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CHAPTER 10

The Iconography of Toltec Period Chichen Itza

The site of Chichen Itza, Yucatan, contains the largest corpus of ancient bas-relief sculptures in the Maya area. Found primarily in architectural contexts on exterior façades, benches, columns, lintels, and interior chambers, the majority of these scenes are quite unlike Classic Maya sculpture of the southern Maya lowlands or even that of the nearby and roughly contemporaneous Puuc region. Since the 19th century work of Désiré Charnay (1887), it has been widely recognized that the iconography of Chichen Itza is notably similar to that of Tula, Hidalgo, situated some 1,100 kilometers to the west (e.g., Seler 1902–1923:1:668–705, 5:197–388; Tozzer 1930, 1957; Jiménez Moreno 1941; Lothrop 1952; Ruz Lhuillier 1962; Andrews IV 1965; Kristan-Graham 1989). For many years, it has been thought that this art followed the Puuc florescence of the northern Maya lowlands. The Puuc style traits at Chichen Itza were considered to be before the advent of Central Mexican art and iconography. Thus the contrasts between the Maya “Old Chichen” and the Toltec “New Chichen” were examined and explained through a chronological construct. A foreign Toltec culture entirely eclipsed earlier Classic Maya art and architecture. Invasion and mass-migration have been frequently cited as explanations for the widespread appearance of Toltec imagery at Chichen Itza (e.g., Morley and Brainerd 1956; Tozzer 1957; Kelley 1983).

In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that the Maya and Toltec styles at Chichen Itza do not simply form two distinct periods but rather, are at least partly contemporaneous. Thus, the occurrence of Maya and Mexican traits cannot be simply explained through chronological succession. The appearance of Toltec iconography is not a manifestation of direct and total domination of a pre-existing Maya population; rather, the manipulation of Mexican versus Maya traits at Chichen is more subtle and complex. In a recent study, Lincoln (1986:153) interprets the appearance of Maya hieroglyphic writing at Chichen in terms of architectural context, and notes that the majority of Maya texts appear in the interior of range structures. In this study, I adopt a similar approach for understanding the eclectic nature of Chichen iconography. However, rather than focusing upon architectural context, I am concerned with symbolic meaning, that is, the thematic context of Chichen iconography. The principal themes to be discussed are cosmology, gods, maize and agriculture, sacrifice and war. By noting the distribution of Maya and Mexican iconography according to themes, it will be possible to determine some of the motivations underlying the conscious manipulation of distinct iconographic systems at Chichen Itza.

Much of the present study focuses upon the primary body of iconography at Chichen, what has been commonly referred to as Toltec style art. The term Toltec here refers specifically to the culture emanating from the site of Tula, Hidalgo. Although I recognize that many

traits found in the Toltec or Modified Florescent art of Chichen Itza are of Maya origin, I also believe that there is a profound and special relationship between Chichen Itza and Tula. To cite the entire range of striking iconographic parallels between Chichen Itza and Tula is not only beyond the scope of the present study, but it would also be quite redundant. A recent discussion of the relationship between Tula and Chichen Itza may be found in the doctoral dissertation by Kristan-Graham (1989).

Chronology

Chronology has played a major role in our interpretation and understanding of Chichen Itza iconography. The issue of contemporaneity has frequently been used to relate Chichen iconography to various cultures of ancient Mesoamerica, including Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, El Tajín, and Cotzumalhuapa as well as the Toltec and the Classic Maya. However, although of primary importance, the chronology of Chichen Itza is poorly understood. Structures bearing Maya style writing and art have been widely viewed as being contemporaneous with the Terminal Classic Puuc florescence, whereas the Toltec style has been considered to be Postclassic and coeval with Tula. Ceramic wares have served as one of the most important means of correlating Chichen Itza with the cultural history of the northern Maya lowlands. In his analysis of Mayapan ceramics, Smith (1971:168-169, 189-192) terms the Puuc ceramic sphere Cehpech, and that of Toltec period Chichen Itza, Sotuta. To Smith, the two ceramic spheres are chronologically distinct. Thus Smith dates the Cehpech complex to AD 800-1000, whereas Sotuta is placed at AD 1000-1200.

However, Ball (1978, 1979) notes that Cehpech and Sotuta are not entirely sequential, but rather, are at least partly contemporaneous. Subsequent investigations at Isla Cerritos directed by Anthony Andrews confirm the chronological overlap between Cehpech and Sotuta wares (A. Andrews et al. 1988:201; Robles Castellanos 1987:104).

There is an increasing consensus that a notable chronological overlap exists between Cehpech and Sotuta ceramics, although the extent of contemporaneity is still unknown.¹ Citing the appearance of Sotuta ceramics in Pure Florescent style Puuc buildings at Chichen Itza, Lincoln (1986:165) argues that Cehpech and Sotuta are contemporaneous, in other words, that there is a total chronological overlap between these two complexes. However,

¹ At present, radiocarbon dates from the northern Maya area have been of comparatively little help in resolving the overlap problem. In part, this is due to the surprisingly limited number of radiocarbon dates from the Puuc region and Chichen Itza. For the Puuc, Pollock (1980:562) cites but four uncalibrated radiocarbon dates from wooden beams in architectural contexts. From Sayil, there is a date of AD 720 ± 60, and from Uxmal three dates were obtained, AD 740 ± 60, AD 885 ± 120, and a date of AD 570 ± 50 from an early structure in the Pyramid of the Magician. In a recent list of radiocarbon dates from the central and northern lowlands, Andrews V (in Andrews and Andrews 1980:Table 4) lists 6 radiocarbon dates from Chichen Itza, with four from the peripheral cave site of Balankanche. Three of the Chichen Itza dates were secured from beams occurring in Puuc style structures. Two dates from the La Iglesia structure are AD 600 ± 70, AD 780 ± 70, and there is a date of AD 610 ± 60 from the Casa Colorada. A date of AD 810 ± 200 was obtained from the east patio of Las Monjas, and may correspond to either the Puuc or Mexican period of occupation (Andrews IV 1965:64; Andrews and Andrews 1980:Table 4). For the period corresponding to the Toltec or Mexican influence, a sample was taken from a wooden lintel at the Castillo. Two runs were made with this sample, providing radiocarbon dates of AD 790 ± 70 and AD 810 ± 100. Andrews V (in Andrews and Andrews 1980:284-285) notes that the radiocarbon samples obtained from wooden beams tend to be slightly earlier than samples from charcoal and other materials. According to Andrews (*ibid.*) this may be due to post sample growth error.

most researchers view the chronological problem of Cehpech and Sotuta in terms of a partial overlap, with Sotuta beginning during Cehpech and the Puuc florescence but also continuing after the end of Cehpech in the region of Chichen Itza (e.g., Andrews V 1981:336; Andrews and Sabloff 1986; A. Andrews et al. 1988; Robles Castellanos and A. Andrews 1986; Ball 1978, 1979; Chase 1986).

According to Parsons (1969:1:174, Table 7) and Cohodas (1978a, 1978b), the early Toltec period at Chichen Itza is entirely contemporaneous with the Classic Maya, and dates to at least as early as the first half of the seventh century AD. Both authors note the similarity of the reputed Toltec style art at Chichen Itza to the Coztumalhuapa style of Bilbao and El Baul. Although I agree that there are striking similarities between the art of Coztumalhuapa and Toltec Chichen Itza, I find that a Middle Classic dating of the Coztumalhuapa style is untenable. Sharer (Morley et al. 1983:177) notes that Coztumalhuapa is actually a Terminal Classic phenomenon (ca. AD 800-1000). Moreover, although Tohil plumbate—an important component of the Sotuta ceramic sphere—has not been found at Coztumalhuapan sites, a number of Coztumalhuapan sculptures bear a striking resemblance to Tohil plumbate effigy forms. Thus it has long been noted that Bilbao Monument 3 is very similar to a common Tohil vessel form representing the head of an aged male (Dieseldorff 1926a:Pl. 28, no. 155, legend). Moreover, a Coztumalhuapa style colossal skull sculpture from Finca la Chacra is quite like a Tohil effigy vessel bearing the same strangely prognathid lower jaw (see Parsons 1969:2:Pl. 66a-b; Shepard 1948:Fig. 19m).

In view of stylistic considerations, ceramics, and the new series of radiocarbon dates from Isla Cerritos, I believe that the Toltec period at Chichen Itza begins no earlier than the late 9th century AD.² Clearly, there is considerable overlap between the appearance of the Toltec style and the Puuc florescence. Uxmal, Edzna, and Yaxcopoil are among the Puuc sites which exhibit traits known for the Toltec period art of Chichen Itza. However, the Toltec period at Chichen Itza is primarily an Early Postclassic phenomenon dating from AD 900 to 1250. This dating is supported not only by the close ties of Chichen to Early Postclassic Tula, but also by particular materials represented in the iconography. Thus it will be noted that items of metal and turquoise, essentially absent during the Classic period of Mesoamerica, are widespread in the iconography of Toltec period Chichen.

Cosmology and Cosmogony

In the art of Chichen Itza, human figures are commonly framed above and below by horizontal registers containing supernatural entities. These framing registers serve to place a given scene in a cosmological context, that is, in terms of sacred space. One of the most common figures appearing in these framing registers is a Maya entity commonly known under such epithets as Bacab, Pauahutun, or God N in the Schellhas system of deity classification

² Recent excavations at the site of Isla Cerritos have provided important information regarding the chronological relationship of Cehpech and Sotuta wares. Here the two groups occur in stratigraphic association, with Cehpech being earlier. Chacpel, the local Cehpech phase, has an uncalibrated radiocarbon date of AD 660 ± 70 (A. Andrews et al. 1988:200). Four radiocarbon dates are available for the following Jotutu phase corresponding to Sotuta. The dates (uncalibrated) are as follows, AD 850 ± 80, AD 980 ± 60, AD 1010 ± 60, and AD 1100 ± 60 (*ibid.*). However, the authors note that there is substantial chronological overlap between Cehpech and Sotuta wares, with such diagnostic Sotuta wares as Dzitas, Silho, and Sisal wares first appearing in the Chacpel Cehpech phase (*ibid.*:201).

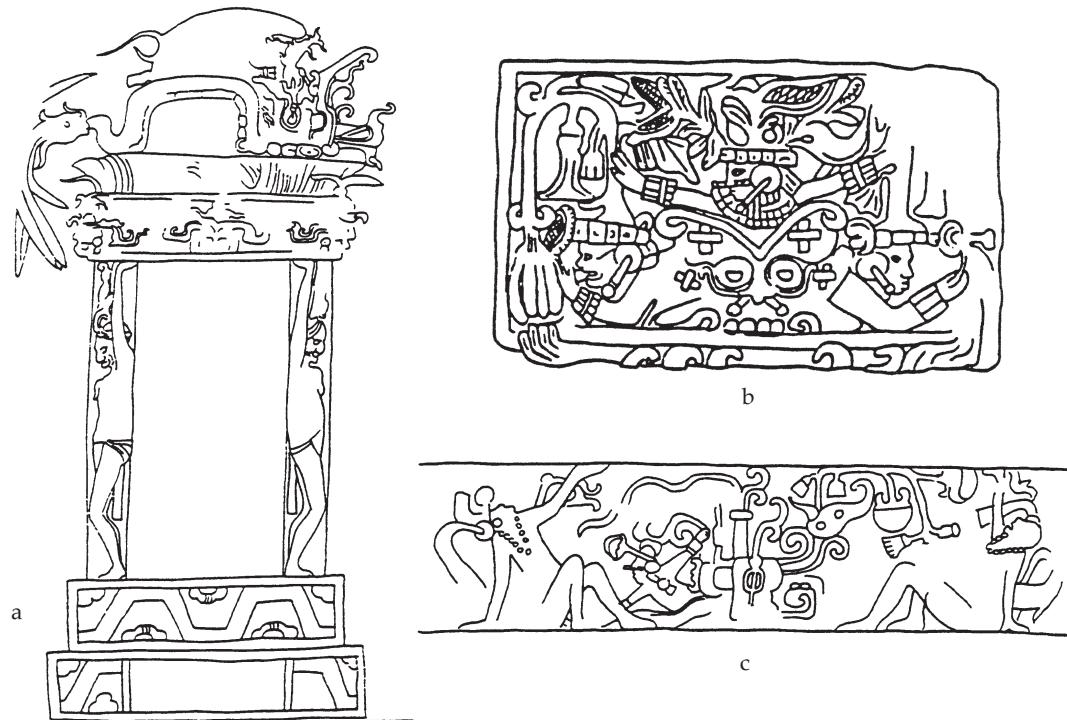


Figure 1. Iconographic parallels between a Late Classic relief and the Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen Itza: (a) detail of Late Classic altar depicting God N columns supporting roof topped by the God of the Number 13, note emerging foliated figures on roof band (after Berjonneau et al. 1985:Pl. 106); (b) capital supported by God N column in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, note fingers at lower left corner (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 346); (c) God N figures in water band with God of the Number 13 (after Coggins 1984b:Fig. 19).

(Figures 1, 2, 5, 6). In Classic and Postclassic epigraphy, he is phonetically named *pauahutun* (Coe 1973:15; Taube 1989d:36). Although a contrast is often made between Bacab sky and Pauahutun earth bearers, we are probably viewing only a single entity, a quadripartite supporter of the world—the earth as well as the sky.

In a number of Classic Maya instances, God N explicitly supports the sky (e.g., Robicsek and Hales 1981:Fig. 9b). However, God N is also commonly represented in a watery environment or with stone, as if also identified with the moist and rocky interior of the earth. On one Late Classic monument, God N appears in the form of columns supporting a structure topped by the God of the Number 13 (Figure 1a). Marked by a bound waterlily pad headdress, this serpent being is closely identified with standing water.³ In the murals from the Upper Temple of the Jaguars at Chichen, the God of the Number 13 appears in a blue band with a pair of God N figures and waterlilies, as if this register depicts the underlying sea supporting the terrestrial scene above (Figure 1c). The roof of the aforementioned Late Classic temple depicts foliated figures rising out of cleft heads. This is markedly similar to the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, where God N columns support capitals represented as cleft heads sprouting personified maize and squash (Figure 1b). It is probable that both the Chichen and Peten cleft heads refer to the stone Cauac monster, which Stuart (1987:17-23)

³ An excellent example of this being appears in the modeled stucco cornice of the Late Classic Temple of the Seven Dolls at Dzibilchaltun (Hellmuth 1987b:327; Taube 1986:66-67).

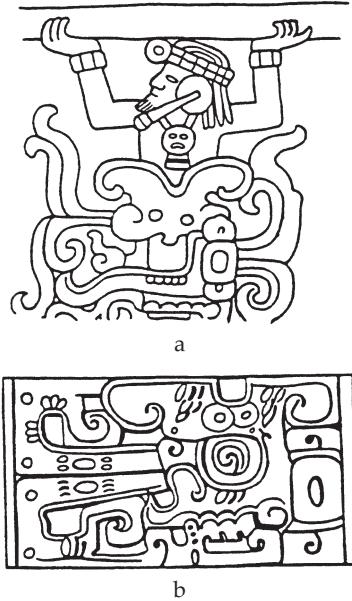


Figure 2. God N as a mountain: (a) God N figure emerging from smoking cleft head, composite drawing by author from two sections of cylindrical columns, North Colonnade, Chichen Itza; (b) smoking cleft head with Cauac signs, detail of Islas Gouged Incised vessel from Burial 14, Seibal (from Sabloff 1970:Fig. 48).

identifies as a representation of *uitz*, or mountain. A series of cylindrical columns in the North Colonnade at Chichen contain registers depicting God N rising out of four cleft zoomorphic heads (Figure 2a). A markedly similar zoomorphic head appears on a Terminal Classic vessel from Seibal, here marked with explicit Cauac signs (Figure 2b). Quite likely, the Chichen column scene depicts God N as sky-supporting sacred mountains at the four corners of the world.

In the case of the North Colonnade columns, the God N mountains appear both above and below the standing Toltec style figures. Rather than referring to a distinct region, such as the sky, the upper register probably also depicts the supporting earth. The warrior figures upon the bas-relief columns of Pyramid B at Tula are bracketed above and below by Cipactli signs, a reference to the well-known earth caiman (see Acosta 1945:Fig. 11). It is noteworthy that in the known sculptural corpus of Tula there are no depictions of God N world bearers. It is possible that at Chichen, the world bearers serve as toponymic markers to refer specifically to Yucatan and the Maya world.

In the area of the Great Ballcourt at Chichen there is another important spatial motif: a prone, skirted woman with one or two serpents emerging from her abdomen (Figures 3a-b, 4b, 25b). The serpent heads are supplied

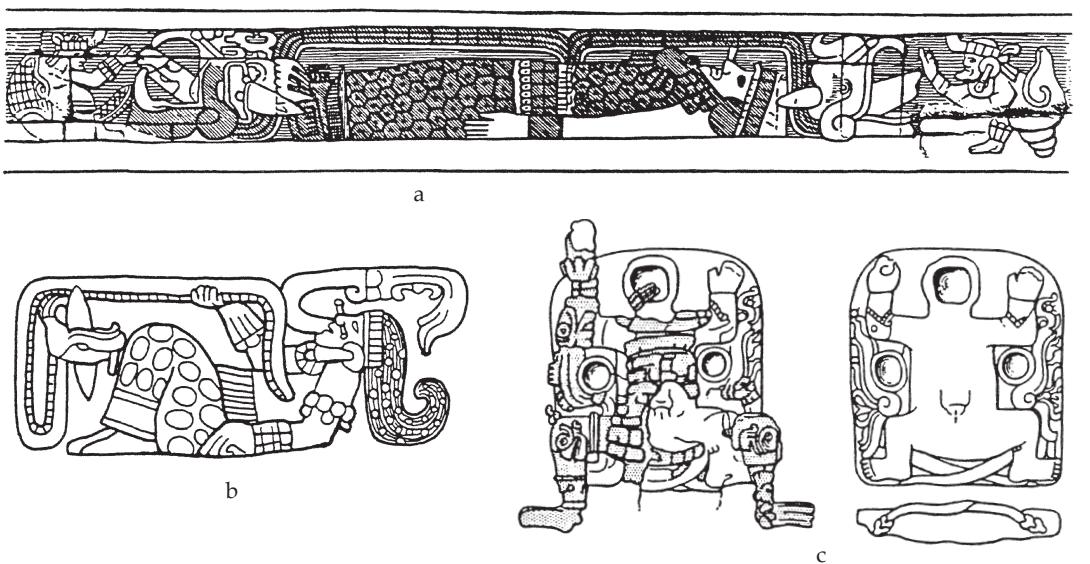


Figure 3. Representations of earth deities from northern Yucatan: (a) prone earth goddess with bladed serpents emerging from abdomen, North Temple of the Great Ballcourt (from Seler 1902-1923:5:321); (b) detail of North Temple column (after rubbing courtesy of Merle Greene Robertson); (c) Tlaltecuhtli figure with two serpents, left view with superimposed plaster (from Chowning 1956:Figs. 1b, 1c).

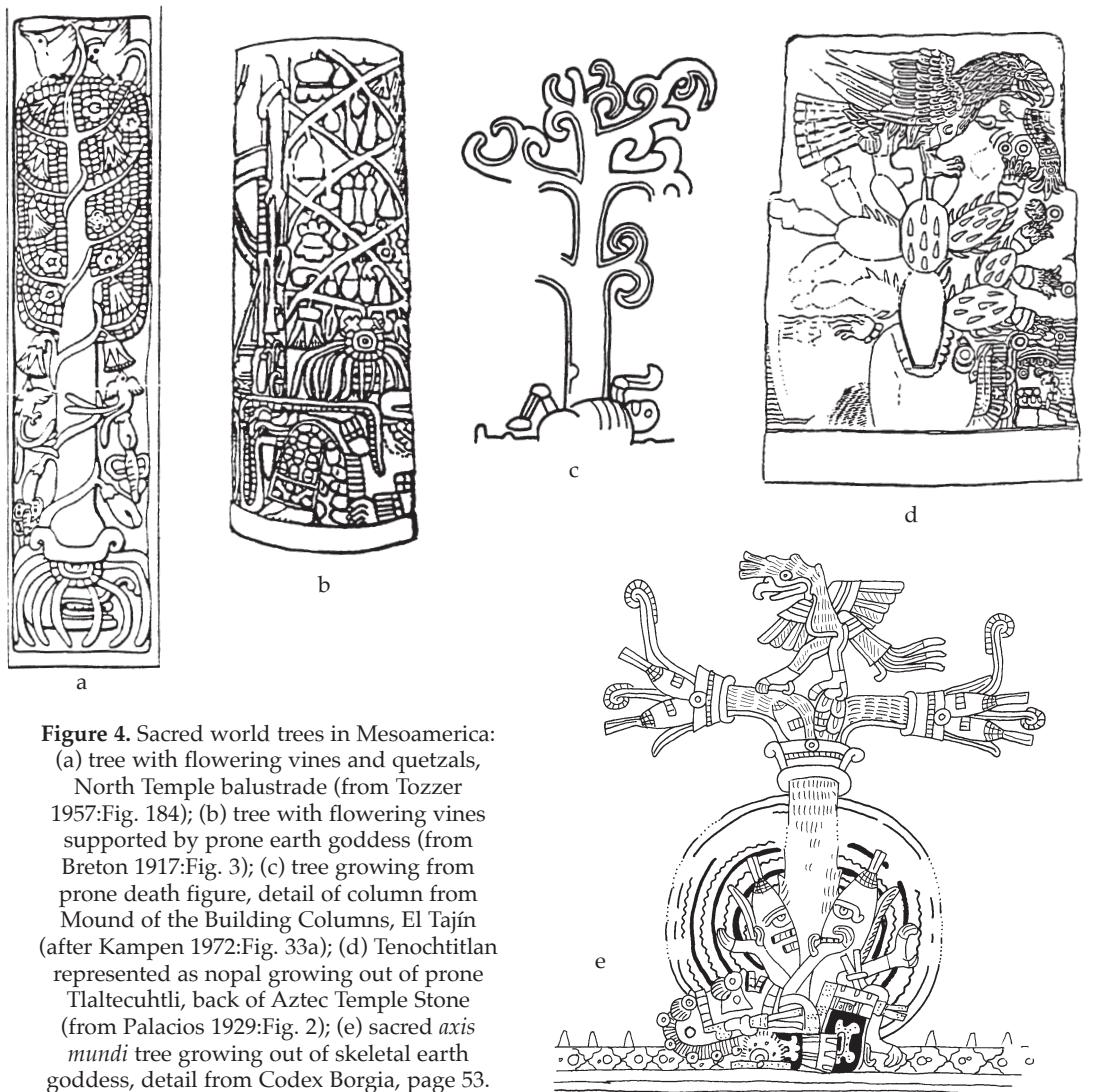


Figure 4. Sacred world trees in Mesoamerica:
(a) tree with flowering vines and quetzals,
North Temple balustrade (from Tozzer
1957:Fig. 184); (b) tree with flowering vines
supported by prone earth goddess (from
Breton 1917:Fig. 3); (c) tree growing from
prone death figure, detail of column from
Mound of the Building Columns, El Tajín
(after Kampen 1972:Fig. 33a); (d) Tenochtitlan
represented as nopal growing out of prone
Tlaltecuhtli, back of Aztec Temple Stone
(from Palacios 1929:Fig. 2); (e) sacred
axis mundi tree growing out of skeletal earth
goddess, detail from Codex Borgia, page 53.

with blades, as if the creatures slashed through her abdomen. In the interior of the North Temple of the Great Ballcourt, this female figure is flanked by a pair of God N figures (Figure 3a). Whereas Seler (1902-1923:5:307) identifies the prone woman as a goddess of the night sky, Coggins (1984b:160) considers her the earth; the terrestrial identification is probably correct. The serpents and prone figure recall an episode in the Aztec *Histoire du Mechique*, in which Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca transform themselves into a pair of serpents to tear apart the earth monster, Tlaltecuhtli (Garibay 1979:108). I suspect that the Chichen motif refers to an early version of this great cosmogonic act. A probable Late Postclassic form of this episode appears at Mayapan. Here a pair of serpents are depicted with an explicit splayed Tlaltecuhtli figure (Figure 3c).

In another Aztec account of creation, the *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas*, Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca transform themselves into a pair of trees to raise the heavens (Garibay 1979:32). Pairs of trees are prominently displayed in the North Temple, once on

the balustrades, and in addition, twice on the two columns in the North Temple doorway (Figure 4a-b). In all cases, the trees are wrapped with flowering vines. The column examples are especially noteworthy, as they rise directly above the abdomen of the prone earth goddess (Figure 4b). This is markedly similar to Mexican scenes of world trees growing out of the abdomen of prone figures, frequently Tlaltecuhtli (Figure 4c-e). I suspect that the North Temple refers to two related acts of creation, the dismemberment of the earth goddess, and the raising of the heavens by the cosmic trees.

Gods

The identification of gods at Chichen is a complicated task. Deity impersonation is a major theme at Chichen, and it is frequently difficult to distinguish between historical figures, political offices and gods. At Chichen, deity impersonation is not limited to ritual and theatrical performances; instead, important historical figures appear to have identified themselves with certain deities as a form of title.⁴ Nonetheless, it is still possible to isolate the iconographic elements of particular gods, whether these appear on mortal impersonators or the deities themselves.

One of the most common and readily identifiable deities at Chichen is the aforementioned God N world bearer. This entity is decidedly Maya in origin, and can be traced back to the beginnings of the Early Classic period. However, the Chichen God N exhibits a number of unusual traits. Thus along with wearing conch and turtle shells—traits common to Classic Maya examples—the Chichen God N also appears with a spider web (Figure 5a). However, although rare, God N is also found wearing a spider web in Classic Maya iconography. An excellent example appears on a Tepeu 1 polychrome vessel, probably dating to the early seventh century AD (Figure 5b).⁵

Two common traits of the Chichen God N are a cut shell chest piece and a pair of elements hanging from the belt (Figures 5a, 6a). Although unknown in the Classic art of the southern Maya lowlands, this God N costume does appear on Yaxcopoil Stela 2 (Figure 6c).⁶ Thompson (1970a:473) interprets the pendant belt devices as bee wings, but this identification is unlikely. Seler (1902-1923:5:284-285) notes that along with the oval shell chest piece, this belt device is an article of dance. Seler (*ibid.*) compares the Chichen

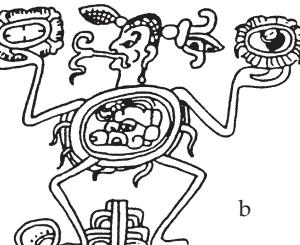
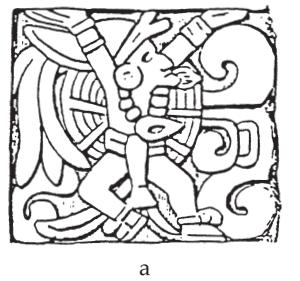


Figure 5. The spider God N:
(a) God N with spider web,
Chichen Itza (from Seler 1902-
1923:5:301); (b) detail of Tepeu 1
bowl depicting God N holding
sun and moon, note spider web
on abdomen (after Robicsek
1978:Pl. 138).

⁴ It is also possible that a particular god was considered as the spirit familiar of an individual, much like conceptions of the *way* and *tonal* in colonial and contemporary Mesoamerica. For an important discussion of the *way* concept among the ancient Maya, see Houston and Stuart (1989).

⁵ A sculpture representing the God N spider is currently placed in the façade of the West Structure of the Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal (see Kowalski 1999).

⁶ Near the entrance to the Dzibilchaltun museum, there is a fragmentary representation of God N wearing the Chichen costume with the pendant belt device clearly visible.



Figure 6. Costume and attributes of God N at Chichen Itza: (a) God N with shell pendant and belt pendants, Chichen Itza (after rubbing courtesy of Merle Greene Robertson); (b) dancer wearing shell pendant and belt element, Vaticanus B, page 52; (c) Terminal Classic God N figure from Yaxcopoil Stela 2 (after Proskouriakoff 1950:Fig. 88f); (d) God N dancing with fan (from Taube 1989c:Fig. 12); (e) God N with staff and fan, drawn by author from structure in vicinity of North Colonnade, Chichen Itza.

Pauahutn costume to a dancer illustrated on page 52 of the Mexican Vaticanus B Codex (Figure 6b). In addition to wearing the shell chest piece and pendant belt elements, this figure also has his arms upraised, much like the Pauahutn world bearer. In both the art of Toltec period Chichen and the Classic Maya, Pauahutn frequently wields a fan (Figure 6d–e). In a recent study of ritual humor in Classic Maya religion, I note that fans were an important accoutrement of performers, such as dancers and buffoons (Taube 1989c). As with the Classic Maya of the southern lowlands, the inhabitants of Chichen considered God N to be a ritual clown as well as a powerful world bearer.

Chac, the Maya god of lightning and rain, is also commonly found in the Toltec period art of Chichen (Figures 7a, 8, 9a, 26b–c, 27a). Quite frequently, he wears a large, broad-brimmed headdress, a specific Chac trait also found at Mulchic, Uxmal, Itzimte, and other Puuc sites (Figures 7, 8a, 9a). Uxmal Stela 14 and Itzimte Stela 12 are especially important examples, since here the figures are explicitly termed Chac in the accompanying texts (Figure 7c–d). The figure upon Uxmal Stela 14 is none other than Lord Chac, as first identified by Kowalski (1985). A sculptured column from Structure 6E1 at Chichen bears another example of an epigraphically named Chac figure wearing the broad headdress (Figures 8a–b, 27a). The first glyph of the second compound represents a waterlily flower and serves as a variant

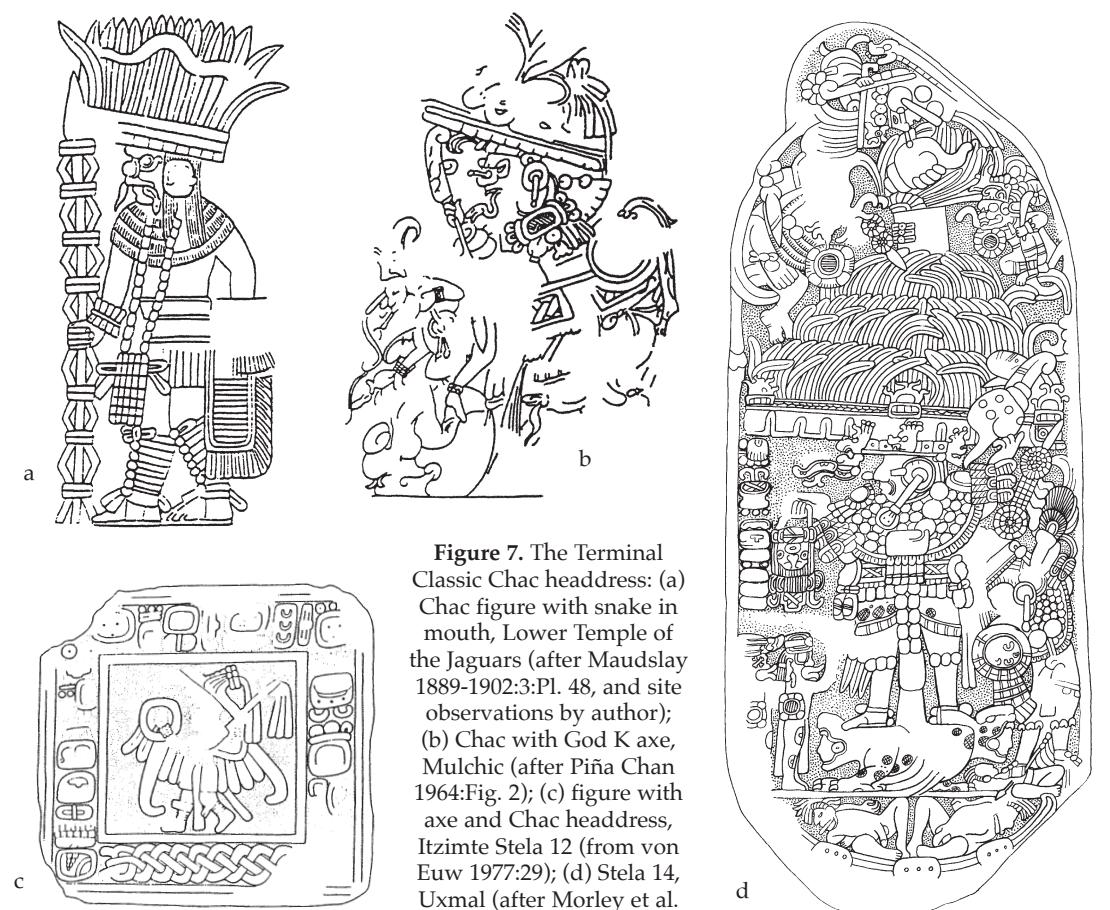


Figure 7. The Terminal Classic Chac headdress: (a) Chac figure with snake in mouth, Lower Temple of the Jaguars (after Maudslay 1889-1902:Pl. 48, and site observations by author); (b) Chac with God K axe, Mulchic (after Piña Chan 1964:Fig. 2); (c) figure with axe and Chac headdress, Itzimte Stela 12 (from von Euw 1977:29); (d) Stela 14, Uxmal (after Morley et al. 1983:Fig. 11, 57).

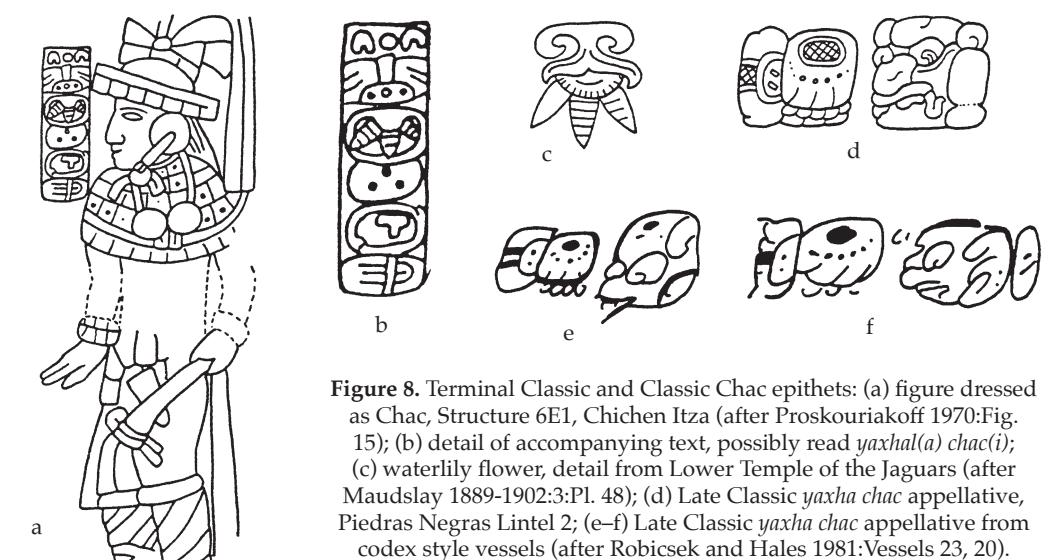


Figure 8. Terminal Classic and Classic Chac epithets: (a) figure dressed as Chac, Structure 6E1, Chichen Itza (after Proskouriakoff 1970:Fig. 15); (b) detail of accompanying text, possibly read *yaxhal(a) chac(i)*; (c) waterlily flower, detail from Lower Temple of the Jaguars (after Maudslay 1889-1902:Pl. 48); (d) Late Classic *yaxha chac* appellative, Piedras Negras Lintel 2; (e-f) Late Classic *yaxha chac* appellative from codex style vessels (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessels 23, 20).

of the T500 Imix sign (Figure 8c). Recent epigraphic work has demonstrated that the Imix sign can have the phonetic value *ha* (Stephen Houston, personal communication 1986). It thus appears that the entire phrase can be read as *Yaxhal chac*. This is virtually identical to *yaxha chac*, a common Classic Chac epithet (Figure 8d-f).

At Toltec Chichen and the Puuc sites, Chac is frequently accompanied with lightning symbols, the most important being burning serpents and axes. In ancient and contemporary Mesoamerica, serpents are a pervasive and widespread symbol of

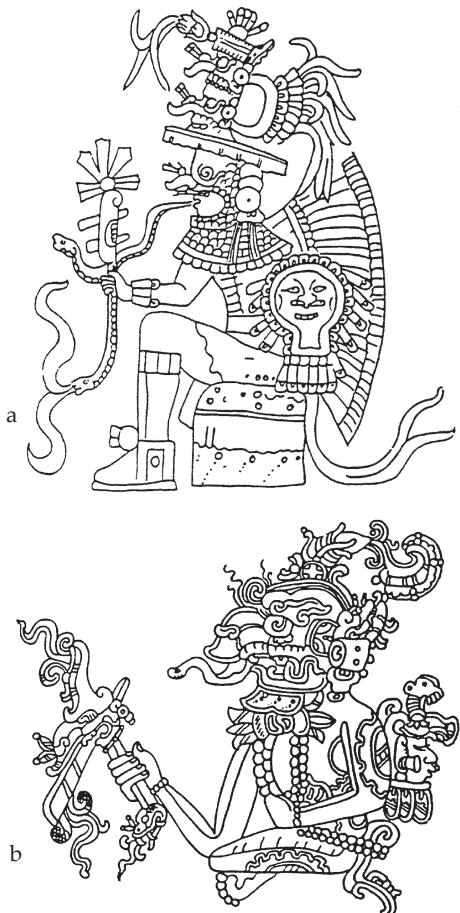


Figure 9. Comparison of Terminal Classic and Early Classic Chac figures: (a) Chac impersonator from Temple of Chac Mool, Chichen Itza (after Morris et al. 1931:1:Fig. 305); (b) Chac from Early Classic vessel (after Coe 1982:71).



Figure 10. Painted capstone from the Temple of the Owls, Chichen Itza (from von Winning 1985:Fig. 91).

lightning. Quite frequently, serpents are either found emerging from or held in the mouth of Chac (Figures 7a-b, 9). In many cases, the Chac lightning axe possesses a burning, serpent-headed handle. Clear examples occur in the Temple of Chac Mool murals, where Chac impersonators wield burning serpent axes (Figure 9a). With their serpent axes and snakes emerging from their mouths, these figures are notably similar to an Early Classic representation of Chac, fashioned some 600 years before. In this case, Chac also holds a fiery serpent lightning axe and has a snake writhing in his mouth. Clearly, many ancient Classic Maya conceptions of Chac were still very much alive during Toltec period Chichen.

The burning serpent lightning axe is identical to the Classic Manikin Scepter, a version of Schellhas' God K (Coggins 1988). However, although clear Manikin Scepters are found in the Puuc region (e.g., Proskouriakoff 1950:Figs. 83a, 88a, 89b), at

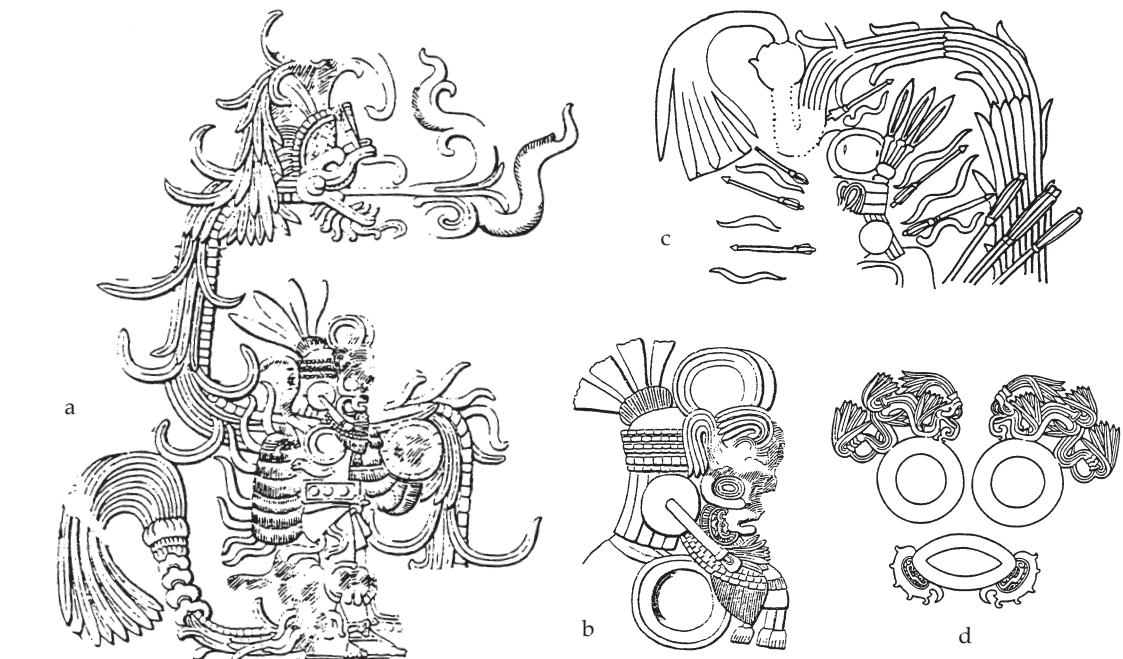


Figure 11. The masked feathered serpent figure at Chichen Itza: (a) masked figure backed by feathered serpent, Lower Temple of the Jaguars (detail from Maudslay 1889-1902:3:Pl. 49); (b) detail of masked figure from Lower Temple of the Jaguars (from Seler 1902-1923:5:313); (c) masked plumed serpent figure confronting solar entity at left, note flames and darts emanating out of masked figure (from Coggins 1984b:Fig. 17); (d) drawing of gold mask from Sacred Cenote (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 216).

Chichen, the image is rudimentary. Rather than possessing the head and body of God K, the axe appears with only the serpent foot and projecting blade. Nonetheless, there is a clear representation of God K at Chichen, here on a painted capstone from the Temple of the Owls (Figure 10).⁷ In this case, the figure resembles God K representations from the Postclassic codices, with a large crenelated nose and no indication of the forehead axe or torch. In fact, there is little in this image to compare with the serpent-footed axes found at Chichen. Thus in contrast to God B, there appears to be a disintegration or breaking up of God K iconography at Toltec Chichen.

In all of Mesoamerica, perhaps the closest and most confusing relationship between a deity and a historical counterpart is that of the plumed serpent, Quetzalcoatl, and the legendary ruler of Tula, Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (see Nicholson 1957). This ambiguity is not limited to Tula, but is also present at Toltec Chichen. According to ethnohistorical sources of highland Mexico, the ruler of Tula migrated to the lands of the east, an episode corroborated by early colonial accounts in Yucatan (Seler 1902-1923:1:669-705). Images of feathered serpents abound at Chichen Itza, and frequently, where paint is preserved, one can discern the green feathers of the quetzal. However, it is quite another matter to correlate the feathered serpent with a specific anthropomorphic being. At Chichen and Tula, feathered serpents seem to serve as titles for a variety of individuals (Figure 12b). Nonetheless, there

⁷ Although the hieroglyphic text is ambiguous, the painted capstone probably dates to the Toltec period. Thus the motifs found in the overarching skyband are quite similar to designs appearing on Sotuta vessels (see Brainerd 1958:Figs. 83, 87).

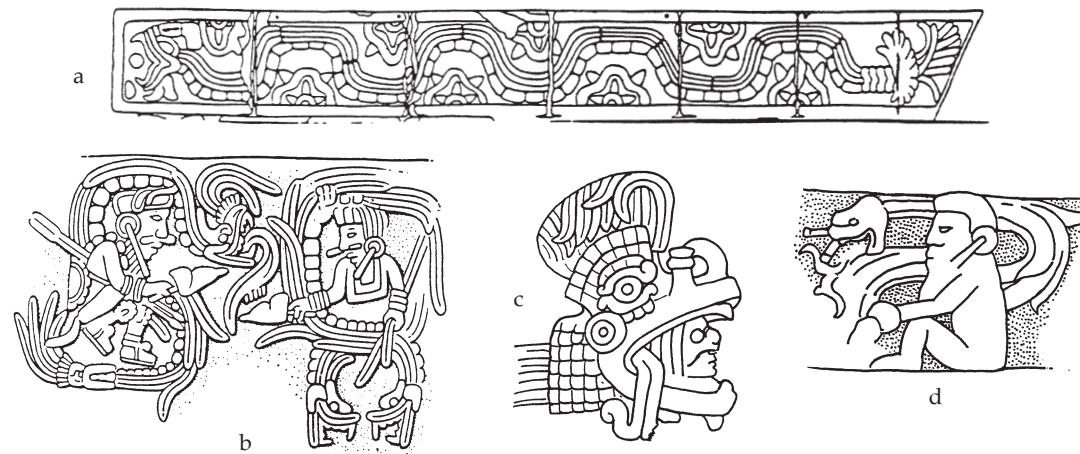


Figure 12. Terminal Classic and Early Postclassic representations of the plumed serpent: (a) plumed serpent with star sign, detail of Mercado dais, Chichen Itza (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 126); (b) Toltec figures with plumed serpents, detail of ceramic vessel (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 273); (c) feathered serpent head containing masked Chac figure in mouth, West Structure of Nunnery Quadrangle, Uxmal (from Foncerrada de Molina 1965:Fig. 39); (d) seated figure with plumed serpent, Edzna Stela 16 (after rubbing courtesy of Merle Greene Robertson).

is one figure which is consistently identified with the feathered serpent. Found in both the Lower and Upper Temple of the Jaguars, the individual wears a mask with clearly demarcated zones around the mouth and eyes (Figure 11).⁸ Such a mask was actually found in the Sacred Cenote (Figure 11d). Fashioned of sheet gold, this mask is virtually identical to the example rendered in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Figure 11b).

Outside of Chichen, anthropomorphic or even zoomorphic representations of Quetzalcoatl are quite rare.⁹ At Uxmal, the feathered serpents at the Ballcourt and the West Structure of the Nunnery Quadrangle are obvious and well-known examples (Figure 12c). The basal register of Edzna Stela 16 depicts a seated individual backed by a twisting plumed serpent (Figure 12d). The entire effect is extremely similar to the figures backed by plumed serpents at Chichen and Tula.

An important representation of Quetzalcoatl appears on page 4a of the Dresden Codex (Figure 13a). Due to the hand-held serpent, shell jewelry, and probable quetzal on the back, Seler (1902-1923:1:698) suggested that this figure is Kukulcan, the Yucatec Quetzalcoatl. However, Seler neglected to point out an especially important detail. The headdress contains a disk flanked by two knots, one partially obscured behind the quetzal head. The central disk is identical to the Aztec symbol of turquoise, and it will be subsequently demonstrated that this device has the same value in the Dresden Codex. This same headdress device—a turquoise disk flanked by two knots—is a diagnostic element of the Aztec Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl (Figure 13b-c). The Dresden figure displays a pair of curving lines encircling the eyes and mouth. Although this recalls the eye and mouth pieces of the Chichen entity, the significance

⁸ Seler (1902-1923:1:688) was the first to identify the individual from the Lower Temple of the Jaguars as a representation of Quetzalcoatl. However, Seler did not recognize this same masked being in other scenes at Toltec Chichen.

⁹ On Dresden page 60b, a kneeling individual supports a Toltec style warrior seated upon a throne backed by a twisting serpent. The hook-like emanations upon the serpent body may represent feathers, and it is thus possible that the creature represents the plumed serpent Quetzalcoatl.

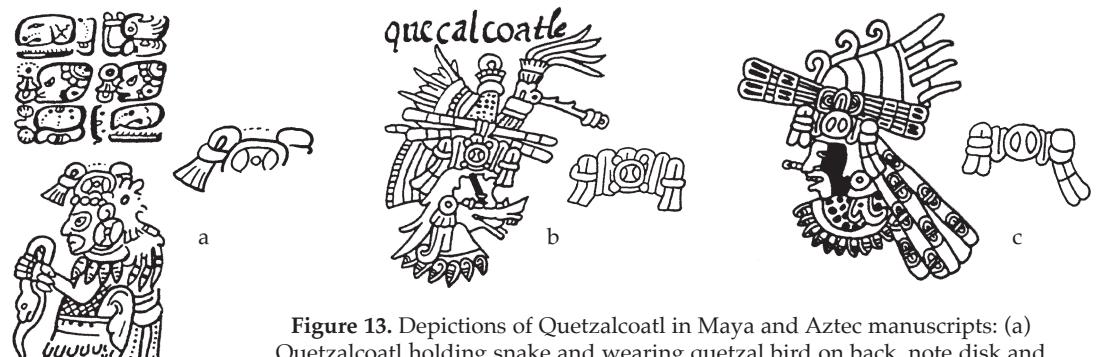


Figure 13. Depictions of Quetzalcoatl in Maya and Aztec manuscripts: (a) Quetzalcoatl holding snake and wearing quetzal bird on back, note disk and flanking knots in headdress, Dresden, page 4a; (b) Aztec representation of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl with headdress disk and knots, Telleriano-Remensis, page 9; (c) Quetzalcoatl with headdress element, Codex Borbonicus, page 3.

of this patterning remains obscure. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Dresden figure constitutes a Postclassic Maya form of Quetzalcoatl.

In the Temple of the Jaguars at Chichen, the Quetzalcoatl figure is paired with an individual appearing in a sun disk. A. Miller (1977), the first to note this consistent pairing in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, termed the Quetzalcoatl figure Captain Serpent, and the solar figure, Captain Sun Disk. The same pairing also appears in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, where both figures receive homage from an impressive procession of individuals (see Maudslay 1889-1902:3:Pls. 49-50). A fine painted vase in the Museo de Tula depicts the masked individual standing before a Maya figure engaged in bloodletting, with a version of the solar figure seated above (Figure 14b). Lincoln (1990:38, n. 3) notes that the sun disk and feathered serpent pair also appear at the remarkable Toltec-style rock painting at Ixtapantongo, in the state of Mexico (Figure 14a). In this case, the feathered serpent is accompanied by star signs. This may also be seen in representations of the sun disk and feathered serpent pair in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, where the feathered serpent figure appears with a prominent star skirt. Moreover, in one relief from the Mercado, star signs appear against the undulating body of the feathered serpent (Figure 12a).

A number of researchers suggest that the placement of star signs on the feathered

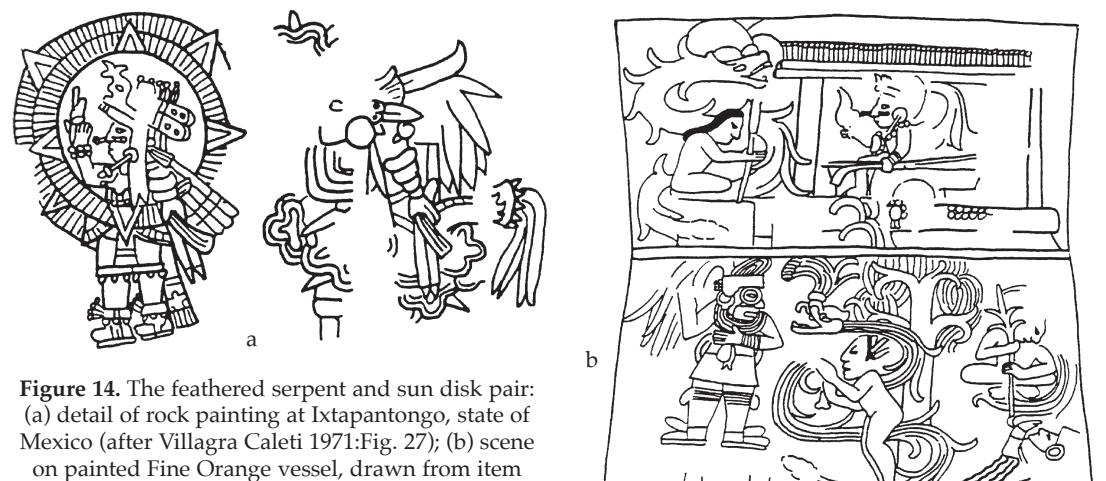


Figure 14. The feathered serpent and sun disk pair: (a) detail of rock painting at Ixtapantongo, state of Mexico (after Villagra Caleti 1971:Fig. 27); (b) scene on painted Fine Orange vessel, drawn from item on display in the Museo de Tula, Hidalgo.



Figure 15. Representations of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli at Chichen and in Mexican codices: (a) representation of skeletal Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli from Northwest Colonnade, Chichen (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 183); (b) Aztec representation of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Codex Borbonicus, page 9; (c) Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Vaticanus B, page 57.

serpent refer to Quetzalcoatl as an aspect of Venus (Coggins 1984b; V. Miller 1989). The star-marked Quetzalcoatl figures probably refer to Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the god of the morning star. The *Anales de Quauhtitlan* relates that at his death, Quetzalcoatl was transformed into the morning star (Seler 1904b:359-360). In the most prominent representation of the feathered serpent figure from the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, flames and arrows emanate from his body (Figure 11c). This may well refer to the fiery rays of the morning star at heliacal rising. In his classic discussion of the Venus pages in the Mexican and Maya codices, Seler (1904b:384) notes that whereas in Nahuatl, *miotl* signifies "ray of light," *mitl* signifies "arrow" or "dart." So far as I am aware, such a word play between a dart and shaft of light does not occur in Yucatec.

The *Anales de Quauhtitlan* relates that during his transformation into Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Quetzalcoatl became skeletal (Seler 1904b:360). In many cases, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli appears with a fleshless skull (e.g., Seler 1904b:Fig. 97). A column from the Northwest Colonnade bears a probable depiction of the skeletal Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Figure 15a). His headband and feather headdress are virtually identical to examples found with Late Postclassic representations of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Figure 15b-c). Moreover, the figure wears the cut conch wind jewel of Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, one of the few examples of this device at Chichen.

The sun disk figure commonly paired with the feathered serpent is a combination of Maya and Mexican iconography (Figure 16). The rayed disk is clearly related to the conventional Postclassic solar sign of highland Mexico. A roughly contemporaneous Cotzumalhuapa style example can be seen on El Castillo Monument 1 (Parsons 1969:2:Pl. 59a). Other disks with rayed rims occur in the art of El Tajín (Kampen 1972:Fig. 24), and Teotihuacan (Taube 1983:Figs. 9, 10a, 14). Although the figure inside the disk cannot be identified as the Maya jaguar sun god, a number of researchers have noted that he is portrayed as a Maya lord (e.g., A. Miller 1977:220; Coggins 1984a:56-57, 1984b:160). Coggins (1984a:56-57, 1984b:160) notes that the

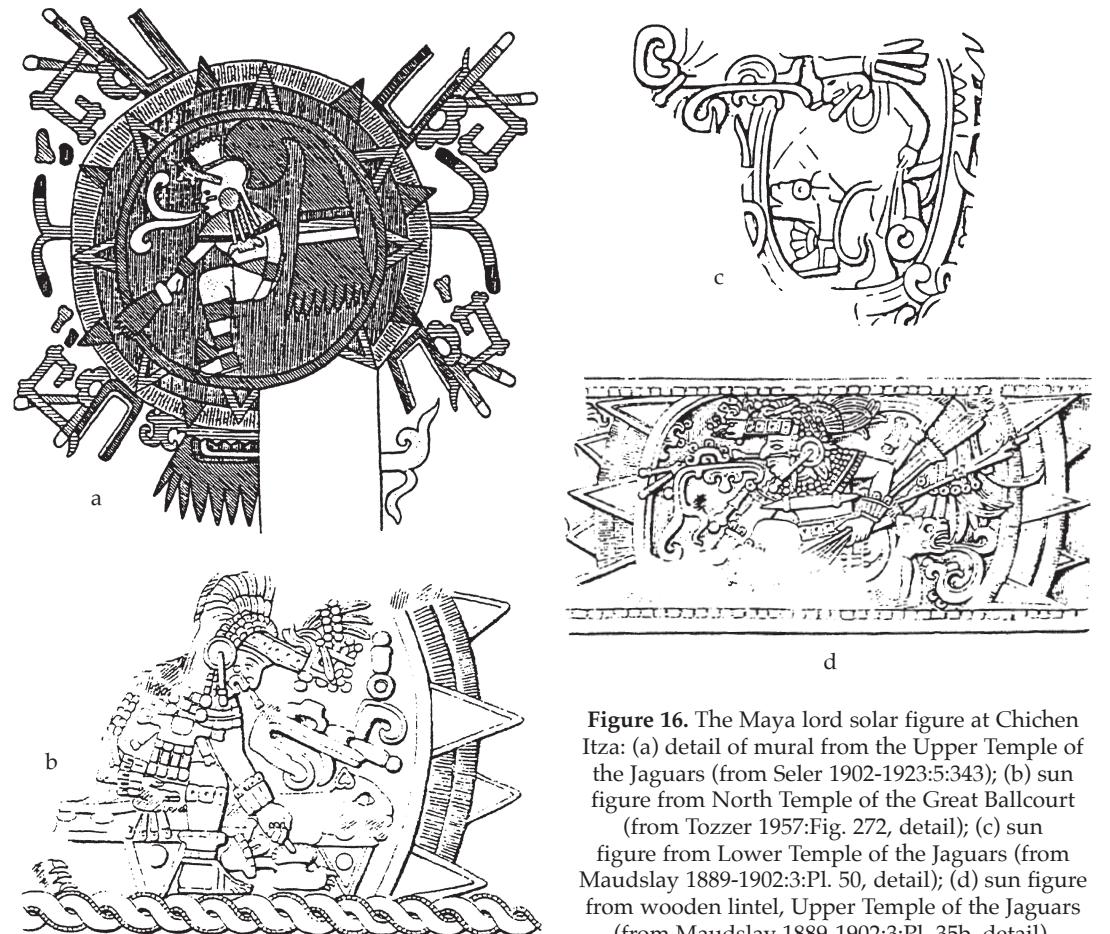


Figure 16. The Maya lord solar figure at Chichen: (a) detail of mural from the Upper Temple of the Jaguars (from Seler 1902-1923:5:343); (b) sun figure from North Temple of the Great Ballcourt (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 272, detail); (c) sun figure from Lower Temple of the Jaguars (from Maudslay 1889-1902:3:Pl. 50, detail); (d) sun figure from wooden lintel, Upper Temple of the Jaguars (from Maudslay 1889-1902:3:Pl. 35b, detail).

figure wears Maya jade jewelry—the nose-bar and, more importantly, the Jester God brow piece, an important Classic Maya symbol of rulership. But although Coggins (*ibid.*) asserts that the beaded jade chest piece is Toltec, clear analogues can also be found in Terminal Classic Maya dress.¹⁰ The jaguar throne serves as one of the clearest allusions to Classic Maya rulership. Although unknown in the iconography of highland Mexico, jaguar thrones are relatively common in Classic and Terminal Classic Maya art.

The Maya sun figure is by no means limited to Chichen. In the aforementioned painting from Ixtapantongo, in the state of Mexico, the solar entity is dressed very much like the example from the Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Figures 14a, 16c). Thus he wears the same jade nose-bar, chest piece, beaded-tassel sandals, and a possible Jester God headdress. In several of the polychrome murals in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, the solar figure has golden hair, quite probably an allusion to the yellow orb (e.g., Figures 11c, 16a). A fine example of the yellow-haired sun figure appears in the Temple of Chac Mool murals (Figure 17a). The

¹⁰ For example, in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars the beaded chest plaque worn by the sun figure also appears on a Maya style warrior in the lowest register (see Maudslay 1889-1902:2:Pl. 4, Fig. 11). This same chest piece is also worn by a Chac warrior on a lintel from nearby Halakal (see Proskouriakoff 1950:Fig. 106, left figure).

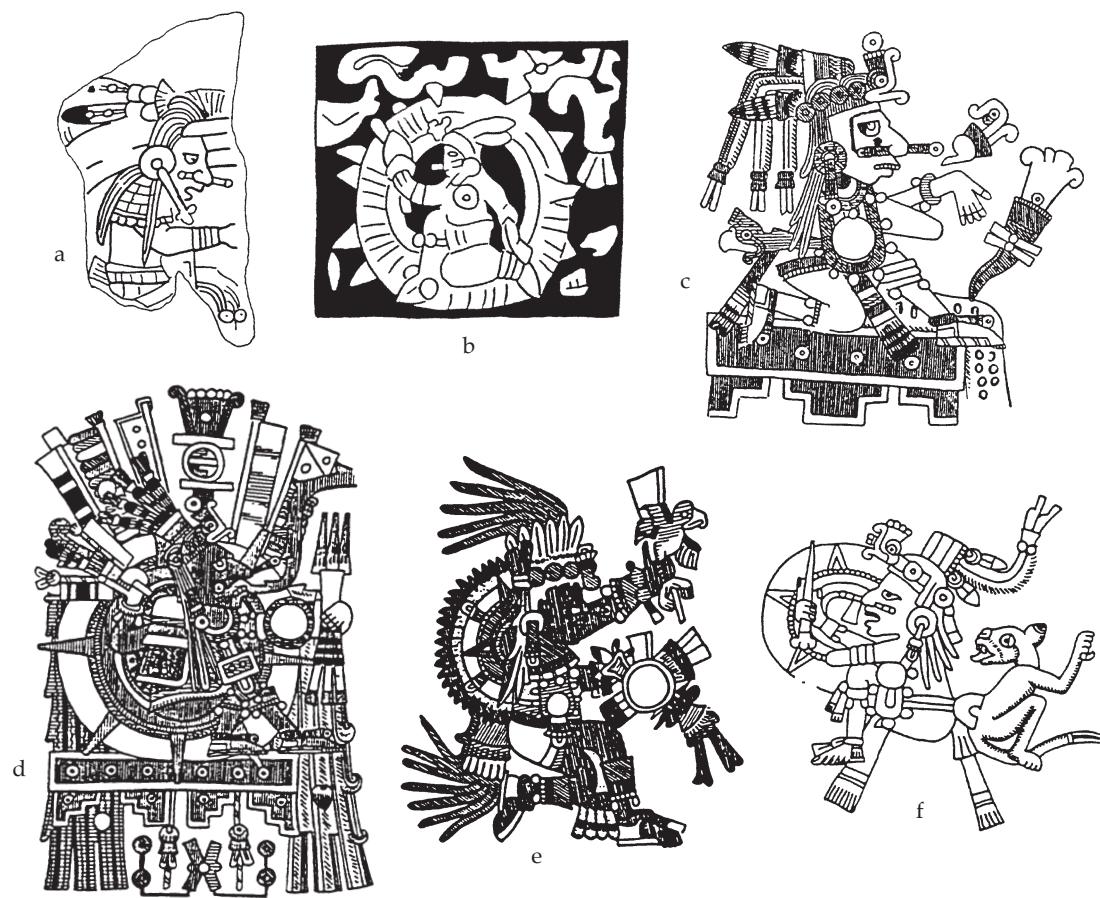


Figure 17. The Maya lord solar figure and Tonatiuh: (a) Maya solar figure backed with probable remains of solar disk, note eagle feathers; mural fragment from Temple of Chac Mool, Chichen (after Morris et al. 1931:2:Pl. 142c); (b) sun disk figure with probable eagle plumes, Temple of the Wall Panels, Chichen (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 275); (c) Tonatiuh, note eagle plumes, Codex Borgia, page 70 (from Danzel 1922-1923:3:Pl. 50); (d) Tonatiuh, Codex Borgia, page 71 (from Danzel 1922-1923:3:Pl. 1); (e) Aztec rendering of Tonatiuh, Telleriano-Remensis; (f) Tonatiuh with jaguar, Codex Laud.

figure is clearly Maya, and in fact, Ann Morris (1931:444) uses this image to illustrate Maya figures in the murals. A pair of dark-tipped feathers—possibly eagle—project from behind the headdress. This same pair of feathers appear with the sun figures from the Temple of the Wall Panels and the Ixtapantongo scene (Figures 14a, 17b).

Many traits observed for the Toltec period sun figure continue into the Late Postclassic in the form of Tonatiuh, the princely sun god of Central Mexico. Along with the rayed solar disk, Tonatiuh is usually portrayed with yellow hair, an eagle feather headdress, a nose-bar, and a jade mask upon the brow (Figure 17c-e). The brow mask possesses the conventional Mexican sign for jade, this being a zone of green, then red, and finally, a segmented white band.¹¹ Although highly stylized, the profile of the jade mask is quite similar to that of the

¹¹ Although found with other Late Postclassic Mexican gods, the jade brow mask is an especially diagnostic element of Tonatiuh. Thus in the Codex Borbonicus and Aubin Tonalamatl series of the thirteen gods of the days, only Tonatiuh is consistently depicted with the jade brow piece.

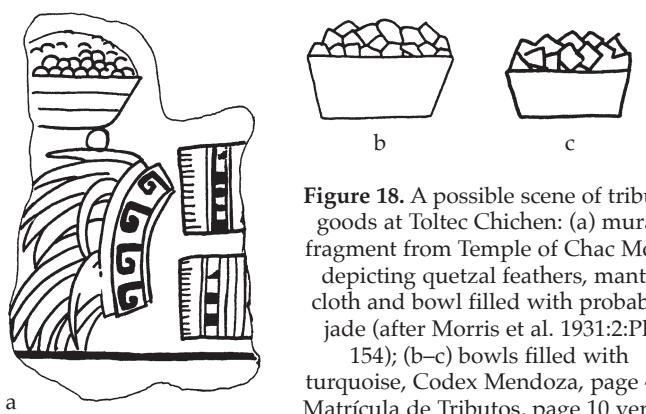


Figure 18. A possible scene of tribute goods at Toltec Chichen: (a) mural fragment from Temple of Chac Mool depicting quetzal feathers, manta cloth and bowl filled with probable jade (after Morris et al. 1931:2:Pl. 154); (b-c) bowls filled with turquoise, Codex Mendoza, page 40, Matrícula de Tributos, page 10 verso.

figure and Tonatiuh brings up the intriguing possibility that the Late Postclassic sun god derives from a prototype based upon Terminal Classic Maya kings. The identification of Tonatiuh with a Maya king is by no means inconsistent with Central Mexican cosmography. In the codices, the realm of Tonatiuh is to the east, the birthplace of the sun (Seler 1963:2:89). This eastern solar realm is consistently identified with jade and the quetzal (e.g., Borgia, p. 49; Cospi, p. 12; Féjervary-Mayer, pp. 1, 33; Vaticanus B, p. 17). As can be seen in the Codex Mendoza and Matrícula de Tributos, the Maya region of Soconusco was a major Aztec source of quetzal feathers and jadeite (Codex Mendoza, p. 47; Matrícula de Tributos, p. 13 recto). The identification of the Maya region with jade and quetzal plumes is surely at least as old as Toltec Chichen. In her study of the murals from the Temple of Chac Mool, Ann Morris (1931:409) notes the similarity of one scene to Central Mexican tribute rolls, and suggests that tribute is represented (Figure 18a). The scene probably is tribute, since it includes manta cloth, an important tribute item of protohistoric Yucatan. Along with the cloth, there is a quetzal plume back device and a bowl filled with green substance, quite probably jade. In the Codex Mendoza and Matrícula de Tributos, precious stones are similarly mounded in bowls (Figures 18b-c). To the peoples of Central Mexico, the Maya region—the land of jade and the quetzal—was the eastern region and the birthplace of the sun.

Maize and Agriculture

In the monumental art of Chichen, there are numerous representations of edible plants and foods. One of the most detailed programs appears on the aforementioned capitals in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Figure 19a). Here a youthful maize god rises out of a cleft head. A pair of figures with squash fruit, flowers and foliage emerge from the sides of the monstrous face. Above, a youthful maize god rises out of the great cleft. This head probably represents a mountain, much like that appearing in the Temple of the Foliated Cross at Palenque (Figure 19b). In this case, the head is clearly a cleft Cauac head from which maize emerges. The left eye of the Palenque head contains a compound phonetically read as *uitz nal*, or maize mountain (see Stuart 1987:18). I (Taube 1985:175) have previously noted that the Chichen scene is a version of the Classic Maya resurrection theme—the emergence of the maize god out of the enclosing earth (Figure 19c). However, in the Classic Petén scenes, the earth is represented as a tortoise shell. The areas from where the squash figures emerge correspond to the Petén depictions of the natural openings of the carapace. It appears that

Jester God, as both possess sharply upturned curving snouts. Quite frequently, Tonatiuh appears with a pair of large eagle plumes in his headdress, strikingly similar to the aforementioned sun figures at Chichen and Ixtapantongo (Figures 17c, e).

The series of correspondences between the Toltec period Maya sun

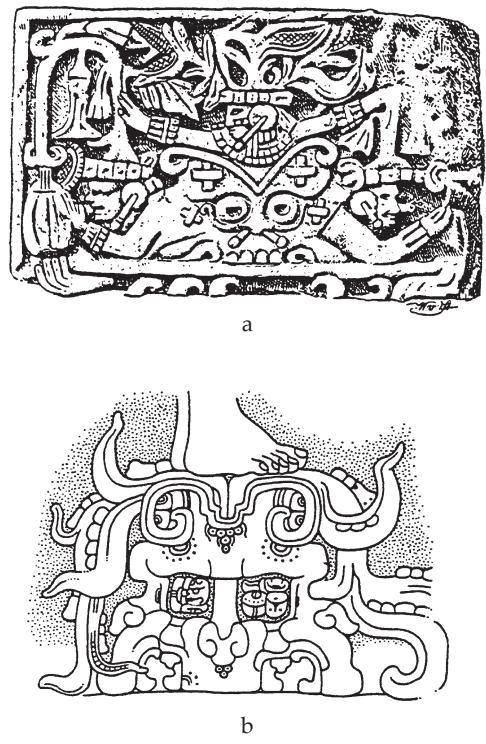


Figure 19. The emergence of maize in the art of Toltec Chichen and the Late Classic southern lowlands: (a) capital from the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen Itza (from Seler 1902-1923:5:317); (b) the *uitz nal* maize mountain (from Stuart 1987:Fig. 27); (c) emergence of the Tonsured Maize God out of tortoise earth (drawing by author).



the Chichen example is a conflation of a tortoise shell and a Cauac monster mountain.

Representations of maize foods are relatively common in the iconography of Toltec Chichen. Quite frequently they appear with personages in Maya dress. Bowls containing tamales appear with the representations of God N flanking the entrance to the Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Figure 20a). The examples on the right side are marked as Kan signs. Recent work by Love (1989) and myself (Taube 1989d) has established that the T506 Kan sign represents the tamale. In a relief from the Holtun Group at Chichen, a Maya figure holds a vessel containing Kan sign tamales topped with maize foliage (Figure 20b). Virtually identical foliated tamales are common in the Late Postclassic iconography of Yucatan (Figure 20c). A painted bench from the Temple of Chac Mool depicts a series of Maya figures with bowls containing Kan sign tamales (Figure 20d). These particular tamales are not ball-like but tall and slender, and thus resemble a huge tamale depicted in a bas-relief near Structure 5A1 in Old Chichen (Figure 20e). These tall tamales may be early forms of the long and slender *yaxche uah*, or 'ceiba tamale' used in contemporary Yucatec ceremonies (see Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:129). The curious spiked tamales appearing in Postclassic Maya painting and sculpture probably represent the *yaxche uah*, with the points referring to the spiked trunk of the ceiba (Figure 20f-g). Many of these Late Postclassic spiked tamales are slender and pointed, and thus resemble the tall tamales in the Temple of Chac Mool scene.

The Temple of the Owls contains one of the most detailed iconographic programs dedicated to cacao known for ancient Mesoamerica. The aforementioned painted capstone depicts God K within a sunken cavity containing cacao pods (Figure 10). Still other cacao pods hang from the sky above. I suspect that this cavity depicts the moist *kop*, or sinkhole,

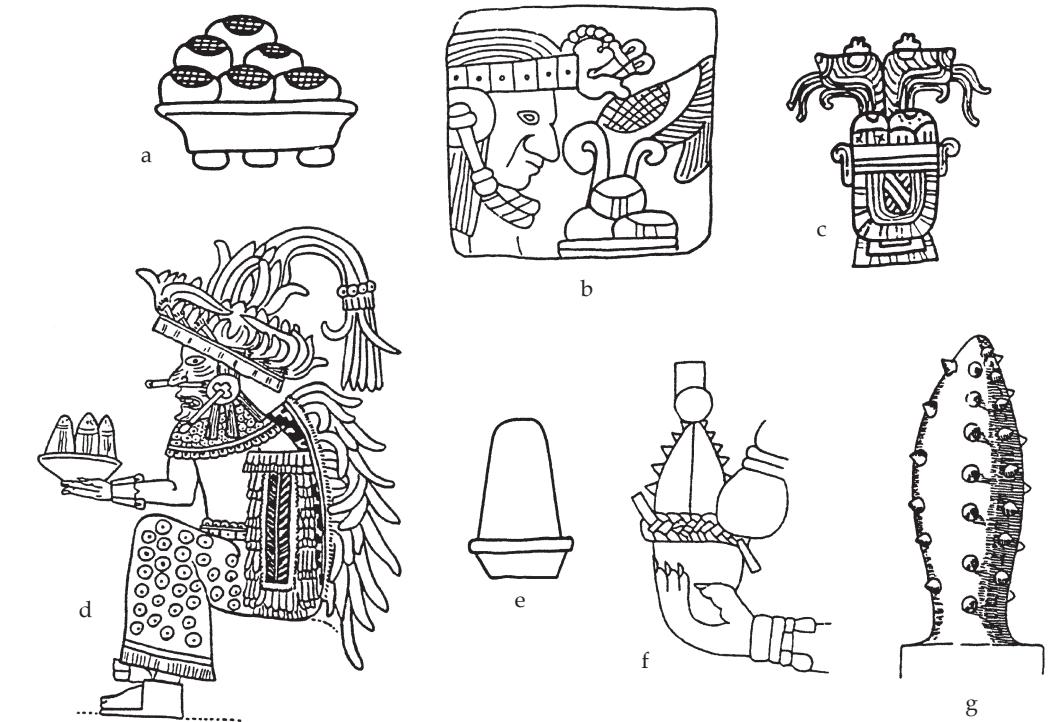


Figure 20. Maize offerings from the northern Maya lowlands: (a) bowl filled with tamales, entrance to Lower Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen Itza (drawing by author); (b) figure with Maya headdress holding tamales topped with maize growth, relief from Holtun Group, Chichen (after Schmidt 1981:Fig. 7); (c) container with tamales, Tulum Structure 16 (after A. Miller 1982:Pl. 33); (d) seated Maya figure with tamales, Temple of Chac Mool (from Roys 1933:Fig. 45); (e) probable maize tamale, detail of bas-relief near Structure 5A1, Old Chichen (drawing by author); (f) spiked tamale, possibly *yaxche wah*, detail of mural from Santa Rita, Belize (from Gann 1900:Pl. 30); (g) spiked tamale, Tulum (from Fernández 1941:Fig. 55).

that is still currently used to grow cacao in Yucatan (Gómez-Pompa et al. 1990).¹² In the capstone scene, God K holds a bowl containing probable cacao seeds and four curious devices resembling jade beads. However, rather than representing jade, these elements refer to another precious substance, the flower of the cacao. On the two piers at the entrance of the temple, these flowers can be seen growing directly out of the trunks of cacao trees (Figure 21a).¹³ These flowers also appear on Madrid page 52c, here in a scene depicting Chac and Goddess I holding cacao grain.

The Temple of the Owls piers originally had tenoned human figures projecting out of the base, as if their lower body formed the trunk of the tree (Figure 21a). This concept is duplicated on a Terminal Classic Maya polychrome reputedly from Belize (Figure 21b).

¹² The colonial Chronicles of Ebtun mention cacao groves at Homteel, Cuncunul, and Cocuitz (Roys 1939:11, 123, 281). The Homteel and Cuncunul groves are both mentioned to be within *kop* sinkholes. At Chichen, the Hoyo de Thompson could have served as a *kop* in which to grow cacao.

¹³ The resemblance of the Chichen cacao flowers to jade earspools is probably intentional, and seems to occur at Bilbao as well. Thus the flowering vine on Bilbao Monument 21 contains a clear earspool assemblage as well as personified cacao pods (see Parsons 1969:1:Frontispiece).

In posture, this figure is virtually identical to the Chichen piers.¹⁴ Just above the Chichen figure, there is a circular, shield-like device (Figure 21a). A very similar element appears on the famous Hun-Hunahpu vessel in the Museo Popol Vuh, again at the base of the cacao tree (Figure 21c). A version of this device also appears on Bilbao Monument 21 below a seated goddess (Figure 21d). A vine with cacao pod heads sprouts at the feet of the goddess. In this case, the shield-like element contains two shell creatures, and it is possible that it refers to a pool of water. However, the actual significance of this element and its relation to cacao remains to be explained.

Von Winning (1985:59, 74) interprets the horned owls in the Temple of the Owls as a reference to death. However, the horned Moan owl was also related to cacao among the Postclassic Yucatec. Thus Landa (in Tozzer 1941:164) mentions that during the month of Moan, special ceremonies were held in cacao groves, quite probably the *kop* sinkholes.

Human Sacrifice

Allusions to human sacrifice are widespread at Toltec Chichen, and have served as lurid



Figure 21. Cacao iconography from the Maya region: (a) front of west pier, Temple of the Owls, Chichen (from von Winning 1985:Fig. 53); (b) figure with cacao trunk growing from lower body (after Kerr 1989:29); (c) detail of Late Classic polychrome, Museo Popol Vuh (drawing by author); (d) detail of Monument 21, Bilbao (from Parsons 1969:1:Frontispiece).

¹⁴ Peter Schmidt (personal communication 1990) has kindly pointed out two other examples of inverted figures marked with cacao pods. A large Rio Bec *incensario* recently exhibited in the Museo Regional de Antropología in Merida depicts a human figure with cacao pods emerging from the body. Schmidt points out a similar figure occurring on an Early Classic vessel lid from Tikal Burial 10 (see Coggins 1975:155-156, Fig. 48). However, unlike the Chichen and Belize examples, both of the inverted figures mentioned by Schmidt have human lower torsos and legs. In this regard, they closely resemble the "diving god" of Late Postclassic Yucatan. An unprovenanced Late Postclassic vessel published by M. Coe (1982:77) depicts a God E "diving god" holding a cacao pod in his hands.

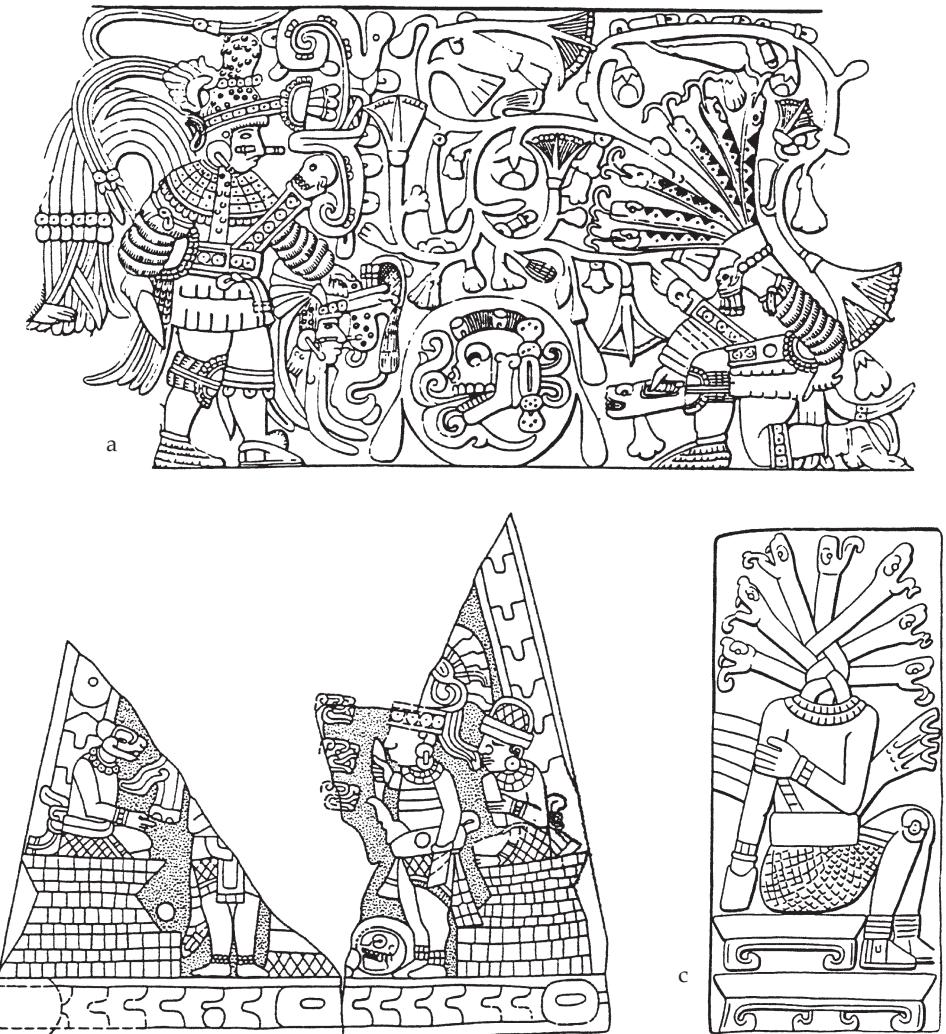


Figure 22. The ballgame and decapitation at Chichen and the Gulf Coast: (a) detail of center panel of west side of Great Ballcourt, Chichen (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 474); (b) fragmentary scene with skull ball and probable representation of blood as snakes, El Tajín (from Kampen 1972:Fig. 19a); (c) bas-relief from Aparicio, Veracruz (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 475).

reinforcements for the conception of Mexican domination at Chichen. According to Tozzer (1957:127), human sacrifice was not common in the Maya region until the Postclassic period. However, recent research has established that human sacrifice was widespread among the Classic Maya; among the more common forms were heart excision, decapitation, and scaffold sacrifice (Robicsek and Hales 1984; Schele and Miller 1986; Taube 1988b).

Some of the most explicit scenes of sacrifice at Chichen occur in the six panels of the Great Ballcourt (Figure 22a). Cohodas (1978b:264) notes that in layout, these panels are notably similar to the South Ballcourt at El Tajín, which also contains six carved panels, a number of which depict human sacrifice. In addition, the striking theme of snakes as blood emerging from a severed neck is found not only at Chichen, but also in a fragmentary sculpture from El Tajín, and on a relief from Aparicio, Veracruz (Figures 22b-c). The *palmas* worn by the Chichen

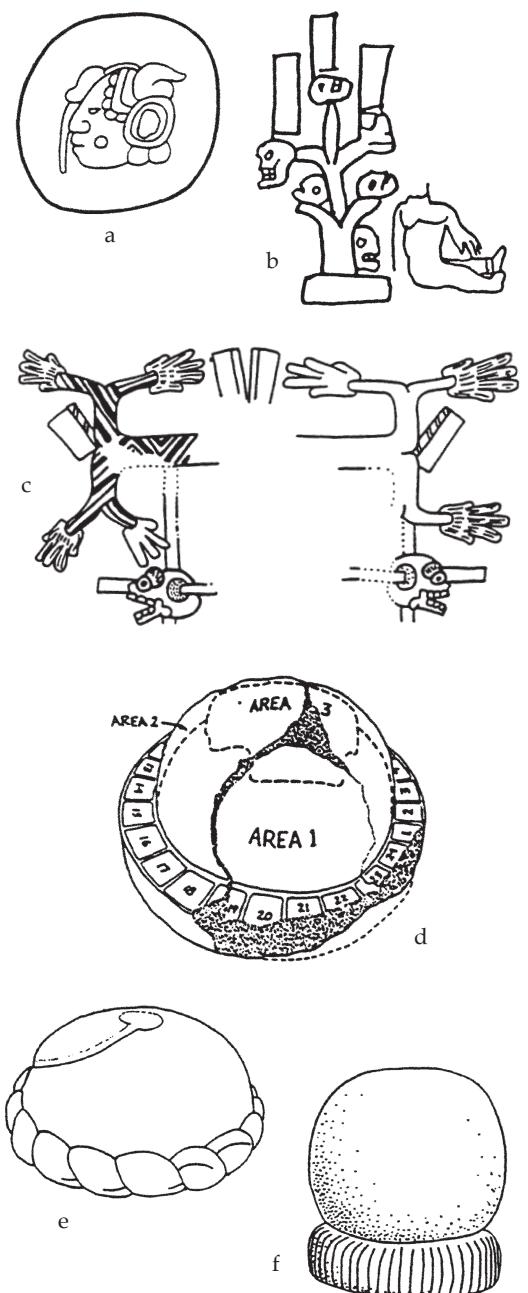
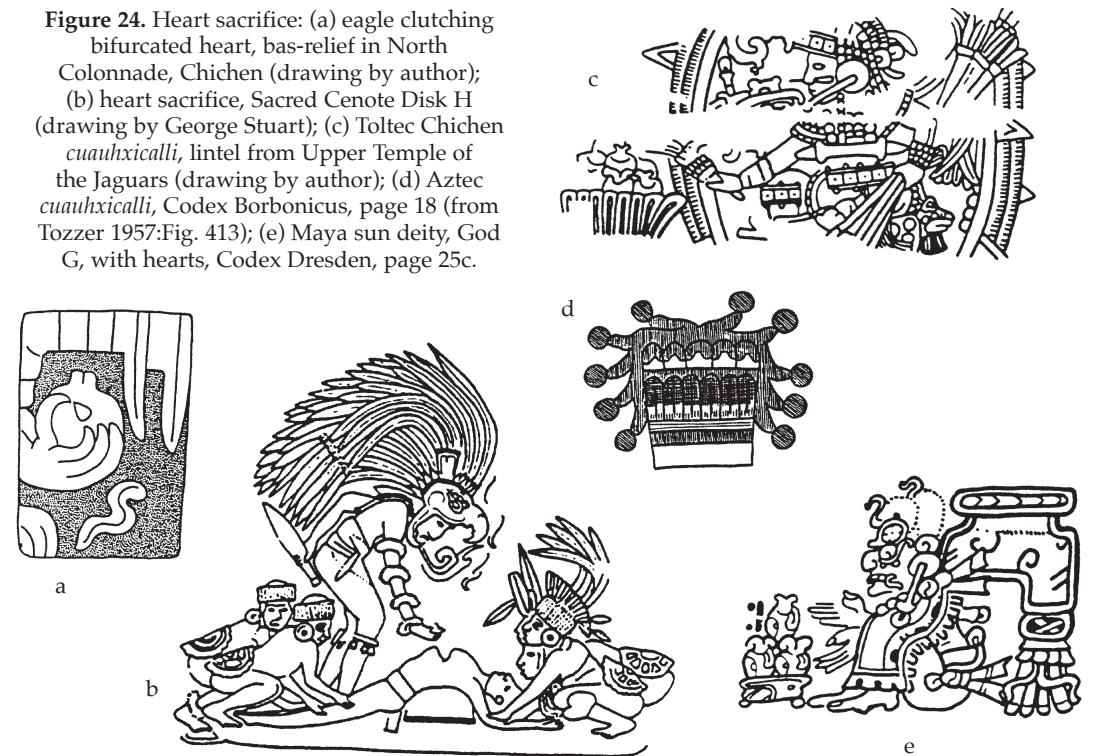


Figure 23. Sacrifice and the ballgame in Mesoamerica: (a) detail of the La Esperanza ballcourt marker (after Castro-Leal 1986:No. 69); (b) detail of Ixtapantongo rock painting (after Villagra Caleti 1971:Fig. 27); (c) tree skull rack, Codex Borgia, page 19; (d) schematic drawing of Great Ballcourt Stone, Chichen Itza (from Wren et al. 1989:Fig. 1); (e) altar from Court B, Tula (after Castro-Leal 1986:No. 100); (f) Altar 4, Copan (after Miller and Houston 1987:Fig. 11).

players also point to the Gulf Coast. However, the Great Ballcourt reliefs also bear traits unique to the Cotzumalhuapa style of Bilbao. Thus for example, several of the flowering "blood vines" in the Great Ballcourt reliefs are provided with stone projectile points. A similar convention can be seen on Bilbao Monument 21, in which the flowering vine contains a possible projectile point and a sacrificial knife, probably to qualify the vine as a plant of sacrifice (see Parsons 1969:1:Frontispiece).

The sacrificial ball game scenes at Chichen are not only linked to the iconography of the Gulf Coast and Bilbao, but also to that of the Classic Maya. Iconographic and epigraphic research by Miller and Houston (1987) demonstrates that the humiliation and sacrifice of captives was indeed an important component of the Classic Maya ballgame. Kowalski (1989) notes that the ball represented on the Late Classic La Esperanza ballcourt marker contains a human head (Figure 23a). Kowalski (1989) identifies this head as that of Hunahpu, one of the hero twins in the Quiche Maya *Popol Vuh*. During the ball playing between the hero twins and the gods of death, Hunahpu loses his head (see Recinos 1950:150-153). It would appear that for the Classic Maya, the slaying of Hunahpu provided a mythical charter for ball game decapitation. The *Popol Vuh* also mentions that the head of Hun-Hunahpu, the father of the hero twins, was placed in a gourd tree at the place of ball game sacrifice (Recinos 1950:117-119). This strongly suggests the *tzompantli* placed near the Great Ballcourt at Chichen. The Ixtapantongo rock painting suggests that the *tzompantli* was considered as a tree during the Toltec period. In the scene, there is a tree laden with skulls and paper banners, or *pantli* (Figure 23b). On page 19 of the Late Postclassic Codex Borgia, there is another depiction of a *tzompantli* tree, once again marked with *pantli* banners (Figure 23c). It is likely that at Chichen, as in the highlands of Guatemala and Mexico, the *tzompantli* was considered as a fruit-laden tree.

Figure 24. Heart sacrifice: (a) eagle clutching bifurcated heart, bas-relief in North Colonnade, Chichen (drawing by author); (b) heart sacrifice, Sacred Cenote Disk H (drawing by George Stuart); (c) Toltec Chichen *cuauhxicalli*, lintel from Upper Temple of the Jaguars (drawing by author); (d) Aztec *cuauhxicalli*, Codex Borbonicus, page 18 (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 413); (e) Maya sun deity, God G, with hearts, Codex Dresden, page 25c.



Wren, Schmidt, and Krochock (1989), suggest that the Great Ballcourt Stone from Chichen served for heart excision (Figure 23d). A quite similar altar, clearly representing a ball, was found in Ballcourt B at Tula (Figure 23e). This altar form is probably Maya in origin. Miller and Houston (1987:56) note that Copan Altar 4 represents a ball, and suggest that it may have been a locus for human sacrifice (Figure 23f).

Along with scenes of heart excision, severed hearts are also common at Chichen Itza. At Chichen and Tula, eagles and jaguars are found clutching hearts. An interesting heart variant appears with a fragmentary representation of an eagle in the North Colonnade; in this case the heart is bifurcated, presumably to represent the severed arteries (Figure 24a). A similarly bifurcated heart appears on Disk H from the Sacred Cenote, here being taken from the chest of the prone victim (Figure 24b). These graphic scenes allow one to identify the objects frequently placed in feather-rimmed bowls. They are clearly hearts, and the feather-rimmed bowl is probably an early form of the Aztec *cuauhxicalli*, the eagle-plumed vessel (Figure 24c). For the Aztec, the *cuauhxicalli* was an important means of offering hearts to the sun (Figure 24d). Similarly, the Chichen example is frequently before the Maya Tonatiuh. The identification of hearts with the sun can also be seen on page 26b of the Dresden Codex, where the Maya sun god, God G, sits before a bowl of bifurcated hearts (Figure 24e).

In ancient Mesoamerica, the act of human sacrifice was often compared to mythic acts of creation. The decapitation of the Quiche Hunahpu has been mentioned. Another clear example is the Aztec myth of Coyolxauhqui, in which Huitzilopochtli kills his evil sister and the four hundred brothers with the Xiuhcoatl fire serpent. A fragmentary Coyolxauhqui stone from the Templo Mayor depicts the Xiuhcoatl penetrating the chest of Coyolxauhqui (Figure 25a). Clearly, this fascinating scene is a mythical analogue to the actual heart sacrifices performed

at the Templo Mayor. At Chichen, it appears that the aforementioned dismemberment of the earth goddess by the two bladed serpents provided a cosmic charter for heart sacrifice (Figures 3a-b, 25b). Thus in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, an actual scene of heart sacrifice appears directly above the prostrate body of the earth goddess (Figure 25b). Moreover, a fine sacrificial knife from the Sacred Cenote bears a handle with two intertwined serpents (Figure 25c). I suggest that this knife represents the pair of bladed serpents which dismember the earth goddess: during the sacrificial act, a victim slain with this knife assumed the symbolic role of the prone earth goddess.

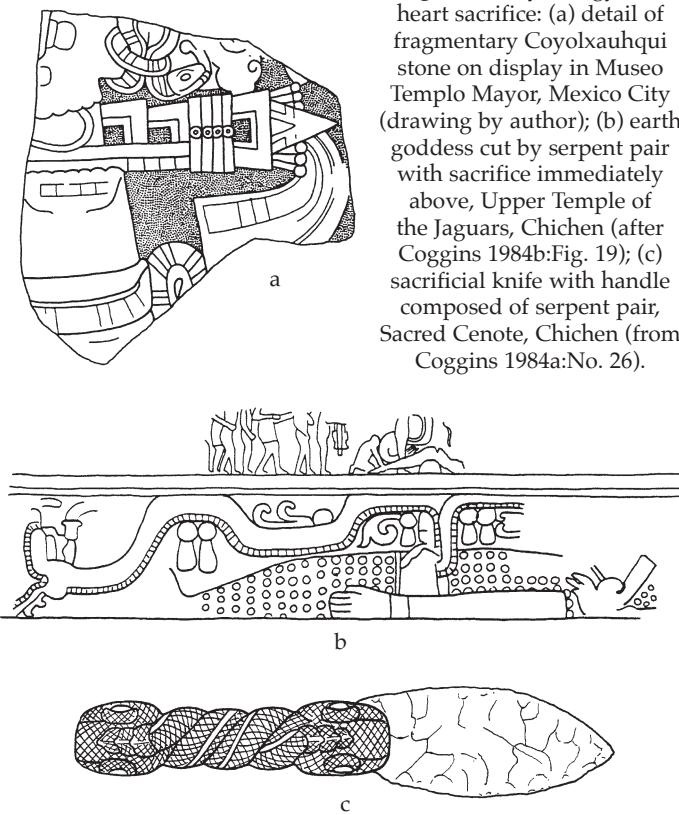


Figure 25. Mythology and heart sacrifice: (a) detail of fragmentary Coyolxauhqui stone on display in Museo Templo Mayor, Mexico City (drawing by author); (b) earth goddess cut by serpent pair immediately above, Upper Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen (after Coggins 1984b:Fig. 19); (c) sacrificial knife with handle composed of serpent pair, Sacred Cenote, Chichen (from Coggins 1984a:No. 26).

Warfare

In an important study published in 1930, Alfred Tozzer notes the simultaneous presence of both Toltec and Maya warrior figures in the art of Toltec period Chichen. Tozzer (1930:160) notes that whereas the Toltec warriors are depicted with darts and spearthrowers, the Maya are usually found with spears and knives. In many cases, Maya warriors at Chichen are portrayed as Chac, and thus frequently hold axes, the lightning weapon *par excellence* (Figures 7a, 8, 9a, 26b-c, 29a). The identification of Maya warriors with Chac is also widespread in the Puuc region (Figures 7b-d). One of the most ambitious programs illustrating this theme occurs on Uxmal Stela 14, where Lord Chac wields a conch and axe as he stands on a jaguar throne above slain and naked figures, probably defeated warriors. The Chac warrior theme was also present among the Classic Maya of the southern lowlands. On Bonampak Lintel 3, the victorious ruler wears a prominent Chac headdress (Figure 26a).

In the south column of Chichen Structure 6E1, a Chac warrior appears with three other warrior figures in very similar dress (Figure 27a). All wear a shoulder cape and a necklace composed of two large beads. This same shoulder cape and beaded necklace appears on a sculpture possibly from Tiho (Figure 27b). Still another example occurs on Uxmal Stela 14, where a warrior figure wears the cape and large bead necklace (Figure 27c). But although the Uxmal figure is dressed in the Maya warrior costume, he wields an atlatl and a circular shield. With its infixed crescents and pendant tassel, the shield is identical to examples known for Toltec Chichen. Clear examples of this type are prominently depicted on the Upper Temple of the Jaguars (Figure 27d). Moreover, it is likely that the crescents were of metal, much like

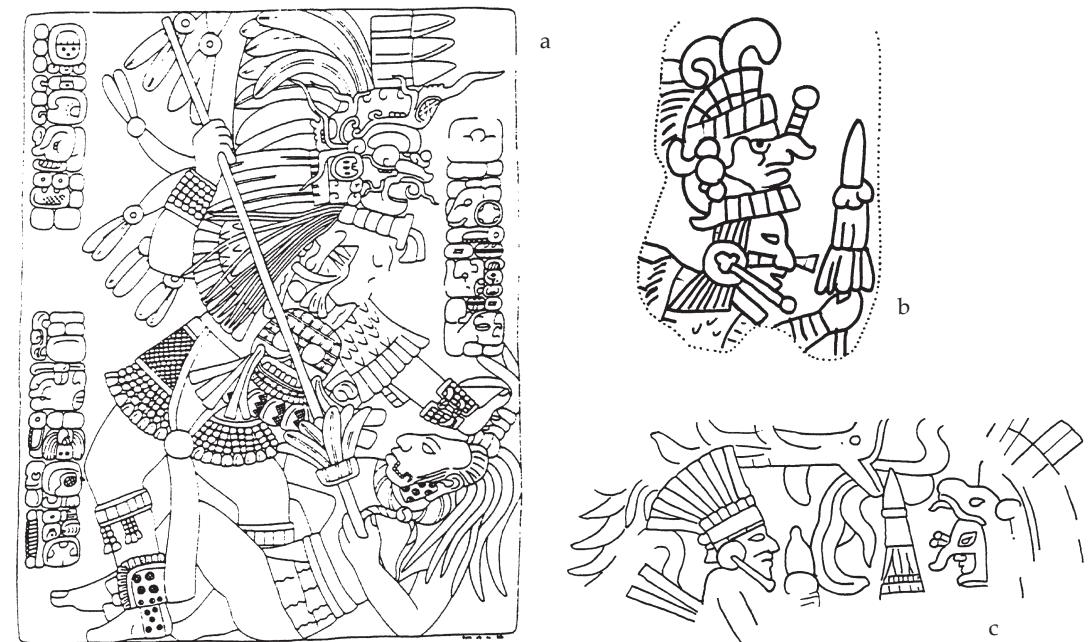


Figure 26. The Chac warrior theme in Maya iconography: (a) Late Classic Bonampak ruler, Knot Eye Jaguar, wearing Chac headdress (from Mathews 1980:Fig. 7); (b) mural fragment representing Chac warrior, Temple of Chac Mool (from Morris et al. 1931:2:Pl. 157b); (c) Toltec warrior facing Maya Chac warrior, detail of lintel from Castillo, Chichen (after rubbing courtesy of Merle Greene Robertson).

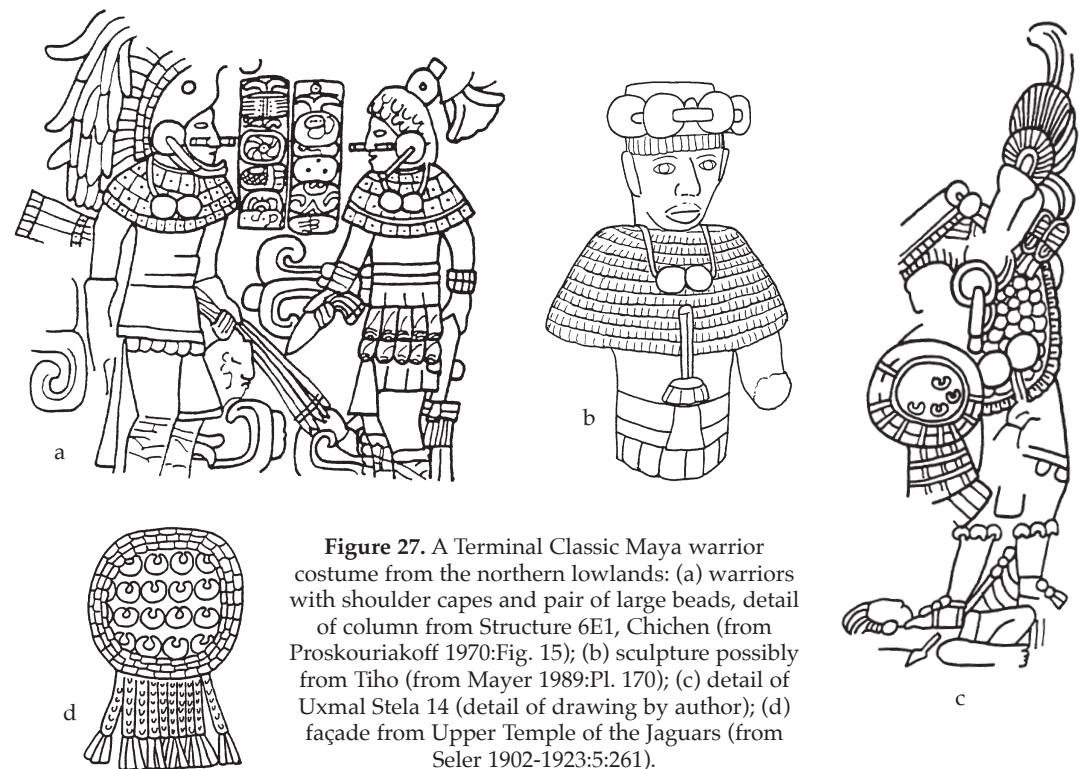


Figure 27. A Terminal Classic Maya warrior costume from the northern lowlands: (a) warriors with shoulder capes and pair of large beads, detail of column from Structure 6E1, Chichen (from Proskouriakoff 1970:Fig. 15); (b) sculpture possibly from Tiho (from Mayer 1989:Pl. 170); (c) detail of Uxmal Stela 14 (detail of drawing by author); (d) façade from Upper Temple of the Jaguars (from Seler 1902-1923:5:261).

examples recovered from the Sacred Cenote at Chichen Itza (see Coggins 1984a:No. 15). Thus although in Maya dress, the Stela 14 warrior bears the arms of Toltec Chichen.

The omnipresent Toltec warriors at Chichen stand out in sharp contrast to traditional Maya warrior dress and have obvious parallels with Toltec costume of highland Mexico (Figures 28b, 29a). Stone (1989:165-166) notes that many traits of Toltec warrior costume can be traced to Classic Teotihuacan. Depictions of Toltec warriors are not only found at Chichen and Tula, but also in the rock painting from Ixtapantongo. One of the Ixtapantongo figures is almost identical in arms and dress to examples at Chichen (Figure 28a). Among the shared costume traits are a pointed mosaic crown, a nose bead, and a large back mirror, or *tezcacuitlapilli*. When the original painted color is preserved at Chichen, these costume elements are light blue, in contrast to the dark green denoting jade. At Chichen, this blue often refers to turquoise, a stone entirely foreign to the Maya area.

Much of the Toltec turquoise warrior regalia continued in Late Postclassic Central Mexican iconography. The Aztec Codex Magliabechiano illustrates the image of a dead warrior, who is depicted with the same blue pointed crown and nosepiece (Figure 28c). In this instance,

the pointed headpiece clearly represents the turquoise *xiuhuitzoll* crown of Aztec rulers. Seler (1902-1923:1:682), the first to note the widespread occurrence of turquoise at Toltec Chichen, suggests that the pointed Chichen headpiece is an early form of the *xiuhuitzoll*. The accompanying Magliabechiano text terms the blue nose bead *yacaxuítl* [*yacaxiuítl*], meaning turquoise or grass nose piece. According to Seler (1902-1923:5:280), the Chichen nose bead is also a turquoise *yacaxuítl*. However, yet another Chichen parallel with the Magliabechiano scene not mentioned by Seler is the blue *xolocozcatl* dog pendant (Figures 28c, 29). Very similar chest pendants are commonly worn by warriors at Chichen and again, when the paint is preserved, these creatures are turquoise blue (see Morris et al. 1931:2:Pls. 74, 77, 81).

One of the most striking diagnostic items worn by Toltec warriors is the large petaled disk commonly placed in the small of the back (Figures 28a-b, 29a, 30). This device is extremely widespread in the iconography of Tula and Chichen, and is even found worn by a graffito warrior incised in the Akab



Figure 28. Turquoise warrior regalia of Postclassic Mesoamerica: (a) Toltec warrior figure from Ixtapantongo rock painting (after Villagra Caleti 1971:Fig. 27); (b) Toltec warrior from Upper Temple of the Jaguars (from Maudslay 1889-1902:3:Pl. 38); (c) Aztec image of dead warrior, Codex Magliabechiano, page 60.

Dzib at Chichen (Figure 30c). Seler (1902-1923:1:681) suggests that these are turquoise *tezcacuitlapilli* back mirrors, an identification that has been entirely borne out by more recent discoveries at Chichen. The actual mirrors found at Chichen are composed of a polished pyrite mosaic center surrounded by a mosaic of turquoise and other materials (Figure 31a). Four mosaic serpents lie within the encircling turquoise. Acosta (1942:129) interprets these as *xiuhcoatl* turquoise fire serpents and notes that they are also present on *tezcacuitlapilli* at Tula, here depicted on the great warrior columns at Mound B. Although with copper backing, similar mirrors are known for the far distant site of Casas Grandes, in northern Chihuahua (Figure 30a). Once again, *Xiuhcoatl* serpents appear in four zones on the mirror rim. One of the Casas Grandes mirrors retained some mosaic of turquoise and specular iron mosaic at the time of discovery (Di Peso 1974a:2:498).

The turquoise back mirror was obviously of extreme importance at Toltec Chichen. Tozzer (1957:120) notes that with their four *Xiuhcoatl* serpents, the Chichen mirrors are very similar to certain Chichen representations of the solar disk, which are also provided with four *Xiuhcoatl* serpents (Figure 31b). In several studies, I (Taube 1983, 1988e, 1992a) note that the Aztec Calendar Stone may be based on the Toltec turquoise and pyrite mirror. In this case, the central solar figure is surrounded by a ring of turquoise quincunx signs and two great *Xiuhcoatl* serpents (Figure 31c). However, the concept of solar mirrors surrounded by serpents may well be Maya in origin. During both the Early Classic and Late Classic periods of Maya art, four serpent heads are found on the rims of mirrors containing the solar *kin* sign (Figure 31d-e). The turquoise back mirror of Chichen and Tula probably also represents the sun. I suspect that by donning the turquoise and pyrite mirror, the Toltec warrior supported the burden or office of the sun.

Still another turquoise element appearing with Toltec warriors is the winged pectoral (Figure 32). Although Seler (1902-1923:5:273) states that the device is mosaic, he suggests that the stone is jadeite. However, when the color is preserved at Chichen, the plaque is turquoise blue rather than jade green (e.g., Morris et al. 1931:2:Pls. 30, 33, 50).¹⁵

¹⁵ Like the Toltec style *tezcacuitlapilli* discovered at Chichen, the mosaic chest plaque may have been backed by wood. Possible examples can be seen among the Sacred Cenote wooden objects currently on display in the Museo de Chichen Itza.

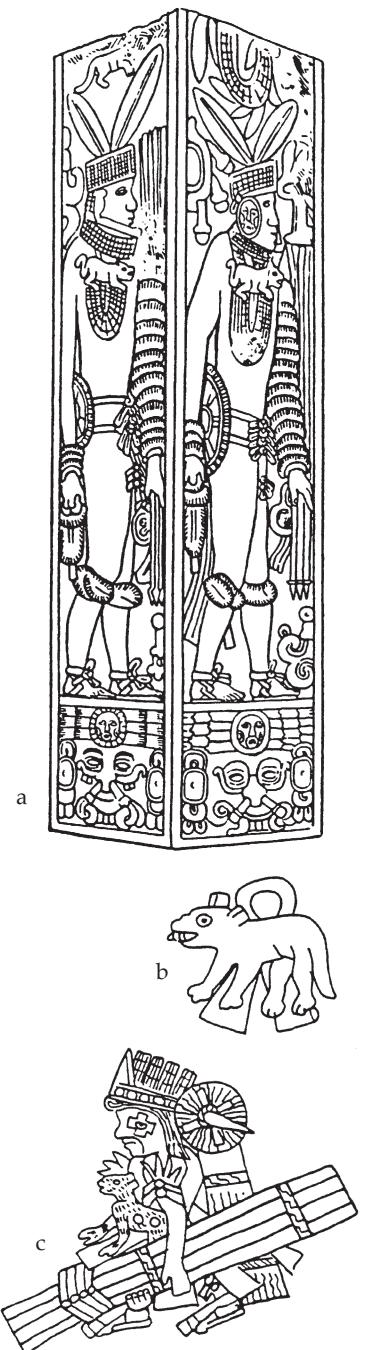


Figure 29. Aztec and Toltec forms of the *xolocozcatl* turquoise chest piece: (a) chest pendants worn by Toltec warriors (from Seler 1902-1923:5:280); (b) *xolocozcatl* pendant, Codex Borbonicus, page 10; (c) *xolocozcatl* pendant worn by fire priest, Codex Borbonicus, page 34.

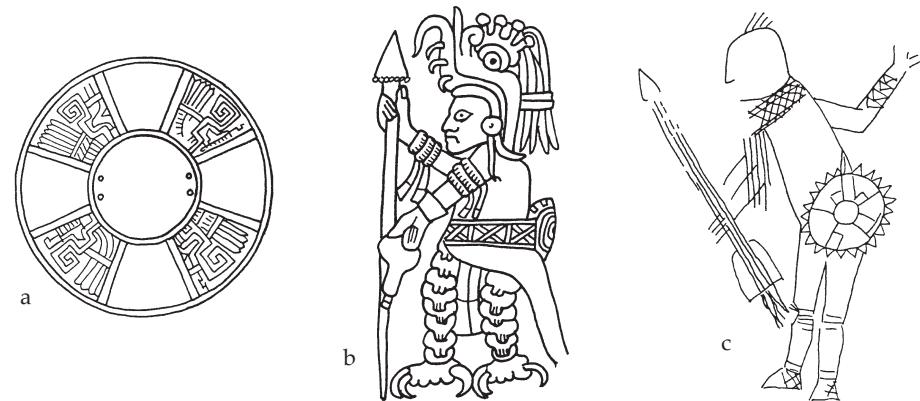


Figure 30. The Toltec style *tezcacuitlapilli* in Mesoamerica: (a) copper *tezcacuitlapilli* backing, Casas Grandes, Chihuahua (from Di Peso 1974a:2:Fig. 255); (b) deity with weapons and *tezcacuitlapilli*, Codex Grolier, page 8; (c) graffito from Akab Dzib, Chichen (drawing by author).

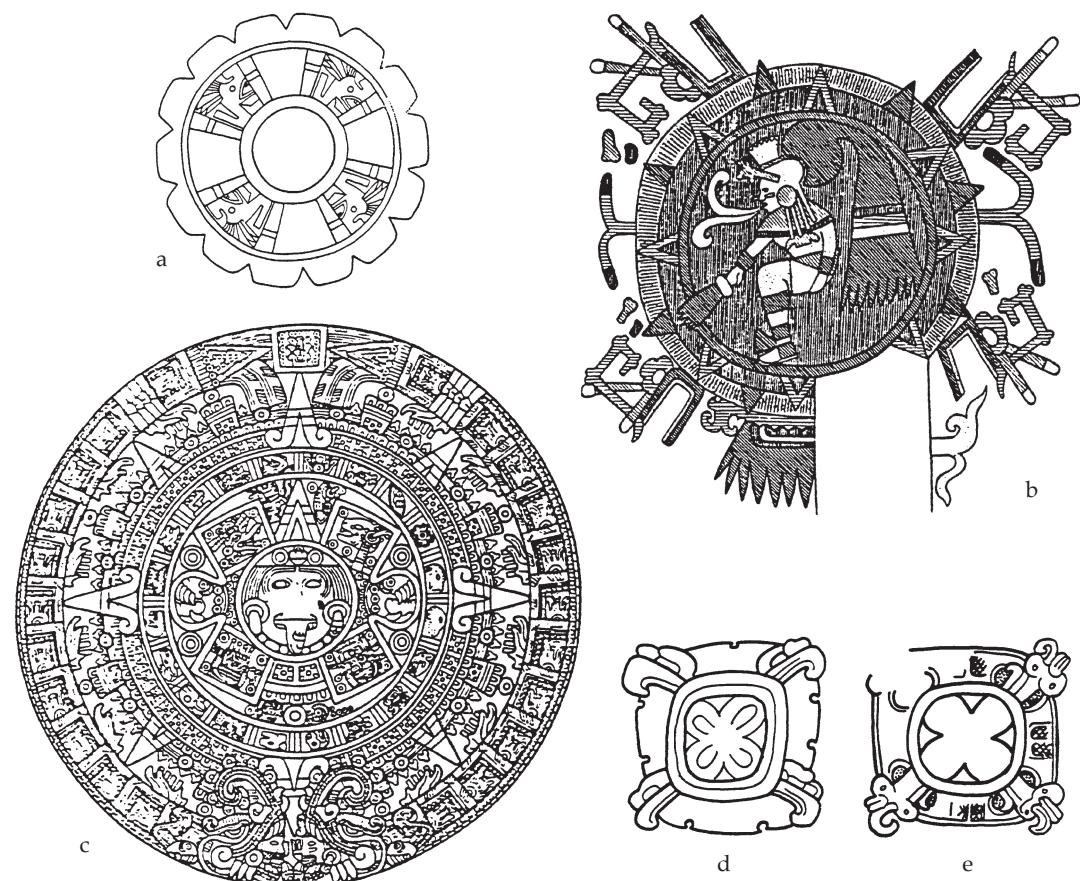


Figure 31. Solar mirrors in Mesoamerica: (a) schematic drawing of *tezcacuitlapilli* discovered in Temple of Chac Mool, Chichen (drawing by author); (b) solar disk framed by Xiuhtecuhtli serpents, Upper Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen (from Seler 1902-1923:5:343); (c) Aztec Calendar Stone, solar figure encircled by turquoise and pair of Xiuhtecuhtli serpents; (d) detail of Early Classic Tikal Stela 1; (e) detail of Late Classic Stela 10, Piedras Negras.

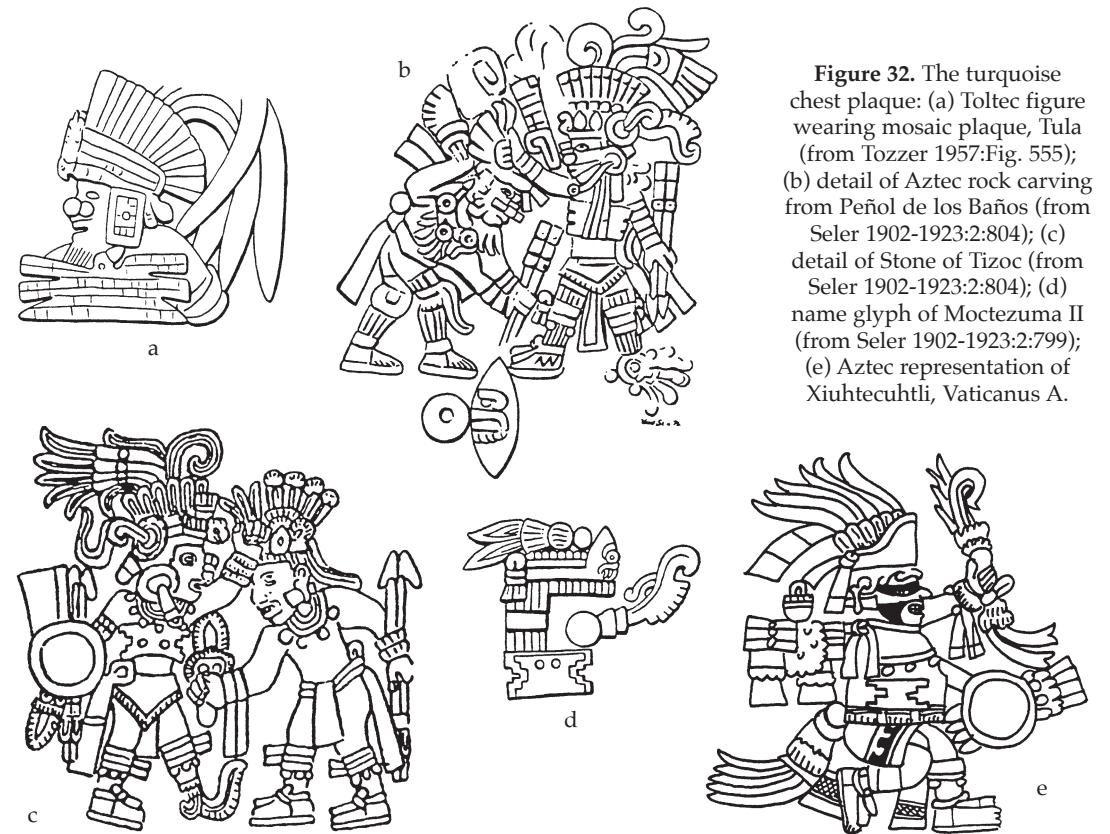


Figure 32. The turquoise chest plaque: (a) Toltec figure wearing mosaic plaque, Tula (from Tozzer 1957:Fig. 555); (b) detail of Aztec rock carving from Peñol de los Baños (from Seler 1902-1923:2:804); (c) detail of Stone of Tizoc (from Seler 1902-1923:2:804); (d) name glyph of Moctezuma II (from Seler 1902-1923:2:799); (e) Aztec representation of Xiuhtecuhtli, Vaticanus A.

Moreover, this chestpiece appears in the Aztec carving at Peñol de los Baños, here on a figure displaying attributes of both Tezcatlipoca and Xiuhtecuhtli, the turquoise lord of fire and rulership (Figure 32b). This same composite figure is also present on the Stone of Tizoc, although here the chestpiece is slightly different and now corresponds to the better known turquoise chestpiece appearing in the name glyph of Motecuhzoma II and on the Aztec Xiuhtecuhtli (Figure 32c-e).

In his early studies of Chichen iconography, Seler (1902-1923:1:690, 5:274) states that the descending bird commonly found on the brow of Chichen Toltec warriors represents the Xiuhtotol bird, or lovely cotinga (*Cotinga amabilis*), similarly found on the headdress of the Late Postclassic Xiuhtecuhtli (Figure 33a-b).¹⁶ This same headdress element is found at Tula (Figure 33c), and interestingly enough, in the Postclassic Maya Dresden Codex. On Dresden page 60, a warrior figure wielding a spear, atlatl darts, and a round shield, wears the Xiuhtotol in his headdress (Figure 33d). But by far the most interesting example occurs on page 49 of the Dresden Venus pages (Figure 33e). A recent study demonstrates that this is a unique Maya representation of Xiuhtecuhtli (Taube and Bade 1991). Thus the figure not only has the Xiuhtotol brow piece and the characteristic facial stripes of Xiuhtecuhtli, but also a version of the *xiuhtitzoli* crown. In addition, the god wears a round breast piece similar to

¹⁶ The Xiuhtotol bird appears to have been of considerable importance in Postclassic Yucatan. According to Tozzer (1941:30, n. 159), the historic Tutul Xiu derived their name from the Nahuatl name of the lovely cotinga.

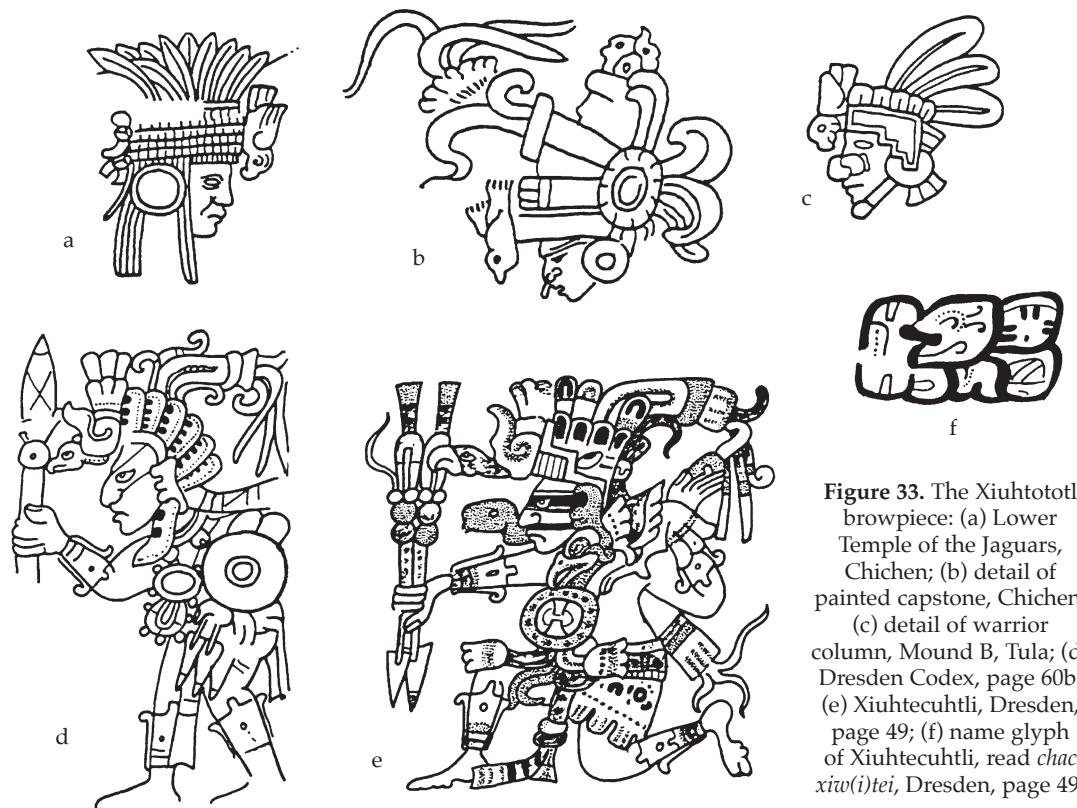


Figure 33. The Xiuhtotol browpiece: (a) Lower Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen; (b) detail of painted capstone, Chichen; (c) detail of warrior column, Mound B, Tula; (d) Dresden Codex, page 60b; (e) Xiuhtecuhtli, Dresden, page 49; (f) name glyph of Xiuhtecuhtli, read *chac xiw(i)tei*, Dresden, page 49.

the Aztec sign for turquoise, or *xiuitl*, such as appears in the toponym for *xiuhtepec*. However, the most striking confirmation of his identity lies in his name glyph, composed of a *chac* sign, a beaded skull, a T277 *wi* suffix, followed by a sign identified by Whittaker (1986:58) as *te* in the Landa alphabet, and finally, T679, Landa's *i* (Figure 33f). David Stuart (1987:37) proposes that the beaded skull sign has the phonetic value *xi*. With this value, the entire compound can be read as *chac xiw(i)tei*, a very close gloss for the Nahuatl Xiuhtecuhtli.

The presence of a phonetically named Xiuhtecuhtli in the Dresden Codex provides a great deal of support for the identification of turquoise, or *xiuitl*, in the iconography of Chichen. Thus along with being named Xiuhtecuhtli, the figure wears the Xiutotol bird, the *xiuhuitzolli* crown, and a turquoise chest piece. It would appear that the Maya of the Dresden Codex were entirely aware of turquoise and even its Nahuatl name. At Chichen and Tula, there was a virtual cult of turquoise. However, I know of only one indication of a possible turquoise object in Puuc art. A standing figure on Uxmal Stela 13 appears to wear a large, Toltec style *tezcacuitlapilli* (see Morley 1970:Fig. 20). However, there is no actual turquoise known for the Puuc Pure Florescent sites or for Classic Maya sites of the southern lowlands. In fact, turquoise, like metal, is generally absent from Mesoamerica until the Postclassic period. Chemical turquoise does not occur naturally in Mesoamerica; instead, it appears that much of the turquoise appearing in Mesoamerican sites comes from the distant mines of Cerrillos, New Mexico (Weigand et al. 1977). Arguments for the contemporaneity of Toltec Chichen and Classic Maya or the Maya origins of Toltec iconography must explain the widespread presence of turquoise at Toltec Chichen.

Conclusions

The iconography of Toltec period Chichen is by no means a monolithic portrayal of Toltec ideology. Instead, the Toltec period iconography reveals a profound understanding and appreciation of ancient Maya belief, as well as traditions of the Gulf Coast and the Cotzumalhuapan region of Guatemala. Although particular Toltec traits, such as the feathered serpents and back mirrors, can be easily traced to earlier traditions of highland Mexico, there are other elements which appear to be Toltec innovations. This is not only true for costume elements, such as turquoise regalia, but also religious ideology and presumably, political institutions as well.

The iconography of Toltec Chichen exhibits both Maya and Mexican cosmological concepts. The God N world bearers abounding in the art of Toltec Chichen are decidedly Maya in origin. However, although less common, the prone earth goddess seems to have had a particularly important role at Chichen. Her dismemberment by the bladed serpents appears to have provided a mythical legitimization for heart sacrifice.¹⁷ Although the dismemberment of the earth goddess by mythical snakes is known for the Late Postclassic Nahuatl, I know of no counterpart in the Classic iconography of the Maya region or highland Mexico. Much like the Aztec Huitzilopochtli and Coyolxauhqui myth, the dismemberment of the earth goddess may have been a Toltec innovation.

Both Mexican and Maya gods are widely depicted in the art of Toltec Chichen. Aside from the omnipresent God N, the Maya deities include the God of the Number 13, Chac, and God K. Representations of Chac are widespread at Toltec Chichen, and display a rich iconography that can be compared not only to the Puuc region, but also Classic sites of the southern lowlands. However, God K is quite rare at Toltec Chichen; this is all the more surprising when one recalls that one of the more important names mentioned in the Maya texts is Kakupacal Kauil, *kauil* being a Maya epithet for God K (Krochok 1988; see Stuart 1987:15). Mexican gods are also common at Toltec Chichen, and aside from the aforementioned representations of Quetzalcoatl, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, and the Maya Tonatiuh, there are also clear images of Tlaloc and Tezcatlipoca (see Thompson 1942). Although images of Tlaloc abound in Classic iconography of the Gulf Coast and Central Mexico, the Chichen depictions of Tezcatlipoca are the earliest reliable representations of this god known in Mesoamerica. The feathered serpent and sun disk pair probably refer simultaneously to both political offices and gods. The feathered serpent clearly enough is Quetzalcoatl, who merges into Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the fierce god of the morning star. Although the Tonatiuh figure is portrayed as a Maya, he is a new entity entirely distinct from the Maya jaguar sun god. It appears that the Maya Tonatiuh of the Toltec continued in Late Postclassic Mexican iconography as the princely sun god of the east.

The iconography of maize and subsistence at Toltec Chichen is wholly Maya, and has

¹⁷ Precisely who these twin bladed serpents represent is an important problem. I suspect that they refer to the masked feathered serpent and Maya solar king pair. Just below the scenes of human sacrifice and dismemberment of the earth goddess in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, there is a wooden lintel representing the feathered serpent and sun disk pair facing a stacked bowl of hearts. They are flanked on either side by a pair of serpents, quite probably the same serpents slicing through the earth goddess in the scene above (see Coggins 1984b:Fig. 19). In both cases the serpents are supplied with hanks of hair pulled through a hollow spool.

clear analogues in the Classic art of the southern lowlands. The importance of maize offerings—particularly tamales—in the art of Toltec Chichen is in striking contrast to Central Mexican iconographic traditions, where maize foods are essentially absent from monumental sculpture. Moreover, the Temple of the Owls reveals a complex lore surrounding cacao that has clear parallels in Classic Maya art as well as the Terminal Classic art of Bilbao.

The explicit scenes of sacrifice with the ball game at Toltec Chichen have clear analogues with ball game iconography of the Gulf Coast, the Classic Maya, and Terminal Classic Bilbao. It is likely that the sacrificial ball game iconography at Toltec Chichen is partly derived from all three areas. I find it unlikely, however, that many traits of the Toltec Chichen ballgame derived from Central Mexico. The lowlands, rather than Mexican highlands, have always been the innovative center of the Mesoamerican ball game. Although Tozzer (1957:130) asserts that the sacrificial *cuauhxicalli* vessel is absent from the Maya lowlands, clear examples exist at Toltec Chichen, frequently as offerings to the Maya Tonatiuh. But although explicit representations of sacrifice are widespread at Toltec Chichen, it is unlikely that Chichen enjoyed a monopoly on heart sacrifice and decapitation. The many drum altars at Puuc sites, frequently with captive iconography, were probably also altars for heart sacrifice. Moreover, Andrews IV (1965:315) notes that the skull platforms at Dzibilchaltun and Uxmal were probably foundations for *tzompantli*. Dunning (n.d.) notes the presence of a probable *tzompantli* platform at Nohpat, here in close association to a ballcourt.

The identification by Tozzer (1930) of distinct Maya and Toltec warriors at Chichen appears to be entirely correct. Quite frequently, the Maya warriors are dressed as Chac, the Maya god of rain and lightning. In contrast, the Toltec warriors bear round shields, the atlatl, and are richly dressed in turquoise. Although it has received little investigation, the clear Aztec relationship of Xiuhtecuhtli with rulership and war could shed much light on the significance of the Toltec turquoise warrior. But although Tozzer (1930) correctly identifies Toltec and Maya warriors, his conclusions regarding a Toltec invasion of Chichen are unwarranted. It is true that there are explicit scenes of conquered and sacrificed Maya at Toltec Chichen (e.g., Lothrop 1952:Figs. 30, 31, 32, 34, 41, 42). However, it is quite another matter to argue that these are Chichen Maya. In other words, ethnic identity has been confused with political affiliation. It is quite likely that during the Toltec period, the Yucatec Maya were divided into competing political city states. Rather than depicting conquered Chichen Maya, these scenes could well represent the defeat of enemies of Toltec Chichen.

The iconography of Toltec Chichen suggests a self-conscious synthesis of Maya and Toltec traditions. Rather than being entirely eclipsed by Toltec influence, Maya traditions are clearly evident in all the themes that have been discussed. However, the Toltec period at Chichen is not a smooth homogenous blend of Mexican and Maya culture. Instead, the underlying theme appears to be “separate but equal”: Toltec and Maya figures are carefully distinguished. This is graphically displayed in the inner sanctuary of the Temple of Chac Mool (Morris 1931:Fig. 271). Whereas the north bench contains explicit depictions of Toltec figures, the south bench figures are exclusively Maya. At Chichen, this duality is exemplified by the Quetzalcoatl and Maya Tonatiuh figures. Although A. Miller (1977) views these two figures as being antagonistic, Lincoln (1988, 1990:165) rightly disagrees, and argues that they represent complementary aspects of rulership.

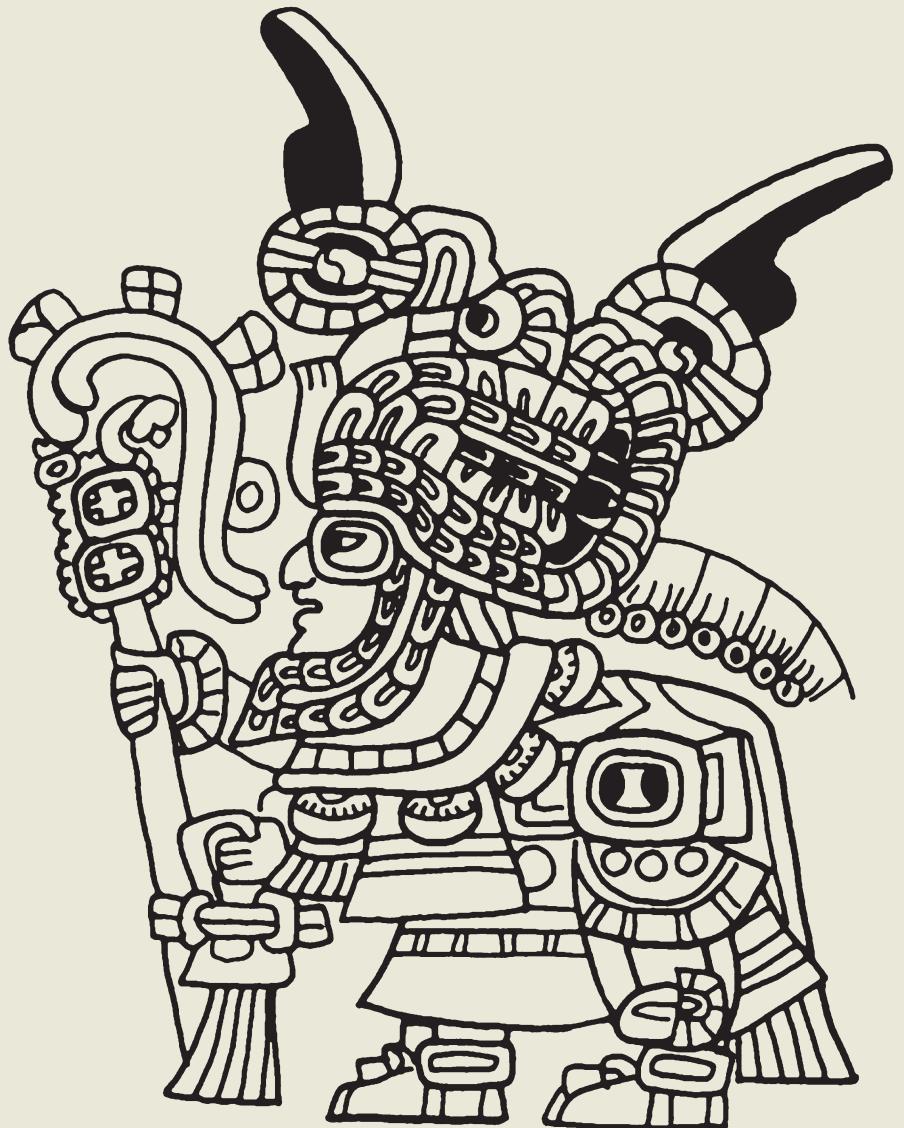
I find that the model of dual kingship proposed by Lincoln (*ibid.*) fits well with the iconography of Toltec Chichen. However, by minimizing the link of Toltec Chichen iconography to Central Mexico, Lincoln obscures the motivations behind this duality. According to

Lincoln, the dualism exhibited by the feathered serpent and sun figures is ultimately Classic Maya in origin. However, although I believe a similar contrast did exist among the Classic Maya, it was again a contrast between Lowland Maya and highland Mexican culture, in this case, the site of Teotihuacan. In her study of the warrior motif at Late Classic Piedras Negras, Andrea Stone (1989:167) argues that the Maya lords consciously identified themselves as Teotihuacan warriors. According to Stone, this identification of local Maya with foreign Mexicans was also widespread in Yucatan during the Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods: “claims of foreign affiliation were a favored form of propping up elite hierarchies in Yucatan from at least the Terminal Classic.” Like Stone, I believe that both the Classic and Postclassic Maya elite aggressively adopted Central Mexican military costume and ideology. In my opinion, Toltec Chichen is the most developed example of this phenomenon known in ancient Mesoamerica. To the Maya, the Toltec imagery was the iconography of power: military strength legitimized by religious ideology. I suspect that whereas the Maya Tonatiuh represents the traditional Maya office of king, or *ahau*, the Toltec feathered serpent figure reflects the office of war captain or perhaps, even co-ruler of Toltec Chichen. However, because there are no texts explicitly describing these figures, this remains only conjecture. Nonetheless, it is clear that the influence of a Mexican warrior cult at Toltec Chichen is important, profound, and cannot be ignored.

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