

## THE YEAR IN THE MEXICAN CODICES: THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE EIGHTEEN FEASTS

GORDON BROTHERSTON

The Mesoamerican calendar is well known for its division of the year into eighteen Feasts of 20 days (*in ilhuiuh*), a system which articulates tribute with quarters, planting with seasons, dance with measure, cosmic with political time. The names and practices proper to each Feast varied over time and according to region. Yet their overall arithmetic, structure and conception can now be better perceived, thanks in part to finer facsimile reproductions of key texts, both pre-Cortesian screenfolds and post-Cortesian compendia<sup>1</sup> (fig. 1).

Besides appearing in *Borbonicus*, now expertly read by Reyes (1992), the Feasts feature in all the post-Cortesian compendia and provide the whole delivery mechanism for commodity tribute in the *Matricula de tributos* and *Mendoza*; they are also the subject of the various calendar wheels of Texcoco and Tlaxcala (Boban, Veytia, etc.), as well as sundry texts associated with the names Ixtlilxochitl, Tovar, Durán and Serna (fig. 2). At the same time, representations of Feasts can be found in other tribute documents, and occasionally in the annals, where they mark out significant moments and periods within a given year. The

<sup>1</sup> A superb facsimile of Sahagún's *Primeros memoriales*, published in 1993 by the University of Oklahoma Press, makes good several errors and omissions in Paso y Troncoso's 'copy' (1905; cf. Baird 1993). The Palacio Real part of this text is referred to here as the 'Tepepulco Ms.' since scribes from that town were the first to work on it. The transcription by Schultz Jena (1950) remains indispensable, as do his German translation and commentaries; they are based on fieldwork in Zitlala (Guerrero) and remain as absurdly neglected as Nowotny's catalogue. Except where divergence matters, 'Mendoza' (Berdan & Anawalt 1992) includes the *Matricula de tributos* (Berdan & Durand-Forest 1980); 'Magliabechiano' (Boone 1982), Tudela and other members of the group (Riese 1986); and 'Rios' (Graz: Adeva 1979), *Telleriano* (Quiñones Keber 1995). Conversely, a distinction is made between the main Tovar calendar (1; Lafaye 1972) and the Appendix (2; Kubler & Gibson 1951). Reyes García's 1992 Spanish-language edition of the *Borbonicus* screenfold, for the Fondo de Cultura Económica/Adeva facsimile series run by F. Anders, M. Jansen and himself, and Doesburg & Carrera González's edition of the *Códice Ixtlilxochitl* set new standards in scholarship. León-Portilla's edition of *Féjérvári* (Mexico: Celanese, 1982) is useful in pointing up pochteca and historical subtext. See also: Glass 1975; Milbrath 1989. Throughout, reading sequences follow Nowotny.

presence of the Feasts cycle has also been detected in pre-Cortesian texts inscribed in stone, among them, the celebrated Aztec 'Sunstone' (Piedra de los soles), and the panels in the temple at Tepoztlan dedicated to the pulque god Ome Tochtli. Kubler and Gibson's survey (1951) remains the most authoritative.

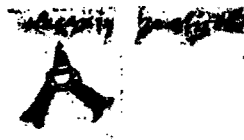
Within a given sequence, individual Feasts may be identified by as little as a single emblem, like the tree-moss of Pachtli; or even a phoneme, like the parrot which being *toz-nene* in Nahuatl denotes the root *tozoa* in Tozoztli, which relates to penance. More substantial versions, called theomorphic by Kubler and Gibson, will present a series of presiding figures, in full regalia, sometimes with supplementary figures or emblems. More elaborately again, there may be a full page scene, replete with choreography and architecture.

Concise, the emblems expose most readily the lack of standardization, over time and space, among the images and names used to identify individual Feasts. In part this reflects what were clearly different regional industries, climates and schedules; in part, it simply reflects the fact that different ceremonial highpoints from any one twenty-day Feast could be chosen to represent it. This last notion is made clear in the multiple images recorded in *Borbonicus*, the *Florentine Codex* and Durán, and in the alphabetic glosses added to several other texts.

Even so, within all this variety, it is possible to discern recurrent patterns, especially when we concentrate directly on the corpus of native texts. There, the iconography of certain Feasts shows remarkable constancy, like

- Tititl: the old woman Ilamatecutli and her weaving batten
- Toxcatl: feathered warrior
- Etzalcualiztli: Tlaloc's pozole stew pot
- Miccailhuitl: mummy bundle, flint knives
- Ochpaniztli: woman with cotton thread and broom, man with club
- Teotleco: footprint trail
- Quecholli: bird hunting gear, nose-bone adornment (*yacamitl*) and arrows
- Atemoztli: Tlaloc's falling water
- Tlacaxipehualiztli: Xipe's knotted conical hat

- F1.1 Tozoztli A
- F1.2 Tozoztli B
- F1.3 Toxcatl
- F1.4 Etzalcualiztli
- F1.5 Tecuilhuitl A
- F1.6 Tecuilhuitl B
- F1.7 Miccailhuitl A/Tlaxochimaco
- F1.8 Miccailhuitl B/Xocotl huetzi
- F1.9 Ochpaniztli



Tribute halves, Mendoza f. 46.

Fig. 1 The eighteen 20-day Feasts of the year

- F2.1 Pachtli A/Teotleco
- F2.2 Pachtli B/Tepeilhuitl
- F2.3 Quecholli
- F2.4 Panquetzaliztli
- F2.5 Atemoztli
- F2.6 Tititl
- F2.7 Izcalli
- F2.8 Atlcahualo/Xilomaniztli
- F2.9 Tlacaxipehualiztli



Tribute quarters, Tlapa Annals verso

Fig. 2 Year, Feasts and Elevens, in the screenfolds and post-Cortesian texts

|          | <i>Borbonicus</i> | <i>Borgia</i>                         | <i>Vaticanus</i> | <i>Cospi</i>   | <i>Fejervary</i>                 | <i>Laud</i> |
|----------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| YEARS    | 21-22             | 27-28; 49-53                          | 95               |                | 1                                | 46          |
| FEASTS   | 23-40             | 29-46                                 |                  |                | 15-22                            | 21-22       |
| Seasons  |                   |                                       | [43-48]          |                |                                  |             |
| ELEVENS  | [23-28, 36]       | 38-46, 29-31                          |                  | verso 1-11     | 5-14                             | 39-40       |
| nightsky |                   | 31                                    | [95-96]          |                |                                  |             |
|          | <i>Tepepulco</i>  | <i>Florentine</i><br>( <i>bk.ch</i> ) | <i>Mexicanus</i> | <i>Mendoza</i> | <i>Magliabec</i><br><i>hiano</i> | <i>Rios</i> |
| YEARS    | f. 283-6          | 7:7-9                                 | p. 9             | f. 2           | f. 3.14-17                       | f. 38v-40   |
| FEASTS   | f. 250-253        | 2:1-19                                | p. 1-8           | [f. 18v-55]    | f. 28-46                         | f. 42v-51   |
| Seasons  | f. 282v-283       | 2:20-37                               |                  |                |                                  | 87-87v      |
| ELEVENS  | f. 258-259v       | App. 2                                | p. 10-12         | f. 17v-18      | f. 49-59                         | f. 1v-2     |
| nightsky | f. 282-282v       | 7:3                                   |                  |                |                                  |             |

The Nahuatl names of these emblems tend to be legible etymologically, and the consistency they display in all major cases makes of them a template for the cycle as a whole.

The emblem sequences, necessarily those found (between the spokes of the calendar wheels, tend to identify the Feasts serially one to one. This is also generally true of the full-figure sequences, despite the extra information and page space allotted to certain of them.

With the scene sequences however, things are different. In the 18-page chapter in *Borbonicus* (p. 23-40), only 15 pages are actually dedicated to the Feasts, and those at the start recur cyclically at the end (Izcalli; p. 23, 37). Moreover, the regularity of the serial page arrangement is modified by the fact that after the first eleven Feasts, enormous attention is paid to Ochpaniztli, whose scene intrudes on to scenes before and after (p. 29-30) and announces a far more spacious arrangement of scenes, one per page or more, compared with the two per page or less before. Just this formatting effect recurs with respect to Ochpaniztli in the Tepepulco Ms. where, as Baird has keenly shown, the presiding figure of that Feast appears before and after, as well as in, her own scene, since her presence was felt to be threaded into the preceding and into the subsequent Feast, in what Baird believes may once have been a parallel vertical format (Baird 1993:116). With respect to Panquetzaliztli, the accompanying Nahuatl text reports that this Feast was associated with a dance that lasted no less than eighty days, or four Feasts. The *Florentine Codex* records several cases of overlapping Feasts, like the wild-flower gathering that began two days before the actual beginning of the flowery Tlaxochimaco,<sup>2</sup> or the mock fights of Panquetzaliztli which ran on into Atemoztli. For all that, the Feasts always add up to eighteen and they always follow the same sequence.

In native-script texts, the Feasts within the 18-fold cycle tend to group themselves in pairs. Several contiguous Feasts are paired as lesser (-tontli, -tzintli) and greater (Huey-), complementary parts of the same concept or 40-day event. An exemplary case is Miccailhuitl: in the first of "lesser" half, a large wooden pole was fetched; in the second, it was set up. These parts or halves of double Feasts are referred to as "lesser" (-tontli) or "greater" (huey-) in Nahuatl and other Mesoamerican lan-

<sup>2</sup> Reports of this Feast provide an excellent example of how coherent native sources may be once respected both for themselves and within their own literary tradition. For the *Florentine Codex* specifies in Nahuatl the names of the seed-flowers that are gathered at this time, seventeen in all; this is exactly the numbers of the flowers depicted in this Feast in *Borbonicus*. Moreover, the concept can be tracked back further insofar as this same number or cipher is seen in comparable contexts at Teotihuacan: the seeds falling from the priest's hands in the Tepaltitla mural come in instalments of 2 2 3 3 2 2 3, again a total of 17.

guages, denoted here by the letters A and B. Tozoztli, Tecuilhuitl, Miccailhuitl<sup>3</sup> and Pachtli are the Feasts most commonly doubled in this way. In Matlatzinca and Tlaxcalan texts (Serna, Veytia), Atemoztli and Titil are similarly paired. Grouping in pairs is also a feature of the Maya hieroglyphic cycle and affects a majority of the Feasts.

*The halves and quarters of the tribute year*

According to the sheer structure of *Féjervary* and other codices, the two main cycles of the Mesoamerican calendar, the 260-night/day *tonalpoualli* and the 365-day year, each had its own specific tribute or economic function. Just as the former as a gestation cycle regulated labour and the course of human life, from cradle to grave, so the Feasts of the year governed commodity tribute, the distinction between the two having been enshrined in indigenous, and subsequently Spanish Colonial, law. A range of texts makes it certain that at a first level the Feasts cycle served as a schedule for the production and delivery of tribute items to centers like Tenochtitlan and its imperial associates and predecessors. In this function, the year divides in the first instance into halves which hinge on the equinoxes.

Distinguished by the fact that it leads up to the autumn equinox, Ochpaniztli is otherwise privileged within the structure of the 18 Feasts. For in the arrangement found in all the screenfolds and compendia it never is, nor could be, a 40-day double Feast, since it falls immediately after the double Feast of Miccailhuitl A & B and immediately before the double Feast of Pachtli A & B. This alerts us to the further fact that the whole cycle of 18 also falls structurally into halves.

In the tribute literature, the autumn Feast Ochpaniztli is characteristically cross-linked with its vernal counterpart Tlacaxipehualiztli, in order to mark the equinoxes at the end of the upper and lower halves of the sun's annual course, summer and winter, in the northern hemisphere. A female-male gender match confirms this pairing, which as it were across the year matches the presiding goddess of Ochpaniztli, when women sang for twenty days (Tepepulco f. 251v) with the flayed one Xipe of Tlacaxipehualiztli. In certain sources (e. g. Tepepulco, *Magliabechiano*), the gender pairing is anticipated within Ochpaniztli itself, the first or major equinox, where, adorned with signs of thread

<sup>3</sup> In deciding when to surrender to Cortés in August 1521, Cuauhtemoc is said to have waited for the exact mid point of Miccailhuitl, the feast of death and destruction, that is, the passage from its first to its second half.

and woven cotton, Tlazolteotl/Tetetoinnan is matched by a male brandishing a shield and wooden war club, and comes herself to resemble a 'warrior woman' (*yaociuatl*).

Strong confirmation of this half plus half model is provided in tribute literature, where woven goods are typically shown or understood to be due twice a year, at the equinoctial Feasts. When scheduling for Xoconochco only two annual payments for all categories of tribute (on account of its great distance), *Mendoza* specifies the equinoctial Feasts of Ochpaniztli and Tlacaxipehualiztli, in that order (*Mendoza* f. 47).

The start of the 'winter' half of the year, after Ochpaniztli, is dramatically imaged in several sources by a footprint (see for example, *Telleriano* and *Tovar* 2), which indicates the passage of the gods in Teotleco/Pachtli A, and the journeys then typically undertaken by *pochteca* tribute agents, and by hunters. Following these indications closely, we are then justified in saying that the year represented in the screenfolds and the compendia falls into two halves, each of which consists numerically of four double Feasts, followed by a single equinoctial Feast. For ease of reference, this scheme will be expressed from now on as follows:

Tozoztli A - Ochpaniztli = F1.1-F1.9  
Pachtli A - Tlacaxipehualiztli = F2.1-F2.9

Even in the otherwise distant hieroglyphic model of the lowland Maya, where the Feasts were detached from the seasons upon being perennially meshed into the 360-day tun calendar, a similar structure is visible.

Tribute literature is also a good guide to further binary divisions of the year, into not just halves but quarters. For within these two halves of the year, the annals and tribute lists go on to specify certain intermediary Feasts for quarterly payments, principally of metals, determining intervals of twice 80 + 100 days in each half of the year, i. e., in the sequence F1.4, F1.9; F2.4, F2.9. Though it is clear that in practice the 'solstice' Feasts Etzalcualiztli and Panquetzaliztli (F1.4, F2.4) fell short of that event in summer and winter, they nonetheless served notionally to anticipate it in the quarter system. The four-Feast pattern in tribute texts from Tlapa (Vega 1991) and Tlaquiltenango make this much amply clear.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The periodicities of payment were generally understood to inhere in any given item, according to this schedule (woven goods twice yearly at the equinoxes, metals quarterly, etc.).

The larger significance of this halving and quartering of the year becomes apparent in the design of the markers which denote the concept of year itself. Of the nine or so different markers used for this purpose throughout Mesoamerica, more than half are structurally four-fold. This is the case with the foursquare box commonest in the highland Basin, the Huasteca, and Tlapa, and the diamond box (the square tilted through 45 degrees) also found in the Basin as well as far to the east in Guatemala.<sup>5</sup> As for the round marker known in the Teotihuacan valley and eastern Tlaxcala, it also exists in fourfold versions: recalling the periodicity of metal tribute in the form of a gold coin, it may have quarters inset, as on a clockface. In the special case of the Atlamalqualiztli ceremony, which correlated a period of 4 + 4 years with the same number of days, the quarter points attach to the outside rather than the inside of the round marker (fig. 3a, b). Round, these designs reflect that of the solar disk itself, which is typically inset with 4 or 4 + 4 pointers.

Quartering the year is also reflected in analogous quatrefoil and four-part ballcourt designs placed at the solstices in *Borbonicus* (p. 27, 34). In Panquetzaliztli (F2.4), the quatrefoil specifically characterises the New Fire ceremony, having implicit in it the notion of four tribute provinces, as in the title-page maps in *Féjervary* and *Mendoza*. The quartered ballcourt at Etzalcualiztli (F1.4) recalls examples of this design also found with New Fire ceremonies in the screenfold annals, where they relate to *pochteca* tribute collection, and to early models of the year calendar based on twelve moons (see for instance *Zouche-Nuttall* p. 1-3).

As well as helping to reveal the structure of halves and quarters implicit in the cycle of 18 Feasts, recalling the importance of tribute practice shows how the notion of paying hard commodity items is continuous with that of making ritual offerings. In its chapter on the subject, the *Florentine Codex* (Book 2) equates 'debt-paying' (*nextlaoaliztli*) with Feast (*ilhuitl*).

Variations existed however, extra deliveries of cloth being specified for Tecuilhuitl or Quechólli (*Cuaauhuitlan Annals*, Bierhorst 1992:130; *Lienzo of Pellacala*, Oettinger & Horcasitas 1982:56-58).

<sup>5</sup> An example is unmistakably there in Fuentes y Guzmán's early colonial report, along with other key information about the year calendar in highland Guatemala (see HMAI 14:78; Edmonson 1988). In such matters, this area always steered a course closer to highland Mexico than to the Maya lowlands, a fact that impinges strongly on how best to interpret the cosmogonical structure of the *Popol vuh*.

*Weather and planting seasons*

Besides tribute, the Feasts cycle reflects other schedules, notably the seasons of weather and planting, an aspect of the year likewise evident in other types of year marker, like the rains of the summer monsoon, or the falling deciduous leaves of the cold season (fig. 3e, f). In this mode, the cycle may likewise highlight the equinoxes, notably Ochpaniztli. Yet in doing so it tends to reflect an arithmetic not so much of halves and quarters as of thirds, hitherto somewhat neglected as proportions of the year.

In its exquisite weather chapter (much translated by Sahagún), the Tepepulco Ms. embodies a series of meteorological seasons in the figures of Ehecatl, Tlaloc, and Itztlacoliuhqui (f. 282v-283). The successive reigns of these deities are characterized as follows: the winds of Ehecatl, the lightning and rain of Tlaloc and his rainbow, and Itztlacoliuhqui's frost, snow, clouds and hail. Each of the three figures wears a distinctive hat, hats which however have in common the fact that they are all adorned with sequences of circles or dots (fig. 4). The fact that the total of these dots is exactly 18 alerts us to the references to the Feasts cycle in the accompanying Nahuatl glosses.

In such a gloss, the dwellers of highland Tepepulco had the following to say of Itztlacoliuhqui:

We say that Itztlacoliuhqui in the year cycle means the arrival of frost in the 20-day period Ochpaniztli. And for 120 days there is cold. In the 20-day period we call Tititl we say the cold is over, this is the time of green maize leaves, the warm time, the good time.

In the corresponding image, the 120 days of Itztlacoliuhqui's reign are unmistakably registered as six dots on his hat, one for each constituent Feast. Just as unmistakably, this evidence alone establishes that for a third of the year, during a period beginning at the autumn equinox and lasting until Tititl (January), it is dangerous to plant because of the danger that cold poses to young seedlings. By contrast, seeds of maize and other crops planted in and after Tititl will enjoy favourable weather.

The 12 Feasts which make up the rest of the cycle and the remaining two thirds of the year are duly indicated by the total of 12 dots found on the hats of Itztlacoliuhqui's companions Tlaloc, who has two sets of dots, and Ehecatl. Like that of the Feasts themselves, the reading order is continuous or cyclical, and proceeds through Tlaloc (4



dots) to Ehecatl (3 dots), and then back through Tlaloc (5 dots) to Itztlacoliuhqui (6 dots), so that the sequence may seamlessly begin again. In neatly establishing the Feast total of 18, these indications match perfectly with weather over the year as it is actually experienced in that part of Mexico, seasons vividly pictured in the set of eight images that comprise this chapter of the Tepepulco Ms.

The first four of these images stand beside Ehecatl and Tlaloc and are coloured, like the deities themselves, and they reflect the red lightning that ends the former's three hot dusty Feasts (Tozotli A-Toxcatl; F1.1-F1.3) and announces the latter's five-Feast monsoon and final rainbow (Etzalcualiztli-Miccailhuitl B; F1.4-F1.8). In its Feasts chapter, *Rios* gives (on pages now vanished from the corresponding chapter in *Telleriano*) a similarly vivid confirmation of the annual transition from dusty wind to rainfall, at just the right moment, in meteorological backgrounds supplied for Tozcatl (F1.3) and Etzalcualiztli (F1.4), but for no other Feast: from a blast of grey wind volutes (Toxcatl) we move to a downpour of turquoise rain drops (Etzalcualiztli).

By contrast, the second set of four images in the Tepepulco chapter are black-and-white, like Itztlacoliuhqui himself, and detail the clouds, cyclonic rain, cold, snow and hail that may be expected during his third of the year (Ochpaniztli-Atemoztli; F1.9-F2.5). Returning to the start of the cycle, we then re-enter the colourful reign of Tlaloc, this time over the four Feasts of the prime planting season, which lasts till the spring equinox, Tititl to Tlacaxipehualiztli (F2.6-F2.9), and which historically was made possible by irrigation and *chinampa* agriculture.

With great economy and ingenuity, the Tepepulco Feasts chapter tells us even more about the year of weather and planting. For closely observed, the disks on the hats of the three deities are of two kinds, either open circles or simple black dots. The former, open circles, cover two thirds of the year, from Tititl to Miccailhuitl B (F2.6-F1.8), when



Fig. 4 Seasons  
Eecatl, Tlaloc, Itztlacoliuhqui (top  
to bottom. Tepepulco Ms f. 282v)

safe planting generally is possible and practised. The latter, closed dots, cover one third, from Ochpaniztli to Atemoztli (F1.9-F2.5), that is, the reign of Itztlacoliuhqui when, as the Nahuatl gloss reminds us, young plants are threatened in the highlands by cold, even frost and wintry weather. The open and closed circles denoting Feast spans over the year thus come to image the very holes in the ground that seeds are or are not put in. Precisely when Itztlacoliuhqui's reign ends does planting begin in earnest, in the Feast Tititl spelt out in the Nahuatl gloss, the good warm green time.

In terms of human activity as opposed to just weather, Tititl becomes, then, the hinge of agronomy and the agricultural year, the time when a great range of vulnerable crops were and are seeded and planted: the chiles, beans, amaranth and the finer cereals are among those listed in the *Florentine Ms.* In this model, the key concept is not so much the monsoon (which in fact often proves too much for vulnerable crops when newly planted), but Tititl's opening of the solid black dot into an open disk that is legible as a seed-hole, immediately after the end of Itztlacoliuhqui's reign, without risk of frost, in floating fields (*chinampas* - the gloss in *Borbonicus* links the products of Tititl to the 'laguna' in which *chinampas* are found; cf. Broda 1983; 1991) or fields wet from the winter rains or snow of Atemoztli. Preceding and following on from Ehecatl's windy Feasts, the two main planting periods are watered respectively by irrigation and monsoon, the larger 'seed-hole' disks of the former suggesting its greater importance. The idea of Tititl being, for planting purposes, this kind of hinge in the year is mirrored in several texts, as we shall see; in the *Boban Wheel* it corresponds to a hand intruding into the yearly cycle bearing literal leafy evidence of the "good warm green time" then due to begin.

In Tititl, the *Borbonicus* screenfold, *Magliabechiano*, *Rios* and the Sahaguntine sources all commemorate a goddess whose complex arrays (*imechichiuh*) has led to her being identified with the whole cluster of fundamental earth and mother deities, saliently the ancient one *Ilamatecuhtli* ('la vieja'), *Cihua coatl* and *Teteu innan* (fig. 5). In this context, her distinctive features are a double tongued head band, a skull mask, a weaving batten (*tzotzopaztli*) and a skirt and garments that may be distinctively edged in four colours and adorned with lattice, heart, skull and crossbone, flower and other designs. One of this goddess's chief functions was to preside over the distribution of seeds and the eagerly-awaited start of planting in Tititl, when there were races up the pyramid steps to the temple that housed the grain bin (*cuexcomatl*) out of which the year's seeds and seed corn (*teosuchil*) were distributed. The *Borbonicus* scene for Tititl shows the pyramid steps and

an elaborate dance that involves the lavishly-attired goddess of *chinampa* agriculture, the 'diosa de la laguna' gloss noted in the Spanish gloss.

Through Ilamatecuhtli, the idea of seed and fruitfulness was carried over into the human realm. For Tititl also celebrated childbirth, specifically through the figures of the five Ciuateteo, who were impersonated in what was called Illamateuh-chololoya, the 'leap' or dance of Ilamatecuhtli, shown in this Feast in the Tepepulco Ms. (f. 253). That Ilamatecuhtli, furthermore, has a celestial nature is evident from the epithet commonly bestowed on her and registered in her attire or 'array': Citlalicue, 'Star-skirt'.<sup>6</sup>

As the hinge between non-planting and planting seasons (6 + 12 Feasts), Tititl emerges as the principle behind the division of the year into thirds. Evidence of this scheme can also be seen in the Aubin Ms. 20 where the year is shown as twelve moons, four of which, starting with the equinoctial Ochpaniztli, are marked by frost-withered falling leaves, thereby suggesting the same non-planting third of the year (fig. 6). A similar arrangement is perhaps indicated by the appearances of the rain god Tlaloc in the *Rios* Feasts cycle, while in his discussion of the Feasts chapter in Ixtlilxochitl, Carrera González notes that the ancient Mazatec calendar likewise divides the year into three seasons, two of

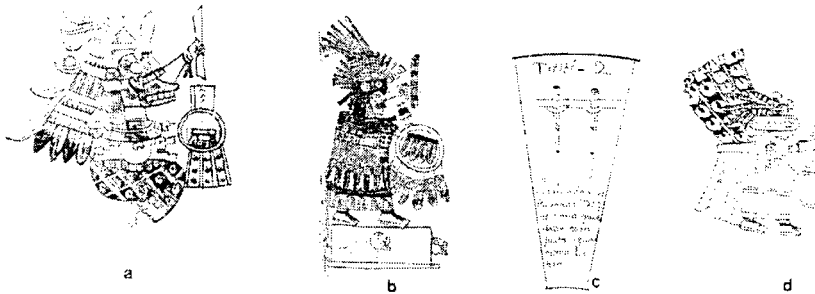


Fig. 5 Tititl: Star-skirt, weaving batten and measuring rods

Star-skirt with batten: *a* Magliabechiano f. 44. *b* Borbonicus p. 36 (second appearance; on tzonpantli platform with tow right-facing skull that indicate Miccaihuitl A & B)

Measuring rods: *c* Tlaxcala or Veytia Wheel 5 (Kubler & Gibson 1951. Fig. 16; the Spanish gloss refers to exact measurement) *d* Borbonicus p. 36 (rods being moved forward to Izcalli)

<sup>6</sup> The Star-skirt of Tititl ('Citlali icue', *Florentine Codex* Book 2:36) was firmly identified with the Milky Way by the generally sceptical and cautious Schultze Jena and his Nahuatl advisers in the 'star-town' Zitlala ('...das Sternen Hüftuch ist die Milchstrasse'; 1950:263).

which have to do with the milpa and planting, and one which does not. After the cold (*nýan*) come the heat (*ndoá*) and rain (*jtsí*) when planting occurs and produces respective kinds of maize. The significance of the match is perhaps enhanced by the fact that in the Mazatec-Chinantec area, the 18 Feasts may function in the absence of the *tonalpoualli* (Bastiaan & Carrera González 1996:174-175).

*Measuring and tying the year*

Pivotal for agriculture, Tititl had a major role in the regulation of the calendar as such. It was known as the Feast when originally things were stretched and measured, the emblem here being raised forearms and Ilamatecutli's *tzotzopaztli* (the weaving batten), or measuring sticks in cloth; (fig. 5c,d). Early in the long story told in its annals, the *Vienna* codex shows such measurements of the year in the image of a stretched cord equated by Kubler and Gibson with the Feast Tititl, on the occa-



Fig. 6 Moons  
Ochpaniztli (spindle) after 7 moons, and before 4 falling-leaf moons, plus 1 moon (Aubin Ms 20, top left)

sion of New Fire ceremonies. The imagery of measuring years with cord extends into the idea of tying them, as units, or in larger bundles, which likewise comes through in the knots and loops attaching to box frames and solar rays in certain types of year marker (fig. 3 g,h).

Three factors could be connected with this measuring, which are:

- year beginnings, knowing when in the year to start the 18 Feast cycle, that, is deciding which should be the initial Feast;
- intercalating the extra days needed to bring the eighteen 20-day Feasts (360 days) up to the length of the solar year, these being the epagomenal days known as Nemontemi in Nahuatl;
- naming years, by means of the 13 Numbers and four of the XX Signs of the *tonalpoualli*, in the 52-year cycle or year-binding (*xihuhmolpilli*), thereby deciding the sequence of Night Lords that guard each new year.

Labyrinthine each in its own right, these concepts —initial Feast, Nemontemi and year name— have no doubt been differently related to each other over space and time within the Mesoamerican calendar system, as Munro Edmonson's *Book of the Year* expertly shows. For example, how and when, or even whether epagomenal days were added, and whether or not they included an extra sixth day in leap years or their equivalent, are still hotly debated topics. A complicating factor has been the scholarly desire in the first instance to correlate relevant native texts less with each other as a corpus than individually with the European calendar, an imported system which for much of the 16th century was still languishing in Julian ineptitude.

For our purposes and method, the priority is to examine the native sources for all they may, reveal, respecting their coherence as a corpus. In this matter of year measuring, they make clear from the start a point sometimes overlooked, perhaps because of a certain intellectual fascination with the model developed by the lowland Maya, where the Feasts lost autonomy and were de-coupled from the solar year. For *Borbonicus* and the compendia leave no doubt that elsewhere the Feasts had use and utility in the economy of tribute and agriculture, and that they could perfectly well function without reference to (and still less dependency on) the 260-day calendar prioritized by the lowland Maya. This was (and in some places apparently still is) true for parts of the Maya highlands and the Upper Papaloapan, and for the whole of Purépecha territory on and beyond the old western frontier of the Olmec in Guerrero. Only thanks to a selfsufficing mechanism that keeps track of the solar year through intercalated days of a sort could the 18 Feasts have kept, over the centuries, the seasonal function and resonance they

so decidedly had (and have) in social practice, not least in the production and distribution of food.

As a whole, *Borbonicus* and the compendia speak to the question of initial Feast, in a fashion that is rational, if complex. For they all indicate a new year within a narrow band of Feasts, Tititl to Tlacaxipehualiztli (F2.6-F2.9), for the most part also making reference to the Nemontemi and/or the xiuholmopilli cycle.

In most cases, Atlacahualo (F2.8) stands as the first of the 18 Feasts, apparently the Mexica norm, the Nemontemi having been intercalated after the year's ending in Izcalli (F2.7). Such is certainly the case in *Magliabechiano* (Izcalli has "25 days"), the Tepepulco Ms. (the Atamalqualiztli ceremony), the Boban Wheel, *Rios* and *Telleriano*. After Izcalli, this last depicts a glyph of the Nemontemi, with five to six volutes, which has been convincingly deciphered as an indication of a "leap-day" practice (Tena 2000). In *Tovar* 1 as in *Tovar* 2, the start is made one Feast later, in Tlacaxipehualiztli (F2.9) and again in the latter text Atlacahualo (F2.8), now the last Feast rather than the first, is followed by the Nemontemi. In *Tovar* 1, a cycle of 52 Series III years (f. 142) is succinctly tied to a year ending in Atlacahualo, with the completing of a full *tonalpoualli*, 260 days or 13 Feasts begun in Tecuilhuitl A (f. 144-146); here, Atlacahualo appears under its guise as Xilomaniztli, when the scaly fisherfolk let the waters rest.<sup>7</sup> In the remaining texts, the principle of slippage as such continues to be evident. In Veytia Wheel no. 4, the new year begins before rather than after Atlacahualo, in Izcalli (F2.7), the final Feast being Tititl (F2.6), and this is the arrangement likewise set out in *Borbonicus*. In these two cases (*Borbonicus* and Veytia 4), as in the Boban Wheel, the question of the intervening Nemontemi is directly linked to year naming. *Borbonicus*, which consciously reckons with the pre-Mexica world, can be seen moreover to comment on the forward slippage itself, in showing the sticks used to measure the year literally carried forward to Izcalli from Tititl, thereby pointing back a prior or 'original' new year one Feast earlier again, in Tititl, whose emblem is after all these same measuring sticks. In all, this proposes an overall new year sequence which over time moved through Tititl-Izcalli-Atlacahualo-Tlacaxipehualiztli, F2.6 to F2.9.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The scales are plain enough here, as they are in the *Magliabechiano* version of this Feast, and the human figure covered with them has grown maize in his hand, to denote its name (xilo..ma..). Yet Lafaye (1972), perhaps misled by transposed Feasts in Durán, reads it as Etzalcualiztli.

<sup>8</sup> Veytia Wheel no. 2 posits an even earlier start in Atemoztli. The heavily Christianized iconography of this text, plus the fact that in one version actually misplaces the preceding

Third, the naming of years, with Signs taken from the *tonalpoualli* set of Twenty Signs. The intermeshing of the *tonalpoualli* 260 days with the year's notional 365 arithmetically produces series of four year "bearer" Signs, always five Signs part (e. g. Series I is Signs I, VI, XI and XVI), which combine with the Thirteen Numbers, in ascending sequence (1 I, 2 VI, 3 XI, 4 XVI, 5 I etc.), to complete the Round or year binding (*xiuhmolpilli*) of 52 years. The *Borbonicus* chapter affirms this connection between the Feasts and year naming by placing the Feasts chapter (p. 23-40) right after a *xiuhmolpilli* chapter (p. 21-22), which celebrates the Night Lords that guard the new years. Moreover, a further *xiuhmolpilli* of Series III years is actually introduced into the Feasts chapter, beginning in Izcalli with 1 Rabbit and running through 2 Reed at the New Fire ceremony in Panquetzaliztli to 3 Flint and the rest of the 52 years at the end of the cycle.<sup>9</sup> A similar pattern occurs in Veytia Wheel 4, which links its start in Tititl to the Series III years 1 Reed, 2 Flint and 3 House. Between Izcalli and its start in Atlacahualo, the Boban Wheel lists all Twenty Signs, ingeniously ranged as both four sets of five epagomenal days and the five Series of possible: year bearers (Series I to Series V).

In pre-Cortesian texts, similar correlations are inscribed in stone, the Tlatelolco pyramid being a celebrated example. There, the *tonalpoualli* Signs run in twenties along one side of the structure; on the other, the Series of year bearers in fours. The layout is critical in proposing not just the principle of correlation as such, but the notion that the year-bearer Series moved forward over time, incrementally, starting with Series I. Recognized as archaic, Series II is in practice used in some surviving annals (Wind, Deer, Tooth, Earthquake), to be succeeded by the far commoner Series III (House, Rabbit, Reed, Flint). Lowland Maya texts, where having no leap day years move faster, get as far as Series IV. A similar logic appears to have governed the numbers that qualified the Signs, an explicit case being the Oaxaca-Mexica equation 1 House = 2 House which through *Rios* can be matched with a 20-day earlier start for a given Feast. This last example suggests that the forward shift in new year Feasts might be directly connected with that of year names (Number and Sign), a connection which needs be mentioned only in principle here.

Panquetzaliztli (Glasgow Wheel), suggest that this new year conforms more to an imported January than to primordial Mesoamerican practice.

<sup>9</sup> Hassig has offered an extremely complex explanation for this year sequence, which appeals to calendar reforms made by the Mexica in the name of political ambition, during their relatively short history.

According to Edmonson (1988), the progression of year bearer Series occurred over the course of Mesoamerican civilization, beginning with the Olmec in the first millennium before Christ. Already then, in 433 BC (according to the same authority), the length of the solar year had been calculated with great accuracy, in a memorable formula that correlates leap days with the span of 29 Rounds (1508 years).

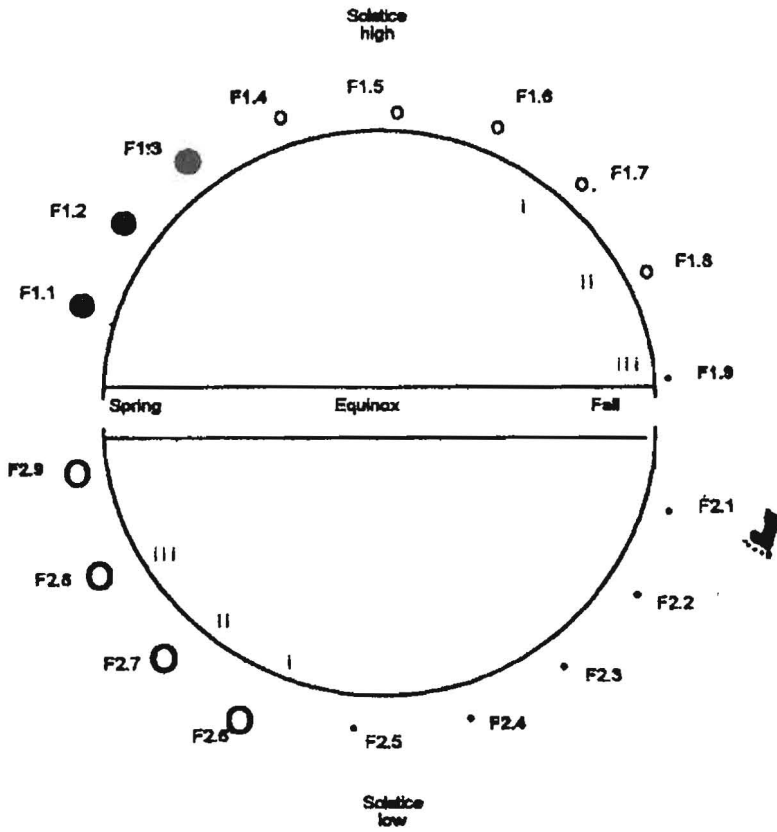
At all events, unlike the other kinds of year discussed above, those of tribute and agriculture, the year of calendrical measuring and naming cannot be assigned fixed starts or turning points within the cycle. There are no equivalents here to the halves of the year begun anew after the equinoxes of Ochpaniztli and Tlacaxipehualiztli, or to the twelve-Feast planting season begun in Tititl. Indeed, the wish to identify the Feast in which "the year began", and which the other 17 would simply follow, has in itself been a major and unnecessary complication since the Spanish commentaries of the 16th century.

In sum, what has generally been recognized as the 18-Feast cycle in native texts becomes clearer, in terms of structure and function, when we consider the simultaneous operation of the three modes and sets of inner proportions outlined so far, those relevant respectively to tribute, planting and year-naming (fig. 7). In dealing with the solar year, the compendia give information about the 18 Feasts on *tlacuillo* pages which for the most part are glossed alphabetically in Nahuatl or Spanish. As a result, despite the occasional interference of European paradigms (which increases in the ratio of alphabetic Spanish to *tlacuillo*), it is possible actually to see in the *tlacuillo* statement evidence for certain patternings and proportions of Feasts within the year. Salient cases are the tribute documents from Tenochtitlan, Tlapa and elsewhere; the superb Tepepulco account of weather and seasons; and a whole range of examples with regard to the start of the year. On several points, this compendia testimony concords with and is enhanced by that of the *Borbonicus* screenfold, the most legible of the nine ritual texts or dream books that adhere entirely to pre-Cortesian norms. Always bearing in mind the lessons taught by these texts, we may now move on to consider the far more difficult and contentious case of the other members of the pre-Cortesian corpus.

### *The Feasts cycle in Borgia*

To date, Nowotny's *Tlacuilolli* (1961) the only comprehensive and authoritative catalogue of the nine surviving ritual codices. Yet, superb as it is in analyzing the *tonalpoualli* and its deployment in the theme





- Tibute Year  
 F1.4 etc.  
 F2.1
- Weather and Planting year  
 F1.9-F2.5, F2.6-F.8
- F2.6-F2.9
- F1.1-F1.3
- F1.4-F1.8
- Calendar year  
 i-iii F2.6-F1.7 etc.
- quarter endings (4.5; 4.5)  
 start of "winter journey"
- no planting, planting (6, 12)
- main planting season (4)
- dust storms (3)
- Monsoon planting season (maize) (5)
- night sky, epagomenal days (11,7)

Fig. 7 Concurrent cycles

chapters of these texts, it pays far less attention to the other great cycle of the Mesoamerican calendar: the Feasts of the year. As a result, Nowotny has little to say about this cycle and, in the case of all the screenfolds except *Borbonicus*, simply overlooks chapters which on several counts might be seen to relate to it. The major example of such neglect is the central chapter of the *Borgia* screenfold (p. 29-46). Significantly, this chapter is 18 pages long and indeed has sometimes been associated with the Feast cycle, albeit inconclusively. Having considered the year and its 18 Feasts, its tribute halves and quarters, its non-planting third and the hinge position of Tititl —always on the direct evidence of native sources—, we are now better equipped to examine it.

The *Borgia* chapter is read vertically downward, unlike the *tonalamatl* chapters in the rest of the screenfold that are read right to left, and it actually runs through the upending between the obverse (which ends on p. 38) and the reverse side (which begins on p. 39). It forms the core of the middle segment in the text, which includes year dates and starts and ends with deerskin icons. It consists of very complex and populated page scenes, many obviously paired, especially the first four and the final four, all of which are in plan, viewed as from below or above (p. 29-32; 43-46).

To date the most thorough analyses of this chapter remain those of Nowotny (1961:245-255), and before him, Eduard Seler (1904-1909). Seler's study is fundamental above all because he was the first fully to appreciate the frame of the chapter as such in *Borgia*, passing daringly as it does from the obverse to the reverse of the screenfold, and to identify successfully the multitude of figures who populate its pages. He described the ritual role and calendrical function, for example, of the five female Cuateteo who dance in a circle on page 39, the first of the obverse. Alert to format, he put particular emphasis on the contrast between the page-framed ceremonies at the start and end of the chapter, thick with choreography, and the more open format of the intervening pages, over which runs a sinuous trail of footprints. The footprints might however be thought to have mesmerized him in his analysis, insofar as they suggested to him that the chapter was primarily an account of the cyclic journey through the underworld, exemplarily undertaken by the planet Venus. In all, Seler's account leaves a great deal of structure at odds or unaccounted for.

Nowotny concurs with Seler that the chapter is cyclic, and mostly agrees with his identifications of the participants in the ceremonies depicted in it. Yet he eschews what for him are Seler's astronomical and idealist excesses, and refuses to accept the Venus journey as an overall principle and, with that, the idea that the elongated boney goddess up-

permost on page 39 could be an otherwise unheard of “guardian of the entrance to the underworld”. Instead, he concentrates on the material and sociological data, seeing the whole as the elaborate ceremonies of a vanished priesthood, performed in temple precincts at the heart of a major city. On internal evidence —iconography, scale of architecture—, he opts for the Olmeca-Xicalanca cult of Quetzalcoatl which made of Cholula the Rome of its day, and the heart of ancient Mexican book culture (*cf.* Brotherston 1999). He excels at formally enumerating the boney, multi-coloured female bodies (*streifenförmig, rechteckig*) that edge and frame pages, and, despite his aversion to Selser’s astronomy, links them directly to the night sky (*Nachthimmel*) and ideas of birth and generation. He even makes a connection between the whole ceremonial cycle in *Borgia* and the year and its seasons (*‘Jahresabschnitte’*), by referring to the practice in Cholula of reserving certain buildings for use only on certain Feasts, over the course of the year.

Yet he stops short of a complete identification between the 18 pages and the 18 Feasts, emphasizing wherever he can the presence of the *tonalpoualli* as a reading and ordering principle. *Tonalpoualli* sequences are indeed present in the chapter, yet only in two subsequences which name year bearers and culminate at quarter points, in fire-drillings, the first of which he amazingly fails to notice. Beyond this, he imposes structures of his own which defy the format of the original text, dividing up integral pages and even ignoring the turn of the screenfold (*fig. 8*).

Now, with all that has been said so far in mind, the *Borgia* chapter may indeed be read, on the grounds of both iconography and structure, as a magnificent representation of the 18 Feasts, one which gives such a wealth of detail as to wed into one whole what are partial or separate strands of significance in other texts. Its extreme richness means that acknowledging this serves not so much to refute Selser and Nowotny as to incorporate and reconcile their different readings within the larger and necessary ritual frame (*fig. 9*).

At precisely the right intervals, there is clear evidence of the Feasts we identified as a template for the cycle as whole. Threads and broom, albeit rudimentary, mark Ochpaniztli (F1.9; p. 33-34); the birds, the arrow, the bag and even the nose-bone of the hunter in Quecholli (F2.3) emerge on page 36 and are carried down the left margin to page 38; falling water poured by Tlaloc at Atemoztli (F2.5) runs off the very bottom of the following page, the last of the obverse (p. 38); the conical cap is worn at Tlacaxipehualiztli (F2.9; p. 42); Tezcatlipoca and the feathered warriors of Toxcatl (F1.3) dominate page 45; and on the next and final page, the sequence culminates in the pozole pot of Etzalcualiztli (F1.4), at the summer solstice (p. 46).

*Übersicht über die Unterabschnitte von Borgia 13*

1. p. 29 Die erste rechteckige Göttin.
2. p. 30 Die zweite rechteckige Göttin.
3. p. 31o Die dritte rechteckige Göttin.
4. p. 31o Die vierte rechteckige Göttin.
5. p. 32 Einzäunung mit Steinmessern und Nachthimmel.
- p. 32 u Die erste streifenförmige Göttin.
  
- B. 6. p. 33 Schwarzer Tempel.
- p. 33u Das erste streifenförmige Cipactli
7. p. 34 Das zweite streifenförmige Cipactli
- p. 34u Das zweite streifenförmige Cipactli
8. p. 35-38 Ritual mit dem heiligen Bündel.
- p. 39o Die zweite streifenförmige Göttin
9. p. 39, 40 Herzopfer für die Sonne
- p. 41o Die dritte streifenförmige Göttin.
10. p. 41, 42 Herzopfer und Kreuzweg
- p. 43o Die vierte streifenförmige Göttin.
  
- C. 11. p. 43 Einzäunung mit Mais und Sonnenstrahlen.
- p. 44o Die fünfte streifenförmige Göttin.
12. p. 44 Einzäunung mit Blumen und Steinmessern
- p. 45o Die sechste streifenförmige Göttin.
- D. 13. p. 45 Tlauizcalpantecutli.
- p. 46o Die siebente streifenförmige Göttin.
14. p. 46 Feuerbohrung.
- P. 46u Die achte streifenförmige Göttin.

Fig. 8 Borgia Feasts chapter: structure according to Nowotny (1961:247)

| <i>Page</i> | <i>Name</i>          |            |
|-------------|----------------------|------------|
| 29-30       | Tecuilhuitl A, B     | [quincunx] |
| 31-32       | Miccailhuitl A, B    | a          |
| 33-4        | Ochpaniztli*         |            |
| 35          | Teotlico,* Pachtli B | Fig. 10    |
| 36-8        | Quecholli*           | Fig. 10    |
|             | Panquetzaliztli      | b          |
|             | Atemoztli*           | c          |
| 39          | Tititl*              | Fig. 11    |
| 40          | Izcalli              | Fig. 11    |
| 41          | Atlcahualo           |            |
| 42          | Tlacaxipehualiztli*  | d          |
| 43-44       | Tōzoztli A, B        | e          |
| 45          | Toxcatl*             | f          |
| 46          | Etzalcualiztli*      | g          |

\* 'template' Feasts'

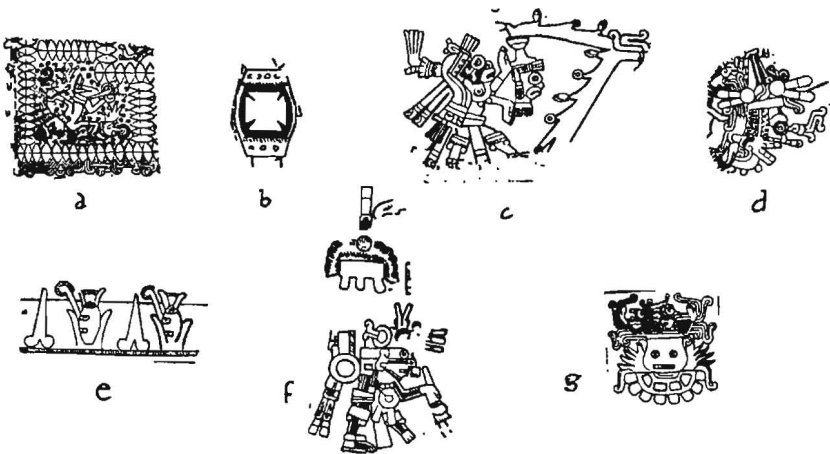


Fig. 9. The Borgia Feasts chapter: structure and iconography

Hence, the chapter opens (p. 29) at the summer solstice with the double Feasts Tecuilhuitl and Miccailhuitl (confirmed at the start as two double twenties-flags), showing the respective quincunx and flint-knife motifs that are prominent in *Rios*, and indicating by means of the inset Signs the calendrical meshing with the *tonalpoualli* that begins with Tecuilhuitl in *Tovar* 1. At the fall equinox, Ochpaniztli and the first firedrilling are identified with paired images of sun and moon (equal day and night), plus the mace-wielding man and the weaving thread woman, exactly as in *Magliabechiano* and Durán. These male-female skirmishes included a parlous night-time ascent up what is shown as a ladder in the Tepepulco Ms., whose rungs in *Borgia* are identified as levels in a roof, of male and female houses.

Immediately after, we see the footprints indicative of the gods' arrival in Teotleco (fig. 10), and here they lead down past the Quecholli bird hunters, and then the winter solstice, identified by the quatrefoil motif seen at Panquetzaliztli in *Borbonicus*. Turning from obverse to reverse, we pass from Atemoztli to Tititl, where, just as in Tepepulco, the Cihuateteo dance Ilamatecuhtli's hop, guarded to either side by three male figures. This Tititl ceremony is marked by the appearance of four Series II year bearers, recalling the measuring of the year emblemized in this Feast's glyph; moreover, just as in *Borbonicus*, the notion of year naming as such carries forward into Izcalli where year-bearer Series I to IV are correlated with the Twenty Signs. After Tlacaxipe's vernal equinox and the end of the winter half of the year, the final four pages correspond to the first summer quarter (p. 43-46), and here as in the second summer quarter (p. 29-34) the pairing principle is neat. Tozoztli includes appropriate maize-cob and penance imagery, before Toxcatl and then the second and final grand fire-drilling at the summer solstice.

This succession of matching details, Feast after Feast, is resolutely corroborated by the sheer structure of the 18-page *Borgia* chapter. For over its length, clear acknowledgement is made of both the tribute year (equinoctial halves) and the planting year (a non-planting third starting in Ochpaniztli).

As for the tribute year, the footprint road that begins in Teotleco (F2.1), immediately after the autumn equinox, in fact leads all the way through the winter half of the year, up to the spring equinox (F2.9). Although the footprint road zigzags, twice disappears under superimposed scenes (Quecholli, Izcalli), briefly mimics the feet of Ilamatecuhtli's dancers in Tititl, and divides into two at the end (Atlacahualo, Tlacaxipehualiztli), it remains clearly visible as a winter journey (Winterreise). The architecture seen at the start, ballcourt and

pit, reappears at the end, and throughout the road is coloured a characteristic blue. With its own internal patterning of halves and quarters, the ballcourt may indeed itself represent the halving and quartering of the year, specifically with respect to the setting off on the road travelled by the tribute-collecting *pochteca*: such is the case in the annals recorded on the obverse of *Vindobonensis* (the ten New Fire ceremonies) and *Nuttall* (the opening pages). By contrast, in the *Borgia* chapter, there is no trace at all of this winter road in the summer half of the year, before (Tecuilhuitl A to Ochpaniztli, F1.5-F1.9) or after it (Tozoztli A to Etzacualiztli, F1.1-F1.4), where the page format is predominantly that of enclosures seen in plan.

As for the planting division of the year, it is precisely in Tititl, with the turn to the reverse of the screenfold, that we encounter the goddess Ilamatecutli who characterises this inaugural Feast. Here (p. 39), as if she had become the elongated batten she holds, she stretches along the upper margin of the page, looking down on the earth below. She reappears in this position and then in full body form over a span of precisely 12 Feasts, Tititl to Miccailhuitl B. By the same token, she is entirely absent from the intervening 6 Feasts, Ochpaniztli to Atemoztli, defined (as we have seen) as Itztlacoliuhqui's reign of cold. In her successive appearances over the 12 planting Feasts, she displays just the details found in the attire of the Tititl goddess in other sources: double-tongued headband, boney jaw and, on her hued skirt, four-colour bands, hook hem, eyes and lattices, skull and crossbones, hearts and gold disks. In this fashion, a fertility figure looking down from and then filling the sky, fringed with stars and with clouds of night swelling from her belly, she readily fits her epithet Citlalicue, Star-skirt, and dramatically corroborates the Tepepulco model of the planting year.

The appearance of Series II year bearers, in round markers, in this same Feast reinforces the *Borbonicus* suggestion that it was once the new year, when time was previously (or originally) stretched and measured. Indeed, the process whereby the measuring and naming happens is demonstrated in the next Feast, on the model of the Tlatelolco pyramid. For here in Izcalli 32 tonalpoualli Signs run down the right margin of the page just as 32 year bearer Signs run down the left, set out in an ascending sequence that in principle reflects the Mesoamerican historical experience reconstructed by Edmonson, from the first millennium BC:

XVII VI XI XVII VI XII

XVII II VII XII XVII II

VIII XIII XVIII III VIII XIII XVIII III VIII XVIII III VIII

XVIII

XIV

XIV

After an intervening set of five Venus year bearers in Atlahualo, the egregious Sign XIV, Jaguar, appears by itself in Tlacaxipehualiztli, a lone representative of Series IV; thereafter, a conclusion is made with Series V in Tozoztli B. Like the Series II year bearers in Tititl, these are all likewise framed in round markers.

Moreover, the calendrical concern announced in Tititl is visibly projected into just the notion of eleven made explicit in the format of *Borbonicus* and the Tepepulco Ms., with respect to their year beginnings. For in the last of the 12 planting Feasts in *Borgia* (F2.6 to F1.8), the presiding Ilamatecutli-Citlalicue radically changes her appearance and function. In full body form, she loses her head and no longer gives birth; instead, colour drains from her skirt so that she acquires the fierce look of the tzitzinime who descend to devour rather than nurture. Just this terminal transformation is shown in *Magliabechiano* (f. 76), where the 11/12 proportion is made explicit on the body of the skeletal Star Skirt herself, in her final and deadly form as a *tzitzimil* monster, claws horribly enlarged, blood now the only colour in her previously rainbow skirt, and on her skull her eleven spent Feasts, shown as eleven flags (*pantli*), victims and arithmetically the twenty days of each preceding Feast. [fig. 6] Here, Ilamatecutli's double identity as Star Skirt presupposes the nocturnal aspect of the eleven, above with respect to *Magliabechiano*'s pulque drinkers.

Several further parallels can be found between this *Borgia* chapter and the Feast chapters analyzed above. The many functions of Tititl and the whole question of the yearly night sky merit separate discussion, as do such stellar related phenomena as the depictions of New Fire, at the equinox and solstice, and pulque drinking in Atlacahualo, a Feast noted for this activity in the Tepepulco Ms. The identifications made here, on the basis of both imagery and structure, effectively cover the cycle, and none requires special pleading. The *Borgia* chapter should then properly be put into the same category as its counterpart in the *Borbonicus* screenfold. More regular, *Borgia* even assigns a page per Feast, top to bottom, although Ochpaniztli (as usual) is given extra space and up to Atemoztli is followed by superimposition and vertical overlap (p. 33-38). The inner proportions of the year proper to respective activities performed during it are all there. The tribute



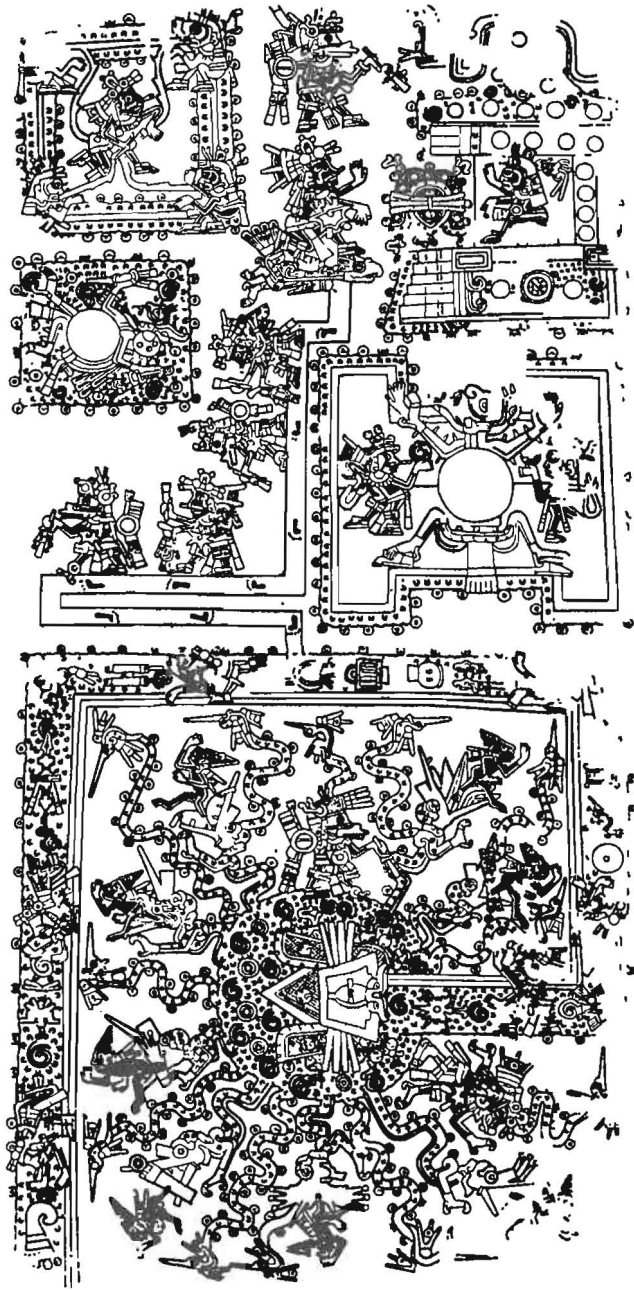


Fig. 10 Stetting off on the winter journey. Borgia p. 35-36

halves and the planting two thirds could hardly be clearer.

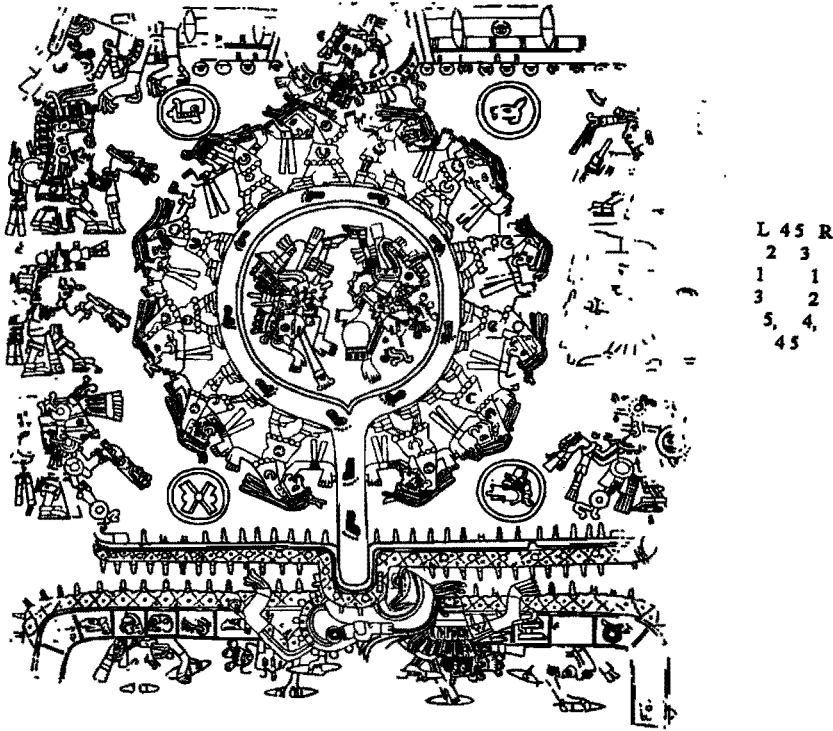
Over the length of the text as a whole, this *Borgia* Feasts chapter is ingeniously placed. Lying as it does at the heart of the middle 'deer-skin' segment of the screenfold, it details a year that falls between the two year-date sequences in that segment, the former concerned with planting, the latter with New Fire. For the Feasts begin in Tecuilhuitl, the onset of the monsoon depicted on the preceding pages in images of Tlaloc dispensing his annual rains (p. 27-28), and they end with the solstitial New Fire at Etzacualiztli, before the New Fire ceremonies repeated after its end, in tribute quarters linked to Series III year bearers (p. 49-53).

The sets of comparisons which enable us to identify the Feast cycle in *Borgia* may further serve to highlight evidence of the same cycle in other pre-Cortesian screenfolds, in chapters likewise underanalyzed by Nowotny, particularly *Féjervary* (p. 5-22) and *Laud* (p. 21-22). Too complex to reproduce here, this argument also involves the night-sky sequence, which, eleven-fold, combines with the year cycle to account for all the chapters in the ritual corpus that are not dedicated to the *tonalpoualli* (Brotherston 1995:142-145; in press).

*Tititl: a plural event*

The literal hinge of the text in *Borgia* at the junction of the screenfold obverse with the reverse, Tititl emerges on page 39 as the hinge of the year in all the senses and functions discussed above. The multiple concepts of new growth and birth embodied in this Feast are supremely articulated in the *Borgia* chapter (fig. 11).

First, Tititl means the re-birth of agriculture after the reign of Itztlacolihqui specified in the Tepepulco Ms. and presided over by Ilamatecuhtli-Citlalicue, the 'diosa de la laguna' in *Borbonicus*. In *Borgia*, this ancient female power can be seen literally exuding her beneficence on to the planted earth below, from upper to lower edge of the page, according to a concept expressed in the very name given to the first day of Ilamatecuhtli's dance: Yancuic temoa, which may translate as 'the coming down begins again' (Tepepulco f. 253). For below her, across the lower edge of the page stretches the caiman earth, its skin inset with coloured disks that recall the Tepepulco open seed holes. Of particular significance is the human head inset into that of the caiman (or vice versa), since it has distinctly Olmec characteristics, to the point of suggesting just the deity said to have carried the sun through the sky over the year (Joralemon's God I).



*Top:* Elongated body of the first of the Star-skirts, head to left, star-fringed, coloured-banded, with inset eyes Middle: Twelve women with lunar markings, forearms raised, dance to left and right of a circle; they are the fivefold skirted Cuuateteo "workers", 1 + 5 front to rear (L4+53124; R5+42135). The two leaders at the exit (lower left and right; L4, R5) are unmatched *across* the circle, while the next in line to the left (L5) wears pants not a skirt and therefore does not count; hence the eleven not twelve footprints, nine in the circle, two on the exit path. The figure opposite the odd woman out (lower L5 to upper R5) has her right hand touched by the mouth of the male who Star-skirt above and so begins to weave the web of the nine moon pregnancy period (R5-3, L3-1, R1-2, L2-4, R4); the bellies of the final trimester swell noticeably to fill the available skirt girth. Around their protective circle are four Series II year-bearers and six male officiators.

*Bottom:* The "stretched" caiman earth maw, measured and inset with unit teeth and disks; the path leads through to Izcalli, inside the body, to the systemic calendar count of incremental year-bearers (left) and days (right).

Fig. 11. Tititl, with the first Star-shirt  
(above and measured caiman earth (below). *Borgia*, p. 39

A comparison between the *Borgia* image and the head in painted in profile in the Oxtotitlan cave reveal the following common features: the typically elongated Olmec head, in its helmet-like frame; the flared eyebrow that denotes the prime 'were-Jaguar' god (God I's diagnostic); an almond eye reddened at the ear end; and the caiman mask, inset with fang and incisor teeth, which emerges disproportionately from the mouth. They even face the same way (fig. 12). This strong coincidence not only points to Olmec antecedents elsewhere manifest in this Cholula text, but again emphasizes the significance of Tititl in the year cycle.

If the caiman below Star-skirt suggests the fertility and insemination of the earth as a source of food, a further birthing can be simultaneously seen, between earth and sky, on the *Borgia* Tititl page. For as the goddess looks down from the sky, star clouds swelling from her belly, a band of female figures looks back up. These are the childbirth women or Ciuateteo, with their distinctive face-marking, the ones who perform the round dance or 'leap' of Ilamatecuhtli depicted at this Feast in the Tepepulco Ms. Indeed, here in *Borgia* the male dancers outside the circle have the same face markings and round shields as in Tepepulco, and in both cases they number six. The ceremony depicted in *Borgia* has a highly sophisticated choreography which involves plaitings or crossovers from one side of the women's dancing circle to the other—the 'leap' in question—which specify the nine moons of human gestation. In the middle, a pair of spiral shell motifs yet again echoes the childbirth theme.

Far from negating it, Citlalicue's skeletal aspect is altogether consonant, in Mesoamerican logic, with the birth of new life. After all, the Twins in the *Popol vuh* are born of Blood Woman, daughter of the skeletal lord of Xibalba. Similarly, Citlalicue's skull in *Borgia* extends into a blood-pumping heart, a life motif brilliantly deciphered by Nowotny.<sup>10</sup>

The footprints of the dancing Ciuateteo in *Borgia* then lead us through the mask of the caiman into its body, towards the great Night Lord Yoallitecuhtli, the 11th of the 13 Heroes, their eleven steps matching the eleven luminous stars inset into his black body. This is the night of the midwives, inner and outer space, so vast and ancient that it holds and contains future suns, which here as nine *tonalli* feed the nine warm

<sup>10</sup> 'Die Knochen oder Schädel sind... nichts Totes, sondern eine Art von Samenkörnern, aus denen neues Leben entsteht. Das Herz bezeichnet... die den Tod des Körpers überdauernde Lebensenergie'. Cf. López Luján 1996; Brotherston 1994. Ixquic or Blood-woman in the *Popol vuh* (Edmonson 1971) is impregnated through her right hand, by spittle from a mouth above her, a configuration also found here with one of the Ciuateteo in Tititl.

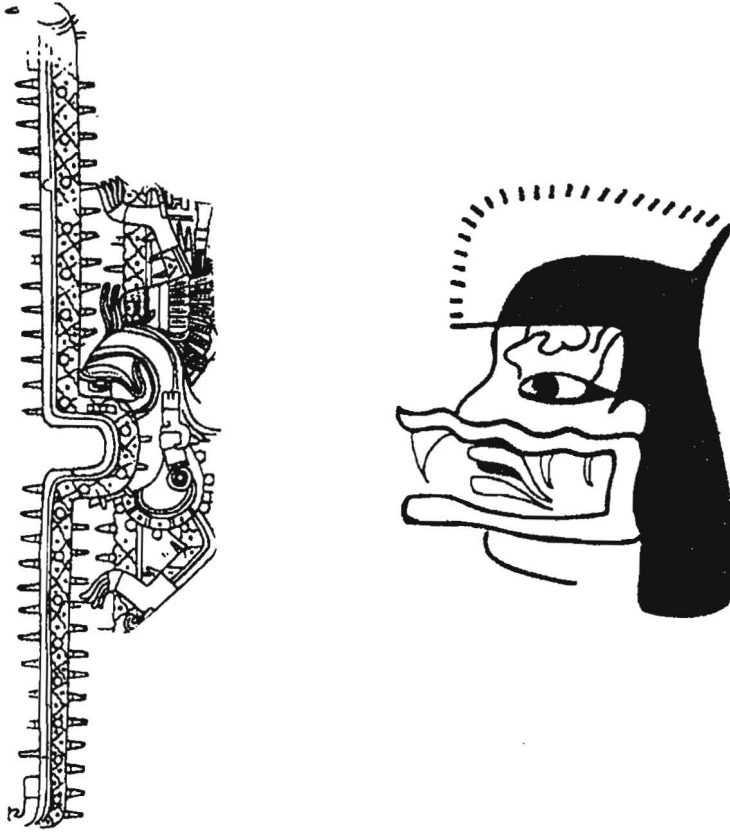


Fig. 12. Mask of caiman earth. Borgia, p. 39, and Oxtotitlan cave  
(after David Grove)

bloods of human gestation (Tedlock 1982; Furst 1986; Furst 1995). In this passage, we move across the page from Tititl to Izcalli, the Feast when the newborn are said to be "quickened".

The two Feasts, Tititl and Izcalli, are also conjoined through a yet further logic of birth, that of the New Fire ceremonies timed by the stars in Youallitecuhtli's body, which articulate the tonalamatl Signs of the days and the years inset into the caiman's body. Under Ilamatecuhtli-Citlallicue's aegis, the correlation begins beside the caiman's head in Tititl, day Signs leading incrementally down one side of the body, and year bearer Signs down the other in just the layout found in the Tlatelolco pyramid, and all in a context which reaffirms the nucleus of the *tonalamatl* as the nine moons and bloods of human gestation.<sup>11</sup>

When attention is paid primarily to the native script sources rather than the alphabetic commentaries later produced by writers who had little understanding of or sympathy with the system, then the eighteen Feasts of the Mesoamerican year shed much of their proverbial confusion, revealing a set of clear if multiple identities, and firm structures that correspond to tribute, weather and planting, and the naming of years. On this basis, it is possible to discover not just in *Borbonicus*, but in *Borgia* (and other classical screenfolds), the antecedents of the Feasts chapters copied and transcribed in the post-Cortesian codices and compendia. In the task of understanding and interpreting the Feast cycle, the body of textual reference is thereby enormously enhanced, given the dazzling imaginative wealth embedded in *Borgia*.

#### REFERENCES

- BAIRD, Ellen T. 1993. *The Drawings of Sahagun's Primeros Memoriales. Structure and Style*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- BERDAN, Frances & J. Durand-Forest. 1980. *Matrícula de tributos*. Graz: Adeva.
- BERDAN, Frances & Patricia Anawalt. 1992. *Codex Mendoza*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BIERHORST, John. 1992. *History and Mythology of the Aztecs. The Codex Chimalpopoca*. Tucson: Arizona University Press.

<sup>11</sup> The *Borgia* Tititl-Izcalli sequence echoes pages elsewhere that celebrate the 'birth' of the calendar itself, for example, *Borbonicus* p. 21-22 and the Yauhtepec Inscription, where the midwives are represented by Oxomoco and where the ciphers eleven and nine are similarly in play.

- BOONE, Elizabeth Hill. 1982. *The Codex Magliabechiano and the lost prototype of the Magliabechiano group*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BRODA, Johanna. 1983. "Ciclos agrícolas en el culto: un problema de la correlación del calendario mexicana". In A. Aveni & G. Brotherston (eds.), *Calendars in Mesoamerica and Peru*, Oxford: BAR, p. 145-165.
- , 1991. "The sacred landscape of Aztec calendar festivals". In: D. Carrasco (ed.), *To Change Place*. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, p. 74-120.
- BROTHERSTON, Gordon. 1992. *Book of the Fourth World*. Cambridge University Press.
- , 1994. 'Huesos de muerte, huesos de vida: la compleja figura de Mictlantecutli', *Cuiculco* (Mexico), no. 1 (August 1994), vol. 1 (nueva época), 85-98.
- , 1995. *Painted Books from Mexico*. London: British Museum Press.
- , 1999. "Reading ancient landscapes in and through the codices", *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Literatures* 13:87-95.
- , In press. *Models of the Year in Mesoamerican Texts*. London: British Museum Occasional Paper.
- DOESBURG, Geert Bastian van & Florencio Carrera González. 1996. *Códice Ixtlilxóchitl*. Graz: Adeva/Mexico: FCE.
- EDMONSON, Munro. 1971. *The Book of Counsel*. New Orleans: Tulane University Press.
- , 1988. *The Book of the Year*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- FURST, Jill. 1995. *A Natural History of the Soul in Ancient Mexico*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- FURST, Peter. 1986. 'Human biology and the Origin of the 260-day sacred almanac: The contribution of Leonard Schultze Jena (1894-1955)'. In G. Gossen, 1986, *Symbol and Meaning beyond the closed Community*. Albany: SUNY, 1986:69-76.
- GLASS, John B. 1975. "A Census of Native Middle American Pictorial Manuscripts", *Handbook of Middle American Indians*. Austin: University of Texas Press, vol. 14:81-250.
- HASSIG, Ross. 2001. *Time, History and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- KUBLER, George & Charles Gibson. 1951. *The Tovar Calendar. Reproduced with a commentary and handlist of sources on the Mexican 365-day year*. New

- Haven: Yale University Press. *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* volume XI.
- LAFAYE, Jacques. 1972. *Manuscrit Tovar*. Graz: Adeva.
- LEÓN-PORTILLA, Miguel. 1985. *El tonalamatl de los pochteca [Codex Féjerváry]*. Mexico: Celanese.
- LÓPEZ LUJÁN, Leonardo & Vida Mercado, "Dos esculturas de Mictlantecuhtli", *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, 1996, 26: 41-58.
- MILBRATH, Susan. 1989: "A seasonal calendar with Venus periods in Codex Borgia". In D. Carrasco (ed.), *The Imagination of Matter; Religion and Ecology in Mesoamerican Traditions*. Oxford: BAR, p. 103-127.
- NOWOTNY, Karl Anton. 1961. *Tlacuilolli. Die mexikanischen Bilderhandschriften, Stil und Inhalt. Mit einem Katalog der Codex-Borgia Gruppe* Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann.
- OETTINGER, Marion & Fernando Horcasitas. 1982. *The Lienzo of Petlacala*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.
- QUÍÑONES KEBER, Eloise. 1995. *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- REYES GARCÍA, Luis. 1992. *El libro del cihuacoatl [Borbonicus]*. Mexico: FCE.
- RIESE, Berthold Christoph. 1986. *Ethnographische Dokumente aus Neuspanien im Umfeld der Codex Magliabechi-Gruppe*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- SCHULTZE JENA, Leonard. 1950. *Wahrsagerei, Himmelskunde und Kalender der alten Azteken*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- SELER, Eduard. 1904-1909. *Codex Borgia*. Berlin. 3 v.
- TEDLOCK, Barbara. 1982. *Time and the Highland Maya*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- TEÑA, Rafael. 2000. "Representaciones de los Nemontemi en los códices". In Constanza Vega (ed.), *Códices y documentos sobre México: Tercer Simposio Internacional*, Mexico: INAH, 427-438.
- VEGA, Constanza. 1991. *Códice Azoyu [Tlapa]*. Mexico: FCE.