

THE EARLY  
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HISTORY AND  
CULTURE



# TIME AND THE ANCESTORS

*Aztec and Mixtec Ritual Art*

MAARTEN JANSEN &

GABINA AURORA PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ

BRILL

## Time and the Ancestors

# The Early Americas: History and Culture

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*Aztec and Mixtec Ritual Art*

*By*

Maarten Jansen

Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez



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## Preface

The central aim of this book is to contribute to the understanding of the religious heritage of Mesoamerica, an impressive and original civilisation shared by the scores of indigenous peoples who live in the region that stretches from the deserts of northern Mexico to the tropical lands of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The cultural tradition of these peoples is characterised by a specific worldview with its values, symbols, ethics and ritual enactments, expressed in ancient visual art and in present-day oral traditions. This heritage is usually first and foremost seen as a topic of archaeology, history and anthropology, but it has also a clear topicality and urgency in our time. Indigenous peoples all over the world have made and continue to make important contributions to human cultural diversity and development, but are still living in deprived and excluded conditions, which have all kinds of social and political implications.

It is that problematic situation, that consequence of colonialism, which 'defines' indigenous peoples. If taken in isolation, the term 'indigenous' may cause confusion, as it seems to refer primarily just to inhabitants of a specific place who did not come from elsewhere. Here it should be understood, however, in the specific combination 'indigenous peoples', which is not just about having been born in a specific place, but also about a specific social condition. The concept itself stems from the colonists' vocabulary and refers to the original inhabitants of invaded territories. Today a full social and cultural decolonisation has not yet taken place in many former colonies, even after they have obtained formal national independence. Injustice and inequality often still reign within their frontiers as a form of internal colonialism, in which bourgeois élites who descend from or identify with the former colonisers are in power, while the descendants of the colonised still suffer the consequences of that historical process of domination. In fact, that plight has been intensified through the onslaught of modern transnational neo-colonialism as an expression of global capitalism.

In international debates, for example in the UN, the term 'indigenous peoples' was chosen to characterise this continuing effect of colonialism: discrimination, exploitation, social marginalisation and linguistic-cultural genocide, now often combined with (neo-) colonial extraction of resources or other (neo-) imperial invasions. Indigenous peoples are peoples who still suffer colonial oppression in an era that claims to be postcolonial and consequently tries to deny their existence.

The struggle of indigenous peoples for recognition, vindication and liberation is nowadays the context for academic research on their cultural heritage.

On 13 September 2007 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Resolution 61/295), thereby setting norms and standards to overcome the remaining and revived structure, mentality and habitus of colonialism. This UN Declaration was the outcome of long and difficult negotiations (starting in the early 1980s in Geneva, Switzerland); it does not represent all the aspirations, aims and needs of indigenous peoples, but it is a mutually agreed basis from which further elaborations need to take place.<sup>1</sup> Though most governments have committed themselves to recognise the rights formulated in the Declaration and to convert its principles into national laws, there is still an alarming lack of implementation.

Together with ILO Convention 169, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is now the first and foremost beacon document that should orient not only political practice but also research on indigenous heritage (archaeology, history, cultural anthropology, linguistics, etc.). This internationally recognised set of principles emphasises the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination (article 3), as well as the right ‘to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures’ (article 11) in connection with ‘the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information’ (article 15).

In this study we want to examine the multiple intersections between cultural interpretive research and the still outstanding issues of decolonisation. Particularly relevant to archaeological-historical-anthropological studies are the articles 12 (1) and 25 of the Declaration:

Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

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1 We feel privileged to have been participants in some aspects of this process (cf. Pérez Jiménez and Jansen 1979, 2006; Musiro 1989). For the international instruments such as ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, see for example the guide by the International Labour Organisation (2009) as well as the series of publications on this topic by the International Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (IWGIA, Copenhagen). As just one example of a timely analysis of ongoing discrimination, we mention the Ph.D. thesis of Huayhua (2010), while the extraction of resources and other infringements on the indigenous peoples’ right to autonomy and sovereignty as peoples are analysed in the Ph.D. thesis of López Flores (2014).

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Archaeological, historical and anthropological studies can make an important contribution to the decolonisation of mentalities and social conditions by including in their research and communications a focus on the implementation of the rights and principles formulated in the Declaration. The research design can focus on questions like: what are those 'spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies', what and where are those 'religious and cultural sites', who defines and controls those 'ceremonial objects', how is the 'distinctive spiritual relationship with the land' to be understood, and what is the real situation when it comes to 'the repatriation of their human remains'? In other words, what are the meanings, functions and values of this religious heritage and what are the relationships between the past and the present?

In this book we illustrate and discuss these questions by focusing on the interpretation of a set of examples of indigenous religious heritage from ancient Mexico. This is not an easy topic. Our procedure includes exercises in the decipherment of precolonial visual art and pictorial writing, which necessarily imply a lot of technical terminology (also in indigenous languages) and detailed analysis, as well as references to a diverse set of relevant sources and professional publications. We hope this book may also serve as an in-depth training in research on Middle American indigenous history, ritual and cosmovision.

The first case of indigenous religious heritage we focus on is a highlight of Mexican archaeology: Tomb 7 at the archaeological site of Monte Albán near Oaxaca City (capital of the state of the same name, in the southern part of the Mexican republic). In the Oaxaca region the Ñuu Dzauí or Ñuu Savi, 'People of the Rain' (generally known as Mixtecs), the Beni Zaa (Zapotecs) and Ngigua (Chochos) are the most relevant peoples for this study. In central Mexico the Nahuas, in historical sources often referred to as Aztecs or Mexica, speakers of the Nahuatl language, play a similarly important role. Much crucial historical information about ancient Mesoamerica comes from the Aztec empire, which the Spaniards invaded and colonised but also described in detail.<sup>2</sup>

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2 For a survey of the archaeology of the precolonial Mesoamerican civilisation in Mexico and Central America see for example Hendon and Joyce (2004), Evans (2013), while Joyce (2010) deals specifically with the cultural region Oaxaca.

Although the archaeological record is abundant, fascinating and well documented, the meaning of Tomb 7 and its contents is so far little understood. Knowledge about it is generally limited to the observation that (1) it contained an amazing treasure of precious works of art, scattered among a large quantity of loose skeletal remains, and that (2) it was discovered by the Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso in 1932, who gave it its name (number) and published his findings in a standard work, *El Tesoro de Monte Albán* (Caso 1969).

Caso's monumental publication offers detailed descriptions and analyses, which remain the point of departure for every further study. Many aspects of this find, however, are still enigmatic, not only as to the detailed reading of the signs and scenes on the art works, but also as to the interpretation of the whole. Was this really a tomb? By whom was it used and for what purpose? Can the contents be dated? Can something be said about their provenance and relations with other findings? What may be said about the skeletal remains? What is the historical context of this deposit? What do the internal order of the deposits and the works of figurative art tell us about the religious convictions and experiences of the ancient peoples? What ideology is expressed in its visual art, what does it tell us about ancient ideas concerning the relationship between living and dead and about the associated ritual practices? In short: what is the narrative of the Tomb 7 and what is the meaning of that narrative?

The second case is related to the first: a small but fascinating corpus of ancient Mexican books – pictorial manuscripts generally referred to as *codices* – has survived the destructive effects of Spanish colonisation. These codices employ the same pictorial conventions, come from the same large region (central and southern Mexico) and belong to the same period (the five centuries before the Spanish conquest of 1521). They constitute the most explicit primary source for studying the precolonial civilisation. We find many connections between the treasure of Tomb 7 and these books, involving both historical and religious aspects. The analysis of Tomb 7, therefore, will lead us to discuss relevant passages from these pictorial manuscripts. One source illuminates the other, so that a holistic hermeneutic approach will not only contextualise Tomb 7 but also throw light on enigmatic passages of the ancient books.

In order to interpret specific pictorial scenes represented on works of art encountered in Tomb 7 we first try to relate those images to the contents of various Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) codices. Can we identify some of the figures represented on the carved bones of jaguars and eagles as historical personages described by those codices and thereby situate the treasure of Tomb 7 within the genealogical history of the dynasties that ruled the city-states of the region? Do the codices contain references to a contemporaneous ceremonial centre on Monte Albán? Here we draw upon our earlier research concerning

these sources and upon the latest advances in decipherment. In this aspect the present book is a sequel to our earlier volume on Mixtec pictorial manuscripts (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2011).

This approach brings us to investigate also codex scenes that contain relevant information about the ritual dimension of Tomb 7. The most interesting themes are the veneration of sacred bundles and the ceremony of making a new fire. We examine in detail a peculiar manuscript from the neighbouring Coixtlahuaca region: the Roll of the New Fire, also known as the Selden Roll.<sup>3</sup> This interesting scroll has not received the attention it deserves and its significance has passed unnoticed. How can we explain its origin and historical meaning? What is the subject matter and what is the reason for the large central scene, which depicts the kindling of a New Fire? The discussion of such rituals will bring us to make a comparison with Aztec monumental sculptures as well as with a famous calendar manuscript, the Codex Cihuoatl (Borbonicus).<sup>4</sup>

Following our focus on ritual aspects, we work towards a new interpretation of the central chapter of the most spectacular of the Mexican precolonial religious books, the Codex Borgia, which we have renamed in Nahuatl, the Aztec language: *Teomoxtli Yoalli Ehecatl*, the Book of Night and Wind.<sup>5</sup> Scholars debate not only its provenance but also the character of its contents: is it an astronomical compendium or does it refer to ritual practices and visionary experiences? Particularly its central chapter ('the Temple Scenes') is highly esoteric. This pictorial text is particularly rich in religious symbolism and has important themes and meanings in common with the imagery from Tomb 7, but, like the tomb's treasure, is has so far remained very difficult to interpret. What is the meaning of the many different activities depicted and what the identity of the many protagonists? In line with our earlier work, it has been a major challenge for us to achieve a better understanding of these impressive and enigmatic scenes of the most important religious book from ancient Mexico.

The search for meaning in Tomb 7, thus, brings us to consider many related or similar works, each of which deserves its own special treatment and analysis. Our interpretive exercise, therefore, becomes a guiding thread for the study of Mesoamerican art and worldview in general and a practical confrontation with the methodical problems of deciphering ancient Mexican pictography. With these elements we try to interpret the deposition of the treasure in Tomb 7 on different levels: (1) its connection with the agency of specific individuals

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3 See Chapter 5 and the publication – with obsolete commentary – by Burland (1955).

4 See Chapter 6 and the facsimile edition with commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991).

5 See Chapter 7 and the publication by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993).

within a precise historical context, (2) its function as a place of specific rituals and religious experiences, (3) its value as an example of Mexico's indigenous heritage.

The result is a complex and detailed argument, in which we need to integrate information and ideas from different disciplinary approaches:

- \* the iconographical interpretation of precolonial and early colonial visual art, taking into account the representational code as well as the materiality and archaeological context,<sup>6</sup>
- \* the historical analysis of relevant chronicles and archival documents that were written in Spanish or in indigenous languages using the Latin alphabet during early colonial times and that refer back to the precolonial period,
- \* the linguistic and ethnographic study of present-day oral literature, concepts and worldview as well as cultural vocabulary and living traditions in indigenous communities,
- \* the understanding of religious symbolism and ritual,<sup>7</sup>
- \* the development of a decolonising perspective and participatory practice with the aim to contribute to the reintegration of cultural memory.<sup>8</sup>

In this quest we are guided by our own experiences in the Oaxaca area and particularly by the cultural and linguistic knowledge of Ñuu Dzau experts from whom we have had the privilege to learn. Furthermore, this study forms part of a much larger project, entitled *'Time in Intercultural Context: the indigenous calendars of Mexico and Guatemala'*, which we are carrying out at the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University (The Netherlands), with funding from the European Research Council (ERC), which enabled us to form a lively and inspiring intercultural research environment.<sup>9</sup> This project is the continuation of our earlier work on the interpretation of the pictographic manuscripts (codices) and related visual art, involving the study of oral literature and living traditions, particularly in the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) region, and comparisons with data from the Nahuatl speaking world.<sup>10</sup>

6 The basics of the iconographical method have been outlined by Erwin Panofsky (see Kaemmerling 1979).

7 See for example the studies of Estés (1992; 2011), Rappaport (1999) and Morris (2010).

8 Jan Assmann (1999) has coined the concept 'cultural memory' (German: *das kulturelle Gedächtnis*), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) that of 'decolonising methodology'.

9 ERC Advanced Grant n° 295434, part of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013). For scope and contents of this project see the introductory sketch by Jansen (2012b).

10 See our commentaries in the series *Códices Mexicanos* together with Ferdinand Anders (Vienna University) and the late Luis Reyes García (CIESAS, Mexico), published by the

Team members Alessia Frassani (studying shamanic discourse in the Mazatec region), Liana Ivette Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo (documenting the archaeological legacy of ancient Mixtec kingdoms and present-day ritual practices), Raúl Macuil Martínez (analysing colonial annals in Nahuatl and the rituals in present-day Nahuatl speaking communities), Manuel May Castillo (investigating the relationship between Maya architecture, astronomy and landscape), Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez (focusing on the Ayuuk calendar) and Paul van den Akker (focusing on the K'iche' calendar and ritual) have carried out independent field research in different indigenous communities. Their work has a common interest in perceptions and concepts related to community time, which is constructed in the (sacred) landscape along axes of livelihood, rituals and oral tradition. They have documented and analysed contemporary religious traditions, such as cave rituals to ask for rain (3 May) and ongoing rituals at precolonial sanctuaries, as well as narratives and ceremonial discourses in relation to rituals, divination and shamanism.

At the same time Mixtec experts Ofelia Pineda, Rosendo Ruiz, Josefina Jiménez and José López Pérez have helped us with documenting different agricultural and ritual activities in various Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) communities. Filmmaker Itandehui Jansen has enriched the project with reflections on the theoretical issues of representation, indigenous narratives and cultural creativity. PhD candidates Omar Aguilar Sánchez and Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán, as well as lecturers Araceli Rojas Martínez Gracida and Genner Llanes Ortiz, have lent additional support to this project with their archaeological and anthropological expertise. Postdoc researcher Anita Tzec has reinforced the connection of these studies to the struggle of Indigenous Peoples for recognition and implementation of their rights, while postdoc researchers Shu-li Wang and Sada Mire, with their knowledge of Chinese and African heritage respectively, have added a much wider horizon to our project. The PhD research of Jana Pesoutova on sacred landscapes in the Caribbean offered a fascinating comparison.

Several Ph.D. candidates in other Leiden projects have focused on related aspects of ancient Mesoamerican culture: Martin Berger studied the Mixtec ball-game as cultural heritage, Ilona Heijnen studied the colonial Nahuatl translation of a Spanish *Reportorio de los tiempos*, and Caroll Dávila studied time perception and symbolism in contemporary Zapotec communities. Our good friend and colleague Peter Mason has helped us with his insights in the history of mentalities and with valuable suggestions to improve the text.

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Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico (1991–1998), as well as our recent monographs on Ñuu Dzau pictorial manuscripts and colonial texts in Dzaha Dzau, the Mixtec language (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2005, 2007ab, 2009ab, 2011), which were the outcome of several projects financed by the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research (NWO).

In a more general sense we are very grateful for the continuing support of our teacher and friend Ferdinand Anders (University of Vienna), who has guided our studies from the very beginning with his encyclopaedic knowledge and enormous experience. Similarly, we owe much to our inspiring friend Antonella Cammarota, who, with her group of young researchers at the University of Messina (Italy), has oriented our path, especially concerning the social dimension of time, during several meetings on the question of time.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, we thank Nelly Robles García (National Institute of Anthropology and History, Mexico) for the opportunity to participate in the group of researchers she brought together with the aim of re-evaluating and reinterpreting Tomb 7 at Monte Albán and for the access she granted us to relevant information, including new photographs of the carved jaguar and eagle bones. All this in the framework of the cooperation agreement between Leiden University and the Mexican Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (I.N.A.H.). The comments of and discussions with the colleagues in this group have been very informative and stimulating.<sup>12</sup> Particularly the cooperation of Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán has been of great value in this respect: he accompanied us during crucial fieldwork activities, for example in Monte Albán as well as around Xochimilco and the Huizachtepetl in Mexico City. Similarly, Leonardo López Luján generously showed us his work on the Templo Mayor and shared with us his insights in Aztec art and culture.

Another line of our argument stems from the study of several works in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Ludo Snijders, first as PhD candidate, later as post-doc researcher, has produced unexpected insights into the materiality of the Mexican codices by applying new non-invasive techniques, concretely to reveal the remains of a palimpsest, we now call Codex Yoho Yuchi, which have been covered under the Codex Añute (Selden). We especially thank Bruce Barker-Benfield, Virginia Lladó-Buisán, and David Howell at the Bodleian Library for their guidance, help and friendship over the years. They stimulated us to make a special study of the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll), here included as Chapter 5.

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11 In cooperation with the research group at the University of Messina, Italy, a first volume of contributions and reflections was produced under the title *Tiempo y Comunidad: herencias e interacciones socio-culturales en Mesoamérica y Occidente* (Jansen and Raffa 2015). It addresses the present-day conflict between economic exploitation (framed as 'modern development') and spiritual values (framed as 'tradition'). Our own contribution to that volume ('Tiempo, Religión e Interculturalidad en la Colonia: Los catecismos pictográficos de México') focuses on the change in time concepts produced by the 'spiritual conquest' of the sixteenth century.

12 Cf. Jansen 2012a, 2015a.

During intensive seminars at Leiden University and elsewhere it was possible to connect the diverse fieldwork data to the study of historical sources and to apply the results to the interpretation of the ancient pictorial manuscripts, while advancing with the theoretical analysis concerning topics such as the perception of time, the representation of indigenous culture, colonialism, memory, identity and interculturality. The contributions of the team-members that belong to Mesoamerican peoples were fundamental. In addition, the series of colloquiums on Heritage and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (co-financed by the Leiden University profile group 'Global Interactions') with prominent participation of indigenous experts from different parts of the world shaped our collective awareness concerning the heritage aspects of this research.

This coordinated and cooperative effort in the context of the broad yet focused ERC-funded project (2012–2017) has indeed brought us new understandings of the precolonial pictographic manuscripts, art and texts in accordance with the values, concepts and practices of indigenous religion.

In order to present the main results of our own research, we have organised this book in the following manner.

The *Introduction* situates this research within the context of general concerns about indigenous heritage and also provides some essential information about Mesoamerican temporality.

*Part 1* (Offering to the Sacred bundles) focuses on the historical context and religious meaning of the treasure of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán.

In *Chapter 1* we begin our analysis of this archaeological find with a review of the magnificent work by Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso and subsequent interpretations. Important questions are the dating of the tomb itself and of its contents, as well as the placing of the style of the artefacts in a specific cultural period. We also examine other relevant archaeological data such as the findings of Tombs 1 and 2 of Zaachila and their relationship with the Ñuu Dzauí pictorial manuscripts (codices), the main historical source for Post-classic society in the region. Do these codices permit a reconstruction of the historical context? We also discuss the character of Tomb 7: do the contents belong to a burial, or did the whole assemblage have a different function? What are the main religious powers referred to in the visual art?

In *Chapter 2* we discuss in more detail the different ways that human remains were dealt with in precolonial Mesoamerica and the religious implications of what we find in Tomb 7. What can the imagery and the arrangement of the deposited artefacts teach us regarding ancient ideas about death and the dead? Do these elements indicate specific ritual practices? We start examining in more depth some of the major pieces in the treasure, particularly the impressive golden ornament ('pectoral no. 26'). What is the implication of the

presence of two different year counts in the Mesoamerican calendar date that is inscribed on this figure?

In *Chapter 3* we present a reading of the pictorial texts carved on the jaguar and eagle bones that form part of the treasure in Tomb 7. What are the themes treated in these texts? Do they refer to a specific dynastic memory? Can we establish direct links with topics treated in the pictorial manuscripts of the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) people, particularly with religious narratives or historical events, but also with the literary conventions of Mesoamerican ceremonial discourse? Do the most recent interpretations of those manuscripts give us new indications about the historical and ideological background of Tomb 7 and its relations with the tombs of Zaachila?

In *Chapter 4* we search the Ñuu Dzauí codices for parallel situations: in which cases were such large quantities of jewels deposited, and what does that mean? Following our reading of the carved jaguar and eagle bones, we try to identify the rituals alluded to. Similarly, we look for indications that might help us to determine the type of ceremonial centre in which the actions depicted took place: a Temple of Jewels. Again, this brings us to discuss relevant scenes in the Ñuu Dzauí codices. Is it possible to identify the site of Monte Albán itself in the pictorial record? What can be said about the associated historical individuals, divine beings and ritual acts? Combining these different detailed discussions, we propose an overall interpretation of the why and how of the ritual deposit of the Tomb 7 treasure.

*Part 2* (Preparing the New Fire) examines the ritual practices and symbolic ideas associated with the Temple of Jewels in the codices. We concentrate on different scenes involving the instrument for kindling the New Fire and work towards a new interpretation of the 'Temple Scenes' chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).

In *Chapter 5* we present a commentary on a document in which the New Fire ceremony plays the central role, namely the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll). This brings us to discuss Toltec expansion into the Oaxaca area, particularly the role of the semi-legendary and still enigmatic great and emblematic personality of Mesoamerican history: the Toltec ruler Nacxítl Topiltzín Quetzalcoatl and his interaction with the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) ruler Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw'.

In *Chapter 6* we move towards the much more abundant texts from the Nahuatl-speaking world and the monuments of the ceremonial centre of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. What is the religious meaning of the New Fire ritual according to these sources, and what is its historical and dynastic importance? Does this connection throw light on still other functions of Tomb 7? In this

chapter we particularly examine the representation of the New Fire ceremony in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) and locate it in its original sacred landscape.

In *Chapter 7* we study the similarities of the religious symbolism referred to in Tomb 7 to the enigmatic central part of the most spectacular of the Mexican precolonial religious books, the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia): the chapter of the Temple Scenes. Following a contextualising approach, we try to develop a new interpretive reading of those scenes.

In the *synthesis* we review the main themes and conclusions of this interpretive exercise, and connect them to the larger contextual and intrinsic issues in order to contribute to the development of a decolonising perspective in the study of Mexican archaeology, history and anthropology.

Any attempt to translate one culture into the language of another runs up against the problem of degrees of relative incommensurability. For instance, a term such as 'shaman' comes from a specific North Asian background and has a specific history of usage in anthropological and religious studies. In applying such a term in an indigenous American context, how can we be sure that it adequately covers the phenomenon in question? Alternatively, if we apply the term 'wizard', as some anthropologists have done, this introduces a note of familiarity to a European reader that may, however, be partly or entirely spurious. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to value-ridden terms like modern, rational and so on. Clearly their definition (and therefore the legitimation of their application) depends on what the person using them wants them to mean. The present attempt to explain a set of indigenous American concepts, symbols and practices to readers of English is clearly subject to the same restraints. Rather than distance ourselves from each and every one of such terms by using inverted commas ('shaman', 'modern', 'Western', 'god' etc.), in the interests of readability we have reduced that insulating device to a minimum.

Drawings and photographs are included with the sole purpose of providing the necessary visual support of the argument. The reader is advised to consult the facsimile editions of the codices and the high quality photographic reproductions of the original art-works mentioned in the text, notes and references. We thank the colleagues who shared images with us, as well as the Bodleian Library for the permission to reproduce the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia for the permission to reproduce photos and drawings of the carved bones from Tomb 7.

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## Temporality and Coevalness

The title of our book pays homage to a classic anthropological monograph: *Time and the Other* by Johannes Fabian (1983). That critical work – unfortunately little used in studies of the ancient or indigenous Americas – examined the way in which the dominant party in an intercultural encounter tends to situate (to construct and to interpret) ‘the Other’, i.e. colonised or otherwise marginalised peoples, in the past. Fabian shows how the study of the Other – in anthropology and related disciplines – has operated since its colonial origins within this conceptual framework and tends to reinforce a mental distance between the intellectual outsider, belonging to dominant society (Self) and the ‘primitive’ or ‘traditional’ poor (i.e. dominated and exploited) peoples-as-objects. Fabian calls this distance, in study but also in social praxis and in policy, a *denial of coevalness*.

This framework of historically produced inequality and alienation has an impact on the research itself and may concretely provoke all kinds of intercultural misunderstandings. The intercultural dimension is crucial to take into account, particularly in the case of Mesoamerica, where the archaeological and iconographical studies of indigenous ideas about time are mainly informed by Spanish colonial sources and outsider ethnographies.

These thoughts will guide us in our study of the relationships between the icons and relics of ancestors (who in part may be seen as Others, in part as intimately related to Self) and the symbolism of time in the Aztec and Mixtec world. Ritual is a key articulation in this matter. Our primary source of information is the ancient visual art that, because of this religiously charged meaning, referred to rituals, was produced in a ritual context and/or had itself a ritual function. Ritual art is intimately connected to cultural memory, ontology and social ethos.

We recall the insightful formulation of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1957):

A people’s ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects....

But meanings can only be ‘stored’ in symbols: a cross, a crescent, or feathered serpent. Such religious symbols, dramatized in rituals or related in myths, are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the

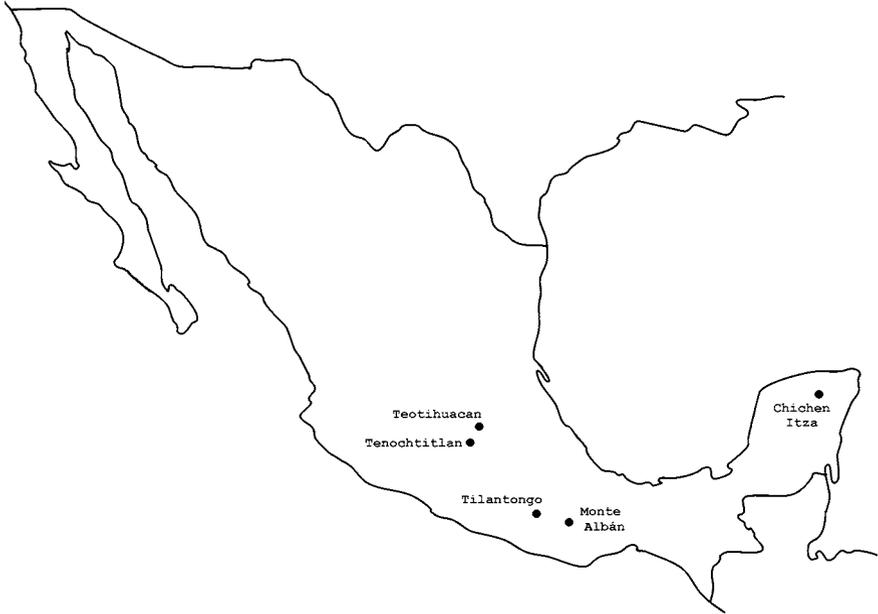


ILLUSTRATION 0.01 *The extension of Mesoamerica*

emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it. Sacred symbols thus relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality: their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give to what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import.

## 1 Mesoamerica: Historical Development

Our interpretive journey will start here with a brief introduction to the basics of Mesoamerican temporality: on the one hand the chronological scheme used by archaeologists and historians; on the other the Mesoamerican calendar and related symbolic thought. Time was of the utmost importance in Mesoamerican civilisation, both as a way of knowing the passage of seasons or years and of registering events, but also as a cognitive and symbolic system to order (and make sense of) history, the cosmos and life itself.

The complex chronological sequence of Mesoamerican civilisation is generally structured in three long precolonial periods, followed by a colonial and a republican period.

- I. The *Preclassic or Formative period* ( $\pm 1200$  BC to  $\pm 200$  AD) is the time in which established agricultural communities started to develop permanent architecture (ceremonial centres with pyramids and palace structures), with monuments and other art works as well as the first forms of graphic communication. The first horizon style is the so-called Olmec ‘mother culture’, the type of site that flourished in the coastal area of the Gulf of Mexico (San Lorenzo, La Venta), as well as in the central Mexican highlands (Chalcatzingo) and in other areas. Many later cultures had their roots and beginning in this period.
- II. The *Classic period* ( $\pm 200$  to  $\pm 900$  AD) continues this development into full and florescent urbanism with complex art, architecture and writing systems. This is the time of the large capitals such as Teotihuacan in central Mexico, Monte Albán in the Oaxaca region, as well as the Maya sites in the eastern part of Mexico (e.g. Palenque) and neighbouring Central America (Tikal, Copan, etc.).
- III. The *Postclassic period* ( $\pm 900$  to 1521 AD) is separated from the preceding period by a sharp break: the Classic collapse, during which many cities were abandoned. After this, the region recovered: a cultural revival with new impulses followed, often in new settlements. First there is the influence of the Toltec culture, which expanded from central Mexico (Tula, Cholula) to the Maya society of the Yucatán peninsula (Chichen Itza). As consequence of this expansion an ‘international style’ developed. In southern Mexico (western Oaxaca) the Ñuu Dzauui (Mixtec) city-state culture achieved its most emblematic form and art style in this time.<sup>1</sup> Here the town of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) was politically the most important.  

It was in the final century of this period that the Mexica or Aztec empire emerged in Central Mexico and expanded from their capital Mexico-Tenochtitlan throughout the whole region. With that expansion Nahuatl, the language spoken by the Aztecs, became widely spread as a lingua franca throughout the region, and is still the main language of reference in many studies of Mesoamerica.
- IV. The *colonial or viceroyal period* (1521 to 1810) followed when the Spanish conquistadors under Hernán Cortés invaded and usurped the Aztec tributary realm in 1521 AD and so brutally interrupted the autonomous development of Mesoamerican civilisation. The region became part of the Spanish colonial empire as ‘New Spain’. An intense cultural exchange and interaction took place. The main thrust of colonialism was the extraction

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1 For Ñuu Dzauui (Mixtec) city-state organisation and culture, see the studies by Spores (1967, 2007), Lind (2000) and Joyce (2010).

of natural resources and the use of native labour. Spanish was imposed as the dominant language of the administration and of intellectual life. The indigenous communities incorporated Spanish customs and worldview (Catholicism) as well as European technologies and styles. Spanish chronicles and missionary texts became the main source of information for reconstructing the precolonial society, its history and religion.

- v. The *republican period* (1810 to the present) started when the struggle for national independence resulted in the present-day republics of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nationalism and capitalist industrial development became the dominant paradigm for science and society in this republican period. Internal colonialism replaced the former Spanish colonisation. The imposition of the Spanish language and Western worldview became even more intense. Indigenous peoples still suffer discrimination, marginalisation, exploitation and (often violent) oppression, but they also maintain an impressive cultural continuity and a specific profound identity, which is undeniably also an emblematic part of regional and national identity.<sup>2</sup>

This chronological sequence, used in archaeology, history and anthropology, is clearly inspired by Western evolutionist thought: a progression from 'primitive' hunter-gatherer society towards urban civilisation, then interrupted by colonial conquest, but recovering with national independence and evolving towards a modern state, that is, moving forward to the industrial and capitalist economy. Mesoamerica's own concepts were and are of course quite different. The Postclassic inhabitants of Central Mexico, where the ruins of earlier cultural phases (such as that of Teotihuacan during the Classic period) are abundantly present, had a clear historical consciousness, certainly intensified by the access to books and participation in commemorative rituals. They were aware of the fact that before them there had been a succession of cultural realms, worlds or eras, which they called 'Suns', as each of them had started with a particular first sunrise.

The Aztecs identified the previous Sun or phase of civilisation with an ancient capital (and associated realm) called Tollan or Tula, the Place of Reeds. Through the ages a number of important cities were designated this way. In fact, the Aztec capital, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, was itself called Ñuu Cohyo, 'Place of Reeds' in Dzaha Dzau (Mixtec), and so is Mexico City today. Archaeologically

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bonfil Batalla (1996) on the concept of 'profound Mexico'. Keen (1971), Gruzinski (1988) and Restall (2003) have discussed the colonial origin and development of the image of Mesoamerica. See also the theoretical perspective of Mignolo (2012).

speaking, the city of Tula (or more precisely Tollan Xicocotitlan) in the Mexican state of Hidalgo was the immediate cultural and political predecessor of the Aztec world, while Tula-Cholula (Tollan – Cholollan) at the foot of the snow-topped volcanoes, at the crossroads between Central Mexico and the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) region, also played a crucial role. Both archaeological sites flourished during the beginning of the Postclassic period, but the memory of Tollan may actually go back further than the beginning of the Postclassic period and contain reminiscences of the Classic culture of the city of Teotihuacan in central Mexico (flourishing between  $\pm 200$  and  $\pm 750$  AD), which was also known as Tollan, Place of Cattail Reeds.<sup>3</sup> Thus the term Tollan refers to much more than a historical city or empire – it is an emblematic place and sphere of civilisation. Authors of the colonial period compared the importance of its cultural legacy and memory to the role of ancient Rome for Europe.<sup>4</sup>

The people associated with the realm of Tollan were called Toltecs (from *Toltecatl*, ‘person from Tollan’): they were speakers of the Nahuatl language. Tollan and Toltec culture were a great example to the Aztecs, particularly in terms of the construction of an empire and of artistic creations. The Aztecs themselves referred to their civilisation as *Toltecatoytl*, a term we might translate as ‘the Toltec tradition’. *Toltecatl* was their general designation for a great artist or craftsman, and *Toltecatoytl* stood for artistic skill and civilisation.<sup>5</sup> In fact we may consider the term *Toltecatoytl* as the indigenous concept for which modern researchers invented the word ‘Mesoamerica’.

For the general image of precolonial Mesoamerica, we heavily depend on the descriptive works of Spanish missionaries. The early colonial chronicles and treatises of the Franciscan friars Toribio de Benavente Motolinia and Bernardino de Sahagún, the Dominican friar Diego Durán and the cleric Hernán Ruiz de Alarcón for the Nahuatl-speaking (‘Aztec’) world, the Dominican friar Francisco de Burgoa for the Mixtecs and Zapotecs, and the Franciscan bishop Diego de Landa for the Mayas, are very informative and influential. The Spanish authors – conquistadors, monks and officials – were all completely convinced of the superiority of their own culture and of the truth of Christian belief. They were strongly motivated to show to themselves and to others that colonisation was justified and in accordance with ‘the will of

3 From Maya inscriptions we know that this ancient metropolis was called Place of Reeds, i.e. Tollan (Stuart in: Carrasco, Jones and Sessions 2000). Several references in early colonial sources that mention Tollan may actually refer to (echoes of) Teotihuacan.

4 Cf. Serna 1953: Ch. 12, 2: ‘*Teutihuacan, que era la Roma, y lugar de los Dioses*’.

5 Cf. León-Portilla (1980). Sahagún (Book x: Ch. 29) translates Toltecs as ‘*oficiales pulidos y curiosos como aora los de flandes*’: they were learned, skilled and wise, righteous and devout, makers of marvellous art, and inventors of medicine, they understood the movements of the stars.

God'. Their description of the indigenous culture is a blend of admiration for certain material and exterior aspects (in the social, technological and artistic areas) with a harsh condemnation of its interior aspect (religion). In this latter area, the Spanish authors were often not capable of understanding what the indigenous intellectual world actually entailed and came up with very confused reports.

Our main aim here is to explore a perspective on Mesoamerican art in accordance with Mesoamerican concepts. This implies foregrounding the Mesoamerican literary heritage that stems from precolonial times: indigenous texts, which, be they precolonial, colonial or contemporary, be they in indigenous languages or in translations, give us access to the concepts, worldview, symbolism, mentality and ethos of Mesoamerican civilisation.

## 2 Ancient Scriptures

Precolonial Mesoamerican civilisation developed various writing systems and related communicative art. As to their nature, we may distinguish two main traditions:

- (a) *Hieroglyphic writing*, which is essentially phonetic in character, using signs to denote syllables and words, particularly well developed in the Maya region (Coe 2012). Such a system seems to have influenced the Classic inscriptions of Monte Albán (Urcid Serrano 2001, 2005).
- (b) *Pictography*, which expresses and transmits information directly through a sophisticated system of figurative images, particularly well developed in the Aztec and Mixtec world (cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011).

Both systems have their roots in the Preclassic period: pictographic conventions and hieroglyph-like signs are already present in Olmec sculptures. In the Classic period clearly separate traditions developed, with hieroglyphic writing prevailing in the Maya cities and pictography being characteristic of Teotihuacan in central Mexico. The latter led to the sophisticated representational system that flourished in the Postclassic period in central and southern Mexico. The images form pictographic texts, which codify complex information about the religion and history of the ancient communities in a direct iconic manner.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Such a register of meaning directly through images is also called *semasiography*. For a recent discussion of the different forms of writing in ancient American cultures see the

Both writing traditions produced screenfold books (generally referred to as codices), made of strips of deerskin or bark paper (*amate*), glued together and folded, covered with a delicate gypsum layer on which hieroglyphic signs or polychrome pictographic scenes have been painted.<sup>7</sup> The Aztec term for the screenfold books was the hendiadys ‘the black, the red’, in *tilli in tlapalli*, an expression that was translated by friar Bernardino de Sahagún into Spanish as *sabiduría*, ‘wisdom’. Nahua intellectuals after the Spanish conquest yearned: *Macamo poliuz in intil in in tlapal in ueuetque: quitoznequi: in tlamatiliztli*, which Sahagún translated as: ‘May the red, the black, not be lost, i.e. the writings of the ancients, their wisdom’.<sup>8</sup>



ILLUSTRATION 0.02 *A Mesoamerican manuscript: Codex Tlamanalli (Cospí) in the library of the university of Bologna (4093)*

volume edited by Boone and Urton (2011) and the corresponding review article by Jansen (2015b).

- 7 For editions and commentaries of the pictorial manuscripts, see the series *Códices Mexicanos* (13 volumes), brought out by Ferdinand Anders, Maarten Jansen and Luis Reyes García with the Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico (1991–1997). For an overview see also Boone (2000, 2007). The Maya also produced such books, but combined the figurative images with texts in hieroglyphic (syllabic) signs, which are to be read phonetically in the corresponding Maya language.
- 8 ‘*Que no se pierda lo negro y lo rojo (las escrituras) de los ancianos, quiere decir: su sabiduría*’. (Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 43).

According to the tradition registered by the seventeenth-century indigenous chronicler Ixtlilxochitl, it was Huemac (also written as Hueman o Huematzin), ruler of the ancient realm of Tollan (Tula Hidalgo) in the first part of the Postclassic era, who brought together the cultural knowledge and memory of his time in a book (or rather set of books), which was called *teo-amoxtli*, i.e. 'divine book' or 'book of the divine'.

I want to speak of Huematzin the astrologer ... who, before he died, brought together all the histories of the Toltecs from the creation of the world up to that time, and he ordered them to be painted in a very large book, in which were painted all their persecutions and hardships, prosperity and successes, kings and lords, laws and good governance of their ancestors, ancient sayings and good examples, temples, idols, sacrifices, rites and ceremonies that they celebrated, as well as astrology, philosophy, architecture and other arts, both the good and the bad, and a summary of all their scientific knowledge, wisdom, prosperous and adverse battles, and many other things. And he gave that book the title *Teoamoxtli*, which, well interpreted, means 'Various Things of God' and 'Divine Book'. The natives nowadays call the Sacred Scriptures *Teoamoxtli* because it has almost the same character, especially as to the persecutions and hardships of men...'

IXTLILXOCHITL 1975/77, I: 270

The term 'astrologer' that the colonial sources use to qualify this ruler must be interpreted as: philosopher about the symbolic meaning and natural order of things. The importance of his work should not be underestimated: it most likely was a conscious effort to rescue, copy and preserve the intellectual and religious treasures of the preceding era (i.e. the Classic period). The reference also shows that the codices were indeed understood as emblematic of the literary tradition of the Mesoamerican civilisation, the *Toltecatl*.<sup>9</sup>

Many of these books were destroyed due to the violence and intolerance of the Spanish conquest; others were discarded and lost over time because of the persecution, destruction, disinterest and neglect that were characteristic of the colonial period. Less than twenty pictographic codices have survived from the precolonial era. The total that once existed must have numbered thousands, if not tens of thousands. The small corpus of preserved precolonial books is, however, impressive for its symbolic complexity and aesthetic quality.

9 The historical character and dating of the rule of Huemac is a topic of debate: see Davies (1977).

Almost all the key manuscripts are now kept in European museums and libraries, valued as unique treasures and testimonies of the intellectual and artistic achievements of that fascinating ancient American civilisation. Indeed, this small corpus is a first-hand and authentic source of information about the ancient Mesoamerican world, which is thus all the more valuable as an expression of indigenous voices, memories, cosmologies and points of view.

The precolonial corpus is enriched by scores of early colonial works in the same style and format, as well as in another form (probably also precolonial in origin), namely that of figurative paintings on large pieces of cloth (*lienzos*) or paper (maps and rolls).<sup>10</sup>

As most of the Mesoamerican codices, *lienzos*, maps and rolls left their area of origin, pertinent data about their meaning and function, as well as about their link with specific indigenous communities and owners, were lost. They became mute curiosity-objects for collectors in faraway lands. In the process they also lost their original names or titles. In many cases investigators have named the codices after the Western academic institutions (libraries, museums), even after the towns in which they ended up, after the Western collectors who had them in their possession or the Western scholars that published and studied them. The negative effect of this practice is that the codices became literally alienated from the Mesoamerican world, no longer recognisable as indigenous heritage or as sources of indigenous history and religion. Using criteria such as provenance, contents or emblematic elements, we have proposed to rename them with Mesoamerican terms (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2004; 2011), which are also used in this book. As these new names are not yet generally recognised we include the traditional Western name in parentheses.

The specialised study of these manuscripts, which has developed since from the nineteenth century onwards, has produced valuable editions and commentaries. The first key for reading the ancient pictorial texts is provided by pictorial manuscripts that were painted after the conquest and contain explanatory notes in Spanish or in alphabetically written indigenous languages. In particular *Codex Mendoza* is a true 'Rosetta stone', as it clarifies the meaning of many signs, which appear as part of place-names, through captions in Nahuatl.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of such glosses the representational code of Mexican pictography could be deciphered.

10 For the form, composition and contents of such *lienzos* see for example Asselbergs (2004) and Ruiz Ortiz and Jansen (2009). We give examples in Chapter 5 of the present book.

11 For a basic pictographic dictionary, see the analysis of Nowotny (1959), based on *Codex Mendoza* (Clark 1938). *Codex Mendoza* was created on the basis of a precolonial original, known as the 'Matrícula de Moctezuma' (see the edition and study by Reyes García

In addition, the reports of Spanish conquistadors and missionaries provide crucial information on many topics, as we mentioned earlier, but they have to be evaluated critically in their original cultural-historical and colonial-ideological context. Particularly interesting are the religious, historical and literary documents written after the *conquista* by indigenous authors in Spanish or in the Mesoamerican languages (using the Spanish alphabet). The *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, the *Leyenda de los Soles*, and the works of native historians such as Tezozomoc, Chimalpahin or Ixtlilxochitl, are relevant examples from the Nahuatl speaking world.

A key text for the study of Mesoamerican symbolism is the *Popol Vuh*, a sacred text of the K'iche' Maya of Guatemala, largely conceived in the precolonial period but written down in the colonial period.<sup>12</sup> This impressive work in the K'iche' language starts with the creation of the world in a time of darkness (mystery). The gods try out different successive creations that must lead to that of human beings. The life cycle, however, depends on the victory of the twin heroes Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué (Sun and Moon) over the powers of the realm of death (Xibalbá). The narrative demonstrates how in Mesoamerican thought there is an intimate connection between light (sunrise), the growth of corn, and the human community.

### 3 The Main Cycles of the Calendar

The calendar is an ancient hallmark of Mesoamerican civilisation and an important component of the precolonial writing systems. It was intimately connected with priesthood, healing and divination. Inscriptions show that this calendar was already in use more than two thousand years ago. It was an intellectual achievement of the Preclassic era, present in the foundational phase of Monte Albán and possibly dating back to the Olmec horizon. Different versions were characteristic of the Classic cultures (Teotihuacan, Monte Albán, the Classic Maya sites, etc.). The system used in Postclassic central and southern Mexico differed in several formal aspects from that of the Classic era (and also from the Postclassic Maya system), but the fundamental mathematical

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1997, which also discusses the composition of the hieroglyphs). Similarly, the *Matrícula de Huexotzingo* (Prem 1974) contains lists of signs for personal names with glosses in Nahuatl.

12 See the facsimile edition (1973) as well as the translations by Tedlock (1985) and Christensen (2003/4). Compare the volume on Maya literature edited by Hull and Carrasco (2012) and its review by Jansen (2015b).

structure was the same. We are relatively well informed about certain (but not all) aspects of the calendar because of the early colonial descriptions and its continuous use among several indigenous peoples (such as the K'iche' and Ayuuk).<sup>13</sup>

The basic characteristic of the Mesoamerican calendar is the combination of a series of numbers from 1 to 13 with a fixed sequence of twenty day-signs. In the Nahua and Ñuu Dzaui calendar the twenty days are the following (their position within the sequence is generally indicated with Roman numerals):

- I. Alligator (Nahuatl: *cipactli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *quevui*)
- II. Wind (Nahuatl: *ehecatli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *chi*)
- III. House (Nahuatl: *calli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *cuau* or *maa*)
- IV. Lizard (Nahuatl: *cuetzpallin* / Dzaha Dzaui: *que*)
- V. Serpent (Nahuatl: *coatl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *yo*)
- VI. Death (Nahuatl: *miquiztli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *maha* or *mahu*)
- VII. Deer (Nahuatl: *mazatl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *cuaa*)
- VIII. Rabbit (Nahuatl: *tochtli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *sayu*)
- IX. Water (Nahuatl: *atl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *tuta*)
- X. Dog (Nahuatl: *itzcuintli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *hua*)
- XI. Monkey (Nahuatl: *ozomatli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *ñuu*)
- XII. Grass (Nahuatl: *malinalli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *cuañe*)
- XIII. Reed (Nahuatl: *acatl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *huiyo*)
- XIV. Jaguar (Nahuatl: *ocelotl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *huidzo*)
- XV. Eagle (Nahuatl: *cuauhtli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *sa*)
- XVI. Vulture (Nahuatl: *cozcacuauhtli* / Dzaha Dzaui: *cuii*)
- XVII. Movement (Nahuatl: *ollin* / Dzaha Dzaui: *qhi*)
- XVIII. Flint (Nahuatl: *tecpatl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *cusi*)
- XIX. Rain (Nahuatl: *quiahuatl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *co*)
- XX. Flower (Nahuatl: *xochitl* / Dzaha Dzaui: *huaco*)

These signs are combined with numbers from 1 to 13 in the following manner: 1 Alligator, 2 Wind, 3 House, 4 Lizard, 5 Serpent, etc. After 13 Reed, the next day is 1 Jaguar, beginning of the second 13-day period (Spanish: *trecena*). This creates a special rhythm determined by cycles of twenty (the day signs) and

13 See the programmatic article by Jansen (2012b). Fundamental studies of the Mesoamerican calendar are, for example, those by Kubler and Gibson (1951), Caso (1967), Tena (1987/2008) and Pharo (2014). On the contemporary uses of the calendar see the studies by Tedlock (1982) and Rojas Martínez Gracida (2012), as well as the dissertations prepared by Reyes Gómez and Van den Akker, members of our research team.



ILLUSTRATION 0.03 *The twenty day-signs*

thirteen (the numbers). After the cycle of twenty day signs is completed for the first time, the day sign Alligator returns but now combined with the number 8. Indeed, each time the day sign is repeated in this sequence its number goes up with 7. As  $2 \times 7 = 14$ , this means that after 40 days the number will be one digit higher: 2 Alligator is 40 days after 1 Alligator. This made it relatively easy to calculate when a specific day in the future would fall. The total of sign-number combinations, i.e. of different day names, is 260 ( $=13 \times 20$ ); the last combination being 13 Flower. This set of 260 days is the primary 'day count', known as *tonalpoalli* in Nahuatl.

The day on which an individual was born accompanied him or her during life as a calendar name, particularly in the Postclassic Ñuu Dzauí codices, and in the pictography of the Oaxaca region in general. The calendar name could be complemented with a more poetic given name, resulting in patterns such as Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' or Lady 10 Flower 'Rain Spiderweb'.

The day of birth also establishes the connection of the newborn human being with his or her *nahuatl*, or *alter ego*. The concept of the *nahuatl* (from Nahuatl: *nahualli*) is crucial in Mesoamerican religion and represents the embodiment of humans' bond with nature. Essentially it is the experience

of becoming an animal or other being during states of dreaming or trance (particularly associated with darkness and night).<sup>14</sup> This category of animals includes certain natural phenomena such as whirlwinds, clouds, lightning, etc. From the moment of birth, a child is spiritually (and to some extent also physically) connected to one or more such animal companions, with which he or she will share character and destiny.

The *nahual* experience is mostly not understood as a physical transformation or shape-shifting, but as a liminal state of trance or altered, expanded consciousness, in which humans transcend their human bodies and can 'walk with the gods'. This bond creates a parallel existence: human beings lead a civil life (under sunlight) as well as a life in nature in the form of animals and/or natural phenomena (*nahuales*), a life of reason and one of vision. This is still the key to the Mesoamerican living religious experience today.

Typically, the Spanish missionaries condemned nahualism, i.e. the idea of transformation into an animal or natural phenomenon, as synonymous with witchcraft (*brujería*) and the trance as indicative of a pact with the devil. In fact, Sahagún used the word *nahuallotl* ('cosa de nigromancia') for the precolonial calendar (introduction to Book IV). In Mesoamerican terms, however, the calendar was the very device to create social and symbolic order: it was indeed *nahuallotl*, i.e. an element of *nahual* power, sacred and mysterious.

The basic cycle of 260 days is obviously not related to the solar-agricultural year and its seasons, but had another origin. According to traditional calendar knowledge, the symbolic meaning of this unit is related to the time that elapses in human pregnancy, which explains its use for divination and related rituals.<sup>15</sup> The calendar is very much about human experience and about the relationships between humans and the divine forces of the universe. On this first level, the combination of thirteen numbers with the twenty day-signs creates a sequence of twenty periods of thirteen days each (Spanish: *trecenas*). Each number, each day sign, each day, each night and each 13-day period would also have its specific patron deity, who would receive worship and offerings. All this would have been generally shared knowledge in the community.

Observations of the places of sunrise and sunset through the year from a fixed point (such as a temple) and in relation to landscape features (e.g. mountaintops) will, of course, bring an understanding of the solstices and other phenomena of horizontal astronomy which mark the seasonal year of

14 The treatise of Ruiz de Alarcón is a primary source for this set of ideas and experiences. López Austin includes an analysis of nahualism in his classic monograph *Cuerpo Humano e Ideología* (1980: Ch. 11).

15 Schultze Jena (1933–38, vol. 1) reproduces texts of the K'iché day keepers.

365 days.<sup>16</sup> In subterranean chambers of caves with natural or artificial vertical shafts it is possible to observe the passage of the sun through the zenith at midday, which produces a remarkable column of light that enabled the ancient astronomers to anchor the astronomical year (Aveni and Hartung 1981). Throughout Mesoamerica that event takes place in the first half of May, which announces the beginning of the rainy season and the preparation for planting. Nowadays this important ritual moment is preserved as a specific liturgical day in the Christian calendar, often the Day of the Holy Cross (3 May), when the community goes in procession to a specific cave, known as the ‘House of Rain’, in order to say prayers and bring offerings to ask the rain to come.

On the basis of such horizontal astronomical observations, Mesoamerican *tlamatinime*, ‘wise and knowledgeable persons’, constructed a second level within the calendar, delimiting solar years consisting of 365 days (*xiuhtli* or *xihuitl* in Nahuatl) within the continuous sequence of 260-day cycles. This unit of 365 days was used for dating historical events. In central and southern Mexico each solar year was named after a specific day, the year bearer, which occupied a fixed position (often the first day) in the total of 365 days. The year bearer was indicated by a special sign: in Aztec pictography the day was situated in a blue square (because of the homonymy between *xiuhtli* / *xihuitl*, ‘year’ and *xiuhtli* / *xihuitl*, ‘turquoise’), while in Ñuu Dzauí codices it was combined with a special sign (called ‘A-O sign’ by codex researchers), which had developed from a diadem but in its form transmitted the symbolism of a bound ray of sunlight.

A simple mathematical exercise reveals that the solar year of 365 days contains eighteen units of 20 days, plus 5 extra days ( $365 = 18 \times 20$  with a remainder of 5). Therefore, the year bearer – that fixed position marking the 365-day period (solar year) – will move forward five positions each year in the list of the twenty day signs. After four years the same sign will return as year bearer ( $4 \times 5 = 20$  days), and so the cycle of day signs is completed. Consequently, the year bearer can only fall on four of the twenty day-signs, each of which is five positions after the other. For the Nahua and Ñuu Dzauí peoples these were the signs Reed (XIII), Flint (XVIII), House (III) and Rabbit (VIII). These four

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16 A number of archaeo-astronomical studies have focused on the orientation of precolonial Mesoamerican buildings towards astral phenomena. A fascinating classic study is that of Tichy and Broda (1991). See furthermore the survey article by Šprajc (2010). Manuel May Castillo, a member of our ERC team, has reviewed part of the evidence and concludes in his Ph.D. thesis (2014) that one should not exaggerate the astronomical aspect of architecture in itself but rather situate this within the overall context of a sacred landscape. See also the hermeneutic analysis of sacred architecture by Jones (2000) and the similarly oriented studies of landscape by Tilley (1994) and Ingold (2000, 2011).

year-bearer signs were symbolically associated with the four world directions: East, North, West and South respectively.

The same simple mathematics determines that in one solar year the 13 numbers are repeated 28 times, with one extra day ( $365 = 28 \times 13$  with a remainder of 1). Therefore, the next year bearer has a number one digit higher than the one before.

The combination of these two mathematical calculations means that the sequence of Aztec-Mixtec year bearers (the days which lend their names to the years) is: 1 Reed – 2 Flint – 3 House – 4 Rabbit – 5 Reed – 6 Flint etc. until the last combination, 13 Rabbit. This gives a total of ( $13 \times 4 =$ ) 52 different year names, a cycle known in Nahuatl as the *xiuhmolpilli*, 'year-binding', in scholarly literature referred to as the 'Calendar Round'. Such calendar rounds are subdivided into periods of thirteen years, named after the year in which they begin: 1 Reed, 1 Flint, 1 House and 1 Rabbit. The beauty of this mathematical organisation is that the sign of the leading year bearer during such a thirteen-year period will fall on the positions 1, 5, 9 and 13, which are symbolically associated with the centre and the four directions of the earth's surface (1, 5), the underworld where the dead ancestors are (9), and heaven (13).

In the system used by the Nahua and Ñuu Dzaui peoples, a full date consists of a day and a year bearer. This combination fixes a day within a period of 52 years, with the only exception that a day may be repeated within the same year (within the unit of 365 days, 105 days of the *tonalpoalli* occur twice).

The calendar is ubiquitously present in archaeological context. In Tomb 7 at Monte Albán one of the carved jaguar bones (Bone 37a), for example, is inscribed with the first thirteen years of the 52-year cycle: year 1 Reed to year 13 Reed.

For historical analysis it is important that ancient Mexican dates can be correlated with dates in the Christian calendar. The day of the Spanish conquest of Mexico Tenochtitlan (on which the last Aztec emperor Cuauhtemoc was captured) was the day 1 Serpent of the year 3 House in the Aztec calendar, which corresponded to 13 August of the year 1521 in the Julian calendar of the Spaniards at the time. On the base of this fact the correlation of other dates can also be calculated. Other Aztec sources confirm this synchronology. Furthermore, colonial documents clarify that the Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec) people had the same day count, but started the year on another moment, 40 days earlier to be precise, with the effect that the Aztec year 2 Reed would correspond roughly to a Mixtec year 1 Reed and so on: the Mixtec year bearer is consistently one digit less than the Aztec year bearer.<sup>17</sup>

17 The difference between the Aztec and Mixtec year count was discovered by the Mexican historian Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, who explains it in his commentary on the Codex of Yanhuitlan (Jiménez Moreno and Mateos Higuera 1940).

The solar years are subdivided into eighteen ‘months’ of twenty days each (Spanish: *veintena*), with 5 remaining ‘superfluous days’, called *nemontemi* in Nahuatl.

The Nahuatl names for these months are the following:

- Cuahuitlehua (‘Rising Trees’) or Xilomanaliztli (‘Offering of tender corncoobs’)
- Tlacaxipehualiztli (‘Flaying’)
- Tozoztontli (‘Small Bloodletting’)
- Huey Tozoztli (‘Big Bloodletting’)
- Toxcatl (‘Popcorn’ or ‘Drought’)
- Etzalcualiztli (‘Eating Corn and Beans’)
- Tecuilhuitontli (‘Small Feast of the Lords’)
- Huey Tecuilhuil (‘Big Feast of the Lords’)
- Miccailhuitontli (‘Small Feast of the Dead’) or Tlaxochimaco, (‘Offering of Flowers’),
- Huey Miccailhuil (‘Big Feast of the Dead’) or Xocotl Huetzi (‘Falling Fruit’)
- Ochpaniztli (‘Sweeping the Roads’)
- Teotleco (‘Arrival of the Gods’) or Pachtontli (‘Small Festival of *Pachtli*’)
- Tepeilhuitl (‘Festival of the Mountains’) or Huey Pachtli (‘Big Festival of *Pachtli*’)
- Quecholli (‘Dart’ or ‘Roseate Spoonbill’)
- Panquetzaliztli (‘Raising the Banners’)
- Atemoztli (‘Water Descending’)
- Tititl (‘Shrinking’ or ‘Stretching’)
- Izcalli (‘Growing’ or ‘Revival’)

The rituals of these 20-day months were the hallmarks of community life and often celebrated agricultural or seasonal events (clearing the fields for planting in Tlacaxipehualiztli, harvesting corn in Ochpaniztli etc.). Colonial sources propose different correlations of these months with periods within the Julian year. The most fundamental one is the correlation of the entrance of the conquistadors in the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan on November 8, 1519, which would correspond to the day 8 Wind as the 9th day of the month Quecholli.<sup>18</sup> A good overall reconstruction, however, is difficult due to the intrinsic problem of understanding the Mesoamerican concepts, subdivisions and sequences of

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18 See Castillo (1971) and Tena (2008: 45–47). Kubler and Gibson (1951: 42–54) discuss the basic aspects of the correlation problem. This complex subject matter will return in the Chapters 6 and 7 of this book.

time in terms of the European calendar. On the one hand the fixed rhythm of year bearers, marking periods of 365 days, does not allow for intercalary days and leap years. On the other hand, the connection of the month feasts with seasonal events must have obliged the calendar experts (priests) to take such measures in order to avoid losing contact with natural reality.<sup>19</sup>

It is logical to suppose that the dates of the agricultural and seasonal rituals were determined by the observation of the natural phenomena (such as the coming of rain and the growth of the maize plant) in relation to the cosmic order of the recurrent solstices and the passages of the sun across the zenith. The synchronisation of the (agricultural) rituals with (astronomical) reality would imply adapting the temporal distances between those rituals in ways that in practice must have come close to the use of intercalary days. If the months of central Mexico had a consistent relationship with the agricultural and seasonal rituals, their cycle could not consist of invariable blocks of twenty days as purely quantitative units (which would have run rapidly out of step with the seasons), but must have been more flexible ritual periods that were anchored in astronomical observations but would allow for incidental adaptations to the reality of the rural world.<sup>20</sup>

The structure of the data from the sixteenth century suggests that the spring equinox (corresponding to March 21 in our Gregorian calendar) fell in Tlacaxipehualiztli, the zenith passage of the sun (Gregorian: in the first half of May) would occur towards the end of Huey Tozoztli or beginning of Toxcatl, the summer solstice (Gregorian: June 21) had to be at the end of Etzalcualiztli or beginning of Tecuilhuitontli, the autumn equinox (Gregorian: 21 September) was part of Ochpaniztli, and that the winter solstice (Gregorian: 21 December) would coincide with the end of Panquetzaliztli.

To keep these correspondences and to keep this structure functioning, the set of the month rituals must have included occasional (slight) variation in the length of the year in accordance with the experiences and needs of the

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19 See the discussion of the calendar in the commentaries on Codex Cospi (Anders, Jansen and Van der Loo 1994) and Codex Ixtlilxochitl (Van Doesburg and Carrera González 1996).

20 In the Maya calendar there is indeed a fixed interlocking of the 260-day cycle with the 365-day cycle so that each day's position is given in a regular system of eighteen 20-day months and 5 remaining days, without leap years or any other use of intercalary days. Classic Maya dates even counted the precise number of years and days that had elapsed since a virtual zero point in 3114 BC. This fixed frame of reference enabled Maya experts to study the changes in the cosmos and keep track of seasonal and astronomical events. The Classic inscriptions as well as the Postclassic books often contain astronomical references, such as lunar positions, heliacal risings of Venus, solar eclipses, etc. (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993).

farming population. The colonial sources mention a variety of solutions to this problem: adding one intercalary day every four years or one intercalary period of thirteen days every fifty-two years etc. This suggests that different practices were followed.

On the other hand, these adaptations seem not to have affected the day-count proper (the continuous sequences of 260 days). The calendar position of the year bearer also remained fixed within cycles of 365 days each. This was confusing to the colonial chroniclers (and still is confusing to us today) as it leads to the co-existence of (1) unvariable sequences of days with fixed year bearers (days giving names to years), which do not allow the introduction of leap-years, and (2) the adaptation of the month rituals to the astronomical year, which implies that the duration of the set of months (forming the ritual year) would occasionally have to be lengthened.

If this reconstruction is correct, the set of eighteen months and five extra days must have behaved more or less like the Julian/Gregorian calendar, with the position of the year bearer shifting vis-à-vis this ritual year (presenting itself with an average of one day earlier every four years, just as it does in the correlations with the Julian/Gregorian year). Unfortunately, this complex process has not been adequately documented, so our explanation remains hypothetical.

The days themselves were subdivided into shorter periods, which the priests marked by blowing conchs on the temple pyramids.<sup>21</sup> This blowing of the conchs also implies that the whole community was aware of the passage of such 'hours', very much as subdivisions of the day in the colonial era were indicated by the church bell and nowadays by watches. Similarly, the knowledge of what day it was in the Mesoamerican calendar must have been generally shared in the precolonial community. Many markets were organised in cycles of five days.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the market days would follow the same rhythm as the year bearers. Similarly, the agricultural rituals and community feasts would make everyone aware of the passage of the 20-day periods or 'months' and – with that – also of the cycle of years. This 'being in the same time' made it possible for the community to maintain its memory and to implement social, economic and religious planning, which implies a sense of cohesion and cultural identity.

#### 4 The First Day-Keeper

Needless to say, the calendar was much more than a chronometric mechanism. In the Nahuatl language a day is *tonalli*, but this word also refers to a spiritual

21 Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*: Ch. 22.

22 See for example Rosquillas Quiles (2010: 150).

power or life-force in human beings, which may be translated as 'soul', 'character', 'luck' or 'destiny'. The word is related to the verb *tona*, 'to shine, give light and heat', which is also the stem of the name of the Sun God: Tonatiuh, 'the Radiating One'. Each day sign has its meaning and its patron deity, and so has each number. The 13-day units (*trecenas*) also have their patron deity, accompanied by symbolic images indicating the specific characteristics, opportunities and destinies of those born in that period. Consequently, the calendar was used in a religious context by priests, healers, midwives, visionaries and wise elders. It is full of meaning and has a strong mantic (divinatory) and symbolic meaning. Its internal structure (of the 260 days) indicates that this was its primary aspect. From there it developed into an instrument to measure the solar years (365 days) in order to predict the seasons and plan agricultural activities, as well as to register events and human deeds. In this manner it was an indispensable device for precolonial historiography.

A Nahua narrative explains the origin of the calendar. In the dark time of creation, the primordial gods made the fire and a half sun, which, because of not being complete, did not give much light, but only a little. Then they made a man and a woman: Cipactonal and Oxomoco. They ordered him to work the earth, and her to spin and weave. The common people descended from them, who should not be lazy, but should always work. They gave her certain kernels of maize in order to use them for curing and divination.<sup>23</sup>

According to several sources, these two persons invented the calendar and mantic symbolism, including fortune telling and the interpretation of dreams. This was a primordial couple, born at the dawn of time, at the first appearance of the morning star. When the first humans inhabited the world, the gods saw that they had no books to be governed, so they went to consult Cipactonal and Oxomoco, who lived in a cave near Cuernavaca. This couple recreated the wisdom of the ancient painters and owners of books, who had left with their sacred bundles. They called their grandson, Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent (i.e. the Whirlwind), and together they began to construct the calendar. When the old man (Cipactonal) was looking for a sign to put at the beginning of the series of days, he found an alligator (*cipactli*) and begged him to accept being the first sign. As the alligator consented, they painted him and called the day *ce cipactli*, '1 Alligator'. The old man himself took his name from this first day: Cipactonal. This is a pun, since *cipac-tonalli* means 'Day Alligator' but can also be understood as coming from *ce icpac tonalli*, 'on the first day'. Afterwards, Quetzalcoatl fixed 'Wind' as the second day sign, combined with

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23 From: *La Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas* (Garibay 1979: 25).

the number 2. Lady Oxomoco put House in the third place, with the number 3, and so on.<sup>24</sup>

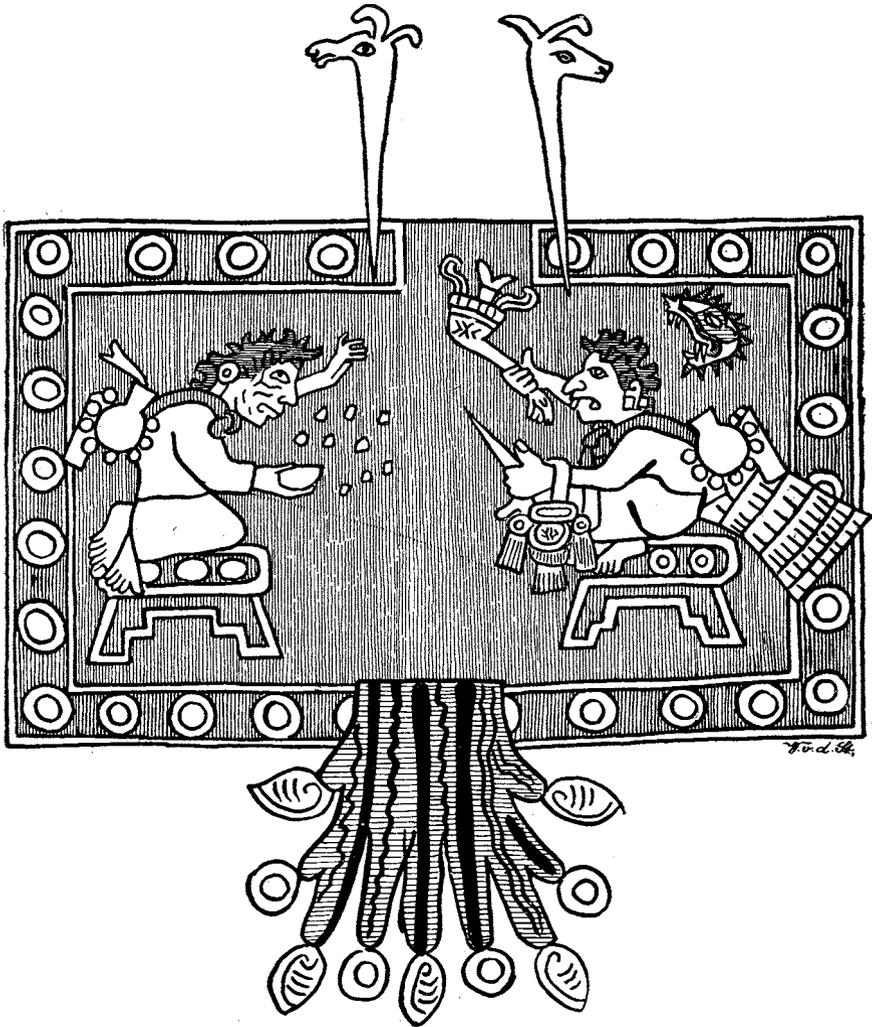


ILLUSTRATION 0.04 *Cipactonal and Oxomoco in the Aztec Codex Cihuoatl (Borbonicus), p. 21.*

24 The narrative can be reconstructed from different sources, such as Mendieta (Book 11: Ch. 14), the indigenous chronicle *Histoire du Mexique* (Garibay, 1979: 106), Codex Telleriano-Remensis (p. 14v) and Sahagún (Book x: Ch. 29 § 12). There is some confusion in these sources about who is the man and who the woman and which day each selected, but, taking into account the depictions of the couple and the symbolism of the calendar, the reconstructed version here seems the most plausible. On the importance of these primordial diviners see also Boone (2007: Ch. 2).



ILLUSTRATION 0.05 *Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' as the creator of ceremonial discourse and as the painter of books in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48.*

Cipactonal and Oxomoco are represented as an elderly couple – the archetypal grandfather and grandmother. Cipactonal means 'Day-sign Alligator' or: 'First Day': he is the primordial calendar priest. The meaning of Oxomoco's name is less clear; we understand it as 'Effort of the Pregnant Woman'; she is the primordial midwife.<sup>25</sup> Together they are said to have invented or reconstructed the calendar, which is associated with an even earlier phase of history (the wisdom of the ancient owners of books). The Plumed Serpent as culture hero or creator of art and sciences participated in organising the calendar; just as he appears in the Ñuu Dzaui codices as the inventor of writing.

The location of the narrative about Cipactonal and Oxomoco in the Cuernavaca region is interesting. Cecilio Robelo (1910) published carved stones

25 A Spanish gloss in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonico) next to the head of Oxomoco identifies her as *diosas de las parteras*, 'goddesses of midwives'. We interpret her name as a combination of *otzli* (pregnant woman) and *tzomocoa* ('to do something with special effort and diligence'). On the other hand, there is a similarity with Xmukané, the name of the Grandmother in the Popol Vuh (the sacred book of the K'iche' of Guatemala), which might suggest a very archaic origin.



ILLUSTRATION 0.06A *Cipactonal. Left-hand stone of the Piedras de los Reyes monument, Yautepec (Robelo 1910).*

from Yautepec de Zaragoza, in the state of Morelos, actually from the base of the Tetillas Mountain<sup>26</sup> – from a site named Coatlan (in later literature often confused with the town Coatlan in the state of Morelos). The monument is known as *Piedras de los Reyes* ('Stones of the Kings') as the carved figures were locally identified as ancient kings. Now it forms part of the archaeological zone of Los Tres Reyes of Yautepec. The monument consists of a set of carved boulders, which form a U-shaped niche. The carved images are clearly in Postclassic style (probably contemporaneous with the Aztec empire).

26 The name refers to the form of the mountain, connected in local lore with the love story between the nearby volcanoes Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl.



ILLUSTRATION 0.06B *Cave. Central stone of the Piedras de los Reyes monument, Yauhtepec (Robelo 1910).*

On the left-hand stone, looking outwards, we see the seated figure of an elderly man (characterised as such by his wrinkled face and single tooth); behind his head is his calendar name: 1 Alligator. No doubt this is a representation of Cipactonal ('Day Alligator'), associated with the first day of the calendar. He is using a sharpened bone to carve or paint an L-shaped band with signs consisting of double speech scrolls: in other contexts, this configuration represents a book (codex). The sign itself also represents *ilhuitl*, 'feast (day)' in Aztec pictography.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The activity of Cipactonal on the relief may be compared to the image of Quetzalcoatl (Lord 9 Wind) as an inventor of writing in the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48. For the identification of the band that represents a codex, see the sign for painter or scribe in Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 30 and Codex Mendoza f. 70. The same sign appears in the volutes that represent 'song' in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 4. Seler



ILLUSTRATION 0.06C *Oxomoco. Right-hand stone of the Piedras de los Reyes monument, Yautepec (Robelo 1910).*

In front, on the right-hand stone, also looking outwards, is the image of an elderly woman, seated in the Mesoamerican women's pose (with her legs folded beneath her). Behind her head is the sign of a butterfly. The combination with the elderly man suggests that this is Oxomoco. The butterfly refers to the fact that Oxomoco was identified with the Aztec goddess Itzpapalotl, 'Obsidian Butterfly' (i.e. the power of the obsidian arrowhead).<sup>28</sup> On the carved boulder

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already established its reading as *ilhuitl* on the basis of its occurrence with a gloss in the Humboldt Fragment VIII (Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* 1: 267–268). See also Houston and Stuart and Taube (2006: 160–163) and Thouvenot (2015).

28 Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f 18v, states that the original name of Itzpapalotl was Xomuco, i.e. Oxomoco.

Oxomoco holds her hands in a peculiar way, which is characteristic of throwing corn kernels for divination.<sup>29</sup> While Cipactonal seems to be occupied with the ritual organisation of the calendar signs, the role of Oxomoco is more that of the healer (Spanish: *curandera*) and midwife (Spanish: *partera*). Both roles are complementary and overlapping: activities such as divination, codex writing and healing were explicitly related to that primordial couple.<sup>30</sup>

On the boulder in the centre, facing the viewer, is the frontal representation of the open jaws of a serpent or alligator. This sign is a common way of representing a cave or shelter, and consequently qualifies the niche as an entrance into the earth.<sup>31</sup> Inside the jaws we see the calendar sign 2 Rabbit, which probably refers the name of the god Ome Tochtli (Nahuatl: '2 Rabbit'). This was the deity of *pulque* (the alcoholic beverage made from the fermented juice of the maguey or agave plant) and the divine patron of Tepoztlan (the neighbouring town to the north).<sup>32</sup> It may also refer to rituals invoking this deity to grant a good production of *pulque*. To the right-hand side of the central image is another day sign: Flower, with two or more dots on the left-hand side: possibly this is a reference to the day 7 Flower (*chicome xochitl*).

Another stone monument at the same site represents the rain god (Tlaloc in Nahuatl) with an elaborate necklace that contains the sign for 'gold'.<sup>33</sup> This suggests that the boulders also form an ancient House of Rain, a place where the rain god dwells and where one may communicate with him, for example invoking him and asking him to bring rain and prosperity to the land. Generally, this house is a cave, shelter or a specific rock formation (often close to a spring), where people nowadays go to pray and make offerings for rain to come, in the 20-day period between 25 April (San Marcos) and 15 May (San Isidro Labrador), with a concentration on or around 3 May, the Day of the Holy Cross. In the Ñuu Dzaui region such caves are known as *Vehe Sau* (the latter

29 A similar scene occurs in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonico), p. 21 (Anders and Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 180–186) – a parallel already identified by Robelo. Another relevant depiction is that of Codex Tudela, pp. 49r and 49v (= Codex Magliabechi pp. 77v/78r). See also Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise v: Ch. 3 and 4) on the art of divining with corn kernels, and compare modern Ayuuk rituals (Rojas Martínez Gracida 2012).

30 Sahagún (Book VI: Ch. 27) mentions '*las personas y oficios de Xumotl [= Oxomoco] y Cipactli [= Cipactonal], teniendo cargo y ciencia de declarar las venturas de los que nacen...*'.

31 See for example the representation of a cave (Nahuatl: *oztotl*) in Codex Mendoza, p. 10v.

32 See the classic study of the Tepoztecatl by Seler (*Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, II: 200–214) and the representation of the pulque gods in Codex Magliabechi (Anders and Jansen 1996b: 185 ff.).

33 The same sign occurs in the action of the *platero* (gold/silver-smith) in Codex Mendoza, p. 70r.



ILLUSTRATION 0.07 *Tlaloc monument, Yautepec (Robelo 1910).*

word also spelled as Savi, Davi or Dau according to the dialect variant), meaning 'House of Rain'.<sup>34</sup>

In Nahuatl such a place is called *Tlalocan*, 'where Tlaloc (the rain god) dwells'. There is, for example, such a locally well-known spot on the slopes of the Matlalcueye volcano. Tlalocan is also the place where the rain god gathers all those who have died through contact with his power: drowned, struck by lightning, or some illness involving pustules or buboes. Because of the

34 See the description and reproduction of a traditional invocation of the rain god by Schulze Jena in the third volume of his *Indiana* (1933/38), the more recent study of ritual texts in the same area by Van Liere and Schuth (2001), the study of cave rituals in the Coixtlahuaca region by Medina Jaen, Peñaflores Ramírez and Rivera Guzmán (2013), as well as the contribution by Posselt Santoyo and Jiménez Osorio ('El ritual como restablecimiento del paisaje sagrado') to the volume edited by Jansen and Raffa (2015).

abundance associated with the rain god, his realm was seen as a sort of paradise. This idea seems to be present already in the frescoes of Teotihuacan. In colonial art the concept fused with that of the Christian idea of the celestial paradise: an example is the Baroque church of Tonantzintla Puebla.<sup>35</sup>

The boulder monument at the foot of the Tetillas Mountain seems to create a small space or niche for executing rituals of calendar divination. At the same time the reliefs may connote the narrative of the origin of the calendar in this area. Its location also creates a visual and narrative line with the Popocatepetl volcano. It has been demonstrated that the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl can be observed to form visual links that permit their functioning as an astronomical device (Broda 1991).

Xochicalco, in the same region (State of Morelos) is an impressive multiple-function site with a strong ritual character, a ceremonial centre with plazas, ballcourts and temples. As for time, it is noticeable that below one of the temple complexes there are tunnels that lead to a subterranean place with a vertical light shaft to the surface that permits observation of the passage of the sun across the zenith. Here that event takes place around 14 May, within the 20-day period that marks the beginning of the rainy season.<sup>36</sup> Similar light shafts have been reported for Teotihuacan and other sites such as Huamelulpan. From our own observations we know about the natural shaft in a small abri or cavity within the rock formation known as Kava Tijii near Chalcatongo, where the zenith passage manifests itself in producing a column of light on midday around 8 May.

Such devices for astronomical observations are well known from many ancient civilisations. In Europe we find churches with openings or windows that create moving light spots on the floor, which in a number of cases were combined with strips of zodiacal signs to register the moment of midday during the year.<sup>37</sup> Specific spots on St Peter's Square in Rome identify the days of the solstices and equinoxes when touched by the shadows of the obelisk.

In a related manner, major rock formations, mountains and buildings – in relation to the horizon – may function as markers of solar and astral phenomena

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35 See the interpretations by Glockner (1995), Gussinyer i Alfonso (1996), González Galván (2006) and Hernández and Loera (2008).

36 It is interesting that the relief around the main temple of Xochicalco repeatedly depicts the Plumed Serpent, in combination with what seems to be his calendar name 9 Reptile's Eye (probably equivalent to 9 Wind of the Ñuu Dzau codices) and with several other dates which have been interpreted as a reference to calendar adjustments or ritual connections. In another layer of reliefs, we see priests engaged in ritual activity.

37 Heilbron (1999) offers a survey, while Catamo and Lucarini (2002), Bartolini (2006) and Paltrinieri (2007) describe specific examples from Rome, Florence and Bologna respectively.

(for example, becoming reference points for following the different locations of sunrise and sunset during the solar year). In this way a direct physical link is produced between caves or other places within the earth and the observation of the solar year. This makes it possible to keep track of the cyclical passage of time, which is essential for planning agricultural activities and the community rituals connected with them.

To conclude, we see that the calendar – which is already quite a complex mechanism of its own – is entangled with astronomical observations, origin narratives, divinatory symbolism, deities, religious values, ritual landscape, archaeological sites and works of art. Furthermore, through defining calendar names and *nahuales* at birth it determines the identity of the individual members of the community and so regulates community life as well as its seasonal interaction with the natural environment.

## 5 Denial of Coevalness

For the European conquistadors the peoples of the Americas were pagans, i.e. *not yet* Christians, as well as barbarians or savages, i.e. *not yet* civilised (cf. Fabian 1983). Today this qualification translates as ‘traditional’, ‘pre-logical’ and ‘underdeveloped’ vis-à-vis modern society. Cultural difference is plotted on an evolutionary line to establish what is presented as a natural (time-given) hierarchy: it seems only logical that those in the present are further ahead (better developed) than those who are still living in the past; the past has to give way to the present, backwardness to modernity. Of course this is an ideological construct, but a very powerful one to legitimize (neo)colonial domination and related practices: discrimination against indigenous culture and racist condemnation of the indigenous appearance, persecution of indigenous religion, prohibition of the indigenous language, etc. All this is a logical correlate of the (top-down) transformation of indigenous peoples, allegedly for their own good. In a similar vein, indigenous lands and resources, which are taken to not formally belong to anyone or to not be put to good use, are then expropriated and developed by (trans)national enterprises according to capitalist industrial logic.

Dominant colonising groups typically see themselves as the legitimate protagonists of the present, while conquered and colonised people are condemned to play a passive role: stuck as they are in the past, in their traditions, in pre-modernity, they have no other future but to adapt to the rules of their natural masters. This is in line with the underlying assumption of colonisation that, as Aristotle had put it, it was the natural order that some people were born to be rulers and others to be slaves (Hanke 1970; Paulat Legorreta 1972).

Following the classic monograph *Orientalism* by Edward Said (1978), a lot has been written about the exoticising and at the same time inferiorising and dehumanising images of the Other, those 'Fantasies of the Master Race' as Ward Churchill (1998) has called them. Those images were, of course, far from innocent or inconsequential. The myth of the cannibal is a particularly illustrative example. The erroneous interpretation of burial customs (drying the body above fire), connected with pre-conceived ideas and expectations about weird customs in faraway lands, led to the construction of an image of native peoples in the Caribbean as having an anthropophagous culture, which is regarded as such an essentially anti-human activity that the very accusation could serve as a legitimisation of genocide (Sued Badillo 1978; Arens 1979; Mason 1990).

As products of their time (late medieval Europe), the conquistadors and the missionaries saw themselves as fighting a crusade against what they considered to be the work of Satan (Gruzinski 1988; Cervantes 1997). Consequently, Spanish colonisation not only subdued the Mesoamerican peoples but also made them the objects of a hostile gaze. Indigenous spirituality was (and to a large extent still is) seen through the lens of colonialism, either as irrational, primitive and bloody (in accordance with the colonial stereotypes of the barbarian, cannibal and witch), or as purely spiritual and wise (in accordance with idealised stereotypes of the noble savage).

This colonial image of Mesoamerica perpetuated the allegation that had been brought forward against the Caribs: the Aztecs too were portrayed as cannibals. Moreover, the central element in their religion and society, according to the colonial representations, was the custom of large-scale human sacrifices to feed their 'diabolic idols': in front of the temples on top of the pyramids, they cut out the hearts of thousands of victims and then threw the corpses down from the staircase, in order to be dismembered and eaten by the hungry public. Most likely this gory image was constructed from a projection of the frequency of self-sacrifice (bloodletting) onto the (much less frequent) execution of enemies or criminals (a form of death penalty), which was ritualised in accordance with the Mesoamerican conceptions of returning life to the gods who had created it. Even though the large majority of the Spanish authors were never present at such a human sacrifice, they reported such acts frequently, consistently and in great detail. Their writings were then printed with sensational illustrations aiming to capture the attention of a broad audience.<sup>38</sup>

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38 See, for example, the famous but fanciful engravings by Theodore de Bry (Bucher 1981; Van Groesen 2008).

In a similar vein the Spanish authors condemned the indigenous religious practices as witchcraft, i.e. based on a covenant with the devil. We should remember that the conquest took place at the height of the witch-hunt in Europe, marked by inquisitional manuals on how to identify, interrogate and torture the unfortunate women and men who had been accused of being witches (Kramer and Sprenger: *Malleus Maleficarum*; Pedro Ciruelo: *Tratado en que se reprueban todas las supersticiones y hechicerías*).<sup>39</sup> Customs identified as witchcraft were to be extirpated and their practitioners exterminated by burning them at the stake. In this case too, behind these criminal executions (which claimed many thousands of innocent victims) there was an interest – on the part of the church as an institution – to monopolise control over the souls of the people, and therefore to be an essential factor in the political power game. The extirpators of witchcraft in Europe and the persecutors of indigenous religion in the Americas shared the same ideological background; in fact, they were sometimes the same people. A key example is that of the first bishop of Mexico, friar Juan de Zumárraga (author of a Christian doctrine in Nahuatl) and his companion, friar Andrés de Olmos (famous because of various works on Nahuatl). Both participated in a campaign against the witches of Vizcaya (Spain) during 1527. Olmos later wrote a treatise in Mexico against witchcraft and the cult of the devil – a Nahuatl text directed to the newly converted generation. This text was an adaptation from a similar work in Spanish by a fellow Franciscan who had accompanied them in the campaign in Vizcaya.

The works (and interpretations) of the missionaries are still the foundation for all research today: the famous Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, author of a true encyclopaedia of the Aztec world, is even hailed as the father of ethnography. Indeed, Fabian's critical study denounces the problematic ideological perspective that modern anthropology has inherited from colonial missionaries. Words such as 'idol', 'witchcraft' and 'devil' are still used in our era to refer to aspects of Mesoamerican religion.<sup>40</sup> This is especially the case in the discriminatory language of everyday life, in which experts in traditional medicine are called *brujos* (witches), caves of religious importance '*cuevas del diablo*', etc.

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39 The books by Dresen-Coenders (1983), Ginzburg (1989), Cohn (2001), Levack (2006) and Nenonen and Toivo (2014), as well as the article by Henningsen (1992) are some of the important publications on the subject.

40 For example: *Witchcraft and pre-Columbian Paper* (Christensen and Martí 1971), *Guide to Mexican Witchcraft* (Madsen and Madsen), *Bloodsucking Witchcraft* (Nutini and Roberts 1993). Archaeologists still use often the word 'idol' when referring to the images of indigenous deities.

One of the great contradictions and problems in Mesoamerican studies is that crucial information for interpreting precolonial art and society comes from colonial texts, which are often plagued by the prejudices of that period, leading to many intercultural misunderstandings that are still among us today. The colonial paradigm disavowed the indigenous world in such stigmatising terms that it becomes nearly impossible for whoever enters the study of Mesoamerica to accept and assimilate this culture or to identify with its peoples. The indoctrinated preconception that Mesoamerica is a world of evil provokes a psychological distance, even among many profoundly interested investigators.

## 6 Methodological Concerns

Archaeology tries to understand the organisation, development and cognition of past societies. The material remains constitute its prime source and focus. This aspect has often meant a materialist bias, the more so where traditionally archaeology is a child of positivism and late colonial expansion, with certain remnants of military structures and élite mentalities.<sup>41</sup> Archaeology is often carried out and/or financed by state institutions, and consequently has developed within a framework of nationalist thinking. Thus the discipline became more and more distant from the worldview and interests of indigenous peoples.

This has also for many decades been the attitude of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), which controls archaeology in Mexico (Vazquez León 1996). Indigenous communities were seen as mere settings for archaeological work. The primary aim of that work was to salvage (i.e. to extract) objects or data that were valuable for the nation (as emblems of the national past and national identity or as tourist attractions), to describe and analyse them for the advancement of science, and to preserve them by putting them in a (national or regional) museum. Archaeologists, historians, linguists and anthropologists have dedicated much of their work and life to Mesoamerica, but most of them did and do not belong to a Mesoamerican people: indigenous experts were – and still are – hardly involved in the study of their cultural and linguistic heritage.

As a consequence, much of the archaeology of Mesoamerica seems to deal with scattered fragments and anonymous processes, not able to connect with

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41 For a critique of this positivist character and a search for alternative approaches see for example Shanks (1992) and Joyce *et al.* (2002).

the ongoing cultural traditions of the descendant communities and not accessible to them, but physically and mentally alienated as a stolen past, a colonised memory.<sup>42</sup>

The material bias of archaeology in combination with the marginalisation of indigenous voices tends to create a silent record. All kinds of contemporary Western concerns are projected onto the resulting void, such as a chronological sequence of social evolution and an ideology for the legitimisation of power. In our previous studies and commentaries on the historical and religious codices we have insisted on the importance of the present-day living heritage (oral tradition) as an indispensable complement to archaeological and historical information for interpreting ancient Mesoamerican art, particularly the pictorial manuscripts.

The living (intangible) heritage has, of course, also been affected and transformed by the processes of colonisation and modernity, but in many respects it conserves a connection to the precolonial past. The precise form and measure of continuity need to be investigated carefully, but in principle we may find here an important key for understanding the structures and elements of Mesoamerican culture in a way that may counterbalance, correct and supersede the limited, biased and distorted views of the Spanish colonial authors. We should be aware that the act of interpreting Mesoamerican art, writing and traditions is fundamentally an intercultural exercise, with the added problematic dimension of the influence of colonial inequality on the perspectives and interactions. We share in this respect the criticisms that, following authors such as Albert Memmi (1965) and Vine Deloria (1970), have been brought forward against the Eurocentrism and colonial mentality that still to a large extent pervades the attitudes towards the indigenous peoples in policies and in academic studies.

In discussing meaning and values of Mesoamerican archaeological remains as well as other cultural and historical sources, we should keep in mind that the Mesoamerican paradigm has its own terms, concepts and forms of analysis. Creative thinking is concentrated in specific symbols, which are then expressed in art and (written or oral) literature. Mesoamerica is no exception. The concepts defined in the language and literary texts, the symbolism, ritual actions and profound narratives hold the key to interpreting the past. This conceptual and symbolic or metaphorical dimension is often not recognised in an intercultural encounter, however. The dominant culture is aware of its own symbolising capacity but denies it to the 'Other' and supposes that all utterances of the 'Other' are simple factual descriptions.

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42 See Pérez Jiménez and Jansen (1979), Bonfil Batalla (1996), Goody (2007).

The problem with intercultural studies is furthermore that often they are not intercultural at all but just part of a Western discourse on Non-Western cultural traits and objects. And, precisely the demonstration that Westerners are able to realise such a one-sided discourse on 'the Others' generates – in most cases not even intentionally – the all-pervasive subliminal message that their culture is more powerful and superior, thereby undermining true dialogue. In intercultural interaction of a colonial nature, the dominant paradigm tends to situate itself as the norm and to consider the 'Other' as basically invalid, irrational or weird. Consequently, Western researchers hold their own tenets, imaginaries and concepts as truth, while referring to those of 'Others' as myth. The word 'myth' denotes a narrative that is known to be considered relevant, true and meaningful by Others, but in which the (Western) speaker does not believe. The Bible would qualify as a book of myths in the eyes of non-believing anthropologists, but to Christian priests and congregations it is a sacred scripture, 'the word of God'. In such discrepancies it is important to seek terms that are acceptable to all and that respect, dignify and validate the worldview of the different people concerned.

For an honest personal encounter with Mesoamerican thought, the Western arrogance towards the 'myths' of Others has to change to a respectful listening to the voices of ancestors, to profound, symbolic, sacred narratives, which evoke the divine powers of creation. Mesoamerican time perception follows the natural cycles as manifestations of divine power, while also organising them into units and periods that have religious and cultural significance.

What positivist science would call (inanimate) objects, more religiously oriented cultures (among them many indigenous peoples) may define as animate subjects, beings, or otherwise elements of a sacred nature. Western culture also has examples of this worldview in its religious or ideological traditions: the Holy Grail, which is venerated in Valencia but also plays a central role in the legends of Glastonbury, the house of the Holy Family in Loreto, the cross that spoke to St Francis in Assisi, the apparition grotto at Lourdes, and so many relics or images of saints, as well as buildings, monuments, sites and other elements that are considered of great religious and cultural value, so that the category of mere physical objects does not do them justice. This status, obviously, has consequences for perception and treatment. If decontextualised, fragmented, museified, and located in alienating boxes, these beings lose agency and power and do indeed become mere objects of observation by outsiders, objects also of a colonial gaze.

A whole series of anti-colonial authors have laid the basis for further critical reflection on and deconstruction of colonial and Eurocentric biases: the

school of postcolonial thought.<sup>43</sup> From indigenous peoples' perspective it is important to insist that the postcolonial situation is an ideal but not yet a reality: the existence of the problems that indigenous peoples face is proof of the ongoing presence and impact of colonial structures and racist mentalities. The active term 'decolonial', or rather 'decolonising', is therefore programmatic, both in the sense of decolonising the traditional methodologies and of using methodologies that have a decolonising aim and effect. Especially the work of the Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), is a seminal analysis that points the way.<sup>44</sup>

A postcolonial or rather decolonising approach is in our opinion a methodological and ethical imperative. It helps us to overcome the paradigmatic distances introduced by colonial and racist thinking, which manipulate us to see Mesoamerica only in a detached way as a set of exotic objects, interesting for bourgeois pastime and tourism, but without intrinsic value. We are called upon to overcome that still influential colonial paradigm (the practice of outsiders turning indigenous cultures into mere objects of detached analysis), which has severely limited the interpretive scope and potential of scholarship and has had an alienating and excluding effect on descendant communities. Present-day popular perception of ancient society and religion is heavily influenced by centuries of hostile colonial propaganda and lack of intercultural comprehension – in a nutshell, by the *denial of coevalness* in past and present. One of the methodologically relevant consequences of this denial is the sharp distinction that is often made between the ancient culture and the descendant communities. Although the historical continuity between the ancient populations and the present-day indigenous peoples (in language, territory, oral traditions and many other cultural aspects) is evident, this fact is often neglected in the separation of disciplinary approaches: archaeologists study only the material remains of the precolonial past, historians the colonial documents, cultural anthropologists the present-day indigenous society, etc.

On the basis of our personal experience and analysis, we are convinced, on the contrary, that the ongoing indigenous culture of today holds many crucial keys for understanding the indigenous past, and vice versa. We therefore argue for a focus on that continuity and for a holistic approach to indigenous cultural and linguistic heritage *in* (and *on*) its own terms, taking into account its own cultural vocabulary and its own symbols and values. In order to achieve this, the full participation, on an equal footing, of indigenous experts and communities is an obvious prerequisite.

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43 See for example Bhabha (1994), Loomba (1998) and Nayar (2015).

44 See also Denzin *et al.* (2008), Grosfoguel (2011) and Mignolo (2012).

This approach should not be construed as mining the present for understanding the past, nor as yet another way of making indigenous peoples an object of study. On the contrary, the interest in the present should be part of a decolonising perspective and practice, which seeks to include the indigenous interests and paradigms as well as the voice and active participation of indigenous experts and communities (Watkins 2001; Atalay 2006 and 2012). Obviously we connect here with the recent development of a more community-centred and indigenous archaeology, following the impact of the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). A similar development is taking place in historical and art-historical studies (e.g. Van Kampen 2012). The context and beacon for these developments is the set of norms and principles formulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

In Fabian's terms, we might say that this Declaration urges the establishment of a coeval relationship between indigenous peoples and the dominant peoples in nation states, and more particularly between indigenous experts and foreign researchers, in a common quest for dignifying indigenous culture by decolonising research. This direction is not only a matter of social justice and professional ethics, but also an important issue for scientific development itself. The full and equal participation of indigenous experts in research has epistemological consequences (McNiven 2016).

Important comparative studies of religion and ritual already pave the way by creating an inclusive understanding of practices and ideas in which Western students may recognise themselves as well as Non-Western ones. This is a crucial aspect for our interpretive study, as we will focus on Mesoamerican ritual art. Rappaport (1999) reminds us that participation in a ritual is a public manifestation of commitment to the values expressed. Participants cannot remain as distanced outsiders unless they give up honesty and enter into contradiction with themselves. Participant observation can only mean becoming and remaining connected to the community in which one is participating, and viewing, sensing and reporting the life-world from that position. This does not mean an uncritical attitude; on the contrary, participation also includes expression of one's own opinions and a dialogical approach. Communication and interaction are important integral components of this method.

In this aspect the work of Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992, 2011) is particularly inspiring. She discusses the symbolic or archetypal narratives of different cultures in the tradition of the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung and the historian of religions Mircea Eliade,<sup>45</sup> but goes a decisive step further. Her aim is to help people today to recognise the psychological problems that are consequences

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45 See Morris (2010) for a discussion of this school.

of, for example, inter-gender violence, structural discrimination and predatory oppression, by reflecting on the symbolic terms of ancient narratives, and so by understanding solve them. In this manner she produces an implicit intercultural discourse, in which different audiences may appreciate, reconstruct and apply to their own situation the possible (and multiple) meanings of these narratives. Such an engaged reading liberates us from the limitations and dryness of purely phenomenological-historical analyses or structuralist taxonomies. We are brought to ask ourselves: what is the value of this entire symbolic heritage today for me, for us and for society at large?

By transforming Fabian's title from *Time and the Other* into our *Time and the Ancestors*, we want to explore consequences for the study of the past and for working towards coevalness when we shift from a dichotomy of Self and Other to a (shared) awareness of continuity and direct links of living peoples with the past. Instead of considering archaeology in a distanced manner as a science to reconstruct ancient societies on the basis of material remains, or, in even more positivist way, as a pure analysis of those material remains themselves, we would like to define this discipline as a holistic and experiential study of what our (collective) ancestors have done, experienced, thought, created, and left us. This implies a focus on meaning.

Jan Assmann has defined cultural memory in the following terms:

This is the handing down of meaning. ... Rituals are part of cultural memory because they are the form through which cultural meaning is both handed down and brought to present life. The same applies to things once they point to a meaning that goes beyond their practical purpose: symbols; icons; representations such as monuments, tombs, temples, idols; and so forth, all transcend the borders of object-memory because they make the implicit index of time and identity explicit.

ASSMANN 2012: 6–7

In exploring this dimension, we use the term 'ancestors' as referents of cultural memory, i.e. as protagonists of ethically important narratives that are played out in religiously charged and ritual landscapes (memory sites). Ancestors in this context personify an affective, respectful, experiential link of a community towards the past, in a humble awareness of a connection with earlier generations as part of a 'creature feeling'.<sup>46</sup>

46 Otto (1917) defined 'creature feeling' – i.e. the human consciousness of life being created by and dependent on wholly other, superior and mysterious forces (fascinating and tremendous numinous identities) – as the basic ingredient of religious experience and worldview.

The term ‘ancestors’ has been (and still is) abused by fanatics/nationalists/racists/imperialists for irrational self-glorification and claims of superiority. A telling and cautionary example is Himmler’s *Ahnenerbe*.<sup>47</sup> An illustration of how the Third Reich’s propagandistic reconstruction of a heroic German past led to militaristic profanation of religious monuments is the conversion of the Romanesque Dom in Quedlinburg – the site where in the tenth century the emblematic first king of mediaeval Germany Henry I ‘the Fowler’ and his queen (St) Mathilda had been buried – into a shrine of the ss.

But it is not the respect and care for ancestors that is the problem in such cases, but the manipulation of their relics and monuments for legitimising corrupt regimes and crimes against humanity. The same, of course, is true for other aspects of religion. Faith can be a very positive element in forming communities, in creating reflection and comforting people in distress, but it can also be blind. In the context of religious rules and institutions it can be misled and abused to legitimise violent oppression, wars and killings in the name of ‘the true and only God’, and to sanctimoniously cover up all kinds of political power games, economic exploitations and sexual abuses.

In a socially engaged and decolonising effort we would like to explore the emancipatory value of terms such as ‘ancestors’ and ‘sacredness’.<sup>48</sup> Thus we ask ourselves: how can Fabian’s theoretical analysis be brought to bear upon the discourse about the past, heritage and identity of indigenous peoples? What are the problems and points of friction caused by the colonial and still ongoing *denial of coevalness*? How can awareness of this issue be introduced into research praxis, what will be the methodological consequences of working towards coevalness, and what new insights will be gained by a decolonising methodology?

An important first step is to go back to the original meaning of anthropology’s central method, participant observation. This is not the use of participation (for example in rituals) for better observation, but a different mode of observation: not the analytical, distanced, a-personal laboratory way of observing the behaviour of objects, but an involved, experiential and engaged way of documenting, reflecting and commenting, making use of all the senses, particularly also of introspection, empathy and intuition. It is the inescapable characteristic of human and social sciences that they explicitly or implicitly include and involve the human subject. In order to be scientific, it will not do to copy the laboratory modes of the natural sciences, striving for objective

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47 Cf. Junginger (2008) and Steinhäuser (2013).

48 De Botton (2012) describes in a non-proselytising manner the positive social aspects of religion.

observation, because the working situation is essentially different: we ourselves are always included. And as Foucault (1980) has demonstrated eloquently, observations are made from specific perspectives, which are far from being unproblematic or innocent but are on the contrary entangled with power relations. The scientific or scholarly quality should, instead, be derived from controllable arguments and intersubjective verification, and be considered part of an ongoing discussion.

Therefore, the practice of exclusive outsider research should be abandoned. The active, full, equal and well-informed participation of indigenous experts – in our case native speakers of the Mesoamerican languages and knowledgeable about Mesoamerican cultural traditions (be it with or without academic credentials) – is crucial. This is not an appeal for ‘using more informants’, but for a common effort to overcome the subject/object (we/them) opposition that still characterises much of the research environment of archaeology, history, anthropology and linguistics, and to replace that by partnership and cooperation, driven by shared profound interest, social consciousness and mutual respect. This may sound a normal thing to do, but it is actually far from easy, given the entrenched hierarchical structures of thought, of vocabulary and of behaviour in that scholarly world, which, as Fabian has demonstrated so eloquently, remains attached to its colonial origins.<sup>49</sup>

The comparative aspect in anthropological studies may be an important way of deconstructing the remnants of colonialism, but the new approaches and discussions will have to be intercultural. Not the exclusive comparison of the different anthropological ‘Others’ among themselves for a higher level of abstraction in theory *about* them, but the inclusive intercultural comparison, which explicitly connects the observation of the ‘Other’ with the observation of ‘Self’, of indigenous and Western culture histories, in order to establish comparability, parallelisms and so create a Third Space of coevalness and dialogue.<sup>50</sup> In doing so we may focus on the recognition of common values and shared humanity, and systematically search for terms of equality, an analytical vocabulary that is applicable and acceptable to both ‘Self’ and ‘Other’.

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49 See the article by Pels (1997) on the multiple and dynamic relationship of anthropology *with* colonialism, including insights from the anthropology *of* colonialism.

50 ‘Cultural diversity or difference carries an exotic appeal, while cultural purity assumes that any appropriation of a different cultural register is just contamination. Hybridity thus becomes a means of resisting a unitary identity, emphasising instead multiplicity and plural identities, existing between cultures (native and colonial master’s), in what Bhabha has called the Third Space’. (Nayar 2015: 92). See also Gudykunst (2005) as an introduction to issues of intercultural communication.

## 7 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

Mesoamerica is a living civilisation. The valuable (but biased and incomplete) information of the colonial sources can be complemented by contemporary oral traditions. Indigenous peoples in Mexico and Central America today are the descendants and inheritors of the great original Mesoamerican civilisation (Toltecatoytl). In spite of a long history of colonial oppression and present-day racist discrimination, ruthless marginalisation and irrational ethnocide, they have maintained their specific languages and identity. Their culture has preserved many elements of knowledge and symbolic thought from those ancient times, while also interacting with other cultures and integrating novel elements from abroad.

In our research we have found that the living languages and traditions are a wonderful source for interpreting the precolonial and early colonial indigenous manuscripts and related works of art. Cultural continuity is a crucial key to understanding the Mesoamerican past. Conversely the study of ancient art, archaeology and history in connection with the living heritage is important for the indigenous peoples today to validate social positions and foster cultural identities. Heritage, values and representation, consequently, become important topics of theoretical and comparative reflection. The issue of heritage connects our project to concerns about the rights of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis nationalist ideologies, and brings to the fore the implications of introducing and applying the voices and rights of (internally) colonised peoples in academic and social contexts, not only in Mesoamerica but worldwide.

Conceived in this manner, academic research may bring to light important components of cultural memory, but not just as items of humanist interest in the past, but as stimuli that evoke a sense of belonging and inspiration in an awareness-raising effort. In this way the art-historical study becomes a crucial ingredient in the decolonisation of culture and memory. Such a decolonising hermeneutical method demands a critical assessment of the socio-economic and political factors that lead to injustices and human suffering in the present. It also calls for the engagement and active participation of indigenous experts and communities.

Thus the main methodological practices of a decolonising approach in case studies such as this one may be summarised as follows:

- Definition of the research design in relation to the struggle for recognition and implementation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples; realisation of the research in cooperation with indigenous experts and/or communities.

- Deconstruction of colonial notions in the cultural-historical sources (criticising and avoiding colonial and otherwise discriminatory terminologies, as well as alienated or alienating viewpoints in general).
- Focus on cultural continuity and intercultural equality in order to achieve a reintegration of memory and an interpretation of artworks in the proper terms of their own living culture (implying an emic and participatory approach).
- Concern for tangible and intangible heritage aiming at the continuation, dignification and validation of the culture and community in question, not as a static past but as an element for emancipatory education and creative elaboration directed towards the future.
- Contributing to the creation of conditions in which the Indigenous Peoples and the individual communities can be truly informed and can have a decisive voice in all matters that concern them. This involves procuring access, training, scholarships and a forum for experts who themselves belong to Indigenous Peoples, as well as promoting their active participation in and their direction of concrete projects.

Re-establishing a connection between past and present, between a community and (knowledge about) its heritage, will lead to new concrete insights into possible meanings of details of ancient art, artefacts and monuments. What we argue for, however, is not just a matter of analytical techniques, but rather a quest for reflection on those meanings and on that past in order to create another, more committed attitude of identification with and care for the heritage (and the future) of the indigenous community. In this way the main thrust of this approach does not only concern the remains of the past themselves, but also their value for constructing and reconstructing *communitas* in the social struggles of the present.<sup>51</sup>

Such a perspective is not common in archaeology or in the humanities, and may be criticised, even censured, as ‘mixing politics with scholarship’ with all the difficulties, counteractions and boycotts that come from going against the mainstream practice. The call for awareness and decolonisation, on the other hand, implies (self-)criticism and may have a disturbing effect on students, or even lead to despair: what can *I* do about it? Actually this is precisely the question – it should not be posed or taken in a rhetorical fashion, but as a challenge to start thinking independently and morally. There is no easy recipe

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51 The classic concept of *communitas* as defined by Turner (1975) should not be understood in an idealised normative sense (much less in a nationalistic or exclusive one) but as a practice of working together and giving mutual support in a context of suffering.

in these matters, but situating one's research in this changing paradigm will start a development that will also bring energy, a sense of purpose, and many unexpected wonderful fruits.

We are writing now in a world and time of violence. The modern neo-colonial economy of global exploitation and abuse has caused widespread social injustice, unbearable suffering, massacres, war, and refugees. Specifically, Mexico seems to have become a failed state, in danger of becoming a failed community, as the country is in danger of sinking away into a night of horror. The entanglement of political corruption, organised crime and impunity has frustrated the development of true democracy and the rule of law. The continuous violations of human rights, generalised torture, murder of journalists and dissidents, in combination with total impunity, are the undisputable hallmark of this bitter reality. The forced disappearance and killing of students in Ayotzinapa (2014) is a telling example, the police firing guns at protesting civilians in Nochixtlan (2016) another.

It is against this background that we do our research. And the main question becomes: what are the values of the past that may inspire the present to take a turn for the better?



**PART 1**

*Offering to the Sacred Bundles*





## Tomb 7 at Monte Albán

As it was a Saturday, the day when workers were paid, I had left Mr Valenzuela in charge of the exploration, and had gone down to Oaxaca to collect the funds. When returning together with my wife, and arriving where Valenzuela was working, he received me with the word ‘*Guelaguetza!*’, which means offering or gift in Zapotec, hung the jade necklace around my neck and showed me the conch trumpet.

CASO 1969: 44

With these words the Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso Andrade (1896–1970) recalls the beginning of the exploration of one of the most famous Mexican archeological discoveries, Tomb 7 at the archaeological site of Monte Albán, near Oaxaca City, on 6 January 1932. Its fame is primarily due to the magnificent treasure of hundreds of precious artifacts scattered among a large quantity of bones: necklaces with golden figures (beads, bells, turtle carapaces, etc.) combined with coral, pearls, turquoise, amber and *azabache*, furthermore earspools of obsidian, jade and rock crystal, various vases of *tecalli* and silver, jade rings, jade nose plugs, a copper axe, golden tweezers, bracelets of gold and silver, a fan handle of gold, ‘false nails’, a lip plug of gold and jade in the form of a bird’s head, pectorals, rings and pendants of gold and silver representing birds, butterflies or deities, and so on. Several of these precious items have forms or decorations that, in accordance with the artistic conventions of their time, convey specific meanings. This applies in particular to the more than forty animal bones – mostly of jaguars and some of eagles – on whose surface figurative scenes are recorded in a very fine and precise form of miniature art. These are true pictorial texts with a synthetic and precise content, which allow us access to the thoughts and feelings of those who left these objects and relics at the site.

In his magnum opus *El Tesoro de Monte Albán* (1969), Alfonso Caso presented a detailed material and iconographic analysis of all the artefacts.<sup>1</sup> His clear,

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1 The text was republished as volume 5 of his *Obras Completas* (2006). In December 2011, the journal *Arqueología Mexicana* devoted a special edition (number 41) to *El Tesoro de Monte Albán*, offering a comprehensive catalogue of the found objects with excellent new

erudite and detailed comments provide a complete picture of the findings and are the obligatory starting point for any further study.

Most of the excavated artefacts are exhibited today in the regional museum in the former Santo Domingo convent in Oaxaca City. Traditionally they were organised in material categories, following the same analytical manner in which Caso (1969) had published them. Some items are in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, where they are exhibited together with similar findings from other tombs in the Oaxaca region. As is so often the case, the contents of the tomb have been fragmented, reduced to loose elements of specific material categories without a meaningful cohesion and message: the original structure and relationships have been lost or destroyed, making it difficult to grasp their message today.<sup>2</sup>

We consider the contents of the tomb as a coherent iconographic complex with a specific message. Therefore, our interpretation – which, of course, to some extent has to remain hypothetical – must take into account both the information content of each sign and the manner in which these signs are connected among each other and with other contextual elements in a structured discourse as a message that makes sense within the paradigm in which we are analyzing these fragmentary remains. The interpretive exercise is one of reintegrating cultural memory: we have to bring together again the dispersed data of archaeology, iconography, history and present-day oral tradition, in order to situate the treasure of Monte Albán in its appropriate context.

## 1 A Deposition of Two Periods

The ancient city of Monte Albán was built on the tops and on the slopes of a mountain range that overlooks the valley of Oaxaca. From this central location, it exercised a considerable influence over a large region in southern Mexico, reflected in the distribution of archaeological elements with a diagnostic style, such as the effigy vessels or ‘urns’. Most likely it was the capital of

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photographs and a selection of Caso's descriptions. The original publication can now be consulted on-line: <http://www.difusion.inah.gob.mx/images/ebook/TesoroMonteAlbanoo/>.

2 See the dissertation of Moss (2012) for a detailed and critical contextualisation of the way these archaeological findings were handled and exhibited in the days of Caso's project, paying attention to the ideological background of the nation's self-representation.

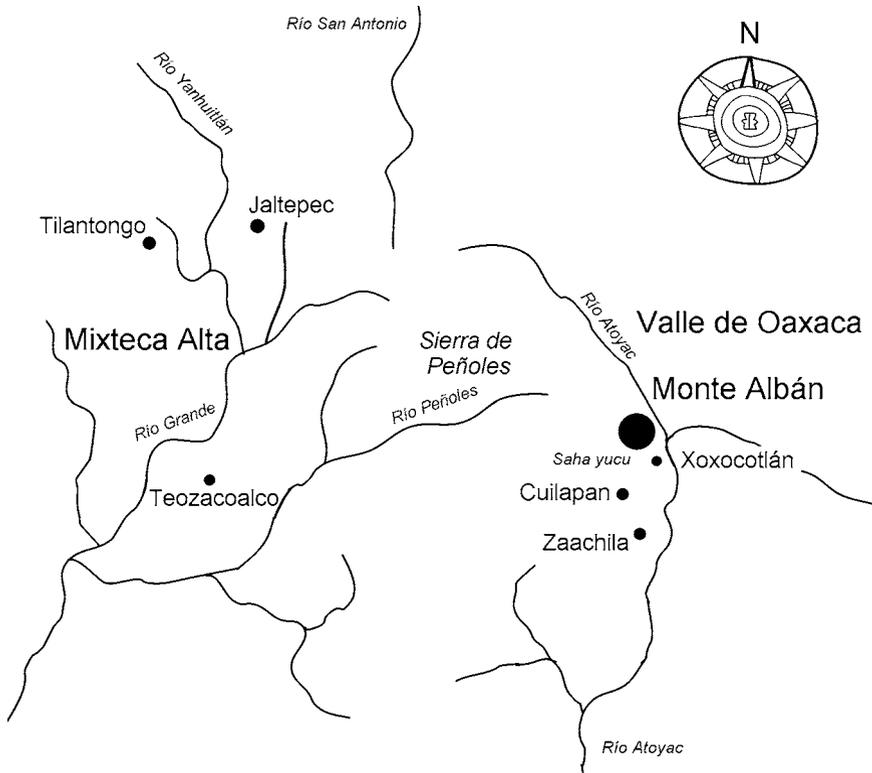


ILLUSTRATION 1.01 *The location of Monte Albán*

a multiethnic empire, dominated by the Beni Zaa (Zapotecs).<sup>3</sup> The prominent location in the landscape and the many temples present in the center leave no doubt that the site had great religious significance and probably counted as a sacred place since its very origin.<sup>4</sup>

As for the chronology of the site we have to refer to the autonomous development of Mesoamerican civilisation as reconstructed on the basis of archaeological observations and dating methods (mainly art styles in combination with stratigraphy and C<sub>14</sub>) as well as epigraphic and historical information. Archaeologically speaking, Monte Albán is first and foremost a Classic site, i.e. it belongs to a period (ca. AD 200–AD 850/900) that witnessed an intense

3 For an overview of the archaeology of Monte Albán and its context, see for example the books of Blanton (1978), Flannery and Marcus (1983), Blanton et al. (1999), Urcid Serrano (2001), Marcus (2008) and Joyce (2010).

4 See the contribution by Joyce in: Hendon and Joyce (2004).



ILLUSTRATION 1.02 *The temple building above Tomb 7 at Monte Albán*



ILLUSTRATION 1.03 *Entrance of Tomb 7 (under the temple building)*



ILLUSTRATION 1.04A *Entrance to the main chamber of Tomb 7*

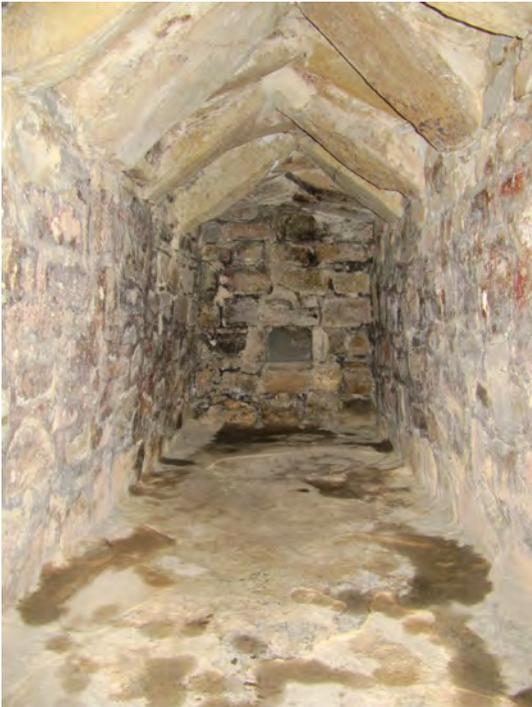


ILLUSTRATION 1.04B *Interior of Tomb 7 (main chamber)*

urban development throughout Mesoamerica. The tomb that was assigned the number 7 by Caso, was built as an underground space for a burial underneath a temple located in the northern part of the site. It is located behind the North Platform, which probably functioned as the rulers' residence. On stylistic grounds the complex of temple and tomb can be dated back to the beginning of the Classic period (Monte Alban phases II and IIIA).

Diagnostic elements from the Early Classic period in Tomb 7 are: a calendric inscription on a slab placed on the roof of the antechamber, fragmentary remains of a mural on the wall, and three effigy vessels ('urns'), representing an old man flanked by two images of the Rain or Storm God (*Cocijo* in Zapotec). These elements exhibit the specific style and system of graphic communication used at Monte Albán during the Classic period.<sup>5</sup>

The vast majority of the artifacts found in Tomb 7, however, belong to another style, which is also manifest in polychrome ceramics and pictorial manuscripts and which is characteristic of the Postclassic period (ca. 900–1521 AD). The 'heartland' of this style (and iconography) is Central and Southern Mexico: therefore it is generally referred to as the 'Mixteca-Puebla style'.<sup>6</sup> Caso rightly concluded that Tomb 7 had been constructed and used at the beginning of the Classic period, but was later reused in the Postclassic period. At that time the realm of Monte Albán had already come to an end and the site itself had been largely abandoned (cf. Blomster 2008).

## 2 The Human Remains in Tomb 7

Originally the access to Tomb 7 was from the courtyard in front of the temple below which it was constructed. Its orientation is from West (under the temple) to East (entrance). Tomb 7 looks a lot like the other tombs of that period

5 Sellen (2007) presents an iconographic analysis of the characteristic effigy vessels. Presumably Zapotec was the main language spoken at Monte Albán during the Classic period. The Monte Albán writing system of that time occupied hieroglyphic signs in columns to record words and sentences (Urcid Serrano 2001, 2005). Its style influenced various parts of the Oaxaca region. For the archaeology of the classic tombs of Monte Albán see Martínez López, Winter and Markens (2014).

6 On the Mixteca-Puebla style see for example Robertson (1959, 1966, 1970, 1982), Anders (1975), Smith and Heath-Smith (1980). For a general interpretative review of Mixteca-Puebla pottery, see the doctoral dissertation of Gilda Hernández Sánchez (2005) and the contribution by Lind on 'Mixteca-Puebla Polychromes and the Codices' to the volume edited by Zborover and Kroefges (2015).

and consists of three units: an antechamber (called 'first chamber' by Caso), a more restricted space, the so-called 'threshold' (*umbral*), and the chamber proper (called 'second chamber' by Caso).

Caso (1969) describes the construction and dimension of Tomb 7: it consists of two chambers of different sizes linked by a threshold. The first is 1.85 m long and 1.40 m wide, and its height to the flat roof is 1.75 m. The second is 3.60 m long, 1.25 m wide and its height to the apex of the angle of the roof is 2 m. The threshold is 80 cm long, 80 cm wide and 1.60 m high. The first chamber is covered with flat stones, placed on others, that are sticking out from the walls. The second chamber has an angular roof formed with large slabs, which at one end rest on the wall of the tomb and at the other are joined in the centre of the chamber to form a vault. The threshold is also covered with flat stones. The chamber of Tomb 7 was subdivided by rows of stones, which were removed after excavation.

Using these rows as a point of departure, Caso divided the tomb into six 'regions'. The first region is the western end of the chamber, where a set of human bones clearly occupied a central position: Skeleton A. According to Dr Rubín de la Borbolla, who was the main physical anthropologist in Caso's project, most of this set of bones may have come from a single individual (though they by no means constitute a complete skeleton), yet there were at least some intrusive skeletal fragments from other individuals found at the same place. Caso identified this Skeleton A as 'the richest and most important' (Caso 1969: 122).

Two stone alignments in front of Skeleton A delimited what Caso called 'the second region'. There the fragmentary remains of Skeletons B, C, and D were located: 'parts of the skeleton of an adult male and of that of a young man; and bones of a woman, probably intrusive'. The latter were 'traces of bones of two women, one old and one young' (Rubín de la Borbolla, in Caso 1969: 279–280).

Caso's third region is the centre of the chamber, after the easternmost row of stones of the second region. No human remains were found, but several artifacts (including objects of jade and gold) were found here: this seems to have been a small open space. There were several large loose stones lying against the north wall, and a row of stones in a semicircle against the south wall of the tomb.

The fourth region is the northeastern corner of the chamber, where another group of bones, Skeleton N, was found, but they were so disintegrated and incomplete that they defied interpretation.

The fifth region is the southeastern corner of the chamber. There, according to Caso (1969: 226): 'were a few bones, but they could not be considered a skeleton. The associated jewels, however, were very rich'.

The sixth region is the ‘threshold’ (the passage between antechamber and chamber) and the antechamber itself (the eastern section of the tomb). The antechamber contained the skeletal remains of a minimum of four individuals, a skull decorated with turquoise mosaic, five maxillaries of adult males with perforations suggesting they were used as (part of) buccal masks. Rubín de la Borbolla characterised the sixth region as ‘overcrowded with bones’: *‘un gran hacinamiento óseo’* (in Caso 1969: 275).

Rubín de la Borbolla’s general conclusion about the skeletal remains from Tomb 7 was:

The human bones found in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán are very irregularly destroyed and anatomically very incomplete. The exact cause of this situation is unknown, but they may have suffered several exhumations previous to their final inhumation in Monte Albán and in this process some bones may have been destroyed and others may have been lost. In fact Tomb 7 may be considered an accidental place for this secondary burial.

in CASO 1969: 303

This analysis established unequivocally that the Postclassic remains found in Tomb 7 correspond not to a primary burial, but to a secondary burial: after having been buried, the human remains were exhumated after some time and then reburied as part of the funerary rites and customs of those days. However, the original Classic use of the structure as a tomb and the presence of skeletal remains – probably connected with a possibly unconscious comparison of the treasure with the almost archetypal Egyptian tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amon, discovered ten years earlier – continue to exert a powerful influence on the perspective of researchers. As a result there is still a general aprioristic tendency to interpret the Postclassic deposit as the burial of a major individual (Skeleton A), which is the set of skeletal remains at the western end of Tomb 7’s main chamber, and the other bones as those of servants who accompanied this individual on his road to the hereafter.

Caso himself regarded the precious objects as belongings of the deceased who had been buried here, and tried – in vain – to relate the materials to specific skeletons. An illustrative example is the finding of a jade ring around the phalanx of a finger. At first glance this combination suggests that the ring belonged to a buried individual, but the phalanges of the other fingers, arm bones and other remains of such an individual are conspicuously missing. We must understand this combination, therefore, either as a ringed finger that was cut off, or as a phalanx bone that was wrapped in cloth and/or paper as a small bundle with the ring placed around it.

Rubín de la Borbolla identified Skeleton A as a very incomplete and deteriorated skeleton, with an osteopathological craneal vault.<sup>7</sup> In his opinion these remains are of an adult man who was no more than 55 years old, who had a head injury and traces of arthritis in some bones.<sup>8</sup>

This led Caso to propose as a general interpretive hypothesis that the main buried person (Skeleton A): ‘may have been a sick individual, who suffered from a brain tumor, and who because of his cranial characteristics, probably was insane. Well, this makes us think that perhaps he was regarded as the incarnation of Xolotl, i.e. the god of monsters, and that he was credited with a semi-divine nature’.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere Caso states that: ‘[...] this skeleton was that of a man who had a large skull-deformation and a brain tumor that probably caused him a serious mental illness, as a consequence of which he would have been considered a monster’.<sup>10</sup>

As Caso himself admitted, this is mere speculation; solid arguments are lacking. Still, following his original hypothesis, Caso interprets the dog heads that appear carved on various jaguar bones in the tomb as references to precisely this deity Xolotl, who was portrayed as a dog and in the Aztec context was associated with uncommon natural features that have been qualified as monstrous.<sup>11</sup>

### 3 The Ancient Literary Context

Among the archaeological remains, ancient visual art occupies a crucial position as it often expresses specific historical and religious data in the

7 See his inventory of Skeleton A in Caso 1969: 276–277 and the different studies of the craneal vault (*calota*) in Caso 1969: 325 ff.

8 Rubín de la Borbolla synthesised the views of various experts about the deformity observed in the cranial cavity of Skeleton A: ‘*La lesión fue causada por la siembra hematogena de origen meníngeo, de larga duración, de tipo tuberculoso, con un proceso osteítico deformante del tipo Piaget*’. (Caso 1969: 342).

9 ‘*haya sido un enfermo, que tenía un tumor en el cerebro, y que, por sus características craneanas, probablemente era un demente, pues esto nos hace pensar que quizá fuera considerado como la encarnación de Xolotl o dios de los monstruos, y se le atribuía un carácter semidivino*’. (Caso 1969: 239).

10 ‘*este esqueleto ... era el de un hombre que tenía una gran deformación craneana y un tumor en el cerebro que probablemente le originaba una seria enfermedad mental, lo que haría que se le considerara como monstruo*’ (Caso 1969: 187).

11 Seler (1904/09, I: 192 ff.) had already made a number of pertinent interpretive remarks on the Aztec deity Xolotl, who also plays an important role in the narrative of the first sunrise.

indigenous vision. Many works of art in Tomb 7 contain figurative decorations, or rather explicit statements in a specific representational code of ancient Mexico, known as *pictography* or pictorial writing. Caso recognised the stylistic similarities between the visual art of Tomb 7 (particularly the scenes recorded on the jaguar and eagle bones) and the paintings in the pictorial manuscripts (codices), which are the main historical and artistic source for the Postclassic period in this area. This brought him to study those manuscripts in detail.

During Caso's lifetime the provenance, contents and meanings of these manuscripts were a topic of intense scholarly debate. Already at the end of the nineteenth century it was recognised that the few precolonial manuscripts that had been preserved belonged to two groups, each called after its most prominent member: (a) the Borgia Group after Codex Borgia, which was named after one of its European owners, the Italian cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731–1804); and (b) the Vindobonensis Group after Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus 1, which was given this name because it was preserved in the Austrian National Library in Vienna (*Vindobona* in Latin).

In the 1930s, many researchers considered the codices of what was then known as the Vindobonensis Group to be similar to those of the Borgia Group. As for the latter, it was easily recognised that its contents were religious, because many images could be identified with the depictions and identifications of indigenous deities and rituals that appear, painted in the traditional style, in the early colonial manuscripts that were made at the request of the Spanish missionaries in order to identify elements of the indigenous religion.<sup>12</sup>

The German scholar Eduard Seler (1849–1922) was one of the founding fathers of the iconographical study of ancient Mexican art. His detailed analysis of pictorial elements (including deities and their attributes), based on erudite knowledge of the early colonial sources, is very impressive and to some extent still fundamental. His overall theoretical framework, however, was in accordance with the dominant paradigm of his time, which considered religious symbolism as a way of registering natural phenomena, especially astral movements. Thus Seler interpreted the codices of the Borgia Group as a kind of astronomical compendia. He showed restraint in proposing such interpretations

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12 To this category belong the codices of the Magliabechi Group (Tudela, Ixtlixochitl, Magliabechi), the Codex Telleriano-Remensis and its later (more complete) Italian version, the Codex Vaticanus A, all from the Nahuatl-speaking world (Central Mexico).

for the Vindobonensis Group (which he studied much less), but several of his followers went further and stipulated that those codices also contained highly encrypted information about the movements of astral bodies.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, following suggestions by Zelia Nuttall, a few scholars hesitantly proposed that scenes from the Vindobonensis Group might be understood as historical narratives, but they did not know to which region and people these codices might be referring. James Cooper Clark reconstructed the main lines of the biography of a historical personage, Lord 8 Deer, already in 1912.

Caso himself was particularly inspired by a lecture of Herbert Spinden, which showed that a series of scenes in such a codex could be understood as a historical narrative, namely the biography of a specific individual. In this context his friend and colleague, the Mexican historian Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, called his attention to a large pictorial map that contained series of individuals, painted with name-signs. Glosses on the map referred to the town of Teozacualco, which some people at the time thought to be Zacualco in the Mexican state of Jalisco. But Jiménez Moreno, author of a commentary on the Codex of Yanhuitlan (1940), an early colonial historical manuscript, recognised this to be Teozacualco in the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) region in the State of Oaxaca.

In 1949 Caso published a breakthrough article on this Map of Teozacualco, in which he showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that the persons painted in in this pictorial map also occur among the different members of the Vindobonensis Group. Thanks to explanatory texts on the same map, he was able to identify them as lineages that ruled the towns of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) and Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) in the state of Oaxaca. With this observation Caso demonstrated that this specific group of codices had originated in Ñuu Dzauí, the Nation of the Rain (the Mixtec region) and was historical in character. Caso elaborated his discovery in several commentaries on particular manuscripts (e.g. 1960, 1964), and so laid the foundation for the study of the Ñuu Dzauí codices. On the basis of Caso's geographical identification of the origin of the Vindobonensis Group it became customary to refer to the style of the precolonial codices as Mixtec.

By demonstrating that the Mixtec codices had genealogical contents and dealt with human history, Caso had contributed decisively to the demise of

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13 Danzel (1922) presented a summary of Seler's codex interpretations for a larger public. For a biography of Seler and an analysis of his work see Anders (1967).

the astral interpretations of Seler. This coincided with the obsolescence of the paradigm of interpreting religion as veiled astronomy after World War II (Dorson 1955). Still, the other category of codices (the Borgia Group) had obviously religious contents. In his monograph *Tlacuilolli* (1961) the Austrian scholar Karl Anton Nowotny made a decisive contribution to replacing Seler's astral paradigm with an understanding of this group as a set of divinatory and ritual manuals.<sup>14</sup>

As the religious books do not contain specific geographical or historical references, their place of origin remained a topic of debate. Following Caso's discoveries, several scholars, such as Donald Robertson, have suggested that those codices of the Teoamoxtli Group (Borgia Group), being stylistically close to members of the Vindobonensis Group, might be Mixtec as well. On the other hand, there are clear correspondences with the Nahuatl-speaking world of central Mexico. In fact, because of the rich (and as such unique) documentation of Aztec religion by Sahagún and other Spanish missionaries, the Nahuatl language is generally used as a point of reference in analysing their iconography. The wish to include the undeniable parallels of these codices with both central and southern Mexico was an important reason to coin the term 'Mixteca-Puebla style'.

We now know that the two groups (Borgia Group and Vindobonensis Group) actually represent two different genres: one can be qualified as predominantly religious, the other as historical in character.

The Borgia Group focuses on religious matters: its basic theme is the association of calendar periods with deities, as well as with diverse symbols that emphasize the consequences of the influence of divine powers on segments of time. These books have a mantic (divinatory) focus and instruct us which ritual measures to take. They are composed in a symbolic (prescriptive) mode and express the esoteric aspect of the calendar, namely the symbolic, religious and ethical meaning of the days and of the different time divisions.<sup>15</sup> Much more than a chronometric or astronomical device, the calendar was the

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14 The astral interpretation (German: *Astraldeutung*) had – and still has – a noticeable influence on the interpretation of ancient Mexican religious iconography (e.g. Séjourné 1987, Milbrath 2013). For an analytical history of the astralist paradigm in the study of the Mexican codices, see our commentary on Codex Tezcatlipoca (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1994). We will return to this issue and to Nowotny's work in Chapter 7.

15 See the interpretive commentaries of Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991, 1993), Anders, Jansen and Loo (1994); Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1994), Anders and Jansen (1994).

paramount structuring principle of religious and social life. Each day, each of the many periods defined within the calendar was associated with specific patron deities, historical or religious narratives, as well as with cosmological realms (world directions, earlier creations, layers of the universe).<sup>16</sup> In spells and ritual speech, days appeared as esoteric names for artefacts, places and natural elements. Each moment in time thus had a symbolic value, which was crucial for divination and ritual. A person's day of birth became his or her calendar name, and this defined character, personhood, possible marriage partners and destiny. According to the day on which crucial events happened or problems (such as illness) manifested themselves, the priests predicted the outcome and prescribed ritual remedies and appropriate behaviour. The ancient religious manuscripts contain such predictions and related ritual prescriptions, painted in figurative form and/or hieroglyphic signs, and so, in a more general sense, they express the ancient religious worldview and symbolism.

We refer to the religious corpus (the former Borgia Group), as the Teoamoxtli Group after the Nahuatl term *teo-amoxtli*, meaning 'divine book(s)' or 'book(s) about the gods', precisely in memory of the recompilation attributed to Huemac.<sup>17</sup> Its leading manuscript (Codex Borgia) we have renamed Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, 'the Book of Night and Wind' after the Nahuatl hendiadys *yoalli Ehecatl*, 'night, wind', used to characterise the mysterious nature of the gods.

The main mantic-ritual codices are:

- Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus)
- Codex Tonalamatl (Tonalamatl Aubin)
- Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)
- Codex Tonalpouhqui (Codex Vaticanus 3773 / B)
- Codex Tlamanalli (Cospi / Bologna)
- Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer)
- Codex Mictlan (Laud)
- Codex Yada (Porfirio Díaz), the religious section

16 On Mesoamerican cosmovision see for example Broda and Báez-Jorge (2001), Carrasco (2013) and Díaz (2016).

17 See our Introduction. In fact, the Mexican scholar Antonio de León y Gama expressed his conviction in a letter of 1796 that the codex in possession of cardinal Borgia was nothing but the *Teoamoxtli* of Huemac (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993: 18).

Codex Yecu (Fonds Mexicain 20/21)  
Codex Yautepec<sup>18</sup>

Together these manuscripts document the philosophy of time of ancient Mesoamerica.

Another genre of pictorial manuscripts refers mainly to historical, economic and geographical matters: it includes genealogies of rulers of city-states, tribute lists and territorial maps from the early colonial periods. Such manuscripts are generally composed in a narrative (descriptive) mode. Early colonial examples have been preserved from the Nahuatl speaking world and from various other Mesoamerican peoples. The precolonial codices of this genre, however, come from the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) region, as Alfonso Caso has demonstrated: they contain the genealogies and histories of the dynasties that ruled the different city-states or rather village-states (*yuvui tayu*, 'mat and throne') in the Mixteca Alta (*Ñuu Dzau Ñuhu*) region during the Postclassic period. Therefore we now call this corpus (formerly known as the Vindobonensis Group) the Ñuu Dzau Group.

The main codices of the Ñuu Dzau Group are:

- Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)
- Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley)
- Codex Tonindeye (Zouche-Nuttall)
- Codex Iya Nacuaa (Colombino-Becker)
- Codex Añute (Selden)

Together these pictorial manuscripts give us an overall narrative framework of Postclassic Ñuu Dzau history, politics and ideology.

Both genres of precolonial books make use of the calendar as a structural principle, but in a different way. The historical texts situate the cyclical sequences in a linear fashion in order to date the narrated events. The religious texts use the different subdivisions of the calendar to order the presence of divine powers and their symbolic associations as a basis for mantic counselling and for indicating the necessary ritual activities.

Caso, Nowotny and others have laid a foundation for further research. The challenge facing us now is to follow up on their work and to compare the

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18 This fragment recently surfaced in Oaxaca. See the article by Urcid and Van Doesburg 2016.

artefacts of Tomb 7, particularly the pictorial statements, with the information provided by the codices. On the one hand, in Part 1 we will try to fit the treasure into the dynastic context of its days, as exposed by the Ñuu Dzau Group. On the other hand, in Part 2 we will try to uncover the religious meaning of Tomb 7 by analysing its connections with religious iconography, in particular with the contents of the Teomoxtl Group.

#### 4 Calendar Dates in Tomb 7

Alfonso Caso worked out a full synchronology for the Ñuu Dzau codices, starting at the end of the seventh century AD. Continuing this enormous work, Emily Rabin checked and recalculated the sequence in a holistic and very precise manner, taking into account newer insights into the meaning of certain crucial signs and dates, as well as biological criteria. This led her to conclude that recorded Ñuu Dzau history started considerably later than Caso had suggested, namely at the end of the ninth century A.D.<sup>19</sup>

The sequences of days and years of the Postclassic calendar as used by the Nahuas and Mixtecs are explicitly present on the carved jaguar bones: Bone 203k, Bone 172i, Bone 37a, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 3. Apart from these, several other temporalities are present in Tomb 7. The oldest one is the calendar statement on the Classic slab in the roof of the antechamber: most likely it was a reused piece that originally formed the entrance to a tomb (perhaps this same Tomb 7) or was part of another historical monument.

One of the most precious and eye-catching Postclassic artefacts also contains a date, a complex one. Golden ornament Number 26 represents the upper part of the body of a man with an elaborate Plumed Serpent headdress. On the shoulders a double date has been inscribed, containing two year bearers (with 'A-O signs'). The year bearer sign on the man's right shoulder (left for the beholder) is combined ('filled') with the mask of the wind god, i.e. the day Wind (position 11 in the cycle of 20 days). The face of the sign Wind looks to the right (for us) and suggests that the direction of reading is: first the right shoulder of the priest, then the left shoulder. This year sign Wind is surrounded by 10 dots, so we must read the complete sign as year 10 Wind. A year with

19 Rabin presented her discoveries at several congresses, and finally synthesised the main argument in a publication of 2004. For an application of her correlation in the form of a full chronological reconstruction, see: Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011).



ILLUSTRATION 1.05 *Golden ornament (pectoral) Number 26 (drawing: Iván Rivera).*

this name does not belong to the well-known Ñuu Dzaui (and Mexica) year count, in which the year bearers use the signs Reed, Flint, House, and Rabbit (positions III, VIII, XIII and XVIII in the cycle of 20 days). The year Wind belongs to another count, which takes days corresponding to positions II, VII,

XII and XVII in the cycle of 20 days.<sup>20</sup> Given the fact that Monte Albán is situated in the Zapotec area, it is logical to assume that in this case the Wind year belongs to the Postclassic Beni Zaa (Zapotec) count.

On the left shoulder of the ornament (right for the beholder) is another year bearer sign, this time combined with the sign House (position III in the cycle of 20 days), surrounded by 11 dots, i.e. year 11 House, a year that does belong to the well-known Mixtec (and Mexica) count. On both sides of the upper part of the year sign we notice eyes, decorated with feathers. This motif is also present in the Mixtec codices. It seems to express phonetically the word *nuu* in Dzaha Dzauí (the Mixtec language), which means both 'eye' and the preposition 'in'. This element ensures a reading of the sign as *nuu cuiya*, 'in the year...', which documents the presence of (speakers of) the Mixtec language in Tomb 7.<sup>21</sup>

In between the two year bearers, directly opposite the sign Wind, is another calendar reference: 2 Flint. This has to represent a day. There is no other day in this chronological text. Therefore this has to be the day that is connected with the two year dates. The most likely interpretation is that a specific day is given (2 Flint) in two ways of counting the years, as already proposed by Caso (1969: 92).

Year bearers are part of 52-year cycles (Nahuatl: *xiuhmolpilli*, 'Binding of the Years'; Mixtec: *dzini*, 'head' and '*edad de los indios de 52 años*' according to the vocabulary of Alvarado). After the completion of this cycle, all dates are repeated in their fixed cyclical sequence. Here we have a day situated in two different cycles of 52 year bearers: a Beni Zaa (Zapotec) count, and a Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) count. The days 10 Wind and 11 House are consecutive days, suggesting that in fact these two ways of counting the years by defining a year bearer only differed from one another by one day. In other words, the ceremonies that started the years in the two systems were held on consecutive days. Where one system initiated the year on 10 Wind, the other did so the next day, 11 House. The dating in two calendar counts, then, contains a kind of correlation. Consequently, the golden ornament Number 26 can be identified as valid for two time reckoning systems; as such it documents the presence of two cultural, linguistic, ethnic and political entities in Tomb 7 and at the same time demonstrates a relation of coevalness between them.

20 This count is documented by Cuicatec codices (called 'Porfirio Díaz' and 'Fernández Leal') and the Azoyú codices (from the State of Guerrero) in Postclassic and early colonial times, but also by the Zapotec Classic inscriptions (cf. Urcid 2001, 2005).

21 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 22–29).

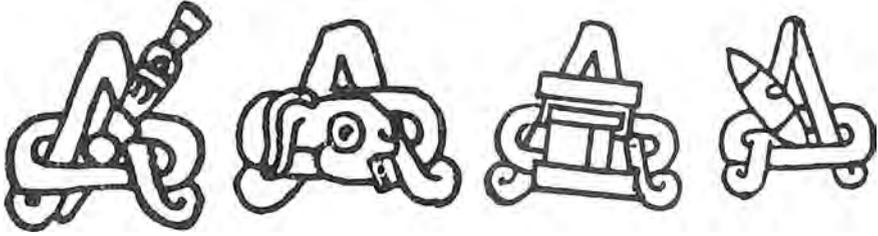


ILLUSTRATION 1.06 *Year-bearer signs in the Ñuu Dzauí codices.*

We discuss this artefact in more detail in Chapters 2 and 4. For the moment, this correlation of two year counts is very illuminating: it suggests that the Postclassic contents of Tomb 7 had links with both the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) and Beni Zaa (Zapotec) peoples.

## 5 Connections with Ñuu Dzauí History

The style and iconographical conventions of the paintings in the Postclassic books (the Teoamoxtli Group and the Ñuu Dzauí Group) are quite different from the sculptures, murals and effigy vessels of the Classic period, when Monte Albán flourished as the main urban centre of a realm that mainly extended within the world of the Beni Zaa (Zapotecs). Hence it became customary to refer to the Classic style as Zapotec and to the Postclassic style as Mixtec. For example, the geometric patterns that decorate the walls of Mitla in the Zapotec part of the valley of Oaxaca have parallels in the codices and therefore Mitla has often been called Mixtec. Such designations may cause confusion because they suggest that artefacts made in these styles imply the presence of speakers of the languages concerned (Zapotec or Mixtec respectively). The presence of 'Mixtec' stylistic elements in the valley of Oaxaca was thus taken to imply a Mixtec invasion of Zapotec territory.

In reality, however, the two styles in question are not representative of an ethnic or linguistic affiliation, but of the periods in which they were in use (Classic vs. Postclassic). Pictorial writing is a characteristic of the Postclassic Ñuu Dzauí codices, but is not limited to them. Other peoples also used this type of pictography in the same period, including the Nahuas and Beni Zaa. Hence the need to re-establish the ethnic affiliation of Tomb 7 on the basis of independent arguments that go much further than stylistic resemblances.

Curiously, Caso did not pay much attention to possible connections of the visual art in Tomb 7 with the codices of the Ñuu Dzau Group he himself deciphered. Of course, he did recognise references to several important images in that corpus, but without finding more structural correspondences and possibly cognate scenes. Instead, he compared the figurative aspects of the golden objects and the scenes recorded on the bones mainly with the religious symbolism of the codices belonging to the Teoamoxtl Group (Borgia Group). While Caso did not find any connection between the calendar names (personages) in the pictorial texts in Tomb 7 and those in the Ñuu Dzau codices, the treasure of Tomb 7 has generally been recognised as Mixtec, but it was not clear what its relationship with Ñuu Dzau history actually was.

After Caso's seminal work, there has been significant progress in deciphering the Ñuu Dzau codices. Several authors have clarified the chronology of events reported here, identified place signs, analyzed in depth the techniques of narrative pictography, and shed light on religious and ideological aspects.<sup>22</sup> Later researchers have found some more direct parallels between scenes and figurative elements in the art of Tomb 7 and the contents of the Ñuu Dzau Group.

Thanks to Caso's work (synthesised in his *Reyes y Reinos de la Mixteca*, posthumously published in 1977/79) we now know that the Ñuu Dzau codices centre around three main themes:

- (1) The sacred origin of the dynasties: the first ancestors were born from trees in specific ritually important towns.
- (2) The epic narrative of the rise to power and tragic demise of Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw', an ambitious warrior from Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo), and Lady 6 Monkey 'Power of the Plumed Serpent', a princess from Añute

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22 Caso's work laid the foundation for a specialised field of study. Later developments are exemplified in the publications by Mary Elizabeth Smith (1973ab), Nancy Troike (1974), Emily Rabin (2004), Bruce Byland and John Pohl (1994), our own work (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992ab) and the synthesis of this phase by Elizabeth Boone (2000). Classic advancements in the historical understanding of Mixtec society are the works of Spores (e.g. 1967) and Terraciano (e.g. 2001). There are also many early colonial pictographic codices referring to the same themes among other indigenous peoples, for example the Beni Zaa or Zapotec (Oudijk 2000), the Cuicatec (van Doesburg 2001), the Ngigua (Brownstone 2015) and of course the Nahuas themselves (e.g. Robertson 1959; Asselbergs 2004, Castañeda 2006). Our own most recent monographic studies of Ñuu Dzau codices and history are: Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2005, 2007ab, 2011, 2013.

- (Jaltepec), who were in interaction with the expanding empire of the Toltec rulership in Tula-Cholula.
- (3) The genealogical (and chronological) connections between the different dynasties of the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) kingdoms, and their implications for rulership, succession and tribute rights.

Some links with these thematic contents are evident in the pictorial texts of Tomb 7. An illustrative example is the motif of people being born from trees, which occurs in several scenes carved on jaguar bones in Tomb 7 (Bone 203i and Bone 200), which were associated with Skeleton A. The same motif occurs at the beginning of historical narratives in Ñuu Dzau codices.<sup>23</sup> These scenes can be correlated with information from colonial sources (such as friar Antonio de los Reyes and friar Francisco de Burgoa), which state that the Ñuu Dzau dynasties originated from trees.<sup>24</sup> There are several places mentioned where this was supposed to have occurred, mainly the towns of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) and Ñuu Ndecu (Achiutla). Research has been undertaken to relate the codex scenes in question to these colonial statements.<sup>25</sup>

An important step in order to connect the narratives of the codices with the geographical reality and the language of the region is the location of the places represented by toponymical hieroglyphs. This task has been initiated by Caso and followed up by Mary Elizabeth Smith (1973ab), who has elucidated very well the method of this form of decipherment. Smith also showed the importance of using Dzaha Dzau (Mixtec) as a language of reference in these studies. She has clarified that Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) place signs generally consist of a basic indicator of the category of the place:

- \* A mountain (*yucu*) is painted as a stylised iconical front view: a bell-shaped form, generally painted green (although in many cases the colours have faded into an ocre brown).
- \* A plain or valley (*yodzo*) is painted as a feather mat (because of the homonymy in Mixtec of *yodzo*, 'plain', and *yodzo*, 'large feather').
- \* A river (*yuta*) is a cross-section view, a container of water.
- \* The sign for town (*ñuu*) is a rectangular frieze, filled with polychrome geometric forms (meander, step-fret) in colour.

23 Cf. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37; Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nu (Bodley), p. 1-V, and Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2.

24 See Jansen 1982b for a detailed discussion.

25 Furst 1978; Anders and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992a.

These basic signs are combined with specifying elements to form the toponym. For example, a frieze with step-fret motif (town: *ñuu*) in black (*tnoo*) reads Ñuu Tnoo, 'Black Town', the Mixtec name of the town that is known under the Nahuatl name of Tilantongo. A mountain (*yucu*) with a bird in it is Yucu Dzaa, 'Mountain of Birds', the Mixtec name of the town known in Nahuatl as Tututepec.

In practice the issue is more complicated, because the etymologies of place names may be unclear or ambiguous. Mixtec is a tonal language: words differ in meaning according to the tone. Moreover the tone of a word may alter under influence of the tone of a preceding word, as if it were under the influence of sentence melody (a phenomenon called tone sandhi in linguistic studies). On the other hand, toponyms may repeat themselves in the landscape. So in order to construct a hypothesis it is necessary to bring together several indications that reinforce each other.

In our own work on the pictorial manuscripts of Ñuu Dzauí we have dealt with many different aspects of their contents. We have written interpretive commentaries on the most relevant pictographic works and we have tried to reconstruct a synthesis of the history they tell (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011). This has brought us to try to identify the historical (chronological) and geographical dimensions, as well as the literary forms of the record and the underlying religious concepts and values. Inspired by the works of Caso and Smith, we have first focused on the town of Apoala, already hypothetically identified by Caso because of its important occurrence at the beginning of the dynastic history. Apoala is mentioned by historical sources such as the Mixtec grammar of friar Antonio de los Reyes (1593), the creation text recorded by friar Gregorio García (1607), and the history of the Dominican missions in the Mixtec region by friar Francisco de Burgoa (1674) as the place of origin of the Mixtec dynasties: here the first founders of the lineages were born from a tree. Apoala's Mixtec name is *Yuta Tnoho*, which means 'Plucking River', or with slight changes in pronunciation 'River of the Lords' (*Yuta Toho*) and 'River of the Lineages or Histories' (*Yuta Tnuhu*). Reyes connected all these etymologies in saying that this was the place where the lords that were the founders of the Mixtec dynasties were plucked from the trees. Its pictorial representation consists of the sign of a river (*yuta*) with a hand in it holding feathers, transmitting the verb *tnoho*, 'to pluck (feathers)'.

Doing fieldwork in the town, we could confirm Caso's idea by comparing the large scene in which this sign is located in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 36, with the actual landscape. With the help of interested local inhabitants, not only the river itself, but also the surrounding cliffs, an important cave and

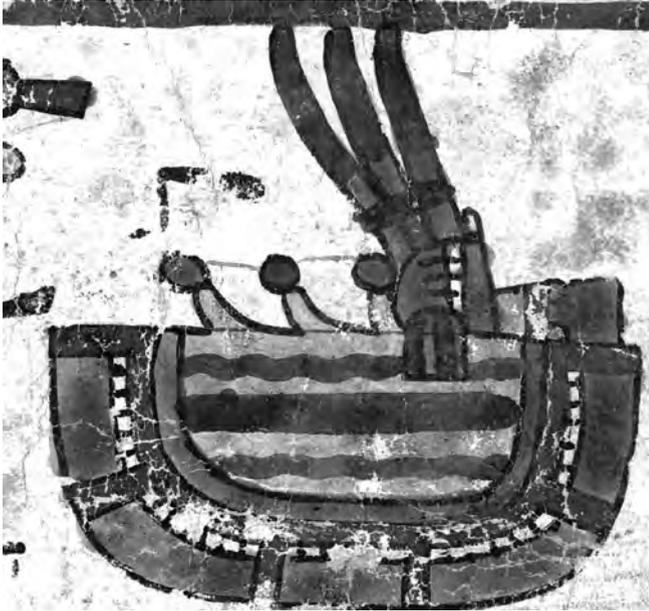


ILLUSTRATION 1.07 *The place-sign of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) in Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley).*

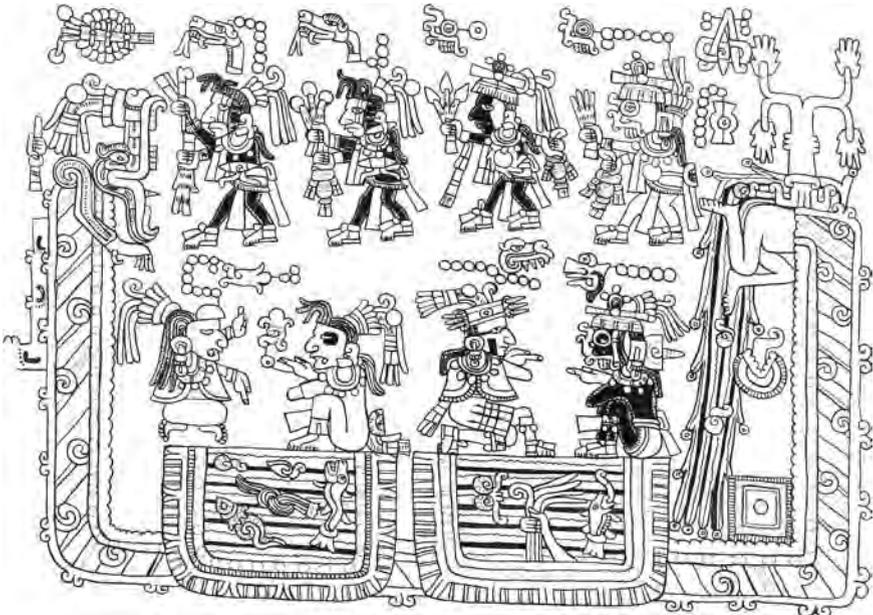


ILLUSTRATION 1.08 *The Valley of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 36.*



ILLUSTRATION 1.09 *Apoala and Mount Kava Kaandiui.*

a waterfall, which appear in the painting, could all be easily identified. Local oral tradition had preserved its own version of the tree of origin: a huge tree on the bank of the river, whose branches and leaves had covered the whole valley in the ancient time of primordial darkness. Don Macario López explained to us:

When the place here was settled, here on the plain stood a tree. But a sturdy tree, big. Its branches and vines reached to the end of the valley, to the rocks on both sides (Kava Kaandiui and Kava Laki), its branches covered the entire valley. In the midst of the branches, the two-headed eagle had its nest. But the servant of a priest killed the eagle and it is said that they took the dead bird to Europe. Here would have been Mexico, but as they took the dead eagle away, it is now in Europe. At the foot of this sturdy tree two valiant men were born, who accompanied the Archer who Shot the Sun in the Revolution. The Archer who Shot the Sun was also born at the foot of the tree.<sup>26</sup>

26 *'Cuando se pobló acá, acá en el llano había un árbol. Pero un árbol robusto, grande. Sus ramas y bejucos llegaron hasta las orillas del valle, hasta las peñas a los dos lados (Cahua*

Knowledgeable persons pointed to the spot where that tree of origin had stood. The name of the tree according to that tradition was Tinuu, locally translated as a *tejocote* (Mexican hawthorn). As this is a small fruit tree, we suppose that the Mixtec name should be understood as that of another species of trees, the ceiba or pochote, an impressive large tree, which is held sacred in Mesoamerica. This is clearly the tree represented as the great mother from whom the first lords and ladies arise in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37.<sup>27</sup>

The Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) creation narrative that was recorded or rather copied and synthesised by friar Gregorio García speaks about the ‘Mountain where the Heaven was’ as a place near Apoala: here the first divine couple Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer had built their palace. This must be the Kava Kaandiui, ‘Rock that rises into Heaven’ or ‘Rock on which the Heaven is extended’, immediately to the east of Apoala, dominating the town.

According to Gregorio García, the primordial couple had two sons, Wind of Nine Serpents and Wind of Nine Caves. The number 9 in these names suggests that they contained calendar names, which, however, were not well understood by the friar.

Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) mentions the primordial couple Lady 1 Deer and Lord 1 Deer at the beginning of its narrative (p. 51) and then focuses on their descendant, Lord 9 Wind, who brought life and culture to the Ñuu Dzauí world. He has the attributes and face paint of the Aztec deity Quetzalcoatl (the Plumed Serpent) or Ehecatl (the wind god), i.e. the whirlwind as creator and culture bringer. The whirlwind as plumed serpent is known in Dzaha Dzauí as ‘Coo Dzavui’ (Koo Sau/Savi/Davi/Dau according to modern dialect variants).

In view of the importance of this figure, we reconstruct the names in the text recorded by Gregorio García, both beginning with ‘Wind of Nine...’: as

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*caandihui y Cahua Lakí, sus ramas cubrían todo el valle. En medio de las ramas, allí tuvo su nido el Águila de Dos Cabezas. Pero el mozo de un cura mató al águila y dicen que muerto lo llevaron a Europa. Es que acá iba a estar México, pero como ya muerto el águila lo llevaron, es que en Europa. Al pie de este árbol robusto nacieron dos hombres valientes, que acompañaron al Flechador del Sol en la Revolución. El mismo Flechador del Sol nació al pie del árbol.* Don Macario continued to narrate the primordial conflict with divine beings (*ñuhu*’s) who were transformed into stones at the first sunrise. His text is included as an appendix in Jansen’s dissertation *Huisi Tacu* (1982: 453–454).

27 The tree-birth scene in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2 is located at another site: Town of Flames. Wigberto Jiménez Moreno has demonstrated that this is Ñuu Ndecu (Achiutla), ‘Burning Town’, another place of dynastic origin mentioned by friar Francisco de Burgoa. See our edition of Codex Añute (Selden) with commentary (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2013).

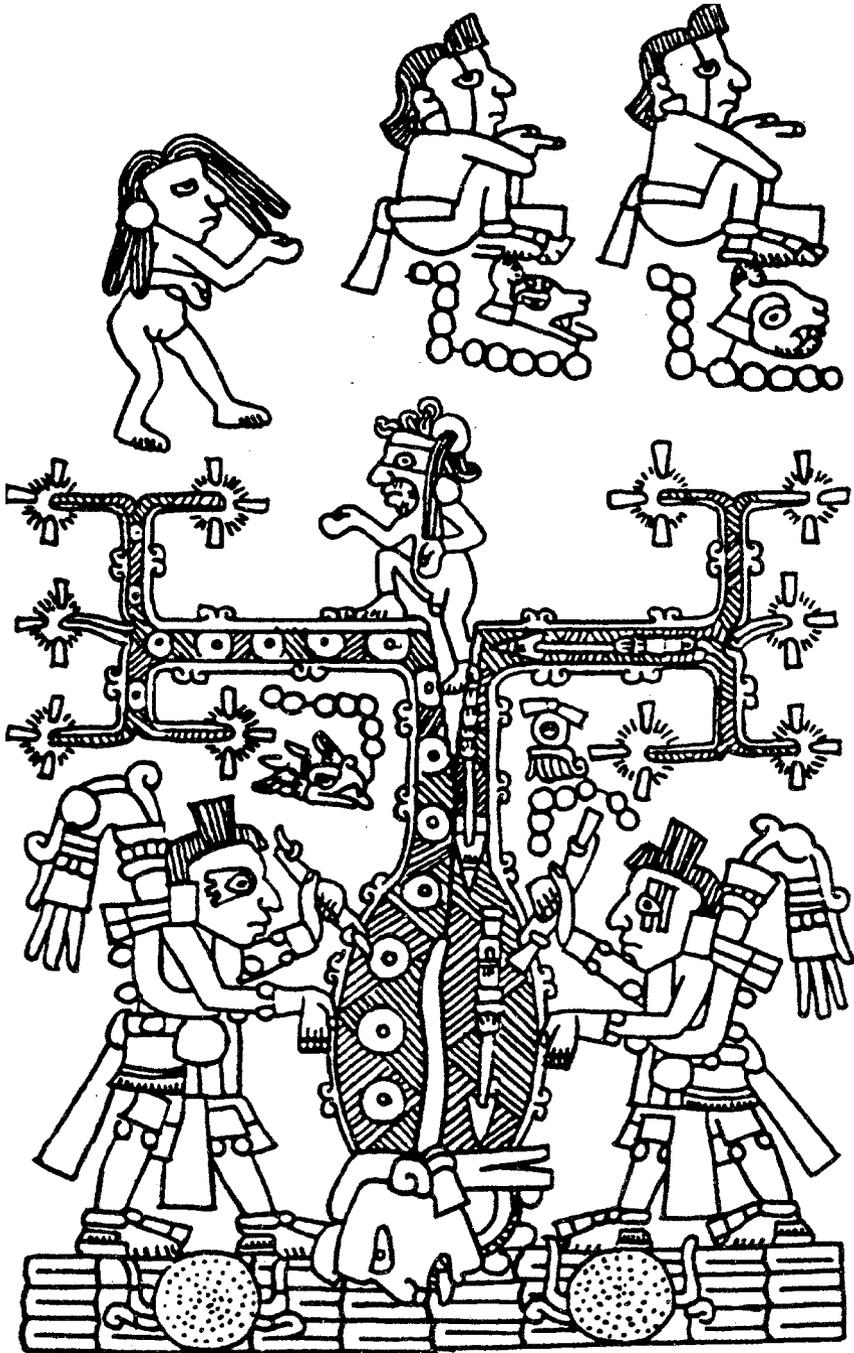


ILLUSTRATION 1.10 *The Mother Tree in the Sacred Valley of Apoala, according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37.*

references to this personage: Lord 9 Wind. The remaining word in the names would then designate the given name, title or attribute of the two brothers, or rather the two manifestations of this primordial culture hero: Lord 9 Wind ‘Serpent’ and Lord 9 Wind ‘Cave’. Of these the first, ‘Serpent’, is most likely a reference to the Plumed Serpent, while ‘Cave’ is a translation of the Dzaha Dzaui (Mixtec) word *yahui*. This term *yahui*, however, can also refer to a ball of lightning into which powerful persons may be transformed, and which in iconographical studies is generally referred to as a fire serpent (*xiuhcoatl* in Nahuatl).<sup>28</sup> It is likely that the name indeed refers to such a *nahual* power, as the friar adds that both brothers had the power to transform themselves into respectively an eagle (*yaha*) and a flying serpent that could pass through rocks and walls (clearly a *yahui*). The combined term *yaha yahui* is translated by friar Antonio de los Reyes as ‘*nigromántico señor*’ or ‘nigromancer’, a person that nowadays would be called a shaman in anthropological texts.

We encounter all these elements in the narrative of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), which pivots on Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’. This personage is presented as the descendant of Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer and he comes down from the Place of Heaven in the form of eagle and fire serpent (p. 48).<sup>29</sup> In other pages we find an association of that Place of Heaven with the place sign of Apoala (River of the Hand Holding Feathers).<sup>30</sup>

Our re-examination of the scenes on the carved bones (Chapter 3) brings to light a detailed resemblance between Bone 203i and page 37 of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis): clearly we are dealing with a reference to the origin narrative of the Mixtec kings and queens. This parallel reinforces the relationship of Tomb 7 with Ñuu Dzaui, the Mixtec world. The implication of this analysis is that the Ñuu Dzaui manuscripts are a crucial key for advancing the interpretation of the pictorial texts in Tomb 7.

## 6 Connections with Beni Zaa History

Although Tomb 7 at Monte Albán is one of the most famous and iconic discoveries of Mexican archeology, it has received relatively little attention since

28 Smith (1973b) has identified the *yahui* figure. For a discussion of the different interpretations of this being, see Jansen (1982b: Chapter 11) and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: Chapter IV).

29 A similar scene is the beginning of the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll): see Chapter 5 of this book.

30 Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 35, and Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p.18.

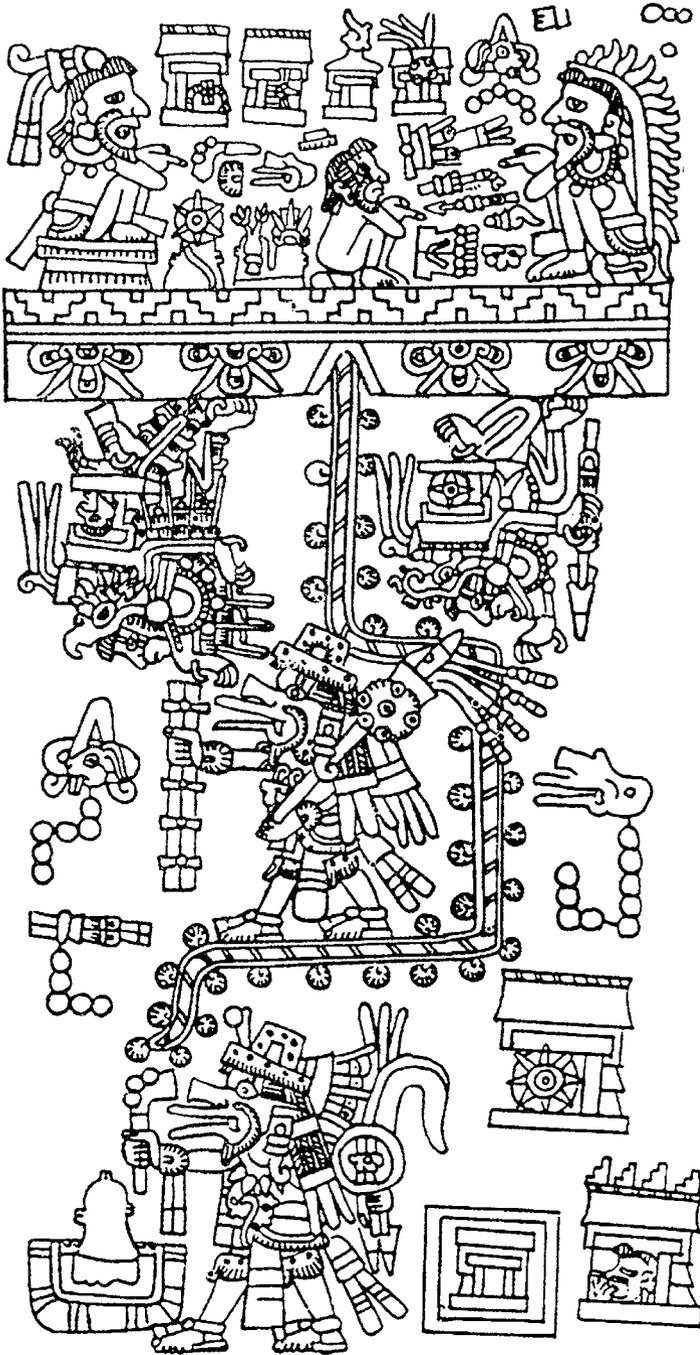


ILLUSTRATION 1.11 *Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' coming down from the place of heaven, Kava Kaandiui, on page 48 of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis).*

the exhaustive publication by its discoverer (Caso 1969). Joyce Marcus wrote a summary and commentary on Tomb 7 in *The Cloud People*, a major synthesis of archaeological work in Oaxaca (Flannery and Marcus 1983: 282–285). Ciria Martínez López contributed a new study of the residential buildings in the area of Tomb 7 (in De la Cruz and Winter 2002).

But the most relevant archaeological information undoubtedly comes from two tombs in Zaachila, the Zapotec capital of the Postclassic period, to the south of Monte Albán. These tombs were discovered and excavated by the Mexican archaeologist Roberto Gallegos in 1962, thirty years after the discovery of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán. Caso himself published colour photographs of these findings and commented on them in *Ancient Oaxaca*, a paradigmatic work of that time, edited by John Paddock (1966).<sup>31</sup> Subsequently Gallegos himself published the report of the excavations (1978). Recently a new synthesis of the archaeology of Zaachila has been published (Vicente Cruz and Sánchez Santiago 2014), which is a valuable contribution because of its new archaeological data, but which, not focusing on the advances in iconographical and historical studies, did not substantially alter the general understanding of the tombs, nor reflect on their relationship with Tomb 7 of Monte Albán.

The two tombs (called 1 and 2) of Zaachila are located next to each other below the central courtyard of Mound A, a large platform with a complex history of construction, which in the Postclassic period probably functioned as the royal palace in Zaachila. Both Tomb 1 and Tomb 2 of Zaachila contain primary burials. As for Tomb 1: 'In the chamber were two skeletons, extended in supine position, oriented from south to north as well as a secondary burial, which occupied the northwest corner' (Gallegos 1978: 77). In addition there were eight skeletons in the antechamber, all corresponding to primary burials (*ibid.*).

In Tomb 2: 'Thanks to the thorough exploration and especially to the patient observations by *maestro* Arturo Romano it was possible to identify all the skeletons. Of the thirteen skeletons twelve correspond to primary burials and one to a secondary burial'. (Gallegos 1978: 98).

The style of the materials found in Tombs 1 and 2 at Zaachila has a direct parallel in the artifacts deposited in Tomb 7 of Monte Albán. Caso noted in the tombs of Zaachila the presence of 'gold objects identical to those of Monte Albán' (Caso 1969: 235). Moreover, observing the strong stylistic similarities between some carved bones of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán and others found in the

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31 Caso also mentioned the Zaachila tombs in the introduction to his own monograph *El Tesoro de Monte Albán* (1969: 11–12).

tombs of Zaachila, Caso declared himself ‘almost certain’ that these specific artifacts were carved by the same artists/craftsmen (Caso 1969: 179).<sup>32</sup>

Today the coincidence in style between Tomb 7 at Monte Albán and Tombs 1 and 2 of Zaachila remains striking: it demonstrates that the objects deposited in these tombs are more or less contemporaneous. It is also clear that they occupy a unique position among Oaxacan tombs because of the abundance and quality of precious materials.<sup>33</sup>

These considerations situate Tomb 7 in the fascinating problem of interethnic relations in this area (between Mixtecs and Zapotecs) during the Postclassic period, i.e. in the socio-political developments after the demise of Monte Albán as a Classic metropolis.

Tomb 1 of Zaachila contains stucco reliefs in good condition on the walls. On both sides of the chamber of Tomb 1 there are stucco reliefs, in each case showing a man in Zapotec royal attire, who is accompanied by a calendrical



ILLUSTRATION 1.12 *Tomb 1 at Zaachila*

32 Miller (1995: 157) agrees and furthermore quotes an observation by Easby (in Caso 1969) on the similarity between golden rings with eagle images found at both sites.

33 Miller 1995; De la Fuente and Fahmel Beyer 2005.



ILLUSTRATION 1.13 *The death god: Stucco relief in Tomb 1 at Zaachila*



ILLUSTRATION 1.14 *Lord 5 Flower: Stucco relief in Tomb 1 at Zaachila*

sign. The relief on the western wall shows a man with the calendar name Lord 5 Flower, that on the eastern wall a man called Lord 9 Flower. The typical white and red regalia they wear is identical to the clothing that characterises the principal members of a specific genealogy in the Mixtec codices, particularly in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 33–35. Because of the colour pattern and other attributes that are associated with the Aztec deity Xipe Totec ('Our Lord,

The Flayed One' or 'Owner of Skins'), this genealogy is known as the Xipe dynasty.<sup>34</sup> Caso suggested that they were the rulers of Cuilapan, a Mixtec settlement located in the territory of Zaachila at the foot of Monte Albán.

From the early 1980ies onwards we have studied the relationship between Tomb 1 of Zaachila and the information about the Xipe dynasty in the Mixtec codices.<sup>35</sup> It is logical to suppose that the two supine skeletons in Tomb 1 are related to the two men represented in the stucco reliefs on both sides of the same chamber. These men, Lord 5 Flower and Lord 9 Flower, are represented as worshippers holding incense bags that follow the god of death in an attitude of religious respect (each with an arm crossed over his chest). The god of death – preceded by his messenger bird, an owl – makes gestures, calling upon the two lords to follow him, and so guides them on a path out of the tomb towards the south, i.e. towards his realm.<sup>36</sup> This reading of the stucco reliefs as a pictorial text that may express a wish for the deceased ('may you follow piously the god of death') again suggests that the two protagonists of the stucco reliefs are the same as the two persons buried in Tomb 1.

We were able to identify the seat of the Xipe dynasty to which both Lord 5 Flower and Lord 9 Flower belonged. In the Ñuu Dzauí codices the place where this dynasty ruled is represented by the sign of a general toponymic category such as plain or valley, with – as the specific name indicator – a carrying frame, known as *cacaxtli* in Nahuatl. We recall having encountered merchants from Magdalena Peñasco coming to the market in the village of Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatingo) to sell *comales* (griddles) and carrying them in a *cacaxtli*-like frame on their back. This *cacaxtli* (the Nahuatl term) is called *jito* in Sahin Sau, the local variant of Dzaha Dzauí (Mixtec). This corresponds to *sito* in the vocabulary of Alvarado (1593), which is the translation of diverse Spanish words used for objects constructed from wooden planks (e.g. 'bed', 'scaffold').

In several cases the *cacaxtli* element of the toponymic sign in the codices is not coloured, i.e. was left blank, which suggests a reading 'white' (*cuisi* in Mixtec).<sup>37</sup> The combination *sito cuisí* as a place name most likely represents Tocuisí, the Mixtec name of Zaachila. The carrying frame (*sito*) seems to have been used as a sign to represent phonetically its near homonym *sitoho*, which

34 For a monograph on Xipe and his iconographical details see Vié-Wohrer (1999).

35 See Jansen 1982a, the argument of which was later elaborated in Anders and Jansen (1988), Jansen (1989) and Jansen (1998).

36 For a more detailed interpretation of the visual art in this tomb, see Jansen and Pérez 2009b: 65–78.

37 Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 61-III (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992b) and Codex Añute (Selden), p. 13-1 (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007b).

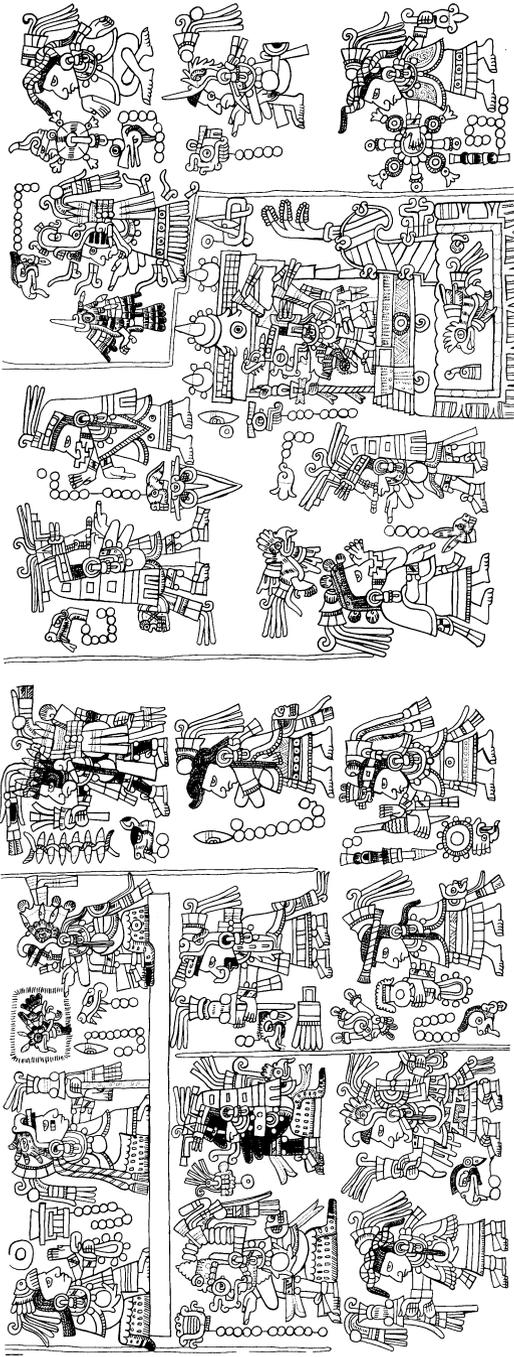


ILLUSTRATION 1.15 *The Xipe dynasty in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 33–35.*

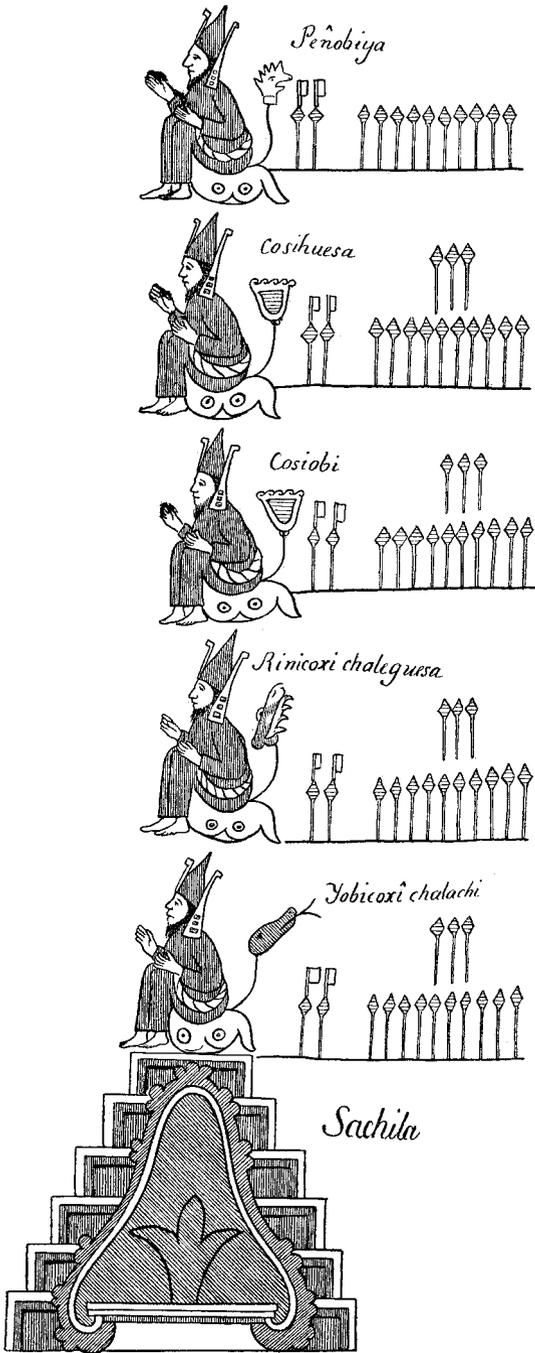


ILLUSTRATION 1.16 The dynasty of Zaachila according to the Lienzo of Guevea (Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen III*).



ILLUSTRATION 1.17 *Tocuisi, place of the carrying frame, in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 13-1.*

also occurs in shortened form as *toho* or *to*, meaning ‘lord’, ‘principal’, ‘respected, important person’. *Tocuisi*, the Mixtec name of Zaachila, might be understood as *Sitoho Cuisi*, ‘[place of the] White Lords’, but also as *To[to] Cuisi*, ‘White Rock’.

As for the ruling dynasty, a confirmation comes from the Lienzo of Guevea, a colonial Zapotec historical painting, which lists the rulers of the town Zaachila (explicitly identified by a gloss in alphabetic writing). These rulers are identified in the lienzo through the signs of their calendar names. For four generations these signs are identical to the signs of the calendar names of the principal members of the Xipe dynasty in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 33–35.

Lienzo of Guevea	Codex Tonindeye
Lord Serpent	Lord 9 Serpent
–	Lord 5 Flower
Lord Alligator	Lord 3 Alligator
Lord Water	Lord 11 Water
Lord Water	Lord 6 Water

In both documents the rulers carry the same unique type of regalia, the same as those worn by the men in the stucco reliefs of Tomb 1 in Zaachila itself.

From all this it may be concluded that the Xipe dynasty is that of the rulers of the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) kingdom of Zaachila.<sup>38</sup> It is not surprising that the Zapotec dynasty of Zaachila is mentioned in the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), which focuses on Ñuu Dzauī (Mixtec) dynastic history, particularly on the realm of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco): Zaachila and Teozacualco were neighbouring kingdoms.

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 31, mentions explicitly an interruption in the Chiyo Cahnu dynasty, the last person mentioned being Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'. From this interruption onwards, the codex first mentions a new genealogical segment (pp. 32–33) and then explains how this came about, namely as the consequence of the marriage of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' (p. 33).

Taking this context into account, we read the scene of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 33, as showing us how Lady 4 Rabbit, a Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) princess, married Lord 5 Flower from the Zaachila dynasty. On this occasion Lord 5 Flower is accompanied by a couple which in this context must represent a parentage statement: his father Lord 9 Serpent and his mother Lady 11 Rabbit.

Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' and Lord 5 Flower have several children. The first of these listed is Lord 2 Dog, who appears both on page 32 and on page 34 of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall): he initiates a new segment in the dynastic history of Teozacualco (inheriting the kingdom from his mother). Another son, Lord 3 Alligator, who was next in line of the Xipe dynasty and inherited the kingdom of his father, is named as the successor of Lord 9 Serpent (his grandfather) in the Lienzo of Guevea.

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38 In his own study of Tomb 1 at Zaachila, Paddock (1983) incorporated some of Jansen's discoveries, but did not properly grasp the argument and its implications. As a consequence, he continued to support Caso's idea that the dynasty in question was that of Cuilapan. Finding the carrying frame sign in a pictorial manuscript ('Coat of Arms') from Cuilapan, preserved among the papers of Oaxacan historian Martínez Gracida, Jansen also thought for a moment that this sign had to refer Cuilapan (Jansen 1992), but then a more complete analysis of the painting and of the context of the sign in question led him to conclude that carrying frame indeed referred to Zaachila (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992b; Jansen 1998, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2009b). Jansen's discovery (1982a, 1989, 1998) that the Xipe dynasty in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) is identical with the list of rulers of Zaachila in the Lienzo of Guevea was the basis for the doctoral thesis of Michel Oudijk (2000), who found and analyzed more versions of the Lienzo of Guevea (cf. Oudijk and Jansen 2000 and Oudijk in Blomster 2008). Van Doesburg (2007: 47) reproduced a synthesis of these interpretations. Today this identification of the Zaachila place sign is so generally accepted among specialists that the argument is often no longer mentioned nor the history of decipherment discussed (e.g. Williams 2013).

Thus, the reason for referring to the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) royal family of Zaachila in this Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) pictorial manuscript is a marriage alliance between the dynasties of Teozacualco and Zaachila, namely the marriage of Lord 5 Flower, son of Lord 9 Serpent and Lady 11 Rabbit of the Xipe dynasty, i.e. of the Zaachila ruling family, with Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', who belonged to the royal lineage of the neighbouring Mixtec kingdom Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco).

We notice that Lord 5 Flower is present in the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p.33, but missing from the list of rulers in the Lienzo of Guevea. This suggests that he was a prince of special importance to the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) record, as groom to a Chiyo Cahnu princess, but less essential in the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) genealogical history. Perhaps he did not actually succeed his father as ruler of Zaachila, but was an intermediate generation: in other words the royal power may have passed from Lord 9 Serpent (Lord 5 Flower's father) to his grandson Lord 3 Alligator (Lord 5 Flower's son).

Lord 5 Flower has to be identical with the man of the same name, wearing the same diagnostic regalia, who appears in the stucco relief of Tomb 1 at Zaachila. In other words, Tomb 1 at Zaachila is the place where Lord 5 Flower of the Xipe dynasty was buried.

According to the chronology of the Mixtec codices, originally established by Alfonso Caso and then partly corrected by Emily Rabin, Lord 5 Flower and Lady 4 Rabbit must have lived around 1300 AD.

This chronological reconstruction is in agreement with the information from the *Relación Geográfica de Teozapotlan* (which refers to Zaachila). That colonial document of 1580 tells of an important marriage between a prince from Zaachila and 'a Mixtec woman', i.e. a Mixtec princess, which had happened more than three hundred years earlier, i.e. shortly before 1280:

[...] asked how they [the inhabitants of Cuilapan] came to this Zapotec province, being Mixtecs, they respond that that was because of a marriage between a Mixtec woman and a lord of Teozapotlan [= Zaachila]. They came [here] more than three hundred years ago.<sup>39</sup>

Obviously the wedding between personalities of the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) and Beni Zaa (Zapotec) royal lineages mentioned by the *Relación Geográfica de*

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39 '[...] preguntados cómo vinieron ellos [los habitantes de Cuilapan] a esta provincia zapoteca, siendo ellos mixtecos, responden que por vía de un casamiento que se hizo de una mixteca con un señor de Teozapotlan [= Zaachila]. Vinieron más ha de trescientos años'. (Acuña 1984, II : 157).

*Teozapotlan* was an important political event. Given the identification of the toponyms, dynasties and chronological context, this royal wedding must have been that of Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila and Lady 4 Rabbit of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco), who lived in that precise period shortly before 1280, according to Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p.33. Considering that princes used to marry at an early age, we estimate that Lord 5 Flower was born around 1260; he therefore may have lived down to about 1330. The latter year then would be the approximate date of Zaachila Tomb 1, where this Lord 5 Flower was buried.

This extensive analysis of the entangled pieces of historical information allows us to arrive at a clear conclusion. We already noticed that strong stylistic similarities suggest that Tomb 1 at Zaachila and Tomb 7 at Monte Albán were contemporaneous. The implication of our analysis of the dynastic chronology is that Tomb 7 at Monte Albán must also date from the first half of the fourteenth century.

## 7 Female Agency

Sharisse and Geoffrey McCafferty studied Tomb 7 within their more general research on gender issues in Mesoamerican archeology.<sup>40</sup> Taking as their starting point the idea that the art of weaving and textile production are indices of female agency, with important implications for their identity and ideology, these authors have examined the possible references to such activities in Mesoamerican visual art. Looking at the iconographical and functional aspects of artifacts in Tomb 7 from this perspective, they observed that there were several spindle whorls deposited close to Skeleton A, as well as a few small cups which may have served for letting the spindle rotate.

The same authors also noted that many carved jaguar bones have the form of a *tzotzopaztli* (a wooden board or 'machete' with two pointed ends, used to tighten the fabric in the process of weaving), while other bones with a clear point (generally referred to as 'perforators' by others) may have served to lift the warp threads. On the basis of this idea, they suggested that Skeleton A, whom they called Individual A, seen as the main person buried in the tomb, was probably a woman. This idea has created quite a controversy, but so far it has not been possible to prove or disprove it through new physical anthropological research.

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40 S.D. McCafferty and G.G. McCafferty 1994 and 2006; G.G. McCafferty and S.D. McCafferty 2003; G.G. McCafferty 2009.

Byron Hamann (1997) has developed further their idea about the importance of weaving as a female gender symbol and as a sign of prestige. Connecting the observation that several objects found in Tomb 7 and in the tombs of Zaachila seem to represent this activity with our decipherment of Zaachila in the Mixtec codices (Jansen 1982a), Hamann suggested that Lady 4 Rabbit (the Mixtec princess who came from Teozacualco to marry Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila) played a central role in bringing Mixtec artists and craftsmen to Zaachila and so promoted the art of weaving. Hamann compares her role (and importance) with that of Eleanor of Aquitaine in the formation of the Gothic style during the European Middle Ages.<sup>41</sup>

We should point out, however, some weaknesses in the identification of the objects that according to these authors were used for weaving. Although the shape of many carved jaguar bones indeed resembles that of a 'machete' for weaving (called *tzotzopaztli* in Nahuatl and *dzitu* in Dzaha Dzau), this does not mean that these bones were actual weaving instruments.<sup>42</sup> Their size and material suggest that they were probably not used for such a purpose. The pointed bones could indeed have been used to lift warp threads, but their shape (and the religious context of the tomb) makes it more likely that they were perforators for bloodletting or self-sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> Also the parallels in the codices that these authors refer to clearly represent such perforators, made of bones and maguey thorns, well-known implements used for drawing blood in Mesoamerican ritual.<sup>44</sup> The *tzotzopaztli* form then may have been meant to invoke a specific deity and/or set of ideas.

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41 In his enthusiasm Hamann revives a speculation of Jill Furst (1987) that the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) could be a forgery created in Mixtec style by Zapotec painters in order to express a pro-Zaachila message. This, however, is totally unfounded: Codex Tonindeye is clearly an example of Mixtec historiography, focusing on the Teozacualco dynasty, and only mentions the Zapotec royal family because of the marital alliance between the dynasty of Teozacualco and that of Zaachila.

42 In the Southern Mixteca Alta (Chalcatongo) *shitu* is 'machete', both the machete itself and the weaving instrument. Quiroz Ruiz (2012) transcribes the name of this artefact in San Pablo Tijaltepec as *xito'o* [= *shito'ho*]. This word corresponds to *dzitu* in the orthography of Alvarado, who recorded in his vocabulary: *yosasi cutundi dzitu*, 'tupir la tela'.

43 Dacus (2005) analyzes a set of carved 'needle bones' that were deposited as funeral offerings in the tomb of a woman of high status in the Mayan site of Naranjo (Guatemala). The hieroglyphics inscribed on them explicitly identified them as instruments for weaving (probably to lift the warp) and give the names and titles of their owners. These objects look different from the pointed bones in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán: they are more elongated and thin.

44 Bloodletting or self-sacrifice is one of the most characteristic ritual practices in Mesoamerican religion, cf. the studies by Joralemon (1974) Anders and Jansen and Reyes García (1991: 75 ff.), Graulich (2005) and the monograph by Baudez (2013).

We think it is indeed important that six spindle whorls were found in Tomb 7: two immediately associated with Skeleton A and two in front of the same set of skeletal remains (Caso 1969: 157–159).<sup>45</sup> In Dzaha Dzau the spindle is *cata*, and the ceramic weight element at the end (known as *malacate* in Mexican archaeology) is called *caha cata*, *saha cata* or *tende cata*, ‘buttocks, foot or nipple of the spindle’ according to the vocabulary of Alvarado (1593).

In accordance with his own hypothesis, Caso interpreted these *malacates* as elements of the headdress of the deity Xolotl, but this is unconvincing. These objects are indeed indices of weaving and, by implication, of female presence. In Nahuatl the hendiadys ‘*malacatl, tzotzopaztli*’ is a well-known metaphor for the feminine (cf. Montes de Oca Vega 2000).

Thus, while there may be discrepancies in our identification of details, the claim that the visual art of Tomb 7 contains several references to female agency is founded. Similarly, Hamann is correct in pointing out that Lady 4 Rabbit ‘Quetzal’ was a crucial link between the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) and Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) dynastic histories.

## 8 Revisiting Tomb 7

Alfonso Caso finished his magnum opus *Tesoro de Monte Albán* (1969) with the inspiring observation:

I believe, therefore, that the discovery of Tomb 7 will serve to better appraise the value of the prehispanic cultures of Mexico, and to show that the humans in the Americas could, by their own efforts and without contact with the great cultures of the old continent, rise from the nomad hunters that they originally were, to corn farmers and later builders of cities and founders of empires, and so become the exquisite artists, able to bequeath us, as friar Bartolomé de las Casas has said, ‘things so rich, made and worked with so much artifice, that they seem a dream and not crafted by human hands’.

CASO 1969: 240

With this same vision, in 2010 an interdisciplinary team of researchers was assembled by Dr Nelly Robles García of Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) to carry out a new interpretive study of Tomb 7.

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45 Compare the ritual deposit of spindle whorls in the Mayan site of El Pilar, Belize (Kamp et al. 2006).

A first level of synthesis was reached during an internal symposium held in November 2013, when preliminary conclusions of the different specialised investigations were presented, discussed and integrated. This book is, in part, a follow-up to our participation in that team.

In this context, archaeologist Ivan Angel Rivera Guzmán has analyzed the arrangement of Tomb 7 and the visual art of the Classic period. He noted, for example, that the three Classic ‘urns’ placed at the entrance of the tomb were still *in situ*, without being disturbed since the time they were left there in the Classic era to seal the space. This implies that people in the Postclassic did not use the entrance of the Classic period, but made their way into Tomb 7 in another manner: not from the courtyard and through the antechamber (as in the Classic era), but most likely through the roof of the chamber. This change must have had important consequences for the Postclassic arrangement of bones and artifacts in Tomb 7, as well as for the orientation, internal organisation and conceptualisation of the sanctuary as a whole.

The physical anthropological analysis made by Dr Noreen Tuross and Dr Sergio Lopez once again established that the skeletal remains of the tomb are so fundamentally incomplete and fragmentary that they cannot correspond to primary burials. Thus we must be very careful with the grouping of bones and their attribution to specific individuals. In fact it is better not to speak of the bones in terms of skeletons, corpses or individuals, but simply to refer to them as bones, skeletal remains or bone assemblages. The bones come from different parts of the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) and Beni Zaa (Zapotec) territory.

The dating identified some fragments as stemming from the Classic period: most likely they are remains of the people originally buried in the tomb when it was still in use as such. The same research also established that the vast majority of the bones are from the Postclassic era, dating from somewhere between 1177 and 1435 AD, and belong to a heterogeneous group of individuals which originated in different parts of the Oaxaca region. The physical anthropological dating agrees well with the stylistic and historical dating presented above, based on the comparison of the visual art of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán with that of Tomb 1 at Zaachila and the references to the Xipe dynasty in the Codex Tonindefe (Nuttall): the first decades of the fourteenth century, when Lord 5 Flower was alive, fall precisely in the middle of that time frame.

## 9 Approaching the Relics

The progress in modern technical analyses of artefacts, monuments and human remains has brought us even more information than was previously thought

possible. Yet, for the interpretation of those tangible relics other sources, such as written documents and oral traditions, if available, are of crucial value and should not be ignored. The treasure of Tomb 7 is clearly more than just a collection of loose objects: it is an artistic and iconographic unit with a complex meaning, which requires a holistic approach.

Let us illustrate the challenges and prospects of such a hermetic exercise with an example from European art. The church of St John the Baptist in Gouda, The Netherlands, contains an impressive series of stained-glass windows made in the sixteenth century, precisely in the period of religious and political conflict that led to the independence of the Dutch republic and its separation from Spain (Bosch 2008). Several important historical personages of that epoch dedicated those windows. The Biblical themes of the painted scenes read as symbolic statements about their ideological convictions. For example, the window dedicated by the Spanish king Philip II in 1557 shows in the top segment the consecration of the Temple of Jerusalem by king Solomon; in the lower segment we see king Philip II himself, kneeling together with his wife Mary Tudor, while St Philip, the disciple, guides him towards Jesus seated at the last supper.

The overall meaning is clear: the king expresses his pious belief in the Catholic mass (as the ritual reproduction of the last supper), in his patron saint (St Philip) and in Jesus Christ, and indicates that he sees it as his task to strengthen the Catholic church as the continuation of the temple of the covenant. The scene is an example of how in religious art the symbolic meaning may transcend time and space, in this case bringing the sixteenth-century Spanish ruler to the last supper that supposedly took place one and a half millennium earlier in Jerusalem, while also referring to the consecration of king Solomon's temple, still another millennium further back into the past.

In a parallel position on the other side of the nave is the stained-glass window commissioned by duchess Margaret of Parma, half-sister of Philip II and governess of the Netherlands at the time (1562). She herself is represented kneeling in the lower segment, under the protection of her patron St Margaret, identified by the fact that she is standing on a dragon. The accompanying Biblical scenes are that of the prophet Elijah defeating the cult of the deity Baal and that of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. The message is clear: the governess will be a humble servant of the nobles who surround her but is determined to fight and destroy 'diabolical' (= protestant) beliefs. Again we notice how the underlying symbolism combines images from very different epochs, and even mythical elements such as the dragon, to form a coherent statement concerning her own time.

In the same way other historical events are represented and interpreted in relation to Biblical prefigurations. The topic of the stained-glass window commissioned by the Prince of Orange (who a few years later would lead the Dutch rebellion against Spain) is that of Jesus cleansing Solomon's temple by whipping and expelling the sellers, buyers and moneychangers from it. The use of that image implies a criticism on the way the temple (read: Catholic Church) under the Spanish authorities had lost its original purity. The historical scenes of the liberation of the city of Leiden from the Spanish siege (1574) are compared with the liberation of Samaria from the Assyrians.

From here onward the windows become self-referential images of the major towns in the country, assessing their own identity and values. This development of the Dutch city-culture is situated in the middle between the windows at the eastern end of the church, which narrate the life of St. John the Baptist, with – as the central scene behind the altar – the baptism of Jesus Christ, and the window next to the western entrance, which represents in typical Renaissance-style allegorical figures the victory of the freedom of conscience. In front of this window is the burial place of the Dutch humanist Dirck Volkert Coornhert (1522–1590), a champion of religious tolerance.

Obviously the intention of these interior space is that the regular religious services, integrating and mobilising these different elements from Biblical and social-political history, would have a strong subliminal effect on the congregation, which by participating in the ritual would reflect on how these messages are interrelated and would reiterate its commitment to Christian ethics as well as to the ideal of freedom.

The contents and dramatic implications of this overall composition of stained-glass windows can only be grasped when we take the religious symbolism and historical context very seriously. Otherwise the connection of diverse times and places in the scenes would seem a confusing and enigmatic hybrid, and the artwork itself would remain inaccessible. Fortunately, in the Gouda case we have explicit glosses that accompany the images and detailed contextual information as well as the religious texts themselves. Biblical symbolism has become less fashionable but has not disappeared and still forms part of a contemporary creed. All this provides a reliable base for making sense of these images and for overcoming the temporal and cultural distance that separates us from these artistic creations. In other cases however, the lack of knowledge of the different culture and the lack of familiarity with its ways of expression, might lead us into a labyrinth of misunderstandings and speculations.

When we engage with a precolonial Mesoamerican monument, shrine or codex, we are in a way joining earlier audiences who have listened to the voices of the work before us. If the work is going to speak and to be meaningful to

us, we should open ourselves to it in this sense: this is religious symbolism transmitting ancient values to us, it is history being commemorated, becoming part of collective memory. This ritual aspect should not be seen in a purely descriptive manner as just a series of acts, reported from a distance without going into the symbolism and the emotions involved. Understanding does not come only from analysis and theory, but also needs a participatory attitude of sharing and respect.

Colonial prejudice, however, easily creeps into the description of Mesoamerican ritual and religion, be it through Christian value judgements, be it through discriminatory Eurocentric notions, be it through a mental distancing brought about by a wrongly understanding of what rationalism means or simply by petit-bourgeois self-complacency. For example, caves and other Mesoamerican places of worship have been classified as belonging to the devil. In the same distorted view offerings to stone formations in a cavern or abri (the House of Rain) are considered 'superstition' or 'idolatry', just like material remains of the past are referred to as idols in popular accounts and even in archaeological reports. But in many cases people are not literally praying or offering to a stone, just as many Catholic believers are not really expecting the wooden or stucco images of saints to become alive and literally lend them a helping hand. In a ritual context, such material referents are used in a metaphorical sense to concentrate and mobilise spiritual power in the psyche, often in a collective manner, and this can have a very real and important effect on the fully committed individual: it can spiritually heal, comfort pain, or give energy and confidence. Such symbolic acts are often carried out in community, with the young generation starting to learn about these values, and the old remembering the many earlier occasions, and hoping to be able to participate next time again. Thus there is interpersonal and intergenerational sharing of emotions and values as commitments to a worldview and its ethical principles. It is not about worshipping stones, but about recognising the profound truth that humans did not make the earth but are part of creation, that there are greater powers in nature with which we should live in a respectful manner and which lend us strength for action and for overcoming our problems.

Therefore, in approaching an ancient work of art a first exercise is to visualize in the mind this symbolic dimension. In situating ourselves within the horizon of the work, we become participants in a ritual gathering that extends through time. Before we even open an ancient manuscript, for example, we start to realize a number of things. A Mesoamerican book is different from modern books in that it is not mass-produced, but a unique manuscript, with, of course, its particular history and context. It was not a commodity to be sold in a bookstore. Nor was it meant for pleasure or pastime, but was made for a

special ritual occasion. Most likely the different materials used to create such a work were also not bought in some kind of store, but procured and manufactured by the artist. The first step would have been to obtain deer hide as the basic material. Given the religious implications of all this, we may imagine that the painter himself, after appropriate preparation (vigil, fasting, offerings), went to the mountain to hunt deer. His first act there would have been to ask permission to the Lord of the Mountain, the divine protector of the animals. Similar acts may have been carried out in order to obtain the gypsum and make the colours, as well as for the concentration necessary to paint the work.

The same is true for the contents of these works. History is not just about distant individuals in the past but about ancestors, which are now in the spirit world. Painting them makes them present again. Similarly, the images of deities imply respectful invocations and prayers. Representing the units of time and the four directions is not just a reference to an abstract structure but mobilises the awareness of having a place in the universe.

Upon entering a religiously charged place like Tomb 7, we should therefore open our minds and hearts to many elements that are pre-understood. Here too materials had to be procured with proper rituals: the stones had to be extracted from a quarry with permission of the Lord of the Mountain. The golden and silver images were metals taken from the earth – without doubt after appropriate rituals to ask permission – and transformed by visionary artists into precious symbols. The bones of jaguars and eagles, the most emblematic animals of earth and heaven, metaphors of courage and power, were ritually captured for the specific purpose of being carved – with painstaking concentration – to carry messages from the living to the dead and to preserve testimony of this to the as yet unborn.

Evidently the tomb is an ancient place – we now say Early Classic – and without doubt the congregation that was going to deposit its treasures here knew that the construction belonged to times long past, to distant forefathers of an earlier era. The ancient (Early Classic) temple had become a mound, returning to its original meaning: that of a symbol of the mountain, the sacred earth. Also the tomb had preserved its essence: that of being a cave, an entrance into the earth. In a way, the human bones deposited here returned to the womb of Mother Earth, protected in a permanent place of remembrance and worship. The relics of the dead ancestors were in the process of becoming seeds of future life.

Archaeologists speak of temples, platforms and pyramids, but in Mesoamerican civilisation such a sanctuary is a *teocalli* (in Nahuatl) or *huahi ñuhu* (in Dzaha Dzau), both meaning ‘house of god’. Religion and history merge here. The protagonists of the historical narratives, the rulers of the city-states, were

addressed as *iya* and *iyadzehe*, ‘divine lords and ladies’, who after death became *ñuhu*, ‘divine beings’. For the audience they were the venerated ancestors, their history a sacred text, their memory a ritual.

## 10 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

Alfonso Caso, the Mexican archaeologist in charge of the excavation of Tomb 7 in early 1932, has done a magnificent job in documenting the findings. A coherent interpretation, however, is still lacking. Caso suggested that the tomb was the burial place of an insane and monstrous person, ‘a sick individual, who suffered from a brain tumor, and who because of his cranial characteristics, probably was insane... perhaps he was regarded as the incarnation of Xolotl, i.e. the god of monsters’ (Caso 1969: 239). This is an unwarranted suggestion in need of re-examination.

The archaeological, historical and linguistic understanding of population developments in the central valleys of Oaxaca suggests that Monte Albán in the Classic and Postclassic periods was situated in the Zapotec-speaking area. Therefore, it is generally considered a Beni Zaa (Zapotec) metropolis in the Classic period. Similarly, after its demise it remained within a Beni Zaa (Zapotec) realm, the Postclassic capital of which was Zaachila.

Originally Tomb 7 was constructed in the Early Classic period. A calendric inscription, remains of mural paintings and three effigy vessels all point to the corresponding Classic Zapotec style of Monte Albán. The famous treasure, however, shows the style of the Postclassic period, which is characteristic of the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) pictorial manuscripts. Clearly, these manuscripts hold a crucial key for understanding the tomb and its contents. The style is generally known as the Mixteca-Puebla style, but in itself it is not limited to the Mixtec region and therefore in itself it is no proof of the involvement of speakers of Dzaha Dzau, the Mixtec language. To determine a link with Ñuu Dzau culture, we need to find more precise correspondences between the figurative elements of the treasure and the pictorial manuscripts. An illustrative example is the image of the birth of the first Ñuu Dzau lords and ladies from the mother ceiba tree of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala): Bone 203i. But how are we to evaluate this presence of Ñuu Dzau elements in a Beni Zaa environment?

The skeletal remains in the tomb are incomplete: they do not represent primary burials, but are the result of a secondary burial of incomplete assemblages of bones. Subsequent studies suggest that Tomb 7 was a shrine dedicated to the veneration of ancestor relics contained in sacred bundles. The scientific dating of these human remains points towards a time frame between 1177 and

1435 AD. On the other hand, the visual art of Tomb 7 shows a strong stylistic resemblance to that of Tombs 1 and 2 of Zaachila. Of these Tomb 1 can be shown to be the burial place of two persons who belonged to the Xipe dynasty. One of them, Lord 5 Flower, is very probably identical to a similar individual of the same name who appears in the Mixtec Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). This opens a fascinating window onto the historical context of both Tomb 1 of Zaachila and Tomb 7 at Monte Albán.

Lord 5 Flower can be identified as the Beni Zaa prince who is mentioned in the *Relación Geográfica de Teozapotlan* (1580) as the one who married a Ñuu Dzauí woman 'more than 300 years earlier', i.e. (shortly) before 1280. The dates coincide with the correction of Caso's synchronology undertaken by Emily Rabin. The Ñuu Dzauí woman, or rather princess, he married, must have been Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', who belonged to the dynasty of Teozacualco and appears as the wife of Lord 5 Flower in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall).

This identification gives us a rather precise historical indication for the time frame of Tomb 1 of Zaachila, namely in the first half of the fourteenth century. Tomb 7 of Monte Albán must have been contemporaneous with the tombs in Zaachila and therefore its contents would also date to the first half of the fourteenth century. This fits within the modern physical anthropological research that dates the skeletal remains in Tomb 7 between 1177 and 1435 AD.

We will have to examine the historical and dynastic implications of this identification. But first we focus on the interpretation of Tomb 7 as a sanctuary and sacred shrine. For that purpose, we try to re-establish the original order and cohesion of the elements that were deposited here, and to connect them with other sources of indigenous memory and spirituality.

Consequently, we examine the relations of the tomb with historical data but also the implications of the presence of specific divine powers. We analyse the meaning of the visual art and compare it to the corpus of pictorial manuscripts produced in precolonial and early colonial times. In doing so, we take advantage of the advances in interpretation of these manuscripts in the past decades, i.e. the new insights that were obtained after Caso finished his research and his monumental publication (1969). But above all, we try to understand the archaeological data in Mesoamerican terms, connecting the human and material remains in Tomb 7 with the world of Mesoamerican concepts, symbols, and values.

This endeavour implies not only the technical decipherment but also – at least partially – the reconstruction of the narrative and religious experience of Tomb 7. Clarissa Pinkola Estés reminds us that stories are medicine and that handing them down is a large and far-reaching responsibility:

In every authentic story and healing tradition that I know, the relating of a story begins with the bringing up, hauling up of psychic contents, both collective and personal. The process is a long exertion in time and energy, both intellectual and spiritual; it is in no way an idle practice. It costs much and takes long....

ESTÉS 1992: 470

## Life – Death – Life

In Mesoamerica the artist, the historian and their public were well aware that the arts, and particularly songs, ceremonial discourse and painting (pictography), had originally been taught to humankind by the Plumed Serpent, the divine whirlwind as culture hero, who had also brought rain and fertility to the world and had defined the appropriate sacred dates for all the towns to start their respective ritual cycles.<sup>1</sup> Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48, lists his names, titles or invocations; here he is called ‘the writer of books’ and represented as painting a codex in red and black. His is also the primordial singer and speaker of ceremonial discourses, one from whose breast flow beautiful words, who carries the divine power (Ñuhu) and the power of the ancestors in his heart.<sup>2</sup>

Also in the Nahuatl tradition, Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, is a god of creation and priestly knowledge, as well as a culture hero. On the other hand, this name or title appears in the sources as that of an emblematic leading personality (ruler/god) of Toltec civilisation.<sup>3</sup> Cultural creations, the making of an art work, as well as writing and performing were therefore ritual acts, a legacy of the Plumed Serpent, a personal encounter with his power.

When we seriously want to understand the meaning and spiritual value of such a religiously charged place as Tomb 7 and of the related scenes in the Books of Wisdom (Teomoxтли Group), we have to prepare ourselves mentally to study these ancient remains with the religious respect that is proper in the age-old civilisation to which they belong. We also have to situate our findings within the Mesoamerican worldview and its cultural memory, its cultural logic.<sup>4</sup> We will therefore develop our interpretation from a personal

1 See Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 48–49 and our commentary (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992a; cf. Jansen 1997 and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a). On the Plumed Serpent in the contemporary Ñuu Dzaui world see also Witter (2011).

2 He carries in his heart the so-called Xipe bundle, which consists of sticks or staffs bound together. The idea transmitted seems to be that of a combination of staffs of office, i.e. of social forces (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: 254–255). The configuration is similar to that of the bundle made in the Aztec Tititl feast, which is explicitly dedicated to the ancestors and clothed as their image or *ixiptla* (Codex Magliabechi, p. 44v). Most likely, therefore, this Xipe bundle represents the combined power of the ancestors.

3 See for example the studies by Carrasco (1982) and Nicholson (2001).

4 For the concepts see Assmann (1999) and Fisher (1999).

acquaintance with Mesoamerican symbolism, particularly the ideas associated with Mother Earth and the ancestors.

## 1 Tale of a Grandmother

In the middle of the 1970s we embarked on our life journey together. At the same time, we started our work, reflections and research on the life and history of Ñuu Sau (Ñuu Dzau), the Mixtec people in southern Mexico. For Aurora, this is a familiar culture, inherited from her parents and community in the village where she grew up: Ñuu Ndeya (known also by its Nahuatl name Chalcatongo), but this research process meant progress in the understanding of the people's history and of the reasons behind its social reality, its colonial condition. For Maarten, coming from a European, Dutch, origin, it meant the privilege of being guided to and connected with another culture, and a progressive understanding of how the interpretation of a culture's ancient art and texts depends on a knowledge of its living traditions, and vice versa a search for their messages for the present. For both of us it meant the beginning of a quest of trying to contribute to the decolonisation of historical knowledge and the reintegration of indigenous cultural memory.

In those early years an elderly aunt of Aurora's family, who already had the status of a grandmother, Mrs María Jiménez, told us an ancient narrative about the *temazcal*, the traditional steambath used by women for regaining strength after giving birth, but also in general for health-related purposes (like the North American sweat lodge). It generally consists of a small and low building of stone and adobe or a temporary structure of reed arches, covered with blankets. A low opening is the entrance to the main chamber, with – on one side or in one corner – a pile of stones that functions as an oven or fireplace, which has its own small outside entrance. In the codices the *temazcal* is typically painted as having a formal door-like entrance with next to it the triangular opening of the oven. This corresponds quite closely to forms that can be found in the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) region today.<sup>5</sup>

Here we will take this narrative as a point of departure for exploring Mesoamerican symbolism. The narrative that grandmother María Jiménez told us is situated in the time of creation, before the first sunrise. We reproduce her text in Sahin Sau, the local variant of Mixtec (Dzaha Dzau).

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5 For the workings of the *temazcal* see Alcina Franch (2000) and, specifically for its use in the Ñuu Dzau region, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1980) and Katz (1996).

*Niyoo in nanañuu ja jahan jahan yuku, ja ndehe in isu te nijayaka staa jiin ndeyu ja niyee isu uan.*

*Uu sehe yii uan niyoo.*

*Nikandikin sehe yii uan onde nuu yuku uan, te nikajini ja jakee isu nijayaka te nindatuhun jiin isu uan.*

*Nikandatuhun ndenduu sehe yii uan ja maa kiyaka jakee isu.*

*Nikakei jini naa: 'Vina te maana kiyakana jakee taana te ndooni vehe,' nikakei jini naa.*

*'Vee, kuahan nu kingoyoro te nandoori nusaa.'*

*Te nikajika kuangoyo ndenduu jayii uan, nikajaa yuku uan.*

*Nikajahni, nikatava ñii isu.*

*Te nikanduku timii tindaka te nikataan ini ñii isu, te nikakiku uan te nikasndukoo isu uan.*

*Inga kiu nikee maa naa kuandehe isu nuu yuku.*

*Nijaa te nikejaha kahan jiin isu, te maa isu nuyuuni iyaa tu kuiti kahan.*

*Nikatu ndaha siki isu: 'Kahan, ¿najaha tu kahanro?' kei jini isu.*

*Te isu ninduani kuahan, uanna nikakenda timii tindaka. Te nikakejaha katuu nanañuu uan.*

*Nijinu nanañuu kuanoho vehe ninajaa vehe.*

*Te nikejaha kanitahan nuu ndenduu sehe yii uan: '¿Nou nikasaharo jiin taaro ja nikajahniro?'*



ILLUSTRATION 2.01 *Temazcal of adobe bricks, Chalcatongo.*



ILLUSTRATION 2.02 *Temazcal of reeds and mats, San Miguel el Grande.*



ILLUSTRATION 2.03 *Oven of a temazcal (without cover).*

*Nikakei ndenduu sehe: 'tukuiti nuu nikasahana jün taana, ko ñahani kaani ñihi chi shraan nikatuu timii tindaka nihi', nikakei jini naa.*

*Te nikachindee ini ñihi nuu nduu ñihi uan, te nikajasu yuhjuehe ñihi.*

*'Kaani nuu nduu uan, kuyaani', nikakei jini nanañuu uan.*

*Uan nikasaha sehe yii nanañuu.*

*Santa Teresa kuu nanañuu ñihi uan, te shraan ii chi katuni yoho, nu nou kuu, tu kuu kitiniyo chi shraan shraan ñihi.*<sup>6</sup>

There was [once] a grandmother (elderly woman) who always went to the mountain to visit a deer, she brought him tortillas and food to eat.

She had two sons.

These sons [once] followed her to the mountain and realised that she brought food to the deer and that she conversed with the deer.

The two sons made a plan that they would take the food to the deer.

They said to their mother: 'Today we take the food to our father, so you can stay home'.

'Yes, go, if you will, and I stay here'.

So both boys went and reached the mountain.

They killed the deer and removed the skin.

Then they searched for wasps and put those inside the deerskin, they sewed it and placed there the [dead, stuffed] deer.

The next day their mother went to see the deer on the mountain.

She arrived and started talking to the deer, but he stood there still and did not respond.

She slapped the deer on the shoulder: 'Speak, why don't you talk?' she said to the deer.

The deer fell down, and there the wasps came out. And they began to sting the grandmother.

The grandmother ran back and finally got home.

She began to scold her two sons: 'What did you do to your father? You killed him!'.

The two sons said to their mother: 'We didn't do anything to our father, you had better come and take a bath in the *temazcal*, because the wasps have stung you a lot'.

And they put her inside the *temazcal*, on the fireplace, and closed the entrance.

'Sit down on the fireplace, stay there', they told the grandmother.

6 See also the publication of this text in the manual for studying the Sahin Sau language (Pérez Jiménez 2008: 68–70). A similar text has been published by Dyk (1959: 10–16). The narrative is widespread in the Oaxaca region: Weitlaner (1977: 52–62) presents a Chinantec version and Boege (1988: 94–98 and 108–112) a Mazatec version.

That was what the boys did to the grandmother.  
 Santa Teresa is the grandmother of the *temazcal*; she is very delicate because she may just grab us (make us sick). We should not get annoyed in her presence, because the *temazcal* is very dangerous.

As an afterthought it was added that later the two boys became Sun and Moon.... A version from San Miguel el Grande, a neighbouring town of Chalcatongo, clarifies this aspect:

*Uanna te seheña un nikeeyi kajahan ñaayi.  
 Te nikanihiyi iin koo kaa.  
 Te nikajahniti.  
 Te nikatavayi nduchiti te luu shraan kaa nduchiti un.  
 Te nikasahayi iin yoho te ni kaayi kajahanyi ichi andiu.  
 Te iinyi chi nikuuyi iin nduchi yosava kiti un.  
 Te ingayi chi savani nduchiti un kuu ingayi.  
 Te suchi nikuu iin nduchi yosava un kuu ndikandii.  
 Te suchi nikuu savani nduchiti un kuu yoo.*

Then the children left and went far away.  
 They found a snake.  
 They killed it  
 They took out its eyes and they were very pretty.  
 They made a rope and climbed up and went to the sky.  
 One of them became an eye and a half of the snake.  
 The other is a half of one of the snake's eyes.  
 The boy who became an eye and a half is the sun.  
 The boy who became half of an eye is the moon.<sup>7</sup>

DYK 1959: 15–16

This text from San Miguel el Grande also clarifies that the stone people (the people that turned into stones when the sun came up) were the ones who named all the animals.

*Anahan niyoo kuendu ja taka yuu mani nikakahan.  
 Te vina ja nikii juisiu jiin ja nikana ndikandii te ni ndihi ñayiu nikanduuyi yuu.*

<sup>7</sup> We have adapted the text to the orthography used by Pérez Jiménez (2008), but follow the translation by Dyk (1959: 15–16). See also the vocabulary of Dyk and Stoudt (1973).

*Te achiyi jayuu nikinihin sihu [sihvi] taka kiti nasaa nuu kiti yuku jün kiti tata nikinihin yuu, achi.*

Long ago there was a story that all the rocks always talked.

And now that judgment/consciousness [*juicio*] came and the sun rose, all the people turned into stones.

People say that stones named all the animals, the various wild animals and the tame animals, the stones named, they say.

DYK 1959: 17

In Ñuu Ndeya, don Casimiro Jiménez, also of advanced age, gave us more details:

*Ñayiu anaha uan nikayooni, ko tu iha Ndikandii, chi maa yoo, tu kuu ndiji.*

*Te nikayuhu shraan ñayiu uan ja nikana iha Ndikandii.*

*Kuu ja nikajahniyi maayi, nikajaniini ja ñuyiu naatu nuu.*

*Te nikajahni maa ini tunchi, chii kava, ini shrahva, yaha uan, nikaküu ñayiu, nakajiniyi nuu iha Ndikandii uan.*

In ancient times there were people, but no Lord Sun, only the Moon, there was no light.

And those people became very afraid when Lord Sun came up.

They killed themselves; they thought that the world was going to be destroyed.

And they killed themselves by throwing themselves in deep holes, in caves under large rocks, in canyons, everywhere they entered, when they saw (the countenance of) Lord Sun.

PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ 2008: 102–103

The complex narrative of the two brothers killing the deer, locking their grandmother in the *temazcal*, and becoming Sun and Moon, has been with us ever since, challenging us to find its meanings, both in a cultural-historical sense and as a message, a value for present society as well as for our personal life. In presenting the narrative in classes for students at Leiden University, we noticed that a Western audience is somewhat baffled by this plot (or the supposed lack of it) and does not easily find a meaning in the events.

Yet this is obviously an important ancient narrative. Essentially the same story is told in many variants throughout Mesoamerica. It is clearly related to the famous narrative in the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred text written down during colonial times in the K'iche' language. This religious and historical book tells of

two brothers, the twin heroes Hunahpu and Ixbalanque, who descended into the underworld and besieged the gods of death, after which they became Sun and Moon. Later on in the epic narrative, there is indeed a first sunrise.<sup>8</sup>

Obviously, we are not dealing here with a register of historical facts, but with a symbolic narrative. In this context apparent contradictions or impossibilities (how can a grandmother and a deer have children together?) generally serve to remind us that this narrative has a symbolic meaning, explicitly situated beyond daily reality.

One of the first things that attract our attention in the *temazcal* narrative is the relationship between the protagonists. Technically one might say that the precise connection between the two brothers on the one hand and the grandmother and the deer on the other is unclear. In fact, the relationship between the grandmother and the deer is not clear either: the deer is referred to as the father of the children, but that is not backed up by any deer-like characteristics of the children themselves, nor by any type of parental recognition on their part.

On the one hand the elderly lady is called grandmother (*nanañuu*), on the other hand the two brothers are presented as her children (*sehe*), and the



ILLUSTRATION 2.04A *Lady 1 Eagle, the Grandmother.*

8 The K'iche' text was transcribed and translated into Spanish by Fray Francisco Ximénez in the first years of the eighteenth century. Tedlock (1985) and Christenson (2003/4) have translated his manuscript into English.

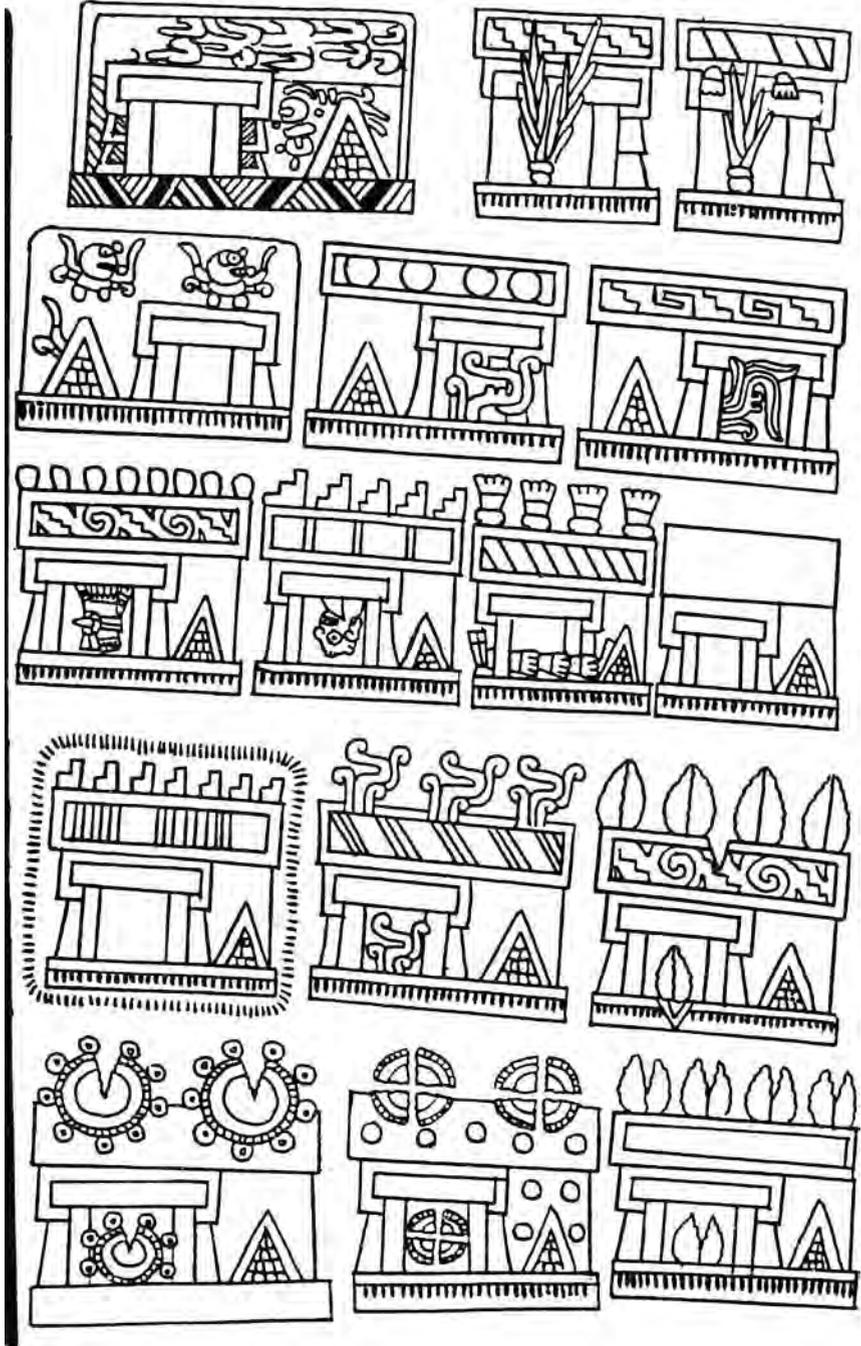


ILLUSTRATION 2.04B *Temazcales of Lady 1 Eagle, Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 15.*

suggestion is that they are the children of the lady and the deer, referred to explicitly as their father. Now it must be said that these terms are not limited to blood relations: a grandmother can also refer to a respected elderly woman, and ‘father’ is also a respective term for a man, comparable to ‘sir’ in English. In addition, as the narrative explains, *Nanañuu*, Grandmother, is also the name and title of the deity of the steambath, who is well respected in Ñuu Dzaui culture. In historical sources she is *Sitna Yuta*, Grandmother of the River, and has the calendar name Lady 1 Eagle. She rules over the region of the West, represented as the River of Ashes Yaa Yuta (the Río Nejapa, which is the western border of the Ñuu Dzaui region). Symbolically the West is associated with fertility and human procreation.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 Nahua and Maya Parallels

In the Aztec pantheon the *temazcal* is also associated with a female deity. Her head appears painted above the entrance of the *temazcal*.<sup>10</sup> The abundant cotton on her hair and the black area around her mouth identify her as *Tlazolteotl*, ‘Deity of Filth’, i.e. the goddess of cleansing. The same pictorial conventions characterise *Teteo Innan*, ‘Mother of the Gods’. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún depicts and describes both. The terminology is clearly that of the Christian condemnation of Mesoamerican religion:

As to the name Tlazolteotl: it was said that it was because her realm was that of evil and perverseness – that is to say lustful and debauched living.

SAHAGÚN, Book I: Ch. 11; ANDERSON and DIBBLE vol. 1: 8

A few lines later a more emic view is presented, when it is said that ‘she forgave... she removed the corruption, she cleansed, she washed... she pardoned’. In doing so this goddess was associated with calendar knowledge, wisdom and vision: ‘And her warden – he who saw for her – was a seer, the *tlapouhqui*, wise

9 On the occurrence of the grandmother in the Ñuu Dzaui codices, see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 261 ff). The title *Sitna yuta* is mentioned by the *Relación Geográfica de Juxtahuaca* (Acuña 1984, 1: 285). The chronicle of friar Francisco de Burgoa (1934, 1: 289) clarifies the symbolic meaning of the West. The ancient term *sitna* (in Alvarado’s vocabulary) corresponds to *nanañuu* in contemporary Sahin Sau (Chalcatongo Mixtec). López Austin (1992) provides a synthetic analysis of Mesoamerican symbolic narratives.

10 The Book of Life (Codex Magliabechi), pp. 76v–77r. Mönnich (1969) has made a classic study of the Mesoamerican earth goddess.



ILLUSTRATION 2.05 *Temazcal in the Book of Life (Codex Magliabechi), p. 77r.*

in reading the sacred almanac which lay in his hand, with the picture [writing], the ink [and] the colours for painting; the knowledge, the wisdom, which hath been uttered' (ibid.).

The grandmother is clearly related to the world of the ancestors and their wisdom. This aspect connects her to the earth and to sustenance but also to the remains of ancient civilisations. Raúl Macuil Martínez has documented how in the present-day Nahuatl-speaking town of Santa Catarina (belonging to the municipality of Acaxochitlan in the Mexican state of Hidalgo) people venerate *Maceualtenancatzintli*, 'the venerable (*tzintli*) mother (*tenan*) of the common people (*maceualli*)' (locally translated as 'la venerable anciana indígena'). She is Mother Earth, who lives in *Tlalticpactli*, 'earth'. Various families in the community have a *Tlalticpactli* close to their cornfields or garden, which is a sacred entrance to the earth where the family members pray for a good harvest. At one particular site (*Tlauatzaloyan*) there is the main *Tlalticpactli*, where *Maceualtenancatzintli*, the Lady of the Earth (*la Dueña de la Tierra*) lives, to whom people pray for the protection and sustenance of the community and the world at large. A small cross is located here at the side of a small spring (*ameyal*).<sup>11</sup>

It is to be noted that in the emblematic Classic site of Teotihuacan the main mountain behind the Pyramid of the Moon is also called *Tenan*, 'Mother'. Actually *nantli* is mother, *tenan* 'mother of people' (*te-* being a general suffix referring to personal possession). The comparison with present-day oral tradition in Santa Catarina suggests that the mountain in Teotihuacan (to which the

11 See the contribution of Raúl Macuil Martínez ('Los dos mundos de Santa Catarina') to the volume *Tiempo y Comunidad*, edited by Jansen and Raffa (2015).

Avenue of the Dead, i.e. of the ancestors, is orientated) is also a manifestation of Mother Earth.<sup>12</sup>

The Aztec deity *Teteo Innan*, the mother of the gods, was also named ‘Heart of the Earth’ (*Tlalli Iyollo*) and ‘Our Grandmother’ (*Toci*). The devotees of Teteo Innan / Toci were the physicians and midwives, ‘who read the future, who cast auguries by looking upon water or by casting grains of corn, who read fortunes by use of knotted cords, who cured sickness by removing stones or obsidian knives from the body...’ (Sahagún, Book 1: Ch. 8; Anderson and Dibble vol. 1: 4).

The same source insists on her connection with the *temazcal*:

Likewise, owners of sweat-houses prayed to her; wherefore they caused her image to be placed in front of the sweat-houses. They called her ‘Grandmother of the Baths’ (*Temazcalteci*) (ibid.).

Tlazolteotl/Teteo Innan/Toci and the Mixtec Nanañuu (‘Grandmother’) share a strong association with fertility, sexuality and procreation, childbirth and motherhood. This clarifies their association with the *temazcal*: the steambath was first and foremost used by women who had given birth.

In the narrative of the Popol Vuh the twin heroes are indeed the grandchildren of the elderly Lady Xmucane, who seems to correspond to the Grandmother in the Ñuu Dzauí version. The boys actually descended from one of an earlier set of brothers, Hun Hunahpu and Vucub Hunahpu, who were the sons of Xmucane. These had been enthusiastic ball-players and had been challenged by the gods of the underworld (Xibalbá), but lost the game to them and were killed. The skull of Hun Hunahpu, hung in a tree, had spit into the hand of a noble young lady of the underworld, Xquic (‘Lady Blood’): she became pregnant and had to fly from the anger of her father; riding a deer, she arrived at the earth’s surface, where she found lodging in the dwelling of Xmucane and raised her own twin boys.

The two versions (the Popol Vuh and the Mixtec narrative) have many elements in common but also show some marked differences. In both cases the narrative deals with events preceding the rise of Sun and Moon: these are two

12 The Nahuatl name for the Avenue of the Dead (*Micca Otli*) is documented by Sahagún and the *Relación Geográfica de Teotihuacan* (Acuña 1985–86, 11) and therefore dates at least to the Postclassic period, when the former metropolis was in use as a ritual place, and perhaps even earlier. This and other names for features of the site most likely reflect a Mesoamerican cosmological interpretation of the ancient ceremonial centre. On the layout of Classic Teotihuacan see for example the studies by Sugiyama (1993, 2005, 2010) and Cowgill (2015).

boys who have an antagonistic relationship with the grandmother figure. In the Popol Vuh version this aspect is a secondary detail, because the episode that the two brothers challenge and disobey the grandmother is overshadowed by the main epic plot: the struggle between the two brothers and the gods of death. In the Ñuu Dzauí version this antagonism is the focus of the narrative and explains the connection between the Grandmother and the steambath. The function of the deer is also different: in the Popol Vuh it plays a very secondary role as the animal used by Lady Xquic to leave the underworld, while in the Ñuu Dzauí version it is crucial as the partner of the Grandmother and supposedly even the father of the brothers. In general, the deer is the emblematic animal associated with undomesticated nature and therefore with freedom.

In some respects, the Ñuu Dzauí version contributes to the understanding of the Popol Vuh. In the K'iche' sacred text the two boys encountered a brilliant bird, named Vucub Caquix ('Seven Macaw'), seated at the top of a tree bragging to be the sun, at a time when there was still no light. The boys became annoyed with him because of his arrogance and vainglorious pretensions and shot him down with their blowguns, after which they took his teeth, his eyes and all his jewels.

This motif of the eyes being taken from a bird is parallel to the eyes being taken from a serpent in the Ñuu Dzauí narrative. The implication is that the eyes of Vucub Caquix will allow the two boys to become Sun and Moon. Generally, Vucub Caquix is interpreted as just an impostor, but as he seems to be the same as the great bird deity that appears in many Maya works of art, he is clearly not a negative figure, but an emblem of special status and power, seated in the cosmic tree, and holding the element that would produce light.<sup>13</sup> His two sons were powerful spirits of volcanoes and earthquakes. Thus we interpret this bird as a symbol of primordial (animal) force that was prominent in the time of darkness, very similar to the deer in the Ñuu Dzauí narrative (also an animal with solar associations). This ancient being had to be overcome and removed (killed by the brothers) so that the true sun and moon could take their rightful place and illuminate the world.

### 3 The Symbolic Dimension

The inspiring works of Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992, 2011), who analyses the symbolic or archetypal narratives of different cultures in the tradition of the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, provide interesting keys for understanding this

13 Cf. Helmke and Nielsen (2015).

Mesoamerican creation narrative. The main thrust of the narrative seems to be the creation of light, and with that the creation of human knowledge and human history on earth. The different confrontations are the obstacles that the two brothers had to overcome in order to transform themselves into Sun and Moon, i.e. in order to bring light to the world. The Popol Vuh explains that humans are children of light (*zaquil al, zaquil qahol*) and that light is a metaphor for cognition and conscious life (seeing is knowing). Human history begins with sunrise. The first sunrise itself meant a radical transformation of nature and of the protagonists of the life-world.

In an effort to rationalize religion, scholars at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century took such symbols to be veiled references to nature and from there they fell into the trap of considering religion as some form of occult physics or astronomy.<sup>14</sup> In fact, we would say, it is the other way around: in trying to understand and make sense of our position in the universe, we humans resort to our common symbolic capacity in order to recognise or construct archetypical relations with nature, very much like the famous prayer of St Francis in which the sun, moon and animals become our relatives.

The Grandmother of the *temazcal* is the archetypical being who represents the primordial time (before sunrise) of life in direct connection with nature (represented by the deer-spouse). She is an example of the archetype of the Wild Woman, which Estés has foregrounded:

The wild nature carries the bundles for healing; she carries everything a woman needs to be and know. She carries the medicine for all things. She carries stories and dreams and words and songs and signs and symbols. She is both vehicle and destination.

She [the Wild Woman archetype] is the female soul. Yet she is more, she is the source of the feminine. She is all that is of instinct, of the worlds both seen and hidden.... She is the life/death/life force she is the incubator... She is ideas, feelings, urges and memory. She has been lost and half forgotten for a long, long time. She is the source, the light, the night, the dark, and daybreak.... She is the maker of cycles... She is from the future and from the beginning of time.

ESTÉS 1998: 10–11

Estés notes as one of the central problems of human psychology the disrupted relationship with the deep instinctual psyche:

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14 For a history of these and other interpretations of religion see Morris (2010).

When we lose touch with the instinctive psyche, we live in a semi-destroyed state and images and powers that are natural to the feminine are not allowed full development. When a woman is cut away from her basic source, she is sanitized, and her instincts and natural life cycles are lost, subsumed by the culture, or by the intellect or the ego – one's own or those belonging to others.

ESTÉS 1998: 8

From these texts we understand that the narrative of the Grandmother of the *temazcal* is precisely about this rupture with nature, the severing of the ties with the primordial natural world and the enclosure or reduction of its powers to the limited space of the *temazcal*.

The narrative shows different dichotomies and structural relationships. The conflict between the Grandmother and the boys contains an opposition between old (possibly the identification of the narrator) versus young (possibly the listener). The action privileges the next generation ('they are the winners'), while the old generation remains immobilised, fossilised. At the same time the narrative addresses the relations between the world of human action (the two brothers) and the forces of nature, associated with light and darkness respectively.

The deer, *pars pro toto* of nature, communicates with the Grandmother who nurtures it, but does not communicate with the boys – that relationship actually ends in aggression and killing. Thus, we conclude, the brothers do not want to recognise (honour) their relations with nature. The boys' killing of the deer and subsequent trick on the Grandmother constitute a breach of factual or spiritual kinship relations. The character of the deer makes it evident that actually kinship relations with nature are meant. This breach amounts to a paradise lost motif. There is a progress from darkness to light, but at a cost. The world of human agency, rationality, cognition and structured society cannot exist without the mysterious forces of nature that govern its very continuity through kinship, procreation and other experiential bonds. The Mesoamerican worldview symbolises the first as an area of male action, associated with the sun and the East, and the second as an area of female action, associated with darkness (mystery, vision), the West, the wisdom of the elders as well as the animal world (deer). The narrative symbolises the unveiling or realisation of the world of cognition (the rising sun) as an act of primordial violence, a dramatic breach with the great feminine principle of nature, its procreative force and its deep intuitive powers.<sup>15</sup>

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15 According to the Mixtec vocabulary of friar Francisco de Alvarado, darkness (*sa naa, sa yavui; sa yuhu sa ndoyo*) stands for mystery.



ILLUSTRATION 2.06A *The Coatepec narrative depicted in the work of Sahagún: the birth of Huitzilopochtli and the death of Coyolxauhqui.*

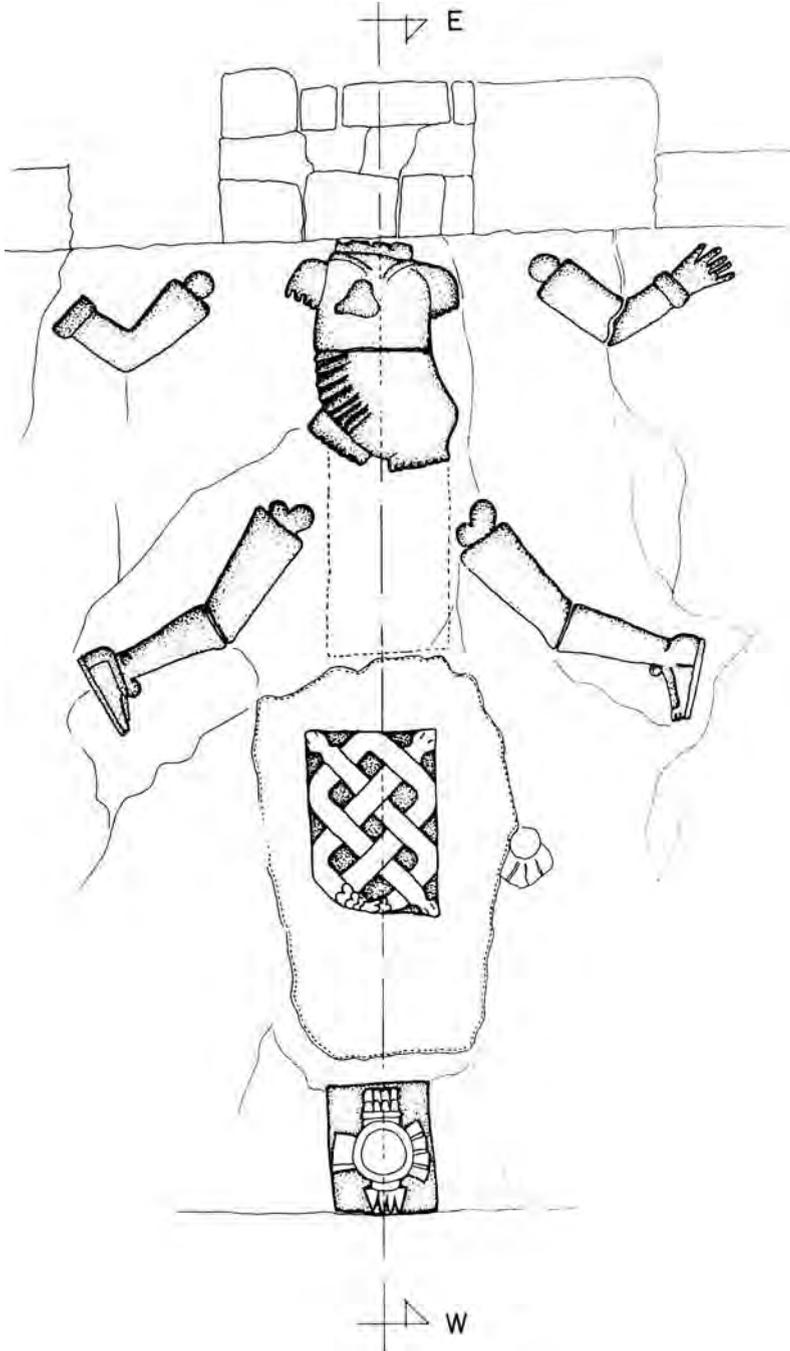


ILLUSTRATION 2.06B *One of the images of Coyolxauhqui at the Templo Mayor (drawing Leonardo López Luján, courtesy Proyecto Templo Mayor).*

We see a structural parallel here with the Aztec narrative of the birth of their patron god Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird, Left-Handed Warrior) as a solar deity. It happened in the time of darkness, on the primordial Serpent Mountain, Coatepec. This was a place between primordial time (the ‘time of darkness’, the ‘time before time’, the ‘time of origin’) and the time of human history, a turning point from the mysterious and dark worlds of the divine primordial forces to the world of sunlight, perception, analysis and order. It was a place of contact between times and between worlds: a *liminal* place. Therefore, it was surrounded by serpents, which set it apart from each of those times and worlds. The serpents are symbols of the liminal sphere between humans and gods; they express the power of vision and trance, which is precisely the sphere of communication between both.<sup>16</sup>

There, on Coatepec, Huitzilopochtli was born as an armed warrior from the body of his mother, the earth goddess Coatlicue (‘She with the Skirt of Serpents’). Throwing his powerful fire serpent (light force), he drove away the four hundred Mimixcoa (‘Cloud Serpents’), powers of the night sky, and killed his sister Coyolxauhqui (‘She with the Painted Countenance’), who in the astral context represents the moon.<sup>17</sup>

Coyolxauhqui’s body broke into many pieces and in this way she is represented in relief on the famous round stone monument in front of the Aztec main temple, the Templo Mayor, which is a ceremonial replica of Coatepec. But, being a deity, Coyolxauhqui is of course not really killed. Only the emblematic moment of the primordial – but eternally ongoing – struggle between light and darkness is represented, just as the Christian crucifix does not represent the death of a person, but is a symbol of religious redemption. Monuments of Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui are intimately connected with the temple of Huitzilopochtli: they retain their power. The temple itself represents the combination of two forces: the celestial one of Huitzilopochtli, the emblematic warrior, and the earth-related one of the rain god (Tlaloc), who dwells in a cave, where he stores the seeds and life-giving waters.

The mystery of the ongoing cycles of day and night, the celestial movement of the stars and planets, the creation and birth of new life remains beyond the control of human knowledge: it is situated within the realm of the Grandmother, celebrated in the intimacy of the steambath. In the terms of Clarissa Pinkola Estés, the Grandmother of the steambath stands for the cycle of life-death-life. The light of reason (the two boys) removes her power from daily life

16 On the concept of liminality see Turner (1975), Leach (1976) and Rappaport (1999). In Mesoamerica the serpent is one of the principal symbols of liminality (Jansen 1997).

17 See the study by Matos Moctezuma and López Luján (2012: Ch. VI).

and limits it to specific ritual places, such as the *temazcal*, which are related to giving birth or other religious activity. But there the mystery is still present and active; there grandmother nature still has its influence and positive healing effects. Even though enclosed in the dark space or broken into pieces by the rising sun of human history, this female principle of nature remains in power, firmly rooted in the interstices and liminalities of her cycle and essential for the continuity of the human community.

In the Mesoamerican narrative, Sun and Moon are presented as brothers and as such belong to a widely distributed theme of twins as protagonists of actions in primordial time. Estés (op. cit.: Ch. 4) sees such a pair as intimately related aspects of the psyche: discursive thought and intuition, reason and emotion, which in the narrative act in mutual support. Indeed, the sun in Mesoamerican symbolism stands for justice, analysis, knowledge, while the moon is associated with the night and therefore with more invisible, mysterious and inexplicable powers. In a way these aspects become conjoined to form a double personality, not one individual but a 'dividual', which in situations of stress may become separated (such as when in the *Popol Vuh* the two have to face the powers of death).<sup>18</sup> The two (twin) brothers Sun and Moon are the archetypical prefiguration of the dual nature of human existence: a being in both male and female manifestation, both separated from nature through cognition (light) and intimately connected to that same nature (the Grandmother) through the mysterious (dark, primordial) cycle of life-death-life.

It is against this background that we will try to interpret the artefacts and visual art of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán.

#### 4 Cihuacoatl and Lady 9 Grass

Among the iconographical indicators of female agency in Tomb 7, McCafferty and McCafferty (1994; 2003) identified several references to yet another manifestation of the grandmother figure in the Mesoamerican pantheon, namely the Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl, 'Woman-Serpent'.<sup>19</sup> This is a complex deity with multiple characteristics and associations, involving earth and sky as well as life

18 The term 'dividual' has become fashionable from studies of Melanesian personhood (e.g. Strathern 1999: 154–156; Mosko 2010). Laura Osorio deals with this topic in a Mesoamerican context in her Ph.D. dissertation (2015).

19 See Klein (1988, 2000), Jansen (2002) and Kroger and Granziera (2012) for a discussion of the iconography and meaning of the goddess Cihuacoatl. We return to this figure in chapters 6 and 7.

and death. In accordance with the meaning of her name, Cihuacoatl is portrayed as a woman with the head of a serpent or as a skeleton figure associated with a serpent (e.g. wearing a serpent as a girdle). The serpent in her name most likely refers to her liminal character, which becomes particularly evident during childbirth, a moment of creation but also of mortal danger. Cihuacoatl guides young mothers in this battle and takes with her those who die in it.

*Cuix à tomicca in ticioatzitzinti ca toiaoiouh: ca uncan miquiztequiti in Ciuacoatl, in Quilaztli, in Tonantzin.*

Or is it not the case that this [childbirth] is our mortality, of us, the noble women, because it is our battle, because there she orders the fatal tribute, she Cihuacoatl, Quilaztli, our mother.

SAHAGÚN, Book VI: Ch. 33

As *Cihuateotl* – the divine woman – she is the archetypical mother who has died in childbirth and consequently has become a deity. Her typical attribute ('weapon') is the 'machete' or sword for weaving, the *tzotzopaztli* or *dzitu*, mentioned in the preceding chapter as a symbol of female agency (cf. Codex Magliabechi, p. 45r). She is often shown wearing a skirt with a star motif, clearly denoting her other name: *Citlalinicue* or *Citlalcueye* 'She with the skirt of stars'.<sup>20</sup> This title refers to the Milky Way, which is the place where the (souls of the) newborn children come from.<sup>21</sup> Another decorative element of her regalia is an S-motif called *xonecuilli* in Nahuatl: it may refer to a constellation of that name, while the coloring in white on black produces an association with death.

Characteristic elements of her representation include other motifs that refer to death, such as the fleshless jaw or skull-like face. She is often portrayed with white clothing; in other cases her robes may be decorated with white bones or crosses on a black background. These references to death suggest a connection with the world of the ancestors. She is also associated with the Aztec earth god Tlaltecuhli ('Lord Earth'). She was venerated in dark temples (called Tlillan, 'Black Place'), the most important of which was located at Xochimilco.<sup>22</sup>

The 'woman' (*cihuatl*) aspect in the name of the goddess Cihuacoatl makes clear that she embodies the female principle in the cosmos. At the same time the serpent occurs in Mesoamerican art as a symbol of power and of liminal

20 Ruiz de Alarcón Treatise IV: Ch. 3 § 299 and Treatise VI: Ch. 8 § 414.

21 Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 7 and 34; cf. Garibay 1979: 109.

22 Durán 1967, I: 125 ff. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991) established a link between that sanctuary and Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus). See also our Chapter 6 and 7.



ILLUSTRATION 2.07 *Cihuacoatl in the book of life (Codex Magliabechi), p. 45r (Danzel 1922).*

places: for example, a cave is usually represented as a serpent's mouth and sculptures in the form of serpents surround temples (such as the Temple of Quetzalcoatl in Teotihuacan and the Templo Mayor in the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan) to mark liminal places of encounter with the gods and to mark the corresponding states of intensified consciousness and spiritual power. Indeed the very sign of Cihuacoatl was that of a serpent's mouth (vision), in which a woman's head manifests itself, demonstrating the visionary character of the goddess.<sup>23</sup> An even more explicit indication of this aspect is the fact that Cihuacoatl's body is the *piciete*, the hallucinogenic *nicotiana rustica* or wild

23 See Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993: 187–189) for a discussion of the serpent in relation to vision and *nahual* experiences. For the corresponding Maya concepts, see Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993: 207–210).



ILLUSTRATION 2.08 *Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 44.*

tobacco.<sup>24</sup> This makes her physically a power that causes trance and visionary experiences.

Imagery of the goddess Cihuacoatl is indeed manifest in Tomb 7. It is a subterranean, dark place (a *Tlillan*), and the presence of human bones is in itself indicative of an abode of death and ancestors. Particularly the fleshless lower jaws that have been found in Tomb 7 (see below), as well as the *xonecuilli* (S-) motifs, the spindle whorls (*malacates*) and the jaguar bones cut in the form of the weaving sword (*tzotzopaztli*) may be understood as attributes of Cihuacoatl in the Nahuatl-speaking world.

The Aztec Cihuacoatl has an equivalent in the Ñuu Dzauí codices: Lady 9 Grass, who has the same basic attributes (fleshless lower jaw, regalia decorated with the *xonecuilli* motif) and who is seated at an important sanctuary, painted as Skull Temple or Temple of Death. Her skeletal imagery suggests she is a goddess of death and her dominion of the Skull Temple suggests that she is

24 Mendieta, Book II: Ch. 19; Ruiz de Alarcón, Treatise II: Ch. 3 ff.

a divine guardian of the dead ancestors. Indeed, Lady 9 Grass seems to have been the Ñuu Dzaui advocacy of Cihuacoatl.

McCafferty and McCafferty went so far as to propose that Tomb 7 was the very Temple of Death where Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’ lived according to the Ñuu Dzaui codices. This hypothesis lacks a sound basis, however, and a contextual analysis of the Skull Temple has led us to another identification of this place. The Temple of Death forms part of a set of four hieroglyphic signs that occur in several codices. In some cases these four signs are located in the four corners of a page or scene, suggesting a link with the four directions.<sup>25</sup> In our own research, we have found that these signs correspond to the names that the Dzaha Dzaui (Mixtec) dictionary of friar Francisco de Alvarado (1593) gives to the four directions:

- \* Heaven (*Andevui*) is East,
- \* Dark Mountain (*Yucu Naa*) is North,
- \* Ash River (*Yaa Yuta*) is West,
- \* Place of Death (*Andaya, Huahi Cahí*) is South.

The East–West axis is relatively easy to identify in Ñuu Dzaui geography: Heaven is the Kava Kaandiui (Cahua Caa Andevui) mountain of Apoala, and Ash River must be the Nexapa (Ash River in Nahuatl), an affluent of the Río Balsas, which still forms the western boundary of the Mixtec world.<sup>26</sup> Because the Dark Mountain appears in combination with a Split Mountain, we take it to refer to a sacred place in the area of Tepeji de la Seda in the Mexican state of Puebla, to the north of the Ñuu Dzaui region.

The Skull Temple, then, corresponds to the terms *A-ndaya*, Place of Death, and its synonym *Huahi Cahí*, in the vocabulary of Alvarado (1593). The latter term refers to a house or temple (*huahi*) with a courtyard or cemetery (*cahi*) – we should take into account that in ancient times the dead were often buried in the courtyard or otherwise close to their house. In modern Mixtec *Huahi Cahí* is Vehe Kihin, a term that refers to a cave, originally most likely a funerary cave. That was a place where one could communicate with the ancestors.

25 Nowotny (1959b) observed that such a directional distribution of the four signs also occurs in Codex Yecu (Fonds Mexicain 20) and in the Cuicatec Codex Yada (Porfirio Díaz), as well as in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and in the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll). Jansen (1998b) comments on Fonds Mexicain 20, while Anders and Jansen (1994) include a commentary on the religious part of Codex Yada (Codex Porfirio Díaz) in their study of Codex Mictlan (Laud).

26 For the full argument see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: 311–316.

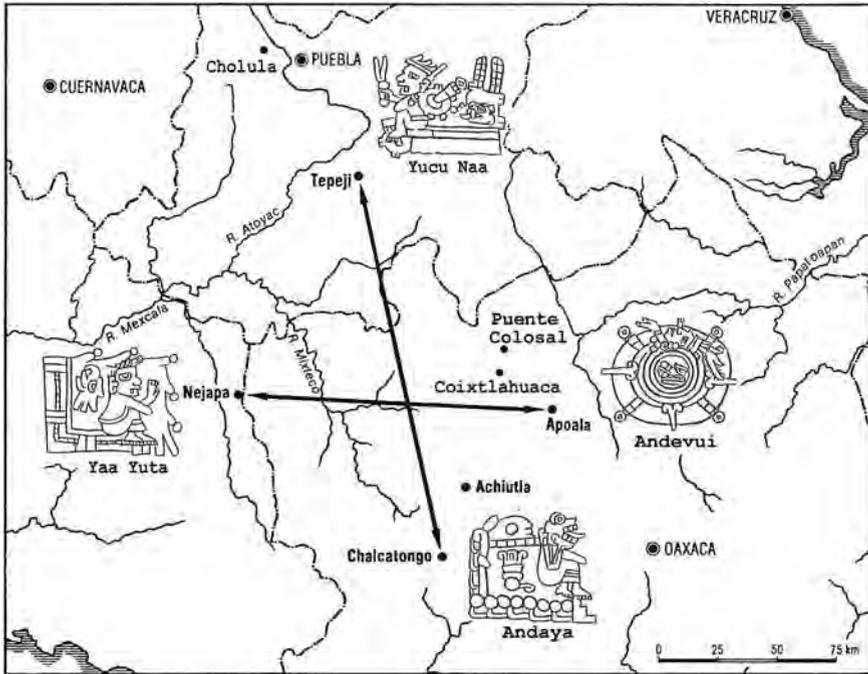


ILLUSTRATION 2.09 *The four directions of the Mixtec world (with the signs from Codex Yada).*

Today under Christian influence that type of cave has become demonised as a place where one could make a pact with the devil. It is not one specific site but a type of place (cave) which is present throughout the Ñuu Dzaui region.

As the Skull Temple represents the direction South in the list of the signs for the cardinal points, it must refer to an emblematic place in the southern part of the Ñuu Dzaui region associated with death. We have therefore proposed that the Temple of Death may represent the cave where the Ñuu Dzaui rulers were centrally buried, the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos*, which was located in the territory of Ñuu Ndaya, ancient Chalcatongo, which was the southernmost kingdom in the Mixteca Alta region. The Mixtec name of Chalcatongo is now Ñuu Ndeya, but in the sixteenth century was Ñuu Ndaya, Town of Death, as registered by friar Antonio de los Reyes (1593). It appears as a frieze (*ñuu*) of a skull representing death (*ndaya*) as the northern neighbour of Yucu Satuta (Zacatepec) on the lienzo of that town: indeed Chalcatongo was the northern neighbour of Yucu Satuta (Zacatepec) in the sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See reproduction and comments by Smith 1973a.

Friar Francisco de Burgoa describes how the Dominican missionary Benito Hernández found this site, a large cavern in a very high mountain called Mountain of the Small Deer (*Cerro de los Cervatillos*). Codex Añute (Selden), pp. 7–1V, connects Skull Temple with a similar Town of Death and a Mountain of Deer, confirming that we are indeed dealing with the Huahi Cahí associated with the Cerro de los Cervatillos and Chalcatongo (Ñuu Ndaya), i.e. with the cave that was the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos* described by Burgoa. The fact that Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’ appears seated in the Temple of Death suggests that she was the guardian of the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos*, a deity who takes care of the buried ancestors.<sup>28</sup>

We conclude that the realm of Lady 9 Grass in the codices has several geographical indicators that do not coincide with Monte Albán and point into another direction, namely the funerary cave of the Ñuu Dzauí rulers in Ñuu Ndaya (ancient Chalcatongo).

Although we do not think that the Temple of Death in the codices represents Tomb 7 itself, we do agree with McCafferty and McCafferty that Tomb 7 has several characteristics of a sanctuary (one among several) that was dedicated to Lady 9 Grass, the Ñuu Dzauí equivalent of Cihuacoatl in the Aztec pantheon. In Ñuu Dzauí terms, Tomb 7, as a subterranean funerary ritual place, was most likely a place where that deity was present: a Temple of Death (*Huahi Cahí*), a shrine for the veneration of and visionary communication with the sacred relics of deceased ancestors.

In the Ñuu Dzauí codices Lady 1 Eagle, *Sitna Yuta*, the ‘Grandmother of the River’, and Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’ are two prominent female deities associated with two of the four directions: the first appears as the patron deity of the West, while the second rules the South. The other directional deities are:

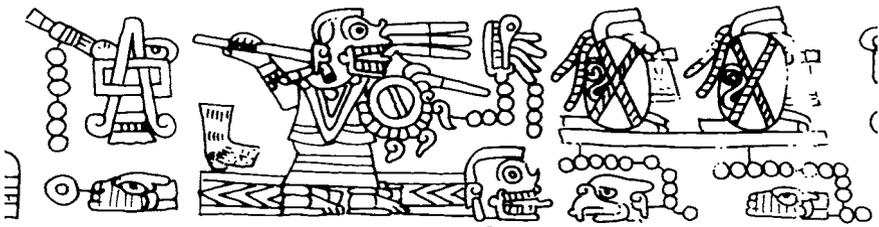


ILLUSTRATION 2.10 *Lady 9 Grass as warrior of the south (Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu, p. 4-III).*

28 Her function would have been similar to that of Mictlancihuatl, the Lady of the Realm of the Dead, the wife or female counterpart of Mictlantecuhtli, the Lord of the Realm of the Dead, in the Aztec worldview. See also Chapter 4.

Lord 7 Flower, the sun god, who is naturally situated in the East, the place of sunrise, and Lord 2 Dog, the archetypical elder shaman-priest, who carries a precious gourd with ground *piciete* (*nicotiana rustica*) on his back and is the keeper of the North. This last personage is the template for representing 'the (male) ancestor' on Classic effigy vessels. Iconographically the Mixtec Lady 1 Eagle and Lord 2 Dog correspond to the Aztec primordial couple Oxomoco and Cipactonal.

It is interesting to notice that the four (horizontal) directions actually refer to the three (vertical) levels of the cosmos. The East is Heaven, the place of sunrise. North and West are Dark Mountain and River of Ashes, which together form a couplet: mountain and water (*altepetl* in Nahuatl, *yucu nduta* in Mixtec), a hendiadys for the community, i.e. for the world or the earth surface. South as the Realm of Death is the underworld. In this structure the young sun god (Lord 7 Flower) and the death goddess (Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl') embrace the world, symbolised by the grandfather-priest (Lord 2 Dog) and the grandmother-midwife (Lady 1 Eagle). Because of her association with the earth and fertility, the Grandmother deity, though a different character, comes close to the Cihuacoatl figure, which establishes in an explicit manner the relationship of childbirth to death and the ancestors, and so in a way represents the passage of time.

## 5 Mortuary Bundles

In a recent article Geoffrey McCafferty concluded that Tomb 7 at Monte Albán was probably not the burial place of a woman who belonged to the royal family, but a shrine dedicated to a Cihuacoatl-type goddess of the earth and fertility and the site of an oracle to consult the sacred bundle of Individual A (McCafferty 2009 : 24).<sup>29</sup> We agree. The interpretation of Tomb 7 as a shrine is enhanced by the acute observations of Middleton et al. (1998), who suggested that it was a site of ritual use, where people would enter several times to perform acts of worship. In his comprehensive study of the tombs of Oaxaca, Miller (1995) noted the same phenomenon.

The specific character of Tomb 7 becomes clear when we compare it with Tombs 1 and 2 of Zaachila or, for that matter, with regular tombs of the Classic period. The latter remind us of the description of funerary customs by Antonio

29 G.G. McCafferty and S.D. McCafferty synthesise their argument in their contribution ('Mythstory and Archaeology: Of Earth Goddesses, Weaving Tools and Buccal Masks') to the volume edited by Zborover and Kroefges (2015).

de Herrera y Tordesillas, based on original information from the *Relaciones Geográficas* and possibly other sources from the Ñuu Dzaui region:

When the cacique [ruler] died, the funeral rites were carried out with great majesty: they made offerings for the body of the deceased, placed themselves in front of it and spoke to it. A slave was placed before it dressed in royal regalia and served as if he were the dead person. Four priests buried him at midnight in the mountains or fields or in a cave. And they took the slave who represented the dead person with them, as well as two other slaves and three women, all drunk. And first they drowned them to serve the cacique in the other world. They clothed him in many cotton blankets, with a mask on the face, golden earrings in his ears, jewels around his neck, rings on his hands, and on his head a mitre. They covered him with a royal cloak, and so they buried him in the grave, in open space, without covering him with earth. Each year they paid their respects to him on the day of his birth, not on the day he died.

HERRERA: DÉCADA III, Libro III, Cáp. XIII

Thus we may characterise Tomb 1 at Zaachila as a primary burial place: the individuals were buried, laid down in the open space of the tomb, their bodies extended (though in this case with feet towards the South and not towards the East), and those who accompanied them and were buried in the antechamber may have been servants who had been killed with the explicit aim of looking after them in the hereafter.<sup>30</sup>

But the situation in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán is quite different: the analysis presented by Caso and Rubín de la Borbolla shows that the skeletal remains of Tomb 7 show no anatomical order but are an incomplete and chaotic piles of bones. Another early colonial document helps us to understand this situation:

The Mixtec, Zapotec and Mixe nations made this [feast] for their dead people nearly in the same way that our nation honours the dead, and they set up a monument covered with black cloth and plenty of food around.

30 Codex Magliabechi, p. 65v, refers to the custom of cremating an important lord, but states that one or two servants would be sacrificed, and that these together with the spouse would be buried with the deceased as his servants (edition and commentary: Anders and Jansen 1996b). Compare the detailed description by Sahagún (Book III Appendix: Ch. 1), who also mentions that servants accompanied the king in death to prepare his food and chocolate.

Since we treat here of the dead, it will be good to include the way they buried their dead, which was similar to our way, feet toward the East, in a grave, [the bodies] extended.

After the corpses had been consumed, they excavated the bones and put them in another place, like the ossuaries used in the churches or cemeteries of our Spain: they were constructed in a very polished manner in the cemeteries of the churches.

This was done by those three nations – Mixtec, Zapotec and Mixe – because the Mexicans burned the bones, just like the Otomí, from whom the Mexican nation took this custom.

CODEX VATICANUS A, f. 46 v

The presence of loose skeletal remains in Tomb 7 conforms more to this idea of an ossuary, which is indicative of a secondary burial: the bones were dug up after the flesh of the bodies had been consumed and redeposited in a new place. Obviously, during this process several bones may have been lost, while others may have been specially selected as relics. In Mesoamerica such ancestral relics could be part of sacred bundles, which play a central role in the ancient religion, and specifically in Postclassic Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) culture.<sup>31</sup>

In the past decades the archaeological and iconological interpretation of Mesoamerica has increasingly come to recognise the importance of ancestor veneration.<sup>32</sup> As the ritual respect for ancestors is not a prominent topic in Christianity nor in Western culture in general, Spanish monks and chroniclers as well as modern archaeologists and anthropologists had no direct feeling for such a practice and often did not recognise it. Images of skeletons were taken to be references to human sacrifices and part of some macabre obsession with death.

A specific indication of ancestor worship in Tomb 7 is the presence of loose femurs. An article by Feinman et al. (2010) documents the precolonial removing of a femur from a burial in the Mitla Fortress, and argues that femurs were

31 See Nowotny (1961a), Stenzel (1972) and Eshmann (1976). Later their insights were confirmed by the progressive understanding of Maya visual art and hieroglyphic writing (e.g. Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993; McAnany 1995). The sacred bundle is important in the *Popol Vuh*. Fundamental publications on religious ideas concerning different souls or animic centres in the human body are those of López Austin (1980) and Fowler (2004). For the presence of sacred bundles in Ñuu Dzauí codices see Jansen (1982b: Ch. v; 1997), Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b: Ch. v1), and Hermann Lejarazu (2008). For the Zapotec bundles see Sellen (2007: 232ff.).

32 See for example the studies by McAnany (1995), Houston, Stuart and Taube (2006), and Fitzsimmons and Shimada (2011).

used as ancestral emblems. This interpretation explicitly contradicts the idea that the femur was a war trophy; rather, it suggests that the femurs of ancestors may have been symbols of lineages and therefore of the right to rule.

Thus, during the Postclassic period Tomb 7 was no longer a burial place, but, in a more abstract way, a dwelling place of the dead, primarily a place of memory and worship, to communicate with the ancestors. This ritual context charges the human remains and the accompanying funerary art with intense religious emotion.

Two Postclassic pictorial manuscripts, Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 81–82, and Codex Iya Nacuaa 11 (Becker), pp. 6–9, graphically document the ritual treatment of the body of a deceased person. In this case it is the body of Lord 12 Movement, who had been killed in a steambath on the day 11 Death.<sup>33</sup> This Lord 12 Movement was the older half-brother of the famous Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’ of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo), who lived from 1063 to 1115. Both are protagonists of a Ñuu Dzauí epic cycle of the Postclassic period, written down in several codices and presumably a topic of declamations and other dramatic performances on ritual occasions.<sup>34</sup>

The codices Tonindeye and Iya Nacuaa divide the process of ritual treatment of the body of the deceased Lord 12 Movement into four phases:

- (1) The funeral rite began on the fourth day after his death, i.e. on the Day 1 Water. First the body, wrapped up as a bundle, was placed on a wooden frame and dried above a fire. This phase lasted nine days (1 Water – 9 Movement). The lighting of the fire was celebrated with the offering of a quail and ground *piciete* (hallucinogenic snuff).
- (2) Seventy days after the start of the ceremony, on the Day 7 Flower (a festive and auspicious day), various persons came to pay tribute to the deceased, offering a quail, chocolate, a ceremonial robe (*xicolli*), *pulque* and garlands of flowers. According to the Codex Iya Nacuaa, the rite included processions of armed people to the sound of an orchestra playing drums, gourd trumpets, rattles and beating turtle shells with deer antlers. This was done in front of a Temple of Jewels on Mountain of the Moon, apparently the site of the burial.
- (3) Two hundred and nine days after the beginning of the ceremony, on the Day 2 Flint, a blue mask (probably decorated with turquoise mosaic) was

33 Edition of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) with commentary: Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992b). Edition of Codex Iya Nacuaa 1 (Colombino) and 11 (Becker 1): León-Portilla (1996).

34 For a reconstruction of his biography, see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a.

placed on the bundle, which was clothed in a red robe with a headdress of the Plumed Serpent. All this took place under the supervision of the ruler, Lord 8 Deer. Offerings were made of *pulque*, chocolate, flower garlands and precious ornaments in the form of butterflies (made of jade and gold).

- (4) A complete count of 260 days plus nine days after the murder, on the Day 6 Jaguar, again offerings were made (quail, *piciete*, rubber ball, fire) to the skull and to some bones, apparently on the occasion of their placing as a bundle in an ossuary.<sup>35</sup>

The inquisition process against the cacique and other nobles of Yanhuitlan in the Mixteca Alta (1544) gives us additional information. This document is an extremely important source for the study of precolonial Mixtec religion.<sup>36</sup> It describes how the remains of the deceased wife of the ruler had been placed in a dark room or cave, probably an underground shrine or tomb. The Mixtec ruler had ordered a funerary image (mask) to be made in honour of her memory; the hair of the deceased lady had been cut and was attached to this image. At that same place there were several sacred bundles and images of deities, including the '*ídolo del pueblo*' or patron deity of the community, called Quequiyo (which is the calendar name Que-huiyo: '9 Reed'), a divine person or goddess of primordial times. A bloodletting ritual was performed as an act of veneration and respect (according to the Mesoamerican custom of perforating tongue, ear or penis) and the blood was sprinkled on leaves or feathers, incense was burnt, quails and doves were sacrificed, and food offerings were placed.

The text of the inquisitorial process and the pictorial description of the various stages of preparing the body of the deceased as a bundle in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 81–82, suggest that the preparation of the mask of the deceased was an important moment in the entire funerary ritual process.<sup>37</sup>

Other interesting details may be derived from the description of the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos*. The Dominican chronicler fray Francisco de Burgoa tells us that the precolonial and early colonial Mixtec rulers were buried

35 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a: 244–246.

36 The records of this process are kept in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN, Ramo de Inquisición 37, expedientes 5, 7–11). The text was first published by Mateos Higuera and Jiménez Moreno (1940) and later in an expanded version by Herrera and Sepúlveda (1999). For a study of its contents see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007b: Ch. IV, based on the complete palaeography by Richard Greenleaf.

37 Markman and Markman (1989) give a survey of the interpretive discussion of masks in Mesoamerica and offer a series of thoughts on their religious symbolism, pointing out what might be called their liminal character.

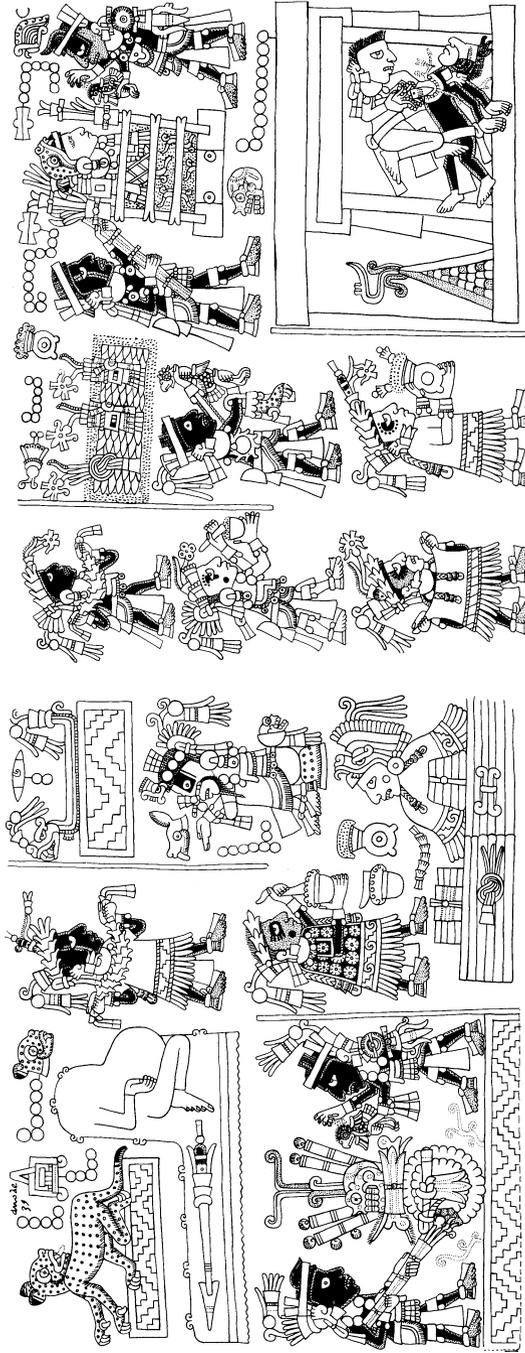


ILLUSTRATION 2.11 Codex Toninideye (Nuttall), pp. 81–82 (Right to Left, following the red guide lines): the funerary ritual for Lord 12 Movement.

in a cave on the Cerro de los Cervatillos (Mountain of the Small Deer) in the kingdom of Ñuu Ndaya (ancient Chalcatongo). The place was venerated by all the political entities in the region as the gateway or transit to the pleasant forests where the souls of the deceased would go. Entrance to the cave was only allowed to special priests; others who tried to enter should expect the death penalty. The entire circumference was very well cleaned and covered with a variety of flowers that grew in the freshness of the mountain. Inside there was a very extensive square room, lit by the light of a window that had been opened in the upper part. Along the walls there were pedestals, like urns of stone, on which bodies were placed, many, in rows, with rich robes and a variety of jewels, precious stones and gold medals. Further inside there was another room with small altars like niches in which there was an immense quantity of divine images in diverse figures and various materials: gold, metal, stone, wood and paintings on canvas (Burgoa 1934, I: 338–340).

The description of this funerary cave reminds us that such sites used to contain many materials that have been lost over time: flowers, wooden items, clothing, paintings and possibly codices. Furthermore it suggests that the *Panteón* was a regional sanctuary, a place to worship the ancestors of all the Ñuu Dzaui dynasties, physically present as mortuary bundles (bodies with robes) placed on pedestals of stone and connected with the divine images in niches.

## 6 Divine Ancestors

Tomb 7 represents the transformation of the Classic burial place into a Post-classic ossuary or rather a sanctuary of relics of divine ancestors. The internal organisation of the tomb most likely corresponds to that later phase, now generally known as the ‘Mixtec’ or ‘Mixteca -Puebla’ style. The subdivision of the main chamber of Tomb 7 by rows of stones, which separated bone assemblages – with the deposited valuables – indicates some form of conceptual cohesion and planning. Similar rows have been found in other funerary contexts in Oaxacan archeology (Middleton et al. 1998). In view of what we explained above, we can identify them as separators of spaces for the placing of bundles. Probably the areas delimited in this manner correspond to the stone pedestals on which the mortuary bundles (mummified bodies in rich attire) were placed inside the cave of Chalcatongo, as described by Burgoa. In the case of Tomb 7 we are probably dealing not with mortuary bundles (which would have contained more or less complete remains of individuals), but with sacred bundles containing selected relics. Such bundles could contain relics of individuals (bodily remains or associated materials such as hair, flints or jewels) or

divine manifestations (such as statues of deities or symbolic animals), usually related to the time of origin and to the history of dynastic foundations. In Nahuatl they were considered *ixiptla*, ‘image, symbol’, and *altepetl iyollo*, ‘heart of the community’.

In the Ñuu Dzaui codices the sacred bundle is the principal object of worship: it appears in temples, often combined with the figure of a red being, an animated stone, with big eyes and long teeth, which, as Mary Elizabeth Smith (1973b) has demonstrated, is read *ñuhu*. This word, with different tones, can mean ‘earth’, ‘fire’ or ‘deity’. The context suggests that the latter meaning is the main one expressed by this image, but the other two meanings seem to be connoted as well. Nowadays the ancient term for deity may be translated as Owner of the Land or Spirit of the Earth (Jansen 1982b : Chapter v). *Ñuhu* as fire or light is a term to refer to Lord Sun, *Iya Ndicandii*, the Sun God. Friar Antonio de los Reyes wrote in his *Arte en Lengua Mixteca* (1593) that the term *ñuhu* is also used for the deceased:

For the deceased they have also a different designation, which is *ñu*, e.g. *ñu Andres*, *ñu Domingo*, the late Andres, the late Domingo, and this *ñu* comes from *ñuhu*, i.e. earth. Thus they say: *nicuvui ndeyeta ñuhu*, the deceased person became earth, which amounts to saying: the deceased person was sent or entrusted to earth; *ñu Francisco niquidza testamento*, the late Francisco made his will.<sup>38</sup>

Although the Dominican friar himself supposes that the prefix *ñu* was derived from *ñuhu*, ‘earth’, it is more logical to understand it as a shortened version of *ñuhu*, ‘deity’, expressing the conviction that the deceased person has become part of the divine world. Similarly, according to Motolinía (1971: 39), the Aztecs ‘called all their dead people *teutl* such and such’, which means ‘god’ or ‘holy’.<sup>39</sup>

The combination of the bundle with a *ñuhu* figure in codex scenes confirms that we are dealing with a sacred, divine being. In an in-depth study, Alfredo López Austin has coined the concept of *hombre-dios*, god-man, for the

38 ‘Para los defunctos tambien tienen diferente relacion que es *ñu*, como *ñu Andres ñu Domingo*, el defunto Andres, Domingo, y este *ñu* viene de *ñuhu*, q.d. tierra. Ansi dizen *nicuvui ñuhu ndeyeta*, hizose tierra su defuncto que es tanto como dezir: fue mandado o encomendado su defunto a la tierra; *ñu Francisco niquidza testamento*, el defunto Francisco hizo testamento’. (de los Reyes 1976: 19).

39 Motolinía, *Memoriales*, Book 1: Ch. 14. See also the studies by López Austin (1973: 137; 1980 1: 375ff.) and Jansen (1982b: Ch. v).

Mesoamerican belief that humans may transcend into the sphere of the divine forces – it is they who become sacred bundles:

Also the sacred bundles – the *tlaquimilolli* – received offerings and sacrifices. The bundles contained bodily remains of the god-men or their penances. Sometimes these were objects that gave political power and respect of the communities, e.g. in the case of the *pizom-gagal* left by Balam Quitzé to the Quiché.<sup>40</sup>

LÓPEZ AUSTIN 1973: 143

A key text for understanding the concept of the sacred bundle in precolonial times is the description by the Nahua chronicler Cristóbal del Castillo of how the god-man Huitzilopochtli after his death was turned into a bundle of the Mysterious God (*Tetzauhteotl*) whom he represented, i.e. into the *ixiptla* (image) of that deity, and how the priests would offer him their blood in self-sacrifice so that the bundle of Huitzilopochtli would intercede and establish contact with that divine power.

When Huitzilopochtli had died, it was said to him:

When your spirit (*in moyolia*) comes to an end, when you have died,  
they should bury your body in a stone urn:  
there your bones will stay still for four years,  
until your flesh rots (much) and becomes earth;  
truly however there you will call upon your servants, the incense burners,  
when they take you (your bones) out:  
then in a cover, in a bundle (*topko kimilko*) they will deposit your bones;  
in the upper part of the shrine, in the upper part of the temple they will  
put it;  
in a good and peaceful place your bundle, the cover of your bones will  
be put.  
And every day they will serve you with incense, they will incense you;  
so that they will make the offering of incense in your presence,  
because, truly you (are) the likeness (*ixiptla*) of our main God of Omens  
(*Tetzauhtéotl*);  
and also, indeed, there will be the flower, the tobacco:  
in your presence they will put it;

40 Team member Manuel May Castillo observes that nowadays the Maya communities of Guatemala pay homage to the sacred bundle which in Spanish is known as *la Sagrada Ordenanza*, 'the sacred ordinance'.

and in your presence they will pay their debt [do the bloodletting]  
 from their ears, from their shoulders, their chest, their spine,  
 they will draw blood and sprinkle you with it.

And when our main lord, who struggles against the enemies (Yaotekiua)  
 desires something, you will tell your servants, dispensers, incense burners,  
 those with long hair [priests], the great fasters,  
 to inform, to notify all the commoners about your instructions.

And also for that reason we favour you,  
 for you to be, oh you, our God of Wonder (*Tetçauhteotl*);  
 this is so, you (are) his likeness (*ixiptla*);  
 so that you shall be called *Uitçilopochtli Tetçauhteotl*.<sup>41</sup>

CASTILLO 1966: 92–93

The inquisitorial process against the caciques of Yanhuitlan (1544) documents that bundles could contain remains of offerings and sacrifices (Jiménez Moreno and Mateos Higuera 1940: 31, 46). A colonial equivalent of the bundles were boxes (Spanish: *cajas*) that contained the important elements of rituals – we can see a continuity with the present-day boxes of the *mayordomos*. A colonial text from the Zapotec area describes how such boxes were respected in rituals:

At the foot of the mound [temple] is a hole in the form of a cave [underground chamber or tomb]. There stood a box that was delivered to their Alcalde Mayor ... According to their tradition it contained the root or trunk of their lineage. The sacrifices dedicated to it were to implore strength: they cut the throat of turkeys and incensed the said box with resin of junipers.... This sacrifice was attended by the whole community. In order to assist at the sacrifice men and women bathed and husbands separated from their wives for three days. After the sacrifice had been made they eat the meat of the said turkeys and drink pulque, and they eat those turkeys with small crude corn tortillas which each one brings.<sup>42</sup>

JANSEN AND PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ 2007B: 371–372

These ceremonial boxes contained: four flint lances, four small images and other brilliant stones, bundles of leaves with a small basket inside containing two ears of corn bound together with a band of paper, with hanging from

41 Cf. Eschmann 1976: 171. The word-pairs or parallels in the text indicate the structure of a ceremonial discourse. We have segmented the text accordingly. We will treat the topic of ceremonial discourse further in the next chapter.

42 Cf. Sellen 2007: 234.

it three polished stones, some peppers, seeds (apparently chia), black beans and *calabaza* seeds. Clearly this was a ritual for fertility of the fields ('to implore strength'). The celebration of this ritual in an underground sanctuary below the mound of the ancient temple is appropriate to conjure the life-giving forces of Mother Earth. The dark space under an ancient shrine obviously stimulates the mystical, visionary experience, and brings the participants into contact with the ancestors, now divine powers of the earth ('root and trunk of their lineage'). So the ritual place becomes a real 'heart of the community' (*altepetl iyollo* in Nahuatl).

An illustrative continuation of this type of ritual space is the divination hut, still in use in the Sierra de Puebla and already mentioned in colonial documents: a small structure of flexible reeds or branches covered with mats where religious specialists enter to communicate with the spirits.<sup>43</sup>

## 7 Communication with the Dead

The connection between visionary experiences and the world of the ancestors – facilitating the communication with the dead – is a profound part of Mesoamerican religion. The above cited text from Herrera explicitly states that 'they made offerings for the body of the deceased, placed themselves in front of it and spoke to it' (Decade III, Book III: Ch. XIII).

In the case of Tomb 7 this theme is already present in the three effigy vessels ('urns') that are remains of the Classic use of the tomb. Two of these effigy vessels show the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) rain/storm god Cocijo. The third, which most likely was placed centrally between the other two, at the foot of the buried person, in front of the entrance/exit, represented an old man. Such a configuration would suggest that the old man is the deceased ancestor himself, seated in the beyond between the great powers of fertility.

A Classic effigy vessel from Tomb 5 of Cerro de las Minas, Huajuapán, in the Mixteca Baja region, is a key for understanding the associated complex of ideas (Jansen 1997, 2004). In that case we see a man sitting on a base decorated with the step-fret motif that is to be read as *ñuu*, 'people, place, nation' in Dzaha Dzauí (Mixtec), i.e. he is a king, most likely the individual buried in Tomb 5. His body is painted black, which means that the king was covered with a black ointment, which, as colonial sources tell us, had a hallucinogenic composition and was an indication of priestly ecstasy. In his hand he holds a gourd, the cover of which is decorated with a gemstone: this object usually contains

43 See the ethnographic study by Stresser Péan (2011: 98–99).

ground *piciete*, the hallucinogenic wild tobacco (*nicotiana rustica*) ingested to enter into trance. In fact, the face of the ruler shows his transfiguration into a powerful *nahual* or alter ego, a fire serpent (the lightning phenomenon called *yahui* in Mixtec), while wings grow out of his shoulders as indicators of a shamanic flight.

Several Classic Beni Zaa effigy vessels contain representations of a similar character: an elder person holding a gourd. So the 'urn' from Tomb 5 at Cerro de las Minas is a real key to interpret these effigy vessels as representations of the buried people (ancestors) during their transformation in a state of trance.<sup>44</sup> On the one hand the visionary experience is itself a part of the (re-)encounter with the deities at the hour of death; on the other it is the way in which the deceased will communicate with his or her descendants and the worshipping community at large. Death is not the end of communication, but a transformation that leads to a different, sublimated communication in the mind, in memories and symbols, connected to the eternal life-giving powers of nature.

In the Ñuu Dzauí codices we find several depictions of rituals in front of sacred bundles. A key example is that of Lord 5 Alligator in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 25, where he is represented in priestly attire, performing bloodletting or self-sacrifice in front of the sacred bundle and the fire-making instrument in the Temple of Heaven (*Huahi Andevui*), the main shrine of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo). His priestly function is specified by a fleshless lower jaw. We can compare this iconographical detail with the skeletal face of the Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, the fleshless lower jaw appears as an attribute of Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl', and also as an index of a specific activity or status of her priests.

In Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 15–14, we see how various priests with fleshless lower jaws (covered with the black hallucinogenic ointment and with cotton in their ears) serve and pay homage to Lady 9 Grass.

Because of its association with Lady 9 Grass, this ritual act seems to imply a communication with the dead ancestors and the sacred bundles that represent them.<sup>46</sup> We may read the fleshless jaw then as a graphic representation

44 Sellen (2007) interprets the Zapotec funerary art effectively in this sense.

45 Lord 5 Alligator was the head of the council of four that ruled the internal affairs of Ñuu Tnoo. For the function and historical context of this personage see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007a: Ch. 5). The position of Lord 5 Alligator seems to have been similar to that of the *cihuacoatl* official (judge and high priest) in Aztec society (see Chapter 6 of the present book). The *Relación Geográfica de Tilantongo* describes the local Temple of Heaven (Acuña 1984, II: 284).

46 In a carved bone perforator found in Tomb 1 of Zaachila we see a seated woman with a fleshless lower jaw, from which a speech volute emerges (Gallegos 1978: 86): an image

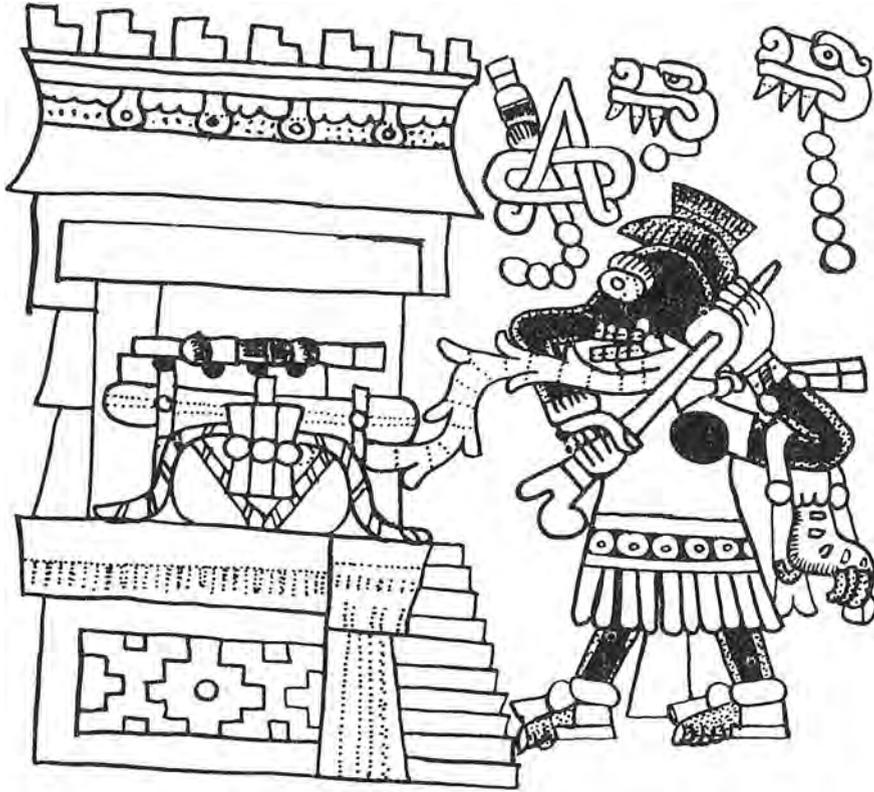


ILLUSTRATION 2.12 *Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 25: bloodletting for the sacred bundle.*

of talking with or for the dead. In fact, five mandibles or jawbones have been found in the antechamber of Tomb 7: they contain traces (holes) of having been used as buccal masks (Caso 1969: 63).

Also found in Tomb 7 were several bone perforators, similar to the one used by Lord 5 Alligator in *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 25, to pierce his ear and offer his blood to the sacred bundle.

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which also suggests communication and speech related to death, in combination with bloodletting. Team member Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez describes in his PhD dissertation that among the contemporary Ayuuk (Mixe) people of Oaxaca there are special male and female religious specialists, who celebrate rituals for and bring offerings to the souls of the deceased on specific days of the Mesoamerican calendar; they are called *o'kpë mëkâjpxpë*, 'those who speak to the dead'.



ILLUSTRATION 2.13 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)*, p. 14: priests of Lady 9 Grass.

It is interesting to observe that Lady 9 Grass is explicitly associated with offerings of gold and other precious materials. A key representation is that in *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)*, p. 15, where she appears in the Temple of Death as the patron deity of the South.

We read the image as follows in *Sahin Sau* (contemporary Mixtec of Chalcatongo).

*Kuia tin iso, kiu in chilia kuu kiu ii Ichi Vee,  
 ja ninatuu soko ñuu, ja ninatuu soko teyu,  
 ja nindukoo iha sihi ñahnu  
 ini vehe ñuhu ndiyi, ini vehe kihin.  
 Maaya kuu iha sihi ichi yuyu,  
 iha sihi ja tahu tiun,  
 iha sihi ja ndito niñi, ja ndito ini ñayiu  
 nuu ñuhu kuaha, nuu ñuhu tuun.  
 Maaya kuu iha sihi ñahnu ja ndito  
 vehe ndiyi, itu ndiyi,  
 ja nikakuu nanañuuyo, tatañuuyo, ja nikajain tatayo.  
 Maaya kuu jitoho siki luu, shruhun kuaan.  
 Chiñuhuyoya jiin yajin niñi, jiin yushi inu,  
 jiin yuku ja kanuhni tahan.  
 Kahan ndekuun ichi jakuu viko ndiyi.*



Year 9 Rabbit day 1 Lizard: the sacred date of the south:  
 then was manifest the origin of the town, the origin of the throne,  
 the seating of the Great Lady  
 in the Temple of the Deceased, in the Vehe Kihin.  
 She is the Lady of the Milky Way,  
 the Lady who has the power,  
 the Lady who takes care of the blood and the hearts of the people,  
 on the red land, on the black land.  
 She is the Great Lady, who protects  
 the houses of the deceased, the fields of the deceased,  
 who are our grandmothers, our grandfathers, who begot us.  
 She is the owner of precious jewels and gold.  
 We worship her with bowls of blood, with tobacco powder,  
 with knotted herbs.  
 Speak to the four directions: it is the ritual for the deceased.

The two hearts with streams of blood, placed in a red and a black field in front of Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl', may symbolize life forces of light and dark, hot and cold, the red and black of the books of wisdom. The hendiadys or couplet *neñe ini*, 'blood, heart', appears in Alvarado's vocabulary as a term for 'son'. In a more general sense we understand it as referring to livelihood and life force. The sign has its parallel in a specific item of the treasure of Tomb 7: a round golden artifact, representing a heart which streams with blood, located in the centre of the threshold between chamber and antechamber.<sup>47</sup>

Close to this artefact, a little to the east of it, the famous golden ornament ('pectoral') Number 26 was found, which corresponds to the other golden item put in front of Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' in Codex Yuta Tnoho.

## 8 The Golden Ornament Number 26

One of the most striking items of the treasure of Tomb 7 is a golden ornament that received the designation 'Number 26' (Caso 1969: 83 ff). It has a height of

47 See Caso 1969: 115; Plate XVII. Caso interpreted this figure as a kind of small spider, which also appears in the divinatory images of Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) – cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 71–72. This is a *pinahuiztli*, a kind of red spider whose movements could indicate what was going to happen and could even predict death. Close inspection and comparison, however, leave no doubt that the sign on the object in Tomb 7 does not represent a spider but a heart.

11.5 cm, a width of 8.5 cm, a thickness of 2 mm, and a weight of 112 grams. The form, with the two ‘shoulders’, is typical of a whole set of artifacts in Tomb 7, and has its parallel in metal objects from Central America.<sup>48</sup> Caso interpreted this form as a pectoral. Indeed it may have been used as such, but it also may have functioned as an ornament of the regalia, or perhaps as a device to hold together a cotton blanket (known as *tilmatl* in Nahuatl) or another woven fabric, by being introduced as a kind of button through openings in two pieces of fabric and so connecting them. The form itself appears in the Ñuu Dzau codices as typical of gold, in parallel with another similar sign: the golden bell. As such it appears in front of Lady 9 Grass in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 15.

Such ornaments in combination with golden bells also occur as the characterisation of a specific primordial being: a man with a dog’s head – for example in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49. This figure is paralleled by another dog-headed male personage which is characterised by the motifs of jade. A similar couple appears in a scene in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 76, where Lord 8 Deer enters the realm of the dead, before arriving at the House of the Sun God.<sup>49</sup> Here he meets people who had been taken captive and presumably were sacrificed. Among them is this personification of the golden ornament: the ornament itself has a human face and a calendar name: Lord 7 Flower. His companion – the dog-headed lord of jade – is probably a similar personification (of jade ornaments) and has the same calendar name. The identical calendar name suggests that the two are twins or – put another way – one character or spirit in two manifestations (as a couplet) ‘Gold and Jade’, i.e. ‘Wealth’. The Day 7 Flower is associated with sunshine, wealth, feast, joy. Caso observed correctly that this Lord ‘Dog’ shares attributes with the god Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent; and therefore he interpreted him as similar to the Mexican dog-headed deity Xolotl, which is called a twin, companion or *nahual* of Quetzalcoatl.

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48 Saville published a valuable pioneering monograph on *The goldsmith’s art in ancient Mexico* (1920). See also Anders (1975) on this category of artefacts. In a specialised study added to the work of Caso (1969), Dudley Easby analyzed the technology of the metal artifacts in Tomb 7, noting their high quality. Other recent work on metallurgy (Camacho-Bragado et al. 2005) has shown the original contribution of Mixtec goldsmiths, who improved the techniques introduced from the South (Costa Rica – Panama – Colombia – Northern Peru). Compare Ortiz Díaz (2002), Peñuelas Guerrero et al. (2009) and López Luján et al. (2015).

49 Cf. Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992a: 88–89), and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007a: 237).



ILLUSTRATION 2.15 Golden ornament number 26: frontal view (drawing Iván Rivera).

In the *Codex Yuta Tnoho* (Vindobonensis), p. 49, the two dog-headed lords appear as children of a primordial couple, and as brothers of Lady 'Corncob'. Together these three seem to represent the title *Yoco To-ina*, the name of the god of merchants according to the *Relación Geográfica de Mixtepec y de Putla*. *Yoco* means ear of corn, but is also a general term for spirit, while *To-ina*



ILLUSTRATION 2.16 *Golden ornament number 26: inclined (drawing Iván Rivera).*

(*Toho Ina*) may be translated as Lord Dog or Master of Dogs.<sup>50</sup> The gold and jade associated with the dog-headed person indicate the wealth produced by long-distance commerce of precious objects. Similarly Lady 'Corncob' represents the fertility of the land and the richness produced by agriculture.

The form of the golden ornament itself, then, carries the connotation of the spiritual presence of the deity *To-ina*. This association is not exclusive, however: in Tomb 7 several other golden ornaments of the same basic form were found with similar feather headdresses but different kinds of heads: a solar deity, the god of rain, a jaguar and an opossum (Caso 1969: 93–94).

The golden ornament Number 26 shows a man's head with an impressive headdress in the form of the head of the Plumed Serpent. Caso correctly compared it with the headdress of Lady 3 Flint in Codex Tonindefe (Nuttall), p. 14. The same headdress was put on the bundle of Lord 12 Movement together

50 For the full text see the publication by Acuña (1984, I: 293, 313).

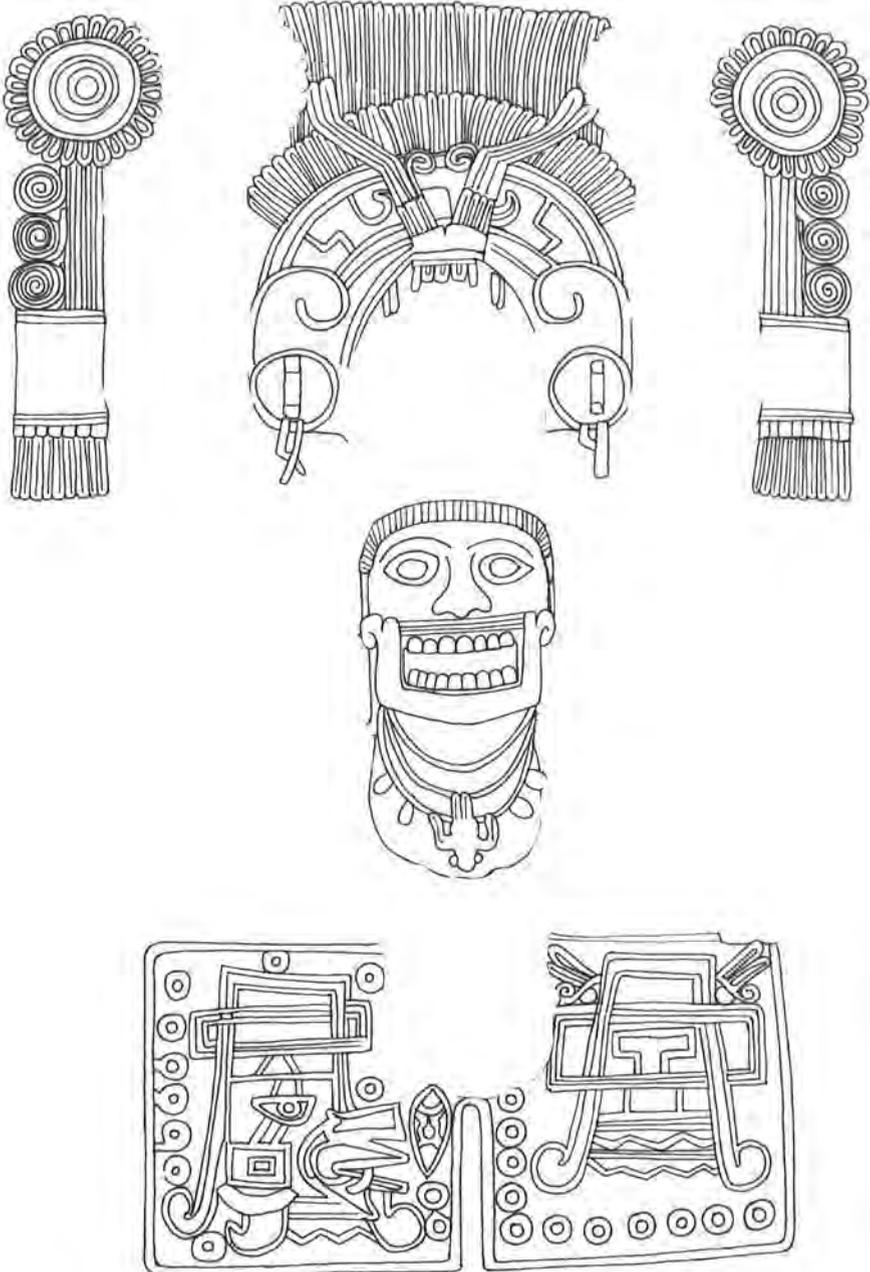


ILLUSTRATION 2.17 *Different elements of golden ornament number 26 (drawing Iván Rivera).*

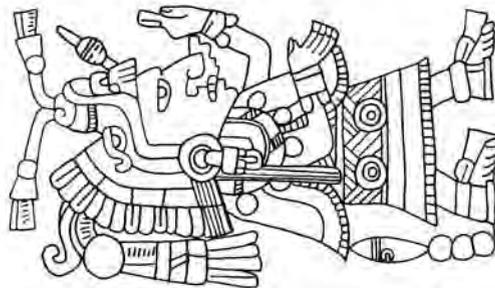
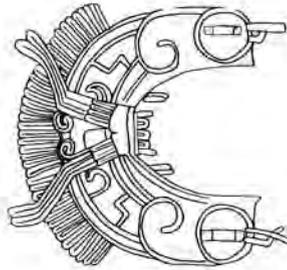
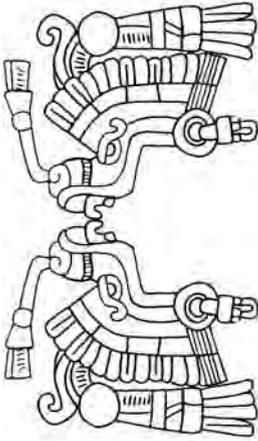
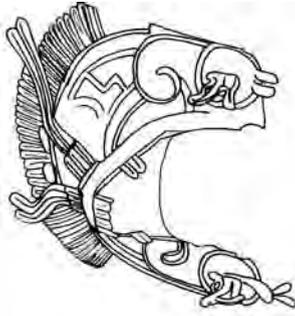


ILLUSTRATION 2.18 Comparison of golden ornament number 26 with the image of Lady 3 Flint in Codex Tonindeye (drawing Iván Róvera).



ILLUSTRATION 2.19 *Mummy bundle of Lord 12 Movement (Codex Tonindeye, p. 82).*



ILLUSTRATION 2.20 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49: To-ina.*

with a turquoise mask in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 82 (discussed above). In Postclassic iconography a headdress may state the name, title and/or *nahual* (animal companion) of the person who carries it. Here it most likely identifies a priest who had the name and power of this important divine being: the Plumed Serpent, called Quetzalcoatl among the Mexica and *Coo Dzavui*, Rain Serpent, among the Ñuu Dzauui people (*Koo Sau* in contemporary Chalcatongo Mixtec), is a metaphor for the whirlwind, a creative force and an important



ILLUSTRATION 2.21 *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 76: Lord 7 Flower.

*nahual*.<sup>51</sup> As we have seen above, he is the protagonist of the story of creation in the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), where he is called Lord 9 Wind.<sup>52</sup>

The Plumed Serpent figure on the golden ornament brings to mind the Nahuatl narrative about the descent of Quetzalcoatl and his twin or *nahual* Xolotl into the underworld, the place of the dead (Mictlan) or place of skeletons (Omiyocan), in order to rescue from there the bones of men and women (apparently those of the previous creation).<sup>53</sup> From there Quetzalcoatl took the bones as a sacred bundle to the home (temple) of Cihuacoatl Quilaztli, where he ground them in a jade container. Performing a self-sacrifice ritual, he perforated his penis and shed the blood on those bones, by which he imbued them with life and so created humanity.

We find a similar symbolic statement in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 53: Quetzalcoatl does the bloodletting above the extended body of the skeletonised Cihuacoatl, as a consequence of which a precious tree of maize grows in the centre of the world. Both the narrative and the painting refer to the creative force (blood from the penis) of Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, which transforms death (bones) into life. In this way this deity (and his priest) is the apt intermediary between the world of the deceased ancestors and that of the living. The interaction between the forces of Quetzalcoatl and Cihuacoatl is also one of the main themes in the Temple Scenes chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29–47, which we will discuss in Chapter 7.

The person on the golden ornament Number 26 has a fleshless lower jaw, which led Caso and others to identify him as a god of death, *Mictlantecuhtli* in Nahuatl, a denomination which has been repeated ever since, but without trying to really interpret it further. In general it has become common to use Nahuatl terminology to identify concepts of cosmivision, ritual practices and names of deities, even in Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) or Beni Zaa (Zapotec) contexts.

51 Sahagún (Book III: Ch. 3) calls him *in vei naoalli*, 'the big (powerful) *nahual*'. In the esoteric formulae registered by Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise II: Ch. 3) the priest identifies with him, saying: *nitlamacazqui, ninahualteuctli, niquetzalcoatl*, 'I the spirit-priest, I the Nahual Lord, I Quetzalcoatl'. See Brundage (1979) for the overall religious narrative cycle of Quetzalcoatl as well as Jansen's study of the symbolism of the Plumed Serpent (1997).

52 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007a: Ch. III), and also Witter (2011). The Plumed Serpent headdress (*apanecayotl*) is also an attribute of Lord 4 Jaguar, the Toltec ruler, whom we have identified as the 'historical Quetzalcoatl' (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a; Jansen 2010) – see also Chapter 5 of the present book.

53 Cf. the text published by Lehmann (1938: 332 ff.). The narrative shows obvious similarities with that of the Popol Vuh about the twin heroes descending into Xibalbá. Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, p. 53, contains an image of Quetzalcoatl performing a penis perforation and sprinkling his blood over the skeletonised figure of Cihuacoatl.

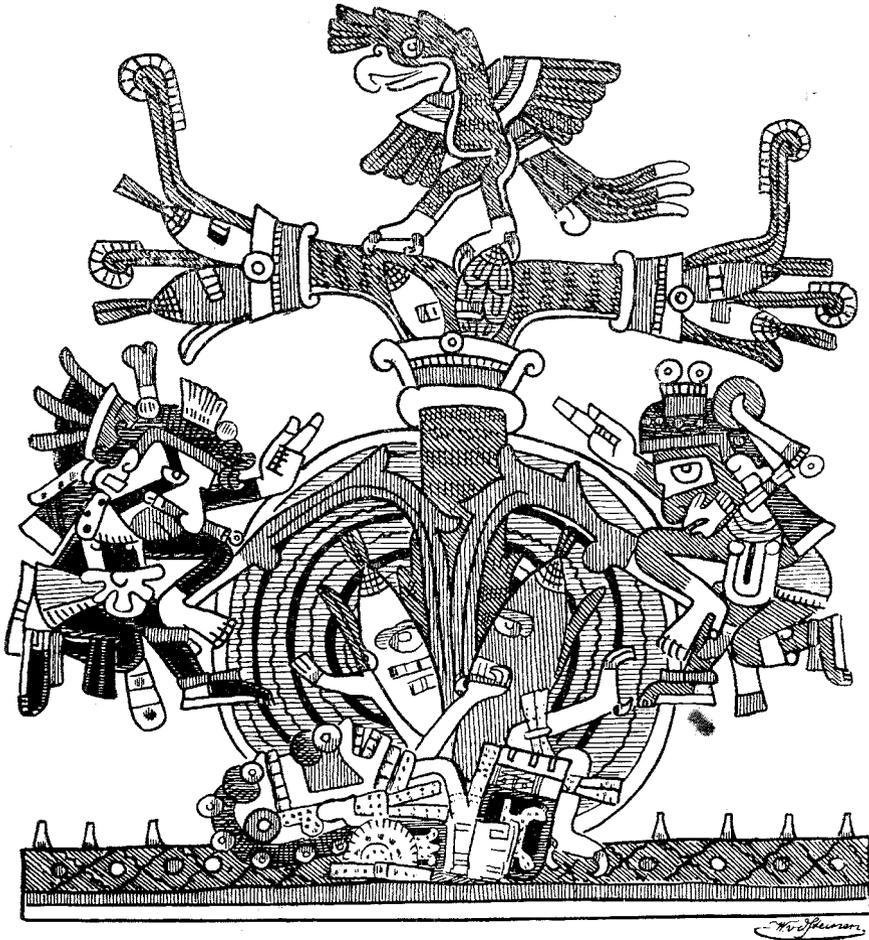


ILLUSTRATION 2.22 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 53: bloodletting of Quetzalcoatl above the life-giving Cihuacoatl (Seler 1904/1909).*

This may lead to an approach in which the identification of a figure or attribute as the representation of an Aztec deity becomes the main aim of the analysis, and questions like 'but what does the presence of such a deity here mean?' or 'can this element also be related to the local (Ñuu Dzaui or Beni Zaa) cultures?' are not elaborated upon.

Our iconographical analysis leads us to interpret the fleshless lower jaw as the indication of the ritual act of speaking with, to or for the dead. Indeed, the golden ornament Number 26 was found near the five mandibles or jawbones in the antechamber of Tomb 7. In addition the gold wires hanging from the ear-rings of the man on the golden ornament are comparable to the cotton threads

in the ears of the priests of Lady 9 Grass in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 15–14.

The golden ornament itself shows that this ritual of communicating with the dead was carried out by a prince in priestly function, whose name, title or *nahual* is Plumed Serpent. The symbolism of the Plumed Serpent itself – as archetypal *nahual* – also refers to the practice of communicating with the other world by *nahual* experiences and visionary trance. The precious nature of the headdress (with its quetzal feathers and jade rosettes), and the presence of fine earrings in the form of serpent heads, a nose ornament of jade, and a necklace with beads or bells and a falling bird, suggest that this belonged to the nobility or to the royal family itself.<sup>54</sup> The band of the headdress is decorated with a step-fret pattern that is read *ñuu*, ‘town, place, people, nation’ in Mixtec, which also suggests that this headdress is a ruler’s attribute.

In general, the abundance of objects of gold, jade and other precious materials indicates that the congregation consisted of members of the royal family. The shape and material of the ornament Number 26 are an explicit manifestation (and evoke the spiritual presence) of Toina, the god of wealth. In this fashion, the artifact identifies itself as a precious offering with religious power. The protagonist of the image and of the ritual (prince and priest) is connected through his headdress (representing his name, title and/or *nahual*) with the Plumed Serpent (Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’) and through the fleshless lower jaw with the guardian of the dead ancestors (Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’).

All this suggests that the golden ornament Number 26 refers to an actual act of worship, a ritual of communication with the deceased ancestors, celebrated in Tomb 7. The presence of several jawbones in the tomb suggests that the ritual was repeated there by several people, probably a number of times. Combining this conclusion with the texts cited above on the sacred bundles, especially their classification as ‘the root or trunk of their offspring’ and the aim of the offerings to them being ‘to implore strength’, we can interpret Tomb 7 as a site for a dynastic ritual directed at the ancestors to ensure the strength and well-being of the community.

The combination of the ancestral (death) aspect with attributes of Quetzalcoatl, the whirlwind and creator god, is not strange, but has a deep symbolic value: the same attributes characterise the primordial couple – Lady 1 Deer and Lord 1 Deer – in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 51.<sup>55</sup> This is the connection of creativity, artistry, vision and priestly piety (9 Wind) with the power and

54 The same nose-piece in the form of a jade stick is carried by Lord 7 Flower, the personified golden ornament in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 76.

55 For these symbolic associations, see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b: Ch. vi).

wisdom of the ancestors (9 Grass). In short, it is the cycle of worship, the union of life and death, which comes to us as a legacy of our grandfather and our grandmother, the first couple, what Clarissa Pinkola Estes calls life-death-life. At the same time the image connotes the couplet ‘night, wind’ (*yoalli ehecatl* in Nahuatl), which is a reference to the mysterious essence of the divine powers themselves.

## 9 The Subterranean Sanctuary

The Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15, shows a sacred bundle combined with a large flint knife, which has the countenance and name of Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’. Probably that bundle contained (a piece of) the flint from which this divine personage was born, as depicted in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49. In that scene we see a couple with skeletal features, claws and black body paint: likely they represent the ancestors as important forces. The woman, who is iconographically a manifestation of Cihuacoatl, has a skirt of flint knives, which identifies her as a deity that embodies the power of knives, in Nahuatl called Itzcueye (‘She with the Skirt of Obsidian Knives’) or Itzpapalotl (‘Obsidian Butterfly’): an alternative name of the primordial midwife, Oxomoco. The couple is celebrating a ritual by offering *copal* incense and *piciete* powder. Then a large and living stone knife is mentioned, from which comes an umbilical cord connected to a child named Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’. The ancient Mixtec creation text synthesised by friar Gregorio García states that this Lord 9 Wind was the son of the primordial couple Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer.<sup>56</sup> Therefore the skeletal beings making the offering here may also represent that primordial couple. Their incarnations in present-day Mesoamerican society are the wise elders, the spiritual leaders of the indigenous communities, known as *tlamatinime* or *tlamatke* in Nahuatl.<sup>57</sup>

The date associated with the stone knife is year 10 House day 8 Vulture; the date of the birth of the Quetzalcoatl child is year 10 House day 9 Wind, which

56 That primordial couple is explicitly mentioned in the beginning of this scene in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 51 and it also occurs with Quetzalcoatl in the opening scene of the Roll of the New Fire (see Chapter 5 of this book). Team member Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez discusses in his PhD thesis the importance of the primordial couple in contemporary Ayuuk (Mixe) worldview.

57 See the dissertation of team member Raúl Macuil Martínez. Compare the function of the *Tanisahnu*, ‘elder’, in the Mixtec world (López García 2007).

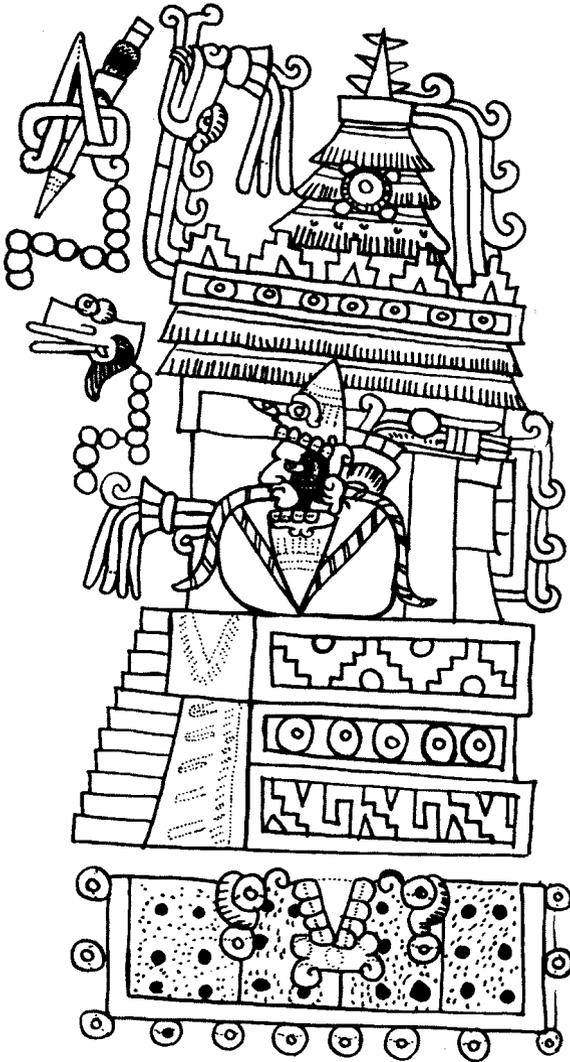


ILLUSTRATION 2.23 *Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15: temple of Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl'.*

is 65 days (five 13-day periods) later and the day before the repetition of the year-bearer day (10 House) in the same year.

Read as a history of events, the scene registers the birth of Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' from a stone knife. Situated in a symbolic dimension, the narrative seems to convey the message that religious vision and creativity (Quetzalcoatl / Koo Sau) come from the living force and ethos of (self-) sacrifice (the stone knife) when properly invoked and respected (with *copal* and *piciete*)

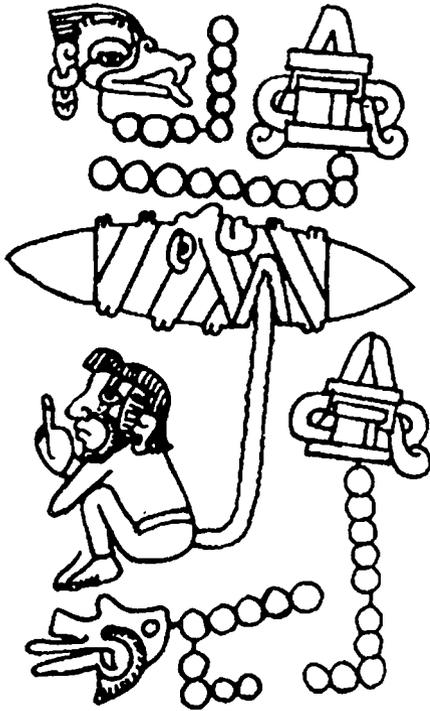


ILLUSTRATION 2.24 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)*, p. 49: birth of Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl'.

in accordance with the teachings of the ancestors. In other words, the divine power of the Plumed Serpent is not literally born from a stone, but is mobilised inside the devotee by the proper celebration of rituals, in which we understand and experience ourselves as creatures, depending on natural forces and linked to cultural memory (the legacy of ancestors).

The scene in *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 15, shows that this principle was given physical form as a sacred bundle holding a flint, dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. That bundle was placed inside a Temple of Jewels, which in turn was surrounded by a Plumed Serpent – emblem of Quetzalcoatl and symbol of priestly trance. Below this temple was a dark portion of land associated with death, i.e. an underground area for invoking and contacting the forces of the earth and underworld. Clearly this place is similar to the one described by the text from the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) area quoted above: a subterranean sanctuary under an important temple, where sacred bundles were worshipped and rituals led to visionary contact and identification with the divine powers.

A similar arrangement can be identified in the ruined ceremonial centre of the city-state (*yuvui tayu*, ‘mat, throne’) of Añute (Jaltepec). The Codex Añute (Selden) describes how successive precolonial rulers used to venerate the Ñuhu bundle in the town’s temple. After ritual vigil and fasting they offered it copal incense and *piciete*. This seems to have been the prescribed practice before the ruler married and took possession of the realm. Now we can identify the ceremonial centre as the archaeological site on top of the mountain of Añute. The main temple (‘pyramid’) or *vehe ñuhu*, ‘house of god’, is clearly identifiable on the spot. At the side of the structure is a subterranean rock cavity or abri, where offerings are still made today and candles are lit for Nana Luisa, the present-day name for the female protector spirit of the community. In view of the descriptions given above, it is plausible that the rock cavity connected to the temple was in fact the place where the sacred bundle of the community, the heart of the people, was kept. Codex Añute also reminds us that the veneration of the bundle was part of dynastic ritual. The sacred bundle itself, according to that codex, contained (either as one single wrapped bundle or as a set of several bundles) relics of the mother and father of the dynasty; she was descended from the first ray of sun that hit the mountain of the kingdom, he from the mother ceiba tree in the holy town of Achiutla.

An interesting and illustrative parallel for Tomb 7 as a shrine for ancestor rituals is the Late Classic Tomb 1 of San Juan Ixcaquixtla (in the southeastern part of the state of Puebla), studied by Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán.<sup>58</sup> The central chamber is oriented from West (entrance) to East. The walls are covered with well-preserved polychrome paintings on a red background. On the north and south wall there are persons depicted, five in total, all wrapped in multicoloured blankets and all wearing white bands on their heads, possibly some form of ritual attire. They are seated in rows, on bands of scrolls, which may represent clouds, vapours or incense. Four are identified by given names, represented as large signs in front of them. The combination of these name signs with quetzal feathers suggests that the bearers belong to the nobility. On the north side there are two individuals: one (Lord Fire Serpent) clearly a mature adult, the other possibly a woman (Lady Jaguar), their name signs resting on wooden frames. The three individuals on the south side are somewhat smaller: a second pair, perhaps a second generation (apparently called Lady Death and Lord Vulture), and a – still nameless – child. All are looking towards the eastern end of the chamber, where another personage, frontally depicted, occupies the central place, rising above a platform in the midst of an aura of light and

58 See Cervantes et al. (2005) and the contribution of Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán (‘El tiempo eternizado: la conmemoración a los ancestros en una tumba prehispánica’) to the volume *Tiempo y Comunidad*, edited by Jansen and Raffa (2015).

quetzal feathers. She is holding black curved objects in her hands, which seem to be obsidian blades as symbols of lightning, clearly expressing a superhuman power. Rivera Guzmán has identified her as an elderly woman, with attributes of a mother goddess, probably a divine ancestor and protector to the family members painted on the walls, who are paying their respect to her.

The murals of the tomb in Ixcaquixtla express a ritual setting, and in doing so create a permanent ritual environment, a locus for ritual activity. Whoever enters this reduced space is physically obliged to squat – bodily express and sense humility – among the protagonists of the ritual in another, earlier time, and to repeat it with them, looking, paying homage to the mother ancestor, manifesting herself in splendour in the East.

## 10 The Internal Organisation of Tomb 7

The original orientation of Tomb 7, when it was indeed used as a burial place during the Classic period, was West–East: originally it would have contained extended skeletons with their head on the western side and the feet towards the East (as in the above-cited description of Codex Vaticanus A, p. 46 v). The orientation establishes a parallelism between the position of the human bodies and the movement of the sun and the power of creation. Possibly the idea was that the dead were facing East and that with the rising sun they would rise again in the other life.

In the Postclassic era, however, Tomb 7, as we have discussed above, was no longer conceived as a burial place, but as a subterranean sanctuary, dedicated to the earth and ancestors. The precious objects, therefore, were not deposited as possessions that the deceased would take with them to the realm of death, but as precious offerings ritually deposited around the sacred bundles and other relics. Rows of stones subdivided the space and the entrance shifted from a horizontal approach to a vertical one.

The new entrance was from above, from within the ancient temple building, probably at the spot where a conch, a necklace of green stones and some round earrings of jade were found (Caso 1969 : plate 111). Rivera Guzmán noted these same objects as offerings presented by the congregation to the ancestral figure in the wall paintings in the tomb of Ixcaquixtla. The conch (*strombus gigas*) is an important instrument in the rites represented in the Ñuu Dzaui codices: it served to call those who were going to participate in the ritual.<sup>59</sup> Its sonorous sound added an acoustic and deep emotional dimension to the

59 Ritual scenes, such as in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 20, 18, 16, 13, 11, demonstrate the frequent use of conch shells on ceremonial occasions. See also the case of

ceremony, similar to the effect of the church bell today. Most probably these artefacts were deposited above Tomb 7 after the last ritual had been performed and the entrance slab in the roof had been closed again. The necklace and the three jade earrings, as personal adornments, suggest a direct link to the main individuals who performed this closing ritual. Two earrings form a pair, their size being adequate for an adult; the third is smaller and may have belonged to a minor. The size difference suggests the presence of at least two generations in the ritual, similar to the situation in the mural painting from the tomb of Ixcaquixtla.

The rows of stones in the chamber of Tomb 7 suggest that they demarcated the places where sacred bundles were set up. The fact that the contents of these bundles consisted of bones (and not of statues) suggests that the sacred bundles were mainly conceived as containers of the relics of ancestors or important lineage members. The bundles in the chamber must have been the main recipients of the invocations, offerings and other ritual activity. Among these, Skeleton A, or rather Bone Assemblage A, occupies a prominent position at the western end of the chamber: it seems to dominate and close the grouping of the other relics or spiritual entities invoked. The central position of Bone Assemblage A on the western side of the tomb – like that of the mother ancestor figure in the tomb of Ixcaquixtla – creates an axis for the entire ritual space.

The loose bones piled up on the so-called threshold and in the antechamber (eastern part) of Tomb 7 were not distributed over discrete spaces marked by rows of stones, so probably they were not the contents of the sacred bundles that were receiving worship, but instead seem to belong to the category of the deposited elements. The analyses of Dr Tuross show that these skeletal remains, distributed among the treasures, came from different parts of the Mixtec and Zapotec regions. We could consider the presence of such loose bones as a counterpart to the extraction of bones observed in several burials. We recall that, according to the study Feinman et al. (2010), several femurs were carefully removed from graves in Lambityeco and Mitla Fortress, apparently as physical connections with the ancestors and as symbols of inherited privilege. Following this hypothesis, we might interpret the loose bones in Tomb 7 as deposited relics, emblems of the identity, devotion and power of the lineages that worshipped them. The precious offerings are indices of a devotee's wealth but such bones are physical representations (*pars pro toto*) of his lineage or house (*maison* in the terminology of Lévi-Strauss) as a whole.

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a conch decorated with an impressive relief that refers to the invocation of spirits and ancestors (cf. Jansen, in Sánchez Nava et al. 2011).

The golden ornament ('pectoral') Number 26 is one of the most impressive artifacts from Tomb 7 (Caso 1969: 83 ff.). The spectacular goldsmith work makes it an outstanding element in the treasure of Tomb 7: we may compare its importance with that of a funeral mask. It must have been an item on which ritual attention was focused; its position seems indeed to have been significant: roughly in the centre of the threshold between chamber and antechamber, on the side of the antechamber.

Together, the Bone Assemblage A and the golden ornament Number 26 define a central axis roughly West–East in Tomb 7. The space between these two points (Region III), where no bones were found, may have been the central space for ritual activities. Here, in the very centre of the chamber and in the middle of the west–east axis between Bone Assemblage A and the golden ornament Number 26, a beautiful vessel with three conical supports was placed, identified as object 242 in Region III (Caso 1969 : plate XXXVIII). It is made of translucent *tecalli* (onyx marble), and its shape appears in the Ñuu Dzau codices as typical of the vessels used for serving chocolate during ritual celebrations.<sup>60</sup> This suggests that it was placed centrally in the chamber of Tomb 7 for the purpose of inviting the ancestors, represented by the sacred bundles, to come together, attend the celebration, share the chocolate and receive the offerings. A very similar idea is found today in the custom of adorning the altars on the Days of the Dead and placing food on them for the deceased family members who are returning to their homes. The bird head and animal bones found in the centre of the antechamber (Numbers 96 and 110 in Caso 1969) could be explained in a parallel fashion as food offerings to the invoked ancestors.

We cannot be sure how intentional that axis and the internal organisation of Tomb 7 actually were, because the objects in the tomb may have changed position caused by falling due to the disintegration of the bundles and other items of perishable material, as well as by telluric movements. We also do not know whether the objects were placed here all at the same time or during successive entries corresponding to different ceremonies. On the other hand, it is likely that the deposition of the material and skeletal remains followed some order and corresponded to certain principles of the ancient worldview.

60 In Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 18, the tripod vessel contains the sign for cacao and forms a couplet together with a *pulque* jar as part of the New Fire ceremony celebrated in the context of the foundation of a kingdom. In the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 26 ff., the same vessel with chocolate is presented as an index of a wedding, while in pp. 81–82 it appears as an element of a funeral ceremony (along with *pulque* and flower garlands).

It is interesting, for example, that the round golden artifact representing a heart which streams with blood (Caso 1969: 115; Plate xvii) was found in the centre of the threshold between chamber and antechamber, a little to the west of the golden ornament Number 26. Obviously it is very appropriate to place an image of a heart on a heavy golden object right in the centre (heart) of the entire sanctuary. We indicated above that this sign also appears with Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 15.

The golden ornament Number 26 is also situated on a north–south axis, defined by two other objects that call our attention: a golden gourd (*tecomate*) and a skull decorated with turquoise mosaic. The golden gourd (Caso 1969: plate xx1) is an artifact of known ritual function: it was used by priests to preserve *piciete*, which was thrown into the air for purification, and was also inhaled for inducing trance.<sup>61</sup> The intertwined leaves of *piciete* form the body of the goddess Cihuacoatl, while also being a sign for fasting, vigil and bloodletting rituals (Nahuatl: *nezahualli*) in combination with ground *piciete* and copal incense.<sup>62</sup>

The skull decorated with a mosaic of turquoise and shell elements (Caso 1969: 62–69; plate iv) was found near the golden ornament Number 26, in the southwestern corner of the antechamber of Tomb 7, i.e. close to the threshold or passage between the chamber and antechamber. This is a very significant piece that immediately catches the eye.<sup>63</sup> The analysis by Dr Tuross shows that it came from outside the Mixtec-Zapotec region; it must have been a special exotic item all along, most likely a being gifted with special powers.

Skulls also appear in isolated caches – buried offerings – in the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan (López Luján 2005). They are often regarded as trophy heads or skulls of sacrificial victims, but when there are no clear references to acts of war, the context may rather suggest a role in the veneration of ancestors and

61 See the identification by Caso (1969: 123 and plate xx1). The small gourd as a container of ground *piciete* is a frequent attribute of elderly priests, e.g. in Codex Añute (Selden), pp. 2–1.

62 See, for example, the representation of Cihuacoatl in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29 ff. (see below, Chapter 7). The *nezahualli* sign appears in Codex Añute (Selden), pp. 5–11. In Tomb 7 this motif appears on Bone 203j (Caso 1969: 193–194; Fig. 189) in combination with eyes, possibly a reference to vigil.

63 After excavation the mosaic of this skull was restored and reconstructed to a significant degree, as is clear from a comparison of Caso's drawing and photo with the current appearance (e.g. the photo on page 73 of *Arqueología Mexicana, edición especial 41*, dedicated to the *Tesoro de Monte Albán*). Possibly this intensive restoration-reconstruction inspired the production of other skulls with mosaics that are so far removed from a possible precolonial work that they are considered forgeries (see Berger 2013).



ILLUSTRATION 2.25 *Skull decorated with turquoise mosaic, found in Tomb 7 (Museo de las Culturas de Oaxaca, I.N.A.H.).*

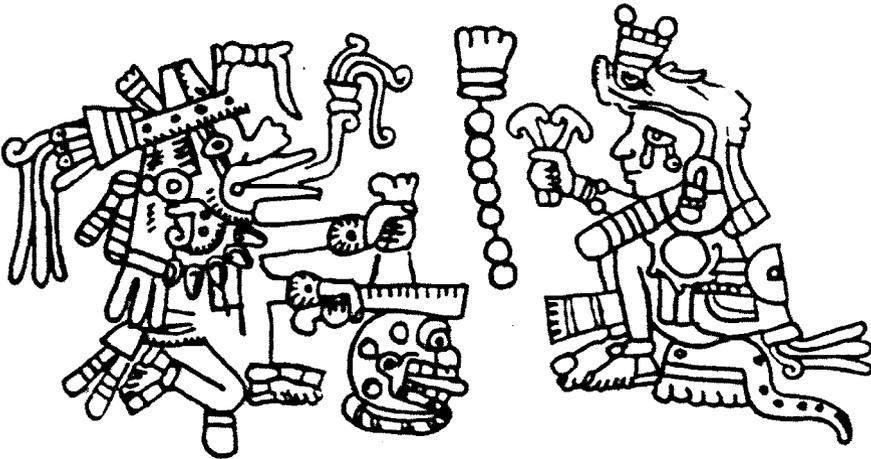


ILLUSTRATION 2.26 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 24: Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' uses a skull and bones as percussion instrument during a ritual with hallucinogenic mushrooms.*

patron deities. In a relief on the Noriega Stela, which seems to register rituals of an older phase of the Xipe dynasty, an element that appears to be a skull decorated with mosaic is offered to an ancestor.<sup>64</sup> Another interesting case is the skull decorated with relief scenes that seem to refer to invocations of dead ancestors (Sánchez Nava et al. 2011).<sup>65</sup> A depiction in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 24, suggests that cut femurs and skulls may have functioned as percussion instruments in shamanic rituals.<sup>66</sup>

The decorated skull of Tomb 7 was placed on a base of amaranth paste, painted red, as a kind of small altar. The jawbone found alongside it seems to belong to another individual, but, according to the analysis made by Tuross, has the same exotic geographical origin as the skull. For that reason and because of how they were found, the two objects seem to have formed a set, as Caso reconstructed them. Perforations in both indicate that they were connected by some type of string, so that the head of the dead person could open and close its mouth. The perforated shell discs put in the eye sockets give it a dark, mysterious and penetrating gaze. This is probably an element of religious value and special power, a mystic gateway, which allowed contact with the world of the dead.

It seems significant that the altar of the decorated skull was located on the south side of Tomb 7 (in the antechamber). This is the direction that is symbolically associated with death in the Ñuu Dzauí codices and in the religious manuscripts of the Teoamoxtli Group (Borgia Group). In a parallel fashion, the fact that the golden *piciete* gourd stood on the north side corresponds to the association between this direction and ritual worship.

On the first page (p. 52) of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), for example, we see four principals as priests or spirits associated with the four directions:

- the rising Ñuhu ('Deity'), i.e. East,
- the setting Ñuhu ('Deity'), i.e. West,
- a person carrying the *piciete* gourd, symbolising life and worship, i.e. North,
- a seated skeletal person, symbolising death and the ancestors, i.e. South.

64 See the publications by Paddock (1966) and Urcid (2000).

65 For this ritual dimension, see also Marcus and Flannery (1994). The work published by De la Cruz and Winter (2002) presents various aspects of the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) religion, while De la Cruz (2007) provides a review and a new synthesis. There are important parallels in Maya art (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993; Stuart, Houston and Taube 2006).

66 Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 82, and its parallel in the Codex Iya Nacuaa II (Becker I), p. 6, contain an image of the selection and preparation of a skull and femurs as a set of ritual elements.

This organisation is repeated in other parts of the same manuscript: the North is the kingdom of Lord 2 Dog, the archetypal priest (carrying a gourd on his back) and the South is under the sway of Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl', the divine guardian of the Temple of Death.

The same contrast between emblematic elements of worship, such as performers, in the North, and the symbolic realm of earth and death in the South, is seen in the famous cosmogram of Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer), p. 1.<sup>67</sup> That painting establishes a symbolic connection between the four directions, characterised by specific trees, and the specific days, units of thirteen days and years of the Mesoamerican calendar, which in turn are related to the nine deities of the nights, forming a mystic cycle through time and space.

- \* The centre is the realm of the fire god in a warrior aspect: fire is the centre of the household, the hearth, but also the centre of the earth itself. Struggles are what life consists of and courage to face them is a central virtue.
- \* East is the place of sunrise, where the god of sacrifice and the sun deity are situated.
- \* South is the place of the earth, the symbolism of which is expressed in the presence of the maize god and the lord of the underworld.
- \* West is associated with the moon and female deities of fertility.
- \* North is the place of ritual, where the Heart of the Mountain and Lord Rain are.

The dynamic movement of time and its progress through the four directions is given life and energy (blood) by the supreme god of mystery and power: Tezcatlipoca, Burning and Smoking Mirror, through sacrifice.

Following the symbolic order of this cosmogram, we can further speculate that the western part of Tomb 7 (Region 1) would correspond to a female environment, which in the Codex Tezcatlipoca, p. 1. is characterised by the goddess of weaving and sexuality (Tlazolteotl) and the goddess of lakes and rivers (Chalchiuhtlicue). The West (*Cihuatlampa*, 'Place of Women' in Nahuatl) is also the place where the spirits of women who died in childbirth dwell. In this context it is even more significant that indicators of weaving were found close to Bone Assemblage A (the above-mentioned *malacates* and cups that may have been used for making a spindle rotate).

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67 Edition and commentary: Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1994).

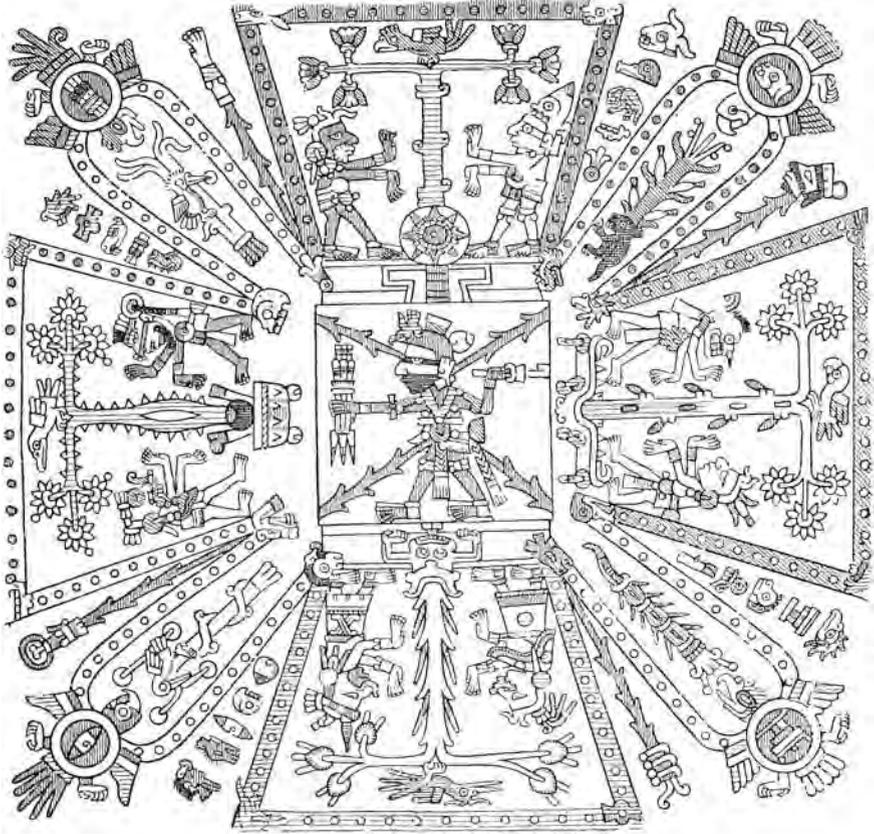


ILLUSTRATION 2.27 *Codex Tezcatlipoca* (Fejérváry-Mayer), p. 1: cosmogram (Danze1 1922).

## 11 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

Tomb 7 may be seen as a sanctuary under the protection and spell of Lady 9 Grass, the goddess of life-death-life, keeper of the ancestors, and herself a gateway to visionary experiences. This deity is the Ñuu Dzauí version of the Aztec goddess Cihuacoatl, who connects the mysterious realm of the Milky Way, where newborn children come from, with the Temple of Death, where the ancestors dwell. This figure forms part of the archetypal complex of the Grandmother as a power from the primordial time of darkness, before sunrise introduced a breach between humankind and nature. She is still an important deity in present-day Mesoamerican religion, mainly associated with the *temazcal* (sweat-bath).

Examining the diverse symbolic associations involved, we find that the ancient sanctuary we now call Tomb 7 was constructed as a place for reflecting

on the cosmic order, on the sacred processes of life, death, and rebirth, on the mysteries of creation, renewal and continuity.

The presence of the incomplete skeletal assemblages can be explained as the remains of sacred bundles, which were kept there for ritual purposes of venerating the ancestors and communicating with them. The presence of some femurs (cut and painted), and of five human jawbones that were part of buccal masks, are further indications of commemorative and perhaps even visionary rituals.

The precious elements deposited in Tomb 7 suggest that originally some form of axial arrangement and meaningful structure determined their position. We find a clear, roughly west–east central axis between Bone Assemblage A and the golden ornament Number 26. The pictorial information on the decorated art works is very informative. The golden ornament Number 26, for example, suggests that the protagonist of the ritual of communication with the ancestors identified with the Plumed Serpent as an intermediary between life and death as well as between heaven, earth and the underworld. The ‘bicultural’ dating inscribed on the golden ornament demonstrates eloquently that the treasure deposited in Tomb 7 and its ritual context were meaningful to both the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) and the Beni Zaa (Zapotec), in other words that Tomb 7 was a place of religious encounter between these two peoples, their time counts, rituals and memories.

These considerations are necessary preliminaries to entering Tomb 7 with a new perspective and an open mind for the Mesoamerican religious values it holds. In touching the past, the relics of the ancestors, we become aware that we are suspended between the generations.

Following Rappaport (1999), there are basically two possible attitudes toward a ritual event: that of the participant and that of the spectator. The spectator is awkwardly distant, an explicitly dissociated outsider: the ritual has no intrinsic meaning for him or her, other than that of a theatrical spectacle, to be enjoyed out of sensation or some sort of tourist interest. People present at rituals are supposed to be participants, who manifest to the community by their bodily acting and by their very presence that they subscribe to the values expressed in the ritual performance – *sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum....*

The ritual place, the sanctuary, sets the stage for the repetitive performance that is the essence of ritual. Now, as people interested in heritage (maybe descendants, maybe archaeologists, historians or anthropologists) we enter such ritual places of ancient times. The performers, the ancestors, may have long gone, but their symbolic environment and memory are still here and draw us inside: are we spectators (tourists) or participants?

## Hymns of Jaguars and Eagles

Tomb 7 contained not only many human bones but also over forty carved animal bones – mostly they come from jaguars and some from eagles.<sup>1</sup> Obviously the choice of material is significant: eagle and jaguar are favourite *nahual* animals, symbols of courage and strength. Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992: Ch. 1) describes the character of the wolf woman, *La Loba*, in the desert, occupied with collecting bones, especially wolf bones: she fills her cave with them and sings over the bones, and as she sings, the bones flesh out. Estés explains the symbolism of bones as the indestructible aspect of the wild self and the collection of dispersed bones as an exercise of psychic alignment (op. cit.: 31, 32). And she stresses the meaning of this symbolism for the psychology of the living:

Within us is the old one who collects bones. Within us there are the soul-bones of this wild Self. Within us is the potential to be fleshed out again as the creature we once were. Within us are the bones to change ourselves and our world. Within us is the breath and our truths and our longings – together they are the song, the creation hymn we have been yearning to sing. (op. cit.: 31)

The jaguar and eagle bones in Tomb 7 are carved in relief: they depict various motifs, or, in some cases, entire scenes, in the same style and according to the same iconographic conventions that we see in the Postclassic pictorial manuscripts. In fact several of these bones are true miniature codices, carved with admirable precision and mastery. In terms of content the elements recorded on several bones refer clearly to Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec) history. Probably this material was also chosen for the messages to be much more permanent than those recorded on deerskin, bark paper, or woven cotton, which do not survive the test of time.

These carved jaguar and eagle bones are found scattered throughout the chamber, the threshold and the antechamber. As we do not know when or how they were deposited, we cannot draw clear conclusions from their position in Tomb 7, although in some cases the location is suggestive. Very remarkable

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<sup>1</sup> Archaeo-zoological confirmation by Manelik Olivera Martínez (member of the team directed by Dr Nelly Robles García).

is the concentration of carved bones close to the Bone Assemblage A, which suggests that this bundle was an important reason for and a main addressee of the pictorial texts.

The carved jaguar bones usually have pointed ends and so, as McCafferty and McCafferty have observed, resemble the shape of a 'machete' used in weaving, an artifact that often appears in the hands of ladies (princesses, queens) in the codices. One could speculate that the bones were organised as parts inserted in a small loom, but the fact that there are both horizontal and vertical scenes recorded on them contradicts this idea. It is possible that this form connotes references to the field of female agency, as well as to the symbolism and creativity of the weaving art. Most interesting is the fact that the weaving baton (*tzotzopaztli*) is an attribute of the goddess Cihuacoatl (Codex Magliabechi, p. 45r): if this association is relevant, that would mean that the carved texts in one way or another are thought to be under her influence. As she is a goddess of life-death-life, the guardian of the ancestors, this would be a particularly strong symbolic statement.

Furthermore, the pointed shape may also refer to a possible use in blood-letting rituals, during which such objects are passed through perforated body parts to increase the flow of blood, and also to bathe the recorded texts with that same blood to give them more life, strength and courage. And, indeed, bone perforators were also found in Tomb 7.

## 1 Flower, Song

This ritual site also evokes the solemn atmosphere of the ceremonial discourse, characterised by the use of parallelism. A special form of parallelism is the combination of two words that together constitute another meaning, the hendiadys or couplet (*difrasismo* in Spanish).<sup>2</sup> The unusual juxtaposition of two words brings the mind to seek an abstract synthesis, i.e. a symbolic meaning behind these terms. Illustrative examples in Nahuatl are: *yoalli ehecatl*, 'night, wind', which refers to the mysterious essence of the gods, or *petlatl icpalli* (*yuvui tayu* in Dzaha Dzaui), 'mat, seat', which refers to the power and organisation of established rulership. This discourse also brings us back to the mysterious time of origin and divine power, as it was paramount in the poetic

2 Building on the fundamental works of Garibay (1953), León Portilla (1974) and Edmonson (1971), several modern studies have discussed the parallelisms and diphastic couplets of Mesoamerican ceremonial discourse, e.g. Montes de Oca (2000, 2004), Montemayor (2001), López García (2007), Mikulska-Dąbrowska (2008), Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2009b, 2009c, 2010), Dehouve (2009, 2011), Hull and Carrasco (2012).

narratives of creation, very much as in the book of Genesis. Characteristically, the Ñuu Dzaui creation narrative sets out in this style:

In the year and on the day  
of darkness and gloom,  
before there were days nor years,  
when the world was in great darkness,  
as everything was chaos and confusion,  
the earth was covered with water:  
there was only mud and slime  
on the face of the earth.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the carved bones record texts, discourse. Elements that are typical of Mixtec ceremonial discourse, also known from the codices and from oral tradition today, make that very clear. Several carvings contain the motif of scrolls and flowers, combined with heads of humans and/or animals. Caso interpreted this as a reference to sacrifice: '*la cuerda enflorada que los mexicanos llamaban xochimécatl y que era un símbolo de sacrificio*' (1969: 218).

Given the absence of references to sacrifice and the presence of signs that denote discourse (speech scrolls), we recognise, however, the well-known couplet 'flower, song', ubiquitous in Nahuatl poetic texts (*in xochitl, in cuicatl*) and still surviving in contemporary popular art.

Caso (1969: 180) correctly noted that the 'flowers and speech scrolls' motif often occurs on wooden drums, confirming its association with singing and music. Likewise the turtle shell that appears in gold as part of necklaces (Caso 1969: plates LI and LII) can refer to this acoustic dimension: the turtle shell functioned as a musical instrument played with a deer antler.<sup>4</sup> This combines with the tinkling sound of many small gold and silver bells: these are abundantly present in Tomb 7 as pendants of rings, brooches, necklaces or pectorals; the jewels themselves often have the form of precious birds or represent the heads of young deities, which presumably connote songs of joy and beauty. We already saw that the decorated skull in the tomb may have been used as a drum.

The frequency of such motifs in Tomb 7 suggests that all artistic elements are part of a discourse or hymn that surrounds or frames the scenes carved on

3 '*En el año y en el día de la oscuridad y tinieblas, antes que hubiese días ni años, estando el mundo en gran oscuridad, que todo era un caos y confusión, estaba la tierra cubierta de agua: sólo había limo y lama sobre la faz de la tierra.*' (García, Book v: Ch. 4). Compare the explicit references to ceremonial discourse in the opening phrases of religious texts such as the Popol Vuh or Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 52 ('These are the sacred words ...').

4 See, for example, Codex Iya Nacuaa II (Becker I), p. 9.



ILLUSTRATION 3.01

*Flower and song as motif on a painted gourd from Olinalá.*

the other bones. On the whole these references to flowery speech can be connected with the above-mentioned reference to a speaking person, i.e. the priest 'Plumed Serpent' on the golden ornament Number 26 (Chapter 2). The context, then, suggests that this flowery speech or song, accompanied by music, is the form of communication with the deceased, and of invoking the ancestors.<sup>5</sup>

The 'flower and song' motif functions as a framework for a series of heads of humans and/or deities, as well as birds and other animals, i.e. it places the value of these signs within the 'flowery style' of ceremonial discourse. A text of Sahagún about the worship of the dead and deified lords in ancient Teotihuacan is illustrative:

And Teotihuacan was called town of *Teotl*, which is 'God', because they canonised the lords that were buried there after death as gods and considered that these did not die but awakened from a dream in which they had lived. Therefore the ancients said that when men died they did not

<sup>5</sup> Compare the discourse recorded in the relief of a carved conch, also associated with the world of the ancestors (Sánchez Nava et al. 2011).

die, but came to life again, almost waking up from their sleep, and that they turned into spirits or gods. They said: 'Lord, Lady, wake up, because it begins already to dawn, morning has broken, the birds with yellow feathers already start singing, and butterflies of different colors are flying.

And when someone died, they used to say that he was already *teotl*, which means that he was already dead, in order to be spirit, or god; and the ancient ones believed ... that the lords when they died became gods, which the rulers said in order to be obeyed and feared, and that some turned into the sun, others into the moon, and others into planets.<sup>6</sup>

The pictorial language of the deposited jewels appears to contain the very characteristics of the ancient Nahuatl poetic texts: they point to the 'glory' of life after death, the quality of which is emphasised by specific volatiles associated with the sun, such as eagles (symbols of courage), quetzals (symbols of nobility), hummingbirds and butterflies (symbols of the soul). In Tomb 7 the butterfly motif occurs frequently in the golden artefacts: for example there is a gold pendant consisting of a 'descending eagle' holding a butterfly in its beak and another on which the deity Quetzalcoatl holds a butterfly (Caso 1969: plate XIII).

A hymn to the Aztec god of rain Tlaloc evokes a similar image:

Allow the animals and herbs to rejoice,  
allow the birds, specifically the birds of precious feathers  
such as the *quechol* and *zacuan*,  
to fly and sing,  
and to suck the herbs and flowers.<sup>7</sup>

And to the newborn it was said:

6 *'Y se llamó Teotihuacan, el pueblo de Teotl, que es dios, porque los señores que allí se enterraban después de muertos los canonizaban por dioses y que no se morían sino que despertaban de un sueño en que habían vivido; por lo cual decían los antiguos que cuando morían los hombres no perecían, sino que de nuevo comenzaban a vivir, casi despertando de su sueño, y se volvían en espíritus o dioses. Les decían: "Señor, señora, despiértate que ya comienza a amanecer, que ya es el alba, que ya comienzan a cantar las aves de plumas amarillas, y que andan volando las mariposas de diversos colores". Y cuando alguno se moría, de él solían decir que ya era teotl, que quiere decir que ya era muerto, para ser espíritu, o dios; y creían los antiguos... que los señores cuando morían se volvían en dioses, lo cual decían porque fuesen obedecidos o temidos los señores que regían, y que unos se volvían en sol y otros en luna, y otros en otros planetas.'* (Sahagún, Book x: Ch. 29 § 12).

7 *'Tened por bien que se regocijen los animales, y las yerbas, y tened por bien que las aves y pájaros de preciosas plumas como son el quechol y el zacuan vuelen y canten, y chupen las yerbas y flores'* (Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 8).



ILLUSTRATION 3.02

*Bone 169 (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

Know and understand that your home is not here where you were born,  
 because you are a soldier and servant,  
 you are the bird called *quecholli*, you are the bird called *zaquan*,  
 you are bird, and soldier of Who Is Everywhere [*Tloque Naoaque*].<sup>8</sup>

Such texts make us understand that birds and butterflies, like jaguars or Plumed Serpents, may be references to people, expressing their qualities, characteristics, virtues, *nahuales* and/or names. Above all these images celebrate life.

Bone 169 shows a number of heads among flowers and speech scrolls (from right to left):

- (a) a human head with a vulture beak and the nose ornament of the nobility
- (b) the head of a puma or jaguar (a rabbit according to Caso)
- (c) the head of a quetzal bird
- (d) a human head with the nose ornament of the nobility and face painting consisting of a vertical line over the face – a motif that appears as an attribute of Xipe, patron deity of the Zaachila dynasty,
- (e) a serpent with claws and feather ornament, i.e. a Plumed Serpent,<sup>9</sup>
- (f) the head of a jaguar (symbol of courage).

The pointed ends of the bone contain depictions of human heads with nose ornaments that are characteristic of the nobility, suggesting that the whole phrase refers to ancestors of high status.

As for the head with the vulture beak as buccal mask, Caso correctly noted that this face occurs several times in representations of historical figures (ancestors) in the Mixtec codices. Interestingly, in Mixtec the vulture *sii* (*'águila de cabeza bermeja'* according to Alvarado) is a homonym of *sii*, 'grandfather'. In this context it seems likely that the vulture mask is a phonetic writing of the word 'grandfather' or 'ancestor'.

Starting from a paradigm according to which we interpret the discourse in Tomb 7 as a communication with the dead ancestors – expressed by the icon of the fleshless jaw – we understand these texts (in flowery speech) as invocations of deities or ancestors. They are referred to with onomastic elements or

8 *'Sábete y entiende, que no es aquí tu casa donde has nacido, porque eres soldado y criado, eres ave que llaman quecholli, eres ave que llaman zaquan, que eres ave y soldado del que está en todas partes [Tloque Naoaque]...'* (Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 31).

9 Compare for example Códice Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 72.

rather in a generic and metaphorical way through their qualities, symbolised by animals, also in order to bring to the fore the properties, virtues, and fortunes, as well as the *nahual* powers, of these animals.<sup>10</sup>

The above example (Bone 169) then might be read as a flowery invocation of two human individuals. The first is identified as old by his vulture mask ('grandfather'), and he is also described as brave or strong (as puma or jaguar) and noble (quetzal). The second is identified by the facial painting of Xipe (possibly because of belonging to the dynasty of Zaachila) and qualified through the *nahual* powers of the Plumed Serpent and the jaguar.

The phrase is clearly structured as a parallelism – an element of the figurative language that is characteristic of Mesoamerican literature. We might reconstruct it more or less as follows:

O noble Grandfather, brave as the jaguar, noble as a quetzal bird.  
 Lord of Zaachila, powerful as the Plumed Serpent, brave as the jaguar.  
 Hear our flowery discourse, show yourself and speak to us.

In the relief carved on Bone 114 we find a clear example of a *difrasismo*. In the pointed ends we see the heads of nobles speaking. The list of heads recorded in the rectangular frame of the bone begins (from right to left) with a well-known and illustrative expression: eagle (*yaha*) and fire serpent (*yahui*). This is a diagnostic combination and is read as *yaha yahui* in Mixtec, the term that friar Antonio de los Reyes translated into Spanish as '*nigromántico señor*' and that today anthropologists would render as shaman. This couplet is followed by the combination of quetzal and jaguar: 'noble and brave/strong'. The second half of the band contains two expressions, each of which starts with a vulture, i.e. the title 'grandfather' or 'ancestor'. First this reference is combined with the sign Serpent and two points: possibly the calendar name 2 Serpent. Then the vulture head appears combined with the head of a puma or coyote, possibly the given name of the person referred to.

All heads show their tongue, often combined with a scroll of speaking or singing. In the context of invoking the ancestors we may read this sign as: 'Speak to us'. We would reconstruct the reading of Bone 114 more or less as follows:

10 The animal figures embroidered on the *huipil* of the bride in the coastal area of the Mixtec region have a similar meaning (cf. Alejandra Cruz Ortiz' contribution in Anders and Jansen 1994).



ILLUSTRATION 3.03

*Bone n4 (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

O Lord Eagle, O Lord Fire Serpent (powerful shaman)  
 Noble and Brave Lord,  
 Grandfather 2 Serpent,  
 Grandfather, brave as a jaguar.  
 We call upon you: speak to us.'

Another example of this genre (Bone 71) shows the couplets 'Jaguar, Eagle' (brave/strong) and 'Serpent, Quetzal' (Quetzalcoatl), framed by the head of a Plumed Serpent and the head of Toina, as other indicators of nobility and wealth, accompanying the ancestors in the hereafter.

Bone 149 – found approximately in the centre of the threshold area – shows heads of alligators in the pointed areas at the ends. Between these, the rectangular band contains a series of other heads (from right to left):

- (1) richly dressed woman with vulture mask and scrolls: invoked 'grandmother',
- (2) dog: Toina, the god of wealth, as divine protector,
- (3) woman richly dressed: 'lady',
- (4) richly dressed woman with vulture mask: 'grandmother',
- (5) richly dressed woman with a mat motif in her headdress: 'queen' (woman of the mat and throne, i.e. the kingdom),
- (6) Quetzalcoatl (*Coo Dzavui* in Mixtec): the powerful *nahual* and founder of the dynasties, as divine protector,
- (7) dog: Toina, the god of wealth, as divine protector,
- (8) a character combining the face painting of Macuilxochitl or Xochipilli with the mask of a snake or lizard, and many scrolls.

The invocation seems to be directed to an elderly lady of the royal family, repeated several times with different headgear, which probably represents different titles. She is clearly identified as a woman by her long hair. First she is said to be next to (under the protection of) Toina, then the phrase is extended and the two gods are mentioned: Quetzalcoatl and Toina.



ILLUSTRATION 3.04 *Bone 149* (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)

The last head shows a rare combination: the face paint of Macuilxochitl or Xochipilli, god of light and flowers, feasts and songs, with a mask of an alligator or snake head over his eyes. A similar attire is found in the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 6, which characterises a Lord 7 Flower in early Mixtec history. Possibly the association with this deity is caused by the day 7 Flower, a day of happiness and good fortune, dedicated to the god of flowers. The same god (corresponding to Xochipilli in the Nahua world) and his symbolic associations appear frequently in earrings and golden ornaments throughout Tomb 7.

Here the defunct female ancestor seems to be invoked together with – or as a manifestation of – the deities Toina and Quetzalcoatl as well as Xochipilli-Macuilxochitl. The scrolls, on the one hand, are a glorification of the ancestors by precious offerings and ceremonial speeches. On the other, they ask the ancestors to pronounce their blessings, advice or oracles of wisdom (Quetzalcoatl), good fortune (Toina) and joy (Xochipilli-Macuilxochitl).

The pointed extremes of the carved bones are often specially marked areas, separated from the scene that covers most of the bone. In such cases they contain paired signs, frequently the heads of alligators (Bone 203d, 203e, 174a, 174b, 149, or 50). As the alligator is the first of the twenty day signs in the Postclassic calendar of central and southern Mexico, we can interpret their presence here as an index of day count (Nahuatl: *tonalpoalli*) or as a reference to the beginning of time in general.

The alligator refers to the primordial character Cipactonal ('Day Alligator'), who created the calendar and acts as the archetypal priest, caring for and explaining the calendar (Nahuatl *tonalpouhqui*, 'daykeeper'). In the context of communication with the ancestors, the alligator refers to the founders of dynasties in time immemorial. Simultaneously it may indicate that the invocation is done continuously: 'from day Alligator to day Alligator', expressing a kind of phrase such as 'for ever and ever'. Alternative signs in this position are:

- (a) the head of the quetzal bird, evoking associations with nobility and art (Bone 172i, 203c),
- (b) the head of an eagle with a scroll of speaking or singing (Bone 50),
- (c) the head of a bird with an axe-shaped beak,
- (d) human head with a scroll of speaking or singing (Bone 114)
- (e) the head of the Plumed Serpent (Bone 94),
- (f) the dog head of Toina (Bone 71).

All these signs connote a noble and important discourse of virtue and good fortune that frames the central main scene that is carved on the bone.

Some of the carved bones contain references to narratives about the primordial time of the ancestors, who are the subjects of the flowery discourse. These will be discussed in the following sections.

## 2 The Tree of the Dynasty

Bone 215 was located directly in front of Bone Assemblage A, more or less on the axis with the tripod vessel for chocolate and the golden ornament Number 26 (Caso 1969: 196, Fig. 195). This position seems to give an extra meaning to the topic represented in its carved pictorial text.

Following the direction in which the personages are looking, the text is read from right to left. The account begins with a building, which stands on a platform with a staircase, usually a feature of temples (pyramids) in pictography. The platform contains a frieze with the step-fret motif that in Dzaha Dzauí is read as *ñuu*, 'town, people, nation' (Smith 1973a). On the roof we see a down ball, which generally characterises objects, beings or people that are consecrated to a divine power; as a sign it seems to convey the Dzaha Dzauí term *ü*, 'sacred, delicate'. In the beam above the door we see a decorative pattern in the form of shells. The shell (*yee* in Dzaha Dzauí) may indicate that the temple was decorated with a shell mosaic, but it also may express its homonym *yee*, 'force'. Bands with discs (painted motifs or stone mosaics) are the quintessential sign of a palace (*aniñe* in Dzaha Dzauí, *tecpan* in Nahuatl).<sup>11</sup> The Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) shows buildings with similar bands, which in that context must be temples. In the door opening of the building on Bone 215 we see the sign of jade or jewel, which qualifies it as very precious. Taking all these elements together we can interpret this building as a precious temple, the principal building of the city-state.

Seated in front of the temple, a man holds in his hand an incense bag and a set of two perforators (one of bone and the other of a maguey spine). He is speaking. His necklace, feather headdress and sandals qualify him as belonging to the nobility. In fact his position in front of the *ñuu* sign suggests he is a ruler. His headdress consists of a feather ornament falling on his

11 For the identification of the *tecpan* sign, see the article of Batalla Rosado (1997). The shell decoration reminds us of the houses of precious materials that were the sanctuaries of Quetzalcoatl in Tula, according to the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 7v), the Annals of Cuauhtitlan (Lehmann 1938: 77) and Sahagún (Book x: Ch. 29).

back, combined with a bush of feathers tied to a ring. The latter resembles the ornament called *cuauhpileoni* in Nahuatl: two feathers hanging from a down ball. The same feather artifact appears as a golden ornament in the antechamber (Caso 1969: plate XIX).

The incense bag and the perforators are indicative of a priestly function. His speech, therefore, most likely is a prayer. He is seated behind the central personage, who, because of his dog head, is to be identified as Toina, 'Master of Dogs', the god of merchants and riches. He is wearing a rich feather headdress and holds a quail, which is the typical sacrificial bird. The next sign, in front of Toina, is a combination of several elements, set on the ground. The lower part is a base (a dish or bone) with a head, on top of which we can distinguish a heart and a shell. As an offering it would express a prayer with a commitment to devote head (*dzini*), heart (*ini*) and force (*ye*). But it is also possible that this set of signs is the recipient of the offering: in that case the head would be the representation of an ancestor, while the heart and the shell symbolize his lively and strong presence. In fact we might think of the skull decorated with mosaic found in the antechamber. On Bone 215 the head seems to have facial painting, interpreted by Caso as the horizontal stripes that characterise the god of fire (known in Nahuatl as Xiuhtecuhtli).<sup>12</sup>

The ultimate recipient of the offering is a tree in horizontal position (probably because of the composition in the elongated horizontal frame). On top of it is a bird with a bald head – maybe a guacamaya (ara) or macaw. The scene suggests that the devotee (seated man) in front of the temple expresses his veneration through the divine power of wealth (precious offerings). Toina himself gives, or rather, embodies the offering: the spirit of the treasure speaks for the priest-ruler to the tree. Let us remember that Toina is also the golden ornament ('pectoral') that was deposited in Tomb 7.

On Bone 215 the place where the ruler in priestly function addresses a prayer to the tree of origin, occupying the spirit of wealth (Toina) as intermediary, is the Temple of Jewels. The fact that the scene is found in Tomb 7, itself a sanctuary full of jewels, suggests that the place where this ritual act is carried out was a temple or ceremonial centre with which Tomb 7 itself was connected. The adoring ruler represents the group of people who deposited valuables here as a treasure of Toina dedicated to honour the tree of the dynasty.

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12 Cf. Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 13, 14, 69, etc.

The tree in a funerary context seems to symbolize the continuity of life and of the royal dynasty. An offering to the tree, therefore, seems to be an invocation of the ancestors of the royal lineage. The bird may represent the oracle of this tree, as a divine power, an emblem of the ancestors, transmitted to the adoring ruler.

We find additional indications for the meaning of this scene in other Mesoamerican works of art. The bird on top of the tree is also a motif in the codices of the Teomoxtli Group (Borgia Group). Generally there are four trees and four birds, associated with the four directions and with four segments of time. The bird on top of the tree also occurs frequently in Mayan art. A famous example is the sacred cruciform tree in the relief on the sarcophagus of King Pakal in the Temple of the Inscriptions and in similar Mayan reliefs of the Classic period in Palenque.<sup>13</sup> In those cases the image indicates the precious, divine character of the bird and of the tree. The tree grows out of the ruler (Lord Pakal) who is shown as descending into the earth. A double-headed serpent – symbol of royal power – is extended over the branches. Around the sarcophagus, Lord Pakal's ancestors appear in relief as specific trees. The whole configuration suggests that the ruler is buried but that the tree of his rulership will keep blossoming and will keep enjoying divine protection.

The appearance of the bird on the tree in the scene of Bone 215 qualifies the tree as under the divine protection of heaven, as imbued with the power of light – in the understanding that light is the principle for humankind, a symbol of human cognitive and creative capacities, a symbol of human time and history, an ideal vision of rulership and genealogy as walking in the light. It is to this ideal that the offerings are made.



ILLUSTRATION 3.05 *Bone 215 (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

13 See the discussion of this symbolism in Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993: 370) and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b: Ch. VI). The Late Preclassic frescoes of the Mayan site San Bartolo in Guatemala show another fascinating representation of trees with birds and sacred bundles in the context of penis perforation rituals (Saturno 2009).



ILLUSTRATION 3.06A

*Bone 203i (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

### 3 Tree Birth at Apoala

A relatively large set of carved bones (numbers 200, 201, 202, 203a-l) accompanied Bone Assemblage A. Among these are two that clarify the importance of the tree: Bone 203i and Bone 200. Both show scenes in which people are born from a tree, which is an important event in the primordial time of Ñuu Dzau history.

Bone 203i (Caso 1969: 192; Fig. 185) shows a thorny tree, clearly a *pochote*. This is a direct parallel with Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37, and with Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nu (Bodley), p. 1, where the founders of the Ñuu Dzau dynasties are born from the great mother Pochote in Apoala. The scene is composed vertically: the direction of reading is from below (left) to top (right).

The basic structure is similar to that of the rectangular band with heads of humans, animals and/or deities discussed earlier. In the lower extreme of the bone, i.e. in the beginning of the scene, we see a singing quetzal bird, and in the beginning of the second part, half-way along the scene on the bone, we see the head of Toina, the spirit of wealth. Scrolls rise from his mouth. But unlike the simple sequences of heads, in this case the quetzal bird and the head of Toina flank a complex narrative scene of trees and people emerging from them. The quetzal is a well known emblem of preciousness and nobility. Interestingly, the quetzal bird looks down its back: this is an ancient icon that dates back to the Classic era of Teotihuacan (and therefore may connote here the respectability of the Toltecatoytl).

We recognise the trees by the shape of their trunk and their spines as *pochotes*: the first has leaves, the second has flowers – a detail that suggests they should be read as a parallelism. A naked woman and a naked man are born from the trees. They are a couple: the same pair of figures also appears as the first to come from the tree of origin in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37. Most likely they represent a title such as ‘Primordial Mother, Primordial Father’. On Bone 203i the primordial couple introduces the birth of two important figures, identified by their calendar names: Lord 7 Flower and Lady 9 Reed. In their left hand they carry what seems to be a perforator, the sign of bloodletting and ritual devotion. They raise their right hand in a gesture of being responsive, giving support and service (*ndaha* meaning both ‘hand’ and ‘tribute’ in Dzaha Dzau).<sup>14</sup>

14 The meaning of this gesture is well documented in the Tira de Tecomaxtlahuaca (Jansen 1994: Ch. 111).

The scene has narrative aspects, telling how the individuals mentioned came out of the tree of origin. But in the context of invoking the ancestors, their gestures may represent a response to their devotees. We suggest reading the text as a pictorial prayer:

May the quetzal continue its ancient and noble song,  
 may the pochote tree of the dynasty stand upright and firm,  
 may it be well rooted in the earth,  
 may it continue to have green leaves,  
 She, the divine primordial mother  
 who gave birth and protection (with raised hands)  
 to the sacred Lord 7 Flower 'Quetzal'.  
 Come forward, great lord,  
 to give us faith, devotion and strength (the perforator of self-sacrifice),  
 to give us your support (raised hand).

May Lord Toina, spirit of wealth and good fortune, continue to bless us,  
 may the pochote tree of the dynasty stand upright and firm,  
 well rooted, beautiful, and noble (with roots characterised by jade and  
 rich feathers)  
 may it continue to blossom,  
 He, the divine primordial father  
 who gave life (eye and speech)  
 to the sacred Lady 9 Reed.  
 Come forward, great lady,  
 to give us faith, devotion and strength (the perforator of self-sacrifice),  
 to give us your support (raised hand).

Lord 7 Flower and Lady 9 Reed, the personages mentioned on Bone 203i, also appear as important protagonists of primordial time in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 33, which tells the story of the tree of origin, the mother ceiba of Apoala. Lord 7 Flower is a precious prince, a solar deity, who appears with Toina in the founding ceremony of a kingdom in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 18. Lady 9 Reed or *Quequiyo* in Dzaha Dzau is mentioned in the inquisition trial of the ruler and nobles of Yanhuitlan as the patron deity of the people, revered as a sacred bundle. One of the accused, Don Francisco, kept that bundle in the underground sanctuary of his home (the same place where he carried out the rituals for his late wife). He made sacrifices of doves and quails in its honour. A witness accused Don Francisco of having sacrificed a boy to this deity. The same Lady 9 Reed appears on another carved bone in Tomb 7 (Bone 174a), which we will interpret later.



ILLUSTRATION 3.06B  
*Lady 9 Reed on Bone 203i (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-  
INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de  
Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.07  
*Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 51: Lady 9 Reed.*



ILLUSTRATION 3.08 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)*, p. 28: *Lady 9 Reed*.

The tree on Bone 203i is clearly the mother pochote or ceiba, the tree of origin of the Mixtec dynasties, associated with the sacred valley of Apoala in Codex Yuta Tnoho (*Vindobonensis*). This suggests that the tree on Bone 215, found nearby and equally associated with Bone Assemblage A, refers to the same tree. Bone 215 would then represent an offering by the seated ruler to that tree of origin, the emblem of the great family of Ñuu Dzauí dynasties.

Another tree birth scene occurs on Bone 200 (Caso 1969: 197; plates xxxvi and xxxvii). This bone is shaped like a perforator for bloodletting. It was placed near Bone Assemblage A. The scene on Bone 200 begins with a year sign (Mixtec: *cuiya*) topped with eyes (Mixtec: *nuu*), which together read in Mixtec as *nuu cuiya*, 'in the year'. The year bearer itself cannot be distinguished, but it was probably 1 Reed, which often accompanies scenes of foundation or events in primordial time. The date, then, would have to be read as 'in the beginning of time'. The following sign is that of the open jaws of an alligator, which

symbolize the earth. In its eye a small turquoise bead has been preserved. A thorny tree – i.e. a *pochote* – grows from the earth and is characterised by a human face and a triangular garment (*quechquemitl*) as a woman, i.e. as our great mother. In its trunk the tree has a frieze with discs, the sign of the palace: *aniñe* in Dzaha Dzau (tecpan in Nahuatl). Thereby the tree is explicitly identified as that of the royal family. The representation is very similar to that of the tree of origin in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37, which also has a woman's head and is inscribed with the same motif of discs (*aniñe*), combined with arrows (signs of conquest and power).

On Bone 200 a man is born from the tree, connected to it by an umbilical cord, and identified by the head of a serpent on his forehead. He raises his hands in the air. Behind him, separated by a year sign, six more lords are seated. They are connected by a band of scrolls, flowers or feathers, which, together with the serpent's head of the first individual, can also be the body of a Plumed Serpent. They raise their right hand, touching the back of the person sitting in front of them – possibly again the known gesture of offering support. At the same time they hold the left arm bent in front of their chest, a gesture that indicates respect and obedience. Interestingly, this left hand almost meets the right hand of the person seated in front, suggesting a connection and community among all.

The birth of seven men from a tree of origin has its parallel in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2: in that case it is a ceiba tree in Achiutla and the seven persons born from it are all named.<sup>15</sup> The men on Bone 200 are not differentiated from each other; only the first is characterised by a serpent's head. This makes another interpretation possible: the scene may present successive generations, which together form the continuity of the plumed serpent.

Bone 200 is a perforator for drawing blood from the tongue, ear or genital member. Using this implement for bloodletting, the participant in the ritual



ILLUSTRATION 3.09 *Bone 200 (reconstruction drawing, Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

15 Edition of Codex Añute (Selden) with commentary: Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b).

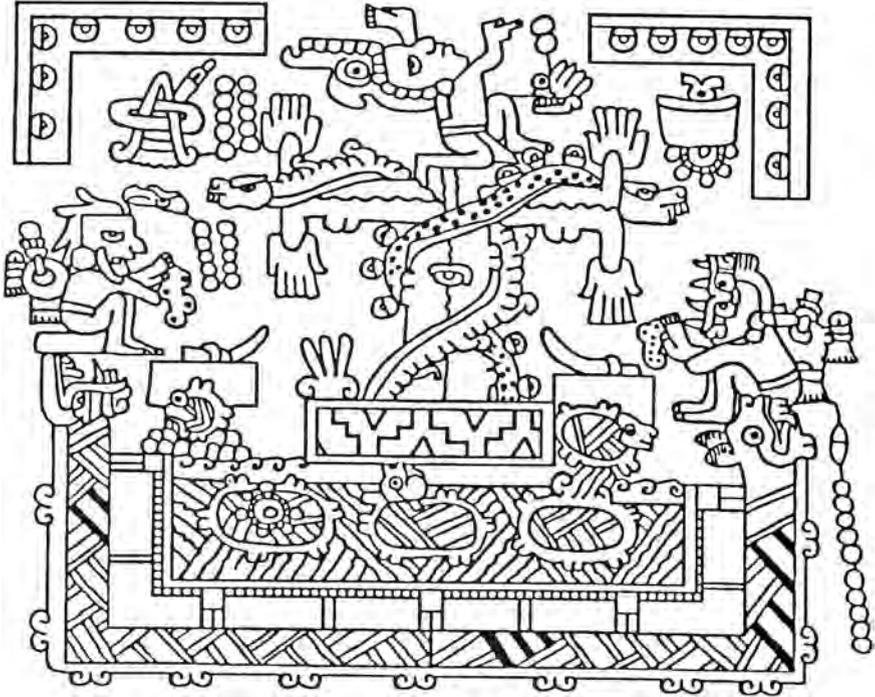


ILLUSTRATION 3.10 *Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2: the birth of the founder of the dynasty from a ceiba tree in Achiutla.*

places him/herself in line behind the seated individuals born from the tree and establishes physical contact – a bond of blood – with those primordial ancestors, and ultimately with our mother. To offer one's blood to the earth nourishes the tree and gives life and strength to the dynasty of its descendants.

#### 4 The War against the Stone Men

The cases discussed above demonstrate the presence of Ñuu Dzauí themes throughout Tomb 7: the year sign with eyes, the Toina figure, the tree of origin. Other carved bones also refer to the primordial era of Ñuu Dzauí history, specifically the war of the founders (associated with Apoala) against the inhabitants of the earlier creation: the stone men.

Bone 203b shows the initial success of the stone men in this war, while Bone 174a shows the ultimate victory of Lady 9 Reed (the same who was born

from the tree on Bone 203i) over the stone men. These scenes have a parallel in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 3 and 20, where the stone men first attacked the lords and ladies who had been born from the tree of Apoala, but the latter successfully defended themselves and defeated the stone men, took them prisoner and killed them in sacrifice.<sup>16</sup>

The stone men seem to represent the *Tay Nuhu* or *Ña Nuhu*, 'Men or Women from the Centre of the Earth' mentioned by friar Antonio de los Reyes in the prologue of his Mixtec grammar (1593). This was the original population that had come from the centre of the earth, *Anuhu*, which also means 'abyss' and 'underworld'. We can relate this narrative theme with current ideas about people who jumped into the abyss and became stone when the sun rose for the first time.<sup>17</sup> Also the *Popol Vuh* tells that when the sun of the present creation rose, the already existing beings (belonging to an earlier era) turned into stone.

The narrative of the Ñuu Dzau lords and ladies achieving victory over the stone men seems to be a metaphorical statement about how new dynasties that derived their origin from the sacred site of Apoala established a new order in the beginning of the Postclassic era.<sup>18</sup>

The bones of Tomb 7 identify the adversaries in the scenes of conflict by their particularly shaped heads or hairdo. The curls or protrusions are the convention for 'stone' in Mixtec pictography. Consequently these personages are stone men.

Bone 203b (Caso 1969: 183; Fig. 170) was part of the set of bones associated with Bone Assemblage A. The narrative scene reads from right to left. It starts with a day 5 Rain. A stone man tied up a mountain. The Ñuu Dzau codices render the stone men in this primordial conflict generally as anonymous; therefore 5 Rain probably does not represent the calendar name of the stone man, but the day when he started this conflict. At the other end of the bone a year (7 Reed) is mentioned, which might complete the date: year 7 Reed day 5 Rain.

The name of the tied mountain is represented by a jade bead inside it and a bush of what may be feathers. The place sign Mountain of Jade with Bush of Feathers matches that of Yucu Yusi (Acatlan, Pue.) in the Mixteca Baja region.<sup>19</sup>

16 Edition with commentary: Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992b). For an analytic description of the scenes of the war against the stone men, also known as the war from heaven, see Rabin (1979).

17 Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2005: 133 ff.

18 Detailed analysis: Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007a).

19 Smith 1973a: 60–62.



ILLUSTRATION 3.11A

*Bone 203b (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

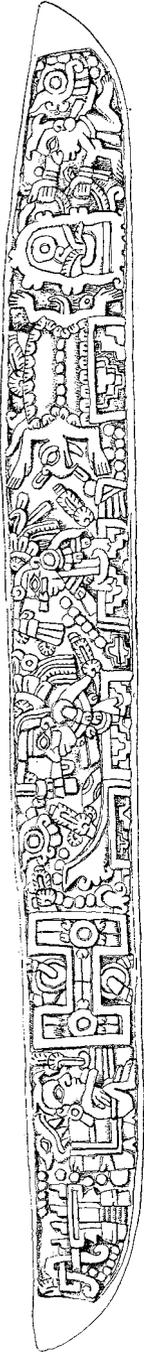


ILLUSTRATION 3.11B

*Bone 203b (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.12A *Stone man in Codex Tonindeye.*

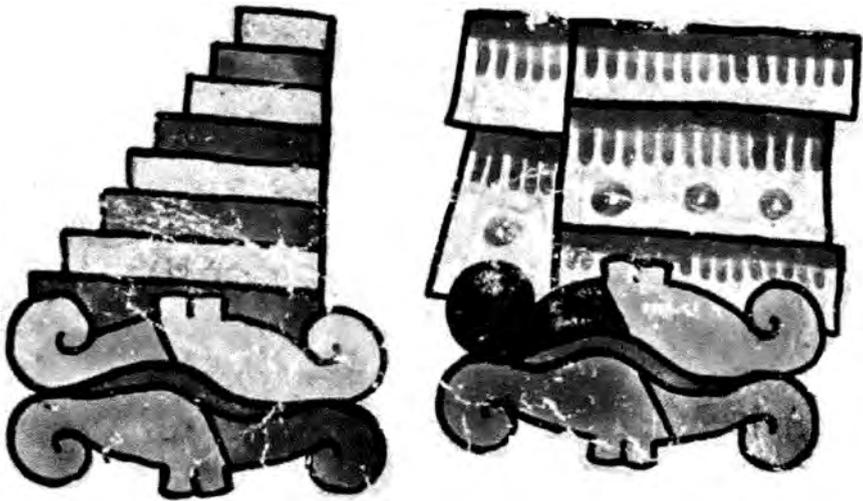


ILLUSTRATION 3.12B *Stone motif in Codex Yuta Tnoho.*

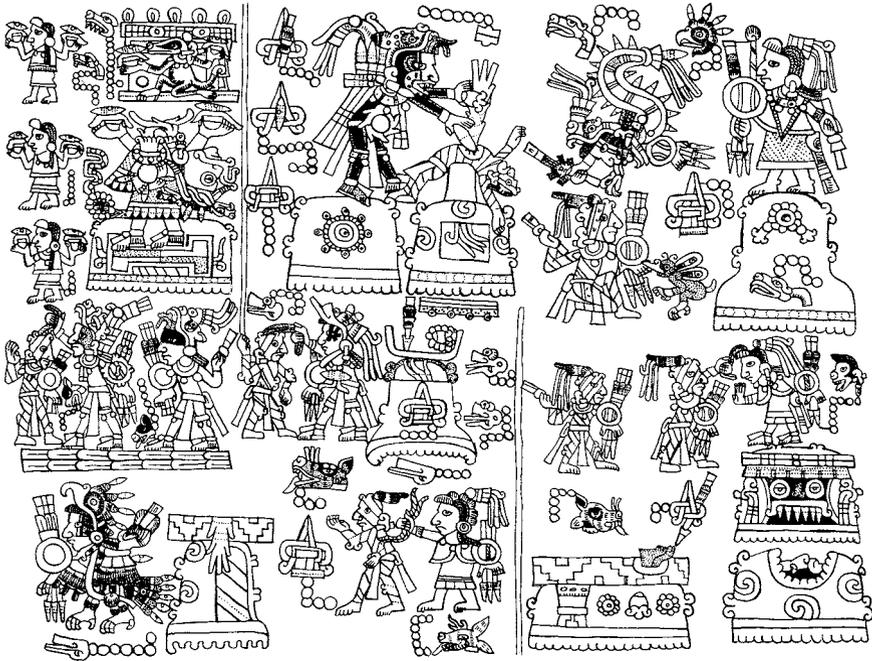


ILLUSTRATION 3.13 *Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3: war against the Stone Men.*

Indeed, the war against the stone men seems largely to have taken place in the Mixteca Baja. Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3, also mentions:

- Icxitlan (Town of Feet: Ñuu Saha),
- Miltepec (Place of the Standing Arrow: Ndaa Nduvua),
- Tetaltepec (Mountain of Fire: Yucu Ihni),
- Tonalá (Town of Blood, representing Ñuu Niñe, Town of Heat, Tonalá's Mixtec name),
- Juxtlahuaca (Green and White Plain: Yodzo Cuii Yaa),
- Guaxolotitlan (Ballcourt of Gravel: Yuhua Cuchi).<sup>20</sup>

We return to Bone 203b. The stone man captures the Mountain of Jade and Feathers: flames rise from its top and a scroll comes out from below, which in this context probably represents smoke (a pictorial convention for conquests,

<sup>20</sup> See Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 327–337).

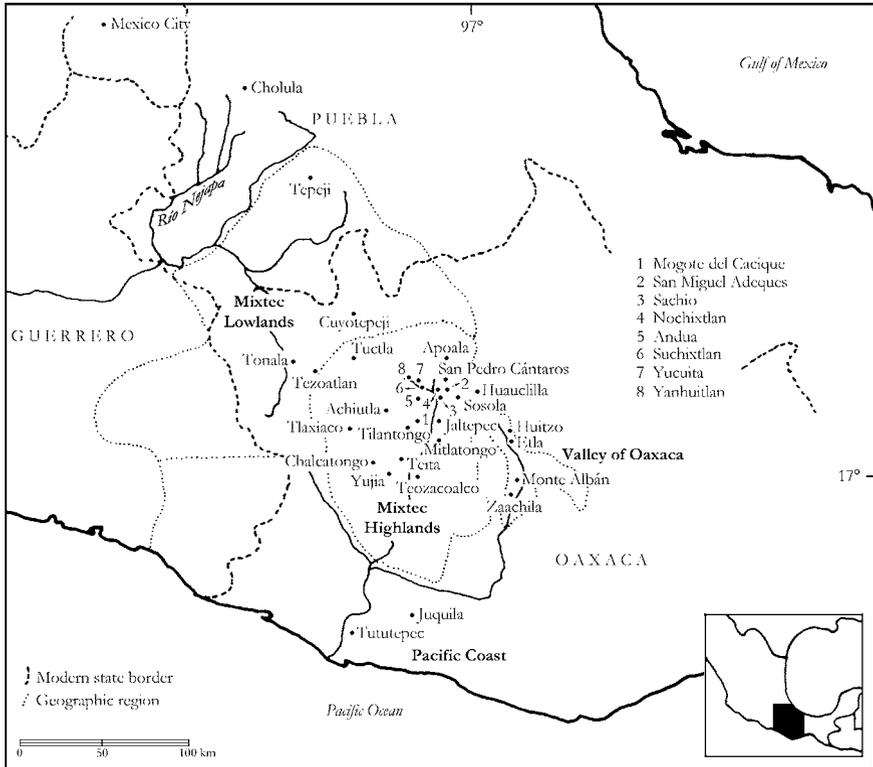


ILLUSTRATION 3.14 *Map of the Mixtec region*

as we see in Codex Mendoza). All this indicates that the site suffered destruction after being conquered. The stone man himself wears a *maxtlatl* (loincloth); earrings and bracelets indicate his high status.

Other toponymic signs follow, all pierced by arrows and sometimes showing flames rising from them: clearly conquests made by the same stone man.

The arrow of conquest pierces the Town of the Precious Turtle (with jade beads on its feet and in its mouth). Flames and smoke: conquest and destruction.

Day 6 or 7 Water.<sup>21</sup> The arrow of conquest pierces the Town of the Staircase, residence of a noble lord dedicated to Xipe (whose attribute, the fabric cut in a

21 The variant of the Water sign here occurs several times on the carved bones of Tomb 7, but is uncommon in other pictorial sources. Six numerical dots or circles are clearly

swallowtail, is hanging from his chest). Town of the Staircase can represent the Mixtec name of Cholula (*Ñuu Ndiyo*), but in this context we cannot be sure of such a reference to that distant place (though famous in and important to the Ñuu Dzau region). People of 'normal' Mixtec appearance are seated on top of the place sign: apparently this town was in possession of a Postclassic dynasty. The lord's attire as Xipe might refer to a place under the control of the Zapotec dynasty of Zaachila, but we cannot be sure of this.

Day 7 Movement. The arrow of conquest pierces Flint Town, again the residence of a noble lord dedicated to Xipe. The day coincides with the name of a Lord 7 Movement associated with the group of the lords of Apoala who played an important role in the war against the stone men according to Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3 where he sacrifices a stone man prisoner in Mountain of Jade with Bush of Feathers (Yucu Yusi = Acatlan).<sup>22</sup>

In the Ñuu Dzau codices we find a sign 'Flint Town', which has been identified as Ñuu Yuchi, 'Town of Flint (Knives)': at present it is known as 'Mogote del Cacique', an archaeological site near Tilantongo, which plays an important role in Ñuu Dzau dynastic history. We cannot be sure that the same place is referred to here.<sup>23</sup> If the reference to Xipe would mean that this place too was under control of the Zapotec dynasty of Zaachila, we probably should look for it elsewhere. The sign of flint establishes a connection with the next place name.

Day 2 (?) Rain. The arrow of conquest pierces Town of Cut Mountain (which appears in the Ñuu Dzau codices as the place sign of Ñuu Ñaña, Tamazola).<sup>24</sup>

Day 9 (?) Flower. The arrow of conquest pierces Ballcourt with Jewels, which because of the parallel with Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3, could be Guaxotitlan (in Dzaha Dzau: Yuhua Cuchi, 'Ballcourt of Gravel').<sup>25</sup>

The arrow of conquest pierces the River of the Seated (Stone) Man – possibly a representation of the town of Chila.<sup>26</sup> The associated day follows this event: 10 Alligator. The ten dots seem to combine with the Alligator sign. There is also

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distinguishable, while another somewhat bigger dot under the claw of the turtle may represent an extra unit but also could be an object held by the animal.

22 Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 4, shows the same association.

23 See Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 293–294) for the arguments to identify Flint Town as Ñuu Yuchi, Mogote del Cacique.

24 See the identification of Tamazola by Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 297).

25 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 334).

26 A similar sign of Chila occurs in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 43. For the identification see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 339).

a House sign, but this seems to be part of a town or place name as the calendar sign House is usually smaller (cf. Bone 174a). If so, the house or rather the temple referred to, designates a site that apparently was not affected by the conquest (it is not pierced by an arrow).

The scene closes with the year 7 Reed. It is the only year in the scene, which would imply that all the days mentioned signal events in this year. The year 7 Reed is associated with several locations in the Mixteca Baja in Codex Yuta Tnoho (*Vindobonensis*), pp. 44–43; it is four years after the year 3 Reed, which dates the beginning of the war against the stone men in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3.

Apparently Bone 203b evokes the memory of the primordial conflict that affected the ancestors born from the tree of origin at Apoala. The scenes are identified by the days of the events. The style of the presentation is that of a narrative, similar to that of the Ñuu Dzaui historical codices. We are looking at a piece of history or rather of an epic, probably ceremonially remembered through declamation or dramatic presentations.

The story told by Bone 203b seems to have its direct continuation in Bone 174a (Caso 1969: 202; Fig. 206), which was found in region IV near Bone Assemblage N.

At both ends of Bone 174a is the Alligator sign, which in this case we may read as a reference to primordial time (situating the narrative ‘in the early days’). The order of reading is from right to left. The scene begins with the sign 5 Flower. Above it is the sign of a big star, to be read as ‘(Place of) Heaven’. From here a rope is hanging down, which has a parallel in Codex Yuta Tnoho (*Vindobonensis*), p. 48, where Lord 9 Wind descends on a similar cord from the Place of Heaven (identified as Cavua Caa Andevui, a sacred mountain immediately east of Apoala).<sup>27</sup>

The rope on Bone 174a combines with a stone motif, suggesting that we are still in ‘the time of the stone men’. The protagonist of the action is Lady 9 Reed. Her hair is entwined with serpents, exactly as she appears in the codices Yuta Tnoho (*Vindobonensis*) and Tonindeye (Nuttall). In her left hand she brandishes a stone club, with a head on its end, i.e. charged with spiritual force. In her right hand she holds a shield with arrows and banner – the typical attributes of a warrior. Her floating position may indicate she is coming down from the Place of Heaven in a magical flight.

27 Other parallels exist in the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 18 and 19, where the protagonist is the priest Lord 12 Wind. See Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2005: 71 ff.).



ILLUSTRATION 3.15A

*Bone 174a (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.15B

*Bone 174a (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

The date is year 10 House day 9 Wind, which corresponds to the birthday of Lord 9 Wind in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49. Down balls above the year sign qualify it as sacred.

Then the towns in which the stone men reside are burnt (smoke rises); the stone men themselves are to be killed in sacrifice (as indicated by the down ball on top of their head).

Another stone man lies dead (with closed eyes) in the cornfield: killed in sacrifice.

Above him a rope with down balls is an index of captives being taken in war and executed (sacrificed).

Heads of stone men are cut (?) in the year 13 Rabbit, on day 13 Vulture.

The mountains and houses of the stone men are conquered and burned.

Day 1 Dog or Jaguar. The arrow of conquest pierces the Town and Plain of Flames. The place sign 'Town of Flames' could be a reference to Ñuu Ndecu (Achiutla). There were the old (or ancient) stone men – note the single tooth in the mouth indicating old age.

Scrolls of smoke rise from the site, indicating its destruction during the conquest.

We may read the two bones (203b and 174a) together as parallel to the narrative of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3. First, on Bone 203b, the stone man performs a series of conquests (at the expense of the lords of Apoala): among the conquered places may be several towns in the Mixteca Baja.

Then, on Bone 174a, we see the retaliation: Lady 9 Reed comes down from heaven (the religious site associated with Apoala) with magical powers to attack and destroy the stone men. This Lady 9 Reed is the same as the person born from the tree of origin (in Apoala) on Bone 203i. She is a Ñuu Dzauí version of the goddess of arrowheads and knives, called Itzpapalotl or Itzcueye by the Mexica. She had her shrine in the gorge known as El Boquerón in Tonalá, a very impressive natural site, which is still considered to be enchanted today. The epic fragment on this bone, then, serves to evoke the heroic feats of Lady 9 Reed, probably in connection with her coming from the tree of origin, represented on Bone 203i.

## 5 First Sunrise and the Cycle of Time

Bone 302 (Caso 1969: 200; Fig. 201) is a perforator for self-sacrifice, which was found in the northern part of region 11. On both sides we see two intertwined

Plumed Serpents rising from earth (the opened jaws of an alligator). Their bodies are decorated with small discs: symbols of royalty.<sup>28</sup>

In their movement they encircle a large disc, within which we see a seated man with a feathered headdress. He must be the sun god. The encircling serpents have their parallel, as Caso already noted, in the famous Sun Stone (also known as the Calendar Stone), where two fire serpents enclose the solar disc (see Chapter 6). Other parallels are found in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2 where serpents of cloud and darkness (i.e. mysterious powers) surround the tree of origin. In the *lienzos* from the Coixtlahuaca Valley similar serpents guard the mountain where the New Fire ceremony takes place as part of the foundation of the kingdom (see Chapter 5). In all these cases, these serpents seem to symbolize a mysterious protective force, which places the scene in the divine realm (the realm of the *nahuales*).

When the perforator is used, the blood flow follows the undulating bodies of the Plumed Serpents until it gets to nourish Lord Sun.

The disc with the seated sun god has its parallel in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 23, where it represents the first sunrise, as part of the main narrative of the founding of the Mixtec dynasties. We note how in this image of the codex the sun rises on a red band of light, which in turn connotes a stream of blood.

Among the precious objects that abound in Tomb 7 there are a very thin solar gold disc (number 249) and two solar discs of gold and silver (numbers 194 and 205), as well as a pendant with a magnificent representation of the moon with its rays of light, from which hang snake heads holding small bells (number 140). Somehow they may represent or connote the same celestial theme.

We see a narrative link between the origin of the Ñuu Dzaui lords and ladies from Mother Ceiba (Bones 203i and 200), their primordial war against the stone men (Bones 203b and 174a) and the first sunrise (Bone 302). The fact that in several cases such narrative scenes are expressed on a perforator (Bones 200 and 302) suggests that memory was kept alive through bloodletting while recalling and invoking the ancestors.

Bone 203L (Caso 1969: 195–196; Fig. 193), next to Bone Assemblage A, seems to refer to the theme of the First Sunrise as well. It contains eyes representing

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28 As we saw above, the same motif of discs (which are characteristic of the royal palace, *aniñe* in Mixtec, *tecpan* in Nahuatl) is inscribed on the tree of origin in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 37.

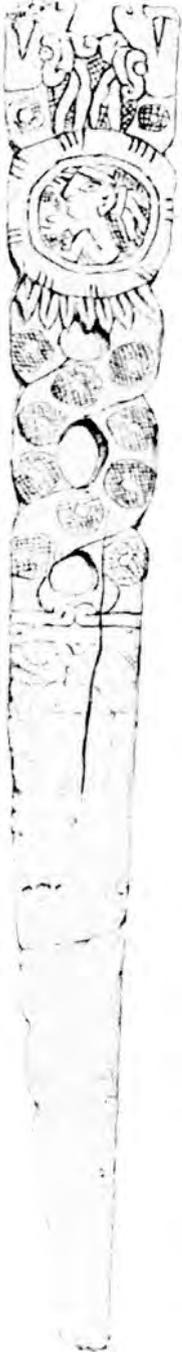


ILLUSTRATION 3.16

*Bone 302 (Caso 1969): perforator with rising sun. (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

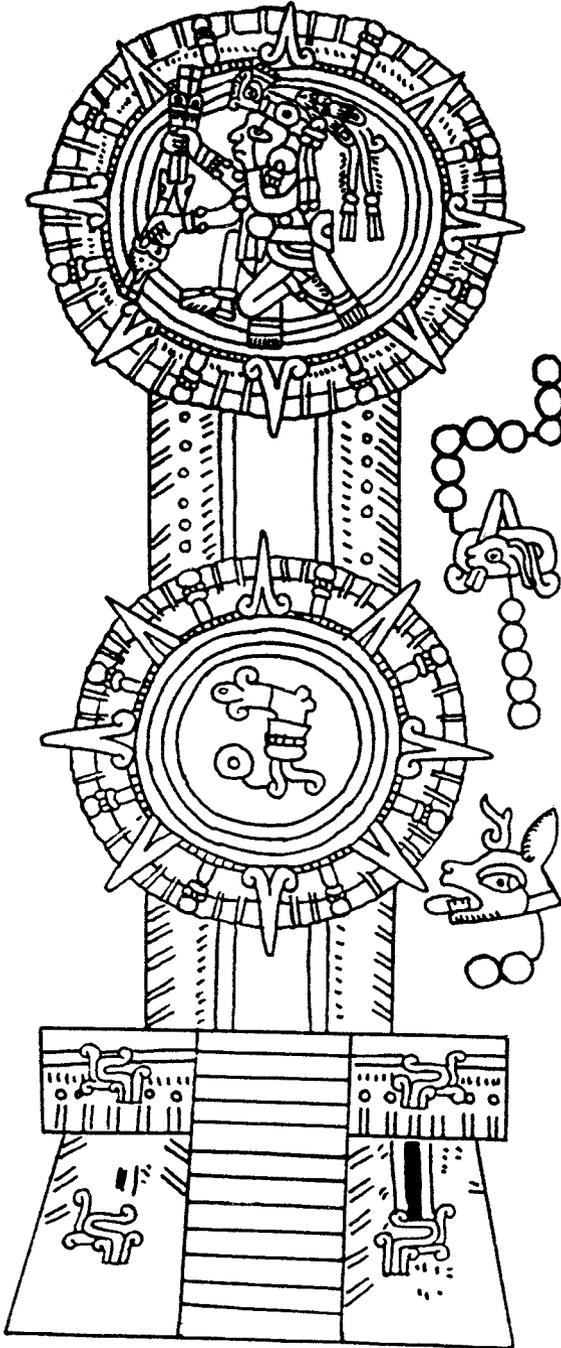


ILLUSTRATION 3.17  
*Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobon-*  
*ensis), p. 23: first sunrise.*

stars in the dark sky (with heads that characterise them as living, divine beings). A parallel is the sky band in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 52, which frames the opening statement of Ñuu Dzau primordial history.

On the eastern side of the antechamber of Tomb 7, more or less on an axis with Bone Assemblage A, but at the other end, a bone perforator (Bone 185) was deposited, which contains two scenes dominated by a large star and separated by a band of star eyes (the night sky). The star is combined with an interlaced band that most likely represents ritual fasting and perhaps also refers to the goddess Cihuacoatl. In the Temple of Cihuacoatl in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29–30, we see how the body of this goddess consists of interlaced leaves, probably *piciete* (hallucinogenic tobacco).<sup>29</sup> Taking into account this parallel, together these bones seem to speak of ritual fasting and bloodletting at night (possibly directed to the Milky Way). Simultaneously the star eye may indicate ritual vigil. Bone 185 terminates in the head of a dog, possibly as a reference to the animal that carries the deceased across the river to the realm of the dead and which therefore is an apt symbol to refer to the communication with the beyond.

In the set of bones associated with Bone Assemblage A there is one that contains the interlaced motif with eyes (Bone 203j): this is probably a representation of fasting and vigil combined. The same motif is repeated in a gold bracelet (number 32) found in the southern part of the threshold area.

Associated with Bone Assemblage A, Bone 203g is a perforator. The scene carved on the upper part shows the figure of a jaguar on top of the open jaws of the earth. Probably in this context it represents the bone of the jaguar itself, which, as a perforator, is the instrument for drawing one's blood as an offering to the earth. The theme of the First Sunrise and the sky is logically connected with the creation of the days and the calendar.

Bone 37a contains the list of the first thirteen years of the 52-year cycle (*xiuhmolpilli* in Nahuatl) of the Mesoamerican calendar, the year 1 Reed until the year 13 Reed. The tip of the bone ends in the image of a singing quetzal bird.

Bone 203 k (Caso 1969: 194–196; Fig. 192) is to be read from left to right, and contains a series of days from [Alligator] (damaged sign) to Grass. It is not a complete 13-day period, but a list of the first twelve signs. Sometimes there are numbers within the quadrants of these signs: 2 Wind, ..., 4 Lizard, 5 Serpent, 6 Death... This numbering suggests that the scene is derived from a prototype

29 Edition of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) with commentary: Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993); see also Jansen (2002). In Chapter 7 we discuss this matter in more detail.

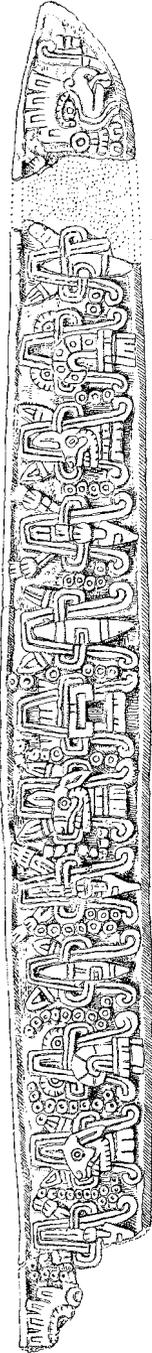


ILLUSTRATION 3.18

*Bone 37a (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.19

*Bone 203k (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

in which all signs had a number, from 1 Alligator to 12 Grass, or rather – to be complete – 13 Reed. The signs are separated by bands with circles or dots (in different amounts), which mean ‘Palace’ (*tecpan* in Nahuatl; *aniñe* in Dzaha Dzau).

We find a parallel scene on Bone 172i (Caso 1969: 204–207; Fig. 213), which was deposited in the southeastern corner of the chamber, near the threshold. It contains the first 13-day period of the 260-day count or *tonalpoalli*. From right to left: 1 Alligator to 13 Reed.<sup>30</sup> In many cases the signs are represented as full figures – just as they appear in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) and Tlamanalli (Cospi). The band of figures is flanked by heads of singing quetzal birds (with a collar of bells to our right, and with another ornament to our left).

Listing the first thirteen days of the *tonalpoalli* and the first thirteen years of the calendar round may connote the creation of the calendar, as in the narrative of Cipactonal and Oxomoco (see the Introduction). The combination of these time indicators with the motif of singing quetzal birds or a palace seems to imply a desire for beautiful times to come and good fortune for the kingdom.

We see in Tomb 7 an intimate relationship or connection of the First Sunrise, the stars and the days of the calendar with motifs of self-sacrifice (perforator), fasting (interlaced tobacco) and vigil (eyes). This can be interpreted as an expression of Mesoamerican piety: for the days of life and creation to have a good outcome, the ritual obligations must be carried out in a careful and proper manner.



ILLUSTRATION 3.20 *Bone 172i* (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)

30 Compare the similar set of the first 13 days of the *tonalpoalli* on a stone monument in Amecameca, for which López Luján (2009) suggests that it commemorates the year 10 Rabbit, after which Moctezuma II ascended to the throne (on the day 1 Alligator).



ILLUSTRATION 3.21

*Bone 174b (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia): pulque ritual.*

## 6 The Pulque Ritual

Bone 174b (Caso 1969: 202–204; Fig. 210) shows the heads of alligators at its extremes (one of which has been damaged and has almost disappeared): therefore, it seems to refer to a theme of the early days, the primordial time. It was found in region IV, near Bone Assemblage N, next to Bone 174a, which shows the victories of Lady 9 Reed in the war against the stone men. The scene carved on Bone 174b is composed vertically. In the lowest part is a bird that looks like a guacamaya (ara) or macaw: it carries a bag (?) on its back, from which scrolls are rising, decorated with a down ball feather, thus probably denoting a sacred chant. The bird has a ring around its eye, similar to the attribute of the rain god. This macaw with scrolls seems to be equivalent to the singing quetzal (on Bone 203i and several others).

Reading Bone 174b (from bottom to top) we then encounter a woman who is characterised by maize cobs on her head. Possibly she is the Postclassic manifestation of the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) corn goddess: a very similar character is represented in Classic urns or effigy vessels (Sellen 2007: 223 ff.). There is a direct parallel to this scene on perforators found in the two tombs at Zaachila (Gallegos 1978: 86, 109). On one of these, found in Tomb 2 of Zaachila, we again see the corncob lady with a bowl of *pulque* in her hand, along with another woman.

The ‘Mixtec version’ of this female corn deity is the lady who has ears of corn (*yoco*) growing out of her head. She appears in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49, as ‘elder sister’ of the Toina twin: together they represent fertility, abundance and wealth. She was born from the earth and is associated with the heart of the earth, the centre of the world, in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 12.

Lady Corncob on Bone 174b has her eyes open: she is alive. From her body a scroll comes down. In combination with the sign of the bird that carries songs, this suggests that she is protagonist of speeches, prayers or chants. In her left hand she holds a bowl (*jícara*) of *pulque*; the other hand is raised upwards, as a sign of greeting and offering support (*ndaha*).

She is accompanied by a woman (dressed in *huipil* and *quechquemitl*) and a man (with a decorated *maxtlatl*, loincloth), who have their eyes closed: both seem to be dead.<sup>31</sup> Each has sandals, ear ornaments and a string of jade beads around the head, combined with an emblematic figure in front (in the case of

31 In the corresponding *pulque* scene on a bone perforator from Zaachila (now in the National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City) the couple and the vulture-woman above the guacamaya, however, all have open eyes: ancestors, though deceased, may be represented as alive.

the man the stylised head of a butterfly). Everything indicates that this couple belongs to the nobility, possibly even royalty. Both raise the right hand as in an act of greeting and offering support. The woman also carries a bowl of *pulque*, like the corn cob lady. The man carries in his left hand a kind of baton or stick. Taking into account the representation of the *pulque* drinking ceremony, this might also be a piece of the maguey plant, which appears combined with the *pulque* bowl in the ritual act of drinking. The couple seems to be a parallel image (almost a couplet): the man and woman drink *pulque* together, touching it with a piece of maguey.

It is interesting to note that in primordial history, the Ñuu Dzauí founding fathers and mothers drink *pulque* together with the gods in a ritual that precedes the First Sunrise: Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 25.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, drinking *pulque* is part of funeral ceremonies: Codex Tonindeye

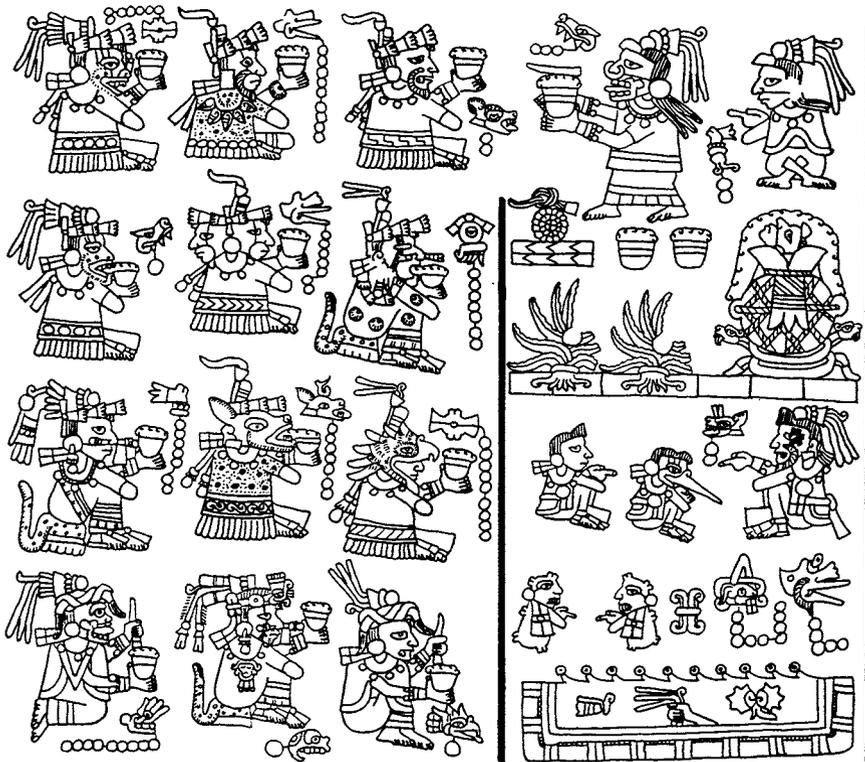


ILLUSTRATION 3.22 Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 25: pulque ritual.

32 The *pulque* ritual in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 25, was initiated by a woman with fleshless lower jaw (Lady 3 Alligator), while Lady 9 Grass was a participant in the drinking ceremony.

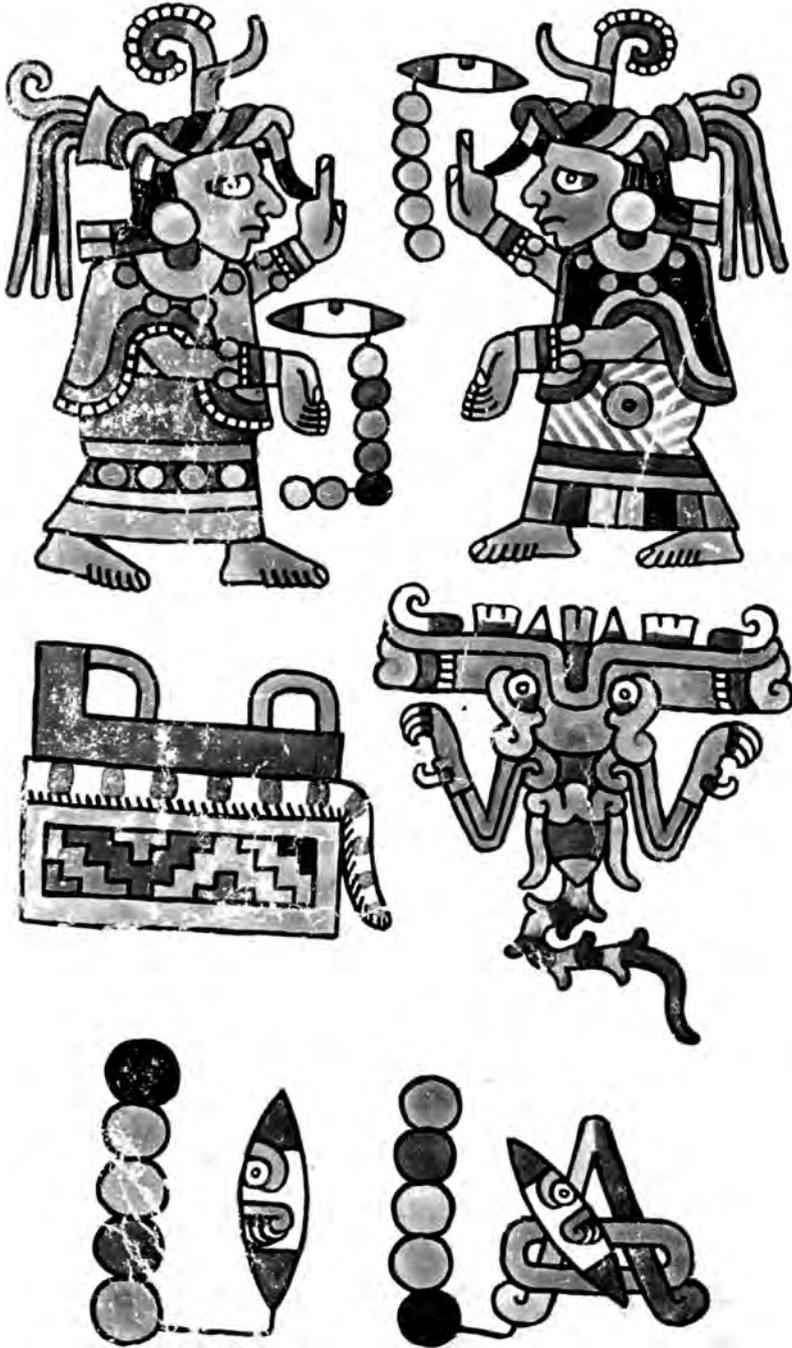


ILLUSTRATION 3.23 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)*, p. 12: *Lady Corncob*.

(Nuttall), pp. 81–82. Somehow Bone 174b connotes such events. At the same time the bone can express a desire for the deceased to be well in the hereafter – where the birds of the sun are singing and where the rain god dwells. In the context of our general interpretation of Tomb 7 as a place of worship of the sacred bundles and ancestors, it seems likely that this scene includes a respectful invitation to the ancestors and Lady Corncob (the maize goddess) to celebrate together with the living. We connect this theme with the presence of the tripod *tecalli* vessel for chocolate in the very centre of the chamber of the Tomb 7. The festive character of what was celebrated in Tomb 7 is documented by the ‘flower and song’ motif on Bone 169, which was found in the same area as Bone 174b (Region IV).

In summary: by means of the macaw’s songs, Lady Corncob and the couple of ancestors are invited to come and participate in the immemorial *pulque* drinking rite and so, in turn, support those who invoke them. The presence of Lady Corncob reminds us of the abundance of seeds and agricultural products in the boxes and bundles of the Zapotec case cited above: ‘within one of them something like a small basket was found, which contained two corncobs, tied with a ribbon of the same paper...’.<sup>33</sup> The communication with the deceased ancestors is combined with rites to ensure the fertility of the land. The powers of life-death-life are intimately related and become articulated in this religious shrine within the earth itself.

## 7 The Realm of the Dead

Bone 325 is a fragment that shows a band of jade from which sunrays emanate: clearly a reference to the sky during the day. Between the rays there are several figures coming out of flowers suspended in the band of jade. The reading starts (from the right) with a human head (characterised by the nose ornament of royalty and a helmet of a quetzal or eagle): it has the face paint of the sun god and raises his hand as if he were worshipping or throwing out ground *piciete* in a ritual act. Next is the head of the rain god, from whose mouth clouds are rising. It reminds us of the expression ‘lord rain speaks’ to indicate an approaching thunder storm. Then the head of Lord Sun is repeated, followed by the head of a dog (Toina) and that of a jaguar. Unfortunately here the fragment ends. The theme seems to be the invocation of noble and brave/strong ancestors (jaguar), who now dwell with the gods in the hereafter: in the House of

33 Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b: 371–372); cf. Sellen (2007: 234).

the Sun (*Tonatiuh Ichan* in Nahuatl) or the House of Rain (*Tlalocan*). Both the jaguar and Toina show their tongue: they are invoked to speak.

A similar theme is seen on Bone 42: a band of jade, with flowers from which hang the heads of animals – butterfly, quetzal, jaguar (with a human hand holding a flower), serpent and again quetzal. Here the sky also contains a band of discs (the palace or *tecpan* motif) and a band of signs in the form of an S. The latter form, known in Nahuatl as *xonecuilli*, appears as an attribute of Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’, the divine guardian of the temple of death and the ancestors in the Ñuu Dzauí codices. The combination of *tecpan* and *xonecuilli* can be read as ‘realm of the deceased (ancestors)’.

With this *tecpan* of *xonecuillis* the sky is qualified both as house of the sun (*Tonatiuh Ichan* in Nahuatl) and as a residence of deceased ancestors. The same theme is seen on a shell bracelet (Number 156). Alternating bands of discs and *xonecuillis* are used to subdivide the number of figures on Bone 203d, while in the scene on Bone 203c this function is performed by alternating bands of discs and spine bones, suggesting that the *xonecuilli* and the spine are equivalent characterisations of the *tecpan* as place of death and the ancestors.

The spine reads *yeque yata* in Mixtec: ‘bone (*yeque*) of the back (*yata*)’, which can also be understood as ‘bone (*yeque*) of the past (*yata*)’. Together with the *tecpan* sign, then, the whole configuration reads *Aniñe Yeque Yata*, ‘palace of the ancient bones’. In Codex Añute (Selden), pp. 6–111, Lady 6 Monkey travels to the temple of death (the *Huahi Cahi*, located in Ñuu Ndaya, ancient Chalcatongo), where Lady 9 Grass resides, the guardian of the deceased ancestors – the *xonecuilli* is her attribute. Before entering an underground path, Lady 6 Monkey asked permission from a *genius loci* or spirit of the place, a *Ñuhu* (divine being) called *Yeque Yata*, ‘bone of the past’. In this case the term is written by combining a bone (*yeque*) with a digging stick or *coa* (Mixtec: *yata*). Now we can understand this character as a spirit (*Ñuhu*) of the realm of the ancient bones (*Yeque Yata*).<sup>34</sup>

We have already seen how on Bone 203i the speaking Toina and the singing quetzal are flanking the tree of origin. The same combination appears on Bone 203c (Caso 1969: 185–186; Fig. 173), where Toina and quetzal alternate, separated by bands with the motif of circles symbolising the palace and, alternating with this, the motif of the spine, sign of death. Both motifs together can be read as a reference to the realm of the deceased ancestors.

Bone 37b contains images of singing birds (a quetzal and a bird with an axe-shaped beak) and of a jaguar holding a heart in its claw, separated by bands of discs (‘palace’), *xonecuillis* and spine bones (*yeque yata*). The bird with an

34 Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007b: 200 ff.



ILLUSTRATION 3.24

*Bone 42 (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.25

*Bone 203c (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.26 *Bone 37b* (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX.: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)

axe-shaped beak has not been identified with certainty. The shape of the beak resembles that of a *quechol* bird,<sup>35</sup> but in a scene on another bone (Bone 71) this bird with down balls seems to be a kind of eagle, since it is combined with a jaguar in the couplet for ‘courage’.

Bone 71 mentions ‘jaguar, eagle, snake, quetzal’, associated with speech scrolls and separated by bands with the motive of a mat. The phrase is clearly structured as a couplet. Within our paradigm we interpret these signs as invocations of a brave person (jaguar, eagle), identified with the Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl). The mat is a reference to a realm (‘mat and throne’), either an indication of his/her status as ruler or an abbreviated reference to the realm of the dead (leaving out the *xonecuilli* or spine as determining element), where the ancestor is now dwelling. The phrase is flanked by the heads of a serpent and a dog at the ends of the bone; possibly the serpent is the Plumed Serpent and the dog is Toina: the two deities who are often mentioned in this context as protectors of the ancestors.

Bone 94 was found more or less in the centre of the antechamber (in line with golden ornament Number 26 and Bone Assemblage A). It is framed by heads of the Plumed Serpent. The central band lists the heads of: (1) jaguar or puma, (2) quetzal, (3) Toina, (4) a noble woman (with long hair) wearing the ornament of two tied feathers (*cuauhpileoni*) in her hair, (5) eagle and (6) jaguar. The quadrants in which these heads are situated are separated by bands that resemble two reeds: in the case of the first four signs there is empty space between the reeds, in the case of the other three we see there the ‘palace’ motifs of a set of circles or discs. Again, we interpret this phrase as an invocation of an ancestor – in this case a woman – as a noble and brave or strong person, dwelling in a palace, either because of her royal status or because she is now in the house of the sun or in the realm of death.

35 Compare the representation of this bird in Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 13, where it accompanies the rain god.



ILLUSTRATION 3.27 *Bone 94 (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.28 *Bone 94: central image (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

Bone 50 (Caso 1969: 210–211; Fig. 221) was found in the antechamber of Tomb 7 near the north wall, next to necklaces and ear ornaments. The reading goes from right to left. We see different types of dogs walking between flying fish of different kinds. The shells around them confirm that this is an aquatic environment. Possibly the dogs are crossing the water, a scene that recalls the Mesoamerican idea that dogs help the souls of their deceased masters to cross the river that is the frontier of the other world. On the bone both the dogs and the fish are singing. This may suggest that the bone expresses a prayer for comforting the dead on their journey to the hereafter.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand it is possible that the invocation calls upon the dogs of the river we have to cross one day, in order to establish contact with the other world and the deceased ancestors. At the ends of the bone are the heads of a serpent and a quetzal, singing: in combination they represent the Plumed Serpent, Quetzalcoatl, the whirlwind, the emblematic god of priests and visionary experiences.

36 A very similar bone was found in Tomb 2 of Zaachila (Gallegos 1978: 109; Fig. 70), showing quadrupeds that may be dogs, but rather look like jaguars, which carry three types of shells: *spondylus*, conch and a cut conch. In their midst is a human being, walking like an animal, with the same claws, not carrying anything. Possibly this is a representation of the soul's journey to the other world.



ILLUSTRATION 3.29

*Bone 50 (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

## 8 Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'

The fact that the bones with references to the tree of origin (Bones 215, 203i and 200) and to the war of the lords and ladies of Apoala against the stone men (Bone 203b) were placed close to Bone Assemblage A establishes a special relationship between those relics and the narrative of the foundation of the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) kingdoms. This leads us to conclude that Bone Assemblage A was a sacred bundle that was relevant and belonged to a Ñuu Dzau lineage. The presence of artifacts typically associated with female activities, such as the spindle whorls found in Tomb 7, suggest that we are dealing with the spiritual presence and agency of an important woman (cf. McCafferty and McCafferty 2003).

It is logical to suppose that during the Postclassic period the site of Monte Albán – mostly abandoned at that time – was part of the territory of Zaachila, the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) capital of the valley of Oaxaca. There is indeed a close connection between Tomb 7 at Monte Albán and Tombs 1 and 2 at Zaachila. In fact, the carved bones of Tomb 7 have direct parallels in carved bones found in Tombs 1 and 2 at Zaachila: there are strong similarities in style, themes and iconographic conventions. This allows us to establish that the deposit of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán is contemporaneous with the contents of Tombs 1 and 2 at Zaachila. We noted that the tombs at Zaachila contain extended skeletons of persons buried there. The representation of Lord 5 Flower on a stucco relief on the wall of Tomb Zaachila 1 suggests that this tomb actually contains his remains.

We recall that the early colonial *Relación Geográfica de Teozapotlan* (1580) documents that this Lord 5 Flower married a Mixtec princess around the year 1280 (Chapter 1). That information fits the contextual dating of his marriage with Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' from Teozacualco, which is presented in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 33. We may conclude that he died and was buried at some moment during the first decades of the fourteenth century (somewhere between about 1300 and 1340 AD).

This iconographic and historical argument suggests that much if not all of the funerary deposit in Tomb 7 of Monte Albán dates from that same period: the early fourteenth century.

The preciousness of artifacts deposited in Tomb 7 establishes a clear relationship with the royal family of the territory in which it was situated, namely the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) city-state of Zaachila. On the other hand, there are numerous references to the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) world.

If we look for a person in that period with the status and influence to bring about the deposit of the enormous treasure of Tomb 7, but who would belong



ILLUSTRATION 3.30 *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 33: Lord 5 Flower and Lady 4 Rabbit.

to a Mixtec lineage, while at the same time having connections with the Zaachila dynasty, we immediately find a unique and excellent candidate: the wife of Lord 5 Flower, Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' from Teozacualco, the Mixtec neighbour of Zaachila. Hence our hypothesis is that the main sacred bundle of Tomb 7, i.e. Bone Assemblage A, was directly related to this Ñuu Dzauí queen of Zaachila, either as a devotional item (an ancestor of special relevance to her) or even as a direct representation (*ixiptla*) of herself.

The carved bones found next to Bone Assemblage A at the western end of Tomb 7 contain clear references to Ñuu Dzauí dynastic history. Bone 203i describes the origin of the founders of a large ceiba or pochote tree, specifically highlighting the figure of Lady 9 Reed. This same divine personage appears on Bone 174a as a primordial warrior, dealing devastating blows to the stone men. This unusual scene suggests she is invoked as a demonstration and as an example of female agency. It is interesting to note that the calendar name of Lady 4 Rabbit is only five days earlier than the day 9 Reed. Perhaps this would make Lady 9 Reed a divine figure of special devotion for Lady 4 Rabbit. On the other hand, the day on which the goddess came down from heaven is 5 Flower, which is identical to the name of the king of Zaachila: Lord 5 Flower, husband of Lady 4 Rabbit.

There are several more possible references to Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' in Tomb 7. Bone 203d, which accompanies Bone Assemblage A (Caso 1969: 186–187; Fig. 174), contains a scene consisting of six quadrants, flanked by heads of alligators (a reference to the ancient time). In the context that we are constructing here, it is possible to read this text as a continuous invocation: 'from day Alligator (the first day of the calendar) to day Alligator'. Again the quadrants are occupied by singing or speaking heads, separated by alternating bands of the 'palace' motif and *xonecuillis*. Successively the heads are those of:

- (1) a vulture person ('grandparent'),
- (2) Toina,
- (3) a noble woman, richly dressed,
- (4) a quetzal,
- (5) again Toina,
- (6) a noble woman with the nose ornament of the water goddess (*Chalchiuhtlicue* in Nahuatl) and a quetzal helmet.

The text seems to consist of two parallel (nearly identical) phrases, addressed to a woman, qualified as 'grandmother' (vulture person): she is protected by Toina (the god of wealth), Lady, Quetzal. Then again: protected by Toina, Lady, Quetzal. The frames with 'palace' and *xonecuilli* motifs clarify that the invoked person is now dwelling in the realm of the dead. The statement is repetitive and stresses the invocation of one person, who is twice mentioned as 'Lady' and 'Quetzal'. This can be a general reference to a noble lady, but also a title and given name: Lady 'Quetzal'. Both times Toina is mentioned as her protector or called upon to give good fortune.

Given that Bone 203d is located next to Bone Assemblage A, we suspect that the invoked Lady 'Quetzal' is no one less than Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' of the Teozacualco dynasty, the queen of Zaachila. In passing we notice that in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 33, she has the same nose ornament. This in itself is not an argument for identification as such ornaments occur often and with different persons, but it is an interesting detail.

Bone 203f (Caso 1969: Fig. 180) contains four pairs of heads: those of an alligator and of a bird with down balls on its head and an axe-shaped beak. The signs are framed in quadrants separated by bands with three circles or discs: the 'palace' motif. A precise determination of the bird with axe-shaped beak is lacking. Caso says it is a vulture, but as it appears with a jaguar in the couplet for 'courage' (Bone 71) it is more likely that a species of eagle is referred to. The combination of such a bird with an alligator is curious. It is interesting and suggestive that the son of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' and Lord 5 Flower was

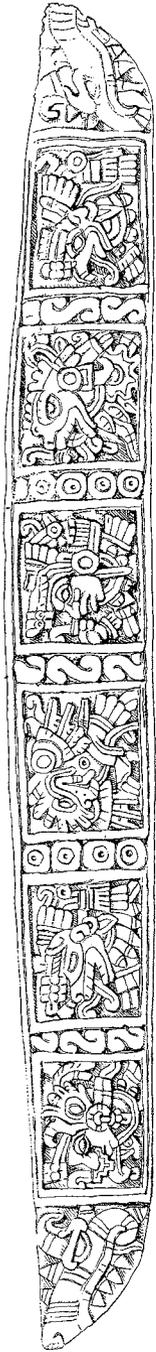


ILLUSTRATION 3.31

*Bone 203d (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*



ILLUSTRATION 3.32 *Bone 203e (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

called Lord 3 Alligator 'Bird with Knives and Down Balls', according to Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 34. He was the son who would inherit the kingdom of Zaachila. Possibly, therefore, the combination of the alligator and the bird with the down balls refers to that prince.

We noticed that the 'palace' motif that separates the scenes is formed by units of three circles or discs – generally in this motif the number of discs is not important, but in combination with the other signs it gives the impression that here this number was chosen to represent at the same time the numeral of the calendar name: 3 Alligator.

This carved bone would then contain the calendar name and the given name of a specific person, the son of the royal couple of Zaachila. The fourfold repetition of this name might indicate his total dedication to the sanctuary of his mother Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'. In that case the 'palace' motif would not be a reference to the realm of the dead, but rather to the palace (and royal character) of the prince himself.

We see something similar on a comb carved out of bone (Bone 203 h), which accompanies Bone Assemblage A. The scene contains a man standing under a band with circles or discs, i.e. inside a palace. The feather ornament in his hair, his jade ear ornament and his decorated loincloth suggest that he belongs to the nobility. In his right hand he holds a stick, staff or perhaps a bone perforator, decorated with ribbons, while raising his left hand on the other side of his body. In front of his forehead is the head of a quetzal bird. Possibly he is a person in the palace who participates in a ritual or a dance. The quetzal bird can be referring to the person as a symbol of nobility, or it can be part of the staff. In the latter case, taking into account the proximity of this artefact to Bone Assemblage A, we may also speculate that it refers to a ritual act (possibly dancing and bloodletting) celebrating or commemorating Lady 'Quetzal', i.e. Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', the Ñuu Dzaui queen of Zaachila.<sup>37</sup>

Bone 203e, which also accompanies Bone Assemblage A, shows a complicated pattern: a band of 'flower and song' meanders around the carved scene.

37 Codex Añute (Selden), pp. 7–111, shows a staff that carries the given name of the founding mother of the dynasty.



ILLUSTRATION 3.33

*Bone 203h (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

The flowers are combined with successively the head of a quetzal, the head of a serpent, the head of a jaguar and a human head. Probably this phrase invoked a human ancestor with the qualities of the Plumed Serpent and the courage of the jaguar. The band generates five spaces. Looking at the direction of the gaze of the figures in these spaces, we distinguish a group of two and a group of three spaces.

The group of three spaces contains two Toina images at both ends and in the centre an image of Quetzalcoatl. The group of two spaces contains human figures: (1) the head of a woman, with a headband decorated with jewels (a queen), and (2) another head identified by a helmet showing a serpent with feathers (the Plumed Serpent motif). The Toina figure on the far right does not have hands but does have speech scrolls issuing from the mouth. The other four figures extend their hands, presenting an offering. Usually this offering consists of a bundle of firewood (to be ritually burnt), but the Toina on the far left and the richly dressed woman offer a disc that looks like a flower.

The text seems to emphasize the pious and glorious dwelling in the hereafter, amidst flowers and singing, along with Quetzalcoatl and the Toina twins.

The queen or noblewoman is probably the same one who appears on Bone 203e, found together with this Bone 203d: Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'.<sup>38</sup> The second character with the head of the Plumed Serpent may be another reference to the same queen, or represent someone invoked along with her, for example the Lord 'Plumed Serpent' in the golden ornament Number 26.

Given the iconographical-historical argument that we have put forward, the references to a Lady 'Quetzal' on the carved bones lend additional support to our hypothesis that Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' was the main person whose spirit was present in Tomb 7, particularly in Region I. It is likely that one of the sacred bundles was a direct representation (*ixiptla*) of this Mixtec queen of Zaachila, the wife of Lord 5 Flower, and contained some of her relics. The sacred bundle that corresponds to Bone Assemblage A most probably was the devotional focal point for the rituals in Tomb 7. It is possible, or even likely, that this bundle contained relics (skeletal remains) of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', but for the time being we cannot tell. For one thing we lack precise physical anthropological determinations; on the other hand one must remember that the sacred bundle is not a mortuary bundle, but a container of a significant set of relics and other items used to invoke the spirit (memory) of the deceased to ask his/her advice and to mobilize his/her strength and support. Tomb 7 was not a burial, but a sanctuary for ritual activities. In this context we cannot be sure of the precise relationship between Bone Assemblage A and the historical individual Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'.

## 9 The Marital Alliance

Several carved bones refer to invocations of ancestors and to scenes from the epic narrative of the origin of the Ñuu Dzaui dynasties. There is, however, one single bone with a scene that has all the appearance of representing a specific event in genealogical history: Bone 124 (Caso 1969: 214; Fig. 232). It was located in a group of objects in the southern part of the antechamber – from the perspective of Bone Assemblage A: behind the skull decorated with mosaic. The pictorial statement concerns a marriage covenant: the encounter between a woman and a man coming from the two sides of the carved bone. Following our contextual interpretation outlined above, we will examine how this event makes sense in the network of genealogical and dynastic relationships of Lady

<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to see that in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 31, Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' is represented with her arms extended, holding a large flower with a scroll and quetzal feathers, i.e. with the signs 'flower and song' and 'preciousness or nobility'.



ILLUSTRATION 3.34A

*Bone 124 (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

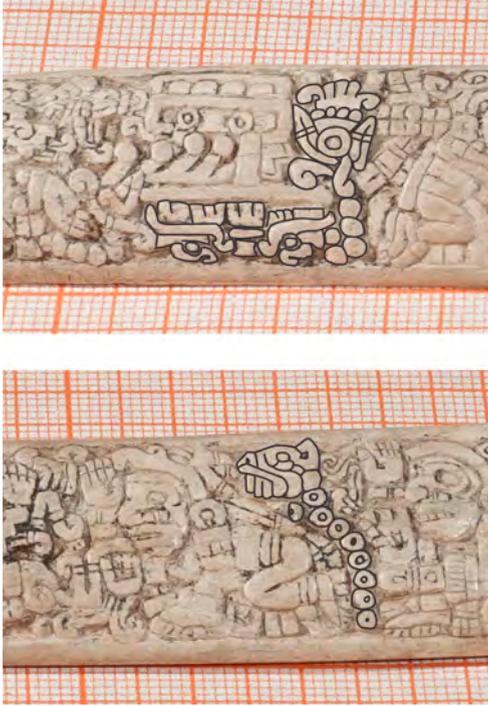


ILLUSTRATION 3.34B  
*Bone 124 details*

4 Rabbit ‘Quetzal’ of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) and her husband Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila.

To our left we see how the rain god comes down from above and delivers a complex discourse, which seems to contain, directly in front of his teeth, a band of chevrons, which in Dzaha Dzauí reads *yecu*, ‘war’ (Smith 1973b), in combination with a jade bead and a floral motif. He extends his right hand with a jade bead from which originates something that looks like an umbilical cord. In summary, the patron deity of the Ñuu Dzauí region gives a jewel, i.e. gives birth to a person.<sup>39</sup> The glyphs that can refer to what the god is pronouncing

39 We may compare this scene with that in Codex Tonindefe (Nuttall), p. 15, in which the Grandmother Lady 1 Eagle (goddess of procreation) gives a jade bead to Lady 3 Flint, who visited her, as a sign that she will become pregnant and will give birth to a daughter (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992b: 115–116). The jewel as a metaphor for a child is also mentioned by Sahagún (e.g. Book 111 Appendix: Ch. 4).

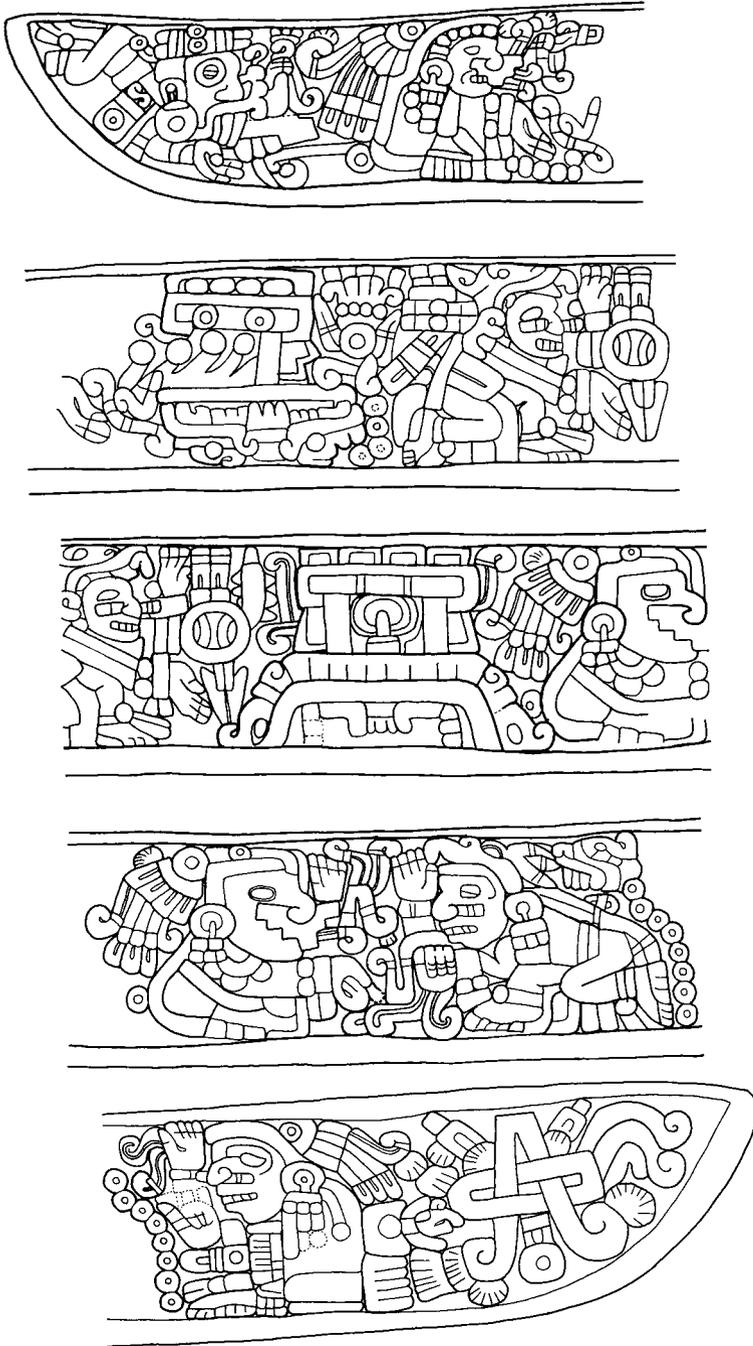


ILLUSTRATION 3.35 *The different scenes on Bone 124 (drawing Iván Rivera)*

may represent the name of the person who will be born, a name containing the words Jewel (jade bead), War and Flower.

What we interpret as an umbilical cord is connected to a seated woman, richly dressed – we note the jade beads in her hair, the elaborate ear ornament, the decoration of feathers, the stepped nose ornament (attribute of the water goddess, *Chalchiuhtlicue* in Nahuatl). She should be the person who is born on this occasion. Facing her is a day sign, probably indicating the day she was born, i.e. her calendar name: six dots with a kind of dish that contains the day sign Water.<sup>40</sup> This configuration identifies a Lady 6 Water, born under the protection of the rain god, i.e. most likely belonging to a Ñuu Dzau dynasty. The calendar sign of her name is combined with a motif of ‘waves’, which in turn connect to a temple or palace (*aniñe*). This building is founded on the earth (represented in familiar fashion as the open jaws of an alligator): in this context probably a cave or underground sanctuary. Lady 6 Water is pronouncing a speech in front of this complex religious site, which seems to be a temple of water.

Following our reading from left to right, we see a man, facing into the same direction as Lady 6 Water: he is going ahead as if guiding her. He wears a loin-cloth (*maxtlatl*) with an elaborate fabric element on his back. Sandals, bracelets, ear- and nose ornaments, qualify him as a person of high status. The jaguar helmet on his head either represents his given name or title, or is his *nahual*, characterising him as a brave and powerful warrior. His calendar name is mentioned first; Caso read it as ‘4 Flower’. There seems to be another dot, however, located on top of the jaws of the alligator in the previous scene: that would make the calendar name ‘5 Flower’. If Caso is right, we just cannot identify this individual in the Ñuu Dzau codices. But if the name is ‘5 Flower’, the obvious question is: could he be Lord 5 Flower, the king of Zaachila in this period?

Lord 4/5 Flower ‘Jaguar’ offers his weapons (shield, darts and a club with obsidian points) to the Temple of Jewels located in the centre of the scene on the bone. The temple – presented frontally – is again situated on top of a cave (jaws of alligator). On both sides of the temple, scrolls are rising, as references to speech.

Thus the scene tells us that Lady 6 Water came forward from the rain god – probably from the land of the rain, the Ñuu Dzau region. First she offered her name, i.e. herself, to a water temple (a ‘House of Rain’ in Mixtec terms). The implication of the image may be that she spent her youth in the religious service of this temple. Then she followed Lord 4/5 Flower ‘Jaguar’, who led her to the Temple of Jewels where speeches are made, that is – in this religious

40 A similar sign represents the day Water on Bones 203k and 172i.

context – where consultations are made and oracles are given. In response to the instructions received from the temple, he decided to make peace, laying down his weapons and handing them in to this sanctuary. This act suggests that he was a person with the authority to make peace, i.e. a ruler – a consideration that supports his identification as Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila.

The next part of the scene shows a seated woman and a man arriving. They are facing each other: the convention of marriage or an arrangement of marriage. No calendar names are shown, but the woman has the same headdress, nose and ear ornaments as Lady 6 Water mentioned previously on the bone, so she is probably the same woman. This interpretation is consistent with the idea that Lord 5 Flower led Lady 6 Water to the Temple of Jewels as part of forging peace there – an act that may well have resulted in a marriage arranged for political purposes.

Lady 6 Water delivers a long speech to the man who comes running towards her. He offers incense. The two greet each other and pledge mutual support, raising their hands (*ndaha*). An eagle headdress is the identifying element of the arriving person. It may be a warrior attribute (as a parallel to the jaguar helmet of Lord 5 Flower), but in view of the absence of other identifying elements, it is more likely that it serves as a name and/or *nahual* to identify this man as Lord 'Eagle'.

Then a day sign is mentioned, or rather a calendar name, which Caso read as 8 Serpent. Closer inspection shows that under the head of the snake is another numeral dot, so that we read the calendar name as 9 Serpent. At first sight one might think that this could be the calendar name of Lord 'Eagle' himself, but it is more likely that it is connected to the next person in the scene, who otherwise would remain unidentified. The person that follows the sign 9 Serpent is another man who looks in the same direction as Lord 'Eagle' – i.e. he is accompanying him and probably related to him. He throws powdered *piciete* up in the air, sanctifying the event. This is not a mere assistant but an important protagonist, as he is seated on a throne and is richly attired with sandals, loincloth with jade motif, jade nose ornament, necklace, headdress, and back ornament. This means that he has the status of a ruler: he is of the same status as Lord 5 Flower.

In the extreme point of the scene is a date: year 1 Reed. There is another sign Reed in the same year sign, so we might read it as year 1 Reed day 1 Reed. A date of this type suggests the beginning of something, a new dynastic phase, a new epoch. Around the date there are several down balls that emphasize the sacredness of the moment. Inside the year sign (A-O symbol) we see also a sign of jade, which symbolises its precious and auspicious character. With this we must connect the feathers that are emerging from the side of the same year

sign: probably they indicate that the date is of importance for the nobility and royalty and that it bodes good fortune.

We read this second half of the pictorial text on Bone 124 as a significant meeting between Lady 6 Water and Lord 'Eagle'. In the pictorial conventions of the Mixtec codices such a meeting between a man and a woman usually means a marriage. The context of Tomb 7 leaves no doubt that this meeting is a dynastic event. Thus Bone 124 seems to record the arrangement of a marital alliance between royal persons. Lady 6 Water is guided to this event by Lord 5 Flower, who with this alliance came to establish peace. Lord 'Eagle' was sent by another ruler, Lord 9 Serpent, who, from his throne, sanctified the event. Lord 5 Flower is shown in the central position, taking the initiative, acting upon instructions from the Temple of Jewels: he deposits his weapons there, i.e. he is forging this alliance and thus establishing peace with the dynasty of the other king, Lord 9 Serpent, seated on his throne at the right end of the scene.

Now, there is relevant information in the Ñuu Dzauí codices about all these people. Assuming that the calendar name of the man with the jaguar helmet is indeed 5 Flower (and not 4 Flower) we identify him as the Zapotec king of Zaachila, who married Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' of Teozacualco. The genealogical information given in the Ñuu Dzauí codices clarifies that this couple (Lord 5 Flower and Lady 4 Rabbit) had several children. One of them, Lord 2 Dog, inherited the reign of his mother – Teozacualco – and married a princess of Tilantongo (Lady 6 Reed). These two had a daughter: Lady 6 Water 'Jewel of the Flower War'.<sup>41</sup> Most likely this is the Lady 6 Water on Bone 124: she has the same calendar name and the same given name. She was a granddaughter of Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila, yet belonged to the Ñuu Dzauí dynasty of Teozacualco. In other words, Lady 6 Water actually came from the land of the rain god, the Mixtec region. Lord 5 Flower, who presented himself at the Temple of Jewels, was her paternal grandfather. Lord 'Eagle' who came to meet her in the arrangement of the marital alliance must be Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle', who appears in the Ñuu Dzauí codices as the husband of Lady 6 Water.<sup>42</sup>

The codices further clarify that this Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle' was the firstborn son of the king of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo), Lord 9 Serpent, 'Jaguar who kindles War'. Clearly the latter is the seated ruler in Bone 124, who sends or pushes Lord [4 Water] '[Blood] Eagle' to marry Lady 6 Water. This Lord 4

41 See Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 32–33.

42 See Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), pp. 16/17-III/IV. Edition and commentary: Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2005). We follow the chronological correlation established by Emily Rabin (see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011).

Water 'Blood Eagle' was born in the year 3 House, which would correspond to 1301 AD.<sup>43</sup>

Due to the complexity of dynastic genealogies, Lady 6 Water of Teozacualco was the niece of her husband, since she was the daughter of the sister of Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle', Lady 6 Reed. In other words, through her father Lady 6 Water belonged to the dynasty of Zaachila (of her paternal grandfather, Lord 5 Flower) as well as to the dynasty of Teozacualco (of her paternal grandmother, Lady 4 Rabbit), while through her mother she belonged to the dynasty of Tilantongo (which in turn was related to the dynasty of Teozacualco).

The Ñuu Dzaui codices further tell us that Lady 6 Water 'Jewel of the Flower War' and Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle' had no children, due to the early death of the latter in the year 4 House, which corresponds to the year 1341. The complex genealogical network with its associated dates allows us to make a chronological reconstruction. Lady 6 Water was the daughter of Lady 6 Reed, younger sister of Lord 4 Water. As Lord 4 Water was born in 1301 (year 3 House), Lady 6 Reed was probably born soon afterwards. In 1321 she arrived together with her husband, Lord 2 Dog, in Teozacualco to take possession of that city-state.<sup>44</sup> Probably that act followed their marriage, so we assume that the couple married at this time, in 1321, when this Lady 6 Reed was around 18 years old.

This suggests that Lady 6 Water herself was born shortly after her parents' marriage in 1321. On the other hand, she probably married Lord 4 Water shortly before he died (in 1341), at a time when she herself must have been between



ILLUSTRATION 3.36 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), reverse, p. XI-1 (Right to Left): Lord 9 Serpent and his two wives; the birth of his son, Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle'.*

43 Codex Yuta Tnoho, reverse, pp. XI/XII-1. Edition and commentary: Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992a). This codex contains several errors, for example pp. XI-1 gives the name of the last person as Lord 3 Water, which must be 4 Water. These errors can be corrected by comparing the scenes with Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nu (Bodley).

44 See the Map of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco), published by Caso 1949 (see also Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2005).



ILLUSTRATION 3.37 *Codex Yuta Tnoho, reverse, p. XII-1: Marriage of Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle' and Lady 6 Water 'Jewel of the Flower War'.*

14 and 20 years old. Two years after the death of her husband she remarried, this time with the crown prince of Ndisi Nuu (Tlaxiaco), with whom she would have several daughters.<sup>45</sup>

The scene carved on Bone 124 could refer to the marriage itself, but also to the commitment of marriage, before the actual wedding. Considering that the marital alliance may have been forged in a covenant before the marriage itself, we have a period between  $\pm 1325$  and 1340 for the event recorded on Bone 124. Recalling that the husband, Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle' was born in 1301, and that, after the age of 25, he was probably somewhat in a hurry to support his dynastic role by choosing a wife, we may assume that we are indeed looking at an arrangement of marriage and that the date is closer to 1325 than to 1340. Hypothetically we would suggest 1330.

The year 1 Reed mentioned on the bone could correspond to 1299 or to 1351, which would be too early or too late to fit the chronological sequence. We therefore interpret the year 1 Reed in a symbolic sense as an indication of the new era that was expected to result from this dynastic marriage that was

45 The first of these daughters – Lady 3 Rabbit 'Sacred Cobweb' – was a crucial figure in the dynastic history. The last daughter (Lady 10 Water 'Fan of the Mixtec region') married a prince of Chalcatongo, Lord 13 Jaguar 'Beard (*dzaa*) of War (*yecu*)' – this given name probably should be read as *Dzaa Yecu*, to be understood as 'Brave in War'.

going to unify the two most important dynasties of the moment (Zaachila and Tilantongo).

Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila at the time must have been already an elderly person (about 70 years of age), taking into account that he was probably born around 1260. With the depositing of Bone 124 in Tomb 7 he announced the commitment of the marriage, implying peace and alliance between the Beni Zaa and Ñuu Dzauí dynasties. Perhaps he thanked the temple for a previous oracle and asked it at the same time for good fortune. Shortly after, he died and was buried in Tomb 1 Zaachila. It seems logical to suppose that it was still under the government of this king, Lord 5 Flower, that Bone 124 was deposited in Tomb 7, together – we assume – with much of the treasure. It is likely that his son and designated successor, Lord 3 Alligator, was also present on the occasion.

The absence of the Mixtec queen of Zaachila, Lady 4 Rabbit ‘Quetzal’ in the politically so important scene carved on Bone 124 calls our attention, especially as she was the key person in this dynastic arrangement. Her absence suggests that at the time she had already passed away. Our reconstruction of the events would be that Lord 5 Flower made an offering to the sacred bundle that represented his late wife, informing her of the Ñuu Dzauí – Beni Zaa marriage covenant, which would continue the close ties between these dynasties that they themselves had begun with their marriage. The rites and offerings that accompanied this commitment were made to the sacred bundle of the deceased queen to invoke her blessing and spiritual support. The chosen venue – Tomb 7 – was a favourite sanctuary for contacting the ancestors, in a very significant and sacred ceremonial landscape for both peoples: the ruins of Monte Albán.

## 10 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

Among the impressive works of art that constitute the treasure of Tomb 7, the carved jaguar and eagle bones occupy a prominent place. They contain pictographic texts which make sense as invocations of honoured powerful ancestors and as evocations of important formative moments in cultural memory. The images are situated in a context of ‘flowers and songs’, i.e. in the literary and symbolic ambience of ceremonial discourse. They often refer to primordial time, as in the narrative of the origin of the dynasties, when the founding fathers and mothers were born from the sacred ceiba tree in Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) and when they defeated the stone men, the people of the earlier era; or to the first sunrise and the invention of the calendar. Their main aim seems to be to establish communication with the ancestors who resided

in the realm of death, i.e. under the protection of Lady 9 Grass, the goddess of life-death-life. But for what reason were the ancestors called upon?

Our answer is based on the reasoning that (1) Monte Albán in the Postclassic period must have belonged to the realm of Zaachila, (2) the treasure of Tomb 7 was contemporaneous with the precious items deposited in Tomb 1 and 2 of Zaachila, (3) Tomb 1 of Zaachila was the burial place of Lord 5 Flower, who ruled around 1300 AD, and (4) Tomb 7 shows clear evidence of a link with Ñuu Dzaui dynastic history.

The combination of these observations leads us to identify the Queen of Zaachila, Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', belonging to the Ñuu Dzaui dynasty of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) and wife of Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila, as the protagonist of this religious site and of its discourse. The sacred bundle that held Bone Assemblage A was probably a devotional focal point or even a relic and direct representation (*ixiptla*) of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' herself. Several details on the carved jaguar bones may actually refer to her.

The most specific historical text in Tomb 7 is that on Bone 124. The brief text mentions the birth of Ñuu Dzaui Lady 6 Water, who can be identified as the granddaughter of Lady 4 Rabbit and Lord 5 Flower, and further the arrangement of her marriage with the Ñuu Dzaui prince Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle' from Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo). This event must be dated somewhere between 1321 and 1340 AD, most likely half-way through this period, i.e. around the year 1330. As this is a unique identifiable historical event in the total corpus of Tomb 7 texts, we attribute it prime significance and suggest that this marital alliance may have been the main motive for the deposition of the treasure.

## Memory and Oracle

What is most striking in the configuration of Tomb 7 is the huge quantity of precious items deposited in it: the shining pectorals, rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and other ornaments of gold, silver, jade, turquoise, obsidian, crystal, shell, pearls and coral. But if the Tomb 7 was not primarily a place of burial, but an ossuary or 'bone yard', or rather a shrine for communication with the dead ancestors, how are we to explain the presence of all these jewels? If they were not part of the attire of someone buried here, but were placed in front or on top of sacred bundles, what was their function? To answer this question it is important to keep in mind the one historical event that we have identified (the marital alliance of Lady 6 Water) and to focus more precisely on the sanctuaries referred to in the pictorial texts of the tomb itself.

We note that Bone 124 features in the centre of the scene a Temple of Jewels situated above a cave or underground space. We explore here the hypothesis that the scene on this bone is directly related to the place where it was found and that, therefore, the cave is precisely Tomb 7 itself. Tomb 7 would then have been the subterranean part of a ceremonial centre that was called the Temple of Jewels. The temple emits volutes, probably speech scrolls, which we interpret as a reference to counsels given by the sacred bundles as a kind of oracle. The visit by Lord 5 Flower can be read as a consultation of the ancestors in order to receive guidance and advice from them about the marriage of his granddaughter. This was probably part of a prolonged ritual activity at the site: in all likelihood there were multiple entries into Tomb 7 to perform such acts (cf. Middleton et al., 1998).

### 1 Chalcatzingo: The Preclassic Template

A key example of a representation of a sanctuary from which volutes emanate is a famous relief with a ritual scene in Chalcatzingo (State of Morelos), an archaeological site that goes back to the Preclassic period (Olmec horizon).<sup>1</sup>

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1 See the publications by Guzmán (1934), Gay and Pratt (1971), Angulo (in Grove 1987); Grove (1999), and from a comparative perspective: Tsukamoto and Inomata (2014).

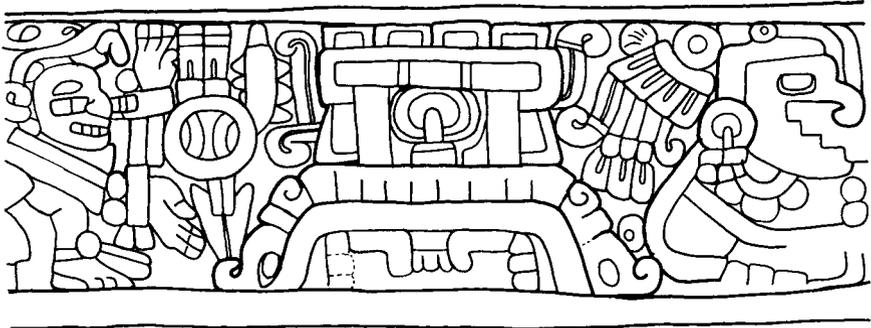


ILLUSTRATION 4.01 *The temple of jewels on bone 124*

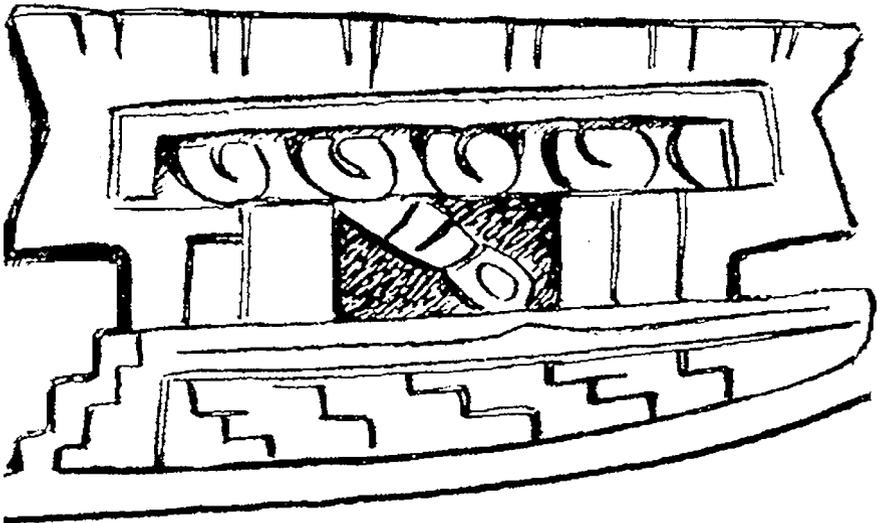


ILLUSTRATION 4.02 *The Temple of Jewels on Bone 215*

The religious heart of the place is an impressive mountain, rising from the valley and visually connected with the Popocatepetl volcano in the distance. Particularly impressive are the rock reliefs on this mountain. Where the foot of the mountain connects with the steep cliff there is an abri with a gallery of rock carvings. In the rainy season water comes down from the rocks: we immediately recognise the site as a House of Rain (Tlalocan). This identification is confirmed by the reliefs, which represent growing plants (squash) and several animals (lizards/iguanas?) singing or speaking to heaven, from where

the raindrops fall. Lizards, frogs and similar animals are known as the children or servants of the rain god.<sup>2</sup>

Our attention is drawn towards a relief at the end of the abri gallery, carved on a rock slab that is sticking out to the side from the surface of the slope and facing Popocatepetl (East). This carved masterpiece (Monument 1), called 'the king' (*el rey*), contains a profile view of a niche or cave, animated with an eye as if it were the head of a serpent or alligator with open jaws. Plants grow from it, making clear that this is an image of the earth as a living and life-giving entity.<sup>3</sup> Within the cave a person is seated on a throne or altar, which is decorated with an S-shaped motif. A large and elaborate headdress containing quetzal birds, jade beads and flowers identifies him as a ruler, priest or other important public official. He holds a rectangular bar-like object in his hands, decorated with the same S-shaped geometric pattern. This bar has been compared to bars or staffs held by Maya rulers (Angulo in Grove 1987), and indeed it may be, like those, a symbol of rulership, which would suggest that this is an enthronement scene. But as the form and geometric patterning are very similar to the Post-classic representations of a painted manuscript, the rectangular bar-like object may also be an early representation of a codex.<sup>4</sup>

Bar or codex, the religious official seems to be exhibiting or reading a symbolic figure as part of carrying out a ritual within the cave. His act of being seated is indicative of a ritual that is dealing with authority, such as confirming the rulership of the protagonist. The content of the text is synthesised by the geometric motif, which actually consists of a combination of volutes going in opposite directions. Angulo describes the visual impression this symbol causes:

This symbol, with its winding and unwinding, visually expresses two aspects of the same movement, but in opposition. In the double scroll we find the dual principle of the giving of life and taking back through death, the dryness and later the humidity that cyclically cover the surface of the

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2 Cf. Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 23. Representations of lizards or frogs appear in temples of the rain god, most clearly in the Aztec Templo Mayor, and in Huamelulpan. Team members Ivette Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo investigate this image further in their dissertation.

3 Monument 9 of the Chalcatzingo site is a frontal image of the entrance to such a serpent-cave, with an actual opening. There are also important parallels between Monument 1 of Chalcatzingo and the large stela of Yucu Ita, which is interpreted in-depth by A. Iván Rivera Guzmán in his doctoral dissertation.

4 Cf. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48, and Telleriano Remensis, p. 30r.

earth.... it forms an inseparable unit as a dual principle of contrary forces that compose the order of the universe, the essence that maintains all of the elements of creation in permanent equilibrium. The scroll is a clearly explicit visual form of the principle of equilibrium of contrary forces, the eternal duality of oppositions found in all philosophical theories, the same principle or scientific premise that explores the eternal dynamics which maintain active and alive all the components affecting the constant rhythm of transformation of life in nature. These eternal oppositions, notable in the contrast between night and day, heat and cold, rain and drought, life and death, express the concepts of duality that have been manifested in Mesoamerica from the Early Formative period to the Spanish conquest.

in: GROVE 1987: 138

The 'opposite scroll' motif appears in Chalcatzingo reliefs occasionally in a celestial position: raindrops fall down from it. In similar scenes a cloud takes its place. On the other hand, there are also cases in Chalcatzingo reliefs in which this sign appears precisely *under* a zoomorphic figure. The same sign appears in Maya hieroglyphic texts associated with heaven and with the rain god (Chac). As a Maya hieroglyph (T632) the S-shaped sign has been deciphered as *muyal*, 'cloud' (Houston and Stuart 1990). A similar S-shaped sign also occurs in Aztec-Mixtec Postclassic pictography, where it is known as *xonecuilli* ('distorted or bent foot'). This term is given to (a constellation in) the Milky Way.<sup>5</sup> The S-shaped sign itself is associated with the goddess who is the guardian of the ancestors (Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl'). Andrea Stone has argued that this sign in the Maya texts may refer to a specific celestial realm, one of the levels of the cosmos, associated not only with rain but also with the ancestors (Stone 1993; Reilly 1996).<sup>6</sup>

Monument 1 (el Rey) includes this sign both on the object in the hands of the seated lord and on his throne, which suggests that it is an emblem of

5 According to Tezozomoc's *Crónica Mexicana* (1975: Ch. 82): *la encomienda de Santiago por parte del Sur*. Painted in white on black, the *xonecuilli* sign is part of the attributes of the goddess Cihuacoatl, who is indeed called the deity of the Milky Way: Citlallinicue (see Chapter 6).

6 This idea is supported by the description of the layered cosmos in Codex Vaticanus A ff. 1v and 2r, where the heavens (*ilhuicatl*) are associated with the rain god and moon, the sun and the Milky Way, thunder and lightning, different colours and where the superior (13th) heaven is the place of bones (Omiyocan), i.e. of the ancestors.

power and ritual action. Combining the visual impression of movement (as observed by Angulo) with the more specific iconographical and hieroglyphic analysis, we may understand the meaning of the sign as referring to clouds, but probably connoting a special name of a celestial or symbolic realm, perhaps in line with the Nahuatl expression *mixtitlan ayauhtitlan*, 'in the clouds and the mists', which connotes an atmosphere of mystery and secrecy. Such clouds are frequent in scenes of origin, such as in the representation of the tree from which an ancient dynasty was born in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2. The symbolism would qualify the seat of the ritual protagonist in the scene on Monument 1 and also the character of the animals associated with this sign on other monuments as situated in relationship to cosmic powers (heaven, rain) and ancestors.

On the other hand, a somewhat different but similar motif of opposite scrolls occurs in Postclassic representations of codices or chants. This sign in Aztec art represents 'day' or 'feast' (*ilhuitl*).<sup>7</sup> In Ñuu Dzauí codices we find a probably related sign of four volutes bound together, which may be read as 'speaking to the four directions' and represents a ritual.

Monument 1 shows how, as a consequence of the cave ritual, large volutes emerge from the cave (mouth of the serpent). These may represent the ceremonial discourse of the person who is performing the ritual, on the other it is possible that they are the moisture, vapours or clouds of rain that will appear as a consequence of the prayers and spread as life-giving breath over the adjacent valley at the foot of the mountain. Possibly they represent both. In the sky above, indeed, clouds gather; raindrops fall combined with circular elements that may represent jewels or seeds (most likely both) in order to qualify the rain as the bringer of fertility and wealth. The same drops are visible on the clothing of the seated person.

Taking into account the context of the place – the abri that is a House of Rain – we realise that the ritual in the abri is essential for producing the rain. The protagonist in the cave most likely is a *tlamacazqui*, a priest who has become a spirit and a *teciuhtlazqui* or rainmaker.<sup>8</sup> To the devotees visiting this place he was an ancestor, intimately connected to the rain deity himself. In fact, we are looking at the image while standing in the opening of the abri ourselves (with the Popocatepetl behind our back), so we realise that the carved

7 See our discussion of the Cipactonal relief in the Introduction to the present book.

8 We will return to the *tlamacazqui* experience in Chapter 7. The studies by Glockner (1996) and Salazar Peralta (2010) describe the contemporary concepts and practices in the area.

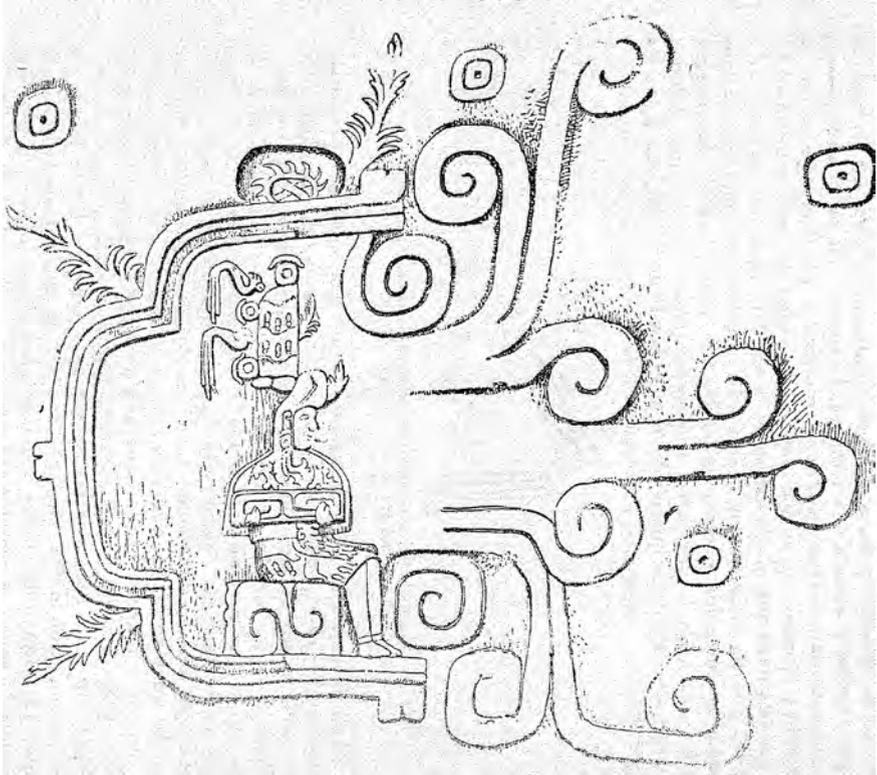


ILLUSTRATION 4.03 *Monument 1, Chalcatzingo (Guzmán 1934)*

image represents our own position and prescribes, in a way, our own action: we are participating in the ritual, reading the pictograms and pronouncing the prayers and ceremonial discourse, in order to bring about the rain for the fertility of the land. In doing so we follow the example of the ancestors (collectively represented by the protagonist of the relief). If our interpretation is correct we see how the reading of the symbols is a religious and creative act, entangled with ritual, offerings and sacred sites.

Interestingly, the local community continues an age-old tradition of bringing offerings in small caves of the mountain:

Today one of the principal festivals of Chalcatzingo is the Christian celebration of Santa Cruz on May 3. On this day a nearly constant procession of villagers can be seen climbing the Cerro Chalcatzingo to the cross that is erected atop the hill.



ILLUSTRATION 4.04 *Monument 1, Chalcatzingo (photo and drawing: Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo and Ivette Jiménez Osorio)*



ILLUSTRATION 4.05 *Contemporary offering in a cave at Chalcatzingo*

We become aware of the great time depth of central concepts and practices of Mesoamerican religion. The passage of time underlines that the sculpture of the religious official has become that of a predecessor, an ancestor, an example to follow. The cave becomes a place to withdraw with the world of the gods and the ancestors, for spiritual preparation. That world, full of mysterious power, was designated with the couplet 'night, wind'. Time becomes inserted in nature both as orientation (on the Popocatepetl) and surrounding horizontal astronomy, and as a link with the fertility-giving forces of nature, deities and ancestors through places such as caves, wombs of the cosmos.

The ancient sculptor situated his public as a devoted congregation and also situates us as modern beholders in a specific position, touching our senses and endowing his artwork with the agency of drawing us all into participation in a prescribed and eternalised ritual. Some modern beholders, because of ignorance or rejection, may wish to distance themselves, others may become impressed as they become more profoundly engaged and open their mind to the meaning of this powerful monument and its context.

Interpretation moves from the one-directedness of an ego-subject observing 'objects out there' to an intersubjectivity of communication with the presence of the numinous, the 'completely other', *das Ganz Andere* in the terms of Rudolph Otto (1917). The ancient process of sacralisation, based on the interaction of sculptured symbolically charged images with the ritual landscape and with the values of the Mesoamerican worldview, and reinforced in the passage of time, mobilises a spiritual connection ('dialogue') with the ancestors.

Various rock carvings on diverse spots of the Chalcatzingo mountain represent jaguars. Given the Mesoamerican notion of animals, particularly jaguars, eagles, fire serpents, etc., as *nahuales* of priests, rulers, healers and other community members, we understand these images in this sense.<sup>9</sup> Consequently they would characterise this site as a place where such persons in their *nahual* aspect would gather to perform rituals with singing, praying or pronouncing ceremonial discourses. In accordance with the Mesoamerican worldview, the *nahuales* gather in the House of Rain in order to help the rain god to bring together enough water and to distribute this water to humankind. These images then suggest that this mountain was precisely a site of spiritual encounters, where religious specialists (*tamacazque*) congregated in their *nahual* state to

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9 For the analysis of Olmec-horizon art and religious landscape see for example Köhler (1985), Guthrie (1995), and Reilly (2002). Davis (1978) discusses critically the old hypothesis that human-jaguar interactions constituted copulations that produced hybrid beings.

communicate with the divine powers of the mountain and of the earth, to pray for and help with the production of rain. Discourse is a crucial component of the construction of such an experiential world. A scene of felines overcoming humans (Monuments 4, 31) may refer to a historical narrative (victory of valiant warriors over others) or be a prayer and petition (*pedimento*) for strong and powerful *nahuales* to overcome enemies and, in general, the problems of life. A similar ritual meaning may be supposed for the images of human persons with masks, marching in procession or possibly dancing, raising clubs or rattles in the air (Monument 2).

Another rock carving (Monument 5) portrays a human being coming forth from a large alligator-like being, floating among the waves, probably a representation of the earth floating in the primordial ocean. If such an interpretation were correct, the image would be a reference in ritual and cultural memory to the creation (and rootedness) of human life within this symbolic landscape.<sup>10</sup>

We may compare the mountain of Chalcatzingo to the Brocken (also known as Blocksberg), the highest peak in the Harz region of central Germany, a place of great natural beauty with an aura of mystery. Local lore has it that on Walpurgis Night (30 April) the witches (read: women who have traditional knowledge and ancient wisdom) assemble there to wipe the snow from the mountains with their brooms: spiritual leaders of the community working with the forces of nature in order to induce the arrival of spring. Goethe staged such a 'witches' gathering' as a phantasmagorical scene in his famous play *Faust*. The monuments at Chalcatzingo were probably equally well known in Mesoamerican literature and oral tradition: the events referred to, the artists and spiritual guides must have been part of cultural memory, the site a centre for pilgrimage and ritual action.

## 2 Occasions for Precious Offerings

In line with the emblematic representation of caves as places of ritual, Tomb 7 seems to have been conceived as a subterranean cult place associated with the earth itself. The image on Bone 124 shows a cave as part of an important

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10 Taking the Kuna worldview and ritual as an example, Severi (2002ab) has shown the enormous complexity and liveliness of the shamanic landscape and also how ritual and shamanic discourses serve to establish (experiential) relationships between humans and nature (spirits of trees and animals) as well as between the living and the dead, and in doing so create special identities for the participants.

sanctuary or ceremonial centre known as Temple of Jewels. Speech scrolls coming forward from this temple may represent a specific communication of the shrine to the visiting lord or a general qualification of the sanctuary as a site of ceremonial discourse that transforms into a counsel or oracle.

The reference to the preciousness of the sanctuary (Temple of Jewels) is most fitting, of course, in view of the deposit of a huge treasure in this place. To understand the presence of this extraordinary treasure and, more generally, the whole role of Tomb 7, we are guided by a comparison with other references to contacts with the ancestors in the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) region. A very similar place is the Temple of Death, where Lady 9 Grass reigned, a cave dedicated to the dead ancestors, which we have identified as the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos*, the central burial place of the Ñuu Dzau rulers in the funeral cave of the Mountain of the Small Deer (*Cerro de los Cervatillos*) in the realm of Ñuu Ndaya (ancient Chalcatongo). Friar Francisco de Burgoa describes this place in detail. In the Ñuu Dzau the sign of the Temple of Death is used – in the list of the four directions – to represent the South. This usage corresponds to the term for South in Alvarado's dictionary: *Huahi Cahí* (*Vehe Kihin* in contemporary Mixtec) or *Andaya*, 'Place of the Dead'. Today the *Vehe Kihin* is a cave where according to the colonial vision people go to make a pact with the devil. The representation in the Mixtec codices suggests that the *Huahi Cahí* (*Vehe Kihin*) was originally a special shrine for the deceased and a place for contacting the ancestors and their emblematic guardian, Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl'.

In Codex Añute (Selden), p. 7-IV, the Temple of Death (the funeral cave) is next to the Mountain of Deer (*Cerro de los Cervatillos*). Both toponyms are combined with a third: the Town of Death (represented as a frieze with a skull).

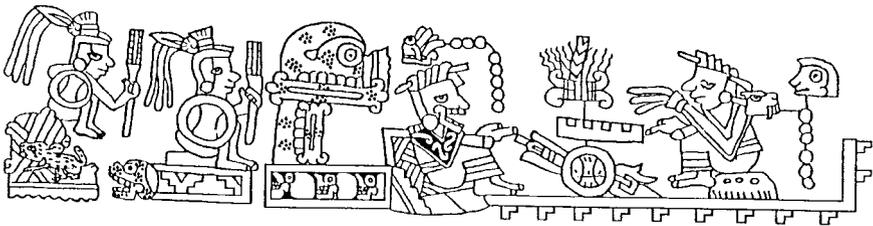


ILLUSTRATION 4.06 *Lady 9 Grass in the Temple of Death (Vehe Kihin) at the Town of Death (Ñuu Ndaya) and the Mountain of Deer: Codex Añute (Selden), p. 7-IV*

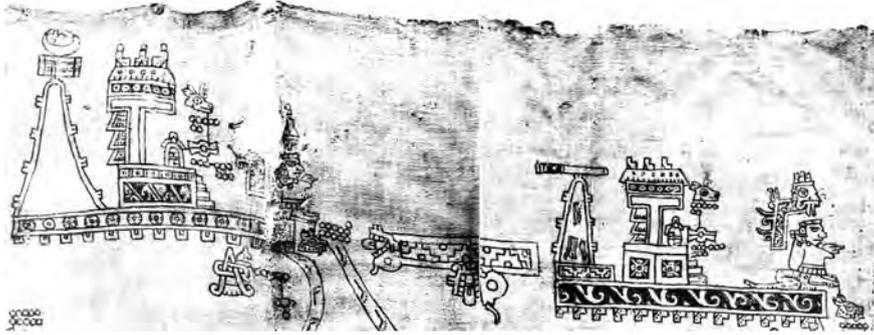


ILLUSTRATION 4.07 *Ñuu Ndaya, Town of Death (Chalcatongo) in the Lienzo of Yucu Satuta or Zacatepec (Smith 1973a)*

This sign appears also as the main town to the north of the kingdom on the Lienzo of Yucu Satuta (Zacatepec) and therefore must represent ancient Chalcatongo, *Ñuu Ndaya*, which means ‘Town of the Dead’.<sup>11</sup>

The ancient kingdom of *Ñuu Ndaya* included what is now an area of various municipalities (Chalcatongo, San Miguel el Grande, Yosonotú, Yosondua, Itundujia, Cuanana and Yucutindo). The southernmost point of this territory is also the southernmost point of the Mixteca Alta, and consists of a huge mountain area, an impressive *sierra*, called *Yuku Kasa* located near Santa Cruz Itundujia. This mountain is still known as a place where the deceased come together when they are going to enter the hereafter: it is *Ñuu Anima*, ‘Place of Souls’, where one can communicate with the dead.<sup>12</sup> All this brings us to the suggestion that the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos* was located in a cave in *Yuku Kasa* and that that is the place the Skull Temple refers to: the realm of Lady 9 Grass ‘*Cihuacoatl*’.<sup>13</sup>

The archaeological site of ancient *Ñuu Ndaya*, locally known as ‘Chalcatongo Viejo’, is located in the agencia Juárez of the present-day municipality of *Ñuu Kahnu* (San Miguel el Grande). The Postclassic remains occupy a large valley at the sides of a small stream. The landscape is dominated (‘crowned’) by the mountain *Cerro de los Pedimentos*, belonging to the municipality of *Yosonotú*.

11 See Smith 1973a: 96 ff. Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007b: 185–188 and 2011: 311–318.

12 See Jansen (1982b: Chapter IV), Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992a: 98, 164) and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b: 185–188 and Chapter VI), as well as Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011). Needless to say, there is also a *Vehe Kihin* in *Yuku Kasa*.

13 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007b: 185–188 and 2011: 311–318.



ILLUSTRATION 4.08 *Yuku Kasa: Ñuu Anima, Place of Souls*

On the top of this mountain is the base of an ancient temple (*vehe ñuhu*): a pyramidal structure with a staircase leading up to a small platform, on which a cross now stands. It is still a centre of pilgrimage and a large ritual celebration takes place here on the second Friday of Lent. This coincides with the celebration of the *Señor de la Columna*, the ‘Lord of the Column’ (the image of Jesus Christ tied to a column and whipped) in the church in the town centre below.

People come from all over the State of Oaxaca and even from further away to this sacred mountaintop to express their devotion. They make their vows and petitions (*pedimentos*), asking for specific favours which they represent in material form, e.g. by constructing a small house of stones (for the well-being of the family) and other miniatures of specific desires: farm animals, a car, etc. Candles are burned for the cross, religious specialists (*curanderos*, *curanderas*) perform cleansing ceremonies and divinations. It is very impressive to watch the ritual continuity at this sacred place, overlooking the valley of ancient Chalcatongo and looking beyond that, straight in a southerly direction, towards the mysterious and vast mountainous complex in the blue distance: Yuku Kasa, known to be Ñuu Anima, ‘the Place of Souls’.<sup>14</sup>

14 Team members Liana Ivette Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo are writing their Ph.D. dissertation on the archaeology and present-day cultural meaning of Chalcatongo Viejo and its surroundings.



ILLUSTRATION 4.09 *Cerro de los Pedimentos in Yasonotú, the ancient ceremonial site of Ñuu Ndaya (Chalcatongo Viejo)*



ILLUSTRATION 4.10 *Feast of the Second Friday of Lent at the Cerro de los Pedimentos in Yasonotú*



ILLUSTRATION 4.11 *The ancient temple platform on the Cerro de los Pedimentos*



ILLUSTRATION 4.12 *The ancient temple platform on the Cerro de los Pedimentos (Yosonotú) during the rainy season*



ILLUSTRATION 4.13A *The construction of pedimentos around the ancient temple platform during the Second Friday of Lent*



ILLUSTRATION 4.13B *The construction of pedimentos around the ancient temple platform during the Second Friday of Lent*



ILLUSTRATION 4.14 *Pedimentos in Nundichi (Mixteca Alta)*



ILLUSTRATION 4.15 *Pedimentos in Sachio (Mixteca Alta)*

The codices leave no doubt that the Temple of Death – as a place of consultation with Lady 9 Grass – also functioned as an oracle. In a very telling scene, Lady 6 Monkey of Jaltepec visited this place.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, her travel to the Temple of Death to meet the great mother guardian of the ancestors parallels a well-known ancient narrative like that present in the tale of Vasalisa. Because of the need to find solutions to a crisis in wordly life, the girl Vasalisa is sent out into the woods to look for fire; there she encounters Baba Yaga (generally described as a ‘wild hag’ or ‘witch’). Clarissa Pinkola Estés analyses the story as a psychic journey, an initiation and individuation (1992: Ch. 3).

Baba Yaga is fearsome, for she represents the power of annihilation and the power of life force at the same time. To gaze into her face is to see vagina dentata, eyes of blood, the perfect newborn child and the wings of angels all at once. And Vasalisa stands there and accepts this wild Mother divinity, wisdom, warts and all. One of the most remarkable facets of the Yaga portrayed in this tale is that though she threatens, she is just. She does not hurt Vasalisa as long as Vasalisa affords her respect. (op. cit.: 88)

Baba Yaga, the Wild Mother, is the teacher whom we can consult in these matters. She instructs the ordering of the house of the soul. She imbues an alternate order on the ego, one where magic can happen, joy can be done, appetite is intact, things are accomplished with gusto. Baba Yaga is the model for being true to the Self. She teaches both death and renewal. (op. cit.: 91)

A similar character is the Skeleton Woman from Inuit oral literature, a profound symbol for the challenges of true love.

The Skeleton Woman who lies under the water represents an inert form of deep instinctual life, which knows by heart the creating of Life, the creating of Death. If lovers insist on a life of forced gaiety, perpetual pleasuramas, and other forms of deadening intensity, if they insist on sexual *Donner und Blitz* thunder and lightning all the time, or a torrent of the delectable and no strife at all, there goes the Life/Death/Life nature right over the cliff, drowned in the sea again. (op. cit.: 137–138)

The fisherman’s challenge is to face Lady Death, her embrace, and her life and death cycles. Unlike other tales in which an underwater creature is captured but then released, thereby granting the fisherman a wish

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15 Cf. Codex Añute (Selden), p. 6-IV and Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), p. 36-II.

in gratitude, Lady Death is not letting go, Lady Death is not graciously granting any wishes. She surfaces, like it or not, for without her there can be no real knowledge of life, and without that knowing, there can be no fealty, no real love or devotion. Love costs. It costs bravery.... (op. cit.: 138)

In Ñuu Dzaui dramatic history Lady 6 Monkey comes to ask the death goddess a favour. There, Lady 9 Grass, the divine protector of the ancestors that were buried in the cave, gave her the instruction to marry, in fact indicated her future husband. Interestingly, we are dealing here with a marriage arrangement: the actual wedding took place seven years later. As a token of her gratitude, Lady 6 Monkey deposited a large offering of various jewels, shell necklaces, golden bells and jade beads, plus other precious objects, as well as regalia for Lady 9 Grass.

Clearly the deposition of such a treasure expresses the strife of the human devotee. The realm of the great goddess is that of the earth, nature, but the essence of the human is culture: therefore the offering consists of precious artwork. The treasure (and all that it took to produce it) becomes a permanent proof of self-sacrifice, of commitment to the ancestors and to the powers of life-death-life.

The final element in the series of offerings in Codex Añute is a dress decorated with the S motif that is referred to by the Nahuatl term *xonecuilli*: this is clearly the same type of dress that the recipient of the gift, Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl', is wearing. In this case Lady 6 Monkey is offering an element that is diagnostic of (and relevant for) the deity she addresses. On the other hand we identify among the offered items in the cognate scene in Codex Ñuu Thoo – Ndisi Nu (Bodley), p. 36-II, a 'jewel of the mountain of sand', which probably represents a 'jewel from Añute (Jaltepec)', i.e. from the realm of Lady 6 Monkey: so this is a self-referential gift.

Given the fact that this offering is part of the arrangement of a dynastically important wedding, it is also possible to understand the jewels as a symbolic reference to children and, therefore, the offering as a way of asking the deity and the ancestors to bless the intended marriage with children and to bestow upon them a good life.<sup>16</sup>

After her offering of jewels, Lady 6 Monkey passes through a series of ritual events that are part of the traditional Ñuu Dzaui marriage ceremony. Together with her fiancé she participates in a round dance to the beat of a drum, which is headed by Lord [9 Wind] 'Quetzalcoatl', the elderly couple of Lord [2 Dog] 'Grandfather' and Lady [1 Eagle] 'Grandmother', patrons of north and west,

16 Compare Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15, where the Grandmother Lady 1 Eagle hands a jewel to Lady 3 Flint as a sign that she will have a daughter.

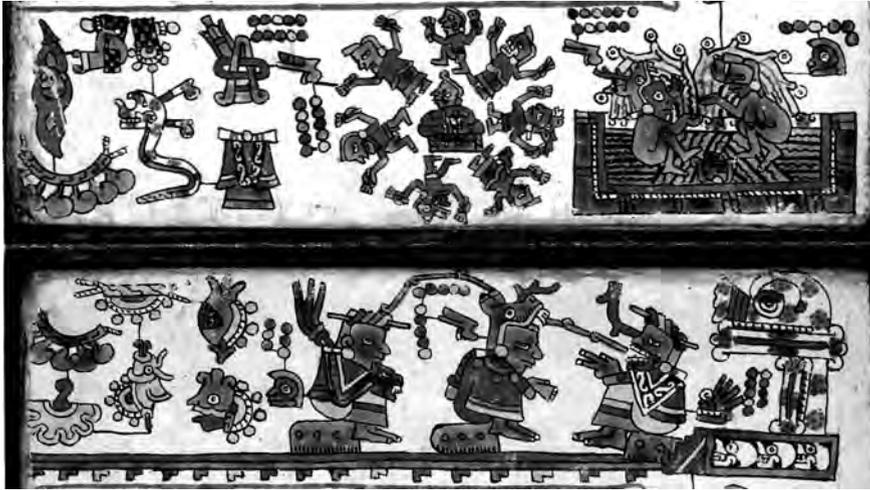


ILLUSTRATION 4.16 *Codex Añute*, pp. 6-IV / 7-I (reading: bottom to top, boustrophedon, along the red guide lines): Lady 6 monkey offers jewels to Lady 9 Grass

the young Lord [7 Flower, 'Sun'], who is associated with the east, and Lady [9 Grass] 'Cihuacoatl' of the south. In this way the four world directions are invoked to participate in the ritual, in harmony, guided by the spiritual power of the Plumed Serpent.

The jewels of Tomb 7 show several clear correspondences with jewels mentioned in the codices. The list of the treasure deposited by Lady 6 Monkey in *Codex Añute* (Selden), p. 6-IV and p. 7-I, begins with a gem in the shape of the head of a *ñuhu*, 'spirit, god', and another gem in the form of a heart. This is the same hendiadys that we saw in the set of signs in front of the tree on Bone 215, and we also find it in the form of objects in Tomb 7. The cognate scene in *Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú* (Bodley), p. 36-II, begins with a skull and a heart-jewel: probably this is the same couplet, but putting emphasis on its reference to the world of the deceased ancestors.

Several jewels in Tomb 7 may in fact have had (or connoted) the meaning *Ñuhu*: for example, the small golden mask (number 257), found in the southern part of region II, which represents Xipe, the flayed god (Caso 1969, plate x), divine patron of Zaachila and its Zapotec dynasty. The symbolism of this god refers to the clearing of the fields, and therefore to spring and planting. Possibly it was placed in the sanctuary as a gift or emblem (spirit) of the royal family of Zaachila. Caso rightly observed that the face paint – indicated by a horizontal line (of gold) on the face – seems to be that of a woman.

The alternative image of the skull is also clearly present in the treasure of Tomb 7: the skull decorated with mosaic (Caso 1969: 62–69; plate IV). The heart

appears as a motif on the important golden round artifact that was found in the very centre of Tomb 7, in the midst of the threshold between chamber and antechamber (Caso 1969: 115; plate XVII).

Among the gems offered by Lady 6 Monkey there is also a slice cut from a conch, with the same *xonecuilli* motif in a red colour. In Tomb 7 there is a very similar item: the shell bracelet Number 156, decorated with the *xonecuilli* sign (Caso 1969: 161; Fig. 131ab).<sup>17</sup> This S-shaped motif is a diagnostic of Lady 9 Grass.

Among Lady 6 Monkey's gifts we also note a butterfly-shaped gem, as are commonly found in Tomb 7. Similarly, butterfly-shaped objects of gold, jade and other coloured materials are offered during the funeral ceremony for Lord 12 Movement (Codex Iya Nacuaa II, p. 8-II).

As we saw in Chapter 2, objects of gold and jade also appear placed before Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 15. The context is as follows: men arrive with bowls filled with a red liquid, probably blood, with *piciete* and with knotted herbs, probably as offerings for the deceased, dwelling in houses and cornfields, under the supervision of Lady 9 Grass in the Temple of Death. These precious objects, therefore, seem to function as emblematic offerings to the dead, and as such are intimately related to Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl'.

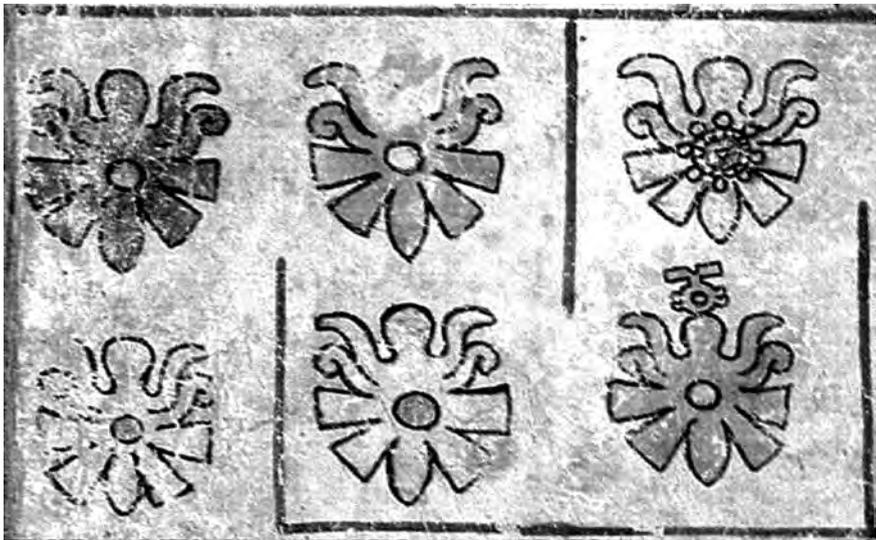


ILLUSTRATION 4.17 *Codex Iya Nacuaa II, p. 8-II: figures of butterflies in the funeral ceremony of Lord 12 Movement*

17 The bracelet was found in the centre of the 'threshold'; its decoration combines the *xonecuilli* (S) with star signs, which are also an attribute of Cihuacoatl as goddess of the Milky Way (cf. Jansen 2002; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a: 264–267).



ILLUSTRATION 4.18 *Codex Añute, p. 6-IV: butterfly jewel in the midst of other jewels*



ILLUSTRATION 4.19  
*Tomb7: jewel of eagle with butterfly (Caso 1969)*

Obviously, the offering of Lady 6 Monkey to Lady 9 Grass is an illustrative parallel for the precious objects deposited in Tomb 7. Also the context is similar: in both cases we are dealing with a shrine to communicate with the dead ancestors (and related divine beings such as Lady 9 Grass). The aim of such a ritual encounter – as suggested by the codices – was to ask for advice, instructions or oracles from the beyond. At the same time the deposited a treasure may be understood as an expression of (anticipated) gratitude and respect to the ancestors. We may therefore interpret the precious objects in Tomb 7 as having a similar function.

We may speculate that some part of the treasure accumulated through the years during consecutive ritual sessions in Tomb 7, which may have started during the lifetime of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' but may have had earlier antecedents as well. The stylistic and technical coherence of the precious artefacts, however, suggests that most of the treasure dates from a specific short period, the same time as the very similar artifacts found in Tomb 1 at Zaachila, i.e. from the end of the reign of Lord 5 Flower, in the first decades of the fourteenth century. This leads us to believe that the most significant part of the treasure may have been deposited precisely on the occasion of the marital alliance described on Bone 124. This would make the parallel with the offerings of Lady 6 Monkey even closer, as she was trying to solve a dynastic conflict, and the counsel she received was to arrange a marriage.



ILLUSTRATION 4.20 *Mountain of Añute (Jaltepec)*



ILLUSTRATION 4.21 *Ancient temple on top of the Mountain of Añute*



ILLUSTRATION 4.22  
*Cave next to the ancient temple on top of the Mountain of Añute*

### 3 The Ballcourt Pendant

Some of the artifacts deposited in Tomb 7 actually contain references to ritual acts that may have been part of the liturgy celebrated in and around this sanctuary, as well as to the associated symbolism. A superb example is the magnificent golden 'pectoral of various sections' or 'ballcourt pendant', which consists of a vertical sequence of four plaques with scenes (Caso 1969: 95 ss. Núm. 167, Lám IX). The lower part of the pendant consists of hanging eagle feathers and bells, which seem to have mainly a decorative function (like in other pendants); thus we get the visual impression that the sequence of the scenes is to be read from the top down. The scenes do not show a clear narrative relationship, but rather represent four distinct images.

The superior section shows a ballcourt with its rings in the form of serpents.<sup>18</sup> In the ballcourt there are two men standing opposite each other: obviously they are ballplayers. Both are men and wear a loincloth. Their head is covered by a string of beads or pearls, with a special ornament (the figure of a bird or butterfly) set on their forehead.<sup>19</sup> One of the ballplayers (on our left) has a skeletonised jaw; his opponent has no such special characteristic. The person with the skeletonised jaw raises his left hand with two fingers and the thumb pointing upward and extends his other arm behind him, holding a ball.<sup>20</sup> The person on our right just raises his left hand, without fingers being specially marked, but rather with a somewhat curved handpalm that suggests the gesture of throwing *piciete* powder up in the air for purification during a ritual. He has his left arm stretched out behind him (in the same position as his opponent), he makes a fist and seems to grasp a bush of feathers or palm leaves, which are generally used in bloodletting and other offering rituals.

Between the two men, in the centre of the ballcourt, lies a human skull with a knife in the cavity of the nose (facing left). A volute rises from it, indicating that the skull is speaking. The person with the skeletonised jaw seems to start the action of bringing the ball into the game; he faces the skull and the other personage, who seems to be involved in a ritual action. Because of their attire and position both persons are qualified as basically equal and involved in different

18 Compare the representation of a ballcourt in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 21.

19 Compare the headdress of the goddess Chantico in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 63, upper scene.

20 The fact that he holds the ball in his hand does not need to refer to a form of 'handball', such as *pelota mixteca*, but may just indicate that he is preparing to start the ballgame. See the PhD dissertation of Berger (2016) for an in-depth discussion of Oaxacan ballgames and their historical development.

aspects of the same action. We therefore read them as two ballplayers – one in charge of communicating with the dead (in other words: a priest of Lady 9 Grass), the other a noble or rather – in this context – the ruler. Both are involved in a ritual scene that precedes the actual ballgame. The detail that the ballplayer with the skeletonised jaw makes a gesture with two fingers suggests that it is significant that both are carrying out the ritual act together.

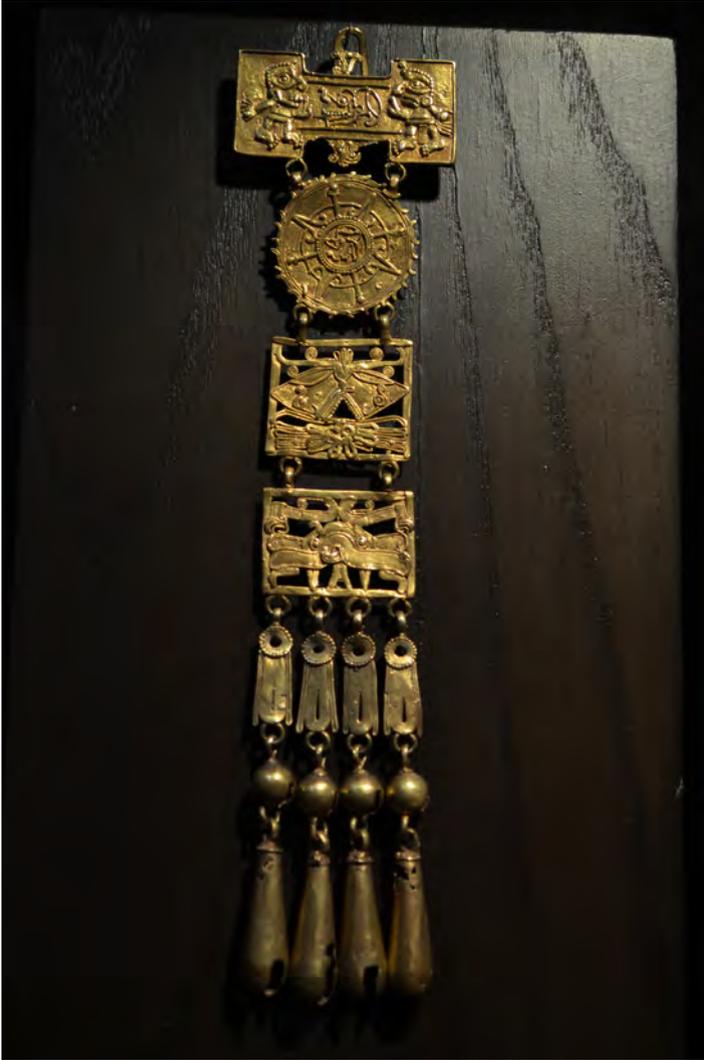


ILLUSTRATION 4.23 *Ballcourt pendant or pectoral of various sections*  
(Museo de las Culturas de Oaxaca, I.N.A.H.)

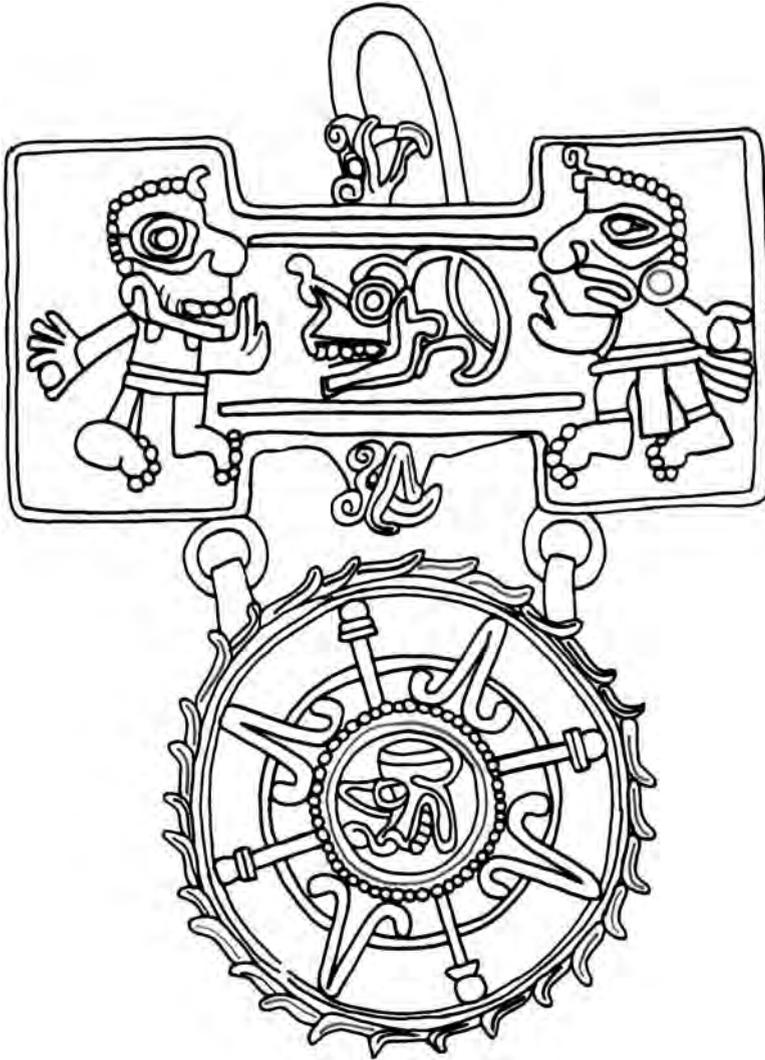


ILLUSTRATION 4.24A *Ballcourt pendant, top part (drawing Iván Rivera)*

The second image on the pendant, which follows underneath that of the ballcourt, represents the sun. The solar disc is surrounded by a current of liquid, probably blood (Caso 1969: 96). In the centre there is a human skull looking downward: probably this is a reference to the Mixtec calendar name of the sun

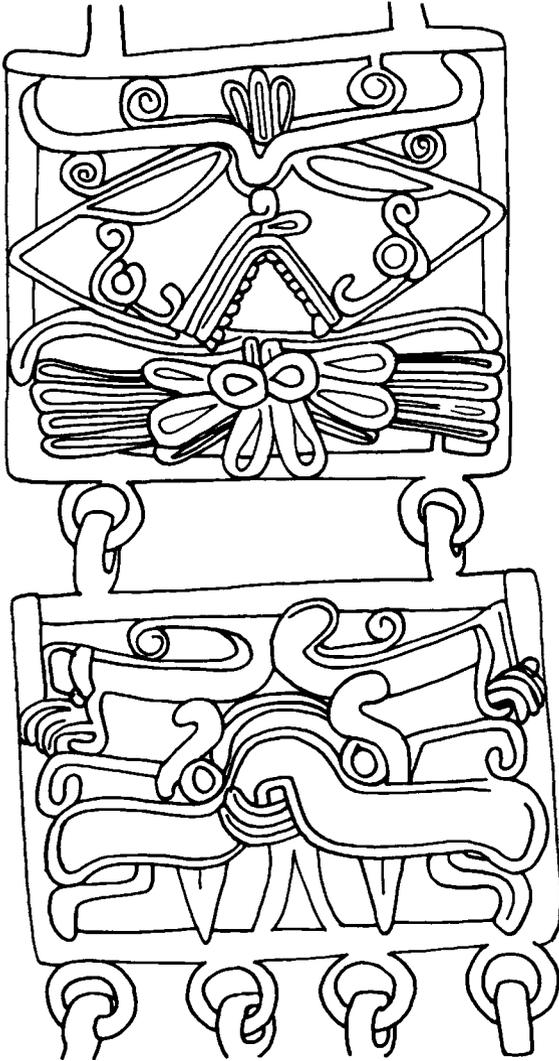


ILLUSTRATION 4.24B  
*Ballcourt pendant, lower  
 part (drawing Iván Rivera)*

god: Lord 1 Death (*Iya Camaa* in the dictionary of Alvarado).<sup>21</sup> Just as the skull in the ballcourt, this skull has a knife in the cavity of the nose and it is speaking. The total configuration gives the visual impression of a round altar or vessel

21 This configuration has a parallel in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 21. Compare the image of the sun god with this name on an *atlatl* in the Ethnographic Museum 'Luigi Pigorini' in Rome.

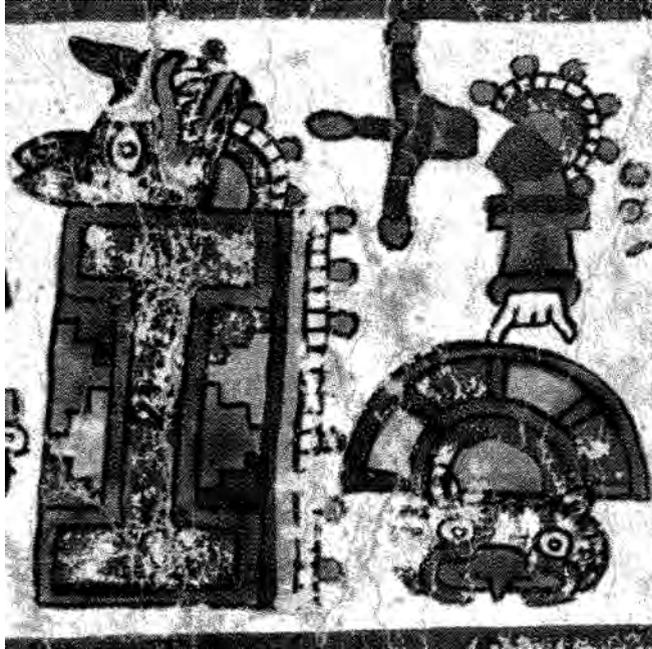


ILLUSTRATION 4.25 *Codex Nuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu, p. 36-II: offerings of Lady 6 Monkey to Lady 9 Grass*

dedicated to the sun, seen from above: a *cuauhxicalli*, as we often encounter in Aztec art (see Chapter 6). In codices we see that such round altars were often located in or next to ballcourts.<sup>22</sup>

The third image on the pendant is a humanised flint (with face and mouth), that looks downward. From the centre of its upper part four scrolls emerge: they create a resemblance with flints in Aztec art that represent the god Tezcatlipoca, Smoking Mirror, in which case the scrolls represent smoke and are indicative of the gods name. There are four of these emanating scrolls, which suggests that they go to the four directions. Below this flint, that is to say in front of its downward looking face, there is something that resembles a tied bundle with a topknot.

The fourth image consists of the open jaws of an alligator (looking downwards). Generally this image symbolises the living earth (*Tlaltecuhтли* in Nahuatl), although in that case it normally is looking upward. Looking closer we see that behind (above) the jaws of the alligator there are legs with claws, as often occur in *Tlaltecuhтли* images. The position suggests that this *Tlaltecuhтли*

<sup>22</sup> See for example Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15 ff. as well as our discussion of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 40 in Chapter 7.

is descending or approaching. From this configuration hang four pendants in the form of eagle feathers with bells.

In Caso's comments we notice an echo of the astral interpretation, introduced into the studies of Mesamerican art and religion by Eduard Seler, which was still fashionable in the 1930s, but has since become obsolete. Caso proceeds in this manner, mentioning that the Mexica historian Tezozomoc names the stars of the North the 'ballcourt of stars' (*citlaltlachtli*). These data lead him to conclude that the pectoral represents 'the starry sky, the sun, the moon and the earth, i.e. the universe' (Caso 1969: 97).<sup>23</sup> Caso (1969: 96) refers to the Aztec chronicle 'Legend of the Suns' (*Leyenda de los Soles*) that registers the name of 4 Flint for the moon, but the flint in the pectoral does not seem to be a calendar name; furthermore it lacks the dots of the number (what Caso read as dots are the ends of the speech scrolls).

We do not exclude the possibility that the organisation of the four plaques of the pectoral may connote aspects of the Mesoamerican worldview. Indeed in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) we find the flint associated with the moon (p. 50), and Codex Vaticanus A, f. iv refers to one of the heavens as the 'place of striking flints', a term that refers to thunder and lightning.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the comparison with the codices suggests that the main signs of this pectoral also have symbolic associations with the Mesoamerican ritual and mantic language.

The ballcourt scene visually dominates the pendant and thus provides a context for the other images. The ballplayers seem to be involved primarily in a ritual action in the ballcourt. The ballgame itself may be a metaphor for engaging in a ritual relationship. The focus of this ritual is clearly the skull in the centre. Therefore, like many other images in Tomb 7, the scene in the ballcourt seems to be about communication with the dead, probably an invocation of and offering to the ancestors. In iconographical terms there is a clear relationship between the ballplayer with a skeletonised lower jaw and the priest of the Plumed Serpent on the golden ornament ('pectoral') Number 26, who is characterised by the same attribute (which we interpret as 'speaking with of for the dead'). Both jewels were found closely together.

Ballcourts are generally closed spaces (within walls) with the aspect of a sunken courtyard. In various codices we find examples of ballcourt marked

23 Tezozomoc in his *Crónica Mexicana* (1975: Ch. 82) indeed identifies the *citlaltlachtli* as 'el norte y su rueda'. Paddock (1985) also comments on this pectoral, expressing doubts of the relationship – suggested by Caso – with the moon and Tezcatlipoca.

24 Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, iv: 24; cf. our discussion of this celestial sign in Chapter 5.

by skulls.<sup>25</sup> They seem to indicate that such a place was an entrance to the spiritual realm of ancestors and gods. At the same time the ballgame is an act of confrontation, in which one indeed may risk gaining life and glory or being killed. We interpret the ballcourt therefore as a liminal place between life and death. We are tempted to situate the first scene of the pendant in a ballcourt in Monte Albán itself: the most famous ballcourt at the northern side of the main plaza is not far from Tomb 7. That structure dated from Classic times and must have been in a ruined state at the time of the deposition of the treasure in Tomb 7, but probably it was still recognisable as an ancient ballcourt and it very well may have been used for rituals to invoke the ancestors.

Thus we interpret the first scene of the pendant as a ritual of a priest of Lady 9 Grass and the ruler, who are initiating a ballgame invoking the dead ancestors (the skull) and asking them to speak, i.e. to give an oracle. In this action the human ballplayers play the role (and become representatives of) the primordial hero twins, so underlining that the ballgame itself has cosmic value and is a symbolic engagement with the divine powers of ancestors and gods.<sup>26</sup>

Among the offerings that Lady 6 Monkey gave to Lady 9 Grass is also a jewel in the form of a ballcourt, accompanied by a ball-game belt known as a yoke.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Cf. Codex Magliabechi, p. 79v, and Codex Tudela, p. 67 obverse and reverse, where the ballcourt is marked by skulls on the central line and in the corners (Anders and Jansen et al., 1996; Batalla Rosado 2002). As Caso already observed, there is another parallel in the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 21, where a Black Tezcatlipoca confronts the Red Tezcatlipoca in the ballgame. We interpret this as a divinatory image, warning ballplayers of the dangers that the associated time segment might bring them, but the image of the ballcourt itself is very similar to that on the pectoral of Tomb 7: rings in the form of serpents, the court marked by skull, bone and hearts.

26 The scene reminds us of how Lord 8 Deer, in an early and decisive event of his biography, confronted a divine power in the ballgame. According to the Codex Nūu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), p. 10-IV, his adversary was the god Venus, Lord 1 Movement, whose attribute is also a skeletonised face. According to Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Columbino), p. 2-II, however, his adversary on that occasion was a character with a diadem of jade beads: the sun god. Considering this parallel, it is possible that the two individuals on the ballcourt pendant incarnate the same divine characters against whom Lord 8 Deer was playing in the two versions of the narrative: Venus (with a nocturnal and funeral aspect) and Sun. These two gods initiate the narrative of the Codex Añute (Selden), p. 1-I, where they throw the arrows (rays) of the first morning light on the top a mountain (cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a: 257–258). They seem to be the primordial twin brothers, mentioned in the narrative of the grandmother (see Chapter 2).

27 Codex Nūu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), p. 36-II. For identifying the sign in the shape of a half ring as a yoke, see the similar representation of this object in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 45.

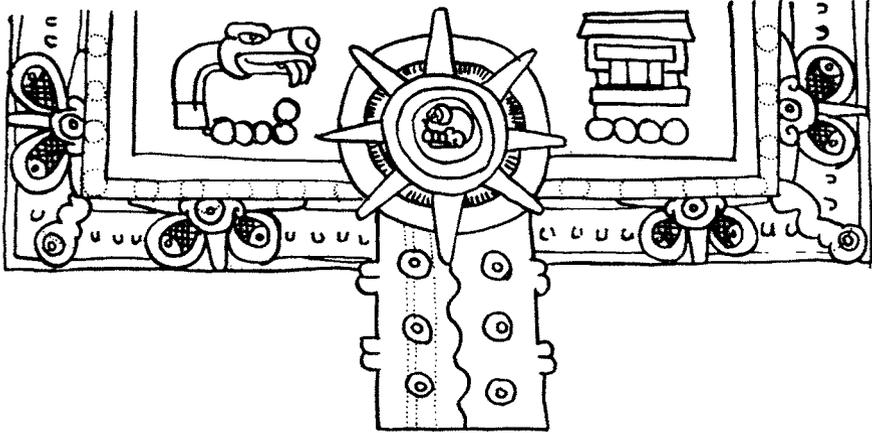


ILLUSTRATION 4.26 *The day sign Death inside the sun disc (Codex Tonindeye, p. 21)*

The jewel in question furthermore contains a frieze with step-fret motif that reads *ñuu*, 'place', in Mixtec, and the head of a bat, whereas the yoke is combined with the head of an owl. These added signs (bat, owl) together connect the ballgame with the realm of the dead. We recall the narrative of the *Popol Vuh*, in which the twin heroes descend into the underworld to play ball with the lords of death, and where one of them is decapitated by a large bat. The context of an offering to Lady 9 Grass suggests that these jewels express a specific petition and/or gratitude for favours received, concretely a petition to communicate with the ancestors and/or gratitude for their counsel.

The ballcourt pendant from Tomb 7 would have a similar overall meaning: it was probably specially made for the occasion to be deposited in order to establish communication with the deceased ancestors. The three following images then would have to make sense in this same context. Sun, flint and earth spirit (*Tlaltecuhli*) are central symbols and also deities in Mesoamerica. They appear frequent in ritual scenes. Possibly the interesting peculiarity that these three images are looking down may be caused by the fact that they are invoked from below, i.e. by humans. Together these three images may symbolise the celestial sphere (sun), the terrestrial surface (flint) and the subterranean world (*Tlaltecuhli*). The communication with the ancestors (skull) in the ballcourt leads to a further invocation of divine powers of the three cosmic levels in order to obtain their help and protection.

The position of the skull in the centre of the disc in the second scene indicates the direction of the sun as looking down at the people on the earth below. The fact that the circular image is surrounded by blood indicates that

a self-sacrifice was made: a human act of bloodletting for the sun. We recall that according to Mesoamerican worldview the sun moves forward thanks to the self-sacrifice of the gods, which is an example for humans; the first sunrise means the origin of an era, the beginning of human history and society (cf. Bone 302). The invocation would imply a prayer to receive some of the sun's force in return: light and energy of life. The sun is sight, knowledge, judgment and justice. Simultaneously, the sun can represent glory (Nahuatl: *Tonatiuh Ichan*, 'House of the Sun') that awaits the brave who died in combat or the princes who became gods.<sup>28</sup> A golden pectoral in the form of a solar disc with the god's face in its centre, found in Tomb 2 of Zaachila (Gallegos 1978: 116), may express the same idea.

As for the third scene: obviously the first association of flint is its (multiple) use as a knife. The knife is the instrument that is crucial for human culture. It is used for cutting all kinds of materials, for working the land, for cutting the umbilical cord, as well as for killing and making sacrifices. Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer), p. 26, contains the divinatory image of the sun god who uses such a flint knife to cut the umbilical cord that connects the newborn child with the sun, as a symbol of its vocation to glory.<sup>29</sup> The knife is not just an object, but a being, a deity: Tecpatl (Flint) or Iztli (Obsidian), one of the lords of the nights, often represented as a manifestation of Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror) or Xipe (the Lord of Skins). Well documented is the Aztec ritual of Tlacaxipehualiztli (Flaying) that centred on the flint as a manifestation of Xipe (the god of skins), i.e. the flint whose power is used to clean the fields for cultivation.<sup>30</sup> In a symbolic narrative, the flint knife appears as the son of Cihuacoatl, possibly as an index of cutting the umbilical cord but also as an expression of the call of the goddess upon humans to make (self-) sacrifices,

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28 The sun is also the central theme of one of the important rituals of the precolonial solar year: the 20-day period known as Panquetzaliztli in Nahuatl, which was represented by a sun disc in Mixtec pictography (as demonstrated by the Codex of Yanhuitlan). In fact Panquetzaliztli ('Rising of the Banners') is the feast related to the New Fire ceremony every 52 years, as documented in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) – see our discussion of the New Fire ceremony in Chapter 6.

29 Edition and commentary: Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1994.

30 The flint deity also plays an important role in the chapter on the rituals in a great ceremonial centre, presented in the central part of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), particularly on page 32 – see our Chapter 7. Flint knives decorated with mosaics representing eyes and mouths, i.e. their animated character as living beings, are frequently found at Aztec ceremonial sites such as the Templo Mayor (cf. Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 313).

and so demonstrate their religious respect to the deities.<sup>31</sup> We have seen that according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49, the Mixtec culture hero Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' was born from a flint – probably this flint was wrapped in the sacred bundle that was venerated in the Temple of Jewels.<sup>32</sup>

The flint knife in the third scene of the golden ballcourt pendant is represented with eyes as a living being (god). The smoke rising from its upper part (back) probably identifies the flint as a manifestation of Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror. The flint is looking downward: under it we see a bound bundle with a decorative bow. The form of this topknot indicates that the bundle itself is not inverted or looking downward, but standing upright. Therefore this bundle does not represent another divine being that is invoked, but rather the well-known offering of firewood that is placed here in front of the flint deity. As such it may be read as a parallel of the blood that surrounds the sun disc in the second scene. These elements seem to be offerings made by the humans in order to invoke and mobilise the powers of sun and flint. The flint deity (Tecpatl or Itztli in Nahuatl) and the sun deity (under the name Piltzintecuhtli) occupy the second and third position in the series of the nine Gods of the Nights (the first being the god of fire: Xiuhtecuhtli). Together they remind us that life is sacrifice, and that religious force is born from this concept.

The fourth image explicitly refers to a deity: earth as a living being, Tlaltecuhli. The open jaws of an alligator generally represent a cave or entrance into earth. In the context of Tomb 7 one would suspect that this deity represents the *genius loci* of the subterranean sanctuary itself. The image itself does not include a reference to an offering (as was the case in the second and third image), but perhaps we may see the hanging eagle feathers and bells as such: they occur quite frequently as decorative parts of the treasure's golden artefacts and therefore must have a generalised meaning. Eagle feathers may refer to courage, nobility and glory ('eagle warriors'). In fact a single golden eagle feather also forms part of the treasure (Caso 1969: 119–121; Lám. XIX).

The four images are not explicitly linked in a narrative sequence, but it is possible that they refer to a known religious text. Being emblematic

31 Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993: 178–179, 200) referring to Sahagún (Book I, cap. 6) and Mendieta (Book II, cap. 1).

32 Cf. Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15. The temple cults introduced by that same Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48, were that of the sun (corresponding to the Aztec month feast of Panquetzaliztli), that of Xipe (Tlacaxipehualiztli), and that of the Dark Temple. The latter sign probably refers to a subterranean ritual, a Mixtec parallel to the *Tlillan* of the goddess Cihuacoatl in the Nahuatl world (see our discussion of the *Tlillan* of Cihuacoatl in Chapter 6).



ILLUSTRATION 4.27 *Codex Tezcatlipoca, p. 26: The sun god, as divine patron of this period, cuts the umbilical cord of the newborn child and so defines its destiny as dedicated to the sun and glory*

representations of deities, they connote specific rituals related to those divine powers. Concretely one might think of a ballgame ritual (honouring the ancestors), the feast of the winter solstice (Panquetzaliztli), the celebration of the knife for clearing fields in spring (Tlacaxipehualiztli), and a cave ritual to ask for rain. The pendant may commemorate the participation in such rituals and simultaneously express a petition (prayer) to the ancestors and – by the same



ILLUSTRATION 4.28 *Codex Yuta Tnoho, p. 49: Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' is born from a large flint knife*

token – an indication of faith in its effectiveness to proceed from death and darkness to light and life.<sup>33</sup> The visual references point on the one hand to the world of death, twilight, caves, but on the other the jewel itself is

33 Compare similar actions in the central chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), which we discuss in Chapter 7.

materialised in gold, and entails feathers and bells as signs of brightness and beauty. The ballcourt pendant registers also the offerings that are part of the ritual commitment: (1) the ballgame itself, with feathers or palm leaves for bloodletting, probably accompanied by *piciete* powder, for the ancestors (2) blood for the sun god, (3) firewood for the flint deity, and (4) the golden jewel itself for the spirit of the earth.

The contents of the prayer can be inferred from the symbolic and mantic meaning of the signs that designate the invoked powers. The ballcourt ritual apparently asks the ancestors to give force for the confrontation, the engagement, the challenge that is life. The sun grants human beings the vocation of being righteous and brave, and also allows the achievement of glory through struggle and self-sacrifice. The knife summarises life's destiny: from cutting the umbilical cord to the obligations of self-sacrifice. Earth is where we are born from, where our umbilical cord is buried and where we return when we die. In their totality these images show us the dynamics (the ballgame) of the different cosmic spheres: they ask the ancestors and gods for force and protection in the struggle and self-sacrifice that define the road of the human being from earth towards the sun, from darkness to light, and from there returning to earth, the cycle of life-death-life, as Estés calls it. In this way the golden pendant in its four sections summarises the symbolic vision, the cultural ethos and religious commitment that permeate the iconography and pictorial texts of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán.

#### 4 The Sacred Flint

A clue for identifying the type of sanctuary that Tomb 7 was, and the type of rituals carried out there, can be found on Bone 235, which offers an interesting example of a temple scene. In the lower part of the carved scene we see the earth, the open jaws of the alligator, i.e. a cave-like underground space for religious activities and connection to origins. Above this cave stands a temple, with in its centre a flint knife. Most likely we are looking again at a representation of the ceremonial centre to which the underground sanctuary of Tomb 7 belonged.

Next to the open jaws of the alligator (the cave) on Bone 235 there is a numerical dot, indicating that the combination is also to be read as the day 1 Alligator, the beginning of time and the name of the primordial inventor of the calendar and the first calendar priest: Cipactonal.

Above this sign there are some speech scrolls coming down with the motif of jade (preciousness) and with an eye (darkness): precious and dark mists.

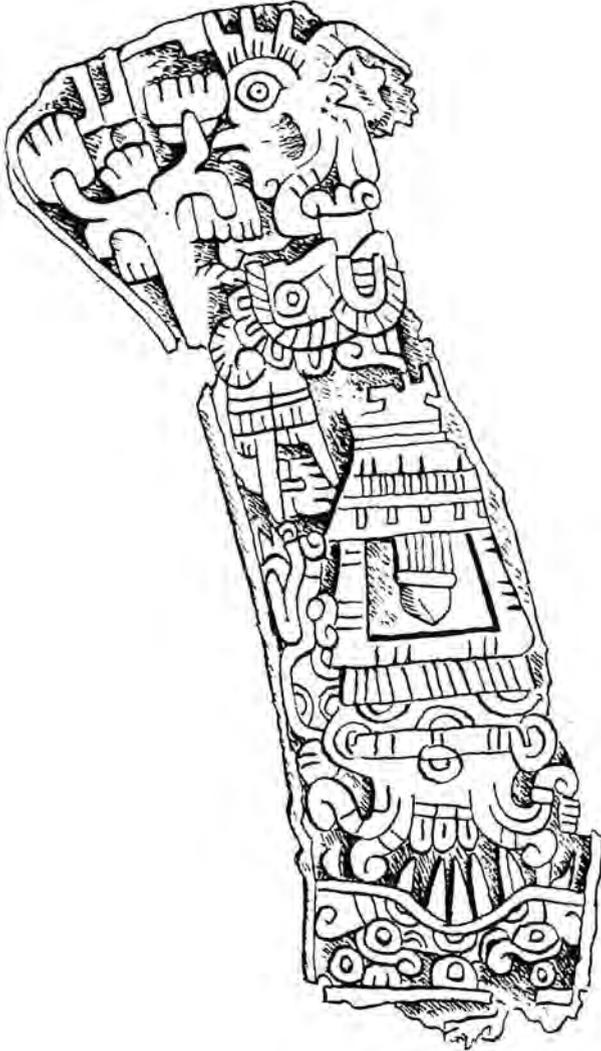


ILLUSTRATION 4.29 *Bone 235 (Caso 1969) (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.-INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

From this set of signs a serpent rises that carries and surrounds the Temple of Flint. The 'serpent of mist and darkness' has its parallel in the Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2, where it surrounds the tree of origin: obviously as a symbol of mystery. This serpent may be compared to the Plumed Serpent that surrounds the Temple of Jewels in Codex Tonindefe (Nuttall) and to similar serpents around temples in the temple scene in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).



ILLUSTRATION 4.30

*Bone 235 (SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA.- INAH.-MEX: reproduction authorised by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)*

Above the Temple of Flint on Bone 235 rises the head of the god Quetzalcoatl – which is also associated with the representations of this temple in the codices Tonindeye and Yoalli Ehecatl already mentioned. Behind Quetzalcoatl stands a tree, possibly the same tree of origin that we seen in the scenes on Bones 203i and 215. An eagle head (decorated with an ornament of feathers) descends on the upward-looking face of Quetzalcoatl with a heart in its beak, which it puts in the mouth of the god.

Thus the scene on Bone 235 seems to refer to a ritual site: a Temple of Flint, situated above a cave or underground chamber dedicated to Cipactonal (1 Alligator) and surrounded by mysterious forces (serpents of darkness and mist). There Quetzalcoatl manifests himself: the brave ones offer hearts to him – these hearts may represent their own (as a symbol of total devotion) or those of sacrificed war captives (as symbols of their bravery) or any life force, such as the first fruits of the field; all in the context of a respectful veneration of the tree of origin of the Ñuu Dzauí dynasties.

## 5 The Temple of Jewels

The association of the temple with a flint knife has a parallel in the representation of the Temple of Jewels in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 15–19. The opening scene of the narrative of this codex chapter (p. 14) is situated next to a cave in the Rock of Heaven – probably the Mountain of Heaven (*Cavua Caa Andevui*) near Yuta Tnoho (Apoala). From here a couple, Lord 5 Flower and Lady 3 Flint ‘Quechquemítl with Conch Shell’ had come forward (originated). The *Quechquemítl* sign in the name is probably to be read phonetically as *dzico*, a word that with another tone means ‘virtue’ or ‘power’. Likewise, the sign of a conch shell (*yee*) stands as a homonym for the word *yee* that means ‘strength’, yielding a total reading as ‘power, strength’, which in combination with the reference to the Plumed Serpent is understood as ‘power, strength of the Plumed Serpent’.<sup>34</sup>

Several other important landscapes are mentioned, where diverse individuals are located. In the second and third landscapes there are two pairs of priests, all with a calendar name that starts with the number 10, *si-* in Mixtec, perhaps a homonym for the title *sii*, ‘grandfather’ or ‘elder’.

The first two of these carry important ritual elements:

- 1) the quincunx staff, a staff of authority, the central sign of which refers to the four directions and the centre and may be compared to a symbol still used today in Apoala, which has the name *Thucucua* (López García 2007). Probably it represents cosmic harmony and the life-giving power of the centre expanding to the four directions. It is an important dynastic emblem, usually carried by lineage founders. It was brought to earth by

34 Alvarado: *yee*, ‘caracol’, *tay yee*, ‘fuerte hombre’, *tay yee ini*, ‘hombre animoso, esforzado, atrevido, magnánimo; constante persona’, *sa si cuvui yee*, ‘fortaleza’.

Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoat' when he came down from the Place of Heaven (the Cavua Caandevui mountain near Apoala).<sup>35</sup>

- 2) the staff of the Xipe bundle, a set of sticks or staffs bound together with red and white cloth, a symbolic reference to the ancestors,
- 3) a paper roll and a conch shell,
- 4) the sacred bundle and the fire drill. Of these the fire drill refers to the New Fire ceremony, which marks the foundation (and cyclical renovation) of the community. These ceremonies are described in detail in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), where they include the ceremonial cleansing of the primordial places and buildings and are also rituals during which the landscapes, towns and sanctuaries receive their names and their sacred foundation dates, as the basis for ritual commemoration and permanent (re)construction of the community. Clearly, dynastic ideology is fused here with ritual action and religious symbolism.

Thinking about the treatment of such sacred elements today, we understand that these were not mere objects but beings of a sacred, divine nature.<sup>36</sup> Their status may be compared to that of the images of saints in present-day indigenous churches, which are not mere objects either, but manifestations of divine presence. It is indeed possible that such beings – sacred emblems of the Teozacualco and Zaachila dynasties – were kept and venerated in Tomb 7 amidst the sacred bundles and other relics.

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 14, makes us understand that these sacred items and the priests who carried them were originally associated with specific places. The Mountain of Heaven at Apoala is the first site mentioned. One of the toponymic signs (in the third landscape) includes that of Town of Flames, which may be the sign of Ñuu Ndecu (Burning Town), i.e. Achiutla (today San Miguel Achiutla) – this place appears as the place of origin of the Añute (Jaltepec) dynasty in Codex Añute (Selden), p. 2. In that scene there are also similar elderly priests with calendar names that contain the number 10.

The last landscape clearly refers to the Valley between Snow-Topped Volcanos, which must be the Cholula-Tlaxcala area. One of the volcanos sustains in the clouds above the image of a lady with a blue skirt: in the given context this must be a reference to the volcano Matlalcueye (now also called 'La Malinche'). The other volcano is dedicated to the rain god and probably refers to Mount Tlaloc, the religious importance of which has been documented in detail by

35 Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48. See also Chapter 5.

36 See the contribution of Raúl Macuil Martínez ('Los dos mundos de Santa Catarina') to the volume edited by Jansen and Raffa (2015).

fray Diego Durán (1967, I: 292). In the valley are two men painted black (priests or spirits, a double meaning contained in the Nahuatl term *tlamacazqui*). Next to those volcanos in central Mexico there is another landscape, a mountain of what seem to be red speech scrolls. In this place stands a Lord 2 Reed 'Tezcatlipoca' offering a quail to Lord 4 Jaguar 'Quetzalcoatl'. Given these personages and the vicinity of the volcanos in the other landscape, we think this place is also situated towards the Nahuatl-speaking area, and possibly represents the Tzatzitepetl, 'The Mountain that Speaks', near Tula (Hidalgo), where the priest-ruler Quetzalcoatl realised his rituals of self-sacrifice (Codex Vaticanus A, f. 8r). There are reasons to identify Lord 4 Jaguar 'Quetzalcoatl' in the Ñuu Dzaui codices as that very same Toltec priest-ruler, the 'historical Quetzalcoatl' (see Chapter 5).<sup>37</sup>

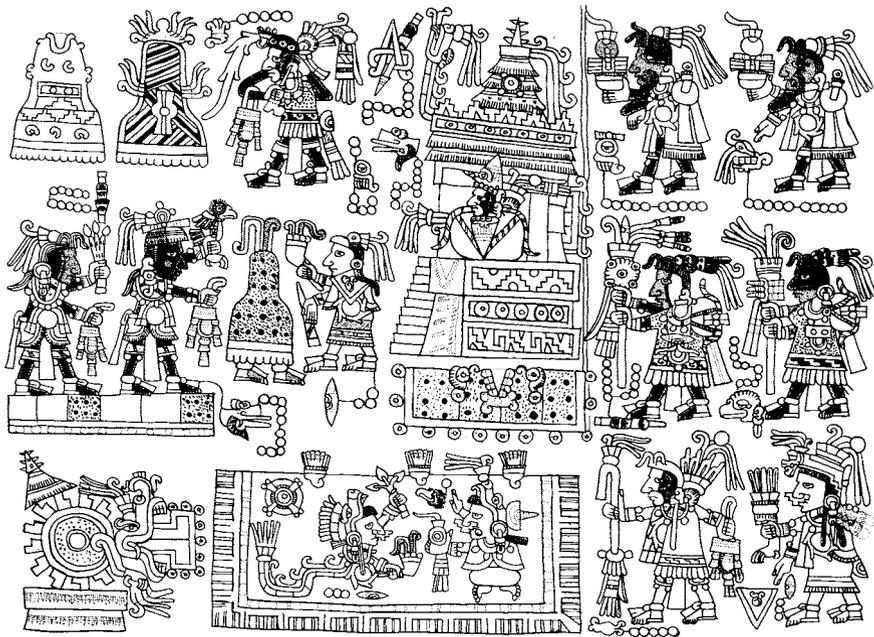


ILLUSTRATION 4.31 *Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15 (Right to Left, boustrophedon): rituals around the Temple of Jewels*

37 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007a) and Jansen (2010). The rivalry between (impersonators of the gods) Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl in Tula is a well-known theme in the (later) historical sources about that period.

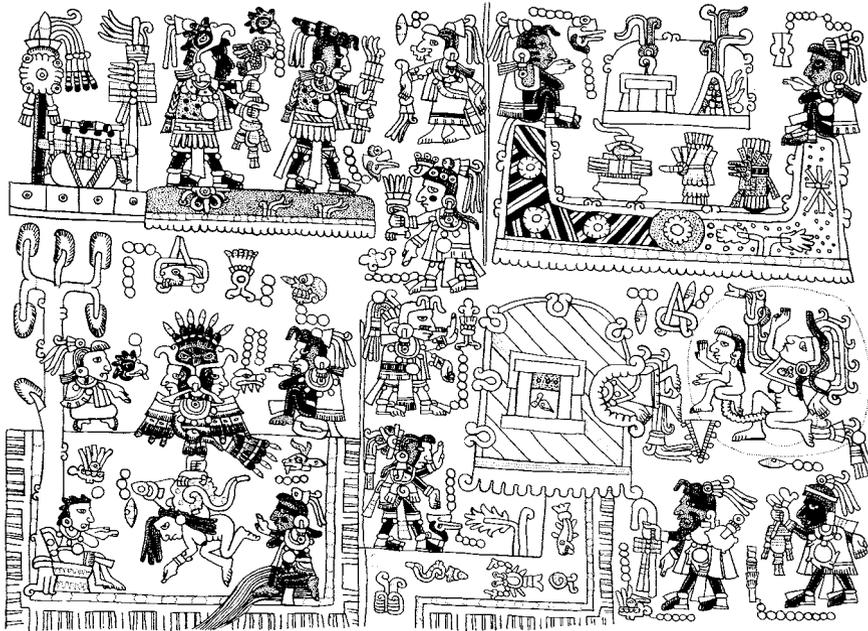


ILLUSTRATION 4.32 *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 16 (Right to Left, boustrophedon): the birth of Lady 3 Flint

Continuing the narrative, *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 15, shows how Lord 5 Flower (not to be confused with Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila, who lived much later) and Lady 3 Flint ‘Power and Strength of the Plumed Serpent’ (Shell Quechquemiltl), accompanied by the four priests that have a calendar name with the number 10 and carry the ritual staffs and sacred bundles, arrive at a River of Feathers and Jade at the foot of Ash Mountain, i.e. the region of the West.<sup>38</sup> Here Lady 3 Flint turns into her *nahual*, the Plumed Serpent, and enters the river. She takes with her a branch as a sign of the reality of her trance voyage, as was customary.<sup>39</sup> In her *nahual* experience she goes to make an offering of incense to the Grandmother of the river, *Sitna Yuta*, the elderly Lady 1 Eagle, patron of the West and of fertility and human procreation.<sup>40</sup> Lady 1 Eagle hands a jewel (jade bead with feather) to Lady 3 Flint, which in this context may be interpreted as a sign that she will become pregnant.

38 The river of feathers and jade is also mentioned at the beginning of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (Caso 1961): it is probably a metaphor for a place of origin.

39 Cf. the *Tlapoztec acxoyatl nezcaoyotl*, ‘desgajada rama del testimonio’, mentioned by Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise 1: Ch. 4).

40 See our Chapter 2.

Both Lady 3 Flint and Lord 5 Flower then perform self-sacrifice – she with a maguey thorn, he with a bone perforator, she with the incense burner, he carrying the incense bag – in a ceremonial centre.<sup>41</sup> The latter is dominated by a big Temple of Jewels, surrounded by a Plumed Serpent, suggesting that it is a *nahual* place, a temple of visions under divine protection. Inside the temple stands a sacred bundle with a flint, from which the countenance of Quetzalcoatl emerges. Next to the bundle and flint the day 9 Wind is painted. Probably this combination means that the bundle contained a piece of the flint of Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’. This divine person is the culture hero of primordial Mixtec history, the one who ordered the cosmos, brought water (life) to the different places in the region and initiated the important rituals, according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 49–47. This ‘Mixtec Quetzalcoatl’ is known in contemporary Mixtec of Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatongo) as Koo Sau (ancient: Coo Dzavui), the ‘rain serpent’ or whirlwind, a powerful *nahual* with creative and destructive properties, indeed bringer of rain. The image suggests that the central being who was venerated in this place was the Plumed Serpent himself, Lord 9 Wind, represented by his *ixiptla*: a flint wrapped in a sacred bundle. Probably this is – at least conceptually – the same as the flint from which Lord 9 Wind was born according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49, before coming down from the place of heaven to bring water and order to the Mixtec world. The sacred bundle, therefore, is probably similar to or identical with the bundle that was venerated in the sanctuary of Achiutla, the main oracle and temple of the Mixtec region: it contained a jade sculpture of the plumed (‘winged’) serpent.

Next to the Temple of Jewels stood a circular altar dedicated to the fire serpent, i.e. to the *nahual* power of light balls that move through the night sky. It was situated at the entrance (mouth) of a ballcourt that was surrounded by darkness, i.e. dedicated to mysterious powers. Under the Temple of Jewels there is a plot of earth, surrounded by darkness, with in the centre a skeletonised face (jaws and eyes) – this sign is similar to the convention for earth as recipient of offerings in Mexica art, for example on the dedication stone of the Templo Mayor. We interpret this convention as a reference to the ancestors who dwell underground. There is a clear iconographical link with the Mexica monuments that represent Cihuacoatl, Tzitzimitl or Tlaltecuhli (e.g. the Stone of Tizoc).<sup>42</sup>

41 See the observations by Hamann (1997) on the parallelism in the composition of this scene.

42 See our Chapter 6.

In the next scene we see priests preparing the sweathbath. Lady 3 Flint gives birth to a daughter with the same calendar name (because she was born on the same day in the 260-day year as that on which her mother had been born) and with the given name 'Quechquemitl of Jade', which we read as 'Virtue of Jade', a general reference to beauty and preciousness. The sign appears also in combination with a reference to the Plumed Serpent in the headdress of the young lady (p. 20) and therefore the combination may characterise her as a jewel of the plumed serpent.<sup>43</sup>

Mother 3 Flint went into a cave in the West, from where a river came forward. Then Lord 5 Flower travelled together with Lady 3 Flint to several places (p. 16). Mostly these representations of Lady 3 Flint do not show the sign of her given name, the exception being Lady 3 Flint at the beginning (upper right-hand corner) of page 17, where she is clearly Lady 3 Flint 'Virtue of Jade' (Jade Quechquemitl). This suggests that the daughter is the protagonist of (most of)

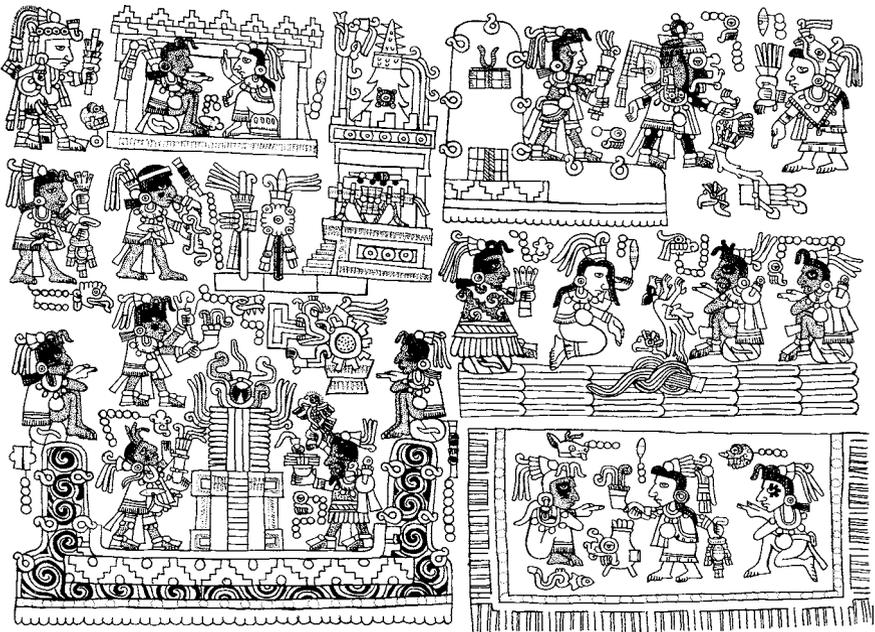


ILLUSTRATION 4.33 *Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 17 (Right to Left, boustrophedon): travels of Lady 3 Flint*

43 Williams (2013) has proposed that the name 'Quechquemitl of Jade' (which he reads as 'red quechquemitl') is a second given name of Lady 3 Flint 'Quechquemitl of Shell – Plumed Serpent' (mother), but on page 20 of the codex it is clear that it is the given name of the daughter, who married Lord 12 Wind.

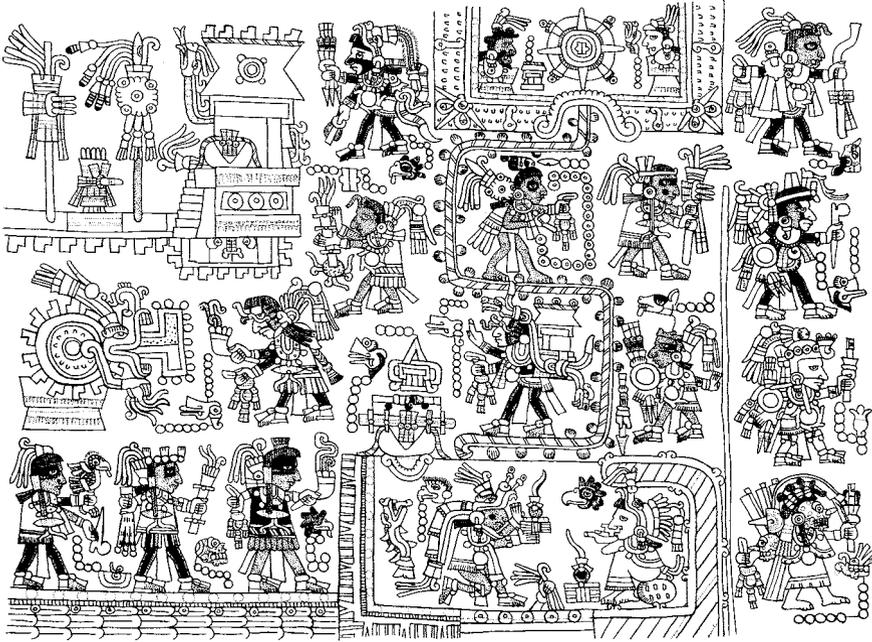


ILLUSTRATION 4.34A *Codex Tonindecy* (Nuttall), p. 18 (Right to Left, boustrophedon): Lord 12 Wind comes down from heaven and arrives in Yuta Thnoh (Apoala)

these scenes. She is finally seated in the palace, manifesting her obedience (with her raised hand) to her father (who makes the gesture of the pointed finger, which expresses leadership and command).<sup>44</sup>

Their palace is situated in a similar ceremonial centre as the one we saw before: the Temple of Jewels surrounded by the Plumed Serpent together with the round altar of the fire serpent. Inside the Temple of Jewels the sacred bundle and the fire drill are deposited; in front of the temple the sacred staffs are planted in the ground. Among those present at the ritual are the (impersonators of the) important deities associated with the four cardinal points: Lord 1 Death 'Sun' (East) and Lord 2 Dog 'archetypical elder priest' (North), then Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl', the culture hero in the centre of this group, followed by Lord 7 Flower 'Sun' (East) and Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' (South) – we recall that the deity of the West, Lady 1 Eagle, was already mentioned on page 15.

Then a new individual is introduced: Lord 12 Wind 'Smoke Eye' (p. 18). His given name and black body paint indicate that he was a visionary priest.

44 We find the same gestures in *Tira de Tecomaxtlahuaca* (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: 226–229).

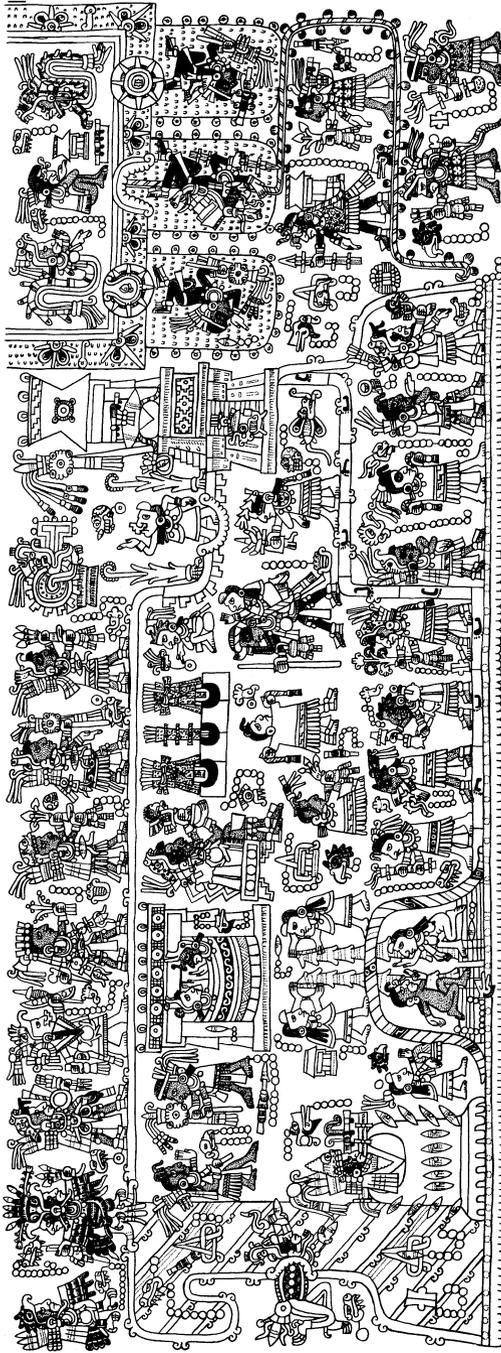


ILLUSTRATION 4.34B Codex Tomindeye (Nuttall), p. 19ab (Right to Left): marriage of Lord 12 Wind and Lady 3 Flint

He came down from the place of heaven (*Cavua Caa Andevui*), carrying a temple, i.e. in charge of a special cult. He arrived at the River of Hand Holding Feathers, the *Yuta Tnoho*, that determines the Mixtec name of the village of Apoala. There he finds or receives a sacred bundle and the instrument to kindle the New Fire. In the river we see Lady 'Plumed Serpent', seated in an abri. The context suggests that she is Lady 3 Flint, the mother, whose *nahual* was the Plumed Serpent. In front of her head is an eagle's head: the function of this sign is not clear. Perhaps the day 1 Eagle is meant (but there is no numerical dot), which would be a reference to Lady 1 Eagle, whom we saw on page 15. But the lady seated in the river of Apoala is not the elderly Grandmother, although perhaps the idea is that she is dedicated to this goddess.

Four priests, probably ambassadors sent by Lord 12 Wind, approach Lady 'Plumed Serpent' with offerings of firewood and a rubber ball. The scene would make sense as a ritual act with which Lord 12 Wind was asking her for the hand of her daughter Lady 3 Flint 'Virtue of Jade'. Afterwards Lord 12 Wind made offerings of incense to the round altar of the fire serpent and deposited the sacred staffs in front of the Temple of Jewels, surrounded by the Plumed Serpent. The sacred bundle was placed inside the Temple of Jewels. Again the underground death-related sanctuary below the temple is mentioned.

All this leads to the impressive landscape scene of pages 19a and 19b of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), where Lord 12 Wind and Lady 3 Flint (daughter) marry in a centrally located cave.

## 6 Identifying Monte Albán in the Codices

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) is precisely the historical document that focuses on the Teozacualco dynasty and was probably painted for rulers of this kingdom. This book gives us, therefore, a sense of the historical consciousness and dynastic memory that may have inspired Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'. The first chapters of the so-called obverse – actually the second side painted – record precisely that the origins of the Teozacualco dynasty dated back to primordial times, when the lords and ladies who had originated in Apoala won the battle against the stone people. Another important dynastic event in those primordial days was the marriage of a princess, Lady 3 Flint, to a visionary priest, Lord 12 Wind, who had come down from the Place of Heaven (identified as *Cavua Caa Andevui*, the 'Rock on which Heaven rests' near Apoala). This marriage took place in the largest landscape of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), covering two whole pages (19a and 19b). The landscape in question is framed by a large curved

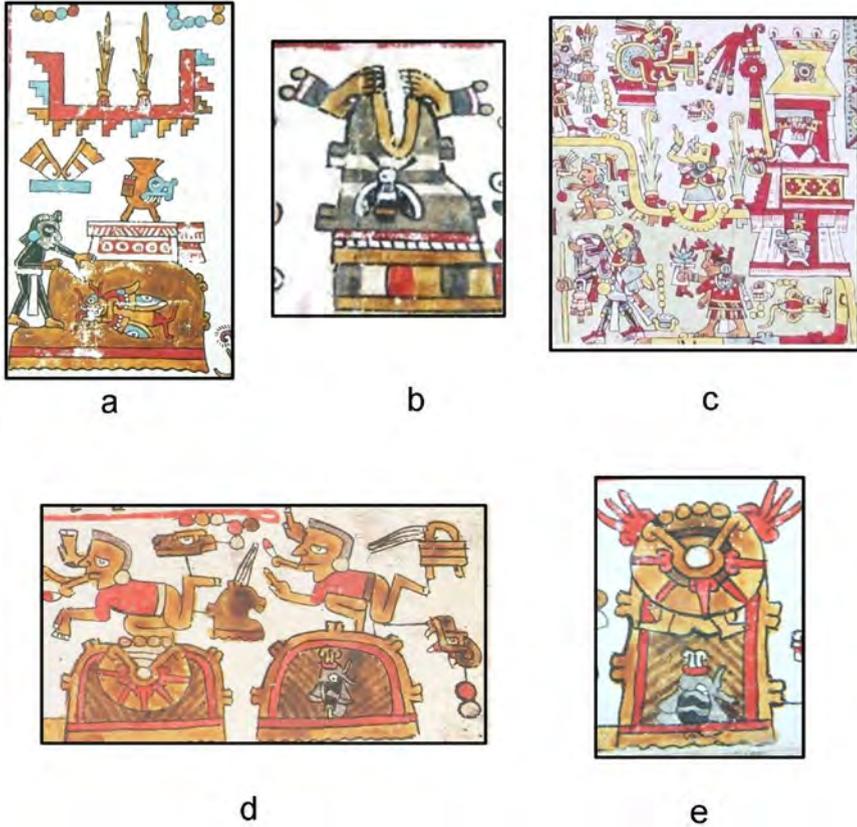


ILLUSTRATION 4.35 *Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), p. 4-II: the place sign 'Mountain that Opens – Bee'*

mountain, which (on our left) terminates in a rocky part with a cave half-way up the slope, associated with the entering of a person transformed into a fire serpent (i.e. a light ball as *nahual*). Furthermore the landscape contains several other toponymic signs (on our right): principally an insect, a field of reeds and an altar containing a vessel with the effigy of the rain god.

This complex place sign appears in several equivalent forms in the beginning of Ñuu Dzau history as recorded in the codices.<sup>45</sup> It was an important site, where founders of dynasties came from or carried out important dynastic

45 Apart from its appearance in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19a-b (Anders, Jansen y Pérez Jiménez 1992b), the place sign appears in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 42-II, p. 1-I and p. II-3 (Anders, Jansen y Pérez Jiménez 1992a), in Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), pp. 4/3-II (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2005) and Codex Añute (Selden), p. 7-III (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007).

acts. In later Mixtec history it is not mentioned, which suggests that it was a Classic site that lost importance in the Postclassic. Alfonso Caso called this place 'Mountain that Opens – Bee', but he did not offer an identification. In the other scenes the mountain, instead of being curved, appears being torn open by an anonymous man or flanked by two hands which seem to suggest a similar action. This type of anonymous man appears in pictorial writing as a convention to express an act, i.e. a verb.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, the place sign of Teozacualco consisting of a frieze with step-fret motif (to be read as *ñuu*, 'place') is bent or broken by such an anonymous man. The name of Teozacualco in Dzaha Dzauí (the Mixtec language) is *Chiyo Cahnu*, 'Big Altar'. Therefore it is generally accepted that the root of the verb 'to bend, to break', *cahnu*, is used as a convention to express the more abstract quality of 'great, large, big', also *cahnu* in Mixtec albeit with a different tone (Smith 1973: 57). In this same manner the curved mountain may be understood as a bent mountain and as a way of expressing the toponym 'Big Mountain' (*Yucu Cahnu*).

The insect of the place sign has wings. In Codex Añute (Selden) it is black and is evidently a fly, in Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley) it is also black, but with a yellow line on its tail, which led Caso to identify it as a bee. This could work for the representation with the yellow band on the tail, but not for the completely black version. On the other hand, a combination of black and yellow is also found in flies.

Byland and Pohl (1994: 85–100) identify the insect as a wasp and take it to represent the site Yuco Yoco, which they encountered in their archaeological survey in the area of Tilantongo and which they translate as 'Hill of the Wasp/Bee'. For this site they heard an alternative name: *Ndua Que'a Sina*, which they translate as 'Valley that is opened'. In doing so, they suppose that *que'a sina* is an equivalent of *quena/sina* (with *n* in *quena*), which is listed in the Mixtec vocabulary of Arana and Swadesh (1965) as a set of two roots of a verb, one for the present (*sina*) and one for the future (*quena*). According to Alvarado the verb *yo-sina* (*yo-* being the prefix that marks the present) is used for 'opening up' in the sense of 'clearing the sky after rain' ('*abrirse el cielo esclareciendo quitándose el agua*') or for 'dividing' or 'separating' as in the case of the waters of the Red Sea in the biblical story ('*dividirse una cosa como se dividió el mar*

46 An example is the Nahuatl place sign of Ahuilizapan, 'River of Joy', which consists of a man bathing – enjoying himself – in a river (Codex Mendoza, p. 48r). Compare the statement in the colonial chronicle of Jacinto de la Serna: 'These Indians had the custom of painting the effects by painting the instruments that caused them, for example in order to paint "air" they painted a face breathing with the mouth or a *mamaztli*, a fan of feathers that caused it'. (Serna 1953: Ch. 12, 4 § 328).

*bermejo en el tránsito de los hijos de Israel*). Apart from the fact that the verb does not refer to a simple act of opening, we note that the combination of the two roots corresponds to the linguistic analytical listing of the verb in a dictionary, but makes no sense in a toponym. The site in question is small: a platform with a mound (small pyramid and a plaza); there is no way of being sure that the toponym dates from the precolonial period.

In the Codices Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) and Tonindeye (Nuttall) the insect looks different: it is more fierce (with claws and wings in the form of flint knives). In Codex Tonindeye it is characterised by eyes painted on its wings, indicating that these are transparent and brilliant, and by a blue tail. In Codex Yuta Tnoho it has blue wings and a skeletonised jaw, suggesting an association with death. After critically reviewing the proposals of Byland and Pohl, Hermann Lejarazu (2011) suggests that the insect is a cicada, which leads him to the hypothesis that it refers to a Mountain of the Cicada south of Tilantongo: the ‘sierra de chicharra’ (Yucudii in Mixtec, Chiquilitepec in Nahuatl), which is mentioned in the *Relación Geográfica de Tilantongo* (Acuña 1984, II: 235), and which according to Hermann Lejarazu should be the famous archaeological site of Monte Negro precisely in that area. The main problem here, of course, is that the equivalent signs in Codices Añute and Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú do seem to show a fly.

In earlier publications (Jansen 1998a, 2012a) Jansen suggested that the representation of the insect in Codices Tonindeye (Nuttall) and Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) with its unpleasant biting/stinging aspects might refer to the qualities of a louse. The Mixtec word *tiyuqh* – with different tones – means both ‘fly’ (*chúkú* in Chalcatongo Mixtec) and ‘louse’ (*chúku* in Chalcatongo Mixtec), which might have caused a hybrid representation. But the representation of a winged insect is not that of a louse. Then Pérez Jiménez pointed out that the skeletonised aspect of the insect seems to name it as the ‘fly of death’ or ‘fly of the churchyard’ (Chalcatongo Mixtec: *chuku ndiyi* or *chuku ñaña*; Spanish: *mosca de la muerte* or *mosca panteonera*). This fly has a striking brilliant blue colour, which explains the presence of this colour in the pictorial representation. The circumstance that the wings are painted in pointed form like flints, together with the ‘claws’ in Codex Yuta Tnoho and the sting in Codex Tonindeye, can be explained as indicating the brave and dangerous character of this insect. The scrolls in front of its mouth in the Codex Tonindeye may well refer to the humming sound of the fly (and not necessarily represent the song of a cicada).

This leads us to conclude that all versions represent a fly – either the common fly or the ‘fly of death’ – and that they register a place name with the word *Tiyuqh*, ‘Fly’ as the main component.

There are more toponymic signs in the large landscape scene of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 19a-b. In order to reinforce their identifications,

Byland and Pohl as well as Hermann Legarazu also suggest identifications for these other signs that appear connected to the insect site, but in general their identifications lack a strong convincing argument: often the etymology of the places in question is not clear, the name is not documented historically, or the site itself seems not to have been of great importance.<sup>47</sup>

The sign next to the Place of the Insect is the Mountain or Precinct of Reeds. In the case of Codex Tonindeye, p. 19, the reeds have ears or flowers like corn (but no corncobs); in other cases, (Codex Yuta Tnoho) they are clearly reeds. In the Codices Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley) and Añute (Selden) the reeds are replaced by a different sign: a moon. The substitution is completely understandable because of the equivalent phonetic value of these signs. Both ‘reeds’ and ‘moon’ are *yoo* in Mixtec. We conclude that this part of the complex place sign refers to a *Yucu Yoo*, ‘Mountain of Reeds’ or ‘Mountain of the Moon’.

The combination of Mountain of the Moon/Reeds (*Yucu Yoo*) with a Place of Flies (*Tiyuqh*) is also found on the Map of Xoxocotlan, which shows the Monte Albán mountain range. Xoxocotlan is a community at the foot and to the east of Monte Albán. The map, or rather small corpus of maps, which has been preserved in various copies, shows the village, its boundaries and the mountain range that constitutes Monte Albán and forms part of the colonial boundary of the town.<sup>48</sup>

47 See Jansen (1998b) for a more detailed discussion. Byland has reflected on the whole issue again in his contribution (‘Reconciling Disparate Evidence between the Mixtec Historical Codices and Archaeology’) to the volume edited by Zborover and Kroefges (2015).

48 See the detailed study by Mary Elizabeth Smith (1973: 202 ff.), as well as the publication of photos and of related documents by Méndez Martínez and Méndez Torres (2007: 436 and 459, 462). One of the maps is preserved in the Archivo de la Nación, México D.F. (Ramo de Tierras vol. 129, exp. 4): it was copied in 1686 from an earlier original and measures 87.5 × 76 cm. See the recent in-depth study of the historical context by Hidalgo (2012). Another Map of Xoxocotlan exists in at least two versions. The oldest one is dated 1718: a coloured painting on European paper (58 × 42.5 cms) in the Biblioteca Orozco y Berra, México D.F. (cf. Ruiz Cervantes and Sánchez Silva 1997). A later version is from 1771, in black and white, preserved in the Archivo General de la Nación, México D.F. (Ramo de Tierras vol. 1064, exp. 13): this was the one published and analysed by Mary Elizabeth Smith (1973: 202 ff.). Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán has located photos (black and white) of the two maps of the Archivo General de la Nación in the Fototeca del I.N.A.H. in Pachuca. Probably these are the photos of Alfonso Caso referred to by Méndez Martínez and Méndez Torres (2007: 437). The version of 1718 has been published online by the Biblioteca Orozco y Berra: <http://w2.siap.sagarpa.gob.mx/mapoteca/mapas/1176-OYB-7272-A-1.jpg>. The two versions of 1718 and 1771 are very similar, but some differences in painting and orthography suggest that the version of 1771 is not a mere copy of the version of 1718. Both seem to derive in an independent manner from an unknown prototype.

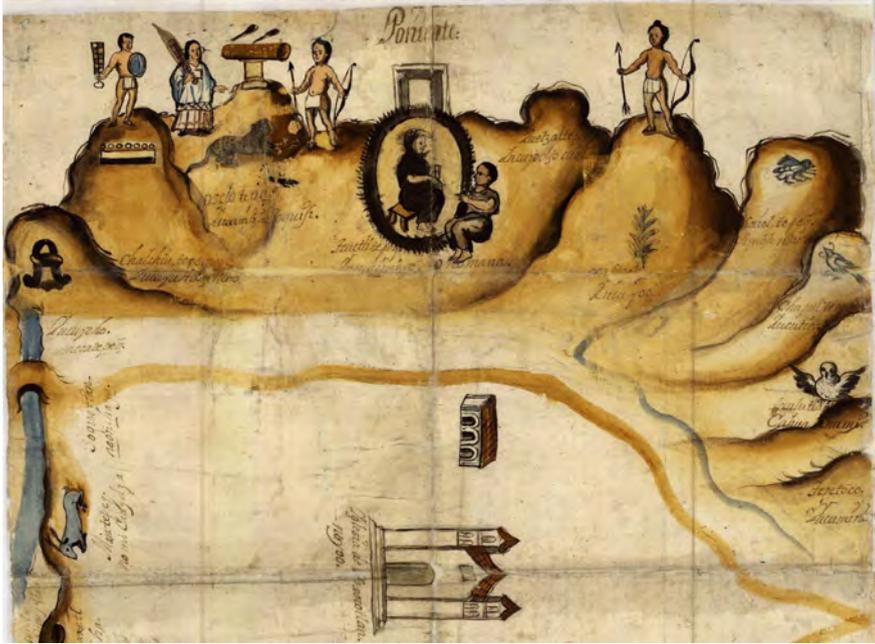


ILLUSTRATION 4.36 *Map of Xoxocotlán (archivo de la Mapoteca Manuel Orozco y Berra)*



ILLUSTRATION 4.37 *Cuilapan Coat of Arms (Obra Inédita, Manuel Martínez Gracida): the town of Cuilapan between Jaguar Mountain, Monte Albán (Left) and Carrying Frame, Tocuisi /Zaachila (Right)*



ILLUSTRATION 4.38 *Monte Albán aerial photo*

On the Map of Xoxocotlan the Mountain of Reeds is glossed in Nahuatl as *Acatepeq* (Acatepec), and as Yucuyoo in Mixtec: both toponyms mean 'Mountain of Reeds'. Today that component of the mountain range is known as Mogollito. According to the *Relación Geográfica de Teozapotlan (Zaachila)*, on the eve of the Spanish conquest it was the site of an Aztec garrison (Acuña 1984 II: 162); indeed, it is an appropriate place to watch the passage from the Mixteca through the valley of Oaxaca towards Soconusco.

The Mountain of the Fly is glossed in Nahuatl as *Saiol, tepeq* (Sayultepec) and as Tiyuqh, 'fly' in Dzaha Dzauí. Smith (1973: 208) has documented the

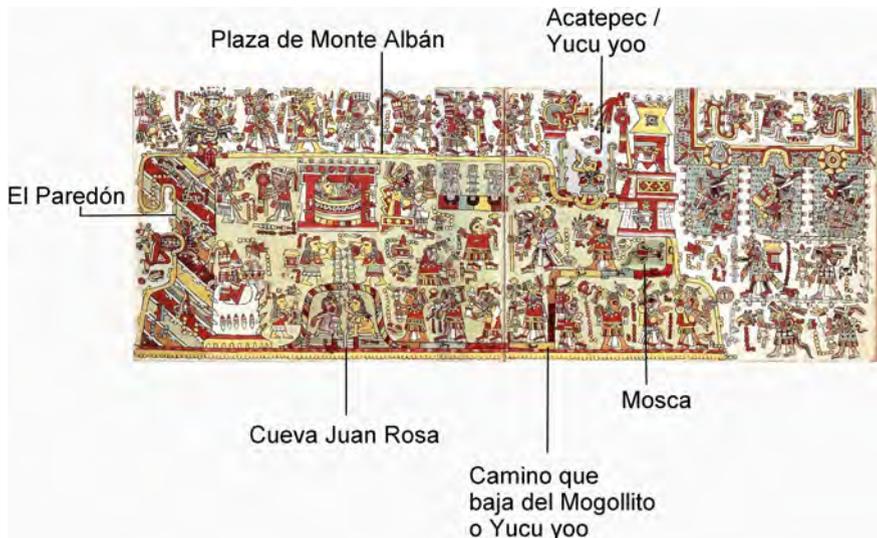


ILLUSTRATION 4.39 *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), p. 19ab: identification of Monte Albán

Spanish name *Cerro del Mozcón* for this place; it is the beginning of the mountain chain that is known as Monte Albán Chico.

Both the Mountain of Reeds/Moon (Yucu Yoo) and the Place of Flies (Tiyuqh) appear next to each other on the Map of Xoxocotlan as two slopes of Monte Albán. This fact connects well with the other toponymic sign of Yucu Cahnu, 'Big Mountain', which would then be the overall Mixtec name for Monte Albán. This toponym does not appear in colonial glosses, but seems a logical designation for Monte Albán as a huge complex rising from the valley of Oaxaca. The identification of Caso's 'Mountain that Opens – Bee' as Monte Albán would of course explain why this sign is so important in the beginning of Ñuu Dzau history (in the tenth century AD): the echo of the power and prestige of the Classic metropolis in the new Postclassic society. It would also explain the sign of an altar that contains a vessel with the effigy of the rain god as a reference to the numerous mounds of Monte Albán where vessels ('urns') with the countenance of the rain god (Cocijo) are found.

In the Map of Xoxocotlan and in *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), pp. 19a-b, the landscape is painted from the same perspective: Yucu Yoo is on the left (South) and Tiyuqh is on the right (North). In both cases we are looking at Monte Albán from the East.

The hypothesis sketched above is in itself already quite convincing because of the coincidence of the hieroglyphic signs and landscape painting in the codices with a colonial pictorial map in which the components are identified by glosses. In addition, the identification fits very well the context of the sign. In order to put the hypothesis to the test, Mexican archaeologists Dante García Ríos and Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán together with Jansen tried to locate other toponymic elements of the large landscape in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 19a-b in the field.

The scene in this landscape shows a procession of persons along a path halfway up the mountains, then going down and leading to a cave, centrally located in the scene, where Lady 3 Flint and the priest Lord 12 Wind are being bathed before becoming a married couple in a palace situated higher up. In accordance with our idea, we would predict the location of the cave in the central slope of Monte Albán, roughly below the central plaza, still quite low, i.e. a little above the level of the valley of Oaxaca.

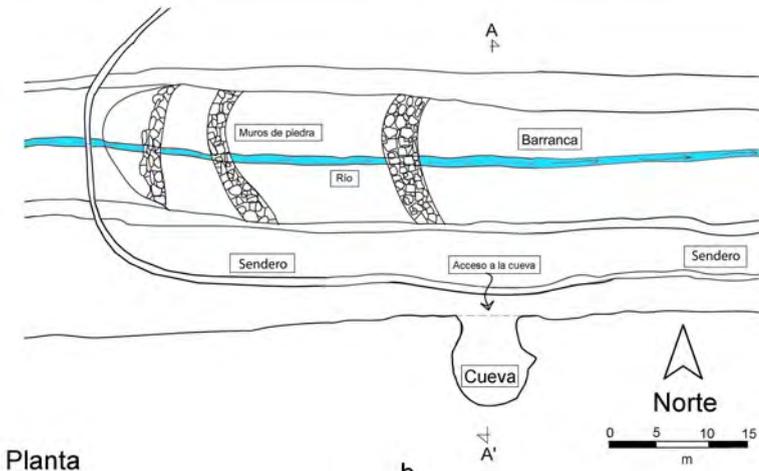
Today there is still a path that follows the slope of the Mogollito (Yucu Yoo) and then goes down to the valley. In aerial photos we can see the old path that passes down the valley along the slope of Monte Albán (full of terraces). This path crosses the gorge coming down from below the main plaza of the archaeological site. There, helped by references of local inhabitants of the place, we arrived at a cave that is known today as the Cueva de Juan Rosa. The UTM coordinates of this cave are: 738086 E / 1885819 N and its height above sea level is 1750 metres. The cave is like a large vaulted room, measuring 6.75 m (north–south) by 6.20 m (east–west), with an altitude of 2.80 m. The entrance faces north and measures approximately 5.50 m long x 1.70 m high. Sherds on the ground demonstrate that it was used in precolonial times. It is located next to the gorge, where in former time a stream used to come down, possibly the source for the water in the prenuptial bath.

The cave is indeed centrally located below the main plaza of Monte Albán's archaeological zone – precisely as it is painted in the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p.19a-b. The palace (*aniñe* in Mixtec; *tecpan* in Nahuatl) that appears above the cave in the codex, would, of course, correspond well to one of the buildings surrounding the central plaza. This Cueva de Juan Rosa then must have been the very spot where the marriage ceremony of Lady 3 Flint (daughter) and Lord 12 Wind was celebrated in the beginning of the Postclassic era.

To our left, the landscape painted in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19a-b, ends in a bent rock with yet another cave, which is entered by a fire serpent person, i.e. a person having the *nahual* experience and power of a ball of lightning (*yahui* in Mixtec). Fray Francisco de Alvarado described this *yahui*



a



Planta

b



Corte

c

ILLUSTRATION 4.40 Location of Cueva de Juan Rosa (drawings Iván Rivera)



a)

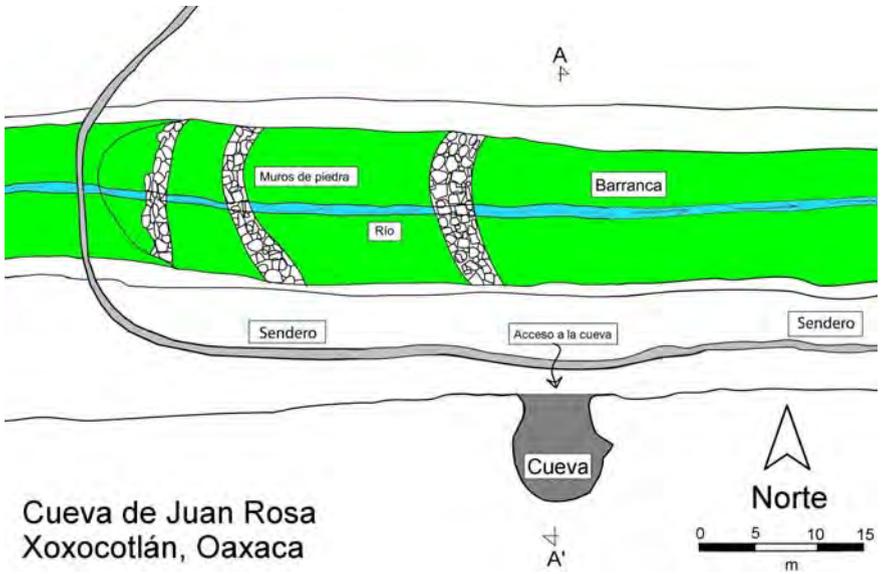


b)



c)

ILLUSTRATION 4.41  
*Cueva de Juan Rosa*



Cueva de Juan Rosa  
Xoxocotlán, Oaxaca

ILLUSTRATION 4.42A Location Cueva de Juan Rosa (drawings Iván Rivera)

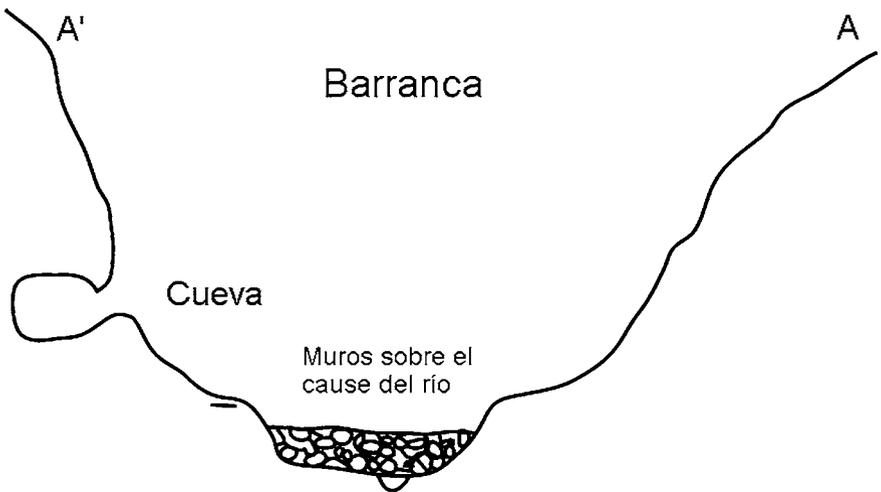


ILLUSTRATION 4.42B Location Cueva de Juan Rosa (drawings Iván Rivera)

in his dictionary as a 'magician/witch who could fly through the air'. Another colonial source, fray Gregorio García, says that this being was capable of perforating rocky walls. In accordance with the geographical perspective (from Xoxocotlan), this rock would have to be on the southern side of Monte Albán. Indeed, the southern slope of Monte Albán has a large and elongated cliff area, known locally as El Paredón. In fact, Dante García Ríos located a cave in this cliff, which, given its position, would correspond quite well to the place mentioned in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19b.



a)



b)



c)

ILLUSTRATION 4.43 *El Paredón* (photos Dante García Ríos)

Below El Paredón, directly to the south of Monte Albán, is the Postclassic archaeological site called Casa Mixteca, which was probably part of ancient Cuilapan, called in Mixtec: Saha Yucu, 'At the Foot of the Mountain'.

Next to the bent rock in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19b, is a White Flint Mountain, where a rite of dynastic foundation is celebrated: a New Fire is kindled in front of the sacred bundle. The bundle contained a large flint knife, probably the flint from which the divine founder, Lord 9 Wind (the Plumed Serpent), had been born according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49. At a later moment in the narrative of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 21, we again find a similar White Flint Place as the site where prisoners were taken in the primordial conflict of the war against the stone men. In this case Lord 9 Wind is standing in a ballcourt. This image includes in its base a step-fret frieze in the colours white and red, which, according to the conventions, we must read *ñuu cuisí*, 'White Town'. There are several place names in the area that contain references to the colour white (*cuisí*). Given the whole context in which an elaborate ceremony in Monte Albán is related to a dynastic foundation rite in that white place, we situate this codex event in a historical process in which power passed from Monte Albán, the Classic Zapotec capital, to Zaachila,



ILLUSTRATION 4.44 *Monte Albán from the East*

the Postclassic Zapotec capital. It seems most logical, therefore, to interpret the white place as a reference to an early phase of the realm of Zaachila (in Mixtec: *Tocuisi*, 'White Rock' or 'Place of the White Lord'), situated south of Monte Albán. The representation of Tocuisi (Zaachila) by the place sign carrying frame (*sito*), in some cases specifically coloured white, as we identified before, would then correspond to a later phase in Zaachila history.

On the basis of these considerations we interpret the magnificent and complex landscape of Codex Tonindefe (Nuttall), pp. 19a-b, as an image of Monte Albán, seen from Xoxocotlan in the valley of Oaxaca. Clearly it is a place of dramatic memories, religious value and great spiritual force. When looking at the composition of the Monte Albán landscape on page 19 of the codex, we notice a parallel with the representations of the end of a Sun or era in Codex Vaticanus A (ff. 4v-7r) in the sense that there is a central couple in a cave – in the scenes of the ending of a Sun (era), this will be the couple that survives and starts the new generation in the next Sun or creation. This may be just a coincidence, but it may also be a visual intertextual reference, a connotation that this marriage in Monte Albán meant the end of one era (in archaeological terms: the Classic period) and the beginning of a new (the Postclassic period).

Furthermore we notice that next to the Field of Reeds (Yucu Yoo) on our right, i.e. the northern part of the archaeological zone, stands a prominent Temple of Jewels. Here we see a sacred bundle was kept and venerated, together with the quincunx staff (*Tnucucua*) of the Ñuu Dzaui dynasties and the instrument for drilling the New Fire. These images all form part of the symbolic complex that refers to the foundation of dynasties and the inauguration of new times, both in a religious-calendrical and in a socio-political sense.

According to the Codex Tonindefe, the ceremonial centre called Temple of Jewels at Monte Albán was associated with the introduction of the cult of the sacred bundle by a visionary priest or 'prophet', Lord 12 Wind, at the beginning of the Postclassic era.<sup>49</sup> Its location in the large landscape painting on page 19, with specific toponyms, suggests that this temple or ceremonial centre was situated in the northern part of the Monte Albán site, near the Acatepec (Yucu Yoo), now known as El Mogollito. The Temple of Jewels appears on top of an altar containing a vessel with the face of the rain god (Dzavui in Mixtec, Cocijo in Zapotec). Taking into account the context, we interpret this configuration as the foundation of a Postclassic Mixtec temple on a substructure inside which Classic urns of the Cocijo type were found.

49 See our interpretation of Lord 12 Wind as the prophet of a crisis cult or revival movement at the beginning of the Postclassic period (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a).

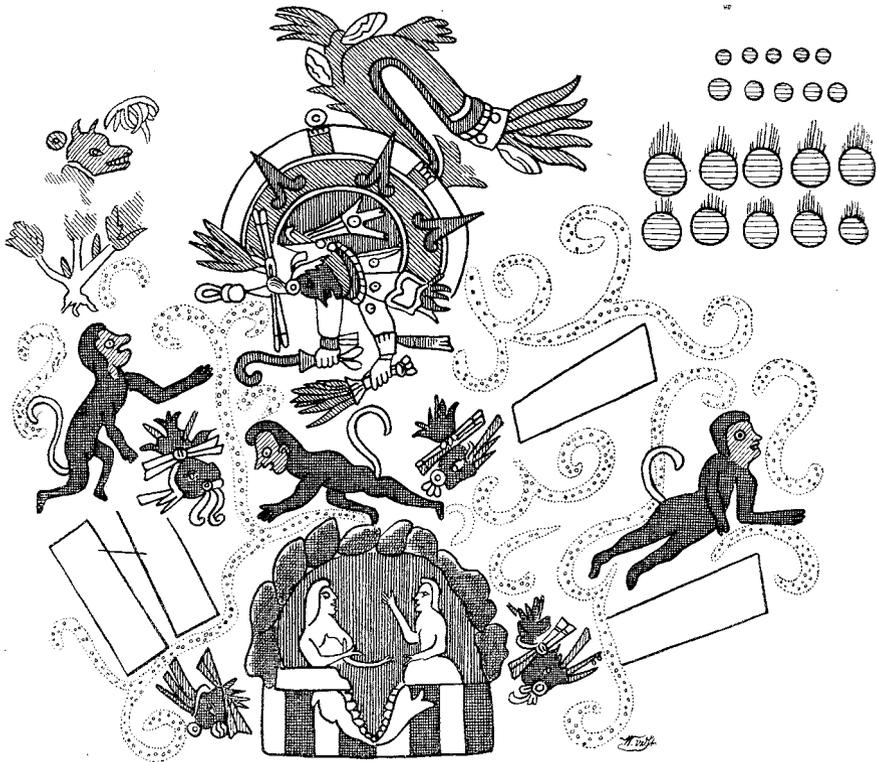


ILLUSTRATION 4.45 *End of the Wind Sun (Codex Vaticanus A)*

Other representations of this Temple of Jewels in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 15, 17 and 18, characterise it as a sanctuary of the Plumed Serpent, with an underground substructure. In Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15, we see beneath the Temple of Jewels a plot of land in four directional colours (earth), with an upward-looking skeletonised face, the whole surrounded by darkness. On page 18 of the same codex we see basically the same sign, but surrounded by a wall with battlements, i.e. within a built enclosure. Clearly this a reference to a cave or a subterranean space, dedicated to rituals for the Cihuacoatl figure of Aztec art. On the above-mentioned bones of Tomb 7 (Chapter 3) that reference generally consists of the sign of the open jaws of an alligator (earth), which basically correspond to the figure of Tlaltecuhli, 'Lord (of) Earth' in Aztec art (iconographically close to Cihuacoatl). This symbolism indicates that it was a place of contact with the powers of the earth and with the deceased ancestors.

We saw that different carved bones found in Tomb 7 locate the action they record in a Temple of Jewels, associated with a cave or subterranean chamber.

This must be an important place in the local ceremonial centre and probably Tomb 7 itself is meant. In fact Tomb 7 is located on the northern side of Monte Albán, in the same area where the Temple of Jewels is located in the landscape of Codex Tonindecy (Nuttall), p. 19a, close to the Field of Reeds (Yucu Yoo).

On page 19a-b of Codex Tonindecy (Nuttall) we observe a clear diagonal axis between the flint bundle and fire drill in the Temple of Jewels (in the upper right-hand corner) and a similar combination on the White Flint Mountain in the lower right-hand corner. Both occurrences are obviously related and suggest a dynamic opposition which frames or guides the various actions taking place in between the two sites. This fits the hypothesis that the landscape painting establishes a connection between the ancient power of (Classic) Monte Albán and that of (Postclassic) Zaachila.

Furthermore we find that the Temple of Jewels in this chapter of Codex Tonindecy (Nuttall) appears associated with the West (p. 15), with Apoala (p. 18) and with Monte Albán (p. 19). Later a similar temple will be founded in Tilantongo (p. 22), where it is no longer called Temple of Jewels, however, but Temple of Heaven (*Huahi Andevui* in Mixtec). This suggests that in each case it is a different building but the same type of sanctuary. In all cases the main function of the Temple of Jewels seems to be the veneration of the sacred bundle that held (a piece of) the flint of Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' and the ritual storage of the sacred *Tnucucua* staff (which that same Lord 9 Wind had brought down from heaven) and the fire drill (in commemoration of the New Fire ceremonies initiated by Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl'). Lord 12 Wind seems to be a visionary priest who followed in the footsteps (i.e. attended to the cult) of the culture hero deity, Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' (*Koo Sau*). His actions may be explained as those of a spiritual leader or prophet in charge of a crisis cult in the period of demise of Monte Albán.

The Temple of Jewels – Temple of Heaven, in combination with a Temple of Darkness or Temple of Cihuacoatl is also the central ceremonial complex referred to in the famous but enigmatic Temple Scenes of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia). We will study those scenes later – in Chapter 7 – in order to explore the rituals and religious experiences associated with such buildings. For the moment we will limit ourselves to examining some further possible references to the sanctuary at Monte Albán in the historiography of Ñuu Dzau.

## 7 Lady 6 Monkey at Monte Albán

There is yet another interesting historical and geographical context that is relevant for our interpretation. We already discussed above some details of the

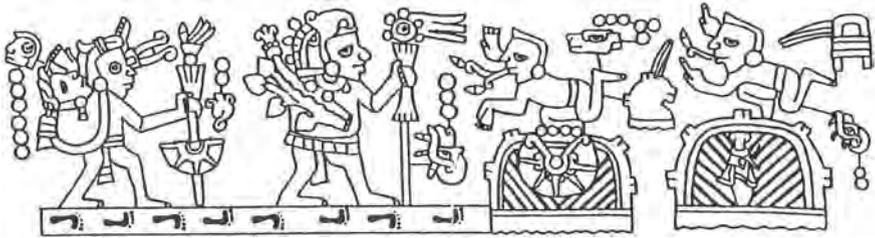


ILLUSTRATION 4.46 *Codex Añute (Selden), p. 7-III: Priests of Zaachila shouting at Lady 6 Monkey from the top of Monte Albán*

biography of Lady 6 Monkey, princess of Añute (Jaltepec), who lived several generations after the marriage in Codex Tonindeye, pp. 19-ab. At a certain moment (1090 AD) this Lady 6 Monkey, after receiving instructions from Lady 9 Grass of the Temple of Death, was carried in a wedding procession to the realm of her groom, a prince of another realm.<sup>50</sup> In this context she arrived at the Mountain of the Moon (Yucu Yoo) and Mountain of the Fly (Tiyuqh). From the mountaintops two men shouted something to the princess. Their words are represented as flint knives, probably denoting the expression *yuchi yuchi*, 'knife, knife', which means something like 'to be killed by a knife'. It is a dramatic moment of tragic irony: the princess Lady 6 Monkey interprets those words as a curse or menace and therefore launches an attack on the two men. Later, however, a knife will indeed kill her, and in retrospect we may interpret those words as a warning. Those who shouted the knife words, then, seem to have had some oracular capacity.

One of the men is named 'Long Hair – Bent Mountain', the other 'Long Hair – Carrying Frame (*cacaxtli*)'. The long hair is not a normal element in an onomastic sign of individuals; probably this is a title, similar to the Aztec *papahuaque*, 'those that have long hair', that is to say: priests. In their names this status is connected to signs that have a toponymic character. One is the bent mountain, i.e. the large mountain (Yucu Cahnu), which we have encountered above as a possible sign of Monte Albán. The other is the place of the carrying frame, which, we know now, is the sign of Tocuisi (Zaachila).

Interpreted in this way, the scene in Codex Añute (Selden) once again documents the connection between the Mountain of the Moon (Yucu Yoo), the Mountain of the Fly (Tiyuqh), the Big Mountain (Yucu Cahnu) and Zaachila, which is logical if the first three indeed constitute references to Monte Albán.

The journey of Lady 6 Monkey began on a day 9 Serpent. Soon she encountered the Long Hairs and felt offended by their words, so she rapidly returned to the Cave Temple of Lady 9 Grass in Ñuu Ndaya (ancient Chalcatongo), the

<sup>50</sup> Codex Añute (Selden), p. 7-III.

place where the ancestors of the Ñuu Dzaui dynasties were buried. Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' put her warriors at the disposal of the princess in distress. With their help, Lady 6 Monkey returned to Mountain of the Moon (Yucu Yoo) and Mountain of the Fly (Tiyuqh), conquered and destroyed those places on the successive days 3 Grass and 4 Reed.<sup>51</sup> The day 3 Grass is seven days after the day 9 Serpent. These seven days are in principle sufficient to walk from the valley of Oaxaca to the Temple of Death – presumably the mountain Yuku Kasa, also known as Ñuu Anima, 'Place of Souls' in the ancient realm of Ñuu Ndaya – and to return. Most likely, however, Lady 6 Monkey did not actually make that part of her journey; she may have communicated with the goddess 9 Grass in another way: we are reading a literary narrative here, not a precise historical report.

## 8 The Funerary Ceremony for Lord 12 Movement

We find other references to the area of Monte Albán in the epic narrative of the famous Ñuu Dzaui ruler Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' (1063–1115 AD), contemporaneous with Lady 6 Monkey of Añute. The Temple of Jewels and the Mountain of the Moon (Yucu Yoo) are mentioned in the description of the ritual acts following the death of the Lord 12 Movement in 1101 AD. This individual was the older half-brother of Lord 8 Deer and was killed in a steambath. The funerary ritual is presented in detail in Codex Iya Nacuaa II (Becker), pp. 8–9, which is a parallel to Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 82.

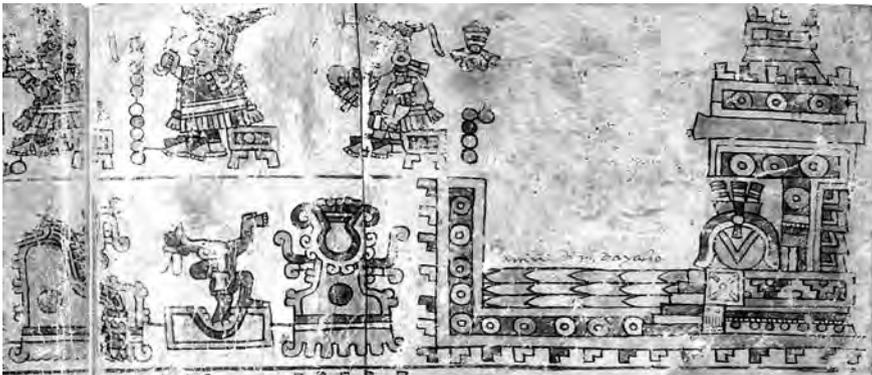


ILLUSTRATION 4.47 *Codex Iya Nacuaa II, p. 9: sanctuary where the sacred bundle of Lord 12 Movement was deposited*

51 The fact that both days are mentioned suggests the attack began during at the evening of the first day or in the night between both days.

We have already discussed that scene (Chapter 2) because it provides so much relevant information about Ñuu Dzau'i funerary rituals. The scene in Codex Iya Nacuaa 11 shows that the funerary ritual was performed in front of a Temple of Jewels, which is identified as such by jade signs on its fundament. Discs on the roof and on the wall of the courtyard identify the building as having the status of a royal palace. A sacred bundle is depicted within this temple-palace, probably the memorial bundle or *ixiptla* ('image, representation') of Lord 12 Movement himself. A series of jewels, especially in the form of butterflies, were deposited in front of the temple on the occasion of this ceremony. The place where the Temple of Jewels is located is identified by three toponymic signs:

- 1) Mountain of the Moon, from which speech scrolls are rising,
- 2) Blue (Precious) Place where the Faceless Spirit (*Ñuhu*) Emerges,
- 3) Mountain of the Fire Serpent, from which speech scrolls are rising. The speech scrolls may indicate that it is a famous place or an oracle (or both).

The two mountains match points of the geography of Monte Albán as presented by Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19. As we have seen, the Mountain of the Moon is a well-established alternative representation of the Mountain of Reeds: both represent the Mixtec name Yucu Yoo (*yoo* meaning both 'moon' and 'reed'), translated as Acatepec in Nahuatl, on the north side of Monte Albán. The Mountain of the Fire Serpent may refer to a cave in the cliff, known as El Paredón, at the southern slope of Monte Albán. Between these two the Place where the Faceless Spirit (*Ñuhu*) Emerges may be a reference to a site where the ancestors manifested themselves.<sup>52</sup>

All this indicates that the bundle of Lord 12 Movement was deposited and venerated in a tomb at Monte Albán. This is not surprising: the mother of Lord 12 Movement, Lady 9 Eagle, belonged to the 'Xipe Dynasty', i.e. the royal family of Zaachila, which at the time controlled the area of Monte Albán.<sup>53</sup>

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 81–82, narrates the murder of Lord 12 Movement in a *temazcal* and also mentions a set of specific days for the funerary ritual. It was the year 11 House day 2 Flint, when his bundle was prepared and when the funerary mask of turquoise mosaic was placed on it, while the

52 The Faceless *Ñuhu* is one of the titles of the primordial beings in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 34.

53 In Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 42, Lady 9 Eagle has the characteristic face painting of the 'Xipe Dynasty' (cf. pp. 33–35 of the same codex).

attending priests made offerings of *pulque*, cacao and flower garlands.<sup>54</sup> In this context, the year 11 House corresponds to 1101 AD and day 2 Flint, according to the most generally accepted correlation, would fall on 11 October of that year (Julian calendar).

We recall that in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 82, the Bundle of Lord 12 Movement receives the same feather headdress as Lord Plumed Serpent on the golden ornament Number 26 from Tomb 7. Now we find an even closer correspondence. The date on the golden ornament Number 26, which we already explained in Chapter 1, consists of the day 2 Flint combined with the Beni Zaa year 10 Wind on one shoulder of the priest (on our left), explicitly correlated with the Ñuu Dzauí year 11 House on the other shoulder (on our right).

At first glance one would have thought that the day 2 Flint of the year 10 Wind (Beni Zaa calendar) or 11 House (Ñuu Dzauí calendar) on the golden ornament simply registered the day on which a Plumed Serpent priest carried out a ritual act of communicating with the ancestors. Indeed there is an important symbolic association of the day 2 Flint with death (i.e. with the ancestors): the Lord of the Night associated with the day 2 Flint is the ruler of the Realm of the Dead (*Mictlantecuhtli* in Nahuatl). The day 2 Flint also falls six days after 9 Grass, the name day of Lady 9 Grass, divine guardian of the Mixtec kings buried in the great cave of Ñuu Ndaya (ancient Chalcatongo). Similarly, 2 Flint is 7 days before the day 9 Serpent, associated with Lady 9 Reed, the Divine Force of Arrowheads and Knives, who we also find represented in the visual art of Tomb 7 (Chapter 3).

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54 For the historical and dramatic context, see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a: 243–246. Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 82, mentions the day 2 Flint in isolation, without indicating the year, but by analysing the chronological context we can reconstruct which year it was. The earlier events took place in the year 10 Flint (1100 AD):

- Day 8 Eagle, the first reference in that year, is day 37 after the year bearer or first day of the year 10 Flint.
- Day 11 Death, on which the murder of Lord 12 Movement took place, is day 248 of the year 10 Flint.
- Days 1 Water to 9 Movement, which are the first nine days of the funerary ritual for Lord 12 Movement, are the days 251–259 of the year 10 Flint.
- Day 7 Flower, the important next step in the funerary ritual, is day 322 of the year 10 Flint.
- Day 2 Flint, which then follows, is 138 days after the day 7 Flower, so it can no longer be part of the year 10 Flint, but should fall in the next year: 11 House; in fact it is day 95 after the year bearer of that year.
- Day 12 Monkey, when Lord 8 Deer begins his punitive campaign, is day 248 of year 11 House, exactly 365 days after the murder.

Our more detailed investigation reveals, however, that the date on the golden ornament Number 26 corresponds to an important day during the funeral ceremony for Lord 12 Movement, which on the one hand aims to honour his memory, while on the other it is the preparation of an act of war that his younger half-brother, Lord 8 Deer, subsequently conducts against the alleged culprits.<sup>55</sup> This was a very specific and fascinating moment in Ñuu Dzau history. A match so precise as to dates and contextual elements cannot be a coincidence. We conclude that the golden ornament Number 26 in Tomb 7 refers to the funeral ceremony of Lord 12 Movement, and thereby connects the contents of the tomb-sanctuary to a dramatic moment in the epic story of Lord 8 Deer. This in itself is not strange. The history of many Ñuu Dzau dynasties, as represented in diverse codices and lienzos, often makes a link with that narrative, which seems to have been a widely shared memory, a broader context for local and individual histories.

The Plumed Serpent headdress that was put on the bundle of Lord 12 Movement in the narrative of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 82, is identical to that of the priest figure on the golden ornament Number 26. It is possible, therefore, that the ornament portrays or at least connotes that very same person: Lord 12 Movement himself. Perhaps he is being invoked in the communication with the beyond, or perhaps he is the one who speaks to us. In this context it is interesting to remember that Lord 12 Movement was the eldest son of Lord 5 Alligator, the high priest of Tilantongo whose rituals, according to Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 2, included precisely the act of ‘talking with or for the dead ancestors’.

The date on such a centrally located, prominent and precious artifact is of obvious importance to the nature of Tomb 7 as a space of memory and ritual. We may suppose it had a foundational value. As an intertextual reference to the funerary ritual of Lord 12 Movement, the date inscribed on the golden ornament Number 26 (year 11 House day 2 Flint) commemorates an important historical moment (in 1101 AD), but as such it also seems to refer – at least ideologically – to the transformation of Tomb 7 from a primarily funeral space into a shrine of commemoration of the past and of communication with the ancestors.

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55 It is interesting to recall that the life of that famous Mixtec king, Lord 8 Deer, himself was determined by the influence of Lady 9 Grass and Lady 9 Reed (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a). We already signalled the importance of Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’ as the guardian of the *Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos* in Ñuu Ndaya (ancient Chalcatongo). Lady 9 Reed, associated with Ñuu Niñe (Tonalá) and Ñuu Dzai (Huajuapán) in the Mixteca Baja region, also played an important role in the pictographic texts of Tomb 7.

The physical-anthropological dating of the bones and the stylistic dating of the visual art suggest that the historical dating of the objects and human remains in Tomb 7 in the early fourteenth century is correct. Thus the reference to the funeral ceremony of Lord 12 Movement is to be interpreted as an expression of dynastic memory, long after the events.

If we look for the cyclical recurrence of the same date (year 11 House day 2 Flint) at the beginning of the fourteenth century, we find that in 1309 there was the anniversary of four cycles of 52 years (four *xiuhmolpillis*) of that ritual moment.

The Temple of Jewels near the Mountain of the Moon (Yucu Yoo) where Lord 12 Movement's bundle was deposited (and where his funerary ritual was celebrated) in Codex Iya Nacuaa 11, is most probably the same shrine as the Temple of Jewels next to the Yucu Yoo (Mountain of the Moon = Mountain of Reeds) on page 19 of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). Both seem to refer to the Post-classic ceremonial centre of Monte Albán, to which Tomb 7 belonged.

The presence of the date of the funerary ritual of Lord 12 Movement on such a spectacular golden ornament (Number 26) in Tomb 7 suggests again that there was indeed a specific relationship between this underground sanctuary and the Postclassic ceremonial centre called Temple of Jewels.

Clearly different aspects of Ñuu Dzau history were commemorated in Tomb 7. Pictorial texts on the carved bones go as far back as the first sunrise and the birth of the founding fathers from the Mother Tree in Apoala. The golden ornament demonstrates that Tomb 7 also kept alive the memory of the epic period of Lord 8 Deer. The funerary ritual of Lord 12 Movement (1101 AD) is a precise historical reference and actually may signal the 'foundation' of the sanctuary of Tomb 7 as a place for commemorating this Mixtec-Zapotec prince and of communicating with him and other ancestors. Indeed, the Beni Zaa dynasty may have carried out rituals in and around the Tomb 7 sanctuary since those days. Evidently Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' was fascinated by finding in the territory of her husband this shrine for the early interaction between Ñuu Dzau and Beni Zaa dynasties. The awe-inspiring landscape and historical associations of Monte Albán added further to the impact of this place.

## 9 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

The clear references to primordial Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) history on the carved bones leave no doubt that Tomb 7 was a shrine of great importance to the dynasties that ruled the Land of the Rain God in the Postclassic era. The chronological indications lead us to the reign of Lord 5 Flower, belonging to the Beni

Zaa (Zapotec) ruling family of Zaachila. The Ñuu Dzaui elements point to his wife, Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' of the Teozacualco dynasty as the main character present in the sanctuary. Hence our hypothesis is that it was she who founded or revived this place of worship. Her motive, we assume, was to have a special place for communicating with her ancestors.

To understand this function of Tomb 7, we must first reflect on the reason for the existence of such a shrine at this site. At the time that Tomb 7 was re-occupied in the Postclassic period, Monte Albán had been largely abandoned and consisted of ruins and foundations of temples and palaces, associated with a bygone era, before the new Sunrise. For Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', who around 1280 came from the Mixtec kingdom of Teozacualco to marry Lord 5 Flower, the Zapotec prince of Zaachila, Monte Albán must have been an important memory site in the fascinating realm that she would co-govern. Within the Beni Zaa kingdom, this was a point of contact with her own Ñuu Dzaui ancestors, a site full of religious references to the primordial time of the first Sunrise of her own dynasty. This was an important locality for memory and worship.

Within this sacred ancestral landscape, we have to understand Tomb 7 in accordance with Mesoamerican religious symbolism. First of all, it is a subterranean place, a womb of the earth, a place of darkness, which takes us back to the time of darkness and mystery, when the gods were present and active in the world. This connection to primordial time may create a mental state to connect with a life sphere before the breach with nature, before the rationalism of sunrise and the ambitions of human history, a void for communicating with the primordial forces that make the seeds germinate and turn bones into fruits. In this way Tomb 7 as a sanctuary comes close to the *temazcal*, which is a place of cleansing and of intimate contact with our Grandmother and her life-giving powers. The collocation of relics as sacred bundles in such a place evokes a process of rebirth and new life, like planting seeds. This was the context in which the precious jewels and works of art were deposited, not to accompany the dead body of a ruler, but to communicate with the ancestors and, ultimately, with the earth, with the goddess of life-death-life. The deposited items evoked the spirit of the deceased Lady 4 Rabbit and honoured the origins of her dynasty. Parallels in the Ñuu Dzaui codices suggest that all this may well have been an offering to thank Lady 9 Grass and the sacred bundles of the ancestors under her protection for their counsel and to ask for their blessings and positive auguries.

We may compare the function of Tomb 7 to that of an oracle. The most important of the ancient Ñuu Dzaui oracles was that of Ñuu Ndecu (Achiutla), known as 'the main temple of this nation' (*el Templo Mayor de esta Nación*).

The worship centred around a sacred bundle that contained a jade figure representing the Plumed Serpent (Burgoa 1934, 1: 332 ff.).

A Temple of Jewels situated above a cave appears as the central site of ritual action in the scenes carved on the jaguar bones found in Tomb 7 (especially Bone 124). A similar building appears in the large landscape painting in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19, which shows a Big Mountain with toponyms referring to a Place of Reeds and a Place of the Fly (Yucu Yoo – Yucu Tiyuqh). This combination points to Monte Albán. Therefore, we conclude that the Temple of Jewels was an important Postclassic ceremonial centre at Monte Albán. The representation in the codices suggests that this was a temple where sacred bundles were venerated and where the instruments for making the New Fire were kept. Tomb 7 most likely corresponds to the ‘cave’ or subterranean chamber that was part of this ceremonial centre. The contextualised iconographical study of Tomb 7 (with items such as the fleshless jawbones that served as buccal masks) leads us to interpret it as a sanctuary of Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’, where visionary contact and communication with the ancestors was possible. Such consultation of the dead may be qualified as an oracle.

The Ñuu Dzauí codices describe an exemplary case in which Lady 6 Monkey, princess of Añute, approaches Lady 9 Grass ‘Cihuacoatl’ in the Temple of Death, asking for her support against those who, she thought, had offended her. During that encounter, Lady 9 Grass instructed her about the New Fire ritual and may even have given her the fire drill. After the consultation and the oracular response of the deity, Lady 6 Monkey made a precious offering as a sign of respect and gratitude. Similarly, Tomb 7 may be understood as a space for such consultations and as a kind of *cista* or cache for depositing such an offering with its corresponding invocations and prayers.

According to the Ñuu Dzauí codices, the presence of the sanctuary for consulting with the sacred bundles and keeping the fire drill went back in time to the priestly activities of Lord 12 Wind (in the tenth century AD). Codex Iya Nacuaa (Colombino-Becker) suggests that it was here – in the Precious Temple at Monte Albán, located above a subterranean chamber – that the mortuary bundle of Lord 12 Movement was placed in 1101 AD. Through his father, this man belonged to the dynasty of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) and through his mother to the dynasty of Zaachila. He was the older half-brother of Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’. This must have been an important moment – and a precise chronological reference – in the history of the sanctuary: a clear link of the shrine with the epic of Lord 8 Deer, the formative and dramatic time of Ñuu Dzauí dynastic history. The golden ornament Number 26 contains the date of Lord 12 Movement’s funerary ritual both in the Ñuu Dzauí calendar and in the Beni Zaa calendar.

The location of this temple on Monte Albán connected it with the spiritual movement directed by Lord 12 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' at the beginning of Postclassic Ñuu Dzau history, as referred to by Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). This segment of the dynastic memory is about the foundation times of the Tree of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala), the war against the stone men and the first sunrise. A later part of this same dynastic memory is the epic drama centred on Lord 8 Deer, his half-brother Lord 12 Movement and Lady 6 Monkey, the princess of Añute (Jaltepec).

After its demise as the capital of a realm in the Classic period, Monte Albán itself remained a place of religious importance in the Postclassic era, without doubt associated with the ancestors of earlier and primordial times: a Mountain of Sustenance that had survived from an earlier creation.

These anchor points of memory, cosmology and commemoration, directly relevant to her own Ñuu Dzau dynasty, may have inspired Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' to celebrate rituals here, after she married the local Beni Zaa prince Lord 5 Flower around 1280 AD. Thus she developed a spiritual connection with Monte Albán's Postclassic ceremonial centre, the Temple of Jewels, as the most prominent sacred place in the realm of Zaachila. Most likely it became the place where her own sacred bundle was deposited and where the rites in her memory were carried out. Keeping all this in mind, her husband, Lord 5 Flower, deposited a large offering on the occasion of the planned marriage between their granddaughter and a prince from the Ñuu Dzau dynasty of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo): a crucial political alliance. These rituals and this enormous cache (*cista*) of relics and precious objects in the centre of a sacred landscape must have generated a monument of intense religious and emotional energy, a source of power, a true 'Heart of the People' for the entire region.

It is in this context we read the diverse images of the treasure deposited in Tomb 7: there are representations of Mesoamerican worldview as well as invocations of the ancestors and other divine powers. In the second part of our study we will analyse similar cases of ritual activity being shown or implied in the visual art of ancient Mexico, in order to gain deeper insights into the symbols and values involved, as well as into the profound religious experience that permeates these material remains.

**PART 2**

*Preparing the New Fire*





## The Foundation of a Dynasty

In the previous section we concluded that Tomb 7 of Monte Albán belonged to a Postclassic ceremonial centre, represented on the carved bones in the tomb itself and in scenes in the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) codices as a Temple of Jewels or Precious Temple. In relation to this temple, Tomb 7 became a focal point for ritual activity: its location at a sacred place of the past made it a chosen point of contact with the ancestors. In a similar manner the ruins of Classic Teotihuacan remained a site of religious importance in Postclassic times. The early colonial *Relación Geográfica de Teotihuacan* recalls that before the Spanish conquest the Aztec ruler Moctezuma used to go there every twenty days with a group of priests to make offerings at the temple pyramids around the Plaza of the Moon.<sup>1</sup>

The Precious Temple appears also among the structures that conformed the archetypical ceremonial centre in Tollan, where the priest-king Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl performed his rituals. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún registers names such as ‘house of jade’, ‘house of gold’ and ‘house of turquoise’ (*chalchiuhcalli*, *teocuitlacalli*, and *xiuhcalli* in Nahuatl).<sup>2</sup> Evidently such a sanctuary was part of the religious canon and cultural memory of Mesoamerica.

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) describes the Temple of Jewels as a place where staffs of office were put into the ground and guarded. Clearly the connection with the founding fathers of the Ñuu Dzauí world transmitted power to these emblems of rulership. One is the *Thucucua* or quincunx staff (symbol of the four directions); the other contains the Xipe bundle, a set of sticks bound together, which evokes the collective ancestors. The meaning of the staffs, at least on one level, therefore seems to be the connection to the principle of order in space (the four directions and the centre) and in time (the connection with the ancestors). It is this synchronic and diachronic power, then, that was revitalised at the temple.

But the Temple of Jewels itself contained another important ritual element: the plank and fire drill that constituted the instrument for making fire. It indicates that the ritual of kindling a New Fire was part of the temple’s liturgy. It was Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’, the Ñuu Dzauí culture hero, who had introduced this practice in primordial time. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)

1 *Relación Geográfica de Teotihuacan* (Acuña 1985/86, II: 236).

2 See the commentary on Codex Vaticanus A by Anders and Jansen (1996: 70–75).

contains a whole series of such ceremonies, which included the ritual cleansing of the land, the naming of the different landscape features in each region, the measuring of areas for construction, and the building of temples to respect the numinous power of the earth.<sup>3</sup>

Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48, shows how Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' came down from the Place of Heaven carrying the quincunx staff (*Thucucua*) and related ceremonial items, such as the roll of paper, the shield and arrows. Then he brought the 'water of heaven' (i.e. rain, fertility, life) to the different places of the Ñuu Dzaui world (op. cit., p. 47 ff.), while at the same time establishing the sacred dates for the different place in the region. Working together with the spirits of nature, he made the founding fathers and mothers of the Ñuu Dzaui dynasties come forth from the sacred mother ceiba tree in the valley of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) (op. cit., pp. 38–37). And he actually founded their realms by initiating the building of temples and by kindling the New Fire (op. cit., p. 32). In this process of distributing water and fire (the cold and the hot as basic elements), Lord 9 Wind ceremonially cleansed the natural and cultural landscapes and gave names to places and people (op. cit., pp. 31–30). This ceremony marked the foundation of the dynasties and village-states ('mat, throne') in the different parts of Ñuu Dzaui.

Similarly, Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 15–19, connects the New Fire instrument with the staffs that symbolise the power of the dynasty and with the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl (which seems to have contained the flint knife from which this deity had been born). Looking at the way in which such ceremonial items are treated in Mesoamerican communities today, we become aware that the New Fire instrument and the staff are much more than just objects; they are to be understood as symbols with agency, i.e. as living beings. These ceremonial elements are located in specific temples, such as a temple surrounded by the Plumed Serpent. Below that temple we often see a dark place, dedicated to the earth, with a skull motif that may refer to the goddess called Lady 9 Grass by the Ñuu Dzaui and Cihuacoatl by the Nahuas.

In a religious sense the kindled fire (light) recalls the first sunrise and the creation or unveiling of the landscape by the culture hero. In a political sense it indicates the foundation of the dynasty. And as a metaphor it stands for the unfolding of human life, history and cognition. The New Fire ceremony therefore marks the relationship of human life with the primordial time (darkness) of the gods. It expresses and celebrates the cycle of life-death-life. Thereby it set the time for the ceremonial centre and for the congregation as a whole.

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3 Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: 361–368.

Certainly this also implied a cyclical commemoration and re-enactment of the foundation ceremony on specific significant days of the calendar.

The Temple of Jewels (and by extension Tomb 7) at Monte Albán was a site for this ritual. In order to understand the meaning of this association we will examine here a specific case of the New Fire ceremony: the kindling of fire connected with a bundle ritual as part of the foundation of a Toltec dynasty. This will lead us to examine painted manuscripts from the area of Coixtlauaca, an important centre in Western Oaxaca, closely related to the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) world. The intriguing references to the Toltec presence in that area also make us pursue the track of a crucial personage of Postclassic historiography: the Toltec priest-ruler Quetzalcoatl.

## 1 Pictorial Manuscripts from the Coixtlahuaca Valley

The New Fire ceremony occupies a central place in a large painted scroll, an early-colonial manuscript, which has been preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The roll is composed of seven sheets of native Mexican paper (*amate*), glued together and forming a strip 38 cm wide and 335 cm long. The strip has been folded in the middle along the whole length, but is otherwise in relatively good condition. The analysis of the contents suggests that the sequence of paintings forms a complete chapter, but the comparison with other related manuscripts demonstrates that this chapter is only the beginning of a much longer text. Therefore, the roll may either be incomplete or it may have been the first of a set of other 'volumes'.

The roll came to the Bodleian Library in 1659 as part of the bequest of the well-known scholar (jurist, historian, philologist) and parliamentarian John Selden (1584–1654). In his library it had been catalogued as *Rotulus Hieroglyphicus* ('hieroglyphic roll') without documentation as to its original provenience. In the Bodleian Library's catalogue of 1697 it was registered as *Rotula continens Hieroglyphica Mexicana* ('roll containing Mexican hieroglyphs') with the library number Arch.Seld.A72(3) = S.C.3207. Since then it has been known as the Selden Roll. In an effort to find names for these documents that are more in accordance with their cultural provenance we will call it here Roll of the New Fire, after its central scene.

The manuscript has been published in a good black and white facsimile by Burland (1955) and in less clear colour photos by Corona Nuñez (1964–67, 11). The commentaries in both editions belong to the period after Alfonso Caso's breakthrough in the identification and interpretation of the Ñuu Dzauí codices. In this context Caso also started to study the corpus to which the Selden

Roll belongs, which is stylistically related to but geographically clearly different from the Ñuu Dzau manuscripts. An important first effort was his study of the so-called Fragment Gómez de Orozco or Doremberg (published in 1954), which is particularly relevant as this fragment starts with the same scene as the Selden Roll: an image of heaven with nine layers, accompanied by several dates. In his commentary Caso pointed out this parallel and also noted that the Selden Roll has detailed elements in common with a large painted cloth preserved in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and known at the time as the Lienzo Antonio de León, Codex Rickards or Lienzo of Tlapiltepec Papalutla and Miltepec.<sup>4</sup> References to this manuscript in the works of early Oaxacan historians Manuel Martínez Gracida and Abraham Castellanos allowed Ross Parmenter (1961) to identify this lienzo as originally coming from Tlapiltepec in the Coixtlahuaca Valley. This is an area where the Ngigua language (also known as Chocho) is spoken, but which also seems to have formed part of the Mixtec world, making use of a very similar form of pictography. It is to be supposed, therefore, that the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) originated in that same region. In his Mixtec grammar friar Antonio de los Reyes called that region ‘Chuchón Mixteca’: *Tocuii Ñuhu*, ‘Land of the Green Lords’.

Alfonso Caso wrote a detailed commentary on the Lienzos of Ihuitlan and Tlapiltepec (1961) while Ross Parmenter contributed many acute observations – among them the identification of an important place sign, the Mountain of Pointed Leaves as the Cerro Verde (Yucu Cuii in Mixtec), also known as Nudo Mixteco. With these studies Caso and Parmenter laid the foundation for defining and studying this corpus.<sup>5</sup> As this work went on, more and more manuscripts came to light. Parmenter brought knowledge of the Lienzo of Tequixtepec I and the Lienzo of Tequixtepec II, as well as the Lienzo of Tulancingo to this developing field of specialised research (1982, 1993). He also made an important interpretive breakthrough when he recognised the map-like character of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec: the place signs of towns that could be identified as Coixtlahuaca, Tlapiltepec, Tequixtepec and Ihuitlan, were painted in the upper right-hand quarter of the lienzo in the same spatial relations as they have in reality.

Following up on Parmenter’s discovery, Jansen reasoned that the continuation of the narrative in the lower right-hand section must be a map as well,

4 For a small-scale reproduction in black and white see Caso (1961). Recently Brownstone (2015) edited a volume of articles on this document with good colour reproductions of this and other lienzos of the Coixtlahuaca valley.

5 See also Smith 1973a: 182–184. For a brief historical and bibliographical survey of these studies see Ruiz Ortiz and Jansen 2009: 20–39.

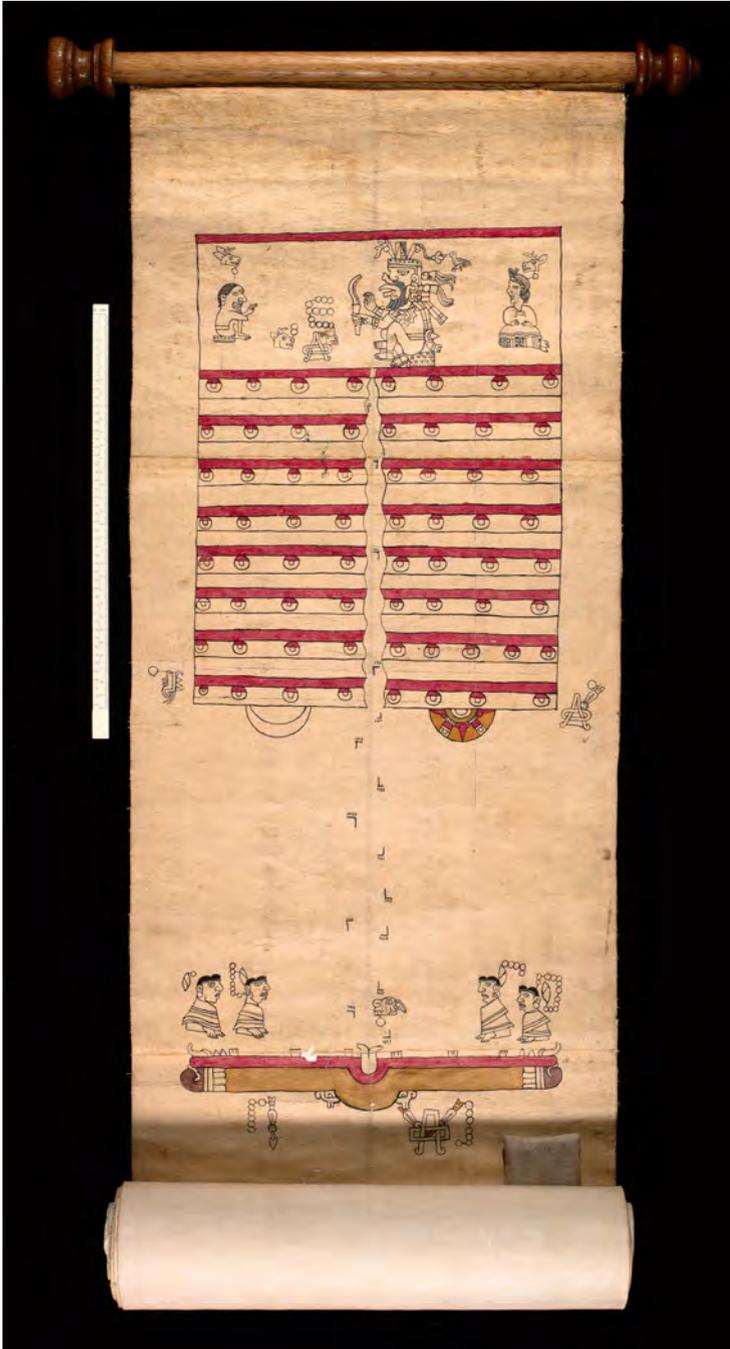


ILLUSTRATION 5.01A *The Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) – photographic reproduction with permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*

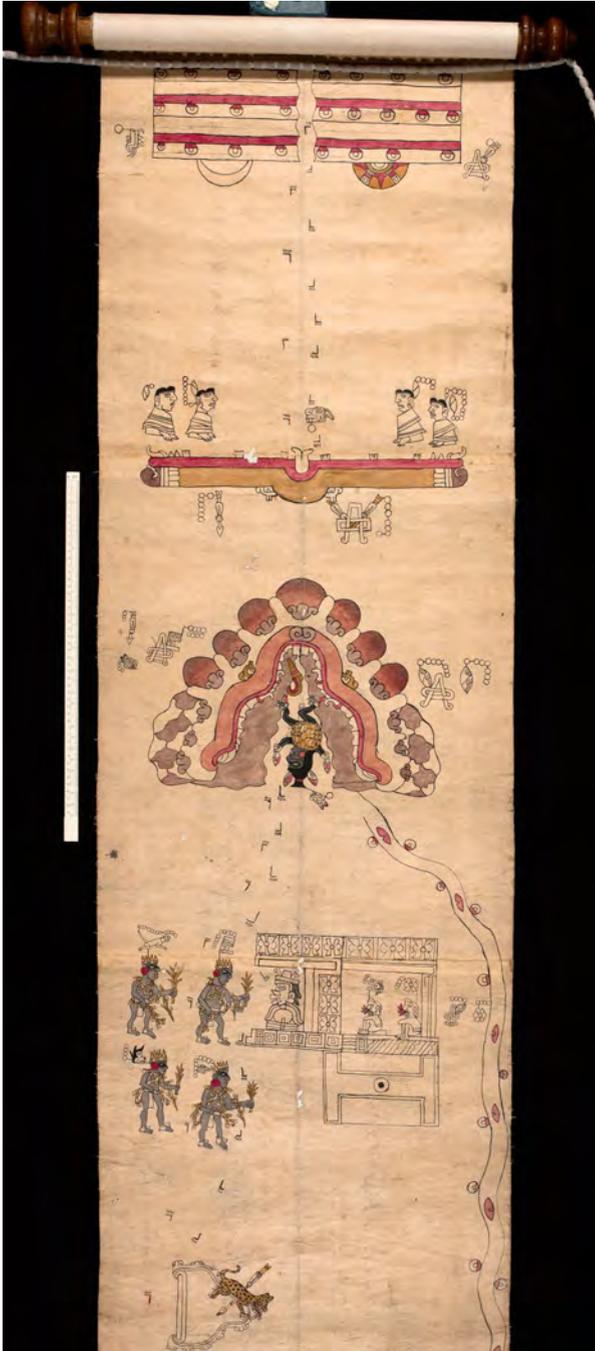


ILLUSTRATION 5.01B *The Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) – photographic reproduction with permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*



ILLUSTRATION 5.01C *The Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) – photographic reproduction with permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*

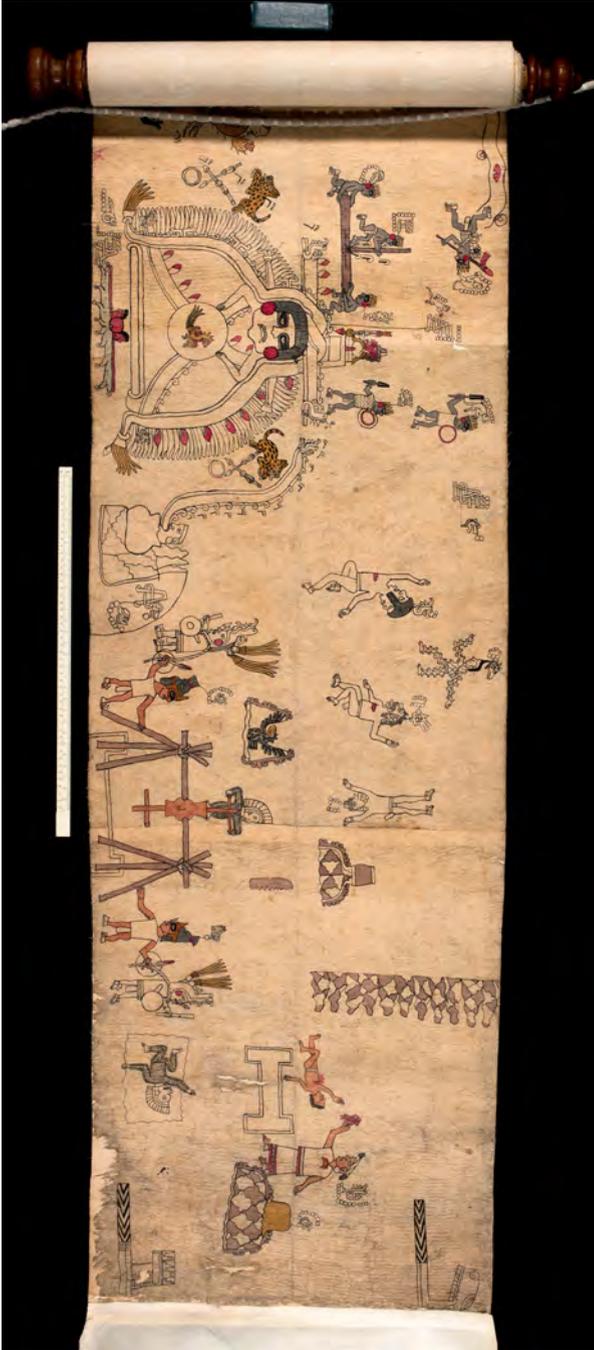


ILLUSTRATION 5.01D *The Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) – photographic reproduction with permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*

but one expanding in a northwestern direction, i.e. into the southern part of the State of Puebla. Thinking of Nahuatl toponyms, he recognised at the lower border the well-known signs of Cuauhtinchan (House of the Eagle), Mountain with Face or Nose (Tepeaca). This enabled him to connect the narrative of an expedition into that area with information in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* about lords from the Coixtlahuaca valley and the Mixtec region establishing lineages in that part of Mexico. Having established this geographical relationship, it became possible to identify many more places, such as Oztoticpac, Quecholac and Tecamachalco, and to connect the dynastic information with that of the Lienzo of Tecamachalco as well as with other historical data (Jansen 1992; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007b).<sup>6</sup>

## 2 The Couple in Heaven

Comparing the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) with the other manuscripts of this corpus, it becomes clear that its narrative is part of the first chapter of the history of the Coixtlahuaca valley and basically presents the preliminaries for the foundation of the Coixtlahuaca dynasty. In presenting the theme of dynastic origins, it intertwines two perspectives, related to two populations in the Coixtlahuaca valley at the beginning of the Postclassic period. The first scenes refer to two distinct primordial places of origin. One is the Mixtec version: the narrative opens, like Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), in the heavens, where the ancestors (old ones) Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer are seated, the Mixtec primordial couple. The date year 1 Reed day 1 Alligator (the first day of the first year) situates the scene in the beginning of time. Another date year 13 Rabbit day 2 Deer is specifically connected to this couple (2 Deer most likely referring to the combination of the day names 1 Deer and 1 Deer) and appears frequently as an origin date in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis).

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6 Parmenter and Jansen announced their discoveries at a congress in Oaxaca (Gaxiola and Jansen 1978). Viola König added to this a new study of the Lienzo Seler II (1984, 2002), while Johnson contributed an important analysis of the internal structure and dynastic coherence of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec by focusing on the lines that connect scenes (1997). Jansen's students Van Doesburg and Van Buren have built on Jansen's discoveries, striving for a new synthesis (1997). In addition, Van Doesburg published several detailed studies on the historical documents about this region, with further identifications of scenes in these lienzos (see his contribution in the volume edited by Brownstone 2015). Ruiz Ortiz and Jansen (2009) added a study of the Lienzo of Otlá. At the same time Carlos Rincón Mautner made an ample study of the Coixtlahuaca valley, its history and archaeology – for a recent synthesis see his contribution ('Pluri-Ethnic Coixtlahuaca's Longue Durée') to the volume edited by Zborover and Kroefges (2015).

The work of friar Gregorio García is an early colonial source that has conserved a Spanish translation or synthesis of a Ñuu Dzaui text about creation. This offers a key to interpret this scene and the more detailed narrative of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis). This text mentions Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer as a primordial couple that manifested itself on earth and resided in palaces on top of a mountain called the Place of Heaven (*el Lugar donde estaba el Cielo*), located close to the village of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala). The mountain in question must have been the Kava Kaandiui (in ancient Dzaha Dzaui: *Cavua Caa Andevui*), the Rock on which Heaven Rests or Rock that rises into Heaven, immediately to the east of Apoala.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned before, the heaven in Ñuu Dzaui codices is also the sign of the East.

Beginning the narrative in this manner, the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) situates itself in the Ñuu Dzaui religious and historiographical tradition. Implicitly the scene refers to the time of origins in which Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' brought life and temporal-spatial order to the Ñuu Dzaui world. Iconographically Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer of the Roll are similar to the primordial couple Cipactonal and Oxomoco in the Nahuatl world: the archetypical grandfather (priest) and grandmother (midwife).<sup>8</sup>

Heaven is depicted as eight bands with one scene above them, presumably in the ninth heaven. The lower band is connected with the sun and moon, which are not only astral bodies, but also refer to the first dawn of time. The general arrangement corresponds to the Nahuatl term *Chiconauhnepaniuhcan*.<sup>9</sup> A famous representation of the different layers of the cosmos appears in Codex Vaticanus A (ff. 1v and 2r)<sup>10</sup> where the layers of the heavens (*ilhuicatl*) are distinguished by colours, names and associated deities.

Counting from the earth (*tlalticpac*) upwards, the first is the heaven of the rain and the moon (*ilhuicatl tlalocan ipan meztli*).

The second (*ilhuicatl citlalicue*) is painted with a band of star-eyes and named after the goddess Citlalinicue, 'She with the Skirt of Stars', i.e. the Milky Way.

7 See our earlier studies: Jansen (1982b), Anders and Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992a), Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007a).

8 There is a direct parallel for this scene in the fragment known as Codex Gómez de Orozco (Caso 1954), but the personages in that document have been severely damaged.

9 This is the name for the heaven where the supreme creator couple (Tonacatecuhtli-Tonacacihuatl) was seated, which was invoked by the legendary ruler Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tula (Lehmann 1938: 77).

10 See the commentary by Anders and Jansen (1996a: 39–49) as well as the studies by Nielsen and Sellner Reunert (2009) and Díaz (2009).

The sun occupies the third celestial level (*ilhuicatl tunatiuh*), while the salt goddess Huixtocihuatl is in level four (*ilhuicatl huixtutla*).

The fifth heaven contains the sign of the *citlalin tlamina*, ‘the star that shoots arrows’ (shooting stars: meteors or comets), but the Nahuatl name *ilhuicatl mamaluacoca* refers to the constellation of the Mamalhuaztli, the fire-making instrument, i.e. Orion (cf. Sahagún, Book VII).

The next two (sixth and seventh) heavens (*ilhuicatl*) are distinguished by their colour: green (but called *yayauhqui*, ‘black’) and blue (but called *xoxouhqui*, ‘green’) respectively.

Then follows the eighth heaven: a Place of Striking or Crushing Flint Knives (*iztapal nanazcaya*), which at first sight seems to refer to a realm of the dead, but is actually a designation of thunder and lightning.<sup>11</sup>

The next three upper levels (tenth, eleventh and twelfth heaven) are realms of god (*teotl*), a term that may also refer to the sun; they are diversified and identified by colour: white, yellow, red (*teotl iztaca*, *teotl coçauhca*, *teotl tlatlauhca*).

The last and supreme level (thirteenth heaven) is called *Omeyocan*, where *Ometeotl* dwells. These terms have often been translated as ‘Place of Duality’ and ‘God of Two’ respectively, but more likely mean ‘Place of Skeletons’ (*Omiyocan*) and ‘God of Bones’ (*Omiteotl*). This heaven then would be an abode of the ancestors.<sup>12</sup>

In the Roll’s depiction of the heavens, Lord 1 Deer is seated on a jaguar pillow or throne and Lady 1 Deer in the women’s pose with her legs doubled under her. Together this indicates the Mixtec expression *yuvui tayu*, ‘the mat, the throne’, i.e. rulership. In between the two there is an image of Quetzalcoatl. The comparison with the narrative in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) and the creation narrative recorded by friar Gregorio García demonstrates that he is their son: Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’, the Plumed Serpent, i.e. the whirlwind, as the creator of the dynasties, the bringer of life to the Ñuu Dzau world, the culture hero.<sup>13</sup> The hummingbird in his headdress is a sign of glory and good fortune, as well as a symbolic connection between heaven and earth.

11 Seler (*Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, IV: 24) interprets it this way on the basis of an expression registered by Olmos in his colonial text: *in ilhuicatl ic nanatzca*, ‘heaven crackles’. See also the studies of the representations of heaven in Mexican codices by Mikulska (2008b) and Nielsen and Sellner Reunert (2009).

12 Mikulska (2008a) discusses the issue in detail (cf. the reference by Jansen 2012b).

13 In Gregorio García’s text the primordial couple has two sons: the names are scrambled but can be reconstructed as: 9 Wind ‘(Plumed) Serpent’ and 9 Wind ‘*Yahui* (Fire Serpent)’, so they were twins, both with the calendar name 9 Wind.



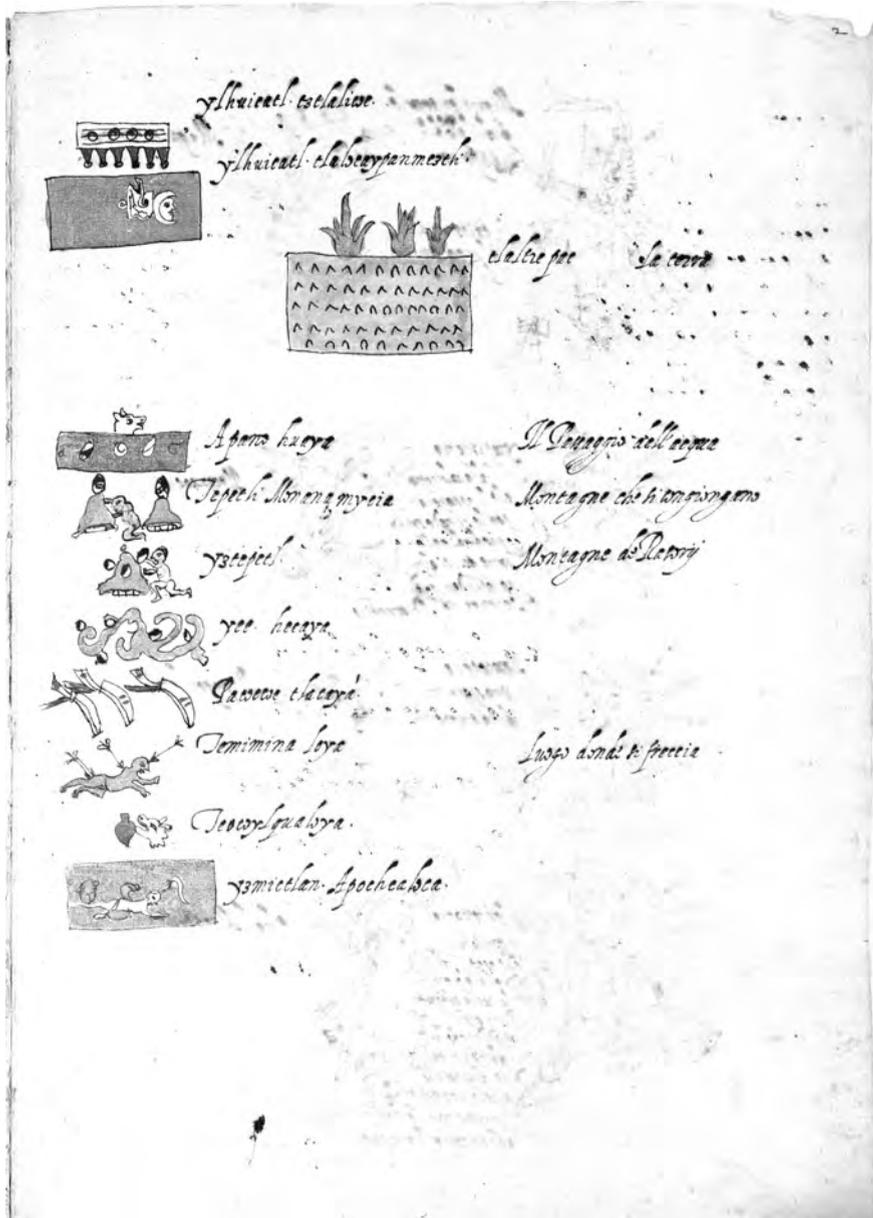


ILLUSTRATION 5.02B Codex Vaticanus A, f 2r: the lower layers of heaven, the earth and the underworld



ILLUSTRATION 5.03 *Codex Yuta Tnoho*, pp. 52–51 (Right to Left): the primordial couple Lady 1 Deer and Lord 1 Deer

Below the 9-layered heaven is the earth, represented as the open maw of the primordial alligator. The alligator is a symbolic representation of the earth: caves and other openings in the earth are represented as the open mouth of this being.<sup>14</sup> Here the earth is associated with the day 1 Rabbit and the sacred year 7 Reed day 7 Reed.<sup>15</sup> Seated on the earth are four persons. Their hairdo

14 Cf. the rain god approaching between the clouds over the precious alligator floating in the waters (*Codex Mictlan* (Laud), p. 23).

15 Hernán Ruiz de Alarcón explicitly identifies the calendar name 1 Rabbit (*ce tochtli*) as a metaphor for the surface of the earth in the Nahuatl incantations he registered (*Treatise 11*: Chs. 1 and 4). The same sign appears on the statue of Cihuacoatl found in the Aztec Templo Mayor under the famous stone of Coyolxauhqui (cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes

and regalia identify them as male. They are seated as two pairs; in each pair the person sitting in front has an elongated earplug, the second a round one. A series of footsteps connects heaven with earth, going to and fro, either because Quetzalcoatl used to visit the four seated lords or because they themselves were dedicated to contacting Quetzalcoatl and the primordial couple in heaven – presumably in vision and prayer. These four seated lords are accompanied by days: 1 Flint, 7 Flint, 5 Flint and 12 Flint, which occupy the positions 118, 138, 18 and 38 of the 260-day count. The days are connected to the lords as if they were calendar names; their regular distribution in the calendar suggests, however, that they are more than just casual calendar names, but represent a calendar structure within the 260-day count, in other words four days of ritual significance. We could therefore interpret them as days that implied certain ritual acts.

An alternative reading of the men with day names would be that they are personifications of four ritually important days. In both cases the days are the carriers of the information, referring to acts that the men had to carry out on those dates. The acts in question would be the contact (going to and fro) with heaven and by extension the veneration of Quetzalcoatl.

Although Burland's commentary in many aspects is now out of date, it contains several important insights into the genre and intellectual context of the roll. For example, he wrote about the opening scene:

The whole picture can be read as a poem of the conferring of symbolic powers on Quetzalcoatl. But as the footprints tell us of Quetzalcoatl's return to earth on (it appears) a day 1 Tochtli [Rabbit], we should take the whole of this section of the Selden Roll as a statement that all power to rule and control the powers of life was invested by The Two in their servant the now divine Quetzalcoatl. From the nature of the rest of the story, and somewhat similar stories of the importance of the relics of Quetzalcoatl in tribal history we may safely assume that the tlacuilo [writer, painter] painted this preamble to his story under the impression that he was describing the divine right inherited from the first Quetzalcoatl by all subsequent High Chiefs of the Toltecs.

BURLAND 1955: 15

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García 1993: 180) and with the earth deity Tlaltecuhltli on the bottom side of the Bilimek Vessel – see the contribution of Taube (*La Vasija de Pulque de Bilimek*) to the volume edited by Noguez and López Austin (1997). The Ñuu Dzau year 7 Reed day 7 Reed corresponds to the Aztec date year 8 Reed day 7 Reed, which was chosen for the inauguration of the Templo Mayor (see the next chapter).

We read the scene as a statement that in primordial times four lords were having visionary contact with the Plumed Serpent and the primordial couple in the Heavens, associated with specific, ritually important days in the calendar. In contrast to later persons in the Roll who are characterised as Toltecs, these four lords are not distinguished by specific ethnic markers and therefore presumably represent local, i.e. Ngigua – Ñuu Dzauí (Choco-Mixtec), individuals. Given what Gregorio García recorded about this specific primordial couple, the geographical point of reference is the Ñuu Dzauí region, specifically the Mountain of Heaven at the religious centre Yuta Tnoho (Apoala).

### 3 Chicomoztoc

This Ñuu Dzauí theme of heaven is connected with another creation referent in the next scene. Earth is again represented as the open mouth of an alligator, but now painted frontally, and surrounded by rocks. In the configuration of the rocks we discover seven fully painted stones in the form of hearts and six incompletely painted stone hearts. This suggests that we are looking at a representation of Chicomoztoc, ‘Seven Caves’ or ‘Cave 7’, the well-known place of origin for the Nahuatl-speaking people in Central Mexico. With the six incompletely painted elements, the number 7 is raised to 13, which symbolises completion in the Mesoamerican symbolic context and is furthermore associated with heaven.

The date associated here with Chicomoztoc is year 7 Flint day 7 Flint (which in a way now ‘succeeds’ the year 7 Reed day 7 Reed, mentioned before in connection with the earth’s surface). On the other side of the scene the year 8 House is written, with the successive days 3 Reed and 4 Jaguar. The year 8 House follows the year 7 Flint. The reference to 4 Jaguar might be very important because, as we will see, behind all this is the presence of a historical individual whose name was Lord 4 Jaguar, a great ruler in the Nahuatl-speaking world of the time.

In the Chicomoztoc cave (the open alligator mouth in frontal view) we see a plumed perforator for bloodletting; the perforator and the feather are green: clearly a maguety thorn is meant. It may indicate that the cave is mentioned here not so much as a place of origin but rather as a place of ritual activity.<sup>16</sup>

16 See *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f 16r for the representation of Chicomoztoc as the place of origin. There too we see footsteps going in and coming out of the cave, representing the entrance of the visiting Toltec leaders and the fact that they made the peoples inside go out.

From there a man descends; his bound hair (*temilotl*) is typical for warriors (*tequihua* in Nahuatl). He has the appearance of a fire serpent (*xiuhcoatl* in Nahuatl; *yahui* in Mixtec), holding flint knives in his hand and having flint knives in his hair. This image is suggestive of a visionary, shamanic experience. The human face of the fire serpent is coloured black as was common for priests in trance. As we have noted before, the fire serpent itself represents a ball of lightning and is an archetypical *nahual*.

Around the eye of this *nahual* priest is a black marking, which in Ñuu Dzau pictorial writing characterises the *tay sahmi nuu*, ‘the men of the burned face or eye’, which is a Mixtec ethnic name for the Nahuatl-speaking peoples (Smith 1973a: 209). In this early time this marker must refer to the Toltecs. It is an interesting detail that the Mixtec names for neighbouring peoples contain references to colours: the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) are the white lords (*tocuisi*), the Ngigua (Chocho) are the green lords (*to cuii*), and here the Nahuas are the men with the burned, i.e. blackened, faces (*tay sahmi nuu*).

The descending fire serpent warrior is accompanied by the day sign 1 Jaguar, which is not a separate day referring to historical or symbolic time (as 1 Rabbit was in the preceding scene) but is explicitly connected to him as his calendar name. Probably this is the same individual we will encounter later in the narrative and who is shown here initiating a set of actions by his ritual act, involving trance or transformation into a powerful *nahual*.<sup>17</sup>

The Roll of the New Fire thus connects two versions of the beginning of history – the Mixtec one referring to Quetzalcoatl coming down from heaven, and the Toltec one referring to the cave of origin Chicomoztoc – in a natural way by situating heaven above the earth’s surface with the cave. At the same time, by doing so the author seems to give the Mixtec version some preeminence, situating it at the very beginning, literally in the highest position. The general purport seems to be the privileged connection of the Ñuu Dzau and Ngigua peoples with the heavenly Quetzalcoatl.

This cosmic scheme also allows ordering several religious symbols. Heaven consists of nine layers, the lowest one being that of sun and moon, the highest one being the dwelling place of the primordial couple and Quetzalcoatl.

17 Descending fire serpents occur for example as signs of ritual acts (trance) on the altar of Ocotelulco (Jansen 2002; Peperstraete 2006). We are reminded of the scene in which Lord 8 Deer emerges from a cave in order to start a series of rituals as preparation for his rise to power (Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nu, p. 9-V) and of the carved stone from Ñuu Yuchi showing a *nahual* priest as fire serpent (likely the ruler Lord 4 Wind ‘Fire Serpent’ himself) entering a cave in the mountain that gave its name to the town (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a: Ch.7).

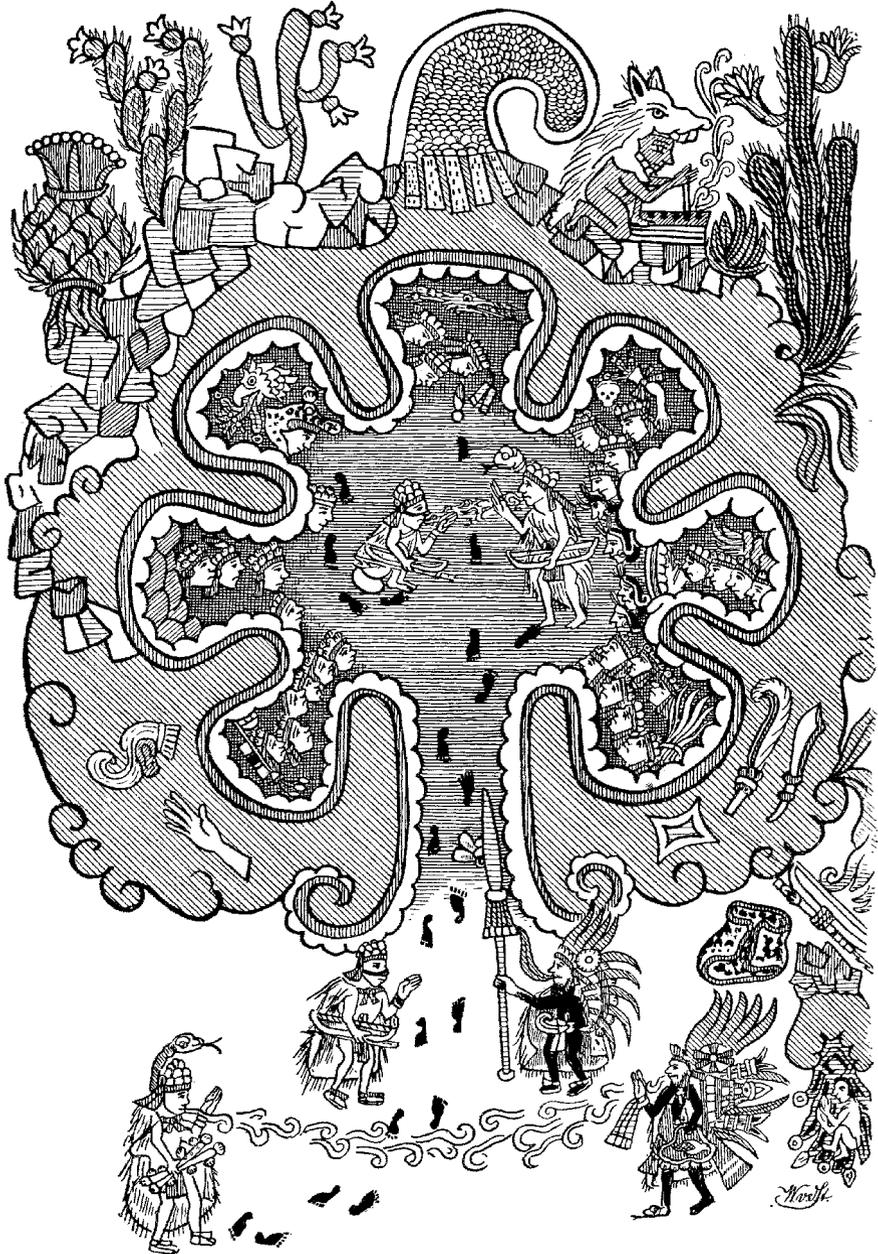


ILLUSTRATION 5.04 Historia Tolteca Chichimeca, f. 16r: Chicomoztoc

That upper level is associated with the date year 13 Rabbit day 2 Deer (the time of Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer), while the lowest level is connected with the date of beginnings: year 1 Reed day 1 Alligator. The earth as surface and fundament under heaven is associated with the year 7 Reed day 7 Reed, while its interior, the cave of origin, is characterised by year 7 Flint day 7 Flint. Year 7 Reed day 7 Reed occurs frequently among the sacred foundational dates in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), for example on page 39, where it is associated with the area of the four snow-clad volcanoes and Cholula (i.e. Central Mexico), but also on page 44, where it is associated with places in the Mixteca Baja.

From here the action continues along two roads. One extends along the upper part of the roll and consists of a band of star eyes and of flints. This is a reference to the heavens. Codex Vaticanus A, ff. 1v-2r, mentions as part of the multi-layered universe the *ilhuicatl citlallinicue*, the heaven of Citlallinicue ('She of the Skirt of Stars'), i.e. the Milky Way, and the heaven known as the Place of Striking or Crushing Flint Knives (*iztapal nanazcaya*), the layer of heaven where thunder and lightning are produced. Together these celestial motifs indicate a road or journey through the darkness of a thunderstorm as a symbol for mystery and trance, as well as the sacrifices and dangers such a journey may entail. We will come back to this nocturnal road later, but anticipate that this will turn out to be a spiritual journey undertaken by a Toltec priest, carrying the ancestral sacred bundle of his people.

#### 4 Religious Peregrination

The other road, along the lower part of the roll, is one of physical reality. A series of footsteps, coming and going, connect with four men, painted black as priests, with the special black marker around the eyes, i.e. once again Nahuatl-speaking (Toltec) priests. They have braided white-green bands around their waist, which in Mesoamerican pictography stand for ritual fasting (*nezahualli* in Nahuatl), as well as peculiar headdresses in the form of saw-tooth or pointed crowns, consisting of green and white elements, woven as mats (known in Mexico as *petates*). We will call them 'mat crowns'.<sup>18</sup>

Their calendar names are: Lord 10 House, Lord 13 Lizard, Lord 4 Monkey, and Lord 9 Vulture. In the parallel scene of the Lienzo of Tequixtepec 11 three of them have Nahuatl names: Lord 13 Lizard is *Totepeuh*, Lord 10 House

18 The pointed crown headdress element also occurs in other contexts, such as Codex Tonindecy (Nuttall), p 62.

*Chalchiuhtlatonac*, Lord 4 Monkey *Cuauhtlix*. These names are well known from Toltec contexts: they occur in the (Toltec) dynasty of Culhuacan.<sup>19</sup>

These four Toltec priests are going to and fro from the Chicomoztoc cave to a Temple of Earthquakes, next to a ballcourt. There they salute with leaves in their hands the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl, located in the open space in front of the temple. In the interior of the temple itself two personages are seated: Lord 4 Wind and Lord 4 Movement. Both have large teeth, an attribute that in Mixtec pictography qualifies them as deities (*ñuhu*). Red scrolls like flames come out of their mouths, suggesting that they are some kind of fire spirits.<sup>20</sup> Behind the temple is a date: year 4 Flint day 4 Movement. This day is a symbolic reference to (or at least has the connotation of) the name of the present era, the Sun 4 Movement. This element is present in both the earthquake motif that decorates the temple and in the name of Lord 4 Movement (as movement and earthquake are the same term).

So far, the narrative suggests a parallelism. On the one hand four presumably Mixtec lords were paying homage to the primordial couple and Quetzalcoatl in the heavens, a scene most likely situated in the Mixtec region. On the other hand, four Toltec priests were performing ritual acts, having visionary experiences in Chicomoztoc, the cave of origin, and honouring the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl in the Temple of the Volcanic Spirits – possibly a reference to a sanctuary related to the great volcanoes in Central Mexico, i.e. in the region of Cholula.

From here the four priests are also shown to transit to and fro on a road that passes by three conquered sites: Mountain of the Jaguar, Mountain of the Eagle and Mountain of the Guacamaya. Apparently these three places mark the route between Toltec and Mixtec territory.<sup>21</sup> Following that route, the four Toltec priests arrived at the Light and Dark River of the Naked Lady 6 Deer. This seems to be a liminal marker between light and darkness. The nakedness is usually a characteristic of a mother goddess or a goddess of fertility. The Naked Lady here has a pronounced stomach, perhaps indicating pregnancy. She may be a representation of the Grandmother of the river, the patron of the West, goddess of fertility. This Grandmother is called Lady 1 Eagle in the Ñuu

19 Cf. Jansen 1982: 433–434, and Van Doesburg in Brownstone 2015: 89n34.

20 The combination of fire and movement appears also with several deities in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 50, which seems to qualify them as volcanic spirits, part of the primordial beings.

21 The Mountain of the Guacamaya (Ara) and the Mountain of the Jaguar appear together in a large landscape in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 9–10.

Dzauí codices.<sup>22</sup> In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec the river is called River of the (day sign) Deer. The reference to a deer may be related to the deer that appears in the sacred narrative about the Grandmother feeding the deer, and her two sons killing it before they became sun and moon (see Chapter 2).

Apparently the four priests had taken the bundle of Quetzalcoatl with them, because we see it here deposited on the bank of the river, where two small black insects are approaching: they seem to be ants. Ants play a role in the sacred narrative of Quetzalcoatl: after returning from the underworld (Mictlan) he encountered a (red) ant that was carrying a maize kernel. The ant showed him the road to the Mountain of Sustenance. In order to enter there, Quetzalcoatl had to transform into a (black) ant himself in order to bring the maize from there to humanity.<sup>23</sup> According to an oracle by Oxomoco and Cipactonal, lightning had to strike to open the mountain. The rain gods in the colours of the different cardinal directions struck the mountain with lightning and so brought forward maize in the different colours white, yellow, red, and blue. Perhaps the pilgrimage with the bundle of Quetzalcoatl replicates events from the ancient narrative. Here we have the encounter with the ants; later we will have a scene in which the rain god manifests himself (see below). This parallelism suggests that the place the priests are heading for is also – on a symbolic level – a kind of primordial Mountain of Sustenance.

On their physical road passing through the landscape, the four priests have to cross the border between two regions, a river of two colours, dark and light, where the great mother goddess dwells. They do so and present themselves to the old priest Lord 2 Dog, an archetypical grandfather figure, similar to Cipactonal. Possibly he forms a pair with the Naked Lady as a parallel to Cipactonal and Oxomoco, the primordial priest and midwife. Lord 2 Dog is the protector of the North of the Ñuu Dzauí world, just as his female counterpart, the Grandmother, is associated with the River of the West.<sup>24</sup> Here the four Toltec priests pay him their respects, offer him precious feathers, and receive his instructions. Probably the scene tells us that the wandering priests duly asked him permission to proceed and that he granted them that permission and

22 See for example Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15; cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: 261–264.

23 Cf. Brundage 1979: 123 ff.

24 Cf. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 22–21, where he appears in the North, and p. 10, where he appears in a huge and complex landscape primarily associated with Mountain of the Rain God (possibly Yucuñudahui). His name is also connected to the Checkerboard Mountain (Yucu Naa) sign of the North in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (next to the New Fire ceremony).

indicated to them the road ahead. In the Lienzo of Ihuitlan a Lord 2 Dog appears as a priestly figure associated with Cuauhtongo (in the northern part of the Coixtlahuaca valley), while four priests with mat crowns are approaching a nearby temple.<sup>25</sup>

Given the toponymical and geographical associations of these scenes, it is clear that the four Toltec priests had arrived at the northwestern border of the Ñuu Dzau region, carrying the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl. They made this trip more than once, because the footsteps also return. In other words, the northwestern frontier of the Ñuu Dzau region was part of a ceremonial circuit of Toltec priests for some time.

At a certain moment, after having received the instructions and the permission of Lord 2 Dog, the group of four Toltec priests continued their journey into a new territory, the region between the four cardinal points. As we have mentioned before, the signs of the four directions also occur in the Ñuu Dzau codices and can be read with the help of the corresponding terms in the vocabulary of friar Francisco de Alvarado, which we have analysed before (in Chapter 2):

- \* Place of Heaven or Sun = Andevui, 'heaven' = East (Mountain of Heaven, Apoala).
- \* Checkerboard Mountain / Split Mountain = Yucu Naa, 'Dark Mountain' = North (Tepeji).
- \* River with Ashes = Yaa Yuta, 'Ash River' = West (Nejapa River).
- \* Skull Temple of Death = Andaya, 'Place of Death'; Huahi Cah, 'cemetery' = South (*Panteón de los Reyes Mixtecos*, Chalcatongo).<sup>26</sup>

In the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) this set of directional markers is clearly present as corners of the territory, but with some specific characteristics. West is only a river – the ashes are missing. More importantly, North is not represented by the usual Split Checkerboard Mountain (Yucu Naa) but – in a unique manner – by a Mountain with a Knot. In the Coixtlahuaca valley area the Mountain of the Knot clearly represents the town of Tlapiltepec, or rather the nearby Cerro del Nudo that gave its name to the town. As the Roll presents the Mountain of the Knot as North, it is logical to presume that the Roll is painted from a perspective that corresponds to a place south of Tlapiltepec. The most immediate town in this location would be Tulancingo. As Tulancingo

<sup>25</sup> See the reproduction in Brownstone (2015: 40) and the corresponding map (*ibid.*: 68).

<sup>26</sup> This is the Temple of Death we have discussed in Part I, the dwelling place of Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl'. See also Jansen 1998b; Jansen and Pérez 2011: 308–318.

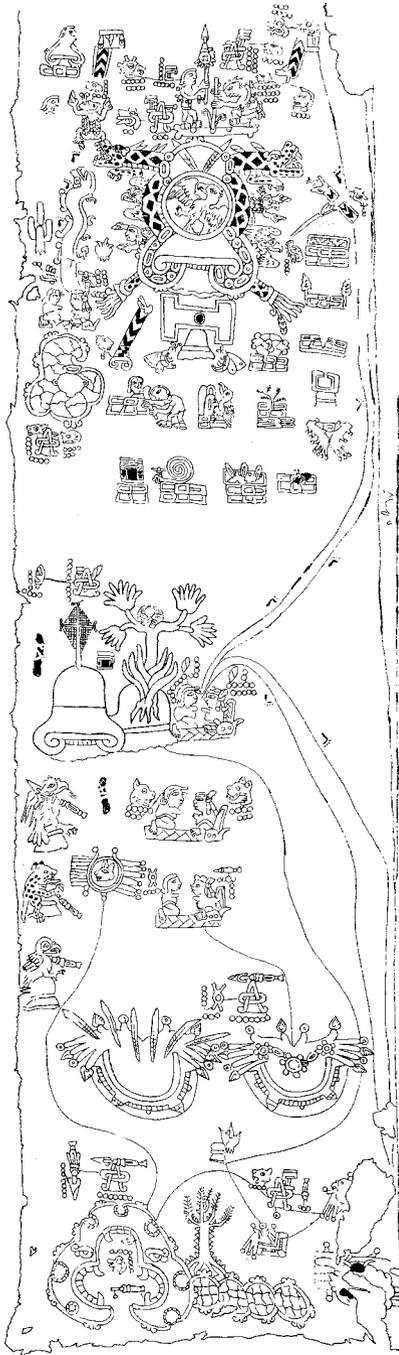


ILLUSTRATION 5.05  
*Lienzo of Tlapiltepec: beginning of history*  
(Caso 1954)



ILLUSTRATION 5.06 *The village of Tlapiltepec (photo Iván Rivera)*

means ‘the venerable Tollan place’, this toponym may be related to the other references to (and preoccupations with) Toltecs (people from Tollan) in these sources. But Tulancingo is not the only town to the south of Tlapiltepec. Coixtlahuaca itself is south – or more precisely southeast – of Tlapiltepec. The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec shows that the New Fire is part of the foundation of the dynasty of Coixtlahuaca, so the perspective of that main capital in the region is present in most of these documents in one way or another. Tlapiltepec may therefore also have functioned as an emblematic indicator of the North for Coixtlahuaca itself. In that case the four directional glyphs represent the four directions as conceived from Coixtlahuaca, the central town in the area. Thus we suppose that the Roll is either directly from Coixtlahuaca itself or from a nearby subject town like Tulancingo.

The above-mentioned Cuauhtongo, where Lord 2 Dog was located according to the Lienzo of Ihuitlan, is further north than Tlapiltepec. It is from there that the four Toltec priests enter this territory, carrying the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl, marching with a series of ceremonial objects: a staff symbolising authority, a shield and arrow symbolising courage and capacity of war, and a conch, an incense burner and a roll of paper. The same ceremonial items occur



ILLUSTRATION 5.07 *The Puente Colosal near the village of Tepelmeme (photo Iván Rivera)*

in the Ñuu Dzauí codices in similar contexts, related to pilgrimages and foundation rituals.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Codex Ñuu Ñaña (Egerton) starts with such a group of priests, and so, obviously, does the Aztec Tira de la Peregrinación (cf. Castañeda de la Paz 2007).

The four Toltec priests, led by Lord 10 House, pass through a subterranean passage and surface as if coming out of a tunnel through a rock.<sup>28</sup> Most likely this is the impressive natural feature known as the Puente Colosal at the Ndaxagua river: a natural passage full of rock paintings dating from at least Classic times.<sup>29</sup>

## 5 The Sacred Mountain

While they are proceeding, several images present themselves, which seem to be abbreviated references to certain narratives. Human heads distinguished by lip plugs and put on top of cacti, for example, seem to be a shorthand description of what is given in much more detail in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*: the fasting of leaders (heads, lords) on cacti or other thorny plants in order to be granted the perforation of lips or nose, signs of having achieved the status of Toltec rulers.<sup>30</sup> This suggests that specific (local) lords were accompanying the priests, but they do not play a role in the story; it is only said that the priests performed the lip-piercing ritual of those lords. The Toltec priests, in other words, started to create new rulers or heads of lineages when entering this area, by having them fast on thorny cacti and see visions, according to the rituals carried out customarily in their capital Tollan-Cholollan (as described in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*).

In a parallel fashion, more towards the upper register, Lord 7 House, with the attributes of the rain god, possibly a local rain priest, walks with an axe and a vessel with the head of the rain deity, from which water flows: the scene suggests a rain ritual. Apparently this is an invocation of the rain god to move his axe of lightning and shed water from his rain vessel.<sup>31</sup> We have already commented that the scene reminds us of the creation narrative in which the rain gods open the Mountain of Sustenance with lightning. In the Roll of the New Fire there is still another associated individual, this time a warrior, who does not have the black mark around the eyes, but has a beard and the diadem of rulers in Central Mexico (*xihuitzollī* in Nahuatl), which make him look Toltec

28 The narrative may be compared with that in Codex Iya Nacuaa I, pp. 9–10, of Toltecs entering the Ñuu Dzaui region.

29 See the reports by Urcid Serrano (2004) and Rincón Mautner (2012).

30 Rincón Mautner in his contribution to the volume edited by Zborover and Kroefges (2015: 185) sees this scene on the contrary as the act of beheading warriors and placing their heads on top of cacti.

31 Compare Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 27–28.

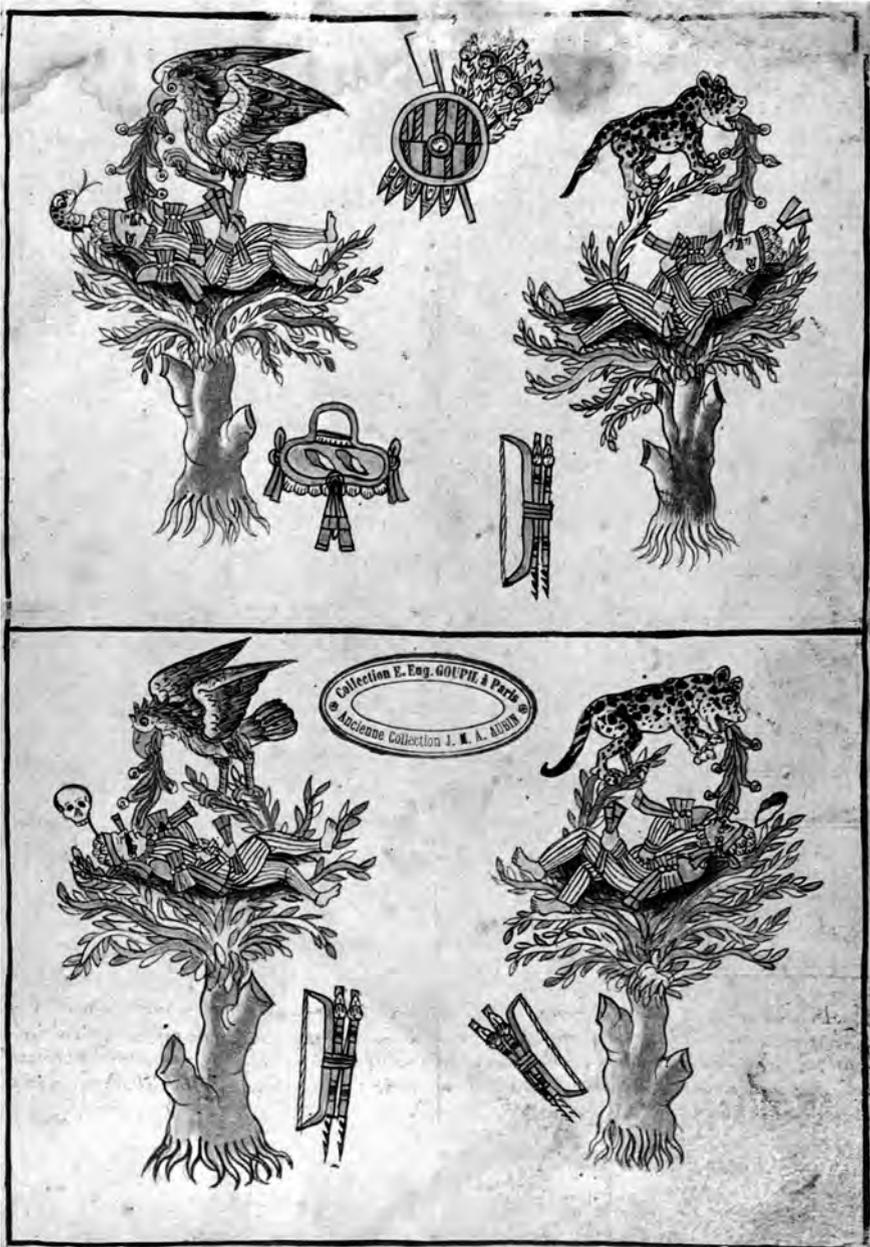


ILLUSTRATION 5.08 Historia Tolteca Chichimeca, f. 20r: *fasting on cacti*

as well. His name is Lord 4 Alligator: with his spear he kills a large serpent and cuts the head off. A stream of water then springs from the body of the serpent, nurtured by the water of the rain god.<sup>32</sup>

Apparently this is a narrative about the creation of an important water source and river. The story is similar to that of the *Relación Geográfica de Petlalcingo*, which tells that in remote times the place suffered from the presence of a huge serpent (*petlalcoatl*, 'mat serpent') which was killing the local inhabitants, until a valiant and great warrior, who had passed through many provinces with a large army, arrived and killed it with his bow and arrow, so that he could found a community there with the warriors who accompanied him (Acuña 1985, II: 49–50). This sounds very much like the foundation stories that are attributed to the Toltec ruler Nacxiti Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl when he set out from his capital Cholula to found new communities throughout Mesoamerica on his road towards the house of the sun, which turned out to be the main temple of Chichen Itza in the Yucatán peninsula.

The two roads of the travelling priests reconnect at a huge mountain in the centre of the Roll. The mountain has a face that looks right at us as an expression of life and personality. Before climbing this mountain, the four Toltec priests on their physical route pass over the sacrificed body of an unnamed local woman, lying at the foot of that mountain. The Roll of the New Fire does not give a date or name, so the scene does not have a specific historical character. At first sight one might think that it refers to casualties of a war that accompanied this Toltec entrance or invasion into the Coixtlahuaca territory. On the other hand, no military activity is shown and the killing of an unnamed woman does not seem to be something so heroic that it had to be committed to memory. It is quite possible, therefore, that this image is part of the symbolic landscape, referring to sacred history.<sup>33</sup>

While the four Toltec priests walked their physical path and climbed the mountain, one of them, however, has also followed the nocturnal road that began in Chicomoztoc (in the beginning of the Roll): he is Lord 13 Lizard, one of the four Toltec priests, who comes from there to participate in the New Fire ceremony. He carries a sacred bundle of a lord with the characteristic *petate* crown: possibly a reference to a deified ancestor. The whole setup suggests that Lord 13 Lizard had arrived at the Serpent Mountain together with the other

32 The same scene appears in the beginning of Codex Baranda (Acuña 1989): see the study by Hermann Lejarazu (2010).

33 We are reminded of the conceptual layout of the Aztec Templo Mayor as the Coatepec (Serpent Mountain) of First Sunrise, with at its foot the image of Coyolxauhqui, immolated by Huitzilopochtli (see Chapter 2).

Toltec priests, that he went into a trance there, returned to Chicomoztoc and from there brought the sacred bundle of the Toltec ancestor to be present at the making of the New Fire.<sup>34</sup> Here then the four priests come together in order to make the New Fire on the mountaintop in front of the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl. This ritual scene is clearly prominent and central in the Roll.

We see the huge mountain as a spirit place. It has a face with black eye-sockets: a Toltec face. The mountain-being holds in his hands a round plate or shield with a quetzal bird. Plumed serpents encircle the mountain; they are further qualified by flint knives (probably referring to lightning and symbolising power) and by volutes that probably represent the clouds and mists of mystery. Flanking jaguars with shields and crossed darts qualify the place as a source of warrior's prowess and suggest that it is defended by the force of warriors and the spirit of the weapons. It is in this spiritual environment that the New Fire is going to be drilled.

On top of the mountain is an altar where the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl was placed, together with the sacred arrow (also carried by the priests). There, in front of the sacred bundle, the four priests lit the New Fire with the fire drill on the day 4 Lizard of the year 10 House. The next day, year 10 House day 5 Serpent, they performed a ritual at the foot of the mountain, where waters flow from a spring in two different directions.

The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec gives a very similar account. Lord 13 Lizard and Lord 10 House are making the New Fire (drilling it on a large bone) with the same date year 10 House day 4 Lizard.<sup>35</sup> Here too they do so on top of the Serpent Mountain, this time flanked by eagles and fire serpents, which characterise it as a place of *nahual* power. In the corners of the scene are the four directional signs: Heaven (East) – Dark Mountain (North) – Altar with Ashes (West) – Skull Temple (South). Normally in Mixtec manuscripts the sign of the West is a river with ashes; probably the altar that replaces the rivers is just a local variation. Several toponymic glyphs surround the site. Interestingly, the Serpent Mountain is situated above a Mountain of Winged Insects, on top of which there is a ballcourt.

The mountain where the New Fire is made is qualified as an impressive, religious, liminal area by surrounding Plumed Serpents with flints and scrolls. We may compare these serpents to the Serpents of Darkness and Mists (= Mysteries) that surround the tree of origin in Achiutla in Codex Añute

34 Compare Olivier (2007) on the relation between sacred bundles and the New Fire rituals.

35 In comparison with the scene in the Roll of the New Fire, the roles of Lord 13 Lizard and Lord 10 House in the ritual are inverted. Note that the year 10 House commemorates the birth of Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 49.

(Selden), p. 2.<sup>36</sup> The motif is that of the Serpent Mountain Coatepec, though not as a toponym but in a special symbolic sense.<sup>37</sup> The mountain of the New Fire is not only surrounded by the serpents of mystery but also flanked by the symbols of force (weapons, jaguars). In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec the same mountain and same scene are represented, with the shield of the quetzal and the Plumed Serpents; but the flanking motifs are eagle (*yaha*) and fire serpent (*yahui*), which represent the Mixtec difrasismo *yaha yahui*, translated as ‘nigromancer’ by friar Antonio de los Reyes.<sup>38</sup>

On the mountain the face of a Toltec is depicted, frontally, looking at us, with fangs that seem those of a jaguar or similar animal. The circle (shield?) with a quetzal bird that the Toltec mountain spirit holds in his hands may represent its status as a place of the nobility or indicate the name of the mountain. But this element is not systematically present in other depictions of this place. On the Lienzo of Coixtlahuaca II (Seler II), on the other hand, the same fire-making scene appears on the same mountain surrounded by serpents – but without the reference to the quetzal bird. It is situated under sun and moon and in the centre of a circle of toponyms.<sup>39</sup>

The Toltec face with fangs seem to be a reference to the Toltec character or spirit of the mountain. In Dzaha Dzauí, the Mixtec language, such a spirit would be called the *ndodzo* (modern: *ndoso* or *ndodo*, according to the dialect variant), which is a primordial being of emblematic value for the community, incorporating and symbolising the strength and character of that community. Like the *ñuhu* (deities), the *ndodzo* dwells in special places in the landscape, such as big boulders, rocky outcrops, cliffs or caves.<sup>40</sup> Specific (stone) images may represent the *ndodzo* too. The same term can also mean ‘breast’, ‘leading figure’, and ‘quetzal’. Possibly the quetzal feathers, used as a headdress by historical personages in the Ñuu Dzauí codices, qualify those persons as *ndodzo*. This is confirmed by modern translations of the term as ‘ancient ruler or king’.

36 Knives occur often in pictography together with star eyes as a representation of darkness – in fact the ‘road of darkness’ followed by Lord 13 Lizard in this very Roll contains such signs.

37 Cf. Castañeda and Van Doesburg (2008).

38 See the decipherment by Jansen (1982b: 149).

39 In the beginning of the Codex Baranda (Acuña 1989) we find the same concept of the mountain surrounded by serpents but flanked by jaguars and turtles (probably an abbreviated representation of the fire serpents); on top of the mountain is a human head, which, although not with the black eye markings, may be a late reference to the Toltec person represented on the Roll of the New Fire.

40 See the PhD dissertations of team members Ángel Iván Rivera Guzmán, Liana Ivette Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo on this topic.

Nowadays the *ndoso* appears in narratives as the one that constructed the church or put the church bell in its place, generally making use of superhuman powers stemming from nature. This seems to be a symbolic reference to the way in which the indigenous community made an effort to construct

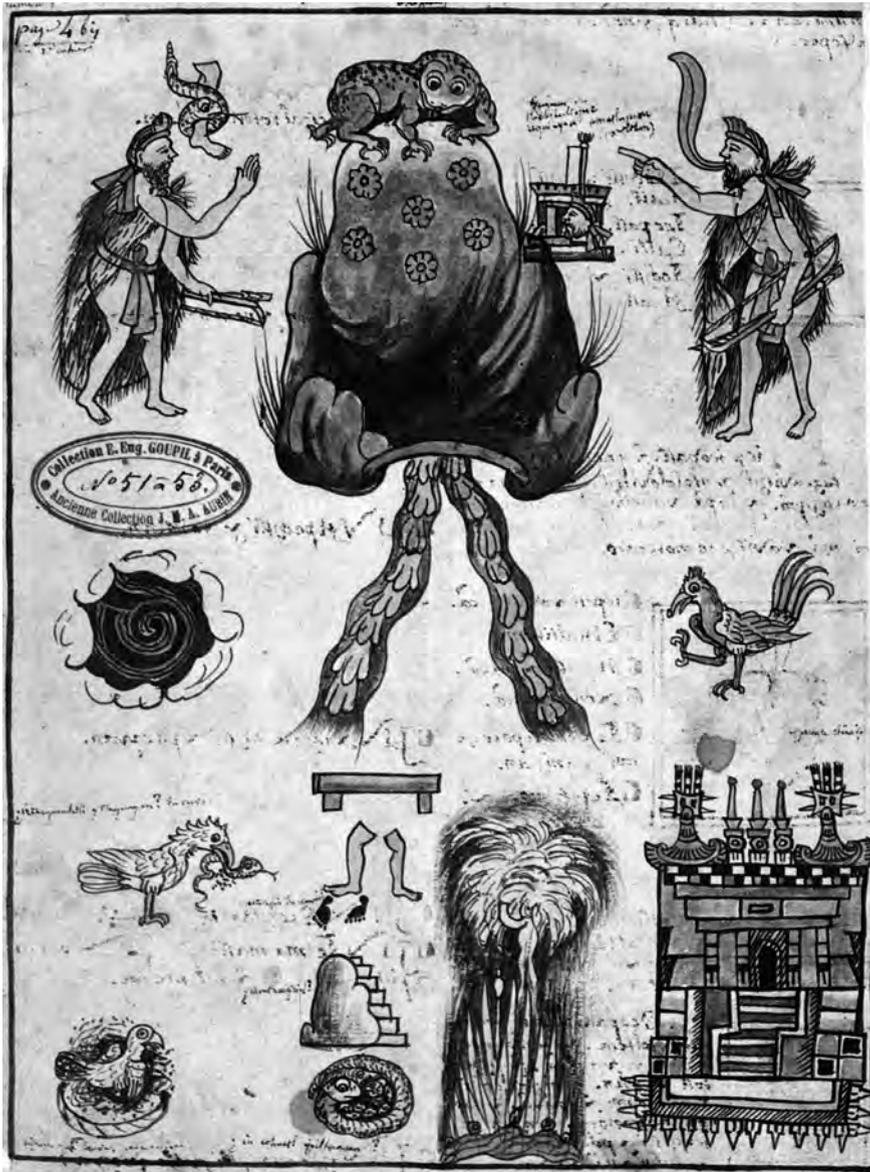


ILLUSTRATION 5.09 *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f. 7v: the landscape of Cholula



ILLUSTRATION 5.10 *Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis)*, p. 39: place-signs referring to Cholula

a Christian society, using its own internal force, always in synergy and in intimate relationship with the forces of nature. Projecting this concept back into the past, we become aware that the ancient ceremonial centres with their altars and temples ('pyramids') were probably conceived as having been constructed by *ndodzo*. Public sculptures, reliefs and steles may have been considered *ndodzo* too. Thus the community would have experienced the ceremonial centre as full of (reminiscences of) the presence of the *ndodzo*, i.e. of the spiritual force of the community itself and its spiritual relationship with the land. Taking all this into account, we understand the frontal image of the Toltec face

on the mountain as the *ndodzo* of the place (a reading reinforced by the quetzal sign), stressing its Toltec identity, its great natural powers and its mystery.

Interestingly, the quetzal is called '*ndodzo* bird' in Dzaha Dzau. It is therefore possible that the sign of the quetzal within the circle and the frontal image of the *ndodzo* are meant to reinforce the reading of the mountain as a *ndodzo* place. We get the impression that the Toltec priests chose a sacred mountain in accordance with their cultural concepts.

The qualification of the mountain as 'Toltec' connects it conceptually to the Tlachihualtepetl of Cholula, the main ceremonial centre for Quetzalcoatl. The *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f 7v, gives among the Nahuatl specific names of sites in Cholula: *in quetzaltotolyacac*, 'where the quetzal bird stands upright'. The quetzal mountain also appears in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 39, as part of the set of toponymic signs that refer to Cholula.<sup>41</sup>

Another coincidence is that at the foot of the Tlachihualtepetl of Cholula there was a spring, from which water flowed in two directions. It thus seems that the Toltec priests recreated the concept of the ancient pyramid of Cholula in the Coixtlahuaca valley and made it the place for their New Fire ceremony. The precise name and identity of the site remains unclear, as the different elements associated with the central mountain in the Roll of the New Fire seem to be religious qualifiers, not toponyms. The mountain of the New Fire would then be first and foremost a conceptual place.

## 6 Primordial Conquest

Continuing towards our right, at the top of the following scene in the Roll of the New Fire there is the year 3 House day 2 Wind, i.e. the day before the (second occurrence of the) year bearer. This is the beginning of an armed conflict. Two Toltec warriors, Lord 7 Death and Lord 8 Lizard, wearing *petate* crowns blanchish their (typically Toltec) *macuahuitl* (obsidian inlaid blades) and proceed to sacrifice, or rather execute, a number of enemies: Lord 2 Alligator 'Looking forward and behind' (a wise man looking to the past and the future), Lord 7 Eagle 'Stone Man', Lord 9 Grass 'Death', Lord 9 Wind, fallen down.<sup>42</sup>

41 For a discussion of signs that refer to the Cholula area in the Ñuu Dzau codices see Jansen (2006, 2010). In Codex Yuta Tnoho the sign Mountain of the Quetzal contains a woman's breast, which is also called *ndodzo* in Dzaha Dzau. It is possible that the name of the Tlachihualtepetl ('Man-Made Mountain') of Cholula was translated into Dzaha Dzau as if it were Chichihualtepetl, 'Mountain of the Breast'.

42 On the *macuahuitl* see Hassig (1992: 112–113).

Lord 7 Death and Lord 8 Lizard appear as new protagonists after the New Fire ceremony. The four persons they kill are not marked as Toltecs and therefore must represent the lords of the original Ngigua – Ñuu Dzaui inhabitants.

Next to the New Fire ceremony is a place represented as a Rock of a Vessel with a human head on top (Cerro de la Olla) with the date year 1 Rabbit day 7 Death. Above the vessel rises a cloud serpent, from which a Toltec warrior emerges: Lord 7 Death (whose calendar name apparently is related to the date of emergence). The Lienzo Coixtlahuaca II (Seler II) represents this Rock of the Vessel as a natural bridge over a river coming from Tequixtepec. In this geographical context the river would have to be the Río Grande de San Miguel or the Río Juquila, while the natural bridge can be identified in the area known as Huerta de Jiquila / Juquila. Van Doesburg identifies this place as Comoztoc, a site in that area that is mentioned in archival documents.<sup>43</sup> Van Doesburg suggests furthermore that the Mountain of the New Fire was itself located next to the Rock of the Vessel (Brownstone 2015: 50). Both the Mountain of the New Fire and the Rock of the Vessel would then be situated at the northern frontier of the Coixtlahuaca valley, significantly further north than Tlapiltepec, which is the emblematic place of the North in the Roll.

Rock of the Vessel is certainly an important landscape feature but not necessarily so close to the Serpent Mountain of the New Fire, which, according to the Lienzo Coixtlahuaca II, is situated at some distance, in the middle of a circle of toponyms.<sup>44</sup> In the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec the Rock of the Vessel seems mainly to function as an indicator of the antecedents of the Toltec warrior Lord 7 Death. His emergence from the mystery serpent that rises above the vessel in the toponym seems to be a synthetic reference to an important narrative element, involving a mysterious, if not magical, origin of Lord 7 Death and of his war against local power holders in the Coixtlahuaca valley.

In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec a ruling couple is mentioned at this Rock of the Vessel: Lord 8 Rain and Lady 12 (?) Grass, possibly as parents or ancestors of Lord 7 Death. This suggests that it was the capital of a specific dynasty. In the Lienzo of Tequixtepec II, Lord 7 Death is glossed with the name Nauchiosion (?), possibly the Toltec name Nauhyotzin. He is depicted in connection with a fire serpent (*yahui* in Mixtec), probably an equivalent of the cloud serpent connected to the place sign. This may either indicate his given name/title or suggest that he was involved in a ritual action involving *nahual* transformation

43 Rincón Mautner 1999: 296 n. 70; Castañeda and Van Doesburg 2008: 189; Van Doesburg in Brownstone 2015: 90 n. 35.

44 For reproductions see Brownstone (2015).



ILLUSTRATION 5.11 *Codex Tonindeye* (Nuttall), pp. 62–63 (Right to Left): Lord 8 Lizard, coming from the Mountain of Green Leaves

and trance at that place. As Lord 7 Death was a Toltec, the place of his origin or ritual antecedents may be situated outside the Coixtlahuaca region.

It is quite plausible that Lord 8 Lizard who accompanies Lord 7 Death in this campaign is identical with the person of the same calendar name and with the same mat crown in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 62-IV. There Lord 8 Lizard (with the given name: 'Bone and Blood') is part of a delegation of lords coming from Mountain of the Green Leaves and of the Lords with Green Leaves as Headdress. That place sign may well represent the area known in Mixtec as *Tocuii Ñuhu*, 'Land of the Green Lords', which is identified by friar Antonio de los Reyes as 'Chuchon Mixteca', i.e. as the Coixtlahuaca valley. The delegation in question participates in the inauguration ceremony of Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' (1063–1115) as ruler of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo). This happened in 1097, after Lord 8 Deer had forged an alliance with the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar and had been distinguished by a specific turquoise nose ornament, the emblem of Toltec rulership. We will come back to this connection below.

Parallel to the victories of Lord 7 Death and Lord 8 Lizard, the Roll of the New Fire mentions two other Toltecs, Lord 10 Alligator and Lord 1 Jaguar, having their hair bound as warriors (*tequihua*) and wearing the *xihuitzolli* diadem of lordly status: they appear holding tied captives. These captives are not Toltecs, so presumably they represent the adversaries of the Toltecs. They have no names but are of high status, given their ear spools and the long quetzal feathers of their headdress. The headdress itself consists of the head of an alligator, an animal that is symbolically related to the earth. We therefore may read these figures as 'noble lords of the land'. It is interesting to notice that the victorious Lord 1 Jaguar wears the typical nose ornament of Toltec rulership, which makes him stand out as the leading individual among the Toltecs. The example of Lord 8 Deer, who also wore such a nose ornament, suggests that this sign represents the status of a ruler but not necessarily of the supreme king of the Toltecs (who – at least in the Ñuu Dzaui codices – does not wear this mark of distinction).

The Toltec captains Lord 10 Alligator and Lord 1 Jaguar organised a *huahua* ritual in a ballcourt.<sup>45</sup> The *huahua* scaffolding supports a horizontal beam in the air, around which a person may rotate holding on to some form of bascule. In this case the person on the *huahua* is a man attired as a monkey with an elaborate feather headdress, suggesting a specific name, title or function. In the next scene at the side he appears thrown down in a pit, hole or grave.

45 See the identification of the *huahua* or *comelagatoazte* (*cuauhmalacatoztli*) ritual by Dahlgren (1954: 283–286) and the more detailed comparative study by Stresser-Péan (2011: 283–294).

His eyes are open but his arms are extended in the position that is used in this document to indicate death. Monkeys are generally considered as funny in Mesoamerica – in the Popol Vuh they represent an earlier creation. Connecting the different aspects of the scene as a logical sequence, we get the impression that the Toltec captains took the local rulers prisoner and then mocked them (as monkeys) before killing them and throwing them in a pit. In itself the *hua-hua* ritual may have been part of an enthronement ceremony, much like the somewhat comparable *Voladores* ceremony, which appears in such a context in the Lienzo of Yucusatuta (Zacatepec).<sup>46</sup>

The Roll of the New Fire situates the defeat of the local rulers in a landscape that consists of a Split Mountain of the Eagle, a Mountain of a Standing Drum (*huehuetl* in Nahuatl), an elongated stone and a long mountain range. It is possible that the drum is to be read as *huehuetl* in Nahuatl and that Mountain of the Eagle is to be read as Cuauhtitlan, 'Place of Eagles'. Together these signs then might represent Huehue Cuauhtitlan ('Old Cuauhtitlan'), an important place of origin of the Toltec dynasty that was going to be established here (see below).

## 7 Lady 13 Alligator, the Peacemaker

At the end of the Roll Lady 13 Alligator finishes this war by killing a man in sacrificial manner standing in a ballcourt next to the Green Mountain. In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec there is a parallel scene where Lady 13 Alligator makes an offering of a burning rubber ball in front of a ballcourt. In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec this ballcourt is next to the Mountain of Green Leaves, a place well identified as the Cerro Verde (Yucu Cuii), also known as Nudo Mixteco, near the towns of Otla and Nativitas. This confirms that the Green Mountain with which she is associated in the Roll of the New Fire is also the Cerro Verde. Its position is in the southeastern part of the Coixtlahuaca valley, which coincides with the directional signs Skull Temple (South) and Sun Temple (East) at the final edge of the roll.<sup>47</sup>

According to the Roll, the Green Mountain where Lady 13 Alligator was active was connected with a special day: 8 or 9 Wind. Probably a dedication to 9 Wind is meant, i.e. to the Ñuu Dzau manifestation of Quetzalcoatl, Lord 9 Wind, with whose appearance in heaven the Roll narrative started. Thus the

46 See the publication and analysis of this lienzo by M.E. Smith (1973a).

47 The two signs are switched: in geographical terms the southeastern part should be in the upper corner and Skull Temple (South) in the lower corner.

narrative is opened and closed by Lord 9 Wind, the whirlwind, the culture hero of Ñuu Dzau. Interestingly, Lady 13 Alligator is clearly on the side of the Toltecs, but is not distinguished by the ethnic marker of the blackened eyes. She seems to represent a local faction that allied itself with the invading Toltecs.<sup>48</sup> In the narrative structure her ritual action finishes the armed conflict and marks the making of peace and, consequently, the foundation of a new political reality.

Here the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) ends. Fortunately, the parallels in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and the Lienzo of Coixtlahuaca II (Seler II) help



ILLUSTRATION 5.12 *Lienzo of Tlapiltepec: Lady 13 Alligator makes an offering in the ballcourt honouring Lord 4 Jaguar, who is arriving to attend the enthronement of Lord 7 Water (Atonal I)*

48 Van Doesburg (2001b: 39) suggests she may be one of the female rulers of the dynasty of Nativitas, mentioned in the lienzo of that town.

us to understand the narrative, as they make clear that the scenes in our Roll are part of a much larger story. The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec starts with the Chicomoztoc scene, mentions the same journey (along the Mountain of the Guacamaya, Mountain of the Jaguar and Mountain of the Eagle as well as the River of the Day Sign Deer) in order to arrive at the mountain surrounded by serpents where Lord 13 Lizard and Lord 10 House engage in drilling the New Fire. Immediately after that large scene, it mentions the Green Mountain (Cerro Verde) where Lady 13 Alligator brings an offering of a rubber ball in a ballcourt. This must be an equivalent of the human sacrifice carried out by that same lady at the end of the Roll of the New Fire. Probably the image refers to an act (verb) that could be understood either as an offering of incense or as a sacrifice that implied the execution of someone. The painter of the Roll of the New Fire chose the latter, more bloody and sensational option, possibly in connection with the executions of the defeated local rulers that were mentioned in the previous scene. Thus we may read the historical statement as: Lady 13 Alligator, who belonged to the local nobility, made peace with the Toltec conquerors by welcoming them with a ritual in a ballcourt at Cerro Verde.

This is where the next segment of this narrative begins, which is missing in the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) but presented in detail in the Lienzo



ILLUSTRATION 5.13 *Cerro Verde (Yucu Cuii)*

of Tlapiltepec: the scene on the Cerro Verde is the foundation of a genealogical column, i.e. a vertically ordered series of couples, representing successive generations of rulers. This is the dynasty of Coixtlahuaca, clearly identified in this corpus of lienzos and represented as the region of the Green Mountain (Yucu Cuii), the Land of the Green Lords (Tocuii Nuhu). We now realise that so far we have been looking only at the first part of the history of the dynasty of Coixtlahuaca, namely the events leading up to the foundation of that dynasty.

## 8 Atonal, First Ruler of Coixtlahuaca

The New Fire ritual in the Roll and in those other sources is directly connected to the enthronement of Lord 7 Water, the first ruler of the Coixtlahuaca dynasty. This person himself is not mentioned in the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) but appears clearly in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. There he is seated together with his wife, Lady 5 Vulture, on top of the Cerro Verde sign (Mountain of the Pointed Leaves), at the base of the long column of successive ruling couples. This scene follows logically the peace-making act of Lady 13 Alligator.

Colonial sources state that the Coixtlahuaca dynasty was of Toltec origin.<sup>49</sup> The Nahuatl chronicle known as the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* explains that when the Aztec ruler Moctezuma I sent his troops to conquer Coixtlahuaca (1457–1458 AD), the city was ruled by an important local lord, a ‘great king’, named Atonal. This Atonal (whom we will call here Atonal II) was a descendant of another, much earlier ruler also called Atonal (I), who had been a native from Tamazolac and was enthroned in Coixtlahuaca during the final phase of the Toltec realm.<sup>50</sup> This Atonal I is referred to in another passage of the chronicle:

The Toltecs went... and passed by Old Cuauhtitlan [‘Place of the Eagle’], where they waited some time for a native of Tamazolac, who was in charge there, named Atonal. He brought his subjects with him.

*ANALES DE CUAUHTITLAN*, 1975: § 67; LEHMANN 1938: 107–109

49 Here we reproduce the argument published by Jansen (2006, 2010).

50 ‘4 calli, 5 tochtli [1457–58]. *En este año, Moteucōmatzīn el Viejo se apercibió a combatir; y salieron todos de guerra a conquistar a Cohuayxtlahuacan, donde reinaba entonces el gran rey llamado Atonal [II], cuya atención absorbía el negocio del tributo de todas partes del Anahuac. De este Atonal [II] se dice que era todavía hijo [o: príncipe] de los toltecas y [descendiente de quien fue] natural de Tamaçolac de Toltiltan, de donde partió, cuando se desbarataron y se salieron los toltecas.* (*Anales de Cuauhtitlan* 1975: 52, cf. Lehmann 1938: 252–253).

Atonal is a calendar name, in which *tonal* means 'day' and *a(tl)* is 'Water', so Atonal refers to a person with a calendar name that contained the day sign Water. Lord 7 Water is one of the few members in the Coixtlahuaca dynasty with such a name and appears indeed at the beginning of the dynasty, so we identify him as Atonal (1). Atonal II must be Lord 6 Water, who is mentioned much later, towards the end of the same dynasty: he fought the invading Aztecs.

Interestingly, behind Lord 7 Water (Atonal I) we see a house with an eagle. In the Lienzo of Tequixtepec I, Lord 7 Water is painted with an eagle outfit, i.e. with the given name 'Eagle' (Brownstone 2015: 46). This has given rise to the idea that the eagle on top of the house behind him in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec would also refer to his personal name. But the different individuals in that lienzo are not generally accompanied by their given names. That and the connection of the eagle to a house suggests that a toponym is meant, or, to be more precise, a reference to the House of Atonal (I) in the dynastic sense. We recall that, according to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, this Atonal came from 'Huehue Cuauhtitlan', i.e. 'Old Place of the Eagle': in view of that statement we suppose that the house with eagle sign makes explicit that we are here dealing with Atonal from the Place of the Eagle (Cuauhtitlan) founding his dynasty.

The reference to Atonal I in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* continues:

Then the Toltecs left... Going and entering the towns, some established themselves in Cholula, Tehuacan, Cozcatlan, Nonohualco, Teotlillan, Coixtlahuaca, Tamazolac, Copilco, Topillan, Ayotlan and Mazatlan, until they had settled the whole of Anahuac, where they are still living today. (ibid.)

Curiously, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* describes this Toltec settlement of Mesoamerica as part of the downfall and abandonment of their capital Tula. The references to Cholula and Coixtlahuaca, but also to places on the Gulf Coast (Copilco, Topillan), indicate that this process was in fact one of expansion. Thus we understand the historical context given by the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* as that of the time preceding the end of the Toltec empire, i.e. a period when that society, in spite of internal conflicts, was still in a thrust of expansion and foundation of dynasties. The historical protagonist of those years was a priest-ruler called Quetzalcoatl, Nacxitl, Topiltzin and/or Ce Acatl. The scholarly literature refers to him to as the 'historical Quetzalcoatl' in order to distinguish him from the wind deity Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent (whirlwind).

The historical Quetzalcoatl reportedly had been a high priest in Tollan located near the Xicococ Mountain (Tollan Xicocotitlan), now the archaeological site of Tula in the State of Hidalgo. Due to local conflicts (and magic employed

by his adversaries), he left that capital. In the next act he established himself as a ruler in Tollan Cholollan (Cholula in the State of Puebla).<sup>51</sup> Probably the Central Mexican sources signal here a shift in power from Tollan Xicocotitlan (Tula Hidalgo) to Tollan Cholollan (Cholula), which now became the capital of a Quetzalcoatl's realm. From here Toltec power and influence expanded to the Oaxaca region. The Spanish chronicler Torquemada reports that from Cholula this ruler had sent his people (his troops) into the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) and Beni Zaa (Zapotec) regions:

[Quetzalcoatl] left Tula very annoyed and came to Cholula, where he lived many years with his people, several of which he sent from there to the provinces of Oaxaca, to populate it, and to the whole Mixteca Baja and Alta and to the Zapotec regions. And those people, they say, made those big and luxurious Roman buildings in Mitla ...

TORQUEMADA, book III: Ch. 7; cf. ACUÑA 1984–85, I: 129

It is in this context that we have to read the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll). It clarifies that the enthronement of Atonal was the consequence of the ritual activities of Toltec priests and of the conquests made by Toltec warrior captains. The highest Toltec person in command is identified by the Toltec symbol of rulership: the nose ornament. He is Lord 1 Jaguar, participating in the *huahua* ritual. In view of his importance, it is likely that the Roll's first reference to a Lord 1 Jaguar – as descending fire serpent in the cave of origin – also refers to this person: seen in this light, Lord 1 Jaguar would be the military protagonist of the Roll's narrative.<sup>52</sup>

With this information let us consider again the scene of Atonal's marriage and enthronement in Tocuii Ñuhu (the Coixtlahuaca region) in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. The date that accompanies the scene is year 1 Reed day 1 Alligator, which symbolises 'foundation' and 'new beginning'. A warrior arrives from afar to be present on the occasion: his shield and *macuahuitl* together with a chevron band (to be read as *yecu*, 'war', in Mixtec) clarify that he was on the

51 In Tula (Xicocotitlan) itself Quetzalcoatl seems to have been succeeded by Huemac, who was symbolically identified with the deity Tezcatlipoca, described as an opponent of both the historical and the divine Quetzalcoatl. For a detailed discussion and synthesis see for example Davies 1977, Stenzel 1980, Carrasco 1982, Graulich 1988, Nicholson 2001 and Florescano 2004.

52 The initial scene would indeed be comparable to the one in which the dramatic narrative about the life of the Ñuu Dzauí hero Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' starts with the protagonist emerging from a cave: Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), p. 9-V.

warpath. His calendar name is 4 Jaguar; his given name is difficult to decipher: it seems to consist of the body of a serpent with some element at its tail. Caso thought it might be 'Serpent Flute' (a very unusual name), but it might also be a somewhat unclear rendering of a serpent with a feathered tail, which would signify the well-known name 'Plumed Serpent'.

Lord 4 Jaguar's arrival does not disturb the ceremony but seems to be part of the confirmation of Atonal's rulership. A list of ten successive years is connected with his shield, starting with the year 10 Reed day 13 Water and ending with the year 6 Flint day 6 Alligator. Next to this sequence there are six day-signs with white banners: according to pictographic conventions these might represent the calendar names of persons who had been vanquished and executed. Indeed, the closing sign is that of a hand holding a knife on top of a mountain.

This war activity, then, is the parallel of the killings and conquests by Toltec warriors in the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll). The year 3 House that is mentioned in the Roll is included in the list of years that Lord 4 Jaguar had been waging war in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. It was the same Toltec campaign that led to the installation of Atonal I (Lord 7 Water) on the throne of Coixtlahuaca, as described by the *Anales de Cuauhuitlan*. The information of the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll), therefore, makes it likely that the Lord 4 Jaguar in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec is a Toltec too. Lord 4 Jaguar in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and Lord 1 Jaguar in the Roll of the New Fire are equivalent (perhaps even identical) personages.<sup>53</sup>

The person that connects the two manuscripts is Lady 13 Alligator. The configuration of the scene in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec suggests that with her offering of incense in the ballcourt Lady 13 Alligator is marking the end of the armed conflict and welcoming Lord 4 Jaguar, who is arriving precisely at that very same point. Their meeting in a ballcourt may be compared to the scenes in which the Mixtec ruler Lord 8 Deer and the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar occupied such a structure to celebrate their alliance (see below).<sup>54</sup> The Central Mexican chronicler Ixtlilxochitl (1975/77, 1: 279) describes how Topiltzin used an artwork composed of jewels, representing a ballcourt, as a precious symbol of one power shared between different rulers, i.e. as a model for establishing

53 In this respect it is interesting that the date accompanying the event that set the whole story into motion, the Toltec fire serpent person coming out of the cave, is the year 8 House with the successive days 3 Reed and ... 4 Jaguar.

54 Cf. Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 80 and Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 11. Another scene of a ritual in a ballcourt as the conclusion of an armed conflict we find on page 21 of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), where the war against the Stone Man is concluded in a ballcourt of White Mountain (probably Tocuisi, Zaachila).



ILLUSTRATION 5.14 *The Valley of Coixtlahuaca*

Toltec order and maintaining peace. All this suggests that Lady 13 Alligator was a local female ruler, who became an ally of the Toltecs and played an active role in the enthronement of Lord 7 Water (Atonal I). Both the ritual at the ballcourt and the enthronement of Atonal I as the new ruler of the area are associated with the same emblematic mountain: Cerro Verde. Possibly the marriage of Lord 7 Water (Atonal I) with Lady 5 Vulture was part of the legitimization of new political arrangement too: then it would seem logical to suppose that Lady 5 Vulture also belonged to the local nobility and that Lady 13 Alligator was her supporter, maybe even a relative (mother?).

The war in the Coixtlahuaca valley is part of an expansionist campaign of the Toltecs into the Oaxaca area. In this context, we should consider the historical information given by the Map of Xochitepec (Caso 1958). The central scene in the pictorial manuscript from that town in the Mixteca Baja shows the foundation of the Postclassic kingdom at the site: an unnamed warrior (armed with a *macuahuitl*), coming from a Town of Tule Reeds, achieves a victory over a local lord. The intruder starts a new local dynasty, with approximately the same time-depth as that of Coixtlahuaca and that of the Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) dynasty, as registered in lienzos and codices: in all cases approximately twenty generations separate these events from the time of the Spanish conquest.

The historiography of the Postclassic dynasties in this region clearly uses the arrival of Toltec conquerors as the beginning of a new era. They have a parallel

in several early colonial sources of Central Mexico, which conserve ancient indigenous memories about the ‘historical Quetzalcoatl’ (also known as Nacxitl, Topiltzin and/or Ce Acatl), an extraordinary Toltec king, who connected so many parts of Mesoamerica and became the foundation for the legitimacy of so many thrones and dynasties in the Postclassic era.

The Aztec priests, for example, addressed a new ruler during the enthronement ritual with a reference to this personage as the ultimate source of power.

From now on, Lord, you remain seated on the throne that was installed by Ce Acatl Nacxitl Quetzalcoatl... In his name came Huitzilopochtli and sat down on this same throne, and in his name came the one that was the first king, Acamapichtli, ... Behold, it is not your throne, nor your seat, but it is theirs, it is only lent to you and it will be returned to its true owner...

TEZOZOMOC 1975: 439

The Popol Vuh tells us that the first K’iche’ rulers in their quest for legitimacy received the insignia of kingship from this very same primordial lord:

And then they came before the lord named Nacxit, the great lord and sole judge over a populous domain. And he was the one who gave out the signs of lordship, all the emblems; the signs of the Keeper of the Mat and the Keeper of the Reception House Mat were set forth... Nacxit gave a complete set of the emblems of lordship... Here are their names: Canopy, throne. Bone flute, bird whistle. Paint of powdered yellow stone. Puma’s paw, jaguar’s paw. Head and hoof of deer. Bracelet of rattling snail shells. Gourd of tobacco. Nosepiece... They brought all of these when they came away. From across the sea, they brought back the writings about Tulan.<sup>55</sup>

TEDLOCK 1985: 203–204

## 9 Lord 8 Deer and Quetzalcoatl

The Ñuu Dzauí codices also mention an important Toltec ruler, seated at the typical Toltec capital Town of Cattail Reeds or ‘Tollan’. He entered into an alliance with Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’, the central figure of the Early Postclassic history of the Ñuu Dzauí region, who lived from 1063–1115 AD (according to the

55 References to Nacxitl are also found in other sources from the Guatemalan highlands, such as the *Anales de los Cakchiquels* and the *Título de Totonicapan* (Recinos, Chonay and Goetz 1967: 64, 176).

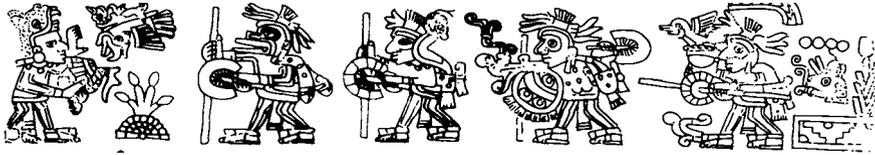


ILLUSTRATION 5.15 *Codex Nuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu, p. 10-III: Lord 8 Deer receives the ambassadors that Lord 4 Jaguar of Tollan (Cholollan) had sent to him*

chronology established by Emily Rabin). Just as in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, this Toltec ruler is called Lord 4 Jaguar. It is a striking coincidence that the final year of Lord 4 Jaguar's war action in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, the year 6 Flint, is the year before the Toltec Lord 4 Jaguar contacted Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' in Nuu Dzau, which was on the day 13 Alligator of the year 7 House (1097 AD).<sup>56</sup> At that moment Lord 8 Deer was ruler of Yucu Dzaa (Tututepec) on the Mixtec coast, but also influential in the whole Mixteca Alta and Baja region. Lord 4 Jaguar invited him to come to his capital, Town of the Cattail Reads and awarded him a turquoise nose ornament, a symbol of Toltec rulership. Thus the Lord 4 Jaguar in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and the Lord 4 Jaguar who became the ally of Lord 8 Deer play the same role: that of an outsider who legitimises a local ruler

The year 6 Flint (of the arrival of Lord 4 Jaguar in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec) and the year 7 House (of the alliance between Lord 4 Jaguar and Lord 8 Deer in the Nuu Dzau codices) are successive years in the calendar round of 52 years. The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec furthermore informs us that the grandson of Lord 7 Water, Lord 2 Flower, travelled to the Town of Flints, a place we have identified as Nuu Yuchi, the archaeological site Mogote del Cacique in San José Tres Lagunas, between Añute (Jaltepec) and Nuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) in the Mixteca Alta.<sup>57</sup> This Town of Flints was an important political centre in Nuu Dzau for a short period, namely under the reign of Lord 4 Wind 'Fire Serpent' (1120–1164), who was the successor of Lord 8 Deer as the most powerful ruler in the Nuu Dzau region.<sup>58</sup> Lord 2 Flower visited the Town of Flints and spoke to its ruler, whose name seems to contain the number 4, the day sign is damaged: presumably this is Lord 4 Wind. For this contact to happen during the reign of Lord 4 Wind, the year 6 Flint in which Lord 4 Jaguar came to Coixtlahuaca to install Lord 2 Flower's grandfather (Atonal I) on the throne must have been 1096 AD.

<sup>56</sup> Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Jansen 1982b: 276; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: 293–296.

<sup>58</sup> See Codex Nuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley) reverse, p. 31-III and p. 28-II. We use the revised chronology of Emily Rabin.

The year 7 House in which Lord 4 Jaguar met with Lord 8 Deer, predecessor of Lord 4 Wind, has already been calculated as 1097 AD.

This chronological context confirms that the year 6 Flint in which a Lord 4 Jaguar arrived in Coixtlahuaca in the context of a Toltec war campaign is indeed immediately before the year 7 House (1097 AD), when a Toltec ruler named Lord 4 Jaguar met with Lord 8 Deer.<sup>59</sup> The year 3 House, which is registered with the scenes of armed conflict in the Roll of the New Fire and also occurs within the list of years that indicate Lord 4 Jaguar's war actions in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, is four years before that year 7 House (1097) and therefore corresponds to 1093 AD.

Looking at the geography we see the logic of this sequence of dates: Lord 4 Jaguar needed ten years of war to advance from Cholula to Coixtlahuaca, passing through (and conquering) the Mixteca Baja. From there it was the logical next step to enter the neighbouring Mixteca Alta region. This warrants the conclusion that we are looking at successive moments of one and the same historical process – a Toltec invasion of the Oaxacan region – and that Lord 4 Jaguar, the Toltec protagonist of this process in the Ñuu Dzauí codices and in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, was one and the same person. But who was he?

The Ñuu Dzauí codices identify Lord 4 Jaguar, the ally of Lord 8 Deer, by applying a black or red painting around his eye as a *tay sahmi nuu*, 'man with burned eye'. i.e. a 'Mexican' or rather a speaker of Nahuatl. In the period of Lord 8 Deer in the Early Postclassic period, this must refer to a Toltec, just like the priests and conquerors in the Roll of the New Fire. In addition, Lord 4 Jaguar is not represented as some locally operating captain, but explicitly as the ruler of the Toltecs, seated on the place sign of their capital, Cattail Frieze, i.e. Tollan, Town of the Tule Reeds.<sup>60</sup> This place sign is read: *Ñuu Cohyo* in Dzaha Dzauí. Today, this is the Mixtec name of Mexico City, but it is obvious that this toponym originally referred to a Toltec capital, known as *Tollan* in Nahuatl.

What was the location of this Town of Tule Reeds where Lord 4 Jaguar ruled and came from? The problem is, of course, that more than one place name in Mesoamerica contains the element 'cattail (tule) reeds'. Contextual evidence

59 Rincón Mautner offers a different interpretation (Zborover and Kroefges 2015: 180 ff) within a different chronological framework as he does not distinguish clearly between two different individuals with the calendar name 4 Jaguar: (1) the Toltec ruler who arrived to be present at the enthronement of Atonal (1) – and who interacted with Lord 8 Deer –, and (2) the Lord 4 Jaguar from the Miltepec dynasty, who, some ten generations later, was a close ally of Lord 1 Wind of Coixtlahuaca (eight generations after Atonal), – together they planned the expedition to the Cuauhtinchan area (cf. Brownstone 2015: 108). The latter also appears in the Lienzo of Otlá (Ruiz Ortiz and Jansen 2009).

60 Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), p. 9-II.

from the Ñuu Dzaui codices, however, clarifies the geographical position of this particular town. Looking closer at how this place is portrayed in the Ñuu Dzaui codices, we find that it was situated in a large plain and that in order to travel there from the Mixtec region, one would pass a snow-topped volcano.<sup>61</sup> Another instance shows that one had to pass a River of the Hummingbird.<sup>62</sup>

There is a Tollan place that corresponds precisely to this profile, namely Tollan Cholollan, now known as Cholula (State of Puebla): it is represented as a Place of Tule Reeds in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* and in its own *Relación*

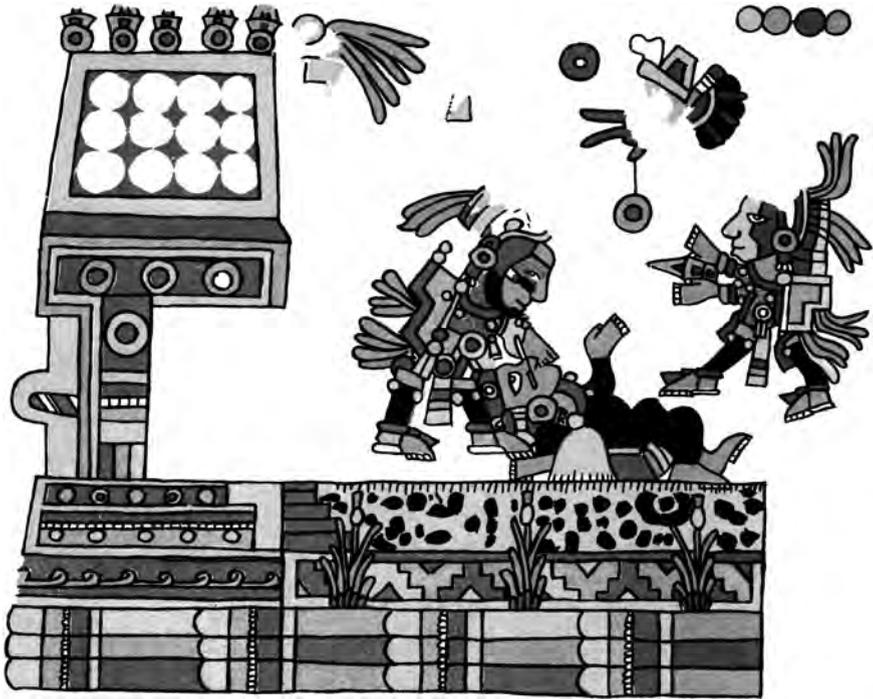


ILLUSTRATION 5.16 *Codex Iya Nacuaa I*, p. 13 (Clark 1912): Lord 8 Deer receives the Toltec nose ornament in the ceremonial centre of Place of the Cattail Reeds (Tollan-Cholollan)

61 *Codex Iya Nacuaa I*, p. 14. Nicholson (2005: 156) points to the fact that the dots in the white covering of this mountain are different from the usual u-shaped fill motif, and proposes to interpret the sign therefore as 'a sand- or ash-covered eminence'. A mountain of sand or ash is represented in a different way, however (cf. Codices Yuta Tnoho, p. 42-IV, and *Iya Nacuaa II*, p. 13). The form of the covering in *Codex Iya Nacuaa I*, p. 14, conforms clearly to that of snowcapped mountains (cf. Codices Tonindeye, pp. 11, 14, and Yuta Tnoho, p. 39).

62 *Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu* (Bodley), p. 34-II.

*Geográfica de Cholula*. Friar Antonio de los Reyes registers its name in Dzaha Dzau as Ñuu Ndiyo, 'Town of the Staircase', which seems to correspond to one of its Nahuatl names: *Temamatlac*. Cholula is indeed situated in a large plain surrounded by three snow-topped volcanoes. In travelling from the Ñuu Dzau region to Cholula one passes either the Matlalcueye (Malinche) or the Popocatepetl. The River of the Hummingbird corresponds to the Huitzilapan river, which gave its name to the city of Puebla (called *Yuta Ndeyoho*, 'River of the Hummingbird' in Dzaha Dzau).

The ruler of the Town of Tule Reeds itself is portrayed as a person of great political importance, who had a decisive impact on Lord 8 Deer's rise to power. This suggests that the Toltec town in question was strategically located to have influence in the Ñuu Dzau region during the Early Postclassic period. Cholula was the main centre of the Mixteca-Puebla style, as well as a religious and political focal point. Early colonial authors compared the town to Rome and Mecca.<sup>63</sup> Its main temple was dedicated to Quetzalcoatl.

As a symbol of the alliance between them, Lord 4 Jaguar had Lord 8 Deer undergo a nose-piercing ceremony, bestowing on him a turquoise nose ornament.<sup>64</sup> More than twenty years later, he granted the same favour to Lord 4 Wind, the assassin and successor of Lord 8 Deer.

The nose piercing appears as a crucial act of legitimisation for those historical rulers. Lord 4 Jaguar is the only character that performs such a ritual in the Ñuu Dzau pictorials. This ritual has been documented precisely (and uniquely) for Cholula, where princes from all over Mesoamerica came to be confirmed in their royal dignity by such an ear- or nose-piercing ceremony.<sup>65</sup>

63 'Asimismo, traían estas ofrendas los indios que de toda la tierra venían por su devoción en romería a visitar el templo de Quetzalcoatl, porque éste era metrópoli [Tollan] y tenido en tanta veneración como lo es Roma en la cristiandad y Meca entre los moros'. (Acuña 1984/85, II: 131–132).

64 Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), p. 9-II; Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 52; Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 14.

65 The *Relación Geográfica de Cholula* states: 'Asimismo, tenían por preeminencia los dos sumos sacerdotes dichos de confirmar en los estados a todos los gobernadores y reyes desta Nueva España, desta manera: que los tales reyes y caciques, en heredando el reino o señorío, venían a esta ciudad a reconocer obediencia al ídolo de ella, Quetzalcoatl, al cual ofrecían plumas ricas, mantas, oro y piedras preciosas, y otras cosas de valor. Y, habiendo ofrecido, los metían en una capilla que para este efecto estaba dedicada, en la cual los dos sumos sacerdotes los señalaban horadándoles las orejas, o las narices o el labio inferior, según el señorío que tenían. Con lo cual quedaban confirmados en sus señoríos, y se volvían a sus tierras' (Acuña 1984/85, II: 130–131).

This lends further support to the idea that the Town of Tule Reeds where Lord 8 Deer went to undergo the nose piercing ritual was Cholula (Tollan Cholollan). In fact, the temple where the ritual took place (Codex Iya Nacuaa I, p. 13) has the same decoration as the corresponding sanctuary in Cholula as depicted in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* (f. 26v). We conclude that the image of the Town of Tule Reeds provided by the Ñuu Dzauí codices indicates that the capital of Lord 4 Jaguar was Cholula.<sup>66</sup> In other words Lord 4 Jaguar of the Ñuu Dzauí codices and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec was the ruler of Cholula at the time: he is seated on the place sign, clearly identified as a Toltec leading figure who enters Ñuu Dzauí with the power and status of a royal person, sending ambassadors and making a transregional alliance.

The chronicle *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* situates the foundation of the Toltec dynasty of Coixtlahuaca in the period of Toltec expansion and subsequent downfall. This was the period in which the above-mentioned famous Nacxitl Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl was the ruler of Cholula. Torquemada, for example, explicitly confirms the rule of the 'historical Quetzalcoatl' in Cholula and his influence in Ñuu Dzauí and Beni Zaa territory.

[Quetzalcoatl] left Tula very annoyed and came to Cholula, where he lived many years with his people, several of which he sent from there to the province Oaxaca, to populate it, and to the whole Mixteca Baja and Alta and to the Zapotec regions. And those people, they say, made those big and luxurious roman buildings in Mitla...

TORQUEMADA 1975–1979, Book III: Ch. 7; cf. ACUÑA 1984–1985, I: 129

The 'populating' of the province of Oaxaca by this Toltec king has to be understood as 'populating with rulers', i.e. as the establishment (legitimation) of local authorities, which is precisely what we see Lord 4 Jaguar doing in the case of Atonal I (Lord 7 Water) and Lord 8 Deer. The Popol Vuh confirms that the nose ornament was part of the symbols of rulership handed out by Nacxitl (a ruler associated with Cholula) to the first first K'iche' rulers and at the same time demonstrates that the influence of this Toltec ruler extended as far as Guatemala.

This coincidence in time, place and action brings us to the hypothesis that Lord 4 Jaguar of the Town of Tule Reeds was nobody less than Nacxitl Topiltzin

66 Alternative identifications that have been put forward, such as Tulixtlahuaca de Jicayán (Mixtec coast) or Tulancingo (Coixtlahuaca valley), simply do not fit the above-mentioned criteria.

Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl of Cholula. When we examine the matter closer, we find that the other available data confirm this identification.

There are a number of traits that Lord 4 Jaguar in the Ñuu Dzaui codices and the 'historical Quetzalcoatl' in the Central Mexican chronicles have in common.<sup>67</sup> Lord 4 Jaguar's face painting and beard in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) are typical attributes of the god Quetzalcoatl, while his white-red striped body paint is typical of Mixcoatl (god of hunting) and of the Venus deity, called Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli or Ce Acatl (1 Reed).<sup>68</sup> The names Quetzalcoatl and Ce Acatl are used frequently by Nahuatl sources in referring to the historical Quetzalcoatl.

We already noted that Lord 4 Jaguar's name in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec may have been 'Plumed Serpent'. Another name occurring in the sources is Nacxitl, a contraction of an archaic calendar name: *Na(hui) (i)cxitl*, '4 Foot'. The calendar names '4 Foot' and '4 Jaguar' have the number 4 in common. It is possible – but clear evidence is lacking – that the sign Foot corresponds to Jaguar, or, rather that the Ñuu Dzaui painters chose to represent the day 'Foot' (not present in their calendar) as 'Jaguar', perhaps thinking of the impressive paws of this animal.<sup>69</sup>

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) depicts Lord 4 Jaguar wearing a large feather headdress and with a pimple or small tumour in the area of his nose and forehead (a unique detail). These attributes correspond to the image and description of Nacxitl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl provided by the Dominican chronicler Diego Durán on the basis of an ancient painting:

This Topiltzin, who was also called *Papa* ('priest'), was a very venerated and religious person, held in great esteem and honoured and adored as a saint. There is a long story about him. I saw him painted in the way that is reproduced above, on a very old paper, in Mexico City, as a noble personality. He was shown as an elderly man, with a large grey and red beard, a long nose with some pimples (*ronchas*) on it, or somewhat eaten, a tall body, long hair; ... when he celebrated his feasts, he put that feather crown on...'

DURÁN 1967, I: 9, 14, cf. pl. 1

67 For a synthesis of the sources concerning the biography and appearance of the historical Quetzalcoatl we refer again to the books of Stenzel (1980), Carrasco (1982), Graulich (1988), and Nicholson (2001).

68 See Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 14v (edition by E. Quiñones Keber 1995).

69 The day sign Jaguar is represented as a paw in Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer), p. 6 (see the edition and commentary by Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1994).

The beard, the pimple on the nose and the feather crown are all present in the copy of the ancient picture that Durán includes in his work. The large feather headdress is a diagnostic of Toltec rulers, known as the *Apanecayotl*, corresponding to the Toltec title *Apanecatl*. A copy of such a headdress has been preserved in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna, where it has become known as ‘the Crown of Moctezuma’. Codex Magliabechi, p. 89r, contains an image of the Quetzalcoatl figure with this headdress, probably as part of the ritual regalia that Moctezuma sent to Cortés.<sup>70</sup>

This attribute is not unique for the historical Quetzalcoatl, however. A more diagnostic element is the pimple on his nose, which characterises Lord 4 Jaguar in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) and which corresponds to the pimples (*ronchas*) that Nacxítl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl had on his nose according to Durán. This is a kind of personal characteristic that is extremely rare in the codices and therefore very distinctive and significant: it seems to have been a real physical mark of this specific personage. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún and the chronicle *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* describe the countenance of the historical Quetzalcoatl in Nahuatl as *ixayac iuhqujn tetecujn pol tehtlanipol*, ‘pock-marked face, full of pimples (stones)’, *xixiquipiltic yn ixayac*, ‘bag face’, and *amo tlacacemelle, atlacacemelle*, ‘bad looking, ugly’.

Furthermore, we find significant coincidences in the actions of Lord 4 Jaguar and Nacxítl Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl. In order to make his alliance with Lord 8 Deer, for example, Lord 4 Jaguar sent a hunchback to the Ńuu Dzauí region (Codex Iya Nacuaa I, pp. 9–10). We know that the historical Quetzalcoatl used hunchbacks as messengers (Sahagún, Book 6: Ch. 41). But the most convincing argument is the structural similarity of the biographical elements that occur in the different sources and their contextual logic.

The most characteristic feature of the epic narrative of the historical Quetzalcoatl is the journey of this Toltec ruler to the East, to a place called Tlapallan, crossing the waters of the Laguna de Términos (where Xicalango and Acallan are located), i.e. entering Maya country.

The *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas* gives the following description:

This Ce Acatl ... built a very big temple in Tula, while he was doing so, Tezcatlipoca came to him and said that toward Honduras, in a place called Tlapalla, was his house, and that there he had to go and die, he had to leave Tula, and in that place they consider Ce Acatl to be a God. He answered to the words of Tezcatlipoca that the heaven and the stars had

70 See the facsimile edition of Codex Magliabechi with commentary by Anders and Jansen (1996) as well as the study of the Vienna headdress by Anders (2001).



ILLUSTRATION 5.17  
*Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl depicted in  
 the chronicle of friar Diego Durán*

told him that he had to go there in four years. And thus, when the four years had passed, he went away and took with him all the commoners. Those he left the city of Chulula, and the inhabitants of that town descend from those people. Others he left behind in the province of Cuzcatan ... and Cempual... He himself arrived in Tlapalla and that day he became ill and died.

GARIBAY 1979: 38

The *Leyenda de los Soles* presents this series of events as a military campaign:

Then Ce Acatl conquered the town of Ayotlan. After that conquest he went to Chalco and Xicco, which he also conquered. Then to Cuixcoc, Çacango, Tzonmolco, Maçatzonco, Tzapotlan, all of which he conquered. Then he went to Acallan, where he crossed the water, and he also conquered it, until arriving at Tlapallan. There he fell ill, five days he was ill, and then he died.

*Leyenda de los Soles* in *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* 1975: 125; CF. LEHMANN 1938:

It was observed long ago that this element coincides with the information given by bishop Diego de Landa about a personage called Kukulcan, which is just a Maya translation of Quetzalcoatl:

It is believed among the Indians that with the Itzas who occupied Chichen Itza, there reigned a great lord, named Kukulcan and that the principal building, which is called Kukulcan, shows this to be true. They say that he arrived from the West; but they differ among themselves as to whether he arrived before or after the Itzas or with them. They say that he was favourably disposed, and had no wife or children, and that after his return he was regarded in Mexico as one of their gods and called Quetzalcoatl; and they also considered him a god in Yucatan on account of his being a just statesman; and this is seen in the order which he imposed on Yucatan...

TOZZER 1941: 20–23

The archaeological records of Tula and the contemporaneous Maya site of Chichen Itza show indeed a number of similarities, which indicate that there was cultural and historical contact between these distant areas (Kowalski and Kristan-Graham 2011). Landa further tells us that the great lord Kukulcan lived for a number of years in Yucatan, founded the city of Mayapan, and finally went back to his capital in Central Mexico:

This Kukulcan lived with the lords in that city [Mayapan] for several years; and leaving them in great peace and friendship, he returned by the same way to Mexico, and on the way he stopped at Champoton and, in memory of him and of his departure, he erected a fine building in the sea, like that of Chichen Itza, a long stone's throw from the shore.

TOZZER 1941: 26

At least one Central Mexican version states that the historical Quetzalcoatl arrived in Cholula, coming from Yucatan, that he ruled this capital for twenty years afterwards, and then went back to the area he had come from.<sup>71</sup> Most sources agree that at the end of his life Quetzalcoatl died on a journey between Central Mexico and the Maya region, in the country known as Tlapallan ('Place of Colours').

71 *'Este, según sus historias (aunque algunos dicen que de Tula), vino de las partes de Yucatan a la ciudad de Cholula ... Afirmar de Quetzalcoatl que estuvo veinte años en Cholula, y estos pasados, se volvió por el camino por do había venido llevando consigo cuatro mancebos principales virtuosos de la misma ciudad, y desde Guazacualco, provincia distante de allí ciento y cincuenta leguas hacia el mar, los tornó a enviar ...'* (Mendieta, Book II: Ch. 10).

There is a structural parallel between the Central Mexican/Maya version and the story told in the Ñuu Dzauí codices. Lord 8 Deer accompanies the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar on a large journey, passing many places that do not occur elsewhere in the Ñuu Dzauí codices and therefore seem to be located in foreign lands. Among them is an active volcano (not present in the Mixtec region). At a crucial moment of this campaign the two rulers cross a broad expanse of water in a canoe and conquer an island.<sup>72</sup> A flying fish, an alligator and a conch suggest that we are looking at a tropical lagoon. The comparison with Central Mexican sources suggests that this is the Laguna de Términos. The Dzaha Dzauí name for these waters is painted as a frieze with step-fret motif meaning *ñuu*, 'place', in combination with a series of rectangles in different colours, i.e. 'Place of Colours', which would correspond to the Nahuatl toponym *Tlapallan*.<sup>73</sup> One of the towns nearby is painted as a river with a house in it, a sign that may represent Acallan, 'Place of the Canoes', literally: 'Place of the Water Houses'.<sup>74</sup>

The Mexica accounts tell us that Nacxitl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl went to the East, where Tlapallan is located, crossed the Laguna de Términos (Acallan, Xicalango) and entered the Maya region. Focusing on the similarity in narrative structures, we agree with Walter Lehmann (1938: 372), who, at a time when little was known about the contents of Ñuu Dzauí codices, already equated the impressive scene of the crossing of the lagoon in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 75, with the account of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl crossing the waters during his voyage towards Tlapallan.

The Ñuu Dzauí codices show how Lord 4 Jaguar and Lord 8 Deer at the end of their journey arrive at the Temple of the Sun God (symbolically associated with the East).<sup>75</sup> Here they climb a huge pyramid that rises into heaven and have a meeting in a large ballcourt, exchanging precious gifts.

72 Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 75.

73 Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), pp. 22–23.

74 Codex Tonindeye, p. 74-I; Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 21-III.

75 Codex Tonindeye, p. 78, and Codex Iya Nacuaa II (Becker I), p. 3-III. Sun temples were, of course, present all over Mesoamerica. Bruce Byland and John Pohl have noted that according to oral tradition such a sanctuary formed part of the ceremonial centre at Achiutla and have taken that reference as a basis for postulating that the whole campaign of Lord 8 Deer and Lord 4 Jaguar was just a trip from Tilantongo to the neighbouring town of Achiutla. This is in accordance with their opinion that most of Mixtec history took place in the immediate vicinity of Tilantongo and Jaltepec, where they had carried out their archaeological survey. As there are no towns to be conquered, no lagoon to be crossed, and no active volcanoes in this area, they proposed an unsatisfactory solution: 'To date these events have defied analysis, for there are very few, if any, bodies of water in the Mixteca Alta large enough to make this scene physically possible. An alternate proposal explored

According to Central Mexican sources, Quetzalcoatl used to say that the sun himself had called him:

And when the people asked him what he was going to do there, Quetzalcoatl answered that the ruler of those lands, who was the Sun, had called for him. This story was widespread among the Mexicans.

TORQUEMADA, Book VI: Ch. 24

This answer is formulated in the lordly language of metaphors, according to which 'going to the realm of the sun god' means 'looking for fame', following the destiny of a warrior.<sup>76</sup> In geographical reality the great sanctuary of the East may then have been Chichen Itza, the final destination of Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan's journey. Diego de Landa documents the prominence of a sun priest (and therefore of a sun cult) at this site: the *Ah Kin May*, who seems to have been the central religious authority among the Mayas of Yucatan (Landa 1966: 14; Tozzer 1941: 27).<sup>77</sup>

Chimalpahin summarises:

In this year [Ce Acatl, i.e. 1 Reed], Topiltzin Acxitzil Quetzalcohuatl marched away. This meant the definitive downfall of the city of Tollan; in this year of 1 Reed he marched and went to the great and heavenly waters of the sea, toward the East.<sup>78</sup>

CHIMALPAHIN 1998, I: 80–81

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here is that this is a representation of a supernatural journey, not a real one'. (Byland and Pohl 1994: 152).

76 Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 4, 21 and 33.

77 Interestingly, Guatemalan Maya sources, such as the *Popol Vuh* and the *Título de Totonicapán* locate the Tollan of Nacxitl in the East, 'where the sun rises'. Obviously this world direction has its symbolic connotations (Sachse and Christenson 2005), but at the same time this statement may be connected with the Yucatec *Relación Geográfica de Izamal y Santa María*, which speaks about a great ruler in the past, who had his court in Chichen Itza, and received tribute from across Mexico and Guatemala (de la Garza 1983: 305). This suggests that the great capital Chichen Itza, with its important sun priest, was symbolically connected with the world direction 'East'. See also the contribution by Sachse ('Over Distant Waters: Places of Origin and Creation in Colonial K'iche'an Sources') to the volume edited by Staller (2008) and the contribution by Gillespie to the volume edited by Kowalski and Kristan-Graham (2011).

78 The year 1 Reed mentioned by Chimalpahin is most likely not a date of historical chronology, but an emblematic date referring to the primordial times, just as we have seen in the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll).

It is logical to assume that the historians of Tula (Xicocotitlan) saw the departure of the priest-king Quetzalcoatl from their hometown to Cholula as a traumatic event: in retrospect it was the beginning of the end of Tula's dominant position and of Toltec civilisation in general. In reality this was probably more a complex process than a set of isolated events.<sup>79</sup> Passing over Quetzalcoatl's rule in Cholula, the Postclassic historians seem to have blended several successive events into one, creating the portentous story of a pious ruler who left his capital and ultimately went to the Gulf Coast to die there. The lamentation that the priest-king was seduced by war demons suggests that in the process of moving to Cholula Quetzalcoatl shifted from a mainly ceremonial office as a priest (or theocratic ruler) to the function of a warlord and a more secular ruler (empire builder).<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, the dramatic final journey of Quetzalcoatl to the eastern Gulf Coast was equated to and merged with the journey of the creator-god Quetzalcoatl, who, in his travels, gave names to places and founded kingdoms. Codex Yuta Tnoho (p. 47) tells us about the Ñuu Dzau equivalent: the culture hero Lord 9 Wind 'Quetzalcoatl' distributing the waters of heaven to the different towns of Ñuu Dzau, the Mixtec region.

Because of this narrative coincidence we conclude that the figure of Lord 4 Jaguar in the Ñuu Dzau codices and in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec is indeed the very same person that the Central Mexican sources call Nacxitl, Topiltzin, Ce Acatl and/or Quetzalcoatl and that the Maya sources from Yucatan call Kukulcan. None of the coincidences mentioned would be convincing in isolation, but taken together they produce a compelling argument that indeed the Ñuu Dzau codices have conserved a precolonial memory about that important and elusive figure, the 'historical Quetzalcoatl'.<sup>81</sup>

In doing so, these documents evoke a narrative universe that is important for the cultural memory and identity of Postclassic society. The various scenes on artworks of the treasure of Tomb 7 are smaller and more abbreviated, but

79 See also Ringle and Gallerta and Bey (1999).

80 Chimalpahin (1998, I: 108) tells how Nacxitl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl attacked Teotenanco and in vain tried to conquer and destroy it.

81 Jansen first published this idea in 1996. For a critical assessment of this identification see Nicholson (2005). Jansen expanded the argument in 2006 and we included it in a monograph on the life of Lord 8 Deer (Jansen and Pérez 2007a). In 2010 Jansen published a detailed rebuttal to the critique by Nicholson and included a note on the chronological aspect, paying also attention to the Maya sources. We reproduce the argument here because it is crucial to our interpretation of the Roll of the New Fire and shows the link between the New Fire ritual and the epic narrative of Quetzalcoatl, which, in turn, anchors and connects different Mesoamerican historiographies (Aztec, Mixtec, Maya).

they basically do the same. Some details are characteristic of specific peoples: Lord 9 Wind coming down from heaven, the tree of Apoala, the struggle with the stone men, and the links with the time of Lord 8 Deer for the Ñuu Dzauí dynasties, and the references to Chicomoztoc and Quetzalcoatl for the Toltec nobility. In all cases the New Fire was an archetypal symbol of resilience and renewal, connecting human communities to the First Light. In the next Chapter (6) we will investigate this theme further with the visual art from the Aztec world.

## 10 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

The comparison of the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) with the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec shows that the New Fire ritual that occupies the central place in this Roll is part of the enthronement ritual of Lord 7 Water (Atonal), originally from Huehue Cuauhtitlan in Central Mexico. Lord 4 Jaguar, a Toltec ruler of Cholula, reportedly was present (either personally or through a representative) on the occasion. The documents from the Coixtlahuaca area together with the Ñuu Dzauí codices produce a compelling argument for the identification of that Lord 4 Jaguar as the elusive ‘historical Quetzalcoatl’, an important figure in precolonial memory.

The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec connects the arrival of Lord 4 Jaguar and the enthronement of Lord 7 Water with the Mountain of the Pointed Leaves, Cerro Verde, painted directly above the scene of the New Fire ceremony. Cerro Verde (Yucu Cuii) is an emblematic mountain, visible from far around. It is probably the origin of the name for the Coixtlahuaca realm as Tocuii Ñuhu, ‘Land of the Green Lords’. Coixtlahuaca itself is represented in various ways, including as Stone with a Pointed Leaf, i.e. with the same toponymic qualifier (leaf) as the Cerro Verde. Both the town of Coixtlahuaca and the mountain where the New Fire is celebrated are characterised by the motif of intertwined serpents.

The identification of the precise place where the New Fire was celebrated is difficult because the mountain is described with symbolic qualifiers and not with a specific toponym, but all of the above makes the Cerro Verde a likely candidate. At the foot of the mountain of the New Fire we see how water flows in two opposite directions: this is an interesting detail, as the Cerro Verde is also the watershed of the region.

The Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) also refers to the Toltec conquest but focuses first on the ritual and ideological aspect. In doing so, it connects references to the origins of the two peoples concerned. It starts with the

(local) Chocho-Mixtec veneration of Quetzalcoatl (Lord 9 Wind) as son of the primordial couple Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer – a direct parallel to the origin narrative of the Ñuu Dzauí dynasties in the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis).

The heaven in this context has the connotation of the specific sacred place of the Mountain of Heaven (Cavua Caa Andevui) near Apoala, but at the same time it is a symbolic place, the site of sun and moon, the primordial brothers who created light as in the narrative of the Grandmother and the deer, and as in the Popol Vuh. Dawn stands for the beginning of human history, knowledge and reason, as well as cosmic order and justice: the foundation of rulership, with specific places of power and dynasties. This is an important starting point that anticipates the central ritual in the manuscript, the New Fire ceremony which implies the remembrance and celebration of the creation.

Heaven is located as naturally connected to Chicomoztoc, the Toltec place of origin. In this way the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) creates an explicitly intercultural discourse, including Ñuu Dzauí and Toltec piety towards places of origin and towards Quetzalcoatl: both attitudes are presented on an equal footing, thereby implying that the values of both peoples were comparable and fundamentally equal.

A historical protagonist, the Toltec ruler Lord 1 Jaguar, is introduced performing ritual activities in the sacred liminal place of his people: Chicomoztoc. His visionary experience motivates four Toltec priests to go to the Temple of Earthquakes, from where they take the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl. This emphasises the Toltec veneration of the same deity that in the Ñuu Dzauí – Ngigua (Chocho-Mixtec) worldview was situated in heaven.

The date of the temple is year 4 Flint day 4 Movement: the day obviously related to the aspect of the movement, or earthquake, for which the temple was named, but also to the name of the present creation or Sun. It is interesting to notice that the Sacred Bundle of Quetzalcoatl was kept in a temple of powerful spirits of nature. Reading this narrative line in the Toltec context, as given for example by the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* and the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, one would suspect that this Temple of Earthquakes is actually in the Cholula area. From here the four priests follow a path marked by three mountains, cross the River of the Grandmother and receive instructions from the grandfather priest Lord 2 Dog. This takes place at the western and northern frontier of the Ñuu Dzauí world. Having obtained the permission of Lord 2 Dog, the priests enter the Coixtlahuaca valley from the northwest through a subterranean passage, the Puente Colosal. Then, in the central part of the Coixtlahuaca realm they make fire for Quetzalcoatl on a high, centrally located mountain for the four directions and the circle of communities as part of the foundation of the Coixtlahuaca dynasty.

For a good understanding we need the additional information from the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, which describes the same New Fire ceremony. The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec starts with the reference to Chicomoztoc and does not mention the heaven scene. Perhaps this indicates a Toltec perspective: that lienzo really focuses on the Toltec dynastic history of Coixtlahuaca, explaining the provenance of the lineage founder Atonal (1), who was installed by the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar. It makes clear that the New Fire ceremony was a crucial part of the inauguration of this Toltec dynasty of Atonal (1) in Tocuii Ñuhu, the Land of the Green Lords, i.e. the Coixtlahuaca valley.

Because of that information we also understand the presence of the Toltecs in the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll). The Roll emphasises that the arriving Toltecs in first instance were priests, carrying the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl: they were set in motion by a visionary experience in the cave of origin Chicomoztoc and went to pay their respects to the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl in the Temple of Earthquakes, which they then carried to a place of power in the Coixtlahuaca area in order to start a new era with the New Fire ceremony. It is after that ceremony that the Roll registers the armed conflict: the Toltec invading warriors take the rulers of the land prisoner and kill them. By focusing first on the origins (heaven and Chicomoztoc) and on the ritual aspect, the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) presents the Toltec invasion of the Chocho-Mixtec land as a primordial struggle in remote times. It stresses that both peoples shared the veneration of Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, thereby producing a retrospective reflection in terms of mutual respect and intercultural integration in the ritual and religious sphere.

Ñuu Dzau codices emphasise that Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' (1063–1115 AD) was an ally of the historical Quetzalcoatl, whom they call Lord 4 Jaguar. Here Toltec, Mixtec and Maya historiographies connect and intertwine: this nexus was a major anchor point in the memory of the Postclassic dynasties. It must have been part of the historical consciousness of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', whose sacred bundle, we think, was present in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán. Belonging to the dynasty of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) she was a direct descendant of Lord 8 Deer – as is stated explicitly in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 26–31. In the previous Chapter (4) we have seen that the date on the golden ornament ('pectoral') Number 26 of the Tomb 7 treasure refers to the funerary ritual of Lord 12 Movement, the half-brother of Lord 8 Deer, and by extension to that very dramatic period of Mixtec and Toltec history. The fascinating figure of the Plumed Serpent in different roles and times – creator deity, *nahual* priest, historical ruler and founding father – unifies these diverse narratives and memories.

We conclude this chapter by saying that the New Fire ceremony was a crucial element of dynastic rituals: a synthetic symbol of the foundation of the

ruling lineage and of its connection with a sacred landscape. By applying this concept to Monte Albán we understand that this mountain too must have been a *ndodzo* or *ñuhu* (deity) and a Coatepec (primordial liminal place). The images in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) suggest that the fire drill was kept in the Temple of Jewels, which, according to our argument was a Postclassic ceremonial centre on top of Monte Albán. This suggests that – at least in the Postclassic period, but perhaps already much earlier – the New Fire was kindled on top of this mountain for the whole region around it, i.e. both for the Beni Zaa realm of the valley of Oaxaca (Zaachila) and for the Ñuu Dzauí kingdoms in the mountains to the west. The wood of the fire drill itself has not survived the ravages of time, nor has the cloth of the sacred bundles, but their appearance in the codices makes it possible for us to reconstruct a picture of the ancient religious importance of the site.

## Fifth Sun Rising

Known in Nahuatl as *mamalhuaztli* or *tlecuahuilitl*, the fire-making instrument is an indicator (index) of a well-documented crucial ceremony, which could have different functions and occur at different moments in time. The New Fire rituals marked diverse ceremonial cycles, generally in units of 52 years. The best-known example is that of the Aztec calendar round celebration or ‘Binding of the Years’ (*xiuhmolpilli*) in the year 2 Reed (which corresponds to the Ñuu Dzaui year 1 Reed). But there were many others. In the previous chapter we saw that Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 47–38, lists the sacred foundation dates of the kingdoms and dynasties of Ñuu Dzaui, and then proceeds to explain that these were related to the New Fire ceremonies celebrated by the founding fathers and mothers in the four directions and in other places of specific importance. The Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) demonstrates that the New Fire ceremony formed part of the foundation of the Toltec dynasty of Coixtlahuaca. In general, we may say that this ceremony was also performed to mark the inauguration of a new place for worship, i.e. the founding of a temple or the completion of a new construction phase of an important religious building, as well as new periods (calendar cycles) in religious life.<sup>1</sup>

Here we will discuss a number of different examples from Aztec visual art and focus on the ideological aspects of the ceremony.<sup>2</sup> These examples are, of course, from a later date than the treasure deposited in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán, but they shed light on the meaning of the ritual complex to which Tomb 7 belonged. Concretely we will comment on the preparation and performance of this ritual in 1507, in the time of the Aztec ruler (*tlatoani*, ‘speaker’) Moctezuma II, when it marked the passage of one calendar round of 52 years to another. That event – the last occurrence in the precolonial period – is the central theme of the calendar in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus).<sup>3</sup> Here we will encounter both the goddess Cihuacoatl and her high priest, the *cihuacoatl* official, but also yet another aspect of the Quetzalcoatl narrative.

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- 1 See Dehouve (2001) for a discussion of the present-day form of the New Fire ceremony among the Tlapanec people, and Elson and Smith (2001) for an analysis of archaeological traces.
  - 2 The development of scholarly thought on the history and social structure of the Aztec realm is reflected in successive overview works such as those by Van Giffen-Duyvis (1957), Van Zantwijk (1985), Gillespie (1989), Clendinnen (1995), and Smith (2011).
  - 3 See the editions and commentaries by Nowotny and Durand-Forest (1974), Anders and Jansen (1991).

We have to take into account such cosmological and political dimensions of the New Fire ritual when we want to understand the presence of the fire-making instrument in the Temple of Jewels, i.e. in the type of ceremonial centre to which Tomb 7 belonged.

## 1 The Inauguration of the Templo Mayor

A New Fire ceremony was celebrated to inaugurate a large extension of the Templo Mayor, the main temple in the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan. The pictorial record of the early colonial codices known as Telleriano-Remensis (f. 39r) and Vaticanus A (f. 83r), shows how this ceremony was performed in that temple in the Aztec year 8 Reed (1487). Immediately before, in the year 7 Rabbit (1486), the Aztec ruler Tizoc had died, as is indicated by the painting of his mortuary bundle and an explanatory text.<sup>4</sup> It was his successor Ahuizotl who in the next year inaugurated the extension and renewal of the Templo Mayor. The temple itself is represented in its characteristic manner as a double temple: on one side the cloud temple of the rain god Tlaloc and on the other the temple of Huitzilopochtli, here characterised by a fire serpent.

The codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A present the Templo Mayor in mirror image. When one stands in front, the temple of Huitzilopochtli is on the right-hand side (South) and the temple of Tlaloc on the left-hand side (North). This corresponds to the cosmic order: the rainy season (summer) is the time when the sun is in the northern half of the sky, while the dry season (winter) is when the sun passes through the southern part. The layout of the temple was done so that the sun rose between the two temples at the spring equinox.<sup>5</sup>

The Spanish commentary of Codex Telleriano-Remensis, p. 39r, says that in the year 1487 the work on the construction and expansion of the great temple of Mexico was finished and that the old men say that in that year 4,000 men were sacrificed, assembled from the provinces that had been subjugated through war.<sup>6</sup> The pictorial text gives the number in the form of ten hair-like

4 The Nahuatl historian Tezozomoc describes the funerary ceremonies for Tizoc in detail in his *Crónica Mexicana* (1975: Ch. 60).

5 See the discussion of the symbolic aspects of the Templo Mayor (with corresponding bibliographical references) in the commentary on Codex Mictlan (Laud) by Anders and Jansen (1994: Ch. iv).

6 *'Año de ocho cañas y de 1487 segun n[uest]ra quenta se hacavo de hazer y perficjonar el cu grande de mexico dizen los viexos que se sacrificaron en este año quatro mil onbres traydos*



ILLUSTRATION 6.01 Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 39r: the inauguration of the Templo Mayor in 1487 under the rule of Ahuitzotl.

de las provincias que havian sujetado por guerra. Por cada rramito destes negritos quantan ençima dan a entender quatroçientos o numero de quatroçientos'. For an edition of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis see Quiñones Keber (1995); for the Vaticanus A: Anders and Jansen (1996a).

signs, each of which stands for 400 (*tzontli* is 'hair' and '400') but it adds to this two incense bags (*xiquimilli*), each standing for the number 8,000: so the total is 20,000. The sources give different numbers of men sacrificed at that occasion. Friar Diego Durán, for example, speaks of 80,400 victims.

Such mass killings, of course, do occur worldwide in war circumstances. And the numbers of casualties in ancient wars are even somewhat small in comparison with the enormous massacres and massive scale of destruction in modern wars. In the expanding Aztec empire wars of conquest must have occurred frequently; still the mass killing of local populations is not something one would expect from an empire based on tributes of goods and services: the impact of massacres on local economy and the capacity for paying tribute would have been disastrous.

When one thinks of the sheer technology or practicality of sacrifice that would have been involved, the conclusion is that it would take quite a large number of days and of sacrificing priests to kill such enormous quantities of people. The psychological effect on the audience would be numbing and stupefying. Both the Spanish authors, hostile towards the indigenous religion, and some old Aztec warriors, boasting about their success in war, may have had reason to exaggerate the numbers.

One might therefore question the precision and objectivity of those registers – especially as they were based on hearsay (the event having occurred more than thirty years before the conquest and several decades more before those sources were written). The lack of linguistic knowledge, particularly concerning the special expressions that refer to ritual events and religious concepts, may further have caused inadequate comprehension on the side of the – already biased – Spanish authors.

Another point of historical critique would be that the image in Codex Telleriano-Remensis is not explicit in dealing with the sacrifice itself. With the number there are four men depicted as indicators of the peoples involved: they were Mazatecs (identified by a deer: *mazatl*), the people of Xiuhcoac ('Place of the Turquoise Serpent'), Tlapanecs (from Tlapa, 'Red Place') and Zapotecs (identified by a zapote tree). These were specifically attired – with white down balls on the head and the vertical black band through the eye – and they hold a white banner. These are indeed signs associated with sacrificial victims, but an explicit representation of the sacrifice itself is lacking.

In view of the different considerations listed above, one wonders, therefore, whether the sacrifice described in the Spanish text is really what happened. The pictorial scene in Codex Telleriano-Remensis could easily be read as the symbolic large quantity of 20,000 men marching through Mexico-Tenochtitlan attired as victims, and so in an embodied, physical manner demonstrating

their subjugation and pledging their obedience to the Aztec gods, the Aztec people and the Aztec rulers. This sounds like quite a normal thing to do in a ritual context. That alternative possibility would explain the numbers without implying a mass killing. It is more logical (and in accordance with the type of direct confrontation and champion warfare) to suppose that enemy leaders were ritually executed, but that their peoples were made into vassals of the new administration.

The issue needs a much more detailed treatment. Here we will just state as our conviction, based on historical critique of the different sources, that so-called human sacrifice is a misnomer for the precolonial ritualised form of execution of enemy leaders, criminals and wrongdoers in accordance with the social norms and laws of Mesoamerican cultures. This practice was certainly present, but in quantity and frequency probably nowhere near what the colonial authors suggest. Most likely the high numbers attributed to the human sacrifices in Mesoamerica were the consequence of the projection of the frequency of self-sacrifice (bloodletting) onto those ritualised executions.

We have to take into account that it was necessary for the justification of the conquest to construct an image of the conquered populations as inhuman, irrational, cruel and bloody barbarians. The same propagandistic technique was applied in the depiction of the native peoples of the Caribbean as cannibals (Sued Badillo 1978; Arens 1979).

In view of these considerations, it is interesting to examine the one statement that has come to us directly from protagonists of the event: the carved relief known as the Dedication Stone, from the Aztec Templo Mayor and dated in the year 8 Reed.<sup>7</sup> The scene on the Dedication Stone shows the rulers Tizoc (deceased) and Ahuitzotl – both are identified by their name signs: the perforated leg which is to be read as Tizoc, ‘he who perforates (in self-sacrifice)’, adding a phonetic complement *xo(tl)*, ‘leg’ to indicate the verb *çoa*, ‘bloodletting’. Both rulers are commemorated, as both had worked for the renewal of the Templo Mayor. Both are shown flanking the sun disc – presumably rising and symbolising a new era – and offering their blood in front of this divine life-giving principle, which also symbolised the rising power of the Aztec nation. But there is no sacrifice of subjugated peoples here, just the rulers themselves and their respect for the powers of nature and the ancestors.

The Aztec date year 8 Reed, day 7 Reed corresponds to the Mixtec year 7 Reed, day 7 Reed, a well-known ceremonial date, and as we saw earlier also present in the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) and in the Roll of the New

7 For publications and studies of the Dedication or Inaugural Stone see for example: Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (vol. II: 766), Nicholson and Quiñones Keber (1983: 52–55).

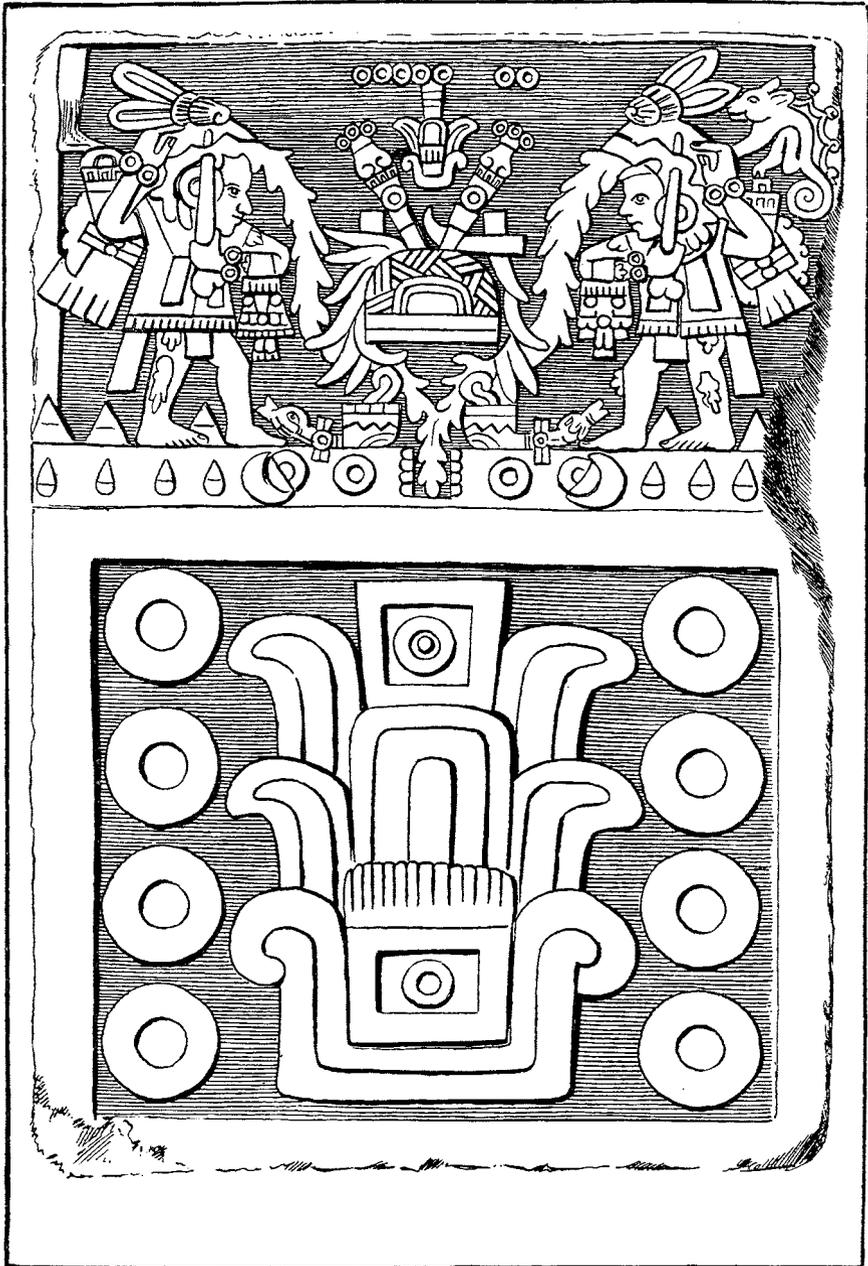


ILLUSTRATION 6.02 *The dedication stone from the Templo Mayor (Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*

Fire. According to the most accepted correlation the Aztec year 8 Reed day 7 Reed would be 2 April or 18 December 1487 (Julian). The latter would coincide with the end of Panquetzaliztli and would be most appropriate for the inauguration of the Templo Mayor as that was the feast of Huitzilopochtli.<sup>8</sup>

The blood of the self-sacrifice of the rulers' flows into the earth, represented by the skull face of Cihuacoatl – just as in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15 (see Chapter 4). The death attributes of the earth in this relief make clear that the action is directed to the earth in its divine aspect as the cave environment where the dead ancestors dwell. The visual art expresses the idea that dark subterranean spaces were dedicated to the life-giving and life-taking powers of the earth and to the communication with the ancestors. The skeletal goddess, named Cihuacoatl by the Aztecs, and among the Ñuu Dzauí people known as Lady 9 Grass, was the divine guardian of those places.

## 2 Cihuacoatl: Goddess and Priest

We have seen that Cihuacoatl, the 'Woman Serpent', like Lady 9 Grass, is a deity of visionary communication with the deceased. The fleshless lower jaw with which both deities are represented may be interpreted as an index of this power. Her particular association with the colour white reinforces this skeletal aspect.<sup>9</sup> At the same time the white colour establishes a relationship with the important volcano Iztaccihuatl, 'White Woman', in the valley of Cholula. In an ancient hymn she presents herself in the following terms:

I am a woman of courage, and effort, and although you know me by my regular name, which is *Quilaztli*, you should know that I'm so brave, I have four more names, with which my power is recognised: one is *Cohuatzihuatl*, which means Snake Woman; the other is *Quauhtzihuatl*, which means Eagle Woman; the third is *Yaotzihuatl*, which means Warrior Woman; and finally *Ttitzimitzihuatl*, which means Infernal Woman...

SERNA 1953: CH. 12, 3 § 325

8 The correlation used by [www.azteccalendar.com](http://www.azteccalendar.com) identifies these two dates as the final days of the months Tlacaxipehualiztli and Panquetzaliztli respectively (see also Tena 2008: 87).

9 See the description by Sahagún (Book 1: Ch. 6), as well as the iconographical and philological studies by Klein (1988, 2000).

Indeed Cihuacoatl is iconographically similar to, if not identical with, *Tzitzimitl*. The *Tzitzimime* (plural of *tzitzimitl*) are spooky beings that, according to Aztec convictions, might come down from heaven at the eclipse of the sun or in the last night of a 52-year cycle to devour the humans.<sup>10</sup> Both Cihuacoatl and *Tzitzimitl* are depicted as wearing their hair loose, with signs of darkness ('star eyes') in it; a set of banners stuck in their hair evokes associations with sacrifice. The goddess Cihuacoatl is explicitly identified as a *tzitzimitzihuatl*, 'female *tzitzimitl*' and she is indeed described as a spooky woman, who passed at nights through the streets like the wind, crying and spitting fire.<sup>11</sup> The leader of the *Tzitzimime* is called *Tzontemoc*, 'The one that comes down with his head first', a death god who appears in stories as a demon with long hair.<sup>12</sup>



ILLUSTRATION 6.03 *The Book of Life (Codex Magliabechi)*, p.76: *Tzitzimitl* (Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*).

10 Sahagún, *Book VII*: Ch. 1 and Chs. 10–13. The *Tzitzimitl* is portrayed on page 76 of *Codex Magliabechi*.

11 Serna 1953: 202.

12 Serna 1953: 229.

There is a specific group of warriors dedicated to these fear-inspiring beings, carrying a *tzitzimitl* mask and 'hair down to their feet' (*Relación Geográfica de Acapiztla*).<sup>13</sup>

Cihuacoatl is not only associated with death, however, but also with the earth. In fact, the Aztec earth deity Tlaltecuhтли, 'Earth Lord', looks a lot like her, the main difference being that Tlaltecuhтли is male and that his countenance consists of the open jaws of an alligator, representing the earth.<sup>14</sup> Clearly this a reference to a cave or a subterranean space. In iconographical jargon Tlaltecuhтли is often called an Earth Monster, but – as has been pointed out by several indigenous researchers – the identification of the earth as a monster is not in accordance with the Mesoamerican worldview.



ILLUSTRATION 6.04 Relief of Tlaltecuhтли (*Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen*).

13 See: Acuña 1985/86, I: 218. Codex Vaticanus A, ff. 2v–3r, lists Mictlantecuhтли, Tzontemoc, Tzitzimitl and several others as names of death deities.

14 Tlaltecuhтли, 'Lord (of) Earth' in Aztec art: his representation is well documented in Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f 20r and Vaticanus A, f 29r, where we see how the earth (the alligator with a humanised body with claws and skulls) swallows the sun, carried by a rain deity. According to the gloss, the image expresses the idea that when the sun sets, it goes to the realm of the dead to give warmth and light to the deceased. Tlaltecuhтли also appears as one of the 13 deities of the days, for example in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus). The face consisting of the open jaws of an alligator occurs also as a priestly title in Codex Añute (Selden), pp. 1–111.

Tlaltecuhтли is connected with a symbolic narrative about the enormous forces of creation and destruction that were active in that primordial time and ultimately shaped our world. The amorphous body of pre-creation energy-activated matter was torn apart by the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca. From this body the gods created the earth (as a living being) and heaven. Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca then set up the four world trees to sustain heaven and give direction to the world.<sup>15</sup>

The Tlaltecuhтли with the open jaws of an alligator is represented on a number of major Aztec sculptures found in the Templo Mayor area. Other Aztec monuments show a death deity in the same position as the figure of Tlaltecuhтли, with claws and skulls, but with a skeletonised face instead of the open jaws of the alligator. A famous example is the large stone monument, found in front of the staircase of the Templo Mayor, which is generally called Tlaltecuhтли in the literature.<sup>16</sup> This figure does not have the alligator jaws but a skeletonised face and female aspect, it has the hairdo with banners that is typical of the Tzitzimitl. Her skirt is decorated with a motif of skulls and crossed bones, referring to the ancestors and also with the star motif, which characterises her as Citlallinicue or Citlalcueye ('She with the skirt of stars'), the alternative name of Cihuacoatl as the goddess of the Milky Way, bringer and protector of the newborn. Therefore it would be more appropriate to call the image Cihuacoatl-Tzitzimitl.

Another monument equally representing Cihuacoatl-Tzitzimitl was buried under the famous image of Coyolxauhqui in front of the Templo Mayor.<sup>17</sup> On her breast she holds a stone being with attributes of the *pulque* deity, with the calendar name 2 Rabbit (Ome Tochtli, the name of the *pulque* god). This *pulque* deity is making the gesture of adoration and invocation (with extended arms) towards the day 1 Rabbit (the esoteric calendar name of earth according to Ruiz de Alarcón). Below this scene the Cihuacoatl image holds – in a central position on her body – a bowl with a liquid. The same we see in the large Cihuacoatl image that has been called Tlaltecuhтли, where Cihuacoatl herself drinks from the bowl. Apparently the Cihuacoatl image is an altar meant to receive libations of *pulque* for earth and the ancestors. The calendar name 2

15 Compare the four trees in Codex Tudela and their parallel in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), discussed by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993: 365–372).

16 Matos Moctezuma and López Luján (2012: Ch. VII).

17 See the publication by Pasztory 1983: 155–157. This image has been identified in various ways (as yet another image of Coyolxauhqui, or an image of the maguey goddess Maya-huel), but her attributes are typical of Cihuacoatl-Tzitzimitl (cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García, 1991: 42).

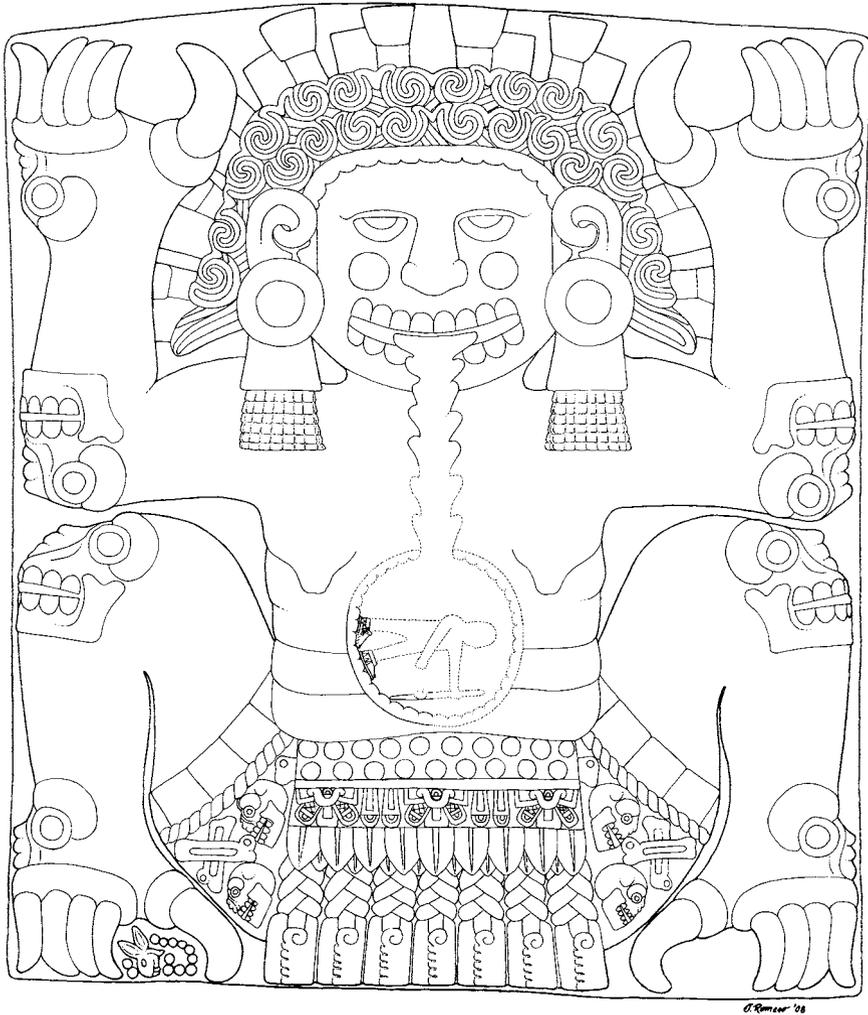


ILLUSTRATION 6.05 *The Cihuacoatl-Tzitzimil sculpture (often called Tlaltecuhli) from the Templo Mayor (drawing Julio Romero, courtesy Proyecto Templo Mayor).*

Rabbit situated within the representation of a cave on the central stone of the Piedras de los Reyes monument in Yautepéc (see the introduction) likely has a similar meaning. Today it continues to be customary in Mesoamerican culture to spill a little pulque or other alcoholic beverage as offering to earth.

Apparently this reference to the earth and ancestors was an important part of the symbolic landscape represented by the Templo Mayor, so that when

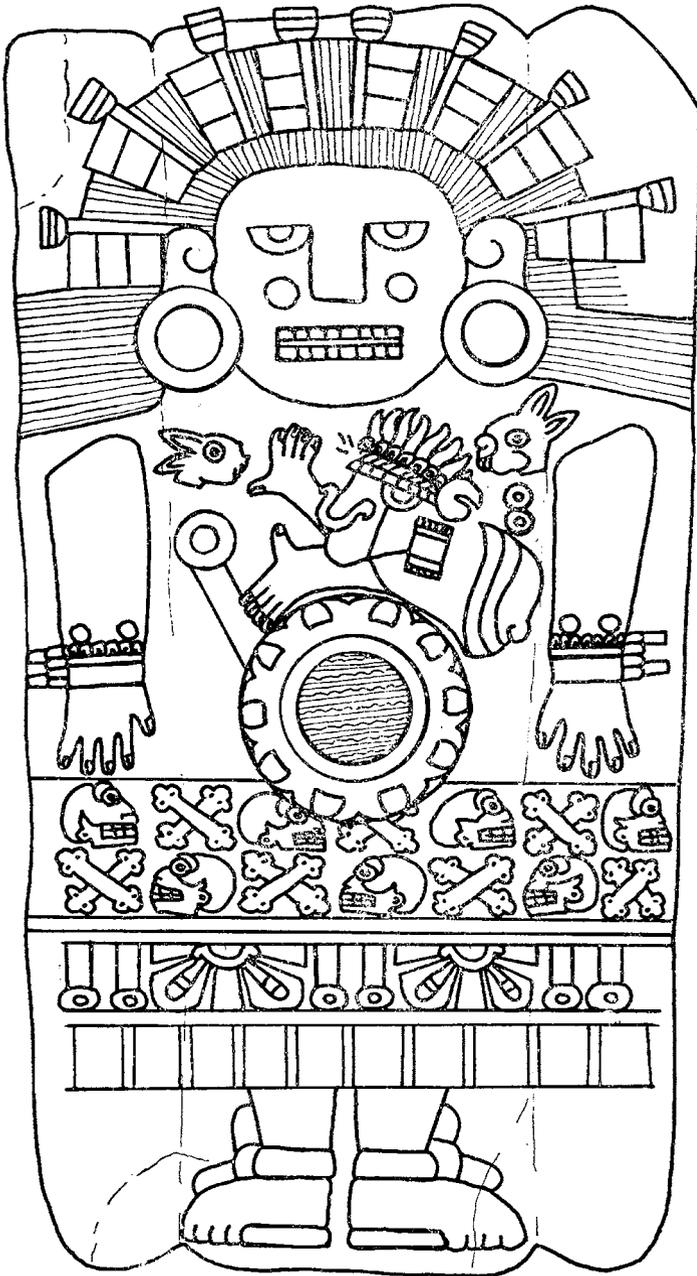


ILLUSTRATION 6.06 *The Cihuacoatl statue found under the Coyolxauhqui monument at the Templo Mayor (drawing Alfredo López Austin, courtesy Proyecto Templo Mayor).*

the temple was increased in size a new, much larger version of the image was created (the one now known as 'Tlaltecuhltli'). This slab was the cover of an enormous offering cache.<sup>18</sup> Such caches were internally often organised as a cosmogram – probably not only to represent the cognitive order but also to implore force for the whole universe (as is often done in Mesoamerican prayers today). This Cihuacoatl-Tzitzimitl is looking up at the pyramid from below, while being located on the western (front) side of the Templo Mayor, so it may represent *Cihuatlampa*, 'the female realm', i.e. the West, where the sun disappears in the earth. In Aztec thought the West was the region of women (*cihuatlampa*): here the souls of the women who had died in childbirth – the *Cihuateteo*, 'women-goddesses' or *Cihuapipiltin*, 'the princesses', – went to accompany the sun from its position at midday to its setting on the horizon.<sup>19</sup>

This type of East–west and heaven–earth arrangement probably goes back to Teotihuacan: in Postclassic memory the famous Pyramid of the Sun was a *teocalli*, a house of god, dedicated to the deity Tonacatecuhltli, the ancient lord of heaven and god of sustenance. In front of the *teocalli* was a flat area or (sunken?) plaza with an altar dedicated to the god of the underworld, Mictlantecuhltli. As the Pyramid of the Sun is situated on an East–west axis, facing West, an opposition (and a cycle) of life (sunrise, East, temple rising into heaven) and death (sunset, West, chthonic altar in a plaza) is created. In vertical terms the temple of Tonacatecuhltli was situated on top of the Pyramid of the Sun (which most likely was considered an image and representation of Tonacatepetl, the primordial mountain of sustenance), but below the same pyramid was a cave, in the Mesoamerican worldview associated with origins (Chicomoztoc) and telluric rites, a 'Heart of Earth'.<sup>20</sup> We find the same dichotomy in the ceremonial complex of the Temple of Jewels/Temple of Heaven and Cave of Darkness/Sanctuary of Cihuacoatl that is important in the Ñuu

18 Compare the offering caches of the Templo Mayor, studied by López Luján (2005). An example is illustrated by Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín (2002: 308).

19 Cf. Sahagún Book 1: Ch. 10. The western region of the cosmogram on page 1 of Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérvary-Mayer) is indeed associated with female deities: the water goddess Chalchiuhtlicue ('She with the Skirt of Jade') and Tlazolteotl (see edition and commentary by Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1994).

20 See the description and the names of the archaeological monuments in the Relación Geográfica de San Juan Teotihuacan (Acuña 1985/86, 11). The Tonacatepetl is comparable to the *Yax Hal Witz* that appears in Classic Maya reliefs (cf. Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993). Heyden (1975) already discussed the symbolic meaning of the cave under the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan. For later studies on the cosmological aspects of the art and architecture of Teotihuacan see for example: López Austin, López Luján and Sugiyama (1991), Sugiyama (1993, 2005, 2010), Nielsen (2003) and Cowgill (2015).

Dzau historical codices and in the Temple Scenes of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (see Chapter 7).

In line with her sphere of death and earth, Cihuacoatl was also associated with darkness, which in Mesoamerican thought stands for mystery and liminality. Thus, Cihuacoatl was venerated in dark temples (called *Tlillan*), the most important of which was located at Xochimilco.<sup>21</sup> Several Aztec monuments, such as the above-mentioned Dedication Stone of the Templo Mayor, show the earth as a band of land with in the centre an upward-looking skeletonised face, the whole being surrounded by darkness.

On the other hand, Cihuacoatl is also a sky goddess. Her skirt is decorated with shells and often also with a star motif, which clearly denotes her other name: *Citlalinicue* or *Citlalcueye* 'She with the skirt of stars', that is, the Milky Way, the place where the newborn children come from.<sup>22</sup>

Cihuacoatl is represented with the claws of a bird of prey and sometimes also with an eagle's head or eagle's wings. Eagle feathers may decorate her shield. These elements correspond to her other name: Quilaztli, which refers to an eagle. This is a reference to her *nahual* power: she can manifest herself (i.e. transform into) an eagle. She was even seen as the very origin of *nahuallism*.<sup>23</sup> The Quilaztli aspect also implies a connotation of a warrior aspect, as warriors in the Mesoamerican world were compared to eagles and jaguars. A House of the Eagle Warriors was a building close to the Templo Mayor.

In the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, there is a large ceramic vessel with the impressive effigy of a skeletonised figure, probably representing Cihuacoatl, characterised by an eagle *nahual* (Quilaztli), holding a shield in one hand and a now lost weapon in the other. Like the famous statue of Coatlicue she wears a necklace of hands and hearts.<sup>24</sup> We understand that Cihuacoatl is the female eagle warrior.

21 See Durán (1967, I: 125 ff.).

22 Ruiz de Alarcón Treatise IV: Ch. 3 § 299 and Treatise VI: Ch. 8 § 414. Sahagún (Book x: Ch. 29) registers a Toltec tradition: the souls of babies came from the primordial couple Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl dwelling above the twelve heavens.

23 Serna 1953: Ch. 12, 4 § 328: '*Tengo por cierto que lo que diximos arriba de los Nahuales, que se convertían en Perros, en Leones, y Caimanes, tuvo origen desta hechizera Quilaztli, porque aunque es verdad, que el vocablo Nahualli viene del verbo Nahuallia, que es disfrazarse, como diximos, y no salió la etymología de Quilaztli, es porque no tomó su denominación del Origen, sino del efecto, que es dissimularse y esconderse debajo de aquella figura, que es su Nahualli...*'

24 Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 216.



ILLUSTRATION 6.07 *Effigy vessel representing Cihuacoatl en el Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico D.F. (Matos Moctezuma and Solís Olguín 2002: 216).*

This connection brings us to another aspect of the goddess: Cihuacoatl is also *Cihuateotl*, the 'Divine Woman', i.e. the archetype of the woman who has died in childbirth, the woman who makes the supreme sacrifice of her own life in order to give life to the next generation. She is the 'woman warrior': the woman in the act of giving birth is equal in status to a male warrior taking a captive. Cihuacoatl indeed appears as a warrior: in addition to her shield she wields her

'weaving sword' or *tzotzopaztli*, a typical emblem of female agency. She is the powerful mother goddess. Her child was represented as a sacrificial knife: her motherhood implied the ritual obligation of (self-) sacrifice.<sup>25</sup>

Statues of Cihuateteo (plural of Cihuateotl) occur with relative frequency in Aztec art.<sup>26</sup> According to Sahagún (Book IV: Ch. 33) oratories for these deified women were built at the crossroads and people who had made a vow to do so decorated their images with papers. This suggests that people invoked the Cihuateteo frequently and made vows to pay special respect to them. It is likely that they were invoked as forces that would protect against death in childbirth or in general for the good outcome of a pregnancy. Ritual deposits frequently contain knives, often decorated as animated figures with faces and sometimes clothed as (human) beings. They may belong to the same complex of ideas and related ritual actions.

The Cihuateteo had their place in the calendar: they were a group of five deified women associated with the days that begin the five 13-day periods associated with the West: 1 Deer, 1 Rain, 1 Monkey, 1 House and 1 Eagle, which were probably assigned for special prayers, offerings and other cult actions for the protection and well-being of pregnant women.<sup>27</sup>

Her serpentine character connects Cihuacoatl with another female earth deity: *Coatlicue*, 'She with the Skirt of Snakes', the mother of the Aztec tribal god Huitzilopochtli (a manifestation of the sun god as hummingbird, i.e. in his warrior aspect).<sup>28</sup> The attribute of the necklace of hands and hearts, which is carried by the Tzitzimitl-Cihuacoatl as well as by Coatlicue, has generally been interpreted by modern scholars as a reference to bloody sacrifice. An explicit text in the chronicle of Diego Durán, however, points in a very different direction: during the rite of the month Huey Pachtli, the priests dressed in robes that were 'painted and decorated with some hearts and hands (with opened palms), a sign that meant that with their hands and heart they asked for a good

25 Sahagún, Book I: Ch. 6; Durán 167, I: 130. See also Chapter 7 of the present book.

26 Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín (2002: 222) illustrate some examples, one of which is seated on a stone platform, decorated with skulls.

27 Cf. Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 5 and pp. 47–48 (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993), as well as the Codex Yecu or Fonds Mexicain 20 (Jansen 1998b). Compare the group of Cihuateteo statues found at Avenida 16 de Septiembre and Calle Isabel la Católica (Mexico City) in 1907 (Alcina Franch et al. 1992: 234; Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1983: 67–68). Similar figures were published by Alcina Franch et al. (1992: 360–361) and by Matos Moctezuma and López Luján (2012: 45).

28 Cf. Pasztory (1983: 157–160); Matos Moctezuma and López Luján (2012: Ch. 111).

harvest, because it was already the time...'.<sup>29</sup> In other words: the necklace of hands and hearts on the goddess symbolises a Mesoamerican prayer.

The Aztecs considered Cihuacoatl to be a sister of their patron god Huitzilopochtli. This concept was integrated in their socio-political organisation: the ruler (*tlatoani*) was a manifestation of Huitzilopochtli, while his adjunct (*co-adjutor*), the second in command, the one mostly involved with the internal affairs (as judge) and with religious activities (as high priest), had the title *cihuacoatl* and apparently was directly related to the goddess. The most famous of these was Tlacaoel (I), who played a decisive role in the construction of the Aztec empire together with the rulers Itzcoatl and Moctezuma I (who governed successively in the period 1428 to 1469).<sup>30</sup>

Logically, in Tenochtitlan the temple of the goddess Cihuacoatl was located next to the Templo Mayor (dedicated to Huitzilopochtli and to the rain god Tlaloc). In this place the Aztec ruler (*tlatoani*) performed rituals when returning from a war campaign, together with the *cihuacoatl*: they smeared themselves with the hallucinogenic black ointment of priesthood to venerate the statues of the deities of 'all the nations and all aspects of creation' (Durán 1967, II: Ch. 58).

As a female principle of the earth and the night sky, keeper of the dead ancestors and of the realm of the newborn, as well as incorporating the power of vision, Cihuacoatl is a prime example of a goddess of life-death-life, as defined by Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992).

Obviously the combination woman-serpent-death provoked in the minds of the Catholic missionaries an association with Eve and death that had come into the world because of the original sin. This association served the Spanish condemnation of Mesoamerican religion, particularly in its visionary aspects, as witchcraft and a pact with the devil:

Among the maps I have seen there is one that is clearly very old, fashioned of very coarse maguey paper, on which a garden is painted with in it a tree, from the foot of which a serpent twines around it right up to the top of the tree where it shows its head with a woman's face. This

29 'albas ... pintadas y labradas con unos corazones y palmas de manos abiertas, cifra que daba a entender que con las manos y el corazón pedían buena cosecha, por ser ya tiempo de ella ... llevaban en los faldellines pintadas unas tripas retuertos, para denotar el hambre o hartura que esperaban ... en las manos unas bateas de palo y jícaras grandes, muy galanas, con que iban pidiendo remedio y limosna a los ídolos' (Durán, Ritos: cap. 16).

30 Studies by Colston (1974), Anders, Jansen and Reyes (1991), Van Zantwijk (1992), Johannson (1998), Peperstraete (2008), Dehouve (2013).

same figure is found in other maps; and those who explain its meaning say that this is one of the goddesses they worshipped in the time after their idolatry, whom they named Cihuacoatl, which means 'serpent woman'. Torquemada assumes this as generally known, and agrees with the histories of the Indians, that tell that she was the first woman who gave birth in the world, and from whom all humans descend, and so they call her Oxomozco – written as Otmozco by others –, and they translate that as 'the craving pregnant', interpreting it as a combination of *otçtli*, 'pregnant', and *moxipehuanoy* 'craving' (Spanish: *golosa*). They also gave her the names Tititl, meaning 'our mother' or 'the womb where we came from'; and Teoyaominqui, who is the goddess who collects the souls of the dead.

VEYTIA 1944: CH. 1

Actually this text explains that Cihuacoatl was the first mother, identical with grandmother Oxomoco, part of the primordial couple Cipactonal and Oxomoco (see our Introduction). Veytia suggests that the first part of her name contains the word *otçtli*, pregnant woman. The second part, however, more likely comes from the verb *tzomocoa*, 'to strain oneself, to do something with special effort and diligence'. The combination would signal the efforts and strength of the pregnant woman in her exertion and labour. As such it is an apt characterisation of Oxomoco as the 'Great Midwife'. On the other hand, Cihuacoatl is Teoyaominqui, the goddess who gathers the souls of those who have died in battle, particularly the young mothers who died in childbirth while giving life.

Here we see the merging of different great female deities into one multifaceted power, the 'Grandmother', who is at the same time the guardian of the dead ancestors (and so a goddess of death) and of the women who die in childbirth, and a mother figure, the great midwife, who brings the souls of the newborn to earth, supervises birth, protects pregnant women from death in childbirth, and is in charge of the *temazcal* rituals for the recovery of those who have given birth. She is the typical goddess of life-death-life, in terms of Clarissa Pinkola Estés: the power of earth in its death-related and life-giving dimensions. Logically she plays a central role in the rituals of cosmic renewal and dynastic foundation, such as the New Fire ceremony.

### 3 The Stone of Tizoc

Thus, in celebrating the bloodletting ritual on the completion of the extension of the Templo Mayor, the ruler Ahuizotl and his predecessor Tizoc (deceased)

honour both heaven and earth, particularly the goddess Cihuacoatl as a manifestation of the earth. Similar representations of Cihuacoatl occur on other Aztec monuments, such as the Stone of Tizoc.<sup>31</sup>

This is a round monument that enumerates a series of important conquests as part of the construction of the Aztec empire. These conquests are represented as the god Tezcatlipoca (presumably merged with the Aztec tribal patron deity Huitzilopochtli) shows himself victorious over other deities, patrons of specific towns. He grabs them by the hair and in this manner pulls them into the circle of the round stone, i.e. binds them into the *cemanahuac*, the 'full ring' that was the Aztec empire. Tezcatlipoca (recognisable by the smoking mirror at the back of his head and by his amputated foot) is dressed as a Toltec warrior (similar to the so-called *atlantes* of Tula), manifesting the link of the Aztec world with the origins of their civilisation, the Toltecatoytl. In comparing conquered places with the list of conquests in the historical section of Codex Mendoza, it becomes clear that the opening scene must be the conquest of Colhuacan, followed by that of Tenayuca. The final part contains the conquests of Matlatzinco-Tochpan-Ahuilizapan-Huexotzingo, which Codex Mendoza (f 10–12) mentions as conquests of Tizoc's predecessor, the ruler Axayacatl.

The image of Tezcatlipoca as conqueror of Matlatzingo, the Place of the Net, is additionally identified through an onomastic sign behind the god's large feather crown (a typical Toltec royal attribute, known as *apanecayotl*), namely a leg. As on the Dedication Stone, this sign represents the name of the Aztec ruler Tizoc. Thus we understand that the ruler Tizoc is portrayed as the conqueror of Matlatzinco and the following places, adding these as his own conquests to those of his predecessors, while honouring Tezcatlipoca as the divine power that enabled him, as well as his predecessors, to achieve this set of victories. One might argue that the Codex Mendoza attributes these conquests to Axayacatl, but it is quite possible that Tizoc either participated in some of the conquests of the previous ruler or was active in the final pacification of those recently conquered places.

This scene of victories is enclosed between a sky-band (heaven) and a skeletonised face with flint knives in its mouth: the earth represented as Cihuacoatl. The top part of the round stone is sculpted as a solar disc, situating the sun in the centre of the sky-band that surrounds the image. In the centre is a small cavity, from where a narrow channel was cut out, leading from the centre to the rim. This latter detail is referred to in the descriptions of a stone monument by friar Diego Durán, according to which the Aztec ruler Axayacatl had

31 For a recent photographic reproduction and interpretative study of the Stone of Tizoc see Matos Moctezuma and López Luján (2012: Ch. v).

ordered stonemasons to sculpt a large stone monument with on it scenes of the wars that the Aztecs had won, 'which had in its centre the rays of the sun and a basin where the prisoners were slaughtered and a channel where the blood drained off'.<sup>32</sup>

According to Durán the round stone was horizontally located on a low platform and used in a type of gladiatorial combat, which was meant to lead to the ritualised execution of adversaries. The sources refer to this type of stone monument as a *temalacatl*, a general term for round stones.<sup>33</sup>

Durán (1967, 1: 9) furthermore states that this monument was situated near the Puerta del Perdón of the Cathedral of Mexico City. His description suggests that the monument now generally known as the Stone of Tizoc was actually ordered, or rather started by Axayacatl. If this is indeed the same monument, Tizoc's name sign then must have been sculpted on it as an addition in the final phase.

Actually Durán states that there had been an earlier version of this stone (which he attributes to Axayacatl). That earlier version had been ordered by Moctezuma I (and his second-in-command, Tlacaelel): the stonemasons should sculpt such a stone with a round figure of the sun and in the centre a small basin and a channel leading out from that basin, and around it a frieze with the Aztec war victories.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, another round stone monument with a similar theme has indeed been found: it is now known as the Stone of the Ex-Arzobispado. Like the Stone of Tizoc, it lists a set of Aztec conquests. Tezcatlipoca-Huitzilopochtli (in the same Toltec dress, with his foot cut off) is shown subduing the patron deities of a series of towns. Here again the list begins with Colhuacan and Tenuyuca, but it finishes with Cuetlaxtlan, the town that also occurs on the Stone of Tizoc, where it precedes precisely Tizoc's conquest of Matlatzinco. Codex Mendoza (f 8, f 10v) states that Cuetlaxtlan was conquered twice: first by Moctezuma I and then again by Axayacatl.

Taking into account the statement by Durán about two successive stones representing the Aztec victories, and looking at the different sets of conquests listed on the two monuments that have been uncovered, it seems most reasonable to suppose that the two recovered stones represent successive projects: the Stone of the Ex-Arzobispado would then correspond to the stone ordered

32 Durán, *Historia*: Ch. 23 [1967, 11: 268] quoted from Matos Moctezuma and Solís 2004: 28.

33 See also the drawing that accompanies the text (Durán, *Historia*: Ch. 36 [1967, 11: 275 and plate 24]).

34 Durán, *Historia*: Ch. 23 [1967, 11: 191] and Ch. 20 [1967, 11: 171] quoted by Matos Moctezuma and Solís (2004: 29).

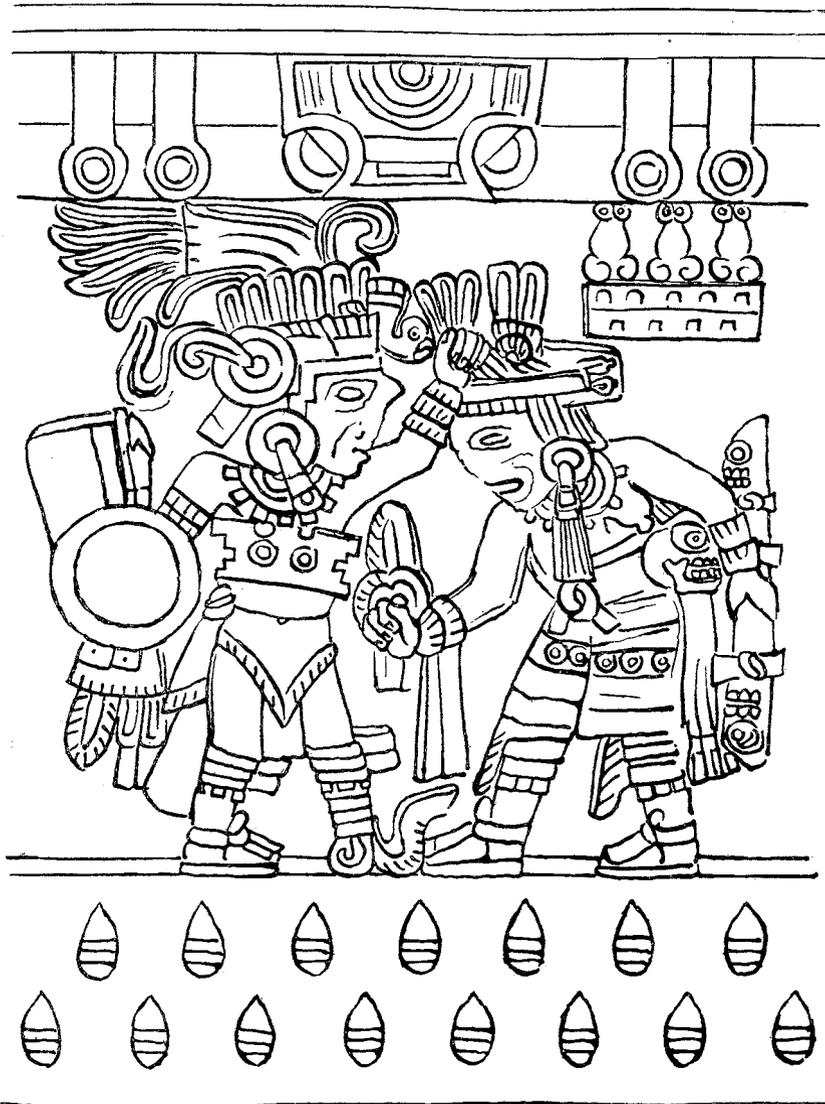


ILLUSTRATION 6.08 *Stone of Tizoc: Tezcatlipoca-Huitzilopochtli draws the patron deity of Xochimilco and (Cihuacoatl) into the circle of the Aztec empire (Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*

by Moctezuma I (but possibly completed under Axayacatl), while the Stone of Tizoc would be the one ordered originally by Axayacatl (but completed under Tizoc). The latter indeed shows the channel Durán refers to, but the first lacks that feature. Perhaps Durán's text about that channel should be read as a projection of his visual knowledge of the later stone back to the earlier version.



ILLUSTRATION 6.09 *Stone of the Ex-Arzobispado: Tezcatlipoca-Huitzilopochtli draws the patron deity of Xochimilco and (Cihuacoatl) into the circle of the Aztec empire (Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico D.F.).*

The ruler's instruction or intention may indeed have been for that earlier stone to have such a channel too, but the stonemasons failed to carry it out.

On the Stone of the Ex-Arzobispado the frieze of the conquests is not bordered by the bands of earth and heaven, but by bands that contain hands and hearts, knives, bundles of firewood, skulls and crossed bones, as well as rings with pieces of cloth (in dovetail form), which are an attribute of the god Xipe. The above-cited text of Durán about the hands and hearts demonstrates that such elements are diagnostic representations of ritual and prayer. Evidently they present the historical data in the context of a ceremonial discourse directed to the deity Tezcatlipoca-Huitzilopochtli as well as to the ancestors.

#### 4 The Calendar Stone

One of the most emblematic Mexican sculptures is known as the Aztec Calendar, the Calendar Stone or the Sun Stone, a circular image of the solar disc, measuring 3.6 metres in diameter.<sup>35</sup> It was located 'in the main plaza next to the canal' and later interred on orders of the viceroy Alonso de Montúfar, to be

35 For drawings and photographic reproduction, description and analysis, see e.g. Beyer 1965: 134–265; Schmidt 1965; Pasztory 1983: 169–171; Alcina Franch et al. 1992: 291–295;

rediscovered only centuries later in the main square of Mexico City in 1790. Antonio de León y Gama wrote a first report on the recovered masterpiece.<sup>36</sup> Certainly it was a focus point for rituals in the ceremonial centre of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan. Now it constitutes the central piece in the Aztec hall of the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

The early colonial descriptions demonstrate that the stone for making such monuments was selected with great care and transported with due respect and solemn rituals.<sup>37</sup> Durán documents that the Aztec ruler Axayacatl had a large stone monument carved, namely one that contained references to the calendar: 'months, days, years and weeks'. From this friar's report we learn that the stones ordered by Axayacatl were situated in a horizontal position on the top of altars in the form of small pyramids (with staircases on the four sides). The Stone of Tizoc was indeed located in front of the temple of Xipe and played a central role in the rites of this god (Tlacaxipehualiztli), while its antecedent, the Stone of the Ex-Arzbispado, seems to have been located in front of the temple of Tezcatlipoca. The Calendar Stone, because of its location, seems to have been associated with the Temple of the Sun.

In the centre of the Calendar Stone we see the countenance of the sun god (*Tonatiuh*), represented with a human face with claws to the side, i.e. with superhuman powers and in a position rising from the earth. His headband is decorated with two precious discs and a central motif: this is a common attribute of the solar deity, but the configuration also seems to evoke the image of the day sign 2 Reed, and therefore may refer to the year in which the calendar round of 52 years comes to an end and is begun anew.

The image of the sun itself is situated within the day sign 4 Movement, which represents the calendar name of the present Sun. This central symbol is surrounded by (1) a circle of the 20 day signs, (2) a band of brightness (turquoise, jade and sunray motifs), (3) two fire serpents (*xiuhcoatl*), representing the magic force or *nahuallotl*, i.e. the *nahual* nature or transformative power of the deity – and, we might say, of symbolic time. Particularly the *nahual* serpent becomes a symbol of vision and liminality, the dimension in which humans communicate with the gods. The serpent bodies are covered with squares, each of which contains flames and dots.

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Graulich 2001; Matos Moctezuma and Solís 2004; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 2012: cap. IV.

36 See the introduction of Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993).

37 Torquemada (Book II: Ch. 79): '*la movieron de su lugar y la fueron arrastrando por el camino con grandísima solemnidad, haciéndole infinitos y muy varios y diferentes sacrificios y honras*'.



ILLUSTRATION 6.10 *Calendar Stone (Schmidt 1965).*

On the very top of the image, between the ends of the tails of the fire serpents, we see the year 13 Reed. This is probably the year of the birth of the present Sun. According to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* the present Sun, called 4 Movement, was born in the year 13 Reed.<sup>38</sup> When we combine the year 13 Reed on the monument with Durán's statement that such a stone was sculpted on the orders of Axayacatl, we realise that the year 13 Reed occurred during the reign of Axayacatl, corresponding to 1479/80. This leads to the hypothesis that Axayacatl had the calendar stone carved to mark and celebrate the anniversary

38 See Lehmann 1938 (§ 37), and the translation by León-Portilla, quoted by Matos Moctezuma and Solís (2004: 40). Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 71, follows another tradition, connecting 4 Movement as the day name of the Sun with the year 1 Reed.

of the birth of the present Sun – a religiously charged moment for ritual commemoration once every 52 years. It is, however, also possible that the year 13 Reed on the Calendar Stone does not refer to 1479/80 but just signals the date of the creation of the present era. It may also refer to the future reoccurrence of that date (foreseen for 1531/32).<sup>39</sup>

The year 13 Reed, then, combines with the day 4 Movement, situated in the centre of the image, as the name and emblem of the fifth Sun (*Olintonatiuh*, Sun of Movement) and the present era. The day 4 Movement was considered the day on which the present world would come to an end, and that the nobility fasted the four days from 1 Jaguar to 4 Movement in order to be spiritually prepared (Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 8v). The sign '4 Movement' on the Calendar Stone contains four quadrants, which, in turn, contain the calendar names of the earlier Suns. Counterclockwise these are: 4 Jaguar (*Ocelotonatiuh*, Jaguar Sun), 4 Wind (*Ehecatonatiuh*, Wind Sun), 4 Rain (*Quiauhtonatiuh*, Rain Sun), 4 Water (*Atonatiuh*, Water Sun). In other words, the present (fifth) Sun incorporates the four earlier creations.

Dividing the passage of time in accordance with their cosmivision of four world-directions and the centre, the ancient intellectuals or wise people (*tlamatinime*, 'those who know') formulated the idea of a sequence of five successive creations or Suns (Nahuatl: *Tonatiuh*).

Each age had started with a new sunrise, a new dawn, each had seen the development of its own specific people, animals and plants, and each also had come to its own specific crisis and end. Each age had its specific date, colour, direction and patron deity.

The theme of the earlier creations appears in various early colonial sources (such as the *Leyenda de los Soles*, *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, *Histoyre du Mechique* and *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas*):

1. Sun 4 Jaguar (*Ocelotonatiuh*, Jaguar Sun) was the age of the god Tezcatlipoca, which ended with jaguars devouring the people of that era.
2. Sun 4 Wind (*Ehecatonatiuh*, Wind Sun) ended with the people being blown away by strong winds and transformed into monkeys; its patron deity was Quetzalcoatl.
3. Sun 4 Rain (*Quiauhtonatiuh*, Rain Sun) was destroyed by rains of fire, while its people transformed into birds; its patron was Tlaloc, the rain god.

39 To be precise: 5 May 1531 or 20 Januari 1532 in the Julian calendar (cf. [www.azteccalendar.com](http://www.azteccalendar.com)).

4. Sun 4 Water (*Atonatiuh*, Water Sun) was the age of Chalchiuhtlicue, the water goddess; it was destroyed by floods and its people became fish.

Codex Vaticanus 3738 ('A'), another early colonial document, registers in images and texts the four earlier ages, which were all destroyed when the Sun of the new era rose.<sup>40</sup> Its text seems somewhat coloured by European influence, but the basic structure of the five periods is clearly precolonial:

1. The first Sun or era (governed by the water goddess *Chalchiuhtlicue*) was a time of giants; it was destroyed by water (a flood), and the people turned into fish.
2. The second (governed by the Plumed Serpent, the whirlwind) was destroyed by winds and the people became monkeys.
3. The third (governed by the fire god *Xiuhtecuhtli*) went up in flames: the people transformed into birds.
4. The fourth (governed by the goddess of flowers, art and beauty, *Xochiquetzal*) came to an end in rains of blood, while the people perished from ecstatic dancing and falling into an abyss.

The general idea in all cases, however, remains clear: the earlier creations came to an end in accordance with the mantic character of their calendar name and the associated patron deity. Clearly this sequence of creations is referred to by the four days surrounding 4 Movement, the day of the present Sun (creation, era).

On the famous Calendar Stone, the names of the four eras are accompanied by yet another set of days. On top of the configuration of 4 Movement we see – on our right – the sign 1 Flint (*ce tecpatl*) with the smoking mirror of Tezcatlipoca. This day name includes a wordplay with the concept *cen tecpan*, the 'one palace or seat of rulership' and may symbolise the power of the ruler as a sacred date of empire (and refer to the Toltecayotl in general). The chronicle *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (§ 39) mentions 1 Flint as the year in which the Toltecs established rulership (*ce tecpatl xihuitl ypan in motlatocatique yn tolteca*). Conceptually the year 1 Flint (of dynastic foundation) follows the year 13 Reed (of the first sunrise). It is the year associated with the departure of the Aztecs from Aztlan (in the Tira de Peregrinación).<sup>41</sup> The first Aztec ruler, Acamapichtli, started his reign in a year 1 Flint (Codex Mendoza f 2v). The same is

40 Codex Vaticanus A ff. 4v–8v (edition and commentary: Anders and Jansen 1996a). See also Jansen (2002; 2015a).

41 For an analysis of this codex see Castañeda de la Paz (2007).

true for the ruler Itzcoatl, with whom Aztec imperial expansion started (Codex Mendoza, f. 5v). On the Calendar Stone the day sign 1 Flint appears animated as a representation (*ixiptla*) of Tezcatlipoca.

Next to this day sign – on our left – we see a royal diadem (*xihuitzolli*) and nose ornament. From the nose ornament emerges another element, like an animated speech volute, at the end of which is a bead or (numerical?) dot. The position of the diadem evokes the sign House. The context is indeed one of calendar signs. Thus the sign in combination with the dot might be read it as the day 1 House, in which the house takes the form of a lordly palace (*tecpan*) with the signs of rulership (diadem, nose ornament) and with a speech scroll, which may refer to the title of the Aztec ruler: *tlatoani*, ‘speaker’. The configuration of the headband and the nose ornament is, however, also very close to the onomastic sign Moctezuma.<sup>42</sup> If the Calendar Stone indeed was sculpted under the rule of Axayacatl, the allusion could not be to the Aztec ruler Moctezuma II, who was in power at the time of the Spanish invasion (1519). One might speculate that it could refer to Moctezuma I Ilhuicamina, the grandfather and predecessor of Axayacatl, but that seems less likely. On the other hand, it is possible that this sign is a direct reference to Moctezuma II himself. In that case the Calendar Stone would obviously not be the monument sculpted under Axayacatl, as referred to by Durán, but must have been produced at a later date.<sup>43</sup> In all cases the presence of the diadem indicates that the power of the ruler was associated with the sun and the beginning of a new era (see below).

In a parallel position below the configuration of 4 Movement are other days – 1 Rain and 7 Monkey. Although the meaning of these dates is not clear, we would suppose that all have a symbolic value and functioned to mark specific ritual moments or historical events.<sup>44</sup>

The relief band around the image of the sun (which is in three dimensions) contains star symbols and flints. On the left side of the image a number of dots may represent specific constellations of stars. All this seems to be a reference to the darkness from which the sun is rising, as well as to the nocturnal path of visionary experience that we saw in the Roll of the New Fire. In the

42 See the study by Umberger (1984, 2010) and the contribution of Olivier and López Luján (‘Images of Moctezuma and his symbols of power’) in the volume on Moctezuma II, edited by McEwan and López Luján (2009).

43 Hajovsky (2015: 112 ff) and Stuart (2016) are among those who argue that the Calendar Stone was sculpted under the reign of Moctezuma II.

44 The day 7 Monkey had specific importance: priests ceremonially cleansed the newborn children with *piciete* leaves and water and gave them their calendar name (Codex Vaticanus A, ff. 21v–22r).

illustrations that accompany the text of Durán the round stone with the sign Movement in its centre is situated horizontally on a low platform for the feast of Nauhollin, '4 Movement'. In the drawing the sign Movement on the stone is surrounded by a band with *xonecuilli* signs (S-motifs).

The date year 13 Reed day 4 Movement on the Calendar Stone seems to correspond to a religious focus on the rising of the Fifth Sun, which may have started during the cyclical occurrence of that date during the reign of Axayacatl (1479). This theme developed further in the following years. The sign 4 Movement occurs frequently in Aztec art. The famous wooden drum of Malinalco, for example, presents it in a central position between dancing eagles and jaguars uttering speech scrolls in the form of the war sign (the difrasismo *atl tlachinolli*, 'water, fire'), suggesting that it the focus of a war ritual carried out by singing and dancing warriors.<sup>45</sup>

The same day 4 Movement is often depicted inside an image of the solar disc. As such it occurs inside offering vessels (*cuauhxicalli*), which suggests that sacrifices were made for this day.<sup>46</sup> The underside of such *cuauhxicalli* sculptures generally bears the figure of the earth deity Tlaltecuhli. The explicit association with the sun leaves no doubt that a reference to the present creation is meant. In other words, the religious focal point is the reflection on and the respect for the life that permeates the cosmos at present.

We find more connections of the interpretation of the day 4 Movement with the idea of the five Suns. A relief of grey basalt in the Peabody Museum contains the solar disc with the day 4 Movement in the centre and in the corners the days 4 Jaguar, 4 Wind, 4 Rain, and 4 Water, which are the calendar names of the earlier Suns (creations).<sup>47</sup>

A stone slab in the Art Institute of Chicago elaborates upon this theme: it also shows the sign of 4 Movement in the centre, surrounded by the dates of the four earlier Suns (all as animated signs with faces or eye).<sup>48</sup> The earth god

45 Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1983: 145–147.

46 Alcina Franch et al. (1992: 306–307 and 310); Nicholson and Quiñones Keber (1983: 36–37). The day 4 Movement also occurs in the centre of the sun disc on top of the Bilimek Pulque Vessel (Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1983: 62–63). An Aztec statue in the Museum der Kulturen in Basel represents the sun god carrying the sun disc on his back with the day 4 Movement in the centre (Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 230).

47 Alcina Franch et al. 1992: 311; Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 278.

48 Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1983: 41–42; Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 279. Hajovsky (2015: 115 ff) calls this relief the 'Coronation Stone' of Moctezuma. For a series of modern studies of Moctezuma II and his importance in Aztec visual art, see the volume edited by McEwan and López Luján (2009).

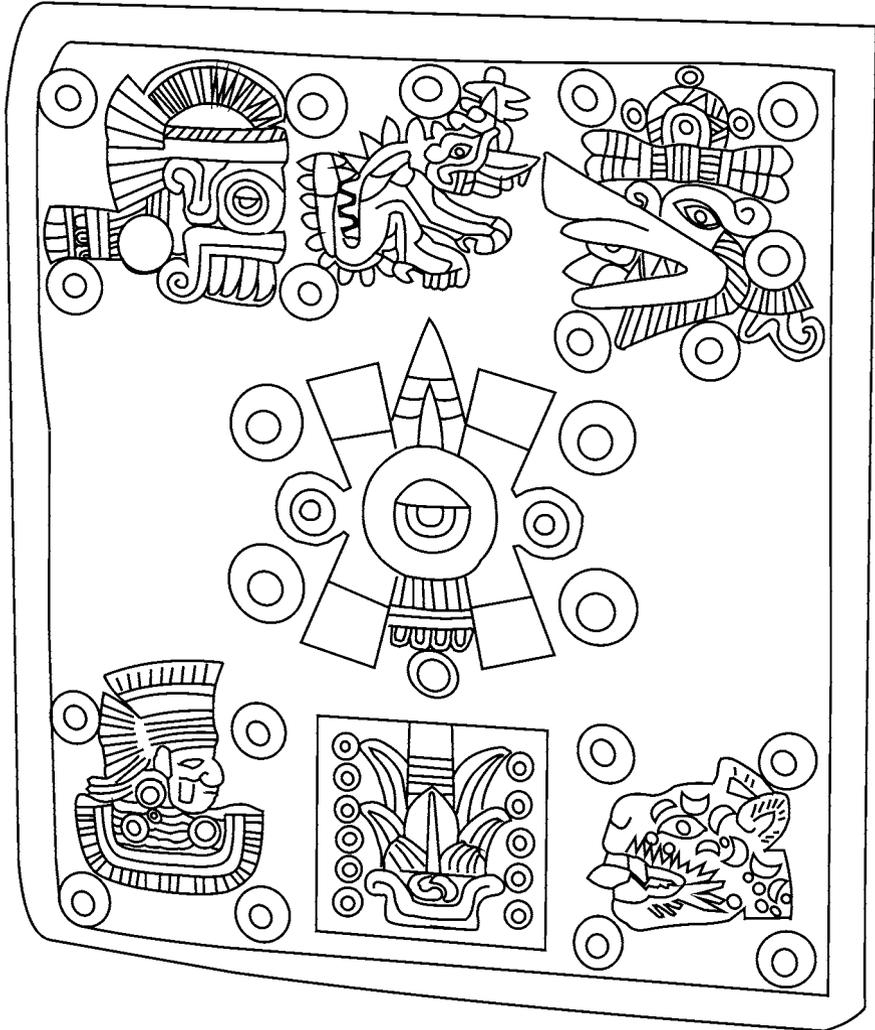


ILLUSTRATION 6.11 *Relief in the Peabody Museum: the five suns and the enthronement of Moctezuma II (drawing Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo).*

Tlaltecuhli (with the open jaws of an alligator and a skull centrally placed on his body) is represented on the sides, flanked by the water-fire symbols of war; on the underside is the day 1 Rabbit, probably also a symbolic reference to the earth. Centrally located in the lower part of this relief is the year 11 Reed, with the day 1 Alligator as its counterpart in the upper segment. The year 11 Reed corresponds to the year of the enthronement ritual of Moctezuma II in

1503.<sup>49</sup> Most likely the day 1 Alligator was the specific day of that ritual, situating the new beginning of rulership on the first day of the sacred day count, the *tonalpoalli*, while also referring to Cipactonal as the archetypical priest who created the calendar in the time of origins.

The connection of dates on this carved slab suggests that the theme of the Fifth Sun was part of the ideological imagery surrounding the enthronement of Moctezuma. That political event itself is presented as a cosmic renewal, the beginning of a new era. The Aztec ruler himself is implicitly qualified as a new sun. All these monuments represent the sun as the determinant force of time, creation and destiny (expressed by the days that give names to the world periods), but also as the founder of the empire (through the first sunrise).

## 5 Moctezuma's Altar

The Sun 4 Movement also occurs on another sculpture that seems to represent a temple model. Because it has the form of a pyramid with a temple on top and because of the frequent occurrence of a sign that consists of interlaced bands of water and fire and that is generally read as 'war', this monument is known as the *Teocalli de la Guerra Sagrada*, the Teocalli (temple pyramid) of the Holy War.<sup>50</sup> Because of its dimensions it has also been interpreted as a seat, specifically as the throne of Moctezuma II (Umberger 1984). If so, that would be a unique form of throne. Usually royal thrones consist of seats of wood or woven mats, often covered with jaguar skins, symbolising the natural or cosmic force in which rulership is embedded.

Archaeologist Angel Iván Rivera Guzmán has made a study of the representation of enthronement rituals in the Classic Nuu Dzau style: in the reliefs from that period we see that rulers climbed a pyramid, temple base or platform, which might represent a mountain (connecting with the concepts of the primordial mountain of sustenance and the cave of origin). At the same time

49 For a description of the election and enthronement see Tezozomoc's *Crónica Mexicana* (1975: Ch. 82).

50 For illustrations and interpretations of this monument, see Caso (1927), Townsend (1979), Pasztory (1983: 165–168), Umberger (1984, 2010), Alcina Franch et al. (1992: 236–239), and Graulich (2001); as well as the contribution to the volume edited by Noguez and López Austin (1997). Hajovsky (2015: Ch. 6) discusses this monument in the context of other sculptures related to the reign of Moctezuma II.

some circular monuments (carved stone discs) have been preserved, which seem to have been situated precisely on the top of such platforms.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, European languages are not adequate to define such monuments (*momoztli* in Nahuatl; *chiyo* in Dzaha Dzau), which are both altar and (sacred) throne. We are reminded of the huge altars/thrones of Olmec civilisation, which are also ritual seats for a ruler or priest but at the same time contain sculpted elements that refer to the ritual performance of moments of origin, such as the emergence from caves and links with ancestors (Gillespie 1999).

The *teocalli* model, because of its form, seems to be first and foremost a temple for personal use, i.e. an altar. The focus of that altar would be the tablet on the upper part of the pyramid (the location of the temple building as house of the deity): on the frontal part or façade it shows the image of the rising sun with the 4 Movement sign in the centre. Flanking the scene are two personages: on our right stands Moctezuma (Motecuhzoma) II, who, as Umberger (1984) has shown, is clearly identified by his onomastic sign: the headband and nose ornament referring to the word *tecuhtli* in his name; in his neck is the head of a jaguar as a helmet (a *nahual* image) moved to the back of the head. On our left stands Huitzilopochtli-Tezcatlipoca, identified by the diagnostic smoking mirror and the hummingbird headdress. In front of their faces are bands of water and fire, meaning that both are 'speaking' or invoking, i.e. animating the people to 'water, fire' (*atl tlachinolli*), i.e. war, conflict, struggle. They hold a spirited perforator in their hand, evoking the ethos of the pious ruler confronting the struggles of life and leading his people to victory in war.

The image of Huitzilopochtli-Tezcatlipoca recalls the presence of Tezcatlipoca on the Stone of Tizoc and the Ex-Arzobispado monument; he represents symbolically the *tlatoani's* ruling lineage. The scene of the two personages flanking the sun echoes that of the Dedication Stone and also refers to the earth at the base of the scene, but in this case it is an image of Tlaltecuhli on the flat area (platform of the pyramid) in front of the tablet. On that same base we see below or in front of the image of Huitzilopochtli-Tezcatlipoca his diagnostic shield covered with down balls, while the shield associated with Moctezuma is simple, without decoration.

Another parallel with the Dedication Stone is the *zacatepeyolli* for placing the perforators: on this monument it is represented on the top side of the standing tablet. Fire serpents with paper knots are flanking it, symbolising that this ritual action takes place in the *nahual* sphere of contact with the divine.

Below, on the side panels of the pyramid, there are four seated male figures, two on each side, holding perforators and incense bags, carrying tobacco

51 Rivera Guzmán, Ph.D. dissertation in preparation.

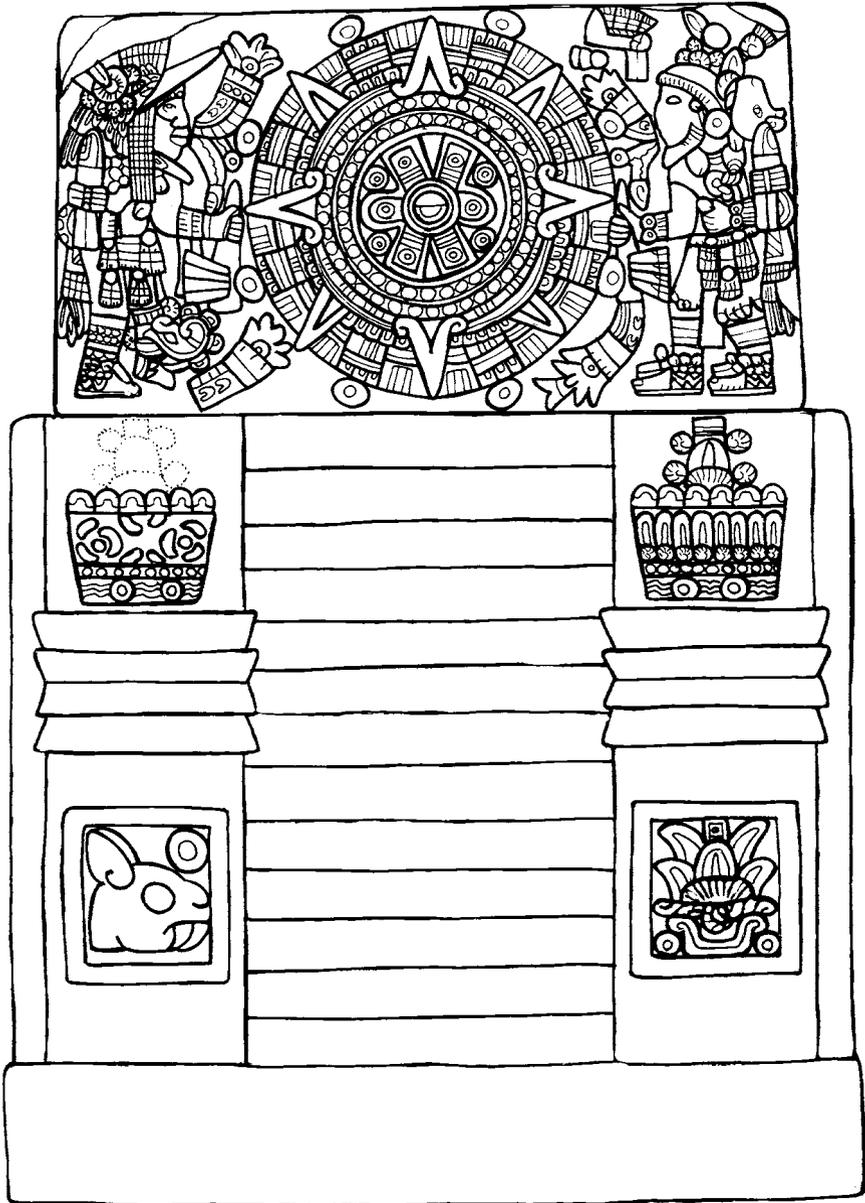


ILLUSTRATION 6.12A *The Teocalli altar of Moctezuma: front (drawing courtesy of Emily Umberger).*

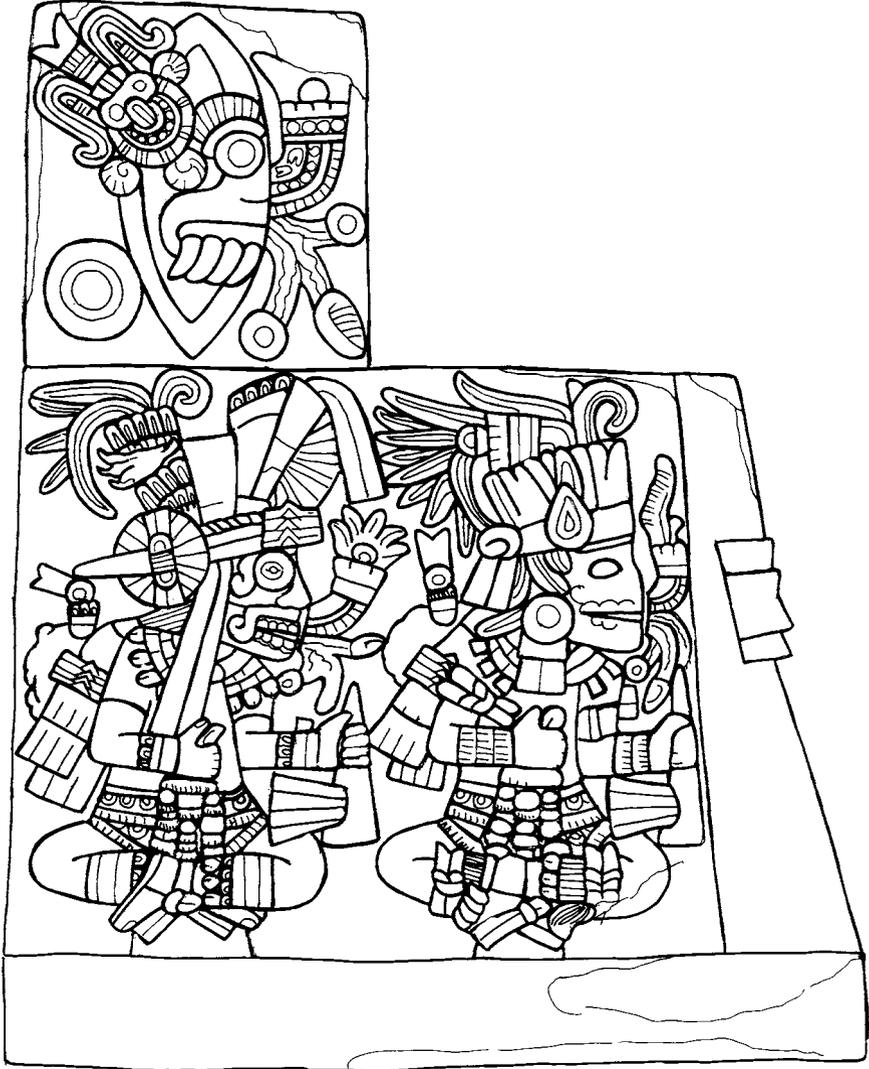


ILLUSTRATION 6.12B *The Teocalli altar of Moctezuma: right side of the monument (drawing courtesy of Emily Umberger).*

gourds, and also saying: *atl tlachinolli* ('war'). They have different deity attributes, which actually makes it difficult to identify the precise deity each of them may be representing. At the same time, all have skeletonised jaws, which suggests they are priests who are in communication with the ancestors or representations of those deified ancestors themselves. They form a council of four, like the four priests who carried the sacred bundle of the Plumed Serpent

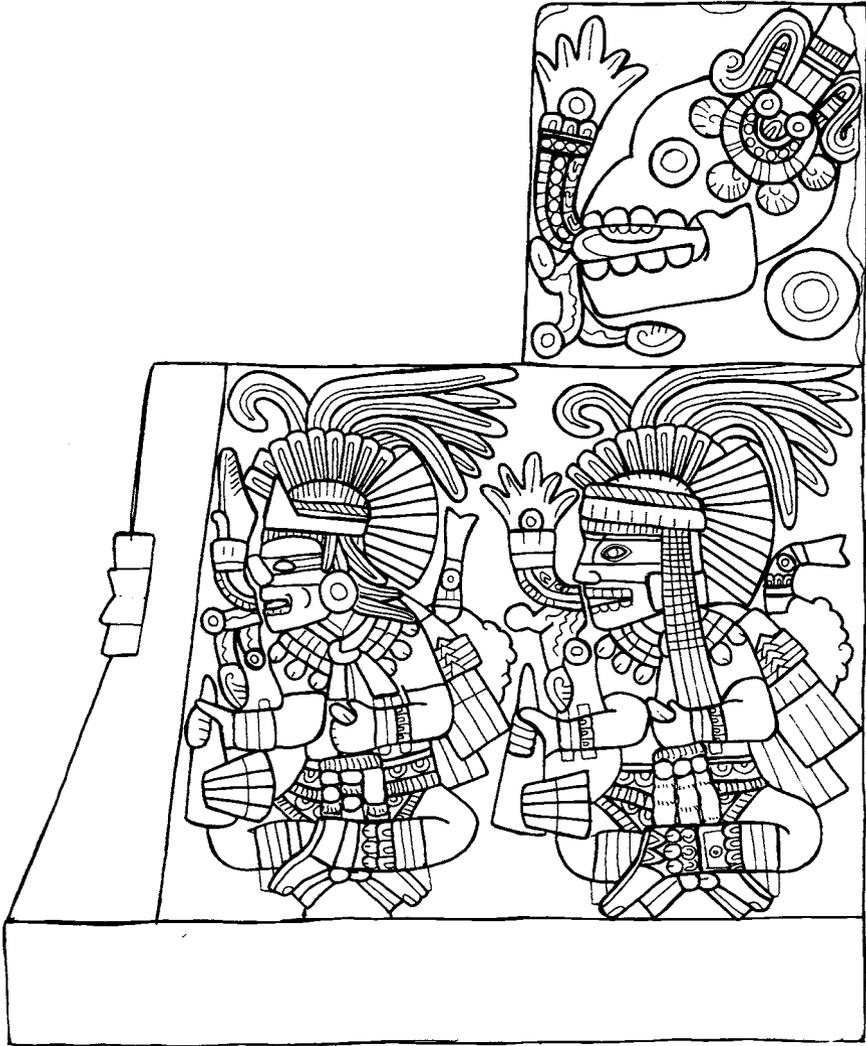


ILLUSTRATION 6.12C *The Teocalli altar of Moctezuma: left side of the monument (drawing courtesy of Emily Umberger).*

and made the New Fire (in the Roll of the New Fire), like the four founding priests who carried the bundle of Huitzilopochtli on the primordial journey from Aztlan (in the Tira de la Peregrinación) or like the four priest that kindle their torches with the New Fire in the Tlillan (as represented in Codex Cihua-coatl). Those on the right side of the monument (our left) have attributes of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli and Tlaloc, and the ones on the left side of the monument (our right) seem to represent the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli (with the royal

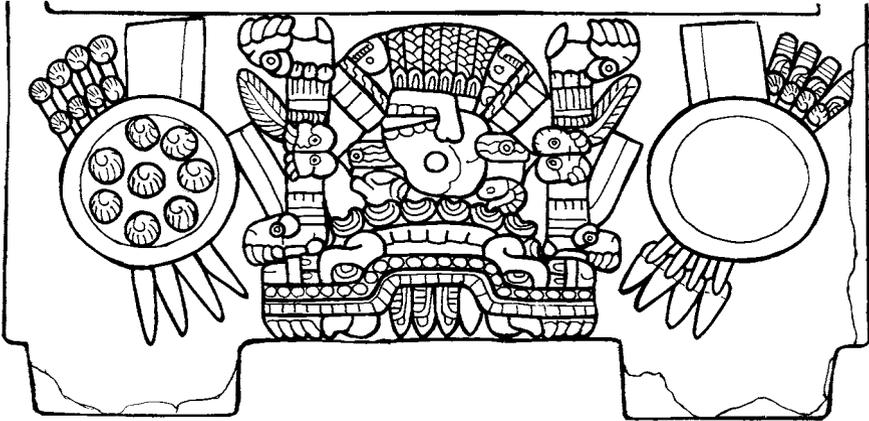


ILLUSTRATION 6.12D *The Teocalli altar of Moctezuma: platform on top of the pyramid (drawing courtesy of Emily Umberger).*

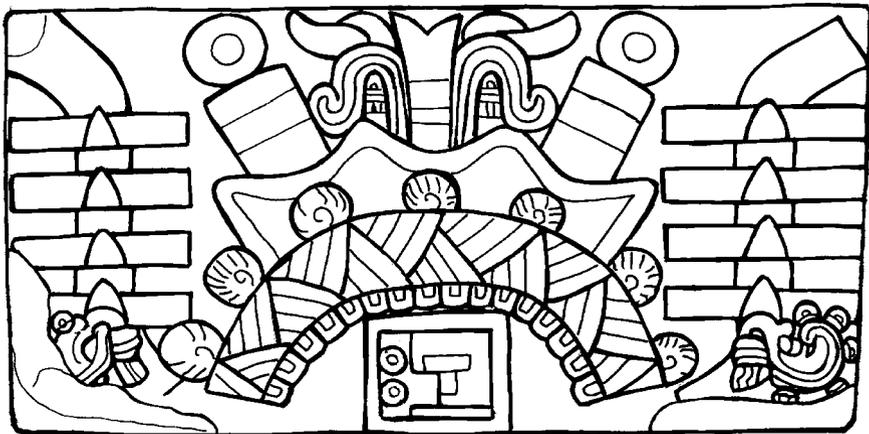


ILLUSTRATION 6.12E *The Teocalli altar of Moctezuma: top of the monument (drawing courtesy of Emily Umberger).*

diadem, which represents the word *tecuhtli*, 'lord') and Tepeyollotl, 'Heart of the Mountain'. The positioning of Tlaloc on the right side of the monument and of the fire god on the left recalls the structure of the Templo Mayor (divided in right, northern part of cold-dark aspect and a left, southern part of warm-light aspect).<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> For the identification of the gods see Caso (1927b), followed by Umberger (1984, 2010). He identified the fourth god as Xochipilli, the god of feasts and flowers, but the long air and the horizontal band through the eye characterise Tepeyollotl on page 4 of Codex

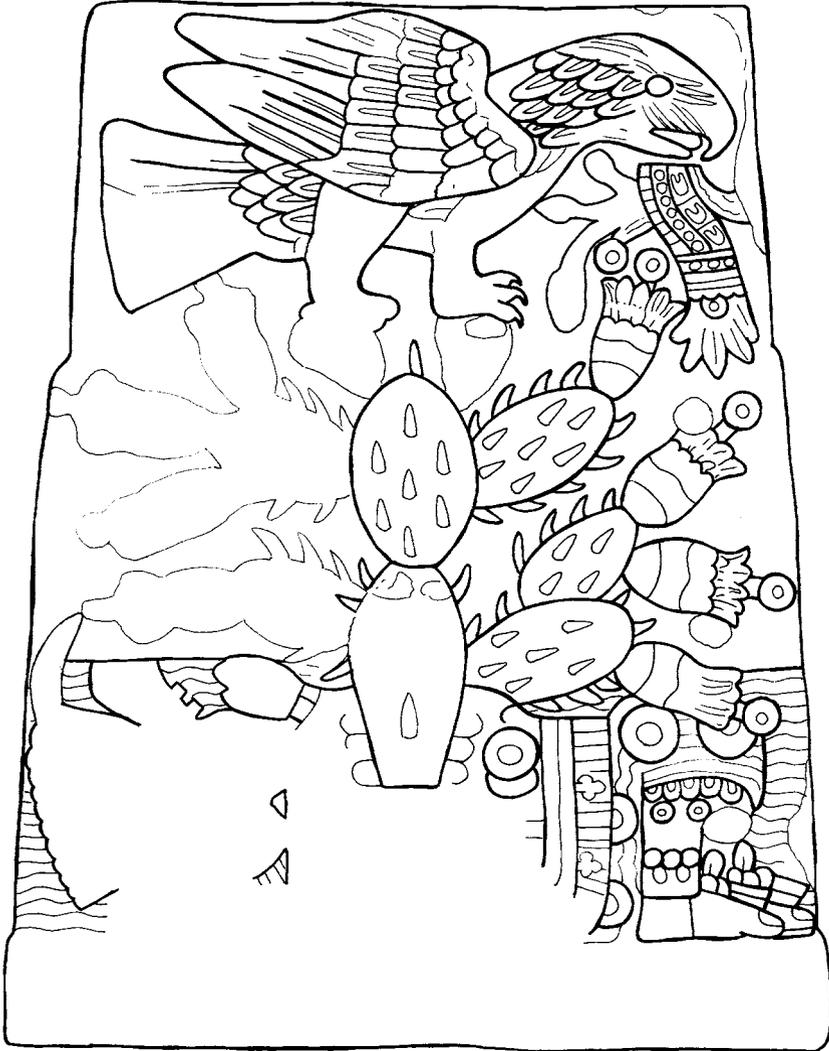


ILLUSTRATION 6.12F *The Teocalli altar of Moctezuma: back of the monument (drawing courtesy of Emily Umberger).*

Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer) and on page 14 of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia). For a discussion of the symbolic structure of the Templo Mayor see the commentary on *Codex Mictlan* (Laud) by Anders and Jansen (1994). Pasztory (1983: 171–172) observes that two similar skeletonised personages performing self-sacrifice are represented inside the sacrificial vessel on the back of the colossal jaguar altar in the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.

On the back of the Teocalli monument is the famous theme of the foundation of the Aztec capital: the eagle on the nopal cactus, holding in its beak again the *atl tlachinolli* sign. In the water under the nopal cactus we see the manifestation of the goddess of the lake.<sup>53</sup> As Umberger (1984, 2010) has pointed out, this scene on the Teocalli monument is most likely to be read together with the year 2 House, which is represented on the top side of the standing tablet and corresponds to the year of the foundation of Tenochtitlan (1325).

The focus of beholding the artwork is on the staircase, connecting vertically the basis of the pyramid, or rather *teocalli*, with the rising sun, where Moctezuma meets the patron deity. The staircase has thirteen steps: the well-known number of completion in the Mesoamerican world. At the sides are not only the ancestral figures giving their support, but flanking the staircase are two successive year bearers: 1 Rabbit and 2 Reed. These dates are clearly related to the New Fire ceremony. The year 2 Reed marked the *xiuhmolpilli*, the 'binding' (completing, closure) of a unit of 52 years and the beginning of a new cycle. We should remember that in the calendar of the Nahuas, Ñuu Dzau and other Mesoamerican peoples, the combination of year and day would repeat in successive sequences of 52 years (calendar rounds). The New Fire ceremonies were recorded in the chronological representation of Aztec history (for example in Codex Mendoza) to mark the progress of time in such 'centuries' of 52 years. The turning point was the year 2 Reed in the Aztec year count, which corresponds to the year 1 Reed for the Ñuu Dzau. The last precolonial year-binding ritual took place in 1507.

In times before that year, according to Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 41v, it was customary to celebrate the New Fire ceremony in the year 1 Rabbit, the year preceding 2 Reed. But as the Aztecs had always experienced hunger and hardships in the years 1 Rabbit – and again in 1506 there was a plague of mice in Mexico –, the ruler Moctezuma II decided to change the ceremony to the year 2 Reed. As far as hardships were concerned, it did not make a lot of difference because in the year 2 Reed there was an earthquake and 1800 warriors drowned in the River Tuzac (Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 42). But the change allowed for finishing the remodelling or expansion of the temple of the New Fire on the Huizachtepetl or Mount Huixachtlan ('*se acabó la iglesia del fuego nuevo*').<sup>54</sup>

Although the explanation quoted in the trustworthy early colonial codex is quite straightforward, other historical codices and texts generally register

53 Compare the representation of Cihuacoatl lying in the centre of the water at the foot of the world tree on page 53 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).

54 The cliff statue of Moctezuma II in Chapultepec is associated with the year 2 Reed day 1 Reed and day 1 Alligator (Pasztory 1983: 127–128; Hajovsky 2012 and 2015: Ch. 7).

the New Fire ceremony in successive occurrences of the year 2 Reed, since the Aztecs proceeded from the seven caves of origin (Chicomoztoc). Before their establishment in Tenochtitlan the ritual was reportedly celebrated at several stations of their migration history: either because the change of date was projected back into the past or because indeed (at least some) New Fire ceremonies took place in the year 2 Reed already.

A Calendar Wheel in the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, dating from 1654, contains a list of *xiuhmolpilli* rituals. The name of the ritual is represented as bounded leaves (the first component of the term, *xiuh(tli)*, meaning 'year' and 'turquoise' as well as 'leaf' in Nahuatl). The successive places where the ceremony was carried out were the following: Coatlicamac (Place of the Serpent's Mouth) in 1195, Apazco (Place of the Vessel) in 1247, Tepacyuca (Place of Knives) in 1299, and Chapultepec (Mountain of the Grasshopper) in 1351.<sup>55</sup> The place where the New Fire ritual was celebrated in 1403, 1455 and 1507 is not mentioned. It was probably understood that in those years the New Fire ceremony was held in Tenochtitlan. Interestingly, the ceremony is also registered for the colonial period: 1559, 1611, 1663. The Calendar Wheel itself combines the ancient calendar structure with colonial references to sun, planets and dominical letters in a new syncretistic form, combining the ancient organisation of time with European time structures.

Returning to the Teocalli monument we understand that the two years at the sides of the staircase have to be the years 1506 and 1507, the only years with those names during Moctezuma's reign. Their combination must refer to the fact that Moctezuma II moved the year of the New Fire ceremony from 1 Rabbit to 2 Reed.<sup>56</sup> Clearly this is the main event referred to on the monument. In other words, we are in front of a model of a religious building, a *teocalli*, holding divine power, made for that specific occasion. Moctezuma II, the Aztec ruler at the time, is the clearly identifiable protagonist of the monument and he is shown in the act of self-sacrifice.

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55 This sequence corresponds to that of the Tira de la Peregrinación, which mentions the New Fire ceremony, in the cyclical year 2 Reed that recurs at different stations in the history of the migrating Azteca-Mexitin. There are differences in the chronological correlations. Codex Vaticanus A starts this sequence with a New Fire in the seven caves of origin (Chicomoztoc) in the year 2 Reed, glossed as 1194. Durán in his *Historia* (Ch. 2) gives the same date. Vaticanus A has the migrating people arriving at Chapultepec to celebrate the New Fire there in 1299. On the locations of the different fire ceremonies and monuments (such as the Throne of Moctezuma) see the profound study by Pharo (2014: Ch. 4) and also Tena (1987/2008).

56 Cf. Graulich (2001).

The scene shows Moctezuma as pious leader, together with Huitzilopochtli-Tezcatlipoca, the patron deity of his lineage, carrying out the bloodletting ritual in order to make the Sun 4 Movement rise (as the self-sacrificing deities in Teotihuacan made the sun rise for the first time). The four seated priests are supporting him in this task. The sun is also the new Sun or era, after the binding of the calendar round of the past 52 years. Thus Moctezuma's *teocalli* ('house of god') is directly connected to the New Fire ceremony of 1507.

On the side panels of the tablet we find the days 1 Flint (left) and 1 Death (right), both as living entities, with the smoking mirror indicating that they are dedicated to Tezcatlipoca (the main god on the Teocalli monument). These very same days are related to the *xiuhmolpilli* ceremony. We find the day signs 1 Flint and 1 Death on the sides of peculiar stone monuments representing a bundle of sticks (presumably indicating the number 52 for the years bound) under the sign of the year 2 Reed.<sup>57</sup> This configuration probably represents the sign of Tititl ('Shrinking'). The sign of the smoking mirror is integrated in both these day signs, indicating that these days are dedicated to Tezcatlipoca. Indeed, they were associated with this deity and furthermore with the act of (self-) sacrifice. This symbolism may connote as well that these days are related to the making of fire.<sup>58</sup>

In view of the relationship of the monument with the New Fire ceremony in the year 2 Reed (1507) it is likely that Moctezuma is expressing his devotion to Huitzilopochtli-Tezcatlipoca, particularly during the feast of Panquetzaliztli, dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, when that ceremony took place at the time of the winter solstice. It is also likely, therefore, that the four priests on the sides, who joining the ruler in this ritual, represent the four priests that kindle the New Fire in the Tlillan in Xochimilco (see below). Simultaneously these four priests, because of their skeletonised jaws, embody ancestor worship and may recall or represent the four generations of Moctezuma's own ancestors that connected him to the foundation of the dynasty: his father the ruler Axayacatl, his grandfather Tezozomoc (who was no ruler), his great-grandfather Itzcoatl and his great-great-grandfather Acamapichtli, the first Aztec ruler.

57 See Nicholson and Quiñones Keber (1983: 43–45).

58 See the essay on calendar names of the deities by Caso (1967). In *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia), p. 27, the combination of (year) 1 Flint and (day) 1 Death is connected with the North. As a year 1 Flint initiates the segment of thirteen years that is symbolically associated with the North, while the day 1 Death heads the period of five 13-day periods (65 days) in the sacred day count (*tonalpoalli*) that is also connected with the North. An invocation registered by Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise 11: Ch. 1) documents that 1 Death and 1 Flint were esoteric calendar names for sacrificial instruments.

It is conceivable that the Teocalli monument functioned as a throne of the ruler, to be seated at the crossroads of heaven and earth, in the crucial moment of the beginning of a new era, accompanied and sustained by his ancestors. The chosen overall symbol, the *teocalli*, however, suggests that the monument was conceived as a shrine to enable communication with the divine powers of the cosmos.

In other words, the main function of the monument seems to be that of an altar, a miniature temple for the ruler's religious activities, self-sacrifices, prayers and offerings to the sun (time) and the ancestors. It seems to be a personal ritual preparation of the ruler for the beginning of the new era or Sun. Every element in the Teocalli monument pronounces the couplet *atl tlachinolli*, calling upon the ruler and imbuing him with the strength for the wars and life struggles ahead and for the defence and glory of Tenochtitlan (emblematically represented on the back), in other words, the well-being of its people.

## 6 The Binding of 52 Years

Friar Bernardino de Sahagún (Book VII: Chs. 9–13) describes in detail how the last precolonial New Fire ritual, the act of *toxiuhmopolia*, 'the binding of our years', was carried out (the year 2 Reed being 1507). Probably he gathered the data around 1559, the first colonial occurrence of the year 2 Reed, in which a cycle had to be renewed and the New Fire ritual would have to be re-enacted. The remembrance must have been particularly strong in those days, the question being whether the rhythm of time would continue or be changed drastically under colonial rule.<sup>59</sup>

All lights and fires were extinguished. The liminal night between the end of one cycle of time and the beginning of another was filled with preoccupation, even fear: Will the world continue for another calendar round, or will darkness take over? In the villages people hid in houses and barns, covering their faces with masks of maguey leaves, and the men took up arms to defend their families (especially the children and the pregnant women) against the spooky *tzitzimime* of the end of time, which might come down from the night sky, roam loose, and devour the humans. At midnight a war captive was sacrificed on top of Mount Huixachtlan and fire was kindled on his breast. His body was

59 Knowledge of the matter is also registered, but in a very much shorter form, in the 1580 *Relación Geográfica de Iztapalapa* (Acuña 1985–86, II: 40).

to be consumed by the fire – a ritual imitation of the sacred narrative about the primordial figure Nanahuatzin who threw himself into the flames in order to become the sun (Sahagún, Book VII: Ch. 2).

Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) gives a detailed depiction of this ritual and places it within the totality of the calendar structure. This manuscript is preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée Nationale in Paris, housed in the Palais Bourbon (hence its name Borbonicus). This library acquired it by 1826; it had probably been brought to France as a consequence of the French invasions of Spain in the early nineteenth century.

The Scottish historian William Robertson had registered the presence of a Mexican pictorial manuscript in the library of El Escorial in Spain at the end of the eighteenth century: the description given to him by Mr Waddilove, chaplain of the British embassy in Madrid who helped him with his research, leaves no doubt that this was the book that is now in Paris. Waddilove still counted 40 pages. In the still unclear transfer of the codex to France, the first two pages were lost. Nahuatl historian Luis Reyes García found the following reference in the list of books of the bequest of King Philip II of Spain (*Libros de diversas facultades de la testamentaria de Felipe II*, Madrid, 1600):

13 – Another book, in large folio format, of the caciques of Mexico and of the days that they sacrificed during the week, hand made, painted in colours with retouched figures; bound in cardboard covered with crimson velvet with red ribbons. Value: 12 reales.<sup>60</sup>

This means that members of the Aztec aristocracy had sent Codex Cihuacoatl to Spain in the sixteenth century. Internal evidence suggests that this codex is an early colonial work (probably made specially for the Spanish king), which reproduces to a large extent a precolonial original that, in turn, was made for the year of the New Fire: 1507.<sup>61</sup>

Codex Cihuacoatl is a calendar book, which consists of four parts:

1. The detailed presentation of the 260-day count (*tonalpoalli*) in twenty periods of thirteen days (originally twenty pages, now eighteen because of the loss of the first two pages). Each day is given as the combination

60 '13 – otro libro en folio mayor, de los caciques de México y de los días que sacrificaban en la semana, de mano, pintado en colores con figuras retocadas; encuadernado en papelón cubierto de terciopelo carmesí con sintas coloradas. En 12 reales'. (Zarco Cuevas 1924/29, III: 552–553).

61 See the edition and commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991).

of a number (1–13) with one of the twenty day signs. In addition, for each day the god of the night is mentioned (in cycles of 9), as well as the god of the number with an augural bird (both in cycles of 13). The days of each 13-day period are composed in an angle that included a central large image of a patron deity for the period with mantic symbols for determining the character and destiny of those born in this period, or opportunities or threats that could occur.

2. The list of the 52 year bearers of the calendar round, again with the corresponding gods of the night (pp. 21–22). They are grouped around two central images.

The first is that of the archetypical calendar priest and midwife: Cipactonal and the Oxomoco. Sahagún explains the reason:

And this astrology or nigromancy originated from a woman named Oxomoco, and from a man named Cipactonal; and the masters of this astrology or necromancy, who counted these signs and were called *tonalpouhque*, painted this woman Oxomoco and this man Cipactonal, and placed them in the middle of the books that contained all the characters of every day, because they said that those were the lord and lady of this astrology or necromancy, as principal astrologers, because of having invented it and having made this count of all the characters.<sup>62</sup>

The second image is that of the two great forces that formed the earth and lifted up the sky: the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca. They seem to be dancing: complementary aspects working together in harmony. Quetzalcoatl holds an incense burner: religious respect as a precious central and unifying element.

3. A pictorial description of the rites of the eighteen 20-day periods, which begin at the end of the year 1 Rabbit and continue during the year 2 Reed, which corresponds to 1507 (pp. 23–40).<sup>63</sup> Emblematic signs indicate each 20-day period while the associated scenes refer to the actual rituals

62 'Y esta astrología o nigromancia fué tomada y hubo origen de una mujer que se llama Oxomoco, y de un hombre que se llamaba Cipactonal, y los maestros de esta astrología o nigromancia que contaban estos signos, que se llamaban tonalpouhque, pintaban a esta mujer Oxomoco y a este hombre Cipactonal, y los ponían en medio de los libros donde estaban escritos todos los caracteres de cada día, porque decían que eran señores de esta astrología o nigromancia, como principales astrólogos, porque la inventaron e hicieron esta cuenta de todos los caracteres'. (Sahagún, Book IV: Ch. 1).

63 See also the synthesis by Graulich (2008).



ILLUSTRATION 6.13 *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus)*, p. 22: Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca.

carried out on that occasion: they can be identified with the help of the ceremonial descriptions in several early colonial accounts (Sahagún, Durán, etc.). The main scene is the kindling of the New Fire (on page 34): it takes place in the year 2 Reed, in this case corresponding to 1507 AD. Several Spanish glosses refer to the Aztec world (e.g. to the ruler Moctezuma II) and specifically to the region of the raised fields (*chinampas*) in the lake where Mexico-Tenochtitlan was located.

4. After the eighteen 20-day periods associated with the year 2 Reed, the final chapter of the codex (pp. 37–40) consists of a list of successive years leading up to the next year 2 Reed, associated with the New Fire instrument.

There is a clear compositional structure. Part 1 presents the twenty 13-day periods with their mantic aspects. Part 2 gives the cycle of 52 year bearers of the



ILLUSTRATION 6.14 *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 23: the high priest (papa) Cihuacoatl and the ruler Moctezuma initiating the rituals of the agricultural year.*

solar years (of 365 days) with their gods of the night and central images that refer to creation. Part 3 presents the eighteen 20-day months with their community rituals during the year 2 Reed (1507), which is explicitly mentioned (p. 34) between a reference to the previous year, 1 Rabbit (p. 23), and to the following one, year 3 Flint (p. 37). Part 4 lists the sequence of 52 years until the next year 2 Reed. In this way Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) connects the mantic and symbolic aspects of the cyclical structure with the community rituals in linear time.

The main character that initiates the feast cycle of Part 3 is a person representing Cihuacoatl. He is clearly recognizable because he is represented with the attributes and the regalia of the goddess: the skeletonised head, the *tzotzopatzli* ('weaving sword') and shield with eagle feathers, the skirt with shells. A Spanish gloss identifies him as the high priest (*papa mayor*). The same figure is repeated at the end of the sequence. He also plays a prominent role during the successive rituals. The regalia and the gloss leave no doubt that this is the *cihuacoatl* official, the second in command, high priest and supreme judge in the Aztec empire, as well as governor of Mexico. In the first and last scene (representing the 18th month, Izcalli) the Aztec ruler (*tlatoani*) Moctezuma II accompanies him. Together, the *tlatoani* and the *cihuacoatl* personify the god Huitzilopochtli (the patron deity of the Aztec people) and his sister the goddess Cihuacoatl.

Moctezuma II had ascended to the throne four years earlier, in the year II Reed (roughly corresponding to 1503). On the basis of historical sources, we can identify the *cihuacoatl* official in question as Tlacaelel II, grandson of the famous Tlacaelel I, who forged the Aztec empire along with his half-brother Moctezuma I (reign: 1440–1469).<sup>64</sup> In Codex Cihuacoatl the *tlatoani* Moctezuma II and the *cihuacoatl* Tlacaelel II initiate the rituals that lead up to the New Fire ceremony of the year 2 Reed (1507 AD).

In 1507 – and probably also earlier – the ritual was carried out on top of Mount Huixachtlan, 'thorn tree place', later renamed 'Hill of the Star' (*Cerro*

64 As for the precise identification of this person as Tlacaelel II, we correct the preliminary reconstruction in the commentary on Codex Cihuacoatl (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991), as already argued by Jansen (2002). Tlacaelel I was the half-brother of the ruler (*tlatoani*) Moctezuma I (both were sons of the ruler Huitzilihuitl) and is generally considered the architect of imperial expansion. He had three sons: Cacama, Tlilpotonqui (who succeeded his father as *cihuacoatl*) and Tezcatltecuhtli. Tlacaelel II was the second child of Cacama and succeeded Tlilpotonqui as *cihuacoatl*. Tlacotzin, a son of Tezcatltecuhtli, succeeded Tlacaelel II and was the *cihuacoatl* at the time of the conquest. Note that the *cihuacoatl* officials used to be the 'second children', whose importance is also indicated by a gloss in the Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 26.

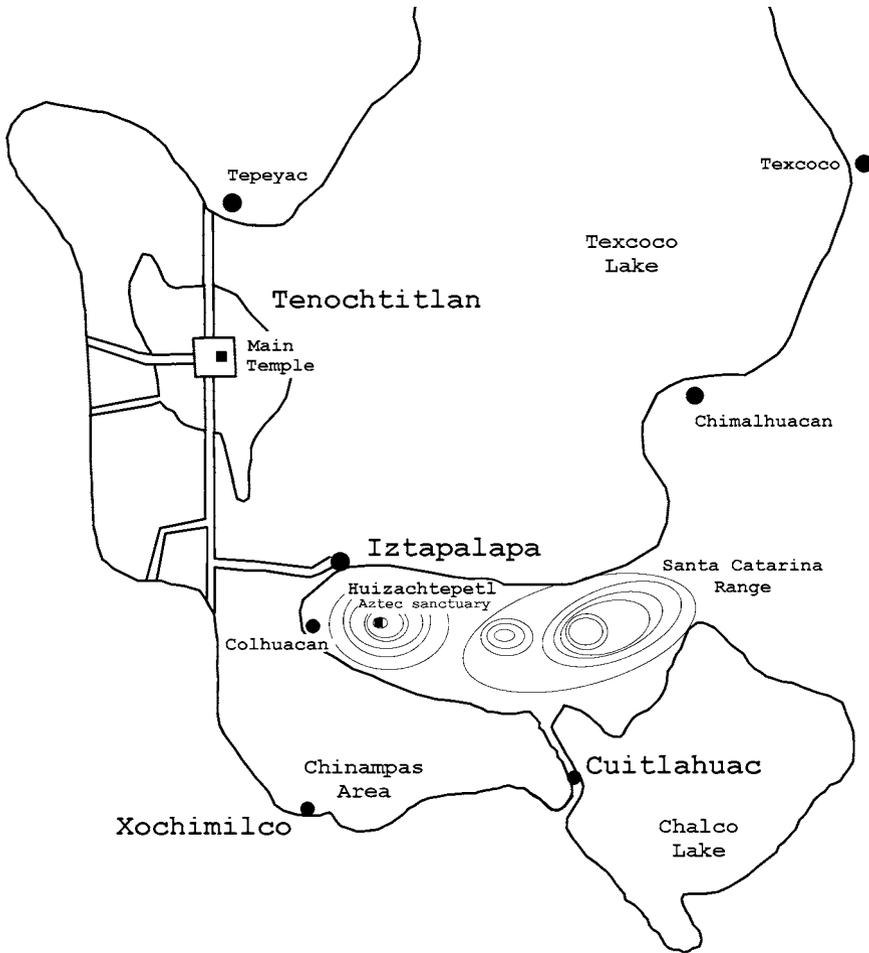


ILLUSTRATION 6.15 *Location of the Huizachtepetl/Cerro de la Estrella and Xochimilco (map drawn by Iván Rivera).*

*de la Estrella*). It took place in the 20-day period Panquetzaliztli ('Raising the Banners'). Probably the month Panquetzaliztli ended with the winter solstice: the date in question may have been 13 December 1507 (Julian calendar), which according to the most accepted correlation ([www.azteccalendar.com](http://www.azteccalendar.com)) corresponded to the day 1 Reed, probably as founding date for the new calendar round.<sup>65</sup>

Mount Huixachtlan is at the extreme end of a promontory that sticks out in the middle of the ancient lake in which Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the Aztec

65 See also the discussion of the dates by Tena (2008: 93–99).

capital, was built on islands and raised fields (*chinampas*). The promontory separated the central and northern part of the large lake, the part known as Lake of Texcoco, from the southern part known as the Lake of Xochimilco and Chalco. Mount Huixachtlan therefore occupies a very central position within the lake, visible from all sides. Even today it still rises prominently above the modern megacity.

On top is the platform base of a temple, with a plaza in front of it. In the plaza, in front of the stairs is a square platform, probably an altar. The construction goes back to the Toltec period ( $\pm 950$ –1150) and was maintained and extended later by the Aztecs.<sup>66</sup> The temple is oriented East (back) – West (front). When one climbs the stairs one sees the mountaintop of the Cerro de Santa Catarina rising right behind (= to the east of) the temple.<sup>67</sup> From the temple one can observe the sunrise above the Iztaccihuatl volcano at winter solstice.



ILLUSTRATION 6.16 *Temple and altar on top of the Huizachtepetl/Cerro de la Estrella.*

66 The Museo del Fuego Nuevo on the site presents the archaeological information from the research by archaeologist Pérez Negrete of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

67 This is the highest point of the Sierra de Santa Catarina (village of Santa Catarina Yecahuizotl), also known as the Guadalupe volcano (2820 metres above sea level), Cerro del Borrego or Cerro de San Nicolás.

At the foot of the pyramid on the southern side is a cave, known as Cueva del Diablo. There are several caves in the mountain, all of them entrances to the earth and the other world. On the northern side is the ancient town (now ward) of Iztapalapa, with the church of San Lucas. Here, at the foot of the mountain, several temple platforms dating from Teotihuacan times demonstrate its ancient importance as a religious centre. This same area now plays a central role as Golgotha in the local, spectacular performance of the Easter Passion. In many ways the mountain has kept its meaning as a sacred landscape.

Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) shows how the New Fire was kindled on top of the Mount Huixachtlan. Sahagún tells us that this was done on the breast of a sacrificed man, a heroic warrior taken captive in battle, who had been conceived 52 years earlier during the preceding year-binding ritual. A torch then brought down the New Fire to a large temple. The body of the captive was consumed in the flames of a huge brazier, as a gloss in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 34 states.<sup>68</sup> White crosses on a black background identify this temple as a *Tlillan*, the Dark Temple of the goddess Cihuacoatl.<sup>69</sup>

Here the priests arrive in solemn procession to light torches at the New Fire and so take it home to distribute it to the temples and the inhabitants of the whole land. Sahagún (Book VII: Ch. 10) describes how the fire priests arrived in order, representing the different gods of the land, proceeding slowly and solemnly: 'they walk like gods'. The temple was completely dark, without windows and with a door opening that was always covered. It was only accessible for the priests of Cihuacoatl, elderly officials who performed the rituals. The main room contained statues of all the deities known in the realm standing against the walls, their heads covered with paper sprayed with rubber.<sup>70</sup>

68 In 1507 the New Fire was kindled on the breast of a sacrificial victim who had been conceived/born exactly 52 years earlier: his name was Xiuhtlamin, and the body was totally consumed by fire (Sahagún, Book VII: Ch. 12).

69 Cf. the *Tlillan* signs in Codex Mendoza, pp. 18, 46, 65. Similar white crosses on a black background are visible in ancient rock paintings in a cave close to the ruins of Diqui Yuu in the Mixteca Baja. The ongoing rituals in that cave demonstrate once again the deeply rooted religious convictions and practices in Mesoamerica.

70 The argument for identifying the *Tlillan* in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) as the temple of Cihuacoatl in Xochimilco is presented in the commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991). Cf. Jansen 2002. Durán (1967, 1: 131) gives a detailed description: *'Toda esta pieza estaba oscurísima, sin tener saetera ni ventana, ni puerta grande, sino muy chica, que no podían entrar en ella sino a gatas. La cual puerta estaba siempre tapada con una antepuerta, de suerte que nadie la veía, ni entraba en aquella pieza, sino solos los sacerdotes que servían a esta diosa. Los cuales eran muy viejos y ancianos, que hacían las ceremonias ordinarias. Llamaban a esta pieza Tlillan, que quiere decir negregura o lugar de*

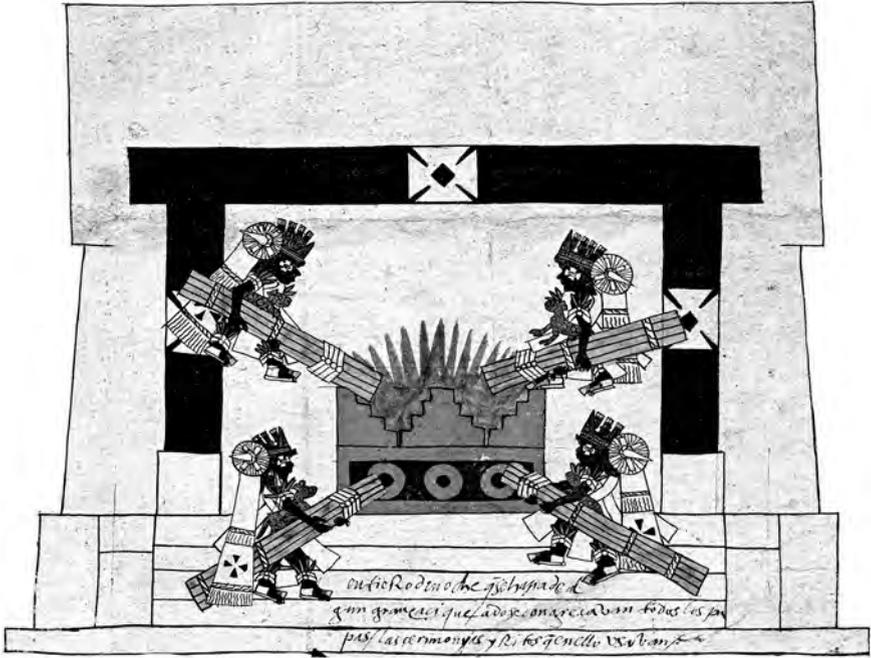


ILLUSTRATION 6.17A *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p.34: the Tlillan temple.*

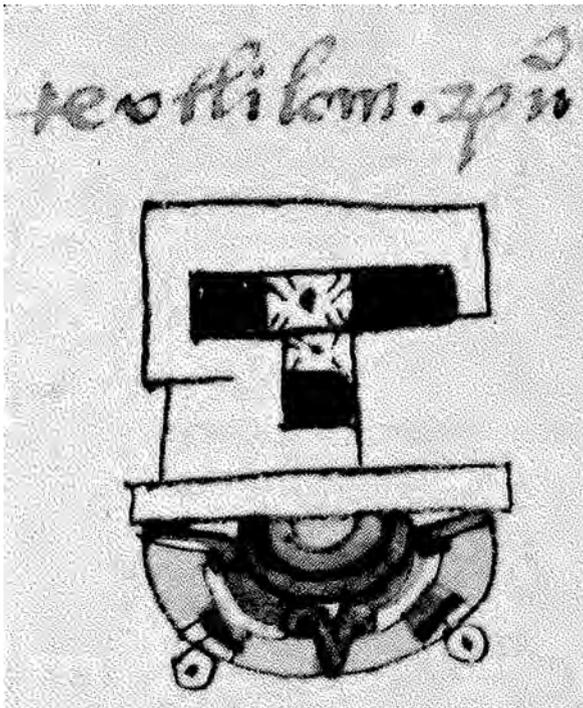


ILLUSTRATION 6.17B  
*The Tlillan as part of the place sign Teotlillan (Codex Mendoza).*



ILLUSTRATION 6.17C

*The Tlillan as part of the title Tlillancalqui (Codex Mendoza).*

An important feature of the Dark Temple was the great divine brazier (*teotlecuilli*), made out of stone and situated in front of the room where the image of the goddess was kept. Here fire burned continuously during the four days that preceded the main feast day.<sup>71</sup>

The Tlillan's aspect is chthonic and mysterious. Darkness symbolises the tomb and the underworld, but also the sacredness of creation time, the time of primordial night (*Yohuayan* in Nahuatl, *Nuu naa* in Dzaha Dzaui), before the first sunrise, before human history. The fact that the Tlillan is also the temple of the New Fire (a ceremony associated with the winter solstice) sheds more

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*ella. Arrimados a las paredes de toda esta pieza estaban todos los ídolos de la tierra, de ellos grandes y de ellos chicos, a los cuales llamaban tecuacuiltin, que es lo mismo que decir "imagen de piedra o de bulto". Todos estos ídolos estaban vestidos con sambenitos de papel, rayado de hule...'*

71 *'Cuatro días antes del día principal de esta diosa empezaban a encender fuego en un gran fogón que estaba en una pieza que estaba frontero de la pieza donde estaba la diosa, y todos aquellos cuatro días y noches no hacían otra cosa sino cebar aquel brasero o fogón con leña de encina. Este brasero era labrado de piedras muy labradas en el suelo de aquella pieza, al cual llamaban teotlecuilli, que quiere decir "brasero o fogón divino". (Durán, 1967, 1: 167).*

light on its function and symbolic meaning. It is not just a dark place of death, but it is also the place where the new light is born and received, where life sprouts and illuminates all peoples in the next 52-year calendar round. At this level we could compare the Aztec rite of the New Fire with the candles that are lit at Christmas, a feast also associated with the new light after the winter solstice.

The Tlillan sign (comparable to a Maltese cross) is also the basic form to present the sequence of the twenty 13-day periods in a symbolically charged, mantic context, on the famous first page of Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer). Likely this form refers to the distribution of days and periods in space (the four directions), and so connotes the passage of time and the cycle of life and death.

## 7 The Ceremonial Landscape of Mount Huixachtlan

In Mexico-Tenochtitlan the Temple of Cihuacoatl was located next to the main Temple of Huitzilopochtli, the main Aztec god, who was regarded as the brother of the goddess Cihuacoatl. However, the main Tlillan temple was not in Tenochtitlan, but in nearby Xochimilco. Cihuacoatl was the patron goddess of that city, and the official who had this title – the second in command of the Aztec empire after the *tlatoani* (ruler) – had a special bond with this place. The different references to the *chinampa* area, the importance of Cihuacoatl, and the depiction of a major Tlillan temple connected to Mount Huixachtlan (also known as Huixachtecatl or Huizachtepetl), together suggest not only that the Tlillan on page 34 of Codex Cihuacoatl is the Temple of Cihuacoatl in Xochimilco, but also that the codex itself originated in that area.<sup>72</sup>

Xochimilco is situated in the *chinampa* area south of Mount Huixachtlan. Originally its centre was founded on an island referred to as Tlillan. Possibly the main colonial church of the town (dedicated to San Bernardino) was constructed on top of the famous Tlillan temple of the goddess Cihuacoatl.<sup>73</sup>

72 Graulich (2008) prefers Colhuacan because of his emphasis on the calendar reform (in which the year of the New Fire changed from 1 Rabbit to 2 Reed), but does not comment on the Tlillan.

73 See the study of Xochimilco by Peralta Flores (2011: 57, 99). The church of San Bernardino contains discs in the façade, which much have come from an ancient palace (*tecpan*). The baptismal font is decorated with vegetal motifs reminiscent of precolonial Aztec art (related to the Tlalocan iconography). The building is oriented towards the volcano Iztacihuatl (a manifestation of Cihuacoatl).

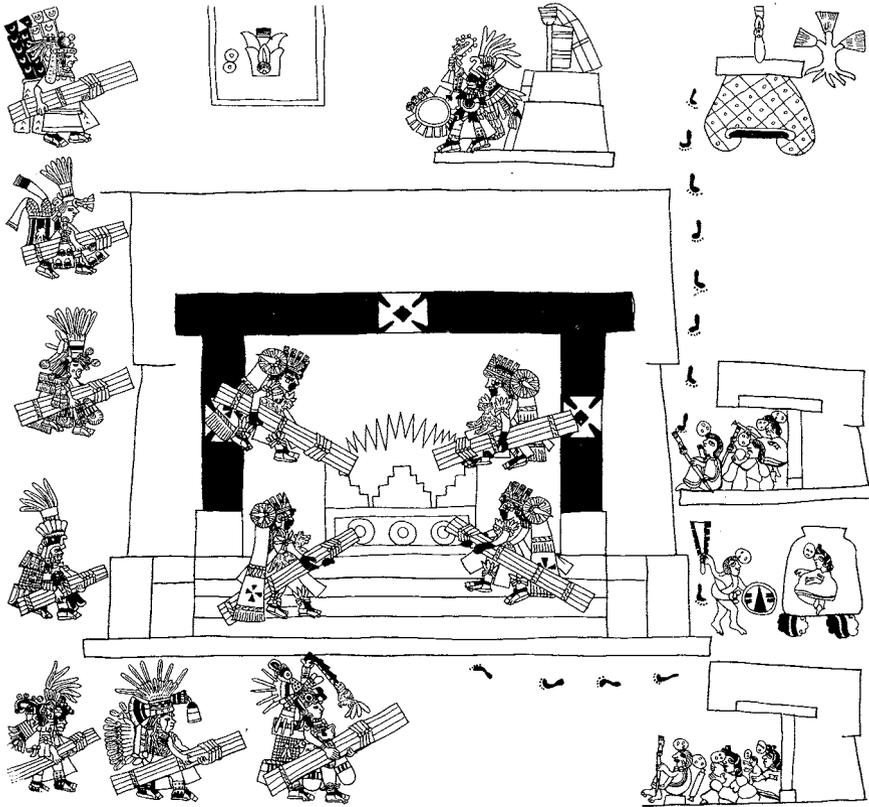


ILLUSTRATION 6.17D *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 34: the New Fire ceremony of 1507.*



ILLUSTRATION 6.18A *Huizachtepetl from Xochimilco.*



ILLUSTRATION 6.18B *Huizachtepetl and Xochimilco from Cuauhilama.*

On page 34 of the Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) we see the Tlillan temple in the centre, with Mount Huixachtlan in the background, in the upper right corner. When we compare this with the actual geographical reality we see that Mount Huixachtlan is to the north of Xochimilco's San Bernardino church. That means that as beholders we are situated further to the south. The Tlillan temple itself is facing us, i.e. probably was facing south.

To the left of Mount Huixachtlan in the codex is the emblematic image of the month Panquetzaliztli: a temple of Huitzilopochtli. Situating this on the ground, we see what is meant. Being located to the south of Xochimilco, for example on or near the archaeological site of Mount Xochitepec, we indeed see Mount Huixachtlan behind the town, to the north. And to the left of Mount Huixachtlan (Cerro de la Estrella), somewhat further in the distance, is the Zócalo area of Mexico City where the Templo Mayor of Huitzilopochtli is situated.

Now we also understand the curved road that the New Fire travelled from Mount Huixachtlan to the Tlillan temple: this has to be the route from the Cerro de la Estrella, crossing the lake via the Tlahuac dam. The estimated time to walk from Cerro de la Estrella to the centre of Xochimilco would be approximately six hours.<sup>74</sup> We do not now how fast or (ceremonially) slow the fire priests walked or ran this distance, but it seems safe to say that if they left the top of Mount Huixachtlan after the midnight ritual, they would arrive in the Tlillan of Xochimilco at daybreak.

On the southern side of the Lake of Xochimilco, the edge of the *chinampas* is a range of foothills with several archaeological sites and monuments. Particularly interesting is the Xochitepec cliff ('Mountain of Flowers') with a precolonial temple on top. The site offers an impressive panoramic view.

74 Team member Iván Rivera walked a significant part of this route to make this calculation.

Monuments from the area around include stone models of landscape features, with caves, staircases, wells and pits, which are indicative of an ancient water cult. Nowadays the crosses on the temple platform indicate the continuing importance of this ancient sanctuary for the celebration of the Holy Cross on 3 May, a day close to the observation of the zenith passage of the sun, which has now become the day for community rituals to ask for rain at specific caves, cliffs and similar locations. Clearly we are here in a religious place dedicated to rain, known in Mesoamerica as House of Rain (*Tlalocan* in Nahuatl).

From a specific stone image (with a cavity in the abdomen), one may observe the rising of the sun above the crater of the Popocatepetl volcano at winter solstice.<sup>75</sup>

Most notable are the rock reliefs near Cuauhilama, also known as the monuments of Acalpixcan.<sup>76</sup> They seem to have been composed along a path leading up to a sanctuary at the top of the cliff.<sup>77</sup> The carvings directly face Mount Huixachtlan. Standing here, we see more to the left (west) but still in front of us the church of San Bernardino de Siena of Xochimilco. Directly to our left, also on the edge of the *chinampas*, we have the Xochitepec cliff.

At the lowest level of the Cuauhilama rocks are the damaged remains of a carving that represent a pyramid with a deity or priestly figure on top, announcing that we are here at the site of a sanctuary. On a second level we find a representation of the calendar sign 1 Alligator, the beginning of the *tonalpoalli* and a reference to the name of Cipactonal. Another relief represents a curved staff with a night motif. It appears as an attribute of Quetzalcoatl.<sup>78</sup> But it is also an attribute of the god of hunting, Mixcoatl, and indeed of other deities. As an attribute of Mixcoatl it may also refer to the Quecholli feast (cf. Codex Cihuacoatl, p. 33). The image of a skull with a knife in the nose placed above a band with four knots probably indicates a place to remember and pay respect to the ancestors.

75 Cf. Peralta Flores 2011: 96.

76 See the studies with photographic reproductions by Beyer (1965), Noguera (1972) and Parsons et al. (1982). The latter publication contains an appendix (4) with a detailed analysis of the rock carvings by Joyce Marcus.

77 Parsons et al. (1982: 220): 'Above the rock carvings, to the south, is a complex of terrace-like stone walls (Feature CR). These are much more nicely constructed than most other stone terraces in the area. There was no surface pottery associated with Feature CR. Upslope from Feature CR is a single mound (Feature CS). This measures 18 by 12 meters in area and 2 meters high, with substantial rock rubble and very light Late Aztec surface pottery'.

78 Sahagún (Book 1: Ch. 5) reads it as a weapon that was an attribute of Quetzalcoatl: 'he had the curved spear-thrower' (*hecaujque*).

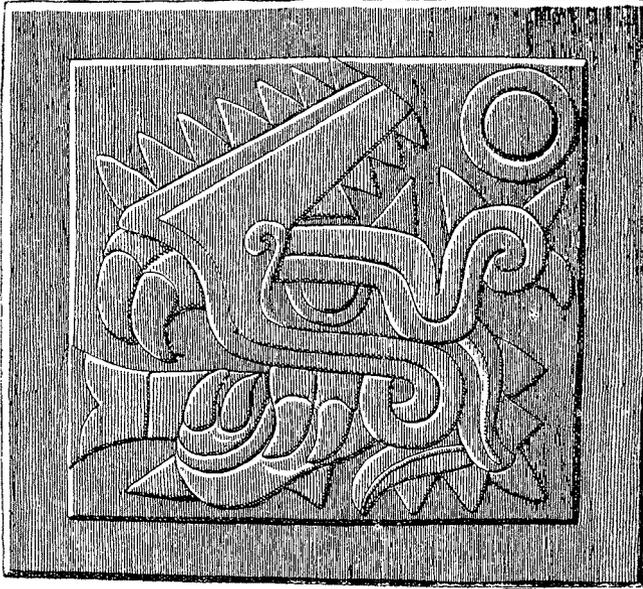


ILLUSTRATION 6.19A *Day 1 Alligator, rock relief Cuauhilama (Beyer 1965).*

The image of a butterfly that speaks or sings in front of a plant is emblematic for a place related to the life-giving force of Nature, a *Tlalocan*. The carving of a jaguar or puma that looks backwards over its shoulder and speaks, sings or roars, may refer to the presence of *nahuales*. According to the Mesoamerican worldview, the *nahuales* assist the rain deity in his work of bringing together the water and resources for maintaining the cycle of seasons.<sup>79</sup>

Still higher up is the sign of the calendar day 4 Movement, locally known as *tonaltetl*, Stone of the Day or Sun.<sup>80</sup> This is an explicit reference to the name of the present Sun or era, which was called 4 Movement and which occupies such an important place in Aztec art. The day 4 Movement falls 36 days before the day 1 Reed. In 1507 it fell in the month Quecholli, while 1 Reed seems to have been when the New Fire ritual took place, coinciding with the winter solstice (the end of Panquetzaliztli). Possibly the day 4 Movement is to be read in combination with the sign of the curved staff with a night motif, which may be the emblem of the month Quecholli. That period ended on 7 Reed (also a religiously charged date that occurs on several monuments). The presence of

79 We find similar visual motifs in rock carvings at the Preclassic site of Chalcatzingo, which is also a House of Rain (see Chapter 4).

80 See again the work of Peralta Flores (2011).



ILLUSTRATION 6.19B *Day 4 Movement, rock relief Cuauhilama (Beyer 1965, photo Carmen Cook).*

this day here right in front of Mount Huixachtlan connects the local House of Rain with the calendar seasons anchored in the idea of the First Sunrise and in the cyclical celebration of the *xiuhmolpilli* with the New Fire.

Other monuments from the area are similarly indicative of ritual activities. The cross in front of the church of Nativitas Zacapa near Xochimilco stands on a stone block, which is decorated with reliefs in Aztec style. On the two opposite sides is the day 1 Death, which in the Aztec world is the calendar name

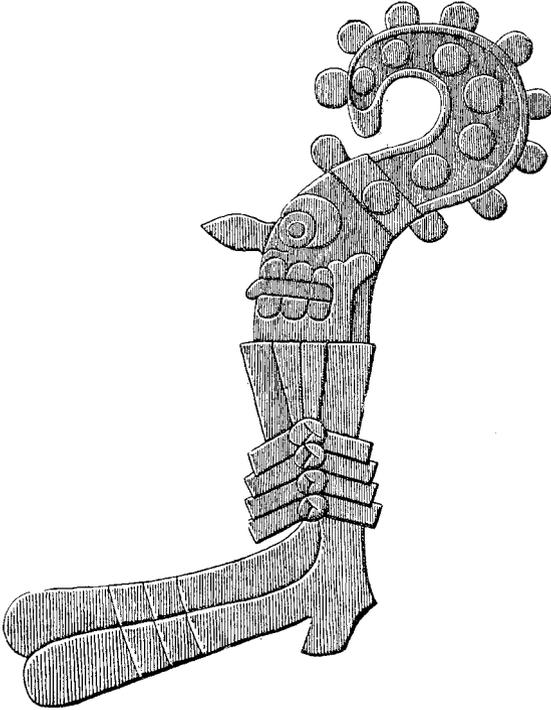


ILLUSTRATION 6.19C  
*Curved staff, rock relief Cu-*  
*auhilama (Beyer 1965).*

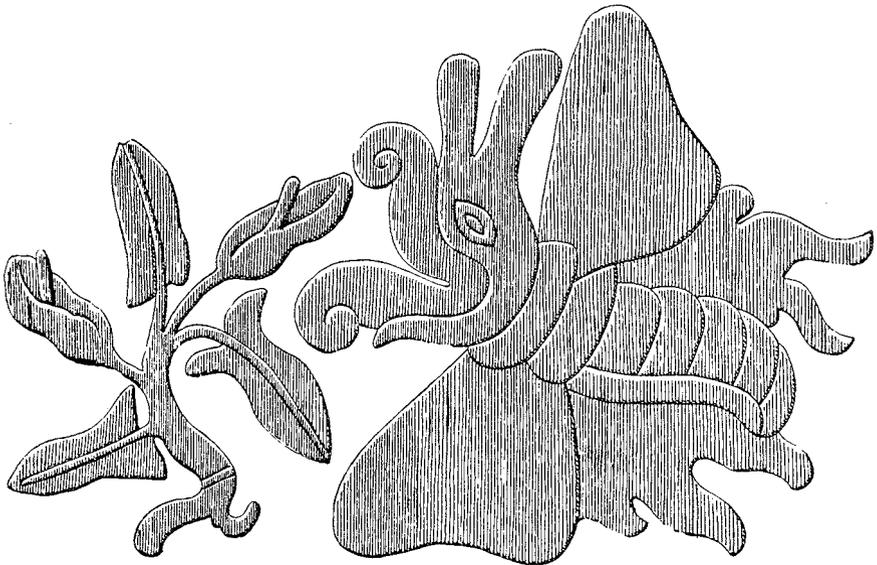


ILLUSTRATION 6.19D *Butterfly, rock relief Cuauhilama (Beyer 1965).*



ILLUSTRATION 6.20 *Jaguar, rock relief Cuauhilama.*



ILLUSTRATION 6.21  
*Cross in front of the church of  
Nativitas Zacapa.*

of Tezcatlipoca and of the sacrificial knife.<sup>81</sup> A perforator placed behind the (missing) ear of the sign Death suggests self-sacrifice by drawing blood from the ear on this day. The front exhibits the day 4 Movement (with a sunray sign above it) and the back the day 7 Reed.<sup>82</sup>

In the Museo Arqueológico de Xochimilco, located in the community of Santa Cruz Acalpíxca (in a Casa del Agua of the Porfiriato era), many archaeological artefacts speak of religious activities. A stone image of the *zacatapayolli* (grass bundle to deposit the perforators of self-sacrifice), a statue of the rain god Tlaloc with crossed arms, an incense burner with a Tlaloc face, as well as statues of the wind god (Ehecatl), the fire god (Huehueteotl), and the corn goddess (Chicomecoatl). We notice particularly a figurine representing a young corn lady (Xilonen Chicomecoatl) very much as in the festival of Ochpaniztli in Codex Cihuacoatl (p. 30), with the same sunray sign in the headdress.

These elements in themselves are no proof of the origin of Codex Cihuacoatl from the Xochimilco area, but once that origin is established on other grounds, they reinforce the link of the rituals depicted in the codex with the local archaeology. Both sources demonstrate the presence of rituals for the rain god. Codex Cihuacoatl mentions a temple of Tlaloc on top of a mountain (pp. 24, 25, 32, 35). In all cases the mountain is turned to the right: if this convention corresponds to the same perspective of the painter as that on page 34 (looking north) it could mean that the temple in question is to the east. As we have seen, there are clear candidates for Tlaloc sanctuaries on the ridge that borders on the *chinampas*. It is also possible that a more important site further away is meant: the famous Mount Tlaloc. On its very top was the central shrine of the rain god for all the kingdoms around it, explicitly also for the rulers and nobles of Xochimilco.<sup>83</sup>

81 See the essay on calendar names of the deities by Caso (1967). An invocation registered by Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise 11: Ch. 1) documents that 1 Death and 1 Flint were esoteric calendar names for sacrificial instruments.

82 The sunray sign is somewhat similar to the year sign in Ñuu Dzauí codices, and in Central Mexican iconography mainly associated with the rain deity (e.g. in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, p. 28).

83 Durán (1967, 1: Ch. 8) describes the religious and ritual importance of Mount Tlaloc and notes: '*Acudían a celebrarla – como dlje – el gran rey Motecuhzoma, al monte referido, con todos los grandes de México, de caballeros y señores, y toda la nobleza de él venía. El rey de Acolhuacan, Nezahualpiltzintli, con toda la nobleza de su tierra y reino. Luego, al mismo efecto, y juntamente, venía el rey de Xochimilco y el de Tlacopan, con todos sus grandes señores*'. See the studies of sacred landscape by Broda (1991, 2001, 2015) and Aguilar Moreno (2009).

## 8 Moctezuma and Ce Acatl

A special category of Aztec sculpture is directly related to ritual practice, namely that of stone caskets or boxes with their covers (*tepetlacalli* in Nahuatl). Presumably they were used for the deposition of religiously charged items, for example the self-sacrifice or other offerings made at special occasions. As such they constitute a kind of sculpted cache, a miniature version of larger and more complex units, such as Tomb 7 itself.

An informative example is the so-called 'Leaf *tepetlacalli*' (López Luján and Santos 2012), cut out of a block of basalt. Its dimensions: 38.1 cms (length) x 28.7 cms (width) x 25.8 cms (height). The interior space is: 30.8 cms (length) x 21 cms (width) x 12.7 cms (depth). On the four sides four days are carved: 4 House – 4 Rabbit – 4 Reed – 4 Flint. Each day is enclosed in a quadrangular frame (which is the Aztec way of representing a *xihuitl*, 'year') and furthermore each is connected with a Mixtec year sign (the 'A-O symbol'). This combination of conventions characterises these days as year bearers and also indicates that their meaning was relevant to both Nahuas and Mixtecs. The same set of years appears on other boxes and most notably on pages 49–53 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, where they are connected to Mixtec year signs as well.<sup>84</sup> In Codex Yoalli Ehecatl the four years are part of complex scenes dealing with offerings to the four directions (represented by temples, trees with birds, gods and other symbols). There the four years are specifically connected to thrones, on which the hairdo of specific deities is deposited. Hair is *tzontli* in Nahuatl, a term that is also used for the four earlier eras or suns.<sup>85</sup> The combination of hair with thrones and dates, therefore, may refer to a Mixtec version of the four creations. The four scenes are connected to a fifth scene (Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, p. 53), which probably is meant to occupy the central position. The gods Quetzalcoatl and Macuilxochitl (who also represents the Tonalteque, the souls of warriors who have died in battle) are performing the penis-preforation ritual. The blood of their self-sacrifice flows to Cihuacoatl, who is lying down on earth and water, and makes a precious tree of corncobs (with a quetzal bird on top) sprout from her body.<sup>86</sup> The bloodletting of the gods transforms death into life: their act sets the example for the ritual agency and responsibility of humans.

84 We consider that Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Nahuatl) belongs to the Nahuatl speaking world. When making use of the A-O symbol the painter has added leaves to it, probably to facilitate the reading of this Mixtec sign as *xihuitl* ('year' as well as 'herb') in Nahuatl. See the more detailed discussion of this manuscript in Chapter 7.

85 Codex Vaticanus A, pp. 4v–7 (cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993: 265–266).

86 The image evokes the symbolic narrative of Quetzalcoatl descending into the Underworld, which we mentioned in Chapter 2 (Lehmann 1938: 332 ff.). The ring of water, which

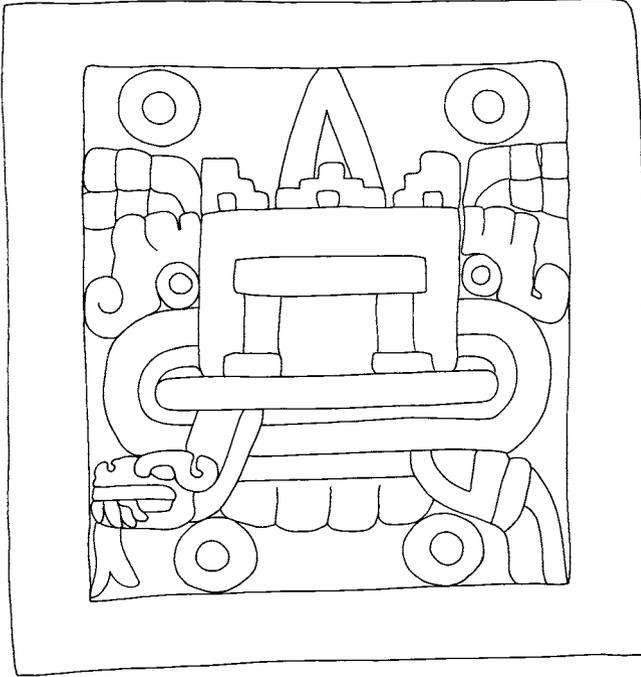


ILLUSTRATION 6.22A *The Tozoztli tepetlacalli ('Leof tepetlacalli'): year 4 House (drawing Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy Leonardo López Luján).*

The parallel in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl suggest that the four years on the *tepetlacalli* also stand as *pars pro toto* for the quadripartite structure of time and cosmos. The Mixtec year signs on the 'Leof *tepetlacalli*' are formed by serpents, which may indicate the visionary character of the ritual. The fact that the Aztec quadrangular year sign 'frames' (corresponds with) the Mixtec A-O year sign (which – as we saw in the introduction – has one digit less), establishes

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forms the background for the lying Cihuacoatl in this image, may be read as *Anahuac*, the Nahuatl term for the world inhabited by the Aztecs. The tree is the fifth tree in the successive scenes: all growing from the body of Cihuacoatl and all having an emblematic bird on top. Such a tree also occurs on a *tepetlacalli* relief, together with floral motifs (Pasztory 1983: 212–213; Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 148–149). We furthermore find *tepetlacalli* reliefs with the image of the sun 4 Movement, as well as the names of the Aztec four suns (Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 280–281). Compare also the famous first page of Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer): blood streaming from the (sacrificed) body parts of Tezcatlipoca nurtures the central deity, the Fire God, who is surrounded by four trees with their respective birds.

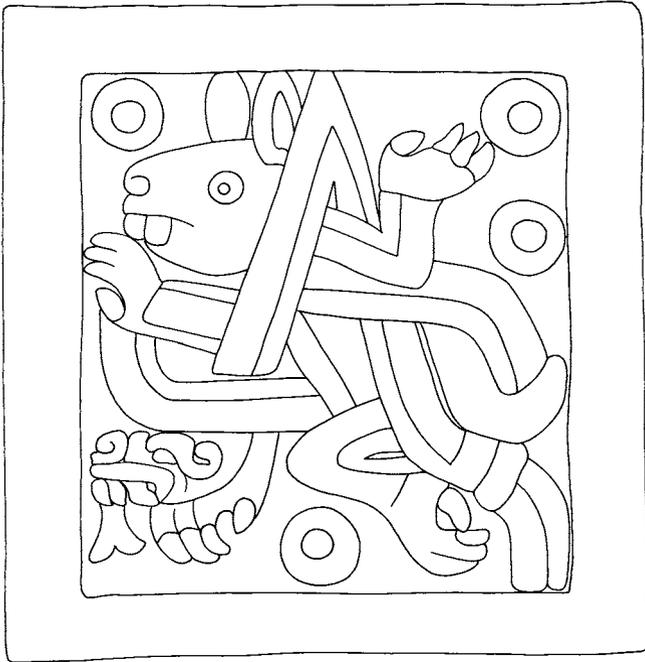


ILLUSTRATION 6.22B *The Tozoztli tepetlacalli ('Leaf tepetlacalli'): year 4 Rabbit (drawing Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy Leonardo López Luján).*

a connection, a sense of coevalness, between the two peoples and their ritual years.

Another scene is carved on the exterior bottom side of this *tepetlacalli*: four devotees in the corners are performing self-sacrifice, offering a liquid to the rain deity and his altar in the centre. The streams of liquid converge on the breast of the rain deity, in an emblem that consists of a bird (*toztli*) holding a maguey spine as perforator – this is the sign of the two successive Aztec months Tozoztontli ('Small Bloodletting') and Huey Tozoztli ('Big Bloodletting'), a period of 40 days dedicated to self-sacrifice in preparation for the rainy season, which would begin with the first zenith passage of the sun.<sup>87</sup>[1] Clearly this month

87 [1] Cf. Kubler and Gibson (1951) and Caso (1967). We discuss these months also in Chapter 7. The bird (*toztli*) is added as a phonetic complement to guarantee the reading *tozoztli* ('bloodletting'), which suggests that the scene was first and foremost meant to be understood in Nahuatl. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), pp. 24b–25, documents the worship of the rain god during the months Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 197–200).

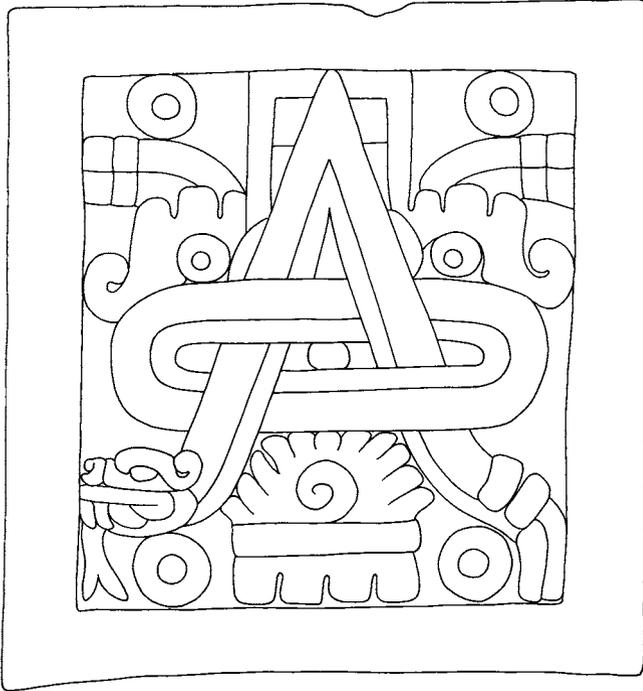


ILLUSTRATION 6.22C *The Tozoztli tepetlacalli ('Leof tepetlacalli'); year 4 Reed (drawing Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy Leonardo López Luján).*

emblem indicates the time and circumstances for the ritual to which the box was dedicated. We therefore propose to change the name of this *tepetlacalli* from 'Leof' to 'Tozoztli'.

The presence of perforators would suggest that the liquid is blood, but its form is more typical of water or *pulque*. Under the month emblem and above the altar (from which leaves are sprouting) we see the day 1 Rabbit, the symbolic calendar name of the earth, indicating that the offering was made to the forces of creation and fertility. The days 13 Rabbit and 13 Jaguar under the altar comprise two 13-day periods (26 days); after another 13 days the day 1 Rabbit is reached (40 days after 13 Rabbit). The rain god is portrayed in a position of giving birth, which suggests that he is invoked to give rain, life and fertility in return for the act of self-sacrifice.<sup>88</sup>[2] From this image we grasp the main

88 [2] The stone caskets often contain images of self-sacrifice (Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* 11: 725–726). A *tepetlacalli* in the British Museum is dedicated to Tlaloc, who appears spending water and corncobs from his jade jar. It also contains the name glyph of

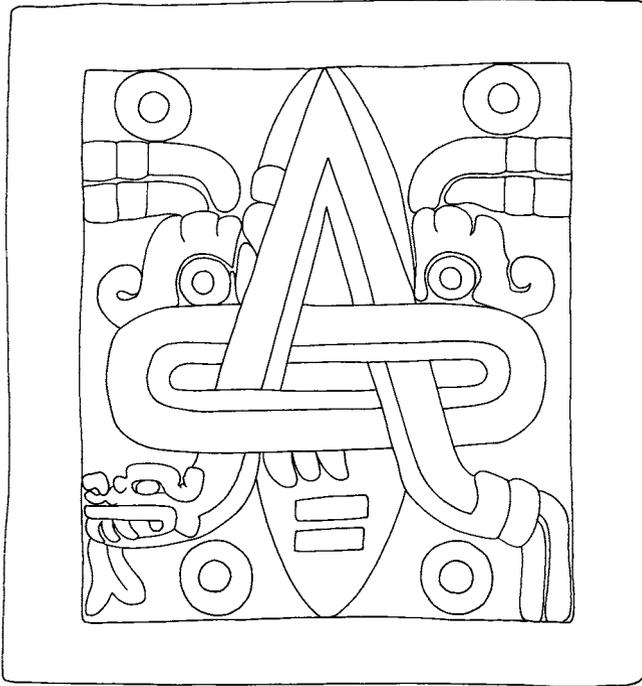


ILLUSTRATION 6.22D *The Tozoztli tepetlacalli ('Leaf tepetlacalli'): year 4 Flint (drawing Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy Leonardo López Luján).*

function of the stone boxes and of the ritual itself. Furthermore, we find a direct thematic connection between this Late Postclassic artefact and the Pre-classic rock relief 'El Rey' in Chalcatzingo (Chapter 4): the ritual implies an activation of age-old cultural memory.

Another carved stone casket, known as the Hackmack Box, has on the lid the years 1 Reed and 7 Reed flanking the figure of a descending Plumed Serpent.<sup>89</sup> On each end of the box the years 1 Rabbit and 4 Rabbit are carved – in Aztec fashion, i.e. placed in quadrangular frames. On the bottom inside the

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Ahuizotl indicating that it was an offering made by that Aztec ruler (Pasztory 1983: 164; López Luján 2005: 167–168). The scene of Tlaloc pouring water from a vessel may be compared to a similar image in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 5, as part of an enthronement ritual, and also to the ritual scene of the rain deity in the Roll of the New Fire (see our Chapter 5).

89 The classic study is by Seler (*Gesammelte Abhandlungen* II: 731–742), but, like most of his work, it is strongly inspired by the school of astral interpretation. See also: Paszatory 1983: 255–257; Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1983: 64–66.

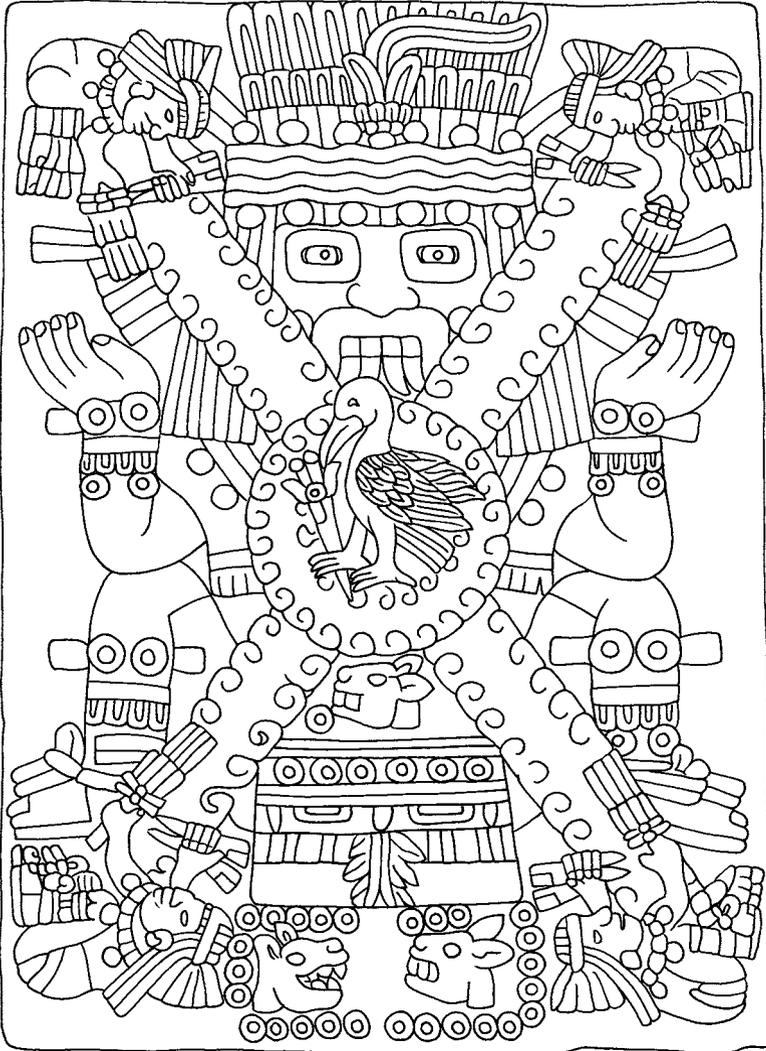


ILLUSTRATION 6.22E *The Tozoztli tepetlacalli ('Leoftepetlacalli'): bloodletting for the rain god (drawing Fernando Carrizosa, courtesy Leonardo López Luján).*

box is the day 1 Alligator. The underside of the lid contains a circle of star-eyes (night) with a skull in the centre. On the exterior side, the base of the box has an image of Tlaltecuhltli (with the open jaw of an alligator, in which a couple of flint knives are set, and with a skull in the centre of the body), which is so often found in this position. On one exterior panel of the box we see Moctezuma performing the bloodletting self-sacrifice – presumably this is Moctezuma II, because this onomastic sign is more diagnostic for him than for the earlier

ruler of that name (Moctezuma I Ilhuicamina).<sup>90</sup> On the other panel of the box a bearded man with the day sign 1 Reed is holding a copal bag, i.e. acting in a priestly function. Given the parallel with Moctezuma, the day sign 1 Reed is most likely to be understood as a calendar name. Both men are speaking, presumably a ceremonial discourse.

Overall, these different relief carvings qualify the box as playing a role in a ritual celebrated by the *tlatoani* Moctezuma together with Lord 1 Reed. The ruler is performing self-sacrifice; possibly the box was meant to hold the performers of bloodletting. The bloodletting is, as so often, associated with the earth (Tlaltecuhltli on the base of the box) as the cosmic principle from which all life comes and to which all life returns. The signs on the underside of the lid suggest that the ritual took place at night and involved the ancestors. Selser already observed that Moctezuma's name glyph contained the sign of *nezahualli*, i.e. fasting, making it further clear that he is in the role of the protagonist of the ritual. The day for the self-sacrifice is 1 Alligator, referring to (new) beginnings. In fact, in the Mixtec calendar the year 1 Reed day 1 Alligator signifies 'beginning (of a specific period or of time in general)'.

Of the four years carved on the box mentions four years, the year 1 Reed seems to be particularly relevant as there is a coincidence with the calendar name of the second person participating in the ritual. Comparing the individuals on the Hackmack Box with those on Moctezuma's *teocalli* model, we see that in both scenes Moctezuma II performs the bloodletting ritual together with someone else: on the *teocalli* with Huitzilopochtli-Tezcatlipoca, on the Hackmack Box with Ce Acatl. This parallel suggests that in both cases the *tlatoani's* companion is a divine figure. The same is the case in the relief of the Dedication Stone discussed above: there the ruler Ahuizotl is standing in front of his deceased (and therefore deified) predecessor Tizoc.

Considering this aspect, it seems logical to interpret the bearded Lord 1 Reed as a representation of Ce Acatl, one of the names of the deified Toltec ruler Nacxiltl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.<sup>91</sup> This is the same individual as the one we have identified as Lord 4 Jaguar in the Ñuu Dzau codices (see Chapter 5). In the

90 Several stone caskets document the ritual activities of the Aztec rulers. The name sign of Moctezuma also occurs on a *tepetlacalli* in the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City (Selser, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* 11: 742–745). On the sides it is decorated with quincunxes, which at the same time form the *Tlillan* motif. On the top is the year sign 11 Flint (1516), on the bottom the day 5 Serpent: together they form a date that corresponds to 18 May 1516. The same name sign is present on a *tepetlacalli* in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 238), which contains the year sign 6 Reed (1511).

91 See also Codex Telleriano Remensis, ff. 8v, 10r, 10v and f. 14v. Quetzalcoatl Ce Acatl is identified with the morning star (Tlahuizcalpantecuhltli).

ceremonial discourse during their enthronement ritual the Aztec rulers were reminded that their power came from this *Ce Acatl*, who had established their throne and rulership. Several sources document that the year 1 Reed was associated with the return of Quetzalcoatl from the East – the place where the historical Quetzalcoatl (Nacxitl Topiltzin of Tollan Cholollan), had gone. The top of the lid indeed shows the Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl) descending (returning) next to the year 1 Reed. The year 7 Reed is – like 1 Reed – a day associated with Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl: the day on which he was reportedly born, and consequently a day for a major festival in Cholula, the town he is most associated with as a historical ruler.<sup>92</sup> In view of this reference we propose to change the name of this *tepetlacalli* from ‘Hackmack’ to ‘Ce Acatl’.

The other years on the casket are less clear: we can only speculate that they had a special meaning for such ritual commemoration. The year 1 Rabbit, for example, might signal the original year for binding the 52 years of the calendar round (1506), the year that was shifted by Moctezuma II. The year 4 Rabbit was the year in which Moctezuma’s father, Axayacatl, started his rule (Codex Mendoza, f. 10). According to Tezozomoc (1975: Ch. 82) Moctezuma II was the sixth son of the earlier ruler Axayacatl and thirty-four years of age when elected

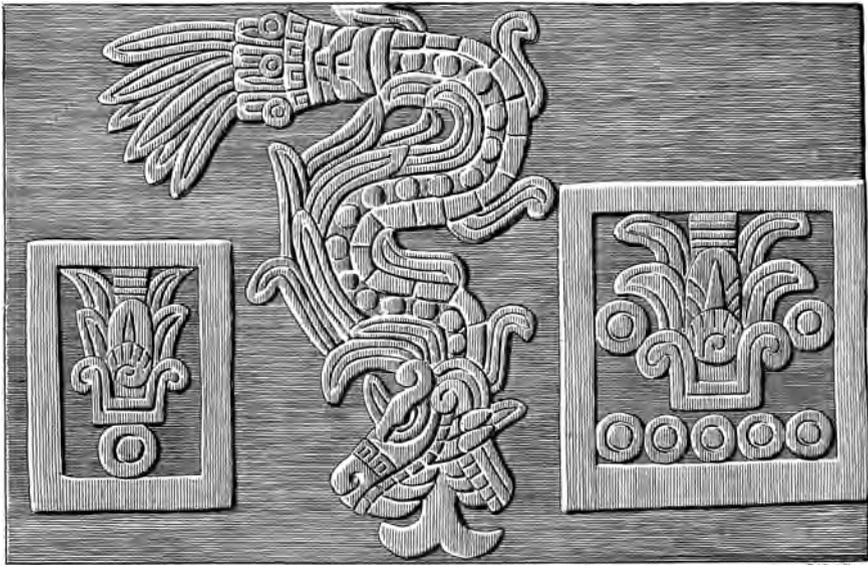


ILLUSTRATION 6.23A *The Ce Acatl tepetlacalli (Hackmack box): descending Quetzalcoatl (Seler; Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*

92 This was already pointed out by Seler (loc. cit), referring to Codex Telleriano-Remensis f. 10r.



ILLUSTRATION 6.23B *The Ce Acatl tepetlacalli (Hackmack box): Moctezuma (Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*

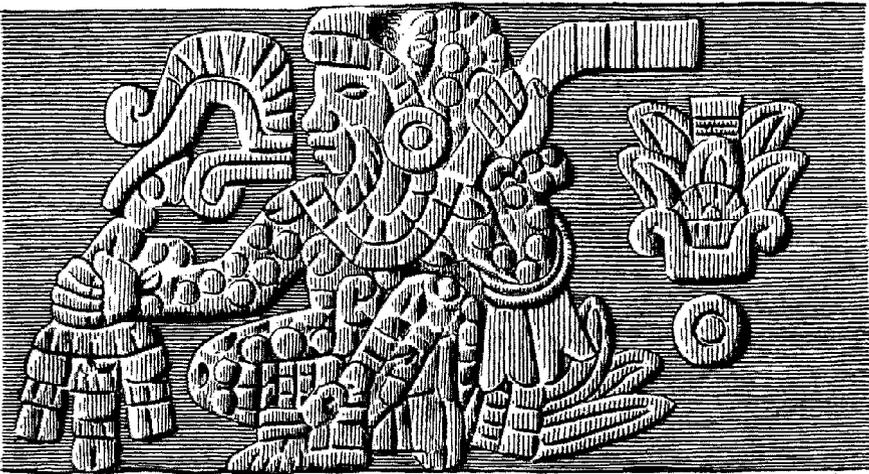


ILLUSTRATION 6.23C *The Ce Acatl tepetlacalli (Hackmack box): Lord 1 Reed (Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*

*tlatoani*.<sup>93</sup> That would mean that Moctezuma II was born in or around 4 Rabbit (1469/70), when his father took office. It may also be that the year 4 Rabbit is related to the sequence of years 4 House – 4 Rabbit – 4 Reed – 4 Flint, which occurs on other stone caskets as we mentioned before.

93 For biographical sources on this and other personages of Aztec history see the encyclopaedic work of García Granados (1952).

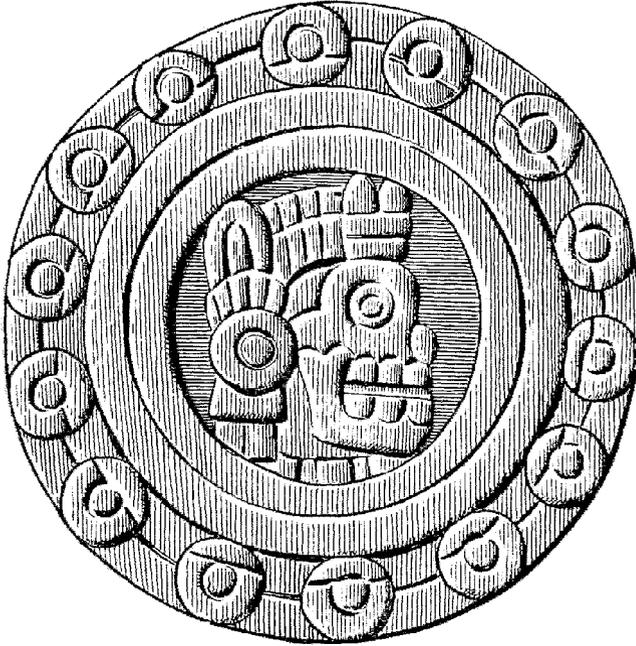


ILLUSTRATION 6.23D *The Ce Acatl tepetlacalli (Hackmack box): nightly ritual for the ancestors (Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*

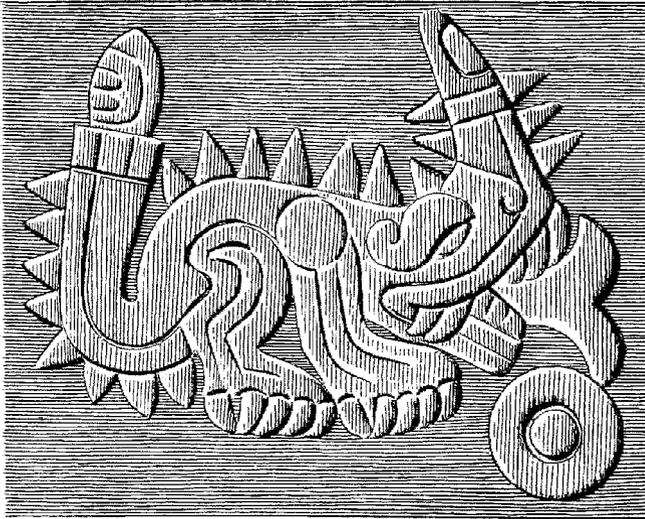


ILLUSTRATION 6.23E *The Ce Acatl tepetlacalli (Hackmack box): day 1 Alligator (Seler, Gesammelte Abhandlungen).*



ILLUSTRATION 6.24 *The Venus deity Ce Acatl*  
(*Codex Telleriano Remensis*).

We conclude that the Ce Acatl *tepetlacalli* was crafted for an important blood-letting ritual of Moctezuma II for the deity Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl, the descending and returning Plumed Serpent. With this action the *tlatoani* reconnected to the Toltec origin of rulership (Ce Acatl), to specific symbolically charged moments in time and so to major themes in Mesoamerican cultural memory.<sup>94</sup>

When we place the different years that are carved on the box in the period that Moctezuma II ruled the year 1 Reed would be the last of the four: it corresponds to 1519. In that historical context the expected arrival of Ce Acatl took a fatal turn. Moctezuma II supposedly mistook the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés for a manifestation or representative of this ancient, legendary and divine personage – an idea that the Spaniards immediately used to their

94 This ritual of the Mexica ruler for Ce Acatl in a way replicates the ritual of the Ñuu Dzau ruler Lord 8 Deer for Lord 4 Jaguar in Codex Tondindeye (Nuttall), pp. 52–53 and 70.

advantage for the legitimation of the conquest, claiming that the Aztec ruler had voluntarily handed over his kingdom to them.<sup>95</sup>

The Ce Acatl *tepetlacalli* (Hackmack Box) therefore seems to be an expression of Moctezuma's welcoming attitude towards the arriving Cortés. As such the box would signal the same message as the ritual regalia that Moctezuma II sent to Cortés, among which were the regalia of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.<sup>96</sup> A shared ritual performance would mean nothing less than an alliance, a spiritual kinship, between the Aztec ruler and (the representative of) Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl. In this interpretation the Ce Acatl *tepetlacalli* would be a dramatic testimony of the attempt of Moctezuma II to establish a coeval relationship with the strangers coming into his land.

## 9 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

Aztec visual art makes use of realistic forms but often in combinations that are not realistic depictions but have a symbolic meaning. The colonial Spanish authors, who were often not aware of the representational code and rejected the thoughts behind it, found these images disturbing and called them weird and monstrous. When we consider these images in their ritual and conceptual context, however, and try to understand them from an emic perspective, we become aware of the strong agency of this art (cf. Gell 1998). This style is particularly apt for devotional images, which are meant to produce religious meditation and prepare the beholder for specific ritual events.

The historical sources on the Aztec world contain relatively detailed descriptions of religious practices. When situating their texts in the colonial context and correcting their bias, we find valuable information on the function, contents and canonical messages of the rituals. Here we focus on the New Fire, synthesised in the image of the fire drill, which invoked once again the power of creation: the first sunrise, the primordial clarity of mind, which set time and created rhythm, order, knowledge and justice in the cosmos. This was the symbol for a new building, a new phase, a new cycle of years, a new rule.

95 Cortés' report has to be deconstructed as an intent to legitimize the conquest (Frankl 1966) but this does not mean that we should dismiss completely the idea that Moctezuma II was expecting some type of manifestation ('return') of Quetzalcoatl. It is reasonable to suppose that the Aztec ruler paid special attention to the year 1 Reed to honour and reflect upon the founder of his dynasty.

96 Sahagún (Book XII: Ch. 4) describes these items; the regalia are depicted in the *Libro de la Vida* (Codex Magliabechi), p. 89 – see the edition and commentary by Anders and Jansen (1996).

The fire-making instrument (plank and drill) was held in great esteem and preserved in temples together with the sacred bundles. In several cases the temples or altars in question were dedicated to the whirlwind god Quetzalcoatl. At the same time those temples had an intimate relationship to the earth, particularly to the divine guardian of the ancestors, Cihuacoatl. In several cases these temples were attended by Cihuacoatl priests or cihuacoatl officials (such as Tlacaclael and Lord 5 Alligator). In any case we may conclude that in the Ñuu Dzaui culture Lady 9 Grass had an important association with the New Fire ritual just like Cihuacoatl in the Nahuatl-speaking world. All of these powers were mobilised with the fire drill as symbol and as relic.

In the Aztec world we see the same connection of the ritual with a sacred landscape: Mount Huixachtlan (Cerro de la Estrella), beautifully located on the promontory in the ancient lake. We also note the ritual interaction between the top of that mountain and the sanctuary of Cihuacoatl, the Dark Temple (*Tlillan*) below in Xochimilco. Applying this concept to Monte Albán, we understand that the Temple of Jewels was the ceremonial centre where the fire drill was kept and where the New Fire ceremony was prepared, while Tomb 7 qualifies as the dark shrine of Cihuacoatl. Obviously Tomb 7 did not contain a brazier where the New Fire could be lit, nor was it a place for public gathering, but it most likely was a place for the intimate contact and spiritual communication of priests with the earth, with the sacred bundles of the ancestors and with the goddess of life-death-life, Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl'.

We see the same concepts synthesised in the iconographical composition of the Ce Acatl *tepetlacalli* (Hackmack Box): ritual action connects humans with the generative force of earth and the nahual power of the Plumed Serpent. As a recipient of the blood offering, the stone casket becomes a cache. In form, function and meaning it may be considered a condensed version of what we see in Tomb 7.

Taking into account the Toltec and Aztec customs and cultural memory, we understand the enormous importance of this ritual complex for the ruling dynasty: secular power was derived from a cosmological structure, from a mysterious foundation in primordial time, from the ancestors who had to be respected and who could provide guidance through oracles. Furthermore, rulership was understood as a function of the sun and its life-giving light: the beginning of a new reign was like a new sunrise, a new creation.

Such ideas must have made the Temple of Jewels, including its subterranean chamber (Tomb 7) at Monte Albán, an important identity site for the ruling family of Zaachila, and in particular for revitalising its relationship with the Ñuu Dzaui dynasties. It was here that the lineage was guarded and that the renewal of cosmos and rule was realised. It was in this setting, therefore, that the

important marital alliance of Lady 6 Water, granddaughter of Lord 5 Flower and Lady 4 Rabbit, was prepared and sealed with the appropriate offerings, which expressed gratitude to the deities as well as the commitment and loyalty of all the lineages in the realm.

The year 1 Reed at the end of the scene on Bone 124 from anticipates the New Fire at the binding of the current calendar round, and as such qualifies that marital alliance as an event of the renewal of time and cosmos. The adding of jade and quetzal feathers expresses the hope and desire of good fortune.

## The Sanctuary of Night and Wind

At the end of Part 1 (Chapter 4) we concluded that Tomb 7 was a subterranean sanctuary that belonged to a Postclassic ceremonial centre on Monte Albán and that this centre appears in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19ab, as a Temple of Jewels. Combining the archaeological evidence with the information from the Ñuu Dzaui pictorial manuscripts we understand that the site was of great religious importance for the dynasty of Zaachila, and particularly for Lady 4 Rabbit ‘Quetzal’, the Mixtec queen of that Zapotec kingdom. The depiction in Codex Tonindeye confirms that this sanctuary was a place for worship of sacred bundles but it also indicates that here the instruments for making the New Fire were kept. The Temple of Jewels, therefore, combines a religious focus on the ancestors with one on the cyclical renewal of time.

Continuing this line of thought, in Part 2 we explore the historical and ideological importance of that ritual. This has led us to discuss the meaning of several other ancient Mesoamerican artefacts, codices and monuments, such as the Roll of the New Fire (Chapter 5) and representations of rituals in Aztec art (Chapter 6). With these detailed case studies, we now confront the challenge to try to say something more about the type of rituals that took place in the Temple of Jewels, so we can get an idea of the religious value of Tomb 7 and the religious experiences that ritual practice entailed. Fortunately, the representations of rituals and their associated symbolism in precolonial pictorial manuscripts, particularly those of the Teoamoxtli Group (Borgia Group), allow us to reconstruct some of the Mesoamerican ideas and visionary experiences. We find specific information about the liturgy of a Temple of Jewels in the screenfold book known as Codex Borgia, which because of its contents we may call the Book of Night and Wind or – using the Nahuatl term – Codex Yoalli Ehecatl.<sup>1</sup>

The central chapter of this codex (pp. 29–46) presents ‘Temple Scenes’, which pivot around the goddess Cihuacoatl, sacred bundles, visionary experiences, Quetzalcoatl priests and the New Fire ceremony. A large number

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1 For general information we refer to the commentaries on the Mexican pictorial manuscripts (with facsimile editions) in the series of Fondo de Cultura Económica, in particular: Anders and Jansen (1993, 1994, 1996ab), Anders, Jansen and Loo (1994), Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (1992ab, 1994), and Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991, 1993), as well as subsequent articles by Jansen (2002, 2012) – all accessible in open access (Leiden University).

of protagonists (partly with human characteristics, partly with divine attributes) carry out diverse religiously charged activities. Stylised iconic ('realistic') representations are combined with symbolic aspects and metaphorical expressions. Clearly the images refer to religious ideas and practices as perceived and experienced by the indigenous population before the Spanish conquest in 1521. In this way, the codex depicts the actions that were performed in the ancient ceremonial centres while also giving insights into the meaning and emotional value of those actions for the performers.

From the thematic and iconographic correspondence, we may expect the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl to provide valuable information regarding the contents, function and meaning of the rituals celebrated in Tomb 7. On the other hand, the chapter of the Temple Scenes in itself is generally considered quite enigmatic. Thus we will have to use both sources to illuminate each other reciprocally. An in-depth analysis of these primary Mesoamerican sources may also throw light on more general questions: How was a place of power conceived and experienced in precolonial Mesoamerica? What role did it play in the structuring of time, which is essential for the construction of memory? Which ritual activities took place there and who were the protagonists? What was the context and structure of the ceremonial centre and cultural landscape, and what the associated symbolism?

## 1 Historical Background of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)

At present the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) is preserved in the Vatican Library ([http://digital.vatlib.it/en/view/MSS\\_Borg.mess.1](http://digital.vatlib.it/en/view/MSS_Borg.mess.1)). The name Codex Borgia refers to the Italian cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731–1804), who had the manuscript in his private collection. Alexander von Humboldt wrote that the cardinal had personally saved the codex from children of the servants of the Giustiniani family, who were burning it – supposedly in the nearby Palazzo Giustiniani. Certainly the codex was, at one point, exposed to flames, having a destructive effect on pages 74–76. But its earliest commentator, the Jesuit José Lino Fábrega (1746–1797), working for the cardinal Borgia himself, declared:

Among the significant monuments of the oldest nations that together may be admired in the rich and erudite museum of Your Eminence is the Mexican Codex. This rare remnant of the antiquity of that people was lucky enough to escape the flames, as evidenced by its first singed pages; and after having circulated unknown, during many centuries, in American and European markets and cabinets, it fortunately came into

the hands of Your Eminence, who already for many years wanted to have a monument of that nation.<sup>2</sup>

This brief reference – which must correspond to the version of cardinal Stefano Borgia himself – suggests that the codex was saved from being burnt while still in Mexico, i.e. escaped from the persecution by missionaries in the early colonial period. In other words, it was not the cardinal himself who took it out of the fire. Afterwards, it circulated among different owners in Europe. The reference to markets and cabinets suggests that it was sold and changed owner several times. Before coming into the possession of cardinal Borgia it most probably belonged to some other private collection in Italy, where it was ‘unknown’. The sign of a pointing hand and the handwriting of a gloss in Italian on page 68 are typical of the sixteenth century, suggesting that the codex was already in Italy in that early period.

In a recent article, Davide Domenici and Laura Laurencich Minelli (2014) report that, in the early seventeenth century, the Giustiniani family did indeed own a Mexican codex, mentioned in an inventory of 1600–1611 and also in later inventories (until 1649) as ‘*Un libro in scorza d’Arboro con varij disegni di colori, e lavori indiani, no. 1*’. Although the explicit reference to a book made of tree-bark, i.e. *amate* paper, would seem to rule out that this could be the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), the authors are right in pointing out that the reference to tree-bark might be a general formula for Mexican books at the time (introduced in the literature by the early chronicler Petrus Martyr). The covering layer of gypsum would actually have made it difficult to be completely sure about the material. The fact that, according to one version, cardinal Borgia obtained his Mexican book from the Giustiniani family and that the Giustiniani actually used to own a Mexican codex seems to be too much of a coincidence: it is indeed likely that this was the same manuscript.

In order to explain the possible way in which this codex came into the possession of the Giustiniani family, Domenici and Laurencich Minelli focus on a reference in the chronicle *Historie di Bologna* (1548) by the local Dominican historian Leandro Alberti to the arrival of fray Domingo de Betanzos from

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2 ‘*Entre los apreciables monumentos de las Naciones más antiguas que reunidos se admiran en el rico y erudito museo de v. Ema. [Vuestra Eminencia], uno de ellos es el Códice Mexicano. Este raro resto de la antigüedad de aquel pueblo, tuvo la suerte de escapar de las llamas, como lo demuestran sus primeras páginas chamuscadas; y despues de haber girado desconocido, muchos siglos, por plazas y gabinetes de la América y de la Europa, afortunadamente llegó á las manos de v. Ema., que há muchos años deseaba poseer un monumento de aquella Nación:* (see Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993: 37–39).

Mexico, who presented the pope (Clement VII being in Bologna because of the coronation of the emperor Charles V in March 1533) with gifts 'from the New World'. These included 'some nicely painted books that looked like hieroglyphs by which they understood each other as we do by letters.... Among these things, I received some books, knives, and the big knife used to kill men to sacrifice them to their idols, which I gave to Mr. Giovanni Achillino to decorate his museum together with a book and a stone knife similar to a razor'.

The authors point to another reference in the work of the Dominican chronicler Dávila Padilla, who states that Betanzos received several 'items of the land' from the Dominican order in Mexico to take to Europe. Furthermore, in leaving for Europe, Betanzos travelled all the way from Guatemala to Mexico City and from there to Veracruz (via Puebla) and so had had the opportunity to collect or receive these items from the whole Mixteca-Puebla cultural area. Domenici and Laurencich-Minelli convincingly argue that the Codex Tlamanalli (Cospì), which turned up in Bologna in the seventeenth century, was most likely one of the books distributed by Betanzos. The Codex Tonalpouhqui (Vaticanus B), in view of its presence in the Vatican Library already in the second half of the sixteenth century, may very well have belonged to this same group, as may that other impressive Mexican book in the Vatican: Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).<sup>3</sup>

In this respect a detailed codicological comparison may provide an additional argument. Anne Walke Cassidy in her dissertation observes:

Of special interest is water damage [in Codex Borgia] identical to the water damage in the *Codex Cospì* throughout the entire manuscript along the bottom edge. The water damage has caused the complete erasure of some of the imagery, has removed some of the ground, and has caused one of the red pigments to leave a bright pink stain. The pink stain is consistent with seawater (or mineral-laden water from another source) reacting with an iron-based red. The removal of some of the ground, which is normally quite tough and resistant to damage, is consistent with the manuscript having been wet for an extended period of time, rather than briefly wetted. The fact that the damage occurs fairly evenly along the entire edge indicates that the manuscript actually stood, folded, in a damp or wet place for some period of time. The fact that the damage matches that in the *Codex Cospì* exactly suggests that they stood together in the same damp, salty place. This would almost certainly have been after the

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3 Codex Tonalpouhqui (Vaticanus B) is another manuscript that was present in Italy at an early date, as demonstrated by the reference in the work of Michele Mercati. See Anders (1972), Anders and Jansen (1993), Laurencich Minelli (2012).

manuscripts were in European hands, making it likely that the two manuscripts came to Europe together.

CASSIDY 2004: 146–147

This would confirm the suggestion by Domenici. The explanation of the damage as an effect of longer exposition to seawater or rather related humidity or damp, would even suggest that both codices, Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) and Tlamanalli (Cospì), crossed the ocean together. This reconstruction sounds tempting – especially as both authors (Cassidy and Domenici) seem not to have been aware of each other's work. Further codicological research is necessary, however: there may be other explanations for the physical damage, and the attribution to seawater may be premature.<sup>4</sup> Still, the coincidence of the damage pattern on the two codices may be indicative of a close historical relationship.

It is fascinating to consider the possibility that Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Codex (Cospì) and Codex Tonalpouhqui (Vaticanus B) were all at one time in the possession of the Dominicans and were brought to Europe by friar Domingo de Betanzos. In fact, the handwriting of the Italian gloss on page 68 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) is close (though not completely identical) to Betanzos' signature (Carreño 1980).

These three codices have enormous stylistic differences, but strong parallels in contents. All three belong to the Teomoxtli Group and are religious in character (which would explain their confiscation by the missionaries).

This does not help, however, to identify the precise origin of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) within Mexico. In contrast with the historical codices,

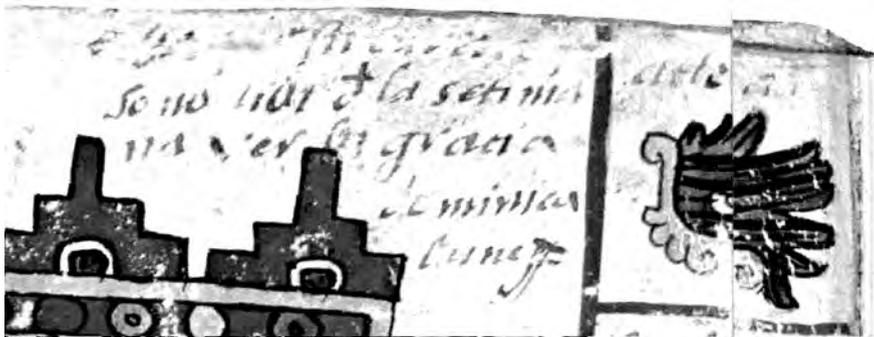


ILLUSTRATION 7.01 *Italian gloss in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).*

4 On the materiality of the Mexican codices see the PhD dissertation of Ludo Snijders (2016).

ILLUSTRATION 7.02

*Signature of friar Domingo de Betanzos.*

the religious books do not contain explicit clues as to their provenance or date of fabrication. There are no place names here, nor historical personages or events. This absence of geographical-historical references seems to be a hallmark of the genre. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint the precise origin in time and place of these manuscripts. There may be other more indirect indications, however, such as the glosses in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) together with its specific focus on the Tlillan temple (as we saw in Chapter 6).

Domenici and Laurencich-Minelli point to a statement by the Dominican chronicler Dávila Padilla, indicating that Betanzos received several 'items of the land' from the Dominican order in Mexico to take to Europe. Furthermore, in leaving for Europe, Betanzos travelled all the way from Guatemala to Mexico City and from there to Veracruz (via Puebla). As such, he had the opportunity to collect or receive these items from the Mixteca-Puebla cultural area.

Codex Tlamanalli (Cospi) depicts the god Tepeyollotl, 'Heart of the Mountain' as a combination of a heart and a snow-clad mountain, which suggests that it comes from a region where that deity was considered to live in a volcano. Areas close to the Popocatepetl-Iztaccihuatl-Matlacueye, to the Pico de Orizaba or to the Nevada de Toluca would therefore be plausible candidates for the place of origin of this manuscript. Particularly the first of these, the valley of Cholula and Tlaxcala, is an interesting possibility.

Eduard Seler (1904/09) has already observed the stylistic and iconographical correspondence with Postclassic polychrome ceramics and pointed to the Tehuacan valley as a possible place from which this codex may have come. Initiating a second phase of research, Karl Anton Nowotny (1961a) attributed it to the Tlaxcala-Cholula region in view of the close similarities with the frescoes of Tizatlan, Tlaxcala (Caso 1927). Henry B. Nicholson (1966) further elaborated upon this theory. Conversely, Donald Robertson (1966, 1970) pointed to the many stylistic and iconographical elements these religious codices share with Mixtec pictorial manuscripts. Our own revision of these different arguments (Anders, Jansen and Loo 1994) has led to the conclusion that they are inconclusive and insufficient to pinpoint the origin of these codices within the widely distributed Mixteca-Puebla style.

Meanwhile, however, some more relevant data and considerations have been published. First, there is the observation by Uruñuela et al. (1997) that a specific biconical cup, used by the rain god in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 27–28, was found in Cholula and seems to be limited to the archaeological records from that area. Furthermore, the frescoes of Ocotelulco (Tlaxcala) show a very strong resemblance – in style and content – to the scene on page 32 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, which reinforces the earlier observed parallelism between the codex and the frescoes of Tizatlan (Tlaxcala).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the polychrome ceramics found at Ocotelulco, like those found in the whole Cholula-Tlaxcala region, are extremely close in style to the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).

One of the arguments against locating the origin of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl in this region has been the presence of the Mixtec year-sign (the so-called A-O symbol) in the codex. This sign is typical of Mixtec codices but seems to be limited to the area between Tecamachalco (southern Puebla) and Mitla (valley of Oaxaca). On the other hand, the colonial Codex of Texupán (Codex Sierra), which combines a written text in Nahuatl with Mixtec pictography, depicts the A-O year sign combined with a leaf, apparently to facilitate the reading of *xihuitl* in Nahuatl, which means both ‘leaf’ and ‘year’ (León 1982).<sup>6</sup> In the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) the year sign is accompanied by small, elongated green elements, which may be feathers or leaves. If these indeed were leaves, we would again be dealing with a bilingual sign. This would imply that the codex was directed to a Nahuatl-speaking public, glossing the atypical Mixtec year sign (read as *cuiya*, ‘year’ in Mixtec) as *xihuitl* in Nahuatl. This would situate Codex Yoalli Ehecatl in an area of Mixtec-Nahua contact, indicating that we might focus on the southern part of the State of Puebla, including the valley of Cholula, and the adjacent area of Tlaxcala.

Although the close parallels with the frescoes of Tizatlan and Ocotelulco point to Tlaxcala, the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) does not prominently feature the deity Camaxtli, patron god of the Tlaxcaltecs.<sup>7</sup> Here it is Quetzalcoatl

5 For a general discussion of the provenance problem, see Sisson (1983), while Sisson and Lilly (1994ab) also point to the valley of Tehuacan. McCafferty (1994) gives a survey of the Mixteca-Puebla style at Cholula. Analysing the question of the origin of this group of codices, Anders, Jansen and Loo (1994) noted the strong visual resemblance of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl to the then recently discovered Ocotelulco frescoes. Later comments by Peperstraete (2006), Boone (2007), and Milbrath (2013) show a growing consensus on the relevance of this argument.

6 Durán (1967, 1: 239 and plate 36) documents the use of the leaf for ‘year’ (*xihuitl*) in the term for the beginning of the year: *xihuitziquilo*. Compare the combination of the Aztec and Mixtec conventions to indicate the year bearer on the *tepetlacalli* studied by López Luján and Santos (2012).

7 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) does not show the diagnostic twisted red and white headband of the Tlaxcaltecan rulers either (Nicholson 1967).

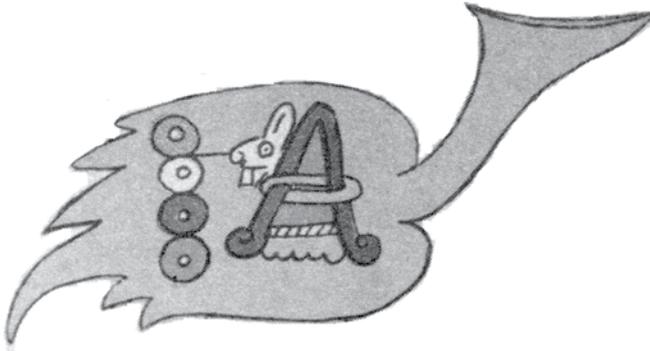


ILLUSTRATION 7.03A *The leaf as year sign in the work of friar Diego Durán.*

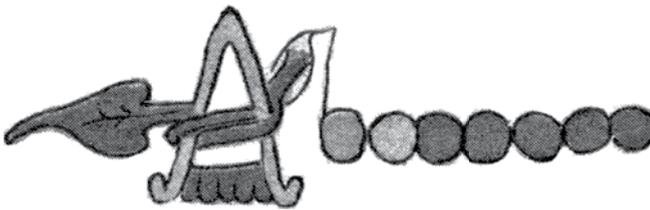


ILLUSTRATION 7.03B *The Mixtec year sign combined with a leaf in the Codex of Texupan (Sierra).*

who plays that central role, though in different forms, throughout the codex. This god is of general Mesoamerican importance, but in the area under scrutiny he stands out as the patron deity of Cholula (Durán 1967, 1: 61–69).

Nowotny (1961a) made an important observation, which has not received due attention in later studies.<sup>8</sup> On page 44 of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) we see the plan of a walled structure with four entrances, which is not common in the codices. In the middle stands a tree on top of which a person in a hummingbird-attire is being bathed in blood by a bat-person. Fire serpent persons arrive through three of the entrances, and an eagle, a jaguar and a quetzal bird bite these persons in the nose. Nowotny recognised that the spatial arrangement has a close parallel in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* (f 20r, f 24). That early colonial chronicle describes how the Chichimec leaders first carried out a fasting ritual on trees. Here, eagles and jaguars descended and gave them things to eat and to drink, after which these leaders underwent a septum-piercing ritual in a building with four entrances. Here, the eagle and jaguar are

8 An important exception is the profound article by Daniel Graña-Behrens (2009) about structures of representation in this codex compared to the pictorial conventions of the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* and Map 2 of Cuauhtinchan.



ILLUSTRATION 7.04 Historia Tolteca Chichimeca, f. 2r: the nose piercing ritual.

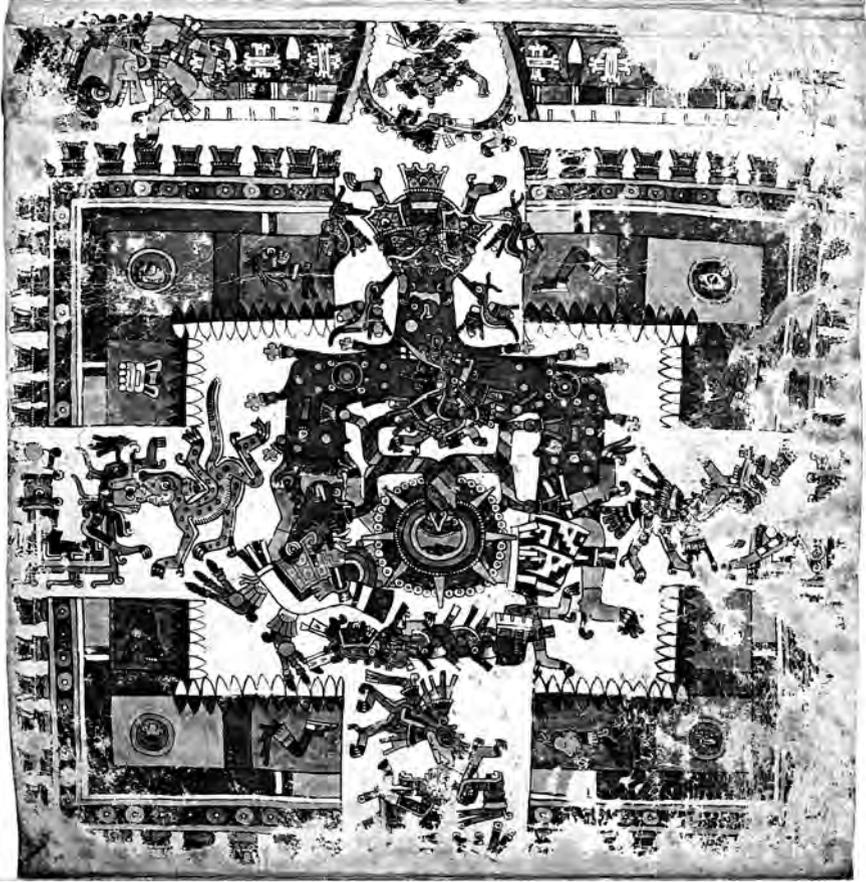


ILLUSTRATION 7.05 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia): nose piercing in the ceremonial centre.*

present as emblems, watching over the scene. The animals seem to fulfil the role of *nahuales*. Nowotny compares the rituals on the basis of the fact that in both sources a person is located in a tree while being nourished by animals. To follow this comparison, the hummingbird person in the *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* would be a fasting ruler (or person with authority) and the bat person a *nahual* that nourishes him with a drink, here represented as precious blood.

Nowotny interprets the biting of the nose as a metaphorical expression for the septum perforation with pointed eagle bone and jaguar bone (*quaomitl*, *ocelohomitl* mentioned in the corresponding text of the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*). Indeed, the comparison convincingly suggests that we are looking at a similar ritual act performed in similar surroundings. The *Historia*

*Tolteca Chichimeca* clarifies that this ritual takes place in Cholula. Furthermore, Nowotny observed that Cholula was generally known as the city where rulers came from afar for their rulership to be confirmed through just such a nose-piercing ceremony – as documented by the *Relación Geográfica de Cholula* (Acuña 1984/85, 11). This seems to have been quite a special – and, as far as we can see, unique – privilege of Cholula, going back to Toltec times.<sup>9</sup> One might argue that this type of ritual, in surroundings such as these, may also have been performed elsewhere, but so far we only have the well-documented case of Cholula. Moreover, evidence that this is in reference to a specific building in that specific town is accumulating.

The implication of this reasoning is that this chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl actually refers to the ceremonial centre of Cholula. We may therefore identify Cholula as this codex's place of origin (although the painter may have come from elsewhere).

This hypothesis may lead to other interpretations. On several occasions, the officials directing the scene are figures (priests?) with the attributes of the deities Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca. On page 43, they are seated as rulers in a temple: eagle and jaguar coverings are used to identify their thrones. This detail may indicate that these two figures are the two principal priestly authorities of Cholula: the *Aquiach*, 'Ruler of Above', associated with the eagle, and the *Tlalquiach*, 'Ruler of Below', associated with the jaguar.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, we recognise the Temple of Heaven in this codex chapter (pp. 33–34) as the main sanctuary in the ceremonial precinct of Cholula, identifiable by its round thatched roof.<sup>11</sup>

9 The Mixtec codices show how successively Lord 8 Deer and Lord 4 Wind received their royal status through such a septum-piercing ritual in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. For the identification of this scene as taking place in Cholula – as well as for its historical context – see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007) and Jansen (2010). Through the decoration with a frieze of discs, the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 44, qualifies the building with four entrances as a *tecpan* ('palace'); it also has a peculiar decoration of jewelled elements on top of the walls. That decoration is comparable to the jade signs on the roof of the Cholula temple in the Mixtec Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 13, and to the nose ornament signs on the roof of two temples in Cholula as represented in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* f. 26v.

10 *Relación Geográfica de Cholula* (Acuña 1984–85, 11: 129).

11 Durán (1967, 1: 64): '*Tenía por techo una copa redonda, pajiza...*'. See also the pictorial representation in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f. 26v–27r (cf. Kubler 1968; McCafferty 1996; Bernal García 2006).

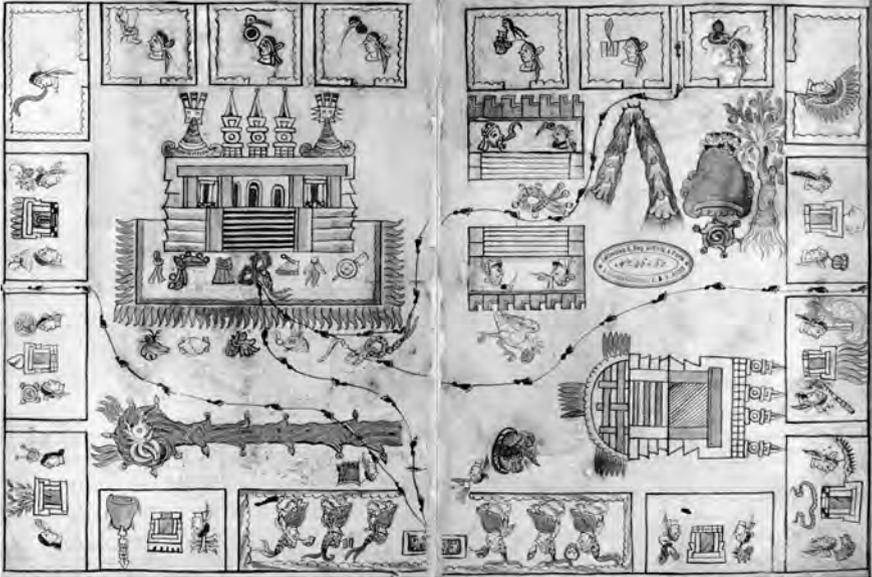


ILLUSTRATION 7.06 *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, ff. 26v–27r: the ceremonial precinct of Cholula.



ILLUSTRATION 7.07 *The colonial church of Cholula, on top of the precolonial pyramid.*

## 2 Studies of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)

Most chapters of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) deal with distinct subdivisions of the Mesoamerican 260-day calendar (*tonalpoalli*), associated with deities and qualified by accompanying images. In his *magnum opus*, Eduard Seler (1904/09) interpreted the codex – and for that matter, Mesoamerican religion in its entirety – as pertaining to astral phenomena. Applying this perspective to the complex central chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (pp. 29–46), Seler proposed that it showed the descent of Venus into the underworld as a symbolic representation of the planet's period of invisibility. Seler's main interpretive outlook was very much in accordance with the general view of religion at the time. In the second part of the twentieth century the astral interpretation of religion was progressively abandoned (Dorson 1955).<sup>12</sup>

The mature work of the Austrian scholar Karl Anton Nowotny (1904–1978) played a central role in elaborating a new paradigm. Actually this was the result of a break with the ideas that had dominated his younger years. In the 1930s he lived in an environment that was under the evil influence of national socialism. During his study of ethnology at Vienna University in the late 1930s his main professor and thesis supervisor was Fritz Röck, the director of the Museum of Völkerkunde, whose classes were popular among students with nazi sympathies: „*die einzig nationale Bastion und deshalb offenbar eine willkommene Anlaufstelle für national (sozialistisch) gesinnte Haupt- und Nebenfächler*“.<sup>13</sup> At the same time Röck was a fervent follower of the *Astraldeutung*. Nowotny's PhD thesis, a commentary on the Codex Laud, finished in 1939, was still in conformity with (and full of praise for) Röck's astral theories.<sup>14</sup>

12 For a historical survey of the interpretation of the religious codices, see Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1994. For a general idea of the place of their contents within the Mesoamerican cosmovision, see Anders and Jansen 1994.

13 Linimayr (1994: 72) quoted in Pauer et al. (2004: 89).

14 Pusman (2008) analyses the ideological currents of anthropology in academic circles of Vienna at the time, while Feest (1980), Linimayr (1994) and Pauer (2004) examine the impact of national socialism. It is telling that Röck remained in function as director of the Museum für Völkerkunde under nazi rule after the *Anschluß* of 1938 (Mayer 1991); a surviving letter documents his anti-Semitic ideas (Reiger 2002: 75–84). Nowotny himself published an article ('Mythos oder Zauberei im germanischen Altertum') in the *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte, Zentrale politische und kulturelle Zeitschrift der N.S.D.A.P.* (10. Jahrgang, Heft 108), Munich 1939. On his further development see the obituaries written by Köhler in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, vol. 104 (1): 7–11 (1979) and by Feest in *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 33: 1–6 (1979).

After the experiences of World War II, however, Nowotny, then employed by the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna, revised his ideas thoroughly. His interest in the ritual and philosophical systems of different cultures brought him to write a postdoctoral thesis on colours and world directions in comparative perspective (presented in 1953, published in 1970). He also studied the work *De Occulta Philosophia* by the sixteenth-century German author Agrippa von Nettesheim on magic, astrology and divination (which he edited and published in 1967). With this erudite background Nowotny rethought the contents of the Mexican pictorial manuscripts in his main work, *Tlacuilolli* (1961a).<sup>15</sup> He showed that the religious codices did not have occult astronomical contents but mainly refer to mantic (divinatory) symbolism: the images associated with calendar periods express the positive or negative value of the days for different human activities, while other scenes can be interpreted as ritual prescriptions. A key example is his interpretation of the series of numbers laid out for deity figures as sets of counted bundles of leaves, fir needles, flowers etc. offered on altars.

Nowotny based this new interpretation on the ethnographic observations by the German zoologist, geographer, ethnographer, and linguist-philologist Leonhard Schultze-Jena, who travelled through a series of Mesoamerican communities in 1929–1931, studying diverse languages, writing grammars and dictionaries, and recording oral traditions. In his three-volume monograph *Indiana* (1933–38), Schultze-Jena also included a detailed description of the offering of such counted bundles by the Tlapanec people (in the State of Guerrero).<sup>16</sup> Comparing these offerings to the layout of the series of numbers in the codices, Nowotny recognised the direct correspondence between the two sets of data. The interpretation of those numbers and images as representing such a ritual was clearly much more coherent and convincing (and founded on Mesoamerican culture) than the hypothesis that they listed astronomical calculations.

In a similar vein, Nowotny analysed the central chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29–46. This chapter is clearly set apart from the sequence of divinatory chapters by a visual break, as the reading order changes here from horizontal to vertical. Instead of Venus descending into the underworld,

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15 On the mantic symbolism in the religious codices see the study of Codex Tonalpouhqui (Vaticano B) by Anders and Jansen (1993).

16 Schultze-Jena's main objective was to prepare himself for the translation of the Popol Vuh. And indeed, at the end of his voyage he stayed for four months in the K'iché' region, where he documented the language but also important cultural elements such as the ongoing use of the Mesoamerican calendar and its symbolism.

Nowotny suggested that these images represent a complex series of rituals ('Temple Scenes') in a specific ceremonial centre. He identified the body of a skeletonised goddess as a structuring device but did not advance a more specific interpretation of this element.

Nowotny's teaching and interpretive breakthroughs in the 1950s and 1960s became the point of departure for the large project of publishing facsimile editions of the Mexican codices by the Akademische Druck- und Verlags Anstalt (ADEVA) in Graz (Austria) with his alumni Ferdinand Anders and Hans Biedermann as the main instigators and coordinators. Nowotny contributed the first volume to this series, the edition of the Ñuu Dzauí codices then known as Becker I and II (1961b), as well as his important final commentary on Codex Borgia (1976).<sup>17</sup> These editions became a hallmark for specialised interpretive studies at the time by a large number of other authors focusing on the meaning of specific scenes and signs, often in relation to other works of (mainly Nahuatl) art and to the writings of the Spanish friars on native religion.

Ferdinand Anders wrote an important handbook on Maya religion (1963), an in-depth study of Mexican feather mosaics (synthesised in his publication of 1975) and many historical and codicological studies of the ancient Mexican manuscripts (e.g. the edition of Codex Vaticanus B in 1972). Most importantly, Anders carried out research on the materiality of the codices, which brought him to analyse present traditions on the making and ritual use of *amate* paper in the Sierra de Puebla, particularly in the Hñahñu (Otomí) village of San Pablito near Pahuatlan. While Nowotny himself could never carry out ethnographic fieldwork in Mexico, Anders demonstrated in practice the relevance of the living traditions in Mesoamerican communities for the interpretive study of the precolonial works of art. Following Anders' M.A. seminars at the Institut für Völkerkunde of Vienna University (1973–1975), Maarten Jansen was trained in this approach. Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez brought her knowledge of Mixtec language and cultural traditions to this effort and guided the further development of this project of codex interpretation.

Together we have tried in our collaboration to situate the study of the Mexican pictorial manuscripts within the wider framework of indigenous heritage and cultural continuity, and to connect this academic study with an active interest in creating awareness of the social reality of indigenous peoples and support for the defence of their rights. As far as the codices are concerned, our research, starting in the mid-1970s, was in part reported in Jansen's Ph.D. dissertation (1983) and subsequent publications. Following up on a survey of

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17 Nowotny's commentary was the basis for the publication on the same codex by Biedermann (1989), which aimed at a wider audience.

the ancient Mexican books by Anders and Jansen (1988), we started working together with Ferdinand Anders on the commentaries for the multi-volume series of Mexican codices published by the Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico. This was a republication of the series of facsimiles of Mexican codices that had been issued by the Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt (ADEVA) in Graz, Austria, with new commentaries.<sup>18</sup> The process of the publication of the facsimiles and the visual presentation of the commentaries was supervised by Anders, while the commentaries were coordinated by Maarten Jansen, who wrote most of the texts and included contributions by several co-authors, while Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez and Nahua historian Luis Reyes García had a determining influence on the concept and interpretive method. In this context the commentary on Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993), presents a reading of the central chapter (the Temple Scenes) as a series of rituals dealing with light and darkness, regeneration and fertility.

On the other hand, the paradigmatic change presented in Nowotny's main work did not immediately have a generalised effect within the discipline. Being written in German and being of a specialist, complex nature, his *Tlacuilolli* (1961a) was often overlooked; it was only translated into English in 2005. For some time, it was challenged within the German-speaking academic world by Thomas Barthel. This former army cryptographer and then Professor of Ethnology at the University of Tübingen, focusing on postulated ancient relations between Mexico and India, proposed in a series of articles that several codices of what we now call the Teoamoxtli Group contained coded astronomical data and in general had their intellectual origin in Asia. In 1963 a Spanish translation of Seler's erudite German commentary on the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) was published in Mexico in an often reprinted and widely distributed edition, leading to a whole new wave of astral readings of this and other codices (e.g. Séjourné 1987).

Furthermore, the development of archaeo-astronomy from the 1980s onwards opened a new perspective on possible astronomical references in the codices, vindicating and incorporating some of Seler's astral theories. Several scholars, notably Milbrath (1989), Aveni 1999, Hernández and Bricker (2004), have tried to align the pictorial contents of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) with astronomical events such as an eclipse or a specific position of Venus.

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18 The three surviving Maya books (Dresden, Madrid, Paris) belong to this category as well. Eduard Seler in fact already recognised some important parallels between the Maya and the Central Mexican codices. Nikolai Grube (2012) has advanced the interpretation of the mantic symbolism in the Maya codices, in accordance with the insights of Nowotny (see also Tedlock 1983 for data from the living culture).

The most detailed study along these lines is a recent book by Milbrath (2013), which focuses on the central chapter of the codex. Her main thesis is that the eighteen pages of this chapter refer to the eighteen successive 20-day periods (*veintenas* or 'months') of a specific solar year and that the associated images register, in symbolic terms, several astronomical events during those periods. Anchoring the 18-month year of pp. 29–46 with a representation of the flayed god Xipe on page 33, which she equates with an image of the month-festival dedicated to this deity, Tlacaxipehualiztli, Milbrath parallels each page with a month-festival. She interprets the image of a dark sun god (p. 40) with sacrificed suns on his body as the image of a solar eclipse. According to her system of correlating pages and months, Milbrath calculates that this eclipse would have taken place in the month Miccailhuitontli. Checking that with eclipse tables, she found that the eclipse of August 1496 provides 'the most likely correlation' (2013: 123). This idea forms the basis for proposing an identification of many more episodes of the Temple Scenes chapter as astral phenomena that occurred during that year. Milbrath concludes that the first page of this chapter commences with the Aztec month Atemoztli, after the winter solstice of 1495. The interpretations of the components of the painted scenes are based on the calculation of astronomical phenomena during the month to which the page supposedly corresponds: 'Xolotl on the pyramid refers to Mercury high in the sky (maximum altitude on April 13, at the new moon)' (Milbrath 2013: plate 6). Such interpretations become rather forced. For example, the main image on page 33 is that of a temple connected to sun and moon. Milbrath postulates this to be a pictorial representation of what Motolinia writes about the Aztec Templo Mayor during Tlacaxipehualiztli: that the sun rose between the double temple on the spring equinox. Other aspects of this temple in the codex are not further investigated. Other temples (like the one on the next page) do not receive similar explanations.

Milbrath's work is a modern adaptation of Seler's astralist method, proposing identifications of gods with specific planets or stars and linking their acts with conjunctions and astral phenomena: the Black Tezcatlipoca, Tepeyollotl, Tlazolteotl and Xochiquetzal are all the Moon, Xolotl is Mercury, Red Tezcatlipoca is Mars, a blindfolded deity represents a lunar eclipse, the smoke-eye attribute of a priest represents a comet, the flint knife decorating a temple roof is Jupiter in the dawn sky, a bat may also represent Jupiter, and so on. This type of interpretation – though often giving very detailed data – is not free from reductionism, nor from circular argument, particularly in its basic structure.

The equivalence of the scenes on the eighteen pages and the eighteen month-festivals is a supposition that is primarily based on the coincidence of the number 18. Gordon Brotherston (2003), who presented an iconographical

analysis without making connections with astral phenomena, has also suggested that these eighteen pages are related to the eighteen 20-day months. In his opinion, however, the chapter opens with the summer solstice in the month-festivals Tecuilhuitl and Miccailhuitl. The discrepancies between Brotherston and Milbrath are based on the fact that their analyses rely on a somewhat arbitrary selection of details, which do not compare whole sets of data within clear, structured or explicit contexts. There are indeed elements of the Temple Scenes that can be compared to parts or aspects of the ritual acts of the 18-month year. For establishing a correlation, it is a methodological imperative to not just compare elements but whole structures: we should try to relate those elements in a systematic manner to the sequence of the month-festivals, paying attention to their emblematic signs and to the colonial descriptions. Only when we identify the overall structure we can start speculating about the possible correlation between Temple Scenes and the pages of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl.

When we analyse the scenes, we notice that several of them actually continue over two or more pages (pp. 35–38 and pp. 39–40). This clearly suggests that the painter was not continuously using the page as a self-contained unit. The calendric structure that does manifest itself in some scenes is that of the basic 20-day period of the *tonalpoalli*: from I (Alligator) to XX (Flower). Later (on page 41) we find references to a specific 13-day period of the *tonalpoalli*, starting with (1) Eagle.

We conclude that the Temple Scenes do have elements in common with the eighteen month-festivals but that they are not identical with the known set of images of those festivals and in fact do not constitute that precise set of eighteen rituals.

Therefore, the scene interpreted as an eclipse on page 40 – of central importance to the astral theory – cannot be ascribed with certainty to the month Miccailhuitontli, much less to the year 1496. Conspicuously, this scene does not have a year date, but is associated with days situated in cyclical periods of the *tonalpoalli*.

The methodological weakness of the astralist paradigm is that the astronomical dates are wholly or largely postulated on the basis of assumptions that are, at best, possibilities. Equally the interpretation of images as astral phenomena is not based on independent evidence but on unwarranted suppositions, which make them fit cosmological occurrences in the postulated period. Given the large quantity of astral events, it is easy to claim that an image would refer to one of them. Detailed information about astronomical positions in the supposed period gives the impression that the interpretation is reinforced while, in fact, one hypothesis is stacked on another. Therefore, the result is a shaky and unconvincing theory.

On the other hand, various scholars have continued the line of research initiated by Nowotny and the Fondo de Cultural Económica commentaries, adding new observations and suggestions.<sup>19</sup> The chapter of the Temple Scenes, however, has remained a topic of debate. As for recent commentaries, Elizabeth Boone (2007) proposed to read the Temple Scenes as a cosmogony narrative, starting with a kind of Big Bang, while Juan José Batalla Rosado (2008) sees them as the journey of the night sun through the underworld as the guide for a spiritual journey of a priest. Following up on the effort to achieve direct readings of the images, as presented in the Fondo de Cultura Económica commentaries, Katarzyna Mikulska-Dąbrowska (2008) wrote a major monograph on interpretive problems of the religious codices. Her focus on symbolic expressions and *difrasismos/digrafismos* is clearly a promising road forward.<sup>20</sup>

### 3 Point of Departure for a New Reading

The different aspects treated by these studies are indeed present in the central chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl: astronomical references (the presence of Sun and Venus), rituals and priestly actions, cosmological associations and symbolic language. These different perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but rather may enrich each other. The very nature of the performed activities provides a strong argument for Nowotny's overall interpretation of the scenes as rituals: offerings, processions, fire-making etc. Many of the performers clearly have a priestly function: they are often shown carrying incense bags and perforators for bloodletting. These rituals would also imply references to cosmology and creation, while they may also relate to the journey of one or more religious protagonists.<sup>21</sup> Milbrath and Brotherston are right in noticing some parallels between certain elements of the Temple Scenes and ritual actions that formed part of the eighteen month-festivals. Observing that the Temple Scenes have a clear organisation and contents of their own we arrive at the hypothesis that we are dealing with a specific set of religious acts that take place against the background of a ritual year.

19 For a recent review article see Jansen (2012b).

20 See also the M.A. thesis of Samantha Gerritse (2013), which gives a useful survey of the different modern interpretations of the Temple Scenes. Similarly, Angélica Baena Ramírez (2014) has reviewed the interpretive issues of the first pages of this chapter of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl.

21 Graña-Behrens (2009) offers an interesting way of connecting such different interpretations in the context of a general theoretical analysis focusing on patterns in the construction of cultural memory.

The surroundings consist of temples and altars, which seem to belong to a specific ceremonial centre. In fact, there is a close parallel for one of these sanctuaries (the temple surrounded by a serpent) and its associated religious items (a flint knife and a sacred bundle) with the associated altar (a round altar with fire serpent motif) in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 15–19: the Temple of Jewels discussed in Chapter 4. The presence of such a temple in a Ñuu Dzaui historical manuscript, telling us about the origins of the Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) dynasty, suggests that the ceremonial buildings and the acts performed in and around them are conceived as part of social and historical reality.

What type of ritual sequence, then, is represented in the Temple Scenes chapter? One of the salient aspects of this sequence is that the eighteen pages are subdivided by extended skeletonised female figures, associated with the night sky. Iconographical analysis identifies this image as that of the goddess we have encountered in the foregoing chapters: Cihuacoatl ('Woman-Serpent'), Lady of the Milky Way, Lady of the Tobacco Plant, Great Mother of the Future Generations, and Goddess of Death, i.e. Guardian of the Ancestors.

The ceremonial year in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) and the Temple Scenes chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) both start with a reference to the Cihuacoatl figure, and both seem to pivot around a New Fire ceremony. In Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), the arrival of the New Fire in the Tlillan temple (p. 34) clearly constitutes a climax in the ritual year of eighteen 20-day periods. In Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) the making of a New Fire is the final act of the Temple Scenes, while the first scene (p. 29) explicitly refers to the fear-inspiring Tzitzimitl, the being (related to Cihuacoatl) that might come down from heaven in the last night of the calendar cycle. This indicates a thematic parallel in these sections of the codices.

Where Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) mentions the New Fire Ceremony within the context of the eighteen month-festivals of the year 1507 AD, which is explicitly mentioned (as we saw in Chapter 6), the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) focuses on the role of (the priests of) the goddess Cihuacoatl and of the god Quetzalcoatl. This suggests that we are looking specifically at a series of preparatory ritual steps by those priests, leading up to such an important ritual. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) refers explicitly to the New Fire as the ritual inauguration of a 52-year calendar round, in this case starting in the year 2 Reed (1507) and projecting to the future (1559). In contrast, the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) does not include year dates, but focuses on cyclical sequences of the sacred 260-day period, the *tonalpoalli*. This suggests that the Temple Scenes are probably referring to rituals that were repeated cyclically with relative frequency.

Actually, there was a New Fire ceremony at the end/beginning of each year, in the month Izcalli. These ceremonies were celebrated more intensely every

fourth year (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 38). In a later chapter of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia), pp. 49–53, the New Fire ceremony is related to the first 13-day periods of the years 4 House, 4 Rabbit, 4 Reed and 4 Flint. This also implies a focus on fourth years and at the same time confirms that the New Fire ceremony in this codex is not necessarily the final one of the calendar round (once every 52 years), but rather the yearly one repeated in the month *Izcalli*. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that the sequence was set in motion with the New Fire that inaugurated the calendar round.

*Codex Cihuacoatl* (Borbonicus) was most likely a work that was prepared for the Spanish king; it copies earlier pictorial texts and offers, in its third part, a brief description of the rites as seen from an outside perspective. In contrast, *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia) emphasises the symbolic character and spiritual force of ritual acts as experienced from within. For example, the ritual implements are not just objects, but they are painted with eyes and faces: they are beings.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the images are in part iconic, in part symbolic. This is evidently a special genre of religious painting. Based on these considerations, we will explore the Temple Scenes to assess whether they can be read as visionary paintings that register a set of rituals with an internal logic structure.

In comparing the Temple Scenes with the descriptions and visual representations of the 18-month cycle of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan we should, however, not expect complete and detailed correspondences. First, *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* is from a different town (Cholula) in a different environment. Second, the subject matter of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* is not the 18-month cycle itself but another cycle of rituals, focusing on the goddess *Cihuacoatl* and her son *Quetzalcoatl*, which follows its own rhythm and focal points against the background of the year passing by with its eighteen 20-day periods. Third, the sources on the eighteen month-festivals are from the early colonial period while *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* is purely precolonial. We therefore should resist the temptation to reduce the Temple Scenes to mere variants of the eighteen month-feasts.

#### 4 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 29: Vision

We will enter the sanctuary of *Cihuacoatl* and see the priests of *Quetzalcoatl* in action in a specific ceremonial centre, most probably located in Cholula (in Central Mexico), the spiritual capital of Toltec civilisation. We are looking at

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<sup>22</sup> Team member Raúl Macuil Martínez has observed that many elements that play a role in present-day rituals are not to be considered mere objects, but in accordance with Meso-american worldview are beings.

the plan of a room (a temple building seen from above), with the entrance situated at the lower part of the painting. The outer wall consists of the familiar sign for 'darkness', including the 'star eye' motif (cf. Codex Mendoza, p. 63). The inside of the wall is coloured red, indicating the presence of light or heat in the chamber. The wall is further characterised by a skeleton head (in the upper part of the painting) and by claws in the corners. This image, which is repeated on the following pages, can be identified as that of the goddess Cihuacoatl. The intertwined vegetal material that constitutes her body is probably the hallucinogenic tobacco (*piciete*) and is also the sign for *nezahualli*, the ritual of fasting and vigil.<sup>23</sup>

The white cross on the black and red banner that is part of her headdress may be this codex's rendering of the white cross with black background that identifies the Tlillan, 'Dark Place', the temple of the goddess Cihuacoatl. A large representation of such a Tlillan, presumably the one located in Xochimilco, appears in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 34, as an important location of the New Fire ceremony in 1507.<sup>24</sup> These details suggest that here too we are dealing with a temple of Cihuacoatl. Taking into account that we are here in the ceremonial centre of Cholula, we suppose the temple is in one way or another oriented towards Iztaccihuatl, 'White Woman', the volcano that dominates the site.

The scene inside the temple would correspond to the important first ritual activity carried out there. The following pages would represent subsequent ritual acts in the same place. The surrounding darkness corresponds to descriptions of nocturnal rituals: 'And when it was midnight... Then none spoke, none talked, none coughed; [it was] as if the earth lay dead, late at night. And everyone gathered around in the darkness'. (Sahagún, Book 11: Ch. 30).

In the centre of the temple is a black round spot, at the base of which is an extended representation of Cihuacoatl, whose body consists of the intertwined vegetal material which we read as *piciete*. On the next page of the codex (p. 30), the centre of the temple consists of a red round spot, identified by a red and

23 See the onomastic sign of Nezahualcoyotl (Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f 32r), and the frequent representation of this ritual in Codex Añute (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2013). On page 51 (lower scene) of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl we see inside the Temple of the West a precious gourd (also carried by an old priest on page 24 and p. 35 of this same codex) with the intertwined tobacco. The vigil, keeping watch and attendance of the fire were part of many rituals, as well as the self-sacrifice known as the bloodletting (*neçoliztli*) and the related 'drawing of straws', generally done at midnight, as well as the black colouring, *tlilpatlaliztli*, at night and dawn (Sahagún, Book 11 Appendix).

24 For the argument, see the commentary on that codex by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991). The Tlillan sign is explicitly identified by glosses in Codex Mendoza, p. 46 and p. 65.

yellow band with a small band of white blocks as brilliant jade. Such red round spots appear later in this chapter as the centre (stone marker?) of a ballcourt (p. 35) and as the background for carrying out the ritual act of fire-making in a temple (p. 34). This suggests that the round spot is a marker of a ritual place, probably a circular altar of some sort, shown as seen from above.<sup>25</sup> We recall round altars such as the Stone of Tizoc (see the previous chapter). Its combination with the jade motif might be compared to the altars or temple bases represented in profile that are decorated with the jade motif (cf. pp. 37, 42). The successive mention of a black and a red altar or ritual location might be read in Nahuatl as the well-known *difrasismo* (hendiadys) *tlilli tlapalli*, ‘the black, the red’. This is a symbol that refers to the place of sunrise, as well as to the intellectual world of knowledge and cognition (black and red being the main colours used for painting codices).<sup>26</sup> This concept is literally placed in the centre of attention in this chapter: the altar (and what happens there) is the focal point of the Temple Scenes.

In addition, the black spot may – at a material level – be compared with the extinguished remains of a fire or hearth, a *tlecuil*, which is still of great ritual importance in Mesoamerican ritual. This is particularly the case in the Nahua-speaking area, where it is used as a point of contact with the world of the divine powers.<sup>27</sup> On page 29, there is a brazier situated on the black spot, which would lend support to its identification as a *tlecuil*. The brazier is not just an object, it is a being with a face and body: eyes, mouth, arms and legs. Its claws indicate divine power. Behind the brazier, we see a coral snake, another manifestation of dangerous power, particularly that of the mother goddess Tlazolteotl (cf. pp. 14 and 68 of this codex). Clouds of dark vapour or smoke are rising from the brazier and a set of eight white banners is put into it. The total configuration is very similar to the representation of a *tzitzimitl* spirit in *El Libro de la Vida* (Codex Magliabechi), p. 76. Such spirits (plural: *tzitzimime*) are expected to descend from the night sky to destroy the world and humanity, an event that might occur at the end of a 52-year cycle (Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 8). As we have seen, the goddess Cihuacoatl shares attributes with these

25 The place of the round red spot in the temple on page 34 of this codex actually corresponds to a red altar surface seen in profile in the parallel temple on page 33.

26 *Macamo poliuz in intil in intlapal in ueuetque: quitoznequi: in tlamaniliztli*, ‘Que no se pierda lo negro y lo rojo (las escrituras) de los ancianos, quiere decir: su sabiduría’. (Sahagún, Book VI: Ch. 43). On the issue of *difrasismos* and metaphorical language in the religious codices, see Mikulska-Dąbrowska 2008.

27 Observation by team member Raúl Macuil Martínez. It is less likely that the black spot would represent a hole or cavity, because in that case one would expect the sign of the open jaws of an alligator.

*tzitzimime* and is indeed called Tzitzimicihuatl, ‘Woman Tzitzimitl’ (Serna 1953: 202). The *tzitzimitl*-brazier, therefore, connotes the possible end of the world, connected with the end of a calendar round.

The ritual that takes place in relation to this complex of ideas, materialised in the brazier, is represented by a black skeletonised person painted above the brazier. This person is seated behind the brazier, as seen from the entrance to the chamber. Eduard Seler identified this seated figure as a form of the Venus god Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli. Indeed, there are several iconographical correspondences with that god, but his main diagnostic element (the white dots in the face) is missing. Furthermore, the seated figure has claws, which do not normally form part of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli’s attributes (cf. pp. 19 and 53–54 of this codex). In the context of the temple of Cihuacoatl, it seems more logical to interpret the seated black figure as a priest (painted black) of Cihuacoatl (skeletonised, with claws).

The black colour and ‘star eyes’ qualify the vapour/smoke that rises from the brazier explicitly as dark. It takes the form of scrolls, several of which end in the head of the wind god Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl. This configuration can be read as the couplet *yoalli ehecatl*, ‘night, wind’, symbolising the mysterious character of divine power.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the scrolls with wind heads take the form of serpents, from whose mouth other elements may emerge. Such a serpent configuration generally denotes the manifestation of someone or something in a vision.<sup>29</sup> Because of these combined associations, we conclude that the brazier and the smoke represent the preparation of the black ointment used by priests, the *teotlacualli* or ‘divine food’, which is described by Durán (1967, I: 51–52): it consisted of all kinds of poisonous animals (scorpions, spiders, serpents etc.) which were burnt, after which the ashes were compounded and mixed in the mortar with the *piciete* and *ololiuhqui* (Morning Glory). Smearing this ointment on the body enabled the priests to see the gods and to communicate with them.<sup>30</sup>

28 Boone (2007: 179) states: ‘These dark winds which I interpret as primordial energy, recall the Nahuatl couplet *yohualli ehecatl*, literally ‘Night and wind’, which Sahagún (1953, bk. 6: 254) translates as ‘invisible and intangible’. This statement echoes the interpretation by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993: 188): ‘*Pensamos que se trata de una representación pictórica de la metáfora yoalli ehecatl, “noche y aire”, que según Sahagún (Libro VI) significa “lo invisible y no palpable”, lo misterioso...*’.

29 See Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1993: 187–189) for a discussion of the serpent in relation to vision and *nahual* experiences. Indeed, the very sign of Cihuacoatl was that of a serpent’s mouth (vision), in which a woman’s head manifests itself, demonstrating the visionary character of the goddess. For the corresponding Maya concepts, see: Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993: 207–210.

30 See also the study by Hatsis (2015).

A rope enters the brazier from under the loincloth of the seated priest; a yellow and a red spider probably represent the being of the rope as an element woven by divine powers. The fact that the rope passes under the loincloth is highly suggestive of a penis-perforation ritual.<sup>31</sup>

By entering into a trance, the priest himself becomes more than just a priest: he is a manifestation (*ixiptla*) of Cihuacoatl. The Nahuatl term used for this double character – human and divine – is *tlamacazqui*, a term used frequently in the work of the Spanish friar Hernán Ruiz de Alarcón, which contains important descriptions of Mesoamerican ritual practices and religious texts. Ruiz de Alarcón translates *tlamacazqui* as ‘*espiritado*’, a term that, as becomes clear from the context, is to be understood as a ‘spirit person’, one who walks with the gods, the religious specialist and spiritual guide, human and divine. At the same time the *tlamacazqui* becomes a title for the spiritual aspect and personality of objects or elements, identified by calendar names.

Serna summarises the character of these priests: they were called *tlamacazque*, a contraction of *tlamaceucatzin*, which means ‘penitent’, because they were spiritual men (and therefore the herbs or instruments they used were called ‘spirited’ (*espiritados*), e.g. the *piciete* or whatever other thing to which they attributed divinity, calling it *tlamacazqui*, i.e. the spirited, the divine). They lived separated from the normal people, generally they were elderly persons, which could be recognised because of the lock of hair that they let grow long... They were so respected and venerated that they were considered divine and diviners, because they knew and saw everything. They were called with the names of the first who taught them astrology and divine science: Cipac-tonal and Oxomoco. They spoke of themselves as *Nixomoco nihuehue nicipac nitalonal* [‘I Oxomoco, I the elderly one, I Cipac, I tonal’].<sup>32</sup>

31 A more explicit representation appears later on page 35 of this codex. The perforation could include the passing of a rope through the penis – as depicted in the Maya Codex Madrid, p. 19b and p. 82b (Joralemon 1974: 61; cf. Graulich 2005 and Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993: 204–206).

32 Serna 1953: Ch. 16, 1 §§ 457–458: ‘Fuera de estos auia en diferentes lugares otros, que eran Sacerdotes, y como ministros destos, llamavanse Tlamacazque, que es syncopa de Tlamaceucatzin, que es el penitente, porque se les hechaua de ver, que eran estos hombres penitentes, y espirituales (y por esso á las yerbas, ó instrumentos, que ellos tienen para sus embustes los llaman espiritados, como al piciete, ó tabaco, ó á otra qualquiera cosa, á que atribuian deidad llamandoles Tlamacazqui, esto es, el espiritado, el diuino). Estos, pues, eran diuinos, segregados de todos los demas hombres comunes, y de ordinario eran hombres viejos, y conocidos por el mechon de cabellos, que dexavan crecer largos en el cerebro, que tambien deuia de auer distincion de vnos y otros Sacerdotes, y conocerse en la diferencia de las coletas.... estos eran tan respectados, y venerados, que los tenían por diuinos, y adiuinos, que todo lo sabian, y lo veían todo: nombravanse con los nombres de aquellos primeros, que

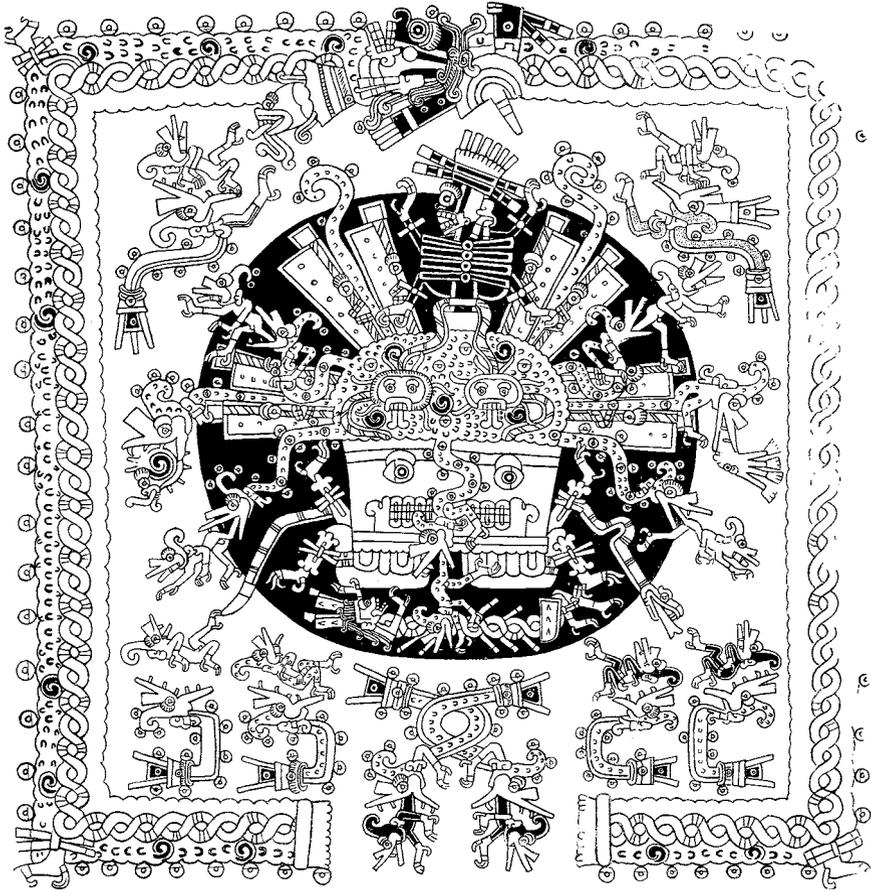


ILLUSTRATION 7.08 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 29 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

The night-wind serpents (visions) that proceed from the brazier on page 29 of the codex bring forth other wind figures, which are in the four colours of the world directions (red-yellow-white-blue) and a central black one, suggesting that the vapour affected the surrounding area in its totality. In their mouths, the two central emanating night-wind serpents hold a piece of a tree and a black sharp stone – both represented as beings with faces (eyes and teeth). The combination is reminiscent of ‘stick and stone’, a *difrasismo* for punishment or some form of affliction. Read in this manner, these signs might represent the apocalyptic powers of the Tzitzimitl. On the other hand, the stone and the tree

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*les enseñaron la astrología, y sciencia diuina Cipactonal y Oxomoco; y assi se decian ellos Nixomoconihuehue nicicpantonal’.*

occur again later (p. 33) as important ingredients of the ritual, so that it is also possible to interpret them as the invocation, preparation or anticipation of those elements here and the mobilisation of their powers as natural elements.

In this sense the *tlamacazqui* can appear in different forms and colours. For example, a specific medicinal herb that is applied to the stomach is invoked as *xoxouhqui tlamacazqui: nican nimitzonteca chicomoztoc* ('*verde espiritado, aqui te aplico a las siete cuebas*'): 'Green Spirit, here I apply you to the seven caves' (Chicomoztoc as metaphor for the stomach).<sup>33</sup>

Around the brazier, in the corners of the chamber, stand six coloured night-wind serpents: these are probably other persons – priests – who were present at the event, but presumably all in trance, transformed into night and wind themselves, participating in the divine power that is being evoked.

A unit of two intertwined night-wind serpents leaves the chamber. They are situated in one line that goes from the head of the Cihuacoatl goddess, which characterises the temple, to the seated priestly figure dedicated to Cihuacoatl, onto the *tzitzimitl*-brazier and finally the night-wind serpent that rises from it, towards the entrance. This alignment suggests that the intertwined serpents are provoked by the self-sacrifice of the Cihuacoatl priest and represent his state of trance, which comes from the ointment prepared in the brazier. The frontal depiction of the brazier indicates that the reader is supposed to be situated in front of the entrance to the chamber, looking inside. The effect of this is that the two night-wind serpents come to encircle the beholder/reader, thereby transmitting the state of trance.

Boone (2007: 179 ff.) interprets this scene as a creation story showing the burst of primordial energy in the darkness before sunrise. This idea is not documented in any of the known Mesoamerican sources and seems rather influenced by the modern Western notion of a Big Bang. The central presence of the *Tzitzimitl*, manifest in the brazier ritual, seems more indicative of ideas about the end of time than about creation (although both are admittedly connected). The identification of the chamber in this codex as a temple of Cihuacoatl also points to this complex of ideas and ritual practices related to the Tlillan temple, which is of central importance in the New Fire ceremony in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus). Milbrath (2013: 77 and plate 1), inspired by the astral interpretation of Seler, sees here a Venus god dying in the fire and descending into the underworld as a symbolic representation of the disappearance of the Evening Star, according to her calculations on 2 January, 1496.

Both interpretations fail to take into account the clear references to the temple of Cihuacoatl (Tlillan) and to the *Tzitzimitl* figure, or the visionary

33 Ruiz de Alarcón Treatise v1 Ch. 18 [445].

symbolism (the metaphors of 'night, wind' and the vision serpent). Trying to read this image in Mesoamerican terms and situating it as the opening scene of a longer ritual sequence, we interpret it as a preparatory ritual. The priest of Cihuacoatl, at night in the temple of the goddess, carries out a penis perforation and prepares the black ointment that will bring him and his associates into a religious trance, bracing themselves against the dangerous powers of the *tzitzimime*, which may be about to descend at the end of a calendar round. Projecting these scenes onto the agricultural and solar year of 365 days, we understand that the first scene corresponds to the beginning of the ritual cycle after the end of the past solar year. Similarly, the Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) starts the presentation of the eighteen month-festivals with looking back at the last ritual of the past year, namely that of the month Izcalli, associated with the fire god and carried out under the direction of the high priest of Cihuacoatl.

## 5 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 30: Bloodletting for Trees

In the next scene (p. 30), the ritual sequence continues in the same temple of Cihuacoatl. The body of the goddess that forms the walls of the chamber is now shown fully skeletonised (spine and ribs). This stresses her connection with death and the ancestors. The intertwined, encircling trance of the *tlamacazqui*, that engulfed all present and embraced the beholder/reader is now drawn inward and concentrated in the centre. This becomes a red spot, a place of light. It corresponds to the black spot in the previous scene and probably represents a circular altar in the centre of the temple. It is characterised as precious (jade), surrounded by a halo of black and red ornaments with star eyes. The jade disc evokes the image of the sun god, the star eyes around it suggest that we are dealing with the night sun, i.e. the sun that after setting illuminates the underworld (see also our discussion below of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, p. 40).

The same black and red motif occurs as the neck ornament of Quetzalcoatl: here it may indicate additionally that the power of the altar embraces the protagonist of the ritual (the Quetzalcoatl priest) with the attire of this important deity. The image suggests that a priestly trance is a centre of light in the midst of darkness: a focus on the *tlapalli* (red) aspect of the *difrasismo*, suggesting that light (sunrise, consciousness, human history) will follow darkness. The *tlamacazqui* looks up and offers incense.

This scene is surrounded in counter-clockwise order (as is customary in many Mesoamerican rituals) by the count of twenty days, from Alligator (I in the sequence of twenty days) to Flower (xx) in a generic manner, without

specific accompanying numbers. Four days are encircled, and are thus given special attention: Alligator (1), Death (VI), Monkey (XI) and Vulture (XVI).<sup>34</sup> These divide the 20-day periods into four equal parts of five days each. The encircled days are associated with black male personages who are carrying specific trees or plants. Their black bodies, with flame hair,<sup>35</sup> large eyes, long teeth and claws, characterise them as the *tlamacazque* that are the spirits of these trees or plants.<sup>36</sup> They hold incense bags and touch the encircled days with bone perforators, indicating that these were the days to perform bloodletting rituals for them.

In Mesoamerican symbolic thought the trees are seen as people from an earlier era who had transformed into trees, which have a rational soul. Thus, when persons cut the trees for human use, they greet them and ask their permission to cut them.<sup>37</sup>

As the images are quite stylised, the trees in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl cannot be identified with certainty in all cases. The first is a stylised green bush with a tree rising from it, perhaps representing a palm tree (although this tree is usually indicated by depicting its flowers) or a bush or grass known as *malinalli*. Boone suggests that it is a copal tree. The second plant is clearly a maguey. Later (pp. 31 and 33–34) we will find references to a combination of these two

34 The same signs occur on page 27 of this codex in a list of the mantic aspects of the rain god associated with the four directions. In that case these days are combined with the number 1: so they represent a division of the 260-day cycle into four parts of 65 days each. Such periods were known in Zapotec as *Cocijo*, which explicitly qualifies them as belonging to the rain deity (also called *Cocijo* in Zapotec). These days that initiate the four segments of the 260-day cycle are in turn connected with year signs that initiate periods of 13 years, also associated with the four directions: 1 Reed – 1 Alligator (East), 1 Flint – 1 Death (North), 1 House – 1 Monkey (West), and 1 Rabbit – 1 Vulture (South). The day signs on page 30 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) are part of a continuous list of twenty day signs and are not explicitly related to the 4 *Cocijos*. In fact, the similar arrangements in the following scenes cannot be interpreted as *Cocijos*; it is possible, however, that other more complex calendrical structures are implied as connotations (cf. Dehouve 2010). Anyway, it is interesting to note that there seem to be connections between this chapter and the previous chapter (pp. 27–28), which deals with the mantic aspects of the rain deity.

35 Sahagún (Book 11: Ch. 27) documents the custom of applying yellow ochre to the hair as a reference to the colour of maize flowers.

36 Compare the tree spirits in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 50.

37 Serna 1953: Ch. 15, 1 § 425: '*Piengan que los arboles fueron hombres en el otro siglo, que ellos fingen, y que se convirtieron en arboles, y que tienen alma racional, como los otros; y así quando los cortan para el vssu humano, para que Dios los crió, los saludan, y les captan la beneuolencia para auerlos de cortar...*'

plants, connected to skeletonised Cihuacoatl-like personages.<sup>38</sup> The third tree is characterised by cotton balls and is, therefore, most likely a ceiba. The fourth has round, dark fruits (*zapote?*).

The tree/plant spirits in this death-related temple may be compared to the tree spirits that surround the sarcophagus of ruler Pakal in the Temple of the Inscriptions in Palenque. In this case, they are dead ancestors, transformed

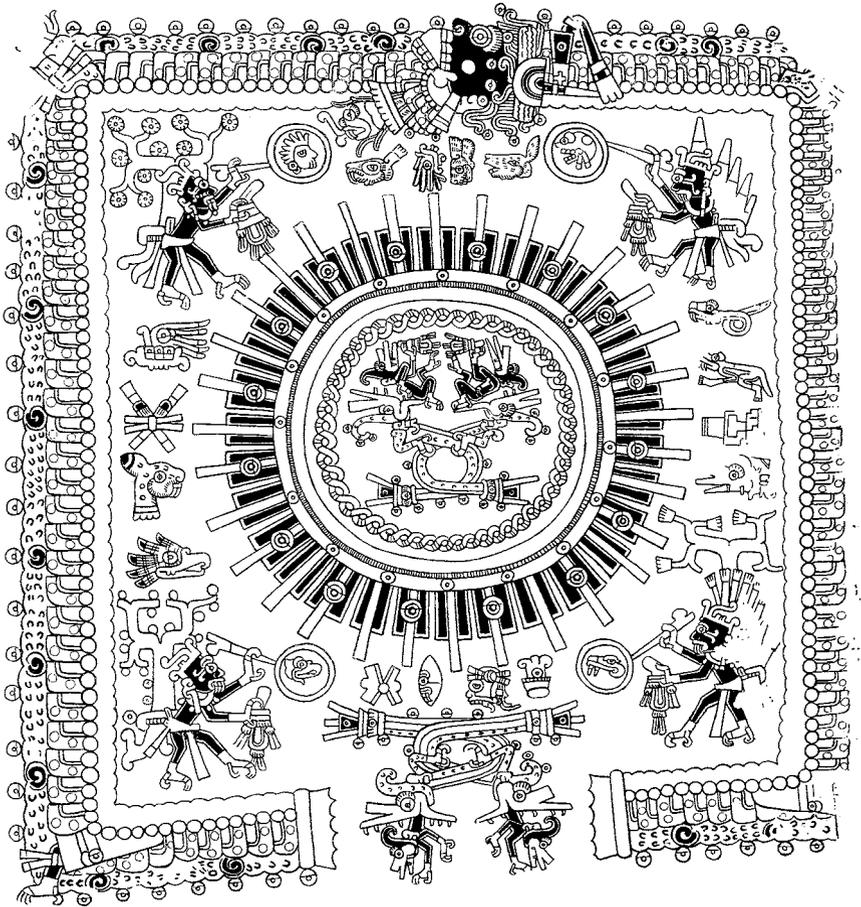


ILLUSTRATION 7.09 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 30 (Danze! 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

38 The palm-like bush or tree with its skeletonised spirit or Owner also occurs on page 75 (upper register) of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, where it can be identified as Malinalteotl, the spirit of the *malinalli* plant, because of a parallel in the early colonial *Codex Tudela* (cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993: 365–372).

into the life forces of nature. It is plausible, therefore, that the spirits here connote the powers of the ancestors, whose cooperation is requested.

The temple scene on page 30 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) mentions ritual activities that mobilise the life force of nature within the sanctuary dedicated to Cihuacoatl (primarily associated with death and ancestors). The focus on the trees recalls the name of the first 20-day month, Cuahuitlehua, 'Rising Trees' (also called Xilomanaliztli, 'Offering of tender corncobs'), the feast marking the moment when trees get new leaves and become green again after the (brief) winter.<sup>39</sup> The image of spirits touching the days with perforators is not a material, real act, but must have a symbolic meaning. In the context of a temple ritual, it seems logical to interpret this configuration as the plant spirits signalling specific days for bloodletting (perforator) and incensing (copal bag). Implicitly, we understand that the *tlamacazque* – the human devotees or priests – in the centre, in a trance (represented by the intertwined serpents), must carry out this ritual.

The image indicates, then, that bloodletting is to be done on four special days, indicated as encircled days, within a cycle of twenty days. It is likely that the tree spirits themselves signal these days for the reason that it is they who will receive the offerings. It is possible to read the encircled days as a sequence, in which each day is dedicated to a specific tree or plant. It is also possible – and in fact more likely – that all the encircled days are dedicated to all the trees and plants; some of these spirits are already active in the following ritual scene.

This is the actual beginning of ritual activity: the cycle includes the first of the twenty day-signs (Alligator), which is symbolically related to the earth and to time.<sup>40</sup> Where the preparatory scene (p. 29) focuses on the potentially destructive and annihilating power of the *tzitzimime* at the end of time, the ritual action depicted on page 30 concentrates on beginnings and on respect for the life-giving powers of nature, manifested in the plants (transformed ancestors). The religious respect for the power of nature is the driving force of this cycle, which transforms black into red, darkness into light, night into day, cold into hot, death into life.

39 The Tovar Calendar explains: 'Quauitleua, which means the lumber or the trees are raised, because at this time, which was in the middle of February, the trees seem already to have raised and elevated their heads, or to have revived, beginning to be covered with foliage' (Kubler and Gibson 1951: 35).

40 It is noteworthy that the sign of the open jaws of the alligator, as well as the brazier and the jade base, appear as places associated with the manifestation of the Lady Corn on the earth (page 28 of this codex).

## 6 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 31: Transformation of Death into Life

The following two representations of the temple of Cihuacoatl (both on page 31) suggest two further successive moments in the same ritual sequence, taking place in the same temple. The first scene is situated in a temple surrounded by darkness, but in the middle of that darkness is a band of red colour (light) with large star signs. In the second scene the temple is surrounded by a 'red night' with a band of blue in it, again with the star sign. As Nowotny (1976) has already observed, this suggests that the time for this ritual is in the early morning, at the rise of Venus. It first shows the beginning of light in the dark sky, then the red of a morning sky, finally transforming into the blue sky of day.<sup>41</sup>

In the centre of the chamber, Cihuacoatl is seated in the position of the great mother, Tlazolteotl, in the position of giving birth.<sup>42</sup> This position she has in common with Tlaltecuhтли, the earth god. As the great mother, she is characterised as a creative force, giving birth to the future generations, while her skeletonised nature connects her with the ancestors. Her image, situated in the centre of the temple, most likely is the animated version of an altar, a place of ritual communication between humans on one side and divine beings (spirits, gods, ancestors) on the other.<sup>43</sup> The Temple Scenes contain regular references to such altars, represented as manifestations (*ixiptla*) of specific deities.

Through the ritual performed on this altar a dark spirit with a skeletonised head and claws rises from the heart (is evoked by the power) of Cihuacoatl. In its fleshless mouth, it holds a serpent of night and wind (the religious experience of trance). This is perhaps because the ecstasis is a consequence of bloodletting through the tongue. It may also be a symbol that represents the spiritual message of the goddess: the trance allows communication with the spirit world of the dead. The heart of Cihuacoatl is the organ from which words and forces proceed (also mentioned on pp. 29–30) and seems to be a symbol of her life-giving principle ('Heart of Earth'). Just as on page 29, the goddess has claws, which stress her *nahual* powers.

The goddess is blindfolded. In a mantic context this sign would represent an obstacle to clear seeing and understanding, but in this ritual context we

41 Cf. such expressions as 'when dawn had reddened and it was light' (*in otlatvic, in otlatlavitlotleoac*) in the descriptions of rituals by Sahagún (Book II: Ch. 30).

42 Cf. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 13.

43 Compare the image of Cihuacoatl in the Aztec Templo Mayor (under the famous Coyolauhqui), holding on her breast a round vessel as a kind of altar to make offerings and self-sacrifice (cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García, 1991: 42).

interpret it as an expression of the mystic nature of the encounter with the deity, even to the degree of secrecy. The visionary experience implies closing the eyes and focusing on the power of inner vision.

On the right-hand side of the temple (the beginning of the reading direction of this codex), the spirit born from Cihuacoatl stands on the brazier (a red one, standing for the East, then a white one with red spots). In attendance, Cihuacoatl's priests throw a dark, death-related liquid over him. On the left-hand side, a similar spirit with flame hair is covered by a blanket (qualified as sacred through the use of down balls) under the supervision of Cihuacoatl priests, the *tlamacazque*, who are in charge of the maguey plant and the bush of *malinalli* grass or palm leaves. It is likely that the combination of maguey and leaves

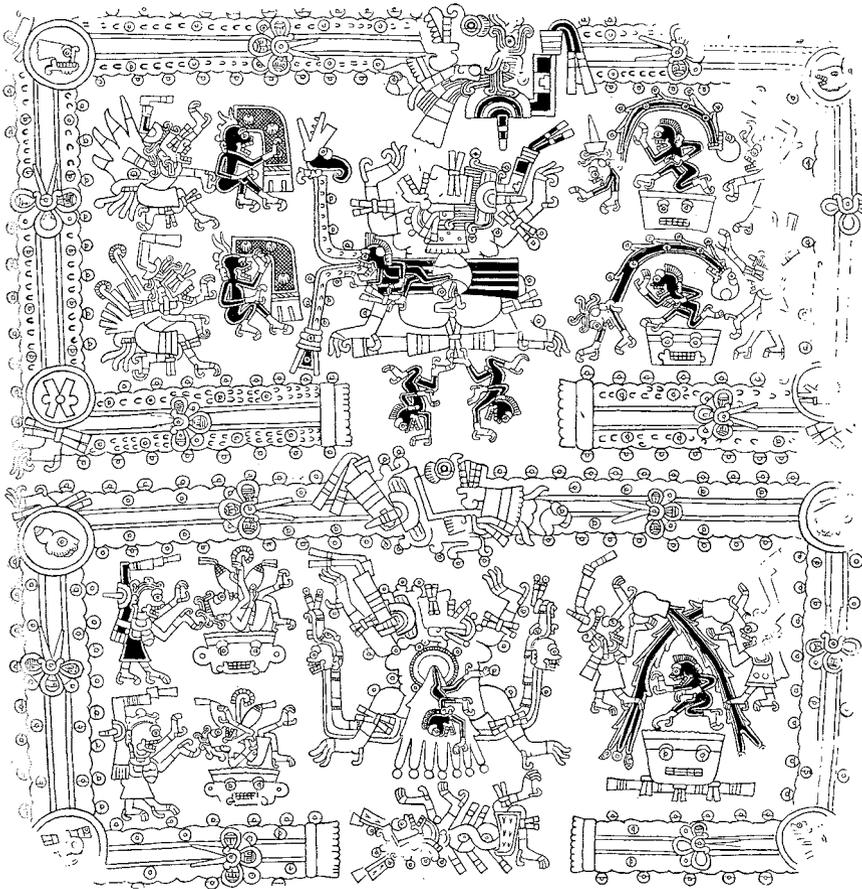


ILLUSTRATION 7.10 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 31 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

refers to the two main plant elements used in bloodletting: the maguey spine for perforation and the leaves used to catch the blood.

Here we see a continuation of the ritual acts carried out on the previous pages. The Cihuacoatl priest (of page 29) has transformed into night and wind, has started to make offerings to the plant spirits (p. 30), and is now manifest as Cihuacoatl, in her aspect of the great mother, all the while transmitting the spiritual power of the ancestors through the trance. The brazier is present again, but it is no longer associated with dark hallucinogenic vapours, but with a 'dark death-liquid'. One possibility is that this 'bath', or ointment, transmits the power to communicate with the other world. On the other side of the scene, there are similar spirits seated, covered with sacred cloth. It may have been read as a set of two continuing acts: the spirits are bathed and dried with blankets. It might also be read as a single act: the *tamacazque* are prepared using the ointment from the brazier, to communicate with ancestral spirits, made into sacred bundles.

The *tamacazque* with fleshless jaws move towards the beholder/reader just as the intertwined night-wind serpents had done on the previous two pages. In this case, the implication could be that this scene transmits the power to communicate with the ancestors to the beholder/reader.

The fourth image of the Cihuacoatl temple (the second one on page 31) brings us to the next and final stage of the rituals in this sanctuary. Cihuacoatl is seated in the centre, in the position of giving birth. From her chest – represented as a round jade (similar to the central motif on page 30) – again a dark spirit with a skeletonised head and claws emerges, now in the midst of a stream of blood. This sign is a parallel to the heart in the first temple on this same page. It is most likely that the scenes are to be read as a *difrasismo*: the ancestor spirit (or the power to communicate with him) is emerging from the heart and blood of Cihuacoatl. Precious serpents rise from her body, looking to both sides of the temple room. From their mouths, skulls emerge as manifestations of ancestors in the open jaws of serpents looking in opposite directions, forwards and backwards in terms of the reading order – a convention we may read as visions that refer to the past and the future.

First, on the right-hand side of the room, the spirit coming from Cihuacoatl is 'bathed' or covered with black liquid above the brazier that is dedicated to the ancestors (it is white with red spots, representing bones). Then, on the left-hand side of the room, two attendant priests, who are dedicated to Cihuacoatl, are positioned behind braziers (blue and green). On the braziers lie manifestations of Cihuacoatl, from whose body corn flowers and corncobs emerge.

It is arguable that the last two Temple Scenes (on page 31) are not iconic representations of actions, but are symbolic references to mental and religious

processes, which could be read as invocations. We may decode the scenes as referring to Cihuacoatl who, in the centre of the temple room, is 'giving birth to the ancestor spirit'. That is, Cihuacoatl is handing out the faculty of communication with the dead ancestors; producing that special state of mind in those who are present: the priests who are in charge of the brazier, and those in charge of the bloodletting (maguey and *malinalli* or palm). Cihuacoatl does this through a trance that is represented by the serpent of night and wind and the double-headed serpent. In this trance, the ancestors manifest themselves on different sides of the room, while protecting all those that are present. The other part of the scene may show how those who receive this gift take good care of it, as if caring for a newborn child, bathing and drying it. Alternatively, it may show how the *tlamacazque* speak to the ancestors, that is, covered by sacred cloth.

The spirit of contacting the ancestors is associated with the power of Cihuacoatl to transform from a death-related force into the force of life (the generation of corncobs).

We note that the representation of Cihuacoatl is similar to that of the female figure on page 28 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), which is the page before the beginning of the Temple Scenes chapter. That figure is associated with the earth, as it receives rain from the rain god Tlaloc. As such, the figure seems to be a representation of the life force of the corn seed as well as that of human procreation. The acts in the temple, then, present a transition from a focus



ILLUSTRATION 7.11 Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 23: Xilomanaliztli.

on trance and communication with the ancestors to taking care of tree/plant spirits and, finally, to the strengthening and birth properties of corn, and life in general. Ultimately, it is corn that is deposited in the living brazier ('god pot') to flower and grow.<sup>44</sup>

A similar configuration is present on the sarcophagus of Lord Pakal in the Temple of Inscriptions in Palenque: there the tree grows from the body of the dead ruler sinking into the earth. The ancestors around are living and growing as trees and welcome Pakal in their midst. This image holds the same symbolism about the transformation from dead ancestor to living tree/plant. This concept is projected onto the figure of the goddess in the centre of the temple.

At the same time the vessel with the corn flowers and corncobs in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 31, recalls the feast of the first 20-day month in the Aztec world: *Xilomanaliztli*, 'Offering of Tender Maize Cobs'. This is an alternative name for the ritual involving the trees (*Cuahuitlehua*): we understand the two ritual scenes as different – though related – moments of a single month feast. The sign of this month in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 23, is precisely such a vessel full of corncobs with the characteristic 'maize hair'. The chronicle of Serna explains that actually this was not yet the time of the year for new tender maize, but that the ritual consisted of offering tender corncobs that had been kept from the previous year. In other words, this was a consecration of seeds and kernels, similar to what nowadays is done on the occasion of the Candlemas festival.<sup>45</sup> This offering, therefore, includes the symbolism of revival.

The sequence of these three pages suggests that the manifestation of the deity is evoked by the ritual acts and religious concentration of the priest on the eve of a series of ritual events, which is set into motion by those same acts (p. 29). The preparation of the priestly ointment and the bloodletting for trees/plants/ancestors (pp. 30–31) results in the power to communicate with the dead and to transform what is dead into life and fertility. The alternation of black and red, colours that represent both darkness and night, and together form the expression for wisdom, qualifies and reinforces this mystery.

44 Cf. our commentary on Codex Añute (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2013: Ch. vi).

45 Serna 1953: Ch. 7, 2: '*el llamarse así era no porque entonces fuese tiempo de Xilotes, porque es tiempo de la siembra: sino porque offrescian Xilotes, ó guardados del año pasado, ó contrahechos, ó de palo, ó de Tzoales [masa de bledos]*'. See the analysis of the page in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) in the commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991: 193–194).

## 7 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 32: Preparing the Knife

In front of the temple of Cihuacoatl is a square (plaza) in darkness. The space is subdivided by rows of flints that form nine segments: a large central place (coloured red) and eight smaller rectangles and corners that surround it. In the centre stands, again, a brazier. This is possibly the same brazier from within the temple (pp. 29, 31) that is now (page 32) located in the open. It is the white brazier with red dots (suggesting a relationship with bones and death). In the brazier, a red and white striped body with claws is seated; it has two knives as a head, and also knives located on four of its articulations (elbows and knees). Clearly, this is a form of the knife god, known as Tecpatl, Itztapal Totec or

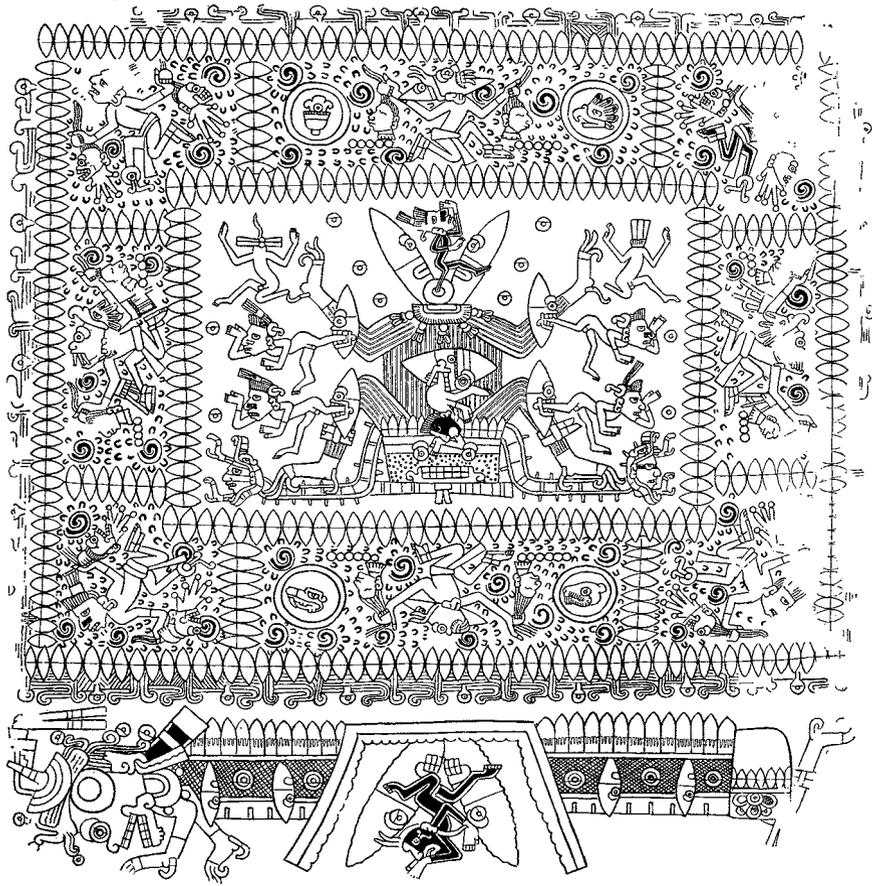


ILLUSTRATION 7.12 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 32 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

Itztli.<sup>46</sup> Another form was *Teiztapali*, an important deity in Teotitlan del Camino celebrated during the feast Tlacaxipehualiztli (Acuña 1985/86, II: 198). The deity was clearly related to Xipe, the god of flaying. This festival celebrated the 'flaying' i.e. cleaning of the fields in spring, preparing them for new planting.<sup>47</sup>

This knife deity was known as the 'child of Cihuacoatl'. This goddess, in the form of a human woman, went to the market carrying a cradle on her back. In the market, she left the cradle alone and disappeared. When the other women looked inside the cradle they found a sacrificial knife. This was the way the goddess called upon people to comply with their ritual obligations.<sup>48</sup> As such, the image suggests a preparation for (self-) sacrifice.

The brazier is surrounded, protected, by a double-headed serpent (or two serpents coming out from behind the brazier), probably representing a guardian spirit. The heads of the Black and the Red Tezcatlipoca (the spirit of obsidian and the spirit of metal) emerge from its open jaws (looking forward and backward in terms of the reading order), indicating that this god manifests himself in visions referring to the past and the future.<sup>49</sup>

Figures rise from the knives that form the head and that are located on the four articulations of the knife god's body. They represent Tezcatlipoca, god of mystery, power and rulership (he is identified by the smoking mirror on his head). These manifestations are in five colours: black (in the centre), white and yellow, red and blue. In addition, centrally, on the body of Tecpatl lies another knife, from which a Quetzalcoatl figure comes forward.

We then see the four Tezcatlipocas, in the directional colours, running or dancing in the corners of the plaza. In the rectangular spaces in between these

46 Compare the knives clothed as (human) beings found in the Templo Mayor (cf. Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1983: 40).

47 Cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 194. Codex Telleriano-Remensis (pp.23v-24) identifies Iztapal Totec as the stone from which knives were made. The gloss '*pedernal o cuchillo del guerreador o desdichado, más propio es decir navaja [corregida en: pedernal] sangrienta del dolorido*' was corrected to: '*propiamente la tierra o asiento de ella, llena de trabajos y dolor*'. The two versions imply two visions: in one the knife is associated with war and pain, in the other with earth and work.

48 Sahagún, Book I: Ch. 6; Durán 167, I: 130.

49 Compare the expression used by Don Carlos Chichimecatecutli of Texcoco: 'My grandfather and my father looked to all sides, backward and forward, so to say, they knew the past and the future, and knew what had to be done for a long time and what was done.... truly, I tell you that my grandfather and my father were prophets'. (González Obregón 1910: 40 ff). The pictorial convention of looking to both sides also appears in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 51 and 50, as a title next to a seated man, in the same position as the priest in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 29 (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992a: 84 ff.).

corners we see other running personages, with large eyes and big teeth: *tlamacazque*, which are similar to the plant spirits on page 30. They too are painted in the four directional colours. Two of them (on the vertical axis of the scene) are knife spirits; the two others (on the horizontal axis) have eagle helmets, which are possibly related to the eagle aspect of Cihuacoatl, also known as Quilaztli, or to the priestly office of the Aquiach.<sup>50</sup>

These spirits hold a human head in each hand, and each head is combined with a number. The eagle spirits hold four heads in each hand; the knife spirits hold five or six. Similarly, the Tezcatlipoca figures hold skulls with some leaves (possibly *yauhtli*, marigold) in each hand. The heads are anticipated in the central scene, in the form of beheaded human bodies flanking the seated figure of Tecpatl.

At first sight, these heads might be interpreted as trophies, but another interpretation is also possible. The object of ritual beheadings and dismembering may have been, for example, figures made of *tzoalli*, amaranth dough (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 35). Furthermore, in Mesoamerican art, fruits and corn-cobs are sometimes represented as human heads.<sup>51</sup>

An illustrative example is the ritual scene in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 22, 20 etc., in which the maguey plant is decapitated, i.e. cut and scraped. The cutter-scaper is represented as an opossum (the one that is going to bring *pulque* into the world) and as a decapitated woman, or rather a decapitated version of the Lady of the Flint Knives (Lady 9 Reed, a Ñuu Dzauí variant of the Aztec Itzpapalotl-Itzcueye): obviously she is not decapitated herself but is characterised as a 'goddess of decapitation'. The two are approaching the maguey plant, carrying bowls with flint knives: the context suggests that they are going to cut and scrape the maguey in order to extract the juice (the 'blood' of the maguey) to make *pulque*. The maguey plant sees them coming and makes a gesture of lamentation, and in the next occurrence appears as a decapitated figure. Decapitation, then, may also refer to the cutting of the maguey in order to produce *pulque*.

Taking this into account and connecting the image of page 32 with the last scene on the previous page, where Cihuacoatl transforms into corn-cobs, we find it plausible that the heads in the hands of the priests are living or dead

50 On the association of Cihuacoatl-Ilamatecuhtli with the eagle, see Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 36.

51 Sahagún (Book II: Ch. 21) says that during the month Tlacaxipehualiztli a dance with heads of the gladiatorial sacrifice victims was performed: *motzontecomitotia*. On the other hand, compare the representation of corn-cobs as human heads on the Tablet of the Foliated Cross in Palenque and on the mural of Lord 4 Dog next to a staircase in Cacaxtla.



ILLUSTRATION 7.13 *Ocotelulco altar: front side.*

corncobs (*elotes* and *olotes*, respectively). The ritual act, then, continues as a logical sequence to the earlier scene: once Cihuacoatl transforms into corncobs, the knife spirits (priests) and Quilaztli spirits (priests) take care of them, dancing joyfully, carrying the heads (corncobs) and storing them. The pairs of heads would be the *ocholli*, the pairs of corncobs bound together, which people used to offer during the successive festivals of Xilomanaliztli (month 1: 'Offering of First Corncobs') and Tlacaxipehualiztli (month 2: 'Flaying').<sup>52</sup> These are both 'old' corncobs from the past year (skulls) and fresh tender ones (*xilototes*), the first fruits of the first early harvest (fleshed heads).

It is possible, of course, that the scene is intentionally ambiguous: the power of the knife is invoked and celebrated, its function in agriculture and harvest as much as in war and sacrifice.

In Ocotelulco (Tlaxcala) an altar has been excavated, which contains paintings that show great similarity to this rite in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 32.<sup>53</sup> Lines of flint knives mark a square ritual space on top of a road formed

52 Cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991: 194). The *ocholli* appears also as part of the image of Tlacaxipehualiztli in the Tovar Calendar (Kubler and Gibson (1951: plate IV). See also the realistic representations of rain priests harvesting the corncobs on Teotihuacan murals and in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis).

53 We thank archaeologist José Eduardo Contreras Martínez for introducing us to this site. His study of the altar and the site was included in the discussion about the provenance



ILLUSTRATION 7.14 *Ocotelulco altar: central image.*

by bones (this is possibly a road that leads from the place of life to the other world, where the ancestors are). In the centre of this marked space, a brazier has been placed, on top of which lies a big flint, *Tecpatl* or *Itztli*, the deified knife, with the face of *Tezcatlipoca* emerging from it. The banner and the arrow decorated with down balls (a sacred arrow), that accompany it, belong to the same consecrated context. Behind this set of elements, a precious black serpent rises in flames, suggesting that a visionary experience is being created. Under this scene there are stellar eyes, as a reference to heaven, to night-time and to trance. On the sides, eight vision serpents are descending, four on each side, decorated with feathers and other elements. From their mouths divine faces emerge, speaking ardent words (the speech scrolls look like flames), divine oracles revealed in ecstasy. Among the different faces we distinguish one of *Tezcatlipoca* and one of *Quetzalcoatl*, comparable with the representation of the priests/spirits in *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia).

The small painted altar within the temple of *Ocotelulco* suggests that the ritual action probably consisted of depositing a knife on the brazier where, through invocations, incensing and offerings, the divine force of the knife was invoked and mobilised. *Tecpatl* manifests himself, as does the power of *Tezcatlipoca*, in the midst of visionary *nahual* experiences. The divine

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of the *Teomoxtli* Group codices, as part of the commentary on *Codex Cospi* (Anders, Jansen and Loo 1994: Ch. XI). See also the article by Peperstraete (2006).

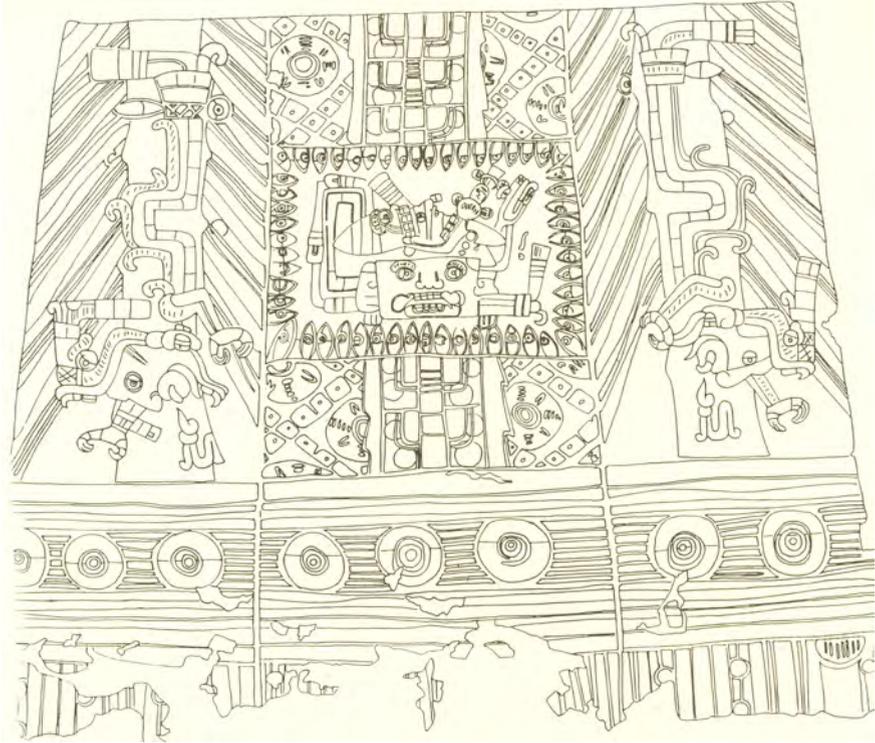


ILLUSTRATION 7.15 *Ocotelulco altar: front side (drawing: contribution by José Eduardo Contreras Martínez to Anders, Jansen and Loo 1994).*

power then extends over the alignments of flints (probably deposited by the participants).

In synthesis, the first pages of the Temple Scenes chapter (pp. 29–32) show a ritual that takes place in the temple of Cihuacoatl during the night and early morning. The *cihuacoatl* priest introduces the ritual sequence on the first page (p. 29) by performing a penis perforation. Several priests in trance accompany him. The ritual unfolds during the night until daybreak. Tree spirits are invoked around the altar of the night sun in the temple of Cihuacoatl (p. 30). Then the small spirits of the dead, i.e. the heart and blood, the sustenance of our mother Cihuacoatl, are brought forward, cleaned and prepared: most likely these are the seeds which have been kept from the harvest of the previous year. They are located in vessels under the good care of Cihuacoatl and so start the process of transforming into corncobs (p. 31). While this is going on in the temple another ritual activity takes place – equally at night – in the plaza in front of the temple: priests are dancing with pairs of ‘decapitated heads’ (corncobs) around



ILLUSTRATION 7.16 *Ocotelulco altar: right side of the monument (to our left).*



ILLUSTRATION 7.17 *Ocotelulco altar: left side of the monument (to our right).*

the manifestation of Tecpatl, the spirit of the flint knife. The focus on the knife god makes it possible to identify this ritual as part of Tlacaxipehualiztli, the second festival of the year, dedicated to ‘flaying’ the fields, i.e. preparing them for planting.<sup>54</sup> This reinforces the observation of a possible reference to the first month-festival, Cuahuitlehua/Xilomanaliztli, on the previous pages of the codex (pp. 30–31). Here we clearly see the interaction between the ritual activities that are the central focus of the Temple Scenes chapter (the concentrated symbolic actions taking place inside the Cihuacoatl temple) and the month-festivals that are going on at the same time outside in the plaza. The Temple Scenes take place in the context of the ritual year of eighteen months but are not the same; rather they represent specific priestly activities with their own thematic focus and temporal structure.

In terms of the agricultural and astronomical year, Tlacaxipehualiztli was the ceremonial preparation for the spring equinox, which would have taken place at the end of this month (the second 20-day period of the Aztec year).

On page 31 we notice that the days associated with the two scenes are not continuous but are actually one day apart. The first sequence is that of the 2nd, 7th, 12th and 17th of the twenty days, that is, the days following those indicated on page 30. The second is that of the 4th, 9th, 15th and 19th day signs. Not represented is the sequence of the 3rd, 8th, 13th and 18th day signs, which would come in between: these are also the day signs that may occur as year bearers (days that can initiate solar years of 365 days). On the other hand, the colour scheme of the walls of the temple clearly suggests the advancing time of first light and daybreak, i.e. of two moments in a continuous ritual taking place in the early morning. This suggests that the encircled days do not date the represented activities. Their first occurrence (p. 30) makes it clear that the encircled day signs indicate the time for bloodletting, fasting and incensing, probably as preparatory rituals.

We note furthermore that the twenty days are presented in their standard order, starting with Alligator. The month-festivals were also periods of twenty days, but their beginning (respectively their end) was determined by the day sign of the year bearer (and consequently changed each year, in accordance with the cycle Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit). One interpretation of the listing of the bloodletting days in the standard sequence would be that the four signs are given to indicate those ritually important days in the four different years and that the first day of this sequence in each case had to be computed according to the year bearer of the then current year. Then the set of ritually marked days would start on a specific day known as initiating such a sequence in a

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54 Cf. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 24, with the commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991).

specific year. For example, Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) associates in another context (p. 27) the year 1 Reed with the day 1 Alligator, the year 1 Flint with the day 1 Death, the year 1 House with the day 1 Monkey, and the year 1 Rabbit with the day 1 Vulture. Consequently, we could read the sequence on page 30 as starting with a day Alligator for years with the year bearer Reed. In that case the sequence of bloodletting days during this first ritual period (pages 29–32) in a year Reed – i.e. for years in which the main festival fell on a day Reed (XIII) – would be: Alligator (I) – Wind (II) – Lizard (IV) – Dog (X). This would be the order of the bloodletting acts associated with (but separate from) the main narrative of the night of the Tlacaxipehualiztli ritual. In years with other year bearers the sequence would shift accordingly.

The absence of the year bearer day-signs themselves (XIII – XVIII – III – VIII) in this sequence – indicating that no ritual activity was carried out in the temple on such a day – could be explained as a consequence of the main festival (Tlacaxipehualiztli in this case) taking place precisely on the day-sign of the current year bearer.

It is also possible, however, that the rituals of the Temple Scenes chapter followed their own temporal organisation, derived from the day sign Alligator as starting point, and therefore were seen as somewhat independent from the eighteen month-festivals. In that case the bloodletting days would be preparatory to the temple scene in question and take place in the 20-day cycle that preceded it (standard starting on the day Alligator). It could mean that on the different sets of four days, various priests carried out the bloodletting as preparation for the specific ritual moments that are portrayed in the Temple Scenes.

In the final part of page 32 a second ritual sequence begins: the Cihuacoatl figure is placed as a dividing line. Considering the function of this character as high priest (*papa mayor*) at the beginning of the ritual solar year in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), we interpret this image as the official or priest who has this title and orders the initiation of a new (part of the) ceremony. From her breast, a Quetzalcoatl *tlamacazqui* comes forward amidst the knives (from the ritual on the previous page), carrying out the orders of the deity. The skirt of Cihuacoatl is decorated with the heaven motif: clearly she is in her celestial aspect of goddess of the Milky Way. The knives in this context may also refer to the 'knives striking in heaven', i.e. to thunder and lightning that accompany the emergence of the Quetzalcoatl priest.<sup>55</sup>

There are eight of these figures in the whole chapter of Temple Scenes in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29–47. The first segment of the chapter (pp. 29–32) does not begin with a standing Cihuacoatl figure but, instead, starts

55 Recall the reading of the Heaven of Flints as *iztapal nanazcaya* in Codex Vaticanus A (Seler, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, IV: 24).

with a Cihuacoatl temple (in four successive versions). Counting in this way, we see that there are nine Cihuacoatl figures. The first segment consists of four Cihuacoatl temples. The association of Cihuacoatl with the number 9 is logical in view of her relationship with death and the ancestors.

## 8 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Pages 33–34: The Temple of Heaven

On pages 33 and 34 we again encounter the wood and the stone that were evoked and became manifest in the opening scene (p. 29). Here we see that they serve as elements in a ritual context: a fire-making ceremony, which mobilises the fire spirits from the burning tree-wood, and a dance by an armed priest around a round stone, which brings forward spirits of rain. The round stone outside the temple may represent a circular altar comparable to the Stone of Tizoc: it has a face (eyes and a mouth with teeth) and is clearly a living being (similar to the *Ñuhu* of the *Ñuu Dzaui* codices).

The Cihuacoatl Temple of the earlier pages is now (page 33) replaced by a big Temple of Heaven with a staircase (pyramid). It is firmly located on top of the Heart of the Earth (indicating both its central position and its connection with a cave or earth shrine).<sup>56</sup> Various divine powers fill its space: there are fire spirits and Cihuacoatl spirits in the roof, while manifestations of Tezcatlipoca and the powers of the hearth goddess, Chantico, are in the base.

Black and red vision serpents encircle (protect and empower) this sanctuary, emphasising its liminal character. Black and Red Tezcatlipoca powers are manifest in the divine flint knives kept here. Ritual implements that will play a role in the rituals to come are prepared and are all connected by the rope of bloodletting, which is woven by the divine spider and connected with the courses of the sun and moon.<sup>57</sup> Five elements are explicitly mentioned in what presumably is a prayer to mobilise them as forces:

- (1) A precious stone (jade), which occurs frequently in the following scenes, right up to the final scene on page 47 (where it is the element from which the deified woman emerges).
- (2) The curved staff of Quetzalcoatl, which will play a role in the struggle between the Quetzalcoatl priest in trance and the rain god on page 38.

<sup>56</sup> The earth is painted as a cross over between alligator and sawfish.

<sup>57</sup> The flint knife and the cord form a conceptual unit, which also occurs as a given name of persons, for example Lord 2 Dog on page 34 of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). Compare the ritual respect and offerings for the *coa* (digging stick) and other 'instruments' of labour, documented by Durán (1967, I: 260).

- (3) Maguey spine perforators for bloodletting, which we will encounter again on the same page 33 (inside the temple) and on page 35.
- (4) The white banner, which appears as a ritual emblem (Panquetzaliztli) on page 45.
- (5) A large down ball, which indicates that persons are consecrated to a deity: it occurs frequently in the hairstyle of the Quetzalcoatl priests (e.g. pp. 33, 46 and *passim* when emerging from the breast of Cihuacoatl), as well as on sacred bundles (e.g. p. 35) and on a sacrificed image (pp. 41–42).

In the first scene of page 33, a black dog-headed Xolotl is seated at the back of the temple. In the next scene he is an active performer of a sacrificial act, while in the temple chamber the red Xolotl manifests himself, carrying the sun disc.

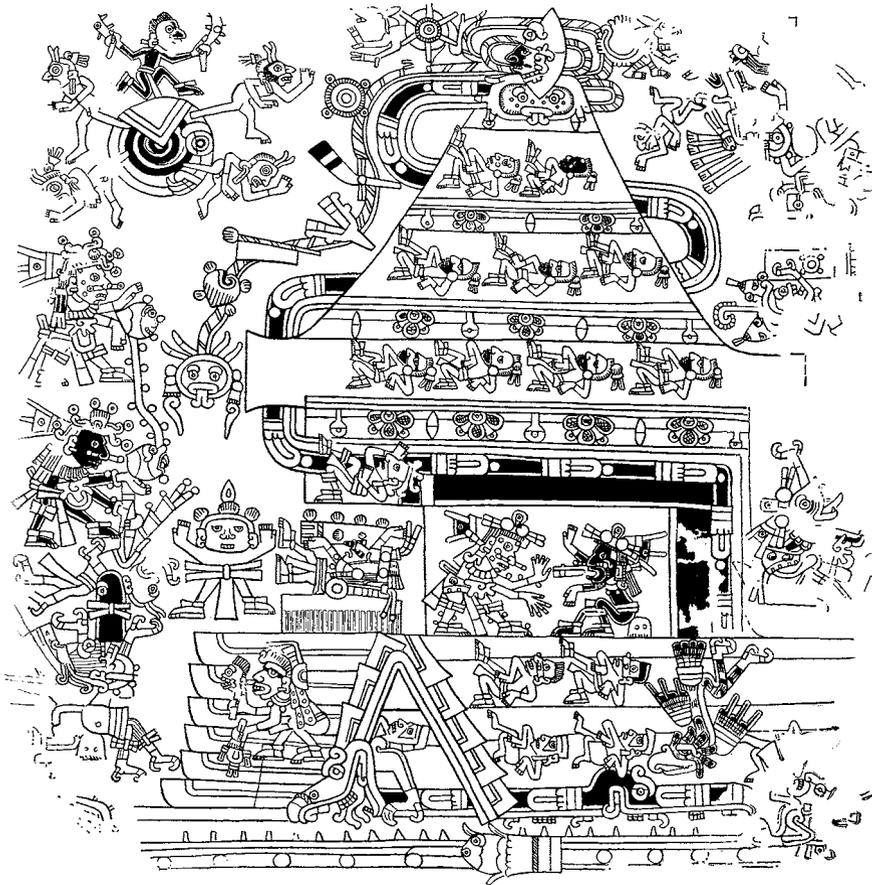


ILLUSTRATION 7.18 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 33 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

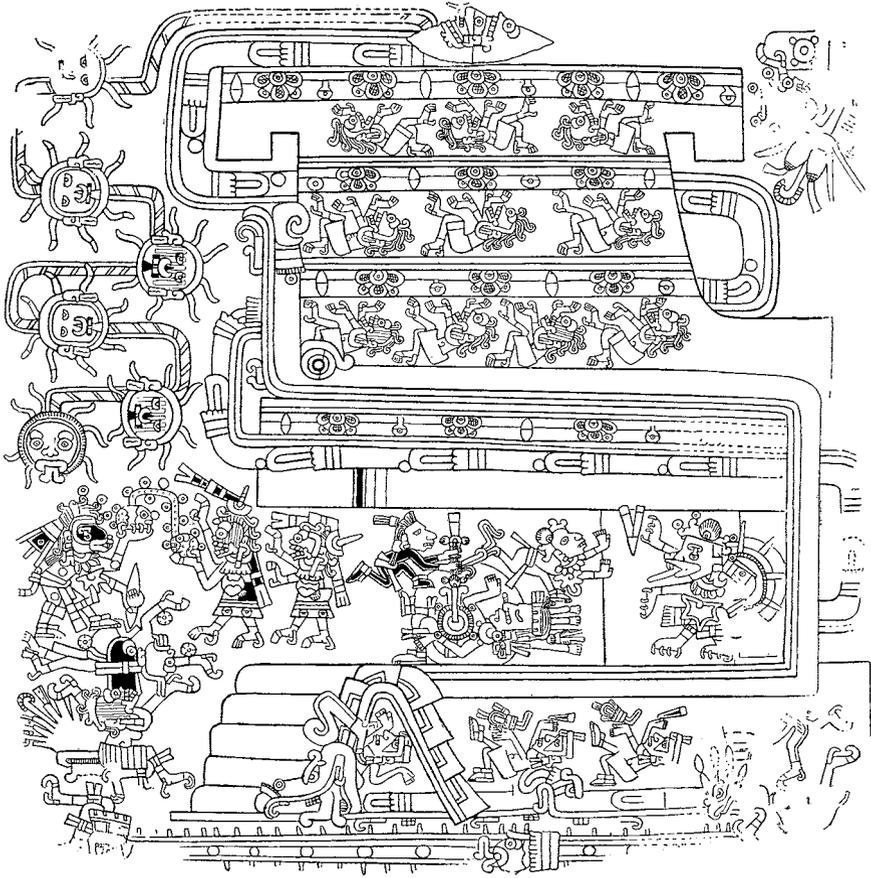


ILLUSTRATION 7.19 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 34 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

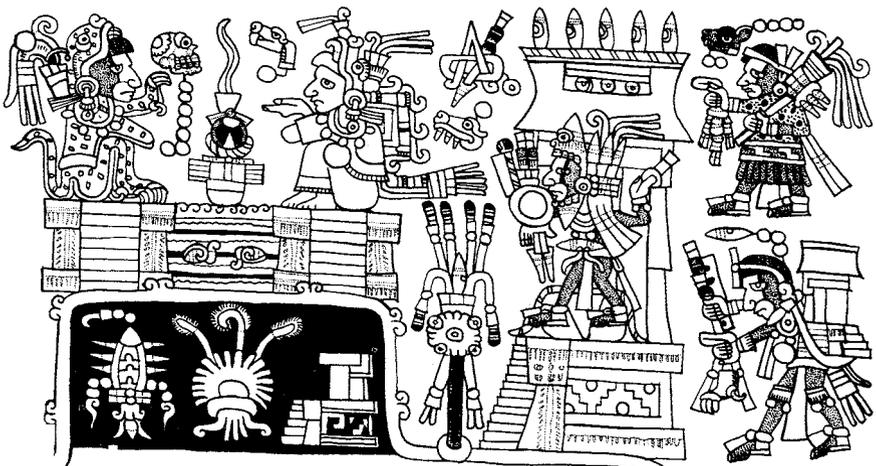


ILLUSTRATION 7.20 *Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall)*, p. 22: *Temple of Heaven at Tilantongo*.

This suggests that the red and the black Xolotl figures are the bearers of the day sun and night sun, respectively. We recall that this deity is known in Dzaha Dzau (Mixtec) as To-ina, 'Lord Dog' or 'Master of Dogs'.

In front of the first temple (p. 33), on top of the staircase, a man is standing, with down balls on his head, i.e. consecrated to the deity, and raising his hands in adoration. He is represented in a quite unique frontal view, looking at the beholder, which suggests a special direct relationship between the reader/public and this scene of entering the temple. The first item at the entrance is an altar (probably a round stone monument), on top of which Xipe is lying under a red cover with down balls on it, i.e. a sacred cloth. Probably this establishes a link with the Xipe-related ritual of Tlacaxipehualiztli of the previous page: it suggests that this Temple Scene is in some way the continuation or outcome of Tlacaxipehualiztli. On the altar a memory (spirit) of that ritual is made into a bundle.

Inside the temple, priests of Quetzalcoatl and Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Venus) perform a preparatory bloodletting ritual. Then outside the temple they perform a sacrificial act on an altar, 'sustained', i.e. attended, by the maguey spirit, a manifestation of Cihuacoatl (earlier mentioned on page 31). The victim of the sacrifice is not a human being but one of the tree spirits that received offerings of bloodletting and incense on page 30. Taking into account the presence of Xipe, the god of flaying, i.e. of clearing the fields for planting, we understand that the priests are actually chopping down a tree (represented as the sacrifice of a tree spirit). The Quetzalcoatl priest gives the heart (life force) of the tree spirit to the priest of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Venus). The presence of Venus suggests that the act takes place in the early morning.

In the second scene (on page 34), the black dog-headed Xolotl 'sacrifices' (cuts) a ceiba tree (mentioned on page 30), which is already dead, and hands its heart to priestesses of Cihuacoatl-Citlalinicue. Meanwhile, the palm or *malinalli* spirit manifestation of Cihuacoatl (Malinalteotl) sustains the altar.<sup>58</sup> We understand that first (p. 33), living trees were chopped down, and that later (p. 34) the trees, already dead, are cut into pieces for firewood.<sup>59</sup> Fire is kindled

58 Compare again the figure of Malinalteotl on page 75 (upper register) of this codex (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993: 365–372).

59 Observation of ERC-team member Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez. Cf. the cutting of wood as tributary activity for the organisation of rituals, depicted in the Codex of Yanhuitlan (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011: Ch. x) and the carrying of wood for the fires in the temples, courtyards and priests' dwellings (Sahagún, Book 11 Appendix). The standing green figure in entrance of the temple (p. 33) may be another reference to such a tree, which was ritually respected as *Tota*, 'Our Father' (Durán 1967, 1: 86).

with this firewood (assembled by clearing the fields with the force of Xipe) and, from the smoke, a spirit runs towards the rising sun, carried by the red Xolotl. The temple is connected with the sign of a descending eagle, which connects it with the following page (p. 35).<sup>60</sup>

Everything indicates that the focus of the activities is a celebration of sunlight (fire). This prepares the Temple of Heaven for the New Fire ritual, which marks the passage from night to day, as a specific elaboration of Cihuacoatl's transforming power. Later on in the Temple Scenes chapter (p. 37) we will encounter this Temple of Heaven again, where it becomes clear that it is the Temple of the Sun God (which is repeated on pp. 40, 42 and 43). Clearly it is one temple. Pages 33 and 34 show one and the same building at different moments in time (the cutting of trees and the chopping of wood).

Looking at the representation of the ceremonial centre of Cholula in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f. 26v, we find the main temple (*Xiuhcalco*), i.e. the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, represented as one building with two pointed roofs of palm leaves and with an impressive shared staircase, surrounded by a large plaza in which several indices of rituals are painted.<sup>61</sup> It is plausible that this is the temple referred to.

When we compare the two Temple Scenes with the sequence of month-festivals that follow Tlacaxipehualiztli in the Aztec calendar, we find that they may correspond to Tozoztontli ('Small Bloodletting') and Huey Tozoztli ('Big Bloodletting'), the third and fourth month respectively. In that case the scene of a priest in the Temple of Heaven perforating his tongue (p. 33) and the sign of the maguey spine in front of Xolotl (p. 34) would be directly related to the main team of the month feast.

These two months were the ritual preparation for the zenith passage of the sun, which would have taken place towards the end of Huey Tozoztli. Nowadays this has become the feast of the Holy Cross (3 May), when people go to a natural shrine of the rain god, generally a cave (known as the 'house of rain') to ask for the rainy season to start.<sup>62</sup> In Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 24b

60 There was an eagle place in the ceremonial centre of Cholula (*Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* f. 26v–27r).

61 Compare also the double temple on the famous polychrome vessel from Nochixtlan, where To-ina (Xolotl) is also present: see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2007b: Ch. VI), as well as the recent analysis by Urcid (2014). The famous Temple of Quetzalcoatl in Cholula is supposed to have been located in the area of the Plaza de San Pedro Cholula and the church of San Gabriel (Bernal García 2006: 291).

62 See Tena (2008: 82), who calculates the last day of Huey Tozoztli as 3 May of the Julian calendar and situates the zenith passage of the sun in Tenochtitlan on midday of 8 May. Team members Posselt Santoyo and Jiménez Osorio describe the procession and prayers

and p. 25, these two feasts are painted as processions of people to the temple of the rain god Tlaloc; the offering of firewood being indeed an important element of the ritual.<sup>63</sup> We now understand why the two temples in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 33–24, are situated on, in, or near caves or earth sanctuaries (the open jaws of the alligator under them), while at the same time their roofs symbolically refer to the heaven. The appearance of Xolotl as sun-bearer within the temple chamber (p. 34) may actually refer to the zenith passage phenomenon, observable at noon as the formation of a column of light in a dark room or cave.

### 9 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Pages 35–38: Opening the Sacred Bundle

The central and first image (on page 35) is that of a priestly figure that combines the attributes of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca and possibly represents the cooperating forces of the *Aquiach* and *Tlalquiach*. Next to him a Quetzalcoatl priest in a trance (with the smoke eye motif) arrives flying on an eagle. The Quetzalcoatl priest in a trance is the same priest who performed self-sacrifice in the Temple of Heaven (p. 33). Here he is also shown (at our left hand side) making blood-offerings (from the penis perforation ritual) in the four directions to the different manifestations of Yoaltecuhtli, the lord of night (the night sun). This happens at night, in front of an altar (red disc) which is a manifestation of a complex figure: an old man, who shares attributes (characteristics) with the sun deity and with Tonacatecuhtli, the god of sustenance, while his alligator regalia connect him with Cipactonal, the archetypical calendar priest. Probably this figure indicates that the altar was dedicated to the primordial forces of creation and sustenance. The ritual activity now focuses on the night as a time of mystery, but also as a time when the sun has entered the earth and is lying at rest.

Having completed the bloodletting, the Quetzalcoatl priest goes to the Temple of Yoaltecuhtli (the night god/night sun), a temple of night and wind,

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that are part of the contemporary ritual of May 3 in their contribution ('El ritual como restablecimiento del paisaje sagrado') to the volume *Tiempo y Comunidad* (Jansen and Raffa 2015).

63 The accompanying Spanish gloss, however, states that this temple corresponded to that of Tezcatlipoca in the City of Mexico, which shows that the ritual could take place in different temples, according to local tradition. See the commentary of Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991: 197–200).

where he receives a sacred bundle. Flames surround the bundle, probably indicating that it holds the power of fire, heat and lightning. Later in the ritual we will see other references to lightning. Guided by the Quetzalcoatl-Tezcatlipoca priest(s) (*Aquiach-Tlalquiach*), the Quetzalcoatl priest carries the bundle, walking on a ceremonial road through the ceremonial centre. He passes a dark ballcourt, in the centre of which there is again an altar of the old sun priest in alligator regalia (Cipactonal – Tonacatecuhtli). In the ballcourt (a representative of) Yoaltecuhtli is standing together with another priest, holding ballgame implements in their hands. Given the surrounding darkness, they are probably not really playing ball, but carrying out a nightly ritual, invoking the powers of nature for good results in the ballgame, or in the whole ritual sequence that follows – as described by Durán (1967, 1: 209). The second priest shows the general attributes of Quetzalcoatl but is distinguished by a vertical angular stripe through his eye. We also find this particular face painting in the representation of Xolotl, who in art and narrative is closely related to Quetzalcoatl, as a type of twin brother or *nahual*.<sup>64</sup> This stripe-eyed priest is going to be an important protagonist in the following Temple Scenes, and is generally in Quetzalcoatl attire. It is probable that he is an important member of the group of Quetzalcoatl priests (*tlamacazque*) in this ceremonial centre. Perhaps the stripe-eyed motif indicates the specific link between this Quetzalcoatl priest and the dog-headed Xolotl (which in this context would refer to Xolotl's function as sun carrier).

On page 36 the figures (priests) of Quetzalcoatl-Tezcatlipoca and the dog-headed Xolotl watch how the sacred bundle is opened. An enormous trance-inducing power emanates from its centre (represented as a casket or *tepetlacalli*) with the sound of a flute and engulfs the ball-player, the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest, who sets forth on a shamanic flight.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, currents of night and wind pour forth from the bundle in all directions, carrying all kinds of ceremonial objects/beings: maguey and maize, jade and blood, hummingbirds in different colours and obsidian knife spirits. The

64 Cf. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 26. The dark ballcourt recalls the term *nahuallachtli*, 'nahuall ballcourt', where Xolotl, 'Lord of the Precious Stones', played ball, while Piltzintecuhtli, the sun god, rested in the house of night (hymn in Sahagún, Book II Appendix). A *nahuallachtli* was part of the ceremonial centre of Cholula (*Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* f 16v and f 21v).

65 In Chapter 5 we saw how the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) also describes such a shamanic journey: the dark path of a priest who carries a sacred bundle to the mountain where the New Fire will be kindled. This parallel is further confirmation that the Temple Scenes of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) are related to a New Fire ceremony. For the relationship of the sacred bundle, the cave cult and the New Fire ritual see also Olivier (2007).

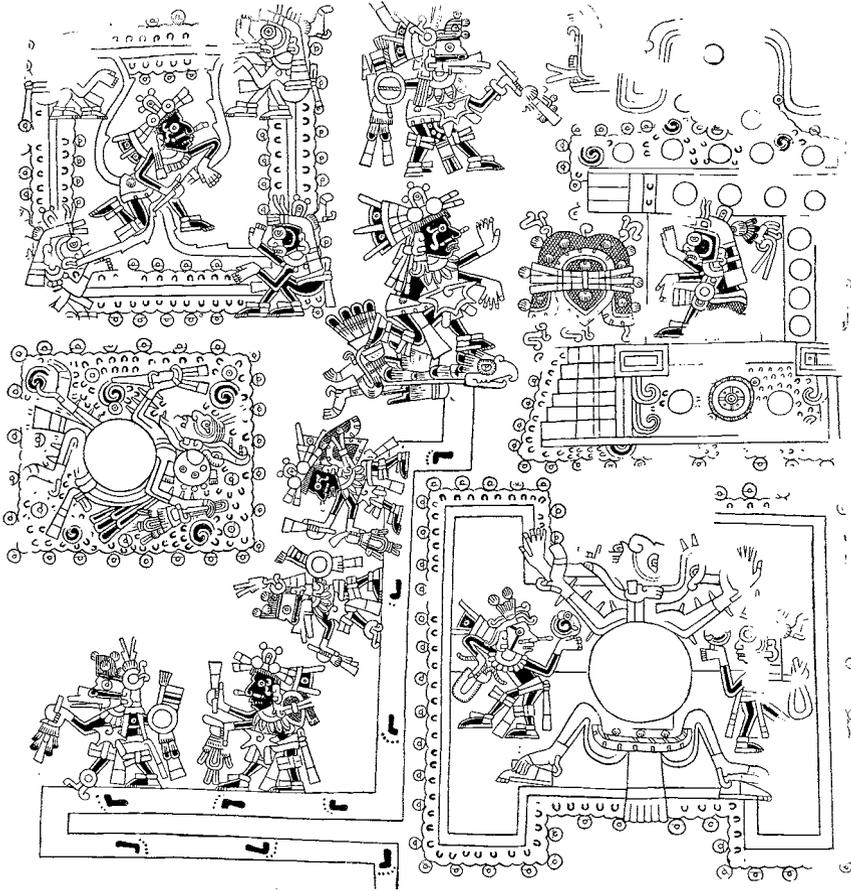


ILLUSTRATION 7.21 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 35 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

organisation of these signs suggests a structure in couplets, which, in turn, indicates that the scene is to be read as a ceremonial discourse (an invocation).

While the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest is in trance, a complex set of ritual events takes place in the ceremonial centre between the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Lightning, where the dog-headed Xolotl rules (page 37). Priests painted in different colours are seated on mountains with maguey spines and with copal bags: evidently they are doing bloodletting rituals on mountains in the four directions. A female priest (devoted to the goddess Xochiquetzal) holding bowls of food stands in front of the temple (on the right-hand side of the scene); a rain priest appears out of clouds and vapours with a spirited jar, and a maize stalk stands in front of Xolotl's temple. On the other side a priest of the sun god is singing and beating a drum in the Temple

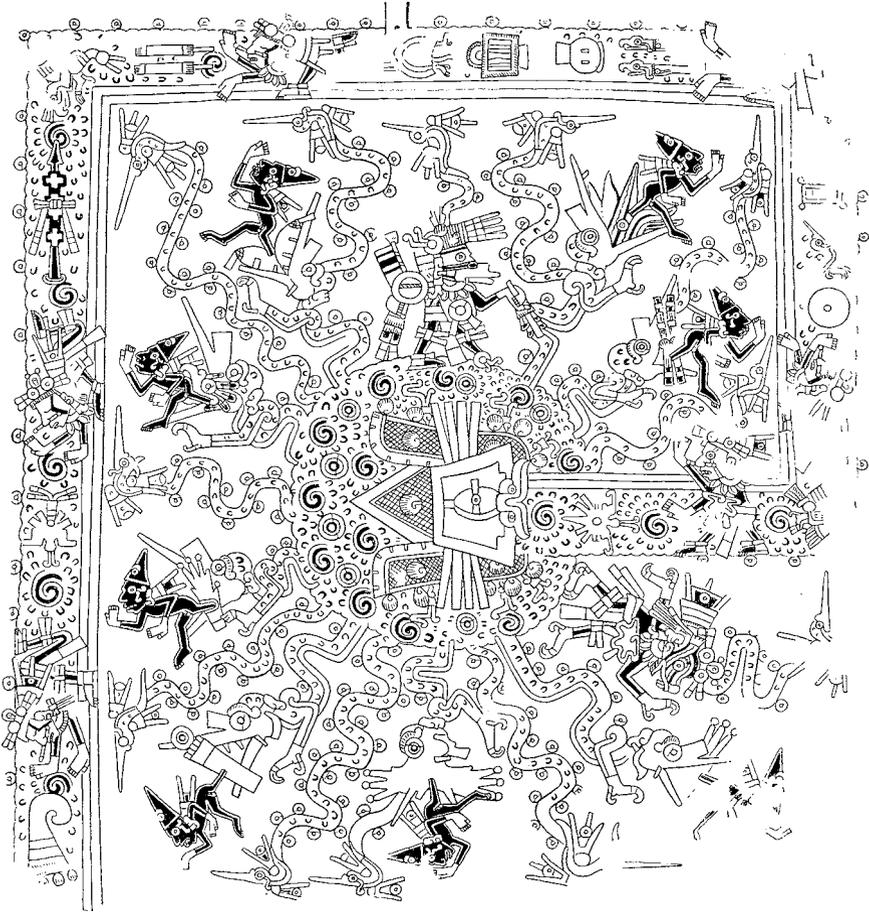


ILLUSTRATION 7.22 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 36 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

of Heaven. Xolotl appears dancing on a precious altar above an entrance to earth. He holds a decorated paper knot in one hand and a fire serpent in the other. Spirited obsidian blades and manifestations of the goddess of the hearth (Chantico) approach, also holding this same paper ornament in their hands. Thus, in the midst of a congregation of priests or rather spirits (*tlamacazque*), the dog-headed Xolotl invokes the powers of rain and lightning, situated on four round altars that represent the four spheres of heaven, characterised by the directional colours. Then Xolotl lies down on another altar or base, next to the round *nahual* altar that forms also part of a *Ñuu Dzau*i ceremonial centre in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 15 ff.

A spirit of the black and white seeing device (*tlachialoni*) and the staff of feathers (*ihuitopilli*) comes forth from this round altar, holding a copal bag and

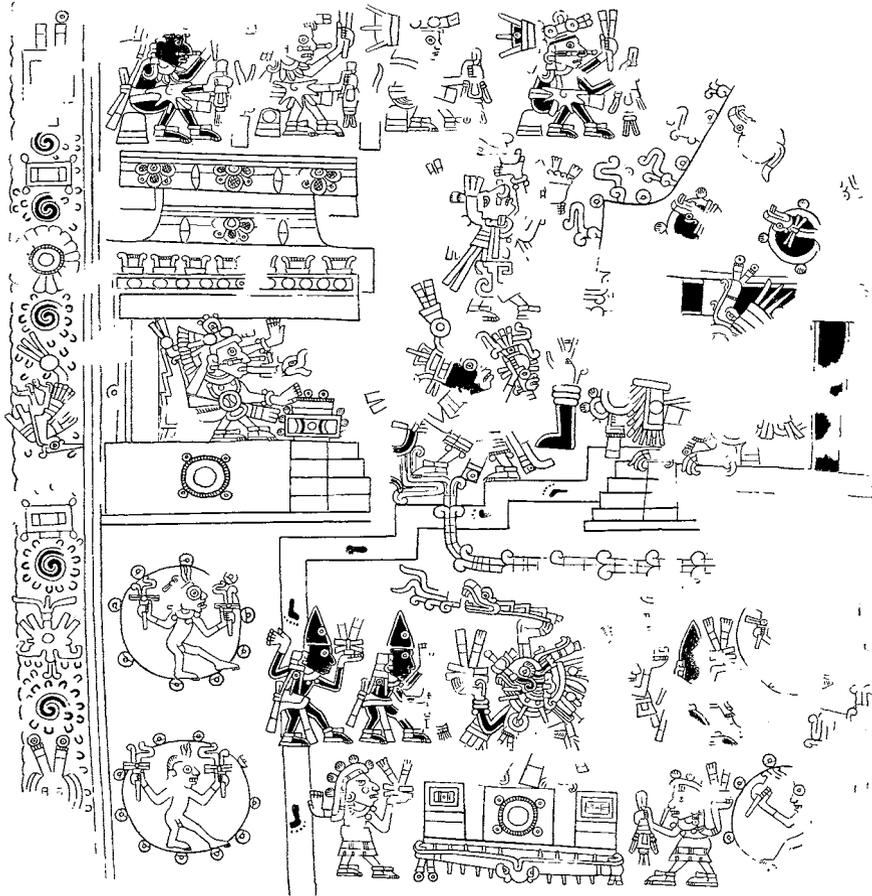


ILLUSTRATION 7.23 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 37 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

a bloodletting implement. This spirit may symbolise the combined powers of the obsidian spirits (as belonging to Tezcatlipoca) and the female spirits (belonging to Chantico).<sup>66</sup> This concentrated sign has captured other spirits: they are seated with their hands tied behind their backs and they are being covered with blankets, i.e. converted into sacred bundles.

The invocation of the lightning spirits in the different colours of the four world directions brings to mind the narrative about Quetzalcoatl and the

66 The *tlachialoni* is an attribute of Tezcatlipoca, Huitzilipochtli and the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli-Ixcozauhqui (see their representations in the first book of Sahagún). The *ihuitopilli* appears with the goddess of the hearth, Chantico, in the Sahagún's *Primeros Memoriales*. We see the combination of both as a ceremonial staff carried by some gods of the alcoholic beverage *pulque* (cf. Codex Magliabechi, p. 55).

opening of the mountain of sustenance (which we mentioned in Chapter 5). Indeed, the next scene shows an elderly priestly couple (Cipactonal and Oxomoco) bringing offerings to a jar with the leaf, flower and corncob of the maize plant (similar to or identical with the plant placed in front of the Xolotl temple). They do so in front of the spirits that are being converted into sacred bundles.

All this happens next to a precious square dedicated to Tepeyollotl (the mountain god) and Chalchiuhtlicue (the water goddess). As deities of 'mountain and water', they are the protectors of the community (referred to with the *difrasismo in atl in tepetl*, or in contracted form *altepetl*, 'water, mountain'). The inside of the square is red: probably this is a fireplace (compare a similar scene on page 46). This would suggest that here the bundles and different representations (*ixiptla*) of the gods – e.g. images of paper, copal or rubber and their regalia – are burned after the ritual is over. From the precious centre of this fireplace, the heart of the community (*altepetl iyollo*) a spirit emerges holding a corncob. Powerful plumed serpents surround this miraculous birth with their *nahual* power: in their wide opened jaws appear as in a vision the faces of four deities, which will return in later scenes (pp. 39 and 43).

Meanwhile the stripe-eye priest has awakened from his trance (page 38). He arrives at a scene of struggle at the bank of a river, stream or pond, a struggle between the power of Cihuacoatl and the power of Tlaloc, the rain god. Cihuacoatl falls backward into the water of a pond or river, apparently pushed by the approaching Tlaloc, but then hits him with the curved staff that is an attribute (weapon) of Quetzalcoatl and was part of the ceremonial objects prepared (connected by the rope of bloodletting) on page 33.<sup>67</sup> Possibly it is the Quetzalcoatl priest himself, still in trance, still under the spell of Cihuacoatl, who is resisting the water of Tlaloc. Falling into the water, the Cihuacoatl manifestation transforms into an *ahuehuete* tree, which is the mirror tree, Tezcacuahuitl, the cosmic tree that sustains the heavens.<sup>68</sup>

The long scene finishes with a ritual act in which a priest of Tlaloc bathes the awakened stripe-eye priest and cleanses him of the hallucinogenic ointment.

67 On page 56 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) we see this staff in the hand of Quetzalcoatl. Similar depictions: Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48, and Libro de la Vida (Codex Magliabechi), p. 61r.

68 The drum (*huehuetl*) characterises the tree as an *ahuehuetl*. Durán (1967, 1: 173) documents the religious veneration of such trees, considered divine and mysterious, and of the corresponding springs. Here this tree is also the primordial mirror tree mentioned in the *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas* (Garibay 1979: 32). A similar mirror tree is represented on the sarcophagus of Lord Pakal (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2013: Ch. v1).

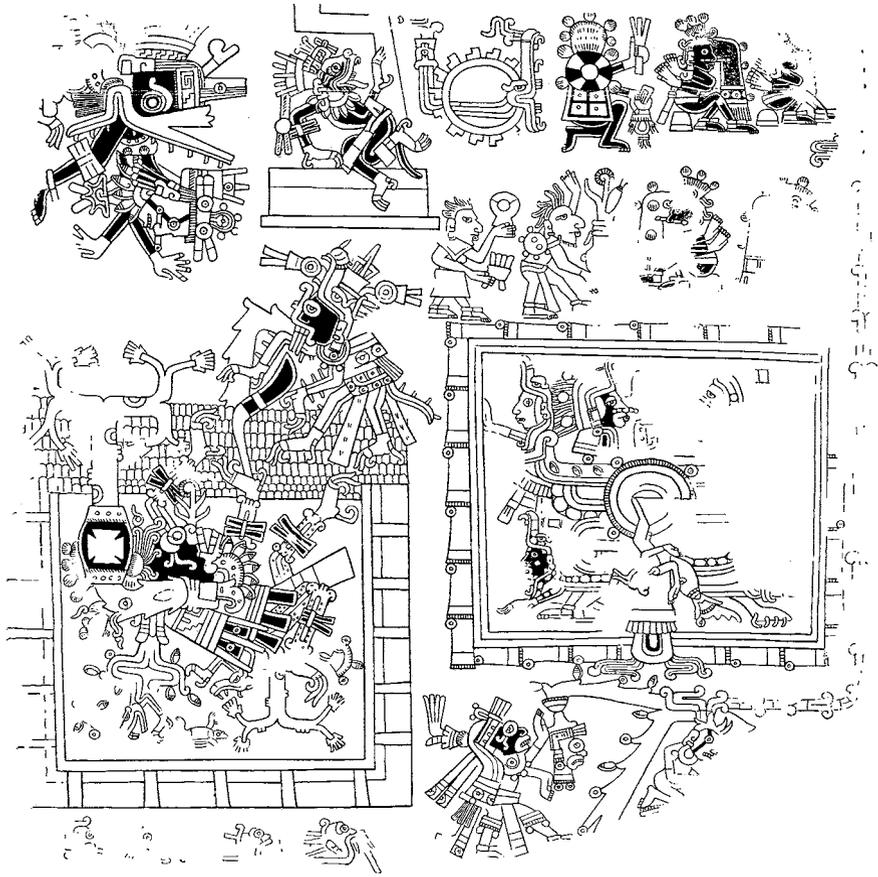


ILLUSTRATION 7.24 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 38 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

An enormous steam column rises, which transports the rain spirit back to the Temple of Lightning (from p. 38 to p. 37).

Comparing this arrangement with the ceremonial centre of Cholula in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f. 26v, we find an important river flowing in front of the main temple and a spring at the foot of the overgrown ancient pyramid (Tlachihualtepetl). The precious altar (platform), where Xolotl invokes the lightning spirits of the four directions, may refer to the Chalchiuhtepetl, 'Precious Mountain', another name for the Classic Great Pyramid (Tlachihualtepetl).

Supposing that this ritual sequence followed the fourth month Huey Tozoztli (p. 34), the penis perforation in the opening scene (p. 35) may refer back to a ritual preparation that still was part (or a direct continuation) of that earlier month, which focused on bloodletting. At the same time the prominent

presence of Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror) in this section (p. 35) might be explained as a link with the fifth month Toxcatl ('Popcorn' or 'Drought').<sup>69</sup> In Tenochtitlan Toxcatl was indeed devoted to Tezcatlipoca: a time for asking the gods for strength both for the work on the land and for war.<sup>70</sup> This would also explain the warrior aspect of Quetzalcoatl-Tezcatlipoca priest (on page 35). The heavy darkness that surrounds the opening of the bundle may include a reference to the intensive burning of incense that was going on during the month Toxcatl, which therefore was also known as *Tepopochhuiliztli* or *Tepopochtli* ('Incensing').<sup>71</sup>

In the second part of this complex ritual sequence (pp. 37–38) we see (the priest of) Tlaloc, the rain god, becoming prominent and (the priest of) Xolotl standing or dancing on an altar related to a cave, invoking the spirits of lightning. Tlaloc appears with a water vessel and a maize plant. All this is suggestive of the sixth month, Etzalcualiztli ('Eating Corn and Beans'), which corresponds to the beginning of the rainy season and was devoted to Tlaloc. During the ritual dances of this feast Xolotl, Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc played a prominent role.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, the instruments of labour received ritual respect – maybe this is reflected in the role of the obsidian spirits and of the bundles honoured by Cipactonal and Oxomoco. The latter scene (on page 38) is framed by a personified *tlachialoni* sign, which appears as an emblem of the Toxcatl feast<sup>73</sup> and by a jar with the leaf, flower and corncob of the maize plant, which is the known sign of the Etzalcualiztli feast.<sup>74</sup> This would suggest that the activity started in the month Toxcatl and continued in the next month Etzalcualiztli.

Comparing the images of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, pp. 37–38, with the description of the Etzalcualiztli feast by Sahagún (Book 11: Ch. 25)<sup>75</sup> we notice that both sources have a different focus but share several details. Sahagún mentions:

69 The Tovar Calendar states: '... toxcatl, which means the drought or sterility of the land. They celebrated it during April because there was a great want for water, for in this land the rains begin at this time'. (Kubler and Gibson 1951: 24).

70 Cf. Codex Vaticanus A, f 44.

71 Cf. Codex Cihuoatl (Borbonicus), p. 26; Motolinia, *Memoriales* (1971): Ch. XVI and the *Relación Geográfica de Teotitlan del Camino* (Acuña 1984, II: 1999).

72 Codex Cihuoatl (Borbonicus), p. 26; Libro de la Vida (Codex Magliabechi), p. 33v; Codex Vaticanus A, f 45r.

73 See the Tovar Calendar (Kubler and Gibson 1951: plate VI) and Libro de la Vida (Codex Magliabechi), p.33r.

74 See the images of this feast, for example, in Codex Vaticanus A, f. 50r, the Tovar Calendar (Kubler and Gibson 1951: plate VI) and Libro de la Vida (Codex Magliabechi), p. 34r.

75 Compare Durán 1967, I: 54.

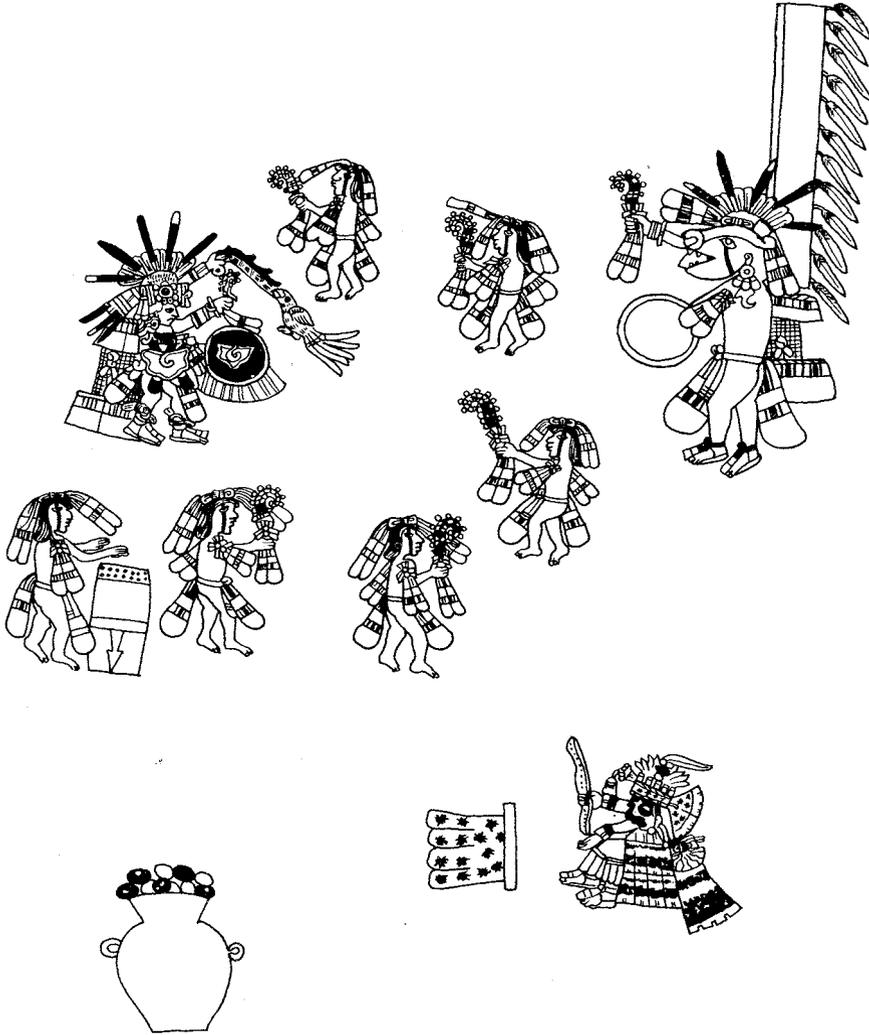


ILLUSTRATION 7.25 *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus)*, p. 26: *Etzalcualiztli*.

- priests fasting for the rain god (the seated priests on page 37),
- the importance of sauce (*molli*) and, of course, the *etzalli* (meal of corn and beans) itself as food (which may be indicated by the bowls in the hands of the priestess of Xochiquetzal on page 37),
- a singing priest, beating the drum, such as we see in the Temple of Heaven (p. 37),<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> The same act is represented as part of this feast on page 26 of *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus)*.

- the old priest that carries the gourd with powdered tobacco on his back (as Cipactonal on page 38),
- the preparation of shoulder rosettes and paper neck adornments for the priests (as do the spirits that approach Xolotl on page 37),
- the burning of the paper offerings and the quetzal feathers towards the end of the feast (which may be implied in the image of the red square).

The elaborated and heavily decorated Xolotl in the temple of mirrors and fire seems to correspond to the fire priest of the temple of Tlaloc in Sahagún's description, who wore an elaborated feather crown. Xolotl's invocation of the lightning spirits in the four heavenly spheres is comparable to the fire priest of Tlaloc placing four round green stones on a mat, turning them around and incensing them.

The confrontation between Cihuacoatl and Tlaloc that the stripe-eyed priest is watching when coming out of his trance (p. 38) has its counterpart in the way persons who had misbehaved were detained and cast into the water, as a punishment in the form of a ritual struggle.

And when they had arrived there, the [chief] fire priest and the other fire priests thereupon [sacrificially] burned the papers and the gods molded in incense, and those formed of rubber. And the incense they scattered in various directions and spread over each of the reed mats. And when this was done, it was as if they wounded the water when they cast [their captives] into the water. Like a roaring host the water stormed and rose. And if any tried to come out from under the water, they plunged him under, [so that] he sank deep. And if any were experienced in water, when [the captors] had submerged them, they fared well. They came out of the water at a distance, and then took off, fleeing and escaping. And some, in truth, [the captors] caused to faint, and verily they swooned. Indeed, they left them, hurt, truly as if dead, laid out at the water's edge.... And when all this had come to pass, then all turned back, all returned again, blowing their conch shells as they went. And those who had been cast into the water went only to their houses; their kinfolk accompanied them. They were sickened, trembling, shivering, that at home they might recover.

SAHAGÚN, Book 2: Ch. 25

The last scene of the Etzalcualiztli feast also corresponds to what we see in the codex:

And when dawn broke, thereupon all the priests washed the blue color from their foreheads, over at the priests' bathing place. (loc. cit.)

This interpretation implies that the opening of the sacred bundle and the trance of the acting priest would have taken place during the two successive 20-day periods of Toxcatl and Etzalcualiztli.

We conclude that these pages (33–38) do not have a clear direct correspondence to a specific festival or 20-day month, but that the portrayed rituals do show some general similarities and connections to what was customary in the period after Tlacaxipehualiztli, including the first zenith passage of the sun and the beginning of the rainy season. Again we see that the Temple Scenes chapter focuses on the activities of a specific group of priests, but in doing so occasionally shows in the background the ritual activities that were going on in the community.

### 10 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Pages 39–40: The Night Sun

The scene on page 39 has a clear vertical structure. On top is Cihuacoatl with the customary star eyes that refer to the night sky (Milky Way) and the knives that may represent thunder and lightning. From the breast (heart) of the goddess a Quetzalcoatl *tlamacazqui* (priest, spirit) comes forward (descends) in a dark cloud related to death (ancestors). In the centre of the page again the same or a similar Quetzalcoatl *tlamacazqui* appears with the same stripe-eye face painting as the priest that went into trance in the past Temple Scene; here he is singing and playing the drum, accompanying (a priest of) the sun god, who plays the flute.

Around them a group of twelve girls are dancing and clapping. Through their regalia these girls are manifesting that they are dedicating themselves to aspects of the Mother Goddess: the ornament of a half moon on their skirts is a typical attribute of Tlalzolteotl. On each side three personages are watching, all wearing the regalia of gods and armed as warriors, each holding a spear thrower, darts and a shield. The personage on the upper row on the right wears a headdress that combines elements of the sun god with the general appearance of the fire god: we may call him the sun/fire god (cf. pp. 43 and 46). In front of him (on the left) stands Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Venus). On the central row on our left is a Quetzalcoatl figure, who is similar to Tepeyollotl (the lord of the mountain), and on our right a death god, probably the Cihuacoatl priest. They seem to be located in the four directions (the sun in the East, death in the South), while also being associated with the three layers of the universe: heaven (sun, Venus) – earth (the wind or mountain god) – underworld (death). Later in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (on pages 49–53, upper register) we find the same deities (Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli – Sun/Fire god – Quetzalcoatl – Death god) as bearers of the night sky: in that night sky they carry the day signs Grass (XII),

Movement (xvii), Wind (ii) and Deer (vii), each of which stands for the eve of one of the year-bearer days (Reed, Flint, House and Rabbit respectively). The year bearers on pages 49–53 are associated with large images that symbolise different aspects of the four directions: Reed in the East, Flint in the North, House in the West and Rabbit in the South. From this we conclude that the four deities on page 39 are the patrons of the four different types of years (named after the days Reed, Flint, House and Rabbit) and carriers of heaven in the four directions. The days Wind – Deer – Grass – Movement surround the dance of the girls in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, p. 39. We interpret them in the same way as the encircled days on page 30: as days marked for bloodletting within a 20-day period. Here (on page 39) the days are those that precede the year bearers and as such are specifically associated with the four mentioned deities (as is clear from the scenes on pages 49–53). Apparently the ritual focuses on the eve of the year-bearer, the darkness that precedes the new light.

On the lower row of page 39 we see the black Tezcatlipoca (on the right) and the red Tezcatlipoca (on the left), which appear to be leading the (devotees of the) other four deities.

The combination of women dressed in the regalia of Tlazolteotl and gods presented as warriors suggests that the men and the girls are re-enacting, through ritual performance, the souls of the warriors who have died in combat (the *Tonalteque*), who accompany the sun from the eastern horizon to midday, and the souls of the women who have died in childbirth (the deified women or *Cihuateteo*), who accompany the sun from midday to the western horizon. This suggests that the ritual is taking place at midday, and that the girls go on from there, following the priests in the centre playing music. The two priests are in a descending position in a red circle, which might be interpreted as indicating that they are accompanying the sun god in his descent to the west.

The girls go dancing on the road to a cave or cavity, which is represented as the opened maw of a huge alligator. The alligator has the head of an old (white-haired) man with a face paint (red lines around the eyes) that is characteristic of the sun god. In other words, the cave is associated with or dedicated to the old sun, which shares attributes with Tonacatecuhtli and Cipactonal (cf. page 35).

The alligator's skin forms a big square lined with bands of day signs: clearly a specially marked area. The priests of the sun god and Quetzalcoatl enter here together with spirits of death (dead ancestors). All hold knives. In the centre of the area within the alligator skin a big male figure is seated or lying down. His body is painted black and covered with star eyes. His head has the same solar face painting of the red line around the eyes. We identify him as the god of night or night sun, Yoaltecuhtli, who also appears on page 35.

Nine suns or solar forces (*tonalli*) are visible in the articulations (animic centres) of the night sun.<sup>77</sup> The repeated image of nine *tonalli* suggests that the poetic parallelism of ceremonial discourse may be directing the image. A variety of Quetzalcoatl priests are sacrificing these suns with flint knives and in each case are taking out the heart. Centrally placed among them is the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest, who here appears in a black hummingbird attire. The hummingbird was considered an aggressive bird – among the Aztecs it specifically represented the sun in his warrior aspect: their patron god Huitzilopochtli. Here it appears to indicate the *nahual* power of the priest, connected with the sphere of warriors. The priest in black hummingbird attire will return on page 44, sitting on a tree.

Below the central scene two sanctuaries – the Temple of the Sun and the Temple of Night and Wind – flank a ballcourt, surrounded by darkness. In the temples persons representing gods are seated on thrones: they are identical to the priests of the sun god and Quetzalcoatl who had entered the area surrounded by the alligator skin. In the palace-temple of the Sun the priest or devotee of the sun god holds his hands open in a gesture of adoration; the red Tezcatlipoca enters the building and grabs the seated lord by his hair, i.e. overpowers him. Similarly, Tlazolteotl-Cihuacoatl enters the Temple of Night and Wind and subdues the seated and praying Quetzalcoatl priest. The victorious red Tezcatlipoca and Tlazolteotl appear again, standing at the ends of the ballcourt. They are watching a central container or brazier, above which a spirit of death (ancestors), now filled with light or heat (red colour), gives birth to a child above a precious bowl.<sup>78</sup>

The scene of priests/spirits sacrificing the nine suns on the body of a dark sun within an area surrounded by an alligator skin with series of day-signs is obviously a symbolic image. Milbrath (2013) sees this page as the register of a specific solar eclipse. As we do not share her idea of a page-by-page correlation between the Temple Scenes and the eighteen months of the Aztec year, we are not convinced of her dating of this eclipse in the month Miccailhuitontli, and therefore do not read the scene as a description of a particular eclipse in August 1496. We do agree, however, that there is an interesting link with the symbolism and ritual practices related to eclipses in general.

At first sight the association of this Temple Scene with an eclipse is strengthened by the image of the dark sun being sacrificed (p. 40): in Mesoamerica an

77 On the *tonalli* concept and the animic centres, see López Austin (1980: Ch. 6).

78 The child still has closed eyes as in the first scenes of pp. 15–16 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia).

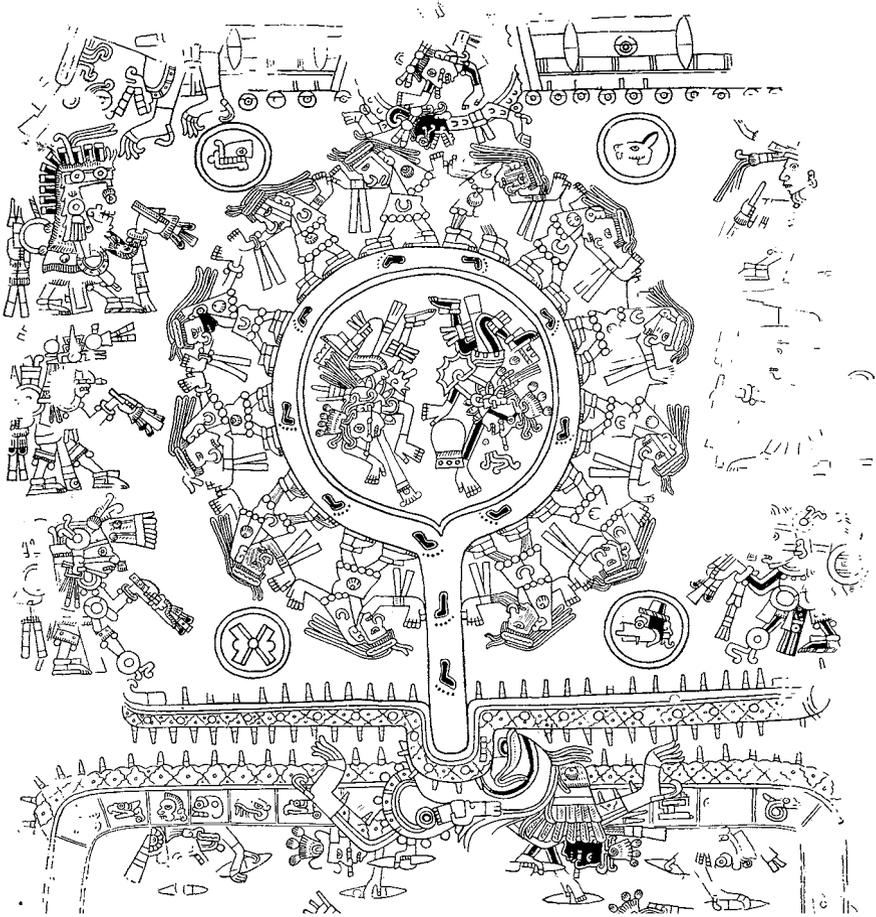


ILLUSTRATION 7.26 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 39 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

eclipse is referred to as the death of the sun. The colonial treatise of Jacinto de la Serna provides another important indication:

The enemy of humankind ... wanted them to also offer him men and women in sacrifice; so when these natives had made their temples to the Sun and the Moon in the town of Teotihuacan, which was their Rome, and Place of the Gods (the meaning of that name), he ordered a plot [of land] for them to sacrifice people to him in those *cues*, or temples that stood there; and as he has knowledge of nature, which he did not lose although he lost grace because of his sin, he anticipated that there was going to be a full solar eclipse, and as he knew the day and the hour when

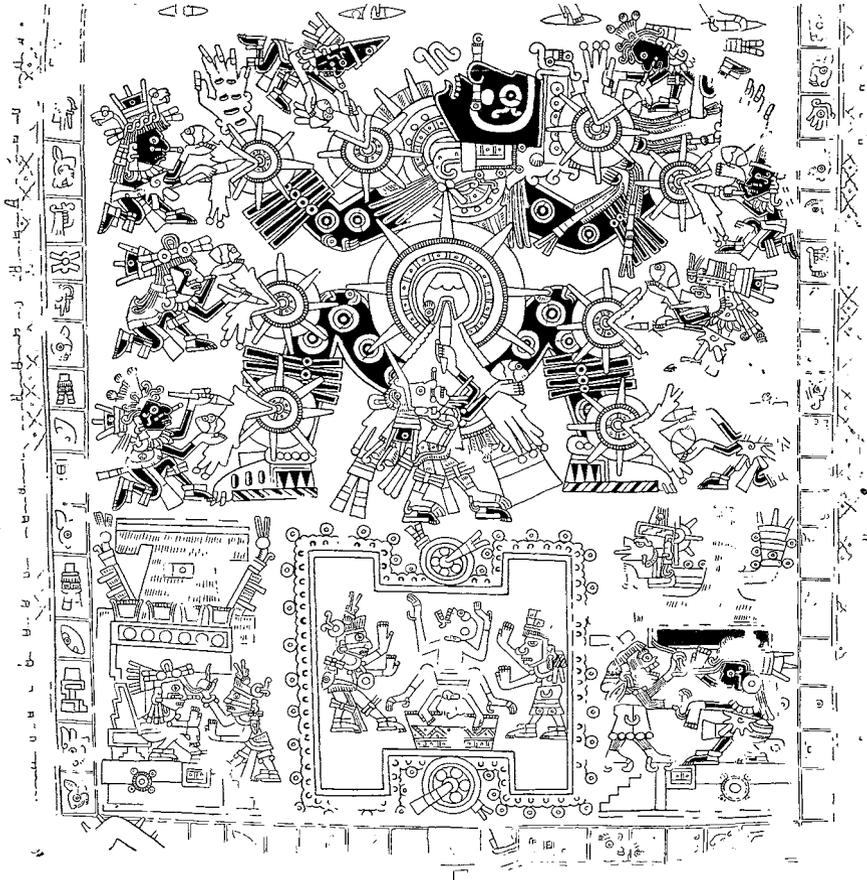


ILLUSTRATION 7.27 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 40 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

that would happen, he gave them orders some days before as to how the priests of the temples of the Sun and Moon should make it known how those gods were very angry, and that on such and such a day they would hide their light as punishment for their sins and oversights in their duties and in sacrificing men and women to them; and that they must prepare sacrifices for that day to appease them

They then chose twelve young men and twelve maidens, and made the young men dance hand in hand in front of the Temple of the Sun; and the same thing they made the maidens do in front of that of the Moon. And this they did until the day of the natural eclipse arrived. And when the Indians saw that the light had gone, they threw the sacrificed male Indians into the bonfires in front of the Temple of the Sun and the female

[sacrificed] Indians into those in front of the Temple of the Moon; and as they saw that the sun had risen, beautiful and resplendent with natural splendour, because the impediment of the eclipse had finished, they considered that those gods had been appeased by those sacrifices.

SERNA 1953: CH. 12, 2 §§ 321–322

Serna's text would suggest that the dance of the twelve girls hand in hand (depicted on page 39) was part of a ritual associated with a (full) solar eclipse. Serna's reference to Teotihuacan suggests that such a ritual was considered to be very ancient and to go back to Classic times. It is interesting that, according to this Mesoamerican tradition, the people of Teotihuacan already had knowledge of the mechanism of the solar eclipses and were capable of predicting one to the day and the hour. The burning of the sacrificed boys and girls refers back to the narrative of the creation of the sun and moon at Teotihuacan, which Serna includes in his preceding chapter: both sun and moon had been persons who threw themselves into the fire and by making that sacrifice became the light-giving gods.

The main correspondence of Serna's text with the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) is that of the dance of the twelve girls holding hands, but there are differences as well. The image in the codex does not include the twelve boys, which in Serna's text play the most prominent role, as they are associated with the Temple of the Sun. Serna's text states that the girls performed the dance in front of the Temple of the Moon (in Teotihuacan) and were sacrificed there. The codex does not show any sacrifices of boys and girls, nor the bonfires in which they would have been burned. One might consider the nine-fold sacrifice of the dark sun as a veiled representation of such a sacrifice, but there is no direct link in the image between the girls and the sacrificed sun discs (also the number does not coincide). The dark sun should not be confused with the moon, which is represented quite differently in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (cf. p. 11 and p. 18).

An eclipse is represented in the last image of Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 24. The god of death is blowing darkness onto the precious disc of the sun god. At the same time, he is sacrificing a white man. The scene is explained by information from early colonial sources about the sacrifice of albinos on the occasion of an eclipse.

When an eclipse occurred, they made great and fear-inspiring sacrifices (especially if it was a solar eclipse), because they thought that they were going to be destroyed, as they did not yet understand the secret of nature. And they searched for all the white or hairless men and women that

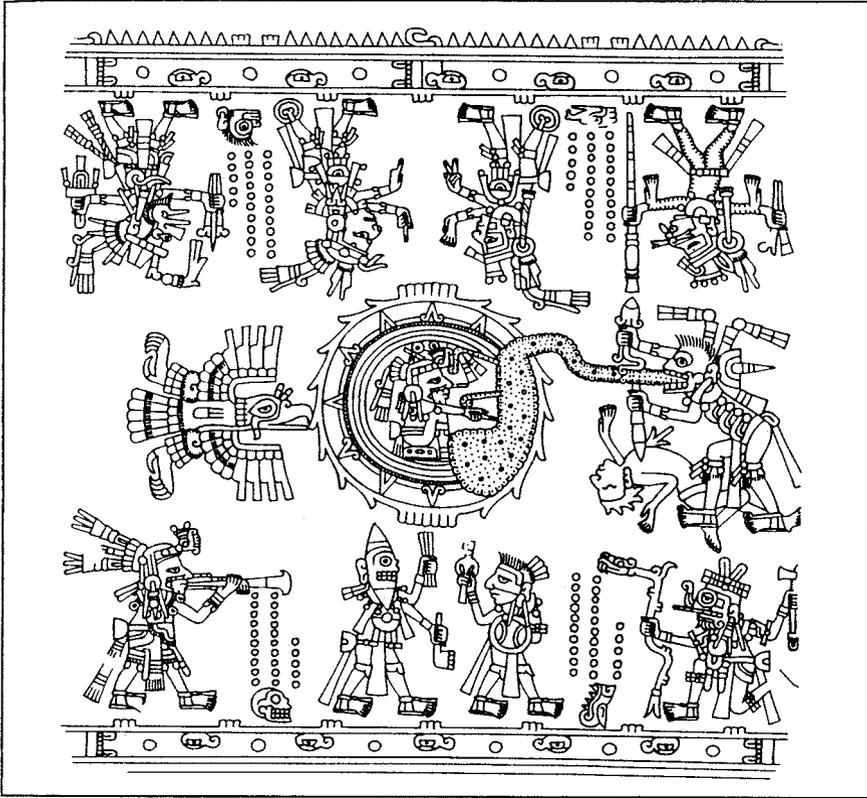


ILLUSTRATION 7.28 *Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 24: the eclipse ritual.*

they could find, and those they killed and sacrificed to appease the sun. With this act they seemed to recall the death of their gods by the sun.... They shouted and screamed loudly on the occasion of a solar eclipse, and equally when an eclipse of the moon happened, or when they saw some other signal or comet in the sky, though not as much as in the case of an eclipse of the sun.<sup>79</sup>

MENDIETA 1971: 101

The context of *Codex Mictlan* suggests, however, that the image on page 24 has a mantic meaning, which, in turn, also points to another possible reading of the colonial text. The mantic meaning would be that an eclipse (particularly in the associated time periods) is dangerous for 'white and hairless men': the

79 The reference to the death of the gods hints at the sacrifice of the gods on the occasion of the first sunrise.

death god might take their lives. In the hostile interpretation by the friars – several decades after the end of the precolonial period – this mantic prediction was transformed into a statement about a supposed general practice, suggesting that on the occasion of an eclipse albinos were rounded up and massacred.

The scene depicted in Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 24, has several similarities with that of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 40. In both cases the sign of Earth (the skin and jaws of the alligator) surrounds the sacrificial scene. In both cases there are nine personages involved. In Codex Yoalli Ehecatl nine priests sacrifice sun discs which are situated in the articulations of the night sun. In Codex Mictlan the death god makes the sacrifice, but he is surrounded by eight other gods: Xiuhtecuhtli and Tlaloc, Tecpatl and the sun god, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (as manifestation of the black Tezcatlipoca) and Quetzalcoatl, Xipe and Tepeyollotl (both as manifestations of the red Tezcatlipoca). Several of these deities are also mentioned in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl, p. 39.

On the other hand, the scene of dancing girls or women is not uniquely characteristic of an eclipse ritual. During the festival of Tlaxochimaco (Offering of Flowers), the ninth 20-day period, also known as Miccailhuitontli (Small Festival of the Dead), there was an impressive dance that started at noon and went as a large serpent through the community, led by the most valiant warriors. Women participated in it, hand in hand with the men: one woman between two men and one man between two women, all singing (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 28).

According to Serna the aim of the ritual that started with the dance of the girls was to appease the sun god and to make him shine again in full splendour. Similarly, the purpose of the sacrifice of an albino, according to Mendieta, was to appease the sun god. Reading these statements in their Mesoamerican context we understand that the rituals were intended to give the sun back his force (*tonalli*). Obviously there was a need to do so after an eclipse, but also other occasions should be considered.

An image of the sun in the maw of the earth occurs in Codex Vaticanus A, f. 29r. The accompanying text clarifies:

This means: between light and darkness, what we call *crepusculum* (twilight) and so they paint this picture of the roundness of the earth: as a man who bears the sun on his shoulders and has the night and death under his feet, meaning that when the sun goes to die he goes to bring warmth and light to the dead.<sup>80</sup>

80 Original Italian text: 'Questo significa fra la luce et le Tenebre, che noi dicemo *crepusculum* e così dipingono questa figura della rotondita della terra come un huomo che à sopra le spalle

This passage suggests that the Mesoamerican concept of the dying sun is not applied exclusively to an eclipse, but also more generally to sunset and twilight.

The general character of the scenes, as we explained at the beginning of this chapter, is that of a series of ritual activities leading up to a New Fire ceremony (p. 46), which most likely would evoke similar associations as the restoration of the sun's force after an eclipse. In that context the image on page 40 might also refer to another moment of darkness that would anticipate the last sunset of a calendar cycle to be followed by a New Fire ceremony.

If we project the idea of such a ritual event onto a ritual landscape, we can uncover more layers of information in pages 39–40. The open jaws of the alligator represent the surface of and entrance to the earth. In terms of the ceremonial centre, this place is probably a sunken courtyard. Here the two main priests enter, accompanied by the spirits of the dead ancestors. The Quetzalcoatl priest turns out to be a whole group of priests. During their sacrificial acts the god (Yoaltecuhtli) speaks: perhaps hymns are sung on the occasion or the god made himself heard. At one end of the sunken court (p. 40) stood two temples, flanking a central ballcourt.<sup>81</sup> The ballcourt is surrounded by darkness, suggesting that here night has fallen: that would be the final image of this sequence.

The figure of the dark sun (Yoaltecuhtli) has some interesting iconographical details: his hands have the protuberances that are characteristic of stone. Combining this detail with the large sun disc in the centre of the figure, we understand the image as a stone monument, probably a round altar with a sun carved on top (such as the Stone of Tizoc or the Calendar Stone).<sup>82</sup> In addition, his hands and feet show black spots on a yellow background, which represent jaguar skin. In combination with the solar elements we read this image as Ocelotonatiuh, the Jaguar Sun, the first Sun of creation (see Chapter 6). Thus we arrive at an interpretation of the image as an altar dedicated to Yoaltecuhtli, but particularly to the sun(s) of primordial time, specifically Ocelotonatiuh, the Jaguar Sun. It is fitting that this altar is located in a sunken courtyard dedicated to the old sun and associated with Cipactonal as the first priest and inventor

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*il sole e sotto li piedi la Notte e la morte volendo intender che quando il sole va à morire va à scaldare et illuminar li Morti?*

- 81 The sanctuary of the Old Sun, the Temple of Night and Wind, and the dark ballcourt are also mentioned on page 35 of this codex; the Sun Temple is probably the same as the Temple of Heaven (see p. 37). These buildings are present again on page 42.
- 82 Another example is the greenstone altar with the sun motif, identified by its calendar name: 4 Movement, which is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Matos Moctezuma and Solís Holguín 2002: 278). The *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, ff. 27v–28r, mentions a round stone monument called *quauhtemalacatl*.

of the calendar. We see a parallel with the spatial organisation of pages 33–35: on one side the Temple of Heaven, on the other the Temple of Night and Wind, next to the ballcourt and the (sunken) patio of the old sun in alligator attire.

We have identified elements of the previous ritual (on page 38) as references to the sixth month-feast, *Etzalcualiztli*, the central deity of which was the Rain God (Tlaloc). The focus on the Sun god in a dark, nocturnal aspect here (on page 40) suggests that a supreme yet critical moment in the annual solar cycle has arrived. Looking at the time of the year we notice that the summer solstice would occur towards the end of *Etzalcualiztli* and the beginning of the next period, which would comprise the seventh month, *Tecuilhuitontli* ('Small Feast of the Lords'), and the eighth month, *Huey Tecuilhuitl* ('Big Feast of the Lords').<sup>83</sup>

In this respect it is interesting that the Classic Great Pyramid (Tlachihualtepetl) in Cholula is oriented toward the point of sunset at the summer solstice, which produced a special hierophany at that time (McCafferty 1996: 13). At Cholula the sun at summer solstice is seen descending in a straight line behind the Tlachihualtepetl pyramid above the volcano Iztaccihuatl (Bernal García 2006: 263). We recall that Iztaccihuatl, the 'White Woman', may be interpreted as a manifestation of Cihuacoatl because of her colour. That hierophany, therefore, would be a spatial correlate of the theme we find in these pages of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl*.

The ritual of the seventh month, *Tecuilhuitontli*, according to Sahagún (Book 11: Ch. 26) celebrated the goddess *Huixtocihuatl*, the elder sister of the rain gods and the patron of salt, salt beds and salt makers. For ten days, women would perform dances, ordered in rows, holding each other with flower-cords and singing in a very high treble, like the *centzontli* bird. Elder priests of the temple led them; an old man carried a representation of *Huixtocihuatl* in the form of a brilliant feather ornament in his arms. The night of the tenth day they sang and danced all night in vigil. The day after, according to Sahagún, a group of captives and finally also the impersonator of *Huixtocihuatl* were killed in sacrifice on the top of the Temple of Tlaloc in Tenochtitlan; her heart was raised as an offering to the gods and placed in a green stone jar.

We notice a structural correspondence between Sahagún's description and the pages 39–40 of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl*: both versions start with dances of women, refer to a ritual at night and finish with sacrifices. The dancing girls accompany the sun in the afternoon – possibly on the day of the summer solstice – into the sunken courtyard (symbolising Earth) where different *Quetzalcoatl* priests make sacrifices on the round stone altar dedicated to the Sun of first

83 Tena (2008: 48) calculates 30 June 1520 (Julian) as 19 *Tecuilhuitontli* of the year 2 Flint.

creation. The Spanish friar throughout his work focuses on human sacrifice, bloodshed and cannibalism. In the case of the precolonial codex the sacrificial act is much less realistic and instead seems to have a symbolical character: priests are sacrificing hearts of the suns located in nine parts of the body of the lord of the night.

Thus the sacrifices are not made to feed or please the deity but it is the night sun himself who is sacrificed by the priests. The god is portrayed in a birth-giving position: clearly he is letting himself be sacrificed, i.e. gives his heart and blood to the priests as precious life force for humans and nature in general. Gods are not really killed; it is their sacrifice that is important to push the creative process forward, as is clearly demonstrated in the narrative about the first sunrise in Teotihuacan. Humans just should follow their example. The priests receive this gift of life force from the god through their sacrificial acts, although it is not made clear what the priests actually sacrifice. The generosity of the sun god does ask from us to perform rituals and make adequate offerings to strengthen the deity, to participate in his creative labour and to be worthy of his blessings. In our interpretation the priests are not killing the sun itself; on the contrary, by their (unspecified) sacrifices they are taking away yet at the same time accumulating the power of the setting sun with the aim of keeping it for his revival and of restoring his primordial force. In fact, in the ballcourt, next to this altar, from death and darkness a new life and light will be born.

It is interesting to notice that Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 27, records for Xochimilco that between Etzalcualiztli and Huey Tecuilhuitl, priests of different gods – Cihuacoatl and Quetzalcoatl vs. Xochipilli-Cinteotl and Ixtlilton – celebrated a major ballgame.<sup>84</sup> The stone ring at one side of that ballcourt is painted black; the opposite one is painted red, which suggests a dichotomy of light and darkness. The scene of death transforming into life in the ballcourt on page 40 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) would have a similar symbolic meaning.<sup>85</sup>

The sunken courtyard is represented as a realm of time: it is surrounded by a band of day signs in different arrangements. A specific date indicator is lacking, although, as we argued, there is reason to connect the ritual to the summer solstice sunset. The set of day-signs is ordered in two segments. The first

84 Cf. Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991: 201–203).

85 The scene of the ballcourt is similar to the historical narrative in which Lord 8 Deer participates in a ballgame with the sun god (Codex Iya Nacuaa 1 (Columbino), p. 2-II). The date of this ritual encounter was year 4 House, day 6 Serpent (Codex Nuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu, p. 10-IV), which, according to the most accepted correlation, would correspond to 14 July 1081 (Julian).

runs from the top over the right side all the way to the left corner of the lower band. It contains two cycles of the twenty day-signs in normal sequence, starting with Wind (which follows the sign Alligator that is actually represented by the alligator head of the figure of Cipactonal – old sun). The band that runs from the top along the left side downwards to the same lower left corner contains sets of day-signs, the sequence of which is difficult to reconstruct. Several signs are not very legible, although the drawings by Aglio (made in the 1826–27 for the edition by Lord Kingsborough) help to determine the identity of some.<sup>86</sup> Combining Aglio's reproduction with the facsimile, we read this band in the following order: Void – Vulture – Alligator – Death – Monkey – Vulture – Alligator – Death – [Grass ?] – Movement – Wind – Deer – Grass – Movement – Wind – Rabbit – Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit – Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit – Jaguar.

The total sequence is difficult to understand and furthermore not completely certain: there may be another sign in between Death and the hardly visible Grass. The three-fold occurrence of Rabbit is strange and would lead us to reconstruct a last (third) set of 9 signs, starting and ending with the same sign (Rabbit – Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit – Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit). In such a – somewhat anomalous – structure the second set would have to be: [Wind – Deer – Grass] – Movement – Wind – Deer – Grass – Movement – Wind, and the first: Vulture – Alligator – Death – Monkey – Vulture – Alligator – Death [– Monkey – Vulture]. But there seems to be no place in the destroyed area for five signs [Monkey – Vulture – Wind – Deer – Grass]; only for one [Grass] and possibly one extra.

For the series to be less anomalous, we would have to suppose that the first occurrence of Rabbit would be an error for Deer. Then there would be three regular sets of  $2 \times 4$  signs plus one additional sign, which might be reconstructed as:

- (1) [Monkey] – Vulture – Alligator – Death – Monkey – Vulture – Alligator – Death –
- (2) [Grass] – Movement – Wind – Deer – Grass – Movement – Wind – Deer (corrected) –
- (3) Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit – Reed – Flint – House – Rabbit –
- (4) Jaguar.

86 Aglio's drawings are accessible on-line at: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/search.aspx?searchText=kingsborough](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=kingsborough).

These are basically sets of four days that are four days apart and so form divisions of the 20-day periods in four segments of five days each.<sup>87</sup> The sequences of groupings of four days would then be given in the same sets that occur encircled on various pages of the Temple Scenes chapter – after a grouping of two of these sets, the sequence moves one position forward.

Thus, in total we have on our right the sequential representation of two 20-day periods and on our left an incomplete series of successive sets of four ritually important days within each grouping of two 20-day periods. In other words, the series on our left represents syntagmatic time, the series on our right paradigmatic time.

It is interesting to note that the series on our right ends with a day Jaguar. This may be related to the day Eagle that is associated with the next Temple Scene (p. 41): the day Eagle follows a day Jaguar. The day Eagle on page 41 seems to refer specifically to the day 1 Eagle: if there is indeed a relationship with that day on the next page, the final day Jaguar on page 40 would be 13 Jaguar.

The total period covered by the series that leads to this day would, in our reconstruction, consist of  $3 \times 40 + 3 \times 1 = 123$  days. If indeed the last day is to be understood as 13 Jaguar, the beginning day would be 7 Monkey, which was an important ritual day for cleansing newborn children and is also mentioned on the Calendar Stone (see Chapter 6).

All of these calendrical references seem to represent the ritual preparation for supporting the setting sun on his way 'to bring warmth and light to the dead'. At the same time the image includes allusions to fertility. The dancing girls or young women, in identifying with Tlazoteotl, are preparing themselves for motherhood, and must have been very aware of the risks of pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>88</sup> The ritual reaches its apogee in the ballcourt – a place of many cosmological associations – where death is transformed into new life. The theme of page 31 is repeated here. This image synthesises the regenerative power that was mobilised in the first place by the dedication of the girls and then by the sacrificing priests who save the light force (*tonalli*) of the night sun. The altar of Ocelotonatiuh reminds us that this force was the beginning of all creations, when the first Sun came forth from primordial darkness. We will see a sequel of this image on page 43.

87 The first set of days of the band on the left side (Alligator – Death – Monkey – Vulture) is the same as that of the scene in Codex Mictlan (Laud), p. 24. The further calendrical arrangement is different, however.

88 Similar acts occur during the festivals of Huey Tecuilhuitl, Tlaxochimaco and Ochpaniztli (Sahagún, Book 11: Ch. 27, 28 and 30).

It is interesting to observe that this ritual scene contains visual references to the same elements that we have seen on the ballcourt pendant from Tomb 7 (Chapter 4). The first image on that jewel is the ballcourt as a place where communication of the living with the dead is possible. The second image is that of the sun surrounded by a stream of blood. The third image is that of a knife, possibly as an index of self-sacrifice. And the fourth and final image is that of Tlaltecuhтли, the earth being or earth spirit. These elements also occur in other Temple Scenes: clearly there is a deep connection between the treasure of Monte Albán and the rituals of night and wind we are looking at in this codex.

## 11 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Pages 41–42: Sacrifice

The symbolic saving of the solar power of the night sun through sacrifice, and the rebirth in the ballcourt was the template for carrying out what is now depicted as a ‘human sacrifice’. On page 41 Cihuacoatl orders the descent of the dead ancestors in the night. This focus on the dead in the first image is different from what happens in the other occurrences of the large Cihuacoatl figure. Looking at its possible correspondence of to the known cycle of feasts we find, of course, the ninth month, Miccailhuitontli (‘Small Feast of the Dead’), and its sequel, the tenth month, Huey Miccaihuitl (‘Big Feast of the Dead’), also known as Tlaxochimaco, (‘Offering of Flowers’) and Xocotl Huetzi (‘Falling Fruit’) respectively. From the night sky the black Tezcatlipoca descends together with two women dedicated to Tlazolteotl (clearly referring back to the previous ritual on pp. 39–40). Tezcatlipoca was the main deity that was honoured during the feast of Miccailhuitontli.

On earth a procession is advancing from two sides, guided by the *tlamacazque* of Cihuacoatl, carrying paper banners in the directional colours. The procession consists of the red and black Tezcatlipoca, the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest and a man with the black face paint of the deity Itztlacoliuhqui, the Curved Obsidian Blade, who is considered a ‘god of frost’ (*ceŧl*) as well as a specific constellation of stars.<sup>89</sup> It should be noted, however, that this man does not have the diagnostic blindfold of that deity, and that his body is coloured white with red dots, which may represent a substance such as maize dough (cf. p. 43). It is possible, therefore, that this individual actually was an image (*ixiptla*) of the god moulded out of such dough. The figure is

89 Compare the image of this deity as a sacred bundle, ruling the 13-day period of 1 Lizard, on page 69 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) and identified through the parallel in Codex Vaticanus A, f. 24v and the description by Sahagún (Book VII: 6).

shown here as an agent in human form, but may actually have been a sacred artefact that was taken care of by devotees.<sup>90</sup> Several Aztec rituals involved such divine images. The emblematic action of the 10th month (Huey Miccailhuitl) was that of youngsters climbing a slippery pole in order to bring down an image that consisted of amaranth paste (*tzoalli*), which then was broken into pieces and consumed (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 29).

In the later month-festival of Ochpaniztli (month 11: 'Sweeping the Roads') Itztlacoliuhqui appears as a transformation of Cinteotl, the maize deity, the son of the mother goddess Toci (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 30). The festival of Ochpaniztli also marked the beginning of the period of cold (120 days).<sup>91</sup> This preoccupation about the cold that might start early and damage the corn-fields actually started already during the 9th month, Miccailhuitontli (Durán, *Calendario*: Ch. xii). We seem to have arrived now at the time that a ritual for Itztlacoliuhqui as god of frost is especially appropriate.

The procession in the scene of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 41, follows parallel roads that enter a precious circle from two sides. This circle most likely again represents a round altar, as we have seen before but it also shows traits of a market place – both meanings do not exclude each other.<sup>92</sup> Sahagún describes that the ritual of Miccailhuitontli consisted of the dance of fearless warriors paired with women (courtesans, harlots); there were musicians and singers, who stood on an altar that was 'completely round, round like a shield, like a millstone' (loc. cit.). In the codex we see that a black priest of Quetzalcoatl and the Itztlacoliuhqui man carry out bloodletting through a penis perforation ritual. In this way, they nourish the deities Tepeyollotl (Lord of the Mountain) and Chalchiuhtlicue (Lady of the Water) with their blood. These deities are, together, the divine patrons of the *altepetl* ('water, mountain'), the community.

Five encircled signs represent the 13-day periods dedicated to the West and to the Cihuateteo, the deified women who died in childbirth: (1) Eagle, (1) Deer, (1) Rain, (1) Monkey and (1) House. These different Cihuateteo were actually

90 Durán comments on the importance of the mother goddess Toci as 'Heart of the Earth' and also mentions the custom of moulding figures of dough (1967, I: 143 and 156 respectively).

91 Brotherston (2003: 74) cites Sahagún's Tepepulco Ms (*Primeros Memoriales*): 'We say that Itztlacoliuhqui in the year cycle means the arrival of frost in the 20-day period Ochpaniztli. And for 120 days there is cold. In the 20-day period we call Tititl we say the cold is over, this is the time of green maize leaves, the warm time, the good time'.

92 See for example Codex Mendoza, p. 67, as well as Durán (1967, I: 177ff and plate 28). Boone (2007: 200), however, interprets this sign as a hearth where the creator pair is located, while Milbrath (2013: 90) sees it as a representation of the 'brilliant Morning Star about to disappear in Superior Conjunction'.

manifestations of Cihuacoatl (see Chapter 6). It seems that these dates refer to the preparatory bloodletting rituals of the Quetzalcoatl priest and the Itztlacoliuhqui impersonator (*ixiptla*). This suggests that the bloodletting was done for the Cihuateteo to mobilise their power, as divine mothers who made the supreme sacrifice. The definitive bloodletting represented here took place on the day (1) Eagle. After that, the *ixiptla* of Itztlacoliuhqui is shown between two naked young girls. All three are in a running position and raising their hands, suggesting a dance or dramatic action. At first sight, the naked girls recall a practice, in which, according to colonial sources, those who were going to be sacrificed – for example, during the festivals of Toxcatl and Izcalli – received special treatment. This included sexual intercourse with young women (Sahagún, Book II: Chs. 24 and 28). Here, however, the girls are young children and the scene does not explicitly refer to any sexual activity. Another interpretation would be that young virgins accompanied and attended the Itztlacoliuhqui figure during a procession or dance drama. Indeed, during the feast of Huey Miccailhuitl some specifically selected young boys and virgins (*doncellas*) carried divine images made of such dough (Durán, *Calendario*: Ch. xiii).<sup>93</sup>

We find here another dimension that connects the care for the deity with the purity of life. Itztlacoliuhqui was considered a blind god, and therefore was associated with ‘going astray’, in particular with adultery. Married men who had committed adultery were punished and executed in front of Itztlacoliuhqui’s image.<sup>94</sup>

Thirteen days are then mentioned, starting with Eagle and leading up to the encircled day, Rabbit. No number is specified, but, apparently, this is the very day on which the following action takes place. The context suggests that this is the day 1 Rabbit, a day known as a symbolic reference to the earth.<sup>95</sup> In describing the festival of 1 Eagle and its relationship with the deified women who had died in childbirth, Sahagún (Book IV: Ch. 33) states that the nineteenth 13-day period, 1 Eagle, was the period when the Cihuateteo (the deified women) descended to earth: not all, but just the youngest ones. These were

93 Similarly, Sahagún (Book II: Ch. 29) describes how during Huey Miccailhuitl a priest carried Painal, the image (*ixiptla*) of Huitzilopochtli, ascending to the sacrificial place on top of the pyramid and descending again.

94 Codex Vaticanus A, f. 24v: *innanzi la sua immagine amazzavano quelli, ehe erano colti in Adulterio, essendo maritati, perche non essendo potevano tenere donne o concubine quante volevano.*

95 See the invocations of Ce Tochtli registered by Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise II: Chs. 1 and 8) and the occurrence of 1 Rabbit on the relief sculpture of Cihuacoatl that was found below the famous Coyolxauhqui in front of the Templo Mayor (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993: 180; Taube in Noguez and López Austin 1997).

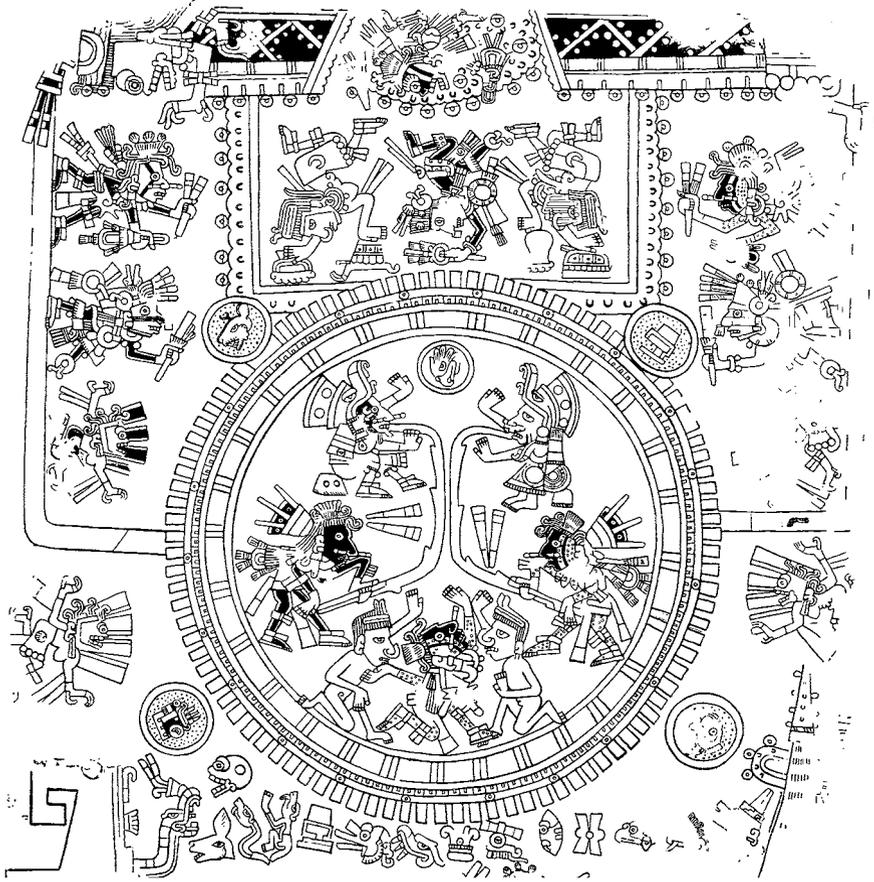


ILLUSTRATION 7.29 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 41 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

more aggressive and affected boys and girls negatively, attacking them, and causing them to make grimaces. In this period the people decorated the oratories that had been built to honour these goddesses at the different crossroads with cattails and flowers; and those who had made a vow to them covered their images with papers.<sup>96</sup> Probably many statues of the Cihuacoatl or Cihuateotl type that have been found belong to this category.

96 Spanish text: '*El signo decimonoveno se llama ce quauhtli [1 Águila]; decían que este signo no era mal afortunado, y que en él descendían las diosas Cihuateteo a la tierra: decían que no descendían todas sino las mozas, y aquéllas eran más empecibles y más temerosas, y hacían mayores daños a los muchachos y muchachas y se investían en ellos, y les hacían hacer visajes, y por esto en este signo adornaban los oratorios edificados a honra de estas diosas*

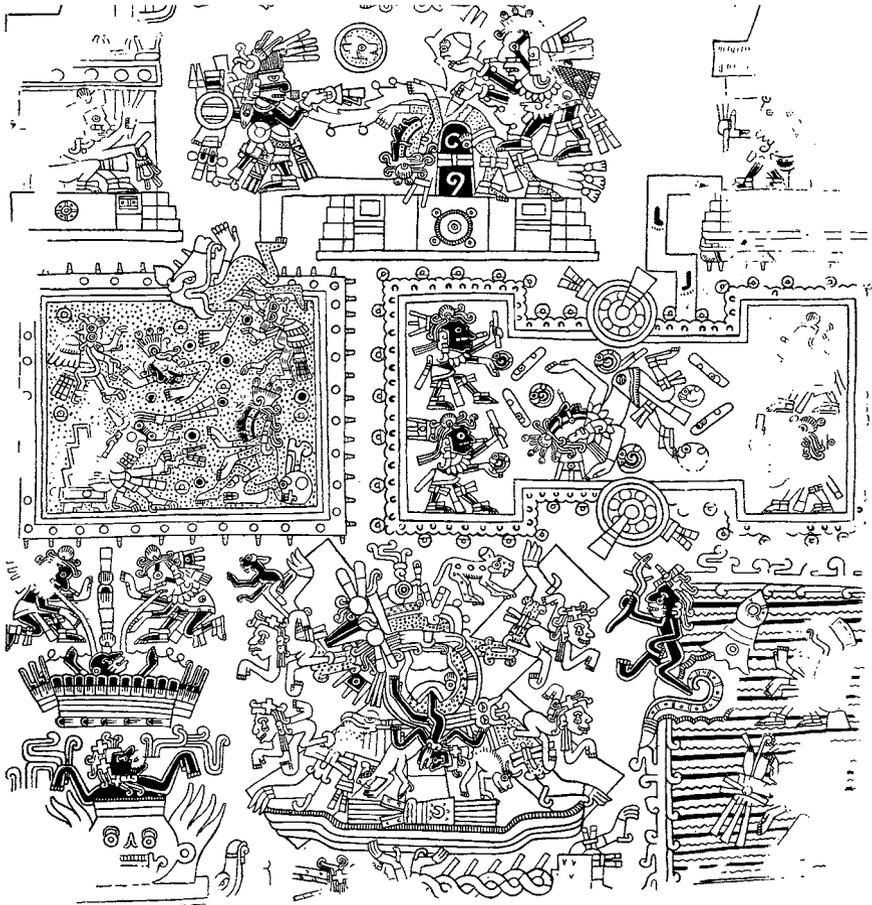


ILLUSTRATION 7.30 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 42 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

Obviously the position of the 13-day period 1 Eagle is fixed in the cycle of 260 days (*tonalpoalli*), but for the same reason it is not fixed in the solar year (*xihuitl*) of 365 days. Thus its location in the solar year of eighteen months changes continuously. The Spanish chronicles, therefore, referred to such a ritually important period as a movable feast. On the other hand, it is interesting that it has been placed here (pp. 41–42) after a ritual that may be related to the summer solstice (p. 40) and before a ritual that may coincide with the month Ochpaniztli (p. 43), which is situated at the ‘beginning of harvest’.

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*por las divisiones de las calles y caminos, con espadañas y flores; y los que habían hecho algún voto o reverencia de ellas cubrían las imágenes de ellas con papeles...’.*

On page 42 the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest prepares himself in the Temple of Night and Wind, situated above a subterranean chamber or cave. From here, the Itztlacoliuhqui figure goes to the ballcourt, where priests throw sticks and stones to him. This form of execution was normally applied to adulterers. Subsequently, the Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest sacrifices the *ixiptla* of Itztlacoliuhqui and offers his blood to Tezcatlipoca – as – Warrior (*Yaotl*), patron of this ritual. This sacrifice happens on a precious altar, next to the market, in front of the Sun Temple. The body of the sacrificed Itztlacoliuhqui figure falls into a dark cave area (marked with the skin of an alligator), where the dead victim presents himself to the death god (Mictlantecuhtli), who is seated on his throne accompanied by owls. We find ourselves in the same area of the ceremonial centre that is mentioned on page 40: the Temple of the Sun and the Temple of Night and Wind, the ballcourt, the sunken court and the altar. The presence of the death god seems to confirm that the period concerned is that of the ritual veneration of the dead ancestors during the successive months Miccailhuitontli and Huey Miccailhuitl.

Other, different ritual acts provide closure to the scene, involving food preparation (drinking and eating) and the evocation or mobilisation of different spiritual forces. The heart of the *ixiptla* of Itztlacoliuhqui figure lies on a crossroads, amidst wild animals (that is, outside the urban centre) in a precious cavity under the care of Cihuacoatl. This cavity is next to the river, spring or pond, dedicated to Tepeyollotl and Chalchiuhtlicue, the patron deities of the *altepetl* (water, mountain), i.e. the community. One of the spiritual forces comes forth from a huge conch in the water: this element also occurs as a mantic symbol in this same codex (p. 4 upper register and p. 8 lower register), which suggests that this part of the scene may represent a phrase of the ceremonial discourse. In geographical terms, however, this seems to be the same place where the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest had awakened from his trance (p. 38).

The crossroads is a relevant reference to the places where the Cihuateteo (the deified women who died in childbirth) are roaming. The skeletonised image of Itztlacoliuhqui seems to transform into that of Cihuacoatl – in a way similar to what we have seen on page 38 of this codex. Spirits like those of the fallen warriors (*Tonalleque*), in the five directional colours, emerge from the body. Words emerge from his mouth: perhaps hymns are sung on the occasion or the divine power made itself heard.

The heart of the transforming figure is placed above a large offering of firewood, which is decorated with the symbols of the goddess Tlazolteotl (head-dress of unspun cotton). This emblem may refer to the next ritual, that of the eleventh month, Ochpaniztli, which is devoted to Tlazolteotl. The presence of this sign would indicate that the final offerings took place on the eve of the Ochpaniztli period.

The sacrifice and eating of the dough figure representing Itztlacoliuhqui is an act of sharing that establishes *communitas*. At the same time, it transmits canonical messages about the need to keep one's life and relationships pure, to refrain from adultery and to avoid other blind actions that lead one astray. Committing to the social ethics of the ritual, the community collaborates with nature to 'kill' the cold, i.e. to prevent early frost (which is also represented by the *ixiptla* of Itztlacoliuhqui), and so contributes to a good harvest.<sup>97</sup>

## 12 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 43: Sustenance

On page 43 Cihuacoatl again sends out the Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest (stripe-eyed), flying in the darkness (in a trance) to contact the ancestors. The ritual scene takes place in the Temple of Sun and Maize.<sup>98</sup> In the centre, the black, dog-headed Xolotl (with jaguar skin on his hands and feet), seated in the position of giving birth, is carrying the dark night sun. We notice on the hands of the Xolotl figure the protuberances that indicate stone. As in the case of the figure of page 40 we interpret the jaguar skin as a sign that identifies the sun as Ocelotonatiuh, the 'Jaguar Sun' of the first creation and the protuberances as indicators that the image actually consists of stone. Again we are looking at a round stone altar, decorated with an image of the sun (like the Stone of Tizoc or the Calendar Stone) but in his nocturnal aspect of Yoaltecuhtli, the night sun. Furthermore, this god has the mouth of Xolotl. The total image therefore refers to a round altar (sun stone) dedicated to Xolotl, the carrier of the nocturnal sun disc, as a venerated figure in the Temple of Heaven (p. 34).

In the centre of the night sun is a large heart, with an even larger jade and a serpent coming from it. Flames surround the dark disc, suggesting that the monument is used to burn an offering or is otherwise heated.<sup>99</sup> The depiction of a large heart, in combination with the position of giving birth, may be a prayer to the sun deity to be benevolent and generous in providing abundant

97 Compare Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 5, and Codex Vaticanus A, f. 17v. It was general knowledge that in the month Tititl (the seventeenth month) the cold would be over and that the natural force of fertility would be restored.

98 The corncocks are painted in the different colours that they may have, generally given in a canonical set of four: red, blue or black, yellow and white (cf. Sahagún, Book 11: Ch. 30; Durán 1967, I: 154).

99 Compare the kindling of a circle of candles (*la rueda de velas*) used for a cleansing ritual among Maya peoples – see the contribution of team member Manuel May Castillo ('Resistencia cotidiana en las comunidades mayas') to the volume edited by Jansen and Raffa (2015, in particular Fig. 24.3).

corn and life force. In a way this image complements that of page 40, where the deity spent blood from his nine articulations. Here we see that his light-force-heart (*tonalli*) was not really taken, nor damaged, but is back in place.

Vessels next to the altar contain corncobs, and are nourishing the four individuals present around the altar of the sun-carrying Xolotl: (priests of) the sun/fire god, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Venus), Quetzalcoatl (Wind), similar to Tepeyollotl (the Lord of the Mountain) and a death deity, probably the Cihuacoatl priest – the same group that we saw on page 39 and that seems to represent the divine patrons of the four different year bearers. Women carrying babies are grinding the precious corn.

A priest devoted to Quetzalcoatl and another priest devoted to Tezcatlipoca are seated on the eagle throne and the jaguar throne respectively. In our hypothesis they are the Aquiach and the Tlalquiach, the main authorities of Cholula. At the base of the scene Cihuacoatl is shown again, lying under the altar, holding and protecting it. Claws signal her *nahual* power. Her body is the blue night; her headdress contains white paper crosses (the Tlillan motif). Corncobs are now sprouting from her body as a result of her transformative power (already announced, invoked and prepared on pp. 31, 33 and 34). The ear and cobs of corn sprouting from her forehead recall the headdress of corn ears that is worn by the woman who impersonates Xilonen Chicomecoatl, also called Toci, the mother goddess, as the main deity of the eleventh month, Ochpaniztli ('Sweeping the Roads').<sup>100</sup> Another typical element of the celebrations of that month is the decoration of altars and temples with corncobs, as we see here in the Sun Temple. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 29, also shows four priests, associated with the four directions, participating in the Ochpaniztli festival.<sup>101</sup> The weapons laid down in front of both seated rulers (Aquiach and Tlalquiach) may be a reference to the mock battles that took place during Ochpaniztli.

Because of these details and the general structure of the sequence of the Temple Scenes we interpret the image of page 43 as an activity of the authorities and the main priests that formed part of the Ochpaniztli celebration. Towards the end of this 20-day period occurred the autumn equinox, which may explain the renewed focus on the sun-bearer. The ritual may express gratefulness to the sun, which, though becoming less strong, has had the good

100 See Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 30 and compare Durán (*Ritos*: Ch. 15): '*A esta India ataban en la coronilla de los cabellos una pluma verde muy enhiesta, que significaba la espiga que echan las cañas del maíz*'. Cf. Sahagun, Book II: Ch. 30.

101 Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 221.



ILLUSTRATION 7.31 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 43 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

heart to provide a precious harvest, and at the same time may include a prayer to Xolotl to maintain strength and carry on.

At the end of the scene the Quetzalcoatl priest leaves the temple (comes towards the beholder/reader) carrying corncobs on his back. This is probably an invocation of the power of the new sun to provide maize (to all of us). This power is cyclical and is anticipated to be manifest again in the New Year and the new ritual cycle.

### 13 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, Page 44: Rulership

On page 44 Cihuacoatl again sends out the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest, now to the building of four entrances that was used to confirm rulers

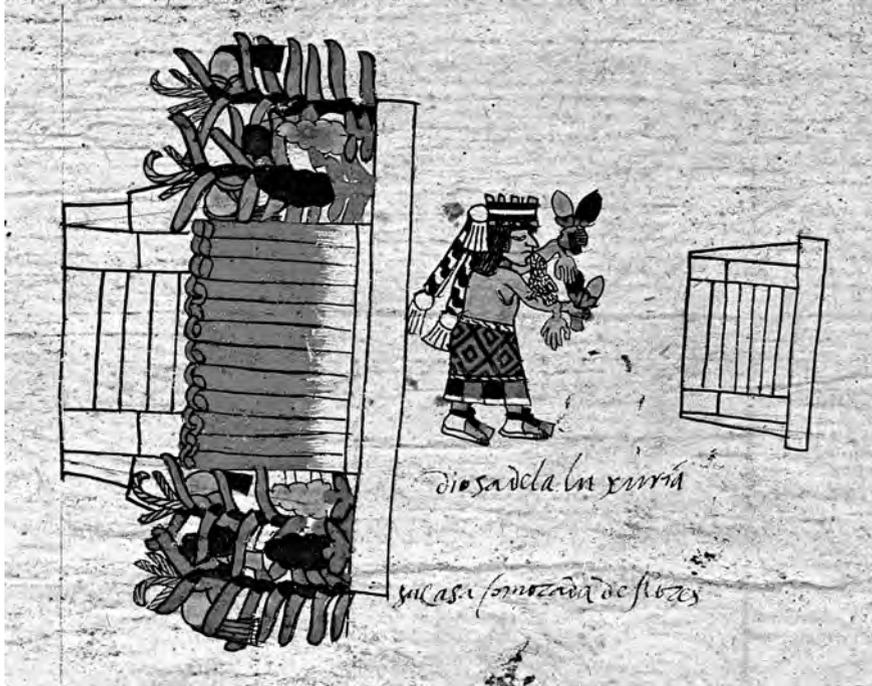


ILLUSTRATION 7.32 *Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus)*, p. 29: *Ochpaniztli*.

in their royal status at Cholula (cf. *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, f 20r, f 24).<sup>102</sup> The enclosure is lined with flints and also with human heads and limbs – perhaps this is the place where the Tlacaxipehualiztli flint ritual was carried out (p. 32). A black Quetzalcoatl priest is seated on a coloured tree. This is probably a stone monument that recalls the *mezquite* (acacia) tree upon which the first Chichimec leaders fasted. A disc decorated with the sun sustains the tree. Probably the disc is again a round altar (seen from above), similar to the Stone of Tizoc (see the previous chapter). This round altar at the same time is a manifestation of the goddess Xochiquetzal (lying under it): she is portrayed with claws, which indicate her *nahual* power. Thus the stone tree (the dynastic monument) grows from the round altar which is the heart (life-force) of the goddess; at the same time, it reminds us of the primordial tree of origin and unity in the paradise of Tamoanchan.<sup>103</sup>

It is likely that the priest is fasting in commemoration of ancient rulers: he is in a trance (as indicated by the ‘smoke eye’ qualifier) and has turned into a

<sup>102</sup> See also the comments of Nowotny on this page of the codex in his *Tlacuilolli* (1961a).

<sup>103</sup> *Codex Vaticanus A*, f. 27v–28r. Compare the setting up of stone trees during New Year rituals in the *Maya Codex Dresden*, pp. 25–28 (Grube 2012).

*nahual*, a hummingbird, which is a symbol of the warriors who accompany the sun in the morning. This is probably the aim of the central image, to evoke dead warriors and rulers to prepare to accompany the rising of the new sun. The fasting is carried out in a cycle of four divisions of the 20-day period (each five days apart). As such, it recalls the statement in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* (f 20v) concerning the four days of fasting observed by rulers during this ritual.

A bat *nahual* is shown descending among the hummingbirds (*nahuales* of the dead warriors who were already conjured in the sacred bundle ritual of page 36). At the same time, he is arriving through the upper entrance to the courtyard. This bat man has the same black face paint as the Tezcatlipoca on page 43. Possibly the bat man (Tezcatlipoca) and the hummingbird man (Quetzalcoatl) again represent the Tlalquiach and the Aquiach. The bat man brings down the heart and blood, a symbol of sustenance and part of the sun's power as portrayed on page 41, and nourishes the Hummingbird-Quetzalcoatl priest, the tree itself and the goddess Xochiquetzal.

This act extends its *nahual* power to the image of the events taking place at the three other entrances of the flint-lined courtyard. Three large Plumed Serpents (fire serpent, jade serpent, Venus serpent), with human faces sticking out of their maws, are entering the place. Three emblematic animals – Jaguar, Quetzal and Eagle – are biting them in their noses. Given the parallel with the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*, we may identify this as a symbolic representation of the nose-piercing ritual, which was carried out to confirm rulers in their royal status. All participants are carrying out this 'biting' or perforation ritual in *nahual* state. The biting eagle and jaguar are probably the Aquiach and Tlalquiach, while the biting quetzal may be a general reference to the nobility.<sup>104</sup>

It is interesting to note that a bat dancer acted during the twelfth month, called Teotleco ('Arrival of the Gods') or Pachtontli ('Small Festival of *Pachtli*?'), which followed Ochpaniztli.<sup>105</sup> The black hummingbird person would then correspond to Huitzilopochtli, who is indeed an important god in that same ritual, together with Tezcatlipoca. It was a typical feature of this festivity that

104 The structure in the composition is consistent with that of the previous page: eagle (Aquiach) at our right-hand side, jaguar (Tlalquiach) to our left and quetzal (Quetzalcoatl priest) down at the bottom.

105 Cf. Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 31. *Pachtli* is a term for a specific plant (tillandsia), a sort of hay that hangs from trees. The translation 'feast of humiliation' in Codex Vaticanus A, f 48v, suggests, however that the name may come from the verb *pechteca*, 'to humiliate oneself, to incline or bow one's body'.

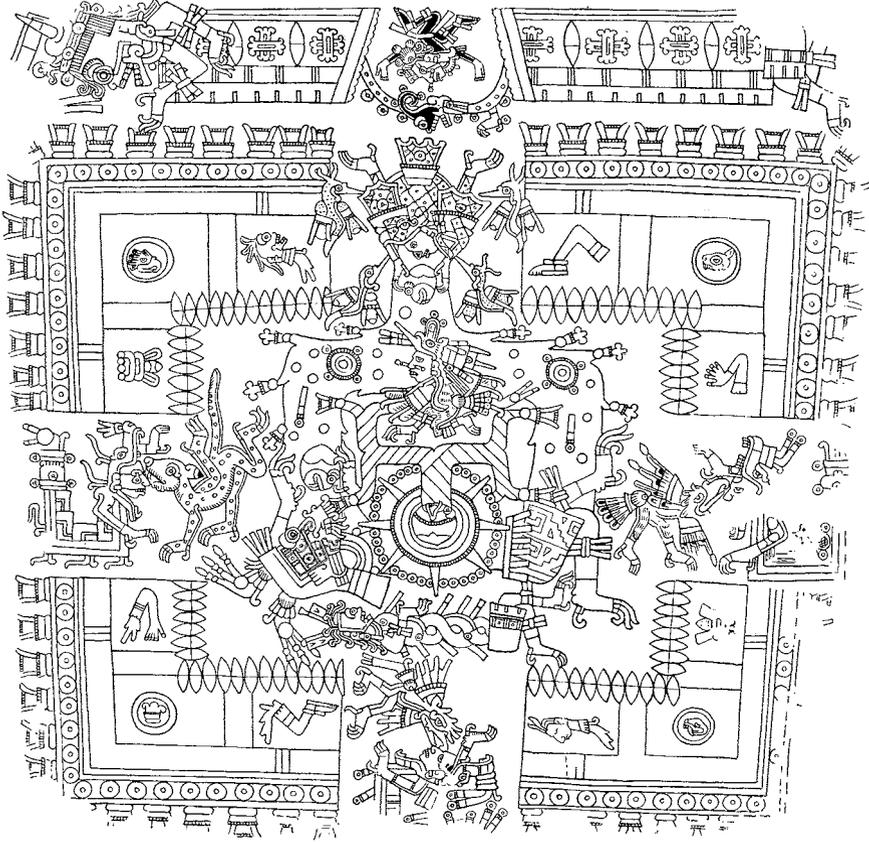


ILLUSTRATION 7.33 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 44 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

the gods arrived in the form of their *nahuales*, leaving the footprints of their animal companions in a mixture of flour and ground marigold, which had been spread out on the temple floor so that priests would be able to observe their mysterious presence.<sup>106</sup>

The next festival, that of the thirteenth month, was called *Tepilhuitl* ('Festival of the Mountains') or *Huey Pachtli* ('Big Festival of *Pachtli*'), which was dedicated to *Xochiquetzal*, the deity represented here (on page 44) as holding and protecting the altar. We therefore suppose that this Temple Scene took place during those two 20-day periods. The body parts in the different corners of the building may be a reference to the dismembering of the sacrificial

106 Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 214–216.

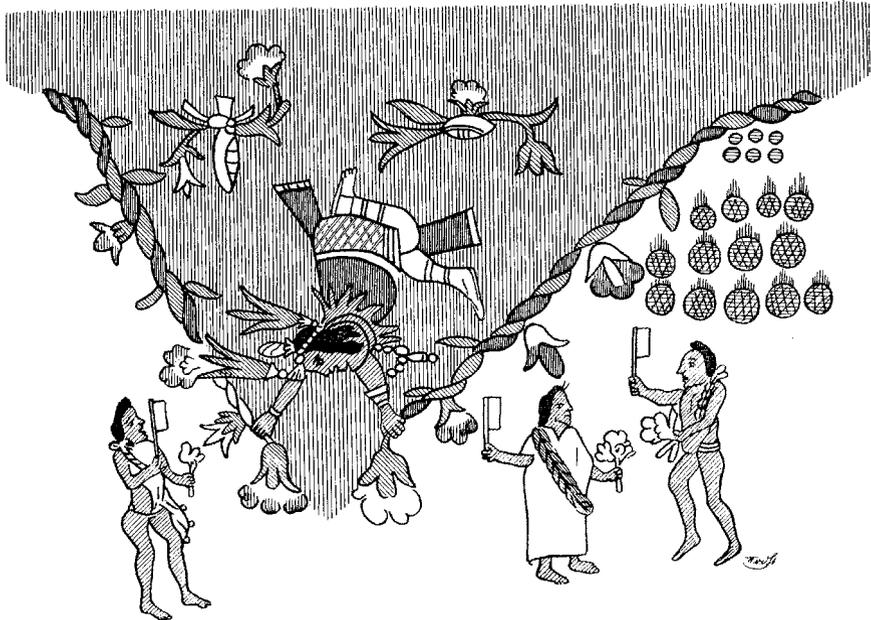


ILLUSTRATION 7.34 *Vaticano A, f. 7r: the end of the fourth sun under the patronage of Xochiquetzal.*

figures of amaranth dough with flint knives, which is specifically documented for the Tepeilhuitl feast.<sup>107</sup>

The scene in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) is about invoking and mobilising the forces of the ancestral rulers and dead warriors, contributing to the sustenance and energy (heart, blood) wealth (jade, gold) and happiness (flowers) of the rulers, which will be installed or confirmed in this period through the septum-piercing ritual in Tollan Cholollan. A historical example of such a septum-piercing ritual is the one ordered by the ruler of this place, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (Lord 4 Jaguar in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices): the Mixtec Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' was granted the Toltec nose ornament in the year 7 House (1097 AD) day 1 Wind, according to Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 52.<sup>108</sup> In that case, the priest who carried out the piercing had the personal name 'Eagle Face' or 'Eagle Eye', which would be the well-known Nahuatl name *Cuauhtlix* but

107 See Durán, *Calendario*: Ch. 16; cf. Sahagún, Book 11: Ch. 33. We see the same motif on the first page of Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejervary-Mayer).

108 Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007: 216–224. According to the most accepted synchronology (see for example [www.azteccalendar.com](http://www.azteccalendar.com)), this Mixtec date would be 5 September 1097 or 23 May 1098 (Julian).

might also be a Mixtec reference to the Aquiach's association with the eagle. This ritual took place one day after an elaborate worship of a sacred bundle, which may be an abbreviated version of the bundle ritual depicted in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 35–38.

#### 14 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 45: Venus

In the opening statement of page 45, Cihuacoatl's cape is covered with hearts and knives, a motif that recalls the famous statue of Coatlicue with a necklace of hands and hearts, and the decoration of altars at Tizatlan (Caso 1927). At first sight this motif seems to refer to sacrifice, but thanks to an explicit statement by Durán (1967, I: 154, 280) we know that it is a metaphor and expresses a prayer for sustenance. This is essentially the same interpretation as we have been making of the body parts on pages 32 and 44.

Cihuacoatl sends out her mysterious power (serpent of night and wind) carrying a banner (not as an object but as a living being). The banner may refer to the festival of Panquetzaliztli (month 15: 'Raising the Banners'). This was the 20-day period in which the New Fire ceremony that inaugurated the calendar round period of 52 years was carried out.<sup>109</sup> The New Fire ceremony is not mentioned here, however, and only appears in the next ritual on page 46. This indicates that the Temple Scenes chapter does not refer to the end of the calendar round (*xihmolpilli*) in the year 1507 (as does the Codex Cihuacoatl), but to other rituals taking place in the Panquetzaliztli period.

In the centre of the open space is a *tzompantli* or skull altar, sustained and supported by Cihuacoatl, who is lying underneath. The skull altar (probably dedicated to ancestor commemoration) is elevated around a tree, which represents the cosmic mirror tree Tezcacuahuitl (cf. p. 38). Standing on the altar, in front of the tree, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Venus) appears as a warrior; it may be the Venus priest dancing or the god himself throwing his rays of light, indicating the early hour, before daybreak. This position, wielding a spear-thrower, is typical of Venus at heliacal rising.<sup>110</sup> In the next scene to our left, we see

109 Cf. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 34, and the commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991).

110 The scene has a parallel in the mantic part of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia: the same *tzompantli* with the tree and the Venus deity is depicted on page 19, where it is associated with war and human sacrifice: under it is the open jaw of an alligator, referring to a cave. In front is standing Quetzalcoatl, who dominates the associated time period. The theme of the spear-throwing Venus will be continued on pp. 53–54 of the codex.

Tlahuizcalpantecuhitli falling into the water; an Eagle-Quetzalcoatl is taking his heart. This may be a reference to the power of the sun that is taking over, making Venus disappear in his light, but also to the Aquiach making an offering at the side of a river or spring precisely for the vanishing Venus.<sup>111</sup> Conchs sound at this early hour.

The tree on the altar is decorated with banners – a clear reference to the 15th month festival, Panquetzaliztli.<sup>112</sup> The skull altar of Cihuacoatl plays a central role in the ritual of the 17th month, Tititl ('Shrinking' or 'Stretching').<sup>113</sup> In this context it may be that the scene of the descending eagle above the river was related to the 16th month festival Atemoztli ('Water Descending').<sup>114</sup> It may equally be significant that the god on the altar is Tlahuizcalpantecuhitli, who shares a characteristic body paint of red lines over white painted skin with the god of hunters, Mixcoatl (Cloud Serpent). Like Mixcoatl he not only holds a spearthrower, arrows and a shield, but also the diagnostic net-like bag (*matlahuacalli*) used by hunters to take food or carry other items with them. The same combination of weapons and bag is explicitly repeated in front of the tree. This reference to Mixcoatl may be due to the otherwise missing fourteenth month festival, Quecholli ('Dart' and 'Spoonbill'), which was dedicated to this deity and to the preparation for hunting.<sup>115</sup>

111 The eagle (*quatleuanitl*) is associated with the sun god (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 21).

112 *Relación Geográfica de Teotitlan* (Acuña 1984, II: 201); Durán (1967, I: 284).

113 See Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 36, where the Cihuacoatl priest is standing on such an altar. The Tovar Calendar translates the name as 'stretching' and gives a fascinating explanation: 'They paint in this month a man as one who stretches something with a cord, in order to indicate that the gods thus stretch and sustain the machine of the world, so that the great violence of the winds may not destroy it' (Kubler and Gibson 1951: 34).

114 The image of Atemoztli in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 35, consists of an offering of paper to the mountain shrine of the deities Tlaloc and Chalchiuhtlicue. The Tovar Calendar explains: 'It was celebrated in December, during which time the waters have totally ceased and there frequently are extraordinary drizzles here. For this reason, they said that since the deity of heavy showers or rains was sending this drizzle unseasonably it was a sign that he wished particular memory and ceremony made to him at this time and so they did it. This god was named tlaloc...' (Kubler and Gibson 1951: 33).

115 Between the weapons as emblem of Quecholli in front of the tree and the two conchs there is a severed human arm, which was omitted in the drawing of Nowotny (1961a): possibly a reference to (community) labour. See further Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 33 and the commentary by Anders, Jansen and Reyes García (1991: 218–221). Cf. the image of Mixcoatl as patron of this ritual in Codex Vaticanus A, f. 49r. The Tovar Calendar explains the name of the month Quecholli as 'an ambiguous name meaning a bird of rich plumage and also a war lance' (Kubler and Gobson 1951: 32).

These – admittedly indirect – representations of those four feasts (the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth 20-day periods of the year) would indicate the chronological framework for the ritual activities that take place on this page.

A white liquid, probably *pulque*, is prepared under the supervision of the black Tezcatlipoca and the red Tezcatlipoca, provided by the stripe-eyed Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl priest.<sup>116</sup> This happens in an open space (courtyard) around the skull altar with the decorated tree, surrounded by four Eagle houses

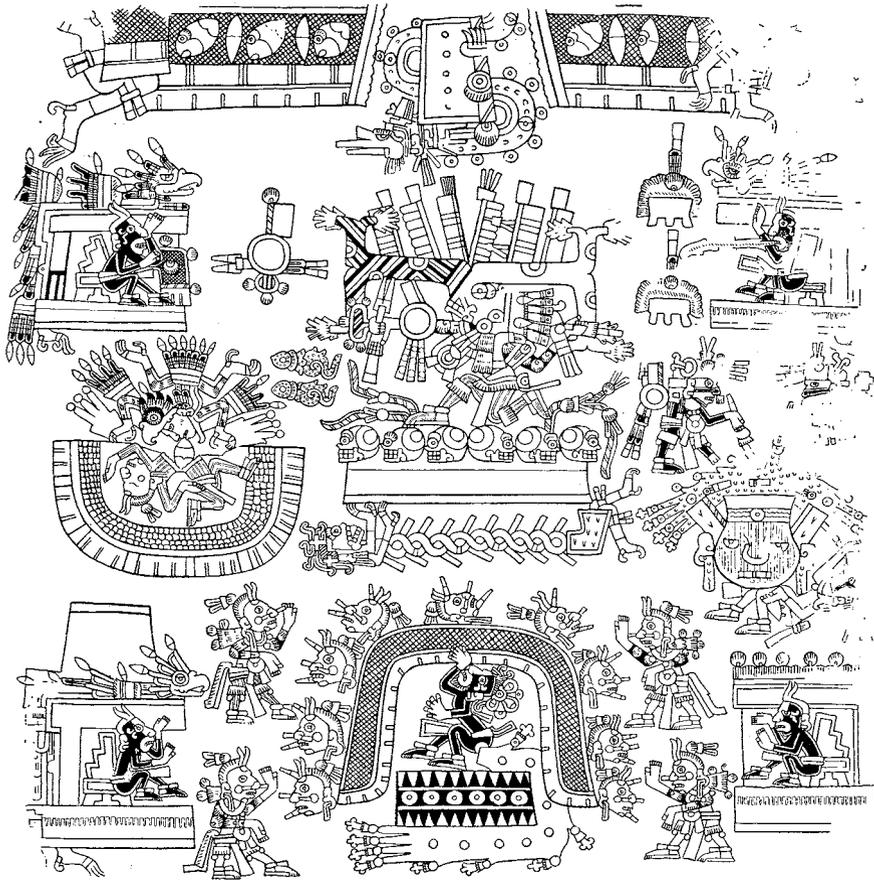


ILLUSTRATION 7.35 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 45 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

116 Preparation of *pulque* was an important part of several rituals in Mexico-Tenochtitlan, for example Izcalli (Sahagún, Book II: Ch. 38).



ILLUSTRATION 7.36 *Codex Cihuaocoatl (Borbonicus)*, p. 36: Tititl.

in each of which a Quetzalcoatl priest is seated.<sup>117</sup> Here, the Quetzalcoatl priest drinks the *pulque* and offers cloth for making a sacred bundle, as well as weapons and an arm (which may symbolise human resources).

Then four Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli priests make a new sacred bundle, the cover of which contains nine faces of this same deity: we may conclude that the bundle is characterised as the nine-fold power of Venus. The element inside symbolises Venus itself: it is represented as a star that has the body of Quetzalcoatl. This bundle of Venus is placed on an altar: it becomes the focus point of respect and veneration. Probably it is the new sacred bundle that is to be opened during the next ritual cycle (cf. page 36 of the codex).<sup>118</sup> Blood streams from this body of Quetzalcoatl: the element inside the bundle is becoming

117 Eagle houses are documented in the Templo Mayor complex of Tenochtitlan (Durán 1967, 1; 106) and also in Cholula: we might think of the eagle altars in the ceremonial centre and of the Achiach's palace located on the slope of the Chalchiuhtepetl (*Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* f 7v).

118 The Tititl feast is also the occasion of making a bundle, but that bundle generally is represented as consisting of staffs, which represent the ancestors. See *Codex Cihuaocoatl (Borbonicus)*, p. 36 (Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1991: 228–230), the *Libro de la Vida (Codex Magliabechi)*, pp. 44v–45r, and the description by Sahagún (Book 11: Ch. 36).

a being (*tlamacazqui*) 'without blood', i.e. an immaterial spirit.<sup>119</sup> This blood stream (containing flowers and gold) engulfs the altar: the transformational power of the spirit permeates the whole ritual and brings precious life to the participants.

## 15 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 46: Fire-making

The final Temple Scene is introduced by a Cihuacoatl figure with a red body. Probably this colour is chosen because of the ritual that is depicted here is clearly related to fire. The central act is a New Fire ceremony, but it is different from the one that completes the calendar round and that involved the Tlillan temple of Xochimilco depicted in Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), p. 34.<sup>120</sup> Both images share the presence of a large hearth. Here (on page 46), that hearth is the central image. Perhaps this scene implies the ritual making (and inauguration) of a new hearth fire (*tlecuil*). Quetzalcoatl is 'cooked' on it, in a precious vessel.<sup>121</sup> Underneath it green stones are laid out in the form of a 'necklace'; these are probably offerings. It should be noted that green *cantera* is used for hearthstones, as it is not affected by fire. At first sight, one is reminded of the Aztec sacrifice of a captive on the occasion of the New Fire marking the end/beginning of the calendar round. But here we are dealing with a less drastic event, as the same Quetzalcoatl acts later as the person who kindles the New Fire. Thus probably the cooking is a symbolic representation and means that he is nourished, reinvigorated. In present-day Mixtec the expression 'to be cooked' is often used for the strengthening effect of the steambath (*temazcal*).

Priestesses of Chantico, the hearth goddess (also mentioned in the Heaven Temple of pp. 33–34), are standing around. Fire gods, in their temples, hold Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca on their lap – and this is possibly a reference to the festival of Izcalli ('Growing' or 'Revival'), which is specifically concerned

119 Ruiz de Alarcón (Treatise II: Ch. 1 § 175) translates the expression *nehuatl amo nezço, amo nitlapallo* 'I am without blood, without colour', as 'sin sangre, ni carne (i. insensible)'; the context clarifies that this condition is characteristic of the *tlamacazqui* as a spirit being.

120 Compare the fireplace *teotlecuilli* in the Cihuacoatl temple, described by Durán (1967, I: 127–128; plate 21) and the *teotexcalli*, 'divine hearth or brazier', into which Nanahuatzin and Tecciztecatl threw themselves to become sun and moon (Sahagún, Book VII: Ch. 2; and see also Book VII: Ch. 9 for the 'binding' of the 52-year cycle).

121 A similar image of a *tlamacazqui* in a cooking vessel appears on page 42 of the Temple Scenes.

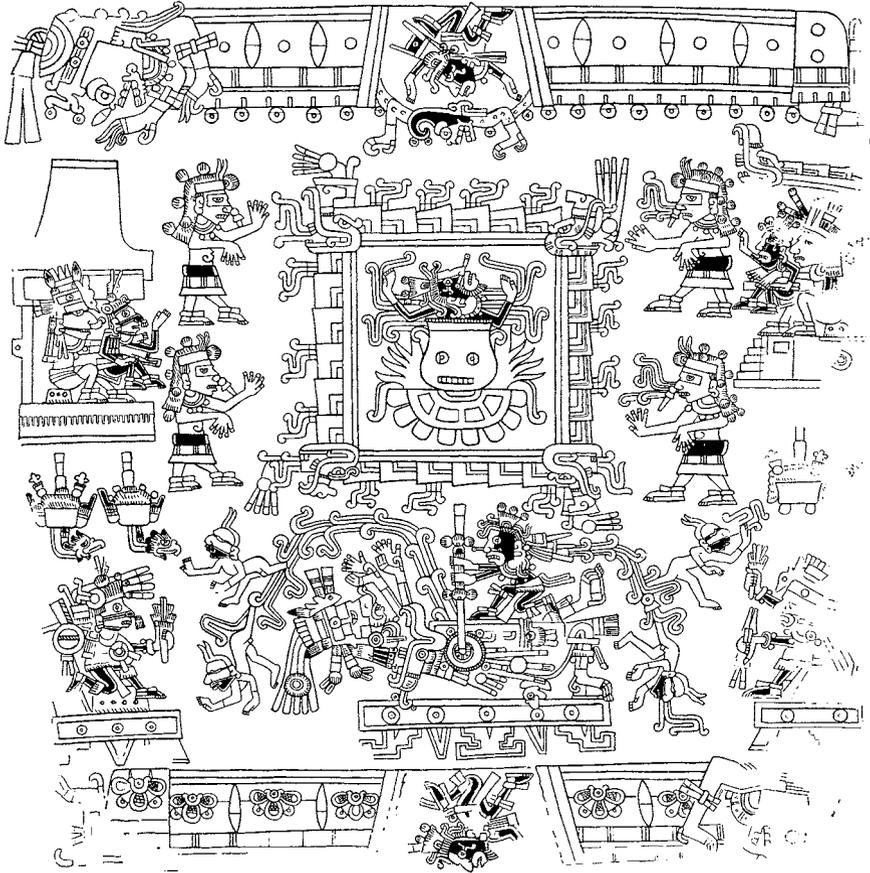


ILLUSTRATION 7.37 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, p. 46 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

with children.<sup>122</sup> The aim of this act seems to be to give them both strength and protection, as well as permission to carry on with the ritual. At the bottom of the scene, Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca appear seated on their thrones as the priestly authorities (in our interpretation, the *Aquiach* and *Tlalquiach*) that are confirmed in their power.

In between, the Quetzalcoatl priest makes fire on a fire serpent, which then transforms into the sun/fire god while fire spirits emerge and fly out to the four directions....<sup>123</sup>

122 Compare the image of gods holding and presenting the newborn children as a metaphor for 'birth', on pages 15–16 of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*. The *Tovar Calendar* explains: 'izcalli, which means to revive or the act of revival, because in this month, which falls in the middle of January the plants begin to sprout' (Kubler and Gibson 1951: 35).

123 Compare the four manifestations of *Xiuhtecuhtli* in the sanctuary of *Tzonmolco* (Sahagún, Book II Appendix). A similar fire-making act on top of a fire-serpent is part of

The scene is similar to the fire-making during the month-festival of Izcalli (the final month of the solar year) as described by Sahagún (Book 11: Ch. 37): an image was made of the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli as a wooden framework with a greenstone mask and a long quetzal feather cape, it was set before the brazier, and the priest made the New Fire on this image at midnight.

The scene ends with another image of Cihuacoatl, in regalia of the starry sky. She initiates and dominates the new segment of time, determining the destiny and ritual obligations of men and women (which will follow on pp. 47–48). Again Quetzalcoatl comes forward as her messenger, the archetypal priest and symbol of ritual devotion.

## 16 Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Page 47: Men and Women

Here we briefly comment upon the scenes that follow the last Cihuacoatl image. They do not occupy a full page, but only a small part, subdivided in two quadrants. Here we become aware of the progressive reduction in the extension of the paintings of this chapter. For the Temple Scenes on the obverse side of the codex, the painter used relatively much space: an introductory image (p. 29) and two pages for activities during Cuahuitlehua-Xilomanaliztli (pp. 30–31), one page for Tlacaxipehualiztli (p. 32) and then the first Cihuacoatl image, followed by two pages for Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli (pp. 33–34) and the rest for Toxcatl and Etzalcualiztli (pp. 35–38). On the reverse Cihuacoatl images first introduce priestly activities that take place during double feasts, represented on two pages: Tecuilhuitontli and Huey Tecuilhuitl (pp. 39–40), Miccailhuitontli and Huey Miccailhuitl (pp. 41–42). Then one page each for the rituals during Ochpaniztli (p. 43), Teotleco (p. 44), Quecholli-Panquetzaliztli-Atemoztli-Tititl (p. 45) and Izcalli (p. 46). Finally, there is a kind of left-over on page 47 that connects the Temple Scenes theme to the following chapter. Looking at the distribution of the scenes on the physical codex, we sense that the painter originally may have planned or hoped to add one or more segments of deerskin at this end of the codex (after p. 38), which would have enabled him to go on painting in the proportions and with the detail that he used on the obverse. Perhaps the original extension of the codex was meant to be 91 pages (7 × 13) instead of the present 78 (6 × 13). But then some change of plan

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rituals in a later chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 49–53, which contains various symbols of the four-part division of time and space, around a central scene of Cihuacoatl bringing forward and sustaining a specific tree – the fifth tree (p. 53) is combined with the symbolic scene of Cihuacoatl transforming into maize (cf. pp. 31 and 33–34 of the same codex).

occurred or he became aware of the fact that he had fewer pages at his disposal than he had thought before, so he had to adjust and to abbreviate the paintings on the reverse side.

The resulting images are not representations of rituals but rather of ideas. As in the final scene of page 42 we see spiritual beings emerging from specific entities amid various animals. In the first (central) scene we see a blindfolded naked woman emerging from a jade stone in the middle of two vessels or braziers (one turned upside down and placed as cover on top of the other). The vessels do not have handles. The one on top is characterised as precious (green colour, with the jade motif), the lower one is related to death (coloured as a bone). The two vessels/braziers moving on each other seem to be a symbol of generative force or procreation. Four serpents and four centipedes, symbols of danger and conflict, are coming out from between them at the same time. There are clear reminiscences of the first temple on page 31 of the Temple Scenes: the same blindfolded naked woman as manifestation of Cihuacoatl, with the bone vessel/brazier and – in that case – a red vessel/brazier, both without handles. The background of the first scene on page 47 is blue, suggesting a new day after the fire was made (on page 46). The theme seems to be the woman dedicated to Cihuacoatl, i.e. the one who is going to become a mother, and who is going to confront the dangers of the world surrounding her with a strong ‘blind’ belief in the goddess, having faith in her inner vision.

The vessels/braziers are situated on a band with attributes (cotton, half moon motif) of Tlazolteotl, which we propose to read as Cihuatlampa, the ‘Place of Women’, i.e. the West, the world segment where the deified women

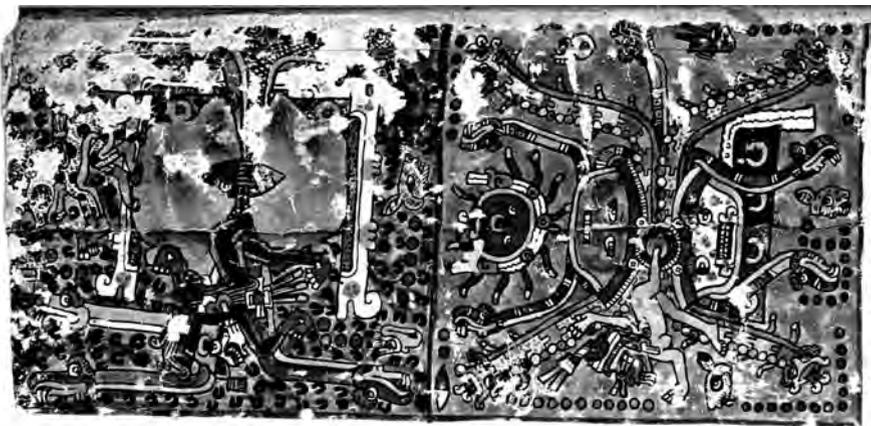


ILLUSTRATION 7.38 *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia)*, first part of p. 47 (Danzel 1922/Nowotny 1961a).

(Cihuateteo) dwell, the ones who have died in childbirth and now accompany the sun in the afternoon. Above the vessels is the head of a red spider looking upwards, similar to the spiders that we have seen on pages 33–34 of the Temple Scenes and that qualified the bloodletting-rope as an animated being. The spider has Tlazolteotl attributes, which confirm its connection here to Cihuatlampa. Because of its contextual associations, the spider may also be read as a symbol of the importance for women to dedicate their life to Tlazolteotl, the great mother and weaver, with piety, so they may attain and partake in her creative and cleansing powers.

Five days surround the image: 13 Death (position 26 in the 260 days of the *tonalpoalli*), 13 Flint (78), 13 Dog (130), 13 Wind (182) and 13 Jaguar (234). These days are 52 days apart and precede the consecrated days and calendar names of the deified women, which are 1 Deer, 1 Rain, 1 Monkey, 1 House and 1 Eagle, the days that initiate the five 13-day periods dedicated to the West.<sup>124</sup>

These are explicitly marked as calendar positions (and names) accompanying the five manifestations of the Cihuateteo, prescribing offerings (for cleansing, protection and regeneration) in the connecting subsequent section on pages 47–48. The same days were mentioned on the occasion of the sacrifice of the Itztlacoliuhqui image on page 41 of the Temple Scenes.

In the parallel image above this one on page 47, we see a black spirit, a black type of *Macuilxochitl* with deformed hands and feet. This figure represents one of the *Tonalleque*, which are the spirits of the warriors who have died in battle. The *Tonalleque* are directionally differentiated manifestations of *Nanahuatzin*, the sick and deformed person who, according to the ancient narrative of Teotihuacan, threw himself into the fire in order to become the sun: a symbolic reminder that the most poor and miserable people can attain the highest glory through valiant determination and pious deeds.

Here this black spirit is 'born' or emerging from a flint knife situated in the centre of two vessels (one turned upside down and placed as cover on top of the other). These are large vessels with handles, similar to the forms that are present in the second temple on page 31 of the Temple Scenes. From between the vessels five serpents (in directional colours) are coming out. The vessels themselves are placed in a 'house' of bones, on top of which a dog is seated. A similar House of Bones appears on page 52, where it is an emblem of the South, very similar to the way the *Vehe Kihin* of Lady 9 Grass is represented in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices.

124 See the organisation of the *tonalpoalli* in four segments dedicated to the four directions in *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia), pp. 1–8 (explained in the commentary of Anders, Jansen and Reyes García 1993).

The surrounding elements suggest dangers (serpents) and death. The dog may be a reminder of the road that souls after death of the individual have to go and the river they have to cross to reach the hereafter. The image is set against a dark background and surrounded by the days 4 House (position 43 in the 260 days of the *tonalpoalli*), 4 Eagle (95), 4 Deer (147), [4] Rain (199) and [4] Monkey (251). These are the days before the name days of the Tonalque: 5 Lizard, 5 Vulture, 5 Rabbit, 5 Flower and 5 Grass, which are explicitly marked as calendar positions (and names) accompanying the five manifestations of the Tonalque, prescribing offerings, in the connecting subsequent section on pages 47–48. The calendar segment in question is that of the five 13-day periods that belong to the South.

This scene on page 47 in a way presents the aftermath of the previous rituals: the cleansing and possibly the storage of the vessels/braziers in places and times dedicated to the West and South. The previous rituals have revitalised and freed the spirits of the men and women, destined to confront dangers and possible death as warriors and young mothers. The next phase will be the offerings and cleansing rituals prescribed in the following scene on pp. 47–48. We note the presence of Lady 9 Reed, the Spirit of the Arrowheads, who is also important in Ñuu Dzauí codices, such as Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 51, and in the treasure of Tomb 7 (Bone 174a), as mentioned earlier in Chapter 3. Her character as ‘Woman Warrior’ is probably an important role model to confront the struggles of life.

## 17 Recapitulation and Concluding Remarks

The chapter of the Temple Scenes in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29–47, shows the function of a specific ceremonial centre, with many ritual and symbolic references, invocations of deities and visionary experiences. Contextual evidence suggests that this ceremonial centre is that of Tollan Cholollan, present-day Cholula. Following this hypothesis, a coherent explanation of the Temple Scenes as a set of rituals working towards and ending with a New Fire ceremony is possible. Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus) presents such a ceremony as the end/beginning of a calendar round of 52 years (specifically, the one carried out in the Aztec capital in the month, Panquetzaliztli in 1507 AD), but the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) refers to another occasion, probably to the more frequently repeated New Fire ceremony that marked the passage from one solar year (cycle of 365 days) to another, at the end of the month Izcalli.

The protagonists of the Temple Scenes are *tamacazque* (priests/spirits/manifestations) of Cihuacoatl and of Quetzalcoatl. The continuous presence

of different types of priests who are avatars of Quetzalcoatl suggests that we are looking at a specialised cult place of this deity, i.e. a ceremonial centre that included the famous Temple of Quetzalcoatl in Cholula. In addition, we find images of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca seated on thrones (p. 43): most likely they represent the priestly authorities Aquiach and Tlalquiach of Cholula.

The Temple Scenes are divided by large extended figures of Cihuacoatl, which initiate, organise and supervise these rituals. There are nine subdivisions. In several cases they are related to the well-known eighteen month-festivals, but generally in an indirect manner. The Temple Scenes are a different series of rituals, which have their own specific form and focus, but they seem to take place against the background (or in the context) of the month-festivals. There is no full correspondence. It is not always clear whether the different scenes formed a fixed chronological sequence, or were, in part, also carried out simultaneously, repeatedly or in a different order. But we see a progress in the sequence of scenes: several important items are being presented and prepared for later ritual use.

The sequence opens with the preparation of the hallucinogenic ointment (p. 29), a bloodletting that invoked the cooperation of the tree/plant spirits, probably as transformed ancestors (p. 30): this is the first month festival Cua-huitlehua ('Raising Trees') or Xilomanaliztli ('Offering of tender corncobs'). The application of the ointment results in communication with the ancestors and in mobilising the transformational power of Cihuacoatl to turn death into life and sustenance (p. 31). In a parallel fashion, the power of the knife is ritually prepared and invoked (p. 32) in the context of the second month-festival Tlacaxipehualiztli, being celebrated in the plaza in front of the temple. In these scenes we see the focus on a central place of encounter with the divine: the black and red round spot (pp. 29–30), which probably was an altar: here the *tzitzimitl*-brazier for the production of the hallucinogenic ointment was placed; later, as the rituals proceeded, this altar became the manifestation of Cihuacoatl (p. 31). The brazier was then placed outside in the temple courtyard, a flint knife was placed in it and so it became the site for the manifestation of Tecpatl, the knife god.

As the ritual sequence started in the temple of Cihuacoatl, we understand that the goddess and her high priest are already protagonists in the organisation of the first Temple Scene. From now (p. 32 end) onwards the involvement of the goddess (and her representative) is painted as the large image of Cihuacoatl, from whose breast (heart) Quetzalcoatl emerges: Cihuacoatl has Quetzalcoatl priests carry out several ritual acts. The next ritual shows the preparation of wood for the temple service (pp. 33–34) presumably during the two months of Small and Big Bloodletting (Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli), which precede

the zenith passage of the sun in the beginning of May. The transformational power of the fire god and of Cihuacoatl is located in the Heaven Temple, which is qualified by the large encircling serpent as a place of vision. Here, trees are cut to provide wood for the temple fire, while the arrival of the sun-bearing Xolotl (the zenith passage) is anticipated. In these scenes we again find the central altar referred to: the place of Xipe (p. 33) and the round place of light for kindling a New Fire in the temple hall, burning the left-over *zacate* (dried maize plants) as well as the weeds and bushes that had overgrown the fields and had to be cleared (p. 34).

A sacred bundle is carried in a procession and then opened, which results in an impacting visionary experience (pp. 35–38). Probably this starts during the fifth month Toxcatl (dedicated to Tezcatlipoca) and continues during the sixth month Etzalcualiztli (dedicated to Tlaloc). A priest of Quetzalcoatl-Xolotl enters into a trance, while various other rituals take place. We follow the protagonists through a complex ceremonial centre: the temple of night and wind where the sacred bundle is kept, next to a ballcourt and a sunken plaza (p. 35), the cult location out in the open (p. 36), the Temple of Jewels – Temple of Heaven, where a sun priest plays music, the Temple of Lightning and the precious altar where Xolotl invokes the lightning spirits (p. 37), the altar where he then lays down, the altar of the fire serpent (*nahual* power), as well as a pond or stream and a large fireplace (p. 38) etc.

Then we move to the reverse side of the codex. In the following segment, Cihuacoatl is constantly overlooking, enabling and protecting each scene. The scene on pages 39–40 starts with a dance of twelve maidens, who accompany the sun to the western horizon. In response to the sacrifices realised by nine Quetzalcoatl priests at the altar of the primordial sun, the god shares his light-force (*tonalli*). Possibly this image refers to the summer solstice in the beginning of the seventh month Tecuilhuitontli.

After a procession and preparatory acts, the *ixiptla* of Itztlacoliuhqui (the cold) – probably an image made of maize dough – is sacrificed on a precious altar at the heart of the ceremonial centre (pp. 41–42). Spirits emerge from the heart of the Itztlacoliuhqui figure, which was deposited at the crossroads. This ritual seems to take place in the context of the period dedicated to festive commemorations of the dead (the successive months Miccailhuitontli and Huey Miccailhuitl).

Under the supervision of rulers dedicated to Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, on the eagle throne and jaguar throne (the Aquiach and the Tlalquiach), rituals take place at the round stone altar of the primordial sun in the Temple of the Sun, decorated with maize ears and corncobs: they provide sustenance in the context of the feast of the eleventh month, Ochpaniztli (p. 43). The tree of

rulership is nourished in the precinct where Aquiach and Tlalquiach celebrate the septum-piercing rituals of rulers, possibly in the period of the months Teotleco and Tepeilhuitl (p. 44). The tree monument rises from a central altar in the courtyard: the sun stone of the goddess Xochiquetzal, sustained by Cihuacoatl.

A new sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl-Venus is then made during the month Panquetzaliztli (p. 45). The ritual takes place at a *tzompantli* (skull altar), devoted to the Venus god (Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli) and sustained by Cihuacoatl. Additional images refer to the feasts of Quecholli, Tititl and Atemoztli. The Tititl ritual honours Cihuacoatl as the 'Old Lady' (Ilamatecuhtli) and implies a reunion of many gods as well as contact with the ancestors (represented by a staff-bundle).

The next action takes place in the centre between four Eagle Houses. The energy of the Quetzalcoatl priest is strengthened at a hearth, located centrally between two temples and surrounded by fire serpents that represent *nahual* powers and emphasise the liminal character of the site (p. 46). The same priest then kindles a New Fire in the month of Izcalli, which confirms the rulership of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca (Aquiach and Tlalquiach seated on their thrones).

Finally, two abbreviated images (p. 47) connect the sequence of rituals with the destiny of men and women as fearless warriors in a dangerous world. Again the braziers, mentioned in the first Temple Scene, occupy a central position.

The representation of the rituals in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) focuses on the experience of the participant priests in preparation of a ritual cycle, to a large extent in service of the goddess Cihuacoatl and ending with kindling the New Fire. The symbolic aspects of the pictorial language show that this chapter was more than a mere prescription of how to organise a ritual. The painting was related to ceremonial discourse and probably served as a source for contemplation, in order to evoke the adequate state of mind, the concentration, with which to prepare these events. We should bear in mind that the spiritual experiences of Mesoamerican religion could (and can) be very intense and that a thorough preparation of priests and other participants was (and is) an absolute necessity.

As we have identified Tomb 7 at Monte Albán as a shrine of Cihuacoatl, we may project the ritual activity painted in the Temple Scenes onto its space and archaeological remains. This results in a mental image of Tomb 7's function as a place of contact with the ancestors and for the preparation of community rituals such as the making of the New Fire. This would have included ceremonial discourse together with fasting and bloodletting in front of the sacred bundles, but also, outside Tomb 7, bringing together the necessary elements for the ritual, such as the cutting of wood and so on.

It was in such an intense religious context that the offerings for the marriage of Lady 6 Water – granddaughter of Lady 4 Rabbit ‘Quetzal’ and Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila – were made. The golden ornament (‘pectoral’) Number 26 clarifies that the protagonist of the rituals in Tomb 7 was, as in the Temple Scenes chapter, a representative (*ixiptla*) of the Plumed Serpent Quetzalcoatl, the archetypal expression of priesthood and a ‘son’ of Cihuacoatl. It must have been under his supervision that the treasure was deposited in Tomb 7. Probably this deposition was an expression of gratitude towards the invoked ancestors and a petition or prayer that they would bless the planned marriage. The inscription on Bone 124 (which presents this historical alliance) contains the date year 1 Reed day 1 Reed, which is a date associated with the making of a New Fire. The date – decorated with precious quetzal feathers – expresses the hope that this union of Beni Zaa and Ñuu Dzauí dynasties would be the beginning of a new prosperous era.

## Heritage and Spirit Connection

Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people.  
The dead are not powerless.  
Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds ...  
How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?  
The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth.  
Man did not weave the web of life – he is merely a strand in it.  
Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

From the reconstructed speech of CHIEF SEATTLE<sup>1</sup>



In our rapidly globalising world, archaeology, heritage concerns and social struggles become seriously entangled. In this process the question of meaning is central. Understanding the relics of the past is a crucial precondition for giving them a place in the present. The interpretative act itself not only makes such works accessible to a contemporary public so that they can become agents of identity and quality of life, but also, by exercising the translation of symbolism, contributes to forming intercultural competences in the community.

At the same time, interpretation, representation and cultural memory enter into a dialectic relationship: our interpretation and representation of the past contribute to the formation process of cultural memory in the present, both at the local and the global level, while cultural memory itself, particularly the way it is played out in the landscape and in cultural continuity, becomes a crucial context for the interpretive effort. This is an intertemporal and intercultural

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1 These words are part of a reconstructed version of statements by Chief Seattle (±1780–1866), supposedly pronounced on 11 March 1854, when he had to surrender the indigenous land to North American colonisers (Kaiser 1987). The text, partly registered at the time, partly reinvented in the context of a Hollywood movie, has had a strong influence on contemporary environmentalism and spiritual movements. We might call it a document of intercultural encounter, because indeed indigenous spirituality meets ecological concern in Western industrial society.

process, in which different perceptions and symbolisations of time play their part. Generally, as Johannes Fabian (1983) has observed, the dominant society constructs an image of the Other (dominated) cultures as *objects* in the past. Such objects are then usually analysed by modern Western researchers with a distant, materialist and positivist attitude, which tends to produce more alienation than understanding.

This is particularly true in the case of colonised and oppressed peoples: their past is expropriated and construed as a mere *object* for the leisure interest of bourgeois élites, their own cultural memory is systematically fragmented and looted; its manifestations are taken away and alienated from the descendant communities. In the end the heritage of indigenous peoples becomes a void category on which different outsider concerns and 'fantasies of the master race' (Churchill 1998) may be projected, while its intrinsic values are not understood nor taken into account. Consequently, the indigenous communities remain without adequate access to their own heritage: school systems and educative media basically conceal and denigrate that heritage and try to replace it with the coloniser's imaginary. And only too often the academic community, in maintaining its 'impartiality' and separateness from the culture it studies, denies itself valuable insights that may come from indigenous knowledge. Not taking into account the human context of a living culture, investigators end up with theories that consider the remains of the past as distant, incoherent and fundamentally strange.

This alienating process, this lack of cooperation and sharing, is bad for the development of the indigenous community, bad for scholarship, and bad for the protection of world heritage. A decolonising reintegration of cultural memory is necessary for a process of healing and social emancipation as well as for a better understanding of specific relics, art works and monuments.

Among the many misunderstandings that may occur in intercultural encounters one of the most frequent is that the symbolism of another culture is not adequately grasped, nor understood in terms of its metaphorical artistic and philosophical message; instead it is treated in a reductionist manner as a realistic description, which then in turn is considered weird and connected with all kinds of prejudices about the Other. Basically the Other is seen as less rational than Self, more driven by fears and other primitive emotions.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it is healthy to systematically compare the culture of the Other with the culture of Self, in a critical and conscious way, looking for values that are similar but may take different forms of symbolic expression. Cultural translation

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2 See the illuminating study by Oosten (1988).

and the mobilisation of cultural memory provide a valuable training in intercultural competence.

Needless to repeat, the real participation of the living descendant community is absolutely indispensable in this process as an antidote against the preconceived notions of outsider scholarship and as the very practice of decolonisation.

## 1 Root Symbolism

We have sought to anchor our study of Mesoamerican religious heritage in the values of the living cultural tradition, taking as our point of departure the profound narrative of the Grandmother of the steambath, which presents several key elements of the Mesoamerican worldview (Chapter 2). In the process of creation there is first the primordial time of darkness, filled with the mystery of the divine powers, the natural world of the Grandmother. Her grandchildren, however, break with that primordial and dark natural world in order to transform into sun and moon, and so to configure human life and society. The central symbol is the first sunrise, which separates day from night and so enables human knowledge, cosmivision and social organisation. It also brings about the growth of maize and other plants. The sunrise did not establish a situation of pure and permanent light but set into motion a dynamic cycle of light-darkness-light, and of its correlate life-death-life, distributed throughout the cosmos, throughout time and space. In the modern indigenous worldviews of Mesoamerica there is a basic opposition of hot (light) and cold (darkness), which does not refer to differences in temperature but to the presence of the forces of the sun and the earth (including rain) in our body (the head is hot, feet are cold) and lifetime (babies are hot, the elderly are cold), in the landscape (eroded slopes and mountaintops as well as roads are hot, while caves are typically cold), in the character of diseases and the medicinal properties of plants, etc.<sup>3</sup> The central idea is that there should be a harmony between these forces.<sup>4</sup>

The human individual – inserted as a creature within a wider community that encompasses animals, plants as well as stones, mountains, rivers and

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3 Compare for example Chevalier and Sánchez Bain (2003). In our summary description we follow present-day ideas of the Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec) people in the area of Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatongo).

4 The ideal of social harmony is expressed in the Mixtec language as the difrasismo *vindaa vinene*.

natural phenomena – must seek to maintain that balance by paying respect to the superior forces of life-death-life and by honouring the ancestors. This is the main purpose and message of ritual activity, which in turn develops in liminal places, i.e. places of visionary contact with the beyond and shrines of the sacred. Being human includes an intimate personal connection with nature, with the deities and with the ancestors, through ritual respect and through the *nahual* experience.

The Grandmother symbolises the realm of the forces of nature that stem from the time of darkness: creation and procreation, fertility, cleansing, spiritual and bodily strength. This realm lives on under the sunlight, but is concentrated in the steambath (*temazcal*) and in similar sacred places. That concentration implies violence: the enclosure of the Grandmother. This is given as the reason why she is easily offended and should be treated with respect and delicacy.

The breach with nature is a common motif in profound narratives of diverse cultures. In the Judeo-Christian tradition it corresponds to the separation Adam and Eve from Paradise. In Greek mythos there is a lot of primordial violence (Graves 1955). The primordial divine couple Uranus (heaven) and Gaia (earth) procreated Titans and Cyclops. As Uranus hated and mistreated the children, Gaia made a flint sickle and instigated their son Kronos to castrate his father Uranus. After the deed the sickle fell into the sea and, according to one version, became the sickle-shaped extension of land next to Messina (Sicily), locally known as Zancle (Greek for ‘sickle’), providing a natural harbour there. Several beings and peoples stemmed from the drops of blood: Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, was born from the foam produced by the testicles falling into the sea. Later Kronos himself was dethroned by his own son Zeus (Jupiter) and banned to Tartaros (the underworld).

All of this reminds us that such violence does not really kill the deities (immortal and eternal by definition): they continue to exist and may transform into specific beings and forces that remain active in the world. This meaning is also present, for example, in the symbolism of the Christian crucifix and of the martyrdom of the saints. The beheading of Coatlicue and the dismemberment of Coyolxauhqui in Aztec cosmology should be understood in a similar symbolic sense. Such acts are not historical incidents but part of an eternal cycle in nature, the cycle of life-death-life. The goddess Cihuacoatl is emblematic of this cyclical force. Her skeletonised face and her dark temple express her connection with the world of the deceased. Her Ñuu Dzau manifestation, Lady 9 Grass, is the guardian of the ancestors in the funerary cave (*Vehe Kihin*). At the same time Cihuacoatl is the Milky Way from which newborn children come. Her *tzotzopaztli* (‘weaving sword’) points to her creative activity. The flint she

bore is, like the scythe in Greek and Christian iconography, a symbol of both death and agency, of (self-) sacrifice and piety.

Possibly because of phonetic similarity, the terms Kronos and Chronos (Greek for 'time') sometimes became confused (or identified) in the Greek cosmivision. Anyway, the sickle of Kronos became the origin of the scythe as attribute of Chronos: a symbol of harvest as well as of cutting and killing.<sup>5</sup> Originally Chronos himself was represented as a three-headed serpent, curling around the cosmic egg of creation. Such narrative and symbolic elements express and connect the forces of life and death. Additional symbols of time in the European tradition emphasize movement. The linear aspect is present in the symbol of the hourglass, often with wings, measuring time running out and flying away. In a portrayal of the cosmic and cyclical aspect of time, Chronos is holding and moving the zodiac. A Mesoamerican equivalent can be found in the sign of 4 Movement (as on the Calendar Stone), which connects the idea of cyclical movement with the four directions and creates the notion of a huge cycle of creations and successive Suns, in the middle of which we find ourselves. Time itself is not personified as a separate deity in Mesoamerican art; it appears as a procession of gods in multiple associations with days and periods. The Mesoamerican calendar provides a mechanism to count and order time, but it does so in a way that is full of symbolism. Its numerical aspect is religiously charged, very much as in ancient Greece the famous scholar Pythagoras combined the study of mathematics, geometry and music with philosophy, cosmology and mysticism.

The Mesoamerican narrative of the Grandmother reminds us that the newborn babies are connected to her realm, which also involves the zodiac (Milky Way). The connection is made through the cleansing and reinforcing ritual bath of the mother but also through the ceremonial fixing of the calendar name and the *nahual* of the newborn, which means a life-long bond with the mantic symbolism of the calendar and with the spiritual experience of nature itself. This points to an awareness of the double character of the human psyche, on the one hand linked to the dark, mysterious, primordial forces of life-death-life, represented by the Grandmother and the *nahual* (or alter ego), on the other to the analytic powers and historical agency which derive from the sun (Tonatiuh). This interpretation comes close to (and may be reproducing) the Western dichotomy of mystic-emotional and rational aspects of human experience.

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5 Leach (1971) wrote a seminal article on Kronos/Chronos. See also the comments on his position by Gell (1992: Ch. 4).

Greek myth also struggled with how these different psychological capacities relate to one another, as external circumstances easily produce confrontations and tragic dilemmas that may deeply affect the mental sanity and even physical existence of the human being. In his famous play *The Bacchae*, the ancient Greek playwright Euripides describes the conflict between King Pentheus of Thebes (as stern authority) and the powers of ecstasy, personified in the god Dionysus. The king's denial of the power of the god provokes the revenge of Dionysus, who causes frenzy among the women of Thebes and makes them roam the countryside in their ecstatic cult. Pentheus wants to control them with military means, but is then seduced by Dionysus (disguised as a visitor from abroad) to follow his own desire (apparently inflamed by sexual fantasies) to find out what the wild women are actually doing there. In the countryside, however, Pentheus' own mother detects her son spying; in her outraged state unable to recognise him, captures him and kills him (proudly claiming that she has killed a lion).

We may compare the power of Dionysus with that of Cihuacoatl (also connected with ecstasy through her manifestation as *piciete*, hallucinogenic tobacco). Pentheus' story demonstrates how this power should not be denied: it is superior to the rational thought of men and women and – if perverted – may destroy the social order and human relations such as that between mother and son. Mesoamerican ritual practice channelled this power through respectful ritual discipline and self-sacrifice into mystic and visionary experiences and moral inspiration.

In the religious heritage of Europe's classical antiquity and in that of Mesoamerica we find similar themes. Focusing on such similarities may help us to overcome the traditional colonial perspective that sees ancient Mesoamerica as alien, bloody, irrational and primitive, while the ancient Mediterranean culture is regarded as the enlightened cradle of Western culture.<sup>6</sup>

Intercultural comparisons may further help us to really understand and appreciate the symbolism of another culture. The colonial missionaries condemned *nahualism* as witchcraft and a pact with the devil. Today we can revalue it as a set of ideas and experiences that makes human individuals aware of our physical and psychological bond with nature: our life world is not confined to the individual human body, but is a product of continuous interactions with nature that transcend those limitations and also make us part of the cycle of life-death-life.

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6 There has been considerable debate on this among classical scholars, at least ever since Dodds (1951) and more recently Gernet (1983).

The ecological issues of our time have made it alarmingly clear that indeed the destinies of humans, animals and natural phenomena are intertwined: what happens to one, affects the other. If bees become an endangered species, that circumstance will directly have a negative impact on the pollination of plants, therefore on flowers and fruits, and then on all species (both animals and humans) that are dependent on these for their survival.

When a Mesoamerican healer carries out a ceremonial cleansing (*limpia*), he or she works on the psyche of the patient. An important symbolic act consists of pouring water or alcohol on the ground (with respectful gestures that situate the ritual in the context of the four directions) and then smearing some of the wet earth in the form of a cross on the forehead and the chest of the patient. An outsider's observation might lead to a dismissive qualification as a superstitious custom without any medical relevance. On a symbolic level we understand it as a strong embodied *memento* to the psyche: 'you belong to the earth, to nature, and awareness of that fact will give your strength and health'. In such acts there is no contradiction between the cross as symbol of the four directions of the universe and the cross as the symbol of salvation through the identification with the suffering of Christ. On the contrary, one symbolic layer supports and reinforces the other. Symbolic thought and religious experience in connection with cultural memory, embodied, activated and mobilised by ritual enactments, can be very empowering, provoke psychic changes and the capacity to overcome problems.

One of the crucial obstacles we encounter in intercultural communication, however, is insufficient awareness of the symbolic, metaphorical dimension of what is expressed by the Other. Inadequate understanding of the language code and cultural context creates a tendency to interpret everything someone else says literally. And even if outsiders do grasp the symbolic or metaphorical character of those statements, they often do not understand them as values but only as intellectual constructs.<sup>7</sup> When the symbolic dimension of religious thought and religious art is not taken into account, the religious cosmivision of the Other is merely seen as a kind of speculative or false physics. The Spanish Catholic priests understood their own images of God the Father, Christ, the Saints and the Virgin as religious focal points, capable of producing faith and pious actions in the congregation; but they considered the images of Mesoamerican deities as false and misleading: idols representing demons. This intellectual and spiritual barrier constructed by the colonial missionaries still impedes comprehension of Mesoamerican symbolism today.

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<sup>7</sup> Compare the critique of structuralism by Fabian (1983).

Here we understand Mesoamerican religious images and symbolic narratives as incorporating values, ethics and other motivations, which produce agency in the faithful and endow them with mental power. The work of Clarissa Pinkola Estés offers many examples of the awareness-raising and empowering capacity of such cultural elements.

When an origin narrative, for example, tells us that God created the cosmos in seven days, it is not a historical reality that is communicated, but a reminder to the congregation of believers that each of the seven days of the week actually implies a reference to the creation of a specific aspect of the life-world. Similarly, when Mesoamericans say that when the fire makes some loud noise it announces the arrival of a special person, we should not understand this as the attribution of prophetic capacity to the element fire, but as an activation of our awareness that the next person to arrive is special and has to be treated as a valuable messenger (Greek: *angelos*).

The Catholic mass is not about eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood in literal terms, but about the congregation becoming present at the dramatic moment of the last supper in which the founder prepares himself to give his life for his ideals, teaching his congregation to be true, loving and forgiving, ethical human beings. In a similar vein, Mesoamerican offerings may be said to feed the gods, but actually they express in a tangible, embodied manner human awareness that we are created by and dependent upon the forces of life-death-life. Giving up something that is ours, denying ourselves voluntarily something precious, we manifest gratitude to superior powers and enter explicitly into a relationship of ceremonial exchange and mutuality with them. The offering is to be interpreted in terms of the age-old custom of mutual support, designated in Dzaha Dzauí (the Mixtec language) as *dzaha* or with the loan-word *gueza* (from Zapotec *guelaguetza*): people help each other with specific goods or services, for example in the preparation of a feast or ritual, but all of that is registered with precision and the idea is that the gift will be returned on the next occasion. In this way all members of the community are in each other's debt. Offerings are human *dzaha* to the divine powers and so integrate both parties in a strong community of confidence and faith.

The type or form of offering may indicate the specific issue at stake: the petitions (*pedimentos*) at sacred sites throughout the Ñuu Dzauí region express in material form (structures of stones, pine cones, etc.) the contents of what is prayed for (houses, good family life, children, cattle, cars, etc.). Similarly, by bloodletting in self-sacrifice people may be asking for life force; deposited weapons may express a wish for strength in battle as well as a desire for peace. The offering of jewels may indicate that the aim is to achieve good fortune, while imagery referring to dynastic history clarifies further that rulership and the legacy of the ancestors are involved.

## 2 Tomb 7: A Dynastic Shrine

The recognition and validation of symbolism is the general background for interpreting an ancient religious text or archaeological monument. In this book we focus on Tomb 7 at Monte Albán, which was found and excavated in 1932. At first the thoughts of the expedition leader, Alfonso Caso, and his team of archaeologists, must have been under the spell of Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen, the great archaeological sensation of ten years earlier. Caso and his colleagues were aware that the bones in Tomb 7 were not a primary burial of specific individuals, but in practice they kept thinking about the find as a treasure accompanying a specific important personality ('Skeleton A'). At the end of the 1930s and during the 1940s Caso made crucial advancements in the decipherment of the Ñuu Dzaui pictorial manuscripts, which provided him with detailed knowledge for his ongoing study of Tomb 7: the treasure was clearly from the same period, style and region. In the 1960s the discovery of two tombs in Zaachila (later published by Gallegos) yielded further important comparable data: these indeed were primary burials accompanied by precious objects. Moreover, they showed a clear stylistic and thematic relationship with the artworks of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán.

Caso published his findings in an extensive monograph, *El Tesoro de Monte Albán*, at the end of his life (1969). This classic masterpiece of Mexican archaeology contains a detailed report and full analytic descriptions. Still, because of the enormity of the task, it proved difficult to achieve a convincing synthesis. Tomb 7 was (and generally still is) not seen as a sacred place or shrine with a coherent meaning and message, but as a mere collection of loose archaeological objects, and it was excavated and treated accordingly. All elements were taken out of the tomb and transported to different storage facilities and museums. The methodical separation of the findings in material categories (both in Caso's monograph and in the museum exhibitions) made it difficult to see significant patterns and relationships. Cooperation with indigenous experts was not part of archaeology at the time, nor was the validation of indigenous religion.

As a consequence, Tomb 7 became an example of the fragmentation of indigenous religious heritage. Actually such a procedure leads to a disjunction between the archaeological remains and the descendant community, and as such to a destruction of the meaning of the heritage. This is reflected in the difficulty of researchers in making sense of all this, the more so when they are caught in a web of outsider categories such as myth, earth monsters, portals of the underworld, witchcraft and so on. Caso's final conclusion regarding Tomb 7 was that it was essentially the burial of an insane and monster-like

individual, who during his lifetime probably had a semi-divine status because of being regarded as an incarnation of the god of monstrosity (called Xolotl by the Nahuas). We may see this idea as an illustration of how an alien perspective on fragmented and decontextualised remains does not produce an understandable coherent image, but provokes the impression that one is looking at weird stuff and crazy personages.

Caso already indicated that Tomb 7 was constructed originally in the Early Classic period as a place of burial (from which a few elements remain), but was reused in the Postclassic period when the treasure was deposited. The organisation and imagery of Tomb 7 is clearly different from the well-known Classic and Postclassic sepulchres. The human remains clearly do not correspond to a primary burial but to contents of sacred bundles, which suggests that the Postclassic function of Tomb 7 was that of a shrine. The fact that this shrine was located in an ancient tomb and that human bones were abundantly present makes it clear that this Postclassic sanctuary was devoted to communication with the ancestors.

In Mesoamerica we can find richly adorned burials in the form of houses or temples for the deceased (often a subterranean equivalent of the palace under which the burial chamber is located).<sup>8</sup> Tomb 5 of Cerro de la Campana in Suchilquitongo (State of Oaxaca) is such a case (Urcid 2015). The funerary iconography may contain the gathering of family members or officials paying their respects to a deceased ancestor, as in the tomb of Ixcaquixtla; or it may represent the deceased who pay their respects to the deity of death, as in the case of Tomb 1 of Zaachila. Maya monuments may contain historical inscriptions or symbolic images about the transformation of the ruler after death, as on the lid of the sarcophagus of Lord Pakal in the Temple of the Inscriptions in Palenque, where the ruler is laid down in earth at the foot of the flourishing tree of rulership, amidst his ancestors who have turned into trees.

In European archaeology there is the impressive example of the Etruscan *tumuli*, such as in the necropolis of Cerveteri (Italy) or the interesting – but rather unique – case of the sarcophagus of Simpelveld in the Netherlands (Galestin 2001). These monuments contain house-like interiors, where the deceased may dwell in comfort. Even more abundantly, Egyptian burial chambers may contain representations of the life-world of the deceased and references to his or her journey to the beyond (the images and texts known as the Egyptian Book of the Dead). In the mediaeval Christian world, the prominent dead were buried in the church, sometimes in special chapels, where they

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8 In Dzaha Dzau (Mixtec) 'house' is *huahi* (today: *vehe*). A temple is *huahi ñuhu*, 'house of the deity'.

rest among images that generally glorify God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin, Saints and angels in a celestial sphere that promises eternal life.

The famous Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh, Scotland, is a beautiful example of such a gothic sanctuary: a wealth of sculpted vegetal motifs and flowers form the setting for images from the Bible and other symbols of the Christian faith. These include the very spirit of plants: the 'green man', a pre-Christian element. The dead were to be buried in the crypt under this chapel and so would be included in this constructed replica (and religious evocation) of Paradise.<sup>9</sup> Some of the reliefs establish ethical norms such as the pictorial texts that contain the seven sins (leading to the opened jaws of the dragon that represents hell) and the seven virtues (leading to St Peter at the gate of heaven). The 15th-century founder of the chapel (William St Clair) is himself referred to (or, rather, made present) in the form of a heraldic sign: the engrailed cross, which is the coat of arms of his family.

The Classic tombs of Monte Albán frequently contained effigy vessels, often designated by the misleading term 'urns' in the scientific literature. These vessels are characterised by images that represent humans or other beings. We may call them 'spirit vessels'. A crucial example is the vessel from Tomb 5 at the Ñuu Dzaui archaeological site Cerro de las Minas (Huaquapan), on which the image of an elderly man, seated (as a ruler) on the *ñuu* sign (representing 'town', 'people' or 'nation'), holds a small gourd that probably contained ground *piciete*; as a consequence of consuming this hallucinogen, he is transforming into a powerful *nahual*: the fire serpent. As the vessel was placed at the foot of the buried person, i.e. facing the entrance/exit of the tomb, the total image suggests that the ruler is entering the trance world to meet his creators. At the same time, this would be the image for those who would enter the tomb to pay their respects and to seek counsel from the deceased. The vessel invites the approaching faithful to replicate the action: both would consume *piciete* and enter into a trance in order to meet and communicate with each other in the world beyond. We suppose that similar experiences were provoked in the case of Postclassic subterranean sanctuaries.

One of the most prominent jewels in Tomb 7, the golden ornament ('pectoral') Number 26, shows a Lord 'Plumed Serpent' with skeletonised lower jaw, a feature that is associated with rituals related to the ancestors. Probably this image signals (and enables) the act of communicating with the deceased. Such jaws (to be used as buccal masks) were indeed among the remains in the tomb. The skeletonised jaw is a characteristic attribute of the goddess Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' (guardian of the abode of the ancestors) and her priests. At the

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9 See the description of this remarkable monument and its history by Turnbull (2012).

same time the figure on the golden ornament is represented as (and transforming into) his *nahual*: the Plumed Serpent – in a way comparable to what we see on the spirit vessel from Tomb 5 at Cerro de las Minas.

Caso noted the stylistic parallels with the Postclassic pictorial manuscripts, and he also was able to identify a specific corpus of those codices as coming from the Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec) region. Therefore, it became customary to call the Postclassic items in Tomb 7: ‘Mixtec’. As knowledge of Postclassic archaeology increased, it became clear that the style in question was distributed much more widely than just in the Ñuu Dzau region. Monte Albán itself had been largely abandoned in the Postclassic period and the site must have been part of the Beni Zaa (Zapotec) realm of Zaachila. All the same, when we consider the material today, we observe that the treasure of Tomb 7 does contain clearly Ñuu Dzau elements. Several of the pictorial texts on the carved bones explicitly refer to Ñuu Dzau historiography, that is to say to the origin of the Ñuu Dzau dynasties: they speak to us about the tree of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala), the war against the stone men, and the first sunrise. The contents of these texts indicate that those who entered Tomb 7 to celebrate rituals belonged to a Ñuu Dzau lineage.

Calendar notations provide an additional indication of the ethnic and chronological dimensions of the treasure of Tomb 7: a relief that was reused as a slab in the roof contains a date in the Classic Monte Albán system. Most dates in the pictorial texts of the treasure are in the well-known Aztec-Mixtec calendar of the Postclassic era with the year bearers Reed-Flint-House-Rabbit. The golden ornament (‘pectoral’) Number 26, however, contains one day (2 Flint) in two different year-counts: one (year 11 House) is part of the Postclassic Ñuu Dzau year count, while the other (year 10 Wind) belongs to a different system of year bearers that stems from the Classic era (Grass-Movement-Wind-Deer) and was still in use by the Postclassic Beni Zaa people. This correlation or bicultural statement indicates that those who deposited the treasure were explicitly making use of two different year counts; in other words, they belonged to two different communities: Beni Zaa (Zapotec) and Ñuu Dzau (Mixtec).

The similarity with objects found in Tomb 1 of Zaachila suggests that most of the carved bones and other objects of the treasure of Tomb 7 date from the reign of Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila (buried in Tomb 1 in the patio of the palace of that town). This gives us a historical chronological reference: the first decades of the fourteenth century, which fits well within the physical anthropological dating of the human remains (the investigation directed by Dr Tuross). At the same time the scenes depicted on items of the Tomb 7 treasure may be connected with the historical information about Monte Albán and the local

dynasties that can be obtained from new insights into the Ñuu Dzau pictorial manuscripts.

Looking for a link between the Beni Zaa and Ñuu Dzau dynasties, we find that Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila was married to Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' who belonged to the Ñuu Dzau dynasty of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco). According to the reconstructed chronology of the Ñuu Dzau codices, we can date their rule around 1300 AD. The time frame leads us to connect this couple with the statement in early colonial sources (*Relaciones Geográficas*) that at the end of the thirteenth century ( $\pm 1280$  AD) a prince of Zaachila married a Ñuu Dzau princess: taken together, all the data suggest that this important marriage was that of Lord 5 Flower and Lady 4 Rabbit. This couple and its genealogical background appear prominently in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), which is precisely a historical book of the dynasty of Chiyo Cahnu.

The genealogical memory of that dynasty, according to what we see in the codex, went back to the marriage of Lady 3 Flint and the visionary priest Lord 12 Wind in Monte Albán at the beginning of the Postclassic era (early tenth century).

Furthermore, Lady 4 Rabbit descended directly from the Zapotec princess Lady 9 Eagle, who was the first wife of the Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) priest and *cihuacoatl* official, Lord 5 Alligator. This Mixtec-Zapotec couple had married in the year 6 Flint (1044 AD); their first son was Lord 12 Movement.<sup>10</sup> This Lord 12 Movement, therefore, belonged to both a Ñuu Dzau dynasty (through his father) and to the Beni Zaa dynasty of Zaachila (through his mother). He played an important role in the epic narrative of Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw', who was his younger half-brother and became the central dramatic character in pre-colonial Ñuu Dzau history.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly we find an indirect reference to Lord 12 Movement on the golden ornament ('pectoral') Number 26: the date registered on it (year 11 House day 2 Flint) corresponds to that of a special moment in the funeral rites for Lord 12 Movement in 1101 AD.

Such historical references are appropriate in the context of dynastic monuments that cultivate the memory of ancestors. The commemorative funerary monument of Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg (1459–1519) in the Gothic *Hofkirche* in Innsbruck (Austria) contains a central cenotaph of black marble with reliefs of white marble representing his major historical victories, surrounded by twenty-eight more than life-size bronze statues representing part of his lineage. The latter include heroic founding fathers such as king Arthur of

10 Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 26 and p. 42 (see our reading in Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992b, and the genealogical discussion in Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011).

11 Cf. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007a.

Britain, king Theodoric the Great of the Ostrogoths, king Clovis of the Franks and the Crusade knight Godfrey of Bouillon, as well as more recent important family members. It is as if a genealogical tree was represented in three dimensions: all were deceased at the moment the monument was erected in the second half of the sixteenth century, so their spirits are accompanying the defunct emperor.

Many pictorial texts on the carved bones of jaguars and eagles in Tomb 7 can be read as invocations of the deceased ancestors like 'quetzal birds, jaguars and eagles', that is 'noble and brave persons', which are dwelling in the realm of death accompanying the deities. The carved bones are thus explicitly presented as ceremonial discourses that seem to invoke the ancestors and refer to formative moments of Ñuu Dzauí dynastic history. Several of their pictorial texts seem to mention a Lady 'Quetzal', which most likely is Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal', the wife of Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila and therefore the Ñuu Dzauí queen of that Beni Zaa kingdom.

The inscribed bones (3) give us an important example of the consultations that took place in the tomb-shrine. A true key is Bone 124, the only carved bone that refers to a clearly historical event: the marriage of Lady 6 Water with Lord 4 Water 'Blood Eagle' from Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo). This Lady 6 Water was the granddaughter of Lord 5 Flower and Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'. It seems that the husband of Lady 4 Rabbit, Lord 5 Flower of Zaachila, himself arranged the marriage: it was a marital alliance of great political importance at the time. Lord 5 Flower appears as the protagonist who guided his granddaughter towards the Temple of Jewels, which had spoken to him, that is to say: had instructed him to do so. This act simultaneously established peace: Lord 5 Flower laid down his arms here.

Possibly the conflict between Zaachila and Tilantongo, the end of which is sealed here, was the one that began more than two hundred years earlier with the murder of Lord 12 Movement, prince of Zaachila on his mother's side and eldest son of the high priest of Tilantongo. The intellectual author of that murder seems to have been the famous protagonist of Ñuu Dzauí epic history, Lord 8 Deer (1063–1115 AD), who was the son of the same high priest with a second wife, and who became ruler of the important capital Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) and an important unifier of the Ñuu Dzauí lands. This genealogical link would explain the important reference to the funeral ritual of Lord 12 Movement (in 1100) on the golden ornament, placed on the axis of Bone Assemblage A, the central sacred bundle that may have been placed there by Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal' or that may even have been a representation (*ixiptla*) of her.

The deposit of the big treasure expresses the gratitude for the oracle obtained and the request for a good result on the part of the ruler of Zaachila,

as well as the respect and affection that he felt for his wife, Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'. Probably the great number and variety of the precious objects/relics corresponded to the participation of nobles from the whole area under the influence of Zaachila. Attending and obeying the call of Lord 5 Flower, these nobles came from all over the realm, laying down the jewels in a ritual act before the sacred bundles of the late Mixtec queen Lady 4 Rabbit and other ancestral personages, deposited between stone rows. Thus, in front of these bundles, the ritual participants manifested their loyalty and personal commitment to honour the marital alliance and peace between Zaachila and Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo).<sup>12</sup>

Next to this treasure they deposited a large quantity of loose bones, accumulated in the area of the threshold and in the antechamber. These bones are not in the same condition as the bones of the bundles, which were placed in specifically designated areas, separated by rows of stones, but rather seem to be part of the deposited offering as important relics that the participants in the ritual left here. This suggests that the participants in the ritual did not only bring a representative testimony of their wealth (the treasure) – and with this a token of their personal dedication and commitment – but also their own family relics: the bones of their ancestors or collection items ('trophies') from elsewhere, all charged with religious and dynastic meaning. In this way the nobles who participated in the ritual did not only express the commitment and loyalty of themselves, but also of their entire lineages (that venerated the relics as symbols of their foundation, history and religious life).

The ceremonial discourse creates an environment in which it is possible to experience the creature-feeling vis-à-vis the *mysterium tremendum* of the Numinous, the wholly Other (as described by Otto). Using terms in *difrasismos* and other combinations that do not sound like realistic descriptions it makes the mind aware of the metaphorical character of the message and the need to understand it in a non-literal sense. Repetition and parallelism, together with metaphors and arcane expressions, produce a special, artificial diction with a solemn effect. References to the primordial time of creation and to the endlessness of time make us aware of being ephemeral, passing by, as a minor creature that is part of a large process (*sicut erat in principio...*). References to mountains, cliffs, springs and other enduring sacred places in the landscape evoke the same sentiment: the human being as a down ball in the winds of time between the eternal mountains and waters of Earth. This emotion is provoked

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12 Compare the theory of Rappaport (1999) about the function and effect of rituals as a public (and bodily) manifestation of the participants that they recognise the community values and declare their commitment to honour them.

in the context of a sanctuary, which can be a huge and impressive temple of precious art works or a small subterranean place in between sacred bundles of ancestors – in all cases a surrounding that makes people feel humble in the presence of Other identities.

The carved jaguar bones mention a specific place for ritual actions: a Precious Temple or Temple of Jewels, which was situated above a cave (Chapter 4). We understand this description as a reference to a large temple or ceremonial centre, of which Tomb 7 itself formed part as a subterranean shrine (the cave). The coincidence of contexts makes us conclude that this is the same type of sanctuary as the Temple of Jewels that appears prominently in the narrative of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 15–19: it was important at the time when the founding fathers of the Ñuu Dzauí dynasties came from the Mountain of Heaven (*Cavua Caa Andevui*) near Yuta Tnoho (Apoala). The ritual activity in this temple is indicated in the codex by means of a sacred bundle and a Plumed Serpent surrounding the temple – together these symbols refer to the visionary communication with the ancestors. The main deity (and sacred bundle) venerated in this temple was Lord 9 Wind ‘Plumed Serpent’, the original founder of the Ñuu Dzauí nation, who had brought life, culture and order into the world when he came down from the Mountain of Heaven, as narrated in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis).

In Ñuu Dzauí the Temple of Jewels was associated with several locations. One was in Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) itself.<sup>13</sup> Another was the Great Mountain characterised by the Mountain of Reeds and the Mountain of the Fly.<sup>14</sup> Detailed contextual analysis and toponymic research on the spot have enabled us to identify that Great Mountain as Monte Albán, with its diagnostic parts Acatepec (Mountain of Reeds) and Sayultepec (Mountain of the Fly).

The visionary priest Lord 12 Wind ‘Smoke Eye’, who came down from the Place of Heaven, i.e. the primordial sacred site in Apoala, was actively involved in rituals at this Temple of Jewels: clearly he followed the archetypical precedent of Lord 9 Wind ‘Plumed Serpent’ and acted as a kind of prophet, reinstalling the old ways of respect towards that founding deity. The original flint from which Lord 9 Wind had been born was the central element in the veneration of the sacred bundle. Connecting the dates in the codices to the archaeological chronology, we find that Lord 12 Wind’s activities correspond to the beginning of the Postclassic period (ninth century AD).

Thus we conclude that the Temple of Jewels designated a ceremonial centre in Monte Albán, located in the northern part of the mountain (the area

13 Cf. Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 18.

14 Cf. Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 19ab.

of the Acatepec). This was a Postclassic cult-place, founded (or rebuilt) after the site had been largely abandoned and no longer functioned as the capital of an extended realm. Tomb 7 belonged to this ceremonial centre as a sanctuary specifically devoted to Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl' and similar to the *Tlillan* (Dark Place), the temple of Cihuacoatl, in the Aztec context. It was the cave or subterranean chamber associated with the Temple of Jewels: an underground sanctuary where the sacred bundles were venerated and where sacred objects (beings) were kept. The complex continued in the form of the Temple of Heaven (*Huahi Andevui*), which was the main religious building of Mixtec city-states such as Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) and Yucu Dzaa (Tututepec). It was also the name for the central building in the Temple Scenes of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), presumably located in Tollan Cholollan.

We may compare it to the Temple of Heaven that is an important imperial religious complex in Beijing (China), the construction of which started in the 15th century AD (Ming dynasty). The building is a supreme example of sacred architecture with many symbolic elements referring to the structure of the universe.<sup>15</sup> In the Mesoamerican example most likely the term 'heaven' in the name of the temple also refers to cosmic order, an order that was mobilised, cultivated and re-established by the ritual acts of the ruler and prominent priests.

The huge treasure that was deposited in Tomb 7 as an offering suggests that this sanctuary in Monte Albán had the function of an oracle: here it was possible to consult the sacred bundles of the deceased ancestors, the *yeque yata*, 'bones from ancient times', which were *ñuhu*, 'divine beings'.<sup>16</sup> According to Alvarado's vocabulary, *dzoco yeque* was the term for a burial place of the nobility (*sepultura de señores*), in which *dzoco* is a term for a deep, low or profound place (the word is also used for a pit, a spring, a fountain or a cradle) and *yeque* is 'bone'. The expression *dzoco ñuhu*, which combines *dzoco* with the word for deity, refers to a sacred place (*sagrario*). Tomb 7 was both a *dzoco yeque* and a *dzoco ñuhu*. It functioned as a kind of *cista* or cache for offerings with the corresponding invocations and prayers (thanking the deities and ancestors for their counsel and blessings). We may compare the treasure to the votive offerings to saints' images today, made in order to implore support, pay respect and express gratitude for favours desired or received.

15 We thank architect Chen Chunhong for having introduced us to this interesting monument.

16 Codex Añute (Selden), p. 6-III, shows how Lady 6 Monkey asked such an ancient bone-spirit permission to enter a subterranean passage that will lead her to Lady 9 Grass 'Cihuacoatl'.

The location of this Temple of Jewels at Monte Albán connected it with the memory registered in the Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). As this codex reflects the historiographical tradition of Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacualco) and pays special attention to the marital alliance and genealogical links between the ruling lineage of that town and the royal family of Zaachila, we find here an expression of the dynastic memory that was relevant for the life and thought of Lady 4 Rabbit 'Quetzal'.

Furthermore, Codex Iya Nacuaa (Colombino-Becker) indicates that this Temple of Jewels was also the site where the mortuary bundle of Lord 12 Movement was placed (1101 AD). This connects the shrine with the epic drama of Lord 8 Deer and Lady 6 Monkey. All these associations made Monte Albán an important *lieu de mémoire* for the Ñuu Dzauí dynasties. Probably it was this status that led Lady 4 Rabbit to choose Tomb 7 as a special shrine for ancestor worship.

The cultural geographical dimension is important here. From the very first monuments of Mesoamerica we find a link of the human world to the surrounding nature: the sacred landscape. This is evident from the Preclassic monuments of Chalcatzingo visually related to Popocatepetl, the orientation of Cholula towards the volcanoes, particularly the Iztaccihuatl, and also from the Huizachtepetl or Huizachtlan Mountain, centrally located in the ancient lake of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Looking at the impressive profile of Monte Albán rising from the valley of Oaxaca, we identify it as a primordial mountain of sustenance, a sacred place rising from diluvial waters, a permanent location for venerating rain and sun, a source of life-giving waters. In the Postclassic era it must have been also known as a relic from an earlier phase of Mesoamerican civilisation, a site of distant memory, an abode of spirits, a realm of ancient rulers and remote ancestors.

The sacred landscape is so much more than just a geographical context or geological set of resources; it is inscribed and imbued with cultural meaning, memory and (religious) values, which become markers of profound identity of a people.<sup>17</sup> An illustrative European example is the breath-taking sacred landscape of Montserrat with its sanctuary of the Black Madonna, which has religious roots that go back very far, even before Christianity, to the archetype of Mother Earth, but which is also an artistic-historical monument that has become a focal point for Catalan identity. Similarly, in indigenous thought land is generally understood as a rhizomatic being; the spiritual relationship with the land is not a matter of non-committed personal opinion but a collective and all-encompassing experiential and ethical connection with nature. Land

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17 See the inspiring studies of landscape by Tilley (1994) and Ingold (2000, 2011).

and community are inseparable. Land is considered an essential aspect of the quality of life.

We may compare the function of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán as part of this Temple of Jewels with that of the castle of Karlstein, a spectacular medieval (Gothic) castle in the Czech Republic. More than a real fortress for military purposes, it was a towering monument constructed mid 14th century on orders of the Holy Roman Emperor and king of Bohemia Charles IV for the safe keeping of the crown of the Holy Roman Empire and the other crown jewels and imperial regalia, including the holy lance. These sacred items were stored in the Chapel of the Holy Cross, centrally located in the main building, the Great Tower. The chapel is profusely decorated with gold and with many panel paintings of saints, prophets, sovereigns and other crucial spiritual or historical individuals, in which bones or other relics were set, in order to make them present both through their images and through their physical remains. The layout of the castle-with-chapel is reminiscent of the castle of the Holy Grail in the legend of Parsifal and – although in Karlstein there is no explicit reference to that mystical narrative – it is plausible that the place had that connotation for the contemporaneous knights (Boněk and Boněk 2007).

Another link to knighthood is present in the locally preserved relic of the head of the dragon killed by St George, who by this act became the incarnation of the valiant and noble warrior, the patron saint of knights and militant organisations. The preserved skull is that of a crocodile. Indeed, the narrative is situated in the Near East (Libya or Syria), where the historical George reportedly was active. In Christian symbolism the dragon was associated with evil and sin (as a cognate of the diabolic serpent of Paradise). At the same time the beast represented the dangerous aspect of primordial nature (chaos). Consequently, St George became the archetypical Christian knight and, integrating the symbolism of other mythical slayers of monstrous animals, such as Perseus and Mithras, the virtuous hero of light, humanity and the true faith who overcomes the forces of darkness. Interestingly in a modern representation of St George – a large statue in the gardens of the United Nations' headquarters in New York, created by a Soviet artist from Georgia – the body of the dragon is composed of remains of nuclear missiles, standing for the dangerous aspects of industrial culture (the madness of self-destruction).

The human remains of St George himself as well as the lance with which according to legend he killed the dragon/crocodile are preserved as relics in the church of San Giorgio in Velabro at the foot of the Palatine hill near the Arch of the god Janus and the Forum Boarium in Rome. That church itself is located in a significant place within the ancient sacred landscape: according to the founding narrative of Rome this was the spot where the basket with the babies

Romulus and Remus came floating down a small stream and hit the land, i.e. where the primordial twins were found and stilled by the wolf mother.

We make these comparisons to argue that relics are not just material remains and that landscape is not just scenery: entangled with narratives about the origins of communities or the deeds of emblematic personages, they become charged with symbolism and implicit ethical imperatives. Whether the narratives are purely religious or legendary, entirely fictional or historical is really not the issue.

Among the relics venerated in the Temple of Jewels was the instrument for making the New Fire. Also the staffs of office, emblems of rulership, were set here into the ground and guarded. These very same elements are present in the inauguration ritual of the Toltec dynasty of the Coixtlahuaca kingdom, as depicted in two manuscripts from the valley of Coixtlahuaca: the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (Chapter 5). There is a clear parallel between the four Toltec priests carrying the sacred bundle of Quetzalcoatl in these documents and Lord 12 Wind's veneration of that same bundle in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). In both cases the New Fire is referred to: as the actual act of kindling the fire on the emblematic mountain of the Coixtlahuaca realm and as the fire drill kept and venerated in the Temple of Jewels on Monte Albán. In both cases the mountain symbolically becomes identified with the mountain of sustenance, where a *genius loci* (in Dzaha Dzau: *Ñuhu* or *Ndodzo*) dwells. The cave in that mountain is the place where – conceptually – the seeds of an earlier creation survived, as well as a human couple that becomes the Cipactonal and Oxomoco of the new creation (Sun). At the same time the mountain becomes a Coatepec, a mountain enclosed by serpents as metaphors of mystery and vision, a liminal place, where different times and different worlds touch. The Nahuatl concept Coatepec refers back to very ancient times, represented by Monument 1 (*'el Rey'*) of Chalcatzingo in the State of Morelos: the visionary ritual in the serpent's mouth, the cave where life-giving force is mobilised. The Roll of the New Fire situates this ceremony in the centre of an area demarcated by the signs of the four directions. For the Coixtlahuaca *lienzos*, the Yucu Cuii (Cerro Verde) may have been the emblematic place, represented as the central mountain of the kingdom and as the abode and manifestation of a powerful Toltec spirit.

The Coixtlahuaca manuscripts use the New Fire ceremony on the mountain as a general religious reference for embedding the Toltec conquest of the region, resulting in the foundation of the Toltec dynasty by Atonal (Lord 7 Water), in a cosmic and ritual framework. Historical events fuse with the ritual that gives them meaning and so become the basis for further ritual commemoration, which expresses and reaffirms community identity. The connection with the Toltecs, particularly with their emblematic ruler Nacxitl Topiltzin

Quetzalcoatl, represented as Lord 4 Jaguar in the Ñuu Dzaui sources, anchors the local ruling lineage in a meta-narrative of the civilisation. We can observe this also in the pilgrimage of the early K'iche' rulers to Nacxiti in order to obtain the symbols of power. A similar ritual pilgrimage was undertaken by Lord 8 Deer 'Jaguar Claw' to become an ally of – and seal spiritual kinship with – Lord 4 Jaguar, the 'historical Quetzalcoatl', in Tollan-Cholollan. The meta-narrative enables the local to participate in the larger Mesoamerican processes, some form of long-distance political interaction (conflicts and alliances), parallel to the long-distance trade and cultural interactions which had been taking place since the expansion of Teotihuacan, and even earlier in the 'Olmec horizon' of Preclassic times. Such incidental connections create the sense of a shared history and a shared heritage, a sense of belonging to a great civilisation.

The same phenomenon can be observed in other large civilisation areas. In mediaeval Europe the common foundation of classical antiquity (ancient Rome) and Christianity, as well as sets of epic stories such as those concerning the Round Table of King Arthur, the Holy Grail, or the paladins of Charlemagne, set the framework for local rulership and chivalry ideals, resulting in such specific actions as the pope's crowning of the king, or the crusades to the Holy Land. We see how the narrative of origin follows a culturally determined pattern, in which history becomes memory in accordance with a cosmic and symbolic order.

The Roll of the New Fire is an early colonial manuscript. The ancient history it refers to was already some 450 years old by the time it was made. Remembering the foundation of the dynasty was probably still very relevant for the descendants of Atonal I (Lord 7 Water) to demonstrate the antiquity of their 'house' and its privileges to the colonial administration. The religious and ethnic dimensions over time may have become less a matter of social division and more one of shared history and cultural belonging. The theme of the New Fire ceremony – though here presented as an event in the distant past – must have been on the minds of many: was the New Fire of 1559 to be celebrated in colonial and evangelised New Spain? The New Fire synthesised on a symbolic level the being-in-time of Mesoamerican civilisation. As colonial dominance questioned (or indeed did not recognise) the coevalness, i.e. the equality, of the indigenous and Spanish societies, Mesoamerican (Toltec) shared history and cultural belonging increasingly came under attack and threat. The repeated references to New Fire rituals of the past may also be read as implicit protests against the marginalising and destructive effects of colonial domination and as pleas to maintain the profound cultural memory.<sup>18</sup>

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18 See also the reflections of Florine Asselbergs on the meaning of the New Fire ceremony (in her contribution to the volume edited by Megged and Wood 2012: 36–39).

Aztec monuments provide yet another example of this process (Chapter 6). The idea of four previous creations – which parallel the four directions – becomes integrated in the symbol of the present era, the Fifth Sun, called 4 Movement. The religiously important moments of the reign of Moctezuma II, such as his enthronement of 1503, the New Fire ceremony of the year binding ceremony of 1507 and the ‘return of Quetzalcoatl’ in the year 1 Reed (1519) all became artistically commemorated as part of this overarching symbolic structure.

The Codex Cihuacoatl is probably an early colonial copy of a book that had been specially made for the New Fire ritual of the Aztec year 2 Reed (1507). The fact that Aztec nobility – supposedly sharing a religious focus on Xochimilco, the Tlillan and Cihuacoatl – sent this calendar book to the Spanish king suggests that they were trying to inform the colonial authorities about the temporality of their own world. This was a counterpart to what the colonisers did: the Spaniards brought calendars and *reportorios* to Mesoamerica in order to integrate the subdued population and the conquered lands within their European colonial time. Those *reportorios* contained information on the seasons (and their implication for agriculture), the cosmos, chronology (e.g. the saints’ days as well as the way of calculating the major festivals), and astrology (including the influences of zodiacal signs and planets on the body and on human character).<sup>19</sup> These data could be combined with devotional exercises: a classic example is the famous manuscript *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (fifteenth century, France), which is a masterpiece of medieval painting. Such images also form part of mediaeval astronomical clocks in bell towers of churches or town halls (such as the famous one in Prague) and appear as artworks in different settings (e.g. the *fontana maggiore* in front of the San Lorenzo cathedral in Perugia or the frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara).<sup>20</sup> In connection with astronomy and the colonial enterprise, however, the European time perception moved from ancient and mediaeval symbolism (with a cyclical focus) to a concentration on deciphering the mathematical structures of the universe and a focus on linear progress, which would allow for predictability and therefore agricultural, economic and social planning, and which

19 The Spanish *Repertorio de los Tiempos* (1495) by Andrés de Li has been particularly influential. An early colonial Mexican text is that of Enrico Martínez (*Repertorio de los tiempos, y historia natural desta Nueva España*). The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam holds a Nahuatl translation of such a *reportorio*, which is the topic of Ph.D. research by Ilona Heijnen (Leiden University).

20 The interpretation of the frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia by Aby Warburg actually laid the foundation for the development of modern iconology (cf. Gombrigg 1999).

would lead to an interpretation of human history in terms of evolution and accumulation.<sup>21</sup> The latter provided the basis for a pervasive ideology that considered other cultures as less evolved (and its synonyms primitive, backward, inferior), which in turn served as a legitimation for colonial and imperialist expansion.

In sending the Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), the Aztec nobles invited the Spanish court to reconsider such schemes and to take into account the indigenous time, i.e. to accept a relation of coevalness, which would permit the continuation of the New Fire ceremony in 1559 and from then onwards in an unbroken sequence of calendar rounds.

In this context we can understand the importance of the shrine where the fire drill was kept. New Fire ceremonies marked the beginning and cyclical continuation of rituals and history. The example of the Aztec New Fire at Mount Huixachtlan (Cerro de la Estrella) – one of the most impressive sacred places that has survived in the frenzy of the megalopolis Mexico City – shows how ritual produces a memory landscape, a moral heritage, which resists colonial and positivist fragmentation and which remains as a beacon for the renewal of time.

The iconographical analysis of the Roll of the New Fire and the Codex Cihuacoatl yields an understanding of (1) the sign of the nocturnal road of the priest as a representation of trance and (2) the prominent role of the Cihuacoatl official as a high priest (*papa mayor*) who initiates and propels the ritual cycle of the community (Xochimilco). These are keys to approach the enigmatic chapter of the Temple Scenes in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), pp. 29–46 (Chapter 7). Another important key is the comparison with the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca*: the parallel scenes lead us to the hypothesis that this chapter of the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) refers to the rituals of the ceremonial centre of Cholollan (Cholula), the former Toltec capital. The most significant identifying element is the identical ceremonial space where the nose-piercing ceremony was celebrated.

The Temple Scenes chapter contains many objects and elements of nature in animated form, i.e. as living beings, together with priests who are manifestations of deities, as well as many metaphoric references and representations of

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21 Needless to say, a wealth of theoretical reflections has been written about the issue of time. Some of the more recent highlights we have found inspiring are the studies by Munn (1992), Gell (1992), Nowotny (1994), Adam (2004), Zerubavel (2004), Birth (2012), Marzo (2012) and Safranski (2015). The volume *Tiempo y Comunidad* (Jansen and Raffa 2015) discusses some effects of the different and changing perceptions of time in relation to our ongoing research.

ritual events as experienced by their protagonists. Because of this the images and scenes are not presented as realistic; rather, they are part of a visionary style. We may compare this style to that of, for example, the visionary writings and paintings of Hildegard von Bingen, the altarpiece *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* by the brothers Van Eyck, the dramatic and profound paintings by Hieronymus Bosch, or even the Magical Realism of more recent artists. The mysterious phrases of prophetic literature, ranging from the Biblical Apocalypse and the Sibylline Books to the Centuries of Nostradamus, are a literary counterpart of such a visual style. The Maya Books of Chilam Balam belong to this category as well.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, the atmosphere of the first Temple Scene is similar to the opening statement of Nostradamus' *Centuries*:

*Estant assis de nuict secret estude,  
Seul reposé sur la selle d'airain:  
Flambe exigue sortant de solitude,  
Fait proférer qui n'est à croire vain.*

Being seated [in] night's secret study,  
Alone, resting on the stool of bronze:  
Exiguous flame coming out of solitude  
Makes utter what is not to believe vain.

We are not qualified to comment here on the contents of Nostradamus' controversial astrological prophecies, but merely observe how in this opening verse the author identifies himself with the ancient Greek Pythia, the priestess at Delphi, seated on a bronze tripod (above hallucinogenic vapours) in order to pronounce the oracles of the god Apollo. In doing so he creates an emotional intensity, a sense of ancient mystery, which frames and permeates his mantic text.

We argue that the Temple Scenes of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) contain a similar emotional dimension as templates for devout contemplation by priests who are preparing themselves mentally for ritual action and visionary experiences. The scenes themselves focus on altars where the divine powers become manifest. Religious concentration, involving fasting and bloodletting, made an encounter with divine powers and ancestors possible in the liminal sphere of *nahualism*. Art itself served to evoke a spiritual connection with the deities. This is the aspect that we may project onto Tomb 7: a site where such experiences may have been induced too.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. the classic article by Farriss (1987).

The Temple Scenes are subdivided in scenes demarcated by eight Cihuacoatl figures. This organisation is similar to that of the heaven divided by eight star bands in the opening scene of the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll) and which is understood as an image of the nine layers of heaven: *Chiconauhpanihcan*. In the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll), Quetzalcoatl appears as the 'son' of Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer (iconographical equivalents of the primordial couple Cipactonal and Oxomoco). He comes down from heaven and interacts with the priests, who will carry his sacred bundle to the mountain where the New Fire is made. In Codex Yoalli Ehecatl a Quetzalcoatl priest occupies the central role in the temples dedicated to Cihuacoatl and emerges from the breast (heart) of the dominant Cihuacoatl high priest, who initiates the successive phases of the ritual.

Thus the rituals connote nine (celestial) realms created by Cihuacoatl figures, which in fact have the iconography of celestial bands. The passing of the Quetzalcoatl priest through the Cihuacoatl figures is comparable to the path through heaven in the opening scene of the Roll of the New Fire (Selden Roll), which also seems to be the path of Quetzalcoatl (cf. Codex Yuta Tnoho, p. 48). Such a heavenly path is to be understood as a priestly, i.e. visionary and mystical, experience. In the case of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl the nine rituals are structured, then, in accordance with the nine levels of the cosmos, as nine visionary experiences. As such they have their own special focus and temporal organisation, but they are also related to the general ritual structure of the solar year of 365 days: we find unmistakable references, for example, to the Nahua months Cuahuitlehua/Xilomanaliztli (pp. 30–31), Tlacaxipehualiztli (p. 32), Ochpaniztli (p. 43) and Panquetzaliztli (p. 45). The Temple Scenes lead up to the final ritual, which is a New Fire ceremony, probably the one that marks the passage of one year to another, celebrated in the month Izcalli (p. 46). These references are fascinating: the hieroglyphic signs of the months are generally considered abbreviated (indexical) descriptions of the main ritual act, but the Codex Yoalli Ehecatl opens a window onto a much deeper and experiential understanding of the underlying thought. For example, we now see that the vessel with corncobs that expresses the term Xilomanaliztli, 'Offering of Tender Maize' (p. 31), actually directly expresses the cycle of life-death-life.

In these rituals, we see an intricate synergy of temporal and spatial symbolism. Particularly noteworthy is the focus on a central spot and item, which often can be interpreted as a brazier, altar or a similar liminal point where the deity becomes manifest and where contact of the human and the divine takes place (in visionary experience). Furthermore, diverse constructed sanctuaries – specific temples, plazas and ballcourts – become intimately connected with

open spaces, caves and waterways, springs or ponds.<sup>23</sup> The ritual activities that took place in open spaces must have drawn a large participating public of devotees. Roads through this ritual landscape indicate routes for processions or ceremonial circuits (like those that characterise Mesoamerican rituals today). In the case of Cholula, and many other towns, such a ceremonial centre had a temporal dimension, as it incorporated sanctuaries from earlier periods (such as the Tlachihualtepetl-Chalchiuhtepetl pyramid from Classic times). This would, without doubt, have evoked the vivid presence of ancestors and the memories or legends associated with them.

Multiple references to night and day, to the four directions, to heaven, earth and the underworld, create a dynamic environment, in which many different priests are carrying out their activities. As *tlamacazque* they are in close contact (and are sometimes even identified) with divine manifestations. The register in the codex focuses on the experience of the participant priests and uses many metaphorical expressions. Thus we find scenes of what appears to be human sacrifice but that actually refer to the cutting of trees or the offering of a figure of dough. The symbolic aspects of the pictorial language show that this chapter was more than a mere prescription of how to organise a ritual. The painting was related to ceremonial discourse and probably served as a source for contemplation, in order to evoke the adequate state of mind, the concentration, with which to prepare these events.<sup>24</sup>

The liminal sphere in which gods and humans meet and interact is that of 'night and wind', the dream environment in which humans blend with their counterparts in nature (the *nahuales*). In this manner, the ceremonial centre becomes a sacred site, a place of memory and regeneration and of religious and social commitment for the community: a 'heart of the people'.<sup>25</sup> It is here that creation (first sunrise) is re-enacted and that the time for a new period of ritual and history is set.

The main temple of this chapter of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) has its parallel in pages 15–19 of Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall). In other words, there is a fundamental similarity between the main temple of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl in Cholula and the Temple of Jewels in Postclassic Monte Albán. Tomb 7

23 See also the comment by Durán (1967, I: 171–174) about the religious value of the landscape in Mesoamerican culture.

24 On the use of images for concentration, reflection and meditation an excellent work is Didi-Huberman's *Fra Angelico* (1990).

25 Again we refer to the classic study by Rappaport (1999) on the function of ritual as a shared public manifestation and reaffirmation of commitment to specific values of the community.

consequently corresponds to the Temple of Cihuacoatl in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl. Connecting the information on both, we understand the intrinsic meaning of this ritual space as a shrine of night and wind, i.e. a liminal sphere of contact with the mysterious world of the gods and ancestors as an inspiration for new beginnings, as a propelling force in the cycle of life-death-life. Human existence is deeply embedded in and dependent on that cycle. The central symbol, which combines the sacred bundle of the ancestors with the fire drill of time, contains the message that life on earth is rapidly passing into memory but also continuously reinventing itself.

The fire drill is the time symbol *par excellence*, index of a ritual, which is central both in cyclical time (solar years and calendar rounds) and in linear time (progression of historical periods). The fire drill is iconographically related to the day sign (1) Reed, which, at least in 1507, was associated with the day of the *xiuhmolpilli*. The ritual itself connects the human present with the First Sunrise: it celebrates and evokes the primordial forces of creation. This connection in itself is a hallmark of cultural memory. It also establishes coevalness with the ancestors, who, although dead, belong to the world of the living. This is in contrast with the mainstream Western/Christian worldview, according to which the dead are usually sharply separated from the living: as active personalities they are confined to (memories of) the past and after having passed away they await Doomsday in another, unknown realm (the hereafter), with which the living are not supposed to interact. In ancient Mesoamerica, however, the dead ancestors remained physically present, often blended with nature, and they participated in ritual as sacred bundles, receiving offerings and providing counsel.

Mesoamerican time, therefore, is the time of the different generations of the living but also the time of the dead and the time of the future generations. It is the time of humans, but also of animals, plants and other beings under the sun, a time that is entangled with the primordial time of darkness, the sphere of night and wind, which is the essence of the gods. That other, ancient time is personified in the Grandmother. Her many different associations, representations and manifestations show that this female religious principle in Mesoamerican religion is manifold yet unified.

### 3 The Continuous Presence of Cihuacoatl

In iconographical terms the skeletonised Cihuacoatl represents the aspect of death. In the Ñuu Dzauí codices we find also the elderly Lady 1 Eagle as the Grandmother of the *temazcal*. In the Nahuatl-speaking world the

Grandmother and the mother of the gods (*Teteo Innan*) are similar characters. A younger counterpart is the goddess Tlazolteotl, who also appears as a divine patron of the *temazcal* – Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia) portrays her as a naked woman, often accompanied by a serpent. This led the colonial commentators to compare her with Eve, the primordial woman with a diabolical nature, and – certainly in the mind of the friars – an emblem of sin. In a similar vein the present-day fascination of the general public with sex and the Freudian tendency of some researchers lead to a sensationalist interpretation of this naked figure as an index of sexual intercourse. Given the Mesoamerican reservation and restraint in these matters, it is more likely that her nakedness connects the reference to sexuality with cleansing, as well as with giving birth, and thus in general indicates her power of generating life.

The name Tlazolteotl defines her as the deity (*teotl*) of *tlazolli*, i.e. ‘filth’, or rather, in religious terms: ‘impurity’ or ‘uncleanliness’. In view of her association with the *temazcal*, we may interpret this name or title as a reference to the *limpia*, the ceremonial cleansing, which takes away all kinds of negative feelings, traumas, shortcomings, corruption and carelessness: the purification necessary for physical and psychic health. The goddess is often represented in the position of a woman giving birth, i.e. of a Great Mother or midwife, handing to women the courage and cosmic force of continuing, transmitting and nurturing life: extremely powerful and dangerous, yet also vulnerable and delicate. Today Mesoamericans approach even the stones that have been used in the *temazcal* oven with the utmost respect and care. Clearly the goddess Tlazolteotl herself is a power that is not dealt with lightly. The same is true for the goddess Cihuacoatl, which connects the female creative and cleansing power with the wisdom of the dead ancestors, and so becomes the emblem of the life-death-life struggles of nature. She is therefore a crucial figure in the rituals of time, such as the New Fire ceremony.

That is the power that is present in the sanctuary of Tomb 7. It is to her care that the sacred bundles of Lady 4 Rabbit ‘Quetzal’ and other dynastic personalities were entrusted. It is that power that was invoked by the united Ñuu Dzau and Beni Zaa nobles in forging the marital alliance of their political worlds and in pledging their commitment and loyalty to support this unity.

Depositing the bones of the lineages and the magnificent treasure in Tomb 7 was a profoundly religious act that situated human social and historical agency of the moment (including its political motivations, ideology and collective memory, as well as desires and expectations) in that numinous sphere of the superior and eternal cosmic powers. It was a *pedimento* (‘petition, rogation’), an offering and a prayer, made permanent in time.

The plurality of the female religious principle of Mesoamerica found its colonial continuation in the many manifestations of the Virgin Mary. In Catholicism the Virgin can be differentiated as to the place of her manifestation (Guadalupe – Tepeyac, Montserrat, Lourdes, Fatima, Juquila), to a specific aspect of her life (Natividad, Concepción, Asunción), and/or some specific function or ritual reference (Remedios, Rosario). All these Virgins are different and yet the same. At the same time the Virgin is the mother of Christ: the paradox of the Virgin Mother serves to situate her explicitly beyond the discursive thought of daily life, in the realm of religious symbolism and mystery.

Yet throughout time the confusion of the metaphorical expressions of religious discourse with historical reality has caused many dogmatic discussions and tragic conflicts. The situation becomes even more complex when the interaction between different cultures leads to a new synergy of symbolic terms. The pre-Christian religions of Greeks, Romans, as well as Celtic and Germanic peoples had already influenced the Christian cult and symbolism. The Virgin Mary and other female saints, for example, had been fused with ancient mother goddesses of earth and fertility (e.g. Demeter and Persephone in Greece, Nehalennia in northwestern Europe), appearing in sacred places such as caves, trees, springs and mountaintops.<sup>26</sup> The day for celebrating the nativity of Jesus Christ had been identified in relation to the winter solstice, a feast day of Mithras and Sol Invictus, important deities in the late Roman empire.

In present-day indigenous ceremonies the speeches and visual or material elements often combine the continuity of canonical messages from the pre-colonial religion with references to the religion imposed by the colonisers. Patron saints become identified with the ancient earth spirits (*ndodzo*, *ñuhu*); invocations of the earth and rain deities are combined with phrases from Catholic prayers, etc. By bringing both religious spheres together, as interrelated and inseparable, the Mesoamerican discourse qualifies them as equal and so shows its inclusive character. We may interpret this phenomenon also as a statement of coevalness and an implicit criticism of all those cases in which only the religion of the coloniser is present (exclusive, intolerant and dominant).

Symbolic synergy results naturally from places and situations that already involve conceptual and spiritual coincidences, for example because of archetypal elements in sacred landscapes and/or symbolic narratives. The sanctuary of the Madonna del Sasso (Madonna of the Rock), in Orselina, near Locarno (Switzerland), is a beautiful example of an archetypal sacred or

26 On Nehalennia see Stuart and Bogaers (2001); on Germanic-Christian religious syncretism in the Netherlands see Schuyf (1995).

ritual landscape (*sacro monte*).<sup>27</sup> The Franciscan church is built in the European tradition but the place where it was founded may be compared to the Mesoamerican concept of a House of Rain: on top of a mountain with rocky outcrops and the dripping water of natural springs, looking out over a spectacular panorama (the lake of Locarno surrounded by snow-clad Alps). The Virgin Mary is reported to have appeared here in 1480.

Shortly after the Spanish conquest of Mexico (1521), a similar event is reported to have occurred, also in a Franciscan context, at a similar sacred place: the mountain Tepeyac (now part of Mexico City). Here the Virgin of Guadalupe manifested herself to a baptised Nahua man (Juan Diego) and left her imprint on his blanket as a young woman of indigenous complexion. It was the transformation, yet continuation, of the worship of a pre-Christian mother deity at this place.

The colonial chronicle of Serna recalls that: ‘the Cerro de Guadalupe, where the famous sanctuary was located, originally was dedicated to the devotion of the goddess Ilamatecuhtli [“the Elderly Lady”] or Cozcambiauh [“Corn Flower Necklace”], normally referred to as Tonan (“Our Mother”). She was venerated at the Tititl ritual, the 17th month-festival of one calendar and the 16th of another. And when people go to attend the feast of the Most Holy Virgin (of Guadalupe) they say that they go to the feast of Totlazonantzin [“Our Beloved Mother”] and not to the Most Holy Virgin, or to both intentions, thinking that one and the other can be combined...’. (Serna 1953: Ch. 7, 2 § 194)

Consequently, the Virgin of Guadalupe received the same title as the original goddess of the place: *Tonantzin*, ‘our respected mother’. At the time the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, famous for his encyclopaedic work on the Aztecs, objected to the use of this title as, in his view, the Virgin is not ‘our mother’ but the ‘mother of our saviour (Jesus Christ)’. The native people, however, understood – better than the Spanish friar – the symbolic nature of the divine figure and also the idea that salvation is an internal spiritual process. Serna’s text establishes equivalence between the Virgin of Guadalupe and the goddess of the Tititl ritual, i.e. Cihuacoatl. The depiction of the Virgin of

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27 Calderari et al., 2015: ‘The phenomenon of the Sacri Monti (Sacred Mounts) occurred in the pre-alpine area of Lombardy and Piedmont between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries... Originally a Franciscan concept, the purpose of the Sacri Monti was to create a setting for the representation in episodes of the “mysteries” of the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary or a saint in a series of chapels along a processional way. The objective of processional ways was to reproduce in the West the Holy Places of which the Franciscans had been official custodians since 1217’. For a further description and history of the sanctuary of the Madonna del Sasso in Orselina see Schnöller 1991.

Guadalupe with a cape of stars (in accordance with the description of her visionary appearance in the Apocalypse) recalls Cihuacoatl's title *Citlalinicue* or *Citlalcueye* 'She with the skirt of stars' (the Milky Way) as a reference to her cosmic power.<sup>28</sup>

The so-called Codex of Teotenantzin is actually a set of two drawings in black and white on European paper, made for Lorenzo Boturini during his stay in Mexico in 1736–1743, representing the Tepeyac Mountain and the neighbouring Zacahuiztco Mountain.<sup>29</sup> The drawings reproduce two rock sculptures on the latter mountain, which since then have deteriorated and disappeared, but which according to Boturini represented 'the goddess called Teotenantzin, i.e. mother of the gods, by the Indians, whom they worshipped on the mountain of Tepeyac, where now the Virgin of Guadalupe is venerated'. The right-hand image seems to be a representation of the maize goddess, similar to the one represented in the Codex Cihuacoatl (Borbonicus), the left-hand one is quite damaged and therefore lacks clearly identifiable attributes, but it is quite plausible that this was an image of Tonantzin-Cihuacoatl.<sup>30</sup>

Very much like the Templo Mayor and Mount Huixachtlan, the colonial Basilica de Guadalupe, La Villa, represents a sacred landscape (a mountain garden with cult places – churches and chapels – related to the sacred narrative of the appearances of the Virgin), as a liminal area, set apart from the urban zone, full of Mesoamerican sacred elements: mountain, rock, well and water streams.

Another symbolic aspect of Cihuacoatl lives on too. We may consider her as a personification of the female principle, and therefore as a symbol of the strength of women.<sup>31</sup> This aspect is expressed by her *nahual*, the eagle, and by some of her other names such as *Quilaztli* (the eagle of the foundation of Tenochtitlan), *Cuauhcihuatl* ('Eagle Woman') or *Yaocihuatl* ('Warrior Woman'). In honour of that empowering aspect, women would dress in a *huipil* that was decorated on the breast with the embroidered or woven image of an eagle.<sup>32</sup> The eagle still occurs frequently on traditional *huipiles* (e.g. among Mixtecs of

28 For the transformation of the precolonial goddess into the colonial Virgin, see for example Lafaye (1977), Martínez (1990), Stresser-Péan (2011: Ch. XIX), Bartra (2012) and Kroger and Granziera (2012). Compare also the paintings of apocalyptic themes by Juan Gerson in the church of Tecamachalco (Moyssén 1964; Gruzinski 1994).

29 This manuscript is Number 35–86 in the codices collection of the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.

30 See López Luján and Noguez (2011) and Noguez (2015).

31 See the fundamental study by Estés (2011).

32 Sahagun (Book II: Ch. 30) mentions such a dress in his description of the Ochpaniztli festival.

the coast, Mazatecs and Chinantecs), often in the form of the double-headed eagle, which was a precolonial symbol of power and wisdom, a native *nahual*, which was obviously reinforced by the emblem of the Habsburg dynasty that was ruling Spain.

#### 4 Intercultural Time and Decolonising Perspective

The awareness of time comes from the expression of the durational experience of human life in sequences of natural cycles. The most basic one is obviously the dichotomy of day and night, light and darkness, caused by our planet turning around its axis. The orbit of the moon around earth produces a cycle of phases (month), more or less in parallel to the biological cycle of menstruation. The orbit of our planet around the sun creates an annual cycle of seasons, of death and rebirth in vegetation. Individual life proceeds from birth to death in a linear fashion, and becomes measurable in these cycles: on the one hand it interacts synchronically with contemporaneous (coeval) other individuals and on the other diachronically with past and future generations. Communication is a crucial element for that interaction, and symbolic systems (primarily language, writing and art) are the means of that communication. Meanings are culturally coded and learning them mobilises cultural memory as well as cultural creativity. The symbolic representation (and consequently the perception) of time itself manifests the connection of human life to the (numinous) forces of the universe and so becomes a paradigm for social order, cultural logic and religious worldview.

The calendar establishes a symbolic connection between days and divine identities: in Mesoamerica through the 20 deities of the day signs, the 13 deities of the day numbers, the 9 deities of the nights, the 20 deities of the 13-day periods etc., and in the Christian calendar through the link of days with patron saints. Similarly, religious narratives are acted out in rituals connected with the passage of the seasons: the Christian liturgy projects events from the lives of Christ and the saints onto the year (Christmas, Easter etc.), while Mesoamerican religion pivots on the remembrance of ancestors (now the Days of the Dead) and the prayer for rain and the renewal of life on occasion of the sun's first zenith passage (now the Day of the Holy Cross). The 'Temple Scenes' chapter of *Codex Yoalli Ehecatl* (Borgia) shows the participation of specific priests in the yearly sequence of rituals. The chapter of the month-festivals in *Codex Cihuatl* (Borbonicus) lists the emblematic moments of such rituals for a specific community in a specific year, namely that of the New Year ceremony that closes a calendar round of 52 years. In doing so both books express

the internal strength and determination of Mesoamerican society to continue its ritualised relationship with the earth.

Given the divine character of the time segments, we may say that according to Mesoamerican worldview humans do not own or have time, but belong to time, in a religious relationship similar to the special relationship they have with land and nature. The cosmic cycles are repetitive (in a virtually eternal manner) and their divine order of time also informs the idea of a social order with its temporal, spatial and religious dimensions. Rituals express and maintain the order of a community (as their 'canonical message' in Rappaport's terminology). The community members manifest in public their commitment (loyalty) to a specific symbolic organisation of values and powers – on earth as well as in the cosmos. On the other hand, the social dimension is not static but develops, passing through dramatic ups and downs and through the individual aging process. This aspect of individual and collective becoming, with its continuities and its continuous changes as well as event history, gives a unique character to the passage of time, as non-repetitive and as a context for accumulating human experience and knowledge, and for communicating them through time and space in an ever more efficient manner.

Time is a dimension of agency and communication, it connects people and it is social. As time becomes an aspect of cultural memory, successive cultural phases lead to a stratification of time perception and symbolisation. The present tends to take prominence over the past. This is not a neutral or unproblematic process. The present often sees itself as active and rational (attributes of Self), and represents the past as passive and irrational (attributes of Other). Cultural differences, when meeting in an equal and mutually sympathetic coeval sphere, may enrich both parties and lead to synergy and a boost of creative developments. On the other hand, conflictive interactions, characterised by violence, inequality and domination, have negative consequences that may haunt us for a long time.

At the time of the Spanish conquest the Christian present took prominence over (and strove to eradicate) the Mesoamerican world (which became the past) – very much in the way that Christianity had done with ancient Rome. This displacement is presented as a divinely-willed progress from pagan to Christian society. The realisation of the Spanish conquerors that they were doing something very much against the ethical prescriptions of their own faith and against their own laws, made them resort to formal (and hypocritical) justifications, especially the blind imposition of (self-serving and self-legitimising) Christian time and Christian ritual (massive baptisms). The answer of the Mesoamerican thinkers was to relate Christian time to physical/

natural time as perceived and symbolised in Mesoamerican terms. This was their effort to establish a coeval relationship with the invaders.

Since the industrial revolution, a mechanistic and positivist worldview has taken prominence over the religious time perception, in a process that defines itself as (natural) evolution, from irrational to rational, from underdeveloped and traditional to a developed and modern (i.e. capitalist-industrial) society. Mechanical and economic (clock) time still uses the terms of Christian time, but merely as hollow referents (in saying 'so many years after Christ' speakers generally just refer to a chronological point, and do not make a religious statement about the life of Jesus).<sup>33</sup> If any religious association comes up, it is usually located outside the mainstream of socio-economic process and action, and relegated to the sphere of subjective experience and individual opinion. The positivist notion of agnostic science is so dominant in the Western intellectual world that modern academics and politicians often forget (or arrogantly dismiss) the fact that they are surrounded by a world in which religious symbols and values are important to many people, as part of their cultural identity and human spiritual needs.

For indigenous peoples today this generalised notion provokes a disorienting and disturbing predicament, in which development, and even the educational system, are not serving their own cultural interest and creativity, but, on the contrary, may directly contribute to the expropriation and exploitation of their land and resources, to the death of their languages and to their disappearance as peoples. The indigenous values themselves are not mobilised or (re-) vitalised because they seem to be in conflict with dominant interests: the present world order has been inherited from a colonial paradigm of inequality and inequity. The colonised world remains fragmented, denigrated, reduced to inactivity, its sacred landscape unknown, unrecognised and violated. Even the protection of cultural heritage is distorted in this context, as it becomes a matter of materialism, concerning commodities and their possession, extraction and/or exploitation.

The concept of 'heritage owned' tends to chain identity to the past. The issue, however, is not only about 'who owns it', but also about 'who speaks' and 'who can speak' (cf. Spivak 1988). Such reflections are timely as international bodies (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN) are analysing the matter and producing standard setting documents concerning the care for and conservation of religious heritage, including sacred monuments as well as sacred natural sites. The denial of coevalness – a legacy of colonial ideology – leads directly to

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33 Capra discusses the mechanical worldview in a classic essay (1982). On the development and implications of mechanical clock time see further Nowotny (1994) and Marzo (2012).

a denial of participation. Indigenous peoples are seen as belonging to the past (primitive, traditional, etc.) and therefore incapable of joining the mainstream in shaping the future. Consequently, indigenous peoples still have little access to and little voice in matters that directly affect them. Often they are even denied participation in the academic studies of their own languages, cultures, histories and social problems.

The issue of the ongoing presence of a colonial paradigm separating Self and Other is also well illustrated in the differential archaeological treatment of ancient tombs and human remains. Those that are identified with (and considered important to) the present-day national societies (Self) are often given some form of personal attention: after excavation and study the bones may even be subject of reburial. Certainly this is common in the case of emblematic individuals. The remains of the Scottish king Robert the Bruce (died in 1329), for example, were rediscovered during building activities at Dunfermline Abbey in 1818 and reburied there the next year with appropriate care; later a new memorial slab in mediaeval style was placed on the tomb. More recently the same was done in the case of Richard III, a much less admired character in English history, particularly infamous because of his portrayal in the eponymous Shakespearean play. He had been killed in battle (a final scene of the Wars of the Roses) and buried in a Franciscan friary in Leicester in 1485. In 2012 his remains were located and excavated from beneath a city car park. After archaeological analysis they were reburied in Leicester Cathedral (26 March 2015) in a ceremony of several days (synthesised on national television), which included a procession (visiting the site of the Battle of Bosworth where he had lost his life), rest in the cathedral, a special mass, a formal reinterment in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and members of the royal family, diverse commemorative activities throughout the city, and the setting up of the King Richard III Visitor Centre.

A famous Mexican case in line with this custom is that of the remains of fifteen heroes of the battle of Molino del Rey (1847), who defended the Mexican capital against invading US troops. The monument that contained their urns and related historical items (as a kind of time capsule) had fallen into oblivion but became a focus of renewed attention during construction activities for the extension of the metro network in 1985. After archaeological excavation and analysis (Salas Cuesta 1988) the bones of the heroes were reburied with military honours.

In contrast with such ceremonial attentions, the remains of persons belonging to indigenous peoples (perceived as Others) receive much less respect. Bones found in precolonial burials, such as Tomb 7 of Monte Albán and so many others, are generally put in plastic bags and removed to archaeological

storage facilities, while selected material items that accompanied them end up in museum exhibitions, if they are not looted and become items of illegal traffic in antiquities.

In the United States it was the appalling inequality in the treatment of the human remains of indigenous peoples and those identified with colonial settlers that motivated the protests of Maria Pearson and other Native American activists. These eventually led to the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) of 1990. This legislation has contributed enormously to awareness of the problem, but the implementation (including repatriation and reburial) is in many cases still a bone of contention, while in other countries, such as Mexico, the discussion has hardly begun.

There is a more general religious dimension to this issue. In the United States the legal recognition of Native American religion makes it possible that the value of sacred places and ceremonial items is recognised as well. In other countries, such as Mexico, the term religion is reserved – in the minds of many and in legal discourse – for Christianity, while other religious convictions, such as the Mesoamerican worldview, are dubbed superstition. If archaeologists were excavating an ancient church in a predominantly Christian country, they would have to be aware of the religious sensibilities the monument entails (and actually could understand many of its aspects better by taking into account the local religious traditions). It is even conceivable that the site would be reinstalled as a sanctuary. The same would be true for the excavation of an ancient Hindu or Buddhist temple. But in the case of indigenous peoples, often their religion is considered part of a (distant) past and therefore less serious. Thus ancient indigenous religious sites are managed by archaeological institutions, the excavated materials go to a museum; repair or reconstruction of the sanctuary is out of the question. All kind of activities (e.g. pop concerts) may be permitted in archaeological sites, but not the practice of religious rituals of the cultural tradition the site belongs to.

Thus the colonial paradigm and its denial of coevalness still promote in many parts of the world an archaeological practice that is a divisive and destructive factor instead of being an active ingredient in the reintegration of cultural memory and in the appreciation of cultural diversity. This is part of a much larger enterprise: the removal of indigenous histories from national history, the removal of indigenous literatures from national literature, and the removal of indigenous presence from national society.

Now, slowly but surely, this situation is changing. The counter-movement from the beginning has looked for an alternative approach, which explicitly involves the sharing of meanings and values through intercultural communication, in order to establish a coeval relationship and *convivencia* in social justice.

In some countries, such as Samiland and Aotearoa (New Zealand) the social struggle of the First Nations themselves has already led to the formation of indigenous scholars and their establishment in academic life. Also in Canada and the USA we see an incipient development of Native American Studies. The discussions of NAGPRA are favouring the development of an indigenous archaeology (Bruchac, Hart and Wobst 2010). This is by no means general practice, however: there is still a long way to go. Moreover, in many countries this development has hardly started at all. We should applaud the initial stages but also be critical in order to learn from the good and bad experiences.

Our historical-iconological study of time symbolism in ancient Mesoamerica, combined with a decolonising perspective, has made us aware of the ongoing denial of coevalness, but also of the fact that we all do share the present. In this way time connects us, even though we may belong to different peoples with different cultural symbolic orders, and that this connection equally includes the monuments and relics of the past, which are now part of our world in the present. As humans we are collectively included in the analysis, not as detached outsiders, but in the position of co-subjects and co-participants. The positioning of diverse cultures in the present vis-à-vis the evoked presence of collective ancestors should lead to intersubjective empathy, communication and interculturality.

As a typical tradition of taking care of the ancestors, the celebration of the Days of the Dead may illustrate the different relationships of the present with the past. In Western culture skeletonised images may be used to provoke fear and a sense of danger as in warning signs. Or they may be a *memento mori*, a statement on the shortness and insignificance of human life and the wish to sublimate it through religious conviction (inspiring a special aesthetics), as in the mediaeval *Danse Macabre* or the famous Capuchin crypts in Rome and Palermo. At the same time, they may be used precisely as a caricature to mock death or the fear of death (a caricature, stressing that we all will die). Shivering may be combined with laughter when people know that the reference is not real, as in the paintings of Posada, in the horror house in a fair or during Halloween. Their multiple aspects make such images apt for sensationalism. This set of Western perceptions has penetrated the modern urban way of celebrating the Days of the Dead in Mexico, with *calaveras* or satirical poems involving death, an industry of sugar skulls and even plastic offerings for the altar.

The Mesoamerican roots of this celebration, however, were rituals that aimed at maintaining the personal memories of deceased ancestors, other relatives or friends. Typically, the existence of a Mesoamerican feast for deceased children was added as a special day to the Days of the Dead (generally 31 October), just as many precolonial elements were incorporated into the Christian

cult, much to the dismay of Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth century. The important difference here is that the references to the dead in Mesoamerican culture do not inspire fear or laughter, but express a very personal, intimate relationship. The spirits – in secular terms: the memories – of the dead arrive at the altar to share a moment with the living. They are received with the appropriate food and drinks, precisely the ones they enjoyed during their life. Choosing and preparing the food and drinks (did he/she like the coffee with or without sugar?) becomes a very tangible way of remembering the relatives and friends that have passed on.

The participation in such a ritual makes us aware of different social attitudes towards the past in general. Is heritage just a set of objects from very distant and different times, as a mere source of fascination, fun, prestige or economic gain? Or is there a more personal identification with ancestors involved, an affective bond that one would like to nourish as a religious and ethical inspiration?

In matters of cultural heritage our link with the past is a collective one, but that does not mean that it is impersonal. It is general human interest that determines the relevance of the past and of cultural memory for our life today. We should not be segmenting or categorizing peoples (and then get trapped in definitions), and we should certainly not leave this important matter to the demons of nationalism or political-ideological-religious extremism. Study of heritage is not limited to one's own country or people (which anyway is an illusionary construct as exploring one's personal genealogy will immediately show), but should be outreaching and inclusive. This does not take away or minimise the direct connection of descendant communities with that heritage; on the contrary, it highlights that special relationship, and the responsibility it entails, but situates these in the context of contemporary predicaments and struggles for social justice.

Studies of the past are done in the present and should engage with tangible modern realities in which the past plays a role, either locally or globally or both, as part of our common human ancestry and our common human development. The issue is not only whether we may learn something from a specific ancient culture in itself; but also whether we all can learn something *from our study of* our collective past and heritage, as a challenge and a quest to mobilise our metaphorical-creative-aesthetic capacity for the common good. Research and fieldwork should be communicative interaction (Fabian 1983: 67), while a continuous comparison between Self and Other should lead to a true intercultural encounter of mutual recognition, appreciation and solidarity. Reintegrating cultural memory implies continuous acts of cultural translation, which are much-needed exercises to develop intercultural competences and empathy throughout our world society.

Looking back at our ancestors we become aware of our own becoming, the development of our cultural universe. Culture is an evolutionary phase of a natural process: we should not reduce it to something else. The cultural universe, the world of the mind, is what that natural process is trying to realise through us by making it survive beyond somatic limitations and individual death. The vehicles of transmission, communication and reflection are the symbols formed in interaction between that cosmic power and our own small intellects, which are part of it and identical with it. Clarissa Pinkola Estés therefore rightly argues for an understanding of symbolic images from within, as we are part of the same universe and life stream (both in the physical and in the spiritual). Nature, the life-giving force of the universe (which we may call the Great Spirit, Mother Earth, the Creator, the primordial Logos, Tao, or other sacred but insufficient names), expresses itself and thinks through us all.

## 5 Final Image

After the young mother and everyone participating in the *temazcal* ritual has had their turn at bathing, once more the bath entrance is closed and steam fills the dark space for the last time: now, it is said, *Nanañuu*, our Grandmother, is herself taking her bath.

Similarly, after preparing the food in the traditional Ñuu Sau kitchen, the wood fire is left alone under the *comal* to slowly extinguish by itself. And similarly it is said that *Nanañuu*, our Grandmother, is now making her own *tortillas* (*está moliendo la abuelita*). The wind entering through the openings between the beams of the hut plays with the light blue smoke curls rising from the ashes and cinders scintillating with sparks of fire. And we think back about the grandmother we have known and loved, the mother who used to make the food at the fireplace, on the *comal*, and who has passed away but continues to be present in our lives, in our children and grandchildren...

Our memories project upon the curling smoke or steam and open our heart to the so many other grandmothers and mothers, here in Ñuu Sau and elsewhere, struggling with poverty and difficulties to raise their children. And to all the martyrs of the cause of the indigenous peoples.... All in their own way images of the great Grandmother of ancient times, who lives on in the steam-bath, in the hearth of every home, in every newborn child, and about whom the Native American poet, the late John Trudell sings:

Grandmother Moon  
 You are more than light in the night  
 You are more than the moon

You are spirit connection  
Your energy is our life  
You are memories to generations past  
You are the creator of sensations  
That will always last ...

Grandfathers whispering in the wind  
Rejoice at the life you are a part of ...

Keep your spirit strong  
For distant stars and distant drums  
Are the memories of spirit infancy  
Children of Earth let the spirit live  
So you can grow in your place  
In the universe.

... the spirit connection that imbues ancient art, ancient rituals, with life and meaning for our days.

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