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The *Codex Teotenantzin* and the Pre-Hispanic images of the Sierra de Guadalupe, México

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To Michel Graulich

The so-called *Códice de Teotenantzin* (Codex Teotenantzin) is one of the most intriguing historical documents to depict bas-reliefs carved on cliffs in the Basin of Mexico during the Late Postclassic period (A.D. 1325–1521). Many a mystery and controversy surround its name, creation, and content. Nonetheless, scholars on Mesoamerican religion and its transformations after the Spanish conquest concur on its great worth, for they regard it as the sole graphic evidence of the cult to female deities in the zone of Tepeyac prior to the phenomenon of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Noguez 1993, 1996).

The *Códice de Teotenantzin* is a *tira* (fig. 1), that is, a long strip. It was made in the first half of the eighteenth century (Noguez 1993:152). It formed part of the celebrated Museo Histórico Indiano founded by the knight from Milan, Lorenzo Boturini Benaduci (1698–1755). It was registered as number 8-52 in the 1743–1744 (Peñafiel 1890:1:67) and 1745–1746 inventories (López 1925:53), as number 2-3 in the 1823 inventory (Glass 1964:140), and as number 30 in the catalogue prepared by Mexican archaeologist Ramón Mena (1923:64–65; on these inventories, see Glass 1975). Just like the other treasures in that museum, the *Códice de Teotenantzin* had an eventful history full of ups and downs, passing through different hands and repositories. Most important is that it managed to survive to the present and it is now in the collection of pictographic documents in the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City, where it is catalogued as number 35-86.

Physically, the *tira* was assembled by attaching— from left to right—a quarter of a sheet, a whole sheet, and a half sheet of paper measuring 44 cm in height, producing a total length of 117 cm. It is made out of European vat paper (thick, lustrous, and white) with the “RR” watermark of the producer (Caso 1979:1). On the reverse it bears the inscription “Inveno 8 n° 52” and a small paper label with the caption “Page 4, back side the Goddess Teonantzin Nō 4 n° 3.” On the obverse, in the

lower right corner, there is a gloss referring to the scene represented: “These two paintings are drawings of the goddess that the Indians called *Teotenantzin*, that means Mother of the Gods, whom the people worshipped on the hill of Tepeyacac, where today it has the Virgin of Guadalupe.” In Mena’s opinion (1923:64–65), it was a note written by Boturini himself; however, it is clear that the handwriting does not correspond to the unmistakable writing of the unfortunate knight.

The artist of the *Códice de Teotenantzin* employed ink and gouache to represent a rocky outcrop with an undulating silhouette. He placed himself in front of it to capture a wide-angle view from ground level. In the foreground in the center of his composition, he drew two bas-relief carvings that depict pre-Hispanic goddesses, which appear to have been placed at the foot of one of the hills of the formation. The goddess on the right displays an *amacalli*, the well-known blocky headdress made of paper, twisted cords, and sticks that evoke the appearance of a temple. In the upper part and in the center, the temple headdress has a *tonameyotl*, or trapeze-and-ray sign that symbolizes the year, flanked by four pleated paper rosettes, two of which have tassels. Further below, two pairs of parallel horizontal cords frame an oval cord element and two quincunxes composed of *chalchihuites* (jade bead symbols). The goddess’s face is drawn with rounded, schematic lines. On the sides of her face, there are two round ear flares, and below, a necklace with two rows of eighteen pendants resembling feathers. Finally, the part that would correspond to her *quechquemitl* (a triangular poncho-like garment) and her skirt displays unrecognizable geometric motifs. The goddess on the left wears a strange headdress framed by a round band that is broken off in the middle and divided into rectangular sections. In the middle there is a diamond-shaped grid with four *chalchihuites*; two horizontal twisted cords frame the top and bottom of this grid. This goddess also has a round face with two rows of paper fringe, a pair of round ear flares, and a single-strand necklace. Finally, on top of her *quechquemitl* and skirt, there is what looks like a round shield with fringes.

In the background, the artist rendered the flank of the mountain range, particularizing what seem to be paths, streams, and steep cliffs, in addition to sparse vegetation and a pair of colonial buildings. The latter were outlined

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Figure 1. The *Códice de Teotenantzin*, ca. 1736–1743. Ink and gouache. Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City. CONACULTA-INAH-MEX, reproduction authorized by Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

in an unusual inverted perspective. In other words, the artist used a single vanishing point situated in the front and not in the background of the composition—in this case, below the deity on the right.

One reality, multiple interpretations

As we mentioned earlier, there are significant discrepancies in the designation, production, and subject matter of the *Códice de Teotenantzin*, which should be noted. In the first place, we should point out that it is not a codex produced by an indigenous scribe, nor is it a late copy of an earlier codex, despite claims to the contrary made by Alfonso Caso (1979:1). In fact, the *Códice de Teotenantzin* is the work of an artist trained in European styles (Glass 1964:140; Noguez 1993:152) who had been commissioned by Boturini himself, in the opinion of Antonio Pompa y Pompa (1938:14; see also Noguez 1993:152; Aguilera 2000:36; Martínez Baracs 2000:65–66). If this identification is correct, it would be plausible to say that Boturini's purpose might have been to obtain an image of the pre-Hispanic reliefs to include them as a visual reference in the essay that he planned to publish on the Virgin of Guadalupe (Boturini 1746:88).

We should also point out that the etymology and linguistic construction of the word “Teotenantzin” is problematical. As far as we know, there is no reference to it in the ancient Mexica religion. Presumably, it was used beginning in 1648, when Jesuit priest Miguel

Sánchez included it in his *Imagen de la Virgen María Madre de Dios de Guadalupe*. The following passage marks the first appearance of this word:

In accounts that deal with the gentility of the Indians of this land, it is found that on that mountain they worshipped an idol they called the mother of the gods, and in their language *Theothenantzi*. Idol of great respect in their ignorance. The Virgin made it possible for her flowers to be born on this same mountain, her miracle was brought about and her dwelling was founded, to disavow and punish the devil in the idolatry he taught, and it was known that she was the sole Mother of the true God, and the mountain, which earlier had been the altar of a sacrilegious idol, later became the throne of a most pure Virgin. (Torre Villar and Navarro de Anda 2004:238, 240)

More recently, several researchers have attempted to unravel the significance of the word “Teotenantzin.” In a brief, synthetic overview of the attempts to translate it that have been published to date, it has been read as: a) “our little mother Centeotl” (Mena 1923:64–65); b) “the venerable mother of the gods” (Martínez Baracs 2000:65–66); c) “the venerable mother of god”; d) “the venerable mother of the people”; e) “the mother of god and of men,” a combination of the last two serving to express a Christian idea (Noguez 1993:152); f) “our revered mother” (Aguilera 2000:36); g) “the divine revered mother of people” (ibid.; Martínez Baracs 2000:65–66); and h) “the mother stone of the gods” or “the divine mother stone” (Martínez Baracs 2000:65–66).

Although suggestive, these proposals lack linguistic foundations. In fact, to be correct, the translation labeled a) would have to be derived from Centeotenantzin; b) Teteo Innantzin (with a double n); c) Teotl Inantzin; d) Tenantzin; e) a *difrasismo* or parallelism like “in Teonantzin, in Tenantzin” in Nahuatl; f) Tonantzin; g) Teteonantzin; and h) also Teteonantzin, an unusual composition that would not make much sense, for pre-Hispanic people did not believe that the gods were beings of perceptible, heavy matter such as stone. According to Alfredo López Austin (personal communication, May 2009), the word “Teotenantzin” would be simply an erroneous construction that might postdate the arrival of the Spaniards.

As for the content of the *Códice de Teotenantzin*, the precise location of the bas-reliefs represented there is still a matter of dispute. Caso (1979:5) says that there is no way to identify it with precision, for the mountain range lacks any hieroglyphic reference to its name. However, the majority of researchers believe that the reliefs are on the Hill of Tepeyac—also known as “El Cerrito”—deriving their conclusions from the gloss written on the obverse of the codex that we have transcribed (Mena 1923:64–65; Pasztory 1983:132). Some go even further to state that the two images were carved where the church of the Cerrito was built (Krickeberg 1969:92) or at the foot of the eastern flank of that same promontory (Sentíes 1991:142; 2000:206; Noguez 1993:154–155). The latter proposal is based on the *Plano topográfico de la Villa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y sus alrededores en 1690* (2005; Glass with Robertson 1975:219–220), which was drawn to accompany the *Títulos de Santa Isabel Tola*. There the spot is marked with the letter O where there was a “Head that shows with the rest of the hill a strange figure destroyed on the day when the causeway that goes up the hill was built there” (fig. 4k). More recently, Jesús Galindo and Ismael Arturo Montero (2000:52) have presented a different perspective, concluding that the reliefs were not on Tepeyac at all, but rather on the “mass of the Sierra de Guadalupe.”

To begin with, the problem of the location is difficult to solve, given that according to generalized opinion, there is no trace of the reliefs today. Some individuals have suggested they were destroyed in the first half of the sixteenth century—whether under the orders of conqueror Gonzalo de Sandoval (Sentíes 1991:142) or those of Fray Juan de Zumárraga (Rivas Castro 2000b:22–23)—which would have been impossible if we take into consideration that in the *Códice de Teotenantzin* the goddesses are depicted as complete. On the other hand,

those who propose that they were on the east flank of the Hill of Tepeyac believe that they were destroyed between 1779 and 1785 (López Sarrelangue 2005:16–17; Noguez 1993:155), when architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres built the stairway that linked the chapel of El Pocito to the church of El Cerrito (López Sarrelangue 2005:200). Francisco Rivas Castro (2000b:22–23, 30; but Rivas Castro 2000a:130) is the only person who claims to have seen them, stating their vestiges are still perceptible at the base of the hill, right behind the former convent of the Capuchins.

Another point of disagreement is related to the faithfulness of the representation of the reliefs in the codex. According to Pompa y Pompa (1938:14), Boturini “had them painted based on the chroniclers’ descriptions of this goddess.” In contrast, Mena (1923:64–65) believes that both the mountain range and the reliefs “must have been drawn from nature,” and Caso (1979:3–4) seconds him by stating that they are a “copy of sculptures that really existed.” Be that as it may, some scholars concur that the iconography of the deities was poorly understood and erroneously reproduced by the artist who painted the *Teotenantzin* (Caso 1979:1; Noguez 1993:153), while others argue that the painter deliberately invented the missing accoutrements in the relief to make Boturini happy (Aguilera 2000:36).

We conclude this section by indicating that the proposals for the identification of the goddesses represented in the codex are equally diverse. On the one hand, the divinity on the right has been linked to Tonantzin (Mena 1923:64–65); Tonantzin-Toci-Teteo Innan (Krickeberg 1949:108–109; 1969:92); Chicomecoatl (Caso 1979:3–4); a maize, water, and earth goddess (Pasztory 1983:132; Rivas Castro 2000b:14, 19); Ilamatecuhtli-Cozcamiauh (Rivas Castro 2000a:130); or a deity with an *amacalli* or temple headdress that could be Toci, Chicomecoatl or some other goddess of water, fertility, or pulque (Aguilera 2000:36). On the other hand, the deity on the left has been identified as Chalchiuhtlicue (Caso 1979:3–4; Rivas Castro 2000a:130); a maize, water, and earth goddess (Pasztory 1983:132; Rivas Castro 2000b:14, 19); or as a female deity difficult to identify (Aguilera 2000:36). Galindo and Montero (2000:52) speak of Coahuaxotl and Chantico without specifying which of the two represent each of these goddesses in the reliefs.¹

1. This interpretation is based on an incorrect reading of a passage in Torquemada (1969:1:177). There, it is clear that the two deities were not venerated by the people of Tlatelolco in the Sierra de Guadalupe, but rather in different locations.

New evidence, new proposals

The purpose of our work is to offer alternative responses to the questions presented earlier in light of the study of three unpublished documents and a comparative analysis of the *Códice de Teotenantzin* with the *Plano topográfico*. Based on this factual foundation, we intend to corroborate the past existence of the reliefs and the relative correction of their representation in the *Teotenantzin*, as well as specify their location and propose a possible identification of the goddesses carved in relief.

Another drawing of the reliefs

Two of the three unpublished documents are in the collections of the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia. They are unquestionably the work of captain of the dragoons Guillermo Dupaix (ca. 1750–1817), who since his arrival in New Spain in 1791 was well known for his interest in archaeology. This Flemish explorer drew the pair of charcoal drawings with brief annotations in ink on one of the “particular jaunts” he was accustomed to undertaking before he led the Real Expedición Anticuaria (1805–1809).

The first of these documents is truly astonishing, for not only did he record the existence of the reliefs at the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century, but he also reinforced the considerable fidelity of the *Teotenantzin*. Dupaix makes it clear in this drawing that the images were carved on a natural rocky formation (fig. 2). He also makes it patent that the deity on the right was still in good condition, although with signs of deterioration on part of her face and arms. In her headdress, the goddess has two of the paper rosettes that we can see in the *Teotenantzin*, the two pairs of horizontal cords, and the two quincunxes. The round ear flares are also reproduced, in addition to the two strands with ten pendants resembling feathers. However, unlike the *Códice de Teotenantzin*, the deity holds rectangular objects that might represent staffs or weapons. A gloss on the headdress indicates that it was a “gigantic figure in relief.” Another annotation, typical of the captain, reveals to us his rather meager understanding of the significance of pre-Hispanic art: “Obviously this bust represents some God, King, or individual of note.” Unfortunately, the deity on the left was destroyed by that time, an act that was deliberate according to the gloss: “There was another figure on the right of this but it had been broken up.” Even so, Dupaix took care to graphically record the vestiges of the large, curved band of the headdress, of

which only seven rectangular sections still survived at that time.

A final gloss is decisive in locating the reliefs. It indicates they were not exactly on the Hill of Tepeyac, but rather to the northeast of this hill: “A short distance after Guadalupe, on a Cerrito [Little Hill], on the left side of the Camino Real.” In this regard, Delfina López Sarrelangue (2005:75) sheds additional light by pointing out that the *camino real* [royal road] that led to Puebla and Veracruz crossed the Villa de Guadalupe precisely in front of the Basilica, a fact that may also be confirmed in the *Plano topográfico*. In this latter document, its trajectory is marked by a dotted line, which passes between the eastern flank of Tepeyac and El Pocito to then frame the Sierra de Guadalupe to the northeast (fig. 4). What Dupaix refers to when he speaks of a “Cerrito” would negate Yohualtecatl as the site of the reliefs, for this is the highest elevation in the Sierra de Guadalupe.

Comparison of two plans

Another unpublished document, possibly composed in the first half of the nineteenth century, now in the Biblioteca Teológica Lorenzo Boturini in the Basílica de Guadalupe, coincides with the *Plano topográfico* by showing that at the foot of the Hill of Tepeyac there was actually a relief of a huge human head with a feathered headdress. Entitled *Ynventario razonado de los documentos interesantes a la historia de la Aparición. Pinturas y Papeles*, this anonymous manuscript reads:

The Tepeyac had a noteworthy singularity whose knowledge contributes to the attempt and it can be seen copied in said map [the *Plano topográfico*; fig. 4k]. The base of the hill (seen for instance from the bridge) has two finishing touches: one is the shop of Dn Manuel Campos and the other opposite the Pozito. On this there was a gigantic head in three-quarter view on whose forehead can be seen a feather crest. It is represented in the position of someone who worships toward the east, whose mouth was next to the spring that flows between the Parish or the Church of the Indians and the house that is opposite and [that] was occupied recently by Baraneta. This stone head was not separated from the hill. It seems to me that nothing more remains of the crest than a rock jutting out toward the east.

Then opposite this crest, the Pozito is drawn on the map and in the intervening space three springs of water [fig. 4b], which I do not know when they would have been covered or blocked up. Also in that intervening space is marked a path and it is the one that came from the Estanzuela [fig. 4i] and passed between the head and the Posito, and then went to the old bridge. (*Ynventario* n.d.:25v–26r)

So if this were the case, where were the goddesses carved? We can find the key to solving this problem if we continue to analyze the *Plano topográfico* and compare it with the *Códice de Teotenantzin*. However, to do this, it is necessary to keep in mind two factors. On the one hand, in the first document northeast is upward and southwest is downward, while in the second, southwest is on the left and northeast is toward the right; therefore, the hills of Tepeyac, Zacahuitzco, Yohualtecatl, and Coyoco run from below to above in the *Plano topográfico* and from left to right in the *Teotenantzin*. On the other hand, we assume the *Teotenantzin* represents a series of geomorphological, biological, and cultural traits that were captured by the artist with the express intention of showing the spectator the place where the

reliefs were located. In the following comparisons, we will examine each location, marking them with letters in figures 3 and 4:

Figures 3a and 4a: Hill of Tepeyac, of Guadalupe or El Cerrito (40 m). On the summit of this small elevation, there is a hermitage with a single nave and a room on its east wall. In the *Plano topográfico* we can see the two towers of the façade on the front, oriented toward the southwest, while the presence of a single tower in the *Teotenantzin* indicates we are looking at the right side of the same construction. From this spot, an undulating line descends in this latter document that might allude to a path or water current. This hermitage was built in 1660 by baker Cristóbal de Aguirre and his wife Teresa Peregrina. It measured 8.4 x 5.9 m and had a sacristy

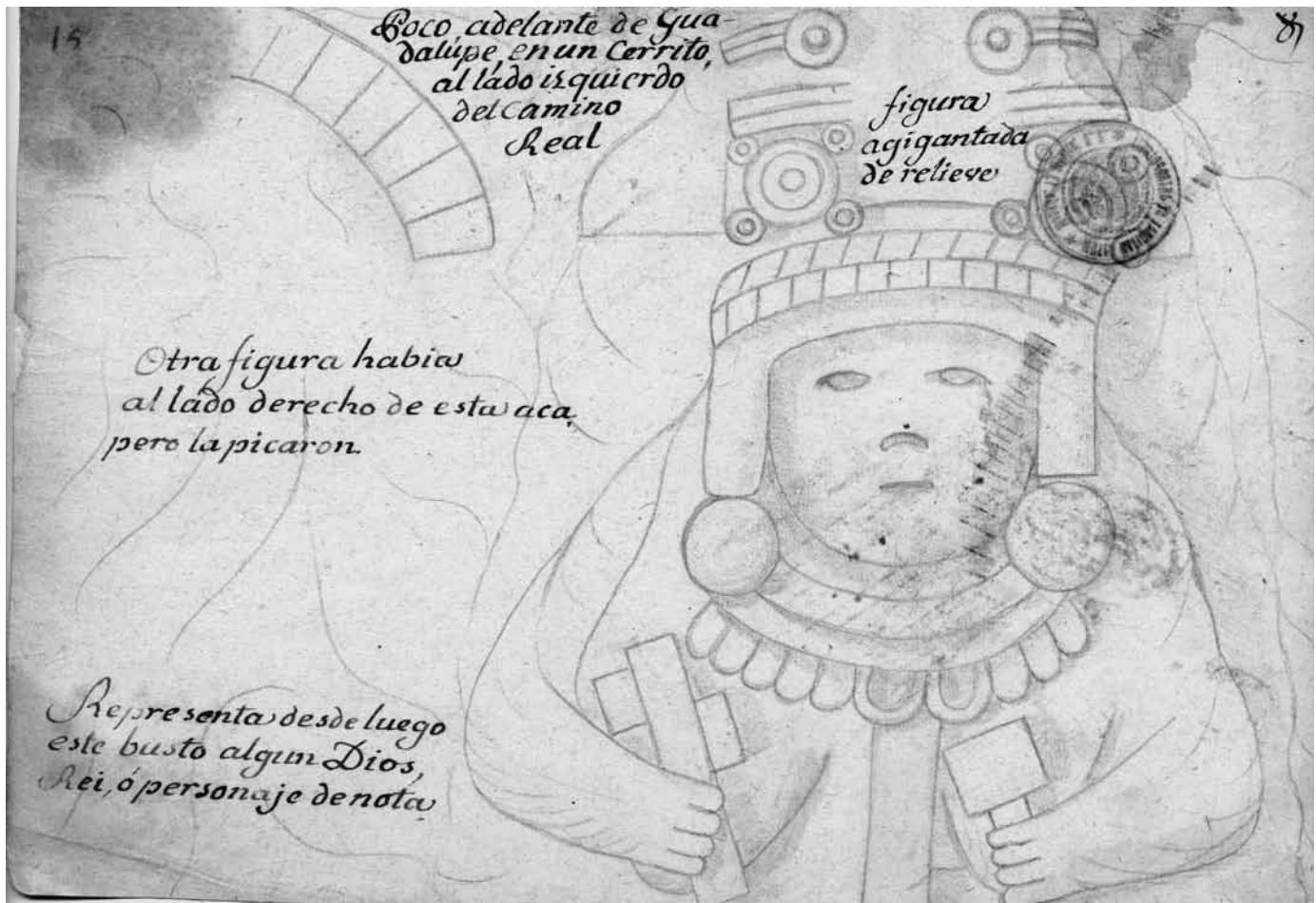


Figure 2. Non-dated drawing by Guillermo Dupaix of the reliefs that were found “a little in front of Guadalupe” ca. 1791–1804. Charcoal and ink, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City. CONACULTA-INAH-MEX, reproduction authorized by Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

measuring 4.6 x 3.8 m. On the east side stood the room of doña Francisca Medina, later occupied by Boturini. This hermitage was replaced by a church with a Latin-cross plan, which was erected between 1746 and 1750 (López Sarrelangue 2005:199–200; Senties 2000:207–208).

Figures 3b and 4b: The Pocito hermitage and water current located at the foot of the Hill of Tepeyac. We should recall that according to the tradition of the *Nican mopohua*, the Pocito is the spot where the miraculous image of Guadalupe was produced and where a curative spring of sour, ochre-colored water sprang forth. In the mid-seventeenth century, Luis Laso de la Vega had an

eight-sided spire (a finial rising in a pyramidal shape) built there and in its interior, a masonry bench that surrounded the little wells (López Sarrelangue 2005:35; Senties 2000:204). The spire was replaced in the second half of the eighteenth century by the spectacular church designed by Francisco Antonio Guerrero y Torres that we know today. As for the *Plano topográfico* (2004:50–51), the spire is marked with the letter E: “First hermitage of the Posito that I[icenciad]o d[o]n Luis Lazo had made with his own assets, year of 1648 or 49 to the present a beautiful and attractive chapel as shown by its charming lay-out, curiosity, and symmetry.” However, the water current is marked by the letter N: “Three small



Figure 3. Diagram of the *Códice de Teotenantzin*. Drawing by Julio Romero.

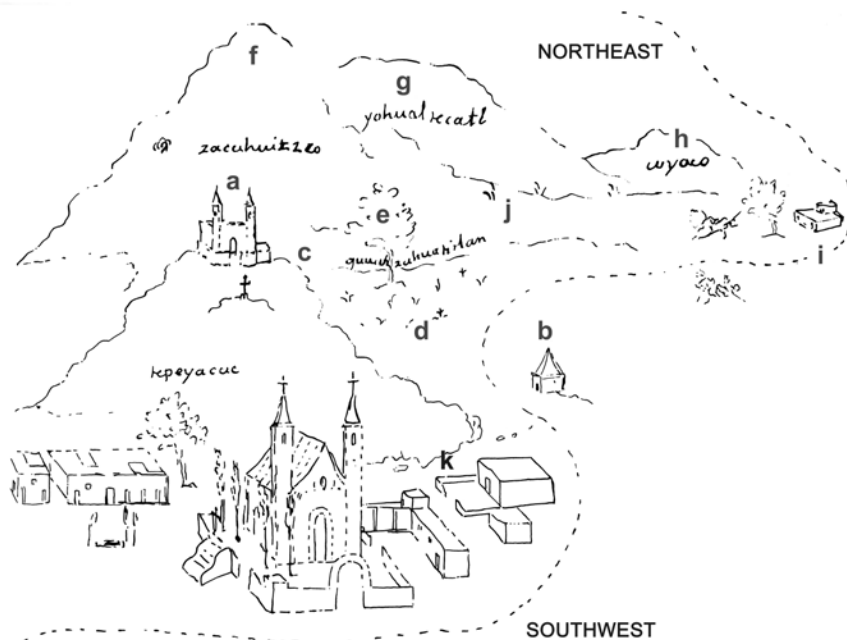


Figure 4. Diagram of the *Plano topográfico*. Drawing by Julio Romero.

waterfalls opposite the Posito that appear when it rains, the third which is the largest covered with a vault at the corner of a small room opposite the image of the old church" (ibid.). The same spot in the *Teotenantzin* is occupied by a frame with multiple undulating lines in its interior and below it, an element with three inflections. Caso (1979:2) confused it with one of the calendrical cartouches that usually frame year bearers. In our opinion, it is actually the masonry bench that surrounded the small wells and the current that issued from it with its three waterfalls. This proposal is supported by the project designed by Manuel Álvarez and Eduardo de Herrera in 1750 to equip the ancient irrigation ditch that went from San Lorenzo to that of Santa Ana: in the position of El Pocito a rectangle appears, to the southeast of which springs forth a sinuous flow (López Sarrelangue 2005:69–71; Sentíes 1991:20–21).

Figures 3c and 4c: Depression between two hills. This would correspond to the depression between the Hill of Tepeyac and Zacahuitzco Hill. Today it is crossed in a southeast-northwest direction by the wide avenue known as Cantera.

Figures 3d and 4d: Agave field. In the *Plano topográfico*, there are some ten agaves on the plain adjacent to Zacahuitzco Hill. In the *Teotenantzin*, two agaves can be seen on the same plain and two more on the slope of Zacahuitzco. This plain is also recorded in the Álvarez and Herrera project (Sentíes 1991:20–21).

Figures 3e and 4e: Casahuate tree. Near the agave patch, we can see a leafy tree in the *Plano topográfico* (2004:50–51). It is accompanied by the legend "Quauhzahuatitlan ("place of the cuauhzahuatl") and also marked with the number 2 ("Quauhzahuatitlan fasting tree or that does not bear fruit") and the letter P ("Albino tree also called tree of the Virgin or granular tree"). In the *Teotenantzin*, there is a tree in a similar location, on the southern slope of Zacahuitzco Hill. It has a twisted trunk, several branches, and more than a dozen leaves or flowers. Most probably, it is a specimen of the *Ipomoea arborescens* (Humb. & Bonpl. ex Willd) of the Convolvulaceae family, also known as the Tree Morning Glory. It abounds on dry mountainous slopes in Mexico. It reaches a height of one to four meters, and in December the top of the tree is filled with large white flowers. According to the *Ynventario*, there were two *casahuates* in the region of Tepeyac: The one represented in the *Plano topográfico* was located 290 *varas* (242.4 m) to the north of El Pocito and "lasted until it dried out ten or twelve years ago. This was not the fortunate tree as the masses of Tepeyac had believed. Carrillo, who lived many years in this Sanctuary, was angered by this

clumsy error and fought against it. The other was the true Tree of the Virgin" (*Ynventario* n.d.:24v–25r). Only the trunk and the roots of the latter remained standing in the second half of the seventeenth century. Supposedly, it was located at the foot of the eastern flank of the Hill of Tepeyac, near El Pocito and the relief of the gigantic head with a feathered headdress (ibid.:25r–26r).

Figures 3f and 4f: Hill of Zacahuitzco, the Tres Cruces, the Casita Blanca or of the Gachupines (70 m). This eminence, even though it is not the main peak in the Sierra of Guadalupe, is the one that is represented as the highest in both documents. In the *Plano topográfico* (2004:50–51) it is marked with the number 6: "Zacahuitzco in the thorny grass." In the *Teotenantzin* one can clearly see that marked on the right is the place of the reliefs and a steep cliff still present on the eastern flank of Zacahuitzco.

Figures 3g and 4g: Hill of Yohualtecatl or of the Guerrero (207 m). Next to the Zacahuitzco Hill rises the greatest peak in the Sierra de Guadalupe. In the *Plano topográfico* (2005:50–51) it is indicated with the number 4: "Yohualtecatl In the house of dark stones." According to Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, there sacrifices were conducted during the twenty-day calendrical period of Atlcahualo: "The second mountain where they killed children was called Yoaltecatl. It is a large range that includes Guadalupe. They gave the children who died there the same name as the mountain, which is Yoaltecatl. They dressed them with some papers dyed black with red ink stripes" (Sahagún 2000:177). Recently, Montero (2000:9, 14) has been able to document the remains of architecture, ceramics, and sculpture on a superficial level, highlighting an image of Tlaloc and a *xonecuilli* (s-shaped cloud symbol). According to Johanna Broda (1991:88–90), the cult of Tonantzin spread from Tepeyac to this hill.

Figures 3h and 4h: Coyoco Hill. This is the last elevation drawn in both documents. In the *Plano topográfico* (2004:50–51) it appears as number 5: "Coyoco place of holes."

Figures 3i and 4i: The Estanzuela. At the foot of the Hill of Coyoco, there is a plain by this name where there was a house with a wall on the south side that delimited a rectangular space. In the *Plano topográfico* (2004:50–51) the first has the letter L ("the dwelling or room") and the second, the M ("hovel that they say had belonged to the rich man of this Town d[o]n Antonio Roxas").

In sum, if we pull together the gloss from Dupaix's drawing—the one that specifies that the reliefs were beyond the Villa of Guadalupe and on the left of the *camino real*—with our comparison of the *Plano*

topográfico and the *Códice de Teotenantzin*, we reach the conclusion that they were located at the base of the eastern flank of the Zacahuitzco Hill, next to the steep cliff that we marked with the letter j in figures 3 and 4.

This idea is solidly backed by one of the eighteenth-century inventories for Boturini's Museo. Obviously, it is not the list that the knight from Milan included in his *Idea de una nueva historia general de la América septentrional*, published in Madrid in 1746, since the *Teotenantzin* was not mentioned there. Nor is it listed in the inventory produced between 1745 and 1746, for the reference to the reliefs is overly vague. It only says that they were on the mountain where one of the Marian apparitions took place:

In this other made of vat paper there are two drawings that the Painters called gouache of the Goddess that the Indians called *Teotenantzin*, that is so valuable, that the Mother of the Gods, to whom the non-Christians rendered cult on this same little hill, where the first apparition of the Mother of the True God, Holy Mary of Guadalupe. (López 1925:53)

The decisive proof of the location of the reliefs on the Zacahuitzco Hill is found, on the other hand, in the 1743–1744 inventory, the oldest of all. This list is of greater documentary value, for it was prepared by Boturini himself and the “Señor Oidor Juez de la Causa y Factor D. Ygnacio Joseph de Miranda.” The text referring to the codex states the following:

A map on Spanish paper of the famed idol Teotenanci, (which means mother of the Gods) which is on the hill contiguous to that of Guadalupe, where the historians say that the Mother of the true God wanted to appear later [Note in the margin: Tonantzin mother of the Gods, as Cybele]. (Peñafiel 1890:1:67)

As for *contiguity*, the Zacahuitzco Hill is the only one that is adjacent to the Hill of Tepeyac. If our interpretation is correct, there would seem to be no doubt that Benito Moxó y Francolí is alluding to the reliefs of Zacahuitzco in his *Cartas mejicanas*. This Benedictine from Catalonia lived in Mexico from 1804 to 1805 and described in some detail the adoration of these images at the end of the eighteenth century and how they were destroyed under the archbishop's orders:

Not many years ago on the summit of one of the hills that rises behind the renowned Sanctuary of Guadalupe, there was still a famed monument of Mexican antiquity. This consisted of certain figures or hieroglyphs engraved in relief on a large boulder that can be seen from fairly far away [. . .]

Some members of the priesthood were disturbed at how the Indians came and went by a causeway that passes near this hill, so that they came to stand in front of this

monument, they stopped suddenly, and looking around to see whether anyone was watching them, they usually paid some reverence, bowing down and other gestures, as if they were worshipping something. This fortunate observation sparked the same point of zeal and curiosity on the part of those worthy ministers. So they approached the boulder and they saw that at the base of the hieroglyphs or grotesque figures the Indians had left some offerings of fruit, I don't know how many wax candles, and a small vessel of incense that was still smoking [. . .] [The priests] conveyed their thoughts and observations to the Archbishop who was then in this City, who immediately ordered some quarrymen to go posthaste to erase those images for they served as such a harmful stumbling block to the Indians of the outskirts. This order was carried out; but nonetheless, certain traces or outlines can still be made out on the surface of that boulder that clearly show how there was some carving there or sculpture; but they are not enough to give an idea, not even a confused idea of what was actually sculpted or carved. (Moxó 1837:184)

The Zacahuitzco Hill

Unfortunately, today any sort of search for the reliefs is unproductive, as we were able to confirm on a visit to Zacahuitzco on April 16, 2009. A team of ten archaeologists systematically explored this hill, the base of which is located at 2,248 meters above sea level (MASL) and whose peak, crowned by a chapel dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe, is located at 2,348 MASL. That day we saw that the houses of the modern neighborhood known as the Colonia Estanzuela cover the entire eastern flank up to 2,284 MASL, which leads us to suspect that the reliefs, if they were not totally destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century, they were at some time during the twentieth. Nor does anything remain from those spectacular landscapes painted by José María Velasco in the 1870s (Altamirano Piolle 1993:1:178–191).

Although unbridled urban growth denies us any archaeological information, we can at least base our argument on astronomical, historical, and ethnographic data, which albeit fragmentary, reiterate the importance of Zacahuitzco in ancient times. For example, Galindo and Montero (2000:44, 48) discovered an extremely interesting astronomical correlation between this hill and that of Papayo, a volcanic cone that stands out on the horizon of the Sierra Nevada and is 45 km east from Mexico City. What is important is that an observer, standing on the summit of Zacahuitzco and not on that of Tepeyac, can witness the emergence of the solar disk behind Papayo Hill exactly on the winter solstice, a

phenomenon that took place each December 12 prior to the Gregorian correction of 1582. Therefore, it does not seem by chance that Papayo peak, located at an altitude of 3,640 MASL, houses a modern shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

As for historical information, we again refer to the *Ynventario*, where it states that the pre-Hispanic cult to Tonantzin initially took place on Zacahuitzco:

Or during [Cortés's] siege [of Tenochtitlan], or after it, some of the riders might have discovered the temple that the idolatrous Indians had, not on Tepeyac, but rather on the contiguous hill that is called Zacahuitzco. . . . On this hill, and not on that of Tepeyac I think that they rendered cult to the false Teonantzin sacrificing a woman to her and the priest carrying her head in the dance, as the Authors tell.

If the Spaniards discovered this Shrine during the siege, they would have scaled it in search of gold, and they would have destroyed it together with the idol, in their hatred of it they would have built a chapel and would have Mass held then, or after the war was over to consecrate to god and to his holy Mother a site that the people had dedicated to the false mother of the gods. As Zacahuitzco has a rugged slope full of thistles, although the chapel came to be made, later it was abandoned. What can be seen on its peak is a Cross. (*Ynventario* n.d.:24r)

There are additional clues in the *Monarquía indiana* by Fray Juan de Torquemada. He described a series of rites carried out there by Moquihuix—the ill-fated king of Tlatelolco—and his troops months before the unfortunate war against his brother-in-law Axayacatl, king of Tenochtitlan. If we believe the different annals, this occurred between A.D. 1472 and 1473. In the words of the Franciscan, it all began when the warriors of Tlatelolco drank a “diabolical brew” prepared with the dirty water from the sacrificial stone, burning “with ire and spirit.” Later, Moquihuix

took as many of his men as he could to a Hill that is next to Our Lady of Guadalupe, called Çacahuitzco (pretending to go for another purpose) and he carried out a solemn sacrifice and confirmed with it the Hearts of his Captains, and many of his Allies, and Confederates, and they set the time [to begin the offensive], and they named the Day that had to be eighty [days] later. He also ordered that the intermediary ill-omened Days pass because otherwise Victory could not be had. (Torquemada 1969:1:177)

The religious meaning of this ceremony of autosacrifice is revealed in the profound significance of the site where it was staged and of the divinity revered there. On the one hand, we should recall that the name Zacahuitzco means “Place of *zacahuitzli*,” in other words *zacate cadillo* or southern sandbur (*Cenchrus*

echinatus L.), a ruderal weed that reaches 60 cm tall and that is known for its pesky spines that stick to clothing and scratch people’s legs (Villaseñor and Espinosa 1998). It is suggestive that another sacred mountain in the Basin of Mexico had a similar name and at the same time a similar connection with Tonantzin. We are referring to Zacatepetl or “Zacate Hill,” which was also known as Ixillan Tonan or “The Womb of Our Mother” (Sahagún 1979:bk. II:136). Based on this fundamental fact and a careful analysis of sixteenth-century graphic and textual sources, Guilhem Olivier (2006) has proposed there was a metaphorical relationship between *zacate* and the vagina of the Mother Earth, just as there was between spines and the phallus of the sacrificed warrior. In Olivier’s opinion, the pious act of inserting sacrificial implements in mountains and in the *zacatapayolli* or penitence grass balls expressed their equivalence with fertilizing the earth (Olivier 2006:414, 420).

On the other hand, we have said that according to the *Ynventario*, Tonantzin was the deity venerated at Zacahuitzco. Also known as Cihuacoatl (“Female Serpent”), Ilamatecuhtli (“Aged Lady”), Cozcamiauh (“Necklace of the male corn flower”) (Sahagún 2000:74, 166), Quilaztli (“Grass Arrives”?) (Sahagún 2000:610, 613, 624, 625) and Ichpochtli (“Maiden”) (*Codex Telleriano-Remensis* 1995:6r), she was a warrior goddess, so she was represented brandishing a menacing, turquoise *tzotzopatzli* (weaver’s batten) and an eagle feather shield (fig. 5). Her belligerent nature reached such an extreme that her manifestation “was an omen of war” (Sahagún 1979:bk. I:3r). At the same time, the twenty-day period of Tititl, celebrated in her honor between December 19 and January 7 (Sahagún 2000:166),² was regarded as a time of “Wars and Attacks, which some Provinces had against others, and they killed and destroyed each other” (Torquemada 1969:1:300).

Therefore, if we believe Torquemada’s passage cited earlier, the people of Tlatelolco visited Zacahuitzco eighty days before facing off with the people of Tenochtitlan and some forty days before the *nemontemi* or the five unlucky days between the end and beginning of the new year. Counting out the days, we discovered with surprise that this blood offering would have taken place on the first days of Tititl, the celebration in honor of Tonantzin-Cihuacoatl. Thus, we might suggest that the purpose was to propitiate/fertilize this goddess, a warrior deity that presaged triumph in battle to her followers.

2. These dates correspond to December 29 and January 17 in the Gregorian Calendar.

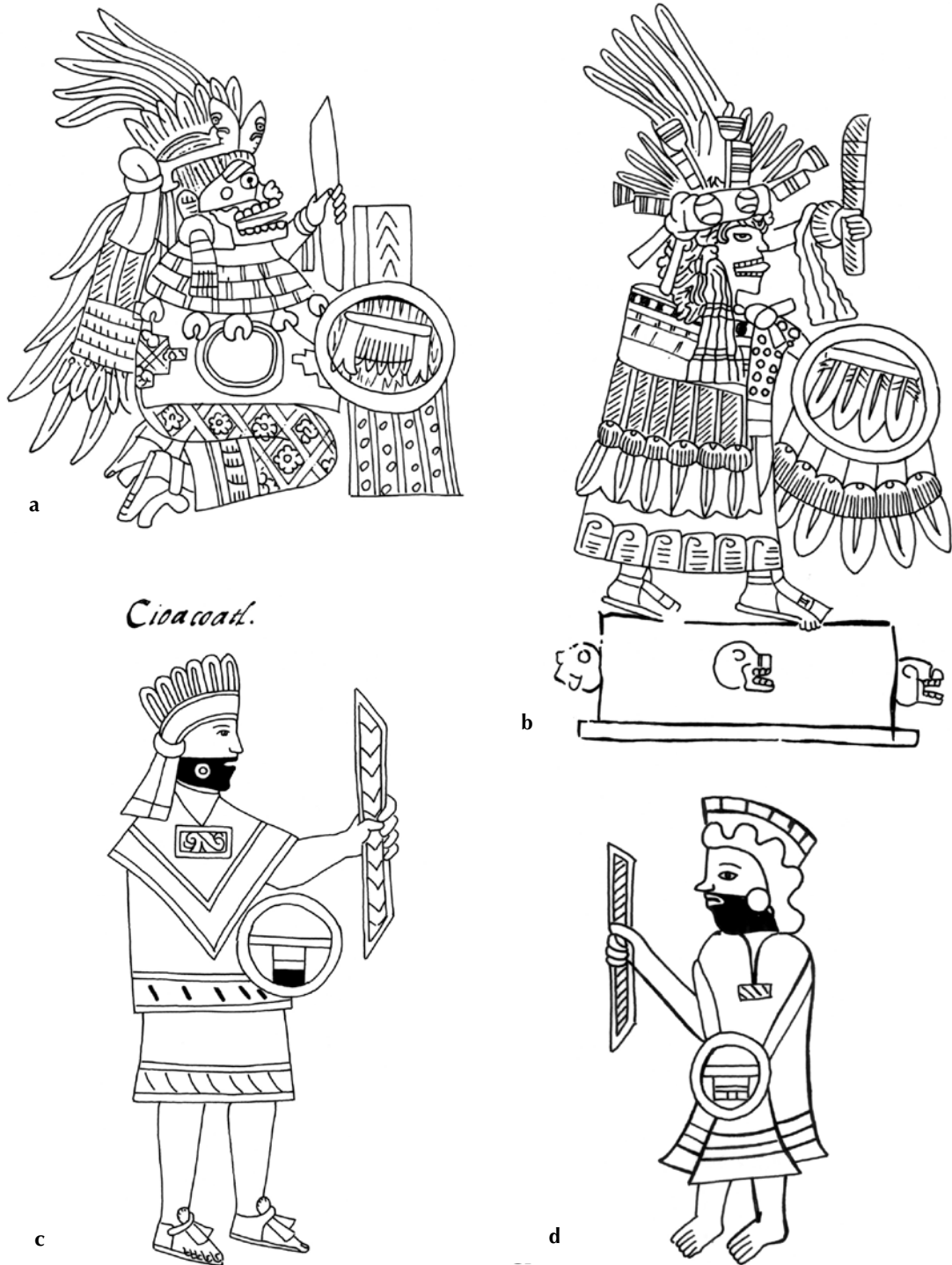


Figure 5. Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin. a) *Código Magliabechi* (FCE / ADEVA, Mexico City, 1996), p. 45r; b) *Código Borbónico* (FCE / SEQC / ADEVA, Mexico City, 1991), p. 31; c) B. de Sahagún, *Código Florentino. Manuscrito 218-20 de la Colección Palatina de la Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana* (Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, 1979), book I; d) Sahagún, *Primeros memoriales* (University of Oklahoma Press / Patrimonio Nacional y la Real Academia de la Historia, Norman, 1993), p. 253r. All drawings are by Julio Romero.

To conclude this section, it is worth mentioning that Zacahuitzco Hill continued to be the setting for popular cults as recently as a few decades ago, before the depression that joined it with Tepeyac was destroyed to build Cantera Avenue. The acts performed by the pilgrims who flocked to the Villa de Guadalupe in December included the ascent to this promontory covered with prickly vegetation (Galindo and Montero 2000:46–47).

Pre-Hispanic images of Zacahuitzco Hill

Returning to the *Códice de Teotenantzin*, we think that there is no room for doubt when it comes to the identity of the goddess painted on the right. The amacalli connects her to Toci-Teteoinnan (fig. 6) or to Chicomecoatl. Deity impersonators of both fertility goddesses played a fundamental role in the Tititl festivities dedicated to Tonantzin-Cihuacoatl-Illamatecuhli (Anders, Jansen, and García 1991:228–230). Unfortunately, the identity of the goddess on the left is much less clear, although we believe she is Tonantzin. This interpretation is based on accounts of indigenous cults in the Tepeyac region and on the iconography of the Mexica pantheon. In fact, the principal historical sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have always spoken of Tonantzin when they deal with the subject of idolatry on the Hill of Tepeyac. We will begin by examining Sahagún's work, where we can find the richest information:

Near the mountains there are three or four places where they used to perform solemn sacrifices, and people from far away came to attend these. One of these is here in Mexico, where there is a little mountain that is called Tepeácac, and the Spaniards call it Tepeaquilla, and now it is called Our Lady of Guadalupe. In this place there is a church dedicated to the mother of the gods, whom they called Tonantzin, which means "our mother." There they performed many sacrifices to honor this goddess. And they came to them from all regions of Mexico from more than twenty leagues, and they brought many offerings. Men and women and young boys and young girls came to these festivals. There was a large gathering of people on those days, and all of them said: "We are going to the festival of Tonantzin." And now that the church of Our Lady of Guadalupe is built there, they also call her Tonantzin, the missionaries taking advantage of the [fact that] they call our lady the mother of God Tonantzin. No one knows exactly where this establishment of this Tonantzin came from; but what we do know is that the word means that ancient Tonantzin, and this is something that must be remedied, because the very name of the mother of God, Sancta María, is not Tonantzin,

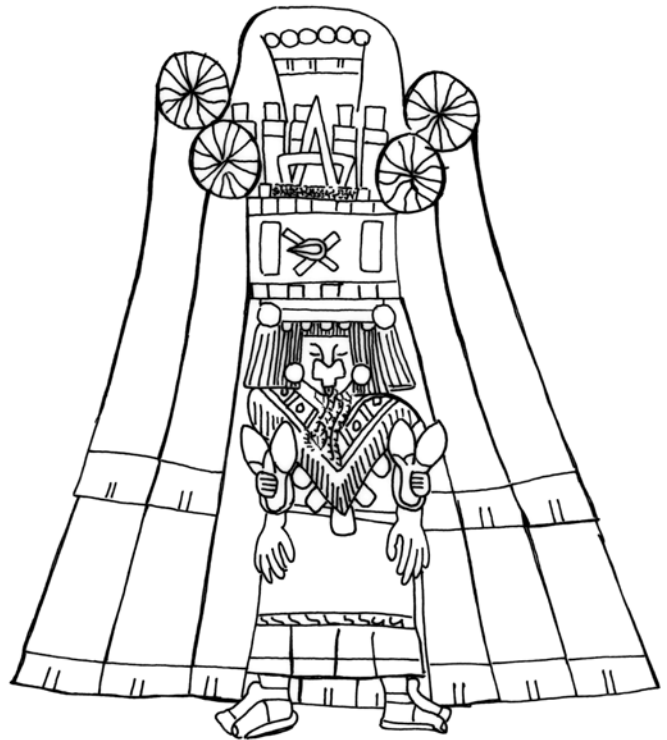


Figure 6. Toci-Teleoinnan, *Códice Borbónico* (FCE / SEQC / ADEVA, Mexico City, 1991), p. 31. Drawing by Julio Romero.

but rather *Dios inantzin*. It seems this satanic invention [was] to alleviate idolatry under the error of this name Tonantzin.

And now they come from very far to visit this Tonantzin, as far away as before, the devotion of which is also suspicious, because everywhere there are many churches of Our Lady, and they don't go to them, and they come from faraway places, like in old times.

And so the inhabitants of those lands that were fed by the clouds of those mountains, persuaded and cautioned by the devil and by his underlings, established the custom and devotion to come visit those mountains at the festival that was dedicated in Mexico to the festival of Cihuacóatl [Tititl], whom they also called Tonantzin. (Sahagún 2000:1143–1145)

Drawing from Sahagún's texts, Torquemada also alludes to idolatrous practices at three sanctuaries in Central Mexico: the one to Tonantzin at Tepeyac, to Toci at Chiauhtempan, and to Telpochtli at Tianquizmanalco. In his *Monarquía Indiana*, he tells us:

In this New Spain the Gentile Indians had three places where they honored three different Gods and they celebrated feast days [. . .] And at another, which is a league

from this City of Mexico, to the North, they had a feast day for another Goddess, called Tonan, which means: Our Mother, whose devotion of Gods prevailed when our Friars came to this Land, and whose festivities were attended by large throngs of people from many leagues around [. . .]. (Torquemada 1969:2:245–246)³

Jacinto de la Serna, a Spanish missionary who was an expert on the continuity of pre-Hispanic deities, states that the cult to Tonantzin in the Sierra de Guadalupe extended into the first decades of the viceregal period within a deliberate, syncretic context.

At Guadalupe Hill, where today the celebrated Sanctuary of the Most Holy Virgin of Guadalupe is, they had an idol of a Goddess called *Ilamateuctli*, or *Cuscamiauh*, or by another name, and the most ordinary, which was *Tonan*, to whom they celebrated a religious feast in the month called *Tititl*, seventeen in a Calendar and sixteen in another; and when they go to the feast of the Most Holy Virgin, they say that they go to the feast of *Totlaçonantzin* ["Our Venerable Precious Mother"], and the intention is aimed in the evil-minded to their Goddess and not to the Most Holy Virgin, or to both: thinking it was possible to do so to one or the other. (Serna n.d.:142)

The respective passage from Fray Alonso Ponce is much more concise. He only records that: "In that town [of Guadalupe] the Indians had, in former times when they were not Christians, an idol called *Ixpuchtli*, which means virgin or maiden, and everyone from the land went there as a sanctuary with their gifts and offerings" (Ciudad Real 1976:1:68).

In sum, all of these documents attest to the same religious phenomenon, which extended from Tepeyac to Zacahuitzco. Given that Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin was the principal focus of devotion in the area, we analyzed the attributes of the goddess in the *Codex Magliabechi*, *Codex Borbonicus* [*Códice Borbónico*], and the *Florentine Codex*, as well as in the prototype to the latter, the *Primeros memoriales* (fig. 5). This simple exercise revealed that the goddess on the left in the *Códice de Teotenantzin* shares three attributes with Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin: a) the shield with fringes; b) the diamond pattern (although in the codices they are rendered on the skirt of the goddess and they have a flower inscribed within); and c) the element crowning the headdress that might be composed of upright eagle feathers (fig. 5a–c) or more probably by "some small things ordered in line,

arranged in a row, as if they were a flower garland" (Sahagún 1979:bk. II:94v; translation by Alfredo López Austin) that the goddess's deity impersonator wore on the head during *Tititl* (fig. 5d).

Pre-Hispanic images from the Hill of Tepeyac

Few people know that two pre-Hispanic images from Tepeyac managed to survive the iconoclastic furor of the conquerors, coming down to us today intact. Although their preservation may have been incredible, their invocation was not, for they represented Chicomecoatl and Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin, respectively. The first of them was donated in 1989 by Luis Ávila Blancas to the Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe (fig. 7). Just as its first owner reported, it came from excavations carried out in the vicinity of El Pocito (Urquijo Torres 2004:15). This crude carving of volcanic rock, perhaps a basalt, measures 40.7 x 21 cm. It is the image of a female figure wearing a plain skirt and with her chest bare. On her head, she has attributes that identify her: a crown of paper and corncobs, as well as red pigment covering her face. This sculpture resembles in several respects the well-known Chicomecoatl from book 2 of the *Códice Florentino* (Sahagún 1979:bk. II:29v).

The second image is a spectacular, three-dimensional carving that is currently exhibited in the Mexica Hall of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City (fig. 8). Bearing inventory number 10-81573, it measures 78 x 33 x 24 cm. It is a Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin sculpted in pinkish volcanic stone, possibly an andesite. One of the distinctive features is a serpent helmet, whose fangs flank the divinity's face. She wears round ear flares with trapezoidal pendants. She also wears a double-strand necklace decorated with five *chalchihuites*. On her *quechquemitl* she has another two-strand necklace of *chalchihuites*, with pendant bell-rattles. Her hands grasp an undulating rattlesnake and what might be a rattle. Her skirt is decorated with a series of *xicalcolihqui* or stepped fret designs decorated with the aristocratic *tenixyo* border. The toes of the goddess appear discretely between this garment and the pedestal. The back of the sculpture is interesting, for there is an enormous maize plant sprouting a ring and an eagle's claw.

We know that this sculpture comes from Cerro del Tepeyac, thanks to another unpublished Dupaix drawing that accompanied the one that we analyzed earlier (fig. 9). In the upper left corner of the sheet, Dupaix clearly wrote "Guadalúpe," indicating the spot where the image was found. He drew it crudely to the right of a hill cactus and labeled it as a "seated figure of stone of the size of

3. This passage from Torquemada caused considerable distress among the secular clergy, which can be confirmed in "Notices sur la Toci ou Teotenantzi de Guadalupe" (n.d.) and Boban (1891:2:428).



Figure 7. Chicomecoatl sculpture, andesite, late Postclassic, Hill of Tepeyac. Coll. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City. Authorized reproduction.



Figure 8. Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin sculpture, andesite, late Postclassic, Hill of Tepeyac. Museo Nacional de Antropología (inv. 10-81573), Mexico City. CONACULTA-INAH-MEX, reproduction authorized by Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

an Infant,” which corresponds to its actual height: 78 cm. Although he did not understand the position of the body, perhaps because the skirt covered the underlying forms, Dupaix faithfully reproduced the serpent helmet, the face, ear flares, and necklace of this one-of-a-kind sculpture.

The exceptional visual quality of the image and the information analyzed throughout the present research make it clear that Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin was by far the most important deity on Tepeyac and Zacahuitzco hills. It could be no other way, for according to Sahagún, Cihuacoatl was the foremost of the principal goddesses

in the Mexica pantheon (Sahagún 2000:74). She was no less than the mother or source of nourishment for all humanity, the ancestral virgin, the patron of births and women who died in childbirth.

Just as Rodrigo Martínez Baracs has emphasized, Cihuacoatl stands apart from the other deities in the indigenous pantheon for her ongoing appearances in the world of men (Martínez Baracs 1990). The texts by Sahagún’s informants reiterate it continuously: “She appeared many times, they say, as a lady composed of some insignia that was worn in the palace. They used to say that at night she called out and bellowed in the



Figure 9. Drawing by Guillermo Dupaix of the Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin sculpture that he saw at Guadalupe (ca. 1791–1804), charcoal and ink, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City. CONACULTA-INAH-MEX, reproduction authorized by Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

air" (Sahagún 2000:74). At the time of Moctezuma "the devil that was called Cioacóatl, at night, was wandering the streets of Mexico weeping, and everyone heard her say: 'Oh my sons, where am I to take you?'" (Sahagún 2000:724). This and other apparitions of a goddess as venerated as she was feared were taken as an augury of the end of Mexica power (Sahagún 2000:735). By colonial times, between 1528 and 1531, her presence was felt again as she went back to her old ways: "Don Martín Ecatl was the second governor of those of Tlatelulco, after the conquest of those of Mexico, and he was governor for three years. And in his time, the devil that was in the shape of a woman wandered and appeared day and night, and she was called Cioacoatl, she ate a child that was in a cradle in the town of

Azcaputzalco" (Sahagún 2000:728). Martínez Baracs lucidly concludes:

Whether real or imaginary, apparitions of Cihuacoatl-Tonantzin such as those mentioned by Sahagún must have been a source of inspiration for Don Antonio Valeriano when he composed *Nican mopohua*. In any event, they help to explain the mythical and religious force of the account of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the indigenous man Juan Diego among the Mexicans. (Martínez Baracs 1990:64)

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