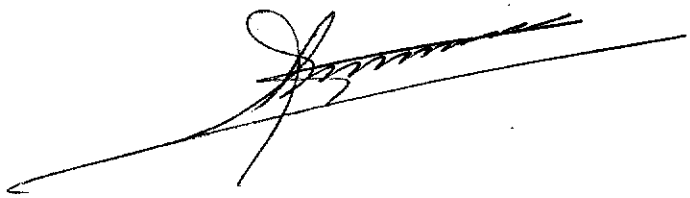
ART, IDEOLOGY, AND THE CITY OF TEOTIHUACAN

A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks
8TH AND 9TH OCTOBER 1988

Janet Catherine Berlo, *Editor*



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Contents

Contents

The Economic Organization of the Teotihuacan Priesthood: Hypotheses and Considerations

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INTRODUCTION

THE APPEARANCE OF URBAN SOCIETY and the process of state formation are subjects that are current in the archaeological literature of recent decades. After a period of fertile and contrasting theoretical formulations, there is perhaps a need to obtain more consistent data on certain aspects of these societies.

There are cases of pristine urban developments, such as the Teotihuacan example of the Basin of Mexico, where there are vast realms of culture (social organization, power spheres, etc.) with lack of crucial data. Thus alternative explanations should be suggested to be tested systematically against new and old information, keeping in mind the particular indicators that would incline the balance in one particular direction.

Some scholars interested in pre-Hispanic Mexico share the idea that tribute and market economy are institutions present throughout the Classic and Postclassic horizons of Mesoamerican history (Matos Moctezuma 1976: 12; Nalda 1982: 116). In this paper (controversial as it may be), nevertheless, I will propose a less stable development, where tribute and market are historical by-products of specific organizational bodies of the Postclassic horizon, preceded by other forms of surplus control and exchange. Undoubtedly there will be some disagreement with my position; yet, with scanty current data, there is a fertile ground to expose different models that can elucidate aspects of the Teotihuacan economy and look for futher data pertinent to answer such questions as: what kinds of goods distribution networks are present at Teotihuacan; who controls them; which sectors of the Teotihuacan society are involved in each circuit?

Elsewhere (Manzanilla 1983, 1985a, 1986, 1987) I have proposed the existence of two different organizational spheres: (a) The temple-centered sphere, which would be responsible for the development of pristine urban

institutions, such as the organized centralization of economic surplus, the presence of full-time specialists (particularly in the manufacturing sector), the auspice of a long-distance exchange network undertaken by temple emissaries, the appearance of complex administrative systems, and all of these instances as by-products of a redistributional circuit administered by the priesthood; and (b) The palace-centered organization (viewing the palace as the seat of government), on the other hand, would account for the development of a state where tribute substitutes redistribution as the basic form of centralization of surplus production, conquest as a means of assuring the continuous flow of goods and land, and the emergence of markets as institutions closely articulated to the palace interests (as Pedro Carrasco [1982] proposed).

In a comparative analysis of the appearance of control institutions in Mesoamerica, the Andes, and the Near East, a parallelism emerges that can shed light on how these two spheres came into being, and how they were transformed through time. Yet, the comparison should not be made between the Sumerian and Aztec societies, as Robert Adams (1966) once proposed, because they are not homotaxial. The comparison should be made, rather, between the proto-Sumerian development and the Teotihuacan case.

In the study of the Teotihuacan society, few considerations have been made on how people were organized. In particular, we will be interested in how the Teotihuacan priesthood could have been involved directly in the supervision of productive and redistributive tasks. Before exposing my hypotheses, I would like to review briefly the proto-Sumerian development with respect to the appearance of centralizing institutions.

THE TEMPLE AND ITS REDISTRIBUTIVE NETWORK IN MESOPOTAMIA

In the fifth and fourth millennia B.C., Lowland Mesopotamia is the scene of the appearance of temple buildings in the largest settlements. These pristine monumental constructions have no parallel in secular architecture and are characterized by a tripartite plan, consisting of a central sanctuary, surrounded by lines of storage rooms. These are particularly notable in the site of Uruk-Warka (in Lowland Mesopotamia) during the Late Uruk-Jemdet Nasr Periods (ca. 3,200–2,900 B.C.) (Nissen 1972: 794) but can also be detected in the Mesopotamian borders, for example at Arslantepé, in Eastern Anatolia (Palmieri 1973). In this last site, a standardized ceramic production associated with the temple constructions—to account for the redistribution of food rations—was studied (Espinosa and Manzanilla 1985).

Yet, not only food was redistributed. For the temple of Khafajah, in Central Mesopotamia, Henry Frankfort (1951: 67) cites the storage of grain,

sesame, onions, dates, beer, wine, salted or dried fish, grease, wool, skins, rushes, wood, asphalt, marble, diorite, and tools.

For the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2,900–2,340 B.C.), there are tablets that enlist temple food rations consisting of bread and grain for different people (Wright 1969: 42): persons who were participating in communal work, priests and other officials, and artisans. Some of the stored grain was kept for future agricultural cycles; another part went to feed temple flocks; another was channeled to the temple's brewery, bakery, and kitchen; and yet another was used for long-distance exchange of raw materials which were nonexistent in Mesopotamia (Frankfort 1951: 68, 72, 74). The temple was, thus, the center of a redistributive circuit, that permitted the maintenance of the temple officials as well as full-time artisans (particularly potters developing for the first time fast-wheel techniques to deal with the mass-production required by the redistribution of food rations, but surely also metallurgists).

If we characterize an early urban society as one with complex division of labor—and thus, the existence of specialists devoted to activities other than the production of subsistence goods—with institutions that coordinate economic processes and have authority over common people, and generally with an urban center that provides specific services and goods to the surrounding region, serving as the living-working locus for the majority of the specialists (Manzanilla 1987: 271), then we would conclude that from Uruk times (ca. 3,500–3,100 B.C.) onwards we have this type of society in Mesopotamia.

If we then define an archaic state society as one with a classist organization, with clear indications of accumulation of wealth, a relatively precise demarcation of frontiers, conquest as a form of territorial appropriation, and tribute as the way of acquiring goods and labor force (Manzanilla 1987), then we would say that this organization would correspond in Mesopotamia to Akkadian times (ca. 2,340–2,159 B.C.).

The Early Dynastic period (ca. 2,900–2,340 B.C.) would be a transitional one, with the following characteristics:

1. Urban institutions are fully settled.
2. The palace (as the seat of government) appears as the temple's rival economic institution.
3. It also concentrates land, cattle, products, and raw materials.
4. The palace has adopted the temple's administrative organization, originally suited to deal with redistributional tasks, and has converted it into a closed circuit.

Returning to the temple sphere in Mesopotamia, I could say that the history of redistribution begins in the Neolithic horizon in the northern Mesopotamian plains, where we find settlements (such as Umm Dabaghiyah,

Hassuna, or Yarim Tepé, from the sixth and fifth millennia B.C.) where the central sector of the village is occupied by rows of small rooms that served as storehouses for meat and grain. Due to the fact that there were no control institutions—such as temples or palaces—yet detected in these communities, I have pointed out the possibility that a situation similar to present "lineage societies" occurred: the elders' council would have been the organism devoted to communal tasks such as the redistribution of the communal produce stored in the center of the village to all members that contributed to it, in a "circular redistributional circuit" (Manzanilla 1983: 7; 1987: 278).

When the temple appears as an institution that seems to inherit and expand the above-mentioned phenomenon, it converts it into an asymmetrical network, deviating some of the stored production to the maintenance of craftsmen and bureaucrats and to long-distance exchange (Manzanilla 1983, 1987). Thus, it was possible for Mesopotamian temple administrators to obtain all the raw materials (rocks, minerals, and metals) nonexistent in their territory but necessary for the production of the most essential tools, as well as for sumptuary goods.

Thus, in regions with homogeneous and relatively limited resources, such as the Mesopotamian Lowlands, or the Maya Lowlands, asymmetrical redistribution would serve as the circuit that allows the supply of nonexistent raw materials possible. Kent Flannery and Michael Coe (1972) have also proposed that in the Maya Lowlands, maize produced by peasants was channeled to the regional center, to be redistributed to those lineages supplying services: bureaucrats, artisans, lapidaries, stone-cutters, and so forth.

There are other areas with more diversified resources, where there are two options for Formative communities: (a) The "economic symbiosis" model (proposed by Sanders 1968: 100), where communities located in different altitudinal positions specialize productively and cooperate intercommunally, having a distribution center where all the surplus is exchanged—a model that could be applied to Formative Basin of Mexico and Oaxaca Valley; and (b) The "vertical archipelago" model of ecological complementarity, proposed by John Murra (1975, 1985a, 1985b) for the Andean Region, where each "ethnic group made an effort to control a maximum of floors and ecological niches" maintaining "permanent colonies situated in the periphery in order to control distant resources." The relations between center and periphery "were those that are called reciprocity and redistribution in economic anthropology" (Murra 1985b: 15–16).

RECIPROCITY AND REDISTRIBUTION IN THE ANDES

John Murra has stated that "when cultivation made its appearance, the calendrical cycle allowed the pooling and redistribution of distinct and geographically separate resources" (Murra 1987: 10). From Chavin times on-

wards (the second half of the second millennium B.C.), Luís Lumbreras (1987: 336–337) has detected new types of public constructions devoted not only to cult purposes, but to star observation, workshop production, and warehouse operations. Similar complexes are found along the Marañon Andes.

Thus, we find here the first hints of the "temple sphere" outlined before, where probably the priesthood was in charge of cult and redistributive tasks, maintaining craftsmen associated with ritual production.

In the "vertical archipelago" model, the type of exchange between the highland settlements and its low valley colonies would be reciprocal, and the rights would be claimed through kinship ties and would be "periodically reaffirmed ceremonially in the settlements of origin" (Murra 1985b: 16).

Ramiro Condarco Morales (in Murra 1985a: 6) thought that this type of complementarity generated interrelationships and solidarity that formed the basis of the total unification of the Central Andes by Tiwanaku or the Inca. John Murra (1985b: 11) adds that complementarity prevailed in times when there were no marketplaces but many state-operated warehouses and was an excellent means to handle "a multiple environment, vast populations, and hence high productivity"; the key aspect of highland economies being massive storage (Murra 1985: 4).

During Inca times, we have archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence with respect to storage facilities. These warehouses are vital when there are continuous frosts or droughts, but also served to maintain state personnel, the army, and state craftsmen (Murra 1975). The deposits were located either inside the settlements or on the mountain slopes (Earle and D'Altroy 1982).

Craig Morris (1978) and William Isbell (1978) have detected a difference in the number of warehouses with respect to the site hierarchy and also different products being stored in deposits having either circular or rectangular forms. At Huanuco Pampa—a provincial capital—Morris (1978) detected 497 warehouses constructed and administered by the state, which served to maintain the population of the settlement. He also excavated forty workshops and ten related constructions destined to textile production—a key element for reciprocal relations between the Inca (the state) and the people from the communities—and to *chicha* preparation and consumption. In two large plazas located near the public sector of Huanuco Pampa, tons of ceramic vessel fragments were found associated with these activities, and Morris observed that the ceramic production was standardized.

This example reminds me of our Mesopotamian example. Yet, the Andean case differs in the form that redistribution takes place: collective meals versus food rations (Manzanilla 1985a: n.d.). In either process, there is a need for a standardized ceramic production, and thus potters were one of the categories that the redistributional circuit sponsored.

Nevertheless, the Andean example should be seen as a case in which redistribution is a relict institution inside the "palace sphere," but that was so efficient in Andean conditions as to persist through time. Similar relict redistributional activities have been detected in the Aztec state by Pedro Carrasco (1982) and Johanna Broda (1976: 42–53), where one of the ritual functions of the Aztec *tlatoani* was the redistribution of weapons and insignia to nobles and warriors. The nobles also sponsored communal banquets and gift exchanges, occasions that served to redistribute goods ritually.

If we think, nevertheless, of a homotaxial example for Teotihuacan, we should invoke the Tiwanaku example (in Bolivia) where redistribution could have been not a relict institution but the axis of economic networks that would explain the colonies established in the coast and lowland valleys. Unfortunately for Tiwanaku there is even less fieldwork and concrete data than for Teotihuacan. It is the major urban center in the Bolivian plateau and the southern Central Andean Region during the first millennium A.D., yet only recently has there been systematic research at the site.

In recent extensive excavations at the main temple of Tiwanaku (the Pyramid of Akapana), I have detected not only cult constructions on its summit, but also multiroom complexes probably devoted to priestly domestic and storage functions (Manzanilla and Woodard 1990). These contexts belong to the Tiwanaku III and IV periods (ca. 300–900 A.D.). Even though these are only preliminary data, I propose that redistributive activities could have been carried out by the priesthood, involving not only local foodstuff but also goods coming from colonies on the coast and in the tropical sectors to the east of the high plateau (*Chione undatella* clam shells, tropical fruits [Sapotaceae or Sapindaceae], etc.).

THE TEOTIHUACAN CASE

The "economic symbiosis" model could well account for the situation in the Basin of Mexico prior to the emergence of Teotihuacan. From Middle Formative times, we have cases—such as Loma Torremote—where centralized storing activities in the hands of specific households took place (Reyna Robles 1977). In Late Formative times, sites with monumental ceremonial architecture, such as Cuicuilco and Tlapacoya, could have been the distribution centers specified by Sanders' model, and I would add that probably the priests were the group who organized centralized storage.

The priest was certainly a central figure in Teotihuacan society. The frequency of priests' representations, particularly in mural art, is high. René Millon (1967: 149–150), for example, states that priests played undoubtedly a very important role and that the integration of the city could have been possible through the pilgrimage-temple-market complex. He also states (R. Millon 1988: 109) that the political realm was sacralized, without a formal differentiation between religious and political spheres. Teotihuacan was a

religious center without equal in its time, a sacred city, the center of the cosmos, the place where time began (R. Millon 1988).

William Sanders (1967: 134) also argues that perhaps priestly institutions controlled alluvial and piedmont land and that religion was probably one of the most important integrative factors in Teotihuacan. I agree with the idea that the priest was surely the most important figure in the Teotihuacan hierarchy; if there had been secular groups who would have claimed a politically predominant position in society—in a way equivalent to the figure of a king, lord, or ruler—surely there would have been innumerable iconographic representations of them and a cult of the dynastic ruler, as Esther Pasztory (1978: 130) has detected for the Maya Lowlands and the Valley of Oaxaca during the Middle Classic period.

I would further propose that the Teotihuacan priesthood centralized the surplus production from communities of the central part of the Basin of Mexico, maintained full-time artisans—probably obsidian workers, some potters who were producing standardized and ritual ceramic types, and sumptuary goods craftsmen—and also had emissaries who established different types of relations with foreign Mesoamerican regions. This situation would not be very different from those reviewed formerly, except perhaps by the scale of the phenomenon, which would be closer to that of Tiwanaku than that of the proto-Sumerian centers.

I will try to review some of the specific data that could be cited for each of these premises.

The Centralization and Storage of Surplus Production

When we review the floral and faunal subsistence data recovered from Teotihuacan excavations, we find that many products could have come from sectors of the Basin of Mexico other than the Teotihuacan Valley. We could cite, for example, lacustrine resources (turtles, fish, and waterfowl) (Starbuck 1987); fresh water snails, and a small rabbit (*Romerolagus diazi*), probably from the Chichinautzin Sierra to the south of the Basin of Mexico (Valadez and Manzanilla 1988). Emily McClung de Tapia (1987: 58) shares the same idea with respect to paleobotanical macrofossils, stating that the Teotihuacanos imported basic products from a large sector of the Basin of Mexico.

Much of the subsistence base detected for the urban center of the Classic horizon was already present at Formative villages such as Cuanalan (Manzanilla 1985b). I propose, then, that this diversified subsistence base could have been recreated on a larger scale during the Classic horizon, through a regional network of redistributive activities involving groups from different parts of the Basin of Mexico, who were offering their surplus to the Teotihuacan gods (and priests). This type of circulation is not proposed as an exclusive one; direct exchange between producers would be a parallel

circuit. Yet, in this paper, I would like to underline that the market would not have been an institution corresponding to the Teotihuacan "temple sphere," as we will propose further on.

The Temple of Agriculture's main mural painting (at the intersection of the Street of the Dead and the Moon's Plaza) could be one of the particular cases that could reinforce the existence of offering scenes, such as the ones depicted in Uruk period vases from Warka. Even though René Millon (1967: 152) considers that the painting discovered by Leopoldo Batres could be a marketplace, I would alternatively argue that it could be seen as the first part of the redistributive circuit, when people are depositing surplus production in the form of offerings to temple symbols.

The problem of centralized storage of food and raw materials is one that deserves particular attention. In Mesopotamia, the warehouses are integrated architecturally with the sanctuary. In the Andean Region and in Mesoamerica, they should be searched for in the immediate vicinity of the ritual structures. I would think that, for example, the low, standing row of rooms that closes the southern part of many three-temple complexes at Teotihuacan would be one possible place. Another would be certain sectors inside the apartment compounds specifically devoted to storage. Yet, in this case, the domestic scale of the storage phenomenon would prevail, masking the centralized public scale that we are searching for, except in the case that a specific apartment compound would not have been devoted to living, but to administrative and/or public purposes (the constructions along the Street of the Dead, for example).

At this stage, I would like to add that when we touch the administrative realm for Mesoamerica, we are dealing with archaeological contexts that have not been studied at all and the particular archaeological indicators that would be related to this type of activity have not been detected. Thus we often hear that a specific structure is said to be used for administrative purposes, without knowing why this particular function is ascribed to it. One of the only indicators that has been cited is the nonexistence of burials (Noel Morelos, in R. Millon 1988: 162).

In the Near East, the appearance of complex administrative activities was a by-product of the temple's redistributive network. They are represented by seals and their respective clay sealings, tablets, and *bullae*. What are their counterparts in Mesoamerican archaeology?

Returning to the problem of storage, one of the particular indicators that has been proposed is San Martin Orange *amphorae*. George Cowgill (1987) states that it is a type particularly common in Xolalpan times, specially in Tlajinga (where there were workshops devoted to its production), in Oztoyohualco (N6W3), and in a band 300 m to the west of the northern part of the Street of the Dead. For this last sector, I would propose that we could be dealing with centralized storage facilities. At Oztoyohualco, however,

we could have a mixed count between domestic San Martin ceramics coming from the apartment compounds and probably some coming from the three-temple complexes.

We recently excavated an apartment compound at Oztoyohualco (N6W3: 15b), where there were particular rooms devoted to storage, and these were near rooms where food preparation had taken place (Manzanilla and Barba 1990). We were excavating this compound with the purpose of studying what particular activities took place in each room by comparing palinological, paleobotanical, phytolithical, paleozoological, chemical, and archaeological data (Barba et al. 1987; Manzanilla 1988–89b; Valadez and Manzanilla 1988). Storage rooms were always represented by San Martin Orange pottery, high pollen counts, the presence of macrofossils of economically important and medicinal plants, and low pH and carbonate values. Jeffrey Altschul (n.d.) also proposed similar sectors in an intensive surface analysis of another compound at S3W3:L3 square, using the distribution of San Martin Orange pottery.

The degree to which centralized storage was incorporated to Aztec palace economy has been recently reviewed by José Rojas (1987). The *Huey tlatoani* had warehouses not only in Tenochtitlan, but also in each provincial capital (Rojas 1987: 31) (as was the case in the Inca and Akkadian examples). The historical sources also cite openings of the imperial storehouses to face catastrophes (p. 36), such as the ones under Motecuhzoma, Nezahualcóyotl, and Totoquihuatzin.

Redistribution of Food, Raw Materials, and Manufactures

With respect to the redistribution of food, a difference should be made between the regular maintenance of artisans and bureaucrats by the system and the occasional collective ritual meals. For the first case, I would propose that the production of standardized pottery would probably be an indicator. There is, however, little done in this field. If we used the Late Uruk example as suggestive, we should have to study bowls in this perspective. Yet, I would also suggest that the handled covers whose distribution is said to be related to high-status architecture, could be another example.

I would invoke here George Cowgill's (1967: 176–183) original idea that these "covers" served to consume food at a certain distance from where it was prepared, with the possibility that this activity required reheating. If the priests and bureaucrats ate often from these or related vessels, their exceptionally high proportions near the Street of the Dead would be explained.

Yet these covers were not distributed only in high-status residences. They have been found also in clear intermediate-status domestic contexts, at my excavation in Oztoyohualco, together with copa vases, censers, Thin Orange pottery, incised ceramics, and other types that have been used as indicators of high status. So there is a long way before us, in determining

particular repetitive behavior with respect to specific types, a task that can only be accomplished by the careful recording of activity areas and associations in extensive excavations and not any more by producing surface distributional maps.

Ideologically, the redistributional activities in the hands of the priest-administrator devoted to the agricultural fertility cult would be reinforced by the reception of oblations granted by groups coming from different sectors of the Basin of Mexico and by the offering of communal meals and warehouse openings, such as the ones detected in the two large plazas at Huanuco Pampa, Peru (Morris 1978). I would further suggest that the Great Compound of Teotihuacan, more than a market, would be the storage place for the different social sectors and probably also one of the main redistributional loci of the city. The regional interests that Rebecca Sload (1987) invokes for her Great Compound apartment constructions could be precisely the storage of products from specialized sectors—particularly manufactures—and their further pooling into the redistributive network.

It is not by chance that the Ciudadela stands just in front of this place, being that ceremonialism is a way of reinforcing ideologically the prodigality of the gods (and their priests). The binome Great Compound and Ciudadela would be perhaps a functional one, regarding redistribution of manufactured items and ritual meals, respectively, and the administration of all the network.

Redistribution in the hands of priests could also be reiterated visually through the multiple representations of ritual officials from whose hands come out "falling panels" with *mantenimientos:* seeds, sea shells, jadeite carvings, and so on (see C. Millon 1973; Miller 1973). Not only in mural paintings, but also in theater censers are there depictions of priests devoted to the Great Goddess' cult (Pasztory 1973) or the Butterfly God's cult, where food and manufactured items flow from their hands (Manzanilla and Carreón 1990).

The redistribution of exotic raw materials would be a restricted circulation circuit that we will mention when speaking of long-distance exchange.

The Auspices of Manufacturing Specialists

With respect to obsidian workers, obviously not all the workshops depended on the redistributional network. Following Michael Spence's (1987) classification, only precinct workshops located near major public structures, and probably regional workshops, were under the priests' control. In the first case, the distribution of precinct workshops would be around the Moon Pyramid, in the Great Compound, and to the northeast of the Ciudadela (Spence 1987: 434). Regional workshops were also located near major public structures or major streets of the city. These would also be

sponsored by the priesthood, to pool their products into the long-distance exchange network that they also controlled, as we will suggest further on.

Thus, Spence's (1987: 444) impression that the obsidian industry was "administered" and "highly centralized" would be explained by the fact that it was one of the main by-products of the redistributional circuit. And we should add that in his comparison between Classic and Postclassic obsidian industries, the last one is seen as much less centralized and in the hands of part-time specialists (Spence 1987), because it no longer was sponsored by the "temple sphere" and was no longer needed for middle-range exchange.

Certain potters would also be maintained by the system. One of the examples that could be cited is the large workshop of censers' molded parts found just to the north of the Ciudadela (Múnera Bermúdez n.d.). Other Matte Ware workshops (for three-prong burners, censers, miniatures, *candeleros*, etc., as well as finely decorated wares) could also belong to this group.

Long-Distance Networks and Colonies

The problem regarding the relationships between Teotihuacan and the rest of Mesoamerica is not a simple one to solve. A recent summary of current data and interpretations has been offered by René Millon (1988). I agree with most of them. Yet, I would like to add some considerations on how the flow of exotic goods from regions such as the Maya Lowlands could be seen as a highly controlled movement.

First of all I should say that my model stipulated that there should be no market at Teotihuacan in the way we should expect it at Tlatelolco in Mexica times, nor should there be *pochteca* merchants. I am proposing that the high-status raw materials that came from abroad (cacao, shells, feathers, hides, honey, incense, copal, jadeite, serpentine, hematite, cinnabar, malachite, etc.) were all of them products that entered a restricted circulation circuit. Many were used directly in ritual or for conspicuous consumption. So there could have been a direct involvement of the priesthood in their supply.

I am proposing that it was through temple emissaries that the flow was controlled. In particular, four possible colonies could be cited, where Teotihuacan emissaries were perhaps living together with local populations: Matacapan, Kaminaljuyu, and probably Alta Vista and Tingambato. This type of colony reminds us of the ones probably established by Tiwanaku in the coastal and lowland valleys in the Central-South Andean Region (Moquegua, in the Peruvian coast, for example).

The tassel headdress that Clara Millon (1973) proposes as a symbol of the Teotihuacan polity in foreign regions could be the basic characteristic of these emissaries. This same headdress is portrayed on priests' heads in different

mural paintings. We should not be surprised that some of these persons are depicted with weapons in Maya contexts. Traveling so far from the Central Mexican Highlands would not have been an easy endeavor.

Let us speak of obsidian, for example. If Teotihuacan obsidian reached Tikal in such a small quantity (1%) and if it was surely not by marketplace exchange but rather by gift exchange among persons of high status (Sidrys 1977; Spence, in Millon 1988: 119), then we should think that one of the products that the Teotihuacan emissaries took with themselves was precisely obsidian in the form of prismatic cores and some bifacial products. Fine pottery would be another possibility.

A different circuit would be the one that involved products from the Oaxaca Valley and the Gulf Coast. The Oaxaca and Merchants' *Barrios* at Teotihuacan show goods that are not precisely high-status: pottery and some other manufactured items. René Millon (1988: 127) has recently asked himself whether these foreigners were really merchants. And even when addressing the subject of Teotihuacan merchants, he recognizes that there is nearly no information.

Barter between producers, foreign people bringing some allochtonous manufactured goods, redistributive networks to assure surplus concentration and craft patronage, long-distance elite exchange between temple emissaries—all are circuits that could have coexisted, involving different goods and social sectors.

RECONSIDERATIONS

In the evolutive framework that Elman Service (1971, 1975) proposed, redistribution would be one of the main characteristics of chiefdoms, so it would seem strange that I have been proposing this economic phenomenon as an indicator of early urban societies. Yet, I should underline that there are no extant ethnographic counterparts of these societies, so there is less probability that they should have been defined with sufficient accuracy as bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states.

The advantages of redistribution at a local scale were: to have a stored stock to face future harvests and eventualities in the agricultural cycle; to constitute a deposit of diversified goods coming from sectors specialized productively; to serve as a feeding basis for specialists not devoted to the production of foodstuff; and to constitute a material stock for long-distance exchange (Manzanilla 1985a).

At a vaster scale, Isbell (1978: 306–307) would propose that in those areas where energetic perturbations were common, there were two alternatives: either to decrease the demographic or the organizational level of society, or to select in favor of progressively larger redistributive spheres. This latter alternative would have been chosen in the Central Andean region, and probably also in Classic Central Mexico. Morton Fried (1974: 30–31) adds

that the advantages of redistribution would also lie not only in security in the face of adversities in food production, but also in the diversification of diet.

In the social realm, the greater the surplus, the greater the degree of stratification, as Frank Hole (1974) stated. Thus, all the basic components of early urban life—surplus concentration, complex division of labor, long-distance exchange networks, and social stratification—could be explained through the analysis of the redistributive organization.

Some of the causes that René Millon (1988: 149) evokes for the end of Teotihuacan were the following: a mismanagement of the economy and polity, a rigid inflexibility towards change, an inefficient and incompetent bureaucracy, and the deterioration of exchange networks. Naturally, the complexity of the articulation between all the circuits and social sectors that we have cited, and the enormous scale that the phenomenon adopted, was such that any factor could have broken this fragile equilibrium, where ideology was the main reinforcement agent.

The changing conditions of the Epiclassic population readjustments, the emergence of palace institutions as economic rivals of the temple sphere, the beginnings of a political realm separated from the religious one—all opened a new perspective in Mesoamerican history: one dominated by the tributary state of the Postclassic period.

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