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Jansen, M.E.R.G.N.; van Broekhoven, L.N.K.; Valencia Rivera, R.; Vis, B.; Sachse, F.

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The Historical Profile of Kukulcan

Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

Introduction

In the liminal zone between the Classic and the Postclassic we encounter a Toltec ruler of legendary proportions, called Kukulcan (K'uk'ulkan) by the Yucatec Maya and Quetzalcoatl by the Mexica. Both names mean "Plumed Serpent". According to the early colonial chronicles he traveled from Central Mexico to the Maya world, where he played a major role in Chichen Itza. The scholarly literature refers to him as the "historical Quetzalcoatl" to distinguish him from the Mexica wind deity Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl. One of the problems in interpreting this personage is precisely that a partial osmosis of human historical agency and the attributes and workings of the deity may have taken place.

In addition, the historical Quetzalcoatl appears under several Nahuatl names: Topiltzin, "Our Noble Prince", Ce Acatl, "1 Reed", and Nacxiti, "4 Foot" (a calendrical name from an epiclassic system, as used in Xochicalco). The overall suggestion of the sources is that these all refer to the same personage, but we should keep in mind that the exploits of different characters may have merged in the accounts. The Central Mexican chronological references to his life-time are very confused and entangled.¹ With much reason, recent studies have stressed the mythical character and religious symbolism of this figure.²

Let me say from the beginning that I too see a strong religious and literary (epic, dramatic) dimension in this narrative (cf. Jansen 1997). It is illustrative that the early colonial Spanish sources already compare the protagonist to King Arthur. On the other hand, the sources also give explicit geographical and historical references, which suggest some degree of realism underlying the literary product.

Here I will focus on that latter aspect and summarize the data from an intermediate

region between Maya and Mexica, namely those contained in the *Ñuu Dzau* (Mixtec) codices, which so far have received little attention but may be highly pertinent to this question.³

The narrative

The unified image arising from the sources may be summarized as follows (see Graulich 1988 and Nicholson 2001 for a detailed discussion). Quetzalcoatl had been a high priest and ruler in Tollan Xicocotitlan (Tula, Hidalgo). In an atmosphere of magic and conflict, he had left that capital and then established himself as a ruler in Tollan Cholollan (Cholula, Puebla). In Tula itself he seems to have been succeeded by Huemac, who was symbolically identified with the deity Tezcatlipoca, described as an opponent of both the historical and the divine Quetzalcoatl.

From Cholula, Quetzalcoatl undertook a long journey to lands far away in the East, beyond Xicalango and the Laguna de Términos, where he crossed the waters and entered into Maya country.

'In this year [Ce Acatl, i.e. 1 Reed], Topiltzin Acxiti Quetzalcohuatl marched away. This meant the definitive downfall of the city of Tollan; in this year of 1 Reed he marched and went to the great and heavenly waters of the sea, toward the East' (Chimalpahin 1998, I: 80-81)

It has since long been observed that this element coincides with the information given by Fray Diego de Landa about a personage called Kukulcan, which is just a Maya translation of Quetzalcoatl:

'It is believed among the Indians that with the Itzas who occupied Chichen Itza, there reigned a great lord, named Kukulcan and that the principal

building, which is called Kukulcan, shows this to be true. They say that he arrived from the West; but they differ among themselves as to whether he arrived before or after the Itzas or with them. They say that he was favorably disposed, and had no wife or children, and that after his return he was regarded in Mexico as one of their gods and called Quetzalcoatl; and they also considered him a god in Yucatan on account of his being a just statesman; and this is seen in the order which he imposed on Yucatan...’ (Tozzer 1941: 20-23)

This great Lord Kukulcan is credited with having founded the city of Mayapan; he lived for a number of years in Yucatan and then went back to his capital in Central Mexico:

‘This Kukulcan lived with the lords in that city [Mayapan] for several years; and leaving them in great peace and friendship, he returned by the same way to Mexico, and on the way he stopped at Champoton and, in memory of him and of his departure, he erected a fine building in the sea, like that of Chichen Itza, a long stone’s throw from the shore.’ (Tozzer 1941: 26).

At least one Central Mexican version states that the historical Quetzalcoatl arrived in Cholula, coming from Yucatan, that he ruled this capital for twenty years afterwards, and then went back to the area he had come from.⁴ The sources agree that at the end of his life Quetzalcoatl died on a journey between Central Mexico and the Maya region, in the country known as Tlapallan (“Place of Colors”).

It is logical to assume that the historians of Tula (Xicocotitlan) saw the departure of the priest-king Quetzalcoatl from their hometown to Cholula as a traumatic event: in retrospect it was the beginning of the end of Tula’s dominant position and of Toltec civilization in general. Passing over Quetzalcoatl’s rule in Cholula, they seem to have blended several successive events into one, creating the portentous story of a pious ruler who left his capital and ultimately went to the Gulf Coast to die there. The lamentation that the priest-king was seduced by war-demons suggests to us that Quetzalcoatl in the process of moving to Cholula shifted from a mainly ceremonial office as a priest (or theocratic ruler) into the

function of a warlord and a more secular ruler (empire builder).⁵

Furthermore, the dramatic final journey of Quetzalcoatl to the Eastern Gulf Coast, was equated to and merged with the journey of the Creator-God Quetzalcoatl, who, in his travels, gave names to places and founded kingdoms. Codex Yuta Tnoho (p. 47) tells us about the Mixtec equivalent: the Culture Hero Lord 9 Wind in the Mixtec distributing the waters of heaven to the different towns of Ñuu Dzaui, the Mixtec region.

Symbolic aspects

Clearly, Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan as the Plumed Serpent is a highly symbolic and complex character. His name is a metaphor for the whirlwind, a great creative power, the bringer of rain (life). As such, he is also a potent nahual, i.e. a being in nature, into which powerful rulers and shamans could transform themselves. From here, he became a central symbol of visionary power, an emblem of royalty and civilization.

Thus, Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan is generally credited with providing legitimacy to the (Postclassic) dynasties. The Mexica priests addressed a new ruler during the enthronement ritual with a reference to this personage as the ultimate source of power.

‘From now on, Lord, you remain seated on the throne that was installed by Ce Acatl Nacxitl Quetzalcoatl... In his name came Huitzilopochtli and sat down on this same throne, and in his name came the one that was the first king, Acamapichtli,... Behold, it is not your throne, nor your seat, but it is theirs, it is only lent to you and it will be returned to its true owner...’ (Tezozomoc 1975: 439).

The Popol Vuh tells us that the first K’iche’ rulers in their quest for legitimacy received the insignia of kingship from him:

‘And then they came before the lord named Nacxit, the great lord and sole judge over a populous domain. And he was the one who gave out the signs of lordship, all the emblems; the signs of the Keeper of the Mat and the Keeper of the Reception House Mat were set forth... Nacxit gave a complete set of the emblems of lordship... They

brought all of these when they came away. From across the sea, they brought back the writings about Tulan.” (Tedlock 1985: 203-204).⁶

In their admirable paper, Sachse and Christenson (2005), incorporating suggestions by Van Akkeren (2000) and others, have analyzed the metaphors present in texts such as this, and shown the symbolic character of many constituent elements of this story. Tula as a place on the other side of the sea, they argue, may be understood as a reference to the locale of creation in the watery underworld. Indeed, important Mesoamerican toponyms have often such sacred and metaphorical connotations, but, at the same time, may refer to specific places in real geography. The “Place of Heaven” in the Ñuu Dzaui account of creation, published by friar Gregorio García in 1607, is such an example: it is both a sacred locale, from where power is derived, and a specific place: the archaeological site of the Rock of Heaven (Kaua Kaandiui) to the East of the town of Yuta Tnoho (Apoala) in the Mixteca Alta (Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1992a).

In fact, it is diagnostic for the ancient Mesoamerican rhetorical tradition to describe important events in religiously charged terms (cosmological associations and metaphors), in order to integrate human agency into sacred history. In this world of epic story-telling it is the value-system, the morality and social-religious ethos, that counts, much more than the analytical presentation of “what really happened” with its causes and effects (cf. the classic study of the psychodynamics of orality by Ong 1988).

The fascinating aspect of the Kukulcan / Quetzalcoatl narrative is its combination of a rich symbolic texture with precise geographical and historical data, against the background of an archaeological reality of contacts between the Toltec realm and the Maya world. This makes it all the more worthwhile to try to figure out where legend meets history.

The historical Quetzalcoatl in Oaxaca

Focusing on the geographical referents in the Quetzalcoatl narrative, we find an internal logic: an overall movement from West (Tula, Cholula) to East (Yucatan, Guatemala).

Naturally, this had to involve the southern part of Mesoamerica (Oaxaca). In fact, the historical Quetzalcoatl is reported to have had his influence in the Mixtec and Zapotec regions:

‘[Quetzalcoatl] left Tula very annoyed and came to Cholula, where he lived many years with his people, several of which he sent from there to the provinces of Oaxaca, to populate it, and to the whole Mixteca Baja and Alta and to the Zapotec regions. And those people, they say, made those big and luxurious roman buildings in Mitla ...’ (Torquemada, book III: ch. 7; cf. Acuña 1984-85, I: 129).

It should come as no surprise, then, that we can identify references to the same epic cycle of Kukulcan / Quetzalcoatl in several pictorial manuscripts from Southern Mexico. Already some time ago (1996), I proposed that this important personage may be identified in the Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec) codices Tonindefe (Nuttall), Iya Nacuaa (Colombino-Becker) and Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nu (Bodley). Here he appears as the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar, who plays a prominent role in the biography of Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’.⁷

Earlier efforts to link the Mixtec and Toltec histories – such as the contribution by Chadwick (1971) to the Handbook of Middle American Indians – suffered from a high degree of speculation and therefore were rapidly disqualified. A central flaw in those theories was that they regarded certain Ñuu Dzaui rulers and chronological indications from the Ñuu Dzaui codices as identical with personages and dates of Toltec history, without taking into account the quite different character of both sources and contexts. Since then, a general feeling that such an enterprise was doomed to fail has dominated the field. This explains the scornful disbelief expressed by H.B. Nicholson and some others about possible references to the famous Toltec ruler in the Mixtec pictorials. John Pohl, for example, remarks in his Texas notebooks:

‘Jansen is now projecting Mixtec codical history onto the broader landscape of ancient Mesoamerica, a specious preposition comparable to theories advocated decades ago by David Kelley and Robert Chadwick, with the Eight Deer saga being played out from Tula to Chichen Itza ...’

This is a good illustration of how these colleagues have jumped to criticize the idea a priori by identifying it (wrongly) with those earlier discredited theories, but without taking notice of its precise purport and without reviewing the argument itself. One of the crucial differences between my study of Lord 4 Jaguar and those earlier theories is precisely that this unique person in the Ñuu Dzauí codices has long been recognized (by Alfonso Caso, Mary Elizabeth Smith, Nancy Troike and others) as a Toltec, giving us all the reason to investigate whether he can be connected to anything known from Toltec history. I will recapitulate briefly the reasons and fundamentals for the proposed identification, focusing on the diagnostic characteristics of our hero.⁸

Identifier 1: "The Toltec ruler of Cholula,..."

The Ñuu Dzauí codices identify Lord 4 Jaguar, the ally of Lord 8 Deer, as a Toltec (or rather a Toltec-Chichimec) by applying a black or red painting around his eye, which in Dzaha Dzauí, the Mixtec language, reads *tay sahmi nuu*, "man with the burned eye". i.e. a "Mexican" or rather a speaker of Nahuatl (Smith 1973: 203). In addition, Lord 4 Jaguar is shown as seated on, i.e. as ruler of, Town of the Tule Reeds (Cattail Frieze).⁹ This place sign is read: Ñuu Cohyo in Dzaha Dzauí. Today, this is the Mixtec name of Mexico City, but it is obvious that this toponym originally referred to a Toltec capital.

What was the location of this Town of Tule Reeds where Lord 4 Jaguar ruled and came from? The problem is, of course, that more than one place name in Mesoamerica contains the element 'tule'. Contextual evidence from the Ñuu Dzauí codices, however, clarifies the geographical position of this particular town.

The Town of the Tule Reeds was situated in a large valley, separated from Ñuu Dzauí, the Mixtec region, by a snow-topped volcano.¹⁰ This is diagnostic of Cholula, where one arrives from Ñuu Dzauí, passing either the Matlalcueye (Malinche) or the Popocatepetl. Another instance shows that one had to pass a River of the Hummingbird.¹¹ This would be the Huitzilapan, which gave its name to Puebla (Yuta Ndeyoho, "River of the Hummingbird").

The Town of Tule Reeds is portrayed as a Toltec capital of great political and ritual importance. The alliance with its ruler had a decisive impact on the political career of Lord 8 Deer. This fits well the profile of Cholula,

which was a prominent capital in the early Postclassic period. This city's Dzaha Dzauí name, registered by Fray Antonio de los Reyes, is Ñuu Ndiyo, "Town of the Staircase", which seems to correspond to one of its Nahuatl names, Temamatlac. In Nahuatl sources, however, Cholula was also known as Tollan Cholollan; it is represented as a Place of Tule Reeds in the *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* and in its own *Relación Geográfica*. It was a major religious and political center, its main temple being dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. Early colonial authors compared it to Rome and Mecca.¹²

As symbol of the alliance between them, Lord 4 Jaguar had Lord 8 Deer pass through a nose-piercing ceremony, bestowing on him a turquoise nose-ornament.¹³ More than twenty years later, he granted the same favor to Lord 4 Wind, the assassin and successor of Lord 8 Deer. This ritual has been documented precisely (and uniquely) for Cholula, where princes from all over Mesoamerica came to be confirmed in their royal dignity by such an ear- or nose-piercing ceremony.¹⁴

In other words, the image provided by the Ñuu Dzauí codices of the Town of the Tules indicates that the capital of the Toltec ruler called Lord 4 Jaguar was Cholula. Alternative identifications that have been put forward, such as Tulixtlahuaca de Jicayán (Mixtec Coast) or Tulancingo (Coixtlahuaca Valley), simply do not fit the above-mentioned criteria. We might go as far as saying that if the Ñuu Dzauí historians would have had one of those towns in mind, they would have included specific references in order to avoid confusion with Cholula.

An additional geographical confirmation is the circumstance that the two intermediaries who played a crucial part in establishing contact between the two lords, were from the Mixteca Baja region, i.e. the area between the Mixteca Alta (with the important center of Tilantongo) and the Valley of Puebla, where Cholula is located. The crucial deity was Lady 9 Reed, situated at Mountain of Blood, which has been identified as Ñuu Niñe, i.e. Tonalá.¹⁵ One ambassador, Lord 1 Deer 'Coanacoch', is associated with Jaguar Town, identified as Ñuu Ñaña (Cuyotepeji).¹⁶

Identifier 2: "called Quetzalcoatl, Ce Acatl or Nacxitl..."

Lord 4 Jaguar's face painting and beard in Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall) are typical attributes of the God Quetzalcoatl, while his white-red striped body paint is typical of

Mixcoatl (God of Hunting) and of the Venus deity, called Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli or Ce Acatl (1 Reed).¹⁷ The names Quetzalcoatl and Ce Acatl are used frequently by Nahuatl sources in referring to the historical Quetzalcoatl. In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (Caso 1961) appears Lord 4 Jaguar's given name, but unfortunately it is not well legible: the sign consists of a serpent with a peculiar element on its tail. Caso (1961) read it as a flute. In our eyes the sign is a somewhat crude drawing of a serpent with a feather on its tail, which would represent the name "Plumed Serpent", i.e. Quetzalcoatl.

Another name occurring in the sources is Nacxitl, a contraction of an archaic calendar name: Na(hui) (i)cxitl, "4 Foot". The calendar names '4 Foot' and '4 Jaguar' have the number 4 in common. It is possible – but clear evidence is lacking – that the sign Foot corresponds to Jaguar, or, rather that the Ñuu Dzauí painters chose to represent the day 'Foot' (not present in their calendar) as 'Jaguar', maybe thinking of the impressive paws of this animal.¹⁸

Identifier 3: "with a pimple on his nose, wearing a feather crown..."

On the base of an ancient painting, the Dominican chronicler Diego Durán provides an interesting description and image of the historical Quetzalcoatl:

'This Topiltzin, who was also called Papa ('priest'), was a very venerated and religious person, held in great esteem and honored and adored as a saint. There is a long story about him. I saw him painted in the way that is reproduced above, on a very old paper, in Mexico City, as a noble personality. He was shown as an elderly man, with a large gray and red beard, a long nose with some pimples (ronchas) on it, or somewhat eaten, a tall body, long hair; ... when he celebrated his feasts, he put that feather crown on...' (Durán 1967, I: 9, 14, cf. pl. 1).

The beard, the pimple on the nose and the feather crown are all present in the copy of the ancient picture that Durán includes in his work. The large feather headdress is a diagnostic of Toltec rulers, known as the Apanecayotl, corresponding to the Toltec title Apanecatl. A copy of such an item has been preserved in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna, where it

has become known as "the Crown of Moctezuma" (Anders 2001). This attribute is not necessarily unique for the historical Quetzalcoatl, however. A more diagnostic element is the pimple on his nose, which seems to have been a real physical mark of this specific personage. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún and the chronicle *Annales de Cuauhtitlan* describe his countenance as *ixayac iuhqujn tetecujnpol tehtlanipol*, "pock-marked face, full of pimples (stones)", *xixiquipiltic yn ixayac*, "bag face", and *amo tlacacemelle, atlacacemelle*, "bad looking, ugly".

Codex Tonindefe (Nuttall) depicts Lord 4 Jaguar not only with the typical Quetzalcoatl beard, but also with a large feather headdress of the Apanecayotl type and with a pimple or tumor on his nose or forehead. The latter element is a personal characteristic that is extremely rare in the codices and therefore very distinctive and significant. The correspondence with Durán's description is too striking to ignore.

Identifier 4: "a provider of royal power and legitimacy..."

The *Popol Vuh*, as we saw above, describes Nacxitl as a great ruler who awarded to the founders of the K'iche' dynasty the emblems of their royal investiture. Among these the nosepiece is explicitly mentioned:

'Nacxit gave a complete set of the emblems of lordship... Here are their names:

Canopy, throne.

Bone flute, bird whistle.

Paint of powdered yellow stone.

Puma's paw, jaguar's paw.

Head and hoof of deer.

Bracelet of rattling snail shells.

Gourd of tobacco. Nosepiece.'

(Tedlock 1985: 203-204)

Similarly, Lord 4 Jaguar bestows a turquoise nosepiece on Lord 8 Deer and on his successor, Lord 4 Wind. He is the only character who performs such a ritual in the Ñuu Dzauí pictorials. The nose piercing appears as a crucial act of legitimization for those historical rulers. It was the culmination of an intricate process of creating an alliance.

Interestingly, this process involved a meeting between the protagonists in a ball-court (Codex Iya Nacuaa I, p.11; Codex Tonindeye, pp. 45 and 80; Codex Ñuu Tnoo - Ndisi Nu, p. 10-IV). The Central Mexican chronicler Ixtlilxochitl (1975/77, I: 279) describes how Topiltzin used an art-work composed of jewels, representing a ball-court, as a symbol of one power shared between different rulers, i.e. as a precious emblem of a political alliance.

Another detail: in order to make this alliance with Lord 8 Deer, Lord 4 Jaguar sent a hunchback to the Mixtec region. Sahagún (Book 6: ch. 41) documents that Quetzalcoatl of Tula used hunchbacks (corgovados in the Spanish text) as messengers.

Identifier 5: “who invaded the Mixteca Baja and Alta and founded the Coixtlahuaca dynasty...”

The above quoted text from Torquemada (book III: ch. 7) about Quetzalcoatl sending his people from Cholula to the Mixteca Baja, Mixteca Alta and to the Zapotec region, to “populate” these areas, may be interpreted as a reference to campaigns of conquest and political reorganization. A particularly interesting example of these Toltec activities in the Oaxacan region is the foundation of the ruling dynasty of Coixtlahuaca (a major center in the Chochon-Mixtec region in Western Oaxaca). The Nahuatl chronicle known as the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* specifies that the heroic defender of Coixtlahuaca against Mexica invasion, Atonal [II], was a descendant from the Toltecs. Furthermore, it explains that the founder of the Toltec dynasty of Coixtlahuaca had been a person from Tamaçolac, also called Atonal [I], who was enthroned in Coixtlahuaca during the final phase of the Toltec realm.¹⁹ This event is described in some detail:

‘The Toltecs went... and passed by Old Cuauhtitlan [“Place of the Eagle”], where they waited sometime for a native of Tamazolac, who was in charge there, named Atonal. He brought his subjects with him. Then the Toltecs left... Going and entering in the towns, some established themselves in Cholula, Tehuacan, Cozcatlan, Nonohualco, Teotlillan, Coixtlahuaca, Tamazolac, Copilco, Topillan, Ayotlan and Mazatlan, until

they had settled the whole of Anahuac, where they are still living today.’ (Anales de Cuauhtitlan, 1975: § 67; Lehmann 1938: 107-109).

This process of Toltecs establishing themselves all over Mesoamerica is described by the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* as part of the downfall of Tula. The references to Cholula and Coixtlahuaca, but also to Copilco and Topillan, which are situated on the Gulf Coast, suggest, however, that this process was actually still one of expansion, contemporaneous with (and related to) the Toltec contacts with the Maya area. Connecting this text with the statements by Torquemada and others, we note that this is the very same period that the historical Quetzalcoatl is reported to have ruled in Cholula.

The foundation of the dynasty of Coixtlahuaca by Atonal (“Lord Water”) [I] is depicted on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (Caso 1961). The first ruler’s name is actually Lord 7 Water. He is associated with a House of the Eagle: Old Cuauhtitlan as mentioned in the above quoted *Anales*. The enthronement ritual is situated on the Mountain of Pointed Leaves, i.e. the Cerro Verde, a very prominent and sacred mountain in the Coixtlahuaca Valley (Ruiz Ortiz and Jansen 2009). This event takes place in front of a warlord, who approaches with a macuahuitl, a wooden “sword” inlaid with obsidian blades, a favorite weapon of the Toltecs (Hassig 1992: 112-113). The name of this warlord was Lord 4 Jaguar. Comparing this scene with the text of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* we have to conclude that this Lord 4 Jaguar was an important Toltec leader, probably based at Cholula, in the time of expansion during the final phase of the Toltec empire, i.e. during the rule of the historical Quetzalcoatl.

The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec mentions several dates in association with Lord 4 Jaguar: he had been engaged in warfare in the region for ten years, between the year 10 Reed and the year 6 Flint. This chronological indication allows us to identify this Lord 4 Jaguar with the person of the same name who appears in the Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec) codices as the ally of Lord 8 Deer ‘Jaguar Claw’, a central figure of the Early Postclassic history of the region. The encounter between these two individuals took place on the day 13 Alligator of the year 7 House,²⁰ i.e. in the year following the year 6 Flint, which is mentioned in the Lienzo of

Tlapiltepec as the last year of his campaign in the Coixtlahuaca region. Their alliance, confirmed with a nose-piercing ritual, is given much attention in the Ñuu Dzauí codices, because it was the basis for Lord 8 Deer's enthronement in Tilantongo.

That we are dealing with the very same years 6 Flint – 7 House here, is confirmed by further information in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. The grandson of Lord 7 Water (founder of the Coixtlahuaca dynasty when he was already an adult) visited Lord 4 Wind in Town of Flints – this Lord 4 Wind was the prince who killed Lord 8 Deer and became his successor as strong man in the Ñuu Dzauí Highlands, precisely in Ñuu Yuchi, Town of Flints, now an archaeological site known as Mogote del Cacique near Tilantongo. The direct contact between the grandson of Lord 7 Water and this Lord 4 Wind demonstrates that Lord 7 Water, and Lord 4 Jaguar who played an active role in his enthronement, were indeed contemporaneous with Lord 8 Deer.

Looking at the geography we see the logic of the sequence of dates: Lord 4 Jaguar needed ten years of war to advance from Cholula to Coixtlahuaca, passing through (and conquering) the Mixteca Baja. From there it was the logical next step to enter the neighboring Mixteca Alta region.

This, in turn, makes it very likely that the Lord 4 Jaguar in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and the Lord 4 Jaguar who became the ally of Lord 8 Deer were one and the same person, especially as he plays an identical role in both stories: that of an outsider whose arrival is a crucial element in the enthronement (legitimization) of a new ruler.

In this context, we should consider the foundation of the Postclassic kingdom of Xochitepec in the Mixteca Baja. The central scene in the Lienzo of that town shows the victory of an unnamed warrior (armed with a macuahuitl), coming from a Town of Tule Reeds, as the base of the local dynasty, with approximately the same time-depth as that of Coixtlahuaca and that of the Tilantongo dynasty: in all cases around 20 male generations separate these events from the time of the Spanish Conquest (Caso 1958).

It seems safe to conclude that in the time of Lord 8 Deer a Toltec ruler, named Lord 4 Jaguar, advanced from Cholula toward Coixtlahuaca and the Ñuu Dzauí Highlands (Mixteca Alta), passing through the Ñuu Dzauí Lowlands (Mixteca Baja), setting up new

dynasties and making important alliances. This Toltec campaign was part of the expansion that, according to Central Mexican sources, took place when Ce-Acatl Nacxítl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was king of Cholula. The Ñuu Dzauí codices emphatically state that Lord 4 Jaguar was the ruler of Cattail Frieze (Tollan - Cholollan) at the time. This Lord 4 Jaguar, therefore, must be the same person as Ce-Acatl Nacxítl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the historical Quetzalcoatl, known to the Maya as Kukulcan.

Identifier 6: “who traveled to the East, crossing a large lagoon...”

The characteristic feature of the Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan narrative is the journey of the Toltec ruler to the East, crossing the waters of the Laguna de Términos and entering into Maya country. The *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus Pinturas* gives the following description:

‘This Ce-Acatl ... built a very big temple in Tula, while he was doing so, Tezcatlipuca came to him and said that toward Honduras, in a place called Tlapalla, was his house, and that there he had to go and die, he had to leave Tula, and in that place they consider Ce-Acatl to be a God. He answered to the words of Tezcatlipuca that the heaven and the stars had told him that he had to go there in four years. And thus, when the four years had passed, he went away and took with him all the commoners. Those he left the city of Chulula, and the inhabitants of that town descend from those people. Others he left behind in the province of Cuzcatan ... and Cempual... He himself arrived in Tlapalla and that day he became ill and died.’ (Garibay 1979: 38).

The *Leyenda de los Soles* presents this series of events as a military campaign:

‘Then Ce Acatl conquered the town of Ayotlan. After that conquest he went to Chalco and Xicco, which he also conquered. Then to Cuixcoc, Çacango, Tzonmolco, Maçatzonco, Tzapotlan, which he all conquered. Then he went to Acallan, where he crossed the water, and he also conquered it, until arriving

at Tlapallan. There he fell ill, five days he was ill, and then he died.’ (*Leyenda de los Soles in Anales de Cuauhtitlan* 1975: 125; cf. Lehmann 1938: 371).

There is a structural parallel between the Central Mexican / Maya version and the story told in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices. Lord 8 Deer accompanies the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar on a large journey, passing along many places that do not occur elsewhere in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices and therefore seem to be located in foreign lands. Among them is an active volcano (not present in the Mixtec region). At a crucial moment of this campaign the two rulers cross a broad extension of water in a canoe and conquer an island.²¹ A flying fish, an alligator and a conch suggest that we are looking at a tropical lagoon. The comparison with Mexica sources suggests that this is the Laguna de Términos. The Mixtec name for these waters is painted as a frieze with step-fret motif meaning *ñuu*, “place”, in combination with a series of rectangles in different colors, i.e. “Place of Colors”, which would correspond to the Nahuatl toponym Tlapallan.²² One of the towns nearby is painted as a river with a house in it, a sign that may represent Acallan, “Place of the Canoes”, literally: “Place of the Water Houses”.²³

Identifier 7: “and met with the Sun God”

The Mexica accounts tell us that Nacxtil Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl went to the East, where Tlapallan is located, crossed the Laguna de Términos (Acallan, Xicalango) and entered the Maya region. Quetzalcoatl used to say that the Sun himself had called him:

‘And when the people asked him what he was going to do there, Quetzalcoatl answered that the ruler of those lands, who was the Sun, had called for him. This story was wide-spread among the Mexicans.’ (Torquemada, book VI: ch. 24).

This answer is formulated in the lordly language of metaphors, according to which “going to the realm of the Sun God” means “looking for fame”, following the destiny of a warrior.²⁴

The *Ñuu Dzau* codices show how Lord 4 Jaguar and Lord 8 Deer at the end of their journey arrive at the Temple of the Sun God (symbolically associated with the East).²⁵ Here

they climb a huge pyramid that rises into heaven and have a meeting in a large ball-court, exchanging precious gifts.

Sun temples were, of course, present all over Mesoamerica. Bruce Byland and John Pohl have noted that according to oral tradition such a sanctuary formed part of the ceremonial centre at Achiutla and have taken that reference as a basis for postulating that the whole campaign of Lord 8 Deer and Lord 4 Jaguar was just a trip from Tilantongo to the neighboring town of Achiutla. This is in accordance with their opinion that most of Mixtec history took place in the immediate vicinity of Tilantongo and Jaltepec, where they had carried out their archaeological survey. As there are no towns to be conquered, no lagoon to be crossed, and no active volcanoes in this area, they proposed an unsatisfactory solution:

“To date these events have defied analysis, for there are very few, if any, bodies of water in the Mixteca Alta large enough to make this scene physically possible. An alternate proposal explored here is that this is a representation of a supernatural journey, not a real one.’ (Byland and Pohl 1994: 152)

Focusing on the similarity in narrative structures, I agree with Walter Lehmann (1938: 372), who, in a time that little was known about the contents of *Ñuu Dzau* codices, already equated the impressive scene of the crossing of the lagoon in Codex Tonindeye (p. 75) with the account of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl crossing the waters during his voyage towards Tlapallan.

In geographical reality the great sanctuary of the East may then have been Chichen Itza, the final destination of Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan’s journey. Bishop Diego de Landa documents the prominence of a Sun Priest (and therefore of a Sun cult) at this site: the Ah Kin May, who seems to have been the central religious authority among the Mayas of Yucatan (Landa 1966: 14; Tozzer 1941: 27).

Interestingly, Guatemalan Maya sources, such as the *Popol Vuh* and the *Título de Totonicapan*, locate the Tollan of Nacxtil in the East, “where the sun rises”. Obviously this world direction has its symbolic connotations (see the study by Sachse and Christenson), but at the same time this statement may be connected to the Yucatec *Relación Geográfica* of Izamal and Santa María, which speaks about

a great ruler in the past, who had his court in Chichen Itza, and received tribute from across Mexico and Guatemala (de la Garza 1983: 305). This suggests that the great capital Chichen Itza, with its important Sun priest, was symbolically connected to the world direction 'East'.

A possible reference in Maya art

The fore-going analysis leads us to the conclusion that the interaction of a Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan) and the Sun God, was an important literary theme, which occurs in Nahuatl texts from Central Mexico but also was painted in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices *Tonindeye* (Nuttall) and *Iya Nacuaa* (Colombino-Becker). It is interesting to see that a similar iconographical theme appears at Chichen Itza itself.

The severely damaged frescos of the Temple of the Jaguars in Chichen Itza next to the great ball-court (preserved in drawings, e.g. those made by Adela Breton in 1903/4), describe a large-scale military conquest. Two groups of warriors, dressed in loincloths or white tunics, with sandals, feathered headdresses and sometimes jade earrings and precious necklaces, armed with large spears on their spear-throwers and decorated shields, engage in military action against the background of local villages of small huts with thatched roofs and defenseless women walking around, in an idyllic landscape of green hills and trees with monkeys, birds, serpents and other animals. We see captives being taken and hit, huts put on fire. Big volutes indicate shouting and turmoil. One of the battles takes place among high red (sand-stone) mountains and cliffs, with little vegetation and a few nopal cacti, suggesting that a campaign of conquests passed through different ecological zones.

Dominant in one of the groups is a warrior surrounded by a large plumed serpent (with large green quetzal feathers). He plays an active role in the warfare, appearing prominently at different locations, wielding his spear and his shield covered with pieces of jade, but also is shown seated in front of others as giving instructions, heading talks (peace negotiations?), and accepting homage and surrender.

Another prominent figure is a noble warrior seated in a sun disk, watching over the battle, signaling and speaking (giving instructions?), but without actually participating in it.

The scene carved on the lintel above the door shows the encounter between these two personages: Lord Plumed Serpent presents himself before Lord Sun.²⁶

As the original is lost and was already very fragmented when it was copied, the painting is difficult to date and open to diverse interpretations. It is suggestive, however, that the protagonists and their actions show such a clear (thematic) resemblance to what is represented in Nahuatl sources and Mixtec codices as the meeting of the Toltec Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl – Kukulcan) with the Maya Sun God or his human representative (Ah Kin May), after a long military campaign.

Evaluation of the argument

The late Henry B. Nicholson had announced in his erudite monograph on the figure of Quetzalcoatl (2001: lii) a forthcoming paper which criticized the hypothesis presented above. The review was published in a volume in honor of Mixtec codex scholar Mary Elizabeth Smith (Nicholson 2005). In this text Nicholson clarified that his comments on my analysis were “not intended to ‘refute’ it but rather to emphasize its very hypothetical character” (op. cit.: 156). Indeed, although the overall tone of his treatment is that of a criticism, his actual counter-arguments are surprisingly few and not at all decisive.

As most investigators of the Mixtec codices now do, Nicholson accepted the identification of Lord 4 Jaguar as a Toltec ruler, but rejects the identification of this personage as the historical Quetzalcoatl. He did not give an alternative suggestion as to how Lord 4 Jaguar then might relate to the known Toltec king lists (cf. Davies 1977, 1980; Prem 1999; Graulich 2002).

In calling the identification of Lord 4 Jaguar with “the most famous Toltec of them all” an “audacious hypothesis” (op. cit.: 157), Nicholson did not take into account the epic character of ancient Mexican historiography, which would precisely focus on the fame and ideological importance of such a legitimating outsider and which would precisely try to establish a narrative link with him. Why create such a detailed memory of the alliance and cooperation of Lord 8 Deer with a Toltec ruler and keep it alive through painting, reciting and performing the story, for some 400 years after the events, if that Toltec ruler actually was a “nobody”, who does not even figure in the Central Mexican sources?

Nicholson disregarded the statement by Torquemada that attributes the Toltec expansion into the Mixtec region to the reign of Quetzalcoatl, as well as the related connection between the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and the Annals of Cuauhtitlan, which clarifies that the foundation of the Toltec dynasty of Coixtlahuaca by Lord 4 Jaguar took place in the final phase of the Toltec realm, i.e. the time that, according to many sources, the historical Quetzalcoatl ruled. About this part of the argument, Nicholson basically stated that “various scholars ... have suggested hypothesis quite different from that of Jansen” (op. cit.: 154). This is true, of course, but hardly an argument, as none of those earlier studies did even remotely consider the coincidences between the story line of Lord 4 Jaguar and that of Nacxiti Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. Nicholson himself did not present a critical examination of the works of those other authors, although they contain unwarranted and questionable propositions (such as the suggestion that Cattail Frieze is Tulancingo near Coixtlahuaca, or that the military campaign of Lord 4 Jaguar and Lord 8 Deer was an imaginary, metaphysical journey from Tilantongo to Achiutla).

Nicholson stressed the variation in the representations of Quetzalcoatl and of Lord 4 Jaguar. Again, this is correct, but one should recognize that there are some significant coincidences, such as the pimple on the nose. Nicholson disqualified the latter as a “minor element” coming from a “late, probably distorted version” (op. cit.: 155). Such a generalizing dismissal does not do justice to the specificity of such a physiognomic detail, which hardly can be explained away as “highly Christianized”, less so as the reference is not unique but coincides with similar descriptions in the work of Sahagún.

Nicholson did not pay attention to the coincidence of the number in the calendar names of Nacxiti (4 Foot) and 4 Jaguar. Instead, he emphasized that the equivalence of the day sign Foot (in Xochicalco) with the Postclassic day sign Jaguar has not been established. I agree, we cannot be sure of this, but, on the other hand, our present state of knowledge does not exclude this possibility either. Actually, as there was no sign ‘Foot’ in their calendar, the Mixtecs had to represent ‘Nacxiti’ as a calendar name that combined the number 4 with another sign. At present it is not clear which criteria they might have used in

such a translation process. An equivalent position of both signs in their different sets of twenty day names would convince Nicholson, but actually would only be one of the possible reasons for making such an equation.

Nicholson’s final verdict could be applied to most interpretive studies of ancient Mesoamerica: “For reasons given above (and others precluded by spatial limitation) I am convinced that this identification, in spite of its many attractive features, must be supported with more convincing evidence ...” (op. cit.: 157). It is unfortunate that Nicholson’s detailed reproduction of my published notes on this topic did not leave space for explaining his other reasons. But even in this incomplete form his main purpose and argumentation are clear. Nicholson was correct in pointing out that several stepping stones of my hypothesis are in themselves not conclusive and that in each case alternative theories are possible. However, in this erudite and cautious evaluation he overlooked the main point. One should not consider the identifiers presented here as isolated elements, nor as interdependent parts of a chain (as weak as the weakest link). The indications discussed are independent, and in combination they constitute a coherent set of cognates. In this exercise in inductive reasoning, the accumulated indications are mutually reinforcing and provide a strong basis for identifying Lord 4 Jaguar as Nacxiti Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. Not just one trait, but all relevant details of his appearance and actions in the Mixtec codices fit what is known about that enigmatic famous personage in the Central Mexican and Maya sources. None of the identifiers discussed above would in itself be enough for this identification, but, taken together, they constitute a quite serious and convincing argument.

This identification, I should stress, only goes as far as saying that the story told about Lord 4 Jaguar in the Mixtec codices corresponds to what other sources tell us about Nacxiti Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan. The relationship of this story with historical reality and chronology as manifest in archaeological data, for example, is quite a different matter.

Chronological problems

One of the consequences of the proposed identification is that we have to consider again the historical dimension of the Kukulcan

character. Lord 4 Jaguar appears together with Lord 8 Deer as the protagonists of an epic narrative about a Toltec ruler marching to the East (the land of the Maya), in a clearly defined chronological context. As we argued earlier, the year 7 House in which Lord 4 Jaguar and Lord 8 Deer met and entered into their alliance, must have been the year after 6 Flint when Lord 4 Jaguar presided over the enthronement of Lord 7 Water in Coixtlahuaca. According to the modern chronology of the *Ñuu Dzau* codices, this year 7 House was A.D. 1097. The ten years between 10 Reed and 6 Flint, during which Lord 4 Jaguar was engaged in war campaigns before entering the Coixtlahuaca Valley according to the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, would correspond to A.D. 1087-1096. The following expedition towards the East took place in the following years, culminating in the encounter with the Sun God in the year 9 Reed, i.e. in A.D. 1099.

Admittedly, the correlation of dates in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices with the Christian calendar is not without problems. The years in these manuscripts occur in cycles of 52 years, without something like a Long Count. The original synchronology proposed by Alfonso Caso has been corrected by Emily Rabin in different papers (e.g. 2004). The difference for the period we are looking at is only one Calendar Round of 52 years. According to Caso, Lord 8 Deer lived from A.D. 1011 till 1063. Rabin has argued that his life span is better calculated as A.D. 1063-1115. On the base of a gloss in the Mixtec colonial Codex *Ñuu Naha* or "Muro" (Jansen 1994), one might construe an even shorter chronological sequence, according to which Lord 8 Deer's dates would be A.D. 1115-1167, but this goes against a reasonable generation length and is therefore less likely. The Rabin synchronology is in view of all available data the best founded. Less likely are the 'Caso synchronology' (52 years earlier at this point) and the '*Ñuu Naha* synchronology' (52 years later at this point). Other proposals, involving much larger discrepancies in years from what Rabin has proposed, must be discarded as too speculative, not being based on the same solid reasoning and detailed calculations.

Summarizing, the *Ñuu Dzau* codices date the Toltec invasion of Yucatan in A.D. 1099 (Rabin) \pm 52 years (Caso: 1047; *Ñuu Naha*: 1151). How does this compare with the dates given in the Maya sources?

The texts known as the Books of Chilam Balam provide the most specific dates for the

arrival of Kukulcan / Nacxítl. The problem is that these dates occur in cycles. Efforts have been made to narrow down these katun datings by connecting them to information in other documents such as the *Relaciones Geográficas*. Erik Boot has investigated this matter in his dissertation on the Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions of Chichen Itza (2005).

The following points are the most relevant. The Books of Chilam Balam from Tizimín and Maní seem to associate the name of Nacxítl with a katun 8 Ahau, which in cyclical repetition might refer to the periods of A.D. 672-692, 928-948, 1185-1204, 1441-1461, or 1697-1717 (Boot 2005: 214). Other Yucatec sources from the early colonial period (such as Sánchez de Águilar) refer explicitly to the "arrival of the Mexicans" 600 years before the Spanish conquest, i.e. approximately A.D. 940. This would coincide with a katun 8 Ahau (A.D. 928-948), as mentioned in the Books of Chilam Balam.

The Books of Chilam Balam from Chumayel and Tizimín, however, date "the second coming" of Kukulcan in katun 4 Ahau, which in cyclical repetition might refer to A.D. 711-731, 968-987, 1224-1244, 1480-1500, and 1736-1756, as calculated by Boot (2005: 202). The *Relación Geográfica de Muxuppipp* puts the time before the introduction of "idolatry" by the "Mexicans" under Quetzalcoatl somewhat less than "800 years ago", i.e. shortly after A.D. 780 (De la Garza *et al.* 1983, I: 368-69, 377). If we take the reference to "800 years ago" to mean 8 periods of 104 years, i.e. 832 years, and subtract those from 1580, we would arrive at A.D. 748. Supposing that this statement originated a few years before 1580, we might even interpret it as situating this event in the katun 4 Ahau that occupied the twenty years between A.D. 711 and 731.

Obviously, the *Ñuu Dzau* date of A.D. 1099 \pm 52 years does not fit into this set of calculations. On the other hand, how sure can we be of those? The early colonial Yucatec chronicles are unclear and even contradictory about this matter. Landa confirms this by indicating that already in his time there was considerable chronological dispute about the arrival of Kukulcan in Yucatan ("they differ among themselves as to whether he arrived before or after the Itzas or with them").

The Books of Chilam Balam may be qualified as "mantic historiography", which tends to join different historical events under

symbolic headings, aiming at a combination of history with prophecy (Farriss 1987). A period named after 4 Ahau, for example, may have been chosen because of the symbolic associations of this day as a sacred date that marks the beginning of a new era. Thus we cannot even be sure if such statements should be taken in a chronological sense.

The dates of the *Relaciones Geográficas*, although straightforward at first sight, are actually far from precise and seem to be modeled after (European) units of hundred years, which makes us wonder whether those were indeed the intended quantities. It was easy to get misunderstandings in the complex search for equivalences between the Mesoamerican count in calendar rounds of 52 years and the Christian count in centuries.

Furthermore, when we read about the “second coming” of Kukulcan another question imposes itself: are we talking about the same events? Let us remember that contacts between people from Central Mexico and the Mayas had been going on at least since the Early Classic. For example a captain with the name of Siyah K’ak’ from Teotihuacan, identified in the inscriptions as Town of Tule Reeds, reached Tikal as early as A.D. 378 (Stuart, in: Carrasco, Jones and Sessions 2000).

The recent ideas about artistic influences from Central Mexico in Chichen Itza suggest that these already took place in the Epiclassic and may have been part of the spread of a specific religious cult in combination with intensified economic and cultural interaction at the End of the Classic (Ringle *et al.* 1998). Indeed, the early segments of *Ñuu Dzau* codices suggest that the transition between the Classic and Postclassic periods of Oaxaca was accompanied by a “crisis cult” centered around the Plumed Serpent (Jansen 2004).

It has been demonstrated that ‘Quetzalcoatl’ functioned as a royal title in Teotihuacan, as well as in the cultural and political sphere of Tula and Cholula. It is quite possible, then, that the Maya recorded several “comings” of a person with the Kukulcan / Quetzalcoatl title.

Thus, if the frescoes of the Temple of the Jaguars in Chichen Itza indeed have a related subject matter, they do not necessarily refer to the Quetzalcoatl that would correspond to Lord 4 Jaguar. They might even express a literary theme, not date a particular historical event.

A katun 8 Ahau, “600 years before the Spanish conquest” (± 940), might well refer to

contacts with Central Mexico (Tula?) in the beginning of the Postclassic, without any relationship to the Cholula of Ce-Acatl Nacxtil Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. Similarly, a katun 4 Ahau or another date in the 8th century (as suggested by the *Relación Geográfica de Muxuppipp*) may actually signal the incursion of a group of wise men (tlamatinime), who during the final days of the empire of Teotihuacan migrated from that capital to the Maya area (Lehmann 1938: 90). The wall paintings at Cacaxtla are another testimony of such interregional contacts during the Late Classic.

We should consider the possibility that the coming of Ce-Acatl Nacxtil Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (Lord 4 Jaguar) was simply classified under the dates assigned to such ‘earlier arrivals from Central Mexico’. Its historical impact probably was quite significant, and precisely because of that reason a symbolic date may have been chosen to adequately register (and interpret) this event. In any case, read with these considerations in mind, the dates given by the Maya sources neither prove nor disprove our identification of the Quetzalcoatl narrative in the *Ñuu Dzau* pictorial manuscripts.

Preliminary conclusion

The information given about the Toltec ruler Lord 4 Jaguar in the *Lienzos* from Coixtlahuaca and in the *Ñuu Dzau* codices shows strong similarities with the well-known narrative of the historical Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan. The coincidences, in the geographic reality and in structure of the story, as well as in specific details (pimple on the nose) are striking. Apparently, the authors of these pictorial manuscripts connected the foundation of dynasties (Coixtlahuaca, Tilantongo) and the activities of specific heroes (Lord 8 Deer) to this important personage, in a similar way as other peoples did (Mexica, K’iche’). The conclusion is warranted that these diverse sources from different peoples all refer to the same story. It was a truly Mesoamerican story, which many peoples had in common, and to which many royal families traced their origin and legitimization.

By the time of the Spanish conquest this theme had acquired epic qualities, comparable to the works of Homer or the saga of King Arthur and the Round Table. During the colonial period the narrative was incorporated

into the Spanish ideological justification of the conquest (cf. Lafaye 1976; Stenzel 1980). In such cases it is difficult to identify or even discuss their possible historical value. The religious associations of the protagonist, named after the Plumed Serpent (deity, nahual, and symbol of power), together with a rhetoric tradition that embeds human agency within a cosmic design, makes the situation even more complex. Understandably, many modern scholars are reluctant to even consider a historical quality of the Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan figure. On the other hand, nobody doubts the historical existence of Siyah K'ak'. Similarly, students of the Ñuu Dzauí codices generally do not question that of Lord 8 Deer.

The main importance of having recognized in the Ñuu Dzauí codices an independent version of the Kukulcan / Quetzalcoatl epic, is that this is a completely pre-colonial confirmation of the story line. Without minimizing the literary character and religious symbolism of the narrative, we may start exploring the possible historical reality of Lord 4 Jaguar / Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan. The Coixtlahuaca lienzos and the Ñuu Dzauí codices describe his actions as human and normal historical events. They even provide a precise chronological framework: according to the Rabin correlation, Lord 4 Jaguar was active between A.D. 1087, when he started a military campaign toward Coixtlahuaca, and A.D. 1119, when he conferred the nose ornament to Lord 4 Wind in Cholula. His absence at the immediately following enthronement and marriage of Lord 4 Wind suggests that Lord 4 Jaguar died shortly after 1119. These dates may be harmonized with a realistic active life span of at least 32 years. These dates might harmonize with a life span of 56 years attributed to the historical Quetzalcoatl (which would place his birth in ± 1064 , i.e. the Aztec year 1 Flint) and with the statement that, having come (returned) from Yucatan, he ruled for twenty years in Cholula, and that after that period he died on another journey to Tlapallan.²⁷

It is interesting to notice that all sources agree on the prominence of Cholula as the (main) capital of this personage. References to Tula Xicocotitlan (Hidalgo) – always focused on by archaeologists because of the known similarities with Chichen Itza – are limited in these accounts to the “earlier life” (priesthood) of Quetzalcoatl. The pivotal importance of Cholula in the Early Postclassic – archaeo-

logically still poorly understood – may have been the incubation and matrix for the production and distribution of the so-called Mixteca-Puebla style and iconography.

Pre-colonial memory saw Lord 4 Jaguar / Quetzalcoatl / Kukulcan as an important historical ruler during the zenith and final phase of Toltec expansion, who, with great success in different wars, played a crucial role in Toltec-Maya interaction. Archaeology suggests that there had been already considerable exchange and interaction between those two culture areas long time before late Toltec times. The story of the historical Quetzalcoatl makes us aware of the agency of important individuals in propelling such processes, and helps us to see Mesoamerican history and archaeology in a less anonymous manner. We find here a suggestive analogy with the spread of the international Hellenistic style in the Mediterranean world and the historical role of Alexander the Great – also subject of later mythification.

Obviously, further research on this matter is necessary. Until now the discussion about Kukulcan has basically been an effort to connect Yucatec, Guatemalan and Central Mexican sources. I hope to have demonstrated that there is reason to use also the testimony of Ñuu Dzauí codices in the discussion of this topic, and to not disregard the historical dimension of this personage altogether.

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Notes

- 1 See for example the detailed discussions by Davies 1977, 1980, and Prem 1999, who reach quite different conclusions.
- 2 See for example Sachse and Christenson 2005 for the Maya part, while Carrasco 1992, Florescano 1995, 2004, and Graulich 2002 concentrate on Central Mexico.
- 3 In this article I use the new nomenclature for the codices as proposed in Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2004: Codex Yuta Tnoho =

- Vindobonensis; Codex Tonindeye = Nuttall; Codex Iya Nacuaa I = Colombino; Codex Iya Nacuaa II = Becker I; Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu = Bodley; Codex Afute = Selden.
- 4 “Este, según sus historias (aunque algunos dicen que de Tula), vino de las partes de Yucatan a la ciudad de Cholula ... Afirman de Quetzalcoatl que estuvo veinte años en Cholula, y estos pasados, se volvió por el camino por do había venido llevando consigo cuatro mancebos principales virtuosos de la misma ciudad, y desde Guazacualco, provincia distante de allí ciento y cincuenta leguas hacia el mar, los tornó a enviar ...” (Mendieta, Book II, ch. 10).
- 5 Chimalpahin (1998, I: 108) tells how Nacxitl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl attacked Teotenanco and in vain tried to conquer and destroy it.
- 6 References to Nacxitl are also found in other sources from the Guatemalan highlands, such as the Annals of the Cakchiquels and the Título de Totonicapan (Recinos and Chonay and Goetz 1967: 64, 176).
- 7 For a more detailed analysis of the dramatic life-story of Lord 8 Deer and his interaction with the Toltecs, see Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2005 and 2007.
- 8 See also Jansen 2006 for a more detailed presentation of this argument.
- 9 Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), p. 9-II.
- 10 Codex Iya Nacuaa I, p. 14. Nicholson (2005: 156) points to the fact that the dots in the white covering of this mountain are different from the usual u-shaped fill motif, and proposes to interpret the sign therefore as “a sand- or ash-covered eminence”. A mountain of sand or ashes, is represented in a different way, however (cf. Codices Yuta Tnoho, p. 42-IV, and Iya Nacuaa II, p. 13). The form of the covering in Codex Iya Nacuaa I, p. 14, conforms clearly to that of snowcapped mountains (cf. Codices Tonindeye, pp. 11, 14, and Yuta Tnoho, p. 39).
- 11 Codex Ñuu Tnoo - Ndisi Nuu, p. 34-II.
- 12 “Asimismo, traían estas ofrendas los indios que de toda la tierra venían por su devoción en romería a visitar el templo de Quetzalcoatl, porque éste era metrópoli [léase: Tollan] y tenido en tanta veneración como lo es Roma en la cristiandad y Meca entre los moros.” (Acuña 1984/85, II: 131-132).
- 13 Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), p. 9-II; Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 52; Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 14.
- 14 The Relación Geográfica of Cholula states: “Asimismo, tenían por preeminencia los dos sumos sacerdotes dichos de confirmar en los estados a todos los gobernadores y reyes desta Nueva España, desta manera: que los tales reyes y caciques, en heredando el reino o señorío, venían a esta ciudad a reconocer obediencia al ídolo de ella, Quetzalcoatl, al cual ofrecían plumas ricas, mantas, oro y piedras preciosas, y otras cosas de valor. Y, habiendo ofrecido, los metían en una capilla que para este efecto estaba dedicada, en la cual los dos sumos sacerdotes los señalaban horadándoles las orejas, o las narices o el labio inferior, según el señorío que tenían. Con lo cual quedaban confirmados en sus señoríos, y se volvían a sus tierras” (Acuña 1984/85, II: 130-131).
- 15 Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), pp. 9-10; Codex Tonindeye, pp. 50–52.
- 16 Codex Ñuu Tnoo – Ndisi Nuu (Bodley), p. 10-III, cf. Codex Tonindeye, pp. 65-66 and Codex Ñuu Ñaña (Egerton), p. 1.
- 17 See Codex Telleriano-Remensis, f. 14v (edition by E. Quiñones Keber 1995).
- 18 The day sign Jaguar is represented as a paw in Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer), p. 6 (see the edition and commentary by Anders, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 1994).
- 19 “4 calli, 5 tochtli [1457-58]. En este año, Moteucgomatzin el Viejo se apercibió a combatir; y salieron todos de guerra a conquistar a Coahuayxtlahuacan, donde reinaba entonces el gran rey llamado Atonal [II], cuya atención absorbía el negocio del tributo de todas partes del Anahuac. De este Atonal [II] se dice que era todavía hijo [o: príncipe] de los toltecas y [descendiente de quien fue] natural de Tamaçolac de Toltitlan, de donde partió, cuando se desbarataron y se salieron los toltecas.” (Anales de Cuauhtitlan 1975: 52, cf. Lehmann 1938: 252-253).
- 20 Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 52.
- 21 Codex Tonindeye (Nuttall), p. 75.
- 22 Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), pp. 22-23.
- 23 Codex Tonindeye, p. 74-I; Codex Iya Nacuaa I (Colombino), p. 21-III.
- 24 Sahagún, book VI: ch. 4, 21 and 33.
- 25 Codex Tonindeye, p. 78, and Codex Iya Nacuaa II (Becker I), p. 3-III.
- 26 The lintel is reproduced by Selser, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen I*: 683. The scenes have been analyzed by Kutscher (1971) and Miller (1977). Valuable watercolor copies made by Adela Breton in 1903/4 are preserved in the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery (Bristol, U.K.). Digital images of these have been made and published on disc by the Bristol Digitalisation Bureau (October 2006). For a general evaluation, see Schele and Freidel, 1990: ch. 9.
- 27 See the Leyenda de los Soles (in *Anales de Cuauhtitlan 1975*: 122) and Mendieta (Book II, ch. 10), respectively. There are other chronological statements from Central Mexican sources, however, many of which are unclear or contradictory on this issue.

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