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Nicachi Songs: Zapotec Ritual Texts and Postclassic Ritual Knowledge in Colonial Oaxaca

Research Year: 2003
Culture: Zapotec
Chronology: Post Classic
Location: Oaxaca, México
Site: Villa Alta

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Introduction

This report is based on ethnohistorical and linguistic information collected at the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Seville, Spain, in Spring 2003, and at five different archival depositories in Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, which were visited in the summer of 2003 and 2004–the Archivo General del Estado de Oaxaca (AGEO), the Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de Oaxaca (AHAO), the Archivo Luis Castañeda (ALC), the Archivo de Notarías de Oaxaca (ANO), and the Archivo del Poder Judicial del Estado de Oaxaca (APJO), which houses hundreds of colonial records from the alcaldías mayores of Villa Alta (AVA) and Teposcolula (ATEP). In 2003-2004, about 85 trial records–which include wills, letters, and petitions written in Nexitzo, Bijanos, and Cajonos Zapotec, as well as a broad range of trial documents written in Spanish–were scanned at the Archivo del Poder Judicial del Estado de Oaxaca. This procedure was undertaken to facilitate the ongoing transcription and parsing of colonial Cajonos and Nexitzo Zapotec textual genres, which in turn yielded morphological, syntactic, and lexical data. These data are currently being used to assist in the translation of four booklets containing Zapotec ritual songs surrendered by town officials to Episcopal authorities in 1704. The first two booklets–henceforth AGI 882 Booklets 100 and 101–are the focus of this inquiry, as they contain a total of 22 songs that name local founding ancestors and Zapotec deities. This particular song corpus was performed during specific calendrical festivities in the Cajonos Zapotec towns of Betaza and/or Lachirioag in the 17th century. AGI 882 Booklets 102 and 103, which are also the focus of a separate translation effort, contain a total of 15 songs that celebrate a range of Christian entities and feasts.

The findings presented in this report should be regarded as preliminary conclusions drawn from a work in progress, since the translation of the song corpus contained in Booklets 100 and 101 is a research task that will take several years to conclude in a satisfactory manner. This report includes a brief characterization of the ethnohistorical context of production and performance of these Zapotec ritual songs, and an appraisal of potential links between some of the deities mentioned in the songs and other known deities in the Pan-Zapotec pantheon. The research carried out so far will continue with subsequent visits to archives in México City and Oaxaca City and with further consultations with linguistic informants in Villa Alta in 2005 and 2006.

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The ethnohistorical context of the Zapotec ritual songs of Villa Alta

On a quiet evening in the year of 1703, the adult population of the Zapotec community of San Melchor Betaza, a town located to the northeast of Oaxaca City in the province of Villa Alta, stood assembled by the entrance of a building used for ritual observances that was called "House of the Great Tree/Beginning," or *Yoo Yag Tao*,[1] awaiting a response that would forever change their way of life. About three years before, a riot in the neighboring village of San Francisco Cajonos had resulted in the lynching of two native informants who dared to reveal an unorthodox ritual ceremony held at the house of the head of a local confraternity. After this lynching, a protracted trail for insubordination and murder had resulted in the execution of fifteen of the Cajonos rebels, and Friar Ángel Maldonado, a newly arrived bishop, performed a lengthy inspection within the province of Villa Alta, and demanded that the inhabitants of the region surrender their ritual specialists (Gillow 1978). As a response to these extirpation attempts–which were the latest entreaty in a long and tempestuous series of confrontations between ritual specialists and Dominicans and their civil allies (Tavárez 2002a)–the Betaza town officials asked two men who specialized in interpreting the visions triggered by the *cuana betao* plant (probably the *Rivea corymbosa* vine, called *ololiuhqui* in Nahuatl) to imbibe this hallucinogenic brew in order to consult their deities. Hours later, when these specialists emerged from the communal house, they made a portentous revelation:

> [they said] that *they had fallen into the hands of God the Father,* that the Christian doctrine would come into town, and that the Spaniards would come in and take away their parents and grandparents–meaning their idols. The first would be *Goque Yagchila*, and in fact, he was brought out and burned in the town square of [Villa Alta] later (AVA Criminal 117, 39v-40r).

In the end, the local deities' alleged premonition seemed prescient, as Maldonado's idolatry extirpation campaign turned out to be the most successful attack on native ritual practices in New Spain. Maldonado selected one of the defendants from the Cajonos trial, placed his pectoral around his neck, and ordered him to travel throughout the region of Villa Alta announcing his offer of absolution: in exchange for denouncing their

[1] *Yaga* is the colonial Cajonos word for "tree, wood." Córdova (1578: 328r) includes the following entry: "Principio este assi no le ay en Dios q[ue] es el principio de todo. Dios***yàca*** lóo, ***yàca*** ni-xèe ni cílla."

ritual specialists and making a full confession about ritual practices, all native communities would benefit from a general absolution without trial (AGI 882). Between November 1704 and February 1705, the elected authorities of 15 Bijanos Zapotec, 27 Cajonos Zapotec, 26 Nexitzo Zapotec, 29 Mixe and seven Chinantec towns–representing a total population of about 60,000–journeyed to the provincial capital to surrender and sign a communal confession, one for each pueblo. Along with these confessions, the Zapotec officials–but not the Mixe or Chinantec–surrendered 99 booklets that contain complete or partial lists of day names in the *piyè* (also known as *biyè* in Villa Alta), the 260-day Zapotec ritual calendar (Alcina Franch 1993), along with various other calendrical annotations (see Figure 2, below). Furthermore, four booklets containing alphabetic transcriptions of Zapotec ritual songs (Booklets 100–103) were also presented to Episcopal authorities. These songs are of great importance for the study of Mesoamerican ritual practices, since they are the only extant corpus of communal ritual songs in a Mesoamerican language performed clandestinely in colonial times.

Sometime after 1704, Bishop Maldonado submitted to the Council of Indies in Spain the Villa Alta confessions–which hold information about more than 300 individually identifiable Zapotec ritual practitioners–along with 103 octavo-sized booklets made of pieces of European paper sewn together. Maldonado was seeking to transfer control of ten parishes in Villa Alta from the Dominicans into his hands, and the sheer mass of evidence about "idolatrous" ritual practices granted him a powerful argument that facilitated the Spanish crown's decision to secularize these parishes. When these records were placed in *legajo* México 882 at the Archive of the Indies in Seville, the ritual songs were separated from the testimonies signed by the authorities of their towns of origin, thus blurring the evidence that may have allowed us to link the booklets to specific confessions by placement alone. These texts remained in Spain from the early 18th century onwards, and were thus spared the canonical fate of native ritual texts–destruction by fire–and the haphazard survival rate of ecclesiastical documents in 19th-century México.

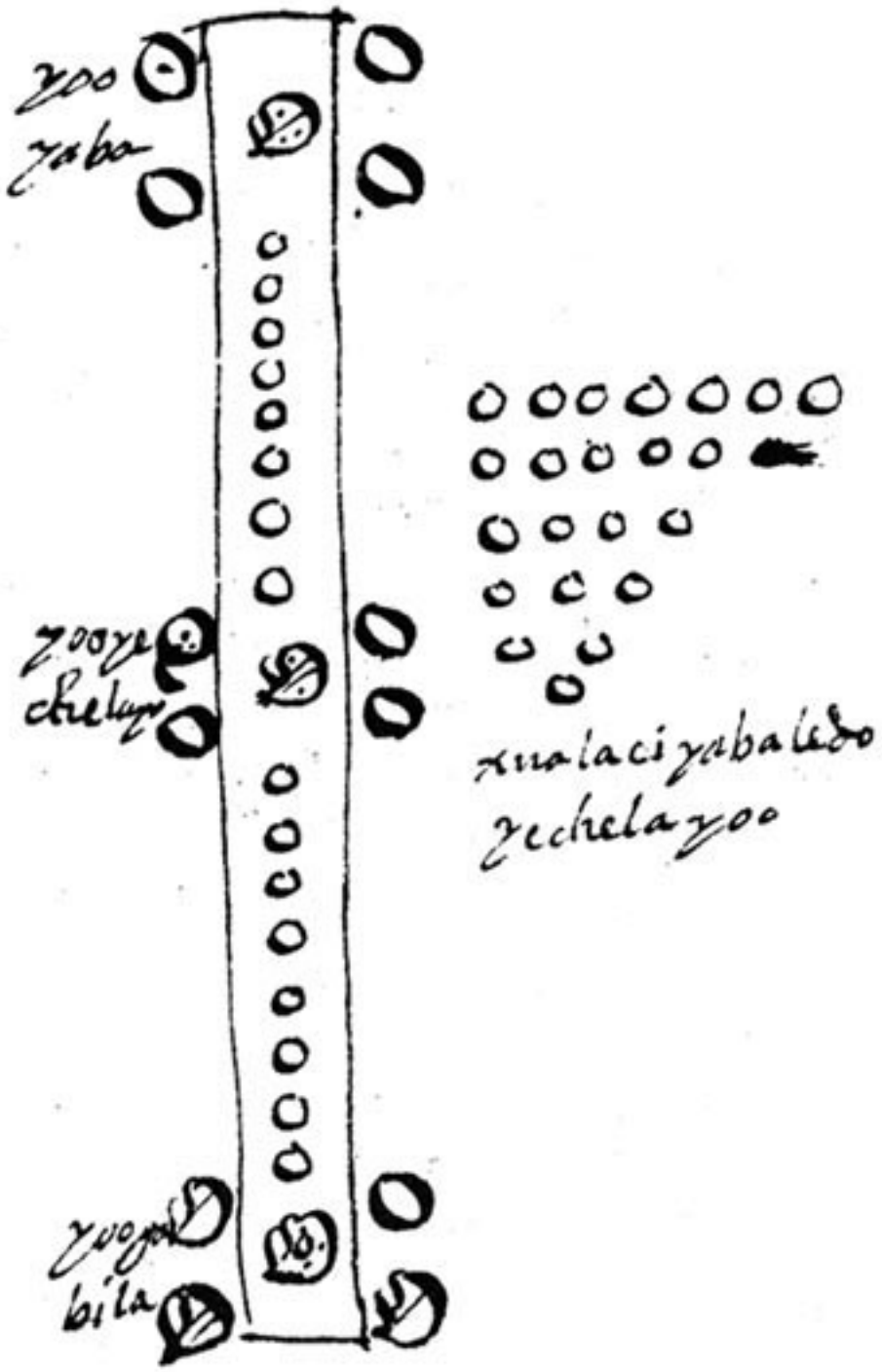

Figure 1. A late 17th-century depiction of the Zapotec cosmos, Calendar 11, AGI México 882.

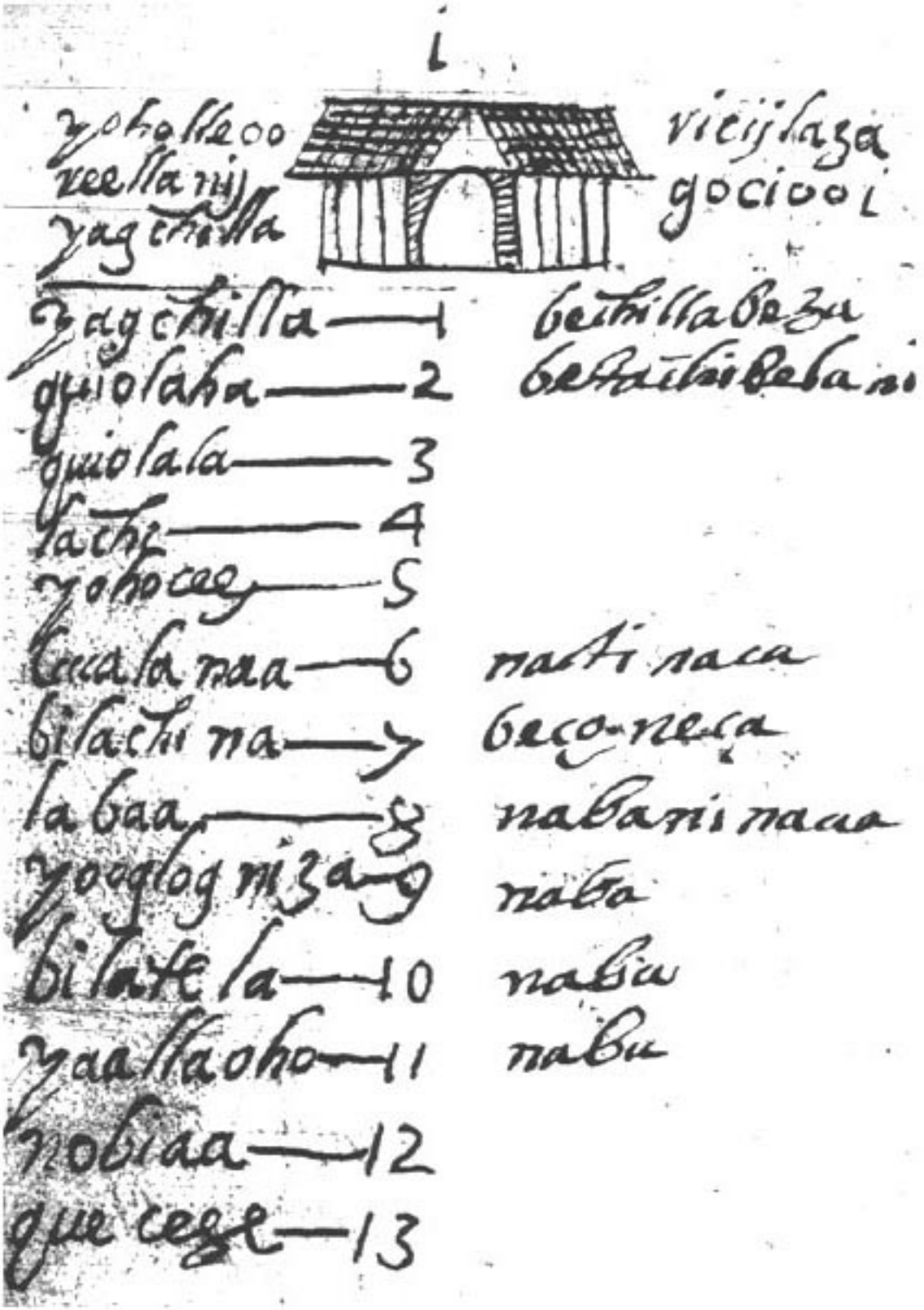

Figure 2. The first 13-day period in the biye, from Calendar 85, AGI México 882..

The linguistic and textual context of production of the Villa Alta songs

Dialectal features

Villa Alta was a colonial jurisdiction located to the northeast of the Oaxaca Valley administered by a resident *alcalde mayor* in the town of Villa Alta of San Ildefonso, and it encompassed more than one hundred towns inhabited by speakers of Zapotec, Chinantec and Mixe. Kaufman's (2004: 64) ongoing research on Proto-Zapotecan reconstructions has proposed that Zapotec is best understood as a language complex consisting of five language areas–Chatino, Papabuco, Northern, Central, Southern, and Western Zapotec–with remarkable internal differentiation. The traditional division of Northern Zapotec–which may have preserved some relatively archaic traits from Proto-Zapotecan and Proto-Zapotec–into Cajonos, Nexitzo, and Bijanos Zapotec (Chance 1989: 7) is supported by Juan Jose Rendón's (1995: 157-199) glottochronological study.

This report will not focus directly on the 99 calendrical booklets seized in Villa Alta, which were called "the time count of the ancestors and fathers of us all," or *piyè xoo tao xoci reo*, by their owners. This is a separate area of inquiry that was pioneered by José Alcina Franch (1993, 1998) and Arthur Miller (1991, 1998), and which is also being pursued as an essential part of my ongoing translation project. Instead, I will turn to the contents of the last four booklets, each of which contain a variable number of ritual songs. Booklet 100 (18 folios), and Booklet 101 (ten folios) focus on non-Christian Zapotec beliefs. On the other hand, the two remaining collections, which feature references to Christian entities, are rather short: Booklet 102 has two folios, and Booklet 103 seven folios.

Booklet 100 and 101 are linked through annotations with owners who lived in the Cajonos Zapotec towns of Betaza and Lachirioag, an issue that will be discussed below. On the other hand, since Booklets 102 and 103 bear an attribution to neither owner nor location, they can be assigned a provenance only on the basis of linguistic evidence (Tavárez 2000, 2006). The first salient dialectal feature one notices in these two texts is the usage of the grapheme tz to represent the voiceless alveolar affricate (IPA [ts], Americanist [¢]) in Zapotec words such as *guetze* (town) or *tzela* (and), which is characteristic of many colonial and contemporary variants of Nexitzo and Bijanos Zapotec. In colonial Cajonos Zapotec–the dialect in which Booklets 100 and 101 were written–this phoneme is realized as the voiceless alveopalatal affricate (IPA [tS], Americanist [č]) and represented as *ch* in the same words, yielding the colonial orthographic variants *gueche* and *chela*. These two phones are variants of the same phoneme, and they may be used to trace an isogloss that divides the Zapotec-speaking regions of central Villa Alta into two minimally defined linguistic communities: the Nexitzo and Bijanos variants to the north and east, and the Cajonos dialect to the south, as suggested by the orthographic data summarized in Tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1. Orthographic evidence from the written colonial Cajonos Zapotec dialect								
Tokens	**Booklet 100**	**Booklet 101**	**Lachirioag will, 18th century**	**Yalalag will, 18th century**	**Zoogocho will, 18th century**	**Tabaa will, 18th century**	**Yatzachi will, 18th century**	**Talea will, 18th century**
"and"	chela	chela	chela	chela	chela	?	chela	chela
"town"	queche, yeche	queche	yeche	yeche	guiechi, yechi	lleche	yeche	queche, yeche

Table 2. Orthographic evidence from the written colonial Nexitzo Zapotec dialect							
Tokens	**Booklet 102**	**Booklet 103**	**Pacheco 1686 doctrina (Tanetze)**	**Villa Alta will, 18th century**	**Reagui will, 18th century**	**Yatzona will, 18th century**	**Yagallo will, 18th century**
"and"	?	tzela	tzela	tzela	tzela	tzela	tzela
"town"	guetze, quetze	guetze	yetze	?	yetze	yetze	yetze

The Villa Alta songs and other Mesoamerican ritual genres

The author(s) of Booklet 100 refer to the songs of Villa Alta as dij dola, which could be rendered loosely as "song." Córdova (1578: 69v) states that the Valley Zapotec expressions *tij, ticha tij*, and *tij tólani* are synonymous with "song." The element *tò(l)la* is included in the verb *tòllaya*, which meant both "I beat on drums" (ibid., 44r), and "I sing" (ibid., 70v). There may be a semantic link between this term and a different item with similar spelling, *tòla*, which in Pre-Columbian times designated sharp pieces of straw, which were woven together and presented to a Zapotec priest (*pigana*) by penitents as tangible representations of their transgressions. *Tòla* was later recruited by the Dominicans as the translation for the term "sin" in Valley Zapotec (ibid., 228v).

Moreover, the Villa Alta testimonies often refer to these texts as "*teponaztli* songs," using the common Nahuatl term for a cylindrical drum. Some testimonies also describe the use of tall standing drums, whistles and tortoise shells. All of these instruments–the cylindrical drum, the standing drum, the tortoise shell, and the whistles–are traditional Mesoamerican musical instruments associated with communal ritual singing and dancing by Diego de Landa and Sánchez de Aguilar in Yucatán, and by Durán, Sahagún and others among the Nahua. These communal ritual songs featured the beat of the cylindrical drum–called *nicachi* in Zapotec and *tunkul* in Yucatec Maya, and carried a label derived from the generic term for "song"–*cuicatl* in Nahuatl, kay in Yucatec Maya.

As a genre, the songs of Villa Alta resemble another substantial corpus of colonial Mesoamerican ritual songs: the *Cantares Mexicanos,* 91 Nahuatl songs transcribed between 1550 and 1580 by Nahua elites in the Valley of México. Each of the 15 Zapotec songs of Villa Alta in Booklets 102 and 103 begin, just like the *Cantares Mexicanos*, with an alphabetic transcription of a cylindrical drum percussion pattern that uses the syllables *ti, qui, co* and *to*. Moreover, in both the Nahua and the Zapotec compositions in each of the booklets (100–103), the end of each stanza is marked with a litany of syllables with no lexical content–*ayao, hiya, hoya*, etc.–which were sung during the performance; this feature appears in both the Christian and the traditional Zapotec songs of Villa Alta. On the other hand, the Zapotec songs in Booklets 100 and 101 propitiate only Pre-Columbian deities, a focus that resembles that of the *Cantares de Dzitbalché*, 15 songs that celebrate a wide range of Mayan divine entities transcribed in late 18th-century Yucatec Maya orthography in the town of Dzitbalché in Campeche (Barrera Vázquez 1965).

A preliminary analysis of the Zapotec songs of Villa Alta

In order to highlight some of the features of the songs of Villa Alta, I will now refer to my translation of three of these songs. It should be stressed that these translations are a work in progress: they are based in the parsing of verbal and nominal constructions that are supported by at least one item of morphological or lexical evidence from colonial Zapotec sources–such as Córdova's 1578 dictionary, which has been digitalized by a group lead by Thomas Smith-Stark (see Smith-Stark *et al*. 1993, and Smith-Stark 1998 and 1999), Feria's 1567 *Doctrina* (Broadwell 2002), Pacheco de Silva's 1687 Nexitzo doctrine, Gaspar de los Reyes' 1704 grammar of Cajonos Zapotec, Levanto's 1776 catechism, Juan Martín's 1696 Nexitzo vocabulary, Pedro de la Cueva's Valley Zapotec doctrinal narratives, and a group of 17th and 18th-century testaments in Cajonos and Nexitzo Zapotec, and accompanied by a Spanish translation. Contemporary sources include the vocabularies and grammars of the Yatzachi El Bajo (Butler 1997), Yalálag (López and Newberg 1990) and Zoogocho (Long and Cruz 1999) Zapotec variants.

The Christian clandestine songs of Villa Alta: Booklets 102 and 103

Booklet 102 contains three brief songs: a song that stresses the message that God gave his only son as savior to the world, a song that celebrates the Virgin Mary, and a song entitled "Sermon of St. Francis." Booklet 103 contains 13 songs that address redemption, the passion of Christ, the mysteries of the Virgin, and celebrates Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Three Wise Men, God the Father, and Saint John the Baptist. These songs display two features that are also found in the Nahua *Cantares Mexicanos*: stanza boundaries are always marked with nonsensical syllables, and the contents of the stanza are organized into a first section–which contains new information, and which we could call "verse," following Bierhorst's (1985) suggestion–and a second, highly repetitive section, which we could designate as "refrain."

Since Booklet 102 and 103 contain songs in the Nexitzo Zapotec dialect, their geographical origin can be surmised through indirect evidence. In the legal records produced by Bishop Maldonado, there is only one instance in which the residents of a Nexitzo-speaking town mention the surrender of *nicachi* songs to ecclesiastical authorities: the confession in behalf of the people of Yalahui. On November 24, 1704, a communal confession signed by Yalahui town officials was presented to Judge Aragón y Alcántara. This confession stated that Juan Martín, son of Yalahui mayor Miguel Martín, owned "a booklet with *teponaztli* songs"; it was also reported that both Miguel and another town official had consulted this booklet. The Yalahui officials also confessed that no communal sacrifices had taken place in their town after the deaths of two of their "teachers of idolatry" 20 years earlier (AGI 882: 430r). While Juan and Miguel Martín were the last known owners of Booklets 102 and 103, it cannot be asserted that they were the authors of these songs. Although both booklets appear to have been composed by two similar hands, it may well be the case that these were copies of texts that were originally composed by the mid-seventeenth century. A substantial analysis and sample translations of this song corpus will appear in Tavárez 2006.

A communal ritual genre of Late Postclassic origin: Booklets 100 and 101

The Zapotec songs from Booklets 100 and 101 have the best-documented context of production. On November 19, 1704, Fernando Lópes of Lachirioag appeared before an ecclesiastical judge, and presented him with "a book made of half a paper sheet, old and dirty, in which he said were contained the days for giving Gentile names…". This is an accurate depiction of Booklet 100, which also bears the legend "From Fernando Lópes of Lachirioag, who bought it from Pedro Vargas of Betaza." On the same date, Pedro Gonzalo of Lachirioag surrendered "a notebook with eight folios, which he said was for *teponaztli* songs." This description matches the physical appearance of Booklet 101. Although there is no biographical information about Pedro Gonzalo, the owner of Booklet 101, some information has survived about Fernando Lópes and Pedro de Vargas–the owners of Booklet 100. A collective confession identifies Fernando Lópes as one of the three leading "teachers of idolatries" who organized communal ritual practices in the town of Lachirioag, and Lópes stated he had bought his songbook from Pedro de Vargas of Betaza. This transfer was business as usual among Zapotec ritual specialists, who exchanged, copied, or bought booklets containing calendars and ritual songs throughout the 17th century in the parish of Sola and the province of Villa Alta (Tavárez 2002b, 2006).

According to the testimony of Pedro's son Fabián de Vargas–who was an office holder in Betaza in 1703 as well as a ritual specialist–his father refused to teach him about divination practices, arguing that he was afraid of being discovered as a practitioner, and had decided instead to pass on his ritual knowledge to his oldest son. In spite of this, Fabián received instruction from other specialists, found a ritual text that belonged to his father sometime after his death in 1694, and eventually learned how to make sacrifices in private. In fact, many of the Villa Alta testimonies refer to a split between

sacrificios de particulares, personal ritual practices–which were performed by common people, usually with the assistance of ritual practitioners–and *sacrificios del común*, or community sacrifices, which involved the playing of songs that were called cantos de teponastle–"wooden drum songs," or *dij dola nicachi* in Zapotec–performed before the entire town in an open space by singers and musicians called *belao*.

Structural features of the song corpus in Booklets 100 and 101

It may be argued that the structure of the cosmos and the structure of the 260-day ritual calendar were regarded as overlapping, interrelated arrangements by Mesoamerican priests and ritual specialists. In Postclassic times, one of the most succinct depictions of this interdigitation of space and time is perhaps the cover page of the Codex Fejérvary-Mayer, which shows Xiuhteuctli at the center of a diagram that contains the four cardinal directions in association with four respective trees and birds, and with specific day signs (Taube 2004). The Nahua, according to León-Portilla's (1974) interpretation of the well-known cosmological diagram from the Codex Ríos (Vaticanus A), believed in a cosmical order that contained 13 separate layers in the realm above Earth, and nine underworld layers. The cosmological beliefs of colonial Zapotec ritual specialists may be represented by one of the last pages of Calendar 11 from Villa Alta (see Figure 1, above): this drawing depicts the cosmos as an 19-level structure, with eight levels (represented by circles) between the House of the Underworld (*yoo gabila*) and the House of Earth (*yoo yeche layo*), and eight levels between the House of Earth and the House of the Sky (*yoo yaba*). The 260-day calendar is directly tied to these houses: in Calendar 11 and in a few of the 99 calendrical booklets from Villa Alta, it is stated that each of the 20 thirteen-day periods (*trecenas*) is linked with a revolving circuit through each of the three levels: Trecena 1 is associated with the House of Earth, Trecena 2 with the House of the Sky, Trecena 3 with the House of Earth, Trecena 4 with the House of the Underworld, Trecena 5 with the House of Earth, and so on until Trecena 20, yielding ten trecenas associated with Earth, and five trecenas each linked to Sky and the Underworld.[2]

Furthermore, the 260 days of this count were also divided into four periods of 65 days each–called piyê in Valley Zapotec (Córdova 1578a: 115v) and goçio in Villa Alta–and each day was associated with one of four cardinal directions, which in the Villa Alta calendars were often transcribed as *xilla, zobi, chaba/tzaba,* and *niti*. As an example of some of these associations, Figure 2 shows a depiction of the first trecena in Calendar 85 of Villa Alta: the gloss on either side of the house drawn atop the list of 13 days (*yagchilla*, 1 Cayman, to *queçee*, 13 Reed) states that the trecena (*llanij* in Villa Alta, *coçij* in Valley Zapotec) is associated with the House of Earth (*yoho lleo*) and that this

[2] Miller (1998) and Álvarez Franklin (1999) also regard the Zapotec cosmos as containing three separate houses associated with the 20 trecenas, which circulate in a rotating fashion. However, I have arrived at somewhat different translations than those that Miller and Álvarez Franklin provide for the glosses in Calendar 85.

house "receives the turn/period" (*ricij laza*)[3] of the first 65-day division (*goçio i*) in the ritual calendar.

The structure of Booklets 100 and 101 suggests that they contain two separate and complete song cycles that traverse, in a symbolic fashion, the cosmological layers depicted in Figure 1. Booklet 100 contains a total of 13 songs. The first nine songs have variable lengths (the longest has 26 stanzas; the shortest, five stanzas), and the song cycle ends with four shorter songs (each one to five stanzas in length), which are preceded by the label *bego* (which probably translates as "turtle"), and numbered one through four. Booklet 101 contains a cycle of nine songs whose length fluctuates between three and 15 stanzas. A possible interpretation of this arrangement is that Booklet 100 contains a nine-song cycle in which each song is associated with each of the levels between the House of the Underworld and the House of Earth, or the House of Earth and the House of the Sky; the four remaining shorter songs would be associated with the four "turtles" that hold up each of these three houses–which are rendered as circles in the Calendar 11 diagram depicted in Figure 1. Since Booklet 100, unlike Booklet 101, contains 24 separate references to *gabila* (the underworld) and six separate references to *Becelao Dao*–the main underworld deity, according to Córdova's informants–it is plausible that this song cycle is tied with a symbolic passage between the House of the Underworld and the House of Earth, or vice versa, and that the songs in Booklet 101, which contain three references to *xana quebaa* (Lord of the Sky), are connected with a journey between the House of Earth and the House of the Sky. However, this issue will not be solved until a full translation is completed.

Although the translation of the songs contained in Booklets 100 and 103 is still in its early stages, it can be stated that these songs celebrate and propitiate a rather broad array of entities that fall into three broad categories: entities that share calendrical and personal names with Sierra Zapotec founding ancestors, Pan-Zapotec deities whose names were known to Córdova's informants in the Valley of Oaxaca and to the ritual specialist Diego Luis of San Miguel Sola, and local or calendrical entities whose names are not associated with either known founding ancestors or known Pan-Zapotec deities. The rest of this report will focus on the first two categories.

Ancestors and deity complexes in the Villa Alta songs

Four founding ancestors named in Booklets 100 and 101

The following section provides a preliminary discussion of four calendrical and personal names mentioned in Booklets 100 and 101 which may refer to known founding ancestors of various Villa Alta Zapotec communities. There are several other names in this corpus that refer to other founding ancestors, but I am limiting my remarks here to four personal names that have been conclusively identified.

[3] The gloss of *laça/laza* as "time, period, turn, duration" is supported by lexical evidence that appears in Córdova 1578: 19r, 28r, 140r, 276r, 311r, 401r, and 424v, and by the common colonial Valley Zapotec expression *co-laça,* "time past, ancient times."

Figure 3. Depiction of Lord 1 Cayman (left) and Lord 6 Death Great Eagle (right) in the Genealogía de San Lucas Quiaviní.

Coque Yagchila (Lord 1 Cayman)

As noted by Michel Oudijk (2000, 2003), several colonial Zapotec genealogical narratives list a Lord 1 Cayman as a founding ancestor. In the Genealogy of San Lucas Quiaviní, a town located in the Valley of Oaxaca, the founder of a genealogy (which Oudijk labels "Genealogy 2") is called *Coque Quiechilla*, or Lord 1 Cayman, with *Quiechilla* being the Valley Zapotec equivalent of the Sierra Zapotec day name *Yagchila*, "1 Cayman." Figure 3, shown above, displays a section from the Quiaviní genealogy, in which 1 Cayman (*Quiechilla*) is drawn facing another ancestor, Lord 6 Death Great Eagle (*Cogui Quielana Piçia Tao*); the accompanying text identifies 1 Cayman with the Zapotec title pichana, and associates him with two place names, *Guia Cachi* and *Guia Pini*.[4] This document also states that Lord 1 Cayman was issued from a mythohistorical place of origin called *bille gaa billehe gache g[ue]la tini,* which Oudijk translates as "Cave Nine, Cave Seven, the Lake of Blood." Furthermore, the Título Primordial de Tabáa lists a *Yaxila Veqini* (1 Cayman Bird) as the ancestor (*xotao*) of the people of Juquila, and another Yagchila as the consort of Nelao, and Frame 14 of the Lienzo de Tabáa lists a ruling couple composed by Coque Yagchila and Bixeag Lachi.

In Booklet 100, Coque Yagchila is mentioned in seven of the 12 stanzas that compose Song 5. It is possible that the song refers to the founding ancestor mentioned in the Genealogy of Quiaviní, the Título Primordial de Tabáa, and the Lienzo de Tabáa. This possibility is supported by the fact that the name Bixeag Lachi, which corresponds to that of Coque Yagchila's wife according to the Lienzo de Tabáa, appears in Stanza 8 of

[4] Oudijk (2000: 149) tentatively identifies the grapheme *beguichipe* in this text as a place name, but the proper parsing of this item is still unclear. For a full discussion of the structure of the Genealogía de Quiaviní, see Oudijk 2000: 141-152.

Song 5. On the other hand, Song 5 stresses the divine origin of Lord 1 Cayman. In Stanza 2 (AGI México 882, 190v) records the formidable origin of Lord 1 Cayman in the following manner:

	biye	yagxo	lani	yagchila	ni
On this	*365-day year*	*1 Earthquake,*	*on this*	*trecena/feast day of 1 Cayman*	

colag	coque yagchila	xini	lopa	ni xee
Lord 1 Cayman was born,		*son of 8/11 Dew,*		*the Beginning*

Two separate criteria render this statement remarkable. First, the statement identifies a date by giving both the name of the 365-day year (called *biye* in the Villa Alta calendars) and the name of the day (*lani*) in the 260-day cycle. According to Javier Urcid (personal communication, 2005), very few known Pre-Columbian Zapotec hieroglyphic texts designate a date by referring both to the year and the day name. Second, the epithet *Nixee Tao Lopa* (Great Beginning 8/11 Dew), mentioned several times in Songs 3 and 5 of Booklet 100, may designate a creator deity that was also known as Cozàana, as discussed below (Deity complexes).

Bicia Tao (Great Eagle)

The personal name Bicia Tao (Great Eagle) is a component in the name of several named ancestors in a number of colonial Zapotec sources. As noted below, the Genealogy of Quiaviní (Figure 3), portrays a Lord 6 Death Great Eagle (*Cogui Quielana Piçia Tao*) seated before Lord 1 Cayman; it should be noted that both lords are shown occupying high-backed chairs that indicate their status as legitimate lords from a founding lineage. This document also mentions a *Coqui Picia Tao Quequeche*, Lord Great Eagle (of the Town?), which shares a personal name with the aforementioned 6 Death Great Eagle. Furthermore, the Lienzo de Tabáa mentions two more ancestors who share this common personal name: Lord Yeagela Great Eagle (*Coque Yeagela Besia dao*), married to Lady 1 Knot (*Xonaxi Yegtela*) in Frame 6, and Lord Yezina Great Eagle (*Coque Yezina Beziadao*), married to Lady (9 Wind/Reed?) (*Xonaxi Yoela*) in Frame 20. Moreover, the family of pictorial genealogies known as Lienzo de Guevea/Lienzo de Petapa depicts an ancestor with a pictorial name glyph, which is glossed in some versions of this genealogy as Old? Great Eagle (*Biciya Tuo Rigula*) (Whitecotton 1990, Oudijk and Jansen 1999).

On the other hand, the personal name *Bicia Tao* occurs once in each of the Songs 5, 7, and 12 of Booklet 100, and once again in Song 5 of Booklet 101. While it may be the case that these songs refer to one of the ancestors mentioned in the genealogical records listed above, the existing evidence does not allow me yet to propose an unambiguous identification. Unlike the naming pattern noted above, which combines Bicia Tao with a title and with either a personal or a calendrical name, it appears that Bicia Tao is not associated with another calendrical or personal name in the Villa Alta songs. The personal name *Biquini Xila* does appear next to Bicia Tao in Stanza 2, Song 5 of Booklet 101; however, since Biquini Xila has an independent pattern of occurrence, it can be proposed that two distinct entities are being named in this stanza, rather than a single entity.

Bilatela Tao (Great 4/11 Knot)

As noted by Oudijk (2000, 2003), Bilatela Tao is the personal name of a founding ancestor in Villa Alta, and one of the seven "brothers" which various northern Zapotec sources identify as founding ancestors who are said to have been baptized by the Spanish in the 1520's. The Título Primordial de Tabáa calls Biladela Dao the "father of Tabáa;" Frame 26 of the Lienzo de Tabáa identifies Coque Biladela Dao as the son of Great 8 Earthquake (Xo Dao) and the husband of Lady Guiha Lepilapag; moreover, a will from Solaga dated in 1789 and transcribed by Oudijk (2003) lists Bilatela Dao as the third founding "brother" in a list of seven founders of northern Zapotec communities, which include Bilapag Laguiag Xobego (1st), Belaxila Yalaxila Yaxila (2nd), Don Juan de Velasco Diadela (4th), Balachila (5th), Tiolana (6th), and Yaalao Lachixoza (7th).

In the Villa Alta Songs, Bilatela Tao is mentioned in Songs 2 and 6 of Booklet 101. In Stanza 3, Song 6, a verse that mentions a Xoo Dao is followed by a second verse that mentions a Bilatela Tao and refers to the latter *xini colaa* (elder son). This pattern of association does suggest that Song 6 refers to a Bilatela Tao that was regarded as the son of Great 8 Earthquake (*Xoo Dao*), a kinship statement that mirrors a similar statement in Frame 26 of the Lienzo de Tabáa. Nevertheless, Xotao is a somewhat ambiguous designation, since *xodao* or *xotao* (literally, Great or Holy Earthquake, if not read as a calendrical name) is a very common term used to refer to ancestors in the Zapotec mundane and ritual literature, as in the recurring sentence *xoci xotao neto* ("our fathers and ancestors"), glossed as "our fathers and grandfathers" in Spanish translations of Zapotec wills. Hence, if one reads Xodao or Xoodao as the calendrical name "Great 8 Earthquake," then it may be argued that both Frame 26 of the Lienzo de Tabáa and Song 6 of Booklet 101 refer to the same individual: one named Great 4/11 Knot (*Bilatela Tao*), who is the son of Great 8 Earthquake (*Xo Dao*).

Biquini Xila (Bird of Cotton/Feather)

As noted by Romero Frizzi and Vásquez (2003), the Memoria of Juquila–a historical account that addresses the foundation of Juquila and narrates a lengthy journey made by the legitimate authorities of this community shortly after becoming Christian subjects of the Spanish crown–mentions a certain Bigini Xila as a Juquila nobleman who takes the name of Don Melchor Martín and the title of governor after the arrival of the Spanish to the region. Furthermore, two sources from Tabáa note the existence of an individual who is designated by the personal name Bird (*Biquini*) and the calendrical name 1 Cayman. The Título Primordial de Tabáa names a 1 Cayman? Bird (*Yaxila Veqini*) who is the ancestor (*xotao*) of Juquila, and Frame 4 of the Lienzo de Tabáa refers to a Lord 1 Cayman Bird (*Coque Guiagxila Biquini*), who was married to Lady 6 Cayman (*Xonaxi Cuachila*). It should be noted that the naming pattern associated with this Juquila ancestor is not consistent; while the Tabáa sources seem to refer to a 1 Cayman Bird (*Yagxila Biquini*), the Juquila source mentions a Bird of Cotton/Feather (*Biquini Xila*). Furthermore, three noblewomen depicted in the Genealogía de Macuilxochitl bear Biquini Xila as a personal name: a woman called Bird of Cotton/Feather 6 Death? (*Piquini Xila Gualana*) in Band IX, and two more women called Bird of Cotton/Feather 6 Lizard (*Piquinj Xila Gualachi*) in Band VII, and Bird of Cotton/Feather (*Piquini Xila*) in Band VI (Whitecotton 1990, Oudijk 2000).

Bird of Cotton/Feather (*Biquini* or *Biquinni Xila*) is mentioned with relative frequency in the Villa Alta songs: this name appears in Songs 5, 6, and 7 of Booklet 100, and in Songs 3, 4, and 7 of Booklet 101. Since the name seems to appear in a diversity of contexts and in association with other poorly understood entities, it cannot be determined at this time whether these songs do indeed refer to the eponymous Juquila founding ancestor, or to any of the other ancestors named in the Genealogía de Macuilxochitl. The relative flexibility of the designations–a Biquini Xila is also called "bird of the community" (*biquini lahui*) in Stanza 3 of Song 4 in Booklet 101, and the name Great Bird (*Biquini Dao*) surfaces in every stanza (1, 2, and 3) of Song 6 in Booklet 101–suggests that there may be in fact two entities mentioned in these songs: a Bird of Cotton/Feather (*Biquini Xila*), which may or may not correspond to the Juquila ancestor, and a Great Bird (*Biquini dao*), who may well bear an association with the well-known figure of the Principal Bird in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cosmologies.

Deity complexes

Table 3 proposes a number of comparisons between the Pan-Zapotec deities named in Booklets 100 and 101 and the two most detailed colonial sources regarding the identification of Zapotec deities/deity complexes: 1) entries from the 1578 Spanish-Zapotec dictionary compiled from the testimony of Valley Zapotec linguistic informants collected by the Dominican grammarian Juan de Córdova, and glossed and analyzed by Smith-Stark (1999); 2) the list of the "thirteen gods" provided by ritual specialist Diego Luis to Gonzalo de Balsalobre in 1635 and in 1654 during a series of idolatry trials in the jurisdiction of San Miguel Sola. Diego Luis was an old "teacher of idolatries" who was

investigated by the priest Gonzalo de Balsalobre in 1635 and again in 1654. In this latter trial, Diego Luis revealed the names of more than 100 clients and ritual specialists in the area, along with the names of thirteen Zapotec gods (Berlin 1988, Tavárez 1999). Since the only known systematic ordering of deity names provided by a colonial Zapotec ritual specialist is Diego Luis' list of 13 deity names, this order has been chosen as the main positional criterion in Table 3. It should be noted, however, that Smith-Stark's 1998 thoughtful proposal regarding a reconstructed order of deity names has also been noted in the column devoted to the 1578 Córdova entries, where the number in the list proposed by Smith-Stark precedes the name of the deity as recorded by Córdova. This table is also an attempt to revise a similar comparison of sources published by Alcina Franch (1993).

In addition to these two sources, a recent iconographic analysis and two other independent sources have been added to Table 3: 1) a correlation of the deities mentioned by Córdova and Diego Luis with an exhaustive analysis of iconographic elements in Zapotec urns recently proposed by Adam Sellen (2002); 2) a Loxicha calendar analyzed by Robert Weitlaner (1958), and 3), a calendar from San Antonio Huitepec that may have been produced in colonial times, and which has been analyzed by Ron Van Meer (2000). It should be noted that both the Loxicha and the Huitepec calendars are characterized by a list of nine calendrical names which are repeated cyclically, and that these two lists are included in this comparison primarily to highlight positional criteria–the relative placement of deity names in slots one to nine, as compared to Diego Luis' list of 13 gods. However, further phonological and morphophonemic change data for Loxicha and Huitepec Zapotec is required in order to establish which of these name variants are etymologically related to the names of deities attested in colonial Valley, Sola, and Cajonos Zapotec.

Hence, Table 3 shows that at least seven deities or deity complexes were either known or worshipped by traditional Zapotec ritual practitioners in Sola, the Valley of Oaxaca, and Villa Alta between the mid 16th century and the first decade of the 18th century:

1. *Quitzino/Chino/Ichinoo/Queechino*, a deity characterized by Diego Luis as "God Number Thirteen," and, in all likelihood, an entity that presided over all other deities (Smith-Stark 1999).

2. *Licuicha (Niyoa, Coquieta)/Cobicha*, a solar deity which Diego Luis associated with hunters and hunting events, and whose name contains a Solteco word (licuicha) and a Cajonos Zapotec word (cobicha), which seem to be derived from ko-kwitza, the reconstructed Proto-Zapotecan term for "sun" or "day" (Kaufman 2004).

3. *Cozòbi/Loçucui/Gozobi Tao*, a maize deity that Córdova portrayed as a "god of harvests," and Diego Luis as the "god of maize and all foodstuffs."

4. *Pezèelào/Huila/Becelao Dao*, a deity who presided over the Zapotec underworld and was its "main devil," according to both Córdova and Diego Luis.

5. *Huichàana (Dao)/Nohuichana*, Córdova's deity of children and procreation, and a goddess associated with birth-giving, fish and rivers, according to Diego Luis.

6. *Cocijo/Loçio/Gocio*, perhaps the best-known Zapotec deity, associated with thunder and rainfall. It should be noted that, in colonial northern Zapotec documents, gocio may also refer to the ritual time count, as in the phrase "the counting of the gocio" (AVA).

7. *Cozàana/Nosana/Coxana*, a deity associated with the creation, and, according to Diego Luis, with deer and fish.

8. *Coqui Xee/Ni Xee/Nixee Tao Lopa*. As Smith-Stark (1999) has suggested, this may be an epithet for the main creator deity, *Cozàana*. All three of these variants of the epithet contain the element xee, which may be tentatively glossed as "beginning," based on two of Córdova's (1572: 140v, 141r) glosses: "Infinite god with no beginning, they called him, without knowing who he was. *Coqui xèe, coqui cílla, xèe tao* […]. To be a god who has no beginning. *Tàca-xèe- taca cilla-tào-a*." As noted above, Song 5 in Booklet 100 identifies a deity called *Ni Xee Tao Lopa* (Great Beginning 8/11 Dew) as the father of Lord 1 Cayman.

Table 3. Zapotec deities in Oaxaca, 16th–20th centuries							
Deities in Córdova 1578 (Smith-Stark)	**Diego Luis' 1654 statement, S. Miguel Sola**	**S. Miguel Sola name variants, ca. 1654**	**Iconographic correlations (Sellen)**	**AGI 882, Booklet 100, 1704 (Tavárez)**	**AGI 882, Booklet 101, 1704 (Tavárez)**	**Loxicha calendar (Weitlaner)**	**Huitepec calendar (Van Meer)**
	1. Liraa quitzino "God 13, supreme deity"	*Liraa chino* AGN Inq. 437-I-3:88r; *Lira quichino* AGN Inq. 571:399r	Glyph U, Mask 5, (same as Cozàana)	*Queechino* (Song 9)	*Betao ichinoo* (Song 6)	*Ndozin* "god 13"	*Natoriño*
	2. Licuicha Niyoa "god of hunters"	*Liquicha Coquieta* Propitiated before hunt, AGN Inq. 571:399r		*Cobicha* (Song 1)	*Cobicha* (Song 9)	*Ndo'yet* "novena god"	*Lguachoriñe*
6a. Pitào quille pitào yàge "god of riches, merchants"	*3. Coquee Laa* "god of riches"	*Coquie Laa* "cochineal advocate" AGN Inq. 437-I-3:89v	Glyph X, Mask 6, Costume 3			*Beydo* "god of riches & well-being"	*Oguilo*
7. Pitào cozòbi, "harvest god"	*4. Loçucui* "god of maize & all foodstuffs"		Glyph L, Mask 2, Costume 1	*Gozobi tao* (Song 9) *Xonaxi Gozobi tao* (Song 12)		*Ndubdo* "maize god"	*Osucui*
2. Pitào pezèelào "underworld god, main devil"	*5. Leraa Huila* "underworld god"	*Coquie Cabila,* "underworld god" AGN Inq. 437-I-3:95r	*Xicani* glyph, Mask 2	*Becelao dao* (Songs 6, 12)		*Kedo* "King of evil, evil god"	*Natobilia*
4. Pitào huichàana, "god of children & procreation"	*6. Nohuichana* "goddess of rivers, fish, pregnant women"		Glyph P, Mask 9	*Huichana dao,* (Song 3) *Huichana quiag lao* (Song 6)		*Ndan* "ancestors' god"	*Bichana*
8. Pitào xicàla "god of dreams" *8a. Pixèe pecàla* "lust-inciting demon"	*7. Lexee* "sorcerers & thieves' god"		Glyph F, Mask 7			*Mse* "Evil god"	*Bexu*
	8. Nonachi "illness god"					*Mbaz* "earth god"	*Yuache*
9. Cociio, "rain god"	*9. Loçio* "thunder god"		Glyph M, Mask 1	*Gaa Gocio* (9 Cociyos) (Song 10)	*Gocio* (Song 7)	*Mdi* "rain god"	*Yocio, lgosioó, osio*

	10. Xonatzi Huilia Leera Huila's wife, illlness/death goddess						
1. Pitào cozàana, "god of animals & the hunt" *Cozàana tào,* "god creator of everything"	*11. Cosana* "the ancestors' god, in the watery depths," propitiated before fishing	*Noçana guela* AGN Inq. 573:290r *Nosana queya,* "god of the deer," AGN Inq.571:393r	Glyph U, Mask 5, (same as God 13)	*Coxana* (Songs 3, 6), *Betao çoxana* (Song 9)			
1b. Coquì xee, coquì cìlla "Lord of creation, of dawn"; *Nixèe nicíllani,* "Beginning of everything"				*Nixee Tao Lopa* (Great Beginning 8/11 Dew) (Songs 3, 5)			
	12. Leraa queche "god of medicines"						
	13. Lira cuee "god of medicines"						
6. Pitào piizi "divination god" *6b. Pitào zii pitào yàa* "god of misery and losses" *6c. Pitào tèe* "god of evil"		*Leraa Huisi* "diviners' god" AGN Inq. 571-13:313r	Glyph Y Mask 4				
3. Pitào xòo "god of earthquakes"							
5. Coquì lào "god of chicken"							
8. Pitao xicala, "god of dreams"							

Preliminary conclusions

The translation of Booklets 100 and 101 from Betaza and Lachirioag is still in its initial stages, but it promises to yield a wealth of information about their local cosmologies. In turn, these cosmologies may bear a number of structural, semantic, and symbolic parallels with the various reconstructions of pan-Zapotec religious practices proposed by Flannery and Marcus (1983), Marcus and Flannery (1996), Sellen (2002), Smith-Stark (1999), Urcid (2001), and other researchers. My preliminary findings embrace a middle ground of sorts in this rather complex epistemic panorama. Instead of proposing a cosmology dominated by local or regional deified ancestors, or a pantheon composed of Classic and Postclassic Pan-Mesoamerican deities, the cosmological order evoked by these songs resembles the intricate cosmological arrangements depicted in the Popol Vuh (particularly in the Tedlock 1994 translation), in which creator deities, entities associated with specific realms (sky and the underworld), and a range of superhuman entities are linked both with major cosmological events–such as the triumph of the realm of the sky over that of the underworld–and with foundational events relating to local mythohistorical narratives. This "middle ground" approach is inspired in part by Urcid's (2005: 27-28) reading of Zapotec elite tomb narratives as representing individuals that have both a historically situated identity, as well as divine attributes achieved through deity impersonation practices. In other words, the Zapotec cosmovisión reflected in the Villa Alta songs includes a complex and perhaps shifting constellation of deified founding ancestors, Zapotec deities with likely historical ties to other Mesoamerican deities, and calendrical entities, among other influential entities.

We can now assert that knowledgeable colonial Zapotec ritual specialists carried out propitiatory acts in behalf of both local founding ancestors and ancient Zapotec deities, some of which resemble deity complexes worshipped in Classic and Postclassic times throughout Mesoamerica. Some of these songs describe kinship links between Zapotec deities and local founding ancestors, as illustrated by the genealogical links between Great Beginning 8/11 Dew and Lord 1 Cayman. Furthermore, there may be a number of key symbolic links between a three-tiered cosmos, dates in the 260-day ritual calendar, and the propitiation of both founding ancestors and ancient deities. The surviving evidence about the specificity of these associations, however, poses significant analytical challenges which will only be addressed through further linguistic research on the colonial variants of Cajonos and Nexitzo Zapotec, and through the interpretation of ethnohistoric evidence regarding social organization, land tenure, and ritual practices that may be obtained from the unusually diverse range of texts in Zapotec and Spanish generated by indigenous writers and their neighbors in 17th-century Villa Alta.

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