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Mayahuel and Tlahuizcalpanteuctli in the Nahuatl Codices: Indigenous Readings of Nahuatl

Pictorial and Alphabetic Texts

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

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Mayahuel and Tlahuizcalpanteuctli in the Nahuatl Codices: Indigenous Readings of Nahuatl

Pictorial and Alphabetic Texts

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by

Felicia Rhapsody Lopez

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It is my firm belief that nothing significant can be created alone. This dissertation, which is the result of years of research and perseverance, was made possible thanks to the help of an entire community of people.

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Nimechtlazohcamatilia nochimeh. Nimechtlazcamatilia noteixmatcauh huan notequipoyohuan.

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ABSTRACT

Mayahuel and Tlahuizcalpanteuctli in the Nahuatl Codices: Indigenous Readings of Nahuatl
Pictorial and Alphabetic Texts

by

Felicia Rhapsody Lopez

Prior to colonization, diverse Indigenous populations across the area now known as Mesoamerica developed complex writing systems. In this dissertation, I examine Postclassic Mesoamerica as a time and place with shared knowledge that spanned across regions inhabited by diverse linguistic groups. During this time, the Nahuatl language served as a spoken lingua franca, and the Mixteca-Puebla writing style (used by Nahuatl speaking people) served as a written lingua franca. As such, my approach makes these glyphic texts (such as the Codex Borgia and other Borgia Group codices) and alphabetic Nahuatl texts (such as the Florentine Codex and the Codex Chimalpopoca) central to the understanding of indigenous culture. Using this approach, I begin by reexamining the ways that previous translations of texts have diminished the role of women within society, and specifically the role of women as readers and writers of diverse texts. I then shift my focus to these texts, challenging the view that they often function as ideograms not tied to a spoken language. I accomplish this by redefining what constitutes writing according to the Nahuatl texts, and proposing the presence of logographic and phonographic writing within the Codex Borgia. I

develop a method of decipherment for Codex Borgia pages 49 through 54, using Codex Borgia page 51 (CB51) as a case study. Within this case study, I examine the nature of *teotl* in Mesoamerican religious traditions, and specifically address the roles of Mayahuel and maguey, as seen in both the alphabetic and glyphic texts. In so doing, I challenge the current identification of the central tree on CB51 as a young corn tree, arguing instead that it represents the *teotl* Mayahuel/maguey. I extend these methods of decipherment across Codex Borgia pages 49 through 54 to argue that these pages contain glyphs and iconography suggestive of the narratives of the *teotl* Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Lord of the Dawn and an embodiment of the planet Venus. Furthermore these glyphs and iconography on CB49 through CB54 suggest the presence of a Venus Table that records the dates associated with the four stages of Venus within its synodic period: Venus as the Morning Star, its first period of invisibility, Venus as the Evening Star, and a second period of invisibility. I conclude my investigation with a translation and analysis of the narrative of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the historical religious and political leader from Tollan who transformed into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. I examine the role of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as the archetype for *tlamacazque* (people within the precontact religious order), and the events that led him to leave Tollan. Through an examination of the use of kinship terms in alphabetic Nahuatl texts, I challenge academic readings of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as an incestuous figure. The goal of this complete work is to serve as a decolonial project wherein the indigenous writers' voices can become central in our analyses and understandings of these and other indigenous cultures.

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I. Preface

For over 500 years, the indigenous people of the Americas have endured myriad negative effects of colonization. Initially, these effects included widespread genocide and active, aggressive, and overt destruction of culture. One of the early locations of Spanish colonization in the Americas was the area known as Mesoamerica. The word Mesoamerica, meaning the middle of America, is an area that extends roughly from today's Northern Mexico down through Central America. The limits of this area have been variously defined according to geographical boundaries, ethnicity, language, religion, and culture (Creamer 1987; Campbell, Kaufman, and Smith-Stark 1986). Among the examples of shared culture among Indigenous groups within Mesoamerica, and the primary source of data for this dissertation project, are the beautifully illustrated texts that are unique to this part of the Americas.

Previous to the time of the Spanish conquest, the people of Mesoamerica had a rich tradition in which scribes created texts (now called codices, the plural form of the Latin term, codex) wherein they documented their religion, rituals, calendar systems, songs, dreams, and histories. According to Art Historian, Elizabeth Boone (1998, 151-2), these texts recorded "almost all aspects of life." Through these texts, as within the Mesoamerican region, people of varying linguistic backgrounds and traditions sought to transmit their culture and knowledge. Accordingly, these codices reflect varying languages, content, styles, and functions of iconography within the region. Many of these texts, deemed anathema to the Catholic Church, were outlawed and destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors and clergy. Today only about 12 codices from precontact Central Mexico

remain. Among these are a group of five, the Codex Borgia, the Codex Cospi, the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer, the Codex Laud, and the Codex Vaticanus B, grouped together because of their similarities in iconographic style, content, and geographic region of origin. These five codices are called the Borgia Group, so named for the Codex Borgia, the most iconographically detailed book within the group, which in turn was named for Italian Cardinal, Stefano Borgia, who possessed the document before his death and before it was gifted to the Vatican Library, where it now resides. None of these documents, as anthropologist John Pohl (2014) points out, are still within or near the communities that created them, but rather are kept in various libraries, museums, and universities in Europe.

Current study of the Codex Borgia varies methodologically, with scholars coming from fields such as Linguistics, Archaeoastronomy, Anthropology, Art History, and Ethnohistory. I will use methods and data from within each of these fields in my examination of the Borgia. Primarily, in my focus within the Codex Borgia, I will engage in an unpacking of the iconography found in the currently accepted Venus pages (Borgia 53-54) and the adjacent directional pages (Borgia 49-53). This unpacking will include intratextual examination of similar imagery within the Codex Borgia, and well as intertextual comparisons drawn from the other codices of the Borgia group and the alphabetic Nahuatl codices. These alphabetic texts, as well as some texts written by early Spanish settlers, can serve to inform how the knowledge within the Codex Borgia and similar documents manifested in the lives of Nahua people. This analysis will also rely on previous research by scholars, with particular attention to the culturally based interpretations of the codices and the Nahuatl language. Through the identification of patterns in meaning

and association, I propose a method of reading these pictorial texts, which yields productive results and provides tools for further research.

Based on the widely accepted theories of cross-cultural, cross-linguistic styles and symbols within Mesoamerica during the Postclassic period (Nicholson and Keber 1994; Pohl 2003; Masson 2003; Taube 2010), I explore the directional tree pages (pages 49 to 53 of the Codex Borgia), using the Nahuatl language as a tool for decipherment. As such, I am able to include other Nahuatl texts, such as the Florentine Codex and the Codex Chimalpopoca as additional sources. In examining the directional panels of the Codex Borgia, I map an internal visual grammar that supports the associations between various images within each respective page, and thereby ascertain possible connections to Venus imagery within the Borgia codex, the Borgia group, and other Mesoamerican codices.

Although scholarship over the last 150 years has reintroduced indigenous knowledge in the form of glyphic texts back into European conception, the study of these codices has remained largely colored by the Eurocentrism and prejudice that destroyed the vast majority of the indigenous texts in the first place. Approaching these glyphic texts from an Indigenous perspective presents a challenge, as the forms of writing seen in the Codex Borgia have been prohibited and absent among indigenous populations for almost 500 years. As such, Indigenous Nahua voices have been completely absent from academic research, and much of the scholarship in the field have been influenced by the biases of Western colonizers. In order to address these issues, my research for this project has focused on learning Nahuatl, the dominant indigenous language of Mesoamerica, and applying knowledge of the language and its embedded meaning to further the understanding of the larger culture. This approach seeks to combine the principles of both emic and etic research.

In other words, the etic or outsider model of research can provide meaningful interpretations, but these must be tempered, corrected, and expanded upon using an emic, or insider model of research. This emic interpretation requires that the exploration of these primary sources in conjunction with indigenous-authored alphabetic texts from the early contact period and with indigenous knowledge and experience of the past and present, albeit with an acceptance that culture is living and changing, and therefore no people can provide an uninterrupted key to the knowledge and experience of their ancestors.

In order to accomplish this, I make the use of the Nahuatl language a key part of every chapter, and I often include the original Nahuatl text for readers to see in addition to translations done either by myself and by other scholars. The Nahuatl alphabetic texts shares much in common with Spanish pronunciation, with a few exceptions (Karttunen 1992). The letter *x* is pronounced like the English *sh*. In the combinations *cu* and *uc*, the letter *u* creates a sound much like the English letter *w* (making the sound *kw*, as at the beginning of the word *quick*, and *wk*, which has no English or Spanish parallels). Similarly, the combinations *hu* and *uh* are two spelling variations that share the sound of the English *w*, with the first spelling appearing at the beginning of a syllable and the second spelling appearing at the end of a syllable. The letter *h* also appears as way of showing a glottal stop, as in the word *pahtli*. The letter combination *tl* is a single sound that is pronounced like the *tl* in the word *atlas*, and when it appears at the end of a word, the tongue is not released from the roof of the mouth. This sound is often the most difficult for non-native speakers to pronounce.

Within this larger decolonial project, my dissertation seeks to make a number of contributions to the study of precontact Central Mexican codices. In my first chapter, I provide an general overview of the time and place of Postclassic Mesoamerica using the

Codex Mendoza as a tool for understanding. The underlying argument of this chapter is that this indigenous text, though largely written in glyphs, can still yield a great deal of information to even novice students with limited knowledge of Mesoamerica. This chapter also provides an introduction to the reading of glyphic and pictorial indigenous texts, which will be built upon in later chapters.

Chapter Two focuses more specifically on the craft of writing among the Nahua (Nahuatl-speaking people) of Central Mexico. Here I examine alphabetic Nahuatl texts in order to identify what qualified as writing according to the Nahua, as well as what segments of the population could read and write. This chapter contributes to the conversation about the role of women as writers and readers of texts. Within this gender analysis, I explore the pitfalls of translation between Nahuatl, a non-gendered language, to Spanish, a highly gendered language, and how scholarly use of Spanish texts and translations has given rise to a gendered view of Nahua societies in English-language scholarship as well.

Chapter Three (a modified version of a book chapter that is currently under review) continues to examine the precontact writing system employed by speakers of Nahuatl. Following the work of Alfonso Lacadena (2008) and his identification of logographic and logo-syllabic Nahuatl writing, I propose a pattern of meaning and associations for the iconography on pages 49 through 52 of the Codex Borgia. By drawing upon Indigenous knowledge, I challenge the current academic reading that the tree iconography on Codex Borgia page 51 represents corn (Seler 1963; Nowotny 2005; Boone 2007; Byland, Diaz, and Rodgers 1993), asserting instead that the tree represents a mature maguey plant. In addition to contributing to the larger conversation about the function and meaning of the Codex Borgia as a text, I also explore the concept of indigenous science and indigenous religion,

including the concept of *teotl* within Nahua religious traditions, building from the definition first proposed by Gerardo Aldana (2011, 55).

The fourth chapter focuses on representations of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, the *teotl* of the planet Venus, and Venus astronomy. This study builds upon the methods I developed within the previous chapter, combining alphabetic Nahuatl texts within the Codex Borgia (on pages 49 through 54), and their parallels within the Dresden Codex. This chapter is part of a collaborative project with Gerardo Aldana (Personal communication 2015), who developed a calendrical model that corresponds with the dates listed on pages 49 through 52 of the Codex Borgia—this model yields day counts for each of the four stages of the Venus synodic period that closely mirror those found within the Dresden Codex. Additionally, I provide an iconographic analysis of these Codex Borgia pages that draws connections to the Venus narratives found in the Codex Chimalpopoca, further supporting that pages 49 through 52 of the Codex Borgia each refer to a different stage within the Venus synodic cycle.

My final chapter focuses on the last days of Quetzalcoatl, a man and a *teotl* who was worshipped throughout Mesoamerica at the time of contact, before his death and transformation into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. This chapter seeks to tie together many of the themes from the previous chapters. Here I focus on the problems of translation, including how gendered translations have erased the female *tlamacazque* (often translated as ‘priests’), or members of the precontact religious order. This chapter again seeks to explore Nahua and Mesoamerican religious concepts, while questioning the associations that were gained with translation into Spanish.

From start to finish, this dissertation is a decolonial project that makes Mesoamerican voices, documents, language, and practices central to research. By using indigenous theories of language and meaning as my guide, I seek to enrich our understanding of the indigenous conceptualizations of culture, religion, and science that are embedded within the extant texts.

II. Chapter 1- Introduction to Postclassic Mesoamerica: Reading the Codex Mendoza as an Interdisciplinary Text

A. Introduction

Most people today in the United States have at least heard of the Aztecs. The indigenous people commonly referred to as the Aztecs were not a single homogenous group of people, but rather were an alliance of Nahuatl-speaking indigenous groups. Some Nahua people, such as the leaders of the Aztec Alliance, called the Mexica, were relative newcomers to the Valley of Mexico. According to the histories of the Mexica written in the early colonial period, the Mexica arrived in the Valley of Mexico around 1248 AD, less than 250 years before the arrival of the Europeans to the New World (Smith 1984). However, linguistic research on Nahuatl and other languages within the Uto-Aztecan language family suggests that the Nahuatl language originated in Mesoamerica and expanded northward with the spread of corn agriculture (Hill 2001). Regardless of the place of origin for the Mexica, the Nahua people as a larger linguistic and ethnic group had roots in Mesoamerica, and by the time of European arrival, Nahuatl was the dominant language throughout Mesoamerica (Karttunen 1992).

At the time of the conquest, two forces among the Spanish colonizers had a significant impact on how we see the Nahua people of Central Mexico today. The first of these was the conquering force that actively sought to destroy both military and spiritual resistance, which brought about the destruction of visible displays of Nahua and other indigenous religious beliefs, such as the traditional painted books (Lockhart 1994; Boone

2000). At the same time, many of the conquerors, most notably Hernán Cortés, wrote dramatic accounts in the form of *probanzas*, the purpose of which was to depict the writer as a man deserving of rewards from the Spanish crown (Restall 2004). These same documents regularly depicted their interactions with the Nahua people—accounts that often described their indigenous enemies as violent, bloodthirsty, and worshippers of the devil.

The second force that would influence the way the ancient Nahua are known today was the creation of numerous documents by Spanish priests, such as Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Fray Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón, Fray Alonso de Molina, Fray Toribio (also known as Motolinía), and Fray Diego Durán. During the spiritual conquest of Mexico, many Spanish priests became fluent in Nahuatl and some actively sought to record various elements of the Nahua culture. Their records, which have been invaluable resources for this dissertation and for generations of scholars of Mesoamerican Studies, contain some of the most thorough records of Nahua language, culture, knowledge, and practices. However, because of the religious affiliations of these writers, their records often reflect Christian and other Western biases and contain commentary condemning the indigenous practices and beliefs as anathema. Some Indigenous men were trained in alphabetic writing and produced Nahuatl alphabetic texts (which I discuss more specifically in regard to Sahagún's Florentine Codex in Chapter Two). The vast majority of these texts are Catholic or legal documents such as testimonies, maps, wills, and petitions that were often written with a Spanish audience in mind (Boone 1992). Some of the written conventions of Nahuatl remained in use, as the courts of Colonial Mexico considered indigenous maps, for example, legally admissible documents. However, with the criminalization of Nahua religious

practices, such traditional books written by and for a Nahua audience were quickly eliminated (Boone 2007).

A few of these remaining Mesoamerican texts again resurfaced when Alexander von Humboldt became the first to write about a Central Mexican text called the Codex Borgia in 1805 (Milbrath 2013). In addition to writing about his travels through Mexico, Humboldt also published sections of the Mayan text that would later become known as the Dresden Codex. Shortly thereafter, the publication of Edward Kingsborough's (1830-1842) facsimiles of various codices (including the Mexican Codex Borgia and the Mayan Dresden Codex) in his *Antiquities of Mexico* made these texts available in their entirety for the first time.

In 1887, nearly 100 years after Humboldt's publication, Eduard Seler published the first rigorous analyses and decipherment of the Codex Borgia and other Mesoamerican texts (Nicholson 1973). According to prominent Nahua scholar, H.B. Nicholson (1973), in addition to his groundbreaking work with codical decipherment, Seler, "made fundamental contributions to aboriginal American linguistics, archaeology, native history, and ethnography." In the last 130 years since Seler's first publications, his interdisciplinary work on the codices continues to inform the research of Mesoamericanists from diverse fields including Linguistics, Art History, Archaeoastronomy, and Anthropology (Boone 2000, 2007; Hernandez and Vail 2010; Lacadena 2008; Hassig 2001; Quiñones-Keber 2002). Furthermore, his work transformed the iconographically inaccessible indigenous manuscripts into texts that were once again capable of being understood.

B. The Codex Mendoza as a Tool for Understanding Postclassic Mesoamerica

In order to begin to understand the writings contained within iconographically complex indigenous texts such as the Codex Borgia, one must first have at least a general understanding of the cultural context within which this and other documents were created. While the precise location of the authorship of the Codex Borgia remains contested, scholars agree that it can be generally placed within Postclassic Mesoamerica, in the style commonly referred to as Mixteca-Puebla, so called because of its affiliation with the Mixteca style and the region of Puebla, which was the neighboring area to the Mexica in the Valley of Mexico and home to the Tlaxcalan people—the primary enemies to the Aztec Alliance (Byland, Diaz, and Rodgers 1993; Anawalt 1981). However, as Emily Umberger and Cecilia Klein (1986) point out, markers of the Mixteca-Puebla style “pertain to several different traditions spanning 700 years,” and therefore a document in this style could potentially come from a wide range of times and places.

Of the remaining indigenous authored books or codices that were written in this style, the Codex Mendoza has provided researchers and students with the most accessible tools for decipherment of iconography and, as a consequence, the clearest example of how an indigenous text may provide readers with a rigorous view of various facets of precontact Mesoamerican politics, life, and culture during the Postclassic era. While I believe that any of the extant texts written in the Mixteca-Puebla style could provide a framework for an interdisciplinary examination of this time in Mesoamerican history, for this introductory chapter I have chosen to focus on the Codex Mendoza over others solely because it provides the most straightforward introduction to many of the themes treated below on the Codex Borgia. The Codex Mendoza does have traits not often associated with the Codex Borgia,

such as the inclusion of phonetic name glyphs.¹ However, the Codex Mendoza and Codex Borgia share traits that are considered defining characteristics of the Mixteca-Puebla style.

As mentioned, at the time of Spanish arrival, the Uto-Aztecan language Nahuatl was the most widely spoken language in Mesoamerica, and it served as a lingua franca among the merchants whose profession required travel between diverse linguistic groups (Kartunnen 1994). The use of spoken Nahuatl as a lingua franca parallels the written lingua franca that existed in the form of the Mixteca-Puebla style—a style of art and writing that appears in Epiclassic and Postclassic Mesoamerica within areas with diverse spoken languages. Among the texts written in this Mixteca-Puebla style are diverse texts from various localities, written before and after contact. The Codex Mendoza represents a postcontact example of this style of writing, and the Codex Borgia represents one of a few remaining precontact indigenous authored manuscripts in this style. While the writers of the Codex Mendoza spoke and wrote in Nahuatl, the exact location of authorship for the Codex Borgia continues to be debated, and therefore the language of its authors and intended audience is likewise uncertain. However, both the Codex Mendoza and the Codex Borgia embody what Donald Robertson (1970) first called an “international style.” Elizabeth Boone and Michael E. Smith (2003) have further explored the concept of an international style by differentiating between what they call the Postclassic International Style and the Postclassic International Symbol Set, in which the former refers to artistic and spatial conventions in artistic rendering and the latter refers to the use of symbols to present meanings that could be understood across linguistic divides. The Postclassic International Style consisted of

¹ I propose that both texts also contain examples of phonetic writing. In Chapter Two, I propose a reading of specific iconography on page 49 of the Codex Borgia as the phonetic glyph of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli’s name.

conventions including, for example, the presentation of human faces and most animal faces in profile, the use of solid black outline drawings with a solid fill color within, and a lack of color gradients or chiaroscuro. The Postclassic International Symbol Set, on the other hand, refers to the iconographic and linguistic elements of the written language, which includes but is not limited to, shared imagery for representing dates and figures. Both the Codex Borgia and the Codex Mendoza use these conventions of both the Postclassic International Style and the Postclassic International Symbol Set. This suggests that if an indigenous person was able to read on of these two texts, they likely would have at least a general understanding of the content of the other. Just as Nahuatl served as a spoken lingua franca by the time of European contact, the use of shared stylistic and symbolic representations among linguistic groups, such as the Mixteca in Southern Mexico and the Nahua in the Valley of Mexico, served as a written lingua franca and therefore allowed for the mutual understanding of written texts regardless of spoken language.

The Codex Mendoza, a text written by Nahuatl-speaking scribes during the early Contact period and centered on Mexica history, in many ways seems unique among the indigenous texts in its seemingly distinct parts: Territorial expansion, Tribute, and Daily life.² Because this text was written on European paper and under the eye of the Spanish, it could be taken as a cut-and-paste construction of various precontact books (and book types, that may have been more uniform in their subject matter). However, it is just as likely that books such as the Codex Mendoza, books that were as comprehensive in subject matter,

² I borrow the titles of these parts from the website and application mentioned below.

existed among the innumerable³ books destroyed during the conquest of Mexico. And while the text focuses on the leadership of those within Tenochtitlan (the military and political leaders of what is commonly referred to as the Aztec Triple Alliance), the text also provides a great deal of information about the cities that fell under their control, especially in regard to the tributes these areas would then be responsible for. As such, the Codex Mendoza provides skilled readers with information not only about the imperial leaders in Tenochtitlan, but also about the crafts, culture, and relationships among regions throughout Mesoamerica. Given the breadth of material provided within the Codex Mendoza, including Mesoamerican calendrics and writing conventions, this text has the potential to illuminate cultural norms and practices across Mesoamerica as a whole.

C. Historical Context of Scholarship on Mesoamerica and the Codex Mendoza

The Postclassic era, generally speaking, begins in about 900 AD and ends when the Mexica capital of Tenochtitlan was defeated by the Spanish in 1521 AD (López Austin and López Luján 2001). The Postclassic period of Mesoamerica, which will be my primary focus throughout this project, directly followed what is sometimes referred to as the Epiclassic period—the last few hundred years of the Classic period. This Epiclassic period of time was marked by cultural exchange and fusion (Kowalshi and Kristan-Graham 2007; Crider 2011). While the Epiclassic period will not be the direct focus here, the cultures that thrived during this time laid the foundation for the societies seen during the Postclassic Period. Within the

³ I choose the word innumerable here as a nod to the Nahuatl word centzontli. Though it literally denotes the number 400, it implies a number that cannot be counted. In the case of the destroyed texts, the number of books that have been lost is unknowable, and can only be presumed to be very great based on Spanish accounts.

Epiclassic period, evidence appears in the archaeological record suggesting that one of the following may have occurred in large cities such as Tula in Central Mexico and the Mayan cities of Seibal, Chichén Itzá in Guatemala and the Yucatán: either people of varying ethnic and linguistic groups were choosing to live together, or else local leaders or artisans within these large cities were borrowing and using the styles and symbolism of other ethnic and linguistic groups outside of their own (Ringle 1998; McVicker 1985). And even before the Epiclassic Period, in the city of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico, which thrived during the earlier part of the Classic Period, phosphate oxygen isotopic evidence found in bone and teeth show that at least certain people lived in multiple areas of Mesoamerica throughout their lives (White et al. 2002). Through regular migration and trading across regions differentiated by linguistic groups, cultural exchange grew throughout Mesoamerica, making the Postclassic period one predicated on a knowledge and familiarity with ethnic difference.

Evidence of cultural exchange specifically between the Maya region and Central Mexico (inhabited by various groups including the Mexica and other potential authors of texts such as those in the Borgia Group) has been recognized since the early academic work of Eduard Seler (1904). Scholarship on the cultural exchange between the Maya region and the adjacent Mexican region has focused predominantly on archaeological evidence found along the land corridor where these two areas touched. Examinations of obsidian and ceramics has led scholars to conclude that sites such as Tula, Seibal, Chichen Itza, and Xochicalco underwent changes in ceramic composition and styles that mark the shift from the Epiclassic to the Early Postclassic period (Stark et al. 1992; Bey 1987). This archaeological evidence suggests changes in population or ideological shifts within the same populations (Adams 1971, Bey 1987, Fählmel Beyer 1988, Ringle et al. 1998). These shifts

in the use of materials and composition styles have led scholars to argue for the presence of “Mayanized Mexicans,” (McVicker, 1985) and “Mexicanized Maya.” (Thompson 1970, Fox 1980). However, as Ringle et al. (1998) point out, these works and many other scholarly works on the subject of cultural interaction remain highly focused in terms of looking at only one specific area, the Toltec city of Tula north of the Valley of Mexico, and, therefore, “these have been either more restricted in their scope or have been ‘Tulacentric.’”⁴

According to Kowalski et al. (2007), this “Tulacentric” theme continues to be the focus of scholars examining cultural exchange in Ancient Mesoamerica. However, some work, such as that done by John Carlson (1991) in his look at Venus iconography and Ringle et al. (1998) in their examination of the “cult of Quetzalcoatl” (a religious figure who I address in detail in Chapter Five), seeks to explore larger pan-Mesoamerican concepts and iconography, and the cultural, political, and religious implications of these shared traits. Furthermore, in addition to widening the geographic scope of cultural exchange, the time period associated with this exchange has widened from the Postclassic period, of AD 900 until Contact, to include the Epiclassic period, which runs from approximately AD 700 to 900. (Carlson 1991, Parsons et al. 1996, Bey et al. 1997, Ringle et al. 1998, Kowalski et al. 2007) The recognition of a wider area of cultural exchange between the Mexica and the Maya, people commonly regarded as culturally removed from one another, allows for a reexamination of the similarities between the texts of these and other neighboring regions. Although the surviving Postclassic Central Mexican and Mayan codices, such as the Borgia and Dresden codices that I will be discussing later, have disparate areas of authorship and

⁴ Ringle, William M., Tomas Gallaneta Negron, and George J. Bey III. “The Return of Quetzalcoatl: Evidence for the Spread of a World Religion During the Epiclassic Period.” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 9, no. 2 (1998): 225.

audience, their overlap in iconography and meaning speak to the larger cultural, political, and religious exchanges taking place throughout Ancient Mesoamerica.

Following this trend of pan-Mesoamerican examinations, scholars such as Karl Taube in his work on the writing of Teotihuacan, use the theory of widespread cultural exchange to argue for shared meanings across much larger areas of time and space.⁵ In this article, Taube uses imagery taken from Colonial period Maya 1,000 miles away, as well as Mexica imagery 1,000 years into Teotihuacan's future, to argue for specific denotative and ideological meanings of written Teotihuacan symbolism, including the presence of glyphs in both Mayan and Mexican styles. Taube's analyses present exciting new theories of meaning, and with his work has come the move to be more inclusive of diverse groups in the examination of Mesoamerican themes and topics. However, the use of Mesoamerican imagery and ideology from across time and space is not without its own set of problems, as it is likely that even similar practices and iconography varied in meaning with time and location.

At its inception, the field of Mesoamerican studies tended toward a view of precontact indigenous groups that was pan-cultural and pan-linguistic, as seen in the work of early scholars Eduard Seler and Ernst Förstemann.⁶ In essays such as, "Mexican chronology, with special reference to the Zapotec calendar," Seler defines calendric commonalities between differing linguist groups of Mayas, Nahuas, and Zapotecs, and further seeks to

⁵ Taube, Karl A. *The Writing System of Ancient Teotihuacan*. Vol. 1. Center for Ancient American Studies, 2000.

⁶ Seler, Eduard and E. Förstemann. *Mexican and Central American Antiquities, Calendar Systems, and History: Twenty-Four Papers*. Translated by Charles Pickering Bowditch. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904.

reconcile the seeming differences between them. He navigates through the day names in various Mayan dialects, Nahuatl, and Zapotec, attempting to find unifying meanings in the calendar elements. For example, Seler argues that the Nahuatl *Tochtli* (rabbit), Zapotec *lápa* (“‘to divide’, ‘to break to pieces’”) and the Mayan *Lamat* glyph (which shows a single block divided into four parts), all denote the concept of a thing divided.⁷ Eduard Seler, like other scholars of his time, worked from the basic and reasonable assumption that Mesoamerican cultures, in occupying a shared geographical space for their known historical durations, were bound to share cultural traits that might aid in better understanding specific elements within each respective group. So while specialization within Mesoamerican research of the early twentieth century certainly occurred, with the relative lack of sources and scholarly literature available to most scholars, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons were commonplace.

Despite the fact that Mayan groups and Nahua groups such as the Mexica (as well as other neighboring groups that do not fall into either category, such as Mixtec and Zapotec groups) shared many similarities, books and resources that address pan-Mesoamerican concepts, especially those designed for mainstream English-speaking audiences, are limited. One result of the increasing academic specialization is the increase in academic journals with more specific fields as their market. These academic journals, though filled with groundbreaking research and exciting discoveries, often have a small readership consisting in large part of other specialists within the given field. This reduces the amount of information and research that reaches a general audience.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 44.

One possible method of increasing accessibility and reach to general readership would be the increase in interdisciplinary texts that address a wider range of information and analyses, and therefore have the potential to reach a wider range of reader interests. According to Richard Posner, “The rise of interdisciplinary research, the concomitant blurring of disciplinary boundaries (sociology, anthropology, political science, and political philosophy are, for example, increasingly difficult to distinguish from one another), can be seen as reactions against excessive specialization.”⁸ Yet he affirms that interdisciplinarity on its own will not make academic work accessible to a general public. Textbooks, designed for general introductory classes in Mesoamerica and housed within such departments as archaeology, do provide a wider overview of these cultures. Texts such as Michael E. Smith and Marilyn A. Masson’s (2000) *The Ancient Civilizations of Mesoamerica: A Reader* provide readers with diverse selection of articles from different scholars in order to address a wider range of topics—a task difficult to accomplish in the age of hyper-specialization in scholarship. However, while these texts provide an interdisciplinary approach to Mesoamerica, they can at times lack the cohesiveness of a single-authored text. Other nonfiction works, though potentially seen as less rigorous academically, may be more meaningful to non-expert audiences.

Today, the most widely read nonfiction written works on precontact Mesoamerica are the recent works of New York Times best selling writer Charles C. Mann, in his work *1491 and Before Columbus*—a version of *1491* adapted for young readers (Habash 2014). According to Habash (2014), in 2012, seven years after its original release, Mann’s *1491*

⁸ Posner, Richard A. *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline, With a New Preface and Epilogue*. Harvard University Press, 2009, p.55.

remained the seventh best selling history book. Although Mann's work looks at indigenous populations across the continents of North and South America, his widespread readership speaks to the public's desire for information on precontact Indigenous populations.

However, it is important to point out that Mann himself was not an expert in precontact history of the Americas before the writing of his book, and arguably he is still not. Similarly, although he presents precontact indigenous histories in ways that are sympathetic to these populations and their experiences, his methods are not rooted in indigenous perspectives, but rather draw heavily on the scholarship of Western academics. This, in conjunction with the legacy of colonial devaluation of indigenous knowledge and tradition, leads to a general lack of Indigenous-centered study in the fields of Mesoamerican study both within and outside of academia. The lack of an interdisciplinary general overview of Mesoamerica from an Indigenous perspective, however, is ironic given the nature of the surviving Indigenous texts, many of which reveal insights into numerous disparate research interests including art, agriculture, religious studies, indigenous medicine, astronomy, calendrics, philosophy, anthropology, history, linguistics, agriculture, geography, and so forth.

This lack may, however, change in the near future with the recent creation and release of an iPad application and interactive website on the Codex Mendoza. The project, presented by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH; National Institute of Anthropology and History), presents the Codex Mendoza (2014) in order to, among other stated goals, "Permit access to the Codex Mendoza to those who are interested in familiarizing themselves and studying a fundamental source on Mexico's past [and c]reate different levels of understanding of the text: materiality, content, and context." The digital format allows for the codex itself to become the primary focus for the student. Within the

INAH website, students and other visitors can navigate (virtually flip) through the pages of the Codex Mendoza. The high-resolution color reproductions of the codex pages often remain visible, even as the cursor hovers over imagery revealing translations or other explanatory texts. Whereas most academic works (including this one) draw images from the codices or other primary indigenous sources, often extracting these images in a way that decontextualizes them, the “Codex Mendoza” website and iPad application re-center the indigenous texts, voices, and perspectives. While the decontextualization of images has become the standard in academic writing about Mesoamerican pictorial writing, and the format of this manuscript also requires this kind of decontextualization, the production of learning tools and texts that recontextualize pictorial writings and iconography hold potential to revive indigenous centered understandings of these primary sources. By placing the codex pages as central to the learning experience, INAH shifts the focus to emphasize the voices, writing, and cultural products of the indigenous Mesoamerican populations themselves. By expanding such projects to include the digitizing of other codices, *mapas*, ceramic designs, and engravings, we can provide a public resource for those interested in Postclassic and early Colonial Mesoamerica that allows for a recentering of the indigenous texts themselves.

While these texts often provide a focused view of Mesoamerican culture (with a focus on the knowledge and culture of the author or intended audience), these texts often provide a wealth of information about pan-Mesoamerican Postclassic culture as well. Arguably all of the codices written in the Mixteca-Puebla style are indicative of a broader Mesoamerican culture by virtue of their accessibility to a range of people regardless of spoken language. Yet among these texts, the Codex Mendoza and *mapas*, such as the Mapa

de Cuauhtinchan #2, provide more obvious representations of pan-Mesoamerican culture with the breadth of identifiable locations they address within their respective texts. As such, the Codex Mendoza has the potential to serve as an entry point into the study of Mesoamerica more broadly. By looking to representations of cultural elements within the Codex Mendoza, especially given the accessibility granted to non-experts via the INAH website, an indigenous centered (and interdisciplinary) understanding of pan-Mesoamerican culture can be gained. Aspects of pan-Mesoamerican culture, such as calendrics, military and political relationships, agriculture, craft production, and social norms, can begin to be accessed through the use of this single text.

D. Pan-Mesoamerican Calendrics

The Codex Mendoza frontispiece (Figure 2) and its adjacent page (Figure 1), as well as the entire first section of the codex (see Figures 3, 4, 5, and 8 for examples) present a chronological account of the Mexica political and military expansion. Along the bottom of page 1v is a list of what can be considered the first thirteen years of the Mesoamerican *xiuhpohualli* (365-day) calendar.⁹ The names of these thirteen *xiuhpohualli* years take their name from days within the *tonalpohualli* calendar (the 260-day count calendar) that are spaced 365 days apart from one another. The *tonalpohualli* and *xiuhpohualli* run simultaneously to create a larger cycle, wherein these two calendars align and repeat every 52 *xiuhpohualli*-years (365 days x 52 *xiuhpohualli*-years = 18,980 days) and every 73 *tonalpohualli*-years (260 days x 73 *tonalpohualli*-years = 18,980 days). The frontispiece and adjacent page show two different ways to view these significant 52 *xiuhpohualli*-year

⁹ See Chapter Four for more information about the Mesoamerican calendar systems.

intervals: one that is significant across the broader Mesoamerican cultures, and one that is specific to the Mexica.

The Year Sign Ce Tochtli (1 Rabbit) begins the count of years on Codex Mendoza page 1v, and the thirteen Year Signs presented on this page provide a model for the pattern of *xiuhpohualli* year naming. As the “A-O” Year Sign¹⁰ found in Mixtec codices is absent, these signs are recognized as representing years based on their spacing and on the glosses that accompany them in the text. Each *xiuhpohualli* Year Sign is derived from *tonalpohualli* Day Signs. Therefore, in order to understand the system of *xiuhpohualli* year naming, one must also have an understanding of *tonalpohualli* day naming. The *tonalpohualli* consists of 20 distinct day glyphs and 13 day numbers, which combine to create 260 distinct Day Signs ($20 \times 13 = 260$). If the first year is named for the Day Sign Ce Tochtli (1 Rabbit, as shown in the Mendoza Codex), the following year will carry the name of the Day Sign that occurs 365 days later. Because the *tonalpohualli* year has only 260 distinct Day Signs, the Day Sign Ce Tochtli will repeat after 260 days, or one *tonalpohualli* year. Therefore, the name of the next *xiuhpohualli* year will be 105 days into the second *tonalpohualli* year following each previous year name ($260 \text{ days} + 105 \text{ days} = 365 \text{ days}$). In this case, the Day Sign exactly 365 days after Ce Tochtli is Ome Acatl (2 Reed). Mathematically, this creates a pattern wherein only four of the 20 unique day glyphs will ever be used in a Year Sign.¹¹ These four glyphs will appear in sequence, as will the 13 numbers that correspond to each the *tonalpohualli* days, creating the pattern on Codex Mendoza page 1v: Ce Tochtli (1 Rabbit),

¹⁰ While some codices use a symbol called the “A-O” Year Sign, which distinguishes a Day Sign from a Year Sign, this symbol is lacking in the Codex Mendoza and appears only rarely in the Codex Borgia. See Boone (2007) for information on the use of “AO” Year Sign in the Codex Borgia.

¹¹ See Table 2 in Chapter Four for a complete list of Day Signs within the *tonalpohualli*.

Ome Acatl (2 Reed), Eyi Tecpatl (3 Flint), Nahui Calli (4 House), Macuilli Tochtli (5 Rabbit), Chicuace Acatl (6 Reed), Chicome Tecpatl (7 Flint), Chicuei Calli (8 House), Chicunahui Tochtli (9 Rabbit), Mahtlactli Acatl (10 Reed), Mahtlactli Once Tecpatl (11 Flint), Mahtlactli Omome Calli (12 House), and Mahtlactli Omei Tochtli (13 Rabbit). The next set of thirteen years would continue with Ce Acatl (1 Reed), Ome Tecpatl (2 Flint), and so on. This pattern wherein the numbers run consecutively from one to thirteen and the four day/year glyphs (Tochtli, Acatl, Tecpatl, and Calli) cycle through, provides the 52 distinct Year Signs of the *xiuhpohualli* calendar. Such a set of 52 year names are shown forming a box along the edge of page 2r of the Mendoza Codex (Figure 2).

However, upon close inspection, the years that surround the central iconographic illustrations on this frontispiece are not a continuation of the years shown on the previous page, and additionally are lacking the first Year Sign of Ce Tecpatl (1 Flint) that would be needed to show a complete 52-year cycle. This is significant as, according to Emily Umberger (1988: 352-356; 1996: 94), Ce Tecpatl, “as both day and year was associated with Tenochca hegemony and Huitzilopochtli’s ‘birth.’” While this Year Sign, which could both begin and end this list of years, is iconographically absent, the name of the year is metaphorically present based on Umberger’s observation. A visual metaphor is suggested by the central illustrations, which show founding members of the Mexica at Tenochtitlan enclosed in a box reminiscent of the year glyph boxes. At the center of this box is the glyph for Tenochtitlan atop a shield. In this representation, the round shield echoes the needed Ce (or one) of the missing Year Sign, Ce Tecpatl. Similarly, the thorny *nopal* or cactus echoes the sharpness of the Tecpatl. By virtue of the Mexica’s strong connection to Tenochtitlan as their promised land and to Huitzilopochtli as their patron *teotl*, the frontispiece shows the

enclosing of a 52-year cycle, which begins and ends in a year that signifies their cultural and political beginnings as Mexica.

Though this year and date holds special significance for the Mexica (and this document is written from the Mexica perspective), the authors continue to include in these calendric representations the regular Mesoamerican practice of the New Fire ceremony. While the New Fire Ceremony celebrations appear in various documents and codices about and authored by Mexica, archaeological evidence suggests that this practice predated the settling of the Mexica in Central Mexico (Elson and Smith 2001). According to various scholars (Hassig 1981, Caso 1971), the day that starts and ends these *xiuhpohualli* years, and consequently the start of each new 52-year cycle, varied between provinces. Even the start of the new cycle suggests that this date may have changed, as the initial year listed on the first page of the Codex Mendoza is Ce Tochtli (1 Rabbit), and yet the glyph for the New Fire Ceremony is shown tied to the following year Ome Acatl (2 Reed) throughout the rest of the text. Ross Hassig (1981) argues that because the year Ce Tochtli marked the final and most devastating year of a four- to five-year famine that left many dead in the Valley of Mexico, such an enduring famine would likely be reason enough to postpone the celebration until a time that was more prosperous. By postponing the New Fire celebration to the following year of Ome Acatl, the Mexica would be able to celebrate at a time when the food necessary for the celebration was again plentiful. This shift in timing of the new Fire ceremony is suggested in the Mendoza Codex, and supports observations that these celebrations and the starting and ending dates of each *xiuhpohualli* year varied. According to Hassig (1981, 174), “the beginning date of the Aztec year is uncertain, and seems to have varied throughout central Mexico.” So while the calendar systems of the *tonalpohualli* and *xiuhpohualli* were

utilized throughout Mesoamerica (and similarly structured though differently named systems were used by other non-Nahua groups such as the Maya and Zapotec), the days and the starts and ends of years reveal a flexibility wherein groups could modify the calendar to suit respective municipal needs.

E. Military Might and the Violence of War in Mesoamerica

This first section of the Codex Mendoza focuses on historical mapping of military and territorial expansion of what is now called the Aztec Empire. Various scholars, such as Frances Berdan (1996), Emily Umberger (1996), and Michael E. Smith(1990), have written extensively about these pages in the context of their relationship to other early colonial documents, and have provided readers with a store of information to add greater context to what is presented in the Codex Mendoza. Here, however, I will analyze the Codex Mendoza (as it appears on the INAH website) iconographically and as a stand-alone document, in order to see what this text seeks to impart about Mexica expansion and the city-states addressed in this expansion.

While the bottom of the Codex Mendoza frontispiece shows the battles won by the Mexica against Colhuacan and Tenayucan, these two areas do not appear in the tribute pages that follow. Frances F. Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt (1997) point out that even after the establishment of Tenochtitlan by Tenuch (as presented in the frontispiece iconography), “the Mexica had to continue working as vassals for their more powerful neighbors. It was only in that menial capacity that they were involved with the conquest of Colhuacan and Tenayucan. Such an event [the defeat of these two cities by the Mexica] did take place, but only some fifty years *after* the 1376 death of Tenuch.” Therefore the defeat of these two

city-states represents a foundational narrative that establishes the Mexica and their city-state of Tenochtitlan as having gained political and military power within the Valley of Mexico. These military defeats are each represented by a single unnamed warrior, equipped with a club (in one case a *maquahuitl*, an obsidian-lined club) and a *chimalli* (shield), who has captured another unnamed warrior by grabbing him by the hair. These side-by-side scenes show the Mexica warriors in superior positions by virtue of their larger size and posture within the text. Each of the defeated warriors appear as if emerging from the glyphic representations of their respective city-states, each of which shows a temple structure which has been toppled and appears in flames (a glyphic representation that continues throughout this first section of the Codex Mendoza). Attached to these identical temple structures are each city-state's respective name: Colhuacan and Tenayucan. While these defeats are literally contained within the circle of 52-years as written upon this frontispiece, their relationship to this time is likely merely ideological. Despite the historical inaccuracy of these events, their presence on this page established the Mexica as a military force within the area. This inaccuracy also suggests that the representations of the subsequent military defeats seen throughout this section may also be embellished to reinforce the narrative of the Mexica as a military powerhouse.

Yet despite this narrative of their military might, and despite the contemporary popular representation of the Aztecs as a band of bloodthirsty warriors, this section of the Codex Mendoza shows few representations of death and even fewer representations of deaths caused by the Mexica themselves. One page 2v (Figure 3), the page following the frontispiece showing the founding of the capital of Tenochtitlan, the first *tlatoani* Acamapichtli is shown between the Year Signs of his rule (which begins again with the Year

Sign Ce Tecpatl) and the glyphs of the city-states he defeated. These four city-states are Quauhnahuac, Mizquic, Cuitlahuac, and Xochimilco. In addition to the standard representation of the glyph of the city-state name connected to the glyph of the toppled temple, smaller representations of each city-state name are tied to glyphs of a human head with closed eyes. According to the Spanish glosses at the bottom of this page of the Codex Mendoza (2014), “The four heads contained and drawn above indicate those who they captured in the wars with the four towns; they cut off their heads.” This representation leads to a question: Was only one person from each defeated city-state killed, or was each head symbolic of a greater number of deaths? Furthermore, similar imagery is lacking for the many subsequent defeats over the course of the Aztec expansion. Should that suggest that these later defeats did not result in deaths? The first of these questions may be addressed in part by examining similar representations on page 4v of the Codex Mendoza (Figure 4), where five similarly painted heads appear. According to the Spanish gloss of the Codex Mendoza (2014), “These heads indicate five Mexicans who were killed by those of Chalco.” This gloss suggests that the representation of heads with closed eyes, at least within these pages of the Codex Mendoza, have a one-to-one correspondence between the number shown and the number of deaths. If this is the case, the earlier representations of the deaths that stemmed from the defeats of Quauhnahuac, Mizquic, Cuitlahuac, and Xochimilco suggest that no Mexica lives were lost in the conflicts.

Other glyphs within this section of the Codex Mendoza, however, suggest other violent causes of death. For example, on page 7v of the Codex Mendoza (Figure 5), a glyph represents the death of Atonal of Coayxtlahuacan dies. Atonal remains adorned as a ruler mirroring the garb and positioning of Mexica *tlatoani*, Huehue Moteçuma below him on the

page, and he lacks any visible battle implements. However, as Berdan and Anawalt (1997) state, he is shown, “with a rope suggestively around his neck.” These illustrations appear similar to those on page 66r of the Mendoza Codex (2014), which show, “a *cacique* who is lord of a town. Because he rebelled against the lordship of Mexico, the officers shown previously throw a rope around the *cacique*’s throat; for his rebellion he would be condemned to death by the lord of Mexico.” These officers shown holding the rope around the *cacique*’s neck also lack battle implements. Rather these officers, instead of engaging in arbitrary violence against the military officers of other city-states, execute the leader as punishment for the crimes committed. Although the crimes of Atonal are not addressed in the Codex Mendoza, the justification of the similarly portrayed killing on page 66r (Figure 6) is shown directly below the image: the subjects of the *cacique* attacked, killed, and stolen from Mexican merchants. In this way, the killing of the local ruler and the associated “destruction of the entire town” were punishment for offenses and killings committed against the Mexica (Codex Mendoza 2014).

Aside from the image of Atonal’s death, only two non-Mexicans are shown dead in this section of the Codex Mendoza,¹² and these two are both from the city-state of Tlatelolco. . As the closest neighbors of the Mexica of Tenochtitlan (the two towns occupied the same small island within the now buried Lake Texcoco), Tlatelolco are the first listed in the chronology of conquests, and their appearance a second time illustrates the complicated and at times rocky relationships between these two groups. Page 6r of the Codex Mendoza

¹² One other dead person (who is not directly linked to the Mexica) is shown as the glyph for the name of the city-state, Miquetlan. However, this representation is a glyph of the morpheme *miqui*, or to die, within the place name, and should not be read as a death caused by the Mexica.

(Figure 7) shows the death of Quauhtlatoa of Tlatelolco, with a rope around his neck and closed eyes like Atonal. On page 10r of the Codex Mendoza (Figure 8), a larger glyphic narrative of the death of Moquihuix of Tlatelolco is shown. Here he is presented as falling from the top of his city's twin temples with a shield in his hand. Both temples burn, signifying their defeat by the Mexica. However, even here this leader did not die at the hands of the Mexica. According to the Spanish glosses,

[Moquihuix] began to pick quarrels and fights with the lord of Mexico, although they had been friends. Great battles resulted, in which the said Moquihuix, lord of Tlatelolco, being pressed in battle and fleeing to take refuge in a temple so he would not be taken prisoner, and being rebuked by one of the temple's priests for cowardice, flung himself from a high temple and died. In this way the Mexicans emerged victorious.¹³

This particular example explains that the leader Moquihuix, like the general case addressed of the *cacique* on page 66r, had created the problem between himself and the Mexica through his actions against the Mexica. As a result, the Mexica came to Tlatelolco to challenge him and his people, and Moquihuix ultimately died by his own hand. It is significant to note that based on the representations and glosses within this part of the Codex Mendoza, it appears that the conflicts between Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan ended with this ruler's demise, suggesting that battles need not be brutal nor need they involve many combatants.

¹³ Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. *Codex Mendoza*, 2014.
http://codice.manuvo.com/index.php?lang=english&folio_number=8&type=v§ion=t

Beyond these examples, the illustrations of defeat show little sign of physical harm to people, but rather iconographically focuses on the destruction of city temples, as shown in the glyphic representations of defeat on the frontispiece and throughout this section. In this way, the glyphic representations of defeat defy the common perception of Mexica (or Aztec) warriors as bloodthirsty. And while it may still be argued that the waging of war was merely different in that warriors sought prisoners to be killed later rather than those to be killed in battle, the removal of these prisoners and their later killing (often referred to as sacrifice) are often ascribed religious rather than military significance, thereby exonerating the warriors from the role of killers that is customary among western military combatants.

F. Lifeways, Foods, and Other Local Products

While part one shows the glyphic names of various cities that have fallen under Mexica control (with some, such as Quauhnahuac, Mizquic, Cuitlahuac, and Xochimilco, listed more than once), the second part of the Mendoza Codex provides more detailed information about the qualities of each town via their tributes to the Mexica. This second section features 371 town names, which line the edges of Mendoza codex pages 18v through 55r, in 38 distinct groups, broken up regionally. These regional groupings do not correspond to waves of conquest, as their groupings differ from the previous Mendoza Codex section, where select town names are listed according to Mexica ruler and reign of conquest. These regions range from the edge of the semi-arid to coastal regions to lush central Mexican areas, and the expected tributes likewise vary.

There was and continues to be a continuum of lifeways within Mesoamerica that included practices generally ascribed to the Tolteca and to the Chichimeca. According to

James Lockhart (1992, 192), Tolteca, the root form of the Nahuatl *toltecatl*, “originally [signified] ‘inhabitant of Tula,’ [but] came to mean ‘craftsman, artisan,’ dropping the ethnic designation.” Similarly, Lockhart (1992, 214) points out that a Chichimeca, the root form of *chichimecatl*, was “an indigenous inhabitant of the North of Mexico; anyone considered a barbarian.” These terms can be understood generally to refer to populations living in cities where divisions of labor are more varied and specialized, and to populations that rely (at least in part) on hunting and gathering. The two ends of this spectrum of livelihood are most evident in the *mapas* of Mesoamerica, such as in the *Mapas de Cuauhtinchan*, which show the Tolteca and the Chichimeca, who are distinguished by their clothing and poses; while Chichimeca are shown standing, wearing animal skins, and carrying hunting implements, Tolteca are often seated in woven clothing. Yet rather than seeing these two groups as binary and mutually exclusive, some people such as the Mexica, identified as both, occupying both identities simultaneously (Smith 1984). As relatively recent settlers within Central Mexico, the Mexica had a largely Chichimec history, and yet their quick establishment of the largest capital in the New World at the time of contact clearly marks them as Tolteca; hence the Mexica’s designation as a Tolteca Chichimeca people. Certainly, these and other sorts of variations existed for other lesser known groups within Mesoamerica. By examining the variations in tribute, readers of the Mendoza Codex may gather information about lifestyle and other commonalities among Mesoamerican cities, as well as some of their more unique qualities.

The tribute items shown for each group of city-states within the second section of the Codex Mendoza offer only a small glimpse of the goods, products, and art created and valued within a given town, and it is important to take note of both the items that are present

and those that are visibly lacking. Of the categories of tribute items, clothing in the forms of specific articles of clothing, *mantas*, and warrior costumes, stand out as some of the most widespread across regions. While the materials used to make these items and the color and design patterns change, the general form of clothing (women's *huipiles*, men's loincloths, and warriors' full-body costumes) remains consistent within the illustrations. Everyday clothing items, most commonly in the form of versatile *mantas*, are given as a tribute item by all of the 38 areas except for two (these two areas instead giving a variety of items that are unique to their respective areas). Similarly, the staple foods with a long shelf life (such as dried maize, beans, chia, and amaranth) appear as tribute coming from over half of the areas listed (Codex Mendoza 2014), illustrating that these staple foods were widely grown and consumed throughout many areas of Mesoamerica. On the other hand, highly perishable food items, such as tomatoes and squashes, and prepared foods such as tamales fail to appear. This indicates that transport of these perishable items did not take place over long distances, and therefore these perishable foods were locally grown, prepared, and consumed.

The tribute items of each town can provide additional information about their respective environments. For example, the city-state of Çihuatlan is the first listed that offers no maize products. (Tlatelolco, which appears earlier, offers no bins of maize, beans, chia, nor amaranth, the usual staple food tributes, but supplies the more laborious products of *cacahuapinolli* and *chianpinolli*—corn flour with ground cacao and corn flour with chia respectively.) However, even without the benefit of knowing the location of Çihuatlan, as no maps is included, the inclusion within the Codex Mendoza (2014) of red seashells on the list of tribute items suggests the town's coastal position. The city-states that do not give (or give less of) the common staples often give more rare, luxury items and items that tend to be

found only in certain climates or environments, such as salt, gold, quetzal feathers, other brightly colored feathers, cochineal, gem stones, and rubber balls. In other cases, the items given in tribute can provide information about the specific relationship between the specific area and the Mexica, as in the case of Tepeacac, the only area required to provide weapons, reeds for making arrows, and human captives. In addition to showing the goods and materials specific to each area, the Mexica desire for all of these items (staple goods of clothing and food, rarer or luxury items, and items, services, and people appropriate to specific relationships) illustrates the perceived worth of these tributes outside of their area of origin and within the larger Mesoamerican culture.

G. Gender Roles and Social Norms

The third part of the Codex Mendoza provides a view of life in Postclassic Mesoamerica, and in Tenochtitlan more specifically. This section provides knowledge about customs related to childbirth, the raising of children, schooling, punishments, marriage rites, religious training and duties, military ranks, and other socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (Joyce 2000, 2001; McCafferty and McCafferty 1996; Carrasco 2012; Olko 2014; Pennock 2008). These 31 pages (pages 56v to 71v), though small in number, provide far too much information to cover adequately here, as on its own this section could serve as an ample resource for students seeking to explore the field of sociology from a Mesoamerican perspective. For the purposes of this overview of Postclassic Mesoamerican culture, I will focus on the ways gender affect social roles and expectations.

The Mendoza Codex reveals that while gender roles did play a significant affect daily life, in some ways boys and girls, men and women, are represented with parity. At the

time of birth, as shown on page 57r (Figure 9) the mother presents the newborn to the midwife. The midwife appears holding the child with one arm and reaching for the container of water, for the child's ritual bathing, with the other (Joyce 2000; Pennock 2008). At the time of this bathing, the child is presented with the symbols often associated with her or his expected occupation and gender: the tools of the carpenter, the featherworker, the painter, and the metalworker, which are also shown on folio 70r (Figure 10); the symbols of a warrior (a shield and reeds or arrows); the spindle for making thread for the textile and garment maker; and the broom for those whose duty it is to sweep. These roles and the associated emblems, according to the glosses, are determined by the roles and occupations of the parent of the same gender.

The division of these tools corresponds with a division of gender roles, as shown in the remainder of this section of the Mendoza Codex. The emblems above the ritual bathing scene (as shown in the upper left corner of folio 57r) are the same as those shown for the carpenter, featherworker, painter, and metalworker on folio 70r, and each person occupying these professions appears to be male, clothed in the *manta* and loincloth typical of men, and wearing typically male hairstyles. Similarly, the symbols below the same bathing scene, which show a spindle, unspun cotton, a basket, and a broom, are suggestive of the girl (shown at ages three to fourteen on pages 58r and 59r, Figures 11 and 12 respectively) who often appears learning how to spin from her mother. On page 60r (Figure 13), the girl appears again at age 12, this time shown sweeping. (In this image, sweeping is presented as a punishment equivalent to a boy being tied up naked and placed on the wet ground all day.) However, a male head priest shown on page 63r (Figure 14) also appears sweeping the

temple, suggesting that this task held value beyond that of a mere domestic duty and could also be performed by a man.

While these occupations correspond to the tasks generally assigned by gender, various images within the text (such as that of the sweeping priest) suggest that this gendered labor division is not so clear-cut. For example, on page 19r (Figure 15), among the items given in tribute by Tlatelolco, are 80 warrior costumes, which include as distinguishing emblems the feminine symbols of the spindle and the unspun cotton crowning the head, suggesting that some warriors were women, were men expressing feminine gender attributes, or were expressing an alternate (neither clearly masculine nor clearly feminine) model of gender (Anawalt 1990; McCafferty and McCafferty 1994). Regardless of which explanation one favors, analysis of the imagery suggests a degree of fluidity of gender roles and presentation.

The value placed on these gendered occupations may seem counterintuitive to Western or otherwise modern audiences, as sewing and sweeping have been historically devalued in Western cultures. And while the presumably masculine professions of carpenter, featherworker, painter, and metalworker may hold high esteem, these are not the common professions for men as laid out in the six pages illustrating the rearing of female and male children. While the young girl begins learning about spinning and weaving at the age of four, with illustrations of her continuing her training at ages five, six, seven, ten, and fourteen, the young boy lacks such focused training. At four he is shown carrying water, at five he carries light bundles, at six he gathers discarded items from the marketplace floor, at thirteen he transports bundles in a canoe, and at fourteen he once again fishes, this time from the canoe. And while the jobs of fishing and laborer were vital for the maintenance of the

community (to provide goods and food), these occupations required less skill and training than spinning and weaving. And, if we return to the tribute section of the Mendoza codex, it seems a reasonable assumption that the making of textiles such as the thousands of mantas, *huipiles*, loincloths, and warrior costumes, in this case the women's work, provided desirable and valuable goods that (unlike perishable food items such as fish) could more readily serve as commodities to be traded and sold. This suggests that the work of the average woman in Mesoamerican culture, though rarely the more public roles of *tlatoani* (ruler) or *tequihua* (warrior), still held a vital role in providing families and communities with commodities necessary for survival and for trade.

The Mendoza codex imagery also suggests a view of punishment that did not discriminate on the basis of gender, including in matters of sexual misconduct. The final page of iconography (folio 71r) shows a man and a woman lying beneath a cloth, with stones by their heads. According to the Spanish glosses, "These two figures lying down and covered in cloth denote that he who had carnal relations with a married woman, they killed them by stoning according to the laws of the lords of Mexico." (4:147) While this level of corporal punishment for extramarital affairs may seem extreme, the exercise of equal punishment of the married woman and the man of unknown marital status suggests that blame is placed equally upon both parties. Other examples of gender parity in punishments include the Mexica laws shown on page 71r (Figure 16), which states that the crime of drunkenness, whether committed by a young man or young woman, is punishable by death. Similarly, drunkenness among the elderly, whether in public or private, is no longer forbidden among old women and men once they reach the age of 70.

But perhaps the most interesting examples are the punishment levied against a male youth and a male novice priest, as illustrated on folio 63r (Figure 14). Here, in the second of four sections on this page, the youth is captured by the hair by a *telpuchtlato* (leader of boys), as two other *telpuchtlato* throw pieces of wood and sticks at him. Similarly, the novice *tlamacazqui*,¹⁴ on the third section on this page, appears barely able to stand, between two other *tlamacazque*. He, like the youth, wears only a loincloth. However in his case, the *tlamacazque* punish the novice by sticking him with spines, which protrude from his skin in seven places. In both cases a dotted line extends from the young man's head connecting him to a woman seated with arms crossed. The woman, in both cases as well, appears not to be punished. According to the Spanish glosses, the reasons for these punishments are that these men "had been living with a woman," and were "negligent and had excessive relations with a woman." In other words, these young men were not punished for having sex, but rather they were punished for having too much sex or else having sex in an inappropriate context.¹⁵ However, what is remarkable here is the imbalance in punishment. There is no indication here that the sexual conduct was anything but consensual, and yet the woman escapes any sort of punishment for her sexual behavior, and in fact only appears to be punished for engaging in sex when she engages in an extramarital affair. This view of punishments for sexual misconduct suggests that stricter expectations and harsher punishments may have been placed upon young men and upon *tlamacazque* within Mexica culture and likely throughout Mesoamerica.

¹⁴ The word *tlamacazqui* (and its plural form, *tlamacazque*) are addressed in Chapter Five.

¹⁵ For more information on the inappropriateness of sexual intercourse among *tlamacazque*, see Chapter Five.

H. Conclusion

Postclassic Mesoamerica encompasses a wide variety of people and places, including diverse language families and ecosystems. For people outside of academia, information about these diverse people and places can be difficult to access, and accessing information from an indigenous perspective has historically been nigh impossible. The move to publish texts electronically, including the publication of the Codex Mendoza website and free application, has the potential to make these texts accessible to a substantially larger audience. As the Codex Mendoza was inked during the early part of the Spanish occupation and colonization, the text contains both Nahuatl glyphic writing and Spanish glosses, making it more accessible to general audiences today. These glosses allow readers of all levels to understand the meaning of the glyphic text contained. This in turn allows students and scholars to gain a view of the Mexica, and of Postclassic Mesoamerican culture more generally, from an indigenous perspective. Additionally, these Spanish glosses make the Codex Mendoza one of a handful of texts that provide current scholars with a kind of Rosetta Stone, allowing for the further decipherment of this logosyllabic writing system, which I will discuss further in the Chapter Two.

I. Images for Chapter One

tena, ncam / G'ansi mismo parece / haze demostracion por lo figurado /
 lo qual paso en el discurso del genero de tenues / G' fueron /
 conuentas y con amos / y al fhemate dellos / mirio /

Y lo figurado de azul en los margines desta y storia / cada una ca-
 bita / o apartado significa con amo / y en el numero de amos / y visado
 G'tuvieron los senios de mex / y para G' abiertamente y clara se entien-
 da / lo figurado y la cuenta / nombres delos amos es / en los p'mtos de
 cada un apartado contaban por el ap'mto primero numerando hasta
 llegar a treze ap'mtos / y se alli adelante tozaban a dar p'mz g'p'io
 en su cuenta / con ap'mto y sus caximete / con discerniendo sab-
 ta llegar a los treze ap'mtas / con G' en los apartados y casitas
 estan diversas figuras / pero la p'mca pal cuenta es la de los
 ap'mtos / y con G' haze poco al caso en lo que cada un apartado / y
 casita los nombres de los amos / nonbraban / y ponian en lo de
 numero del p'mca ap'mto / hasta los treze ap'mtos / y a G' se entronca
 hazer aqui que si se al / demostracion delos nombres con sus
 ynterpreta / ones por otra nota al letra /

Y en la or den y flegla de los apartados / o casitas mezcladas que
 amos / en la casita donde se pende en fhamo con sn'p'ia / y ama-
 nera de floz / significa amo agiano fructu / G' los mexicamos
 temion / temian / diciendo que sus ante pasados de tiempo / n
 memorial les avian dexado aviso / en los tales amos / G' sus ca-
 sion de emuentas / dos en emoneta / y los amos / eran peligrosos
 fortutos / aziajos por causa de G' entales amos / noia sido el
 diluvio de aguas general / y ansi mismo la tenebrosidad de
 eclipse de sol / terremoto / comercial / y ansi en el tal amo
 hazim grandes sacrificios / y ceremonias a sus dioses / y se da
 con / hazer penitencia / y abstencion de todos errores / y a
 quando llegase el propio dia / y ora del tal amo / en el qual
 sin generalmete apagados todos las lumbres / y fuegos / hasta
 G' pasase el dia / y pasado encendim lumbre meda / hazida
 de una sierra / sacada que en la / cer de te

ome, yei. nahui. macuil. chiq'en. chicomē. ch'icna / matlac / x. oze / x. omo. / x. omey / x. o'na
 ce tuchtlī / acatl / tepatl / cali - / tuchtlī / acatl. / tepatl / hui. cali / hi. tuchtlī / acatl / me. tepal / cali - / hui / tepal /

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un conejo / dos cañas / tres pe- / cuarto / cinco - / seis. ca / siete. pe / ocho. / nueve - diez / onze. pe / doce / treze.
 / deanales / casias / zonzos / nūs - / deanales / casias / conzjos / cañal / deanales / casias / conzjos /

lo de suso que esta escrito de colorado son los nombres que ponian a los amos
 que es cada un apartado / y la ynterpreta con de los tales nombres son
 los de abaxo de un apartado / en lo de lo colorado donde esta mme-
 mezado una. x. que son diez / nonbram. matlac tli /

Figure 1: Page 1v of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 2: Page 2r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).

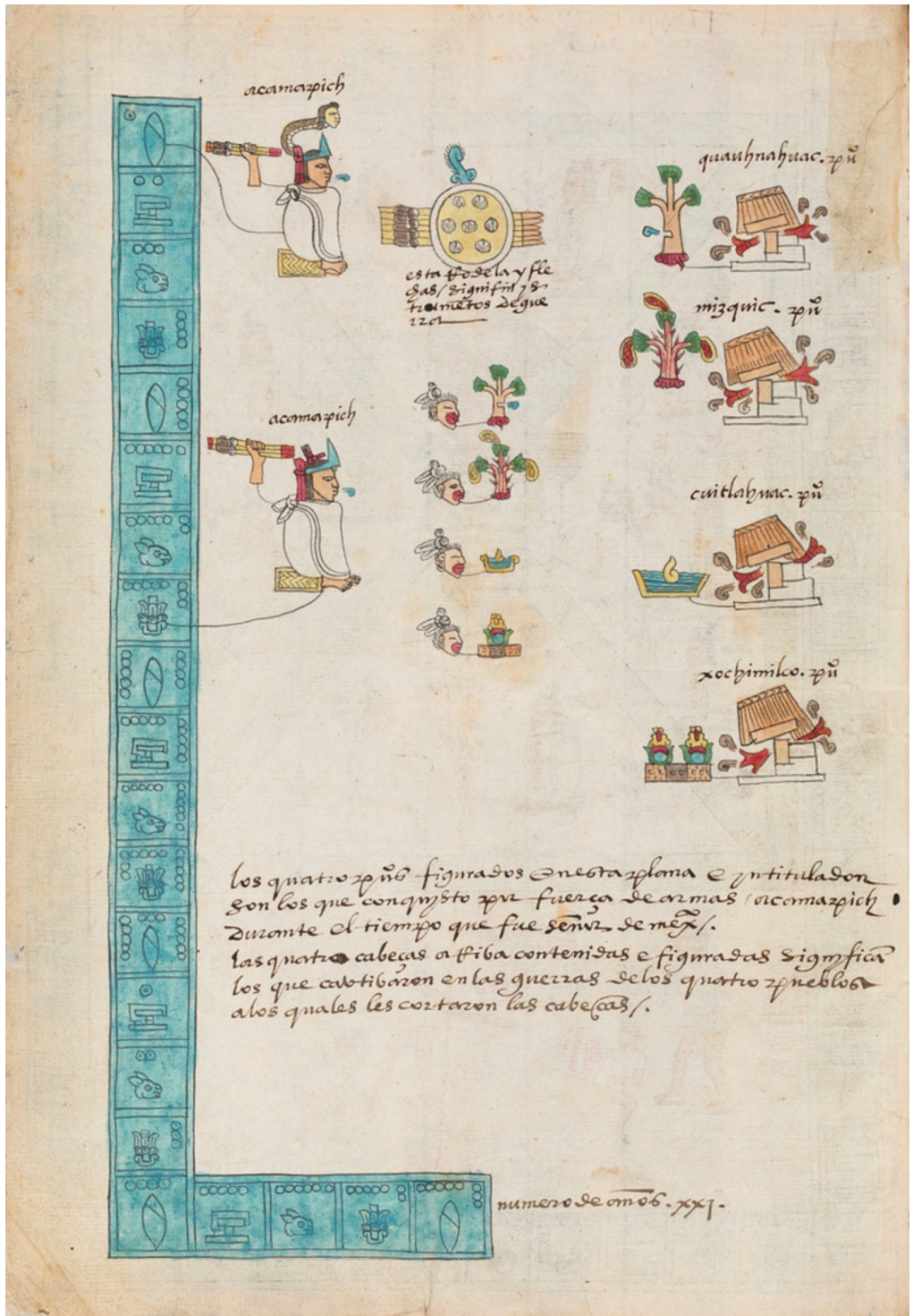


Figure 3: Page 2v of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 4: Page 4v of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 5: Page 7v of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 7: Page 6r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).

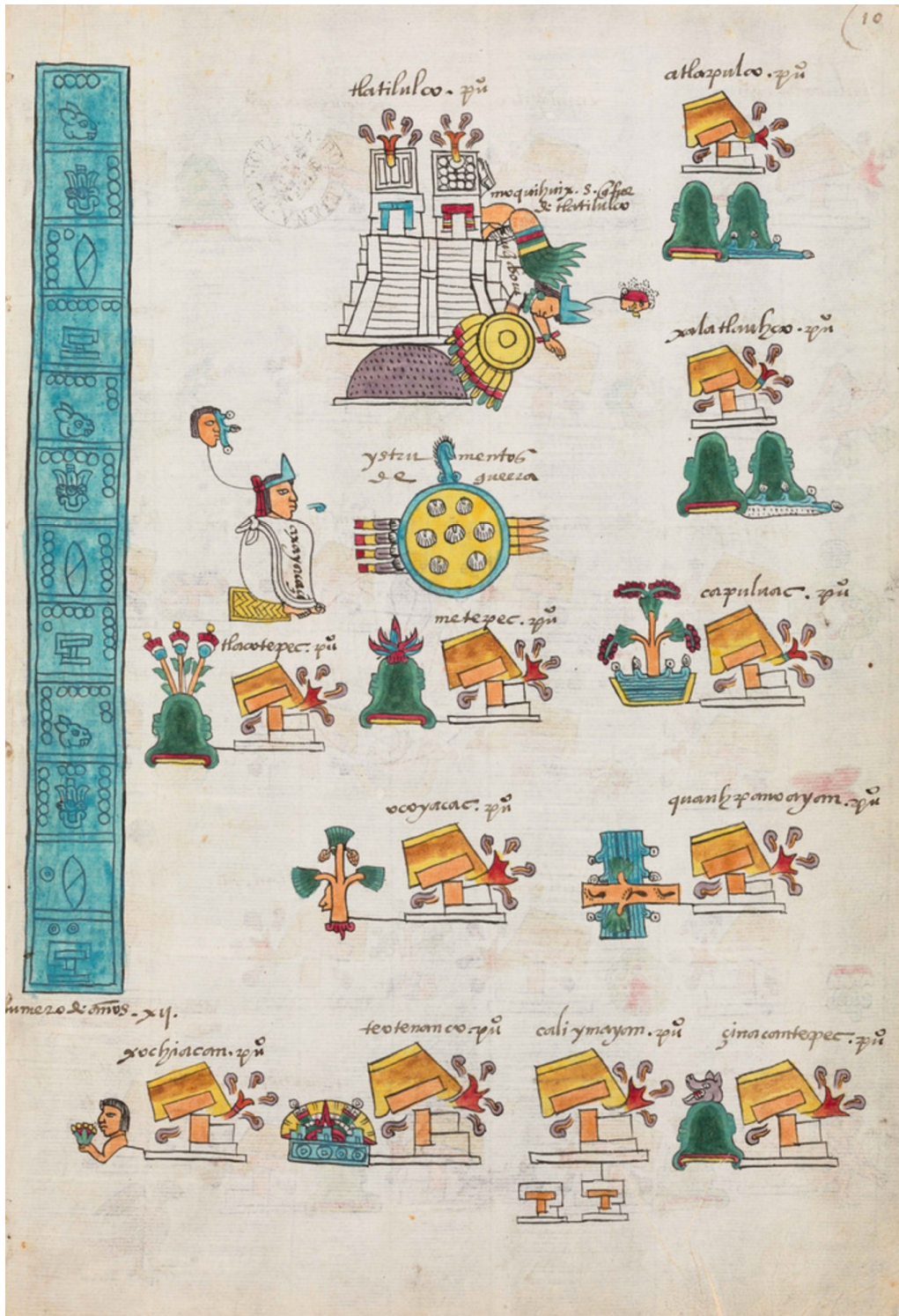


Figure 8: Page 10r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 9: Page 57r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).

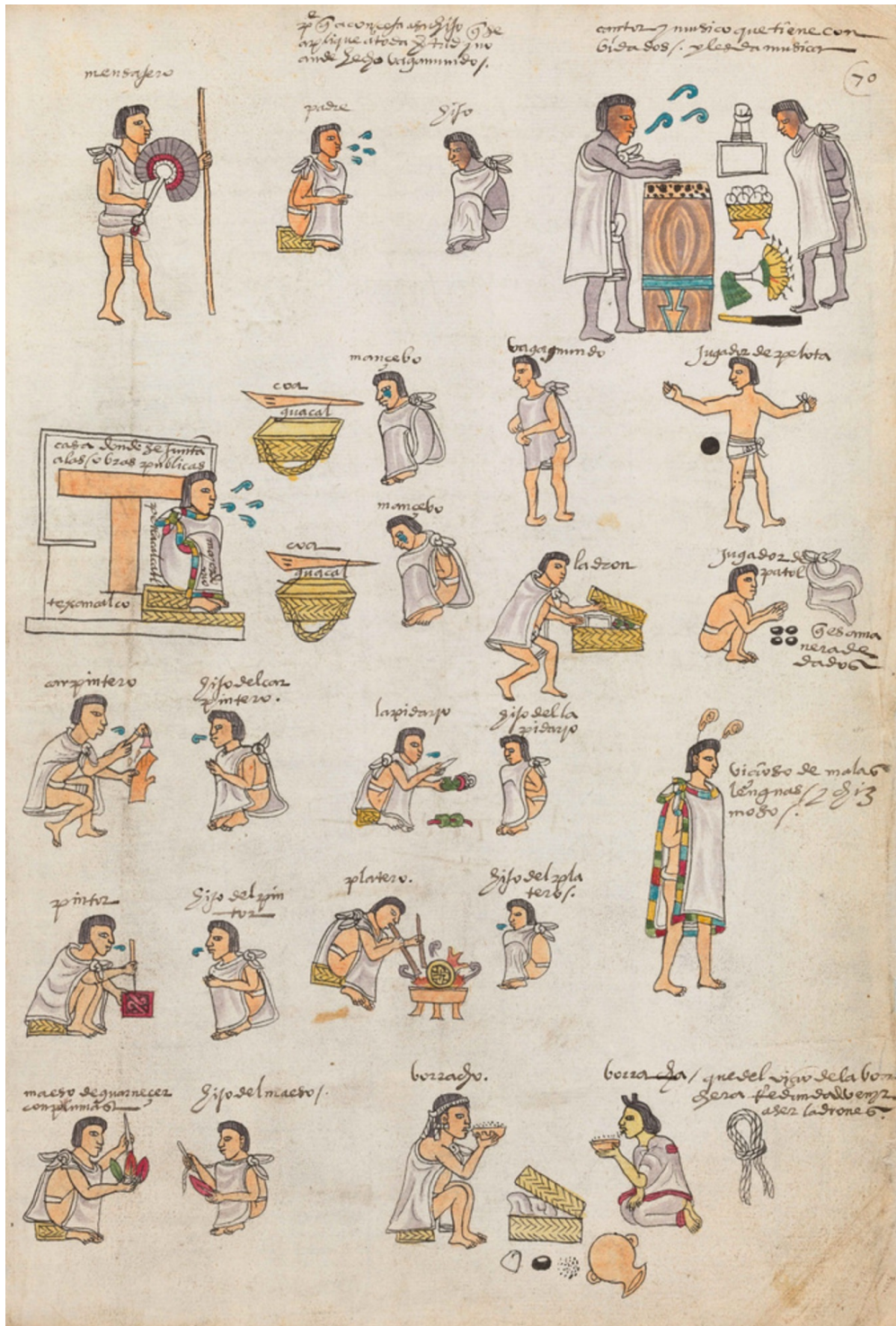


Figure 10: Page 70r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 11: Page 58r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 12: Page 59r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 13: Page 60r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 15: Page 19r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).



Figure 16: Page 71r of the Codex Mendoza, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA).

III. Chapter 2: Postclassic Scribes and Scribal Practices

A. Introduction

There are two known events in the course of Mesoamerican history that significantly and forever altered the way Mexican writing functioned for the indigenous population. The second and more recent event (which I will not be discussing) was the attainment of Mexico's National Independence, at which time the newly established Mexican government stopped accepting Nahuatl language documentation in legal matters. During what is known as the colonial period of Mexico, the Nahuatl language was written by a large number of indigenous people, including indigenous people whose primary language was something other than Nahuatl. As such, there are many thousands of Nahuatl alphabetic texts (which include poetry, annals, sermons, prayer books, petitions, wills, catechisms, court documents, bills of sale, and censuses) stored in archives throughout Mexico. The political and legal decision to remove the civic functionality of Nahuatl writing, and the institution of educational policies aimed at Hispanicizing indigenous groups, quickly relegated the language to one of strict orality (Stavenhagen 1990). As damaging as this event was, the first of the two pivotal events in the history of Nahuatl writing, and I would argue the far more damaging of the two, was the conquest of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico by the Spanish and the resulting destruction of the precontact ways of writing. The results of the conquest and colonization of the Americas include not only widespread genocide, but also the destruction of indigenous texts and culture (Lockhart 1994; Gibson 1964; Boone 2007).

From the time of Spanish arrival, the legitimacy of Indigenous writing traditions has been questioned. The question of the value of Indigenous writing extended to every aspect

of Indigenous life, from the perceived inferiority of native beliefs systems to the perceived inferiority of the native populations themselves. As Elizabeth Boone (2008: 151-152) states:

There have always been those—historians and anthropologists alike—who deny historicity to pre-Columbian cultures, who have argued that the painted records are not history in the ‘proper’ or ‘true’ sense. As early as the sixteenth century, such arguments were surrounded by and integrated into the larger debates about the intelligence and humanity of the Mexicans and other American peoples—whether the Amerindians were rational and civilized. ...[W]riting and history became conceptually braided together.

While previously the sides of the debate over the function of Nahuatl writing positioned themselves at opposite ends, with one side dismissing the idea of any sort of precontact Nahuatl writing system, today most scholars agree that Nahuatl writing does exist to varying degrees (Nicholson 1973; Boone 1992, 2000, 2007; Lacadena 2008; Zender 2008). With most now in agreement about the presence of Nahuatl and other Mexican writing systems (such as Mixtec writing) at the time of contact, the academic debates have become more nuanced. Current debates include questions about who among the indigenous populations had access to and knowledge of these systems, and about the depth and prevalence of logographic and phonographic writing within these pictorial works (Boone 2005).

Contemporary scholarship offers varied and conflicting interpretations of precontact and early contact indigenous texts, including regarding who the scribes were and how the precontact Nahuatl written language functioned. In Chapters Three and Four, I will address more thoroughly these areas of contention with a focus on the five precontact codices or

books that comprise the Borgia Group, and specifically the Codex Borgia. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on an iconographic and linguistic investigation of Nahuatl glyphic writing and scribes through an examination of the Florentine Codex. The Florentine Codex is a 12 volume indigenous-authored Nahuatl alphabetic text of the early colonial period. This text, written under the direction of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, provides one of the most rich examples of writing about Nahua life from a Nahua perspective. These books, though primarily in alphabetic Nahuatl, also contains glyphic and pictorial writing, which I will address more thoroughly below and in the next chapter. Through an examination of the Florentine Codex, I explore the role of writing within Nahua (and specifically Mexica) society, who had access to the varying forms of writing, and how Nahuatl writing can be further deciphered through a logographic analysis. With my data and conclusion, I am adding to the ongoing debates on Central Mexican writing by demonstrating the patterns of meaning, including phonographic and logographic writing, found within the precontact Borgia Group codices.

B. Books within the Power Structures of Central Mexico

In order to understand the function and content of Indigenous, and specifically Nahuatl writing in a precontact culture, I will begin by exploring the relationship that the Nahua people had to their books (called *amoxтли* in Nahuatl). Through an exploration of Nahuatl conceptions of writing, we may further clarify the dominant views regarding the precontact craft of writing. According to Federico Navarrete (2011, 190), “In Mexica society, and quite likely in other Mesoamerican societies, writing was primarily a tool at the service of the state and its rulers.” This assertion certainly follows from the Spanish and

English translations of the Florentine Codex, with their emphases on male elites or “sons of noblemen” as the primary attendees of the *calmecac*, the schools where instruction of writing took place (a topic I will address below). Additionally however, the Florentine Codex offers significant insight into the nature of political power’s relationship with books with the inclusion of mytho-historical narratives that make these texts themselves central characters within the narratives.

According to the collective migration story of the Mexica, Tolteca, Tepaneca, and Chichimeca as recounted in the Florentine Codex, the *amoxtli* (or books) themselves played a significant role in the journey and challenges within their mytho-historical peregrination. Along the journey the migrating collective stopped in Tamoanchan, where one subgroup known as the Amoxhuahqueh¹⁶—“they had books” or alternately “those who have books”—separated from the group and continued to travel eastward, taking the *amoxtli*, or books, along with them. According to the narrative, four “in huehuetqueh, in tlamatinime [old people, wise people]” remained behind, and these four individuals, it should be noted, are not described as Amoxhuahqueh, likely because the books had all been taken away by the others. The lack of books presents a crisis within the narrative. According to Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble’s translation of the Nahuatl text (1950-1982), the four *tlamatinime* lamented: “they carried away the writings. And how will the common people dwell? How will the lands, the mountains be? How will all live? What will govern? What will rule? What will lead? What will show the way? What will be the model, the standard?”

¹⁶ This word is originally spelled amoxoaque within the Florentine Codex, but I have changed the spelling here and elsewhere according to the orthography used by the Instituto de Docencia e Investigación Etnológica de Zacatecas (IDIEZ). Though the Nahuatl word amoxhuahque is not gendered, the Spanish text states, “se dezian Amoxoaque, que qujere dezir: hombres entendidos en las pinuturas antiguas.”

What will be the example?” This line of questioning expresses a sense of impending doom, not merely for those who would be left to rule, but for the common people and for elements within the natural world as well. In this way, the text suggests that these books functioned as more than just a tool for the governance of people, but included templates for prosperous living beyond prescribed governance. In other words, when, for example, information about the lands and how to thrive upon them has been recorded in books, the loss of those books exposes the populace to increased risks. Immediately after the lament above, however, follows the favorable conclusion wherein new *amoxтли* are created to replace the old.

The Nahuatl scribes of the Florentine Codex further emphasize the importance of the books to the population with an anachronistic account of the Mexica ruler, Itzcoatl. This account comprises a single paragraph surrounded by accounts from the mytho-historic time of Tamoanchan—an otherwise incongruous flash-forward out of the mythological time of the migration story. Itzcoatl served as the Mexica *tlatoani* (ruler, or speaker) in Tenochtitlan from 1427 until 1440, less than 100 years before the arrival of the Spanish, and from 107 to 150 years before writing of the Florentine Codex.¹⁷ According to Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 11:191), “The history of [the migration and events in Tamoanchan] was saved [from the time of its occurrence until the time of Itzcoatl], but it was burned when Itzcoatl ruled in Mexico. A council of rulers of Mexico took place. They said: ‘It is not necessary for all the common people to know of the writings; the government will be defamed.’” The suggestion here, as scholars such as Navarrete above have asserted, is that writing served a largely

¹⁷ According to James Lockhart (1993), the writing of drafts of the Florentine Codex began in 1547, by 1569 the Nahuatl scribes had completed the Nahuatl text in a version very similar to the one we see today. The surviving copy of the Florentine Codex, possibly the third iteration of the text, was likely written from 1578 to 1579.

political purpose in establishing and maintaining social control, as at least one of the reasons for the book burnings that took place under Itzcoatl's reign was to maintain power among the people. However, this explanation of why books would be destroyed and of the political desire to limit knowledge of reading such books does little to answer who maintained access to the writing arts before and after Itzcoatl's reign. Furthermore each of these accounts—the loss of books at the hands of the Amoxhuahqueh in Tamoanchan and the loss of books under the reign of Itzcoatl—presents a counterpoint to the other that draws out a few questions about the craft and practice of writing and reading.

Within the primary account of Tamoanchan (which flanks the smaller secondary account of Itzcoatl), the Amoxhuahqueh serve as a kind of leader to the migrating people, called their *tlamacazque*.¹⁸ This singular form of this title is *tlamacazqui*, translated by Frances Karttunen as “one who serves in a (preconquest) religious establishment.” Within the account, these Amoxhuahqueh gather the people together to inform them that they are leaving, but the people must stay behind. According to the Nahuatl text of Sahagún's Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 10: 190, my translation), “Auh amo cenca huecahuaque, in tlamatinimeh, niman yaqueh: oc ceppa macalaquique, auh quitquique in tlilli, in tlapalli, in amoxtli, in tlahcuilolli: quitquiqueh in ixquich toltecayotl, in tlapitzalli, (And they did not stay long, the wise ones, soon they went; again they embarked, and they carried the writing [literally, the black ink, the red ink], the books, the paintings: they carried all of the works of artistry, the musical instruments.)” The Amoxhuahqueh who serve as both religious leaders and leaders of the migration itself, , continue on the journey shortly after they arrive in

¹⁸ For more on this role, see Chapter Five of this dissertation.

Tamoanchan, leaving the ancestors (and the protagonists of the narrative) behind and without books or wares. This begs the question of how these books and crafts could have been recreated. Were these Amoxhuahqueh merely keepers of the books, and still others were able to read and write, and otherwise were in possession of the knowledge contained within them? Were the four remaining old wise people, “in huehuetqueh, in tlamatinimeh,” even though in their advanced years, the sole painters of the new books, the sole practitioners of the many arts, and the sole receptacles of all of the lost knowledge? Or were there perhaps others within the group who were not keepers of the books, were not “in huehuetqueh, in tlamatinimeh,” but had some knowledge that would then contribute to the recreation and painting of the lost books? Regardless of who contributed to the re-creation of the texts and other arts, the account of the book burnings under Itzcoatl clearly establishes that the use of books had once again become prevalent in between the mytho-historical time of loss and the time of Itzcoatl, and that at that latter time commoners again had access to knowledge, whether by reading the books themselves or by having others read the books to them—something that, according to the narrative, the leaders under Itzcoatl sought to avoid. This suggests that the books contained information that would be damaging to the state. However, if the goal of the destruction of books was to limit this sort of knowledge, would other books, books that contained other information perhaps about agriculture or calendrics, be spared? Though this question may never be answered definitively, the stores of books that existed at the time of Spanish contact suggest that either many books were spared or that the craft of writing and the knowledge the books contained were too deeply engrained for the craft to end. This origin narrative about the loss of books at Tamoanchan, with its leap forward into the time of Itzcoatl, centers the importance of these texts and suggests that

perhaps hundred or thousands of years of increasing literacy among the people preceded the burnings. The centrality of these texts to the origin narratives clearly establishes the Mexican identity, at least from the perspective of the indigenous writers of the Florentine Codex, as one rooted in the tradition of books and book writing.

C. Who Among the Nahua Could Write?

One aspect of the academic debate about Nahua writing is the question of who the practitioners of these arts and their intended audiences were. Certainly, and is evident from the range of skill displayed in the extant texts, there existed within the writing population degrees in the knowledge of writing, with the spatial planning and painting of more complex codices such as the Codex Borgia requiring a highly specialized skill set and training. While likely only a very small percentage of the overall population was so highly trained (as could be said of any highly specialized occupation), the accessibility of basic writing techniques remains a question.

According to Frances Berdan (1982, 158), “both reader and writer had to rely on intellectual skills sharply honed in the *calmecac* in order to fill in the necessary unwritten information.” Frances Berdan (1982, 95) also states that, “In Mexica society, education outside the home was primarily geared toward males.” She argues that within the *calmecac*, male nobles held the privilege of receiving training in the writing or painting of books, specifically in their training to be priests. This interpretation of the accessibility is echoed in other works by other scholars. Hugo Nutini and Barry Isaac (2009, 22), in their examination of the history of social stratification in Central Mexico contend that male elites, “had privileged access to the temple schools that taught the fields of knowledge necessary for

entrance or success in the higher tiers of government, the military, or the priesthood: reading and writing, rhetoric, religion and philosophy, history, governance, and martial arts (tactics and elite weaponry).” These positions are well supported by Sahagún’s Spanish translation of the Florentine Codex, as well as the English version, translated and edited by Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble (1950-82).

The Florentine Codex contains the most extensive account of the cultural practices and knowledge from the time of early contact. Here, indigenous scribes of Tlatelolco, who had been taught alphabetic writing under Bernardino Sahagún in the decades after contact, recorded information on a broad range of topics. These topics include, along with a multitude of others, the process under which children entered the *calmecac*, the diverse school where students garnered knowledge and skills that included reading and writing (Sahagún 1950-1982). The extent to which the Nahuatl sources, who contributed to the 12 books, and the Nahuatl scribes, who recorded and augmented the information, were influenced by their Spanish teachers and audience remains contested, as does the authorship of the Spanish text that accompanies the Nahuatl. While it has long been thought that the Spanish serves as a direct translation of the Nahuatl, scholars such as Classical Nahuatl expert James Lockhart contend that the Sahagún composed or else dictated the Spanish version of the text. Although Sahagún was most certainly a proficient and knowledgeable speaker of Nahuatl, his translation of the Nahuatl often deviates and translates passages incorrectly. According to James Lockhart (1993, 37) states, in the introduction to his translation of (among other works) the twelfth book of the Florentine Codex, “Although I would not know how to go about proving it, I doubt that Sahagún’s [indigenous Nahuatl] aides did much direct translation of the Nahuatl [into Spanish].” After an extensive list of

differences in detail, content, and meaning seen in the Nahuatl versus the Spanish version, Lockhart (1993, 37) states, “Considering everything, I have little reason to doubt that the Spanish text faithfully represents Sahagún’s intentions and views, and even for the most part his phrasing.”

Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble, recognizing the need for a more precise and thorough translation of the Nahuatl text within the Florentine Codex, dedicated decades to its translation. Their transcriptions and translations of the Nahuatl texts have become an invaluable resource for scholars. However, their translations, like any, do not provide an unadulterated version of the Nahuatl, and they, by their own admission, relied heavily on the Spanish text. Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 1:5) state in their introduction to the collection of texts, “As to our intellectual approach, I have already noted perhaps the most basic factor; our frequent turning, for interpretation of parts of the Nahuatl text obscure to us, to Sahagún’s Spanish text.” The use of the Spanish passages as a guide, though essential for clarifying the meaning of the often metaphorical Nahuatl language, created the potential for the inclusion of Spanish biases, Spanish culture, and gendered language (that are lacking in the Nahuatl text), within the English translation as well. Therefore, while Sahagún’s Spanish text and Anderson and Dibble’s English text both serve as indispensable resources to scholars, both should be tempered via an examination of the Nahuatl text.

One such complication revealed in the translations of the Nahuatl text calls into question who, within the Nahua population, attended the *calmecac* and thus received training in reading and writing. According to the original Spanish translation by Sahagún

(Folio 178v)¹⁹ the oration given as children enter the *calmecac* stated: “Ahora ve a aquel lugar donde te ofrecieron tu padre, y tu madre que se llama *calmecac*, casa de lloro, y de tristeza, donde los que allí se crían, son labrados, y agujerados como piedras preciosas, y brotan y florecen.”²⁰ Anderson and Dibble’s (1950-82) translation of this same Nahuatl text within the Florentine Codex states, “Now go where thy mother, thy father have dedicated thee with paper, with incense, to the *calmecac*, the house of weeping, the house of tears, the house of sadness, where the sons of noblemen are cast, are perforated; where they bud, where they blossom.” Within this statement, Anderson and Dibble establish the *calmecac* as a place where the elite send their sons, a meaning lacking in this particular case within the Spanish version, and thereby show the *calmecac* to be a school for those of higher social status and specifically for males. Without knowledge of Nahuatl and the ability to read the corresponding Nahuatl text (which appears side-by-side along with Anderson and Dibble’s English translation), little additional knowledge can be gained. With Nahuatl literacy lacking even among scholars of Nahua cultures, the original Nahuatl text remains impenetrable, and therefore many rely on the translations done by Sahagún, Anderson, Dibble, and James Lockhart (who published a translation of the twelfth and final book of the Florentine Codex in 1993) to provide background for their analyses. However, these and other translations, though still considered primary sources, both add and remove nuance, increasing the

¹⁹ “General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy — Viewer — World Digital Library.” <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10617/view/1/366/>.

²⁰ This passage has been modified from the original by the author, and appears here written in contemporary standard Spanish spelling.

potential for misunderstandings of, among other matters, the social and gender dynamics at work in the entry into the *calmecac*.

The original Nahuatl text provides clues about the Nahuatl perspective on class and gender, and thereby complicates the way we understand who had access to precontact indigenous writing knowledge. The Nahuatl text of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, my translation) that corresponds to the Spanish translations above reads:

In axcan ma xoiatiuh in vnpa omjtzamapouh, in vnpa omjtzcopalpouh in monantzin, in motatzin in calmecac, in choqujzcali, in jxaiocali, in tlaoculcali, in vncan mopitza, momamali: in vncan xotla, cueponj in tepilhoan [Now may you go, over there where your mother, your father read/counted papers for you, over there where s/he²¹ read/counted copal for you, to the calmecac, the house of crying, the house of tears, the house of sadness, over there where one is blown on,²² one gets pierced: over there where the people's children bloom, they blossom, the people's children.]

Perhaps the most significant change in meaning from the existing translations to my own, especially in terms of who comprised the literate population, comes from the single Nahuatl word *tepilhoan* (or *tepilhuan*), translated by Anderson and Dibble as “sons of noblemen,” as this word and its translation epitomize the hierarchical gender and social dynamics at play within the larger text. This word is comprised of three morphemes: *te-*, a nonspecific human object; *-pil*, which could signify a child (or children) or could signify a nobleperson or lord

²¹ I use the designation s/he to indicate that the subject of the verb is singular, but does not indicated gender. The English and the Spanish languages do not have a genderless singular subject pronoun to indicate a human.

²² The use of the breath (*ihiyotl*) in ritual continues in some Nahuatl societies today. For more information, see Roberto Martínez González (2006) *El Ihiyotl, la Sombra y las Almas-Aliento en Mesoamerica*.

(or noble people or lords) depending on the context; and *-hoan* (or *-huan*), a plural possessive suffix indicating that the preceding noun is both plural and possessed. In theory, *tepilhuan* could either mean people's lords or people's children. However, in discussing the root, *-pil* that signifies children, Frances Karttunen (1992, 194) states that, "Unlike PIL-LI 'noble person,' this plural does not reduplicate, NOPILHUĀN 'my children' contrasts with NOPĪPILHUĀN~NOPĪPILLŌHUĀN 'my lords.'" According to Karttunen's analysis, the pivotal *tepilhoan* word would be more accurately translated as someone's or people's children.

It could be argued, however, that Nahuatl root *-pil*, though seemingly not gendered, referred primarily to sons. In this way, Nahuatl would function in a way that is similar to the Spanish translation of *-pil* and *-pilhuan*, *hijo* or *hijos*, in that Spanish-language plural nouns (though consistently gendered, unlike the Nahuatl) often default to the masculine form when genders are mixed or unspecified. Yet in reference specifically to the word root *-pil*, Brant Gardner (1982, 94) stated that, "The sources clearly apply [-pil] to children of either sex." Gardner (1982, 231) adds that, "Because many Nahuatl kin terms are not inherently marked for gender, that function is supplied by either the assumption that an unmarked form represent a male, of the clarification of gender by the affixion of the generic term for male (okič-) [oquich-] or for female (siwaa-) [cihua-]." In other word, Nahuatl has the linguistic ability to differentiate between male and female offspring, yet the texts largely omit any gendered morphemes when referencing young children. A cursory evaluation of the use of the non-reduplicating possessed *-pil* (which includes *nopilhuan*, my children, *mopilhuan*, your children, *ipilhuan*, her or his children, *topilhuan*, our children, *amopilhuan*, your

(plural) children, *inpilhuan*, their children, and *tepilhuan*, people's children) uncovered 45 occurrences with an identifiable translation within Anderson and Dibble's translation of Book 6: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy of the Florentine Codex.²³ Among these 45 examples, the vast majority of the translations revealed a default to male gender (See Table 1). While context may at times present information to translators that influence their decision to add meaning not otherwise expressly stated, the inclusion of this additional information (i.e. the perceived gender and social status of the children) has the effect of presenting a more gendered and class-oriented version than is found in the original Nahuatl text. This is precisely the point of Elizabeth Brumfiel's (1991) work in her analyses of "women's work." One of the consequences of these gendered translations is that scholars who rely on these texts for their research often perpetuate the same gender and class readings of Nahuatl culture, as can be seen in the scholarship that attributes attendance at the *calmecac*, and by extension the learning of writing, nearly exclusively to the male children of nobles.

The lack of subtlety in considering gender has not gone unnoticed. James Lockhart recognized the issues related to the gendered nature of translations of the Florentine Codex in his examination of Nahua commerce. In his examination of the texts, Lockhart (2004, 528n191) comments in an endnote that the four versions of the same text—the pictorial Nahua representations, the Nahuatl alphabetic texts, the Spanish translation of Sahagún, and the English translation by Dibble and Anderson—present very different gender representations: "In [Florentine Codex], book 10, the illustrations from 119 through 148

²³ This book was selected for the collection of this particular data based on the presence of many references to writing as a skill, entry to the *calmecac*, and the raising of children, which are all highly relevant to this particular inquiry.

show many women as sellers instead of men, and the Nahuatl texts take no position on the gender of the vendors. Yet the corresponding English translations speak of men, and so for the most part do the original Spanish renditions of Sahagún.” Dibble and Anderson (1950-1982, 11:69) noted this disparity as well, recognizing within a footnote that the genders of

| Identified Translations of the possessed Nahuatl Root <i>-pilhuan</i> within Anderson and Dibble’s (1950-1982) translation of the Florentine Codex: Book Six | | |
|---|-----------------|------------|
| Translation refers exclusively to males | 35 of 45 | 78% |
| Translation is gender neutral | 9 of 45 | 20% |
| Translation refers exclusively to females | 1 of 45 | 2% |
| Translation refers to offspring, regardless of gender | 39 of 45 | 87% |
| Translation refers to nobles, regardless of gender | 9 of 45 | 20% |
| Translation refers to nobles not identified as offspring | 6 of 45 | 13% |

Table 1: Gender and Nobility in *-pilhuan* translations, data compiled from Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble (1950-1982, 7:1-260)

the pictorial representations and the gender in the Spanish version of the text did not match. However, this recognition did not prevent Anderson and Dibble from removing at least one of the few Spanish references to women in lieu of presenting a more masculine representation of commerce.

While the Nahuatl alphabetic texts, like the Nahuatl spoken language, reveals very little about possible gender dynamics within the writing arts, other sources such as the pictorial texts found in the Florentine Codex and in other Mesoamerican codices offer additional information. As Elizabeth Brumfiel (1991, 243) points out in her work on the vital economic importance of women's clothing production, "The variability of women's work that is visible archaeologically contrast sharply with the narrow stereotypes presented in the ethnohistoric literature." Yet while variability in women's occupations can be surmised based on the archaeological record, determining how often women served as writers and readers of texts is a more difficult task. There are a limited number of pictorial sources, and this manifests as a general lack of information regarding distribution of labor across gender within most Mesoamerican occupations and experiences, except on the relatively rare occasion that gender is made explicit either in images or in gendered language. According to Lockhart (1992, 195), "Because of Nahuatl's reluctance to specify gender, indigenous lists of tradespeople and descriptions of market and merchant activity tell us hardly anything about the relative functions of men and women." This lack of explicitness extends to many of the accounts surrounding entry into the *calmecac*, and, unlike the case of the descriptions of commerce, the Florentine Codex lacks pictorial representations of these same events that could serve to clarify this matter.

As the study of gender has become a more prominent area of study in contemporary western culture, the study of gender within precontact and early colonial Mesoamerica has likewise grown in prominence. As such, various scholars have questioned the ways that gender has been read in ancient and colonial texts, both alphabetic and pictorial. In discussing those knowledgeable in the craft of writing as presented in Anderson and Dibble's English translation of the Florentine Codex, Elizabeth Boone (2005, 13) points out, "Sahagún's Nahuatl text refers to these wise ones as in *vuetque*, in *tlamatinjme*, which Anderson and Dibble translated in the masculine as 'the old men, the wise men.' The Nahuatl terms are not gendered, however, and of the four [one] is elsewhere identified as a female." Although she agrees that the likely majority of scribes and keepers of books were noble men, Boone (2005, 21) agrees that, "the Aztec sages, so often simply called 'wise men,' were female as well as male and could be commoner as well as noble born." The relative prevalence of women or commoners within the *calmecac* or otherwise trained in writing and reading art, can likely not be ascertained given the lack of data. However, the presence of diverse writers are attested to by Elizabeth Brumfiel (2011, 57), who suggests that at least some of the creators and consumers of books were commoners. Additionally, other pictorial codices such as the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (Figure 17), where a woman (identifiable by her hairstyle, her attire, and her manner of sitting) is shown in the process of writing.

The tendency to identify figures as male by default likewise exists in iconographic and pictorial representations, as seen in the case of the murals at Cacaxtla, a city east of the Valley of Mexico in the modern state of Tlaxcala that was settled during the Classic Period. Some of the murals at this site depict a battle with a variety of figures, all of which had been

previously identified as male. Two of the most prominent figures, however, are painted wearing identifiably female-coded attire (Anawalt 1990). In identifying these two figures as women for the first time, Sharisse and Geoffry McCafferty challenge the assumptions that all people shown in a battle scene must be male, and that those wearing female-coded attire must be doing so to represent their humiliation. In drawing out the possible interpretations of this particular mural scene, McCafferty and McCafferty (1994, 168) state that, “If, as could be suggested, the two central individuals were males forced to wear female costume, we would expect to see some male attribute, specifically the end of a loincloth, to indicate the ‘shameful humiliation’ of the event. Without this clue, any ascription of male gender is highly speculative and based more in modern gender bias than on hard evidence.”

D. Levels of Literacy in Writing and Reading

The abundance and breadth of Nahuatl texts that existed before their near total destruction at the hands of the Spanish can only be pieced together from the few remaining texts and the accounts of the people who saw or heard of them. Among the surviving precontact and early contact pictorial documents of Central Mexico, exist examples of calendrical, economic, ritual, religious, historical, genealogical, astronomical, topographic, and ethnographic subject matter within diverse manuscripts. According to Nahua historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl of Tetzcoco (Durán/Heyden 1971, 569-570):

[T]here were writers for each branch of knowledge. Some composed the historical annals, setting in order the events that took place every year, stating the day, month and hour. Others recorded the genealogies and descendants of the kings, lords and personages of high lineage; they would make note of those who were born and

cancel the dead. Others painted the limits, boundaries and border stones of the cities, provinces and villages, and of the fields and plantations, indicating their owners. Yet others made records of the laws, and the rites and ceremonies performed in pagan times. The priests made records regarding the temples of the idols, of their idolatrous doctrines and the feasts of their false gods and their calendars. And finally, there were philosophers and wise men among them who recorded in picture writing the sciences they were versed in.

Here Alva Ixtlilxochitl provides a list of highly educated individuals within specific subsets of indigenous knowledge, each trained in writing about their particular field. However, the writings of these individuals could only serve a function within the larger society if they were accessible to at least a select group of people outside of those trained in their writing.

According to Federico Navarrete, levels of literacy varied among populations, with those who achieve “full literacy” being restricted to elites, while other social groups and classes could at times attain lower levels of literacy. Navarrete (2011, 190) argues that, outside of the specialized elites who are trained in writing, reading, and performing the codices, “other social sectors may have been able to muster varying degrees of literacy, which allowed them to understand some parts of the visual, written, and performed messages and to participate in the rituals.” Here he argues that while each genre of books had its own rules for writing and therefore required specialized knowledge to be able to read them, books that required group performance likely required basic reading skills from all participants. This is an important observation, and it aligns well with the widely accepted theory of the International Style and Symbol set. However, the extent to which various other groups had knowledge of reading and writing and to what extent remains.

In examining the nature of Nahuatl reading and writing as a Western scholar, it becomes necessary to examine the Nahuatl words for reading and writing in order to better understand what constituted and constitutes these acts from an indigenous perspective. While writing in most Western traditions implies the transcription of phonemes, usually onto paper, the Nahuatl words for writing have a much broader range of meanings. The implication of this more inclusive definition is that a Nahua person need not have worked with paper nor worked with ink to have been considered a writer. Similarly, the transitive verb *pohua*, has a range of meanings that according to Frances Karttunen (2004, 201) includes, “to count something, to read something, to recount, relate or give account of something, to assign something.” The possible uses of this verb will not be addressed here (as they are too numerous to do justice to in this space), yet this verb suggests that there are different forms of reading that include the reading of numbers, reading that is done aloud, and reading that directs things or people. The Nahuatl verb *ihcuiloa* (sometimes spelled *cuiloa* because of the weak initial vowel *i-* and the often absent *-h-*) means, according to early Nahuatl grammarian and writer of the first Nahuatl dictionary Fray Alonso de Molina, to write or paint something. From this verb comes the noun *tlahcuiloh* (the plural forms being *tlahcuilohqueh*), meaning either *s/he* wrote or painted something, or one who writes or paints things. And from this verb comes the additional noun *tlahcuilolli*, meaning that which is written or painted. Through the examination of the uses of these words, both on their own and within larger phrases, in Nahuatl documents reveal indigenous conceptions of writing.

The pairing of the word paper, *amatl*, with the words for writing, though not mandatory, appears frequently within the Florentine Codex. Most of these references, however, do not refer to the production of *amoxтли* (books or codices), but rather refer to the

use of paper in rituals. Documentation on the use of paper, unlike the use of books, suggests its wide use among the general population. For example, not only does the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950-1982, 11:78) state that the “peddlers” sell paper (along with metal tools, jewelry, and cloth), but among professions listed is the dedicated business of making and selling paper in the marketplace: the *amanamac* [*ama(-tl)* = paper, *namaca-c*= s/he sold], or the one who sells paper. The availability of paper in the marketplace, along with the presence of paper in many of the rituals described, suggests that paper played a significant role in the lives of commoners. And while the paper sold by the *amanamacac* did not have writing on it, much of the paper described in rituals does. This includes what the Florentine Codex describes as, “*amatl acaxilqui, ynjc tlahcuilolli*” (Sahagún 1950-1982, 3:72). The word *acaxilqui*²⁴ is defined as a particular pattern or scroll design, making the general meaning of the first part of the phrase the general equivalent of Anderson and Dibble’s (1950-1982, 3:72) translation of the whole: “papers painted with black scroll designs.” The second part of this phrase, *inic tlahcuilolli*, likely appearing in Anderson and Dibble’s translation in the single word “painted,” presents the design concretely as a noun, affirms that this pattern constitutes Nahuatl writing. Similarly, writing also appeared on the paper costumes within rituals, where the Nahua authors of the Florentine Codex state, “*ynjc tlahcuilolli, yn iamatlacqui, tezcapocyoh* [His paper raiment was painted with black discs]” (FC 3:73, my translation). In this phrase, *iamatlacqui* means her/his paper clothing, *tezca(-tl)* means mirror or glass, and *pocyoh* means, according to Fray Alonso de Molina (2013, 2:83),

²⁴ The root of this word is not clearly understood. Perhaps it bares a connection to the name Acaxel, to the word *acaxitl*, which is a water tank, or to *acaxilotl*, which is the name of an edible root. Whatever the case, the painted writing likely evokes imagery that at some point related at least ideologically to the etymological root of this word.

“cosa que tiene humo.” This construction of this phrase, “this writing, her/his paper clothing, the mirrors of smoke,” indicates that not only was the writing upon her/his paper clothing in the pattern indicating mirrors of smoke, but it also suggests the possibility that the paper clothing itself may be considered a form of writing.

While the use of paper with writing within religious ritual may imply that the elites, the trained priestly class, did all of such writing, the Nahua writers of the Florentine Codex tell us of specific rituals in which merchants also wrote on paper. According to Anderson and Dibble’s translation of Sahagún (1950-1982, 10:9), the merchants “painted [the paper] with liquid rubber. They impaled the [lump of] rubber on a [copper] spit; thereupon they set it on fire. As it continued to burn, so they painted. And thus did they paint the paper.” Here, Anderson and Dibble choose to translate the verb *ihcuiloa* as to paint rather than to write. This decision may be because these paintings, when described specifically, seem to center on representations of people or animals. However, this should not imply that they held any less meaning than the images that are found in the codices, which also often represent images of people or animals. With this widespread use of paper and writing, as seen in the availability of paper (and ink) products in the marketplace, and the creating of writing by those that included and yet extended outside of the priestly class, the use of paper became synonymous with writing. According to the online Oregon dictionary, which compiles data from multiple classical Nahuatl sources, the entry for *amatl*, or paper, states that, “not knowing ‘paper’ meaning not knowing ‘writing’ (not knowing how to write).” As seen in the Mexica origin story wherein the destruction of the books played a pivotal role in their ethnic identity, the use of paper in ritual likewise suggests that the craft of writing/painting continued to play a significant role within the Nahua population.

While these merchants are not described as *tlahcuilohqueh* (writers/painters) many other artisans (*toltecatl*) are. According to the Nahuatl text of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, my translation), the *tlahcuiloh* (writer/painter) is a “toltecatl tlachichihuahqui [the artisan is a maker of things].” The ensuing description imparts the need to work with colors specifically, as half of the words within the brief description contain either *tlil-* (black/black ink or dye) or *tlapa-* (red/colored dye) as a morpheme:

in tlacuilo, tlilli, tlapalli, tlatlatl, ihyalhuil, toltecatl tlachichihuahqui, tlatecollaliani, tlatecolaniani, tlatlilani, ttilpatlac, tlapaltecini, tlapallaliani. [The writer/painter, the black, the red, the black liquid (ink), its woven or wound product, the artist is a maker of things, one who places black (charcoal) on things, one who blackens things (with charcoal), one who blackens things (with black ink or dye), one who dissolves the black ink/dye, one who grinds the colors, one who applies the colors]. (Sahagún 1950-1982, 11:28, my translation)²⁵

What is important to note here is that the writers of the Florentine Codex make no mention of the use of paper, but rather use the word *ihyalhuil*. Although it is unattested in ancient sources (and therefore could apply metaphorically to the use of ink on paper) in Modern Huastecan Nahuatl the word *ihyalhuilia* refers to the winding of thread onto a spool or the encircling of someone or something with cloth, rope, or string.

This translation is supported by other sections of the Florentine Codex wherein those skilled in clothing construction, either as embroiderers or seamstresses, are described as *tlahcuilohqueh*, or writers/painters. According to the Florentine Codex, many *tlacuilohqueh*

²⁵ Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 28) translate this passage: “The scribe: writings, ink [are] his special skills. [He is] a craftsman, an artist, a user of charcoal, a drawer with charcoal; a painter who dissolves colors, grinds pigments, uses colors.”

paid special honor to the day (and likely the *teotl*²⁶) Chicome Xochitl, or Seven Flower. However, in discussing the rituals among the *tlahcuilohqueh* on the day, the text focuses on the actions of women, specifically the actions of those who embroidered as an occupation. The reason for this is made clear in the Nahuatl text of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 5:7, my translation), which states that these embroiderers sought to ensure that their work, “huellahcuilozech; in ipan intlahmach intlahcuillol [will be well-painted/written, their painting/writing on their embroidery].” In other passages that address women who work in the construction of clothing, in the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 9:49, my translation) that their use of colors, in the dying of thread and the formation of patterns was an act of writing/painting; “quihcuiloah icpatl [they write it with string].”

Other *toltecatl*, or artisans, in various fields were also described as writers. The Florentine Codex refers to the *tlacuilohqueh*, the writers/painters; the *chalchiuhtlacuilohuque*, the green stone workers (writers/painters in green stone); and the *quauhtlacuilohque*, the wood workers/carvers (writers/painters in wood). According to the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 9:45, my translation), when feather work was to be done, when the feathers would be set in a design on a given surface, “yehhuantin achto quicuiloa [qui-cuiloa] in tlacuilohqueh [they who first wrote it, are the writers/painters]”. Writing also appeared on gourds and other vessels, such as the *tecontlacuilolli*, a painted receptacle for chocolate, and the *tlacuilolxicalli*, a large vessel used for the washing of hands. *Tlacuilolli*, or writing, also appears in the descriptions of the appearance of reed mats and seats (used predominantly for leaders).

²⁶ For more information on the meaning of *teotl*, see Chapter Three of this dissertation.

In addition to the precontact tradition of the *amatlahcuiloh*, the writers who used paper,²⁷ and the *amoxtlahcuiloh*, the writers of books or codices, a multitude of other surfaces were also used in the creation of *tlahcuilolli*, or writing. For example, in certain contexts, the human body served as a writing surface. The Florentine Codex (1950-1982, my translation) mentions in the Nahuatl text that: “momaihcuiloa, moquechihcuiloa...melchiquihcuiloa, mochichihuatihcuiloa [their hands, their necks, their chests, their breasts were written upon/painted].” This is similar to a description in the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 12:85, my translation) of the *xicalcoatl*, a type of snake, which is said to have on its body, “tlacuicuilolli, huel cuicuiltic [painting/writing in many colors, covered in different colors].” This description has the duplicated version of the verb *cuiloa*, which is *cuicuiloa*, or “to paint something with many colors” in Modern Huastecan Nahuatl. The derived noun found as the last word in this description, *cuihcuiltic*, according to Frances Karttunen (2004, 72), means “something painted.” That designs such those upon the snake also represent a form of writing suggests that writing/painting need not be the sole domain one group of people nor of people in general. These patterns, however, could acquire meaning to the people and then be reproduced in writing upon paper or other materials.

As with those skilled in writing, those who had the ability to read texts in whatever form likewise varied. According to the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 11:42, my translation), a horticulturalist, or *quilchihuiqui*, is described as an “amoxmatini, tonalpohuani [a knower of books, a reader/counter of the days]. Similarly, the herb seller, *quilnamac*, is likewise described as a horticulturalist, and is therefore likely to also possess

²⁷ Entry for *amatlacuilo*: <http://whp.uoregon.edu/dictionaries/nahuatl/index.lasso>

this same reading ability.²⁸ The presence of these occupations under the category of those who can read the books specifically (rather than just read and create writing in other media) prompted Elizabeth Brumfiel (2011, 57) to assert that, “the ability to read the almanacs, at least at an elementary level, was widespread.” In addition to these occupations, the job of the physician also required book reading. This occupation, which falls under the category of “wise person” or knower of things, *tlatimini*. This category includes a subset of occupations that includes those commonly held by women, such as that of a midwife. Likewise, still others such as the *tlapouhqui tonalpouhqui*, the readers of things, the counters of day, held position that centered on their ability to read the calendric books. According to the Nahuatl text in Sahagún’s Florentine Codex, (1950-1982, 7:198, my translation):

Niman quizohuah, quittah imamox, in itlacuilol, in itlil, in itlapal, quipohuah...niman quinnontzah in pilhuahqueh in huehuetzqueh, in ilamatqueh. [Now they spread it out, they look at their book, at its writing/painting, its black ink, its red/colored ink, they read it...now they, the old men, the old women, advise the parents.]

The *huehuetzqueh* and *ilamatqueh*, the old men and women, though they appear at the very end of this description in the Nahuatl text, serve as the subject of each of the preceding actions. That the requisite ceremonies of birth included consulting with book readers (just as planting required reading to be done by the horticulturalist) further suggests that the ability to read was widespread among the populations.

Any discussion of the ability to read Mexican pictorial or glyphic texts requires an understanding of what reading comprehension entailed, and likewise what the intended

²⁸ While the *quilchihuhqui* or horticulturalist pictured in the Florentine Codex presents as male, the *quilnamac* or herb seller pictured appears wearing female-coded attire.

messages of the writing included. With the destruction and loss of much of the indigenous knowledge at the time of conquest, certain individuals and fields have been invaluable in the recovery of the intended messages of these texts. Perhaps the most influential in this recovery has been the work of Eduard Seler, who was one of the first non-Indigenous people to engage in iconographic inquiry and identify what much of the iconography of these texts represented (such as recognizing the patterns of day signs along pages, or the identity of key figures). Just as valuable has been the work of contemporary Art Historians such as Elizabeth Boone, whose corpus of work has furthered the work of Seler in their iconographic identifications. Much of this work has centered on the important task of uncovering the often-obscured denotative meaning of symbols within the texts. A denotative reading of these texts is fundamental to their understanding because, as Fray Toribio de Motolinía (1951) observed in a letter written in 1541, “These books were written in symbols and pictures. This is their way of writing, supplying their lack of an alphabet by the use of symbols.”

Among the Spanish conquistadors and missionaries, Hernán Cortés, Fray Motolinía, Diego Durán, and Bernardino de Sahagún all recorded seeing these books, and witnessing the indigenous people read these books. Each recognized that the books had encoded meaning that they as Spaniards could not understand, and which the native readers could not recount without access to those books. Sahagún (1950-1982, 1:54) wrote about the elders: “They gave me all the matters we discussed in pictures, for that was the writing they employed in ancient times. And the grammarians [the Nahuatl scribes who worked on the Florentine Codex] explained them in their language, writing the explanation at the bottom of the painting.” Similarly, Diego Durán (1971, 65) when recounting his questioning of a man

from Coatepec, says, “the Indians find it difficult to give explanations unless they can consult the book of their village. So he went to his home and brought back a painted manuscript... This native narrated the life of Topiltzin to me as I had known it but in a better manner than I had heard before.” And while neither Sahagún nor Durán spoke to how the information was encoded in the visual texts, their accounts tell of the depth of the messages therein. That Durán was able to learn details of the life of a key historical figure, and that Sahagún was able to source thousands of pages, suggests that these pictorial texts housed far more information than a list of names and dates.

According to many preeminent scholars, the native readers of texts achieved this through memorization of story elements that could be triggered by mnemonic devices within the iconography. David Carrasco and Scott Sessions (2008, 20), in speculating upon Sahagún’s understanding of the Nahuatl methods of delivering information, state:

Sahagún must have learned that this oral recitation was exactly the way the Aztecs had taught their own children prior to the coming of Europeans. We know from surviving traditions that native youth were instructed by preceptors who used large and beautiful books with pictures and symbols in them. The key method of transmitting knowledge during the pre-Hispanic period, however, was the oral description or recitation of the knowledge on the pages.

The belief that the writing system did not constitute the source of the vast majority of the information recounted orally by the readers of these texts is shared by others, such as Frances Berdan (1982, 157), who states, “The Aztec writing system was based on a great number of glyphs that served as mnemonic devices. Being nonalphabetic, the glyphs provided only guides or clues to the entire message. Learning to read, therefore, involved

much more than merely learning the glyphic symbols: It was essential to have learned, or memorized, the messages themselves.”

Still others contend that these texts served as a source for additional performance aspects, and a more thorough reading of the texts can be achieved through study of the associated performances. Federico Navarrete (2011, 175–95) asserts that, “analysis of Aztec writing should also include the oral traditions and the ritualized performances that usually accompanied these two elements in order for us to understand the workings of the scriptural traditions as wholes.” The push toward a more holistic and culturally-based understanding of the texts have prompted others to seek out associated rituals and beliefs to aid in iconographic understanding. For example, John Monaghan (2011) ties writing to music, ritual, dance, and the body, Susan Milbrath’s (2013) “Seasonal Veintena Festivals in Central Mexico” ties images in the text to specific festivals, rituals and celestial events, and Alfredo López Austin (1973) similarly links texts to ritual, political actions and celestial events.

The movement toward a more culturally-centered, and therefore indigenous-centered approach, while allowing for a greater understanding of the contexts of the texts, does little to illuminate to what extent the Native *tlahcuilohqueh* inscribed information within the texts and to what extent messages needed to be memorized. This question becomes more pressing with the indication that some writings, such as those produced in or for the precontact Mexican court system, required no previous memorization, and instead all relevant information could be derived exclusively from the text. When speaking of the precontact courts, or the *teccalli*, the Nahuatl text of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 9:42, my translation) states that the judges would hear new cases everyday, and yet for each of these the judges would read and comprehend texts specific to each case: “tlapallahcuilolpan

in quipohuayah, in quittayah neteilhuilli [in the painted writing they read it, they saw the complaints].”²⁹ The Florentine Codex does not specify whether these texts were provided by and clarified by the claimants within the dispute or recorded by a court intermediary prior to coming before the judge. However, regardless of the author of these texts, the examination of the texts by the judges served a specific function within the court, and likely provided enough information to assist in court decisions despite not previously having seen nor having memorized the specific text.

Although the description of the court document states that they recorded *neteilhuilli*, or ‘complaints’ or ‘accusation,’ court documents in the Colonial Period included maps, genealogical records, testimonies, wills, or other indicators of inheritance or possession, documents that likely had precontact precedents (Terraciano and Restall 1992; Cline and Portilla 1984). These kinds of documents, while not specifically detailing complaints, required the use of a form of rebus writing that has been documented in such texts as the Mendoza Codex and various *mapas*. At present however, the deciphered glyphic elements in these texts primarily convey specific names of people or places, and have provided little in the way of narrative structure. In reference to Boturini Codex page 1, which shows the Aztecs departing from Aztlan, Elizabeth Boone (1994, 54) says:

Except for the glyphs composing personal and place names, the graphic components on this page convey meaning without a detour through speech. Functioning outside of spoken language, they help to compose a visual language of graphic convention

²⁹ Anderson and Dibble’s translation reads: “in the picture writing which recorded the case, they studied the complaints.”

and spatial relation that is understandable to those familiar with the pictorial conventions.

In other words, Boone and others argue that while some glyphs such as those for names and places do connect to specific spoken language, the vast majority of the writing does not relate to spoken language, but instead merely provide a structured picture of events.

According to Navarrete, belief in the largely non-linguistic nature of Mexican codical writing is shared by others including one of the leading scholars in Nahuatl decipherment, Alfonso Lacadena. Navarrete (2011, 177) writes, “Students of Aztec writing, most recently Alfonso Lacadena (2008), agree that Aztec glyphic writing was used mainly to denote dates, names of places, and names of persons and deities.” However, this is arguably a mischaracterization of Lacadena, whose work I will examine and expand upon presently.

E. Logo-Syllabic Writing and the Borgia

Perspectives on what qualifies as a written language, and what form those written languages must take, varies among Mesoamericanists. And while scholars such as Elizabeth Boone argue that the Mexican pictorial texts qualify as writing, the current popular view remains that the written languages of Central Mexico such as those of the Nahua and Mixtec, unlike written Mayan language, fail to convey complex ideas that are directly tied to speech. As Katarzyna Dąbrowska (2010), a Polish scholar of Mexican manuscripts, states, the prevailing belief remains that, “Mixtec and Nahua systems do not totally conform to a linear writing system.” Her footnote here is indicative of the current debate regarding this issue. Dabrowsky continues, “I do not wish to enter into a discussion as to whether the method of graphic communication used by the Aztecs (similar to the one used by the

Mixtecs) did or did not constitute writing.”³⁰ Ironically, within this article Katarzyna Dąbrowska convincingly argues that certain iconographic elements suggest indigenous writers used logograms to visually construct the same metaphoric and metonymic *difrasismos* found in spoken Nahuatl.

Despite widely accepted theories of cross-cultural, cross-linguistic styles and symbols within Central Mexican texts (Nicholson and Keber 1994; Pohl 2003; Masson 2003; Taube 2010), the writing contained within these texts continues to be classified as lacking the ability to convey specific verbal messages to their readers. According to Elizabeth Boone (2007, 33):

Although to the east the Maya had developed a hieroglyphic script to represent words logographically and syllabically and to reproduce phrases and sentences, the Aztecs, Mixtecs, and their neighbors did not. Instead, their writing consisted of images that are spatially organized in various ways to create visual messages that sometimes parallel spoken language but do not usually record it.

And while scholars such as Elizabeth Boone (2007, 35) acknowledge that deeper meanings are embedded in the images presented in texts, few scholars have followed early Mesoamericanist Joseph Marius Alexis Aubin, who, in 1849, identified the Nahuatl writing system (like that of the Maya) as syllabic (Lacadena 2008).

Decipherment of the writing styles of Mesoamerica has yielded tremendous advancements over the last century, especially Mayan logosyllabic writing. This has had a profound impact on the ways that these written languages have been perceived. Few

³⁰ Dąbrowska, Katarzyna Mikulska. “‘ Secret Language’ in Oral and Graphic Form: Religious-Magic Discourse in Aztec Speeches and Manuscripts.” *Oral Tradition* 25, no. 2 (2010) 325.

scholars, however, have acknowledged that the writings of Central Mexico function in ways akin to those of the Maya, and to my knowledge, no scholar has proposed that the text contained within the Codex Borgia represents an example of such a complete and formal writing system. The style of the Codex Borgia, often called the Mixteca-Puebla style (or, according to John Pohl, the Nahuatl-Mixteca Style), suggests that writers of such texts as the Borgia Codex and similarly styled documents spoke a Mixtec language. This is misleading, as the area using this style of writing encompassed at least 15 different language groups, and the exact location of its authorship and therefore the linguistic group(s) their authors belonged to continue to be debated.³¹ And while some codices, such as the Codex Nuttall and the Codex Bodley, are decidedly Mixtec, other books such as those in the Borgia Group, have yet to reveal a clear indication of place of origin to modern readers. Despite the debate regarding the primary language of the authors of these texts, and as previously discussed, the content of the Codex Borgia, as well as all of the aforementioned texts, embodies the Postclassic International Style and the Postclassic International Symbol Set. These symbols, which are found in texts from far-reaching places where disparate languages are spoken and from before and after the arrival of the Spanish. The shared stylistic and symbolic representations among linguistic groups such as the Mixteca and the Nahuatl in Central Mexico allowed for at least a certain level of mutual understanding of texts regardless of spoken language. The presence of a system of writing that functions outside of and despite spoken languages certainly suggests that the written forms do not correspond to spoken

³¹ Place of origin ranges from Tlaxcala, to Cholula, to Mixteca. For more on this debate see Anne Cassidy. "Divination By Image: The Borgia Group of Pre-Hispanic Mexican Manuscripts." PhD dissertation, Columbia, 2004, pp. 98-113.

language. However, recent research by Alfonso Lacadena and Marc Zender has convincingly argued that the written texts of Central Mexico meet the same criteria for logosyllabic writing as the Mayan, Egyptian, and Sumerian languages.³²

According to Alfonso Lacadena (2008a), the three characteristics that Nahuatl writing shares with these other logosyllabic languages are: 1) the use of logograms and phonograms to make up word signs; 2) the use of logograms to form rebus writing; and 3) the optional use of phonetic complements to clarify logogram meaning. And while Lacadena does agree that the *tlahcuilohqueh* used writing to indicate names, dates, and numbers, he also argues that scholars have had difficulty with decipherment precisely because of the preponderance of logographic writing lacking obvious phonetic components. In outlining the differences between different schools of Nahuatl writing throughout Central Mexico, Lacadena (2008a, 2) points out that in some texts (and in this case the Tepetlaoztoc group of documents) “there are no examples of completely syllabic compounds.... On the contrary, what one finds is an overwhelming use of logographs.” However, the absence of regular use of phonetic writing does not preclude its existence, nor does it necessitate that the logographic elements be seen as merely picture writing distinct from spoken words. Lacadena (2008a, 18) points to the importance of Chichen Itza in the quest to decipher Maya writing, where the writing school favored phonetic over logographic writing:

It is precisely the substitutions at Chichen Itza in which the name of the deity K’awiil and the words for ‘house’ and ‘fire,’ in addition to appearing in their statistically

³² Lacadena, Alfonso. “Regional Scribal Traditions: Methodological Implications for the Decipherment of Nahuatl Writing.” *The PARI Journal* 8, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 14.

more common [logographic] forms, are written phonetically...that offer in due course the final evidence for the reading of their respective logograms.

Lacadena suggests that Nahuatl writing similarly has not been understood as wholly because of it is largely made up of logograms. While Lacadena's work focuses on works such as the Codex Mendoza, the Codex Santa María Asunción, and other early contact documents, rather than on the relatively iconographically dense precontact texts such as the Codex Borgia, his argument suggests that the authors of these older documents employed the same writing system. As such, precontact codices such as the Codex Borgia likely contain writing that merely has the appearance of not being tied to spoken language because of the frequent use of logograms.

Within the logosyllabic writing of the Nahuatl, most of the signs (discrete iconographic elements or collections of iconography called glyph blocks within a codex) represent logograms, wherein the image likely corresponds to a word or set of words that share the meaning of the image itself. In other words, the image of a hill in codices such as the Codex Mendoza often serves as a logogram for the Nahuatl word *tepetl*, meaning hill, wherein the *-tl* is a noun suffix that often is dropped when forming larger, compound words. (See Figure 18b.) This glyph block consists of two joined logograms (*tepe-tl*, or hill, and *yaca-tl*, or nose) to form the name of the place, Tepeyacac. A phonogram, on the other hand, is a word part that creates a sound that is not intended to play into the meaning of the word, but rather functions as a sound marker. For example, the Nahuatl word for water is *atl*, and words that have or start with the sound *a-* will often be represented with water pouring off of it, as seen in the example of the glyph for the place name, Azcapotzalco (Lacadena 2008a: 4). This phoneme will not always mean that there is water implied by the word itself, nor

will it necessarily mean that the word represented is a compound word that includes “water” as a component word. Logograms and phonograms provide the basic building blocks for any logosyllabic language. These logograms, as stated, can be used in rebus writing as well, wherein the logogram used does not share the meaning with what is being represented. This would be an example of what I call a visual pun, wherein two words may sound similar or the same, but their appearances are different. In Western English-speaking culture this can be seen in informal notes, wherein people write out or send digital images of such things as “eye-heart-ewe.” In this example, the heart represents a logogram that has the intended meaning of “love.” However, the “eye” and the “ewe” are images that do not share meaning with the words/word-sounds they are meant represent. Rather, they are merely homophones, but as such they are still easily understood as having a direct connection to specific spoken words.

According to Lacadena (2008a, 14), the third component of logosyllabic forms of writing is the incorporation of phonetic complements to clarify which logographic meaning is intended. For example, the hill sign represented earlier is most often representative of the logogram *tepetl*. However, the logogram for hill looks similar to that for *tlatelli*, or mound (See Figure 18a). Since the reader may mistake one image for another, the scribe may choose to add a phonetic complement, an additional phonetic symbol, to clarify which of the possible words the artist intended to portray. For example, the logogram for the place name of Tlatelolco in the Codex Xolotl (Figure 18a) consists of three basic elements: the hill shape, which could represent a variety of words including *tlatelli* and *tepetl*; the teeth iconography, which is *tlantli* in Nahuatl and here represents the phonetic complement of *tla-*; and the pot or jar iconography, which is *comitl* in Nahuatl, and here represents the

phonogram *-co*. The teeth, serving as a phonogram for the syllable *tla-*, lets the reader know that the word intended is *tlatelli* rather than *tepetl*. In the second example (Figure 18b, the location glyph for Tepeyacac, consist of only two elements: the hill shape, which in the absence of a phonetic complement seems to default to the Nahuatl *tepetl*, and a nose shape, which in Nahuatl is *yacatl*. (Here, the final consonant *-c* is absent from the spelling. The omission of syllables, sounds, and larger word parts seems to be a common practice, which has made decipherment more challenging.)

Within Lacadena's compelling argument for the use of logosyllabic writing within Central Mexico lies one of the limiting factors in the decipherment of the written language: the seeming lack of phonograms. This creates a challenge for the decipherment because if a written language consists primarily of logograms, the functions of those logograms can be overlooked and misunderstood as a strictly pictorial "story-book" rather than as a logosyllabic writing system. I contend that such is the case with imagery found in the Codex Borgia, specifically iconography related to Tlahuizcalpanteuctli.³³

The figure of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, recognizable from his apparel and associated markings, is also the logogram that represents him. Although his logogram appears multiple times within the Codex Borgia, he appears only twice with the symbols associated with him: a mount with weapons upon it. Eduard Seler was the first to positively identified his image on page 49 of the Borgia (Figure 19) based on factors such as his attire and body and face markings. This image shares commonalities with other representations of him within the

³³ For more information on Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, see chapters 4 and 5 of this text. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus primarily on the evidence needed to decipher his related imagery.

Codex Borgia as well as in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, where a gloss of his name accompanies the figure. In Eduard Seler's (1963, 106) description of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli and his emblems, he states:

Siendo Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli la deidad que dispara y el representante de las almas de los guerreros sacrificados que moran en el cielo, en la casa del Sol, se hallan frente a él los símbolos de la guerra: el escudo, el haz de dardos, el lanzadardos, la banderola de mano, la macana enrizada de púas y la red para las puntas de flecha de piedra.³⁴

And while this description does represent the nature of the elements pictured before Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, as well as indicating something of the nature of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, these emblems also provides a glyphic spelling of the name Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, according to the linguistic rules of Nahuatl writing as proposed by Alfonso Lacadena (2008).

According to Montes de Oca (2000, 253-56) and Dąbrowska (2010, 336), the shield and the arms, or more specifically “in chimalli in tlahuiztli,” represent a *difrasismo* indicating war. This becomes important because although there are multiple words used to describe arms or weapons in Classic Nahuatl, this particular word (used to describe a particular kind of weaponry) shares the first two syllables with the name of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. While Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, or Lord of the Place of Dawn, derives from *tlahuizcalli*, which Frances Karttunen asserts as being derived from *tlahuitl* and *izcalia* (red ochre color and to revive, respectively) the use of the *tlahuiztli* (arms) indicates an example of Nahuatl rebus writing. Beneath these arms lies a *tlalelli*, or mount similar to

³⁴ “Being Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, the deity that shoots [arrows] and the representative of the souls of the sacrificed warrior that dwell in the sky in the house of the Sun, in front of him are found the symbols of war: the shield, the bundle of darts, the dart-thrower [atlatl], the hand flag, the curved mace of spines, and the net for [holding] the stone arrowheads.” (My translation.)

those seen in Figure 18. According to Alfonso Lacadena's theories regarding Nahuatl logosyllabic writing, this mound likely functions as a phonetic complement to clarify the first syllable of the word, *tla-*, and therefore clarifying the intended word for arms, *tlahuiztli*. Along with these weapons appears a flag, another identified logogram, *-pan-*, from the word *pamitl*. And while this imagery may or may not include each of the syllables³⁵ in the name Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, my proposed decipherment indicates the presence of the necessary parts to constitute his name according to Lacadena's findings: *tla-TLAHUIZ-pan*, or Tlahuiz[cal]pan[teuctli]. Again, according to Lacadena (2008a, 14), "the phonemes indicated by the signs of a compound do not have to be contiguous...but always have to represent at least the first syllable of the word.... Forms of abbreviation were by means of syncope, suspension, and the combination of both." Therefore, although this decipherment lacks one internal syllable and the final phoneme *-teuctli*, the glyph contains sufficient components to constitute a glyphic and phonetic spelling of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's name. The result, as seen in Figure 19, is a logogram of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli in the form of a representation of him in human form, beside a logo-syllabic spelling of his name.

F. Conclusion

A reexamination of Nahuatl alphabetic and glyphic texts is overdue. Such an examination has the potential to yield new understandings, especially in terms of issues related to gender, class, and religion. While many of the Nahuatl alphabetic texts have previously been translated, and many Nahuatl pictorial texts have been interpreted inasmuch

³⁵ This glyph here includes other components that have not yet been deciphered. These undeciphered elements may include glyph components for the missing sounds: *-cal-* and *-teuctli*.

as figures have been identified, these texts have more knowledge to impart. The difficulty in translating Nahuatl into Spanish (and into English) has yielded gendered language that did not exist in the original. This has created an inaccurate view of Nahua society. Furthermore, the common view of Nahua (Mixteca-Puebla) glyphic writing as a strictly pictorial, non-language-based system, has given the false impression that these texts have been deciphered. By revisiting these texts with a view of them as glyphic and predominantly logographic, further decipherments can be made in the Codex Borgia and other codices, and a greater understanding of Nahua culture can be achieved.

G. Images for Chapter Two

All Figures for this chapter have been drawn by Justin McIntosh. Open Source.



Figure 17: Codex Telleriano-Remensis, detail of page 30r. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

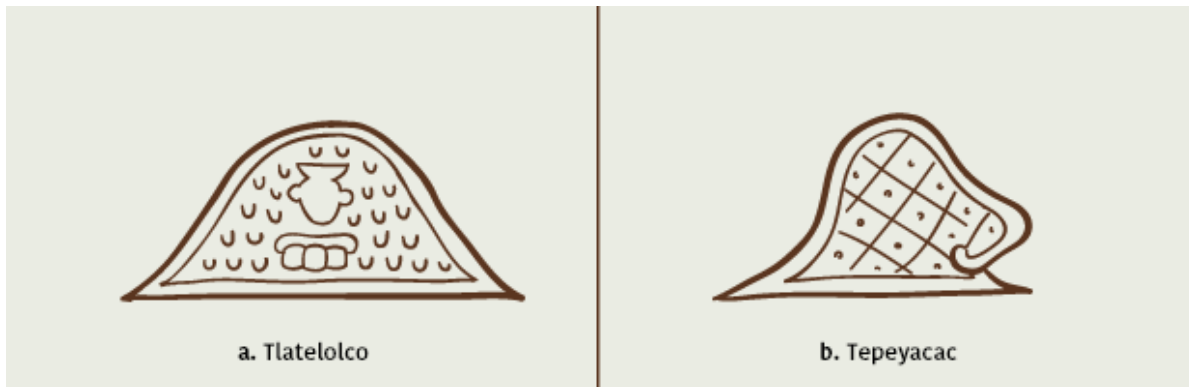


Figure 18: a) Tlatelolco, (tla-TLATEL-[ol]-co), detail from the Codex Xolotl, b) Tepeyacac, (TEPE-YACA), detail from the Codex Xolotl. Drawings by Justin McIntosh.



Figure 19: Tlahuizcalpanteuctli (tla-TLAHUIZ-[cal]-pan-[teuctli]) Detail of page 49 of the Codex Borgia. Drawn by Justin McIntosh

III. Chapter 3: Case Study for the Development of a Visual Grammar in the Codex Borgia

A. Introduction

“The books stand for an entire body of indigenous knowledge, one that embraces both science and philosophy.” – Elizabeth Boone (2007, 3)

As previously discussed, the results of the conquest and colonization of the Americas include not only widespread genocide, but also substantial destruction of indigenous texts and culture. Today only 12 codices from precontact Central Mexico remain. Among these are a group of six, defined by their similarities in iconographic style, content, and geographic region of origin, called the Borgia Group. None of the six Borgia Group documents, it should be noted, are still within or near the communities that created them, but rather are casualties of colonialism kept in various libraries, museums, and universities in Europe. In my examination of precontact Central Mexican codices, both in general and in my current examination of the Codex Borgia, I seek to further the decolonial project of recovering indigenous knowledge through methods that center Mesoamerican voices, documents, and language. In this chapter, I will extend the process of decipherment that I proposed in the previous chapter through an analysis of iconographic and alphabetic textual representations of Mayahuel and her plant, the maguey.

Mesoamerican scribes created a wide variety of texts that include maguey iconography. These historical, topographical, and ritual texts draw upon the cultural

symbolism, metaphor, and scientific understanding of the plant and of the *teotl*³⁶ Mayahuel in order to provide rich and layered meanings for their indigenous readers. My exploration of these layered meanings begins with the metaphorical connections between Mayahuel and maguey illustrated on Codex Borgia page 51 (CB51). Starting with this image, I develop an internal visual grammatical structure. On a practical level, this visual grammar allows for the new identification of the primary tree on CB51 as Mayahuel/maguey in place of its traditional interpretation as corn. In the process of outlining the method behind this identification, I first recognize a linguistic complexity within Ancient Mesoamerican pictorial texts. Here I rely on a familiarity with the local language and cultural contexts of these books. Based on this understanding, I examine Mayahuel/maguey as a case study for the ways in which iconography can be read and understood as a language with its own complex set of grammatical elements. Lastly, I use this visual grammar to draw upon various stories, myths, and histories related to Mayahuel/maguey in order to understand her role as *teotl*, thus shedding further light on the nature of “deity” within Mesoamerica more generally.

Through the identification of patterns in meaning and association using Nahuatl sources and linguistics, I present here a new method of reading these pictorial texts, which provides tools for further research and decipherment.

³⁶ I have intentionally resisted the common translation of god/goddess, as I will address the complex and layered meaning of the word *teotl* later in this chapter.

B. Background

The Codex Borgia is a traditional Mesoamerican book made of a continuous single sheet, folded accordion style upon itself forming 76 pages. The physical form of the book allows for multiple consecutive pages to be viewed simultaneously. Pages 49 through 52 and the right side of 53 of the Codex Borgia follow a similar pattern, and were likely folded out to allow an indigenous reader to view pages 49 through 54 as a single and complete set of pages.³⁷ Each of pages 49 through 52 (which are read from right to left) is divided into multiple cells by red lines. There are two main parts to each page: a large lower panel that takes up about two-thirds of the content; and an upper panel that is further separated into two smaller cells. (See Figure 20.³⁸) Both the upper and lower panels on each of these pages are lined along their lower edges with multiple smaller boxes (again outlined in red) that each contain a single day-sign glyph. The right half of page 53 shares a similar pattern, with the bottom half containing a tree in the same general form as the primary trees [C7] seen in the other pages, yet with only one cell above this image. Many scholars have addressed these two portions, the top and the bottom across the four and a half pages, separately (Seler 1963; Boone 2007; Anders, Jansen and Reyes 1993), and for the majority of this research, I am following this trend. In this paper, I focus on the bottom portion of these pages, each of which centers on a tree with a bird perched atop its forking branches.

³⁷ Page 53 of the Codex Borgia, in addition to containing patterns that mirror those on pages 49 through 52, contains part of the Venus Table that appears on page 54. Because page 53 shows no physical evidence of having been folded in half, the physical layout of the manuscript suggests that these six pages were viewed simultaneously.

³⁸ All images can also be viewed online at: <http://www.chicomoztoc.com/images-for-chapter-3-case-study-of-a-visual-grammar/>

The trees and the pages upon which they appear, have long been read by scholars as representations of the directions east, north, west, south, and center (Seler 1963; Nowotny 2005; Boone 2007; Anders et al 1993; Hernández and Bricker 2004; Hernández 2004). Eduard Seler (1963) was the first to recognize that these pages are analogous to the frontispiece of the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer, wherein trees representing east, north, west, and south surround a central figure. The detailed imagery put forth by the original Mesoamerican scribes suggests to many of these same scholars above that the trees depicted correspond to plants indigenous to the regions of and around Mesoamerica (Seler 1963; Nowotny 2005; Boone 2007; Anders et al 1993). Previous interpretations of CB51, have identified this region as the West and its tree as a young corn plant (Seler 1963; Nowotny 2005; Boone 2007; Byland, Diaz, and Rodgers 1993). While there is certainly some evidence for these proposals, my own research using iconographic, cultural, and linguistic evidence suggests that this tree is instead a flowering, mature maguey.

Early twentieth century German scholar of precontact Mesoamerica, Eduard Seler, was the first European to produce an extensive study of the Codex Borgia. As art historian Elizabeth Boone (2007, 7) states, “He described, identified, and interpreted just about every image in the codices. Most of Seler’s specific readings of individual iconographic details have been accepted by subsequent scholars and remain fundamental to all later research.” Seler was the first scholar to identify the tree illustrated on page 51 (Figure 21) as an immature maize plant—i.e. one that had not yet yielded corncobs or other visible fruit. He noted that the black stripes on the yellow and brown tree resemble the face paint of the maize god, Cintéotl, reasoning that, by association, the plant represented here was a form of maize. In fact, two black zigzagging lines, one thick and one thin, do appear on

representations of Cinteotl within the Codex Borgia, on pages 14, 15 and 57, so Seler's assertion is not without evidence.

Seler (1963, 87), within this visual decipherment, goes on to assert that a symbol at the center of the immature corn plant's trunk represents a sort of transforming star. He states:

[H]ay en el tronco un dibujo extraño: una raíz ancha y dos flores flanqueadas de espinas; los pétalos (muy alargados) de las flores se levantan, a su vez, sobre espinas. Como conjunto el dibujo tiene aspecto de un ojo-estrella —o un ojo-rayo transformado en flores.³⁹

Through this reading, Seler presents the West as being characterized by what he identifies as a young maize plant with a star icon at its center. This assessment, following Floyd Lounsbury's (1978) discoveries of Venus dates in the Dresden Codex, continued the ongoing academic trend of identifying astronomical references within Mesoamerican art and writing (Aveni 1999; Aveni et al. 2007; Hernandez 2007; Carlson 1991; Whitaker 1986; Sprajc 1993)

Karl A. Nowotny, an Austrian scholar of Mesoamerica who began publishing in the field about 50 years after Seler, also identified this tree as a corn plant, though not consistently. In his work, Nowotny sought to incorporate ethnographic data collected largely from indigenous people of Central Mexico in the early 20th century and use that data in his analysis of and comparisons to the imagery within the codices. George A. Everett and

³⁹ “There is on the trunk a strange drawing: a broad root and two flowers flanked by thorns; the (very elongated) petals of the flowers rise, alternating, between thorns. As a whole the drawing has the appearance of an eye-star—or an eye-ray transforming into flowers.” My translation.

Edward B. Sisson, the translators of his work *Tlacuilolli* (2005, xx), state: “In particular, [Nowotny] offers well-reasoned and insightful alternatives to the astral interpretation of the great master Eduard Seler.” Despite his goal of challenging Seler and his students in their tendency to seek astral significance within the Codex Borgia, in his original *Tlacuilolli*, Nowotny (2005) describes the tree at the bottom of page 51 as, “a corn tree with a large star,” showing that he seems to agree with Seler’s interpretation. Yet by 1976, in labeled overlays Nowotny provided to accompany a newly available Codex Borgia facsimile (the Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt facsimile), Nowotny offers an alternative reading. Written in the position of the tree he previously identified as a corn tree with a star, Nowotny (2005) simply writes “Quetzal Flower Tree” and makes no mention of stars or other tree emblems. While the likely reasoning behind Nowotny’s re-identifying this as a quetzal flower tree comes from the visual similarity between representations of quetzal feathers and the foliage of the tree, as both appear as curved green outshoots, Nowotny does not provide explanation nor support for his identification within this facsimile or elsewhere.

Nowotny’s interpretation is challenged by the translators themselves. In Everett and Sisson’s footnotes (2005, 328n111), they disagree with Nowotny’s interpretation writing: “This appears to be a plant, perhaps a maguey, and not a star.” More recently, Elizabeth Boone (2007), in her comprehensive overview and examination of the “general principles” of the codices within the Borgia group, follows the latter interpretation by identifying the Western tree as a flowering corn plant with maguey—and not a star—at its center. Most recently, Christine Hernández and Gabrielle Vail (2010) have outlined similarities between codices within the Borgia Group of Mexico and the Mayan Madrid Codex as evidence for cross-regional scribal communication. In their work, they follow Seler’s original

interpretation that this page represents a maize plant, but they make no mention of the iconography on the trunk of the tree. At this point, therefore, we are left without clear consensus and without an agreed upon method for interpretation.

*C. Mayahuel ~ Cinteotl, Maguey ~ Maize*⁴⁰

Underlying the published interpretation of the plant/tree of CB51 is an implied ambiguity between the representation of corn and that of maguey. I have found this ambiguity reflects an overlap in representation within other codices and within mythohistorical narratives. The conflation of maize and maguey, for example, shows up in another book in the Borgia Group, Codex Rios (also called the Codex Vaticanus A). Within the Codex Rios, Mayahuel and Cinteotl are represented as sharing the eighth *trecena*, the eighth grouping of 13 tonalli (13 days) within the larger 260-day tonalpohualli⁴¹ year. Within this part of the text, images of corn and the corn “god”⁴² Cinteotl are accompanied by glosses describing Mayahuel, who is identified as the mother of corn, and *octli* (called pulque in Spanish), the fermented juice of the maguey. The description for Mayahuel

⁴⁰ The symbol, ~, has multiple meanings in mathematics. I use it here as a form of glyph to mean that these figures have a rough equivalence in some ways but not others, much in the way the symbol is used in comparison of similar triangles in geometry.

⁴¹ Within Mesoamerica, two calendar years run simultaneously. One, the *tonalpohualli*, counts out 260 days. The other, the *xiuhpohualli*, counts out 365-day years. Within a given *tonalpohualli*, there are 20 *trecena*, or 20 groups of 13 days, to make 260 days. For a more thorough look at the *tonalpohualli*, see Boone (2007).

⁴² While “god” and “goddess” are the commonly used translations for the Nahuatl word *teotl*, I disagree with the use of these words. For a more thorough analysis of this issue of translation and for the complex meaning of the Nahuatl word *teotl*, see page 27 of this paper.

explains that, according to indigenous advisors, she has four hundred⁴³ breasts with which to feed and nourish many. However, the description for Cinteotl, rather than focusing exclusively on corn, continues to focus on Mayahuel and her maguey by outlining the affects of the “vine” and “wine” of the indigenous populations, maguey and *octli* respectively. Beside the image of Cinteotl, the chronicler states, “‘wine changes the heart’, since it caused these people to believe that from this woman (Mayaguil) Cinteotl sprung whose name signifies the origin of the gods; giving us to understand, that from the vine which bears the grape the gods derived their origin.”⁴⁴ Here, the chronicler suggests that Mayahuel is a mother figure for the “gods,” for corn as Cinteotl, and therefore for the indigenous populations in general. Additionally, this passage affirms the strong connection between Mayahuel and Cinteotl, and suggests the possibility of the overlap in the representation of maguey and corn as well.

Just as the reliable food yield that resulted from the domestication of corn encouraged the growth of sedentary Mesoamerican settlements, the maguey plant also provided Mesoamericans with a reliable food source and had nearly limitless uses. Maguey could provide food, unfermented drinks, honey-like syrup, *octli* (pulque), medicines, textiles, artisan tools, weapons, implements for ritual use, building supplies, paper, clothing, rope, and more. Such scientific and practical knowledge of plant uses impressed early Spanish chronicler Francisco Hernández, who in 1577 stated that a single maguey could

⁴³ The word in Nahuatl commonly translated as 400, *centzontli*, also means innumerable, much in the same way as “a ton” in English means 2,000 pounds or very large amount.

⁴⁴ Pohl, John MD. “A Colonial Era Decipherment of Codex Rios, (Borgia Group).” *FAMSI*. Accessed June 17, 2014. <http://www.famsi.org/research/pohl/jpcodices/rios/>.

continue to reproduce and ultimately support an entire community. “This plant, by itself, could easily furnish all that is needed for a simple, frugal life since it is not harmed by storms, the rigors of the weather, nor does it wither in drought. There is nothing which gives a higher return.”⁴⁵ Maguey still serves as a means of survival for many living in the deserts of Mesoamerica today, where *octli* is consumed in place of water. In her ability to provide for the people, the maguey and the *octli* she produces have the power to sustain life in a manner that is most often associated with corn. While corn domestication began as early as 7000BC,⁴⁶ the roots of Mesoamerican agriculture began with the regular harvesting of maguey an estimated 1,600 years earlier.⁴⁷ Culturally and historically we can understand this to mean that maguey served as a reliable food source similar to corn and previous to corn. Maguey’s role as a food source, in allowing for a sedentary lifestyle for larger populations prior to the adoption of agricultural dependence on corn, resonates with Mayahuel’s depiction as a mother with four hundred breasts, able to feed her innumerable children.

Similarly, within the Codex Laud (another manuscript within the Borgia Group), Mayahuel and Cinteotl are depicted together. Cinteotl is presented here sitting upon a chair under a brown tree. His legs are not visible under his attire, and he holds, in his only visible

⁴⁵ F. Hernández, 1959; vol. 1, 348-349, as quoted and translated by Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, 1990, 110.

⁴⁶ Matsuoka, Yoshihiro, Yves Vigouroux, Major M. Goodman, Jesus Sanchez G, Edward Buckler, and John Doebley. “A Single Domestication for Maize Shown by Multilocus Microsatellite Genotyping.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 99, no. 9 (April 30, 2002).

⁴⁷ Zizumbo-Villarreal, Daniel, and Patricia Colunga-GarcíaMarín. “Origin of Agriculture and Plant Domestication in West Mesoamerica.” *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution* 57, no. 6 (2010): 813–25.

arm, a single sharpened bone. Mayahuel, on the adjacent page (Figure 22), sits naked in a position suggestive of the *mamazouhticac*, or “hocker,” position associated with childbirth,⁴⁸ and her blue-green, and maguey plant is in full bloom with the red-tipped spines of the plant extending to her right and left, and the “tree” and flowers of the maguey extending above her head. Here she squats atop a snake and turtle’s shell, which is suggestive of an alternative name for her found in Sahagún’s (1997, 110) *Primeros Memoriales*: Tezcacoac Ayopechtli, or “Mirror-Snake Tortoise-Bench.” This alternate name is given as part of a song dedicated to her—a song sung to ease the pains associated with giving birth. And though there are no accompanying glosses within the Codex Laud to explain the connection between the representations of Mayahuel and Cinteotl, the maternal connection described and represented in the Codex Rios likely remains.

D. Current Readings of CB51

Comparing the flowering tree on page 51 of the Codex Borgia to the corn plant found on page 53 of the same text reveals obvious similarities and differences. One similarity is the presence of a variant of what I call a Mayahuel band (Figure 23). This band appears in six places upon the tree of this page, once on the Day Sign in the far left corner of the main cell upon the page, and once on an animal contained within the secondary tree to the immediate right of the Day Sign. This iconographic repetition suggests ideological connection between these images. The two animals that share this Mayahuel band are the *cipactli* (crocodile) and the *michin* (fish). Various codices support the ideological

⁴⁸ See Codex Borbonicus, page 13. Also, see Nicholson (1954, 166; 1967, 82) and Matos Moctezuma (1997, 22-23).

associations between Mayahuel and both the michin and cipactli, which I will discuss below.

A variation of this Mayahuel band also appears within the central corn tree on page 53 (Figure 24), albeit with different colors. Seler (1963) practices this method of “decipherment” in his identification of this plant as corn, wherein one similar element is seen in various places and can therefore be used as a way to decode otherwise veiled meaning. Yet while this method does provide clues about how the artists and communities conceptualized and represented a wide array of figures and ideas, relying on isolated similarities such as these in iconography as the basis for identification leads to an illicit minor fallacy. For example, one story of Tezcatlipoca explains that his foot was bitten off, and in iconographic depictions, Tezcatlipoca is often shown with a missing foot that is sometimes replaced with a mirror. While this is one method of identifying Tezcatlipoca, we should not assume that all figures who are missing a foot necessarily represent Tezcatlipoca, especially if all other defining attributes are absent. For example, the figure depicted on CB51 in the upper right corner of the main cell on the page shows someone who has had his foot bitten off by a *cipactli*. While this image may suggest Tezcatlipoca, Seler (1964, 54-55) identifies him as Xochipilli, while Boone (2007, 127) identifies him as Tlahuizcalpanteuctli based on his attire. The differences in the identifying these figures, shows that each scholar has a diverse set of iconographic detail to draw upon when drawing conclusions, and the use of a single element to identify a figure can often be insufficient.

While this method of interpretation (in which an individual or a small number of emblems are used for identifying a larger whole) may lead to accurate conclusions in some instances, this method is also in large part responsible for the current belief that this tree represents a young corn plant. The central tree on CB53, with its cobs of corn extending

from various places throughout, is easily identified as corn. In the absence of corncobs, the similar auxiliary iconography in itself does not identify this Western tree as a young version of the same. Much like the fish and crocodile carry a similar element (the Mayahuel band) as that of the Western tree, I argue that the reason the Western tree and the Central tree carry similar elements is because of ideological associations evidenced in culture and language.

Rather than follow Seler's lead in attempting to identify this plant as corn despite the absence of its corncobs—the absence of its most distinctive feature—a more straightforward interpretation would be that the absence of corncobs implies that this plant is not corn at all. In the absence of corncobs, Seler's criteria for establishing the tree on CB51 as corn are the tree's black stripes and flowers. We saw above that Seler associates the black stripes on this tree with similar stripes on the face of Cinteotl. (See the upper left corner of Figure 33.) However, these identifying stripes of varying thickness are absent in the representation of the corn tree on page 53, (Figure 24) and are likewise absent from any representation of a corncob producing corn plant within the Borgia Codex (such as those presented on pages 20 and 24). Similar stripes to those seen on the face of Cinteotl can also be found on the maguey spines on most plants pictured in the Borgia Codex (see pages 12, 16, and 48), as well as on some representations of flowing water (see page 27). The flowers on both of the trees that Seler identifies as corn do appear similar to one another, as both yield the tassels or “flowers” associated with the corn plant. Yet as similar as the flowers appear, they do show variation in the numbers of flowers and in the shape and number of auxiliary petals or leaves.

These differences may be considered minor variations due to artistic style and are, in and of themselves, not justification for the dismissal of the interpretation that the tree on

page 51 represents an immature corn plant. On the other hand, artistic renderings of maguey often include a flowering stalk that appears similar to a flowering corn plant. For example, on page 16 of the Borgia, in the upper right corner (Figure 25c), Mayahuel appears seated in her maguey. Above her head the flowering stalk of the maguey appears again, as it does in the Codex Laud, looking similar to both of the trees pictured on the directional pages. Scholars agree that this section of CB16 denotes Mayahuel and maguey, and none claim this is a representation of a corn plant. Cognates in the Codex Vaticanus B page 40 and the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer page 28 (Figures 25a and 25b, respectively) show similar flowering shoots above the recognizable maguey plant. Additionally, this maize flower, as depicted in the Codex Borgia does not belong exclusively to the corn plant and the maguey. Rather, the same flower is seen within the Day Sign for Malinalli/Grass throughout the Borgia. (Figure 26) This too makes ideological and scientific sense, as corn shares visual similarities with related grasses, especially before it produces corncobs, and corn (maize) and teosinte (its closest wild relative) are both taxonomically classified as part of the Poaceae or “true grass” family.⁴⁹

It is also worth pointing out that, according to Frances Karttunen (1992), one of the Nahuatl words for the flower and tassel of maize is *miyahuatl*, which is phonetically similar to and therefore a possible mnemonic for Mayahuel’s name. This sort of visual pun, which I will continue to address later, mirrors regular use of puns in Nahuatl poetry observed by Miguel León-Portilla (1986) and the continued use of similar words in divination among the Highland Maya witnessed by Barbara Tedlock (1992). This potential visual pun between

⁴⁹ Lukens, Lewis, and John Doebley. “Molecular Evolution of the Teosinte Branched Gene among Maize and Related Grasses.” *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 18, no. 4 (2001): 627–38.

miyahuatl and Mayahuel, in addition to ideological connections between corn and maguey and Cinteotl and Mayahuel, would justify the use of “corn flowers” in identifying maguey rather than corn in this context. Therefore, the *miyahuatl* imagery likely functions as a visual marker clarifying the identity of the plant in a manner that is ideologically consistent with Mayahuel/maguey. So while elements of corn do appear on Borgia 51, the visual grammar of the page, as I will outline, supports the positive identification of this tree as maguey rather than corn.

E. Mayahuel = Maguey

Mayahuel, as Michael E. Smith (2003, 203) points out, is widely regarded as a “fertility figure who personified the maguey plant itself.” On Borgia 51, Mayahuel, as personified maguey, is not shown. However, Mayahuel does appear in numerous other places within the Borgia Codex and within other codices. In these representations of Mayahuel in human form, she is identified by her physical connection to the maguey plant. Mayahuel appears within her maguey in a number of codices, including the Codex Borgia, Codex Laud, Codex Fejérváry-Mayer, and Codex Borbonicus. Her significance in these texts can largely be understood by examining the context in which she appears. She most often appears in two contexts: as discussed previously, she appears alongside Cinteotl in her human form as patron of the eighth *trecena* within the *tonalamatl* (the written 260-day calendar) and as part of a set of five female figures who appear suckling children. Within this second context, wherein Mayahuel suckles her young, the codices suggest an interchangeability wherein representations of Mayahuel’s human form and maguey seem to convey the same message to readers. In Codex Borgia page 16, within a set of suckling

women, Mayahuel is shown suckling a fish (Figure 25c), whereas the parallel pictorial passages, or cognates in the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer and the Codex Vaticanus B show Mayahuel suckling a human child and a maguey (without her human form) suckling a fish, respectively (Figures 25c and b).

Some of the meaning of these figures, and these discrepancies between them, can be explained through an examination of Mayahuel within the Codex Chimalpopoca, where she goes by other names, including the name Mecitli, which is commonly translated as Maguey Rabbit (though *citli* can be translated as either rabbit or grandmother). Here as Mecitli, Mayahuel/maguey nourishes and feeds many, as she breastfeeds the Mixcoa—the four hundred or innumerable children (just as she is described in the Codex Rios). Few of these innumerable children survive, and John Bierhorst’s translation of the Codex Chimalpopoca (1998, 9, 151) suggests that the sole surviving Chichimec among the Mixcoa was named Mimich. In this way, Mimich acquires the role of symbolic representation of the Chichimeca (the semi-nomadic Nahuatl groups from semi-arid areas northern of Central Mexico) while also having a name that suggests a connection with fish, *michin*.⁵⁰ That Maguey and Mayahuel (also called Mecitli here) is mother figure and patron of Chichimeca people is further supported in Bierhorst’s (1998, 150) translation of the Codex Chimalpopoca in its explanation of the origin of the name Mexica (who also have Chichimeca origins): “Mecitli suckled [the Mixcoa]. This Mecitli is Tlalteuctli. And so we today who are Mexica are not really Mexica but Mecitin.” While the origins and meaning of the name Mexica are contested, this source supports a connection between the various

⁵⁰ The root of the word *michin* is *mich-*. Mimich suggests a reduplication typical in the plural form of nouns, where fishes would be called *mimichtin*.

Chichimeca people and maguey as mother and sustainer, in a way that is similar to how Central Mexican Tolteca (or city-dwellers) saw corn as their life source and sustainer.

Returning to the codical representations, the theme of sustaining through suckling remains despite changes in the way maguey and her young are portrayed. That the cognate from the Codex Vaticanus B lacks Mayahuel's human form, and yet the fish (like that seen in the Borgia) suckles inside of the maguey, illustrates the interchangeability of her human and plant forms to a Mesoamerican audience. Through the use of this surviving story as a means of analysis, I argue that the three parallel codex images, of Mayahuel suckling a fish, of Mayahuel suckling a human child, and of maguey suckling a fish, may be understood as conveying similar narrative and symbolic meaning.

The ideological and iconographic connection between Mayahuel and her maguey is further emphasized in the Codex Mendoza. As discussed in the last chapter, Lacadena (2008a) has identified how glyph components could be used as logograms, as phonograms, or as phonetic complements to clarify logogram meaning. Similar to the example of hill iconography described in the last chapter, the presence of a maguey plant in logosyllabic writing can have various meanings, and scribes added phonetic complements to distinguish which intended word and meaning they sought to represent. The name of a military leader is given in roman letters as Teçineuh (which could be alternately spelled Tetzineuh), which is represented by a glyph combining the maguey plant and the phonetic complement *-tzin* (or in this case *-çin*), which is represented by hindquarters. (Figure 27a) However, in this case the maguey does not produce the *me-* sound often associated with name building within the Codex Mendoza, as it does in the glyph for Metepec; the maguey forms a *me-* sound (using the root of the Nahuatl word for maguey, *metl*), the hill or mountain (*tepetl* in Nahuatl) is

represented as a logogram, and the suffix *-c* signifying a place, is absent or assumed.

(Figure 27b) Since the maguey plant does not function as a phonetic element in the case of Teçineuh, as the *me-* sound does not occur in the name, the maguey plant in this text serves instead as a logogram with a more complex meaning. Frances F. Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt (1997, 5) translate the name Teçineuh as “he who expels someone,” while Frances Karttunen (1992, 313) says the metaphorical meaning of *tzinehu(a)*, is “to hurl [someone] down from a high place, defeat, destroy.” We find that the translations of this name correspond to some of the ideological significance of maguey and Mayahuel’s name as synonymous with destruction.

For example, within Bierhorst’s (1998, 92) translation of the Codex Chimalpopoca, the planting of magueys signifies the defeat of a town in much the same way as a burning temple does throughout various codices. In relating the conquest of Cuauhtitlan, Bierhorst’s (1998, 92) translation cites both of these consequences as signs of defeat: “This was when they finally came and broke up the soil in the marketplace of the Cuauhtitlancale and planted it with magueys and set fire to their temple.” Just as the concepts of conquest and the “expelling” of another are ideologically connected, the translation of Teçineuh as “he who expels someone” closely matches the meaning of the likely root of Mayahuel’s name. Although the translation of her name remains contested, with scholars often arguing for a wide range of etymologies,^{51,52} I argue that the root of her name is the Nahuatl *mayahui*.⁵³

⁵¹ Quiñones-Keber, Eloise. “Mayahuel and Maguey: Sustenance and Sacrifice in Aztec Myth.” *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 5, no. 2 (1989): 72–83.

⁵² Klein, Cecelia F. 2000. “The Devil and the Skirt: An iconographic inquiry into the pre-Hispanic nature of the tzitzimime”. *Ancient Mesoamerica*. 11 (1): 36n38.

This word has been translated “rechazar, alejar,”⁵⁴ “to reject scornfully,”⁵⁵ and “to fall; to hurl something down, to dash someone down to his death.”⁵⁶ Understanding Mayahuel’s name and the maguey, as a symbol of death via downfall corresponds as well to her origin story within the *Histoyre du Méchique*.⁵⁷ In this account, the wind *teotl* Ehecatl takes Mayahuel with him down to the earth. Mayahuel’s grandmother and aunts (the Tzitzimime, who are associated with the stars), upon discovering she is missing, descend upon her, killing and devouring her.⁵⁸ From her buried remains grew the first maguey, making the maguey a sign of her destruction. In this way, the maguey imagery within the codices, the maguey itself, and Mayahuel’s name illustrate her literal connection with downfall and destruction.

The representations of Mayahuel and maguey in origin stories, such as those found in the *Histoyre du Méchique* and the *Codex Chimalpopoca*, mirror the complex ideology

⁵³ According to James Lockhart (2002, p.29), the suffix –l can be added to the root of a transitive verb (mayahui) to form a passive form of a noun. In this case, the word or name mayahuil (a form of Mayahuel’s name) could be understood as one that has been hurled or dashed down to death.

⁵⁴ Simeon, Remi. *Diccionario De La Lengua Nahuatl o Mexicana*. Siglo XXI Editores Mexico, 1977, p. 250.

⁵⁵ Bierhorst, John. *A Nahuatl-English Dictionary and Concordance to the 'Cantares Mexicanos: With an Analytic Transcription and Grammatical Notes*. 1st ed. Stanford University Press, 1985, pp. 207, 297.

⁵⁶ Karttunen, Frances. *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1992, p. 141.

⁵⁷ The *Histoyre du Méchique* is a sixteenth century French translation of a lost Spanish text.

⁵⁸ De Jonghe, Edouard. 1905. *Histoyre du Mechique, manuscrit français inédit du XVIe siècle*. PERSEE. http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/jsa_0037-9174_1905_num_2_1_3549.

and symbolic meanings embedded in the diverse codical representations of Mayahuel and maguey. The stories of Mayahuel and maguey as mother to the Chichimeca, as told in the Codex Chimalpopoca, echo the iconography of the Borgia, Rios, and Vaticanus B. Similarly, the story of Mayahuel's origins recounted in the *Histoyre du Méchique* and her ideological and practical significance to Mesoamericans as maguey correlate in some respects with Eduard Seler's interpretations of the primary tree on Borgia 49. Though I dispute his identification of this tree as a young corn plant with a star emblem, I would argue that his misinterpretation draws on intentional iconographic similarities, and ideological connections between maguey and Mayahuel, and corn and stars. The similarities between the representations of maguey and maize can readily be explained via an understanding of the plants' roles as a vital food source for the diverse populations of Mesoamerica. Similarly, Mayahuel sharing iconographic elements with stars directly reflects her origin stories where she, as the granddaughter and niece of stars (the Tzitzimime), is arguably a star of a sort herself before journeying to the earth's surface and ultimately becoming maguey. Using this understanding of the ideological, historical, and cultural significance of maguey/Mayahuel, while maintaining that texts such as the Codex Borgia (and texts in the Mixteca-Puebla style more generally) employ a complex and highly logographic writing system, I propose the following methods for decipherment.

F. Visual Grammar

Rather than relying primarily on iconographic similarities to arrive at the denotative meaning of isolated imagery, I propose the recognition and examination of a visual grammar designed by indigenous scribes and contained within Mesoamerican codices. Through the

use of such things as visual puns, the visual grammar of the pictorial codices could provide meaning across linguistic groups to create rich connotative significance for a potentially larger Mesoamerican audience. As with the understanding of spoken and written languages, the understanding of a visual grammar within a multi-linguistic writing style depends on a shared cultural knowledge base such as that shared within Postclassic Central Mexico.

We can begin to explore the visual grammar within the Codex Borgia by examining the iconography present in pages 49 through 52. On each of these four directional tree pages (those representing West, South, East, and North⁵⁹), we see similar figures and symbols in parallel positions. (See Figure 20, 28, 33, 34, 35, and 36.⁶⁰) Starting from the top left corner and going clockwise, these images include: an animal/Day Sign [C1]; a secondary tree with beheaded sacrifices [C2]; a house with a figure giving offerings [C3]; a battle involving animals [C4]; and two descending figures, male and female (likely sets of *macuiltonalehqueh*⁶¹ and *cihuateteoh*) bringing forth objects [C5]; the making of fire [C6]; the directional tree emerging from a person with a bird atop its bifurcated branches [C7]; a chair and specific year sign [C8]; a seated *macuiltonalehqueh* and Day Sign [C9]; and a

⁵⁹ I am leaving out the central directional page, seen on the right half of CB53. While it does share the pattern seen on at the center of the other pages (a directional tree emerging from a person with a bird atop its bifurcated branches), it lacks the majority of the other imagery found on the other directional pages.

⁶⁰ Figure 28 and Figure 36 are two different artists' renderings of Codex Borgia 49.

⁶¹ The *macuiltonalehqueh* are so identified based on the Day Signs with coefficients of five, as well as by the outline of the five-fingered hand around their mouths. According to Ruiz de Alarcón, (1987: 230), the *macuiltonalehqueh* are the owners of five-days (days with the numerical coefficient of five) and are ritual metaphors for the hands. Some scholars, such as Anders, Jansen and Reyes (1993: 252) claim that these are the warriors who have died in battle, who upon death have become dedicated to the sun, and who are the male counterparts of the *cihuateteoh*, the women who have died in childbirth. John Pohl (1998, 2003) associates these *macuiltonalehqueh* with court diviners.

couple scene [C10]. While scholars believe each of these images held associations to the direction they shared, little has been said about the associations of these images to one another within a given page. I argue that at least a few of these images relate to one another forming a pattern of meaning, or visual grammar.

For example, the main tree shown at the bottom center of CB49, though taxonomically unidentified, is distinguished by the design of its trunk, by its blossoms (which are in the form of jewels), and its central emblem of a shield with spears, a spear thrower, a bag or bundle with tail-like ropes and white down-balls containing flint, and a white flag. (Figure 29b) This collection of symbols at the center of the tree's trunk, which Elizabeth Boone (2007) describes simply as a "war symbol," share the same form as those seen in other places within the page. Most notably, these symbols are practically identical to those shown in the upper right hand corner of the page, atop a hill in front of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli (Figure 29a), whose name is commonly translated "Lord of the Dawn."⁶²

While *tlahuizcalli* does mean "dawn" in Nahuatl, I assert that an alternate literal translation of the name Tlahuizcalpanteuctli could read 'lord of the place of the house of weapons' (tlauiz-tli= *armas, o insignias*⁶³; cal-li=house; -pan=place⁶⁴; teuc-tli=lord). The symbol in front of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, like that on the tree, has the three spears, the spear

⁶² At this time, I am not proposing a connection between the tree and the figure in the upper right corner of the page. Rather, I am using this image as a decipherment key.

⁶³ Alonso de Molina. 1571. Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana, part 2, Nahuatl to Spanish, f. 145r. col. 2.

⁶⁴ It is worth noting that the word part -pan- may be a suffix signifying a place in or on, or could be the root of the word pantli, meaning flag.

thrower, the white flags, and a shield with round shell-like decorations at its edges and a rope-design bisecting it, and a red rectangle at its center. Both also have what is likely a bag or bundle,⁶⁵ shown here tied with what looks like red animal-tail ropes draping over each side,⁶⁶ and white circles, possibly feather-balls, beneath it (though only one can be seen on the tree).

This same shield pattern appears again in the hands of the descending male figure, the *macuiltonalehqueh*, to the right of the tree on CB51 (Figure 29c). While this male figure does not hold all of the elements, such as the spear thrower and the *tlaquimilolli*, and the shield no longer has the shell pattern seen in on the other two shields, the shield held by the descending figure does mimic the more intricate center design of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's shield, with the three paired lines running horizontally across, more precisely. The female descending figure, one of the *cihuateteoh*, lacks weapons but holds related emblems designed in the pattern and shape of the shield and spears (Figure 29d). The white circles at the bottom of the coiled rope likewise mimic the white circles below the *tlaquimilolli*, and the upper end of the rope mimics the shape of the spear thrower. Her white body suit and white cords closely resemble those worn by a female gladiatorial participant pictured in the Codex Magliabecchiano.⁶⁷ In this way, both of the descending figures bring forth and are adorned in such a way to form visual and ideological associations with the emblems of battle

⁶⁵ This looks similar to what Guilhem (2007) identifies in the Codex Zouche-Nuttall as a *tlaquimilolli*. Also see Molly Bassett, 2014. The Codex Zouche-Nuttall 57 shows a *tlaquimilolli* with similar tail-ropes securing it.

⁶⁶ See also, Codex Borgia page 23 for an image of Ehecatl holding similar elements.

⁶⁷ *Codex Magliabecchiano XIII. 3: manuscrit mexicain post-Colombien de la Bibliothèque nationale de Florence*, (Rome: Danesi, 1904), 30r-30v.

both generally and as shown on the tree.

In the same way, the visual grammar that connects the descending figures with their respective trees continues on pages 50 and 52, where the figures carry some of the same implements, including spiked weapons and an axe. While the trees of these two directions differ, both are thorny trees whose thorns are mirrored by the thorns of the objects the descending figures carry. In the case of the Western tree, which I identify as the maguey, the two associated descending figures bring forth highly related goods. The male figure carries a container of *octli*, the fermented juice of the maguey, while the female figure carries a small, uprooted maguey (Figure 30a and b). Therefore, in each page the items carried by the descending pair share direct ideological and iconographic associations with the corresponding directional trees.

A similar association exists between the directional tree [C7] and the figure in the upper left-hand corner [C1] on their respective pages. According to scholars Nowotny (2005, 250-251), and Boone (2007, 129), these images refer to calendrical dates evenly spaced within the 260-Day Count: 4 Ozomatli/Monkey, 4 Cozcacuauhtli/Vulture, 4 Cipactli/Crocodile, and 4 Miquiztli/Death. While this interpretation of the iconography seems highly likely, the Day Sign on CB50 is not 4 Cozcacuauhtli/Vulture, as the vulture has been replaced with a turkey, a replacement acknowledged by Nowotny (2005, 250-251) and Boone (2007, 129). I argue that the substitution of the Day Sign of vulture with a turkey rather than being problematic reveals further associations between the image of a turkey and other images on the page, specifically the connection between the turkey and the directional tree/bird. At the center of this northern page, CB50, an eagle sits within a thorny cactus. The eagle pictured closely matches the description given within the Florentine Codex of what the

Nahua scribes called the *mixcoaquahtli*, or the smoky-snake eagle. (This name also suggests the bird's direct connection to the ornaments in the tree, which includes a smoky snake or stream of darkness.⁶⁸) According to Sahagún (1950-1988, 12:41), “[A]t the back of its head are its feathers, paired feathers forming its head pendant. It is white across the eyes, joined, touching the black; so is the face adorned.” This description matches the bird on CB50, with its crown of feathers and a white stripe across its eyes. Arguably, this description may not be unique to one bird. However, what is unique about the description of the *mixcoaquahtli* is that it is, according to the Florentine Codex (1950-1988, 12:41), “somewhat the same as the turkey hen living here.” Therefore, the *mixcoaquahtli* and the turkey share an association that aligns with the representations seen on CB50, and this in turn links the animated Day Sign in the upper left corner of the cell with the tree/bird at the bottom center of the cell.

This visual grammar that connects the animated Day Signs to the tree/bird repeats throughout the directional pages. The Florentine Codex suggests a connection between the eastern tree with the shield on page 49 and its respective animated Day Sign of the monkey. According to the scribes of Sahagún's (1950-1988, 12:14) Florentine Codex, while the monkey is known traditionally as *ozomatli*, “Its name is also *quaauhchimal*.” Literally translated, *quaauhchimal* can mean wooden shield or tree shield. Therefore the monkey Day Sign, as a *quaauhchimal* or tree shield, becomes synonymous with the tree and its shield emblem. Within the main cell on CB49, the presence of these figures—the monkey, the tree

⁶⁸ The ideological and metaphoric connection between the tree (*cuauhtli*) and the “eagles” within them (*cuahuitl*) is mirrored linguistically, as these general words for trees and eagles share a root stem of *cuauh-*. In this way, they are linguistically tied through a visual pun.

with a shield, and the two descending figures bearing weapons of various forms—indicates that all of these figures have associations with battle and with one another.

The figure that occupies the day-sign position on page 51 relative to the maguey plant is the 4 Cipactli/Crocodile Day Sign. The *cipactli* carries with it much iconographic, literary, and semantic meaning, the beginnings of which will hardly be covered here. Among other things, the *cipactli* represents the earth itself, as the flesh of the *cipactli* as seen in the Borgia appears nearly identical to the illustration of the ground under the center tree on page 53. (Figure 24) And while any plant that grows from the ground may claim some connection to the *cipactli* as earth, the maguey has a much closer identification with the *cipactli* in the plant's personification as Mayahuel. This is because within other codices she goes by other names; in the Codex Chimalpopoca, she is called Tlalteuctli, or lord of the earth, and according to one of the translators of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, she is known by the secondary name Cipactonal.⁶⁹ This Nahuatl name can be broken up into two parts, Cipactli and Tonalli. Literally translated, this name means day of *cipactli*, meaning that the animated *cipactli* Day Sign [C1] on this page of the Codex Borgia can be read as a pictorial representation of Mayahuel's alternate name. This identification of the maguey with both Mayahuel and therefore with Cipactonal promotes a direct link between the directional tree and the day figure in the upper left corner of the main cell of this page. In this case, as seen in the other directional pages, the tree/bird and its adornments, the objects held by the descending figures, and the Day Sign allude to one another mnemonically, ideologically, and iconographically.

⁶⁹ Quiñones-Keber, Eloise. 1995. *Codex Telleriano-Remensis: ritual, divination, and history in a pictorial Aztec manuscript*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 174.

With this analysis, it is important to note that the Nahuatl language in its spoken and written forms, as with other languages of indigenous peoples, rely heavily on metaphor and poetics. So while the connection between the animated date and the tree/bird may be at times homophonic, the connection may be less precise at other times. Some words may be perfect homonyms, while other words, such as the word for tree, *cuahuatl*, and bird, *cuauhtli*, form the same root: *cuauh*. And still other words are less similar, providing a looser pun. I would argue that such is the case for the southern tree and date (on CB52), which shows the day-sign death, *miquiztli*, and, based on my proposed visual grammar, the mesquite tree, *mizquitl*. Although these two elements do not share the same exact name, the words are similar enough to act as a sort of pun in the way that Barbara Tedlock (1992, 107) witnessed among the Highland Maya.

G. Mayahuel/Maguey as Teotl

In identifying the tree on Borgia 51 as maguey, I am likewise identifying the tree as Mayahuel. I therefore read these two manifestations of the same *teotl* as ideologically linked and interchangeable. Although Mayahuel is commonly referred to as the Goddess of Maguey, her many roles in precontact Mesoamerica extend beyond that title and role. While the designation of goddess (or god) carries with it connotations derived from European traditions, seeing Mayahuel/maguey as a single *teotl* allows us to recognize her position within Mesoamerica while simultaneously gaining a better understanding of beliefs and traditions unique to the indigenous cultures of the New World. It is necessary at this point to consider the term ‘*teotl*’ itself.

According to Michael E. Smith (2011, 204), “The Nahuatl term *teotl* means ‘deity’

or ‘sacred power.’ This is a complex and multifaceted concept that does not fit well with modern preconceptions of ancient polytheistic religion.” While Smith attempts to complicate the translation of *teotl* as god or deity, virtually every scholar continues to refer to Mayahuel and other Mesoamerican figures as gods. However, conceptualizing Mayahuel as a maguey goddess or deity, erases the complexity of her multifaceted nature as well as the complexity of the word *teotl*. Rather than seeing Mayahuel as a personification or deification of a passive maguey plant, Mayahuel and maguey share an identity wherein both possess the (not exclusively human) ability to think, choose, act, and affect the world around them; to interact with other *teteoh* (the plural form of *teotl*). Gerardo Aldana’s (2011, 55) interpretation of the concept of *teotl*, as “an ‘entity’ possessing three characteristics, the ability: *i.* to heal; *ii.* to poison; *iii.* to nurture,” perhaps provides the most useful model for understanding how a single *teotl* can (choose to) take multiple forms and have a diverse impact within Mesoamerican experience. Mayahuel/maguey fulfills these characteristics in her ability to heal others as evidenced by a song dedicated to her, sung to ease the pains associated with giving birth.⁷⁰ In addition to Mayahuel’s help with the birthing process, the maguey plant and juices can act as a salve or poultice, especially for head wounds,⁷¹ and as *octli*, what Diego Durán (1971, 310) called the “Native wine,” which “truly has medicinal quality.” Mayahuel/maguey embodies the ability to poison or in other ways defeat and destroy as shown by her plant form representing defeat, and in the consequences of an

⁷⁰ Sahagún, Bernardino de, Thelma D Sullivan, and H. B Nicholson. *Primeros Memoriales*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, 142:n21.

⁷¹ Sahagun, Bernardino de. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*. Translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. University of Utah Press, 1970, 11:179.

overconsumption of *octli*, and in the use of the spines of the plant in making weaponry; and Mayahuel/maguey serves as a great nurturer of people in her ability to feed and provide for the needs of entire populations, both in the recorded stories and in current and historical practice among indigenous populations.⁷² However, just as Mayahuel/maguey can be seen as *teotl*, so too can diverse people, animals, plants, and objects that would otherwise not be identified as a “god” or “goddess.”

By understanding Mayahuel/maguey as different representations of the same *teotl*, and through the recognition of a visual grammar within the Codex Borgia, I argue that the directional tree found on page 51 constitutes a representation of Mayahuel through her plant embodiment as a maguey, despite the fact that her human form appears absent. While scholars have suggested that CB51 portrays a corn plant with a maguey plant attached, I assert that although the maguey and corn plant are associated ideologically and iconographically, this tree does not represent a corn plant with a maguey in the auxiliary position; rather, this is Mayahuel/maguey with her flowering stalk in bloom.

H. Conclusion

Western academics of the last 150 years have provided other scholars with tools for understanding some of texts that had been left undecipherable since their initial destruction and abolition by Christian priests. However, much of this research provides superficial denotative decipherment of texts and often reproduces the damaging or narrowly framed narratives made prevalent by the Spanish accounts. By expanding my analysis of the Codex

⁷² Granberg, Wilbur J. *People of the Maguey: The Otomi Indians of Mexico*. Praeger, 1970.

Borgia to include similar imagery from other Borgia group texts, cultural and scientific knowledge about maguey, stories from other Nahuatl texts, and linguistic and written systems from the region, I have challenged the assertions that Borgia 49 represents an immature corn plant. By reidentifying this tree as maguey, and by extension, Mayahuel, I seek to broaden the picture currently held of Mesoamerican people, in terms of their understanding of science, their cultural diversity, and the complexity of their language.

Though the conquest and colonization of Mexico has left only twelve precontact Central Mexican codices, the indigenous knowledge contained within them has just begun to be explored by indigenous scholars in a decolonial context. Utilizing indigenous knowledge, including associations with Mayahuel, in her human and plant form, the complex imagery of the codices demonstrates a pictorial grammar with which the trees on the directional pages can be identified. Additionally, the recognition of the existence of a visual grammar opens the field to new forms of analysis beyond the goal of denotative understanding. Furthermore, using the Mesoamerican conception of *teotl*—wherein a single *teotl*, unlike an Old World god, can have simultaneously take human, animal, plant, and or object forms, all of which display agency—the imagery and language within the codices and other indigenous authored texts, can be better understood. By combining the knowledge shared in the various surviving media and the knowledge of local languages and culture, while maintaining an indigenous-centered approach, previous assertions and assumptions made by Western scholars can be effectively challenged. This is vital for the continued decolonial struggle for the indigenous people of Mexico and the Americas, their descendants throughout the world, and indigenous people and their allies globally.

I. Images for Chapter Three

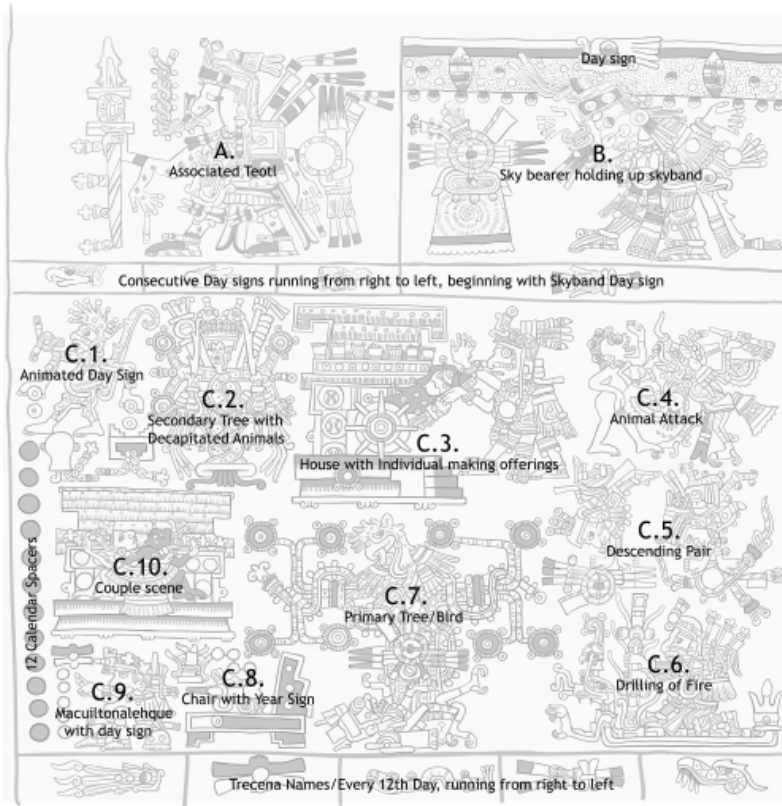


Figure 20: Codex Borgia 49, with labeled overlay. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.



Figure 21: Detail of the primary tree/bird [C.7.] on Codex Borgia 51. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.



Figure 22: Detail of Mayahuel/maguey from Codex Laud 9. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.



Figure 23: Detail of the animated day sign [C.1.] on Codex Borgia 51, highlighting a repeating symbol (the Mayahuel Band). Drawn by Justin McIntosh.



Figure 24: Detail of the central corn/maize tree on Codex Borgia 53. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

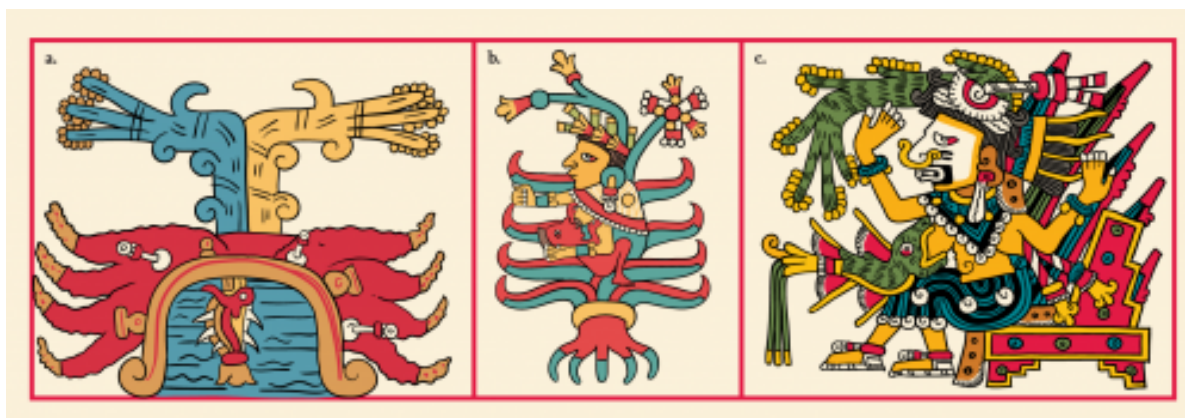


Figure 25: a) Detail of maguey from Codex Vaticanus B 40, b) detail of Mayahuel/maguey from Codex Fejervary-Mayer 28, c) detail of Mayahuel/maguey from Codex Borgia 16. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

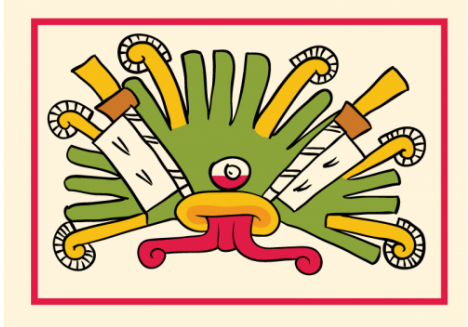


Figure 26: Detail of the day sign *malinalli* from Codex Borgia 18. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

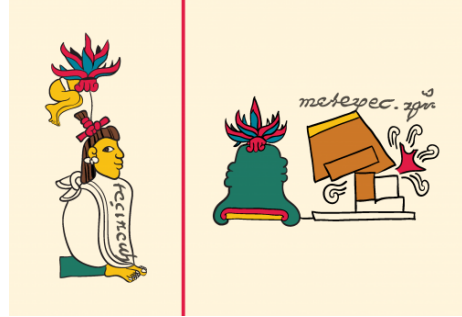


Figure 27: a) Detail of Tetzineuh from Codex Mendoza 2r, b) Detail of Metepec from Codex Mendoza 10r. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

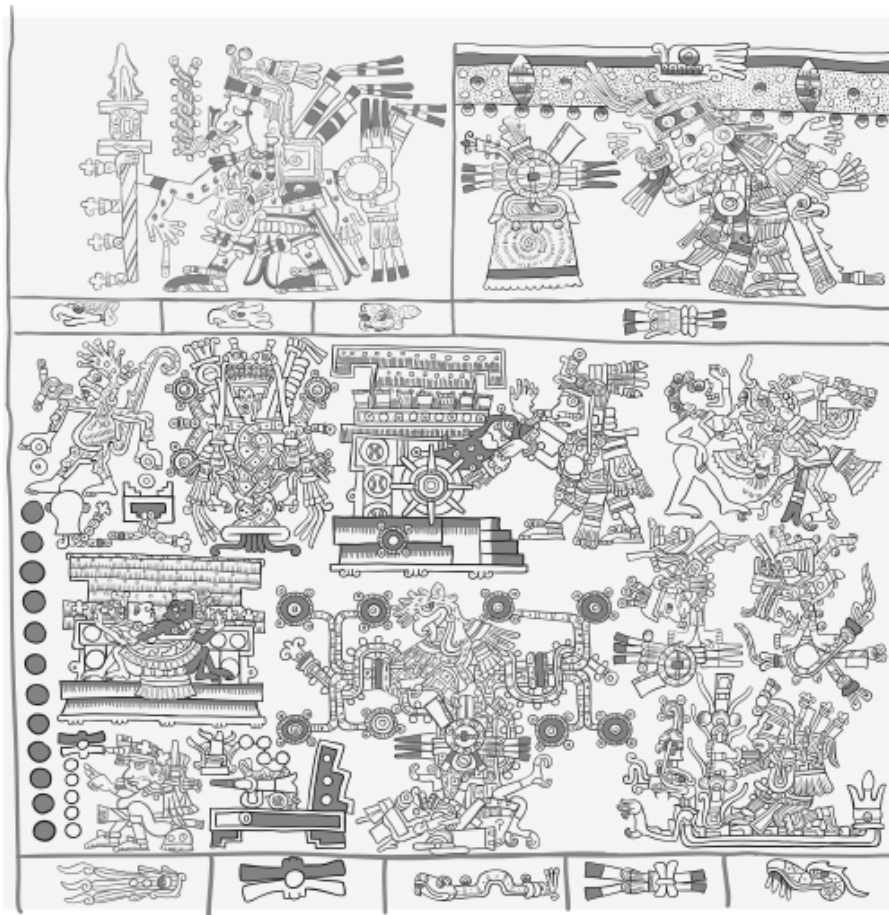


Figure 28: Codex Borgia 49. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

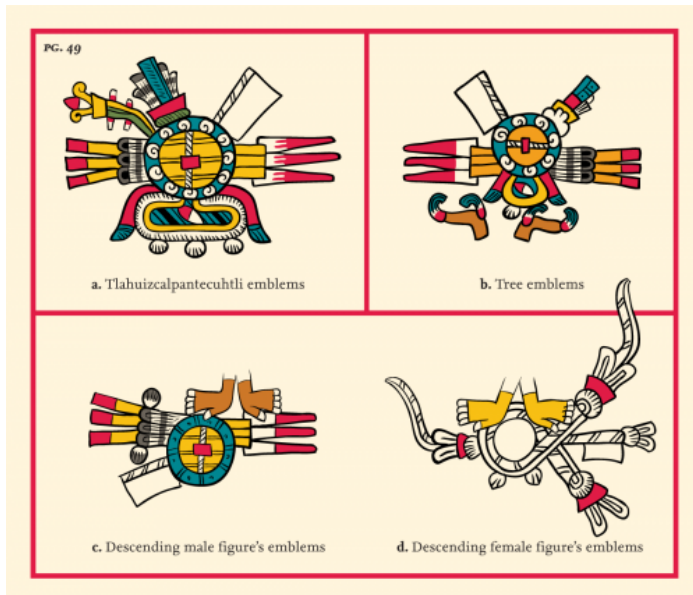


Figure 29: a) Detail of Sky Bearer's associated emblems [B] on Codex Borgia 49, b) Detail of emblems on the primary tree/bird [C7] on Codex Borgia 49 c) detail of the items held by the descending male figure [C5] in Codex Borgia 49 d) detail of the items held by the descending female figure [C5] in Codex Borgia 49. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

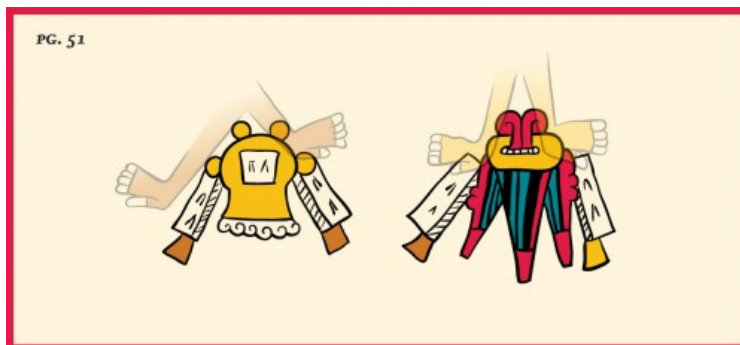


Figure 30: a) Detail of the items held by the descending male figure [C5] in Codex Borgia 51, d) detail of the items held by the descending female figure [C5] in Codex Borgia 51. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

V. Chapter 4: Venus in the Codex Borgia

A. Introduction

Since Ernst Förstemann first identified a Venus table in the Mayan Dresden Codex in the late nineteenth century, numerous scholars have sought out and found astronomical imagery throughout documents and monuments in Mesoamerica. As we saw in Chapter Three, although scholars such as Karl Nowotny (2005) have sought to challenge some of these astronomical interpretations, the prevalence of astronomical inquiry throughout Mesoamerica has been made clear by the many academic articles written on the subject. And while the Codex Borgia is classified generally as a divinatory text (Nicholson 2001:165; Boone 2007, xxv), the academic exploration of astronomical knowledge contained within it has been relatively limited compared to the quantity of academic work on Mayan texts such as the Dresden Codex. The academic work that has been done generally falls into two categories: those who suggest that these calendric dates for astronomical occurrences are related to a repeating cycle unrelated to historical events (Nowotny 2001; Anders, Jensen and Reyes Garcia 1993), and those who attempt to tie specific dates to real-time events in Ancient Mexico (Seler 1963; Thompson 1934; Aveni 1999; Hernandez 2004). Within both of these groups, most have recognized the similarities and evidence of shared knowledge related to the recording of the periodicity of various celestial bodies.

However, absent from these investigations is how the *teteoh* related to Venus, including Quetzalcoatl, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Itztlacoliuhqui, and Xochipilli, are discussed in Nahuatl alphabetic texts, and how these same alphabetic texts inform the reading of the glyphic texts such as the Codex Borgia. In addition to engaging in this project of providing a culturally and linguistically informed reading of the Codex Borgia, I will introduce a model

of calendrics developed by Gerardo Aldana (Personal communication 2015) that, in conjunction with the iconography, support the connection to Venus as it relates to the Venus Table in the Mayan Codex Dresden. In so doing, this collaborative chapter proposes that the Venus Table contained within the Codex Borgia extends from page 49 through 54 (CB49 through CB54), and includes information about Venus as the Evening Star as well as the periods of Venus invisibility.

B. The Many Quetzalcoatl

H.B. Nicholson, in his dissertation in 1957, presented a comprehensive collection of the Mesoamerican indigenous texts and early Spanish chronicles that told of Quetzalcoatl. As Nicholson pointed out in his introduction, the demand for his dissertation made its publication a virtual necessity.⁷³ In his published book, Nicholson addresses a point of confusion for many scholars: Quetzalcoatl seemed to be different entities to different people at different times. Quetzalcoatl as a name or title applied variously to the wind teotl, Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, to the historical figure and leader of Tollan, Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, and to numerous other creator and leader aspects. Quetzalcoatl, as the patron of the *tlamacazque*,⁷⁴ lent his name to their titles, and as such many were called Quetzalcoatl. The confusion this caused and still causes among academics can be seen in how scholars such as Eloise Quiñones-Keber (1995), in her brilliant work on the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, states that annotators working on the early Spanish glosses “confuse” Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl

⁷³ Nicholson, H. B. *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl: The Once and Future Lord of the Toltecs*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001.

⁷⁴ This word, commonly translated as “priest,” is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, as is the figure of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.

with Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl of Tollan. Similarly, as Quiñones-Keber (1995) points out, the Codex Vaticanus A combines the two different Quetzalcoatl narratives that are presented in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis and adds that Quetzalcoatl later disappeared into the sea. Although Quiñones-Keber sees this addition as an allusion to the story of Moses, it harkens to the narrative of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl found in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, where he journeys to the sea, self-immolates, and subsequently transforms into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli—the planet Venus.

These accounts of Quetzalcoatl’s persecution, exile, death, and transformation into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli—the Lord of the Dawn and the planet Venus—are best recorded in the Nahuatl alphabetic text, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, although an alternate and much abridged version can also be found in the 16th century French text, *Histoyre du Mechique*. Spanish chronicler Fray Diego Durán also wrote extensively on similar stories of Quetzalcoatl, which I address more thoroughly in Chapter Five, although his accounts lack the key event of transformation into Venus. As Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Quetzalcoatl appears in various pictorial codices as well, most notably within the Venus Tables of both the Maya and the Central Mexicans. Through an exploration of the Venus Tables within the Codex Borgia and the Dresden Codex, I argue for the augmentation of the current reading of the Codex Borgia Venus Table (CBVT) to include four and a half more pages.

C. Background

Codex Borgia page 54 (CB54) and the bottom left quarter of CB53 (Figures 31 and 32) comprise what is commonly considered an example of a Central Mexican Venus Table. This page and a quarter contains five figures in the act of spearing. And while the entirety of

CB54 is dedicated to this table, CB53 has a diverse collection of representations. The entire right half of CB53 contains the final part of the preceding section (CB49 to CB52, Figures 33, 34, 35, and 36) of directional pages. Even though CB53 contains cells from both the Venus Table and the directional pages, and the accordion-style structure of the original document made it impossible to view these sections separately, most scholars (Seler 1963; Boone 2007; Aveni 1999) do not address these two sections of the Codex Borgia as a single section.

As we have seen and in other cases, scholarship on the Codex Borgia generally falls into two different schools of thought: astrological in one camp and cultural in the other. Seler was the first to establish the tradition of astrological interpretations within the Codex Borgia. Following the work of Ernst Förstemann on the Dresden Codex Venus Table, Seler reexamined the Codex Borgia and identified the calendrical mapping of Venus synodic periods⁷⁵ on CB54 and the bottom quarter of CB53. His reading of Venus in this part of the text extended to the identification of Venus iconography in many different sections of the Codex Borgia, and led him to the conclusion that the text was largely related to Venus imagery.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ The planet Venus orbits closer to the sun than the Earth. It passes between the Earth and the Sun, on average, every 584 days, or one complete synodic period. This passage of Venus between the Sun and Earth is known as the Inferior Conjunction. The four stages of Venus within this larger 584-day cycle are outlined in relation to where and when in the sky Venus is visible from Earth. The Inferior Conjunction lasts, on average, 8 days. This is followed by the heliacal rise of Venus as the morning star, which lasts an average of 263 days. At that point, Venus then disappears behind the sun. This is called the Superior conjunction, which lasts an average of 50 days. Finally, Venus becomes visible again as the evening star for an average of 263 days before once again passing between the Earth and Sun during the Inferior Conjunction.

⁷⁶ Seler, Eduard. *Comentarios Al Códice Borgia*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1963, 2:113-128.

Since that time, the assertion that CB53 and CB54 represent the synodic periods of Venus has been repeated and expanded upon by various scholars, most notably by archaeoastronomer Anthony Aveni. Anthony Aveni introduced scientific methods to the study of Mesoamerican texts, and began to use the dates recorded in texts such as the Dresden Codex to connect recorded events with actual celestial events in the astronomical past. While the majority of his work has focused on the texts of the Maya, which include dates in their Long Count calendar (and thus have the potential to be pinpointed to a single day⁷⁷), he written on the shared knowledge of the 584 day synodic cycles as it appears in the Codex Borgia. Additionally, he argues that pages 25, 27, and 28 in the Codex Borgia reflect the same sorts of Venus tables as are seen in the Mayan Dresden Codex.⁷⁸

Following the lead of Anthony Aveni, Christine Hernández and Victoria Bricker have attempted to link dates within the Codex Borgia to actual astronomical events. Christine Hernández and Victoria Bricker (2004, Hernández 2004, 2006), while not overtly reading CB49 through CB54 as a single expanded Venus table, do argue that Venus events may be recorded within these earlier directional pages. They make this argument by looking specifically at page 51, which shows Tlahuizcalpanteuctli losing a foot in a crocodile attack. This representation, they argue, signifies and corresponds to a specific Venus event—the last day of Venus visibility as the Evening Star (ELAST) on March 31, 1483 (or 4 Acatl 4

⁷⁷ Day Signs and Year Signs of the *tonalpohualli* and *xiuhpohualli* (called the Tzolk'in and the Ha'ab in Quiche Maya) repeat every 52 solar years. As such, historic dates can be difficult to pinpoint. The use of the Mayan long count calendar allowed for the tracking of dates older than 52 years.

⁷⁸ Aveni, Anthony. "Astronomy in the Mexican Codex Borgia." *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 30 (1999): S1–S20.

Cipactli).⁷⁹ This dating pulls glyphs from two different areas of the page: [C1], the animated Day Sign, and [C8], chair with Year Sign. (See Figure 20.) The year sign, 4 Acatl, appears on the bottom left side of the page, while the day sign, 4 Cipactli (a life-like representation of the *cipactli*, rather than the standard glyphic representation), appears on the upper left. Hernández and Bricker do not justify why they have used this Day Sign rather than the day sign 5 Mazatl which appears substantially closer to the 4 Acatl Year Sign, and is arguably tied to the Year Sign on the page,⁸⁰ nor do they use the same methods of real-time analysis to the parallel days and years on the other three directional pages. And while the Borgia pages 53 and 54 do suggest iconographic connection to Venus imagery found in the Mayan Dresden Codex, and the appearance of the figure of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli in the Codex Borgia (as on CB51) likely represents a Venus event⁸¹, Aveni, Hernández, and Bricker provide little iconographic analyses beyond this to support their calendrical and astronomical assertions. Instead their argument relies almost exclusively on the counting of days; the completion of five Venus cycles of 584 days ($5 \times 584 = 2,920$ days) requires that the 20-day "calendar" provided on Borgia pages 53 and 54 be cycled through a seemingly arbitrary times ($20 \times 146 = 2,920$ days).

⁷⁹ Hernández, Christine, and Victoria Bricker. "The inauguration of planting in the Borgia and Madrid Codices," *The Madrid Codex: New Approaches to Understanding an Ancient Maya Manuscript*. Edited by Gabrielle Vail. Test. Boulder Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2004.

⁸⁰ See Boone (2007) for argument on whether the day 5 Mazatl and the year 4 Acatl are linked in the text of CB51.

⁸¹ Bricker, Victoria R. "A Comparison of Venus Instruments in the Borgia and Madrid Codices." *Astronomers, Scribes, and Priests: Intellectual Interchange Between the Northern Maya Lowlands and Highland Mexico in the Late Postclassic Period*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010, 310-313.

Art Historian Elizabeth Boone repeats the assertions made by Seler and by contemporary scholars Aveni, Hernández, and Bricker in regard to many of their readings of Venus in the codices, yet at times remains skeptical. Speaking of their assertions about the Venus events recorded on Borgia 27 and 28, Boone (2007, 151) states, “Venus imagery is not itself much in evidence.” Similarly, Boone (2007, 130) points out that Hernández and Bricker, in their analysis of the possible Venus event portrayed on CB51, they do not “account for many of the relevant scenes in the mantic cell.” Elizabeth Boone provides the most thorough cross-textual codical analysis, which includes glyphic/pictorial codices and glossed and alphabetic codices written in Nahuatl and Spanish. In her analyses, Boone makes connections to the Florentine Codex, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, and the *Leyenda de los Soles*, which call up the shooting role of Venus and draw connections to iconography found in the Dresden and Borgia Codices. Here Boone also points out the disparity of data, with the spearing Venus within Borgia pages 54 and 53 relating to five 4-day periods, while descriptions of the spearing Venus in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* appear to relate to *trecenas*. Boone (2007, 7) also critiques Seler’s identification of Venus throughout various parts of the Borgia Group codices:

Following Ernst Förstemann's identification of the Venus table in the Dresden Codex, Seler correctly recognized the Venus almanacs in the Borgia, Cospi, and Vaticanus B; but then began to seek, and 'find' Venus references in other almanacs when they were not actually in evidence.

In her footnotes speaking of the animal attack imagery ([C4] on Figure 19) on each of the Codex Borgia pages 49 to 52 (Figures 33, 34, 35, and 36), Boone (2007, 263n34) asserts that Seler, “erroneously described them all as forms of the planet Venus”; at the same time, she

states that Hernández and Bricker's (2004) reading of one of these same images ([C4] on CB51) as a Venus event, "fits the Borgia imagery well." In occupying this middle ground among scholars, Boone further claims that while Seler relied too heavily on astronomical interpretation, Karl Anton Nowotny dismisses many of these Venus sightings and sees much of the imagery in the Borgia, including pages 53-54, as mantic or prophetic instead.

Karl Nowotny, himself a student of Eduard Seler, felt that Seler over-identified Venus within the codices, and he maintained that texts such as the Codex Borgia were texts recording ritual and culture instead of astronomy. In his analysis of pages 53 and 54 and of pages 49 to 52, Nowotny (2005, 37) denies any Mexican pictorial representations of the Venus cycle. And while the translators of his text, Everett and Sisson, do not resolve the question so far as these pages are concerned, they, like Boone, argue that more evidence is needed to assert that pages 25, 27, or 28 contain Venus tables. In the tradition of Karl Nowotny, other scholars have tended toward a more iconographically and culturally based understanding of the codex, in which indigenous knowledge and practice informs the reading of the codices.

Susan Milbrath (2013), noting that some such as Maarten Jansen have criticized the reading of astral meanings into the Borgia, argues that with the recent creation of real-time computer-generated celestial mapping, such interpretations as those made by Seler, Aveni, Hernandez, Bricker, and herself, are now grounded in astronomical science.⁸² Milbrath broadens the examination of astronomical elements within the Borgia by providing a comparative study of codices as divinatory documents. Here she focuses primarily on the

⁸² *Skywatching in the Ancient World: New Perspectives in Cultural Astronomy: Studies in Honor of Anthony F. Aveni*. Mesoamerican Worlds. Boulder, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 2007.

unique and iconographically complex pages 29 through 46 of the Codex Borgia, asserting that these pages serve as a narrative describing the journey Venus and other celestial bodies over the period of one Aztec *xiuhpohualli* (365-day) festival calendar year. However, while technology has allowed us a look into the ancient sky, such advancements do not establish the textual and cultural evidence needed to assert that associations with Venus events or other celestial occurrences were intended within pages 49 to 52 of the Borgia. And as Gerardo Aldana (2009, 138) points out, Milbrath displays and admits “her inexpert treatment of iconography,” and she relies unquestioningly on the iconographic work of Karl Taube and on the real-time astronomical work Aveni, Hernández, and Bricker to make further connections in real-time.

Most recently, the book *Astronomers, Scribes, and Priests : Intellectual Interchange Between the Northern Maya Lowlands and Highland Mexico in the Late Postclassic Period* provides a collection of perspectives on the connection between Mexican and Mayan uses of Venus tables and imagery. Part III presents the most material on Venus use within the Maya almanacs and the Borgia group (with contributing scholars: Merideth Paxton, Victoria Bricker, Christine Hernández, and Gabrielle Vail). Vail and Hernández (2010, 9) assert that, “similarities ...on the surface, specifically in terms of iconography and almanac layout, hint at an even deeper set of connections in almanac structure, function, and calendrical reckoning.” While Bricker (2010) argues that Borgia pages 53 and 54 follow a 5-page format as seen in the Dresden, proving an overview of iconographic similarities between the Borgia and Madrid Venus Tables.

Meredith Paxton (2001), in her examination of Maya and Mesoamerican astronomy, attempts to provide a culturally rooted explanation of the Mesoamerican directions. Here

she asserts that the directions as they were understood in Mesoamerica were rooted in a desire to form cosmological connections—connecting the sun to directions and connecting codices to celestial occurrences. As with other scholars who provide an archaeoastronomical analysis of Mesoamerican codices, she relies on the previous interpretations of Aveni to place dates in real-time as predictors of Venus appearances, and on the work of John Teeple (1930) to account for "errors" in and adjustments to the calendar charting of the Venus cycles.

Gerardo Aldana's work provides a larger cultural context in his examination of Venus in the Maya codices. Aldana (2011) examines the significance of the glyphic elements of the Dresden Codex Venus Table (DCVT), wherein he focuses on the presence of a single date within the Venus Table and on the glyphic element, *k'al*, in the Mayan language, culture, and in relation to the Venus cycle. Here he draws comparisons to the Venus Table in the Codex Borgia and to the structure of other Mixteca-Puebla codices in order to illustrate how the tying or completing of a Venus cycle is shown across the Mesoamerican codices. Unlike many of his peers, Aldana questions both the tradition among Mesoamerican scholars of placing events in real-time and the function of the Venus Tables as tools for predicting astronomical patterns. However, Aldana's analysis of iconography and calendrics focuses on the Dresden Codex, and little is said about the iconography found in the Borgia Codex.

Through a more detailed analysis of the calendrics and iconography shown on pages 49 through 53 of the Borgia Codex, I seek to further the evidence supporting the connections between these pages and the Venus Table found in the Mayan Dresden Codex. In doing so, I will draw upon the Nahuatl alphabetic texts related to the Venus *teteoh*, including

Tlahuizcalpanteuctli/Venus, Tonatiuh/the Sun, Itztlacoliuhqui/the Frost, and Cinteotl/Corn. In doing so, I will explore how the iconography contained within Codex Borgia pages 49 through 52 present figures associated with the transitioning between the four stages within the Venus synodic periods.

D. Exploring Alphabetic Texts

The identity of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli and how he fits into the larger mytho-historic narrative remain contested. While one very detailed account of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's origin story does exist in the Nahuatl text, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, few other alphabetic texts address Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's role within Nahuatl religious tradition. According to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, the historical ruler of Tollan, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl,⁸³ became Tlahuizcalpanteuctli after his demise by self-immolation. The Nahuatl text *Leyenda de los Soles* states that Tlahuizcalpanteuctli already existed when the current sun was created. The French text *Histoyre du Mechique*, a translation of a lost Spanish text that is believed to have been based on an original indigenous text, mentions Tlahuizcalpanteuctli by name, stating that he is the *teotl* of the twelfth level of the heavens. And the last few lines of the *Histoyre du Mechique* (a text which ends abruptly at this point) recount how some indigenous people believe that Quetzalcoatl, upon the burning of his dead body, became the planet Venus—a version that aligns with what is stated in *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*. However, in the latter part of the *Histoyre*, there is no mention of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli by name. Similarly, the *Florentine Codex* makes brief mention of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli in the context of the birth omens (merely to say that he governed a particular Day Sign, 10 Tochtli, and this was a

⁸³ Chapter Five focuses on the life and the causes of the downfall of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.

favorable day), but his name is absent from the stories that suggest the transformation of Quetzalcoatl after his death. Although the Nahuatl writers of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 11:170) state that Quetzalcoatl “went to disappear” in Tlapallan, the same location where he transforms into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, their version of the narrative (in the Nahuatl version and in the Spanish translation) comes to an abrupt halt, and transitions into a refutation of Indigenous religious beliefs. Discussion of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl’s transformation into a celestial body, and the origins of the planet Venus, are completely lacking in the Nahuatl and Spanish texts of the Florentine Codex.

According to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* and the *Leyenda de los Soles*, Quetzalcoatl, or Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl, who would become Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, was the son of Chimalman. Quetzalcoatl’s father, however, varies among the texts. According to the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, Quetzalcoatl’s father was called Totepeuh (a name meaning Our Hill). Within this narrative, Quetzalcoatl’s father died eight years before the birth of his son Quetzalcoatl in the year 1 Acatl (a birth-year that is synonymous with Quetzalcoatl and is attested in the *Leyenda de los Soles* as well as in various pictorial texts). Although a young Quetzalcoatl would later search for the remains of his father Totepeuh, Chimalman became pregnant when she swallowed a piece of green stone. In the *Leyenda de los Soles*, however, Quetzalcoatl has a different father; his birth in 1 Acatl came as the result of the union of Chimalman and Mixcoatl.

Like Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Mixcoatl is a *teotl* associated with the stars. The early postcontact pictorial Codex Teleriano-Remensis shows a figure glossed as Mixcoatl. In this representation, Mixcoatl has the red and white body striping, the atlatl, the dark mask of night, and the arrows and a pouch that are similar to those seen associated with

Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. Their connection as father and son, or at least as relatives, is further supported by the iconography within Codex Borgia pages 15 and 16. Here, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli and Mixcoatl occupy adjacent cells, where they are present as small versions of themselves. All four figures (Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Mixcoatl, and their two children) share the same red body striping, and two children being presented appear virtually identical except for the weapons they carry and the presence of a rope around the child in the hand of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. Furthermore, the child of Mixcoatl on CB15 appears holding the atlatl and with the same shield and flag symbol from CB49 below him. This symbol, which I previously asserted is a glyph for Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, further supports the identification of Mixcoatl's child on CB15 as Tlahuizcalpanteuctli himself.

Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's child carries two darts, is bound with rope, and has a symbol or a rope and flags below him. All of these four figures can be identified by their darkened faces and their red and white body striping as celestial *teteoh*. On page 4v of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, Spanish glosses written in three different hands identify Mixcoatl (also called Camaxtli) and Tlahuizcalpanteuctli as the stars. According to Eloise Quiñones-Keber (1995, 147) : “[Hand 3] then give a capsule history of the ‘fall of the demons,’ who were once stars and whose names the stars still bear. Hand 2 names these gods.”

The events within the *Leyenda de los Soles*, a Nahuatl alphabetic account, has the potential to challenge characterizations of their *teteoh* as “demons” and shed new light on how their religious traditions worked in conjunction with their scientific knowledge of Venus. Within the *Leyenda de los Soles*, the narratives of Venus as Tlahuizcalpanteuctli represent the recording of indigenous knowledge of celestial activities. For example, within the *Leyenda de los Soles*, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli appears during the creation of the Fifth Sun, 4

Olin. This can be seen as a narrative that describes how during certain times Venus can be seen rising in the eastern sky before the sun. Within the *Leyenda de los Soles*, Nanahuatl becomes the new sun, Tonatiuh, but he does move across the sky. According to the Nahuatl text of the *Leyenda de los Soles* (Bierhorst 2011, 91, my translation⁸⁴), when Tonatiuh does not move:

ye mononotza in teteo . auh niman ye quallani in tlahuizcalpanteuctli ye quito auh
tleica ma nicmina macaçe niman momanani nima ye quimina amo huel quimin ye ye
quimina in tlahuizcalpanteuctli yeic quimina in cueçalmamazço in imiuh tonatiuh
auh niman ic quihuallixtlapacho in chiucnauhnepaniuhqui ca yehuatl in
tlahuizcalpanteuctli in çetl [They consult with one another, the *teteoh*. And then he
gets angry, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, saying “But why? Let me shoot him.” Although he
cannot, he extends himself, and he fires at him, but he is unable to hit him. And
while Tlahuizcalpanteuctli shoots at him, Tonatiuh also shoots the assembled darts,
his arrows/light, and then it came covering him, the nine levels (of the sky). For this
reason he, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, is the frost.]

The battle between Tonatiuh and Tlahuizcalpanteuctli echoes the celestial “battle” between Venus and the Sun to be the first to rise in the east in the morning. However, the indigenous writers of the *Leyenda de los Soles* point out that, at least after he is struck by the sun’s arrows,⁸⁵ this Tlahuizcalpanteuctli is the frost, rather than Venus (or perhaps in addition to

⁸⁴ Although my translation has much in common with Bierhorst’s translation, my translation avoids the inclusion of words such as ‘gods,’ which imbue the narrative with Western ideology that I otherwise seek to challenge in this chapter.

⁸⁵ The Nahuatl word for a ray of light, *miotl* or *meyohtli*, takes its name from the word for an arrow, or *mitl*, and the suffix *-yotl* denotes that this is an abstract noun.

Venus). The frost, however, is more commonly known by the name Itztlacoliuhqui in Nahuatl texts, as seen in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis on folio 16v, where he shares the vertical red body striping often associated with Tlahuizcalpanteuctli and Mixcoatl. This transformation between Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, or Lord of the Dawn, and Itztlacoliuhqui, or the frost, is reminiscent of the transformation of Quetzalcoatl into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli as told in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*—wherein the individual’s death does not signal their end, but rather leads them to a new identity and associations. Furthermore, it emphasizes how these names may function as titles, wherein Topiltzin’s role changes from the role to Quetzalcoatl (a rank of *tlamacazqui*) to the role of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli (Lord of the Dawn) to the role of Itztlacoliuhqui. That Tlahuizcalpanteuctli can be seen as a role instead of a fixed personal identity is further supported by the presence of the symbols associated with Tlahuizcalpanteuctli (as addressed in Chapter Two) in front of both Tlahuizcalpanteuctli and Tonatiuh, the Sun, on pages 76 and 75 of the Codex Borgia (Figures 37 and 38). On CB75, Tonatiuh also holds the atlatl and weapons that the Venus *teteoh* hold on CB54 and CB53, supporting the idea that at certain times (when the sun is the first to rise in the east), Tonatiuh holds the title of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Lord of the Dawn.

The Nahuatl text of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* describes how Quetzalcoatl, specifically Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl, the leader of Tollan Colhuacan, fled his home after he became a target of Tezcatlipoca and other *teteoh*.⁸⁶ He travelled to Tlillan, Tlapallan, Tlatlayan (the Land of Black and Red [or of writing], the Land of Burning), where he set himself on fire. According to the Nahuatl text (Codex Chimalpopca 1992, 12,

⁸⁶ See Chapter Five for more about the events that led Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl to leave his home.

my translation):

They who have grown old said that he [Quetzalcoatl] turned himself into a star, in the place of dawn he comes into view, thus they say it, when he became visible. Quetzalcoatl died, and already they had given him the name, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. They had already said it when he was dead only four days, he did not appear when they had said it, when he came to live in Mictlan, then also for four days he made himself arrows, for around eight days. He came appearing, *huey citlalli*, the big star. They said of Quetzalcoatl, they said of *moteuctlalli*.⁸⁷ Then they so learned, when he appeared over here, on what Day Sign each single type he casts light on, he shoots them with arrows, he is enraged at them. If he went on [the Day Sign] 1 Cipactli, he shoot them: the old men, the old women, all as well if 1 Ocelotl. If 1 Mazatl, if 1 Xochitl he shoots them: the little children. Then if 1 Acatl, he shoots them: the rulers, all as well if 1 Miquiztli. Then if 1 Quiahuitl, he shoots it: the rain, it will not rain. Then if 1 Olin, he shoots them: the young men, the young women. Then if 1 Atl, often is our drought, etcetera.

This text relates to calendric associations of Venus and his appearance, which I will discuss below, and to Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's powers as Lord of the Dawn to shine his light (shoot his arrows) on various groups. Here he is presented at once as a hunter able to influence the human world and as a celestial body acting in the heavens.

⁸⁷ John Bierhorst (1998, 36) translates this word as "he became lord." It appears to share morphemes with the name Moteucōma, the meaning of which is also unclear.

E. Current Reading of the Calendrics in CB Venus Tables

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Codex Borgia page 49 through the right half of Codex Borgia 53 are read as one complete section, often referred to as a directional almanac, and are read separately from the left half of page 53 and page 54, where the Borgia Venus Table consists of five smaller cells each containing an image of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli spearing a different entity. However, this former section can also be read as a Venus Table. Based on an iconographic reading and the calendric model proposed by Gerardo Aldana (Personal communication 2015), CB49 through CB54 potentially present dates for the appearance of Venus as the Morning Star in the form of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, as well as the dates for the other Venus stages: Venus's disappearance behind the sun, Venus's reappearance as the Evening Star, and Venus's disappearance behind the earth for eight days before its final reappearance at dawn and the Morning Star. In order to address these pages as one complete Venus Table, I will first examine the calendric iconography present throughout these sections.

The function of pages 49 through 54 of the Codex Borgia relate in large part to the Tonalpohualli,⁸⁸ or the 260-day calendar. The Tonalpohualli consists of 20 Day Signs and 13 numbers (20 x 13=260). The numbers run from one to thirteen, and then back to one, while the 20 Day Signs begin with Cipactli and continue through the subsequent 19 in order, finally coming back to Cipactli. As previously discussed, and as Table 2 below illustrates, the calendar begins 1 Cipactli, 2 Ehecatl, 3 Calli, 4 Cuetzpalin, 5 Coatl, 6 Miquiztli, 7 Mazatl, 8 Tochin, 9 Atl, 10 Itzcuintli, 11 Ozomatli, 12 Malinalli, 13 Acatl, (back to the number) 1 Ocelotl, 2 Cuauhtli, 3 Cozcacuauhtli, 4 Olin, 5 Tecpatl, 6 Quiahuitl, 7 Xochitl,

⁸⁸ For a more detailed description of the Tonalpohualli, see Boone (2007).

(back to the Day Sign) 8 Cipactli, and so on. The result is 260 unique Day Sign and number combinations, with each repeating at 260-day intervals. The return of the coefficient to the number one marks the beginning of what the Spanish called a *trecena*. While Mesoamerican scribes certainly recognized this grouping of 13 days according to the numbering system of the Tonalpohualli, they did not have a Nahuatl name for this grouping. The group of 13 days, or *trecena*, that begins with 1 Crocodile is designated by this Day Sign. Therefore the name of the first *trecena* is Cipactli, and the name of the second *trecena* is Ocelotl, the fourteenth day of the 20-day cycle, the name of the third *trecena* is Mazatl. There are a total of 20 *trecenas*, one for each Day Sign, in a given 260-day Tonalpohualli year.

At least certain sectors within Nahua communities used this Tonalpohualli calendar along with a concurrently running 365-day calendar called the Xiuhpohualli. This Xiuhpohualli used the same Day Signs and number system, as well as additional year names. Together these two calendars, the Tonalpohualli and the Xiuhpohualli, create a larger cycle known as *toxiuhmolpilia*, or the Binding of the Years, in which the two calendars begin again on the same day every 52 Xiuhpohualli years ($52 \times 365 \text{ days} = 18,980 \text{ days}$) and every 73 Tonalpohualli years ($73 \times 260 \text{ days} = 18,980 \text{ days}$). Two sets of this larger cycle is called *cen huehuetiliztli*, or One Old Age (104 Xiuhpohualli years, or 146 Tonalpohualli years), which also coincided with the completion of 65 Venus synodic periods of 584 days each. (See Table 3.) Tonalpohualli Day Signs frame or appear within every cell of these six pages of the Codex Borgia. However, these days and the patterns they create function differently according to where they appear in the text.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Cipactli | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 |
| Ehecatl | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Calli | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 |
| Cuetzpalin | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 |
| Coatl | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 |
| Miquiztli | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 |
| Mazatl | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 |
| Tochin | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 |
| Atl | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 |
| Itzcuintli | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 |
| Ozomatli | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 |
| Malinalli | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 |
| Acatl | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 |
| Ocelotl | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 |
| Cuauhtli | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Cozacuauhtli | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 |
| Olin | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 |
| Tecpatl | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 |
| Quiahuitl | 6 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 |
| Xochitl | 7 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 13 |

Table 2: Tonalpohualli Day Signs and Numbers

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| 104 Xiuhpohualli years | x 365 days per Xiuhpohualli year | = 37,960 days |
| 145 Tonalpohualli years | x 260 days per Tonalpohualli year | = 37,960 days |
| 65 Venus synodic periods | x 584 days per Venus synodic period | = 37,960 days |

Table 3: *Cen Hueuetiliztli* in Xiuhpohualli years, Tonalpohualli years, and Venus synodic periods

On CB54 and the bottom left-hand corner of CB53, five cells show five different appearances of a Venus *teotl*, with each cell showing a different target of his spearing⁸⁹ and different dates related to each. The first cell of these five, on the lower left-hand quarter of CB53 (Figure 32), is lined with the repeating day of Cipactli, with each Day Sign accompanied by a different numerical coefficient. These numbers create a clear pattern that is repeated on the subsequent cells. While the three Day Signs following Cipactli (Ehecatl, Calli, and Cuetzpalin) do appear within the cell alongside the image of the spearing figure, these subsequent days (and the sets of three Day Signs corresponding to the other four cells in this section of the Codex Borgia) do not have numerical coefficients, and each Day Sign appears only once. The spearing figure in this cell shares all of the recognizable attributes of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli: the red striped body, the white circles on his face, and his distinctive feathered headdress. The following cell, directly to the left of the first, is on the lower right-hand quarter of CB54 (Figure 31) and shows the spearing Venus *teotl* surrounded by the repeating Day Sign of Coatl. The third cell of this sequence, on the bottom left corner of CB54, shows the spearing Venus *teotl* surrounded by the Day Sign of Atl. At this point, the reading changes directions, with the fourth cell being above the third on the upper left corner of CB54. This cell shows the spearing Venus *teotl* surrounded by the repeating Day Sign of Acatl. The fifth and final cell of the sequence shows the spearing Venus *teotl* surrounded by the Day Sign of Olin.

Eduard Seler was the first modern scholar to recognize that this pattern of dates corresponded to the Venus cycles, and more specifically that they corresponded to the Venus cycles as shown in the Mayan Dresden Codex Venus Table. Seler (1904, 374) points

⁸⁹ The individuals and symbols who are the targets of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's spear vary. I will not be addressing these targets here.

out that although the Day Signs correspond to the correct spacing of 584 days apart within the Tonalpohualli (as the Day Sign that comes 584 days after 1 Cipactli, 13 Coatl, appears among the Day Signs surrounding the next cell in the sequence, and these appearances cycle through the five cells in turn), “These initial days, however are not set down here in their actual order of succession.” In other words, the first cell of the table that has the repeating Cipactli Day Signs reads: 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10, 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13, 7, and, similarly, the following cell has the pattern: 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13, 7, 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10. However, if these numbers were to reflect the actual order of the numbered Day Signs placed at 584-day intervals, the order of the numbers alongside Cipactli would read: 1, 9, 4, 12, 7, 2, 10, 13, 8, 3, 11, 6, and the numbers in the following cell would similarly read: 13, 8, 3, 11, 6, 1, 9, 4, 12, 7, 2, 10. In order to visually reflect these movement between the Day Signs of the Venus appearance in their correct order, the scribes would have required 64 Day Signs (or spacers, usually in the form of red circles in the Codex Borgia). Instead, the numbered Day Signs appear out of order, with the three enclosed unnumbered Day Signs of each cell serving as spacers in between the out-of-sequence Venus appearance days. Although Seler points out that these days are not presented in order of their actual occurrence, he does not speculate as to why the authors of the Codex Borgia chose to represent a pattern of days that do not reflect the actual order. Seler (1904, 374) states that the unnumbered Day Signs (Ehecatl, Calli, Cuetzpalin, in the case of the bottom left-hand cell on CB53) merely “fill up the space between Cipactli and Coatl.” While other scholars, as I mentioned above, state that this five-cell set of Venus *teteoh* appearances be cycled through 146 times to reach the next numbered Day Sign in the progression of Venus cells.

Just as these cells present the Day Signs of Venus's appearance as the Morning Star out of order, I argue that pages CB49 through CB52 could have charted Day Signs for the other stages with the synodic cycle of Venus. Along the bottom of CB49 through CB52 (Figures 33, 34, 35, and 36), from right to left, are the Day Signs scholars such as Elizabeth Boone (2007, 121-123) associate with the sequence of the *trecenas*, wherein these four pages must be cycled through to five times to complete all 20 *trecenas*. This interpretation matches the Day Sign pattern on these pages, as CB49 shows the initial Day Signs of the first, fifth, ninth, thirteenth, and seventeenth *trecenas* (Cipactli, Acatl, Coatl, Olin, and Atl), CB50 shows the initial Day Signs of the second, sixth, tenth, fourteenth, and eighteenth *trecenas* (Ocelotl, Miquiztli, Tecpatl, Itzcuintli, and Ehecatl), CB51 shows the initial Day Signs of the third, seventh, eleventh, fifteenth, and nineteenth *trecenas* (Mazatl, Quiahuitl, Ozomatli, Calli, and Quauhtli), and CB52 shows the initial Day Signs of the fourth, eighth, twelfth, sixteenth, and twentieth *trecenas* (Xochitl, Malinalli, Cuetzpalin, Cozcacuauhtli, and Tochtli). By reading through these pages one *trecena* per page at a time, the reading follows the chronological order of *trecenas*, with the first *trecena* on the first page, the second on the second page, the third on the third page, the fourth on the fourth page, the fifth again on the first page, and so on. Supporting this interpretation is the presence of twelve red circles, or spacers, that could serve as the twelve remaining days in between the first day of a *trecena*, and the first day of each subsequent *trecena*. These spacers, however, like the Day Sign spacers appearing beside Tlahuizcalpanteuctli on CB53 and CB54, are placed in the larger cell above the smaller individual cells that contain the Day Signs. The use of these spacers to move through the *trecenas* at the bottoms of these pages is further complicated by the presence of other Day Signs within the same larger cell. Directly to the right of each of

the lines of twelve spacers is a Day Sign ([C9]), presumably associated with the name of the figure beside each respective Day Sign: 5 Olin on CB49, 5 Ehecatl on CB50, 5 Tochtli on CB51, and 5 Malinalli on CB52. To the right of these Day Signs and figures on each of the pages 49 through 52 of the Codex Borgia is a Year Sign ([C8]), 4 Calli, 4 Tochtli, 4 Acatl, and 4 Tecpatl, respectively, within the Xiuhpohualli calendar. These Year Signs are accompanied with the distinctive A-O symbol, which signifies that these refer to a 365-day year (Xiuhpohualli) rather than to a Day Sign of the same name within the Tonalpohualli. The years presented on the pages are each 13 years apart. Therefore the twelve red circles on the far left of each page could serve as year markers for each year in the 52 Xiuhpohualli calendar instead of or in addition to serving as day markers. Or, as my later interpretation of these pages as part of the larger Venus Table, these spacers could designate that there are a total of 13 cycles of the five different “faces” of Venus, to make a total of 65 Venus synodic periods (just as shown in the Dresden Codex Venus Table on DC46 to DC50). A further complication to the interpretation of these Day Signs as initial *trecena* days is the appearance of two additional Day Signs below the Center Tree on CB53 (Figure 32). This Center Tree, in many ways an extension of the previous four pages, lacks most of the scenes associated with the other directional pages. At the bottom of the first half of page 53, are two Day Signs: Cuauhtli on the right and Tochtli on the left.⁹⁰ These Day Signs do not follow the pattern of *trecenas* established by the previous pages. And based on the established tradition of decipherment, the meaning of these signs remains a mystery to scholars.

⁹⁰ In Bruce Byland, Gisele Diaz, and Alan Rodgers’s (1993) reproduction, these two Day Signs are Itzcuintli and Atl. These Day Signs are incorrect, as said by Boone (2007) and as seen in the Kingsborough reproduction of 1825-1831, which I include here.

F. Connection to Mayan Dresden Codex

When Ernst Förstemann became the head librarian at the Royal Public Library at Dresden in German in 1865, none could have suspected the fortuitousness this event would be for Mesoamerican Studies (Tozzer 1907). Contained within the library in Dresden is the Mayan manuscript commonly known as the Dresden Codex, and Förstemann would become the first modern scholar to decipher many of elements of the Mesoamerican calendar systems that I address above (Bricker and Bricker 1988). Not only was Förstemann's decipherment of Mayan mathematical notation in the Dresden Codex the first stride toward the decipherment of Mayan hieroglyphs, his understanding of mathematics allowed for his recognition of number patterns related to the synodic periods of the planet Venus, which in turn revealed to later scholars the importance of Venus and of astronomy in general within Mesoamerica.

Soon after this early work, Eduard Seler, a contemporary of Ernst Förstemann, drew connections to Venus within the pages of various Mexican codices, including the Codex Borgia. As Eduard Seler (1904) pointed out, and Anthony Aveni (1999, S2) later expanded upon, pages 53 and 54 of the Codex Borgia and pages 46 through 50 of the Dresden Codex, "Both display five forms of the Venus deity spearing and victim and in three cases specific Venus gods common to both cultures can be identified." Eduard Seler's (1904) recognition of these similarities in iconography would be further reaffirmed by when Gordon Whitaker (1986, 57) deciphered the phonetic spelling of various Nahuatl names, including Tlahuizcalpanteuctli: ta-wi-si-ka-la, or tawiskal. While the use of Nahuatl names appears in Mayan texts, the calendrics are believed to have started with the Maya. For example, Aveni

(1999, S1), in examining the Venus Tables in both the Dresden Codex and the Codex Borgia, argues that the Venus calendrics in the Codex Borgia, “may have been derived from that particular Mayan [Venus Table] calendar.” As with many other aspects of Mesoamerican culture (such as those discussed in Chapter One), iconography and language from the Mexican and the Mayan codices suggests that the sharing of information moved in both directions.

While Seler (1904) and Aveni (1999) focus on CB53 and CB54 in their comparisons to DC46 through DC50, together in collaboration with Gerardo Aldana, I seek to expand the number of pages that are considered in this comparison through an examination of similarities in possible function of Codex Borgia pages 49 through 52. According to multiple scholars (Aldana 2011; Förstemann 1906; Teeple 1970; Thompson 1970; Lounsbury 1978; Bricker and Bricker 2011), the Dresden Codex pages 46 through 50 serve as a Venus Table that charts the various phases of Venus across 65 complete Venus synodic periods. Each of these five pages share the same basic format, with four columns of dates at the top left of each page (Figure 39). These dates, listed according to the Tzolk’in, the Mayan 260-day calendar, and the equivalent of the Tonalpohualli Day Signs. The dates of each row divide a single Venus Cycle of 584 days into four stages: 236 days, 90 days, 250 days, and 8 days (Aldana 2011; Wells 1991; Aveni 2001). At the very bottom of each column, the numerical notation states these same intervals in days. The first column of days, which on DC46 is the Kib Day Sign, corresponds to an approximation of the time when Venus is no longer visible as the Morning Star.⁹¹ The second column of dates corresponds to

⁹¹ For the reading of the glyphs and calendrics of Mayan Dresden Codex, I am indebted to Gerardo Aldana, who, in addition to providing me with scholarly sources, sat with me on multiple occasions in order to review these pages from the texts.

the approximate time when Venus reappears as the Evening Star, the third to its second disappearance, and the fourth and final column to the day that Venus reappears as the Morning Star. However, although the lengths of each stage do add up to a complete Venus synodic period ($236 + 90 + 250 + 8 = 584$), these lengths of time do not reflect the actual durations of each phase, which average 263, 50, 263, and 8. Scholars have recognized Mayan precision related to the second eight day disappearance of Venus and to the length of the entire cycle, citing correction tables written into the Dresden Codex Venus Table. The Mayan scholars, having recognized the loss of 0.08 days every Venus synodic period, certainly knew that the duration of Venus's disappearance before rising again as the evening star was closer to 50 days than to their proposed 90 days. There is no clear consensus among scholars regarding the reason why some of these periods are drastically different from actual durations. J. Eric Thompson (1971) has argued that the Maya sought to produce a specific mathematical pattern across these pages, Floyd Lounsbury (1978) and Anthony Aveni (1982) hold that these shifts provide a pattern that simultaneously considers phases of the moon, while others such as Bryan Wells (1991, 300) suggest that elements within the Venus Table, "are tied to particular days and this connection, perhaps tied to mythological events, supersedes other concerns." These explanations are not mutually exclusive, and like all the rituals related to the planet Venus, the information recorded about the Maya relationship to it and its cycles are culturally informed.

The Nahua and other Central Mexican people, in their recognition of the 584 day Venus synodic period, shared an understanding of the overall length of the synodic period. However, as the Codex Borgia and other Mexican texts lack a recognizable pattern of 236, 90, 250, and 8 day intervals, these other Venus stations are believed to be absent from the

texts entirely. As Elizabeth Boone (2007, 153) states, “Despite the complex cycle of Venus, the central Mexican Venus almanacs focus only on the planet’s first appearance as the morning star, which occurs every 584 days. The chroniclers imply that this was the event on which the Mexicans put the greatest emphasis, because it is the one event they discuss.”

| Venus Appears as Morning Star | Venus Disappears | Venus Appears as Evening Star | Last Day of Venus as Evening Star |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) Cipactli | + 89 days (4) Tecpatl | + 249 days (2) Mazatl | + 9 days (4) Cozacuauhtli |
| + 237 days (13) Coatl | + 89 days (3) Ehecatl | + 249 days (1) Ozomatli | + 9 days (3) Xochitl |
| + 237 days (12) Atl | + 89 days (2) Miquiztli | + 249 days (13) Cuauhtli | + 9 days (2) Cuetzpalin |
| + 237 days (11) Acatl | + 89 days (1) Itzcuintli | + 249 days (12) Quiahuitl | + 9 days (1) Tochtli |
| + 237 days (10) Olin | + 89 days (13) Ocelotl | + 249 days (11) Calli | + 9 days (13) Malinalli |

Table 4: Day Signs for phases within five synodic periods of Venus, based on the Codex Borgia 49-52.

However, I argue that other Venus events likely did hold significance, and it is instead our current inability to decipher much of these precontact Nahua texts that leads to the conclusion that these events are not contained within these texts. Furthermore, the calendric interpretation of Gerardo Aldana (Personal communication 2015) of Codex Borgia pages 49 through 52 could be understood as containing the days that mark each of the four phases of Venus, and therefore these pages can serve a similar function to the five pages of the Dresden Codex with only slight alterations to the phase lengths as recorded by the Maya.

By adjusting the duration of three of these phases according to the Maya Dresden Codex by one day, a pattern is created that corresponds to the pattern seen in the Borgia Codex. (See Table 4 above.) The new pattern is much simpler than that found in the Dresden Codex, where the Ajaw dates mark the appearance of Venus as the Morning Star every fifth complete Venus synodic periods, but during some cycles also marks the disappearance of Venus as both the Morning and the Evening Star. Similarly, the Tzolk'in Day Signs of Kib', Lamat, K'an, and Eb' mark multiple distinct phases, while ten of the twenty Tzolk'in Day Signs do not appear in the table at all. In the Borgia Codex, however, by adjusting the intervals to 237, 89, 249, and 9 days (from the Mayan 236, 90, 250, and 8 days), each of the various phases of Venus will always fall consistently on the same set of days. Like the appearance of Venus in the Dresden Codex, which always occurs on Ajaw, Kan, Lamat, Eb and Kib Day Signs, in the Codex Borgia (and other texts in the Borgia Group), Venus as Tlahuizcalpanteuctli (or the Morning Star) always occurs on Cipactli, Coatl, Atl, Acatl, and Olin. However, unlike the Dresden Codex, these days will never mark other phases of Venus. The single day shifts I propose would make a lengthy table, such as that seen on DC46 through DC50, largely unnecessary. With this small shift, the Day Signs marking the

disappearance of Venus from the morning sky would always be Tecpatl, Ehecatl, Miquiztli, Itzcuintli, and Ocelotl; the Day Signs marking the appearance of Venus as the Evening Star would always be Mazatl, Ozomatli, Cuauhtli, Quiahuitl, and Calli; and Day Signs marking the disappearance of Venus from the evening sky would always be Cozcacuauhtli, Xochitl, Cuetzpalin, Tochtli, and Malinalli. These Day Signs are grouped together (as their more variable counterparts in the Dresden Codex are) according to directions. While the Dresden Codex has all four directions listed on each of its five pages, with each direction named below each column of Day Signs, the Codex Borgia gives each direction its own page. By examining the iconography within these pages, as well as the structural similarities between the Codex Borgia and the Dresden Codex, this collaborative project proposes that CB49 through CB54 functions in a similar way to the six-page Mayan Venus Table.

Scholars agree (Seler 1963; Boone 2007; Anders, Jensen, Reyes García, 1993) that the figure represented in the far upper right hand corner of CB49, the page representing the direction of the east, is Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. This is the direction in which the planet Venus appears on the horizon as the Morning Star, and likewise it is the direction most associated with the *teotl* of Venus as the Morning Star, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. The dates listed at the very bottom of CB49 are Cipactli, Acatl, Coatl, Olin, and Atl. These are the same Day Signs that are listed in the Venus Table on CB53 and CB54—the Day Signs that represent the day Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, as the Morning Star, appears every 584 days. These Day Signs listed on this page, much like a column of Tzolk'in days in the Dresden Codex, function as a list of all the days upon which the Morning Star is expected to appear. Currently, the Day Signs that line the bottom of CB49 through CB52 are read by scholars such as Karl Nowotny (2005) and Elizabeth Boone (2007) as days spaced twelve days apart—the initial Day Signs

of the *trecenas*, the 13-day sets within the *tonalpohualli* (the 260-day calendar). The evidence used to support this assertion is the presence of twelve red circles, or space markers, on the large cell above the dates on each of the four main directional pages. However, I propose that these spacers may have been placed here merely to provide a way of moving through the days, much in the same way that the Venus Table of CB53 and CB54 contain spacer of three named yet unnumbered Day Signs to move through the Day Signs for appearances for Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. During the time of the Borgia's creation, a skilled Indigenous reader of the table on CB53 and CB54 would not have to cycle through the table 146 times to arrive at the next appearance day, but instead would know that the next appearance of Venus would occur on a Day Sign associated with the adjacent cell. Similarly, I suggest that the spacers on CB49 through CB52 are visual representations of that complete the 260-day Tonalpohualli, but are not necessary for the reading of the table itself. As a representation of the East, CB49 presents one kind of Venus Table which presents the possible days of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's appearance, while the adjacent Venus Table on CB53 and CB54 provide a comprehensive list of the numbered Day Signs.⁹²

G. Visual Grammar

In addition to shared calendrical elements that allow for the reading of CB49 through CB52 as a Venus Table, I will outline how the iconography on these pages supports this interpretation through the inclusion of *teteoh* and other elements suggestive of the four phases of Venus's synodic period: Venus as the Morning Star, the first period of invisibility,

⁹² I have not addressed the Day Signs presented at the bottom of CB53 under the tree associated with the direction of the center, the fifth direction within this part of the table. The dates under this tree do not work as a continuation of the pattern of *trecenas*. I will further address these Day Signs and their meaning below.

Venus as the Evening Star, and a second period of invisibility. Eduard Seler argued that each of the [C4] animal attack scenes (see Figure 20 for reference) on these pages (Figures 33, 34, 35, and 36) represents a Venus event. This assertion has since been challenged. Regarding these scenes, Boone (2007, 263n34) states that Seler, “erroneously described them all as forms of the planet Venus,” and yet simultaneously credits Hernández and Bricker for providing an interpretation of [C4] on CB51 as a Venus event that, “fits the Borgia imagery well.” Boone does not state her reasons for dismissing Seler’s interpretation, nor will I enter into this particular debate. I argue instead that the [C3] house with individuals making offerings on each of these pages reflect Nahua ideas related to Tlahuizcalpanteuctli and, more broadly, to the four phases of Venus within the synodic period.

Elizabeth Boone (2007, 123-126) describes this scene showing an individual making offerings [C3], which she points out is one of the most prominent aspects of these pages, as follows:

In the east [CB49], the sun god Tonatiuh offers a blood heart to the sun disk in a temple qualified by jades and flowers (symbols of preciousness). In the north [CB50], the god of frost and sacrifice Itztlacoliuhqui offers another bloody heart to the moon within a dark temple qualified by flints and black water. The west [CB51] depicts the flower prince Xochipilli offering another bloody heart to a tobacco gourd, from which a jeweled twist emanates inside another jeweled and flowered temple. The south [CB52] features the death god Mictlantecuhtli offering a decapitated human to a screech owl within a bone temple. These gods or deity impersonators

effectively make offering to entities within their own temples: the sun, the moon, priestly office in the form of the priests' tobacco gourd, and death.

These identifications simultaneously provide associations for these directions and for the associated phases of Venus according to Nahuatl texts, specifically the *Leyenda de los Soles* discussed earlier.

Recalling the narrative of the *Leyenda de los Soles*, the Nahua scribes describe Tlahuizcalpanteuctli as existed before the creation of the sun. This narrative presents Tlahuizcalpanteuctli as one who rose before the sun (who is called Nanahuatzin in the *Leyenda de los Soles* before he is transformed by fire into the sun, Tonatiuh). On CB49 (Figure 36), the individual who stands before the house making offerings shares many of the iconographic markers of Tonatiuh, who is pictured in other places within the Codex Borgia including CB15, CB18, CB23, CB55, CB71, and CB75 (Figure 38), most often appears with the sun symbol either on his back or encircling his upper body. On CB49, however, he appears only in his characteristic red body and face paint and his yellow hair, with the sun symbol before him within the house of the east. As a representation of the East, the presence of the sun could mean that this is generally his domain (as the sun, because of its daily rise in the east, is associated with that direction), but during the time that Tlahuizcalpanteuctli is the Morning Star, Venus rises before the sun and so earns his title of Lord of the Dawn.

The following page, CB50 (Figure 35), represents the direction of the South. According to the Dresden Codex, this direction was given a Day Sign that occurred 236 days after that in the direction of the East, and is the direction also associated with the end of Venus's time as the Morning Star. CB50, in addition to listing the Day Signs that occur 237 days after the Day Signs listed in the east also contains iconography suggestive of

Tlahuizcalpanteuctli defeat by the sun. On this page, Itztlacoliuhqui stands giving an offering ([C3]) in front of a house being flooded with darkness. The darkness that enters the house is suggestive of the imagery often used to represent the night sky. Itztlacoliuhqui is recognizable by his curved hat in this image, and generally appears wearing what is called the Mexayacatlahuiztli.⁹³ While this is often considered a thigh skin mask (Seler 1904; Klein 1986; Sullivan 1997)), the word also suggests a mask made of *metl* or maguey leaves or fiber.⁹⁴ *Tlahuiztli*, suggestive of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli's name, can refer to arms (as discussed in the previous chapter) or can be a noun form of the verb *tlahui*, to shine or to glow with light. The name of this attire then acquires a meaning suggesting that the wearer's light is masked. Furthermore, Itztlacoliuhqui, as the *teotl* of frost or ice, is another name for Tlahuizcalpanteuctli after he is transformed when the sun shots him with his arrows (or rays of light). In this way, the appearance of Itztlacoliuhqui suggests the defeat of Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, and the disappearance of Venus behind the sun.

The following page, CB51 (Figure 34), represents the direction of the west and includes a list of the Day Names that are 89 days after those of the previous page (as opposed to the 90 day interval shown in the Dresden Codex). The figure who appears making the offering on this page is more difficult to identify. While I agree with Boone's identification of this figure as Xochipilli, it is worth pointing out that his face painting here, which shows him with two red stripes across his eyes, and a red pattern with three red dots around his mouth, do not appear on any other representation of Xochipilli within the Codex

⁹³ In Sahagún's *Primeros Memoriales*, the curved hat often associated with Itztlacoliuhqui appears with the label, *mexayacatlahuiztli*.

⁹⁴ The word *mexayacatlahuiztli* is comprised of the following roots: *metl*, meaning maguey (or alternately *metztli*, meaning leg), *xayacatl*, meaning face or mask, and *tlahuiztli*, meaning either weapons or light.

Borgia. However, nearly identical face paint appears in the cognate of this offering scene on page 13 of the Codex Cospi (Figure 40), where a maize *teotl*, Centeotl with starry hair, appears offering incense. This overlap in iconography suggests the Song of Xochipilli that is found in both Sahagún's Florentine Codex and *Primeros Memoriales*. Despite the fact that these two songs share the name in neither version of this song, titled Song of Xochipilli in both, say the name of Xochipilli within the song itself, both make repeated reference to Centeotl. According to Thelma Sullivan's translation of the *Primeros Memoriales* (1997, 139-140), the song says:

He's the red Centeotl. This means, the sun has shone, the day has dawned. Now there is signing; now Centeotl, the *quetzalcoxcotli* [bird], sings. Just the lord of the bells with the thigh-skin face paint will yet hear my song. Cipactonal will yet hear my song.

Similarly, Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 3:210) translate a variation of the same song, "now the *quetzalcoxcotli* singeth at night—the Red Cinteotl. Let the god of twilight hear my song; let the god of the thigh skin face painting hear my song. Let Cipactonal hear my song." These two versions of the song both draw out important imagery related to Venus as Itztlacoliuhqui: the "thigh skin face" adornment. Similarly, both versions of the song make reference to the dawn, which suggests Venus as Lord of the Dawn, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. This connection between Venus and maize as Centeotl-Xochipilli, though not yet thoroughly explored, has been written about by Ivan Sprajc (1993), where he specifically connects Venus as the Evening Star to maize.

On CB52 (Figure 33), the direction of the north, and the page associated with the second disappearance of Venus before his reappearance once again as the Morning Star, the

figure making the offering is the *teotl* Mictlanteuctli, the Lord of the Underworld. This page begins the final phase of Venus, during which time the planet is not visible for eight days. Since the interval of time between the Day Signs on the bottom of this page and those on CB49 is nine days, this would mean that this page would signify the final day of Venus as the Evening Star. This has a direct parallel in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, which states (my translation):

[Quetzalcoatl] returned himself into a star, in the place of dawn he comes into view.... Quetzalcoatl died, already they had given him the name, Tlahuizcalpanteuctli. They had already said it, when he was dead only four days, he did not appear when they had said it, when he came to live in Mictlan, the Land of the Dead, then also for four days he made himself arrows, for around eight days.

As Venus (and in this telling, Quetzalcoatl as Tlahuizcalpanteuctli) has died, he must then spend eight days in Mictlan. It would therefore be likely that his death and journey to Mictlan would relate to imagery of Mictlanteuctli, the Lord of the Land of the Dead.

On the right half of CB53 (Figure 32) appears the final directional tree associated with this part of what I propose is a Venus table. This center tree and the surrounding iconography do not appear in other codices. The Codex Vaticanus B, which has cognates that show similar directional trees (pages 18 to 19) for the east, south, west, and north with the same Day Signs below and the same twelve spacers, lacks a central tree. The layout of CB53, which is shared with part of the Venus Table that extends across CB53 and CB54, reduces the amount of space for this center direction, and therefore it lacks most of the scenes that are present on the other directional pages. There is no house with offerings. There is, however, a different form of offering: two male figures stand on opposite sides of

this central tree give an offering of their own penis blood. This center tree is easily identifiable as maize by its multiple and diversely colored corncobs. Behind this tree is a large circle with what appears to be dark water in its center. This water, like the water that appears behind and within the moon in the house on CB50, suggests darkness. Although this circle with a dark and wavy interior could be identified as a lake or other body of water (one that is oddly represented as standing up on the land behind the corn plant), I propose that this circle could represent the planet Venus as it tries to rise above the horizon, and as such is a more elaborate form of the drawing of Venus shown in the *Primeros Memoriales* (Figure 41). The Day Signs below this scene on CB53 are the Tochtli appearing on the left and facing the right and the Cuauhtli on the right, facing left. These two Day Signs do not correspond with the patterns set forth by previous scholars nor myself, and according to Elizabeth Boone (2007, 122) “the meaning of the Rabbit and Eagle signs is not clear.” However, the eagle and rabbit face each other just as the two figures within the cell above them do. The eagle, which at times represents the sun, and the rabbit, which is often shown within the moon, could serve as additional celestial imagery suggesting that the other celestial *teteoh* play a role in the death and ultimate resurrection of Venus as Tlahuizcalpanteuctli.

H. Conclusion

With the level of cultural exchange taking place during the Postclassic period, the sharing of books among the writers of these Venus Tables across the Maya and Nahua areas and among the Amoxhuahqueh (keepers of books) and writers of books would not be improbable. The indigenous knowledge contained within these books, which we know

included the duration of the Venus synodic period among the Maya, likely meant the sharing of knowledge regarding the four stages within each period. Similarly, by sharing knowledge across sub-fields in Mesoamerican Studies, Gerardo Aldana and I sought to bridge the gap between Mayan and Mexican archaeoastronomy. By analyzing the Central Mexican Venus texts (both alphabetic and glyphic), we were able to draw out a productive method of aligning the calendrics of the Codex Borgia to the Dresden Codex. And by using the methods of iconographic decipherment I developed in previous chapters, we sought to connect this calendric model with other iconographic elements across these pages of the Codex Borgia. The results of our collaboration suggests that the Nahuatl of Central Mexico shared knowledge of Venus cycles beyond the first appearance of Venus as the Morning Star, and this knowledge was recorded in books such as the Codex Borgia. Furthermore, if Venus stages and iconography were linked to corn, this suggests that both in Mayan and Central Mexican people shared this knowledge, and it further suggests that knowledge of Venus travelled with corn throughout the Americas.

I. Images for Chapter Four



Figure 31: Page 54 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

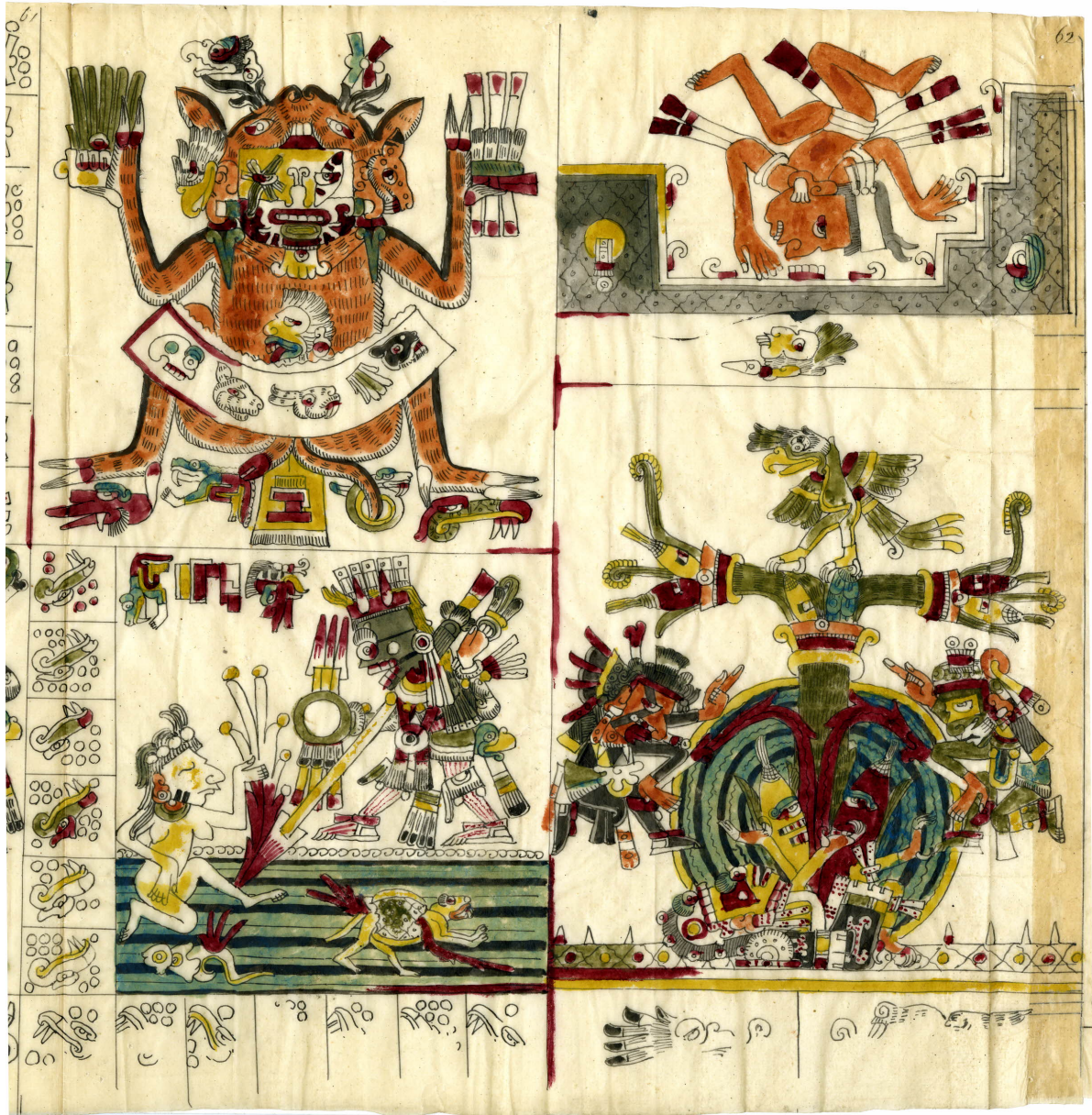


Figure 32: Page 53 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

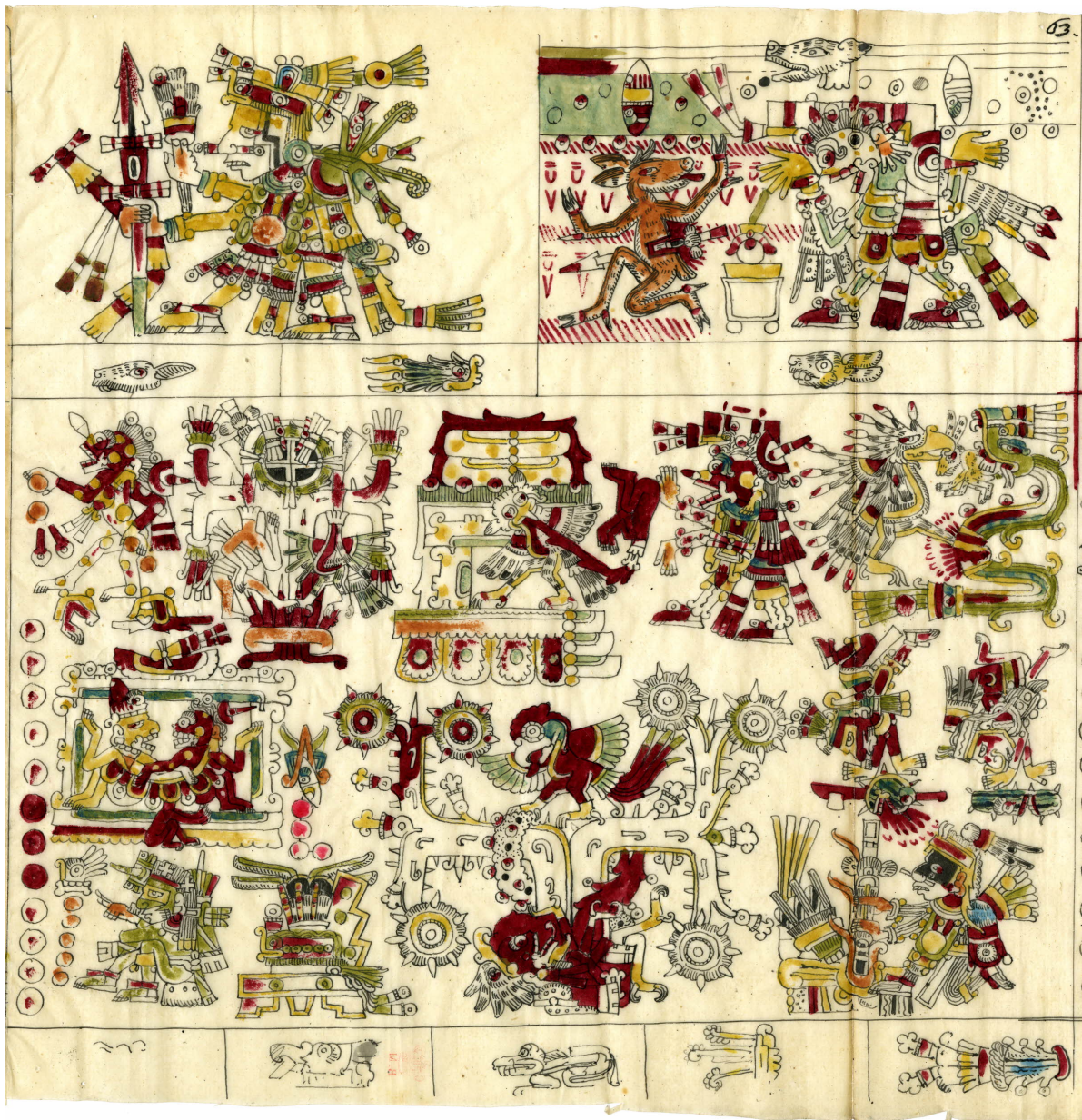


Figure 33: Page 52 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

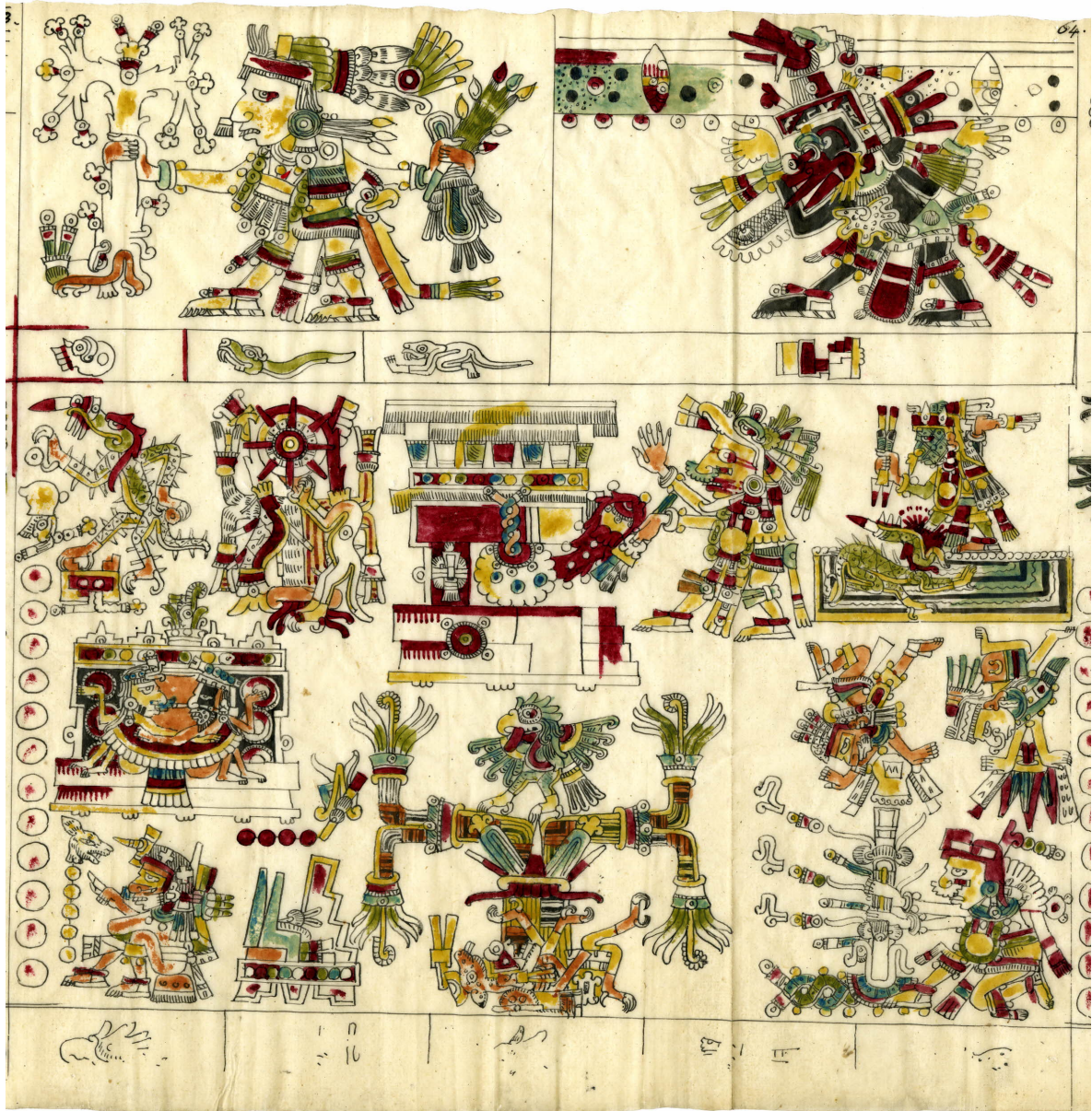


Figure 34: Page 51 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

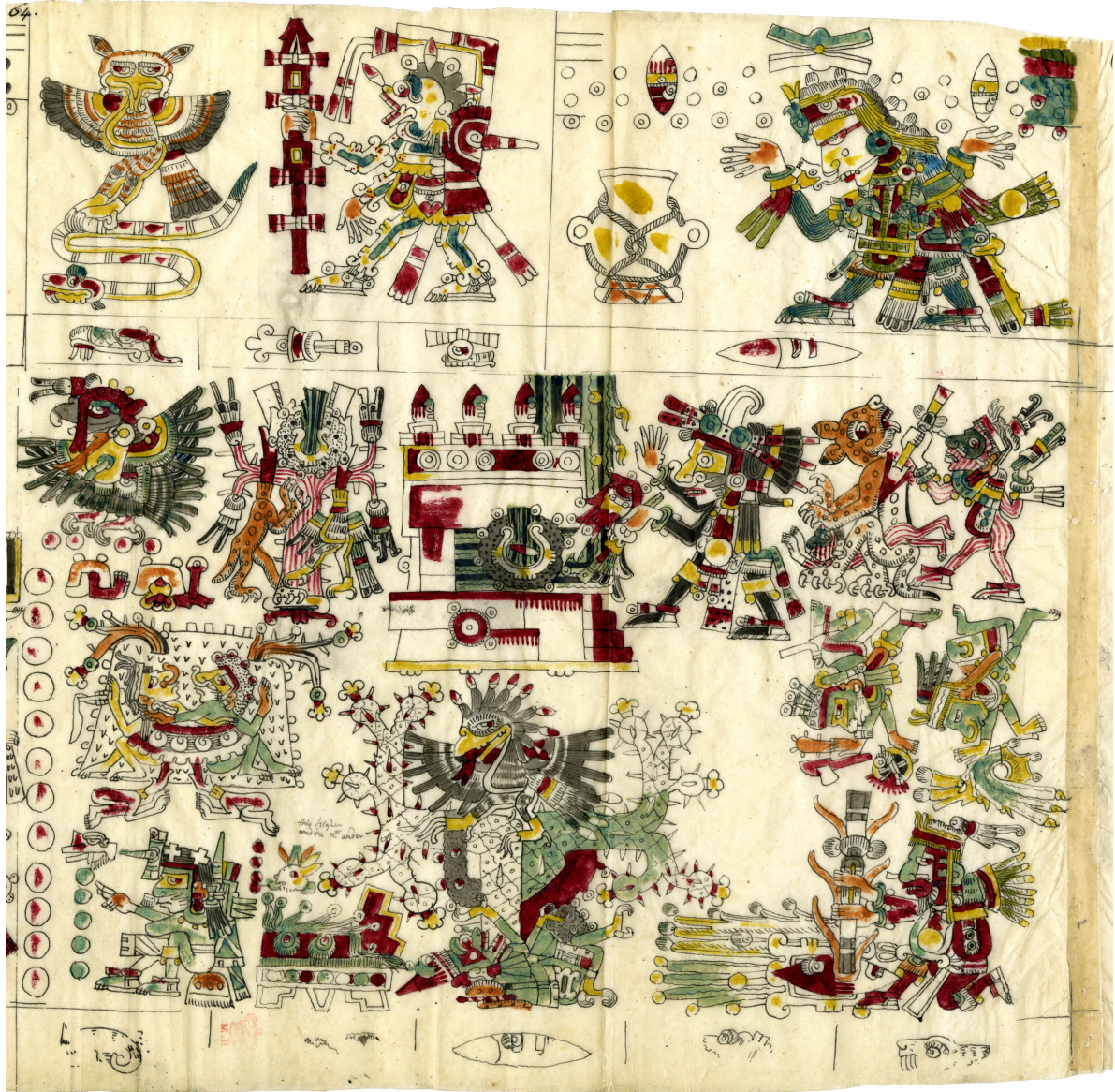


Figure 35: Page 50 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

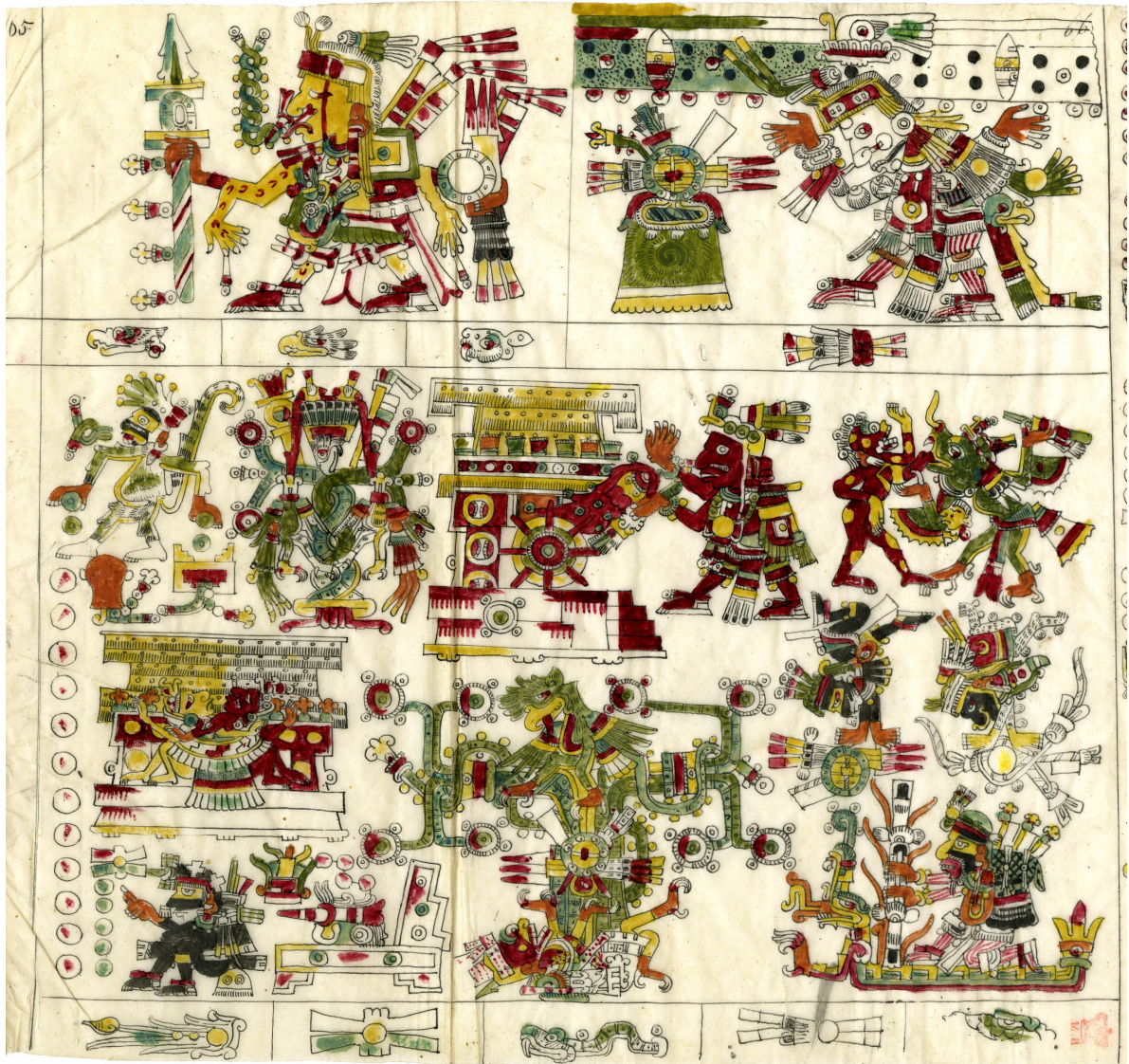


Figure 36: Page 49 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Figure 37: Detail of page 76 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).

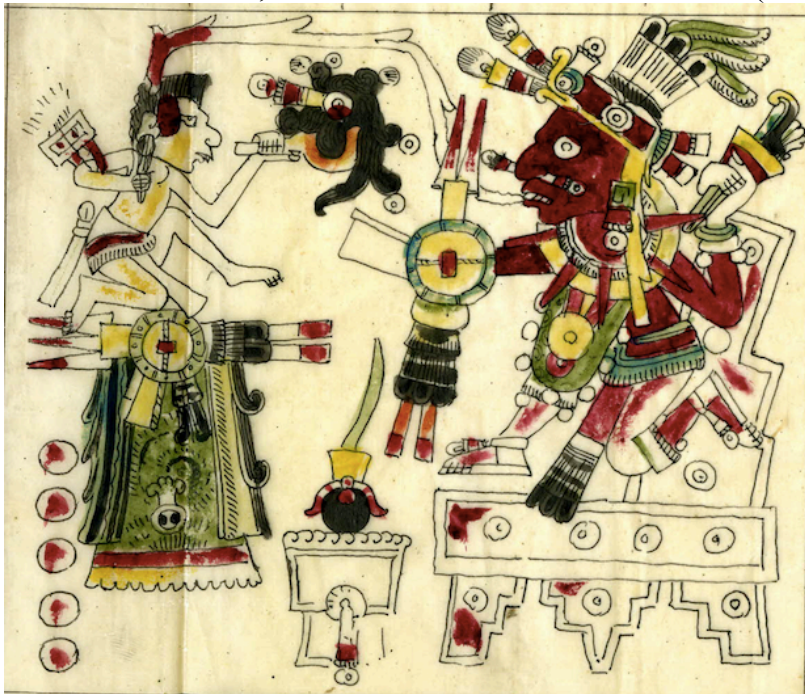


Figure 38: Detail of page 75 of the Codex Borgia, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Figure 39: Page 48 of the Dresden Codex, housed at the SLUB Dresden. (Mscr.Dresd.R.310). Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Figure 40: Centeotl before a house. Detail of page 13 of the Codex Cospi, Kingsborough reproduction, courtesy of the British Museum, London. Creative Commons License (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Figure 41: Venus. Detail from page 282r of *Primeros Memoriales*. Drawn by Justin McIntosh.

VI. Chapter 5: Quetzalcoatl and Quetzalpetlatl, *Tlamacazque* in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*

A. Introduction

In the wake of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, the teaching of Indigenous forms of writing (which I have discussed in the first four chapters of this dissertation) quickly became taboo and, when the content included visible reference to indigenous religion, illegal. However, with the suppression of one written language, came the imposition and quick embrace of another. During the early colonial period, elite men were trained in Latin alphabetic writing, and they produced an extensive amount of material acceptable to and at times commissioned by the Spanish. In addition, they also created a handful of works that recorded their traditional knowledge and beliefs. Today, the collection of documents commonly known as the Codex Chimalpopoca represents an early example of this kind of indigenous writing.

The Codex Chimalpopoca consists of three parts: the Nahuatl text, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*; the Spanish text, “Breve relación de los dioses y ritos de la gentilidad,” written by a sixteenth century indigenous cleric by the name of Pedro Ponce de León; and a second Nahuatl text, *La Leyenda de los Soles*. It is in the first of these works, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, that we find the most comprehensive telling of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl life, his abuse at the hands of Tezcatlipoca, Ihuimecatl, and Toltecatl, and Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl’s ultimate self-exile, self-immolation, and transformation into Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, the *teotl* of the planet Venus. Based primarily on this narrative, scholars have asserted that Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, in a drunken state, committed the crime of incest, and that the shame of the

illicit sex act led him to banish and kill himself. However, through a culturally informed analysis of the role of Quetzalcoatl within indigenous religious traditions and a linguistic analysis of kinship terms among the Nahuatl, I assert that Quetzalcoatl's transgression was his failure to conduct ceremony, and that the act of incest, although possibly based on literal translations, is an unlikely and dubious interpretation of the narrative.

The narrative of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as it appears in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* contains multiple parts, much of which I do not present here. This account has information about his birth and his death (which I address in the previous chapter), as well as an account of Tezcatlipoca's first trick against him, in which he shows Topiltzin "his flesh" in an obsidian mirror. Here I focus on the introduction to the interaction between Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and the Tlatlacatecollo (of which Tezcatlipoca is one, who is unnamed in this part of the account). While there is much analysis that could be done on this narrative, I specifically seek to challenge common readings of this text; in the place of a reading of incest in Topiltzin's narrative, I instead posit that the emphasis within the text is placed on the importance of ceremony and Topiltzin's failure to perform his ceremonial duties. This emphasis on ceremony exists both in Tezcatlipoca's plan (which is the first line of the translated text below) and at the conclusion of this narrative, when Topiltzin finds himself saddened and takes leave of his home in Tollan.

Multiple translations of the following text exist, including Spanish language translations by Faustino Galicia Chimalpopoca (for whom the collection, the Codex Chimalpopoca, is named), and by Gumesindo Mendoza and Felipe Sánchez Solís (1885), and an English language translation by John Bierhorst (1998). In many ways, Faustino Galicia Chimalpopoca presents the least literal translation, often straying away from the

narrative as written and other points leaving out sections. The Spanish translation by Gumesindo Mendoza and Felipe Sánchez Solís, and the English translation by John Bierhorst offer translations that are far truer to the original Nahuatl, yet both take license in attempting to make the narrative more accessible to their intended audiences. In the tradition of these translators before me, I present my own translation of the text that seeks to draw closer to the original, as much as it may be possible in a translation into the English language.

The *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, as with many Nahuatl texts, presents difficulties for the translator, as the structure and function in the Nahuatl language is unlike English, Spanish, or any Old World language. The general lack of punctuation and the freedom within Nahuatl to shift word order often make it difficult to distinguish when one sentence ends and the next begins. Furthermore, the speech is often metaphorical, with metaphors that often become inaccessible due to cultural and historical differences. Where it is possible to maintain the integrity of the account, I have provided a literal translation of the metaphorical language. Furthermore, connotations and double meanings are often lost in translation, and are replaced with connotations connected to the English translation. For this reason, I choose not to translate certain words here. The first of these words, Tlatlacatecolloh, literally means the Human Owls (a term that applies to figures such as Tezcatlipoca, Ihuimecatl, and Toltecatl in the larger narrative). This word, which is commonly translated as devils, suggests that these figures were evil in a Christian sense. The second of these words is Tlamacazqui (with the plural form, Tlamacazque), which I will discuss in greater detail below. The common translations of these two terms, devil and priest respectively, imbue the account with Christian ideology that was most certainly lacking within the precontact traditions.

B. Excerpt from the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*,⁹⁵ my translation:

quitoque ma ticchihuacan octli
ticytizque ynic ticlapoltizque ynic
aocmo tlamagehuaz ...

They said, “let us make *octli*. We will have
him drink so that we will disorient him, so
that he will not do ceremony.”

...niman yaque yn ichan quetzalcoatl yn
ompa tollan mochi quitquique yn inquil
yn inchil et^a. yhuan octli. açito
onmoyeyecoque amo çiaya yn quipiaya
quetzalcoatl ynic calaquizque oppa expa
quincuepque amo çeliloya çeliloya
çatepan tlatlaniloque yn canin ynchan.
tlananquilique quitoque ca oncan yn
tlamacazcatepec yn toltecatepec
yuh quicac yn quetzalcoatl yc quito ma
hualcalaquican callacque auh
quitlapaloque yequene quimacaque yn
quilitl. et^a

...Then they went to the home of
Quetzalcoatl there in Tollan, they carried all
of their green, their chiles . Also *octli*.
They went to arrive over there and they, the
guardians of Quetzalcoatl, did not consent to
the entrance. Two times, three times they
turned them away, unreceived. At last they
asked where their home was. They responded
saying, “there in Tlamacazcatepec, in
Toltecatepec.” Quetzalcoatl heard and said,
“come enter.” They entered. Then they
greeted him and at last they gave the greens,
etcetera.

⁹⁵ The Nahuatl text is drawn primarily from John Bierhorst. *Codex Chimalpopoca: The Text in Nahuatl with a Glossary and Grammatical Notes*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011, 10-11.

auh yn oquiqua ocçepa quitlatlauhtique
quimacaque yn octli. auh quimilhui ca
amo niquiz ca ninoçahua aço teyhuinti.
anoço temicti . quilhuique ma
momapiltzin yn xicpallo . ca tetlahueli ca
huitztli . yn Quetzalcoatl ymapiltica
quipallo yn oquihuelmat qito ma niqui
cocol yn oçe conyc quilhuique yn
tlatlacatecollo nahui yn ticmitiz yuh
oquimacaque yc macuilli quilhuique
motlatoyahualtzin . auh yn oquic niman
mochintin quinmacaque yn itecpoyohuan
mochintin mamacuilli yn quique yn
oquincentlahuantique . occeppa yn
tlatlacatecollo quilhuique yn Quetzalcoatl
nopiltzin ma ximocuicati yzcatque yn
mocuicatzin yn ticmehuiliz . niman
quehuili yn yhuimecatl .

Once he was finishing eating again they
implored him, they gave him *octli*. But he
told them, “I will not drink it because I am
fasting. Perhaps it gets people drunk, or
perhaps it kills people.” They told him,
“taste it with your finger, as it is as angry
with people as thorns.” Quetzalcoatl used
his finger to taste it, and it tasted good to
him. He said, “let me drink, grandfather.”
And he drank more. They said, the
Tlatlacatecolloh, the Human Owls, “you
will drink four,” and once they gave him
five, they said, “it is your share.” And once
he drank, then they all gave them, all of his
pages, five. And they drank. When they had
given them all of it. Again the
Tlatlacatecolloh said, “Quetzalcoatl, my
noble, may you sing. Here it is, your song,
you will raise yourself up with it.” Then
Ihuimecatl, caused it to rise up:

== quetzal quetzal nocalli çaquan
nocallin tapach nocallin nicyacahuaz
anya .==

auh yn ye pactica . quetzalcoatl quito
xicanatin yn nohueltiuh quetzalpetlatl ma
tonehuan titlahuanacan . yaque yn
itecpoyohuan yn ompa tlamaçaehuaya
nonohualcatepec quilhuito nopiltzi
çihuapilli quetzalpetlatl moçauhqui ca
timitztanilico; mitzmochilia yn
tlamacazqui yn quetzalcoatl ytlán
timoyetztiyetih quito ca ye qualli . ma
tihuianocol tecpoyotl . auh yn ohualla
ytlán motlali yn quetzalcoac niman
oquimacaque yn octli nahui no çe
ytlatoyahual yc macuilli . auh yn
tetlahuantique yn yhuimecatl yhuan
toltecatl niman ye no yc quicuicatia yn
ihueltiuh quetzalcoatl quehuilique

==quetzal quetzal, my house is closed, my
house is covered, my house I will *ya*
abandon... *anya* ==

And when he was already happy,
Quetzalcoatl said, “grab my older sister
Quetzalpetlatl that we, ourselves, may drink
together.” They went, his pages, and there
she was doing ceremony at Nonohualcatepec.
They went saying, “my noble, young girl,
Quetzalpetlatl, one that fasts, we came to ask
for you, he waits for you, the *tlamacazqui*,
Quetzalcoatl, for you to be there. She said
“That is good. Let’s go, grandfather page.”
And when she came, she set herself at the
place of Quetzalcoatl. Then they gave her
octli, four and also one, Her share was five.
And when they, Ihuimecatl and Toltecatl,
had gotten the people drunk, then also they
gave her a song, the older sister of
Quetzalcoatl, they caused it to rise:

== nohueltiuh ca tiyanemeyan
tiquetzalpetlatl in ma titlahuianacan ayya
yya ynye an ==

yn oyhuintique aocmo quitoque yn tlaça
titlamaçeuque . auh niman aocmo apan
temoque . aocmo mohuitztlalito aocle
quichiuque yn tlahuizcalpan . auh yn
otlathuic cenca tlaocoxque ycnoyohuac
yn inyollo . niman oncan qito yn
quetzalcoatl onotlahuelitic niman ye ic
tlaocolcuica ynic quicuicayoti ynic yaz
onca queuh .

==my older sister, where *ya* are *yan*, you
Quetzalpetlatl. Let's get drunk *ayya yya*
ynye an ==

And when they were drunk, they no longer
said, "we are the doers of ceremony." And
then they no longer went down to the water,
they no longer went setting themselves
with thorns, they did nothing at the
time/place of dawn. And when it dawned
they were very sad, dark and pitiable were
their hearts. Then and there Quetzalcoatl
said, "I am downcast." Then he already
sang for solace, he wrote a song about how
he will go away from there.

In this narrative, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was driven to despair, a despair that ultimately led to him leaving his home and (according to this version) kill himself by the sea thereby becoming Tlahuizcalpanteuctli, Lord of the Dawn and the Morning Star of Venus. But which of all the events laid out in the narrative led him to leave his home and ultimately kill himself? Although his displeasure the morning following his drinking suggests he had a hangover, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl did not leave town for another four days following that morning.⁹⁶ The four days spent in solitude (much like the four drinks that were a “reasonable” amount before the fifth drink made him and the others drunk) likely has ritual significance. Whatever the significance, the four days likely afforded him time to recover physically from any possible hangover and to give his decision to leave greater thought. Certain factors likely contributed to his decision to leave, including the song written for him to sing in his drunkenness, stating that he was going to leave. This song, along with the inebriation, likely functioned as a form of persuasion via the production of a trance-like state. However, these reasons are rarely presented as causes of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl’s departure from Tollan. And while this narrative, as presented in Nahuatl by Nahua writers, makes no mention of sexual intercourse, the act of sex is often assumed.

Current academic readings of this narrative are diverse, yet the popular academic view maintains that Quetzalcoatl’s downfall was caused by the crime of sexual misconduct, or incest with his sister Quetzalpetlatl (Durán 1971; Burkhart 1989; Florescano 1999; Lee 2015). Louise Burkhart seminal work, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, sought to examine the ways that Christian values, such as sexual prohibitions, manifested among the Nahua people before contact. Yet despite her

⁹⁶ Quetzalcoatl spent *nauhilhuatl*, or four days, lying in a wooden box. The significance of this act is unclear.

critical examination of the framing of sexual mores in Nahua societies by Spanish texts and misunderstandings, Burkhart (1989, 75) likewise frames the Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl narratives (and the following narrative of Huemac, which I will address later) as one where, “Tezcatlipoca, assisted in some versions by other trickster or sorcerer figures, tricks Quetzalcoatl/Huemac into getting drunk and/or having illicit intercourse with his own sister or with Tezcatlipoca in female disguise.” Other scholars, such as Sharisse and Geoffrey McCafferty (1999) and David Carrasco (1999) maintain that the brother and sister became drunk together and that “perhaps” a sexual act took place. This reading extends into more popular culture, in Rudolfo Anaya’s fictionalized retelling of the Quetzalcoatl narrative, *Lord of the Dawn: The Legend of Quetzalcoatl*. In the introduction to Anaya’s (2012, 12) book, David M. Johnson explores the idea of incest as a step toward more positive transformation when he states that, “Although incest is implied in the text [*Anales de Cuauhtitlan*], there is also the connotation of rebirth, as if the ascetic priest must become fully carnal, fully immersed in the flesh, before he can abandon Tula and begin his journey to death and resurrection.”

Renown scholar of Nahua history and texts, H. B. Nicholson (2001, 47) provides a different reading on the relationship between Quetzalcoatl and Quetzalpetlatl, however his succinctness perhaps allows his observation to go unnoticed by many other scholars; he states, “completely under the influence, he [Quetzalcoatl] sends for ‘his elder sister’ (= priestess), Quetzalpetlatl,” and together the two, “completely neglect their penitential and religious duties (and commit sexual transgressions?).” Nicholson’s identification of Quetzalpetlatl as a “priestess,” rather than as the biological sister of Quetzalcoatl was taken up by Julia Madajck (2014, 277), where she further suggests that Quetzalpetlatl is

Quetzalcoatl's priestess, while also referring to her as "the woman with whom Quetzalcoatl committed a fatal transgression." In addition to Nicholson's reading of Quetzalpetlatl's role as sister as a term denoting her position as a religious leader, early Spanish translations suggest that the relationship of brother and sister in the context of this narrative were not understood to be literal. Such is the case with G. Mendoza and Felipe Sánchez Solís translation of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (1885, 20) narrative, where Quetzalcoatl calls Quetzalpetlatl, "Querida esposa mia [my darling wife]," rather than the more literal older sister.

C. The Influence of Early Spanish Texts and Alternate Indigenous Narratives

When applying a Western cultural lens, the notion that an evening of drunkenness between a man and a woman culminates in sex, even if unmentioned overtly in the text, seems a reasonable conclusion. Another possible explanation for the assumption of sex in interpreting this story may be the conflation of this narrative with that told by Fray Diego Durán, a Dominican friar in Mexico in the second half of the sixteenth century. In his *Book of the Gods and Rites and the Ancient Calendar*, Durán (1971, 58-59) dedicates a chapter to the historical figure of Topiltzin, who he adopts as a Christian figure delivered to the New World:

I wish to adhere to the Holy Gospel of Saint Mark, who states that God sent the Holy Apostles to all parts of the world to preach the gospel to His creatures, promising eternal life to all baptized believers, I would not dare affirm that Topiltzin was one of the blessed Apostles. Nevertheless, the story of his life has impressed me greatly and has led me and others to believe that, since the natives were also God's creatures,

rational and capable of salvation, He cannot have left them without a preacher of the Gospel. And if this is true, that preacher was Topiltzin, who came to this land.

Fray Durán's rendering of Topiltzin as a man of God are unmistakably influenced by his religious training. And while he is not always so obvious in his influences, the details he provides in his chapter about Topiltzin provides insight into the ways Durán has filtered the information he received from his indigenous sources.

In reading Durán's version of the account, one striking dissimilarity between it and the Nahuatl version above is the name of the principal figure; while his name in the Nahuatl text is Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl Ce Acatl (usually shortened to Quetzalcoatl), Durán calls him Topiltzin Huemac (usually shorted to Topiltzin). While both of these names share the title of Topiltzin, which is Nahuatl for "our son" or "our noble person," Durán identifies another figure within the narrative as Quetzalcoatl—one of the persecutor of Topiltzin. This may have been due to the confusion surrounding the name and identity of Quetzalcoatl among non-natives at the time, a confusion that has continued among academics. For while Quetzalcoatl is the name of one of the primary *teteoh* of the Nahua and other indigenous people, and one of the creators of the world and of humanity, the title of Quetzalcoatl was shared by the religious leader who followed his example. As such, many held the title of Quetzalcoatl. And while the narrative told by Durán has much in common with the narrative told within the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, Durán (either on his own or based on the information he received) seems to be conflating the narratives of two figures. While these two may have been merged by the native people themselves by the time of Diego Durán's work, the figures of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl Ce Acatl and Quetzalcoatl Huemac are discussed as separate individuals within both the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* and the Florentine Codex.

Durán's writing about Topiltzin carries the reader along through his collection of data, and at times gives readers a view of how he is selecting what to believe and record, and what to reject. At one point Durán (1971, 62-63) states, "When I asked another aged Indian what he knew about the departure of Topiltzin, he narrated to me Chapter Fourteen of Exodus... I ceased interrogating him in order to stop this repetition of Exodus." This filtering of information, however, goes largely unwritten, with Durán making only occasional reference to such things as hearing "incredible" stories, that he then fails to inform the reader of. Throughout his chapter on Topiltzin, Durán suggests that he talks with many indigenous people (having lived in Mexico since his youth, and being a fluent speaker of Nahuatl) and mentions having questioned at least four old indigenous men directly. However, it is not until he repeatedly questions the final Nahua man mentioned within the chapter that Durán (1971, 68) gains information related to the possibility of sexual misconduct:

I was still curious and wished to press the Indian to give more information, so that one word here and another there-I could complete my book. Again I asked him the reason for the departure of the holy man from this land. He answered that the persecution by Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca (both of them wizards and magicians, who could change their forms as they wished) had been the reason. I questioned the native regarding the unhappy causes which obliged the holy man to flee. He responded that, while Hueymac was absent from his room, the wizards had secretly introduced a harlot called Xochiquetzal, who lived a whorish life in those times. When Topiltzin returned to his cell, ignorant of the harlot's presence, the evil wizards spread rumors about Xochiquetzal, who was lying in the cell of Topiltzin. This they

did in order to spoil the priest's reputation and that of his disciples. Since Topiltzin was chaste and lived a life of purity, this insult wounded him deeply, and he immediately decided to depart from this country. I asked the Indian whether he knew or had heard where the priest had gone. Although he told me some incredible things, he confirmed my idea that Topiltzin had gone toward the seacoast.

Within Durán's version of the narrative, Topiltzin does not engage in incest, but rather is falsely accused of breaking his vow of chastity. This would align well with Durán's Christian image of Topiltzin as a holy man who would not have broken such a priestly vow. And according to Guilhem Oliver (2008), "The sexual sin is not only absent from this version but negated, given the image of Topiltzin that Durán wants to present to his reader." Durán's retelling, however, is more suggestive of the story of Hueymac as told in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*. According to John Bierhorst's (1992, 38) translation of the text, "When female sorcerers set out to make fun of [Huemac] and mock him, [Huemac] cohabited with them. The sorcerer Yaotl and the one called Tezcatlipoca, who lived in Tzapotlan, were the ones who came there. When they deceived Huemac by changing themselves into women, he did cohabit with them. Then he stopped being Quetzalcoatl." (Bracketed text appears in the original work.) It should be noted that this narrative (presumably written by the same scribe who wrote the narrative of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl only a few pages earlier) is quite explicit in the misdeed that led to Huemac losing his title. The verb used to denote this sex act is *açi*, which can mean to touch, to arrive, or to have sexual intercourse. The Nahuatl text of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (Bierhorst 1998, 14) reads, "*yn çihuatlatlacatecollo yntech açic*," he had sex with the female *tlatlacatecollo*, and later "*yn omoçihuacuepque yntech açic*," when they transformed into women, he had sex with them. The sex act in this context is not veiled

in metaphor nor in figurative language. And though this account appears alongside that of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the Nahuatl writer or writers included no such suggestions of sex within his narrative.

D. The role of the Quetzalcoatl

The significance of this narrative within the life of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as a historical figure and as a leader of indigenous religious traditions can begin to be understood through an examination of the role of a Quetzalcoatl as a *tlamacazqui*. The title of *tlamacazqui*, often translated as priest, represents a specific role within Nahuatl religious and political tradition, and the Quetzalcoatl is the highest rank among the *tlamacazque* (the plural form of *tlamacazqui*). The word *tlamacazqui* has an etymology that defies easy analysis. This may be the reason that, as far as I have come across in my research, few have attempted to engage in a linguistic analysis of the word. According to Frances Karttunen (1983, 278), a preeminent linguist of Nahuatl and author of *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, a *tlamacazqui* is “one who served in the (preconquest) religious establishment, penitent... See TLAMACA.” Karttunen lists this secondary word, *tlamaca*, thereby suggesting it is the root of *tlamacazqui*. Karttunen (1983, 278) defines *tlamaca* in two ways: “to serve someone food,” and “to give blows.” Similarly, Fray Ángel María Garibay (1953-1954, 2:408), a linguist and historian of the early twentieth century, defined *tlamacazqui* as “*Lit., el que dará algo* [he who will give something].” However, the formation of *tlamacazqui* from the word *tlamaca* would require an atypical if not unique formation.

The suffix *-qui* in Nahuatl words generally functions in two ways and is a relatively common suffix to find on personal titles. This suffix primarily appears as a preterit tense

suffix on multiple classes of verbs in first, second, and third person singular conjugations. For example, the verb *choloa* (meaning to flee) would become *nicholoqui*, I fled, *ticholoqui*, you fled, and *choloqui*, s/he fled. A secondary and related function of this suffix is as a preterit agentive—one that did something becomes a marker indicating one who is a habitual doer of that verb, much like the –er suffix in English (in words such as singer or thinker). Following this train of thought, it might follow that, as Garibay asserts that the *tlamacazqui* is one who will give things, Karttunen is suggesting that a *tlamacazqui* is one who regularly distributes food or punishment.

However, the verb *maca* (meaning to give, and the root of both forms of *tlamaca*) does not acquire this particular suffix in the preterit tense. Instead, this verb takes the suffix –c, a shortened form of this suffix. This would yield *nitetlamacac*, I gave food to people, *titetlamacac*, you gave food to people, and *tetlamacac*, s/he gave to people. Additionally, the verb *tlamaca* is known to have taken on the alternate suffix of –ni, also signifying that one is a habitual doer of the verb. Hence a *tetlamacani*,⁹⁷ is one who (-ni) who gives food (*tlamaca*) to people (*te-*). However, even if *tlamacazqui* represents an anomalous verb form within the language, and hence acquired a different, yet still acceptable suffix than what was typical (which is found in archaic word formation), the addition of the –z- suggests another unusual element.

The suffix –z in Nahuatl exists as a future tense marker on first, second, and third person singular verbs. This would yield *nitetlamacaz*, I will give food to people, *titetlamacaz*, you will give food to people, and *tetlamacaz*, s/he will give of food to people. And while the plural form of the title, *tlamacazque*, could be read as they will give blows

⁹⁷ For an example of the word *tetlamacani* in context, see the Florentine Codex (YEAR) 11:21

(though it is lacking a necessary object required of the transitive verb *tlamaca*, meaning to give food), the singular form, *tlamacazqui*, resists a similar interpretation. According to preeminent Classical Nahuatl Linguist, James Lockhart (2001, 35), the singular *-zqui* ending in the future tense possibly represents an ancient form, but had disappeared with his noted exception “In the Tlaxcalan region a monosyllabic future often bore *-qui*, thus *yezqui*, ‘it will be.’” As the proposed root of *tlamacazqui*, *maca*, is a two syllable word, and *maca* appears with the standard singular future suffix in innumerable colonial documents, this accepted word construction of *tla-maca-zqui* is either unlikely or represents an archaic and unique form. This construction would also be unique in that this title would use the future tense of a verb, rather than the typical use of the preterit agentive form as a title.

As an alternate reading, I propose that the title of *tlamacazqui* comes from the verb *imacaci*, a transitive verb which has the preterit root, *imacaz*, forming the singular and plural forms *imacazqui* and *imacazque*. Alonso de Molina’s (1880, 2:38) Nahuatl dictionary, first published in 1571, defines *imacaci* as, “to have respect or reverential fear.”⁹⁸ In Nahuatl, the letter and sound *-i-* tend to be weak, and this letter is often dropped when a prefix or suffix are added. For this reason the verb *ihcuiloa*, a transitive verb meaning to write becomes *tlahcuiloa*, s/he writes in general.⁹⁹ However, Karttunen (1983, 105) has the word transcribed as *īmacaci*, with an initial long *i-*, meaning that the letter should not be dropped when a prefix is added. Nevertheless, other examples from within the Florentine Codex suggest that this initial letter was sometimes kept and other times lost. For example, the

⁹⁸ The original Spanish text reads: “tener respecto o temor reuerencial.”

⁹⁹ The prefix *tla-* has a multitude of meanings. One of the more common uses of the prefix is to take the place of an unnamed object in a transitive verb. Similarly, the transitive verb *pohua* requires an object. As such, one could say *ni-c-pohua amoxtli*, I read books (where the *-c-* represents the object that is later named: the books), or one could simply say *ni-tla-pohua*, I read in general.

Nahuatl writers of the Florentine Codex describe the good merchant as a person who, “*tlatmacazqui teimacazqui*,” which Anderson and Dibble translate as “He shows respect for things, he venerates people.” While the second of these words maintain the initial *i-* of *imacaci*, the first of these words does not and could be interpreted as having the same root (*maca*, to give) as asserted by most scholars. Within the original Spanish translation of this section of the Florentine Codex, these two words become, “*temiendo á Dios en todo* [fearing God in everything].” This early translation suggests that these words, *tlatmacazqui* and *teimacazqui*, derive from the root *imacaci*, meaning to have reverential fear, in the preterit/habitual form, *imacazqui*. Also, the continued use of the word *tlatmacazqui* in the colonial era as a Nahuatl translation for a Catholic priest had imbued the word with a new significance that becomes apparent in the Spanish translation. Further, this early translation suggests that the root of this word, *imacaci*, does not always maintain the initial *i-*, regardless of its vowel length. While the *tlatmacazqui* drops the initial *i-* with the addition of the object *tlat-* meaning property or things, *teimacazqui* keeps the initial *i-* and adds the object prefix *te-* meaning people. Following the pattern of the former, I assert that *tlatmacazqui* also experiences an elision of the *i-*, and has the meaning of one who shows respect in general.

As a *tlatmacazqui* and as a revered historical figure, the accounts of the life of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl became the template for all other *tlatmacazque*. According to Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble’s (1950-1982, 4:14) translation of the Florentine Codex, “this Quetzalcoatl also did penances. He bled the calf of his leg to stain thorns with blood. And he bathed at midnight.... Him the fire priests imitated, and the [other] priests. And the priests took their manner of conduct from the life of Quetzalcoatl. By it they ordained the law of

Tula. Thus were customs established here in Mexico.” (Bracketed words appear in original.) In many ways, the historical figure of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, as presented in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* and as known throughout many parts of Mesoamerica, became the model for other *tlamacazque* who came after him and for the *calmecac*¹⁰⁰ throughout the precontact area of Mexico, where young boys and girls went to be trained as *tlamacazque*.

E. Fasting and the Requirements of a Tlamacazqui

Various words in Nahuatl are translated as fasting, and they have an array of meanings that are overlapping. In the English language, the verb to fast is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as, “Abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, especially as a religious observance.”¹⁰¹ While the English word “fasting” generally denotes refraining from ingesting food or beverages, the Nahuatl word *zahua* has a more inclusive meaning, and can apply to abstention from a variety of activities including eating, drinking, bathing, dancing, and sleeping with others. The most commonly discussed form of fasting within the Florentine Codex is the abstention from eating and from specific kinds of food at specific hours.

Food held special significance to the Nahua people, as evident in the Florentine Codex’s discussion of food and the varying relationships to it. Book ten of the Florentine Codex discusses the diverse people and roles of people within the Mexica Nahua communities, including the various kinds of nobles. The terms for these individuals include

¹⁰⁰ I more thoroughly describe the *calmecac* in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Additionally, see Caso (1936) for more information on how Quetzalcoatl was the patron of the *calmecac*.

¹⁰¹ fast. Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/fast> (accessed May 28, 2016).

tetzon, one's hair, *teezio*, one's blood, and *teizti*, one's nails. One listed among these noble people is *teauaio*, one's thorn, suggesting a connection to the ritual of setting oneself with thorns. While this text does not suggest that the type of individual being described is a *tlamacazqui*, the discussion of the fasting and a good relationship to food held by the *teauaio* likely extended to *tlamacazque* and to other segments of the population. According to the Nahua scribes of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 11:21):

Teauaio, moçaoani, mocuitlaxcolçaoani, tlaqualizcaoani, motenoatzani. In qualli teaoaio tetlamacani, tetlaqualitiani, teihhiocuitiani, teihhiocuitia, tetlaqualtia teacotlaça, teiolloizcalia. [Someone's thorn is someone who fasts, someone who deprives their intestines, someone who abstains from food, one who dries out their lips. Someone's good thorn is one who gives food to people, one who has people eat, one who makes sure people have something to eat, causes people to have something to eat, causes people to eat food, relieves people of work, lifts people's hearts.]

In this short passage, the Nahua writers present three different ideas—the idea of fasting, the idea of the giving of food, and the idea of easing the burden of others. The pattern of this particular passage provides a list of synonyms to emphasize the importance of these actions. The passage begins with the title of the individual, *teauaio*, one's thorn, and is followed by four words of very similar meaning (*moçaoani*, *mocuitlaxcolçaoani*, *tlaqualizcaoani*, *motenoatzani*) denoting an abstention from food and drink. Again, the passage further names the individual, this time specifying one's good thorn, *qualli teaoaio*, followed by five words (with three distinct roots) each sharing the very similar meaning of giving food to people. The description of this good thorn concludes with a couplet explaining that these actions have a positive effect on people. The description of the *teauaio* concludes with a description

of the bad thorn, which among other descriptors explains that this individual is selfish and, according to Anderson and Dibble's (1950-1982, 11:21) translation, "He eats to excess; he is an intemperate eater."

The concepts and practices of fasting and overeating were determined culturally and should not be expected to align with contemporary Western traditions. For example, the Florentine Codex discusses a drug, *teopochotl*, commonly given to turkeys to fatten them up, that could be given to people as well. In the passage about *teopochotl*, the Nahuatl writers explain how giving a person this drug would cause them to become obese and eventually die from being overweight. Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 12:216) describe the effects of the drug saying, "He has a great appetite—eats excessively. He becomes in no place unblemished; he become revolting; he just lies stretched out panting, breathing heavily. He has a great thirst, a great hunger; he eats three times, four times a day." The gluttony here emphasized by the frequency of the person's meals, *expa nappa*, three four times each day, contrasts sharply with contemporary Western norms of eating at least three meals a day. Additionally, the extensive and graphic description of the fattening of the person by the *teopochotl* and the words chosen to describe the process suggests that overeating for people and the resulting weight gain was considered wholly unattractive and undesirable. However, while eating three or four times a day is here described as excessive, those who were fasting still often ate once a day, either at midday or in the middle of the night.

Rather than barring the eating of food and drink entirely, fasts are often described as limiting the time of day and the kinds of food that a person could consume. The Florentine Codex describes the fasting that took place during the Atamalqualiztli, the Eating of the Water Tamales, among the general population and among the *tlamacazque*.

According to the translation of the text describing the practices among the general populace, Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 3:163) state, “For seven days all fasted. Only water tamales, soaked in water, were eaten, without chili, without salt, with neither saltpeter nor lime. And they were eaten [only] at midday.”¹⁰² In this case, the specific fast allowed for the eating of a specific food, water tamales prepared without limestone (a necessary alkaline treatment called nixtamalization, required to properly digest corn) and without salt or chiles. The resulting water tamale was likely a bland food compared to standard tamales, which are described in mouthwatering detail in other parts of the text. These same fasting restrictions for the seven-day Atamalqualiztli apply to the *tlamacazque*, who could eat either in the middle of the night or the middle of the day.¹⁰³

The seven-day Atamalqualiztli fast was one of many different ritual fasts that took place. The Florentine Codex also describes fasts of other lengths, including fasts that lasted a single day, four days, five days, twenty days, eighty days, and a year.¹⁰⁴ The conditions of these fasts are rarely made clear, though most include descriptions of dietary restrictions. However, some fasts make no mention of food, and focus instead on other types of abstention. Regarding the 20-day fast held by the *tepopochtin*, the young men, Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 3:95) translate, “And they did not dance; they did only one thing—they only provided light. And they were on guard and kept close watch on people.” Similarly, during another fast, Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 3:187) state that, “When

¹⁰² Brackets appear in the original text.

¹⁰³ Florentine Codex (4:64)

¹⁰⁴ Sahagun, Bernardino de. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*. Translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. 12 vols. University of Utah Press, 1950-1982. For single day fasts, see 3:81; for four-day fasts, see 3:81; for five-day fasts, see 3:180; for seven-day fasts, see 3:163, for twenty-day fasts, see 3:95; for eighty-day fasts, see 3:130; and for yearlong fasts, see 4:8 and 13:49.

all abstained, they did not fast. But none washed themselves with soap nor in the steam bath; neither did [men] lie with women.”¹⁰⁵ While this fast restricted bathing and sexual intercourse rather than food consumption, still other fasts seem to combine these multiple restrictions on food with the restrictions on other bodily acts like bathing, dancing, and sexual intercourse.¹⁰⁶ Another common way of discussing fasts are the description of the work that the *tlamacazque* must do during a fast. For example, Anderson and Dibble’s (1950-1982, 3:130) translation of the description of 80-day fasts for the *tlamacazque* makes no mention of food, but instead outlines the required ceremonial tasks:

When the feast of Panquetzalitzli had not yet arrived, the priests fasted for eighty days, and laid down green boughs. When they began [the fast], it was upon the day following [the month of] Ochpaniztli. At midnight they spread the green boughs, on all the mountain tops and upon the circular altars, [even those] which were distant. And this they did until [the month of] Panquetzalitzli arrived. When they laid the green boughs, they went quite naked, wearing nothing. They went carrying green boughs; these [were] green reeds and thorns. And they went blowing their shell trumpets and pottery whistles. They proceeded blowing [them] alternately.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Brackets in original. In this section, the word that Anderson and Dibble translation as “abstained” is elsewhere throughout this text translated as “fasted.” However, to translate this passage as, “When all fasted, they did not fast,” would not make sense to contemporary Western readers. There are two different words here representing the idea of fasting: *neçaoaloia* and *tlacatlaqualoia*. While the latter has the specific meaning of fasting in relation to food, the former has the more variable meaning discussed throughout this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ See Sahagun, Bernardino de. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*. Translated by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. 12 vols. University of Utah Press, 1950-1982, 3:180.

¹⁰⁷ Brackets appear in original.

These fasts were important, and failure to abide by the conditions of the specific fast could bring about grave consequences, including punishment from within the community or from Tezcatlipoca himself. According to Anderson and Dibble's (1950-1982, 4:11-12) translation, "when he [Tezcatlipoca] laid these [scourges] upon men, it was when he was wroth—that someone had forsaken his vows and promises, and that he had mishandled the fasting; that a man had lain with a woman [or] a woman with a man, or that otherwise the fasting had been broken."¹⁰⁸ This passage suggests that the breaking of the vow of fasting, like that undertaken and then broken by Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, would necessarily result in some kind of affliction from Tezcatlipoca.

While the nature of fasting is variable, and the original Nahuatl narrative does not specify the occasion for Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl's fast, and likewise the limitations on his fast, the framing of the narrative does allow for an understanding of the fast and how it was broken. The narrative begins with Tezcatlipoca plotting specifically to get Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl drunk in order to keep him from fulfilling his ceremonial duties as *tlamacazqui*. Topiltzin, when he is offered the food, eats without objection. However, when he is offered the *octli*, he objects stating specifically that he is fasting. He continues, stating that the drink may cause him to become inebriated, a likely indicator that his fast prohibits him from drinking intoxicating beverages. However, when he tastes the *octli*, he finds it good, which leads to the question of whether Topiltzin thought it would not intoxicate him. Regardless of this, he drinks to the point of drunkenness, sings through the night with his pages and his older sister, and fails to make any ceremony through the night nor in the morning. This directly contradicts many of the guidelines set out for the person who becomes a *tlamacazqui*.

¹⁰⁸ Only the final bracket, [or], appears in the original.

Book three of the Florentine Codex outlines the proper lifestyle of the *tlamacazque* and of the Quetzalcoatl *tlamacazque*, of which there were two. Within this volume of the codex, which was given the Spanish title of Origin of the Gods, the Nahuatl writers explain fifteen expectations placed on the members of this group. Among these are guidelines for appropriate behavior, including the use of proper speech and knowledge of the books of songs, of dreams, and of the calendar systems. Within these fifteen standards, six explicitly define the actions of the *tlamacazque* during the nighttime and early morning hours. These nighttime tasks include sweeping, collecting wood, performing ceremony, setting themselves with maguey thorns, and taking midnight meals. This is significant in light of the events chronicled in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, where Quetzalcoatl spent the evening and morning hours in sadness, doing none of the six duties that were required of him during that time. Some of these guidelines state that the *tlamacazque* are not to sleep in proximity to other *tlamacazque* (not specifying gender), that they are not to be infatuated with women, and that they will not eye women, there is no prohibition against marriage and no lifelong prohibition against sexual intercourse. As Anderson and Dibble (1950-1982, 4:65) point out, the Nahuatl texts elsewhere give examples of *tlamacazque* who were married, and “Probably a life of celibacy is not to be understood.” Rather, as their title would suggest, the *tlamacazque* were required to treat all things and people, including women, with respect, and in the cases of certain fasts, were to abstain temporarily from sexual intercourse. The restrictions on sexual intercourse, when found to be associated with a certain fast, were usually framed from a masculine and heteronormative perspective, stating that men should not *cihuacochi*, sleep with women. However, similar restrictions were extended to women who were fasting and who were *tlamacazque*.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for more information about the minimal use of

Although rarely explicit about the gender of the *tlamacazque*, the Florentine Codex explains how young women became *cihuatlamacazque*, or female *tlamacazque*. In Book Six: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy of the Florentine Codex, the Nahuatl writers recorded the speech associated with those who attend the *calmecac*. The Nahuatl text of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 7:209, my translation) states:

cioatlamacazquj iez, îpitiz: no mopixtinemjz, amo tecuhtli tlaçulli itech aciz; intlan nemjz in mopixque in jchpupuchti: in mitoa îpioan in calmecac onoque, in mopia, in caltentoque. [She will be a *tlamacazqui*, she will become her older sister; also she will live guarding herself, the lord will not touch filth, beside them she will live, they who live guarded, the young women: it is said that she is her older sister, they will fill the *calmecac*, the guarded, they who fill the house.]

Here the female *tlamacazqui* is described as acquiring the title and relationship of older sister. The words used to define this relationship are *îpitiz*, she will become her older sister, and *îpioan*, or *îpihuan*, her older sister. The root of this verb is the noun *pihtli*, which according to Frances Karttunen (2007, 194), means an “older sister (from the point of view of a woman).” This root differs from the word used in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, where the word *ihueliuh* is used to mean his (Quetzalcoatl’s) older sister, an older sister from the perspective of a boy or man. However, later within this chapter of Book Six of the Florentine Codex, when speaking of the young girls being brought to the *calmecac* by their parents, the Nahuatl writers of the Florentine Codex (1950-1982, 7:216, my translation) again refer to the female *tlamacazque*, as older sisters, this time from a masculine perspective:

gendered language in Nahuatl. While names and titles (such as *tlamacazque*) sometimes used additional gender markers for women, their absence should not imply that these words referred exclusively to men.

in mjtzitoque, in mjtznetoltique, in jvic mjtzitoque in totecujō, naoaque, in jtech tipovizqui in qualtin, iectin in jveltioatzitzinoan totecujō. [They said of you, they promised you, with what they said of you, to our lord,¹¹⁰ the one who is close, beside him you were counted, the good, the great, his older sisters, our lord's.]

Within this portion of the text, the Nahuatl writers clarify whose older sisters the *tlamacazque* become: the older sister of their lord of the near. And while the name of this lord is not given here, the role of Quetzalcoatl as patron of the *calmecac* and as the *tlamacazqui* with the most authority (and arguably the embodiment of the *teotl* Quetzalcoatl), it seems reasonable to assume that the lord they refer to here is Quetzalcoatl.

As H.B. Nicholson (2001, 47) succinctly stated in his summary of the narrative of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, “‘his elder sister’ (= priestess),” the relationship between of an older sister within the context of the *tlamacazque* carries non-literal religious significance. According to Nahuatl linguist Julia Madajczak (2014, 281), the terms *-hueltiuh* (older sister) and *-oquichtiuh* (older brother) reveal, “the actual nature of ‘kinship’ relations between deities. ‘Brothers’ and ‘sisters’ share the same essence, but they should not be understood in terms of descending from the same parents.” Similarly, Madajczak (2014, 283), suggests that “the female candidates for priestesses could have also been called *-pihuan*,” and also points out that, “the male counterpart of *nohueltiuh* [my older sister] in this source [Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón’s Nahuatl text “Treatise on the Heathen Superstitions That Today Live Among the Indians Native to This New Spain”] may be the term *tlamacazqui*.” Based on the use of both *-pihuan* and *-hueltiuh* (both meaning older sister) in the context of women who are or will become *tlamacazque*, I argue that *-pihuan* was used to define the

¹¹⁰ The sense of the word lord here or *teuctli*, does not imply divinity, but rather signifies that the individual holds authority.

relationships to and among *tlamacazque* women, and that *-hueltiuh* was used by *tlamacazque* men to define the relationships to *tlamacazque* women.

Kinship terms require possessive prefixes, and within the narrative of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* the possessed forms are *ihueltiuh* and *nohueltiuh*. In speaking of Quetzalpetlatl, she is addressed either as *ihueltiuh* (with the *i-* prefix meaning her or his) or as *nohueltiuh* (with the *no-* prefix meaning my). *Ihueltiuh*, his older sister, appears spoken by people who are not Quetzalcoatl, and *nohueltiuh*, my older sister, appears spoken by Quetzalcoatl and within the song written by Ihuimecatl (presumably from Quetzalcoatl perspective, like the first song). This should not imply that Quetzalcoatl and Quetzalpetlatl are blood relatives born of the same biological mother. Rather, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as a *tlamacazqui* calls Quetzalpetlatl his older sister out of respect for her role as a *tlamacazqui* as well. Her role as *tlamacazqui* is further supported by the narrative as her entrance into the account is as someone in the midst of ceremony, and as someone who fasts.

F. Conclusion

While translations of important colonial Nahuatl texts such as the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* already exist, reexamination of these texts and of the conclusions drawn from them can still yield new understandings of the culture and ideology of Nahua people. The *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, as the most extensive account of the life of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, has the potential to provide contemporary readers (across cultures) with a better understanding of this foundational figure for Nahua and other Mesoamerican populations. Through this new understanding of the terms used to describe the role of and the

relationships among *tamacazque*, and by recentering the Nahuatl accounts, I suggest that new knowledge of Nahua religious traditions may still be recovered.

Furthermore, by challenging the accepted reading of this narrative as one that culminates with incest, I am simultaneously challenging readings of other texts that use the same and similar terminology. For example, the *Treatise on the Heathen Superstitions That Today Live Among the Indians Native to This New Spain*, a Nahuatl and Spanish text written by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón in 1629, recounts the narrative of Yappan, a *tamacazqui* who is transformed into a scorpion. According to the account, Yappan was fasting in preparation for the transformation he knew was to come. However, the *teteoh* foresaw that his sting would kill people unless they could ensure that Yappan broke his fast, described as a vow of sexual abstinence. According to Ruiz de Alarcón (1984, 204), “two sister” *teteoh* decide to send their sister, Xochiquetzal, who upon arriving introduces herself to Yappan saying, “nimohueltiuh nixochiquetzal [I am your older sister; I am Xochiquetzal].” Furthermore, Xochiquetzal calls Yappan *nooquichtiuh*, my older brother. The biological impossibility of this relationship, where each one is the older sibling of the other, further reveals that these kinship terms denote a relationship outside of their literal meanings. When Yappan breaks his vow of abstinence, when Xochiquetzal and Yappan engage in sexual intercourse, Ruiz de Alarcón (1984, 205) explains this saying, “the cause of this fall was Xochiquetzal’s being a stranger and a goddess who came from the heavens.” While this is not a translation of a Nahuatl text (as much of the *Treatise* is), this suggests Ruiz de Alarcón, as Spaniard born and raised in the Mexico in the late sixteenth century, recognized that Yappan and Xochiquetzal were not biological siblings, but rather they were

strangers who addressed one another with respect in a manner fitting their positions as *tamacazque*.

Translations of such texts as the narrative of Quetzalcoatl from the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* are in need of scholarly reexamination. The reading often proposed, of Quetzalcoatl as one who commits incest with his sister, is very different from the reading I propose here: of Quetzalcoatl as a *tamacazqui* who breaks his vow in the company of another female *tamacazqui*. Review of the original Nahuatl text not only revealed that the *teotl* Quetzalcoatl likely did not commit the crime of incest, it revealed the ways that women within Mexican texts have been negatively impacted by the act of translation. Instead of Quetzalpetlatl serving as a vehicle for Quetzalcoatl's offense (as Durán's reading of the alternate narrative of Topiltzin and Xochiquetzal suggest), Quetzalpetlatl becomes her own character, a religious leader in her own right, who commits her own offense and breaks her own vows. As discussed in Chapter Two, many of the existing translations unintentionally add gender bias that likely did not exist in the original Nahuatl texts. Uncovering such examples, and reinserting the Nahua voices into their own narratives is vital to the ongoing decolonial project.

VII. Conclusion

This dissertation, as an interdisciplinary project, has sought to approach the decipherment of Mexican codices from a variety of different angles. Perhaps my most vital contribution has been my focus on the indigenous texts themselves, rather than on translations and Western academic interpretations. This approach has allowed me to make novel connections between Nahuatl glyphic and Nahuatl alphabetic texts, without using Western scholarship as an intermediary. In using this approach, I faced a challenge in providing a general overview of Postclassic Mesoamerica. I met this challenge by providing an overview that was rooted in the Codex Mendoza. In so doing, I created a model for how an indigenous text, in the form of the INAH interactive application and website for the Codex Borgia, can be used as a primary text in the instruction and study of Postclassic Mesoamerica and an introduction to Nahuatl writing.

Another of my key contributions has been my introduction of productive models of Nahuatl logographic decipherment. In Chapters Two and Three, I developed a methods of reading glyphs within the Codex Borgia, and in Chapters Three and Four I provided two in depth case studies of how this method of decipherment can be used to gather new information about the content and function of the Codex Borgia. This development can be used by other scholars of the Codex Borgia and other Central Mexican codices, and has the potential to yield new avenues of study for codical scholars and other scholars of Mesoamerican history, religion, language, and culture.

In examining the Mexican craft and system of writing, I highlight indigenous conceptions of science, language, and gender. In doing so, I regularly return to examples of

how Western gendered language and ideology have influenced scholarly understanding of Nahua texts and culture. This thread that can be seen in translations of the Florentine Codex in reference to who could attend the *calmecac*, and therefore who was trained to read and write. And this thread continued in my analysis of the translations of *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* in reference to the ways that Quetzalpetlatl has been painted as sister and party to incest, rather than as a religious leader and respected peer to Quetzalcoatl.

These methods and discoveries have practical implications for future study. As more indigenous scholars enter academia, and as more Western scholars become aware of the need for culturally informed and guided analyses, my methods can serve as a roadmap for future decipherment of the Codex Borgia and other Mexican texts. Furthermore, my challenges to contemporary readings of Central Mexican history, language, and figures can provide Chicana feminists, artists, and communities with new ways of seeing Mesoamerican iconography and history. For example, scholars such as Cherrie Moraga have emphasized the ways that Mesoamerican elements have been used to perpetuate discrimination:

For a generation, nationalist leaders used a kind of ‘selective memory,’ drawing exclusively from those aspects of Mexican and Native cultures that served the interests of male heterosexuals. At times, they took the worst of Mexican machismo and Aztec warrior bravado, combined it with some of the most oppressive male-conceived idealizations of ‘traditional’ Mexican womanhood and called that cultural integrity. (Moraga 2001, 158)

While the sexism and heterosexism that Moraga identifies among some Chicano nationalists certainly exists, and the perpetrators of these forms of oppression do often claim to draw on Mexican and Native cultures and histories, my research suggests that many of the oppressive

ideas commonly associated with the Aztecs are in large part a product of colonization.

Therefore, my contributions could potentially influence how Chicana feminists and others view precontact indigenous masculinity and female religious figures.

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