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Article

Travelling the Time Line: The Visual Organisation of New Spanish Manuscripts about the Mexica[*]

Anna Boroffka | Hamburg

During the Spanish conquest (1519–1521) and subsequent mission of the High Valley of modern-day Mexico, all the local pre-Hispanic manuscripts were destroyed.[1] This destruction was not accompanied by a general halt in regional manuscript production, however. On the contrary, numerous new manuscripts were manufactured in Central Mexico on behalf of the Spanish crown and Christian missionaries. About 500 of these manuscripts have survived to this day.[2] Over the last few decades, scholars have analysed these handwritten and hand-drawn colonial-era documents in an effort to detect traces of erased Aztec[3] manuscript cultures and European influences.[4] This article focuses on a subgroup of Central Mexican manuscripts that were produced during the Early Colonial Period (1521–*c*. 1600) and dealt with the pre-Hispanic history of the Mexica, the inhabitants of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan[5] (now Mexico City).[6] Unlike previous research, the paper focuses on the dialectic of destroying, rewriting and restaging the indigenous heritage.[7] In my article, I take pictorial and alphabetic manuscripts equally into account, as I believe this enables us to see things in a broader perspective and witness shifts and transformation processes within the visual organisation and visual narrative of these manuscripts.

I. Aztec manuscripts

It is known that in pre-Hispanic times, Central Mexico was populated by numerous small and large polities consisting of different groups of people and their territory.[8] Several of the larger communities seem to have been independent city-states ruled by a *tlatoani* ('speaker') and surrounded by smaller, dependent polities. The structure of such an independent pre-Hispanic city-state is not completely known to us today and may have varied,[9] but it seems that it was often centred on a relatively large town and its dependencies, including rural areas or civic and ceremonial centres, for example. Colonial records indicate that in pre-Hispanic times some kind of connection was established between the cities

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[*] The research for this paper was carried out at the Sonderforschungsbereich 950 'Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa', Hamburg University, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) and and was part of the general work carried out by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC). In this article, I refer to a definition of visual organisation elaborated at the CSMC. According to this definition, visual organisation relates not only to the layout of the individual page, but regards the manuscript as a whole, including all its constituting factors (such as its size, form and materiality, its architecture, its writings and its drawings). In a broader sense, the visual organisation of a manuscript is thus the visual arrangement of knowledge.

[1] Only 14 manuscripts have survived from the whole of Mesoamerica that can be dated to the pre-Hispanic period with any certainty (three Maya codices, six codices of the Borgia Group and five Mixtec codices). None of these manuscripts are from Central Mexico. Federico Navarrete Linares connects the dialectic of burning and reproducing manuscripts to pre-Hispanic traditions. He emphasises that due to the pre-Hispanic valuation of orally transmitted knowledge, manuscripts were not regarded as unique and irreplaceable objects, but could be destroyed, reproduced, improved and adapted; Navarrete Linares 1998.

[2] Robertson 1959; Cline 1975, 3–252; Boone 1998a.

[3] The umbrella term 'Aztecs' subsumes the heterogeneous Nahuatl-speaking groups living in the Valley of Mexico between the fourteenth and early sixteenth century. According to legend, these groups (often shown as inhabitants of seven different caves) came from a mythical place known as Aztlan. The term was first used by the Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731–1778) and was made popular by Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859).

[4] Besides several other studies, see Radin 1920; Robertson 1959; Nicholson 1971; Boone 1994b; Boone 1998a; Boone 2000.

[5] When Axayacatl, the ruler of Tenochtitlan, conquered the neighbouring city of Tlatelolco in 1473, both city-states were united.

[6] See Elizabeth Hill Boone's fundamental study for a broader discussion of historiographical manuscripts, including Mixtec documents; Boone 2000.

[7] This is also the topic of the sub-project B07 'Collecting, Extinguishing, Rewriting and Restaging Cultural Identity and History: Cultural Encyclopaedias on New Spain' at the Sonderforschungsbereich 950.

[8] Hodge 1984; Gillespie 1998, 234–235.

[9] Lockhart 1991, 9; Lockhart 1992, 14–58; Berdan et al. 1996, 2–3; Gillespie 1998, 234–235; Boornazian Diel 2008, 2.
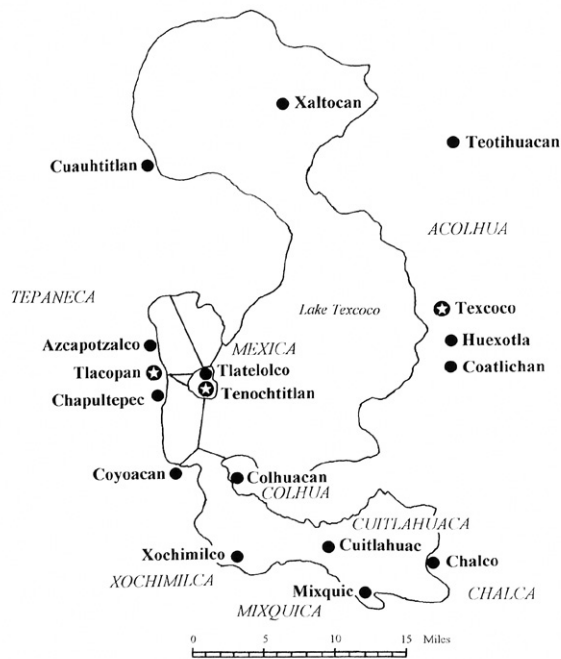
Fig. 1: Map of the High Valley of Mexico around 1519, showing the city-states of the 'Triple Alliance'.

of Tenochtitlan (inhabited by the Mexica), Texcoco (home of the Alcohua) and Tlacopan (present-day Tacuba, associated with the Tepanec). Researchers interpreted this connection of the three city-states and their corresponding ethnic groups as a 'Triple Alliance' (Fig. 1).[10]

This alliance was apparently controlled by the Mexica Tenochtitlan and became the foundation of the Aztec empire, the dominant political power in Central Mexico until the Spanish conquest. It is evident that the heterogeneous Nahuatl-speaking groups living in Central Mexico before the conquest maintained an elaborate manuscript-production system. Due to the lack of surviving manuscripts, however, all our conclusions about the content, materiality and form of these pre-Hispanic manuscripts are drawn from colonial sources and examples. The Franciscan friar Motolinía (Toribio de Benavente, 1482–1569), one of the twelve missionaries to arrive in New Spain in 1524, described five types of Aztec manuscripts,[11] including four kinds of religious manuscripts[12]

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[10] Gillespie 1998.

[11] Borgia Steck 1951, 74–75.

[12] Consisting of ritual calendars or books of the days and feasts of the years; books of dreams, illusions, superstitions and omens; books related to baptism and the names bestowed on children; books of rites, ceremonies and omens relating to marriage; cf. Boone 2000, 22.

(which were clearly idolatrous in his eyes) and one kind of (much more trustworthy) manuscripts about the years and times.[13] Elizabeth Hill Boone has pointed out that a third manuscript group including Aztec documents for practical use (like tribute and tax lists, pictorial testimonies and land records) must have existed besides these two categories.[14] It can furthermore be assumed that the hand-drawn Aztec documents were either guarded in temples or kept in so-called 'book houses' and archives belonging to the palaces of rulers and noble families, depending on their content.[15]

The Aztec writing system is not fully understood any more and has not been entirely deciphered either,[16] but numerous studies about it agree that the Nahuatl-speaking peoples used a recording system consisting of pictures and glyphs (as they are called in Mesoamerican studies) before they were introduced to the Latin alphabet by the Spaniards. There are various calendar and number signs among the glyphs, but also signs used as morphograms (logograms) or phonograms (syllabograms).[17] This notation system, which lived on during the colonial period when it was supplemented with alphabetic glosses,[18] was able to record dates and quantities as well as names of places and persons, including their titles and sociopolitical designations. However, most of the information and the actual narration was not provided via glyphs, but by pictures without defined phonetic values. This way of producing manuscripts, which is called *tlacuilolli* in Nahuatl, translated by the Spaniards as either 'writing' or 'painting', was not a general recording system of spoken language, nor did it create a continuous and reproducible text. This is why some scholars have described

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[13] Concerning the history manuscripts, see Boone 1998a, 152–153; Boone 2000, 22.

[14] Boone 1998a, 150–155, 165–181; Boone 2005, 11. Regarding land records, also see Zorita 1963, 110.

[15] Díaz del Castillo 1960, 1: 273; Pomar 1986, 46, 88; O'Gorman 1985, 1: 286; Boone 1998a, 186.

[16] Marc Zender claimed in 2008 that Alfonso Lacadena's studies (2008a; 2008b) about the Nahuatl scipt published in the same year could be considered the final breakthrough; Zender 2008. Gordon Whittaker strongly refutes this opinion, however; Whittaker 2009.

[17] Whittaker points out that all signs with a phonetical use are derived from logograms involving a rebus application; Whittaker 2009, 62.

[18] On pictorial documents of the post-conquest period up to the end of the sixteenth century, see Boone 1998a.

it as a partial,[19] restricted[20] or limited[21] writing system, while others have criticised this classification, arguing for the general necessity of a broader concept of writing and textual discourse.[22] Due to the character of the Aztec notation system, manuscripts were generally not intended for individual or private reading, but needed an interpreter and – when shown in public – were part of narrative performances and oral traditions.[23] How the interaction between the pictorial document and oral explanation was balanced, whether the drawings were meant to be interpreted as mnemonic devices and scripts for a performance, or if the oral explanations were of a supplementary character is still being debated.[24] But early colonial era sources indicate the status of pictorial manuscripts as verifying documents and evidence, used as a basis for oral accounts and alphabetical writings.[25]

As no pre-Hispanic Aztec manuscripts have been handed down, we can only guess – by analysing colonial era sources and artefacts – what their physical appearance might have been. The extant Central Mexican manuscripts of the Early Colonial Period can generally be grouped into three forms:[26] (1) large, rectangular sheets of paper, (2) long, screenfolded strips and (3) codices bound in quires.[27] The first two book forms are considered to be a continuation of pre-Hispanic tradition, while the third type is an adoption of European codex binding and form.[28] Furthermore, it is known that

the Aztecs – like the Mayas[29] centuries before them – used amate (or *amatl*) sheets produced from the bark of a fig tree as supporting material.[30] In pre-Hispanic times, amate paper was valued as a tribute and also played a significant role in religious rituals. Due to its religious significance, the Spaniards regulated and prohibited the manufacture and use of bark paper.[31] Nevertheless, a great number of surviving Central Mexican manuscripts from the Early Colonial Period are made of amate paper. During the sixteenth century, this material was gradually supplanted by European paper. But until 1575, when a royal concession was granted to open the first paper mill in Culhuacan,[32] European paper used for Central Mexican manuscripts had to be imported, and therefore was generally spared for documents of a certain importance, like the codices sent to the Spanish court.

II. The picture manuscripts about Mexica history

The pictorial history manuscripts that are still extant are of a regional character. They do not provide a general historiography of Central Mexico or the Aztec realm, but narrate the history of their respective communities.[33] Given the rivalry of pre-Hispanic polities and their jockeying for power during colonial times, they have to be analysed not only as identity-forming documents, but as media with which to obtain and defend political and economic benefits. This second aspect will be discussed in more detail later on.

The majority of colonial period manuscripts about the pre-Hispanic history of the Mexica deal with their departure from the mythical place of Aztlan, their migration to the Valley of Mexico and the founding of Tenochtitlan.[34] Some of them also cover later times and narrate how the Mexica expanded their territory by conquering the surrounding cities until they were defeated by the Spanish army led by Hernán

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[19] Barthel 1968, 283.

[20] Prem 1992, 54–55.

[21] Whittaker 2009.

[22] Mignolo 1995, 7–8, 20; Boone 1994a; Boone 2000, 28–63; Boornazian Diel 2008, 8. Also see Lacadena 2008a, 17.

[23] Boone 1994b, 71–72; Navarrete Linares 1998, 60–61; Boone 2005; Navarrete Linares 2011.

[24] Couch 1989, 10, 78; Lockhart 1992, 335; Leibsohn 1994; Boone 1994b, 71–72; Boone 1998a, esp. 192–193; Navarrete Linares 2011, 175–176.

[25] Cummins 1995; Folger 2003.

[26] See Gumbert 1993 as well.

[27] In Mesoamerican studies, all pre-Hispanic and colonial pictorial manuscripts are called codices, although they are not actually bound in quires.

[28] The shifts of visual organisation accompanying the replacement of pre-Hispanic with colonial manuscripts are described in Robertson 1959 and Escalante Gonzalbo 1996.

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[29] All four known Maya codices (the *Dresden Codex*, *Madrid Codex*, *Paris Codex* and *Grolier Codex*) are made of amate paper. The earliest of them date back to the thirteenth century.

[30] Some of the surviving pre-Hispanic codices from other regions in Mexico consist of animal hide. On the production of amate paper, see Asunción 2003, 13. A sociocultural history of bark paper production is in López Binnqüist 2003.

[31] López Binnqüist 2003, 89–92.

[32] Hunter 1978, 479.

[33] Lockhart 1992, 377; Boone 1998a, 181–190.

[34] Also see Levin Rojo 2014.

Cortés (1485–1547). Although the content of the manuscripts is more or less identical, the extant picture manuscripts differ strongly in their appearance. Their visual organisation can be roughly divided into two types, each of which shapes a different kind of historiographical narrative. The first type is the cartographic history or historiographical topography known as a *mapa* ('map'), painted on large rectangular sheets of amate or European paper. These *mapas* were read multidirectionally and depict Mexica history embedded in topographic surroundings. The second type is named *tira* ('strip'); these manuscripts are made of long screenfold strips of amate or European paper glued together, showing Mexica history in relation to a time line running from left to right. Furthermore, a subgroup or modification of the *tira* manuscripts also exists; these pictorial manuscripts are made of amate or European paper bound in quires like European codices, but they stick to the horizontal page format that *tira* manuscripts have. Besides these pictorial forms of historiography, numerous alphabetic manuscripts were written about the Mexica and their history during colonial times. These manuscripts will be discussed later on.

The categorisation of historiographical manuscripts applied above is based on – and modifies – previous attempts to analyse and categorise extant Mexica history documents.[35] The anthropologist Paul Radin was the first to present such an attempt in 1920.[36] He divided the manuscripts into 'primary' and 'secondary' sources according to their assumed proximity to an indigenous heritage. Following his classification, 'primary' sources are the pictorial documents painted in a pre-Hispanic style (as well as some early alphabetic manuscripts based on – and replacing – native pictorial documents that got lost or were destroyed).[37] 'Secondary' sources are the alphabetic – and often illuminated – manuscripts written by Spaniards or mestizos. Radin furthermore established three subcategories of 'primary' sources, defined by their content: manuscripts dealing with the Mexica migration, manuscripts about the post-migration (or imperial) area, and manuscripts including both periods. His division between pictorial and alphabetic manuscripts and the subcategorisation of

pictorial manuscripts according to the period they cover is of fundamental importance without a doubt, although since all existing Central Mexican manuscripts were produced under colonial rule, they all integrate pre-Hispanic and European elements, combining them in unique colonial styles. A division between 'primary' and 'secondary' sources is therefore hard to defend. In this context, I believe it is even problematic to speak of 'pre-Hispanic' and 'European' manuscript elements or traditions, as they might have different stylistic origins, but are all part of the contemporary repertoire. Nevertheless, I have used these terms here, not in an essentialist way or to describe a temporal development, but to mark different aesthetic values mixed together in a hybrid texture.[38] It is important to bear in mind that this texture is more than just the sum of its individual elements; it is a new, multi-layered, transcultural creation.[39]

Analysing the pictorial manuscripts of sixteenth-century Central Mexico, it becomes clear that their heterogeneity is basically in terms of their visual organisation and, thus, a heterogeneity of visual narrative. In the following, these different kinds of visual narratives will not be discussed as different stages of a teleological development, but – taking their time of origin into account – as synchronic phenomena. This is a perspective that has not been regarded sufficiently yet. In 1959, art historian Donald Robertson published a pioneering study on painted manuscripts from the Valley of Mexico.[40] On the grounds of their visual organisation (or 'style' as Robertson put it), he divided the historiographical manuscripts into two groups:[41] (a) 'time-oriented' manuscripts based on time signs and organising historical events with the aid of a time line, and (b) 'place-oriented' manuscripts based on place signs and narrating history embedded in a topography. He furthermore assumed that the 'place-oriented' histories had been developed from the older 'time-oriented' histories. By doing this, Robertson established a basic distinction regarding pictorial Aztec history manuscripts,

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[35] Radin 1920; Robertson 1959; Nicholson 1971; Boone 2000; Navarrete Linares 2000.

[36] Radin 1920.

[37] One example of such an alphabetic 'primary' source is the anonymous *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas*, which is thought to have been written in the 1530s.

[38] I am referring to a concept of hybridity which does not emphasise the development of cultural codes, but their usage. This model was elaborated by Homi K. Bhabha, Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, amongst others; Bhabha 1994; Dean and Leibsohn 2003. For further discussion of this topic, see Kern 2010.

[39] In doing so, I follow a definition of transculturality used by Wolfgang Welsch; Welsch 1997. Also see Schütze and Zapata Galindo 2007. On processes of transcultural negotiation in Mexico, see Kern 2013.

[40] Robertson 1959.

[41] Ibid., 62–65.

which was accepted by other scholars and further developed by H. B. Nicholson and Boone.[42] Up to now, though, no evidence has actually been presented to back up the claim that one form of visual organisation is indeed older than the other. A new contribution to the debate on how to analyse and classify the heterogeneous manuscripts about Mexica history was made in 2000 by Federico Navarrete Linares, who generally refutes Robertson's hypothesis of 'place-oriented' and 'time-oriented' manuscripts.[43] Referencing Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory,[44] Navarrete Linares describes the visual narration of all pictographic migration manuscripts as chronotopes structured by entangled time and space lines. He argues that this kind of visual narrative, which he considers to be a native tradition, was adapted to different manuscript formats during colonial times, but basically kept its intrinsic meaning. In doing so, Navarrete Linares focuses on the similarities of the narrative rather than on its formal attributes. This idea is an interesting new approach to the corpus of pictorial history manuscripts, which shall be discussed in more detail later on. Nevertheless, I will stick to a classification of the manuscripts according to their visual organisation. Aspects like format, materiality, reading direction and structure of content are not only important from a reader-response critical point of view, but help to define and describe modifications and transformations within the visual arrangement of knowledge, symptomatic of the negotiation and visual rewriting of Mexica history during the Early Colonial Period.

II.1 Cartographic histories

The first type of colonial period manuscript about the Mexica migration, the *mapa,* is composed of narrative pictorial sequences, place and name glyphs and calendar signs and is not to be confused with a map in the modern sense of the word.[45] These manuscripts were not intended to serve as orientation guides in an unknown territory, but were made to relate an identity defining legend of origin. Unlike most of the mediaeval and early modern European chronicles or annals we know of today, the narrative of the *mapas* is not structured according to a sequence of years, but according to changes of place and distances travelled. Their way of recording history is thus based on territories and movements rather than dates. The result could be described as a localised or – as Robertson put it – 'place-oriented' historiography.[46]

One of the cartographic histories is the *Mapa de Sigüenza*[47] (Fig. 2), which was produced on a large piece of amate paper (54.5 × 77.5 cm) in the sixteenth century.[48] The narrative starts with the migration of the Mexica from Aztlan and concludes with the founding of Tenochtitlan in the Valley of Mexico. Aztlan, according to legend an island in a lake, can be seen in the top-right corner of the map. The island is pictured as a pre-Hispanic mountain glyph, while the rectangular form of the image and the waves of the surrounding water resemble European woodcuts. Two heads with attached name glyphs and a canoe with a human lying in it are floating on the waves. Some effort has been made to interpret the content of the images.[49] On a tree emerging from the island and painted in a European style, an equally European-style bird is perched, which represents Huitzilopochtli, the god who is said to have guided the Mexica tribe on its long journey.[50] Pre-Hispanic speech glyphs in front of the bird's beak indicate it is uttering sounds, but they provide no details or specification about the kind of sound or speech. This creates a kind of ambiguity in the narrative that can also be found in other parts of the manuscript and shows the necessity of additional orally transmitted knowledge provided by an interpreter.

A continuous line and footprints embedded therein show the path travelled by several successive generations of Mexica, establishing a coherent group beyond the individual lifetimes of the travellers. The trail first forms a circle around Aztlan,

[42] Nicholson 1971; Boone 1994b; Boone 2000.

[43] Navarrete Linares 2000; Navarrete Linares 2011.

[44] Holquist 1981.

[45] Boone 1994b, 60–64; Boone 2000, 162–196. Boone assumes that the Aztecs also knew about and produced maps designed for orientation ('mapas de ruta') before the Spanish conquest, although no such document has actually survived; Boone 1998b, 20–23. In his letter to Charles I, Hernán Cortés wrote about a map of the Gulf Coast drawn on a piece of cloth which he received from Moctezuma in 1519; Hernández-Barba 1963, 65. See Mundy 1996 for the maps included in the *Relaciones Geográficas* commissioned by Philip II (1556–1598) between 1578 and 1584 to get an

overview of his new territories (esp. 91–133 for the pre-Hispanic heritage of these maps). Also see Leibsohn 1995. For maps about land concessions, see Russo 2005.

[46] Robertson 1959, 62–65.

[47] *Mapa de Sigüenza*, sixteenth century, amate paper, 54.5 × 77.5 cm, Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

[48] Boone 1998b, 25–28; Boone 2000, 166–173.

[49] Boone 2000, 166.

[50] On the representation of Huitzilopochtli, see Boone 1989.

Fig. 2: *Mapa de Sigüenza*, 16ᵗʰ century, amate paper, 54.5 × 77.5 cm, Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

then leads to the bottom-right corner, from there to the top-left corner and finally to the Valley of Mexico in the bottom-left corner of the map. Unlike the surrounding territory, the High Valley around Lake Texcoco is depicted more in detail (becoming more geographic than toponymic) and is mainly upside down.[51] One has to turn the sheet around to follow the narration, which splits up into three paths. This change of perspective indicates the end of the Mexica migration story. The longest and most important of the three paths runs through the dense vegetation of the plateau and crosses one of the straight canals, referring to the sophisticated drainage system the Mexica created after settling in the valley. The path finally reaches the place where a Nopal cactus, which alludes to the founding myth of Tenochtitlan, marks the future site of the city on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco – depicted here as the centre of two canals that cross. The setting of the

newly founded city is similar to the site of Aztlan, which had been left behind. (That is what the manuscript suggests, at least.) Scholars are still debating about the location of the historical Aztlan – if ever it existed – and the unsolved question of whether the memory of Aztlan was influenced retrospectively by Tenochtitlan or Tenochtitlan was built in the middle of a lake with the purpose of creating a new Aztlan.[52] The existing pictorial and alphabetic histories point out the similarities between both cities. The reason for this, as Navarrete Linares has suggested, might be found in a legitimation strategy used by the Mexica to claim the island of Tenochtitlan as their own, arguing that they came from a place that was nearly identical.[53]

As Navarrete Linares emphasises, the *Mapa de Sigüenza* combines spatial and temporal devices.[54] A closer look at it

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[51] Boone divides the depicted areas of the *Mapa Sigüenza* into a sequential space ('espacio secuencial'), which reaches up to the Valley of Mexico, and a real space ('espacio real') depicting the area around Lake Texcoco; Boone 1998b, 28.

[52] Levin Rojo 2014.

[53] Navarrete Linares 1997, 15.

[54] Navarrete Linares 2000, 35.

reveals that the devices are not equally balanced, however. The path from Aztlan to the Valley of Mexico is marked by place glyphs; in accordance with the pre-Hispanic counting system, dots (or disks) indicate how many years the Mexica spent in each place. 'Year bundles' alluding to the new fire ceremony called 'Binding of the Years' show the closing of a 52-year cycle. Interestingly, both ways of measuring time lead to different results, creating a temporal vagueness: adding up the year signs, it seems the Mexica travelled for less than 200 years, but according to the bundles it was more than 400.[55] As Boone has pointed out, though, this discrepancy is of little importance for the narrative.[56] Other elements of time counting, such as calendar signs, have not been included. Consequently, the actual historiographical narrative is implied in the path: several generations of Mexica travelled over hundreds of years. In which year they started, when they reached which city or on which date they founded Tenochtitlan might also have been part of the additional explanation provided by a narrator, but details of this kind are not revealed by the manuscript itself.

II.2 Screenfold manuscripts containing annals

The second kind of historiographical manuscripts about the Mexica – the *tiras*, or screenfold annals manuscripts – were geared to time rather than place and movement.[57] A well-known example is provided by the *Tira de Tepechpan*[58] (Fig. 3) produced in the sixteenth century. The strip is over six meters long and composed of 20 sheets of amate paper. A time line made up of Mesoamerican calendar signs divides the manuscript into a top and bottom half. Each sign symbolises one year. Some of the calendar signs have European year dates written beside them. Based on these calendrical translations, it is assumed that the time line runs from 1298 to 1596.[59] The upper register is devoted to the founding of the minor Central Mexican city of Tepechpan and the history of its inhabitants and regents, while the lower register depicts the history of the Mexica during their migration and the imperial and colonial periods.

The beginning of the *tira* is in a poor condition, but the first miniature on the lower register seems to be a painting of two Chichimec hunters, indicating the nomadic origin of the Mexica.[60] The following miniatures show single events which, according to legend, happened during the migration[61] and conclude with the founding of Tenochtitlan. However, the migration itself is not part of the visual narrative. The succession of miniatures is structured by the ongoing time line, not a path, track, or other territorially embedded movement. The Mexica migration is therefore not a spatial action, but a series of dated historical events.

Robertson considered the *tira* a prime example of 'time-oriented' pictorial history, representing the oldest form of Central Mexican historiographical manuscripts.[62] Boone followed this theory, describing the 'unbroken ribbon of time' that the manuscript presents as the original form of Aztec pre-Hispanic annals.[63] She furthermore suggested that the unbroken year account was developed by the Mexica to present their 'official' history.[64] Lori Boornazian Diel, who emphasised the hybrid and palimpsestual nature of the *Tira de Tepechpan*, also classified the layout as shaped by the model of the 'Mexica annals format.'[65] As we are ignorant of any Aztec predecessor to this kind of historiography, though, the unbroken ribbon of time could just as well be a colonial invention, aiming to integrate the migration legend into a European chronology.[66] This chronology unites the pre-Hispanic and Early Colonial Period to an ongoing

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[55] Boone 2000, 196.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Boone 1994b, 64–71; Boone 2000, 197–237.

[58] *Tira de Tepechpan*, sixteenth century, amate paper (20 sheets), 21 × 625 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Mexicain 13–14.

[59] Boornazian Diel 2008, 14.

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[60] Boomazian Diel 2008., 23–40.

[61] The scenes depict the Mexica settlement at Chapultepec, the battle of Chapultepec and the expulsion of the Mexica, the flight of the Mexica to Contitlan and the sacrifice of Huitzilihuitl and his daughter.

[62] Robertson 1959, 62–65.

[63] Boone 2000, 198–200; the quotation is on p. 199.

[64] Boone 1996.

[65] Boornazian Diel 2008, esp. 7–11; the quotation is on p. 10.

[66] Similar forms of visualising temporality can be found in other manuscripts from colonial times as well, which try to establish a correlation of Mesoamerican and European calendar systems. One example is provided by the *Codex Saville* (New York City, Museum of the American Indian, Cat. No. 13/6913). The vertically painted *tira* manuscript made of amate paper shows a vertical row of turquoise disks connected to images related to pre-Hispanic and Christian symbols. The manuscript was purchased in Peru but is attributed to the Texcoco region of Central Mexico. The *Codex Mexicanus* and the *Tovar Calendar* also use a row of disks (filled with alphabetical letters in this case). In the *Codex Mexicanus*, the disks are arranged horizontally, whereas they are vertical in the *Tovar Calendar*.

Fig. 3: *Tira de Tepechpan*, 16th century, amate paper, 21 × 625 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Mexicain 13–14, fols 1ʳ–5ʳ.

narrative supported by several glosses besides the calendar signs and translating them into European dates, suggesting a transcultural equivalence of temporal and recording concepts.

II.2.1 Media of claims to power

In general, Boone described the *mapas* and annals or *tira* manuscripts as community pictorials painted to configure group identity.[67] She furthermore emphasises that during colonial times they became an important means of arguing for claims to power.[68] The reason for this lies in the usage of pictorial documents as legal proof[69] and the political situation at the time. After the conquest, the Spaniards installed a ruling system quite similar to the pre-Hispanic political system before the Aztec 'Triple Alliance': they divided the existing polities into larger and independent city-states ('cabeceras') ruled by a *tlatoani* and smaller and dependent communities ('sujetos').[70] The dependent communities were forced to pay tributes and had to work for the independent city-states, which in turn had the same obligations to the Spanish crown. By doing this, the Spaniards elevated the political position of numerous communities to the status of former members of the 'Triple Alliance'.[71] Amongst other

things, this accelerated the scramble and rivalry among the communities to benefit from the political reorganisation of Central Mexico in early colonial times.

Their claim to power was based on pictorial histories which enhanced and manipulated history, including documents like the *Tira de Tepechpan*.[72] Lori Boornazian Diel's comparison of the two registers suggests that the visual organisation was used to assign value and hierarchy to the two narrative strands, evidence of Tepechpan's rivalry with Tenochtitlan. Thus, the upper register shows people from Tepechpan as being noble, civilised and morally superior, whereas the Mexica are denigrated as uncivilised and insignificant. The colouring of the time line – alternating between red, blue, yellow and green – is likewise based on the succession of regents of Tepechpan, not the changes of ruler in Tenochtitlan. The historically insignificant small town of Tepechpan rather than the leading power of the 'Triple Alliance' and capital of the Aztec empire thus became the centre of the historiographical narrative. Consequently, the founding of Tenochtitlan, which took place in the year '2 House' (1325) according to other artefacts, was re-dated on the *tira* time line to around 35 years after the founding of Tepechpan.[73] This time shift not only denies the Mexica city-state's historical status as the older settlement, but it disconnects the founding of the city from the calendar sign '2 House', a very symbolic sign for the Mexica.[74] The plain depiction of

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[67] Boone 1998a, 181–190.

[68] Ibid. Also see Gibson 1964, 50–57; Boornazian Diel 2008, 5–8.

[69] Cummins 1995.

[70] Gibson 1964, 33–37; Lockhart 1992, 20; Boone 1998a, 196; Gillespie 1998, 235; Boornazian Diel 2008, 4–5.

[71] Apparently, the Spaniards did not define *cabeceras* as former independent city-states ruled by a *tlatoani*, but used Spanish or Caribbean terms like *Señor* or *cacique* to refer to the position of the ruler, which had no political significance for the Nahua-speaking people. As Gibson has pointed out, the

disuse of the original Nahua title made it possible for minor communities, which had been dependent before, to rightfully call themselves *cabeceras*; Gibson 1964, 36.

[72] Boornazian Diel 2008. Also see Boone 1998a, 186–190.

[73] Boone 1992, 187; Boornazian Diel 2008, 40–41.

[74] Boornazian Diel 2008, 42.

the founding of Tenochtitlan and the comparatively carefully designed miniature of the founding of Tepechpan further accentuate this hierarchy in artistic terms. Elsewhere, too, the *tira* devalues the history of the Mexica and at the same time enhances the value of the inhabitants of Tepechpan. The lower register, for example, shows two people prepared for sacrifice, which are assigned to the year '2 Reed' (and hence the new-year ritual) and who have been identified as a Mexica tribal leader and his daughter.[75] In the upper register, the Mexica human sacrifice is contrasted with an animal sacrifice at the Tepechpan temple.[76] Boornazian Diel argues that this juxtaposition aims to denigrate the Mexica, pointing out that at the time the *tira* was produced, human sacrifice was deemed a comparatively uncivilised, 'barbaric' act that was morally inferior to animal sacrifice.[77] Interestingly, the animal sacrifice is ascribed to four Mexica couples who moved to Tepechpan. Their moral superiority is thus defined by the fact that they now belong to Tepechpan and the upper register, not by their ethnic origin.

II.2.2 Entanglements of time lines and spatial units

Only one screenfold *tira* manuscript is known from the Mexica area of Central Mexico. It is called *Tira de la Peregrinación*[78] and consists of 22 sheets of amate paper

glued together to form a strip about five and a half meters long (Fig. 4). The unfinished, monochrome sixteenth-century manuscript shows the events of relevance to the Mexica, starting with their legendary departure from Aztlan in the year '1 Flint' up to the year '6 Reed'. In the pre-Hispanic calendar system, a cycle is completed once every 52 years and the counting then starts anew with the calendar sign '1 Flint'. As no superordinate counting system existed, further information is required to differentiate between the distinct 52-year cycles. That is why a translation of the depicted dates always bears the risk of misinterpretation if no additional European year dates have been written next to the Mesoamerican signs (like in the *Tira de Tepechpan*). The calendrical deciphering of the *Tira de la Peregrinación* is still being discussed for this reason and scholars' interpretations of it vary. Some scholars believe the manuscript to cover the years from 1116 to 1303,[79] while more recent research argues that it most likely spans from 1168 to 1355.[80] Unlike the *Tira de Tepechpan*, the *Tira de la Peregrinación* doesn't show a continuous but an interrupted year account. Boone explains the broken time line as a consequence of its visual organisation.[81] She argues that an annal's narrative is unable to present a migration story, which is basically the narrative of 'the movement of people across the land'.[82]

In the *Tira de la Peregrinación*, the time line was shaped into blocks of time which, like the dots or disks in the *Mapa*

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[75] Ibid., 36–37.

[76] Ibid., 36.

[77] Ibid., 38–40. A transcultural perspective concerning the European construction and strategic appliance of the Mexica sacrificial rituals is provided in a study by Margit Kern; Kern 2013.

[78] *Tira de la Peregrinación* (*Codex Boturini*), sixteenth century, amate paper (22 sheets), 19.8 × 549 cm, Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

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[79] Brotherston 1992, 106.

[80] Johansson Keraudren 2007, 8–9. Among other aspects, this hypothesis is based on information from the *Codices Azcatitlan*, *Mexicanus* and *Ríos*.

[81] Boone 2000, 213.

[82] Boone 2000, 213.

Fig. 4: *Tira de la Peregrinación (Codex[59] Boturini)*, 16th century, amate paper, 19.8 × 549.0 cm, Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, fols 4ʳ–8ʳ.

de Sigüenza, show how long the Mexica stayed in a given place. The clusters of calendar signs are only kept together by a thin black line, which is hardly visible anymore and might have been a later addition. In comparison with the *Tira de Tepechpan*, the interruption of the time line can be read as a power shift between temporal and spatial elements serving to structure the narrative: by dividing the time line, the manuscript creates room for the migration narrative. This spatial narration integrates the temporal elements, but uses them like the cartographic histories to mark an ellipsis or a pause during the journey. This raises major doubts as to the correctness of Robertson's classification of *tira* manuscripts generally being 'time-oriented.'[83] It rather argues in favour of Navarrete Linares' theory of temporal and spatial entanglements structuring the visual narrative of Mexica history.[84]

Another variation of a discontinued time line can be found in the *Codex Azcatitlan*[85] (Fig. 5), which likewise depicts the migration of the Mexica and their arrival in the Valley of Mexico. On a symbolical level, as Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo has shown, the drawings connect the Mexica migration with the Israelites' leaving slavery in Egypt by including palm trees, following the model of engravings taken from a biblical book of Exodus.[86] This parallel between the Mexica and Israelites, who were both guided through the hardships

of their journey into a promised land by their god, is more than an eclectic visual incidence showing the reception of European images during the manufacturing of colonial codices. In fact, it reflects a colonial interpretation and parallel reading of the Mexica and their history: several of the Christian missionaries like the Franciscans Motolinía and Gerónimo de Mendieta (1525–1604) and the Dominican Diego Durán[87] (1537–1587) assumed the Mexica to be one of the Ten Lost Tribes of the Old Testament.[88] As the Apocalypse of John (7, 4–9) tells us that the lost tribes will reappear on the day of the Last Judgment, the identification of the Mexica as being of Jewish descendent also implied the approaching end of the world.[89]

The *Codex Azcatitlan* is made of European paper and was bound in quires, like European codices. Several sections of the manuscript, which is generally dated to the second half of the sixteenth century or the first half of the seventeenth, are painted in a European style, while other parts try to stay close to pre-Hispanic painting traditions. To explain the diversity of styles employed, Robertson suggested that the manuscript might be a hastily made seventeenth- or even eighteenth-century copy of a lost original.[90] But Navarrete Linares argues that the composition of the codex is coherent, however in a colonial time sense of the word, mixing European and Mesoamerican painting traditions

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[83] Robertson 1959.

[84] Navarrete Linares 2000.

[85] *Codex Azcatitlan*, sixteenth or seventeenth century (?), European paper, 25 folios (21 × 28 cm), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mexicain 59–64.

[86] Escalante Gonzalbo 1996, 252–253.

[87] *Durán Codex* (*Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme*), fols 2ʳ–4ᵛ ('Capitullo Primero de donde se sospecha que son los yndios destas yndias y yslas ytierra firme del Mar oceano').

[88] Huddleston 1967, 33–47.

[89] Phelan 1956.

[90] Robertson 1959, 69, 184.

in an attempt to reach audiences with different cultural backgrounds.[91] This cultural complexity is also reflected by the visual organisation. Even if the pictorial manuscript is presented in the disguise of a European codex, the horizontal format and the narrative extending beyond the boundaries of the pages follow a pre-Hispanic manuscript tradition: the painters took care not to create any breaks whenever they reached the end of a page, connecting the miniatures as an ongoing narration. Hence the codex can be read like a pre-Hispanic screenfold by flipping the pages.

The manuscript covers the migration and the imperial and colonial period. By organising these periods in a row, the manuscript's architecture connects them to a continual historiography. The section of the Mexica migration itself includes fragmented sequences and blocks of time distributed across the pages. Unlike in the *Tira de la Peregrinación*, the sequence of years assigned to individual stages of the migration does not mark the time spent at a given place, but the duration of the changes of place. Hence they are not used to indicate and describe a pause during the journey, but to describe the distances travelled. Or as Navarrete Linares puts it, 'time [is being] measured by the rhythm of the stopovers of the migrants in their journey'.[92]

The journey itself is expressed by a path that meanders across the pages from bottom to top and from top to bottom. The manuscript's surface is perceived and explored as a three-dimensional space, filled with rivers to be crossed and mountains to be climbed. In several cases, the path disappears behind a hill, depicted in the form of a pre-Hispanic glyph,

adding a spatial character to the textual element. The arrangement of the calendar signs within the pages tends to be subordinated and in some cases even ambivalent and disconnected from the main narration provided by the continuous path. It is the Mexica's track, not the calendar signs, that structures the migration story by connecting the different historical events, thereby recalling the visual narrative of topographic historiographical manuscripts.

Even in some of the migration manuscripts that keep an uninterrupted time line chronology, we can see attempts to subordinate the time line to the territorial narrative rather than vice versa. One example is the *Codex Mexicanus*[93] (Fig. 6). Produced presumably at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century,[94] this manuscript consists of several pieces of amate paper and was fastened like European codices. As in the *Codex Azcatitlan*, the pages are of a horizontal format and were painted and written on both sides. The painters took care to draw the time line at the same height on each page. Like in the *Codex Azcatitlan*, this creates a narrative that does not correspond with the limits of the pages but develops beyond them, connecting them to an ongoing narration in the tradition of pre-Hispanic screenfold manuscripts.

The counting of the years starts with a miniature showing the Mexica leaving Aztlan. Or rather, the counting of the years is introduced immediately after the Mexica's departure. What we see is a group of people, some of

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[91] Navarrete Linares 2004.

[92] Ibid., 153.

[93] *Codex Mexicanus*, sixteenth or seventeenth century, amate paper, 51 folios (10 × 20 cm), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mexicain 23–24.

[94] Although the counting of the years goes up to 1590, the last annotation is actually for 1583; see Robertson 1959, 122–125; Prem 1978; Boone 1994b, 65–68; Boone 2000, 67–69; Boornazian Diel 2008, 25.
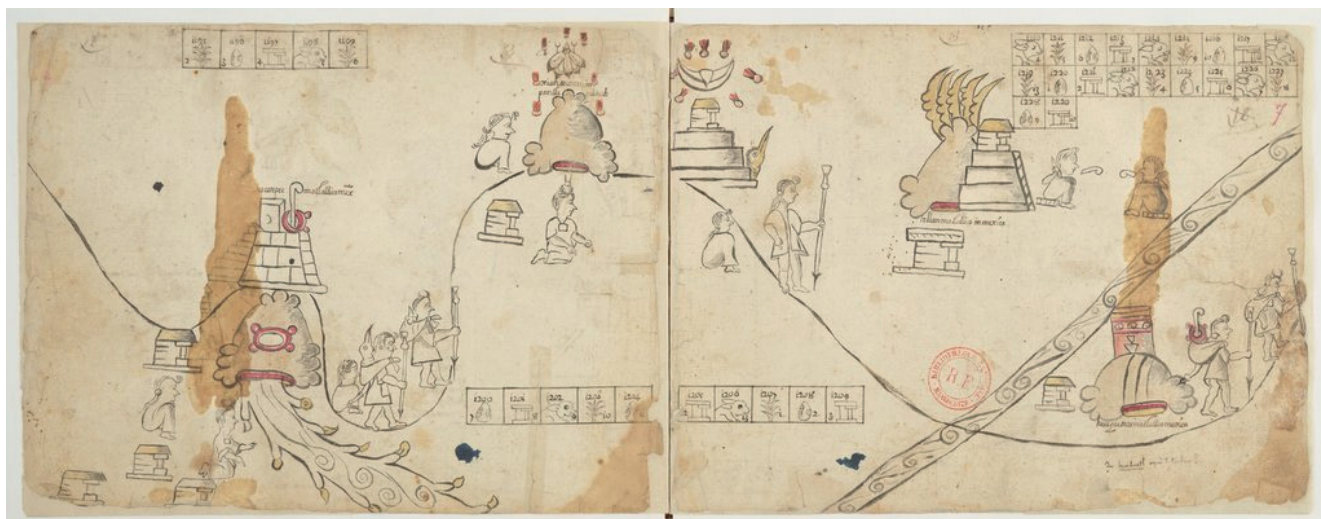
Fig. 5: Codex Azcatitlan, 16th or 17th century (?), European paper, 25 folios (21 × 28 cm), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Mexicain 59–64, fols 6ᵛ–7ʳ.

them carrying bundles on their back, standing in a place surrounded by water.[95] The Mexica are looking and gesturing upwards, to a bird sitting in a treetop and representing the animal incarnation of Huitzilopochtli, the legendary leader and god of the Mexica. The animal's body is drawn facing toward the right, but its head is turned to the group of people. Two Mesoamerican speech glyphs emerge from the bird's beak, symbolising the uttering of sounds. A black line marks the track the Mexica will take. This line rises up, passes the tree and ends at the feet of a human figure, which – paralleling the body language of the bird – is facing to the right, but has also turned its head toward the Mexica group. This figure, which can be interpreted as a human incarnation of Huitzilopochtli, is on the first Mesoamerican calendar sign of the depicted time line and signals to the Mexica below to follow him by climbing the time line. Not only does this image connect the start of the journey with the beginning of a historiographical chronology, defining the undepicted pre-migration area as prehistoric. It also gives the following – essentially immaterial – reckoning of the years a physical character, reinterpreting it as a spatial rather than temporal pictorial element. The succession of years is thus turned into a distance that can be travelled. And more than that, as Navarrete Linares has shown: the painters are systematically playing with the idea of

physical temporality.[96] Take the miniature of Chicomoztoc, for instance: the legendary seven caves the Mexica reached during their journey are placed below the time bar. On one side there are footprints descending to the cave and they emerge again on the other side to indicate the continuation of the journey.[97] With this, the time line not only turns in a distance to be travelled, but becomes the surface of the Earth, creating an upper and a lower register for the manuscript page, which is defined as above ground and below it.

II.3 Alphabetic historiographical manuscripts

The third category of colonial-period historiographical manuscripts about the Mexica is alphabetical writings in Spanish or Nahuatl.[98] Several of these texts are included in multiple-text manuscripts about pre-Hispanic Aztec life and knowledge, which are often highly illuminated.[99] These manuscripts (mostly written by Christian missionaries) were generally made of European paper bound in quires

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[95] Escalante Gonzalbo interprets the men with bundles as *teomamaque* ('god-carriers'). He points out that one of them holds a thick walking stick, which reminds one of St Christopher's walking stick in a sixteenth-century painting (showing the saint carrying Christ) in the Franciscan church of Tlatelolco; see Escalante Gonzalbo 2003, 182–183.

[96] Also see Navarrete Linares 2000, 32–34.

[97] Like Aztlan, Chicomoztoc seems to be a mythological place rather than an actual one. In other colonial manuscripts about the Mexica's origin, the legendary leaving of the seven caves is strongly connected with the leaving of Aztlan, suggesting that Chicomoztoc was, in fact, part of Aztlan.

[98] More than 40 alphabetic codices about the Mexica migration have been preserved from the sixteenth century. Navarrete Linares 1997, 61–62 lists seven of them, dividing them into 'indigenous' and 'Spanish' histories. For alphabetic codices written by indigenous historians, see Boone 1998a, 190–193 as well.

[99] For a definition of multiple-text manuscripts, see Friedrich and Schwarke 2016.

Fig. 6: *Codex Mexicanus*, 16th or 17th century, amate paper, 51 folios (10 × 20 cm), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Mexicain 23–24, fols 9v–10r (pages 18–19).

and were designed to be of use within the mission or sent to the Spanish court. Researchers have often referred to these compilations as 'cultural encyclopaedias', but so far, neither the corpus nor the genre of these works has been analysed thoroughly.[100] One of the earliest known examples of such a manuscript about pre-Hispanic times is the *Codex Mendoza*[101] (*c*. 1542), which does not narrate the legendary migration, but gives an account of the imperial period between the founding of Tenochtitlan and the Spanish conquest. The manuscript, which was written and painted on European paper, was commissioned by the first New Spanish viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza (1535–1550) and originally intended for Charles I of Spain (1516–1556).[102] The classification of the *Codex Mendoza* and other related alphabetic multiple-text manuscripts as 'encyclopaedias' or 'encyclopaedic writings' derives from the famous

Florentine Codex[103] and its encyclopaedic structure. The *Florentine Codex*, written in Nahuatl, Spanish and Latin, was produced under the aegis of the Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590) and sent to Philip II of Spain (1556–1598). Unlike other alphabetic compilations about pre-Hispanic history, religion and knowledge, the manuscript's architecture follows the model of European encyclopaedias created in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, among them the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (23/24–79), the *Etymologiae* compiled by Isidore of Seville (*c*. 560–636) and the Franciscan *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (before 1203–1272).[104] According to the encyclopaedic aspiration of the manuscript (and unlike the other examples discussed in this text), the corresponding chapter of the *Florentine Codex* does not confine itself to narrating the history of the Mexica's origins, but claims to give an overview of all the generations who populated New Spain in pre-Hispanic times.[105] Starting with the Toltecs, who Sahagún's Nahuatl text parallels with the Babylonians (his Spanish text compares them with the Trojans, the legendary founders of Rome).[106] Mexica history is not presented here as the

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[100] The following are generally classified as cultural encyclopaedias: *Codex Mendoza*, the *Florentine Codex*, *Durán Codex*, *Tovar Manuscript*, *Codex Ramírez* (Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico 35–100), *Codex Tudela* (Madrid, Museo de América, Ms. 70400), *Codex Magliabechiano* (Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Ms. Magl., XIII, 3), *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Mexicain No. 385), *Codex Ríos* (an Italian version of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* partially attributed to the Dominican Pedro de los Ríos, Rome, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Codex Vaticanus 3738) as well as all the calendar wheels. See Boone 1998a, 160–161. On encyclopaedic works about the New World, also see Rabasa 1993, 125–179.

[101] *Codex Mendoza*, *c*. 1542, European paper, 71 folios (30 × 21 cm), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Arch. Selden A. 1.

[102] The most comprehensive analysis of the manuscript so far has been carried out by Frances F. Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt; Berdan and Anawalt 1992.

[103] *Florentine Codex* (*Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España*), *c*. 1577, European paper, 1,223 folios (31 × 21.2 cm), Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Mediceo Palatino, 218–220.

[104] Robertson 1966. Also see Folger 2003.

[105] *Florentine Codex* (*Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España)*, book 10, chap. 29 ('De todas las generaciones que aun poblado en esta tierra'), fols 114 r–149r.

[106] On the parallels Sahagún draws between Mexica and Greco-Roman history, see Todorov 1987, 243–244; Keen 1990, 116–117.

Fig. 7a: *Durán Codex*, 1581, European paper, 344 folios (28 × 19 cm), Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vitr. 26–11, fols 4ᵛ–5ʳ.

history of a regional community, but as the last chapter of a universal indigenous chronology, which ends with this very last generation.[107]

The alphabetical writings about the Mexica adapt the migration story to a European manuscript page layout that fundamentally alters the nature of the narrative. Unlike the pictorial manuscripts discussed above, which were bound in quires (*Codex Azcatitlan* and *Codex Mexicanus*), the pages are in a vertical format. Furthermore, the categories of image and script – not existant in Aztec manuscript cultures – are defined and separate. A closer look reveals the permeability of these categories, however, showing phenomena of mutual interaction that go beyond the relationship between picture and text found in European manuscripts. In the *Codex Mendoza*, for example, alphabetic and pictorial sections are separated on different pages, but juxtaposed as two

alternative systems of recording the same content. Thereby – as the Spanish text emphasises – the pictorial form of record keeping is regarded the original one, while the alphabetical writings are considered a hurried and imperfect attempt to grasp the images' meaning. Alphabetic glosses besides the pictures furthermore indicating the translation between image and script.[108]

In examples like the first treatise of the Dominican *Durán Codex*[109] (1581) (Fig. 7a), which tells Mexica history from its legendary origins up to the Spanish conquest, this kind of valuing of the pictorial form of historiography is absent in the visual organisation (at first glance, at least).

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[107] The Mexica history is narrated in book 10, chap. 14 ('De los mexicanos'), fol. 139ᵛ–149ʳ as a Spanish and Nahuatl text. See Levin Rojo 2014, 123.

[108] Also see Bleichmar 2015.

[109] *Durán Codex* (*Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme*), 1581, European paper, 344 folios (28 × 19 cm), Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vitr. 26–11. It is assumed that the manuscript formerly belonged to the royal collection of Philip V (1700–1746); Couch 1989, 44–45. According to Durán, the third treatise was finished in 1579 (fol. 316ᵛ) and the first one was completed in 1581 (fol. 221ʳ). For the dating of the first treaties, also see ibid., 24–25, 65.

Fig. 7b: *Durán Codex*, 1581, European paper, 344 folios (28 × 19 cm), Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vitr. 26–11, fol. 4ᵛ (detail).

The manuscript section is dominated by alphabetical writings and the inserted images – the first six of which relate to the Mexica's migration – are separated from the text by black and white framing, recalling the aesthetics of framed woodcut prints.[110] As a result, the images seem to be decorative attachments or, as N. C. Christopher Couch has suggested,[111] illustrations of the text in the tradition of illuminated European manuscripts. The pictures are all in a primary position, however: each one was put directly before a new chapter, serving as a kind of frontispiece to introduce the text that followed. The physical proximity of images and chapter headings furthermore creates a link between the two categories, allowing one to interpret the textual titles both as chapter titles and picture captions. The illumination (Fig. 7b) belonging to the second chapter of the first treatise, for example, shows three Chichimec hunters equipped with bows and arrows departing from the open mouth of an earth monster, which recalls medieval illuminations and woodcuts of the mouth of hell.[112] The three hunters have been placed

in a row, moving toward the right-hand side of the image, visualising a trail. Their feet are equally in a row, reminding one of the footprints embedded in the tracks of cartographic migration manuscripts.

The heading below the image reads 'Second chapter: how the indigenous peoples left the seven caves they inhabited to come to this land.'[113] This information clarifies two things: on one hand, we know that the hunters are to be interpreted as members of the legendary seven tribes leaving Chicomozto and migrating to the Valley of Mexico. On the other hand, it connects the picture with the illumination of the previous chapter (fol. 2ʳ), showing the seven tribes seated in the caves. The image of the three hunters, thus, becomes part of a series and a visual narration, while the alphabetic script adds information about the pictured departure and journey. The Spanish text of the first treatise of the *Durán Codex* is considered to be a translation of a lost alphabetic Nahuatl document recording oral history (connected with the hypothetical so called *Crónica X*, or rather the *Crónica*

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[110] According to N. C. Christopher Couch, the page layout follows the model of printed editions of the Old Testament, designed to support Durán's theory of the Mexica being descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel; Couch 1989, 5.

[111] Ibid., 35, 316. Also see Cummins 1995, 168.

[112] See the following images, for example: *Hellmouth, locked by an archangel*, Winchester Psalter, *c*. 1150; *Christ descending to the dead*,

Goldener Münchner Psalter, thirteenth century, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 835; *Last Judgment*, Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry, *c*. 1440s. A printed example is provided by a coloured woodcut of the apocalypse: *Der Reiter 'Treu und wahrhaft', Sturz des Tieres und seiner Anhänger in den Höllenschlund* (Apc. XIX, 20–21), fifteenth century, Heidelberg, University Library, Cod. Pal. germ. 34, fol. 102ᵛ. Also see Couch 1989, 285–286. On the pre-Hispanic tradition of ritual caves and their decoration, see Brady and Prufer 2005.

[113] 'Capitulo segundo de como estos naturals yndios salieron de las siete cuevas donde auitauan [habitaban] para benir [venir] a esta tierra,' fol. 4ᵛ.

X group).[114] The text mentions pictures as the original form of record-keeping. Although the inserted miniatures of the *Durán Codex* are not pre-Hispanic but colonial era creations,[115] within the context of the alphabetical manuscript, they are presented as heirs of pre-Hispanic recording traditions, turning into primary sources and references for the knowledge imparted in the Spanish text.[116] The text, in turn, incorporates oral history, closely connected to the interpretation of pictorial recordings. Although the text and images are presented in the guise of a European codex page layout, they claim to be a translation of indigenous systems of historiography.

The Jesuit *Tovar Manuscript*[117] (*c.* 1587), which is based on the *Durán Codex* and was compiled by Diego Durán's cousin Juan de Tovar (1546–1626) for the Jesuit José de Acosta (1539/1540–1599/1600),[118] narrates Mexica history from the migration to the fall of Tenochtitlan.[119] Within the codex, alphabetic and pictorial systems of recording history are equally present, although divided into isolated chapters by the manuscript's architecture,[120] the first containing

Spanish text (fols 1ʳ– 84ᵛ), the second a series of pictures (fols 85ʳ–146ʳ).[121] The page-sized illuminations present four images related to the migration legend (fols 85ʳ–91ᵛ). These show the seven caves, followed by two images of stops along the Mexica's route (at Tula and Chapultepec) and conclude with an illumination of the founding of Tenochtitlan (Fig. 8). The images, similar to the migration-related pictures of the *Tira de Tepechpan*, show isolated scenes out of the migration story, but the migration itself, that is a movement of generations of people through territory across a long distance, is not stated in any detail. Nevertheless, the miniature picturing the founding myth of Tenochtitlan includes a reminiscence of the trail, showing a short section of zigzag track with five embedded footprints. This short piece of track meanders its way toward the pre-Hispanic town glyph of Tenochtitlan, surrounded by pre-Hispanic glyphs for water, marking Tenochtitlan as a settlement in the middle of a lake. Within this pictorial context, the track itself turns into a glyph, serving as an abbreviation of the migration and is used to mark the end of the journey.

As in the *Durán Codex*, all the additional information about the migration legend was transferred to the Spanish text. Distances and paths were thus turned into words. Unlike the *Florentine Codex*, however, which does not include any images of the Mexica migration at all, migration-related pictures are still present, even if they are only presented in an appendix. References in the form of folio numbers for the corresponding pictures, which are written in the margin of the textual pages, link both, images and script. Phrases like 'La pintura que tienen estas siete cuevas es en esta forma' ('The painting of the seven caves was in this form') (fol. 1ᵛ) and 'El cual [lugar] pintan en esta forma' ('This [site] was painted in this form') (fol. 6ʳ) mark the coloured drawings as containers of knowledge. Furthermore, they show Tovar's intention to transmit the images in their 'original' form, regarding them as evidence of the alphabetical writings. Distances and paths are thus turned into words – but the words constantly remind one of or directly refer to pictorial forms of Mexica historiography.

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[114] The denomination *Crónica X* was introduced by Robert Barlow; Barlow 1945. Later research made it clear that Durán's first treatise and other related texts did not follow one specific hypothetical manuscript but a type of oral history transmitted through various sources. See Couch 1989, 16–17 and 53–58; Bernal 1994; Peperstraete 2007.

[115] For images in the *Durán Codex*, see Couch 1989.

[116] Also see Cummins 1995, 164–169.

[117] *Tovar Manuscript* (Historia de la benida de los Yndios apoblar a Mexico…), *c.* 1587, European paper, 158 folios (21.3 × 15.2 cm), Providence, The John Carter Brown Library, Codex Ind. 2. The text of the *Tovar Manuscript* is a copy of the *Codex Ramírez*, but some of the images follow the model of illuminations from the *Durán Codex*. For an affiliation of the manuscripts of the Durán group (*Durán Codex* and its related and modified copies *Codex Ramírez* and *Tovar Manuscript*), see Couch 1989. Before the production of the *Tovar Manuscript*, Tovar apparently supervised the preparation of a similar text about indigenous history, which was commissioned by the fourth viceroy of New Spain, Don Martín Enríquez de Almanza (who died in 1583) and was intended to be sent to Philip II; ibid., 162, 193–194.

[118] In 1590, Acosta's *Histora natural y moral de las Indias* was published. Several chapters of the work are taken from Tovar's writings.

[119] 'Relacion del origen de los yndios que havitan en esta Nueva España segun sus historias', fols 1ʳ–58ʳ. The second part of the alphabetic text describes the pre-Hispanic religion of the Mexica, 'Tratado de los ritos y ceremonias y Dioses que en su gentilidad usavan los Indios de esta Nueva España', fols 59ʳ –81ᵛ.

[120] Couch interprets the change of visual organisation on a symbolical level. According to him, unlike the *Durán Codex*, the design of the *Tovar Manuscript* does not follow the model of printed Old Testaments (which combine script and images) with the aim of negating Durán's thesis about

the Mexica being of Jewish origin. He also suggests that Tovar's miniatures are painted in a more 'original' pre-Hispanic style in order to suppress Durán's theory of descent; Couch 1989, 5–6. He furthermore stresses the role of colouring by producing this 'native' quality; ibid., 362–365.

[121] The third section of the manuscript contains the independent *Tovar Calendar* (fols 146ᵛ–158ʳ), which closely combines images and texts and is connected to Sahagún's writings. The *Tovar Calendar* was studied by George Kubler and Charles Gibson; Kubler and Gibson 1951. Also see Couch 1989, 178–192 and Cummins 1995, 164–166.

The alphabetical writings about the migration can be regarded as an attempt to make Mexica history accessible – or rather, readable – for a European audience. Several indeterminate places included in the pictorial manuscripts indicate the necessity of interpretation and explanation offered by oral accounts. The alphabetic codices aim at dissolving these ambiguous elements within the narrative, superseding the task of an interpreter and thereby replacing oral traditions. In doing so, they create a reproducible text designed for the individual reader.

To some degree, the alphabetic manuscripts also reflect the colonial debate about the capacity and limits of pictorial manuscripts and the Spaniards' doubts of them being adequate for the writing of history.[122] Following a Renaissance model, the existence of a 'proper' recording system (meaning alphabetic from a European point of view) was repeatedly turned into a precondition for 'proper' historiography.[123] How one thing could be possible without the other seemed unconvincing to some of the missionaries – José de Acosta wrote to Juan de Tovar that he could not understand how the Mexica were able to record history without writing it down, for example.[124] In contrast, Juan de Tovar, Diego Durán and Bernardino de Sahagún all knew about the functionality of this kind of historiography and utilised, translated and adapted it for their own alphabetic manuscripts, using it to authorise their new form of historiography, thereby rewriting Mexica history.

III. Conclusion

Regarding the pictorial manuscripts about the pre-Hispanic history of the Mexica, the above analysis shows that Robertson's distinction between 'time-oriented' and 'place-oriented' manuscripts might well be helpful for a rough initial classification, but it is far from suitable for describing the dynamics within the visual narrative of these documents. The dynamics are basically created by what Navarrete Linares describes as a visual integration of 'time and space into a single narrative'. This integration emerges from an indigenous tradition in his opinion.[125] But as the presented

Fig. 8: *Tovar Manuscript, c.* 1587, European paper, 158 folios (21.3 × 15.2 cm), Providence, The John Carter Brown Library, Codex Ind. 2, fol. 91ᵛ.

material shows, there are different types of narrative that are created by different types of interaction between temporal and spatial devices – and they do not only derive from indigenous traditions.

In the *Mapa de Sigüenza*, for example, the visual narrative is dominated by the path the Mexica travelled; additional temporal aspects are present, but only of minor interest. The rectangular amate sheet on which the *mapa* was produced provides an adequate format for this kind of historiographical narrative, offering a multidirectional approach and sufficient space for the meandering track. In contrast, screenfold manuscripts, dominated by an ongoing time line like the amate-paper *Tira de la Tepechpan*, abandon the travel motive of the migration myth. Following the form of the strip and a reading direction from left to right, they break the path into a series of individual episodes connected to the reckoning of the years. The third kind of temporal and spatial interaction in pictorial manuscripts of the Early Colonial Period is the broken year account, provided as a screenfold (made from European paper, like the *Tira de la Peregrinación*) or bound in quires (like the European paper *Codex Azcatitlan* or the amate-paper *Codex Mexicanus*).

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[122] Regarding this debate, see Mignolo 1995 and Boone 2000, 3–7.

[123] Mignolo 1995.

[124] The text of the letter is included in the *Tovar Manuscript* (fols 2ʳ– 4ʳ). Also see Couch 1989, 192–194; Boone 2000, 28–29.

[125] Navarrete Linares 2000.

These manuscripts maintain a linear reading direction from left to right, but create room for a meandering path as well. They do so by either breaking the time line into blocks of time or reinterpreting it as a spatial element fit to be travelled and explored from above and below. This shows a creative combination of temporal and spatial elements that is more likely to have emerged from colonial-age negotiations than from an unbroken native tradition. In any case, it shows the rivalry between two narratives, a spatial and a temporal one, which, when combined, tend to be difficult to reconcile.

In a broader sense, the visual interaction of these narratives also reflect the colonial negotiation of different concepts of historiography. The alphabetic codices produced during the Early Colonial Period, like the *Florentine Codex* (1577), the *Durán Codex* (1581), and the *Tovar Manuscript* (*c*. 1587), can be interpreted as an attempt to solve this debate. Here the spatial and temporal narration is turned in a continuous text, structured by the succession of the chapters and the layout of the pages. In some cases (as in the *Florentine Codex*), the inserted pictures do not show the migration at all. In others (like in the *Durán Codex*), the pictorial sequences are broken into disconnected scenes, either divided by the chapters or (as in the *Tovar Manuscript*) moved towards the end of the codex. This separation of script and image translates the narrative of the Mexica migration into the visual organisation of European illuminated manuscripts, incorporating it into European manuscript traditions – and thus conquering and replacing pre-Hispanic forms of historiography. Interestingly, though, they do so by constantly using and referring to pre-Hispanic pictorial manuscripts and oral traditions. Hence, Sahagún emphasises that all his texts are based on information transmitted in the form of paintings which were explained and translated for him.[126]   His alphabetical writings in Nahuatl, Spanish and Latin may present a reproducible text designed for individual reading, but they are grounded on pre-Hispanic traditions of recordkeeping and knowledge transfer. Manuscripts like the *Durán Codex* or the *Tovar Manuscript*, which equally translate the migration narrative into written words, also present migration-related images. These pictures are colonial-era creations combining pre-Hispanic and European

aesthetics in a hybrid and new style. Even so, they are – as the corresponding texts express – sources, authorities and references of the written account. The alphabetical writings, in turn, adopt the function of a narrator, interpreting the images and thus translate and replace oral traditions. This special form of interaction between image and script can only be understood if it is analysed while bearing in mind the colonial negotiation of different forms of historical narration. Within this context, the integration of images visually marked as belonging to a pre-Hispanic tradition reveals an imperial strategy. The alphabetic manuscripts do not incorporate these drawings unintentionally, but annex their authority, using them as elements of verification while rewriting indigenous traditions of historiography.

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[126] 'Todas las cosas que conferimos, me las dieron por pinturas, que aquella, era la escritura, que ellos antiguamente vsauan [usaban]: y los gramaticos las declararon, ensu lengua, escrjujendo [escribiendo] la declaration, al pie de la pintura: tengo aun agora estos originales.' *Florentine Codex* (*Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España)*, book 2, Prologo, fol. 1ᵛ.

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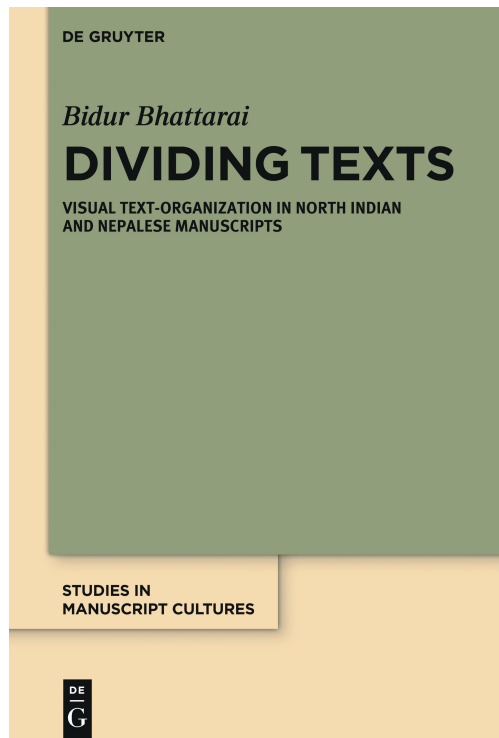
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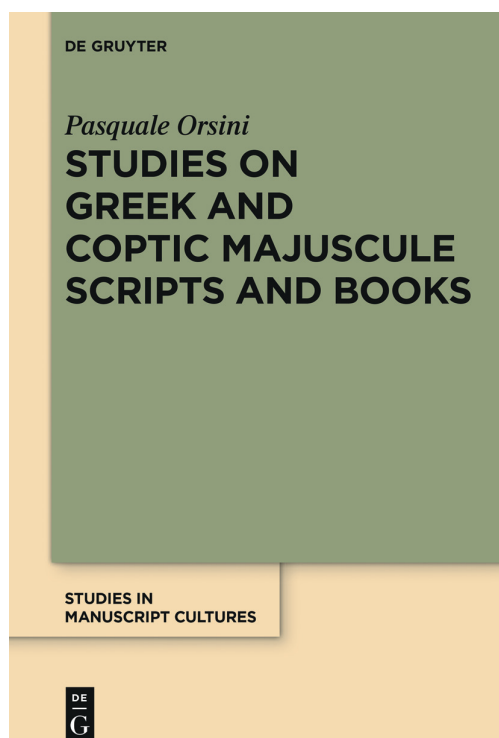Fig. 8 © The John Carter Brown Library, Providence.

DE GRUYTER

Bidur Bhattarai

DIVIDING TEXTS

VISUAL TEXT-ORGANIZATION IN NORTH INDIAN
AND NEPALESE MANUSCRIPTS

STUDIES IN
MANUSCRIPT CULTURES

10 - Dividing Texts: Visual Text-Organization in North Indian and Nepalese Manuscripts by Bidur Bhattarai

The number of manuscripts produced in the Indian sub-continent is astounding and is the result of a massive enterprise that was carried out over a vast geographical area and over a vast stretch of time. Focusing on areas of Northern India and Nepal between 800 to 1300 ^{ce} and on manuscripts containing Sanskrit texts, the present study investigates a fundamental and so far rarely studied aspect of manuscript production: visual organization. Scribes adopted a variety of visual strategies to distinguish one text from another and to differentiate the various sections within a single text (chapters, sub-chapters, etc.). Their repertoire includes the use of space(s) on the folio, the adoption of different writing styles, the inclusion of symbols of various kind, the application of colors (rubrication), or a combination of all these. This study includes a description of these various strategies and an analysis of their different implementations across the selected geographical areas. It sheds light on how manuscripts were produced, as well as on some aspects of their employment in ritual contexts, in different areas of India and Nepal.

DE GRUYTER

Pasquale Orsini

STUDIES ON GREEK AND COPTIC MAJUSCULE SCRIPTS AND BOOKS

STUDIES IN
MANUSCRIPT CULTURES

15 - Studies on Greek and Coptic Majuscule Scripts and Books by Pasquale Orsini

The volume contains a critical review of data, results and open problems concerning the principal Greek and Coptic majuscule bookhands, based on previous research of the author, revised and updated to offer an overview of the different graphic phenomena. Although the various chapters address the history of different types of scripts (i.e. biblical majuscule, sloping poitend majuscule, liturgical majuscule, epigraphic and monumental scripts), their juxtaposition allows us to identify common issues of the comparative method of palaeography. From an overall critical assessment of these aspects the impossibility of applying a unique historical paradigm to interpret the formal expressions and the history of the different bookhands comes up, due to the fact that each script follows different paths. Particular attention is also devoted to the use of Greek majuscules in the writing of ancient Christian books. A modern and critical awareness of palaeographic method may help to place the individual witnesses in the context of the main graphic trends, in the social and cultural environments in which they developed, and in a more accurate chronological framework.

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