

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

	i	m	b	i	b
					
					

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

patecate tlahuizcalpantecutli
vuc cau
ola estrella venus

este tlahuizcalpantecutli es
estrella venus es el que calta
vulca que se llama y se llama
fue y mudo en el mar cuando
al qual se nudo mas yero
dize que es agla estrella
llamamos luzero o el alma
y aby lo pintan con una
una trasudja
cuando se fue
de saparecio
tomo su nombre



la primera
claridad es
fue criado
en el primer tiempo
antes del diluvio
dizen que esta lumbre
o estrella fue criada
antes que sal

Aste tlahuizcalpantecutli quiere decir 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 ayunaban los quatro profetas
propiamēte la primera claridad
y aparecio en el mundo. / a qui era
el aguiño 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 Tlahuizcalpantecutli, 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.

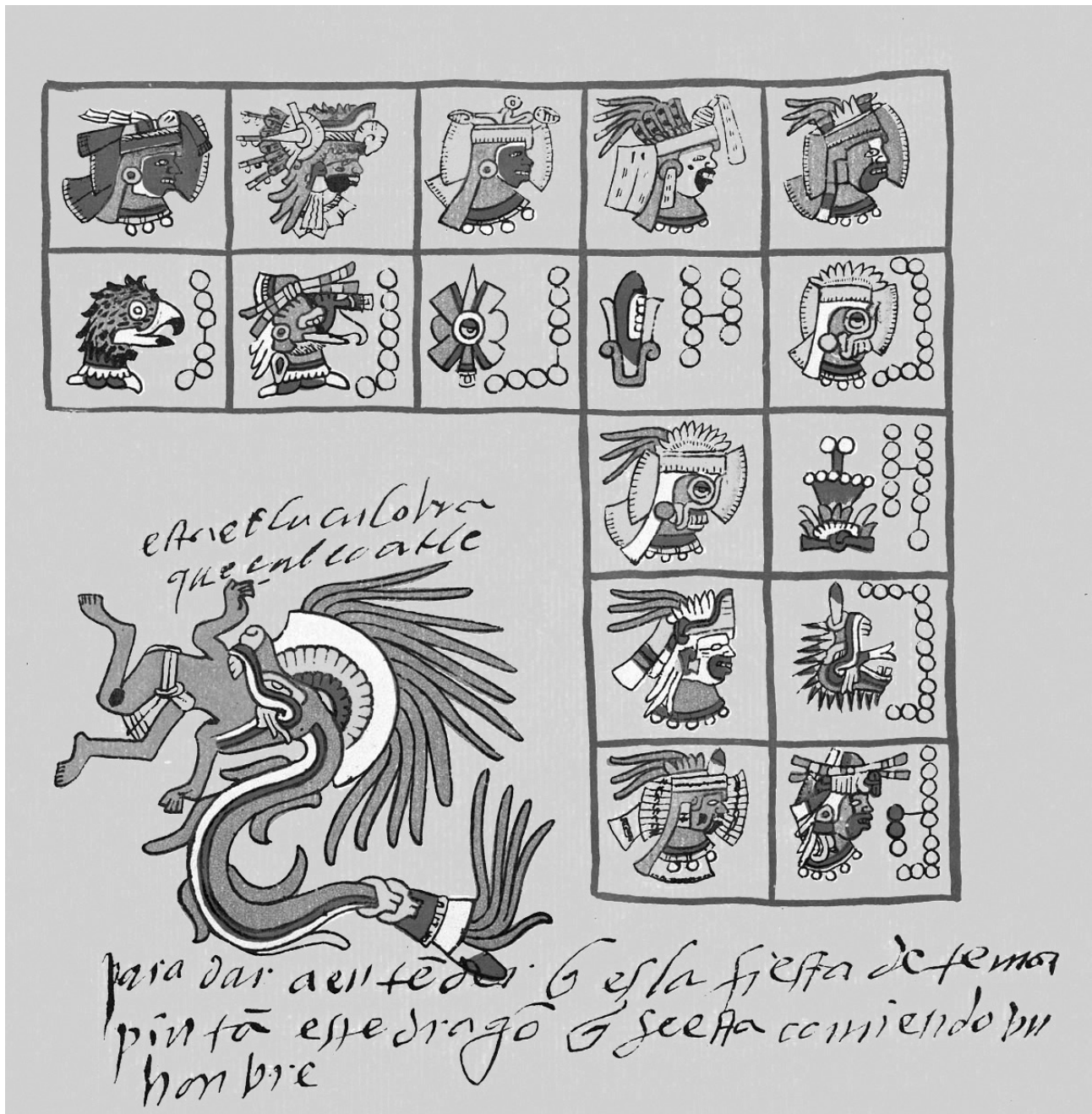


Figure 7.3. Feathered serpent, trecena 1 Dog. Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 18r. Loubat 1901.

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