



Winning believed it to stand for fertility and abundance. I read it even more specifically as an earth sign, because it usually appears under bands of lightning and rain, in the base position on the cartouche. On braziers it is repeated in four different colors to display directional character (Fig. 26), as one might expect of an earth sign. In *adornos* resembling human faces it always occupies the position of the mouth (Fig. 30). Indeed, Kidder saw it as related to speech and prayer.¹⁰ These readings—fertility (von Winning), mouth images (Kidder), and earth symbolism—are only different modulations of the same theme. None of these three precludes the others.

A molded orangeware bowl excavated by Linné at Las Colinas (Linné 1942:68) is the outstanding example (Fig. 41) of a fourfold or fivefold division. Sherds from the same mold appear at the Yahuala suburb during Teotihuacán III (Séjourné 1963:43 ff., Figs. 8-10). As a supernatural, spectacted figure on the base, the raingod presides over four separate aspects, which embody both nominal and adjectival forms, as well as principal and accessory representations. Four emblems or cult images (a serpent, a quetzal, a rain diadem, and a coyote) are attended by priests with copal bags, who pour libations and give voice. At the rim hang various drops, and the priests tread upon water lilies like those in the Temple of Agriculture murals. Linné suggested that they symbolize the different kinds of water, as recorded by Sahagún, and that they refer to the four cardinal directions. The circular order and the emblems themselves strongly indicate a directional sense on visual evidence alone, without help from texts written a millennium later. The Las Colinas bowl probably summarizes and brings together several cults of which the murals give us only fragments of scattered evidence.

(6) Frames and borders. The frames surrounding mural panels (Figs. 12 and 16) resemble the borders on costume elements and on headdresses (Fig. 45), because both contain adjectival forms which qualify what is inside them. The panel frame establishes the kind of space that is represented, and the costume border establishes the rank and the attributes of its wearer, in much the same manner as the eagle (Fig. 12), coyote (Fig. 17), or jaguar (Fig. 45) helmets do.

Twining serpent bodies bearing different markings and sometimes terminating in jaguar, bird, or coyote heads (Fig. 10) are a common kind of mural frame. The serpent bodies may signify that the scene is meant to represent supernatural events in a celestial dimension. The different compound animal forms may relate to world quarters or to eras of mythological time. Analogous frames suggesting celestial space appear in the sky-signs crowning the murals at Bonampak, in the tomb murals of Monte Albán, and in the scrolls surrounding the ball-court reliefs at El Tajín.

At the Palacio de los Jaguares, there are profile figures of jaguars blowing conchs (Fig. 16) represented on the four walls. The scene may allude to a liturgical prayer for water in a directional context. The surrounding frame contains an interlace of flowered serpents, as well as diadems alternating with raingod-starfish. These adjectives probably enrich and specify the main theme with clauses or phrases of liturgical character, qualifying place and time. Other walls are reticulated by interlacing bands (Fig. 8), which surround many replicas of the same profile human, and specify the liturgy or ritual that is represented. Simple nets may refer to fishing and bird-snaring; serpent-nets may have a meta-

¹⁰ Kidder (1946:221-222) compared the pairs of small protuberances within the cartouche to those of the speech scrolls.

phorical meaning of divine or supernatural order.

In costumes and headdresses, the borders often have adjectival ornaments of which the meaning is fairly clear. Feathered ruffs and edges (Fig. 11) suggest precious quality. Saw-tooth rays (Fig. 15) and eyes (Fig. 3) represent brilliance. Borders of flame (Fig. 37) relate at least to fire. Half-stars, interpreted as sectional conch shells, connote water, perhaps specifying the salt water of the oceans.

7) **Iconographic clusters.** The art of Teotihuacán as we know it today contains few themes. These, grouped as humans, animals, signs, and compounds, total only about one hundred distinct forms. Among them the outlines of several clusters or groupings can easily be discerned.

III

A) The raingod cluster is the most common, with five or six variants in the representation of the deity, under reptile (Fig. 3), jaguar (Fig. 32), starfish (Fig. 16), flower (Fig. 3), and warrior aspects (Fig. 14). Associated with goggled (Tlaloc) figures are feathered serpent (Fig. 12), quetzal, butterfly (Fig. 42), jaguar, and dog or coyote forms. These representations are common in indoor murals, where the same combination will recur identically in many repetitions on the walls of one room (Fig. 13), as if it were a special prayer for beneficent water.

On pottery vessels (Fig. 32), abbreviated forms of the raingod complex are common, without close replication. Variety in the clustering may have been deliberately sought, within permitted limits.

B) A butterfly complex is common on braziers (Fig. 26) and cylindrical tripod vessels (III, p. 13). The curl (RE) glyph, flower forms, mountains, and raingod heads are usually associated (Figs. 29, 36, 42, 44). The brazier form suggests that this cluster relates to funeral rites, and that the butterfly may be an image for the soul. The curl (RE) glyph has an accessory, adjectival role on the braziers (Fig. 26), where it appears on thin molded terracotta plaques called *mantas*, often painted in different colors suggesting directional symbolism. On cylinder tripods, the funerary symbolism of the braziers is abbreviated and reduced to alternations of butterfly with curl glyph or butterfly with flower (Fig. 42). The mountain shapes¹¹ and crossroads forms in this cluster may function as place names (Fig. 44). In any case, there are very few such place signs. It is reasonable to think that some refer to an afterlife and to the residence of souls, as Caso has supposed for the mural of Tepantitla (Fig. 3), which he calls the mural of Terrestrial Paradise (Caso 1942).

C) A third major complex is smaller in scope, having fewer associated forms than the raingod or the butterfly clusters. The figure of an owl predominates (Fig. 40), with arrows and a shield as emblems of warlike meaning (von Winning 1942). At the Quetzalpapalotl courtyard (Acosta 1964) frontal representations of an owl with skeletal features occupy the west side.¹² Facing them on the three remaining sides there are figures of profile quetzal birds which are clearly accessory (Fig. 37). The quetzal piers have flames on their

¹¹ These images were studied in my seminar at Harvard University in 1966 and at Teotihuacán by Stephen Tobriner, as well as in another section of the same seminar at Yale University in 1965 by David Summers, who presented his work at the Frick Symposium in 1966. Mr. Tobriner's paper has been submitted for publication in the XI *Mesa redonda*.

¹² These figures were studied at the Harvard seminar in 1966 by Arthur Miller, whose paper was submitted for publication in the XI *Mesa redonda*.

bases and at the heads, unlike the owl piers, which have green feather bands. Owl and quetzal surely have connected meanings, probably pertaining to war and a named dynasty. Elsewhere, as on Metepec or Phase IV figurines, quetzal is part of the elaborate costume of personages who are possibly historical, such as members of a lineage marked by the quetzal emblem (Fig. 35). At the Quetzalpapalotl court, this lineage and its devotion to a warrior cult symbolized by the owl are probably the subject of these reliefs.¹³ In another context at Tetitla, the owl is allied to rain (Figs. 38 and 39), in a compound which may relate war and relief from drought: if nature cannot provide, aggression will, under the rainingod's aegis.

D) A compositional scheme common at Teotihuacán shows a cult object flanked by worshippers or impersonators. An example is the radiant circle containing a net, mounted upon a pedestal, with priests on both sides, in the mural of the Casa de los Barrios at Teopancaxco (Fig. 45). The priests wear feathered jaguar headdresses and carry incense bags. Flowered scrolls of song rise from their lips and libations pour forth from their hands.¹⁴ Surely the radiant rim signifies brilliance, while the netted center, with its jar-shaped interlace sign may signify a cult, to which other references appear in the netted figures of jaguar-headed men and profile jaguars in the murals of Tetitla (Fig. 15) and Atetelco. Thus both the disc and the priests have strong jaguar associations.¹⁵

This symmetrical scheme is inverted in the vanished mural of the Temple of Agriculture (Fig. 46), where two cult images flank a group of worshippers whose offerings are addressed to the sides rather than the center of the scene.¹⁶ Further variants upon the theme of the worship rendered to an image appear in several rooms at Zacuala, where priests are shown as in a litany, performing the rites suitable to the room. Thus a goggled figure bearing a corn plant impersonates the rain deity (Fig. 1) in several replicas on the walls of one room. His copal bag has the shape of the serpent-tail rattle, and he bears ears of corn on his back. No cult image survives, but we may suppose that a stone or wood figure occupied the room.

At Tepantitla the paradise mural is capped by such a scene, showing the frontal figure of a rain image, with water pouring from its hands, flanked by priests and standing upon scrolled waves filled with sea creatures and shells (Figs. 4 and 5). Possibly the compound frontal figure, showing a goggled face with bifid serpent tongue, framed by a jaguar muzzle surmounted by an owl diadem over diamond-shaped eyes, is another such cult image, compounding the attributes of water, air, earth, and fire. The facial glyph of Fig. 30 may be an abbreviation of this image.

E) The foreheads of the jointed figurines studied by von Winning (1958:7-8, Figs. 27-33) bear signs, stamped from a mold, called the four-element group, standing for rain

¹³ This supposition still requires proof but it conforms with recent discoveries of comparable ritual, historical, and genealogical material in Mixtec manuscripts (Caso 1949) and in Maya inscriptions (Proskouriakoff 1960, 1963; Berlin 1959; Kelley 1962, 1965).

¹⁴ Seler (1915:417, Pl. XI) thought the interlaced threads represented the moon, rather than the sun as proposed by Peñafiel (1900:82). Caso (1958-59:58) proposed it as an emblem of the day-count.

¹⁵ Jaguar figures are presumably related to an earth cult both in older Olmec and in later Toltec and Aztec worship. Séjourné (1960:68), however, prefers to relate them to the Toltec and Aztec warrior societies as Tiger Knights, contrasted with Eagle Knights, citing the sixteenth-century historian of Tlaxcala, Diego Muñoz Camargo.

¹⁶ Beyer (in Gamio 1922:286) regards the lateral forms as altars bearing burning material.

and ground water, lightning and fire (Fig. 33). These figurines, branded or stamped as devotees, probably were related to a cult image. It may have represented these paired elements of water and fire by rain and butterfly forms in compound or dual figures. Another reflection of such a cult appears in the cylindrical tripod vessels decorated with butterfly or curl (RE) glyphs alternating with rain symbols (Fig. 36). The braziers (Fig. 26) also may reflect this cult, with their butterfly and fire symbols.



IV



This model of the iconography of Teotihuacán may not be reliable in all its details, but its main outlines as here presented are consistent with the visual evidence of the pottery, murals, and sculpture. As to the forms which Teotihuacán shares with other regions (see Table), we must beware of disjunctive situations where form and meaning separate and rejoin in different combinations. This caution runs counter to the practice, standard since before the time of Eduard Seler, of assuming that similar forms in different periods and places of Mesoamerica must carry similar meaning.

There has been an assumption that strong continuities connect Teotihuacán with Aztec art and with early colonial records,¹⁷ despite an eight-hundred-year interval between the abandonment of Teotihuacán and the discovery of America. The easiest and most seductive historical patterns are those which assume simple continuity of happening. Upon reflection, however, it is apparent that only biological and ecological occurrences are continuous, while events in the domain of symbolic experience show a much greater instability and are more susceptible to transformation. It is axiomatic that history is more discontinuous than biology. It is also self-evident that long historical periods are less continuous than short ones.

Such historical discontinuities are measured by the separation of form from meaning, as Erwin Panofsky demonstrated in 1960. In a review of this book I paraphrased its message as follows:

Having left Antiquity unburied, the Middle Ages "alternately galvanized and exorcised its corpse" in the Carolingian *renovatio*, in the Christocentric spirit of Ottonian art, in the renaissance of the twelfth century and the reaction after the Black Death. Finally, "the Renaissance stood weeping at its grave and tried to resurrect its soul. And in one fatally auspicious moment it succeeded" with the "mutational changes" carried both in Italy and in northern Europe by the men born about 1400.¹⁸

¹⁷ This point of view emerged clearly as the official Mexican position at the XI *Mesa redonda*, with spirited defenses by Caso and Jiménez Moreno. In effect it has been the working premise of Mesoamerican studies since the time of Seler that sixteenth-century sources clarify the most remote historical events. Seler (1915:405-585) discussed the whole iconography in Aztec terms. The same method was applied again by Armillas thirty years later (1945:35-41). Armillas identified eight aspects of the Aztec rain god (Tlaloc), as Armillas thirty years later (1945:35-41). Armillas identified eight aspects of the Aztec rain god (Huehue-téotl); a vegetation god (Xipe); and an unidentified fat god. Caso (1958:59) later attempted to prove that Aztec calendrical observances were prefigured at Teotihuacán by a few signs for numbered years and days. Séjourné (1956, 1958, 1962) sought to show that Aztec human sacrifice was a corrupt degradation for political ends of the spiritual transcendence cultivated by their forebears at Teotihuacán. Thus she remained, even with this argument, inside the orthodox habit of explaining Teotihuacán by the use of Aztec beliefs. At the XI *Mesa redonda*, Jiménez Moreno sought to prove that the presence of coyote images in the art of Teotihuacán was evidence that the inhabitants spoke Náhuatl, since the coyote is not indigenous to the Valley and its representation would presumably have accompanied Nahuatl immigrants from the North. But by the same token, quetzal, which is not a Valley bird, could be taken as proof of foreign speech among early dwellers in the Valley.

¹⁸ Kubler 1961:34.

Panofsky was writing about what he called the "law of disjunction," which pertains to the separation of form and significance in the art of the high and later Middle Ages.

Wherever in the high and later Middle Ages a work of art borrows its form from a classical model, this form is almost invariably invested with a non-classical, normally Christian significance; wherever in the high and later Middle Ages a work of art borrows its theme from classical poetry, legend, history, or mythology, this theme is quite invariably presented in a non-classical, normally contemporary form.¹⁹

In other words, with successive cultures spanning a duration on the order of magnitude of about one thousand years in the same region, such as western Europe or Mesoamerica, we may expect to observe disjunctions of form and meaning more often than marked continuity in their association. As Orpheus and the Good Shepherd displayed different meanings in similar representations, so may we expect representations of the feathered serpent and Quetzalcóatl to display meanings at least as different across more than one thousand years in Mexico.²⁰ It is for this reason that I have avoided the use of Aztec or Náhuatl names, preferring "rain" figure to Tlaloc, "fire" figure to Huchuetéotl, and "flayed" figure to Xipe Totec.

Mesoamerican cultures contemporary with Teotihuacán contain forms similar to those of Teotihuacán, but they appear in greatly different contexts. Until each of these other systems is put through the same sort of configurational analysis we have conducted with Teotihuacán, we are blinded to their proper connection. Beside the pictorial language of Teotihuacán, Maya vase painting and Classic Veracruz sculpture seem notably more secular, lacking the reverent monotony of the litanies and prayers of Teotihuacán. The relation to Monte Albán is obviously close, but the direction of influence is still undetermined. At Monte Albán, the public sculpture and the tomb furnishings differ greatly. The tomb pottery and the murals closely resemble those of Teotihuacán, to the point of sharing many forms, but there is nothing at Teotihuacán even distantly like the *danzante* reliefs, or the conquest stelae, or the marriage slabs. These themes are closer to Maya dynastic art than they are to those of the Valley of Mexico.

The art of Teotihuacán can be distinguished from other regional styles of ancient America by its strongly marked liturgical character. The general form of a painted communication in the style of Teotihuacán displays the liturgical actions that embody the cult, which was itself represented by appropriate images. The liturgy may be portrayed in specific actions by the celebrants, as in many mural paintings, or it may be evoked by symbolic figures and signs, as on decorated pottery. There is no reason to believe that different sectors of meaning are figured in murals and on pottery, however much more compact and stenographic the signs on pottery may be.

At Teotihuacán, every mural or decorated vessel is a prayer exalting the elements of nature, unlike El Tajín, where the pictorial system centers upon the ball game, or Monte Albán, where public sculpture commemorates conquests and great captains, as do Late Classic Maya art and Post-Classic art throughout Mesoamerica. The real affinity of the configuration at Teotihuacán is with Early Classic Maya art in its liturgical aspects, as at Tikal

¹⁹ Panofsky 1960:84.

²⁰ Examples: Monument 19, La Venta, supposedly prior to 400 B.C., and the serpent columns of Tula (Hidalgo), c. 1200 A.D.

or Kaminaljuyú.²¹ In its tendency towards compound figures, Teotihuacán iconography resembles that of Olmec art more closely than any Late Classic expression.

Teotihuacán is perhaps the terminal expression of an old theocratic system represented also by late Olmec art and by Early Classic Maya art. The few traits it shares with Late Classic Maya dynastic art belong mainly to Teotihuacán IV. Personal glorification, the cult of war, and the appearance of dynastic lineages are the traits of the new, emerging society of the centuries after 500 A.D. The late Quetzalpapaolotl court reliefs (Fig. 37) and the final Metepec-stage figurines (Figs. 35 and 40) are alone at Teotihuacán in portraying this new dynastic society. All earlier Teotihuacán representations reflect an aging theocratic system organized on the basis of animistic worship, which probably survived only in the funeral customs and imagery of later periods after the collapse and abandonment of Teotihuacán.

²¹ Coe 1965; Kidder, Jennings, and Shook 1946. During the Harvard seminar in 1966, Nicholas Hellmuth ('67 Harvard College) prepared a detailed report assessing the presumed Teotihuacán "presence" at Kaminaljuyú and Tikal respectively. He found it lacking in Kaminaljuyú sculpture, but he concluded that the art of Tikal on the whole was less affected by Teotihuacán than was the highland site.



Tripod vessel (feet missing) painted with a profile figure wearing a butterfly costume and a schematized butterfly pendant. Height: 0.11 m. Diameter: 0.16 m. (Dumbarton Oaks)