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Figure 4. The Xalla sculpture after restoration. Photo by Leonardo López Luján.

# The destruction of images in Teotihuacan

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## *Anthropomorphic sculpture, elite cults, and the end of a civilization*

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Images can serve as vehicles of all powers and of all forms of resistance.

—Serge Gruzinski, *La guerre des images*

### The decline of a metropolis

The end of Teotihuacan was “fiery and cataclysmic,” in the words of René Millon (1988:149) in his classic study on the last years of this archetypal city.<sup>1</sup> The metropolis perished in flames and never again managed to rise from its ashes. However, it was not a fateful urban blaze that spread wildly and randomly, consuming everything in its path. Quite the contrary, the catastrophe was unequivocally the consequence of a premeditated, highly selective group action. Today we know that the targets focused on the city’s palaces, temples, and administrative buildings. At Teotihuacan, the remains of destruction are the expression of a tremendous collective effort in which the architectural monuments that served as seats of the state’s political, religious, and economic power were destroyed, dismantled, and torched with uncommon fury. One by one, the pyramids succumbed to blazes lit on their summits as well as in front and on the sides of their stairways, the sculptures of their facades were pulled down and scattered with violence, and the cult images were reduced to fragments.

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1. Although the evidence is not entirely conclusive, it seems that in the last years at Teotihuacan, society experienced a demographic reduction, a widening gap in status differentiation, secularization of political roles, weakened connections of the religious state, and a preponderance of military power (Millon 1988:142–145; Cowgill 1992:110–114; Cowgill 1997:156; Moragas 2005).

The archaeological evidence seems conclusive. Between 1974 and 1979, Millon (1988:149–156) and his team examined the city anew in pursuit of material testimony of the catastrophe. On the Street of the Dead, they recorded 147 buildings with clear traces of incineration and another 31 that also seemed to have been burned. In fact, the only constructions lacking any burn marks were those severely altered by the passage of time or by the hand of the archaeologist. In the rest of the city, roughly 53 percent of the temples examined were victims of fire, compared to only 14 percent in apartment compounds.<sup>2</sup> Every time new excavations are undertaken in the monumental zone, these surface data are confirmed and reinforced. Further testimony from those apocalyptic days has been reported by archaeologists working at the Ciudadela (Jarquín and Martínez 1982a, 1982b, 1982c; Cabrera and Sugiyama 1982:168; Sugiyama 1998:152 and 161; Jarquín 2002), the Street of the Dead Complex (Armillas 1944: 122–123; Matos 1980:87; Morelos 1993:64–66), the Sun Pyramid (Batres 1906a:14–15; Batres, 1906b:12), the Puma Mural Temple (Martha Sempowski quoted by Millon 1988:151), the Quetzalpapalotl Palace (Acosta 1964:24–25; Ignacio Bernal quoted by Coe 1968b: 72–73), and the Moon Plaza (Bernal quoted by Coe 1968b:72–73; Saburo Sugiyama, personal communication, October 2003).<sup>3</sup>

The research presented here focuses specifically on that dramatic moment of final destruction. Our reflections are based on abundant new archaeological evidence recovered in the Central Plaza of Xalla, Teotihuacan, and particularly on the discovery of an exceptional sculpture carved from white marble. Given the historical and aesthetic importance of this image, we first consider its formal and technological characteristics in detail. Next, we undertake a systematic analysis of

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2. Beginning with the buildings on the Street of the Dead, Millon and his team analyzed the vestiges of 68 temples and 965 apartment compounds in the rest of the city.

3. Sugiyama discovered evidence of burning in the compound located directly to the west of the Moon Pyramid.

the corpus of human sculpture from Teotihuacan, discussing its significance and assessing the archaeological contexts in which large-scale male figures tend to appear. Based on this discussion, we analyze the crucial problem of the destruction of temples and images at the end of the sixth century to better understand the iconoclastic conduct observed at the collapse of the metropolis.

### The marble statue from Xalla

The evidence discussed in this paper took place within the framework of the recently concluded Xalla Project (2000–2003), the result of collaboration between the INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History), the UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico), and Harvard University (López Luján and Manzanilla 2001; López Luján et al. 2002; Manzanilla and López Luján 2001; Manzanilla et al., 2005). This project was coordinated by Linda Manzanilla (UNAM), Leonardo López Luján (INAH), and William L. Fash (Harvard University). The setting of our explorations, Xalla, which means “sandy area” in Nahuatl, is a monumental complex located 230 m to the north of the Sun Pyramid (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> It has unusually large dimensions within the urban context, for it is ten times larger than the average apartment compound; its outer perimeter wall surrounds a surface of 3.5 hectares in which thirty-two buildings were constructed around eight plazas.

Besides its colossal proportions, Xalla displays other characteristics that might indicate to us that it was one of the seats of Teotihuacan government: location in the oldest sector of the city between the Sun Pyramid and the Moon Pyramid; early ceramics on the surface from the Tzacualli and Miccaotli phases; exceptional communication with the Street of the Dead by means of a raised road; privacy, produced by wide avenues isolating it from the nearby buildings and by a thick limiting wall; the existence of several mounds more than 4 m in height; the presence of mural painting and sumptuary objects, detected by surface reconnaissance and excavations; and complex configuration of interior spaces, which may be correlated with the highly diverse spaces appropriate for a palace (López Luján and Manzanilla 2001; Manzanilla et al., 2005).

Between 1999 and 2002, we conducted two surface survey seasons and four excavation seasons in an effort to corroborate the hypothetical identification of Xalla as

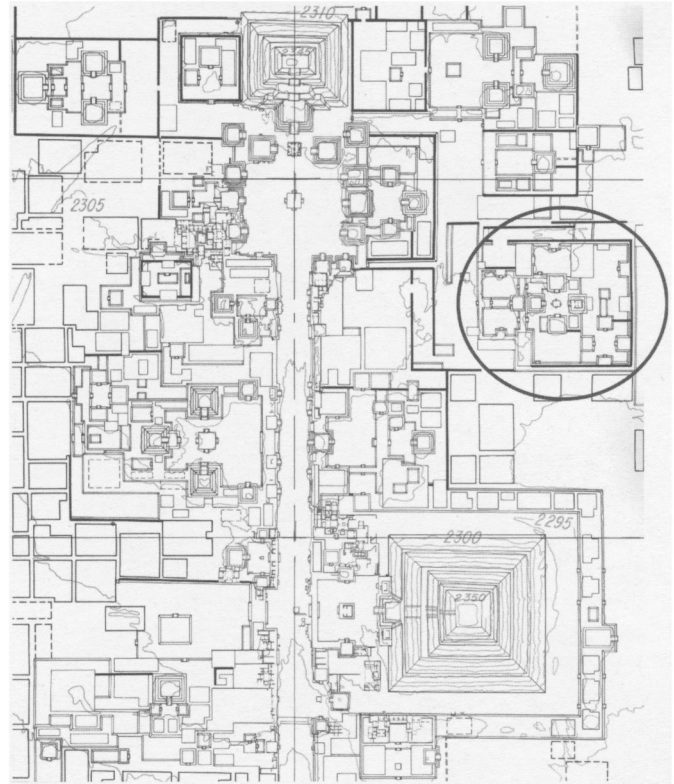


Figure 1. Location of the Xalla Compound in the heart of Teotihuacan. Based on Millon 1973, vol. 1, part 2, map 1. Courtesy of René Millon.

one of the seats of Teotihuacan government. Given its gigantic dimensions, we focused a good part of our efforts on studying the Central Plaza (fig. 2). All indications seemed to support the idea that this served as the complex's main ritual theater, because all internal circulation routes met there and the religious buildings of greatest dimensions were concentrated there. This space departs completely from the Teotihuacan norm: unlike the typical three-temple plazas, the Central Plaza of Xalla has five large religious constructions that occupy the cardinal points and the center, echoing the form of the renowned Mesoamerican quincunx. In fact, the number five and the quincunx seem to serve as a leitmotif in the context of the Xalla Central Plaza. For example, an offering (AA18) found to the west of the central temple (E9) formed a true cosmogram,<sup>5</sup> for it

4. It is located in quadrant N4E1 of Millon's grid (1973:1:31).

5. Quadrant N346–347, E359.

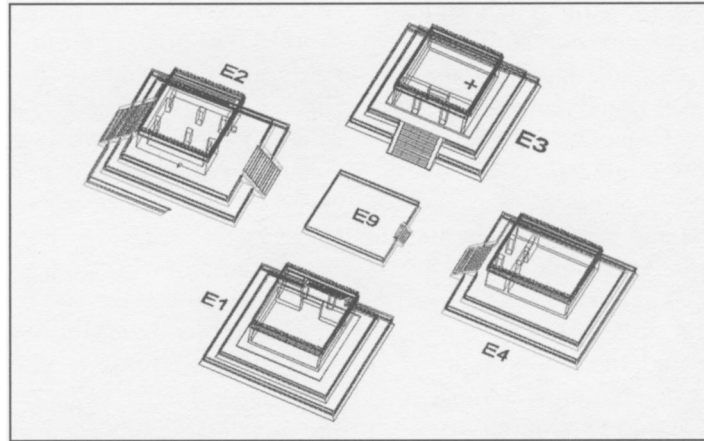


Figure 2. Drawing of the plan of the Central Plaza of Xalla. The cross in Structure E3 marks the place where the marble sculpture was found. Drawing by Tenoch Medina.

contained three seashells and a small green obsidian blade at each cardinal point of the deposit in addition to a greenstone bead placed in the center. Furthermore, it is likely that the sanctum sanctorum of the third construction phase of E9 had five irregular greenstone stelae in its interior, as indicated by the oval marks found on the stucco floor of the precinct.<sup>6</sup>

The Central Plaza of Xalla has a long history of remodeling that apparently began in the Miccaotli phase (A.D. 150–225) and concluded in the Xolalpan phase (A.D. 350–550). The central temple (E9) is a spacious building with roof decorations that rose from a platform measuring 14 m per side. This platform has *talud-tablero* profiles and a stairway on the west side. In its interior, we uncovered four substructures whose respective dates are still unclear. On the other hand, each one of the four temples located respectively at the north (E1), east (E2), south (E3), and west (E4) end of the plaza had at least four construction stages. Based on a preliminary analysis of ceramics found within the oldest substructure of E4, Barbara Fash reached the conclusion that it dates to the Miccaotli phase. On the firmer basis of radiocarbon analysis of burned pole laths and beams, it is possible to date the penultimate stage to the Early Tlamimilolpa phase, while the last one would date to the Early Xolalpan phase.

During the fourth excavation season, archaeologists Edgar Rosales and Paul Morales, accompanied by an

enthusiastic crew of workers, explored the summit of Structure E3, a mound measuring a little more than 4 m in height that closes off the south side of the plaza. After an extensive excavation, the vestiges of the shrine that had been erected on a two-tiered *talud-tablero* platform were uncovered. This shrine is a spacious room with a portico and an entrance from the plaza.<sup>7</sup> The portico and the room were divided by a wall running east-west; both were interconnected by an opening from the central access. The room measures 10.8 m from east to west and more than 9.4 m from north to south (no remains of the southern wall have been preserved). To create such a large opening, Teotihuacan architects supported the roof on six pilasters from which four still remain.<sup>8</sup> The vestiges of a quadrangular stuccoed base, 20 cm in height, were located at the head of the room, in other words, in the zone corresponding to the sancta sanctorum;<sup>9</sup> although broken, this base shows a cavity where an image was possibly placed. It is important to point out that this large space seems to have been the setting for ritual activities that involved the ongoing handling of organic compounds, as revealed by chemical analysis of the stucco floors conducted by

7. Only part of the floor in quadrant N325 of the portico has survived.

8. The two pillars flanking the entrance are located in quadrants N324/E363–364 and N324/E368, while the two central pillars are located in quadrants N320–321/E363 and N320–321/E368. The pillars added to the south wall no longer exist, but they surely must have been found on squares E363 and E368, respectively.

9. Quadrant N317, E367.

6. Associated with one of these holes, we recovered a big fragment of an irregular greenstone stela that is similar to those found in the West Plaza Compound by Morelos (1993:F4).

archaeologist Laura Bernal (2005:193–206). High values for phosphates, fatty acids, and protein residues were recorded throughout the room, particularly around the pilasters and the rectangular base, which may be the consequence of plant and animal offerings, burning incense, auto-sacrifice, and other sacrificial acts involving blood.

On October 9, 2002, the first fragment of one of the most spectacular specimens of Teotihuacan anthropomorphic sculpture appeared in the shrine just below the surface. Following this discovery, the fragments of the left thigh appeared, then those of the torso, the head, left foot, right leg, left arm, and, finally, the right arm (fig. 3). It took us almost two months to uncover and register more than 160 fragments into which the image had been mutilated.

Following its meticulous restoration we are in a better position to describe the sculpture's principal features. It is a freestanding full-bodied human figure. Despite the fact that it lacks genitals, it clearly represents an adult male (fig. 4). It measures 128 cm in height, 46 cm in

width, and 20 cm in depth, and weighs approximately 140 kg. The body of the sculpture is markedly disproportional compared to a real human body, because it is equivalent to a proportion of 3.7 heads. The representation strictly conforms to a model of bilateral symmetry; the individual stands erect, with head facing forward, arms extended downward and held close to the body, legs straight, and feet firmly planted on the ground.

The facial features are realistic and follow the traditional Teotihuacan style (Pasztory 1992:292–295). The impersonal features are framed by a curved line in the shape of a “U”: a flat, straight band forms the forehead. A slightly curved, raised area marks the brow; the cavities of the eyes are elliptical, and in their interior, there are disk-shaped reliefs simulating the iris. The nose has a wide base with drilling in the cavities; its half-open mouth lacks teeth and is limited to fleshy lips. The cheeks and chin are fine protuberances, and two rectangular plaques stand for the ears. The upper part of the head has two grooves: one that runs

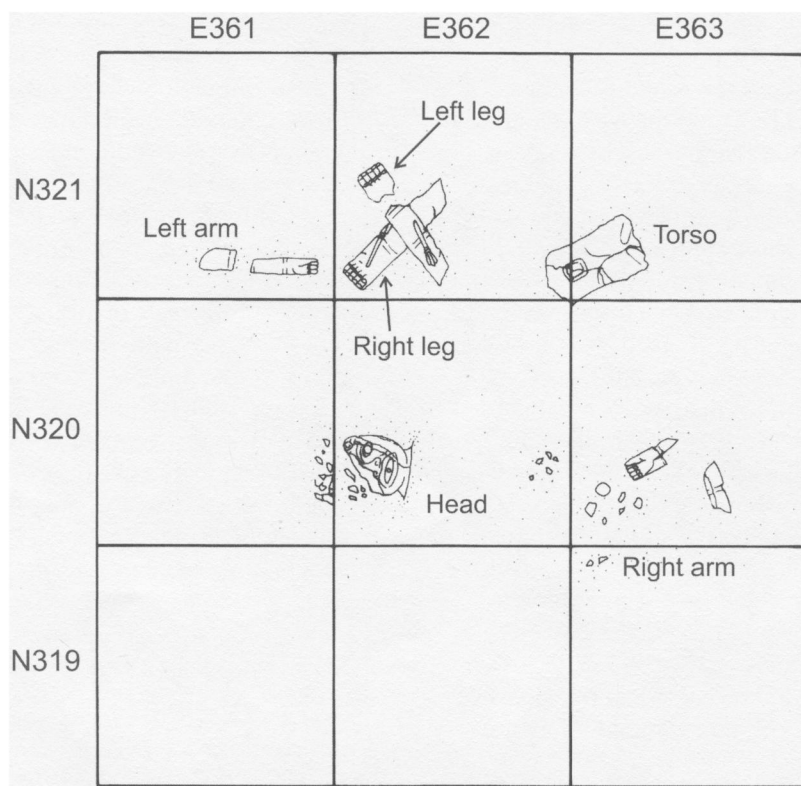


Figure 3. Distribution of the main fragments of the sculpture on the summit of Structure E3 in the Central Plaza. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

along the sagittal plane, and the other that follows the transversal plane.

A short, thick neck conveys the weight of the head on the torso, which takes the shape of a slender rectangle. In it, delicate relief masterfully outlines the clavicles, nipples, abdomen, shoulder blades, and the gluteus, while a long depression indicates the spinal cord and a rectangular cavity of the abdomen.<sup>10</sup> Two muscular arms with strange grooves at the level of the biceps and wrist are flushed against the torso. The hands display hollowed-out palms facing frontward, framed by semi-flexed fingers. The gracefulness of the torso contrasts with the robust quality of the hips and of the lower extremities. These also display horizontal grooves, both above and below the knees. The ankles are only indicated by pairs of disk-shaped malleoli and the toes appear as rough rectangular shapes, oddly enough with two rows of toenails.<sup>11</sup> The soles of the feet are completely flat.

The figure is naked and its sole attire consists of a diadem decorated with three rings. These rings are defined in the catalogue prepared by James C. Langley (1986:282) as “171. Roundel,” which he ascribes with the same value as the *chalchihuitl* in Mexica iconography, a symbol for water, and, by extension, preciousness. Of crucial importance for our interpretation are the bas-reliefs of the lower extremities, each of which represent slanted spears: one of them penetrates the instep of the right foot, while the other enters the left thigh. In both cases, only part of the spear’s shaft is visible and the entirety of the end with its stabilizing plumes. These iconographic elements appear defined in Langley’s catalogue as “56. Dartbutt” (ibid.:245).<sup>12</sup>

10. This cavity measures 8 cm in height, 6 cm in width, and 3 cm in depth.

11. Curiously, each toe has two nails: one on the tip and the other higher up at the level of the articulation of the phalanges. In this regard, we might propose that each toe once had only the nail at the tip. But given the evident instability of the piece (the sole of each foot measures 20 by 14 cm), the people of Teotihuacan must have decided to tenon the feet into the platform of the sancta sanctorum (see below), so that the toenails would have remained hidden beneath the floor plaster. This would have led, *a posteriori*, to the carving of new nails (more roughly rendered) a few centimeters above and in a visible area. This idea is confirmed by the presence of remains of plaster and sand on the tips of the toenails, in the back part of the heel, on the sides of the feet, and on the soles. All of this also shows that the sculpture was set up in a vertical position.

12. In Atetelco and Tepantitla, the stabilizing feathers are painted black, indicating that they could come from an owl (García-Des Lauriers 2000:94–95). Sometimes, decorative plumes are represented together with the stabilizing feathers.

Furthermore, after the figure was cleaned, remains of polychrome color were revealed—hematite red on the ridges of the head, the iris of the eyes, and the cavity on the abdomen and smoky black on the sclera, the inside of the mouth, and on the face—forming two curved lines beginning at the eyes and ending at the base of the cheeks (fig. 5).<sup>13</sup> Also during cleaning, a tiny jadeite bead was discovered inside a cylindrical cavity drilled in the back of the mouth (Sánchez and Robles 2005).<sup>14</sup>

Thanks to the detailed petrographic study and X-ray diffraction conducted by Ricardo Sánchez and Jasinto Robles (ibid.) in the INAH laboratories, we know that this sculpture was carved from whitish fine-grained calcite marble, a rock exceptionally rare in archaeological contexts at Teotihuacan. In this regard, it is interesting to point out that remains of marble have not been found in any of the four zones of lapidary workshops excavated to date in the ancient city.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, to date, only four marble artifacts have been reported at the site, two of which are from the Temple of Quetzalcoatl.<sup>16</sup>

Whitish calcite marble, the product of the metamorphosis of limestone,<sup>17</sup> does not occur naturally in the Valley of Teotihuacan or its immediate vicinity.<sup>18</sup>

13. We thank Javier Vázquez (ENCryM, INAH) for the identification of both pigments.

14. The bead is globular and measures 0.7 cm in diameter; its perforation is biconical and measures 1.8 cm in outer diameter and 2.4 cm in depth.

15. See the information on the so-called “lapidary craftsmen barrio” or Tecopac in N3E5 (Turner 1987, 1992:91–93); the compound to the west of the Moon Pyramid in 6G:N5W1 (ibid.:103); Tlajinga 33 in 33:S3W1 (Widmer 1987, 1991), and the Architectural Compound A of La Ventilla in N1 W2 (Gómez 2000:558–580). As for the highly diverse materials used by sculptors and lapidary artisans at Teotihuacan, see also Ordóñez (1922), Sotomayor (1968), Cabrera Cortés (1995:165–189), and Sánchez (1995).

16. According to Sotomayor (1968:46–47), during unspecified excavations carried out by INAH, a marble vessel was recovered (made of thick-grained calcite) and a fragment of contact marble. However, in the fill of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, two white marble beads were found, representing 0.11 percent of the collection of the lapidary materials found at the building (Cabrera Cortés 1995:174; Sánchez 1995:341–342). Also, we cannot exclude the possibility that marble artifacts might have been erroneously identified as travertine.

17. Marble is unfoliated metamorphic rock. Its texture is fine-grained and it may be composed either of calcite or dolomite. Calcite marble contains between 95 and 100 percent calcium carbonate (Rich 1988:223–225).

18. As is widely known, the Valley of Teotihuacan and the neighboring regions are areas of high volcanic activity that lack outcrops of metamorphic rock (Mooser 1968:31–32; Sotomayor 1968:41–45).

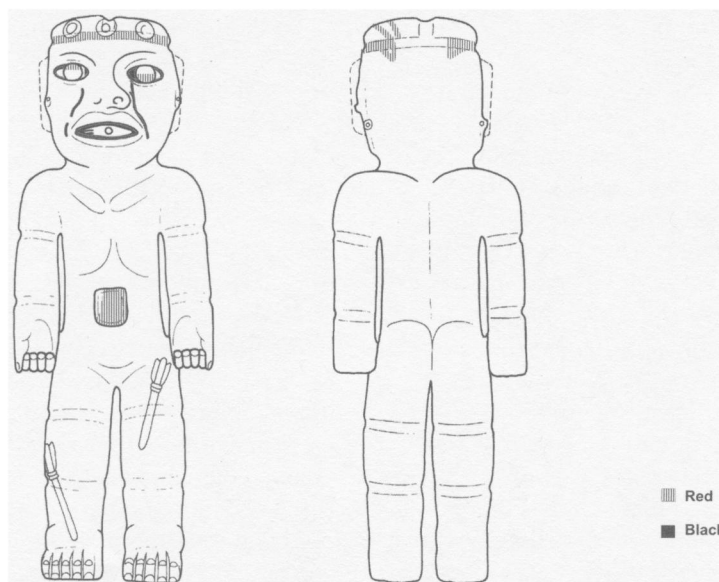


Figure 5. Remains of paint detected on the Xalla sculpture. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

The closest deposits are in Apasco, State of Mexico (Sotomayor 1968:48); in the municipalities of Zimapán and Nicolás Flores, Hidalgo (Sánchez 1995:341–342; Consejo de Recursos Minerales 1993:41–44); in the municipalities of San Martín Atéxcatl, Acajete, and Tepeaca, Puebla (Sánchez 1995:341–342; Cabral 1988; Torres 1989); in the municipalities of Pilcaya and Ixcateopan, Guerrero (Consejo de Recursos Minerales 1993:29–37); and in the central part of the State of Veracruz, to the northwest of Xalapa and northeast of Perote (Sánchez and Robles 2005). After carefully examining the sculpture, it was clear that a bed with well-preserved compact marble with sacaroid fine-grained texture had been selected. The whitish and cream color of the calcite predominates, although in some parts it has grayish hues, as well as numerous impurities in the form of reddish brown streaks and bands, caused by montmorillonite-type clays visible in the planes of the fracture (*ibid.*).

Beginning with the shape and dimensions of this piece, we can infer that a quadrangular block weighing some 280 kg,<sup>19</sup> or else a pre-form of close to 220 kg

19. This calculation was made based on the minimum dimensions of a hypothetical quadrangular block (128 by 46 by 20 cm) and the specific gravity of calcite (2.40–2.75 gr/cm<sup>3</sup>). Obviously these calculations only provide an approximate value. As we mentioned, the sculpture weighs about 140 kg, which represents half the hypothetical weight of the original block.

(fig. 6),<sup>20</sup> had been transported to Teotihuacan from the deposit. The prized load would have traveled from 80 to 200 km before arriving at the specialized workshop, where it was endowed with human form.<sup>21</sup> Given the softness<sup>22</sup> and the dense crystalline structure of the marble, the process of carving and polishing must have been relatively easy, producing subtle details and glossy surfaces.<sup>23</sup> Based on studies of Teotihuacan lapidary work, it must have been made following a technical sequence of fracturing, sawing, grooving, drilling, polishing, and burnishing.<sup>24</sup> However, only the use of

20. This hypothetical pre-form would adapt to the silhouette of a cross and would lighten the load by some 60 kg.

21. This effort would be insignificant if we compare it to the transport of the celebrated Goddess of Water, a 24-ton monolith that would have been carried to Teotihuacan from a quarry located some 25 km south of the city. Depending on the formula utilized, between 363 and 816 individuals would have been needed for its transport (Heizer and Williams 1963:96–97).

22. Marble has a low hardness of 3 on the Mohs scale.

23. The block was cut so that the planes of the fracture were oriented longitudinally, thus reducing the risk of fracturing the piece during the process of carving. Because the original block had some imperfections, the sculptor decided to hide them, leaving them on the back side of the image. There one can see, for example, a small piece missing in the left gluteus and another larger piece missing on the heel of the same side. The nails of the large toe of the left foot were carefully carved next to a crack, suggesting that it was there from the beginning.

24. For the fracturing of the original block, generally all types of percussion tools were used, as well as wooden wedges. Sawing was



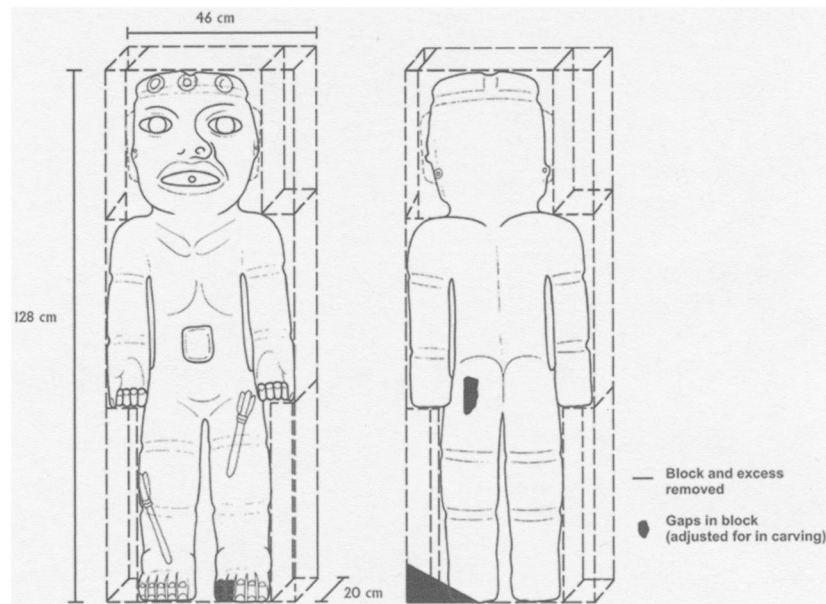


Figure 6. Dimensions and hypothetical shape of the original marble block.  
Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

rigid saws is perceptible in this sculpture in the delineation of anatomical details and the separation of the arms from the torso. Flat chisels were used to mark the rings on the diadem,<sup>25</sup> pointed drills to create orifices,<sup>26</sup> tubular drills to delimit curved shapes,<sup>27</sup> and polishing tools to smooth the surface.<sup>28</sup>

carried out with the help of obsidian, quartz, and flint tools. They might also have used hard wood blades in combination with sand abrasives or cord instruments. Grooving and incising served to delineate elements of the design, such as the facial features, arms, and legs. Conical, biconical, or tubular drilling was carried out with conical chalcedony tools or with hollow tubular drills made of bone or reed. The cylindrical core resulting from the boring was possibly removed with a string or cord. Finally, the polishing and burnishing was done with all sorts of fine abrasives, in addition to skins, leathers, reeds, gourds, wood, and hard stones such as opal and chalcedony (Turner 1987:469, 1992:95–102; Cabrera Cortés 1995:190–200; Gómez 2000:567–578).

25. The rings were not polished. Instead they were left as rough surfaces produced by the flat chisel.

26. Two wide orifices were perforated in the nasal cavities and another in the center of the mouth. Narrow orifices were also made at the middle and lower section of the ears.

27. The two lateral sides of the eye cavities were drilled, the two lateral sides of the mouth, and the four corners of the cavity of the abdomen. In these latter holes, the use of a tubular drill measuring 2.1 cm in outer diameter is clearly evident.

28. With the exception of the cavities between the arms and torso, which have rough surfaces, the entire sculpture was well-polished and burnished.

### The corpus of male sculptures from Teotihuacan

In characterizing sculpture, studies of Teotihuacan visual arts appear inextricably linked with monumental public and private architecture (Seler 1960:424–437; Beyer 1922; Gamio 1922a:LXII–LXXIII; Gamio 1922b; Marquina 1922:122–124; Nicholson 1971:97–102; Sarro 1991, Allain 2000). In fact, a large number of the sculptures created by this civilization served the primordial function of highlighting and qualifying the most important buildings in the urban center. Carved from volcanic stone, they emerge from walls, stairways, and entrances, or in the middle of first-order patios and plazas. They are markedly flat frontal representations from which little or no information is obtained when one walks around them. Symmetry dominates them, and, above all, a sense of geometry rigorously adapted to the blocks from which they were hewn.

The Xalla sculpture pertains to a rare group of stone images that were designed to be placed not outside but rather in the dark interiors of shrines or buried inside of temples. They are freestanding realistic representations with well-modeled volumes and curved, finely polished surfaces.<sup>29</sup> This corpus barely exceeds a dozen complete

29. There are some greenstone sculptures very similar to those in our corpus, from the Late Preclassic period in Oaxaca and possibly from Guerrero. The most well-known specimen measures 49 cm in

Table 1. COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE CORPUS OF MALE SCULPTURE FROM TEOTIHUACAN

Corpus	Stone color	Height cm	Canon	Preservation	Inlays	Attire	Nipples	Male genitals	Mouth	Abdomen cavity	Palms	Malleoli
Xalla	white	128	3.7	mutilated	no	diadem	yes	no	naturalistic	yes	frontward	yes
Casa Sacerdotes	green	71	?	mutilated	yes	no	yes	yes	?	yes	?	no
Ciudadela 1	green	75	3.6	mutilated	yes	diadem	no	no	naturalistic	no	?	yes
Ciudadela 2	green	47.5	3.3	complete	yes	diadem/ loincloth	no	no	naturalistic	no	frontward	no
Ciudadela 3	white	45	3.5	complete	yes	no	no	no	Olmecoid	no	frontward	no
Moon Pyramid 1	green	30.6	3.4	complete	yes	head-dress	yes	no	Olmecoid	no	backward	no
Moon Pyramid 2	green	25.5	3	complete	yes	no	no	no	Olmecoid	no	frontward	yes
Mexico City 1	green	54	?	mutilated	no	no	yes	yes	Olmecoid	no	?	no
Mexico City 2	green	39.5	2	complete	yes	no	no	no	naturalistic	no	backward	no
Mexico City 3	white	25.4	3.2	complete	yes	no	yes	no	naturalistic	yes	toward body	yes
New York	green	40	?	mutilated	no	no	no	no	naturalistic	no	toward body	no
Paris	green	76	4.2	mutilated	no	no	yes	yes	Olmecoid	no	?	no
Hamburg 1	green	42	2.8	complete	no	no	no	no	naturalistic	no	frontward	yes
Hamburg 2	green	34	2.7	complete	no	no	no	no	naturalistic	no	toward body	no

or semi-complete specimens (table 1).<sup>30</sup> Six of them come from controlled excavations, so that we are quite familiar with their archaeological context. The first to appear was discovered by Leopoldo Batres in 1905

during his explorations of the so-called “Casa de los Sacerdotes.”<sup>31</sup> Many years later, in the context of the Proyecto Teotihuacan 80–82, Rubén Cabrera and his team unearthed a specimen of large dimensions in

height, and it was found in an offertory box under Structure 35 at San José Mogote (Marcus and Flannery 2001:127–128); this context dates to the Monte Albán II phase (100 B.C.–A.D. 200). Three others are lacking a context: one forms part of the Leff Collection and measures 23 cm (Easby 1967:18); another was found in a private collection in the United States and measures 38 cm (Javier Urcid, personal communication, May 2002); the third is from Harvard University and measures 45 cm (Peabody Museum, cat. 22-18-20/C9551). This last example has a vaguely simian figure holding a spear-thrower and a pair of darts engraved on its torso. Finally, we cite a similar, although more schematic, image in the so-called Guerrero-Teotihuacanoid style. It is made from serpentine, it measures 47.8 cm, and it is in the collection of the Fundación Cultural Televisa (Reyero 1978:piece 23).

30. We should emphasize that our corpus is not in any way exhaustive. For example, we did not include two complete sculptures from the collections of the Museum für Völkerkunde of Vienna,

because we were unaware of its dimensions and raw material (Becker-Donner 1965:pls. 10 and 12). In addition, we have not taken into account several fragments found in the House of the Priests (Batres 1906a:17, figs. 10 and 11), the West Plaza Compound (Morelos 1982:311 and F.1.2.; elemento 5, associated with a niche inserted in the wall of room 14), and the Ciudadela (Jarquín and Martínez 1982c:115; northeast room of Group E of Compound 1D; sector N1E1, sección 14, unidad 52, cuadro 71, capa II/III, elemento 192). In the Ceramoteca of the Archaeological Zone of Teotihuacan, there is a leg, perhaps made of marble, measuring 11.1 cm in height, which is formally identical to the legs of the Xalla sculpture (Néstor Paredes, personal communication, November 2002; inv. 10-336611).

31. See “Casa Sacerdotes” in table 1 (Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-81806). This piece was published, among others, by Batres (1906a:13–18), Seler (1960:434, fig. 26), Marquina (1922:124), and Berrin and Pasztory (1993:177).

Structure 1Q of the Ciudadela<sup>32</sup> and two other smaller ones in Group 1D of this same quadrangle.<sup>33</sup> And most recently in 1999, Saburo Sugiyama found two spectacular images in Burial 2 of the Moon Pyramid.<sup>34</sup>

The provenience of the remaining pieces is unknown. Three of them are in Mexico City and they form part of the rich collections of the Museo Nacional de Antropología.<sup>35</sup> The others have been sold or donated by private collectors to museums abroad: one is located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York,<sup>36</sup> another is in the Musée du Louvre in Paris,<sup>37</sup> and the remaining two are in the Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde.<sup>38</sup>

A review of this corpus makes it clear that stones with whitish and greenish tonalities were always chosen.<sup>39</sup> Depending on their height, the sculptures may be divided<sup>40</sup> into those measuring between 24 and 35 cm,

those between 40 and 50 cm, and those exceeding 60 cm (fig. 7).<sup>41</sup> Despite these variations, they almost always conform to an anatomical canon by which the proportion of the body varies between 2.7 to 3.7 heads. Half of the corpus has shell, obsidian, slate, and pyrite inlay. Distinctive traits include nudity and masculine features, whether or not genitals are depicted (not unlike the much earlier Preclassic white and greenstone figurines). Occasionally, the face resembles Teotihuacan masks either with a naturalistic or Olmecoid mouth. Another constant feature is the unnatural position of the arms, rigidly close to the side of the body with palms facing frontward, backward, or toward the body.

Deprived of any accoutrements, it is difficult to determine who these fourteen sculptures represent. The possibility that they could have been dressed with perishable materials and that their attire disappeared with the passage of time cannot be discarded.<sup>42</sup> However, in the case of the image from Xalla, it strikes us as illogical that darts, in other words, its principal iconographic attributes, would have been hidden beneath any sort of clothing. Furthermore, it should be considered that female sculptures from Teotihuacan always have the headdresses, *huipiles*,<sup>43</sup> and skirts carved from the same stone.<sup>44</sup> It is for this reason that we are more inclined to propose that nudity is an intentional trait of our corpus. We should recall, for example, that in different times and places in Mesoamerica, the naked body alluded to the war captive on the verge of being sacrificed.<sup>45</sup>

32. See "Ciudadela 1" in table 1 (Museo de sitio de Teotihuacan, inv. 10-333079). It has been described by Cabrera (1982:33–37), Jarquín and Martínez (1982a:122–123, 126; 1982b:34–36), and Berrin and Pasztory (1993:178).

33. See "Ciudadela 2" (Ceramoteca de la Zona Arqueológica de Teotihuacan, inv. 10-2113191) and "Ciudadela 3" (Museo de sitio de Teotihuacan, inv. 10-336690) in table 1. The former, made known by Jarquín and Martínez (1982c:115), was discovered in room 2 of Group B of Compound 1D (sector N1E1, sección 35, unidad 14, cuadro 73, capa II/III, elemento 195). The latter, published by Jarquín and Martínez (*ibid.*) and by Berrin and Pasztory (1993:179), comes from room 4 of Group D of Compound 1D (sector N1E1, sección 14, unidad 73, cuadro 4, capa II, elemento 186).

34. See "Moon 1" (Ceramoteca de la Zona Arqueológica de Teotihuacan, inv. 10-614783) and "Moon 2" (Ceramoteca de la Zona Arqueológica de Teotihuacan, inv. 10-614784) in table 1 (Sugiyama 2004). Burial 2 was located in the north facade of phase 3 of the Moon Pyramid. It was interred during the construction of phase 4 (ca. A.D. 319).

35. See "Mexico 1" (Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-9465), "Mexico 2" (Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-229755), and "Mexico 3" (Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-2562) in table 1. This last piece formed part of the collection of Miguel Covarrubias (Solís and Velasco 2002:404–405).

36. See "New York" in table 1 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1979.206.585, former collection Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979). It was published by Berrin and Pasztory (1993:180).

37. See "Paris" in table 1 (Pavillon des Sessions, Musée du Louvre, inv. 70.1998.2.1., former collection Eugène Pepin). It has been analyzed by Pasztory (2000) and Querré (2000).

38. See "Hamburg 1" (Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde, inv. B3627, former collection Hackmack, 1889) and "Hamburg 2" (Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde, inv. B264, former collection C. W. Lüders, 1880) in table 1. Both were published by Berrin and Pasztory (1993:180 and 278).

39. Thanks to diverse petrographic studies, we know that Teotihuacanos used stones such as serpentinite, metadiorite, dacite, marble, and tuff in their creations.

40. According to Allain (2000:20–21), the three-dimensional sculptures may be divided into figurines (less than 25 cm), statuettes

(25–80 cm), and statues (more than 80 cm). These latter are extremely rare at Teotihuacan.

41. Equivalents in miniature are types 5 and 6 of greenstone human figurines defined by Cabrera Cortés (1995:271, 274, 280). All of them come from Burial 14 of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl. According to the author, they could have been used as amulets in the burials.

42. Pasztory (1992:307) is among those who have proposed that these figures wore clothing made of fabric and feather ornaments.

43. Closed-sewn sleeveless tunic.

44. These are large-scale representations (heights of 45 to 46.5 cm) that were carved in greenstone. The most well-known examples are exhibited in the Museo de la Pintura Mural Teotihuacana (inv. 10-213190; see Cabrera 1982:33–34 and photo 12; Morelos 1982:311 and F.1.2.; Berrin and Pasztory 1993:179) and in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna (inv. 6270, former collection Bilimek, 1878; see *ibid.*:180).

45. In the iconography of the Preclassic to the Epiclassic, there are abundant examples of captives partially or completely stripped of their garments and jewelry. Among the most celebrated images are examples from San José Mogote, Monte Albán, Yaxchilán, Bonampak, Toniná, Dzibanché, and Cacaxtla (Marcus 1976; Foncerrada 1993; Marcus and Flannery 2001; Baudez 2004). In the case of the Postclassic, we could mention the god Mixcoatl, prototype of the sacrificial victim represented without clothing (Olivier 2001:40–41).

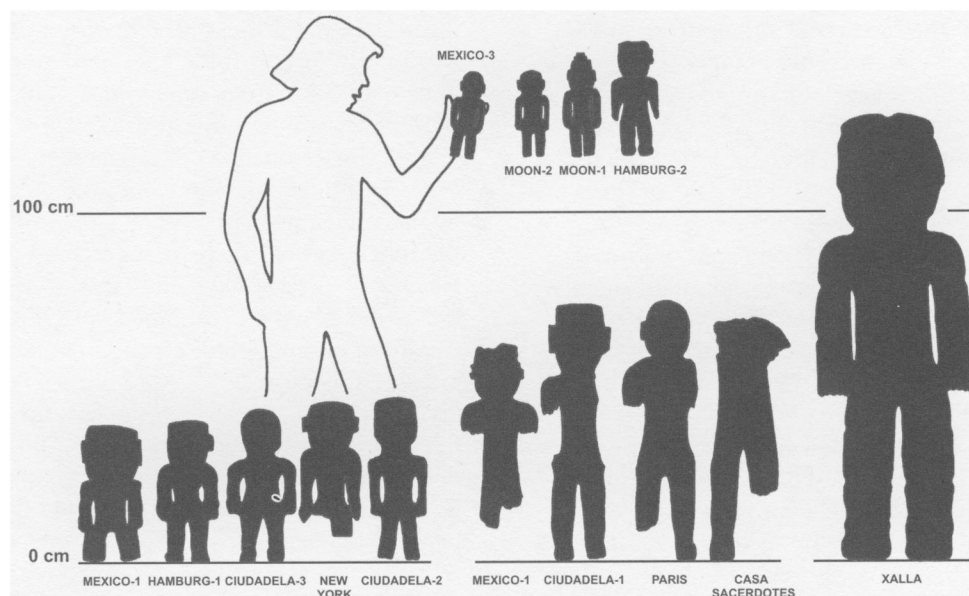


Figure 7. Diagram of heights of the corpus of male sculpture from Teotihuacan. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

### The marble captive from Xalla

After discovering the image, we immediately considered its four possible identities: god, divine ancestor, legendary figure from Teotihuacan history, or foreigner captured in battle.<sup>46</sup> From the start, the high status of the individual in question was evident, from the rich diadem on his head. However, the projectiles carved penetrating the sculpture's foot and thigh were iconographic elements that provided the key to recognizing his true identity. Based on exhaustive studies by Guilhern Olivier (2004), we know that the projectiles of spear-throwers (*atlatl*) and bows (*tlahuitolli*) are referred to indistinguishably by the terms *acatl*, *tlacochtli*, *mitl*, and *tlaxichtli* in documents in Nahuatl. Not only that, but also the spear and arrow tend to share the same polysemic character. Both serve throughout Mesoamerica as symbols of a declaration of war, military conflict, conquest, sacrificed warrior, punishment, imparting justice, fertilization, and rebirth.

46. Jarquín and Martínez (1982a:126) have suggested that the image they discovered in Structure 1Q of the Ciudadela was of "a deity that represented the ruling class." However, Pasztory (1992:307; 2000:370) proposes several designations for this type of sculpture, such as "prized central idols in temples," "idealized ancestors of various social groups," "ancient images venerated as relics," or "a combination of mythical ancestors and nature spirits."

In the specific case of Teotihuacan iconography, the dart<sup>47</sup> and its thrower are the weapons most commonly represented (Garcia-Des Lauriers 2000:88–96, 138–142; see also Caso 1966:272). The point of the dart<sup>48</sup> appears as a calendrical sign (Caso 1966:275),<sup>49</sup> and as decorative elements in tassel headdresses (C. Millon 1973:296). Often darts are found on bundles and beside shields constituting military emblems (Langley 1986:306). They are also frequently seen held by the Rain God and by high-status warriors, as well as by bellicose carnivorous mammals and birds of prey (Garcia-Des Lauriers 2000). On the other hand, Teotihuacan art does not offer examples of the active use of the dart- and spear-thrower, because it does not appear in explicit scenes of either battle or sacrifice (Millon 1981:213; C. Millon 1988:217; Pasztory 1990:183–188; Cowgill 1992:113). Therefore, the image from Xalla would be the sole case of its kind reported to date.

Following the discovery, we speculated that the darts carved on the sculpture could be onomastic or personal

47. This element is defined in Langley's catalogue (1986:306) as "55. Dart."

48. This element appears defined in Langley's catalogue (1986:247) as "57. Dartpoint."

49. According to Caso, this glyph is equivalent to the sign *tecpatl* or flint from the Mexica calendar.

name glyphs, above all because we recalled that some figures bear the particles “leg” or “dart-that-penetrates” in their name. Then we thought of *Ehmibāthā* or “mask-of-thigh (skin),” ruler of the Otomi domain of Xilotepec (Códice de Huichapan 1992:fol. 40; cf. fols. 51 and 63); Iztlacoliuhqui, deity with a dart thrown by the Sun God and entering his forehead or his headdress (Olivier 2003:117–123); and the head pierced with an arrow painted on the rise of the north walkway of the Red Temple at Cacaxtla (Piña Chan 1998:fig. III.2.c).<sup>50</sup> In addition, there are onomastic glyphs with “shot foot” found in codices borne by the figure of Xomimitl (“Arrow-Foot”) (Codex Mendoza 1992:fol. 2r; Códice Azcatitlan 1995: XIII)<sup>51</sup> as well as that of Tizoc (“The Bled One”) (Códice Ramírez 1944:pl. XIII)<sup>52</sup> both protagonists in Mexica history.

Although this hypothesis was exciting in the heat of the moment of the discovery, we had to consider that Central Mexican name glyphs tended to be drawn next to the head or in front of the figure. They could also be sculpted on the back of the neck or the back of the image. Furthermore, the existence not of one, but of two darts in different positions made us seek alternative explanations: We proposed that the sculpture was made in memory of a celebrated individual wounded at an important moment in his life, as in the case of Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin in the ill-fated encounter with his own people (Códice Azcatitlan 1995:XXIV).<sup>53</sup> However, as far as we know, the art of Teotihuacan differed from Mexica and Maya art in that it did not glorify the individuality of rulers.

50. An imperfect drawing was published by Piña Chan. According to Urcid (personal communication, November 2002), it is an onomastic glyph composed of the signs “knotted band-painted face-crossed arrow-plant with flowers or fruit.”

51. In the Codex Mendoza, Xomimitl appears as one of the ten founding chiefs of the city of Tenochtitlan. In the Códice Azcatitlan, Xomimitl participated in the coronation of Acamapichtli in the year 1376. Durán (1984:2:218) mentions that a person named Xomímitl was one of the “caudillos” who left Aztlan.

52. However, it should be recalled that Tizoc normally is indicated by either a bleeding or dotted leg (Codex Mendoza 1992:fol. 12r) or by a leg pierced by a sharp instrument (Códice Telleriano-Remensis 1995:fol. 38v).

53. In this plate, a figure may be seen falling from the top of a pyramid with a leg shot by an arrow. According to Graulich’s commentary on this same document (Códice Azcatitlan 1995:138), it is Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin, shown at the moment when his subjects threw all sorts of projectiles at him as he tried to placate them; he was struck on the temple by a stone and in the leg by an arrow (Durán 1984:2:551; Díaz del Castillo 1982:279).

By delving deeper into our inquiries, we sought another explanation. It struck us as more likely that we were dealing with the figure of a victim of *tlacacaliztli* (“being-shot-to-death-with-arrows”; Molina 1944, v. *tlacacalli*)—in other words, with one of the numerous men, generally of high military rank, who were captured in battle, stripped of their clothing, and sacrificed with darts or arrows (Seler 1963:1:129–133; Taube 1988; Vié-Wohrer 1999:1:30, 35, 77–78, 93, 99, 107; Neurath, forthcoming).<sup>54</sup> As is widely known, prisoners of war were tied up to a tree, a post, or a scaffold for this purpose (Taube 1988:331, 337, 346–348; Vié-Wohrer 1999:1:93). In Nahuatl, the scaffold was known as *cuauhtatzatzli*, which may be translated as “stick framework” (Molina 1944, v. *cuauhtatzapictli*, “wooden gate”). Generally, it was a structure placed on the floor, a stone base, or a platform. It was composed of two vertical beams joined by one, two, three, five, six, or seven transversal sticks bound with rope.

The *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán* (Landa 1941: 117–118) contains one of the most vivid descriptions of this ceremony:

[W]hen the day arrived, they all came together in the court of the temple, and if the victim was to be sacrificed with arrows, they stripped him naked, and anointed his body with a blue color, and put a headdress on his head. When they had reached the victim, all armed with bows and arrows, danced a solemn dance with him around the stake and while dancing they put him up on it and bound him to it, all of them keeping on dancing and gazing at him. The foul priest in vestments went up and wounded the victim with an arrow in the parts of shame, whether it was a man or woman, and drew blood and came down and anointed the faces of the idol with it. And making a certain sign to the dancers, they began one after another to shoot, as they passed rapidly before him, still dancing, at his heart, which

54. This sacrifice was staged in different *veintenas*. The Códice Zouche-Nuttall (1992:fols. 83–84) show the gloss *tlacaxipectli* over the scaffold of Lord 6 House. On the other hand, the Códice Tudela (1980:fol. 21v) indicates that in Ochpaniztli—a *veintena* linked symmetrically and symbolically with Tlacaxipehualiztli—“they put an arrow through the throat” of a Chicomecoatl impersonator, whose body was then decapitated. Durán (1984:1:140) agrees by stating that the sacrifice was held in Ochpaniztli in honor of Chicomecoatl: on that occasion, a group of shooters armed with bows and arrows and dressed as Tlacahuepan, Huitzilopochtli, Titlacahuan, Ixcouzauhui, the Sun, and the Four Dawns cast their projectiles at the war captives bound to wood. In contrast, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (1975:13) and Motolinia (Benavente 1971:65) comment that in Cuauhtitlan, shooting with arrows was done in Izcalli. In that *veintena*, according to the Franciscan, they decapitated two women, flayed them, then ordered six war captives to shoot them with arrows.

had been marked beforehand with a white mark. And in this way they made his whole chest one point like a hedgehog of arrows.

The terrible ceremony of *tlacacaliztli*, which could have originated in Pre-Ceramic societies,<sup>55</sup> achieved widespread distribution on the continent, according to accounts of Caddo Indians on the Prairies, the Mound Builders of the southeastern United States, and Mesoamerican peoples (Neurath, forthcoming). According to Eduard Seler (1963:1:131–132), the Mesoamerican version of this ceremony was linked to Xipe Totec, god of war and fertility. In his opinion, the rite evoked both the sexual act as well as the earth penetrated by the planting stick and fertilized by grains of corn. Seler stated that drops of blood shed by the victim on the ground fulfilled the symbolic function of strengthening the earth for the new period of vegetation.<sup>56</sup> It is worth pointing out that since that time, other researchers have seconded this proposal (Taube 1988:341; Graulich 1999:116–117). For example, Doesburg (in Códice Porfirio Díaz and Códice Fernández Leal 2001:171, note 273) indicates that this ritual “was connected with the military god of fertility Xipe Totec: the sacrifice of prisoners during his fiesta ensured rain and good harvests. The ritual illustrates the role of warriors in the natural cycle.” In a more recent study of a greater spatial and temporal scope, Johannes Neurath (forthcoming) also concluded that this ceremony was rich in political, cosmological, sexual, and fertility content. From his keen perspective, the enemies immolated with darts or arrows personified the forces of darkness annihilated at dawn by the solar king and his astral warriors.<sup>57</sup>

55. Taube (1988:351) supposes a pre-state origin, while Vié-Wohrer (1999:1:107) goes even further by suggesting its roots in times prior to the neolithic revolution. The *tlacacaliztli* has symbolic connections with ancient hunting activities. According to Durán (1984:2:147), the people of Chalco “did not have any other means of sacrificing, because, as their god was the god of hunting, they always sacrificed with arrows.”

56. The *Leyenda de los Soles* (1975:124) tells how Mixcoatl cast four arrows at Chimalma, when she was naked and unarmed; then he fertilizes her and procreates Quetzalcoatl with her. According to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (1975:13), the first *tlacacaliztli* took place in the year 9 Reed, when the Ixcuiname (the four forms of Tlazolteotl, closely associated with Xipe Totec) arrive at Tollan and shoot two of their Huastec husbands that they had brought along as captives from Cuextlan. They do so with the express purpose of fertilizing the earth (Seler 1963:1:130 and 133; cf. Graulich 1999:116–117).

57. In the *Leyenda de los Soles* (1975:123), the Sun turns over arrows of *tzihuactli* to Mixcoatl and his four brothers, so that they kill the four hundred *mimixcoah* of the night.

In Mesoamerican pictographs, *tlacacaliztli* is abundantly illustrated. It invariably appears in the framework of military victories and promotions of dignitaries, which tend to be protected by the image of Xipe Totec (Taube 1988:340–350, Doesburg in Códice Porfirio Díaz and Códice Fernández Leal 2001:171–175, 178–179). Mexica annals, for example, record one of these ceremonies in the year 1 Rabbit (A.D.1506) to celebrate the conquest of Zozollan by the troops of Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin (Códice Telleriano-Remensis 1995:fol. 41v and commentary on pp. 228–229; Códice Vaticano A 1996:fol. 86v).<sup>58</sup> In the Otomi Códice de Huamantla (1984:frag. 5–2, 16), the *tlacacaliztli* was also a direct consequence of a conquest,<sup>59</sup> just as in the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca* (1976:15, fols. 28r, ms. 46–50; 24–25, fols. 32v–33r, ms. 46–50), where *tlahuahuanaliztli* (better known as “gladiatorial sacrifice”) is simultaneously carried out.<sup>60</sup> Something similar occurs in the Mixtec codices Zouche-Nuttall (1992:fols. 83–84 and commentary on pp. 241–244) and Becker I (1961:fol. 10):<sup>61</sup> in the year 12 Rabbit (A.D. 1102), lords 10 Dog and 6 House perish, personifying Xipe Totec himself, the former in

58. Both documents show the same scene, although the Códice Vaticano A lacks an explicative gloss. The Códice Telleriano-Remensis on the other hand, specifies that the sacrifice was intended to “placate the gods because well it had been two hundred years, when they always suffered from famine in the year of 1 Rabbit.” However, the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* (1973:63; see also Barlow 1990:116–117), confirms the execution of this sacrifice in 1506 (in other words, the 184th year since the foundation of Tenochtitlan) not in conjunction with the famine, but rather with the conquest of Zozollan. This passage concludes by adding that “each year they held this fiesta.”

59. According to Carmen Aguilera (in Códice de Huamantla 1984:43), it was held in Atlancatepec under the eyes of the goddess Acxacapo, the Otomi version of Cihuacoatl.

60. On the day 7 Flower of the year 7 Rabbit, the Tepilhuan Chichimecs conquered the towns of the Xochimilca, Ayapanca, Teciuqueme, Texallo, Tlilhua, Cuilocatl, and Auzolcatl. The defeated *tlatoque* were led to the main pyramid of Cholula. There, Quauhtzimitl was shot with arrows, while the rest of the dignitaries died in gladiatorial sacrifice. Later, it says in the year 8 House, the Tepilhuan Chichimecs conquered Tepetlcoctocan, Petlazolmetepec, Tzouac Xillotepec, Quauhtli ychan, Ocellotl ychan, and Tlatlahuqui tepexioztoc. As a result, Lords Totozintli and Xicalan were sacrificed with arrows.

61. On the day 12 Monkey of the year 11 House (A.D. 1101), 8 Deer-Jaguar Claw began his campaign of revenge for the death of his elder half-brother 12 Movement. He conquered the city of the Sacred Bundle of Sticks on the Hill of White Flowers, and he took captives. One of them, Lord 10 Dog-Burning Tobacco Eagle is immolated on the day 6 Serpent, while Lord 6 House-Bound Flints was sacrificed eight days later on 1 Reed.

gladiatorial confrontation and the latter shot to death with darts from a spear-thrower. This event marked the beginning of the autocratic government of 8 Deer at Tilantongo over a good part of the Mixteca region.

We have the parallel scenes from the Cuicatec codices Fernández Leal (2001:fols. 5–7, 10–12) and Porfirio Díaz (2001:fols. 9–13, 16–18). In the first sequence, the celebration of the day 2 Eagle in the year 1 Grass is represented, resulting from the triumph of Tepeucila over Papalotécpac. There, the victorious Lord Serpent sacrifices a prisoner as part of his military promotion. Later, in another sequence on the day 5 Serpent of the year 3 Deer, Lord Ballcourt orchestrates his own sacrifice.<sup>62</sup> Repeatedly, the illustrations in question show the sacrificial victims and the main participants in these ceremonies with attributes of Xipe Totec.

Other iconographic representations of *tlacacalitzli* from the Postclassic period are found in the spear-thrower from the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini in Rome (Alcina et al. 1992:247–248) and in the atrium cross of Topiltepec, Tepozcolula, State of Oaxaca (Caso 1956). In this latter monument, which reused a pre-Hispanic relief, it can be seen how a warrior casts darts with his thrower at the body of a captive tied to a scaffold; both have the garments of Xipe Totec. Vestiges of sacrifice by shooting arrows and flaying can be found in the terrifying scenes of hell painted in the shrine of Santa Maria Xoxoteco, Hidalgo (Artigas 1984:83–100).

There are older scenes of *tlacacalitzli* and of prisoners tied to scaffolds, dating back to the Classic period. We can recall, among others, the incised graffito in Temple

2 at Tikal (Trik and Kampen 1983:1, 9, figs. 38a, 103b),<sup>63</sup> the Maya cylindrical vessel in the Art Institute of Chicago with a captive tied up prior to his immolation (Taube 1988:342, fig. 12.11), and the celebrated Scaffold Vessel in Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.,<sup>64</sup> where the sacrificial ceremony takes the life of a deer-man (Coe 1975:26–27). Several stelae from Piedras Negras present an imposing image of kings who just took power, showing them seated majestically on scaffoldings to preside over the sacrificial rites held for their accession. Taube (1988:341–346, 350) writes about these stelae: “Blood sacrifice appears to have been the major ritual link between the ruler and his prisoner. Just as the Maya lord pierced such sensitive parts of his body as his tongue and phallus, the body of the tortured prisoner was repeatedly pierced by spears. In terms of the state ceremonies of the Maya elite, it is as if the torture and killing of the victim served as a ritual amplification of the lord’s bloodletting act.” Something very similar is captured in a relief from the Building of the Columns at El Tajín. There, Lord 13 Rabbit receives offerings seated on a scaffold, while on the other scaffold death presides over a line of prisoners who are being undressed and their hair is being tied up by their captors (Taube 1988:340–341; Koontz 1994:108–129).

In addition to this long list of representations of sacrifices, we want to mention an extremely interesting offertory deposit at Teotihuacan. It was discovered by Millon in 1959 at the base of the Sun Pyramid. It consisted of a typical human-shaped, obsidian eccentric carefully deposited in a vertical position. Around it and pointing toward it was an arrangement of more than thirty tiny projectile points also fashioned of obsidian (Millon et al. 1965:24–25 and figs. 37–41). According to Taube (personal communication, May 1999), Teotihuacan eccentrics could have represented captives with their arms tied behind their backs.

To return to the image of the naked, wounded personage from Xalla in light of what is discussed here, we propose that the two darts piercing the figure’s legs indicate that he is a victim of *tlacacalitzli*. As pointed out by George L. Cowgill (personal communication, March 2004), neither of the two darts penetrates zones with vital organs. This fact is not unusual in pictographic scenes of *tlacacalitzli*, where the victims appear with arrows or darts both in the torso as well as in the extremities. This detail makes sense if we recall that the

62. Codices Porfirio Díaz and Fernández Leal make clear the ritual sequence of the two ceremonies. Both were staged in the patio of the main temple, where the post of the flyers was raised and the scaffold was assembled. The prisoner was then tied to the scaffold and his hair was covered with white feathers to show that he was to be sacrificed. He also had to wear a white helmet with a red cord characteristic of Xipe Totec. Then, in the patio, a heavy stone was placed in which the Sacred Staff of the Eagle’s Feather was inserted. After the staff was honored, the sacrifice by shooting with arrows would begin. At the end, the vanquished lord was militarily promoted to the degree of *tequihua* and received as signs of his new status a loincloth, a red mantle, and a special coiffure (*temilotl* or *quetzalilpiloni*). Finally, the descent down the flyer’s pole followed (Doesburg in Códice Porfirio Díaz and Códice Fernández Leal 2001:171–175, 178–179).

63. This incised graffito belongs to a context dated to the Late Classic period. It is located in Structure 5D-2-1st (Temple 2). It represents a victim tied to a scaffold and shot with arrows. As noted by Javier Urcid and by us, the ritual of El Volador also might be represented in this graffito.

64. In it, one of the participants in the ceremony carries a staff similar to the one used by the Mexica *xipeme*.

objective of this ceremony was not to immediately kill the victim, but rather to wound him, so that his fertilizing blood would drip slowly onto the ground. In fact, in the work of Fray Diego Durán (1984:1:140), it is explicitly stated that the projectiles were not what caused the captives' death: "As soon as those unfortunate men were shot with arrows they tossed them down and they cut their chests and wrenched out the heart. . . ." In the same vein, Motolinia (Benavente 1971:65) comments that "they shot them with many arrows, and as they were shot and half-dead, they allowed them to be cast down from that height, and from the strong impact of the fall their bones were crushed and broken, and then they killed them a third time by sacrificing them and removing their hearts, and dragging them and taking them away from there, the fourth [act of] cruelty was slitting their throats and cutting off their heads. . . ." <sup>65</sup>

Employing this line of reasoning, we propose that the uncomfortable position of the arms and hands of the Xalla sculpture, as well as the presence of grooves on its four extremities indicate that this figure was originally bound, perhaps to a post or a scaffold in the shrine of Structure E3 (fig. 8). <sup>66</sup> As is widely known, at Teotihuacan, the practice of binding captives before sacrifice was very common. This is evident from the position of the bodies of dozens of cadavers that served to consecrate the Temple of Quetzalcoatl (Cabrera et al. 1991) and the Moon Pyramid (Sugiyama and Cabrera 1999, 2000). In fact, in some cases, vestiges of ropes and gags were associated with the wrists and mouth of these victims. Along similar lines, Millon (1981:241, note 12) emphasizes the existence of Teotihuacan

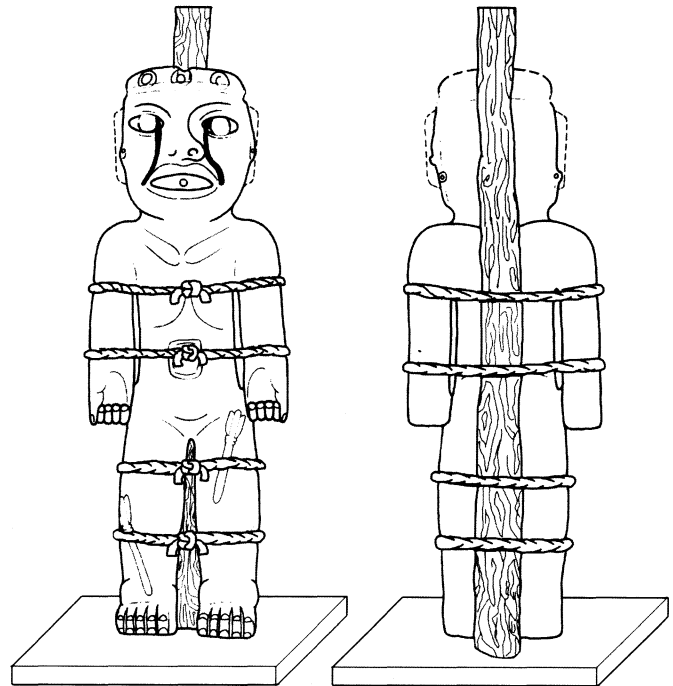


Figure 8. Hypothetical reconstruction of the way the Xalla sculpture could have been exhibited in Structure E3. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

representations of individuals (possibly captives) with arms closely bound to the torso (fig. 9). <sup>67</sup>

Equally revealing are the red eyes and vertical black lines crossing the face of the Xalla sculpture—standard attributes of Xipe Totec in the Postclassic period. <sup>68</sup> In fact, that particular iconography of the god of war and fertility was already present in the Classic period in Mesoamerica, <sup>69</sup> for example in Oaxaca (Caso and

65. Something similar occurred with *tlahuahuanaliztli* or "gladiatorial sacrifice," a ritual related directly to *tlacacaliztli*. There, once the captive was wounded with the *macuahuitl* on the *temalacatl*, he was untied and taken down from his stone to be led to the *cuauhxicalli*, where his heart was extracted (Durán 1984:1:98 and 2:275; Seler 1963:1:131).

66. It is clear that the body of the figure from Xalla is not in the same position as the victims of *tlacacaliztli* in the pictographs. One possible explanation could have to do with the artistic license of the Teotihuacan sculptor: Technically the carving of a body with arms and legs open and extended would require a block at least two times larger in addition to the fact that the work would be extremely fragile because of the relative thinness of the extremities. Another possible explanation is related to a hypothetical "Teotihuacan usage" of tying victims of *tlacacaliztli* with their arms close to the body and the legs closed. A similar practice was employed among the Maya and other Mesoamerican societies. In fact, in images published by Taube (1988:figs. 12.3, 12.4, 12.10, 12.11, 12.13), the figures that are tied to scaffolds do not have their arms or legs in an open position.

67. Almost all of them are figurines and ceramic fragments (Séjourné 1966:fig. 161).

68. It should be pointed out that these lines tend to be black or red and can be either single, double, triple, composed of dots, or in the shape of a rope. They usually cross the centers of outer ends of the eyes of Xipe Totec. In our sculpture, the line is very blurry, since it is "smoky black." It is single, crossing the eye at the level of the tear duct: Javier Urcid has pointed out to us that the line could also allude to the tears of the victim, because weeping is represented in codices, particularly in images of *tlacacaliztli*.

69. Nicholson (1976:164–169) has discussed the temporal depth of images of Xipe Totec. Coe (1968a:111–114) and Joralemon (1971:79–81) connect the so-called God VI of the Olmecs with Xipe Totec. This deity in the Preclassic period also has vertical lines crossing its face.



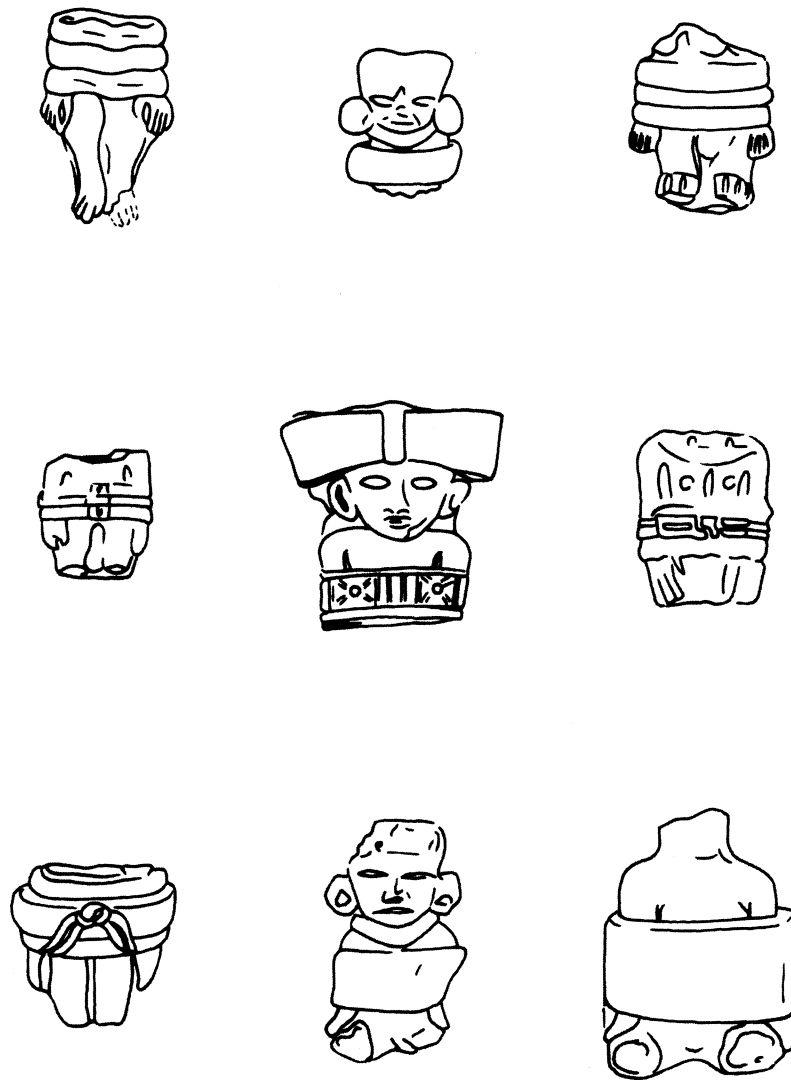


Figure 9. Teotihuacan ceramic figurines with arms next to the torso and bound. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

Bernal 1952:247–262),<sup>70</sup> in the Maya area (Taube 1992:105–112), and at Teotihuacan itself.<sup>71</sup> With respect to this site, we recall the mural from the northwest apartment of Zacuala that represents the face of a dead individual with vertical lines on his cheeks (Séjourné 1959:22, fig. 6; Fuente 1995:339, fig. 21.9).

70. There are images of Xipe Totec from phases I and II at Monte Albán until at least the beginning of phase IIIB.

71. Numerous authors have identified the so-called “god with mask”—which appears in figurines, on vessels, and in reliefs—as a Teotihuacan version of Xipe Totec (Seler 1960: 462–463, fig. 53, pl. XXV-2; Beyer 1922:169, pls. 81c–d; Gamio 1922b, pls. 86d, 96a–f;

In conclusion, if our proposal is correct, the south temple of the Central Plaza of Xalla would have exhibited in its interior the image of a high-ranking prisoner who was sacrificed as part of the festivities of a major military victory and perhaps also as part of a

Linné 1942, fig. 181; Armillas 1945:52–55; Séjourné 1959:62, 97–99, fig. 675; Caso 1966:269–270, figs. 33–34; Kubler 1967:7, fig. 32). These are images that show a circular mask with three holes for the eyes and mouth, a diagonal band that runs from the shoulder to the opposite hip, sometimes a plaque with rosettes behind the head, and the St. Andrew’s cross. Von Winning (1987:1: 147–149, figs. 1–3) and Scott (1992:43–49) have questioned this identification.

ceremony of social promotion.<sup>72</sup> In this way, the sculpture in question would have ideologically backed the preponderant power of the inhabitants of this complex, possibly a Teotihuacan palace. As is known, this sort of iconographic program is fairly common in Mesoamerican contexts (for example, Chichén Itzá, Monte Albán, Dzibanché; see Morris et al. 1931; Marcus 1976; Baudez 2004). To cite one example, at Copán we find that Structure 10L-16, erected by Yax Pasaj Chaan Yopaat,<sup>73</sup> exhibits three large sculptural panels along the stairway leading up to the temple (Agurcia and B. Fash 2005). The central panel is occupied by the sculpture of the founder of the dynasty dressed as a solar warrior, and the upper one contains the image of a bound prisoner within the jaws of a serpent mountain deity. According to Barbara Fash and Karl Taube, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' in his guise as apotheosized solar warrior sought captives for sacrifice to the ancestral deity of the cave and earth, represented here by motifs for mountain and *pu* (cat tail). Yet another example of bound captives is found flanking the stairway at the East Court of Palenque's Palace.

We can tentatively suggest that the other sculptures of the Teotihuacan anthropomorphic corpus depict war captives as well. However, they could also be the images of lords who, after being elected as rulers, were naked for the ceremony of ritual death, purification, self-sacrifice, and ontological change. The ritual was transformative, allowing the rulers to be metaphorically reborn as divine solar deities, then crowned and enthroned (López Luján 2006). We see this action taking place in El Tajín with the ruler 13 Rabbit, the king's enthronement ritual depicted in the newly discovered San Bartolo murals, and among the Aztec rulers.

### Iconoclasm at Teotihuacan

During the preceding analysis, we examined the contexts in which some images from our corpus had been found. In the first place, we said that all of them were located in highly exclusive religious buildings, always close to the Street of the Dead. In the specific case of the sculpture found in the Casa de los Sacerdotes, to the southwest of the Sun Pyramid, Batres presumed to have discovered "the revelation of how that extremely

sumptuous city was destroyed" (Batres 1906a:13–18). In particular, he says: "In that entire labyrinth of patios and rooms, and even in the architectural parts of the construction, traces of the terrible fire that consumed them can be seen, as another Troy." Among the rubble, the polemic archaeologist from the era of Porfirio Díaz recovered burned roof ornaments, charred beams, and skeletons of men, women, and children. There, at the foot of the shrine, on its west side, he exhumed remains of masks and cult effigies, including the famous serpentine torso that we analyzed above, violently shattered into pieces.

We have very similar testimony from the West Plaza Compound and the Temple of the Puma Mural.<sup>74</sup> However, much more enlightening are the contexts from the Ciudadela, particularly that of Structure 1Q, the temple located directly behind the Temple of Quetzalcoatl (Cabrera 1982:33–37; Jarquín and Martínez 1982a:122–123, 126; Jarquín and Martínez 1982b:34–36; Berrin and Pasztory 1993:178.)<sup>75</sup> There, evidence of destruction was everywhere to be found. According to Jarquín and Martínez, it dated to the very demise of the city, in the Metepec phase. The beautiful sculpture that we have described was broken into numerous fragments, all of them mixed with charcoal and ash, and in direct contact with the burned floor from the last construction stage of the building. However, the most interesting aspect of the discovery is that these bits were dispersed over an area of 800 m<sup>2</sup> around the temple (where surely the image was once venerated): one fragment to the north, three to the south, five to the east, and one to the west, in addition to a fragment of the quadrangular base on which the image would have rested.

The explorations at Xalla amply corroborate what was reported by earlier researchers. The destruction seems to have been concentrated in the Central Plaza,<sup>76</sup> where

74. In the West Plaza Compound, there is the same type of evidence of violent destruction. Two sculptures, one male and the other female, appeared broken, positioned next to the remains of a small altar in room 14 (Morelos 1982:311, L.1. y F.1.2., elemento 5). In the case of the Puma Mural Temple, Martha Sempowski (quoted by R. Millon 1988:151) documents a layer of ash on the plaza floor, as well as a sculpture made of green travertine that was broken into pieces and intentionally dispersed.

75. Of the fifteen temples framing the Ciudadela, Structure 1Q occupies a place of preeminence, because it is the only one located on the central east-west axis.

76. Between 2000 and 2002, we did not detect any evidence of incineration during the excavations conducted in plazas 2 and 5 of Xalla, located to the north and to the south of the Central Plaza, respectively.

72. Marcus and Flannery (2001:127–128) discovered a sculpture very similar to ours in an offering in Structure 35 at San José Mogote. In an interesting discussion, they interpreted it as the image of a noble who had been sacrificed.

73. Sixteenth ruler at Copán.

we recorded many obsidian artifacts deformed by the heat, floors with evidence of fire, fallen walls, flat roofs with the ceiling hardened by the fire, charred beams, and roof ornaments torn out of their cornices. One highly special case is Structure E2, whose exceptional facades displayed mythological felines that emerged from portals with starfish, “equilateral sawteeth,” and feathers (López Luján et al. 2002). Once this structure was freed from the rubble, to our surprise we found that the heavy blocks out of which the felines had been carved were mixed up, scattered about, and many of them found at a great distance from their original position (fig. 10).

As we mentioned, the marble sculpture under discussion was destroyed on the summit of Structure E3 (fig. 3).<sup>77</sup> Its fragments were found several meters from the base that possibly supported it, dispersed without preserving any anatomical relationship. They were found directly on the floor of the shrine, mixed with ash, and bits of the roof and the west wall, indicating that the destruction of the image and the temple were simultaneous.<sup>78</sup> The marble displays several types of damage, the most significant of which was caused by the fire.<sup>79</sup> On one side, there is a physical expansion of the mass of the stone and the resulting splitting, and on the other, chemical transformations that converted the calcite in some areas into limestone. The analysis of



Figure 10. One of the two mythological felines discovered in front of Structure E2, Central Plaza of Xalla. Photo by Leonardo López Luján.

77. The sculpture was found between the west wall and one of the central pilasters. The area of dispersion was recorded as “activity area 50” (P1, E3-C1, N320.25-321.47/E361.7-363.38, z=2307.349-2307.034 masl). Four fills were excavated (R1-R4) of sandy-muddy earth of dark-grayish brown color (10YR 4/2) with the inclusion of granules, round smooth pebbles, small round pebbles, and irregular angular rocks. A moderate presence of carbonates was recorded, as well as a pH of 7–8. As related material, ceramics, lithics, stucco plaster, mural painting, and fragments of limestone were recovered.

78. The floor of the shrine displays several intrusions of post-Teotihuacan looting, both in the opening entrance (N323-324/E365-367) and in the central part; in addition, its southern side was broken in an irregular way. Most of the fragments were found in R1-R4 (N320-321/E361-363), directly on the shrine floor. In that great post-Teotihuacan looting pit (N316-321/E362-367), only two fragments of small dimensions were found (N317-320/E362-363).

79. Marble is a material sensitive to chemical reactions, the effects of sun, carbonic acid absorbed by the rain, moisture, and freezing—agents that provoke changes in coloring, corrosion, chemical dissolution, or structural disintegration. It is estimated that Carrara marble tends to live twenty years when it is left exposed to the elements (Rich 1988:242–244). Among the features of deterioration recorded in our sculpture, there is abrasion, dissolution, disgregation, displacement, cracks, fissures, and deformations, in addition to the presence of roots, soil, charcoal, ash, concretions, saline layers, and iron salts.

areas where the piece had been fractured showed the traces of diverse tools,<sup>80</sup> including a chisel 2 cm in width. The impact was focused on the base of the neck and the extremities in order to split up the image into six large body segments (fig. 11).<sup>81</sup> Then the ears were broken into pieces and heavy blows were delivered at the level of the nose and the right cheek. Finally, the segments were systematically reduced to more than 160 pieces of extremely diverse dimensions (fig. 12).<sup>82</sup>

80. Much of the breakage from blows or other impact followed the cracks and fracture planes of the stone itself.

81. The arms and neck were separated from the torso by strong blows aimed at the shoulders. The hands were severed from the hip with chisel blows to the front and back of the image. Finally, the legs were cut with a chisel at the level of the base of the gluteus.

82. The most seriously damaged body segments were the head with thirty-one large fragments, and the right arm with twenty-two, followed by the left arm with twelve, the torso with three, and the left leg with three. The right leg was not destroyed. Unfortunately, 8 percent of the fragments could not be found during our exploration.

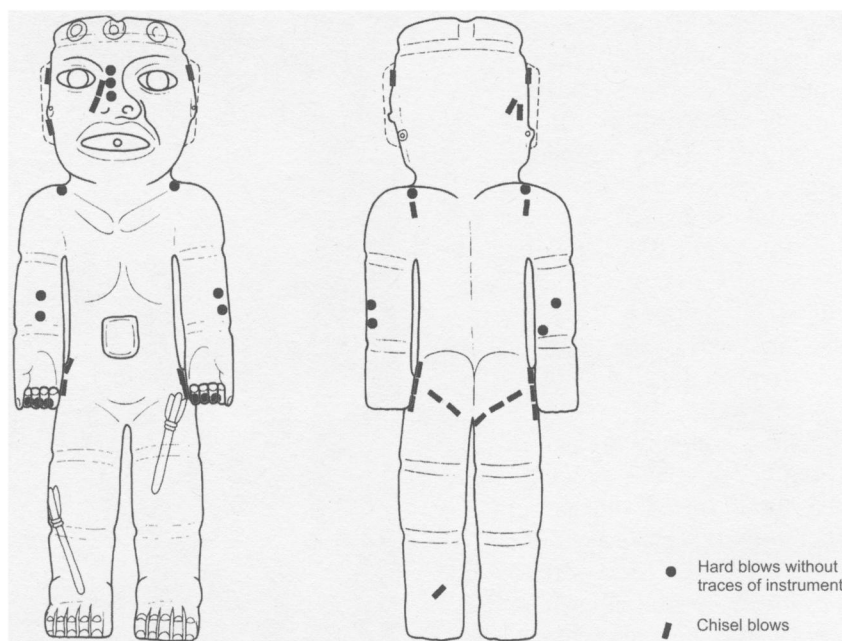


Figure 11. Distribution of the blows given to the Xalla sculpture. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

Fortunately, we now have the first archaeomagnetic data from the burned floors of Structure E3, which places the disaster around A.D. 550.<sup>83</sup> These results are confirmed by the discovery of a “mountain type” incense burner decorated with images of rain gods, a piece that was trapped between the floor and ceiling of Structure E2 at the moment of destruction. According to observations made on-site by Warren Barbour, the piece dates to the last epoch of Teotihuacan.<sup>84</sup>

The contexts at Xalla help us better understand the Teotihuacan iconography of power and the actions of those who annihilated that power for all time. Obviously, the archaeological evidence of destruction is not conclusive when it comes to the identity of those responsible for the catastrophe. Much has been speculated on this weighty matter. Ignacio Bernal (quoted by Coe 1968b:72–73), for example, speaks of a revolution; R. Millon (1988:156–158) is also inclined to point to the city’s inhabitants; Cowgill (1997:156–157)

prefers the idea that they were neighboring societies, perhaps allied to the Teotihuacan “dissidents”—an idea that coincides with that of Eduardo Matos (1990:88–90) and that of our own team. However, whatever the case, it is clear that it was carried out by a group of people highly familiar with Teotihuacan culture. This is why the old hypothesis that attributed these actions to nomads from the north (for example, Jiménez Moreno 1982:1063–1069), a hypothesis inspired by the fall of the Roman empire, may be definitively dismissed.

The evidence of iconoclasm that we have seen presents us with far more than isolated cases of vandalistic aggression, if this aggression is understood as an irrational act lacking specific significance. At Teotihuacan it is clear that the desecration of images and locations in which they were venerated formed part of a strategy full of meaning (Jarquín and Martínez 1982a:126; Millon 1988:156; Pasztory 2000). The devastation this Mesoamerican metropolis experienced may be added to the long list of iconoclastic movements in world history, including the renowned “Quarrel of the Images” that occurred in Byzantium in the eighth and ninth centuries; Protestant iconoclasm during the Reformation; the profanation of symbols of the *Ancien Régime* during the French Revolution; the Nazi

83. Samples of E3 were taken and analyzed by Ana María Soler at the Instituto de Geofísica, UNAM (personal communication, December 2001).

84. According to this researcher (personal communication, September 2003), the piece dates to the Metepec phase.

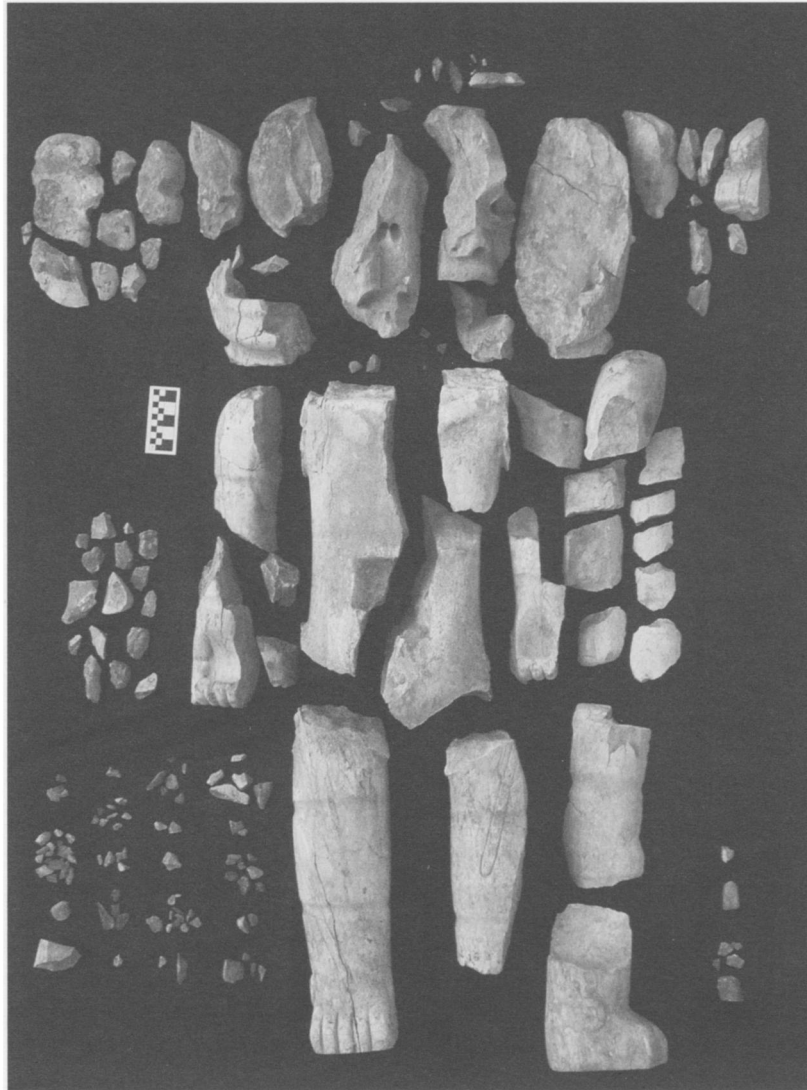


Figure 12. Fragments composing the Xalla sculpture. Photo by Leonardo López Luján.

persecution of *Entartete Kunst*; the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989; and the taking of Baghdad in March 2003 (Freedberg 1991:378–428; Gamboni 1997:27–90). In the case of Mexico, we should not overlook the hotly debated mutilation of Olmec sculptural monuments (Stirling 1940:334; Coe 1967:25; Grove 1981:67; Porter 1990), the so-called burning of idols that took place after the Conquest (Gruzinski 1990:55–147), the violent demolition of monasteries during the Reform period (Tovar y Teresa 1991), or, more recently, the iconophobic festivals promoted by Governor Tomás Garrido Canabal in the State of Tabasco (Hernández 2003).

By comparing these historical events, we discovered that iconoclasm is a multiform, irreducible phenomenon, encompassing conduct dissimilar in motives, purposes, promoters, actions, targets, and yielding equally diverse results.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, the lack

85. As Gamboni (1997:22–24) indicates to us, the heterogeneity of acts of iconoclasm has meant that individuals who study it have created a large number of typologies, each one based on distinct taxonomic criteria. He tells us: “It will be possible to observe distinctions and nuances in each case: aggressive motives can be explicit or implicit and of a more ‘ideological’ or more ‘private’

of historical records on the societies that we study prevents us from knowing many of the details indispensable for undertaking a satisfactory reconstruction of the events. Archaeology is only able to reveal the consequences of iconoclastic acts, which include the suppression or replacement of symbols and inscriptions on monuments; the transformation, deformation, or decapitation of effigies; their confinement, definitive burial, or total elimination. Based on the analysis undertaken here, we can conclude that at Teotihuacan, the images used to express, impose, and legitimate power were the ones that were profaned with the express purpose of insulting, rejecting, or desecrating them.<sup>86</sup>

However, let us read between the lines and attempt to go a bit further. By Postclassic times, the conquest of enemy societies—neighboring and distant—was depicted in two correlative ways. On the one hand, it was represented by the triumphant warrior seizing the rival by the hair on the crown of the head (for example, the Stone of Tizoc), the zone where the *tonalli* resided—the source of vigor and bravery without which the warrior could die. According to Nahua belief in the sixteenth century, it was dangerous to cut the hair on the crown of the head, for this action could lead to the release of the *tonalli*, and the lack of the *tonalli* brought about serious illness and led to death (López Austin 1980:1:225, 231, 239, 241–243). On the other hand, the well-known glyph of a temple in flames was drawn to symbolize destruction, as was the case with the damaged residence of the divinities that protected the subjugated community (for example, Codex Mendoza 1992). In this respect, Olivier (forthcoming, chapter 1) points out: “When Sahagún’s indigenous informants describe the beginning of a battle, it would seem that they had this glyph in mind: ‘War cries were raised;

there was fighting. They shot arrows of fire at the temples’ (*quitlemina in teucalli*)” (see Sahagún 1979: bk.VIII:fol. 53).<sup>87</sup>

The iconography of the Postclassic period shows us that the attacker aimed part of the aggression at locations where the divine power of the enemy was concentrated, demoralizing him and causing profound terror in him. Surely, such practices had their roots in ancient times and were shared by societies during the Classic period. In this regard, archaeology tells us that those who destroyed the ancient city of Teotihuacan not only politically annihilated the people who ruled the metropolis, but also ritually terminated every one of the sources of supernatural power of a community composed of tens of thousands of individuals. Although it is true that the violent destruction of images might speak to us of wild irrational fury, the systematic dispersion of its fragments can only be understood as a logical act aimed at preventing the reemergence of a power intolerable from every perspective through magical means. Something similar may be said of the destruction of virtually all the city temples, which never again were to rise from the rubble. In our opinion, the people of Teotihuacan would never have damaged their own patron gods in this way. Therefore, we are convinced that the instigators of the cataclysm must be sought in the political entities formerly subject to Teotihuacan, or else the city’s rivals, or conceivably both, as was the case in the fall of Mexico Tenochtitlan.

87. We should also recall the toponyms shown shot with an arrow in Mixtec codices—undoubtedly symbols of conquest.

nature; aims can be equated with the physical result of the attack or go far beyond it; assailants can be individual or collective, make themselves known or remain anonymous, possess or not different kinds of power and authority; their actions can be more or less violent and destructive, direct or indirect, visible or clandestine, legal or illegal; the targets can be private or public property, deemed attractive or ‘offensive,’ acknowledged as art or not, appear as ‘autonomous’ or associated with certain groups or values; the context, finally, can be variously accessible and be permanently dedicated to the display of art or not.”

86. With reason, Gombrich (2003:153) indicates that “their own power [of certain sculptural monuments], the finality for which they were commissioned and erected, may also be their perdition . . . this destiny was imposed on these statues not for what they were, but rather for what they meant or represented. . . .”

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