

Everything made now is either a replica or a variant of something made a little time ago and so on back without break to the first morning of human time.

George Kubler¹

THE AZTECS' PRAGMATIC VIEW OF THE PAST

The Aztec kings exploited history for propaganda purposes. They used it as a powerful tool to justify, in the eyes both of their own people and of foreigners, the hegemonic role they had acquired after gaining independence from the lords of Atzcapotzalco in 1430. By re-creating history – reinterpreting the past from the perspective of the present – they convinced their people that the role of the Aztec nation was to dominate all others and that their destiny was to engage in ambitious expansionist campaigns.

At a time when great changes were taking place in Tenochtitlan, the legitimacy of power was derived from the relationship between the Aztec people and their patron god Huitzilopochtli, via a sacred link: the ruler. The sovereign was considered a semi-divine being who belonged to the lineage closest to the protective numen. This explains why Aztec historical records, commissioned by the rulers themselves to leave traces of their passage across the earth, detail long dynastic lists in chronological order (the main genealogies always begin in mythic times), as well as coronation ceremonies and endless accounts of military triumphs. The official Aztec history also sets down exceptional events of huge importance

for the state: major architectural programmes embarked on by the government (temples, ditches, aqueducts and other public works), migrations (movements of people, foundations, arrivals of foreigners) and extraordinary natural phenomena (astronomical, climatological and geological).²

As well as being limited to these themes, Aztec historical records suffer from great conciseness, given the lack of a proper phonetic script. Knowledge of the most important events in the lives of the Aztecs tended to be transmitted orally from generation to generation, a practice which in the long term distorted reality. Only some events were worthy of being set down using a mixed form of writing, which combined pictograms and ideograms with phonetic symbols. This system also included numerical and calendar symbols that, among other things, allowed events to be fixed in time. These messages passed into posterity either in the form of manuscript books made of animal skins or tree bark, or as reliefs etched into hard rock. Unfortunately, as the centuries passed, almost all these historical records were damaged or destroyed through the interaction of nature – in the form of catastrophes and weather – and human beings. The book-burning ordered by Itzcoatl (1427–40) to eliminate these magic tools that the old *calpulli* leaders had used to wield power is one example of the latter.³

As a direct result of the above, Aztec knowledge of the past was always limited in terms of time. As has been demonstrated by H. B. Nicholson, the annals of central Mexico

can provide no certainty of events earlier than three or four centuries before the arrival of Hernán Cortés.⁴ Furthermore, this scholar warns, any records of events prior to 1370 should be viewed with scepticism. Under these conditions, at the close of the Late Postclassic period (1250–1521), the remote past had become as malleable as the future, a game of mirrors which reflected both historical accounts and mythical tales.

This is clear in the Aztec image of Tula (fig. 11), in which vague recollections of a militaristic capital city, which achieved its greatest splendour between 950 and 1150, are combined with the well-established myth of Tollan, the wonderful 'place of the Tules [reeds]', where fruit grew to gigantic proportions, the inhabitants were great craftsmen

and the government had been in the hands of Quetzalcoatl, a wise and virtuous priest who instituted self-sacrifice.⁵

Teotihuacan (fig. 12), however, because of its greater age, was devoid of historical context in the eyes of the Aztecs. The various versions given of its inhabitants undoubtedly resulted from Aztec amazement at the majesty of the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon. Depending on the version, these Cyclopean buildings were considered to be the work of powerful Toltecs, deformed giants with long thin arms, or of the gods themselves. When the Spanish arrived, this archaeological metropolis, enveloped in a divine aura, was considered to be the revered place of origin, the birthplace of the Fifth Sun and the place whence the primordial peoples set forth on their journey.⁶

Fig. 11

The carved stone atlantes of Pyramid B at Tula.

Fig. 12

The Processional Way and Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at Teotihuacan.



AZTEC ADDITIONS TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

We know that Mesoamericans frequently visited ruined ceremonial sites, avidly exploring buildings and monuments whose shapes they could just make out under the cover of vegetation. There is no doubt that this activity was common among the Aztecs, particularly considering that Tenochtitlan was surrounded by perfect material testimonies of great civilisations. Within a radius of 70 km lay vestiges of real cities that had been populated by tens or even hundreds of thousands of people. The most important were Teotihuacan, to the north-east, the famous metropolis of the Classic period (AD 200–650); Xochicalco, to the south, one of the most cosmopolitan centres of the Epiclassic period (650–900); and Tula, to the north-west, a city which unquestionably dominated a major part of the Early Postclassic period (900–1250).

At these archaeological sites, dominated by silence and desolation, the Aztecs performed a huge range of activities. Unfortunately, many of these have left no perceptible traces for modern archaeologists. We know that they took place because a few sixteenth-century historical records exist, particularly a report on the town of Tequizistlan ('Relación de Tequizistlan y su partido').⁷ This document shows that societies living eight centuries after the turbulent collapse of Teotihuacan, including the Aztecs, used the ancient Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon for worship, to consult oracles, to perform sacrifices and as a place to execute criminals.

There were other lesser idols [worshipped by the Aztecs] in the town of San Juan [Teotihuacan], which was the [location of the] temple and oracle attended by nearby towns. In this town they had a very tall temple [...]: at the summit of it was a stone idol called by the name Tonacateuctli. [...]

It faced the west and on a plain that stretched in front of this temple, there was another smaller temple [...] on which was another idol a little smaller than the first one, called Mictlanteuctli, which means 'Lord of Hell'. [...] A little further, toward the north, was another temple slightly smaller than the first, which was called 'the hill of the Moon', on top of which was another idol [...], which was called the Moon. All around it were many temples, in one of which (the largest of them) there were six other idols, who were called Brothers of the Moon, [and] the priests of Montezuma, lord of Mexico, came with this Montezuma, every twenty days to [offer] sacrifices to all of them.⁸

Other Pre-Hispanic activities, however, did leave an indelible mark on archaeological sites. The first group of these we might define as additive, because they resulted in new elements being added to the ruins. Such interventions were carried out by many different people at different times and practically everywhere in Mesoamerica. A clear example of this can be found in the Preclassic settlement of Cerro Chalcatzingo, Morelos.⁹ On the sides of this sacred mountain sufficient evidence exists for us to state that the Olmec-like reliefs sculpted there between 700 and 500 BC were venerated two thousand years later. In fact, around the thirteenth century AD, the Tlahuicas who lived in the immediate surroundings built a series of wide stairways and platforms which led to a place of worship. These structures allowed people to ascend 30 metres with ease and perform ceremonies in front of the relief known as Monument 2.

Other additions include offerings and corpses buried inside destroyed buildings, indicating the way in which ruins were regarded as sacred. Both practices were widespread during the Postclassic period. Examples are the Mayan effigy censers that were buried as propitiatory gifts or as symbols of gratitude in the collapsed temples of the Late Classic period in Dzibanché, Quintana Roo;¹⁰ the sumptuous Mixtec funeral offerings deposited in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán, Oaxaca;¹¹ and the mortal remains of two individuals with Aztec and Tetzcocan pottery placed in Structure 1-R of the Ciudadela in Teotihuacan.¹²

However, it is the ruins of Tula which provide the most evidence. As a consequence of two decades of excavations in the main square, the archaeologist Jorge R. Acosta recovered huge quantities of so-called Aztec pottery, unquestionable proof of three hundred years of human activity taking place directly over the ruins of the city.¹³ Unfortunately it has been impossible to determine exactly who brought this pottery here because we know it was made in at least four

different zones of the Basin of Mexico: Tenochtitlan, Tetzcoco, Chalco and the far western end of the Ixtapalapan peninsula. We can establish with accuracy, however, the type of additive activities which these groups engaged in. Large quantities of offerings are buried inside the ruins of the main buildings of the Toltec golden age, including the Central Shrine, Buildings B and C, and the Burnt Palace. Fewer in number are the tombs of individuals of all ages, almost always buried with very humble funerary offerings, discovered in Building B, Building 4 and the Burnt Palace. It is also worth mentioning the construction of religious buildings and sumptuous residences over the ruins of the ancient ceremonial centre. Examples of this include the residential complex erected over Building K, the shrine attached to the north-west corner of Building C and the pyramidal plinth placed over the Burnt Palace.

Another additive activity engaged in by carriers of Aztec pottery, albeit of a different nature, relates to the creation of sculptures in the immediate surroundings of the main plaza, specifically the reliefs of Cerro de la Malinche, created at the end of the fifteenth century in the purest Aztec style.¹⁴ This unique group, which consists of the effigies of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and Chalchiuhlticue, has been interpreted both as an Aztec homage to the deities inherited from their Toltec forefathers¹⁵ and as a 'retrospective historical image' of Ce Acatl – the most famous ruler of Tula – validating the Aztec tradition of sculpting portraits of their rulers on the rocks of Chapultepec hill.¹⁶

The Dominican friar Diego Durán recounts one of the last recorded additive activities.¹⁷ He states that in 1519, while still at the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, Hernán Cortés sent Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin a gift of wine and biscuits. On receiving the gifts in Tenochtitlan, the Aztec *tlatoani* (ruler) refused to consume them – whether because he found them strange or because of the way they looked after having travelled across the ocean we shall never know – and stated that they 'belonged to the gods'. He gave orders for his priests to take them all to the ruins of Tula 'with great solemnity and to bury them in the temple of Quetzalcoatl, whose sons had arrived'.

AZTEC REMOVALS FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES
Archaeology and history also provide much evidence of activities we could define as subtractive. Naturally they include the excavation of buildings to extract architectural elements, sculptures, offerings and bones, all actions that



fig. 13
fragment of a Teotihuacan mask,
c. 150–650, found in Chamber III,
very rich Aztec offering in the
orth-western corner of Stage IV(a)
of the Templo Mayor. Greenstone,
covered by the Aztecs with a layer
of tar, 16.7 × 7.7 × 5.7 cm.
useo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City

fig. 14
Offering 82, found in the south-
western corner of the Templo
Mayor, contained, among other
things, the skull of a decapitated
individual, a Teotihuacan mask
(c. 260), and an Aztec
avertine mask.
useo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City



many modern authors have defined pejoratively as sacking and pillage. Most of these operations, however, were clearly not carried out for profit but only to recover useful construction materials or objects that were appreciated for their aesthetic beauty, particularly because they were considered to be the work of gods, giants or almost mythical people.

In the case of Teotihuacan, a simple bowl – a fragment of an Aztec container found at the entrance to a large man-made cave over which the Pyramid of the Sun was built – could be a clue to planned excavations having taken place just before the arrival of the Spanish. When archaeologists entered this sacred space in the early 1970s, they found that the walls that sealed access along the tunnel had been knocked down, and that in the four-lobed chamber at the end there were no traces of offerings or burials. According to some researchers, unless it was accidentally left there in recent times, the fragment of pottery would suggest that the people who broke in were the Aztecs themselves.¹⁸

Historical sources from the sixteenth century provide firmer evidence. For example, the indigenous informants of Friar Bernardino de Sahagún describe the procedures individuals had to perform to acquire precious stones:

And those of experience, the advised, these look for it [the precious stone]. In this manner [they see,] they know where it is: they can see that it is breathing [smoking], giving off vapour. Early, at early dawn, when [the sun] comes up. They find where to place themselves, where to stand; they face the sun [...] Wherever they can see that something like a little smoke [column] stands, that one of them is giving off vapour, this one is the precious stone [...] They take it up; they carry it away. And if they are not successful, if it is only barren where the little [column of] smoke stands, thus they know that the precious stone is there in the earth.

Then they dig. There they see, there they find the precious stone, perhaps already well formed, perhaps already burnished. Perhaps they see something buried there either in stone, or in a stone bowl, or in a stone chest; perhaps it is filled with precious stones. This they claim there.¹⁹

The same work contains a more explicit mention, and talks not only about the profound knowledge Aztecs had of the vestiges of Tula but also of the way they went exploring underground in search of antiquities:

Because verily they [the Toltecs] there [in Tula-Xicocotitlan] resided together, they there dwelt, so also many are their traces which they produced. And they left behind that which today is there, which is to be seen, which they did not finish – the so-called serpent column. [...] And the Tolteca

mountain is to be seen; and the Tolteca pyramids, the mounds, and the surfacing of Tolteca [temples]. And Tolteca potsherds are there to be seen. And Tolteca bowls, Tolteca ollas are taken from the earth. And many times Tolteca jewels – armbands, esteemed greenstones, fine turquoise, emerald-green jade – are taken from the earth.²⁰

Various people who lived at the same time as the Aztecs were also involved in taking Toltec antiquities. There is credible testimony that, after they had been exhumed, old sculptures were taken to various destinations, one of which was the city of Tlaxcala, capital of the Aztec empire's greatest enemies. According to Friar Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía),²¹ a mask and a small image brought from Tula were venerated in the main pyramid of this city, together with the sculpture of the fire god Camaxtli. Another destination was Tlatelolco, as described in a short passage of *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* (*A History of the Mexicans Through Their Paintings*):

In the year 99 [AD 1422] the people of Tlatilulco went to Tula and since [the Toltecs] had died and left their god there, whose name was Tlacabuepan, they took him and brought him back to Tlatilulco.²²

These activities, which had been carried out intensively since at least the thirteenth century, had a devastating effect from an archaeological point of view. In fact no records exist whatsoever of the massive, if not total, loss of sculptures and covering stones.

RECOVERY OF A GLORIOUS PAST: REUSE

These additive and subtractive activities not only had a serious impact on archaeological sites but also affected the populations responsible for them. Relics recovered during planned excavations, as well as those discovered accidentally and handed down from generation to generation,²³ were reused as worthy relics of vanished worlds.²⁴ The high quality of the raw materials and manufacture of these objects certainly had an influence on their value, but the allegedly supernatural origin of these items, which were thought to have been created by powerful beings, convinced their owners to wear them as amulets or to re-bury them inside temples and palaces as part of dedicatory and funerary offerings. Furthermore, as is often the case with all kinds of relic, fragments were also venerated. This would explain why these offerings include so many broken bits and pieces (fig. 13).²⁵

The Aztecs were not the first Mesoamerican people to reuse antiquities to establish a direct connection with their ancestors and gods.

Evidence of this practice has been found in many other Mesoamerican regions. Examples include numerous anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, masks, pendants, ritual spoons, miniature canoes, celts and self-sacrifice instruments all made of greenstone and produced by both the Olmecs and their contemporaries of the Middle Preclassic period (1200–400 BC) which have been found by modern archaeologists in Protoclassic (100 BC–AD 200) and Classic (AD 200–900) sites. The most notable finds were made at Cerro de las Mesas, Veracruz;²⁶ Dzibilchaltún and Chacsinkín, Yucatan;²⁷ Cozumel, Quintana Roo;²⁸ Laguna Francesa, Chiapas;²⁹ and Uaxactún and Tikal, Guatemala.³⁰ Similar objects have also been found at Postclassic (900–1521) sites, including Mayapán, Yucatan,³¹ and San Cristóbal Verapaz, Guatemala.³² To this list we could add the Olmec pieces found in the sacred well at Chichén Itzá, which may have been thrown into the water by the Maya during the Classic and Postclassic periods.³³

Although we lack any contextual archaeological information, other Olmec works of art were clearly reused as amulets by dignitaries of the Protoclassic and Classic periods, as is demonstrated by the presence of Mayan inscriptions on their surfaces.

Examples include the ritual spoon in the Museum of San José, Costa Rica,³⁴ and the greenstone pendants in the shape of a human face in the Brooklyn Museum of Art,³⁵ the British Museum³⁶ and at Dumbarton Oaks.³⁷ Around 50 BC, an effigy and an inscription in the early Mayan style were engraved on the back of this Dumbarton Oaks piece which appeared to allude to the enthronement of a ruler called 'sky-moan bird'.

Although these activities were commonplace throughout the vast Mesoamerican territory, Tenochtitlan was the centre when it came to reusing antiquities. A century of archaeological excavation in the Aztec capital has unearthed hundreds of relics in the main religious buildings (fig. 14). Items made of greenstone predominate, although there are also beautiful ceramic and basalt objects. Most notable are a mask, a pendant and various fragments of figurines made by the Olmecs and other Middle Preclassic societies;³⁸ hundreds of masks, and anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, in addition to a model of a temple, Mezcal-style objects, all of them ranging from the Middle Preclassic to the Epiclassic periods;³⁹ various pendants that may date back to the Classic Mayan period; tens of masks, anthropomorphic



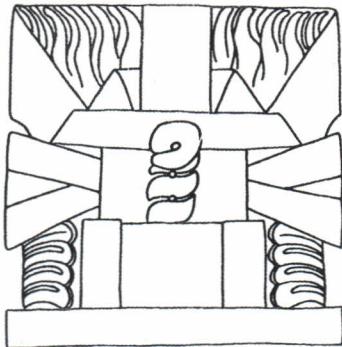
Fig. 15

An Early Postclassic Toltec *chacmool*. Stone, 49 × 106 × 46 cm. Found in the colonial building known as the Casa del Marqués del Apartado, located in front of the ruins of the Templo Mayor. Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City



Fig. 16

Front and rear views of a mask made in the Mezcal region, AD 150–650. Greenstone, 11 × 9.5 × 3.9 cm. From Chamber III of the Templo Mayor. The Aztecs added the image of a person playing a horizontal drum. Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City

**Fig. 17**

Line drawing of a stone discovered in front of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan showing the symbol of the *xiuhmolpilli*, or cycle of 52 years.

**Fig. 18**

La Chinola, c. 1500. Volcanic stone, 107 × 40 × 10 cm. Discovered at Cerro de la Chinola in the late nineteenth century. This Aztec-style slab seems to represent Chalchiuhltlicue, the water goddess, wearing an archaic headdress in the shape of the Teotihuacan symbol of the *xiuhmolpilli*, or cycle of 52 years.

Museo Nacional de Antropología,
Mexico City

figurines, nose-plugs in the shape of snake rattles and containers dating back to the Teotihuacan Classic period;⁴⁰ and a *plumbate* vessel made in the eastern part of Soconusco during the Early Postclassic period.⁴¹ Strangely, only one antiquity which is undeniably Toltec has been unearthed to date: a decapitated *chacmool* which was discovered in the foundations of the colonial Casa del Marqués del Apartado, opposite the ruins of the Templo Mayor in Mexico City (fig. 15).⁴² The piece's typically Toltec features, in terms of raw material, size, proportions, style and iconography, make its origin unquestionable.

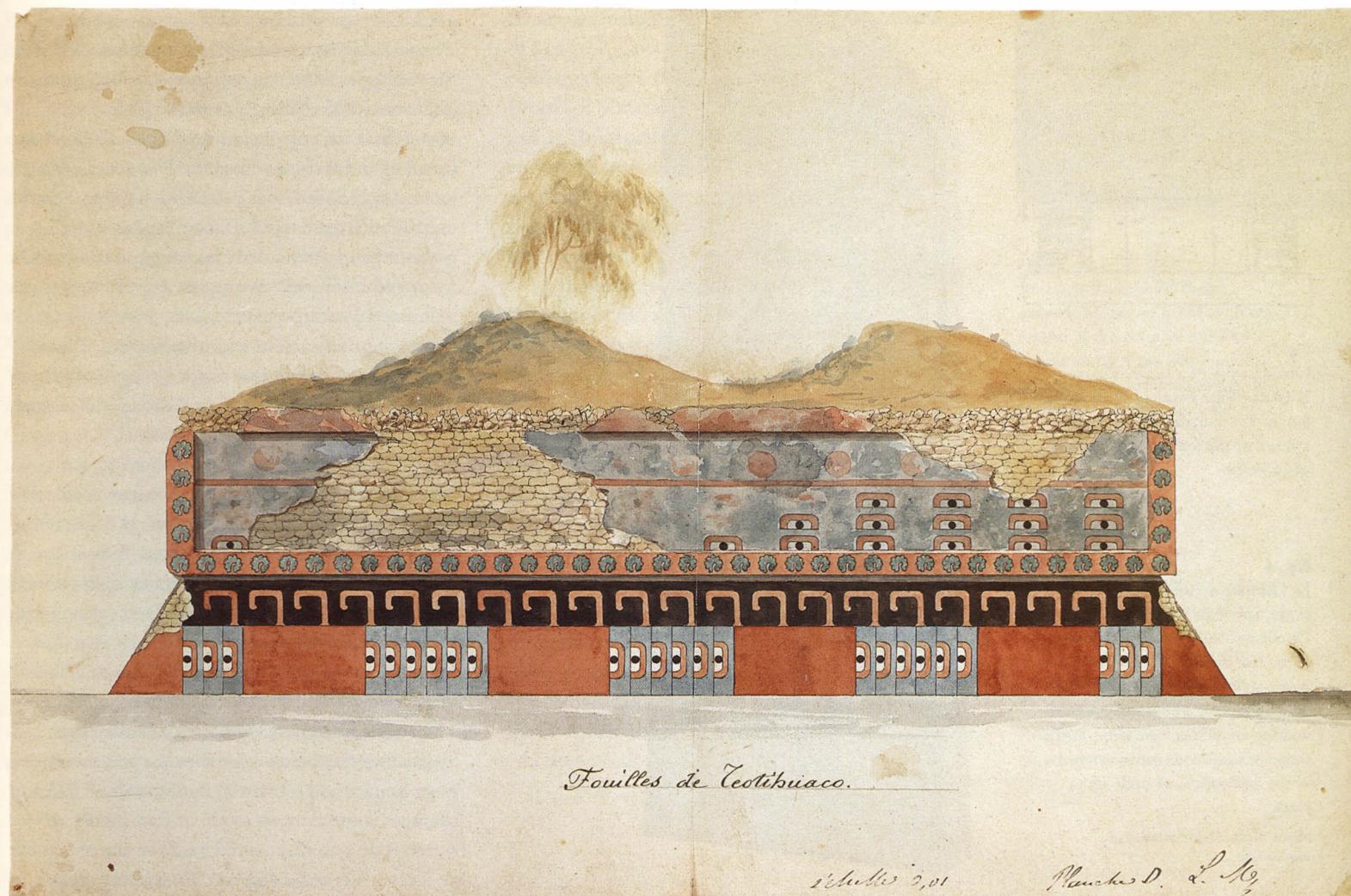
Interestingly, the Aztecs did not bury all relics just as they found them.⁴³ They altered quite a number, adding paint or tar to accentuate their original religious significance or to confer new meaning upon them. Thus, for example, Tlaloc jars from Teotihuacan retained their pluvial symbolism by being painted blue or with tar. Many Mezcala human masks and figurines, however, were transformed into divinities by having the faces of Xiuhtecuhtli or Tlaloc painted on them. As if that were not enough, the inside of tens of Mezcala masks were decorated with aquatic glyphs and human figures (fig. 16).

RECOVERY OF A GLORIOUS PAST: IMITATION

Tenochtitlan was the main centre of imitation in Mesoamerica. Aztec exploration was sufficiently intensive for the island's artists to have the opportunity of copying ancient styles of sculpture, painting and architecture, as well as completing iconographic scenes. It is well known that Aztecs used alien artistic types in their capital, often without being particularly faithful to their original form and meaning.⁴⁴ We might say that their imitations reinterpreted the past, eclectically combining the ancient with the modern. Their archaisms were therefore fragmentary evocations of times gone by, rather than identical and integral copies of specific artistic creations.

As examples of these, the Aztec sculptures based on the effigies from Teotihuacan could be mentioned. One of them is the image of the old fire god, found near the North Red Temple at Tenochtitlan (cf. cat. 5).⁴⁵ The Aztec sculptor was faithful to the Teotihuacan models in copying the round-shouldered posture of the deity as well as the position of his hands and feet, but he added new iconographic attributes – connected with water and the underworld – such as the fangs, the rectangular plates over the eyes and mouth, a huge brazier and terrestrial figureheads. A different example is the famous stone of La Chinola, an Aztec-style slab discovered near the site of Castillo de Teayo, Veracruz (fig. 18). Everything seems to indicate that the front side of the monument represents Chalchiuhltlicue – the water goddess – emerging from or descending into the jaws of a terrestrial monster. On the back, however, are four flying *tlalocue* (assistants of the rain god Tlaloc) making rain fall with their jugs of water. Intriguingly, the main divinity wears an archaic headdress⁴⁶ in the shape of the Teotihuacan symbol of the *xiuhmolpilli*, a composite bundle representing the cycle of 52 years (fig. 17).⁴⁷ It is extremely likely that the Postclassic artist knew the meaning of this ancient symbol and sculpted it to allude to one of the first four eras of humanity, which was ruled by Chalchiuhltlicue and ended with a flood.

As regards Epiclassic art, we know of only one Aztec greenstone plaque inspired by the Temple of the Plumed Serpents at Xochicalco, and a sculptural complex at Tenochtitlan, consisting of three fire-serpent heads with calendar dates in the Xochicalcan style.⁴⁸ It is also worth mentioning the many evocations of Tula sculpture. Contrary to what happened with the religious images of Teotihuacan and Xochicalco, the Aztecs copied practically every Toltec vestige that met their eyes, particularly braziers with the face of Tlaloc, telamons, standard-bearers, colossal



plumed serpents, as well as reliefs showing people bearing arms, undulating serpents, birds of prey, felines and the so-called man-bird serpents.⁴⁹

Imitation extended, even more effectively, to religious architecture. At the end of the fifteenth century, the sacred precincts of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco included several buildings which revived the forgotten shapes of Teotihuacan. Known as the Red Temples, five small shrines harmoniously combine the typical Teotihuacan *talud-tablero* (a rectangular panel [*tablero*] sitting on a sloping panel [*talud*]), a structure that had not been built for several centuries, with decorative Aztec elements fashionable at the time of construction.⁵⁰ Even though the builders of the Red Temples undoubtedly used local materials and applied their own architectural techniques, they took special care to reproduce the ancient proportions and, in particular, to re-create the mural paintings of the Classic period (fig. 19).⁵¹ In so doing, they copied various Teotihuacan symbols on red backgrounds following repetitive patterns: storm god masks, trilobes (water droplets), elongated eyes (flowing water) and cut shells

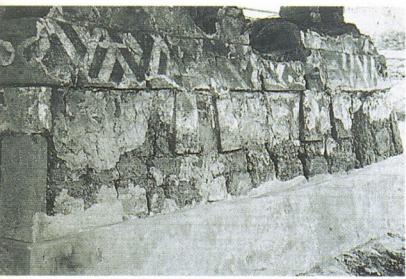
(wind?; fig. 21). To these motifs they added the red and white stripes and knots that distinguish Xochipilli, the Aztec god of music and dance (fig. 20). These elements, and boxes found inside the shrines, filled with musical instruments, demonstrate that the Red Temples were used to worship Xochipilli.⁵²

Finally, mention should be made of the House of Eagles, a fifteenth-century religious building located to the north of the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlan. The design of this building is vaguely reminiscent of the Toltec hypostyle halls, but its iconographic and decorative programme revives Tula in all its splendour. Braziers with the face of Tlaloc, benches with undulating serpents and processions of armed men, and mural paintings with multi-coloured friezes decorate interiors to convey the living image of a glorious past. Petrographic, chemical, technological, iconographic and stylistic studies⁵³ have shown that these decorative elements are local copies that illustrate a kind of Neo-Toltequism in the art of the Aztec capital.⁵⁴ There is, therefore, much evidence to support the observation made by the

Fig. 19

E. L. Méhédin, Detail of a temple in Teotihuacan excavated by Longpérier in 1865. Watercolour, 20 × 36 cm. The proportions and mural paintings of this temple may have inspired the Aztecs when they built the North Red Temple at Tenochtitlan.

Collection Agence Régionale de l'Environnement de Haute-Normandie, Rouen

**Fig. 20**

Building L of Tlatelolco was excavated in 1963–64. Its mural paintings, with Xochipilli's stripes and knots, are very similar to those of the South Red Temple at Tenochtitlan.

Fig. 21

Certain decorative elements of the North Red Temple, among them cut shells and aquatic currents in the shape of an eye, are identical to those of the Teotihuacan temple excavated by Longpérier.

Mexican poet Octavio Paz, who commented that 'if Tula was a rustic version of Teotihuacan, México-Tenochtitlan was an imperial version of Tula'.⁵⁵

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PAST

The reuse of relics, the imitation of ancient sculptures and the construction of archaic buildings in Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco coincided with the period of maximum integration, consolidation and expansion of the Aztec empire. The recovery and ennoblement of extinct civilisations in this particular historical context should perhaps be seen as one of the many strategies adopted by Aztec rulers to sustain a new, dominant position in the eyes of both kindred and strangers. As the centuries passed, these antiquities, making direct allusion to a grandiose past and genealogically legitimising the actions of their belligerent users,⁵⁶ no doubt became the ultimate sacred symbols.



2 THE AZTECS' SEARCH FOR THE PAST

- I should like to thank Fernando Carrizosa, Alfredo López Austin, Peter Sawbridge, Eric Taladoire and Germán Zúñiga for their assistance.
- 01 Kubler 1963, p. 2.
- 02 Nicholson 1955, p. 596; Nicholson 1979, p. 195.
- 03 López Austin 1985, pp. 310, 325.
- 04 Nicholson 1979, p. 192–93.
- 05 Nicholson 2001.
- 06 López Luján 1989, pp. 43–49; Boone 2000. See also Alfredo López Austin's essay in this volume, pp. 30–37.
- 07 Castañeda 1986.
- 08 Ibid., pp. 235–36.
- 09 Arana 1987, p. 395.
- 10 Nalda and López Camacho 1995, pp. 22–23.
- 11 Caso 1932.
- 12 Romero 1982.
- 13 Acosta 1956–57, pp. 75–76, 92. A detailed study of Acosta's Postclassic finds is being prepared (López Luján forthcoming).
- 14 Navarrete and Crespo 1971, p. 15; Nicholson 2001, p. 234–36.
- 15 Fuente 1990, p. 39.
- 16 Quiñones Keber 1993, p. 153.
- 17 Durán 1967, vol. 2, p. 511.
- 18 Heyden 1973, p. 5.
- 19 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 11, p. 221.
- 20 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 10, p. 165.
- 21 Benavente 1971, p. 78.
- 22 Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas 1965, p. 60.
- 23 López Luján 1989, pp. 61–65.
- 24 López Luján 1989, pp. 17–19.
- 25 López Luján 1989, p. 73.
- 26 Drucker 1955, pp. 29–33, 47, 56–60, 66–67.
- 27 Proskouriakoff 1974, p. 10; Andrews 1987.

- 28 Rathje 1973.
- 29 Gussinyer and Martínez 1976–77.
- 30 Kidder 1947, p. 48, figs 37t, 74; Proskouriakoff 1974, p. 10.
- 31 Smith and Ruppert 1953, fig. 9c; Proskouriakoff 1974, p. 10.
- 32 Navarrete 1995.
- 33 Proskouriakoff 1974, pp. 10–11, 36, plates 37a, 38a, 52c, 53a and colour plate III.
- 34 The inscription apparently refers to the 'lord of the nocturnal place'. Graham 1998, pp. 46–48, 51–52, 105.
- 35 Piña Chan 1982, p. 232.
- 36 McEwan 1994, p. 22.
- 37 Coe 1966.
- 38 Matos Moctezuma 1979; López Luján 2001, pp. 24–25.
- 39 González and Olmedo Vera 1990; Olmedo Vera 2001, p. 304.
- 40 Batres 1902, pp. 61–90; Gussinyer 1969, p. 35; Gussinyer 1970, pp. 8–10; López Luján 1989, pp. 25–36; López Luján, Neff and Sugiyama 2000.
- 41 Matos Moctezuma 1983; López Luján 1994, pp. 225, 340–41.
- 42 López Luján 2001, p. 25. This *chacmool* measures 49 × 106 × 46 cm; cf. Acosta 1956.
- 43 López Luján 1989, p. 74.
- 44 López Luján 1989, p. 19.
- 45 López Luján 1989, pp. 32–33.
- 46 Cf. Heyden 1979, pp. 62–65.
- 47 Batres 1906, p. 25, plates 30–31; Langley 1986, pp. 152–53, 245, 254, 332. Cf. Caso 1967, pp. 130–38.
- 48 Caso 1967, pp. 14–16; Nicholson 1971, pp. 120–22; Umberger 1987, pp. 92–95.
- 49 Nicholson 1971, pp. 118, 131; Umberger 1987, pp. 74–82; Fuente 1990, pp. 48–52; Solís Olguín 1997; López Luján forthcoming.

50 Four of these buildings have been unearthed in the ruins of Tenochtitlan and one more in Tlatelolco. See Matos Moctezuma 1965; Gussinyer 1970b; Matos Moctezuma 1984, p. 19; López Luján 1989, p. 37–42; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 1993, pp. 160–61.

51 See Gerber and Taladoire 1990, pp. 6–8.

52 Olmedo Vera 2002.

53 López Luján, Torres Trejo and Montúfar 2002; López Luján forthcoming.

54 Fuente 1990; López Luján forthcoming.

55 Paz 1989, vol. III, 1, pp. 77–78.

56 López Luján 1989, pp. 77–89.

3 COSMOVISION, RELIGION AND THE CALENDAR OF THE AZTECS

01 A generic name given to northern hunter-gatherer nomads.

02 The name Aztecs is derived from Aztlan. During their migration, the Aztecs changed their name, by order of Huitzilopochtli, from Aztecs to Mexitin or Mexicas.

03 Part of this argument appears in the journal *Historia Mexicana* (Florescano 1990; López Austin 1990). I support the second theory. I should underline the fact that the Aztecs considered themselves more civilised and urban than the 'true' chichimecas, defining these as a 'barbaric people who support themselves by hunting and do not settle' (Sahagún 2000, vol. 10, p. 978).

04 The 'place of the seven caves' is the mythical place of origin of various Mesoamerican peoples, but the stories describe it as a real place. Various creation myths state that seven different peoples emerged

there, although their names vary according to who is telling the story.

05 The supreme god was also seen as a conjugal duality.

06 Another conjugal duality, split between proto-Sun and proto-Moon.

07 Many different versions of the myth exist. In some there are not five, but four suns (Moreno de los Arcos 1967).

08 This is according to authors who agree that the Aztecs made the corrections required to ensure that the common year was equal to the tropic year.

09 The gods could be seen by humans only in dreams, in hierophanies or in altered states of consciousness.

10 The One God was known by various names, including Moyocoyani, Icelteotl, Ipalmehuani, Tloque Nahuaque, Tlacatl, Yohualli Ehecatl, Ometeotl and Moche.

11 Plural of Tlaloc and name of the four cardinal divisions, as well as of the huge army of minor rain-gods.

12 *Tlatoani* means 'the one who commands', and *cihuacoatl*, 'female serpent', is one of the names of the goddess of the earth. Both appointments were for life and obtained by election among the members of the most noble families.

13 The highest-ranking priests were the Quetzalcoatl Totec *tlamacazqui*, who was consecrated to Huitzilopochtli, and the Quetzalcoatl Tlaloc *tlamacazqui*, devoted to worshipping Tlaloc. The supreme generals were the *tlacatecatl*, who led the armies, and the *tlacochcalcatl*, who administered weapons and victuals. The managers of public finance were the *hnei calpixquí*, chief collector, and the *petlacalcatl*, who were responsible for the collected goods.

14 The fire-drill, or *mamahuaztli*, was an instrument consisting of two pieces of wood, one 'female' and softer, the other 'male' and in the shape of a lance. The 'male' piece rested in a groove of the 'female' part and was rotated with an up-and-down movement of the palms of the hands until a fire was lit by friction.

4 AZTEC SOCIETY: ECONOMY, TRIBUTE AND WARFARE

01 Lockhart 1992, p. 14.

02 Berdan 1982, pp. 56–59.

03 Lockhart 1992, pp. 20–28.

04 When distilled, this same 'maguey honey' yields tequila. The process of distillation was introduced by the Spanish.

05 Smith 1996, p. 73.

06 The size of Tenochtitlan was extraordinary. Other cities rimming Lake Texcoco ranged from fewer than 10,000 to approximately 30,000 residents.

07 Calnek 1972.

08 Chia, a plant of the *Salvia* family, yields small seeds that were typically ground and eaten in the same manner as maize. High in calcium, phosphorus and iron, chia was a nutritious part of the Aztec diet (see Smith 1996, p. 69).

09 This seems to have been the case even with obsidian-workers, perhaps surprisingly, given that obsidian blades were such important components of Aztec weaponry.

10 Berdan 1982, p. 42.

11 Anderson, Berdan and Lockhart 1976, p. 211.

12 Información sobre los tributos 1957; Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 9, p. 48.

13 Benavente 1971, p. 367.

14 Díaz del Castillo 1956, pp. 211–14; Calnek 1976.

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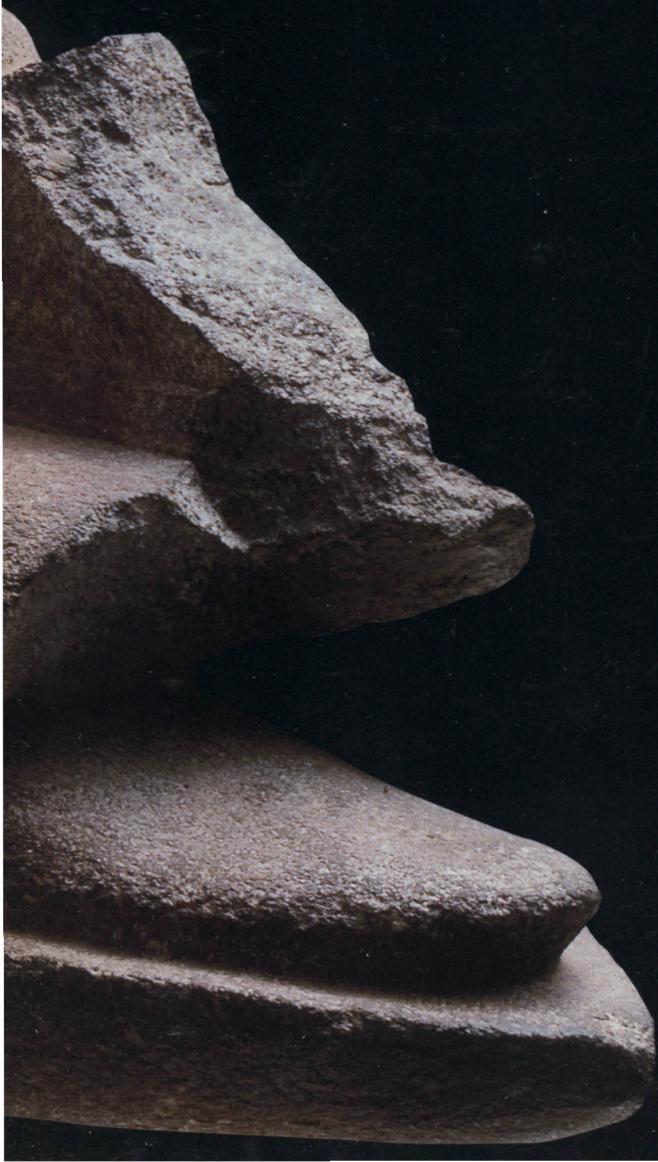
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