

Life after Death in Teotihuacan

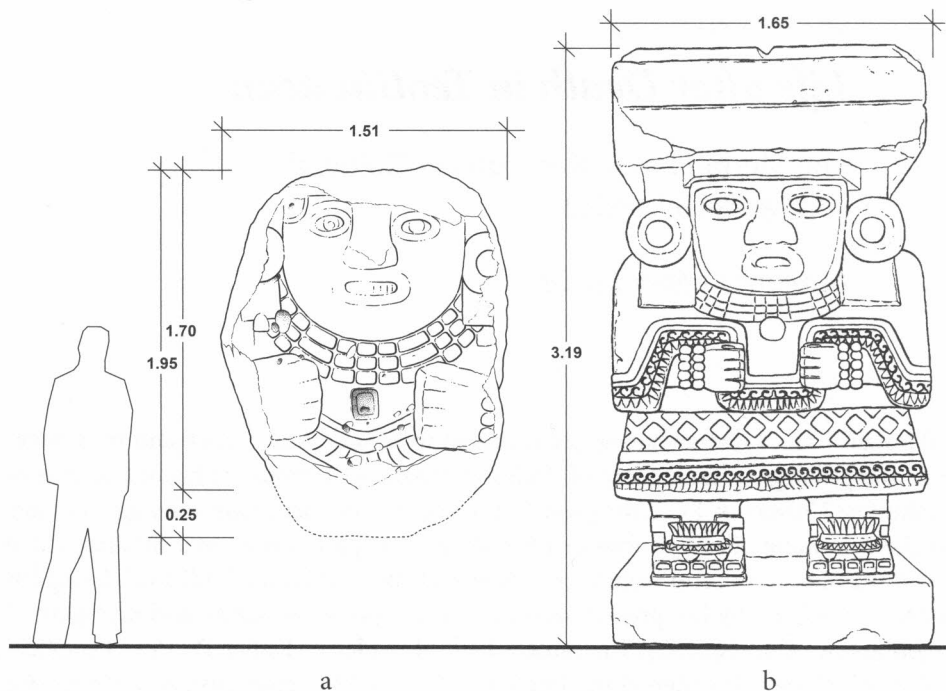
The Moon Plaza's Monoliths in Colonial and Modern Mexico

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Although I am a dirt archaeologist educated in Mexico and France and thus never had the privilege of taking any of Professor Pasztory's famous art history courses at Columbia University, I had the great fortune of meeting her many years ago, in 1989, at the beginning of my professional life. Both of us participated in a seminar at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City; to this day, I still recall being left utterly speechless by her presentation on military power as reality and metaphor at Teotihuacan. Consequently, I became a faithful reader of Esther Pasztory's publications, which have broadened my limited archaeologist's perspective to embrace the masterpieces of antiquity and all material culture of past societies in general. In fact, many of my fellow archaeologists and I accordingly have learned to analyze the social context in which art is produced and consumed in order to comprehend the selection of certain aesthetic forms and compositions. Conversely, we have also come to understand, thanks to her, that these forms and compositions are documents with cognitive value, which are useful for deciphering the ethos of a culture. Therefore, for this well-deserved tribute, I offer a brief study in the genre of "social history" or "cultural biography of things" (see Kopytoff 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999)—for objects, like human beings, also have a "social life" and weave their own stories throughout the intricate cycles of their creation, use, reuse, and destruction. Analyzing these cycles can be highly productive, for they inform us about the distinct roles that these objects play in the life and identity of their creators and users.

Previously I have examined the cultural biography of several Mexica monuments, including the famous Coatlicue (López Luján 2008; Fauvet-Berthelot and López Luján 2011; López Austin and López Luján 2012; López Luján 2012a). This paradigmatic sculpture has been viewed over time with admiration, horror, enthusiasm, or curiosity, but never with indifference. To the Mexica priest, it was a goddess both feared and venerated; to the Spanish friar, a manifestation of the devil; to the eighteenth-century soldier, a headless and footless idol; to the positivist scientist, a historical document; to the revolutionary artist, a muse; and to the present-day museum visitor, a work of art. This plurality of readings has determined the fate of the monument: after being worshiped atop the Great Temple, the Coatlicue was buried beneath the colonial plaza; a few centuries later, after accidental exhumation, it was packed away in a *cabinet de curiosités*, subsequently to be exalted at the center of the National Museum (Paz 1989, 40–41).

Fig. 5.1. (a) Monolith 2 and (b) Monolith 1 of Teotihuacan. Measurements given in meters. Composite diagram by Michelle De Anda and Nicolas Latsanopoulos. Used by permission.



The Monoliths of Teotihuacan

In this chapter I provide a brief biography of two large sculpted monoliths from Teotihuacan, a civilization that we know much better thanks to the contributions of Pasztory and several of her students. According to Pasztory (1998, 67–72) and Patricia Sarro (1988, 3–9; 1991), the large-format sculptures of Teotihuacan are inextricably linked to monumental architecture, both public and private. Emerging from walls, stairways, and entrances, or occupying central plazas and courtyards, they are markedly frontal representations, yielding little information from their other surfaces, and they exhibit a dominant bilateral symmetry and an overall geometrism that mimics the blocks from which they originated. They are part of “the most abstract tradition in Mesoamerican art” (Pasztory 2005, 128), that is, a nonnaturalistic, nonnarrative art that followed a corporate and eminently religious ideology. The present study focuses on two such sculptures, which I am calling Monolith 1 (M1) and Monolith 2 (M2), which represent female personages. The best known of the two, M1 (fig. 5.1b), which is on display at the National Museum of Anthropology (inv. 10–1163) in a nearly perfect state of conservation, measures 319 by 165 by 165 cm (Almaraz 1865, 355) and weighs approximately 23,800 kg (Heizer and Williams 1963, 96; 1965, 57–58). The other sculpture, M2 (fig. 5.1a), which still resides at the archaeological site, in quite damaged condition, measures 195 by 151 by 143 cm (Alejandro Sarabia, personal communication, December 2012) and weighs about 6,000 kg (Heizer and Williams 1965, 61).

Both sculptures were carved in pale gray lava, which Robert F. Heizer and Howel Williams (1963, 97; 1965, 57–61) described in their petrographic studies as a “porphyritic, pilotaxitic, pyroxene andesite with resorbed hornblendes.” The source of this material is 25 km south of Teotihuacan, on the western flank of the Sierra Nevada (Ordoñez 1922, 165; Heizer and Williams 1963, 95–96; 1965, 56–57), where large rocks

of this type of andesite, up to 4 m long, are usually found enclosed in a matrix of andesitic mud, silt, sand, and gravel. Originally part of thick lava flows on the upper slopes of Mount Tlaloc, these rocks subsequently detached and powerful torrents of water and mud deposited them at lower elevations, where Teotihuacan sculptors could access and transform them into blocks (Heizer and Williams 1963, 95). Such blocks were conveyed to Teotihuacan with the aid of ropes and levers, and perhaps mounted on sledges that were slid on wooden rollers (Heizer 1966, 821). Considering that M1 weighs nearly 24 metric tons and applying the respective formulas of Heyerdahl, Atkinson, and Kagamiyama, one may estimate that it took between 360 and 730 individuals to transport the original block (Heizer and Williams 1965, 58; cf. 1963, 96). The trip may well have proceeded due north by land, although it seems more logical that part of the journey would have involved the lake system.

Once in Teotihuacan, artists gave human form to these blocks, without taking away from their massivity, weightiness, and cubist volume (Toscano 1952, 211–13; Covarrubias 1957, 151; Nicholson 1971a, 100–1). As George Kubler (1984, 60) rightly pointed out with regard to M1, “The profiles approach cubical forms, and the body parts are all rendered in orthogonal projections upon the front plane, as in an engineer’s drawing of a human figure.” The figure depicted is a female personage, whose body is complete, standing upright, with her hands on her stomach and her feet firmly planted on a quadrangular pedestal. She has a typical Teotihuacan face, with elliptical eyes, a wide nose, and a trapezoidal mouth, and she wears a plain *quechquemiltl* blouse and a diamond lattice-patterned skirt. Both garments have a border with four parallel bands; the upper two are plain, the third a “scroll chain,” and the fourth a “fringe feather” (Langley 1986, 259–60, 283–84). Her clothing is complemented with a large quadrangular headdress, a pair of round earspools with trapezoidal pendants, a necklace with quadrangular and tubular beads, a pair of bracelets with globular beads, and a pair of sandals with the heel adorned with globular beads and the front knot decorated with a bundle of feathers. M1 also has a cylindrical cavity in the chest, where a precious stone that simulated the heart was placed and gave life to the image (Seler 1998 [1915], 193; G. Kubler 1984, 60; cf. Headrick 2007, 36–37). M2 likely had dimensions similar to those of M1, in addition to affinities in the face, hands, earspools, necklace, and bracelets (Seler 1998, 195), although significant technical and formal differences in M2, including a quadrangular chest cavity and the absence of scrolls, suggest that the two monoliths were not carved by the same group of artists or combined as a sculptural pair (but see Pasztory 1997b, 99).

The Pre-Hispanic Period

With respect to the function of these two monoliths, recent studies have proposed that they might be symbolically connected with the moon (Cowgill 1997, 149–51) and that they were representations of a mountain goddesses who hosted the “ritual raising of a world tree” (Headrick 2002, 83–87, 94–99) or else effigies of actual rulers dressed in female attire (Headrick 2007, 34–41, 157), although older hypotheses identifying them as water, vegetation, and earth goddesses seem more plausible (e.g., Mendoza 1877b, 225–26; Batres 1890, 264; 1906, 12–14; Krickeberg 1949, 200–201; Bernal 1969, ii; Pasztory 1977, 87–89; 1997b, 84–91, 99; 1998, 68–69; Coe 1984, 97; G. Kubler 1984, 60; von Winning 1987, 136–37; Matos Moctezuma 1990, 81; Paulinyi 2006, 9, 13; 2007,

244; 2013, 89). Thus the large quadrangular headdress may evoke the *amacalli* worn by female corn deities in Postclassic times (see Pasztory 1983, 218–19). More revealing is the presence of scroll chains and abundant jade beads that are commonly associated with aquatic and vegetation divinities (Codex Fejérváry-Mayer 1994, 33; Beyer 1965 [1920], 419–23; Langley 1986, 283–84),¹ the composite earspools and skirt's pattern similar to those worn by Mexica earth goddesses (Codex Borbonicus 1991, 24–25, 32, 35; Codex Magliabechiano 1996, 45r; von Winning 1987, 137; López Luján 2012a, 186–89; 2012b, 421),² and the hands in the same position as Huastec sculptures representing fertility goddesses (Fuente and Gutiérrez Solana 1980, 51–134).

These two female images clearly played a fundamental role in the religious life of Teotihuacan, for they are the two largest monoliths found thus far at the site (Allain 2000, 46). Evidently they did not perform a secondary architectural function, however, for they never were incorporated into the stairways or walls of a temple. Rather, they are two rare examples of extant monumental sculptures that probably occupied a central position, perhaps on a large platform or inside a temple. Moreover, their physiognomy, height, and massive volume are not suitable for ritual tablets, sacrificial stones, braziers, or architectural supports but are quite characteristic of cult images (see Heizer and Williams 1965, 59–60; von Winning 1987, 136–37).

Although we have no information about their use in Teotihuacan times, we do know that large monoliths from the Classic period were still worshiped at the site during the Late Postclassic, that is to say, nine centuries after the great city collapsed. In fact, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the pyramid ruins served as a ritual stage for the surrounding communities and were visited regularly by Mexica people (López Luján 1989, 51–59; 2013; Nichols 2013). According to the sixteenth-century *Relación de Tecciztlan*, the Mexica ruler Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin and his priests went to the ruins every twenty days to consult the oracle and make sacrifices to nine large images: one called “the Moon” on top of the Pyramid of the Moon, six “Brothers of the Moon” crowning separate buildings around the Moon Plaza, “Mictlanteuctli” on the central platform of the Sun Plaza, and “Tonacateuctli” atop the Pyramid of the Sun, the latter image being “made of a very hard, rough stone all of one piece . . . eighteen feet long, six feet wide, and six feet thick” (Castañeda 1926, 68; 1986, 34–236).

The Conquest

The aforementioned Postclassic cult was eradicated soon after the Spanish conquest. At that time considered demonic idols, the images of Teotihuacan were victims of a relentless iconoclastic policy, attested to by the Franciscan friar Gerónimo de Mendieta (1870, 87; 1886, 92), who visited the ruins and left us two important accounts. One of them relates that on top of the pyramids “there are some very large statues of idols made of stone, especially one that stands on one of the sides of the great mountain, which they say the first holy bishop of Mexico City Juan de Zumárraga tried to have brought down from there, and it could not be done with any device, because of its immensity; it is not known by what power and human efforts it could have gotten up there” (1886, 92). This must have occurred between 1527 and 1548, when Zumárraga was bishop and subsequently archbishop of that see. Early in the seventeenth century, however, the aforementioned Tonacateuctli still remained on the Pyramid of the Sun, and pieces of the rest of the images were scattered around the other pyramids,

as the mestizo historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl (1975–77, 1:272–73) recorded. Nearly a century later in 1697, the Italian traveler Giovanni Gemelli Careri (1976, 128–29) saw two pieces—the arms and feet—at the bottom of the Pyramid of the Sun, and three other pieces at the foot of the Pyramid of the Moon. A few decades later, the Milanese nobleman Lorenzo Boturini also confirmed the existence of various fragments (Veytia 1836, 1:248–49).

As for our two sculptures, I believe their original locations can be established with sufficient certainty. To do so, we must take into account the places where they were first recorded (fig. 5.2): M1 was behind Building 4 in the Moon Plaza, and M2 lay on the southeast corner of the central altar of the same plaza (Acosta 1964, 5–10). Therefore, it is possible that M1 crowned Building 4, although it seems more logical that such a large image representing a woman would have resided atop the Pyramid of the Moon. Following the latter supposition, the monolith must have been taken down the west side of the pyramid and then hauled 140 m to the south. Its magnificent state of conservation suggests that the maneuver was performed carefully, probably in the same way Mexica monuments were taken down from Tenochtitlan's Great Temple in 1521. The chronicler Francisco Cervantes de Salazar (1985, 341–42) mentioned that, in the Mexica capital, nearly four hundred people with ropes pulled the sculptures, mounted on sledges and protected with mats, and did so in total silence. In the case of Teotihuacan, M1 was left facedown at the bottom of a depression, perhaps to prevent desecration. Likewise, I believe that M2 originally was located atop the central altar of the Moon Plaza, which would have involved a move of only 23 m.

The Colonial Period

Unlike M1, whose principal relief depicting a female remained concealed until it was stood upright in 1864, M2 lay exposed in the center of the plaza where it was severely damaged by man and nature. Having lost most of its features, it was effectively used by the people in the surrounding communities as a boundary marker from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In fact, several unpublished documents, currently conserved at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Mexico City, refer to the use of this monolith to mark the boundary between the agricultural fields of San Martín Obispo and those of San Francisco Mazapan (Oudijk and López Luján 2006). For example, a 1596 land title mentions a judicial survey that traversed the archaeological site, which visited “a carved stone that sets out the limits of the community of San Martín and its Barrio [de San Francisco],” then went by “a steep hill they call Tzacualli” (the Pyramid of the Sun), and, fifty paces farther, arrived at the boundary between San

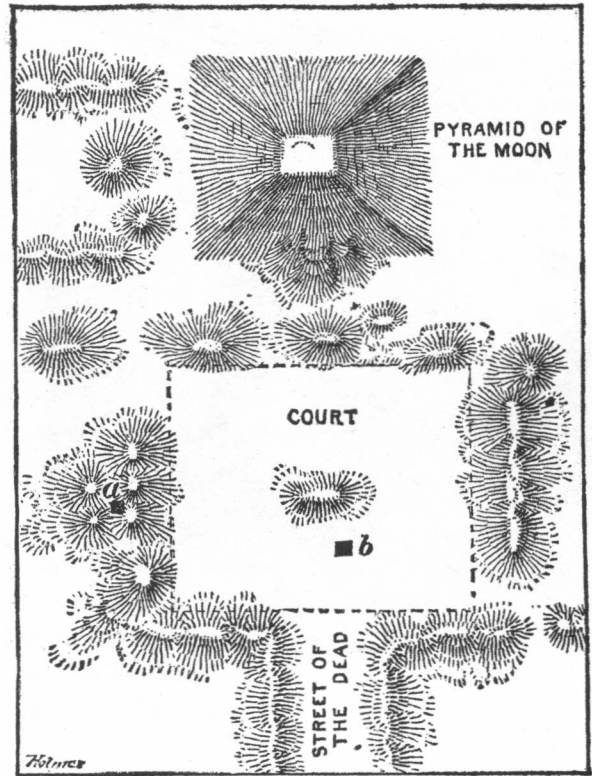


Fig. 5.2. Location in the nineteenth century of (a) M1 and (b) M2 in the Moon Plaza of Teotihuacan. Drawing by William Holmes (1885, 361, fig. 9).

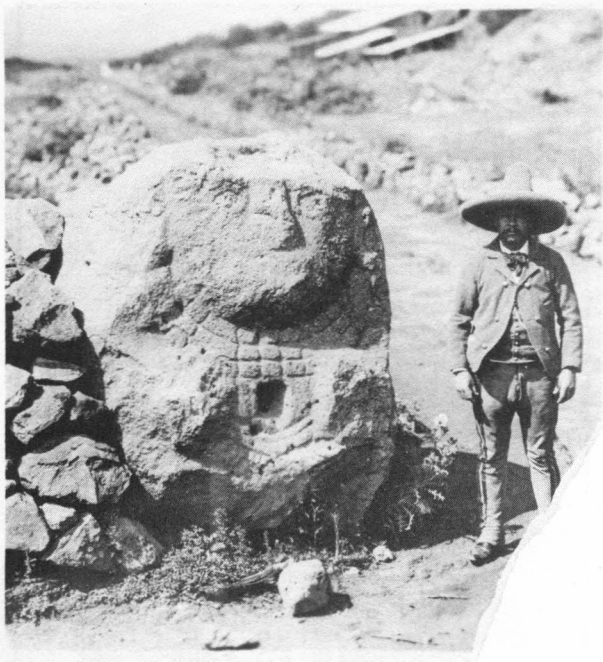
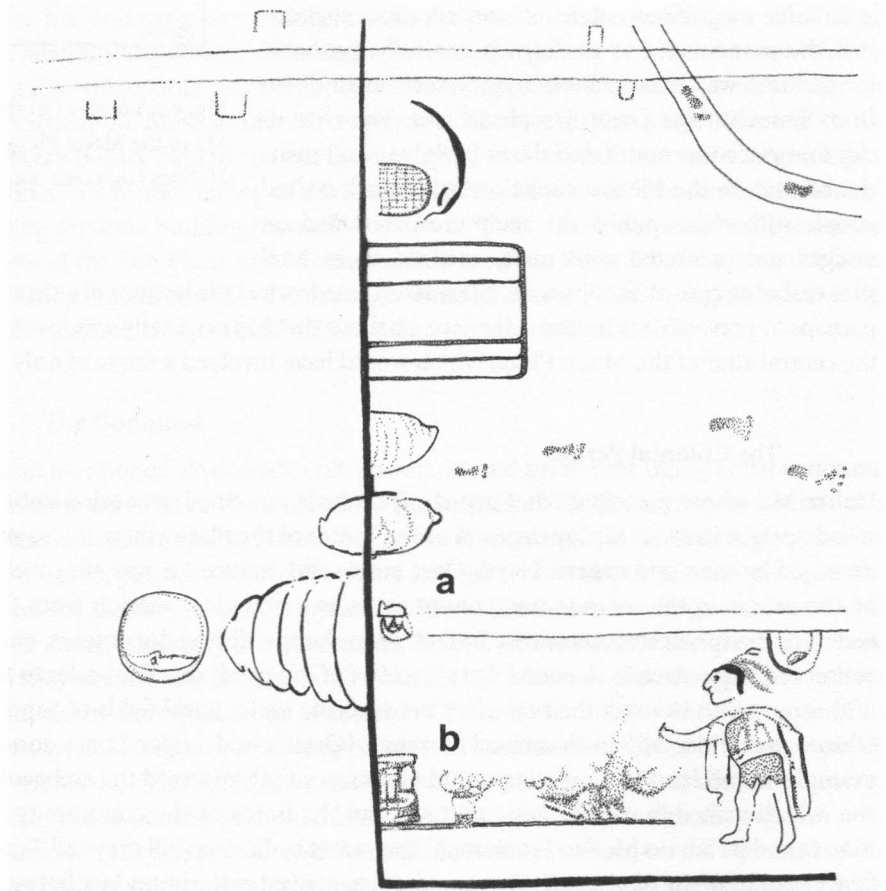


Fig. 5.3. Photograph from the late nineteenth century of M2 used as boundary marker in the center of the Moon Plaza. Reproduced by permission of Instituto Nacional Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (466979). © CONACULTA.INAH. SINAFO.FN.MÉXICO.

Fig. 5.4. Possible location in the eighteenth century of (a) M2 and (b) M1, in the *Mapa de San Francisco Mazapan*. In this map, north is to the left. Drawing by Julio Emilio Romero after Arreola (1922, pl. 148, between 552–53).



Francisco and the Barrio de Purificación (AGN, Tierras, vol. 2607, exp. 1, 16v–17r). A much later title from 1767 mentions another survey to reestablish the old boundaries, which visited the “very large carved stone . . . that divides the lands of San Martín” from those of San Francisco, from there proceeded in “the direction of the south wind” along the “camino de micaoco” (Street of the Dead) to reach “Zaquale” (the Pyramid of the Sun), and then went fifty yards west to the boundary between San Francisco and the Barrio de Purificación (AGN, Tierras, vol. 1710, exp. 2, 231v). Moreover, throughout the nineteenth century M2 continued to serve the same function, located at the intersection of a wall running north-south along the Street of the Dead and another wall that ran east from there (fig. 5.3).

These land titles were accompanied by maps prepared during the judicial surveys, which apparently included the Mapa de San Francisco Mazapan published by José María Arreola (1922), although it is no longer extant. The map covers much of the archaeological zone, with the Pyramid of the Moon depicted as a blue mountain, crowned with a crescent representing the European lunar convention. In front of the pyramid, in the center of the Moon Plaza, is a round form enclosing some sort of human figure, which possibly marks the position of M2 (fig. 5.4a). A little lower, a blue rectangle appears with straight lines inside that likely represents the back of M1 in the spot where it remained abandoned for centuries (fig. 5.4b). This supposition seems to be confirmed by the Nahuatl gloss adjacent to the rectangle: *Nican No Tle Yntolohuaco*, meaning “Here is also their shrine,” in the sense of “Also what is here is their altar.”

The Enlightenment in New Spain

As time went on, perceptions concerning these monoliths diametrically changed. By the late eighteenth century, Enlightenment ideas were circulating in New Spain, and archaeological monuments, including M1 and M2, began to be appreciated as historical documents with a particular aesthetic content. This is illustrated by the 1789 visit of José Antonio Alzate, who recorded: “Descending the mound of San Martín on the west side there is . . . a parallelepiped, very well carved, whose upper diameter is three yards” (López Luján and Sugiyama 2015). Two years later, a team of scientists and artists sent by the Italian explorer Alessandro Malaspina in the context of his “scientific-political expedition around the world” (González Claverán 1988, 97–101, 124–26, 391; 1991, 117–19; López Luján and Sugiyama 2015) visited Teotihuacan in September 1791 on their way to the royal mines in Hidalgo and Guanajuato. Fortunately the leader of the team, Antonio Pineda (Museo Naval de Madrid, ms. 563), a mineralogy expert from Guatemala, documented the visit in his diary and mentioned our M1: “At the foot of a pyramid is recorded an enormous rectangular stone 11½ feet long and half as wide, with 6 inches on all sides: all of it is adorned with decorative borders, and there are some hieroglyphics on the surface lying facedown against the ground. Our painters depicted it, gaining access via a hole underneath” (112v–113r). In a note, Pineda described the rock’s color, fracture, composition, density, hardness, acid reaction, and origin in the Sierra Nevada (147r). And in another section of his diary, he wondered how they would have moved this monolith to Teotihuacan without machinery or draft animals (113r–113v).

In those same years, Teotihuacan was visited by Guillermo Dupaix, the dragoon captain from Luxembourg whose penchant for antiquities led him to travel on his own

account through much of New Spain. Although his notes have not survived, three drawings that he made of the ruins exist at the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City (inv. 58–60; López Luján and Pérez 2013). In the first drawing, Dupaix, in almost childlike fashion, sketched the pyramids of the Sun and the Moon. In the second, he depicted a Postclassic sculpture, which, according to its gloss, was located on a hill in the Moon Plaza. In the third drawing, he sketched our two monoliths (plate 8), where M2, depicted with two giant breasts instead of hands, is identified as the lunar image worshiped on top of the pyramid, and the back of M1, which Dupaix erroneously thought was M2's pedestal, appears beside it.

Independent Mexico

In 1821, Mexico became an independent nation, and consequently its territory began to be systematically traversed by North American, British, French, and German visitors, who had come to the young republic as part of diplomatic missions or looking for easy fortunes in trading or mining. Many of them published their diaries or correspondence, which are permeated with the romanticism of that era and usually contain poorly informed descriptions of Teotihuacan peppered with exaggerated evocations of pre-Hispanic sacrificial practices. Although the site often disappointed them because its buildings were covered with a thick layer of earth and vegetation, these visitors marveled at the view of the horizon from the top of the pyramids and had fun collecting ceramic figurines and obsidian blades.

Many of these travelers mentioned having inspected our two monoliths, usually after consuming some refreshing pulque in the stalls located at the foot of the Pyramid of the Moon (Bullock 1824, 414–15). The cyclopean proportions and sculptural quality of M1 particularly drew their attention; but, because its female traits were not visible, they were left to speculate about its function. According to the American diplomat Edward Tayloe (1959, 105–6), it was simply a large, well-cut stone; to the British showman William Bullock (1824, 415), the American ambassador Waddy Thompson (1846, 140–42), and the German collector Ferdinand Seiffart (*Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, E1192/1852*), it was a sacrificial stone; in the opinion of the British army officer Mark Beaufoy (1828, 192) and the Austrian painter Jean-Frédéric Waldeck (*Newberry Library, Ayer 1831, 3; Baudez 1993, 63*), it was an altar; to the French settler Mathieu de Fossey (1857, 316), it was a tombstone covered with hieroglyphics; and, according to the Mexican surveyor Ramón del Moral (Ortega, in Veytia 1836, 1:239n1), it was the pedestal of another sculpture. The British mountaineer Charles Latrobe (1836, 162) and the American diplomat Brantz Mayer (1844, 224–25) mentioned that the monument was known as the “fainting stone” and explained that the name reflected the popular belief that anyone who dared to sit on the monolith fell unconscious, though both authors regretted not corroborating this alleged phenomenon firsthand. This belief may have indigenous roots; present-day Nahuatl and Otomí people say that stones, from pebbles to megaliths, contain the primordial, harmful forces of ancestral deities (Galinier 1987, 447–48).

To a lesser extent, M2 was also the subject of speculation for travelers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Bullock (1824, 415) and Tayloe (1959, 105–6) said that it was simply a rough stone with reliefs; Waldeck (*Newberry Library, Ayer 1831, 3*) saw it as the head of a sphinx; Beaufoy (1828, 192), del Moral (Ortega, in Veytia 1836, 1:239n1),

Mayer (1844, 224–25), and the British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor (1861, 147–48) realized that it was the remnant of an anthropomorphic idol; and Mayer (1844, 224–25) suggested it might be another sacrificial stone.

Nearly all of these visitors recorded the measurements of the sculptures, but only three of them drew the monoliths. Beaufoy (1828, 190–91) made a line drawing of the archaeological site in which he depicted two small items that approximately corresponded to the position of the sculptures in the Moon Plaza. Waldeck (Baudez 1993, 70, pl. 9; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, M238790) painted a watercolor of the site, with two boxes delineated in the center; the one on the right depicts the inverted back of M1, that on the left shows us that M2 formed part of a stone wall and was lying on its side (Holmes 1885, 362–63). Mayer (1844, 222–24), in turn, published a sketch that located both sculptures more precisely.

The Second Empire

With the French Intervention and the installation of the Second Empire in the 1860s, the attitudes about antiquities changed once again. Maximilian, during his brief tenure as emperor, not only renewed the ban on exporting archaeological artifacts (Diario del Imperio 1, no. 117, May 22, 1865, 481) but also moved the Public Museum of Natural History, Archaeology, and History to the imperial palace and gave instructions for the foundation of a similar museum in Mérida. The emperor also formed the Scientific Commission of Pachuca and appointed as its director the Mexican engineer Ramón Almaraz, who was entrusted with studying the ruins of Teotihuacan. In 1864, members of that commission stood M1 upright so that it could be photographed, sketched, and measured accurately (Almaraz 1865, 354–57; Batres 1890, 263–64), thus allowing the director to calculate its volume, density, and weight. Almaraz not only determined that its dimensions were 3.19 by 1.65 by 1.65 m but concluded that Teotihuacanos used a linear measurement system whose unit was around 80 cm (see Sugiyama 2010).

After the work of the commission was completed, Maximilian, accompanied by a large entourage, went to Teotihuacan to see the pyramids and the recently raised sculpture. Four days later, the *Diario del Imperio* (1, no. 93, April 24, 1865, 387–88) described the visit: “On arriving at San Juan Teotihuacan, the emperor ordered that they leave immediately to visit the pyramids. He went to the main ones, climbing the one called the Pyramid of the Sun, and issued several provisions so that all of the objects of historical interest found there would be preserved. At one of those monuments he paused to contemplate a magnificent idol which was found there.” Maximilian was so fascinated with the ancient city that he returned at dawn to witness the sunrise from the top of the Pyramid of the Sun (see also Blasio 1934, 51–52; Ratz 2003, 165–67; Ratz and Gómez Tepexicuapan 2012, 192–93; Knechtel 2013, 154–55).

Around the same time, members of Napoleon III’s Commission Scientifique also visited Teotihuacan. The French architect Léon Méhédin, who was quite taken by the two monoliths, immediately informed his superiors about the importance of making replicas of them (Gerber, Nicaise, and Robichon 1992, 37). According to his instructions, copies should be made of the greatest possible number of “large idols of the religions of the highlands of Anahuac” (1992, 35), for they would help scholars in France assess the progress of indigenous societies toward civilization (Fauvet-Berthelot and López Luján 2011, 20). Méhédin used a new procedure for this known as *lottinoplastie*,

a technique for creating very light and impermeable molds that enabled the production of a large number of highly accurate plaster reproductions (Fauvet-Berthelot and López Luján 2011, 19–21). The following year, the mold, drawings, and photographs that Méhédin made of M1 were sent to Paris (Le Goff and Prévost Urkidi 2011, 163, 301, 305, 335, 352; Gerber, Nicaise, and Robichon 1992, 51, 176, cat. 194–95). In 1867, Méhédin's replica was cast in plaster and exhibited on the Champ de Mars as part of the Universal Exposition (Gerber, Nicaise, and Robichon 1992, 38, 59; Demeulenaere-Douyère 2009, 10; López Luján 2012a, 162–66). Subsequently, in 1882, this replica (plate 9) became part of the Musée d'Ethnographie collections and thus is currently found in the Musée du quai Branly (inv. MQB 71.1882.64.1.1–3).

In the twilight of Mexico's Second Empire, Maximilian apparently ordered the Pachuca Commission to transport the monolith to Mexico City, which at that time meant an expenditure of 40,000 francs along with several army platoons to clear the route that the monument would follow (Butler 1885, 150–51; Batres 1890, 264). This order reflected the emperor's desire and policy of enriching at all costs the new installations of the museum. The ordered transfer, however, never materialized (Diario del Imperio 5, no. 623, January 26, 1867, 67), for Maximilian soon stopped receiving military support from Napoleon III and consequently was captured and shot by Republicans, in 1867.

The Restored Republic

The restoration of the republic after Maximilian's demise ushered in yet another chapter in the biography of our monoliths. By this time the local population already had begun to cover M1 with earth and stones (fig. 5.5), perhaps to discourage any new attempt to bring it to Mexico City (Bullock 1866, 166; Batres 1890, 264). There are abundant references and images of its partial burial, including those of the British adventurer William Henry Bullock (1866, 166), the American naturalist Frederick Ober (1885, 483), and the French explorer Désiré Charnay (1880, 195) and compatriot industrialist Émile Chabrand (2008, 284). The main event of the 1870s and 1880s, however, was the emergence of the first studies of these two stones written by professionals in the fields of history and archaeology. Although these works suffer from being too descriptive and mainly draw upon earlier publications, they have the virtue of bringing together much of the textual and pictorial information available at that time. These studies include the notices by Gumesindo Mendoza (1877a, 187; 1877b, 225–26), the director of the National Museum, in his institution's *Anales*; the extensive summary by the American Hubert Bancroft (1883, 538–40) in his monumental *Native Races*; the article by compatriot Amos Butler (1885) in the *American Antiquarian*; and the response of countryman William Holmes (1885, 362–63; see also 1897, 293–97) in the *American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, which contains several images of both monoliths as well as the most accurate map of their location that we have (fig. 5.2).

Also belonging in this group is a curious article by the Mexican archaeologist Leopoldo Batres (1888; 1889, 16, pl. 9) in the French journal *La Nature*, which proposed a new method of racial identification. According to Batres, linguistics was not suitable for such purposes, for members of a race may speak a language not spoken by their ancestors. As a solution, he suggested analyzing the physiognomy of ancient



Fig. 5.5. M1 partially covered with earth and stones, c. 1885. Reproduced by permission of Instituto Nacional Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (313259). © CONACULTA.INAH. SINAFO.FN.MÉXICO.

anthropomorphic sculptures. For example, he pointed out that there were two successive levels of archaeological occupation at Teotihuacan: Toltec and Aztec. Since M1, in his opinion, belonged to the Toltec civilization, studying the proportions of its figure's face was crucial for identifying its modern descendants in the Valley of Teotihuacan.

The Porfiriato and After

The climax of this cultural biography occurred in 1889 and 1890, when Batres insisted on moving M1 to the National Museum. This unleashed an avalanche of debates and attempts to block the project. A few years earlier, in 1885, President Porfirio Díaz had tapped Batres to occupy the newly created position of inspector of archaeological monuments of the republic and entrusted him with monitoring the conservation of sites and monuments, preventing illicit excavations and exports, and inventorying all acquisitions and donations subsequently to be channeled to the National Museum (Gallegos Téllez Rojo and Pastrana Flores 1997, 271–72; Rico Mansard 2004, 127, 137). Obviously, this decision raised the fury of the officials of that institution, who considered this an encroachment upon their functions. This began a long struggle for the control of patrimony between the inspectorate and the museum, that is, between field and museum archaeologists, which reached capital proportions with the relocation of M1 (Rico Mansard 2004, 138–42).

Beyond the wrangling between these two cultural institutions, however, the transfer

of M1 reveals the ideological importance that pre-Hispanic civilizations had acquired among Mexican politicians and intellectuals at this time. As Christina Bueno (2010a, 2010b) has noted, the idea of a glorious national past was constructed and refined during the Porfiriato (1876–1911), which sought at all costs to create a unique heritage capable of generating a sense of pride for all the inhabitants of a country which, as we well know today, is still multicultural. Archaeology, then, would serve as a source of identity and prestige in a nation that dreamed of itself as modern, progressive, and enveloped in an aura of scientism. And Batres was instrumental in fulfilling a political agenda pursued by the state in which monuments of the past were seen as the materialization of the genius that characterized the ancestors of all Mexicans. Under this logic, those antiquities deemed exceptional for their extraordinary dimensions, precious constituent materials, magisterial artistry, or evidence of writing would have to be protected and celebrated by the supreme government and its agents. This helps us understand why Batres was so given to the task of expanding the nation's archaeological patrimony and simultaneously became a veritable treasure hunter and true patriot, inundating the National Museum with masterpieces that were proof of Mexico's millenarian grandeur.

As one might expect, the story of the monolith's transfer has several dimensions, including the technological and logistical aspects involved (Batres 1890; 1906, 15–18). Batres's initiative was approved in August 1889 by the president, and the work began immediately. An artillery company spent four days removing the earth and stones covering the monolith before clearing the 7.8 km route that it would have to travel. The local population gathered there to weep and offer bouquets of yellow flowers to the image. Many of them rebuked Batres for wanting to take the monument from the site and assured him that he never would succeed: "The goddess will not allow herself to be moved because she is tied to the ground with unbreakable chains" (quoted in Bueno 2010a, 215). On November 16, the sculpture lay on a cart pulled by forty-six mules and thus commenced its journey toward the Teotihuacan train station (fig. 5.6).³ The monolith, well protected with sacks, inched its way little by little in what Batres called "the mythic carriage" (Bueno 2010a, 215). Things got complicated in the middle of the trip when they had to cross the San Juan River with the aid of wooden beams and steel rails, but on February 28, 1890, the monolith finally reached the station. Two days later, it was loaded with troops and gear onto a train to Mexico City, where it arrived in just three hours. Nevertheless, new technical complications arose that made the journey between Buenavista Station and the National Museum, from March 17 to April 9, seem almost interminable.

Another fascinating dimension of this story is the media coverage; Batres did not miss an opportunity for generating publicity. To this end he made sure that numerous journalists and distinguished guests were present every step of the way. As a result, several sympathetic stories began to appear in the city's daily newspapers about the transfer of the monolith and the great service that Batres was doing the republic, although other newspapers that were hostile to the archaeologist wasted no time in responding with critical articles and sarcasm. A journalistic frenzy ensued, one unique in the history of Mexican archaeology (Beyer 1965 [1920]). To give an idea of its proportions, thus far I have documented 213 articles and eleven cartoons from fifteen different newspapers (fig. 5.7).⁴

While some newspapers merely narrated the daily progress of the monolith, others



Fig. 2. — Le monument de la *Déesse de l'eau*, fixé au chariot de transport.

Les artilleurs commencèrent par enlever les pierres | et des scories qui la recouvraient; cette opération,
 et les cailloux, par débarrasser la statue de la terre | malgré les difficultés d'exécution, fut faite en quatre

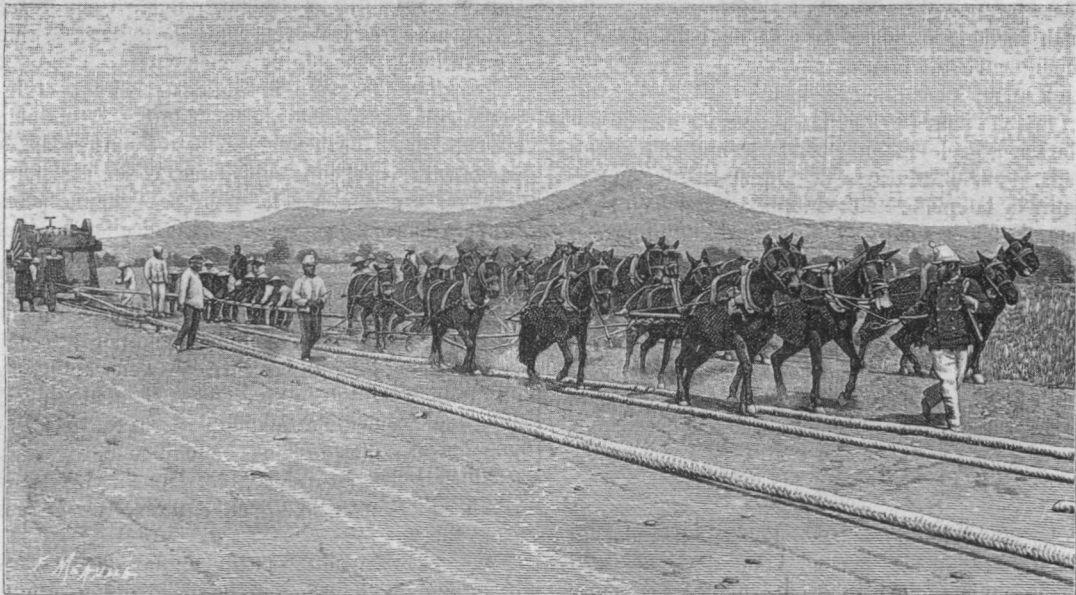


Fig. 3. — Transport du monument. (D'après des photographies communiquées par M. Léopoldo Batres.)

Fig. 5.6. Transporting M1 to the Teotihuacan train station. From Batres (1890, 265, figs. 2-3).

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T. I, p. 400.

(Que padrecote se necesitaria para decir la misa de ellos!)

Fig. 5.7. Caricature alluding to the transfer of M1 in which Leopoldo Batres and Alfredo Chavero appear. From the weekly *México Gráfico* 2, no. 71 (November 10, 1889), 1.

discussed the cost of the operation or remarked on the relevance of the technical solutions chosen. Others even spread the rumor that the goddess, with her magical powers, would rid the population of the influenza epidemic that was ravaging the city at the time. One reporter warned his readers not to expect to see the Venus de Milo or the Apollo Belvedere but rather a colossal sculpture as important to the history of Mexican art as the works of the primitive school of painting were to Europe. Batres, meanwhile, was the butt of all kinds of insults for his petulant character, for his manifest obesity, and for following the interpretation of Mendoza (1877b, 225), who had claimed that the monolith represented the Water Goddess (Batres 1890, 264; 1906, 12–14). The playwright Tomás Domínguez refuted him, saying that it was actually the Goddess of Prostitution, because the locals had explained to him that the sculpture was a woman petrified by her adulterous behavior (*El Nacional*, September 29, 1889, 2). Historian Alfredo Chavero (1892, xxviii–xxxiii; see also 1888, 366, 400) argued that it was the Goddess of the Crescent Moon, the deity of “pure love,” and that our M2 represented the Waning Moon, the “immodest deity with uncovered breasts.” To make matters worse, Emilio Riedel (1890), from the Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, proposed that M1 was at the same time the image of the Water Goddess and the Moon Goddess.

M1 had now achieved the greatest of popularities. A Paris jeweler created pins, buttons, and batons depicting its effigy; in Mexico City, a *pulquería*, a department store, and a brand of cigarettes were named after it (*El Monitor*, July 9, 1890, 3; November 12, 1890, 3); the writer Juan Mateos composed a lengthy poem about it (*El Monitor*, May 25, 1890, 2); and all sorts of tourist souvenirs inspired by the monument began to be manufactured and sold. Finally, the sculpture was installed in the Gallery of Monoliths (Blake 1891, 17–19; Galindo y Villa 1895, 57; Peñafiel 1900, 34; Seler 1907, 23b).

While M2 was left on its own in the archaeological zone, M1 was glorified in Mexico City by officials during the Porfiriato and successive revolutionary governments. Throughout the twentieth century it became one of the greatest works of art held in the National Museum and was admired by a long list of celebrities. In 1964, M1 underwent one last move, this time to the new National Museum of Anthropology in Chapultepec Park. It is worth mentioning that the sculpture was now considered to be the ultimate artistic expression of the City of the Gods and came to occupy the position of honor in the new Teotihuacan Hall. In that same year, the Teotihuacan site museum and my high school in Coyoacán, Mexico City, opened to the public, each with the installation of a fiberglass replica of the cubic sculpture.

Conclusion

In this brief cultural biography, we have seen how two blocks of andesite have lived very different lives over time, amid the disparate values and meanings imparted by their creators and users. According to the rhythm of social and historical transformations, these monoliths have been classified and reclassified in a world of shifting cultural categories. From the greatest of sacred images in pre-Hispanic times to desecrated idols after the Conquest, in the best of cases during the colonial period one of them served the local inhabitants as a boundary marker. During the Enlightenment, scientists and antiquarians used them to demonstrate the advances of vanished civilizations. Soon, however, they became the object of absurd speculations among romantic

nineteenth-century travelers, who saw them as pedestals, altars, pillars, or sacrificial stones. Then they were turned into positivist instruments that revealed ancient systems of measurement or modern methods of racial identification. Local populations, meanwhile, imagined them as receptacles of powerful forces causing fainting or as humans petrified by their sinful actions. Subsequently, one of these images was elevated to the status of patrimonial asset worthy of being conserved in a museum, where it was exhibited as a foundation of national pride and shaper of shared identities. But what do these two sculptures mean to us now? At least for archaeologists and historians, they are partial and imperfect reflections of our past; and, as Esther Pasztory well taught us, these partial and imperfect reflections are our best tools for deciphering the ethos of an ancient civilization.

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Notes

1. I should point out that, in the Postclassic central Mexican pantheon, no sharp line can be drawn iconographically or ideologically between water and maize goddesses (see Nicholson with Quiñones Keber 1983, 69–70).
2. This kind of earspool is exclusive to feminine representations in Teotihuacan art (Paulinyi 2007, 247–49).
3. A few days after, Batres erected in that place a 3 m high memorial made of lime and pebble (AGN, Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, exp. 6, 22r–22v).
4. I am currently preparing a book on this topic, which will include transcriptions of all of these newspaper articles and several archived documents.

Teotihuacán. Estatua mutilada con su pedestal, y representa esta figura agigantada de mujer, la Luna, todavía existe el Cerro hecho a mano en el qual tenia su culto.



Pedestal de dicha figura ó busto & Colosal.

Plate 8. Teotihuacan Monolith 1 and Monolith 2, according to a charcoal drawing by Guillermo Dupaix, c. 1791–1803. Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (60). © CONACULTA.INAH.BNAH.MÉXICO.



Plate 9. Replica of Teotihuacan Monolith 1, made by Léon Méhédin from a mold created in 1865. Photograph by Leonardo López Luján, taken in 2002 at the old Musée de l'Homme in Paris.

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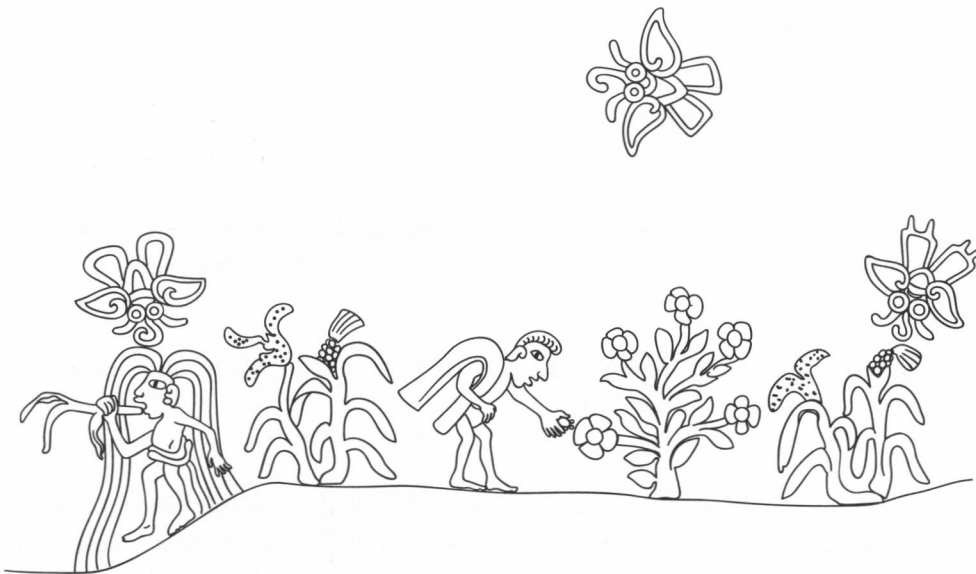
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Edited by

ANDREW FINEGOLD *and* ELLEN HOOBLER

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ESTHER PASZTORY



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