

Peripatetic Yya of the Mixtec: Visual Narratives of Place, Emergence, and Movement

D. Bryan Schaeffer

The *despescuezada* is an annual ritual performance that takes place in the Mixtec-speaking town of San Juan Mixtepec, Oaxaca, México (Figure 1). In the linguistic variant of Mixtec called *Sa'an Savi*, the town of San Juan Mixtepec is referred to as “Ñuu Snuviko,” or “the place where clouds are made to come down.” The community of this Sierra Madre del Sur mountainous town gathers every June in order to perpetuate a cycle of communal cleansing through the killing of several roosters by twisting, pulling, and finally yanking off their heads. The sacrificial blood is symbolic of a purging of wrong words or actions, the community’s sins thereby jettisoned so that the gods will initiate a fertile rainy season. Perhaps a ritual persistence from the pre-contact era, rituals involving the decapitation of birds feature in several visual narratives in Postclassic Mixtec codices or *tonindeye*, the “histories of lineages,” thereby pointing to an indigenous persistence in public rites and ceremonies continued today in the Mixteca.¹

As public ritual, the *despescuezada* involves many symbolic elements of the community’s foundational identity, including a reckoning of time, an initiation of the fertile rainy season, and a purging of wrong actions. With four males on horseback who represent the four cardinal directions, this ceremonial performance in a physically defined field of action culminates when the four directions move toward the symbolic center of town represented by a clothesline with the four roosters hanging upside down. As they arrive at the central point or axis mundi of San Juan Mixtepec, the riders twist, yank, and pull off the *pescueza* (neck) of the roosters and fling the decapitated heads into the crowd. The crowd’s physical grouping forms the ritual’s marked boundaries, a placial frame conceived of in this paper as a spatial partitioning of the periphery from the center as well as an action of extirpating communal sin (Figure 2). As

blood, the ensoulment of the community, streams down the men’s faces, necks, and shirts, ranchera and cumbia music inundates the atmosphere. Ñuu Snuviko is cleansed and transformed, its cosmogonic and therefore placial scaffolding re-made yet again.

Among other things, this ethnographic encounter with a modern-day indigenous ritual underscores a panoply of cultural issues intersecting with identity, community, agricultural production, the reckoning of a spatio-temporal frame for ritual action and understanding, as well as the issues of movement and emic cultural geographies, all concepts and actions that visually animate narratives in Postclassic Mixtec codices (c. 950-1519 CE).² Contained in these sacred objects, replete with historical narratives, the understudied, visualized element of travel ingeminates a centralizing template for the visual schemata in the overarching Mixtec pictorial program. This paper argues that images of travel in the manuscripts offer culturally encoded representations apposite for understanding the significance of place and movement in the Mesoamerican ecumene generally and in the Postclassic Mixteca region specifically. The interplay of place and movement as codified in Mixtec books of remembrance provides us with a conceptual and visual anchor that tethers the Mixtec of today to the Mixtec of the past.

The Mixtec are an indigenous people who anciently occupied much of the region of what is today western Oaxaca, eastern Guerrero, and southern Puebla (Figure 3). With around 400,000 speakers of the Mixtec language in Oaxaca today, this mountainous region is home to dozens of dialects in Mixtec, a name that derives from the Nahuatl language of central Mexico meaning “people of the cloud place.”³ Depending on the dialect, the Mixtec refer to themselves as

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1 Mixtec historical manuscripts have many names, among them “tonindeye,” or “histories of lineages,” as well as “naandeye,” or “memories of the past.” Other terms like “ñee ñuhu sanaha” (“the ancient books”) are also used in modern scholarship. See Maarten E.R.G.N. Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez, *The Mixtec Pictorial Manuscripts: Time, Agency and Memory in Ancient Mexico* (Leiden, NL: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011), xxi-41.

2 I am aware that some scholars have shifted to using solely the most common autonym for this indigenous group, the “Nudzahui” (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, 2011), which, according to Terraciano’s examination of colonial documents (2001), was the most frequently used name for this ethnic group. However, other scholars argue that the Nahuatl term “Mixtec” was known by Mixtec elites in the Postclassic period (John Pohl, personal communication). Throughout this essay, I employ the term Mixtec because of the vast array of dozens of Mixtec dialects and autonyms within those dialects that complicate the matter to an overwhelming degree.

3 Kent V. Flannery and Joyce Marcus, ed., *The Cloud People: Divergent Evolution of the Zapotec and Mixtec Civilizations* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1983). See also J. Kathryn Josserand, “Mixtec Dialect History: Proto-Mixtec and Modern Mixtec Text” (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1983).

“Tay Ñudzahui” or “Sa’an Savi” or “Tu’un Davi,” which all mean “people of the rain place,” a clear conceptual connection of a concrete physical setting, the Mixtec people as a unified community in that setting, and a specific, persistent climatological attribute of the setting itself.⁴

Mixtec codices are sacred books folded like accordions and composed of strips of deer hide or fig-tree bark that visually narrate activities of deities, supernatural culture heroes, and the genealogies of the kings and queens who wanted to emulate them, hence the moniker of “histories of lineages.” Of the eight extant codices from the Postclassic era, seven reside in libraries and museums in Europe while only one remains in Mexico, although not in Oaxaca, but in Mexico City. In polychromatic designs and motifs, these visual narratives embody the communal and therefore codified versions of myriad myth-histories. Recorded in pictographic writing, the narratives contain complex mythopoeic and historical representations of a specific people from particular places who perform various rituals. Mixtec elders reportedly informed the seventeenth-century Spanish priest Francisco de Burgoa that their ancestors used to ritually open and display the codices on walls of temples or nobles’ homes where they were used as storyboards for dramatic reenactments of the narratives by Mixtec actors.⁵

A salient, but neglected part of these visualized narratives is the act of travel. Anthropologist James Clifford defines the act of travel as simply “rootless histories.”⁶

However, the experience of travel is layered and complex, an activity linked to the categories of place and history, and therefore memory and identity. The Mixtec visually depict travel as an action necessary to establish place, to perform rituals in particular places, to “map” territories of place, to “encounter” supernatural beings in caves or mountains, to record sites of war, migration, and trade at marketplaces, among other things. Because the Mixtec pictorially portray such framed sequences in the codices, travel appears to be not a deracinated extension into the past or its creation, but rather a re-occurring event connected to named places in order to be remembered and codified in sacred tomes. Travel was ritually performed by *yya*, “gods,” the autonymic title historical Mixtec kings and queens shared with supernatural ancestors and patron deities. The sharing of this term thereby conceptually, linguistically, and visually aligns Mixtec elite with the sacred titles and generative activities of the gods, like travel, as visually narrated in the codices.

According to Plate 29 of the Codex Borgia, cosmological genesis begins with movement (Figure 4). Placed against the circular, black backdrop of ethereal origin, a large, bluish-gray vessel releases its foamy substance of creation. Emerging from this creative substance are several animate beings characterized as winds by the central Mexican deity Quetzalcoatl’s traits.⁷ Origins, then, begin with ritualized motion, with the creation of space, time, and being through movement. This visualized mythological narrative in the Borgia connects with the Mexica oral tradition of creation at the city of Teotihuacan as recorded by Bernardino de Sahagún.⁸ Through self-immolation in the sacred hearth at Teotihuacan, the deities of the Mexica compelled the newly created sun to move, to cyclically traverse the skyscape. This original movement generates and perpetuates the cycles of being, space, and time.

The act of emergence is visualized, written about, performed by rulers in ceremony, and repeated as a conceptual, visual, and performative trope throughout Mesoamerica. Images of emergence are produced in different media by distinct ethnic groups with various levels of power in the wider webs of Mesoamerican praxis. The visualization of emergence of a substance or being, whether human or supernatural, signifies not only a structural point of departure for a narrative, but it also signals the incipient recording of a community’s very own genesis. Original creation tethers the primordial movement of the substance or being to the contemporary people, place, and cultural rhythms of communal life. Such an understanding of a community’s shared identity through time is linked to and constitutive of

4 It is important to note that Mixtec autonyms, of which I list only a few, have the same linguistic and conceptual connections to “people” and “rain” or “cloud” as the exonym given to the Mixtec by conquering Aztec, Nahuatl speaking, forces that invaded the Mixteca in the fifteenth century. The main point is that, whether emically and etically, indigenous groups of pre-contact Mesoamerica often associated an ethnic group with their immediate landscape, particularly through a specific aspect or phenomenon of that landscape. That is, a community’s identity in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica is often tethered to or underscored by the local, experienced environment.

5 Byland and Pohl (1994: 9), Pohl (2009: 6); Bruce E. Byland and John M.D. Pohl, *In the Realm of Eight Deer: The Archaeology of the Mixtec Codices* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 9; John M.D. Pohl, “Screenfold Manuscripts of Highland Mexico and their Possible Influence on Codex Madrid: A Summary,” in *The Madrid Codex: New Approaches to Understanding an Ancient Maya Manuscript*, ed. Gabrielle Vail and Anthony Aveni (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2009), 367-413; See also Burgoa (1934 [1674]); Fray Francisco de Burgoa, *Geográfica Descripción*, 2 vols. (Mexico City, MX: Editorial Porrúa, 1934). However, there is some debate about the objects to which Burgoa, or his indigenous informants, were referring. Rossell y Ojeda (2003) as well as Hermann Lejarazu (2011) have argued that the objects could have been single-sheet lienzos or perhaps murals and not the codices. The point I add here is that, whether they were codices or lienzos or murals, narrative imagery was utilized in dramatic performances, that is, in reenactments of Mixtec stories that served to connect Mixtec history, identity, and community to contemporary concerns about those very categories and their understanding. Cecilia y María de los Angeles Ojeda Rossell, *Las mujeres y sus diosas en los códices prehispánicos de Oaxaca* (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003). Manuel A. Hermann Lejarazu, *Códice Colombino: una nueva historia de un antiguo gobernante* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011).

6 James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-13.

7 Bruce Byland, “Introduction and Commentary” in *The Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*, ed. Gisele Díaz and Alan Rodgers (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1993), xxiii.

8 Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, trans. and ed. Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J.O. Anderson (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research and the University of Utah, 1959-1982).

a specific place through specific actions, such as emergence from points of origin.

For instance, the deity Lord 9 Wind vertically descends from the celestial realm, as depicted in the Selden Roll and the Codex Vindobonensis (Figure 5). His vertical descent cuts through horizontal layers of conceptualized, celestial space. In the Vindobonensis, Lord 9 Wind descends a sacrificial rope that pivots at right angles and allows for different narrative moments to be recorded (and possibly reenacted in dramatizations of his descent). His rectilinear descent brings the legitimate stamp of divine authority to organize and establish place, which becomes a template for sacred movement from one realm into another, imbuing subsequent places in the Mixtec region with the founding presence of the supernatural through geometric lines and angles that not only describe a divine descent through the portal of a celestial rupture, but urge the reader to recognize the ethnogeometries of such movement.⁹ Plate 29 of the Borgia may appear to be chaotic energy released at the moment of creation, but emergence of the foamy substance of being is visually depicted as occurring within a clearly defined, squared precinct of impetus and form, much like the field of action for the *despescuezada* (see Figures 2 and 4). The visualization of emergence at the origin of movement is inextricably intertwined with an axis of symbolic and experiential meaning. Reifying this in imagery, the Mixtec scribe-artist recorded an emic concept of the ethnogeometries of movement as bound to and definitive of the ethnogeographies of place, the linear proportions of visualizing travel, and the stories associated with place.

The Mixtec word “ñuu” can broadly mean a settled place or more specifically a place with a defined territory, but also a community, meaning the people themselves and the immediate geographical landscape.¹⁰ Many place names in the Mixtec region today retain the word “ñuu” as part of their names such as Ñunduhua (the Mixtec term for the state of Oaxaca) or Ñundaa (the town of Texupa), among others. Recorded by Spanish priests in the Colonial period, the Mixtec people called the world in which they lived “ñuu ñayahui,” which means “places and people.” This term demonstrates that the Mixtec conceptually viewed themselves as intimately bound to the landscapes in which they lived, a conceptual link articulated in this instance linguistically.¹¹

Mixtec scribes employed pictorial descriptions of place by using conventional imagery to piece together both the general idea of place and, when necessary, specific attributes of a particular ñuu in order to visually distinguish it from other places. These place-name glyphs, referred to as toponyms, represent the few pictographs in Mixtec writing that coincide linguistically with speech.¹² Even today, Mixtec scribe-artists paint toponyms as signifiers of place. For example, a multicolored hill with a protruding bird’s head and a temple-pyramid on top of the hill visually refers to the town of Yucu Dzaa near the Oaxacan Pacific coast. The toponym sits on a wall inside the patio entrance of the community museum, with the Mixtec culture hero Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw seated in front of the glyph, forming part of it as he merges with its traditional iconographic and linguistically encoded elements (Figure 6).

As a culturally constitutive marker of place, and of belonging to the Mixteca since time immemorial and place ethnoterritorial, landscapes and histories, whether individual or communal, are condensed into toponyms. Toponyms visually declare a formative cohesion for Mixtec origins, genealogies, and the surrounding environment. Therefore, visualizing place performs a significant, integrative role in a Mixtec ontological and epistemological foundation. The cognitive and cultural mapping of communal identity is established through oral narratives, many of which are the myth-histories pictographically portrayed in the codices. Because the codices were utilized throughout the year as mnemonic devices during performances of the narratives, place would have been ritually imbued with synchronic and diachronic sacred relevance for a localized, communal Mixtec identity.¹³

Pictorial representations of place also play a vital role in narratives of emergence and movement. In Codex Nuttall, Lord 8 Deer travels to meet with the Sun god, Lord 1 Death

9 The ethnogeometries of movement in Mixtec codices has been paid scant attention and never phrased or discussed in this manner. One of the fairly recent visual and conceptual analyses of Lord 9 Wind descent is found in Elizabeth Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000) 89-96. However, the analysis does not mention the geometric patterning of 9 Wind’s descent. Such patterning, I argue, is vital for understanding Mixtec ideas of space and movement specifically and in Mesoamerican conceptual structures generally.

10 Mary Elizabeth Smith, *Picture Writing from Ancient Southern Mexico: Mixtec Place Signs and Maps* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 3-8.

11 Ibid. See also Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press, 2001), 1-14.

12 Many scholars have observed Mixtec visual representation of spoken language in the codices. The first to note and publish on the use of pictorial puns in Mixtec codices that connect to spoken language was Alfonso Caso, *Interpretación de Códice Bodley 2858* (Mexico City, MX: Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, 1960), 16-17.

13 The concept of “place” is much more solid and therefore much more useful than the abstract notion of “space.” Beginning in the late 1980s, a growing body of scholarship reflects this transition from space to place. For example, “On the contrary, just because place is so much with us, and we with it, it has been taken for granted, deemed not worthy of separate treatment. Also taken for granted is the fact that we are implaced beings to begin with, that place is an a priori of our existence on earth. Just because we cannot choose in the matter, we believe we do not have to think about this basic facticity very much, if at all.” Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), x. See also Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); and Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011). Ingold argues that indigenous and other forms of knowledge are formed by and connected to movement, in the “passage from place to place and in the changing horizons along the way” (154).

(Figure 7). This particular snapshot of Lord 8 Deer's journey fills an entire page, thereby lending it a full frame, a focused and privileged position in what scholars refer to as an image of "heroic history." Such a history entails the specific actions centered on an individual, like a divinely sanctioned king, whose actions carry social, political, economic, and religious weight in the larger society.¹⁴ As it is visualized, Lord 8 Deer traverses a large body of water with two companions who are framing mechanisms in this particular pictorial portrait of Lord 8 Deer as a peregrinating man. Lord 8 Deer's sojourn across a body of water moves him to a place in between land and sky, to the unanchored movements often associated with bodies of water such as oceans, lakes, and rivers (which are constantly moving). Bodies of water are conceptually contrasted with the firmness and seeming permanence of land, its tactile immobility connected to concepts of anchors, of stability, and of traditional agricultural life.

Oceans or other large bodies of water, for many indigenous cultures around the world, are often thought of as the conjunction of earth and sky, serving as contact points between perceived boundaries.¹⁵ The ocean is viewed as a central or middle domain between earth and sky, between the digestible, immobile landscape and lived terrestrial realm and that of the expansive, ill-defined, and non-experiential realm of the all-encompassing heavens forever spread out above the head as vertical and horizontal converge into the sempiternal and infinite celestial canopy. The ability to traverse the perceived boundaries of earth and sky, as Lord 8 Deer does, would be considered an extraordinary ability bequeathed to an extraordinary individual. Because it is imaged in the Nuttall, and therefore represents an integral part of Lord 8 Deer's saga, such an extraordinary event in Lord 8 Deer's life was codified and became part of not only his own personal narrative—thereby visually stating Lord 8 Deer's legitimate authority to rule because he goes on a challenging quest—but also part of the official Mixtec historical canon.¹⁶

It is interesting to consider this common conception of the ocean and sky when viewing the image of Lord 9 Wind lifting the sky (imaged as a body of water) with his head and shoulders on page 47 of Codex Vindobonensis. Lord 9 Wind functions as both a connective bridge between different domains, and also as the deity responsible for separating space into distinct domains to begin with. Lord 9 Wind performs this action as part of a series of itinerancies linked in a chain

of peripatetic rhythms that remake space into place, that essentially begin the process of the naming of place—as opposed to the unknown and undifferentiated territorial realms of wilderness and supernaturally-charged space replete with potentially dangerous powers. The organization of place, of community, and therefore of a shared, historically imbued and endowed identity, and known, codified history with points of origin, functions as a narrative process bound up with the actions of Lord 9 Wind. One such action is travel, movement from place to place as he creates and establishes Mixtec communities.

In a similar manner, the opening sequence of travel in the Codex Nuttall depicts Lord 8 Wind as he emerges from a generic earth glyph (Figure 8). This first glimpse of the culture hero Lord 8 Wind displays his vertical entrance through a horizontally-framed landscape of the earthly realm and time. John Pohl observes that Lord 8 Wind's positioning as he emerges from the earth glyph visually corresponds to the portrayal of two Mixtec progenitors, Yya Cahuaco (Lord 1 Flower) and his partner Yya Sihuaco (Lady 13 Flower), on a mural found at the site of Mitla in Oaxaca.¹⁷ This paper suggests that this physical position associates the concept of emergence with procreation or generative acts "at the beginning of things." Lord 8 Wind is then displayed astride the Hill of the Monkey glyph placed vertically above, which is the toponym for Cerro Jasmín in the town of Suchixtlan, a site of Mixtec ritual significance even today.¹⁸ Next, Lord 8 Wind steps into the rivers at Yutsa To'on, the place of Mixtec ethnogenesis in the Nochixtlan district of Oaxaca. He is subsequently portrayed atop the place glyph for Yucuñudahui, or Hill of the Rain god, a site of paramount importance during the Postclassic era, a site visualized in multiple Mixtec narratives.

This sequence of Lord 8 Wind's movement frames a narrative of his emergence from the earth, his travels to Suchixtlan, his stepping into the waters of Yutsa To'on, and his subsequent emergence atop Yucuñudahui, all of which are significant places of Postclassic ritual action in the Mixteca. These places even today carry the import and weight

14 Arthur A. Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos: Ancient Peoples of Southern Mexico* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 259.

15 Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988) 25-26.

16 Another significant observation is that, on the previous pages of the Nuttall, 8 Deer travels by (or possibly "visits") Mixtec ancestors on his way to meet with the Sun deity, 1 Death (personal communication, Mary Pohl). Such an action would lend not only power to Lord 8 Deer on his quest, but also legitimize his movements through various realms, granting him access to power in the present because of the presence of Mixtec rulers from the past.

17 John M.D. Pohl, "The Lintel Paintings of Mitla and the Function of the Mitla Palaces," *Mesoamerican Architecture as a Cultural Symbol*, ed. Jeff Karl Kowalski (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 176-197.

18 According to Robert Lloyd Williams, *The Complete Codex Zouche-Nuttall: Mixtec Lineage Histories and Political Biographies* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013), 36-39, the reading order of the first two pages, 1-2, and that of pages 5-6 is complicated because he believes that those pages can be put together in order to skip over pages 3-4, which visualizes the so called "War of Heaven." So, Williams proposes a complex reading order that includes skipping from page one's earth glyph to page two's portrayal of Lord 8 Wind at Yucuñudahui and then back to page one's pictorial representation of Lord 8 Wind stepping into the waters at Apoala. Or, he writes, perhaps Lord 8 Wind first goes to Suchixtlan, the place glyph pictured vertically above Lord 8 Wind's emergence from the earth glyph before traveling to Yucuñudahui and then back to stepping into the river at Apoala (Yutsa To'on). Remarkably, on the first two pages of the Nuttall there are no red vertical "reading" lines as on other pages in the Nuttall and in other Mixtec codices that are often helpful hints as to the reading order, meaning the preferred sequence of narrative events.

of historical significance for the Mixtec people.¹⁹ This visual strategy of Lord 8 Wind's "birth" from the earth in general, and from no place in particular, suggests both his divine dimension as well as his representation as a "structuring principle" for Mixtec rulership in the Late Postclassic era; that is, much like Lord 8 Deer's emergence from a generic cave or Lord 9 Wind's birth from a sacrificial flint knife, Lord 8 Wind's birth and legitimate right to rule cannot be verified and therefore cannot be questioned, as the place in which it purportedly occurred cannot be directionally located.²⁰ However, because of subsequent place-specificity, 8 Wind's atypical birth from a generic earth glyph stands in stark contrast with his subsequent travels to specific, known, defined places in the Mixteca.

Lord 8 Wind's chthonic, vertical emergence, Lord 9 Wind's celestial, vertical descent, and Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw's horizontally-positioned travel to the Sun God parallel each other, but each sojourn contains distinctive elements. These three snapshots of travel, part of larger narrative sequences, are conceptualized as the ethnogeometries of movement rendered visible, crystallized, narrated, and performed repeatedly. As actions tethered to and framed by various aspects of place, such ethnogeometric movement is bound to ethnogeographies of place, the visual representations of ontological and epistemological foundation brought into a vital relationship with Mixtec *ñuu* through reenactments of oral histories embedded in the narratives.

Representations of Mixtec yya and their connections to *ñuu* persist in Oaxaca today. Painted on one of the central

walls of the public square in San Juan Mixtepec, the place of the *despescuezada*, codical imagery of two yya flanking a central map of the Mixteca region assert connections between past and present; they function as unifying threads that weave distinct eras and generations together in a social geography of memory, identity, and community resonating within a Mixtec logic of autochthony, place, and action (Figure 9). Although the mural's imagery is not portable like Postclassic codices, the recasting of historically charged imagery within the very heart of the Place Where Clouds are Made to Come Down, represents a consciousness of the power, meaning, and value of such imagery.

The sustained presence of Mixtec luminaries—with their physical juxtaposition to geography and visual clusters of narrative nerves—continues to build the muscle of Mixtec memory and identity through visual presence and modern articulation in a public, communal frame at the heart of San Juan Mixtepec. Their presence is even more profound given the physical absence of the codices. Therefore, such imagery touches on a different form of travel, which functions as an epigraphic elasticity that stretches beyond its original and originating era of influence, potency, and meaning in order to illuminate present concerns, in order to centralize generational connections to place. Such visual representation binds Mixtec landscapes of origin to the stylized idiom of ancient symbols framed by community action, identity, and memory of the once and always peripatetic yya.

Florida State University

¹⁹ I argue that Lord 8 Wind travels to these specific places in order to recreate a pattern of travel associated with certain actions performed not only by 9 Wind or other deified Yya, but also primordial, ancestral figures like the male-female couple who emerge from the sacred tree at Yutsa To'on (Apoala). 8 Wind steps into the waters there as imaged on page one of the Nuttall and the primordial ancestral couple emerges from the sacred tree of life there.

²⁰ Lord 8 Wind could possibly be "literally a personification of the earth itself," John M.D. Pohl, "Introduction," in *Lord Eight Wind of Suchixtlan and the Heroes of Ancient Oaxaca: Reading History in the Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, Robert Lloyd Williams (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009), 22. Pohl notes that 8 Wind, whether or not he was a historical person, became through the codices a "structural principle in the rationalization of the Mixtec social hierarchy and land distribution of the Late Postclassic period," thereby representing a symbolic, indigenous link of Mixtec nobles to the landscape of the Mixteca specifically, but also to the earth more generally.



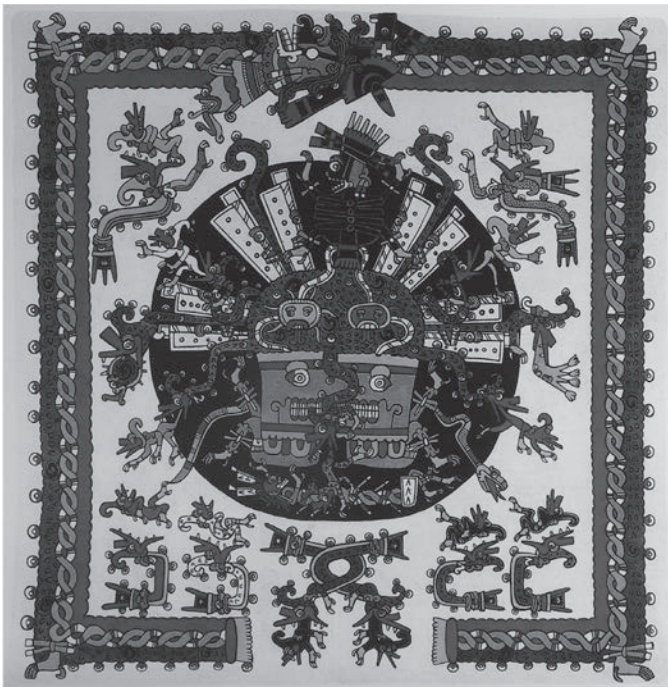
Figure 1. The *Despescuezada* Begins, Summer 2014. Photo credit: D. Bryan Schaeffer.



▲Figure 3. Map of the Mixteca, the geographic region of the Mixtec people.



◆Figure 2. A Field of Action where the *despescuezada* takes place, Summer 2014. Photo credit: D. Bryan Schaeffer.



◀Figure 4. *Codex Borgia*, c. 1400 CE, Plate 29, Nahuatl Culture of Puebla or Veracruz. *Cosmogonies Begins*, 39 leaves, c. 27 x 27 cm. British Museum.

▼Figure 5 [bottom left]. *Codex Vindobonensis*, Lord 9 Wind Descends. 52 leaves, c. 22 x 26 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna.

▼Figure 6. [bottom right] Toponym from Postclassic Mixtec Codices for San Pedro Tututepec, Yucu Dzaa, Fall 2015. Photo credit: D. Bryan Schaeffer.



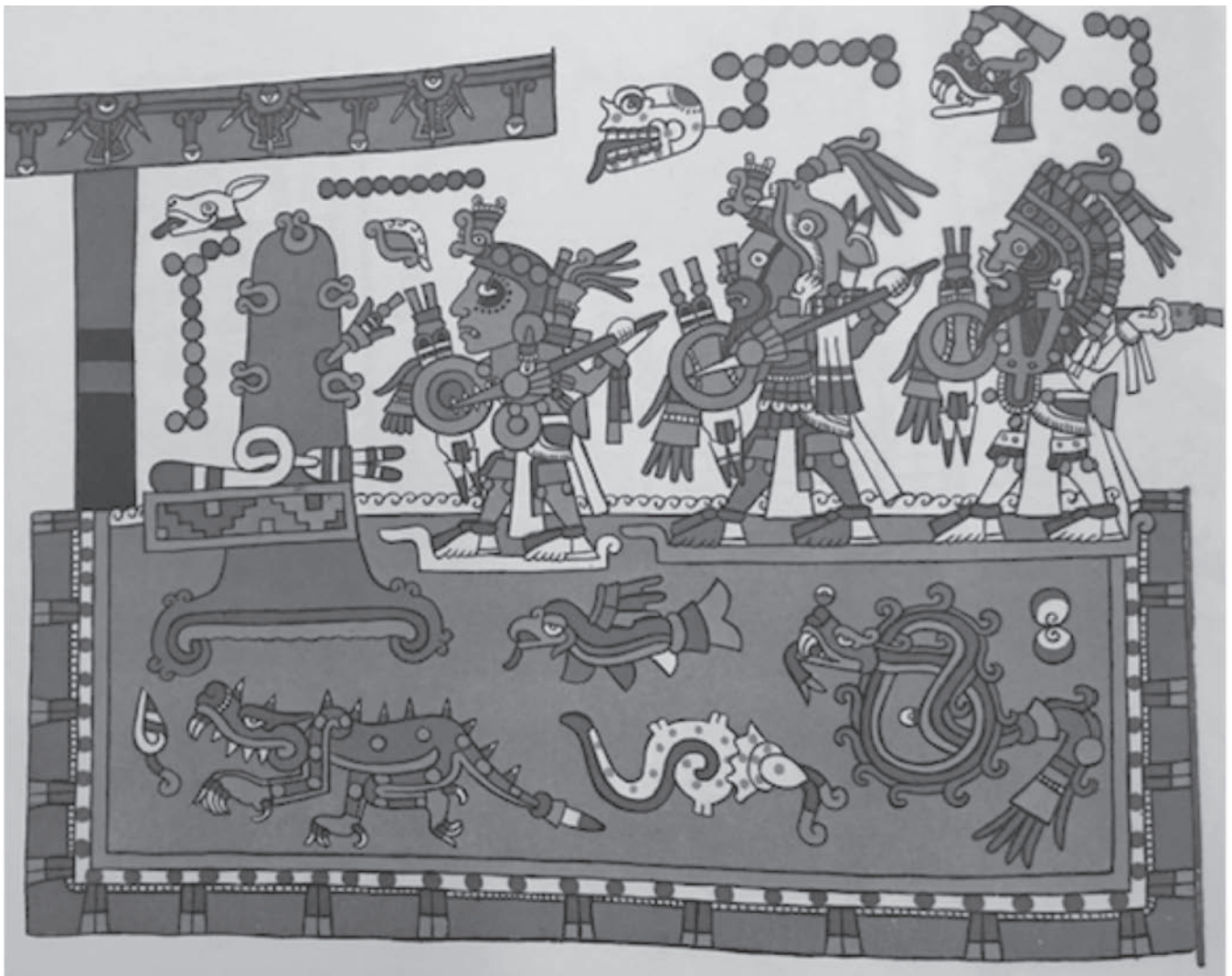


Figure 7. *Codex Nuttall*, Lord 8 Deer Travels to the Sun God, 47 leaves, Page 75, c. 19 x 25.5 cm. British Museum.

