

STONE TREES TRANSPLANTED?

CENTRAL MEXICAN STELAE OF THE EPICLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC AND THE QUESTION OF MAYA 'INFLUENCE'

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Contents

List of Illustrations	iv
Preface	viii
Acknowledgements	x
Chapter 1: Introduction: Stela Stories	1
So Why This Book? An Apology	5
An Outline	6
A Caveat: Definitions	6
Chapter 2: Classic Maya Stelae: Current Perspectives on Origins, Function and Meaning	8
Definitions	8
Stelae Before the Classic Maya: Stone Roots	12
Classic Stelae: Function and Meaning	16
The End of the Maya Stela Tradition	19
Chapter 3: Central Mexican Stelae of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic Periods	23
Introduction.....	23
Tula, the Toltec Capital	23
The Tula Stelae	24
A General Literature Review and Critique.....	24
Description of Tula Stelae: General Considerations.....	31
Problems of Context and Dating: Stelae or Architectural Sculpture?	32
Teotihuacan Elements in the Tula Stelae.....	34
Parallels to Other Toltec Sculpture	37
The Xico Stone: A Toltec Monument From the Basin of Mexico	38
The Stela of Tlalpizáhuac.....	40
The El Cerrito Stela: A Toltec Monument in Querétaro	41
The Mystery Stela of El Elefante, Hidalgo.....	49
The Frida Kahlo Museum Stela	51
Xochicalco, Epiclassic Metropolis	52
The Stelae: General Considerations	53
The Saenz Triad	54
General Contextual and Descriptive Issues.....	54
The Xochicalco Triad: The Controversy Over Meaning	56
External Connections.....	61
Nonfigurative Stelae at Xochicalco	62
The ‘Statues’ of Miacatlan and Xochicalco: A Stela By Any Other Name	62
Previous Literature.....	65
Iconography: More Recent Contributions.....	66
Iconography: In Epiclassic/Early Postclassic Context	66
Context of the Xochicalco Stelae—General Comparisons	67
A Looted and Vanished Xochicalco-Related Sculpture	67
A Painting of a Stela at Cacaxtla?	68
A Stela-Like Stone Sculpture From Cacaxtla	71
Painted (?) Stelae at Cholula	72
Two Matlatzinca Stelae: Teotenango and Nevado de Toluca	73
Chapter 4: Central Mexican Artists Under The Influence? A Critical Review of The Literature On Maya-Mexican Interactions At The Classic – Postclassic Transition	77
Introduction.....	77
Historical Context (1): ‘Influence’ in Art History.....	78
Historical Context (2): Ghosts of Colonialism?	79

Explanatory Models: The Migration Maze	80
The Putun as Deus Ex Machina	81
Migration Model (Slight Return).....	83
The Business of Business	86
Ideological and Systemic Explanations	87
The Reality of Zuyua?.....	87
Semantic Escape Clause: Coggins and the Toltec Redefined	88
That New-Time Religion?.....	89
The Worlds of World Systems Theory.....	90
Elite Networks and the Transmission of Art as Ideology.....	92
Chapter 5: Forgotten Forebears? Stelae in Central Mexico Before the Epiclassic.....	94
Introduction	94
In the Beginning: Phallus, Fire God, or World Tree? The Cuicuilco Stela.....	95
The Site	95
The Discovery.....	95
Morelos Before the Maya: The Middle Formative Stela-Altar Complex at Chalcatzingo.....	97
The Site	97
The Stelae	98
Full Frontal Deity? The Mysterious Stela of Tlalancaleca	101
The Site	101
The Stela	101
The Xochitecatl Snake.....	105
The Site	105
The Stela	105
Teotihuacan Stelae	106
The Metropolitan Museum Stela.....	106
All Things Great...and Small	107
From Afar: The Oaxaca Barrio Stela	110
Conclusion (or a Pause Along the Road).....	111
Chapter 6: Go West (and South)? Stelae of Oaxaca and Guerrero.....	113
Introduction.....	113
The Classic Zapotec Stelae of the Valley of Oaxaca	115
Monte Albán	115
The Tomb Stela of Suchilquitongo	119
The Ñuiñe Stelae of the Mixteca Baja	119
Forgotten Forests: The Stelae of the Oaxaca Coast	126
Río Grande.....	127
Cerro del Rey	128
Chila.....	129
La Humedad	131
Nopala	131
Río Viejo	132
Archaeological Evidence for Oaxacan/Central Mexican Contacts	134
A Zapotec Tomb in Tepeji del Río	135
From Oaxaca to Tula	135
The Stelae of Guerrero	136
Early Stelae and the Olmec	136
Point of Departure: The Acapulco Stela	137
The Stela Pair of Tepecuacuilco: Teotihuacan Rain Deities Go West?	138
More Tlalocs: the Stelae of Acatempa, San Miguel Totolapan, and Piedra Labrada	141
The Burial Slabs of Placeres de Oro: Stones of the Nivened Dead	144
The Tenexpa ‘Bird-Man’	144
Toltec Stelae in Guerrero?	146
Guerrero Connections: The Archaeological Evidence	149
Guerrero Sculpture and Ceramics at Xochicalco	149
Guerrero: A Toltec Frontier?	149

Chapter 7: Stone Trees Transplanted? A Comparison of Central Mexican Stelae with their Suggested Maya Counterparts at Piedras Negras, Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Ceibal, And Copan	151
Introduction.....	151
The Warrior Stelae of Piedras Negras vs. Tula Stelae 1-3 and 5, the Xochicalco Trio, and the ‘Statues’ of Xochicalco and Miacatlan	151
The Site	151
The Warrior Stelae: History and Context	152
Comparisons: Formal Considerations	159
Comparisons: Iconography	163
Summary.....	168
The Dos Pilas 2/16-Aguateca 2 Pair Compared to the Tula Stelae	169
The Sites.....	170
The Stelae	173
Comparison.....	175
General Comments	176
Ceibal, La Amelia, and Tula.....	176
The Site and Its Monuments in Historical Context.....	177
Stela 5 and 7 and the Ballplayers of Tula	178
Ceibal Stela 2 and the Tula Stelae.....	181
Copan Stela 6 and Tula Stelae 1-3 and 5	182
Conclusion	186
Chapter 8: In Place of a Conclusion, or More Questions	188
Sites, Monuments, and External Connections, or the ‘What’	188
Stelae: What’s in a Word?	190
Models Revisited	190
The Web of Networks vs. the Mechanics of ‘Influence’	191
The Stela- <i>Tun</i> at the Feast?	191
Appendix 1: Catalog of Central Mexican Figural and Associated Stelae of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic	194
Tula	194
Xico	199
Tlalpizáhuac.....	200
El Cerrito.....	200
El Elefante	202
Museo Frida Kahlo Stela.....	202
Xochicalco	203
The Saenz Triad	203
Cacaxtla	206
Teotenango.....	207
Nevado de Toluca	207
Appendix 2: A (Very) Brief Summary of the Tula/Chichen Itza Debate/Acle.....	209
Dramatis Personae	209
References Cited.....	220

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Map of the Maya area. Drawing by Adam S. Hofman, based on http://www.latinamericanstudies.com (accessed October 1, 2007).	1
Fig. 2. Map of Tula and other Epiclassic and Early Postclassic sites. Drawing by Adam S. Hofman based on http://www.latinamericanstudies.com (accessed November 11, 2007).	2
Fig. 3. Map of archaeological sites in Mesoamerica. Drawing by Adam S. Hofman after Miller 2006:12-13.	3
Fig. 4. Tikal, Stela 16. Photo by Dennis Jarvis, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_archer10_(Dennis)_-_Guatemala-1552.jpg). ..	9
Fig. 5. Tikal, Stela 4. Photo by HJPD, reprinted from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tikal_St04.jpg).	9
Fig. 6. Copan Stela H. Photo by Arjuno3, reprinted from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Copan_Stela_H.jpg). ..	10
Fig. 7. Flora Clancy's classification of composition fields of Maya stelae. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Clancy 1990:23, fig. 2.	10
Fig. 8. Copan, Stela C from the north. Drawing by John Williams after Schele and Mathews 1998:141, fig. 4.9.	11
Fig. 9. Río Pesquero, drawing of Olmec ceremonial celt, private collection (?). Drawing by John Williams after Reilly 1995:38, fig. 25.	13
Fig. 10. The Maya World Tree. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Wagner 2000:286, fig. 450.	14
Fig. 11. Takalik Abaj, Stela 5. Photo by Simon Burchell, reproduced from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Takalik_Abaj_Stela_5_p2.jpg	15
Fig. 12. Nakbe, Stela 1. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Miller 2006:63, fig. 49.	16
Fig. 13. Tikal, Stela 29. Drawing by John Williams after Miller 1999:91, fig. 71.	17
Fig. 14. Ixlu, Stela 2, Flores. Photograph by author.	19
Fig. 15. Ceibal, Stela 19, detail of figure, in situ. Photograph by author.	20
Fig. 16. Oxkintok, Stela 9. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Rice 2004: 225, fig. 7.13.	21
Fig. 17. Flores, Stela 5. Drawing by John Williams after Rice 2004:217, fig. 7.9.	21
Fig. 18. Mayapan, Stela 1. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Miller 1999:149, fig. 128.	22
Fig. 19. Tula, Stela 1, Nuevo Museo Jorge R. Acosta. Photograph by Elizabeth Jimenez Garcia, used by her permission and permission of FAMSI.	25
Fig. 20. Tula, Stela 2, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl. 99, by permission of INAH.	25
Fig. 21. Tula, Stela 3, left, Main face; right, serpent on edge, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pls.100, 100A, by permission of INAH.	26
Fig. 22. Tula, Stela 4, MNA bodega. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:pl. 101, by permission of INAH.	26
Fig. 23. Tula, Stela 5, MNA bodega. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl. 102, by permission of INAH.	27
Fig. 24. Tula, Stela 6, Nuevo Museo Jorge R. Acosta bodega. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl.103, by permission of INAH.	27
Fig. 25. Alleged Tula stela, MNA bodega. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:pl. 159, by permission of INAH.	28
Fig. 26. Tula, lost fragment of companion stela of Stela 4. Drawing by Jay Scantling after de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:pl. 129.	28
Fig. 28. Fragmentary stela from Tula above, front: below, rear, location uncertain. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl. 158, by permission of INAH.	29
Fig. 27. Tula, fragment of companion stela to Stela 4, in situ. Photograph by author.	29
Fig. 29. Tula, slab sculpture. Photo by Elizabeth Jiménez García, used by her permission and courtesy of FAMSI.	30
Fig. 30. Tula, 2007 photo of Stela 6 by Elizabeth Jiménez García, used by her permission and courtesy of FAMSI.	31
Fig. 31. Tula, relief of reclining figure, Tula Chico. Reprinted from Suárez Cortés, Healan and Cobean 2007:50, by permission of Robert Cobean.	33
Fig. 32. Tula, detail of Pyramid B pillar relief. Photograph by author.	35
Fig. 33. Tula, Stela 1, detail of headdress with Tlaloc mask, Nuevo Museo Jorge R. Acosta. Photograph by author.	35
Fig. 34. Tula, Tlaloc figure with quechquemiltl, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl. 2, by permission of INAH.	37
Fig. 35. Tula, female figure with quechquemiltl, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo, and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:pl. 5, by permission of INAH.	38

Fig. 36. Tula, female figure with quechquemilt and trapeze and ray headdress, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:pl. 8, by permission of INAH.....	38
Fig. 37. Tula (?), figure holding disk, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl. 3, by permission of INAH.	39
Fig. 38. Tula, figure with serpent headdress, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988, pl. 7, by permission of INAH.	39
Fig. 39. Tula, head of figure with bloodletting knots, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: pl. 15 by permission of INAH.	40
Fig. 40. The Xico Stone, left, front; right, back, MNA. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:pl. 155, by permission of INAH.	41
Fig. 41. The Tlalpizahuac Stela. Reproduced from Tovalin Ahumada 1998:180, fig. 76, by permission of INAH.....	42
Fig. 42. The El Cerrito stela, Museo Regional, Querétaro. Drawing by John Williams after Braniff C. 2000:fig. 41.....	42
Fig. 43. The El Cerrito stela, Museo Regional Queretaro. Reprinted from Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz 2005:29, fig. 1 by permission of INAH.	43
Fig. 44. Chichen Itza, ‘Captain Sun Disk,’ left, Lower Temple of the Jaguars; right, lintel, Upper Temple of the Jaguars. Reprinted from Taube 1992c:141, figs. 77d-e, courtesy of Karl Taube.....	44
Fig. 45. Chichen Itza, ‘Captain Sun Disk’ from mural painting, Upper Temple of the Jaguars. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Milbrath 1999:80, fig. 3.5j.	44
Fig. 46. Chichen Itza, drawing of ‘Captain Sun Disk’ relief, site hacienda. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Lincoln 1990:174a, fig. 1.	45
Fig. 47. Ixtapantongo, solar figure. Reprinted from Taube 1992c:141:fig. 77c, by permission of Karl Taube.	45
Fig. 48. Tonatiuh, Codex Borgia, p. 71. Loubat facsimile edition image in public domain reproduced from Wikimedia Commons (commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Codex_Borgia).....	46
Fig. 49. Tula, relief of Itzpapalotl, Nuevo Museo Jorge Acosta. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988:127, by permission of INAH.	48
Fig. 50. Tula, tripod vessel with flowers in net design, MNA. Photograph by author.....	49
Fig. 51. The El Elefante stela at the time of its discovery. Reprinted from Martínez Magaña 1994:144, by permission of INAH.....	50
Fig. 52. The Frida Kahlo Museum Stela. Drawing by Karl Taube, reproduced by his permission.....	51
Fig. 53. Xochicalco, Stela 1, showing all four sides, MNA. Drawing by John Williams after Smith and Hirth 2000:23, fig. 3.3.	53
Fig. 54. Xochicalco, Stela 2, showing all four sides, MNA. Drawing by John Williams after Smith and Hirth 2000:24.	54
Fig. 55. Xochicalco, Stela 3, showing all four sides, MNA. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Smith and Hirth 2000:25, fig. 3.5.....	55
Fig. 56. Xochicalco, drawing of the Seler Monument, Museo Cuauhnahuac. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Smith and Hirth, 2000:26, fig. 3.6.....	63
Fig. 57. Xochicalco, drawing of Monument 13 Reed, Centro Regional, INAH, Morelos. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Smith and Hirth 2000:26, fig. 3.7.....	63
Fig. 58. Xochicalco, drawing of Stela of the Two Glyphs. Drawing by John Williams after Smith and Hirth 2000:26, fig. 3.8.	63
Fig. 59. Xochicalco, Statue of Miacatlan, MNA. Reprinted from Smith and Hirth 2000:37, photo 3.9, by permission of University of Utah Press.	64
Fig. 60. The Statue of Xochicalco, Museo Cuauhnahuac. Photograph by author.	64
Fig. 61. The Statue of Xochicalco, detail of face, Museo Cuauhnahuac. Photograph by author.	65
Fig. 62. Statue of Xochicalco, profile view, Museo Cuauhnahuac. Photograph by author.....	65
Fig. 63. Lost Xochicalco-style stela. Drawing by Javier Urcid, reproduced by his permission.....	67
Fig. 64. Cacaxtla, possible painting of stela, Battle Mural, Building B. Drawing by Jay Scantling after after Foncerrada de Molina 1976: fig. 13 and Foncerrada de Molina 1993:front cover insert.....	70
Fig. 65. Cacaxtla, stela-like sculpture. Photo by Claudia Brittenham, reproduced by her permission and permission of INAH.....	71
Fig. 66. Cholula, Altar 1. Photograph by author.	72
Fig. 67. Cholula, Altar 3. Photograph by author.	73
Fig. 68. Teotenango, stela, Museo Roman Piña Chan. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Alvarez A. 1983:240, fig. 1.	73
Fig. 69. The Nevado de Toluca Stela, Museo Roman Piña Chan. Photo by Claudia Brittenham, reproduced by her permission and permission of INAH.	75
Fig. 70. Drawing of the Nevado de Toluca Stela by Jay Scantling after Alvarez A. 1983:249, fig. 5.....	75
Fig. 71. Maltrata, relief. Drawing by John Williams after Berlo 1989:42, fig. 25.....	84
Fig. 72. Cuicuilco, stela. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Pérez Campo 1998:37.....	96
Fig. 73. Chalcatzingo, Monument 27, in situ. Reprinted from Grove and Guillen 1987:37, fig. 4.17, by permission of David Grove.	98

Fig. 74. Chalcatzingo, Monument 27. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing from Angulo V. 1987:151, fig. 10.22.	98
Fig. 75. Chalcatzingo, Monument 28, reconstruction of figure. Drawing by John Williams after Angulo V. 1987:153, fig. 10.24.	99
Fig. 76. Chalcatzingo, Mounument 21, in situ. Reprinted from Grove and Angulo V. 1987: 127, fig. 9.21, by permission of David Grove.	100
Fig. 77. Tlalancaleca, Element 7. Drawing by Jay Scantling after García Cook 1995:14, ill. 8.	102
Fig. 78. Tlalancaleca, Element 7. Drawing by Jay Scantling after García Cook 1995:16.	102
Fig. 79. Facial markings of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Seler 1963, 1:191, fig. 440.	104
Fig. 80. Xochitecatl, stela in stone basin, in situ. Photograph by author.	105
Fig. 81. Teotihuacan-style stela, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photograph by Lawrence Waldron.	106
Fig. 82. Teotihuacan-style miniature stelae, left, excavated by Ruben Cabrera Castro at Teotihuacan, 1980-1982, present location unknown; right, featured in Harmer Rooke auction catalog, NY, 1987, present location unknown. Drawings by Vivian Schafler after from Berlo 1992:143, figs. 16-17.	108
Fig. 83. Teotihuacan, plaque from Palace of Quetzalpapalotl, MNA. Photograph by author.	109
Fig. 84. Chalco, plaque, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Berrin and Pasztory 1993:275.	110
Fig. 85. Teotihuacan, Oaxaca barrio stela, MNA. Photograph by author.	111
Fig. 86. Map of the state of Oaxaca. Drawing by Adam S. Hofman after González Licón 2001:14, fig. 1.	113
Fig. 87. Map of archaeological sites in Guerrero. Drawing by Hazel Antaramian-Hofman and Adam S. Hofman after Niederberger 2002:fig. 3.	114
Fig. 88. Monte Albán, Stela 1. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Mark Orsen in Marcus 1983b: 139, fig. 5.8.	117
Fig. 89. Monte Albán, Estela Lisa, edge carving. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Marcus 1983c:177, fig. 6.5.	118
Fig. 90. The Suchilquitongo stela. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Felipe Dávalos in Miller 1995:199, fig. 8.	120
Fig. 91. Tequixtepec, Stone II. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Moser 1977:49, fig. 18.	122
Fig. 92. Rancho Sauce, Stone II. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Moser 1977:91, fig. 51.	123
Fig. 93. Rancho Sauce, Stone III. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Moser 1977:91, fig. 52.	123
Fig. 94. The Pignorini Stone. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Moser 1977:168, fig. 63.	124
Fig. 95. Cerro Yucundaba, stela. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Urcid 2005:fig. 1-10.	125
Fig. 96. The Río Grande #1 stela. Drawing by John Williams after Jorrin 1974:39, fig. 5.	127
Fig. 97. The Cerro El Rey stela. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Jorrin 1974:38, 4B.	129
Fig. 98. Chila, stela, above, stela in modern town; below, Stela 1. Drawings by Jay Scantling after Jorrin 1974:60, figs. 18B and 18D.	130
Fig. 99. The La Humedad Stela. Drawing by John Williams after Jorrin 1974:38, fig. 4E.	131
Fig. 100. Nopala, above, Stela 1; below, Stela 2. Drawings by Jay Scantling after Jorrin 1974:47, figs. 9B and 9D.	132
Fig. 101. Nopala, above, Stela 4; below, Stela 10. Drawings by John Williams after Jorrin 1974:49, fig. 10-D and 53, fig. 13 B.	133
Fig. 102. Río Viejo, stelae. Drawing by John Williams after Urcid and Joyce 2001: 213, fig. 20.	134
Fig. 103. The Acapulco Stela, MNA. Reprinted from Díaz Oyarzabal 1990: 11, by permission of INAH.	137
Fig. 104. Yaxha, Stela 11, fiberglass replica. Photograph by author.	138
Fig. 105. Tepecuacuilco, left, 'Tlaloc' stela; right, 'Chalchiutlicue' stela. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Reyna Robles 2002c:385, figs., 11c-d.	139
Fig. 106. Tepecuacuilco, 'Chalchiutlicue' stela, MNA. Photograph by author.	140
Fig. 107. Tepecuacuilco, 'Tlaloc' stela, MNA. Photograph by author.	140
Fig. 108. Stelae from San Miguel Totalapan, left, and Acatempa, right. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Reyna Robles 2002c:385, figs. 11 a-b.	142
Fig. 109. Piedra Labrada, Stela 1. Reprinted from Schmidt Schoenburg 2006:37.106, by permission of INAH.	143
Fig. 110. Placeres de Oro, drawing of slabs by John Williams after Reyna Robles 2002c: 376, fig. 2.	145
Fig. 111. Tenexpa, stela. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Niederberger 2002:67, fig. 16c.	146
Fig. 112. Tetmilincan, Stela 1, Museo Regional de Guerrero. Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: ill 157, by permission of INAH.	147
Fig. 113. Tetmilincan, Stela 2, MNA, bodega (?). Reprinted from de la Fuente, Trejo and Gutiérrez Solana 1988: ill.156, by permission of INAH.	148
Fig. 114. Piedras Negras, Stela 26. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard (ID# 204.29.7562, digital file # 98790013)	154
Fig. 115. Piedras Negras, Stela 31. Photograph reproduced courtesy of of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard (ID# 2004.24.2133, digital file # 131990002).	154
Fig. 116. Piedras Negras, Stela 35. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, ID #2004.24.2569, digital file #1309.1008).	155

Fig. 117. Piedras Negras, Stela 7. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Harvard (ID #59-50-20/74011.1.3, digital file# 98790014).	156
Fig. 118. Piedras Negras, Stela 7. Drawing by John Williams after Stone 1989:162, fig. 13.	156
Fig. 119. Piedras Negras, Stela 8. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Harvard (ID# 2004.24.31540, digital file#153170125).	157
Fig. 120. Piedras Negras, Stela 8. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Martin and Grube, 2008: 147.	158
Fig. 121. Piedras Negras, fragment of Stela 9. Photograph reproduced courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Art History (ID#2004.24.2100, digital file #13198006).	159
Fig. 122. Tula, diagram by Elizabeth Jiménez García of Stela 1, costume elements. Drawing by John Williams after Jiménez García 1998:138, fig. 52.	160
Fig. 123. Tula, diagram by Elizabeth Jiménez García of Stela 2, costume elements. Drawing by John Williams after Jiménez García 1998:141, fig. 53.	161
Fig. 124. Tula, diagram by Elizabeth Jiménez García of Stela 3, costume elements. Drawing by John Williams after 1998:144, fig. 54.	162
Fig. 125. Tula, Stela 1, detail of face and collar, Nuevo Museo Jorge R. Acosta. Photograph by author.	163
Fig. 126. Tula, Stela 3, detail of face and chest, MNA. Photograph by author.	163
Fig. 127. Xochicalco, Stela 1, detail of figure, side A, MNA. Photograph by author.	164
Fig. 128. Chichen Itza, jade plaque from Cenote of Sacrifice, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Tatiana Proskouriakoff in McVicker and Palka 2001:fig. 13b.	165
Fig. 129. Teotihuacan (left) and Chichen Itza (center) staffs, compared to Piedras Negras Stela 26. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Sugiyama 2000:131, fig. 3.13.	169
Fig. 130. Piedras Negras Stela 8 and Dos Pilas Stela 2. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after Linda Schele in Schele and Freidel 1990:148, fig. 4.17, and Martin and Grube 2008:147.	171
Fig. 131. Dos Pilas Stela 2. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson in Greene et al 1972:197, pl. 91.	172
Fig. 132. Aguateca, Stela 2. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson in Greene et al. 1972:187, pl. 86.	172
Fig. 133. Aguateca, Stela 1. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson in Greene et al. 1972:185, pl. 85.	174
Fig. 134. Ceibal, Stela 5, in situ. Photograph by author.	179
Fig. 135. Ceibal, Stela 5, detail of figure, in situ. Photograph by author.	180
Fig. 136. Ceibal, Stela 7. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after James Porter. in Graham 1990:19, fig. 6.	181
Fig. 137. Tula, Stela 4, diagram of by Elizabeth Jiménez García costume elements. Redrawn by John Williams after Jiménez García 1998:298, fig. 134.	182
Fig. 138. Tula, fragment of companion of Stela 4, in situ. Photograph by author.	183
Fig. 139. La Amelia, Stela 1. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson in Greene et al. 1972:179, pl. 82.	184
Fig. 140. La Amelia, Stela 2. Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson in Greene et al. 1972:181, pl. 83.	185
Fig. 141. Ceibal, Stela 2, Drawing by Vivian Schafler after rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson in Greene et al. 1972:219, pl. 102.	185
Fig. 142. Copan, Stela 6. Drawing by Jay Scantling after Baudez 1994:134.	186

Preface

All presentations of Mesoamerican art require authorial decisions regarding the choice of spellings of indigenous names from the array of alternative readings present in the past and current literature, as well as choosing among the often controversial options available for naming various deity images and other motifs. I would like here to explain my selection of a few usages.

In the rendering of Maya names in English, I have tried to adopt the most recent versions of both hieroglyphic decipherments and spelling conventions. Given the rapid progress of decipherment over the past few years alone, and the changing fashions in transcription, the results will no doubt appear dated in the not so distant future, but this is unavoidable. Some of these conventions are more contentious than others. For example, I render the Yucatec Maya term for both a hilly region of Yucatan and an associated

Terminal Classic architectural style Puuk rather than the alternative Puuc. This spelling is consistent with the recent shift towards using the Latin 'k' instead of 'c' in spelling Maya words, and was employed by Schele and Mathews (1998), two leading Maya epigraphers. It has not, however, been accepted by the Mexican government, which in its tourist literature still uses the older and still common variant 'Puuc.' With the name of a *Pasión Maya* site in Guatemala I discuss extensively in Chapter 6, Ceibal, on the other hand, the name is currently favored by the modern government of the region, although the competing alternative 'Seibal' does still appear in the archaeological and art historical literature. As I discuss in reviewing the site's history in Chapter 7, the locality was christened after nearby stands of ceiba trees by the Austrian archaeologist Teobert Maler at the close of the 19th century. However, Maler Teutonicized the spelling by changing the 'c' commonly used to render the name of the tree into an 's' for the name of the ruined city. I have opted for the 'c' to bring the tree and its eponymous archaeological site into congruence, as well as to remove the European twist on this indigenous name.

The renderings of the names of deities depicted in Mesoamerican art are also often disputed matters. A frequently appearing character in this book is the goggle-eyed, fanged Central Mexican rain deity whose face appears on Stela 2 at Xochicalco and on the headgear of at least two of the Tula stelae, as well as in the art of Classic Teotihuacan, and via contacts with that metropolis in some of the Classic Maya works under examination here. The Mexica (or Aztecs) and other Central Mexican speakers of Nahuatl at the time of the Spanish Conquest called this figure Tlaloc. We have no evidence to determine with absolute certainty what he was called in earlier times

and in areas outside the Nahuatl area. But from the 19th century, scholars, like the Sufi holy fool looking for the keys he lost in the house not there but under the street light because the light was brighter there, have used the better documented Mexica material to name and interpret these earlier images. For the greater part of the 20th century, the images of this deity in Teotihuacan art were referred to as Tlaloc even though the linguistic affiliations of this city were (and remain) unknown. In last few decades of the last century, George Kubler (1985) and Esther Pasztory (1997) argued strongly against this label for the Teotihuacan version on the basis of both the probable linguistic differences and on art historical grounds, noting, following Erwin Panofsky and other historians of Western art, that the same image may acquire radically disjunctive meanings over the centuries. (A small winged figure on a Roman sarcophagus, for example, will have a quite different intended meaning than one gracing a Christian painting of the Renaissance.) The arguments and influence of these writers lead to the common use in recent writings of the term 'Storm God' to describe this god in Teotihuacan art. Both writers stressed the uniqueness of Teotihuacan among Mesoamerican art traditions and deemphasized its connections both with contemporary Mesoamerican cultures and later developments in Central Mexico. Yet, recently the pendulum has begun to swing once again in the direction of using apparent continuities of Teotihuacan's art and religion with those of its Central Mexican successors as the basis of hypothesis formation. Consistent with this development, some recent writers have referred to the Teotihuacan deity as Tlaloc, not to demonstrate linguistic but what they perceive as ideological continuity. Thus in the most recent monograph on Teotihuacan art at the time I write these words, Annabeth Headrick calls the goggle-eyed figure at Teotihuacan Tlaloc, explaining that 'As of late it has become more common to refer to Tlaloc as the Storm God...so as not to confuse the Teotihuacan manifestation of the god with the later Aztec version. While I find much merit in this strategy, I have retained the name Tlaloc because I see so many continuities between the Central Mexican cultures. However, this decision must acknowledge that there are differences, and it is critical to be sensitive to the Classic period manifestations of this deity' (2007:172). A more cautious tactic is taken up by Karl Taube (Miller and Taube 1993; Taube 2000a), who employs the more qualified epithet 'the Teotihuacan Tlaloc,' adopting a term used in the past by Pasztory (1974). I have adopted this usage for this god, both at home in Teotihuacan and abroad among the Classic Maya, as a compromise stressing continuities and differences simultaneously.¹

¹ As will be seen in Chapter 7, historians of Maya art like Linda Schele (Schele and Freidel 1990) and Andrea Stone (1989) call him Tlaloc when

At Xochicalco, this supernatural is called Tlaloc by all of the pundits involved with the interpretation of the stelae at this Epiclassic site (e.g., Smith 2000), although this city's ethnic and linguistic affiliations are also uncertain. For ease of communication, I use this consensual label, but it is not to be interpreted as reflecting a belief that this is what the citizens of ancient Xochicalco called him or how he might have differed in cult and concept there from later Postclassic cultures, matters on which I remain agnostic. At Tula, the same name is used for this divinity by most of the handful of scholars concerned with the site's iconography (e.g., Diehl 1983; Jiménez García 1998; Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002). The majority of the very small community of Toltec scholars agrees, on ethnohistorical and historical linguistic grounds, that the Tula Toltecs included Nahuatl speakers, removing the linguistic disjunction objection to the use of the name. Cynthia Kristan-Graham represents an exception to this consensus (2007). She is deeply skeptical of the historical veracity (in a European sense) of Mexica traditions about Tula, and points to DNA evidence (Fournier and Bolaños 2007) suggesting a great time depth for the presence of speakers of Otomí in the Tula region. However, since both archaeology and ethnohistory (Davies 1977) point to the multiethnic makeup of the Tula polity, and Fournier and Bolaños (2007:496) report that DNA analysis of skeletons from the Early Postclassic in the Tula area shows the presence there of other lineages or ethnicities beside the Otomí, I accept the probability that Nahuatl speakers were present at the site, at least during the Early Postclassic Tollan Phase. In addition, Jiménez García

sees much iconographic and by implication, conceptual continuity between Toltec and later Mexica deities. For these reasons, I have retained the 'T-word' to describe this god in Toltec art, but again it is not to be understood that conceptions of this deity were the same in their entirety between the Toltecs and their Aztec successors and admirers, no more than concepts of the nature of Christ among the creators of catacomb paintings, Coptic art, or Byzantine icons were identical.

In terms of geographical nomenclature, I employ the term Central Mexico in its narrower sense to designate the highland regions of the center of the country, encompassing the states of Mexico, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, and Morelos, as distinct from the Mixtec and Zapotec regions to the south in Oaxaca, and the coastal lowlands of Veracruz and Tabasco.

All translations from Spanish are mine, with the exception of works cited as their English translations in the Bibliography, where the translator is credited. I have commonly employed abbreviations in the text for some agencies and museums. Although each name is given in full in the first usage, a few common ones bear explaining at the start as well:

INAH Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia,
Mexico City
MMA Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
MNA Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City

he occurs in Classic Maya art to distinguish him from the very different indigenous Maya rain deity Chaak (formerly Chac), and to emphasize his Central Mexican origins. Among the Terminal Classic and Postclassic Maya of Yucatan, these two gods seem to have syncretistically merged (Taube 1992c:133-135), but during the Classic they occur in very different contexts, with 'Tlaloc' associated mostly with warfare rather than water.

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A book is never really the work of one individual, traditions or conventions of attribution and authorship, and intellectual property laws, aside. It is a reflection of one writer's engagement and interaction, at one stage of scholarly and personal development, with the broader field and discipline as it stands at a particular juncture in its history. Both the individual and the field exist within broader social, economic, and political contexts that shape, constrain, and provoke the forms of the thoughts expressed in its pages. Beyond these macrosocial contexts, the contents of a dissertation are conditioned and shaped by the more immediate networks of support and feedback surrounding its author and the processes of research and writing. I would like here to acknowledge the crucial help received from individuals and institutions that permitted, facilitated, and stimulated the work presented here.

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