platform and the Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli shrines. The rest of the building is hidden beneath the city's subsoil.

The shrines are small, free-standing constructions, made of stone covered with stucco and decorated with mural painting. According to ancient documents, the upper part of each one of these shrines was very tall and decorated with large architectural ornaments along the roofline.

Tlaloc Shrine

Tlaloc, the rain god, has been venerated by the Mexicas and by many other groups in Mesoamerica since remote times. This deity was responsible for bringing rain, which enabled crops to grow. However, he could also bring storms, easily destroying them.

The image of the god probably once stood on the bench inside the shrine. In this part of the building, the best preserved mural painting can be found. It is reproduced in Gallery 5 of the museum

Outside the entrance, we can see the polychrome sculpture of a chac mool, bearing the attributes of Tlaloc and still retaining its original color. In 1989, a tunnel was excavated in the middle of the stairway leading to this shrine, where the head of another, earlier chac mool was found. This is the oldest Mexica piece found so far in the Great Temple. It dates to approximately AD 1350.

The seven Enlargements of the Great Temple

Each ruler was responsible for enlarging the dimensions of the Great Temple. In addition to reflecting the growth of the empire, it was also motivated by the constant floods the city suffered.

At this point in the visit, it is possible to see the superimposed levels of the different construction phases of the platforms on which the pyramid rests. Here one can see the vestiges of Stage VII, the last expansion of the Great Temple.

It is also possible to see the first construction phases, so this vantage point is a strategic location allowing visitors to view almost two centuries of historical development. Take a look at the diagram showing the building remains from the expansion projects of each of the Mexica rulers.

Serpents and Frogs at the Great Temple

The importance of animals in Mexica ritual is evident in the Great Temple, both in the architecture and in the offerings deposited there.

Different species of serpents were represented in architecture; their bodies were decorated with symbolic elements, such as feathers, rings, or spirals. On the four facades of the platform, there are monumental serpent heads carved of basalt. Two enormous serpents, each measuring 6 m (20 ft.) long and with an undulating body, flank the access to the platform. The serpent heads tenoned into the platform have been interpreted as images serving to evoke Coatepec Hill the place where Huitzilopochtli was born.

A frog altar stands in the middle of the Stage IVb platform. The croaking of these amphibians announced the coming rains. During the festival honoring the Veintena of Tozoztontli, a celebration related to corn, frogs were dressed in blue, sacrificed, and roasted.

North Patio

This patio has several superimposed floors, laid to counteract the sinking of the land and the constant floods that plagued Tenochtitlan. The three small buildings, aligned with the wall of the Great Temple platform, have been given letter designations; A, B, and C. They were built around AD 1500 (Stage IV).

Building A is the one closest to us. Its two stairways lead to the upper part. Only stucco plaster remains on the surface.

Building B of the Tzompantli (Skull Wall) Altar is decorated with rows of human skulls carved in stone.

Building C of the North Red Temple displays well-preserved mural painting. The style and decoration of its architecture evoke the Teotihuacan style.

Another small construction may be seen next to the street of Justo Sierra, at the limits of the Archaeological Zone. This is known as Building D.

The structure of largest dimensions, located on the north side, is the House of the Eagles. The rooms in its interior date to an earlier construction phase, between AD 1481 and 1486).

The House of the Eagles

One of the most important paces in the Sacred Center was the building known as the House of the eagles. It was here that the Mexica elite held their ceremonies. Including meditation, prayer, penitence and the rendering of offerings

The building was raised, then amplified three times between 1430 and 1500 AD. In the course of the tour, we can observe two of the three phases of construction. The most ancient (Phase I) is now buried.

Around 1470 AD, during the regime of Axayacatl, the building was expanded (Phase II). Seeing the interior of this house is a privilege that many Mexicas did not have because only a few people had access to it.

The House of the Eagles was destroyed during the Conquest and was buried beneath the church of Santiago Apostol (the Apostle James).

Phase II of the House of the Eagles

This construction phase is the best conserve, so that we can see the stairways, porticos, rooms, and a small interior patio. This patio allows for the entrance of light and rain and facilitates there circulation of air. Rainwater ran into a drain in the floor.

The inner rooms reflect the influence of the Toltec style, which was dominant four centuries before this building was constructed. Some examples are the banquettes and the braziers bearing the face of the god Tlaloc.

The flowers with four petals, located at the doorways to the rooms on the east of the building, symbolized the four corners of the universe. In the southern part, we can observe a colonial oven that destroyed part of the building.

Four ceramic sculptures flanking the entrances to the rooms were found during excavations. Two of these represent men in eagle attire, and two others represent the god of death, Mictlantecutli. These sculptures can be viewed inside the museum.

The House of the Eagles, The Templo Mayor Project: Fourth (1991-1992) and Fifth (1994-1997) Seasons

This neo-Toltec building was a key religious structure in Tenochtitlan for private rites involving only a few individuals. Isolated from the outside and dimly lit, its small dimensions offered an environment more apt for prayer, meditation, and penitence than public display. The rich

decoration suggests offering blood was one of the main rites conducted here. Processions of armed warriors in the bench reliefs meet at a grass ball in the middle with bloody awls from rites of autosacrifice.

The architecture and benches also offer valuable data on the nature of these rites through microchemical studies of the porous plaster surfaces. INAH and UNAM archaeologists submitted ten samples for chemical analysis. Areas of intense ritual activity were pinpointed in front of altars with braziers and large ceramic images (displayed in Hall 4 in the Museum), where chemical remains included burned copal incense, blood, and food offerings of plant and animal origins.

Banquettes in the House of the Eagles

The banquettes built into the lower part of the walls in this space are made of blocks of stone displaying beautifully carved bas reliefs. They are painted in bright colors against a red background/

The scene portrayed on the banquettes is that of a procession of armed warriors in a zacatapayolli, a ball of dried moss or grass used to hold the bloody spines of spikes used in self-sacrifice.

These architectonic elements, like the braziers adorned with the face of Tlaloc, reflect the influence of the Toltecs, whose style was copied by the Mexicas four hundred years after they settled in the valley.

Explorations in the House of the Eagles

Since 1981, excavations at this site have produced surprising results. Especially noteworthy is the find of sculptures of two people dressed as eagles. Thanks to interdisciplinary investigation, it has been possible to learn about the kind of ritual activities that were performed in this building. Evidence of the rites was left on the floors.

Ritual activity occurred near the altars, braziers, and sculptures. The chemical analysis of the floors showed residues of animal and vegetable products, pulque, and blood, distributed in specific areas.

During the most recent excavation period, ceramic sculptures were recovered representing the god Mictlantecutli. He was Lord of the Underworld, the destination of the souls of those who had died a natural death or died of old age.

Tzompantli Altar (Building B)

Arranged in rows, two hundred forty stone skulls covered with several layers of stucco decorate the back and sides of the structure. The main façade has a stairway flanked by balustrades. Its interior contained a spectacular offering, including representations of musical instruments, along with puma and wolf skeletons and other elements.

This building is located on the north side of the great Temple, symbolically alluding to the region of the dead known as Mictlampa, according to Mexica cosmovision.

North Red Temple (Building C)

It was built with the talud-tablero system, with a sloping base surmounted by a rectangular panel, inspired by constructions at Teotihuacana. The main façade is composed of a vestibule with a small round altar in the center.

This area is limited by walls painted with red and white ribbons and topped by large stone rings also painted red. The small temple in the back is completely covered with designs painted in red, yellow, blue, black and white.

This building stands out for its mural painting on a stucco base, with well preserved, finely drawn designs.

The great Temple and the Metropolitan Cathedral

Since its construction, the Great Temple was enlarged on all four sides on seven different occasions. By 1521, the year of the conquest of Tenochtitlan, the Great Temple, had reached its maximum dimensions; a height of 45 m (almost 148 ft.). Today the Metropolitan Cathedral measures 60 m. (197 ft.) tall, only 15 m (49 ft.) more than the original construction.

Recent research at the Metropolitan Cathedral has revealed earlier churches buried beneath it. See the diagram for details.

Construction Techniques

The problems of the muddy subsoil of Tenochtitlan and the frequent flooding of the city when the lakes swelled forced the Mexicas to adopt highly particular construction techniques.

Building foundations were made by driving stakes made from ahuejote (ahuehuete) trees into the lake bed or into the surface of the island, which were anchored with fragments of tezontle tone and mud. This is how they prepared the land to build platforms with an earth and volcanic rock core. This technique was so effective that the Spaniards adopted it in their first constructions.

The First colonial Constructions

The first constructions in the capital of New Spain were made of stone from pre-hispanic temples and vestiges of these viceregal structures remain overlying the Great Temple. In addition, piles from colonial foundations penetrated Méxica structures, partially destroying them.

Some of the colonial remains visible are:

The bases of several columns on top of the House of the Eagles. These probably pertain to a 16th century construction.

At the northeast corner, over a slab-paved patio, there is a colonial fountain that was once part of a house or convent built in the area around the 18th century.

Other colonial elements include a brick tank built very close to the South red Temple and an arch that was built into the Stage V platform.

Braseros Ceremoniales (1177)

Braseros manufacturados en barro moldeado y modelado, decorados con aplicaciones hechas mediante la técnica del patillaje. En el culto mesoamericano, los braseros fueron utilizados para quemar hule y resina de copal, junto con los corazones de victimas sacrificadas en las principales ceremonias. Los mexicas creían que el fuego, mediante se poder transformador, permitía entablar una comunicación con el mundo divino. Los braseros, en tanto lo simbolizan y le servían como depósito, representaban adicionalmente el centro del universo, lugar ocupado por el anciano dios del fuego, Huehuetēotl o Xiuhtecuhtli.

El más grande tiene una decoración simple llagada estrechamente con Huitzilopochtli y el fuego. Resaltan el borde que simula una cuerda, así como varias protuberancias hemisféricas

distribuidas de manera uniforme entre la parte media del cuerpo del brasero y sus extremos. El frente está rematado por un gran mono, compuesto por una cinta anudada al centro cuyos extremos cuelgan diagonalmente hacia la base. Está recubierto con una delgada capa de estuco que presenta restos de color ocre y rojo, sobre todo hacia el frente de la base.

El más pequeño tiene un borde con forma de flecos triangulares que descienden en forma de rayo por todo su contorno. En la parte central tiene tres hileras dobles de picos, cada una dirigida hacia el frente y los extremos, las cuales están delimitadas por dos bandas a manera de castilas. Presenta un soporte trípode, conformado por tres grandes conos que convergen hacia el centro, y está recubierto por una delgada capa de estuco.

English Translation:

Ceremonial Braziers

Braziers were manufactured through molding and shaping clay, decorated with applications made by the techniques of pinout. In the Mesoamerican cult, the braziers were used to burn rubber and copal resin, along with the hearts of victims killed in major ceremonies. The Mexica believed that fire, through power, transformed, and made it possible to start communication links with the divine world. The braziers, symbolized and served as a deposit, additionally represented the center of the universe, a place occupied by the old god of fire, or Xiuhtecuhtli Huehuetotl.

The largest has a blistering single decoration linked closely with Huitzilopochtli and fire. They emphasize the edge to simulate a rope, and several hemispheric protrusions evenly distributed between the upper body of the stove and the ends. The front is surmounted by a large baboon, consisting of a knotted ribbon whose ends hang down the center diagonally toward the base. It is covered with a thin layer of stucco that has traces of ocher and red, especially towards the front of the base.

The smallest has a fringed edge with a triangular-shaped beam down on all sides. In the central part, it has three double rows of peaks, each headed toward the front and ends, which are bounded by two bands at castile way. It has a tripod stand, composed of three large cones that converge toward the center, and is coated with a thin layer of stucco.

El Recinto Sagrado de Mexica-Tenochtitlán ha sido objeto de numerosas investigaciones a lo largo del tiempo. Sus impresionantes edificios y las místicas ceremonias que en él se realizaban fueron ampliamente descritas por los conquistadores. Más tarde, cuando el pasado prehispánico parecía estar olvidado, el hallazgo de piezas y esculturas, junto con el surgimiento de una conciencia nacionalista durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, hicieron renacer el interés por la historia antigua de México; interés que ha aumentado y perdurando hasta nuestros días, y que ha tenido como consecuencia la realización de importantes excavaciones y estudios arqueológicos en el centro de la Ciudad de México.

En esta sala se da un panorama del desarrollo que han tenido estas investigaciones desde 1790, hasta los hallazgos más recientes realizados por el Proyecto Templo Mayor y el Programa de Arqueología Urbana del INAH.

“El día 4 de septiembre de 1790 en México en la plaza principal, enfrente del real palacio, abriendo unos cimientos sacaron a un ídolo de la gentilidad, cuya figura era una piedra muy labrada con una calavera en las espaldas, y por delante otra calavera con cuatro manos [y] figuras en el resto del cuerpo pero sin pies ni cabeza...”

(José Gómez, alabardero que prestaba sus servicios en el Palacio Virreinal)

English Translation:

Room 1

The Sacred Precinct of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was the subject of numerous investigations over time. Its impressive buildings and mystical ceremonies were widely described by the conquerors. Later, when the pre-hispanic past seemed to be forgotten, the finding of pieces and sculptures, along with the emergence of a nationalist consciousness during the second half of the nineteenth century were a revival of interest in ancient history of Mexico; interest has increased and lasted until today, and that has resulted in the implementation of major excavations and archaeological studies in central Mexico City.

This room provides an overview of developments that have been taken by this research since 1790, until the most recent findings made by the Templo Mayor Project and Program INAH Urban Archeology.

"On September 4, 1790 in Mexico in the main square opposite the palace royal, opening a foundation pulled a pagan idol whose figure was a stone well carved with a skull on the back,

and ahead of another skull with four hands [and] figures in the rest of the body but made no sense ... "

(Jose Gomez, yeoman who served in the Viceregal Palace)

Escultura de dios Xólotl

Xólotl era el dios de lo gemelo o doble, de lo deforme o monstruoso, por ello los partos de mellizos eran considerados consecuencia de la intervención del dios. Xólotl también representaba a Venus como la estrella vespertina, que alumbrada tenuemente el Mictlán.

Este dios era representado con cabeza de perro y esta ataviado con una orejera circular que lleva un pendiente en forma de gancho llamada en náhuatl epicololli.

Esta pieza fue encontrada en 900 por Don Leopoldo Batres en la calle de las Escalerillas, hoy Guatemala.

English Translation:

Sculpture of god Xolotl

Xolotl was the god of the twin or double, the deformed or monstrous, so twin births were considered as coming from the intervention of God. Xolotl also represented Venus as the evening star that dimly lit the Mictlan.

This god was represented with the dog's head and wearing a circular earplug, and wearing a pendant hook epicololli called Nahuatl.

This piece was found in 900 by Don Leopoldo Batres in Escalerillas Street, today Guatemala.

New Findings from Urban Archeology Project

The aim of the Urban Archaeology Program, created in 1991, is the recovery of archaeological heritage from sites where new construction is planned within the former limits of the sacred area of ancient Tenochtitlan. Works began recently in the Cultural Center of the Spanish Embassy, located on Donocles Street, has yielded amazing discoveries.

Three sculptures and one offering containing seven clay roof ornaments were found in the building's foundations in association with a Mexica religious structure.

One almost complete sculpture represents the death god Mictlantecuhtli ("Lord of Mictlan"). Another fragment represents the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli ("Lord of Grass/Year"). The third one, also fragmentary, is an Eagle Cuauhxicalli, a vessel for sacrificial offerings. Much of the original building will be preserved inside the new one.

They are on display with information from the archaeologists who researched them.

Descubrimiento de Coyolxauhqui

El 21 de febrero de 1978, obreros de la Compañía de Luz y Fuerza, al estar efectuando trabajos de cableado en la esquina de Guatemala y Argentina, localizaron un gran monolito circular. Se dio aviso al Departamento de Salvamento Arqueológico, para que llevara a cabo las excavaciones de la escultura, que ya entonces había sido reconocida como la diosa Coyolxauhqui, y recuperaron los materiales de cinco ofrendas asociadas a esta.

Este importante hallazgo vino a desencadenar toda una serie de hipótesis e inquietudes que precipitaron el interés que ya se tenía por excavar y conocer el principal edificio de los mexicas. Así a partir de ese año se da comienzo al Proyecto templo Mayor, el cual realizó trabajos de exploración y excavación en un área de 12,900 m² durante casi cinco años.

English Translation:

Discovery of Coyolxauhqui

On 21 February 1978, workers of the Light and Power Company, were doing wiring on the corner of Guatemala and Argentina and found a large circular monolith. They gave notice to the Archaeological Rescue Department to carry out excavations of the sculpture, which even then was recognized as the goddess Coyolxauhqui, and they recovered five offering materials associated with this.

This major discovery came to trigger a whole series of assumptions and concerns that precipitated the already existing interest in excavating and understanding the main building of the Mexica. So after that year, began the Templo Mayor Project, which carried out exploration and excavation in an area of 12.900 m² for nearly five years.

Ofrendas

En el área que corresponde únicamente al edificio del Templo Mayor se han encontrado un total de 101 ofrendas enterradas bajo los pisos de las diferentes etapas constructivas. Esto se debe a que el Templo Mayor era el espacio sagrado por excelencia donde se llevaban a cabo la mayor parte de las ceremonias rituales, ya que era un lugar destinado a la comunión con los dioses.

La ofrenda es una forma de expresión con que cuentan los hombres para hablar con sus dioses; es la intermediaria entre este mundo y el otro. Cada objeto dentro de la ofrenda lleva un mensaje, que unido a otros forman un discurso destinado a los dioses.

Al parecer las ofrendas eran colocadas en los templos para consagrar la construcción o la ampliación del edificio, así como la erección de algún monumento importante asociado a este. Otro motivo pudo ser la celebración de algunas fiestas del calendario ritual o el ascenso de algún miembro del grupo dominante.

En el Templo Mayor se han encontrado tres tipos de ofrenda de acuerdo a como fueron depositadas: ofrendas en relleno, ofrendas en caja y ofrendas en cista. En cada una, los objetos fueron cuidadosamente acomodados por capas, unos sobre otros; en varios niveles de enterramiento que en algunos casos, representaban los niveles del cosmos, según la concepción que los mexicas tenían del universo.

English Translation:

Offerings

In only the area of the main temple building they found a total of 101 offerings buried under the floors of the various stages of construction. This is because the Temple was the quintessential sacred space where they did most of the ritual ceremonies, as it was a place for communion with the gods.

The offering is a form of expression with which men have to talk to their gods, it is the intermediary between this world and another. Each object within the offering carries a message, which is attached to other speeches to the gods.

Apparently, the offerings were placed in temples to enshrine the construction or expansion of building and erection of a monument to this important partner. Another reason could be the holding some events in the ritual calendar or promotion of any member of the dominant group.

At the Templo Mayor was found three types of offerings, according to how they were deposited: filling offerings, offerings in cash and gifts in a cist. In each, the objects were carefully arranged in layers one above another, at various levels of burial in some cases, represented the levels of the cosmos, according to the conception that the Mexica were the universe.

Etapas constructivas

El Templo Mayor fue el principal edificio de la ciudad de Tenochtitlán, ya que en él se celebran las ceremonias políticas y religiosas más importantes. Se trata de un edificio doble, con una gran plataforma y una escalinata que conduce a dos adoratorios dedicados a sus dioses patronos. En el lado norte se encuentra el adoratorio de Tlaloc, dios tutelar de la agricultura; y en el lado sur el de Huitzilopochtli, dios de la guerra y el tributo.

Este edificio tuvo cuando menos siete ampliaciones por sus cuatro lados y cinco añadidos en su fachada principal. A cada ampliación de le ha denominado etapa, ya que representa un periodo de tiempo en que el edificio estuvo en funcionamiento. Al parecer cada gobernante mexica mando edificar un nuevo templo que fuera más grande y mejor decorado que el interior, para mostrar al pueblo y a los grupos conquistados la grandeza y riqueza de su señorío.

Las siete etapas constructivas fueron superpuestas una sobre otra, es decir que el Templo tenía una misma permanencia. Esto se debe a que según la cosmovisión mexica, el Templo Mayor estaba ubicado en un sitio sagrado y en centro del mundo, por lo que el edificio no podía ser cambiado de lugar. De él partían los cuatro rumbos del universo y los tres niveles; cielo, tierra e inframundo, convirtiéndose así en el centro fundamental.

English Translation:

Construction phases

The Templo Mayor was the main building in the city of Tenochtitlan, since it held the more important political and religious ceremonies. This is a double building, with a great platform and a staircase leading to two temples dedicated to their patron gods. On the north side is the temple of Tlaloc, the tutelary god of agriculture, and on the south side of Huitzilopochtli, the god of war and tribute.

This building had at least seven extensions on all four sides and five additions to its main

facade. Each expansion phase has been called so because it represents a time period when the building was operational. Apparently, each commanding Aztec ruler built a new temple that was bigger and better decorated than the inside, to show the people and groups conquered the greatness and richness of his dominion.

The seven stages of construction were superimposed upon each other, meaning that the Temple had a great permanence. This is because according to Aztec cosmology, the Temple was located on a sacred site and the center of the world, so that the building could not be moved. It depicted the four corners of the universe and all three levels, sky, earth and underworld, becoming the fundamental center.

Proyecto Templo Mayor

La mayoría de los trabajos arqueológicos que se habían realizado en el centro de la Ciudad de México, habían sido solo recates de hallazgos inesperados. Pero a partir de 1978, el Proyecto Templo Mayor llevo a cabo excavaciones sistemáticas dentro de una investigación y de un plan de trabajo.

Este proyecto fue una excavación a gran escala en la que participaron numerosos especialistas que trabajaron de manera interdisciplinaria, y que no solo permito conocer e gran edificio del Templo mayor y parte Recinto Sagrado, sino que también ayudo a corroborar o refutar la historia escrita en los documentos del siglo XVI, y proporcionó importantes datos al estudio de la cultura mexicana.

English Translation:

Templo Mayor Project

Most archaeological work had been made in central Mexico City, and were aonly rescuing unexpected findings. But since 1978, the Templo Mayor Project took place in a systematic excavation and research work plan.

This project was a large-scale excavation in which many specialists worked in an interdisciplinary way, and not just learning about the much larger building and part of the Temple Sacred Chamber, but also helped to corroborate or refute the story written in the XVI century documents, and provided important data for the study of Mexica culture.

Para llevar a cabo la investigación se plantearon tres fases de trabajo.

1. Recopilación y revisión de los trabajos arqueológicos que se habían realizado previamente en el área de excavación y en los alrededores. Con esto se logro tener una perspectiva general de la información que se tenía sobre el Templo Mayor.
2. Obtención de datos. Esta fase consistió propiamente en la excavación, lleva a cabo durante casi cinco años, logrando recuperar las diversas etapas constructivas del Templo mayor, así como otros edificios aledaños. También se encontraron varias esculturas, relieves, pinturas murales y un total de casi siete mil objetos arqueológicos procedentes de 110 ofrendas. Posteriormente se llevaron a cabo otras tres temporadas de excavación, siendo la ultima en 1995.
3. Interpretación de los datos. Con la información recabada en las dos fases anteriores, se han podido confrontar la teoría con la práctica. Esta fase ha requerido de varios años y de hecho los trabajos de análisis e interpretación aun continúan. Producto de esta fase ha sido la publicación de más de 100 títulos sobre las excavaciones y las investigaciones.

English Translation:

To carry out the investigation, there were three phases.

1. Data collection and review of the archaeological work had been carried out previously in the excavation area and its surroundings. With this achievement they had an overview of the information that was available about the Temple.
2. Data retrieval. This phase consisted of the excavation itself, performed for nearly five years, achieving various stages of construction recovering more Temple and other nearby buildings. Also found were several sculptures, reliefs, murals and a total of nearly seven thousand archaeological objects from 110 offerings. Another three seasons of digging were subsequently carried out, most recently in 1995.
3. Interpretation of data. With the information gathered in the two previous phases, they have been able to confront the theory with the practice. This phase has required several years and, in fact, the work of analysis and interpretation is still ongoing. Output of this phase was the publication of over 100 titles on the excavations and investigations.

Programa de Arqueología Urbana (1199)

En 1991 se inicia el Programa de Arqueología Urbana (PAU) con el objetivo de investigar el área que ocupó el antiguo centro ceremonial de Tenochtitlán, desde su fundación en 1325 d.C. hasta el desarrollo que ha tenido la actual Ciudad de México, a lo largo de siete siglos. Este periodo

comprende la ocupación mexicana, la ciudad colonial erigida sobre los edificios prehispánicos, la etapa Independiente y el siglo XX.

Gracias a este programa se han podido llevar a cabo diferentes exploraciones de rescate arqueológico en varios inmuebles y predios cercanos al Templo Mayor, que han permitido ampliar nuestros conocimientos sobre el centro ceremonial. Dentro de este espacio quedan comprendidas siete manzanas o bloques urbanos que tienen los siguientes límites: al norte con las calles de San Ildefonso y González Obregón; al poniente con República de Brasil y Monte de Piedad; al sur con la parte norte de Palacio Nacional y frente a la fachada principal de la Catedral Metropolitana y al oriente con las calles de El Carmen y Correo Mayor.

English Translation:

Urban Archeology Program (1991)

In 1991 he started the Urban Archeology Program (PAU) in order to investigate the area occupied by the ancient ceremonial center of Tenochtitlan, since its founding in 1325 AD through the development that has taken place in the current Mexico City, over seven centuries. This period includes the Mexican occupation, the colonial city built on pre-hispanic buildings, the Independent stage and the twentieth century.

Thanks to this program, they have been able to perform various rescue archaeological explorations in several buildings and grounds near the main temple, which is expanding our knowledge of the ceremonial center. Within this space fall seven blocks or urban blocks that have the following boundaries: north to the streets of San Ildefonso and Gonzalez Obregon west with Republic of Brazil and Pawn Shop on the south by the northern part of the National Palace and front of the main facade of the Metropolitan Cathedral and the streets east of El Carmen and E Major.

Catedral Metropolitana

Debido a la extracción de agua de subsuelo que se realizó durante de varios años para abastecer a la ciudad, muchos de los inmuebles ubicados en el centro histórico han sufrido hundimientos graves. Dichos edificios fueron asentados sobre las construcciones prehispánicas, lo que ha provocado el hundimiento diferencial, la inestabilidad y el agrietamiento de los edificios.

Uno de los más afectados por este fenómeno ha sido la Catedral Metropolitana. Es así que diversos especialistas han venido realizando obras de regimentación y corrección geométrica

consistentes en la excavación de 32 lumbreras (pozos circulares) de 20 metros de profundidad en promedio, con 3.40 metros de diámetro así como otras 50 excavaciones menos profundas, las cuales se han podido aprovechar para el rescate arqueológico.

English Translation:

Metropolitan Cathedral

Because of the extraction of underground water that was conducted during several years to supply the city, many buildings situated in the historic center have suffered serious sinking. These buildings were settled on the pre-hispanic constructions, which have led to differential sinking, instability and cracking of buildings.

One of the most affected by this phenomenon has been the Metropolitan Cathedral. Thus, various scholars have been creating works of regimentation and geometric correction involving the excavation of 32 lights (circular holes) of 20 meters deep on average, with 3.40 meters in diameter and 50 other shallow excavations, which are needed to rescue archeology.

En muchas de las lumbreras se han localizado vestigios de construcciones prehispánicas, entre las que destacan el juego de pelota, decorado con pinturas, el Templo del Sol y el Templo circular de Quetzalcóatl.

In many of the luminaries have been found traces of pre-hispanic constructions, among which the ball game, decorated with paintings, the Temple of the Sun and the circular Temple of Quetzalcoatl.

Case;

Disco de Turquesa (1203)

Mosaico formado aproximadamente por 15 000 pequeñas incrustaciones de turquesa. En la franja exterior tiene siete personajes ataviados como quereros, que por sus atributos se refaccionen con dos de los principales astros del cosmos mexicana, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, dios del planeta Venus y Mizcóatl, que ha sido identificado con la vía láctea.

Fue descubierto en las excavaciones realizadas en el edificio de la equina de Seminario y Republica de Guatemala. El hallazgo corresponde a la sexta amplificación arquitectónica del Templo Mayor que ha sido fechada para los años 1486 a 1502 d.C.

La pieza es el resultado de un laborioso trabajo de restauración que incluyó tanto el análisis de la posición que guardaba cada pieza al momento del hallazgo, como la identificación de sus diferentes formas halladas en representaciones pictóricas y escultóricas.

English Translation:

Turquoise Disc (1203)

Mosaic consisted of approximately 15 000 small inlaid turquoise pieces. The outer strip has seven figures dressed as quereros, with attributes that are parts of two major stars of the Mexica cosmos Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, god of the planet Venus and Mizcóatl, which has been identified with the Milky Way.

It was discovered in excavations in the building of the Equine Seminar and Republica de Guatemala. The finding corresponds to the sixth architectural amplification of the Temple which has been dated to the years 1486 to 1502 AD

The piece is the result of a painstaking restoration work that included both the analysis of the position of the pieces and keeping every piece at the time of discovery, including the identification of different forms found in pictorial and sculptural.

Quotes.....

“Los cuerpos de los soldados eran recogidos por sus padres para llevarlos a sus casas y luego, según distinción, a quemar al patio sagrado de Cuauhxiccalco o al Tepuchcalli. Las cenizas...eran guardadas después o sepultadas”. Sahagún

“El dios de la tierra abre la boca, con hambre de tragar la sangre de muchos que morirán en esta guerra. Parece que se quieren regocijar el sol y el dios de la tierra llamado Tlaltecucutli; quieren dar de comer y de beber a los dioses del cielo y del inframundo, haciéndoles convite con sangre y carne de los hombres que han de morir en esta guerra...” Sahagún

English Translation:

"The bodies of the soldiers were picked up by their parents to take them home and then, as distinction, to burn the sacred courtyard or Tepuchcalli Cuauhxiccalco. The ashes ... or buried were later saved. Sahagun

"The god of the earth opens her mouth, thirsty to drink the blood of many who will die in this war. Appears to want to rejoice in the sun and the earth god called Taltecutli, they want to give food and drink to the gods of heaven and the underworld, making lunch with flesh and blood of men who have died in this war ... " Sahagun

"cuando nace un varón el
ombligo... enterrarlo han
en medio del campo donde se
dan las batallas, y esto es la
señal que eres ofrecido y
prometido al sol y a la tierra,
ésta es la señal que tú haces
profesión de hacer este oficio
de guerra, y tu nombre estará
escrito en el campo de las
batallas para que no se eche en
olvido tu nombre, ni tu
persona .." Sahagún

Telpochcalli

"Cuando han comido
comienzan otra vez a enseñarles:
a unos cómo usar las armas,
a otros cómo cazar,
cómo hacer cautivos en la guerra,
cómo han de tirar la cerbatana,
o arrojar la piedra.

Todos aprendían a usar,
el escudo, la macana,
cómo lanzar el dardo y la flecha
mediante la tiradera y el arco

también cómo se caza con la red
y cómo se caza con cordeles
Otros eran enseñados en las variadas
artes de los Toltecas. . ."

English Translation:

"When a male is born at the
navel ... they are buried
in the countryside where they
give battle, and this is the
signal that you are offered and
promised the sun and the earth,
this is the sign that you professionally do this job of
war, and your name will be
written in the field of
battles, to not cave in and
forget your name or your
person .. ' Sahagun

Telpochcalli

'When they have eaten, they
begin again to teach
about how to use weapons,
others how to hunt,
how to make captives in war,
how they shoot the blowgun
or throw a stone.

All learned to use,
the shield, the club,
how to throw the dart and arrow
through the landfill and the arc
also how to play the game
and how to hunt with string
Others were taught in the various
arts of the Toltecs. . . "

“Pero el sacrificio mas celebre entre los mexicanos era el que los españoles llamaron...gladiatorio. Este era un sacrificio de mucho honor y no se ejecutaba sino en prisioneros celebres por su valor. Había cerca del Templo Mayor de las ciudades grandes...una gran piedra redonda semejante en su figura a la de los molinos...sobre esta piedra que llamaban Temalacatl, ponían al prisionero armado de rodela y espada corto, atado pos un pie y asegurada la cuerda por el agujero de la piedra. Salía a combatir con él sobre la misma piedra un oficial o soldado mexicano con más ventajosas armas...si el prisionero era vencido lo llevaban al ara común de los sacrificios para abrirle el pecho y sacarle el corazón...pero si el prisionero vencía a aquel soldado y a otros seis...se le concedía la vida, la libertad y cuanto se le había quitado en la batalla en que había sido apresado.”

English Translation:

"But the sacrifice most celebrated among Mexicans was what the Spanish called ... gladiatorial. This was a great honor, and sacrifice was not execution of prisoners but was notorious for its value. Temple was near the big cities ... a large round stone similar in figure to the mill ... on this rock, called Temalacatl, was put the prisoner armed with buckler and short sword, a foot pursuit and tied the rope secured the hole in the stone. He went out to fight him, on the same stone Mexican officer or soldier, with weapons ... more advantageous if the prisoner was beaten him to the common altar of sacrifice to open the chest and take out his heart ... but if the prisoner has already expired at that soldier six ... he was granted life, liberty and all that he had taken in battle that had been captured."

“...llevaban al real cautivo al ara común vestido de las insignias del ídolo del sol, en donde le sacrificaba el sumo sacerdote; hacia con su sangre una aspersion a los cuatro vientos cardinales y enviaba un vaso de la misma sangre al rey, el cual hacia rociar con ella todos los ídolos que había en el recinto del templo en acción de gracias por la victoria obtenida sobre los enemigos del estado. Fijaban en un madero altísimo la cabeza de la víctima y después de secar su piel la rellenaban de algodón y colgaban en el mismo palacio del rey para _____ tan ilustre acción...”

English Translation:

"... The brought the captive out in common dress insignia of the idol of the sun, where he sacrificed by the high priest to a sprinkling with his blood to the four cardinal winds, sending a glass of the same blood to the king, which to sprinkle with it all the idols that were in the precincts of the temple in thanksgiving for the victory over the enemies of the state. Fixed on a

towering tree, the head of the victim and after your skin dry cotton stuffed and hung in the palace of the king to such an illustrious *victorious* action ... "

Máscaras Cráneo

Las mascararas se fabricaban con la parte frontal de un cráneo humano, al que le incrustaban discos de concha y pirita en los orificios oculares. En algunos casos llevan también cuchillos de pedernal incrustados en las cavidades nasal y oral. Las perforaciones que presentan algunos de ellos posiblemente sirvieron para colocar pelo o algún elemento que o simulara, ya que las deidades de la muerte y el inframundo, se caracterizan por llevar una cabellera encrespada.

English Translation:

The masks were made of the front of a human skull, which was inlaid shell discs and pyrite in the eye holes. In some cases, flint knives are also embedded in the oral and nasal cavities. Perforations that some of them possibly have served to put hair or some element or simulated, as the deities of death and the underworld, are characterized by wearing curly hair.

Ofrenda 17

En ese tipo de ofrendas se representaron los tres niveles que, según el pensamiento mexica, formaban el universo. El nivel inferior o Mictlan era concebido como un lugar oscuro, frío subterráneo y acuático, por ello fue recreado con caracoles, corales y animales marinos; por su parte los restos óseos encontrados de un espadarte de pez sierra, un cocodrilo y un tiburón, quizás representaron al cipactli, animal monstruoso que flotaba sobre las aguas oceánicas y que era visito como la superficie de la tierra. El nivel celeste estaba habitado por los dioses, por lo que encontramos imágenes de diferentes deidades como Tlaloc, dios de la lluvia y Xiuhtecuhtli, dios del fuego, así como objetos relacionados con los rituales y cultos asociados a estos.

Finalmente, los cráneos humanos posiblemente pertenecieron a prisioneros de guerra, que fueron decapitados y ofrendados en honor a los dioses para consagrar el templo.

Esta ofrenda fue localizada al centro de la fachada posterior del Templo Mayor (Etapa IVb 1469-1481 d.C.)

English Translation:

Offering 17

In such offerings are represented the three levels, according to Mexican thought, that formed the universe. The lower level or Mictlan was conceived as a place of dark, cold underground water, so it was recreated with snails, corals and marine animals, and on the other hand I found bones of a swordfish of sawfish, a crocodile and a shark, perhaps cipactli represented the animal monster floating on the ocean waters and was visited as the surface of the earth. The sky level was inhabited by the gods, so they are images of different deities such as Tlaloc, god of rain and Xiuhtecuhtli, god of fire and related objects and rituals associated with these cults.

Finally, these human skulls possibly belonged to prisoners of war, who were beheaded and offered up in honor of the gods to consecrate the temple.

This offering faith located in the center of the rear facade of the Templo Mayor (Stage IVb 1469-1481 AD)

El sacrificio para el mexica simbolizada la incursión del hombre en el ámbito de lo divino. El individuo destinado a esta muerte ritual representaba la justa retribución al sacrificio perpetuado por los dioses para la creación del quinto sol. El corazón y la sangre, símbolos de la vida, se convierten en fuerza cósmica u divina, servían para alimentar al dios del sol y de la tierra.

Morir en sacrificio confería a la víctima el mayor honor después de la muerte: acompañar al sol en su recorrido diario para alumbrar la tierra.

English Translation:

The sacrifice to the Aztec to symbolize man's foray into the realm of the divine. The individual for this death ritual represented just compensation for slaughter perpetrated by the gods to create the fifth sun. The heart and blood, symbols of life, become divine or cosmic forces, served to feed the sun god and earth.

Dying as a sacrifice gave the victim the highest honor after death: to accompany the sun on its daily route to illuminate the earth.

Existían diferentes tipos de sacrificio, teniendo entre los más importantes” la muerte en la piedra de sacrificios y la ceremonia gladiatoria. Había festividades como Tlacaxipehualiztli y Panquetzaliztli en las que se sacrificaban principalmente cautivos de guerra. También tenían las guerras floridas, contiendas de carácter ritual celebradas conjuntamente con los pueblos de Tlaxcala, Huexotzingo y Texcoco principalmente; el fin era obtener prisioneros de guerra para los sacrificios.

Los conceptos sobre la guerra y el sacrificio responden a la necesidad de cohesión de la sociedad mexicana así como a la reproducción del sistema. El guerrero tiene una importancia fundamental, se encuentra inmerso en un control ideológico-religioso sacrificio; ya que de esta manera se lógica la retribución de sacrificio realizado por los dioses en un tiempo unifico.

La guerra justificaba por aspectos religiosos, obedecía fundamentalmente a la necesidad de expansión territorial para la obtención de tributos. Así a traes del recorrido de esta sala se muestran algunos de los aspectos más importantes que intervienen en la guerra y el sacrificio, conceptos sustentadores del militarismo mexicana. La participación militar conjuntamente con las prácticas religiosas constituía la aspiración máxima del pueblo mexicana.

English Translation:

There were different kinds of sacrifice, having among the most important death on the sacrificial stone and the ceremony gladiatorial. There were festivals like Tlacaxipehualiztli and Panquetzaliztli in which there were mainly sacrificed prisoners of war. They also had flower wars, contentions of ritual held jointly with the people of Tlaxcala, and Texcoco Huexotzingo mainly, the end was to get prisoners of war to sacrifice.

The concepts of war and sacrifice responded to the need for cohesion in Mexican society and the reproduction of the system. The warrior is of fundamental importance, is immersed in a religious sacrifice, ideological control, because in this way is logical to pay sacrifice made by the gods in a unified time.

The war was justified by religious issues, and was primarily due to the need for territorial expansion to obtain taxes. So to bring the tour of this room, there are some of the most important aspects involved in the war and sacrifice, concepts of Mexican supporters of militarism. Military participation in conjunction with religious practice was the highest aspiration of the Mexican people.

El poder político y económico de los mexicas ante los demás pueblos mesoamericanos se manifestaba a través del tributo y el control de las principales rutas de comercio; con lo cual

lograban la obtención de alimentos, mantas, plumas, joyas y diversos objetos exóticos; así como mano de obra principalmente para los cultivos, la maquila y la construcción. El tributo, como resultado de las guerras de expansión, era impuesto de varias maneras a los grupos sometidos. El mexica, al conquistar determinado lugar, seleccionaba tierras de las que obtenía el tributo que le tenían que dar. Otra manera de tributar era exigir algunos de los principales productos o materias primas de la región.

La actividad comercial era de vital importancia para los mexicas, ya que a través de sus comerciantes o pochtecas- que eran considerados como espías- realizaban conjuntamente con su actividad de intercambio un espionaje sobre los pueblos que querían someter. La muerte o atentado a un pochteca era considerado como una provocación de guerra.

En los materiales obtenidos en las excavaciones del Templo Mayor se encuentran diversos objetos que manifiestan la presencia de estas dos actividades tan importantes para el grupo mexica.

English Translation:

The political and economic power of the Mexica before the other Mesoamerican peoples was expressed through the charge and control of major trade routes, and thus succeeded in obtaining food, blankets, feathers, jewelry and various exotic objects as well as labor mainly for crops, light industry and construction. The tribute, as a result of wars of expansion, was imposed in various ways to the subject groups. The Mexica, to conquer a certain place, selected land that they got the tribute from. Another way to tax was to require tax on some major products or commodities of the region.

The trade was of vital importance to the Mexica, as they brought their traders or pochtecas- they were considered spies- conducted jointly with its exchange activity spying on people who wanted to submit. The death or bodily harm to a pochteca was regarded as a provocation of war.

The materials obtained in the Templo Mayor are various objects that manifest the presence of these two activities so important to the Mexican group.

El tributo para el mexica, además de ser la manifestación de su dominio político sobre diferentes poblaciones, era la principal fuente para la obtención de diversos productos. El tributo era pagado por los grupos sujetos por lo regular cada veinte u ochenta días. Consistía en la entrega de alimentos, mantas, piedras, plumas, metales, etc., pero no solo con especie se podía pagar, al parecer muchos lugares tributarios servían de maquiladores, a los cuales se les entregaba la materia prima para la elaboración de trajes de guerrero, objetos elaborados en piedra, pluma, metal, etc. También era importante la mano de obra para la construcción de

templos, calzadas, cultivos, en fin, todo lo necesario para el engrandecimiento y embellecimiento de la ciudad de Tenochtitlán.

El tributo era repartido entre los integrantes de la Triple Alianza, quedando distribuido de la siguiente manera: dos quintas partes para Tenochtitlán, dos más para Texcoco y la restante para Tacuba.

English Translation:

The tribute to Mexico, and the manifestation of political control over different populations, was the main source for obtaining various products. The tribute was paid by the subject groups usually in twenty or eighty days. It consisted of the delivery of food, blankets, rocks, feathers, metals, etc.. But not only with goods could it be paid, it seems many places served tax maquiladoras, which gave them the raw material for making clothes for warriors, objects made of stone, feather, metal, etc.. It was also important labor for the construction of temples, roads, crops, in short, everything needed for the enlargement and beautification of the city of Tenochtitlan.

The tribute was distributed among members of the Triple Alliance, being distributed as follows: two-fifths to Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and two more to the left to Tacuba.

En lo que daban o tributaban los oficiales y mercaderes había diversas costumbres, porque en unas partes lo daban de veinte en veinte días, en otras de ochenta en ochenta,...estaba repartido el tributo por pueblos y por oficios, según era lo que tributaban y la distancia que había a cada pueblo; y no todos tributaban cada veinte días, ni cada ochenta, sino por su tanda como estaban repartidos, y así todo el año había quien tributase, y no había falta de ello en casa de los señores, y lo mismo era en la fruta y pescado y caza y loza, y otras cosas para la comida y servicio, y cada tributario pagaba un tributo repartido en dos o tres pagos o mas según convenía.”

English Translation:

As the officers and merchants had different customs, because in some places tribute gave him twenty in twenty days, eighty in eighty others ... the tribute was shared by people and offices, as was the taxed and the distance that each people, and not all tribute every twenty days, or every eighty, but by his stint as were scattered, and so he had all year being taxed, and there was no lack of it in elite houses, and the same was in the fruit and fish and game and earthenware and other items for the food and service, and each paid a tribute tax divided into two or three or more payments as convenient.

Objetos manufacturados en Tecalli

Hacia 1480 d.C. los mexicas conquistaron el señorío de Tepeaca, en la Mixteca poblana. Uno de los pueblos que lo integraban era Tecalco, donde según los documentos históricos había – y aun se encuentran- yacimientos de una piedra muy blanca y translúcida que los indígenas apreciaban mucho, considerándola como joya o piedra preciosa. Tecalco se llamaría posteriormente Tecalli, y la piedra blanca a la que aluden los textos se conoce hoy día con ese nombre.

Se trata de un travertino de color claro, que puede ser opaca o translúcida, y que permite realizar un pulimento de gran calidad. Una vez que los mexicas tuvieron la capacidad de obtener esta materia prima en forma de tributo, la emplearon para esculpir objetos como los que aquí se exhiben y que fueron localizados en varias ofrendas del Templo Mayor.

English Translation;

Articles manufactured in tecalli

About 1480 A.D. the Aztecs conquered the dominion of Tepeaca in Mixteca, Puebla. One of the people who composed it was Tecalco, where, according to historical documents, had - and still are- deposits of a very white and translucent stone that Indians were very fond of, considering it as a jewel or gemstone. Tecalco, tecalli it would later be called, and the white stone that is referred to in texts, is known today by that name.

It is a light colored travertine, which can be opaque or translucent, which enables a high quality polish. Once the Aztecs had the capacity to obtain raw material in the form of tribute, they were hired to sculpt objects like the ones exhibited here and which were located in various offerings of the Templo Mayor.

Objetos estilo Mixtec

El área cultural de la mixteca, conquistada por las mexicas a partir de 1462 d.C. ocupaba parte de los actuales estados de Puebla y Oaxaca. Las esculturas antropomorfas de mármol que se exhiben aquí corresponden a un estilo muy característico de dicha región; su forma general geométrica y apariencia rígida hacen pensar que fueron elaboradas en serie, aunque los rasgos logrados mediante incisiones rectas y circulares- les dan un carácter individual. La materia prima pudo ser obtenida de yacimientos que han sido localizados al sureste de Puebla y en el noroeste de Oaxaca, región conocida como la Mixteca Baja; para posteriormente ser tributada a Tenochtitlán, ya fuera como material en bruto o piezas trabajadas.

Las esculturas antropomorfas en muchos casos personifican dioses, siendo Tlaloc el más representado, sin embargo encontramos también instrumentos musicales, vasijas y animales, que fueron localizadas en diferentes ofrendas del Templo Mayor.

English Translation:

Mixtec-style Objects

The cultural area of the Mixtec, Mexica conquered the post from 1462 AD and occupied part of the present states of Puebla and Oaxaca. Marble anthropomorphic sculptures on display here belong to a style characteristic of that region, its general shape and appearance rigid geometric suggest that they were prepared in a series, though the features, straight-through incisions, made and give them a round base. The raw material could be obtained from sites that have been located southeast of Puebla and Oaxaca in northwestern region known as the Mixteca Baja, and later be bestowed on Tenochtitlan, either as raw material or parts worked.

Anthropomorphic sculptures often embody gods Tlaloc being the most represented, but also find musical instruments, vases and animals, which were located in different offerings of the Templo Mayor.

E comercio fue una tradición económica y política muy importante en Mesoamérica. Sus principales representantes eran los pochtecas o comerciantes. Estos vivían en barrios particulares, con cultos y ceremonias propias, y con una estratificación social interna muy especial. En algún tiempo fueron muy favorecidos por los gobernantes mexicas otorgándoles privilegios como si fueran pillas o nobles, aun cuando durante el gobierno de Moctezuma II fueron objeto de persecución y desconfianza. Conocían no solo las mercaderías y objetos exóticos de gran valor, sino que sabían de la geografía de las rutas comerciales. Así como las costumbres y lenguas de los diversos pueblos visitados, en ocasiones se hacían pasar por habitantes del lugar para encubrir sus actividades de espionaje. Tenían que saber de estrategia militar para subsistir ante los ataques frecuentes que sufrían de parte de salteadores y militares enemigos. En muchas ocasiones eran embajadores del gobernante mexica para entablar nuevas relaciones comerciales de no ser aceptadas estas, se tomaba como una provocación de guerra al igual que la muerte de uno de los comerciantes. Los viajes realizados por los pochtecas en ocasiones se prolongaban por años. Para cubrir las extensas redes de intercambio que había en Mesoamérica, los comerciantes estaban organizados en la Pochtecaoyotl que consistía en una federación de todas las organizaciones de comerciantes. Esto permitía al mexica tener acceso a productos provenientes de lejanas tierras tales como: Xicalanco, Soconusco, el Golfo de Honduras, la Península de Yucatán, etc.

English Translation:

Commerce was an economic and political tradition very important in Mesoamerica. Its main representatives were *pochtecas* or traders. These individuals lived in neighborhoods with their own cults and ceremonies, and a special internal social stratification. At one time, they were highly favored by the Mexica rulers granting privileges as if they were plundered or nobles, even during the rule of Montezuma II were subjected to persecution and distrust. They knew not only the goods and exotic objects of great value, but they knew the geography of trade routes. Just as the customs and languages of the various towns visited, sometimes posing as locals to conceal their espionage activities. They had to know how to survive military strategy before suffering from frequent attacks of bandits and military enemies. In many occasions they were ambassadors of the Aztec ruler to establish new business relationships, failing to accept these was taken as a declaration of war, as was the death of one of the merchants. Journeys by the *pochtecas* sometimes lasted for years. To cover the extensive trade networks that were in Mesoamerica, merchants were organized into the *Pochtecayotl* which was a federation of all organizations of merchants. This allowed access to Mexican products from distant lands such as Xicalanco, Soconusco, the Gulf of Honduras, the Yucatan Peninsula, and so on.

“...y desde que llegamos a la gran plaza que se dice el Tlatelulco, como no habíamos visito tal cosa, quedamos admirados de la multitud de gente y mercaderías que en ella había y del gran concierto y regimiento que en todo tenían... cada genero de mercaderías estaban por si, y tenían situados y señalados sus asientos.

...y tenían allí sus casas, a donde juzgaban, tres jueces y otros como alguaciles ejecutores que miraban las mercaderías...” Díaz Del Castillo

English Translation:

"... And since we reached the great square which is called Tlatelolco, as we had not visited such a thing, we were amazed at the crowds of people and goods that were in it and the big concert and regulations that were around ... every genre of if were goods, and were located and assigned their seats.

... And had resided there, where he judged, three judges and others as executors marshals looking at the goods ... "Diaz Del Castillo

El llamado “estilo Mezcala” comprende una gama considerable de objetos de piedra pulida que se han localizado principalmente en las cercanías del río Mezcala, dentro del actual Estado de Guerrero. Las representaciones antropomorfas incluyen sobre todo mascararas, cabezas y figuras de cuerpo completo, presentándose una gran variedad de formas, tamaños y materias primas. Aunque aún no se conoce su cronología con precisión, la antigüedad del estilo Mezcala se remonta por lo menos hasta la época del esplendor teotihuacano (400-750 d.C.). En el Templo Mayor, la mayoría de estos objetos se localizaron en ofrendas asociadas con Tlaloc; muchos tienen pintado el rostro de este dios, así como símbolos de agua o de lluvia. Otros presentan, en la cara posterior, glifos de fechas, personajes y lugares.

English Translation:

The so-called “Mezcala style” covers a considerable range of polished stone objects have been located mainly around the river Mezcala within the present state of Guerrero. Anthropomorphic representations primarily include masks, heads and full body figures, presenting a variety of shapes, sizes and materials. Although their precise timing is not known, the length of the Mezcala style goes back at least until the time of the splendor of Teotihuacan (400-750 AD). In the Temple, most of these objects were located in offerings associated with Tlaloc, many have painted the face of this god, and symbols of water or rain. Others have, in the back, date glyphs, characters and places.

“...y cuando ya venían, y salían de aquella provincia para venir a su tierra, venían con los mismos trajes, que entre aquella gente habían usado, y en llegando a Tochtepec...allí dejaban aquel traje y tomaban el traje mexicano, y allí les daban bezotes de ámbar, y orejeras y mantas de maguey, tejidas como telas de cedazo, y les daban aventaderos o mascadores hechos de plumas ricas, y también les daban unos báculos adornados con unas borlas de pluma amarilla de papagayos, con que venían por el camino hasta llegar a México.” Sahagún

English Translation:

"... and when they came, and out of that province to come to their land, they came with the same clothes, that among these people had used, and when he reached there, Tochtepec ... let the costume and took the Mexican dress and there they gave lip rings amber earrings and blankets and maguey, as fabrics woven sieve, and gave them facts, chewers, aventaderos or feathers, and also gave them some staffs adorned with yellow tassels parrot feather, with which coming down the road until you come to Mexico. "Sahagun

“...deseamos que vuestro camino...sea prospero y que ninguna cosa adversa se os ofrezca en vuestro viaje; id en paz, y poco a poco, así por los llanos como por las cuestas conviene empero que vayáis aparejado para lo que quisiere hacer en vos nuestro señor que gobierna los cielos y la tierra...” Sahagún

English Translation:

"... Your way ... hope that is prosperous and that nothing adverse will offer you on your journey, go in peace, and gradually, and over the plains and the slopes should be however that you should go hand in hand to do what he chooses you our lord who rules the heavens and the earth ... "Sahagun

El mercado era a institución complementaria del comercio, siendo de gran importancia en la economía del México prehispánico. Según algunas crónicas del Siglo XVI todos los días de la semana había un tianguis cerca de una gran capital o centro rector; así como los días domingos se colocaba en la ciudad regente el más grande y más importante. Se podían intercambiar diferentes tipos de productos, como animales, alimentos, vestidos, piedra de construcción y madera entre otros, vendiéndose todo lo indispensable que requería la población. Se ha dicho que existan gentes encargadas de supervisar las medidas exactas, que los productos tuvieran la calidad necesaria y que todo el intercambio se llevara a cabo en el mejor orden posible.

English Translation:

The market was to trade complementary goods, it was an institution of great importance to the economy of ancient Mexico. According to some chronicles of the sixteenth century every day of the week was a swap meet near a large city or a central head, and on Sundays it was placed at the regent's largest and most important city. You could exchange different types of products such as animals, food, clothing, building stone and wood among others, selling everything essential that was required by the population. It has been said that there are people responsible for supervising the exact measures that have the necessary quality products and that the whole exchange was carried out in the best order.

Mictlantecuhctli el dios de la Muerte

El señor del inframundo era representado como un ser sema-descarnado, con cabellos crespos, garras y en posición de ataque. Junto con su mujer Mictecacihuatl habitaba en el Mictlan, lugar ancho, oscuro, sin ventanas y sin salida. Se creía que a este sitio, región del eterno extravió y del sueño del olvido, se dirigiría el alma o teyolia de aquellos que morían por enfermedad común o vejez. El trayecto para llegar al Mictlan duraba cuanto años, durante los cuales el difunto debía recorrer nueve parajes llenos de peligros.

Esta escultura de cerámica en tambaba natural, compuesta por cinco segmentos ensalmados mediante un soporte metálico interno diseñado por restauradores, fue encontrada junto con otra de iguales características en el edificio conocido como la "Casa de las Águilas". Ambas fueron colocadas sobre las banquetas que flanqueaban el acceso norte del edificio y, gracias a las investigaciones realizadas, podemos saber que los mexicas les hacían ofrecimientos de sangre.

"Al muro de la región de adores, se dieron plumas, se va disgregando, se dio grito de guerra...Ea, ea, ho, ho! Mi dios se llama defensor de hombres. Oh, ya prosigue, muy vestido va de papel, el que habita en región de ardores, en el polvo, en el polvo se revuelve en giros..."

English Translation:

Mictlantecuhli the God of Death

The lord of the underworld was represented as a disembodied being weak, with curly hair, claws and in attack. He and his wife lived in Mictlan Mictecacihuatl, a broad, dark, windowless end. It was believed that this site, region of eternal sleep lost and forgotten, will lead the soul or teyolia of those who died from illness or old age. The journey to reach as Mictlan lasted years, during which the deceased had to go to new places full of danger.

This ceramic sculpture in Tambo natural, consisted of five segments ensalmados of internal metal strut designed for restaurateurs, was found along with another of the same characteristics in the building known as the home of the Eagles. Both were placed on the sidewalks flanking the north entrance of the building and, through investigations, we know that the Aztecs made them offerings of blood.

"The wall of the worship area, they found feathers, it is disintegrating, the war cry ... There, there, ho, ho! My god is called defender of men. Oh, and continues, great dress of paper, which thrives in the region of burning in the powder, the powder is stirred into money ... "

A los guerreros muertos en combate y a las mujeres muertas en el parto les estaba destinado ir a la casa del sol. Tanto los guerreros como los sacrificados habitaban la parte oriental del ciclo, y al salir el sol, gritaban y miraban hacia él, y lo acompañaban desde el amanecer hasta el mediodía, mientras hacían peleas de regocijo. Al llegar al nepantla ___ mediodía, dejaban el lugar a las mujer muertas en el parto que lo continuarían acomunando hasta la puesta del sol. Pasados cuatro años después de la muerte, las almas de estos quereros de la muerte, las almas de estos guerreros se convertían en diversos tipo de aves.

English Translation:

The warriors killed in battle and women dying in childbirth were intended to go home to the sun. Both warriors as sacrificial victims lived in the eastern part of the cycle and as the sun rose and shouted and looked towards him and accompanied him from dawn until noon, while they fight for joy. ___ Nepantla Arriving at noon, the place to let women die in childbirth then continued until sunset. Four years after death, the souls of these quereros of death, the souls of these warriors became different kinds of birds.

El sector norte del Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlán estaba dedicado al dios Tlaloc “señor del agua y la fertilidad.” Representa el elemento principal de la actividad agrícola, base de la económica mexica. La presencia de esta deidad refleja el culto tan importante que se tenía en el México prehispánico al agua y a la agricultura. Sin embargo, no representa solo la vida, es un dios que también castiga al hombre con heladas, granizo, aguas malas, etc., tiene el poder de destruir, por lo tanto, es una deidad de vida y de muerte.

A través de esta sala encontramos la imagen del dios Tlaloc en diferentes representaciones y relacionado con fenómenos naturales como sequía, la nubes y el viento. Aspectos que eran visitas como manifestaciones de los ayudantes del dios del agua, llamados Tlaloques. Asimismo, se muestra la importancia del maíz y otras plantas en la vida del grupo mexica; así como la función y creación de la chinampa, sistema particular de la agricultura del México prehispánico.

English Translation:

The northern section of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan was dedicated to the god Tlaloc, "Lord of water and fertility." It represents the backbone of agriculture, the economic base of the Mexica. The presence of this deity worship reflects the importance in prehispanic Mexico of water and agriculture. However, there is only life, he is also a god who punishes man

with frost, hail, bad water, etc., he has the power to destroy, therefore, is a deity of life and death.

Through this room we find the image of the god Tlaloc in different representations and related natural phenomena like drought, clouds and wind. Aspects that were visited as manifestations of the aides of the water god, called Tlaloques. It also shows the importance of maize and other plants in the life of Grupo Mexico, as well as the role and capacity of the chinampa, agricultural system of ancient Mexico.

Olla Tlaloc (1427-1440 DC.) Etapa III

Los pueblos prehispánicos concebían el rostro de Tlaloc formado por dos serpientes que se entrelazaban en la nariz y juntaban sus fauces donde se sitúa la boca. En este caso, dichas serpientes se aprecian mediante las bandas con líneas verticales y círculos alternados que se encuentran sobre las áreas de las cejas, los ojos, la nariz y alrededor de la boca.

Olla de cerámica modelada con un mascarón en alto relieve que representa el rostro de Tlaloc, dios de la Lluvia.

English Translation:

Olla Tlaloc (1427-1440 AD.) Phase III

Prehispanic people perceived the face of Tlaloc formed by two serpents entwined in the nose and gather their jaws where your mouth is situated. In this case, these snakes are seen by the bands with alternating vertical lines and circles that are in the areas of the eyebrows, eyes, nose and around the mouth.

The ceramic pot with a mask modeled in high relief represents the face of Tlaloc, God of Rain.

Caracol de Piedra (1486-1502) Etapa VI

En el mundo Mesoamérica, los caracoles marianas tuvieron una gran importancia como alimento, como materia prima para la elaboración de bellas y delicados objetos, como instrumentos musicales (particularmente el Strombus que se utilizaba como trompeta) y también como símbolos religiosos de la fertilidad y la vida.

Se les equiparaba con el vientre materno y estaban asociados con el culto del agua y de Tlaloc.

English Translation:

Snail Shell (1486-1502) Stage VI

In the Mesoamerican world, marine snails had a great importance as food, as feedstock for the production of fine and delicate objects such as musical instruments (particularly the *Strombus* that was used as a trumpet) as well as religious symbols of fertility and life.

They were equated with the womb and were associated with the worship of water and Tlaloc.

Fragmentos del Brasero Tlaloc (1468-1401 D.C.) Etapa IV B

Fragmentos de un brasero policromo que originalmente formada parte del basamento del templo mayor. Presenta el rostro de Tlaloc con la característica tocado de papel coronado con plumas, así como algunos símbolos relacionados con el fuego como el _____ [Word is too obscured to make out] ("pájaro turquesa"), que se encuentra sobre la frente.

La posición de las manos as un rasgo de estilo teotihuacano que as suma a las múltiples reminiscencias que fricaron los mexicas de ese importante tradición cultural.

English Translation:

Fragments of Tlaloc brazier (1468-1401 AD) Stage IV B

Fragments of a polychrome brazier was originally found in part of the basement of the temple. It shows the face of Tlaloc with characteristic headdress crowned with paper feathers and some symbols related to the fire as the _____ [word is too obscured to make out] ("Turquoise Bird"), is located on the front.

The hand position as a feature of Teotihuacan style that sums up the many reminiscences of the Mexica is an important cultural tradition.

Es un hecho reconocida por muchos investigadores de las culturas prehispánicas, que la flora y la fauna fueron elementos importantes en la vida de los puebla mesoamericanos. Sin embargo, los estudios en este terreno son escasos, a pesar de que estos elementos nos proporcionan un panorama más amplio para la comprensión del modo de vida de dichas culturas.

El pueblo mexicana es uno de los que ofrece actualmente la posibilidad así de hacer un estudio completo acerca del compeltimiento que sobre flora y fauna poseían los indígenas, antes de la llegada de los españoles. Posibilidades que surgen como resultado de las excavaciones practicadas durante el periodo de las excavaciones practicadas durante el periodo 1978-1982 en el Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlán.

Los mexicas conocieron bien el ambiente en que vivieron, lo manejaron y utilizaron ampliamente, además de incorporarlo a su vida cotidiana a través de numerosas manifestaciones.

English Translation:

It is a fact recognized by many researchers in pre-hispanic cultures, the flora and fauna were important elements in the life of the Mesoamerican peoples. However, studies in this field are scarce, although these elements provide a more comprehensive understanding of the lifestyle of those cultures.

The Mexican people is one that currently offers the possibility and make a complete study about compelling flora and fauna that had the Indians before the Spanish arrived. Opportunities that arise as a result of excavations during the period of 1978-1982 in the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan.

The Mexica knew the environment well in which they lived, they handled and used extensively, in addition to incorporating it into their daily lives through many manifestations.

Tanto la fauna como la flora, elementos de importancia en la cultura mexicana, trascendieron el sentido estrictamente utilitario y de subsistencia, para ser incorporados en diversas manifestaciones culturales.

La presencia arqueológica de restos de fauna obedece a un lenguaje simbólico que se trata de expresar a través de todos y cada uno de los elementos que constituyen el sitio.

Si bien no ha sido posible descifrar el simbolismo que encierra cada uno de los animales representados arqueológicamente de algunos ha quedado evidencia, n solo del uso que se les dio como materia prima, como ornato y en la elaboración de instrumentos musicales, sino también, del profundo sentido mítico y religioso con que se asociaron y que los incorporo a la escultura, al pensamiento guerrero, a las practicas rituales y, más profundamente, a los mitos y leyendas que quedaron plasmados en los códices y narraciones indígenas.

English Translation:

Both the fauna and flora, elements of importance in Mexican culture, transcended the strictly utilitarian sense and subsistence, to be incorporated in various cultural events.

The presence of archaeological faunal remains due to a symbolic language which is expressed through every one of the elements of the site.

While it has not been possible to decipher the symbolism each of the animals represented archaeologically, there has been some evidence, with no single use that were given as raw material, as ornamentation and in the development of musical instruments. But also the deep mythical and religious meaning associated with it and who incorporates it into sculpture, thought warrior, ritual practices and, more profoundly, myths and legends that were set in codices and indigenous narratives.

La variedad o diversidad de los restos biológicos comprende un número mayor a las 200 especies animales, pertenecientes a 11 diferentes grupos zoológicos, que van desde los invertebrados como las esponjas, corales, erizos y moluscos; hasta los grupos, mejor conocidos, de vertebrados: peces, anfibios, reptiles, aves y mamíferos.

La presencia de grupos animales tan diferentes no es casual, ya que cada grupo y ciertas especies en particular, reflejan la existencia de un patrón de selección, derivado indudablemente de un amplio conocimiento de las especies; de sus características y el lugar en que viven.

Una selección de características, bien conocidas y apreciadas por el mexicana, se manifiesta entre las especies identificadas. Estas incluyen animales con formas extravagantes, gran variedad de tamaños, coloraciones llamativas con diseños vistosos y de gran atractivo, ornamentaciones de gran belleza, venenosos, peligrosos o de difícil captura; o bien, que proporcionan materia prima adecuada para diversos fines.

English Translation:

The variety and diversity of biological remains comprised a number greater than the 200 animal species belonging to 11 different zoological groups, ranging from invertebrates such as sponges, corals, urchins and molluscs, to the groups, better known in vertebrates: fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

The presence of so many different animal groups is not accidental, since each group and certain species in particular, reflect a pattern of selection, undoubtedly derived from a broad knowledge of the species, their characteristics and where they live.

A selection of features, well known and appreciated by the Mexica, occurs among the species identified. These include animals with bizarre shapes, a variety of sizes, bold colors with ornate designs and extremely attractive, beautiful decorations, poisonous, dangerous or difficult to catch, or else that provide appropriate material for various purposes.

El material arqueológico de naturaleza biológica constituye una excelente fuente de información, poco utilizada tradicionalmente pero que brinda la posibilidad de comprender nuevos aspectos sobre el modo de vida de los pueblos prehispánicos.

Los restos de flora y fauna encontrados son una muestra de que los mexicas conocieron bien el ambiente que les rodeo, lo manejaron y utilizaron ampliamente, obteniendo del las plantas y animales de su interés. Sin embargo, sus conocimientos de la naturaleza no se limitaron a la Mesa Central en que se localizo. Tenochtitlán, sino que incluso llegaron a tener contacto, directa o indirectamente, con sitios alejados geográficamente.

El análisis de la abundancia y diversidad biológica que se reunió en las ofrendas, permite conocer algunos de los ambientes que fueron conocidos y explotados por el mexica, ambiente donde extrajeron especies características. De ella cuatro son los que se encuentran mejor representados: el ambiente templado de la Mesa Central, las selvas, los arrecifes y los esteros y lagunas costeras del país.

Contrariamente a lo que se pudiera esperar, encontró muy poco material proveniente de la Cuenca de México.

English Translation:

The archaeological material of biological nature is an excellent source of information, but little used traditionally; it provides the ability to understand new aspects of the lifestyle of the prehispanic peoples.

The remains of flora and fauna found are an indication that the Aztecs knew well the environment that surrounds them, they widely handled and used plants and animals of interest. However, their knowledge of nature is not merely that the Table is located in

Tenochtitlan, but actually came into contact, directly or indirectly, with geographically distant sites.

The analysis of the abundance and biodiversity, which met in the offerings, allows us to know some of the environments that were known and exploited by the Mexica environment where features extracted and used species. Of them, four are those that are better represented: the temperate environment of the central plateau, forests, reefs and estuaries and coastal lagoons in the country.

Contrary to what one might expect, he found very little material from the Basin of Mexico.

Resulta notable la cantidad de ofrendas que han aportado miles de objetos, así como grandes cantidades de restos de fauna y, en menor proporción, de flora. Ofrendas que fueron depositadas en relación con los diferentes templos edificios que contornan el Templo Mayor. Su cantidad y disposición son perfectamente comprensibles, si no se pierde de vista el carácter ceremonial del sitio y el profundo significado ritual que tuvieron en el concepto religioso de la cultura mexicana.

Los restos de flora y fauna rescatados provienen de más de la mitad de las ofrendas encontradas, y en algunos casos superan en número a los demás objetos.

De 111 ofrendas excavadas hasta la fecha, se han registrado restos animales en 58 de ellas, siendo el número de especies reconocidas al momento, superior a las 200.

English Translation:

Remarkably, the number of offerings have contributed thousands of objects, as well as, to a lesser extent, large amounts of faunal remains from plants. Offerings were deposited in relation to the various temples buildings that surround the Temple. Their number and arrangement are perfectly understandable, if we had not lost the ceremonial visiting the site and the ritual that had deep meaning in the religious concept of Mexica culture.

The remains of plants and animals rescued from more than half the offerings found, and in some cases outnumber all other objects.

Of 111 offerings excavated to date, animal remains have been recorded in 58 of them, and the number of species recognized at the time, more than 200.

La agricultura constituyo el medio de obtención de alimentos más importante en Mesoamérica. Los mexicas cultivaban principalmente mediante el sistema de chinampas, que en esa época caso cubrían los lagos de Chalco y Xochmilco. Otros sistemas agrícolas se practicaban en la Cuenca de México dependiente de la topografía, la manera de obtención del agua y de la frecuencia del uso de las parcelas. Las herramientas que utilizaban eran simples pero eficaces como la coa y el bastón plantador.

El calendario ritual mexica relacionaba el ciclo anual de las fiestas con los fenómenos climatológicos que permitían el crecimiento de los cultivos. El año se dividía básicamente en estación de lluvias y estación seca, Tlaloc, dios de la lluvia, presidía sobre la mitad del año que ellos llamaban "tiempo verde", cuanto llueve, cuando el maíz crece y madura.

English Translation:

Agriculture is the largest means of obtaining food in Mesoamerica. The Aztecs cultivated crops mainly through the system of floating gardens, which at that time were covered lakes of Chalco and Xochmilco. Other agricultural systems practiced in the Basin of Mexico were dependent on the topography, the manner of obtaining water and frequency of use of the plots. The tools used were simple but effective such as the hoe and planting stick.

Aztec ritual calendar linked the annual cycle of festivals with weather events that allowed the growth of crops. The cycle is basically divided into rainy and dry season, Tlaloc, rain god, presided over half of the year they called "green time", the rains, when the corn grows and matures.

Cultivos en la Época Prehispánica

Los principales cultivos en las chinampas de la ciudad de Tenochtitlán eran: maíz, calabazas, frijoles, amaranto, chía, tomate verde, quelites, algunas variedades de chiles y posiblemente árboles frutales como el capulín; además cultivaban flores como el cempoalxochitl, tuberosas y dalias. Otros productos agrícolas consumidos por los mexicas llegaban a la ciudad proveniente de las distintas provincias conquistadas como el maguey, de

las tierras frías del altiplano central de México; algodón y cacao de tierra caliente y diversas frutas de clima tropical.

English Translation:

Crops in prehistoric times

The main crops in the floating gardens of the city of Tenochtitlan were: corn, squash, beans, amaranth, chia, green tomatoes, greens, peppers and several varieties of fruit trees such as possibly capulin; also they grew flowers such as cempoalxochitl, tuberose and dahlias. Other agricultural products consumed by the Aztecs arrived in the city from the provinces conquered and the maguey, from the cold lands of the central highlands of Mexico, cotton and cocoa hot and various tropical fruits.

“Se escogen las semillas...las que están sanas...lo mas alabastrino de nuestro sustento...lo mejor escogido se desparrama; se pone en el agua; por dos días, por tres días están en el agua.

Primeramente se excava la tierra; se mira allí en, donde se ofrendo el riego, en donde se baño la tierra...con moderación se cubre la tierra, se echa tierra muy desmenuzada...al punto revienta la semilla, al punto se abre paso, sale de lo profundo, luego suda...en seguida se hace el tallo...allí se le echa tierra, se cubre bien hasta el cuello, se forman los montones de tierra.

...luego vienen colgando los cabellos; al punto espiga. Una vez más allí se allega la tierra; dizque comienza a apuntar el jilote;...luego jilotea, brota surge, viene surgiendo el jilote; su cabellera va cubriendo al jilote...es antojo para la gente, es resplandeciente.

Luego se dice que ya va muriendo el pelo, que se v chamuscando...Se dice que ya es nacido...luego se emparejan las semillas; por lo mismo, brota la nextamalxochitl, la flor del nixtamal. Entonces se dice chichipelotl, elote que tiene como perlas de agua.

Luego al punto cuaja; entonces se dice élotl, mazorca de maíz ya cuajado. Luego entonces comienza a endurecerse, a tornarse amarillo; luego entonces se dice cintli, mazorca de maíz maduro, seco...” Códice Florentino

English Translation:

"... The seeds are chosen that are healthy ... what more alabaster our livelihood ... the best choice spreads, is placed in the water for two days, for three days in the water.

First you dig the earth, you look there, where irrigation is offering, where bathing the earth ... in moderation land is covered, gets very crumbly earth ... to the point bursts the seed, the point is making its way, leaving the deep, then sweats ... then the stem is ... there is poured earth, is well covered to the neck, form mounds.

... Then there are the hair hanging down, the pin point. Once again there is joined the earth begins to target the so-called floss; ... then jilotea, springs emerges, the floss is emerging, his hair is covering the floss ... it pleases to the people is brilliant.

Then he says that he is dying his hair, which is scorching ... It says it is born ... then the seeds are paired, for the same, nextamalxochitl springs, the flower of corn. Then he says chichipelotl, corn that is water pearls.

After fruit set point, then say élotl, ear of corn and fruit set. He then begins to harden, to become yellow, then we say Cintli, ripe ear of corn, dry ... "Florentine Codex

Cortes encabeza la tercera expedición que sale de Cuba, con fines de exploración y comercio. Toca tierra mexicana en la costa de Yucatán, donde encuentra a Jerónimo de Aguilar y Gonzalo Guerrero, quien se encontraba adaptado a la vida nativa con mujer e hijos, por lo que decide no aliarse con Cortes. Parlamentemente murió más tarde en una de las tantas batallas entre indígenas e hispanos. Aguilar por su parte acompañó a Cortes si viéndole de intérprete del maya al español.

La labor realizada por los intérpretes de Cortes fue de vital importancia para que los conquistadores pudieran concretizar su labor de dominio en tierras mesoamericanas. Por un lado contaron con Dona Marina o Malintzin, quien fue obsequiada a Cortes en Campeche, hablaba nahua y maya. Por otro lado, los recién llegados tenían a Jerónimo de Aguilar, que había llegado a las costas de Yucatán en una expedición anterior. Marina, que entendía la profunda simbología de la lengua nahua, traducía al maya para que Jerónimo de Aguilar tradujera al español. Con esto, los conceptos que recibía Cortes carecían del sentido original.

Por la incomprensión de significado ideológico y de las costumbres nativas surgieron dos intenciones, dos nodos de pensar y de ser diferentes, lo que determinó el destino de cada uno de los participantes. El indio, sometido y sujeto de exudación, el español inquisidor y encomendero.

English Translation:

Cortes led the third expedition and left Cuba for the purpose of exploration and trade. They touch down on the coast of Yucatan, where he finds Geronimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero, who was adapted to the native life with wife and children, and therefore decided not to ally themselves with Cortes. Parlante died later in one of several battles between Indians and Hispanics. Aguilar for their part accompanied Cortes so the Maya could see the Spanish interpreter.

The work of interpreters and Cortes was important for the conquerors whose work would domino and is materialized in Mesoamerican lands. On the one hand counted with Dona Marina or Malinche, who was given to Courts in Campeche, spoke Nahuatl and Maya. Moreover, the newcomers had to rely on Jeronimo de Aguilar, who reached the shores of Yucatan in a previous expedition. Marina, who understood the profound symbolism of the Nahuatl language, translated into Maya while Jeronimo de Aguilar translated into Spanish. With that, the court lacked concepts that received the original meaning.

By the incomprehension of ideological significance of native customs and emerged two intentions, two nodes of thinking and being different, which determined the fate of each of the participants. Indian subjects and the subject of exudation, the Spanish Inquisition and encomendero.

Al llegar a tierras mesoamericanas, Cortes, miliar y aventurero, tenía la intención de reivindicarse ante la Corona Española, que tenia antecedentes no muy elogiabes sobre se persona. Con este abierto pretende conquistar y poblar nuevas tierras para España. Al enterarse de la existencia de Moctezuma y la gran ciudad de Tenochtitlán siente la inquietud de conoce al gran Señor y la maravillosa ciudad. A esto se sumaron los numerosos mitos sobre las riquezas de Moctezuma II, casas de oro y piedras preciosas. Esto incita la codicia de Cortes y sus soldados, que se deciden a iniciar el viaje a la capital mexicana.

El odio y temor que los indígenas tenían a Moctezuma II provocado por los excesivos tributos que pedía el monarca mexicana, es aprovechado por Cortes, quien decide aceptar alianzas con grupos como el Cempoalteca y el Tlaxcalteca. De esta manera se acentúan las diferencias entre los grupos mesoamericanos. Con esta ayuda, el conquistador pudo conocer las costumbres, caminos y estrategias militares, lo que represento para Cortes y sus hombres, conjuntamente con las armas de fuego, una ventaja significativa sobre los guerreros de Tenochtitlán.

“...llegando todos a Cholula, los cholultecas no hicieron cuenta de nada, ni los recibieron de guerra ni de paz, estuvieron quedas en sus casas.

Des esto tomaron mala opinión de ellos los españoles, y conjeturaron alguna traición, y comenzaron luego a dar voces...para que viniesen donde estaban los españoles, y ellos todos se juntaron en el patio del gran su de Quetzalcóatl. ...comenzaron a lancearlos y mataron todos cuanto pudieron, y los amigos indios de creer es que mataron muchos más.

Los cholultecas ni llevaron armas ofensivas ni defensivas, sino fueron ser desarmados pensando que no haría lo que se hizo: de esta manera murieron.... Sahagún

English Translation:

On reaching land in Mesoamerica, Cortes, military man and adventurer, was intended to be claimed before the Spanish Crown, and who was on record not a very commendable person. With this he intended to conquer and colonize new lands for Spain. Upon learning of the existence of Montezuma and the great city of Tenochtitlan, he felt anxiety of meeting the great Lord and the wonderful city. To this is added the many myths about the riches of Montezuma II, houses of gold and precious stones. This prompts the greed of Cortes and his soldiers, who decide to start the trip to the Mexican capital.

The hatred and fear that the Indians had to Montezuma II caused by excessive taxes that called the Mexica monarch, is used by Cortes, who decided to accept alliances with groups like the Cempoaltecas and Tlaxcala. This accentuated the differences between the Mesoamerican groups. With this help, the conqueror could know the customs, roads and military strategies, accounting for Cortes and his men, along with firearms, a significant advantage over the warriors of Tenochtitlan.

"... Getting everyone to Cholula, the Cholulans did not notice anything, nor received war or peace, were staying at home.

Does this low opinion of them took from the Spanish, and speculated treachery, and then began to shout for them to come ... where were the Spanish, and they all gathered in the courtyard of his great Quetzalcoatl. ... Began to spear and killed all they could, and friends believed that Indians killed many more.

The Cholulans nor led offensive or defensive weapons, but were being disarmed thinking it would do what was done: in this way they died Sahagun

“Los que estaban cantando y danzando estaban totalmente desarmados...los golpearon en las manos, les dieron bofetadas en la cara, y luego fue la matanza general de todos estos. Los que estaban cantando y los que estaban mirando junto a ellos, murieron.

Luego se meten dentro de las casas (del templo) para matar a todos; a los que acarreaban el agua, a los que traían la pastura de los caballos, a las que molían, a los que barrían, a los que estaban de vigilancia.

Pero el rey Motecuhzoma acompañado de Tlacohtcalcatl de Tlatelolco, Itzcohuatzin,...les dio: Señores nuestros... ¡Basta! ¿Qué es lo que estáis haciendo? ¡Pobres gentes del pueblo...! ¿Acaso tienen escudos? ¿Acaso tienen macanas? ¡No más andan enteramente desarmados...!

Anónimo de Tlatelolco

English Translation:

"Those who were singing and dancing were totally unarmed ... beaten on the hands, slapped them in the face, then was the general massacre of all these. Those who were singing and they were looking past them died.

Then they get inside the houses (the temple) to kill all, those who were carrying water, who brought the horse pasture, which was ground, which swept, who were monitoring.

But the king Moctezuma together tlacohtcalcatl of Tlatelolco Itzcohuatzin ... gave them: Sirs ... Enough! What you are doing? Poor people in town ...! Do they have shields? Do they have clubs? No more, walk entirely unarmed ...! Anonymous of Tlatelolco

Guerra y Tributo: Presencia Mexica en Guerrero

Para los mexicas, la guerra constituía un ritual cuya justificación descansaba en principios religiosos y la concebían – por paradójico que parezca – como un medio de contribuir a la prolongación de la vida, puesto que permitía nutrir a la Tierra con la sangre obtenida mediante el sacrificio. Sin embargo, desde un punto de vista práctico, la emprendieron casi siempre movidos por la necesidad de obtener el pago de tributos. De esta manera, llegó a ser para ellos una actividad de sustento tan importante como la agricultura.

Tras la derrota de los tepanecas de Azcapotzalco en 1430, se integro la llamada Triple Alianza, con Tenochtitlán a la cabeza e incluyendo también a Tetzcoco y Tlacopan. Nació así lo que

llegaría a ser la última gran maquinaria bélica de Mesoamérica, convirtiéndose los mexicas en una sociedad expansionista que, tras someter a los diversos señoríos de la cuenca de Mexico, extendería su dominio hacia una gran parte de Mesoamérica.

A la llegada de los conquistadores españoles en 1519, la Triple Alianza había logrado sujetar a más de 360 pueblos distribuidos en numerosas provincias tributarias. Muchas de ellas fueron registradas en documentos como la Matricula de Tributos y el Códice Mendocino, los cuales dan cuenta de productos, cantidades y a periodicidad con la que debía enviar su pago cada una de esas provincias.

La región prehispánica comprendida por el actual estado de Guerrero no fue ajena a ese proceso expansionista. Su conquista fue iniciada hacia 1430 DC por Itzacoatl y continuada por sus sucesores Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina, Azayacatl y Tizoc, culminando durante el mandato de Ahuitzotl entre 1486 y 1502 DC.

El sometimiento de los grupos étnicos antiguos de Guerrero tuvo como finalidad lograr el control de los yacimientos y sitios productores de cobre, oro, cinabrio y de una gran variedad de piedras preciosas, abundantes en lugares aledaños al Río Balsas. La región también era rica en algodón, miel, cera, maíz, frijol, chía, calabaza, chile, copal, jícaras, plumas preciosas y pieles, todos ellos necesarios para la economía del Centro de México.

La guerra, el tributo y el impacto económico e ideológico generado por los mexicas en las comunidades étnicas de Guerrero durante los siglos XV y XVI, son algunos aspectos fundamentales que se intentan ilustrar a través de esta exposición.

English Translation:

War and Tribute: Presence Mexico in Guerrero

For the Aztecs, war was a ritual whose justification rested on religious principles and conceived - paradoxically - as a means of contributing to the prolongation of life, as it allowed the Earth to nourish the blood collected by the sacrifice. However, from a practical standpoint, the most often undertaken motivation was the need to secure payment of taxes. Thus, it became for them a livelihood activity as important as agriculture.

After the defeat of Azcapotzalco in 1430 Tepaneca, he joined the so-called Triple Alliance, Tenochtitlan at the head with and also including Texcoco and Tacuba. Thus was born what came to be the last big war machine in Mesoamerica, the Aztecs became expansionist in a

society that, after carrying out the various domains of the Basin of Mexico, extended its domain to a large part of Mesoamerica.

On arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in 1519, the Triple Alliance had been subject to more than 360 villages spread over many provinces. Many tax records were recorded in documents like the Registration of Taxes and the Codex Mendoza, which account for products, amounts and frequency with which payment was to send each of those provinces.

The region covered by this prehispanic current state of Guerrero was no stranger to this process of expansion. His conquest was begun about 1430 AD by Itzacoatl and continued by his successors Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina Azayacatl and Tizoc, culminating during the tenure of Ahuitzotl between 1486 and 1502 AD.

The submission of ancient ethnic groups of Guerrero was aimed at gaining control of deposits and sites producing copper, gold, cinnabar and a wide variety of gemstones, abundant in places bordering the Rio Balsas. The region was also rich in cotton, honey, beeswax, corn, beans, chia, pumpkin, pepper, incense, cups, precious feathers and skins, all necessary to the economy of central Mexico.

The war, tribute, and the ideological and economic impact generated by the Aztecs in the ethnic communities in Guerrero during the XV and XVI, are some fundamentals that are intended to illustrate through this exhibition.

El Estilo Mezcala en el Templo Mayor

En la primera temporada de excavaciones del Proyecto Templo Mayor, entre 1978 y 1982, se localizaron numerosas piezas de piedra pulida pertenecientes al llamado estilo Mezcala, originario del actual estado de Guerrero. En a mayoría de os casos, se trata de imágenes antropomorfas (figuras completas y mascararas), aunque también hay figuras de aves, reptiles y batracios, entre otras clases de animales. Todas ellas fueron elaboradas en rocas de origen metamórfico, cuya coloración oscila del verde oscuro al gris claro.

Estos materiales fueron encontrados al menos en 13 ofrendas de consagración del templo principal de los mexicas, asociadas con la cuarta etapa constructiva, la cual ha sido fechada entre 1454 y 1469 es decir la época del mandato de Motecuhzoma I. Entre las representaciones

humanas, muchos ejemplares fueron pintados con rasgos faciales y corporales vinculados con Tlaloc, el dios de la lluvia, y con sus ayudantes, los tlaloque.

El estilo Mezcala es una de las tradiciones prehispánicas que mayor valor y popularidad ha alcanzado en el mercado negro de piezas arqueológicas, razón por la cual se han elaborado una gran cantidad de falsificaciones a lo largo de varias décadas. Por ello, la colección recuperada en el Templo Mayor adquiere especial relevancia, puesto que su autenticidad se encuentra certificada. Aunque se ignora si estos objetos llegaron a Tenochtitlán como tributo o por otra vía, constituyen un testimonio sobre la importancia que tenía la región ocupada hoy día por el estado de Guerrero para los mexicas.

English Transcription:

Style Mezcala in the Templo Mayor

In the first season of excavations of the Templo Mayor Project, between 1978 and 1982, were found many pieces of polished stone outside the style called Mezcala, originating in the current state of Guerrero. In the majority of cases, they are anthropomorphic images (complete pictures and masks), but there are figures of birds, reptiles and amphibians, among other kinds of animals. All were developed in rocks of metamorphic origin, whose color ranges from dark green to light gray.

These materials were found at least 13 offerings of consecration of the main temple of the Aztecs, associated with the fourth building phase, which has been dated between 1454 and 1469 ie the period of the mandate of Moctezuma I. Among the representations of humans, many specimens were painted with body and facial features associated with Tlaloc, the rain god, and their aides, tlaloque.

Mezcala style is one of the most valuable pre-hispanic traditions and popularity has reached the black market in antiquities, which is why they have drawn a lot of fakes over several decades. Therefore, the collection was recovered from the Templo Mayor takes on special significance because its authenticity is certified. Although it is unclear whether these objects came to Tenochtitlan as a tribute or otherwise, they are a testimony to the significance of the region occupied today by the state of Guerrero to the Mexica.

Itzcoatl (R. 1427-1440 DC)

Fue durante el mandato de Itzcoatl como Señor o tlatoani de Tenochtitlán cuando se llevo al cabo la primera incursión militar con fines de conquista en la región norte del actual estado de Guerrero.

A partir de las fuentes documentales, se sabe que Itzcoatl envió tropas a la zona comprendida entre los ríos Teloloapan y Cocula, al norte del Río Balsas. En la invasión participaron, además de los soldados tenochcas, sus aliados de la naciente Triple Alianza: Tetzco y Tlacopan (Tacuba).

De acuerdo con reconstrucciones históricas, los ejércitos conquistadores llegaron primero a Cuauhnahuac (Cuernavaca), pasando después por Xiutepec y Tehuixtla para internarse en territorio guerrerense y apoderarse de Tepecoacuilco, Yohuallan (Iguala), Cuetzala, Apaxtla, Tenepantla (Tlanipantla), Tetellan (Tetela del Río) y Zacualpan, este último en el límite sur del estado de México.

Según Robert Barlow, las tropas no pudieron dominar a las poblaciones que se encontraban en la zona comprendida entre Tlachco (Taxco) y Oztuma, como tampoco pudieron someter a los pueblos de Coatepec y Alahuiztlan.

Con la muerte de Itzcoatl, hacia 1440 DC, varios de los señoríos chontales conquistados al norte del Río Balsas se rebelaron al dominio de la Triple Alianza.

English Translation:

Itzcoatl (R. 1427-1440 DC)

It was during the tenure of Itzcoatl as Lord or tlatoani of Tenochtitlan when it takes after the first military incursion for conquest in the north of the current state of Guerrero.

From documentary sources, we know that Itzcoatl sent troops to the area between the rivers Cocula Teloloapan and north of Rio Balsas. They participated in the invasion, and the troops Tenochca, allies of the emerging Triple Alliance: Texcoco and Tacuba (Tacuba).

According to historical reconstructions, the conquering armies first arrived Cuauhnahuac (Cuernavaca), after passing by and Tehuixtla Xiutepec and into Guerrero and seize territory Tepecoacuilco, Yohuallan (equal) Cuetzala, Apaxtla, Tenepantla (Tlanipantla) Tetellan (Tetela River) and Zacualpan, the latter in the southern Mexico state.

According to Robert Barlow, the troops could not dominate the peoples who were in the area between Tlachco (Taxco) and Oztuma and failed to subdue the peoples of Coatepec and Alahuiztlan.

With the death of Itzcoatl around 1440 AD, several Chontals conquered dominions north of the Rio Balsas rebelled to the domain of the Triple Alliance.

Motecuhzoma: Huicamina (R 1440-1469 DC)

El expansionismo mexicana en el actual estado de Guerrero prosiguió con Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina, renovándose el control sobre los pueblos que se habían sublevado y lográndose la conquista de otros senorios.

Este tlatoani enfoco sus ataques principalmente contra los pueblos chontales. Entre sus conquistas se encuentran Acapetlahuaya y Oztuma, lugares estratégicos que no se había podido someter y se rebelarían periódicamente en épocas posteriores. Según el cronista Ixtlilxochitl, la ocupación de Acapetlahuaya y Oztuma ocurrió en 1442 y en ella participaron tropas autónomas de Tetzco. El principal objetivo de esas incursiones fue apoderarse de las salinas existentes en esa región, así como obstaculizar a los purépechas o tarascos de Michoacán.

Los pueblos conquistados por Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina son Nochtepec, Teticpac, Tlachco (Taxc Viejo), Ichcateopan, Chilapan, Quecholtenanco, Tenanco (Cacalotenango), Chuapan e Itzyocan (Izucar), recuperándose además Tepecoacuilco y Tlacozahtitlan. De esa manera, hacia el final de su mandato se había logrado ya el sometimiento de todos los centros chontales, con la excepción de Alahuiztlan.

English Translations:

Moctezuma: Huicamina (R 1440-1469 AD)

Mexican expansionism in the current state of Guerrero continued under Ilhuicamina Moctezuma, and he renewed control over the people who had rebelled and achieved the conquest of other domains.

This tlatoani focused their attacks primarily against the Chontals people. Among his conquests are Acapetlahuaya and Oztuma, strategic locations that had not been regularly submit and rebel in later times. According to the chronicler Ixtlilxochitl Acapetlahuaya occupation of Oztuma occurred in 1442 and involved troops Tetzco autonomous. The main objective of

these raids was to seize the existing salt in that region and hamper the Tarascan or Purépecha of Michoacán.

The peoples conquered by Moctezuma Ilhuicamina are Nochtepec, Teticpac, Tlachco (Taxco Viejo), Ichcateopan, Chilapan, Quecholtenanco, Tenanco (Cacalotenango) Chuapan and Itzyocan (Izucar), recovering well were Tlacoauhtitlan Tepecoacuilco. Thus, towards the end of his mandate had been achieved since the submission of all places Chontal except Alahuiztlan.

Axayacatl (R. 1469-1481 DC)

Además de atacar a los purépechas de Michoacán y a los matlazincas del valle de Toluca, Axayacatl reconquistó a Oztuma y Teloloapan, que se habían rebelado y se negaban a pagar el tributo correspondiente. En esa campaña, la única emprendida por ese tlatoani en territorio guerrerense, también fueron sometidos los pueblos de Totoltepec y Tlacotepec.

Teloloapan ofreció a Axayacatl puntualidad en la entrega de sus tributos, cuestión que no cumplió. Posteriormente, continuo rebelándose y oponiendo resistencia a los mexicas, hasta que por fin fue sojuzgado por Ahuizotl hacia 1487 o 1488, convirtiéndose en sujeto oficial de la Triple Alianza encabezada por Tenochtitlán.

English Translation:

Axayacatl (R. 1469-1481 AD)

Besides attacking the Purépecha of Michoacán and Matlazincas the Toluca Valley and Axayacatl, reconquer Oztuma and Teloloapan, who had rebelled and refused to pay taxes accordingly. In that campaign, launched by the only territory in that tlatoani, Guerrero, also imposed on the peoples of Totoltepec and Tlacotepec.

Teloloapan Axayacatl offered timely delivery of their taxes, which was not fulfilled. Subsequently, continuous rebelling and resisting the Mexica, until he was finally subdued by Ahuizotl to 1487 or 1488, becoming the official subject of the Triple Alliance led by Tenochtitlan.

Tizoc (R. 1481-1486 DC)

La actividad militar en territorio guerréense de este tlatoani se limitó a la conquista de dos poblaciones importantes: Tonalli imoquetzayan (tal vez el actual Tonaliquizaya) y Tlappan. El primero era un pueblo chontal ubicado dentro del actual municipio de Apaxtla, en las cercanías del Río Balsas, notable por la gran batalla librada allí contra los mexicas. Tlappan, por su parte, fue invadido en este periodo pero muy pronto de rebeló y su completo dominio se logró posteriormente, durante el mandato de Ahuitzotl (r. 1488-1502 dC).

Aunque no se tienen mayores referencias, es probable que bajo las ordenes de Tizoc se hayan tomado otros pueblos en las zonas cuitlateca y tepozteco-tlacotepehua, en la región del Río Balsas.

English Translation:

Tizoc (R. 1481-1486 AD)

The military activity in this tlatoani guerréense territory was limited to the conquest of two major populations: Tonalli imoquetzayan (perhaps the present Tonaliquizaya) and Tlappan. The first was a village located within the existing Chontal of Apaxtla town, near the Rio Balsas, notable for the great battle fought there against the Mexica. Tlappan, meanwhile, was invaded during this period but very soon rebelled and full domain was achieved later, during the tenure of Ahuitzotl (r. 1488-1502 AD).

Although there are more references, it is likely that under Tizoc, orders were taken to other areas, towns and villages-tlacotepehua Cuitlateca in the Balsas River region.

Ahuitzotl (R. 1486-1502 DC)

Este gobernante consolidó el dominio de los territorios comprendidos hoy dentro estado de Guerrero. A él se debe, también, la instauración de la frontera que serviría para separar el territorio dominado por los mexicas y el de los purépechas de Michoacán, aunque dicho control fue breve, puesto que concluyó con la llegada de los españoles en 1519.

Desde el inicio mismo de su gestión. Ahuitzotl emprendió su primera campaña militar—la llamada “campaña de coronación”—en contra de Tlappan, puesto que se había rebelado tras una efímera conquista realizada por Tizoc. La mayor parte de la provincia cayó bajo el poder de la Triple Alianza en 1486 y los cautivos obtenidos fueron sacrificados el año siguiente 1487, en la más fastuosa consagración del Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlán descrita por las fuentes documentales.

Pero Ahuizotl no se conformaría con Tlappan. De acuerdo con fray Diego Duran, los de la provincia de Teloloapan no asistieron a esa gran fiesta de consagración, a pesar de haber sido convocados a ella por el tlatoani tenochca. Esta ausencia despertó sus sospechas con por el tlatoani tenochca. Esta ausencia despertó sus sospechas con respecto a una posible rebelión, ante lo cual envió mensajeros a esa región para saber que estaba sucediendo; al llegar a su destino, encontraron claras evidencias que confirmaron los temores del jerarca.

Ante esa situación, se conformo un gran ejército con la participación de los señoríos de Tetzaco, Tlacopan (Tacuba), Chalco y Xochimilco, el cual se traslado de inmediato hasta Teloloapan, Oztuma y Alahuiztlan, realizándose cruentos combates que estuvieron a punto de exterminar a la población local. Como consecuencia de dicha campaña, se implanto un fuerte tributo a favor de la Triple Alianza.

Otros pueblos de Guerrero conquistados por Ahuizotl son Tetelan, Tlacotepec, Oatlan, Xoochiuhan (Jolochuca), Coyocac (Coyuquilla), Atenchancecan y Acapolo (Acapulco). Finalmente, estas conquistas, unidas a las de Tlappan y Chilapan, dieron a la Triple Alianza el ansiado control sobre la Costa Grande.

English Translation:

Ahuizotl (R. 1486-1502 AD)

This ruling reinforces the domination of the territories now included in the Guerrero state. To him we owe also the establishment of the border, which would serve to separate the territory controlled by the Mexica and the Purépecha of Michoacán, even if that control was brief, since I conclude with the arrival of the Spanish in 1519.

From the very beginning through management, Ahuizotl undertook his first military campaign called "bell crown"-Tlappan against because he had rebelled after the conquest by Tizoc ephemeral. Most of the province fell under the power of the Triple Alliance in 1486 and obtained the captives who were killed the following year of 1487, in the most splendid consecration of the Temple of Tenochtitlan described by the documentary sources.

But Ahuizotl Tlappan did not settle. According to Fray Diego Duran, the province Teloloapan did not attend this great festival of consecration, despite having been called to it by the tlatoani Tenochca. This absence aroused his suspicions with the tlatoani Tenochca. This absence aroused their suspicion about a possible rebellion, whereupon he sent messengers to the

region to know what was going on. In reaching their destination, they found clear evidence that confirmed the fears of the Administration.

In response, a great army was formed with the participation of the lords of Texcoco, Tacuba (Tacuba), Chalco and Xochimilco, which immediately moved to Teloloapan, Oztuma and Alahuiztlan, enhancing bloody fighting that was about to exterminate the local population. Following that campaign, he implanted a heavy price for the Triple Alliance.

Other peoples of Guerrero won by Ahuizotl are Tetela, Tlacotepec Otatlan, Xoochiuhan (Jolochuca) Coyocac (Coyuquilla) Atenchancelecan and Acapolo (Acapulco). Finally, these achievements, together with those of Tlappan and Chilapan, the Triple Alliance gave the desired control on the Costa Grande.

Productos de Guerrero Tributados A La Triple Alianza: Cihuatlan, Quiauhteopan, Tepecoacuico, Tlacozahtitlan, Tlachco y Tlappan

Las fuentes documentales donde está la información básica sobre las provincias tributarias de la Triple Alianza, en lo que hoy es el estado de Guerrero, son la Matricula de Tributos, el Códice Mendocino y las Relaciones geográficas del siglo XVI. Sin embargo, los productos y cantidades mencionados en ellas no reflejan el monto total del tributo recibido por la autoridad central, entre otras razones porque no se registraron muchos pueblos, ni tampoco algunos conceptos relevantes como al pago a través de servicios en obras públicas. No obstante, dichos documentos aportan una idea general sobre la gran diversidad de productos enviados periódicamente al Centro de México desde esas provincias.

Muchos eran comunes a todas ellas, como las mantas de diversos tipos y calidad, tanto de henequén como de algodón, prendas de vestir cotidianas (sobre todo naguas, huipiles y tilmas⁰, trajes guerrereros miel de abeja, copal tanto en bruto como refinado, guajlotes y semillas como maíz, frijol huauhtli o amaranto y chía. Sin embargo, pueden señalarse también algunas particularidades.

Aunque la documentación sobre Cihuatlan es particularmente escasa, destacan las referencias sobre el envío semestral de 800 conchas *Spondylus*, muy apreciadas en Mesoamérica y presentes en varias ofrendas localizadas en el Templo mayor de Tenochtitlán. Asimismo, los pueblos de Anecula región minera y aportaba cascabeles de cobre.

Tepecoacuilco tributada una gran cantidad de mantas, y entre una con rico diseño llamada nacazminqui la cual solo podrían utilizar los guerreros que hubieran capturada a cuatro a mas enemigos, o bien aquellos en retiro. Por otra parte, entre los trajes guerreros enviados por esta provincia destacan uno de guerrero jaguar, así como otro con una suntuosa divisa de plumas llamada quetzalpatzactli, misma que fue adoptada personalmente por el tlatoani Ahuizoti tras una campaña militar en Tehuantepec. Las Relaciones geográficas mencionan que el pueblo de Chilapan particular aportaba jaguares y águilas, animales de gran importancia por razones religiosas.

English Translation:

Products Guerrero Tribute To The Triple Alliance: Cihuatlan, Quiauhteopan, Tepecoacuilco, Tlacoauhtitlan, Tlachco and Tlappan

Documentary sources give basic information on the tributary provinces of the Triple Alliance, in what is now the state of Guerrero; they are the Matricula de Tributos, the Codex Mendoza and geographical relations of the sixteenth century. However, the products and quantities mentioned in the lists do not reflect the total amount of tax received by the central authority, among other reasons because there were not many people, nor some important concepts as the payment through public works services. However, these documents provide an overview of the wide variety of products brought regularly to central Mexico from the provinces.

Many were common to all, as the covers of various types and quality, both hemp and cotton, everyday clothing (especially skirts, and tilmas) huipiles, warriors costumes, honey, both raw copal as refined guajlotes and seeds such as maize, beans and amaranth and chia huauhtli. However, some particularities can be noted also.

Although the documentation is particularly scarce, Cihuatlan highlights the references to the sending of 800 semi Spondylus shells, highly prized in Mesoamerica and present in various localized offerings in the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. Also, the people of the mining region and provided Anecula copper bells.

Tepecoacuilco taxed a lot of blankets, and between a rich design call nacazminqui which could only use the warriors who had captured four more enemies, or those in retirement. Moreover, between the costumed warriors sent by the province include one jaguar warrior, and another with sumptuous feather currency quetzalpatzactli call, it was taken personally by the tlatoani Ahuizoti after a military campaign in Tehuantepec. Geographical relations mentioned that the people of particular Chilapan brought jaguars and eagles, animals of great importance for

religious reasons.

Combates a Corta Distancia

- a) Guerrero con teputzoplili. Dentro de las filas de corta distancia, uno de los primeros sistemas en ver acción eran, seguramente, los guerreros armados de lanza con navajas de obsidiana, quienes abrían las filas enemigas o las mantenían a distancia, aprovechando una de las funciones básicas de toda lanza. Vestían ichcahuipilli y podían o no llevar escudo.
- b) Guerrero con macuahuitl. Personajes equipados con macuahuitl, los cuales hipotéticamente lo blandían sin más armamento, aunque podían utilizar un chimalli y un ichcahuipilli como elementos defensivos.
- c) Guerrero con macuahuitzoctli. Otros guerreros que complementaban la acción en el combate cuerpo a cuerpo eran sin duda, los que portaban el macuahuitzoctli, que era un macuahuitl más pequeño y con un menor número de navajas de obsidiana. Iban protegidos invariablemente por un escudo e ichcahuipilli.
- d) Guerrero con cuauholli. Este sistema no es muy conocido, pues fue un arma poco empleada. El cuauholli era un bastón de madera rematado en su parte superior a manera de esfera, por lo que podía utilizarse de forma contundente como macana. Se complementaba con escudo a ichcahuipilli.

English Translation:

Close combat

a) teputzoplili Guerrero. Within the ranks of short distance, one of the first systems to see action were, surely, the warriors armed with spears with obsidian knives, who opened the enemy ranks or stayed away, taking advantage of the basic functions of all launches. Ichcahuipilli dressed and might or might not have lead with shields.

b) macuahuitl Guerrero. Characters equipped with macuahuitl, which they brandished hypothetically without weapons, although they could use a ichcahuipilli chimalli and defensive elements.

c) macuahuitzoctli Guerrero. Other warriors that complemented the action in the melee were undoubtedly those who carried the macuahuitzoctli, which was a smaller than macuahuitl and had fewer obsidian knives. They were invariably protected by a shield and ichcahuipilli.

d) cuauhololli Guerrero. This system is not well known because he was a little used weapon. The cuauhololli was a wooden staff surmounted at the top by way of field, so that it could be used overwhelmingly. Was supplemented with a ichcahuipilli shield.

Combates a Larga Distancia

- a) Lanzardados. Guerrero con e lanzardados o atlatl y un manojo de dardos, protegió con escudo e ichcahuipilli. Probablemente fue el sistema más empleado en las filas mexicas de larga distancia, debido a la importancia de esta arma y a la especialización que tenían en su uso.
- b) Guerrero con arco y flecha. En un segundo nivel de importancia se habrían encontrado los arqueros y los honderos. Los arqueros estaban equipados con un manojo de 21 flechas y se protegían con escudo e ichcahuipilli.
- c) Guerrero con honda. De los cuatro sistemas propuestos para el combate a larga distancia, tal vez los honderos quienes se encontraban menos protegidos, ya que para tener mayor libertad de movimiento no llevaban armas defensivas. Se equipaban con una honda y una pequeña bolsa repleta de proyectiles en su costado.
- d) Guerrero con lanza arrojadiza. Su equipo de ataque se compañía de varas tostadas (es decir, con la punta endurecida al fuego) o lanzas con punta de proyectil. Para su defensa, portaban ichcahuipilli y escudo.

English Translation:

Fights Long Distance

a) Thrower. Guerrero and thrower or atlatl and a bunch of darts, protected with shields and ichcahuipilli. It was probably the most widely used system in the ranks of long distance Mexica warriors, because of the importance of this weapon and the expertise they had in their use.

b) Warrior with bow and arrow. At a second level of importance they would have met the archers and slingers. The archers were equipped with a bundle of 21 arrows and protected with shields and ichcahuipilli.

c) Guerrero with a sling. Of the four proposed systems for long range combat, perhaps the slingers who were less well protected, to have some more freedom of movement had no defensive weapons. Were equipped with a sling and a pouch full of bullets in his side.

d) Warrior with spear throwing. His strike team is toast sticks company (ie, with the point hardened by fire) or spears tipped with missiles. For his defense, he carried ichcahuipilli and shield.

Armamento Mexica

Las armas empleadas por los mexicas se conocen a través de códices, crónicas, esculturas y, en menor medida, por algunos ejemplares originales. La arqueología experimental ha aportado datos reveladores sobre su carácter letal, en oposición a ciertas propuestas que pretenden explicar las guerras floridas suponiendo la existencia de artefactos diseñados para herir, sin provocar la muerte.

En la época mexica, el patrón de los armamentos utilizados en Mesoamérica era muy semejante. La supremacía de un ejército estaba más vinculada con su capacidad táctica y operativa, que con el uso de un arma específica. Se puede afirmar, por ejemplo, que si el ejército purépecha no pudo ser derrotado por el mexica, ello se debió a errores tácticos militares y no al hecho de que el primero hubiera comenzado a utilizar armas metálicas.

Se conocen dos tipos de armas ofensivas mexicas: las de largo alcance y las de choque. Entre primeras destacan el atlatl o lanzadardos, con un alcance de hasta cien metros, así como el arco con flecha, la honda y la lanza arrojadiza. Por su parte, las de choque eran la lanza con filo de obsidiana, el bastón de madera simple y el que tenía filos de obsidiana (macuahuitl), siendo este último el arma típica de los ejércitos de Posclásico Tardío.

Estos artefactos tenían la capacidad de provocar lesiones de alta peligrosidad que, evidentemente, podían causar la muerte. Además, se complementaban unos con otros para conformar sistemas que, a su vez, permitían organizar a los guerreros en unidades con actividades especiales dentro del campo de batalla. Esto permitía despliegues e incursiones para las tácticas militares.

En cuanto a las armas defensivas, existían de dos clases: por un lado los escudos, decorados con multitud de plumas y diseños multicolores, asociados con emblemas militares y atributos de deidades. Por el otro, el ichcahuipilli, una armadura de peto o coraza de algodón rellena con sal, la cual permitía movilidad y brindaba la protección requerida por el guerrero durante la batalla.

English Translation:

Mexica Weapons

The weapons used by the Aztecs are known through codices, chronicles, sculptures and to a

lesser extent, some originals. Experimental archeology has provided insight into the lethal character, as opposed to certain proposals that attempt to explain flower wars assuming the existence of artifacts designed to wound, not kill.

In Aztec times, the pattern of the weapons used in Mesoamerica was very similar. The supremacy of an army was more related to tactical and operational capacity, than using a specific weapon. One can argue, for example, that if the army could not be Purépecha defeated by the Aztec, it was due to military tactical errors and not to the fact that the former had begun to use metal weapons.

There are two types of offensive weapons Mexico: long-range and short. Between first and include the atlatl thrower, with a range of up to one hundred meters and the bow and arrow, sling and spear throwing. For its part, the short was the sharp spear of obsidian, wood stick that was simple and obsidian blades (macuahuitl), the latter being the typical weapon of the armies of Late Postclassic.

These devices were capable of causing injury and were very dangerous, obviously, it could cause death. They complement each other to form systems which, in turn, helped to organize the warriors in units with specific activities within the field. This allowed for hundreds of deployments and military tactics.

As defensive weapons, there were two classes: first shields, decorated with many colored feathers and designs associated with military emblems and attributes of deities. On the other, the ichcahuipilli, armor breastplate or shield of cotton stuffed with salt, which allowed mobility and provided the protection required by the warrior in battle.

Protocolo de Guerra

En el México Antiguo se declaraba la guerra mediante el envío de embajadores ante la autoridad del pueblo que se deseaba someter. Los emisarios se presentaban en nombre del gobernante agresor y entregaban un presente: pomada blanca de albayalde (carbonato de plomo), plumas, un escudo y dardos para la guerra (tlazontectli) o una vara tostada, es decir, con su punta endurecida al fuego.

El Señor provocada se embadurnaba el cuerpo con la pomada y se colocaba las plumas en la cabeza. Si aceptaba el desafío, entregaba a cambio un bastón con navajas de obsidiana (macuahuitl) y un escudo decorado con una banda a manera de pétalo torcido (yoxcolihqui).

Las principales razones esgrimidas por los mexicas para declarar una guerra de conquista eran la negativa a pagar el tributo o el asesinato de mercaderes en tierras hostiles. Por su parte, las guerras floridas se acordaban previamente en cuanto a la fecha y el lugar para su realización.

English Translation:

War Protocol

In Ancient Mexico people declared war by sending ambassadors to the authority of the people who wanted to submit. The emissaries were presented on behalf of the ruling handed aggressor and a present: white cream white lead (lead carbonate), feathers, a shield and arrows for war (tlazontectli) or a hardened shaft, that is, with its fire-hardened tip .

The Lord caused the body was smeared with the ointment and placed the feathers on the head. If he accepted the challenge, he gave a stick shift with obsidian blades (macuahuitl) and a shield decorated with a band so twisted petal (yoxcolihqui).

The main reasons given by the Aztecs to declare a war of conquest were the refusal to pay the tax or the assassination of merchants in hostile lands. For its part, the flower wars previously agreed on the date and place for its implementation.

Conquista y Tributo: Captura y Sacrificio

Antes que destruir a los señoríos conquistados, los mexicas preferían someterlos a través de la carga tributaria. Sin embargo, una excesiva resistencia podía derivar en la aniquilación de la población rebelde mediante ejércitos fuertemente armados.

En cambio, las guerras floridas eran campanas bélicas pactadas para ofrendar el sacrificio humano, en las que se aplicaban tácticas encaminadas más a la captura de los enemigos que a su aniquilación. Al mismo tiempo, constituían un precurso para intimidar a los enemigos potenciales del pueblo mexica y para que los guerreros, principalmente los de menor jerarquía, pudieran mejorar se posición de acuerdo con el numero de cautivos obtenidos.

Es por ello que la instrucción militar mexicana hacia hincapié en el sometimiento y la captura de guerreros.

English Translation:

Conquest and Tribute: Capture and Sacrifice

Rather than destroy the dominions conquered by the Aztecs, they preferred to submit to the tax burden. However, excessive resistance could result in the annihilation of the rebel population by heavily armed armies.

In contrast, the flower wars were military campaigns that agreed to offer up human sacrifice, in which they applied tactics designed to catch more enemies to their annihilation. At the same time, it was a precursor to intimidate potential enemies of the Mexican people and the warriors, especially the lower-ranking positions, and could improve it according to the number of captives obtained.

That is why the Mexican military training to focus on the subjugation and capture of warriors

Guerra y Tributo: Presencia Mexica en Guerrero

Para los mexicas, la guerra constituía un ritual cuya justificación descansaba en principios religiosos y la concebían- por paradójico que parezca- como un medio de contribuir a la prolongación de la vida, puesto que permitía nutrir a la Tierra con la sangre obtenida mediante el sacrificio. Sin embargo, desde un punto de vista práctico, la emprendieron casi siempre movidos por la necesidad de obtener el pago de tributos. De esta manera, llegó a ser para ellos una actividad de sustento tan importante como la agricultura.

Tras la derrota de los tapanecas de Azcapotzalco en 1430, se integro la llamada Triple Alianza, con Tenochtitlan a la cabeza a incluyendo también a Tetzcoco y Tlacopan. Nació así lo que llegaría a ser la última gran maquinaria bélica de Mesoamérica, convirtiéndose los mexicas en una sociedad expansionista que, tras someter a los diversos señoríos de la cuenca de México, extendería su dominio hacia una gran parte de Mesoamérica.

A la llegada de los conquistadores españoles en 1519, la Triple Alianza había logrado sujetar a más de 360 pueblos distribuidos en numerosas provincias tributarias. Muchas de ellas fueron registradas en documentos como la Matrícula de Tributos y el Códice Mendocino, los cuales

dan cuenta de productos, cantidades y la periodicidad con la que debía enviar su pago cada una de esas provincias.

La región prehispánica comprendida por el actual estado de Guerrero no fue ajena a ese proceso expansionista. Su conquista fue iniciada hacia 1430 DC por Itzcoatl y continuada por sus sucesores Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina, Axayacatl y Tizoc, culminando durante el mandato de Ahuitzotl entre 1486 y 1502 DC.

El sometimiento de los grupos étnicos antiguos de Guerrero tuvo como finalidad lograr el control de los yacimientos y sitios productores de cobre, oro, cinabrio y de una gran variedad de piedras preciosas, abundantes en lugares aledaños al Río Balsas. La región también era rica en algodón, miel, cera, maíz, frijol, chía, calabaza, chile, copal, jícaras, plumas preciosas y pieles, todos ellos necesarios para la economía del Centro de México.

La guerra, el tributo e impacto económico e ideológico generado por los mexicas en las comunidades étnicas de Guerrero durante los siglos XV y XVI son algunos aspectos fundamentales que se intentan ilustrar a través de esta exposición.

English Translation:

War and Tribute: Mexican Presence in Guerrero

For the Aztecs, war was a ritual whose justification rested on religious principles and conceived-paradoxically-as a means of contributing to the prolongation of life, as it allowed the Earth to nourish the blood collected by the sacrifice. However, from a practical standpoint, the most often undertaken motivation was the need to secure the payment of taxes. Thus, it became for them a livelihood activity as important as agriculture.

After the defeat of tapanecas Azcapotzalco in 1430, they joined the so-called Triple Alliance, Tenochtitlan with the head also including Texcoco and Tacuba. Thus was born what would become the last great war machine of Mesoamerica, becoming the Aztecs in a society of expansion that, after carrying out the various domains of the Basin of Mexico, extending its domain to a large part of Mesoamerica.

Upon the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1519 loc, the Triple Alliance had been subject to more than 360 villages spread over many provinces. Many tax records of them were recorded in documents like the Registration of Taxes and the Codex Mendoza, which account for products, amounts and frequency with which payment was to send each of those provinces.

The region covered by the current pre-columbian state of Guerrero was no stranger to this process of expansion. His conquest was begun about 1430 AD by Itzcoatl and continued by his successors Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina Axayacatl and Tizoc, culminating during the tenure of Ahuitzotl between 1486 and 1502 AD.

The submission of ancient ethnic groups of Guerrero was aimed at gaining control of deposits and sites producing copper, gold, cinnabar and a wide variety of gemstones, abundant in places bordering the Rio Balsas. The region was also rich in cotton, honey, beeswax, corn, beans, chia, pumpkin, pepper, incense, cups, precious feathers and skins, all necessary to the economy of central Mexico.

The war, tribute and ideological and economic impact generated by the Aztecs in ethnic communities of Guerrero during the XV and XVI are some fundamentals that are intended to illustrate through this exhibition.

Sistema Tributario

La administración tributaria en Tenochtitlan suponía una organización burocrática compleja. Los bienes recaudados servían para el sustento del aparato gubernamental y de los ejércitos. Una buena parte del producto agrícola se almacenaba como medida preventiva contra las hambrunas, causadas por las sequías que provocaron, en más de una ocasión, grandes perjuicios a la capital mexicana.

El tributo era administrado por el hueicalpixqui, alto funcionario cercano al gobernante supremo. A partir de él se ordenaba jerárquicamente un grupo de funcionarios, hasta llegar a los numerosos encargados de la recaudación en las comunidades que integraban las provincias sujetas al Estado mexicano.

La sujeción y el tributo se implantaban en regiones accesibles a los mexicas, donde existían redes mercantiles extensamente desarrolladas. Incluso, es posible que la imposición fomentara el comercio, pues en muchas ocasiones los señoríos conquistados tenían que pagarlo con productos que obtenían a través de esa actividad.

English Translation:

Tax System

The tax administration in Tenochtitlan involved a complex bureaucratic organization. The goods collected were used to sustain the government apparatus and the army. One good part of the agricultural product was stored as a precaution against famine caused by drought that resulted in more than one occasion, great damage to the Mexican capital.

The tax was administered by the hueicalpixqui, a senior official close to the supreme ruler. Since the hierarchical ordering a group of officials, down to the many responsible for the collection in the communities that comprised the provinces subject to the Mexican State.

The support and the system were implanted in areas accessible to the Mexica, which were extensively developed through commercial networks. Even taxes might encourage trade, since in many cases the estates had to pay it conquered with products obtained through this activity.

Recaudación Tributaria

Cuando un provincia o población no ofrecía mayor resistencia y se rendía rápidamente frente a una guerra de conquista, los mexicas acostumbraban mantener en sus cargos a los gobernantes locales, siempre y cuando cumplieran puntualmente con el pago tributario y se mostraran dóciles ante el dominio de Tenochtitlan. Sin embargo, cuando la defensa era feroz, o bien cuando se trataba de una localidad en rebeldía, implantaban autoridades de origen mexica con el fin de ejercer un control férreo y directo. De igual manera, esa mayor o menor oposición al control de la Triple Alianza traía como resultado una mayor o menor carga impositiva.

El tributo estaba constituido por una gran variedad de productos y servicios. Podrían ser recolectados con intervalos de 3 a 80 días, aunque algunos artículos, como los trajes guerreros, se enviaban anualmente. Llegado el plazo pactado, los recaudadores o calpixqui – quienes se distinguían por llevar en una mano un bastón y en la otra un mosquero – exigían su entrega para reunirlos y llevarlos a los almacenes reales de Tenochtitlan, Tetzaco y Tlacopan.

English Translation:

Tax Collection

When a province or city offered no further resistance and surrendered quickly to a war of conquest, the Mexica customarily maintained the positions of local governors, provided they complied promptly with the tax payment and were docile to the dominance of Tenochtitlan. However, when the defense was ferocious, or when it was a default location, they implanted Mexican authorities in order to exercise tight control and direction. Similarly, this more or less

was opposed to the control of the Triple Alliance and brought results in a greater or lesser tax burden.

The tribute consisted of a variety of products and services. It could be collected at intervals of 3 to 80 days, although some items, like warrior costumes, were sent annually. Where a timely fashion, or calpixqui collectors - who distinguished themselves by carrying a cane in one hand and the other a flapper - demanded his surrender to unite and lead to real stores of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tacuba.

Panorama Geográfico de Guerrero

El estado de Guerrero se encuentra situado al sur de la Republica Mexicana y tiene una extensión aproximada de 63,794 km². Colinda al norte con los estados de México y Morelos, al noroeste con Michoacán, al noreste con Puebla, al este con Oaxaca y al sur con el Océano Pacifico. Su accidentada orografía se distingue por serranías escarpadas, barrancos profundos y planicies escasas. La Sierra Madre del Sur atraviesa longitudinalmente a la entidad; sin embargo, una porción del Eje Volcánico Transversal dio origen a las sierras de Sultepec y Taxco.

Guerrero es uno de los estados con más ríos de la Republica Mexicana, entre los cuales destaca sobre todo el que es conocido como Balsas. La flora representativa esta compuesta principalmente por árboles de amate, copal, partota, pochote, Ceiba, cuajote, organero, huisache, palmera, cedro, encino y pino. Por su parte, entre la fauna guerrerense destacan las iguanas, serpientes, escorpiones, lagartijas, liebres, conejos, jabalíes, mapaches, tejones, ardillas, tlacuaches, venados, águilas, tortugas y coyotes.

Tradicionalmente, el territorio de Guerrero ha sido dividido en siete regiones: el Norte, es decir. La zona que limita de poniente a oriente con los estados de México, Morelos y Puebla; la región de Tierra Caliente, que limita al norte con Michoacán y el estado de México; la Montana, situada en el oriente del estado, limita con Puebla y Oaxaca; la región Centro, como su nombre lo indica, esta delimitada por las demás regiones estatales y en ella se encuentra la capital, Chilpancingo; por ultimo, las regiones de la Costa Grande y la Costa Chica están ubicadas como una franja extendida de noroeste a sureste sobre el Océano Pacifico.

English Translation:

Geographic Panorama of Guerrero

The state of Guerrero is located south of the Mexican Republic and has an approximate area of

63,794 km². It is bordered on the north by the states of Mexico and Morelos, Michoacán to the northwest, northeast to Puebla, Oaxaca to the east and south by the Pacific Ocean. Its rugged terrain is distinguished by steep mountains, deep ravines and low plains. The Sierra Madre del Sur cuts longitudinally through the body, but a portion of the Transverse Volcanic Axis originated with the mountains Sultepec and Taxco.

Guerrero is one of the states with more rivers than the Mexican Republic, among which stands out, above all, is knowledge of rafts. The flora is composed mainly representative of amate trees, copal, partota, pochote, Ceiba, cuajote, organ builder, huisache, palm, cedar, oak and pine. For its part, between Guerrero fauna include iguanas, snakes, scorpions, lizards, hares, rabbits, boars, raccoons, badgers, squirrels, opossums, deer, eagles, turtles and coyotes.

Traditionally, the territory of Guerrero has been divided into seven regions: the North, that is. The area that borders west to east with the states of Mexico, Morelos and Puebla, the Tierra Caliente region, bordered on the north by the state of Michoacan and Mexico, the mountain located in the eastern state bordering Puebla Oaxaca, the central region, as its name implies, is bounded by the state and in other regions it is the capital, Chilpancingo, finally, the regions of the Pacific Coast and the Costa Chica are located as a band extended from northwest to southeast over the Pacific Ocean.

Appendix VII: Text Transcription and Translation from the Museo Nacional de Antropología

National Anthropology Museum of Mexico City

The High Plateau

The Preclassic or Formative period is characterized by the appearance of certain traits that traditionally define the cultural area known as Mesoamerica; for example sedentary communities, a self-sufficient economy and ceramics manufacture. In addition, the period displays social processes and political evolution, for it begins with simple communities of agricultural villages and ends with the onset of a stratified society on a state level. The elements that conform this period gradually took their own characteristics in the different regions of the Mesoamerican territory; thus, areas with different types of development were formed, and that of the Central High Plateau was one of the most important in the prehispanic period.

The Central High Plateau lies inside the frame formed by the western Sierra Madre, the eastern Sierra Madre and, to the south, the Transversal Volcanic mountain range, which runs from west to east. This area, which housed very early manifestations of human life, is conformed by a highly irregular landscape, with plateaus, closed basins, and valleys separated by mountains with heights that exceed, generally, the 2,000 meters (6,000 ft.) above sea level.

The area includes the present states of Mexico the Federal District, Morelos, Tlaxcala, Puebla and the south of Hidalgo. The High Plateau also features the sources of some of the most important Mesoamerican fluvial systems, such as the Panuco in the Hidalgo zone and the Balsas in Puebla-Tlaxcala.

In this Museum's wing, the historical development of the Central High Plateau is presented, starting from the beginning of the Preclassic period -2300 B.C.-to the encounter with the Spanish conquerors in the 16th century (in four Rooms: The Preclassic Period, Teotihuacan, Toltec, and Mexica).

The Preclassic of Formative Period

The Preclassic of Formative period covers approximately from 2300 BC to 100 AC; during that time the basic Mesoamerican patterns – which would give place to the great civilizations – were formed.

The Intensive development of agriculture was the period's main economical characteristic. Starting from this cultural horizon, agricultural activities became the foundation of sedentary communities. Hunting, fishing and gathering were also practiced during all the prehispanic times. This type of mixed economy was an important trait of Mesoamerican cultures.

Production surplus little by little allowed an increase in population and the growth of villages to form ceremonial centers. Another characteristic aspect of the Preclassic period is the onset of architecture, which began with the construction of dwellings made of perishable materials up to the building of platforms to support temples. Ceramic production was the most important activity, and high levels of perfection were attained in its manufacture: clay figures, the first portable and monumental sculptures, and the development of technology in carved and polished stone, are other outstanding characteristics of this time.

In the social aspect, differences rose in the type of activity performed, as well as in hierarchy; religion underwent a transformation, from individualistic cults – Shamanic practices-, to community cults, up to the development of institutionalized religion and the first evidence of gods. In regional cultures, the development of trade networks and knowledge exchange nets encourages and unified beliefs; the most important event between 1200-600 BC is the development of the Olmec civilization in the south of Veracruz and the north of Tabasco, whose expressions can be appreciated in a great part of Mesoamerica and specially in the Central High Plateau.

Rural Life: The Beginnings

In the Mesoamerican territory, a new form of life appeared between the years 2300 to 1500 BC: the flourishing of the rural world, which presented the first sedentary societies that settled near lakes and water sources. These agricultural pioneers produced their own artifacts, of which clay objects – small figures and bowls – constitute the best indicator of their material culture.

Food production activities are reflected in the presence of grinding instruments and domesticated plants, particularly corn (*Zea mays* L.), complemented by the exploitation of lakes and woods. Pottery is the most important and characteristic product that gives knowledge of these incipient communities of the Prehispanic world.

The Environment

The environment is the set of physical factors or circumstances that surround all living beings; thus, it is an important part of a culture and is reflected in several of its aspects, such as economy, shelter, and religion.

The Central High Plateau, in particular, is characterized by a very irregular relief, with different environments and vegetation. There are zones where aridity only allows the growth of a few types of life forms, but perennial forests, aquatic environments, and thick high-mountain forests also exist. This great diversity is due to physiographical, geological, and climatic conditions (temperature, rain and height above sea level), that show a vast range of variation and combinations and that, in addition, are in close relation with animal life.

However, climatic changes – during the Formative climate was more humid than at the present time-, man's hand, and population growth modified these environments. Now, for example, rivers and lakes have dried and, consequently, fauna and flora have been affected.

Economy

Sedentary life was possible due to the adoption of a mixed economy – mainly agricultural-, complemented by hunting, fishing, and gathering.

The environmental richness of the High Plateau allowed the development of these activities by the groups who inhabited it. In particular the Mexico Basin presents a variety of ecological niches, from where the necessary products for living were obtained. Furthermore, the exploitation of different animal species and mineral and vegetal resources, as well as of the technology which was developed, gave place to work specialization. Thus, the communities carried out a number of activities related to the production of food and artifacts; some of these were even part of their religious practices.

Clay, a great variety of stones, vegetal fibers, wood, bone and other perishable materials were the main raw materials used in the manufacture of different objects and instruments. The occupations and technological advances of these groups can be known through the study of their handicrafts.

Example of text accompanying a display of a specific kind of material:

Wood:

Wood was a fundamental element in these groups' life; unfortunately, very few wooden archaeological objects have been preserved to the present time, as this material is organic and thus, perishable. However, through the great quantity of tools (made of stone, teeth, and

animals horns) used for working with wood that have been found in archaeological expeditions, one can conclude that the material was used in home building and furniture manufacture, in the making of other tools, and in the creation of sculptures.

In addition to fire, instruments employed to work with wood were axes and chisels used to obtain big blocks and, after wards, smaller and more delicate tools like burins, drillers and abrasive rocks with which to give finishes, carve the fine traits of sculptures and make smaller objects.

Society:

During the early stages of the Preclassic a series of gradual social changes took place; the human groups began to settle in villages – where they performed a great part of their activities, and the family constituted the basis of society. The abundance of female figures, which underline their sexual attributes, denote the importance that farmers gave to the bonds between women's and soil's fertility.

Production increased at the same pace as agricultural techniques; the excedent allowed certain villages to experience a demographical growth and settlements became towns.

One of the elements that contributed to the enrichment and complexity of customs and ideas was the contact with other groups, which took place since much earlier times. Most certainly the social differences were due to the variety of activities performed. However, little by little men began to take command of community activities, as can be appreciated by the "personages" associated to community cults, which gave rise to the first leaders. Shamanism was present since early times, as shown by evidences, as well as the ball game. Finally, the death cult, as a part of their beliefs, constitutes another element that reflects social aspects.

Shamanism:

Shamanistic cults consisted of magic – religious rites, in which one or more officials participated with a divination or therapeutic ends. The shamans were consulted when under pressure or anxiety and they were masters of prestidigitation, trance, and possession.

Shamans purified themselves through fasting, bathing, ingesting special drinks and other such means prior to entering the sacred act of shamanic ritual. They reached a state of trance through various techniques: meditation, insomnia, fasting, pain and/or ingestion of hallucinogens; by these means they believed to transport themselves to other dimensions intending to achieve knowledge, curing illness and/or establishing contact with ancestors.

From the Preclassic period, material evidence has been found of these practices: figurines, grinding stones of volcanic rock, enemas, stylized representations of mushrooms, and abundant depictions of acrobats or contortionists.

Burial Group:

Tlatilco, a site which developed during the Early and Middle Preclassic periods (1400-600 BC), may be considered one of the most important sites of the Valley of Mexico, not only because of its abundant archaeological materials but also because of their beauty and quality. Many of them captured attention due to some features that relate them to the Olmec groups of the Gulf Coast, a culture considered by many as the earliest of Mesoamerican civilizations.

One of Tlatilco's characteristics are its burial places; during four seasons of excavations, over 500 human burials have been explored, from which the majority contain offerings of diverse objects, such as ceramics, lithic instruments and figurines; these objects generally reflect activities formerly engaged in by the buried individual.

These burials show that the dead were buried directly on the ground, inside as well as outside their homes, and were wrapped with some type of matting. Here seems to have been no particular preference regarding the orientation or positioning of the body.

Certain cultural practices may be observed in the skeletons found; these include intentional cranial deformation, filed teeth, and a red pigment covering the majority of the bodies. Some bones and teeth show clear signs of illness, which may have been of an endemic or epidemic type. These and other osteological data allow a reconstruction of Preclassic populations. This particular burial collection was found in Trench 6 during the last season of excavations carried out in Tlatilco (involving Burials 151 to 160); it is important to note that Burial 154, according to some specialists, seems to be that of a shaman, due to objects associated with the body.

Houses and Areas of Activity

The results of archaeological work in Tlatilco have provided valuable information regarding diverse aspects of life in this community. In addition to the burials, other items have been studied, which reveal typical peasants' houses; this evidence includes post holes, stone alignments, remains of wattle and daub walls, granaries or truncated cone formations, hearths and occupations. Although it is not possible to accurately determine the sizes and distribution of these houses, the residential unit can be recreated by comparing Tlatilco with other sites.

Another important aspect is the spatial analysis. This type of study allows the identification of activity areas such as workshops, that may be determined by the tools involved in the production process, and the raw material. Detection of activities performed within residential units also provides valuable information in understanding aspects of daily life.

Houses were constructed over a low platform to avoid flooding; inner and outer areas had dirt floors; walls were of wattle and daub, or in other words, of interwoven branches covered with mud; additionally, it seems that single or double rows of stones held posts, which supported the walls and roof of a house. Kitchens were probably located in the back of houses, and various hearths and granaries were located around the house.

Pottery

During the first stages of the Formative period, artisans must inspired themselves by the elements of nature to create a great diversity of pottery forms, although probably they had to respect certain rules imposed by the community. Also, contact among different regions was translated into a richness of forms, colors, and decorative techniques in pots, with which new fashions or styles were achieved.

The Middle Preclassic, in particular, is distinguished by the high quality and beauty achieved in its pottery, which was used in daily life and in ceremonial rites.

In this period symbolical elements, as well as new techniques, were introduced; this was a result of the intense exchange that existed among the peoples; in them also shaped a great part of these groups' way of thinking.

Exchange

One of the most important activities in the development of Preclassic societies and fundamental to the rising of the great Mesoamerican cultures was the exchange of raw materials and objects, as well as of ideas and concepts represented in artwork.

The Central Mexican High Plateau participated in a wide network reaching distant places, such as the Gulf Coast, Oaxaca, Guerrero, and sites on the western region. These activities were also carried out within the High Plateau area, specifically in the Basin of Mexico, where diverse communities specialized in manufacturing and unified to create a central distribution force.

They obtained, both locally and from distant regions, materials such as salt, green stones, obsidian, silex, hematite, pigments, bitumen, sulfur, hallucinogens, tortoise shells, mantas, and shells, of great value for these groups, as well as manufactured items, mainly for sumptuary use, specially pottery.

Ceremonial Centers

The late and terminal Preclassic – 600 BC to 100 AC- is characterized by the surge of ceremonial centers, due to important economical developments and social and technological changes. Preponderant among these was the intensification of agricultural activities that produced an excedent and, this, caused certain villages – which functioned as power centers- to become great settlements where religious, administrative, and exchange activities were carried out.

The social structure suffered important transformations. Religion was institutionalized as an integrating nucleus and the priest was placed in front of the community; he was also the mediator before the gods, that began to be represented. This sociopolitical change was reflected in architecture, with the construction of foundations and platforms located around the plazas built for the congregation of a great number of the faithful.

Religion

In the Late Preclassic, religion was institutionalized and became the integrating nucleus of society. The priest was the representative before the gods, and he carried out religious activities in the ceremonial centers. In these, huge plazas, destined for the congregation of the faithful, as well as monumental temples, were the highlights.

Forces of nature were deified and images with the characteristics of some of the divinities that would become a part of the Mesoamerican pantheon were created. In funeral practices, the treatment of some personages clearly underlined social differences; the habit of building tombs with personages accompanied with rich offerings was begun. Human remains with signs of alterations due possibly, to a ritual habit, have been found.

The ball game developed as a characteristic of the Mesoamerican cultures; its importance can be appreciated by the presence of buildings devoted to the execution of this ceremony.

Architecture

The rise of ceremonial centers carried with it the beginning of architecture building construction acquired civic and religious taint. Elements such as platforms and the superposition of structures with ramps and stairs were developed, as well as the slope and the slab. Monolithic sculptures associated to buildings and spaces which possibly functioned as plazas were also created; it was in these places that political and economical power was consolidated, as well as the religious cult.

One of the first evidences of ceremonial architecture is the one found in the Tepalcate Hill. However, Cuicuilco, Tlapacoya, Tlalancaleca, Xochitelco, Cholula and Teotihuacan, among others, are no doubt the greatest architectural groups they came to be important regional centers that had an economical control over other communities.

In regard to domestic architecture, access to certain resources and raw materials, as well as the size and importance of the site, determined the architectural and constructive characteristics. However, since earlier times there are some evidences of this type of work made of perishable materials. In the later period new modalities were developed, such as stucco floors and stone walls.

Pottery

During the Late Preclassic, new pottery forms arose; some of them had a tendency toward compound silhouettes, with convex bases and ornamental supports. Pots for food services, generally big-sized, were predominant; possibly this was due to the important increase in population that took place during those times. Also, new decorative techniques were developed, such as the use of polychrome painting and fresco or cloisonné, which consisted of putting on a hand of stucco over the pot, where paint of different colors was also applied.

Small figures of his period lost the grace which characterized those of earlier times; they became flatter, probably as a result of the incipient use of moulds for their elaboration. This originated serial production, with social groups possibly using the pots on different ways.

In the evolution process that took place in the Mexican Central High Plateau during the Preclassic or Formative period, the basic elements of Mesoamerican cultures were formed.

Intensive use of the different microenvironments of the region, as well as the specialization in obtaining and producing goods – which required technological advances and tool improvement-, were factors that made demographical increase possible. This originated a complex social organization and the appearance of a ruling class that resided in the ceremonial centers, which became the first cities with urban characteristics that would determine the next stage.

Many of these traits are present in several sites of the Mexican Basin such as Cuicuilco, and Cholula, in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. The latter became the same as Teotihuacan, one of the greatest cities of the classical world.

Teotihuacán

Initially Teotihuacan was a hamlet. It starts to grow during the first century AD, when the population of the Valley of Mexico began to concentrate in the area where the city would later be built. With a labor force at their disposal, the rulers began to exploit the area's natural resources, and embarked on the great project of building the pyramids of the Sun and the Moon. They prepared a master plan, which covered economic questions, as well as the city's early layout and planning. Teotihuacan was conceived as a model of the Universe originated. The master plan was instrumental in making Teotihuacan the best planned and most influential city in Mesoamerica during the Classic Period.

Teotihuacan's control of the obsidian mines at Otumba and Pachuca allowed it to centralize the production of obsidian goods in the city. Some of these articles were for domestic sale, while others were exported. With its economy founded on the production of obsidian and a monopoly of the distribution of Thin Orange pottery, Teotihuacan developed a trading system that embraced almost every region of Mesoamerica, including places as far away as the Maya area, the modern state of Guerrero, and the area around the Gulf of Mexico.

Its metropolitan flavor, its trading system, and the religious prestige that it must have earned from its enormous pyramids and ceremonial center attracted a floating population that greatly enriched the quality of life in the great city.

After a long period of prosperity, Teotihuacan finally collapsed in about 750 A. This seems to have been brought about in part by pressures from the new centers of population that were rising up on the Mexican plateau. However, evidence of fires and the systematic,

devastating way in which the buildings lining the Avenue of the Dead were destroyed are irrefutable proof that the main cause of its collapse must have been internal conflicts.

The Pyramid of the Sun

The pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, together with the Ciudadela (the Citadel), form the oldest group of ceremonial buildings in the city of Teotihuacan.

The Pyramid of the Sun is important, not only for its monumental size, but also for its meaning. The fact that it faces west suggests that, as stated in some sixteenth century texts, it was indeed dedicated to the sun.

The existence of a cave underneath the pyramid also seems to have a ritual significance, since caves were both symbols of origin and places where it was possible to communicate with the gods who were supposed to live in them.

Additionally, the discovery of children's skeletons at the corners of all its sides may be evidence of a cult in which children were sacrifices and offered to the storm god.

In the Pyramid of the Sun we can see the first melding of the symbols and beliefs that were to evolve and endure in the central Mexican plateau until the Spanish conquest.

The Pyramid of the Moon

Recent excavations, carried out by tunneling, have revealed four substructures in the Pyramid of the Moon. The oldest is built of small blocks of cut pink stone laid so as to form a slope, and is tentatively thought to date from the first century BC.

The fourth building completely covers the others and includes the "talud-tablero" (sloping panel) feature that is typical of Teotihuacan. Before construction was begun, an extraordinary burial offering was placed under its foundations. In addition to the skeleton of a sacrificed person with his hands tied behind his back, it also includes numerous objects and the skeleton remains of one canine and two feline animals, ten birds, and a snake. The appearance of the talud-tablero and the importance of the burial offering seem to indicate that there were important ideological changes in the government of the city at that time.

The fifth and last building is what we now see before us.

The Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent

The pyramid of the Feathered Serpent in the Ciudadela was probably Teotihuacan's most important political and religious center. It is outstanding because of its elaborate ornamentation, the supreme examples of which are two stone sculptures; a head of the feathered serpent and another piece that has been identified either as a representation of the storm god or as a great crested and knotted headdress.

The pyramid was erected in one continuous operation between 150 and 200 AD. In recent excavations, archaeologists have discovered numerous examples of sacrificed individuals dressed as warriors buried inside the pyramid, which confirms the prevalence of human sacrifice and militarism in Teotihuacan from an early stage.

The number of the sacrificial victims and the symmetrical way in which their bodies were arranged indicate that the building and the sacrificial ritual were directly related to the culture's cosmology, calendar, and astronomy.

Apartment Compound

Reconstruction of an inside courtyard and central temple in an apartment compound.

It is estimated that there were about 2,000 of these apartment compounds, which were used as dwellings and for other purposes. They were generally square or rectangular in shape, and ranged in size from 65 feet square to 260 feet square. They were usually surrounded by a high, windowless outer wall. On the inside, they had numerous passageways, rooms, small pools, and one or two courtyards with an altar for performing the compound's own rituals.

Some of the apartment compounds that have been excavated, such as Tetitla, Atetelco, Tepantitla and Zacuala, contain the finest mural paintings in Teotihuacan.

These paintings were not meant to represent nature or the common man; instead they illustrate Teotihuacan's rituals, mythology, and religious beliefs. The meaning of the images, however, may not be readily apparent to modern observers.

The Storm God

The storm god was the most often depicted deity in Teotihuacan. Although we do not know what the inhabitants of Teotihuacan called him, some of his traits and elements resemble those of the Mexica god Tlaloc, and it is possible that he was Tlaloc's precursor.

Some aspects of the storm god cult seem contradictory to our eyes. For example, when the god is depicted with a water lily emerging from his mouth, the idea seems to be to stress the concept of fertility; however, he is also often depicted with a forked tongue, and here the emphasis seems to be on the idea of war or sacrifice.

The Idealized Man

Anthropomorphic representations in Teotihuacan reveal a stereotyped and idealized vision of man. In contrast to what we find in other Mesoamerican cultures, sculptors did not attempt to immortalize their rulers in stone.

In the masks, particularly, we can find no features that would allow us to identify individuals; they all seem to have been made in accordance with established aesthetic rules masks must be broader than they are tall, and have a large forehead.

Traditionally, it was thought that the masks had a funerary function and that they were attached to the faces of the dead. However another possibility is that they were fastened to a skeleton dressed to represent one of the deities worshipped in a temple.

Specialized Production and Trade

The specialized mass production of certain products – both for domestic consumption and for export – and state control of their commercialization were important factors in Teotihuacan's economy. For example, proof that the production of ceramics for domestic consumption was specialized can be found in the area in the southern part of the city that housed the workshops where "Orange Saint Martin" ware was made.

Another of Teotihuacan's strategies was to monopolize the source of the raw material. This was the strategy it employed with the obsidian mines of Pachuca.

To strengthen its systems of production and distribution, Teotihuacan set up a network of trading routes and used it to send many of its products to the furthest reaches of Mesoamerica.

Teotihuacán's Contacts with Other Cultures

The archaeological proof of Teotihuacan's interaction with other, often distant, Mesoamerican cultures is based on evidence both of their presence in Teotihuacan and of Teotihuacan's presence in their centers.

The presence of foreign ethnic settlements in Teotihuacan is shown by the existence of Oaxacan and Gulf Coast of Mexico neighborhoods within the city.

As for Teotihuacan's presence in other areas, it seems that the degree of contact varied, since its influence was greater at some places than at others. Although some of these contacts might be no more than occasional dealings, they were at times strong enough to warrant the establishment of a Teotihuacan enclave.

Teotihuacan's influence can be seen in such fields as architecture, pottery, and iconography.

The Collapse and Reoccupation of Teotihuacán

Teotihuacan collapsed in about 750 AD, and archaeologists have found strong evidence of fire at many of its excavated sites. Especially hard-hit were the places that were most important to its rulers, such as buildings along the Avenue of the Dead like the Ciudadela and the Quetzalpapálotl Palace.

Although the fire may have been started by invading forces, the local population must have played some part in the city's destruction.

Shortly after its destruction, the city was reoccupied by successive groups with different cultures. Among them were the groups who used pottery decorated with wavy red lines on a reddish brown background. Examples of objects made in the reoccupation, are the pottery found on the floor of one of Teotihuacan's apartment compounds which is associated with a large sculpture of Xipe.

Even as a ruined city, Teotihuacan's fame was recognized by all of the peoples who arrived to the Mexican plateau after its fall. This explains why its pyramids and buildings continued to be visited and revered by the Mexica, who in their legends made Teotihuacan the place where the fifth sun was created.

Cacaxtla

In 1975, a campesino from the village of San Miguel del Milagro found a fragment of painted wall while working his fields. After that fortuitous discovery, the National Institute of

Anthropology and History began to explore what was called the Great Basement of Cacaxtla, the center of one of the most important archaeological sites of the epi-classical period.

Cacaxtla lies on a plateau that covers parts of the states of Puebla and Tlaxcala. It dominated a vast landscape of lakes and fertile soil that encouraged the development of intensive agriculture, capable of sustaining a large population. It was also in a strategic position between the Central Plateau and the Gulf of Mexico Coast, and brought together aspects of the cultures of both regions. It reached its climax between the years 600 and 750 AD.

This archaeological complex comprises a set of rooms around a patio. The extraordinary wall painting used as decoration reveals wonderful realism and color.

Xochicalco

Xochicalco means the “Place of the House of Flowers”. Although like other centers it reached its greatest height after the fall of Teotihuacan, during the classical period, it was dominated and ruled over by that great city. However with the change of power Quetzalcoatl was to raise his flag; worship of this god and the myth of the creation of the Fifth Sun and Fifth Humanity began at the same time.

Located near Cuernavaca, in the state of Morelos, it was built on the top of several hills, shaped with cuts and terraces, where large buildings were erected. The architectural traditions of Teotihuacan were maintained and complemented with other cultural influences from such distant places as the Maya region, the Gulf Coast, and Oaxaca.

This was a fortified site, surrounded by ditches and guarded over by watchtowers and a fortress. The scale of the causeways and incomplete temple basements give us an idea of how important this place must have been.

The influence of Teotihuacan may be seen in such building elements as slopes and frontispieces, decorated with projecting cornices.

The pelota courts with their characteristic “I” shape are an outstanding feature of Xochicalco, which rose to its height between 650 and 850 AD in a period known as the epi-classical.

Tula

In the 11th century a new groups arrived from the north of Mexico known as “Chichimecs”. One band was led by Mixcoatl who migrated with his people to the Central Plateau where they settled in Culhuacan.

Legend says that while he was hunting in the valleys of Morelos he came across a woman named Chimalmatl. When she saw him she stood naked and Mixcoatl shot four arrows without harming her; this happened again but finally he caught and possessed her. From this union was to be born Ce-Acat Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the most important figure in the early post-classical period (850-1250 AD).

As an adult, he lead his people to a place known in the ancient texts as Xicocotitlan, in what today is the state of Hidalgo. This is where the Toltecs, the name they to, worked tirelessly to create their own concept of the universe. They were to live given over to worshipping their principal god Quetzalcoatl in the form of Venus, “the morning and evening star.”

The place was called Tule, “the Sacred City of Quetzalcoatl.”

Corral

The Corral area is located about half a mile from what is known as Tula Grande. It held a semicircular temple which was chiefly associated with Ollin (movement). At one end, there is a tzompantli, which is decorated with a series of small figures, similar to the ones fund on the Burnt Bench. Then there is a series of crossed femurs alternated with skulls, and in the lower part several semi-recumbent figures can be seen.

These richly attired figures are holding an enormous feather-bedecked staff of office. They are wearing characteristic pectorals with a stylized butterfly design, similar to the ones worn by the warriors in the stone sculptures.

It is interesting to note that the Toltecs carved representations of the rain god on the back of some of their stone tablets, and that his features were the sae as those fund in the distant Maya area, where the rain god was known as Chac. The ost prominent feature in his enormous hooked nose. In some cases, he is holding a bag for copal (incense), and is n a serpent’s body in others, he is represented as a serpent with a forked scroll emerging from its body.

These come from Room I of Building 3 of the Southern Platform, Building C, Tula, Hidalgo (Early Post-Classic 850-1250 AD)

Trade

Trade routes were an important feature at that time. Some of them extended as far as Central and South America. The toltecs were great and adventurous traders, or pochtecas, who brought goods from a wide range of places: the Gulf and Pacific coasts; Teotlalan, in the southern part of Queretaro; the Bajio; parts of the valley of Morelos; the Huasteca; the Lerma-Santiago routes to the Pacific coast and the Pachuca-Tollantzinco-Cuauhchinanco to the Gulf coast; the center of Veracruz; the Xoconochco (Soconusco); southern Sinaloa; the highlands of Guatemala; and northern Yucatan.

They traded in many different kinds of goods, which were sold at the markets where warriors, traders and ordinary people would meet to exchange jade, shell, feathers, plumbate vessels, flowers, skins, and other objects from different regions of Mesoamerica.

Cholula

Cholula, located in the modern state of Puebla, was one of the most important centers on the central plateau. It gave lodging to the pilgrims who arrived there from different parts to worship at its shrine and consequently became a strategic trading point.

Cholula's decline began with the collapse of Teotihuacan. Its area of influence was greatly reduced and it fell under the control of the Olmec-Xiclanca.

When Tula fell, Cholula, a sacred ceremonial center par excellence, became a refuge to the Toltec groups who fled from their homes. According to the Toltec Chichimec History, in year 1 flint (1168 AD), after 36 years of wandering, groups of Toltec-Chichimec settled in Cholula and obtained control of the city after defeating the local ruling group. They installed Quetzalcoatl as their supreme tutelary god, and the city once again became one of Mesoamerica's main religious centers and the center of Quetzalcoatl's cult.

Cholula regained central control of its trade routes, and used them to exchange a vast number of goods. Its importance survived until the arrival of the Spaniards.

Teotenango

Originally, Teotenango was a civic and religious center strategically located on Mount Tetepetl, and was home to the priests and high ranking officials who took care of government, administrative affairs, and religion. Other residents were artisans, artists, traders, servants, etc. Its buildings included temple basements, ceremonial plazas, and administrative buildings, as well as the dwelling compounds that gave it its urban nature.

At some time between 900 and 1200 AD, the Chichimec-Matlatzinca (a people who took their name from the Nahuatl word Matlatl, which means “net”) conquered the people of Teotenango and brought them under their rule. According to the historical sources, the main purpose of the war was to obtain honor, fame, and riches, as well as slaves to be used as workers and as sacrificial victims. Nevertheless, it was at least as important to make vassals of the conquered peoples, in order to receive tribute and property.

This people based its economy mainly on the food paid as tribute by the rural communities, which practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, combined with fishing and gathering.

The conquest of Teotenango by the Mexica in around 1474-76 led to the gradual impoverishment of the population and of the city, and sparked rebellions among the local people and at other centers in the Valley of Toluca. However, because of the superior weapons of the Mexica of Tenchiitclan, these were snuffed out. Not many years later, the place was conquered by the Spaniards. Some of the Matlatzinca and Mexica remaining on the hill were forced to abandon it and move to the new colonial town of Tenango del Valle.

The Volcano District

The Eastern corner of the central plateau is home to the volcanoes that typify the region: Popocatepetl, or Popocatezin, and Iztaccíhuatl or Cihuatepetl.

From the earliest times, no traveler to the vicinity of the volcanoes has failed to fall under the spell of their overwhelming beauty. There are references to them in oral traditions handed down from the remote past and collected by sixteenth century chroniclers.

Sahagun wrote, “There is a very high one that smokes. It is near the province of Chalco and is called Popocatepetl, which means “smoking mountain”. It is huge and well worth seeing, and I went to the top of it...There is another mountain next to it called Iztacteoetl, which means “white mountain”. It is extraordinary to see how high it is, and there used to be a great deal of idolatry there. I saw it and went to the top of it.’ (A General History of the Things of New Spain vol 11, p. 479, 1946).

Likewise, Duran mentions the importance of the volcanoes, and associates them with festivities and gods: ‘On the feast day of the goddess, which the local people celebrated in the name Iztaccihuatl, which means “white woman”...they spent two days performing the ceremonies on this rough, snowy mountain, which they also took to be a goddess and adored as such...We are all used to seeing Mount Popocatezin, which in our language mean the smoking mountain, emit smoke visibly two or three times a day, often together with flames. It has been seen by many

people, especially early at night...and they honored it more by making routine, continuous sacrifices and offerings, without counting the special festival called Tepeylhuitl, which means mountain festival and which they held every year..." (History of the Indians of New Spain, 1880, pp. 190 and 202).

Tenayuca

Tenayuca in Nahuatl means "Walled Place". It is also known as Oztopalco. Around the turn of the twelfth century it was the capital city of the Chichimeco empire under Xolotl, a leader renowned for his exploits and long rule.

Thanks to the information contained in numerous documents (for example, the Tlotzin and Quinatzin codices), we know that the Chichimeco at the time of Xolotl were rude tribesmen who dressed in animal skins used bows and arrows, lived in caves and straw huts and spoke a language that was very similar to Nahuatl. Later, through contact with groups from the central plateau, they picked up some of the cultural features of Mesoamerica.

The first three kings of this tribe of battle-hardened Chichimeca were Xolotl, Nopaltzin, and Tlotzin. Their seat of government was Tenayuca, and they ruled their people wisely. The fourth king, Quinatzin, moved the capital to Texacoca, and as a result, Tenayuca's importance diminished.

Kingdoms in the Basin of Mexico

When the Mexica first came to the Basin of Mexico, the region was densely populated, and divided politically into numerous city-states that controlled no more than the territory around them. The turmoil that was so prevalent in the first half of that fourteenth century was caused by their attempts to extend their areas of influence.

Chief among the kingdoms that fought to dominate the region were Azcapotzalco, Tenayuca, Culhuanacan, Xochimilco, Texcoco, Coyoacan, Chalco, Xaltocan, Cuatlinchan, and Xico.

Azcapotzalco formed alliances that transformed it into the main regional power at the end of the fourteenth century. However, the kingdom of Texcoco began its expansion at the eastern end of the region, and became Azcapotzalco's most dangerous rival. Years later, this would lead the two states to clash.

In time, the situation would be resolved by the rise of the Mexico-Tenochtitlan, which would go on to form the celebrated triple alliance, and eventually become the leading power on the central plateau.

The Ball Game Among the Mexicas

All the peoples of ancient Mesoamerica practiced the ball game, a ritual sport that determined the dangers faced by the sun on its daily journey across the heavens, thus predicting its fate.

For the Mexicas, the sacred ball game was ullamaliztli, a word derived from rubber, the material used to make the ball which was skillfully moved by the players, obtaining a precise bounce which surprised the European conquerors. The game was played on a special court called a tlaxco, which was a patio in a unique shape, like an "I" or a double "T"; on either side there were slopes and walls where the stone rings tlaxtemalacatl, were placed, one to the south and one to the north, through which the balls had to pass when struck either with the hips of the forearm. The ends of the court, where the teams were located, were to the west and to the east.

When a play was made that went against the movement of the sun, a decapitation was carried out and the blood vitalized the earth and the sun. Secular betting was not a feature of the ball game in Mexico-Tenochtitlan.

The North of Mexico (1500)

The "north" is identified with the region that the Mexicas called chichimecatlalli, the "land of the Chichimecs", located to the north of the River Lerma. The Spaniards called this same territory La Gran Chichimeca. It includes various ecosystems bordered to the west by the Western Sierra Madre and to the east by the Eastern Sierra Madre. Both sierras, covered with pine and oak, rise over 3,000 meters above sea level, but they are also home to deep canyons and valleys with some seasonal rivers. Amid these two sierras there is a semidesert region with plains and hilly country, and fertile coastal strips crossed by major rivers. Each of these regions had different kinds of animal and plant life, providing their inhabitants with what they needed to survive. This Gran Chichimeca was not only inhabited by Teochichimecs (barbarians), but also settled farmers, both Toltec-Chichimecs, of a Mesoamerican origin, and other agricultural groups located in the south, beyond the 38th parallel.

Despite their different natures and origins, these highly diverse groups comprised a unit within which there were alliances and trade, but also conflicts and wars, which produced a relationship of symbiosis and interaction. Depending on the climatic, social, and cultural

conditions, farmers sometimes became nomads and vice versa. The north was, therefore, a very special cultural area, different from the regions of Mesoamerica.

Conquest

The conquest of the West was different from that of other parts of Mexico. In the light of the ethnic and linguistic diversity it was difficult and bloody. The Spaniards had to defeat settlement by settlement to conquer such a vast territory.

The Tarascans, just like the Mexica, in almost 3300 years consolidated a great empire and imposed their language and customs on several peoples. However, the Spanish conquest ended their power. The last Cazonci or governor was Tangaxoan II, killed by Spanish conquistador Beltrán Nuno in 1530. This domain was brought under Spanish control with practically no battles.

The Franciscans and Augustinian monks Christianized the area. Acknowledging the mastery of the Indians in different crafts, they assigned them Christian subject matters in line with their craft specialties and the natural resources available. Thus, to this day places offer a unique creativeness, evidence of the ancient social and religious organization of these peoples.

The Tarascans

During the Late Post Classic, which includes from 1250 to 1521 AD, the Tarascans were the main group in the cultural panorama of the west.

This group arrived in the region of Lake Patzcuaro and mingled with the existing inhabitants. Within a short time they had conquered the territory of Michoacan and the neighboring areas. Their borders went from the river Lerma to the River Balsas, two voluminous watercourses that flow into the Pacific.

According to the Relation of Michoacan, a document from the 16th century, the Tarascan domain was consolidated in 1370 by a figure called Tariacuri, a cultural hero who united the villages around the lake and founded the State. Tariacuri brought together three domains: Ihuatzio, Patzcuaro, and Tzintzuntzan, and the political, economic, and religious power of the last of the three soon came to the fore, it being the capital until the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors.

The Tarascans were a warlike people. They maintained a line of fortifications to separate their domains, generally located on hills and the banks of rivers like watchtowers. They were the only people to oppose the great expansion of the Mexica. In the 15th century they made several

attempts to conquer them but were defeated each time. This deepened the respect other communities held for the Tarascans.

Specializations of the Peoples of the West

The peoples of the West were outstanding and original artists. Their imagination knew no bounds and they depicted the world around them in different raw materials. Potters made vessels with complicated decorations such as cloisonné or pseudo-cloisonné which is thought to have originated in this region because of its abundance here. Objects made of shells which represented a symbol of fertility and power were worked with highly elaborate techniques, to produce utility goods and decorations used both in life and in death.

State of Guerrero

Guerrero was inhabited by diverse and complex societies that over time developed their own cultures while maintaining contact and sharing features with other Meso American groups. This is why many authors do not include the state of Guerrero in the West.

In Puerto Marques evidence was found of the manufacture of ceramics. His pottery, called Pox because of its pitted, rough appearance, is one of the most ancient in meso-America. It was dated to around 2500 BC.

During the Middle Pre Classic (1200-400 BC) there was heavy influence from the Omec culture of the Gulf of Mexico. Important sites include such examples of cave painting as Oxtotitlan and Juxtlahuaca and the monumental site of Teopantecuanitlan.

Toward 200 BC, the Mezcala cultures, known for its stone work, reached its height, and there were other local developments such as the Balsas culture. Teotihuacan influences a large part of this region in such sites as Tambuco, Contlalco Pyramids and Tepecoacuilco.

During the Post Classic (900-1521) the cultures of Guerrero remained in contact with the Central High Plateau and toward the end of this period, with the exception of the domain of Yopitzingo, the entire territory was controlled by the Mexica.

Relations with the Central High Plateau primarily involved the exploitation of natural resources because apparently they had little effect on the material cultural forms of the local Guerrero peoples.

There were penetration by the Olmec, Teotihuacan culture and Mexica, and incursions in which people traveled from the center and the south in search of green stone and products from the Tierra Caliente region.

Local Developments: Jalisco, Nayarit, Colima and Sinaloa

After abandoning the custom of using shaft tombs (600 AD) a new tradition arose in Jalisco, Colima, Nayarit, and Sinaloa. Around 900 AD, the central part of Mexico brought cultural influences to bear on the West; town planning was more complex, with groups of buildings around squares, perhaps lined up with a certain position of the sun, platforms, altars and sunken patios.

Pottery and figurines showed these influences; ceramic decoration was multicolored, using black, red and white with geometric decoration enclosing religious symbols. Shapes became more simple; there are vessels with zoomorphic supports, globular parts, plates and mortars, pipes and spindles related with cotton spinning and tobacco farming.

The features are stylized in most stone sculptures. Simplification was used and in both cases the forms are highly expressive.

Metalworking appeared during this period, using such advanced techniques as smelting, beating, wire, filigree, etc.

Chupícuaro

The Chupícuaro culture is enormously important in the West of Mexico. It greatly influences today's states of Michoacán, Guanajuato and the Tierra Caliente region of Guerrero; several places in the Central High Plateau and Teotihuacán in its early stages; northern Mexico, Querétaro, Zacatecas and the southwest of the United States of America, especially the area occupied by the Hohokam.

It takes its name from a place located in the hills near to the river Lerma and its tributary the Coroneo. Today it is covered by the waters of the Solís reservoir seven kilometers from Acámbaro Guanajuato.

This culture developed during the Late Pre-Classic and its influence spread thanks to the trade route between the West and the Central High Plateau which followed the natural course of the River Lerma. It was the center for cultural links between both regions and helped Mesoamerican elements to spread north and west. It had an influence on pottery traditions that

would last until the end of the Classic and even the Post Classic as can be seen in the Tarascan ceramics of Michoacan.

Example of a Text from a Specific Object:

Máscara de Concha:

Esta máscara de mosaicos de concha marina (*Spondylus*) se descubrió en un individuo masculino, ubicado en la laza principal del centro ceremonial del sitio El Piñón cañada de Bolaños, Jalisco. La máscara se colocó sobre la cara del individuo; exhibe orejeras compuestas por un ornamento piramidal con base triangular y una cuenta cuadrada bajo este. La nariguera que cuelga representa una serpiente emplumada barbada con lengua bífida y chalchihuites (elementos acuáticos) semejantes a las representaciones del Centro del México. La plaza estuvo dedicada al entierro de los personajes principales de la sociedad, después de haber cesado la costumbre de enterramientos en tumbas de tiro.

English Translation:

Mask Shell:

This mask mosaic seashell (*Spondylus*) was discovered in a male individual, located on Main laza ceremonial center of the site The Pinon Glen Bolanos, Jalisco. The mask was placed over the face of the individual; exhibits ear ornament consisting of a triangular based pyramid and a square under this account. The nose ring hanging represents a feathered serpent with a forked tongue bearded and emeralds (water features) similar to the representations of the Mexico Center. The plaza was dedicated to the burial of the main characters of the company, after leaving the practice of burials in shaft tombs.

Shaft Tombs

The societies that practiced this unique form of burial used it to inter the most distinguished members of their community (the governor and his relatives), who were accompanied by their servants to care for them and, possibly, a shaman to help them on their way to the afterlife. Bodies were laid with the skull pointing towards the chamber entrance. They were dressed and decorated, accompanied with objects useful for the life after death; vessels with food and, depending on sex, stone axes, projectile heads for dart throwers and lances, knives, grindstones or spindles for cotton.

Symbolic objects included snail shells that stood for male fertility; sea and snail shells associated with water; hollow figurines of the dead person and such companions as wives, servants, warriors and shamans, as well as musical instruments (shells, trumpets and whistles). Dogs, whether as art or as sacrifices animals, guided the dead person on his way to his final destination. The symbolism of this burial reproduces the conditions of birth, to be reborn in life after death; and so the shaft and the chamber would have been based on the female reproductive apparatus.

Example of a case label with a specific theme

Arquitectura y Fiestas Comunales

Las aldeas se formaron en grupos de chozas hechas con cimientos de piedras, paredes de Carrizo forradas con lodo y techos de paja; fueron colocadas sobre plataformas bajas construidas con piedras y tierra para evitar la humedad.

Las maquetas son auténticos modelos de las construcciones reales y su colocación dentro de las aldeas. Hay representaciones de casas donde aparece la familia: hombres, mujeres y niños en actitudes cotidianas; también ceremonias, fiestas y juegos en que participan los miembros de la sociedad.

English Translation:

Architecture and communal feast

The villages were formed into groups of huts made of stone foundations, Carrizo walls lined with mud and thatched roofs, were placed on low platforms built with stones and earth to keep out moisture.

The models are authentic models of real buildings and their placement within the villages. There are representations of houses where it appears the family: men, women and children in everyday attitudes, also ceremonies, festivals and games involving members of society.

Procedencia: Tumbas de Tiro

Cronología 200 a.C. – 600 d.C.

The Cultures of the West of Mexico

The region of the west of Mexico include the states of Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, Michoacan, a part of Guanajuato, and Guerrero, which to some extent is an exception.

Various cultures developed in this area and we can date their remains from 1800 BC until the Spanish conquest in 1521.

The formative period was between 1800 BC to 200 AD, and includes the cultures of Capacha in Colima, El Openo In michoacan, Chupicuaroo in Guanajuato, the Olmeca presence and San Jeronimo in Guerrero, and the beginning of the tradition of shaft tombs.

The years between 200 and 900 AD were marked by the sire of the culture of the shaft tombs, located in today's states of Jalisco, Colima and Nayarit. This tradition ended in 600 AD and the states began their own local development. In Guerrero the influence of Teotihuacan and the Mezcala culture may be noted.

The outstanding cultures in the eriod from 900 to 1521 were Aztatlan in Sinaloa and Nayarit, and the Tarascans in Michoacan, who formed a strong domain that ruled over a large part of the West and was never defeated by the Mexica.

Introduction

The culture of the groups in the southwest of Mexico and parts of Central America that spoke Maya languages began to develop approximately 4,000 years ago. Their descendents inhabit the region to this day: Chontal, Chl, Yucatec, Tzetzal, Tzotzil, and Lacandon.

The Maya forged one of the most brilliant meso-American cultures, especially in science and art. They built large civic and ceremonial centers and cities, with pyramids and temples around patios and squares where they erected stelae and altars. Politically, they organized themselves into independent states and were powerful warriors.

They created their own hieroglyphic writing and a positional system of counting based on twenties. Their advances numeracy required the invention and use of the mathematical concept of zero centuries before the Europeans learned it from the Arab scholars.

They were brilliant mathematicians and astronomers and developed an almost perfect calendar system with a starting point and set eras; they knew the duration of the solar year; the lunar months, the period of revolution of Venus and were able to predict eclipses.

The era of greatest development, the classical period, was between 300 and 900 hundred years AD, a time when they consolidated and perfected their material, intellectual and artistic creations.

Because of social and economic factors and the arrival in the Maya area of new groups from the central plateau and the Gulf coast – Toltecs and Itzas of Puntun- this time of cultural splendor went into decline after the 10th century and the post classical period began. This brought cultural change, ideological innovation and material transformations, in other words, a new way of life.

That historical period and the cultural processes it involved were abruptly interrupted by the arrival of the Spaniards and their conquest of the lands and the native inhabitants they encountered.

The Mayas

Ancient Maya civilization, developed over a period spanning more than two thousand years, extended its culture over a territory almost 400 thousand square kilometers. Due to its artistic and scientific creativity, it was one of the most outstanding and complex civilizations in the Mesoamerican world. It managed to establish itself in a diversified environment, composed of high mountainous zones, rainforests, and extensive coastal regions. This natural variety served as a context for an equally multifaceted culture still astonishing to us today, to a large measure thanks to the continuities evident among the different Maya people now living in southeastern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador, and who preserve their language, beliefs and customs with pride.

This hall displays an important collection of pieces from ancestral Maya communities, which allows us to appreciate different stages and scenarios of their world. Here may be found testimonies of their everyday life, political and social organization, and their knowledge, customs, and traditions regarding trade and militaristic thought. In addition there is material evidence of the profound religious meaning underlying a number of ritual practices and that simultaneously defined the traits and significance of their architecture and art with endurance and existence. The visitor may also see the vestiges of a writing system that contains the secrets of community memory and time in its structure.

Thanks to the extraordinary task of recovery and study by archaeologists, historians, ethnologists, physical and social anthropologists, as well as epigraphers, linguists, restorers, among other specialists, it has been possible to assemble an increasingly clear and in-depth

profile of the millennial, highly original civilization that forms a fundamental part of Mexican culture.

La época del contacto

A la llegada de los españoles, a mediados del siglo XVI, la península de Yucatán sufría numerosas guerras internas entre las familias gobernantes de las diferentes provincias. Este hecho fue aprovechado por los conquistadores, que establecieron alianzas con algunas de ellas para apoderarse del sector norte de la península. A diferencia del centro de México, la conquista de los mayas fue un proceso lento y difícil, principalmente por la resistencia presentada y la escasa cantidad de soldados españoles. Numerosas comunidades escaparon hacia las regiones selváticas, y dificultaron aun más su sometimiento. La región montañosa de Chiapas y Guatemala fue dominada con mayor prontitud, pero las regiones selváticas del Peten y la selva Lacandona, cayeron bajo el control español hasta entrado el siglo XVIII.

La explotación colonial representó para los mayas un desafío a que se adaptaron con originalidad en busca de preservar, en la medida de lo posible, sus tradiciones y costumbres. Múltiples documentos legales, como testamentos, se escribieron en maya mediante el alfabeto latino, mientras que algunas deidades fueron disfrazadas bajo el manto de los santos católicos.

English Translation:

The Time of Contact:

On arrival of the Spanish in the mid-sixteenth century, the Yucatan suffered numerous internal wars between the ruling families of the different provinces. This fact was exploited by the Conquistadores, who established alliances with some of them and seized the northern sector of the peninsula. Unlike in central Mexico, the conquest of the Maya was slow and difficult, mainly by the resistance and the small number of Spanish soldiers. Many communities fled to the jungle regions, and further obstacles to their subjugation. The mountainous region of Chiapas and Guatemala were dominated more quickly, but the Peten jungle regions and the Lacandon jungle, came under Spanish control until well into the eighteenth century.

The colonial exploitation represents a challenge for the Maya to be adapted with originality in search of preserving, to the extent possible, their traditions and customs. Multiple regulatory documents such as wills were written in Maya using the Latin alphabet, while some deities were disguised under the guise of Catholic saints.

Tulum y la Costa Oriental

Tulum es la más conocida de una serie de ciudades costeras que funcionaron como puertos comerciales entre los siglos XIII y XVI. A través de este sistema de intercambios regionales, los mayas de la Península de Yucatán tuvieron acceso a diversos productos de otras regiones como el jade, el oro, la obsidiana, la tumbaga, la turquesa y conchas y caracoles preciosos, originarios del Norte de México, el Pacífico y Centroamérica.

Estos puertos fueron construidos con un estilo propio, denominado Costa Oriental, que se caracteriza por la presencia de edificios pequeños con techos planos y muros desplomados, construidos con bloques toscos, recubiertos de gruesas capas de estuco pintado que ocultaban las imperfecciones de la piedra; las fachadas de estos edificios tienen nichos con figuras de estuco, principalmente de dioses descendientes. También era común la construcción de diminutos santuarios y pequeños altares en los que se colocaban incensarios con la efigie de diferentes dioses.

Los palacios, por otra parte, contaban con dos habitaciones, una reservada para las actividades privadas y otra porticada y equipada con una banqueta, en la que se recibía a los visitantes y se realizaba la mayor parte de las actividades cotidianas.

English Translation:

Tulum is best known for a number of coastal cities that functioned as commercial ports between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Through this system of regional exchanges, the Maya of the Yucatan Peninsula had access to various products from other regions such as jade, gold, obsidian, tumbaga, turquoise and precious shells originating in northern Mexico, Pacific and Central America.

These ports were built with a unique style, called East Coast, which is characterized by the presence of small buildings with flat roofs and collapsed walls, built of rough blocks, coated with thick layers of stucco painted to conceal the imperfections of the stone, and the facades of these buildings are niches with figures of stucco, mostly depicting descendants of gods. Also common was the construction of tiny shrines and small altars where incense is placed with the image of different gods.

The palaces, on the other hand, had two rooms, one reserved for private activities and a colonnade and equipped with a bench where visitors are received and performed the majority of everyday activities.

El Dios Descendente

Las representaciones de personajes con alas o con rasgos de ave son muy antiguas y han aparecido en varias regiones de Mesoamérica; cuando se trata de figurillas de barro con las alas extendidas, se las ha descrito “como si volador”, común en el sur de Veracruz y en Yucatán.

En el sitio de Izapa, se encontraron representaciones de hombres-pájaro, algunas en posición descendente, as cuales se han asociado con el sacrificio por decapitación.

Este dios se ha interpretado de muy diversas formas: se ha comparado con e símbolo del sol que cae al atardecer (equivalente al Tzentemoc de los aztecas); se ha sugerido que representa la lluvia, el rayo o la abeja; y parece ser el símbolo característico de Tulum, donde se observa a un hombre con alas, un ser sobrenatural o deidad. También se ha relacionado con el palo del volador, ya que el disfraz de pájaro que usaban los danzantes representa al alma de los guerreros muertos así como de los sacrificados que bajaban al mediodía en forma de pájaros y mariposas a libar la miel de las flores. En general, se asocia a los dioses descendentes con antiguos rituales de fertilidad.

English Translation:

The Descending God

The portrayal of characters with wings or bird traits is very old and have appeared in various regions of Mesoamerica, in the case of clay figurines with wings outstretched, they have been described "as if flying," common in southern Veracruz and Yucatan.

At the site of Izapa were representations of men-bird, some in a downward position, which has been associated with sacrifice by decapitation.

This god has been interpreted in many different ways and has been compared with the symbol of the sun that falls at dusk (equivalent to Tzentemoc of the Aztecs), it is suggested that he represents rain, lightning or bee, and seems to be the symbol characteristic of Tulum, where there is a man with wings, a supernatural being or deity. He has also been associated with the flying club, as the bird costume worn by dancers. These dancers represent the souls of dead warriors and the slaughter that went down at noon. The costumes are in the shape of birds and butterflies, sipping honey from flowers. It is generally associated with ancient gods descending and fertility rituals.

Mayapán and the Last Maya Kingdoms; Late Postclassic period

After the fall of Chichen Itza and some 50 years of conflict and social movement, Mayapan, the new kingdom that would briefly enjoy great power, emerged around 1250 A.D. Due to the fragmentary political milieu, it was united under a kind of council government, headed by the lineage known as the Cocom, encompassing the provinces to the west of the peninsula. Meanwhile those at the east (today's state of Quintana Roo) and those of modern-day Campeche remained independent, although not isolated.

It maintained some enclaves in the east, above all in Cozumel, already a major port at the time of Chichen Itza and that won greater fame, because the inhabitants of Mayapan were said to have come from there. Activity at other coastal sites such as Xcambio in Yucatan and Tulum, Xcaret and Ichpaatun in modern-day Quintana Roo, would constitute the beginning of a trade route that existed between 1250 and 1440 AD.

The domination of Mayapan broke down due to its heterogeneity and the semi-independence of some provinces. According to native sources from the sixteenth century, the Cocoms made alliances with mercenaries from Central Mexico, the Ah Canul, displeasing the Xiu lineage in particular, which led to the rebellion that would result in the destruction of Mayapan around 1441. The peninsula was left divided into 16 to 24 independent provinces (kuchkabalob), which permanently competed for control of coastal trade routes. It began a period of political restructuring and greater contact with other regions of Mesoamerica, but not one of decadence. It is impossible to know if it would have been possible to form new states, given that the arrival of the Spaniards in 1517 produced an unexpected scenario. The Maya were never totally subjugated, as shown by the history of their constant rebellions, which did not come to an end until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Splendor of Chichén Itza: Early Postclassic period

The consolidation of Chichen Itza as a center of power in the Yucatan peninsula, beginning in 1000 AD, marked a milestone in the pre-hispanic history of the area; for the first time a single city controlled economy and politics. A vision of the world was developed with innovative religious and social concepts and a different economic structure. New rituals unified groups in the northern Maya region. Some deities, such as Kukulcan, were redefined, and the symbolic system began to represent powerful individuals on sculptural monuments, and no longer only the king as the central figure, as in the ancient cities to the south. Stelae were replaced by riches on columns, walls, and lintels.

Although for years it was believed that the city had a Maya phase and a Toltec one, recent archaeology seems to show that Chichen Itza was always a single city, with areas devoted to clearly differentiated activities, joined by a great network of stone roads (sacbeob). The most

well-known sector (where the Castillo is located) was dedicated to public cult; others were occupied by palaces of the nobility. Commercial activity, above all seas trade, led to the prosperity of coastal communities such as Xcambio, Isla Cerritos, Cozmel, and Chac Mool,, and reached such far-away regions as Tabasco and the southern zone of Guatemala. The Itza seized control of the northeastern peninsula from Coba, with which they gained access to the Caribbean coast, expanding their trade networks to Central America and establishing enclaves in what is today Belize. The hegemony of Chichen Itza began to wane around 1200 AD. The exact causes are unknown, but two important factors must have brought about the decline: the extremely exploitative nature of the system and the fall of cities in the Puuc area.

The End of the Classic period (Terminal Classic period)

Between 750 and 850 AD, the construction of large-scale buildings and monuments with hieroglyphic inscriptions came to an end in the central zone at most cities in the Peten, Usumacinto, and Motagua river regions. According to experts, conflicts between cities apparently increased, and the need for farmland forced peasants to destroy large stretches of rainforest, which led to a serious environmental crisis.

The latest glyphic texts mention some rulers died as a result of these conflicts. It is possible that others abandoned kingdoms and emigrated to other regions. However, most people continued to live in the same cities, building houses even within large plazas formerly considered sacred, and sustaining an impoverished way of life, a far cry from the splendor of the great kingdoms. In the centuries to come, the inhabitants of these cities gradually left their ancient dwellings and emigrated to other regions, where they founded small villages

At the same time, the peninsula of Yucatan underwent a great sociopolitical and economic boom. Between 800 and 1000 AD, inhabitants at Chichen Itza and Puuc cities constructed magnificent buildings, based on the most advanced architectural techniques known. The urban design of these cities resembled that of ancient cities in the central zone, but with innovations that some experts have linked to Central Mexico or with the Chontal area of the Gulf Coast; although they could also have been due to independent developments in local styles.. Competition between these cities would have resulted from the political strengthening of Chichen Itza around 1000 AD.

Architecture

The civic-ceremonial precinct, ever present in ancient Maya cities, was the site for important administrative and ritual activities, as well as for the residence of local leaders. Buildings – each with a primary and specific function- were oriented following the cosmovision and religious ideas of the Maya people. Surrounding these centers were extensive residential zones inhabited by the rest of the population, whose socio-economic level is evident in the quality and size of their homes. Temples were generally built on tall platforms and had only a few small, interior spaces. Palaces were long buildings, with many rooms arranged around patios or else on several levels.

A prominent trait among the Maya is the use of open spaces: plazas and patios in the middle of constructions. Poorly illuminated building interiors were used mainly to store objects and for sleeping. The Maya believed that the gods and ancestors dwelled in temples, while processions and ritual dances were held in patios and plazas. Housing for the masses had a sloped roof and was made of wood and palm thatch, in stark contrast to the palaces of nobles and temples of the gods in which walls and roofs were made of stone but with the same general shape as the humble dwellings of commoners. They also used stucco, a mixture of lime and sand, to join stones and to model complex multicolored decorations.

The principle trait of ancient Maya architecture was perhaps the false arch, also known as the Maya arch or corbel vault. This roofing system consists of staggering rows of stone on two walls: each row projects slightly over the one below it, until they reach the upper part where only a small space remains, capped by a small slab.

Trade

Archaeological discoveries have corroborated data provided by the chronicles and tales bequeathed by members of the religious orders and conquistadors on the existence of trade relations from the earliest times with the Gulf Coast, central high plateau and toward the south, as far as the Gulf of Honduras.

We read of markets held in ceremonial centers that also served as important cities attended by traders and pilgrims who traveled to worship at a certain sanctuary and to trade; important sites include Xichalango and Xcambio. The sources also tell us of maritime, river, and land routes that were traveled by canoe or on foot.

The Maya region provided cocoa, wax, honey, cotton, incense, salt, and duck and quetzal feathers. Central America and Oaxaca made beautiful alabaster vessels. The Gulf Coast produced pottery, jade, alabaster, shells and other objects. The central plateau was a source for raw materials such as rock crystal, obsidian, copper, pyrites, and turquoise. Although barter was the

most common system of trade, some objects and raw materials were used as “currency”; cocoa beans, colored shells (*Spondylus*), T-shaped copper axes, quetzal feathers, copper bells, etc.

The Era of Great Cities

Beginning in AD 600, after the fall of Teotihuacan major cities in the Maya region reach their peak. High quality buildings are constructed, inscriptions abound, and the symbolic richness of architectural decoration achieves its maximum perfection. In only 200 years, Tikal, Calakmul, Yaxchilan, Palenque and Coan developed enormous architectural projects, including great plazas, spacious palaces, magnificently decorated temples and splendid monuments glorifying gods and rulers.

Some of these cities, boasting impressive signs of wealth, occupied several square kilometers in extension. At that time, they housed up to five million inhabitants, who formed part of a complex socio-political system of settlements. Society was stratified into different hierarchic levels: ranging from specialists in multiple production and craft activities to impoverished peasants, whose sole link with the nobility was by way of shared rituals. The demand for food increased along with the population, creating an ever greater demand for more productive agricultural techniques. By AD 700, the environmental impact was enormous and was surely a key factor in the growing conflict between communities, along with marriage alliances with other kingdoms that had been established by the nobility.

Almost all of the buildings and many of the monuments visible today at archaeological zones in the Maya area date to this era. At the same time, in the Yucatan peninsula, cities in the Puuc, Chenes, Rio Bec and southern Quintana Ro regions gradually rose in political power. They developed new architectural projects with innovative styles and possibly also different socio-political structures.

Cosmogony

The Maya believed that mankind was created by Hunab Ku, who rather than being a specific god, was an abstract, invisible deity, so superior to mere mortals as to be almost unknown to them and of whom it seems there was no known representation. He was father of Itzmna, lord of the heavens, of day and of night.

The sky was held up by the Bacabs – four immensely strong gods who were associated with the four cardinal points and a special color: red (*chac*) for the East, white (*zac*) for the North, black (*o'ek*) for the West and yellow (*kan*) for the South. A fifth color, green (*ya'ax*), was associated

with a point that we do not use – the center. In addition, at each of the four points here was a sacred ceiba, or silk cotton tree, which was also associated with the corresponding color. This was thought to be the tree of plenty that had given humanity its first sustenance.

Heaven was divided into thirteen higher levels which were home to thirteen deities – the Oxlahuntiku, rulers of the heavens. The underworld, on the other hand, was divided into nine parts, each presided over by one of the malevolent Bolontiku – the lords of the night.

Although little is known of the Mayan concept of the shape of Earth, it seems that they shared with the Aztecs the belief that it was the back of a giant crocodile – like reptile, and that it was an object of worship.

Maya Ritual

Each day in the life of Maya individuals, whatever their social position, was surrounded by ritual. Human existence was replete with symbolism: human life was equated to that of the gods. Most people had a calendrical name associated with different deities and life cycles. Representations of gods as infants or small children, whom rulers lovingly carried in their arms, were surely a way that sovereigns used to demonstrate their divine origins: they descended from the gods, and therefore, they could also give life to divine beings.

Peasants who cultivated the land conducted ceremonies and rituals for each phase of the agricultural cycle. The different stages of growth of the corn plant were equated with the stages in human life, including birth, death, and of course, rebirth, which for the Maya was fundamental for guaranteeing the future generation of new cycles. The k'uhul ajaw, the divine king, the center of the universe, also formed part of the ritual linked to subsistence activities. His royal blood fed the gods by being carefully sprinkled on strips of paper that were burned so that the sacred smoke would rise into the sky. The “vision serpent” emerged from these blood offerings as a symbol of rebirth of the gods and ancestors.

War, another major activity among the Maya, also had its own rituals, the most important of which was the ballgame. Each encounter on the court evoked the myth of the gods' creation of the universe, while the playing field was the symbolic place of emergence for humanity, which originated in the supernatural world, in other words, in the underworld.

The Underworld

For the Maya, existence after death took place in a parallel world reproducing the conditions of earthly existence, therefore they regarded it with the same importance as life itself. The idea of a soul allowed them to identify humankind with nature, the universe, and the world of the gods. The soul was not invisible nor intangible, it adopted a specific form during rituals such as dances of sacrifices. Once an individual died, the soul embarked on the path to the watery realm located deep in the earth's interior, connected to the earthly sphere by bodies of water or caves and inhabited by lugubrious beings who terrorized the dead. Their relatives burned incense to chase away the evil spirits and help them avoid different obstacles.

The deceased had to satisfy his or her basic needs on the difficult journey down the path, so food, such as chocolate, tamales (corncakes), and meat, were always deposited in tombs. Because material needs were the same as those of earthly life, they began the path to the underworld accompanied by their wealth (if they had any) and their belongings. In a certain way, life beyond the tomb reproduced social and economic differences. The sepulcher (muknal) was the place of physical rest of the individual's body, but it did not affect that person's existence in the other world.

On the road to the underworld, which was known as Xibalba in the sacred book of the Maya known as the Popol Vuh, sovereigns received the help of Juanajpu and Xb'alanque the divine hero twins who made the first journey. After eluding the obstacles on the path, the king rose from the depths of the underworld transformed into a divine being, oscillating between the border between the world of the living and the dead.

Warfare

Throughout the history of Mesoamerican people, warfare played a key role in the consolidation of political structures. During the first part of the twentieth century, it was believed that the Classic Period Maya were a peaceful people; today it is known with certainty that wars were ongoing since the earliest times.

A k'uhul ajaw, or "divine king," governed each kingdom or autonomous political entity; he exercised control over a defined territory that was expanded when he vanquished other rulers. In almost all cities where hieroglyphic texts have been found, conflicts and victories have been recorded among the feats of leaders. Another result of warfare were the material gains won by conquest, for subjugated cities had to pay tribute; many ceramic vessels and monuments show a "divine king" receiving tribute. Causes for war, in addition to political control of territories and tribute, also included personal conflicts between rulers and the break-up of alliances.

Maya warfare had its rules; in no case were populations nor cities entirely annihilated, due to the economic loss that it represented for the victor. Only certain captives were exhibited in

humiliation, stripped of their accoutrements (dart-throwers, shield, and cotton armor) and their jade earspools substituted with simple paper ear ornaments, to later be tortured and sacrificed in the ballgame, the supreme representation of mythical warfare. A complex ritual accompanied bellicose conflicts, combining divine and profane elements. The god representing the planet Venus was the regent of warfare and when some glyphic texts mention “star wars” to refer to bellicose confrontations, they

Política E Historia Dinástica

El desarrollo de la escritura en la sociedad maya es uno de sus rasgos culturales más sobresalientes, que la distingue del resto de los pueblos que habitaron a América precolombina. En los textos jeroglíficos se registraron, entre otros aspectos, los sucesos históricos que marcaron la vida política de las dinastías gobernantes de los estados de la zona central.

Los registros epigráficos dan el siglo I d.C. como fecha de la fundación de las primeras dinastías, que identifican con los llamados glifos emblema, muy numerosos. Cada pequeño estado tenía su propio emblema y su genealogía, en general basada en un antepasado divino que era, a la vez, el protector de la dinastía reinante y de la ciudad. A los sobraños, para diferenciarlos de los nobles, se les llamaba k'uhul ajaw, o “rey divino”, título que denotaba su parentesco con el antepasado fundador de la dinastía y con la deidad protectora.

Cada estado maya poseía su propia dinastía gobernante y un territorio más o menos definido bajo su control. Esto quiere decir que, en las guerras, los territorios conquistados no siempre se anexaban al del vencedor, sino que seguían existiendo como estados autónomos, a diferencia del centro de México, donde se desarrolló una unidad política hegemónica que centralizaba el poder y controlaba a los estados conquistados. Por ello, la historia de los mayas debe entenderse como una compleja red de relaciones personales y familiares establecidas entre dinastías residentes en cada ciudad y en continua competencia. Se conoce la existencia de al menos cincuenta ciudades autónomas con su propio k'uhul ajaw, a las cuales establecieron vínculos que iban desde alianzas políticas y comerciales hasta alianzas por motivos de guerra.

English Translation:

Dynastic Politics and History

The development of writing in Mayan society is one of its most outstanding cultural features, which distinguishes it from other peoples who inhabited the Americas before Columbus. In

hieroglyphic texts were recorded, among other things, historical events that marked the political life of the ruling dynasties of central states.

Epigraphic records of the first century A.D. date the founding of the first dynasties; they identify them with the numerous emblem glyphs. Each small state had its own emblem and genealogy in general based on a divine ancestor who was at the same time the protector of the ruling dynasty and the city. In the year, to differentiate them from the nobles, kings were called k'uhul ajaw, or "divine king", a title denoting their relationship to the founding ancestor of the dynasty and the protective deity.

Each Maya state had its own ruling dynasty and a more or less defined territory under its control. This means that, in wars, conquests will not always be appended to the victor, but continue to exist as independent states, unlike the center of Mexico, where he developed a political hegemony that centralized power and controlled the states that he won. Therefore, the history of the Maya can be understood as a complex network of personal relationships and family dynasties established between residents in each city and continued competition. We know the existence of at least fifty autonomous cities with their own k'uhul ajaw, which established links ranging from commercial to political alliances and partnerships because of war.

Los Mayas y Teotihuacán

El desarrollo de las grandes ciudades mayas tuvo enorme impacto en Teotihuacán, la gran urbe del centro de México, que hacia el año 500 d. C. tenía más de 125 mil habitantes. En su época de mayor desarrollo, fue el centro del mundo mesoamericano y, como tal, sin duda un factor decisivo en la definición de ciertos aspectos de la organización política y económica de la zona maya. La influencia teotihuacana se aprecia en el tocado de algunos gobernantes mayas, como la "serpiente de 18 cabezas", o "serpiente de guerra", deidad teotihuacana.

Según la investigación epigráfica, las relaciones entre las ciudades mayas y Teotihuacán eran de reciprocidad y no de dominio. Algunos gobernantes se decían descendientes de la dinastía real de Tollan ("lugar del cañaveral"), para reforzar su poder político, e incluso realizaron peregrinaciones al valle de México para legitimar su jerarquía. La importancia de Teotihuacán se plasmó en diversos aspectos de la vida material de las ciudades mayas. La arquitectura de los siglos III y IV d.C. adoptó el estilo de los basamentos con "talud y tablero", típicamente teotihuacanos, visible en la arquitectura de ciudades como Tikal, el Peten guatemalteco, Oxkintok

en Yucatán y Kaminaljuyu en los altos de Guatemala. En la cerámica policroma adoptaron las vasijas con tapa y tres patas características de Teotihuacán.

La obsidiana verde teotihuacana llegó a casi todas las grandes ciudades mayas, pero fue mayor la cantidad de productos mayas que llegaron al centro de México: plumas de quetzal, granos de cacao, jade y pieles de jaguar, de gran demanda entre la elite teotihuacana.

English Translation:

The development of the great Mayan cities had an enormous impact at Teotihuacan, the great city of central Mexico, that by the year AD 500 C., it had over 125 thousand inhabitants. In their time of greatest development, it was the center of the Mesoamerican world and as such, it was no doubt a decisive factor in defining certain aspects of political and economic organization of the Maya area. Teotihuacan's influence is seen in the headdress of some Maya rulers, as the "serpent of 18 animals" or "serpent of war," a Teotihuacan deity.

According to the epigraphic research, relations between Teotihuacan and the Mayan cities were of reciprocity, not domination. Some rulers claimed descent from the royal dynasty of Tollan ("place of reeds"), to strengthen their political power, and even made pilgrimages to the valley of Mexico to legitimize its hierarchy. The importance of Teotihuacan is reflected in various aspects of material life of the Maya cities. The architecture of the third and fourth centuries A.D. adopted the style of the bases with "slope and board." Teotihuacan is typically visible in the architecture of the cities of Tikal, Peten Guatemala, Yucatan and Kaminaljuyu, Oxkintok in the highlands of Guatemala and in the polychrome pottery jars with lids adopted and three legs features of Teotihuacan.

The green Teotihuacan obsidian reached almost all the major Mayan cities, but was higher quantity of products. Maya arrived in central Mexico with quetzal feathers, cocoa beans, jade and jaguar skins, which were in great demand among the elite Teotihuacan.

Nomadic Life and the First Urban Centers: Preclassic period

The earliest evidence of occupation in the Maya highlands was found in the state of Chiapas at the Cave of Santa Marta, occupied and then abandoned by hunters and gatherers around the year 35,000 BC. In the Quiche Basin, an important number of pre-agricultural sites dating to between 11,000 and 12,000 BC have been found. Flint tools from the coast of Belize and the cave of Loltun in Yucatan are proof that the central zone was already inhabited between 9000 and 14000 BC. The site of Cuello, in Belize, is the earliest agricultural settlement found to date in the central area, with an archaeological record dating back to 1200 BC.

Between 800 and 400 BC, which is archaeologically known as the Middle Preclassic or Middle Formative, there is rapid population growth and evolution toward more complex society. Interaction with other regions in Mesoamerica enriched the cultural assemblage fostering the rise of what is known today as Maya culture. All of this promoted the emergence of a number of sites in this period: Kaminaljuyu, in the Guatemala valley; becomes the dominant site in this region, while others include the Motagua Basin and El Porton. The latter had glyphic inscriptions by around 400 BC.

In the southern and central lowlands, the development of agricultural techniques allowed the rise of different population centers. In the central Peten region, civic-ceremonial structures of more than 18 meters in height were built at Tikal Nache, and Calakmul.

Near the end of the Preclassic, between 400 BC to 250 AD, the Maya consolidated their economic, social and political structure. Major urban centers that competed for control of vast regions arose in the central zone. Monumental architecture developed with buildings raised on tall pyramid platforms decorated with large, colorful masks representing gods differentiated by their attributes. Sculpture, particularly calendrical monuments and hieroglyphic inscriptions, are among the most distinctive characteristics of this period.

The Emergence of Maya States: Early Classic Period

During the Preclassic Period, almost all traits characteristic of Maya culture developed. Cities such as Kaminaljuyu, Cerros, Nache, and El Mirador were the capitals of the first Maya states, with dynasties that ruled over territories with settlements of different sizes and ranks.

During the Early Classic (250-600 AD), dynastic power structures were consolidated. Hieroglyphic writing was also perfected for recording political history to legitimate the right of groups in power to govern. The use of titles was adopted to refer to high level dignitaries; *k'uhul ajaw* was the title designating the ruler of highest rank, the one who displayed royal power. The city of Tikal emerged with great power in the central zone. Other states made their domination felt in adjacent regions: Piedras Negras in the Usumacinta basin, and Calakmul one of Tikal's bloodiest rivals, in the north.

In 378 AD, the arrival of a group of Teotihuacan dignitaries under the command of a noble called Siyaj K'ak' was recorded. With this event, a new dynasty was founded with different characteristics reflected mainly in ceramics and architecture. This Teotihuacan influence was felt in other cities such as Uaxactun. In the sixth century Yaxchilan and Caracol fought against and defeated the kingdom of Tikal, which permitted the rising state of Calakmul to become the center of power in an extensive network of associated and dependent states.

Maya Subsistence

Maya society arose from groups of hunters and gatherers who consumed animals, roots, fruit, and tubers. The development of agriculture made it possible to rely on a stable, permanent food supply, which radically changed the life expectancy of the region's inhabitants. The oldest and simplest agricultural system known is the cornfield, in which the land is cleared and the remaining brush is burned prior to sowing. This and other agricultural systems produced the need for a calendar to keep track of the best time to plant and harvest and also led to a detailed study of the surroundings. Some leaders began to accumulate specialized knowledge on the environment, which served to strengthen their power, for they were perceived as intermediaries with divine forces of nature. Therefore, from the earliest times, agriculture was bound with ritual and a mythical conception of the world and the universe.

The geographic diversity of the Maya region forced its inhabitants to seek other alternatives for production in addition to the cornfield, which could only be employed on high lands with good drainage. In lands that flooded, known as "depressions," in the Yucatan peninsula, it was necessary to develop other farming techniques such as building canals in fields to allow water to drain off prior to sowing, or the construction of artificial raised fields made of soil and mud, which were raised from the flooded area. Improvements in agricultural techniques made it possible to increase the food production capacity, and therefore, the food supply for growing populations.

The Origins of the World

According to the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, the world of human beings was preceded by the complete destruction of an earlier world due to a sudden flood, caused by the outrage of the gods, when they became aware of the robbery of the insignia of the Oxlanhun Ti-Ku, or celestial deities.

According to the myth, after the destruction of the world that existed prior to the abrupt flood, four trees were planted at the four corners of the world, so that divine birds of four colors, called yuyum, could perch on them. These four-colored birds were yellow in the south, white in the north, black in the west, and red in the east. In the middle a green tree was planted as a reminder of the destruction.

For this reason, the Maya universe is divided into four parts and it has a central axis that joins the cosmic levels of the sky, the earth, and the underworld. The Maya describe the surface of

the earth as a quadrangle floating on a great body of water marking the boundary with the underworld. The earth is represented as a sea turtle or a crocodile. In the center rises a sacred mountain with a cave at the entrance of which grows a ceiba tree, where one may enter the underworld and the ocean of origins that rises above it.

Once the world was created, with its corresponding plants and animals, the first father and first mother shaped men from corn dough after previous failures using other materials. Therefore, the Maya refer to themselves as “men of corn.”

The Gulf Coast

Since the inception of archaeology, the cultural region known as the Gulf Coast has referred not solely to the coastal zone, but also includes portions of the states of Veracruz, Tabasco, Puebla, San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas, Hidalgo, and Queretaro.

In pre-hispanic times it was conceived of as a place of exceptional abundance and fertility, therefore the first accounts written by sixteenth century friars call it Tlalocan, meaning “land of riches and earthly paradise.”

The presence of the sea, rivers, lagoons, swamps and frequent rains made it a place that symbolized the origin of life and its renewal. Nevertheless, its landscape was complex and diversified, for it has highland areas pertaining to the Eastern Sierra Madre, as well as the mountain range of the Tuxtlas including a volcano; there was also a semiarid zone in the central part of the state of Veracruz.

The entire Gulf Coast was inhabited by Huastec, Otomi, Nahuatl, Totonac, Tepehua, Popoloca, Zoque-Mixe, and Mixtec groups. Despite the fact they spoke different languages, they shared the same cultural base and had the same social, political and religious development. Differences are expressed in their architecture, sculpture, pictorial representations and manual arts.

Throughout all periods, cultural innovations transforming the life of Mesoamerica radiated out from the Gulf Coast. The first civilization emerged there with the Olmecs (1800-100 BC). Later, new religious ideas of great complexity arose, associated with the most important gods of Mesoamerica, as well as cults, ceremonies and rites, including the ritual ballgame and offering blood to the earth to express gratitude for its fertility. The coast was a crossroads traversed by human groups, bearing diverse cultural influences and products for trade (some from the coast), such as cotton, cacao, rubber and chapopote (a tar-like substance), to name just a few. Cotton and cacao were particularly valuable and came to be used as currency.

Cempoala (1200-1521 d.C.)

Cerca de la costa río Actopan se construyó la gran ciudad de Cempoala, cuya población sumó 30,000 habitantes hacia 1519. La región de los alrededores estaba habitada desde la Época Preclásica y continuó así hasta el siglo XVI.

Los sistemas constructivos de la ciudad estaban integrados por edificios con muros de cantos de ríos revestidos de estuco, murallas, altares, almenas, fogones, redes de canales y acueductos, además de tumbas y pinturas.

La tradición de la hechura de la cerámica tuvo influencia de varios grupos, la más antigua es la local, resultado de los modelos provenientes de la Época Preclásica. Posteriormente, la tradición costeña se mantiene con la fabricación de vasijas de la Isla de Sacrificios Tres Picos, Naranja Fina, Qualahulztlan y la tercera es la del tipo mixteco-Puebla que corresponde a los grupos que venían de esa región limítrofe entre la costa y los estados de Tlaxcala y Puebla.

Cempoala fue la primera ciudad a la que entraron los españoles, en 1519, quienes quedaron admirados por su tamaño y organización.

English Translation:

Cempoala (1200-1521 A.D.)

Near the coast Actopan river was built the great city of Cempoala, population 30,000, in 1519. The surrounding region was inhabited since pre-classic period and continued until the sixteenth century.

The city building systems were composed of buildings with walls lined edges of rivers stucco walls, altars, battlements, stoves, networks of canals and aqueducts, plus tombs and paintings.

The tradition of the making of ceramics was influenced by several groups; the older and local models resulted from the Preclassic Period. Subsequently, the coastal tradition is maintained with the manufacture of pottery from the Isle of Sacrifices, Tres Picos, Fine Orange, Qualahulztlan and the third is the Mixtec-Puebla styles corresponding to the groups that came from that border region between the coast and the states of Tlaxcala and Puebla.

Cempoala was the first city that the Spanish came to in 1519, who were admired for their size and organization.

Postclassic Period

At the end of the Classic Period, a regional reorganization occurred, resulting in part from the abandonment of Teotihuacan, given that many groups that had been living in the great metropolis returned to their regions of origin. These population movements particularly affected the eastern area, especially the Gulf Coast, Puebla, Tlaxcala and southern Mesoamerica. Some of these Toltec and Chichimec groups, as well as those who came from the Chontal area of the southern coast and who disembarked at Panuco (Veracruz) brought new cultural traits evident in architectural, sculptural and pictorial styles.

On the Gulf Coast, changes took on greater importance, depending on traditions or their cultural expressions, in certain regions: Panuco, the Sierra de Puebla, El Tajin, and La Mixtequilla-where Cerro de las Mesas was a major site. At that time, the Totonacs were a predominant group.

At the end of the Postclassic Period, contacts between the Gulf Coast and areas such as Puebla and Tlaxcala and the Central Highlands intensified. This last case is evident in architectural resemblances, as may be seen at Cuauhtochco and Castillo de Teayo, among other sites, in addition to similarities in ceramics and religious figures such as the Chac-mool, Xipe, coyotes, and walls composed of images of skulls surrounding main temples.

This period concluded with the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519, although 1521 is the year considered to mark the end of pre-hispanic civilization. The conquest modified culture and gave rise to blending or mestizaje in the nation's territory.

Architecture: Their Works

The sites display regional styles in construction systems and architectural forms. In the Huasteca, circular plans and rectangular forms with rounded corners predominate on other parts of the coast, square and rectangular buildings are the norm.

At some sites, the construction system is based on stone slabs set with clay or river stones and mud. In the Huasteca, buildings have simple shapes; some have stairways without balustrades.

One of the largest buildings, measuring 47 m in height may be seen at Tantoc, San Luis Potosi. In other regions of the coast, there are buildings with talud-tablero profiles of the type known at Teotihuacan, such as those of Maticapan.

El Tajin displays an original, well-defined style with stone slabs covered with stucco, the same system adopted at sites such as Yahualichan, Xiuhtetelco and Malpica, with elements such as niches, stepped frets on the bodies of buildings or on the balustrades flanking stairways, decorative friezes and projecting cornices. The altar in the center of stairways and the false arch at El Tajin show, once again, the relationship of this site with the Maya area.

Materials such as oyster shell mixed with sand made it possible to build flat roofs spanning large spaces without interior supports.

On the other hand, the stone walls of ballcourts have bas-reliefs and sculptures at the corners elements resembling ballgame yokes. Classic Period (100 BC-AD 850)

Ceremonies

Autosacrifice was one of the duties of priests. They offered drops of their blood to the gods by piercing parts of their body with maguey thorns or fishbones, just as other cultures did.

The Huastec slab from Huilocintla Veracruz represents a priest of the god Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl-whose most important insignia was a cut shell pectoral as worn by this priest-who is performing autosacrifice.

The stone sculpture of a head from Castillo de Teayo, in the Huastec region of Veracruz, shows another element of the insignia characteristic of the god Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl-the buccal mask resembling a beak. It confirms the survival of the ritual of decapitation, begun by the Olmecs some 1000 years before our era and represented by colossal head sculptures. The rite is shown in different sculptures from the Classic Period, such as the slab from Aparicio, a large number of hachas related to the ballgame, and some heads made of clay.

Finally, on the Gulf Coast, the creation of sculptures in the form of heads, as in Huastec ceramic vessels, continues into the Postclassic period.

The Ballgame

This complex ceremony left a number of material expressions, including buildings, bas-reliefs, sculptures, gods related to it, and images in codices.

The Olmecs were the creators of the religious ideas that gave rise and meaning to the ballgame and they spread it throughout many parts of Mesoamerica.

The ballgame was an ancient celebration that invoked the earth's fertility and renewal of life. Men offered their blood through sacrifice-decapitation or heart extraction-which they executed within the ballcourt structure.

In the game, the importance of survival was recognized on individual and collective levels, as well as on that of the dominion to which they belonged. It also seems to have been a celebration of political-religious nature, associated with the designation of new leaders.

El Tajin

It is the city of the hurricane, place of wind, thunder and lightning: all of these are expressions of nature related to water. The most important site on the north coast, it reached its maximum splendor between AD 60 and 900 and was abandoned around AD 1200.

The abundance and quality of the city's constructions, arranged around large plazas, reflect a highly complex political, social, and religious organization. This is also seen in its sheer dimensions, and the technique and architectural style of its buildings, ballcourts, sculptures, wealth of bas-relief full of meaning, as well as its mural painting.

The site's architecture and stonework is highly original among Mesoamerican cultures and displays great beauty. The main elements are niches and stepped frets. This architectural style spread to places such as Yohualichan and Cuetzan in the Sierra de Puebla, Sculptural imagery describes religious ideas and ritual activities that may be appreciated in the low relief on ballcourt walls, columns, three-dimensional sculptures of humans and animals, stelae, and on ballgame pieces such as yokes and hacahas. Its distinctive style is exhibited particularly in images describing movement, shown by a series of curved, interlaced lines or scrolls, while human figures appear in a wide variety of poses.

Culto Fálico

Las ideas relacionadas con la fertilidad de la tierra se expresaron de diversas maneras, una de ellas fue la representación de la diferencia sexual entre el hombre y la mujer. La reproducción del miembro masculino en figurillas de barro y piedra se encuentra desde la Época Clásica Temprana (100-900 d.C.) en Cerro de las Mesas y Tres Zapotes. Después, en la Época Clásica Tardía (900-1250 d.C.) y la Época Posclásica (1250-1519 d.C.) fue más frecuente; algunas figurillas de barro provenientes de distintos lugares, llevan falos postizos.

La figuración del falo en las esculturas en piedra huastecas tuvo tanta importancia que llegaron a crearlo de modo independiente al resto del cuerpo masculino.

Los huastecos eran apreciados por los aztecas como un grupo interesado en los aspectos sexuales; en una de las últimas páginas del Códice Borbónico forman parte de la ceremonia dedicada a la diosa Tlazolteotl o Toci (nuestra abuela)-llevan el tocado típico-y una de sus manos sostiene un enorme falo postizo.

English Translation;

Phallic worship

The ideas associated with the fertility of the land were expressed in various ways, one of them was the representation of sexual difference between men and women. The reproduction of the male member in clay and stone figurines found from the early classical period (100-900 AD) in Cerro de Las Mesas y Tres Zapotes. Then, in the Late Classic Period (900-1250 AD) and the post-classic era (1250-1519 AD) they were more frequent, some clay figurines from different locations, with false phalluses.

The figuration of the phallus in the Huasteca stone sculptures was so important that they created it independently to the rest of the male body.

The Huasteca were prized by the Aztecs as a group interested in the sexual aspects, in one of the last pages of the Codex Borbonicus, part of the ceremony dedicated to the goddess Tlazolteotl or Toci (our grandmother)-are the typical hit-and from His hands hold a huge phallus hairpiece.

The Fertility Complex

The fertility cult was connected into the fundamental aspect of society whose food base was agriculture. Feminine figures were converted into goddesses and priestesses. Since the Preclassic Period, women were associated with the earth and were represented naked, with breasts or reproductive organs emphasized, as pregnant or carrying children.

During the Classic Period in central Veracruz, goddesses associated with the origins of life appeared. Examples include Tlazolteotl, a goddess with a buccal mask and black paint around her mouth, and Xochiquetzal, goddess of flowers wearing a headdress with two feather plumes on her head.

The Huastecs expressed fertility clearly through human fertility and sexuality. Many of their stone sculptures represented women with their hands on their womb, where life begins in the human body, or else male figures with the sexual organ rendered as part of the reproduction of life. Old men with a planting stick in their hands and sometimes with an erect member represent those who plant seeds for the creation of plant life or semen necessary for the generation of human life. Stone and clay sculptures with representations of phalluses were made at Yahualica in Hidalgo, Tamtok in San Luis Potosi and at Las Puertas in Veracruz.

Later the cult was expressed in kneeling figures. For example, a young woman wears flowers on her head a mature woman of corn in her headdress of through the representation of the earth as in the Tepetzintla slab.

Ceremonies

El Volador was a rite focused on a tree, from which four figures representing birds descended, symbolizing the descent from the sky to the earth. This ceremony is still performed by several indigenous groups on the coast they associate it with a conception of fertility, by integrating the birds, symbolically linked to the sun, as taking its fertilizing power to the earth.

Among the ceremonies dedicated to the goddess Tlazolteotl was that of shooting sacrificial victims with arrows, represented in some codices. Drops of the sacrificed victim's blood fell on the earth to fertilize it and thank it for its fruits, which is a theme similar to that of sacrifice represented on the Great Balcourt at El Tajin.

It is worth mentioning other ceremonies with religious significance not entirely understood, as represented on the brazier from Palmillas, Veracruz, decorated with plaques in the shape of figures hunting birds with a blowgun.

La Religión

Las figuras femeninas predominan en el mundo de la costa, representaban la reproducción y el mantenimiento de la vida, la más importante era la diosa Tlazolteotl que guardaba relación con la tierra y la luna y se representaba con una máscara de jaguar de medio rostro, pintada de negro, además de un tocado adornado con un ave descendente. Las figuras sonrientes estaban dedicadas a esta diosa ave, así como la música y la danza.

Xochiquetzal, joven en plena capacidad de reproducción se representaba cargando un niño en su cadera, adornada con flores, además de las muestras de mujeres muertas durante el parto,

lo que les adjudicaba una cualidad guerrera y quienes llevaban un cinturón con serpientes en las manos.

Xipe era otro dios de este grupo que se asociaba a la vegetación. Los dioses narigudos eran representaciones del sol, las figuras de ancianos, la serpiente, el cocodrilo, la rana y el dios huracán, del cual formaba parte el dos viento, integraban el panteón de la Época Clásica.

English Translation:

The female figures dominate the world of the coast, accounted for the reproduction and maintenance of life, the most important was the goddess Tlazolteotl it related to the earth and the moon and is represented with a jaguar mask half face painted black, and a headdress adorned with a bird down. The smiling figures were dedicated to this goddess bird, as well as music and dance.

Xochiquetzal, young fully capable of reproduction, is represented carrying a child on her hip, adorned with flowers, in addition to samples of women dying during childbirth, which they ascribed a quality jacket and who wore a belt of serpents.

Xipe was another god of this group and was associated with vegetation. Gods were representations of the sun, the figures of old, snake, alligator, god of frogs and hurricanes, which was part of the two-wind, made up the pantheon of the classical period.

Relación entre Teotihuacán y la costa del Golfo

Durante la Época Clásica Teotihuacán y la Costa del Golfo mantuvieron una estrecha relación que se refleja en la presencia de figuras e imágenes semejantes en ambas regiones. Algunas de ellas se crearon con anterioridad en la Costa del Golfo, como las figurillas en barro con extremidades móviles, que son de la Época Preclásica de las costa, sin embargo, desde la época de los olmecas-cientos de años anteriores a Teotihuacán- se observa una figura con brazos móviles como el hombre arrodillado. Otra de las figuras que comparten son los dioses gordos con vestidos de algodón, así como la numerosa representación de caracoles, conchas y animales de "tierra caliente" como los loros. La imagen de las manos (tema importante en las pinturas teotihuacanas) también se encuentra en la Costa del Golfo desde la cultura olmeca y, posteriormente, se representa en algunas esculturas, como la mano que sale de la boca de la cabeza en piedra, las que se encuentran en una palma o en las orejeras de algunas diosas huastecas.

En el yugo aquí expuesto se ven figuras de personajes teotihuacanos con bellos tocados de plumas que llevan el símbolo de la palabra frente a su boca y la misma posición de las manos.

Las creaciones de Teotihuacán son los candeleros en los que se supone que se quemaba copal, vasos trípodes con decoración pintada o de pastilla, vasijas en forma de florero y la representación de Tlaloc- el exhibido en la vitrina procede de Cerro de las Mesas.

Por otra parte, el estilo arquitectónico teotihuacano de los cuerpos que formaban las pirámides integrados por dos partes, la primera inclinada-talud-y la segunda rectangular-tablero-, a lo que se llama "talud y tablero", se reprodujeron en algunos sitios de la Costa del Golfo, como en Matacapán, Veracruz.

Las vasijas de tecali (ónix) se encuentran en Teotihuacán y en Matacapán – la que aquí se muestra contenía las cuentas que están frente a ella- En Teotihuacán fue importante el uso de laminas de mica, en tanto que en Matacapán se encontraron únicamente pequeños fragmentos.

English Translation;

During the Classic Period Teotihuacan and the Gulf Coast had a close relationship; this is reflected in the presence of similar figures and images in both regions. Some of them were created prior to the Gulf Coast cultures, as clay figurines with mobile limbs were the pre-classic period of the coast. However, a hundred of years ago, Olmec-Teotihuacan shows a figure with movable arms and the man kneeling. Another of the figures are the gods wearing fat cotton dresses and the large representation of snails, shells and animals of "hot" climates like parrots. The image of hands (important theme in the paintings Teotihuacan) is also found in the Gulf Coast from the Olmec and later depicted in sculptures, like the hand that comes from the mouth of the head stone, found in a palm or in the ear of some Huasteca goddesses.

In the yoke figures presented here are characters with beautiful Teotihuacan headdresses bearing the symbol of the word in front of his mouth and the same hand position.

Teotihuacan's creations are the candlesticks in which is supposed to burn incense, vases with painted decoration tripods or tablet, vase-shaped vessels and the representation of Tlaloc from the cabinet displayed at the Cerro de Las Mesas.

Moreover, the architectural style of the bodies Teotihuacan pyramids were made up of two parts, the first inclined-slope-and second rectangular panel, to what is called "slope and board," were reproduced in some places in the Gulf Coast, as in Matacapán, Veracruz.

The jars of alabaster (onyx) are in Teotihuacan and Matacapan - the sample contained herein accounts that are in front of her was important in Teotihuacan and use of sheets of mica, while in Matacapan they found only small fragments.

The Classic Period

Throughout the Gulf Coast, a number of regional cultures flourished along with a diversity of artistic expressions that nonetheless displayed shared religious and sociopolitical characteristics. Many of these groups spoke different languages, some of which are still spoken on the coast today, including Huastec, Tepehua, Totonac, Nahuatl and Popoluca.

Sometimes these groups lived side by side under the same government. Developments during the Classic Period grew out of those of the preceding period, so the ancient Olmec region remained one of the most important. In this area, we find candeleros (small rectangular receptacles with two openings), alabaster vessels, figurines with articulated limbs and others of fat gods, which show a close relationship with Teotihuacan that suggests mutual cultural exchange between the Gulf Coast and this metropolis.

Groups from the coast continued the tradition of producing great stone sculptures, as evident in Huastec sculptures the bas-relief images of El Tajin stelae, and in yokes, hachas, and palmate stones, paraphernalia associated with the ballgame. They achieved one of the most outstanding traditions of clay art in ancient Mexico. Examples include smiling figurines whose precursors may be seen in Olmec colossal heads, and life-sized sculptures reflecting their advanced technology in firing ceramics, in addition to exhibiting their expressive power.

The population grew and converged in different ceremonial centers, throughout the region. Some centers were of exceptional size and construction, such as El Tajin with its unparalleled architectural style, based on stepped platforms, a flaring cornice and distinctive architectural decoration based on niches and stepped frets, in addition to its multiple ballcourts. Others were of more modest dimensions, such as Las Higueras and El Zapotal, where earthen architecture was accompanied by murals in the first case and clay sculpture in the second. In the Huastec region, sites such as Cerro de las Mesas and Tres Zapotes stand out; one of the largest was Tantok, while El Tamuin also has murals associated with architecture. Artistic expressions from daily life spread in ceramics, with regional styles evident in vessels and figurines, in which women are the predominant theme.

Religion

The religious ideas of the Olmecs were associated with the fertility of the land, water and corn by means of these creatures. For example, the jaguar represented the earth and the power of the renewal of life; the serpent was related to water in rivers and rain. It was the foundation of priests to please their gods.

Rites and ceremonies were held to ask the gods for their support in the realm corresponding to each one of them. These were comprised of fairly complex activities, as were the cult of the head, dismemberment, the sacrifice of newborns and the ballgame. Sculptural expressions made of clay and stone have remained of all of these practices. So on altars, the jaguar with gaping jaws represented the earth's interior, which helps explain the significance of hachas in which the jaguar's head has a cleft in the middle sprouting corn.

Preclassic Period

The Preclassic or Formative period has been divided into three phases: Lower (1800-1100 BC), Middle (1100-600 BC), and Upper (600-100 BC).

At this time human groups began to develop a sedentary lifestyle, inhabiting a specific geographic environment, where they invented different techniques to exploit natural resources to insure their survival. One of them was agriculture, which allowed them to establish permanent communities, generally occupying the banks of rivers, the coast, or the shores of lakes and lagoons, where water guaranteed the fertility of their cultivated fields and provided them with food and a means of communication. Their technology was advanced, making it possible to build a diversity of structures, ranging from huts made of logs and earth, to buildings of stone and earth for ceremonial purposes.

Communities were distributed throughout the coast. They shared many similarities, especially with the Maya and Oaxaca regions as well as with other groups in Mesoamerica.

The Olmecs

On the south coast, in part of Tabasco and in the region known as the Tuxtlas, in Veracruz, the first Mesoamerican civilization developed (in the Preclassic or Formative Era 1800-100 BC). It exhibited unique characteristics such as planned architectural centers – at La Venta in Tabasco, and Tres Zapotes and San Lorenzo in Veracruz- and a complex, structured religion.

The first monumental stone sculpture appear, as well as greenstone figurines, social and political organization with clear hierarchies, intensive agriculture, the beginnings of writing and the calendar, techniques of architectural construction and sculptural production, and the establishment of trade.

Architecture

The first villages had dwellings made of perishable materials. They were placed on low platforms with palm roofs supported by posts, and the walls consisted of logs covered with earth inside and out. Later as society developed, constructions arose reflecting new lifestyles.

The Olmecs of the Gulf Coast were the first to build ceremonial centers with different types of rectangular, square and round structures, aligned on a north-south axis. The buildings created open spaces known as “plazas” that were used for ceremonies and rituals. Construction materials were primarily earth and colored clay, and some of the tombs, offerings and large sculptures were situated in relation to buildings, as may be seen at La Venta in Tabasco, and San Lorenzo and Tres Zapotes in Veracruz.

Offering 4 from La Venta, Tabasco

Olmec culture has been recognized as the first civilization in ancient Mexico and one of the first on the American continent. Its development has been dated between 1800 and 200 BC, that is to say some 3800 years ago. Their ceremonial centers were the earliest to display advanced planning with buildings arranged on a north-south axis, implying knowledge of the movement of the stars, and thus, the existence of a calendar.

La Venta is one of the most important Olmec ceremonial centers. There they made buildings, plazas, tombs, offerings and sculptures ranging from colossal to diminutive dimensions.

In excavations conducted in 1955, under the floor of the patio of the Northeastern Platform, archeologists found 16 figurines and six celts arranged to represent a religious ceremony, deposited as an offering in the sand. The 16 figurines of shaved individuals, wearing only a loincloth without any other adornment, had cranial deformation and some of them had filed front teeth, both of which are pre-hispanic practices common on the Gulf Coast. Eleven figurines were placed in a semi-circle, contemplating a ritual in which four of them (8,9,10,11) are set up row in the middle of the scene. All of this takes place in front of a figure (7), unlike the rest due to the type of stone of which it was made; this figure was his back toward the six celts, which were set up like stelae.

Imagery represented in materials such as stone are a means of communication between people, not merely a copy of reality, but rather they bear a special meaning constituting a visual message. This message is captured at the moment the object is seen, but a true understanding is possible only through knowledge of the ideology of the society that produced it. So we see how the Olmec message is conveyed in the form of these figurines and celts, in their placement and in the images reproduced on four of them.

The images are not complete. In one of them we see half of a human body stretched out. Meanwhile, the others include signs that formed part of the Olmecs' symbolic language and may be interpreted as ideograms.

Landscape and Animals

The wealth of the Gulf Coast may be attributed to its particular geographic conditions, the sea and the presence of rivers, streams, lagoons and swamps, which sustained a rich diversity of plants and animals.

The coast has several regional ecosystems with specific characteristics: the semiarid zone, the mountainous western region and the north. One of them is the tropical rainforest, with a tremendous diversity of plants and animals: parrots, toucans, howler monkeys, hummingbirds, bees, birds, insects, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Some were nocturnal animals, such as jaguars, cacomistles and porcupines, while others were flying species, such as the great variety of bats that fed on plants and flowers.

Today the Tuxtlas rainforest has some 900 species of plants, 100 mammals, 450 birds, 90 reptiles, 50 species of amphibians, and thousands of invertebrates.

The Region of Oaxaca

In ancient times, Oaxaca was the land of the "Cloud People", who left a legacy of rich archaeological treasures and an important cultural tradition. Huaxyacac was founded in 1486 by Moctezuma II as a military garrison. The first inhabitants of this area arrived at around 10000 BC, and their presence is evidenced by numerous campsites along the central Oaxaca valleys and in the Upper Mixtec region. Agriculture was initiated in this area at around 7000 BC and by 1500 BC sedentary communities, were established, along with Oaxaca's first hub of political power, San Jose Mogote. Although ancient Oaxaca evidenced significant ethnic diversity, the culturally dominant groups in the area were the Zapotecs and Mixtecs. The first settlers among these groups arrived to the central Oaxaca valleys and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec between 1500 BC and 1521 AC. These settlers were responsible for constructing the most important

prehispanic city in Oaxaca: Monte Alban. Established as a cultural authority since its founding, this Zapotec capital houses one of the most beautiful prehispanic plazas.

The Mixtecs showed a preference for valleys- which were limited in number- of Oaxacan mountain ranges, as well as sections of the coastline; their area of influence extended to the western portion of the present state of Guerrero and to the southern part of the state of Puebla. Around 800 AC, they ruled the central Oaxaca valleys from an important capital: Tilantongo. These warrior groups demonstrated a unique artistic sensibility; they were the leading goldsmiths in Mesoamerica, created some of the finest polychrome ceramics, and painted codices to narrate their history. Represented in all their works of art is their vision of a religious universe.

In 1529, the ancient territories of Oaxaca became part of the Marquesado del Valle and were granted as royal recompense to Hernan Cortes. At this time Oaxaca was named Antequera.

Hunters and Gatherers

Human settlement in Oaxaca dates back to around 10000 BC, according to archaeological evidence discovered in the Oaxaca valleys and particularly in the Tlacolula zone.

Caverns were the sites most preferred for shelter by these early peoples. In Cueva Blanca (meaning "White Cave"), findings of rabbit, fox and deer remains provide us with information regarding these early peoples' diet; diverse stone tools have also been found at this site.

Evidence of open- air campsites set up at Gheo Shih, near the Mitla River, include numerous artifacts such as projectile points and circular or oval- shaped stone ornaments with perforations, allowing them to be strung by some type of cord.

Guila Naquitz is yet another cave where, owing to its dry conditions, remains have been conserved of gourds, beans, prickly pears, avocado, mesquite vines, walnuts, pine nuts, acorns and chewed maguay leaves. In all of the archaeological sites mentioned above, discoveries have been made of pollen grains from teocintle, a graminaceous plant which investigators classify as an early predecessor of corn.

The Emerging of Monte Alban

The founding of the city of Monte Alban, in 500 BC, was accompanied by the abandonment of several surrounding sites. Continual wars for power were a prime motivation in the construction of an urban center placed high upon a mountaintop and the later (Late Monte

Alban I Phase) construction of a great wall- extending three kilometers (2.4 miles)- to defend the city.

Initial work on the site consisted of leveling the Great Plaza and initiation of monumental constructions, such as Building IV South, Building K, and Building L (or Los Danzantes “the Dancers” Building). This great city, whose original name might have been “Mountain of the Jaguar”, was made up of a ceremonial center with palaces, temples, water storage systems, drainage systems and a market area.

Monte Alban grew rapidly; dominating and unifying the central Oaxaca valleys; in fact, for more than a thousand years, it was the center of Zapotec culture. Since its founding, Monte Alban received tribute via the military domination of other cities, towns, and villages.

The Preclassic Period

The Preclassic Period is subdivided into the Early Preclassic (1500-850 BC), during which the Espiridion Complex, Tierras Largas Phase and San Jose Mogote Phase took place; the Middle Preclassic (850 to 300 BC), which included the phases Guadalupe, Rosario and Early Monte Alban I and the Late Preclassic (300-100 BC), characterized by the Late Monte Alban I Phase.

Around 1500 BC, the first villages to employ agricultural irrigation systems were established, principally in the ETLA Valley.

Families of these villages met their nutritional needs through agriculture, hunting, fishing and the gathering of plants, mollusks and insects. They also took part in a long-distance interchange of obsidians, shells and other goods.

During the Middle Preclassic Period (850-300 BC), they used a hieroglyphic system of writing, long with a numbering system- represented by dots and bars- which was employed in their ritual calendar. In 1150 BC, Olmec influences were present in their ceramic designs and religion. Also during the Preclassic Period, the village San Jose Mogote served as cultural rector of the central Oaxaca valleys until the founding in 500 BC of Monte Alban.

In the Upper Mixtec region, villages established in the Nochistlan Valley developed cultural patterns, similar to those of the central Oaxaca valleys. Etlatongo and Yucuita served as cultural authorities in their area.

Monte Alban II

The era is characterized by an expansion of Zapotec power via military conquest; another strategy used to dominate the central Oaxaca valleys was the forming of alliances between sites, such as an alliance between Abasolo, Tomaltepec and Yagul; a third mechanism for controlling a given territory involved the propagation of ideological and religious concepts. Monte Alban was the capital of a State, and its principal satellite cities were strategically located to watch over surrounding zones; San Jose Mogote, was the central authority in ETLA, while Dainzu led in Tlacolula and Cuilapan watched over Zimatlan.

The Mixtec zone of this time is characterized by the presence of chiefdoms in the Sierra de Penoles; this area, to the west of the central Oaxaca valleys, is on one of the principal prehispanic routes between the (Zapotec) Eta Valley and (Mixtec) Nochistlan Valley. Many Mixtec sites contain Monte Alban-type ceramics. The region of Cuicatlan, in La Canada, was also a strategic zone between the valleys of Tehuacan and Oaxaca; this site housed abundant ceramics similar in style to those of Monte Alban II.

La Religión: Monte Albán II

Las diversas deidades recibían su culto en los templos, de acuerdo con un calendario ritual, se realizaban sacrificios de aves, perros, infantes y prisioneros de guerra. Cuatro dioses aparecen con frecuencia: Cocij una deidad con pico ancho de ave; una deidad con la nariz curvada hacia atrás y una deidad que combinada atributos de jaguar y cocodrilo.

Los sacrificios humanos además se efectuaban ceremonialmente cuando se construía un edificio o se hacia una ampliación u superposición del mismo. Las debieron estar relacionadas con el culto a los antepasados y la creencia en otro tipo de existencia.

English Translation:

The various deities received their worship in the temples, according to the ritual calendar, sacrifices were made of birds, dogs, toddlers and prisoners of war. Four gods appear frequently: Cocijo a deity with broad-billed bird, a deity with the nose curved back and a deity who combined attributes of jaguar and crocodile.

Human sacrifices were made also ceremonially when constructing a building or to an extension or overlay it. The must be related to ancestor worship and belief in another kind of existence.

Monte Alban III

The Classic Period may be subdivided into the Early Classic Period or Monte Alban IIIA (200-500 AD) and the Late Classic Period or Monte Alban IIIB-IV (500-800 AD). This period is characterized by a peak in civil and religious, architectural and artistic development; artwork produced at the time included lavish clay urns, carved stone slabs and mural paintings; the great city, furthermore, extended to the nearby mountains of Atzompa and El Gallo.

During the Early Classic Period, strong cultural influences from Teotihuacan are notable; however, a splendid, authentic Zapotec style was developed in the Late Classic Period.

During the Monte Alban IIIA Phase, ruler 12 jaguar ordered the carving of six stelae, representing war captives, to adorn the South Platform; this artistic gesture demonstrated military expansion of Monte Alban. A peak in construction occurred during Monte Alban IIIB-IV; in fact, a majority of the buildings, still standing, were made during that era.

Deceased members of society, of high status, were also buried in sumptuous tombs, some of which- like Tombs 104 and 1005- were painted with mythic scenes.

During Monte Alban's decline, around 800 AD, all major construction ceased; however, the city was never completely abandoned.

La Sociedad Zapoteca

Los zapotecos se llamaban a sí mismos “gente de las nubes” – Ben'zaa- la designación “zapoteca” es náhuatl y significa “pueblo del zapote”; su sociedad estaba dividida en nobles, sacerdotes, pueblo y esclavos. Entre los nobles se distinguían las tijas coquí o gobernantes y los tijajoana o principales. Vestían prendas elegantes, se cubrían con mantos de algodón, usaban variedad de joyas de jade, obsidiana y conchas y sus cabezas lucían adornos elaborados de variadas plumas.

El gobernante era llamado Coquilhalao y recibía su rango vitalicio a través de la sucesión directa. Entre los nobles era común la poligamia. Los plebeyos usaban roa hecha de fibras de maguey y tenían prohibido el uso de materiales preciosos. Ciertos manjares les estaban restringidos como la carne de guajolote y de otros animales, así como beber chocolate.

Los esclavos pinijno, choco, xillani, eran prisioneros tomados en guerra o caían en este estado por deudas; estos podían ser comprados en la ciudad de Miahuatlan, sede del mercado más importante de esclavos.

English Translation:

The Zapotec called themselves "People of the Clouds" - Ben'zaa-the designation "Zapotec" is Nahuatl and means "people of zapote." Their society was divided into nobles, priests, people and slaves. Among the distinguished nobles or rulers coqui seatposts and tijajoana or principal. They wore elegant clothes, were covered with cotton sheets, used variety of jewelry made of jade, obsidian and shells and their heads wore ornaments made from various feathers.

The ruler was called Coquilhalao and received his rank for life through direct succession. Among the nobles polygamy was common. Commoners used cloth made of maguey fiber and had banned the use of precious materials. They were restricted certain dishes such as beef and turkey and other animals, and from drinking chocolate.

Slaves pinijno, choco, xillani were prisoners taken in war or fall into this state for debt, and these could be bought in the city of Miahuatlan, home of the largest slave market.

Architecture

Architectural forms and styles evolved in response both to geographic factors and economic and social dynamics. Early village constructions consisted of simple daub, mud brick and occasionally stone houses, with wood and thatch roof and floors of compacted earth, sometimes stucco. These became the prototype for popular housing as it exists to this day.

In contrast, urban centers had monumental buildings in a planned layout besides long avenues bordered by platforms. Cities comprised a ceremonial center and an area of palaces, normally with its burial grounds. Dwellings and cemeteries of lesser importance were located outside the city. The ceremonial center included temples, ball courts, and the residences of priests and governors.

The different areas of urban centers were linked by a system of well laid out and paved plazas, streets and avenues. For drainage there were channels leading from yards to the streets and a system that eventually conducted water out of the city. A major feature were the huge basements, formed by covering a mound of clay and stones, dressed with vertical walls and slopes.

To make constructions more massive and taller, they were often built atop previous buildings using a stone and clay filing to stabilize them. Basements were constructed to bear temples, which often were only an open enclosure.

La Religión y el Inframundo

La religión dominaba todos los actos humanos por lo que requerían de múltiples rituales y ceremonias; entre las más conocidas, está el ceremonial dedicado a la muerte. Los zapotecos llamaban Coquí Bezelao y Xonoxi Quecyua a la pareja que señoreaba en el inframundo o región de los muertos. Dentro del sepulcro se colocaba al difunto con variadas ofrendas, destacando las urnas que se ubicaban a la entrada de la tumba, estas identificaban a dioses, que seguramente cumplían la función de deidad protectora del difunto.

Las cuevas se usaban también como sitio de enterramiento, depositando el cuerpo ataviado con sus mejores galas, envuelto en un petate y acompañado de su ofrenda.

English translation:

Religion and the Underworld

Religion dominated all human actions as required multiple rituals and ceremonies, among the best known, is the ceremony devoted to the death. The Zapotec called Coqui Xonoxi Quecyua Bezelao and the couple who rule the underworld or land of the dead. Inside the tomb was placed the deceased with varied offerings, noting that the polls were located at the entrance to the tomb, they identify God, which probably functioned as patron deity of the deceased.

The caves were also used as a burial site, depositing the body dressed in their finery, wrapped in a mat and with his offering.

Other Sites Contemporary to Monte Alban

Monte Alban had the most numerous population; however, other sites in the central Oaxaca valleys also presented important settlements. Cities like Cuilapa, Jalieza, Zaachila, Lambityeco, and Mitla gained power and prestige in their respective valleys. Many of the minor sites acted as defensive frontiers.

During the Classic Period, in the Lower Mixtec region, the Ñuiñe cultures developed (200-800 AC), while Huamelulpan and Yucuita, in the Upper Mixtec region, continued until their decline between 750-800 AC. During this period, other sites, like Yucunudahui, became great and important.

The Disintegration of Monte Alban

Once the great Zapotec capital declined politically, in 800 AD, no other entity appeared to unify Oaxca's ruling territories with the same ancient splendor and efficiency.

Perhaps a sudden climatic change affecting food reserves,, a great drought, demographic pressures, social problems, armed conflicts and/or invasions- along with a pre-existing instability provoked by political competition- could have set off the chain of events leading to Monte Alban's collapse; whether caused by all or some of these factors, the city's collapse had an enormous impact, influencing in the disintegration of other great Mesoamerican cities of its time.

Taking political advantage of the resulting power vacuum in the central Oaxaca valleys, population centers such as Noriega, Xoxocotlan and Cuilapan appeared.

The Ñuiñe

The Ñuiñe (pronounced "Nyéw-nyee") culture received its name from the Lower Mixtec region, where it developed. Its most outstanding cities were Huajuapán, Tequixtepec, Chilixtlahuaca, Miltepec, and Cerro de Las Minas; in these cities, the culture demonstrated its most important innovations, considered as representative of the Mixtec Classic Period (200-800 AC). The most important characteristics of these include a thin orange type of ceramics, a hieroglyphics system, clay heads, polychrome urns, the employment of an architectural technique involving construction with stone blocks and slabs, and the funerary custom of constructing spaces below the flooring of houses for simple burials.

Persons of high social ranking were buried in elegant tombs, such as Tomb 1 of Yucunudahui or Tomb 5 of Cerro de Las Minas. Sculpted representations of persons on stone slabs suggest that the Ñuiñe worshiped gods also belonging to other cultures in their area: rain wind, death, jaguar, and old god, as well as Xipe Totec. Their system of numeration and calendar were also similar to those nearby cultures.

The Postclassic Period

The Postclassic or Monte Alban V Period is subdivided into the Early Postclassic Period (800-1000 AD) and the Late Postclassic Period (1000-1521 AD). The city of Monte Alban during this period was practically uninhabited, although it remained a sacred area. The Early Postclassic Period is characterized by continuous confrontations and serious political problems; few monumental constructions were built, and the most important cult was directed toward the

god Xipe Totec. Around 1250 AD, during the Late Postclassic Period, a new political order was achieved: the chiefdoms.

In general, the Postclassic Period was a time of political instability, accelerated social and cultural change, and the arrival of invading foreign groups. It was an era of strong militarism, during which only small city-states with individual, local styles existed.

The Zapotecs, during this time, lived in new cities and were involved in great internal battles; these intensified with invasions by the Mixtecs and Mexicas. A group of Zapotec authorities attempted to establish a political center in the city of Zaachila, while Mitla was made a center of religious authority.

The Mixtecs

The Mixtecs, as they were called by the Mexica, called themselves Ñusabi; both mean “people of the Clouds”. The ancestors of this group reached the region around the year 3000 BC and were hunters and gatherers, as can be seen at the camp of Yazanu dated at 2000 BC. As they developed agriculture, they settled in villages such as Yucuita and Etlatongo.

They domesticated dogs and turkeys, and traded a range of products such as cotton, cacao beans and cochineal, a highly valued and indeed valuable dye used to color cotton. The most important cities during the Classic Period were Cerro de Las Minas, Huamelulpan, Yucuita and Yucunudahui.

Through trade and military strength, the Mixtecs dominated vast regions. Skilled in the arts, they made beautiful pottery and carved bones with mythical scenes; they were also the great and unequalled metalworkers of Mesoamerica.

Despite their ethnic and cultural unity they never achieved one single political organization, although Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw did attempt to unite them.

The Codices

The Mixtecs referred to their codices as naandeye or tonindeye, meaning “the history of lineage/bloodlines”; another term given to these sacred documents is neenuhu, which translates to “the sacred skin’ or “skin of god.” Most Prehispanic codices known to us come from the Upper Mixtec region and were painted by painter-scribes, or tay uisi tacu. The texts were painted over large deerskin strips, which were covered by a thin layer of lime and painted with mineral and organic pigments. Their sizes vary; yet, all codices were folded in an accordion,

which was then bound by a wooden covering. The writing in these documents is hieroglyphic and pictographic; thus, by means of images and conventionalized symbols, the Mixtecs were able to narrate historical genealogical, and mythical events.

The *tay uisi tacu* received an education allowing the learning of their pictorial tradition, rituals, and calendar; a priest probably supervised the work of the manuscript. The reading of these codices generally begins in the lower right side of a page and follows a zigzagging motion from right to left.

El Posclásico Tardío

Durante este periodo los mixtecos son el grupo dominante del entorno oaxaqueño, el advenimiento de este grupo propicia nuevos recursos artísticos, donde el color juega un papel importante, se desarrollan esplendidas técnicas artísticas.

Como elementos mixtecos destacan el mosaico de piedra para recubrir fachadas, la talla espectacular de piedras duras, la cerámica policroma, la metalurgia, los mosaicos de materiales semipreciosos y sobre todo los códices; documentos que permiten llamar horizonte histórico a este momento cultural. El estilo mixteco principalmente en cerámica y orfebrería influye durante el posclásico tardío sobre las artes mesoamericanas.

English Translation:

The Late Postclassic

During this period the Mixtec were the dominant group of the Oaxacan environment, this new group promotes arts, where color plays an important role, developing splendid artistic techniques.

Mixtec elements include stone mosaic coatings for facades, dramatic hard stone carving, polychrome ceramics, metal, mosaics of semiprecious materials and, particularly in the codices, documents that let you call the historical horizon to this cultural moment. Mixtec style mainly in ceramics and gold during the Late Postclassic influences on Mesoamerican art.

The Mixtec Penetration of the Central Oaxaca Valley

In the year 900 AD Mixtec influence penetrated toward the central Oaxaca valleys by military means. A decisive act leading to the control of these valleys was the forced subjection of the city Zaachila, which after the fall of Monte Alban held political reign the Zapotec ruler of the city

fed and sought refuge in Teuantepec, from where he attempted- without success- to conserve political authority over the central Oaxaca valleys. After this conquest, the Mixtecs' power was extended across the region, subjecting other Zapotec populations and eventually dominating the western part of the valleys; a political center was established in Cuilipan.

From Achiutla and Tilantongo, the Mixtecs went on to conquer towns of lesser importance and established their first kingdom. In this manner, the invaders managed to extend their domination to the northeastern and southeastern portions of Oaxaca, reaching as far as the Pacific coast although Mixtec expansion in the central Oaxaca valleys was mainly due to displacement of the aforementioned Zapotec ruler, it seems that another primary strategy of the Mixtecs was establishing matrimonial alliances. According to the account of La Relacion de Cuilipan, Mixtecs entered the central Oaxaca valleys in 1280 AD.

The Mexica Penetration

In the year 1461, the kingdom of Coixlahuaca was defeated by the Mexica ruler Moctezuma I, who then led a military campaign in the Oaxacan territory; afterwards, Teposolula, Puyla and Acatlan were conquered. The Mexicas encountered great resistance in the kingdom of Yanuitlan whose ruler was treacherously killed by Moctezuma I; this territory continuously rebelled and therefore had to be reconquered during the era of Tizoc, another Mexica ruler.

Moctezuma I ordered to repopulate all the conquered cities by Mexicas. From 1469 to 1486, the Mexica ruler Axayacatl led conquests on the coast as far as Huatulco.

Moctezuma II later led a great battle and gained dominion over Sosola, Tututepec, and part of the region of Tehunatepec in 1506 and 1507. A great Mixtec insurrection, unifying the towns of Tlaxiaco, Icpatepec, and Nopala, occurred during the years 1511-1512. There was a total of six Mixtec rebellions.

Toward the end of Mexica ruler Ahuizotl's reign, between 1495 and 1497, the most famous battle between Zapotecs and Mixtecs occurred; it took place in the city of Guingola, where hostilities suspended after the wedding between a Mexica ruler's- or tlatoani's- daughter and the Zapotec ruler.

European Contact and Conquest

The Chinantecs were the first Oaxacans to receive notice of the arrival of the Spaniards. While the Spanish invaders marauded along the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico, Cortes received his first

news of Oaxaca from Moctezuma, who according to the story narrated by Bernal Díaz, told him about the region's wealth in gold.

In search of the precious metal, Cortes sent his first troops to Oaxaca in 1520. The men were led by Hernando Pizarro, who returned to Cortes with nuggets of gold obtained from the Tuxtepec and La Chinanta Rivers, as well as gifts from Oaxacan rulers.

Later on, Diego de Ordaz arrived to the region and embarked upon a long journey, during which he obtained great quantities of gold. The two most important military expeditions in Oaxaca included one led by Orozco, whose troops arrived during the latter part of 1521, and a second led in 1522 by Pedro de Alvarado against Tututepec; reuniting with Orzoco's soldiers, this second group managed to obtain numerous gold products which they robbed from the local rulers.

The ancient Oaxacan provinces formed a major portion of the royal recompense, the Marquesado del Valle, which Hernando Cortes e Monroy received in 1529 as reward for his services to the Spanish crown. Oaxaca then received the name of Antequera.

The World of the Mexica

The peoples who settled on the Mexican central plateau after the decline of Tula flourished politically and culturally towards the end of the thirteenth century, leaving a wealth of evidence of Pan-Mesoamerican ideas, essentially comprising shared myths, gods, and religious cults. The various realms that grew in power at the time forged their identities through artistic styles that had a common visual language. This process began with the predominance of Culhuacan and Tenayuca, followed by a succession of groups known in the chronicles as Nahuatl-speaking or "Nahuatlaca tribes", who set out from the mythical Aztlan-Chicomoztoc to find their promised land. They were the Xochimilca, Tlahuica, Tlaxcalteca, Huexotzinca, Tepaneca, and Acolhua, and the Matlanzina, who spoke another language.

Archaeologists have defined this era as the Late Postclassic (1300-1521 AD). One of its main features is the predominance of militarism in all aspects of life: the main gods were the patrons of military conquests; the most important ceremonies revolved around the capture of prisoners, and human sacrifice took on a central role in daily rituals. The structural basis for political and social organization were military hierarchies made up of young men who had shown an outstanding fierceness, bravery, and willingness to fight. Likewise, the art of the era relied heavily on the iconography of war.

This is the background to the rise of the Mexica, also referred to in texts as Aztecs or Tenochca. This people founded its capital city, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, in the year 2 House (1325 AD), and soon was to be engaging neighbors in battle, making alliances, and defeating its enemies. By the mid fifteenth century, there was what can be called a Mexica world, shaped by the domination of this group of a large part of Mesoamerica, where its religious, military and political ideals ruled.

Ancestral Peoples

Some of the towns and cities from Mesoamerica's past, especially Teotihuacan and Tula, were considered prototypes of power and knowledge; the Mexicas sought in this glorious past the roots of their own identity, and they excavated the ruins of those Prehispanic capitals to obtain valuable objects: masks, jars, stone figurines, etc., which they made Mexica by adding elements that emphasized the link between the past and their particular present.

At one time the buildings of Mexico-Tenochtitlan were similar to Teotihuacan, with embankments and decorated walls. In the palatial enclosures there were ritual banquets and processions of warriors; together with the chac-mools they evoked mythical Tula, Quetzalcoatl's capital.

For the Mexica it was very important to show the neighboring peoples that their city of Tenochtitlan was the direct descendent of Tula, the center of power. This explained the force that lay behind the conquest by its armies in all four universal directions.

From the realm of Culhuacan the Mexica took their governing royal lineage, along with some cultural elements, especially the ceramic traditions; from Tenayuca they took the ritual architecture, with the dual pyramid that bore two temples, seeking balance in the pair of supreme gods, Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Thus, the Mexica presented themselves to other peoples as the heirs to the ancient civilizations, validating their expansion and their military domination.

The Mexica's Neighbors

Long before the Mexica reached the Mexico Basin, other peoples had settled on the Central Plateau. Culhuacan, to the south of the lake region, was proud of its Toltec past, whereas Tenayuca, to the north side it had been founded by Xolotl's Chichimecs.

The Acolhua dominated the Eastern side of this region. Their capital, Texcoco, was the most important artistic and cultural center in the area. The Tepaneca, probably of a Chichimec origin, with two large capitals, Azcapotzalco and Coyoacan, controlled the Western side of the lakes; this people taught the Mexica the art of hegemonic alliances. To the South lived people who inhabited chinampas (raised fields dredged from the lakebed), dominated by the Xochiilca, whose capital rose amid the vegetable and flower-covered fields.

To the east beyond the surrounding mountains lay the realms of the Tlaxcalteca and Huexotzinca. These traditional enemies of the Mexica worshipped Camaxtli, the patron of hunter-gatherers. The same region was also home to the city-state of Cholula, famous for its success in trade and its much sought-after polychrome pottery.

The Tlahulca, who spoke a crude version of Nahuatl, inhabited the valleys of Cuernavaca and Oaxtepec in what today is the state of Morelos. In the valleys of Toluca, the Matlatzinca, skilled fisherman and lake hunters, were identified by their own language: Matlatzinca.

Mythological Tales

The origin of the Mexica is wrapped in the deep mystery of the mythological tales. Originally from Aztlan, they left on a difficult migration that lasted more than 200 years; although different versions are found, all agree the Mexica were on their way to a promised land.

Aztlan was a place in the north ruled by the color white. It was near Chicomoztoc, the place of the seven caves where man was made, his destiny being to populate the known world. What are known as the Nahuatlaca tribes left here on their long journey with the Mexica, in the sacred year 1 Flint.

Certain pictographic documents that survived the destruction that followed the Spanish conquest tell of this migration. The most outstanding are the Codex Boturini or the Pilgrimage Strip, the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, and the Codex Vaticanus. The most important sites on the route taken by the Mexica, in addition to Tula, are those places where the ceremony of the new fire was held. The final destination was marked by the sacred sign, the eagle atop the cactus growing on an islet in the middle of a lake.

The year 2 House (1325 AD) marked the founding of Mexico-Tenochtitlan by the chief and guide Tenoch, who set out the foundations of the future city, dividing the space into the four large barrios and ordering the temple to Huitzilopochtli and his companion Tlaloc to be built in its center. On the death of Tenoch, the decision was taken to establish the realm. In Culhuacan the

Mexica found the young Acamapichtli, who was to become the first Mexica tlatoani or governor, thereby establishing the royal family.

Eleven tlatoanis, linked by family ties, ruled Mexico-Tenochtitlan. They guided their people to the greatest military triumphs and came to dominate a large part of Mesoamerica. The last two governors, Citlahuac and Cuauhtemoc, faced the Spaniards in the war for their survival, succumbing on August 13, 1521.

War

In archaeological terms, the Mexica era was in the Late Postclassic (1300-1521 AD) and its mainly associated with militarism and war dominating all aspects of the societies that lived at that time.

The Mexicas were the most outstanding warriors of all, and they learned from the military experiences of the other peoples and cultures that came before them, in both offensive and defensive weaponry the use of local techniques and strategies of attack, and the art of alliances and regional supremacy.

War played an extremely important part in political, social, and religious organization; young men were urged to follow the examples set by victorious conquerors, and honors and valuable objects were awarded to those who took live prisoners in battle. The supreme god, Huilzilopochtli, symbolized the Sun of war, who defeated his sister Coyolxauhqui, the Moon, colossal battles, putting to flight the Centzonhuiznahuac, the countless stars in the south.

Town Planning and Architecture

The decision taken by the Mexica ruling-class, led by Tenoch, their spiritual leader, to settle on the soup of muddy islands located in the western part of Lake Texcoco, later known as the Lake of Mexico, required the development of ingenious construction techniques that over the years allowed the consolidation of two island-cities; Mexico-Tenochtitlan and Mexico-Tlatelolco.

The choice of these islets as the location for the future city was undoubtedly linked to the conception the Mesoamerican peoples had of the universe. The gods had created a sacred space for them, defined by the movement of the stars. This is where the four universal directions came together, corresponding to the points of the compass. Its borders were the corners of the world. There is no pictographic document from the Mexica era revealing this

vision of the cosmos, but one of the pages of the Fejervary-Mayer Codex illustrates the theme with enormous richness.

The original islet divided into four sections by streets that led East, West, North and South; the spaces for dwellings were known as the four large barrios; Atzacualco, Cuepopan, Moyotlan and Zoquiapan; the center, where the eagle appeared on the cactus, was designated as the ritual area for the construction of pyramids, temples and other ceremonial buildings. In time this came to be known as the sacred enclosure.

Using water-resistant ahuejote trunks, piles were sunk to bear the heavy buildings and to construct the causeways that linked the island to terra firms: Iztapalapa, to the south; Tepeyacac, to the north, and Tlacopan, to the west (to the east there was only a short road that led to the place where canoes had to be taken to the lakeside).

The Sacred Buildings of Mexico-Tenochtitlan

Towards the end of the 15th century, when Mexico-Tenochtitlan was at its greatest height, the buildings dedicated to the gods were decorated with magnificent sculptures and ceremonial containers, whose symbolism exalted the power of the gods who created the universe, and man's devotion to them.

The roofs of the temples had sculptures in the shape of human skulls alternating with spherical elements, which symbolized the night and the stars; at the upper edge of these rooms were placed figures carved in stone which invoked the god's dominant element: cut snails represented wind, sun beams, etc.

At the top of the pyramid, facing the temple, was the sacrificial stone called the Techcatl. To the sides of the entrances there were huge braziers, where the fire of life would permanently burn. On the platform, where the pyramid was built, there were sacrificial stones and standard bearers that held flags with the names of the gods. At the bottom of the staircase there were the heads of serpents, opening their mouths threateningly.

The best-known and most numerous Mexica ceremonial buildings are the pyramidal structures that bore the temples. They were normally of a rectangular shape with four or more platforms built on top of each other. Most of them had a single access, with staircases bordered by small walls, identifying these constructions as from the Late Postclassic, because on the upper part the slope is less pronounced, forming a platform called an "architectural die". The Mexica era also was when dual pyramids were built, which bore two temples, such as those to Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc in Tenochtitlan.

Life in the Chinampas and Lake Resources

The cities of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and its twin Tlateloco were built on islands that emerged atop muddy promontories on the western edge of Lake Texcoco. These cities took advantage of the experiences of the lake dwellers of Xochimilco, Tlahuac and Mixquic to expand their city using chinampas, which were like artificial rectangular islands. To make them they planted trees that are extremely resistant to damp, called ahuejotes, at the corners. Then the edges would be marked in the lake with timbers, and the plot would be filled with successive layers of water lilies and mud which provided the fertile base for the maize and other vegetable crops that the Indians framed. The chinampas were separated by canals which in turn were highly effective waterways that communicated the cities.

The Mexicas, in this watery environment, successfully developed a system to use the lake resources. Their diet was highly dependent on fish, ducks, herons and other aquatic birds, frogs, and snakes, and they collected the abundant and nutritious plankton.

Mexico-Tlatelolco

According to the legends in ancient historical chronicles, Mexico-Tlatelolco was founded in 1388 AD, 13 years after Tenochtitlan, by a faction of the original group of immigrants that arrived from Aztlan; they chose to live on a group of sandy islets, which in time would become a proud city, mainly dedicated to trade.

Taking care of their own interests, the Tlatelolcas sought the protection of Tezozomoc, the Lord of the Tepanecas of Azcapotzalco, and their first tlatoani was a son of that governor. Tlatelolco expanded in military and commercial terms independently of Tenochtitlan, until it was conquered by Axayacatl, who killed the last Tlatelolca tlatoani, Moquihuix.

This island city grew around an east-west axis. Its ceremonial center, of which important archaeological remains survive, is rectangular. The outstanding feature was its main dual pyramid which bore two temples dedicated to the cult to the gods of war and agriculture.

Trade and Economy

In the time of the Mexica the economic base was mixed and highly complex, combining intensive agriculture with hunting, fishing and gathering, all complemented with a rich and abundant trade that relied on a network that covered the length and breadth of Mexico, even

extending beyond Mesoamerica. In addition large consignments of objects and precious materials reached Mexico-Tenochtitlan and later Tlatelolco as tributes paid by the conquered provinces.

The products, in their natural form, or already worked and made into different objects, were sent to the markets. These formal trading institutions, known as tianguis or tianquiztli, were ruled by their own authorities and had their own police. The market governors laid down the rules that vendors and buyers had to follow; they served as judges in cases of disputes, and they imposed the punishment corresponding to each case.

The peoples of Mesoamerica had been using important trade routes since ancient times. The traders' guilds, whose specialization was so effective, undoubtedly dated back to those ancestral times. For Mexica, all trade was part of *pochtecayotl*, the art of exchanging goods; traders were called *pochtecas* and formed tightly knit endogamous clans, relying on strategic marriages among the different groups to strengthen their links. They had their own gods, festivals, and an internal organization that for centuries resisted change.

The Daily Life of the Peasants

In Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the general population were the *macehualtin*-commoners, who lived in single-family dwellings that had one of two rooms, occupied by a man and his wife, their children, and sometimes a relative who was a widow or otherwise in need of support. Another room was sometimes built as a kitchen. House construction was very simple. Buildings were raised on a platform of compacted earth to avoid damp. The foundations were stone, the walls branches and twigs covered with mud, and the roof, straw.

The *macehualtin*'s houses were located on the edge of the city, on the *chinampas* or raised fields or on dry land at the foot of the hills, always near the corn fields.

The peasants normally went barefoot and dressed in a simple fashion, making their clothes from *ixtle*, a fiber obtained from *maguey* an agave; men covered their private parts with the *maxtlatl*, a loincloth that went between the legs and was tied around the waist; the *tilmatl* was a kind of tunic that was worn tied over one shoulder which, at night, was used as a blanket. Women dressed with a wrap used as a skirt, tied with a ribbon or sash; their torso was covered with the *huipil* or long blouse, and sometimes a *quechquemitl*.

Mexica Society

The basis for the social organization of this people was the calpulli, which allowed the growth and development of the powerful Mexica empire; this group was made up of two perfectly differentiated social classes: the pipiltin, who were the nobility, and the macehualtin, or commoners.

The nobility jealously guarded the royal lineage that set them aside from the commoners. Genealogical documents recorded the names of their ancestors, living relatives, and especially the newborn. The pipiltin were allowed to accumulate and wear riches and precious objects, especially jade, feathers, and skins, and elegant clothes made of cotton; they lived in palatial buildings, practiced polygamy and worked as public servants, making them exempt from manual work, especially agricultural labor. In return, they received tributes as payment.

The macehualtin were responsible for all heavy work in daily life: agriculture, carrying and hauling. Their distinctive activity meant working with their hands; they lived in simple huts, their clothes were made with ixtle fibers, and accumulating and showing off riches and precious objects was punishable with death. They were permitted to take only one wife.

Craftsmen and traders belonged to the macehualtin, the importance of whose specialized work was acknowledged with an exemption from agricultural labors. However, in exchange, they had to pay tributes in the form of the goods made by their own hand or those they brought from afar.

Slaves, the tlacotin suffered that unfortunate condition because they were in debt and could become free men by paying what they owed. The state allowed outstanding young warriors, regardless of their status, to enjoy the benefits of the life of the nobles: fame and wealth.

Kitchen of the Mexica's time

The peasants who lived in the raised fields (chinampas) around Mexico-Tenochtitlan or on the edges of the lake built their houses on mud platforms. Their walls were made of timber and sticks and the roofs were thatched in straw.

The luckier ones had a kitchen in a small room next to the main room. This was the domain of the lady of the house. The hearth was located on the earth floor, where there was a comal for the tortillas, with pots for beans and other meals to the sides. The women would protect themselves from the damp by sitting on mats. Grains, corn cobs, and water were kept in large pots and baskets to the sides. Essential features were the metate to make dough and the mortar, where the spicy sauces were prepared.

Water and its Religious Importance

Tlaloc, the roar or voice of the Earth, and Chalchiuhtlicue, she of the skirt of jades, were the two patrons of water. With the Tlaloques, his assistants, the former was responsible for extracting the water deposited on the mountains and letting it fall from the celestial plane from sacred pitchers that poured out their content. Chachiuhtlicue ruled over the water in the lakes, rivers, and sea.

Of the year eighteen, twenty-day months, six were dedicated to these water gods, their festivals and ceremonies designed to curry favor. One of the buildings atop the main pyramid of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was dedicated to the cult to Tlaloc, and there was also a curious ritual building in the sacred enclosure around a spring related to Chalchiuhtlicue. On the summit of Tlaloc Hill, on the snow-capped mountains to the east of the Valley of Mexico, lie still the archaeological remains of the largest sacred building dedicated to Tlaloc.

Although the Mexica empire grew in power due to the bravery and commitment of its armies, the entire state apparatus depended on the daily labors of its farmers who pulled from the earth the staples of the Prehispanic diet.

The Central Plateau is one of the regions of Mesoamerica where life is marked by two clearly defined periods; the rains and the dry season. The former is a time of famine and suffering; to survive, food had to be stored that could go some way toward offsetting the ravages of hunger. The rainy season represented a revival; that was when the heat of the Sun and the humidity from the clouds- full of the precious liquid- made the land fertile and allowed plants, most importantly, crops, to grow and flower.

The Cult to Pulque

In the landscape of central Mexico, it is common to find maguey, a cactus with broad leaves called pencas that end in sharp spines that were used as needles and ritual barbs. His sacred plant was the goddess Maayahuel, and it gave the people many products; the pencas were used as roofing material for houses, and yielded the ixtle fiber for weaving; within the plant lived delicious worms- a delicacy enjoyed to this day-, and from the center of the maguey, if it is softly scraped, there comes a honeydew which turns into pulque when fermented.

Pulque, neutle in Nahuatl, has a strong odor and high alcoholic content; its patron was the god Ome Tochtli, "Teo Rabbit", to view of its calorific value, adults were only allowed one drink, and drunkenness was prohibited because the excess of pulque would make people fall under the

influence of the Cenxon Totochtin or Four Hundred Rabbits, which meant losing control and becoming aggressive and violent.

Maize-Religion and Ceremony

One of the most important ancient Mexican contributions to mankind the world over is maize. This extraordinary vegetable, domesticated by new world farmers, sustained the development and flourishing of all Mesoamerican cultures. By the time of the rise of the Mexica, the main varieties of this plant were being grown intensively; there were mountain-side terraces and irrigation channels, and the system of raised fields (chinampas) allowed the inhabitants of Mexico-Tenochtitlan to produce their food practically at the gates to their city.

Maize was a gift from the gods themselves: Quetzalcoatl, after the creation of the Fifth Sun, set about searching for it to give it to man hence its divine nature as the god Centeotl and, as the food of man, the goddess Xilonen, the healthy growing and flowering maize that when ripe becomes Chicomecoatl, "Seven Serpent", picked as cobs to be stored to guard against famine. Maize was the staple of the Mexica diet; it was used to make tortillas, tamales, atole and the pinole that sustained the warriors during military campaigns; three of the months of the Indian calendar, Tozoztontli, Hueytozoztli and Ochpaniztli, were dedicated to worshipping maize, but the sacred foods for all the other months were also made of maize.

The popularity of the goddess Chicomecoatl spread throughout the towns and cities of the Central Plateau and neighboring regions. This is why so many surviving sculptures identify the deity, depicting her showy square headdress made of a frame of sticks covered with strips of paper, called amacalli.

Quetzalcoatl and His World of Rituals

One of the most important gods in the religion of the Mexica, and in general all Mesoamerica, is Quetzalcoatl, whose symbolic name describes the powerful serpent with his precious quetzal feathers. This plumed serpent can trace his origins as a sacred element back to the Preclassical Period (1500 AD), and he flourished particularly in Teotihuacan and Tula.

In the myths of the Mexica world, Quetzalcoatl plays a fundamental role in the creation of the universe and man. According to some stories he was one of the children of the two creators, who together with Tezcatlipoca created the Earth by tearing apart the goddess Cipactli-Tlaltecuhli's body. He also penetrated the underworld, the domain of Mictlantecuhtli, the lord of the dead, where he fought to obtain the bones of ancient mankind. In an act of self-sacrifice

he mixed them with his own blood to create the humanity who would populate the universe, lit by the Fifth Sun. Quetzalcoatl was also Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the Planet Venus, and Xolotl god of the twins.

By the Late Postclassic Period (1300-1521 AD), apart from his traditional cult as the plumed Serpent and the patron of the most important priests, Quetzalcoatl had assumed an important role as the god of wind, called Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl. He was specifically identified by the half mask in the shape of a bird's beak that blew forth the wind; it was in that evocation that he took part in the creation of the Second Cosmogonic Sun, Ehecatl-Tonatiuh "Sun of Wind". Nanahuatzin himself, the creator of the Fifth Sun, was also an evocation of Quetzalcoatl.

Quetzalcoatl appeared in the fields of the Mexica, in the form of dust devils, of on the coast as cyclones or hurricanes; his temples were cylindrical and had conical roofs; he was in charge of sweeping the fields to attract the rains.

Xolotl

An important figure within the rituals surrounding the god Quetzalcoatl is Xolotl, his twin, a peculiar god in the form of a dog, identifiable by the many wrinkles on the sacred canine and the two rectangular protuberances on its head, relating it with the heavenly fire.

According to legend, to create man Quetzalcoatl traveled to the underworld to search for the bones of the ancestral generations, guarded over by Mictlantecuhtli, Quetzalcoatl had to take on the appearance of a dog to carry out this mission. And hairless, reddish dogs called xoloitzcuintli lead the dead on their journey to Mictlan.

Xolotl is the god of monstrosities and the patron of twins and animals that undergo transformations such as tadpoles that turn into frogs. Xolotl is also the planet Venus the evening star and is the companion and twin of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Venus as the Morning Star, identified with Quetzalcoatl.

Ehecatl

In ancient Mexico the wind was one of the regional elements that participated in the creation of the universe. In the era of the Mexicas it was the domain of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, a god identified by a mask in the shape of a beak that covered the lower part of its face, sometimes with sharp fangs. The people believed that the god produced the wind by breathing through this mask.

The ritual dress of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl was completed with a conical hat, from which hung long strips, or a band around his head, with a wavy decoration that symbolized the movement of a snake; his maxtlatl had a rounded edge and the decoration included curved ear flares, called epocoyolli, and the large pectoral of a cut snail known as Hecaicoxcatl.

The cult to this deity required worship in temples atop sacred buildings that were circular pyramids. With a cylindrical room and a conical roof, they invoked the curious movement of the wind, in whirlwinds either on land or at sea.

Tezcatlipoca – God of War and Darkness

Tezcatlipoca, the Obsidian Mirror, was an ancestral god considered by the Mexica to be one of the creators of the universe. In mythical tales apart from sharing with Quetzalcoatl the work of the creation of heaven and Earth, he was supposed to be comprised of four parts, defining the spaces of the universal plane: himself as black Tezcatlipoca, in the north; Huitzilopochtli as Blue Tezce south; Xipe as red Tezcatlipoca, in the East, and Quetzalcoatl as white Tezcatlioca, in the West.

Black was his defining color, which is why he was considered the god of darkness and of all that occurred at night, such as theft, adultery, etc. He was the god of masculinity, the patron of procreation; in his honor each year a young single man, less than 20 years old, was chosen to represent him as a living god. This subject would be dressed and decorated with all the attributes of the deity and sacrificed in his honor at the festivals of the fifth month, called Toxcatl.

The tale is told in pictographic manuscripts and certain reliefs of the mythical birth of Textcatlipoca, who tore off his left foot. This is why the smoking mirror that identifies him appeared in depictions in the place of this foot or as a decoration on his headdress. The most representative of his insignias was the obsidian mirror, with which he could look into the faces and hearts of people Thus obsidian is the raw material of his world.

This was one of the gods who revealed their bellicose nature, and he was considered the most important of all the patrons of wars; he was the god of warriors and also the enemy, he who all Mexica warriors feared and yet wanted to meet.

Xochipilli and Xochiquetzal

Man's natural environment, specifically in many parts of Mesoamerica, repeatedly underwent two phases; a sterile dry season, and a time of flourishing, the result of the Earth's fertility due to the heat of the Sun and the arrival of the rains, the season to this day called by campesinos "the time of water". For the Mexica and their neighbors this time of abundance was due to the actions of various gods. The most important, of course, was Tonatiuh, the Sun, and Tlaloc, the patron of rain. However, those responsible for covering the fields with the lush green of the plants and the sparkling colors of the flowers were Xochipilli, "The Prince of Flowers", and Xochiquetzal, "The Precious Flower covered with Quetzal Feathers". Xochipilli, especially, was one of a group of gods linked with the Sun, marked by the color red and identified by the heat they gave off.

This time of natural abundance and flowering was also a time of songbirds and butterflies, when nature seemed to give man a harmonious musical concert; therefore, we should not be surprised by the fact that Xochipilli led the set of gods whose calendar number was 5. The most important of these was Macuilxocitl, 5 Flower, the patron of music, singing, and in general, all social celebration.

Human beings, in their own development, also undergo highly marked stages of fertility or infertility, it falling to this pair of gods to oversee society's ability to reproduce on reaching the age of maturity; young adolescents addressed their petitions to Xochipilli and Xochiquetzal, the ruler of women's sexual desires. She was also the patron of prostitutes, called ahuanime or "bringers of happiness".

Scientific and Literary Knowledge

The Mexica and their neighbors systematized the wealth of knowledge of the Mesoamerican peoples who came before them. The constant observation of the stars gave them detailed information on the most important constellations, this being the basis for some of their most important rites. This native astronomy provided a foundation for design and construction in the layout of the cities, especially the size and position of the pyramids and temples, which were aligned in accordance with the path of the Sun, Venus, etc. They skillfully mastered a corpus of geometric knowledge, with which they produced such extraordinary works as the Stone of the Sun. Their number system was vigesimal.

In what is a characteristic of Mesoamerica the Mexica used two calendars: the solar calendar for agricultural purposes, made up of 18 twenties=360 days, plus 5 additional days, called nemontemi. The ritual calendar or Tonalpohualli was made up of thirteens: it had 260 days and was used for ritual purposes and prophesying.

Knowledge was passed down using pictographic writing, painted in native books, made mainly of tree-bark paper (amate), and commonly called codices today. Because keeping knowledge and history was fundamental for them, they maintained libraries where they cared for their books.

The Mexicas, like most of the inhabitants of central Mexico, spoke Nahuatl and were proud of their mastery of the language. They worked to improve their skills, and in the schools, especially the Calmecac, teachers and students exercised their skills in poetry and prose. Knowledge was passed on mainly by memory.

Medicine in the Nahuatl World

Since the first humans inhabited the beautiful region of lakes and volcanoes, where the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was built, a long learning process began into the plants useful for curing illnesses. By the time the Spaniards arrived, this herbal medicine was enormously rich, as can be seen in the beautiful Codex b Martin de la Cruz entitled *Libellus de Medicinalibus Indorum herbis* which contains, apart from indicating therapies, elegant drawings of the main plants used by the native doctors.

In the ancient chronicles it is written that the goddess of medicine among the Mexicas was Tzapotlatena, a woman who was made a goddess after discovering that resin could be used to cure many skin diseases. In the treatments described by Brother Bernardino de Sahagun in his works, apart from the use of medicinal plants, the benefits of certain animals, minerals, and even obsidian can be found.

Artistic Traditions

When the Mexica were at the height of their military domination, controlling a huge expanse of Mesoamerica, many valuable products and objects reached Mexico-Tenochtitlan. These materials according to historical tales, were brought in their raw form or skillfully worked by artists and craftsmen in the regions that sent the tributes. In time, and given the constant demand for these prized possessions among the nobility and especially the tlatoani of lord, the capital also imported the artists themselves, who performed their work in specialized barrios.

The lavish nature of life in the city of Huitzilopochtli demanded a certain level of quality in the various artistic forms that arose in the atmosphere of supremacy and sumptuousness that so astonished the European conquistadors as they walked its streets at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The buildings dedicated to the gods and the lavish palaces were decorated with murals. These used a wide variety of colors, and emphasized ritualistic motifs, especially those that exalted war. The clothes of the most important people were woven of fine and wonderfully dyed cottons; some of the clothes used feathers, rabbit skins or jade beads. In those times the delicate art of the feather weavers was especially prized. The skillful hands of these amanteca created beautiful headdresses, insignias that were worn on the back or carried in the hands, and the showy battle shields called chimalli.

The metalworkers, whose art was imported from the Oaxacan world and Michoacan, turned gold, silver and copper into ostentatious jewelry using techniques that ranged from beating to lost-wax casting. Lapidarists skillfully turned chalchihuitl (jade), rock crystal and obsidian into ornaments and luxury goods that were given to the emperor or offered to the gods.

The Earth and the Female Side to Nature

One of the aspects that define the religious thought of the Mexica is a dual conception of nature, essentially comprising active and passive principles. This can be seen in masculine and feminine elements, giving hot and cold, day and night. The feminine side of creation corresponds to the world of the goddess of the Earth, whose ancestral presence is narrated in the oldest cosmogonic myths.

It was thought the Earth was a monster, called tlaltecuhtli, an enormous tad that wandered over the universal water, the dark liquid found in the deepest layers of the universe it was also thought of as the cipactli, a terrifying animal covered in spines. According to ancient tales, to create the universe Quetzalcoatl and Texcatlipoca took charge of throwing out this ancient being, making the Earth with its back and the celestial plane with the other half. To complement this act of generation, they made all the fruit necessary for man's existence our forth from this god; from its hair: trees, flowers, and plants; its skin: fine grass; its eyes: lakes, springs, and small caves; its mouth: rivers and large caves; finally, the nose: valleys and mountains.

Because of its reproductive capacity, the Earth included all aspects related to the feminine forced in nature. The Mexica and their neighbors, other Nahuatl speakers, called her cihuacoatl, the serpent woman, associating the goddess with power and strength; they imagines the surface of the Earth to be an immense interweaving of reptiles, hence her ritual clothes gave her the name Coatlicue, she of the Skirt of Serpents, the mother of the Sun, of all the gods, and therefore, of all men.

Death Rites and Ceremonies

Prehispanic peoples believed the world of death, Mictlan, was beyond the ninth plane of the underworld, a place ruled over by Mictlantecuhtli and Mictecacihual, the lord and lady of the dead. They were represented as skeletons, hair sticking up and eyes bulging, and talked and breathed death; they carried sacrificial knives in their mouths and in pear-shaped holes.

When a member of a family died, a rite began that lasted 40 days. After the sacrifice of a xoloizcuintli, the remains of the deceased were cremated. They were first wrapped in precious clothes or simple mats, depending on social condition, and in the mouth was placed a jade bead or a blue painted pebble, again depending on whether the person was a nobleman or a commoner. Thus, symbolically, the journey began along the path in the darkness, traveling through the nine planes located beneath tlaticpac, the Earth; on this long final journey the deceased lost his skin and had to overcome many constant dangers. These included having to release the bead, which represented the heart, from the mouth, so it could be devoured by the wild animals that inhabited those sinister regions. The relatives helped by observing sexual abstinence and going without certain foods during the journey. The soul of the deceased reached the Chignahuapan, the river in the ninth region, where it recognized the dog that had been sacrificed for it and took it as a guide to cross the water, finally reaching the Mictlan the dark and cold place of no return.

World Vision

The world vision that the Mexica shared with the other peoples of Mesoamerica included many explanations of the creation and structure of the world by the gods. These myths told that the Earth, tlaticpac, was inhabited by man, in an environment surrounded by plants and animals, living in the center above which was the celestial plane with the underworld below it. In this universe of vertical planes, the celestial plane was made up of thirteen levels: Omeyocan, the highest one, was the place and home of the creators Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl. The underworld had nine levels that had to be passed by the dead on their way to the Mictlan, the ninth region, the place of Mictlantecuhtli and Mictecacihuatl, the patrons of the world of the dead.

This cosmic vision of vertical lanes includes a four-faceted conception of the universe, where space takes the four directions of the points of the compass, sacred places where events of the importance to the continuity of life itself occurred: to the east was called Tlapcopa of Tlauilcopa, the region where the Sun was born, dominated by the color red; the king of stars was born there, and he was accompanied by Xochipilli and other gods of flowering; to the west there was Cihuatlampa, "the region of women", inhabited by old goddesses and the cihuateteo,

where the main color was white; to the north was Mictlampa, the place of the dead and of the beginning, the home of Mixcoat, the god of hunters and the Cichimecs; the dominant color is black; the South was called Uitzlampa, the region of spines; the color of this the home of Huitzilopochtli, is blue.

Xiutecuhtli the god of fire and lord of turquoise, lived in the center, where the paths of the universe crossed; all Indian capitals were supposed to have been built in this central region of the world

Sun Worship

The Prehispanic peoples considered the light and warmth of the Sun to be equal to life itself. Therefore their creation myths saw in the presence and destruction of that star the precarious nature of life and the need for men to help maintain the Sun as the supreme deity.

The creation myth, the cosmogonic suns, explains how different gods played a part. The essential aspect is the nature of each of these star, that in their moment rules the different stages of life. The first Sun was earthly, its patron Tezcatlipoca, and its signs the jaguar and darkness. The second Sun was created by Quetzalcoatl, the wind being its nature. It fell to Tlaloc to make the third Sun, in the form of a rain of fire, and Chalchiuhticue made the water Sun which took the fourth position. All of them were created and destroyed by the very essence of their nature.

The four elements of life having come together: earth, wind, fire and water, in the fifth creation it was the turn of two other numena, Nanahuatzin and Tecucistecatl, who became the Sun and Moon respectively. For this act of generation to take place, both gods had to set themselves on fire. That is why when man was created he had to repay the gods with his own blood and that of his enemies.

The Sun is the victorious warrior who defeats or puts to flight his opponents, the Moon and the stars. It clears away the shadows and the darkness and brings the light and warmth that illuminate the universe. Its rays penetrate the Earth, fertilizing it and allowing plants to grow. It is the bringer of life in general.

Stone of the Sun

The one sculpture which identifies the Mexicas above all others is the Stone of the Sun

discovered in December, 1790, in the Plaza Mayor of the capital of New Spain. Because of its symbolic content, with the names of the days and the cosmogonic suns, it was incorrectly identified as the Aztec Calendar.

This is a large gladiatorial sacrificial altar, known as a temalacatl, which was not finished because of a deep crack that runs from one side to the center of the piece at the rear. Despite the fracture, it must have been used to stage the fights between warriors in the tlacaxipehualiztli ceremony. In the design of the disk, the face of Xiuhtecuhtli-emerging from the earth hole, holding a pair of human hearts and showing his tongue transformed in a sacrificial knife- can be recognized; he is surrounded by the four suns that preceded the Fifth Sun, in turn inscribed in the sequence of the 20 day signs, framed with the figure of the Sun with its four beams symmetrically accompanied by sacrifice sharp points. The star is surrounded by two Xiuhcoatl or 'Fire serpents', which carry it across the heavens.

The Spanish Conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan

In the year 1 Reed (1519 AD). Hernan Cortes and his armies dropped anchor off the coast of Veracruz beginning an historical process that culminated in the conquest of the Mexican Empire. European expansion in the New world had begun in the Caribbean from where, on their voyages of discovery, the Spaniards had reached the coasts of Quintana Roo and Yucatan, fighting the warriors of Tabasco before coming into contact with the Totonacs of Veracruz.

At the time the governor of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was Moctezuma Xocoyotzin. His fervent belief in religious myth told him these light-skinned men were somehow related to Quetzalcoatl whose calendar name 1 Reed (1519) would explain the presence of these warriors who brought strange animals (horses) and powerful weapons that made the noise of thunder. Therefore the Mexica lord did not wage war on the new arrivals but sent them gifts in a vain attempt to prevent them from reaching the city.

Cortes, a skilled soldier and cunning expert in human psychology, took advantage of Moctezuma's hesitation and made alliances with the Totonacs and Taxcalteca, enemies of the Mexica. During the advance, he carried out a brutal attack at Cholula to terrify the emperor. Moctezuma received him in peace and housed him in the city shortly afterwards he was taken prisoner and forced to swear allegiance to the King of Spain, Charles I.

Cortes took control of the situation and returned to Veracruz to face Panfilo de Narvaez, who was coming to punish him. Meanwhile, Pedro de Alvarado carried out a fresh massacre, that of the nobles in the Great Temple. This led to an Indian uprising and on his return Cortes killed Moctezuma when the Mexica fiercely surrounded him. The invaders fled the city and

Cuauhtemoc was chosen as the new tlatoani taking charge of the defense of his capital. Finally in August the 13th, 1521, Mexico-Tenochtitlan was conquered with great violence by the Spaniards and their superior weaponry.

The Expanse of the Mexica Empire

From the moment the Mexica founded their capital city, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the religious ideology that inspired them was obvious. Their military conquests of the neighboring states and their territorial expansion, achieved through religious and economic militarism, allowed them to build a powerful state based on tributes that chroniclers and historians define as the Mexica empire.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century this empire's territorial reached were vast. To the west, it bordered the neighboring Purepecha Empire, sharing regions of the states of Mexico and Guerrero; to the north, the Mexica dominated Otoms and Chichimecs in the states of Hidalgo and Puebla, expanding toward the Gulf of Mexico with conquests in the Huasteca region.

In the southern part of this coastal region they reached the borders of the Maya world by overpowering the Totancas and other groups near Acalan in Tabasco; their armies entered the valleys of Oxaca in triumph, establishing military power bases in the Zapotec world and constantly waging war in the Mixteca region, where rebellious domains constantly fought against their domination.

In the times of emperor Ahuizotl, an advance party conquered the distant province of Soconusco in Chiapas. Within this immense empire, dominated by the Mexica and their allies, Meztitlan, Tlaxcala, the Yopitzinca region and Teotitlan del Camino survived as independent domains, mainly for ritual reasons, serving as opponents in the enormously lavish wars that supplied prisoners for the rites in the cults in Huitzilopochtli and Xipe Totec.

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