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RENAMING THE MEXICAN CODICES

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Abstract

The names of many pictorial manuscripts from ancient Mesoamerica honor collectors, politicians, scholars, or institutions of the "Western" world or the national elite, alien to the people who created them and the region to which they refer. Different usages in designating these codices and lienzos have introduced some confusion in the nomenclature. Here, a new set of names is proposed that is more in conformity with the contents of the documents and closer to the Mesoamerican culture.

Many aspects of the Native American world are now formulated and discussed in terms of a national or international metalanguage (Spanish or English). This practice has an alienating effect. The geography of the conquered continent was rechristened with designations such as New Spain, New Amsterdam, or New York, as well as Mérida, California, or Venezuela. Christian patron saints and republican heroes (such as Washington, Bolivia, Hidalgo, and Morelos) dominate the landscape. Similarly, terms such as "ethnic minorities" or "groups" in "refuge areas" are used to characterize the Native American peoples without taking into account their own perspective. Their faith, with its ancient holy accounts, first to resort to the use of code names to refer to unknown minorities or institutions of the "Western" world or the national elite, far removed from the region from which they originated and to which they refer. Is it not strange that the major religious book of ancient Mesoamerica is known as the Codex Borgia? How would the present-day inhabitants of Ñuu Dzaui suspect that the history of the kings and queens who once ruled their towns is registered in books called Codex Bodley or Codex Vindobonensis? Who would think that the dramatic story of the life of a major figure in that history, Iya Nacua ‘Teyusi Naña’ (Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’), is told in a manuscript called Codex Colombino-Becker? The proposal of the Mexican scholar Miguel León-Portilla (1996) to change the name of this last document to Codex Alfonso Caso in honor of its main interpreter is hardly a step forward.

It is time to start using adequate names for these important manuscripts. One might argue that the currently used designations are well established in the scholarly literature and that changing them would bring about confusion, but confusion already exists. First, several manuscripts have more than one name in the literature (e.g., Sánchez Solís/Egerton) or are known by quite different references in the library or museum where they are kept. Moreover, some authors have begun to replace the traditional names with others. Ross Parmenter (1982), for example, successfully renamed the Lienzo Antonio de León the Lienzo de Tlapiltepec. This change is quite justified, as it was based on Parmenter’s identification of the document’s place of origin. Other alternatives have found less support. Indeed, it is doubtful that Tonalamait de

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1 The census of pictorial documents by John Glass and Donald Robertson (1975) contains codicological data and brief notes about the history of the documents. Our research, which has concentrated on the pre-Colonial religious and historical manuscripts, was supported by Leiden University (Faculty of Archaeology and Center of Non-Western Studies Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies) and received additional grants from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).
los Pochtecas (León-Portilla 1985) is an adequate characterization of the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer, while names such as “Tepexic Annals” for the Codex Vindobonensis and “Coixtlahuaca Map” for the Fonds Mexicanain 20 Manuscript (Brotherston 1995) are based on unconvincing speculations regarding their contents.

As a complex nomenclature is irritating, many scholars oppose the changing of names altogether. But let us not prefer intellectual laziness to the quest for a correct conceptualization. Here a new set of designations is proposed for a number of important screenfold books based on efforts to interpret this unique literary heritage in terms of the civilization that produced them. The new names can be derived from the community of origin, the subject matter, or specific personages associated with the document. Obviously, whenever possible, it is preferable to use terms in the relevant Native American language.

**ÑEE ŃUHU: THE CODECES OF ÑUU DZAUI
[THE VINDOBONENSIS GROUP]**

The Mixtec people are referred to this way because of the name the Mexicans gave them: Mixtecá means “Inhabitants of the Land of the Clouds” in Nahua. They call themselves Ñuu Saviu, Ñuu Dau, or Ñuu Dzau, according to dialectical variability. The term means “People of the Rain” and appears as Ñuu Dzau or Ñuu Dzahui in the Colonial documents; we write it as Ñuu Dzau. The same name is given to the land they inhabit, now generally known as La Mixteca. Its central mountainous area is located in the sovereign state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico and known as the Mixteca Alta, but to the original inhabitants it was Ñuu Dzau Ñuhu, “Ñuu Dzau of the Gods.” The most important city-state—or, rather, yuwatayu, “mat and throne”—in the history of this region is Santiago Tilantongo. The combined Spanish–Christian and Nahua name of this village overshadows its original toponym: Ñuu Tnoo, “Black Town.” An important dictionary of Dzahau Dzaui, the Mixtec language, was published by the Dominican friar Francisco de Alvarado in 1593 (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2003). He registered the native term for a pictorial manuscript or codex née ñuhu, “sacred (deer)skin.” An important corpus of such pictorial chronicles has survived.

• The Codex Bodley is preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, as MS. Mex. d. 1. The Mexican scholar Alfonso Caso published it as Codex Bodley 2858, in reference to the first known European owner of the manuscript, Sir Thomas Bodley (1545–1613), adding the number from the library catalogue. With its 40 painted pages, the manuscript is a crucial source for the history of Nuu Dzau Nuuh (the Mixteca Alta), as a compendium of its major dynasties, with abundant dates.2 The obverse side tells the genealogical history of the dynasty of Nuu Tnoo (Tilantongo). The reverse deals with another dynastic line, ending with the ruling family of Ndisi Nuu (Tlaxiaco). The last ruler mentioned on the obverse is Iya Qchuaa ‘Yaha Ndisi Nuu’ (Lord 4 Deer ‘Eagle of Clear Sight’ or ‘Eagle of Tlaxiaco’), who reigned in Nuu Tnoo at the time of the Spanish invasion. The last pre-Hispanic ruler on the reverse is Iya Nacsua ‘Dzauv Nidcaniidi’ (Lord 8 Grass ‘Rain Sun’), who appears as Malinaltzin of Tlaxiaco” in central Mexican sources; he is famous because of his resistance to the expanding Mexica empire and his tragic end on the sacrificial stone of the Templo Mayor of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. The Nuu Tnoo ruler Iya Qchuaa ‘Yaha Ndisi Nuu’ must have been the person who ordered the painting of this manuscript and was its first owner. Thus, we might call this document after his calendar name in Dzaha Dzau: Codex Iya Qchuaa. However, because the book is not about this ruler alone but about two noble houses—namely, those of Nuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) and Ndisi Nuu (Tlaxiaco)—it seems more appropriate to call it Codex Nuu Tnoo–Ndisi Nuu, or, if one prefers, the toponyms as they are locally pronounced today, Ñuu Tnoo and Ndijin Nuu.

• The Codex Selden is also preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and has become known as Ms. Arch. Selden A.2 or Codex Selden 3135. This name is equally derived from its first known European owner, the English scholar John Selden (1584–1654).3 The manuscript was painted around 1560 in a completely pre-Colonial style and deals with the history of that dynasty that ruled Añute—that is, Magdalena Jaltepec, in the Valley of Atoco (Nochixtlán), in Nuu Dzau Nuuh, the Mixteca Alta.4 Using the criterion of first ownership, we could name the codex after the last ruler portrayed in the manuscript, Iya Siquaua (Lord 10 Grass), but as the manuscript actually is not about him but contains the whole dynastic history of its community, we prefer the designation Codex Añute.

• The Codex Vindobonensis had already reached Europe by 1521, which implies that it was handed over to the conquistadors at an early date. After an eventful history, it finally landed in what is now the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. Like many other manuscripts in that collection, it is named for the Latin name of Vienna, Vindobona. Locally, of course, it is known as Codex Mexicanus.1

Originally, the manuscript must have belonged to the ruler or high priest of Nuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) on the eve of the Spanish invasion. The reverse side contains an incomplete and hastily drawn genealogy of the Nuu Tnoo ruling family, similar to that on the obverse side of Codex Nuu Tnoo–Ndisi Nuu (Bodley). The obverse deals with the sacred account of the creation, starting with the First Primordial Couple in the ‘Place Where the Heaven Was’—that is, in a ceremonial center on top of the Kaua Kaandiu near the town of Yuta Tnoho (Santiago Apoala) in Nuu Dzau Nuuh (the Mixteca Alta). It further tells how the founders of different dynasties were born from Iyadzehe Yutnu Nuuh, the Great Mother Pochote Tree, in the Sacred Valley of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala). Because of the main theme on the obverse, we prefer to call this manuscript Codex Yuta Tnoho (locally pronounced Yutsa Tohon).

One might wish to use a special designation for the reverse side, as this is clearly a different document, created by another painter. In an earlier publication (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2000) we referred to the reverse as Codex Nuu Tnoo, but since then we have changed our opinion. Actually, the well-known place sign of Ñuu Tnoo, the Black Frieze, is not present on the reverse. Instead, we find several references to its ceremonial center, the Huahí Andehui, “Temple of Heaven.” To avoid confusion with the other, more important manuscript from Nuu Tnoo, the so-called Codex Bodley, we could call it Codex Huahí Andehui. However, it is preferable to keep one name for the whole document (Codex Yuta Tnoho) and distinguish the two sides as “reverse” and “obverse.”

• The Codex Zouche-Nuttall (British Museum, London) is named for the nineteenth-century English collector Robert Curzon, Lord Zouche (1810–1873), who bought and owned the manuscript, and the investigator Zelia Nuttall, who in 1902 published a first facsimile reproduction with a commentary. It is a complex document, painted on both sides. The so-

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2 Facsimile edition with commentary: Caso 1960. At present, the Bodleian Library is preparing a photographic reproduction with an introduction by Jansen and Pérez Jiménez.

3 Another document in the same collection is the Selden Roll (Burland and Kutchser 1955), which probably comes from a town in the Valley of Coixtlahuaca, the heartland of the Ngiiga people (often referred to as Chocho). Its subject matter is the foundation of a kingdom: priests, as sacred symbols of power from heaven and from a cave, make a fire on a huge central mountain, surrounded by signs for the four directions. We therefore propose to call it the Roll of the New Fire, or Rollo del Fuego Nuevo in Spanish.


called reverse (which actually was the first side painted) is an unfinished biography of the great king of Nuu Dzau, Iya Nacuua ‘Teyusi Nahu’ (‘Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’), who, according to the latest calculations, lived from 1063 to 1115. After the project of painting his life story was abandoned, the so-called obverse side was used as a notebook to copy segments of different dynastic histories, with special attention to the city-states of Chiyoh Cahu (Tezcuacualco) and Zaachila.8 Because of its composite character we call this pictorial manuscript Codex Tonindéy after the Dzahu Dzau term for “lineage history.”

- The Codex Colombino-Becker consists of two fragments. The first is preserved in the codex collection of the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City and was published as Códice Colombino by the Junta Colombina in 1892 to celebrate the fourth centennial of Columbus’s voyage. The second fragment, Codex Becker I, now in the Museum für Volkerkunde in Vienna, was named for a German collector who bought it in Mexico in the late nineteenth century and brought it to Europe. The rest of the original manuscript is now lost. Research suggests that it was painted (obviously following an older document) on orders of the king of Yucu Dzau (Tututepec) close to the Pacific Coast, shortly before the Spanish invasion. It tells the life story of the famous warrior and king Iya Nacuua ‘Teyusi Nahu’ (‘Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’). We therefore call it Codex Iya Nacuua after the calendar name of this protagonist in Dzahu Dzau. The two fragments that have survived will we call Codex Iya Nacuua I (Colombino) and Codex Iya Nacuua II (Becker I). The first remained in Yucu Dzau at least until the eighteenth century and was heavily annotated with the names of the boundaries of the cacicazgo in alphabetic script. The second was for some time in the possession of a cacique family in Santa María Tindú in the Mixteca Baja before it was transferred in 1852 to the lawyer Pascal Almazán in Puebla as documentation for a lawsuit.

- The Codex Muro is named for Felix Muro, a twentieth-century collector of antiquities in Oaxaca who once owned the manuscript. At present it is in the codex collection of the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. It contains a genealogical list of ruling couples of a small city-state, with a short reading of the scenes in Dzahu Dzau.9 The glosses identify the city-state in question as Nuu Nahu—that is, San Pedro Cántaros in the Mixteca Alta. The pictorial representation of the main town—Mountain of Head (dzque) with Open Mouth (a)—actually may represent San Pedro Cántaros’s neighbor San Miguel Adeques (A-dzeque), as argued by Mary Elizabeth Smith (2000). This could mean that the city-state originally had a double capital. We will refer to it using the name of its community of origin as registered in the document itself: Codex Nuu Nahu.

- The Codex Sánchez Solís or Codex Egerton 2895 (British Museum, London) is named for a century or collectors. It contains the dynasty of a town in the Mixteca Baja, represented as Temple of the Jaguar, most probably Nuu Nahu (Cuyotepej).9 We therefore call it Codex Nuu Nahu.

- The Codex Becker II, now in the Museum für Volkerkunde in Vienna, is reported to have come from a village near Huaextongo or Choluata, but it actually contains a lineage history from an unidentified town in the Mixteca Baja. Like the Codex Becker I (the Tindu fragment of Codex Iya Nacuua), it was named for the German collector Philip J. Becker. We propose to name it Codex Cohi after the last depicted ruler Iya Cohi ‘Cuihe Sahmi Nuu’ (‘Lord 3 Wind ‘Jaguar That Burned the Mexicans’). The beginning of this document, known as the Nochitlán Fragment, is now in the Museum für Volkerkunde in Hamburg.10 Nochitlán is the place where it was bought. Referring to this particular (section of the)

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10 It is reproduced and interpreted in Smith 1973. See also Jansen 1994.
most information on Mesoamerican religion was documented in that language. Although it is by no means certain that these manuscripts were painted by speakers of Nahuatl, they probably are part of the Toltec tradition.

- The Codex Vaticanus 3773 or Codex Vaticanus B (Apostolic Library, Vatican City) is known as the “pocket” manual of a day-keeper. It is simply named for the library where it is kept. A more appropriate name, then, is “Book of the Diviner,” or Codex Tonalpouhqui.
- The Codex Cospi (University Library, Bologna) was named for the Italian aristocrat Ferdinando Cospi (1606–1686) who received it in 1665 as a Christmas present from Valerio Zani and included it in his private museum in Bologna. After a standard presentation of the count of 260 days, with their Lords and Ladies of the Nights, the next chapter deals with the “attacks” of the spear-wielding Venus god (Tlalocuilontecuhtli)—that is, the possible negative consequences of the newly rising Venus for different segments of society. These scenes are followed by a chapter that indicates offerings to be made to the four directions. The reverse side of the codex is devoted again to a series of deities threatening to throw their darts, accompanied by altar tables with offerings of counted bundles of leaves, fir needles, or similar materials to invoke their powers and secure protection. Its main theme is similar to that of the Nahutl (Otomi) or Nahua rituals, with cut-paper figures for protection against “attacks” of spirits (armed with machetes) causing misfortune or disease. We propose the designation “Book of Offerings” or, using the Nahua word for “offering,” Codex Tlamanalli.
- The Codex Fejérváry-Mayer (Free Public Museum, Liverpool) combines the names of two European owners: the Hungarian collector Gabriel Fejérváry (1803–1886) and the English antiquarian Joseph Mayer (1780–1851). The manuscript itself gives prominence on its first and last page to the deity of the Smoking Mirror as lord of the days and night, and a Temple of Darkness. Particularly impressive is the representation of the cult of the Sacred Bundle and the visionary experiences of priests. In religious ecstasy, humans take the form of “vision serpents” with bodies of darkness and masks of the Wind God. This refers to the metaphor expression yoalli ehecatl, “night and wind” in Nahuatl, which is used to characterize the mysterious condition of the gods. In view of this conceptualization, it seems proper to rename this magnificent work “Book of Night and Wind,” or Codex Yoalli Ehecatl.
- The Codex Laud (Misc. 678, Bodleian Library, Oxford) proceeds from the collection of English Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645), who obtained it in 1636. Its first chapter refers to special influences of the death deities, a reason to call it the “Book of Death,” or Codex Mixtlan.
- The Codex Porfirio Díaz (Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City) received its name to please the Mexican president of that name during the fourth centennial of Columbus’s voyage in 1892. It has been established that the manuscript comes from Yaxtahua, which translates in Nahuatl as “Tututepetongo” and today is San Francisco Tutetepotango in the Cuicatec Cañada (state of Oaxaca). It combines a historical account of that city-state with a chapter that forms part of the Borgia Group. After its place of origin, we call it the Codex of Tututepotong, or, using the original Cuicatec toponym, Codex Yaxtahua.
- The Manuscript Fonds Mexicain 20 (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris) is a single painting on deerskin (a copy of which is preserved as Manuscript 21). Divine pairs (“Father and Mother”) are situated in the landscapes of the four directions and the center, as is common in the codices of Nuu Dzau. The scenes are connected with each other through a chevron war band, called yecu in Drahu Dzau. As this is the central element in the representation, we propose to rename the document Codex Yecu.

Our proposals aim to start a discussion among Native Americans interested in their own history and among scholars in general to find a more appropriate, post-Colonial idiom. There is, of course, an arbitrary element in this renaming process. Deities such as Tezcatlipoca and Cihuacoatl are not limited to the manuscripts of Nuu Dzau. The scenes are connected with each other through a chevron war band, called yecu in Drahu Dzau. As this is the central element in the representation, we propose to rename the document Codex Chihuacoatl.

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18 Color reproduction with commentary: Jansen 1998.

RESUMEN

Los nombres de muchos manuscritos pictóricos de la antigua Mesoamérica honran coleccionistas, políticos, o instituciones del mundo “occidental” o de la élite nacional, y son ajenos al pueblo que los creó y a la región a que refieren. Además los usos diferentes en designar estos códices y lienzos ya han introducido una confusión en la nomenclatura. Aquí proponemos una nueva serie de nombres, más en conformidad con los contenidos de los documentos y más cercanos a la cultura mesoamericana. Los pieles sagradas (fée yahu) de Nuu Dzau (La Mixteca) son los códices Nuu Tao—Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), Añute (Selden), Yuta Taoho (Vindobonensis), Tonindeye (Zouche-Nuttall), Iyu Nacua (Colombino-Becker/Caso), Nuu
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