

SOCIAL SKINS OF THE HEAD

*Body Beliefs and Ritual
in Ancient Mesoamerica
and the Andes*



Edited by Vera Tiesler and María Cecilia Lozada

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EDITED BY

VERA TIESLER AND MARÍA CECILIA LOZADA

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*To the heads of the future,
our children
Fabio Cucina Tiesler
and
Alicia Haydon*

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Preface

VERA TIESLER AND MARÍA CECILIA LOZADA

This collection of essays was initiated by a passion for the study of Native American head treatments, shared among the contributors and the editors of this volume. Both editors look back on decades of active (bio)archaeological work on bodies and body modifications in the Andes and Mesoamerica. It was probably our sheer academic curiosity to learn more about the “other side” that triggered our initial conversations regarding the heads and skulls from the lands south and north of the Panama Canal. This curiosity was certainly tailgated by our dissatisfaction with the many ready-made, simplified, or Westernized explanations of Native “corporeity” to permeate the popular and academic literature alike.¹ Sadly, the scrutiny of Native headworks does not make an exception. A more rigorous and culturally aligned (or emic) reflection of the tantalizingly complex undercurrents that once bolstered Native body practices should go *a la par* with statistical validation and Western social semantization. We believe that these efforts are timely, given the amount of published groundwork on indigenous body models in the Andes and Mesoamerica.

Both cultural spheres stretch over extended territories and are known for the diversity and complexity of their world views and body works, focused on the head. The latter included a myriad of permanent modifications in the past, backed by deeply embedded beliefs about the cosmic makeup and its corporeal models. Once this connection is established, a host of specific inquiries fall into place:

How would Native concepts about life, cosmic vitality, and constructed, body-inscribed values motivate specific forms of embodiment? Which ideas about vitality, protection, and health led mothers to wrap and shape their babies’ head over the months and years? What did the first haircut mean to Natives for whom the hair harbored animic energy? Why were earspools important for hearing among ancient Andeans and Mesoamericans? And beyond the threshold of death: what cultural rationales inspired the protracted treatments of heads and skulls?

In 2012, we first shared the discussion table with twenty other invitees who had arrived from near and far in order to engage in dialogues on ancient head-shaping practices during a thematic symposium. This encounter was held in the “white city” of Mérida, Mexico, and was organized by the Autonomous University of Yucatán (fig.I.1). Our series of enlightened talks on heads culminated with a hands-on workshop on cranial taxonomies and an exhibit of artificial cranial vault modifications in the Americas. At the end of the late-autumn symposium, all participants were treated to a visit to a traditional community and its acclaimed celebration of Hanal Pixan (“food for the souls”), or simply Day of the Dead. Blending in with local Maya, we watched folk recover and clean the ancestral bones and skull *calacas* in the local cemetery as they prepared jointly for the long-awaited arrival of their deceased kin. Each year, the dead spirits are expected to stay with their family over the whole month before they leave again



Figure 1.1. Participants of the Second Mesoamerican Symposium of Bioarchaeology hosted in 2012 by the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mérida, Mexico (photo, Laboratory of Bioarchaeology and Histomorphology, UADY).

in late November. As part of this “Maya way of receiving” dead kin, we were offered to eat “bodies” (*pibes*), as they were pulled out of the smoking soil. The delicious cakes are made of corn and red *achiote*. They come wrapped in green leaves and are baked beneath the ground, the earthy domains of the dead.

It was clear to both of us already that the topic of ancient head treatments in truth subscribes to a Pandora’s box of meanings, purposes, and culturally sanctioned body techniques, a subject abstrusely complex and varied both south and north of the Panama Canal, yet holding some common undercurrents in terms of both procedures and social values. At this point, both editors started to talk about a second, still more culturally engrained symposium, open to specialists in regional linguistics, art history, and ethnography. A two-part paper session entitled “Cultural Meanings of Head Treatments in Mesoamerican and Andean Societies” followed in 2014. Organized for the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Austin, Texas, it was this symposium that spurred the preparation of the present volume. A select group of international and local scholars working in Mesoamerica and the Andes engaged in a dialogue on culturally ingrained anthropological research related to the head. Building on the momentum of Native body and embodiment

research in the humanities, this dual-regional approach was intended to encourage out-of-the-box thinking. By bridging two highly specialized academic traditions in the Americas, we wished to find conceptual and analytical commonalities and/or points of disjuncture between Andean and Mesoamerican cephalic practices. Back home, the symposium-guided dialogues continued as the discussants’ comments were circulated among the participants to further encourage and enrich the ideas presented during the encounter. In this same spirit, we also invited a number of other scholars to write on the subject.

Each of the contributors was enheartened to align with a number of “cornerstones” from which to interpret and understand the cultural roles and meaning of the head in Native world views. First, we want to conceptualize the head and its physical insignia as a spiritual locus within the Native cosmos, the embodied *anecumene* within the *ecumene* if you will. This complementary notion between the sacred and the profane is an inherent part of Native cosmology on both sides of the Panama isthmus. Its confrontation contributes a new level of understanding of particular Native body treatments and prepares the ground for a renewed discussion of body concepts and physical embodiment in general.

We identify the term “physical embodiment” in this

volume as the physical representation of sociocultural conditions in the human body, enacted in body treatment and the cultural modification of its segments (in life or death). To achieve this, our *modus operandi* (and that of many contributors) confronts different sets of information with autochthonous body concepts, specifically those of the head and its vital components.

Second, we promote an interdisciplinary, dual approach between the Andes and Mesoamerica, as both spheres held—and still hold—body-anchored and specifically head-anchored world views. Despite the pitfalls in comparing two parallel but separately evolving cultural spheres, we believe that the cross-continental juxtapositions should facilitate a deeper causal understanding of the Native body beyond the region and invite broader questions regarding body concepts and embodiment. Interdisciplinary approximations have been encouraged whenever possible, drawing from discursive media and material data sets. Their joint interpretation and discussion is meant to re-create and contextualize broader meanings at the interstice between the self, the head, and culture, along with their mutual interactions.

Third, we encourage the wide thematic treatment of permanent and not-so-permanent forms of enhancement of the head and its surfaces (both in life and past death). In practice, this does not go as far as we would have wished, given the dominance of scholarship on head shaping and the ancient Maya. However, in addition to these head modifications, this volume does treat other forms of physical enhancement such as haircuts and facial paint, hair arrangements, dental reductions, and ear piercings, all of which have been covered only sparsely in the anthropological literature to date. Past death, the many meanings and mortuary pathways of trophy heads, venerated skulls, and headless bodies in the Andes and Mesoamerica acquire importance.

Our efforts would not have expanded into a thick oeuvre had it not been for the continued support and active engagement by the participants in this project. We

wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to each and all of our contributors for sharing efforts and expertise during the different stages of preparation and editing. Needless to say, both of us have enjoyed immensely our exquisite rounds of discussion and the academic exchange with everyone involved. This includes all those who for one reason or another could not be part of this book, namely Rosaura Yépez and Mary Weismantel. Jane Buikstra’s discussion at our session at the SAA and her permanent inspiration in general have been instrumental for both of us in our advancement of this project and in conducting bioarchaeology from a human lens in the Andes and Mesoamerica. A thank you also goes to Josefina Mansilla and the late Carmen Pijoan Aguadé, whose rigorous analytical approaches in the human taphonomy of Mexico are well recognized worldwide. We are indebted to Pilar Zabala, our colleague and historian friend, with whom we have the pleasure of sharing also this continued quest for physical embodiment in the eyes of the conquerors.

Last but not least, we extend our thankful recognition to those institutions that have promoted this project through the years, specifically the University of Chicago and the Autonomous University of Yucatán. Thanks go to the editorial team of the University of New Mexico Press, led by John Byram, all of whom have generously supported us throughout. We are indebted to Khali Ashton, Flavius Beca, Catherine Harrison, Raúl López Pérez, and Kristie Sanchez for style correcting, formatting, and unifying the drafts as they came in. The feedback we received by two reviewers have strengthening the volume substantially. Their comments have been instrumental in stringing together the parts and chapters and in providing a more balanced treatment of information and conceptual frames.

NOTE

1. We conceive “corporeity” simply as the quality or state of having or being a body.

Cultural Modification of the Head

The Case of Teopancazco in Teotihuacan

LUIS ADRIÁN ALVARADO-VIÑAS AND LINDA R. MANZANILLA

INTRODUCTION

One of the emblematic cases of urban planned settlements of Mesoamerica is Teotihuacan, in Classic central Mexico. During the first six centuries CE, this twenty-square-kilometer site housed a multiethnic population with a corporate organization (Manzanilla 2015). The inhabitants of the metropolis were involved in craft production, construction projects, ritual practices, military endeavors, and the large-scale movement of sumptuary goods, raw materials, and specialized artisans from allied sites aligned along several corridors (Manzanilla 2011a, 2011b, 2015).

In the roughly twenty-two neighborhood centers in the city (Froese et al. 2014; Manzanilla 2012d), a very competitive intermediate elite managed the neighborhoods and established alliances with people from different regions of Mesoamerica to ensure the provisioning of the most lavish and rare sumptuary goods for elite consumption (Manzanilla 2012d, 2015). During thirteen field seasons of extensive excavations (1997–2005), Linda Manzanilla and her team excavated one of these neighborhood centers: Teopancazco (Manzanilla 2006, 2009, 2012a, 2012b). Teopancazco is a multiethnic neighborhood center located in the southeastern sector of Teotihuacan (Manzanilla 2012a, 2015) and has been studied in the framework of the interdisciplinary project Teotihuacan: Elite and Government, directed by Manzanilla.

Different activity areas and functional sectors were defined in the neighborhood center of Teopancazco (Manzanilla 2009, 2012b, 2012d). Distribution maps of the different archaeological materials and ecofacts, and their analyses, have identified a large variety and quantity of items from the Gulf Coast of Mexico (Rodríguez-Galicia 2010), particularly remains of marine fauna and other species that provided feathers, skin, and plaques for the manufacture of garments and headdresses. According to the remains, the instruments found used by the garment makers (standardized bone needles for embroidery, sewing, and joining fabrics, and awls and punchers to make holes; Manzanilla et al. 2011), and the activity markers in the bodies of many of the individuals buried at the site, it is certain that the shells, bones, and plaques of the coastal animals were used in the production of garments and headdresses for priests and soldiers (Rodríguez-Galicia 2010), but the animals were also consumed in feasting (Manzanilla 2006, 2012b; Mejía-Appel 2011). Such evidence points to the existence of a skilled craft group whose occupational activity in daily life was making fine garments. Other crafts manufactured at Teopancazco include baskets, nets, lacquered and painted pottery, and lapidary pieces, but most important were garments and headdresses.

At Teopancazco, among other remains and archaeological materials, the bones of 129 human individuals in formal burials were found. The purpose of this chapter is

to analyze the most salient features of these burials, specifically the cranial modifications found there.

FEATURES OF BONES AND HEADS

Through strontium and oxygen isotope analyses (Morales-Puente et al. 2012; Schaaf et al. 2012), trace elements (Mejía-Appel 2011, 2012), ancient DNA (Álvarez-Sandoval et al. 2015), activity markers and paleopathology, cultural modifications, and standard osteological analysis (Alvarado-Viñas 2013), a very heterogeneous population was defined for Teopancazco (Manzanilla 2015).

Among the young adults, six had evidence of having been directly exposed to fire, sixteen had been indirectly exposed to fire, nine had cut marks, and ten had intentional fractures for bone instrument manufacture. Three individuals evidenced dental filing and one, dental incrustation. Thirty-eight individuals had been decapitated, twenty of whom were covered with cinnabar; of these last, fifteen were buried in room C162F in a series of pits under a floor, of which the largest pit (AA144) housed seventeen individuals; other pits had one or two skulls. In general, each head was set inside a San Martín Orange crater and covered with a cover or bowl (Manzanilla 2006:32, 2012b:35, figs. 17, 19).

Among the decapitated individuals, seven had undergone cultural modifications of their heads. This chapter will focus on them.

THE TEOPANCAZCO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

In this neighborhood center, thirty-eight beheaded individuals were discovered, of whom twenty were male and four were female; because of the poor preservation, the gender of the remainder could not be determined. Twenty-eight individuals were between twenty-one and thirty-five years old at death, which, according to Earnest Hooton's classification, ranks them as young adults; the next-biggest group is that of adolescents between twelve and twenty years, of whom we recorded seven burials. We also have two middle-aged adults between thirty-six and fifty years at death, and, finally, a female of advanced age. Accordingly, most individuals in the group were in their productive age.

The decapitation of these individuals was part of

a termination ritual, dated to late Tlamimilolpa/early Xolalpan times (ca. 350 CE), which indicated a change of organization perhaps related to a general change in Teotihuacan society (Manzanilla 2006, 2012b). In different sectors of the city we see a Tlamimilolpa construction level covered by later constructions belonging to the Xolalpan phase; also during this time, one of the main pyramids of Teotihuacan, the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, was destroyed. Simultaneous to these changes around 350 CE, different termination rituals were performed, one of which involved the decapitation of twenty-nine individuals and the placement of their heads in vessels covered with bowls or covers. Other than Teotihuacan, this practice has only been found in Cerro de las Mesas, Veracruz (Drucker 1943), and thus may be seen as a foreign funerary practice in the metropolis. It is likely that among the beheaded are the masters and leaders of the craft production of Teopancazco, as well as some specialized artisans responsible for the manufacture of garments, some of them having migrated to the city from smaller villages and centers along the corridor toward the Gulf Coast.

Their activity, related to the manufacture of clothing and headgear for the elite, may have provided them with important political and economic status within the city; in La Ventilla 92–94 Glyph Plaza, the only two craft groups represented by glyphs are the garment makers and lapidary workers, which emphasizes their status in Teotihuacan. It is also possible that over time there may have been a reaction against these foreign people by locals whose own interests had been compromised to such an extent that the newcomers were beheaded.

However, in the funerary ritual dedicated to these victims, the inhabitants of Teotihuacan recognized their social status. This can be stated with some degree of certainty because residue of cinnabar (mercury sulfide) was found on top of the skulls of twenty of these decapitated individuals (Manzanilla 2012b). The ancient use of this red mineral has been observed elsewhere in Teotihuacan, especially in very particular mortuary contexts. The application of this mineral on bodies, or parts of bodies of dismembered individuals, has been interpreted as an indicator of social status or preferential access to foreign resources. Cinnabar had great symbolic value because it could be obtained only at great expense due to the physical distance to the deposits and the effort needed to extract the mineral. Therefore, its use was limited primarily to the elite (Gazzola 2004).

In room C162F and activity area 144 (a large pit), fifteen

of the twenty skulls with cinnabar were recovered. Manzanilla (2006, 2012b:34–35) describes that several of these skulls had been placed in individual San Martín Orange craters topped with a cover or bowl, indicating that an elaborate mortuary ritual had taken place. In the classification system proposed by Arturo Romano Pacheco (1974), these are considered secondary burials, because they result from intentional manipulation, and indirect, due to the fact that pits and containers were made for the purpose of depositing the skulls inside.

This particular room and activity area were located northeast of the main ceremonial courtyard, in a former ritual sector of this neighborhood center, and thus were in a place that is symbolically important. This suggests that the decapitated persons were neighborhood leaders or elite persons who perhaps were involved in craft production at this place and possibly monopolized access to items that came from sites along the corridor toward the Gulf Coast region.

DECAPITATION IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

By beheading, we refer to the action of cutting and detaching the head from the body. It is one of the modes of human sacrifice, whose aim was to use an anatomical body part as a sign of power exercised by a dominant group. In Teopancazco, as part of a mortuary ritual, human remains were modified and consecrated as part of an offering to be deposited near an altar. A question that arises is, what determines the choice of the victim? It is very likely that activities and status played a significant role, but other possible causes include the manner in which the sacrificial rite was to be performed. Here, we propose that the decapitation rite served to express and modulate social contradictions, to assign new roles, and to dictate behavior. We suggest that this occurs in a context in which a hierarchical reorganization of the social tissue begins (González 2003).

In the context of Teopancazco, human sacrifice was an act that was performed within a religious framework by means of consecrating the victim when that victim's status changed. The first part of the sacrifice aimed to grant such representation, so that the act could establish a communication between the sacred and profane worlds, earning the consecration with the immolation of the victim in the course of the ceremony (Mauss and Hubert 2010). The

premise is that the selection of these beheaded people was not random. The decapitation of these individuals was in response to a social process, possibly during a time of crisis (see Manzanilla 2012b:36). The decapitation act may have been intended to break the power of a particular group at the onset of a transition of economic and political power. Decapitation is an example of a sacrificial rite of social reorganization; it breaks old social relations and ensures the consolidation of new ones. Human sacrifice thus becomes an instrument of legitimacy by the state.

In order to validate our hypothesis, it is important to establish the context in which these burials were found. The seven individuals with cephalic modification (Burials 26, 46, 47, 48, 50, 75, and 92) especially attracted our attention because, in the context in which they were deposited, such modifications are not common, and the specific types of modifications that these skulls exhibited are unusual for this time period and location.

CULTURAL MODIFICATION OF THE HEAD: THE LOOK MATTERS

All societies assign symbolic content and meaning to the body; sometimes, provisional or permanent modifications are applied to the body to project group associations, intended as identity symbols related to a group or community, to establish differences or similarities. As such, the body is a physical and individual creation, and at the same time a collective and cultural one. As Rosaura Yépez and Ramón Arzápalo (2007) suggest, all modifications to the body have a symbolic purpose; they act as a corporal writing system that contains nonverbal signs shaped into the body of an individual, which have meaning within the group to which the individual belongs.

In traditional societies, there is no distinction between body and person; the raw materials that form a human being are the same that form his or her body. The body is the possession of an individual, and it may be modified or transformed. David Le Breton (1995, 2002) mentions that the body is a social construct, in what is involved both in the collective scenario and in the theories that explain its performance or in the relationship that it maintains with the being it embodies. For Le Breton, the body is the effect of a social and cultural elaboration; it constructs itself and resignifies itself constantly. Human beings are judged by their appearance. One watches over one's own body

so that it can become an advantageous representative of oneself (Le Breton 2007:34).

Considering the ethnic diversity of Teotihuacan (Price et al. 2000; Manzanilla 2015), each group tried to keep, manifest, and integrate its identity characteristics within the social dynamics of the metropolis by projecting its corporal image: garments, headdresses, and decorative items for the body such as face paint, earrings, necklaces, labrets, bracelets, and the like, as well as corporal modifications born of the body's plasticity that altered the image of a person permanently (like embedding beads or incrustations in the teeth, filing the teeth, and implementing cephalic modifications, the topic on which we are focused).

With respect to the population that inhabited the city of Teotihuacan during the Classic period, only some individuals' heads were modified or transformed. One can observe that, in this society, appearance mattered; it was a way to present oneself in a multiethnic environment. Such modeling resituated the individual in accordance with cultural traditions, as Le Breton notes.

The cultural modification of the head has been observed in some skeletal remains in Teotihuacan, as noted in the work of Manuel Gamio as well as reports from different archaeological sites such as Oztoyalco 15B: N6W3, La Ventilla, Zacuala, Yahualala, and the Oaxaca Barrio (Civera 1993).

In studies of Teotihuacan mural paintings (Fuente 1996), the expression of body modifications in the Tetitla divers (porch 26, mural 3) has been noted; their heads are elongated with cranial deformations. In the mural painting *The Tlalocan of Tepantitla*, one can observe several human figures with intentional cephalic deformation.

In various theater-type censers, we may see human heads with modeled skulls and facial paint; this is another artistic manifestation that captures information concerning the ideology and religion of the Teotihuacan metropolis (Sugiyama 2002) and, at the same time, the representation of the human body.

THE TEOPANCAZCO CASE: FACTS AND ANALYSIS

At Teopancazco (Manzanilla 2012b, 2015), tangible evidence of permanent corporal modifications made to the head and, in some cases, to the teeth have been found. As stated above, we are here attempting to understand the

presence of these particular individuals in the neighborhood center of Teopancazco as well as the reason for their corporal modification. The modifications may have had an aesthetic motive; or they may have served as markers for ethnicity, gender, or social status; or they may even have served to imitate or represent a deity or force of nature. Whatever the specific reason, as Christina Torres-Rouff (2007) puts it, the modifications may have served to establish a social frontier within a group.

Of the Teopancazco sample, seven individuals (Burials 26, 46, 47, 48, 50, 75, and 92) had intentional modifications of the head. Five of the skulls had tabular erect cranial modifications; two of them—individual 46 (from room C162F, activity area 144, sexed as male by DNA and with an A haplogroup [Álvarez-Sandoval et al. 2015], coming from the Basin of Mexico and neighboring regions), and individual 92 (from room C154A, activity area 172, male, displaying a C haplogroup [Álvarez-Sandoval et al. 2015], coming from altitudes higher than Teotihuacan [Morales-Puente et al. 2012])—had a fronto-occipital tabular oblique cranial modification, in two varieties. This finding is of significant interest because of the scarcity of this type of cranial modification in bone samples from other Teotihuacan compounds.

The practice of modeling the skull to generate a significant morphological change, which may have represented social status, leaves an indelible trace in ancient remains that can be elucidated by osteological analysis. It involves a permanent alteration of the head by different techniques aimed at modifying the head form during the first stages of life by applying two compression planes, one in the front and another in the back.

In his classification system, José Imbelloni has established a basic typology: tabular oblique cranial deformation, tabular erect, and ring-shaped or circular. The first two types were attained by affixing rigid objects such as planks or boards to an infant's head, supported with cords and occasionally with compression bands; in the tabular erect, the compression is applied over the lambda, whereas in the tabular oblique, the compression is applied under the lambda parallel to the frontal plane. Ring-shaped forms are attained with bands that compress the head in a circular way (Tiesler 1999:202, 2012:73).

Both variants, erect and oblique, are defined by the morphoscopic traits of the skull (its form); with respect to the tabular erect, the obliquity axis has an angle of less than 120 degrees with respect to Frankfort's horizontal plane (figs. 5.1a, 5.1b; Burials 48 and 75, respectively).

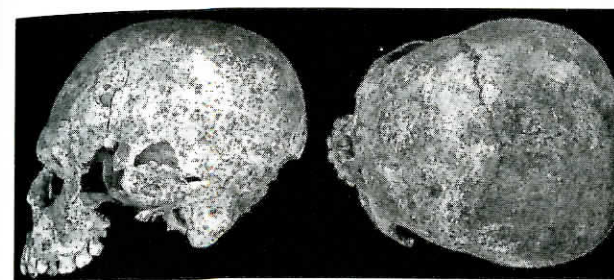


Figure 5.1a. Burial 48: skull with tabular erect modification in the left lateral norm and upper norm.

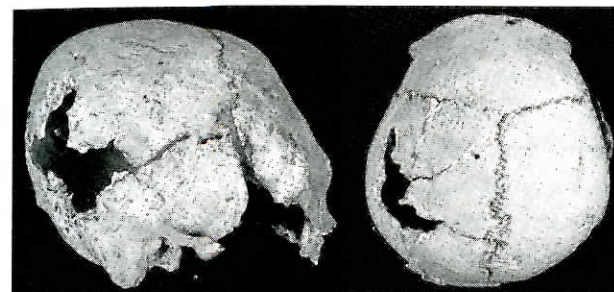


Figure 5.1b. Burial 75: skull in the right lateral norm and upper lateral norm.

The flattening direction is a rear compression plane that forms a very small angle with the basion-bregma line; one can assume that they are practically parallel to one another. The pressure is applied to the entire lambdoid region (parietal and occipital bones), the three bones that form the lambda, by applying a decubit plane in the cradle (Comas 1966:377).

With respect to tabular oblique cranial deformation, the obliquity axis with Frankfort's horizontal plane is an angle of 120 degrees. The compression direction is tangential to the external protuberance of the occipital, and the anatomic pressure only affects the occipital; this type of cranial deformation is attained with free tablets (Comas 1966:378).

During our review of the bone remains in the laboratory, we registered and classified the skulls with intentional modifications (perhaps made as identity or status symbols) when the preservation condition allowed it, for the purpose of identifying particular cultural practices related to groups who worked in the neighborhood.

At a morphological level, the head of individual 46 has a curvo-occipital tabular oblique modeling, whereby the instrument used to achieve the modification exercised pressure on the frontal bone, generating a straight surface and a direction toward the back of the head. Individual 92 has an intermediate tabular oblique cranial modification

with a parallel fronto-occipital compression. It presents a slight sinking mark, perhaps due to a compression band behind the bregma (figs. 5.1c, 5.1d).

A cult dedicated to human heads existed in Mesoamerica from early times. Cult members represented the modeling or modification of the head in figurines, sculptures, mural paintings, and codices. In some cases, trophy heads and *tzompantli* (skullracks) were also collected. For each individual, the head is an external representation of the personality (Romano Pacheco 1987:26). On the other hand, Alfredo López Austin (1996:183–85) maintains that the head is the part of the body that hosts the most varied attributions, such as reasoning power and communications capabilities; the head is the center of an individual's relations with society and the cosmos and the wellspring from which internal life emerges. The head and face of a person mirror the virtues of that individual; there is a connection between a person's head and his or her capacity for honesty. The head worships, it is humble; its face glows, dignifies itself, gives and shows prestige.

Thus, in these ancient societies the intentional modification of the head represents first a differentiation of social status. In research done in the Maya area, it was determined that, in general, the population modified the heads of their children in tabular erect form. However, rulers, chiefs, priests, and warriors, who from their infancy were

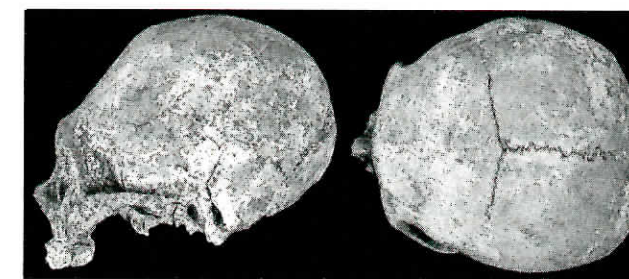


Figure 5.1c. Burial 46: skull with tabular oblique modification in the left lateral norm and upper norm.

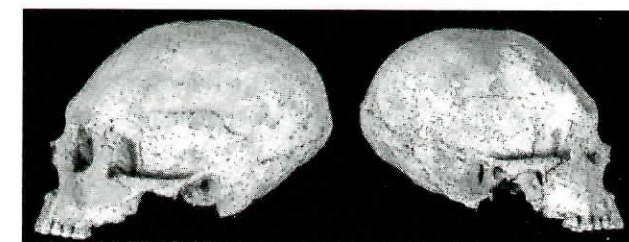


Figure 5.1d. Burial 92: skull with tabular oblique modification in the left lateral and right norm (excavation by Linda R. Manzanilla; photos by Rafael Reyes, Proyecto Arqueológico Teopancazco).

destined to have a high status in their group, had their heads modified in tabular oblique form (Romano Pacheco 1987).

In the Maya area, the oblique modification during the Classic period is considered an emulation of the jaguar, which was a sacred animal and a symbol of authority. In this sense, Vera Tiesler notes that in the coastal zone of Veracruz a parallelepiped modification associated with magical and religious power, venerated by merchants, appeared precisely at the time when long-distance trade was beginning to facilitate the transmission of emergent dominant ideologies, constituting a "new international order." For Tiesler, this order comprised a new class of merchant elite (Tiesler et al. 2009:86–88).

Thus, the following questions about the group of decapitated individuals at Teopancazco can broadly be answered. Are they local or foreign? Most are foreign, coming from different parts of the corridor of allied villages stretching toward the Gulf Coast (Manzanilla 2011b, 2012b, 2015). Do those who display intentional modification of their heads belong to any particular lineage or ethnic group? They come from different altitudes and display different genetic haplogroups. Were those who have oblique modifications group leaders? There is no data to support this claim, although they might have been.

THE APPLICATION OF ANALYTICAL PRINCIPLES TO THE CASE

Following the methodology proposed by Tiesler (1994) for a social interpretation of cephalic modification, the osteological data together with the archaeological information associated with the funerary context should be taken into consideration, keeping in mind four principles:

The Principle of Effort and Energy

This principle indicates that the value of a burial and its meaning for society reflects the social status of the individual being buried. The group of decapitated individuals were treated with a particular funerary ritual: each head was placed in a San Martín Orange crater topped with a bowl or cover, and most of them were laid in pits (of which AA144 was the largest) or on the ruins of a destroyed temple (Manzanilla 2012b:34ff., figs. 17, 19). This type of funerary ritual has not been found elsewhere in Teoti-

huacan, but it has been detected at Cerro de las Mesas, Veracruz, by Philip Drucker (1943), and orange lacquer pottery also came to Teopancazco from the Mixtequilla region where Cerro de las Mesas is located (Manzanilla 2012b:fig. 16).

Fifteen skulls had cinnabar on them; Julie Gazzola (2004) mentions that this was a material with highly symbolic value, generally associated with elites. The largest pit, where seventeen decapitated individuals were buried, was made *ex profeso* for them; no doubt they had performed a particular function in society, and their status was recognized by their heads being covered with cinnabar. Many of them have dental activity markers indicating that they used their teeth to work with fibers (Alvarado-Viñas 2013). Their possible role as part of a select group of artisans earned them a privileged social position with respect to the rest of the group. Another explanation may be that these individuals were sacrificed as part of a termination ritual, victims of the transition from the Tlamimilolpa to the Xolalpan period (ca. 350 CE) (Manzanilla 2002, 2003, 2012b).

The Principle of Spatial Grouping

The skulls of the decapitated group were found in the northeastern sector of the Xolalpan-period main ritual courtyard of Teopancazco, in a former ritual sector (Tlamimilolpa period), distributed in two primary groups and a few smaller groups. The first and largest, in room C162F, includes twenty burials; nine others are located atop the ruins of a destroyed temple; three more are in room C154; and the rest are scattered in different parts of the neighborhood center (plates 10, 11).

This principle states that the formal designation of an area as a place of mortuary ceremonies is indicative of a social organization structured by familial lineages. Nevertheless, Teopancazco is not a domestic compound but a neighborhood center where social actors (priests, bureaucrats, military personnel, specialized artisans) interacted. Thus, it is possible that the decapitated individuals date to the end of Tlamimilolpa times (200–350 CE) and that they were specialized artisans who produced the intermediate elite's garments and headdresses as well as baskets and nets for general use (Manzanilla 2012b, 2015; Manzanilla et al. 2011). With respect to the women buried in Teopancazco (who represent only 15 percent of the sexed adults), they could have been the spouses of the city's leaders,

women who performed specific functions in the *chaînes opératoires* of garment making for the elite, or sacrificed women deposited as companions. In fact, the remains of many of these women show evidence that they were multispecialized artisans (Manzanilla 2015).

The Principle of Differentiation According to Social Status

This principle states that mortuary treatment varies according to the social role of the individual, or, in hierarchical societies, the set of social roles that the individual played, which were predetermined from birth. With respect to head modification, the fact that cranial plasticity allows for change in form only during early infancy reveals a particular social pattern (Tiesler 1994:39).

The human remains of Teopancazco can be grouped into three categories of cranial modification:

- Individuals who did not undergo cranial modification, who were not among the decapitated group found in other sectors of the neighborhood, and whose mortuary treatment was different from that of the decapitated individuals;
- Among the decapitated group, those who did not undergo intentional modification of the head (thirty-one cases); and
- The seven individuals who experienced cranial modification, five of which were the tabular erect type and two of which were the tabular oblique type. These last seven may have belonged to a particular set of leaders of the "house group." The modification of their heads may have been symbolic of their identity and authority within the group.

The Principle of Social Complexity

This variability in funerary behavior reveals a degree of social complexity; in a society such as Teotihuacan, one can observe more diversity in mortuary treatments and offerings than one finds in rural settings. This principle cannot be applied to the different forms of burial practices found in Teopancazco: the decapitated individuals, the formal burials of intact individuals, the infants, the secondary burials, plus the dispersed bone material lacking

any mortuary treatment. Other sectors should be investigated in the future to learn more about their inhumation practices and variations in such practices that may be dependent on ethnicity or different social classifications.

The head modifications undergone by the individuals discussed above had to be visible to the rest of Teotihuacan society; it is possible that the diffusion of this cultural practice inside the city was related to a new elite arriving from towns along the corridor leading toward the Gulf Coast. These persons probably maintained relations, or had kin ties, with different groups from their hometowns outside the capital, and they consolidated a specialized group of artisans who manufactured garments using foreign raw materials that were imported to Teopancazco. One can also point to the import of volcanic glass from Altotonga, Veracruz, to manufacture the floors of the Teopancazco compound (Barca et al. 2013).

The tabular oblique modification that was identified in two individuals is a sign of authority; it expresses a greater social status than those bearing the tabular erect type of modification.

Through stable isotope analyses (Morales-Puente et al. 2012) and ^{87/86}strontium isotope analysis (Schaaf et al. 2012), we know that the group of decapitated individuals came from different altitudes and sites outside Teotihuacan, mainly located along the corridor toward the Nautla region of Veracruz (particularly Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, and Veracruz), emphasizing the heterogeneous character of the population of this neighborhood center (Manzanilla 2015). One of the individuals with tabular oblique deformation came from an altitude similar to that of Teotihuacan, but the other came from a higher altitude, perhaps the Cofre de Perote or Pico de Orizaba region of Veracruz.

One final point that we can make is the possibility of facial and corporal paint as an identity marker. The main mural paintings found at Teopancazco (see McVicker 2005:figs. 5a, 5b) depict priestly and military figures who may have painted their faces. In fact, some theater-type censer masks found with the decapitated individuals in AA144 had facial paint (Manzanilla 2012c:508). Different cosmetics made from galena, cinnabar, hematite, jarosite, and other minerals (Doménech-Carbó et al. 2012) were found in miniature vessels associated with important burials in Teopancazco (Manzanilla 2012b:35).

We may conclude that facial and corporal paint would have been another means of visual recognition of differ-

ent groups in multiethnic Teotihuacan, together with the diversity of attire and headdresses (Manzanilla et al. 2011), personal adornment (Manzanilla 2007), and head modifications.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As we can see in this work, the human body is culturally symbolized due to social processes. Thanks to a precise archaeological record, we were able to determine that the individuals decapitated in Teopancazco were subjects of a specific funeral ritual. After their death, these people were deposited in pits or atop the ruins of a destroyed temple and were covered with cinnabar.

The mortuary space and minerals used as makeup for the dead bodies are indeed symbols of the hierarchical status these people had gained during their lives. Within the beheaded group, as stated before, seven individuals had undergone intentional modification of their head, five undergoing tabular erect modification and the two others fronto-occipital tabular oblique modification. Their bodies had been altered or modified at an early age in order to distinguish them from other members of the greater society. Thus, the modification was in actuality a sign of ethnic identity and status, because their origin was foreign. We presume that they belonged to an elite group of artisans coming from places along the corridor toward the Gulf Coast and that they maintained control over certain trade routes, creating bonds between people from their hometowns and people in Teotihuacan. In a cosmopolitan society, body modification was a privileged tool for the display of ethnic and social differences.

The sorts of cranial modifications we see in Teotihuacan are a development of the predominance of tabular erect types and exceptional tabular oblique types found in the Formative Basin of Mexico (Tiesler 2014:167); tabular oblique types are also common in the Formative sites of Michoacán (Tiesler 2014:167).

In Classic Teotihuacan, where tabular erect types predominate, there are also multiethnic neighborhoods such as La Ventilla, the Merchants' Barrio (Tiesler 2014:186), and Teopancazco, where tabular oblique examples and other variants have been detected. Thus, we may assume that the few tabular oblique examples are related to foreign traditions. One of the examples from Teopancazco (Burial 46) has an A genetic haplogroup, whereas the

other (Burial 92) has a C haplogroup. Both are decapitated males.

During the Epiclassic and Postclassic periods of central Mexico, Tiesler (2014:245) cites a predominance of the tabular erect type.

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Plate 9. Jade inlays and supernumerary incisors of a young adult male from Piedras Negras Burial 45 (photo by Andrew Scherer).

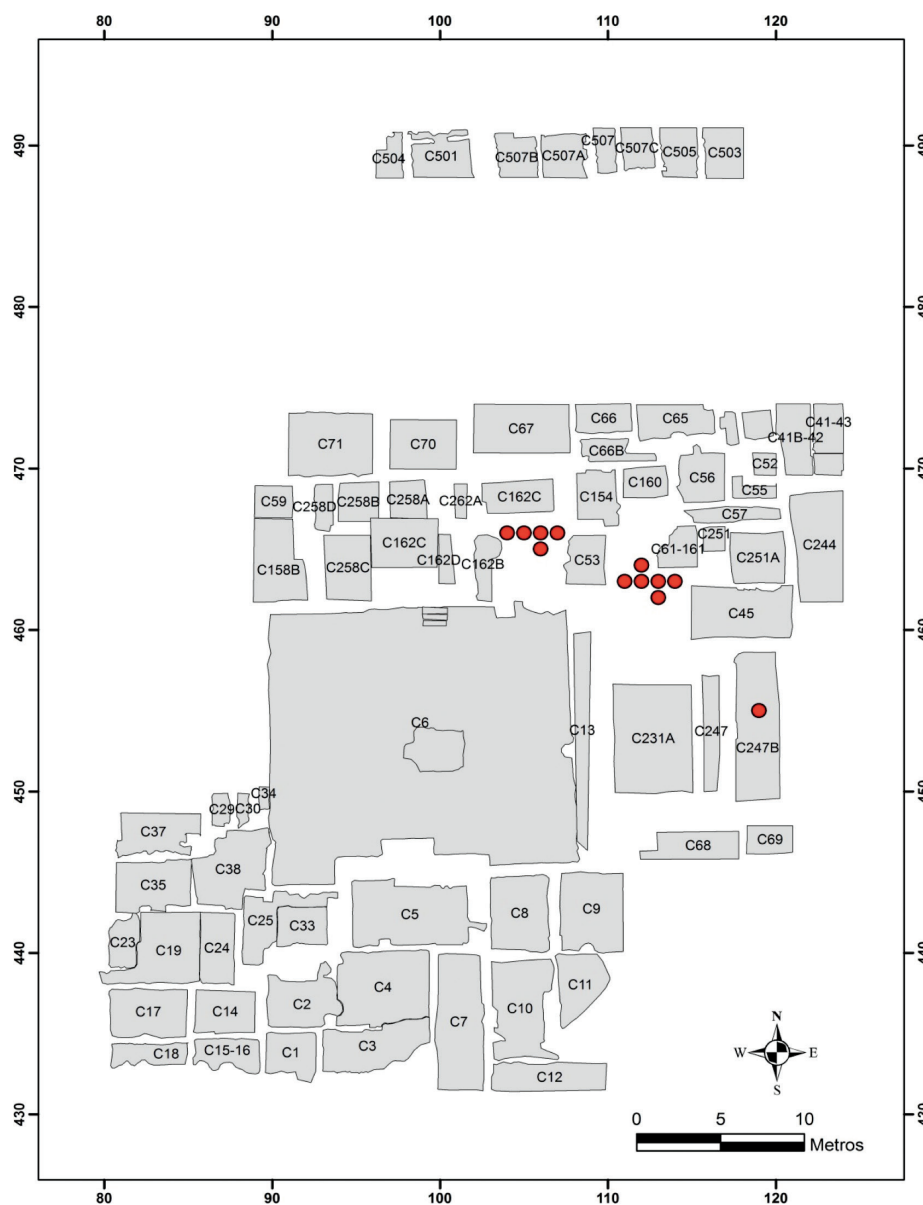


Plate 10. Distribution of decapitated individuals, with the highest concentration in rooms C162F and C161 (map by Linda R. Manzanilla and Luis Adrián Alvarado-Viñas, Proyecto Arqueológico Teopancazco).



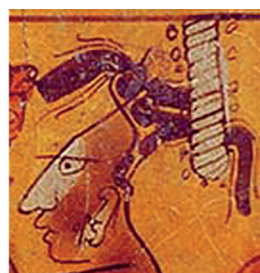
Plate 11. On-site construction distribution during excavation (photo by Linda R. Manzanilla, Proyecto Arqueológico Teopancazco).



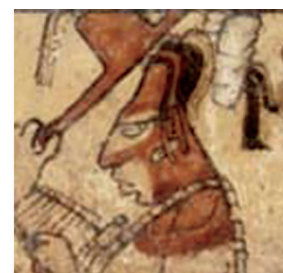
a



b



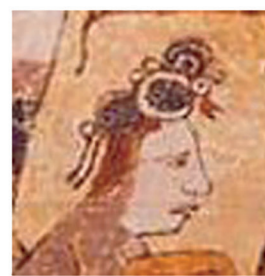
c



d



e



f

Plate 12. Details of different female faces with face paint. Images © Justin Kerr, Kerr Database: (a) K2707, (b) K767, (c) K9300, (d) K5847, (e) K554, and (f) K5451.

