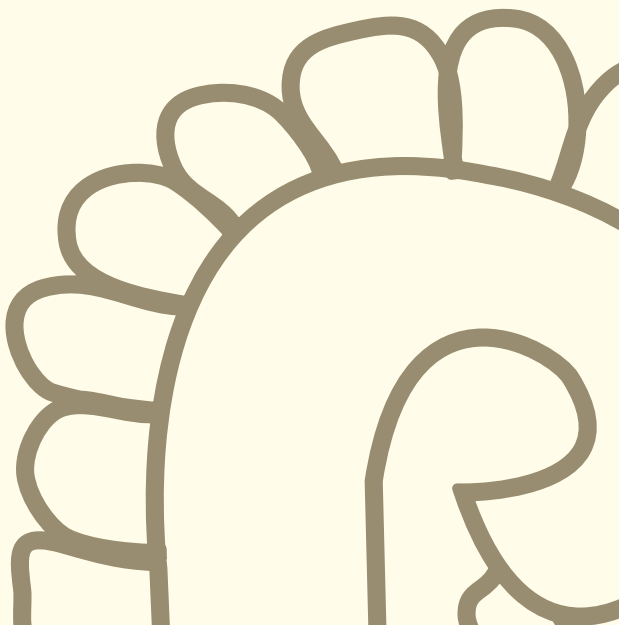
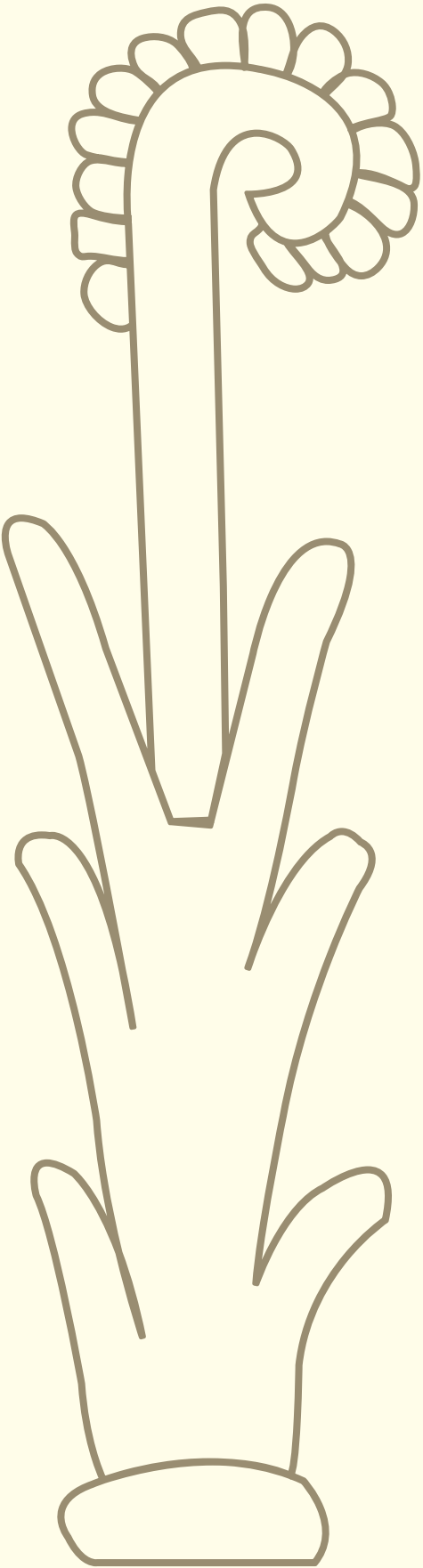


MAN, FOOD, AND THE GODS

White maize and yellow maize were used to make the arms and legs of the four men who were created. Then the grandmother Ixmukané ground the cobs and made nine jars of a drink. From this food came the strength of men.

Popol vuh





Food, an indispensable component of all cultural activities that made up the pre-Hispanic world, was used in offerings to the deities and tributes to the lords; it was a sign of hospitality, a peace offering, accompanying man from birth to death. In ancient Mexico, food constituted a nexus between humans and gods.

Teotl, “divine energy,” was the supreme essence that appeared in various forms; its force permeated the universe and ruled nature. In the agricultural calendar, each phase of the maturation of maize was honored with a specific *Teotl*; among the Mexicas, the principal ones were Centeotl and Chicomecoatl.



Xilonen

Her name means “the shaggy one” in allusion to the beard that sweet maize has.

Chico me coatl

The majority of pre-Hispanic cultures had at least one god of maize. Archaeological evidence found among the remains of each group demonstrates their reverence toward the plant that was their main source of nourishment. Curiously, in several Mesoamerican cemeteries different gods mark the distinction between young maize and mature maize. The Mexicas, for example, had Xilonen as the goddess of *jilote* or sweet maize; Centeotl as the god of maize proper, with Chicomecoatl as his female counterpart (also associated with fertility); and Ilamatecuhtli, the goddess of mature maize.





Tla loc

Tlaloc, the god of rain, descended from the heavens to fertilize the maize fields. He was feared for his rage, which could provoke storms and hail. The ceremonies in his honor included the sacrifice of children to appeal for water and a ritual that consisted of hitting women with sacks filled with hay to make them cry and thereby simulate rain. Tlaloc and his helpers, the *tlaloque*, lived in the paradise known as Tlalocan, which is depicted in the famous mural of Tepantitla, in the archaeological zone of Teotihuacan.





The God of Maize

The scene depicted in this piece is made up of three parts: on top, an area painted orange; below this, a pseudo-glyphic inscription; and in the third part, an image of two semi-anthropomorphic cobs of maize and various precious symbols. Although it is possible to identify the glyphs on this vessel, the inscription does not form a linguistic text. One of the heads in the third part of the scene has a grain and two leaves, while the other head has only one leaf; in both cases, the leaves emerge from the side of the head.



rites AND OFFERINGS

The fourth month they called uey tozoztli. During this month they celebrated the feast of the god of the maize fields, called Cinteotl, and the goddess of sustenance, called Chicomecoatl.

*Fray Bernardino
de Sahagún*





MONTHLY FESTIVALS were held to honor the various gods in accordance with the agricultural calendar; special foods were prepared for each occasion, or offerings were made, in which the penitents would ask the gods for rain and good harvests. Some of these rituals have become deep-rooted traditions observed in Mexico to this day.



Ceremonial cup

used to offer pulque and other drinks to the gods.



Incense burner with a figure attached in front.

The association between smoke and food was important among pre-Hispanic groups because smoke allowed mortals to share the aroma of food; it carried the essence of their dishes to the gods.