

The Evolution of Early Colonial Pictography

This and the following concluding chapter analyze religious manuscripts produced after the conquest under the sponsorship and guidance of Spanish friars. The Codices Telleriano-Remensis, Tudela, and Magliabechiano and the Florentine Codex have been cited numerous times throughout this book in the interpretation of images and calendrics pertaining to the ancient religious manuscripts. In this chapter, the focus is on their creation in the mid- and late sixteenth century. Although the socio-cultural context of their production can be at least partially reconstructed, unlike the Codices Laud, Borgia, and even Borbonicus, the analysis of the manuscripts' contents, organization, and specific iconography offers the most important clues and insights into the motivations and concerns of the artists and patrons involved.

A comparative analysis of selected post-conquest sources reveals the ways in which Spaniards (primarily friars) and Nahuas participated and interacted in the representation of Mesoamerican religion after the establishment of the colonial order in New Spain. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the Codex Borbonicus is also a post-conquest document, but it was produced before the forceful Christianization of the Indigenous population. Once manuscript painting was co-opted and confined to the *conventos* and their schools, the documents began to serve a different purpose: illustrating Indigenous religion to a foreign and mostly hostile audience. In this respect, the most striking feature of the manuscripts discussed in this chapter is perhaps the novel juxtaposition and relationship between the alphabetic text and pictorial representations—the two poles of European and Mesoamerican understanding of local religion, respectively. I do not mean to argue that alphabetic and pictographic texts were separately produced or that they constitute parallel narratives, a view that has been expressed by authors such as Batalla Rosado (2002) and Magaloni Kerpel (2003a, 2003b) with respect to the Codex Tudela and the Florentine Codex, respectively. However, I attempt to highlight how the inherently different semiosis engendered by Mesoamerican pictography and European alphabetic writing—a topic discussed in the introduction of this book—came to interact and mutually influence each other once they were made to coexist within the same intellectual project. I have already remarked on a peculiar quality of the glosses in, for example, the Codex Borbonicus: they often provide information that is not given or apparent in the images but nonetheless corroborated by other colonial sources.

Two pairs of manuscripts are discussed in this chapter: the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A, and

the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano. The dating of these documents is not precisely known, but they were all compiled roughly between 1550 and 1580 and underwent different stages of production. All manuscripts primarily concern Nahua (Aztec) religion and comprise divinatory and ritual sections. The latter aspect is extensively represented by the *veintena* ceremonies. How did history—namely, the fateful events of the conquest and its aftermath—and a certain conception of history affect the way that both divination and ceremonies were represented during the colonial period? Post-conquest pictorial and alphabetic descriptions of Mesoamerican religion, such as those analyzed here, were produced under the supervision of the Spanish friars. Their agenda and purpose were wholly different from those of the creators of pre-Hispanic manuscripts. To understand how different ideas and conceptions operated within these texts, I compare the works as a whole and try to define the overall intellectual project before moving on to a comparison of specific details to account for their differences and possibly competing points of view.

7.1. The Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A

The Codex Telleriano-Remensis, a manuscript that details several aspects of Nahua religion and history, may have been drafted in the 1550s and 1560s (Quiñones Keber 1995, 129). The Codex Vaticanus A is largely a “clean” copy of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, whose sections were partially rearranged, and the glosses were translated into Italian (Quiñones Keber 1995, 130). Painted and written on European paper, both works are also bound like Western books. Although the Codex Vaticanus A's pictorials are decidedly of inferior quality, the codex contains more sections. Its faithful reproduction of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis makes it particularly useful for reconstructing lost pages from the original. Jansen (1984) established that Dominican friar Pedro de los Ríos was responsible for the realization of both documents, which reflect a wide interest in Nahua culture. The manuscripts include sections on mythology, the calendar, divination, ceremonies, and history. With respect to general presentation and layout, Quiñones Keber (1995, 242–243) noted the tripartite arrangement of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis. The *tonalamatl*, which addresses the calendar and divination, can be found between the ceremonial cycle (the *veintenas*) and history (the *annals*). Thus, the gods are the focus of the first part of the manuscript, followed by human and individual destiny (the reading of the *tonalamatl*), and, lastly, the historical and transcendental projection of human and divine action through time. The same author (Quiñones Keber 1995, 242–243)

suggested that this may be an intrinsic pattern in Nahua or Mesoamerican cosmovision rather than an external and imposed European conception. However, no known or extant pre-Hispanic pictographic document includes historical accounts alongside ritual and divination.

The Codex Vaticanus A, which is seemingly a complete version of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, has a slightly different structure. The manuscript begins with a cosmological and mythological narrative, then presents the tonalamatl, which is primarily concerned with personal fate. The festival cycle of the veintena follows, introduced by a written text on the fifty-two-year cycle in Italian. The manuscript proceeds with a presentation of religious and social customs before closing with the historical section of the annals. Table 1 summarizes and compares the two manuscripts' general layout.

Both documents posit a paradigmatic dichotomy between ceremonial life and divination. The poles of the dichotomy comprise religion and the gods on one side and fate, history, and people's ethnic identity on the other. In the preceding chapters, I argued that ritual and divination are inseparable aspects in the ancient books, which blend clues about ceremonies related to the solar year in the tonalamatl and the 260-day count. The Codex Vaticanus A further complements sections on Indigenous religion and history, which are presumably based at least partially on preexisting pictographic genres, with mythological and ethnographic texts and illustrations. This creates a framework for the understanding of Mesoamerican religion that seemingly contradicts the Indigenous pictographic semiosis, which relies on performance (i.e., ritual action and context) to function properly.

How did locality and timing inform the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A's descriptions of Mesoamerican (mostly Nahua) life, religion, and history? Following Cline (1973, 11) and upon consideration of the multiple possible sources of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, Quiñones Keber (1995, 127–128, 130–131) opted for two major places of production: Mexico City-Tenochtitlan and the area of Puebla and Cholula. On the one hand, the pictorials of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis were possibly drafted in the newly founded capital of New Spain or even Tlatelolco (Quiñones Keber 1995, 128) and created before the addition of the glosses,

which are particularly diverse. The different handwritten annotations in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis belong to the Dominican friar Pedro de los Ríos and other Nahua or *mestizo* authors and may have been added in Cholula or Puebla. The Codex Vaticanus A, on the other hand, was possibly created in Puebla in the early 1560s. The Italian glosses indicate that the manuscript was created with the intention of reaching an overseas audience, most likely the Vatican in Rome (Anders and Jansen 1996b, 30–31). The Italian texts in the Codex Vaticanus A have a finished and polished quality that is missing from the annotations in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, whose glosses sometimes appear to be hastily written. Therefore, the two documents can be analyzed as part of a process of knowledge production regarding Nahua culture. The Codex Vaticanus A contains a much longer and more elaborate cosmological section, which may have reflected the interests of the friars and a foreign audience in general. It is possible that the Codex Telleriano-Remensis has always only comprised the three sections that, albeit fragmented, still exist today. Mythology became a device with which foreign actors repackaged and repurposed Mesoamerican pictographic manuscripts for an Italian audience.

7.1.1. *Quetzalcoatl as culture hero*

As a mythological culture hero, Quetzalcoatl is remarkably present in the two manuscripts' images and texts. The ways in which this important character is addressed, presented, and discussed shed light on differing conceptions of history, mythology, and religion within the codices. In Section 1.2 of the book, I discussed the importance of Quetzalcoatl as a diviner and visionary priest. I argued that his presence is often implicit in the pre-Hispanic codices because the diviner who read the manuscript and interpreted and activated its images took on the active role of Quetzalcoatl. Furthermore, I argued that the divine priest is represented in a conscious and self-referential manner in the ritual narrative in only a handful of instances. This is the case with the Quetzalcoatl priest in the central section of the Codex Borgia and Moteczuzoma II and with the Cihuacoatl priest in the veintena section of the Codex Borbonicus.

The books discussed in this chapter offer a third perspective on the role of the diviner—more specifically, his mythological character. This is perhaps the best-known aspect of Quetzalcoatl (López Austin 1989, Nicholson 2001), precisely because of its preponderance in written colonial sources. However, as argued in the following discussion, this may be a largely post-conquest distortion that was developed within the friars' intellectual circles and responded to their interests. I do not suggest that the concept of Quetzalcoatl as a cultural hero did not exist in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. Rather, I propose that, while Quetzalcoatl's powers once inhabited the present and were summoned during the very act of opening and interpreting pictographic images in the sacred books,

Table 1. Contents of the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A

| The Codex Telleriano-Remensis | The Codex Vaticanus A |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Veintenas | 1. Cosmology and mythology |
| 2. Tonalpohualli/Tonalamatl | 2. Tonalpohualli/Tonalamatl |
| 3. Annals | 3. Fifty-two-year cycle (text only) |
| | 4. Veintenas |
| | 5. Religious customs |
| | 6. Annals |

the creation of a mythological discourse about him was geared towards relegating those very visionary qualities to “another” time, the mythic past or the messianic future. In the colonial context, visionary powers were relegated to the demonic and diabolical and therefore could not be salvaged. The personification of the divine ceased to be narrated as an acceptable lived experience and became a tale of the past.

In the first section of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, which is dedicated to the *veintena* ceremonies, Quetzalcoatl is mentioned only twice in the glosses: in relation to *Pachtontli*—a festival dedicated to Tezcatlipoca, his nemesis—in folio 3v and in relation to the festivities of Quecholli in folio 4v. As Quiñones Keber (1995, 255) noted, both annotations are attributed to Pedro de los Ríos (Hand 3) and refer to Quetzalcoatl, first his defeat at the hands of Tezcatlipoca and in the second instance as the Venus star. Both annotations are part of a larger and well-known narrative about the sinful demise of the great priest, and the tale of the culture hero, who was cast as a sort of Adam, betrays Christian overtones. It should also be noted that, in both cases, Pedro de los Ríos’ remarks do not provide more information about the depicted ceremonies—*Pachtontli* and *Quecholli*—but rather diverge from the topic.

Both the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A reference Quetzalcoatl as the main priest of Cholula in pictorials and glosses in the *tonalamatl* section. As previously mentioned (Quiñones Keber 1995, 166, 168), while the pictorials display an iconography found in other pre-Hispanic manuscripts and monuments, the glosses extensively relate the myth of Quetzalcoatl in a rather Christianized manner, including references to Jesus and the Creation of Man. The annotation in folio 10r, which was made by Pedro de los Ríos, explains that the main celebration of 7 Reed during the *trecena* 1 Deer was held in Cholula every fifty-two years. The “Binding of the Years,” which occurs at the end of a fifty-two-year cycle, is the moment the *tonalpohualli* (cyclical time) and historical time meet, as the 260-day calendar reverts to its initial position within the solar year. Celebrating it every fifty-two years ensures that the day 7 Reed falls during the same time in the solar year (i.e., in relation to the season and movement of the sun) when the historical event (birth or death) took place.

For the *trecena* 1 Reed in folio 11v, the same annotator again states that “the other great feast” for Quetzalcoatl was held in Cholula, which is undoubtedly a reference to the first day of the *trecena*, also a calendrical name associated with the god and culture hero. At the same time, 7 Reed and 1 Reed are twenty days apart, which signals a period of celebration akin to a *veintena*. Accordingly, one annotator (Hand 1) refers to a fast that precedes the last four days of the *trecena* 1 Flower, before 1 Reed begins. This remark highlights the intrinsic ceremonial nature of the *tonalpohualli*, gods, and days, in contrast to Pedro de

los Ríos, who refers to the myth of Quetzalcoatl and a related celebration in Cholula.

Interestingly, the two authors (Hand 1 and Hand 3) consistently demonstrate considerably divergent points of view on the same dates and periods throughout the *tonalamatl*. Relying on a personal comment by Louise Burkhart, a scholar of Nahuatl language and documents (Quiñones Keber 1995, 326–327n24), Quiñones Keber (1995, 126) tentatively identified Hand 1 as an Indigenous intellectual due to certain recurring orthographic mistakes that indicated that Nahuatl may have been his first language (both written and spoken). It is interesting to see how annotations written by Hand 1 significantly differ from those of Pedro de los Ríos (Hand 3), among others. For Hand 1, important days are not identified in isolation; rather, they require preparation and anticipation, as if they exist on a continuum of perpetually counted time and cannot easily be extrapolated from it. Rather than encapsulating a mythical event, a tendency clearly exhibited by Pedro de los Ríos, this annotator suggests that time and memory are embedded in ritual and divinatory practice. Thus, dates indicate periods in which ritual activity intensifies rather than a fixed commemoration.

In folio 14v of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (Fig. 7.1), which corresponds to the *trecena* 1 Serpent, *Topiltzin* Quetzalcoatl is referenced in the pictorials through his calendrical name 1 Reed, attached to the main character *Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli*, the Venus or morning star. Pedro de los Ríos (Hand 3) adds in writing that “when he went away or disappeared, he took this name” (Quiñones Keber 1995, 262). Once again, this annotation indicates that special attention is paid to mythology and lore. By contrast, Hand 1 follows his own interests by referring to the fasting days associated with the *trecena*, without any mention of Quetzalcoatl. The importance that Pedro de los Ríos attributed to the mythical tale of *Topiltzin* pervades the two works that he compiled. One wonders if this interest may have affected the production of the pictorials, including folio 14v. For example, cognate images in the same *trecenas* at the bottom of page 69 in the Codex Borgia and page 57 of the Codex Vaticanus B do not associate a name with the Venus star god, although the deity is recognizable by his white body and long yellow hair.

In folio 22r, which is associated with the *trecena* 1 Wind and the hearth goddess *Chantico*, Hand 1 simply states that *Chantico* was the patron of the thirteen days and does not comment on the accompanying image. Annotations by this author are often pleonastic and recursive and do not complement or explain the image. Pedro de los Ríos, however, discusses *Chantico* with the usual Christian and demonic overtones, an element that is more vigorously developed in the corresponding text in the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 31r). In it, the “first” priest Quetzalcoatl (as he is described in the gloss) faces *Chantico*, the patron of the *trecena*; once again, he is identified by one of his

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|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| | i | m | b | i | b |
|  |  |  |  |  | |
|  |  |  |  |  | |

malo

este dia del mundo a tiempo
malo que entró en el mundo
nueva de que se empezó en palo
lo piedra de detras que vendría
aparece la ytema lo mundo

la primera
claridad es
fue criado
en pal del mundo
antes del diluvio
dizen que esta lumbre
o estrella fue criada
antes que sal

~~patecate~~ **tlauizcalpantecutli**
vuc cau



ola estrella venus

este tlauizcalpa tcutli es
estrella venus es el que callo
vulgo ~~se llama~~ ~~se llama~~
fue ympo en el mar cuando
al qual de nula mas yero
dize que es agla estrella
llamamos luzero o el alma
y aby lo pintan con una
cama o rasada
cuando se fue
de saparecio
tomo su nombre

Aste Tlhuizcalpantecuhtli quiere dezir señor de la mañana quando
amanece y lomes mo es señor de aquella claridad. quando quiere anoche
cer se te es señor de los tres dias ayunavan los quatro profetas
propiamēte la primera claridad
y aparecio en el mundo. / a qui era
~~el agnito de los santos que era el cielo~~
Lo de mas / propia uete de la libra sobre
las cascas o haz de la tierra

Figure 7.1. Lord 1 Reed as Tlhuizcalpantecuhtli, trecena 1 Serpent. Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 14v. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

calendrical names, 1 Reed (Fig. 7.2a). He is enclosed within a quadrangular temple structure glossed as “golden house” (*casa de oro*). The *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (*Códice Chimalpopoca* 1945, par. 35, f. 5) and the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 3, ch. 3) describe the palaces or temples of Quetzalcoatl in Tula. Gold, green stones, corals, shells, turquoise, and feathers adorned these houses, indicating their sacredness and preciousness. The corresponding trecena on page 18 of the Codex Borbonicus (Fig. 7.2b) also represents a temple enclosure; in it, a standing priest holds an incense bag in one hand and an instrument of sacrifice in the other, in the same guise as Lord 1 Reed in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis. However, in this case, day 1 Crocodile (the first day of the calendar) is depicted near the priest and the sacred house, although it is not directly associated with them. The sign can also be read as the calendrical name of Cipactonal (Day Crocodile), an ancestral diviner credited with the invention of the calendar, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Anders et al. 1991, 172). Finally, the corresponding image at the top of page 63 in the Codex Borgia (Fig. 7.2c) consists of a naked priest falling down a yellow or golden opening while holding sacrificial instruments. In mantic terms, the image could refer to the priest’s visionary travel (as seen in the central pages of the same codex, Fig. 1.8, 4.13, 4.15, 4.16, 4.19) or failure to keep up with penitential duties (Anders et al. 1993, 343). The related evidence from these pictorials suggests that, in the later manuscript (i.e., the Codex Telleriano-Remensis), the written story of Quetzalcoatl was Christianized, perhaps through the influence of Pedro de los Ríos, but upon a preexisting set of ideas related to the office of priesthood. In the colonial manuscript, the date that refers to the invention of the calendar (1 Crocodile) transforms into Quetzalcoatl’s name (1 Reed). The challenges and difficulties inherent in priestly functions are described as a result of sin, a fate assigned to Chantico in the gloss in folio 21v. As discussed in Section 5.2, although 1 Reed is a day that has been associated with Quetzalcoatl since ancient times, it may have taken on new symbolic overtones after the conquest, when it became associated with Cortés’ arrival.

Finally, in the trecena 1 Dog, Quetzalcoatl is mentioned in relation to the accompanying image in both the Codices Telleriano-Remensis (f. 18r) and Vaticanus A (ff. 26–27). The first page of the trecena, which is missing in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, depicts the patron Xipe Totec (Our Lord the Flayed One). The corresponding Italian gloss in the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 26v) refers to Xipe Totec as a priestly companion to Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, a myth that is only found in the first section of this manuscript. The text also refers to the fact that 4 Reed, the fourth day of the trecena, was the day on which the rulers were enthroned, following three days of fasting beginning on day 1 Dog. Indeed, 4 Reed is indicated as the day of accession rituals in the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 4, ch. 25), as discussed in Section 5.1. On the opposite page, an emerald-green feathered serpent in the act of devouring a man faces Xipe Totec (Fig. 7.3), an image repeated in all other trecena depictions (the Codices Borgia, Vaticanus B, Borbonicus). Despite the many sculptural representations of Quetzalcoatl as a mythical feathered serpent, only this trecena portrays it in the act of devouring a human being. In the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, Pedro de los Ríos glosses the image with a terrifying explanation: “To express that it is the feast of fear, they depict this dragon devouring a man” (Quiñones Keber 1995, 265). The friar may be referring to the celebration of Xipe Totec, which is presumably mentioned in the first half of the trecena. However, he may also be referring to coronation rituals and related fasting. As suggested by Quiñones Keber (1995, 181), the act of disappearing into the serpent may be a variation on the theme of emerging from it, which is common in imagery of the plumed serpent. The association of days or years Reed with different numerals (most commonly 1, 4, or 7) is frequently found in pre-Hispanic depictions of Quetzalcoatl in Aztec sculpture in relation to penitential rituals performed by royal dignitaries to invoke and even embody Quetzalcoatl’s identity and powers (e.g., Hackmack Box or the carved relief in the Cerro de la Malinche in Tula, Hidalgo). In another section of the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 7v), a temple called Cauacalco (House of the Serpent) is glossed as “house of fear” (*casa del temor*).



Figure 7.2. Quetzalcoatl god or priest in the temple, trecena 1 Wind. a. Codex Borgia, p. 63. Kingsborough 1831. b. Codex Borbonicus, p. 18. Loubat 1899. c. Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 22r. Loubat 1901.

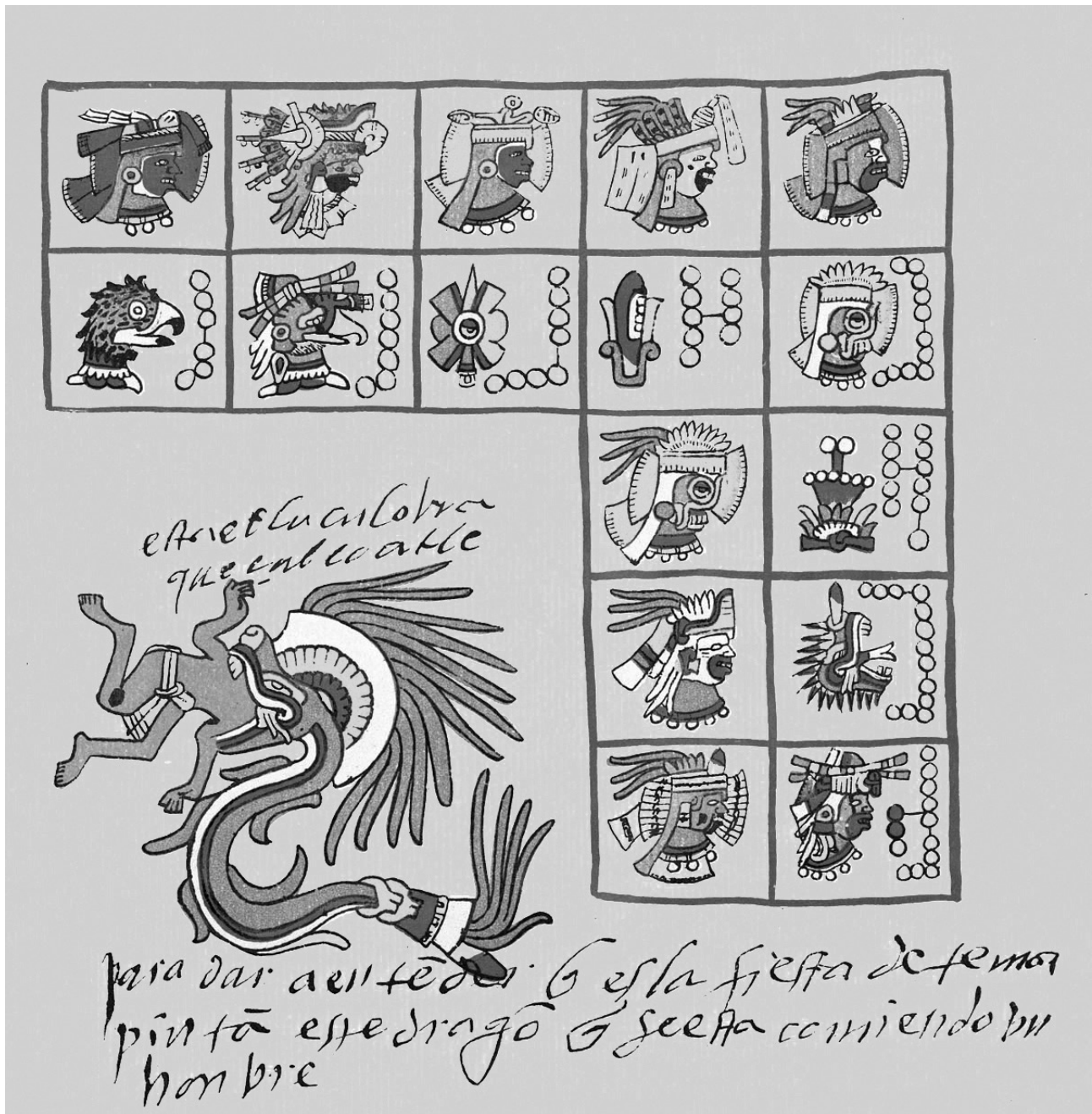


Figure 7.3. Feathered serpent, trecena 1 Dog. Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 18r. Loubat 1901.

According to the accompanying text, in one of the temples Quetzalcoatl and his followers performed penance in Tula (also identified sometimes as Chollan). The name “house of fear” derived from the attitude required when entering the temple. People kept their gaze on the ground and never looked up while inside. In the image, the temple’s roof is decorated with green feathers, and a feathered serpent can be seen disappearing into the house, which somewhat mimics the disappearance of the naked man into the maws of the serpent in folio 18r.

7.1.2. Cosmology and the tonalpohualli

The first section of Vaticanus A (ff. 1–10) is not found in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis and was perhaps never

part of it. It addresses Indigenous cosmogony, creation, and the life and deeds of the legendary Quetzalcoatl. As Quiñones Keber (1996) previously remarked, there seems to be a strong Nahua (but perhaps not Mexica) influence in this section, which suggests that the pictorials were produced in the region of Cholula and southern Puebla, where Pedro de los Ríos worked in the 1550s and 1560s. The depiction of Nahua cosmology in folios 4v–7r is worth close calendrical and iconographic scrutiny. It relates the four eras (Four Suns), with corresponding deities and events that led to their destruction. Although narratives related to different eras of creation and destruction are common in Mesoamerican mythology, the version found in this manuscript is unique. The first era ended with flooding, and it is aptly associated with

Chalchiuhtlicue, the Nahuatl goddess of water. While Mexica monuments refer to this era as 4 Water (e.g., the famous Calendar Stone), the day sign associated with this era in the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 4v) is 10 Water (Fig. 7.4). This day, which belongs to the fourth trecena of the tonalpohualli (1 Flower), is recorded as the first day of a four-day fasting period in both the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 16v) and the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (f. 10v). The observance is related to the celebration of 1 Reed, the first day of the following trecena, which is presided over by Chalchiuhtlicue, the water goddess responsible for a deluge that destroyed the world (Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 11v). According to the *Leyenda de los Soles* (*Códice Chimalpopoca* 1945, f. 1–2), the era of 4 Water was destroyed in the year 1 Reed. In the case of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis, all the glosses mentioned are from Hand 1, possibly a Nahuatl annotator, whose comments favored the description of ceremonial aspects over divinatory or even mythological ones. In this respect, while day 10 Water should be interpreted as a mythological date in the cosmological section of the Codex Vaticanus A, it has a ceremonial value in the tonalamatl in both the Codices Vaticanus A and

Telleriano-Remensis. It is possible that the painter of the Codex Vaticanus A placed importance on the day Water that immediately precedes day 1 Reed, which was associated with destruction by flooding. Thus, calendrical considerations inherent in timekeeping and the tonalpohualli may have played a role in the presentation of cosmological information.

The second era (f. 5v; Fig. 7.5), is presided over by the god of wind, Ehecatl, who is depicted falling downwards in the guise of a green feathered serpent. The head of the serpent is replaced by a solar disk from which the wind god himself emerges. Rather than the most commonly depicted day 4 Wind, the day 1 Dog is signaled, which is the first day of the fourteenth trecena, as previously discussed; its mantic image includes a green feathered serpent devouring a man. The fourth day of the trecena, 4 Reed, was reserved for the enthronement of rulers. The two images—a naked man entering a feathered serpent and a sun god emerging from it—may be viewed as the stages of a succession ceremony in which the prospective ruler must undergo a rite of passage (vision quest) to acquire his title.

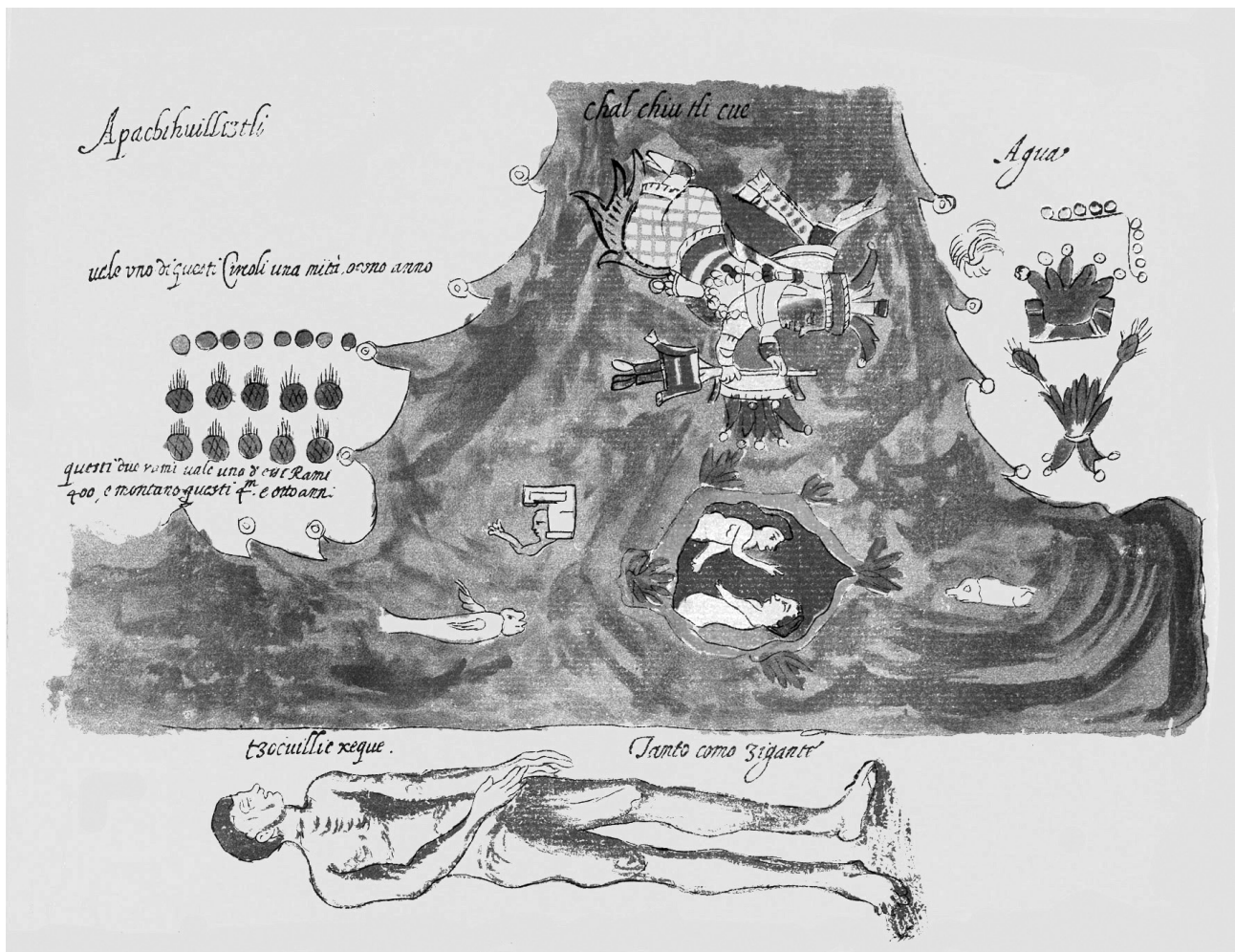


Figure 7.4. End of the first Sun. Codex Vaticanus A, f. 4v. Loubat 1900.

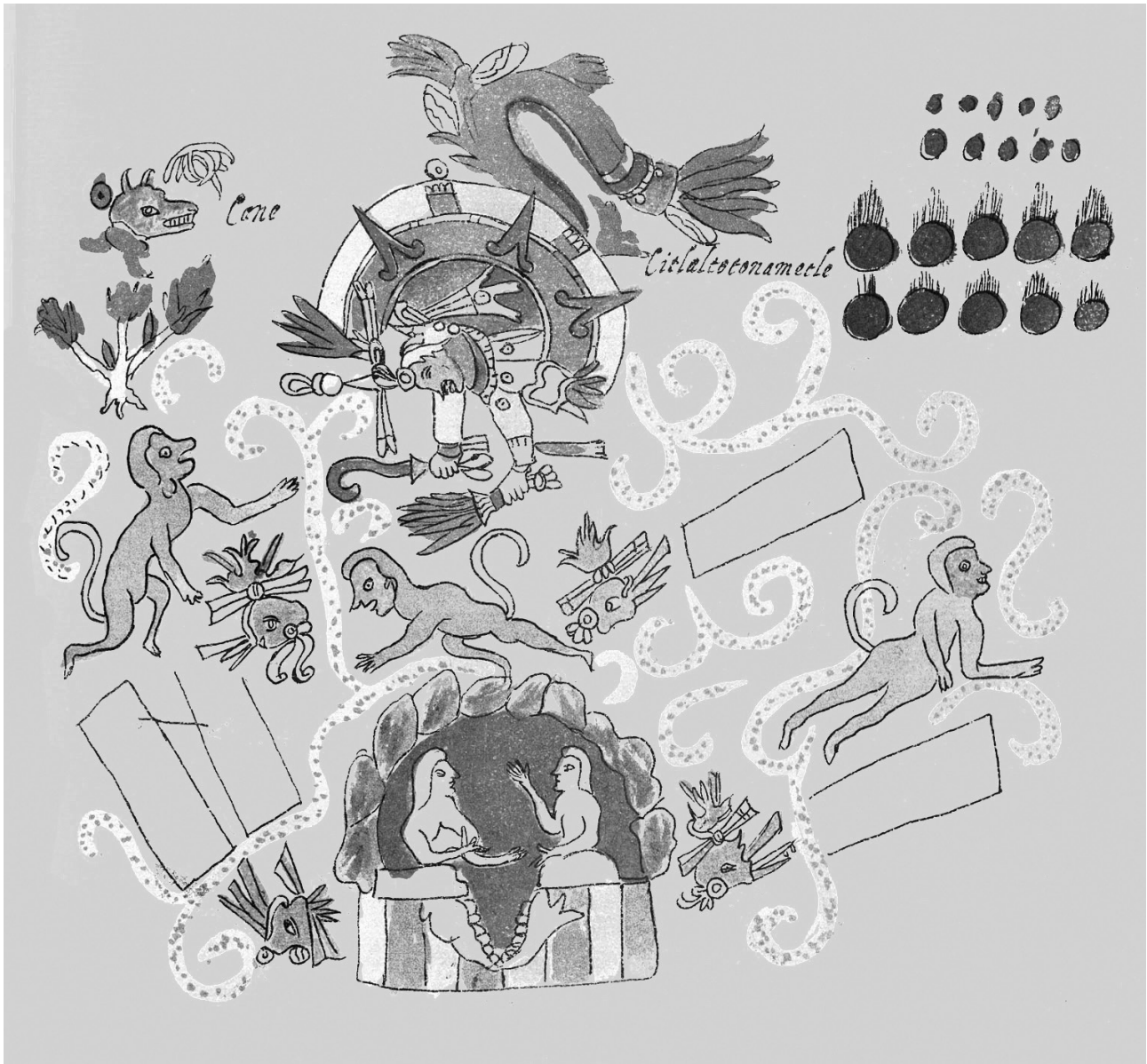


Figure 7.5. End of the second Sun. Codex Vaticanus A, f. 5v. Loubat 1900.

The relationship between the second era and the trecena 1 Dog is explained in the Italian text as follows:

The deluge came on the day that they call 1 Dog, which is in their calendar, because they relied on these events to make those pictures that they use for every day of the month and year, as we shall see ... (*venne questo diluvio in quel giorno ch'essi dicono, uno cane, che se ritrova nel suo calendario, perché de simili accidenti pigliorno occasione di fare quelle figure, che servissero à tutti li giorni del mese et dell'anno, come dopo si vedrà ...*). (Translation by author)

The annotator then makes a clear connection between cosmology and the calendar. Although the latter derived from the former in his mind, cosmological significance in this case (and many others) may have been based on calendrical patterns and established ceremonial behavior.

The third era, presided over by the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli, is associated with the day 9 Movement and was destroyed by fire, according to the text in folio 6r. This day, which belongs to the trecena 1 Water, falls five days before 1 Wind, which is tied to the destruction of the world by fire in the *Leyenda de los Soles* (*Códice Chimalpopoca* 1945, f. 1–2). The annotators of both the Codices Telleriano-Remensis (f. 21v) and Vaticanus A (f. 30v) note this aspect in relation to the patron of the trecena, Chantico, the hearth goddess and female equivalent of Xiuhtecuhtli, who is responsible for the destruction depicted in the Codex Vaticanus A (f. 6r; Anders and Jansen 1996b, 180). It is possible that, even in this instance, the day signaled is a day of preparation and anticipation for the upcoming destruction. Finally, no date is mentioned for the fourth and final era associated with the flower goddess Xochiquetzal in folio 7r. This absence can be attributed to the fact that, according to the Codex Vaticanus A, this was the current era, which began

when Quetzalcoatl was born of Xochiquetzal in Cholula. Unlike central Mexican sources, such as the *Leyenda de los Soles* (*Códice Chimalpopoca* 1945, f. 3), only four eras (or Suns) are narrated in the Codex Vaticanus A, as discussed by Quiñones Keber (1996).

The proposed interpretation of cosmological dates based on their importance as markers of ceremonial activities in the tonalpohualli undermines many assumptions regarding fixed mythological narratives. Ceremonial behavior, historical or circumstantial occasions, and even specific localities are important in determining the iconography and outlook of pictographic images. In this respect, some specific information in a section that relates the life and deeds of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in the Codex Vaticanus A ties the manuscript to the southern Puebla region, near Huautla and the Mazateca. In folios 5r and 10v, it is said that Quetzalcoatl's followers included Xelhua, who is credited with the construction of the Great Pyramid of Cholula, the Tlachihualtepetl. In Section 3.4, Xelhua was mentioned as the leader of the Nonoalca, a Nahuatl group that settled in modern-day southern Puebla and founded the towns of Tehuacán, Teotitlán, and Coxcatlán. Archaeological data indicates that this region is one of the possible places of origin for some of the ancient religious manuscripts. Furthermore, in folio 9v, the departure of Quetzalcoatl is specifically tied to Venus and its periodic disappearance into the sun, another observation that ties the Codex Vaticanus A to southern Puebla, a region renowned for its skywatchers. Both details seem to confirm that the Codex Vaticanus A was produced based on specific and regional information that was eventually turned into a more general mythological tale. In another section of the Codex Vaticanus A (ff. 60v–61r), the annotators explicitly state that some information on traditional clothing was gathered in the southern regions of the Mixteca and Zapoteca in Oaxaca.

Calendrics, divination, and ceremony merge in a very interesting last aspect of the trecena 1 Flower in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis. In folio 10v, Pedro de los Ríos (Hand 3) writes, “they said [there was] an omen in the year of one rabbit [1 Rabbit], on the day one rose [1 Flower], that a rose blossomed in the earth and then withered” (Quiñones Keber 1995, 259). This information is reiterated on the following page, where the friar specifies that, every eight years, there was an eight-day fast before the day 1 Flower that was observed by eating only “bread [presumably tortillas] and water” (Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 11r). The friar further stated that “in this year of 1562 on July 23 the feast was celebrated” (f. 11r). Later, on one of the last and hastily compiled pages in the annals in folio 49r, he again writes that the the feast was held in the year 5 Rabbit and on the day 1 Flower (July 23, 1562). In this instance, Pedro de los Ríos attaches to the commemoration of 1 Flower (Ce Xochitl) an omen of a blossoming flower from the Huasteca, a Nahuatl-speaking region towards the Gulf Coast, in the modern state of Veracruz. While this information is internally coherent, it does not align with Caso's chronology, according to which 1562 was the

year 5 Rabbit but July 23 was 5 Rain. Furthermore, in the veintena section of the same manuscript (f. 1v), the feast of Atamalqualiztli, as the fasting of bread and water was known among the Nahuas, is said to have occurred in Tenochtitlan during the year 2 Flint (1520), concurrent with the veintena of Hueytecuilhuitl. In Caso's chronology, July 23 was 5 Rain in the year 2 Flint, during the veintena of Hueytecuilhuitl. If Atamalqualiztli was celebrated every eight years, an observation also found in the Sahaguntine sources, then it would always fall in the same yearbearer: either Rabbit or Flint, but not both. Finally, day 1 Flower may refer more to the floral symbolism of the day sign in relation to the blossoming of a flower on that day than any calendrical calculation. One also wonders if Pedro de los Ríos relied on a calendar in use in the Huasteca that was different from the more widely accepted one in central Mexico.

7.2. The Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano

The case of the two manuscripts titled after their European owners, the Spanish Tudela and the Italian Magliabecchi, is similar to that of the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A in that the Codex Magliabechiano is a copy of the Codex Tudela, as Batalla Rosado (2002, ch. 6) demonstrated. The former features a clean look and juxtapositions between written texts and painted images. By contrast, frequent annotations and redactions are found around images in the latter. The Codex Magliabechiano was predominantly glossed by a single hand; a second scribe added only a few annotations (Boone 1983, 28). Thus, this is another instance in which a comparison of two manuscripts clarifies the process of knowledge production about “ancient” (mostly Nahuatl) religion and customs in a colonial context. Rather than searching for an original or a presumably unadulterated Mesoamerican god, myth, ritual, or ceremony, the present discussion is mainly concerned with a critical combined reading of the colonial sources themselves. The intellectual demands and ideological aims of the friars must be addressed to understand their impact on the Indigenous (again, mostly Nahuatl) presentation of Mesoamerican religion primarily shown in the pictorials.

The two manuscripts differ from the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A in that greater attention is given to the written explanation of rituals and ceremonies. Texts and glosses were drafted by a single author in the Codex Tudela, according to Batalla Rosado (2002, 79–88). He was also responsible for the long text found at the end of the manuscript (ff. 90–125), which focuses on explaining the tonalpohualli. Batalla believes that the annotator of the manuscript, who remains anonymous, was not a priest or a friar given his generally descriptive and neutral stance with respect to the rituals that he described. Furthermore, compared to the two previously discussed colonial manuscripts, mythology appears to have been of no interest to the annotator, who maintained a close adherence to the images rather than complementing them with narrative tales. Remarkably, as seen below, divination

was also not a main concern. Overall, the authors of the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano demonstrated a very different approach from those of the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A, in which the representation and description of religious or ceremonial customs is either limited or entirely absent. It is possible that the lay nature of the Codex Tudela's commission dictated not only the topics treated but also their portrayal in the manuscript. The descriptive approach rarely attempts to interpret the meaning "behind the image"—that is, its divinatory or mythological significance.

The two manuscripts contain the same sections but in a different order. Although some parts of the Codex Tudela were reordered at a later date, according to Batalla (2002, 16–22, 48–50), their original placement differed from what was eventually adopted in the Codex Magliabechiano. In both cases, the tonalpohualli is located right before the description of the veintena cycle and after the initial section on ritual cloaks. After the veintena section, there is a list and description of different gods, including, most notably, the gods of pulque (the fermented beverage obtained from agave) and different rituals. Finally, the Codex Tudela closes with a depiction of the years of the solar calendar (xiuhmolpilli).

Table 2 provides a brief comparison of the changes that occurred between the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano. In the Codex Tudela the section on the counting of the years (xiuhmolpilli) is found at the end of the book, while in the Codex Magliabechiano it was moved right after the one on the tonalpohualli. In the process, the Codex Magliabechiano's author opted to separate the calendars and the ceremonies, which are kept more closely related in the Codex Tudela.

7.2.1. Ritual cloaks

According to the reconstruction proposed by Batalla, the depiction of ritual cloaks (*mantas rituales* in Spanish) comprised the first chapter in the original arrangement of the Codex Tudela; they are also the topic of the first section of the Codex Magliabechiano. There are only a few differences in the images of this section in the two manuscripts. Each page depicts either six (the Codex Tudela) or four cloaks (the Codex Magliabechiano), which are painted as horizontal rectangles of the same size. Cloaks, which are known in Nahuatl as *tilmatli*

(sing.), are found in colonial manuscripts as prized tribute items (Codex Mendoza, ff. 17v–56v) and summarily described as the attire of lords in Primeros Memoriales (ff. 55v–56r) and the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 8, ch. 8–9). As remarked by Seler (1902, 509–619), there are many iconographic commonalities between representations of the cloaks in the two codices under discussion and the Nahuatl terminology of the Sahaguntine sources. Anders and Jansen (1996a, 141–142, 156) suggested a systematic comparison of the cloaks' outstanding iconographic features with mantic symbols in the trecenas of the Codex Borbonicus. In the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano, the cloaks are placed before the tonalpohualli. As we shall briefly see, the depiction of the tonalpohualli in these manuscripts differs from all other extant representations of the 260-day calendar. Its close proximity to the ritual mantles may indicate a different aspect of the divinatory calendar that is unique to these two sources. Brief texts introduce the series of cloaks and provide clues about their significance and even placement in the manuscripts:

These are the makes of the mantles dedicated to the demons and each lord and nobleman used to wear them for the festivals and keep them in remembrance of the demons to which they were dedicated. (*estas son hechuras de mantas dedicadas a los demonios y cada uno de los señores y principales se las vestian en las fiestas y las tenyan en memoria de los demonios a quien eran dedicadas*; Codex Tudela, f. 85v; Batalla Rosado 2002, 426, translation by author)

These figures and the following through the eighth folio are the mantles or garments that the Indians used in the festivals, which will be named later with all the solemn days of these festivals, just as our festivals have *octavarios*. (Codex Magliabechiano, f. 2v; Boone 1983, 171)

The texts clarify that the mantles were used in the ceremonies of the veintenas discussed later in the books. The text from the Codex Tudela further states that the cloaks were specifically worn for these occasions and then kept to commemorate the celebrations. The Codex Magliabechiano adds that each festival was celebrated in specific periods. In Catholic liturgy, *octavas* are the eight days of observance for a festivity—most commonly Corpus Christi, but also Holy Week. The annotations suggest both performative and commemorative uses for the mantles. I believe that this is how their presence at the beginning of the books should be understood. The act of wearing a cloak and other paraphernalia means impersonating and becoming a god. Their representation is more than an iconographic clue that was intended to aid the identification of the gods in the following section. Rather, it is a statement on the transformative and creative quality of performance and the role that cloaks and other objects play in it. The mantles with the jaguar spots and other black stains, probably hule (liquid rubber), in folios 86r, 86v, and 87v of the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.6) and folios

Table 2. Contents of Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano

| The Codex Tudela* | The Codex Magliabechiano |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Ritual cloaks | 1. Ritual cloaks |
| 2. Tonalpohualli | 2. Tonalpohualli |
| 3. Veintenas | 3. Xiuhmolpilli |
| 4. Gods and rituals | 4. Veintenas |
| 5. Xiuhmolpilli | 5. Gods and rituals |

*Original arrangement according to Batalla Rosado (2002).

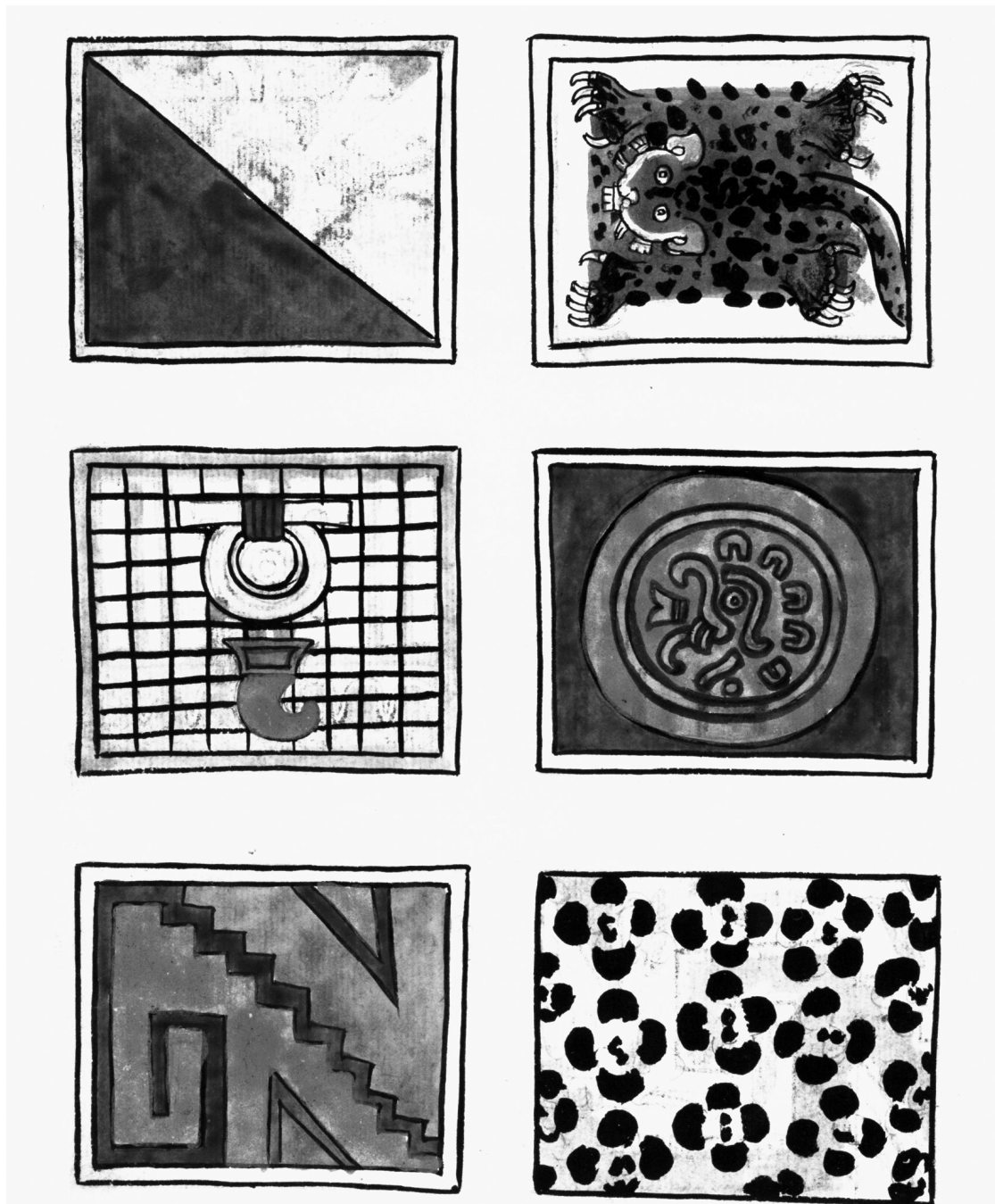


Figure 7.6. Ritual cloaks. Codex Tudela, f. 87v. Museo de América, Madrid.

4r, 5r, and 6r of the Codex Magliabechiano recall María Sabina’s vivid description of her ability to transform into a jaguar by recognizing the spots left by the charcoal on her huipil (discussed in Section 4.1). Furthermore, the Codex Magliabechiano’s glosses in this section repeatedly mention Macuilxochitl, 5 Flower, the Mesoamerican god of feasting, and Ometochtli, 2 Rabbit, the god of pulque and altered states—a topic that I elaborate on below. They also mention Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, the two major gods related to visionary powers.

Finally, one mantle occupies an entire page in folio 83v of the Codex Tudela and folio 7r of the Codex Magliabechiano (Fig. 7.7). The image, which was left uncolored in the

Codex Tudela, represents a turkey impaled on a stick and diagonally positioned on the page/mantle. Fire bursts from the lower portion of the page, while scattered or flying obsidian flints occupy the top part of the image. The gloss in the Codex Tudela explains that this was how turkeys were roasted, while the one in the Codex Magliabechiano states that this is the cloak of the devil’s fire (*manta del fuego del diablo*). The turkey is tied to the reed with white ropes decorated with cotton balls and feathers, an iconographic element usually associated with sacrificial victims. The turkey is a manifestation of Tezcatlipoca, which may also be referenced by the obsidian flints. This is the last mantle depicted in the Codex Tudela, but it remains unclear why the section closes with this imposing

manta del fuego del diablo.



7

Figure 7.7. Large ritual cloak. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 7r. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.

but unfinished depiction. By contrast, the tlacuilo of the Codex Magliabechiano continues with more illustrations of cloaks and a different arrangement (Fig. 7.8). On the reverse side of the turkey mantle (f. 7v), there are four mantles decorated with a different representation or symbol: fire, rabbit, wind, and water. The first three are also found in the Codex Tudela, but they are placed alongside another cloak with a solar disk. All these symbols (fire, rabbit, wind, water, and the sun) relate to the Suns (i.e., successive creations) known through distinct colonial sources, such as the Codex Vaticanus A, previously discussed. In this context, the large mantle with the turkey burnt by fire can be understood as a reference to the third Sun (4 Rain), which, according to most sources, ended in a rain of fire and whose inhabitants were turned into turkeys (Moreno de los Arcos 1967, 191). If these scattered references are correct, the cloaks would have, in addition to the previously mentioned performative function, a very different meaning or purpose, indicating a rather implicit cosmological narrative.

The depiction of mantles as ritual objects and cosmological symbols suggests a tension between the performative and transformative aspects of clothing and the intention

to convey a mythical narrative. As previously argued, these two divergent approaches to the representation of Mesoamerican religion may derive from different agendas in the production of the manuscripts. On the one hand, the friars were more interested in explanatory statements, such as myths and mantic readings; on the other hand, Indigenous artists and the pictographic medium itself were more concerned with the pragmatics of ritual and the correspondences suggested by the inner workings of the tonalpohualli. In other words, explicit statements on mythology and cosmology reflected the needs of a readership that was unfamiliar with Mesoamerican religion and thus required a clear diagrammatic explanation of it. Conversely, as a quintessential Mesoamerican form of expression, pictography was not intended to be illustrative but rather useful in a ceremonial context. Their serviceability ultimately made them pliable to reworking and interpretation.

Although it is ultimately impossible to know how the people involved in the production of the manuscripts interacted with and mutually influenced one another, it is important to bear in mind that the Indigenous intellectuals and artists who contributed to them were born after the

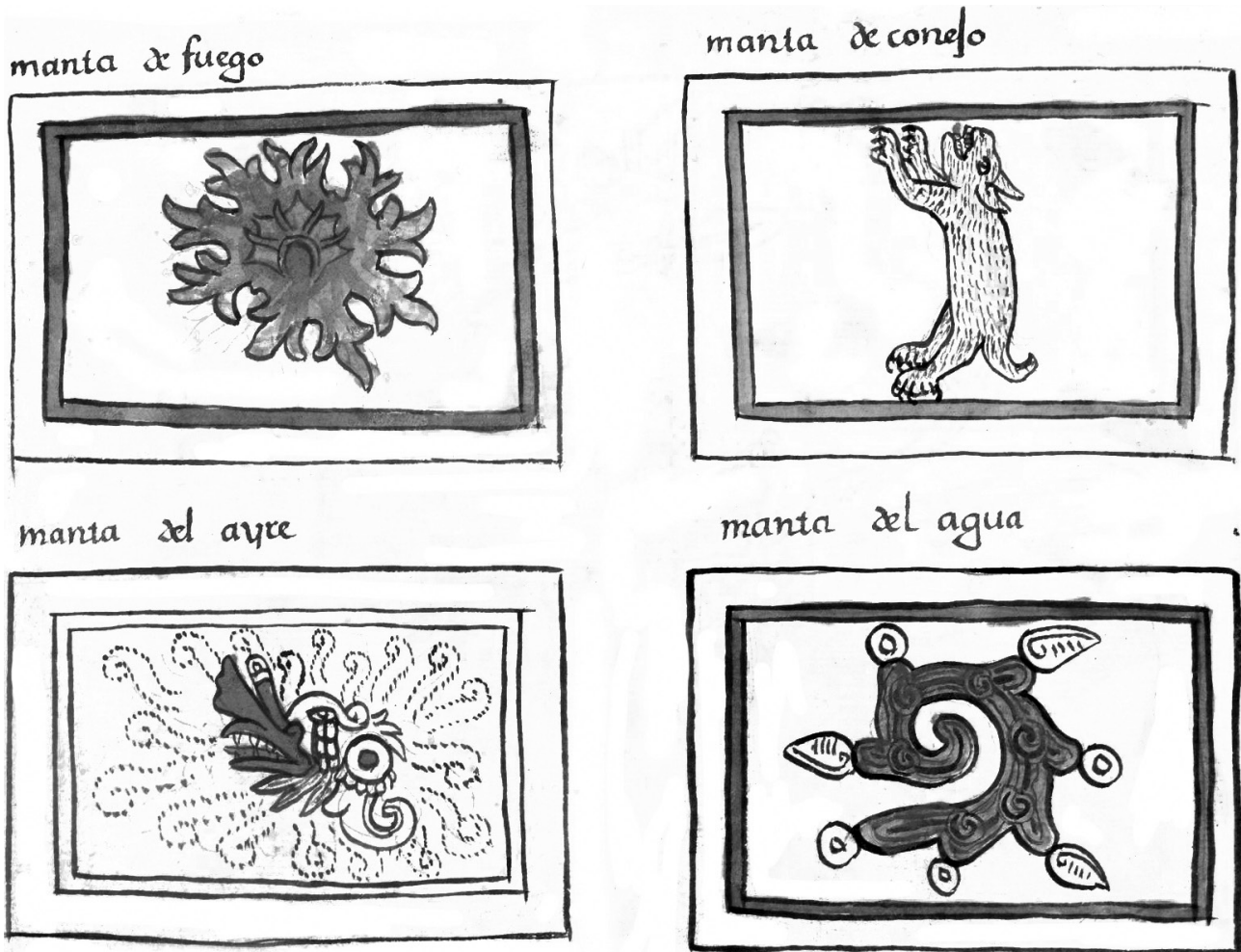


Figure 7.8. Ritual cloaks. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 7v. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.

conquest and most likely had been educated by the same friars with whom they eventually collaborated. This aspect of Indigenous manuscript production is investigated at greater length in the next chapter dedicated to the work of Sahagún. The encyclopedic Sahaguntine project contains many images that were produced by Indigenous painters and that nevertheless played a much more ancillary and illustrative role than those in the Codices Telleriano-Remensis, Vaticanus A, Tudela, and Magliabechiano.

7.2.2. The tonalpohualli and the veintenas

The Codex Tudela (ff. 90r–124r) treats the 260-day calendar through elaborate pictorials and lengthy written explanations based on a four-part division of the tonalpohualli and associations with trees and pairs of patron gods (Jansen 1986, Batalla Rosado 2002, 374–385). In the text, divination and ritual activity are accorded the same importance. Day signs are noted not only in terms of the fate of whoever was born on that day but also in terms of the type of sacrifice that the person was required to make. This indicates that mantic images had equally predictive and prescriptive functions.

The corresponding section in the Codex Magliabechiano (ff. 11r–14r) beautifully but rather simply renders the twenty day signs of the tonalpohualli, each accompanied by a numeral from one to thirteen. The count begins with the day 1 Flint (Fig. 7.9) rather than the expected 1 Crocodile. While Batalla Rosado (2002, 379) considered this detail a simplification of the original section in the Codex Tudela, whose calendrics was seemingly too complex for the copyist of the Codex Magliabechiano to master, Anders and Jansen (1996a, 157) proposed instead that the manuscript was drafted on a year that began on a day Flint, which also establishes the veintena count for that year. I find this suggestion to be interesting and worthy of consideration. While the canonical reading of the calendar seems to imply that there is a first day in the calendar, the 260-day calendar does not have any fixed correlation with the solar and vague year, and day 1 Crocodile may fall at any point of the year. Among contemporary Maya K'iche' communities, no day is universally considered to be the first of the chol q'ij, although there is general agreement that 8 B'atz' (8 Monkey) may be counted as the first (Akker 2018, 33–34). The annotation in folio 13v related to this section seems to confirm Anders and Jansen's hypothesis:



Figure 7.9. The first four days of the tonalpohualli. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 11r. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.

These figures of this part, which are those just mentioned, which are twenty, are the twenty days of each festival, which are painted later. They had them in order to name one who was born in these days ... (Boone 1983, 177).

The annotator is clearly referring to the veintena festivals that had a close relationship with the solar year and would in fact fall on a specific set of twenty day signs in any given year, as discussed at length in this book. In the Codex Magliabechiano, the specific time of the manuscript's production had a bearing on the drafting of the calendar, while the Codex Tudela adheres to a standard depiction, beginning with day Crocodile on folio 98v. The following pages in the Codex Magliabechiano depict the xiuhmolpilli, the cycle of fifty-two years. This placement seemingly departs from the original arrangement in the Codex Tudela, in which the counting of the years is positioned at the end of the book. As for its depiction, both codices represent the entire fifty-two-year cycle from year 1 Reed to 13 Rabbit. An explanatory text in folio 14v of the Codex Magliabechiano introduces the counting of the years with another reference to the veintena ceremonies that were celebrated over the course of the solar year.

I believe that this provides sufficient proof that the painters and annotators of this manuscript had a specific narrative and content structure that they wanted to develop and that its focus was the ceremonial aspect of the Mesoamerican calendar (i.e., how days and time periods were celebrated and counted). In this respect, there is a clear shift from a divinatory function assigned to the pictograms and their arrangement to a ceremonial and descriptive one. While the illustrative purpose of these manuscripts should not be underestimated, I have argued throughout this book that the current divinatory paradigm applied in the study of the codices has perhaps wrongly underestimated other less pragmatic but more self-reflexive aspects of Mesoamerican religious pictography and the calendar—namely, a ceremonial, commemorative, or even prophetic function.

The counting of the years (xiuhmolpilli) in both manuscripts begins with the year 1 Reed, an unusual date for Nahuatl manuscripts, which more commonly used either 1 Rabbit or 2 Reed. The reason seems to be of a historical and transcendental nature because glosses in both codices (Tudela, f. 77v, and Magliabechiano, f. 14v) explicitly refer to the arrival of Cortés in Mesoamerica in the year 1 Reed or 1519 (*entró el Marqués del Valle a esta tierra*). Given the complete lack of historical contents in

the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano, in contrast to the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A, the religious overtones of the date year 1 Reed as a marker of a new beginning should not be underestimated. In the Codices Telleriano-Remensis and Vaticanus A, the year 1 Reed is associated with Quetzalcoatl and the tale of his return after his disappearance in the eastern sea. While all these documents offer the earliest pictographic depictions and accounts of the events surrounding the conquest, they were produced at least one generation after the fact and drafted by artists and friars who had not witnessed them firsthand. Thus, they are indicative of the perception of momentous historical events in a later period.

7.2.3. Xochihuitl and the pulque gods

One of the most interesting aspects of the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano are the godly and ceremonial scenes that follow the veintenas section. At the closing of the yearly ceremonies (depicted in folios 29r–30r in the Codex Tudela and 46v–48r in the Codex Magliabechiano), Xochipilli, the god of flowers and feasting, is celebrated (Fig. 7.10). He holds a *yollotopilli* (a heart stick), one of his known attributes. A flowered plant is depicted in front of him, along with his day sign, 7 Flower, and a few eggshells that, according to the annotator of the Codex Magliabechiano, were scattered on the street to celebrate the gods who provided an abundance of eggs. The same manuscript further explains that this occasion was a movable feast (*fiesta extravagante*), a celebration tied to the tonalpohualli that occurred at different points of the solar year. However, in the following folio in both codices, another day, 1 Flower, is added to the celebration

of Xochipilli. 7 Flower and 1 Flower occur twenty days apart, which suggests that this celebration was akin to a veintena.

The day 1 Flower, which corresponds to the fourth trecena of the tonalpohualli, is a day dedicated to artists and musicians. In the case of the Codex Borbonicus, for example, Quiñones Keber (1987, 191–192) proposed that the explicitly ritual and festive character of the trecena 1 Flower presided over by Huehuecoyotl may indeed be the representation of the festival of flowers (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 2, 36, bk. 5, 25–27) in the tonalamatl section of the manuscript. In the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano, there appears to be a close relationship between this particular movable feast and the previous section devoted to the veintenas. In this light, Xochihuitl (the Feast of Flowers) paradigmatically becomes a feast dedicated to feasting. Moreover, as noted in Section 3.3, the presentation of the feast of 1 Flower as a movable feast right after the “fixed” solar celebrations of the veintenas also seems to suggest that the relationship between solar or seasonal phenomena and the tonalpohualli was noteworthy. The xihuitl and the tonalpohualli were one calendar, rather than two working in sync. In a few sources, namely Cristóbal del Castillo’s Nahuatl chronicle (Castillo 2001, ch. 71, 167–168) and the Códice de Huichapan (Caso 1967, 222), which hails from the Otomí town of the same name in the modern state of Hidalgo, Xochihuitl is mentioned as a veintena that falls in December, replacing Izcalli or Tititl. In the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano, Xochihuitl is placed right after Tititl.

Several representations of the pulque gods, which are disparagingly described as “gods of drunkenness”

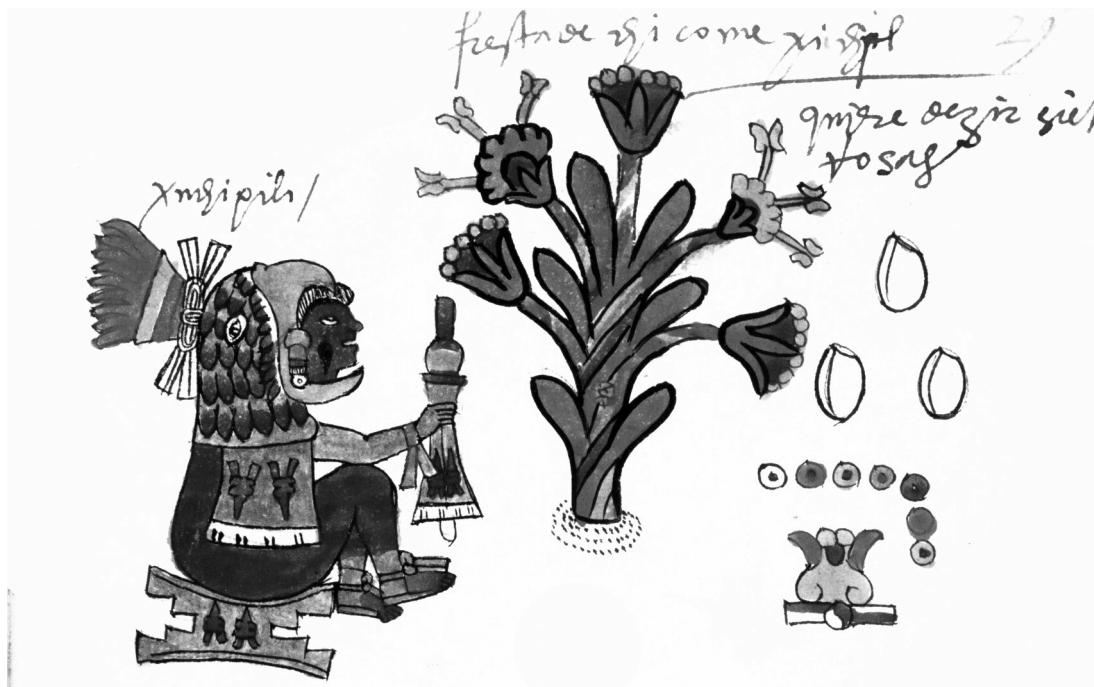


Figure 7.10. Xochipilli celebrated during 7 Flower. Codex Tudela, f. 19r. Museo de América, Madrid.

(*dioses de la borrachera*), follow the feast of flowers. “Drunkenness” is a misguided term that betrays a deep misunderstanding of the role and importance of pulque and its gods in a ritual context. Instead, I propose interpreting the pulque gods as representatives of a cult that was closely related to the visionary powers of the drink (Wasson 1980, 93–103, Ashwell 2006, 93–103). The eleventh trecena of the tonalpohualli (1 Monkey) is presided over by Patecatl, the god of pulque, in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (f. 15v). An annotation on this page explains that he “is the lord of these thirteen days and of certain roots that they put in the wine, for without these roots they could not become drunk no matter how much they would drink” (Quiñones Keber 1995, 263). These roots are depicted in a ritual found in both codices under discussion (Fig. 7.14), as elaborated below. They are substances added to the drink to make it powerful and able to induce visions.

Pulque gods in the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano are explicitly related to several localities in the modern state of Morelos, such as Tepoztlan and Yautepec, where Ome Tochtli and his many manifestations were venerated

as local patrons (Codex Tudela, f. 32r, Anders and Jansen 1996a, 185). According to Mendieta (1973, bk. 2, ch. 14), the calendar originated in this region, as discussed in Section 1.2. Therefore, the gods of pulque are strictly related not only to the drink and its visionary powers but also to timekeeping and its devices. Patecatl, depicted among the pulque gods in folio 35r of the Codex Tudela and folio 53r of the Codex Magliabechiano (Fig. 7.11), is shown with many of Quetzalcoatl’s attributes, including a feather headdress, a curved stick, and a shell symbol on his shield.

7.2.4. The ceremonial use of plants

The display of powerful and sacred plants as well as pulque is noteworthy in the two manuscripts’ descriptions of ceremonies. Flowery plants are also prominent at all such occasions, beginning with Xochipilli on the page dedicated to 7 Flower (Codex Tudela, f. 29r, Codex Magliabechiano, f. 47r). As first discussed by Wasson (1973, 305), several words found in colonial sources indicate the “flowery” connotations of plants and ceremonies. First, in the sixteenth-century Nahuatl dictionary by the friar Alonso



Figure 7.11. Patecatl as Quetzalcoatl. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 53r. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.

de Molina, *xochinanacatl* (literally, “flowery mushroom”) is translated as “mushroom that causes drunkenness” (*hongo que emborracha*). In the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 11, ch. 7), the corresponding word is *teonanacatl* (“sacred mushroom”), which identifies mushrooms with psychoactive components. The adjective “flowery,” which is given in Nahuatl by the prefix *xoch-*, is used interchangeably with both “sacred” (*teo-*) and “visionary” (or “drunk” in colonial sources). Thus, the festive nature of the calendar is more accurately reinterpreted as sacred and ceremonial. Rituals include both communal gatherings and night ceremonies, with the latter being of a more private nature. With respect to private ceremonies, Wasson (1973, 324) mentioned the term *temicxoch* (literally “flower of dream”) found in Ruiz de Alarcón’s treatise (Andrews and Hassig 1984, bk. 2, ch. 2, 79). Although the incantation was intended to “induce sleep,” according to the Spanish text, it is more likely related to a state of trance. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the Xochipilli statue studied by Wasson for its detailed depiction of flowers, petals, and pistils came from Tlalmanalco, a town near the region of origin of many of the pulque gods in the two codices under discussion.

Folios 68r, 69r, and 70r in the Codex Tudela and the corresponding folios in the Codex Magliabechiano (i.e.,

folios 83r, 84r, 85r) prominently display flowering plants, although the information provided by the annotators is scarce or nonexistent. First, in folio 68r in the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.12), two flowered vine plants grow on a patch of land with outstretched serpents. Guerra (1967, 173) and Anders and Jansen (1996a, 218–219) identified the plant as *ololiuhqui coatlxihuitl* or *coatlxoxouhqui* (green serpent plant; Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 11, ch. 7), whose seeds have psychoactive properties. The same plant or a piciete (wild tobacco) appears in the next image in folio 69r of the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.13). It stands between two male priests; one is eating a green substance, while the other is drinking. Finally, in folio 70r (Fig. 7.14), five people (two men and three women) are performing a pulque libation ritual seated around a jar with a foaming white beverage. In the corresponding image in the Codex Magliabechiano (f. 85r), the god of pulque himself is also present. The only gloss and information provided pertain to the bundled roots, which are used to make the *ocpatli* (literally “pulque medicine” or “what makes pulque work”). These images attest that the consumption of pulque was conducted in a ceremonial context by priests on certain occasions, perhaps related to communal festivities. The numerous gray or smoky volutes scattered in front of the two male drinkers on page 69r of the Codex Tudela indicate the words and chants associated with these private events.

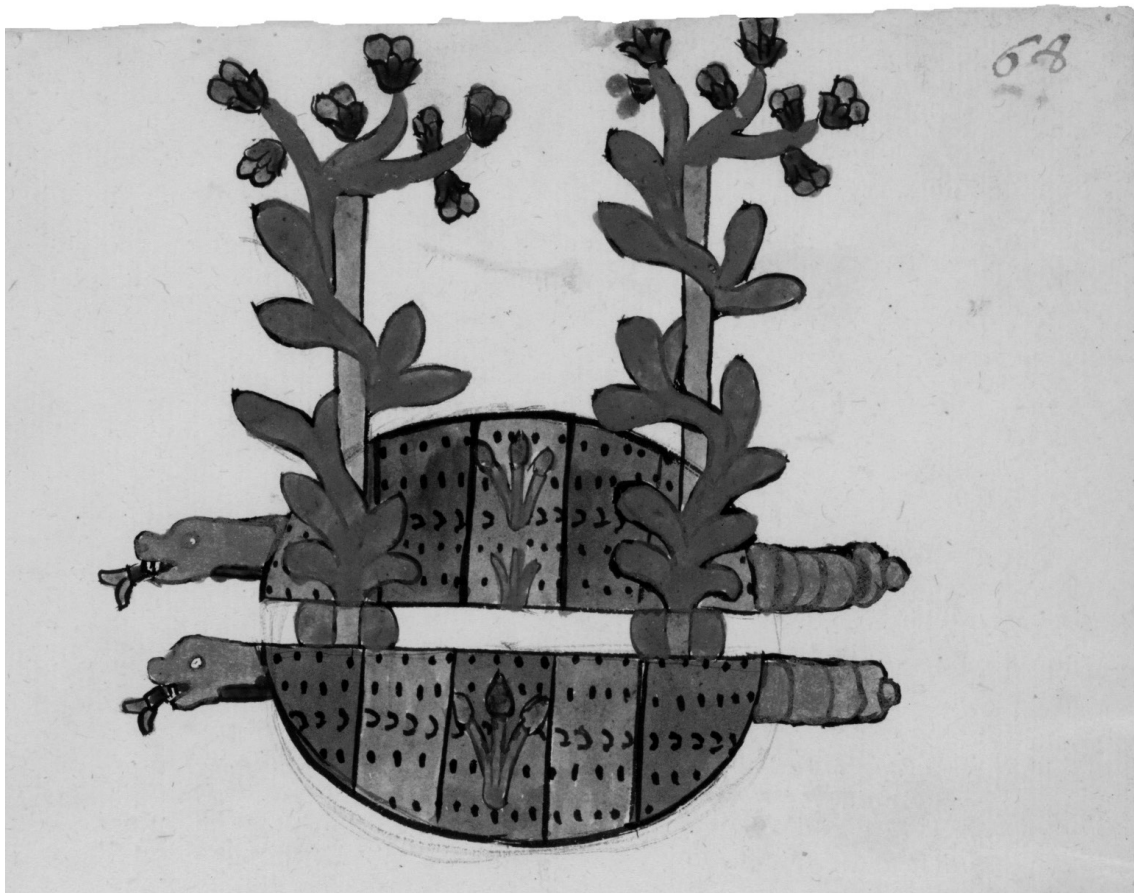


Figure 7.12. Coatlxoxouhqui plant. Codex Tudela, f. 68r. Museo de América, Madrid.



Figure 7.13. Two priests eating and drinking in front of a coatlxoxouhqui plant. Codex Tudela, f. 69r. Museo de América, Madrid.



Figure 7.14. Ritual consumption of pulque. Codex Tudela, f. 70r. Museo de América, Madrid.

The ingestion of sacred plants in relation to priestly knowledge, communal activities, and a festive setting is a common theme on two other pages. In folio 63r of the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.15), a vessel that contains burning copal (incense) is set on an altar framed by two flowering plants, which appear to have been cut from their roots. A man and a woman are sitting in front of the altar making offerings. The corresponding text in the Codex Magliabechiano (f. 73v) explains,

This is a small place of sacrifice where the Indians offered incense or paper with blood to their gods. It is known that every five times [*sic*] they had in common a cue or place of sacrifice in which to hold a sacrifice. And for every twenty days they had another larger one that was dedicated to an idol of their gods to whom they were devoted. And each barrio had another large temple where they had another idol, whom they say was guardian of the barrio ... (Boone 1983, 213)

As noted by Boone (1983, 213) and Batalla (2002, 312), it is possible that the term *veces* or *vezes* (times in Spanish) should have read *vecino* (neighbor), which is shortened as *vez*. There is indeed a certain confusion and ambiguity in the timing and place of participation in the ritual in question, but perhaps both aspects of

the cult were at issue. On the one hand, the cult must be observed every five or twenty days. On the other hand, certain families or neighborhoods were involved. Festivities that took place every five days (*macuililhuitl*) or twenty days (*cempoalilhuitl*; Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 2, Bustamante García and Díaz Rubio 1983) were celebrated differently in each community and various social groups within each community, such as associations of people who practiced the same craft. On the page in question, the tools depicted directly below the altar may represent plastering and scraping tools made of stone and obsidian that were used by masons or papermakers.

Finally, folio 73r in the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.16; Codex Magliabechiano f. 87r) depicts five penitents engaged in different ceremonial acts with thorns, incense burners, and food and other offerings. The person at the top is casting paper strips soaked in blood into a fire. The five men are expressing their devotion to a god with a large feather headdress seated atop a temple. At the foot of the temple, a blue lizard walks over a white cloth with five dots next to it. The text accompanying the image explains that this ceremony was intended to petition the gods. To understand whether the request would be granted, priests put a straw mat next to the stairway of the temple. If a lizard walked on it, it was taken as a sign that the request



Figure 7.15. Ceremony in front of an altar. Codex Tudela, f. 63r. Museo de América, Madrid.



Figure 7.16. Petition to the god. Codex Tudela, f. 73v. Museo de América, Madrid.

would be granted. The addition of the five dots seems to suggest the day 5 Lizard in the tonalpohualli. However, as observed by Anders and Jansen (1996a, 221–222n7), there is an inherent ambiguity to the representation. The animal is depicted in a transitional status between the iconic value as a day sign and a representational status as the animal carrying the oracular response. The

numeral 5 can also be read in two different ways: as the five-day period (macuilxiuhuitl) dedicated to the oracle and ceremonial quest or as the number of the day. As illustrated in *Primeros Memoriales* (f. 269; Fig. 7.17), 5 Lizard is one of the names of Macuilxochitl (Sahagún et al. 1997, 120n9, Anders and Jansen 1996a, 221–222n7), whose temples and cults were found around the main

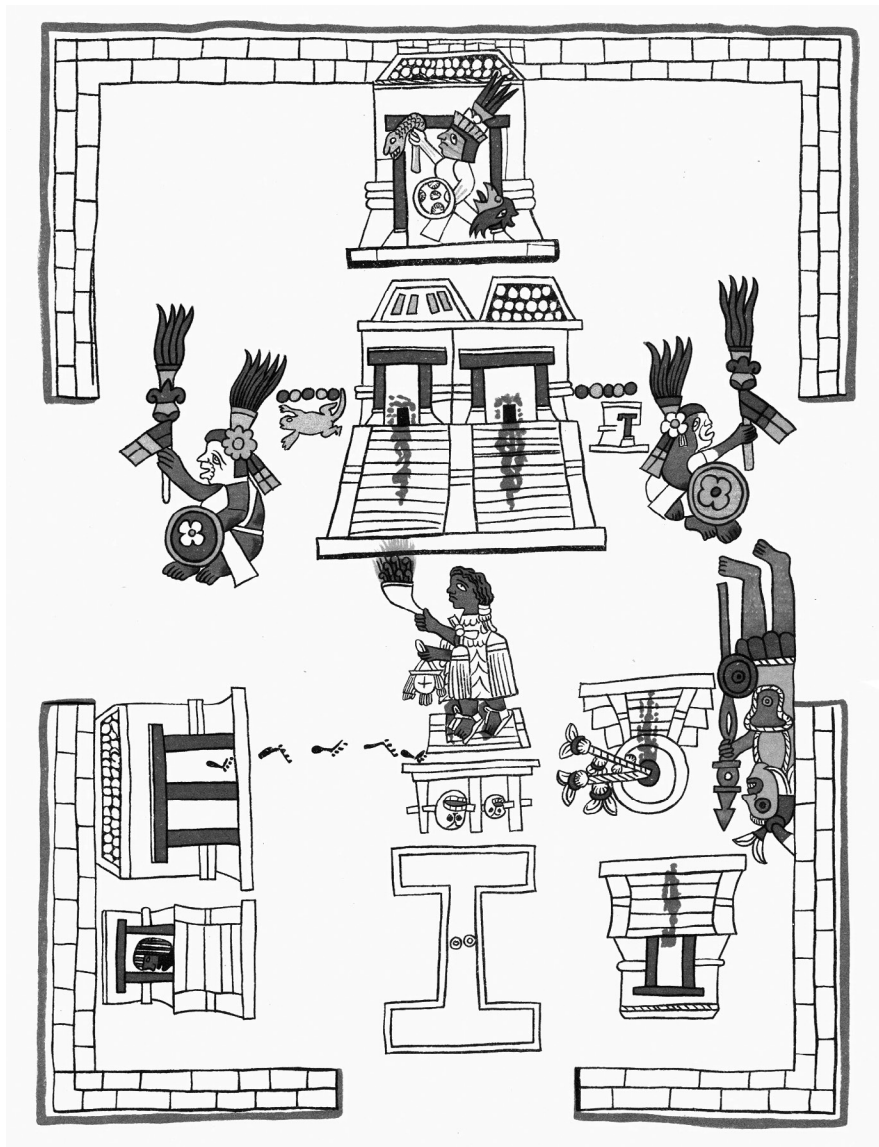


Figure 7.17. The sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan with the gods Macuilcuetzpalli (5 Lizard) and Macuilcalli (5 House) presiding over the twin temple. *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, f. 269r. Paso y Troncoso 1905.

twin pyramids in the sacred precinct. The god illustrated in the Codex Tudela was probably an image such as the one found today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (Fig. 7.18), which has the name 5 Serpent carved in the back of its head. Their presence in the pictorials attests to the importance of the cult to the Macuiltonaleque, godly diviners who commanded rituals upon consultation of the sacred books (Pohl 2007). I believe that the tlacuilo deliberately pursued ambiguity by showing that the relationship between the days of the tonalpohualli, divinatory function, or festival days is not fixed but rather constitutes a web of meaning that is always dependent on the act of reading and interpretation.

7.2.5. Gods and ceremonies in folios 89r–92r of the Codex Magliabechiano

After the long section on festivals and ceremonies, a few illustrations of gods and ceremonies that appear in the

Codex Magliabechiano are not found in the Codex Tudela, either. Folios 89r–92r (Fig. 7.19 and 7.20) depict several gods in groups of three or four. Boone (1983, 27) argued that the artist responsible for this portion of the manuscripts was the same one who added the cloaks in folios 8 and 9, which are not found in the Codex Tudela. As for the iconography of the gods in this unique section, Anders and Jansen (1996a, 223–224) noted that Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Xiuhtecuhtli, Xipe, Centeotl, and Tezcatlipoca were patron deities of several veintenas, which may indicate that this part of the manuscript was copied from an original fragment that depicted the yearly ceremonial cycle. In folio 89r (Fig. 7.19), a priestly impersonator in the bottom left corner of the page stands out from the others due to the insignia of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (Aguilera 1983, 166, Anders and Jansen 1996a, 223). He is encircled by eighteen footprints, which, as Paul van den Akker brought to my attention in a personal communication (2017), may be a reference to the number of veintenas in a year. Thus, the footprints may be

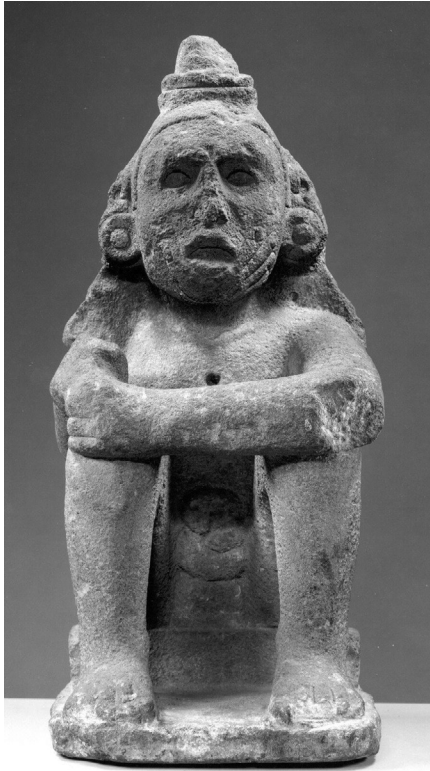


Figure 7.18. Macuilcoatl (5 Serpent). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

interpreted as the eighteen ceremonies that comprise the yearly cycle and must be completed around Quetzalcoatl, according to his instructions.

Tena (2000, 428–430) followed up on the suggestion that the gods in these last pages of the Codex Magliabechiano relate to the veintena patrons and further developed an idea proposed by Caso (1967, 36, fig. 14), who posited that the five paper offerings that close the section and the book in folio 92r (Fig. 7.20) represent the five nemontemi days. Tena (2000, 429) referred to these representations as “paper offerings” (*amatetehuītl* in Nahuatl). The last one is larger than the others and decorated with a maize outcrop. It should be noted, however, that nemontemi are seldom pictorially represented and therefore not easy to identify despite being consistently cited in written sources.

At the bottom of folio 90r (Fig. 1.15), there is an unusual scene that breaks with the general contents of the section. A man is seated on a straw mat, ingesting mushrooms, as explained in Section 1.3. More red and green mushrooms sprout from a patch of land in front of him, while Mictlantecuhtli, the god of the land of the dead, looms from the back and slightly touches the seated figure. I suggest that this scene, which was seemingly added to a loose representation



Figure 7.19. Four gods. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 89r. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.

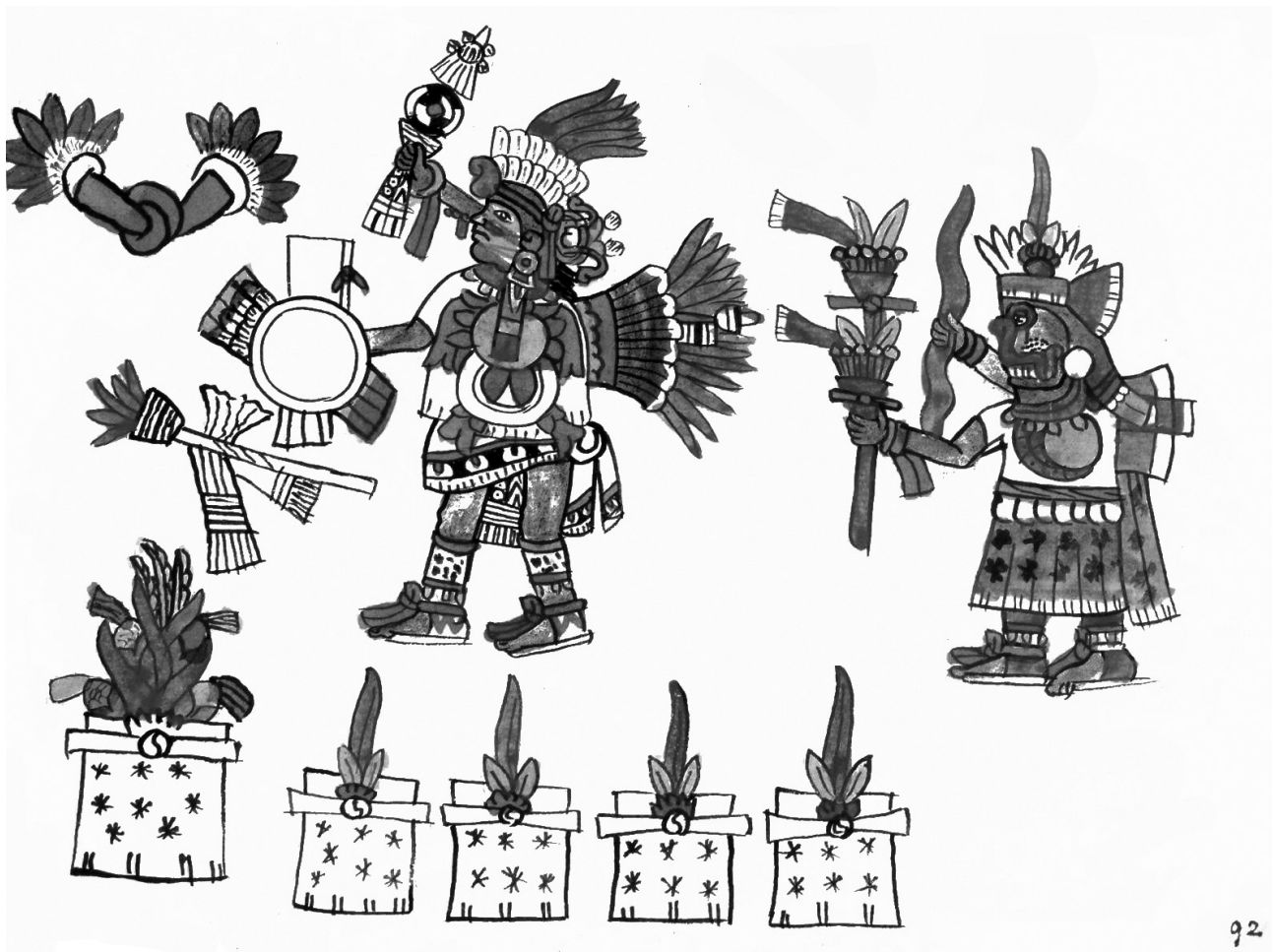


Figure 7.20. Two gods and five paper offerings. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 92r. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.

of the *veintena* patron gods, is another instance of the close relationship between visionary experience and the *veintena* ceremonies. Their planning and correct performance required knowledge derived from the experience of a revelation, as discussed in the previous chapters. The presence of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl can also be interpreted in this light, as he is the archetypal priest in charge of leading ceremonies.

Boone (1983, 27) previously commented on this unique section of the Codex Magliabechiano and considered that the iconographic complexity of the gods makes it unlikely that they were independent inventions; rather they were copied from a source other than the supposed prototype of the Codex Magliabechiano (presumably the Codex Tudela). Indeed, there is a very interesting comparison to be made with pages 17–22 in the Codex Laud (Fig. 7.21–7.22). A sequence of twenty-two characters is arranged in two rows but without guiding red lines; with one exception, they all face the same direction. The section includes at least one clear reference to the *veintena* ceremonies on page 17 (Fig. 7.21), presumably at the beginning of the sequence to the right, where Xiuhtecuhtli, the fire god, opens the celebration in the top right corner

of the page, followed by another priest drilling a stick in a fire serpent at the bottom. In front of the officiating priest, another character carries a white flag. Both men carry a turquoise diadem, and their body paint identifies them as Paynal and Huitzilopochtli, the main gods of the celebration of Panquetzaliztli, according to the sources. On the following pages, where the retinue appears to reach its final destination in a cave (Fig. 7.22), three characters bear distinctive iconographic attributes. The last one, who holds a burning ball of hule (rubber), can be identified as Tezcatlipoca; behind him follows a man who can be identified as a priest to Xiuhtecuhtli (Anders and Jansen 1994, 253). The rain god Tlaloc, holding a serpent and an ax, is next. Once the offering is placed, the scene (and presumably the ceremonial pilgrimage) ends with four day signs and counted bundled stick offerings, which were left uncolored. In folio 92 of the Codex Magliabechiano, Tezcatlipoca and Tlaloc, possibly related to the celebrations of Teotleco and Tepeilhuitl (Anders and Jansen 1996a, 224n10) or Toxcatl and Etzalcualiztli (Tena 2000, 429) appear right before the five paper offerings, which Tena identified as *nemontemi*. Thus, both codices contain a loose representation of the tutelary gods of the *veintenas*.

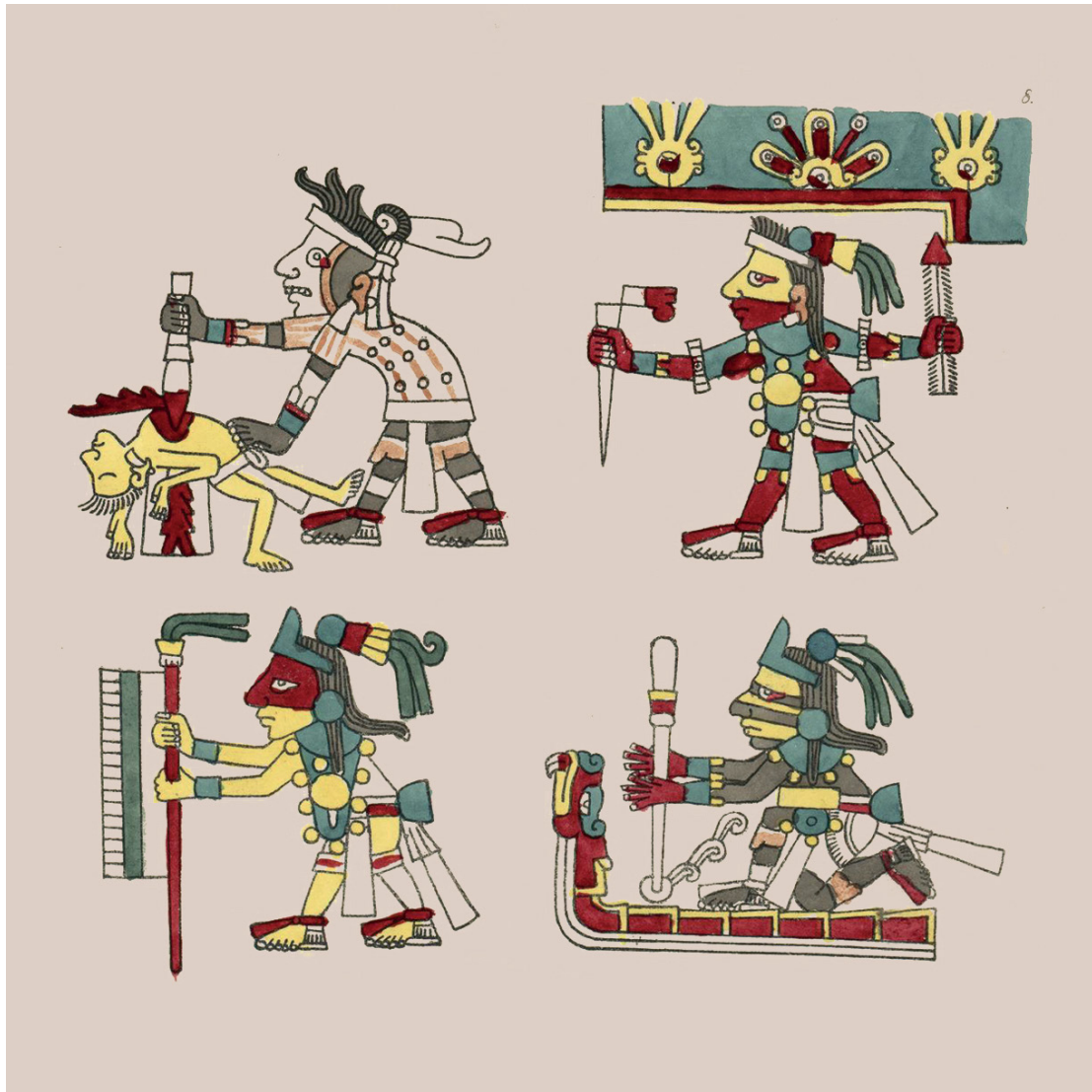


Figure 7.21. Panquetzaliztli and the New Fire ceremony. Codex Laud, p. 17. Kingsborough 1831.



Figure 7.22. Procession to a cave. Codex Laud, pp. 21–22. Kingsborough 1831.

Both the Codices Magliabechiano and Laud may be an original creation of different divinatory or ceremonial images. In the case of the Codex Laud, these images were taken from a lost original, which had presumably already been damaged when the new manuscript was painted. By contrast, the Codex Magliabechiano was copied from the Codex Tudela but lost much of its credibility, according to Batalla Rosado (2010). In both instances, however, the quality and level of detail in the images contradict their presumed fragmentary and lacking contents. Why would an artist invest skills and time to reproduce an incomplete and therefore unusable document? Perhaps we should consider that the result is neither faulty nor inconsistent; indeed, we have yet to understand much of the logic that underlies pictographic image-making in both pre-Hispanic and colonial contexts. Could it be that the seemingly complete image of the eighteen veintenas that we have come to expect from the sources, including the Codex Magliabechiano itself, is not more appropriate for describing the Mesoamerican ceremonial cycles than the fragmentary images found on the pages of the Codices Magliabechiano, Laud, and Borgia?

The main aim of this book is to understand pictography as a cultural expression whose complex inner mechanisms are not a mere reflection or illustration of some external reality but rather able to engender their own meaning. The four documents examined in this chapter belong to a corpus of Mesoamerican religious texts produced during the colonial period that largely adhered to their ancient counterparts. In other words, the images were meant to convey meaning on their own terms and were not ancillary to verbal explanations. The final fate of pictography is the focus of the next and final chapter.

Manuscript Painting and the Conventos

This last chapter is dedicated to the development of pictography once it was fully incorporated into the intellectual project of the friars and their art schools. The four manuscripts discussed in the preceding chapter also form part of the corpus of pictographic and written works produced under mendicant sponsorship. They largely relied, however, on established pre-Hispanic canons, such as those found in the Borgia Group manuscripts. The written text, provided in the form of glosses, is largely subordinate to the images. Written explanations were intended to complement or clarify the meaning of the pictorials, whose overall presentation and composition still conformed to known pre-Hispanic pictographic genres.

By contrast, the work of Bernardino de Sahagún discussed in this chapter was wholly novel, blending European literary antecedents and local pictographic traditions. In particular, the Florentine Codex is widely considered the most important source on Nahuatl culture, religion, and history at the time of contact and is therefore cited at length in this book. However, the bulk of information in the document is found in the written texts. The Nahuatl version of the texts, whose complete translation was attempted only once, by North American scholars Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble (Sahagún 1950–1982), reflects the interests and knowledge of an Indigenous intellectual elite that had been fully educated at mendicant schools. The monumental work of Bernardino de Sahagún is contrasted with the Codex Yanhuitlan, a document produced in the Mixtec town of the same name. The manuscript is fully pictographic and hails from a region in Mesoamerica where picture writing was particularly developed. The Mixtec codices, in fact, constitute the only pre-Hispanic corpus of historical documents that focus on local and regional genealogies. The Codex Yanhuitlan is heir to this tradition, but it also represents a novel genre that fully incorporated a format, a style, and contents derived from European and colonial examples.

Both works have received extensive scholarly attention. Therefore, I focus on specific aspects that demonstrate the scope, impact, and limitations of the mendicant evangelical and educational enterprise in New Spain. On the one hand, the encyclopedic and scholastic endeavor of the Franciscans, which is exemplified by the work of Sahagún, intended to salvage Mesoamerican religion by portraying it as dead and sealed in the past, not as a living phenomenon. Consequently, books were seen as repositories of fixed knowledge on mythology and rituals, as also observed in the Codices Telleriano-Remensis, Vaticanus A, Tudela, and Magliabechiano. On the other hand, the Codex Yanhuitlan was produced in an Indigenous town and demonstrates how local Mixtec leaders and artists

were able to re-appropriate the pictographic medium from the friars to address the complex socio-political situation in early colonial Yanhuitlan.

One striking aspect of these manuscripts is the innovative and widespread use of monochrome, an artistic development unique to sixteenth-century New Spain that has yet to receive its scholarly due. In Europe, monochrome painting (usually referred to with the term *grisaille*, from French for “gray-like”) was first adopted in manuscript illumination. An outstanding example is the famous Book of Hours produced by Jean Pucelle for Jeanne d’Evreux, the queen of France in the first half the fourteenth century. Eventually, early Netherlandish painters mastered the technique in oil painting, most notably in the decoration of altar wings. Throughout the Renaissance, the *grisaille* technique was commonly employed to paint architectural decorations and details and to create *trompe l’oeil* or other similar visual effects. Among the few scholars who have addressed the use of monochrome in the visual arts of New Spain, Manrique (1982) and Peterson (1993, 62–63) considered that the lack of color was a direct consequence of the pedestrian and unoriginal copies of European models that arrived in the New World in the form of prints. Although I believe that the introduction of print illustrations from Europe triggered the production of monochrome images among Indigenous *tlacuilos*, the selective adoption of *grisaille* in specific contexts reveals a conscious positioning on the part of local artists vis-à-vis a foreign and imposed tradition.

European art historical scholarship on *grisaille* has examined it as a representational strategy that engages and asks questions of the viewer (Schoell-Glass 1999). Philippot (1966) noted that the lack of color in early Netherlandish altar wings, which usually depicted fictive sculptures in niches, had the effect of collapsing different levels of reality into a single surface. Fehrenbach (2011) considered that monochrome in early modern marble sculpture constituted a regression of the naturalist Renaissance impulse to a potential state of animation, a moment in which dead and raw materials seemed to come alive and make present what the picture claimed to be. Finally, Powell (2012, 107–111) remarked on the uncanny vivacity of paintings of monochrome sculpture, highlighting a possible paradox; the painted image purports to be a sculpture, but sculpture shows a degree of realism in its expression that one would only expect from the “real” subject. In all these cases, *grisaille* is employed to implicitly reveal the mechanism by which the image and its life-like and mimetic qualities are created. This is often framed within the debate on the *paragone* (comparison) between the relative merits of architecture, sculpture, and painting. Monochrome manifests a transition or process that the viewer must