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
interpreted as the eighteen ceremonies that comprise the yearly cycle and must be completed around Quetzalcoatl, according to his instructions.

Tena (2000, 428–430) followed up on the suggestion that the gods in these last pages of the Codex Magliabechiano relate to the veintena patrons and further developed an idea proposed by Caso (1967, 36, fig. 14), who posited that the five paper offerings that close the section and the book in folio 92r (Fig. 7.20) represent the five nemontemi days. Tena (2000, 429) referred to these representations as “paper offerings” (amatetehuitl in Nahuatl). The last one is larger than the others and decorated with a maize outcrop. It should be noted, however, that nemontemi are seldom pictorially represented and therefore not easy to identify despite being consistently cited in written sources.

At the bottom of folio 90r (Fig. 1.15), there is an unusual scene that breaks with the general contents of the section. A man is seated on a straw mat, ingesting mushrooms, as explained in Section 1.3. More red and green mushrooms sprout from a patch of land in front of him, while Mictlantecuhtli, the god of the land of the dead, looms from the back and slightly touches the seated figure. I suggest that this scene, which was seemingly added to a loose representation...
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of the veintena patron gods, another instance of the
close relationship between visionary experience and
the veintena ceremonies. Their planning and correct
performance required knowledge derived from the
experience of a revelation, as discussed in the previous
chapters. The presence of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl can
also be interpreted in this light, as he is the archetypical
priest in charge of leading ceremonies.

Boone (1983, 27) previously commented on this unique
section of the Codex Magliabechiano and considered that
the iconographic complexity of the gods makes it unlikely
that they were independent inventions; rather they were
copied from a source other than the supposed prototype
of the Codex Magliabechiano (presumably the Codex
Tudela). Indeed, there is a very interesting comparison
to be made with pages 17–22 in the Codex Laud (Fig.
7.21–7.22). A sequence of twenty-two characters is
arranged in two rows but without guiding red lines;
with one exception, they all face the same direction. The
section includes at least one clear reference to the veintena
ceremonies on page 17 (Fig. 7.21), presumably at the
beginning of the sequence to the right, where Xiuhtecuhtli,
the fire god, opens the celebration in the top right corner
of the page, followed by another priest drilling a stick
in a fire serpent at the bottom. In front of the officiating
priest, another character carries a white flag. Both men
carry a turquoise diadem, and their body paint identifies
them as Paynal and Huitzilopochtli, the main gods of the
celebration of Panquetzaliztli, according to the sources.
On the following pages, where the retinue appears to
reach its final destination in a cave (Fig. 7.22), three
characters bear distinctive iconographic attributes. The
last one, who holds a burning ball of hule (rubber), can
be identified as Tezcatlipoca; behind him follows a man
who can be identified as a priest to Xiuhtecuhtli (Anders
and Jansen 1994, 253). The rain god Tlaloc, holding a
serpent and an ax, is next. Once the offering is placed, the
scene (and presumably the ceremonial pilgrimage) ends
with four day signs and counted bundled stick offerings,
which were left uncolored. In folio 92 of the Codex
Magliabechiano, Tezcatlipoca and Tlaloc, possibly related
to the celebrations of Teotlco and Tepeihuitl (Anders
and Jansen 1996a, 224n10) or Toxcatl and Etzalcualiztli (Tena
2000, 429) appear right before the five paper offerings,
which Tena identified as nemontemi. Thus, both codices
contain a loose representation of the tutelary gods of the
veintenas.
Figure 7.21. Panquetzaliztli and the New Fire ceremony. Codex Laud, p. 17. Kingsborough 1831.

Figure 7.22. Procession to a cave. Codex Laud, pp. 21–22. Kingsborough 1831.
Both the Codices Magliabechiano and Laud may be an original creation of different divinatory or ceremonial images. In the case of the Codex Laud, these images were taken from a lost original, which had presumably already been damaged when the new manuscript was painted. By contrast, the Codex Magliabechiano was copied from the Codex Tudela but lost much of its credibility, according to Batalla Rosado (2010). In both instances, however, the quality and level of detail in the images contradict their presumed fragmentary and lacking contents. Why would an artist invest skills and time to reproduce an incomplete and therefore unusable document? Perhaps we should consider that the result is neither faulty nor inconsistent; indeed, we have yet to understand much of the logic that underlies pictographic image-making in both pre-Hispanic and colonial contexts. Could it be that the seemingly complete image of the eighteen veintenas that we have come to expect from the sources, including the Codex Magliabechiano itself, is not more appropriate for describing the Mesoamerican ceremonial cycles than the fragmentary images found on the pages of the Codices Magliabechiano, Laud, and Borgia?

The main aim of this book is to understand pictography as a cultural expression whose complex inner mechanisms are not a mere reflection or illustration of some external reality but rather able to engender their own meaning. The four documents examined in this chapter belong to a corpus of Mesoamerican religious texts produced during the colonial period that largely adhered to their ancient counterparts. In other words, the images were meant to convey meaning on their own terms and were not ancillary to verbal explanations. The final fate of pictography is the focus of the next and final chapter.
Manuscript Painting and the Conventos

This last chapter is dedicated to the development of pictography once it was fully incorporated into the intellectual project of the friars and their art schools. The four manuscripts discussed in the preceding chapter also form part of the corpus of pictographic and written works produced under mendicant sponsorship. They largely relied, however, on established pre-Hispanic canons, such as those found in the Borgia Group manuscripts. The written text, provided in the form of glosses, is largely subordinate to the images. Written explanations were intended to complement or clarify the meaning of the pictorials, whose overall presentation and composition still conformed to known pre-Hispanic pictographic genres.

By contrast, the work of Bernardino de Sahagún discussed in this chapter was wholly novel, blending European literary antecedents and local pictographic traditions. In particular, the Florentine Codex is widely considered the most important source on Nahua culture, religion, and history at the time of contact and is therefore cited at length in this book. However, the bulk of information in the document is found in the written texts. The Nahua version of the texts, whose complete translation was attempted only once, by North American scholars Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble (Sahagún 1950–1982), reflects the interests and knowledge of an Indigenous intellectual elite that had been fully educated at mendicant schools. The monumental work of Bernardino de Sahagún is contrasted with the Codex Yanhuitlan, a document produced in the Mixtec town of the same name. The manuscript is fully pictographic and hails from a region in Mesoamerica where picture writing was particularly developed. The Mixtec codices, in fact, constitute the only pre-Hispanic corpus of historical documents that focus on local and regional genealogies. The Codex Yanhuitlan is heir to this tradition, but it also represents a novel genre that fully incorporated a format, a style, and contents derived from European and colonial examples.

Both works have received extensive scholarly attention. Therefore, I focus on specific aspects that demonstrate the scope, impact, and limitations of the mendicant evangelical and educational enterprise in New Spain. On the one hand, the encyclopedic and scholastic endeavor of the Franciscans, which is exemplified by the work of Sahagún, intended to salvage Mesoamerican religion by portraying it as dead and sealed in the past, not as a living phenomenon. Consequently, books were seen as repositories of fixed knowledge on mythology and rituals, as also observed in the Codices Telleriano-Remensis, Vaticanus A, Tudela, and Magliabechiano. On the other hand, the Codex Yanhuitlan was produced in an Indigenous town and demonstrates how local Mixtec leaders and artists were able to re-appropriate the pictographic medium from the friars to address the complex socio-political situation in early colonial Yanhuitlan.

One striking aspect of these manuscripts is the innovative and widespread use of monochrome, an artistic development unique to sixteenth-century New Spain that has yet to receive its scholarly due. In Europe, monochrome painting (usually referred to with the term grisaille, from French for “gray-like”) was first adopted in manuscript illumination. An outstanding example is the famous Book of Hours produced by Jean Pucelle for Jeanne d’Evreux, the queen of France in the first half the fourteenth century. Eventually, early Netherlandish painters mastered the technique in oil painting, most notably in the decoration of altar wings. Throughout the Renaissance, the grisaille technique was commonly employed to paint architectural decorations and details and to create trompe l’oeil or other similar visual effects. Among the few scholars who have addressed the use of monochrome in the visual arts of New Spain, Manrique (1982) and Peterson (1993, 62–63) considered that the lack of color was a direct consequence of the pedestrian and unoriginal copies of European models that arrived in the New World in the form of prints. Although I believe that the introduction of print illustrations from Europe triggered the production of monochrome images among Indigenous tlacuilos, the selective adoption of grisaille in specific contexts reveals a conscious positioning on the part of local artists vis-à-vis a foreign and imposed tradition.

European art historical scholarship on grisaille has examined it as a representational strategy that engages and asks questions of the viewer (Schoell-Glass 1999). Philippot (1966) noted that the lack of color in early Netherlandish altar wings, which usually depicted fictive sculptures in niches, had the effect of collapsing different levels of reality into a single surface. Fehrenbach (2011) considered that monochrome in early modern marble sculpture constituted a regression of the naturalist Renaissance impulse to a potential state of animation, a moment in which dead and raw materials seemed to come alive and make present what the picture claimed to be. Finally, Powell (2012, 107–111) remarked on the uncanny vivacity of paintings of monochrome sculpture, highlighting a possible paradox; the painted image purports to be a sculpture, but sculpture shows a degree of realism in its expression that one would only expect from the “real” subject. In all these cases, grisaille is employed to implicitly reveal the mechanism by which the image and its life-like and mimetic qualities are created. This is often framed within the debate on the paragone (comparison) between the relative merits of architecture, sculpture, and painting. Monochrome manifests a transition or process that the viewer must