HISTORIC MEXICAN COSTUME

AS A SOURCE FOR MODERN DESIGNERS

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By

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PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to make a contribution to the fashion world by assembling historic Mexican costumes so that they will be available as a source of inspiration for modern designers. The fact that the world is looking to America for its costume inspirations makes this subject a timely one.

The material was gathered from the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Library, the Middle American Research Institute Museum and Library of Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, the Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, and the American Consulate in Mexico City, Mexico, as well as various travel bureau pamphlets. By the full cooperation of these agencies, old manuscripts, codices, modern books and magazines, as well as costumes and accessories, were consulted. The time range extends from several centuries before the Christian Era, through the Spanish Conquest, and up to the 20th Century.

The carefully chosen illustrations of costumes, accessories, and motifs may give inspiration to designers. They are reproduced as authentically as possible by means of tracings, photographs, and sketches.

A brief historic background is necessary for a better understanding of the subject. The sequence used for the Mexican Indian tribes was determined by the age in which they reached their greatest level of civilization. The costumes of each tribe are arranged in chronological order.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to express her sincere appreciation to Ruth Smith, under whose direction this work was done, and to the Home Economics faculty of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College for the financial assistance given in the form of a teaching assistantship that made her graduate work possible during the year 1938-39. Especially is the author indebted to the library staffs of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, the Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, and the Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, and the American Consulate in Mexico City, Mexico, without whose cooperation this work could not have been accomplished, and to my husband for his help in making the photographs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I

TOLTEC

The Toltecs are said to have been the greatest builders that ever inhabited the Valley of Mexico, and were more advanced in their culture than any later tribe. Their reign is often described as the Golden Age in Mexican history. They flourished from five or ten centuries before the Christian Era up to the time of the Spanish Conquest. Tula and Cholula were the two main centers of the empire.

The Golden Age was during the reign of Quetzalcoatl who was the principal god of both the Ancient Toltecs and the later Aztecs. In his time vegetation grew so abundantly that an ear of maize was said to have been large enough to serve several people. Other grains and fruits were of similar size. The cotton not only grew to enormous size, but in many colors so that dyeing was unnecessary. They gathered and sewed cotton of all colors: red, yellow, purple, white, green, blue, grey, dark orange, and a yellow brown.

Cotton was spun in every degree of fineness, so that some of it looked like muslin and some like velvet. It was brilliantly dyed with both vegetable and animal substances. They knew the art of netting and of interweaving with cotton cloth the delicate animal hairs and bird feathers, making a cloth of great beauty. They also wrought cleverly in gold and silver.

The women, even today, use the same primitive type of spindle and whorl for twisting the yarn that these ancient Toltec women used. Spindles and whorls have been found in Egypt and the Swiss Lakes that were similar to those used by the Toltecs. Weaving was done on small hand looms.

The two straight cut, sleeveless tunics of the women were heavily embroidered in horizontal bands. Both floral and abstract motifs were used. A large medallion was worked at the base of the neckline, used also by the later Aztecs and Mayas. Their hair was worn in two long braids or loose and flowing. Shoes were not worn. Jewelry for the Toltec woman consisted of multistrand necklaces, and ear and nose plugs.

The Toltec men wore either a loin cloth, tied about the loins and hips, or a short skirt over a loin cloth. The skirts were straight cut and seamed or made of narrow strips of fabric hung from a waist band. The short skirt was sometimes heavily embroidered, as were the square cloth capes. The capes were edged with shells or fringe and knotted over the left shoulder. Quilted cotton tunics were used by the warriors to protect their chest and thighs from the light missels of Indian warfare. This same type of armor was used by all later tribes and even adopted by the Spanish Conquerors. A stole, crossed in front, was sometimes used to cover the chest.

The most outstanding article of the male Toltec's dress was his headgear. Green quetzal feathers were the most popular ornaments for this purpose. These were tied into the hair or attached to a head-band or cap. Tassels, bows, and tufts of raw cotton were also used.

Sandals consisting of a sole of hemp or leather and a back of fabric were tied on around the ankle. Fabric and leather leg and ankle bands were tied just below the knee or at the ankle.

Body painting was used to designate rank or valor of the Toltec men, as were the insignia on their shields. Ear plugs of jade and mosaic turquoise and collars of gold and silver were their main articles of jewelry.

Figure 1

Ancient Toltec girl of Tula
wearing two straight cut tunics, heavily
embroidered. (For enlarged motif see Figure 7)

Charnay, Ancient Cities of the New World, p. 89.

Figure 2

Xochiquetzal, Toltec goddess.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican
Art, I, p. 98.

Figure 3

Chalchiuhtlicue,
Toltec goddess of water.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican
Art, I, p. 98.

Figure 4

Toltec Women.
Cihuacoatl left and Chicomecoatl right.
(See Figure 76 for modern adaptation of Chicomecoatls necklace.)

Monuments of Ancient Mexican Art, I, p. 98.

Figure 5

Opochtli, ancient Toltec
man wearing skirt of strips
of fabric and a crossed stole.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican
Art, I, p. 95.

Figure 6

Quetzalcoatl, principal Toltec
god with shell edged shoulder cape.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican
Art, I, p. 90.

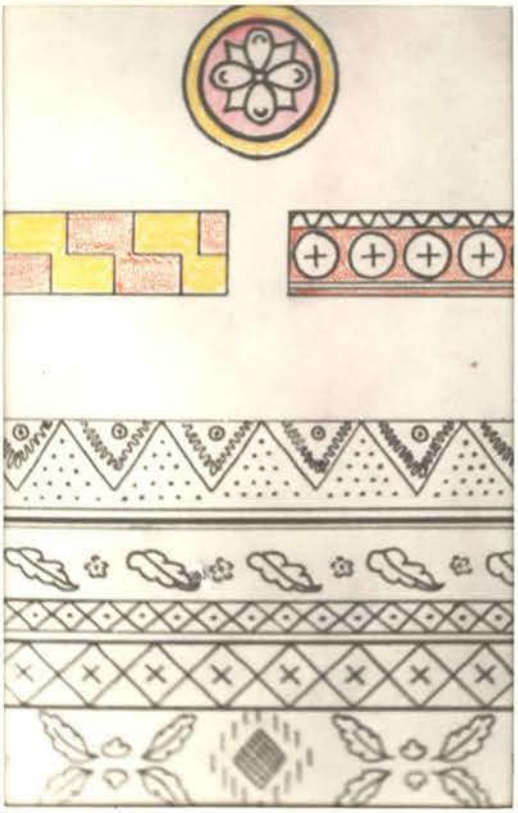
A

B C

D

Figure 7

A. Shield design from Figure 5.
B. Border motif from Figure 4.
C, D. Embroidery motifs from Figure 1.



Chapter II

OLD MAYA EMPIRE

The people known as the Mayas traversed Mexico during the third century and arrived in Yucatan about the middle of the sixth century. Their history covers about 1,500 years. They flourished at two periods. The Golden Age, or Old Maya Empire as it is better known, was of indefinite duration, but surely several centuries. During this period they developed their pantheon, built their temples, perfected their arts, social structure, and government, evolving almost a national character. They then went into a period of obscurity known as the Dark Age, later they underwent a renaissance which brought them up again to a flourishing state. This was the New Maya Empire but in no way comparable to the Golden Age of the Old Maya Empire. They maintained this new state for a few centuries, then went into their final decline. When the white invader found them in 1517, their final decline had begun and in the course of a few years the dissolution of a great people was completed.

The Old Maya Empire occupied the southern part of the Maya area up to the beginning of the 7th century A.D. This area included what is now the states of Campeche, the eastern part of Tobasco and Chiapas, extending into Guatemala, Quintana Roo and British Honduras.

Palenque was the center of the Old Maya Empire and was inhabited by a war-like race some 6,000 or 7,000 years ago. The Maya rulers of this era were contemporaries of Cheops and Cheffron in Egypt. These ruins are in the northern part of Chiapas. Other cities of the Empire were, Piedras Negras, Chama, Nabaj, Yaxchilan, Tikal, Naranjo, and Copan.

The Old Maya Empire was one of the highest civilizations, judged both by its intellectual and esthetic achievements, ever produced by the American Indian. In the various arts, so far as the native races of the New World are concerned, the Old Maya Empire acknowledged few equals, with the possible exception of the Incas of Peru in the art of weaving, no superiors.

The textile art of the ancient Mayas can be recovered in part from the study of the monuments, since the designs on many garments were reproduced in relief. These were mostly all-over geometric patterns. Borders frequently were a line of astronomical symbols. The techniques of brocade and lace were understood by these ancient peoples, as well as the weaving of plain cloth.

The Old Empire Mayas did not have metal, other than gold and silver, but the lack of it did not prevent them from carving such hard substances as jade. Necklaces, anklets, wristlets, earrings, nose ornaments, beads and pendants were fashioned from this material.

Our fullest record of the dress of these people are the monolithic stelae and altars, stone and wooden lintels and other carvings on the buildings they raised. The monuments show us the elements of costume. These were so combined in different cities as to give each site a distinct individuality. The irreducible minimum of the Old Maya dress was headdress, neck ornaments, and girdles or loin cloths. These in one form or another were universal. Additional capes, skirts, sandals, leg and arm bands appear in various localities.

The warriors wore armor of well padded cotton, like the Toltecs. Their shields were round and decorated with feathers or the skins of animals. Even the nobles wore only headdress, necklace and loin cloth.

This seems to substantiate the theory that the clothing of the figures on the stone reliefs was ceremonial in character, rather than the ordinary dress. The sacred character of the costumes may account for the apparently static fashions over a period of 400 years, for example, witness the clerical robes of today. The variation of the costume was local rather than chronological. This accounts for a single costume being found in only a few localities.

The characteristic costume of Palenque would be a short or long netted skirt and cape, a girdle of long tubular beads edged with round ones, hair drawn up and banded with or without supplementary trimming. For the priest a tall cap, bead necklace and apron, or shaped net loin cloth, completed his dress. The worshippers wore a cap with embroidered flaps and a cloth garment that covered him from neck to hips.

Network costumes were not limited to Palenque alone as they were found at Tikal, Naranjo, Xupa, Piedras Negras, and Copan in the form of capes and skirts worn over fabric or skin foundations.

At Piedras Negras were definite militaristic scenes. There were two characteristic costumes at this site. The first may have a snake snout headdress, with or without the geometrically conventionalized lower jaw, or a vertically folded turban, wearing a collar and loin cloth, with an elaborate fabric flap, or wrapped in a long robe. The other costume was a girdle of close set squares fringed with rows of shells, beads, and perhaps embroidery, with skirt or loin cloth showing below.

The atmosphere at Yaxchilan seems to have been almost exclusively religious. The characteristic dress of this city was more elaborate than at Piedras Negras. They wore long robes, collars and knee bands of square sets, or collars with three amulets, accompanied by elaborate

headdresses of feathers and carved objects, and varying girdles. An amulet is a large medallion, usually the face of a god or person, cast of metal, generally gold. The typical girdle fitted tight at the waist and flared below.

Feather garments were found at Tikal, Copan, Piedras Negras, and Naranjo. Embroidered robes occurred at Tikal, Piedras Negras, and Yaxchilan. Tunics and capes were also made of close set squares, quilted and plain fabric, jaguar skin, and feathers.

The average girdle was generally of fabric and fairly wide, in a design that may have had planetary significance, edged with a sea shell fringe in the front, and large amulets hanging at either side with three shell pendants.

The traditional Old Maya loin cloth was wrapped around the waist in a wide band with long ends hanging down in front and behind. These were made of fabric and jaguar skin. A simple loin cloth was the only wearing apparel of the children.

Headdress of the Old Maya was of feathers and other objects interwoven with the hair, or fabric turbans, both horizontally and vertically folded. A broad brim hat found at Piedras Negras, Tikal, and Chichen Itza, decorated with cross bones does not fall into these two classifications. The snake, or some portion of his anatomy, was the most prevalent decorative element for headdress. Feathers were used on almost every one.

Sandals were similar to those worn by the Toltecs, but more highly decorated. The decoration was applied to the heel piece. Other accessories included bracelets, arm, ankle, and leg bands, ear and nose plugs, and necklaces and collars of beads and mosaic.

The only woman's costume of this period was a figurine of a lady with a dog and child. She wore a straight, simple, textile skirt of ankle length. Above the waist she was bare except for a string of large round beads. Her only other ornament was a pair of round ear plugs.

Figure 8

Characteristic dress of Palenque, netted cape and skirt of round and tubular beads and mosaic bracelet. (See Figure 72 for modern adaptation of girdle)

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal, XXII No. 2, p. 173.

Figure 9

Palenque.
Feather headdress, gold amulet necklace, fabric skirt and arm bands.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican Art, I, p. 143.

Figure 10

Piedras Negras. Long fabric robe.

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the
Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal,
XXII No. 2, p. 171.

Figure 11

Yaxchilan. Gold amulet set
in mosaic collar, gold cross
bar pendant, headdress of
feathers and carved objects,
fabric girdle and leg bands.
(See Figure 78 for modern
adaptation of collar)

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the
Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal,
XXII No. 2, p. 171.

Figure 12

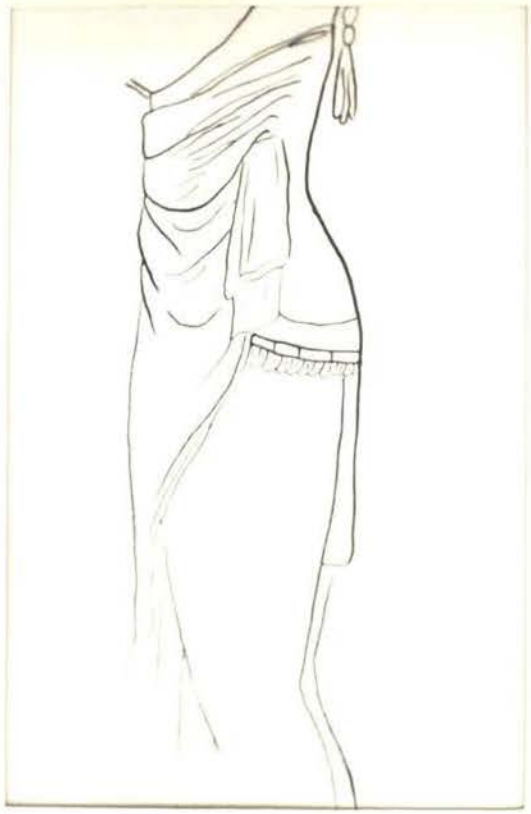
Girdle from Palenque.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican Art, I, p. 142.

Figure 13

Loin cloth designs of textile and beads.

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal, XXII No. 2, p. 162.



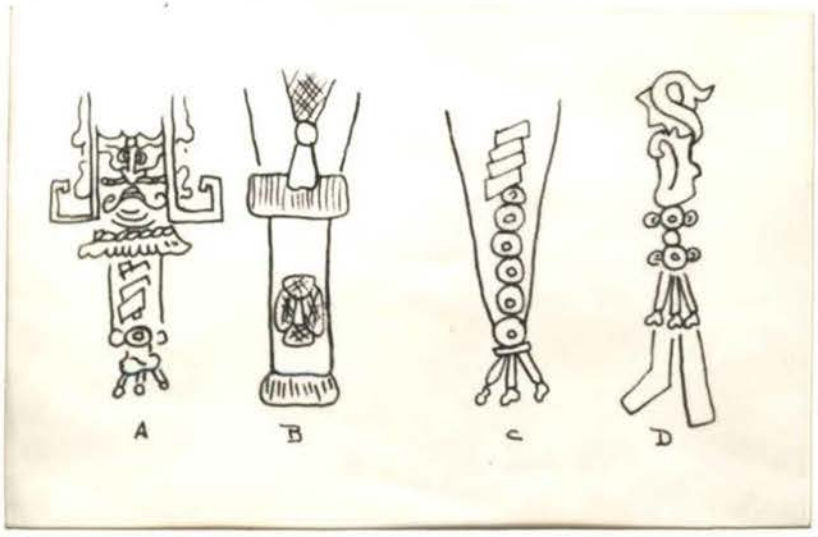

A
B
C
D

Figure 14

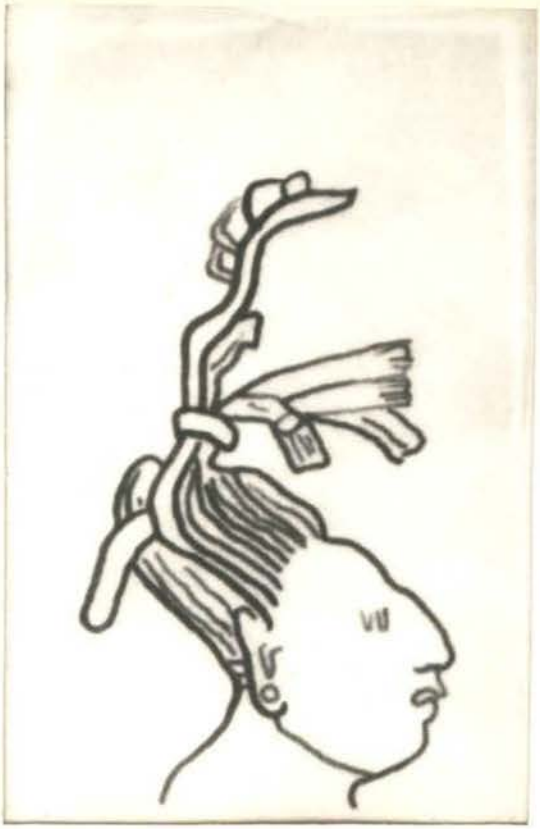
Headdress of the
poorer class Old Empire Mayas.

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the
Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal,
XXII No. 2, p. 156.

Figure 15

Textile turbans.
A. Horizontally folded turban
from Copan.
B. Vertically folded turban from
Piedras Negras. (See Figure
71 for modern adaptation)

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the
Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal,
XXII No. 2, p. 156.



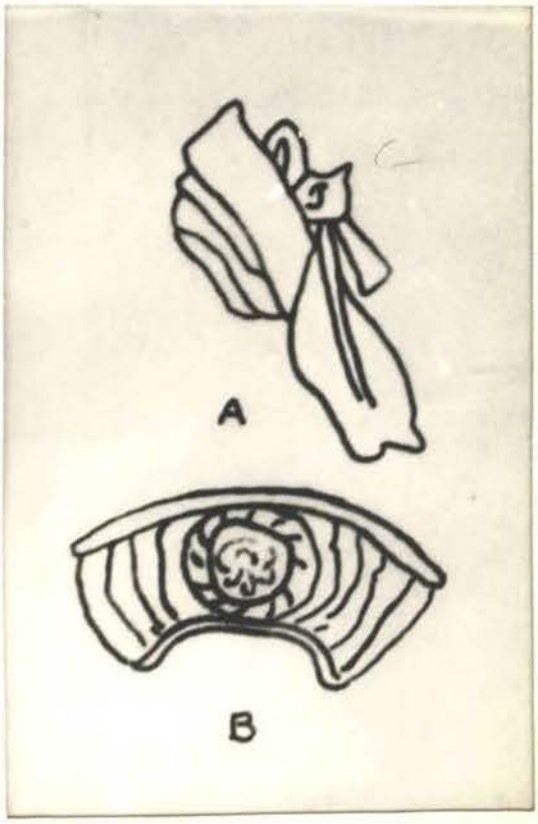

A
B

Figure 16

Priest from Palenque.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican
Art, I, p. 142.

Figure 17

A. Pointed textile cap from Yaxchilan.
B. Warrior's quilted helmet.
C. Tall cylindrical cap from El Chicazopte.

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the Maya Old Empire,
Museum Journal, XXII No. 2, p. 156.

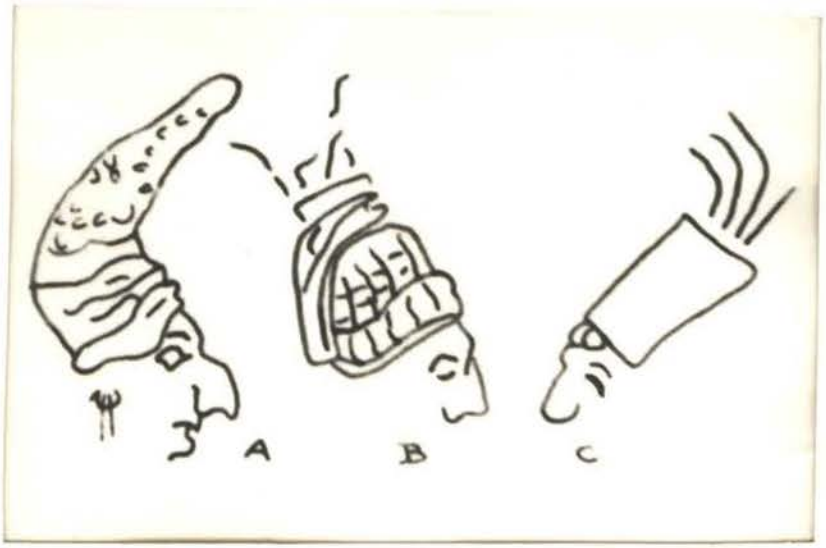

A
B
C

Figure 18

A. Copan, 471 A.D. Conventionalized chin strap adapted from animal mask headdress.
B. Variation of animal mask with hinged visor front.

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal, XXII No. 2, p. 160.

Figure 19

A. Cross bone decorated hat from Piedras Negras and Chichen Itza.
B. Striped or folded textile hat adapted from the folded turban.

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal, XXII No. 2, p. 160.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B

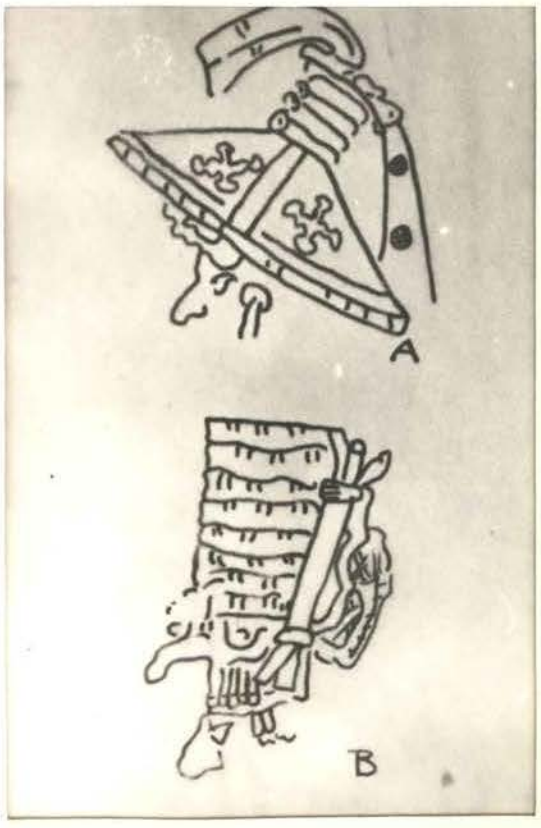

A
B

Figure 20

Old Maya Empire woman with child and dog from Xupa, Chiapas.

Blom, The Conquest of Yucatan, plate IX.

Figure 21

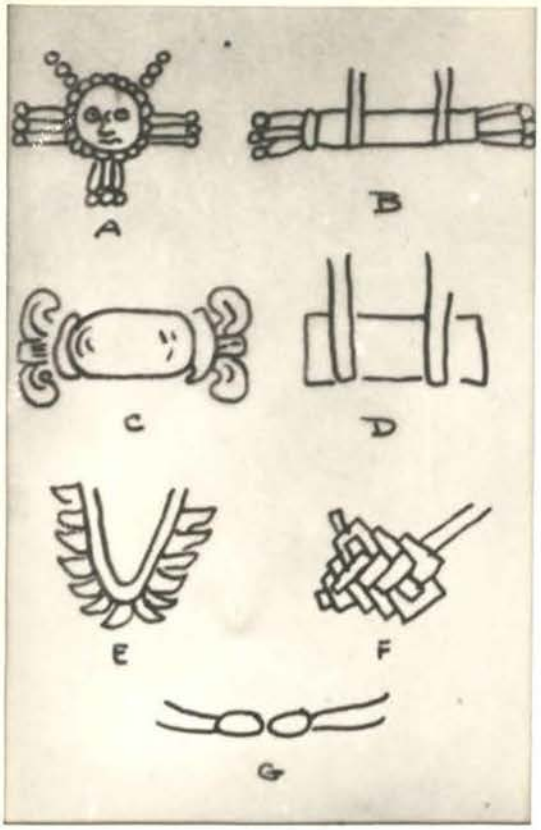
Jewelry motifs of the Old Maya Empire. (See Figure 75 for modern adaptation of C)

Butler, Dress and Decoration of the Maya Old Empire, Museum Journal, XXII No. 2, p. 160.

Figure 22

Typical Old Maya Empire Sandals from Palenque.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican Art, I, p. 142.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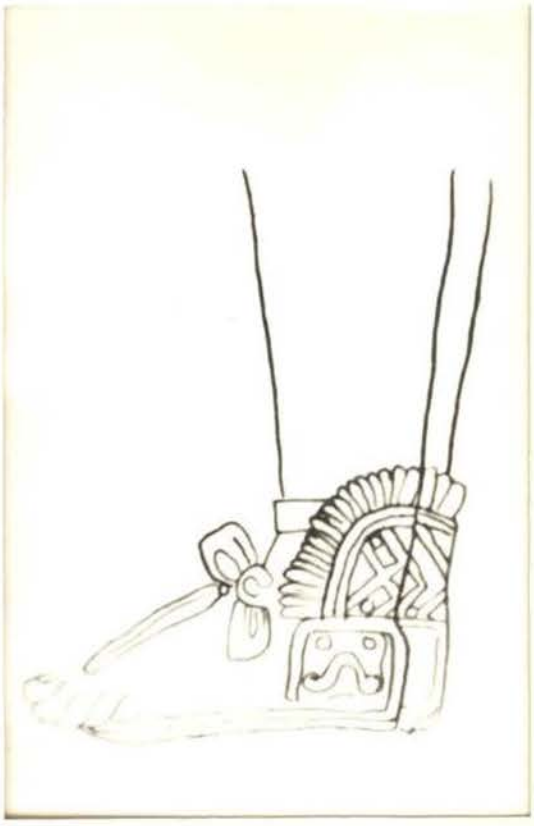


A B

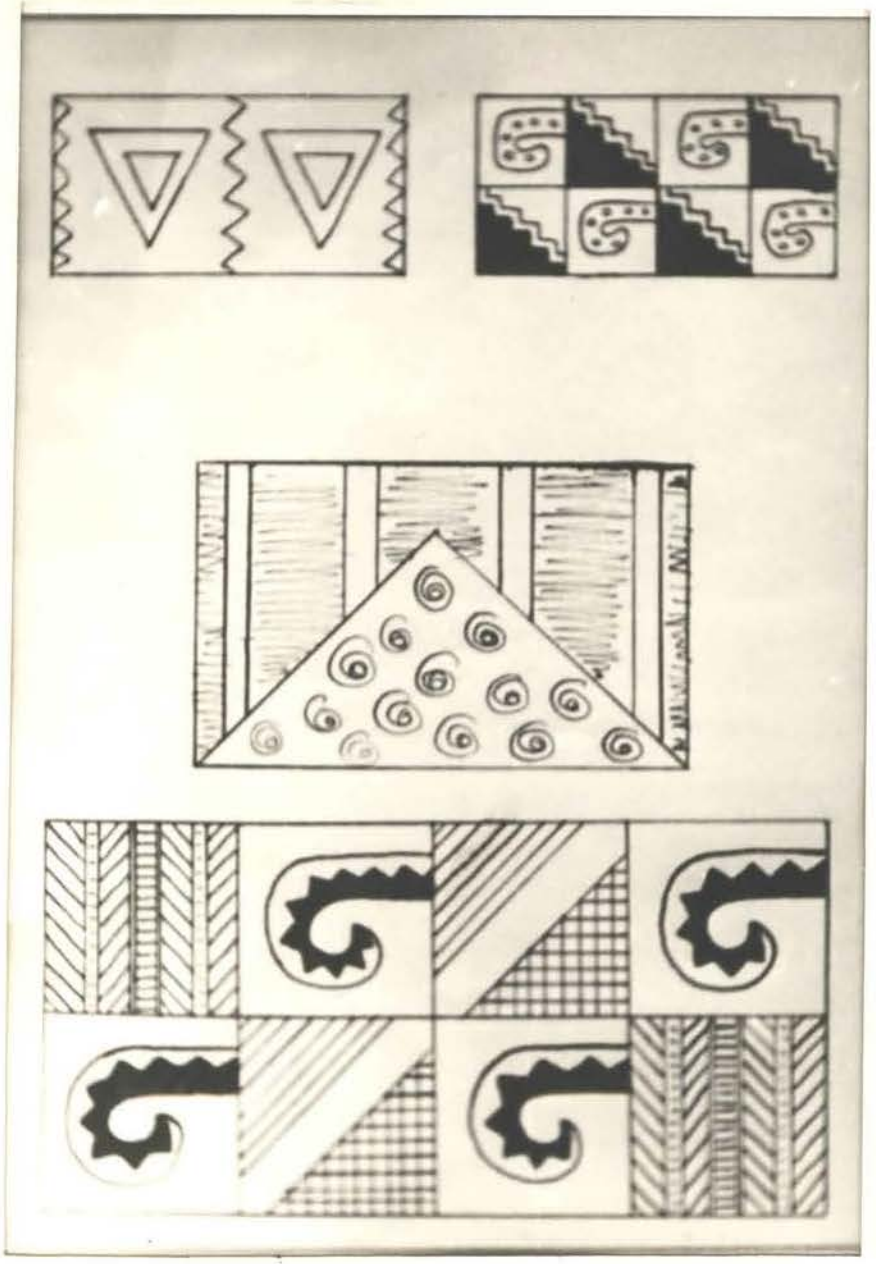
C

D

Figure 23

Old Empire Maya Textile designs painted on archaic effigies.
(See Figure 79 for modern adaptation of D)

Spinden, Ancient Civilizations of Mexico, p. 57.



Chapter III

NEW MAYA EMPIRE

The New Maya Empire was only a provincial region during the Old Maya Empire. It included the northern half of the Yucatan Peninsula; what is now the state of Yucatan, the northern part of Campeche, and the Territory of Quintana Roo. The Old and New Maya Empires were simultaneous, but reached their zenith at different times.

The New Maya Empire began between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D., but did not reach its height until the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. Chichen Itza was settled early in the Christian Era, Uxmal, Mayapan, Labna, Izamal, Kabah, Coba, and Teluum were settled later. They were the principal cities of the New Empire. Uxmal was invaded by the Xius about 1,000 A.D. and soon absorbed. The Toltecs stormed Chichen Itza in the 12th century. From the late 13th century to the early 15th century Chichen Itza fell under a strong Aztec influence, reflected in their art and architecture, and to some extent, in their dress. By the 16th century a strong Aztec influence was felt throughout the New Maya Empire.

The buildings and monuments of these peoples and the account of Columbus' last voyage, the Tribute List of Cortez and the accounts of Father Sahagun, serve as our main source of costume for this period.

The Mayas did not have to learn from the Spaniards how to weave their cloth, or to cut and drape it in simple graceful lines, or to color the threads in native dyes with which to embroider. This they already knew. Spinning was done in the same primitive manner by the New Empire women as by the Toltecs and Old Mayas.

The simplest costume of the male Maya of the New Empire was a

plain white sleeveless textile robe with a surplice neck and fringed knee length hem. Loin cloths were of two types. The simplest loin cloth was made of narrow strips of fabric tied about the loins and knotted in front. The other, and more elaborate, was made of wide figured cloth draped apron-like in the front and tied in the rear with the long fringed ends hanging to the ankle.

Heavy mosaic collars, similar to those worn by the Old Empire Mayas, and pendant necklaces of gold and precious stones were worn. Wristlets and anklets of mosaic and fabric, as well as raw tufts of cotton, were used for adornment. Sandals, when worn, were made of a sole and side pieces, rather than a heel piece as used by the Toltecs and Old Mayas, and tied with fabric strips to the ankle.

The most outstanding article of the New Maya male was the headdress. This was a triangular fronted crown of mosaic stones topped by feathers and tied to the head with strips of cloth. Amulets or beads hung over the ears. This headdress was the typical crown of the Aztecs and its presence in the New Maya Empire shows the Aztec influence. This same type of headdress was still worn at the time of the Spanish Conquest, proving its long period of popularity.

Another type of headdress took two forms. The simple tying up of the hair and the addition of a fabric bow at the sides was used by the ordinary man. The chieftans elaborated on this form and added beads and feathers and used a much larger bow placing it on top of the head.

Other personal ornaments used by the Old Maya men were horizontal and button nose and ear plugs of jade. Bone and pebble ornaments were used by the poorer class.

The New Maya woman wore only a skirt and necklace as did her sisters

of the Old Empire. The headdress of the upper classes was a large fan-shaped feather structure attached to the top of a mosaic skull cape. The ordinary woman wore her hair long and either loose or braided. They, like the men, wore large round jade ear plugs.

A New Empire Maya maiden of about the 12th century belonging to the upper class wore a richly embroidered short skirt, or kirtle, fringed with jade beads. This was held up by a wide jade and metal belt. She was bare above the waist. The headdress was very elaborate. The hair was piled on top of the head and filled with many rich objects of gold and stone. She wore earrings and a heavy gold bracelet. The heel piece of her sandals was decorated with gold and colorful stones.

The temple walls of Chichen Itza show the same type of costume that is worn by the modern Mexican women. It consisted of a sleeveless blouse, a wrap-around skirt, and a reboso, or head scarf. The feet were bare.

The New Maya Empire was already on the decline by the time the Spanish conqueror, Cortez, arrived. Thanks to the priests and scribes who accompanied him we have definite information concerning the costume of this period. Father Sahagun made the most complete set of illustrations and descriptions.

During the time of the Conquest the men wore the same type of loin cloth that they did earlier in the New Maya Empire. The addition of a large square cloak was made, that tied over the shoulder. The warriors still wore the quilted cotton jacket. Sandals were made of hemp or dried deer skin. Tattooing and painting of the face and body, using red, black, and white paint, was almost universal. A warrior was entitled to fresh hieroglyphs after each notable feat of arms. The most favored forms for this kind of decoration were stripes, serpents, and birds.

Cranial disfigurement seems to have been confined to the jaguar skin clad priests and the nobles. This was done by binding a board to the forehead to make it flat. Their ears, nose and lips were pierced for jeweled ornaments. Some of these jade ear plugs were of considerable size. One was found that measured a little short of five inches in width.

The women at the time of the Conquest wore hand woven cotton skirts of white and striped material. Some had bands of colored cloth sewn horizontally on the skirt in blue, red, or yellow. With the skirt was worn a light cotton blouse often embroidered in gay colored designs around the neck and arm openings. This same type of striped skirt and embroidered blouse is worn by the modern Maya woman. Their long black hair was braided or twisted about the head. This too is still practised. Squinting was quite fashionable and mothers insured it for their daughters by allowing a tuft of hair to hang over their eyes. They adorned themselves with colored bits of ribbon or flowers.

During the 17th century many of the pre-Conquest costumes were still worn. By this time the blouse of the women had become longer and was more a tunic than blouse. Both the skirt and tunic were heavily embroidered, and often edged with lace. According to an ancient law there were no buttons or fasteners on the blouse. Therefore, the garment was cut very low in the neck so it could be easily slipped over the head. This same type of costume was worn by the women of Coptic Egypt. Sandals, when worn, were made of hempen rope.

By this same time, the 17th century, the men had adopted the Spanish trousers, or drawers as they were more commonly called. These drawers were of white cotton and with them was worn a white cotton

shirt also like those of the Spanish men. Some shirts were plain; others had a ruffled bosom and some a plaited back. Straw hats patterned after the large felt hats of the conquerors were almost universally used by the men in some form. Many of the men went bare footed, the others wore sandals like those of their ancestors.

During the latter part of the 17th century a small turban-like headdress of twisted cloth was worn by the women to keep the reboso in place. The reboso was white or colored, usually blue. Heavy necklaces of gold chains as well as finger rings were used and often constituted a girl's whole dowry.

The modern native Maya girls still wear the ankle length skirts with horizontal stripes of various colors. The tunic or over blouse is of the same style as that just following the conquest and usually has wide bands of delicate embroidery at the neck and hem. Even today few of the women wear sandals or shoes. The reboso is still used as a head covering and for carrying everything from the baby to market packages. Blue is the favorite color for these. Long earrings are sometimes worn.

The modern Maya man wears the national costume of white cotton drawers and shirt that was adopted after the conquest. His hair is worn short and no jewelry is used. Sandals are optional. Most of the men wear sombreros of felt when they can afford them and straw when felt is prohibitive. Men's hats are like the women's rebosos. Even though they are all similar, no two are exactly alike.

The colors most often used by the women for their cross stitch embroidery are aqua, mulberry, yellow, orange, deep olive green, apple green, crimson, pink, and fuchsia.

The Maya men of the independent Santa Cruz tribe wear only one earring. When in the left ear the wearer is of higher rank than when it is worn in the right ear. Some of these are made of silver.

Figure 24

New Maya Empire warrior from Chichen Itza wearing a necklace of turquoise mosaic, the triangular crown of the Aztecs, arm and leg bands of raw cotton, and a loin cloth of folded fabric strips.

Archaeology, VIII, plate 38.

Figure 25

New Maya chieftan being carried on a litter by servants.

Blom, The Conquest of Yucatan, plate XI.

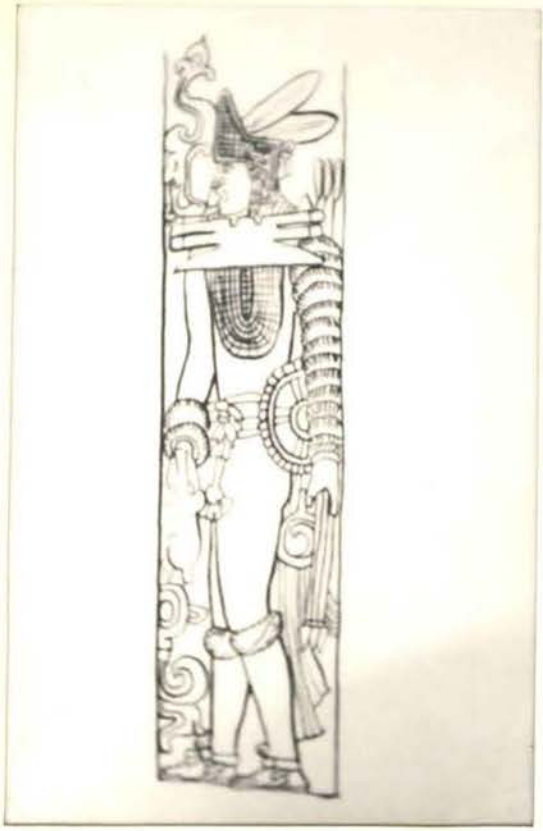


Figure 26

Maya women from pre-Conquest
Chichen Itza, New Maya Empire.

Breton, Original Water Color Plates.

Figure 27

Modern Maya girl from Yucatan.

Come Down to Mexico, Wagons-Lits/Cook.

Figure 28

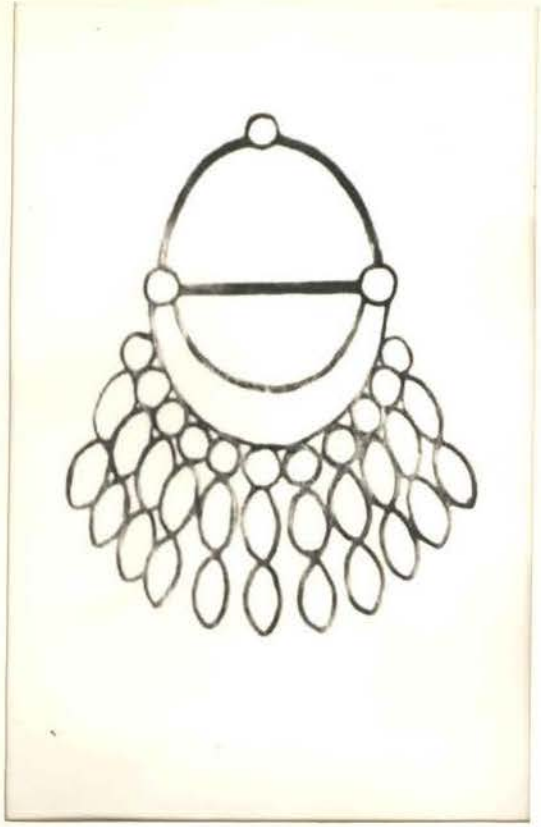
Silver earring of a modern Mayan.

Sketched from the museum cases of
the Middle American Research
Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana

Figure 29

Modern Mayas.

N vestro Mexico (Mayo
Y Junio De 1932), p. 11.



Chapter IV

MIXTEC

The Mixtecs inhabited the northern part of Oaxaca and built Monte Alban early in their era. They reached their greatest level of civilization between the 3rd and 9th centuries. This era was a transition between the Toltec-Aztec and Maya periods and both influences were felt. Little is known of their early history and what we know comes from legends and the findings of evacuations. They were, however, far from primitive at the time of the Conquest.

The brilliant, permanent dye of the cochineal was used by the early Mixtecs for coloring their fabrics. They were also familiar with many native dye woods. Almost invariably the Mixtec tombs near Monte Alban contain jade objects. All other jade objects found in Mexico bore definite signs of Mixtec workmanship.

Little could be obtained from the statuary concerning their wearing apparel, other than that they wore sandals, elaborate textile and feather headdresses and ornaments of all kinds. Ornaments were to them more important than actual clothing and the findings of the tombs confirms this theory.

From the tomb of a Mixtec warrior, some 600 or 800 years before the Spanish Conquest were taken many ornamental objects. These included jade and turquoise beads, necklaces of crocodile and wolf teeth, turquoise, pearl, coral, gold, amber, jet, and rock crystal. A necklace of gold, turquoise, pearl and coral was made of 19 rows of netted beads in the form of a collar and fastened at the back with a clasp of two long beads. This necklace was similar to one worn by the ancient Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut over 3,000 years ago. Other ornaments found

were jade ear plugs, gold earrings, gold and silver bracelets, a tiny hammered gold belt clasp, finger rings and lip ornaments representing birds and animals. An elaborate breast plate was made in a "jaguar knight" design of gold by soldering the separately cast pieces together. The most striking specimen was a gold crown with a plume of gold.

According to Cortez, they were still wearing the same types of ornaments at the time of the conquest. The Codex Tulane shows the Mixtec women, at the time of the Conquest, wearing long sleeved dresses with a pendant necklace or rectangular medallion like those of the Toltecs and later Aztecs. Their skirts were ankle length. The hair was worn long and flowing. According to the same source, the men were wrapped in capes with a border design, tied over one shoulder. Their hair was long and sometimes banded with fabric. Sandals were the same as the Toltecs.

The modern Mixtec women wear a white or unbleached muslin smock richly decorated with crimson and blue embroidery in horizontal bands. The skirt is very full and sewed onto a wide waist band or just a straight piece of cloth wrapped tight about the hips. These, too, are decorated with horizontal bands of embroidery or strips of contrasting color fabric. A knee length smock is worn over the skirt and blouse. The modern Mixtec men wear the national costume of Mexico.

Figure 30

Ancient Mixtecs.

Codex Tulane.

Figure 31

Modern Mixtec from Oaxaca.

Come Down to Mexico, Wagons-Lit/Cook.

Chapter V

ZAPOTEC

The Zapotecs lived in the southern part of Oaxaca. Their civilization paralleled that of the Mixtecs. The Mitla ruins were built early in their era. In the Palace of the Dead, near Mitla, were numerous corridors of inlaid stone mosaic in scroll, grecque, and star patterns. Brenner said these were textile patterns translated into stone. This is our best example of Zapotec design.

The clothing and ornaments of the early Zapotecs were like the Mixtec, but prior to the Conquest an interesting article of dress was introduced. This was the "huipil grande", a huge headdress of starched lace. It was really a dress with the plaited flounce of the skirt worn about the face. The body of the dress fell over the shoulders. There is a story of this headdress that said the people of Tehuantepec saved a ship wrecked child from drowning and because the child brought good luck they wore a headdress patterned after the baby's dress. This headdress is still worn and the sleeves are made into the garment just as they were when it was first adopted.

The modern Tehuana Zapotec women wear the "huipil grande" in one of three ways. The flounce is worn about the face when going to church, wound around the neck like a huge Elizabethan ruff for dancing, and laid back on the head for every day. They wear a quaint little jacket of lace or velvet with various amounts of embroidery, according to the occasion. Some of these designs show oriental characteristics. This jacket is cut very low in the neck and is quite short. Skirts are made of soft material, as linen, cotton, and velvet. These are cut quite full for dress occasions and have a wide flounce of starched lace around

the bottom. For every day wear the skirts are simple, straight, cut pieces of fabric wrapped sarong-like about the hips. With this skirt a very short blouse is worn that leaves the midriff bare like the costume of the Nautch girls of India. There has been little change in the cut of these dresses since the Conquest. The Zapotec women are very fond of jewelry. It is invariably of gold coins, usually those of the United States. The trail of the California gold rush from 1850 to 1865 crossed the Tehuantepec Isthmus and gold coins were plentiful. It was during this time they developed their love for them as ornaments. They are still used for necklaces, earrings and bracelets. These women will not wear shoes. Dressed in all their finery they will dance barefooted over floors of stone or gravel.

Among the Zapotec men a few of their ancient dances and costumes have survived. One of these is the Dance of the Feathers. The headdress is made of large fluffy feathers in red, green, grey and orange. This fan of feathers is attached to a crown of split cane and held on by a chin strap. The costume itself is made of rose, green and white sateen covered with sequins, beads, lace and gold ribbons covering a short bib and apron. The trousers are a little shorter than ankle length and the shirt sleeves are three-quarter length.

The modern Zapotec men cling to their traditional costumes. The cotton homespun garments are embroidered with figures of birds and beasts. A narrow tunic open under the arms and without sleeves is worn over a white shirt. The trousers are short and figured and similar to the shorts of the modern American women. The hair is short and uncombed. When worn, sandals are of the typical Mexican style.

Figure 32

Xipe Totec, ancient Zapotec god.
(See Figures 74 and 77 for modern adaptations)

Mexican Art and Life, No. 4,
(October, 1938), p. 5.

Figure 33

Corridor in Palace of the Dead near Mitla.

National Geographic, LI No. 5, (May, 1927), p. 521.

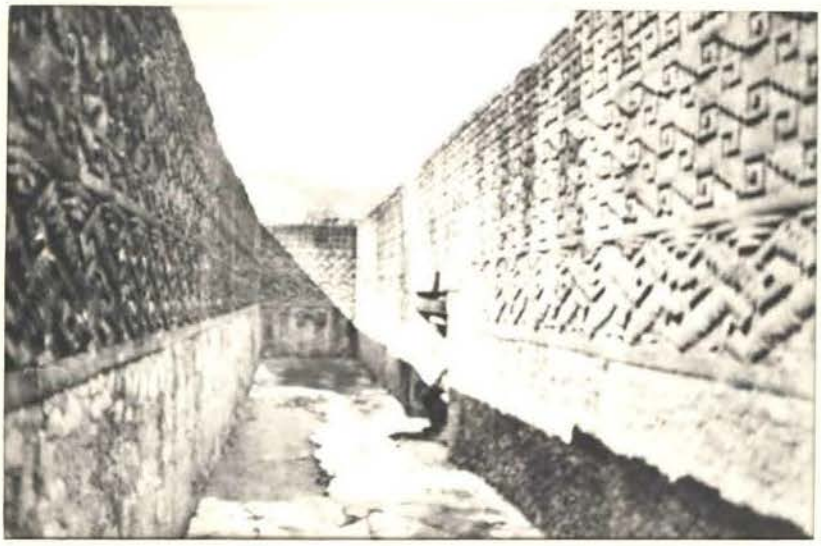


Figure 34

Tahuantepec women
wearing "huipil grande", short
blouses, and sarong-like skirts.

Charnay, Ancient Cities of the New World, p. 497.

Figure 35

Modern Tehuana from Oaxaca wearing the "huipil grande", a large headdress of stiffly starched lace. The flounce around her skirt is of the same material.

Come Down to Mexico, Wagons-Lit/Cook.

Figure 36

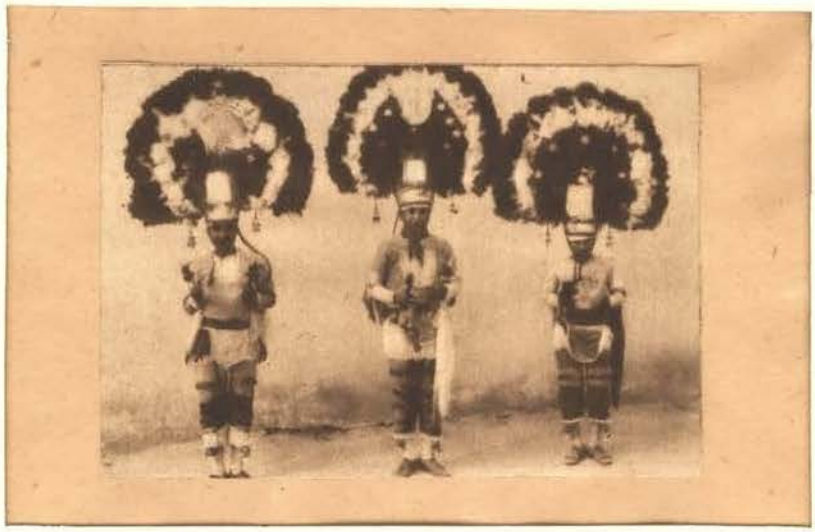
Modern Zapotec from Oaxaca.

School Arts Magazine, No. 37, (January, 1938), p. 122.

Figure 37

Dance of the Feathers, Oaxaca.

Come Down to Mexico, Wagons-Lits/Cook.



Chapter VI

AZTEC

The Aztecs or Nahuans, as they were sometimes called, joined the eight related tribes in 1168. These were the Matalazinca, Tepanec, Chichimec, Malinalca, Cuitlauaca, Xochimilca, Chalca, and Uexotzinca. After wandering about the Chichimec country for a century and a half, the eight related tribes went on, and the Aztecs remained behind. They were in a wild stete when they arrived in the Valley of Mexico. Here they built Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, in 1324, as their headquarters. In less than a century they dominated the valley, and extracted tribute from the towns beyond their domain. The Aztec influence and invasion of Mexico extended from the 6th to the 12th century. Besides their capitol, Tenochtitlan, they built the towns, or kingdoms, of Texcoco, Atzcapotzalco, Ixtapalapan, Coyoacan, and Tacuba. Before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519, the Aztec empire extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific and covered most of Mexico.

The Aztec picture writing and drawings from the old codices show the people, during the nomadic period, wearing only the skins of animals, mainly that of the ocelot. The head of the animal was thrown over their own head like a hood and the skin hung to the calf of the leg in the rear. Slits were made for the arms. Their sandals were made of plaited vegetable fibers because they had, at this time, no domestic animals from which to obtain leather. According to the Codex Fejervary, the children were nude. They wore large round ear plugs.

Besides animal skins their clothing was, at a later date, made of bark cloth and henequen and cotton fibers. Among the wealthier inhabitants there was much display of barbaric splendor in dress. They

decked themselves with embroidery, jewelry, and feather cloaks.

The Aztecs used the same type equipment for spinning and weaving as the Toltecs and Mayas. The geometric designs on the spinning whorls show the simplicity of design so common to these peoples both for household articles and clothing. The motifs were floral and conventional. Many of these had symbolical significance. Clay stamps, like our modern linoleum blocks, were used for printing designs on skins and fabric.

Body and face painting were popular with both men and women. Red, yellow, and black paint was used. Priests were designated by their black, painted bodies. The victims, offered as human sacrifice, had their legs painted with red and white stripes. The costumes, insignia, and mode of painting the face and body revealed not only the age, rank, gens, and residence of each individual, but also his occupation.

The Nuttall Codex, executed between 1472 and 1519, contains the same type drawings found on the Aztec Sacrificial Stone supposed to have been made about 1486. This Codex is an excellent source of costume for the pre-Conquest Aztecs. The main articles of clothing for the Aztec men at this time were loin cloth, shoulder cape, headdress, and sandals. Various articles of jewelry included nose and ear plugs, lip rings, bracelets, and leg bands, as well as, elaborate necklaces and collars.

The Aztec loin cloth was similar to the Maya. It was tied in such a manner that ends hung down both fore and aft. Over this was sometimes worn a very short skirt edged with fringe or small gold bells. Their capes were made of beautifully embroidered fabric or of cloth covered

with feathers. A large necklace or collar edged with gold bells was worn by the wealthier or ruling class. Their hair was tied on top of the head in the Maya manner and supplemented with feathers, ribbons, and carved objects.

The two principal types or casts of warriors were represented by the ocelot and eagle headdresses. Their sandals were the same as the Toltecs and Mayas.

The nose-turquoise, "yaca-xiuitl", denoted the rank of chieftanship. There were three types of nose-turquoises; the crescent, pendant, and transverse. The crescent and pendant were symbols of higher rank. Two or more of these could be worn at once. Mainly they were made of turquoise, but other stones and sometimes gold were used.

Almost all the figures in the Huttall Codex wore cuffs and leg bands of fabric, edged with small gold bells or shells. Similar bells and shells were sometimes fastened to the sandal ties.

Skillfully decorated gold and copper rings were worn, but are comparatively rare in archaeological collections. These were decorated with bird and animal heads. The pre-Conquest codices show the Aztecs learned the arts of metal casting and the manufacture of cotton cloth and jewelry from the Toltecs.

Aztec women were allowed to become warriors. This was not continued at the time of the Conquest. In fact, by that time they were little more than hand maids to their warrior husbands. Their dress, like the Mayas, consisted of two tunics, or a tunic and a skirt. A small, triangular shoulder scarf displayed an insignia denoting rank and whether or not she was married. Some few women wore sandals. The hair dress of the women was rather elaborate, and similar to that of the men. The hair was worn long and tied at the base of the neck.

Feathers and fabrics were combined and attached to the top of the head in such a way that the feathers fell down the back to the shoulder. Cihuacoatl, an Aztec goddess, was pictured wearing a fabric bandeau that tied in the back of the head, with feathers attached in an upright position. This same type headdress was worn by the American Indians.

When the Spaniards arrived in 1519 the Aztecs had reached as high a level of civilization as any aborigional people on the American continent. The Spaniards found the markets of Tenochtitlan piled high with bales of cotton, dresses, curtains, coverlets, and other domestic articles ready made and offered for sale.

Fabrics were richly stained. The dyes were produced from the cochineal, indigo, purple logwood, fustic, and other sources. The rich crimson of the cochineal was intoduced into Europe from Mexico.

The cloth used by the common people, at the time of the Conquest, was woven of thread obtained from the agave, or palm tree, a coarse cotton fiber, henequen, pita, and aloe. Fine cotton cloth, dyed various colors, was used by the wealthy. The Spanish chroniclers of that time said the Aztecs made webs as fine and delicate as those of Holland. Fabrics were decorated with figures of animals and flowers, but in the main, conventional and abstract designs were used. Almost every design had a meaning. Some fabrics were interwoven with feathers and animal hairs and ornamented with bits of gold.

Designs were woven into the fabric by using different colored threads, and probably by the use of tie-dyeing. It is also likely the batik technique was used, as a similar method was employed in the decoration of their pottery. Embroidery was also used.

The art that delighted them most was the "plumaje", or feather work. There were three peoples who raised the use of feathers to the status of true art. These were the Polynesians, ancient Peruvians, and the Mexicans. The excellence of the Aztec work lies in mossic, rather than in fabric, headdresses, shields, and other objects, even though it was used for all these. From the examples of this art that have come down to us, one may infer it reached a higher level of development and refinement in Mexico than Peru.

Face and body painting were continued at the time of the Conquest. According to Sahagun, the noble women colored their teeth red with cochineal dye.

Great proficiency had been reached in the jeweler's art and the Spaniards who witnessed their work stated that their own craftsmen could not equal it. The Aztec lapidaries could chip, saw, bore, and polish the hardest stones and were acquainted with the art of inlay and mossic.

The Aztec men were very fond of jewelry and feathers. Small gold figures and precious stones were suspended from their cloaks and ornamented their ears and lower lip. Obsidian was used for making ear and lip rings. They loaded themselves with bracelets, collars and rings. The wealthy used pearls, emeralds, turquoise, and amethyst, mounted in gold. The poor used mother-of-pearl, crystal, and brilliant stones. Sometimes even the sandal straps of the wealthy were ornamented with gold cords and precious stones.

The clothing of the Aztec man had changed but little since the pre-Conquest period. It still consisted of a loin cloth, cape, and sandals. Of these the first has disappeared, the second influenced

the form of the modern zarape, and the third is little changed in modern Mexico.

The nobles generally wore two or three mantles. Their wives wore the same number of petticoats, all of equal length but different colors. Besides the mantles, the nobles muffled themselves in a sort of surplice, such as the Catholic priests wear, but with wider sleeves.

The men wore their hair long as it was considered dishonorable to cut it. It was dressed in various ways. While engaged in battle or ceremonial dances it was surmounted by tall bunches of feathers, otherwise it was tied on top of the head, or at the base of the neck. Ribbons, twisted rolls of fabric, and jeweled objects were used in dressing the hair.

A distinctive headdress, or crown, known as the "copilli", was worn by the rulers, civil, religious, and military leaders. This crown with the mosaic studded, triangular front reminds one of those worn in ancient Lower Egypt. This type of headdress was adopted, from the Aztecs, by the Mayas. The helmets of Aztec warriors were made of carved wood or heads of wild animals, and sometimes of silver with a crest of variegated feathers sprinkled with precious stones and ornaments of gold.

The costume of the Conquest period women was little changed from that worn by the earlier Aztec women. The triangular scarf of the ancient Aztec women reappears, but without the customary insignia. The garments varied more in color than shape. The skirt and over blouse, or tunic, are still worn by modern Aztec women.

Both the skirt and blouse were decorated with horizontal bands of embroidery, applique, or fringe. All-over patterns of stripes and figures were used.

The women adorned themselves with jewelry, gold collars, multi-strand bead and pendant necklaces. Ear pendants and plugs were almost universal.

Only the young girls, who consecrated themselves to the worship of the gods, were allowed to cut their hair. The other women wore their hair long and flowing or in two braids. When the hair was worn loose a bandeau of fabric was sometimes tied around the head. When arranged in plaits, ribbons and strings of beads were braided with the hair. The plaits of hair hung down the front of their blouses, like those worn in Europe during the Middle Ages. Sometimes these braids were wound about the head, a fashion still prevalent in parts of modern Mexico.

As a rule, the women went barefooted, except when walking long distances. Then they wore sandals like the men.

The modern Aztecs still occupy the Valley of Mexico and the adjacent states. They are now a very poor tribe. The purest culture is found in Tepoztlan and Yautepec in the state of Morelos.

For the most part, the modern Aztecs wear the national costume of Mexico, with only slight variations in certain localities. The men wear white drawers and shirts topped by enormous sombreros of felt or straw. These three garments are adapted from the Spaniards. They still wear the traditional Mexican sandal and the serape.

The only major change in the dress of the modern Aztec woman is the reboso. This is the head-scarf worn by the Mayas, as well as all other modern tribes.

Figure 38

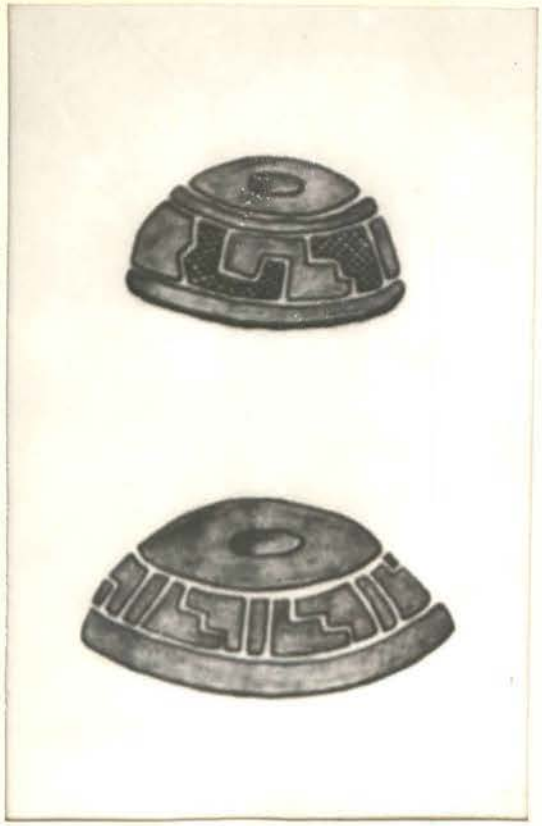
Ancient Aztec spindle whorls.

Monuments of Ancient Mexican Art, I, p. 92.

Figure 39

Aztec blanket design that represents interlacing sand and water, called "spider water", appears on a mantle in the Magliabecchi Codex.

Thompson, Mexico Before Cortez, p. 86.



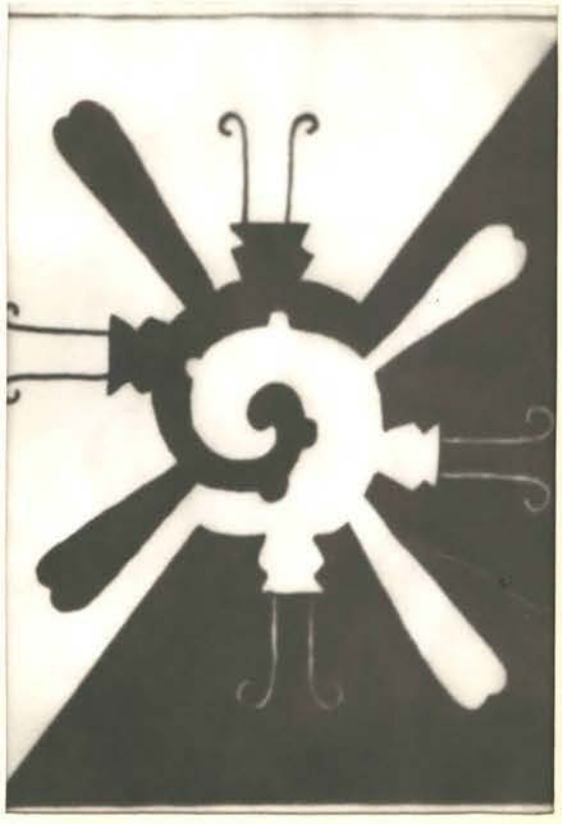


Figure 40

Ancient Aztec with mantle tied by the four corners over the chest. Note the unusual headdress and the similarity of the folded loin cloth to one worn by a Mayan in Figure 25.

Il Manoscritto Messicano Vaticano 3738, p. 84.

Figure 41

Pre-Conquest Aztec priest.

Nuttall Codex, p. 50.

Figure 42

Pre-Conquest Aztec chief.

Nuttall Codex, p. 33.

Figure 43

Pre-Conquest Eagle warrior
in full military regalia.

Nuttall Codex, p. 49.

Figure 44

Pre-Conquest Aztec chieftan carrying banner employed to designate him as a merchant or ambassador on a peaceful mission.

Nuttall Codex, p. 62.

Figure 45

Pre-Conquest Aztec chieftan holding a blue ribbon neck ornament with three gold bells attached.

Nuttall Codex, p. 79.

Figure 46

Pre-Conquest Aztec
woman warrior.

Nuttall Codex, p. 3.

Figure 47

Pre-Conquest Aztec woman
wearing the serpent insignia
of Cihuacoatl, a goddess.

Nuttall Codex, p. 26.

Figure 48

"Copilli", distinctive crown of the
Aztec leaders adopted by the New Maya men in Figure 24.

Saville, Turquoise Mosaic Art in Ancient Mexico, p. 45.

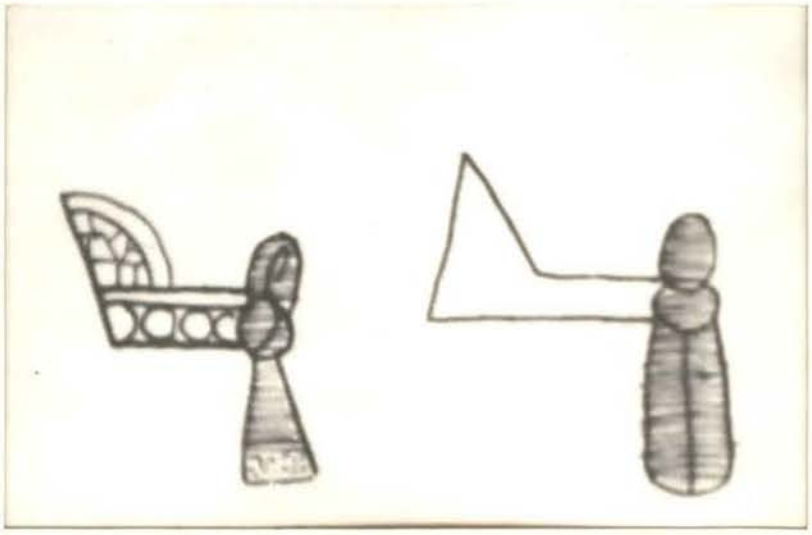


Figure 49

Yacatecuhtli, Aztec chief.
(See Figure 80 for modern adaptation.)

Monuments of Ancient Mexican
Art, I, p. 94.

Figure 50

1519, Azted tribute collectors
arriving to see Cortez.

Prescott, The Conquest of Mexico,
I, p. 204.

Figure 51

Aztec woman, 1519.

Il Manoscritto Messicano
Vaticano 3738, p. 61.

Figure 52

Marina, Aztec interpreter
for Cortez. Note similarity
of skirt design with those of
Zapotec ruins in Figure 33.

Prescott, The Conquest of Mexico,
I, p. 170.

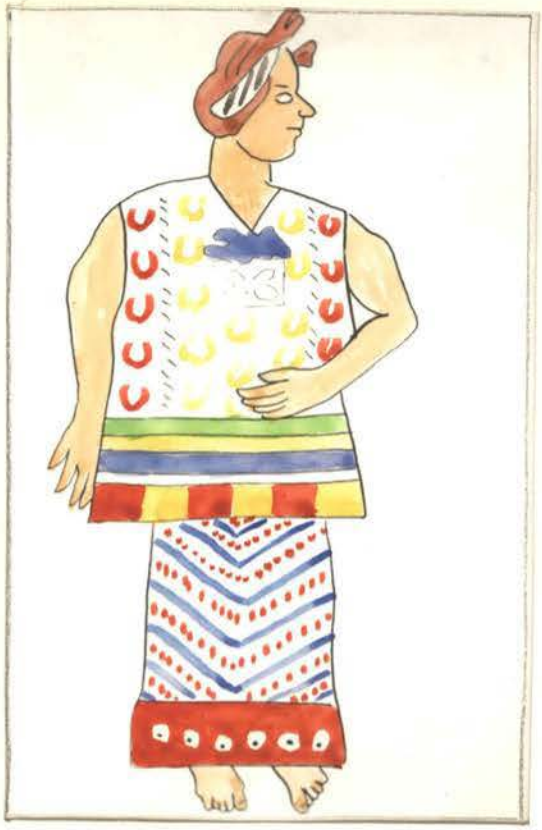


Figure 53

Modern Aztecs, market scene in Toluca, Mexico.

Come Down to Mexico, Wagons-Lits/Cook.

Figure 54

Modern Aztec women.
Three "Rebekahs" of Sinaloa.

National Geographic, LI No. 5, (May, 1927), p. 313.

Chapter VII

TARASCO

The Tarascan Indians were an independent Post-Archaic tribe who inhabited most of the state of Michoacan and some small parts of neighboring states. Little is known of the ancient life or dress of these people, except that they were dainty in costume and appearance. Their chief accomplishments were weaving, embroidery and featherwork. Their most flourishing settlement was at Lake Chapala.

The earliest account of their clothing was in 1852 when Mme. Calderon de la Barca wrote quite a detailed account. The women wore black cotton skirts with narrow white and blue stripes, cut very full and quite long. The short blouse or chemise was of coarse white cotton and embroidered with different colored silk thread. The rebosos were black, white, and blue, edged with fringe. The higher class women used finer cotton and more embroidery and wore a loose surplice on cool days. When married, a woman added a white embroidered veil and a pretty colored huipilli. The hair was worn in two long braids and fastened at the top with a ribbon and a flower. Even the poorest women wore a necklace of coral, or many strands of red beads.

The men of this same period wore a "majtlatl", or wide belt, with the ends tied in front and behind. This was the same type loin cloth worn by the ancient Mayas. A short square cloak was tied across the breast or over one shoulder. These were worn by the men of most of the ancient tribes. Trousers, a Spanish introduction, were sometimes worn.

The modern Tarascans around Lake Chapala still spin and weave cotton in the primitive manner used by all other tribes.

The costume of the modern Tarascan women has changed but little. The long full skirt and loose embroidered blouse, and reboso are still worn. The apron is a comparatively modern addition to her costume. The hair is still dressed in two long braids, sometimes wound about the head.

The modern Tarascan men wear the regulation white cotton shirt and drawers and wool serape, but add a wide sash or girdle at the waist. The crown of the sombrero is more shallow than the average Mexican hat and resembles the Chinese coolie hat. For holiday occasions Tarascan boys may wear two pairs of fringed trousers, one shorter than the other, and a sleeveless jacket and cape of a woven design fabric.

The costumes for the curious Dance of The Old Men have not changed for several hundred years. In addition to their white shirts and drawers, they wear a small serape with the head thrust through a slit in the center and wide brimmed shallow crowned hats. A mask of an old man is worn over the face of the young men who execute the strenuous dance.

Figure 55

Modern Tarascan maidens.

National Geographic, 71, (May, 1937), p. 641.

Figure 56

Modern Tarascans from Lake Palzcuaro.

Life Magazine, 9, (December 6, 1940), p. 30.

Figure 57

Modern Tarascan boy from Michoacan in holiday attire.

Hewett, Ancient Life in Mexico and Central America, p. 305.

Figure 58

Tarascan men performing the
Dance of the Old Men in traditional costume.

National Geographic, 71, (May, 1937), p. 643.

Chapter VIII

CORA - HUICHOL AND OTHERS

The Cora and Huichol tribes are subdivisions of the Aztec group. Although separate tribes, their customs and costumes are so closely related, they will be treated as one stock. They occupy most of the state of Nayarit, the southern part of Sinaloa, and west and north central Jalisco.

Though related to the Aztecs, the Cora-Huichols belong to the tribes that remained in barbarism while the main stock of the family developed the Aztec Empire. They are still in the same state of barbarism today as at the time of the Conquest. Little is known of their clothing at the time of or before the Conquest, other than, the men wore loin cloths and both men and women dressed their hair in a single braid. This hair dress is still used by the modern Cora-Huichol men.

All modern Cor-Huichol designs are derived from animal and plant life or objects in their domestic and religious life. Some of the designs are so highly conventionalized it is hard to recognize the original idea. The Toto flower is one of their favorite motifs. The import of materials has had little effect on their designs.

No Cora-Huichol woman undertakes any hand work without first asking the gods for help in her undertaking. A common way of expressing luck is to embroider a small figure, often only half completed, on a scrap of wool or cotton and hang it on an arrow. These experimental designs are found on nearly all garments. Several designs will be worked at random and only one or two used in the finished article. Because of their deeply religious nature, most of their motifs are a request for some benefit. Girdles and ribbons may be considered as

rain serpents, and as such, are prayers for rain and the results of rain. The designs are in imitation of the markings on the backs of the real reptiles as they see them. The pattern at the end of the girdle is always somewhat different from that used in the main part and is usually a zigzag design, the symbol of lightning.

Rings, bracelets, and ear pendants are made of bead work. Blue and white are the most popular, although other colors are used. Both men and women wear bead ear pendants. Silver earrings are worn to some extent, but not as much as those of bead work, because of the cost.

The really artistic fabrics are woven on primitive hand looms. Wool shirts and serapes are woven in long strips and sewed together.

The clothing of the modern Cora-Huichol men is more elaborate than that of the women. It consists mainly of a coarse wool or cotton shirt, usually heavily embroidered and long or short drawers. A wide, hand woven girdle is worn at the waist. Both the men and women are fond of these girdles and the rich may wear two or more, one over the other.

The Cora-Huichol man is never seen without a pouch suspended from the waist or shoulder. These come in as great a variety of patterns as the girdles. They are made of cotton or wool and are seldom worn singly. Usually there are several suspended from the shoulder and perhaps a string of them about the waist. When worn in strings they are attached by the upper corners. In these pouches are carried tobacco, flint and steel for striking fires, and other other personal belongings. Those not used for carrying purposes are purely ornamental.

The Cora-Huichol men have adapted the straw hats of their neighbors to suit themselves. The brim is immensely wide and out of all proportion to the small shallow crown. Because of the small crown the hat would never stay on were it not for the hand woven ribbon chin strap. The trimming of these palm leaf hats is not subject to fashion, but rather to personal preference, yet they all seem similar. Small crosses of red cotton flannel and woolen tassels adorn the upper side of the brim and crown. Strips of red flannel may be sewed to the underside of the brim, like tassels. Sometimes seed pods are alternated with these flannel strips. The base of the crown is almost always encircled by a ribbon similar to the chin strap.

In place of a serape, the Cora-Huichol men wear a small scarf or kerchief of unbleached cotton with a wide border of red flannel. The center of unbleached cotton is frequently embroidered in border designs and all over patterns.

The men wear their hair in one of three styles. The most elaborate coiffure is with the hair in one ribbon decorated queue. Another way is to gather the hair at the base of the neck and fasten it with ribbons, the ends of which are passed around the head and tied in a bow over the forehead. The third, and simplest way of dressing the hair, is to let it hang loose. This is the style most commonly used.

Modern Cora-Huichol women wear full skirts of almost ankle length and tunics of cotton. In some sections this tunic is similar to those of the ancient Romans. They are sometimes nicely embroidered, but equally as often plain. The hair is usually worn loose although a head ribbon may be added, in the style of the men. Their necklaces are many strands of beads and may weigh several pounds. Rebosos, when worn,

are of red or blue and are more often draped over the shoulders than the head. Both men and women wear sandals.

Figure 59

Modern Cora-Huichol girdle designs.

Sketched from the museum collection
of the Middle American Research
Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Figure 60

Modern Cora-Huichol pouch design.

Sketched from the museum collection of the
Middle American Research Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana.

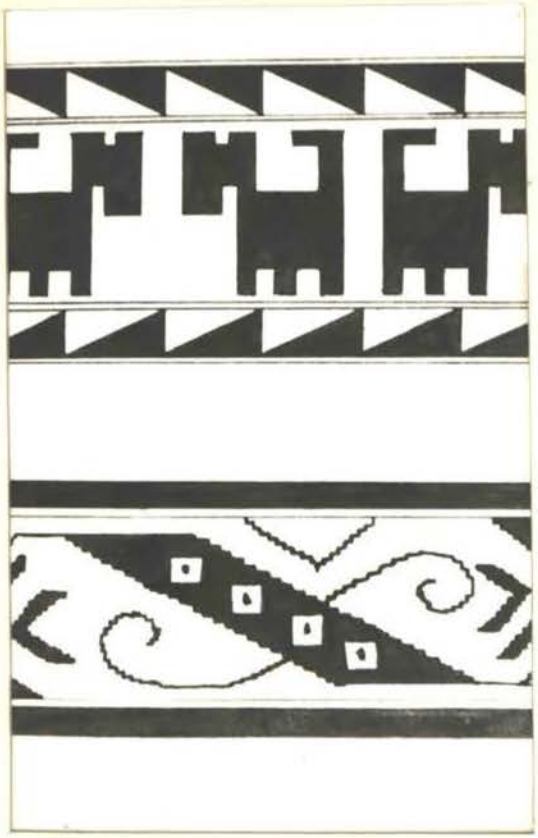


Figure 61

Cora-Huichol embroidery motifs.

Wells Fargo, Mexico?
Si Senor!, p. 36.

A B

Figure 62

Modern Cora-Huichol bead work ear pendants.
(See Figure 81 for modern adaptation of B.)

Sketched from the museum collection of the
Middle American Research Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana.

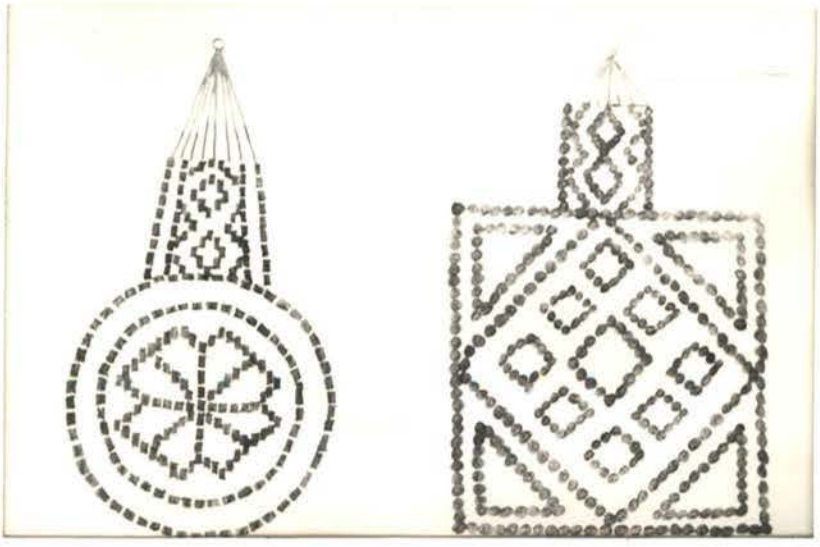


Figure 63

Neck scarf of the Cora-Huichol men
with scattered experimental designs.

Sketched from the museum collection
of the Middle American Research
Institute, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Figure 64

Huichol brave wearing
characteristic hat and neck scarf.

National Geographic, LXV,
(March, 1934), p. 325.

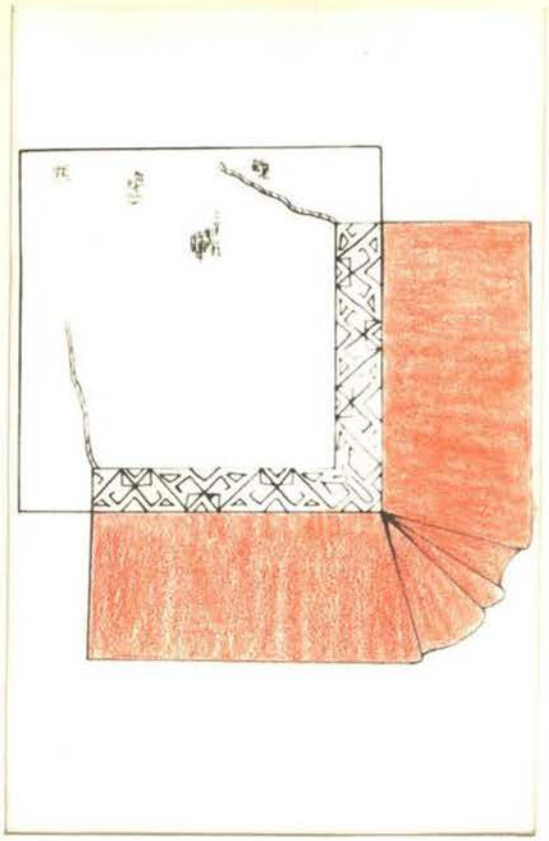


Figure 65

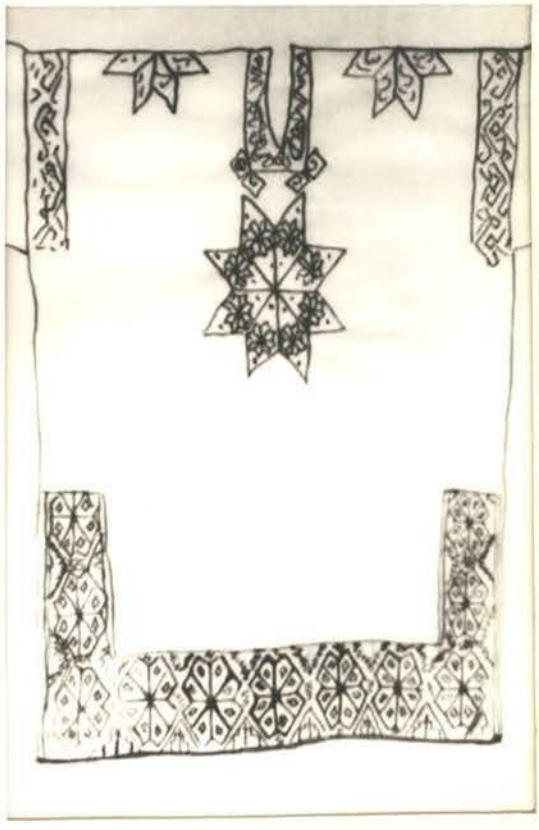
Cora-Huichol man.

Lumkoltz, Unknown Mexico, p. 1.

Figure 66

Cora-Huichol man's shirt of wool
embroidered with toto flower motif.

Lumkoltz, Unknown Mexico, p. 231.



The Huastecs were archaic Mayas and wore feathers in each end of a gold tube thrust through the nose. They also dyed their hair yellow and red. The skirts of the modern Huastec women are so gay they are referred to as "clothes of 400 colors". A square white covering is split in the center and pulled over the head. The ends of this "kiskem" are embroidered and hang over the chest. A straight white skirt is held at the waist by an embroidered belt. An embroidered bag for carrying articles was worn with a strap over the forehead.

The dress of the modern Tarahumar male is scanty. He wears a coarse homespun loin cloth held up by a girdle of woven design. On ceremonial occasions a figured, triangular, bandanna-like apron is worn over the loin cloth. Some wear a tunic or shirt, with open neck, that does not quite cover the loin cloth. Their serapes are hand woven and beautifully colored. Among some of the Tarahumars a turban-like headdress replaces the sombrero. For Indians they are not especially fond of ornaments. The women may wear ear ornaments of triangular pieces of shell attached to bead strings. When in town, the Tarahumar women cover the chest with a reboso, otherwise they are bare above the waist.

The hat of the modern Tepehuan men is of woven design and resembles the Turkish fez. The hats of the Yaqui men resemble those of Tyrol and Switzerland more than the Mexican sombrero. They are made of light colored felt and banded with deeper, brighter colored ribbons. The crown is high and pointed, like those of the American cowboy and the brim, about half the width of a regular sombrero, turns up in back and down in front. The women of this tribe wear halter tops that fasten over one shoulder above a straight wrapped skirt.

Chapter IX

NATIONAL MEXICAN COSTUMES

Even though the different tribes of Mexican Indians may be recognized by their costume or detail of costume, there is still what is called the national costume for both men and women.

The national costume of the men is composed of white cotton shirts and drawers, sombreros and sandals. Every man exerts his individuality in the kind and size of the sombrero. The size of the brim, the height of the crown, and the amount of decoration indicate his opinion of his own importance. For the wealthy, sombreros of felt heavily decorated with gold and silver are worn. For the less wealthy straw or palm leaf must suffice. Those of straw come in an even greater variety of size and shape than those of felt. In the whole of Mexico, no two sombreros are tilted at the same angle or shaped and worn alike.

The charro costume of the wealthy ranch owners or horse men may also be classified as a national costume. This is adopted almost intact from the matador costumes of Spain. The trousers are usually of leather or dark rich fabric and heavily ornamented with rows of gilt braid or silver buttons down the sides. These trousers fit quite snugly. A short bolero jacket of the same material as the trousers is also heavily decorated in much the same manner. The large silver decorated felt sombrero makes the charro look top heavy.

The national costume of the Mexican women consists of a full gathered skirt, short sleeve, low cut blouse, usually embroidered around the arm and neck openings, the reboso, or head shawl, and sandals. The sandals are an optional part of the costume. For festive occasions the China Poblana dress is worn. It is very gay with full

red skirt, heavily spangled and embroidered in yellow, black and white. The cream colored blouse is also heavily embroidered in many colors. A thin reboso is wound around the waist, crossed in the back, and the ends hang from the shoulders. Slippers of green taffeta are worn on stockingless feet. The China Poblana is the traditional Mexican flirt and wears many necklaces of coral and bright beads, or perhaps a locket, and many bracelets. This costume was copied from one worn by a Chinese girl who was kidnapped from her home and brought to Mexico in 1620. This costume has changed little since it was first adopted.

Figure 67

Charro costume

School Arts Magazine, 37,
(January, 1938), p. 144.

Figure 68

National costume for Mexican men.

Come Down to Mexico, Wagons-Lits/Cook.

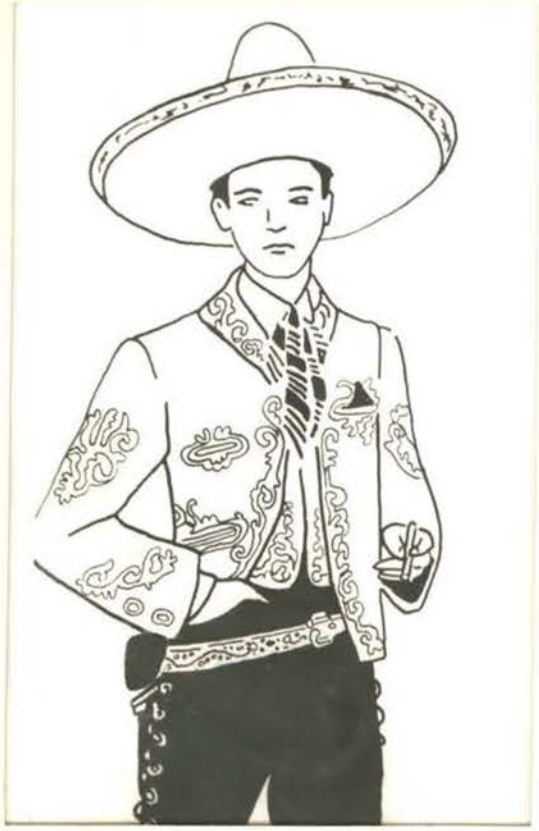


Figure 69

A group of "Chinas" about 1850.

Mexican Art and Life, No. 5,
(January, 1939).

Figure 70

Chinas Poblanas and ranchero in
the first third of the 19th century.

Mexican Art and Life, No. 5,
(January, 1939).

Chapter X

ORIGINAL INTERPRETATIONS

From this historic study of Mexican costumes, one realizes their possibilities as inspiration for modern designers. The general lines of the garments offer little that is new, but the detail of patterned fabrics, color combinations, ornamental objects, and elaborate headdresses offer many new ideas.

The beaded Old Mayan girdle, Figure 8, could be translated into gold or jade for a novel bracelet, as could the vertically folded turban, Figure 5 B. A dress clip patterned after the Old Mayan loin cloth flap, Figure 13 A, using only the upper half, would accent the neck of a plain colored dress. The large medallion worn at the neck of the Zapotec god, Xipe Totec, Figure 32, unchanged in design, adding only a center prong, and made of metal or colored bakelite is a nice buckle for a dress belt. The unique figure of an Aztec warrior, Figure 42, made of enameled wood or metal is a clever lapel ornament for suits. The quetzal feather crest on the Aztec headdress, Figure 49, could be used in the same manner. The gold collar pendant of the Old Maya Empire, Figure 21 C, with its flat center and trefroil ends, is suitable for a brooch.

Necklaces of varied designs are inspired by the Toltecs, Old Empire Mayas and the Zapotecs. One of painted wood carved in the shape of maize ears and strung on a beaded chain is made in the same colors used in the necklace of the Toltec goddess of maize, Figure 4. The Old Mayan amulet of gold could be worn just as it was by the men of Palenque, Figure 9. The beaded cape and skirt of another Mayan from Palenque, Figure 8, could be considerably reduced in scale and

made into a netted collar-like necklace. The Old Maya Empire inspires another necklace from the one of gold ornaments strung on a fabric strip, Figure 21 E. This necklace would be made of small gold leaves, sea shells, or other objects, strung on a narrow velvet ribbon. The large bell-shaped ornaments strung at the waist of the Zapotec god, Xipe Totec, Figure 32, would also make a nice necklace, if carved of wood and strung on a cord.

Various types of fabric designs could be obtained by using such sources as the large mosaic collar, studded with amulets, of the Mayan from Yaxchilan, Figure 11, the lower right hand portion of the Old Mayan textile design, Figure 23 D, either as a wool tweed, or for printed cotton fabrics, and the stone mosaic designs on the walls of the Zapotec Palace of the Dead, Figure 33, said to be textile designs translated into stone could be retranslated into fabric and used for dresses and draperies.

Some of the Toltec motifs, Figure 7, are suitable for embroidery, others for applique and braiding. The upper half of the Old Mayan loin cloth flap, Figure 13 D, has simple, pleasing lines that make it suitable for embroidery on a pocket or lapel. The Aztec "Spider Water" design, Figure 39, is ideal for applique on a dress pocket. The geometric designs of the Ancient Aztec spindle whorls are also suitable for applique.

Ideas for buttons are found in the shield designs of the Toltecs, Figure 5, and the Aztecs, Figures 40, 43 and 49, as well as the center of the Old Maya amulet, Figure 21 A, and the center of the large pendant worn by the Zapotec god, Xipe Totec, Figure 33.

A stunning evening wrap could be made by using the colors and design of the Aztec cape border, Figure 49, as a border on a long

black wool cape. A gaily colored hand bag could be patterned after the design for the blue and white ear pendant of the modern Cora-Huichol, Figure 81. The beaded, lower half of the Old Maya loin cloth flap, Figure 15 D, if made of bright colored beads, could be used as a zipper pull for dresses or hand bags. Braided frogs for cape, coat, or jacket fastenings may be made after the pattern of the braided textile strip belt of the Old Mayas, Figure 21 F. The conventionalized dogs in the Cora-Huichol belt, Figure 59, could be effectively used as a wall paper border for a child's room.

By removing the feather crest and substituting fur or wool for the raw cotton on the red cloth cap of a Toltec god, Figure 7, we have a cap suitable for outdoor winter sports. The horizontally folded turban of the Old Mayas, Figure 15 A, could be worn, without any changes, as a fashionable modern hat.

In conclusion, it may be said, that good design principles remain the same, regardless of the age in which they were conceived. This is proven by the many designs and motifs from historic Mexican costumes that can be used effectively today. Besides the many new ideas that may be obtained from these historic costumes, there are some already in use. Except in the early periods of most of the Mexican tribes, comfort has been the keynote. This is particularly true of their sandals, or huaraches, that have already been adopted by the modern sports enthusiast. Full skirts, such as most Mexican women wear, also are being worn by modern young Americans. The loose embroidered blouses are so simply and comfortably cut that they are always in style.

Figure 71

Gold bracelet adapted from the vertically folded, Old Maya Empire turban of Figure 15 B.

Original drawing by author.

A B

Figure 72

A. Gold bracelet.
B. Jade bracelet.
Designed from Old Maya Empire beaded girdle, Figure 8.

Original drawing by author.

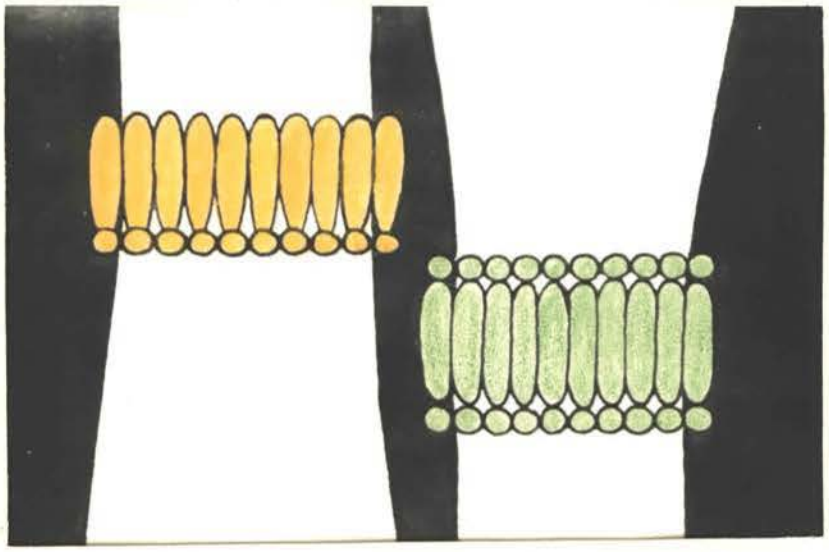


Figure 73

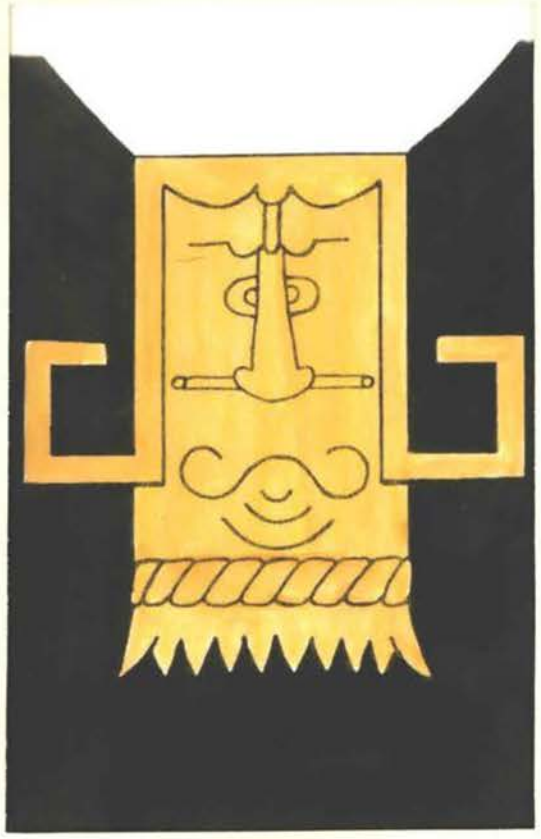
Gold dress clip patterned
after upper part of Old Maya
Empire loin cloth flap, Figure 13 A.

Original drawing by author.

Figure 74

Dress buckle of metal or bakelite
using medallion of Zapotec god, Xipe Totec,
Figure 32, adding only center prong to original design.

Original drawing by author.



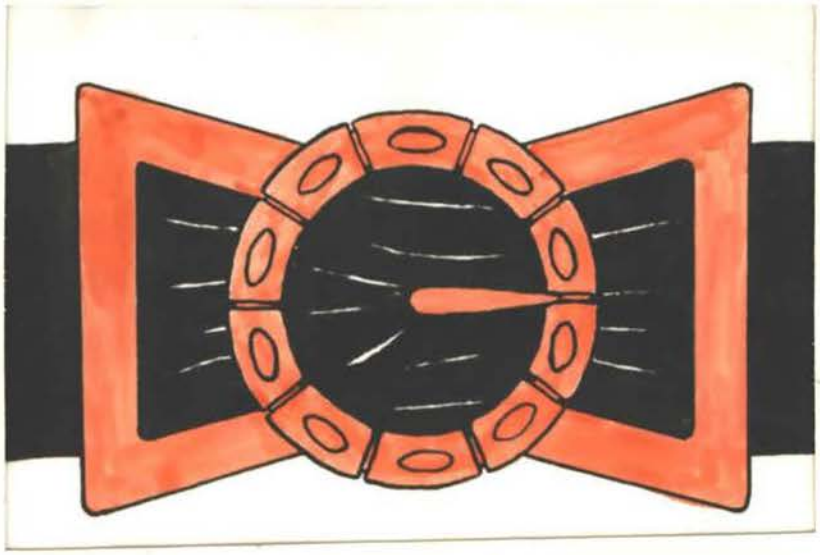


Figure 75

Brooch from gold
collar pendant of Old
Maya Empire, Figure 21 C.

Original drawing by author.

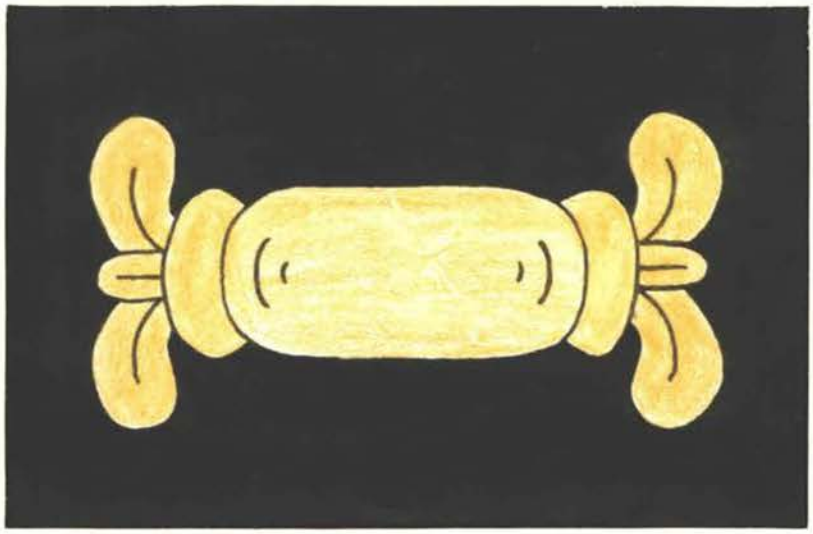


Figure 76

Necklace of painted wooden beads
inspired by the necklace of the
Toltec maize goddess, Chicomecoatl,
Figure 4.

Figure 77

Necklace of carved wooden bells
patterned after waist ornaments
of Zapotec god, Xipe Totec, Figure 32.
Figure 32.

Original drawing by author.

Figure 78

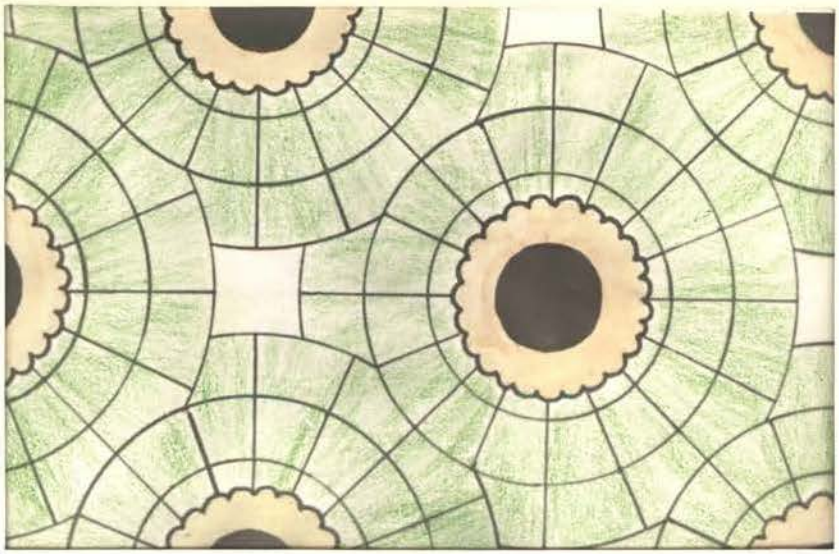
Textile design from the large
mosaic collar studded with amulets worn
at Yaxchilan in the Old Maya Empire, Figure 11.

Original drawing by author.

Figure 79

Textile design taken from a portion
of the Old Maya Empire fabric, Figure 23 D.

Original drawing by author.



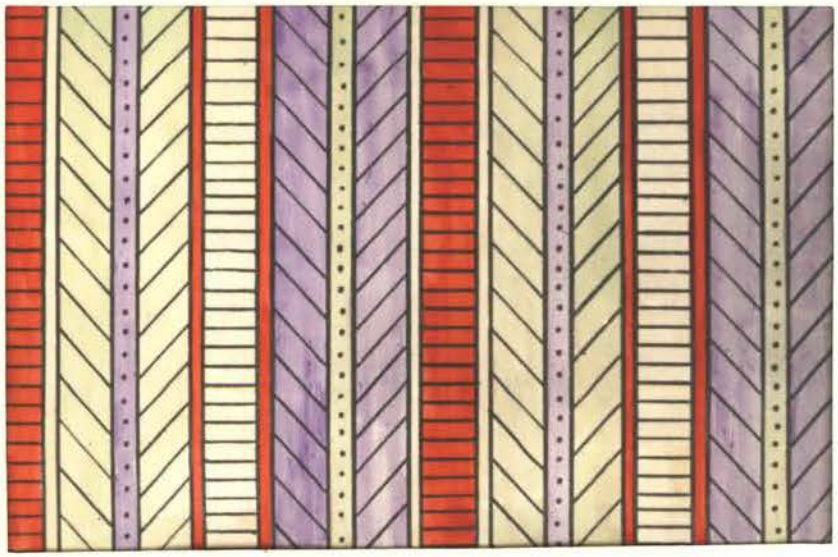


Figure 80

Evening cape of black wool
with border design taken from the
cape worn by the Aztec chief in Figure 49.

Original drawing by author.

Figure 81

Zipper pull of colored wooden beads adapted from Old Maya Empire beaded loin cloth flap, Figure 13 D.

Original drawing by author.

Figure 82

Beaded hand bag patterned after blue and white Cora-Huichol ear pendant, Figure 62 B.

Original drawing by author.

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