Mesoamerican Codices

dioses de la borrachera), follow the feast of flowers. “Drunkenness” is a misguided term that betrays a deep misunderstanding of the role and importance of pulque and its gods in a ritual context. Instead, I propose interpreting the pulque gods as representatives of a cult that was closely related to the visionary powers of the drink (Wasson 1980, 93–103, Ashwell 2006, 93–103). The eleventh trecena of the tonalpohualli (1 Monkey) is presided over by Patecatl, the god of pulque, in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis (f. 15v). An annotation on this page explains that he “is the lord of these thirteen days and of certain roots that they put in the wine, for without these roots they could not become drunk no matter how much they would drink” (Quiñones Keber 1995, 263). These roots are depicted in a ritual found in both codices under discussion (Fig. 7.14), as elaborated below. They are substances added to the drink to make it powerful and able to induce visions.

Pulque gods in the Codices Tudela and Magliabechiano are explicitly related to several localities in the modern state of Morelos, such as Tepoztlan and Yautepec, where Ome Tochtli and his many manifestations were venerated as local patrons (Codex Tudela, f. 32r, Anders and Jansen 1996a, 185). According to Mendieta (1973, bk. 2, ch. 14), the calendar originated in this region, as discussed in Section 1.2. Therefore, the gods of pulque are strictly related not only to the drink and its visionary powers but also to timekeeping and its devices. Patecatl, depicted among the pulque gods in folio 35r of the Codex Tudela and folio 53r of the Codex Magliabechiano (Fig. 7.11), is shown with many of Quetzalcoatl’s attributes, including a feather headdress, a curved stick, and a shell symbol on his shield.

7.2.4. The ceremonial use of plants

The display of powerful and sacred plants as well as pulque is noteworthy in the two manuscripts’ descriptions of ceremonies. Flowery plants are also prominent at all such occasions, beginning with Xochipilli on the page dedicated to 7 Flower (Codex Tudela, f. 29r, Codex Magliabechiano, f. 47r). As first discussed by Wasson (1973, 305), several words found in colonial sources indicate the “flowery” connotations of plants and ceremonies. First, in the sixteenth-century Nahuatl dictionary by the friar Alonso

Figure 7.11. Patecatl as Quetzalcoatl. Codex Magliabechiano, f. 53r. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Banco Rari, 232.
de Molina, *xochinanacatl* (literally, “flowery mushroom”) is translated as “mushroom that causes drunkenness” (*hongo que emborracha*). In the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 11, ch. 7), the corresponding word is *teonanacatl* (“sacred mushroom”), which identifies mushrooms with psychoactive components. The adjective “flowery,” which is given in Nahuatl by the prefix *xoch-*, is used interchangeably with both “sacred” (*teo-*) and “visionary” (or “drunk” in colonial sources). Thus, the festive nature of the calendar is more accurately reinterpreted as sacred and ceremonial. Rituals include both communal gatherings and night ceremonies, with the latter being of a more private nature. With respect to private ceremonies, Wasson (1973, 324) mentioned the term *temicxoch* (literally “flower of dream”) found in Ruiz de Alarcón’s treatise (Andrews and Hassig 1984, bk. 2, ch. 2, 79). Although the incantation was intended to “induce sleep,” according to the Spanish text, it is more likely related to a state of trance. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the Xochipilli statue studied by Wasson for its detailed depiction of flowers, petals, and pistils came from Tlalmanalco, a town near the region of origin of many of the pulque gods in the two codices under discussion.

Folios 68r, 69r, and 70r in the Codex Tudela and the corresponding folios in the Codex Magliabechiano (i.e., folios 83r, 84r, 85r) prominently display flowering plants, although the information provided by the annotators is scarce or nonexistent. First, in folio 68r in the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.12), two flowered vine plants grow on a patch of land with outstretched serpents. Guerra (1967, 173) and Anders and Jansen (1996a, 218–219) identified the plant as *ololiuhqui coatlxihuitl* or *coatlxoxouhqui* (green serpent plant; Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 11, ch. 7), whose seeds have psychoactive properties. The same plant or a piciete (wild tobacco) appears in the next image in folio 69r of the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.13). It stands between two male priests; one is eating a green substance, while the other is drinking. Finally, in folio 70r (Fig. 7.14), five people (two men and three women) are performing a pulque libation ritual seated around a jar with a foaming white beverage. In the corresponding image in the Codex Magliabechiano (f. 85r), the god of pulque himself is also present. The only gloss and information provided pertain to the bundled roots, which are used to make the *ocpatli* (literally “pulque medicine” or “what makes pulque work”). These images attest that the consumption of pulque was conducted in a ceremonial context by priests on certain occasions, perhaps related to communal festivities. The numerous gray or smoky volutes scattered in front of the two male drinkers on page 69r of the Codex Tudela indicate the words and chants associated with these private events.

Figure 7.12. Coatlxoxouhqui plant. Codex Tudela, f. 68r. Museo de América, Madrid.
Figure 7.13. Two priests eating and drinking in front of a coatlhxohqui plant. Codex Tudela, f. 69r. Museo de América, Madrid.

Figure 7.14. Ritual consumption of pulque. Codex Tudela, f. 70r. Museo de América, Madrid.
The ingestion of sacred plants in relation to priestly knowledge, communal activities, and a festive setting is a common theme on two other pages. In folio 63r of the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.15), a vessel that contains burning copal (incense) is set on an altar framed by two flowering plants, which appear to have been cut from their roots. A man and a woman are sitting in front of the altar making offerings. The corresponding text in the Codex Magliabechiano (f. 73v) explains,

This is a small place of sacrifice where the Indians offered incense or paper with blood to their gods. It is known that every five times [sic] they had in common a cue or place of sacrifice in which to hold a sacrifice. And for every twenty days they had another larger one that was dedicated to an idol of their gods to whom they were devoted. And each barrio had another large temple where they had another idol, whom they say was guardian of the barrio … (Boone 1983, 213)

As noted by Boone (1983, 213) and Batalla (2002, 312), it is possible that the term veces or vezes (times in Spanish) should have read vecino (neighbor), which is shortened as vez. There is indeed a certain confusion and ambiguity in the timing and place of participation in the ritual in question, but perhaps both aspects of the cult were at issue. On the one hand, the cult must be observed every five or twenty days. On the other hand, certain families or neighborhoods were involved. Festivities that took place every five days (macuililhuitl) or twenty days (cempoalilhuitl; Sahagún 1950–1982, bk. 2, Bustamante García and Díaz Rubio 1983) were celebrated differently in each community and various social groups within each community, such as associations of people who practiced the same craft. On the page in question, the tools depicted directly below the altar may represent plastering and scraping tools made of stone and obsidian that were used by masons or papermakers.

Finally, folio 73r in the Codex Tudela (Fig. 7.16; Codex Magliabechiano f. 87r) depicts five penitents engaged in different ceremonial acts with thorns, incense burners, and food and other offerings. The person at the top is casting paper strips soaked in blood into a fire. The five men are expressing their devotion to a god with a large feather headdress seated atop a temple. At the foot of the temple, a blue lizard walks over a white cloth with five dots next to it. The text accompanying the image explains that this ceremony was intended to petition the gods. To understand whether the request would be granted, priests put a straw mat next to the stairway of the temple. If a lizard walked on it, it was taken as a sign that the request

Figure 7.15. Ceremony in front of an altar. Codex Tudela, f. 63r. Museo de América, Madrid.
would be granted. The addition of the five dots seems to suggest the day 5 Lizard in the tonalpohualli. However, as observed by Anders and Jansen (1996a, 221–222n7), there is an inherent ambiguity to the representation. The animal is depicted in a transitional status between the iconic value as a day sign and a representational status as the animal carrying the oracular response. The numeral 5 can also be read in two different ways: as the five-day period (macuilxiuhuitl) dedicated to the oracle and ceremonial quest or as the number of the day. As illustrated in Primeros Memoriales (f. 269; Fig. 7.17), 5 Lizard is one of the names of Macuilxochitl (Sahagún et al. 1997, 120n9, Anders and Jansen 1996a, 221–222n7), whose temples and cults were found around the main
twin pyramids in the sacred precinct. The god illustrated in the Codex Tudela was probably an image such as the one found today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (Fig. 7.18), which has the name 5 Serpent carved in the back of its head. Their presence in the pictorials attests to the importance of the cult to the Macuiltonaleque, godly diviners who commanded rituals upon consultation of the sacred books (Pohl 2007). I believe that the tlacuilo deliberately pursued ambiguity by showing that the relationship between the days of the tonalpohualli, divinatory function, or festival days is not fixed but rather constitutes a web of meaning that is always dependent on the act of reading and interpretation.

7.2.5. Gods and ceremonies in folios 89r–92r of the Codex Magliabechiano

After the long section on festivals and ceremonies, a few illustrations of gods and ceremonies that appear in the Codex Magliabechiano are not found in the Codex Tudela, either. Folios 89r–92r (Fig. 7.19 and 7.20) depict several gods in groups of three or four. Boone (1983, 27) argued that the artist responsible for this portion of the manuscripts was the same one who added the cloaks in folios 8 and 9, which are not found in the Codex Tudela. As for the iconography of the gods in this unique section, Anders and Jansen (1996a, 223–224) noted that Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Xiuhtecuhtli, Xipe, Centeotl, and Tezcatlipoca were patron deities of several veintenas, which may indicate that this part of the manuscript was copied from an original fragment that depicted the yearly ceremonial cycle. In folio 89r (Fig. 7.19), a priestly impersonator in the bottom left corner of the page stands out from the others due to the insignia of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (Aguilera 1983, 166, Anders and Jansen 1996a, 223). He is encircled by eighteen footprints, which, as Paul van den Akker brought to my attention in a personal communication (2017), may be a reference to the number of veintenas in a year. Thus, the footprints may be