

Searching for the Sanctuary of Lady 9 Reed: Huajuapán, Ring of Stones

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Abstract: The Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) codices refer to a place-sign ‘Ring of Stones’, which, the context suggests, must be an important Postclassic site in the Mixteca Baja region (in the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Puebla). The Patron Deity of this place is Lady 9 Reed, who plays an active role in early Ñuu Dzauí history, particularly in the episode known as the ‘War against the Stone Men’. She had various sanctuaries throughout the region, e.g. in Tonalá, where she was visited by the warrior king Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’ in AD 1097. This article presents arguments for the identification of ‘Ring of Stones’ as ancient Huajuapán (in the Western part of the State of Oaxaca, Mexico) and examines some of the related archaeological remains.

Keywords: Mixtec codices; Mixtec archaeology; Mixtec religion; Mixtec toponyms; sacred landscape; pre-Hispanic period.

Resumen: Los códices de Ñuu Dzauí (la región mixteca) mencionan un signo toponímico ‘Anillo de Piedras’, que, según sugiere el contexto, tiene que ser un importante sitio postclásico en la Mixteca Baja (en los Estados de Oaxaca y Puebla, México). La Deidad Patrona de este lugar es la Señora 9 Caña, que juega un papel protagónico en la historia temprana de Ñuu Dzauí, particularmente en el episodio de la ‘Guerra contra los Hombres de Piedra’. Ella tuvo varios santuarios en la región, por ejemplo en Tonalá, donde la visitó el rey guerrero Señor 8 Venado ‘Garra de Jaguar’ en 1097 d.C..

Este artículo presenta argumentos para la identificación de ‘Anillo de Piedras’ como el antiguo Huajuapán (en la parte occidental del Estado de Oaxaca) y examina algunos de los restos arqueológicos relacionados.

Palabras clave: códices mixtecos; arqueología mixteca; religión mixteca; toponimia mixteca; paisaje sagrado; periodo prehispánico.

How can we identify places of power in precolonial Mesoamerica? How can we bring information from historical sources and oral traditions to bear upon the interpretation of archaeological sites? What were the context, structure and history of the ceremonial centre and cultural landscape, and what was the associated symbolism? What can we say about the sacred aspects of the landscape, about the presence of divine beings and ancestors? What about the construction of memory and about the ritual activities that took place there?

As an example of the different difficulties and possibilities in dealing with such questions, we will focus here on the pictorial manuscripts of Ñuu Dzauí, the Mixtec people, in Southern Mexico (the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero). These manuscripts – screenfold books (codices) or large pieces of cloth (*lienzos*) – are impressive examples of precolonial historiography. Their potential for understanding the Postclassic period is similar to that of the Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions for the Classic period.

The Ñuu Dzauí region is ecologically subdivided into three main areas: a) the cold highlands of the *Mixteca Alta* in the centre of the western part of the state of Oaxaca, b) the much lower, hot and eroded *Mixteca Baja* more to the west and continuing into the neighbouring states of Puebla and Guerrero, and c) the tropical lowlands along the coast of the Pacific Ocean in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero: The *Mixteca de la Costa*. The region is rich in tangible and intangible cultural heritage, but suffers from depressing socio-economic conditions, so that many Mixtecs have migrated to other areas of Mexico and to the U.S.A.

In general, our research aims at connecting the contents of these painted sources to the archaeology and early colonial chronicles, as well as to the cultural landscapes and living tradition of the region. We try to read the Ñuu Dzauí scriptures and related art in terms of Ñuu Dzauí culture, in its historical and contemporary dimensions. An important effect of that approach is that the study of the archaeological remains may become less anonymous and may result in a historical narrative, which, in turn, is more informative and recognisable for the present-day population.

Here we will discuss the identification of several place signs that appear in the Ñuu Dzauí codices and their association with a specific female deity, Lady 9 Reed (Figure 1).¹

1 This article is an outcome of the project ‘*Time in Intercultural Context*’, which is directed by Maarten Jansen in collaboration with Mixtec researcher Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez at the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands, and funded by the European Research Council through an Advanced Grant in the context of the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° 295434. Mexican archaeologist Iván Rivera also participates in this project, while being supported by an INAH Fellowship for his doctoral studies at Leiden University.



Figure 1. Map of the Mixteca showing the towns and villages discussed in the text.

Places in the Ñuu Dzauí codices

It was the Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso who made the decisive breakthrough in the interpretation of the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) pictorial manuscripts. In his in-depth analysis of the early colonial Map of Teozacoalco (1499) he showed that two place signs on the Map of Teozacoalco were identified by Spanish glosses as important city-state capitals: ‘Black Frieze’ is Ñuu Tnoo, ‘Black Town’ (known in Nahuatl as Tilantongo), and ‘Broken Town’ is Chiyo Cahnu, ‘Large Altar’ (known in Nahuatl as Teozacoalco), both in the Mixteca Alta (Figure 2). The related personages were identified as the his-

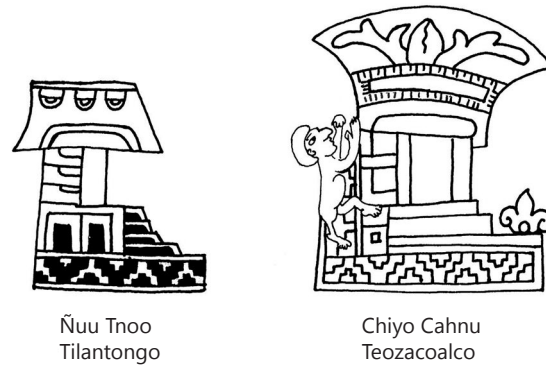


Figure 2. The Tilantongo and Teozacoalco glyphs in the Map of Teozacoalco (redrawn from Smith 1973a).

torical rulers of those places. The same personages occur in a specific corpus of codices and related documents, which therefore must all be historical in character and refer to the history of the different dynasties that were ruling the ‘city-states’ or ‘village states’ in the Ñuu Dzauí region during the Postclassic period (\pm AD 900-1521). These political units were called *yuvui tayu*, ‘the mat(s), the throne(s)’, in Dzaha Dzauí (the Mixtec language).

With his publications, Caso founded a scholarly specialisation devoted to the study of this corpus of pictorial manuscripts. Several researchers followed in his footsteps and continued his work with crucial contributions to the clarification of the different actions carried out by the individuals in the codices, the reconstruction of the chronology of events, the identification of more place signs, the connection of codices with archaeology and other aspects.² The Map of Teozacoalco enabled Alfonso Caso to identify the signs of several important ‘city states’ in the Mixteca Alta. Mary Elizabeth Smith has considerably broadened the amount of identified places. Her studies of early colonial codices contain place signs with glosses in Dzaha Dzauí, such as the Codex Ñuu Naha (Muro), and she has carried out specialised field research in the Mixteca de la Costa and in the Mixteca Baja.

2 For the history of the decipherment and the overall contents of the Ñuu Dzauí codices, see the handbook by Jansen & Pérez Jiménez (2011). We follow here the new nomenclature proposed there for the Ñuu Dzauí codices.

The analysis and identification of place-signs is crucial for reconstructing the geographical reality of the narratives and therefore plays an important role in the interpretation of the Ñuu Dzauí pictorial manuscripts. The first step is, obviously, to establish a possible correlation or fit between a sign painted in a pictorial manuscript and a place name in the region. Yet often this is not so easy as it sounds. On the one hand the painted sign may not be totally clear or straightforward, so that we are in doubt about what word is intended. This part is conditioned by what we know about the principles of Mesoamerican pictography, as documented in early colonial sources such as the Codex Mendoza, a tribute list of the Mexica empire that contains a large amount of Nahuatl place-signs with alphabetic transcriptions. On the basis of such works a 'pictographic dictionary' may be reconstructed (cf. Clark 1938; Nowotny 1959), which then may be applied to the pictorial manuscripts of Ñuu Dzauí. Of course we have to be aware of the difference between the languages involved (and their corresponding pictorial expressions).

On the other hand, the meaning of Ñuu Dzauí toponyms in the region may be difficult to establish with certainty. Dzaha Dzauí (Mixtec) – with its modern variants Sahin Sau, Sahan Savi, Daha Davi, etc. – is a tonal language. This means that words have specific tones and the tonal differences between otherwise identical words correlate with different meanings. Thus, we are often confronted with several possible meanings, depending on the tones of the words. There are many tonal languages in the world, but most researchers speak languages that are not tonal, which limits their perception of this phenomenon. Furthermore the tone in many words is not constant but may change according to the influence of the tone in a preceding word: A linguistic phenomenon known as *sandhi*. The rules of these changes are not yet fully understood (see Faraclas 1983 for a case study) and the dialect variability of the tones is insufficiently documented. The early colonial works on Dzaha Dzauí, such as the grammar by friar Antonio de los Reyes (1976) and the dictionary by friar Francisco de Alvarado (1962), both written in 1593, did not register tones nor *sandhi*. Modern speakers obviously notice the tonal aspect of the words and its implications for meaning (in fact they indulge in tonal punning), but – as the language is nowhere in the region a topic of formal teaching – they are not accustomed to carry out precise tonal analysis. The linguistic categories of high, middle and low tones do not always coincide with the way speakers differentiate between tones. The consequence of all this is that tonality may cause extra problems in establishing the etymology of a toponym.

Many places in Ñuu Dzauí are now known by a Nahuatl name (registered by the Spanish administration on the basis of information given by the Nahuatl – Dzaha Dzauí translators at the time). Friar Antonio de los Reyes in his grammar includes an appendix with a list of the major towns in the area, with their names in Nahuatl and Dzaha Dzauí. Additional information on the place names is provided by the work of the 19th century Oaxacan histo-

rian Manuel Martínez Gracida (1883) and subsequent inventories and studies. Sometimes the meanings of the names in both languages for a specific place may coincide (which may point to a coherent explanation); in other cases they may differ. Occasionally we may be able to reconstruct errors or misunderstandings in the translation process.

Obviously the meaning attributed to the toponym by the local inhabitants and the presence of specific oral traditions about it, are very relevant; still they may also be the result of a ‘folk etymology’, an *ad hoc* speculation or imagination. We also have to take into account the dialect variability of the Mixtec language (Josserand 1983). A complicating factor here is the lack of an in-depth study of the historical development of Dzaha Dzauí, so that it is not always clear how a word may have been affected by phonetic changes (for example Alvarado’s *huahi*, ‘house’, today is *vehe* or *vehi*). There is always the possibility that toponyms, being conservative, may have preserved more archaic forms that do not correspond to the way the words would normally be used in the present-day language or that may have fallen into oblivion altogether.

Once we have a reasonable idea of the word(s) that can be expressed by a specific pictographic sign and start looking for the possible match with a place name, we note that many toponyms are repetitive: Names like ‘Black Mountain’, ‘River of the Serpent’, ‘Mountain of the Birds’, or ‘Cave of the Jaguar’ occur frequently throughout the region. We need additional information to define better to what specific place the pictorial sign refers. Are we looking at the name of an inhabited place, *i.e.* a ‘city-state’ (*yuvui tayu*), or at a very local name for a feature in the natural or cultural landscape? Archaeological information may help to establish whether certain places were inhabited and had special importance in the Postclassic period. Some of these places may be referred to in the scraps and pieces of precolonial history mentioned in early colonial sources. Specific identifications supplied by glosses, such as the ones that identify Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) and Chiyo Cahnu (Teozacoalco), are of course of prime importance for the argument. Where individual place names may be common and repetitive, a cluster or coherent combination of such names is bound to be less common: Thus it is important to connect the place sign in question to other place signs. The association of a place sign with specific personages may help in the identification process. Finally, the place sign plays a role in dynastic history, so it must correspond to an underlying geographical ‘logic’ of the narrative.

All of these considerations together involve different disciplines: The iconographical analysis of signs and scenes, the archaeological information about specific places, the in-depth reading of historical sources, the linguistic study of etymology as well as of related oral traditions and customs. Fortunately, there have been noticeable advances in these fields, which enable us to continue the work carried out already by earlier researchers.

Archaeologists have clarified the chronological sequence and patterns of ancient habitation by carrying out a number of surveys and local excavations.³ Some have paid special attention to the iconographical analysis of ancient visual art and writing system (e.g. Rivera Guzmán 2000, 2002, 2008). The early colonial documents about the Ñuu Dzaui world has become a topic of sustained historical research, with some specific attention on documents in Dzaha Dzaui, the Mixtec language, written with the Spanish alphabet. The study of the latter connects with studies of the dialect variants of present-day Mixtec (Sahin Sau, Sahan Savi, Daha Davi, etc.) and registration of oral literature in these variants, carried out by the protestant missionary linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, as well as by academic linguists and a growing number of native speakers (e.g. Pérez Jiménez 2008; Caballero Morales 2008). Similarly, anthropological studies are nowadays enriched by an increasing participation of Ñuu Dzaui scholars (e.g. López García 2007; Julián Caballero 2009; Aguilar Sánchez 2014).

Religious and ritual dimensions

As our understanding of this subject matter advances, it becomes clear that the pictorial texts also express religious worldview and ritual practice, which, in turn, can be related to traditional concepts, experiences and mentalities that continue to be alive and important in the present-day indigenous communities. A key example is the notion of divine presence in the landscape. Earth itself is a living being: *Ñuhu*, the ancient word for 'Deity' in Dzaha Dzaui (Mixtec). In the codices this concept is painted as an animated stone and indeed nowadays it is often applied to rocky outcrops or boulders. In the Chalcatongo area the *Ñuhu* is invoked in Spanish terms as *San Cristobal*, *San Cristina*, *Santo Lugar* for the ceremonial cleansing and healing of traumatic experiences (*susto*); food and drink are offered to him/her for sowing and harvesting rituals. *Ndoso* (*ndodzo* in Alvarado's variant) is a similar term, which may also refer to ancient rulers and other powerful personages of the past (ancestors). Ancient archaeological sites are referred to as *vehe Ñuhu anaha*, which means 'house(s) (*vehe*) of God(s) (*Ñuhu*) of ancient times (*anaha*)'. Nowadays *vehe Ñuhu* is the normal word for 'church', but is clearly an ancient term, similar to the Nahuatl word *teocalli*. Caves are the dwelling place of Lord Rain, to whom people pray and make offerings in the beginning of the rainy season (around the time of the first passage of the Sun through the zenith, now centered on the day of the Holy Cross: May 3). Ponds are the resting places of the Plumed Serpent, *Koo Sau*, the Whirlwind and Bringer of Rain. At the same time the dream experience of transforming into animals or other natural beings and phenomena as *alter ego* or, with a Nahuatl term, *nahual*, connects the human person intimately with Nature. In the codices the

3 Important recent works are for example: Kowalewski *et al.* (2009) and Joyce (2010). See the recent review article by Pérez Rodríguez (2013).

nabual quality is often represented in the given names (containing references to jaguars, coyotes, serpents, wind, clouds, balls of lightning etc.).⁴

Codex Añute (Selden), preserved at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, gives a concrete illustration of the integration of historical and religious aspects. It is an early colonial document that recalls the origins and history of the dynasty in accordance with the concepts of precolonial historiography.⁵ The main place sign consists of a town on a mountain with a mouth from which a white volute with dotted material comes forward. Alfonso Caso in his pioneering commentary (1964) did not yet have arguments for its identification and therefore designated this place sign with the code name ‘Belching Mountain’. It was Mary Elizabeth Smith (1983) who demonstrated that this place sign must represent Añute, ‘Place (*a-*) of Sand (*ñute*)’, now the village of Magdalena Jaltepec, neighbour to Tilantongo, in the Mixteca Alta.⁶ The first scene of the codex shows how arrows (*i.e.* the rays) of the Sun God and the Venus God, touch the top of the emblematic ‘Mountain of Sand’, which would give its name to the settlement of Añute. From that first sunlight the ancestral figure of the dynasty was born. In other words, the codex opens with stating that the dynasty goes back to the beginning of the present era, and with invoking the ancient deities Sun and Venus.

On p. 2, Lady 8 Rabbit, who descended from the First Ancestor, marries a Lord 2 Grass, who was born from a tree growing in the valley of Ñuu Ndecu (Achiutla).⁷ Making use of homonymy in Dzaha Dzauí, the eye (*nuu*) painted on the tree (*yutnu*) identifies it as a ceiba or pochote (*yutnu nuu*). The calendar names of the founding couple were combined into one sacred date – Year 8 Rabbit, day 2 Grass – that appears as the sacred foundation date of the ‘Mountain of Sand’ (Añute) in a list of the primordial places of the Ñuu Dzauí world given by Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis).⁸ We will come back to this fascinating list below.

4 For an introduction to *nabualism* and other aspects of Mesoamerican thought, see the classic monograph by López Austin (1980). Jansen (1982: ch. V) and Jansen & Pérez Jiménez (2013: ch. VI) discuss the Mixtec concepts; the course book by Pérez Jiménez (2008) offers insight in modern Mixtec orthography, grammar and relevant texts. Liana Ivette Jiménez Osorio and Emmanuel Posselt Santoyo are carrying out an in-depth research on the Houses of the Rain: see their article in Jansen & Raffa (2015).

5 Recent facsimile edition with commentary by Jansen & Pérez Jiménez (2013).

6 Cf. Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2011: 292-293.

7 Mexican historian Wigberto Jiménez Moreno identified the sign Town of Flames as Ñuu Ndecu, ‘Burning Town’, present-day San Miguel Achiutla, which was the major religious centre for the Ñuu Dzauí region (cf. Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2011: 303-305).

8 Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), pp. 42 and 1 (Anders, Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 1992a). The numeration of the pages of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) stems from a time when the contents of the manuscript were not yet understood and are the consequence of reading the 52 pages as one would do with a European book, from left to right. In reality, as we now know, the reading order goes in the opposite direction, from right to left, so that p. 52 is the first one and p. 1 the last one.

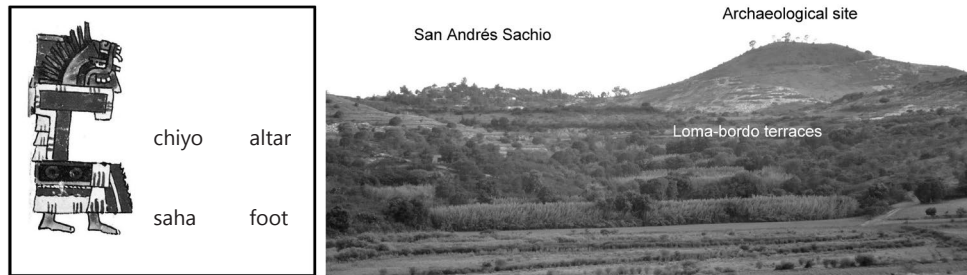


Figure 3. Sachio in the Codex Añute and the geographical position of the town (photo: Iván Rivera).

Codex Añute goes on with spelling out the ancient rituals carried out by the successive members of the dynasty, particularly those for the Sacred Bundle (a round bundle containing the N̄uhu sign), which were carried out in the ceremonial centre on top of the mountain of the town. The place is easy to identify: On top of the mountain that rises above the village of Añute (Jaltepec) is an important archaeological site with a clearly defined main temple mound. At the side is a small cavity, where till today offerings are made. Most probably this is the sanctuary of the Sacred Bundle.

Codex Añute (pp. 3-4) also mentions in detail several inauguration rituals carried out by the first prince, Lord 10 Reed, the son of the founding couple Lady 8 Rabbit and Lord 2 Grass, in order to become ruler of Añute. The first ritual was celebrated in a place that is represented as Altar with Feet, (Codex Añute, p. 3-II/III). Arguing that this place should be close to the main town, Smith has identified it as San Andrés Sachio, a neighbour of Añute (Jaltepec). Sachio means 'At the Foot (*saha*) of the Altar (*chiyo*)'. The village is indeed located at the foot of a mountain, on the top of which we distinguish the archaeological remains of a platform (very clearly visible in the profile of the mountain). The place name suggests that that platform was the basis of an altar (*chiyo*). Today the sacred and ceremonial character of the place is marked by a catholic chapel on the mountain top (Figure 3). All around it are the remains of recently constructed *pedimentos*, *i.e.* small houses and other structures of loose stones, branches, pine cones etc. as visual expressions of what pilgrims to the site pray for (good livelihood). Clearly this site, looking out over the Valley of Nochixtlan, is still a sacred place.

The image in the Codex Añute (Selden), p. 3, informs us that the temple of Sachio was dedicated to the Plumed Serpent, *i.e.* the Whirlwind, who appears as culture hero in the N̄uu Dzauí codices. It was here in the ceremonial centre of Sachio that the first prince of Añute (Jaltepec), Lord 10 Reed, still a young child, assisted at the ceremony in which Sacred Bundles were made of his mother and father, and in which offerings of counted

items were laid down in front of these. Seated in the temple he watched the acts carried out by the elderly priests. These took place in the Year 2 Flint (AD 936). A few years later, in the Year 5 Reed (AD 939), the young prince pronounced a ceremonial discourse in front of the nobles of the kingdom and its neighbours. These ritual activities were crucial steps in becoming ruler of Añute. The Codex Añute (Selden) itself was explicitly linked to those dynastic events. On its cover we see the Year 2 Flint, day 5 Reed. This ‘title image’ combines into one sacred date references to the Year 2 Flint and to the Year 5 Reed, *i.e.* to the first foundational rites of the dynasty. Given its position on the cover, this date most likely signals the ceremony for which the codex was prepared. Given the internal chronology of the manuscript, that date would correspond to 1560. Supposedly, the ceremony in question was similar to the ones referred to by the combined date, *i.e.* the preparation of a prince to become the new ruler of the mat and throne of Añute. Thus, we take it as the appropriate time for the ruler to designate and ritually prepare his successor. The last ruler mentioned in the dynastic sequence of the codex (p. 20) is Lord 10 Grass, probably identical with the ruler that historical documents refer to as Don Carlos de Villafañe: He was born in 1527 and married in 1546. His son (baptised as Don Ángel de Villafañe) must have been still a young boy in 1560. The ruler in office ordered the codex Añute to be made for this solemn occasion, in accordance with the ancient customs. So instructed, the painter occupied an older (presumably precolonial) manuscript as a base to reproduce the age-old genealogical record.⁹ This choice suggests that the ruler and the painter belonged to a conservative faction, clinging to the precolonial values.

References to the Mixteca Baja in the codices

Mary Elizabeth Smith was able to define a corpus of manuscripts that come from the Mixteca Baja, including the Codex Ñuu Ñaña, also known as Codex Egerton, and the Roll of Yucu Nindavua (Huamelulpan), also known as the Codex Tulane.¹⁰ Glosses in Codex Ñuu Ñaña (Egerton) made it possible for her to decipher among others the following place signs in the Mixteca Baja (Figure 4):

- Mountain of the Standing Conch as Yucu Ndaa Yee, ‘Mountain (of the) Standing Conch’, which is the Dzaha Dzaui name of San Pedro y San Pablo Tequixtepec (Smith 1973a: 76).
- Mountain of the Jewel as Yucu Yusi, *i.e.* Acatlan in the State of Puebla (Smith 1973a: 60-62).

9 Codex Añute is a palimpsest: On the reverse side remains of the earlier manuscript are visible under the later gypsum layer. At present, PhD candidates Ludo Snijders (Leiden University) and Tim Zaman (Technical University Delft), supported by a grant from the Netherlands’ Foundation for Scientific research (nwo) and in cooperation with experts from the Bodleian Library, are applying non-invasive techniques to assess the composition of this earlier work.

10 Smith (1973 a and b); König (1979); Smith & Parmenter (1991).

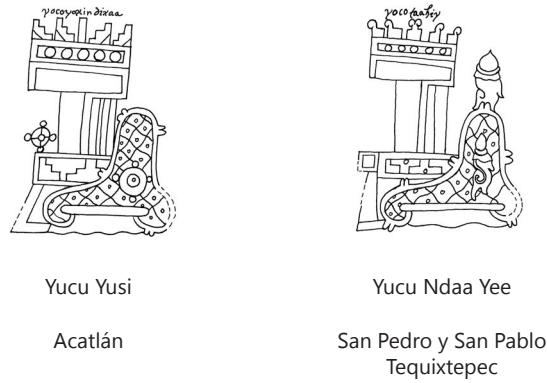


Figure 4. The place signs of San Pedro y San Pablo Tequixtepec and Acatlán in Codex Nuu Naa (after Smith 1973a).



Figure 5. The list of identified communities in the Mixteca Baja that appear in Codex Yuta Tnoho (from Anders, Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 1992a).

Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2011: 327-340) observed that these place signs also occur in the large listing of places in the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) (Figure 5). On pp. 44-43 there is the diagnostic sign ‘Mountain of the Standing Conch’: Yucu Ndaa Yee (Tequixtepec). It is preceded by the neighbouring ‘Town of Feet’: Ńuu Saha (Icxitlan) and followed by ‘Mountain of the Standing Arrow’, which must be Da Nduvua (Miltepec), another town in the neighbourhood. Signs correspond well with the toponyms. After this follows ‘Mountain of Jade and Feathers’, which most likely in this context is a variant of Yucu Yusi (Acatlan). The places identified already by Smith are names of city-states in the Mixteca Baja (Tequixtepec and Acatlan); they anchor therefore the whole cluster in that region. This is the point of departure to identify more places as well.

At the beginning of p. 44 we see a Mountain with a ‘Ballcourt of Gravel’ and a ‘Ballcourt of Flames’, which in this same area of the Mixteca Baja clearly corresponds to the toponym Yuhua Cuchi, which means precisely ‘Ballcourt (*yuhua*) of Gravel (*cuchi*)’. The town is now known under its Nahuatl name Guaxolotitlan. The ‘Burning Ballcourt’ as part of the place signs may refer to an outstanding local landmark, the mountain peak known as ‘Fire Stone’ (*Piedra de Lumbre*). On the following page (p. 43) appears a mountain with a ‘Town of Blood’, combined with a ‘Wooden Fence’. This combined sign has to correspond to the city-state with two capitals: Ńuu Niñe, ‘Town of Heat’, painted as Ńuu Neñe, ‘Town of Blood’, and Ńuu Nduyu, ‘Place of the Fence’, which are known today under their Nahuatl names Tonalá and Silacayoapan respectively.¹¹

These places were important in primordial time. They receive here the celestial waters brought to Earth by Lord 9 Wind, the Ńuu Dzauí version of the Mexica deity Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, ‘Wind - Plumed Serpent’, *i.e.* the divine Whirlwind, nowadays known in Mixtec as the Rain Serpent (known as Koo Sau in Chalcatongo Mixtec).¹²

A selection of these primordial places is repeated on the final pages of the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis). That part of the codex deals with the foundation of the dynasties that would be ruling the different ‘city-states’ of Ńuu Dzauí. The founders of

11 Jansen & Pérez Jiménez (2008) present these identifications in more detail, and review other interpretations in their handbook (2011: ch. 7).

12 Pérez Jiménez made this identification of Koo Sau in the codices (already reported in Jansen 1982; see also Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2007, 2011). On pp. 48-47 of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) this culture hero had come down from the Place of Heaven, which was the place where Lord 1 Deer, Lady 1 Deer and their son Lord 9 Wind were dwelling (pp. 52 and 48 of the same codex). This Place of Heaven can be identified with the *Lugar donde estaba el Cielo* of the creation narrative registered by friar Gregorio García, according to which it was located on a mountain close to Apoala. That made it possible to identify it as the mountain known as Cavua Caa Andevui (today: Kaua Kaandiui), which rises immediately to the East of Apoala and dominates the valley in which the village is situated.

the dynasties and the kingdoms are the Lords and Ladies that had been born from the Mother Ceiba in the Sacred Valley of Apoala (on pp. 37-35 of the same codex).¹³

Several of these place signs also occur together in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 3-4. Here they are mentioned in the context of the narrative about the primordial struggle or war of the Ñuu Dzauí Lords and Ladies that had been born from the sacred tree in Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) against the ‘Stone Men’. This narrative is already mentioned by friar Antonio de los Reyes (1593: prologue) and can be related to Ñuu Dzauí narratives about earlier inhabitants of the region transforming into stones when the Sun rose for the first time.¹⁴

Thus it is to be concluded that (1) the various place-signs in this segment belong together both in a geographical and in a narrative context and (2) they played a major role in the time of origins.

The place sign of Huajuapán

What about the possible presence of the town of Huajuapán in these codices? Nowadays Huajuapán is a major district capital, actually the largest city in the whole Mixtec region. The ruins of the Cerro de las Minas demonstrate its importance in Classic times, while there are also important Postclassic remains (see below). The etymology of its name is not clear. The Nahuatl toponym Huajuapán can mean ‘River (*apan*) of the huaje trees (*huaxitl*)’ or ‘River of the willows (*huexotl*)’.

The meaning of Huajuapán’s Mixtec name has been even more difficult to uncover. Friar Antonio de los Reyes (1976) registers this name as Ñuu Dzai. The *ñuu* part translates as ‘town’. But the word *dzai* does not occur in Alvarado’s vocabulary.

At present the town’s Mixtec name is locally pronounced as Ñuu Dee. Here we have to take into account the historical development of Dzaha Dzauí. In the dialect variant of the Huajuapán region the /dz/ sound of the Mixtec of Teposcolula, registered by the Dominican friars Francisco de Alvarado and Antonio de los Reyes, is realized as a /d/. Similarly the /ai/ and /ahi/ sounds become /ee/ and /ehe/ respectively (*huabi*, ‘house’ in Alvarado’s vocabulary is here: *vehe*). Thus the modern word *dee* indeed corresponds

13 Friar Antonio de los Reyes in the foreword to his grammar of the Mixtec language (1976) clarifies that the Mixtec name of Apoala is Yuta Tnoho, which basically means: ‘River that plucks or pulls out’ but connotes interpretations as ‘River of the Lords’ and ‘River of the Histories or Lineages’. Caso already suggested that it corresponds to the sign of a river with a hand holding feathers (cf. Smith 1973a: 75). That place sign is the centre of an extraordinary landscape painting in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 36. The different elements of this landscape correspond to the Valley of Apoala (Jansen 1982; Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2011). The ‘River of the Hand Holding Feathers’ (Apoala) occurs explicitly on p. 35 of the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) as part of the tree-birth scene.

14 Dyk (1959: 17) also registers such a narrative. There is a clear parallel with the description of the First Sunrise in the Popol Vuh (Tedlock 1985). See also Jansen (2015).

to the word *dzai* registered by the Dominican friars. Today the term Ñuu Dee is translated as ‘Tierra de Valientes’ but this is due to a misunderstanding: *Dee* (corresponding to ancient *dzai*) is confused with *ndee* (*ndai* or *nday* in Alvarado’s vocabulary), which indeed means ‘strong’ and ‘courageous’.¹⁵ Nowadays *dee* and *ndee* may sound similar (only differentiated by initial nasalisation), but the corresponding terms *dzai* and *nday* in Alvarado’s work show that they are really quite different words.

In San Juan Diquiyú, Huajuapán is called Ñuu Sehe, which is translated as ‘Hidden Town’ (*pueblo escondido*). The Mixtec of San Juan Diquiyú is a dialect variant, in which the /dz/ of Alvarado’s vocabulary is realised as an /s/ and /ahi/ as /ehel/. Thus *sehe* in Diquiyú corresponds to *dzahi* in Alvarado’s vocabulary, which indeed means indeed ‘hidden’, as well as ‘to cover’, ‘to conceal’ and ‘to be absent’.¹⁶

Closer to Huajuapán itself is the village of Cacaloxtépec, which maintains the local Mixtec variant of that area, in which the /dz/ of Alvarado’s vocabulary is realised as a /d/ and /ai/ as /eel/. Here Huajuapán is called Yuu Dee, which may be translated as ‘Stone (*yuu*) that is Hidden (*dee*)’.

Both *sehe* in San Juan Diquiyú and *dee* in Cacaloxtépec mean ‘hidden’ and have the alternative meaning of ‘ring’: They are clearly the same term. The first form corresponds to *dzahi* in the vocabulary of Alvarado, the second to the *dzai* of friar Antonio de los Reyes: The glottal stop is clearly present in San Juan Diquiyú, but absent in Cacaloxtépec. In addition, the information from Cacaloxtépec suggests that the first part of Huajuapán’s Mixtec name can be *ñuu* (‘town’) or *yuu* (‘stone’) – both words are phonetically close. The Cacaloxtépec version of Huajuapán’s Mixtec name is presumably the closest to the name used in Huajuapán itself.¹⁷

In the cluster of place signs that refer to the Mixteca Baja in the Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 44 and p. 3, appears the ‘Stone (*yuu*) Ring (*dzahi* / *dzai*)’ as a beautifully designed toponymic hieroglyph, which clearly designates an important site in this very same region. We propose to identify this sign as Huajuapán: It fits the geographical context in a very convincing manner.

15 Cf. *ijo nday*, “fuerte ser” and *tay nday ini*, “animoso hombre, esforzado; atrevido; constante persona; magnánimo” (Alvarado 1962).

16 Cf. *yodzahindi*, “agazaparse escondiéndose; ausentarse; encubrir algo; encubrirse; esconderse; mudarse de un lugar a otro haciendo ausencia”; and *sa siyo dzahita*, “ausente andar, escondido”.

17 The help of *maestro* Máximo Sánchez Ventura (from San Juan Diquiyú), local teacher of the Mixtec language, and of Mrs. Gabriela Encarnación (from Cacaloxtépec) was crucial in this analysis. See also the argument presented by Jansen & Pérez Jiménez (2011: 338). The dialect variant of Ñuu Ndeya (Chalcatongo) also realises the /dz/ of Alvarado’s vocabulary generally as an /s/ and /ahi/ as /ehel/. Here ‘ring’ is *shrehe* and the stem for ‘hidden’ is *sehi*. The name for Huajuapán, however, is Ñuu Sajin, which does not yield a convincing translation in this variant: *sajin* is ‘nephew’, which is not a likely element in a toponym. In our opinion the term Ñuu Sajin clearly corresponds to Ñuu Dzahi in the orthography of Alvarado, but most likely is taken from a different variant (other place or time).

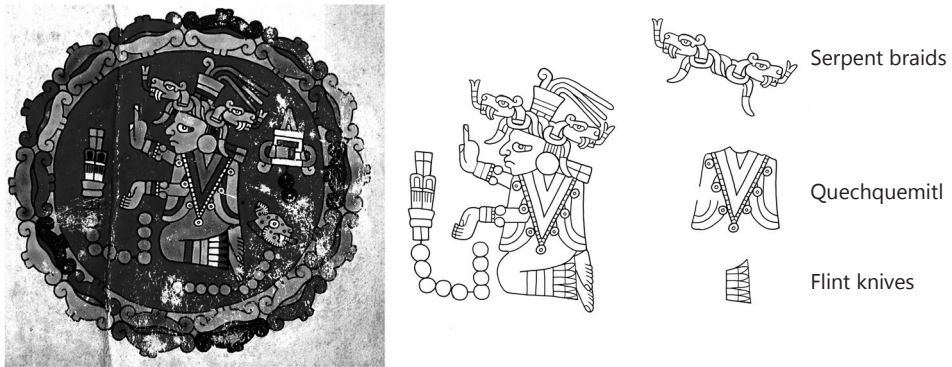


Figure 6. Lady 9 Reed in Codex Yuta Tnoho, p. 3 (drawings: Iván Rivera).

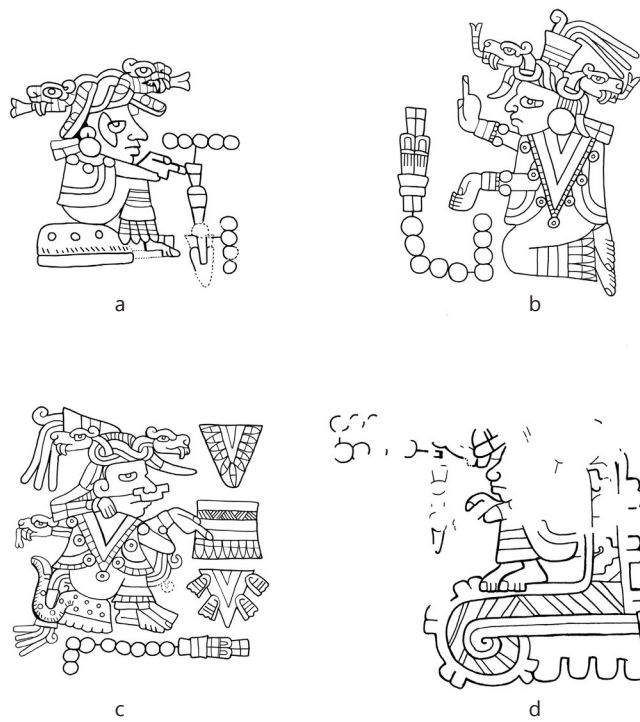


Figure 7. Lady 9 Reed in different Ñuu Dzauí codices (drawings: Iván Rivera).

The Patron Deity

The place sign ‘Ring of Stones’ in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 3, contains the image of a seated Patron Deity: Lady 9 Reed (*Qhu Huiyu* in the Mixtec calendar idiom) (Figure 6). According to Mesoamerican symbolism, the number 9 of her calendar name connotes death, while Reed actually is an arrow or dart: Together they may refer to the fatal power of an arrow or dart. In this scene she is accompanied by a sacred date: Year 2 House, day 10 Jaguar, which is the day after that of her calendar name. She also appears leading a group of primordial personages, seated in front of the place sign of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) in the same codex (p. 33). This Patron Deity figure is characterised by sets of flint knives that decorate the borders of her regalia (*quechquemitl* and skirt) and by serpents that are braided into her hair (Figure 7). The same element appears in her name sign in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 28. The *quechquemitl* garment is called *dzico* in Dzaha Dzauí, while ‘border’ and ‘girdle’ are called *huatu*. Both *dzico* and *huatu* have also an abstract meaning: The first is used to express virtue, honor, fame; the second refers to beauty, grace, glory, and spiritual enjoyment. Together they form the couplet (difrasismo) *dzico huatu*, ‘good’ as a substantive. The location on the regalia seems to express this concept. The combination with flint knives (*yuchi*) names the Goddess as *Dzico Yuchi*, *Huatu Yuchi*, something like ‘the Power and Glory of Knives’. This name suggests that she represents the power residing in the flint knife (seen as an animate being): A Goddess comparable to the Itzpapalotl Itzcueye ‘Obsidian Butterfly, She of the Obsidian Skirt’ of the Nahuatl speaking world, who also seems to represent the power residing in the obsidian arrowhead.¹⁸ Braids are called *huatu* too, so Lady 9 Reed is also *Huatu Co*, ‘the (Power and) Glory of Serpents’.

The green painting of the lower half of her face and the green nose ornament are attributes of the Goddess Mayahuel (the Maguey Spirit).¹⁹ Today the maguey is generally identified with the Virgin of the Remedies, also known as the Virgin of Juquila.

The Ñuu Dzauí codices show us also a similar lady with serpent braids and a skirt of knives, but often in a decapitated form. In several New Fire rituals of Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) – from p. 22 onwards – she appears marching together with an opossum, holding knives and gourd bowls. They direct themselves towards maguey plants that then appear decapitated. Clearly the Goddess and the opossum represent the coupled action of cutting and scraping the maguey plant with the flint knives and take out the juice (*aguamiel*), represented as blood, in order to produce the alcoholic beverage

18 In Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 47, Lady 9 Reed is associated with arrowheads (decorating her person and her regalia).

19 Deities in the religious codices of the Teomoxtlí Group (also known as Borgia Group) are generally referred to with their Nahuatl names. Compare the representation in Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), p. 68.

pulque.²⁰ In this context the ‘Decapitated Lady’ probably has to be understood as the ‘Lady of Decapitation of the Maguey’ (*i.e.* the Patron of cutting and scraping magueyes).

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3, and Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 3, situate this ‘Decapitated Lady’ in ‘Ballcourt of Gravel and Fire’, *i.e.* in Yuhua Cuchi (Guaxolotitlan). Her calendar name here is not 9 Reed, but 11 Serpent, so she is conceived as another individual, apparently an Founding Mother or Ancestor as avatar of the same power as Lady 9 Reed. It is interesting to notice that both Ladies seem to be mentioned as Sacred Bundles in the inquisition process against caciques of Yanhuitlan: Quequiyo (Qhu Huiyu, which may correspond to 9 Reed), called *el ídolo del pueblo*, *i.e.* a Patron Deity of the community, and Xiyo (Si Yo, which may correspond to Lady 11 Serpent).²¹

Next to Lady 11 Serpent in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 3, is a temple, inside of which we see the opossum. As these two figures belong together is its likely that they – both carrying the bowls with knives and blood – were venerated as a unit in the central temple of the site.

Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 51 shows how Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’, the main hero of Ñuu Dzauí history, visits the Place of Blood (Ñuu Niñe) in order to make an offering to Lady 9 Reed. The parallel scene in Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 10-I, situates the Lady 9 Reed inside a cave above a river. Local tradition in Tonalá identifies the Boquerón, the place where the Río Salado enters the valley, after passing through an impressive gorge, which is locally considered an enchanted place. On the cliff at one side, known as Cerro de las Flores, there are several abris with precolonial rock paintings. Several motifs are similar to those in the codices and therefore should be Postclassic. Clearly this area of religious meaning is the place of encounter between Lord 8 Deer and the Goddess. In fact, the rock paintings in the abris contain the same signs for ‘war’ and ‘ritual’ that appear in the scene of the encounter as painted in Codex Iya Nacuaa.

Local tradition has it that the Goddess of this place tried to free her beloved, the king of the neighbouring village of Tezoatlán, who was imprisoned and surrounded by an enormous snake. She cut off the snake’s head with a blow of her machete and so the gorge of the Boquerón was formed: The body of the snake became the mountain range at one side of the gorge – including the Cerro de las Flores – and the head became a specific mountain, now known as Cerro de la Culebra. The narrative seems related to the image of Lady 9 Reed: Associated with the use of weapons and having knotted serpent braided in her hair. The impressive cliffs and abris of the Boquerón appear as her special dwelling place.

20 See Jansen & Pérez Jiménez (2010) for Mixtec texts on the cutting and scraping of magueyes.

21 Probably due to tonal differences the calendar names in Dzaha Dzauí (Mixtec) may translate in different ways, but the possible correspondences of these names with 9 Reed and 11 Serpent seem most likely in view of the fact that these Ladies are documented as Deities in the codices (cf. Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2013: 148-150).

Another sanctuary of Lady 9 Reed was located in Ndisi Nuú (Tlaxiaco), a place represented as crossed beams with eyes. The sign of the crossed beams (sometimes crossed legs) expresses the verb *ndisi*, ‘to lay crosswise’ and the eye is read *nuu*. Together they form the term *ndisi nuu*, which may be translated as ‘sharp sight’ or ‘well seen’ (Spanish: *Buena vista*). It is in the main temple of that town that Lord 4 Wind (successor to Lord 8 Deer as powerful overlord in Nūu Dzauí) offered *pulque*, cacao, ritual regalia, precious feathers and flowers to Lady 9 Reed.²² This demonstrates once more that this Goddess was also venerated in the Mixteca Alta, where Ndisi Nuú (Tlaxiaco) is located.

The inquisitorial process against the native nobility of Yodzo Cahí (Yanhuitlan) describes Qhu Huiyu, ‘Lady 9 Reed’, as a Sacred Bundle that was venerated in a subterranean sanctuary (maybe a tomb). We also find her represented on two carved jaguar bones (Number 203i and 174a) that form part of the treasure deposited in Tomb 7 at Monte Albán (Figure 8). On the first (Number 203i) she is shown being born from the Mother Ceiba tree, supposedly in the Valley of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala). On the second (Number 174a) she appears coming down from Heaven, wielding a club and attacking the Stone Men.

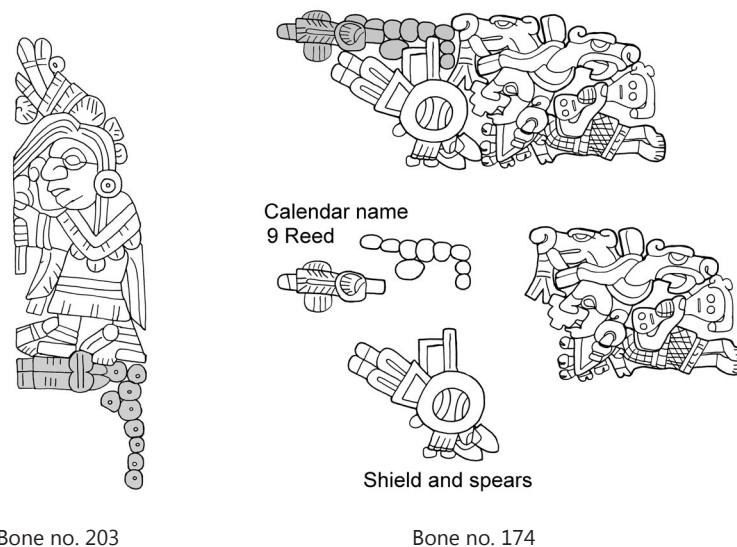


Figure 8. Lady 9 Reed on the carved bones of Tomb 7 at Monte Albán (drawings: Iván Rivera).

²² Codex Nūu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuú (Bodley), p. 30-V (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2005).

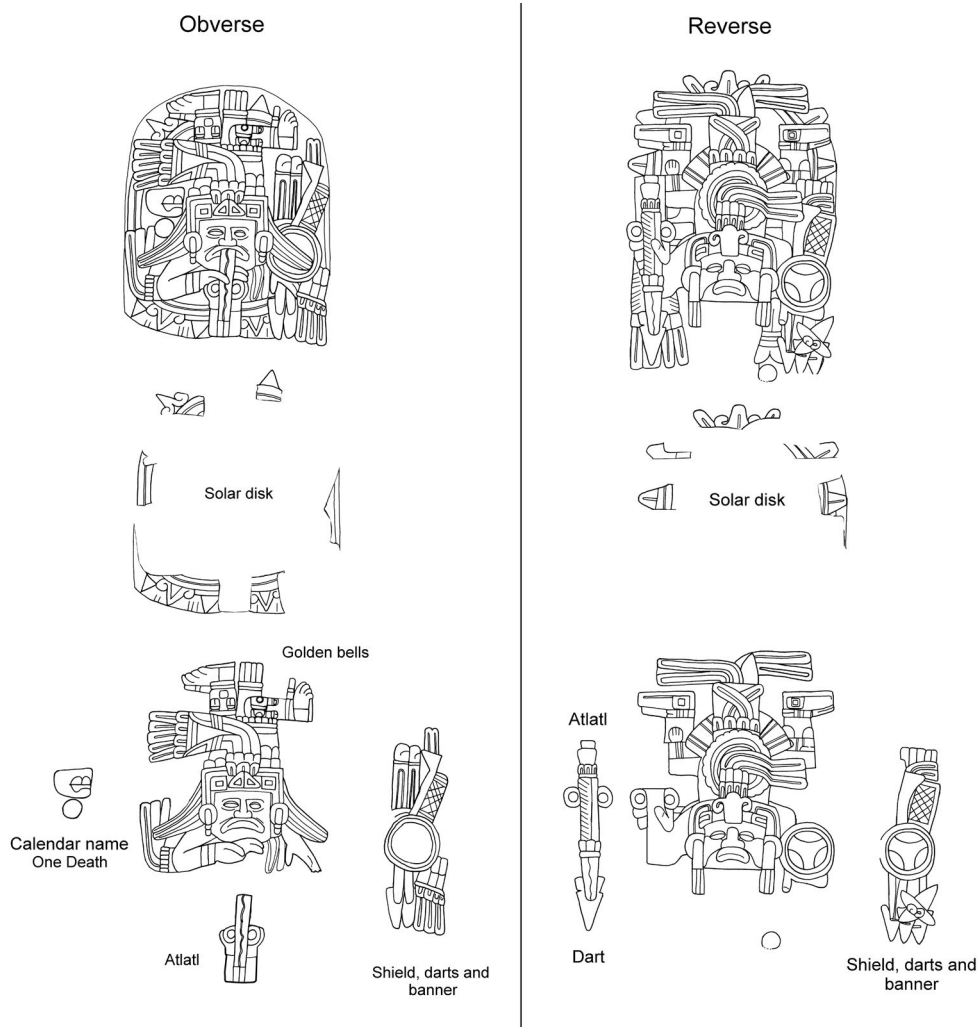


Figure 9. The decorated *atlatl* of the Ethnographic Museum in Rome showing the descending Sun with shields and darts (drawings: Iván Rivera).

In the creation or foundation narratives the representation of descending Deities or religious figures is relatively common. In Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 48, we see Lord 9 Wind ‘Quetzalcoatl’ descending from the Place of Heaven. In Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), pp. 18-19 the same action is performed by Lord 12 Wind, a founding priest. The opening scene of Codex Añute (Selden), p. 1, as we mentioned earlier, shows the Sun God and the Venus God coming down from Heaven and throwing their arrows

(rays of light) to the top of the emblematic mountain of the village Añute (Jaltepec). An interesting parallel is the scene on one of the dart throwers (*atlatl*) in the Museo Etnográfico Luigi Pigorini of Rome, Italy (Figure 9). In this case the descending Sun God is represented within the sun disk, holding a shield and darts in his hands. His calendar name appears on the front side: Lord 1 Death. This name is registered as *yya camaha*, ‘the sun as the Indians called him in heathen times’ in the vocabulary of friar Francisco de Alvarado and occurs as Yoko Kamao in the ceremonial discourse of Ñuu Dzauí ritual specialists in the State of Guerrero (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2011: 257-258).

The victory over the Stone Men is symbolically equivalent to the First Sunrise (when the earlier inhabitants turned into stone). Consequently we may interpret Lady 9 Reed’s coming down from Heaven as a visual representation of her important role in setting up the world order of the Postclassic era.

This is consistent with her appearance as Patron Deity of major towns in the Mixteca Baja: According to the codex scenes discussed above, she dwelt in the Boquerón of Ñuu Niñe (Tonalá), had a temple in Yuhua Cuchi (Guaxolotitlan) and constituted the religious focal point of Ñuu Dzai / Yuu Dzahi (Huajuapán). This same area was the main locale where the war against the Stone Men took place, *i.e.* against those who would turn into stone at First Dawn. The rise of the Sun of the new (Postclassic) era meant that the Lords and Ladies who had been born from the Mother Ceiba in Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) took over the political and religious power in the whole Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) region. The Tree-Birth of the Founding Fathers and Mothers is followed by their victory over the Stone Men and by the New Sunrise. Placing this set of symbolic events in an archaeological context, we find that the beginning of the dynastic history narrated in the Ñuu Dzauí codices coincides with the passing of the Classic to the Postclassic era, which archaeologists would date around AD 900. The Stone Men represent the earlier inhabitants of the region (the ‘first Mixtecs’), in other words: They correspond to the people of the Classic era, and according to the codices they were mainly associated with places (kingdoms) in the Mixteca Baja. It cannot be a coincidence that the Mixteca Baja indeed had been an area where during the Classic period a distinct phase of Ñuu Dzauí civilisation had flourished, called the ‘Ñuiñe style’ by archaeologists. Although a new political order and a new writing system had taken over in the early Postclassic period, the memory of that ancient impressive cultural phase was kept alive in the ritual commemoration of the symbolic origin events.

The Postclassic site of Huajuapán

In the Huajuapán Valley, as in the Mixteca Baja in general, several archaeological studies have shed light on the Preclassic and Classic periods, for example at the sites of Santa Teresa and Cerro de las Minas. In the first the existence of an early village dating to the Middle Preclassic (600 BC) was documented. The second, Cerro de las Minas, became one of the first cities in the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) region and a centre of Ñuiñe culture in Classic times (Arriola & López 2009; Winter 1994). The Postclassic period in this region, however, has so far received less attention. The images of Lady 9 Reed as seated in the Ring of Stones, *i.e.* Huajuapán, and on the Mountain of Blood, *i.e.* Tonalá, in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), therefore, are a fascinating piece of evidence for the importance of this Goddess in the Mixteca Baja.

Searching for her sanctuaries, we can identify at least one with certainty and precision, namely the abris of Cerro de las Flores, next to the Boquerón gorge in Tonalá. But where is the Postclassic site of Huajuapán located? Several precolonial settlements of the Nuyoo phase (AD 900-1521) are scattered over the piedmont slopes around the valley. In Acatlima, to the west of Huajuapán, there are archaeological remains that belong to the Postclassic period: An unexplored mound as well as residential complexes and burials that have been rescued by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) in the area that currently is occupied by the Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca (UTM). Acatlima has several springs and permanent water sources that should have



Figure 10. Post-classic ceramics from Huajuapán de León, collection of the Museo Regional de Huajuapán (MUREH), Oaxaca (photo: Iván Rivera).

been attractive to the inhabitants. Findings of Postclassic objects in places as diverse as Colonia Reforma, Agua Dulce, La Estancia, Xochixtlapilco, El Molino, Vistahermosa and Cerro Ticoco indicate that during the Postclassic period the Huajuapán Valley there was already a dense population living in these areas (Figure 10).

The Postclassic site Cerro del Sombrerito, located east of Huajuapán, is the largest and is the best candidate to be considered the realm's capital in those days. Situated on a vast rocky plateau, Cerro del Sombrerito has the typical settlement pattern of the period: On the northern slope residential terraces starting near the Mixteco River, while on the highest part of the mountain, away from the residential section, we find an architectural complex of mounds, platforms and plazas. Its distinctive geographical feature is a large reddish rock formation that rises about twenty meters above the floor of the north plaza. It is a unique feature on the eastern side of the Valley of Huajuapán and clearly visible from several kilometres away (Figure 11). It is because of this curious elevation that the site is called *Cerro del Sombrerito*, i.e. 'Mountain of the Small Hat'.²³ This element might explain the red colour in the centre of the Ring of Stones, which we propose to identify as Postclassic Huajuapán. The place-sign then would represent the red rock as seen from above. On the top of the rock there are archaeological structures, which indicate that this formation itself was a centre of ritual activities. In the Ñuu Dzauí (Mixtec) worldview the rock would correspond to a Ñuhu or Ndodzo. Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis) suggests that the genius loci or inhabitant spirit was Lady 9 Reed, looking out from here over her domain. From here much of the landscape of the Mixteca Baja is fully visible: In the southwest we see the Cerro de la Costilla and the mountain of San Juan Diquiyú, the communities of Cacaloxtotec and the sierra of Monteverde, on the border with the Mixteca Alta and the neighbouring region of Tlaxiaco. In the same way, we distinguish the canyon of the Mixteco River and the Boquerón of Tonalá. To the north are the villages of Huajolotitlán, Camotlán and beyond those the high mountains of Cuyotepeji.

The archaeological site of Cerro del Sombrerito comprises two sets of monumental architecture (Figure 12). One is located on the southern edge of the plateau, with two mounds of black volcanic rock oriented northwest-southeast, and with a large, open plaza between the two structures. The scarcity of domestic ceramics on the surface suggests that this sector was merely ceremonial. Because of the space and height, it is possible that the ceremonies that took place in this plaza were observed from afar. The second group of structures is located in the northeast end; it consists of low platforms

23 Martínez Gracida (1883: s.v. Huajuapán) gives as the Mixtec name for this place: *Yucu sañohodzini-dzuchi*, in which *yucu* means 'mountain', *sa ñoho dzini* 'hat' (literally: 'what contains the head') and *dzuchi* 'small'. We notice that he did not use the local dialect variant, but the Tepozcolula Mixtec of the 16th Century as registered by Friar Francisco de Alvarado (1962). This suggests that the Mixtec name is a reconstruction, a translation of the Spanish name back into 'classic' Mixtec.



a



b



c

Figure 11. Different views of the archaeological site Cerro del Somberito. *a)* View from north to south. *b)* A mound in the northern plaza. *c)* The northern plaza and terraces (photos: Iván Rivera).

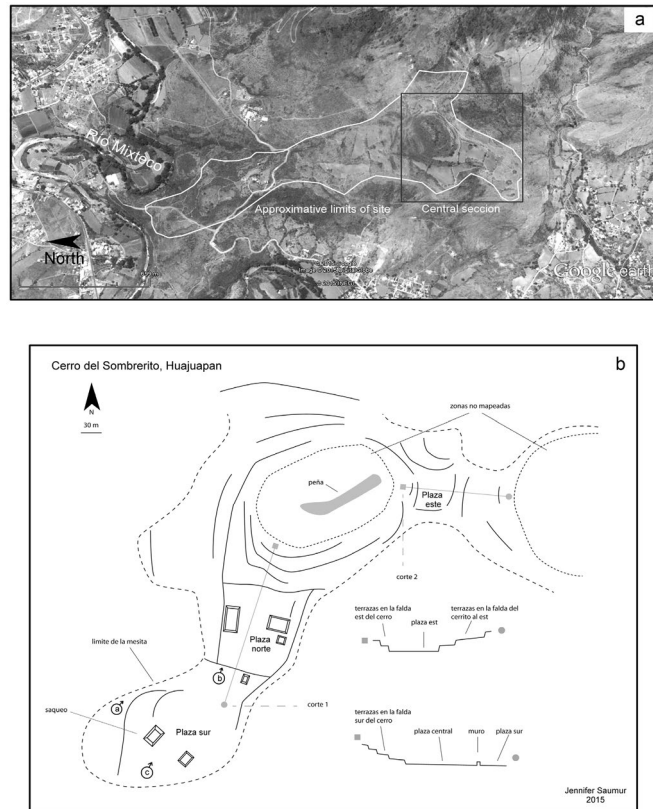


Figure 12. The archaeological site Cerro del Sombrero. *a)* The location of the site, Google Earth (the mapped area is indicated with the red square). *b)* Plan of the central complex of the site. The circles with letters indicate where the photos in Figure 11 were taken (drawing: Jennifer Saumur).

arranged around a square, which is connected with the terraces of the large rock. The architectural pattern that we see in Cerro del Sombrero is similar to that of other Postclassic sites in the Mixteca Baja. In the plan of the Postclassic centre of the Cerro de Tequixtepec in San Pedro and San Pablo Tequixtepec as well as in El Tempexquixtle, the old town of Camotlán, for example, we find comparable large squares surrounded by sets of mounds and platforms (Figure 13). This pattern contrasts with that of the Classic Nuiñe centers where generally the mounds and plazas are oriented to follow the natural direction of the hills.

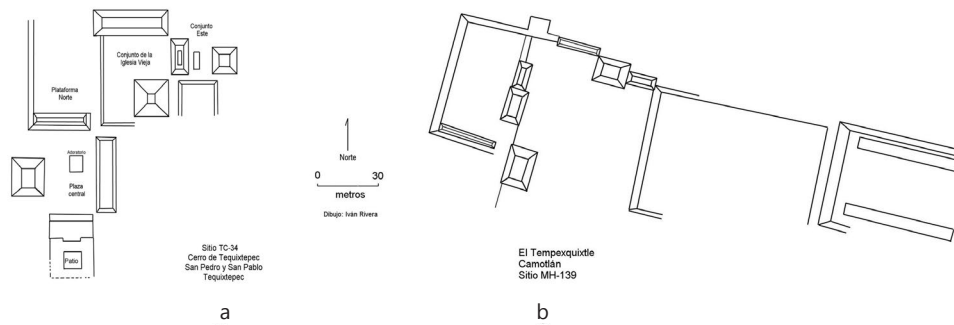


Figure 13. Comparison of the urban plan of two post-classic sites of the Mixteca Baja: *a*) Cerro de Tequixtepec. *b*) El Tempexquixtle, Camotlán (drawings: Iván Rivera).

In this sector there is presence of ceramics of the Postclassic period (Nuyoo phase), but also of the Preclassic period (Ñudee phase) and the Classic period (Ñuiñe phase), which indicates an earlier occupation of the place.

The finding of stones engraved with glyphs in Ñuiñe style confirms that Cerro del Sombrerito was already a ceremonial centre before the beginning of the Postclassic period. Thanks to the documentation of the Oaxacan historian Manuel Martínez Gracida, we know that three slabs (*figuras y geroglífico en bajo relieve*) were taken from this place, apparently from a tomb.²⁴ The mayor of Huajuapán at the time (1831), Don Juan Ortiz, ordered that two of them would remain fixed in the porch of the town hall, the other was put in the corner of the atrium of the church. This arrangement is similar to what we have observed in many communities of the Mixteca, where the carved monuments discovered in archaeological sites were subsequently placed in walls of public buildings such as town halls, schools or churches. In this case the carved stones remained in the town hall until the creation of the Regional Museum of Huajuapán (1999) allowed them to be displayed in a dignified manner.

²⁴ The measurements of these slabs are: 78 x 26 cms, 82 cms x 27 cms, and 76 cms x 26 cms. Martínez Gracida (1986: 280), described Cerro del Sombrerito, distrito de Huajuapán, in the following terms: “En 1831 casualmente y con el arado en trabajo, algunos labradores descubrieron restos de paredes y cimientos de edificios antiquísimos, que demostraban que aquel lugar había sido poblado. Uno de los cerdos de los labradores, escarbando en el suelo con el hocico, descubrió un subterráneo, que era nada menos que un sepulcro, del que se extrajeron cuatro anillos de oro, algunas cuentas del mismo metal, idolillos de pedernal, perlas, platos, vasos, conchas antiguas, etc. etc. Dos anillos fueron regalados al obispo de Puebla D. Francisco Pablo Vazquez y los otros fueron enviados a México, donde se dieron a conocer al público por medio de dibujos en el periódico científico ‘El Museo Mexicano’. Eran de alambre de oro, trabajo de filigrana; uno representa a un guerrero y otro a una dama”.

It is likely that one of these blocks is identical with the one seen by the famous Flemish captain William Dupaix on his second voyage (1806) through New Spain: It was drawn by José Luciano Castañeda and reportedly came from a place called Loma Tallesto, located one league east of Huajuapán (Dupaix 1969: 101).²⁵ The *Diccionario de Autoridades de la Lengua Española* (1734) specifies that a league is “a regular hour’s walk” (*lo que regularmente se anda en una hora*); that is indeed the walking distance from the centre of Huajuapán to the Cerro del Sombrerito. The monument shows a calendar name, placed on top of a U-shaped base – a characteristic element of the Nuiñe style. We cannot identify the numerical coefficient. The day sign has the form of three pointed leaves. It is similar to the day sign generally interpreted as Rain (‘glyph C’), but it may also represent the first sprouting corn, called *huiyu* in Dzaha Dzauí (Mixtec). In the special calendar idiom of the Postclassic period this word came to designate the day sign Reed. On the monument, the day holds a pointed device with a spiral (Figure 14): A person identified by his calendar name is carrying out a specific action of historical importance. It is noteworthy that the thumb’s nail of the hand in the sign is quite long, which may indicate a special power or office.

The other two monuments reported by Martínez Gracida are more difficult to identify in the known corpus but we should mention one slab that because of its iconography seems relevant for the subject matter of this study. This is a carved disk that was set in the garden of the town hall in Huajuapán, but in the early 1960’s was transferred to Mexico City to be part of the Oaxaca room in the National Museum of Anthropology (Figure 15). There are no reliable reports about its origin, so it may come from any of the Nuiñe centres in Huajuapán: Cerro de las Minas, Cerro del Sombrerito or some other site. The image depicts a jaguar lord wearing a feather headdress and having a forked tongue, recalling the representation of jaguars in Teotihuacán. Possibly the image registers the lord’s given name: Feathered Jaguar. The lord, furthermore, has a calendar name (placed under his mouth): 2 C, *i.e.* 2 Rain – perhaps the same as the name registered on the stone from Loma Tallesto? He stands on a precolonial altar or platform with stairs, which merges with a mountain sign. Apparently the lord is ascending to the throne and

25 According to Dupaix: “[...] hay una piedra la que se ve tendida en el suelo, de calidad sólida, de grano fino y azulada: su configuración es prismática, y en uno de sus lados, está gravado de relieve en su plano un escudo circular y orlado, y en su campo un cimbolo desconocido, por la parte posterior nace una mano con algo del brazo y empuña una especie de arma ofensiva sea dardo o lanza, con ciertos adornos que la acompañan: este escudo (arma defensiva de tanto uso entre la nación [indiana {deleted} mejicana] esculpido con destreza en ésta piedra con los geroglíficos (expresados con fuerza en él y con él) parece que aluden a algún hecho valeroso o que fue adoptado de alguna Provincia belicosa, por insignia de sus armas.” (Dupaix 1969: 101). Dupaix is the first scholar to identify the signs of the hand and arm in this writing system, as well as the inscription’s historical character in general. See also the comments on this monument in Moser (1977: 28).

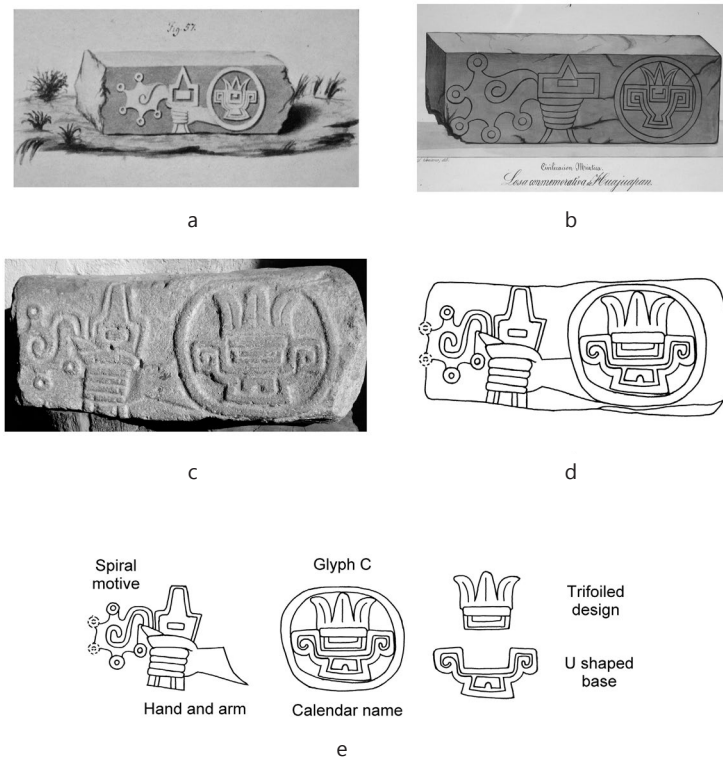


Figure 14. Monument 1 from Loma Tallesto / Cerro del Sombrerito. a) Drawing form Dupaix (1969). b) Drawing from Soriano in the work of Martínez Gracida 1910. c) The monument today in the MUREH (photo: Iván Rivera). d) y e) Analytical drawing of the inscription (drawing: Iván Rivera).

taking possession of the kingdom ('our mountain', *i.e.* 'our place'). Below the platform roots are depicted, a convention that occurs frequently on *ñuiñe* monuments with place names and which may indicate the founding ('planting') of the town. Most interesting is the very form of monument: A stone disc with a frame, which recalls the representation of the place where Lady 9 Reed is seated according to Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis). The round monument most likely was located on the top of an 'altar platform' (*chiyo*), like the one depicted in the relief scene itself. The surface shows intensive wear, which suggests frequent use. Most likely the altar functioned in enthronement rituals and other dynastic events. The descendant rulers may have celebrated such rituals standing on the image and so connecting to their Ancestor.

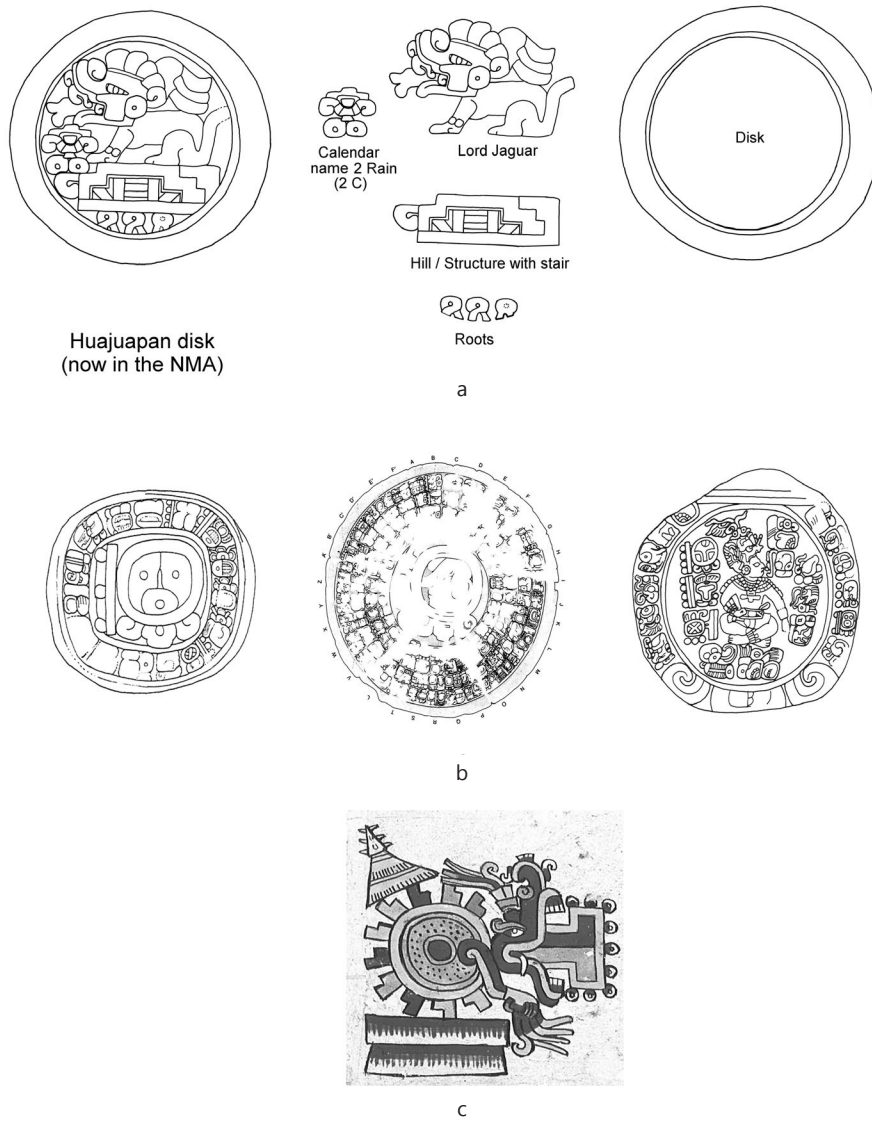


Figure 15. The Disk of Huajuapán (drawing: Iván Rivera). *a*) Monument analysis (drawings: Iván Rivera). *b*) Maya altars, from left to right: Altar 30 Tikal, Caracol Altar 21, Altar L Quiriguá (after Schele & Freidel 1990). *c*) Altar in the codex Tonindecy 15.

There is a similarity between this monument and the altars with reliefs from the Maya area, which also show lords in rituals of taking possession or ascending to the throne, often accompanied by inscriptions and dates (e.g. Schele & Freidel 1990). Such an altar is represented in Codex Tonindecy (Nuttall), p. 15, where a disc (as seen from above) is placed on top of a platform (in profile) – the combination with the image of a Fire Serpent qualifies the structure as a *locale* of *nabual* power and trance. We may link these round monuments on the one hand to the ancient Olmec ‘altars’ or ‘thrones’, and on the other to the famous Mexica ‘Calendar Stone’ or ‘Throne of Moctezuma’. The first seem to connect dynastic rituals to *nabual* powers and caves as *locales* of Ancestors as well as of origin and fertility (Coe *et al.* 1995). The second refer to the earlier creations and the rising of the new (Fifth) Sun as a symbolic and ideological expression of a new rule and a new epoch (Matos Moctezuma *et al.* 2010).

Final consideration

Combining the different indications from the codices with the archaeological information, we see unfolding before us a cultural landscape of religious value. The sacred sphere is created through the connection of impressive natural features, understood as manifestations and/or seats of Divine Forces, with monuments that link the enthronement of rulers and other rituals to the time of First Sunrise and Founding Ancestors. Human settlements, with their ceremonial centres, are embedded in this special space.

The impressive panorama of the canyon that links Huajuapán, Tonalá and Tlaxiaco offers a visual connection between Cerro del Sombrerito (Figure 16) and other sanctuaries of Lady 9 Reed. The presence of this Goddess gives meaning to these places and also creates a narrative and conceptual connection with the foundation narrative of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) and the dynastic drama of Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’. Calendar names and dates in the codices and, before those, in the Nuiñe inscriptions, fill the space with specific references to Time and Ancestors, calling for ritual commemoration and veneration.

This complex web of intersections and relations between the human world and the sphere of Ancestors, Deities and *nabuales*, was to a large extent destroyed by colonialism. Yet, though in a transformed way, this web has survived: The many churches, chapels, caves, houses of the Rain and other ritual places, as well as the many feast days of Patron Saints and other important moments of the year still maintain a coherent, syncretic spatial-temporal organisation of the landscape.

Western archaeology tends to focus on the secular (even economic) power of rulers and its legitimation through art, ritual and ‘propaganda’. Often these notions do not take into account the living Mesoamerican culture and mentality, and consequently tend to project modern issues of western society onto the precolonial past. Mesoamerican



Figure 16. The Red Rock at Cerro del Sombrero (photo: Iván Rivera) and the place sign of Huajuapán in Codex Yuta Tnoho (Vindobonensis), p. 44.).

symbolism and historiography pay more attention to how the rulers were conditioned by their ritual obligations and by the context of a sacred landscape. The visit paid to Lady 9 Reed by Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’ in Tonalá, for example, shows how specific places such as the Cerro de las Flores, and probably the whole Boquerón gorge, were places of ritual encounter with the ancient powers of the Founding Deities and Ancestors. This dimension of memory and timeless religious value has implications for ritual respect, morality and identity – in the past and in the present. It is through the combination of iconographical analysis with archaeological and historical data as well as with the living intangible heritage of the Indigenous Peoples that we may begin to uncover – at least partly and tentatively – this layer of profound meaning and emotional experience. Here archaeological and iconographical studies, obviously with the full participation of Indigenous experts, may offer important elements for a more integral and decolonial understanding of Mesoamerican art as well as for the revitalisation of its cultural landscape.

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 see Clark 1938.
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 see Smith 1973b and Jansen 1994.
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