



This book is dedicated  
with affection and grateful thanks  
to all our Totonac friends  
and colleagues in the town of Papantla  
and surrounding communities

*Frontispiece:* Detail of a lifesize papier mâché figure of a skeleton with flowering branches made by Felipe Linares, Mexico City. See plate 16.

*The cover shows: (front, centre)* Offerings for the souls of the dead. Chicontepec, Veracruz.  
*(Left)* Papier mâché figure of a skeleton selling bread. Mexico City. H 69cms  
*(Back)* Woman selling *cempasúchil* flowers for the Day of the Dead. Acaxochitlán, Hidalgo.

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## *Introduction*

The ten interviews which follow were all recorded in Spanish in 1988 and 1989. Although they have been translated and edited, an attempt has been made to retain the spirit and the phrasing of the spoken text. These first person accounts describe the beliefs, rituals, religious commitment and artistic endeavour embodied today in the ancient festival of the Days of the Dead, or *Todos Santos*.

Celebrations are evoked within the cultural context of each community. Some of the people interviewed live in cities and towns – namely Mexico City, Puebla City and Toluca; others live in rural settings in the States of Puebla and Veracruz. Two interviews offer an insight into Totonac traditions near the archaeological site of El Tajín: while Fredy Méndez offers a factual account of festivities in the region, Juan Simbrón links *Todos Santos* with early Totonac history and mythology. Although the other speakers are Mestizo, traits from Náhuatl<sup>1</sup> culture are clearly discernible in San Salvador Huixcolotla and Huaquechula. The age of informants also varies: Fredy Méndez is in his twenties, while Consuelo García Urrutia was seventy-eight at the time of her interview. All stress the serious nature of this festival, yet agree that the arrival of their dead brings great pleasure and tranquility.

## Fredy Méndez

(La Congregación del Tajín,  
State of Veracruz)

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Before the Conquest the lands of the Totonac were known as Totonacapan; today their descendants live in south-eastern Veracruz and northern Puebla. According to the National Census of 1980, the Totonac language is spoken by more than 185,836 people. Differences between highland and lowland culture are marked. The archaeological site of El Tajín is located in northern Veracruz; built in the mouth of a thickly vegetated valley, it lies 50 km from the Gulf of Mexico and 15 km west of Papantla. This area currently supports a large Totonac population, yet the formal establishment of the present community is relatively recent. In the late nineteenth century the Mexican government opened up a great stretch of the Papantla area to settlement; many of those who purchased plots of land were Totonac.

Fredy Méndez lives with his family beside the road which passes El Tajín.<sup>1</sup> They own a strip of land, and make a living selling beer and soft drinks to motorists and tourists. Fredy, now in his twenties, is respected in the region for his embroidery skills. There is, as he explains, a shortage of jobs. 'In Papantla or Poza Rica there is little work to be had. Many people here embroider – men, women and children. I started when I was ten or twelve. No one taught me; I learned by myself. I embroider skirts, blouses, servilletas [cloths] and tablecloths.' During Todos Santos Fredy regularly receives awards and compliments for the splendour of his ofrendas. Judges from the town of Papantla visit ofrendas in local homes; they also assess exhibition ofrendas mounted in the town centre.<sup>2</sup>

In nearly every Totonac house, the religious shrine or altar is a focus for artistic expression. Catholic saints and holy images are venerated, and frequently displayed in wooden, glass-fronted nichos.<sup>3</sup> During the festival of Ninín (the Totonac term for the Days of the Dead) returning souls are received with lavish and costly offerings. These may be arranged with those of the saints; alternatively they may occupy a second, temporary altar.<sup>4</sup> The visual appearance of these ofrendas can vary widely from house to house. Balloons and colourful cut-outs of tissue-paper are a recent innovation; suspended palm-leaf suns and stars, flowers, foliage



76. Fredy Méndez and his sister wearing traditional Totonac dress in La Congregación del Tajín, Veracruz.



**77. Household saints' altar in the Totonac village of El Cedro, Veracruz. A temporary altar for returning souls is set up beside it during Todos Santos. Saints and souls both receive offerings of incense, candles, food and drink. The carved wooden saints wear miniature garments; behind them are a number of Holy pictures.**

and clusters of fruit have a much longer history. Fredy gave the cost of his materials as 300,000 pesos, which works out at about £75.00 (US\$125.00). No sum was suggested for the food. Because people buy things slowly over several weeks, they rarely calculate the total outlay.

Although the State of Veracruz is rich in pottery, its produce is rarely seen beyond the locality where it is made. Before Todos Santos cooking utensils and incense burners, some shaped like birds, are made for family use in many houses by women who rely on nearby clay deposits. Sometimes objects are fired indoors in the embers of the cooking stove; sometimes they are fired outside without a kiln. A rapidly diminishing supply of firewood – the result of widespread deforestation – now threatens this ancient tradition.

The spiritual conquest of Totonacapan dates from the very arrival of the Spaniards. Today traits of the old religion are fewer in the lowlands than in the highlands. Catholicism is a powerful unifying force, and evangelical sects have made little headway. Prayers and rituals are often led by rezan-

deros (prayer-makers). According to Fredy, 'Such a man would take an interest in this subject from an early age. He learns the prayers from an older man – perhaps his father; when the older man dies, or when he's too old to carry on, the younger man inherits his hand-written books. Rezanderos in El Tajín are farmers; they sing alabanzas (Catholic hymns of praise) when the dead return.' In the Handbook of Middle American Indians, H. R. Harvey and Isabel Kelly (1969) write: 'The most common ritual numbers are four and seven, but eight and twelve also occur. Reference to twenty- and eighty-day periods strengthens the assumption that the Totonac shared the Mesoamerican calendar.'<sup>5</sup> Some of these numbers occur in the following pages.

Fredy Méndez was interviewed in 1988 in the company of his father and his mother. Both contributed information, and confirmed his statements. Although Fredy was not taught Totonac as a child, he has since learned to speak it fluently. He takes great pride in his cultural heritage, and hopes Totonac customs can survive.

We have lived in this region for a long, long time. My great-grandparents moved from a place nearby, and settled in El Tajín. They knew many stories about the pyramids, but these have mostly been forgotten. Who the builders were, no one is sure. I don't think they were our ancestors. If the original inhabitants had survived, their ruins would not have been forgotten and buried underground. Perhaps the Spaniards killed them all. Some people say there are spirits in the ruins of El Tajín, but they lived long ago and they do us no harm.<sup>6</sup>

We are Totonac, and we are Catholics. We go to mass, as we have always done, and observe the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. The Protestants want us to abandon our beliefs.<sup>7</sup> They say we waste our money on foolishness. People whose faith is weak are easily persuaded. In these parts, however, there are few converts. When Protestants talk, we listen politely and buy their books, but we don't read them. We are faithful to our festivals and saints.

Each year during *Todos Santos* the dead return. This is the most important festival of the year. It is not a time for making merry. It is a sad and solemn time, as when someone close to us dies, yet it gives us pleasure to receive our dead. We do the things our ancestors did: my father follows his parents' teachings, and I will continue to do the same. The dead come to eat: they come to consume our offerings of food and drink. These must be set out with pleasure and affection. If I decide to make you a present, I do it whole-heartedly, because I want to. It must be like this during *Todos Santos*. The souls do not force us to give them anything. If we give, it must be because we truly want to.

As the festival approaches, we accumulate the things we need. When we want something costly, like new clothing, we put money aside over many weeks. So it is with *Todos Santos*. Last year we spent 300,000 pesos on materials alone, without including the cost of food. During October, and maybe September, our purchases include plates, paper, candles and other goods; we buy chili peppers, sugar, salt, *cacao*, coffee, cinnamon, and twelve kilos of wheat flour. In this way we make our preparations.

Not everyone takes the same amount of trouble. Not everyone has the same amount of skill. To do something good takes time, enthusiasm and a love of tradition. I like things to be ornate, not simple and uncomplicated. From the ceiling we hang tissue-paper cut-outs in many colours. These are laborious to make: if the blade slips even slightly, the sheet is wasted. Some

people barely pattern their paper, but I create birds, animals, flowers and people; I even show the main pyramid of El Tajín.<sup>8</sup> This technique was uncommon in my father's youth. Instead, he uses tissue paper to cover rope or strips of wood: by tying the paper at intervals with string, he shapes the paper into bubbles.

On 29 October my mother grinds *cacao* on her *metate* (grinding stone). She adds sugar, cinnamon, hard-boiled egg yolks, and powdered cloves. She prefers not to add biscuit crumbs, as some people do. This mixture is kneaded and rolled flat, like a *tortilla*. Then she fashions it by hand into different shapes. Some are inspired by nature, while others refer to things that no longer exist. Not everyone does this: some women make unadorned circles,

78. Making paper decorations for the Day of the Dead in Cerro del Carbón, Veracruz. Designs are cut with a sharp blade. The patterned sheet of paper is then stuck down on to a second sheet of a contrasting colour. Such decorations are pinned round altars during celebrations (see figs 15 and 66). The pottery vessels on shelves in front of the house serve as hives for native stingless bees.




ours in a private place; we shield them from visitors, who might swear or become drunk. When *Todos Santos* comes, these other families mount a second altar beside or opposite the first, according to the space available. This is what my grandparents did. If we, in our house, had lots of images and lots of saints, then we might follow their example and have two altars. As it is, we have just one.

We love our surroundings, and the fruits of nature; we hang clusters of bananas, *jicamas*, limes, oranges and *mandarinas*. We put out flowers – yellow flowers, and others if we want. We deck the altar with green *tepejilote* leaves,<sup>10</sup> and we fashion suns, stars and pineapples from the *palma de coyol*.<sup>11</sup> We cut the fronds ourselves nearby. These are the adornments that we make. At the centre goes an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe or the Sacred Heart. In front we lay a *petate* on the ground.

If we have photographs of the deceased we put them out, but many families have none. There should be a chair, so that the dead can sit and eat. There should be towels and a dish of water, so that the dead can wash their hands. We need ribbons, incense burners, shoulder-bags, embroidered *servilletas*, and cloths. The dead use these cloths to carry away their food. Of course this is a belief – they can't physically take it away. Sometimes we put out clothing. The dead go to the grave in the clothes they have used. When they return each year, we give them what we can afford: a newly embroidered kerchief, a blouse, or a skirt. If you like, you can put out other things as well – a *machete* or a comb.

Candles for the dead are supported by split logs and split sticks. There are yellow candles and white candles. Once we preferred the yellow ones of beeswax, but now they are poorly made and oily; as soon as they get hot, they start to bend. Today we find the white ones better; they are made from paraffin wax, and they are harder. We also offer candles in glasses.

There are many classes of *copal* (incense).<sup>12</sup> High-quality *copal* costs 24,000 pesos a kilo, but some varieties are more expensive. Cheaper ones are bad value: they won't burn and the smell is poor. Good *copal* is white in tone; bad *copal* is usually dark. The kind we buy is from the State of Puebla. During *Todos Santos* wealthy families use half a kilo over three days; we make do with less. The cost is high, so we use a quarter of a kilo, and chiefly burn it when food is placed on the altar. Incense drives evil spirits away. They are attracted by the



79. Totonac food offering for the Day of the Dead. In the centre are figures made from chocolate. Papantla region, Veracruz.

without even a pattern. My mother, by contrast, scores the surface, and makes them pretty, as her mother and her grandmother taught her. After about two hours, the figures harden. Some will lie flat upon the altar; others will be hung up on threads. Long ago my family found some seals of stone; they were very ancient, and came out of the ground. My grandmother used these seals to imprint her chocolate with designs; then, sad to say, the seals were lost.

29 October is also the time when bread dough is mixed; my mother does this at the end of the day. On the 30th we bake bread in the oven outside. People who have no oven buy bread from us, but we keep ten or fifteen kilos to feed our visitors. On the 30th, too, we hang our paper banners, and suspend our wooden board for the *ofrenda*. This board should be flat, so first we lay it under bricks. The *altar colgante* (hanging altar) is usual still in countless homes, where it hangs on ropes from the ceiling during the month of November. A white cloth covers it and hangs down around it. Many families, however, prefer a table; in modern houses, they may have no choice – a hanging altar requires a beam, or some other method of support.

31 October is La Vigilia,<sup>9</sup> and we work hard to finish our *ofrenda*. Some people barely dress their altar: they spread out a white cloth, and offer only water, bread and a few *tamales*. Other people, by contrast, lavishly decorate two quite separate altars. One is for all saints, while the second is for all souls; both altars carry flowers, candles and food. Families in Plan de Hidalgo and Plan de Palmar have many holy images, and many saints of wood or plaster. In houses such as these, the saints' altar is permanent: it remains in full view all the year round. We too have saints, although not so many, but we keep



80. Suspended household altar in the home of Fredy Méndez (see also plate 20b; fig. 14). Adornments include papercuts and hanging figures made from the *coyol* palm. Candles are set into a section cut from the stem of a banana plant. Laid out on low chairs are newly made women's garments, handtowels and a man's hat; these are for the use of the returning souls. Although the central cloth is from Tenango de Doria, Hidalgo, all other embroidery is the work of Fredy Méndez.



aroma of food, and by the candles. The devil would also like to share the food of all souls, but the smell of incense keeps him away.

The day of La Vigilia, from the hour of noon, is for the souls of dead children. 1 November is for adult souls, who also arrive at noon. Although the dead can find their way home from the cemetery, we lay a path of flowers near the door to lead them inside. When they leave us on the 2nd, they need no path.

Between 31 October and 2 November, past generations were careful always to leave the front door open, so that the souls of the deceased could enter. My grandmother was constantly worried, and was forever checking that the door had not been accidentally shut. Younger people are less concerned, but there is one rule which we must obey: while the festival lasts, we treat all living beings with kindness. This includes dogs, cats, even flies or mosquitoes. If you should see a fly on the rim of a cup, don't frighten it away – it is a dead relative who has returned. If a moth sits on a *servilleta*, leave it be; welcome every living creature.

The dead come to eat *tamales* and to drink hot chocolate. What they take is vapour, or steam, from the food. They don't digest it physically: they extract the goodness from what we provide. This is an ancient belief; it comes to us from our grandparents, or maybe it's older still. Each year we receive our relatives with joy. We sit near the altar to keep them company, just as we would if they were alive. We are not able to talk with the dead, though there are those who can. Some people possess this knowledge. Because they study books on Satan, they know

how to converse with the dead. Individuals can visit these people, if they want to contact their dead. A murder victim could say who had killed him, and why. Several women near Papantla have these powers.<sup>13</sup> We, during *Todos Santos*, do not; we merely sense the presence of those we love.

We burn incense, and we feel glad. We offer food, and we say: 'Eat'. Always, we do this with good grace. If people are irritable and resentful, the dead know it. They become ill, and they vomit. Our duty is to make them happy. The poor must do the best they can. Hard-up families offer bread and water, if that is all they can afford: what matters is the feeling in their hearts. Some people, however, make no *ofrenda*. They have lost faith in the return of all souls. 'Why should I spend my savings on the dead?' they ask. 'I can use my money in better ways.' These people, after *Todos Santos*, frequently fall ill. The dead say: 'In this house, nothing has been done for us' and misfortune may follow. People who neglect their dead have been known to fall, to sicken with fever, maybe even to die. I myself have seen such cases. When such a person starts to vomit, he or she must see a doctor, take medicine, garlic and other remedies, pray and say the rosary. We, in this house, have never been ill, because we respect and welcome our dead.

We feed dead children with *comida blanca* ('white' food); this means that it contains no chili. Red meat is never given. Instead we provide broth, and *tamales* with egg and sesame seeds, chicken, fish, and squash with shrimps. For these *tamales* we use maize dough and salt. We put out *refrescos* (soft fizzy drinks) and hot chocolate prepared at home. We cook sweet dishes from pumpkin, banana, boiled *camote* (sweet potato) and yucca. We serve toasted sesame seeds, and toasted pumpkin seeds with *panela* (brown cane sugar). We make *totopos*, which look like square *tortillas*. For these we use maize dough, eggs, lard, aniseed and *panela*. Fried until they are crispy, they last about two weeks. To decorate the altar, we hang up *bollitos de anís*: wrapped in maize husks and steamed, they contain maize dough, *panela*, carbonate, lard and aniseed.

Dead adults eat many of the things I've listed; they too like *totopos* and *bollitos de anís*, sweets dishes, fruit, chocolate, *refrescos*, and home-baked bread in a *batea* (wooden dish). In addition they like meat and chili, so we make them *tamales* with pork, and serve them hot *mole* sauce with turkey and *tortillas*. We offer them

81. Locally fired cooking pot. Food is being prepared in the open air for the Ceremony of the Cross (see page 82). El Tajín, Veracruz.



coffee, cigarettes, beer, and sometimes *refino* (*aguardiente*, or cane alcohol). Some things, like *mole*, are best served in earthenware dishes, but for other foods we prefer fine china. A single plate, which might have cost 200 pesos a few years back, is now priced at 20,000 pesos or more. The best make is called *Ánfora*. It costs a lot, but it's still the one we like the most. Those who can afford it buy new dishes for *Todos Santos*; those who can't offer the best of what they have. Many families also need new cooking pots for this time of the year. These are made or bought with care. A good earthenware pot, if you treat it well, can last ten or fifteen years.

In other places, so I've been told, people wear masks, dance and play music when the dead return. This is not the custom here. Instead, we have *alabanzas*. These are sung by four men, who go in groups from house to house. On 1 November they sing in the evening and late into the night; then, on 2 November, they sing again. They sing *Los ángeles en el cielo* (The Angels in Heaven), *El Señor de Tampico* (Our Lord of Tampico) and other songs besides. Householders give them food to eat and alcohol to drink. There is little music other than this. In our region we have brass bands: if a dead man had been a musician, his family might pay a group of musicians to play for him; or his fellow musicians might come and play for free.<sup>14</sup> But this is rare.

I have a holy picture which shows two roads: the road of virtue and the road of evil. When someone dies, the soul rises up and the body goes below. The good ascend to Heaven, but those who have robbed or killed must go to Hell. Our altars, our offerings and our *alabanzas* are for *los fieles difuntos* (the faithful departed); we are welcoming pure souls from Heaven. We cannot be sure that the wicked return from Hell, but, in case they do, we offer them their own *ofrenda*. Outside the house, on a narrow shelf or table, we put bread, chocolate and flowers. Those who have sinned may neither enter the house, nor approach the blessed altar; they must remain outside. This altar is for errant souls, for souls in torment, and for orphans.<sup>15</sup>

At midday on 2 November the dead depart. Those who have been well received go laden with bananas, *tamales*, *mole* and good things. Those who have been poorly received return empty-handed and grieving to the grave. Some people here have even seen them, and heard their lamentations. When the visiting spirits

have withdrawn, we visit each other in our homes, and exchange gifts of food. On this day, we welcome relatives and friends; as the hours pass, they come and go, talking and eating. We like to offer hospitality. There is *mole* with turkey or chicken, rice, and *tamales*; there is hot chocolate and bread.

On the 2nd or 3rd we go to the cemetery: this is our duty. We sprinkle lime over the grave, as if clothing the dead person in white, and we offer bread, chocolate, *tamales*, *bollitos de anís*, *totopos*, fruit, candles and flowers from the altar at home. We lay a leaf on the grave, then we spread out the food; we perfume the air with incense, and we light our candles. When we go home, we leave the food behind.

This is not the end of our celebrations. On the eighth day of November we set a small quantity of food upon the altar.<sup>16</sup> Then, at the end of November, comes the day of San Andrés. We offer him *tamales*, chocolate, bread and many things, just as we did the other saints on All Saints' Day. Dead adults and dead children both return: together, on this day, they make their last farewell. *Todos Santos*, you see, lasts all month long.

Even though we know the dead will visit us on earth, we feel grief and sorrow if our loved ones die. When this sad moment comes at last, a crucifix is placed on the dead person's breast, to offer protection against the devil. Then the body is washed, and dressed in its finest clothes. A man who is *de calzón* is arrayed in the newest *calzón* he owns.<sup>17</sup> People may go to the grave with all their clothing, although some families like to keep a few garments in memory. Forty years and more ago, when a woman died, she was buried like a bride in her white skirt, her blouse and her *quexquén* (*quechquemil*, or shoulder cape). She wore her gold earrings, her gold necklace and her gold rings. Now these things go to her daughter, or her daughter-in-law.

When a man dies, his wife prepares him for burial; when a woman dies, her husband prepares her for burial. This task may also be done by the *compadre* or *comadre*. In adult life, at the time of our marriage, we form a life-long bond with a man and woman: they become our *compadre* and our *comadre*, just as we become theirs.<sup>18</sup> When death occurs, they must immediately be told. We also run to tell the chief *rezandero* who arrives as fast as he can, bringing with him one, or three companions. He asks for a *petate* and a blanket, so that they can kneel and pray during the night-long vigil.

flowers, and light twelve candles – six along one side, and six along the other. These don't need to be tall; if necessary, we cut big candles into smaller pieces. Then we erect a provisional cross.

When a death has occurred, someone goes asking for donations. He or she goes from house to house, asking for eggs and *nixtamal* (maize boiled in water with slaked lime). Four days after death, this is used to make egg *tamales*. For these four days, the dead person's house has remained unswept, inside and outside. Then, on the fourth day, the chief *rezandero* sweeps: he asks for a bucket of holy water and *aguacatillo* leaves. With these, he drives away the evil spirits. He sprinkles water, and he sweeps. This is his task, and he must do it alone. He gathers the refuse in a bag, a sack or a blanket. He takes it away, prays, and burns it; to do this, he needs *aguardiente*. Then he returns to the house, asks again for the *petate* and the blanket, and says three prayers. On the ninth day after death, he comes again to the house, and again says three prayers.

Eighty days after death, we erect a permanent cross. Next week my father will be *el padrino de la cruz* (godfather of the cross) for a woman who died aged ninety.<sup>21</sup> In the house where she lived there will be an altar for *la difunta* (dead woman). This altar will be decorated as if for *Todos Santos*; so too will the permanent altar of the saints. There will be flowers, food, incense and candles. New clothes will be set out for the dead woman; later, these will be worn by the living. The *rezanderos* will kneel on a *petate*. They will pray for the soul of the dead woman; they will bless the cross, and the *ofrenda*. There will be food in abundance for relatives and friends. Afterwards the flowers and the cross will be taken to the cemetery.

All regions and all peoples have their own traditions. I take our traditions seriously and am forever asking questions. I want to know how things were done and why. It saddens me that some young people now reject our culture, and take no interest in our past. Many customs are already lost. As the years pass, and as old people die, memories are blurred. We live next to the pyramids, yet we know next to nothing of their creators. They too had their traditions and beliefs. One day our descendants will also forget how we dressed, how we behaved, and what we believed.

82. Professional prayer-makers (*rezanderos*) during the Ceremony of the Cross (see text). They kneel on a rolled up palm mat (*petate*) before the dead woman's altar, blessing both it and the cross (visible here above their shoulders). Later the cross will be placed on her grave in the cemetery. El Tajín, Veracruz.

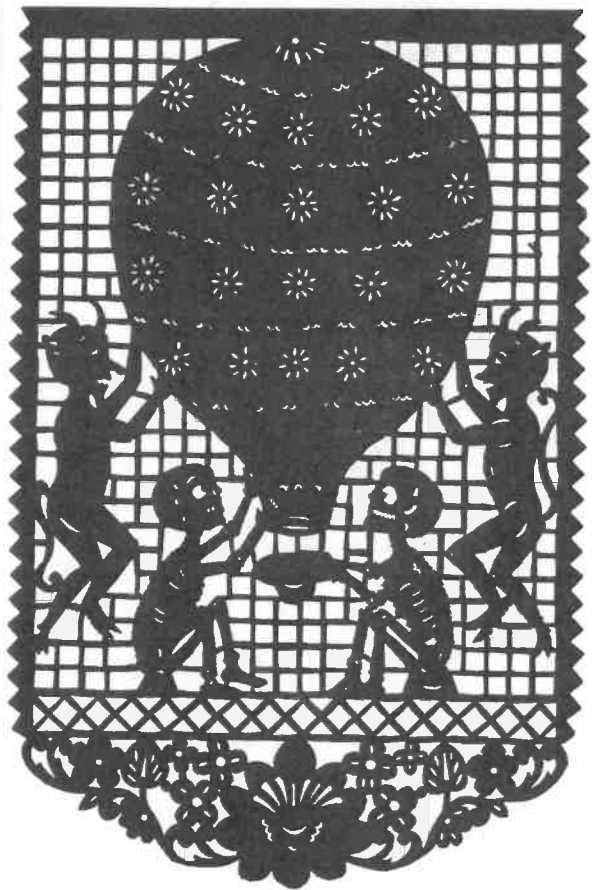
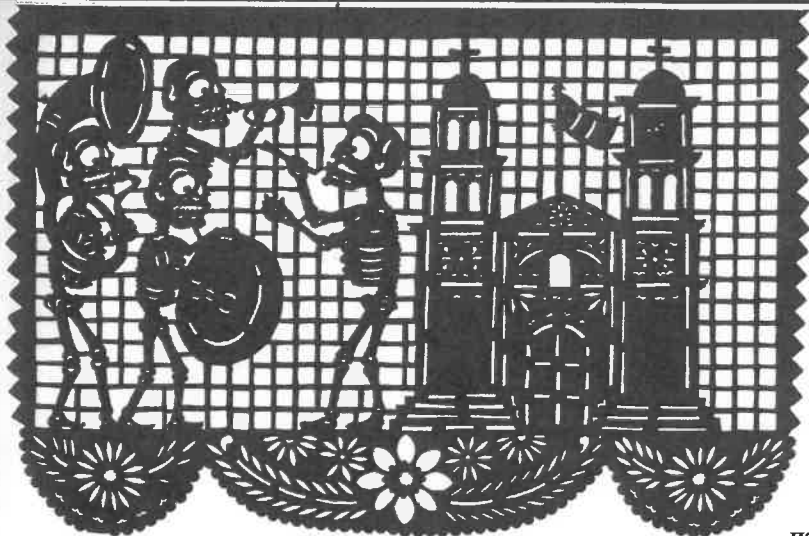
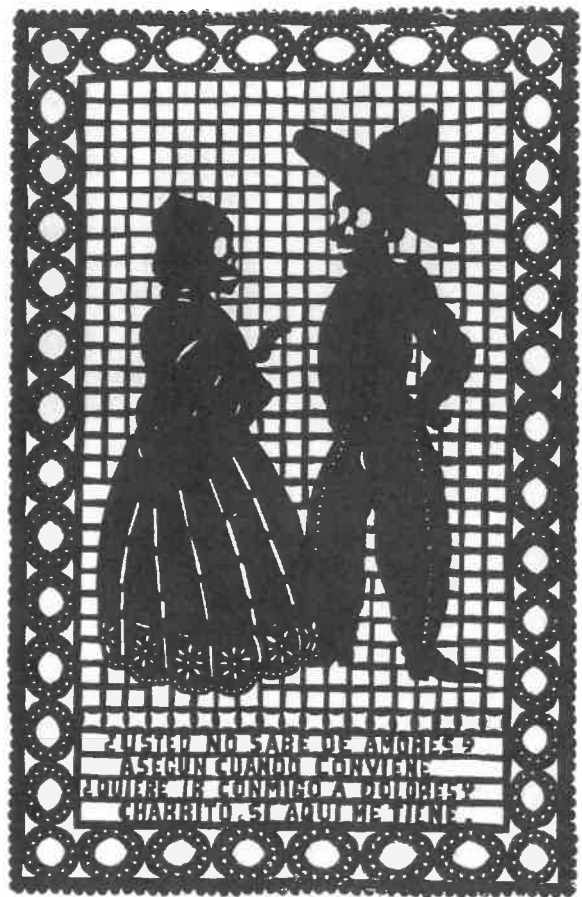
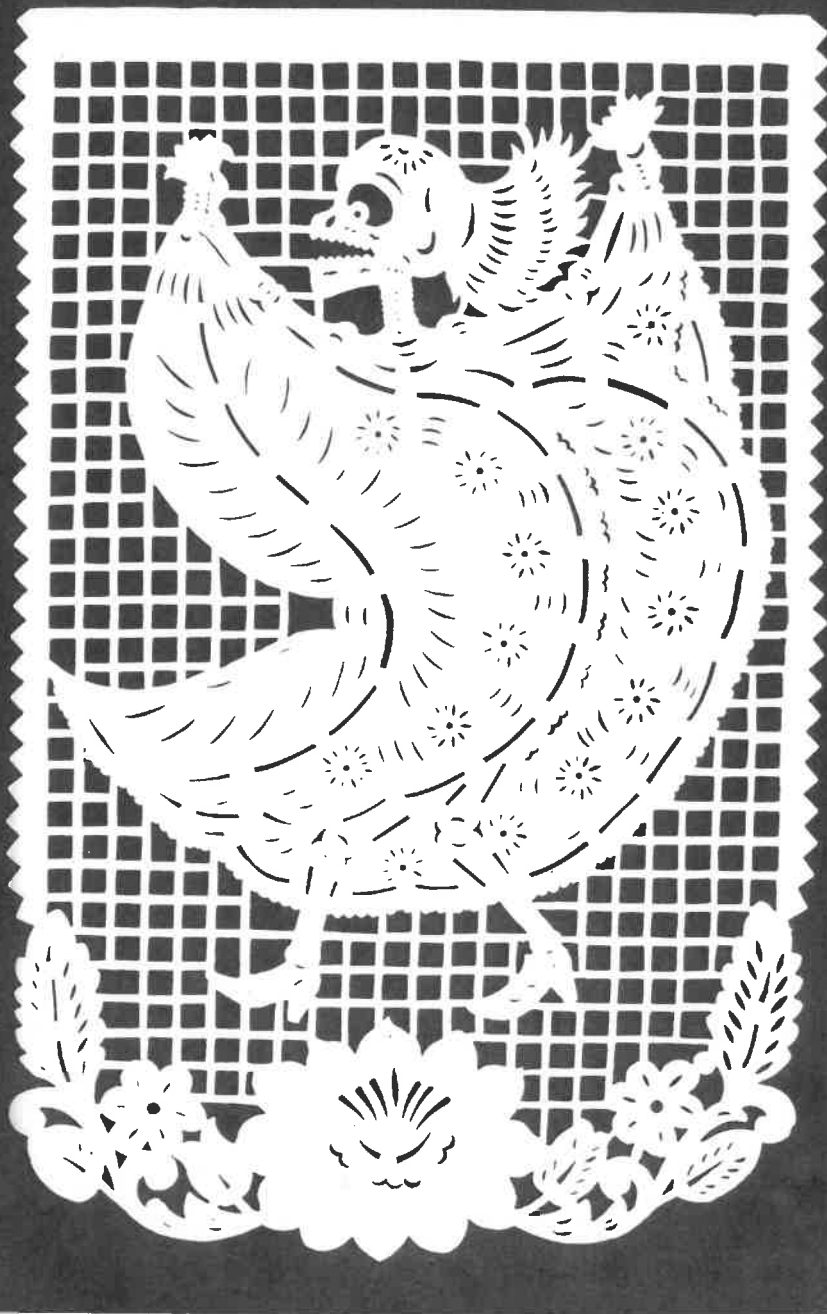
The coffin is placed on a table; beneath it we put the dead person's belongings – his *machete*, his *coa* (digging stick), his shoes and his blankets. Forty years ago, the *rezanderos* would ask for all these things, and take them away for their own use. Now we are becoming modern: today these things go to the next of kin, and not to the *rezanderos*.

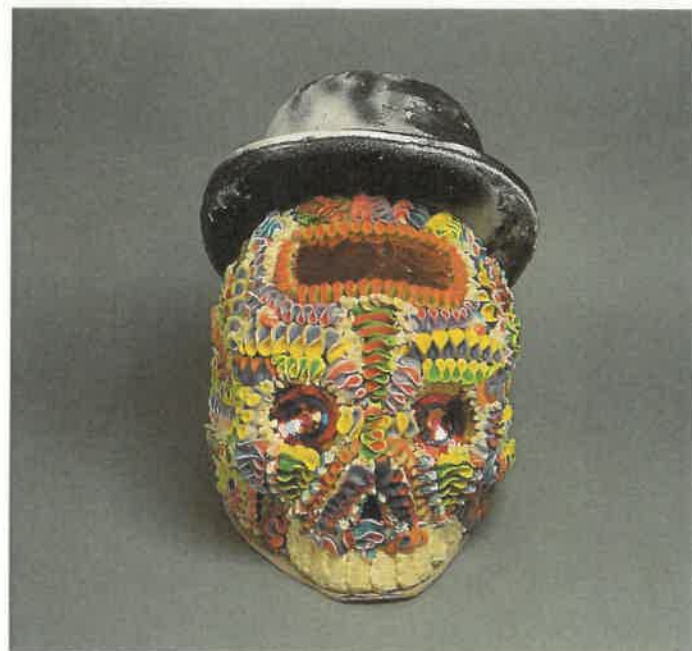
When someone dies, we cut a short length of *carrizo* (stiff and hollow reed). Into this little cup we pour water and two or three fresh-water *acamayitas* (small crustaceans).<sup>19</sup> This goes in the coffin, so that the spirit will have something to eat and drink. Some people also put in miniature *gorditas* (puffed maize cakes), and throw pieces of *tortilla* on top of the coffin. The dead person is thus assured of water and maize on his journey.

On the day following death, the body is borne away for burial.<sup>20</sup> The chief *rezandero* will say three prayers; often, he chants in Latin. In the cemetery, he blesses the grave, which has been dug for a fee by the community's own policemen. Then, when the coffin is in the ground, each relative drops a handful of earth on it, making the form of the cross. After the coffin has been properly interred, we offer



Children in the Nahua village of Atla, Puebla, making a path of *cempasúchil* petals to lead the souls back to the cemetery after the Day of the Dead.





a. Offering in a public building, Mexico City. Included are skulls and skeletons of papier mâché and pottery. Also, reproductions of *La Catrina* by José Guadalupe Posada. The floor is decorated with metallic paper cuts, *cempasúchil* petals and dried chili peppers. Made by Maurilio Rojas of San Salvador Huixcolotla, Puebla.

b & c. Lifesize sugar skulls representing a bride and groom. Made by Wenceslao Rivas Contreras. Toluca, State of Mexico. H (approx.) 34 cms

Mestizo family *ofrenda* (offering) in the town of Chicontepec, Veracruz. The arch framing the offering is decorated with yellow *cempasúchil* flowers and the magenta and (less common) greenish *mano de león* (cockscorb) flowers. The wall behind the photographs, candles, crucifixes and other ornaments is decorated with red metallic paper overlaid with a white hand-made cloth.