



Mexica Chicomecoatl (seven snakes), the maize goddess, AD 1325–1521. Probably Tenochtitlan, Mexico. Basalt; 70 x 30 x 15 cm. Fred Braun Collection. 8143

these and other cities by AD 900—a phenomenon still poorly understood—the Maya continued to flourish in Uxmal, Chichén Itzá, and other regional capitals in the highlands and lowlands until the Spanish appeared in their lands in the early 1500s.

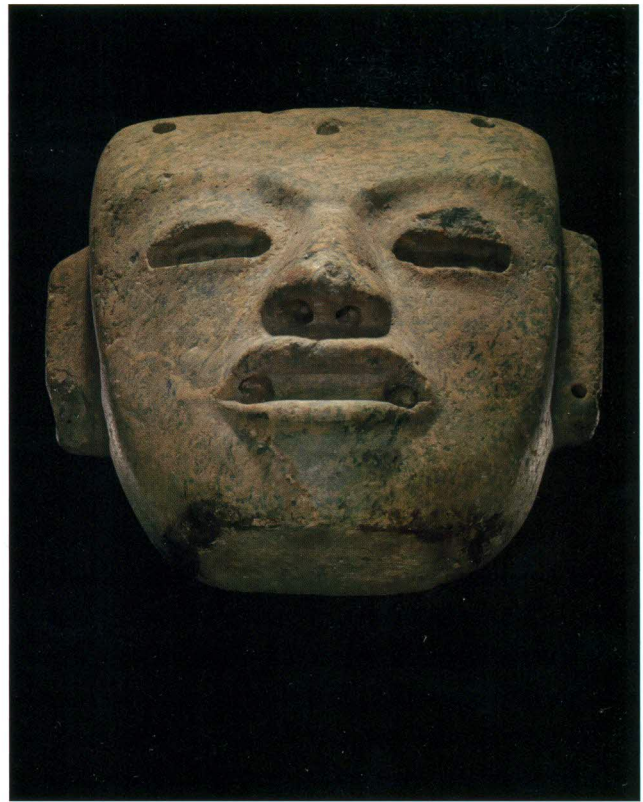
Throughout the span of high civilization in the Maya area, various influences from distant Mesoamerican neighbors continue to show up in the surviving art and architecture and in smaller artifacts as well. The painted goggle-like pattern on the stone head from Uxmal, Yucatán, suggests that the subject of the portrait is in the guise of Tlaloc, the central Mexican god of rain and lightning, counterpart to the Maya Chaak (see page 104).¹

The carefully chosen pieces shown here distill the essence of ancient Maya culture and civilization wrought by a society of elite nobility, warriors, traders, merchants, architects, sculptors, painters, and priests. Maya scribes, using the most sophisticated system of writing known in ancient America, recorded everything from simple tags of ownership, such as the short hieroglyphic text on a king's drinking cup (pages 92–93), to the sweeping grandeur of the history, both real and mythical, of their time and place. That record, deciphered only in recent decades, provides the living Maya, many of whom adhere to the beliefs and rituals of ancient tradition, with the knowledge of their long and distinguished history as one of the most accomplished cultures in the history of the world.

—George Stuart

The Mexica and the last Triple Alliance

Migrating from northern Mesoamerica, the Mexica and other Nahuatl-speaking peoples reached central Mexico in the 13th century AD. Upon their arrival, they found that many societies shared a common history strongly influenced by trade, war, and religion, in spite of ethnic, linguistic, and political differences. The Mexica's final destination was the Basin of Mexico, an area defined by five large lakes and the three societies already established there: The city of Colhuacan ruled the dominion that belonged to the Colhua ethnic



Teotihuacán mask, AD 200–600. Tlaltelolco, Mexico. Metamorphic greenstone; 28 x 28 cm. Conde de Penasco Collection. 2/6607

group, including the southern towns of Xochimilco and Cuitlahuac. Tetzco was the political capital of the Acolhua–Chichimeca, whose territory occupied the eastern strip. Azcapotzalco functioned as the capital of the Tepanec, who had settled in the western strip.

Given this intricate landscape, the Mexica had no choice but to found their capital city, Mexico–Tenochtitlan, on a small, uninhabited island in Lake Tetzco. As this was inside Tepanec territory, the Mexica became taxpayers to Azcapotzalco starting in 1325. But in the following century, things would change. In 1428 the Mexica militarily defeated their masters and established the last *excan tlatoloyan*, or Triple Alliance, comprising now the cities of Tenochtitlan, Tetzco, and Tlacopan.¹ Due to Mexico–Tenochtitlan's dominance, this alliance is wrongly referred to as the Mexica or Aztec empire. It is worth mentioning, as well, that the Mexica, after leaving their original homeland of Aztlan, never called themselves “Aztecs.”



Mexica Chinampanec Xipe Totec (our lord, the flayed one), war and harvest god, AD 1507. Tepepan, Federal District, Mexico. Basalt, pigment; 77.5 x 31 x 24 cm. Purchased in Paris. 16/3621



The *excan tlatoloyan*, a regional organization that transcended the state, was embedded in a setting of endemic warfare. Its main purpose was to resolve disputes between the different political entities that fell under its jurisdiction, although it also sought to look after the security of the region and absorb the states that resisted becoming part of the coalition. Under this pretext, its three capital cities led military expansion aimed at controlling the lake's basin and the large territory surrounding it.

To the west, in the Toluca and Ixtlahuaca valleys, other Chichimeca communities had reached important economic, cultural, and political heights. These groups formed an interesting linguistic confluence of peoples who spoke Otomian languages (Otomi, Mazahua, Matlatzinca, and Ocuilteca) and Nahuatl-speakers. When the Mexica began their expansionary period, the *excan tlatoloyan* conquered these neighboring groups, which by then had become highly divided. To the east, in the Puebla–Tlaxcala Valley, the Chichimeca had also established key centers of power. Among these, Tlaxcala, Cholula, Huexotzinco, and Tliluhquitepec stand out as cities that joined forces to resist the constant hostility of the alliance, managing to maintain the region's independence. To the south, in the warm land of the Morelos Valley, lived other Nahuatl-speaking Chichimeca, specifically the Xochimilca and Tlahuica communities. The Mexica had long coveted the cotton and other tropical products these groups harvested, and they defeated the city of Cuauhnahuac after a protracted war. During this rapid expansion, the alliance annexed political entities made up of different ethnic groups with varying levels of development.

The imperial borders of the *excan tlatoloyan* stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean and from the Purepecha (Tarascan) Empire down to today's border between Mexico and Guatemala. Yet the main goal of this hegemonic expansion was not



Mexica Cihuateotl (goddess), AD 1325–1521. Probably Tenochtitlan, Mexico. Basalt; 33 x 36 x 66 cm. Purchase. 15/5597

territorial domination, but rather profits gained from taxation. Other goals included having exclusive access to certain natural resources, restructuring trade, and controlling key markets. In most cases, conquered cities paid duties, were forced to permit the unrestricted entry of merchants protected by the alliance, and had to provide troops and provisions to the armies of the conquerors. They kept their legal and political systems, however, as well as their deities. Still, they lived under the burdensome and unsettling conditions generated by the institutionalization of violence. In cases of extreme opposition, the excan tlatoloyan could impose a governor or, alternatively, destroy rebellious populations and occupy their territory with colonists.

At times, these tax-paying peoples not only had to hand over their locally produced goods, but they also had to pay their debt with goods acquired through trade with neighboring peoples. In this way, the

capital cities of the alliance acquired resources from regions well beyond its borders.

The *pochteca*—professional merchants from central Mexico who lived in the three capitals as well as the subjugated cities—took advantage of the huge territory controlled by the alliance. Although they enjoyed ample autonomy to trade, the *pochteca* were expected to serve their masters as ambassadors, spies, and, in rare cases, militiamen. The *pochteca* of the alliance jointly organized trade missions. Some *pochteca* of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec traded along the route to Anahuac Ayo-tlan on the Pacific Coast; others headed to Anahuac Xicalanco on the Gulf of Mexico. In their southern network, the *pochteca* controlled the region of Soconusco, a rich producer of cacao beans, an agricultural product that served as currency. In Xicalanco, the *pochteca* traded their goods with Zoque and Maya merchants, who in turn traded goods all the way to Honduras.



Tepanec Ehecatl, the wind god (detail), AD 1325–1521. San Miguel, Mexico. Basalt; 14 x 17 x 25 cm. H. H. Rice Collection; presented by James B. Ford. 9/2874

The museum's Mexica collection includes many remarkable stone sculptures distinguished by their aesthetic, cultural, and historic significance. They represent many of the deities of the peoples of the Triple Alliance and help us understand more fully their beliefs and history. The deities also appear in Native and European codices written shortly before and after Spanish conquest.

Chicomecoatl was the deity most revered by the farmers of central Mexico (page 90). Countless images of this maize goddess were produced, from the most humbly and crudely carved destined for family worship in rural communities, to more polished sculptures placed in the public temples of the capitals. This Mexica sculpture also has certain attributes of Chalchiuhtlicue, the goddess of ground water.

Xipe Totec, the god associated with fertility and war and patron saint of goldsmiths, was revered throughout Mesoamerica, especially by the Mexica and by the Yopi, who lived in the present-day state of Guerrero. Like Xipe, Mexica kings would wear the skins of sacrificed individuals when leading their armies on military campaigns. This Chinampanec image has the date 2-Reed on its back (see page 94).

Women who died giving birth to their first child became terrifying beings. Five days a year, they would come down from heaven to inflict paralysis upon children. The Mexica sculpture shown here represents the Cihuateotl who descended on 1-Eagle, one of those five days, as shown by the carving on her head (page 95). To avoid the Cihuateotl, mothers would prevent their children from leaving the house and would not bathe them.

As wind preceded rain, the faithful believed that Ehecatl "swept the path for the gods of water," bringing forth life and fertility. The most common feature of this god is his mouth-mask in the shape of a grebe's or duck's bill. The sculptor exemplified the inconstant and changing movement of the wind in the twisted body of this Tepanec sculpture, shown at left.

The sun god Tonatiuh is usually represented as a young, armed male, flying, surrounded by the solar disk. In this Mexica sculpture, he appears defeated, with an arrow piercing his mouth and his heart torn out (page 286). His curly hair symbolizes the sunset (Tlalchitonatiuh), since the deities of the earth and the underworld are depicted with this type of hair.

In the early 16th century, the excan tlatoloyan reached its greatest height, but its power did not endure. The political situation became highly unstable. Increasingly unhappy, many subjugated peoples saw in the arrival of the Spanish a unique opportunity to regain their freedom. In joining the Spanish, these nations paved the way for the process of conquest. Obviously, the end result did not match their initial expectations.

—Leonardo López Luján

Contemporary Mexico

There is a widely held belief in Mexico today that the society is divided into two ethnically distinct groups—indigenous people and people of mixed race, who are considered nonindigenous. The first group is a minority, both in numerical terms and politically, by virtue of its invisibility in public life. Mexico's indigenous peoples are often associated in the popular mind with stewardship of our past and our traditions, with geographically and culturally remote regions of the country, and—unfortunately—with poverty. Yet according to data collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in 2000 and 2005, one-third of the speakers of indigenous languages in Mexico live in big cities; more than half live in cities of 50,000 to 500,000 inhabitants. The majority of indigenous Mexicans between the ages of five and twenty-five are urban dwellers. In other words, Mexico's Native people today live throughout the country.

Government policies in place for more than half a century have been explicit in the goal of bringing Mexico's Native population into contemporary society. At one time, these initiatives seemed to lead to the conclusion that indigenous people had two options: they could remain isolated from the national scene



Broadway revival

For more than seventy years, beginning in 1922, George Gustav Heye's Museum of the American Indian at Broadway and 155th Street in upper Manhattan was widely recognized as one of the best places in the world to see the material culture of the original peoples of the Americas. Now, *Infinity of Nations*, the companion exhibition to this book, again presents a survey of Heye's unparalleled collections on Broadway, through more than 700 particularly significant objects on view at the George Gustav Heye Center, at the southern end of that old Algonquin trail.

Both museum-goers who remember the exhibits at Audubon Terrace—and many New Yorkers do—and those who discovered the collections after Congress created the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, will find familiar and challenging elements in the new exhibition. The Heye Center, which opened in 1994, and the museum on the National Mall in Washington, our larger, but younger (2004) sibling, are part of a new generation of museums that interpret cultural history from the inside out. Presenting objects and art made by American Indians in imaginative, intelligent, and beautiful ways remains important, and the Heye collections remain dazzling, but we now give greater emphasis to cultural context—the ideas objects embody and their relationship to living cultural values.

At the same time, the National Museum of the American Indian and other culturally based museums are seeking to be more significant to the communities we represent. By regarding our galleries, auditoriums, classrooms, screening rooms, collections and research facilities, and conservation labs as places where living cultures can express and renew

their traditions, museums are becoming new kinds of civic spaces.

A recurring theme of *Infinity of Nations* is the interconnectedness of peoples and the important role contact and exchange have always played in the development of cultures and societies. By serving as contemporary centers for the exchange of ideas—bringing together intellectual and cultural values and contributions from many sources and disciplines, and people from throughout our communities and around the world—museums have the potential to play a unique part in cultural encounters on issues that have bearing on all our lives, indigenous and nonindigenous.

I hope this marvelous book spurs you to visit the museum. Reading Philip Deloria's introduction on the power of objects to move us, I realized that one emotion I so often feel in our galleries is gratitude. Arden Kucate touches on it in his discussion of a stone jar and the care Ancestral Pueblo people took to keep it safe. These objects have come through hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years of history.

Musing—Phil's perfect word—on a Mississippian shell gorget, my colleague Tom Evans observed, "We can only guess as to what the artist was recording. The people of that place and time knew the warrior being depicted. They understood what he was doing and why. It would have been inconceivable to them that we might one day look at these objects and wonder at the meaning of their universe." Yes, it would have been, but we are privileged to have that opportunity. Come and see these objects in person. Something you encounter will speak to you.

—John Haworth (Cherokee), director, George Gustav Heye Center, National Museum of the American Indian

Notes & references

A note on the maps

The tribal names and archaeological cultures identified on the regional maps in this book correspond to the cultural attributions of the objects illustrated in each chapter. Their locations correspond to the dates when those objects were made. These maps do not reflect a comprehensive identification and location of tribes and archaeological cultures present in any region at any point in time.

For more information on the collections

To see more about the objects in this book and the accompanying exhibition at the George Gustav Heye Center in New York, please visit the *Infinity of Nations* website at www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/infinityofnations.

INTRODUCTION

Philip J. Deloria

1. Benjamin, "On some motifs in Baudelaire," 188.
2. Benjamin, "On the mimetic faculty," 333–36.
3. Rabinbach, "Introduction to Walter Benjamin's 'doctrine of the similar,'" 60–64.
4. Prown, "Introduction."
5. Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," 176.

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PATAGONIA, TIERRA DEL FUEGO, AND GRAN CHACO

Tom Dillehay

1. Bengoa, *Historia de los antiguos Mapuches*; Dillehay, *Monuments, Resistance and Empires*; Faron, *Hawks of the Sun*; Latcham, *Organización social y las creencias religiosas de los antiguos Araucanos*; Mandrini and Ortelli, "Los 'Araucanos' en las pampas"; Nacuzzi, *Identidades impuestas*.
2. Bengoa; Boccarra, "Colonización, resistencia y etnogénesis"; Villalobos and Pinto, ed. *Araucanía*.
3. Aldunate, "Mapuche: Gente de la tierra."
4. Faron, *Hawks of the Sun*.
5. Foester, *Introducción a la religión Mapuche*; Grebe et al., "Cosmovisión Mapuche"; Guevara, *Historia de Chile*; Latcham.
6. Alonqueo, *Instituciones religiosas del Pueblo Mapuche*; Dillehay; Foester; Grebe; Titiev, *Araucanian Culture in Transition*.
7. Acuña et al., "Genetic variants of serum Butyrylcholinesterase in Chilean Mapuche Indians."

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Paul Ossa

1. Borrero, "Early occupation in the Southern Cone"; Dillehay, "Profiles in pleistocene history."
2. Bolas are sets of stones (commonly three) wrapped in leather and connected by leather thongs. The hunter holds one stone, or the nexus of the thongs, and whirls the other stones about his head, before letting the bolas go in the direction of the prey. The thongs wrap about the legs or neck and body of the animal, bringing it down. Bolas are found early in the occupation of the area, with possibly the earliest being found at the archaeological site of Marazzi in Tierra del Fuego. Laming-Emperaire et al., "Le site de Marazzi en Terre de Feu."
3. The most famous Yámana was a young man called Jemmy Button (his Yámana name is recorded as Orundellico) by Fitz-Roy after he "purchased" him for a button. Jemmy Button was taken to England with three other Fuegian natives. There they were educated and discreetly exhibited for a year. On Fitz-Roy's second voyage on HMS *Beagle*—with Charles Darwin as his naturalist and gentleman companion—the three surviving Fuegians were returned to their homeland. They were left at Wulaia Cove on Navarino Island. In the report of his voyage, Fitz-Roy mentions the last encounter he had with the natives, whom he had named Fuegia Basket and

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MESOAMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

George Stuart

1. This important Mesoamerican deity with goggle eyes and fangs also appears on a rectangular bowl from Copán, Honduras, and a clay portrait from an area in El Salvador settled by central Mexicans around AD 1000—both in the museum's collections.

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Leonardo López Luján

1. Among earlier triple alliances in central Mexico, scholars include Tollan, Culhuacan, and Otompan before the fall of Tollan in the 12th century; Culhuacan, Tenayuca, and Xaltocan after the fall of Tollan; and Azcapotzalco, Coatlinchan, and Culhuacan. Through these and other coalitions in the Basin of Mexico, city-states joined together for mutual defense and to pursue other shared interests.

On the greenstone mask from Teotihuacán (2/6607, p. 91): This

kind of mask was not used by the people of Teotihuacán to cover their faces in public ceremonies; stone masks are too heavy to wear, and they lack perforations for the eyes. It has been suggested that these masks were buried in graves, but they have never been found in that type of setting. Perhaps they were used to depict the divine images of perishable materials, like those represented in mural paintings.

Alejandro González Villarruel

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Joanna Ostapkowicz

1. Taíno, from *nitaíno*, meaning "good" or "noble," has come to refer to the people inhabiting the islands of Hispaniola (Quisqueya), Puerto Rico (Boriquen), Jamaica (Xamayca), and Cuba at the time of European contact. The name, however, masks the cultural complexity and diversity that was present in the Greater Antilles at this time.
2. Wilson, *The Archaeology of the Caribbean*, 102–10.
3. Long-distance trade connections between the Greater Antilles and the South American mainland appear to have waxed and waned since the first ancestral migrations into the islands, and were filtered through the Lesser Antilles. These connections appear to have increased slightly during the 1200s to 1500s, with the development of complex chiefdoms in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico and their desire for valuables. Such exotics, acquired via long-distance trade networks, were interwoven into local value systems that were autonomous of mainland influences. More regular links—and, to a degree, greater influences—were maintained between the cultures of the Lesser Antilles and South America. Sued-Badillo, "The indigenous societies at the time of conquest," 259–60;



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THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Edited by Cécile R. Ganteaume



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