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PLACE AND PERSON AT PRE-HISPANIC TEOTIHUACAN, MEXICO

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Abstract

There are significant societal differences evident in the material remains of the Classic period (ca. AD 250-600) city of Teotihuacan in central Mexico compared to contemporary Maya kingdoms in southern Mexico and Guatemala, despite both being part of the larger Mesoamerican civilization, sharing many cultural features. One proposed explanation for these differences derives from an analytical social science dichotomy that contrasts groups and individuals. According to this approach, Maya art and architecture indicate a society centered on individuals, particularly the rivalrous semi-divine rulers. Teotihuacan's depersonalized art, lack of royal tombs, and gridded city plan are believed to indicate a corporate ethos in which individuals were subsumed by the societal collective. However, archaeological evidence for these interpretations is not compelling; moreover, the dichotomy itself is misleading. The key to these differences may lie in conceptions of embodied versus emplaced personae. The identity of Teotihuacanos was shaped by living within the city itself, and their concepts of personhood were entwined with their built environment in ways different from their Maya counterparts.

Keywords

Mesoamerica, Archaeology, Personhood, Emplacement, Teotihuacan

Introduction: Individuals and Groups at Teotihuacan

Teotihuacan, near Mexico City, was the greatest urban center in Mesoamerica from the 2nd to the 7th centuries AD, during the Classic Period (Cowgill 2015). Despite its importance, its social and political organization are relatively unknown, and this has long been a recognized problem in Mesoamerican studies (e.g., Evans and Berlo, 1992; Pasztory, 1993b:45). I examine some of the reasons for this dilemma and suggest a means for understanding Teotihuacan society by focusing on the under-emphasized role of place-making in social identity and social organization. At Teotihuacan, "place" (the city itself or its neighborhoods) was a critical component of one's sense of self. I will argue that "place" was inscribed in one's personhood, endowing the city dwellers with a collective sense of identity.

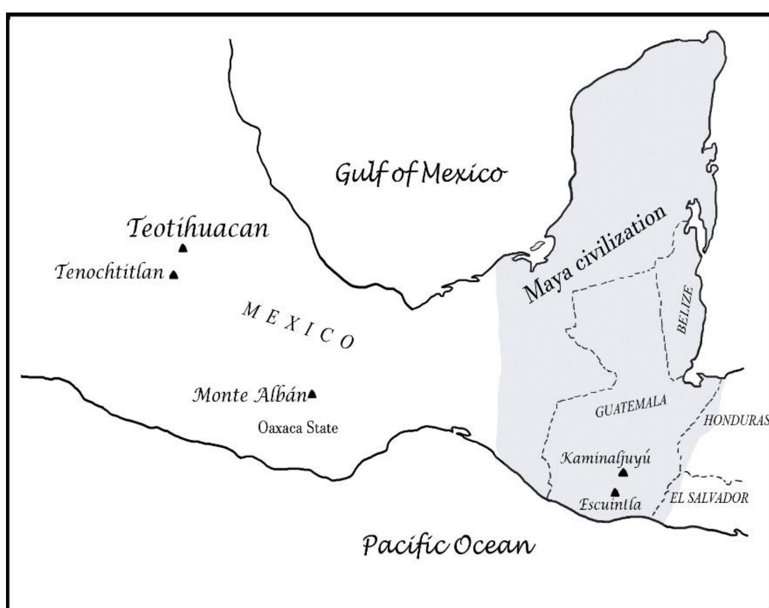

Figure 1. Map of Mesoamerica with the locations of places mentioned in the text. The area inhabited by Maya speakers is shaded. (Drawing by the author)

A major reason why Teotihuacan is considered enigmatic is because Classic Period Maya peoples of southern Mexico and Guatemala, with whom the Teotihucanos interacted, seem to be much better understood (Evans, 2004:264). Maya elites created many surviving portraits of rulers, hieroglyphic inscriptions that provide their biographies, and calendar dates that place

their life events in history or legend. Elaborate royal tombs further reflect the individuality and dynastic relationships of Maya kings to one another. Teotihuacan, in contrast, is best known for its rigid geometric urban plan based on a gridded system of streets and buildings oriented slightly off a north-south line (15.25̊ E of N), against the alignments presented by the natural topography. The façades of principal buildings were ornamented with a ubiquitous profile distinctive to the city: a sloping talus (*talud*) alternating with a rectangular framed inset (*tablero*), which may have been a codified sign of the structures' sacred quality (Kubler, 1977:103).

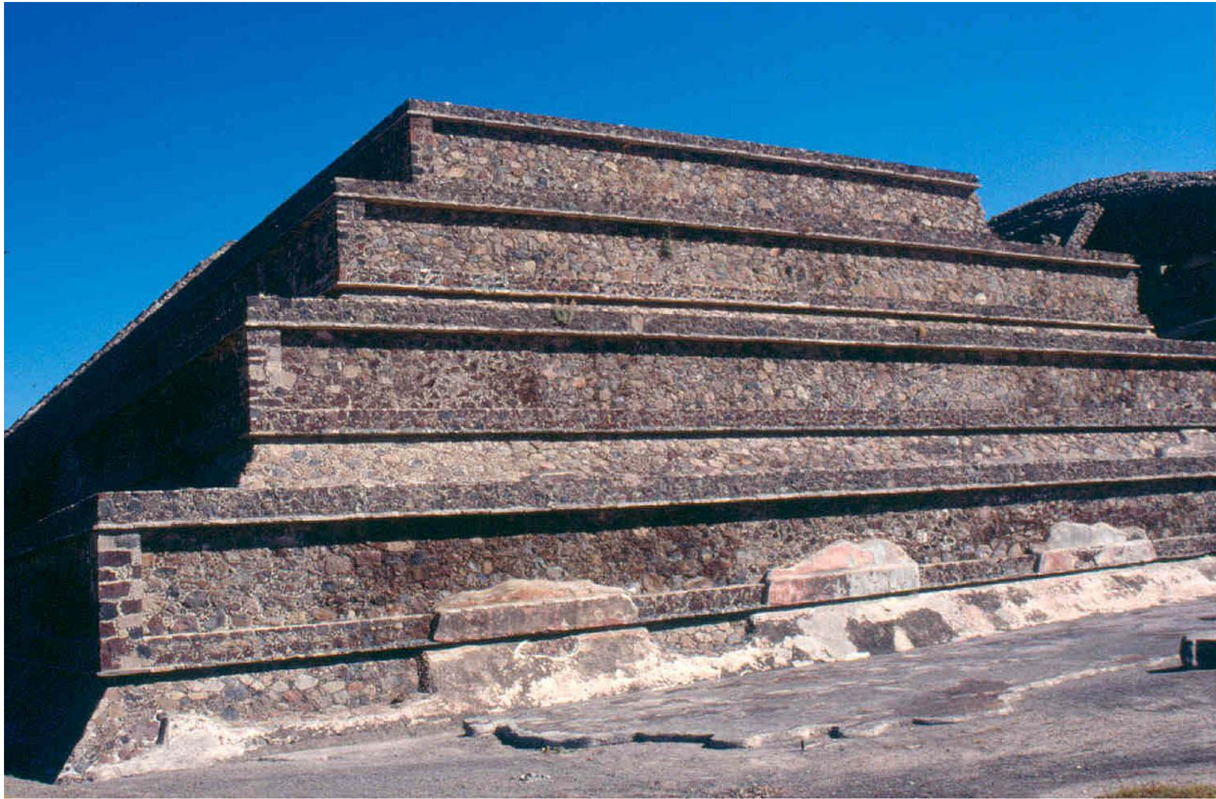

Figure 2. A Teotihuacan building façade with alternating *talud y tablero* construction. (Photograph by the author)

The city plan was laid out early in its history, as if manifesting some kind of "social revolution" unique for that era (Evans, 2004:266; Millon,1993:27). After AD 200, the city's 125,000 + citizens were concentrated in over 2000 multi-family "apartment" compounds (Millon, 1992:400). More is known about Teotihuacan as a city than about its people, including its rulers, in contrast to what has been called a Classic Maya obsession with a "cult of personality" focused on the lives and deaths of individual kings (Fash and Fash, 2000:449; Pasztory, 1978:135).

Interpretations of Teotihuacan society within Mesoamerican culture history have therefore typically been based on what Teotihuacanos did *not* do. Scholars have "lamented" the "'faceless, nameless' tradition of Teotihuacan" (Fash and Fash, 2000:449), presenting a strong and anomalous contrast with Maya and also Zapotec contemporaries of southern Mexico (Blanton et al., 1996:12; Cowgill, 1992:212; Millon, 1988:112; Pasztory, 1992b:145). Teotihuacanos are even presumed to have had some "aversion" to depicting human likenesses (Pasztory, 1988:67, 1990-1991:117, 1997:91; see also Fash and Fash, 2000:449). Human bodies are virtually absent in many artworks that only suggest their presence by costume elements (Pasztory, 1990-1991:117). According to one imaginative scenario, the absence of portraits of rulers was a conscious reaction to the excesses of hypothetical early despots (Millon, 1988:112-113, 1993:27).

Because the nature of the evidence (or lack thereof) for understanding Teotihuacan culture and society has focused so much on imagery, art historians have contributed greatly to these discussions. Pasztory (1997:235; see also 1993b:58), for example, emphasized the absence of portraits and texts at Teotihuacan in highlighting its singularity within the Mesoamerican world in the Classic Period:

> "Teotihuacan's avoidance of dynastic image making as well as glyphic inscriptions is highly unusual in this Mesoamerican context and suggests that Teotihuacan was avoiding this type of commemoration intentionally as inconsistent with its chosen identity as a 'collective' rather than a personified power."

Her conclusion is widely shared. Given the general absence of distinguishable individuals in Teotihuacan art and inscriptions, as well as readily recognizable royal burials and definitive palaces (Manzanilla, 2004:142;

Millon, 1992:400), a long-standing presumption is that individual personalities were absorbed within some collectivity. Perhaps this was a means to overcome the conflicts posed by the city's known ethnic diversity and its ranked social strata, as well as to moderate tensions inevitable within such a large population. The most apparent collectivities would have been the corporate residential groups, marked by the large, apartment-like domestic compounds (Berlo, 1992; Pastory, 1988:61, 1990-91:131, 1992a:288).

Even beyond a corporate ideology deriving from kin or residential groups, a polity-wide collective leadership may have arisen to suppress the personal ambitions of still-powerful rulers (Millon, 1992:398). Although it is possible that religious or political leaders are among those depicted, for example, in the painted murals found at some elite residential compounds late in Teotihuacan's history (ca. AD 500), the artists took pains to "depersonalize" their appearance (Pasztory, 1990-1991:130). Alternatively, this was done in a manner of "self-effacement" to maintain only the "appearance of a collective social contract" (Pasztory, 1993b:57, 62), an ideology that masked actual power relations.

In sum, the consensus interpretation of significant categories of material evidence at Teotihuacan is that individual identities were lost in a collective or corporate ethos, in contrast to Classic Maya and Zapotec peoples to the south, and also to later Postclassic Mixtec and Aztec elite practices in central Mexico (Pasztory, 1992b:136). This dichotomy between Mesoamerican sociopolitical systems, based on whether principal emphasis was given to individuals *or* groups, was further formalized by Blanton and colleagues (1996; Blanton, 1998; Feinman, 2000) in their development of a typology of alternative political economic strategies, which they dubbed "corporate" and "network." The network strategy is based on the actions of individual rulers or royal linages evidencing "the culture of named rulers" (Blanton et al., 1996:12), in contrast with the emphasis on collective solidarity that marks the corporate strategy. Distinguishing the two archaeologically, however, has turned primarily on the absence of the same evidence–of portraiture, recognizable royal burials, distinctive palaces, and written texts naming rulers that–by default–pushed Teotihuacan into the "corporate" category (Blanton et al., 1996:9).

The Plurality of Person and Place

However, the individual versus group dichotomy is misplaced, as is the notion that the dearth of naturalistic portraits at Teotihuacan necessarily implies a suppression of individuality in favor of social group identities. I use the term "misplaced" quite intentionally because place is too often the missing element in explaining both the Teotihuacan and Maya evidence for the construction of personhood (following Mauss, 1985) and social agency (following Gell, 1998). Increased research and analysis on these two related concepts in archaeology, including a focus on Mesoamerica specifically (e.g., Fowler, 2004, 2010, 2016; Gillespie, 2001, 2008a, 2008c, 2011, 2021; Martínez González & Barona, 2015; Page Pliego, 2007-2008), provide insights into understanding the evidence for, and consequences of, alternative notions of the person.

First of all, the corporate/network dichotomy does not adequately consider, in terms of social processes, how either individuals or groups could function alternatively as "social actors" or agents (Blanton et al., 1996:65-66). Certainly, both Maya and Teotihuacan peoples took their identities, their roles, and their access to resources and privileges from their membership in corporate groups of varying ranks and scales (Gillespie, 2001, 2008a, 2011, 2021). In contrast to the assumptions of the corporate/network distinction of political economic strategies and the collective/personified dichotomy underlying interpretations of Teotihuacan's social organization, ethnographers in many non-Western societies have detailed how personhood is actively produced out of relationships with others. This relational understanding of personhood vis-à-vis others (another individual or a group) has been variously labeled the "partible person" (Mosko, 1992), the "dividual" or "plural person" (Strathern, 1988:13), and the "fractal person" (Wagner, 1994).

Strathern (1988:13-15) distinguished two forms of plurality of the person, which she called the composite and the dual. Composite plurality has to do with the relationship between the individual and the groups of which people are members. The Western worldview assumes that morally and jurally independent individuals are the building blocks of society, and thus the relationship between the group and the individual is hierarchical. In other societies, however, the collective and the singular instances of that collective are "the same," as homologues of one another; thus, one man may be conceived as replicating an entire men's house, one woman an entire matrilineage (Strathern, 1988:13-14). From this perspective, "individual" and "group" are "false alternatives" because each implies the other (Wagner, 1994:161)–the many and the one are equivalent (Strathern, 1988:14). Wagner's notion of the fractal person borrows from the mathematical figure of the fractal, "one which displays self-similarity at different degrees of magnification and minimization" (Gell, 1999:49; see also Fowler, 2004). The fractal person is composed of the same sets of relations but at different scales as one moves from the individual up to society as a whole (Gosden, 1999:140).

Strathern's dual plurality is a different kind of relationship, based on dyadic expressions of difference (primarily gender in her analysis), such that a unity is formed out of its internal differentiation. The pan-Mesoamerican organizing principle of "complementary dualism" (Gossen, 1986:6) comes into play in this regard, whereby male and female are not essentialized, isolable identities but are aspects of incomplete "dividuality" that

assemble to create a unity in specific contexts of social action. This form of plural personhood need not be restricted to dyads, as other multiples of difference (e.g., the four-part unity of horizontal space) can form the basis of internally differentiated unities. Allowing for fractality and dual forms of plural personhood therefore requires a strikingly different approach to the analysis of social forms and processes than the implicit notions of the agency of individuals and corporate groups embedded in the corporate/network dichotomy.

Secondly, it is difficult to archaeologically distinguish evidence for corporate versus network/individual political strategizing. Royal portraiture, burials, palaces, and texts are all symbolic representations, and they cannot be interpreted quite so literally as to indicate a “personality” cult of individuals, or its absence, in the Western senses of both personality and individual. The better known Postclassic Aztec case is similar to that of Teotihuacan. The Aztecs (ca. AD 1300-1521) produced no monumental portraits of individual kings (excepting an apparent late sculpture on the hillside of Chapultepec in Mexico City) and only a handful of small depictions exist (cf. Pasztory, 1997:234), nor have distinct royal tombs been found. Like Teotihuacan, the population of the Aztec capital city, Tenochtitlan, was organized into city districts, residing in multi-family, multi-room residential compounds.

Nevertheless, the preponderance of the documentary evidence indicates that leadership of the Aztec tribute empire was dominated by the royal dynasty of Tenochtitlan (Gillespie, 1989), which interacted on a personal basis with ruling houses of allied cities. The Aztec empire was figuratively identified with the body of the emperor, as in the case of Moteuczoma (died 1520), a divine king whose personal heroism or character flaws were sympathetically linked to the strength and well being of his kingdom (Gillespie, 2008b). The political configuration at that highest level of polity would thus more ostensibly be aligned with the individualizing network, similar to the Maya, than with the corporate political strategy (Gillespie, 1998; cf. Blanton et al., 1996). However, the representations upon which this judgment is based come from historical documents, not from material expressions in the form of portraits, palaces, and tombs.

Finally, even if some collective ethos dominated, as determined from the absence of individualizing representations, these analytical distinctions provide little guidance for understanding the nature of such an ideology and how it was reproduced or reinforced, or alternatively, contested. The principal positive (as opposed to negative) material evidence that has been suggested to argue for the corporate strategy is the construction of sufficient space for large public gatherings and the promulgation of probable collective religious representations such as fertility symbols (Blanton et al., 1996:6). Teotihuacan’s artworks, for example, teem with images of animals, plants, and flowing waters (Pasztory, 1992b:137). Nevertheless, the lack of further attention to potential variability in either of these political economic strategies gives the impression that all corporate strategies–like all network strategies–were alike, even though it was acknowledged that the “corporate emphasis may be achieved in several ways” (Blanton et al., 1996:6). Clearly, a more specific set of evidentiary categories is needed to verify the likelihood of a corporate strategy and to explicate how it was reproduced if archaeologists are to give this alternative the same emphasis long enjoyed by centralizing network strategies, which was the stated goal of the archaeologists who proposed this analytical approach (e.g., Blanton et al., 1996:14; Blanton & Fargher, 2012; Feinman, 2000:31).

In particular, the importance of place in constructing identities and social relationships has been downplayed in both the personalizing network and corporate interpretations because the analytical emphasis in this dichotomy is on people as social agents–whether as individuals or as groups–separate from the places they inhabit. Yet even today the social organization of traditional Mesoamerican villages is based on territorial divisions, often glossed as “neighborhoods”–*barrio*, *paraje*, *calpulli*, *cantón*, *chinamitl*, etc.–where kinship, locality, and ritual affiliations intersect in the formation of social roles and relationships (see Arnauld et al. 2012; Mulhare, 1996). For example, among the Nahua-speakers of Amatlan, Veracruz, “family” groups were actually organized as much by shared residence and labor exchange as by kinship. The people of Amatlan took their identities from the name of the place where their houses were built, the “house name” (*caltocayotl*) becoming the surname of the people who lived there and often serving as the name for a larger village area (Sandstrom, 2000:65).

Thus, in composing and enacting identities and roles, social actors can incorporate in a relational manner specific places as well as other persons. This is a mechanism for the “inscription” of space, that is, the formation of meaningful relationships with locales that transform “space” into “place” (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003:13). Places take meanings from the persons who occupy or reference them. By the same processes, persons derive a portion of their identities and their relationships to others from those places, such that the boundary between self and place can be quite fluid and permeable. Metaphorical relationships are established, often via ritual means, that link social persons to places such that new understandings emerge from bodily practices within those spatial settings:

> “the ideas human beings have of place are always in some part a projection of their own body image, and, vice-versa, their own body image is an introjection of their experience in such places. The situation is paradoxical, but it is a fact of man-space negotiations. Men predicate space upon themselves and obtain qualities that they, in turn, project upon space” (Fernandez, 2003:200).

Indeed, the vastness and orderliness of Teotihuacan, along with its massive buildings, delineated open spaces, and directional orientations, have long been emphasized as essential to understanding Teotihuacan civilization. The dominating characteristic of the city is its gridded layout oriented along a major north-south axis, the so-called Street of the Dead.

Figure 3. A view of the Street of the Dead at Teotihuacan looking south from the summit of the Temple of the Moon, with the Cerro Gordo behind. The Pyramid of the Sun is on the left side in the distance. (Photograph by the author)

This axis metaphysically terminates in the north at the summit of a prominent mountain, the Cerro Gordo, and in the south at a system of underground caves (Stuart & Garrison, 2022). This planned community was built according to a "cosmic blueprint" to conform to the ideology that Teotihuacan was the singular place of cosmic creation (Aveni, 2000:253; Millon, 1993; Pasztory, 1978:49, 1993b:49; Tobriner, 1972). Evidence for this interpretation comes from the early monumental architecture, impressive stone pyramids, and walled enclosures that are oriented to astronomical sightings associated with the annual calendar. The most imposing structure, the Pyramid of the Sun, was purposely constructed over a four-chambered cave (Heyden, 1975, 1981:3) that likely was regarded as the place where world creation began (Aveni, 2000:254; Millon, 1981:230, 1992:373, 383).

René Millon and Esther Pasztory, the leading archaeologist and art historian of Teotihuacan respectively, emphasized how the spatial setting–both its natural characteristics and the added meanings of the built environment–must have impacted the identities of the urban dwellers:

> "Teotihuacan was built according to a sacred plan and ... residing within Teotihuacan was a religiously sanctioned privilege. ... all of Teotihuacan was, to its inhabitants, the equivalent of a cathedral" (Pasztory, 1992b:137, 139).
>
> "The conviction that Teotihuacan was where the world came into being would have been at the core of a belief system giving the Teotihuacanos an unrivalled *pride of place*" (Millon, 1992:383, emphasis added; see also Millon, 1981, 1993).

Much more than "pride" of place was at issue. As detailed above, the common assumptions are that Teotihuacan elite/public artworks do not provide information on individual rulers and the nature of rulership (Cowgill, 1992:208), and they fail to convey much detail concerning the alternative (default) collective ideology as well (Millon, 1992:398; Pasztory, 1997) beyond a "suppression" of political imagery and the glorification of nature as a metaphor for civic order (Pasztory, 1992b:144, 137). Nevertheless, the existing evidence from artworks and architecture clearly demonstrates how "place" was essential to the production of persons, and people to the production of places. Social actors incorporated specific places as well as other persons in forming their identities. Furthermore, in a fractal manner, individual persons could represent large-scale places, even up to the level of the city as a whole. On the flip side, the structured set of relationships that characterized the city (or its subdivisions) were reproduced in the social actions and relationships of its individual citizens.

Indeed, within Teotihuacan imagery it is sometimes difficult to distinguish places from persons. I contend that this blurring was purposeful and constitutes one of the most salient qualities of these material expressions. The making and displaying of depictions that combine parts of people with parts of buildings were concrete acts of "inscription" (Connerton, 1989; Joyce, 1993) in a public and communal form, reiterating and naturalizing the linkages between persons and places. The modern Western dichotomy dividing subject from object breaks down as intersubjectivity comes into play, and buildings and objects can assume agency in social actions.

Conflating Bodies and Buildings in Teotihuacan Artworks

In this section, I describe only a few notable examples of this inscriptive phenomenon in Teotihuacan's art and architecture. In doing so I draw upon the same evidentiary categories that have been employed in complementary fashion (based on positive rather than negative data) to assert that the network strategy and a personality cult of

rulers dominated the Classic Maya nobility. All these examples come from published conclusions made by art historians and archaeologists–no new iconographic identifications are presented here. This treatment is selective rather than comprehensive of Teotihuacan imagery, the objective being to show how analysts have made numerous observations that would support this thesis but have neglected an explicit role for place-making in identity-formation when interpreting the artworks.

1. The Water Goddess

A massive statue excavated in the mid-19th century and identified in the late 19th century as a "water goddess" (Winning 1987:I:137) is a three-dimensional anthropomorphic stone sculpture, very rare for Teotihuacan (Batres, 1906:Figure 3).

The 3.17 meter tall statue was discovered face-down near the Pyramid of the Moon and has been dated to AD 200-300, early in the city's history (Winning, 1987:I:136-137). Its blocky, rectilinear form might seem to indicate a lack of skill among Teotihuacan's sculptors. Indeed, it was first identified as an architectural pillar and in 1874 was published upside-down (Winning, 1987:I:137, Fig. 2b, 2c). Although its human form was later recognized, Kubler (1984:60) nevertheless suggested it served as an architectural support, like a caryatid (see Sarro, 1991:257; c.f. Winning, 1987:I:137). Whether it was originally free-standing or part of building, the image represents an anthropomorphic "person" depicted in architectonic form, rendering her equally isomorphic with a building as with a human being.

Figure 4. "Water Goddess" statue excavated near the Pyramid of the Moon in the 19th century. (Batres, 1906: Figure 3)

2. Composite Incense Burners

A similar conflation of architecture and human image appears more commonly on composite ceramic incense burners or censers. These were made out of multiple pieces of fired clay motifs, often mold-made, that were glued onto a frame to create a façade on the burner lid that covered its chimney. Composite incense burners have been recovered from usually ritual contexts in Teotihuacan–burials, caches, and offerings, including in the apartment compounds. They were generally taken apart, detaching the decorative motifs, prior to their deposition (Berlo, 1982:92; see illustration in Pasztory, 1993b:facing p. 45). The lids themselves sometimes resemble miniature temples (Berlo, 1982:90).

One particular form has been labeled the "theater" type censer because the chimney façade is constructed out of layers of flat clay, "similar to the stage and proscenium of a theater," leaving a framed central opening (Pasztory, 1988:62). Inside the frame is a human face, more like a mask with large earspools and nose ornament mimicking the shape of a *talud y tablero* building façade (Kubler, 1977:103). Pasztory (1988:63) argued that this is not anthropomorphism but symbolism in that the face is simply one among the other design motifs. Nevertheless, the positioning of a human face, adorned with an architectural ornament and set within an architectural frame, is not unlike the combination of architectural and human elements in the "Water Goddess" statue.

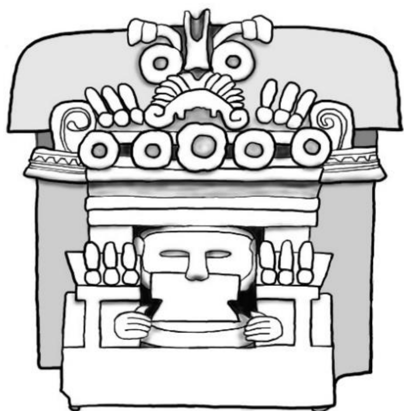

Figure 5. Lid of a Teotihuacan-inspired theater style censer from Tiquisate, Escuintla region, Guatemala. (Drawing by the author from a photograph in Hellmuth, 1975: Plate 24)

Even though the mold-made faces are generic or idealized, the additional symbols, the architectural setting, and the original placement of incense burners in dedicatory caches or burials associated with elite buildings (Langley, 1992:259-261; Manzanilla & Carreón, 1991) provide a more specific meaning to the being represented by the face, an identity grounded in a place marked by architecture. Indeed, Pasztory (1988:67) earlier suggested that the face may represent the deity venerated by "the apartment-compound dwellers as corporate group"–but again, her emphasis

was on the social group rather than on the place they resided in and from which they drew aspects of their identities. Given that the censers are built to resemble the architecture of Teotihuacan temples, the mask inside "substitutes for the image of the deity within the temple" (Pasztory, 1993a:216).

More than simply the face/mask contributed to the personified entity within. Incense burners in this style were also made in the Escuintla region of Guatemala, within the Maya area, which briefly came under Teotihuacan influence (Berlo, 1984; Hellmuth, 1975). They present some notable differences with those from Teotihuacan (Berlo, 1989). On the Teotihuacan censers, the flat area above the face is covered with individual, often mold-made motifs, indicating the symbolic complexity of the object. However, it is more common on the Escuintla censers that this decorated upper armature forms a headdress for the head below. In addition, the side flanges have the addition of two hands, grasping the lateral frame, as if the lid were the upper body of a person (formed by headdress, face, and hands). This "is not the impersonal mask of the spirit, but the corporeal anthropomorphic presence" (Berlo, 1989:152). The Escuintla censers give the impression of a person masking himself as a building by holding an architectural frame around the human face, which itself is a mask.

3. Roof Ornaments as Headdresses and the Tassel Headdress

On the composite incense burners, the frame around the face "can be read both as a headdress and a temple doorway" (Pasztory, 1988:63; see also Langley, 1992:261). In fact, the roof ornaments of some of Teotihuacan's elite buildings are similar in the structured arrangement of their decorative additions to the elaborate headdresses worn by people and gods in both painted murals and mosaic sculptural façades. Again, this indicates a significant overlap between persons and buildings in their wearing of the same "head" covering.

An especially important recurring headdress design is the "tassel headdress" (C. Millon, 1973, 1988), whose most basic component is a triangular "tassel" attached to a *tablero*-shaped element, the *tablero* evoking Teotihuacan's architectural façades. The tassel often occurs in a grouping of three or more and was originally called the "Tri-mountain Symbol" at Kaminaljuyú, Guatemala (Marcus, 1983:176), where it was determined to be indicative of Teotihuacan influences at that Classic period site. The tassel headdress was also depicted–either as part of the costume of a person or as a separate image–in artworks from the Oaxaca area south of Mexico City, the lowland Maya area, and the Pacific slope of Guatemala (C. Millon, 1988:125). In these contexts, it is interpreted as a sign of Teotihuacan affiliation in these far-flung regions, "to name the metropolitan center as the point of origin for whatever and whoever was being represented in foreign lands" (C. Millon, 1973:305).

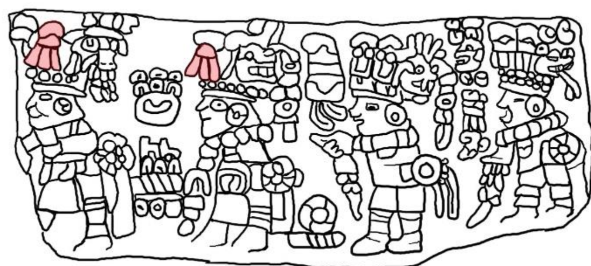

Figure 6. Monte Albán Stela 7, bas-relief of men wearing the Tassel Headdress, emblem of Teotihuacan. The tassels on the left-most two individuals are shaded for legibility. (Photograph and drawing by the author)

In other words, the tassel headdress represents the *place* from which the people wearing it came. The city of Teotihuacan, indicated by costume, was apparently key to their identity above all else, and even a single individual could represent the entire city. On Monte Albán Stela 7, the Classic Period Zapotec capital in Oaxaca state, four men wearing the tassel headdress are also named or titled via accompanying Zapotec hieroglyphs.

On Stela 8 similar name or title glyphs also accompany the tassel headdress, but in this case the headdress is perched atop an incense burner rather than on a figure's head, as if there was a substitution between the two; the combination of people and architecture on the composite incense burner has already been noted above.

Late in Teotihuacan's history, a mural was painted on the four interior walls of a room in the Techinantitla apartment compound consisting of a series of men walking in the same direction. The men wear comparable dress– military garb (C. Millon, 1988) including the tassel headdress–but in addition, placed in front of each of them was a non-repeating hieroglyphic symbol also "wearing" the tassel headdress.

René Millon (1988:82) remarked on the importance of finding human figures apparently identified as distinct persons:

> "Except for these figures, no named individual has been found so far at Teotihuacan in any context, either public or private, either in the center of the city or in any other part of it. That is what made these figures at once so anomalous and potentially so significant."

Moreover, Techinantitla is one of the largest elite compounds in the city, and its interior temple is the largest so far found (Millon, 1988:105).

Based on their military dress, Clara Millon (1988:131) assumed that the tassel headdress at Teotihuacan was a badge of office for a category of officials, likely an elite warrior group. The Techinantitla personages are generally considered to represent the highest rank in Teotihuacan society (Pasztory, 1993b:58). Nevertheless, if it is the case that the headdress when found outside of Teotihuacan represented a place, then simple interpretive consistency would suggest that also it represented a place when used within Teotihuacan itself. Rather than personal names or ranks of these individuals, the headdress+hieroglyph combination accompanying each man may identify them by the places they came from or represent. These places could be mythical locales or real geographical locations within the city (or both–real locations representing mythical places), including the elite residential compounds, all of which must have been named.

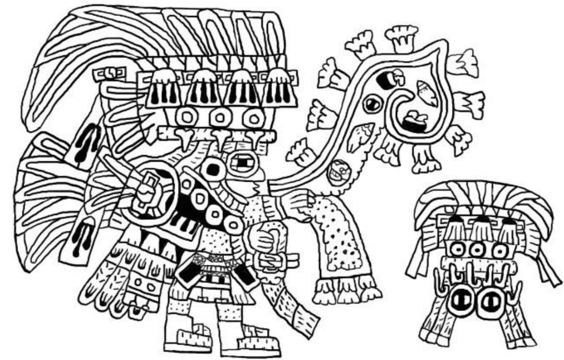

Figure 7. Striding human wearing the tassel headdress; looted fragment of a mural from the Techinantitla compound at Teotihuacan (damaged portions reconstructed). The hieroglyphic sign that precedes the figure is also wearing the headdress. (Drawing by the author from C. Millon, 1988:Figure V.3)

Given its late date, C. Millon (1988:132) suggested that this mural was a rare reference to illustrious named ancestors. Pasztory (1992a:293) also considered the exceptional quality of these glyphs and suggested that they may evidence a breakdown in Teotihuacan's "communal structure." She (Pasztory, 1993b:57) went a step further, speculating that these and other important richly dressed human figures walking in processions or performing ritual acts in the late mural art may indeed be the rulers of Teotihuacan. This possibility had been downplayed in the past because human figures are almost always unnamed, and they are usually engaged in service to the gods. On the other hand, as Pasztory (1993b:57) observed,

> "Unlike the gods who are represented by their parts [see below], these elite are the only Teotihuacan figures who are whole, complete in body, and immediately recognizable. Second, they are dressed remarkably like the gods, with the same spectacular feather headdresses, necklaces, mirrorlike back ornaments, and huge feather bustles. Third, they are shown as about the same size as the gods and much bigger than the ordinary or common people who are shown as very small ... And fourth, there are a great many of them."

If these are indeed rulers, then the "self-effacing" (Pasztory. 1993b:57) mode of their portrayal is further comparable to that of the later Aztecs. The few known depictions of late 15th century Aztec rulers in sculptures are miniature depictions of complete figures distinguished only by name glyphs near the head. They are portrayed in profile, are engaged in specific actions (conquest and auto-sacrifice), and are sculpted at the same scale and wearing the same dress as the gods shown with them. In the case of the Teotihuacan Techinantitla personages in procession wearing the tassel headdresses, their materially marked identity with the accompanying glyphs indicates the fractal nature of their status vis-à-vis a sacred topology. In their persons they represent a syntax or sequence of places that form a larger whole–a city or sacred landscape.

4. The "Goddess" Images

Significantly, an association with place has already been suggested for certain important deity images known colloquially as the "Mother Goddess" (Furst 1974) and the "Great Goddess" (e.g., Paulinyi, 2006), and now more generically as the "Goddess" (Berlo, 1992; Pasztory, 1977). They appear in painted murals in some elite residential compounds and a few sculpted architectural façades. These images approach anthropomorphic form, but like the "Water Goddess," which may represent this same deity (Pasztory, 1992a:314; Winning, 1987:I:138-140), they are distinct from representations of human beings in important respects. These deities or "cult effigies" are typically shown in frontal view in two-dimensional art (although there are exceptions), whereas humans are shown in profile. The deities tend to lack some body parts, and those that they have are unnaturally placed.

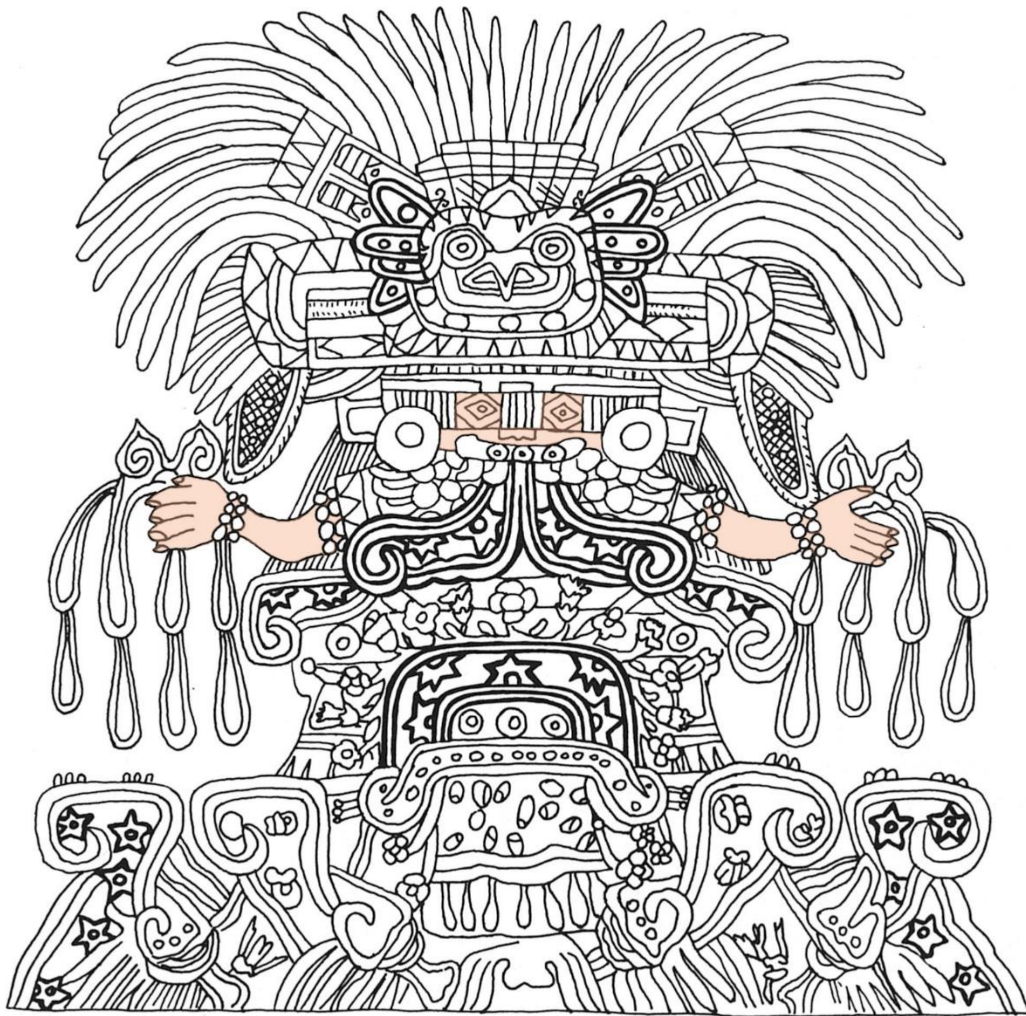

Figure 8. "Goddess Image" wearing a bird headdress from a mural in the Tepantitla compound at Teotihuacan. The minimal body parts are shaded for legibility. The hands are backwards. The lower half of the deity represents a mountain over a cave. (Drawing by the author from a photograph)

A well known example is the central figure in the upper mural in the Tepantitla compound. It consists of a masked face (the face so reduced as to be almost absent; Pasztory, 1990-1991:115-116), arms positioned unnaturally at the neck area, and backward hands on the arms. Its non-natural characteristics create an immediate contrast with the fully human form of the two profile figures on either side. The lower body is missing, replaced by a version of the pan-Mesoamerican mountain symbol with a cave inside (Pasztory, 1977:85). Cowgill (2015, 226) suggested that the being so represented was a deified mountain.

Indeed, these various cult images have been linked to places, specifically mountains or mountain/pyramids, and are comparable in some respects to the mountain cult effigies made by the later Aztecs (Pasztory, 1977:85). The "mountain" aspect of the deity is even further highlighted in the now-destroyed murals of the Temple of Agriculture in which an even less human and more architectural form is assumed, with much smaller humans engaged in acts of veneration (Pasztory, 1992a:306). Berlo (1992) suggested that the deity depicted in the Tepantitla mural represents the Pyramid of the Moon–the earliest monumental construction at the city–and/or the mountain, Cerro Gordo, behind it. The pyramid obviously references that mountain by sheer visual juxtaposition, at the northern terminus of the Street of the Dead. Cerro Gordo, whose Aztec era name was Tenan (Tobriner, 1972:104), meaning "someone's mother," might have served as the original model in the natural environment for the representations in architecture and art of anthropomorphized places as cult images.

However, Heyden (1981) and Pasztory (1997) suggested instead that the deity refers to the Pyramid of the Sun, which has a cave beneath it, a detail that matches the Tepantitla mural. Pasztory (1997:91) proposed that the "Goddess" venerated by Teotihuacanos was actually the Pyramid of the Sun itself, and that only later cult images were made to represent this pyramid with partial human form and masked faces, as if there was "a reticence in giving her a fully human form." It could also be the case that the cult image represents the genius loci, the resident spirit or power, that inhabits and empowers the pyramid. On the largest possible scale, the "goddess" may represent the totality of the earth (Pasztory, 1993b:55)

A "reticence" on the part of Teotihuacanos to create cult images in fully human form could better be explained in terms of the personhood and agency of spirits and humans as intersecting bodies and buildings, signaling their intersubjectivity. Although metonym is common in Mesoamerican art as a whole (Berlo, 1992:134), Teotihuacan imagery is well known for almost uniquely presenting fragments of human and other bodies, especially hands, hearts, eyes, mouths, claws, and footprints, in combinations with other motifs. Bodies are "chopped up into pieces" (Pasztory, 1997:198, 210) and recombined in novel ways, serving thereby as signs on par with a notation system (Pasztory, 1990-1991:116). This is particularly evident among the "goddess" depictions in mural art (Berlo, 1992; Pasztory, 1993b:55) as well as the act of disassembly and reassembly of the ceramic motifs on incense burners (Pasztory, 1993b:45; see Manzanilla and Carreón 1991). This recourse to cutting up the body (and its representations) forms a notable contrast with the more "naturalistic" Maya depictions of human figures (Gillespie, 2008c), which are intact, even outlined in a single unbroken line as if to reinforce their integrity, especially in the Late Classic period after Teotihuacan influence in the Maya region declined (Pasztory 1978:120-121).

Teotihuacan Inscription Devices: Diagrams and Calendars

In sum, the visual evidence is overwhelming that an important component to personhood at Teotihuacan was "place," including structures that represented specific places. Some of these places would have been the named residential compounds of the noble lineages of the city, many of which may have retained the names of places from their origin legends. Millon (1981:210) briefly mentioned the importance of place of inhabitation in the organization of the apartment compounds, a residential unit that did not survive the decline of the city, recognizing "the indivisible bond between the architectural unit, the social unit inhabiting it, and the character of the state that fostered it." Other places associated with organized collectivities would have been larger city segments (Millon 1981). They were locales marked on the ground by architecture and open spaces that differentiated categories of people by residential group, occupation, and even ethnicity.

These and other places helped to define various social spheres of interrelated actors, beyond the residential or territorial units. They include ritually-charged places–temples and plazas–where people interacted with animate spirits. Some of these may have become local versions of places inhabited by ancestors and creator beings in cosmological narratives and foundation myths of the distant past, including the actual caves and mountain summits in Teotihuacan's sacred geography. The integration of personhood with place, which motivated much of the enduring material the Teotihuancanos created, gave the appearance that individuality was absent, dominated by a corporate ethos. Rather than the embodied persons portrayed in elite Maya art, in highland central Mexico the Teotihuacanos constructed personified and sacred places from which they derived their identities and relationships with others via the ritual and mundane activities of inhabiting these places.

The long-noted contrast between Teotihuacan and the Classic Maya is therefore not simply one of group versus individual, but reveals, first, a greater emphasis on the intersection of place with person at Teotihuacan; and second, a different approach to topology as cosmology between these two civilizations. The close identities created and represented between people and the places they inhabited–the city compounds, the pyramids, the dominating Cerro Gordo as the mother of the city–are aspects of inscribed space, creating meaning through practices that link people to places. Inscribing practices require making devices that hold information "long after the human organism has stopped informing" (Connerton, 1989:73), namely, the architecture, artifacts, and artworks. They do not simply express aesthetic sensibilities or even store information but, more importantly, mediate between the observable physical universe of Teotihuacanos and the general ideas they shared about that universe and their place within it (following Orlove, 1991:5).

Pasztory (1992a:299) earlier described Teotihuacan art in very similar terms:

> "At Teotihuacan the cultural and artistic emphasis was usually not on narrative [like Maya art], but rather on the representation of structural relations. The Teotihuacan form is something like a diagram that can express visually both social and cosmic relationships."

In the case of Teotihuacan, these devices are iconic diagrams that conflate aspects of the human body with aspects of the built environment in a complex symbolic structure approaching a notational system. Significantly, the diagrams occur especially as part of architectonic monumental constructions as well as finely crafted objects under elite control. The diagrammatic aspect of Teotihuacan art, as noted by Pasztory (e.g., 1992a, 1992b, 1997), was directly related to the city plan. In her (1992a:299) words, "the people of Teotihuacan were living in a huge diagram." The urban plan organized not just the ceremonial-civic center but all of space down to the individual residences (Pasztory, 1992b:140). The most mundane acts of citizens' daily lives would have been made meaningful, moral, aesthetically pleasing, and even natural in their conformity to a systematic and uniform orientation to space.

The many inscriptional devices manifest the multiple dimensions of "fractality" (Wagner, 1994) and

"composite plurality" (Strathern, 1988), terms more usually employed to refer to the co-definition of groups and individuals, each implying and representing the other. Teotihuacan art itself is similarly fractal: it is often reduced to the most minimal, abstracted elements at one extreme, while the same principal meanings can be expressed by elaborations and complexities of designs composed of multiple pieces at the other, a characteristic typical of a non-mimetic art (Pasztory 1990-1991:133). The scalar relationships between persons and places therefore requires further analysis and appreciation, given that a single individual wearing the tassel headdress can refer to the entire polity of Teotihuacan, and by the same token a place (or place glyph) could refer to an entire ancestral group.

Further investigation into the relationship of place to persons would model Strathern's (1988) "dual" plurality with respect to the diagrammatic aspect of the city. The gridded landscape oriented to the cardinal directions, together with the rectilinear apartment compounds, emphasizes a quadripartition of space repeated at various spatial levels or scales. These include small four-part diagrams engraved in floors or on rocks in the outlying landscape (Cabrera Castro, 2000, Winning, 1987:II:35-39) known as "pecked circles" or "pecked crosses," a motif that overlays a cross shape with a circle, made by pecking small depressions in the surface of a stone or floor (Aveni, 2000; Aveni et al., 1978; Worthy and Dickens, 1983). The astronomical and calendrical associations of these particular diagrams and certain Teotihuacan buildings is well studied (Aveni, 2000), implicating celestial sightings that mark successive stages in the annual calendar and other time cycles (Pasztory, 1978;110).

The Mesoamerican calendar was a mechanism for measuring cosmic fluctuations as time "moves" through the four quadrants of space in a counterclockwise direction; it provides a syntax for ordering and understanding the cosmos (Hubert 1999). Teotihuacanos derived a portion of their identities based on their anchoring in space (most immediately in their homes) and their relationships with fellow citizens based on linking the city's segments to the passage of time marked by the calendar, at the place where "time" (as world order) was believed to have been created. I suggest that the spatio-temporal organization of the calendar–which organized virtually all activities–was a principal means by which Teotihuacanos reproduced "a cognitive code that emphasizes a corporate solidarity of society as an integrated whole, based on a natural, fixed, and immutable interdependence between subgroups and ... between rulers and subjects" (Blanton et al., 1996:6), as well as between people and the sacred landscape they occupied and maintained (see Millon, 1992:390).

In other words, the calendar created the unity of space through time that brought together the internal differentiations within the city, at least in certain salient contexts. More than a static diagram or blueprint, the city was a dynamic pivot for the "eternal celebration" (Millon, 1992:383) of the (re)creation of time, a vast stage built for calendrical rites in which virtually everyone participated to some degree, even in daily practices. This configuration, with certain modifications, endured for centuries. But evidence from the later periods of Teotihuacan history reveals profound changes (Millon, 1992:375).

Among the modifications to the architectural program, Millon (1993:19) noted that the largest walled quadrangular spaces–the Citadel (38 acres; 15.4 ha) and Great Compound (48 acres; 19.4 ha)–were built in c. AD 200 to refocus the city center where a major east-west axis intersects the more dominant north-south Street of the Dead. The Citadel is notable for a vastness not based on vertical height, like the Sun pyramid, but on its four-sided horizontal expanse (Millon, 1993:25). If, at least at some point in the city's history, the Citadel served as a palace (in the residential or administrative sense), then Teotihuacan's rulers located themselves at this hub for the circular movement of universal time, based on the endlessly repeating solar (agricultural) calendar. Their association with this place reinforced their supreme hierarchical rank in Teotihuacan society, in the axial position that bound together, and thus encompassed, all the peoples in the four directions. In contrast, dynastic time, as measured by the Classic Maya nobility with their historical calendar, would have been less relevant to the legitimacy of Teotihuacan's rulers as sovereign in the eyes of their subjects. If spatial symbolism loomed large in organizing relationships between nobles and commoners, and within those social strata as well, then we need to rethink how we would recognize a Teotihuacan palace or royal tomb.

Conclusion

To briefly conclude: The elite and popular art and architecture of Teotihuacan does indeed inform us on aspects of political ideology and the identity-building of social actors. We do not need to fall back on an apparent absence of portraiture, identifying texts, or royal tombs to accept the conventional wisdom that Teotihuacano identities were somehow absorbed into collectivities from the lowest to the highest social stratum. Notwithstanding the common use of this adjective, Teotihuacan was not "faceless"–on the contrary, there are many depictions of humans and anthropomorphic deities. Significantly, the canons for the depictions, practices, and ideals of human bodies in the artworks frequently overlap the canons for the design and elaboration of structures to be inhabited by the populace. The material evidence indicates that what Teotihuacanos emphasized in their construction of personhood was places, the representations of these places within the built environment, and their renderings in diagrammatic form as conflations of bodies and buildings. The differences in personhood between Teotihuacan and their Maya contemporaries are indeed profound, but not in the simplistic manner of "group" versus "individual" that dominates the literature.

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