

PART ONE



THE PARADIGM SHIFTS
IN MESOAMERICAN STUDIES



THE MYTH AND REALITY OF ZUYUÁ

THE FEATHERED SERPENT AND MESOAMERICAN
TRANSFORMATIONS FROM THE CLASSIC TO THE POSTCLASSIC

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TRANSLATED BY SCOTT SESSIONS

TO MARIANA

THE TRANSFORMATION FROM THE CLASSIC TO THE POSTCLASSIC

PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRANSITION

Three decades ago, there was no great discussion about distinguishing the Classic period from the Postclassic. Scholars at that time supposed a sudden transformation from peaceful societies ruled by priests to forms of secular and militaristic organization. This schematic view has given way in our day to the realization that the historical reality is far more complex. The differences between both periods, though still recognized, are less clear, especially if one takes into account the recent discoveries of the bellicose character of the cities of the Classic, the expansionist ambitions of their leaders, and the widespread practice of human sacrifice. Moreover, today we are becoming aware of the great diversity of paths that Mesoamerican societies followed in the twilight of the Classic period, in the transformation occurring between 650 and 900 C.E., and in the subsequent centuries preceding the arrival of Europeans. This leads us to inquire about the general historical processes of the Postclassic in conjunction with regional and temporal particularities within the overall setting.

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Already in 1959, Wigberto Jiménez Moreno had pointed out the need to define an intermediate period between the Classic and the Postclassic—the Epiclassic—which would explain the changes occurring between 600/700 and 900/1000 C.E. Although Jiménez Moreno and later Malcolm Webb (1978), in a Manichaean way, supposed the movement from theocratic to militaristic organization, they developed the models that serve as the foundation of the current debate. Obviously, not all contemporary authors agree on the defining characteristics of this period, which is reflected, among other aspects, in the multiplicity of names bestowed upon it, including the Late Classic, Terminal Classic, Proto-Postclassic, and Phase One of the Second Intermediate Period.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Gradually, archaeological discoveries and the decipherment of Maya glyphs have modified our appreciation of the differences between the Classic and the Postclassic. Consequently, current preoccupations are centered upon understanding a change that was not so radical or abrupt as previously supposed. Examples of this line of thinking were found in the summer seminar “Cultural Adjustments After the Decline of Teotihuacan,” which took place at Dumbarton Oaks in 1984 (Diehl and Berlo 1989; see also Mendoza 1992). In spite of their different positions, the specialists insisted on four aspects that distinguished the transition: a) the emergence of new centers of power; b) population movements; c) new commercial arrangements; and d) religious and architectural innovations.

In fact, the principal signs of the time were political instability, social mobility, the emergence of new multi-ethnic centers of power, the restructuring of mercantile networks, the intensification of trade, the change of spheres of political and cultural interaction, and a distinct relationship between religion and politics. Along with many authors, we believe that the foundations of the Postclassic world reside in this period.

In the centuries following the decline of Teotihuacan, Mesoamerica became an enormous crucible where ethnic and culturally distinct peoples entered into contact and fused with one and other. The weakened power of some of the old capitals opened the way for the mobilization of broad demographic sectors. Generally, displacements of agriculturists did not involve great distances. Artisans, on the other hand, specializing in the production of prestige goods, tended to travel much farther during this period in search of elites who could patronize their activities. To these movements should be added those of merchants, warriors, priests, and rulers belonging to ethnic groups whose roles in Mesoamerican history would be decisive (Diehl 1989). In addition, we should mention the continuous migratory incursions of northern nomadic and semi-nomadic societies—bellicose groups who would forge new ways of life with the ancient inhabitants of Mesoamerica (Armillas 1964).

Everything seems to suggest that, from this time on, multi-ethnic settlements and confederations proliferated at the same time marriage alliances diversified among nobles of different dynasties. Alongside these developments, the regions of Central Mexico, the Gulf Coast, the Yucatán Peninsula, Chiapas, and Highland Guatemala became linked together in a manner still not fully understood (Webb 1978; Kowalski 1989).

One of the most impressive changes occurred in the realm of exchange. The monofocal Teotihuacan system gave way to a new mercantile structure that connected numerous production and distribution centers. This imbrication led to complex pan-Mesoamerican bonds among politically independent, cosmopolitan capitals that shared symbols of elite status and participated as equals in international exchange. Luxury goods such as fine salt, cotton, green obsidian, jewelry made of semiprecious stones, plumbate, and fine orange ceramics from many different places were traded practically everywhere in Mesoamerica (see Fahmel Beyer 1988). The system was significantly strengthened by the growing importance of maritime trade (Kepecs, Feinman, and Boucher 1994).

This richness of cultural contacts was also expressed in public art through coherent eclectic styles that spoke of real or fictitious relations (Nagao 1989; Jones 1995). In such a context the military apparatus grew in an unusual manner. This does not mean that during the Classic period constant bellicose conflicts did not exist, but during the Epiclassic, political instability assured that military concerns would permeate all aspects of social life. Thus, the new cities of this time were built on strategic sites, according to a strictly defensive plan.

Another fundamental aspect of the so-called Epiclassic—and one that lasted throughout the Postclassic—was a distinct relationship between religion and politics, a product of those times dominated by multi-ethnic political organizations. The node of this relationship was the complex formed by the primordial city of Tollan and its ruler, Feathered Serpent. Our essay focuses precisely on this politico-religious phenomenon that marked, in diverse ways and to varying degrees, the life of many Mesoamerican societies from the seventh to sixteenth centuries. Our purpose is the general characterization of this phenomenon and some of its expressions in different times and spaces. To this end, we will elaborate two explanatory models: one concerning the hegemonic groups' ideology and the other concerning the articulation of this ideology with politics.

We are aware, of course, that any model is a simplification of reality that privileges certain aspects. Our two models emphasize organizational forms and shared thinking in order to obtain a congruent description. It is evident, however, that the differences are greater than the similarities in the societies studied and that specific case studies highlighting the numerous historical particularities must follow our global evaluation of the phenomenon.

CHICHÉN ITZÁ AND TULA IN THE CENTER OF THE DEBATE

SISTER CITIES

It is well known that in Chichén Itzá, around the ninth century, Puuc style was present along with several harmoniously combined artistic elements from distant Mesoamerican regions. Accounting for the coexistence of these exogenous elements, fundamentally those from Central Mexico deemed "Toltec," has fueled one of the most passionate controversies in the history of Mesoamerican studies. More than a century ago, Désiré Charnay (1885) published his *Les anciennes villes du Nouveau Monde*, a book about his travels in Mexico and Central America between 1857 and 1882 under the patronage of the French government. Among his bizarre anecdotes and eccentric commentaries, Charnay noted

an important fact that until then had eluded experts and amateurs alike: the enormous similarities between the architecture of Chichén Itzá and Tula, in spite of the hundreds of kilometers separating both sites. From this moment on, by means of archaeological excavations and quantitative analysis, researchers from the team of Alfred M. Tozzer (1957) began to uncover, one by one, the many shared characteristics, until completing an extensive inventory.

Comparisons between the two cities continue to this day. Concerning the configuration of the principal plazas of Chichén Itzá and Tula, Lindsay Jones (1993a, 1993b) has pointed out similarities in the orientation of monuments; the articulation of pyramid-raised temples over a rectangular, open courtyard in the form of an amphitheater; the correlative position of the ballcourts, *tzompantli*,¹ and platforms; the presence of large colonnaded areas (the Palacio Quemado, or Burnt Palace, in Tula and the Hall of a Thousand Columns in Chichén); and the existence of almost identical buildings (the Pyramid of Tlahuizcalpantecuhli in the Toltec city and the Temple of the Warriors in the peninsular city).

These parallelisms, of course, are not limited to architecture; they extend to numerous cultural expressions such as myths, historical narratives, artifacts, mural painting, and especially sculpture. Similar sculptural features found at both sites include atlantes supporting lintels or altars, the so-called *chacmool* images (Figure 1.1), columns in the form of a descending feathered serpent, and standard-bearers with human or animal traits. Also abundant are the pilasters, benches, panels, and other architectural elements decorated with bas-relief motifs alluding to warfare and sacrifice, most notably, birds and felines devouring human hearts, mythical beings (part man, bird, and reptile), and processions of richly attired warriors armed with throwing-sticks and arrows.

BALANCING AN OLD DEBATE

Faced with such similarities, researchers have argued for decades, trying to explain simultaneously the kind of relations that could have existed between two cities so distant from each other *and* the nonexistence of the same type of manifestations in intermediate places between the two sites. The ongoing debate has yielded a wide range of responses that attempt to support themselves with various combinations of archaeological and written evidence.

Jones, in his monumental *Twin City Tales*, has presented a detailed historiographical study of this polemic (1995: 21–104). In the first part of his analysis, he summarizes the conceptions surrounding the relationships between the Maya and the peoples of Central Mexico. A long time ago a group of authors used to imagine the Maya and the “Mexicans” as two discrete and quite opposite units: the former more ancient, peaceful, and civilized; the latter more bellicose and less refined. More recently, ideas have changed since it is now thought that these two units derived from a more modest, common Mesoamerican descent, in constant demographic exchange of goods and ideas (32–42).

In the second part, Jones tackles three great controversies raised in turn to Tula and Chichén Itzá: the historicity of the mythical Tollan and its identification with the archaeological and historical Tula in the modern-day state of Hidalgo; the chronology of Chichén Itzá; and the connections between this urban center

and Tula. Regarding the latter controversy, he brings up two groups of explanations that, in general terms, succeeded each other in time (60–75). He calls the hypotheses of the first group, those of “irreconcilable polarity.” Their central idea is that a confrontation between the two different societies occurred and left one of them the loser.

In this respect, all kinds of propositions exist concerning the number of invasions, their nature, and the trajectories that followed. Charnay (1885), Daniel Brinton (1882), and Tozzer (1957) supposed the direct arrival of the Toltecs to

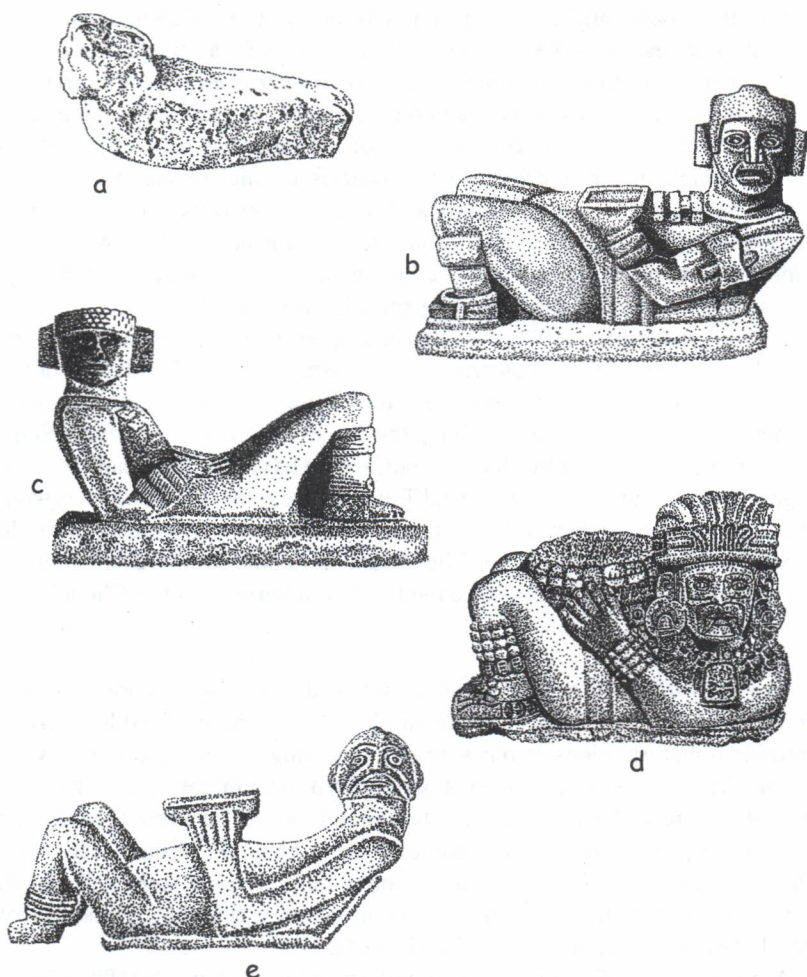


Fig. 1.1. Representations of the deity known as Chacmool: a. proto-*chacmool* from Cerro del Huistle, Jalisco (Chalchihuites culture), from Marie-Areti Hers 1989; b. Toltec; c. Maya from Chichén Itzá; d. Mexico; and e. Tarascan.

Chichén Itzá. Tozzer (1957: 53) affirmed that the Maya of Chichén were not invaded on one, but rather three successive occasions, by peoples originating from Central Mexico who had introduced—in addition to an architectural style of their own—the practices of human sacrifice, the phallic cult, and sodomy. First the Toltecs arrived, headed by Kukulcán I; then the Mexicanized Itzá from the Gulf Coast, led by Kukulcán II; and, finally, Mexican mercenaries from Tabasco. Sigvald Linné (1934), Sylvanus Morley (1947), and Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1950) proposed that peoples from Central Mexico did not arrive directly to Chichén Itzá, but rather established themselves previously in other zones of the Yucatán Peninsula, establishing relations with the local populations. Whether directly or indirectly, all these scenarios and many more perceived Tula as the indisputable motor of the process and the Maya capital as the “victim” of an invasion.

In stark contrast, George Kubler (1961) and Román Piña Chan (1980) inverted the causal equation to suggest that groups originating from the northern peninsula had founded a colony in Tula and built a modest copy of their capital there.

Jones later refers to a second group of hypotheses, those of “symbiotic polarity,” which imagine more complex scenarios in which two or more societies established bonds of complementarity and collaboration, rather than coercion. In these explanations, the Itzá play a symbiotic role, and are used as “wild cards,” attributing to them the most diverse ethnic affiliations, including Petén Maya, Toltecs, “Mexicanized” Maya, and Mayanized “Mexicans.”

J. Eric S. Thompson (1975: 21–72) is the representative par excellence of this group. In his most refined reconstruction, he identified the Itzá with the Putún—powerful merchants and warriors of the Gulf region, who would have settled in Chichén Itzá in the tenth century, giving the city its first moment of glory. Some time later, the Toltecs, led by Quetzalcoatl, would have fled their capital to take refuge with their Putún allies in coastal Tabasco. From there both peoples would make their way to Chichén Itzá. Thus, after this alliance was formed, the exiled Toltecs, bolstered by the power of the Putún, were able to re-create a new and more sumptuous Tula and introduce the Feathered Serpent cult in Chichén.

THE DEBATE TODAY

In recent times, the polemicists have left aside these two groups of hypotheses to explore new routes. Fundamentally, this has been possible thanks to incredible transformations in our way of conceiving Maya society. Today it is clear that Maya societies had always participated in an intense network of relations with the rest of Mesoamerica. These bonds would be strengthened in the ninth century, giving the Maya a cosmopolitan conception of the world. Along with these new scientific perspectives, many authors have supposed that the builders of Chichén Itzá were Maya who conscientiously imitated models from Central Mexico as part of a new political strategy.

Along this line of thinking, the hypothesis of Jones himself (1995: 76–78, 307–425) stands out, who in a suggestive manner thinks that the architectural and sculptural program of Chichén was eclectic and undertaken by local Maya groups, quite belligerent and knowledgeable of the outside world, given their mercantile activities. He deduces that the imitation of Toltec style could have resulted from

a flow of ideas rather than that of human groups. The copy, stripped of its original significance and function, would have been integrated in this manner into a hybrid, cosmopolitan style whose purpose would be to ideologically legitimate before neighboring communities a recently attained hegemony.

Here it is interesting to compare the ideas of Jones with those of Marvin Cohodas (1989), who maintained that the "Toltec" elements of Chichén were not mere imitations of external ideas, but true esthetic innovations that created an eclectic art. The purpose that the rulers of Chichén pursued, according to Cohodas, was a political and economic relationship with Central Mexico.

OUR POSITION

Faced with this array of propositions, what is our position? Like Jones, we think that a clear intention existed in Chichén Itzá to reproduce elements of a style belonging to Central Mexico. This means that the direction of the flow—independent of those who were its historical agents—was from Central Mexico to Maya territory, because some cultural elements attributed to Tula have their antecedents five hundred years earlier in northern Mesoamerica. In fact, Marie-Areti Hers (1989) described not only a militaristic emphasis in the Classic societies of Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Durango, but also what appear to be the earliest examples of "hypostyle" halls, the *tzompantli*,² and, perhaps, the *chacmool*. Contrary to Kubler's proposition, she claimed that human groups from the Chalchihuites culture, together with the Nonoalca, gave origin to the Toltec tradition.

We also agree with Jones's assertion that the motives of imitation were of a political character. However, we believe that copying exogenous styles has a political meaning that goes much further than merely legitimizing a seductive cosmopolitan image. On the contrary, we think that these artistic phenomena are immersed in far more complex processes that have to do with political and ideological strategies appropriate for a new system of organization. There is another conception of power.

In this same sense, we judge that the analogies between Tula and Chichén Itzá should be analyzed in a much wider context, one that goes beyond the spatial and temporal limits of a specific case. We are referring to an historical process for which evidence seems to exist in a good portion of Mesoamerica from the Late Classic through all of the Postclassic. Written sources from many different regions continually allude to migrations, settlements, and conquests of foreign groups and contain coincidences of personages, religious symbols, and mystical journeys. Archaeology, on the other hand, reveals similarities in aspects such as settlement pattern, architectural styles, iconographic subject matter, and luxury objects. This leads us to believe that the problem is much greater than what has been posed until now.

Like all authors who have intervened in the debate, we base our proposal upon data that archaeology and history offer. However, it is appropriate to state that these data and the methodology of both disciplines have grave limitations. On the one hand, archaeologists have not developed sufficiently complex techniques for detecting the very different flows of humans and ideas that existed in Mesoamerica. The existence and nature of these flows are not necessarily revealed

in the traces of demographic variations nor in the presence of exogenous cultural traits (Arnauld and Michelet 1991). On the other hand, historians are faced with very particular Mesoamerican conceptions of history that make the direct interpretation of texts and distinguishing myth, history, and political propaganda within them extremely difficult (Marcus 1992b).

A good part of the investigations that have tried to resolve this issue has proceeded from the disciplines of archaeology and history. Even in the best of cases, archaeologists have supported themselves in nonanalytical readings of texts, or historians in archaeological findings that are too specific. Lacking, in the face of these problems, has been a global, critical comparison of a considerable, diverse accumulation of historical and archaeological data.

Moreover, it seems pertinent to us that in order to breathe new life into the discussion regarding Tula–Chichén Itzá connections, the specific case must be transcended. This means studying similar phenomena that took place within the overall cultural area between 900 and 1500 C.E. The similarities, of course, are not absolute and become evident when comparing information from areas as distant as Central Mexico, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Highland Guatemala, and Yucatán. None of these regions offer all of the urban, architectural, iconographic, mythical, archaeological, and historical indicators. We are facing a *polythetic group*, whose entities share a good number of attributes, but none of them possess them *all*.³

To manage richer and more varied information and widen the spatial-temporal focus, we present the following two models of general explanation.

THE MODELS

AN ATTEMPT AT AN EXPLANATION OF GREATER SCOPE: THE ZUYUANS

These observations led us to formulate a proposition in an earlier book, intended to provide a global view of the indigenous past throughout the territory corresponding to modern-day Mexico (López Austin and López Luján 1996: 247–271). Particular characteristics of the work—above all, the small amount of space we had for each one of the historical periods—limited our presentation of the proposal to a mere outline. We will now develop some of its aspects.

As one might guess from the problems we posed at the beginning of this essay, research in the last few years has tended to look for:

- a) A politico-ideological explanation of the problem.
- b) Answers from a wider spatial-temporal range, given that the political relationships of the Postclassic present disturbing common aspects.

Various authors have preceded us in emphasizing the politico-ideological character of the problem. For example, Brinton (1890: 83–100) expressed an ideological explanation in his *Essays of an Americanist*. According to him, the process studied, which for many other specialists was produced by invasions of foreign peoples, did not necessarily occur because of population movements: what traveled were not peoples, but rather ideological paradigms and religious and aesthetic ideas. Linnea Wren and Peter Schmidt (1991), on the other hand, in studying the art of Chichén Itzá, found the simultaneity of two different styles substantiating the harmonic coexistence of ruling groups from different ethnic communities, and concluded that the so-called Modified Florescent style, rather

than merely suggesting the existence of a flow, in whichever direction between Tula and Chichén Itzá, may have been the product of elites who propagated a new multi-ethnic policy of greater integration. For Jones (1995), as we have seen, there was a clear intention of reproducing architectural, sculptural, and pictographic styles of outside origin, as there was a quest for political prestige, along with a seductive propagandistic image of cosmopolitanism; copying the model of a remote capital hallowed in glory was desirable.

We can say much more about authors who have looked for a wider interpretive radius in terms of time and space. One of the first explanations that transcended the case of Chichén Itzá attributed the innovative processes emerging in northern Yucatán and Highland Guatemala to a single group of people. This was the position of Thompson (1975: 21–72), followed by many other researchers, which identified this group of people as the Putún or Chontal Maya of the coast of Tabasco and Campeche.

Marie-Charlotte Arnould and Dominique Michelet (1991) also attributed a common cause to processes occurring in distinct regions of Mesoamerica. They demonstrated that a background of radical sociopolitical transformation exists in indigenous Tarascan and Quiché migration stories that should not necessarily be explained in terms of invasions.

We will reconsider both explicative currents. The historical event studied, in fact, has a profound political nature. In it one can observe—with particular shades of temporal, regional, and historical diversity—the confrontations between those who tried to maintain the ancient forms of sociopolitical organization and those who looked for a definitive change. As in different Mesoamerican political movements, the innovators supported their conception of dominion and control in a mythological and ritual complex derived from millenarian religious traditions, but in this case, under a new interpretation that fulfilled the political functions of the moment. This was not an exceptional phenomenon, inasmuch as Mesoamerican religion was utilized as a component of political action. And, of course, the new religious interpretation did not depend upon universal acceptance. In some written sources it is said that during the conflicts those who disagreed were denounced as heretics and sinners.

The fundamental purpose of this essay is to find a link between political action that attempted to make changes in regional relations and an ideological complex that served to support them. For many years, specialists—especially Mayanists—have recognized the ideological nucleus: the Tollan-Quetzalcoatl duality.⁴ This duality constituted a paradigm of the primordial order of society, religion, and authority (Carrasco 1992: 1–2, 106). Our problem now is to determine how politics, religion, mythology, and ritual were related.

The historical scenarios and times were diverse (see Map 1.1). Among them would be found:

- a) Central Mexico, with its privileged position in Tula, Cholula, and the Basin of Mexico.
- b) Michoacán, with Tarascan expansion.
- c) Oaxaca, with disputes among the Mixtec kingdoms.
- d) Northern Yucatán, with majestic Chichén Itzá at its head.

- e) Highland Guatemala, with the aggressive expansion of the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Rabinal Maya.

Concerning the actors, these were:

- a) on the one hand, original peoples with conservative tendencies
b) on the other hand, innovators who could just as well be native groups as immigrants or invaders.

The problem of naming half of the actors arises.⁵ Taking into account that current investigations dismiss the idea of indispensable military flows penetrating the affected regions to impose their dominion, what name would be generically suitable to give to these innovators? Fray Diego de Landa (1982: 16) quite inappropriately called the aggressive outsiders who supported the illegitimate government of the Cocom in Mayapán, "Mexicans." Centuries later, Thompson (1964: 114–144) would perpetuate the absurd name, comparing them with the destructive honey moth that had invaded the industrious Maya beehive, and one still hears the term.⁶ The terms "Toltec" and "Chontal-Putún" are inadequate because they do not extend to the realities of Michoacán and Oaxaca. In fact, any names with ethnic content are limited when facing the possibility that at least some of the political innovators were natives of the affected zones. In short, we cannot give a name to these actors that indicates an ethnicity, language, or place of origin, because other aspects besides ethnic, linguistic, and those of ideological origin are crucial for understanding the historical process.

If this process is of a profoundly political character and is based in myth, our designation of the innovators should come from their own discourse. Given that the reference that they themselves had to a place of origin exists as a common denominator, and that one of the many names of this place is *Zuyuá*, we believe it is accurate to call them *Zuyuan*s.

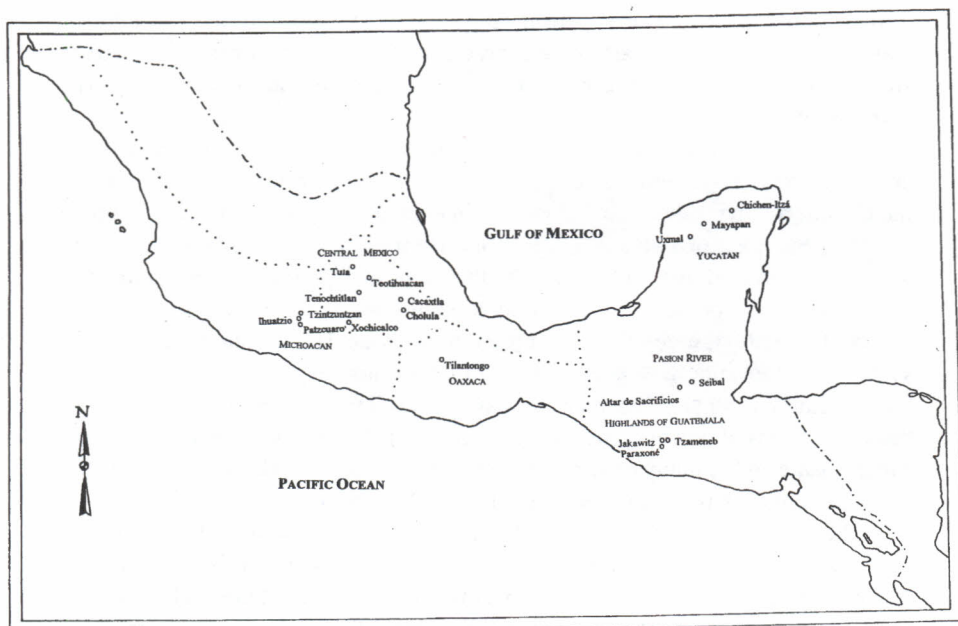
DEFINITION OF THE ZUYUAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

We understand the Zuyuan system as a form of sociopolitical organization and suggest that its primary characteristic is control, on the part of an organic hegemonic complex of settlements of diverse ethnicities who inhabited a region, through a system that assigned an economic and political place and function to each one of the subordinate political entities. This system tended to the maintenance of (traditional ethnic) internal public order and respected the ideological foundations of power in each one of the units; but superimposed a multi-ethnic apparatus as the head of the global organization.⁷

The Zuyuan system differed from the forms of political organization of the Classic in at least three spheres:

- a) The type of multi-ethnic structure.
b) The type of hegemonic influence and dominion of some political units over others.
c) The type of bellicose action.

First, we will look at the ethnic sphere. From the indigenous perspective, each human group had a patron deity, a profession received from this deity, and a language. Gentilic identity was a principle of the first order in the political life of



Map 1.1. Mesoamerica: Some capitals of the Classic, Epiclassic, and Postclassic.

Mesoamerican peoples. Externally, on the one hand, this identity regulated permanent political relationships among the different political units. Internally, on the other hand, it was one of the pillars of governmental authority.

Much of the iconographic and epigraphic evidence from the Classic period reveals that royal authority was based on the supposed proximity between sovereign and patron deity. The sovereign not only operated as the intermediary between the patron deity and the protected collectivity, but he also retained within himself such an affinity with the deity that he was considered superhuman, the very image of the numen over the earth. The sovereign was the “elder sibling” of his subjects, on a level of kinship that legitimated his sacred power over them.

The sacrality of the ruler through his proximity to the deity finds its prototype in the Classic Maya. The great splendor of the Maya kings was not reached in any other Mesoamerican region. This system of the sacralized "elder sibling," however, does not seem to have been sufficient in Teotihuacan. Elsewhere, we have suggested that Teotihuacan was confronted, from very early times, with the necessity of integrating diverse ethnic units under a common government (López Austin 1989; López Austin and López Luján 1996: 112–114). Ethnic composition required the fulfillment of two conditions: first, the necessity of maintaining the principle of authority of different "elder siblings," or representatives of the respective patron deities of each of the units being integrated; second, the constitution of a supra-ethnic, organic, governing collective that, without ignoring the legitimacy of the ethnic rulers and their religious foundations, was sheltered under the

divine protection of a global patron deity. We have supposed that the solution was located for the most part in the character of the exalted patron: He had to be situated at the top, not strictly as a supra-ethnic deity, but as the "territorial patron deity."

If our proposition is correct, then a combination of the two systems of government would have been produced: the traditional, based on the kingship ties of the community with their patron deities (in each of the units within the political system), and the global, based on territory. By means of the first system, power would be exercised over individuals by their ethnic dependency, independent of where they were located; in the second, it would be exercised over all the settlements of a territory, independent of their ethnic group. If this combination of two systems of dominion had been initiated in Teotihuacan, similar solutions may have endured in some Mesoamerican states on until the sixteenth century. In fact, these two forms of power (gentilic and territorial), did exist simultaneously in the Mexica state and in many others on the eve of the Conquest (López Austin 1985: 232–234; López Austin and López Luján 1996: 205–208).

The Zuyuan system, as we shall immediately see, also tried to resolve the problem of ethnic integration with respect to diversity. But this was done by reducing it, ideologically, with the conception of the essential unit of humankind under a divine order that had produced several different human groups. Each group was considered a complementary element of a human complex in service to the gods. Humans, as collaborators of the gods, were agents of divine will over the earth; each different human group had a specific function it had to carry out as its particular mission.

We now move on to the second sphere: the way in which some political units influenced and dominated others. The Maya regimes of the Classic period were characterized by their dispersion. Supra-statal cohesion was attained through alliances and conquests; but a strong autonomous position within the diverse political units and relative instability when facing their neighbors prevailed. Permanent bonds between a metropolis and its dependents and allies could be cemented by extending its ruling lineages. Tikal came to dominate an area of 30,000 km², either directly, by sending nobles of the royal lineage as rulers, or through alliance, by sending royal women to become the marriage partners of neighboring sovereigns (Marcus 1992a). In Oaxaca during the Classic period, Monte Albán had successfully achieved an extensive dominion through military expansion. However, we still know little of its level of cohesion and system of domination. On the other hand, Teotihuacan had economic superiority and political influence over nearly all of Mesoamerica. Although the stages of its ascendancy varied, this seems to have been cemented for the most part in the control of production and mercantile exchange, not in a formalized political framework.

After the fall of Teotihuacan, new forms of political organization seem to have been produced. For the Epiclassic, the "celestial sign" glyph has been interpreted as indicative of a more formal pact between powerful states (Marcus 1992a). It consists of a rectangle from which two open hands emerge, and may also contain the nose and fauces of a jaguar. This glyph is found associated with others depicting weapons, giving it the possible meaning of a military alliance.

The glyph developed between 650 and 900 C.E. in Monte Albán, Zaachila, Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla.

The Postclassic regimes that we are calling Zuyuan, in contrast to those preceding them, attempted regional dominion through the imposition of a thoroughly formalized politico-economic structure. Their confederations of hegemonic capitals were not merely military alliances, but jurisdictional organs of great administrative complexity.⁸

Finally, we will mention what corresponds to the third sphere of political difference: the bellicose. Numerous researchers have contributed in the last fifteen years to refute the utopian idea of a Teotihuacan and Maya Classic period of peace and tranquillity. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the Zuyuan system exceeded the limits of Classic-period bellicosity, above all, because it was not only a warrior regime, but also a militarist regime.

In summary, the Zuyuans constructed a system whose cohesion was based on two apparently contradictory principles. On the one hand, they followed an ideological path that was reinforced by maintaining a peace and harmony among peoples that supposedly was a reflection of universal order. On the other hand, Zuyuan states developed powerful military bodies of control and undertook aggressive campaigns of expansion against weaker ones. The Zuyuan system was an enterprise of enforced harmony.

THE NECESSITY OF FORMULATING MODELS

One reason, of an ontological character—the historical and cultural unity of Mesoamerica—and another, of an epistemological character—the limitation of the sources for knowing what they really thought—make the global study of ideology attractive and necessary. Perspectives that limit the study of a Mesoamerican tradition to an overly specific temporal and spatial scope obscure the general historical meaning of social and political events of great dimensions. Therefore, we propose a different path, divided into two methodological stages:

- a) First, a global understanding of the subject, including the formulation of one or more explanatory models.
- b) Second, research circumscribed to specific times, spaces, and cultures, delving deeper into the particularities of the case, but without losing its wider Mesoamerican context.

In this essay we will be concerned with covering the first methodological stage, for which we mention beforehand some specific aspects of the formulated models:

- a) They derive, as one might suppose, from many earlier investigations conducted by specialists with particular foci, whose data will be integrated in such a manner that permits one to get a sense of the general historical process.
- b) They are intended to be instruments of methodological orientation and not Procrustean beds; in any case, their primordial character is hypothetical.
- c) Two models are offered to the reader (one corresponding to Zuyuan religious and mythological ideology and one concerning the articulation of this ideology with politics), more for facilitating exposition than for logical reasons,

since both make up an indissoluble unit.

- d) First, the outlines of the model are presented; and second, the specific data that gave rise to it (in reverse order from how we proceeded) so that the reader perceives with greater clarity the historical meaning that we intend to uncover.
- e) In spite of the fact that we have made use of a greater amount of space to discuss our proposition in this essay, we recognize that our presentation is susceptible to extensive additions and corrections, for which we submit it to the criticism of our colleagues.

IN SEARCH OF A MODEL OF ZUYUAN IDEOLOGY

The mythical and religious foundations of Zuyuan ideology had the characteristics of a propaganda that, in spite of the military backing of its propagators, attempted to convince rather than oppose. The act of its diffusion in those very different Mesoamerican scenarios itself tells us of its efficacy, and this, in terms of the beliefs, rituals, and imagery of the innovators, must have been presented as a sublimation of the traditional creed rather than a confrontation. In this sense, rather than thinking about this conception as a heretical deviation, we should consider it a mytho-religious adaptation to the political requirements of the innovators. They will accentuate some myths, develop others; increase or diminish the importance of specific deities; introduce or transform rituals; but always striving to maintain an equilibrium between their discourse and the beliefs and practices of the native population, faithful to their traditions and overly susceptible when faced with changes. This can be accepted in general terms; however, during the confrontations, it reached the point that each of the factions accused the other of impiety, heresy, or sin.

The ideology had to resolve a fundamental mytho-political antithesis: the unity/diversity of humans, from which derived the unity/diversity of the religious foundation of power. The mythical figure to which one could appeal to resolve the antithesis was the Tollan-Quetzalcoatl complex, one which, without negating diversity, subjugated it harmoniously.⁹ We will look into the matter in greater detail.

According to Mesoamerican cosmovision, all worldly beings were composed of weighted matter and divine substance. Each living species had a particular divine substance in which resided their inherent characteristics. Human beings were more complex than the other creatures. They had, along with the divine substance that characterized them as members of the human race, that which made them belong to a particular gentilic group, defined, among other characteristics, by a language. This double ascription (to the human race and to the gentilic group) was explained through a mythology that distinguished between the common origin of humanity and the gentilic origins of human groups. Some creation myths explained how divine substance was added to give existence to the human race; others, how humanity, once created, was divided into groups that appeared in the world separately, led by their respective patron deities.

Each human group had a patron deity with whom they shared their divine substance. Mesoamericans conceived of a complex hierarchy of patron deities correlating to the social hierarchy. For example, minor patron deities were merged

to form more powerful deities when the union of minor social units constituted larger groups. The fusion and fission of deities was characteristic of Mesoamerican religion, and the rank of the patrons was a reflection of social segmentation (see Table 1.1).

It is not strange, therefore, that the historical and ethnographic sources would offer us an enormous range of patron deities. The most well known are those of the Nahuatl *calpulli*-type or Mixtec *siqui*-type communities;¹⁰ but minor social units such as families had patron deities, as did those of the major units, up to entire ethnic groups, such as the eponymic patron deity of all the Otomí, or Mixtecs, or Huastecs, etc. (López Austin 1994: 35–39).

The place of origin of the human groups is mysterious and shrouded in mist. The great quantity of names in the sources is surprising. This rich toponymy could be due to two nonexclusive causes: a) the place of origin had many attributes, expressed in epithets, and b) it had a complex topology that suggested specific names for each one of its compartments. The names are so numerous that it is unclear if they refer to sequences in the gestation process of the newborns, or the itineraries that the newborns followed to emerge into the world, or are merely qualifying adjectives.

Among the names given to the primogenial place are found: Where the Tree Stands Erect, The Place of the Ancestors, The Ravine, The Place of Passage, The Place of the Mountain of the Serpent, Where the Flowers Stand Up Straight,

THE DUALITY	THE CREATOR OF HUMAN BEINGS	THE FIRST MOTHER-FATHERS OF THE GREAT ETHNIC GROUPS	THE CALPULTETEO	THE FAMILY PATRONS
The duality projects its creative power	→ ...into one or a pair of deities who in turn unfold...	→ ...into groups of deities, such as the first mother-fathers of the great ethnic groups, who in turn unfold...	→ ...into patron deities of minor social units, such as patrons of communities, who in turn unfold...	→ ...into family patron deities
The Sky and the Earth (Iztac Mixcoatl and Chimalma) engender the creators of humans	Feathered Serpent, son of Iztac Mixcoatl and Chimalma, creates human beings	Tenuch, Ulmecatl, Xicalancatl, Xelhua, Otomítl, and Mixtecítl, all sons of Iztac Mixcoatl, and Chimalma are eponymic creators of the great ethnic groups	Each <i>calpulli</i> has a deity. For example, artisans who make feathered mosaics have Coyotl Inahual as their patron deity	Each family is a depository of a sacred bundle with relics from their protector

Table 1.1. The succession of divine delegations.

Where the Curved Mountain Rises, The Place of He Who Is Adorned With Paper, Where the Blue-Green Water and the Yellow Water Flow, The Place of Reeds, The Place of the Bifurcation, In the Fauces of the Serpent, The Place of the Seven Caves, The Place of the Nine Ravines, and The Place of the Nine. Judging from the frequent confusion in the sources, it is to be supposed that the contradictions or the diversity of interpretations would already, in the past, be part of the mysterious aspect of another time-space.

The creation process in which the human groups emerge consists of three phases: the nocturnal, the auroral, and the sunrise (Table 1.2).¹¹

The nocturnal phase is initiated with the formation of the species by a generic creator deity. There is a primogenial nondistinction, in that all human beings live together, speak the same language, and do not know any particular patron deities. This existence can be compared to intrauterine life, from gestation to the moment prior to birth.

In the auroral phase, the light of Venus produces the colors and with them are born order and time. Order, the colors, and time are encapsulated in the symbolism of the four cosmic trees that sink roots down into the world of the dead and support the celestial levels with their canopies. The trees are individualized by their colors, which mark their position in the cosmos.

The presence of the trees indicates the flow of the divine forces that gave rise to the world and maintain its existence. Standing out among these forces is time, also a divine substance, which extends over the earth's surface in the form of rigid calendrical order. In the primogenial place, time begins to circulate inside the trunks of the cosmic trees. The trees, therefore, record the sequence of the

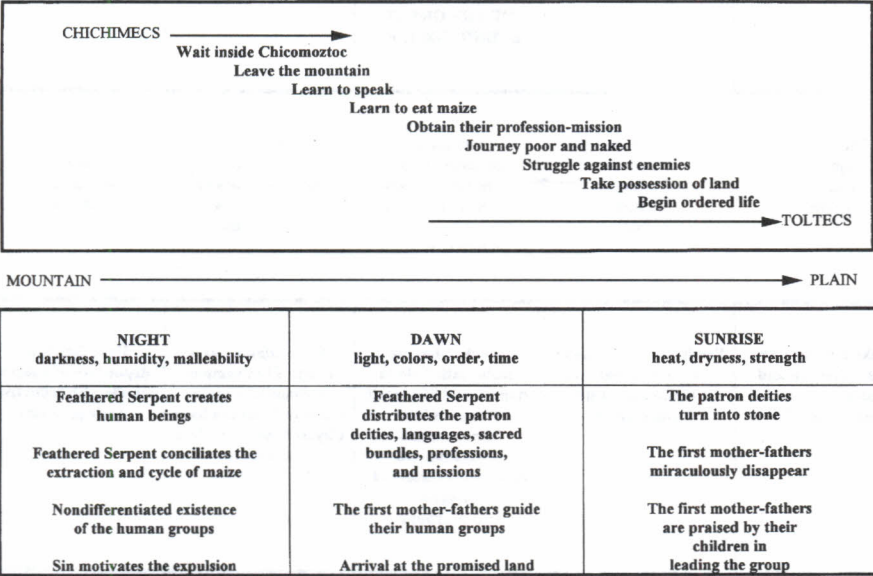


Table 1.2. Human beings, from creation to the beginning of life in the world.

deities upon their permanent entry into the world: they establish the rules of their appearance and the specific time of their influences. In other words, with calendrical time were born order, law, distribution, etc.

In the auroral phase, the various human groups started rising to the surface of the world in distinct historical moments. Often these would be multiple births of seven in seven groups.¹² The cause of birth could be imagined as a transgression committed in the primordial place that forces them to abandon the placid place of origin. This distinction occurs at the moment the light of dawn appears. Each human group acquires its coessential, patron deity, along with their language,¹³ particular customs, divine image, and sacred bundle.¹⁴ The patron presents the group with a profession—an art—that will become a sacred exercise. This phase includes their departure from The House of the Four Trees, their crossing of the waters of the sea, and their suffering great torments. According to the different myths of origin, the group is born as a multitude of humans or simply in the form of “first mother-fathers”—Edenic pairs, whose personalities come to be confused with those of the patron deities, because they are their derivations, their realization.¹⁵ Often the story of the four “first fathers” is told and, occasionally, their consorts are mentioned. After the departure from The House of the Four Trees comes the dispersion of the human groups, who begin to journey distances on their own in search of the promised land. This stage can be compared with birth.

In the sunrise phase, the groups take possession of the land and the “first mother-fathers” disappear. This time corresponds to the beginning of life.

The first two phases of creation—the nocturnal and the auroral—are dominated by the figure of the creator deity of the human race. During the night he forms humans. After this he is the *accoucheur*, the Lord of the Dawn, the one who organizes and distributes humans in the world. Order is established under the form of a donation of goods. The creator deity is the great distributor of the riches corresponding to each group. In fact he delivers himself in the form of specific patron deities; he is projected in multiple segmentations. He gives each group the image of the patron and the sacred bundle containing the indispensable relics, cementing the direct relationship between protector and protected.¹⁶

The creator of humanity receives many names, among them Feathered Serpent, Our Venerable Noble, The Conqueror, Four Feet, Flower, and 1 Reed. Obviously, he is one of the most important deities in the Mesoamerican pantheon. Feathered Serpent seems, at first glance, to be a mélange of incongruous symbols: his body forms a column that supports the sky; his powers extend to the wind, light and colors, dawn, and the course of Venus; he plays an active role in human gestation; he is the inventor of the calendar and, consequently, of temporal order; he is the bandit-bestower who transfers the most precious goods (bones, fire, maize, and pulque) from the time-space of the gods to that of humans; he is the divinity of commerce, priestly knowledge, and even robbery through sorcery.

Feathered Serpent, however, could not be conceived as a divinity that accumulated attributes over the centuries. Within his range of powers exists a logic, a meaning that unifies these attributes. If we wanted to characterize Feathered Serpent in a formula, we would say that he is the divine being that causes the flow

of substances between the world of the gods and the world of humans: he is the *extractor*. As the wind, he opens the way for the rains; as Venus he opens, alternately, the way to the sun and to the shadows of the night; as lord of the cosmic trees, he opens the calendrical way to the gods transformed in time; he extracts the human race, its diverse groups, and the child who is born; he extracts light, heat, and food for humankind. He transcends boundaries (see Table 1.3).

Before leaving the subject of the three phases of human creation, we want to mention the importance that geometry, colors, and numbers have in the origin of order in the universe. The cosmos was divided into three great levels: the sky, the surface of the earth, and the underworld. The three were connected by five columns or axes—usually, flowering trees—that occupied the center and each one of the four cardinal points. These five arboreal axes were distinguished from each other by a certain color and, occasionally, by other diagnostic features. In this manner, numbers and colors served as guides to the structure and mechanics of the universe.

The Flowering Tree was the central axis of the cosmos. Inside its trunk flowed two opposing, complementary forces—fire and water—into which all that existed was divided. Like the gods, the tree was projected to the four cardinal extremes in the world and, correspondingly, the two opposing forces were reproduced in pairs within each trunk. In this game of replication, the numbers one, two, four, and five stand out. With these numbers and colors, the flow of divine forces, including time, was symbolized.

ATTRIBUTES	CONDUCT	CHARACTERIZATION
GOD OF THE DAWN GOD OF VENUS GOD OF THE COLORS	<i>extractor</i> of the light	CIVILIZER WARRIOR
WIND GOD	<i>extractor</i> of the rains	BESTOWER REPRODUCER
COSMIC TREE COLUMN SUPPORTING THE WORLD INVENTOR OF THE CALENDAR	<i>extractor-organizer</i> of time	ORGANIZER RULER
CREATOR DEITY OF HUMANKIND GENERAL PATRON OF HUMANITY GOD OF GESTATION	<i>extractor</i> of human beings	REPRODUCER PROTECTOR BESTOWER
INVENTOR OF <i>PULQUE</i> EXTRACTOR OF MAIZE STEALER OF FIRE GOD OF COMMERCE	<i>extractor-conductor</i> of the goods of humanity	BESTOWER REPRODUCER CIVILIZER MERCHANT

Table 1.3. Attributes, mythical conduct, and characterization of Feathered Serpent.

To summarize this section, the Tollan–Feathered Serpent complex constitutes the ideological essence of the Zuyuan system. Feathered Serpent, the *extractor*, creates in the night, distributes at dawn, and protects during the day. Tollan is his home, the house of the dawn, the origin of temporal, spatial, and social order. The primogenial light, arriving in Tollan at the moment when the human groups abandon it, makes the colors appear; the colors mark the points where the archetypal trees stand erect; the trees reveal the three cosmic levels that act as passageways to the gods. There in Tollan, Feathered Serpent is ruler, organizer, and distributor. And when the inhabitants of Tollan leave, Feathered Serpent, in the ultimate, auroral act, fragments and distributes himself by turning into the bestowers, the patron deities. Thus divided, he delivers a part of his own essence to humankind: he gives them different languages, he imparts to them the professions, he marks the specific ritual obligations, he situates each human group on the surface of the earth, and, when the groups are finally settled, from each unit of his divided being he makes humans and their maize plots fertile.

Finally, there is an aspect that should be emphasized: Feathered Serpent, as an astral divinity, as a being of light who defeats the powers of darkness and the night, is an aggressive, warrior deity. His figure as Lord of the Dawn is one of an armed and belligerent god.¹⁷ Thus, another one of his names is The Conqueror.

IN SEARCH OF A MODEL OF THE ARTICULATION OF ZUYUAN POLITICS

The Zuyuans recognized and respected the internal regimes of the peoples drawn into their dominion, since this order emanated from the different patron deities. They advocated, simultaneously, the formation of a superior political example. Their innovation consisted of a center-periphery structure with a greater range, which went beyond ethnic and linguistic boundaries, without dismissing the value of their primogenial distinctions. This order was established in each region; the independent political units in constant conflict were integrated within a corporate governmental institution. This institution established the hierarchy of its components, distributed jurisdictions and functions according to a cosmic model, imposed a harmonious coexistence, and permitted the organization of a military authority for internal control, defense, and expansion.

The innovators were said to come from the source of order itself: The Place of Reeds, The Place of the Seven Caves. They were put in charge of reproducing the primordial order over the earth, of projecting Tollan in the world. This action made necessary the establishment of a network of governmental, military, and ritual functions that considerably increased administrative capacities and warrior power.

Cosmic geometry was projected in political organization. The hegemonic capitals often established their internal government upon a dualistic division. Externally, a tripartite system—which we think derived from the division of the cosmos into celestial, terrestrial, and underworld levels—commonly gave rise to an alliance among three hegemonic capitals. This allowed for multi-ethnic composition, which was one of the firmest pillars of the new power.

Inside and outside these capitals, power was distributed according to a rigid formula of functions and hierarchies. Territory customarily was segmented bureaucratically into four parts, corresponding to the divisions of the terrestrial

level, and the quadrants of time and space, with their symbolic colors, organized lineages, bureaucratic bodies, functions, and power.

The earthly was a replica of the divine. For centuries rulers had been presenting themselves as spokesmen of the gods, and this arrangement had to continue. Although the traditional rulers—"natural lords," as many sources call them—were said to be privileged bearers of the essence of their respective patrons, the supreme Zuyuan ruler received the force of the generic creator of the human race: Feathered Serpent. He was the gods' replica in the world. Thus, more than a few rulers appear in history bearing some of his names: their biographies are charged with wonder and their lives follow the patterns of the Lord of the Dawn's adventures.

The ability of Feathered Serpent to be divided into various entities was also projected into the political order. As we shall see, the man-god, the earthly recipient of fire from the supreme patron (the one who presided over the man-god-patrons), was not always one individual, since the force of the generic creator could be distributed among two or more human beings to constitute a compound delegation.

The new system reproduced among the rulers the deity-creator/deities-patrons relationship, and at the same time legitimated a superior order that unified the diverse (Table 1.4). The traditional rulers, since remote times, had celebrated rituals renewing their sacred political power through the mystical path of meeting with their patron deity, the great ancestor. In the new order, the delegation of divine power formed a pyramid. Feathered Serpent, The Conqueror, Lord of the Dawn transmitted authority to terrestrial representatives, and they, in turn, authorized the charges of the "natural lords." This system obligated the supreme delegate to travel to the Place of Reeds to obtain the god's power. The written sources refer to the sovereign's legitimating journey as the miraculous crossing to another time-space, where he received as gifts the symbols of the deity's power—the sacred bundle,¹⁸ the diagnostic adornments, the book, jewels, musical instruments, emblems, mantles, etc.—or to the sanctuary that reproduced the place of creation. In the sanctuary, a representative of Feathered Serpent, during the pilgrimage, pierced the nasal wing membrane or nasal partition to insert a jewel that identified him, in turn, as the redistributor of the sacred instruments of power and governmental legitimacy. Through ritual, both officiant and penitent achieved communion with the god, both partook of his essence.

All this appeared in a context of opposition between two cultural categories: the *chichimecayotl* and the *toltecayotl*, nomads and sedentaries, barbarism and civilization. Zuyuans extolled their nomadic Chichimec origins; but their political message was the civilized *toltecayotl*. How can this be understood? In this opposition, values from two extreme conditions experienced during the auroral phase were being expressed. When the human groups began setting auroral time in motion, when they left The Place of the Seven Caves, they were semiconscious, as if inebriated, still possessed by the forces of the night; they were described as savages, crude, ignorant of correct forms of expression. It is said that they did not even know about eating maize, one of the goods that Feathered Serpent had stolen for humans.¹⁹ But their condition started to be transformed on their mythical







	ÁMBITO MÍTICO			ÁMBITO POLÍTICO
FUSIÓN  FISIÓN 	<p>Tollan la ciudad de los artistas</p>  <p>Cada grupo humano recibe su profesión al salir de Chicomóztoc</p>	<p>Tollan donde se habla una sola lengua</p>  <p>Cada grupo humano recibe su lengua al dejar Zuyuá</p>	<p>Serpiente Emplumada creador del ser humano</p>  <p>Cada grupo humano es creado por su dios patrono</p>	<p>Representación humana (singular, dual o plural) de Serpiente Emplumada sobre la tierra</p>  <p>Cada unidad política tiene su "señor natural" representante de su dios patrono</p>

Table 1.4. Transitions between unity and diversity in the divine and worldly realms.

journey until being replaced by civilization.²⁰ This was reached at sunrise, that is to say, in the time of the founding of their settlements, the establishment of great order, the beginning of Zuyuan cultural and political realization.²¹ We think that the ontological change between *chichimecayotl* and *toltecayotl* is not simply a confrontation of opposites, but rather a transition of the human groups in the auroral phase, the supposed transformation of the poor migrants who arrive, in the end, at the promised land to await the first rising of the sun.²² As Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1989, Lib. X, cap. xxix, II: 650) says, “These said Toltecs all were named Chichimecs, and had no other particular name, except for the one taken from the curiosity and excellence of the works they created, they were called Tultecas, which is the same as us saying ‘refined and curious artificers,’ as those now of Flanders.”²³

In the terrestrial Tollans, the primogenial order of diversity was renewed under one unique power: the power of those who personified the archetypal Toltec ruler. The name “Tula” became synonymous with “civilized metropolis.”

THE ABANDONMENT OF THE ZUYUAN SYSTEM

Before testing our models with specific cases, it is necessary to mention the two ways in which the Zuyuan system or its attempted implementation came to its end.

The first way, which we may call Mixtec-Maya, was the deterioration that led to political disintegration in Oaxaca, Yucatán, and Highland Guatemala. The second, which we can call Tarascan-Mexica, was, in contrast, the surmounting of the

system by more centralized and powerful regimes. Along these lines, the processes in Michoacán and in the Basin of Mexico were similar: on the political terrain, one of the hegemonic states unseated its two allies to become the superior power; ideologically, the winners declared that their own patron deity had the function of "foster father" over all the communities (López Austin 1992; López Austin and López Luján 1996: 270–271). Thus, the Tarascan and Mexica written sources, rather than referring to systems totally Zuyuan in character, illustrate a transitional process toward a more novel order that was interrupted by the Spanish Conquest: the order of Huitzilopochtli and that of Curicaueri.

MESOAMERICAN SCENARIOS

CENTRAL MEXICO

Although we have tried in this essay to relate very synthetically specific cases to the application of the models, none of the sections are as drastically condensed as this one dedicated to Central Mexico. The reasons for abbreviating are appreciable: on the one hand, the volume of data is so great that more detailed attention would offset the balance of the presentation; on the other hand, we have referred to these problems in various earlier works. We therefore will highlight only some of the important points, with the purpose of returning to the topic in the future.

Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, and Teotenango. In the Metepec Phase, when Teotihuacan lived its ultimate times of splendor and retained a population of eighty thousand inhabitants (Sanders 1989), some foretelling signs of change appeared. Cohodas (1989) has said that warfare was exalted in mural painting and funerary pottery, artistic phenomena that also occurred in Xochicalco and Cacaxtla. On the other hand, Esther Pasztory (1988) notes that, as a result of competition with Xochicalco and Cacaxtla, Teotihuacan art of the Metepec Phase turned more virtuous and complex.²⁴ The figurines of the period show exalted and richly attired personages, while, according to her, the mural painting emphasized individualism and nobiliary secularity.

Unfortunately, we lack written sources that speak specifically about the possible roots of Zuyuan ideology in Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, Teotenango, or Cholula. Nevertheless, some characteristics exist in these centers that could be situated within the spectrum of our study (cf. Carrasco 1992: 106).²⁵ The first of these is the paramount importance of Feathered Serpent. In the iconography of Cacaxtla and Xochicalco this god is represented as an ophidian with long barbs.²⁶ The second feature is the militaristic character of these cities: Teotenango, Cacaxtla, and Xochicalco were built at relatively inaccessible elevations and protected with walls and moats. An art style charged with symbols of war and sacrifice corroborates this bellicose exaltation (Hirth 1989; Berlo 1989b; Foncerrada 1993).²⁷

Another aspect worth taking into account is the multi-ethnic condition of their populations, reflected in very diverse ways. On the one hand, calendrical notation in the Epiclassic capitals derived from the Teotihuacan system, although they did coherently combine glyphs from other distinct regions of Mesoamerica (Berlo 1989a). On the other hand, the art of Xochicalco, Teotenango, Cholula, and Cacaxtla is markedly eclectic (Marquina 1970; Nagao 1989; Foncerrada 1993).

One more element situates Xochicalco in the interpretive range of what is Zuyuan: Kenneth Hirth and Ann Cyphers (1988: 147–151) are very astute to notice that the city was founded in a valley that did not have the agricultural potential to support so large a population. Its sudden appearance and prominence could only be explained, according to these authors, by the integration of a confederation of the region's elites, attempting to consolidate regional political control after the fall of Teotihuacan.

Finally, we would like to point out that in the principal temple of Xochicalco, as is well known, the *taludes* (sloping panels) are decorated with feathered serpents and the *tableros* (vertical panels) present a succession of seated personages, individualized with glyphs that have been interpreted as onomastic of one dynasty (Nicholson 1969) or as toponyms of conquered communities (Berlo 1989a; Hirth 1989). A third possibility, however, could be considered in light of the aforementioned work of Hirth and Cyphers: the personages on the *tablero* could be local rulers integrated into a federation under the sign of Feathered Serpent. Although one could interpret this sequence as a lineage legitimated by Feathered Serpent, it could also be understood as a meeting of local lords incorporated into the Xochicalco state, members of a system of corporate government. This third reading seems more plausible if one considers it doubtful that, during the relatively short life of the city, a dynasty of thirty monarchs would have existed.

The influence of the Central Mexican Epiclassic cities on the rest of Mesoamerica should not be minimized. Gordon Willey (1977: 67) thinks it is possible that the iconography of Cholula and Xochicalco may have inspired the invaders of the Río de la Pasión region.

Tula. As we move forward in time, the archaeological and historical information from Central Mexico offers more evidence concerning Zuyuan ideology and organization. In the written sources of the sixteenth century, as Arnould and Michelet (1991) asserted, "all roads led to Tollan or came from there." Tollan, The Place of Reeds, is the focal point of legitimacy.²⁸ Central Mexico possessed four great capitals whose fame, in one way or another, made them replicas of the mythical center of power: Teotihuacan and Cholula, which received the name of Tollan as an epithet; Tula, Hidalgo,²⁹ considered by many authors to be the prototypical Tollan; and the powerful Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the city that provides us with the most information concerning the political organization of the *excan tlatoloyan*, or Triple Alliance.³⁰ We will exclude the first of the four, which, at least for now, remains outside the temporal scope of our study, and will refer to the rest.

Tula—the "ugly sister" of an old polemic—astonishes us as much for the praise of its greatness made in the sources as for the contrast between these eulogies and archaeological reality. The magnificence, technical development, and treasures described by the written sources do not correspond with excavation results. But at least the archaeologists have been able to show the magnitude of the city, its relative wealth, and multi-ethnic character (Matache and Cobean 1985; Cobean and Mastache 1995),³¹ crucial factors in assessing its role in history.

The explanation of the apparent contradiction between the written and archaeological sources is well known: it concerns two cities, one divine and the other worldly. Tula (Hidalgo) was one of the terrestrial replicas of the divine

Tollan (The Place of Reeds). Tollan is identified—wholly or as one of its parts—with the Tamoanchan of the newborns' formation. As we have seen, the Feathered Serpent god played a primary role in this during the nocturnal and auroral phases.

According to the written sources, in the terrestrial Tula existed one or two rulers who received the name of Quetzalcoatl, meaning Feathered Serpent, which allows us to suppose that the ones who carried the name were the representatives of the Lord of the Dawn, human vessels wherein the creator divinity deposited his force (López Austin 1973).

In addition, it is also necessary to take into account that the protagonist role of Tula exercised during the Early Postclassic period was converted into a Mesoamerican model in the realms of architecture, imagery, dress, and armaments. The confusions between Tollan and Tula derive from the Mesoamerican conception of history, but also from popular fantasy, and, above all, from political intentionality. This vagueness formed a chain in which myth, legend, and reality were reciprocally transformed (Table 1.5). As if that were not enough, the force of Tollan/Tula and Feathered Serpent/Quetzalcoatl also affected colonial historiography, in which the richest interlaces between divine adventures, legendary miracles, and terrestrial events appear.

When referring to Tula as the city of exuberance, wealth, precious birds, colors, wisdom, and the coming together of all artificers (master craftsmen), the written sources are referring to the primordial Tollan (Sahagún 1989, II: 650–655). The mythical Tollan infected the historical Tula with its fame. The archetypical place was marked not only by total abundance, but also by the joining together of the arts and human knowledge. It is well-known that the word *toltecatl* in the Nahuatl language was as equivalent to the genteel “Toltec” as it was to “artificer.”³¹ Under this logic, we believe that the cluster of “artificers” of Tula of which the written sources speak should be interpreted as the auroral meeting of all the human groups in the common mythical homeland: Tollan. Upon leaving there in the moment of their creation, each human group acquired a specific art as a gift from their patron deity.

Much more can be said about the ruler Quetzalcoatl: he is painted as a powerful being who repeats the heroic exploits of Feathered Serpent. Political propaganda depicts the earthly Quetzalcoatl as founders of order and sources of legitimacy. Thus, according to written sources, the royal houses of the Quetzalcoatl of Tula are four (Sahagún 1989, II: 651) and are distinguished among themselves by the colors of the cosmic trees, and in each of them are joined the cold and hot substances that constitute time (López Austin 1990: 345–347). In other words, the order imposed by the priest-ruler Quetzalcoatl is a reflection of the calendrical order established by Feathered Serpent, that is to say, the temporal sequence that rises through the cosmic columns to spread over the face of the earth.

The colonial historiography concerning the historical Tula (Hidalgo) began to be affected, moreover, by the efforts of some historians who intended to give a rational explanation to indigenous mythical passages and, at the same time, wanted to adjust the story to new myths: those of the Bible. Thus, when Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl (1975: 263–264) recounted the history of the Toltecs, he made

the five cosmogonic suns merely stages in the history of humanity. He said that the peoples altered their languages, but he related the episode to the construction of a very high tower. The ancestors of the Toltecs were seven men and seven women who spoke the same language, covered great lands and seas, and arrived at Huehue Tlapallan (The Ancient Place of Painting), a site that seems to have more to do with auroral colors than with terrestrial time. In spite of its imbrication with Christian elements, this material is very useful, at least for establishing comparative links with other narratives of greater historical constancy. In this respect, the passage is interesting where the ruler Our Venerable Noble,³³ in order to establish peace with his powerful neighbors, proposes that they construct a harmonious quadripartite government and gives them a ball court. The ball court is made of precious stones: emerald, ruby, diamond, and hyacinth (Alva Ixtlilxóchitl 1975: 279). Here the reader should remember the symbolic nexus between the terrestrial level and the ball court, as well as the quadripartite division of the Zuyuan system, itself. The colors of the jewels of the ball court (green, red, white, and reddish yellow) clearly coincide with those that another source points out for houses of Quetzalcoatl (Sahagún 1989, II, 651).³⁴

Cholula. As we said, Cholula also was called Tollan. It is an exhilarating case for at least three reasons. The first is the serious doubt it raises when reading

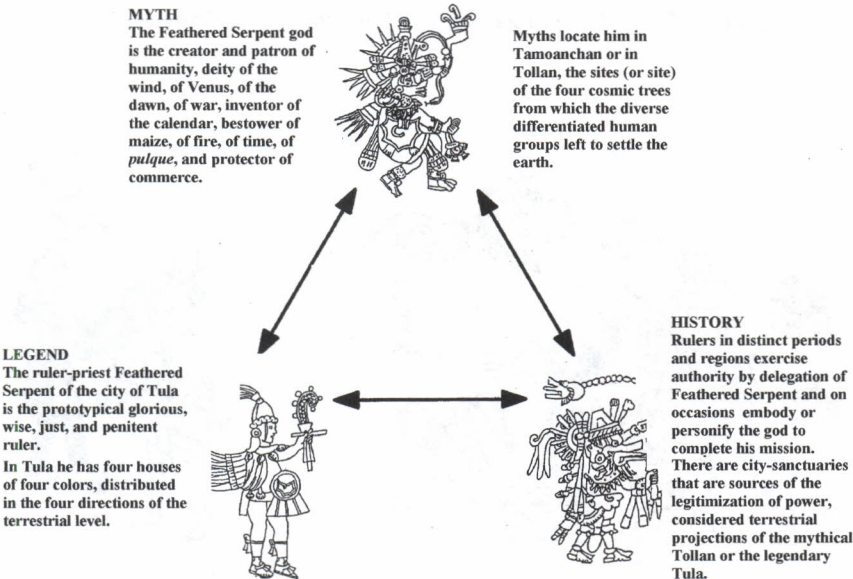


Table 1.5. The three levels of analysis of Feathered Serpent and Tollan.

fragments in the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca* (1976) that mention the Toltec people's city of origin: To which Tula were they referring? The second has to do with the dual government of Cholula, formed by two personages who represent the Supreme Divinity and integrate the Sky/Earth pair. The third reason is the sanctuary character Cholula had along with the "nose-piercing" ceremony practiced there, the ritual legitimator of the power of other communities' rulers (Figure 1.2).³⁵

We begin with the reference to Tula in the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*. When we read the story of the Tolteca-Chichimecs and the Nonohualca-Chichimecs who left The Place of Reeds, do we not find mention of the terrestrial Tula or are we in the presence of the Tollan of myth? In spite of the very timely and careful translation of Luis Reyes García, the text is totally obscure and contains strange parts that require meticulous analysis.

We will synthesize the beginning of the narrative: Toltecs and Nonohualca were Chichimecs originating from Colhuacatepec (The Place of the Mountain of the Ancestors), where they left to occupy Tula. It is mentioned that there were four Toltecs and four Nonohualca who abandoned Colhuacatepec (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 132–133). It could be interpreted that there were four chiefs of the emigrants, or the four "first fathers." Everyone was settled in The Place of Reeds; but the Nonohualca-Chichimecs had to leave there during the general disbanding of the twenty groups subordinate to the Toltecs. The source says that each one of the twenty went to deserve their place of settlement.

Up to here, nothing seems too suspicious. The first problem is the time of the occupation of The Place of Reeds. The joint stay of the Tolteca-Chichimecs

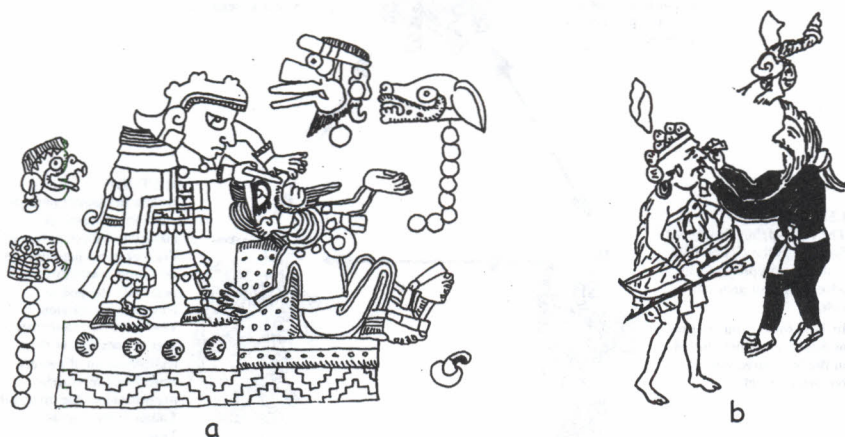


Fig. 1.2. Nose-piercing ritual for insertion of the jewel of power: a. Mixtec: 8 Deer Jaguar Claw submits to the ritual on lámina 52 of the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*; b. Cholula: Ixcicoatl pierces the nose of the Chichimec chief Tecpatzin on folio 21r of the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*.

and Nonohualca-Chichimecs in this city, which one could suppose lasted centuries based upon written and archaeological sources, is reduced to two years! In addition, the Nonohualca-Chichimecs, after the conflict, leave "The Place of Reeds" *during the night* and "take the riches of Quetzalcoatl" (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 132–135). These riches, perhaps, may be related to the sacred bundle (*tlaquimilolli*) that one of the chiefs carries (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 136–137). They leave, moreover, in seven groups, which will give rise to the foundation of seven seats of stone (*chicome teicpalli*), symbols of authority (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 136 and note 19).

The Tolteca-Chichimecs, now without the Nonohualca-Chichimecs, remain in The Place of Reeds until completing a total stay of fifteen years. They abandon the city according to Feathered Serpent's instructions. In fact, one of the Toltec chiefs, Cohuenan (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 141–144), travels to Cholula and admires its richness. Then he invokes the creator (He for Whom Is Lived, Feathered Serpent, Four Feet, The Conqueror), and asks him for a home for the Toltecs. Feathered Serpent acquiesces, and the Toltecs depart toward Cholula, where they are established in definitive form.

In summary, what is suspicious is that until this point the narrative seems to correspond to an auroral time that begins in Tollan and ends in Cholula, suggesting that these Tolteca-Chichimecs were not necessarily those of Tula (Hidalgo). Thus, there is no basis in this source for supposing invasion. Cholula would earn the name of Tula in its own right and not by the intervention of its western neighbor.³⁶ Many other details in the document's text and pictographs would complement this proposition, but we will leave this problem for another time and continue with the Cholula story.

In the same document, another auroral time takes place that is very well defined. Two of the four Toltec chiefs—or "first fathers"—are the most important personages in the codex: Quetzaltehueyac and Ixcicoatl. They are characterized by their extraordinary longevity. Their names form, with two of their respective halves (*Quetzal-* and *-coatl*), the name of Feathered Serpent. They are depicted, moreover, with a priest's hairstyle and the long whiskers of this deity. By order of He for Whom Is Lived, both go to the place of origin, called in the codex, among many other names, The Place of the Mountain of the Ancestors, The Place of One Adorned with Paper, The Place of the Seven Caves, Where the White Reed Is, and Where the Magical Ballcourt Is Straight. Their supernatural powers allow them to do the work of *accouchers*, of initiators, for they conciliate the departure of the seven Chichimec groups waiting in the seven wombs of Chicomoztoc (The Place of the Seven Caves). The two Tolteca-Chichimec priests receive the newborns when they cannot even speak the Nahuatl language, and teach them to eat maize. The Chichimecs who went out to the world obtain the military profession, for which they were created and with which they will fulfill their obligation before the creator god, acknowledging their commitment with a sacred song. They will leave, then, their mythical mountain, to wander "through the flat land, through the divine land."³⁷ Quetzaltehueyac and Ixcicoatl are the ones who legitimate the Chichimec chiefs through complex ritual acts, and pierce their noses to insert the jewels of power in the holes (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 158–171) (Figure 1.2).

One of the drawings in the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca* may provide evidence concerning the political functions of Cholula architecture. Two quadrangular buildings, found on folio 27r, are organized symmetrically with stairways in front, an arrangement that can be seen in Quiché Maya settlements. The four Chichimec chiefs are depicted in the interiors of the buildings: Quetzaltehueyac and Tezcahuitzil in one and Ixcicohuatl and Tololohuitzil in the other.

We move on to the second of the interesting issues we mentioned at the beginning of this section. Before the Toltecs settled in Cholula, when it was still populated by the Olmeca-Xicallanca, the priest Cohuenan observed the lords who governed the city: the *tlalchiach* and the *aquiach*. The titles of these two lords are very interesting because we know from another source that they derive from the compound name given in Cholula to the Supreme Deity (Tlaquiach Tlachiach), as the master who came from the celestial levels and the underworld (Muñoz Camargo 1981: 72v and 197r).³⁸

When using his name, both rulers should be considered the joint delegates of the Supreme Deity. But, at the same time, these rulers are identified with those instituted by Quetzalcoatl, himself:

These two Indians [Aquiach and Tlalchiach] were in a temple . . . that was called Quetzalcoatl[']s, . . . founded to honor a captain who brought the people of this city, in olden times, to settle there, from very remote parts toward the west, where is not known [with] certainty. And this captain was named Quetzalcoatl, and, deceased as he was, they made him a temple, in which there were, besides these two Indians, a great quantity of priests (Rojas 1985: 129).³⁹

Now then, if we take into account that the two principal personages of the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca* make up a dual authority in a city where the same type of government previously existed, and if we accept that putting together the two halves of the names Quetzaltehueyac and Ixcicoatl form Quetzalcoatl, may we not suppose that the Zuyuan government in Cholula had to adapt to a local tradition of dual power?

The third of these issues relates to the sanctuary character the city had—for which it received the title of “Tula”—and to the ceremonies involving the piercing of the nose, lip, or ears, as an legitimizing act for the lords of other communities. Rojas (1985: 130), speaking of the power of the city and the attributions of the two priest-rulers who reigned there, describes that,

[L]ikewise, these two supreme priests had preeminence for confirming the status of all the rulers and kings of this New Spain, [and it was] in this manner: that those such kings and chiefs, upon inheriting their kingdom or domain, came to this city to acknowledge their obedience to the idol there, Quetzalcoatl, to whom they offered rich feathers, mantles, gold and precious stones, and other things of value. And, having made offerings, they joined together in a chapel dedicated for this purpose, where the two supreme priests honored them by piercing their ears, or their noses, or their lower lip, according to the domain they possessed, by which their authority was confirmed, and they returned to their lands . . .

Likewise, there was an order and law that, in 53 out of 53 years . . . peoples, from all the communities, who confirmed [their] authority here, came to pay tribute to the said temple . . .

Likewise, the Indians who came from throughout the land brought these offerings because of their devotion and pilgrimage to visit the temple of Quetzalcoatl, because this was the metropolis and had as much veneration as Rome in Christianity, and Mecca among the Moors (Rojas 1985: 130–132).⁴⁰

Zuyuan tradition also continued to be reflected institutionally in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region during the Late Postclassic. We are referring particularly to the installation ritual of the rulers called *tetecuhtin*, according to a report sent to Spain by Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza on December 10, 1537. This report, published by Pedro Carrasco (1966), says that the future *tecuhitli* ascended to the office in the penitential ceremony called *yacaxapottaliztli*, or “the perforation of the nose,” an operation performed with two piercing implements, one made of eagle bone, the other of jaguar bone. In this ceremony, the ruler was awarded two highly significant names: the first, Motecuhzauhqui, characterized him as a penitent who attained the title of *tecuhitli*; the second identified him with the god Quetzalcoatl himself, under his Nacxitl avocation. The text literally says, “and four days passed, on the fifth they covered his entire body and face with soot, and some clothes and some strips of paper and two names were given to him, one was Motecuçauque, and the other, Naxictle, which are his designations as penitent and image of Calcoatl” (Carrasco 1966: 135).⁴¹

Mexico-Tenochtitlan. On the other side of the mountains, the communities of the Basin of Mexico provide us with a vast amount of information about origin myths, migration accounts, as well as the political organization of the hegemonic Triple Alliance. One of the best-known myths is that of the creation of human beings beginning with the journey of Feathered Serpent to the world of the dead, where he takes bones and ashes—a cold substance—to mix with blood extracted from his own penis—a hot substance (*Leyenda de los soles* 1945: 120–121).⁴² From this mixture humans would be born.

The preceding myth is complemented with another account in which it says that, after the fourth age of the world had been destroyed, the first man and the first woman were created, ten years before the birth of the Fifth Sun. In this account the creator deity was named 9 Wind (Benavente 1971: 389), a name that also corresponds to Feathered Serpent.

The myth of the origin of human beings is connected with the myth of their sustenance. The creator of humankind begins the process of extracting maize, a treasure that the gods had hidden away in an impenetrable mountain. This action prompted by Feathered Serpent causes maize to begin a life-and-death cycle. Leaving the Mountain of Our Sustenance, maize is robbed by the rain gods, the ones who bring him to the underworld (*Leyenda de los soles* 1945: 121), and thus will begin the cycle of the birth and rebirth of agricultural crops.

The first of the myths mentioned is fundamental for the problem that we have taken on, because in it one can see the dividing of the creator god into the multiplicity of the patron deities. In fact, in one variant very similar to the account pointed out, the one who descends into the world of the dead is not Feathered Serpent, but rather his twin, Xolotl. Instead of Feathered Serpent’s blood giving origin to human beings, it will be the blood of a group of deities; and instead of

this act occurring in Tamoanchan, the generic site of creation, it happens in Chicomoztoc, the Place of the Seven Caves (Mendieta 1945, I: 83–84).⁴³

Here, the pairing from the singular to the plural is clear. On the one hand, we have Feathered Serpent creating all of humanity in Tamoanchan (the generic cradle); on the other hand, the patron deities gestate their respective human groups in Chicomoztoc (a multiple uterus of births that occur in the story).

This important leitmotif is found in other mythical accounts that refer to the birth of the children of the Supreme Pair, the Sky and the Earth (cf. López Austin 1973: 145–147). From this hierogamy is born one or various offspring.

1. According to the *Histoyre du Mechique* (1665: 112), Camaxtli (the Sky) impregnates Chimalma (the Earth) in Michatlauhco. Chimalma dies during childbirth and the son is Quetzalcoatl.
2. According to Motolinía (Benavente 1971: 10), Iztacmixcoatl (equivalent to Camaxtli)⁴⁴ has six children with Ilancueitl (equivalent to Chimalma).⁴⁵ The six are: Xelhua, Tenuch, Ulmecatl, Xicalancatl, Mixtecatl, and Otomitl. The place of origin is Chicomoztoc.

We may see in these two accounts some characteristics coinciding with the myths of the creation of human beings.

1. *Singularity/plurality*. In one of them, the protagonist is Quetzalcoatl. In the other, there is a multiplicity of personages.
2. *Multiple personages engender human groups*. In Motolinía's account, five of the six personages are clearly eponyms: Tenuch, Ulmecatl, Xicalancatl, Mixtecatl, and Otomitl, generators, respectively, of the Tenochca, Olmec, Xicalanca, Mixtec, and Otomí peoples.⁴⁶ In addition to this, Motolinía affirms that "from them great generations were produced, almost like one reads of the sons of Noah" (Benavente 1971: 10).
3. *Mythical places*. Quetzalcoatl's place of origin is Michatlauhco, while that of the eponymic deities is Chicomoztoc. It should be stated here that Michatlauhco means "In the Ravine of the Fishes," a name that we suggest is equivalent to Tamoanchan.⁴⁷

The migration stories of the peoples of the Basin of Mexico also offer rich information. However, their proper exploitation would require a timely study of mythical births, migrations, and foundations of settlements, one that would go considerably beyond the aims of this essay.⁴⁸

Other Mesoamerican accounts whose registers come from Central Mexico illustrate the relationship between the patron deity and his people by way of the sacred bundle. Some refer to the birth of the sun, their sovereign character in the world, and the way in which other deities were destroyed to initiate their government. "Dead" gods were converted into patron deities, each one delivering to the community a sacred bundle with their relics. These would be the link between the protector and his children. When a priest, for example, wore the clothes of the patron deity, he transformed his body into a vessel of the divinity (*Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* 1965: 47). Another gift that the patron deity gave to his children—the profession—was delivered to them with the instruments of office. Thus, the Mexica received from Huitzilopochtli the necessary instruments to act as hunters of lacustrine (lake) species.

The Mexica and their contemporaries in the Basin of Mexico boasted as much about their Chichimec origin as their claim to *toltecayotl*, which might seem contradictory if one did not take into account that "Chichimec" and "Toltec" were two extremes of a people's transformation process during the auroral stage. In other words, as Carlos Martínez Marín (1963) proposed, the alleged nomadic origin of the Mexica does not correspond to a cultural reality. It is appropriate to observe here that, based on an overly literal interpretation of the sources, the originality of the Mexica as supposed Chichimecs has been exaggerated. We believe, to the contrary, that this community was thoroughly Mesoamerican at the moment of their arrival to the Basin of Mexico, and that their feigned foreignness was precisely part of the mythical paradigm common to their neighbors. Thus, the strength of Mexica art is owed more to the power they achieved in their last years of existence than to the introduction of new concepts.

The attraction that the Toltec past exerted over the Mexica remains as evident in the written sources as in the archaeological data. Their admiration was not free of political content. It is well known that the Mexica often conducted excavations in the ruins of Tula (Sahagún 1989, Lib. X, cap. xxix, II: 654; Acosta 1956–1957). They extracted numerous objects from their offerings and tombs and dismantled sculptural elements of considerable size from their buildings, all of which were transported to Tenochtitlan. In the Sacred Precinct of the city, not only did they bury Toltec treasures, but they reproduced the style of Quetzalcoatl's metropolis (Navarrete and Crespo 1971; Umberger 1987; López Luján 1989, 1993: 81–82; Fuente 1990; Solís Olguín 1990).

The mythical nexus also connected the creator deity with the Mexica nobles. They were assured that, as sons of Feathered Serpent, they were given in primogenial time the mission of governing the people.

Here they take, they receive, our rulers, our nobles, the hair of the people, the fingernails of the people, the sons of the precious ones, of the jades, of the bracelets, the receivers of divine breath, those who come from Our Venerable Noble, Feathered Serpent. [This] was what was delivered to them, what they deserved, for which they acquired life, for which they were born: the mat, the seat;⁴⁹ [power was given to them over] the one who had to be carried, [over] the one who had to be ruled. For this they acquired life, for this they were born, for this they were created in the place where in the night it was determined, it was ordained, that they would be rulers, that they would be *tlatoque* (Sahagún 1979, Lib. VI, cap. xvi, fols. 67v–68r, 1).⁵⁰

Concerning Mexica administrative and political organization, it is appropriate to point out three aspects: The first was the dual government that fell upon the *tlatoani* and the *cihuacoatl*. The second consisted in the division of the city into quadrants, the *nauhcampa*n, each one directed by a high-ranking official. The third was the constitution of the Tenochtitlan-Texcoco-Tlacopan Triple Alliance.

Regarding this alliance, it is necessary to say, first, that the Triple Alliance was not merely a military and political league that emerged in the fifteenth century among the winners after the war against Azcapotzalco. On the contrary, it was a form of political organization with deep historical roots in the Basin of Mexico.

The written sources speak of it as a very ancient regional institution, whose origins go back to Tollan (*Anales de Cuauhtitlan* 1945: 63). Its name in Nahuatl, *excan tlatoloyan*, makes reference to its judicial character arranged around three seats. Alvarado Tezozómoc (1944: 178, 245, 267, 340) also calls it *tecuhltlatoloyan* ("the tribunal of the *tetecuhtin*"), or, in Spanish, "el tribunal de los reyes" or "las audiencias" (in English, "the tribunal of kings" or "the supreme courts"). Although this does not allow us to understand the ideological foundations of its establishment as a jurisdictional organ, accounts of its political actions reveal its role as an instrument of expansion and domination in the hands of three hegemonic states. On the other hand, it was a political body that joined the ethnic system within the territorial system. Carrasco (1996: 185) points out that "in the organization of the Triple Alliance there was no personnel dedicated exclusively to the central government," and adds that "the rulers of the three capitals assumed imperial functions, acting in unison or exercising special activities."

It is appropriate to emphasize here that the *excan tlatoloyan* not only allowed for the multi-ethnicity of its constituents, but also established a structure of an economic and political character that was a reflection of cosmic order (López Austin 1987; López Austin and López Luján 1996: 211–214). Moreover, the Triple Alliance tended to respect the internal political order of the societies integrated within its sphere of dominion, centering its attention more on tribute collection than on the administration of those subjugated. In this political context, the cultural influence of the Mexica, Texcocan, and Tlacopanecan was minimal outside the nuclear area. This is made clear by the sparse presence of Aztec III ceramics and sculpture and architecture of the so-called Imperial Aztec style in the majority of their provinces (Umberger and Klein 1993). The system tended to the conservation of internal (traditional ethnic) political order and respected the ideological foundations of power in each of the units, but it superimposed a multi-ethnic apparatus as the head of the global organization. Earlier, we stated that, at the moment of the Spanish Conquest, the Mexica were found in a transition between the Zuyuan system and a regime of more centralized power. This produced some incongruencies of a political character that would remain registered in the historical documents. Mexica historiography contains two contradictory theses concerning the source of supreme power. In the first, the Mexica recognized the authority of their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli, and that of their rulers derived from Quetzalcoatl. For example, when Tizoc was installed on the throne, it was said to him, "From today, lord, you remain on the throne, the seat that Zenacatl [One Reed] and Nacxitl Quetzalcoatl first set up . . . and in their name Huitzilopochtli came" (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1944: 247).⁵¹ But, as a consequence of their sudden rise, the Mexica placed upon the *excan tlatoloyan* a new political conception, thus moving away from the Zuyuan model. They elevated Huitzilopochtli to the rank of "foster father," to whom the communities within reach of their military might had to be subordinated (79–80). This new conception, which quite probably would have been conducive to the development of a different type of state from the Zuyuan system, was interrupted by the Spanish Conquest. The words directed by Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin to Fernando Cortés seem to reflect a strong ideological conflict: before the European invasion, the Mexica *tlatoani* already

mistrusted his own ideas concerning the “foster father” and recognized that the time of the return of Quetzalcoatl, the god of the *excan tlatohtlan* whom the Mexican had unseated, had come.

THE MAYA LOWLANDS

The Río de la Pasión Basin. The most ancient evidence of Zuyuanism in the Maya lowlands may go back to the ninth century in the Río de la Pasión Basin of northern Yucatán. Numerous researchers have proposed that, from the ninth century on, important demographic movements related to an atmosphere of political instability took place in both regions. Concerning Río de la Pasión, the archaeological findings support the hypothesis of the arrival of foreign groups to Seibal and Altar de Sacrificios. It is not known if the intruders were Maya or not, or if they came from coastal Tabasco (which seems more probable) or from more distant regions, but it seems evident that they followed the course of the Usumacinta River from the north.

Numerous sculpted monuments from Seibal that combine typical Classic Maya elements with other exogenous ones are well known (Graham 1971, 1973; Sabloff 1973). Among these latter types of elements, the use of the square cartouche stands out, as well as the depiction of personages with non-Maya ethnic traits such as long, straight hair, mustache, and beard. In addition, they bear strange insignias and weapons: long skirts, nose ornaments, curved staffs, and throwing sticks. Some personages wear symbols of deities not worshipped before in that region; for example, one of them has a long-billed buccal mask similar to that of the Wind God, an avocation of Feathered Serpent.

A similar phenomenon is observed in the architecture and ceramics of Seibal (Sabloff 1973). Buildings with a circular plan, temples with four stairways situated in the center of plazas, and façades with barrel-shaped columns appear during the Bayal Phase (830–930). Some ritual changes are evident in the ceramics, as traditional censers and funerary vessels are replaced by spiked and ladle censers and fine paste vessels. These changes only occur in the ceramics of elites, causing Jeremy Sabloff (1973: 129) to suppose that a partial changeover in the ruling group had taken place.

At the same time, Altar de Sacrificios experienced a marked decline during the Boca (771–909) and Jimba (909–948) Phases (Adams 1973). Buildings of importance were neither constructed nor renovated, nor were stelae erected. Fine Orange and Gray ceramics, and figurines depicting foreign deities as well as armed warriors with quilted armor, rectangular shields, and feathered headdresses significantly appear.

This intrusion from the ninth century on is corroborated by linguistic data. In an interesting study, John Justeson, William Norman, Lyle Campbell, and Terrence Kaufman (1985: 49–52) have asserted that dynamic interaction took place in coastal Tabasco and surrounding areas between Nahuatl, Mixtec-Zoque, Chontal, and Yuactec Maya speakers. One of the results was that certain Nahuatl terms made their way into the Lowland Maya lexicon. Words such as *cimal* (“shield”) and *tepowal* (“authority”) would suggest that these contacts were not always peaceful.

Chichén Itzá. The phenomena that took place in the Río de la Pasión Basin and coastal Tabasco may have been inscribed in a much wider process that would have included the Yucatán Peninsula. The constant flows of individuals and ideas would have followed the same riverine and maritime routes as the new commercial system. Pure, crystalline, white salt, produced on the northern coast of Yucatán was one of the reasons this region was integrated into the pan-Mesoamerican network of exchange. According to Anthony Andrews (1978) and Susan Kepecs, Gary Feinman, and Sylviane Boucher (1994), Chichén Itzá reached its apogee thanks to its control of the salt marshes of the Río Lagartos estuary, the port of Isla Cerritos, and the farming settlements in the region. This permitted it not only to become master of the northern peninsula, but also converted it into an important link in a chain extending from Central Mexico to Central America. In this manner, Emal and Isla Cerritos, like Chichén, were enriched with the traffic of gold, greenstone, turquoise, cotton, fine orange ceramics, and green obsidian. With its commercial and political prominence and the religious prestige of its Sacred Cenote, Chichén Itzá acquired a cosmopolitan physiognomy.

A few decades ago no one doubted that the invaders guided by Kukulcán (Feathered Serpent) had succeeded the Chichén Maya: that is, the passing from the Pure Florescent Period to the Modified Period, from Puuc to Toltec architecture, and from Cehpech to Sotuta-style ceramics. Recent studies of the city's urbanism, architecture, iconography, and ceramics reveal no such historical succession, but rather a three-way chronological overlap between Yucatec societies and those of the so-called Terminal Classic of the Southern Lowland Maya, between Chichén Itzá and the Puuc capitals, and between the so-called Maya Chichén and Toltec Chichén (Lincoln 1986; Andrews and Sabloff 1986; Taube 1994; Jones 1995: 52–60). This suggests the cosmopolitan character of the inhabitants of Chichén Itzá.

We will not repeat here the architectural, sculptural, and pictorial characteristics that have given rise to the already more than a century-long controversy over the similitude between Chichén Itzá and Tula (see Tozzer 1957 and Jones 1995). However, there is no doubt that Chichén's inhabitants, whatever their ethnic affiliation and provenance, knew thoroughly well the dominant styles in Central Mexico. Whether direct or indirect, contact was intense. Concerning architecture, in some cases, the imitation is reduced to formal aspects, creating eclectic combinations without importing the original contextual function and logic. In contrast, other cases reveal a congruency between form and function and the imitation implicitly bears an organization of space that satisfies new functional requirements of an administrative and ritual nature. In this respect, we mention as an example the building that received the name El Mercado (The Market) (Ruppert 1943). Its plan is made up of two rectangles joined together in the form of a T. Its façade has a long, 75-meter portico with a vaulted roof, supported in front by a row of alternating columns and pillars. The portico is connected, through only one central entrance without passage to any other rooms, to a wide courtyard furnished with an *impluvium* (a large central sunken basin). Hers (1989: 157, 173–175) has noted that this type of courtyard is inappropriate for a market, since it is a partially open, poorly arranged space. Moreover, its paintings and reliefs, per-

taining mostly to warfare, have nothing to do with commerce. It is an aisled cloister with its central part uncovered, similar, according to Hers, to those that appear in the architecture of Tula and the distant Chalchihuites culture. She supposed that the northern buildings—like those of Alta Vista and La Quemada (550–900 C.E.)—had a double function: congregating members of a segment of the population and distinguishing them from the rest of society.

In other words, these large spaces with their broad interiors would be appropriated to accommodate meetings of numerous, but entirely select, bodies that would be adjusted to the requirements of a political organization such as the Zuyuan system, whose governmental actions enlisted the participation of a very large number of high dignitaries.

The buildings of Chichén Itzá transmitted an equally cosmopolitan message through imagery. Here there was no categorical separation, as was previously supposed, between Maya and Toltec. On the contrary, indigenous and foreign elements are intertwined. Although the majority of the symbols are either Maya or from Central Mexico, those from the Gulf Coast and the Cotzumalhuapa region are not rare (Taube 1994). For example, the representations of Gods K and N, Chac, and the number 13 have their roots in Classic Maya, while the feathered-serpent figures (primarily repeated as a cosmic column), Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Tlaloc, and Tezcatlipoca belong to a clearly Central Mexican matrix. But independent of their origins, the images are interpreted in the expressive style of the city. As Karl Taube (1994) points out, there was no mere transfer of the Toltec to Yucatec lands, but rather an expression that corresponded to a new cultural and political reality.

In its time, Chichén Itzá radiated its symbols and its style. Inextricably linked to both a political exercise and a religious cult, they would begin extending themselves throughout northern Yucatán, above all in the direction of the Puuc area. Rubén Maldonado Cárdenas and Edward Kurjack (1993) proposed, on the basis of this shared iconography, a lively early interrelationship between Chichén and other large cities in the region.

In the iconography of Chichén there is a manifest intention of contrasting two military groups. The weapons and adornments distinguish these groups: the “Toltecs” wear tessera (mosaic) headdresses with standing plumes and butterfly pectorals, and carry circular shields, arrows, *atlatl* (throwing sticks), and *tezcacuitlapilli* (a large ornamental disk worn on the lower back); the “Maya” are depicted as Chac and bear rectangular shields, lances, knives, and *hachas* (celts). Both groups are represented, whether in stark bellicose confrontations or in peaceful scenes.

On the deteriorated images inside the Temple of the Jaguars at Chichén, “Toltecs” and “Maya” are led by personages who have been interpreted as either gods or their terrestrial representatives. These leaders often form the pair called Captain Serpent/Captain Solar Disk (Miller 1977). The first of these has a feathered serpent on his back, wears a tessera headdress and a characteristic butterfly pectoral, and carries an *atlatl*. The second is enclosed in a clearly Central Mexican-style solar halo; but he has a Chac mask, a long nose ornament in the form of a bar, and a jaguar throne.⁵² Significantly, as Taube (1994) has noted, the motif of

this pair of captains developed in Central Mexico, as they are represented in murals at Ixtapantongo and on a polychrome vessel discovered at Tula.

This duality, of course, could be explained in different ways. Arthur Miller (1977) supposed the existence of two antagonistic ethnic groups. Charles Lincoln (cited in Taube 1994) asserted that the two captains exercised complementary charges in the same government, whose roots derived from the Classic Maya. Taube, on the other hand, suggests that this duality has clearly exogenous elements: the solar captain represents the traditional Maya *ahau*, while Feathered Serpent refers to the charge of the war captain or co-ruler of Chichén. He adds that the Maya elite of this city aggressively adopted a military ideology and mode of dress from Central Mexico. For the Maya, Toltec imagery was the iconography of warrior power legitimated by a religious creed.

In the Temple of the Chac Mool, images were discovered that elucidate the governmental roles of the two mentioned groups. This council house, buried beneath the Temple of the Warriors, was decorated with mural paintings of lords adorned as different deities (Morris, Charlot, and Morris 1931). The personages depicted on the south bench are seated upon jaguar-skin cushions and present offerings or hold *hachas*, very similar to the manikin-scepters of the Southern Maya lowlands. On the north bench, in contrast, the personages rest on jaguar thrones and hold arrows and *atlatl*. While members of the first group have typical Maya hairstyles, the hairstyles in the second group are clearly Toltec. Linda Schele and David Freidel (1990: 370–371) very astutely believed that there was no preeminent person among them, but rather that they formed a gathering of nobles who governed in a corporate manner.

In our judgment, the architectural, iconographic, and ceramic data make plausible the ideas that Chichén Itzá was a center in which two or more ethnic groups (Maya or not) interacted in an ongoing manner; that these groups would have made up a corporate government; that each one of its members was represented as a god; and that the corporation in its entirety rested upon a dual cosmological principle in which Feathered Serpent played a fundamental role. Chichén had militarily conquered the neighboring peoples of northern Yucatán to incorporate them into a complex political system, legitimated by a cosmopolitan court discourse. Such plans of incorporating neighboring communities are revealed in a new style of artistic propaganda in which enemies vanquished by arms are no longer depicted naked, humiliated, and mutilated as in the old regimes of the Classic Maya; in Chichén Itzá, they are shown richly attired with their emblems of rank (Schele and Freidel 1990: 366–367), arranged, perhaps, to be assimilated into a multi-ethnic system. According to Schele and Freidel (367), the Itzá Maya preferred to absorb their enemies rather than annihilate them.

All of this profiles the government of Chichén Itzá as one more version of the system we have called Zuyuan. Although the colonial sources from Yucatán are often confusing, contradictory, and cryptic, we find data in them that strengthen our models. In fact, we took the term “Zuyuá” from colonial Maya writings. It is the name of the legitimizing capital, a city whose location is so vague that it is valid to suppose its mythical nature. It was said, for example, that from faraway Zuyuá came the riddles that the supreme rulers of Yucatán used to substantiate

whether their functionaries were of a royal lineage or had received adequate education or not. At the end of each *katun*, the *halach uinic* formulated these questions to the *bataboob*. If the *batab* passed, his mandate was ratified; if not, the *halach uinic* ordered that he be bound and sacrificed (*Chilam Balam of Chumayel* 1973: 35–37; *Books of Chilam Balam* 1948: 204–219).

As in the case of Tollan, there are many names associated with Zuyuá, among them Tulán. The names also have a vague character: they confuse the identity, the vicinity, and the part for the whole. There are those that come from Nahuatl: the tradition speaks of men coming from Tulapan (The River of Reeds) or from Chiconautlan (The Place of the Nine). Resembling passages from the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, the *Books of Chilam Balam* (1948: 57–59, 64, 69) mention a site called Nonoual and insist that the invaders were “mountain people,” as were the Chichimecs in The Place of the Seven Caves, who left their mountain to wander “the flat land, the divine land.”⁵³

Some names given to the creator deity in the Central Mexican sources also appear in the colonial Maya texts. In Yucatán there is memory of two great rulers, both named Kukulcán (Feathered Serpent), who governed Chichén Itzá in different periods. At least one of them was considered a god. The Maya written sources also speak of a leader named Chan Tepeu (*Books of Chilam Balam* 1948: 58), who led the Tutul-Xiu to Yucatán. His two names are very significant: Chan means “Serpent” (Barrera Vázquez and Rendón, in *Books of Chilam Balam* 1948: 58) and Tepeu comes from Tepeuhqui, that is to say, “The Conqueror,” a name given to the creator deity in Cholula tradition. This causes us, again, to wonder if we are facing the figure of an historical leader or dealing with one of the mythical “first fathers.” In this sense, the Maya sources state that the Itzá invaders were led by four lords who were the chiefs of the four lineages of the sky (Thompson 1975: 383).

Who were these “mountain people”? Perhaps they were military invaders, foreign merchants with old roots, or local natives dazzled by faraway traditions; most probable is that these three identities were not exclusive and that the change would have been instigated by heterogeneous groups in the dense historical complexity brought on by the deterioration of the old regimes. One of the most attractive hypotheses concerning the invading groups—though it should be taken with reservation—is one that identifies them with the Chontal or Putún Maya, the lords of coastal commerce who connected, both commercially and culturally, the Yucatán Peninsula, the Gulf Coast, and Central Mexico (Thompson 1975: 21–72).

One of the problems of political organization that has also disturbed Mayanists is that of the Yucatec “triple alliance.” The written sources speak of the famous League of Mayapán. Its hegemonic cities would be Uxmal, Chichén Itzá, and Mayapán, capitals, respectively, of the Tutul-Xiu, Itzá, and Cocom Maya. A great deal of the discussion revolves around chronology, a problem that no one to date has been able to solve in any definitive manner. Whether or not the three cities were contemporaneous, necessary for the establishment of that alliance, has been discussed. In order to solve the problem, some authors propose that accounts in the sources should be interpreted as an alliance between three ethnic groups or between three dynastic lineages. Most disconcerting is that this confederation

would correspond to the system we have characterized as Zuyuan. Assuming for the moment that it did exist, the league would have been dissolved around the end of the thirteenth century. Two centuries later, with Mayapán's supremacy also vanished, acute political fragmentation occurred in northern Yucatán, the situation encountered by the Spaniards upon their arrival.

HIGHLAND GUATEMALA

We know the traditions concerning the origin of Guatemalan Zuyuans principally from three extremely important texts: the Quiché *Popol vuh* and *Título de Totonicapán*, and the Cakchiquel *Memorial de Sololá*. Their descriptions of the faraway homeland and the adventures of the "first mother-fathers" aid in understanding our central problem, in spite of the fact that the texts, strongly influenced by Christianity and colonial life, present human and divine acts with many contradictions, distortions, interpolations, and reinterpretations. A study of the meaning of the migrations of these Maya peoples, based on a very timely analysis of the written sources, becomes urgent. At this time, two currents of interpretation exist. The traditional interpretation, still defended by researchers such as Robert Carmack (1981: 43–52, 125–126) and John Fox (1987: 156), maintains that the Guatemalan innovators effectively came from the Gulf Coast, identified as the legendary Tulán of Nacxit. The most recent interpretations, however, assert that sufficient elements do not exist to show the foreignness of these historical actors. Carlos Navarrete (1996), for example, points out that there are no archaeological, linguistic, or physical bases supporting immigration, and that "the testimonies in manuscripts and from oral tradition do not match the material remains." Navarrete adds that the contrary could be thought, that is, assuming a Toltec origin formed part of an ideology subsequently acquired by the Maya rulers.

We continue our brief synthesis of the relevant parts of the three books. The *Popol vuh*⁵⁴ begins the account by mentioning the creator-divinity as a duality: Tepeu and Gucumatz.

And the Progenitors, the Creators and Shapers, who were called Tepeu and Gucumatz, said, "The time of dawn has arrived, for which the work is determined and that those who sustain and nurture us, the enlightened children, the civilized vassals, would appear; that man, humanity would appear on the face of the earth." Thus they said. (*Popol vuh* 1964: 103)⁵⁵

We have previously encountered the first of the names—Tepeuqui (meaning The Conqueror in Nahuatl)—as the creator's name in the Cholula story and in the Yucatán story, as that of the serpent chief—The Conqueror—who led the Tutul-Xiu from Tulapan Chiconautlan to the peninsula. The second name, Gucumatz, means Feathered Serpent.

According to the *Popol vuh*, the Quiché "first mother-fathers" were created by divine prodigy. They were born looking so much like deities that the gods had to fog up their eyes by breathing on them to diminish their nature. There were four men and their wives, and together they engendered all the tribes.

The name of the place of origin was East.⁵⁶ The enormous diversity of human beings, of different races and languages, was formed there, in the dark, before

there was sun or light in the world. In East they did not worship deities; they did not keep stone or wood images. There, in the mountain, they were insane,⁵⁷ and spoke only one language.

The "first mother-fathers" asked the creator to give them a lineage, a dawn, level roads over the land, peace and happiness, a good life, and a purposeful existence. They watched toward the east for the Morning Star, the female harbinger of the sun;⁵⁸ then, tired of waiting for the star to rise and lacking images of their deities and their symbols, they proceeded to a city called Tulán Zuivá, and also Vucub Pec (The Seven Caves), Vucub Zuivá (The Seven Ravines). Innumerable peoples came to Tulán, where the distribution of deities, one to each human group, began. And there the languages of the peoples were altered and they no longer could understand each other (*Popol vuh* 1964: 111).⁵⁹

After the alteration of their languages, each group made their way on an arduous journey. In fact, during the entire time after their departure from Tulán, the Morning Star shined and the peoples did not eat. The texts describe them as being so poor that they only dressed in animal skins. This is the same image that the Central Mexican written and pictographic sources give us of the Chichimecs.

Tohil, the god who had been delivered as the patron of the first father of the Quiché "mother-fathers," presented fire to his people. The Quiché gave it to the Vucamag people, but only with the promise that they would later allow their children to be sacrificed in honor of Tohil. The Quiché peoples continued in search of the places where they would establish themselves, where the sun would rise for the first time. They took a detour to the mountain called Place of Advice⁶⁰ and agreed on an alliance, which later grew to include the Cakchiquel, Rabinal, and Tzikinahá peoples.

The Quiché groups continued on their way. Already close to the sunrise, they crossed the sea. Each group hid their deity in a safe place and settled. Then, the four "first mother-fathers" retired to a mountain to await the sunrise. Jubilant, they burned copal incense when the sun appeared. Beasts roared, birds sang, and the surface of the earth, which until then had been muddy and humid, dried out. In that moment, the patron deities turned into stone images. The sun appeared everywhere and rose for each group when they had arrived at their promised land. The source specifies that the sun rose for the Mexica when they were in Mexico-Tenochtitlan.⁶¹

With the Quiché already settled, the "first mother-fathers" bid their children farewell. One of them left as a memento a sacred bundle that could not be unwrapped because it did not have a seam on any side. The "first mother-fathers" descended down the mountain and disappeared miraculously to return to East.

Much later, the three sons who succeeded them set out on a journey to the sea, toward East. In East they received the investiture of the kingdom from the hands of Lord Nacxit (Four Feet),⁶² "the only supreme judge of all the kingdoms." They returned with the insignias of power, including the canopy, the throne, the bone flutes, the books, the yellow beads, the claws of the wild beast, the mantles, the snail shells, and other objects of legitimacy. They brought back the government and displayed the insignias of the kingdom's greatness to the Quiché, Cakchiquel, Rabinal, and Tziquinahá peoples.

We now move to the *Título de Totonicapán* (1983: 174–196). In this book, Sewán Tulán is compared to the earthly paradise of Judeo-Christian tradition. The Great Lord created humans there, in “Wukub Pec, Wukub Siwán, which truly was in a cave, in the ravine, where [the ancestors] slept in the east.” This makes one suppose that, in the *Título*, East and Sewán Tulán are the same mythical place. In the place of origin there was a violation of the law that led to the language change. Tulán is also mentioned as being on the other side of the sea and called The Yellow Mountain/The Green Mountain, which refers to the idea of the origin of the world, since the same image appears in the foundation stories from Central Mexico (see Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949: 3). The ancestors, who were “magical people,” celebrated rituals in Tulán with Lord Nacxit. He personally delivered the sacred bundle, known as *pisom c’ac’al*, to them. When the four Quiché “first mother-fathers” left Tulán, they wished to cross the sea. One of them poked at it with a walking stick; the sand dried up; and thus all the groups were able to pass.

Some episodes of the painful journey toward their definitive settlement, including the origin of fire, the concealment of the patron deities before the first sunrise, and the miraculous disappearance of the “first mother-fathers,” are repeated in the *Título*, more or less, as they appear in the *Popol vuh* account.

Once the Quiché groups were settled, the authors of the document give special attention to the journey that two of their leaders made in search of the sacred instruments of power that were distributed after they returned from East. One of the Quiché groups had the idea of establishing rule. They told “our messengers to go there where the sun rises, ahead of Lord Nacxit, so that the warrior factions would not conquer us, exterminate us, destroy us; so they would not diminish our power, our lineage, our name, and our presence.” They sent two sons of one of the “first mother-fathers.” Both were directed different ways to search for the original homeland, and one returned with the mantle, the throne, the puma and jaguar bones, the black and yellow stones, and all the rest of the instruments of power delivered by Lord Nacxit, himself. These brothers “were the first to possess authority and listen to the problems of the people.” Then the instruments from the East are distributed among the different titles of the rulers. The sacred bundle is “the sign of the power which came from where the sun rises.” Later on, the text speaks of the ceremony in which the nose of the most famous of the Quiché lords, Q’uikab, is pierced, and the same is done to other lords of the upper hierarchy, to insert in the orifice the precious jewel.

The Cakchiquel history told in the *Memorial de Sololá* (1950: 47–84) is very similar to the previous two Quiché documents; but, while these first two have thoroughly obscure passages, this third source excels in confusion.⁶³

The story begins by telling how the two “first fathers” were to settle Tulán. But far from considering that only one Tulán existed, it speaks of four: one in the east, one in the west, one in the underworld (Xibalbay), and one supposedly in the sky, since the text situates it “where God is.”

The two Cakchiquel “first fathers” were engendered in the darkness of night, in a Tulán whose gates were guarded by a bat. The text is thoroughly confusing in terms of the location of the Cakchiquel ancestors and the directions in which their journeys were made. It seems that their Tulán of origin was the one in the

underworld, and their departure from there was ordained by a deity formed below the earth who was named Obsidian Stone. This god ordered the people to go to the other side of the sea to search for the lands that he offered them; he promised them valleys and mountains to make them happy. On the outskirts of Tulán, the travelers received images of their deities. The journey seems to have gone from the Tulán of Xibalbay to Zuyvá, the Tulán in the east, with a necessary crossing of the sea, but it is very difficult to distinguish in the narrative which stage of the story (the auroral or sunrise phase) these different acts occurred. Some passages simply state that the two "first mother-fathers" acted when the aurora still had not glowed; that before the sunrise no one ate, and that the peoples were distributed in the territory to await the sunrise (*Memorial de Sololá* 1950: 81–84).

As in the case of the Quiché texts, the *Memorial de Sololá* (67–68) refers to the symbols of power when it speaks of the ceremony in which two personages invested with supreme titles were legitimated by Lord Nacxit. The rite consisted of piercing these two rulers' noses and the presentation of flowers.

These three books possess a wealth of information about Zuyuan political organization in Highland Guatemala. One could say that the abundance of data concerning the structure, functions, ethnic value, and mythical origin of the different titles of dignity and power has no parallel in the rest of the written sources pertaining to Mesoamerica. Some information, however, is very difficult to process, and thanks only to the timely studies of specialists such as Carmack (1981: 156–163) and Fox (1987: 142–193) have sufficiently explanatory descriptions been obtained. The results reveal an extremely complex political body that combined ethnic and supra-ethnic functions and principles of government by distributing different dignities among the segmentary lineages that made up the assembly of authorities. It is an impressive bureaucratic edifice in which the value of cosmic numbers, spaces, colors, and times are prominent (Fox 1989). In fact, divine geometry becomes reality, converting the political world into a faithful reflection of the order of the universe. Faced with such complexity attained by lineages, Fox (1989) asserted that this type of organization shows that the dichotomy that some anthropologists make between "state" and "segmentary tribes" is mistaken.

The proper functioning of such an apparatus must have required the meeting of organs and suborgans in long but orderly sessions and ceremonies. And this, of course, lent itself to a particular arrangement, both urban and architectural, as well as, paradigmatic and functional. An idea of the complexity of this organization emerges when we take into account that the Quiché were organized in twenty-four "great houses," or heads of agnatic lineages, organized in four major lineages that, in turn, made up two halves. Those who headed each agnatic lineage hereditarily possessed a specific governmental charge with all of them together constituting the Quiché political nucleus. This nucleus, in turn, was joined with those of the allied communities (Fox 1989). According to Fox, the general organization followed a triad patron, exemplified in the confederation of the three capitals: Jakawitz of the Quiché, Tzameneb of the Rabinal, and Paraxoné of the Cakchiquel.

We see repeated in Highland Guatemala some of the ideological foundations of other Zuyuan peoples, including the existence of extraordinary sovereigns, the

best example of this being the Quiché Lord Gucumatz (Feathered Serpent), famous for his power of transformation.

Some foreign influences in Highland Guatemala are clearly Nahua, including the use of certain terms to designate levels of social and political organization, such as *chinamit*. Navarrete (1976, 1996), in his meticulous inventory of architectural, pictorial, sculptural, ceramic, and lithic indicators, taking into account skeletal remains that reveal ritual practices, has concluded that Nahua influence penetrated Guatemala during the Late Classic by way of Soconusco, not via river routes leading from the Gulf of Mexico. Finally, it is appropriate to examine not only the existence of indicators common to other Zuyuan-dominated regions, but also the notable absences. Absent in Highland Guatemala are the so-called *chacmool* sculptures, columns carved in the form of Feathered Serpent, atlantes, and warriors dressed in Toltec fashion.

OAXACA

The Postclassic history of Mixtec peoples, documented primarily in the pictographic codices, is presented as a precarious balance of small independent political units in permanent effervescence. Scholars have suggested that this political atomization was due, in large part, to the nature of the mountainous terrain, fragmented into small valleys, though the decline of Monte Albán also influenced Mixtec life in the Postclassic, since the metropolis exercised considerable control over its neighbors during its time of splendor.

Keeping these Mixtec domains in a state of equilibrium depended in great measure on political alliances, based, above all, upon marriages, and a flexible tradition of heritage (Caso 1977–1979 I: 69–155; Spores 1984: 79; Byland and Pohl 1994: 108–113). Thus, for example, the emergence of too favorable a union could produce a crisis in the region due to the danger its power represented to the rest of the small kingdoms.

The codices show that, sporadically, lords of exceptional quality attempted to establish foundations for regional consolidation (Byland and Pohl 1994: 125). Some cases lead one to suppose that these rulers received foreign assistance for the realization of their designs. Assistance came from Central Mexico, as may have been the case of Lord 8 Deer, who appears dressed in Toltec style (Flannery and Marcus 1983a). However, experiments involving the centralization of power were illusory, too bloody, considerably limited territorially, and of short duration. Therefore, in Oaxaca, rather than finding a Zuyuan state, we are in the presence of a difficult succession of failed attempts at Zuyuan consolidation.

In the Mixtec codices, we begin to find evidence of ancient religious concepts that occupied a niche in Zuyuan ideology as well as anchored the Zuyuan process of political transformation. Among these beliefs, those referring to the origin of humans focused on the birth of rulers, as one might expect due to the dynastic character of the pictographic documents. Thus, in the upper right panel of lamina 14 in the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* (1992), the royal pair 5 Flower and 3 Flint appear in a very significant scene bordered on three sides by overlapping multiple bands. The top and right sides consist of two sky bands: a) one with stars depicted in the form of eyes and b) a band of diagonally arranged colored

stripes, six omega figures, and an open womb symbol in the corner. From the womb emerges a third band of footprints leading from the top right corner down the right side and to the left along the bottom. Jill Furst (1986) very astutely identified these six omegas and the womb figure as the seven caves of Chicomoztoc. The path of footprints, from the womb to the earth, completes the symbolism of the birth of these royal personages. This is a clear expression of the origin of the lineage in The Place of the Seven Caves. Another very similar example is the scene in the *Selden Roll* (1964–1967: lam. 4), which depicts the birth of 1 Jaguar, a personage who descends from the top of the mouth of the great mountain of The Place of the Seven Caves. These two pictorial representations are in accordance with the Mexica view concerning the origin of the Mixtecs, since, according to Torquemada (1975–1983, I: 49), they descended from the eponymic ancestor Mixtecatl, born in Chicomoztoc along with his brothers—Xelhua, Tenuch, Ulmecatl, Xicalancatl, and Otomitl.

A problem, facing this affirmation of the origin of the Mixtecs, emerges from an old colonial document—the account that Antonio de los Reyes (1976) provided in his Mixtec grammar. Reyes spoke of how the Mixtec people, called *tay ñuhu*, had come from the center of the earth, but also said that the primogenial ruling lineages emerged from the river of Apoala,⁶⁴ which in Mixtec is called the River of the Lineages or River Where the Rulers Emerged. On the banks of Apoala there were certain trees with particular names. As in the myth concerning the expulsion of the gods from Tamoanchan, these trees were broken. From them emerged the first heroic lords to extend themselves throughout the four regions dividing the Mixteca. They conquered, founded settlements, gave names to each place, and established law and order in the territory (Reyes 1976: i–ii).

Different accounts come from Gregorio García, a friar who incessantly inquired about human origins in the Americas. According to García (1981: 262), there were two indigenous traditions. One maintained that Quetzalcoatl, the king of Tula, after retiring to Cholula, founded the provinces of the Zapotecs and the Mixteca Alta and Baja. The other (1981: 327–328) told of the creation of the world and of the role played by the two supreme deities, 1 Deer Puma's Serpent and 1 Deer Jaguar's Serpent. This duality died near Apoala, in The Place Where the Sky Is, a great mountain with a rock-faced summit, upon which a copper ax, with the blade facing upward, held up the sky. Puma's Serpent and Jaguar's Serpent engendered two sons: 9 Wind Serpent and 9 Wind Cavern. The older of them had the remarkable ability to change into an eagle, while the younger one could become a flying serpent. Between the two they founded a garden filled with trees and flowers. There they dedicated themselves to burning copal incense in honor of their parents and pierced their ears and tongues to ask them to dry up the waters, so land could be found and clarity would exist in the world. We continue reading the account, hoping that García will tell us how time passed from the auroral phase to the sunrise, but the Dominican abruptly interrupts the story "so as not to annoy the reader with such fables and nonsense as the Indians tell" (1981: 328).

Other written sources complement the story. Francisco de Burgoa (1934, I: 274–275, 369–371), for example, referred to the trees of Apoala, speaking as

Torquemada did of the joint origin of the Mixtecs and Mexica, arriving from the west. He narrates the adventure of Mixtecatl, the eponymic leader who was led to Tilantongo with plans of conquest and when encountering the sun in the west, fired his weapons at it, hit it, and caused the fires of the sunset with the hemorrhage of the star.

The discrepancies in these origin myths have been interpreted as the confluence of two traditions. According to Bruce Byland and John Pohl (1994: 119–120), the texts reveal, on the one hand, the beliefs of a people with ancient roots in the region, who were originally created from the depths of the earth, and, on the other hand, the mythification of a wave of conquerors coming from Central Mexico who imposed themselves upon the original population, saying they emerged from the trees of Apoala.

We propose, as a hypothesis, a different explanation; but before presenting it, we must clarify the point concerning the identification of the brothers 9 Wind Serpent and 9 Wind Cavern with the creator deity of the human race. Eduard Seler (1904) made a brilliant observation concerning the calendrical name of the two divine brothers: the combination of the number 9 and the “wind” sign refers to the god, Quetzalcoatl.⁶⁵ Seler added that the divine Mixtec brothers formed a complementary pair representing light and darkness. This Mixtec creator deity’s duality corresponds to the dual projection of Cholula’s figures of Quetzaltehueyac and Ixcicoatl. In sum, the coupled unfolding of these deities allows for the games of replication to which we previously referred, and in the case of this Mixtec myth, we encounter Feathered Serpent as a pair of complementary opposites.

We move on to our explanation concerning these different myths of origin. We propose that they are parts of the same extensive myth and that there is no need to suppose that northern invaders introduced an explanatory account of their own creation. We can accept that all the Mixtecs came from the interior of the earth, that is, that they emerged from The Place of the Seven Caves. Thus, 5 Flower and 3 Flint, even though they formed a royal pair, emerged from Chicomoztoc, as we have already seen. However, the account of the origin of human beings may be more complex. In the first stage of creation (the nocturnal phase), on the mountain, the creator duality ruled over a still-unsettled world that was dark, humid, and devoid of creatures. From the divine pair were born the creators of humanity as a pair of brothers: 9 Wind Serpent and 9 Wind Cavern. Their mission was to bring the light of the dawn, time, the colors, and order to the place of the four cosmic trees. It was necessary to introduce humans into the world before the sun rose and dried the surface of the earth. Thus, the birth could have various representations, including the departure from caves or from the four cosmic trees. It all depended on what emphasis was desired in the mythical narrative. If the second symbolic pattern was used, reference was being made to the foundation of the four lineages of Mixtec royalty.

Ronald Spores (1984: 83) has noted that the Mixtecs thought that their dead rulers were transformed into gods. At the same time, a multiplicity of founders of royal lineages, considered by some to be a reflection of noncentralized authority, stands out (Byland and Pohl 1994: 226). One could add that many Mixtec lords, in

the pictographic sources, had extraordinary biographies, some of which present aspects connecting with the Zuyuan systems of their times.

The most famous in terms of miracles is Lord 9 Wind, Koo Sau (Feathered Serpent).⁶⁶ The importance of his calendrical name immediately comes to mind, since it is the same as the two divine Mixtec brothers who created humanity and, as we have said, corresponded to Feathered Serpent. His identification with Feathered Serpent has been amply studied by several authors (Dahlgren 1990: 238–239; Nicholson 1957: 204–205; 1978; Caso 1977–1979, II: 60–64; Furst 1978: 109; Anders, Jansen, and Pérez Jiménez 1992: 57–58, 90–93). This Mixtec ruler is repeatedly represented in the codices with the diagnostic features of the Wind God—the double-billed buccal mask, conical hat, rounded adornments, etc. In the *Codex Vindobonensis* (1992: lam. 48) he appears with a helicoidal-shaped body, as the Wind God is depicted in images from other parts of Mesoamerica (López Austin 1990: 488, plate 13). He is also represented carrying the sky (*Codex Vindobonensis* 1992: lam. 47), in the same manner as the Feathered Serpent–Wind God appears in pictographic documents from the Mixteca-Puebla tradition (*Codex Borgia* 1993: lam. 15; *Codex Vaticanus B* 1993: lam. 21; Nicholson 1978; Furst 1978). But, without a doubt, the most important adventure for our purposes is the journey of Lord 9 Wind to the other world (*Codex Vindobonensis* 1992: lam. 48). He goes up to the sky with the divine duality, who in this case is shown as two bearded deities.⁶⁷ Facing them, naked and orant, he receives all the objects of power, including his adornments, his buccal mask and other diagnostic features of the wind god, the sacred bundle, the quincunx staff, and the god's weapons. Now majestically dressed, loaded with presents, 9 Wind descends from the sky on a rope adorned with white plumes. He then establishes order in the world, distributing the objects of power among the Mixtec rulers, who are depicted in the codices, in their turn, carrying the conch trumpet, the fire sticks, the staff of Xipe Totec, the quincunx staff, the sacred bundle, etc.⁶⁸

Another great Mixtec personage was the conqueror 8 Deer Jaguar Claw, who, through usurpation, marriage alliances, and warfare, dominated an extensive amount of territory in the Mixteca Alta, Baja, and the Coast during the eleventh century. 8 Deer established a complex bureaucratic state, modeled, according to some authors, after the Toltec state (Flannery and Marcus 1983b; Spores 1984: 78–79; Byland and Pohl 1994: 142). Spores (1984: 77) has pointed out that his government had four high dignitaries immediately below the sovereign, which we suggest is a Zuyuan trait.

Most notable about his government, however, was the manner in which he legitimized his power. He traveled to a sanctuary where a distinguished personage pierced his nose and implanted the jewel of power. According to Maarten Jansen (1996), 8 Deer was awarded this distinction by 4 Jaguar, a Toltec king who wore the face paint of Quetzalcoatl and had a similar pimple or tumor on his nose. The location of the sanctuary is represented in the *Codex Colombino* (1966: lam. 13) with a place-glyph in the form of a frieze of reeds and thought to be situated in either Tula, Cholula, or San Miguel Tulancingo (near Coixtlahuaca), a site of possible Toltec heritage (e.g., Byland and Pohl 1994: 147; Jansen 1996).

After the death of 8 Deer Jaguar Claw, political atomization returned to the Mixtec area.

MICHOACÁN

While the process of Zuyuanization in Oaxaca seems not to have reached its full manifestation, in Michoacán the system was rapidly overcome by another that imposed a heightened level of centralization and control, one in which a conquering patron deity provided protection to communities that submitted to his rule.

The principal actors in this historical process were the Uacúsecha, Tarascan speakers who, by their own accounts, had no remote history in the region. Their ancestors, they said, had arrived a few generations before as nomads. In other words, they were a people who took pride in their Chichimec origin. But not all contemporary authors accept this part of their story, once they consider the notion that the Uacúsecha's alleged Chichimec origin was inspired by Central Mexican traditions and that their inclusion of *chichimecayotl* heritage was aimed at projecting the image of great conquerors to their neighbors (Michelet 1989, 1995; Arnould and Michelet 1991). This new point of view takes into account contradictions in the *Relación de Michoacán* (1977)—where, for example, these “Chichimecs” appear constructing storage bins—and recent excavations in the region of Zacapu, the origin of the Uacúsecha expansion. The archaeological work of Dominique Michelet reveals that the region was occupied around 1300 C.E. by a clearly Mesoamerican people who had little to do with the hunter-gatherers of historical tradition.⁶⁹

The Uacúsecha initiated their process of expansion in the fourteenth century with the bellicose actions of their leader, Taríacuri, his son, and his two nephews in the Lake Pátzcuaro region. This territory, as well as the rest of the lands dominated by the Tarascans, was multi-ethnic. The Uacúsecha then organized a powerful army of different peoples in the region and launched a fervent war of conquest. According to Helen Pollard (1994), the problem of the ethnic groups' unification under one ruler was solved by means of a prophetic fiction, because they mentioned the alliance's divine resolution between the Uacúsecha god Curicaueri and the goddess Xarátanga of the Tarascans, who settled the lake islands before the arrival of the “Chichimecs.” This provided the foundation for a joint enterprise. In time, the conquering army was converted into a true ethnic mosaic made up of Tarascan, Nahuatl, Otomí, Matlatzinca, and Chontal peoples, along with members of other ethnic groups (*Relación de Michoacán* 1977: 191).

After the death of Taríacuri, a central domain composed of three capitals—Pátzcuaro, Ihuatzio, and Tzintzuntzan, ruled respectively by his son and his two nephews—was established. Michelet (1995) has suggested that the Tarascan triple alliance lasted approximately three decades, from 1450 to 1480, as a multi-ethnic power. After this brief period of consolidation, Tzitzipandácuare, successor of the first king of Tzintzuntzan, nullified the tripartite system and concentrated power in his own capital.

The political system imposed by Pátzcuaro, Tzintzuntzan, and Ihuatzio was characterized by a complexity never before seen in the region. Speaking about the

border and enclave groups, Pollard (1994) noted that many of them were not Tarascan, but often were composed of various ethnic groups. These communities had governments administered by their "natural lords," whose power derived from their own ethnic right, authorized by the Tarascan king, or *cazonci*. When a ruler died, his designation fell upon a member of his family. The new lord was ratified by the *cazonci* as the Zuyuan patron, because the representative of Curicaueri presented him the jewels that legitimated his authority.

When a chief died in the communities of the province, his brothers and relatives came to inform the *cazonci*, and brought him the gold lip ornament, and the earspools, and the bracelets, and the turquoise necklaces, which were the lord's insignias that the *cazonci* had given him when they made him lord, and as they were bringing those jewels, they carried and placed them with the jewels of the *cazonci* . . . And appearing before [the *cazonci*] were five or six relatives, brothers, sons, or nephews of the dead chief . . . and [the *cazonci*] entrusted the position to the most judicious, the one who grieved the most, which is their way of telling, who is the most experienced and most obedient . . . And the *cazonci* ordered he be given another new gold lip ornament and earspools and bracelets, and said to him, "Take this as the insignia of the honor that you carry with you" (*Relación de Michoacán* 1977: 203).⁷⁰

In a few words, the system respected the order and customs of the integrated units. This occasioned—as has been pointed out for the *excan tlatoloyan*—that the cultural influence of the Tarascan nuclear area over the periphery was not significant. Acámbaro is a typical case of this. Shirley Gorenstein (1985: 27–98) has observed that the diagnostic archaeological elements of Tarascan presence are minimal in this frontier site.

As we have said before, the system's structure corresponded to the image of the cosmos. Thus, the conquered communities began to be incorporated into an arrangement in which their patron deities would be reinterpreted within the order of the four quarters (those of the four brothers of Curicaueri) and the five directions, including the center. This made Lake Pátzcuaro the navel of the universe. These four quarters and the center of the earth were associated with the colors red (east), yellow (north), white (west), black (south), and blue (center) (Pollard 1994).

Among the Tarascan archaeological remains that refer to Zuyuan ideology, the so-called *chacmool* images (Figure 1.1) and thrones in the form of carnivorous mammals stand out (see Williams 1992). Hers (1989: 74, note 20) observed that the *chacmool* figures of Ihuatzio are related to coyote thrones, as those of Chichén Itzá were linked to jaguar thrones. This led her to suppose that the Michoacán sculptures belonged to the Early Postclassic. Another Zuyuan architectural example is the *tzompantli*. In fact, written sources mention the practice of skewering the heads of sacrificed victims with wooden rods (*Relación de Michoacán* 1977: 182).

The lack of written sources for Tarascan history and culture, above all in what is referred to as their cosmovision, makes it difficult to find many more ideological foundations of Zuyuan character. These, moreover, could have remained hidden under the new ideology that made the god Curicaueri protector of

all the communities. The *Relación de Michoacán* is a document that firmly reflects this ideology. According to this source, the sky deities had entrusted Curicaueri to conquer and rule the land, by which his representative, the *cazonci*, held power over the four parts of the territory (*Relación de Michoacán* 1977: 173).

CONCLUSIONS

Our two models concerning the Zuyuan system attempt to explain a thoroughly complex historical process that took place in various regions of Mesoamerica between the seventh and sixteenth centuries. This process, of course, manifested itself in very different ways through time and space. Its axis was of a political character, fundamentally consisting of a statal reorganization that attempted the creation of supra-ethnic governments that joined units of different ethnic groups, the establishment of a regional domain through confederations of hegemonic capitals, and the implantation of militarist regimes charged with maintaining and expanding the political and economic order.

We have proposed, for the study of this process, the existence of a hegemonic patron of political control, over a broad territorial range and an ethnically heterogeneous population. This patron tended to be widely accepted, from the Epiclassic on, in a good portion of Mesoamerica, with lively resistance from political units that defended their traditional and more autonomous forms of government. Among the typically Zuyuan institutions, the confederations of three capitals stand out.

We have also proposed a model that explains the ideological foundation of the Zuyuan system, crystallized as much in political institutions as in religious beliefs. The supra-ethnic centers presented themselves as those in charge of establishing order in the world. Other notable institutions were the rule of one or more sovereigns who embodied the force of the Feathered Serpent god, including Quetzalcoatl, Kukulcán, Gucumatz, and Nacxit; the consecration of royal power by means of a ceremony officiated in sanctuaries identified with the mythical place of origin; and a specific, common cult that held the different military orders together. Concerning beliefs, the Zuyuans assured that their primordial ancestors came from the same mythical place: Tollan, Zuyuá, or Tulán Sewán.

The bearers of the Zuyuan system were of a very different nature. While in some regions the system was introduced by aggressive foreigners who seized power, in others it was imposed by the local groups themselves over their neighbors. The routes of ideology may have been the same as those of commerce, an activity very important for the Zuyuan lords. Their principal interest, however, was dominating the tribute of their respective regional territories and they did this for themselves. They were not agents of remote forces established in enclaves. Thus, even in the case that some Zuyuans had originally been foreign invaders, it is logical to think that with the passage of time they became assimilated to the local cultures to the degree of losing their own language. There is no evidence suggesting the existence of a great metropolis upon which all the Zuyuan groups were dependent. We know, on the other hand, that some urban centers—such as Cholula and Mexico-Tenochtitlan—received the epithet of Tollan. In addition, it

is possible that the Zuyuan system may be very old, with roots in the Epiclassic, multi-ethnic, mercantile cities of Central Mexico. Cacaxtla or Xochicalco are good candidates as cradles of this ideology.

This leads us to reiterate that Zuyuan and Toltec are not synonymous. Zuyuan does not correspond to an ethnic group, a language, or a precise region of origin. The Zuyuan system quite probably was initiated before the founding of Tula and lasted several centuries after its decline. We should not confuse, therefore, the primordial Tollan-Zuyúa with the historical Tula in the modern-day state of Hidalgo. This city, in the Late Postclassic, acquired sufficient prestige to become the terrestrial Tollan par excellence, with its fame enduring until the arrival of the Spaniards.

It is undeniable that a considerable number of characteristics of the Zuyuan system were disseminated by Tula. Today, we know that this city inherited them from very old civilizations, including those of northern and central Mesoamerica. Tula would have been able to absorb and bring together the first Zuyuans, of whom it was a member and important diffuser. This would explain the presence of its artistic models in many regions of Mesoamerica, and why certain terms of Zuyuan sociopolitical organization derived from the Nahuatl language.

In other words, Tula was not the capital of a pan-Mesoamerican empire, but rather, in its moment, the principal center of the spread of Zuyuan ideology and, perhaps, of some immigrant groups of conquerors.

We believe that with these proposed models it is feasible to deepen the studies of each one of the regions where Zuyuan systems seem to have been established. As we have seen, the form and success of the system's implantation varied considerably in time and space. This remains evident in myths, in historical accounts, in artistic styles, and in luxury objects. Not only should the similarities and differences be determined, but the specific historical processes to which they correspond will have to be explained.

One of the fundamental problems that remain, of course, is determining the historical origin of the Zuyuan system.

NOTES

1. Here we use the Nahuatl term *tzompantli*, which refers to the buildings that supported racks where the heads of sacrificial victims were hung, and we extend its meaning to buildings that depict sculpted as well as pierced skulls.

2. According to Hers, the *tzompantli* is found dating back to the sixth century in Alta Vista, La Quemada, and Cerro del Huistle.

3. "A polythetic group—is a group of entities such that each entity possesses a large number of attributes of the group, each attribute is shared by large numbers of entities, and no single attribute is both sufficient and necessary to the group membership" (Clarke 1968: 37).

4. Enrique Florescano (1993: 144–145) synthesizes this proposition of Mayanists.

5. Charles Lincoln (1986: 143) says, "While the terms *Mexican*, *Toltec*, and *Maya-Toltec* do not satisfactorily describe the distinctiveness of the art and architecture in Chichén Itzá, there is yet no other name that adequately conveys the cosmopolitan but very original character of the site."

6. Concerning the use of the term "Mexican" in the context of Maya history, see Alberto Ruz Lhuillier (1971). According to him, "the meaning of 'Mexican' implies what

in the Valley of Mexico is called archaic, Teotihuacan, Tolteca-Chichmeca, and Aztec, or in other words, the cultural manifestations that flourished in Central or Highland Mexico in the different chronological horizons." For Thompson (1964: 31), "Mexican" is a term designating non-Maya cultures, except for the Zapotecs. For Ledyard Smith (1955: 75–77), "Mexican" refers to non-Maya cultures, including those of Oaxaca.

7. See, for example, *Popol vuh* (1964: 149).

8. Pedro Carrasco (1996) says that, due to the ethnic complexity of prehispanic Mexico, internal segmentation in the political units prevailed. The Triple Alliance of the Basin of Mexico almost always respected this segmentation.

9. Concerning this issue, see the way in which Tollan was a mythical site of linguistic unity (López Austin 1990: 437–439; 1995).

10. These patrons in the Nahuatl language received the name *calpulteteo*, or deities of the *calpultin*.

11. Our conception of the paradigm of the sun's course differs from the interpretation that Michel Graulich has given in numerous works. For example, he thinks that the peoples' original migrations mythically compare to the night (Graulich 1988: 260–263). As will be seen later, we identify the migrations with the dawn.

12. There is an exception to this idea of successive births of human groups. The *Popol vuh*, as we shall see, speaks of simultaneity in the birth: it says all the human groups received the sun in the same moment.

13. The separation of languages from one original language is a pre-Hispanic mythical theme (Graulich 1988: 75; López Austin 1995).

14. Recently, Guilhem Olivier (1995) has published an extensive study of sacred bundles.

15. In demotic stories, the elements of myth, legend, and history become fused. Therefore, the ethnic (often eponymic) engenderers, on the one hand, become fused with the patron deities and, on the other hand, can be considered political founders.

16. The donation of the sacred bundle appears in the written sources in various modalities: a) the creator deity of humanity (Feathered Serpent or Nacxit) delivers to each group a particular bundle in the mythical Tulan of the auroral phase; b) a particular patron deity delivers to his people part of his own body, clothing, or belongings, such as legat matter of his divine substance, in the moment of his death or entry to the underworld; c) a "first mother" or a "first father" (a common ancestor of the group, a personage who is confused with the patron deity) leaves his or her people the relic in some moment during the mythical migration, often when he or she disappears before the first sunrise. In all these cases, the meaning is the same: the bundle marks the transition between myth and history, serving as a permanent connection between the divine and the worldly.

17. On the bellicose character of Feathered Serpent, see, for example, Virginia Miller (1989), John Carlson (1991), Saburo Sugiyama (1992), and Ivan Šprajc (1996: 123–168).

18. Werner Stenzel (1970) points out that sacred bundles in Mesoamerican tradition may indicate a hierarchy within the clan system and a connection to political power.

19. Many groups in the migration accounts insisted on their nomadic origins, in spite of the information from archaeological and written sources, which suggests they were agriculturists. Taking this into account, various authors have affirmed that the hunter-gatherer origin of the migrants is more a product of the mytho-historical archetype than reality. See Pedro Armillas (1964) and Brigitte Boehm de Lameiras (1986: 252–274) for the case of the Chichimecs of Xolotl; Carlos Martínez Marín (1963) for the Mexica; and Arnauld and Michelet (1991) for the Tarascans and the Quiché Maya.

20. Graulich (1988: 125) says, "We understand well: before becoming such [refined artificers] the Toltecs were Chichimecs."

21. The "first sunrise" is a very important event in the life of the human groups.

Accounts of migrations from darkness to the primogenial sunrise exist among the Chichimecs (*Anales de Cuauhtitlán* 1945: 3–4), the peoples of Michoacán (*Lienzo de Jucutácato* n.d.), the Quiché Maya (*Popol vuh* 1964: 122–123), the Tlaxcalans (Zapata y Mendoza 1995: 86–87), etc. However, in some accounts we should distinguish three types of sunrise: a) the *mythical* (the passage from another time-space to the worldly time-space, marked by the primogenial sunrise, in the moment when the human groups come to life on the surface of the earth); b) the *legendary* (a miracle that gives “definitive” possession of land to a group, according to the account that corresponds to their last migration to that of primordial time); and c) the *ritual* (a ceremony that stages or dramatizes the primogenial sunrise). Confusion among the three types of sunrise was due to ideological reasons, since their nondistinction sacralized reality.

22. Nigel Davies (1980: 72–90, 327–329) interprets the change from Chichimecas to ex-Chichimecas as passing from rags to riches.

23. “Estos dichos tultecas todos se nombraron chichimecas, y no tenían otro nombre particular, sino el que tomaron de la curiosidad y primor de las obras que hacían, que se llamaron tultecas, que es tanto como si dijésemos ‘oficiales pulidos y curiosos,’ como ahora los de Flandes.”

24. Pasztory follows the chronology of René Millon (1981: 207), dating the Metepec Phase from 650 to 750 C.E., a period that coincides with the initial splendor of Xochicalco and Cacaxtla. Recently, however, new radiocarbon dates have been used to propose that the Metepec Phase occurred a hundred years earlier (Cowgill 1996). This proposition puts in doubt the contemporaneity of the Teotihuacan Metepec Phase with Xochicalco and Cacaxtla.

25. We are convinced that the symbol complex of Feathered Serpent has much earlier manifestations. For example, in Miccaotli-Phase Teotihuacan (150–200 C.E.), the symbols of Feathered Serpent, the creation of the world, the extraction of time, the calendar, governmental authority, and war were all joined together in one building (López Austin, López Luján, and Sugiyama 1991; Sugiyama 1992).

26. Feathered Serpent also appears on the sides of Altar 2 at Cholula (Acosta 1970).

27. In recent years, Norberto González Crespo found sculptures depicting human skulls with temporal perforations, characteristic of the *tzompantli*.

28. Davies (1974) examines the mythical and historical levels of Tula, and compares this city with the idealized image of Rome and Jerusalem of the Middle Ages.

29. For the sake of clarity, here we are calling the mythical city “Tollan,” and the archaeological city located in the modern-day state of Hidalgo, “Tula.”

30. These and other settlements in Central Mexico and in the rest of Mesoamerica received the name of Tollan (Davies 1977: 29–52; Carrasco 1992: 106). In the *Mapa Quinatzin*, the “tules” (reeds) glyph is associated with Teotihuacan; in the *Codex Sierra*, the same glyph refers to Tenochtitlan; Chalco was also called Tollan (Graulich 1988: 20).

31. Richard Diehl (1989) says that in the tenth century Tula was possibly the largest city in Mesoamerica.

32. Gabriel de Rojas (1985: 128) says, “[T]he Indians call [Cholula] Tullan Cholollan Tlachiuh Altepetl . . . Tullan means ‘congregation of artificers of different arts’ ” (“llaman los indios [a Cholula] Tullan Cholollan Tlachiuh Altepetl . . . *Tullan* significa ‘congregación de oficiales de diferentes of[ic]ios’ ”).

33. “Topiltzin” was another one of the names of the feathered-serpent god.

34. The houses of Quetzalcoatl were characterized by their walls covered with minerals and seashells, or by feathers. In the first case, corresponding to the east was gold; to the west, jades and turquoise; to the south, silver and seashells; and to the north, precious red stones, jaspers, and shells. In the second case, corresponding to the east were yellow feathers; to the west, *xiuhtotl* (blue-green) and quetzal feathers; to the south, white

feathers; and to the north, red feathers. These give the values: east = yellow; west = blue-green; south = white; and north = red.

35. There is evidence that this ceremony also was practiced in Tula: see, for example, the Toltec *chacmool* bearing the *yacaxihuitl*, the distinctive turquoise nose jewel (Fuente, Trejo, and Gutiérrez 1988: 53). As we will see later, the *yacaxapottaliztli* (nose-piercing ceremony) also was performed in Huexotzinco and Tlaxcala. Evidently, the best known descriptions of this ceremony come from Tenochtitlan (see, for instance, Durán 1984, 2: 301, 317, 399; Broda 1978: 226–231).

36. Rojas, in his “Relación de Cholula” (1985: 128–129), makes the distinction between a remote, unknown Tula, and the contemporaneous Tula, Cholula’s western neighbor. Nevertheless, like many accounts from this period, he leaves unclear the context that would have favored the ideological interpretation in pre-Hispanic times: “And the Indians also say that the founders of the city [Cholula] came from a community called Tullan, *about which, being very far away and much time having [passed], nothing is known*, and that, on the way, they founded Tullan . . . and Tullantzinco.” “Y también dicen los indios que los fundadores desta ciudad [de Cholula] vinieron de un pueblo que se llama Tullan, *del cual, por ser muy lejos y haber [pasado] mucho tiempo, no se tiene noticia*, y que, de camino, fundaron a Tullan . . . y a Tullantzinco.” The emphasis is ours.

37. This same expression is used to speak of the Tolteca-Chichimecs who abandon Tula (*Historia tolteca-chichimeca* 1976: 144, 174).

38. The relationship of these two personages with the Sky and the Earth is corroborated in their distinguishing characteristics, since the first had the eagle, a symbol of the Sky, for his insignia while the second had the jaguar, a symbol of the Earth, as an emblem (Rojas 1985: 129).

39. “Estos dos indios [Áquiach y Tlálchiach] estaban en un templo . . . que se llamaba [de] Quetzalcóatl, . . . fundado a honor de un capitán que trajo [a] la gente desta ciudad, antiguamente, a poblar en ella, de partes muy remotas hacia el poniente, que no se sabe [con] certinidad dello. Y este capitán se llamaba Quetzalcóatl, y, muerto q[ue] fue, le hicieron un templo, en el cual había, demás de los dichos dos indios, gran cantidad de religiosos.”

40. “Asimismo, tenían por preeminencia los dos sumos sacerdotes dichos de confirmar en los estados a todos los gobernadores y reyes desta Nueva España, [y era] desta manera: q[ue] los tales reyes y caciques, en heredando el reino o señorío, venían a esta ciudad a reconocer obediencia al ídolo della, Quetzalcóatl, al cual ofrecían plumas ricas, mantas, oro y piedras preciosas, y otras cosas de valor. Y, habiendo ofrecido, los metían en una capilla q[ue] para este efecto estaba dedicada, en la cual los dos sumos sacerdotes los señalaban horadándoles las orejas, o las narices o el labio inferior, según el señorío q[ue] tenían. Con lo cual quedaban confirmados en sus señoríos, y se volvían a sus tierras . . .

“Asimismo, había un orden y ley que, de 53 en 53 a[ñ]os . . . venían gentes de todos los pueblos que aquí confirmaban los señoríos a tributar al dicho templo . . .

“Asimismo, traían estas ofrendas los indios que de toda la tierra venían por su devoción y romería a visitar el templo de Quetzalcóatl, porque éste era metrópoli y tenido en tanta veneración como lo es Roma en la cristiandad, y [La] Meca en[tre] los moros.”

41. “. . . i pasados los quatro días, al quinto le entiznavan todo el cuerpo i la cara, i le hacían unas ropetas i unas ameras de papel i le ponían dos nombres, el uno era Motecuꝯauque, y el otro Naxictle, ques su declaracion ayunante i figura de Calcoatle.”

42. It seems contradictory that, without true human beings having existed during the earlier “suns” or ages of the world, there would be two piles of bones, one of men and another of women, in the Place of the Dead. We must understand that the reading of myth is not that of a historic account: the bones are, in this case, the first cold raw material, generator of life. Mesoamericans understood that life was generated from death and led it in a cyclical process.

43. Concerning the comparison between both variants of the myth, see López Austin (1994: 35–37).

44. For the Camaxtli-Iztacmixcoatl—The Sky account, see López Austin (1973: 145–146).

45. For the Chimalma-Illancueitl—The Earth account, see López Austin (1973: 146).

46. Xelhua, the sixth personage in Motolinía's account, was the patron of the Cholultecs (*Codex Vaticanus A* 1964: lam. 14).

47. Compare "In the Ravine of the Fishes" with another of Tamoanchan's names: Chalchimmichhuacan, The Place of Those Who Have Precious Fishes (López Austin 1994: 87–88).

48. The historian Federico Navarrete thoroughly investigates this topic.

49. The expression "the mat, the seat" signifies power.

50. "Ca njcan quicuj, cana: in totecujoan in tepilhoan, in tetzonoan, in teitzioan, in tlaçoti in chalchiuhtin, in maquijzti in jnpilhoan: auh in jtlápitzalhoan, in jtlaxoxalhoan in topiltzin in quetzalcoatl: a in jpan iolque, in jpan tlacatque in jmjhlvil, in jnmaceoal in petlatl, in jcpalli: in tlatconj, in tlamamalonj in çan njman iuh iolque, in njman iuh tlacatque, in çan njman iuh icoloque in canjn iooaia itoloc, iocoloc in tecutizque in tlatocatizque" (Sahagún 1950–1982, book VI, chapter 16, p. 83). (Translator's note: The English translation is based upon the authors' Spanish translation of the Nahuatl text and differs somewhat from the English translation of Dibble and Anderson: "Here the sons, the noble sons, the precious ones, the precious green stones, the precious bracelets, the sons of our lords, and the descendants of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl—those under his spell—take it, receive it. At this time they came to life, at this time they were born; their desert, their merit is the realm, the governed. So they came to life, so they were born, so they were created where in the beginning it was determined, ordained that they would be lords, that they would be rulers.")

51. "Ya desde hoy, señor, quedáis en el trono, silla que primero pusieron Zenácatl [Ce Ácatl] y Nácxitl Quetzalcóatl . . . y en su nombre vino Huitzilopochtli."

52. Hypothetically, one could think that these two personages have a parallel in mythology. Captain Serpent would correspond to the god, Feathered Serpent, the son of the supreme pair and, as we have seen, the patron deity of humanity. Captain Solar Disk could refer to the sun, also a son of the supreme pair and ruler of all creatures in the world. Both divinities, while favored sons of the supreme pair, have notable similarities in their mythical cycles.

53. Although the traditional Maya term, translated into Spanish as "montañez" and rendered here in English as "mountain people," does not seem to have had the sense of being "barbarous" or "barbarian"; if it is found that the native population superimposed a meaning of "foreign" onto the term, it is very probable that it implied "heretic," "sinful," and "lascivious."

54. Versions of the *Popol vuh* are very different, especially due to the obscurity of the mythic language. Its interpretation not being our field of specialization, for convenience we follow the version of Adrián Recinos (*Popol vuh* 1964: 103–143), unless otherwise indicated.

55. "Y dijeron los Progenitores, los Creadores y Formadores, que se llaman Tepeu y Gucumatz: 'Ha llegado el tiempo del amanecer, de que se determine la obra y que aparezcan los que nos han de sustentar y nutrir, los hijos esclarecidos, los vasallos civilizados; que aparezca el hombre, la humanidad, sobre la superficie de la tierra.' Así dijeron." (Translator's note: Interestingly, Tedlock (*Popol vuh* 1995: 163) translates this passage: "So they spoke, the Bearer, Begetter, the Makers, Modelers named Sovereign Plumed Serpent: 'The dawn has approached, preparations have been made, and morning has come for the provider, nurturer, born in the light, begotten in the light. Morning has come for humankind, for the people of the face of the earth,' they said.")

56. In this part of the account, the place of origin seems to be divided into two different sites: East and Tulán Zuivá.

57. This state of insanity, similar to the inebriation referred to in other sources when human groups begin their journey toward life in the world, is very clear in both the Recinos (*Popol vuh* 1964: 109) and Tedlock (*Popol vuh* 1996: 150) versions.

58. Recinos (*Popol vuh* 1964: 176, n. 13) interprets her name, Icoquih, as She Who Shoulders the Sun.

59. Later on, the text will say, "Oh no! We have abandoned our language! What have we done? We are lost. Where were we deceived? We only had one language when we arrived there at Tulán" (*Popol vuh* 1964: 113). ("¡Ay! ¡Hemos abandonado nuestra lengua! ¿Qué es lo que hemos hecho? Estamos perdidos. ¿En dónde fuimos engañados? Una sola era nuestra lengua cuando llegamos allá a Tulán.")

60. Here we are following Tedlock's translation (*Popol vuh* 1996: 157).

61. The word used to designate the Mexica is *yaqui*. It derives from Nahuatl: *yaqui* (singular), *yaque* (plural) and means "those who go," "the travelers."

62. This name derives from the Nahuatl "Nacxitl" and corresponds to Quetzalcoatl.

63. Like the *Popol vuh*, the *Memorial de Sololá* was translated by Recinos (1950).

64. This comes from Nahuatl and means "in the calculation of water."

65. One could add to what Seler said, by pointing out that the name 9 Wind appears as the god Quetzalcoatl himself, in the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (1995: fol. 8v).

66. Ferdinand Anders, Maarten Jansen, and Aurora Pérez Jiménez (1992: 57–58, 90–93, 243) give the name Koo Sau to Lord 9 Wind.

67. Anders, Jansen, and Pérez Jiménez (1992: 92) identify them as the Grandparents from the "Place of the Sky of the Venerated Ancestors."

68. Concerning this, see Furst (1986). The Mixtec lord appears, for example, in the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* (1992: lams. 14–17). As for the case of Cholula, the *Historia tolteca-chichimeca* (1976: lam. 26v) seems to depict a similar distribution of insignias of power in front of the principal temple.

69. This vision contradicts Paul Kirchhoff's interpretation (1956) of the conquest of an uncultured people by a refined group.

70. "Muriendo algún cacique en los pueblos de la provincia venían sus hermanos y parientes a hacerlo saber al cazonci, y traíanle su bezote de oro y orejeras y brazaletes y collares de turquesas, que eran las insinias del señor que le había dado el cazonci cuando le criaban señor, y como traían aquellas joyas, llevábanlas e poníanlas con las joyas del cazonci . . . Y poníanle delante [al cazonci] cinco o seis parientes suyos, y hermanos del muerto, o de sus hijos o sobrinos . . . y [el cazonci] encomendaba aquel oficio al más discreto, el que tiene más tristezas consigo, según su manera de decir, que es el más experimentado, y el que era más obidiente . . . Y mandábale dar entonces el cazonci otro bezote nuevo de oro y orejeras y brazaletes, y decía: 'Toma esto por insinia de honra que traigas contigo.'"

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