



THE ORIGINS *OF MAIZE*

The story of maize and mankind began ten thousand years ago in the Americas. Maize was the common thread guiding the evolution of Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations and

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE THE PROGRESS OF THESE CULTURES WITHOUT THIS IMPORTANT PLANT THAT BECAME THE CENTER OF AGRICULTURE ON THE CONTINENT

the new social and economic orders that distinguished them. The introduction of maize and agriculture by pre-hispanic groups left a

lasting mark on religion, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, art and agriculture. Today maize, along with



• THE ORIGINS
OF MAIZE

• DOMESTICATION
OF MAIZE

• BALSAS
RIVER VALLEY

• PEOPLE
OF MAIZE

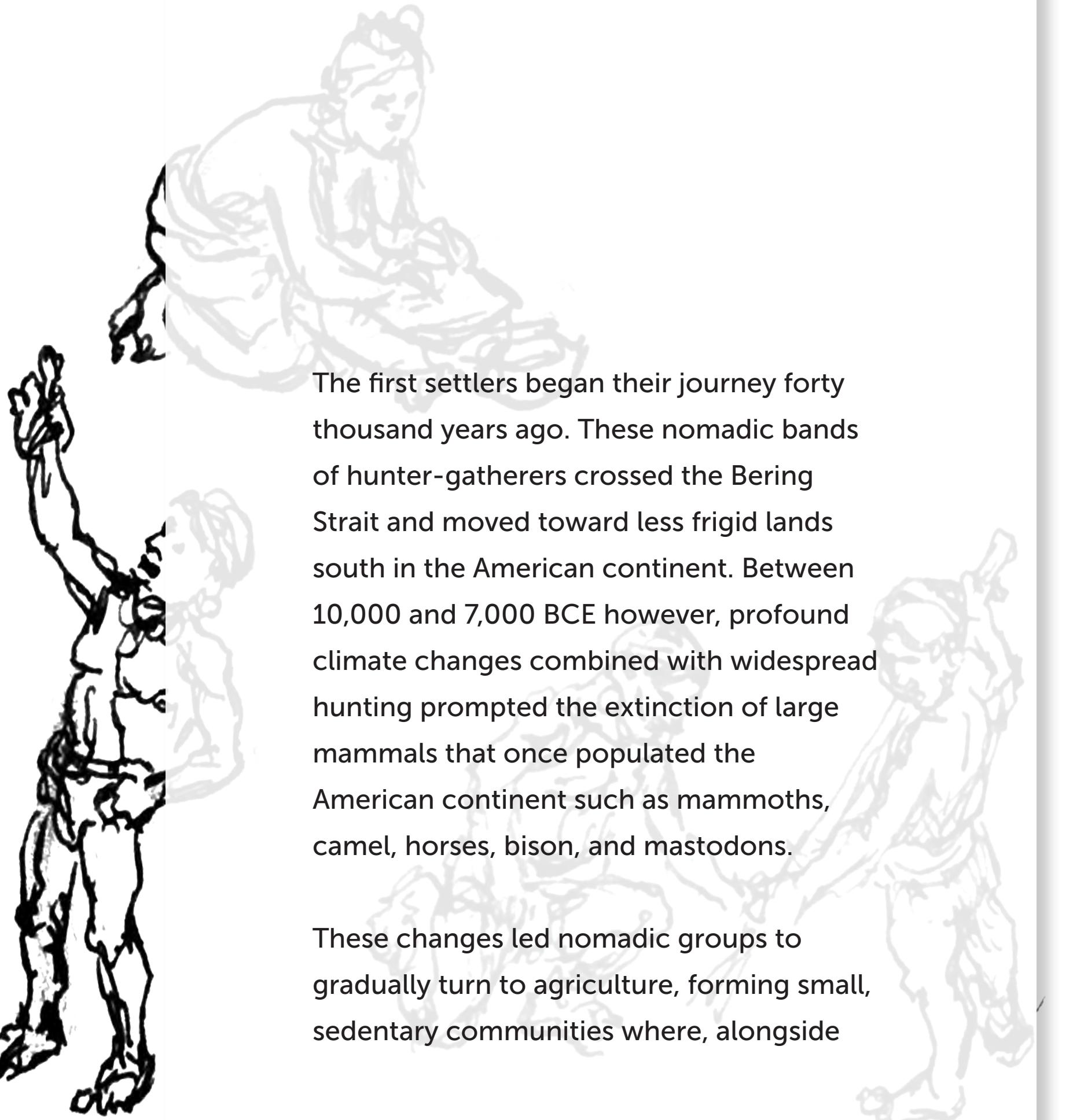
• FROM SEED
TO CITY

• CULTURE
& WHEAT

• SPREAD OF
A REVOLUTION

• WHEAT'S
DIASPORA

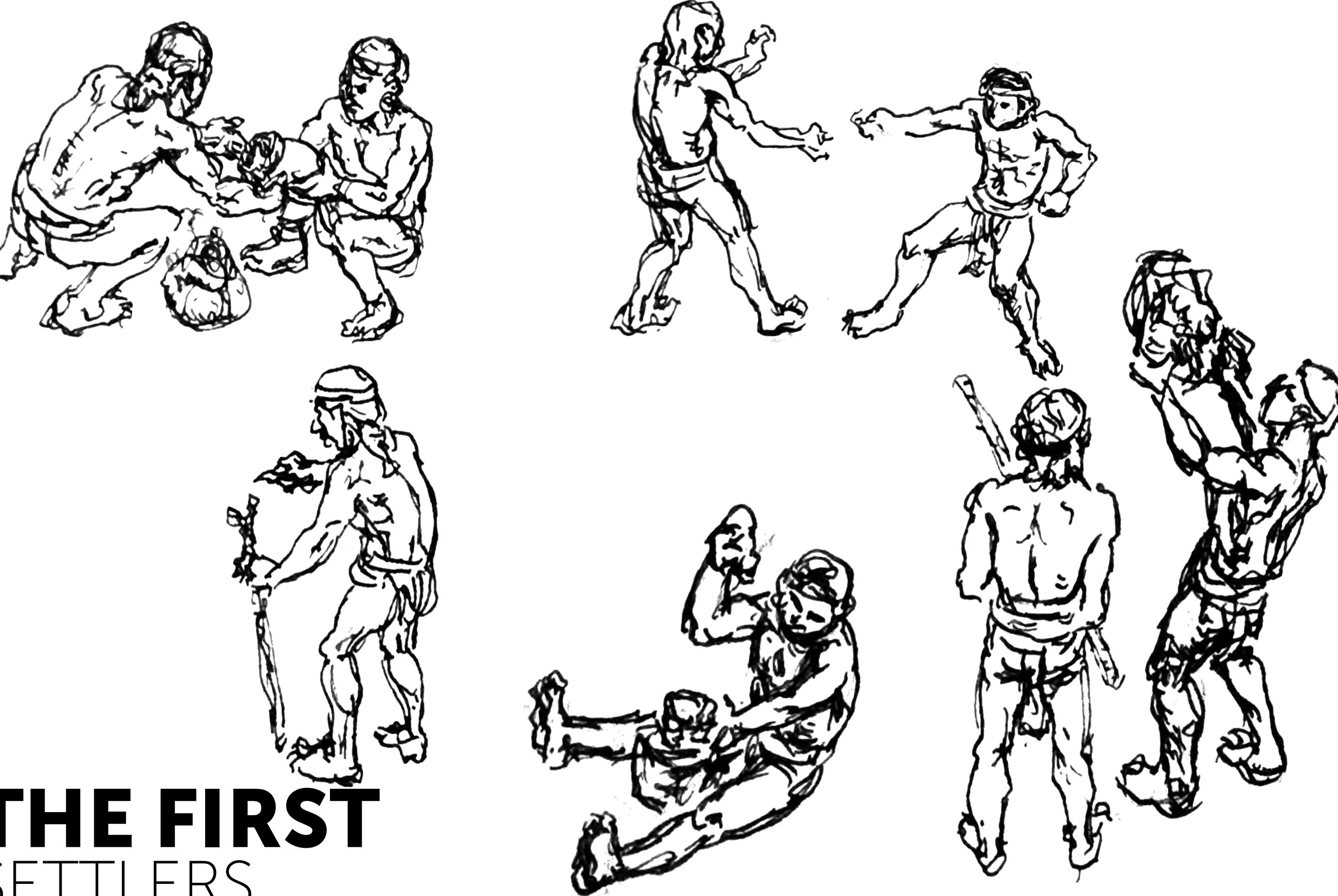
• ESPAÑOL



The first settlers began their journey forty thousand years ago. These nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers crossed the Bering Strait and moved toward less frigid lands south in the American continent. Between 10,000 and 7,000 BCE however, profound climate changes combined with widespread hunting prompted the extinction of large mammals that once populated the American continent such as mammoths, camel, horses, bison, and mastodons.

These changes led nomadic groups to gradually turn to agriculture, forming small, sedentary communities where, alongside

THE FIRST SETTLERS



DOMESTICATION OF MAIZE

Archeologists believe that maize was first domesticated between 10,000 and 5,500 BCE by nomadic groups who settled along the Balsas river basin--a region that spans the current south-central Mexican states of Puebla, Morelos, Guerrero, and Mexico. This transition occurred simultaneously in other communities and may have extended as far south as northern Nicaragua. From these regions, maize rapidly spread throughout the continent.

The sudden appearance of maize in historical record challenges the notion that evolution involves gradual changes over long periods of time. Genetic consistency between maize varieties proves that modern varieties descend from a single ancestor. Unlike other plants such as wheat and rice, maize has no obvious wild relatives. It



ESPAÑOL

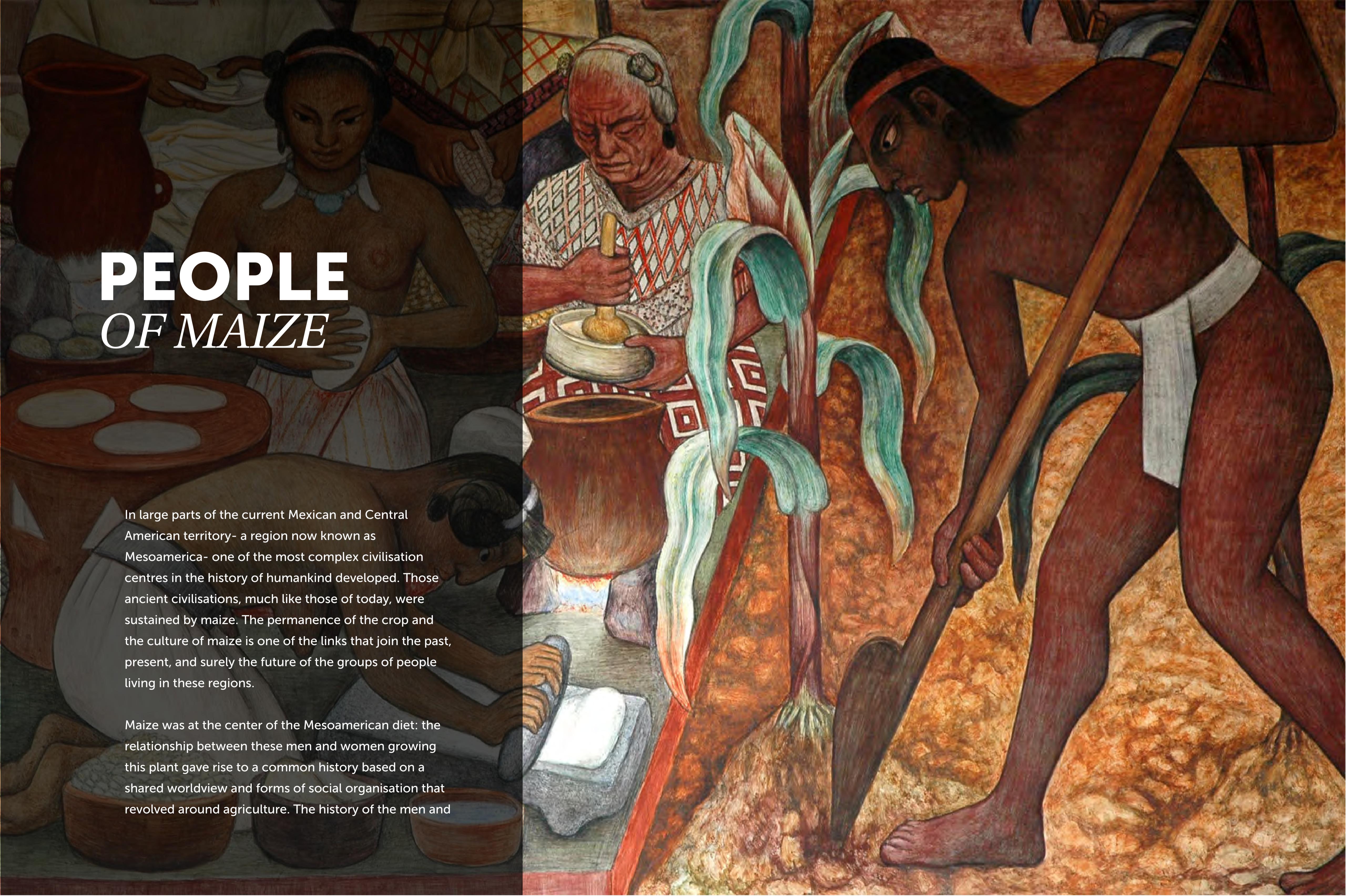


OAXACA VALLEY

Though maize-like plants derived from teosinte were cultivated since 5,000 BCE, the earliest corn cob dates to around 4,250 BCE, found at the **Guila Naquitz Cave** in the **Oaxaca Valley**. Early maize (*Zea* species) pollen dating back to 5100 BCE has been found at the Olmec archeological site at San Andres, Tabasco in south-western Mexico. By 3,000 BCE, there is evidence of maize cultivation in South America, and by 2100 BCE it was introduced to the southwestern United States in areas of New Mexico and Arizona.



BALSAS RIVER VALLEY



PEOPLE OF MAIZE

In large parts of the current Mexican and Central American territory- a region now known as Mesoamerica- one of the most complex civilisation centres in the history of humankind developed. Those ancient civilisations, much like those of today, were sustained by maize. The permanence of the crop and the culture of maize is one of the links that join the past, present, and surely the future of the groups of people living in these regions.

Maize was at the center of the Mesoamerican diet: the relationship between these men and women growing this plant gave rise to a common history based on a shared worldview and forms of social organisation that revolved around agriculture. The history of the men and



CENTRAL HIGH PLATEAU

As tools and irrigation methods advanced, agriculture became a central part of the livelihood of nomadic groups in Mesoamerica. This led to food surpluses of important plants like maize which encouraged population growth and prompted the emergence of the first permanent settlements around 2300 BCE. This transition took root in the Central High Plateau region of Mexico where access to vital water sources, as well as diverse game for hunting and fishing, encouraged fixed settlement along the lake shores.

Dwellings made of straw, logs, and mud were grouped together in small villages around which various



PEOPLE OF MAIZE

CULTURE *OF MAIZE*

The history of maize and the Mesoamerican people are one and the same. Maize became the central axis of diverse groups which developed and faded throughout the length and breadth of the current Mexican territory and Central America over four thousand years. In spite of the differences in economic, and cultural power, and the ecological characteristics of their territories, all these groups grew maize in their different geographic locations.

Evidence testifies to the flourishing of these societies, which while maintaining their local peculiarities,



THE MESOAMERICAN WORLD VIEW

Mesoamerican religions granted great importance to the worship of nature and maize; the saying “(wo)men of maize” is apt as mankind feeds from the grain, which in turn serves as the base for their civilisations. The structure of a life of maize builds upon worldview that organises time and space, and whose recurrent metaphor is this sacred plant’s cycle of life. In this way, deities, rites and ceremonies, festivities and participants, are linked with nature’s rhythms, the cycle of the land and its product: maize.

The popular religions of some communities in Mexico and Central America still celebrate maize:

MAIZE, A CULTURAL MATRIX



Page 49 of the Dresden Codex

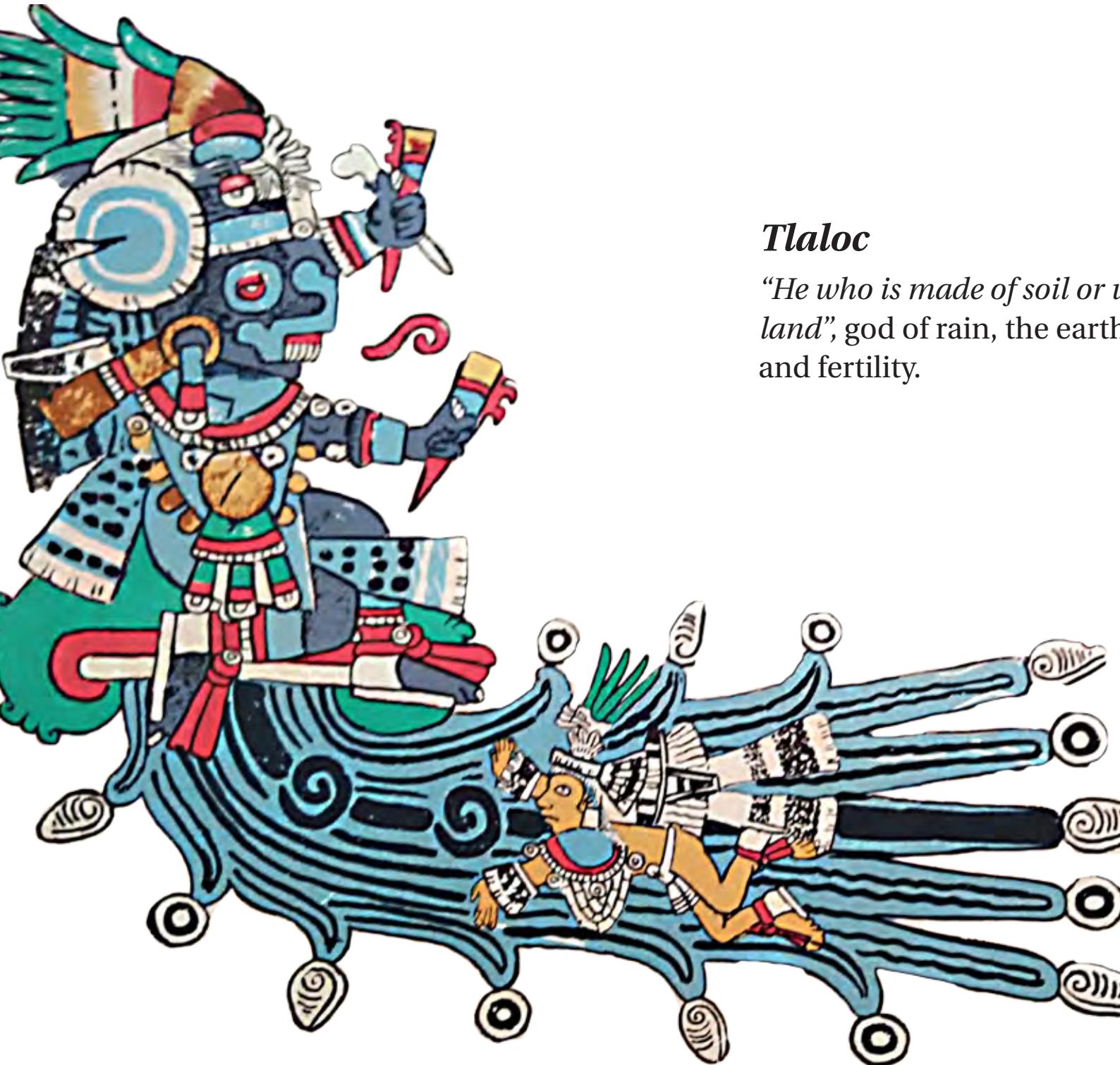
The Dresden Codex, also known as the Codex Dresdensis, is a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh or twelfth century. It is the oldest book written in the Americas known to historians.



TLALOC

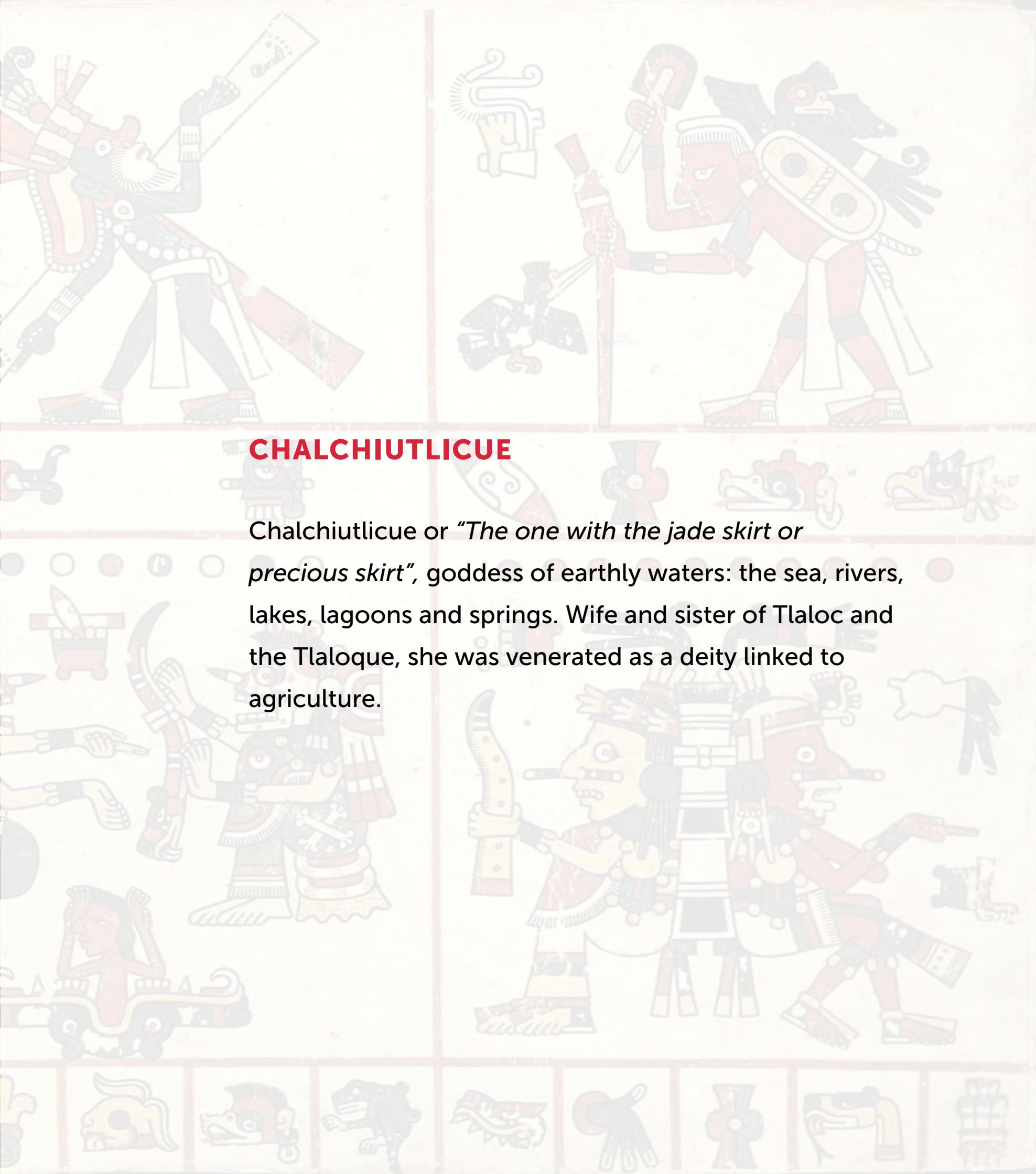
Tlaloc "He who is made of soil or wine of the land", god of rain, the earth, lightning and fertility. Its dwelling is Tlalocan, underworld or place of abundance; its guardians, the Tlaloque, reside in the four corners of the world, administering the rainfall. Among the Maya, this same deity is named Chac; Tajin among the Totonaca and Cocijo among the Zapotec.

MAIZE A CULTURAL MATRIX



Tlaloc

"He who is made of soil or wine of the land", god of rain, the earth, lightning and fertility.



CHALCHIUTLICUE

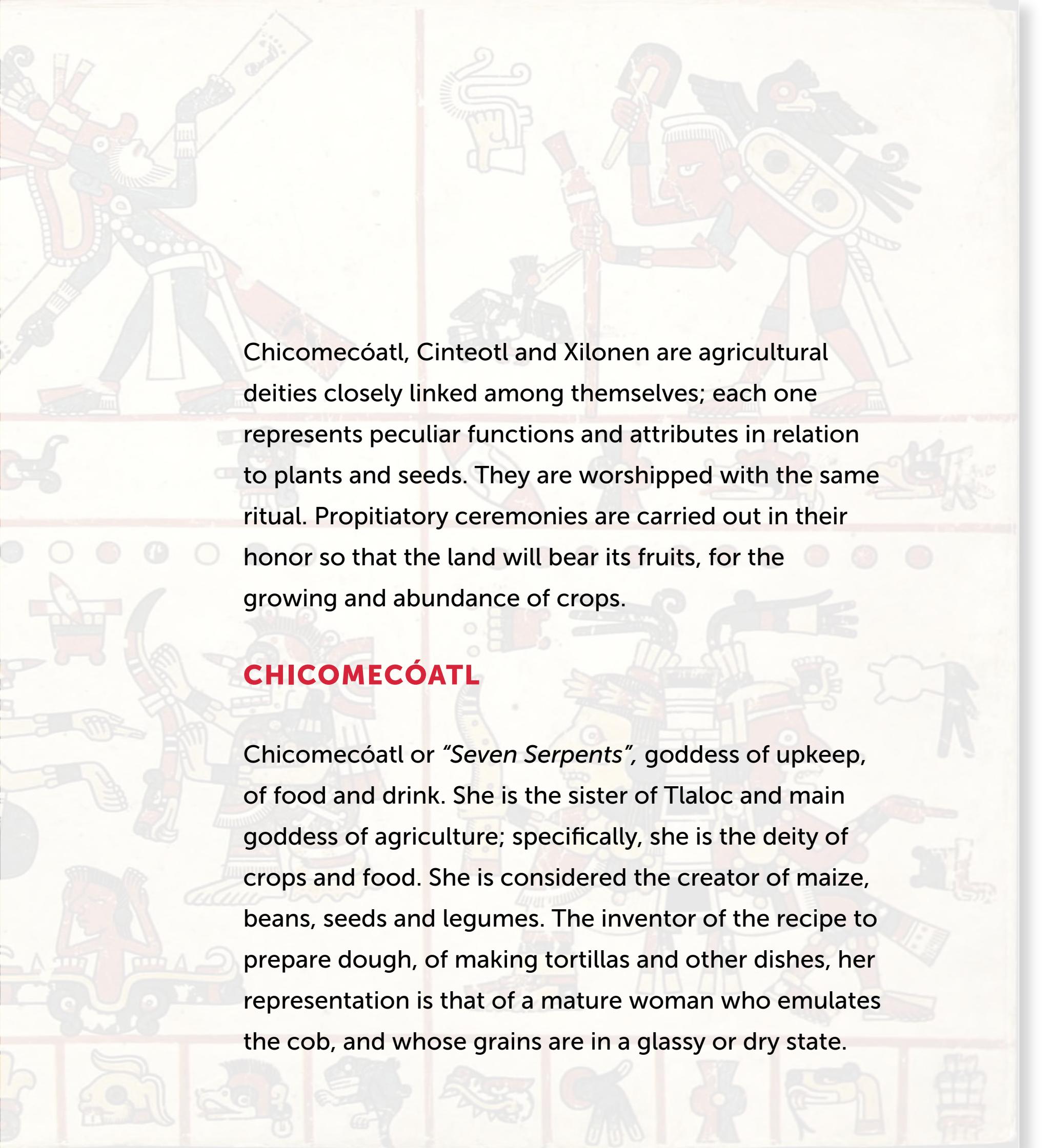
Chalchiutlicue or *"The one with the jade skirt or precious skirt"*, goddess of earthly waters: the sea, rivers, lakes, lagoons and springs. Wife and sister of Tlaloc and the Tlaloque, she was venerated as a deity linked to agriculture.



Chalchiutlicue

"The one with the jade skirt or precious skirt", goddess of earthly waters: the sea, rivers, lakes, lagoons and springs.

MAIZE A CULTURAL MATRIX



Chicomecóatl, Cinteotl and Xilonen are agricultural deities closely linked among themselves; each one represents peculiar functions and attributes in relation to plants and seeds. They are worshipped with the same ritual. Propitiatory ceremonies are carried out in their honor so that the land will bear its fruits, for the growing and abundance of crops.

CHICOMECÓATL

Chicomecóatl or “Seven Serpents”, goddess of upkeep, of food and drink. She is the sister of Tlaloc and main goddess of agriculture; specifically, she is the deity of crops and food. She is considered the creator of maize, beans, seeds and legumes. The inventor of the recipe to prepare dough, of making tortillas and other dishes, her representation is that of a mature woman who emulates the cob, and whose grains are in a glassy or dry state.

MAIZE A CULTURAL MATRIX



Chicomecóatl

“Seven Serpents”, goddess of upkeep, of food and drink.

CINTÉOTL

Cintéotl or "God-goddess of maize". Deity of food; more specifically, of maize. Also called "loved child"; is the stalk of the maize plant when it is green. "Its heart is like jade, green and precious". Son of Xochiquetzal, another wife of Tlaloc and Piltzintecutli, or "god child" and son of the first man. Born in the new moon, in Tamoanchan, in a cave, it burrows in the earth. From its hair cotton is born, from one ear the huahzontle, from its nose chia seed, from its fingers squash and from its nails maize. From the rest of its body many other fruits emerge.



Cintéotl

"God-goddess of maize". Deity of food; more specifically, of maize.

MAIZE A CULTURAL MATRIX

XILONEN

Xilonen or "Alive like tender maize". Goddess of the tender or milky cob, Xilonen represents the intermediate stage between the sprout of the cob (Cinteótl) and its maturity (Chicomecóatl). In its quality as tender corn, she is represented as a teenager.e. From the rest of its body many other fruits emerge.



Xilonen

"Alive like tender maize". Goddess of the tender or milky cob.

MAIZE A CULTURAL MATRIX

ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

In the mesoamerican world, scientific knowledge was frequently expressed through religious language. With a profound knowledge of the plant, of the agricultural conditions suitable for growth and the help of simple instruments, the Mesoamerican people developed agricultural systems to obtain the most precious of fruits: maize. Ancient Mexicans expressed their knowledge on the origin of this grain in myths and legends, as a way of transmitting their own experience.



MURALS OF SAN BARTOLO

In the second, mankind is made of maize, after several failed attempts by its creator to achieve the perfect work with other materials. The Mayans put this faith into famous verse, writing one of the most complete cosmogonies of world literature, called the Popol Vuh. A brief look at this story illuminates the important symbol of maize to Mesoamerican people:

"Había alimentos de todas clases, alimentos pequeños y grandes, plantas pequeñas y plantas grandes. Los animales enseñaron el camino, y moliendo entonces las mazorcas amarillas y las mazorcas blancas, hizo Ixmucané nueve bebida, y de este alimento provinieron la



MAIZE A CULTURAL MATRIX



THE MILPA: A MESOAMERICAN INVENTION

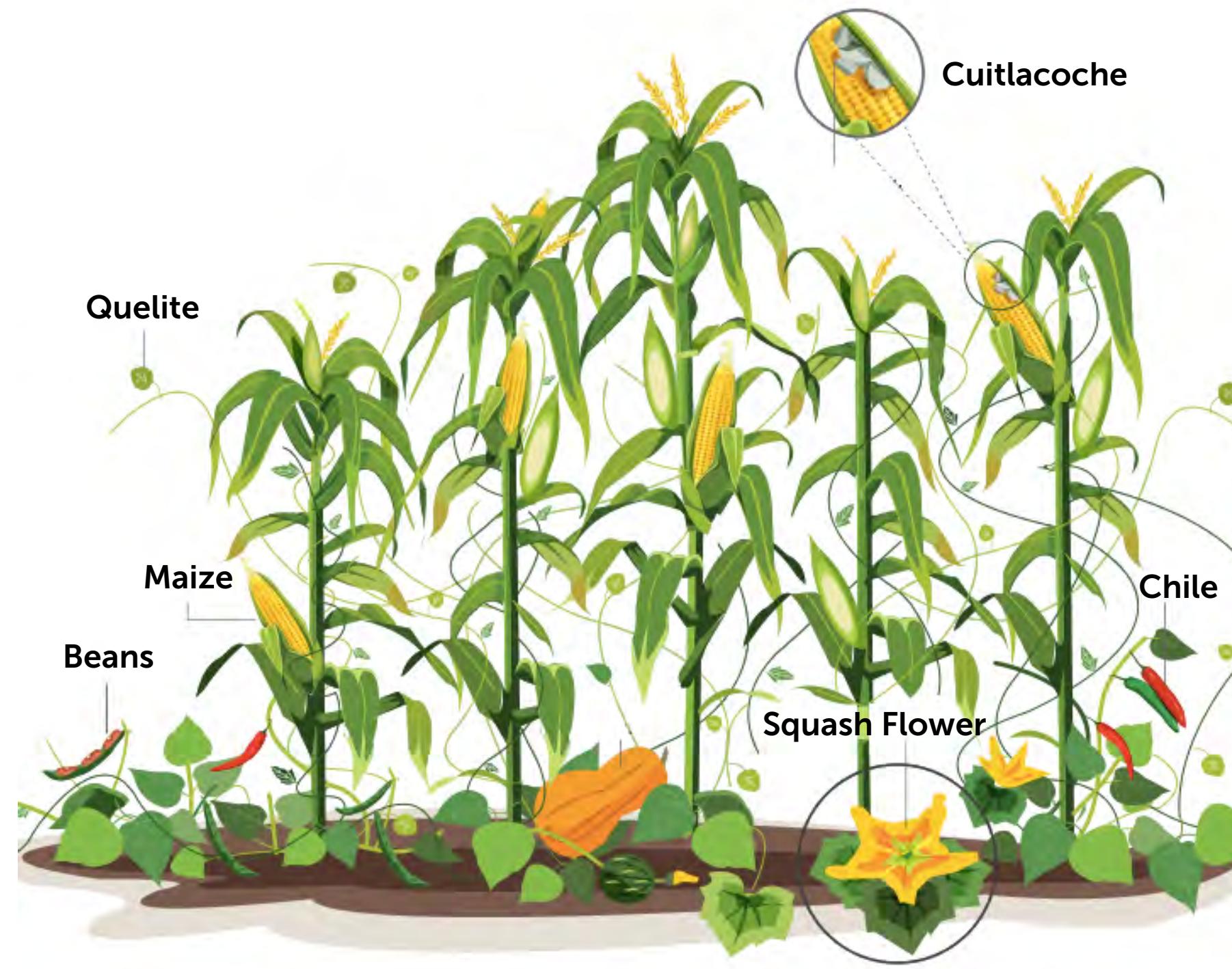
In the mesoamerican world, scientific knowledge was frequently expressed through religious language. With a profound knowledge of the plant, of the agricultural conditions suitable for growth and the help of simple instruments, the Mesoamerican people developed agricultural systems to obtain the most precious of fruits: maize. Ancient Mexicans expressed their knowledge on the origin of this grain in myths and legends, as a way of transmitting their own experience.



THE BASIS FOR A BALANCED DIET

In addition to the domestication of maize and the advent of nixtamalization, Mesoamerican groups designed the milpa (from the nahuatl: milli = crops; apam = open field or plan) which is an agricultural ecosystem based on the joint production of maize-beans-squash and has played a decisive part in the conservation and improvement of agricultural diversity and ecology.

In the milpa, every plant has an ecological function. The association between maize and beans is complementary, as the bean plant fixes the nitrogen, an essential nutrient required by maize. On its part, maize



THE MILPA

THE BASIS FOR A BALANCED DIET

NIXTAMALIZATION

The treatment of maize with lime, or the hulled of the plant, is important to increase its nutritional value. The exterior covering of the grain is eliminated so that it does not produce indigestion or interferes with the assimilation of other nutrients. The lime and heat used to elaborate the nixtamal provoke chemicals in the maize, and improve its quality by making it more digestible. Nixtamalization significantly improves the bioavailability of calcium and amino-acids. It also represented a technological revolution that allowed Mesoamerican people to improve its quality as food.

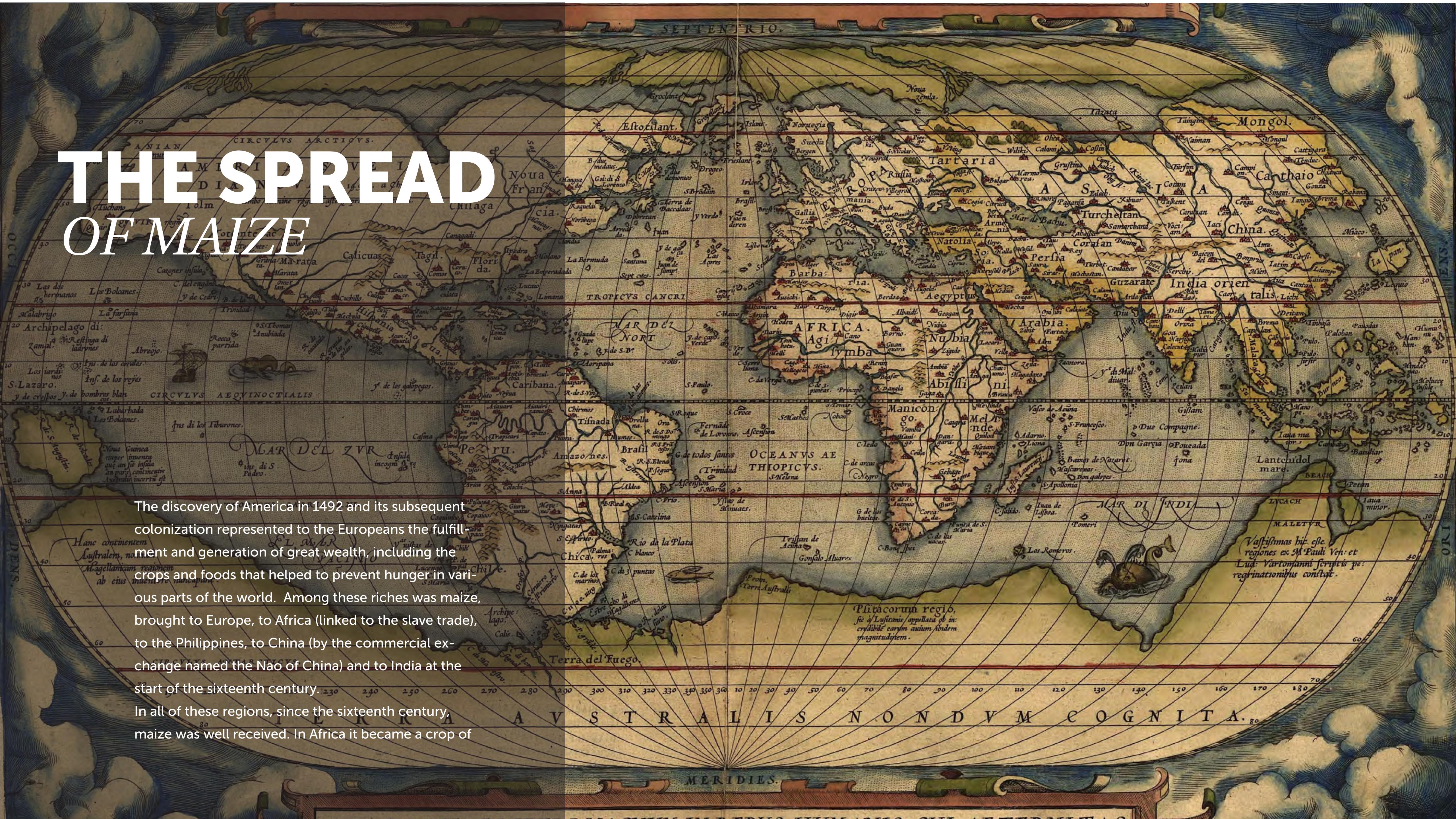


THE MILPA THE BASIS FOR A BALANCED DIET

THE SPREAD OF MAIZE

The discovery of America in 1492 and its subsequent colonization represented to the Europeans the fulfillment and generation of great wealth, including the crops and foods that helped to prevent hunger in various parts of the world. Among these riches was maize, brought to Europe, to Africa (linked to the slave trade), to the Philippines, to China (by the commercial exchange named the Nao of China) and to India at the start of the sixteenth century.

In all of these regions, since the sixteenth century, maize was well received. In Africa it became a crop of





THE SPREAD OF MAIZE TROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Thousands of years before the European conquest of the New World, maize grew throughout the continent. From its place of origin (central-western Mesoamerica), it spread via two routes. First, across and down the length of this territory and much later, to western North America; shortly after, it spread down the eastern coasts of what is now the United States and Canada. Its second route ran across the Antilles (from where it gets its most common name), until landing in South America, especially in the Andes. Some argue that the return of more resistant varieties of maize to Mesoamerica and improved varieties in the lowlands of the continent and in

1520 1600 1712 1750 1940



DIASPORA OF MAIZE