

## Night Ceremonies and Chants

Recordings of María Sabina's chants (Wasson and Wasson 1957a, Wasson et al. 1974) by American mycologist Gordon Wasson turned a humble but powerful woman into one of the most famous figures in modern Mexico, both within and outside of the country (Fig. 2.1; Estrada 1981). Nonetheless, despite the publication of the recordings along with full transcriptions, annotations, and translations of the recited texts in both Spanish and English (Wasson et al. 1974), the remarkable knowledge of María Sabina and many other *chjota chjine* from the region has not been given the attention that it deserves.

This chapter is an attempt to critically present and discuss original Mazatec chants that were recorded, transcribed, and translated by the author and Santiago Cortés Martínez, a *huauteco* with a long-lasting interest in the preservation and promotion of his native language, ceremonies, and traditional medicine. The chants provide a unique entry point into Mesoamerican healers' images of themselves and their knowledge and powers. Colonial poems and chants are also critically presented alongside contemporary examples to understand the historical depth and trajectory of Indigenous way of constructing personhood and agency in a ritual context.

### 2.1. Colonial views on night ceremonies

Along with other deeply misguided and negative terms, such as “idol” (*idolo*), that have been used to describe sacred Mesoamerican images in colonial and modern scholarship, “drunkenness” (*borrachera*) has been taken at face value when describing ceremonies, especially those performed at night, which are seemingly implied to be orgiastic, alcohol-fueled rituals. Such a misinterpretation is a direct result of the fact that every piece of information on the use of mind-altering, psychoactive substances in colonial sources was intended to demonize and extirpate their use. Treatises such as those by Ruiz de Alarcón and other friars compiled in the seventeenth century were veritable manuals for the identification of illicit Indigenous practices that involved substances such as *ololiuhqui* (*datura* seed), *piciete* (wild tobacco), and sacred mushrooms (*teonanacatl*; Andrews and Hassig 1984, Ponce et al. 1987).

The implications of such a prejudicial stance are seldom considered when relying on these sources for interpretation, perhaps due to common and long-lasting misconceptions of altered states in Western society and culture. Notably, Ginzburg (1983, 1991) unveiled how the witch-hunt craze



Figure 2.1. María Sabina. Fototeca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico.

of the early modern period persecuted deeply rooted agrarian cults in Europe. A person's ability to transform into another being (human, animal, or supernatural) was deemed diabolical by the Church and led to the killing of hundreds of thousands of people, mostly women. Witches were accused of being willfully malevolent beings who vengefully caused sickness and death to others. It is not a coincidence that Inquisitorial practices in the Old World spread to the New World during the same period in the wake of the political subjugation of Indigenous peoples. After the so-called decline of magic and the rise of the modern state, which became the institution charged with controlling societal behavior, the condemnation of altered states passed from the realm of the diabolical to that of the insane (Foucault 2006). Even Freud's theorization of the subconscious, which has been accepted by the medical and scientific establishment since the early twentieth century, elicits the idea of something subversive and threatening. To this day, substances that alter states of mind are mostly illegal and only used for recreational purposes.

In the case of Latin America, perhaps no scholar has more cogently expressed the deep and entrenched relationship between Western constructs and Indigenous American history than Michael Taussig (1986). In his work, the colonialist enterprise of the Peruvian Amazon Rubber Company in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries manifested the limits of European logos pushed to extreme and inhumane rationality in the name of capitalist extractivism, a situation that he described as "epistemic murk" (Taussig 1986, 121). The unspeakable torture and violence perpetrated against local Indigenous workers who were forced into the extraction of rubber was "a space of death" (Taussig 1986, 4, 127), from which the healing of these victims paradoxically began. Rituals with the *yage*, a sacred and powerful Amazonian plant, represent travel to the world of death and back, and they counter and heal the rationality of Western violence, which conceives of death as final and abhorrent—indeed, the physical and cultural destiny inflicted on Indigenous people in the Amazon rainforest. Where colonialist logic finds its most gruesome outcomes, a new type of understanding emerges.

In Mesoamerica, 1 Death is a date and a calendrical name associated with the sun, as seen in depictions of the trecena beginning with this day on page 66 of the Codex Borgia and the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (f. 12v), among others. Moreover, 1 Death is the day sign of Tezcatlipoca (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 4, ch. 9), the visionary god associated with night and darkness. The Nahuatl text and images that correspond to the day sign 1 Death (Fig. 2.2) in the Florentine Codex indicate sacrifice and cannibalism: "He will die sacrificed as a war captive. They will cook him in an *olla* and eat him" (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 4, ch. 9, 35). The upper image of the illustrations depicts a naked man seated on a rock, weeping with his head bowed. Then, the next image shows two people extracting the heart of a male victim stretched out on a sacrificial stone. Finally, the third image presents two people cooking and

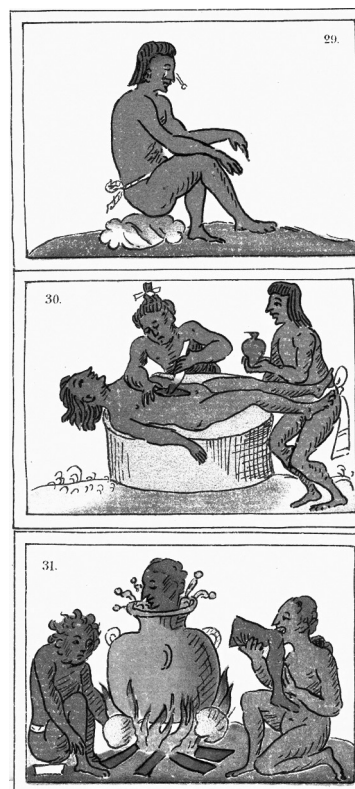


Figure 2.2. Illustrations related to the trecena 1 Death. *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, vol. 1, bk. 4, f. 25r. Paso y Troncoso 1926.

eating dismembered body parts. Cannibalism has been deconstructed and rejected as a largely early colonialist fabrication that began with the European encounter of the once infamous Caribs of the Antilles (Arens 1979, Reid 2009, 88–99; see also Barker et al. 1998, Isaac 2005, Wilkosz 2015, Declercq 2018, and Restall 2018). What is left of this image and the information provided by the Nahuatl author of the written text, once they are stripped of the barbaric distortion imposed by those who were in reality inflicting insufferable pain onto Indigenous people? Is death itself a journey from light to darkness *and* back?

A gloss in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (f. 12v), penned next to the day sign 1 Death, reads,

Those who were born here would be magicians for they tried hard to transform themselves into the shapes of various animals as well as other shapes, as well as making it appear as if a man were separating into pieces, as if each leg and arm were detached. (Quiñones Keber 1995, 261)

According to Fagetti (2015, 153–155), modern shamans known as *xicovame* (fire serpents, sing. *xicovatl*) in the Nahuatl town of Tlacotepec, Puebla, experience the abandonment of their own body as literal dismemberment: flesh and bones are left visible on a table or a plate, while the person inhabits another physical state.

The man seated on a stone in the first image of Figure 2.2 is not pondering his somber destiny. Weeping is associated with vision, as discussed in Chapter 1. The naked man, devoted to Tezcatlipoca, is beginning his journey to reach the world of the ancestors and know his fate, which may mean death in battle or as a war captive, as also suggested in the above-quoted Nahuatl text from the Florentine Codex. As further discussed in Chapter 8, the intellectual missionary experiment that led to the creation of the Florentine Codex demonstrates the limits of the cultural encounter when it is framed by evangelical ideology. It was the missionaries' intention to represent, with the authority of the victor, Mesoamerican culture at the moment of its declared death. As modern heirs of Sahagún's ethnographic and encyclopedic method, Western scholars fall victim to the same mistake all too often.

Anthropologists have long turned their attention to shamanism and ecstatic techniques, building on the classic study by Romanian historian Mircea Eliade (1964). Furst (1972), Harner (1973), and Wasson (1980) are the most important contributions for the present study, which seeks to uncover the shamanic aspects of Mesoamerican being in the world, as expressed through visual and other artistic means (see also Harrison-Buck and Freidel 2021). Mazatec ceremonies and their language provide a key to the identification of elements in the pictographic and textual descriptions of Indigenous ceremonies, which speak to an enduring Mesoamerican paradigm of vision quests (or, as Santiago suggested, quests for an encounter) and spiritual transformations.

## 2.2. Mazatec night ceremonies

Night ceremonies have been referred to as *veladas* (vigils) since the work of Wasson (Wasson et al. 1974, IX), who also provided detailed descriptions of the general outlook and development of the performance he attended (Wasson and Wasson 1957b, 215–329, reprinted partially in Wasson and Wasson 2003). *Velada* is a translation of the Mazatec terms *tsaka tio' nko* or *kjoabijnachon*, both of which refer to the act of being awake at night. All ceremonies take place after dark, most often in the curandero's house. Usually, people other than the curandero and the patient are in attendance, such as members of either family or close acquaintances. The entire ritual, which lasts between two and five hours, entails different kinds of activities. Every time that I attended a *velada*, the curandero or curandera made a divinatory reading both before and after the ceremony using corn kernels, eggs, or candles, as explained in the previous chapter, which helped to clarify the prospect and outcome of my visit. At the same time, it seemed to me that these divinatory rituals, held in daylight, also served as a kind of introduction and closing for the nocturnal experience by connecting the dark time with the light of day. Praying with Catholic litanies, such as *Avemaría* and *Padre nuestro*, in either Spanish or Mazatec, accompanied the entirety of the night ceremony. Long periods of silence and casual chatting were also part of the communication

established between participants. Plants, such as *hoja de Pascua*, as seen in the preceding chapter, and *aguardiente* (a distilled spirit) were frequently employed; they were mostly rubbed on the head, temples, and forearms of the patient, a procedure that was intended to “raise” (*levantar* in Spanish) them—that is, to infuse strength or calm. Copal smoke served the same function, and it was often blown on the participant's face and body. While these aspects are almost universal, every curandero has their own style of conducting the ceremony and sings in remarkably different ways. In my experience, the most important factor that determined the outlook of a ceremony was the severity of the issue to be addressed, which could be physical, psychological, or social (e.g., interpersonal conflict). If the curandero themselves had unresolved problems, these would also greatly interfere with and affect the quality or, more accurately, the intensity of the ceremony.

Although I attended five ceremonies, I was only able to record on three occasions because curanderos often do not want mechanical devices to disrupt the ceremony or their words to be recorded. During chanting, language could become rather obscure, but this was usually because recordings cannot reproduce the complexity of the lived experience and interactions shared by participants during the ceremony. Wasson's 1974 publication is the only one that includes a complete tape recording, transcription, and translation (in both English and Spanish) of a ceremony conducted by María Sabina in 1958. By contrast, earlier published recordings (Wasson and Wasson 1957a) only contained excerpts from chants. For this reason, I believe that the latter publication only included partial transcriptions and translations, which could not be completed due to a lack of necessary context. In her later years in the 1970s, María Sabina was asked to perform a ceremony several times purely for the sake of being recorded, which she resented. She complained that the little mushrooms had lost their powers because of this. Even in earlier recordings from the 1950s, she agreed to the intrusion in the ceremony out of courtesy; however, in her own opinion, it came at a great cost (Estrada 1981, 90–92). The ceremony recorded in 1958 (Wasson et al. 1974) involved a young man called Perfeto José García who had fallen severely ill. It is important to mention Perfeto's illness because, as seen in some of the following chants or excerpts, the quest, struggle, and longing for knowledge (to identify the origin and cause of the illness to cure it) is a central aspect of and indeed the driving force for the ceremony. Without it, it is unclear what the purpose of the ceremony would be.

### 2.2.1. Marina Mendoza

As can be gathered from the full transcription in Wasson et al. (1974), ceremonies are punctuated by long and strenuous requests to God and saints to elucidate why the patient is suffering and to plead for clarity on the causes and outcome of the illness. For example, the following excerpt represents an invocation performed by Marina Mendoza on my behalf in Boca del Río, a dependency



Figure 2.3. House of Marina Mendoza, Boca del Río, San Mateo Eloxochitlan. Photo by Alessia Frassani.

of San Mateo Eloxochitlan located near Huautla on the federal highway, during a ceremony held on August 24, 2014 at her house (Fig. 2.3):

Na'inaa xi tsi so'nde, sije'ña kjoanda tjatse ndili'ji  
My Father of the World, I ask for a blessing for your little one

¿Cómo se llama? — Alessia  
What's her name? — Alessia

Nga'i'sin'nga jtino ko'na nda'i, na'i xi tsi so'nde  
She is here with me now, Father of the World

Kata én, katana kjoale koi'nixin, koi'nitjen je'ndai  
May [God] consider your words, may he consider you, on this day, on this night, right now

Nga'ndai ka'ni ka'bijin nio'xtila'li ya'ni'ya oracion'li  
Now you gave your bread in your house of worship

Ka'bi'ni kjoanda'li xi'koi'nixin je'ndai, na'i xi tsi so'nde  
You gave your blessing on this day, now, Father of the World

Ji kajen'li sondeli ji, aliya'jin'sa, nai tao'ngo xi tsi so'nde  
You won in your world and nobody else [but you did], only Father of the World

K'oasin si'isenli ji ndi'li  
So you will enlighten your little one

Tisiko, chomi'tje, chomi'yajin me'ni chiin xi tjin'le  
Help her, raise her, lift her from the disease she carries

Ñani, ñani nda, sate'ta ndi'li  
Where, wherever she is blocked, your little one

Tojñani nga ñai chón, ji xi nkoali k'oana i'sain, na'i xi tsi so'nde  
Wherever there are difficulties, you will shed light on the path, Father of the World

Na'inaa Scribano, na'inaa San Isidro, ndi na'naa Natividad, ndi'chjon Pastora, ndi'chjon nda 'be  
Father Notary (grandfather of the underworld), Father San Isidro, Mother Nativity, Lady Pastora, lady of the running water

Sijena án kjoanda xikoi nixin, je tsee San Pedro, San Pablo  
I ask for a blessing on this day, of San Pedro, San Pablo

Na'inaa San Miguel Arcangel, kata én, kata kjoali ji  
Father San Miguel Archangel, consider her words, may he consider you

San Ramon, sijena án kjoanda  
San Ramon, I ask for a blessing

Ndi'nanaa Guadalupe, José y María  
Precious Lady Guadalupe, Joseph and Mary

Xi tjen, xi xo'má katabitjo  
May what drips like mucus go away

K'oasin si i'sen í, k'oasin k'oe je kjoandali  
So enlighten here, so give your blessing

Tjana i'sen niji tsa meni xichon, meni xitjin, na'i xi tsi sonde  
Enlighten, you, where the problems are, where there are  
issues, Father of the World

Kata én, kata kjoani  
May her words be considered, may she be considered

Nga'i skotsen ndiasai, ndiajtsoko, ndili ji  
(God) will look after the path of the calf, of the foot (her  
destiny) of your daughter

Transcription and translation by Alessia Frassani and Santiago  
Cortés Martínez

Although Marina refers to God as a Christian entity, as evidenced in her mention of the bread given in the house of worship, for example, several other supernatural beings are more clearly Mesoamerican. Na'inaa Scribano is an elderly and authoritative figure, akin to Cipactonal introduced in Chapter 1. Although rendered with a Spanish word meaning “notary,” Na'inaa Scribano's powers consist in his ability to read and draft written documents, such as the ancient painted books. Ndi'chjon nda 'be, the Lady of the running water, a well-known supernatural among the Mazatec, is the local equivalent of the central Mexican Chalchiuhtlicue (Fig. 7.4). Some of the same expressions are found again in the following chant, although the tone and intensity attained during chanting is quite different. On the same night, Marina performed only one chant during a three-hour ceremony.

Án'jña nga'nirole so'nde, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the world, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole kjoa'nichikon'ta'in, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the blessing, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole so'nde, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the world, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole kjoa'kjin tokon, ti'tso  
I am the strength of wisdom, is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa ni'ndayaa chjota, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to cure people, is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa fe'e, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to come forth, is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa fitje'en, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to fly, is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa fe'e, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to come forth, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole so'nde, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the world, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole nangi, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the earth, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole kjoa'kjin tokon, ti'tso  
I am the strength of wisdom, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole son'de, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the world, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole na'chja ninda'jba, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the grandmother of the broken bones, is  
saying

Án'jña nga'nirole na'chja Lisabe nginde, ti'tso  
I am the strength of Grandmother Lisabe of the underworld,  
is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa fi'tjeen, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to come forth, is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa fe'e, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to come forth, is saying

Án'jña xi ma'naa ni'ndaa chjota, ti'tso  
I am the one who knows how to cure people, is saying

Án'jña na'chja Lisibe, ti'tso  
I am Grandmother Lisabe, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole cho'o nro'jbi, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the opossum, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole xa i'ndo since, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the spotted jaguar, is saying

Án'jña nga'nirole na'chja ninda'jba, ti'tso  
I am the strength of the grandmother of the broken bones, is  
saying

Án'jña nga'nirole kjoa'bi'jnachon, ti'tso  
I am the strength of life, is saying

Án tisije kjoanda nai'taongo xi tsi so'nde  
I am the one asking for a blessing, oh Father, guardian of the  
world

Tai'nai kjoanda, tai'nai nga'nio kjoan'kji tokon'li  
Give me blessing, give me the strength of your wisdom

Ji'ni nai taongo xi tijnli nga'nio, na'in  
You are, my father, the one who gives strength, Father

Ji'ni xi mali ni'ndaya'ai chjota  
You are the one who knows how to heal people

Ji'ni nai'naa San Isidro  
You are my father, San Isidro

Ji'ni nai'naa Escribano  
You are my father, Escribano

Ji'chjon Pastora  
You mother, Shepherdess

Si'jee án kjoanda  
I ask for your blessing

Tai'ñe kjoanda'li, tai nga'nioli ji  
Give your blessing, your strength

Ni'kia'jinla ti'ska'ngini x'oa'inaña  
My incense burner will never fall and break

Ni'kia'jin koi'tsaoya'jin x'ao'inaa  
My incense burner will never stop burning

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Transcription and translation by Santiago Cortés Martínez  
and Alessia Frassani

The chant is the only instance during the entire ceremony where Marina openly states that she identifies with natural and supernatural beings, such as animal and saints. While she invoked God, saints, and other divine beings throughout the ceremony, as seen in the first prayer, it was only during this chant that she claimed otherworldly powers for herself. In other words, while she addressed supernatural beings during prayers and invocations, she only claimed to be or become them in a few minutes of chanting. In this respect, Marina's chant is similar to María Sabina's (Wasson et al. 1974, Wasson and Wasson 1957a).

Marina closed the sentences with the verb *tso* (says) or *ti'tso* (is saying), with the subject of the verb left implicit. Munn (1973, 89) remarked on this characteristic of Mazatec chanting, in which the speaker appears to quote someone else: "I am the strength of the world, I am the strength of the opossum, etc." It appears that God or another religious authority is telling the women (i.e., bestowing upon them) the strength and powers of various animals. At the same time, the use of direct quotation makes the "I" in the embedded sentence a co-reference to the subject of the main clause "says/is saying," whose subject is implicit. Not only is the "I" an indexical pronoun, but it also moves in a continuum from the relational stance of the present speaker to the fixed proposition expressed in the sentence: "The curandera is a spotted jaguar." Thus, the speaker fluctuates between simply being themselves to being the narrator of the event and seeing themselves from the outside looking in, finally returning to the initial quoted proposition: "I am the spotted jaguar." This initial and final statement is not declarative but rather expresses

an embodied experience: knowing is not believing but experiencing.

### 2.2.2. Baldomero Pineda and the chant of the grandparents

Chanting is a particularly lively aspect of Mazatec culture and not restricted to night ceremonies (Quintanar Miranda 2007, Faudree 2013). Baldomero Pineda (Fig. 2.4) from Santa Cruz de Juárez, a small dependency of Huautla, composes and performs his own songs for the yearly celebration of the Day of the Dead (Cortés Martínez and Frassani 2017). During one such occasion, when Santiago Cortés and I visited him in his shop in Santa Cruz, on November 2, 2014, he sang the following chant:

Jonga inda jonga nangi, tso el oro  
Slowly, calmly, says the gold

Án k'jinten, k'jitje tojme tikina, tso  
I jump, I overcome any obstacle, says

Jñan kjoa'nii, jtji ma, jti'tsa kja'ngi, tso el oro  
Wherever it is hidden, concealed, says the gold

Án k'jinten, k'jitje tojme tikina, tso  
I jump, I overcome any obstacle, says

Jñan kjoa'nii, jtji ma, jti'tsa kja'ngi, tso el oro  
Wherever it is hidden, concealed, says the gold

Án fa'xoe án fa'nia, tso  
I implore humbly and reverentially

Tojñan kjichoi'ñen  
As far as you reach

Atsin ma'sinlee, atsin ma'sinlee  
Don't you feel bad for me? Don't you feel bad for me?

Nga k'oasin ti'jnan nion'noo án  
That you are keeping me closed in?

Tonga nda'i tokjoa' mana  
Now I feel nothing, I have no fear

Tjen k'aoñan chjota titjona  
I now come with my big people

An'nan xi koan'na si'tsín si'faneña  
I am the one who knows how to thunder and rumble

Tsatsín k'oakonai ñan' tinamali  
If you do not tell me where you keep it hidden

K'oa me kjoa'ni ximeli, Jo kjoa'tjin taón jme'li jí  
What do you want? How much do you want?

Kjoe'e kiechi'tjaiña án, chjota'na án  
I am coming to pay for my people



Figure 2.4. Baldomero Pineda, Santa Cruz de Juárez. Photo by Javier García.

Tsatsín k'oakoi jñan kjoa'ni tjima titsa'kjangi, tso  
If you do not show where it is hidden, where it is covered, says

Tsatsín k'aokoi jí chjota nda xi tjen'koa jñan  
If you do not show it, I come with my capable people

Ngo tjo si'xkoa si'ndenai jñani ngatinai jí  
You will destroy me swiftly, wherever you are

Jonga faxoc, jonga fania jña, nga'i kjoe'eñan  
I bow with reverence and humility, now that we have come here

Ji kjoa koakonai án, nga'ya jtina manai  
You will show me where you keep me hidden

jñanin koa sai'li, tsoa kjoa'sai kjoanio'nain  
Where you found it, there I will also find the strength

Jmeni jé xi ya án, nga koasin tijnamani'nain  
What sin have I committed for which you are hiding from me?

Jmeni jé xichon nga koasin tjima titsakjangili  
What is the sin for which you keep it hidden and covered?

Tonga ndai án kotsen són, kotsenta'ñan  
But now I am the one who is looking carefully, the one who  
is searching

Niyaa ti'jnan ñan  
There I am

Atsin ma'sinlee án nga k'oasin ya tinanio'nina  
Don't you feel for me, since you are keeping me hidden there?

Tonga tjen kaonan chjota titjona  
I am coming with my important people

Ngo tjo kjoas'koena, skoeya skoetañan  
Swiftly he will rescue me, he will receive me

Tsimasianñan, likoi tibeñan  
Poor me, I am not aware

Nga k'oasin tijma, tjitsakjangili kjoa'ai tsen senixina án  
Because you keep it hidden, you keep it covered, my spirit

Tsi'masinle, atsi'masiañan  
Don't you have any compassion, don't you feel for me?

Ni'ya tsoatinianiole jña tinai jí  
You have sequestered me, you have hidden me there where  
you are

Jetsabe jña'nga jtinanioli  
I have seen now where you have it hidden

K'oa jotjin ma taón jmeli 'an k'oechitje, án  
How little money do you want, I will pay, I

Tjen kaona chojta nda'ñan  
I am coming with capable people

Tjen kaona án xi kjoa'axin  
I am coming with the person who will unveil (clear) it

Jñanga tjina ta'nio'oa án  
Where I am chained

Aní k'oasin jnó tjita nai'ñan  
Why do you keep me in chains?

Tonga nda'i jñan  
But now I ...

Koena kjoa'xoe, kjoania jña, ti kao kjoachan kjoa'ti, tso  
You will show reverence and humility to me, let the anger go

Kao kjoanda, tso  
With goodwill, says

Kjoaxoe fannia, tso  
With reverence and submission, says

án kotsen són, kotsen'tañan so'nde xokji  
I look carefully at this world

Tso xi tsaka tio'konni chjota chingana  
So it says, when our ancestors kept the vigil

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Transcription and translation by Alessia Frassani and Santiago  
Cortés Martínez

Baldomero's song is unique in that it is not a night chant but rather a recollection of what his grandparents used to sing during the ceremonies. Baldomero himself has never taken mushrooms, which is not uncommon in the Mazateca despite their widespread consumption. Some people, including Baldomero, have never partaken in veladas, explaining that they have not received a calling to do so. Thus, the chant should be analyzed alongside the songs that Baldomero composes for the Day of the Dead as a tribute to the ancestors. At the same time, it clearly belongs and relates to the tradition of night chants, as several features indicate. In a manner akin to what was discussed before, the grandparents, who are the guardians of the world of the dead, and the singer, Baldomero himself, sometimes exchange roles. It is often unclear who is speaking, although it is explicitly stated at the beginning that "gold" (*el oro*) is speaking. Baldomero explained that gold is the same as cacao beans, one of the most common offerings used to communicate with the dead and the gods. Thus, in the chant, the gold-cacao is an animate intermediary that can speak and carry a message, but it is the chant itself

that brings the ancestors' message from the world of the dead to that of the living. As noted in the case of Marina, the often impersonal "says" (tso in Mazatec) conveys the idea of a message that stands on its own and depersonalized from whoever created or sent it in the first place.

However, Baldomero's night chant differs from previously presented ones in that there is no claim of supernatural embodiment. While the speaker claims at some point to be able to thunder and rumble—thus equating himself to a storm, as is often the case with María Sabina—Baldomero does not mention any animal, natural phenomenon, or god. The singer becomes angry and at times confrontational, but the chant is clearly a quest—a persistent search for someone or something that is hidden. What is out of reach and invisible, purposefully covered, sequestered, or tied in chains, is unclear, but it is explicitly stated at some point that this is indeed the *senixin*, a word composed of the term *sen* that can mean "image," such as one's double, and *nixin* (day). Alan Suárez Ortiz suggested to me in a personal communication (2022) that *senixin* corresponds to the Nahuatl word *tonalli*, which refers to both the day (hence tonalpohualli, the calendar, as the "count of days") and the character of a person (the "spirit" closely related to the day of birth; Martínez González 2006). In this light, it becomes clearer that in the chant it sometimes appears as if the speaker is the one sequestered and hidden and other times it seems that something is hidden, sequestered, and looked for. I'sen also refers to a place of clarity and knowledge, as in the expression ndosen seen in Section 1.1, and wisdom is thus equated with self-knowledge. A longing for clarity and the relentless pursuit of enlightenment and knowledge on one's destiny becomes the central issue in the following chant.

### 2.2.3. Leonardo Morales

Santiago Cortés Martínez and I participated in a ceremony with Leonardo Morales on July 29, 2014 in the locality of Barrio Mixteco in Huautla. The ceremony lasted around five hours and Leonardo not only prayed and sang several times but also whistled and spoke a non-existent language (glossolalia). Whistle speech is a well-known characteristic of Mazatec language, even in everyday use (Cowan 1948), and glossolalia has been recorded in María Sabina's chants (Wasson et al. 1974, XI–XII). In the case of Leonardo's, I had the impression that he was speaking Italian, given that the ceremony was directed at me and Italian is my native language.

Ngo'la'ni, koin ... koin'chaa  
First, I will talk

K'ianga'ma nga'tjin'naa canto  
It can be done, when we have some canto

K'ianga li'saa joxo'sin nga'tso'ba án  
It is when ... this is how I am going about



Ali'me xi'tjinaa nga'tso'ba  
I have no problem while I am going

To jngo sa'tse canto, nga'ma'na, nga'ba'jme  
It is only a chant, because I can go

To'sa to jngo  
It is only one

Un perdón de Dios, un perdón de Dios  
God's blessing, God's blessing

Perdón del Cielo y perdón de aquí  
Heaven's blessing and earthly blessing

Como así se comunica que ...  
As it is communicated ...

Está dando de todo nuestro Señor  
Our Lord is giving us everything

Da gracias a Dios Padre Todopoderoso  
Thanks to our Lord, almighty

No más tengo un canto  
I only have a song

Jí ni'jñe, nga jí ni'jñe, nga jngo kjoanda xi'tsi  
You, you are you, your blessing

Nga jí, jí, jíi, nga jí, jí, jíi, nga'i nga'jo'nga'sin tsó'ba nda'i  
Because you are you, the reason why I am going around now

Nga jí bix'kiee, nga jí *santa*, nga, nga jí, nga jí, ngo kao jíni,  
kao jí nga nda'i  
Because you read, you are saintly, you are unique, with you  
in this moment

Jí bix'kiee, nga jí *santa*, j'e ... chakaonai'ña, nga i'tso'ba, nga  
i'kjoe'e  
You read, you are saintly, but talk to me, because I am  
wandering around here, I arrived here

Nga ngo kjoanda, ngo kjoanda, ngo kjoanda sije'lee nda'i  
A blessing, a blessing, a blessing is what I am asking for at  
this moment

Ti'se'kao'na'iña, ti'se'kao'na'i jí  
Help me, help me

Nga jí mamá, nga jí nga nda'i  
Because you are the mother, because you are you in this moment

To jngo nga jí, to jngo nga jí, to jngo ni'nda'i  
You are the only one, the only one, the only one in this moment

To jngo nga'jaoo, nga i'tso'ba, nga i'jo'nga, ngo kjoanda xi'tsi  
It is only a hole, because I am wandering around here, because  
here is your blessing

Ngo kjoanda, nga kao nga jí nga kao josin tso'ba  
A blessing, I am truly going around

I'so'nde xo'chón, i'so'nde xo'chón  
On this world, on this world

Jíni nda'i, ngojí ni nda'i, nga jngo kjoanda  
You are, you are now a blessing

Jíni, jí, ngojí ni jí, jí nga'nda'i  
You are you, because you, you are at this moment

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Transcription and translation by Santiago Cortés Martínez  
and Alessia Frassani

This chant is rather different from Marina's and María Sabina's and seems more akin to Baldomero's. While both women claimed to have greater powers and become animals and supernatural beings, neither Baldomero nor Leonardo made such claims. The insistent and even threatening requests for clarity and knowledge in Baldomero's chant are absent in Leonardo's. He repeatedly and rather plainly states that he has a chant and is singing it. A term that Leonardo often employs is *kjoanda*, which can be translated as "blessing," although the word has other meanings: offering, ceremony, grace, bounty, or something good in general. The same meaning applies to the word *perdón* (forgiveness) that Leonardo uses in the Spanish portion of the text. If so, the entire chant is about asking a supreme spiritual authority (the Virgin or the Father) for a blessing. Leonardo's chant revolves around singing for its own sake without any explicit message or contents. The impersonality of the utterance, which was suggested in previous chants through the use of direct quotation with an implicit subject, becomes the central theme developed by Leonardo. Consequently, the text is full of deixis (i.e., terms that can only be understood in a relational context), such as "you," "here," and "at this moment," which refer to a context without explicitly describing it. The place where Leonardo finds himself is only suggested but cannot be clearly identified. Although he directly addresses the Father and the Virgin, he may not be in their presence but rather longs for them. Leonardo never describes a situation that he sees or something that he hears.

Leonardo relied on the rhetorical and ontological trope of the *mise en abyme* to sing about himself singing. Caught in a labyrinth of his own construction, he disappeared into it. In a separate discussion, he compared chanting to the voice of a radio, which, unattached to its speaker, can rapidly move around and allow everyone to hear and enjoy it until the radio is turned off and the chant returns to where it originated (which I believe is God). In this light, we can also understand Leonardo's glossolalia: words in a chant do not refer to anything but rather express the process of creating language itself (Munn 1973).

The narrator's shifting and often ambiguous position in all the chants discussed underscores a specific feature

of the language employed. As in daytime divination (e.g., the reading of maize), the wise person seeks signs and clues for a client, but only during night ceremonies do they embody the signs, the gods, to themselves become divine agents. Their ability to speak to the gods and invoke them is taken a step further, and the performer becomes the god and claims their powers. Such a transformation occurs when the curandero simultaneously describes a situation that they participate in and see themselves from the outside as if a spectator to the story. The ability to enter, inhabit, and then leave the attributes of a certain god or supernatural being increases their power. Although I was able to participate in a limited number of ceremonies and, in even fewer cases, to record and eventually study the texts, two aspects stood out in the chants. On the one hand, the chant is a search characterized by feelings of longing, solitude, hopelessness, desperation, and anger at times; on the other hand, there are moments of communion and even transformation into gods, whose powers and knowledge are claimed by the performer.

### 2.3. Colonial chanting

Some of the features highlighted in modern Mazatec chants can also be found in the few examples of colonial texts that reproduce chants and songs either in their entirety or in short excerpts. The performer's consistent use of the first person and the conflation of several identities are frequently found in the so-called incantations collected in the early seventeenth century by Ruiz de Alarcón, as are exhortations from the singer, who sometimes angrily pled with the gods (Andrews and Hassig 1984). Ruiz de Alarcón gathered his material from several Nahuatl communities in the modern states of Morelos and Guerrero with the intention of creating a manual to extirpate enduring Mesoamerican ceremonial practices. The texts that he transcribed constitute an important historical source for the present study because the original context of their production and execution seems to be very similar to those of modern Mazatec divinatory and curing chants or prayers despite being considerably shorter, perhaps because they were collected as samples. In the incantation for fortune telling (Andrews and Hassig 1984, bk. 5, ch. 2), the text reads as follows:

Ca niman aman. Nohmatca nehhuatl.  
It will indeed be I, immediately at this moment.

Nohxomoco. Nicipactonal. Nicmati huehue, nicmati ilamah  
It is I in person. I am Ohxomoco. I am Cipactonal. I know Old Man, Old Woman.

Nimictlanmati, nitopamati  
I am knowledgeable about Mictlan, I am knowledgeable about Topan.

Nohmatca nehhuatl. Nitlamacazqui. Ninahateuctli  
It is I in person. I am the priest. I am the nahualli-lord.

(Andrews and Hassig 1984, 151)

The priest claims to be both Oxomoco and Cipactonal, the old diviner couple, and immediately follows by saying that they know them, seemingly because they have visited Mictlan and Topan, the otherworldly realms that surround the terrestrial plane. Thus, the “I” in the sentence shifts position and apparently indicates different identities and enunciators. As a result, the attributes of both the ancestral couple and the man-god (*nahualli-lord*) diviner are conflated, creating a complex image previously seen in the discussion of the primordial couple of the Codex Vienna in Section 1.2.

Around eighty years before Ruiz de Alarcón, Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún collected another important corpus of sacred texts (Sahagún et al. 1997, 128–129). They are referred to as *cuicame* (sing. *cuicatl*, song) and are formally different from Alarcón's incantations. Despite the early date of Sahagún's “sacred hymns,” as they have been called since Garibay (1958), their current form and context of production may have been influenced by early modern European poetry, as Tomlinson (2007, 9–27) suggested for another corpus of poetic texts, the *Cantares mexicanos*. In other words, it would appear that Sahagún's *cuicame* were an early attempt to normalize Nahuatl ceremonial chants according to the canons of European poetry, as discussed in the Introduction. I do not think that it is coincidental that the songs were attached as an appendix to the second book of the Florentine Codex, which is dedicated to the *veintena* ceremonies, the most important ritual cycle of Nahuatl communities. In the same appendix, Sahagún discusses the temples, their rituals, and their gods. Thus, the songs are an aspect of the cult that is more directly related to activities within the temple, a divine manifestation akin to the image of the god itself. They are only indirectly related to the public aspects of the cult, which are presented in the main part of the second book, and are more accurately described as part of secluded activities within the temples, where the image of the god usually resides.

In *Primeros Memoriales* (Sahagún et al. 1997, paragraph 14, ff. 279r–280r), the chant performed during *Atamalqualiztli* (the Feast of the Water Tamales), a ritual that involved fasting with water and unseasoned tamales, begins with an invocation to the mother goddess *Tlazolteotl* before switching to a description of *Tamoanchan*, the paradise of abundance, where the corn god *Centeotl* is said to have been born. Then, the setting seemingly changes to a marketplace on the earthly realm (*tlalpan*), and the verse reads as follows:

Oyatlatonazqui tlavizcallevaya  
The sun has come forth, the morning has dawned

inan tlachichinaya nepapā quechol  
And sundry red spoonbills sip nectar from flowers

xochitlacaca yyātala, yantata, ayyao, ayyave, tililiyao, ayyave  
oayyave

Where flowers stand erect *yyātala, yantata, ayyao, ayyave,*  
*tiliyao, ayyave oayyave*

*Tlalpā timoquetzca*  
 On earth you are standing

*tianquiznavaquj a*  
 By the marketing place, ah

*Nitlacatla niquetzalcoatla yyantala yātanta, yyao, ayyave,*  
*tiliyao, ayyave, oayyave*  
 I am the lord Quetzalcoatl *yyantala yātanta, yyao, ayyave,*  
*tiliyao, ayyave, oayyave*

(Sahagún et al. 1997, 145–146)

The last verse marks an abrupt intermission on the part of the narrator to boldly state that he is the supreme priest whose cult is also related to the aforementioned marketplace. The song then shifts to the underworld, where Xolotl plays in a ball court, and back to a marketplace in Cholula, where the main temple of Quetzalcoatl was located. The last verse reads,

*Cochina cochina cocochi*  
 The sleeper, the sleeper is dozing

*Ye nicmaololo nicanj ye ciuatl*  
 I turn the woman here over

*Nicochina yyeo ovayeo, yho, yya, yya*  
 The sleeper I am *yyeo ovayeo, yho, yya, yya*

(Sahagún et al. 1997, 146)

These concluding lines seem to refer to the next chant, which is dedicated to Xipe Yovallavana (the Night Drinker; i.e., the one who falls into a state of trance, like the night sleep) and may not belong to this chant. It is in this state of trance that the performer first sees someone sleeping; then, they turn the person over and realize that the person is actually the sleeper whom they just saw. Another important aspect that both Nahua texts share is the mention of different realms, such as Mictlan, Topan, and Tamoanchan, as places visited during the chant, which indicates that singing is in itself a journey to and from another world where knowledge and power reside. Both Mictlan and Tamoanchan are places of the dead; thus, traveling back and forth between them is akin to entering and exiting the land of the dead and defeating death itself.

As I just said, the verses at the end of the *cuicatl* for *Atamalqualiztli* seem to introduce the song to Xipe as follows:

*Xippe icujc, totec iovallavana.*  
 The song of Xipe, our Lord the visionary

*Ioalli tlavana, iztleican, timone*  
 You, you are in trance, why do hide yourself?

*nequja xjiaquj mjlatia teucuj tlaquemitl, xjcmoquenti quetlovjia.*  
 You are hiding your golden cape. Put it on!

*Noteuhoa chalchimmama tlacoa*  
 My Lord is holding a precious shield

*pana itemoia, oiquetzallavuevuetl,*  
 comes down in the middle of the water, precious drum

*ayquetzalxiujcoatl nechaiqujno*  
 precious turquoise serpent

*cauhquetl ovjia*  
 Poverty has left us

*Manajivajia, njia njia poliviz*  
 I shall be happy, it shall not perish

*nियोatzin, achalchiuhtla noiollo*  
 I am the purple corn, my heart is a place of precious water

*ateucujtlatl nocoiattaz noiolce*  
 I shall see golden water

*vizqujtlatl achtoquetl tlaqua*  
 My heart shall be content

*vaia otlatatquj iautlatoa quetl ovjia*  
 The warrior who leads into battle is born *ovjia*

*Noteuhoa centlaco xaiaivilivizco*  
 You will grow the height of maize plant

*noa yioatzin motepeiocpa mjtz*  
 You are the purple maize on your mountain

*valitta meteuhoa, vizqujntla*  
 Your followers will see you

*catl achtoquetl tlaquavaia etla*  
 I shall be content. The Lord ripens, the one who comes first

*catqui iautlatoaquetl ovjia*  
 The warrior who leads into battle is born *ovjia*

Transcription and translation by Osiris González, Raúl Macuil Martínez, and Alessia Frassani

The two variants of this chant found in *Primeros Memoriales* and the *Florentine Codex* have been translated several times (Seler 1902, 1071–1078, Garibay 1958, 175–185, Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 2, 213, Sahagún et al. 1997, 146–147). The epithet attributed to Xipe, *yovallavana*, found in the title head of the chant, is usually translated as “night drinker” (the corresponding illustration in the *Florentine Codex* indeed shows Xipe Totec in the second image drinking from a cup; see Fig. 8.4). However, I believe that, although drinking may refer to an intoxicating beverage such as the fermented agave drink pulque, the term *yovalla* should be better understood as the effect of the drink:

inducing a state of trance. Andrews and Hassig (1984, 79–80, 262) proposed a similar translation for the same term in the incantations collected by Ruiz de Alarcón.

The paleography and translation of the manuscript version from the Florentine Codex by Osiris González, who studied “classical” Nahuatl at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in seminars led by León Portilla, and Raúl Macuil, a Nahua speaker from Tlaxcala, highlight the text’s close relationship to the corresponding image (Fig. 8.4). For example, we translated *chalchimmama* as “he who holds a precious shield” (from *chimalli*, shield) rather than “precious water,” as was the case in all preceding translations. *Quetzallavuevetl* became “precious drum” (from *huehuetl*, drum; see also Rojas Rabiela 2000, 248–249); previously, *ahuehuetl* had been translated as “cypress tree.” In both cases, we opted for a closer adherence to what is found in the illustration, and I believe that the tlacuilo chose to adhere to elements found in the chant, such as the shield in the upper image and the upright drum in the one below. Finally, we translated *yoatzin* as “purple maize,” the meaning of the term in modern Nahuatl, rather than “green stalk of maize” (Sahagún et al. 1997, 147). Previous translations relied on an annotation found in *Primeros Memoriales* (f. 280r), which referred to *yoatzin* as “the green maize stalk, my ear is like a jade” (Sahagún et al. 1997, 147). However, in the early twentieth century, German archaeologist and ethnographer Konrad Preuss (1905, 371) proposed translating *yoatzin* as “deplorable night” (*bejammernswerte Nacht* in German, *deplorable noche* in the Spanish translation from German given by Neurath in Preuss 2008, 97)—from the word for night (*yohual*) and the reverential *-tzin*. This interpretation was strongly opposed by Seler (1905, 463), who by that time had already produced his own translation, which has remained the standard reference for all subsequent studies (Seler 1902, 1071–1078). Finally, the interpretation proposed in this book, “purple maize,” reconciles both versions, as the darkness of the night indicates the purple color of the maize.

This colonial chant presents interesting similarities to modern Mazatec equivalents. In Baldomero’s chant, the god is hidden at first. The chant is itself a quest and a request to encounter the god. The singer challenges the god to manifest himself because the well-being of the performer and their community depends on it. While Mazatec chants tend to be repetitive and have little progression, Prof. Eloise Quiñones Keber rightly indicated to me in a personal communication (2016) that the god progressively manifests himself in the song to Xipe, growing and blossoming like a plant. This stylistic difference may be due to a refashioning of the cuicatl to conform to the canons of written poetry, losing much of its performative, repetitive, and pleonastic value in favor of a progressive narrative (Tomlinson 2007, 28–40). Singing, on the one hand, is in itself a quest for clarity and knowledge, a constantly unfolding process. Written poetry, on the other hand, tends to favor a self-contained structure. This explains Sahagún’s complaints about the

obscurity and demonic nature of the cuicame found in the introduction to the appendix.

Chanting is a performance that intensifies the process of knowledge acquisition. It is through experience rather than doctrinal teaching that real wisdom is attained. These reflections align with the general understanding of Indigenous American chants elaborated by Carlo Severi (2002, 2004), who highlighted the pragmatism of Kuna (Panamanian) healers’ knowledge and language, the construction of the chant as a path, and the complexity of the chanter’s identity as it unfolds in a purposeful and self-reflective way during the ceremony. Process, not structure; pragmatism, not doctrine; and self-reflexivity, not objectivity, are central concepts in Indigenous knowledge.

While Mazatec *chjota chjine* are not directly aware of the existence of their sacred books in European collections, they frequently mention them in ceremonies. Marina calls the guardian of the underworld by his first name, Escribano (notary), the one who produces official documents. Leonardo refers to God as “the one who reads.” María Sabina mentions books several times in her chants, along with notarial acts and pencils (Munn 2003). The acts of writing and reading are an inseparable process of pursuing knowledge. Books, as sacred sources of wisdom, are constantly reinvented every time they are invoked. The next chapters are dedicated to the ancient sacred books and the calendar that informs their structure.

## The Mesoamerican Calendar

The codices of the so-called Borgia Group, which are named after the codex that is considered its finest example (see listing in the Appendix), offer an unadulterated window into ritual, divinatory, and calendrical knowledge as it was practiced in Mesoamerica before the arrival of the Europeans. Today, all pre-Hispanic religious manuscripts are housed in European collections, where they arrived in the first decades after the conquest as gifts and objects of curiosity for ecclesiastical and political dignitaries throughout the continent. It is unknown how many more manuscripts of this kind circulated in Mesoamerica. The extent of the deliberate physical destruction of Indigenous knowledge on the part of the friars cannot ultimately be quantified. Many other specimens may have been forgotten and destroyed over time once they were hidden to spare them from Spanish and missionary fury. Lack of provenance notwithstanding, it is quite remarkable that the few surviving manuscripts of the Borgia Group form a very consistent corpus in terms of both calendrics and iconography. Nowotny (1961) was the first to conduct a comprehensive study of the manuscripts as a whole based on calendrical concordances, upon which iconographic similarities are largely based. Colonial manuscripts that feature religious content, such as the Codices Borbonicus, Telleriano-Remensis, and Tudela, also focus on the Mesoamerican calendar and related iconography, although in a much simpler manner, which likely reflects the limited knowledge of ancient religion and calendrics on the part of the lay Indigenous informants who contributed to their creation. This chapter focuses on the Mesoamerican calendar, especially its different configurations, in the pre-Hispanic religious manuscripts. An in-depth analysis of the calendar's functioning and use is essential to gain an accurate understanding of the pictorials.

### 3.1. The tonalpohualli

The 260-day calendar is one of the diagnostic characteristics of Mesoamerican civilizations, as was first recognized by Kirchhoff (1943). The earliest archaeological record of it dates to the Formative Period in the sixth century BCE, and its use extends to the present, albeit restricted to Indigenous communities in southern Mexico and Guatemala. Mazatec diviners, as noted in previous chapters, no longer rely on the 260-day count, although German ethnologist Wilhelm Bauer (1908) documented the use of a twenty day-sign calendar in the region in the early twentieth century. Thus, in my field work, I could not account for the use of the 260-day count in divination. Instead, I largely relied on a study by Paul van den Akker (2018), a colleague from the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University, who conducted extensive field work in the Maya K'iche'

community of Momostenango. Paul's knowledge of the intricacies, functioning, and logic of the calendar, known as *chol q'ij* in K'iche', was gained through his training and collaboration with don Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac, a K'iche' *ajq'ij* (diviner) from Momostenango.

Spanish friars extensively discussed the use and characteristics of the ancient Mexican calendar in their writings. Most notably, Bernardino de Sahagún (1950–1982, bk. 4) devoted an entire book of his great opus to “judicial astrology or art of divination.” Figure 3.1 is an illustration from the appendix at the end of the book, where Sahagún explains to the reader the table that the diviner, whom he refers to with the Nahuatl word *tonalpohuque*, used to count days and make prognostications. Tonalpohuque literally means “those who count the days,” from the words *tonal* (day) and *pohualli* (to count). Tonalpohualli is the word for calendar, as the “count of days.” The table combines twenty day signs (Fig. 3.2) and thirteen numerals, which are consecutively counted to yield a unique and fixed sequence of 260 days. Beginning on 1 Crocodile (Cipactli in Nahuatl), the count reaches 13 Reed (Acatl), at which point the numeral starts again from one with 1 Jaguar (Ocelotl), reaching 7 Flower (Xochitl), then 8 Crocodile. After 260 days, both the thirteen-day period and the twenty day signs return to the initial position of 1 Crocodile. It should be noted that, in contemporary communities such as Momostenango, where the tzolkin (as the tonalpohualli is known among Mayanists) remains in use, no fixed day functions as the first in the calendar; rather, the count seamlessly and endlessly continues. By contrast, in the ancient manuscripts, the count almost always appears to begin with day 1 Crocodile, although the diviner could easily start counting from any point in their chart.

In Sahagún's table, numerals are indicated with Arabic numbers, while Indigenous documents, such as the codices of the Borgia Group, utilize a dot for a unit to reach a maximum of thirteen dots. Although a complete and unequivocal date can only be given with a combination of a day sign and a number, numbers in the ancient manuscripts are often omitted and implicit in the progressive count of day signs. Dots are often used to indicate a period or lapse of time between signaled day signs. As also remarked by Mayanists (Aveni 2011), such a use of numbers in Mesoamerican calendrics indicates that intervals and lengths of time between events were at least as important as the time when the events occurred. Replacing dots with Arabic numerals, as Sahagún did in his table, erases this important aspect of Mesoamerican time reckoning and philosophy.