

TWELVE

THE MEXICA IN TULA AND TULA IN MEXICO-TENOCHTITLAN

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THE TOLLAN-QUETZALCOATL DYAD IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF MEXICO-TENOCHTITLAN

THE AUTHORS OF THIS CHAPTER share an interest regarding a crucial dyad in Mesoamerican history: that of Tollan-Quetzalcoatl. A book on the nature of men-gods appeared more than 30 years ago (López Austin 1973); since then, another has just come out examining the Tenochca imitation of Toltec art (López Luján 2006). More than three decades separate one study from the other, and during this time, we have left the subject and returned to it, both individually and together. There is nothing unique about our keen interest in revealing the mysteries of the Feathered Serpent, the legendary ruler, and the city that oscillates between ecumenical and anecumenical.¹ For centuries, countless authors, intrigued by similar enigmas, have come before us, and clearly many will follow us with their inquiries on this interplay of myth, legend, and history.

Saying that the Tollan-Quetzalcoatl dyad is complicated because of the impact of politics does not fully explain this concept. The dyad was the ideological basis of a widespread political project in Mesoamerica, one that had been in operation for centuries. We dealt with this subject together in our essay *Mito y realidad de Zuyuá* [*The myth and reality of Zuyuá*] (López Austin and López Luján 1999, 2000), where we focus on the double figure of Tollan (as an anecumenical dwelling place, where the distinction was produced between men prior to their appearance on the surface of the earth and as a prototypical earthly capital), which is a parallel to the double figure of Quetzalcoatl (as a generic creator of humanity and as a legendary ruler). During the Epiclassic (A.D. 650–900) and Postclassic (A.D. 900–1521), these double figures served to lay down a political order that justified the nascent power of multi-ethnic, hegemonic, militarized states, capitals of regional systems competing with one another for control of trade routes. This order—which we have designated by the term “Zuyuan”²—did not

action. The first difference resulted from the combination of two classes of government: the traditional or gentilic, based on the kingship ties of the community with their patron deities (in each of the units in the political system), and the global, based on territory. By means of the traditional one, power was exercised over individuals by their ethnic identities, independent of where they were located; in the global one, power was exercised over all settlements of a territory, independent of their ethnicities. The Zuyuan system, as discussed below, also tried to resolve the problem of the integration of diverse ethnic groups; but this was done by reducing diversity ideologically, using the conception of the essential unit of humankind under a divine order that had produced several different human groups. The second difference came about because the Zuyuans, 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. The third difference was that the Zuyuan system exceeded the limits of Classic period bellicosity, largely because it was not only a warrior regime but also a militaristic one.

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 states. The Zuyuan system was an enterprise of enforced harmony.

Significantly, the most numerous and important written and pictographic testimonies on the Tollan-Quetzalcoatl dyad come from the Basin of Mexico, a region profoundly influenced by the Mexica-Tenochcas. This group was immersed in such an accelerated political transformation that the successive periods of their history substantially affected their mythical and religious paradigms, and that of their neighbors. Broadly speaking, this political transformation may be divided into three successive phases. In the first, from the foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan until the victory over Azcapotzalco in A.D. 1430, changes were focused primarily on the consolidation of the figure of patron god Huitzilopochtli and the transformation of the offering he made to his people during the search for the promised land. The great power of the god Tezcatlipoca must have fused in the patron god with fiery, celestial, astral, solar, and warrior attributes; the original gifts of the *minacachalli* and the *chitatli* used by lake fishermen and hunters³ must have been exchanged for the darts of warfare and the dreams of glory, power, and wealth of those who wield arms on a divine mission (López Austin 1973: 176–177).

In the second phase, from the victory over Azcapotzalco and the recon-

stitution of the Triple Alliance (*excan tlatoloyan*) until the establishment of supremacy over their allies around A.D. 1486, the Mexica fully embraced the Zuyuan ideological context with supreme status as heirs to historical Tula in Hidalgo:⁴ with their allies Tetzcoco and Tlacopan, they were privileged to receive the power of Quetzalcoatl. In the third phase, from the beginning of their exclusive hegemony to the Spanish conquest of A.D. 1521, they turned their back on the Zuyuan order. The proud Mexica recovered supreme control for their god Huitzilopochtli, and they put an end to Tetzcoacan aspirations, subjecting this powerful ally to the new victorious ideology of the patron god of Tenochtitlan.

As is well known, ideology responds at each moment in history to the specific needs of political action, consolidation, and justification. However, when historical transformations are sudden, both ideological adjustment and reconfiguration are complex—even more so if the ideological base is composed of deeply rooted ancient traditions, religious dogmas, and mythical accounts. Following the ideas of Fernand Braudel (1974: 60–106) on this point, the historical rhythms governing politics, morality, religious beliefs, and myths are different; the lag brought about by distinct levels of resistance to change often produce a breakdown between political action and its intellectual underpinning (López Austin 1992).

Another problem faces societies that must adapt their ideologies as a result of sudden transformations of their historical-political contexts. The new ideology must convince all members of an increasingly heterogeneous society in which there are diverse interests, tendencies, and plans in life. The degree of penetration of the new ideas varied among the privileged and the dispossessed, the cultivated and the uncultivated, and young and old: some were more profoundly immersed in traditional discourse, in created interests, or in consolidated beliefs, and others were more hopeful at the prospect of favorable transformation.

However, the ideological discourse was not uniformly embraced in time, as it was unable to completely replace what had been proclaimed in earlier times. Even in texts from the corpus of official history, ideas from different ideological eras overlapped, replete with incongruities, contradictions, and anachronisms. The rapid transformation of the Mexica—from immigrants in a highly complex political scene to their swift ascent to hegemonic preeminence—produced great difficulties in generating a seamless adjustment between politics and ideology. The historiographic inconsistencies of Mexica documentary sources are a field ripe for modern researchers, because they facilitate heuristic study. Thus reinterpretations and modifications of historical discourse at times are conspicuous as touched-up patches that affect the coherence of the exposition, providing clues that shed light on the time frames of revisions. Reading Mexica historical texts, one can perceive the different faces of the patron god, the various promises at the

outset of the migration, or the disparate lines of reasoning used to justify their subjugation and domination of other groups.

In this chapter we analyze the ideological relations between the mythical and legendary images of Tollan and the reality of Tenochtitlan as a capital that needed to provide justification for its hegemony at the end of the Late Postclassic. For purposes of the present discussion, we first adopt a list of ideological complexes as a guide that in our opinion is prominent throughout Mexica history. These are then related to the activities undertaken by the Mexica in the ruins of Tula and at their own capital, actions with great political weight and by which they attempted to link the images of anecumenical Tollan and those of archaeological Tula with the reality and representations of Tenochtitlan.

IDEOLOGICAL COMPLEXES

Without attempting to provide an exhaustive list of the different aspects of the Tollan-Quetzalcoatl dyad in the history of Tenochtitlan, we now enumerate the main ideological complexes to properly contextualize the problem at hand. In this case, an ideological complex is a structured group of ideas, beliefs, principles, and values used independently of its origins or character as a basis to justify, consolidate, or legitimate a political action.

Mythical Origins of the Human Race

Mesoamerican cosmovision was developed over the centuries until the Late Postclassic, when it was converted into a complex of central, structuring components highly resistant to change, and they served as a basis for actions and conceptions more susceptible to social and political transformations. These elements formed part of what we have referred to in other works as the *núcleo duro*, or “resistant core” (López Austin 2001). Based on this nucleus, one of the fundamental contradictions concerning the origins and nature of humans was effectively resolved, for paradoxically the human race was unitarily conceived as one species, yet diversified because of its ethnic differences. As the essential unity and diversity of man, the solution was the interplay of two successive processes of mythical birth: a unitary god by the name of Quetzalcoatl created all of humanity; but the division of the god, conceived of as different deities, produced the protagonists of a second type of origin myth. This type of creation gave particular characteristics to each human group at the time of their appearance in the world (Figure 2). Thus the god Quetzalcoatl was the creator of humans in general, and Tollan, his anecumenical kingdom, was the dwelling place where humans to be born were transformed into their diverse ethnic identities. When the different groups of people had to leave the mythical city to populate

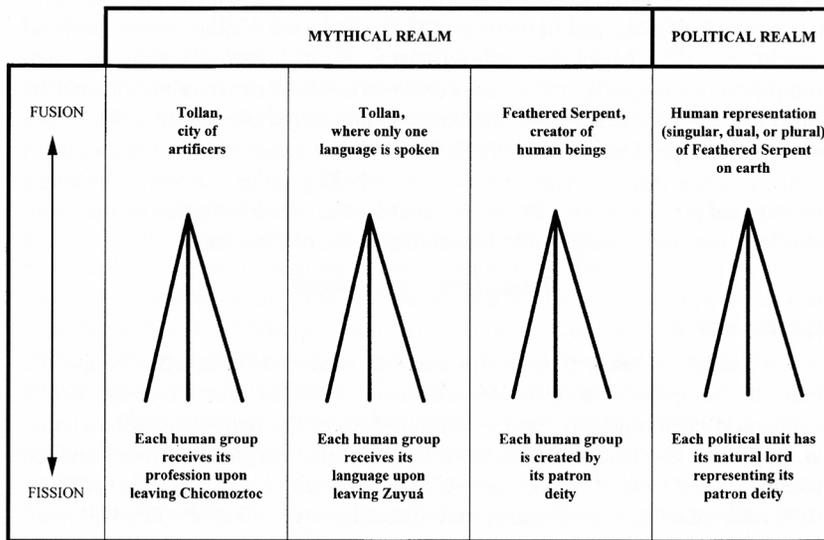


FIGURE 2. Transition between unity and diversity in divine and earthly realms.

the world, they left at the instructions of Quetzalcoatl (sometimes in his guise as Nacxit), presided over by their respective patron gods and endowed with languages, customs, and crafts that from that time forward would distinguish them (see Sahagún 2000, bk. VI, chap. xxix, par. 1: 949–954; *Popol Vuh* 1964: 107–112; *Título de Totonicapán* 1983: 174–175; *Memorial de Sololá* 1950: 47–57; López Austin and López Luján 1999: 51–55, 2000).

Earthly Prototype

The myths of a creator god of humanity and of an anecumenical kingdom from which the diversity of humankind was brought forth provided the necessary elements to forge the legend of the ruler Quetzalcoatl and his earthly Tula. Thus, in the transition from myth to legend, the idea of a prototypical city arose, a city that was a marvelous place, inhabited by the totality of human races, who spoke the same language and were skilled in all mechanical arts (Sahagún 2000, bk. X, chap. xxix, par. 1: 949–953), for these crafts had been invented by Quetzalcoatl himself (Sahagún 2000, bk. III, chap. iii: 308). The texts tell of the legendary Tula as a place of abundant fertility and wealth (*Anales de Cuauhtitlán* 1945: 8; Sahagún 2000, bk. III, chap. iii: 308–309, bk. X, chap. xxix, par. 1: 949–952). The biography constructed of its ruler Quetzalcoatl portrayed him as full of virtues, and at his dwelling place, four palaces were erected of precious materials; their role as cosmic trees was revealed through their four colors (Sahagún 2000, bk. X, chap. xxix, par. 1: 950–951; *Anales de Cuauhtitlán* 1945: 8).

The exuberance and splendor of the Toltecs described in these sources have given rise to highly diverse interpretations. Even in the sixteenth century, Sahagún stated that Quetzalcoatl was a figure akin to King Arthur

of English legends (2000, bk. VIII, prologue: 719–720), and the Toltecs were the Trojans of the New World (2000, bk. X, chap. xxix, par. 1: 949). Today some authors see more of a historical description than a legendary construction in these texts (e.g., Feldman 1974: 140–141, fig. 39; Diehl 1983: 60). There are even those who believe that Toltec exuberance is an idealized reflection of the fertile lowlands of eastern Mexico, inhabited by the Olmec-Xicalanca (Duverger 1983: 212–224). Davies (1974: III, 1977: 14–18), one of the most meticulous historians of the Toltecs, sees a generalized conception in descriptions of Tollan as Chicomoztoc or Quinehuayan, the universal point of origin of all peoples, which was transformed into an abstraction that may be found not only at Tula in Hidalgo but also anywhere in Mesoamerica. In our opinion the marvelous city and its ruler must be sought in the imagining of an otherworld.

According to legend, harmony and wealth came to an end: in the beginning of this world, in the light of the dawn, before the sun rose, humanity had to abandon the city and splintered into multiple groups, each one distinguished by its language, patron god, and a specific trade among the diversity of arts.

Sacred Character of the Settlement

In the Mesoamerican past, archaeological sites seem to reflect the supernatural force of its former inhabitants, beings of an earlier world that gave rise to the present one, one that remains latent beneath the worked surfaces of stones. Teotihuacan was the most conspicuous case, and its ceremonial center was regarded as the setting for the creation of the stars and a burial place worthy of kings (López Luján 1989: 43–49; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 1993: 157–159; Sahagún 2000, bk. 10, chap. 29, par. 14: 974–975). Archaeological Tula, although much later and quite modest in comparison to the great capital of the Classic period, was also regarded as a site charged with divine power. We know of its fame in the Late Postclassic, but most likely in its own time Tula fulfilled the function of a sacred city, a mundane replica of the anecumenical Tollan, just as Cholula in Puebla and other cities did in their respective eras. Its ruins were occupied, and its monuments were exhumed and new offerings were deposited in them, all as recognition of having been the home of the portentous ruler Quetzalcoatl.

Transfer of the Sacred Character

The image of anecumenical Tollan imbued sacred character to its earthly replicas. Therefore, in its capacity as mundane Tollan, Cholula was converted into a sacred city with sufficient divine faculties to sanctify recently elected rulers, who turned to it in search of confirmation of their authority

(Rojas 1985: 130–132). After their decline the Tollans of this world retained the hierophantic power that permeated their archaeological remains. Those who kept the memory of the glory of these cities of yore in their tradition tended to visit ruins imbued with supernatural power, and there they performed cult acts demanded by their devotion (e.g., Castañeda 1986: 235–236). There was another method of harnessing that force: by taking control of the sacred matter. Each object that had been used in the city's heyday had absorbed sacred power, and thus it became a highly prized object that could be transported and reused (López Luján 1989: 25–36, 2002: 24–27; López Luján et al. 2000; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 1993: 161–165). Therefore the ruins of the legendary Tula were stripped of many of its ancient objects. Charged with numinous power, they were transported to different locations, where their function as offerings was rehabilitated in new contexts.

Sacred character cannot be reduced to relics that had once formed part of the setting of a hierophany. According to Mesoamerican belief, the forms of the divine attract gods lodged in what they identified as similar. This principle determined the value of sculptural images (López Austin 1993: 137–139). Therefore the images exhumed in the Late Postclassic in what was by that time the archaeological zone of Tula were considered archetypes of the sacred, and they were reproduced or partially imitated in objects that would become gifts for the gods and liturgical components of consecrated settings (López Luján 1989: 19, 32–33, 37–42, 2002: 27–29; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 1993: 160–161).

Source of Rulers' Powers

For the Mexica, the legitimacy of power was based on two postulates: on the one hand, the ruling lineage claimed to have been created by the god Quetzalcoatl (Sahagún 1979, bk. VI: 71–68v); on the other, this same lineage was the legitimate heir of Toltec nobility, thanks to Acamapichtli's blood ties. Shortly after they settled on the island in Lake Tetzaco, the Mexica launched a search for a ruling lineage that would allow them to incorporate themselves into the political hierarchy of the region, because they lacked sufficient legitimacy to be ruled by their own lords. After some failed attempts, they received a noble, Acamapichtli, from the reigning lineage in Culhuacan whom they made *tlatoani* (king) in 1352. As in other historical passages referring to crucial ideological moments, there are highly disparate versions of the ascent of this first ruler (e.g., Durán 1984, *Historia*, chap. vi, v. 2: 52–56; Benavente 1971, epístola proemial: 8); however, without a doubt, beginning in his reign all the Mexica sovereigns and nobles proudly flaunted their Culhua ancestry, which was linked with ancient Tula, because Culhuacan was a Toltec settlement in the Basin of

Mexico (Davies 1984: 209). The quest for ties of legitimation coalesced in a series of marriage alliances that culminated in the Colonial period with the marriage of Don Pedro Tlacahuepan, son of Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin, to a noble from Tula-Xicocotitlan (see Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949: 136, 144, 151–152, 156–157; Davies 1977: 42, 1984: 209; *Relación de la genealogía* 1991).

Underpinning of the Zuyuan System

In Central Mexico, Yucatán, the Guatemala Highlands, Michoacán, Oaxaca, and other regions of Mesoamerica, from at least the Early Postclassic there were political movements aimed at the forced inclusion of ethnic rulers in a regional regime encompassing many ethnic groups. Each political unit that was included took on a specific administrative function in the group. An example of this form of imposition and distribution of functions is found in the Acolhua politics of Techotlalla (Torquemada 1975–83, bk. II, chap. 8, v. 1: 127–128). The ideological foundations of these movements referred to the mythical figures of the creator god of mankind and to his anecumenical city, Tollan. As discussed above, the myth was complemented by the legend of an earthly city, Tula, and its wise, mundane ruler, Quetzalcoatl. In the anecumenical city, groups of people had existed without ethnic and linguistic distinctions, and only at their departure from Tollan, to go out into the world, had they received their definitive characteristics. Those who militarily promoted regional regimens of multi-ethnic unity attempted to establish the model of anecumenical Tollan on earth, an order that presumed that all ethnic groups had to remain under the direction of the representatives of Quetzalcoatl (López Austin and López Luján 1999: 59–71).

One of the tools of domination employed in Zuyuan politics was a Triple Alliance composed of the strongest states in the region. The institution had to maintain order by means of a tribunal with three headquarters, known as the *excán tlatoloyan*. According to historian Chimalpain Cuauhtlehuantzin (1991: 12–15), the legendary Tula had belonged to this institution, together with Otompan and Culhuacan. This last group managed to preserve its position in the alliance, despite the fall of its ancient allies. In the end, in 1430, the Mexica asserted their supposed right to remove Culhuacan when they won the war against Azcapotzalco. Then they reconstituted the *excán tlatoloyan* with Texcoco and Tlacopan, and they used it as a tool of domination to extend their control over their entire known world.

Transfer of Toltec Power

Because Tenochtitlan was in charge of directing military activities in the Triple Alliance, very soon the city surpassed its allies in power and

attempted to elevate itself politically over them. For this purpose, it reclaimed the glory of Tula and the direct link with Quetzalcoatl for itself. Among the numerous testimonies of this appropriation, we cite only three by way of example. The first is a speech given in Tetzaco after the death of Nezahualpilli by the *cihuacoatl* (viceroys) of Tenochtitlan to Quetzalacoyatl, son and successor to the deceased. The *cihuacoatl* acknowledged the power of sovereigns is derived from Ce Acatl Nacxiti Quetzalcoatl. However, by referring to Quetzalcoatl, he stated that he was “lord of Aztlan Chicomoztoc,” thus appropriating the legendary ruler by converting him into the lord of the birthplace of the Mexica (Alvarado Tezozómoc 2001, chap. ciii: 444).

According to the second legend, King Huemac of Tula played the sacred ballgame against the rain gods. The king won the game, and the gods wished to give him tender ears of maize and corn husks as payment for the wager. However, Huemac rejected this payment, demanding instead that they give him greenstone beads and quetzal feathers. Offended by the scorn of the Toltec *tlatoni*, the gods sent a terrible frost and then a drought that lasted four long years (*Leyenda de los Soles* 1992: 126–127). An original account, didactic in nature, seems to end with this story. However, in the version we know, there is a sudden twist in the narrative that breaks the canonical account and introduces an incongruent episode, a strong indication of the political alteration of this account. In fact, in an unjustifiable addition, it is said that the Mexica offered a human sacrifice to the rain gods. After this act of devotion, the gods made it known that the end of the Toltecs had arrived and they made it rain, but now for the benefit of the Mexica. In this way, the Mexica were portrayed as worthy successors to the ancient people (Broda 1987: 237–238; Graulich 1988: 217, 233–234; Olivier 2003: 141).

The third testimony refers to the adjudication of the title of Tollan. In some documentary sources, it is said that Tenochtitlan was founded “in the rushes, in the reeds” (*in toltzallan, in acatzallan*) (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949: 3–4), a metaphor that connects the Mexica capital with ancient Tula, a city whose name indicates it is a place of abundant rushes (Davies 1980: 192). However the explicit recognition of the projection of Tollan on earth is iconographic in character. In fact, toponyms of sacred cities that were projections of the anecumenical city tended to include the glyph of rushes. This may be seen in codices referring to Teotihuacan (Figure 3), Tula-Xicocotitlan (Figure 4), the city that the Mixtecs called Frieze of Rushes (Figure 5), and Cholula (Figure 6). In the particular case of Tenochtitlan, the *Códice Sierra* (1982) attributes to it the name of Tollan through the use of a rectangle decorated with a stepped fret, from which some rushes grow (López Austin and López Luján 1999: 71–72; Figure 7).

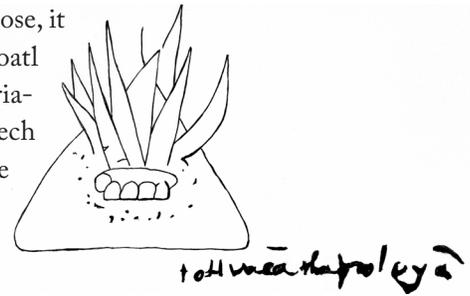


FIGURE 3. Toponym of Teotihuacan. The glyph reads “Tollan.” The word *tlatoloyan*, (tribunal) is written next to the name of Teotihuacan (redrawn from *Códice Mapa Quinatzin* 2004: 2).

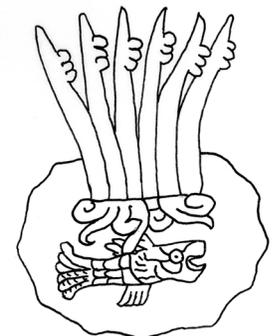


FIGURE 4. Toponym of Tula-Xicocotitlan (redrawn from *Códice Boturini* 1964).

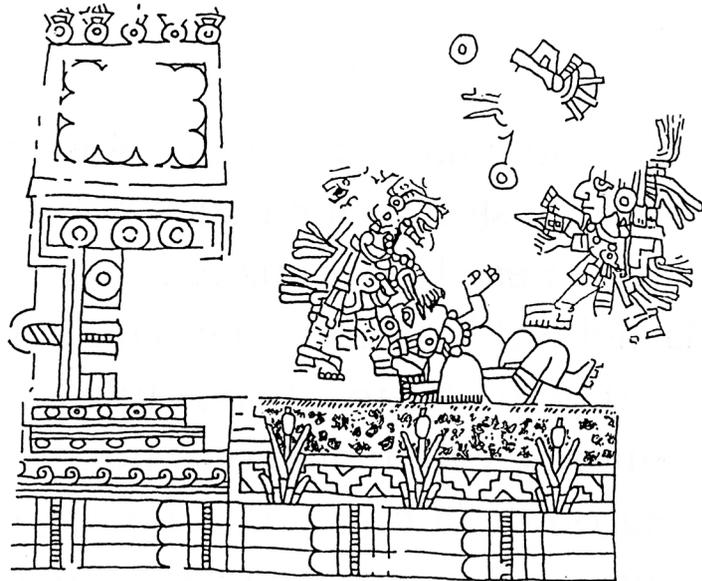


FIGURE 5. The city that the Mixtecs called Frieze of Rushes. The ruler 9 Deer underwent a nose-piercing rite here (redrawn from *Códice Colombino* 1966: 13).

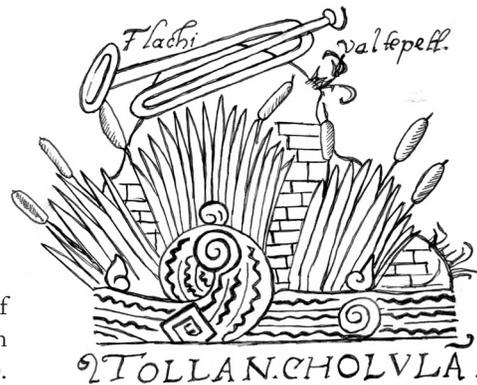


FIGURE 6. Toponym of Cholula (redrawn from Rojas 1985: n/p).

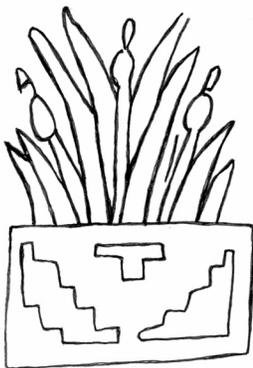


FIGURE 7. Toponym of Mexico-Tenochtitlan (redrawn from *Códice Sierra* 1982).

Rejection of Zuyuanism

Ideological complexes may also refer to the abandonment of an earlier political proposal. In our particular case, the force acquired by the Mexica state during the reigns of Ahuitzotl (A.D. 1486–1502) and Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin (A.D. 1502–1520) made it possible for Tenochtitlan to proclaim itself the center of the universe, without the need to refer to the *excan tlatoloyan* or to the Zuyuan regime of Tollan and Quetzalcoatl. Now the mission entrusted to them by Huitzilopochtli to continue expanding and looting was more than sufficient. The Mexica, based on their military victories and an ideological rationalization, broke the equilibrium of the alliance. Tenochtitlan invoked a new justification for its destiny: the gods had entrusted Huitzilopochtli with domination of the known world, and the proof was the very power of its armies. With this brutal justification,

the god remained as the generous “adoptive father,” prepared to receive under his protection all people who recognized his superiority (Alvarado Tezozómoc 2001, chap. xxiii: 115–117; López Austin 1992: 57). The official histories state that in the times of Ahuitzotl, the Mexica were already invoking in Xoconochco the power that their patron god Huitzilopochtli had granted to them to conquer faraway peoples (Alvarado Tezozómoc 2001, chap. lxxxi: 347–348). It also tells us that Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin, instead of being considered the ruler one of the three states of the *excan tlatoloyan*, received the title of *Cemanahuac tlatoani*, a term that Alvarado Tezozómoc (2001, chap. xcvi: 428) translates as “the emperor of the world.”

Return of the Disavowed Idea

However, the new ideology did not crystallize completely, so the figure of Quetzalcoatl persisted as a source of power, at least in a surreptitious and frightening form. It was said that Huitzilopochtli had received the throne of Quetzalcoatl on loan for an undetermined length of time (Alvarado Tezozómoc 2001, chap. lviii: 249), but the arrival of the Spaniards filled Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin with doubts. In 1519 the Mexica sovereign received from Hernán Cortés a gift of wine and biscuits. Motecuhzoma refused to ingest the food, claiming that “it belonged to the gods and that to eat it would be a sacrilege.” He then ordered his priests to take the offering to the ruins of Tula “to bury it in the temple of Quetzalcoatl, for those who had arrived here were his sons” (Durán 1984, *Historia*, chap. lxix, v. 2: 511). Shortly thereafter Motecuhzoma became fully convinced the Europeans were the envoys of the displaced god (Alvarado Tezozómoc 2001, chap. cix: 470–471; Carrasco 2000: 205–240; Graulich 1991; Nicholson 2001b: 13–14).

THE MEXICA AND OTHER CENTRAL MEXICAN GROUPS AT TULA-XICOCOTITLAN

The nine ideological complexes analyzed above are fundamental for an understanding of the activities that the Mexica and other peoples in Central Mexico undertook in the ruins of ancient Tula-Xicocotitlan (Figure 8). Numerous pieces of archaeological evidence indicate that ca. A.D. 1150, the main buildings of Tula were consumed in flames (Acosta 1956a: 67; Mastache et al. 2002: 42, 129). As a consequence of this disaster, considered by modern archaeologists to have been a deliberate burning, it is unclear whether the city remained completely uninhabited or if it managed to retain some sectors of its population. What is certain is that the population in the region sooner or later managed to grow until the arrival of the Spaniards (Diehl 1974: 190–192, 1983: 166–168; Healan et al. 1989: 247), at which time it is estimated that the number of inhabitants was slightly higher than that of

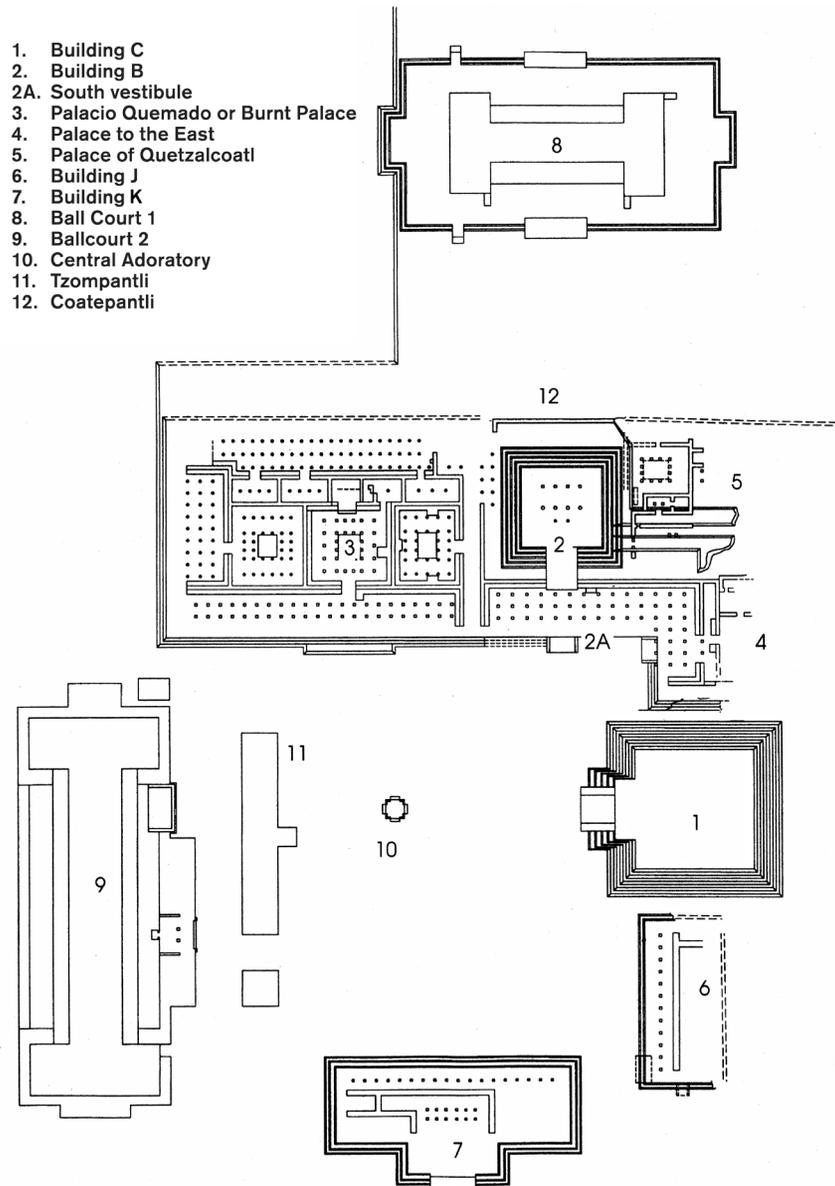


FIGURE 8. Location of the principal buildings in Tula's sacred precinct (from Mastache et al. 2002: fig. 92).

the site at the time of its maximum splendor (Stoutamire n.d. [1975]: 80–81; Yadeun 1975: 24, 28–29). However, according to several authors (Diehl 1974: 191; Healan and Stoutamire 1989: 209, 213, 235–236; Healan et al. 1989: 247; Mastache and Crespo 1974: 76–77), the occupation during the Palacio phase (A.D. 1350–1521) was never as dense or urban as that of the Tollan phase (A.D. 900–1150). Instead it was composed of small villages and hamlets in alluvial lands and of a settlement around Tula Grande that could have been associated with the veneration of the ruins.

The excavation seasons conducted by Jorge R. Acosta in the Great Plaza of the Tollan phase resulted in enormous quantities of Aztec II (A.D. 1200–

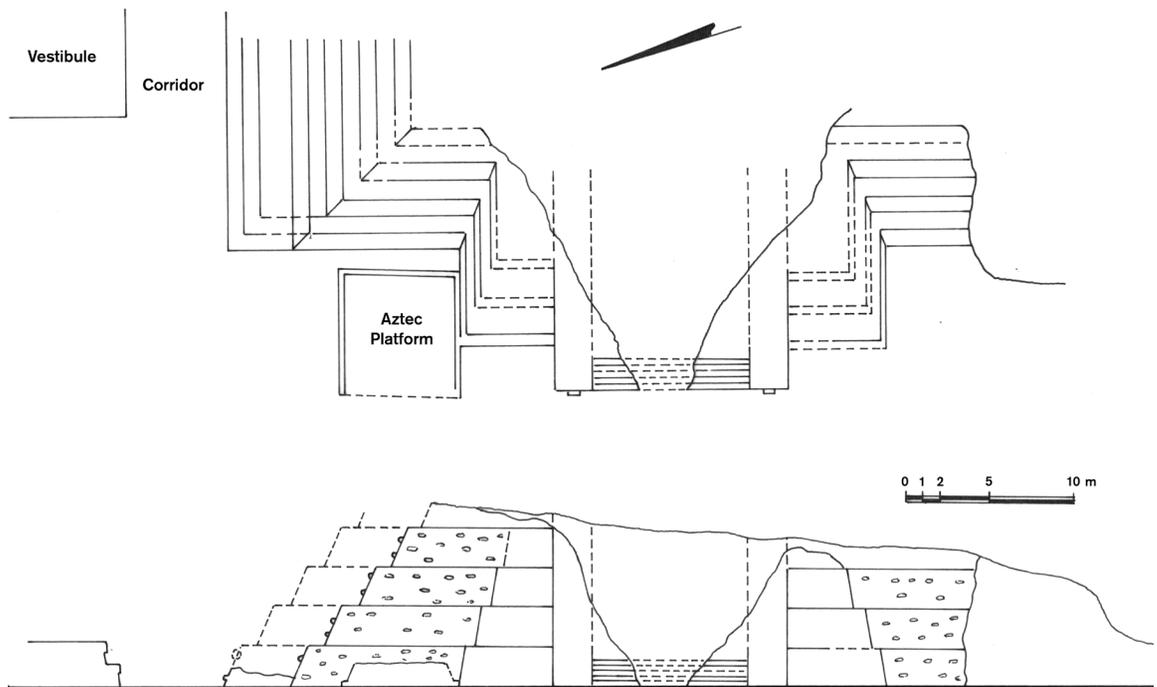


FIGURE 9. Late Postclassic platform attached to the northwest corner of Building C, Tula (redrawn from Acosta 1956a: pl. n/p).

1400/1450), III (A.D. 1300/1350–1521), and IV (Final Late Postclassic–Early Colonial) ceramics. These materials are indisputable proof of the three long centuries of human activity on the ruins of the ancient city (Acosta 1956–57: 75–76, 92). Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to determine the identity of the bearers of these ceramics, because types Aztec III and IV were manufactured in at least four zones of the Basin of Mexico: Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, Chalco, and the western end of the Peninsula of Ixtapalapa (Hodge et al. 1993: 138–150).

However, what can be determined with exactitude are the sorts of activities usually carried out in the ruins of Tula between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. There are those actions that added the imprint of the Late Postclassic on the already archaeological city. What stands out is the construction of religious buildings, sumptuous residences, and simple rooms on top of the vestiges of the ancient ceremonial center. We recall in this regard the spaces with traces of ceremonial, domestic, and craft activities erected on top of Building K (Getino Granados n.d. [2000]: 137–144, 181–182; Mastache et al. 2002: 128–129; see Figure 8); the quadrangular structure found in the interior of Ballcourt 1 (Acosta 1941: 239–240); the *temazcal* (sweat bath) built in the center of Ballcourt 2 (Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, personal communication, December 2005); the rectangular platform attached to the northwest corner of Building C (Acosta 1956a: 83, 107–112, 114, 1957: pl. 13–14; Figure 9); and the pyramidal platforms situated on top of Room 1 (Acosta 1956a: 95–96) and Room 2 (Acosta 1957:

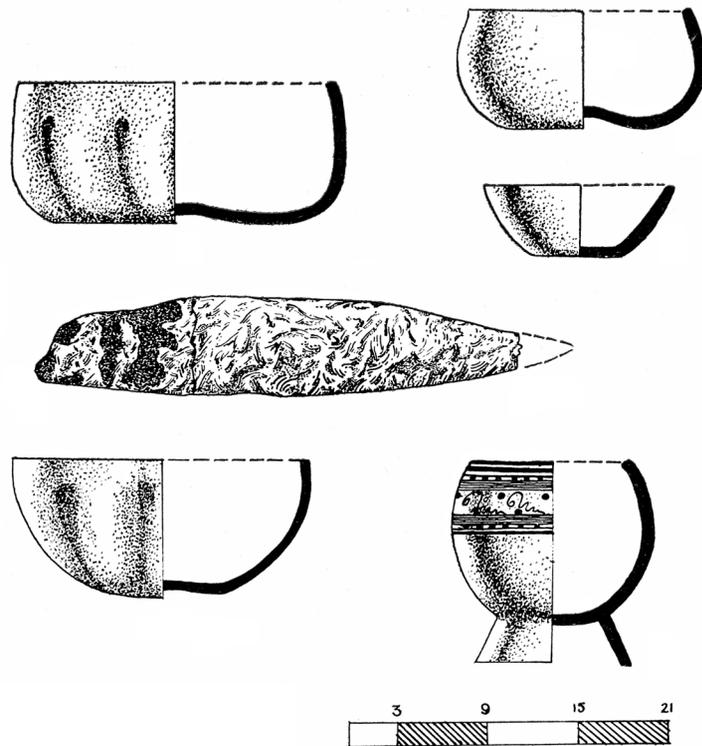


FIGURE 10. Artifacts that formed part of the three Late Postclassic offerings deposited at the northwest corner of Building C, Tula (redrawn from Acosta 1956a: fig. 13). Scale bar is in centimeters.

146–147, 164–166, 1960: 42–43, 1964: 53–54) of the Burnt Palace (Palacio Quemado).⁵

Beyond the Great Plaza but still in its surroundings there are other examples of Late Postclassic architecture, for example Building D (Acosta 1957: 142); Mound I of Cerro de La Malinche (Rodríguez 1995: 131–134); Building 2 (Acosta 1942–44: 148–149); the structure added onto a Toltec temple at the locality of El Canal (Diehl 1989: 27; Stocker and Healan 1989: 152); the Palace of El Cielito (Acosta 1941: 245–246); and the possible elite residence at the foot of El Cielito next to the Tula–San Marcos highway (Diehl 1974: 192, 1989: 18–19).

The burial of corpses and the internment of offerings in old monuments may also be included in this group of additive activities. The mortal remains of individuals of all ages have been discovered, almost always accompanied by extremely humble funerary offerings. For instance, there are the simple, individual sepulcher in the vestibule of Building B (Acosta 1945: 44–45) and the mass burial in Building “4,”⁶ which contained a bowl, nine Black/Orange Aztec III vessels, and a reused Toltec spindle whorl (Acosta 1964: 66–71). The masonry tomb of a possible dignitary also appeared in Room 2 of the Burnt Palace, but unfortunately it was destroyed (Acosta 1964: 53–55).

In comparison to the sepulchers, Aztec period offerings are much more abundant at Tula. They have been discovered in pits excavated in the

bedrock and in the interior of the fill of buildings, most notably from the Tollan phase: in the Central Adoratory (Acosta 1945: 47–48, 1956a: 50–53, 56); in the vestibule of Building B (Acosta 1945: 45–46); at the northwest corner, the balustrades, and stairway of Building C (Acosta 1956a: 49, 84–87, 92–93, 108–112, 114–115, 1957: 136, 139, 145; Figure 10), and in Rooms 1 and 2 of the Burnt Palace (Acosta 1956a: 73–76, 1957: 147–148, 164). This phenomenon not only indicates intense ritual activity in the Great Plaza but also emphasizes the sacred character of its ruins (Acosta 1956a: 93).

Generally speaking, Late Postclassic offerings have contents similar to those from Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, and other contemporary capitals in the Basin of Mexico. Among the items exhumed by archaeologists are all sorts of Aztec II and III containers; Texcoco White and Black/Red cups; Texcoco Compuesto incense burners; ceramic braziers decorated with Tlaloc or Mictlantecuhtli faces; a ceramic temple model and a vertical drum; flint sacrificial knives; ceramic, travertine, and greenstone human figurines; shell and greenstone beads; and a sculpture of a serpent with a human face emerging from its open jaws (Figure 11).

What should be added to this list are the celebrated reliefs from Cerro de la Malinche, carved at the end of the fifteenth century in pure Mexica style (Navarrete and Crespo 1971: 15; Nicholson 2001a: 234–236). This complex is composed of two figures: that of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl doing penitence next to the glyph 1 Reed and that of the goddess Chalchiuhtlicue next to the glyph 8 Flint (Figure 12, the goddess to the left). These reliefs have been convincingly interpreted as the Mexica paying homage to the two deities inherited from their Toltec forebears (Fuente 1990: 39), and as a “retrospective historical” image of Ce Acatl Topiltzin, which served to validate the Mexica tradition of sculpting effigies of their rulers on the cliffs of Chapultepec (Pasztor 1983: 125–127; Quiñones Keber 1993: 153).



FIGURE 11 [AQ11]. Late Postclassic sculpture representing a serpent with a human face emerging from its jaws. Found near two monochrome Aztec ceramic vessels near the south wall of Building C, Tula (redrawn from Acosta 1956a: pl. 7).

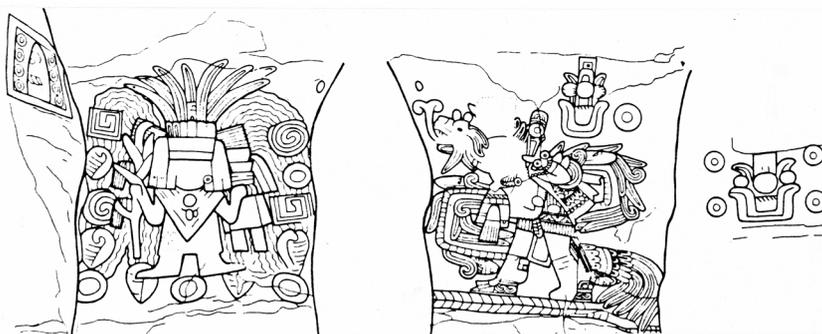


FIGURE 12. Reliefs from Cerro de la Malinche. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

TRANSPORTING TOLTEC SCULPTURES TO LATE POSTCLASSIC CITIES

Sixteenth-century historical sources offer equally valuable testimonies on the activities we have classified as a second group. We refer specifically to the excavation of buildings to extract sculptures, burials, and offerings, actions that many modern authors have referred to using such pejorative terms as “looting” and “pillaging.” However, the individuals involved were not seeking profit or gain, but rather the recovery of aesthetically prized objects—above all those objects that were regarded as magical, given that they were the work of a powerful people (López Luján 1989: 73; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 1993: 162–163). A passage from Sahagún (2000, bk. X, chap. xxix, par. 1: 949) tells of both the profound knowledge that the Mexica and their contemporaries had of the surface vestiges of the city of Quetzalcoatl and the exploration of the subsoil in search of antiquities:

and having dwelled and lived there together [the Toltecs in Tula-Xicocotitlan], there are traces of the many works they made there, among which they left a work that is there and that may be seen today, although they did not finish it, which they call coatlaquetzalli, which are some pillars in the form of a serpent that has its head on the ground, standing, and with its tail and rattles above. They also left a mountain or a hill that these Toltecs began to make and did not finish, and the old buildings of their houses and the surfacing that can be seen today. Nowadays, it is also worth mentioning beautifully made things that can be found: pieces of pots or clay, and vessels or wide bowls, and pots. They also take precious stones and jewels and fine turquoise from the earth.

One can imagine how the religious fervor and admiration for the beauty of the ancient works devastated the sacred city. The loss of reliefs and facing stones was massive. On the long list of monuments that were affected were Ballcourt 1 (Acosta 1940: 173, 187, 1941: 240); Building 4 (Acosta 1956a: 78); Building B (Acosta 1941: 241–244, 1942–44: 128, 132–135, 1945: 27–28, 1956a: 74; Diehl 1983: 61);⁷ Building C (Acosta 1942–44: 146, 1945: 46, 61, 1956a: 46–48; Diehl 1983: 60, 1989: 27); and Building K (Getino Granados n.d. [2000]: 110, 120, 137, 141). In general, the damaged areas yield considerable volumes of Aztec ceramics, a fact that suggests the cause of the destruction (e.g., Acosta 1940: 172–173, 187). An extreme case was discovered in Room 2 of the Burnt Palace, where there was an offering box with Late Postclassic materials that was covered with a Toltec slab showing a jaguar in procession (Acosta 1957: 147, 164).

Not all acts were carried out with fervor and admiration. In the same period 9 Chacmoos—of the 10 known today from this site—were mutilated for unknown reasons. They were violently decapitated, and the heads of eight of them have never been found (Acosta 1941: 241, 1942–44: 147, 1956a: 70, 80–84, 1956b: 159–160, 1957: 160, 163, 169; Castillo Tejero and Dumaine 1986: 223–224; Fuente et al. 1988: 53–59; Jiménez García 1998: 70, 72–78). The remaining one, from Room 2 of the Burnt Palace, was found buried in a trench, and the head was deposited in the fill of the platform built in the same room in the Late Postclassic.

However, we know that several groups from Central Mexico were involved in obtaining and reusing Toltec antiquities. There is convincing historical and archaeological evidence that following their exhumation, monoliths from Tula were taken to diverse destinations. One of them was the city of Tlaxcalla, capital of the principal enemies of the Mexica. According to Motolinía (Benavente 1971: 78), a mask and a small image from Tula were worshipped at the main pyramid of the city together with the sculpture of Camaxtli:

Then they dressed the statue of their god Camaxtli, which was three *estados* tall, as mentioned above, and they had a small idol that they said had come from the old first people who inhabited this land; they put the idol next to the great statue of Camaxtli. . . . Then they said “today Camaxtli comes out as his son Quezalcovatl.” They also put a mask on him, that this and the small idol had come from Tulla and Puyahutla, from where it is said Camaxtli himself was from, and also these Tlaxcaltecs, who are from here at that place about twenty-eight leagues from there.

Another destination was Tlatelolco, as first noted by Barlow (1989: 20–21). A brief fragment of the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* (1965: 60) states that the people of Tlatelolco made a journey to the city of Quetzalcoatl to bring a cult image back to the island: “In the year 99 [A.D. 1422] those from Tlatilulco went to Tula and as [the Toltecs] had died and left their god there, which was called Tlacahuepan, they took it and brought it to Tlatilulco.”

Finally, we refer to the sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan, where the decapitated image of a Chacmool was uncovered recently (Figure 13). Found as part of the Colonial foundations of the House of the Marquis del Apartado, this sculpture displays typical Toltec traits (see Acosta 1956b; Castillo Tejero and Dumaine 1986: 223–224, 247–248; Fuente et al. 1988: 51–59; Jiménez García 1998: 69–77) in terms of raw material, size, proportions, and iconographic elements (Table 1), so there seems to be no doubt as to its origins (López Luján 2002: 26–27).

TABLE 1. The Toltec Chacmools

Provenience	Discovery	State of conservation	Orientation of face	Bracelet	Pectoral	Dress	Size of pedestal (cm)	Height of plate (cm)
Central Shrine	1942	without head/legs	left	without	without	apron/?	? × 72 × 13	32
Burnt Palace	1947	only torso	left	?	triple necklace	?/?	? × ? × 9	?
Building C	1947	without head	left	band/knife	triple necklace	apron/loincloth	109 × 46 × 10	42
Building C	1947	without head	left	band/?	triple necklace	apron/loincloth	102 × 37 × 6	40
Building C	1947	only torso	?	?	?	?/?	? × ? × 8	28
Burnt Palace	1954	complete	left	band/knife	butterfly	apron/loincloth	109 × 51 × 8	35
Burnt Palace	1954	without head	?	?	without	apron/loincloth	117 × 58 × 6	38
Ballcourt 2	1981	without head/legs	?	?	without	?/loincloth	? × ? × ?	35
?	?	without head/legs	left	band/knife	butterfly	apron/loincloth	? × ? × ?	41
?	?	only torso	?	?	?	?/?	? × ? × ?	42
Apartado	1995	without head	left	band/knife	without	apron/loincloth	106 × 47 × 09	34

Note: ?, unknown.

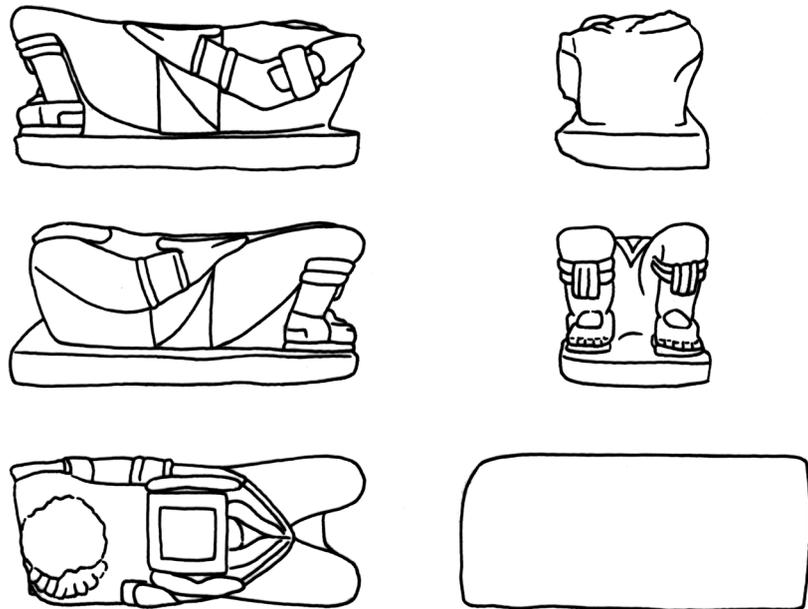


FIGURE 13. The six sides of the Toltec Chacmool found in 1995 in the Colonial foundations of the House of the Marquis del Apartado, Mexico City. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

0 50 cm

MEXICA IMITATION OF TOLTEC SCULPTURE

The recovery of the Toltec past found its best expression in imitation. Mexica artists copied practically all types of remains that passed before their eyes: free-standing sculptures of atlantean figures, standard bearers, colossal serpents, and Chacmools;⁸ reliefs of so-called “bird-serpent-men,” processions of armed figures, undulating serpents, birds of prey, and felines; large-scale braziers with the effigy of Tlaloc or protuberances; and multicolored borders painted on earth and stucco surfaces (Beyer 1955; Fuente 1990: 48–52; Nicholson 1971: 118, 131; Nicholson with Quiñones 1983: 78–79; Pasztory 1983: 90–91, 144–146, 173–178; Umberger 1987: 74–82). The unusual quantity and quality of these imitations suggest the profound effect and appreciation of the value and meaning of the art of Tula. The observation made by Octavio Paz (1989: 77–78) is not inappropriate: “if Tula was a rustic version of Teotihuacan, Mexico-Tenochtitlan was an imperial version of Tula.”

In certain visual complexes, the overwhelming reuse of themes is so strong that we might surmise a sort of neo-Toltecism in the art of the island of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco. Such is the case of the sculptural group discovered in 1944 at number 12 on the street of República de Guatemala, Mexico City, today occupied by the celebrated Pasaje Catedral or “Cathedral Passageway,” an arcade through a building joining Guatemala and Donceles streets (Moedano Koer 1944a–1944e; Rosado Ojeda 1944).⁹ On this lot, Hugo Moedano Koer, Rafael Orellana, Juan Valenzuela, and Antonieta Espejo uncovered stairways (Espejo 1996: 179)¹⁰ and a total of 75 complete and incomplete archaeological objects associated with them, including an unusual number of archaist images (Mateos Higuera 1979: 213–214; Navarrete and Crespo 1971; Nicholson 1961, 1971: 111, 119; Umberger 1987: 75–76, 96; Solís 1997). Among these are eight handsome slabs representing birds of prey and felines, the latter roaring and seated on their hindquarters. Based on the position of their bodies, these felines evoke free-standing sculptures found by Acosta in different parts of Tula (Moedano Koer 1944d) and indirectly, animal processions decorating the facades of Building B (Solís 1997: 84–85). This fact and the existence of the stairway lead one to believe that the Mexica sculptures were originally tenoned into the walls of a building that could be considered neo-Toltec in style, which would have been located just north of the main ballcourt.

Another set of sculptures found in the Pasaje Catedral is composed of four males and one female dressed in Toltec garb; they recall the colossal figures discovered by Acosta in Tula’s Building B. They depict a spectacular group of divine warriors displaying the butterfly emblem on forehead and chest and armed with spearthrowers and darts. The male figures have a sacrificial knife bound to their arm, and they wear a triangular apron over their loincloths; in contrast, the female figure has a *tzotzopastli* (weaving



FIGURE 14. Mexica sculpture of a figure dressed as a Toltec warrior. Found in the Pasaje Catedral, Mexico City. Photograph by Michel Zabé.

batten) tied to her arm and wears a skirt in the form of interlaced arrows. Their provenance is subject to debate, because one of the five sculptures, singled out by a small beard like that of Quetzalcoatl, is ostensibly distinguished from the rest by more detailed technical execution and by its greater anatomical realism (Figure 14). Based on these differences, Navarrete and Crespo (1971: 13–15), Nicholson (1971: III, 119), and Townsend (1979: 17–18) believe that the bearded image is a Mexica copy of the other four, which are originally from Tula. However, Fuente (1990: 46–48) and Umberger (1987: 75–76) are of the opinion that all of them are Mexica imitations and that the contrasts in sculptural quality arise because four of them date to an earlier period. A hypothesis that strikes us as more plausible has been proposed by Solís (1997: 90–93), who suggests that the five images were carved in the same workshop in Tenochtitlan. Following this logic, the intention was to highlight iconographically the bearded figure, in addition to the fact that it is evident that the creator of this image was more skilled than the sculptor who executed the other four. Whatever the explanation, the fundamental point here is that these small “colossal figures” were associated with the slabs of animals and they must have formed part of the sculptural program of an archaist building in the sacred precinct of the Mexica capital.

According to Felipe Solís (personal communication, May 2007), Hugo Moedano Koer’s team detected several large-scale ceramic roof ornaments representing a *tecciztli* shells in the same spot; two of these pieces are currently in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. This detail is of extreme importance for our study, because seven virtually identical roof ornaments (measuring 230 cm × 100 cm × 8 cm) were recovered in 2007 at Donceles 97, a property located only 20 m to the east of the Pasaje Catedral. According to recent research conducted by Raúl Barrera Rodríguez and Gabino López Arenas (2008), the architectural and sculptural vestiges found on this property were part of the *calmecac*, the temple-school dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. Among other pieces of evidence supporting their proposal there is the image of the sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan from the *Primeros memoriales* (Sahagún 1993: 269r), showing the relative position of the *calmecac*, and the drawing of this school in the *Codex Mendoza* (1992: 61r), where it is shown as topped by roof ornaments in the shape of *tecciztli* shells. In sum, it would be of enormous importance if the archaist sculptures of the Pasaje Catedral that we have described belong to a neo-Toltec style building and if this building was indeed the *calmecac*, an institution for nobles protected by Quetzalcoatl.

HOUSE OF EAGLES

The best example of the neo-Toltec style in Tenochtitlan is doubtless the House of Eagles, a religious building dating to the fifteenth century

that also formed part of the sacred precinct and was located a few meters north of the Great Temple (Figure 15). Its iconographic and decorative program brings Tula back to life in all its splendor three centuries after its turbulent collapse. In the second constructive stage of the House of Eagles (ca. A.D. 1469), allusions to Toltec civilization were everywhere to transmit to the faithful the idea of the glorious past.¹¹ Particularly surprising in this body of material are eight large bi-conical braziers,

whose surfaces were decorated with appliquéd faces of the Rain God streaming tears (Figure 16). These braziers, found opposite the altars in the inner rooms of the Mexica building, are copies of braziers of type *Abra Café Burdo*, *Variedad Tláloc* known from Tula (see Acosta 1956a: 110–111, 114–115, pl. 52; Cobean 1974: 35, 1990: 421–426, pl. 196d, 198; Diehl 1983: figs. 39–40; Stocker 1974: 29–30, fig. 12a; Stocker and Healan 1989: 152–154; Figure 17). Although these Mexica imitations are fairly faithful to the Toltec originals, they betray their distinct origin in their smaller dimensions and in certain stylistic details, above all in the way the appliquéd details were added. This observation has been corroborated by the petrographic analysis carried out by Jaime Torres and the neutron activation analysis conducted by Hector Neff, experts whose results consistently identify the temper and clay of the eight braziers as coming from Tenochtitlan and its vicinity (López Luján 2006).

The walls of the House of Eagles also bear the unmistakable Toltec stamp. Mexica artists followed technical and stylistic solutions that were in vogue during the Tollan phase, as shown by the discoveries of Acosta (1945: 38, 1956–57: 82–83, 1960: 42, pl. VI, 1961: 32, 1964: 60) and Moedano Koer (1947: 113). One of these solutions consists of applying the pictorial layer on walls combining stucco and earth surfaces. The smooth, whitish stucco surface was placed on the lower third of the wall, followed by a surface made of rough, dark earth up to the roof. While the latter was still moist, pigments, mixed with lime water, were applied, resulting in opaque colors with great chromatic saturation.

In the House of Eagles, Toltec ornamental motifs were also copied, such as multicolored borders (López Luján 2006; López Luján et al. 2005). These motifs were composed of four horizontal bands that always follow the same color sequence: black, blue, red, and yellow from bottom to top. Each band measures between 9 and 11 cm in height, totaling an approximate height of 40 cm. The horizontal borders decorate the entire wall, reaching several

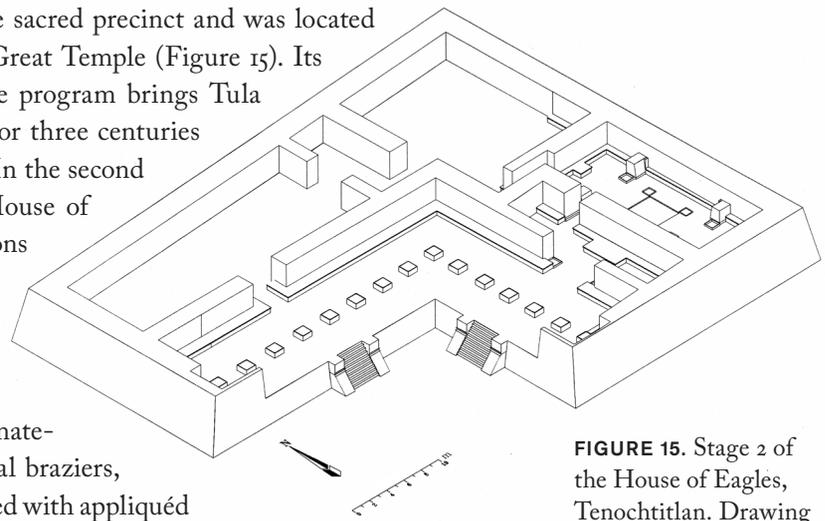


FIGURE 15. Stage 2 of the House of Eagles, Tenochtitlan. Drawing by Tenoch Medina.

FIGURE 16. Mexica Tlaloc brazier, imitation of ceramic type Abra Café Burdo, Variedad Tláloc. From the House of Eagles, Tenochtitlan. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

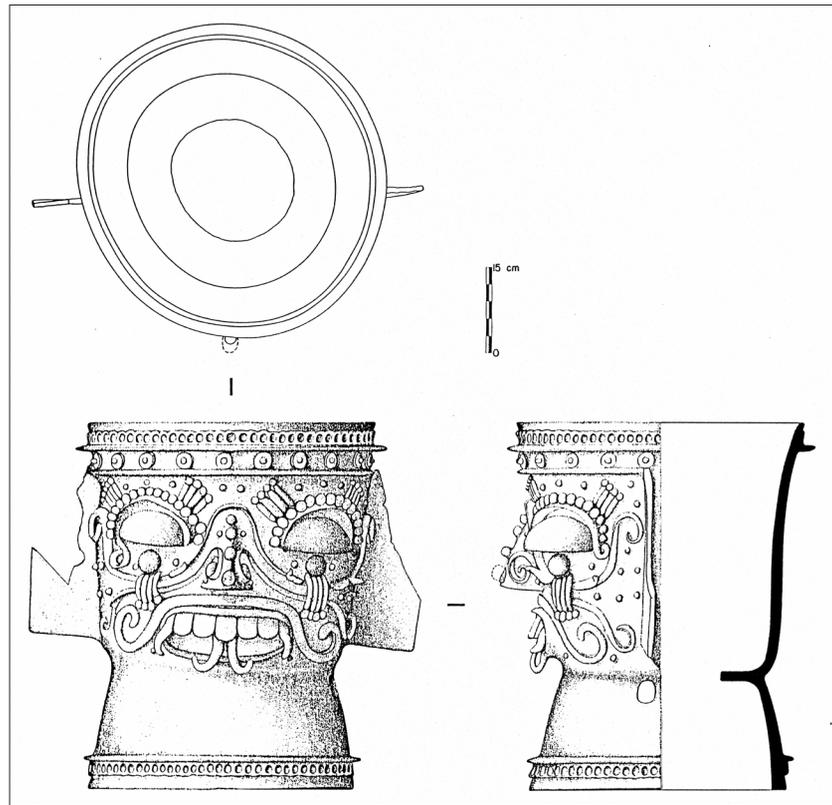
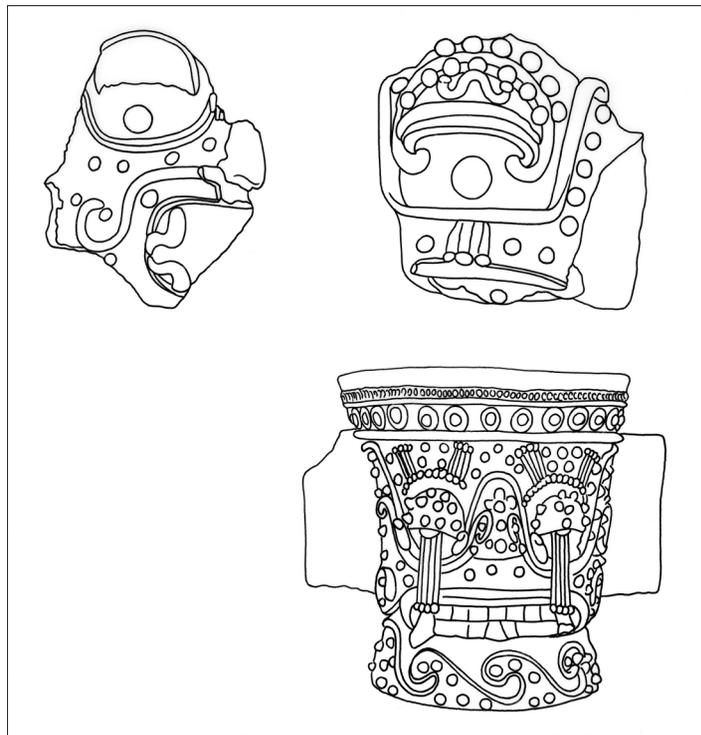


FIGURE 17. Toltec Tlaloc braziers. Ceramic type Abra Café Burdo, Variedad Tláloc. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.



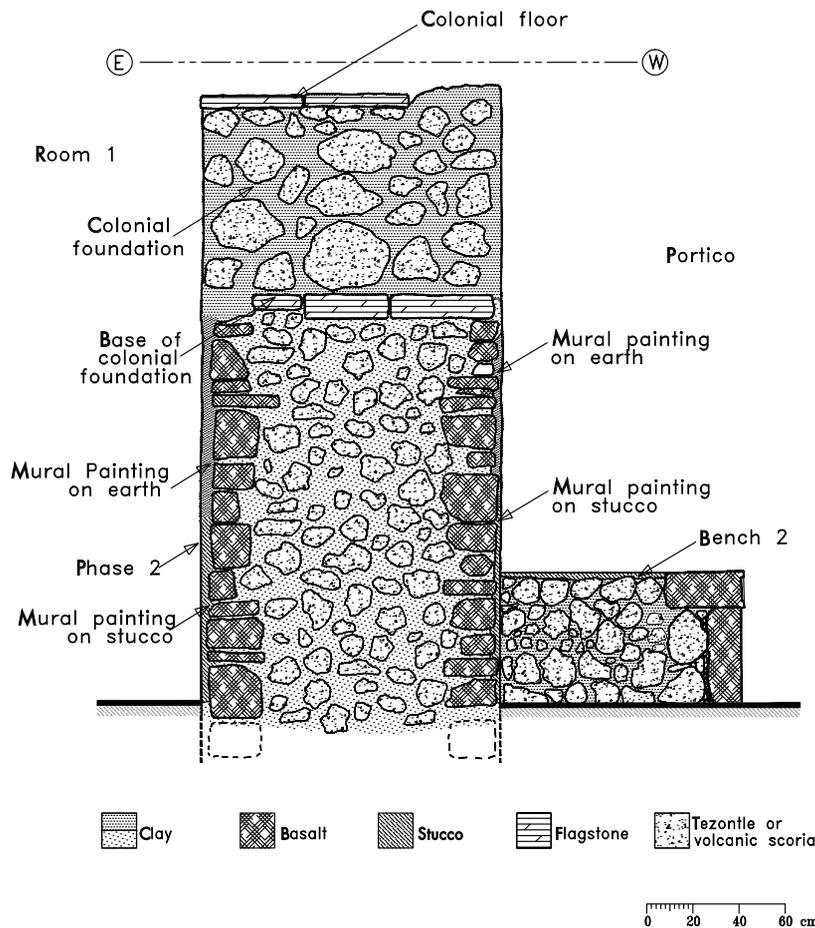


FIGURE 18. Mexica bench construction system. Portico, bench 2, from the House of Eagles, Tenochtitlan. Drawing by Tenoch Medina.

meters in length. On the walls without benches, the border is about 80 cm above the floor. What is interesting for our purposes is that Acosta found the same type of border at Tula in the passage running from Building B to the Burnt Palace (Acosta 1956a: 44, fig. 3, 1956-57: 82-83). It is surprising that the Toltec borders measured 38 cm in height and were 79 cm above the floor. They were composed of four bands: yellow, blue, red, and black from top to bottom. Just as in the House of Eagles, below the border, the wall was painted white, and above the border it is red.

The final touch to the neo-Toltec program of the House of Eagles was an impressive sequence of bench reliefs. To date, 86 linear m have been excavated from the fill (López Luján 2006). Each bench is composed of two panels roughly carved. The upper part is a frieze with images of serpents with undulating bodies. The lower panel shows a procession of figures coming together on both sides of a *zacatapayolli*, a grass ball into which the bloody perforators from auto-sacrifice were inserted.

Over time numerous authors have proposed that the benches found at Tenochtitlan were obtained by the Mexica at the ruins of Tula (Figures 18,

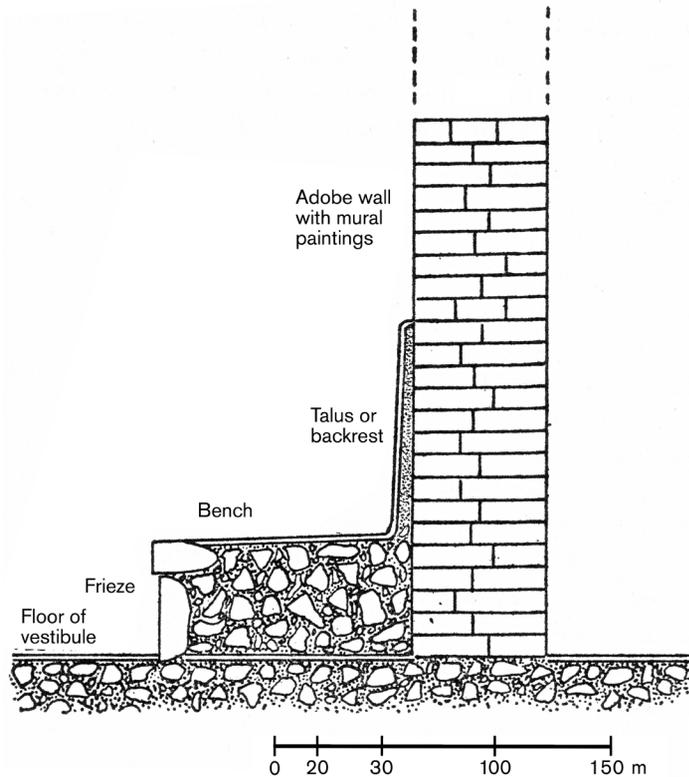


FIGURE 19. Toltec bench construction system. Vestibule of Building B, Tula (redrawn from Acosta 1945: fig. 21).

19). However, this suggestion is far from the case. Petrographic, technological, and stylistic analysis of the benches at the House of Eagles indicate that without a doubt they are archaist copies (López Luján 2006). In effect, Mexica artists imitated the Tula benches, employing local raw materials and their own construction techniques. They used earth and large, irregular *tezontle* (volcanic scoria) stones as fill—unlike the Toltecs, who used earth and smaller sedimentary rocks. In addition, they utilized thick slabs of *tezontle* and pyroxene basalt carved on five sides, which contrast with the thin Toltec pieces of limestone worked on six sides (Acosta 1956–57: 81–82; Jiménez García 1998: 23). In the House of Eagles, they built up a first row measuring 41–45 cm in height with these slabs; on top of this row they placed a second row 16–18 cm tall. In contrast, the artists of Tula used slabs slightly less high (35–37 cm on the first row and 15–16 cm on the second), often using plaster to adhere them. Another interesting difference has to do with the angle of the first row of the stones carved with the figures in procession. In the House of Eagles, these slabs are in a perfectly vertical position, just as in the vestibule of Building B at Tula (Moedano Koer 1947: 115); however, in the Burnt Palace and in Building 4 of that same city, the slabs were placed in a sloping position (Acosta 1956a: 77–78, 1957: 132–133).

Iconographically the bas-reliefs at the House of Eagles, just like their

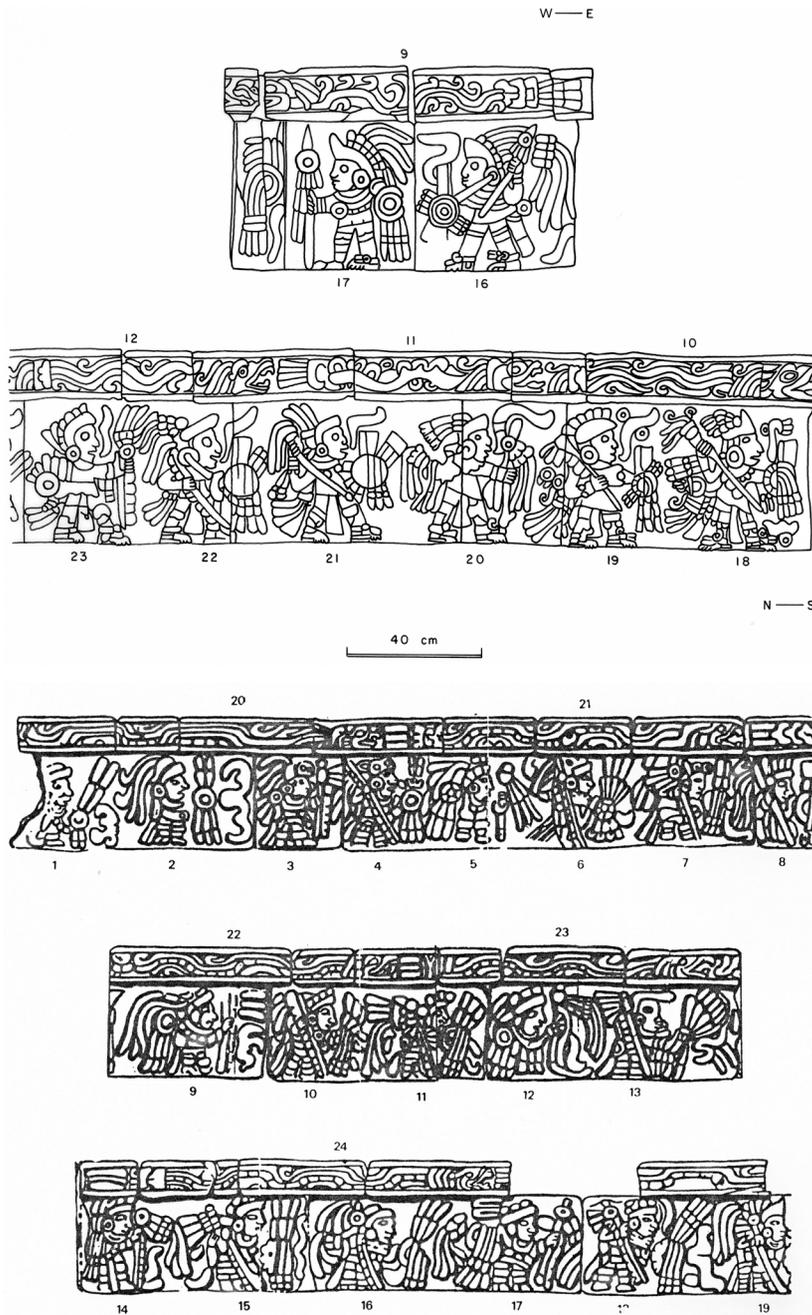


FIGURE 20. Warrior procession carved on a Mexica bench relief. Portico, bench 2, from the House of Eagles, Tenochtitlan. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

FIGURE 21. Warrior procession carved on a Toltec bench relief known as the “frieze of the caciques.” Vestibule of Building B, Tula (Acosta 1945: fig. 25).

models, represent individuals dressed in Toltec garb and bearing defensive and offensive weapons, although always in a noncombative stance (Figures 20, 21). None of the 201 figures discovered to date bear the complex insignia of the officials of the Mexica military that were rendered in such documents as *Primeros memoriales* (Sahagún 1993: 68r–69r, 72r–80r), *Codex Mendoza* (1992), and *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* (1983). It is significant that the bench bas-

reliefs in the House of Eagles do not depict those offensive weapons that were absent from the Toltec military inventory but were used extensively by Mexica armies, such as the bow-and-arrow combination, and particularly to the *macuahuitl* (a wooden club edged with obsidian blades). The latter instrument, so feared by the Spanish invaders, was represented profusely in pictographic documents of Mexica tradition and somewhat rarely in the sculptures of this civilization (e.g., Gutiérrez 1983: 142–144, figs. 124, 125). On the benches of the House of Eagles, no elements suggest a specific event from Mexica history. The bas-reliefs completely lack calendrical signs, name glyphs, place names, and allusions to the reasons underlying the auto-sacrifice represented. The images only seek to record in stone the sacrifices performed by high dignitaries without time references.

Since its discovery, the House of Eagles has often been compared with different hypostyle halls at Tula (e.g., Klein 1987: 307; Mastache et al. 2002: 111–114; Molina Montes 1987: 102; Solís 1997: 91).¹² Some authors have suggested the configuration of the Mexica building is similar to that of the Burnt Palace, because the House of Eagles also has a portico supported by pilasters, rooms decorated with bench reliefs, and a patio with an impluvium. Nevertheless, we have reached the conclusion that there is no such analogy between the two buildings (López Luján 2006). The hypostyle halls at Tula were composed of an entrance portico and an extremely large, rectangular hall that always exceeded 500 m² in area. Their shapes and dimensions implied that their interiors were used for activities involving large groups of people. In contrast, the inner rooms of the House of Eagles display a much more complex spatial configuration and all are smaller than 72 m² (Table 2). In other words, these small, barely illuminated rooms that were isolated from the outside are spaces more in tune with prayer, meditation, and penitence. This suggestion is confirmed by the iconography and the chemical remains recovered from the stucco floors of the building, which indicate that oblation and auto-sacrifice were the principal rites that took place there (Barba et al. 1996; López Luján 2006). Complementing these data, a study of the historical sources has determined with a fair degree of certainty that this neo-Toltec building served as a setting for rites of dynastic transition: a wake was held there over the body of the dead king, and a few days later in the same location the successor to the throne conducted rites of death and rebirth prior to ascending the throne (López Luján 2006).

In conclusion, the House of Eagles did not have the same functions as its Toltec predecessors or models. Physical similarities were simply the result of an architectural revival that lacked specific connotations but took on the quality of a sacred symbol alluding to a grandiose past. From this perspective, it is worth asking: what was the meaning of evoking the Toltec past in a structure destined for rituals surrounding the major rites

TABLE 2. Comparison of the Halls in the Burnt Palace, Tula, and the Rooms in the House of Eagles, Tenochtitlan

<i>Inner space</i>	<i>Area (m²)</i>
Burnt Palace, Tula	
Hall 1	537
Hall 2	657
Hall 3	518
House of Eagles, Tenochtitlan	
Room 1	72
Room 2	28
Room 3	28

of passage of Mexica kings? In general, we can state that the neo-Toltec iconographic and decorative program transmitted the idea of prestigious ancestry, an established means of legitimating the supremacy of the king, heir, and indisputable successor to the great Quetzalcoatl.

CONCLUSIONS

We can surmise that the attitude of the Mexica toward the archetypical image of Tollan and Quetzalcoatl—toward the ruins of the legendary Tula and the figure of their own patron god, Huitzilopochtli—can be characterized as variable over time. This was the case in different periods of their history and in terms of the different components of society and their diverse ideologies. Nonetheless, an ongoing, generalized belief seems to have been the sacred character of the site, which was visited, honored, and deprived of the vestiges of its ancient glories by the Mexica and their contemporaries. Nevertheless, beyond the widespread admiration of the peoples of the Central Highlands, there is the need (evident in the Mexica attitude) to transform their capital, first into the successor of the legendary Tula, and later in the new projection of the anecumenical Tollan.

Once the Mexica reached their maximum power and domination, they may have had pretensions of removing any legitimating references to Tollan and to archaeological Tula. It is difficult to derive this idea from extant material testimonies, but if true, the pride of the sons of Huitzilopochtli was demolished by the impact of the Spanish conquest and the cosmological interpretation given to the European invasion: Quetzalcoatl had returned because of Huitzilopochtli's arrogance, and the latter god had to recognize his true stature.

Tula, its architecture, sculptures, paintings, and ritual objects were models for Tenochtitlan. There is evidence that one incentive for copying

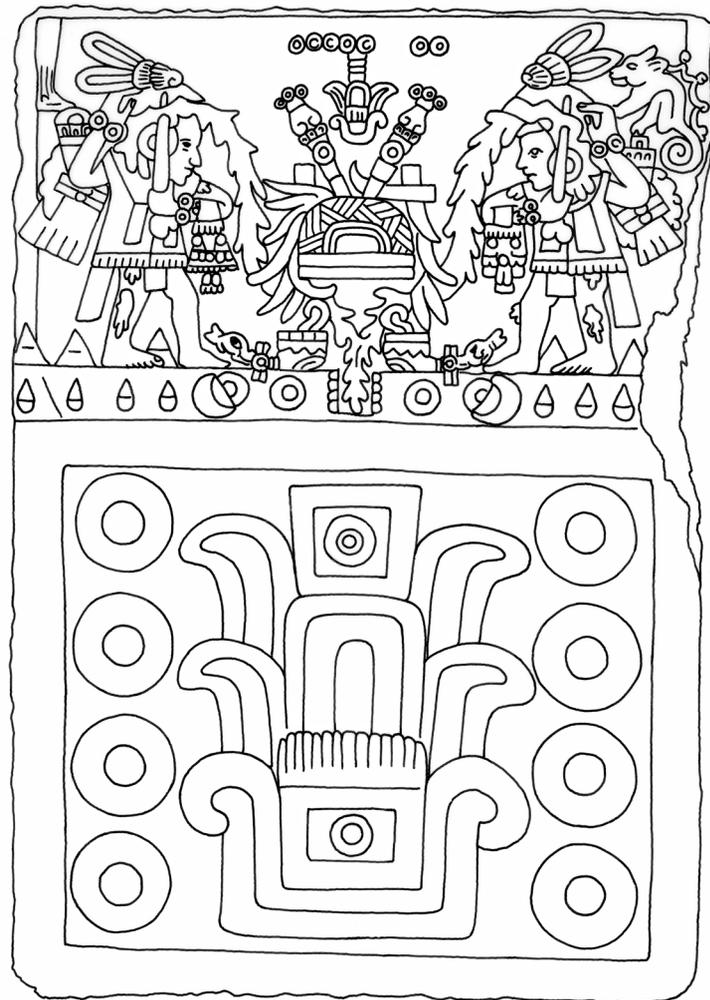


FIGURE 22. Dedication Stone of the Inauguration of the Great Temple. Drawing by Fernando Carrizosa.

Tula must have been political: the ostentatious display showing that the Mexica capital was the successor of the former city's power and held an unbroken legitimacy. However, other evidence suggests much more profound causes: the use of forms that invited divine beings to occupy their space. Beyond ideological adaptations to the vagaries of history, the figure of Tollan as an anecumenical place and the place of origin for humans had penetrated rituals connected to power and became rooted in these rituals independent of ideological changes. The liturgy linked to the most important political acts had created a mundane projection of Tollan on religious architecture. The penetration of the faithful in neo-Toltec precincts launched a mystical journey to another time-space, and there, they fulfilled high-level rituals for the transfer of rulership. The recently elected sovereign had to visit the House of Eagles through a ritual death, and there he received his new being and the responsibility of his future power (López Luján 2006). He had to journey to anecumenical Tollan, because

this place was the threshold of the other time-space, the antechamber of the creation of humans (see *Memorial de Sololá* 1950: 47–57; *Popol Vuh* 1964: 107–112; *Título de Totonicapán* 1983: 174–175). To become king the elected ruler came to Tollan; perhaps he gave offerings there to the god Nacxitl-Quetzalcoatl, who bestowed distinctive characteristics on different ethnic groups, and the elected ruler crossed the limits between this and the other world to take on power. Later, in a complementary ritual, the deceased king returned his gift to the place of origin of power. In this celebration, the *zacatapayolli* must have had the symbolic value of the sacred place where Quetzalcoatl intervened to bestow his legitimation. We can see this symbolism in the relief known as the Dedication Stone commemorating the inauguration of the Great Temple (Figure 22), a monument in which Tizoc and Ahuitzotl let blood as they flank a *zacatapayolli* in the year 8-Reed (A.D. 1487). According to Townsend (1979: 40–43; cf. Klein 1987: 318–324), the celebrated scene represented Tizoc legitimizing the ascent to the throne of his brother and successor, Ahuitzotl, a ceremony that took place at the navel of the universe, the place of the earth's reproductive and alimentary forces. Nicholson with Quiñones Keber (1983: 54) emphasize that the date that appears above the *zacatapayolli*, 7-Reed, is one of the archetypal names of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, inventor and patron of auto-sacrifice carried out by both *tlatoque*. The parallel would seem to confirm our interpretation that those who attended the ritual in the House of Eagles were mystically situated in the anecumenical Tollan, precisely at the axis mundi in the mythical realm governed by Quetzalcoatl, where the transfer of political authority was carried out.

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NOTES

1. In this chapter, ecumenical (from *oikos*, house) is defined as the world inhabited by natural and supernatural beings, and anecumenical as the space exclusive to supernatural beings.

2. The designation is conventional (see López Austin and López Luján 1999: 38–40).

3. The *minacachalli* was the dart used in lake hunting, propelled with the *atlatl* (spearthrower); the *chitatli* was the net bag used to collect game.

4. To distinguish anecumenical Tollan from its earthly manifestation, we reserve the original name for the former and use Tula to refer to the archaeological city.

5. According to Diehl (1989: 26), the small size, crudeness, and lack of decoration of these constructions suggest that they were erected by small, disorganized groups of individuals.

6. Acosta's Building "4" is to the northeast of Ballcourt 1 (see Diehl 1989: 23). It should not be confused with Building 4, located in the Great Plaza. About the latter, see note 12.

7. A huge trench was dug during the Late Postclassic on the north side of Building B; it had a volume of 2,600 m³ (Acosta 1961: 29, 1964: 46). The colossal figures, columns, and piers that held up the roof of the temple were violently cast into this pit.

8. The enormous formal, stylistic, and iconographic differences between the Chacmoos from Tula and those from Tenochtitlan lead us to think that, beyond mere imitation, these are two sculptural expressions extremely different from a pan-Mesoamerican tradition of great temporal depth (López Austin and López Luján 2001).

9. Unfortunately, this important discovery was publicized only through the local newspapers. Apparently a technical report was never submitted to the authorities at the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (José Ramírez, personal communication, August 2005).

10. These stairways were dismantled at the end of November 1944 and were taken to Tlatelolco under the orders of Pablo Martínez del Río (Espejo 1996: 179).

11. The second construction stage of the House of Eagles is contemporary with Stage IVb of the Great Temple. Stage IVb of the Great Temple was characterized by the presence of two chambers on its front platform that were decorated with benches imitating the Tula bench reliefs (López Luján 2006).

12. Some of these authors (Francisco Hinojosa, personal communication to Molina Montes 1987: 102; Mastache et al. 2002: 113–114; Molina Montes 1987: 102; see also Chapter 10 in this volume) have made reference to certain spatial analogies between the House of Eagles and Building 4 at Tula. The latter is a complex of adobe rooms connected directly to Pyramid B via the Southern Vestibule. Building 4, also known as "Palace to the East" (see Figure 8), was partially excavated in the 1950s by Acosta (1956a: 44–46, 77–80), and today it is being explored by Robert H. Cobean (personal communication, October 2005). On the one hand, the House of Eagles differs from Building 4 in construction materials and finishes, in the precise distribution of pilasters and benches, and in that it is not articulated to the north with any pyramidal structure. On the other hand, the Toltec building and the Mexica one display interesting similarities in the relative positions of their first rooms and interconnecting doors.

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