



ON THE MOUNT OF INTERTWINED SERPENTS

The Pictorial History of Power,
Rule, and Land on Lienzo Seler II

Edited by Viola König



Ethnologisches Museum
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

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MICHAEL IMHOF VERLAG

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MAP 3
Coixtlahuaca Valley and adjacent areas in Puebla

A Summary: Lienzo Seler II's Structure, Content, and Relation to Other Pictorial Documents, and a Tentative Reconstruction of a "Codex Coixtlahuaca"

VIOLA KÖNIG

INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter of the present volume on Lienzo Seler II I return to the point of departure of my initial research (König 1984, 1999), that is, the structure of the document and the questions arising from that structure: how are the entries of the authors involved in the making of the lienzo to be interpreted? What were their intentions? In former publications I have used the term “contributions” to refer to the various units of which the lienzo is composed.¹

It is essential to compare Lienzo Seler II with the other lienzos from the Valley of Coixtlahuaca, all of which were made after the Spanish conquest. All these documents have since been subject to thorough research.² To use Frassani's words, I am interested in the “visual and formal aspects of the lienzo and specifically the composition, layout, and relation between the different parts of its extended visual narrative. [...] Does this suggest a direct derivation of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec from a pre-Hispanic regional screenfold? Why, then, the striking difference in format, size, and material?” (Frassani 2016, review on Johnson 2015a: 95–140). In my final conclusions I will try to answer these questions.

As yet, no pre-Hispanic lienzos and *mapas* from the Valley of Coixtlahuaca have become known. However, the lienzos of that group show pre-Hispanic elements in their structure, iconography, and content, albeit in varying degrees. There are many indications that the authors of Lienzo Seler II and the other manuscripts from the Valley of Coixtlahuaca were familiar with several prototypes. As late as in the twentieth century, several—usually two—lienzos or *mapas* were kept in the communities in Oaxaca (Parmenter 1982).³ The reasons for this varied; for example, a copy was made in time if a document began to show signs of wear or had suffered damage. These copies might include modifications as compared to the respective original document (König 2010: 19–21). However, such lienzos and *mapas* can also look different from each other, featuring different records, as is the case with the lienzos from the Valley of Coixtlahuaca.

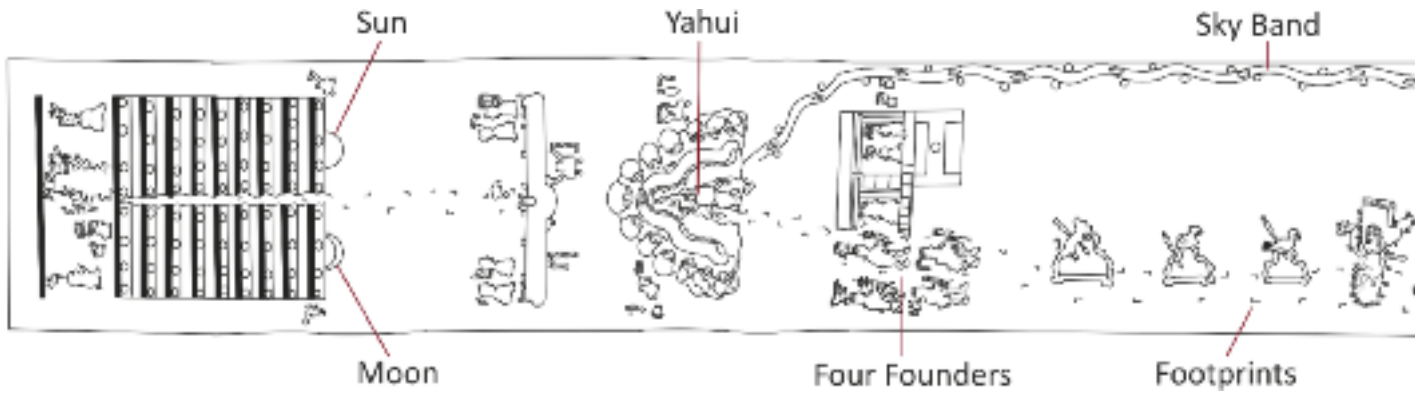


FIG. 11.1 Rollout Selden Roll.
Drawing by Renate Sander.

DUALISTIC COMPONENTS IN THE DOCUMENTS

The dualistic principle plays an important role in the cultures of Mesoamerica; this is reflected, among other things, in the bipartite rule of ethnic or linguistic groups. Two types of government ruled Coixtlahuaca (Doesburg 2015: 38). The two ruling dynasties belonged to two different ethnic and linguistic groups, the Chocho and the Mixtec (Doesburg 2015: 36, 37).⁴

Codex Baranda, which is from the Valley of Coixtlahuaca, shows the two ruling lines in two parallel rows (Boone 2000: 107–127). In its formal structure, that strip-shaped document follows the pre-Hispanic codices (fig. 7.5b). Its direction of reading is from left to right.

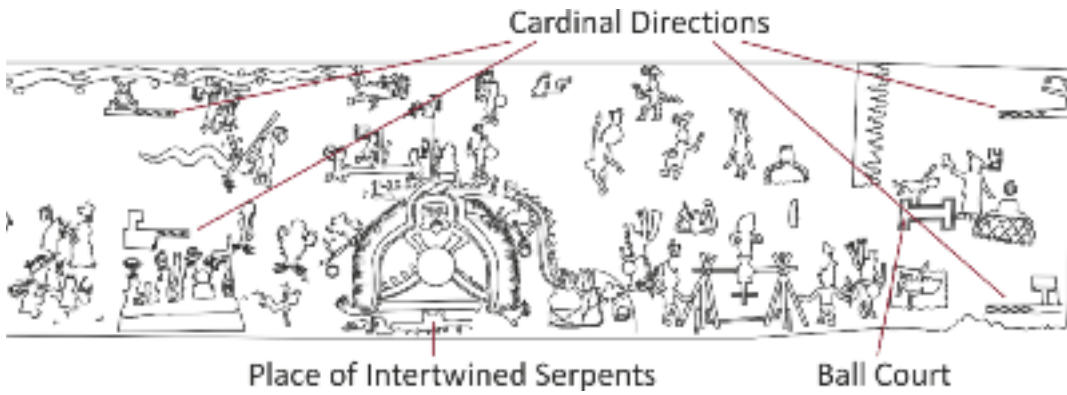
Codex Baranda shares several elements with Lienzo Seler II:

- 1) mythical origin from two traditions (Boone, this volume; Pacheco Silva, this volume)
- 2) legitimization at the “Place of (Two) Intertwined Serpents”
- 3) actions performed by four founders
- 4) via “Stony Hill of the Olla”
- 5) establishment of the two dynasties of/at Miltepec and Monte Verde
- 6) bipartite body of the serpent (Codex Baranda) and maw of the earth monster (Lienzo Seler II) to make way for a stream of water
- 7) settlements of reference
- 8) arrival of the Spaniards

In principle, this pattern—with the last part (8) missing for obvious reasons—is also found in the pre-Hispanic codices, for example in Codices Vindobonensis and Nuttall.⁵

The contents 1–8 are documented completely or partially in various formats in the codices and on the lienzos of the Coixtlahuaca Group. The jaguar-skin border on Lienzo Seler II is laid out in a way to leave enough space outside the border for the depiction of the dual origin from Chicomoztoc and “River of Quetzal and Jade” outside the valley (fig. VII). The guiding lines take the reader diagonally across the cloth, from its lower right to the upper left. In the upper left corner there is a bend in the border, creating space for the depiction of the end of the story, the presence of the Spaniards (fig. II).

The Selden Roll, which is in pre-Hispanic strip format with an iconography that reveals European influence, confines itself to the phase of the origin in the sky (fig. 11.1). We see (9) Wind walking through the bipartite sky (sun and moon). He then proceeds through the



cave of Chicomoztoc (fig. 11.2) and walks on as a supernatural *yahui* on two paths: along the male sky dotted with stars and along the female earth on a path with footprints (Wake 2007: 230). Via several stopovers, the four culture heroes carry him as a Quetzalcoatl bundle to the act of foundation at the “Place of Intertwined Serpents.” Both on the Selden Roll and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, the four cardinal directions, marked by bands of chevron (fig. 11.3), frame the New Fire ceremony held by the four founders (Johnson 2015a: 130–131, 134). On Lienzo Seler II the sun (east) and the moon (west) are to the left and to the right of the fire-drilling men above the circle (fig. XI).

Some lienzos are bipartite in their overall structure, divided into

- 1) the narration of the mythical origins, the migration of the four founders, and the ritual of legitimization at the new site of settlement
- 2) a map with a geographical focus showing important settlements, features of the landscape, and toponyms. Examples of this include the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (fig. 11.4), and the Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2 (Johnson 2015a: 95, 137–138, 142–144; Boone 2007: 35).

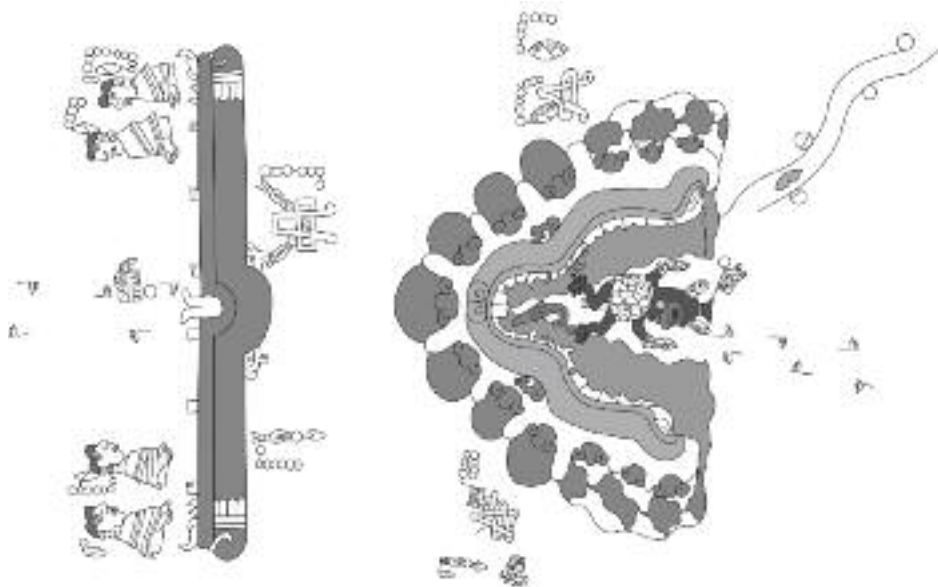


FIG. 11.2 Chicomoztoc on the Selden Roll. Drawing by Renate Sander.

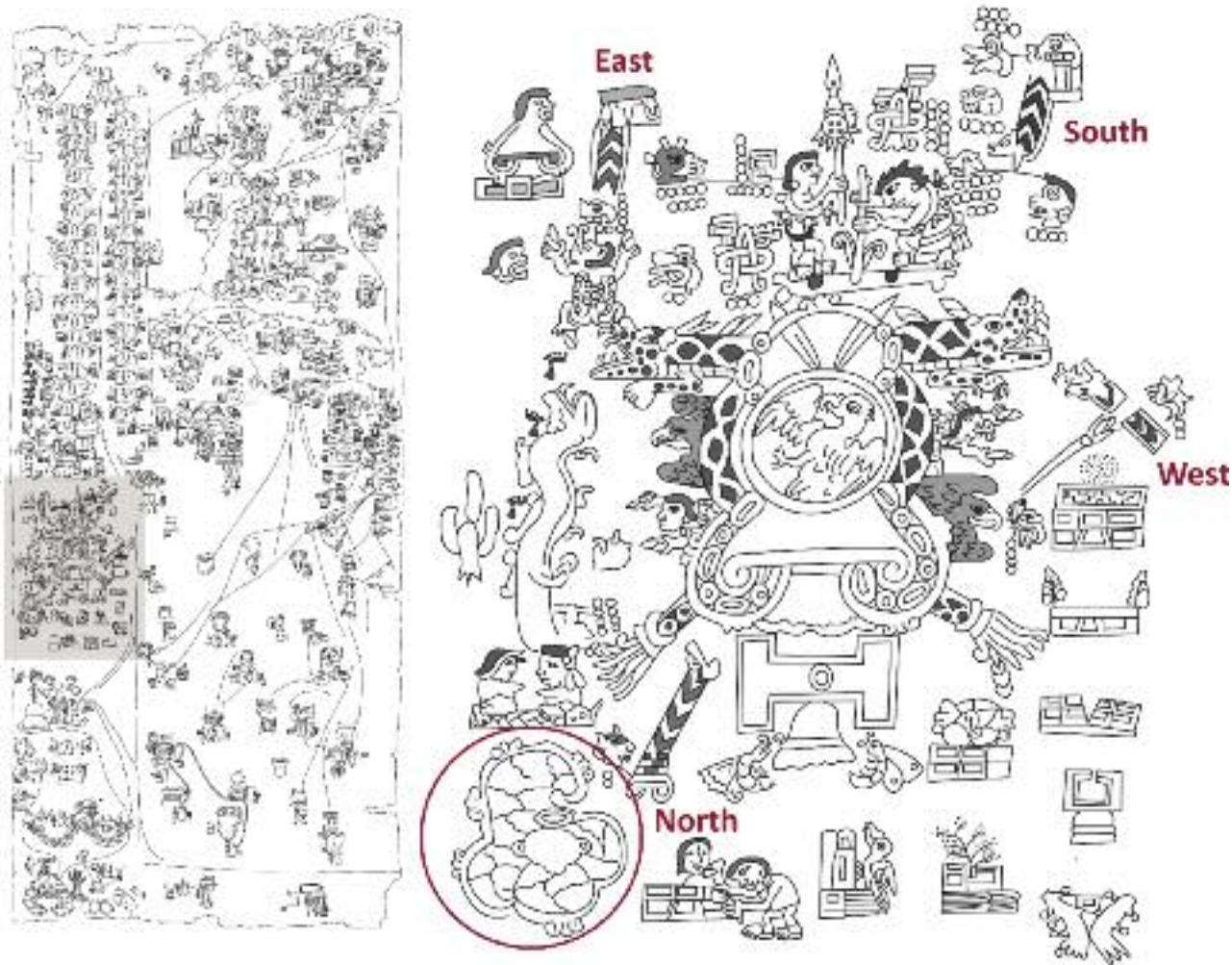
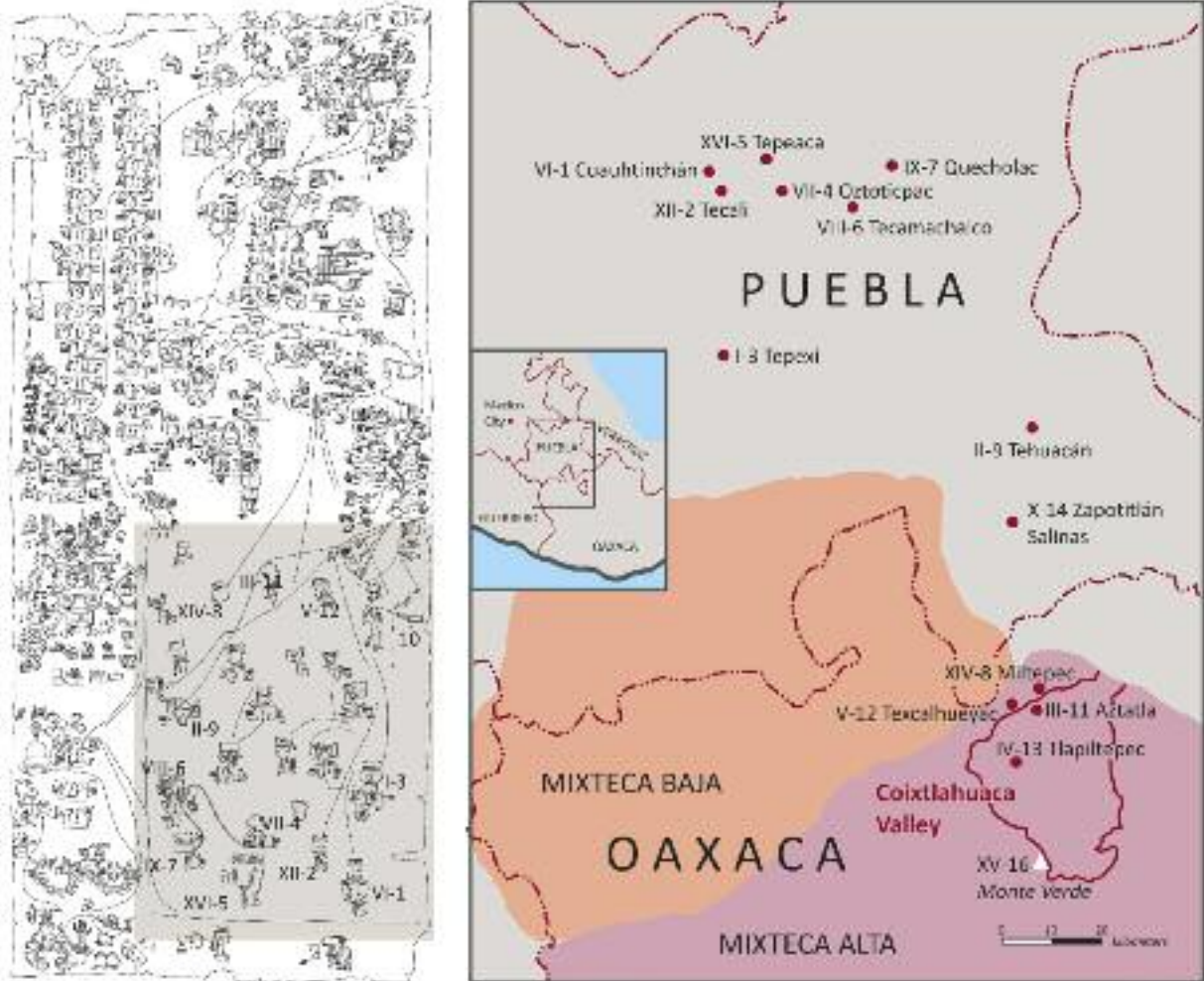


FIG. 11.3 “Place of Intertwined Serpents” on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. Drawing by Renate Sander.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LIENZO SELER II AND THE LIENZO OF TLAPILTEPEC

The Lienzo of Tlapiltepec is a rectangular strip of cotton similar to pre-Hispanic codices. It differs from lienzos such as the Lienzo of Coixtlahuaca I and Lienzo of Nativitas (Doesburg 2015: 39) that feature a central place glyph and, if applicable, smaller settlements, surrounded by a new colonial border and boundaries (figs. 7.7 and 7.8). The latter documents tend to be square in shape and correspond to European maps rather than to pre-Hispanic codices in terms of subject matter and structure. At first glance, Lienzo Seler II seems to belong to the second group, but it is actually a “mixed” document, as becomes apparent from the iconography of its drawings and from its content.

There exists a special relationship between the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and Lienzo Seler II in several respects. Doesburg has discovered striking similarities between the two documents.⁶ According to the results of his study of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, the document tells the story of the royal house that ruled Coixtlahuaca in the early sixteenth century, including a long genealogical register, showing the expansion of Coixtlahuaca’s dominion by villages in Southern Puebla that were governed from approximately AD 1400 by descendants



of these Coixtlahuaca rulers (Doesburg 2015: 71–72). These statements apply to Lienzo Seler II as well.

Hence, two large-format lienzos with almost identical content, but different in format and structure, existed in Coixtlahuaca. Both documents show the following events (Johnson 2015a: 94–149; Boone, this volume):

- 1) the mythical origin of the ruling elite of Monte Verde and Miltepec, as well as—originating from these elites—the ruling dynasty of Coixtlahuaca.
- 2) the foundation ritual of the *cacicazgo* (*altepetl*, or *yuhuitayū*) at the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” in the context of a New Fire ceremony in which important settlements inside and outside the Valley of Coixtlahuaca are involved.
- 3) events, some of which are shown as ritual actions, particularly at the “Place of Reeds” Tulancingo (figs. III, X, XIII and XV), as well as meetings of the elite and wars (Boone, this volume).
- 4) close interconnection with the north, that is, with the southern part of what is today the state of Puebla. These relations are represented by depictions of migrations in both directions (Doesburg 2015: 54–60; Johnson 2015a: 114–118).

FIG. 11.4 “Northern Map” on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. Drawing by Renate Sander, based on Brownstone 2016.

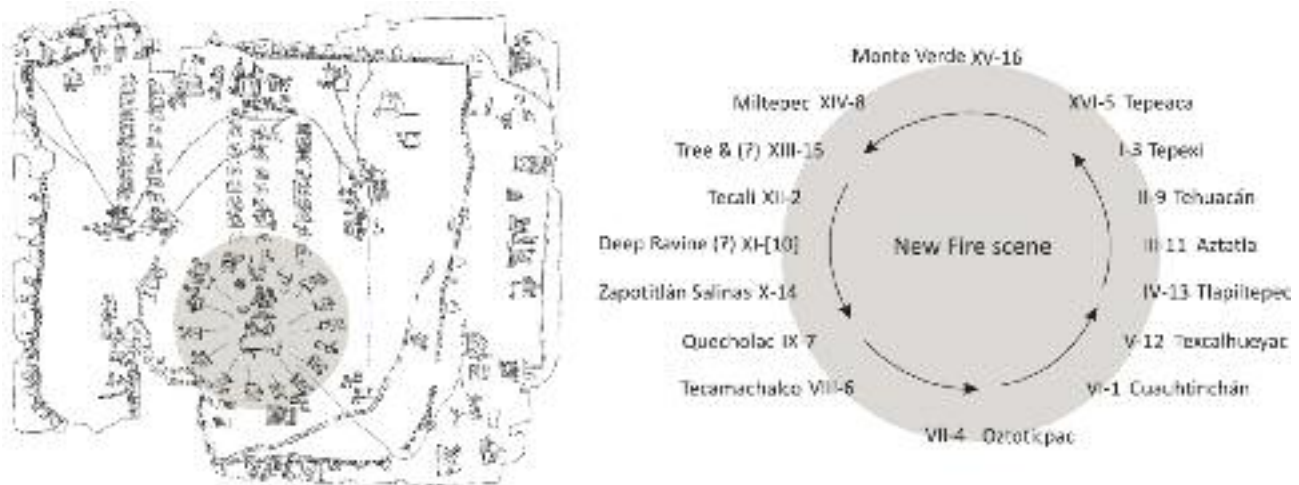
5) both documents record the arrival of the Spaniards. The representation of Christian church buildings reveals that the lienzos date from after 1520 (Pacheco Silva 2016: 31–34).

In terms of structure, Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and Lienzo Seler II are so different that it can be excluded that one is a copy of the other. Their content, however, is so similar that it suggests common pictographic or oral prototypes such as the Selden Roll and Codex Baranda, whose content corresponds to the left vertical third of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and parts of the lower half of Lienzo Seler II. In all cases, this shared content is the mythical and historical origin of the rulers of Coixtlahuaca.

A comparison of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and Lienzo Seler II shows that the surrounding border and the border settlements found on Lienzo Seler II are missing on Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. No pre-Hispanic prototypes are known of the pictographic representation of borders and border towns. This suggests European concepts and prototypes. Perhaps the place glyphs were converted into border towns only after the Spanish conquest, and new border-town glyphs were subsequently created. Sequences of place glyphs are well known from both pre-Hispanic and colonial documents where they mark routes and stopovers of migrations and eventually the counter-clockwise circling, or circumambulation, along the cardinal directions in order to legitimize a new settlement (König 2017: 179, 192).⁷

The author of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec made an effort to keep to the format and direction of reading of the pre-Hispanic strip format. The authors of Lienzo Seler II, in contrast, decided to detach the large place glyph from the strip format and to present it in the center of the large cloth, as on a European map (fig. I). The authors of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec arranged the place glyphs as a map in the lower right third of the document (fig. 11.4), while the authors of Lienzo Seler II did not arrange the same place glyphs as a map but put them in a circle around the central “Place of Intertwined Serpents” (figs. XI and 11.5). As a result, the eye of the beholder is immediately caught by this circle. While details connected to the foundation such as the “Stony Hill of the Olla” are included in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec’s, Selden Roll’s and Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2’s presentation of the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” (figs. 1.4, 11.3, and 11.6), this element, as well as the equivalent of the bipartite

FIG. 11.5 Circle of place glyphs and couples of rulers on Lienzo Seler II. Drawing by Renate Sander.



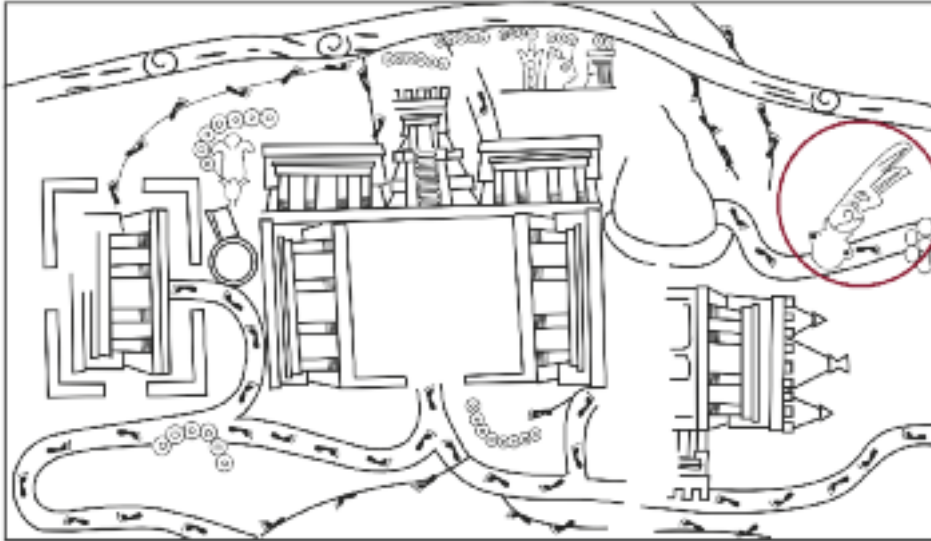


FIG. 11.6 The city center of Cholula on the Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2. Drawing by Renate Sander.

serpent (Codex Baranda, Selden Roll), i.e. the maw of the earth monster, and a stream of water, is placed outside the circle on the lower left hand on Lienzo Seler II (fig. V).

In Lienzo Seler II and Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, the dynastic columns of rulers and place-related events are in the upper half, albeit arranged in different ways due to the respective format of the lienzos, which in one case is a long rectangle (strip) and in the other a square cloth (map).

Hence, different decisions were made with regard to the representation of identical contents, so as to make allowance for both pre-Hispanic arrangement and direction of reading and the distribution of places as on a European map.

THE INTERVENTION OF THE AUTHOR OF THE LIENZO OF TLAPILTEPEC

The analysis of the various styles and contributions of Lienzo Seler II sheds light on an intervention by the author of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (fig. 11.7). Johnson picked up my 1984 discussion by stating

“Style remains a largely unexplored aspect of the Coixtlahuaca Group” and he goes on to explain:

“While there is a great variety of individual painting styles, there is evidence of interaction among the artists. For example, a number of human figures on the Lienzo of Coixtlahuaca II, also known as Lienzo Seler II, of the Coixtlahuaca Group, are so similar to figures on Lienzo of Tlapiltepec as to suggest the possibility that these figures on Coixtlahuaca II were drawn by an artist who also worked on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec” (Johnson 2015b: 10).

New photos and the analyses by the Rathgen-Forschungslabor have yielded new insights into this issue. The analyses showed that the script of the glosses is in a black ink that differs from that used in the color drawings made by the main contributor. As yet, it has not been possible to identify the ink used for the two Spanish priests, Antonio de la Serna and Domingo de Salazar, who are drawn in a different style, as well as for the fields and gardens

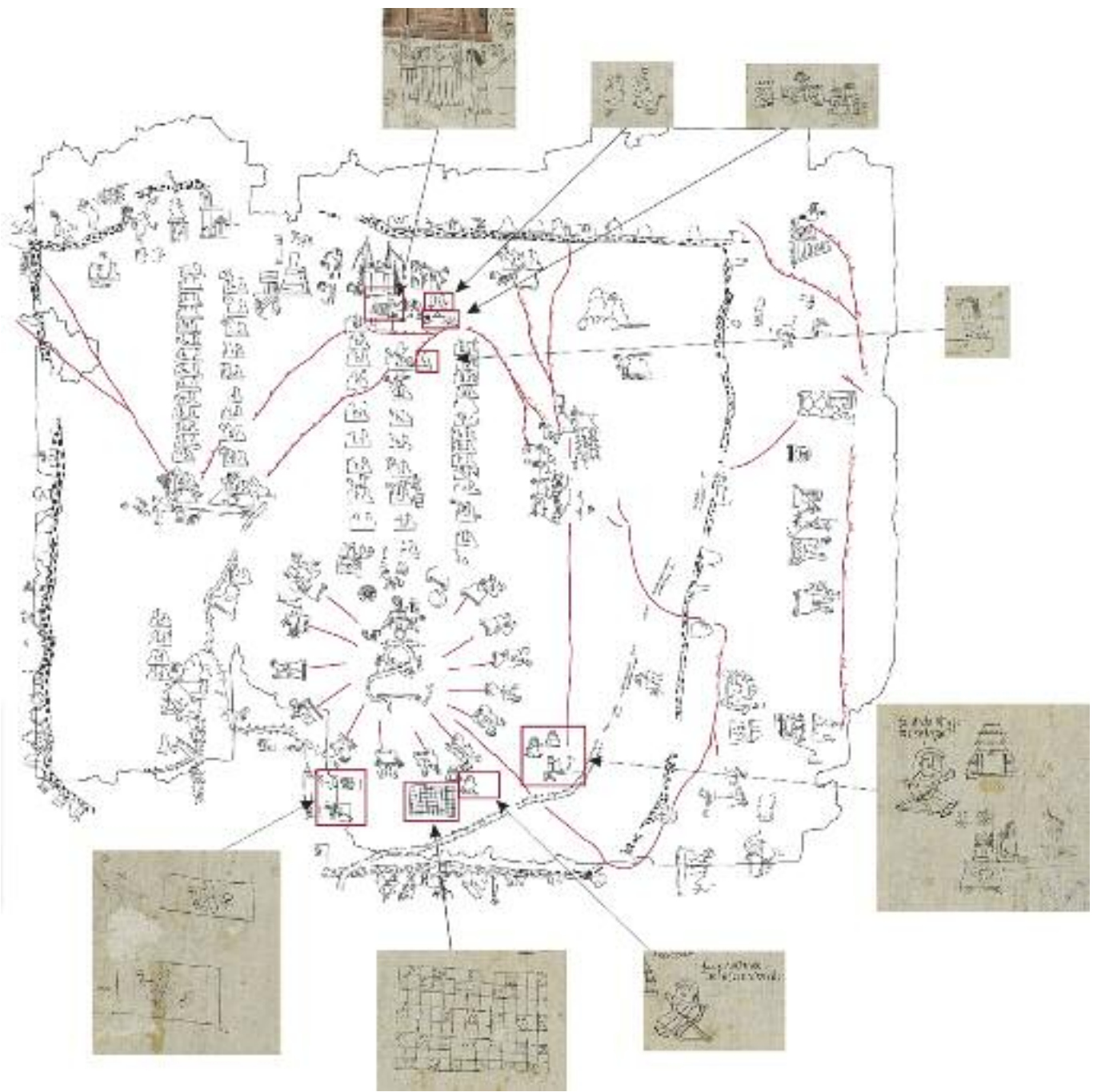


FIG. 11.7 Interventions on Lienzo Selzer II by a different author. Drawing by Renate Sander.

to their left (König 1984: 286; Doesburg 2003: 9).⁸ In addition, the couple above the date of year 6 House, day 8 Lizard is in the same style. Between the information on year and day a small platform with a jewel on top can be seen; an identical depiction of that platform appears on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, where it is to the right of Coixtlahuaca's church, though with a different date (Doesburg 2015: 45, fig. 2.7). Immediately to its left and also carried out in the abovementioned style is an uncompleted drawing of a stepped temple; it is superimposed on the temple of the "Place of Reeds" (Tulancingo), which looks exactly like the stepped temple but is in color. That pyramid is clearly related to the thin connecting

lines with footprints that run all over the lienzo. One such line leads to the uppermost couple of the dynasty of Monte Verde, where the author in question extended the mat behind the woman in order to add another woman (Johnson 2015b: 11, fig. 1.3).

The lines with footprints as well as the style used both in the abovementioned images of persons and the line drawing of the temple correspond to the iconography of the entries on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. If the author of the entries on Lienzo Seler II is identical with the author of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, his attempt to draw the temple of Tulancingo rotated through 90 degrees—that is, the way it appears on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec—on Lienzo Seler II may be a clue to his intentions (fig. 11.7). Did he know a relevant prototype (Johnson 2015a: 102, fig. 3.8)? His additions include the two Spaniards, which indicates that he was obviously keen to bring Lienzo Seler II up to date. By means of adding connecting lines—which are abundant on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec—he wants to help the beholder orient himself/herself on the document and grasp its references (Johnson 2015a: 94, fig. 3.1). Why, however, did the author of the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec make the additions? Did he first try to complete the older Lienzo Seler II, and then make the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec as a separate document at a later point in time? According to the analysis, the entries of the main contribution on Lienzo Seler II are of an earlier date than those made by the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec author (from 1556 onward, see above).

THE CENTRAL SCENE ON LIENZO SELER II: “PLACE OF INTERTWINED SERPENTS” AND THE NEW FIRE CEREMONY

The depiction of a mountain or place with two intertwined serpents is limited to the documents of the Valley of Coixtlahuaca, however it is related to the “binding of the lands” which is known from all over Mesoamerica as an “act of taking hold of the land or laying down a foundation in primordial times, to be constantly reenacted and revived” (Megged 2010: 144). In Central Mexico, the founding of settlements, the establishment of borders, and the placement of boundary stones were celebrated as a ritual that required participation by one’s neighbors who sent their leaders to attend (Megged 2010: 150–153; König 2017: 184, 185, 187). Hence, it seems reasonable to suppose that the places and couples along the New Fire circle represent the most important places and rulers in Coixtlahuaca’s neighborhood. Inside the circle, thirteen lines connect the places with the central “Place of Intertwined Serpents” (Johnson 2015a: 131); the image looks like a wheel with spokes (figs. XI, 11.5 and 11.7). This lends particular emphasis to the connection between these villages and the three places and rulers depicted above the central “Place of Intertwined Serpents.”

THE PLACES OF THE NEW FIRE CIRCLE

In my 1984 study, I identified the place glyph of Tlapiltepec in position IV of our numbering along the circle (fig. 11.5, König 1984: 283, 253). In addition, Johnson identified the town of Aztatla in position III.⁹ By comparing the persons in the dynastic column, Johnson was able to locate the place glyph of Monte Verde in position XV of the circle (fig. 11.5, Johnson 2015a: 123–124).

The remaining thirteen places along the circle largely correspond to the twelve places on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec that were identified by Johnson in the lienzo's lower right section (Johnson 2015a: 115–118, figs. 3.21 and 3.22).

For my identification of the remaining place glyphs along the circle in Lienzo Seler II I use the Roman numerals from König 1984 (238–239) as well as the Arab numerals used by Johnson for the place glyphs on Lienzo of Tlapiltepec (2015a: 116–117). The places are numbered consecutively in the Mesoamerican manner, that is, counterclockwise. I have given new numbers to places missing in Johnson's so-called 'Northern map' (fig. 11.4).

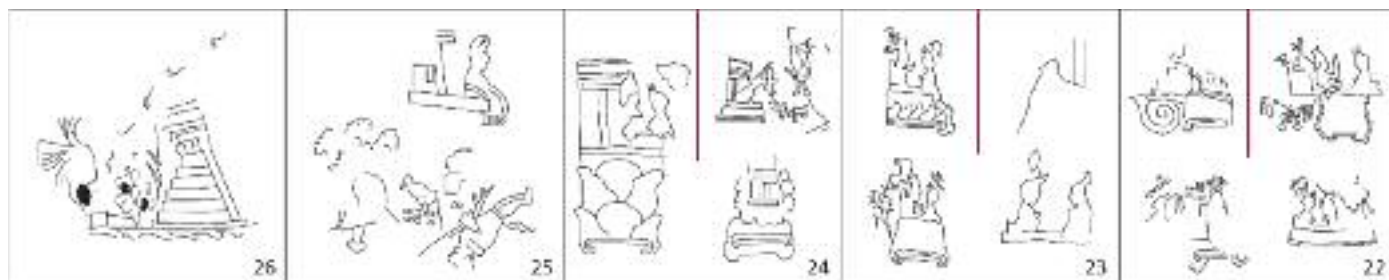
At least six of the place glyphs in the circle reappear on Lienzo Seler II in another place, on its right edge outside the jaguar-skin border in just the same order when reading the glosses (Doesburg 2015: 59, fig. 2.23). These are marked by an asterisk in the list below (fig. 11.5). My sequence starts with the first place sign following the founding sites at Tepeaca-Monte Verde-Miltepec on the left:

- XIII-10* Tree& (?)¹⁰;
- XII-2* Tecali(?), circle of leaves;
- XI-15 Deep Ravine (?);
- X-14* Zapotitlán Salinas (?), tree with blossoms (without number in Johnson)¹¹;
- IX-7 Quecholac;
- VIII-6* Tecamachalco;
- VII-4* Oztoticpac;
- VI-1* Cuauhtinchán;
- V-12 Texcalhueyac;
- IV-13 Tlapiltepec (without number in Johnson);
- III-11 Aztatla;
- II-9 Tehuacán;
- I-3* Tepexi;
- XVI-5 Tepeaca;
- XV-16 Monte Verde (without number in Johnson);
- XIV-8 Miltepec.

FIG. 11.8 A tentative reconstruction of a "Codex Coixtlahuaca." Reading order right to left ending on page 26. Reconstruction by Viola König, drawing by Renate Sander.

CHOLULA AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE "PLACE OF INTERTWINED SERPENTS"

It has been possible to identify and locate most places recorded on Lienzo Seler II and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec. As to the "Place of Intertwined Serpents" central place glyph under



the New Fire ceremony in Lienzo Seler II and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, Doesburg (this volume) proposes to interpret it as a “conceptual place” rather than locating it in real geography, because “serpent mountain” is a known metaphor for the center of the world, the place of the main temple of the community and the point where the natural and supernatural world meet. In fact, in the Codex Aubin, “serpent mountain” is the site of the first New Fire ritual of the Mexica people (Doesburg, this volume). Pacheco Silva¹² and Wake¹³ argue in a similar vein.

The depictions of the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” in all the documents— Lienzo Seler II, Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, Selden Roll, and Codex Baranda —emphasize its outstanding importance by means of various iconographic variants. Is it sufficient to interpret it as a “conceptual place?” Or is there, after all, a connection to a place that actually exists? (Rincón Mautner, this volume).

I have suggested an identification of the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” as Cholula because it is unlikely that Cholula, the center of reference of the region’s entire elite, goes unmentioned in documents that feature images of places such as Cuauhtinchán and Tehuacán in Puebla, and even Mexico Tenochtitlan (König 2017).¹⁴

Cholula is the epitome of the place of feathered serpents, the site of the cult of Quetzalcoatl (maps 1, page 36 and map 3, page 130). On Lienzo Seler II, the large central place glyph is presented as such a place: as a mountain in the blue-green color typical of Cholula (Leibsohn 2009: 44, 117), encircled by two knotted serpents (fig. XVI). One of these represents Quetzalcoatl, as becomes apparent from its feathers; the other, with clouds, represents Mixcoatl. Other attributes refer to Cholula as well: the eagle feathers combined with flints are known from the depictions of the cardinal points in Codex Borgia page 50, which is from Cholula. Here, the eagle represents north (Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. [FAMSI]: 2004). However, flints are also associated with Tezcatlipoca, who likewise symbolizes north and is a variant of Mixcoatl. Cholula is the large center north of the Valley of Coixtlahuaca. In the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec and in the Selden Roll, the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” is surrounded by the symbols of the cardinal points. Besides these attributes, the Selden Roll also features Mixcoatl’s typical black eye mask (fig. 1.4; Boone 2000: 156–175, figs. 100 and 101). In the mountains shown in the Selden Roll and the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec is a quetzal bird in a circle (figs. 1.3, 1.4 and 11.3).¹⁵ These two documents as well as the Codex Baranda show jaguars, or jaguar elements, as well as tortoise *yahuis* (fig. 9.4).¹⁶ At the base of the mountain of the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” on the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec is a ball game court, which is also found on the Selden Roll (figs. 11.3 and 11.1).



Cholula has the largest pyramid in the world and was a religious capital comparable to Rome and Mecca. It attracted pilgrims from far and wide. In the Postclassic, its importance was not least due to its function as a center of the cult of Quetzalcoatl.¹⁷ Only there could rulers be granted the sacred right to rule. For that purpose, rulers from the neighboring kingdoms made a pilgrimage to Cholula as soon as they succeeded to power. They deposited offerings at the temple of Quetzalcoatl to get their right to rulership confirmed. A key component of the pilgrimage was the ceremony of piercing their ears and septum, which was performed by the two high priests of Quetzalcoatl, “White Eagle,” or “Quetzal Bird,” and “Jaguar.” This corresponds to the attributes that appear on the “Place of Intertwined Serpents.”¹⁸

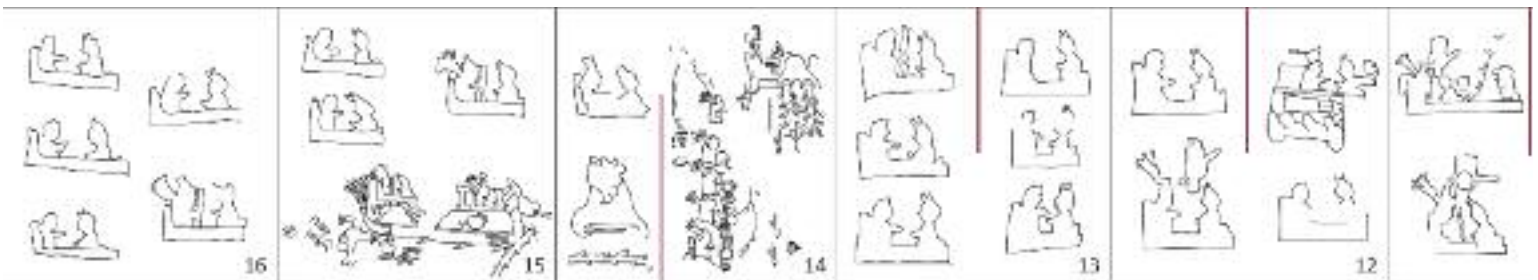
“Every fifty-two years, people from kingdoms whose rulers had been confirmed in Cholula participated in a great pilgrimage to Cholula to make offerings of fine feather cloaks, gold, silver and precious stones to the temple of Quetzalcoatl.” (Lind 2012: 88–96)¹⁹

In return, they were included in the “network of elite alliances throughout the Central and Southern Mexican highlands” (Pohl 2012: 26).

Are the four men drilling new fire under the place glyphs of Miltepec and Monte Verde to be viewed in this context, and do the places along the circle represent that alliance? If this is the case, the scene as a whole with the large-format place glyph – symbolizing Cholula and its two high priests – in the center is a kind of certificate: it confirms the legitimacy of Coixtlahuaca’s claims to rulership and to a territory defined by a boundary.²⁰ Hence, Cholula corresponds to Coatepec as the place where new fire is drilled at the beginning of a new era after 52 years (Castañeda de la Paz and Doesburg 2008: 169–191; König 2017: 187).

How is Cholula depicted in pictorial documents? On the Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2 it appears in the middle as a temple center immediately to the left of the “Stony Hill of the Olla” which is repeatedly discussed in the present volume (fig. 11.6). Water is flowing from the mouth of the vessel. This is another element shared by the Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2 and the documents of the Coixtlahuaca Group (figs. IV, 1.3, 1.4 and 11.3). However, the proximity of “Hill of the Olla” to Cholula on the Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2 contradicts the geographic localization of “Stony Hill of the Olla” inside the Valley of Coixtlahuaca (Doesburg, this volume; Rincón Mautner, this volume). Hence, we have to consider a possible additional metaphorical meaning.²¹

On the Lienzo of Tlaxcala, a serpent with darting tongue looks out of the roof of the place sign of Cholula (Bakewell and Hamann 2008–2012: fig. 2, cell 9). On the map of the



Relación Geográfica of Cholula from 1581, the place is depicted under its alternative name, Tula Cholula (“Tollancholula”), with reed and water (Benson Latin American Collection 2017). In the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* there are several variants: Cholula as the temple of Quetzalcoatl with a feathered platform; as a mountain with a precious stone (as in Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, Selden Roll); and as a large green mountain with a green reptile (Leibsohn 2009: 117, 136, 137).²²

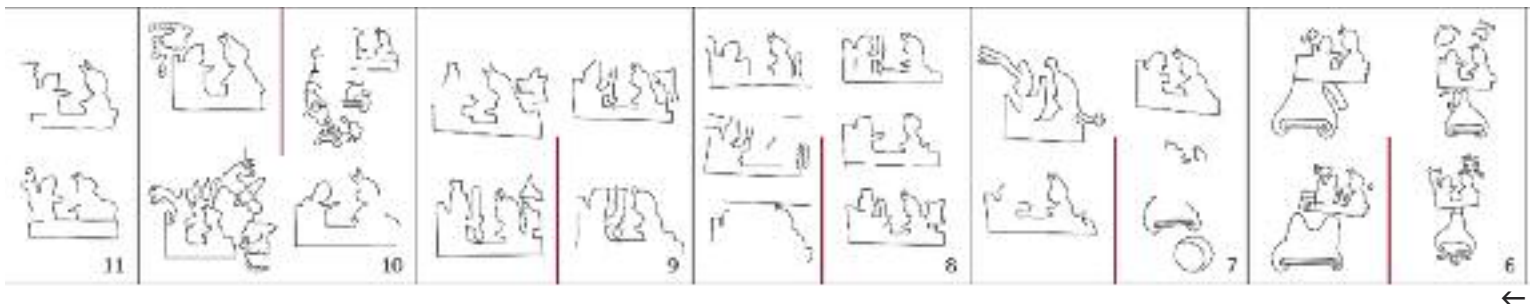
To sum up, most authors agree that the central scene on Lienzo Seler II serves to confirm and commemorate the founding of the place, in the sense of a “conceptual space,” in primordial times. Yet, as Boone states in the initial chapter, “Regardless of its geographic status, this unique place of intertwined serpents is featured only in the Coixtlahuaca stories as the foundational location for royal lineages” (Boone, this volume).

THE SPANISH CONQUEST AND THE END OF THE STORY

In the left corner of the upper edge of Lienzo Seler II, the jaguar-skin border has a bend. That bend, or curve, is used for the depiction of battles inside and outside the border, as well as the eventual establishment of the Spanish administration in year 6 House, day 7 Serpent, represented by an unnamed official above an unnamed indigenous man who has been hanged.²³ An era has come to an end (fig. II).

As yet, it has not been possible to provide the evidence necessary to bolster attempts to associate these depictions with specific, known historical facts (Doesburg 2003: 8–19; Pacheco Silva 2016: 38, 39). In iconographical terms, the scene conveys its message without any specific identifications: the seated Spaniard represents Cortés or, more generally, his locally appointed functionaries; the hanged man and the battles represent the Conquista and the end of indigenous insurgency; the church represents successful missionary work in the Valley of Coixtlahuaca; and the rulers 3 Wind and 1 Grass are the incumbent *caciques*.²⁴ The direction of reading begins in the upper left outside the border, crosses the border, and then proceeds to the right.²⁵

The authors of Lienzo Seler II illustrate the history of Coixtlahuaca’s nobility from the perspective of the latter; the selection of events is subjective. Defeats like the one against the Aztecs go unmentioned, rival places such as Ihuatlán are only mentioned in passing; they are not important. The world south of the border of the Valley of Coixtlahuaca is ignored as well. In the Late Postclassic, the elite of the Valley of Coixtlahuaca was apparently oriented towards the north. It engaged in bilateral exchange with Cholula, Cuauhtinchan, and places between the valley and these cities. The legitimacy of their rule over the Valley of Coixtlahuaca

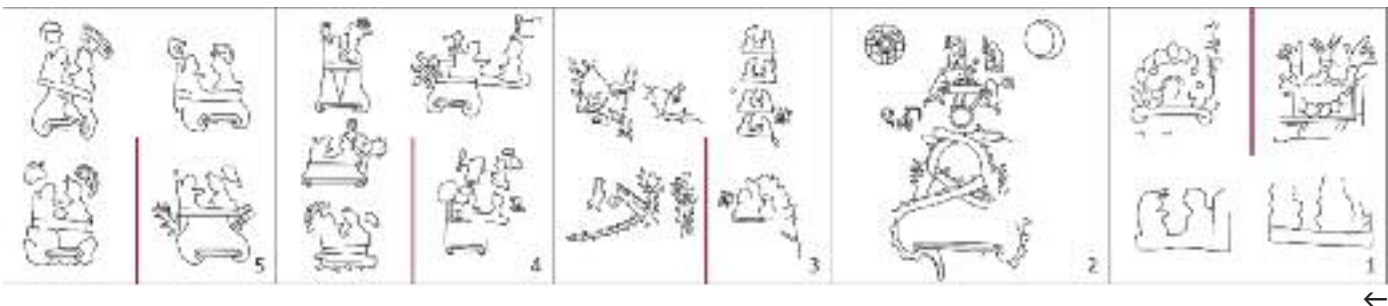


is granted in Cholula, and reaffirmed by marriage alliances. History is depicted as a process, made visible *a posteriori* by lines and footprints, which connect protagonists and their actions, events, genealogies, and places. The main thread of the narrative moves from the mythical origins in the lower right corner to the left showing the most important events—the founding of places and dynasties—in the center, and then continues all the way to the upper left corner where the story ends with the Spaniards seizing power (fig. 11.8). However, the story makes no distinction between myth and historical “truth,” or between ritual repetition and uniqueness. All the other events such as meetings, migration and wars are to be found on the remaining areas of the document, mainly on the right in and outside the border. The author(s) obviously had a hard time placing the contents of a 26 or so pages pre-Hispanic codex onto a cotton-sheet map, which is the reason why some lienzos are so large.

LIENZOS IN THE COURSE OF TIME

The impressive Lienzo of Tlaxcala, which was made at about the same time as Lienzo Seler II, was apparently known supra-regionally. An oversized image of the newly introduced coat of arms with the double-headed eagle appears in the upper middle of that lienzo (Bakewell and Hamann 2008–2012: fig. 1). The coat of arms floats above a likewise gigantic green mountain which features the typical pre-Hispanic iconography of place signs. The image is strikingly similar to the “Place of Intertwined Serpents” with its two snakes raising their heads above the mountain (see discussion note 20). The native elites in the region around Tlaxcala, Cholula, and the neighboring greater region were familiar with visual metaphors. Hence, we can assume that they were impressed by the symbolism—related to claims to rule and territory—of the coat of arms, as well as by the double-headed eagle that suggests principles of dualism. The Lienzo of Tlaxcala was apparently the model *per se* for lienzos and *mapas* all the way down to the south of what is today the state of Oaxaca (König 2010: 20, 25, 66, 115).²⁶

Narratives on post-Conquest lienzos and *mapas* such as Lienzo Seler II are intended to portray mythical and real history as a process in the flow of time.²⁷ They do not express any rupture that occurred when the Spaniards arrived and seized power; they rather integrate that event, as is exemplified by Lienzo Seler II, Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, Codex Baranda, and other documents. Their central theme is the pre-Hispanic legitimization of power and claims to territory. The media, structure, and style of the documents are subject to change, and reflect the reception habits at the time.



NOTES

- 1 For a definition and discussion of the term “contributions” see König 1999: 165–171; on intentional messages in Lienzo Seler II see König 1984: 297.
- 2 See Doesburg 2015: 35–39; Boone, this volume; König, this volume.
- 3 An unusually large number of *mapas* was made for Cuauhtinchan in Puebla (Carrasco and Sessions 2007; Leibsohn 2009).
- 4 Other such cases are known from the neighboring multiethnic regions; one example is Tepeucila which was ruled by a Mazatec and a Cuicatec lineage (Hunt 1978: 674).
- 5 It is noticeable that the fourth part of Codex Vindobonensis obverse ends with four pages featuring four place glyphs each, which corresponds to the sixteen place glyphs along the circle on Lienzo Seler II (König 2017: 179).
- 6 “Most of the information registered in the latter is also found in the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec, except for a boundary list and an emphasis on the Juquila church, which can be identified as belonging to the specific message of the Lienzo de Coixtlahuaca” (Doesburg 2015: 73).
- 7 See for example the Codex Vindobonensis, the Maps of Cuauhtinchan, the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*.
- 8 Both these priests, Domingo de Salazar and Antonio de la Serna, were active in the Mixteca around 1556.
- 9 No. 11 in Johnson’s numbering (Johnson 2015a: 116–117).
- 10 Johnson’s hypothetical no. 10 as Cuyotepeji does not fit with the circle on Lienzo Seler II (Johnson 2015a: 116–117).
- 11 Swanton and Doesburg (2015: 86–87) discuss gloss and place sign on Lienzo of Tlapiltepec.
- 12 “... su importancia, lejos de representar sólo un lugar geográfico específico en el paisaje, recae en la representación del ritual o evento de fundación de las casas gobernantes de la región y/o la fundación de alianzas entre éstos, por lo que sería acertado decir que es la representación de una confederación de familias reales que gobernarían la región del valle de Coixtlahuaca” (Pacheco Silva 2016: 40).
- 13 According to Wake, the toponym of the “Realm of Intertwined Serpents” of the Coixtlahuaca Valley marked Mixteca-Popoloca transition from sacred to real history, a symbol of the beginning of Coixtlahuaca as a united Popoloca nation, and not the federation’s real geographical name (Wake 2007: 231).
- 14 Called “Mountain of Knotted Feathered Serpents” in König 2017.
- 15 “Quetzal” is synonymous with “precious stone.” On the Lienzo of Tlapiltepec this is emphasized in the lower parts of the serpents’ bodies, which are depicted as strings of beads (Johnson 2015a: 130).
- 16 The Selden Roll shows the earth monster of Chicomoztoc giving birth to *yahui* (fig. 1.2).
- 17 For detailed discussions on Cholula’s importance see Carrasco and Sessions 2007: 427–453.
- 18 These priests were called upon as mediators by the neighboring principalities in difficult legal cases.
- 19 Lind is quoting Gabriel Rojas, “Descripción de Cholula” (*Revista Mexicana de Estudios Históricos*, vol. 1, n° 6 [1581] 1927: 164).
- 20 The Spaniards introduced a similar symbolism to New Spain by means of the Hapsburg coat of arms, which consists of the double-headed eagle, sometimes surrounded by the Hapsburg hereditary lands.
- 21 On the Map of Cuauhtinchan no. 2, the place glyph of Coixtlahuaca itself appears in the context of the ritual practice of “contagion” at the very end in the lower right corner (Carrasco and Sessions 2007: 449; Wake 2007: 228–229).
- 22 The animal resembles a jaguar. Both Codex Egerton from the Mixteca Baja (König 1979) and Codex Baranda (Boone 2000: 128, fig. 74) begin with a green mountain and a jaguar.
- 23 Doesburg equates that date with the year AD 1525 (2003: 8, <http://jsa.revues.org/index1489.html>, 05-02-2017).
- 24 Doesburg (2003: 12) identifies 1 Water as a certain Don Francisco who is known from the sources, and 3 Wind as a man by the name of Don Diego. Pacheco Silva draws attention to the symbolic character of the church buildings, which look standardized and stereotyped (2016: 34).
- 25 There is evidence of this pattern in other colonial lienzos and *mapas* from Oaxaca as well (König 2010: 44–45).
- 26 Iconographic details were apparently borrowed from the Lienzo of Tlaxcala (1552), which was made at the same time: the Spaniard on the folding chair as well as the attacking warriors, men fallen in action, and buildings in the battle scenes (<http://mesolore.org/viewer/view/2/The-Lienzo-de-Tlaxcala>, 05-02-2017).
- 27 Cf. Boone’s detailed analysis (2000), summarized on pp. 238–249.