

# Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl vs. Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan: a Problem in Mesoamerican Religion and History<sup>1</sup>

Henry B. Nicholson

One of the paramount deities of Central Mexico at Contact was a supernatural personage who can be most conveniently designated Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl. This god clearly expressed, above all, the fundamental fertility theme with particular emphasis on the fructifying-vivifying aspect of the wind (= breath). A key figure in Central Mexican Conquest period historical traditions was a ruler, believed to have reigned long before the coming of the Europeans, who can perhaps best be denominated Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan. Concerning his life and deeds a rich *corpus* of narratives had been accumulated. The nature of the relationship between the former and the latter is a problem of considerable complexity. This paper is devoted to a concise general discussion of this problem, with major attention to the specification of basic issues and an analysis of the nature of the evidence rather than an attempt to arrive at definitive solutions. The modern literature on both these figures is voluminous. Merely to list them, much less to discuss and appraise them, would consume many pages (representative recent treatments of the “Quetzalcoatl problem”, often expressing quite different points of view, would include: Séjourné 1962, 1965; Sáenz 1962; Lanczkowski 1962; Florescano 1963, 1964; Díaz Infante 1963; Díaz Bolio 1964; Hedrick 1967,

<sup>1</sup> Publicado originalmente en *Actes du XLIIe Congrès International des Américanistes, Congrès du Centenaire. Paris 2-9 sept 1976*, vol. VI, 35-47. París: Société des Américanistes, 1979.

1971; León-Portilla 1968; López Austin 1973; and Lafaye 1974 [1976]. Because of the brevity of this paper and the complexity of the theme, for the most part just primary sources will be cited—and these only when specific items of information are utilized.

Quetzalcoatl, in Nahuatl, literally means “quetzal feather (*quetzalli*)-snake (*coatl*)”. More metaphoric, secondary meanings, such as “precious twin”, are possible but not certain. Perhaps the most “logical” interpretation—and probably the one most frequently advanced—of this union of bird feathers and a slithering reptile would be that the former symbolizes the bird’s environment, the atmospheric realm, while the latter connotes the snake’s milieu, the terrestrial sphere, i.e., Quetzalcoatl may well symbolize the union of earth and sky—which in many cosmologies signifies a creative concept. As has been frequently recognized, this contrastive complementary dualism is quite typical of Mesoamerican religious ideology, which often features cosmic oppositions. Aqueous and vegetational renovation connotations for this icon have also often been favored, and both might well have been included in its overall significance. Certainly the deity who bore this primary name at Contact does play a major role in the cosmogonies (summarized in Nicholson 1971b, 397–403) and was also, judging from certain Sahaguntine rhetorical orations (*Florentine Codex* 1950–69, bk. VI; Sahagún 1950–69, Part VII), believed to play a continuing creative role at least in the production of human infants. Creativity is a positive manifestation of fertility, and, regarding Quetzalcoatl’s basic’ fertility connotation, the evidence overwhelmingly supports this role for the god, both conceptually and in propitiatory ritual.

Although clearly less featured than certain other deities, Quetzalcoatl enjoyed a sufficiently significant cosmogonical and ritualistic role that his considerable antiquity in western Mesoamerica seems quite likely a view which receives some support from archaeological data. At the time of the Conquest, iconographically the deity Quetzalcoatl was portrayed anthropomorphically with a highly distinctive set of diagnostic insignia (see useful summaries in Seler 1900–01, 45–47; 1963, 1: 68–72). More frequently than not he wears a very prominent projecting red mask, in Central Mexico usually buccal, with both avian and reptilian features. This mask also normally represented the second of the 20 day signs, Ehecatl, “wind”, was employed

occasionally to signify the wind *per se* (e.g., Sahagún 1905, 66 [*Códice Matritense del Real Palacio* fol. 282v]; *Codex Vaticanus A* 1900, fol. 6r), and, when worn by the god, appears specifically to connote his role as the supernatural presiding over the wind-air. The commentators of the *Codex Magliabechiano* (1970, fol. 60v) and its Madrid partial cognate (fol. 42r) specifically state that the deity blew the wind through this pointed, projecting mask.

Archaeologically, Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, in his full-fledged Contact “Mixteca-Puebla” (Nicholson 1960) form, does not appear until relatively late, probably some time during the Postclassic—and then these characteristic representations seem to be largely confined to Central Mexico, Western Oaxaca, and the Gulf Coast, precisely those regions where the Mixteca-Puebla stylistic-iconographic system was manifested in its more intense and typical form. However, the Ehecatl mask itself appears at least by the Late Classic (Stela 19, Seibal, ca. A. D. 870, GMT correlation; Greene, hands, and Graham 1972, Pl. 115—probably reflecting Gulf Coast intrusions into the Rio Pasión sites). Judging from some sculptures from the Cotzumalhuapa region, Escuintla, Guatemala (Thompson 1948, 25–26, Fig. 13; Parsons 1969, 127, Pl. 48d), Ehecatl, with a more realistically reptilian version of his projecting buccal mask, may have been already extant by the “Middle Classic” (Parsons 1969, 157–85)—again, probably reflecting Gulf Coast intrusions and/or influence in this Pacific Slope area. By the Early Postclassic, at least in the Gulf Coast region, the non-buccal form of the mask was also well established (e.g., du Solier 1943, 69–70, 76, g; Goldwater et al. 1969, 604). Although the question requires more research, its earlier antecedents probably can be traced to a complex of projecting buccal masks worn by numerous personages in Classic Veracruz-Oaxaca iconography, which, in turn, can be traced back into the Preclassic (Nicholson 1971a, 16). Possibly the buccalmasked personages wearing conch shell pectorals depicted in Murals 3 and 4, Portico 2, Atetelco, Teotihuacan (e.g., Séjourné 1962, Fig. 55), are also relevant to the problem of the origin of Ehecatl’s “wind mask”, but this is uncertain.

The standard Conquest period representation of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl displayed various items of costume and insignia typical of the Huasteca. For this reason, various students have suggested a Huastec origin for the god (e.g., Seler 1963, 1: 71–72; however, he also recognized possible other explana-

tions). Depictions of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, and variants thereof, are occasionally encountered in the Late Postclassic Huasteca (e.g., Franco 1961, Fig. 1; Von Winning and Stendahl n.d., Fig. 331), and the well-known Huilicintla reliefs (Seler 1902–23, 3: 517 [Abb. 2], 519 [Abb. 3]) also portray personages with some Quetzalcoatl insignia, including, perhaps, a version of the “wind mask” as part of their headdresses. The connections with the Huasteca (Cuextlan) mentioned in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* and Muñoz Camargo (via Torquemada) accounts of Quetzalcoatl, ruler of Tollan and “cultural missionary”, respectively (discussion in Nicholson 1957, 56–71, 157–64), also seem suggestive. However, since virtually nothing is known ethnohistorically concerning the cult of this god in the Huasteca and no pre-Postclassic relevant archaeological data have apparently been uncovered, the precise significance of these Huasteca associations of the deity still pose somewhat of a problem.

At Contact, Quetzalcoatl was also represented, in many variants, by a rattlesnake with quetzal feathers replacing or covering its scales. This icon can be traced, especially through Tula, Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla, more or less continuously back at least as far as Early Teotihuacan (Miccaotli or II phase: “Temple of the Feathered Serpent” carved frieze, etc.). Although the feathered serpent, as such, appears to be lacking in Classic Oaxaca iconography, Caso and Bernal (1952, 145–62) have suggested that their “God with the Buccal Mask of the Serpent” represented a Monte Albán version of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, connecting the ophidian buccal mask with the later Ehecatl “wind mask”. Classic Veracruz iconography also yields a few subsidiary representations which might qualify as feathered serpents (e.g., Kampen 1972, *passim* [Tajín reliefs]; Gendrop 1971, Fig. 109 [Las Higueras wall painting]). Preclassic representations of snakes apparently with some associated feathers have also been claimed (e.g., Joralemon 1971, 82–84) to connote at least a “proto-Quetzalcoatl”. I would regard some of these as possible anticipations of the indubitable Early Classic “feathered serpents” but none, perhaps, as absolutely conclusive. A basic problem, of course, is whether the latter connoted the same meanings as those of the Late Postclassic. Some students (e.g., Armillas 1947) have argued that the Teotihuacan period feathered serpents signified general aquatic-fertility concepts but not necessarily the specific creator-fertility deity, Quetzalcoatl, of later

times — thus applying, in effect, the Panofskyan “principle of disjunction” which Kubler, especially, has recently emphasized (discussion in Nicholson 1976). I suspect, however, that at least some of the Conquest period connotations of the feathered serpent as a symbol of the deity Quetzalcoatl were already present during the Classic, if not earlier. Hopefully, future archaeological discoveries will clarify these and other questions connected with this complex god.

In Eastern Mesoamerica, the Protoclassic Izapan and Classic Lowland Maya “Serpent Bird” or “Principal Bird Deity” (Bardawil 1976) was probably conceptually linked with the feathered snake of Western Mesoamerica. Occasionally the essentially ophidian “Bearded Dragon” (Coe 1975, 20) or “Fish Monster” (Joralemon cited in Bardawil 1976, 208) of Classic Lowland Maya iconography displays decorative feather edging (the most frequently illustrated examples are Late Classic Altar 0, Copan, and Lintel 3, Temple IV, Tikal), as well as even more specifically serpentine creatures (e.g., Adams 1971, Fig. 36a; Veremos Complex [terminal Early Classic) Contrabandista Gouged-Incised, Contrabandista Variety cylindrical vessel). However, the characteristic feathered rattlesnake of Central Mexico, where the feathers replace or at least mask the scales, was apparently absent in the Central Maya Area and only appeared very late in the Northern Area (e.g., Uxmal: West Building, Nunnery Complex; Ballcourt ranges)—where it is often assumed to have reflected “Mexican” influence (or even to have been added by later “Mexican” or “Mexican-influenced” invaders). By the Early Postclassic, of course, this icon appeared in an exceptionally intense concentration at Chichen Itza, in forms quite similar to those of Tula, Hidalgo—and most students (but cf. Kubler 1961; Parsons 1969, 172–84) accept its Toltec derivation there.

Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl poses problems enough, but these pale in comparison with those which surround Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan. First of all, it should be stressed that no really sharp, clear-cut distinction can legitimately be drawn between them. I have employed these labels merely to distinguish them for purposes of the discussion. In my doctoral dissertation (Nicholson 1957) I attempted to summarize all available primary data which appeared to be relevant to what I called the “Basic Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan Tale”. I also undertook a preliminary analysis of all these scattered

data, concluding that — in spite of the obvious presence of considerable mythologic, legendary, and folkloristic elements — a basic core of historicity adhered to at least the 6 narratives (*Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, *Juan Cano Relaciones*, *Histoyre du Mechique*, *Leyenda de los Soles*, Sahagún, and the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*) I considered most fundamental. As I (Nicholson 1957, 360–61) summarized it then:

Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was very likely a genuine historical figure prominently involved with an early stage of Toltec history; he later became blended with and, occasionally, frankly confused with certain important purely supernatural personalities, particularly an ancient fertility-rain-wind-creator deity I have been calling Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl; probably the son of an important early conqueror, Mixcoatl-Totepeuh, after revenging himself on his father's murderers, he rose to become the leader, both secularly and sacerdotally, of a vigorous group established at Tollan; while in power, he sought to introduce certain important innovations, especially in the religious sphere but also in other aspects of the culture; due to circumstance which are very obscure but which probably primarily involved opposition to his religious doctrines, a conflict developed in Tollan to such proportions that Topiltzin was forced to leave, probably with a sizable number of followers; heading generally in an eastward direction, with a possible long stop-over in Cholula, he disappeared over the horizon of specific geographical knowledge of the highland peoples; the suggestion that "the" Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl actually led a group into Yucatan and established a new political capital there (Chichen Itza) has often been made and is certainly conceivable, although an alternative theory invoking different individual leaders bearing the names, Kukulcan, Quetzalcoatl, Nacxit, etcetera, as *titles* seems just as likely; in addition to his highly important religious role, which is stressed in both Central Mexico and Yucatan, Topiltzin seems also to have functioned importantly as a political leader—consolidator and was best remembered by the Toltec—descended dynasts of Guatemala as the dispenser of all valid political authority; the evidence for a widespread belief in his eventual return to reclaim his own, which materially influenced Motecuhzoma II in his initial dealings with the Spaniards, is very strong.

Today, almost a *cempohualli* of years later, I am not so sure I would go quite so far in acknowledging this degree of historicity in the basic Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan narratives. I perhaps underestimated the process of “mythicization”, of the type recently stressed by Eliade (1974, 39–48), which probably profoundly restructured the tale of Topiltzin. However, I still feel that, essentially, the fundamental position I took in 1957 is still viable as a working hypothesis. To reduce the basic Topiltzin narrative entirely to a “dawn hero”, lunar, or Venus myth, for example, as some have attempted to do, would constitute, in my view, an inadmissibly radical position. On the other hand, imputing too much literal historicity to the basic tale would also unquestionably be naive.

I still think it likely that there once lived on this earth a man of flesh and blood who ruled at Tollan, now the ruins of Tula, Hidalgo, who, among other names and titles, bore that of an important old creator-fertility deity, Quetzalcoatl, probably because of a prime sacerdotal role connected with his cult. There may have been other rulers who earlier bore this same title and played a similar role, whose lives and deeds may have fused with “the” Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan, *i. e.*, the protagonist of the basic tale current at Contact—perhaps even at Teotihuacan (see Séjourné 1959, Fig. 138; 1962, Fig. 38, Lám. 9 [cf. Caso 1966, 265]; the incised scene on a tripod cylindrical red-on-ochre vessel found at Zacuala which Séjourné claims proves Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl ruled in Classic Teotihuacan, however, can certainly be interpreted in diverse ways [cf. Florescano 1964, 155–57]). Quetzalcoatl was indubitably later borne as a title by at least the high priests of the two politically most powerful communities of North America, Mexico Tenochtitlan (Sahagún 1950–69, Part IV: 67) and Tetzaco (Pomar 1964, 167, 173). In any case, I think it probable that Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl must have enjoyed the kind of career that made a strong impact on the consciousness of his time. Although I would hesitate to go as far as Gordon Willey (n.d.) has recently gone in suggesting that he introduced a new, genuinely “transcendental” religion, I would tend to reaffirm my view expressed in my thesis that his impact was probably greatest in the religious sphere. He also appears to have manipulated the symbols and rituals of royal power—undoubtedly enveloped by religious sanctions—so successfully that he continued, many generations after his “fall” and “flight”, to be considered the fountainhead of

all “legitimate” political power in Central Mexico, to the extent that the Tenochca ruler considered himself to be his direct dynastic heir, in effect ruling in his name, with the expectation that he would eventually return to reclaim his throne.

It might be expected that archaeological evidence would be relevant to the Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl “historicity problem”. I tried to examine most of what was available in 1957 (Nicholson 1957, 292–300). Although representations of bearded individuals of obvious high rank associated with the feathered serpent image were encountered at both Tula and Chichen Itza (seemingly confirming Yucatecan traditions concerning an intrusive “Mexican captain” called Kukulcan), none of the archaeological evidence seemed specific enough really to clarify the question of whether the key events in the career of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan narrated in the basic accounts had actually occurred. Although additional archaeological excavation has been undertaken at Tula during the past few years, nothing has been encountered, to my knowledge, which would add any significant amount of data directly relevant to our problem. Hopefully, however, future discoveries may change the picture significantly.

Complicating the historicity problem is the great importance in some of the Mixteca pictorials of a personage with the calendric name, 9. Wind, arrayed with nearly all of the standard Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl insignia, who apparently figures as a divine ancestor of Mixteca royalty (Nicholson n. d.). What connection, if any, this figure might have had with Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan poses a difficult problem. Kelley (1965) has also suggested that the birth of a deity (Berlin’s “Gi”), possibly an aspect of a Classic period version of the later Yucatecan Kukulcan, on the day 1.18.5.3.2 9 Ik 15 Ceh, in the hieroglyphic text of the Temple of the Cross, Palenque, probably dedicated shortly after A. D. 692 by “Chan Bahlum” (ruled 683–702, in the Mathews and Schele reconstruction; Mathews and Schele 1974; Schele n.d.), might indicate that a Lowland Maya version of our deity was prominent this early. His argument is rather involved and somewhat speculative at some points, and the relevant text contains some difficult and still poorly understood passages, which were not thoroughly discussed by Kelley. However, later studies (e.g., Kubler 1974, and, especially, Lounsbury 1976) have indicated the likelihood of a comparable divine ancestral role for “Gi-9 Ik”



(= 9. Wind) for Palenque royalty. Caso (1967, 159–61), interpreting the “Reptile’s Eye” (RE) sign as equivalent to the later day sign Ehec atl, suggested that this calendric name, 9 RE, well fitted its prominent association with the feathered serpent representations on the Xochicalco Temple of the Feathered Serpent. In any case, the relatively early connection of the day 9. Wind with the wind aspect of our deity is attested by its occurrence among the Nahuatl-speakers of far-off Nicaragua; certainly in later times 9. Wind was intimately associated with Ehec atl Quetzalcoatl (discussion in Nicholson 1957, 356–57, citing relevant ethnohistorical and archaeological data [cf. Caso 1967, 191]).

Aside from the strictly historical problem surrounding Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan, analysis of the key primary sources reveals that the basic distinction between the deity and the Toltec ruler seems to have been generally recognized at Contact. For example, the major annotator of the *tonalamatl* of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (1899, fol. 10v), in the fourth trecena, 1. Xochitl, states: “ayunavan los quatro dias prosteros al quezalcoatl de tula ques el que tomo nombre del primer quezalcoatl y agora le llaman una caña que es la estrella Venus de laqual se dizen las fabulas questos tienen”. The 4 day fast referred to was in preparation for the ceremony on the day 1. Acatl, initial day of the following trecena, the sign especially connected with Quetzalcoatl. The commentator of the *Codex Vaticanus A* (1900, fol. 16v), in this same trecena, also refers to this 4 day fast as being: “in reverential dell’altro Quetzalcoatl de Tula”. In Sahagún’s (1950–69, Part XI: 165–70) account of the Toltecs it is made clear that a priest (*in tlamacazqui in teopixqui*) who particularly preached the doctrine of the “single deity” (*ca ce in inteouh*) named Quetzalcoatl was also called Quetzalcoatl—and the latter is later denominated Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl when his “entry into the water” at Tlapallan is mentioned. Also, in the more comprehensive native histories (e.g., *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, *Leyenda de los Soles*, *Historyre du Mechique*), which commence with a cosmogonical section, the deeds of the creator god, (Ehec atl) Quetzalcoatl, are strictly separated from those of the Toltec ruler who is sometimes even designated by other names (Topiltzin, Ce Acatl, etcetera).

The evidence for a considerable degree of fusion between the deity and the Toltec ruler, on the other hand, is also patent. For example, in various of

the Sahaguntine (1950–69, Part VII: 141–47, 183–88, 201–04) rhetorical orations the deity is linked, in his continuing creative function, with the supreme creative duo, Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl, and designated Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the appellation normally applied to the Toltec ruler. In the *Primeros Memoriales* (Sahagún 1905, 131 [*Códice Matritense de la Real Academia de la Historia*, fol. 60r]) the deity in his role as creator of man is also labeled Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. Pictorially, this fusion is also evident. The Toltec ruler is depicted in both the *Codex Vaticanus A* (1900, fols. 7v–9v) and the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún 1950–69, Part IV: Figs. 9–10, 14) with many elements of the deity’s typical attire and insignia (but not the buccal Ehecatl “wind mask”). In Durán (1967, 1: Lám. 1), however, the Toltec ruler is shown otherwise, wearing the *quetzalapanacayotl* feather headdress and with what seems to be the *xiuhcoaxayacatl* mask depicted below him—both of which are assigned to Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in the *Anales de Cuauh-titlan* (1938, 83) and in Sahagún (1950–69, Part XIII: 11). One of the annotators of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (1899, fol. 10r), referring to a typical representation of the deity, although lacking the Ehecatl “wind mask”, names him Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and otherwise provides data concerning his birth and flight or death that obviously belong to the Toltec ruler. It is also worth stressing that the presence or absence of the “wind mask” does not by any means neatly distinguish the god from the ruler, since some representations which clearly depict the deity (e.g., the day sign Ehecatl in the *Codices Telleriano-Remensis/Vaticanus A*; full figure representation in *Codex Magliabechiano* [1970, fol. 62r]) lack the mask. Its presence may always indicate the creator-wind deity, but the reverse does not seem to hold.

Another way, perhaps, of expressing the fusion of the god with the human ruler who served as his special protagonist and priest is the statement (although crossed out) by one of the annotators of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (1899, fol. 8r), referring to the depiction of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl as patron of the second *tonalpohualli* trecena commencing 1. Ocelotl, that: “este solo tenía cuerpo humano como los hombres, y los demás dioses no tenían cuerpo”. Also, another commentator in the same source (*Codex Telleriano-Remensis* 1899, fol. 8r) wrote near the representation of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl that the latter was born to the virgin Chimalman (“en el cielo”), while the principal annotator identifies the same figure straightway

with the wind god, attributing to him the invention of round temples. Thus, these two annotations, in effect, fuse Ehecatl and Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the deity and the ruler.

Quetzalcoatl at Contact had various functions and attributes other than his creative and wind deity roles, one of the most important of which was his connection with the planet Venus. Was this also an attribute of the ancient deity or did this relationship develop only as part of the Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan narratives, various of which tell of his conversion into the star upon his death and cremation? Archaeologically, what has usually been interpreted as the bright star or Venus symbol is associated with the feathered serpent icon at least as early as the Toltec period (e.g., Acosta 1956, Lám. 5; Tozzer 1957, 2: Fig. 126), so, on the face of it, the Venus association appears to go back at least to the Early Postclassic. The Epiclassic (?) Maltrata, Veracruz, feathered serpent (Medellín Zenil 1962, Fig. 14) has attached to it a symbol which may also be this stellar sign (cf. Medellín Zenil 1962, 560, who identifies it as the sliced conch shell pectoral of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, the *ehēcacoꝝcatl*), which might take the Venusian association back somewhat earlier. Complicating the problem is the existence of another deity, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, as the particular Venus god. He shares the same calendric sign, 1. Acatl, with Quetzalcoatl but is otherwise iconographically quite distinct. Mound B at Tula has been claimed as a temple to Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Acosta 1943, 143–44), but I have never regarded the evidence, originally assembled by Hugo Moedano, as very compelling, nor is Séjourné's (1962, 119, Figs. 142–44) identification of various painted figures on Classic Teotihuacan structures as the same Venus god particularly convincing (cf. Caso 1966, 272).

Quetzalcoatl was also credited with the invention of the calendric system in vogue in Central Mexico at Contact (Sahagún 1950–69, Part VIII: Fig. 20; Mendieta [probably from Olmos] 1945, 1: 106). Whether this calendric association already belonged to the ancient creator-fertility deity or only appeared in connection with the sacerdotal innovative role of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl is another difficult question. This problem intersects with whole “culture hero” aspect of the latter, particularly his role as introducer of new penitential religious exercises. Certainly, Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl is characteristically portrayed with the chief instrument of ritual auto-sacrifice, the pointed bone

for drawing blood from various parts of the body, inserted in his headband. This could be interpreted as another example of Ehecatl-Topiltzin syncretism, but might also point to an early association of penitential rites with the creator god, who, in the cosmogonies, also displays some culture hero aspects, particularly his involvement in the obtaining of man's principal sustenance, maize.

Another significant role for the god at Contact was his association with the merchants. Durán (1967, 1: 61) flatly terms him “el dios de los mercaderes”. This is in the context of his description of his role as the special patron deity of the great mercantile center, Cholollan. Durán (1967, 1: 265) explicitly identifies him also as Ehecatl and, if his description of the appearance of the Cholollan idol can be accepted, he was clearly depicted as that aspect — and this is corroborated by the illustration (Durán 1967, 1: Lám. 12). Interestingly, some scenes in the Mixtec screenfolds (discussion in Nicholson n. d.) appear to associate this deity with traveling merchants and/or emissaries. As in the case of his Venusian associations, the problem is complicated by the existence of a full-fledged, iconographically distinct merchant deity, Yacatecuhtli. Some relationship between Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl and Yacatecuhtli seems evident, even if certain proposed etymologies for the latter's name, Ce Acatl Tecuhtli (Acosta Saignes 1945, 39 [quoting Jiménez Moreno]), and I-aca-tecuhtli (Barlow 1945, 166), seem less likely than “Nose-Lord” (pointing more in the direction of “God M”, the Maya “Pinocchio Nose God” of the merchants), particularly when Sahagún (1950–69, Part 11: 19) gives Nacxitl as one of the names of a “brother” of Yacatecuhtli. Also suggestive is the existence of another deity, Nahui Ehecatl (originally Nacxitl?; discussion in Nicholson 1957, 354–55), especially propitiated by the merchants; this deity iconographically combines Tlaloc and Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl insignia. These mercantile associations would seem to belong more fitly to Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl than Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, but whether largely because of his status as patron of Cholollan, the commercial center *par excellence*, or for some more profound historical or theological reason is, at this stage of our knowledge, rather difficult to judge.

It was mentioned earlier that a certain degree of “mythification” of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl almost certainly occurred, probably both in the direction of a kind of standard Mesoamerican “hero pattern” as well as some

assimilation to the deity whose particular protagonist he was credited with being. His miraculous birth and the vanquishing of his hostile brothers or uncles, among other possible motifs, probably reflect the first process (cf. Huitzilopochtli birth myth). Our understanding of the second process would be clearer if we really knew the full conceptual scope of the pre-Topiltzin deity. We can probably safely assume a basic fertility-creative aspect, but, beyond that, as we have seen, it is difficult to reconstruct other possible elements (culture hero, arch-penitent, Venus patron, mercantile association, etcetera) which might have been melded with essential narrative of the Toltec hero ruler.

To summarize, for modern analytic purposes it is convenient to distinguish between: 1) a supernatural being, whose chief sphere was apparently fertility and creativity and whose principal symbol at least in later times was a rattle-snake whose scales were replaced or covered with quetzal feathers; and 2) a prominent Toltec ruler who appears to have left a great impact on the historical consciousness of Late Postclassic Mesoamerica and who was credited, *interalia*, with important religious-ritual innovations and with having established the “legitimate” political order emulated by the successor states to the Toltec imperium. To the latter figure various sources also ascribe a significant role as the particular priest and advocate of the deity whose name he assumed as a title. For this, and probably other reasons, the deity and ruler were gradually to some extent merged, resulting in a highly complex personage with both divine and human aspects. Although in the indigenious view the god and the man were, in some contexts, principally historical, essentially distinguishable, in other contexts, principally cultic, the fused concept tended to prevail. To separate out and trace the history of all the perhaps originally independent strands which went into the Conquest period conception of this deity-hero poses an exceptionally formidable task. Modern students have been prolific in advancing innumerable hypotheses intended to clarify the “enigma of Quetzalcoatl”, and it is unlikely that this output will slacken since the fascination of this problem seems perennial.

As indicated at the outset, the principal purpose of this brief article is not to offer definitive “solutions” but to attempt to pinpoint and clarify some of the major issues. As I stated at the conclusion of my 1957 study of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan:

Like Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl I do solemnly prophesy a return, a repeated return to this problem on the part of many future students, building steadily upon the work of one another. This study is intended to be one more link in that chain of greater understanding.

This much briefer discussion of the nature of the relationship between the Toltec hero-ruler and the deity whose name he bore also had this same intention. To what extent I have succeeded I leave to the judgment of my colleagues. In the book I am preparing on Quetzalcoatl these and related problems will be explored at much greater length. For the moment, these preliminary observations must suffice.

#### REFERENCES CITED

- Acosta, Jorge. 1943. "Los colosos de Tula." *Cuadernos Americanos* 2(6): 138–46.
- . 1956. "Resumen de los informes de las exploraciones arqueológicas en Tula, Hgo. durante las VI, VII y VIII temporadas, 1946–1950." *Anales del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, 8: 37–115.
- Acosta Saignes, Miguel. 1945. *Los Pochteca: ubicación de los mercaderes en la estructura social Tenochca*. Mexico (Acta Anthropologica, I: 1).
- Adams, Richard. 1971. *The Ceramics of Altar de Sacrificios*. Cambridge: Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.
- Anales de Cuauhtitlan*. 1938. In *Die Geschichte der Königreiche von Colhuacan und Mexico*. Text mit Übersetzung von Walter Lehmann. *Quellenwerke zur alten Geschichte Amerikas aufgezeichnet in den Sprachen der Eingeborenen herausgegeben vom Ibero-Amerikanischen Institut*. Stuttgart, Berlin.
- Armillas, Pedro. 1947. "La serpiente emplumada: Quetzalcoatl y Tlaloc." *Cuadernos Americanos*, 1: 161–78.
- Bardawil, Lawrence. 1976. "The Principal Bird Deity in Maya Art — an Iconographic Study of Form and Meaning." In *The Art, Iconography and Dynastic History of Palenque, Part III: Proceedings of the Segunda Mesa*

*Redonda de Palenque, December 14-21*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson, 195–209. Pebble Beach, California: Pre-Columbian Art Research, Robert Louis Stevenson School.

- Barlow, Robert. 1945. "Review of Miguel Acosta Saignes, 'Los Pochteca: ubicación de los mercaderes en la estructura social tenochca'". *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana*, 8: 164–66.
- Caso, Alfonso. 1966. "Dioses y signos teotihuacanos." In *Teotihuacan: Onceava Mesa Redonda*, 249–79. Mexico: Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967. *Los calendarios prehispánicos*. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas.
- Caso, Alfonso and Ignacio Bernal. 1952. *Urnas de Oaxaca*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.
- Codex Magliabechiano*. 1970. *Codex Magliabechiano CL.XIII.3 (B.R. 232)*. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. *Einleitung Summary und Resumen Ferdinand Anders*. Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt.
- Codex Telleriano-Remensis*. 1899. *Codex Telleriano-Remensis. Manuscrit Mexicain du cabinet de Ch.-M. Le Tellier, archevêque de Reims á la Bibliothèque Nationale (Ms. Mezicain No. 385)*. Reproduit en photochromographie aux frais du Duc de Loubat et précédé d'une introduction contenant la transcription complète des anciens commentaires Hispano-Mexicains per le Dr. E.-T. Hamy. Paris: Imp. Burdin.
- Codex Vaticanus A*. 1900. *Il Manoscritto Messicano Vaticano 3738 detto Il Codice Rios riprodotto in fotocromografia a spese di sua eccellenza il Duca di Loubat per cura della Biblioteca Vaticana*. Rome: Danesi.
- Coe, Michael. 1975. *Classic Maya Pottery at Dumbarton Oaks*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Díaz-Bolio, José. 1964. *La serpiente emplumada: eje de culturas*. Mérida, Yucatan: Registro de Cultura Yucateca.
- Díaz Infante, Fernando. 1963. *Quetzalcoatl: ensayo psicoanalítico del mito nahua*. Prólogo de Ángel Ma. Garibay K. Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana.
- Du Solier, Wilfrido. 1943, *A Reconnaissance on Isla de Sacrificios, Veracruz, Mexico*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.

- Durán, fray Diego. 1967. *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*. La prepara y da a luz Ángel Ma. Garibay K. 2 vols. Mexico: Editorial Porrúa.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1974. *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Florescano, Enrique. 1963. "Tula-Teotihuacan, Quetzalcóatl y la Toltecéyotl." *Historia Mexicana*, 13(2): 193–234.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1964. "La serpiente emplumada, Tláloc y Quetzalcóatl." *Cuadernos Americanos*, 23 (2): 121–66.
- Franco, José Luis. 1961. "Tres representaciones fálicas de Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl." *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Antropológicas de México*, 12: 5–8.
- Gendrop, Paul. 1971. "Murales prehispánicos." *Artes de México*, 18(144).
- Goldwater, Robert, Douglas Newton, Tamara Northern, and Julie Jones. 1969. *Art of Oceania, Africa, and the Americas from the Museum of Primitive Art: An Exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, May 10-August 17, 1969*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Greene, Merle, Robert Rands, and John Graham. 1972. *Maya Sculpture from the Southern Lowlands, the Highlands and Pacific Piedmont: Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras*. Berkeley: Lederer, Street & Zeus.
- Hedrick, Basil. 1967. *Quetzalcoatl*. Carbondale, Illinois: The Museum, Southern Illinois University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1971. "Quetzalcoatl: European or Indigene?" In *Man across the Sea: Problems of pre-Columbian Contacts*, edited by Carroll Riley, J. Charles Kelley, Campbell Pennington, and Robert Rands, 255–65. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Joralemon, Peter David. 1971. *A Study of Olmec Iconography*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Kampen, Michael. 1972. *The Sculptures of El Tajín, Veracruz, Mexico*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Kelley, David. 1965. "The Birth of the Gods at Palenque." *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, 5: 93–134.



- Kubler, George. 1961. "Chichen-Itzá y Tula." *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, 1: 47–49.
- . 1974. "Mythological Ancestries in Classic Maya Inscriptions." In *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque, Part II: A Conference on the Art, Iconography, and Dynastic History of Palenque, Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico, December 14–22, 1973*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson, 23–43. Pebble Beach, California: Robert Louis Stevenson School.
- Lafaye, Jacques. 1974. *Quetzalcoatl et Guadalupe. La formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique (1531–1813)*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1976. *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1531–1813*. Translated by Benjamin Keen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lanczkowski, Günter. 1962. "Quetzalcoatl — Mythos und Geschichte." *Nu-men*, 9(1): 17–36.
- León-Portilla, Miguel. 1968. *Quetzalcóatl*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- López Austin, Alfredo. 1973. *Hombre-dios: religión y política en el mundo náhuatl*. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas.
- Lounsbury, Floyd. 1976. "A Rationale for the Initial Date of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque." In *The Art, Iconography and Dynastic History of Palenque, Part III: Proceedings of the Segunda Mesa Redonda de Palenque, December 14–21, 1974*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson, 211–24. Pebble Beach, California: Robert Louis Stevenson School.
- Matthews, Peter and Linda Schele. 1974. "Lords of Palenque — the Glyphic Evidence." In *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque, Part I: A Conference on the Art, Iconography, and Dynastic History of Palenque, Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico, December 14–22, 1973*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson, 63–76. Pebble Beach, California: Robert Louis Stevenson School.
- Medellín Zenil, Alfonso. 1962. "El monolito de Maltrata, Veracruz." *La Palabra y el Hombre*, 24: 555–61.

- Mendieta, fray Gerónimo de. 1945. *Historia eclesiástica indiana*. 4 vols. Mexico: Editorial Salvador Chávez Hayhoe.
- Nicholson, H. B. 1957. "Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan: a Problem in Mesoamerican Ethnohistory". Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University.
- . 1960. "The Mixteca-Puebla Concept in Mesoamerican Archaeology: a re-Examination." In *Men and Culture: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences*, edited by Anthony F. C. Wallace, 612–17. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 1971a. "The Iconography of Classic Central Veracruz Ceramic Sculptures." In *Ancient Art of Veracruz; an Exhibition Sponsored by the Ethnic Arts Council of Los Angeles at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, February 23–June 13, 1971*, edited by Olga Hammer, 13–17. Los Angeles: The Ethnic Arts Council.
- . 1971b. "Religion in pre-Hispanic Central Mexico." In *Handbook of Middle American Indians, vol. 10, Archaeology of Northern Mesoamerica, Part I*, edited by Robert Wauchope (general editor), Gordon Ekholm and Ignacio Bernal (volume editors), 395–446. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- . 1976. "Preclassic Mesoamerican Iconography from the Perspective of the Postclassic: Problems in Interpretational Analysis." In *Origins of Religious Art and Iconography in Preclassic Mesoamerica*, edited by H. B. Nicholson, 157–75. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications.
- . n.d., "The Deity 9. Wind 'Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl' in the Mixteca Pictorials." Paper presented at the XLI International Congress of Americanists, Mexico, D. F., September 2–7, 1974, in the special session, "Mixtec Codices: Problems and Progress".
- Parsons, Lee. 1969. *Bilbao, Guatemala: An Archaeological Study of the Pacific Coast Cotzumalhuapa Region*. Vol. 2. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum.
- Pomar, Juan Bautista de. 1964. "Relación de Juan Bautista de Pomar (Tezcoco, 1582)." In *Poesía Náhuatl, I, Romances de los Señores de la Nueva España*.

ña, *Manuscrito de Juan Bautista de Pomar, Tezcoco, 1582*, paleografía, versión, introducción, notas y apéndices de Ángel Ma. Garibay K. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Historicas.

Sáenz, César. 1962. *Quetzalcoatl*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Sahagún, fray Bernardino de. 1905. *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España por Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún*, edición parcial en facsimile de los códices matritenses en lengua mexicana que se custodian en las Bibliotecas del Palacio Real y de la Real Academia de la Historia. Edited by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso. Madrid.

———. 1950–69. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, edited and translated by Charles Dibble and Arthur Anderson. Parts 2–13. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research.

Schele, Linda. n. d. *The Attribution of Monumental Architecture to Specific Rulers at Palenque*. Paper presented at the XLI International Congress of Americanists, Mexico, September 2–7, 1974.

Séjourné, Laurette. 1959. *Un palacio en la ciudad de los dioses (Teotihuacán)*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

———. 1962. *El universo de Quetzalcoatl*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

———. 1965. “El Quetzalcóatl en Teotihuacan”. *Cuadernos Americanos*, 24 (1): 131–56.

Seler, Eduard. 1900–01. *The Tonalamatl of the Aubin Collection. An Old Mexican Picture Manuscript in the Paris National Library (Manuscripts Mexicains No. 18-19)*. English edition by A. H. Keane. Berlin: Published at the expense of his Excellency the Duke of Loubat.

———. 1902–23. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Amerikanischen Sprach- und Alter-tumskunde*. 5 Vols. Berlin: A. Asher & Company.

———. 1963. *Comentarios al Códice Borgia*. 3 vols. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

- Thompson, J. Eric S. 1948. *An Archaeological Reconnaissance in the Cotzumalhuapa Region, Escuintla, Guatemala*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Tozzer, Alfred. 1957. *Chichen Itza and its Cenote of Sacrifice: a Comparative Study of Contemporaneous Maya and Toltec*. 2 v ols. Cambridge: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.
- Willey, Gordon. n. d. "Mesoamerican Civilization and the Idea of Transcendence." *Antiquity*: in press.
- Winning, Hasso von and Alfred Stendahl. n. d. *Pre-Columbian Art of Mexico and Central America*. New York.