TEOTIHUACAN

Teotihuacan was the first great urban center of the New World. It persisted in the Valley of Mexico for a period of some thousand years—from about 150 B.C. to 900 A.D. Throughout most of its history, it was a center of a vast trade network. As such, Teotihuacan influenced style and ritual as far away as Kaminaljuyu in the Guatemala highlands; Tikal, the great lowland Maya center; and El Tajin, in Veracruz on the Gulf Coast.

Teotihuacan was located on a rich alluvial plain watered by springs and in a part of the valley through which the best route from the Valley of Mexico to the Valley of Puebla (and thence south) passed. It was near rich obsidian sources, which were very early exploited. It was a city planned on a grid oriented on a north-south axis fifteen degrees east of north—an orientation which bore no relation to the local topography, and therefore must have been an astronomical orientation. The plan of Teotihuacan included two major intersecting avenues, markets and manufacturing sites, administrative and religious centers, neighborhoods for many occupationally specialized groups, and large open spaces for ritual and ceremonial purposes.

Although the inhabitants of Teotihuacan left no written records, some of their history can be inferred from the archeological record, not only in the Valley of Mexico but elsewhere in Mesoamerica. The fact that they traded extensively in both luxury and everyday items implies that much of their production was non-agricultural and that they must have had substantial food surpluses to feed the various specialists. They had apparently well-organized systems of irrigation and food distribution. There is little evidence either for human sacrifice or for military fortifications in the earlier stages of the city's development, although warriors make their appearance in the later murals.

The chronology of Teotihuacan, based on ceramic styles and its estimated population, is generally thought to be the following:

LATE PRECLASSIC STAGE (Proto Teotihuacan)

Patlachique Phase (150 B.C. to 1 A.D.)

Peasant communities using irrigation and terrace agriculture and specializing in obsidian procurement and manufacture for domestic use and export in four distinct areas near the ceremonial center. About 10,000 inhabitants in Teotihuacan.
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Tzacualli Phase (1 A.D. to 150 A.D.) (Teotihuacan I and 1A)

Population concentrating in center; possibly about 30,000 inhabitants, indicating efficient agriculture and distribution of resources. Pyramid of the Sun constructed on site of a previous shrine, and work on the Pyramid of the Moon was begun. Work also begun on the north end of the Avenue of the Dead. At the end of this period, the Pyramid of the Moon was twice rebuilt. Further specialization of economic activities; continuation and expansion of obsidian trade in return for feathers, jade and other luxury goods. The city reaches its maximum area--20 square kilometers.

EARLY CLASSIC STAGE

Miccaotli Phase (150 A.D. to 200 A.D.) (Teotihuacan II)

During this period the highest section of the Pyramid of the Sun was built, as well as the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the Citadel, and the Great Compound. Intensive trade between Teotihuacan and the rest of Mesoamerica, including the Gulf Coast (cotton) southern Mexico and Guatemala (jade, pottery pigments and probably feathers), Cholula (pottery).

EARLY CLASSIC AND CLASSIC STAGES

Tlamimilopa Phase (200 A.D. to 400 A.D.) (Teotihuacan Transition, IIa and III)

This period is marked by construction; all the monuments begun in the preceding phase were finished, including the Citadel, the platform in front of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the Temple of the Plumed Shells and the Palace of Quetzalpapaloitl, and the plaza of the Pyramid of the Moon. An innovation of this phase was the planning and construction of stone multifamily apartment houses. More than 400 obsidian manufacturing workshops date from this time. Between 75,000 and 125,000 inhabitants.

LATE CLASSIC STAGE

Xolalpan Phase (450 A.D. to 650 A.D.) (Teotihuacan III and IIIa)

Throughout Mesoamerica, the influence of Teotihuacan was at its peak during this phase. Whether this influence spread through trade, proselytism or conquest or a combination of factors is
unknown, but the fact remains that traits and goods from Teotihuacan, dating from this period, are ubiquitous. Kaminaljuya and the surrounding area in the Guatemala highlands is so similar to Teotihuacan that many observers feel that it was a colony. In Guerrero and Tuxtla also, the influence of Teotihuacan is extremely strong. During this period, other ethnic groups were living at Teotihuacan itself; there is a "ward of Oaxaca" in the city and almost certainly neighborhoods of other cultural groups. At this stage of its history, Teotihuacan was clearly one of Michael Coe's "three unifying forces in the pre-Spanish history of Mexico." (The others were the Toltecs and the Aztec state.) There is virtually no part of Mexico which does not have Teotihuacan-style artifacts.

Metepec Phase (650 A.D. to 750 A.D.) (Teotihuacan IV)

Sometime around 750 A.D., the center of Teotihuacan was looted and burned, possibly because of a popular uprising against an increasingly repressive government, possibly because of foreign invasion. Despite this, some building activity continued near the end of the Avenue of the Dead. There is no decline in the quality of the murals, which continued to be painted, and little decline in pottery-making. It is possible that the outskirts of the city remained inhabited for another 150 years. In 900 A.D., however, Teotihuacan was completely abandoned.

A number of factors led to the abandoning of the city. The dessication of the Valley of Mexico, probably speeded by drainage efforts and by deforestation, had probably become irreversible by the 6th century, and by the end of the 9th, the land could no longer support the population. Decline of trade, due to political disruptions in other parts of Mesoamerica, may also have led to the end of the city, as well as revolution from within against a top-heavy repressive theocracy. In a weakened state, the city could have been a relatively easy prey to wandering bands of marauders from outside. But the gods of Teotihuacan, who included Tlaloc, god of rain and water, Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, the old Fire God, and Xipe, god of spring, lasted longer than the city. Their legends and the influence of the city were still strong some 600 years later when Cortez arrived at Mexico.
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<td>Ekholm, Gordon F.</td>
<td>ANCIENT MEXICO &amp; MESOAMERICA. New York: American Museum of Natural History</td>
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TEOTIHUACAN

1. Map of Mesoamerica.

2. Site map of Teotihuacan. It is important to remember that this map represents a small part of the city. The Teotihuacan mapping project, directed by Rene Millon, shows that the complexity and magnitude of the city is far greater than the Avenue of the Dead. For more information and more realistic maps, see Rene Millon's "Teotihuacan," Scientific American, June, 1967. This is reprinted in NEW WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY, Scientific American. This map is adapted from A GUIDE TO ANCIENT MEXICAN RUINS, by C. Bruce Hunter. Copyright 1977 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

3. View of the Avenue of the Dead, named by the Aztecs, who held Teotihuacan in great reverence. To the right of the Avenue, the central axis of the site, is the Pyramid of the Sun; in the background, to the north, is the Pyramid of the Moon. Note that the shape of the pyramids echoes those of the surrounding mountains.

4. The San Juan River crosses the Avenue of the Dead, and the site rises from the bed of the river in ascending levels. Here the original drainage conduits are visible, as well as the various levels, which rise a total of 27 meters to the plaza of the Pyramid of the Moon.

5. The Citadel. This is a large plaza on the excavated south end of the Avenue. It is bounded by temple platforms. At the rear of the plaza is a very large pyramid, in front of which is a smaller platform which has stairways on three sides. Opposite the Citadel plaza, across the Avenue of the Dead, was an enormous area called the Great Compound, which may have been the actual center of the city, serving both as a great market and an administrative center.

6. Platforms surrounding the Citadel plaza. Note the typical tablud-tablero style of Teotihuacan. The tablud, the ascending part, connects the strongly horizontal panels called tableros, which shadow the tablud. Framed by rectangular moldings, the tablero could serve as the surface for sculpture or painting. According to Kubler, "the tablero appears to float upon a cushion of shadow."

7. Stairway of the Citadel. The steps are extremely steep and narrow. The entire platform was covered with several thick coats of plaster and painted red, traces of which remain. Many observers believe that the enormous amount of fuel needed to burn limestone to make the stucco which virtually covered Teotihuacan was responsible for the deforestation and subsequent dessication of the area.
8. In restoring the Citadel, archeologists found that the structure had been superimposed on an earlier temple. This is visible to the rear of the Citadel.

9. The Temple of Quetzalcoatl, from the top of the Citadel. The carved and painted facade was preserved by being covered over by the later building. Note the similar tablud-tabllero proportions, as well as the balustrades decorated with serpent heads.

10. Facade of Temple of Quetzalcoatl, apparently dedicated to two deities, a fire-serpent and a grotesque creature related to the God with a Bow Headdress, which appears in the Oaxaca area. Note the water symbols of marine shells and waves. Traces of blue and red paint remain.

11. Temple of Quetzalcoatl. On one level, carvings of undulating serpents, face the steep stairway.

12. Serpent. Note the curved eyebrow or eye ridge, a convention used in depicting serpents and possibly deities throughout Mesoamerica and dating from Olmec sculptures.

13. View of the Avenue of the Dead, facing north, from the Plaza of the Four Small Temples. This plaza, below the level of the avenue, is opposite the Pyramid of the Sun. In its center is a small platform, probably an altar. At the end of the avenue is the Pyramid of the Moon.

14. Pyramid of the Sun. In front of the pyramid is an offertory, on top of which are the remains of a two-chambered temple. The Plaza of the Pyramid of the Sun is surrounded by the remains of temples and palaces. The oldest structure at Teotihuacan, the Pyramid of the Sun is the second largest pyramid in Mexico (the largest is at Cholula, in Puebla) and only slightly smaller than the Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt. First built around 100 B.C., it is oriented 15° 30' east of astronomical north. Its orientation is such that on the day the sun reaches its zenith—June 21—the sun sets directly in front of the pyramid. The orientation of the Pyramid of the Sun governs the axial arrangements of all the other buildings at Teotihuacan. A sighting mark has been discovered on a mountain about 2 miles to the west of the city. This sight directly to where the top of the Pyramid was originally. There are other sighting marks consisting of concentric rings and a cross pecked into the Base of some other buildings on the sight. Aveni suggests that the rising of the Pleiades may also have governed the orientation of the site.
15. Surface of the Pyramid of the Sun. Although the core of the pyramid was made of adobe, it was faced with stone, stucco and plaster. The upright stones supported the facing.

16. Structure on Avenue of the Dead. Some of these were residences of the priests or nobility. Note the square columns which supported a roof.

17. Foundation of building showing the construction with volcanic stone, plastered floor and at least two thick layers of painted plaster.

18. Small structure on Avenue of the Dead. Possibly a shrine; the small stones in the mortar indicate recent archeological reconstruction.

19. "Underground" altar. The people of Teotihuacan followed the practice of building new buildings on top of older ones, possibly every 52 years. This is an altar on which another building was superimposed and whose original plaster and paint were therefore preserved. It was not originally underground but was built on the surface.

20. The inhabitants of Teotihuacan excelled in mural painting, and the Avenue of the Dead must originally have been lined with murals on the tableros of the buildings. Only the painting of a great jaguar has survived. The circles probably represent the sun. Since the jaguar is not found in the Valley of Mexico, the concept of the jaguar deity undoubtedly came from another area, possibly the Gulf Coast. Jaguar skins and possibly live jaguars may have been articles of trade.


22. Temple of the Quetzal Butterfly (Quetzalpapalotl) in the Plaza of the Pyramid of the Moon. This very large building was probably a residence.

23. Jaguar at entrance of the Temple of the Quetzal Butterfly.

24. Detail of ceiling of the Temple of the Quetzal Butterfly showing the use of wood beams resting on solid pillars.

25. Mural on walls of the Temple of Quetzal Butterfly, representing eyes and rippling water symbols.
26. Courtyard of the Temple of the Quetzal Butterfly. This was a square patio, the columns of which were carved with representations of the quetzal, a brilliantly colored bird whose habitat is hot lowland rain forest. The quetzal, therefore, represents either influence from the south or trade, probably in both feathers and live birds.

27. Merlon symbolizing the Teotihuacan year sign. The sun and its rays are represented by the circle and the pointed symbols above. Similar symbols occur in the much later Aztec era.

28. Detail of columns with carved water, bird, sun and plant symbols.

29. Detail of column. These columns were originally painted and inset with obsidian discs, some of which remain. The backs of these columns have perforations for rods to hold up curtains. The entire Quetzal Butterfly complex has a still-functioning drainage system, as well as some small chambers which were probably toilets.

30. Murals surrounding plaza, which probably represent cross-sections of shells. The small circles were decorated with mica discs, and the stepped figures were painted green or blue.

31. Stairway of the Palace of the Jaguars. This was a palace on which the Temple of the Quetzal Butterfly was superimposed. It was discovered during the archeological reconstruction of the later building. At either side of the stairway are representations of the rattles of rattlesnakes, which may indicate that figures of large snakes originally formed the balustrades.

32. Detail of painted rattle.

33. Patio of the Palace of the Jaguars. Although only a portion of the murals remains, the room was originally plastered and painted with murals. To the left is a series of three rooms, curtained as they originally were.

34. Detail of entrance.

35. Mural in the Palace of the Jaguars of a procession of jaguars. In this detail, a jaguar wearing a feathered headdress, his back and tail decorated with shells, blows a musical instrument, a seashell decorated with plumes. The two spirals to the right of the shell represent sound. Three drops of blood or water fall from the shell. Representations of the Teotihuacan year sign and Tlaloc, the god of rain and water, frame the jaguars and border the mural.
36. Tlaloc is shown with a serpent-like bifurcate tongue and a starfish. The god has jaguar-like fangs and circles around his eyes. The "spectacle" circles are also found in representations of warriors or priests. They were either painted on the skin or were made of shell.

37. Substructure of the Plumed Shells. This was a well-preserved temple, built between the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., which was found under the Temple of the Quetzal Butterfly. It was filled in to create the base for the latter building. The facade is decorated with painted bas-reliefs of flowers and feathered shells, probably musical instruments.

38. Detail of flowers.

39. Detail of feathered shells. These were marine shells which Teotihuacan procured through trade with coastal areas.

40. The base of the Temple of the Plumed Shells was decorated with a frieze of green birds, probably parrots, and yellow flowers.

41. Reconstruction of frieze from the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City. From the birds' beaks flow streams of water. The eyes above the flowers and the green circles symbolize "precious things."

42. View of the Avenue of the Dead, with the Pyramid of the Moon. The names of the various structures, as well as Teotihuacan itself, which means "place of the gods," are translations of Aztec names.

43. Plaza of the Pyramid of the Moon.

44. View of Teotihuacan from the Pyramid of the Moon, looking south. In the foreground is the plaza with a platform; to the left, the Pyramid of the Sun. There is evidence that the Avenue of the Dead originally extended far beyond its present limits, possibly as far as to the nearer mountains to the south. A major avenue running east-west intersected the Avenue of the Dead at the Citadel and the Great Compound.

45. Structure A at base of the Pyramid of the Moon, seen from the pyramid. The structure is enclosed by four walls with an entrance on the west side. Nine altars were attached to the walls and one was in the center. The remains of the plastered and painted floor are visible. This structure was probably used for important ceremonies.
46. Drainage channel which runs down the side of the Pyramid of the Moon to the plaza below. Remains of the immense amounts of plaster which covered the pyramid are visible.

47. Architectural element from Teotihuacan, representing Tlaloc, and made of painted stone.

48. Painted stone pillar from the base of the Pyramid of the Sun. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

49. Sculptured stone, possibly a boundary marker. This style is very similar to that of El Tajín in Veracruz, an important site partly contemporaneous with Teotihuacan. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.


51. Carved painted stone, probably an architectural element representing death. The eye may have been inset with an obsidian disc. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

52. Carved stone architectural element found near an altar. The cross motif appears frequently in Mesoamerican iconography. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.


54. Monumental stone sculpture of water goddess from Teotihuacan. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

55. Polished stone plumb bob used in construction. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

56. Stone smoother for stucco or plaster, or, with sand and water, for stone. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

57. Clay spindle whorls used in weaving. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

58. Bowlawls used in weaving. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F.
59. Maguey. This was an all-purpose plant for the Teotihuacanos. Its fibers were used for textiles, the tips of the leaves could be used for needles, and the heart of the plant can be made into several alcoholic beverages. The maguey is still cultivated in the Valley of Mexico.

60. A beetle used for textile dye.

61. Examples of obsidian technology. Teotihuacan was a center of the obsidian trade, both mining and manufacturing. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

62. Paint palette. Using mineral paints and brushes made either of animal hairs or plant fibers, the Teotihuacanos painted their murals and their pottery. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

63. Reproduction, in the National Museum of Anthropology of Mexico, of a mural in the Palace of Tepantitla, on the outskirts of the city. On each side of the entrance is a representation of Tlaloc, the rain god, flanked by his priests. The god's headdress is made of streams, trees, birds and flowers. Beneath are two scenes, one of a ball game, the other, the paradise of the god.

64. Detail of reproduction of Mural. The priests flanking the god distribute seeds. Behind them, birds sing, (note the sound scrolls). The border represent water and aquatic creatures.

65. Detail of remaining original mural at Tepantitla. Seeds cast by priest on left.

66. Detail of marine panel. A frog or turtle swims amid starfish and cross-sections of shells.

67. Detail of paradise of Tlaloc. People dance, sing, catch butterflies and play a ball game resembling soccer.

68. Detail of paradise of Tlaloc.

69. Detail. Singing people, holding branches, dance among butterflies.

70. Detail. A ball player.

71. Tepantitla. A procession of priests. Note the plumed serpent headdresses.
72. Detail.

73. Detail.

74. Small, highly realistic clay model of dog. Teotihuacan Ia. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

75. Small clay figure with feathered headdress. Partially mold-made. Very similar figures occur in central Veracruz. Teotihuacan Ia. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

76. The Teotihuacanos made enormous numbers of small clay heads made in molds. This is an example of a mold of the head of an old man and a modern head made from the mold. American Museum of Natural History, New York.

77. Small clay heads made from molds. The making of various molded heads and figures persisted throughout the history of the city. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

78. Domestic jar. Teotihuacan IIa-III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

79. Painted clay effigy vessel in the form of a bird, decorated with marine shells. Teotihuacan II. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

80. Clay bowl with serpent heads on base. Teotihuacan IIa-III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

81. Thin orange bowl painted in polychrome. This ware was traded extensively throughout Mesoamerica. Teotihuacan IIa-III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

82. Polychrome jar with button feet. Teotihuacan III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

83. Polychrome vessel with representation of Tlaloc or his priest. Teotihuacan III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

84. Large orange jar with Tlaloc or priest wearing a plumed serpent headdress. Astronomical symbols, including three skulls. Teotihuacan III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.
85. Thin orange jar with jaguar handles and a band of human faces at the base. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

86. Funerary offering. Vessel with human figure, possibly a slave or porter. A similar figure occurs at Monte Alban. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

87. Funerary mask. Clay, showing remains of face paint. Teotihuacan III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

88. Funerary mask of carved stone. Note perforations on earlobes, either for ear spools or to tie the mask to a corpse. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

89. Turquoise and coral mosaic funerary mask and jewelry. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

90. Red-painted clay jar with decorated top. Teotihuacan IV. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

91. Wheeled clay fragment, probably a toy. Although this was found at Teotihuacan, it probably came from the Gulf Coast, where these figures are not uncommon. Gordon Ekholm suggests these wheeled figurines may indicate influence from Asian civilizations. The wheel was not used in the New World, although the principle was apparently understood. Teotihuacan IV. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

92. Clay brazier in the form of the Quetzal Butterfly. This is an "assembled" piece, the various components of the brazier being made separately and then attached to the main piece. This is painted and decorated with bits of mica. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

93. Clay figure of Xipe, god of spring. He wears the flayed skin of a sacrificial human victim and carries a cup in the form of a jaguar paw. On his left arm he carries either a shield, or more likely, a mirror. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

94. Stone brazier in the form of Huehueteotl, the Old God of Fire. Nearly identical braziers are found at Monte Alban in Oaxaca, and in Veracruz. Teotihuacan III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.
95. Stone vase representing Tlaloc, god of rain and water. Similar vases have a long history at Monte Alban. Teotihuacan III. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.

96. Stone statue of Chalchiuhtlicue, Teotihuacan goddess of water. A piece of obsidian or jade was probably inset in her necklace. Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, Mexico, D.F.