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Representations of the human body can have many culturally specific meanings. In the Western artistic conception—the origins of which in Europe go back to classical antiquity—anthropomorphic representations depict finite, stable entities with established anatomical features, often accompanied by material objects such as clothing that serve to identify them. These figures refer to the domains of nature, daily life, and cosmovision, but also to a repertoire of traditions, legends, and myths within a world that is both earthly and mythic, and within which humans can become entangled in the lives of the gods and engender intermediate categories of demigods and heroes. Anthropomorphic representations are usually situated within a framework of narratives that structure mythical thought, but they also feed into ideologies with historical, political, and social significance (see Malamoud and Vernant 1986). We need only widen our survey to include non-Western civilizations however to realize that these perceptions are anything but universal, and that the representation of the human body must be approached quite differently in the face of different ontologies (Costa and Fausto 2010; Descola 2005, 2010, 2013; Ingold and Palsson 2013; Latour 2005; Martínez González 2016; Viveiros de Castro 1992).

This volume meets this challenge by presenting a series of case studies on the anthropomorphic representations of the Mexican Highlands in the Prehispanic period by attempting to relate them to the Mesoamerican ontology. This new approach to ancient representations

Introduction

*Gods, Ancestors, and
Human Beings*

BRIGITTE FAUGÈRE AND
CHRISTOPHER S. BEEKMAN

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is particularly difficult because an understanding of the images will not be reached directly through indigenous texts that might explain them from the *emic* perspective. Unlike Maya works where text may accompany the image, writing—though it existed in Teotihuacan or with the Mexica—is of no help here as it was too limited in both its structure and use. The supporting sources used in this case are therefore ethnohistorical texts and ethnographic analogies, recognizing that the 3,000-year-old Mesoamerican ideology was decimated by European colonization in the sixteenth century and only survives today in acculturated forms. We refuse to accept this as a fatal weakness, however, and argue that elements of ideology concerning the body and the human person can be studied if we exercise sufficient caution when using these analogies. Why should we limit ourselves to a formal and *etic* analysis of imagery when we possess these other sources of information on the ontology of their makers?

Since the works of Esther Pasztory especially, art historians regularly go beyond the method Panofsky (1960) initiated to adopt a comparative approach in which art and anthropology speak to one another—sometimes going so far as to “aboli[sh] . . . the concept of art and [adopt] a cognitive interpretation of things” (Pasztory 2005, 4). This tendency has become only stronger over time with the growing number of works under the heading of an anthropology of art, even if the methodology linking typology, iconography, and contextual studies remains a strong trend among archaeologists (see, e.g., Lesure 2005). The theories of Alfred Gell, in particular, allow us to rethink the object as a mediator (Gell 1998; Osborne and Tanner 2007). Gell drew upon ethnographic studies in Oceania to develop a very stimulating approach in which art acts upon the viewer. This agency is obtained by the artist—as Gell particularly emphasized—through technical skill, but also through the dimensions chosen for the object and the diversity of materials employed, especially relevant in Prehispanic art with its emphasis on certain parts of the body and ornamentation (Orr and Loooper 2014). The representations’ capacity to act can even be evident when certain motifs are not meant to be seen,¹ but give the piece an essence and capacity for action. The viewer is in a way subjected to the artwork’s living presence, which becomes an instrument for dialogue, particularly between humans and nonhumans.

The theme of the human body has long held a prominent place in Mesoamerican anthropology, particularly since Alfredo López Austin’s (1980, 1990, 1996, 1997) foundational studies based on ethnohistoric sources, iconography, and ethnography, which have impacted generations of researchers. Taking an interest in the human body also means taking an interest in the perception of the person and in the conceptualization of human life (Gillespie 2001, 2002;

Joyce 2000; Martínez González 2012; Martínez González and Barona 2015; Martínez González and Mendoza 2011; Pitrou 2011, 2012). Social anthropologists, in particular, have been very interested in this subject and have developed approaches that prove to be very stimulating for archaeologists—these include among others, Chamoux (1981, 2011) and Sandstrom (1998) for the eastern Nahuas, Dehouve (2014) and Raby (2013) for Guerrero, Pitarch (2012) for the Tzeltal, Pitrou (2012) among the Mixe, Galinier (1990) for the Otomi, and Neurath (2011) for the Huichol. From an *emic* point of view, the person must be perceived as connected to a social sphere—the body forming an unstable assemblage of more or less independent living elements permanently connected to various spheres of nature, the cosmos, and society. The boundaries between elements become permeable—as do the boundaries between human beings, ancestors, or divinities (López Austin 1980; see Neurath 2011 for the Huichol). According to López Austin, these concepts are very deeply rooted in the ideology that constitutes the common foundation for the people of Mesoamerica (López Austin and López Luján 2001). In light of these observations, it becomes extraordinarily interesting to inquire as to the meaning of anthropomorphic representations in the Prehispanic period. How was this ontology retranscribed in a figural representation? And conversely, what formal features allow us to recognize the nature of the representation? How can we distinguish the representation of a god, an ancestor, or human being? And how can we take into account the historical and cultural differences in these conventions of representation?

Without going back over the many articles archaeologists have published on this theme, the methodological and theoretical issues involved (Boric and Robb 2008; Hamilakis et al. 2001; Lesure 2005), and the multifarious lines of research that have been opened (among others, Lesure 2002; Gillespie 2001; Joyce 2000), we shall restrict ourselves here to mentioning a few recent contributions concerning Mesoamerica directly. *The Memory of Bones: Body, Being and Experience among the Classic Maya* (Houston et al. 2006) constitutes a major reference for the Maya based on the study of the iconography and texts that, in this case, accompany the images. With the Maya, the art is highly figurative and the human person is represented in known political and social contexts. The artwork offers exceptional possibilities for interpreting meaning and sensibility, morality, personal status, alimentary practices, and hygiene, but also the means of expression and individual development—fields that make it possible to enquire into what is human within these contexts (Houston 2014).

A second work, *Mesoamerican Figurines: Small-Scale Indices of Large-Scale Social Phenomena* (Halperin et al. 2009), touches on many points that concern

us here—a reflection on the concept of the body, the function of anthropomorphic representations, and issues of social identities, genres, and links to political systems. It is also worth noting the publication in 2014 of an issue of the online journal *Ateliers d'Anthropologie* entitled “Representations and measurements of the human body in Mesoamerica” (Dehouve 2014), in which the body is studied in a comparative perspective by both archaeologists and social anthropologists. The contributions analyze the presence of the human body in social phenomena by studying figurative practices and rituals through mainly diachronic approaches, which attempt to highlight processes of continuity or discontinuity over the long term.

From their origins, anthropomorphic representations in the highlands of Mexico are obviously very numerous and varied. In the framework of this volume it is primarily the representations of the body as a whole—from head to toe—that are discussed, but this need not be the case. Prehispanic art quite often includes representations of isolated segments of the body. Heads without bodies (very frequent in all sorts of materials and which may be partially or entirely fleshless), ceramic vessels in the form of feet, footprints and handprints, organs, and especially the heart come to mind. These depictions are important as they focus on the significance, capacities to act, and/or symbolic meaning to be found in incomplete bodies (McKeever Furst 1995). Further, it has to be borne in mind that the archaeological objects studied in this volume—limited to materials preserved over time—comprise only a part of the range of Prehispanic figural imagery. Anthropomorphic figures are known to have been manufactured in perishable materials, such as wood, but also in even more rarely preserved raw materials of plant origin. Human figures woven from leaves, or modeled using grains, flour, or copal were made to play a role in many rituals or deposited as offerings, especially in the Aztec period. Durán and Sahagún, in particular, describe how effigies were made of grains of amaranth mixed with toasted maize and black maguey honey to represent Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca during rites that took place in the 20-day month of *Toxcatl* (Durán 1967; Sahagún 1969). Since artifacts as ritually important as these are not covered by our inquiry, ethnohistorical accounts of the conditions in which they were manufactured and used are of real interest.

Thus our investigation concerns what anthropomorphic bodies stood for—but also the meanings of composite bodies combining human and animal elements, or the assemblages of signs or symbols covering or replacing the human body. For an *etic* perspective, as followed in certain articles in this book, we have chosen to include these signs and symbols as we consider them amenable to analysis. Nonetheless, we are aware that from an *emic* standpoint

these states are not fixed but temporary and subject to continuous mutation and transformation.

GODS

The depiction of the god is situated between two poles. On the one hand, the intent to make the divinity present, to make it real in a living, animate image which can be used to contain it; on the other, the effort to suggest—in and through the image itself—the incommensurable distance separating the divine being from everything representing it here below. (Vernant 1986, 14; from the French original)

This statement by the eminent scholar of classical antiquity, Jean-Pierre Vernant, may be applied to the choices faced by Mesoamerican artists and crafts producers as they sought to embody divine entities whose nature, however, is very remote from the classical pantheons of the Old World. On the basis of an analysis of the ethnohistorical sources and iconography, López Austin (1980) proposed that the Mesoamerican gods of the Postclassic—invisible entities that are subtle in essence—could adopt the form of the human body, and art historians recognize gods in some anthropomorphic representations (e.g., Nicholson 1971; Pasztory 1983; Solis 2002). The alleged purpose of this personification was to make the establishment of links, pacts, and exchanges of services possible in an ongoing dialogue between humans and supernatural beings. Nevertheless, the invisible and omnipotent entities do not pass solely through the human body but through any living being or inert object, including those manufactured by humans, hence people, animals, planets, stones, buildings, or tools are all potential conduits. An analysis of the Nahuatl term *teotl* (Bassett 2015) shows how the essence and the power of the sacred can materialize in animate or inanimate objects. The well-known addition of mouths and eyes to Aztec sacrificial knives (*tecpane*) or to mountains in the *Primeros Memoriales* (Sahagún 1993) transforms the object to a god with the capacity to link humans and gods. The god or part of a god thus becomes material, perceptible but perishable. The divine essence, or substance, traverses time by passing from body to body over the generations (Houston 2014).

The constituents of gods and humans possess independent links to natural and cosmic forces, such that the microcosm holds crisscrossing links to the macrocosm. An important characteristic of the Mexica gods is their dynamic nature, which allows them to go through transformations in accordance with cosmic cycles (Graulich 1999) and grants them their capacity for “fusion and

fission,” a principle whereby a divinity can divide itself into several entities or join itself to others to form a more complex divinity endowed with special powers (Beyer 1965; Ichon 1973; López Austin 1983; Monaghan 2000; Sandstrom and Sandstrom 1986; Townsend 1979). This particulate conception explains the limitless variations on Mesoamerican gods and the symbolic richness of their iconography (Gillespie and Joyce 1998).

In a world entirely under the sway of supernatural forces, the image of divinity received concrete expression through a partial anthropomorphization. The structure of the human body was further used to give presence to a cluster of concepts that were materialized through the juxtaposition of symbolic elements (Mikulska 2017; Vauzelle 2017). The ornaments, attributes, clothing, manner of arranging the hair, body painting, and so on formed a true visual language that enabled the names or functions of the gods and their variants to be distinguished. The image became charged with power for an audience hoping to benefit from the divinity’s favors. This audience may be individual or collective—each group, whether ethnic or social, referred to a specific patron god, because it had given substance to them. In an interlocking system each member of the group incorporates, though in varying degrees, a fraction of her/his patron god, social group, *calpulli*, or corporation (Gillespie 2002; López Austin 1980). Two forms of gods may be at least partially anthropomorphic, the *ixiptla* (Nahuatl “covering”; Dehouve, chapter 11, this volume) (Bassett 2015; Gruzinski 2001; Hvitfeldt 1958), which is an incarnation of the god endowed with a name and defined attributes, and the *nahualli* (Nahuatl “co-essence”; see Monaghan 1998; Graulich 1999; Martínez Gonzalez 2011) often animal in form. A god may thus also be represented by his *nahualli*: for example, Coyotl Inahual, patron of the Amanteca people, is shown as a coyote covered with feathers, or as a composite being illustrating the process of hybridization (Graulich 1999).

The divinity’s presence is thus materialized in anthropomorphic objects of various materials whether permanent or not, but may also take on the form of more abstract objects, such as the sacred bundles for particular ritual acts (Bassett 2015; Guernsey and Reilly 2006). The sacred bundles, called *tlaquimilolli* by the Mexica (Olivier 1995) or *tnani* among the Mixtec (Hermann 2008) are collections of objects often very different in nature connected metaphorically or metonymically to the god they materialize (Bassett 2015; Olivier 1995, 2006). Among the materials that constitute the *teotl*’s body, human bones gathered together after sacrifices were often included. During the months *Ochpaniztli* and *Tlacaxipehualiztli*, for example, separation rituals were held to prepare body parts to form sacred bundles (Durán 1967).

Moreover, certain bones such as the leg or femur could also incarnate the divinity by themselves.

If the *ixiptla* or substitute of a god on earth could take the form of statues, images, or objects, it could also be embodied in human avatars. In this way humans were so imbued with the force of their god that they became god-humans, celebrated in myths and in life. Sacrifice could also transform the victim into a god; the priest who wore the victim's skin and ornaments became, for the time of the rite, the divinity's living incarnation. Similarly, Mexican rulers collected and used masks of gods (Klein 1986, 152–157), probably to bring about a temporary embodiment of the divine in these highest of all political positions. Ethnographic examples show, moreover, the major role of ritual, “the inanimate objects ceremonially transformed into animate entities” (Bassett 2015, 15). In this sense, divine entities should be seen as a means of ritual action that varied according to the context and the goal of the ritual (Dehouve 2007).

Recognizing divinities in the iconography of the Mexican Highlands thus presents particular challenges. Since a multitude of possibilities exist, the range of what is possible allows room for every hypothesis. It is possible from the images and objects available, however, to try to decode the language of the figurative representations, and we attempt to do so in this book by taking into account additional factors such as the production contexts or the identities of the works' sponsors, makers, and users.

ANCESTORS

The ancestor has a special place in Mesoamerica, not only for the ruling classes whose lineages it legitimated, but for all groups making up society (McAnany 1995). For Mesoamericans the ancestors were dead people transformed into spirits, non-corporeal beings who continued to interact with the living (Gillespie 2002; McAnany 1995). However, not all the dead were destined to become ancestors (Neurath 2011) and, as Marcus (1998) and Headrick (2007) stress, several statuses probably existed—close, remote, and mythical ancestors. These variations were determined by the social position they held in life, by how long ago they had died (due to the selective transmission of memory), by continuing support for them among living members of society, and perhaps also by how they died.

As an effective instrument of social cohesion and group advancement, ancestor worship was practiced in the various cultures discussed in this book. It is often placed at the center of ritual among Formative cultures, or in regions

where explicit representations of divine entities did not exist or were not recognized as such, for example, in western Mexico (Hernández Díaz 2013; López Mestas 2007; Marcus 1998). The line between the living and the ancestor was a continuum, with the elderly forming a transitional state (as in Perrin 1996 for the Huichol). The duty of the living was to maintain not only the memory of the ancestors, but to take care of them physically, and in particular to feed them. This proximity between the living and the ancestors is part of a specific conception of the life cycle, in which life was a temporary, transient, and even permeable condition. Indeed, among the Huichol today, the aim of the ritual is not so much to communicate with the ancestors as to transform oneself temporarily into an ancestor (Neurath 2011). The associated rites may make reference to the ancestors' curative or protective powers or have political purposes (see Morris 1991). It was also important to maintain links between the spirits of the dead and the household setting. The domestic unit seems to have been an "anchor for meaning" and the ancestor's anthropomorphic representation may have the same function (Gillespie 2001). So manufacturing their images would have been a way to maintain social memory and retain access to the force of a spirit and, where applicable, its social position. Along the same lines, the manipulations of and interventions on human bones, very common in every period, at Chupícuaro, Teotihuacan, or among the Mexica, seem to have had the underlying logic that the intangible part of human beings was imprisoned in their skeletal remains (Gillespie 2002).

On the material level, ancestor worship thus manifests itself through funerary deposits and the manipulation of bones, and in the importance they potentially occupy in iconography. The funerary deposits were made primarily beneath houses, altars, or other ritual structures, thereby energizing or sacralizing a surface construction used by their descendants. At Teotihuacan the cult of ancestors probably played a major role (Headrick 2007, 44–45), and this is perceptible both in the presence of burials under house floors (Cowgill 2003) and in altars destined for ancestor worship (Rattray 1992). Besides the complete deposits, other isolated body parts such as skulls or jaws are also found (Manzanilla 1998). It is not impossible that the large residences of Teotihuacan each had a founding ancestor (Headrick 2007, 50). In the Mexican highlands, the most important ancestors may also have been given different mortuary treatments and been placed in sacred bundles, to which certain anthropomorphic features may have been added. At Teotihuacan the equivalent of the mortuary mask worn by certain Maya dignitaries would have been the anthropomorphic mask affixed to the sacred mummy bundles (Headrick 2007, 55). The importance of this funerary treatment can also be

gauged by their miniature representation in ceramics. Headrick (2007, 57) thinks she can recognize these funerary packages in certain figurines wearing removable masks, or in others that are seated or lacking bodies but that wear imposing headdresses and face ornaments.

In terms of specific iconography, the ancestors could be represented in various ways. We can recognize them in works composed of multiple registers, by their location in the register attributed to the underworld. This is well-known among the Zapotec, for instance in the stela from Cerro de la Campana Tomb 5, but the visual practice also seems to have existed at Teotihuacan. Some authors sustain the interpretation that the lower scene of the fresco of Tepantitla represents a world connected to the souls of the ancestors (Headrick 2007, 49). For the Formative of Oaxaca, ceramic figurines arranged into scenes are proposed to represent ancestors, to be animated during rituals (Marcus 1998). In a particularly well-known scene from the site of San José Mogote, one such figurine seems to take the form of an anthropo/zoomorphic flying figure (Marcus 2009, 33).

But do formal morphological characteristics exist that allow the recognition of a dead person promoted to ancestor status? Ancestors may not necessarily be depicted as “old,” with wrinkles or an emaciated face, for example (Marcus 1998). On the other hand, signs of old age may well indicate seniority, anteriority, or respectability, and metaphorically the end of a cycle, a given social position, or mythical status (Billard 2015; Chamoux 2011). Furthermore, animal elements or signs of hybridity especially on the level of the face could express the transformation to ancestor status (Marcus 2009). Still within the Formative, issues of style may intervene, as in the case of the very schematic *tezontli* (Nahuatl “porous volcanic stone”) heads from Tetimpa, where the artisan barely modified the roughness of the basalt. Described as “carved anthropomorphic stones,” they could be confused with the Earth Lords and spirits as ancestors owning the land (Plunket and Uruñuela 1998). Taking the theme of transformation further, certain authors also propose that the representation of a temporary state, such as a pregnancy, may be likened by association of meaning to descent and ancestry (Faugère 2014; Headrick 2007). Headrick (2007, 48) adds interestingly that the ancestors might also be represented as immature beings such as babies (cf. Tate 2012).

HUMAN BEINGS

Of course, human beings are also represented in the art of the Mexican highlands. Living beings often occur in the context of official images of

historic significance to glorify a ruler's actions, showing especially their military exploits and ritual performance. The elites who commissioned the works thus constructed political narratives in which the human body is represented as acting in a context the spectator can identify—a battle, ritual, or political act. This context of action is precisely what enables the living human to be distinguished. Indeed, the ability to work (Good Eshelman 2011) and to speak (López Austin 1980) are what in the tradition of the Mexican highlands distinguish humans from animals. The flow of work (Nahuatl *tequitl*) that a person generates is assimilated to his/her vital energy, which circulates alongside the energies of the other members of the community (Good Eshelman 2011). The individual only exists within the social relationships of his/her community. Thus, the human becomes identifiable when placed in the context of action and in a known environment.

In depictions of isolated individuals, it was the ornamentation, the way of arranging the hair, and the tattoos and body painting that made it possible to emphasize certain characteristics of this human being, for they transformed a body into a person integrated into a social environment. In this context, the creation of effigies bearing this visual language in permanent materials such as stone or pottery was the surest means for portraying a socially integrated person (Joyce 1998).

From an *etic* perspective, researchers sometimes consider that naturalistically depicted figures represent human beings, as in the Formative cultures of central Mexico (Grove 1987; Joyce 1998) or the western region (Hernández Díaz 2013; Townsend 1998). “They are figures of men and women who are nude or lightly dressed, and manifest a profound awareness of corporeality and of what that implies about living beings, immersed in universal time and space” (Hernández Díaz 2013, 80; from the Spanish original). Yet the hollow ceramic effigies of western Mexico are not so easily identified. The depiction of clothing or ornamentation varies profoundly by region, as does the degree of naturalism, while widespread human social categories such as warriors, mothers, or musicians crosscut all such stylistic groupings (Beekman and Pickering 2016; Kirchhoff 1946). Clearly an analysis of the figural imagery needs to address regional variation, but must also evaluate known indigenous conceptions of the body rather than appealing to largely Western interpretations of form and aesthetic. The case of Teotihuacan is particularly interesting since its artwork has long been considered to include both naturalistic depictions, considered by some to be humans, and more conceptual and abstract entities thought to be divine (see, e.g., Caso 1966; Miller 1973; Pasztory 1976). Overall, the official art of Teotihuacan is described as “conceptual” by Pasztory

(2005), a conscious effort to differentiate themselves from their neighbors, while Headrick highlights the fact that its supernatural entities reflect metaphysical concerns—hence their abstract character.

To conclude this inquiry into the criteria that might enable us to distinguish human beings amongst all the anthropomorphic depictions, it seems important for us to refer again to the fact that the perception of the human person is defined above all by a social context. The works of Gillespie stress the importance of considering the person (in the sense of personhood) in a given society, by insisting that the individual and the society interconnect in mutual regulation (Gillespie 2001). Among the Maya, there are anthropomorphic beings that, rather than representing individuals, might designate functions or “houses” that are metonymic references to the ruling house. She notes, “identities were not isolable essences but were linked systematically to others—both persons and ‘houses,’ both the living and the dead—in the reproduction and transformation of society” (Gillespie 2001, 99). In the art of Teotihuacan, all humans are represented alike as the members of a community, which distances them from any personal glorification (Headrick 2007, 26; Pasztor 1992). This absence of differentiation seems to reflect a corporate ideology, deflecting emphasis on any particular individual. The contributions in this volume make it clear that the political and social are essential for the interpretation of the objects studied.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This volume includes eleven contributions concerning different regions in the Mexican highlands and various periods from the Formative to the Postclassic. Within the highlands, the center of Mexico holds a privileged position (seven chapters) owing to the importance of the cultures that developed there during Prehispanic history and the abundance of research conducted within its bounds. The Basin of Mexico and its neighbors have pride of place with a focus on the major loci: Teotihuacan (Billard, chapter 7; Turner, chapter 6), Tula (Kristan-Graham, chapter 9), and the Mexica (Dehouve, chapter 11; Peperstraete, chapter 10). Puebla-Tlaxcala is addressed for the Early Classic (Uruñuela and Plunket, chapter 5) and the Epiclassic (Testard and Serra Puche, chapter 8). In a more peripheral position, on the southern margins of the neo-volcanic axis, we include a case study from the Late Formative Mixe zone of Oaxaca (Winter, chapter 4). The Formative receives more attention in the western states (Beekman, chapter 2; Faugère, chapter 1; Logan, chapter 3) because of the abundance of ceramic effigies characterizing this period. The

contributions highlight many of the issues raised here, and isolate a variety of factors that play a role in the formal, conceptual, and practical characteristics of anthropomorphic imagery.

CONCEPT AND IMAGE: NAHUALLI/IXIPTLA

Our contributors suggest that the Mesoamerican ontology, particularly the ties between different beings, may be distinguished in how the body is adorned or placed in proximity to those other entities. The *nahualli* or “co-essence” is a near-universal presence in Mesoamerican ethnography, yet its portrayal in Prehispanic contexts has only been recognized in recent decades. Beekman points to the appearance of animal co-essences on the backs or helmets of warrior figures from Late Formative western Mexico, not as ethereal representations but as material items of headgear or ceremonial attire (as in Martínez González 2006, 13–14, 17–20). Whether the presence of animal-skin headgear, as seen with rulers among the Gulf Coast Olmec, in western Mexico, and many other places, is meant to convey the same thing is not entirely clear, but is suggestive.

The co-essence may be more commonly represented than generally supposed. Beekman includes a more elaborate but related class of effigy figures from Colima that depict warriors as dancers, with removable masks in the form of animals or monsters. Winter describes the contemporaneous Late Formative life-sized clay figures in the Cueva del Rey Kong-Oy in Oaxaca, one of whom is a ballplayer wearing a mask with a jaguar next to the head. Uruñuela and Plunket also describe possible male warriors with masks or animal features at Early Classic Cholula. The near identity between warriors and ballplayers, particularly in the imagery of Late Formative western Mexico, and the association elsewhere in Mesoamerica between fierce animals and warriors link these distinct media as likely representations of co-essences.

Yet masks are also implicated in the *ixiptla* or “substitute,” both in how they are represented visually and in terms of their conceptual overtones. Dehove considers the linguistic roots of *ixiptla* and finds the recurring theme of a covering or skin or mask, something that can be donned and removed at will as one adopts the mantle and abilities of a god. She finds the substitute to be less often associated with visual signifiers in her study, but she perceives its presence in the dressing of ceremonial objects or newly invested rulers in the garments of gods. Turner’s chapter finds numerous indications that the storm god’s features form a mask at Classic-period Teotihuacan. His chapter focuses on separating out representations of different deities or distinguishing

between masks and the deity itself. This highlights the role of the *ixiptla* in gaining access to the powers that controlled rain, agriculture, and warfare.

The co-essence and the substitute may have been associated with different social strata. Neither occurs in the Prehispanic visual record except in association with gods, rulers, and warriors. Dehouve in particular shows how the *ixiptla* was a manifestation of the divine in material or fleshly form, with the power of gods devolved upon rulers acting as their substitute, and the authority of rulers could be delegated in turn upon selected secondary elites serving as the ruler's substitutes. The systematic destruction of elite culture and state religion after the Conquest may explain the *ixiptla*'s limited presence in the later ethnographic record (though Dehouve provides an example). The *nahualli* on the other hand, going by various names in various languages, is still well represented among traditional communities from one end of Mesoamerica to the other (Martínez González 2011). We would like to highlight this point to emphasize that the two concepts are not completely equivalent (Martínez González 2011; Bassett 2015, 66), which may also explain why they were not maintained in the same way. There is good reason to posit that the *nahualli* is a very old and widespread concept in Mesoamerican ontology.

BODY PARTS AND PROPORTIONS

Culturally specific meanings and metaphors could be indexed by highlighting different body parts or altering their proportions. Billard's methodical review of the iconography of the Old Fire God identifies the visual package of wrinkles, missing teeth, and hunched-over posture that define him as aged. The affinities between age, *tonalli* (Nahuatl "heat"), volcanism, and power explain the characteristics of his portrayal and hint at a time when community elders may have held sole political authority. Faugère suggests that the *tonalli* or the *yollotl* (Nahuatl "heart") may be indexed not by metaphor, but by marking the part of the human body that they were thought to inhabit. Hence, Chupícuaro figurines show designs radiating away from the chest or the animistic centers in the thighs, and the forehead, where the *tonalli* resides, was stressed through painted decoration. She emphasizes the focus on the sensory organs, most notably on the face, that inscribes an identity or state of being onto the figurines.

Dehouve's chapter provides a more complex example. She describes a number of linguistic metaphors by which different body parts, particularly those of a ruler, may refer to desirable characteristics. Rulers or *tlahtoani* (Nahuatl "speaker") possessed the ability to speak and give orders (the mouth), to

transmit the speech of a god (the mouth again), to hear and see more than other people (the ears, eyes), to lead others (the nose), or to conquer (again the mouth, as suggested by Turner in his chapter). These are not unlike the Western metaphor of the arm for “wielding” power. Some of Dehouve’s examples may ultimately refer to those animating components of the body such as *ibiyotl* (Nahuatl “breath”) or *tlahtolli* (Nahuatl “word”), but in many cases it is the senses themselves that hold symbolic meaning. What is problematic for purposes of visual analysis is that most of the examples given by Dehouve are not accompanied by a corresponding emphasis upon the imagery of the mouth, eyes, ears, or nose directly, but rather upon those piercing or opening rituals by which the body parts were activated or made ready to hold precious objects.

One possibility to consider is that the knowledgeable representation of these body parts in visual culture may have changed over time and space. Artisans in the Formative period may have understood the special properties or inhabiting entities of different body parts, and displayed this knowledge in their creations, but had this changed by the Postclassic? Peperstraete’s contribution finds that the depiction of the human figure is very much fit-for-purpose in the Aztec murals of the Templo Mayor. The proportions of the human body are more pragmatic than symbolic, defined by the available space and the medium of representation. While the sculptors or potters of earlier periods embedded concepts within the images they made, the Aztec artisans for the monuments discussed by Peperstraete may have been more concerned with the space they had to fill. She notes however that those body parts that received the greatest emphasis are those most adorned with ornamentation, the head and the torso, which are also the major centers for animating forces.

FLUIDITY AND STABILITY IN REPRESENTATION

The gods of fire and water at Classic Teotihuacan show striking contrasts in the stability or mutability of their representations. Turner shows how the multivalent associations of the storm/war/earth god are indexed by complex regalia that reference first clouds, then war, then the underworld. Turner interprets the storm god’s best-known facial features to be a mask with goggles, a five-knot headdress, and a prominent mouth with two protruding canines. The essentially nude Old Fire God on the other hand displays a more stable core of corporal and facial iconography and an equally consistent form as a functioning brazier. The Storm God’s conceptual and iconographic complexity is mirrored by the diversity of murals, artifacts (jars), and sculptures that

portray him. While the storm god corresponds well to the fluid and particulate model of the body posed by López Austin, the Old Fire God is more stable, the consistency of its representation likely dictated by its position at the heart of Teotihuacan society. The Old Fire God was at least partially a god of ancestors and the hearth, an entity largely limited to the city itself by the Classic period and found in public and private ritual contexts. The more visually diverse representations of the storm god are at least partially related to its role as the face of Teotihuacan in areas external to the city, since the demands upon it were more varied. Even the respective fates of these gods differ. The visually mutable storm god continued unhindered and recognizable into the Epiclassic and Postclassic periods, but the Classic-period Old Fire God was rejected by Teotihuacan's successors and reemerged with a very different and even youthful appearance under the Aztecs (Billard 2015).

PUBLIC AND HIDDEN TRANSCRIPTS

Common to the different chapters is a concern with distinguishing where objects were used versus where they were deposited. Faugère emphasizes how the context of imagery is important for the interpretation of meaning, and several chapters note that even excavated objects may have passed through multiple locations before reaching their final resting place. Beekman and Faugère refer to excavation data supporting the proposal that the ceramic figurines and larger statuettes or effigies from the western highlands were used or displayed in domestic or public architectural settings, only to be finally deposited in burials. Objects used as charms, incense burners, storytelling props, ritual manipulations, or display can all potentially end up in funerary contexts, and objects found in such locations should not automatically be assigned a mortuary interpretation. Testard and Serra Puche find that figurines used as *ixiptla* may similarly have been used in forming narrative scenes before they were sacrificed or buried in association with public buildings. Figurines from accumulated domestic contexts versus deliberate deposits tend to be distinguished by their fragmented or complete condition, respectively, but what we currently lack is information on iconographic differences by context. Which figurines were interred in tombs compared to those represented in domestic settings? Are funerary offerings a representative subset of those used in public rituals, or are they completely different in the messages they were meant to convey?

The fixed nature of some imagery makes them more useful for assessing the relative differences between public and private contexts. Winter's analysis highlights nude figures or those engaged in sexual activity in the Cueva

del Rey Kong-Oy, tying fertility to private, dark, and hidden spaces. Kristan-Graham's chapter on the imagery at Epiclassic Tula Chico and Postclassic Tula Grande is the most explicit comparison of open and restricted spaces. Sculptures of standing rulers and of prone ancestors of those rulers are distinct representations found in locales with different degrees of access. She associates the living rulers with public spaces, while their dead ancestors are usually restricted to more private house compounds or halls. These structural distinctions suggest that publicly visible anthropomorphic portrayals are more likely to be gods or living rulers, while ancestors are more likely to be displayed in private settings.

To what degree may these public and private distinctions hold parallels to Mesoamerican cosmology? Faugère describes how the human body played the role of microcosm to the macrocosm of the broader landscape or the cosmos as a whole, a theme represented in multiple chapters. Winter finds just such a micro/macro correspondence in the Cueva del Rey Kong-Oy. The explicit sexual imagery is present not only in a private context, but specifically within a cave, which represented both the underworld and the entrance to the sacred Mesoamerican mountain of sustenance. The Old Fire God of Billard's chapter was associated with volcanos and the sacred mountain, relating him to the heavens and placing him at the center of the Mesoamerican cosmos. The presence of images of the Old Fire God transformed the private and restricted lineage altars into conduits to the heavens. This in turn may reflect the prominent role of lineages in Teotihuacan society, and their independent access to the divine. The deposits of expended *ixiptla* beneath the stairs up the Flowers Pyramid at Xochitēcatl similarly brought substitutes for the gods closer to the heavens. Kristan-Graham's analysis of Tula Chico and Tula Grande placed ancestral representations in halls, which she notes as having drains. She suggests that flooding of these spaces would have created a natural *tollan* (Nahuatl "place of reeds"), and it may also have been an interpretive association between the ancestors and the watery underworld.

ACTIVE USE, PERFORMANCE, AND STORYTELLING

The active use and manipulation of images is favored by many of the contributors to this volume. This is in some cases inherent to the object itself, most clearly exemplified by the anthropomorphic braziers of the Old Fire God. The transitive association between the *tonalli*, the heat associated with elderly and/or powerful people, and the fire of the brazier is direct, linear, and all the more powerful as an evocation of the god. Turner and Peperstraete

discuss the portrayal of masks and headdresses worn in ritual impersonations. The small figurines cited by Faugère suggest a range of potential uses, particularly for individual rituals in which the object would have been held and manipulated in some manner. Due to their small size, these same small pieces could potentially have been strung as pendants. The larger figures discussed by Beekman and Faugère for western and north-central Mexico were less likely to be manipulated than they were to be displayed, or placed in proximity to others to form tableaux. Beekman focuses on these larger pieces, and their flexibility for developing multiple unique performances of lineage or cosmic histories.

Sets of figurines are groups that bring together varying proportions of genders, roles, and so on, while *scenes* are in situ arrangements of figurines that may convey meaning based on their placement relative to one another. Our authors suggest that both were taking place. Logan establishes matching “male” and “female” ceramic effigies as a very common set in Late Formative Colima, Nayarit, and Jalisco. Other sets described by Faugère for Middle to Late Formative Chupicuaro burials vary in their composition, and close comparisons of the specific numbers and features in relation to the characteristics of the individuals they accompanied may clarify their intended meaning (see Beekman 2016 and Rhodes and Mountjoy 2016 for examples). The occurrence of sexually adult female statuettes in child burials would certainly suggest that the images are not necessarily meant to correspond to the identity of those they accompanied, and other meanings need to be explored. Testard and Serra Puche agree with recent research from earlier and later periods that scenes related to a mix of mythical narratives and real social settings could have conveyed proper social roles. Scenes are particularly important for the relationships they portray between characters that might otherwise appear only as isolated pieces. The most detailed scenes are the examples from western Mexico alluded to by Beekman and in which buildings and figurines are permanently fixed onto slabs. The more convincing interpretations are that they show marriages, battles, and rituals—this may in turn provide a guide for interpreting more ad hoc scenes made up of separate figurines. It is regrettable that the scenes out of western Mexico lack excavated context, while the few excavated examples lack detailed publication of the imagery.

The most evocative of the performative figurines may be those discussed by Uruñuela and Plunket for Early Classic Cholula. The authors propose that these simply made anthropomorphs and animals were used in small-scale “puppet” shows that were part of developing neighborhood identities during this period of rapid population influx. The figurines’ secular and/or neighborhood

associations expand the potential uses of images beyond simply the ritual or political fields. The authors contextualize these pieces within a longer history of performative figurines in central Mexico, such as the Xolalpan-phase articulated figurines from Teotihuacan. As representations of gods, ancestors, and human beings, all of these portable anthropomorphic images were well suited to active storytelling and the development of identity and social memory for groups of various sizes.

There is to some degree a predictable difference in uses for imagery that is large and static compared to smaller and more mobile objects. Examples of the former, such as the sculptures of Tula and the murals of the Templo Mayor, decorate or embellish spaces that may have had specific functions. But even these examples may have had an active use and been “read” by viewers. Winter proposes, for example, that the creation of clay figures in the Cueva del Rey Kong-Oy to either side of a pathway may have framed a kind of active storytelling as viewers walked through the cave.

GENDER/CLASS

The relative importance assigned to gender or to class is a significant theme among many of our chapters. Logan discusses a case in which gender and class received opposing emphases in spatially discrete style zones. She examines ceramic effigies of couples in far western Mexico during the Late Formative period, a body of visual material that has often been treated as monolithic in function and meaning. The equal representation of genders is rare in Mesoamerica, and it is surprising that this theme has not previously received this level of attention. Sexual characteristics receive their greatest expression in those areas of western Mexico where there is less evidence of social ranking. In central Jalisco and southern Nayarit on the other hand, where public architecture and social inequalities were most clearly expressed in the Late Formative period, gender fades in importance in favor of the display of regalia associated with rank or class.

A more temporal contrast is described in the chapters by Faugère and Uruñuela and Plunket. The predominance of sexually defined images in the Formative gave way to a greater emphasis upon costumes that covered up sexual identity at the end of that period or in the Early Classic. This seems particularly evident in Turner’s discussion of Tlaloc at Teotihuacan. The tendency becomes more extreme by the Post-Classic, when Dehouve argues that markers of status among the Aztec had become even more temporary, relying upon clothing, jewelry, and body painting to convey status and identity.

Bodies themselves, as Peperstraete notes, had become assemblages of parts or armatures for symbols rather than true bodies. In concert with this shift is an increased emphasis upon male representations. Based on her sample from western Mexico, Logan argues that male sexual characteristics were obscured as they adopted some costume elements associated with women in an attempt to co-opt the spiritual authority of the latter, an argument similar to that made by Joyce (1996) in other contexts.

Testard and Serra Puche also argue for a higher status and more diverse range of social roles for women at Epiclassic Xochitécatl. The site is better known for the Cacaxtla battle murals, whose depictions of female or feminized warriors have received varying interpretations (McCafferty and McCafferty 1994). Testard and Serra Puche find a rapid diversification of depictions of women as orators, warriors, political dignitaries, and religious figures, an impressive change that demands a reexamination of the battle murals. We should also consider these changes in visual representation within a broader assessment of the Epiclassic as a period of disruption of existing social norms, perhaps allowing greater flexibility in social roles than previously or, at the very least, a change in norms of visual representation by which women might be portrayed in a wider range of social roles.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The variety and abundance of the examples developed by our authors demonstrate the rich potential of anthropomorphic imagery to elucidate personhood, conceptions of the body, and the relationship of humans to other entities, to nature, and to the cosmos itself. Anthropomorphic representations illustrate these perceptions through their manufacture, form, context, and uses. We see continuities in the Mesoamerican analogistic ontology extending back into the Formative period, but legitimate questions remain as to whether they fully correspond to the beliefs of the contact period. This collection, in the end, only emphasizes the scope of the work that remains to be accomplished. We wish to thank all those who have helped in the completion of this book, including the authors, the reviewers whose comments permitted us to improve upon the initial draft, and the staff of the University Press of Colorado.

NOTE

1. For example, in certain monumental Aztec sculptures, the base is decorated but is invisible when the sculpture stands upright.

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