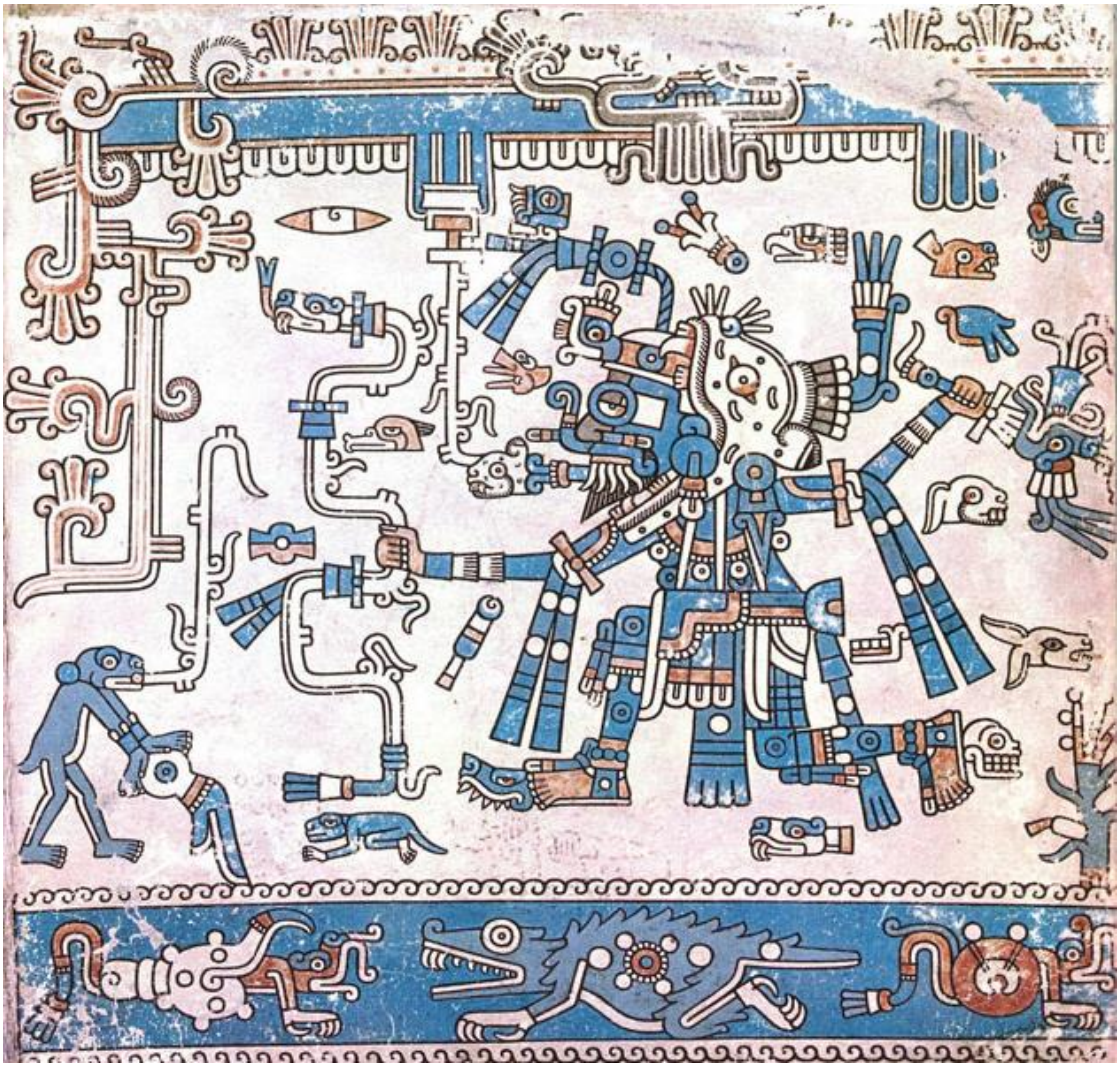
'This is the world, the cosmos of Tlaloc.'

An iconographical analysis of page 23 of the Central Mexican Codex Laud



By Kim Houben

Cover image: Page 23 of the Codex Laud (taken from the digitised ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud available at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

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An iconographical analysis of page 23 of the Central Mexican Codex Laud

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1. Introduction

Since the late eighteenth century, the surviving Central Mexican codices of the Postclassic period (900-1521 CE) have been the subject of many studies. Most of these codices were brought to Europe as curiosities in the period just after the Spanish conquest, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They became part of large collections of foreign manuscripts and art gathered by rich and powerful Europeans. These collections were eventually left or donated to museums and libraries, and thus became accessible to groups of scholars. When the interest in ancient Mexican history increased in the late eighteenth century, so did the interest in the Mexican codices. However, although interest in scholarly circles was high, the access to these manuscripts was limited. In order to study them, scholars often had to travel long distances and even then, there was only a single copy available. This changed in 1831, when the Lord Kingsborough published commentaries of many of the known Central Mexican codices, which were accompanied by lithographic reproductions of the originals. Through this 'Kingsborough edition', the codices became better accessible to scholars, and over the next two centuries, the amount of research done on these precolonial pictorial books continued to increase. Even today, there are still many aspects of the Central Mexican codices that remain obscure, and more research is required in order to uncover all of their secrets.

Codex Laud is one of these Postclassical Central Mexican codices. Compared to various others, the Codex Laud has generally received little attention from scholars. In the past, this codex has been considered stylistically inferior to other codices, causing the scholars to turn to what they deemed the more intricate and beautiful codices first (Nowotny 2005, 9). This attitude has contributed to the fact that there are barely any major studies dealing specifically with the Codex Laud, and only four editions of this codex have been published throughout the years. Most research on this codex has been conducted in the context of the group of codices it belongs to – the Borgia group codices – in which it more often than not plays a marginal role alongside more extensively researched codices such as

the Codex Borgia itself. Because of this marginal position of the Codex Laud as a topic of research on its own, there have been only a few attempts to describe and unravel the meaning of this codex in detail, for example those by Nowotny (2005 [1961]) and Anders *et al.* (1994). As such, additional research into this codex is not only welcome, but necessary.

In an attempt to fill some of this gap, this thesis will deal with a single page from the Codex Laud: page 23. This page is the second-to-last in this codex, and contains an image with a complex composition centred around a single figure, forming one complete chapter. While this does not mean that it should be isolated from its various contexts – on the contrary, these contexts are vital to the interpretation of this page – it does allow for an individual examination of this page in all its aspects and meanings. As page 23 of the Codex Laud is pictorial in nature, it lends itself to being approached and studied through the method of iconography and iconology first outlined by Panofsky in his 1939 *Studies in Iconology*. Panofsky's method offers a comprehensive manner in which one can describe and interpret an image in great detail, eventually (and ideally) leading to an understanding of the meaning of the image.

At the same time, it is necessary to go back to the basics every once in a while. Since Seler's work in the early 1900s, the Codex Laud has not been studied in detail with regards to its pictorial features - even Seler himself did not study the Codex Laud in much detail. Since the astralistic theoretical framework used by Seler is considered to be outdated, and studies of the codices have advanced since, it is not useless to restudy the pages of the codices following an iconographical method using a new, more up-to-date theoretical framework.

As mentioned above, this thesis will deal with page 23 of the Codex Laud. One might wonder why it is exactly this page that was chosen as the subject for this thesis. First of all, it is impossible to deal with the entire codex in such detail within the scope of this thesis; there is simply not enough time and space to address everything. The most important reason for choosing this page in particular, however, is the appearance of Tlaloc (or someone dressed as him) as the main character of this image. In recent years, interest in this god has been renewed, and

new studies concerning this important god have been published. One study in particular, Philip Arnold's *Eating Landscape* (2001), holds an entirely new interpretation of Tlaloc, revolutionizing the way this god is looked upon. Arnold claims that, especially among the Aztecs, Tlaloc was an overarching god associated with both water and earth, and thus with space, instead simply being a god of water or rain. As we will see, Tlaloc was also associated with the calendar, and thus with time (Klein 1980, 156, 197). According to Arnold, these two dimensions, time and space, are essential to understanding Mesoamerican worldview (Arnold 2001, 62-63). This is reflected in this page, as both of these dimensions take a prominent place – Tlaloc as the embodiment of space, and the calendar signs as the representation of time. As such, it would be interesting to analyse this page according to these new insights, which are probably much closer to the Mesoamerican worldview than the older ideas about this subject, and shed some light on Tlaloc as a space-time deity, hopefully contributing to a better understanding of this god.

As I count the Codex Laud among the Central Mexican codices, I will mainly use sources concerned with the Aztecs and their worldview in order to explore the iconographical content of the chosen page. In Postclassic times, the Aztecs were one of the most prominent people living in Central Mexico. Between 1428 and 1521, they ruled a vast tributary empire that was centred around the Valley of Mexico, where their capital Tenochtitlan was located (Matos 1988, 15, 48-49, 54-55, 165-173). This empire covered large parts of Central Mexico, and included many different peoples and cultures. This resulted in a multicultural society, in which these many cultures came together and influenced one another (Boone 2007, 231). As such, the choice to use the sources concerning the Aztecs for the interpretation of the chosen page of the Codex Laud is not inappropriate – it is, after all, logical to assume that the rulers' culture would have a great impact on the cultures of their subjects, and as such, the culture of the Aztecs may be taken as being representative for the region in this period.

Within this thesis, I aim to create a detailed iconographical analysis of page 23 of the Codex Laud, and hope to eventually reach the full meaning of this

page. By focusing on such a small part of this codex for such an analysis, it is possible to attain a higher level of detail, which will reveal underlying meanings and associations that would otherwise stay hidden beneath the more obvious. This, in turn, will provide us with a better and fuller understanding of this page, and hopefully of the codex in its entirety.

In order to accomplish these goals, we must first consider the Codex Laud itself, in terms of form, contents, history, and previous studies (chapter 2). Chapter 3 will discuss the theories and premises that form the basis of the rest of this thesis, as well as the method used to describe and interpret the chosen page. Chapters 4 to 6 will hold the most important part of this thesis: together, they form the iconographical analysis, from the pre-iconographical descriptive level (chapter 4), through the iconographical level (chapter 5), to the level of intrinsic meaning (chapter 6). Finally, I will conclude the thesis with a brief summary and some final remarks on the results of the study presented here, as well as some recommendations for further research.

2. The Codex Laud

The Codex Laud is one of the few surviving precolonial Central Mexican codices. It is one of the seven divinatory codices known as the "Borgia Group codices", a name that derives from their resemblance to the Codex Borgia, after which the group is named. This group contains the codices known as the Codex Borgia, Codex Fejérváry-Mayer, Codex Cospi, Codex Vaticanus B, Codex Porfirio Díaz (also known as Codex Tututepetongo; see Anders *et al*. 1994, 13), Codex Aubin No. 20 (also known as Manuscript Fonds Mexicain 20), and, of course, the Codex Laud. The codices in this group are mostly precolonial hide screenfold books, with the exceptions of the Porfirio Díaz, which is postcolonial, and the Aubin No. 20, which is a hide sheet, not a screenfold (Boone 2007, 5).

Recently, Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2004) have proposed to rename all of these codices in a more emic manner. In their proposal, the codices have been renamed to reflect their subject matter and/or their origins, resulting in the following names: Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (Borgia), Codex Tezcatlipoca (Fejérváry-Mayer), Codex Tlamanalli (Cospi), Codex Tonalpouhqui (Vaticanus B), Codex Yada (Porfirio Díaz Reverse), Codex Yecu (Aubin No. 20), and Codex Mictlan (Laud) (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2004, 270). In this thesis, however, I will use the more well-known names for these codices in order to avoid any confusion.

As this thesis focuses on the Codex Laud and not on the other Borgia Group codices – although it will become clear that there are parallels between these codices that cannot be ignored – this chapter is meant to offer a thorough description of the Codex Laud alone. It will deal with form, contents, provenience, history, and the history of study of this codex, in that order.

2.1 Form of the Codex Laud

The Codex Laud is a precolonial screenfold book, dating to the Late Postclassic period (1250-1521 CE). It consists of four deerskin strips of approximately one metre long glued together, making for a total length of nearly four metres. This long strip is divided into 24 pages of an average size of 16.55 centimetres wide

and 15.75 centimetres tall. It is folded in such a manner that the joints of the segments fall into the folds, leaving them visible only on the *verso* side of the codex.[1] The pages are painted on both sides, giving the codex a total of 48 pages: 46 pages contain pictorial writing, while the two outermost pages function as covers, with hardened leather glued to them to protect the codex (Anders *et al.* 1994, 11; Boone 2007, 18; Burland 1966, 8-13).

The deerskin is covered in a white stucco layer, which is used to hide imperfections in the material, and to create a smooth surface, suitable for precise painting. Once applied and dried out, the stucco was probably burnished, causing it to take on a glossy shine (Anders *et al.* 1994, 11; Boone 2007, 18; Burland 1966, 10-11). On top of this stucco layer, brightly coloured and highly detailed images are painted. These images show a strong likeness to the Postclassic Mixteca-Puebla style, making it likely that they were painted within this stylistic tradition (Boone 2007, 229).

The technique used to paint the images of the Codex Laud shows a high level of skill on the part of the painter. The drawings have a stylized and general character. The figures in the scenes are similar to one another in outline and composition, so much that the figures are almost interchangeable. It is likely that the painter worked with the aid of drawing and measuring instruments, as well as models (Anders *et al*. 1994, 15). The layout of each page is carefully planned out: the proportions and composition of the drawings have been calculated to make full use of the available space. There is no trace of guidelines, indicating that the painter either worked without them, or hid them underneath the black lines of the drawings. The colours used are likely water based and of high quality, and the colouring is done with the utmost care, filling the outlines perfectly without transgressing the lines of the drawing (Burland 1966, 11-12). All these elements attest to the high skill of the painter, causing the Codex Laud to be named one of

[1] Of course, we must always remain aware that the *recto* and *verso* sides have been so named by the Western scholars, who studied the codex according to Western conventions and numbered the pages as such; as a result, what we now call the *recto* (or front) side is not necessarily the same as what the indigenous Mexican people who originally created and used the codex considered the front.

the finest of the Central Mexican manuscripts (Anders *et al.* 1994, 15; Boone 2007, 18; Nowotny (2005, 9) calls the paintings of the Codex Laud austere and impoverished through lack of expression, but very charming).

Despite the high skill and nearly perfect technique of the paintings, some errors can be discerned. These errors are mostly unrealized inversions, appearing for example in the upper parts of the pages 1-8 (Anders *et al*. 1994, 15-16). The figures of this upper register are facing the same direction as the figures in the bottom register, while the reading order of the bottom register (right to left across pages 1-8) is inverted in the upper register (left to right across pages 8-1). This means that the figures in the upper register are facing the wrong way, as the conventions dictate that the figures should face in the direction in which one reads, and should have been inverted. This kind of unrealized inversion indicates that this codex is a copy of an older one, in which this particular chapter was displayed across a single register that was read from right to left in its entirety. However, considering the high technical skill of the drawing, it seems unlikely that the painter of this codex would have had problems with such an inversion. This suggests that the Codex Laud is probably a reproduction of a codex that already contained these errors, indicating that the Codex Laud may well be the copy of a copy (for a complete discussion of this issue, see Anders *et al.* 1994, 15-20).

Traditionally – probably since it was acquired by the Bodleian Library in the late 1630s – the pages of the codex have been numbered 1 to 24 from left to right on the *recto*, while the pages on the *verso* remained unnumbered. However, advances in research on the codices and their reading order in the 20th century suggest that this traditional pagination is incorrect (Anders *et al.* 1994, 12; Nowotny 2005, 206). As early as 1898, the Mexican historian Francisco del Paso y Troncoso established that the correct main reading direction of the Codex Laud was not left to right, as was assumed by European scholars such as Kingsborough (1831), but rather right to left. Accordingly, del Paso suggested that the Bodleian pagination should be reversed, turning page 24 into page 1 (Anders *et al.* 1994, 12). Unfortunately, this change did not find its way into the main scholarship on the codices until much later, when Nowotny proposed this reading order and

pagination for the Codex Laud in his *Tlacuilolli* (1961; an English translation of this work was published in 2005). He even claimed that the beginning of the codex is on page 25 – the first page of at the far right of the *verso* – and ended with page 24 (Anders *et al*. 1994, 18; Nowotny 2005, 206-207). Despite the arguments in favour of the new pagination, the Bodleian page numbers has been continually used in the literature written on the Codex Laud – for example, in the facsimile edition of the codex published by the Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt in 1966 (Burland 1966, 13). At the same time, the Mexican editions made by Martínez Marín (1961) and Corona Núñez (1964-1967, vol. III) do follow the pagination suggested by del Paso (Anders *et al.* 1994, 12).

In this thesis, I will adhere to the pagination and reading order as established by Anders *et al.* (1994, 17-20), who follow the pagination and reading order as suggested by del Paso and Nowotny. As such, the page numbering starts on the *recto* side, which begins with page 1 on the far right, and ends with page 24 on the far left. The *verso* side bears both covers; it starts with page 25 on the far right, adjacent to the cover if folded open, and ends with page 46 on the far left, next to the other cover (see fig. 1).[2] The general reading order of the Codex Laud is right to left, starting on page 25 and ending with page 24 (Anders *et al.* 1994, 18, 155-264). In a few almanacs that are spread over multiple pages the reading order deviates from this general order, for example in the almanac on pages 1-8, which is read from right to left in the bottom register, and then from left to right in the upper register.

Although the presence of two covers seems to indicate that the codex is complete in its current form, there have been debates about its completeness as long as it has been studied. Often it is argued, primarily based on the contents, that the codex is missing several pages at either end (Anders *et al*. 1994, 17-20, 156-158, 219, 259; Burland 1966, 9, 22-27). More recent research seems to indicate that the codex is complete, but lacks a distinct, neutral beginning and ending

[2] One must note that Nowotny (2005, 206-207), other than Anders *et al.* (1994, 17-20), considers pages 25-46 the *recto*, and pages 1-24 the *verso*. Boone (2007, 246-248) follows the same pagination as Anders *et al.*, but reads the codex according to the page numbers, starting on page 1 and ending on page 46.

(Boone 2006; 2007, 83). But whether the codex is complete or not, the placing of the covers leaves no space for extra pages to be attached. If the codex is incomplete in its current state, one can only conclude that the missing pages were lost and the covers replaced before it reached Europe, or that – as I previously mentioned, and Anders *et al.* conclude – this version of the codex was a copy of an older, incomplete codex, in which the missing pages were not reconstructed (Anders *et al.* 1994, 15-20). Otherwise, it is logical for the codex to be considered complete.

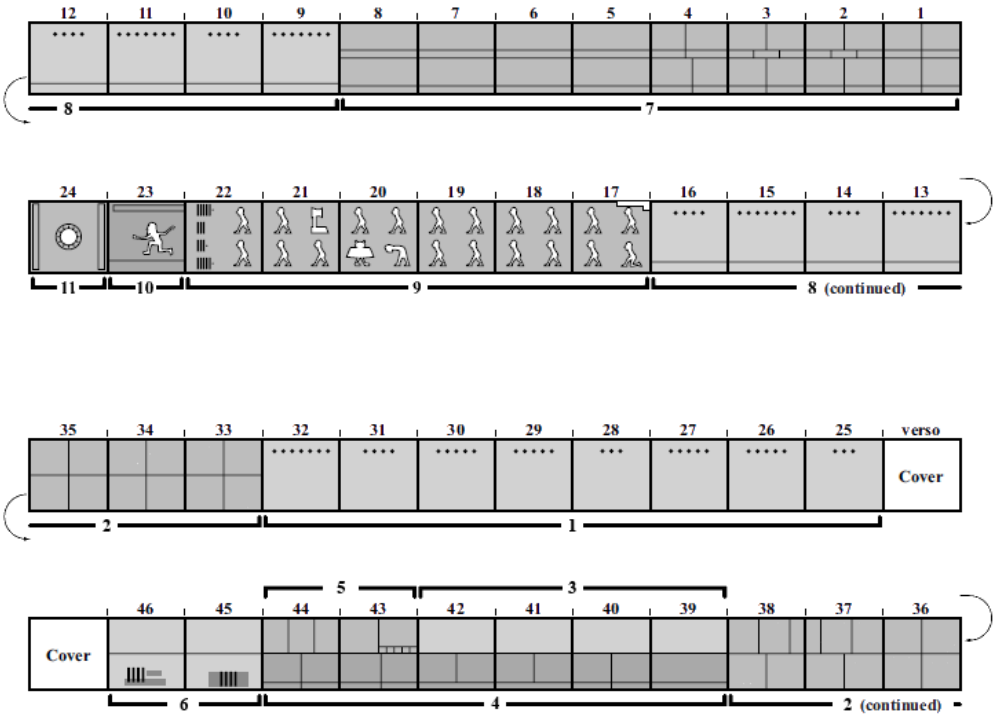

Figure 1: Layout of the Codex Laud with page numbers (directly above the pages). Chapters are indicated by the black square brackets, which are also numbered (after Boone 2007, 247).

2.2 Contents of the Codex Laud

The Codex Laud has a divinatory and ritual character. It deals with two main themes, death and destiny, as various depictions of deities of the underworld in their characteristic skeletal forms and prognostic scenes for diverse moments and

occasions in life indicate. For this reason, it has been called a 'painting of death and destinies' (Anders *et al.* 1994, 11; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2004, 270).

The codex is divided into eleven chapters, some of which show parallels with the other Borgia Group codices, while others are unique to the Codex Laud. As is common in the Borgia Group, these chapters contain protocols for rituals, and religious almanacs related to the *tonalpohualli*, the ritual calendar (Boone 2007, 3). This calendar consists of 260 days, divided into 13 cycles of 20 days (*trecenas*). Each period of the calendar has its own patron, mantic aspects, and rituals, which are recorded in the codex. This information served as a prescription of the correct practices for rituals, and as a guide to predict futures and destinies (Anders *et al.* 1994, 13, 20-21).

Adhering to the reading order established in the previous section – thus starting from page 25 and ending on page 24 – the eleven chapters can be identified, named, and described as follows (see fig. 1; Anders *et al*. 1994, 21; Boone 2007, 246-248):

Side 1 (*verso*)

1. Pages 25-32: The Domain of Death.
   Almanac containing the only count of 360 days in the Borgia Group. It is presented as a compressed table, associated with eight scenes involving skeletal figures and auguries related to Death divinities. This chapter reads from right to left.
2. Pages 33-38: Predictions for marriages.
   Almanac containing 25 scenes of couples, associated with the numbers 2 to 26 (representing the sums of different combinations of the numbers 1 to 13) and various other elements. The chapter is arranged into two registers. The lower register reads from right to left; the upper register reads from left to right.
3. Pages 39-42 (upper register): The four aspects of the Mother Goddess Tlazolteotl.
   Almanac containing a *tonalpohualli* (260-day calendar) in *trecenas*,

organized as compressed table. The count is associated with four figures and rituals of the goddess Tlazolteotl. The chapter reads from right to left.

4. Pages 39-44 (lower register): Offerings and its dangers.
   Almanac containing 40 day signs, presented as grouped list. The day signs are associated with 11 scenes of rituals involving tied bundles of splinters and reeds. The chapter reads from right to left.
5. Pages 43-44 (upper register): Aspects of the funerary cult.
   Almanac containing a *tonalpohualli* in a compressed table, associated with five scenes of funerary nature. The chapter reads from right to left.
6. Pages 45-46: The rites with the counted bundles.
   Ritual protocol containing scenes of women offering liquids, as well as the days 1 Dog, 8 Deer, and 1 Water on page 45, and 1 Water and 8 Water on page 46. The chapter reads from right to left.

Side 2 (*recto*)

7. Pages 1-8: Forty days after 1 Water.
   Almanac containing a count of forty days, arranged as grouped list over two registers. The count is associated with 32 figures. The topic is related to war and sacrifice. This chapter reads from right to left along the bottom register, and from left to right along the top register.
8. Pages 9-16: The Lords of the divided *trecenas*.
   Almanac containing a *tonalpohualli* organized as compressed table, in which sets of facing pages form *trecenas*. The count is associated with eight deities seated under trees or shelters. The chapter reads from right to left.
9. Pages 17-22: The grand march.
   Protocol for ritual involving counted offerings. It contains 22 figures, most of which are walking right to left to the location of the counted items on far left. On page 22, next to the counted bundles, are the days 9 Reed, 8 Reed, 5 Flower, and 2 Reed. The days associated with the figures are 1

Crocodile[3] on page 19, and 3 or 4 Water on page 20. This chapter reads from right to left.

10. Page 23: Tlaloc, Lord of the days.

    Almanac containing 20 day signs arranged around a striding Tlaloc, with no obvious sequence to reading order. The day signs are associated with different parts of the god's body, making it likely that this is a corporeal almanac. The entire page shows a strong connection to water and rain.

11. Page 24: The eclipse.

    Almanac containing the sun god, seated in the sun disk. The disk is surrounded by blood and being covered by dark flow from the death god's mouth. Eight other gods flank the sides of the page, associated with four day signs in the corners. These day signs indicate *trecenas*, dividing the *tonalpohualli* into quarters.

2.3 The history of the Codex Laud

The Codex Laud was first noticed when it was donated to the Bodleian Library by William Laud, the archbishop of Canterbury, in the late 1630's (Anders *et al.* suggest that it was part of the donation made on the 28 June 1639 (1994, 38)). There, it became part of the extensive collection of codices bearing Laud's name, and received the name it still bears today: *MS Misc. Laud 678* (miscellaneous manuscripts from the collection Laud, number 678) (Anders *et al*. 1994, 11, 23).

[3] This day sign (*cipactli* in Nahuatl) has been named Caiman (see Taube 1993), Crocodile (see Boone 2007), and, most commonly, Alligator (see among others Anders *et al.* 1994; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011). I believe the name Alligator to be inappropriate, because there are no true alligators in Central America. The only two species of alligator known are indigenous only to the southern USA and to the Yangtze-Kiang river basin in China (Allaby 2014, under the entry Alligatoridae; Halliday and Adler 2008, under the entries Crocodilians). The names Caiman and Crocodile are thus more appropriate to use in this case. Macias (2013, 32) takes the inspiration for this day sign to be the caiman. However, I would argue that, while the caiman is more common in Mexico, the crocodile is a more impressive creature. It is much larger than the caiman; where the caiman reaches on average 2 metres of length, the crocodile with its average length of 4.5 metres is over twice as big (Allaby 2014, under the entries Alligatoridae and Crocodylidae; Halliday and Adler 2008, under the entry Crocodilians). As such, I would say that the crocodile is the better candidate to receive a special status. This identification is further supported by the depiction of ridges on the back of full-bodied representations of this animal - these ridges are much less pronounced in caimans. Therefore, in this thesis, I will call this day sign Crocodile, not Alligator or Caiman.

The codex was preserved in an Italian-style, gilded leather casing, dating from the mid-sixteenth century. This casing carried the label 'Liber Hieroglyphicorum Aegyptarum MS' (Egyptian hieroglyphic manuscript). It was not the only Mesoamerican codex to receive a faulty label. For example, the Codex Cospi was initially thought to be Chinese in origin, and its cover still bears the inscription that labels it as such. These allocations of Mesoamerican codices made in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century indicate that the owners were generally ignorant about the origin of these codices (Anders *et al.* 1994, 23).

Even today, the exact provenience of the Codex Laud is unknown. Various scholars have made an attempt to argue for specific locations as origins for this codex, but none of their suggestions are conclusive (see, for example: Anawalt 1981, Anders *et al.* 1994, Boone 2007, Burland 1966, Cassidy 2004, Nicholson 1966, Nowotny 2005, Robertson 1963 and 1966, and Sisson 1983). The lack of evidence for its early history – the period of its existence before it was acquired by William Laud in 1636 – contributes to the difficulty of determining its origins. As it is, one can only speculate based on elements such as style and pictorial conventions that differ slightly from region to region, resulting in many different possibilities (Boone 2007, 211). Seler suggested that the codex originated somewhere south of the city of Mexico, possibly in the Mazatec-Culcateca region (see Anders *et al.* 1994, 13). Robertson (1963, 148-164; 1966, 298) considered the entire Borgia Group to be of Mixtec origin, including the Codex Laud. Nicholson (1966), Burland (1966, 6-7), and Anawalt (1981, 849-850) have all suggested that both the Codex Laud and the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer were created near the Gulf Coast. Sisson (1983) suggested the southern Tehuacan Valley or the Cuicatec-speaking Cañada as location of origin. Anders *et al.* (1994, 15) argue for a similar provenience: a warm, coastal region. Nowotny (2005, 9) puts the origins of the Codex Laud somewhere southwest of Tenochtitlan. Boone (2007, 211-230) makes a thorough analysis of the possibilities of provenience for the entire Borgia Group. After considering all elements that could indicate a certain region of origin, she concludes that these codices show a mixture of cultural influences from different Central Mexican cultures, and that their origins probably lie in a region where all

those cultures meet. Specifically, Boone suggests the trading centres of Teotitlan del Camino and Tochtepec as places to consider as possibilities. Although their conclusions differ, most of the scholars mentioned here are in agreement that the Codex Laud is painted in the Mixteca-Puebla style. As such, in this thesis, this codex will be considered a product of Central Mexico.

Like its origins, the details of the arrival of the Codex Laud in Europe are unknown. Various scholars have proposed theories on this part of the history of the codex. For example, Nowotny states in his unpublished 1939 dissertation on the Codex Laud that the codex had reached Europe through a merchant or soldier who had taken it with him to sell to a collector (Anders *et al.* 1994, 28). In an 1911 article, Lehmann suggested that the codex came to William Laud from Spain through a visit there from the Duke of Birmingham (Anders *et al.* 1994, 28). Burland (1966, 5-6) argues for the possibility that it was part of the legacy of Dr. John Dee. Hunt (1973) finds that Laud acquired his manuscripts from various sources spread out over Europe; he had contacts in England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. Anders *et al.* (1994, 31-32) speculate that the codex was acquired from Bohemia, Austria, or southern Germany. However, in the end, most of these scholars have to admit that there is simply not enough information to come to anything more than speculations about the previous owner(s) of the Codex Laud.

After the codex was donated to the Bodleian Library, its physical location changed a few times, but it never left the library again. To this day, the Codex Laud remains a part of the Laud collection of the Bodleian Library.

2.4 Studies and editions of the Codex Laud

The Mesoamerican codices have been studied since the late eighteenth century, when Mexican and European scholars took an interest in ancient Mexican history (Boone 2007, 6). From the beginning, the Codex Laud has been underrepresented in these studies. Since the beginning of its study, only six editions of the codex have been published. Often, the codex is mentioned in relation to other codices, in comparisons of contents or style, but there are little articles and monographs

dedicated to the Codex Laud alone – especially when compared to other members of the Borgia Group. [4]

The first edition of the Codex Laud was published by the Lord Kingsborough, Edward King, in 1831. This edition is part of a large publication encompassing nine volumes, in which sixteen codices were reproduced in their entirety. It contains lithographic plates of drawings of the codex's pages, created by the Italian artist Aglio. Despite its lack of a commentary to go with the drawings, this edition made the Codex Laud more readily accessible for scholars, changing the way it was studied (Anders *et al.* 1994, 43; Boone 2007, 6).

The next advance in the study of the Mexican divinatory codices was made by the German scholar Eduard Seler in the late nineteenth century. In 1887, Seler recognized the contents of several of the codices as religious and divinatory, and placed them together in the so-called Borgia Group. In the early twentieth century, Seler published detailed commentaries on the Tonalamatl Aubin (1900), Fejérváry-Mayer (1901), Vaticanus B (1902) and Borgia (1904-1909), to accompany the facsimiles of these codices financed by the Duke of Loubat. While Seler mentioned and explored the parallels between these codices and the Codex Laud in his commentaries, he did not produce a detailed commentary on the Codex Laud itself (Anders *et al.* 1994, 43; Boone 2007, 6-7).

Seler's commentaries became extremely important for the study of the Borgia Group codices, as they offered the first detailed iconographic description of pictographic scenes, thus forming the basis of interpretation of these codices. Although his descriptions of the scenes are still very useful today, his interpretations rooted in astronomy are problematic. Although they are often speculative, many scholars have accepted them because of the weight of Seler's authority in the field. In recent and current research, however, it has been established that Seler's interpretations are largely incorrect (Anders *et al.* 1994, 43-44; Boone 2007, 6-7; Nowotny 2005).

[4] For example, the codices Fejérváry-Mayer and Borgia have received much more attention in modern research. See Boone (2007, 6-10) for an overview of the research on the Borgia Group Codices; Anders *et al*. (1994 43-48) for an overview of the research on Codex Laud; and Nowotny (2005) for overviews of publications on the various codices.

The second edition of the Codex Laud was published in 1937, more than a century after the Kingsborough edition, by the Mexican scholar Echániz. The very limited amount of copies of this edition (25 in total) caused this edition to remain obscure and inaccessible to the general public (Anders *et al*. 1994, 43).

In 1939, Karl Anton Nowotny wrote his dissertation on the Codex Laud. In this dissertation, Nowotny attempts to introduce a new scientific interpretation of the codex, emphasizing the mantic and ceremonial character of the codex. However, because it was written under the tutelage of Fritz Röck, who was an adamant follower of Seler's ideas, the dissertation also contains Röck's own ideas, which are often contradictory to the interpretations that Nowotny was trying to propose. For this reason, the dissertation was never published (Anders *et al.* 1994, 44-45). Nowotny later published his interpretations in his famous work *Tlacuilolli* (1961), a commentary on the Borgia Group codices, in which he proposes various new interpretations. Among other things, he identified the marriage almanac in the Codex Laud (Laud 33-38, see above), clarified the structure and contents of various almanacs in the different Borgia Group codices, and recognized the bar and dot numbers depicted in association with gods as ritual offerings meant to communicate with those gods (Anders *et al.* 1994, 45-46; Boone 2007, 8; Nowotny 2005).

Despite its revolutionary ideas, Nowotny's work was of limited influence for a long time. Its publication in German limited its accessibility for many Americanists, causing it to be generally unknown outside of Europe. Furthermore, Seler's influence was widespread and continued to overshadow the new insights offered by Nowotny. In 2005, the *Tlacuilolli* was finally translated into English by George Everett, Jr., and Edward Sisson, making it available for a much wider public. Today, more than fifty years after its initial publication, Nowotny's work is regarded as a classic in the field, and forms the basis for many of the current interpretations of the Borgia Group codices (Anders *et al.* 1994, 45-46; Boone 2007, 8).

In the same year as Nowotny's *Tlacuilolli* was published, another edition of the Codex Laud appeared. This edition was published by the Mexican Carlos

Martínez Marín (1961). It contains reproductions of black and white photographs of the codex made by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, and includes the views of various other scholars. As a high number of copies was produced, this edition became widespread and well-known, unlike the 1937 edition of the Codex Laud (Anders *et al.* 1994, 43, 47).

The first colour edition of the Codex Laud was published in 1964 by the Mexican Ministry of Finance. This high-quality edition is part of a series by the name of *Antigüedades de México*, which contains photographic reproductions in colour of various codices that were originally part of the Kingsborough publication. It is accompanied by a descriptive commentary written by José Corona Núñez, as well as the notes made by the Lord Kingsborough. Corona Núñez's commentary is heavily based on Seler's work and features the outdated theories of astronomy, making it deficient for current research (Anders *et al.* 1994, 43, 47; Boone 2007, 8).

In 1966, the Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt (ADEVA) in Graz, Austria published a facsimile edition of the Codex Laud, in collaboration with Ferdinand Anders. This edition, too, is part of a series of facsimiles of various codices, published between 1966 and 1979. This series aims to reproduce these codices as accurately as possible by using colour photographs of the original as a base, and retaining their original size and format. The edition of the Codex Laud is accompanied by an introduction by Cottie Burland, who had previously written a few short articles on the Codex Laud (e.g. Burland, 1947, 1948). This introduction offers a description of the form of the codex as well as its history, but does not comment on the contents of the codex (Anders *et al.* 1994, 43, 47; Boone 2007, 9).

Between 1969 and 1981, Thomas Barthel published a series of articles on the Codex Laud (Anders *et al.* 1994, 47). These articles draw mostly on Röck's ideas, returning to the old theories of astronomy and diffusionism, and emphasizing the existence of a connection between Mesoamerica, China, and India. Interestingly, Barthel used Nowotny's unpublished dissertation as a source,

but ignored Nowotny's later *Tlacuilolli* as it did not conform to his interpretation (Anders *et al*. 1994, 47-48).

The most recent facsimile edition of the Codex Laud was published in 1994, as part of the ADEVA project to republish their earlier facsimiles. The facsimile is accompanied by an elaborate commentary written by Ferdinand Anders, Maarten Jansen, and Alejandra Cruz Ortiz. This commentary contains various introductory chapters on larger themes such as the structure, provenience, and history of the codex, and Mesoamerican religion, and offers a preliminary reading and interpretation of the codex (Anders *et al.* 1994; Boone 2007, 9).

Since the publication of this last facsimile, the extent of the research on the Codex Laud has been mostly limited to its usefulness to larger studies of the entire Borgia Group. The most influential of the recent research on the Borgia Group is Elizabeth Hill Boone's *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate* (2007), in which the Codex Laud plays a significant role. The most recent research on the Codex Laud by itself was conducted by María Isabel Álvarez Icaza Longoria, in her dissertation named *El Códice Laud, su tradición, su escuela, sus artistas* (2014), which contains an elaborate study of the codex.

3. Theories and Method

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the theories and method used in this thesis. As the main part of this thesis will consist of a new iconographical analysis of page 23 of the Codex Laud, I have chosen to use Panofsky's method of iconology in order to describe and interpret this page. While this method pertains to works of art, it is also suited to analyze the pictorial writing of the Central Mexican codices, which can be considered as works of art and writing. In the first part of this chapter, I will argue that they should be considered as such – aided by both Jansen's views on the codices as writing, and Morphy and Perkins's 'Anthropology of Art' and their definition of the art object. In the second section, I will discuss Arnold's 'eating landscape' concept, which will be used in the second and third steps of interpretation. Finally, in the third and final part of this chapter, I will describe the iconological method of Panofsky.

3.1 Mesoamerican codices: writing and art

Ever since the Spanish conquest of Mesoamerica, the precolonial Central Mexican codices have been understood to be books containing texts. Many different interpretations of their meaning and function have been made throughout this time, based on studies of the codices themselves, as well as the various cultures and languages of the region, such as Nahuatl (Aztec) and Mixtec.[5] Despite this consistent interpretation of the codices as texts, most of the surviving codices became part of various Western art collections after their discovery by Western individuals, and were subsequently named for the collection they were a part of. This suggests that the codices were also seen as works of art suitable to collect and put on display – at least in the eyes of the Western people that made them part of their art collections, if not by the indigenous people themselves. These two classifications of the Central Mexican codices are not mutually exclusive, and the codices should be seen as both writing and art at the same time.

[5] See Jansen 1990 for an overview of the scholarship regarding the Mixtec codices; see Boone 2000 for an overview of scholarship regarding the historical codices; see Boone 2007, 6-10 for an overview of scholarship regarding the divinatory codices.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Central Mexican codices are screenfold books, made out of deerskin or bark paper. These books contain texts in the form of images that were part of a polychrome pictorial writing system, painted in the Postclassic international style, which in turn had regional variations and substyles, including the Mixteca-Puebla style and the native-Aztec style (Boone and Smith 2003; Hernández Sánchez 2010, 253-254; Jansen 1992, 20-21; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 47; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 5). Despite critics claiming that the term writing should be reserved solely for phonetic writing (see Mikulska Dąbrowska 2008, 20-30 for a discussion of this criticism), this pictorial writing system has been regarded as true writing by scholars such as Jansen and Pérez Jiménez (2010; 2011), as well as Boone (2000; 2007) and various others. The system consisted of stylized, iconic images as well as signs that have a symbolic or phonetic value, and are dependent on language to be read correctly. These elements are used to create scenes, which are painted along dividing lines on the pages of the codices in a boustrophedon reading order (Jansen 1992, 21).

Apart from the phonetic elements for which it is necessary to have knowledge of the Central Mexican languages to understand, the pictorial writing system is fairly independent from any specific language (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 48; Troike 1978, 559). As the images themselves are used to convey information, the system is well-suited to represent tonal languages – widespread throughout Central Mexico – without needing complex signs to indicate the intended tones. At the same time, images can be understood even if one does not speak the language of their creator; one simply needs to understand the cultural conventions related to the pictures. This makes pictography a very useful writing system for Mesoamerica, with its many different interacting peoples and languages, but similar iconographical traditions (Hernández Sánchez 2010, 253-254; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 48; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 17).

The contents of the Central Mexican codices are mainly historical and religious in nature, recording historical events, religious ideas, and ritual practices.

The codices that belong to the Mixtec group are considered narratives containing information on the Mixtec elite and their exploits, featuring dynastic lists, scenes of battles and conquests, and scenes of rituals (Jansen 1992, 23-24; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 48, 53; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 14); the Borgia group codices are divinatory codices, concerned with calendar counts and rituals (Boone 2007). Careful analyses of the iconic images, the symbolic and phonetic signs, and the Central Mexican languages reveal the existence of metaphors, parallelisms, and titles of the subjects in the texts, especially within the Mixtec codices. This points to a connection to reverential and ceremonial speech, indicating that the codices had a sacred character (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 53, 64, 70; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 12, 31). This sacred character is confirmed by the Mixtec and Nahuatl terms for codex, *ñee ñuhu* (Mixtec), which translates to 'sacred skin', and *teoamoxtli* (Nahuatl), which translates to 'sacred book' (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2004, 269; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 51; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 12).

As seems clear from this brief description of the codices, there is much evidence supporting the interpretation of the Central Mexican codices as a form of writing. In fact, this interpretation is firmly established and widely accepted among scholars, going as far back as the times of the Spanish conquest (Boone 2007, 1; Jansen 1990). The identification of phonetic elements corresponding to words in the codices points to a close connection between the pictorial system and language – however, the main elements of the system are iconic and remain independent of language. The phonetic elements also allow for the existence of metaphors and parallelisms, which further indicate that the codices are meant to be a representation of language (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 17-18).

Additional evidence for the interpretation of the codices as writing may be found within the Mixtec and Nahuatl languages. The terms associated with the codices, their content, their creators, and the implements used to create them all point to various aspects of writing. Aside from the already mentioned term 'sacred skin' for codex, codices are also referred to as 'painting' (*tacu* in Mixtec) and 'history' (*tnuhu sanaha, tnuhu nicuvui,* or *tnuhu yata,* literally 'discourse about

the past' in Mixtec), while those who paint them are called various variations of 'man who writes' (among others: *tay taa tnuhu nicuvui sanaha*, 'man who writes discourse of the past', *tay taa tut quevui cuiya* 'man who writes the paper of the days and years' in Mixtec) (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 12-14). The implement used to paint the codices are indicated with a term that translates to 'pen' (*yeque taa tutu*, literally 'bone for writing' in Mixtec). 'Inkpot' is used for the container that holds the paint (*tiyaha tnoo*, literally 'a gourd of black stuff' in Mixtec) (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 51-52). In Nahuatl, there is no distinction between 'writing' and 'painting', both are designated by the Nahuatl *icuiloa* (Mikulska Dąbrowska 2008, 28). Additionally, there are terms indicating the lines of writing, scenes, and the acts of writing and reading, all adding to the evidence supporting the notion that the codices should be seen as writing (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010, 51-52; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 12-14). It is likely that the other Central Mexican codices should be interpreted similarly – as a form of writing.

If the codices are to be interpreted as writing, it is logical to assume that the pictorial texts they contain can also be read, in a similar manner as one would read a book written in an alphabetic writing system. The presence of a term for reading related to the codices indicates that this is a correct assumption, and extensive studies of the codices themselves (for example Anders *et al.* 1994; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2010) confirm that it is indeed possible to read them – in fact, it has been argued that the codices were used in public readings (Monaghan 1990).

Despite their original status as texts, most of the surviving codices were transported to Europe after the Spanish conquest to become part of Western art collections. This suggests that these codices can also be viewed as pieces of art, admired not primarily for the tales they told, but for the beautiful, but foreign multi-coloured images they held, allowing for their display in museums, as well as inspiring studies of style and iconography. Even scholars who subscribe to the interpretation of the codices as writing have addressed the codices or their creators in some of their works with terms relating to works of art (for example, naming

the writers of the codices 'artist' (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 14), or calling the codices 'verbal art' (Monaghan 1990, 134), or even outright labelling them 'artworks' (Boone and Smith 2003, 188)).

To explore this possibility to interpret the Central Mexican codices as works of art, it is necessary to define the rather abstract term 'art'. Throughout modern scholarship, there have been various attempts at making a definition of art that is useful to determine exactly which artefacts should count as falling within this category, and which should not. Often, indigenous works are not considered art by the predominantly Western scholarship. However, Klein (1994) argues that indigenous works can and should also be considered art for their aesthetic value as well as their significance; the Central Mexican codices could be considered a part of this category. In their book *The Anthropology of Art* (2006), Morphy and Perkins present a definition of the art object that sheds the more traditional Western view of art, and can be taken to include any type of object of any kind of origins. Their exact definition is as follows: "Art objects are ones with aesthetic and/or semantic attributes (but in most cases both), that are used for representational or presentational purposes" (Morphy 1994, 655 cf. Morphy and Perkins 2006, 12). [6]

The Central Mexican codices fit into this definition of art objects rather well. They have both aesthetic and semantic attributes – they can be analysed for style, composition, and meaning. Their status as writing makes them inherently representational – they represent narratives of history as well as religious predictions and prescriptions. As briefly mentioned above, Monaghan (1990) makes a case for a 'performance' of the codices (of the Mixtec ones specifically), arguing that the people would have used them in public, ritual readings, in

[6] Of course, within this definition texts can be regarded as works of art in and of their own – poetry and polished literary prose would be good examples of a kind of 'verbal art'. However, in the case of the codices we are not just dealing with words arranged in a certain manner, we are also dealing with images, adding an additional dimension of interpretation to these codices. One must first ascertain the meaning of the depicted elements before being able to associate them with words, and even then, multiple readings of the images would be possible. This means that the codices are complex works of art with various layers, all of which should contribute to their final interpretation (see Boone 2000, 28-63 and Boone 2007, 33-63 for extensive discussions of symbolic vocabulary).

addition to private readings done by a diviner in the case of the divinatory codices (see also Arnold 2001, 200-202; Boone 2007, 32). If this is indeed a correct assessment of the use of the codices, then it would mean that they also have a presentational character.

All these aspects combined make that the codices are a very suitable case study for the 'Anthropology of Art' theory, which looks not only to the art object itself, but also to various contexts surrounding the object. As Morphy and Perkins put it:

> "[…] the work of art is not simply the object itself but the whole context in which it is produced, seen and used. […] The experience of an artwork is not necessarily confined to a single event or context. Different dimensions of the work may come into play over time as a result of multiple exposure or evocations of the memory of form." (Morphy and Perkins, 2006, 16)

In the case of the codices, this means that in order to gain full understanding, one should focus on not only the codices themselves, but also their creation, their use and perception within indigenous culture, the ways in which they were used and perceived by the colonists after the Spanish conquest, their incorporation in various Western art collections, and the current perception of the codices in Western European and Central Mexican cultures.

In recent research, the codices have mostly been approached as indigenous historical and religious writing. Although this approach has offered us many important insights into the contents of the codices, and – to a certain extent – into their creation and purpose, it does not tell us much about the exact use of the codices (aside from their function as records of history and prescriptions for rituals) nor about the postcolonial views on the codices. Both of these aspects are important for a complete interpretation of the codices, even though the postcolonial views are often disregarded by scholars (see Jansen 2004 for a discussion of the importance of postcolonial views). Even in this thesis, the postcolonial views are only touched upon very briefly.

Perhaps the surviving codices are still in existence simply because they were perceived by the colonists as objects worth incorporating into Western art collections for their aesthetic value. As Morphy and Perkins note, such a change of context for an object adds an additional dimension to the object itself, perhaps even changing its meaning (Morphy and Perkins 2006, 16). This applies to the codices as well. By being taken from their original context and put into another, the codices became objects of art, whether or not this was part of their original context (for similar ideas, see Klein 1994).

Thus, regarding the Central Mexican codices as both art and writing offers a more comprehensive understanding of these codices, especially if we approach them with the theory outlined in Morphy and Perkins's 'Anthropology of Art'. By focusing not only on the codices as written documents, but also paying attention to all contexts they operate in – from their creation and their initial use within the Central Mexican cultures, to their journey to the Western art collections in postcolonial times and even their current place in modern research – we may gain insights into the codices that previously remained obscure.

3.2 'Eating landscape'

Interpreting any kind of art or writing is only possible with a certain knowledge of the tradition and cosmology in which the artwork or text was created. Without, one cannot possibly presume to interpret anything that is depicted or written in an accurate manner. This is especially important in iconography (see also chapter 3.3). Since this thesis is meant to provide an iconographical analysis of a work of art and writing (specifically, page 23 of the Codex Laud), it too must be based on the cosmology of the culture to which the work belongs – in this case, Central Mexican culture.

In order to obtain knowledge of this culture and its cosmology, it is necessary to understand the sources from which we create our interpretations. In the case of Central Mexican culture, or more specifically the Aztec culture, there is an abundance of colonial sources that describe the Aztec society and its worldview thoroughly (for example, the works of de Sahagún and Dúran).

However, these works were written by Spanish colonists, who were often heavily biased against indigenous cultures, and had their own political and social agendas (Voss 2015, 356). Their descriptions are more often than not inaccurate and exaggerated, and show the way the Spanish viewed Aztec society rather than the way the Aztecs viewed the world. If we are to gain insight into the Aztec views of the world, we must move away from the colonial sources towards a more emic perspective (see also Jansen 2004).

As the Codex Laud may be considered a product of Postclassic Central Mexico (see chapter 2.3), it is not unreasonable to use the Aztec worldview as a basis for the iconographical analysis of page 23 of this codex. Therefore, I have chosen to adopt the Central Mexican (Aztec) worldview presented by Philip Arnold in his book *Eating Landscape* (2001) as basis for this thesis. He uses the colonial sources in concert with archaeological evidence, and attempts to move away from the traditional colonial views of the Aztecs towards a more emic perspective of the Aztec world. His approach yields valuable and innovative notions about Aztec worldview. For Arnold, the landscape and Tlaloc are two central features of Aztec cosmology. Considering that our page of the Codex Laud features a Tlaloc figure in a watery landscape, Arnold's ideas fit well with the depicted ones. In this section, I will present a general summary of Arnold's ideas; specific parts will be addressed and elaborated on further as the analysis presented in the following chapters requires.

Arnold's concept of an 'eating landscape' is based on the idea that the precolonial Central Mexican people saw the world as one of consumption, in which the principles of 'eat and be eaten' and reciprocity between the supernatural and natural played a central role (Arnold 2001, 39, 59-60, 163, 234-236). As they perceived it, each entity in the natural world with all its plant, animal, and human life was food for another entity. Even the landscape itself was perceived as a living entity that simultaneously provided food and needed to be fed in order to maintain the circle of life. Food was considered to have transformative qualities. The death of one living entity, whether plant, animal, or human, could extend the life another living entity through the action of eating. As such, eating was

considered to be a violent activity that symbolized the transformative process that governed life and death (Arnold 2001, 161-163).

This belief coincides with the belief that the earth was an embodiment of the supernatural forces associated with the god Tlaloc, the deity of rain, earth, and fertility (Arnold 2001, 33; see chapter 5.2.1 for an in-depth discussion of this god). This god was not only responsible for providing the rain and soil necessary for the growth of both wild and agricultural plants, but also for the lives of all animals living in the forests, on the mountains, and in the lakes, and thus for providing sustenance for humans (Arnold 2001, 33, 161-163). In return, humans were expected to do the same: to provide food for the god in the form of rituals and sacrifice, in order to establish and maintain their mutually beneficial relationship that eventually supported the circle of life and death. In this manner, Tlaloc permeated the landscape and controlled the means of subsistence for Central Mexican people. As a result, everyday life was interwoven with intensive worship of this god (Arnold 2001, 138-139, 161-162, 240).

According to Arnold, this close relationship between the god and the landscape meant that the worship of Tlaloc was closely related to the landscape as well. The many rituals performed in his honour were associated with various locations within the landscape of the Valley of Mexico (Arnold 2001, 238). This connection between Tlaloc and the landscape, as well as the relationship with food and the circle of life and death, served as the basis for the cult of human sacrifice associated with Tlaloc. As mentioned above, the Central Mexican understanding of the landscape as a living and eating entity necessitated a certain kind of reciprocity for life taken in order to sustain other life, which was articulated through human sacrifice (Arnold 2001, 163, 240). By eating elements of the landscape, humans were in effect eating parts of Tlaloc himself. Thus, in a way, the landscape *was* Tlaloc. As Tlaloc fed the humans with the landscape that was considered to be his body, the humans living in this landscape were obligated to feed Tlaloc with their bodies in ritual sacrifice performed at prescribed places. In this way, human sacrifice was viewed as the payment of the debt created by

using the landscape as means of producing and procuring food (Arnold 2001, 37-39, 238-240).

The cult of Tlaloc shows the manner in which human existence was understood to be embedded in a continuous and reciprocal relationship with the phenomenal world (Arnold 2001, 245). Living in a living landscape in any meaningful way required constant recognition of the interconnectedness of the various living beings within the circle of life. Through the cult of Tlaloc, the Central Mexican people acknowledged and honoured this intricate connection, and at the same time, created a meaningful existence for themselves. Thus, in the Central Mexican cosmology life is oriented around human interaction with the material conditions of existence (i.e. the natural world and the products that can be made from it). As a consequence, human interaction is structured by these material conditions, and should be understood as such, leading to the cosmology of an 'eating landscape' (Arnold 2001, 245).

3.3 Panofsky's iconological method

As outlined in the first chapter, this thesis aims to provide insight into the meaning of page 23 of the Codex Laud, by means of a detailed description and analysis of this page according to the iconological method of Panofsky (this method is outlined in detail in Panofsky 1939, 5-17; see also table 1). Although this method was originally developed to interpret artwork from the European Renaissance period, it is not necessarily limited to this specific period and culture. The method's basic premises and the various steps to be followed are not tied to any single culture or work of art. Instead, they are formulated to be universally applicable to any work of art, no matter to which culture it belongs (Panofsky 1939, 5-8). In fact, they have been successfully applied in iconographical studies in archaeology and other disciplines (Homer 1998). The only requirement to the successful application of this method is a certain degree of familiarity with the tradition and the culture in which the artwork was created. This familiarity can be obtained either by belonging to the same culture as the work of art, in which case the familiarity is taught from birth, or through extensive study of the aspects of

the culture to which the artwork belongs necessary to correctly interpret the art, such as depiction conventions, literary tradition, and cosmology (Panofsky 1939, 5-17). Accordingly, it is possible for a Western researcher to interpret a piece of Mesoamerican art by using this method, as long as the Western researcher has familiarized himself thoroughly with Mesoamerican culture.

The method is based on Panofsky's recognition of three different levels of meaning contained in everyday human interactions through body language. In every expression or gesture, one can discern factual and expressional meaning, conventional meaning, and intrinsic meaning (Panofsky 1939, 3). The factual and expressional meaning of the interaction together form the primary or natural meaning – this is the kind of meaning that is easily understandable from observation of the interaction itself, and is based in practical experience. The conventional meaning is the secondary meaning – this type of meaning is hidden underneath the primary meaning, and can be deducted from the primary meaning when one takes into account the connotations of the interaction as governed by customs and cultural traditions (Panofsky 1939, 4). Finally, the intrinsic meaning of the interaction is the content of the interaction – this kind of meaning pertains to the cultural principles of the interaction that are not directly observable, and is the unifying factor that underlies and explains the primary and secondary meanings, while at the same time governing the form of the interaction (Panofsky 1939, 4-5).

This categorization of meaning of everyday interactions between humans can be transferred to works of art, which carry the same layering of meaning (or subject matter). Just like human interactions, art has primary or natural meaning, secondary or conventional meaning, and intrinsic meaning or content. Although the three levels of meaning are here presented as three distinct layers, one must keep in mind that, within a single piece of artwork, these three layers of meaning work in concert, merging into one encompassing, but indivisible, meaning for the work of art (Panofsky 1939, 5, 16-17).

The primary meaning can again be subdivided into factual and expressional meaning. In terms of iconographic study, this meaning is found "by

identifying pure *forms* […] as representations of natural objects such as human beings, animals, plants, houses, tools, and so forth; by identifying their mutual relations as *events*; and by perceiving such expressional as the mournful character of a pose or gesture, or the homelike and peaceful atmosphere of an interior" (Panofsky 1939, 5). These elements are identified through practical experience and can be labelled artistic motifs. The description produced by the identification of these motifs can be called a *pre-iconographical description* of the artwork (Panofsky 1939, 5).

The secondary meaning can be found by connecting artistic motifs and combinations of artistic motifs, which can be referred to as compositions, with themes or concepts present within the culture associated with the work of art. Motifs with this kind of secondary meaning can be named images, and combinations of these images are referred to as stories and allegories. The identification of these images, stories, and allegories may be considered to be *iconography in the narrower sense*. This kind of iconography is reliant on the correct identification of the motifs that underlie the images, stories, and allegories – if the motifs are not identified and interpreted correctly, the images, stories, and allegories will not be identified correctly either (Panofsky 1939, 6-7).

Finally, the intrinsic meaning can be found by determining the underlying principles that reveal "the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work" (Panofsky 1939, 7). These principles may be identified through examination of the methods of composition and iconographical significance of the artwork, and lend symbolic values to motifs, images, stories, and allegories. The discovery and interpretation of these symbolic values can be called *iconography in the deeper sense*, and often produces a synthesis rather than an analysis. And like the correct analysis of the iconography in the narrower sense requires the correct identification of motifs, the correct analysis of the iconography in a deeper sense requires a correct identification of images, stories, and allegories (Panofsky 1939, 7-8).

From this description of the different levels of meaning as recognized by Panofsky, it is obvious that the correct interpretation of an image requires the correct identification of each of these levels of meaning. Because the correct interpretation of each level of meaning is contingent on the correct interpretation of the level of meaning below it, one must begin the interpretation of the artwork at the primary, pre-iconographical level and slowly work one's way up towards the level of intrinsic meaning. However, even this kind of slow and careful progression through the levels of meaning alone does not guarantee the correctness of the analysis. The interpretation of each level requires knowledge of a certain kind in order to be correct, and even then, mistakes are bound to be made (Panofsky 1939, 9-16).

On the pre-iconographical level, which appears to be straightforward as it deals with the world of motifs, and thus produces a description of the representations of objects and events depicted in the artwork, the main problem is in the initial identification of these representations. Although this identification is made on the basis of the practical experience of the interpreter, this practical experience alone does not necessarily mean that the identification that is made is correct. In fact, what we see as identification through practical experience is actually partially based in knowledge of the conventions of depiction in a certain culture, or, as Panofsky puts it, "the manner in which *objects* and *events* were expressed by *forms under varying historical conditions*" (Panofsky 1939, 11). This can be called the history of *style*, which serves as a controlling principle and as a supplement for our practical experience (Panofsky 1939, 9-11).

On the level of iconography in the narrower sense, a similar problem for correct interpretation exists. In order to correctly identify images, stories, and allegories within the motifs of the pre-iconographical level, one needs to possess a certain level of familiarity with the cultural themes and concepts that underlie these images, stories, and allegories. Thus, to be able to perform the analysis at this level, one must familiarize oneself thoroughly with the cultural traditions in which the creator of the work of art operated, especially through reading of literary sources. In Panofsky's words, one must be acquainted with "the manner in

which, under varying conditions, specific *themes* or *concepts* were expressed by *objects* and *events*, […] the history of *types*" (Panofsky 1939, 12-13), in order to correct and control our knowledge of the literary sources (Panofsky 1939, 11-14).

Finally, on the level of iconography in the deeper sense, or intrinsic meaning, which deals with an abstract concept of symbolic value based in the cultural background of the artist, it is required to transcend beyond the particular into the general, and it becomes necessary for the interpreter to trust their own diagnostic capabilities, called *synthetic intuition* by Panofsky (1939, 14-15). This intuition is subjective and often irrational as it is influenced by the interpreter's psychology and worldview, and must, as Panofsky states, "be controlled by an insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, the *general and essential tendencies of the human mind* were expressed by specific *themes* and *concepts*. This […] may be called a history of *cultural symptoms* […] in general" (Panofsky 1939, 16). This is accomplished through the comparison of the intrinsic meaning of a work of art with as many other related works as one can, even within other humanistic disciplines (Panofsky 1939, 14-16).

As mentioned several times before, this method of iconography will be used in the remainder of this thesis, in order to come to an interpretation of page 23 of the Codex Laud. Accordingly, the following three chapters will each contain the analysis of one of the three levels of meaning as described above. Chapter 4 will contain the pre-iconographical analysis of the page, chapter 5 will present the iconographical analysis, and chapter 6 will deal with the iconological level.

Table 1: Synoptical table of Panofsky's iconological method. After Panofsky 1939, 14-15.

OBJECT OF INTERPRETATION	**ACT OF INTERPRETATION**	**EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION**	**CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION (History of Tradition)**
I *Primary* or *natural* subject matter - (A) factual, (B) expressional - constituting the world of artistic motifs	*Pre-iconographical description* (and pseudo-formal analysis)	*Practical experience* (familiarity with *objects* and *events*)	History of *style* (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *objects* and *events* were expressed by *forms*)
II *Secondary* or *conventional* subject matter, constituting the world of *images*, *stories*, and *allegories*	*Iconographical analysis* in the narrower sense of the word	*Knowledge of literary sources* (familiarity with specific *themes* and *concepts*)	History of *types* (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions specific *themes* or *conce pts* were expressed by *objects* and *events*)
III *Intrinsic meaning* or *content*, constituting the world of '*symbolical' values*	*Iconographical interpretation* in a deeper sense (*Iconographical synthesis*)	Synthetic *intuition* (familiarity with the *essential tendencies of the human mind*), conditioned by personal psychology and '*Weltanschauung*'	History of *cultural symptoms or 'symbols'* in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *essential tendencies of the human mind* were expressed by specific *themes* and *concepts*)

4. Pre-iconographical analysis of page 23 of the Codex Laud

In order to come to any interpretation of any art object – and, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Mexican codices certainly *are* art objects – it is necessary to first look at and describe the object itself, without paying attention to any part of the cultural meaning the object may have. Describing the elements depicted and identifying these elements as representations of natural objects, events, and expressions, but not interpreting these elements as having additional meanings (yet), will provide a neutral description of the object, which in turn will aid us in its further interpretation (Panofsky 1939, 5).

In this case, the object to be examined is the image on page 23 of the Codex Laud (see fig. 2). Although it has been studied extensively, the exact meaning and function of this page within the Codex Laud has been ever unclear (see for example Anders *et al.* 1994, Boone 2007, Burland 1966, Nowotny 2005). By beginning at a neutral description of the page and working my way up from there towards an interpretation as complete as possible, as Panofsky advocated in his *Studies in Iconology*, I hope to make a valuable contribution to the research concerning this page – and thus the Codex Laud as a whole.

Following Panofsky's method, the aim of this chapter is to provide the basic, pre-iconographical description that will become the starting point of further interpretation of the image. As previously discussed, this preliminary description will attempt to avoid any cultural interpretation – it will only identify what Panofsky named natural objects, events, and expressions. These are the basic things that any human should be able to recognize in any image, no matter his or her cultural or ethnic background, and include human beings, animals, plants, buildings, and tools, as well as basic events, emotions, and interactions between separate elements (Panofsky 1939, 5).

However, we must remain aware that even in the case of such a basic description, there is always a possibility of making mistakes in the identification of elements, especially when the image originates from a culture not the observer's own. To avoid this problem, knowledge of the depiction conventions

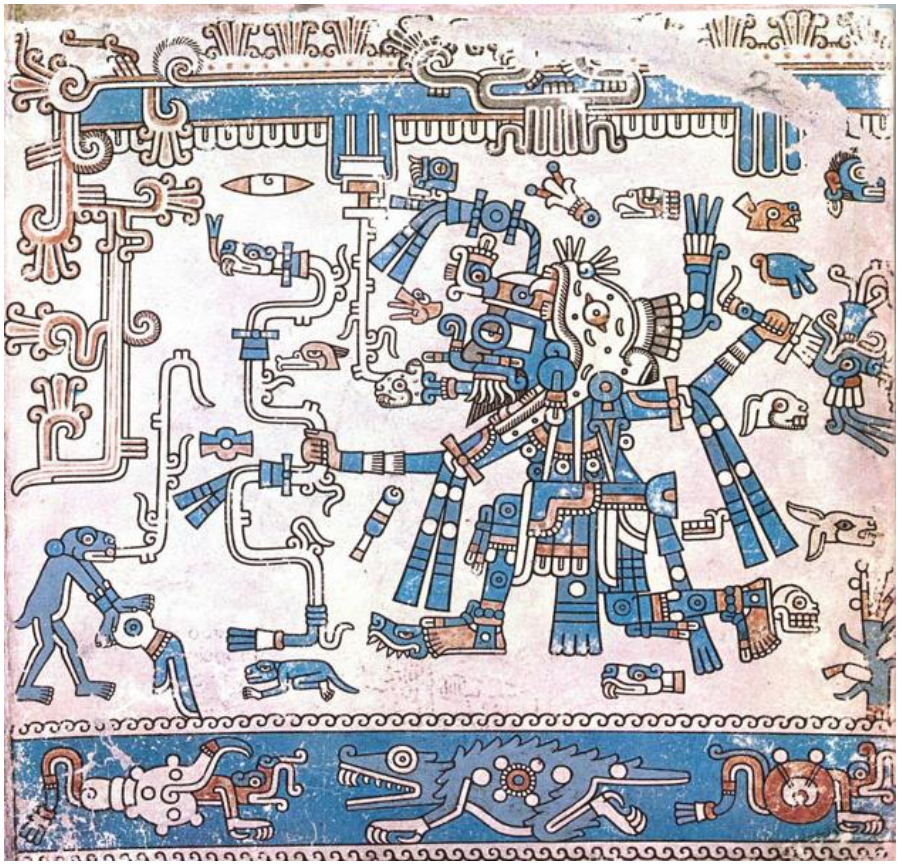

Figure 2: Page 23 of the Codex Laud (taken from the digitised ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

of the style in which the image is created is a necessity (Panofsky 1939, 9-11). Therefore, I will base this description not only on the image itself and what I believe to see in it, but I will also turn to previous descriptions of the image, as well as other sources discussing the Postclassic international style and the Mixteca-Puebla substyle in order to identify each element.

With these aims, methods, and problems in mind, I will now turn to the description itself. For a correct interpretation and reading of this page, it is important to acknowledge the ordering of the elements on it. In the Central Mexican pictorial writing system, the spatial ordering of a page serves as the grammar and syntax of the text, and is, as such, vital to the understanding of the page (Boone 2007, 33-34, 66-67; see also chapter 6.3). Thus, the order of this description is based on the order in which the elements on this page would likely

be read by the indigenous reader – f rom right to left, and from bottom to top. Generally, this order follows the main elements on the page, starting from the bottom right, and ending at the top left.

4.1 The physical characteristics of the page

The first things to consider are the physical attributes of the page, such as materials used, shape, size, style, and current state of the page. These attributes influence the manner in which the contents of the page are presented to us, and thus cannot be absent in any description of this page.

Like the other pages of the Codex Laud, page 23 has an almost square shape. The page is 16.8 centimetres wide and 15.6 centimetres tall (Burland 1966, 18). It is made of deerskin coated in a layer of white gesso, on which the image is painted in the polychrome Mixteca-Puebla style (Anders *et al.* 1994, 11; Boone 2007, 18, 229; Burland 1966, 10-11). Despite the fading of the colours, it is clear that the page is dominated by the colour blue, while white, red, green, and black are the only other colours present in the image.[7] The painting is substantially damaged around the edges and at the top right, erasing part of the band painted along the top. This slightly complicates the description of the top band – this problem will be further addressed below.

4.2 The bottom band

Along the bottom edge of the page runs a blue band (fig. 3). This band has a border of white curls along both the top and bottom, and is decorated with three animal figures. The animal on the right is mainly red. It has a curved beak, sharp claws and a tail, and it appears to be coming out of a circular red and white shape, which is likely a shell of some kind. It is likely that this animal is a kind of mollusc, or perhaps a hermit crab with a shell on its back.

The leftmost animal is nearly identical to the animal on the right. It has a similar curved beak, sharp claws and tail, and its dominant colour is also red. The

[7] In Central Mexico, there is no real distinction between blue and green – these are considered to be the same colour (personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas).

only real difference is in the shell, which is coiled and white, instead of having the circular red and white shape. Considering the likeness between the two animals, it seems that this animal on the left is also a kind of mollusc, perhaps a conch, or hermit crab (Anders *et al.* 1994, 256 identify these animals as snails and molluscs; Nowotny 2005, 156 identifies the left animal as a snail and the right as a mussel).

The third animal is situated in the centre of the band. This animal is predominantly blue. It has a long snout, large sharp teeth, sharp claws, a tail, and some sort of ridges on its back. Its body is decorated with a large red circle with a blue centre, a rim of small tiny circles, and four middle sized white circles attached to it. Three loose white circles are spread along its body and tail. This animal can be identified as a crocodile or a caiman. The clear, high ridges on the back of this animal seem to point to a crocodile more than a caiman, as most species of caiman lack such obvious ridges on their backs (see note 3 above). The red-blue-white circular element on its body is a jewel or precious stone, indicating that this animal is considered precious (see Nicholson 1967 for a discussion of the depiction of a precious stone on this animal).

From its blue colour and the presence of water animals, it is clear that this band represents a body of water. The white curls around the band represent the foam that is often visible on cresting waves, indicating a relation with the sea. The jewelled crocodile is often associated with land. It is a representation of the earth, which was believed to be a crocodile floating on the sea (Boone 2007, 14; see also chapter 5.1). Thus, this band is meant to represent the sea, on which the earth floats.

Figure 3: Band at the bottom edge of page 23 of the Codex Laud (taken from the digitised ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

4.3 The middle band

The middle band is the broad white band between the bottom and top bands. Situated between sea and sky (see also chapters 4.2 and 4.4), this band likely represents the earth. There is a single male human figure at the centre of this band, surrounded by twenty loose elements. On the far right, there is a plant of some kind, and on the far left, there is an animal. From the top band, curls descend into the middle band – these will be described as part of the upper band in chapter 4.4.

4.3.1 The central figure

Most of the page is taken up by a single human figure, depicted in profile (fig. 4). This human figure seems to be male, indicated by the style of his clothing and the presence of a black beard on his chin. His face is partially black, partially blue. His ear and nose are pierced by blue, red, and white ornaments. The white half-circle at the end of these ornaments are representations of feathers. There is a blue goggle-like ring around his half-closed eye, and a curled blue element under his nose. Sharp fangs are protruding from under a curved blue upper lip. The large white square next to his eye and the fact that the fangs extend over his beard indicate that the ring around his eye, the curved nose element, the curved upper lip, and the fangs are part of a mask worn by the figure. Another blue element is sticking out of his mouth; this is probably his tongue. A long line of white curls runs from the tip of this element (separated by an animal head that I will address below) towards the top band. Considering that these curls seem to come from his mouth, and going by the conventions of depiction within the codices, these kinds of curls can be interpreted as a depiction of sound made by the figure, whether this is speech, song, or any other kind of sound (Boone 2000, 58-59).

The figure is wearing elaborate clothing. His blue upper body is covered by a semi-circular red and blue pectoral garment, perhaps a cape or a broad necklace (Anawalt 2000, 185). White concentric circles are hanging from this garment; these circles are jewels made of precious stone, supporting the idea that this element is a necklace (Boone 1989, 53; Nowotny 2005, 15). His arms are painted blue. White and red bands are fastened in knots just above his elbows, and

long blue strips with white circles are dangling from them. These strips are probably made of paper, splattered with rubber as indicated by the circles on them (compare to Heyden 1983, fig. 10: the spatters on the costume of Tlaloc). Around his wrists, the figure is wearing a set of frilled white bands.

On his lower body, he is wearing a white, blue, and red skirt-like garment, and a blue loincloth decorated with a white circle, indicating that this garment is also spattered with rubber, just like the paper ornaments around his arms (Anawalt 2000, 184-186; Heyden 1983). A red and blue girdle is fastened around his waist. The girdle has feathered ornaments on the front and a semi-circular element on the back, from which a long blue strip is hanging. This semi-circular element can be identified as the *tezcacuitlapilli*, a mirror-disc often made of turquoise or pyrite. It was worn on the lower back by warriors throughout Mesoamerica. This kind of disc is clearly visible in the Atlantes warrior statues at Tula (fig. 5; personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas), as well as in several murals at Teotihuacan, and the object has been found in the archaeological record as well (Taube 1992, 172-177).

The central figure is wearing sandals on his red feet. The rest of his legs are painted blue and decorated with concentric circles; again, these circles represent jewels, indicating that the figure is precious. Red and blue bands with white feathers attached to their bottom and a knotted ornament attached to their front are fastened just below his knees.

On his head, he is wearing an elaborate headdress consisting of the head of a large animal, a band with a bird element on his forehead, and a reed element on the top of his head. Attached to the large animal head are black feathers with white tips, and a large quetzal feather element (see Anawalt 2000, 188 for feathers on headdresses; compare to Sharpe 2014, fig. 6g-h). The large animal head can be identified as a jaguar through its spots, its small pointed ears, and its sharp fangs. This jaguar is wearing a red and blue ear ornament with a triangular shape at the end that can be identified as a sun ray (compare Boone 2007, fig. 25g). The bird on the figure's forehead is recognizable as a quetzal, due to its blue colour and the red crest on its head (Boone 2007, 51; Sharpe 2014, 7-10).

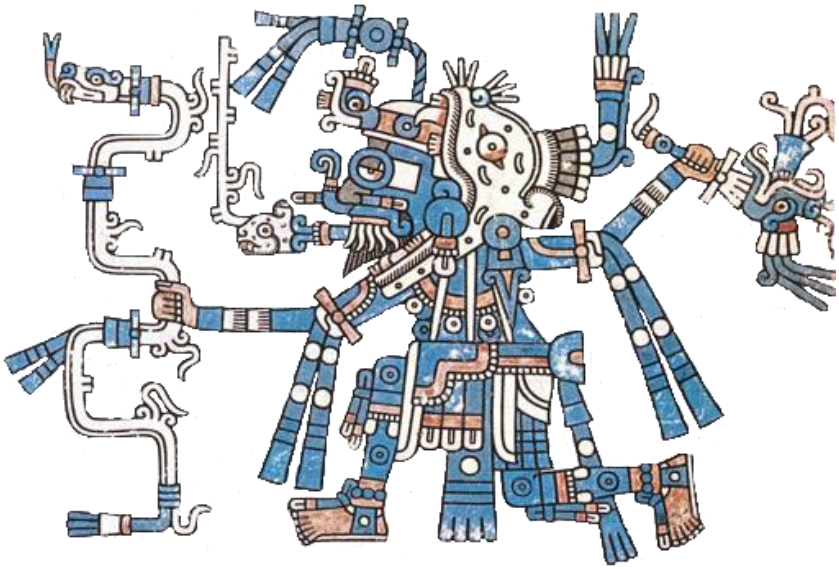

Figure 4: Central human figure with his attributes (taken from the digitised ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

Figure 5: Tezcacuitlapilli *on the back of the Atlantes warrior statues at Tula (http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/toltec-warriors-4.htm).*

The figure is holding an attribute in each of his hands. In his right hand, held out in front of him, he is holding a long undulating serpent. The serpent is recognizable mainly by its two sharp fangs, its forked tongue, and its feathered tail. It has blue ornaments tied around its white body, similar to those around the figure's arms. There are white volutes attached to its back, indicating its movement. In his left hand, held out behind him, the figure is holding a blue axe, decorated with a green bird's head similar to that on his headdress, probably a quetzal. White curls, similar to those coming from the figure's mouth, are coming from the axe, indicating that these curls too depict a sound of some kind.

The figure's posture indicates that he is not simply standing still. His legs are bent at the knees. One leg, probably his left, is in front of him with the foot placed underneath, as if it is standing firmly on the ground; the other, probably his right, points downward with the foot held behind, leaning on its toes. His arms are bent lightly. His left arm is held out in front of him; his right is held out behind him. This pose seems to indicate movement; he is walking forward, holding his weapons ready to strike (see also Anders *et al.* 1994, 256). It evokes an image of a warrior on the battlefield, intimidating his enemies. It is a pose that exudes strength and power. In Mexican pictography, this pose seems to be associated with divine authority, and thus it may well be that, on this page, we are dealing with either a god, or an impersonator of a god (Boone 2007, 48-49).

Considering his attributes and his appearance, this figure could be identified as the god Tlaloc. However, while the ring around the eye, the curled nose, and the sharp fangs are visual identifiers of this god (Arnold 2001, 38, 42-43; Boone 2007, 40-42), the fact that the figure is wearing them as a mask indicates that he is not Tlaloc himself. This is reinforced by the presence of the jaguar headdress and his warrior-like clothes, as well as the black beard – these elements are normally not part of Tlaloc's attire (see chapter 5.2.1 for an in-depth discussion of this god). Instead, they indicate that we are dealing with an older man, probably an elder priest, who is dressed as Tlaloc, but also carries the insignia of his status among the people (see Nowotny 2005, 14-15 for the notion of priests dressed as gods; see Arnold 2001, 102-104 for the impersonation of

Tlaloc during a ritual). Thus, the central figure may be identified as a priest impersonating of Tlaloc for a certain ritual.

4.3.2 The twenty elements circling the central figure

The central figure on the page is encircled by twenty elements. Most of these elements are loose on the page; a few, however, are directly attached to another element. As we will see in this chapter and the next, these twenty elements can be identified as the twenty day signs of the *tonalpohualli*, the 260-day calendar (see chapter 5.2.2 for a detailed discussion of the Mesoamerican calendar). These twenty day signs were organized in a specific order, and always appeared in this same order when used to count the cycles. However, in this image, the twenty day signs do not appear in this or any other discernible order. As random as their placement may appear, spatial arrangement was extremely important in the Central Mexican codices – as mentioned above, it functioned as a grammar and syntax, recording the relationship between elements on the pages and determining how a page should be read (Boone 2007, 33-34). As such, one should understand these twenty day signs surrounding Tlaloc as being depicted and ordered according to their association with the central figure of Tlaloc, his body, and the attributes he is carrying (Boone 2007, 247).

Through the composition of the image, the day signs add their meaning to various parts of Tlaloc's body, his attributes, or a general position near Tlaloc (either in front of him or behind him, or in association with the sky or the earth). Simultaneously, the character of the days is determined by their position within the composition. In other words, meaning is achieved through association (Anders *et al.* 1994, 256; Boone 2007, 62). Thus, to interpret these elements correctly, it is necessary to acknowledge this order even at the pre-iconographical level. Therefore, I will adhere to the calendrical order of these signs in this description. Accordingly, the elements are numbered 1-20 to clarify which element is meant (fig. 6 and 7). The identification of these elements presented here is largely based on Anders *et al.* 1994, 255-258; Boone 2007, 36, 51; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 23-25; and Nowotny 2005, 46, 156-157.

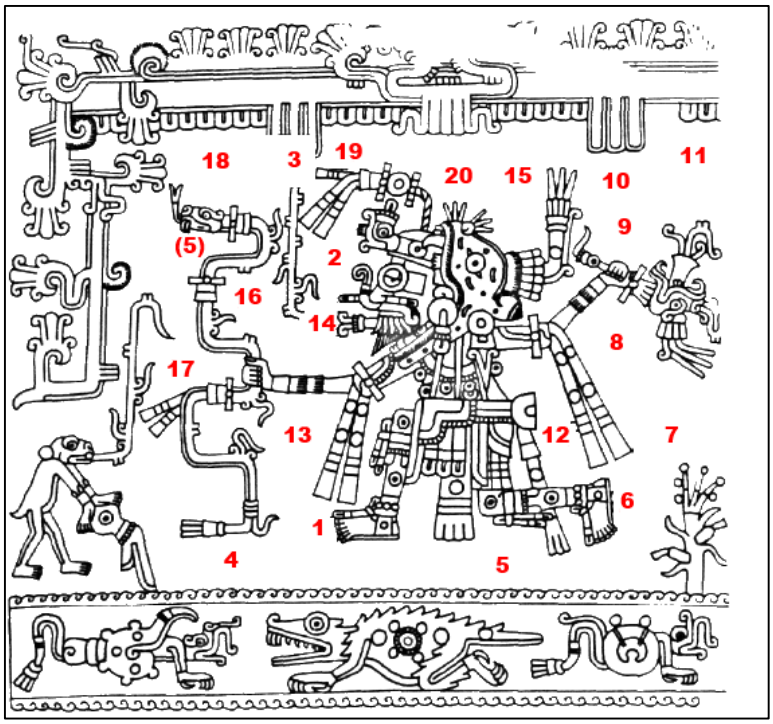

Figure 6: Twenty elements circling the central figure on page 23 of Codex Laud. The elements in question are replaced by numbers for clarity (after Anders et al. 1994, 256).

1		11	
2		12	
3		13	
4		14	
5		15	
6		16	
7		17	
8		18	
9		19	
10		20	

Figure 7: List of the twenty elements as numbered in figure 6 (images taken from the digitized ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

1. Attached to the toes of the central figure's right foot. It is a blue animal head facing the left. It is a reptile with a row of sharp teeth along its entire jaw and a prominent nose, identifying this animal as a crocodile. This is the sign for the day named Crocodile.

2. Located in front of the central figure's face, between the curled nose element and the white curls running towards the upper band. It is a red face with a long beak and a square nose with large eyes on top. It may be identified as the mask of the Wind god. This is the sign for the day named Wind.

3. Attached to the upper band and the stream of white curls coming from the central figure's mouth. It is a flat platform with a roof over it, which can only be identified as a building of some kind. As there is only one day sign that is a building, this element should be identified as a house, the sign for the day named House.

4. Positioned underneath the serpent held by the central figure. It is a full figure depiction of an animal, coloured blue, with a bald head and a tail. It appears to be lying down. According to Mexican depiction conventions, this animal should be identified as a lizard. This is the sign for the day named Lizard.

5. Situated underneath the central figure. It is an animal head facing the left. It seems to be a reptile with two sharp teeth at the front of its mouth. As it bears a strong similarity to the head of the serpent held by the central figure (indicated with the (5)), it is obvious that this too is the head of a snake. This is the sign for the day named Serpent.

6. Attached to the sole of the central figure's left foot. It is a white human skull with large round eyes. This is the sign for the day named Death.

7. Found below the rabbit head, just above the plant coming from the bottom band on the far right of the image. It is a white animal head facing the right. This animal is drawn with two long, pointed ears visible, an open mouth, and flat teeth, which indicate that it is a deer. This is the sign for the day named Deer.

8. Located underneath the axe held by the central figure. It is a white animal head facing the right. It has a long, hanging ear and two large, square teeth, clearly identifying this animal as a rabbit. This is the sign for the day named Rabbit.

9. Placed almost straight underneath the dog, right above the central figure's hand holding the axe. It is a red vessel that has blue liquid – likely to be water – pouring out of it on the right side. This is the sign for the day named Water.

10. Positioned between the upper band and the axe held by the central figure, immediately above element 9 and a little lower than and to the left of element 11. It is an animal head facing the right. It is red with a blue nose, and has sharp teeth and a square ear. The square ear indicates that the ear was cut or chewed off, identifying this animal as a dog. This is the sign for the day named Dog.

11. Situated in the upper right corner, between the upper band and the axe held by the central figure. It is damaged, but enough of it is visible in order to identify it as an animal head. It is blue with white circles around its eyes and mouth, and faces the right. It has black hair, and a large red and white ear ornament. This animal can be identified as a monkey. This is the sign for the day named Monkey.

12. Positioned between the central figure's girdle and the paper streamers hanging from his arm. It is a white lower human mandible, filled with teeth. The red strip below the teeth are the gums. According to the depiction conventions, this is the sign for the day named Grass.[8]

13. Placed in front of the central figure, underneath his arm, between the paper streamers on the figure's elbow and the body of the serpent he is holding. It is a stick with a thicker blue, red, and white semi-oval part, and a round blue and white element on top of that. This is a stylized depiction of reed, the sign for the day named Reed.

14. Attached both to the blue element sticking out of the central figure's mouth and the stream of white curls reaching towards the upper band. It is a white animal head facing the left. It has pointy ears, sharp teeth, and black spots, which identify it as a jaguar. This is the sign for the day named Jaguar.

15. Placed to the right of number four. It is a red animal head facing the left. It has a sharp, curved, white beak, and red and blue feathers on the back. It is clear that this animal is a bird; the curved beak and the feathers identify it as an eagle. This is the sign for the day named Eagle.

16. Found in front of the central figure, between the serpent's body and the curls coming from the central figure's mouth. It is a red animal head facing the left. It has a white, sharp beak with a lump on it, and a bald head with a feather crest on the back. It appears to be a bird; its bald head identifies it as a vulture. This is the sign for the day named Vulture.

[8] In most depictions of this sign, the mandible is accompanied by a tuft of grass or a green leaf. However, as the name of this day is also 'teeth' in some Central Mexican languages, the mandible can also appear alone (compare with the Grass sign in fig. 20; Boone 2007, 36).

17. Situated in front of the central figure, between the serpent's body and the swirls coming out of the mouth of the animal on the far left. It has a bowtie-like shape, with two rectangular ends and a round middle part. It is divided into two identical halves horizontally. The upper half is coloured blue, while the bottom half is coloured red. It is clear that this is an abstract sign. This is the sign for the day named Movement.

18. Situated to the left of the house element, between the upper band and the head of the serpent held by the central figure. It is an oval shape, divided into three parts. Both pointed ends are coloured red, and the middle section is white with a curl drawn on it. This kind of oval is found many times in the codices, and can be identified as a flint knife. This is the sign for the day named Flint or Knife.

19. Located to the right of the house element, attached to the headdress of the central figure. It is a face in profile, looking upwards. It is similar to the face of the central figure; this face too has black face paint, a blue circle around a half-closed eye, sharp fangs under a curled blue lip, and an ornamented ear. Their identical features indicate that this face shares an identity with the central figure. It may be identified as the mask of the Rain god. This is the sign for the day named Rain.

20. Situated above the central figure's head. It exists of a blue circle on the bottom, with a red band on top of it. On top of this band, there is a band of smaller, white circles, which in turn has a white flower shape with three petals on top of it. Two red sticks with blue circles are sticking out between the petals. This element can be identified as a flower; the white flower shape with three petals represents the flower petals, and the red sticks coming out of the top are the stamens. This is the sign for the day named Flower.

4.3.3 The plant and the animal in the middle band

On the far right of the page, a green stalk is growing from the bottom band (fig. 8). The red and white element on top is likely a flower, and there are white oval-shaped elements with red tassels on both sides of the plant, which seem to be cobs of maize. This means that this plant is most likely a stalk of maize (Anders *et al*. 1994, 256 also identify this plant as maize).

On the far left, a blue animal with a white belly and a short tail is standing on its hind legs (fig. 9). In its front legs, it is holding a white jar with a blue concentric circle on it. Again this circle represents a jewel or precious stone, indicating that the jar and its contents are precious. The jar is tilted downwards, so that its blue liquid contents flow out towards the sea represented by the bottom band. From the mouth of the animal comes a long line of white curls, similar to those connected to the mouth of the central male figure. Again, this seems to indicate sound.

With the emphasis on water in the rest of this page – the rainy sky, the sea on the bottom, and the blue colour dominating the entire page – it would be logical to conclude that the liquid pouring out of the jar is water as well. The blue animal is then probably an aquatic animal, perhaps a frog or toad (Anders *et al.* 1994, 256 and Nowotny 2005, 46). Or perhaps its similarity to the full-bodied representation of the day sign Lizard indicates that it is some kind of water lizard, such as the axolotl native to the Mexican lakes (compare fig. 7 number 4 and fig. 9; see fig. 10 for the axolotl). In personal communication, Dr. A. Rojas suggested a fourth possibility for the identification of this animal: a mole. Despite these various possibilities, the identification of this animal as a toad or a frog seems the most likely one, as these animals are both associated with Tlaloc, while the lizard was more generally associated with water and fertility (see chapter 5.2).

Figure 8: The plant on the far right (taken from the digitized ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

Figure 9: The animal with the jar on the far left (taken from the digitized ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

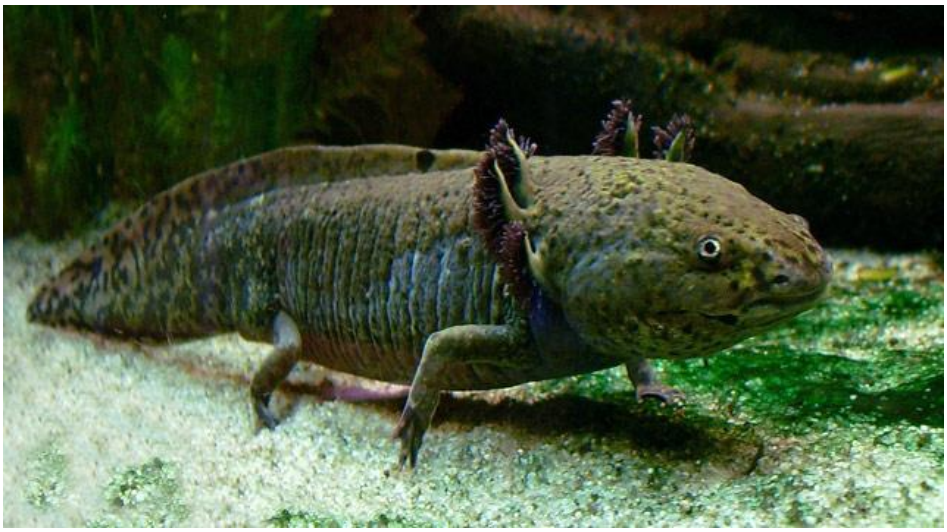

Figure 10: The Mexican axolotl (http://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/26777-Ambystoma-mexicanum).

4.4 The upper band

The upper edge of the page is taken up by a wide blue band with a red border, spanning across the entire width of the page (fig. 11). The picture is severely damaged in this area; the band is partially erased because of it. As a result, some elements of the band are not clearly visible, and cannot be described in their entirety. However, as with the monkey day sign above, the features of the band that are visible are enough to describe and identify the band.

The underside of the band is decorated with a pattern of white and blue semi-ovals. The blue semi-ovals are longer than the white ones, and occur in two

groups of three, positioned so that they seem to frame the central figure. The white semi-ovals run along nearly the entire underside of the band, and may be identified as feathers. Along the top of the band runs a line of red dots topped by red-white volutes with round, curling protuberances. Some of these volutes appear to have a fuzzy edge, like a ball of cotton. Similar red-white striped elements are descending from the left side of the band. These descending elements have scrolls that indicate movement downwards, connecting the upper band with the middle band.

In the centre of the band, there is a large black element. It appears to be a rounded triangular shape with an open top and eye-like curls at either side, featuring small teeth-like elements on the inside, volutes that are similar to the red ones along the entire upper side of the band, and semi-ovals on the bottom, similar to the blue ones described above. This element can be identified as a depiction of the sky maw, which are commonly used in Mesoamerica to indicate the sky (compare fig. 12; personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas).

This band represents the sky. The white feathers along the underside of the band, and the red-white elements represent the clouds. As the red-white elements on the left are descending towards the middle band representing the earth, these can be considered ‘descending clouds’, referring to either mist, or the clouds gathered around the mountaintops (fig. 13; Anders *et al.* (1994, 257) identify this descending element as a ‘tongue of fire’, probably referring to a lightning bolt). The blue colour of the band and the blue semi-ovals connect the band to water and rain. Thus, the sky represented here is a cloudy or a rainy sky (Boone 2007, 55; Nowotny 2005, 46).

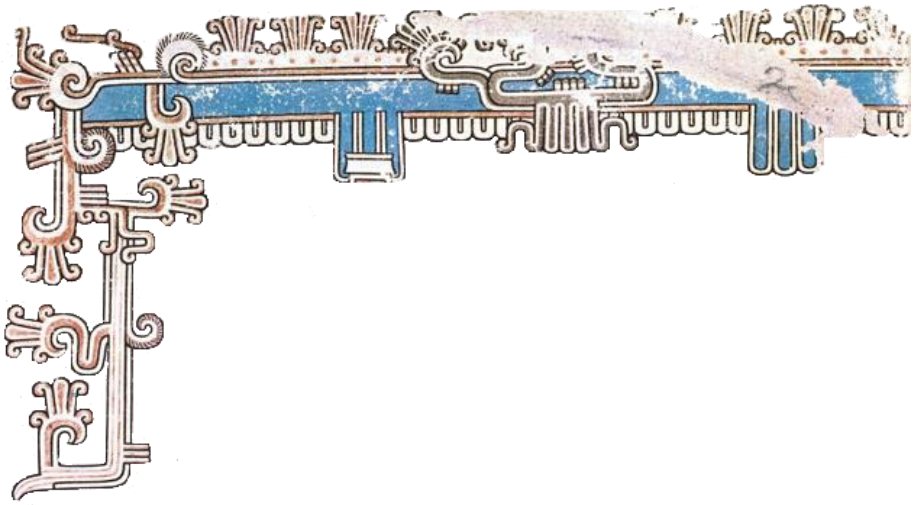

Figure 11: The band along the upper edge of page 23 of the Codex Laud, with the 'descending clouds' on the left (taken from the digitized ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25).

Figure 12: Zapotec relief. The sky maw is clearly visible at the top centre of the image (taken from the digital database of the American Museum of Natural History at http://anthro.amnh.org/central).

Figure 13: 'Descending clouds' in the Mexican mountains (photo by courtesy of Dr. A. Rojas).

5. Iconographical analysis of page 23 of the Codex Laud

After examining the page in the most basic manner possible, and creating a pre-iconographical description of the page as a basis for further interpretation, it is now time to turn to the next stage of Panofsky's method: the iconographical analysis. As discussed in chapter 3.3, this analysis will deal with what Panofsky named the secondary or conventional subject matter of the image. This secondary or conventional subject matter exists of the underlying themes and concepts expressed by the various elements depicted in the work of art (Panofsky 1939, 6-7).

While the creation of a primary, pre-iconographical description relies on practical experience combined with a basic knowledge of the depiction conventions, the analysis of the secondary subject matter requires a certain familiarity with concepts and themes as they are transmitted by the creators of the artwork (Panofsky 1939, 6-7, 11-14). This means that the researcher must be aware of the most common cultural conventions, not only in the manner of depiction, but also in the way that the various elements in the depiction express specific themes and concepts. If the separate elements are not identified correctly in the basic, pre-iconographical stage, the iconographical analysis of those elements cannot be correct either. Careful literary and ethnographical research is necessary in order to familiarize oneself with these conventions as to avoid making mistakes in the analysis (Panofsky 1939, 11-14).

In the previous chapter, I have already attempted to advance towards the conventions in order to facilitate the interpretation presented in this chapter. In this iconographical analysis, I will adhere to the same order that I used in the pre-iconographical analysis presented in the previous chapter, in order to avoid confusion.

5.1 The sea

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the band on the bottom edge of the image represents the sea. The two small aquatic animals (molluscs) depicted in this band embellish and confirm the watery setting (Arnold 2001, 42-43; Boone 2007, 52-53).

The jewelled crocodile is the Precious *Cipactli* (meaning 'crocodile' or 'caiman' in Nahuatl), also known as the 'Earth Creature'. In Mesoamerican belief, the *Cipactli* was a primordial crocodile, living in the ocean. It was the body of this crocodile that had been transformed into the earth (Boone 2007, 14). Thus, the earth was considered to be, quite literally, a crocodile floating on the sea (Miller and Taube 2003, 83-84). This belief is quite logical if one considers the geographical realities of Central Mexico. From the highest mountains in the region, one is able to see the sea on both sides of the land (the Gulf of Mexico to the north-east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west). From this view, the mountainous land in between the seas resembles the ridged back of the crocodile (fig. 14; personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas).

As the earth was considered to be a crocodile floating on the sea, it was thought that the sea ran underneath the earth as well as around it. This idea was reinforced by the existence of (underground) springs and lakes, which were seen as examples of water coming from under the earth (Arnold 2001, 145-146). This kind of water source was perhaps also considered the blood of the 'Earth Creature', as blood and water are both fluids and thus were considered related (Arnold 2001, 147, 239). This could be seen as confirmation that the earth was a living being.

With these connotations in mind, it seems that the presence of the Precious *Cipactli* in the sea is a reference to the Mesoamerican conception of the earth as a living creature. It shows the intricate connection between earth and sea, and connects the sea band on the bottom with the middle band representing the earth. The sea band as a whole serves as an indicator of setting, reflecting the sea that lies underneath the earth.

Figure 14: The Mexican mountains resembling the ridged back of a crocodile (photo by courtesy of Dr. A. Rojas).

5.2 The earth

In the previous chapter, it has been established that the middle band represents the earth. The earth was the realm in which humans lived, and was associated with water, sky, fertility, life, and death. It was believed to be a crocodile floating on the sea (see chapter 5.1). The Aztecs also associated the earth with Tlaloc; the land around the Valley of Mexico was understood as the body of Tlaloc (Arnold 2001, 130, 136).

The earth band is positioned above the sea, corresponding to the belief of the earth as a crocodile floating on the sea, and reflecting the idea that the earth was a dimension above the water. However, it is clear that this earth is not an isolated realm, and is connected to both the sea below and the sky above. The Precious *Cipactli* in the bottom band ties the sea and the earth together (see chapter 5.1). This connection is reinforced by the positioning of the maize stalk on the right, which has its roots in the sea, but grows into the earthly realm, and the frog/toad on the left, as it pours the water from the earthly realm towards the sea

(see chapter 5.2.3). At the same time, the descending clouds on the left create a connection between sky and earth.

Aside from showing these associations, the earth band also functions as part of the setting (Boone 2007, 54-55). The maize stalk represents the plants on the earth, while the connection to the sea indicates the presence of water in the earthly realm. This creates a green and watery setting, reminiscent of Tlalocan, the realm of Tlaloc (see chapter 5.2.1). The central place of this band, as well as the presence of the image's main character within it, identifies this band as the location where the depicted events take place.

5.2.1 The Tlaloc impersonator

In chapter 4.3.1, the central figure of the middle band has been identified as a priest impersonating Tlaloc. However, even though he is an impostor, this impersonator of Tlaloc is visually tied to Tlaloc himself. At first glance, he *is* Tlaloc, which means that he also carries the associations connected to Tlaloc along with the connotations that come with his impersonation of this god. Before we can correctly interpret this figure, we must understand the god Tlaloc. Thus, for a correct interpretation of this page, it is necessary to conduct an investigation into this god and his functions, his appearance and attributes, his origins, and his symbolism. In the following sections, I will explore mainly the Aztec idea of Tlaloc (see also chapter 1).

Tlaloc, god of rain

Tlaloc was one of the two principal gods of the Aztec pantheon; Huitzilopochtli was the other (Boone 2007, 48; Winfield 2014, 2). Tlaloc was a complex god. He was a god of rain and fertility, but he was also associated with earth, mountains, caves, clouds, storms, thunder, lightning, hail, life, death, and water in general (Arnold, 39, 42-43; Boone 2007, 42; López-Austin 1994, 176; Staller and Stross 2013, 136).

Tlaloc was the overseer and provider of sustenance, and controlled the landscape of interactions between the various beings in ancient Mexico, both supernatural and natural, with his ubiquitous presence (Arnold 2001, 33; López-

Austin 1994, 176). Often, he was helped in his numerous tasks by the Tlaloque, spirits associated with water, the weather, the four cardinal directions, and maize (Arnold 2001, 46-47, 54; López-Austin 1994, 178-180). The presence of Tlaloc and the Tlaloque was announced by clouds gathering around the mountaintops. Especially those around Mount Tlaloc, the mountain that was considered Tlaloc's realm and home, as well as the source of all water, were associated with this god. Even today, the connection between Mount Tlaloc and water spirits continues to exist (Fernández 2010, 530-532).

Tlaloc was associated with the calendar and time in various ways. He appeared as one of the day signs, Rain (see also chapter 5.2.2), and was the supernatural patron of the day sign Deer (Boone 2007, 42, 47). He was the lord of the *trecena* Rain, the seventh *trecena* (Boone 2007, 42; see also chapter 5.2.2). He was the ninth of the nine Lords of the Night, the deities ruling over the nights (Boone 2007, 44-45). He was the eighth of the thirteen Lords of the Day, the deities ruling over the days. He was a patron of the number 8, and the Eagle was his Volatile, or bird companion (Boone 2007, 45-46).

Tlaloc was the ruler of the eighth heaven, a lush green and watery realm named Tlalocan, which was believed to be accessible through caves, bodies of water, and on the tops of high mountains surrounded by clouds. This was the place where victims of death associated with water would spend their afterlife after they were buried in the earth – the dead claimed by Tlaloc were never cremated, in order to secure their travel to the correct afterlife (Arnold 2001, 37-38, 46-47, 140, 145; López-Austin 1994, 182-186; Matos 1988, 163).

Appearance and attributes of Tlaloc

In Central Mexican imagery, Tlaloc is recognizable by his own set of facial features and attributes. Appearing in all sorts of art, such as sculpture, murals, and the codices, Tlaloc is generally depicted as a young man with black face and body paint, goggle-like rings around his half-closed eyes, and long, sharp fangs protruding from under a curved upper lip with a curl extending under the nose (Arnold 2001, 38, 42-43; Boone 2007, 42; Heyden 1983; Klein 1980, 162-163;

Staller and Stross 2013, 125-126). In some images, the nose and eyebrows are formed by two intertwining serpents (Arnold 2001, 38; Klein 1980, 163).

In full-body representations of Tlaloc, the god's costume is coloured either blue or green with red accents, or red with green accents. The clothes are lavish, decorated with pieces of rubber spattered paper and precious stones such as jade and bluestone (Boone 2007, 42; Staller and Stross 2013, 188). Often, Tlaloc is holding attributes, ranging from general ritual implements and offerings to symbols attuned to the god specifically, such as his feathered axe and his serpent staff (Boone 2007, 56-61; Staller and Stross 2013, 164, 174).

Most elements in the depiction of Tlaloc are symbols for water, earth, thunder, and lightning. The goggle-like rings around his eyes are associated with water in springs and caves. The serpent nose and the serpent staff (often referred to as the Lightning Serpent) are symbols of water and lightning, while the feathered axe is a symbol for thunder. His sharp fangs connect him to other creatures with sharp fangs, such as serpents, jaguars, and crocodiles. The serpent and the crocodile are both associated with the earth (see chapters 5.1 and 5.2.2); the jaguar is a symbol of warriors and is associated with the sound of thunder (Boone 2007, 62; Saunders 1994, 112-113; Staller and Stross 2013, 163-168). His half-closed eyes show a connection to the sky (Heyden 1983).

In many cases, especially in the codices and murals, the figure of Tlaloc is surrounded by a scene of water and plants. The focus on water in these scenes is often accentuated by the depiction of a cloudy sky signalling rain, and the presence of small water creatures such as fish, turtles, and molluscs, which serve to qualify and embellish the watery setting (Arnold 2001, 42-43; Boone 2007, 52-53, 55).

The origins of Tlaloc

Tlaloc is a god with a long history. He has his ultimate origins in the Olmec period (1500-300 BCE). In this period, a figure depicted as a combination of a human and a predatory animal with exaggerated mouth and teeth appeared in sculpture and murals (Arnold 2001, 39). Olmecists often refer to this figure as the

were-jaguar, a supernatural being associated with earth, caves, and the underworld. It is unlikely that this figure was named Tlaloc and functioned as the Postclassic Tlaloc at that point in time (Klein 1980, 196); however, the mouth of this figure bears a clear resemblance to the mouth of the later Tlaloc (compare fig. 15 and fig. 16).

In Teotihuacan in the third century CE, a deity looking more like the Postclassic Tlaloc, complete with rings around his eyes, fangs, and a curved mouth, appeared in the elaborate murals at this city (Arnold 2001, 42-43; Pasztory 1988, 290). Teotihuacan seems to have had particular associations with Tlaloc; images of this god were found throughout the city. Furthermore, the entire city was planned around an extensive system of waterworks, and the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon were likely perceived as representations of the mythical mountains of water and sustenance, showing a connection to water and agriculture (Arnold 2001, 40-45).

Between 200 and 1521 CE, the concept and the image of this god spread throughout Mesoamerica. A god of rain and fertility was present in the imagery of various different peoples and cultures, under various names, but with similar features and attributes: the Mayan Chac, the Zapotec Cocijo, the Mixtec Dzahui, the Totonac Tajin, and the Nahua Tlaloc (see fig. 17; Arnold 2001, 46; Boone 2007, 238). Although indigenous religion was slowly replaced by the Spanish Catholic faith after the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521, Tlaloc is still present among present-day Nahua people. He often takes the form of ‘rain saints’ – Catholic saints with the task of providing rain – while the Tlaloque sometimes appear as *ahuaques* (Arnold 2001, 33-34; Fernández 2010, 522; Juárez 2009; Pasztory 1988, 289-291; Villela Flores 2009).

Figure 15: The Olmec were-jaguar (Taube 2009, 26 (fig. 1)).

Figure 16: The Postclassic Tlaloc (photo from http://www.mna.inah.gob.mx/coleccion/pieza-181/ficha-basica.html)

Figure 17: The various other Mesoamerican rain gods. From left to right: Mayan Chac (Madrid Codex, page 4), Zapotec Cocijo (Urcid 2009, 30 (fig. 1)), Mixtec Dzahui (Contel 2009, 21 (fig. 2)), Totonac Tajin (Ladrón de Guevara 2009, 45).

The symbolism of Tlaloc among the Aztecs

Although Tlaloc was mainly a god of water/rain and has often been described as such (see for example Anders *et al.* 1994, 74; Boone 2007, 42; Heyden 1975; Miller and Taube 2003, 166-167; Staller and Stross 2013, 125-126), the name Tlaloc itself indicates a variety of other associations as well, as has been attested by etymological studies into the name. Arnold (2001, 35-39) explores this etymology in detail, and his analysis will serve as the basis for a brief discussion of the etymology of the name Tlaloc here. According to Arnold, Diego Durán suggested that the name Tlaloc means 'path under the earth', derived from *tlalli* ('earth') and *ohtli* ('road'), while de Sahagún stated that the name Tlamacazqui ('the provider') was often added to Tlaloc's name (Arnold 2001, 35). According to López-Austin (1994, 176), de Sahagún also assigned the name Xoxouhqui ('the green one') to Tlaloc. Both of these names would indicate that the god was a divine provider of everything that is necessary for life and was related to the growth of various plants (Arnold 2001, 35; López-Austin 1994, 176).

Arnold continues his analysis with the claims of de Torquemada that the name Tlaloc came from Tlalocatecuhtli, meaning 'Lord of Paradise'. This would refer to Tlaloc's position as ruler of Tlalocan, again pointing to his relation with growing plants and water (Arnold 2001, 35-36). Then Arnold moves on to Seler, according to whom the name Tlaloc is related to the verb *tlaloa* in the meaning 'to sprout', which yet again would relate to the growth aspect of the god (Arnold 2001, 36). The final section of Arnold's analysis is focused on Sullivan (1974), who suggested that Tlaloc comes from the word *tlallo*, meaning 'full of earth, made of earth'. The plural of this word is *tlaloque*, which is also the name for the multiple rain gods associated with Tlaloc. Tlaloc would then be an eroded form of *tlalloqui*, meaning 'he who is made of earth' (Arnold 2001, 35-38; Sullivan 1974).

These etymologies show that Tlaloc was closely associated with water, earth, plants, and animals, indicating a direct connection between the god and agricultural life. Tlaloc was seen as an embodiment of growth and life (Arnold 2001, 37-38). However, it was also thought that in order to create and sustain this life, other life must be destroyed as living beings feed on other living beings,

automatically connecting the god to death and sacrifice. Tlaloc seems to have been at the centre of a consumptive cosmos, where reciprocity between life and death was a necessity to sustain all life (Arnold 2001, 38-39, 234-236).

As a male aspect of earth, the Aztec Tlaloc was also intricately connected to the landscape, especially of the Valley of Mexico and the surrounding mountains (Arnold 2001, 33, 52, 130, 136, López-Austin 1994, 181). The mountains themselves were considered to be filled with water, and thus were points of access to Tlalocan, either through caves or on the tops of these mountains (Arnold 2001, 146). The clouds surrounding the mountaintops announced the presence of the god himself. In Aztec thought, Tlaloc was often accompanied by the Tlaloque. The Tlaloque were also associated with the landscape and the world – they were the pillars that held up the sky in the far corners of the universe, and would send rain from outside the confines of the earth (Arnold 2001, 54; López-Austin 1994, 178-179; Klein 1980, 176-177). The signs of their presence were aspects of the weather, such as lightning, hail, thunder, snow, and wind (Arnold 2001, 46-47).

Tlaloc was linked to other deities associated with water and agricultural success (Arnold 2001, 48). The most important of these was Chalchihuitlicue (‘she with skirt of precious greenstone’), who was said to be Tlaloc’s wife and sister of the Tlaloque. She was the goddess of terrestrial water: springs, rivers, and lakes were associated with her (Arnold 2001, 48; López-Austin 1994, 178). Her name is thought to have referred to the forests on the mountainsides, again connecting water to plants (Arnold 2001, 70 n. 55). Other gods that were associated directly with Tlaloc were Uixtocihuatl, a goddess of salt water; Chicomecoatl, a maize goddess; the three goddesses that symbolize the maturation process of maize: Xilonen (‘image of ear of green maize’), Cinteotl (‘maize goddess’), and Ilamateuctli (‘noble old woman’); various gods of pulque, the sacred drink made from sap of the maguey plant; and Mayahuel, the goddess of maguey and symbol of absolute fertility (Arnold 2001, 48).

As briefly mentioned above, Tlaloc was also associated with death (López-Austin 1994, 180). Water was considered to have a dual nature; it had a

side that promoted fertility and growth, and another side that was violent and dangerous (Arnold 2001, 145-146). This violent side of the water was associated with certain illnesses, and could easily cause violent, watery deaths. People who fell victim to this side of the water, for example through drowning, were buried in the earth as a tribute to Tlaloc, who was thought to have claimed their lives. Death associated with Tlaloc could also be delivered by a lightning strike, which was considered to be Tlaloc's weapon of choice (Arnold 2001, 140).

Considering all of these associations, it seems that Tlaloc was a god of dualities (López-Austin 1994, 177-178). He was a god of water and earth, life and death, rain and drought, fertility and infertility, and so on. While this may seem confusing, it makes perfect sense within the Aztec cosmology, which was highly dual in nature. Every power or natural occurrence had its counterpart to ensure balance within the cosmos (Arnold 2001, 59).

Being so closely connected to water, agriculture, the circle of life, and the landscape, Tlaloc was an important god for the Aztecs. Their capital city, Tenochtitlan, was built entirely on an island in Lake Texcoco, and was constantly in danger of flooding due to changing water levels in the lake. This danger prompted the construction of an extensive water-managing system (see Staedtler and Hernández (2006) for a discussion of the water management systems in the postclassic Valley of Mexico). At the same time, it caused an intensive worship of Tlaloc as god of water in order to prevent any problems, turning him into one of the Aztecs' most important gods.

This importance was articulated in various manners. The presence of a shrine dedicated to Tlaloc in the Templo Mayor at Tenochtitlan was the most obvious one; this shrine underlined the importance of Tlaloc and placed him at the same level of importance as the god Huitzilopochtli (Arnold 2001, 239). This had a political advantage as well. As a god indigenous to the region around the Valley of Mexico, Tlaloc and his cult were extremely suitable for the Aztecs to use as legitimation of their occupation and rule of the Valley of Mexico and the surrounding areas (Arnold 2001, 46). By incorporating this god into Aztec religion and giving him a place of extreme importance next to their main god

Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec people were able to gain a claim over the land, based on a fabricated relationship with past civilizations in the region (Arnold 2001, 239; Klein 1980, 197). Through their worship of Tlaloc, along with strategic marriage alliances with other peoples living nearby, the Aztecs connected themselves to the previous rulers of the region, the Toltecs, and so established legitimacy to their usurpation of the rule over the Valley of Mexico (Pasztory 1988).

A large sanctuary dedicated specifically to Tlaloc was built on top of Mount Tlaloc. This sanctuary stood in alignment with other ceremonial centres in the valleys of Mexico and Puebla, and was used in many large rituals in honour of Tlaloc (Arnold 2001, 78-117). The remnants of many smaller shrines dedicated to Tlaloc in caves and on other mountaintops indicate the worship of this god throughout the region (Heyden 1975; Iwaniszewski 1994; Rickards 1929). There is also abundant evidence for offerings associated with water and sustenance (including human sacrifice) in these contexts, further emphasizing the importance of this god (Arnold 2001, 49-51, 92; López Luján 1994).

The amount of rituals in which Tlaloc played a more or less central role is a final indication of the importance of this god. Rain deities, and thus also Tlaloc, were associated with over half of the festivals of the agricultural year (the 360 day year, see chapter 5.2.2 for a discussion of the Central Mexican calendars). Many of these festivals were directly related to one another. They can be divided into roughly three groups: those concerned with agricultural success and rainfall, which featured human (child) sacrifice; those concerned with the promotion of the growth of maize through the sacrifice of impersonators of the Tlaloque; and those concerned with alleviating disease and lessening violent storms in order to reduce deaths associated with Tlaloc (Arnold 2001, 117-118). Central elements of these rituals were grand processions, human sacrifice and other offerings, large feasts, the drinking of pulque, and the abundant use of paper (often splattered with rubber), green feathers, and green stones, all of which were related to Tlaloc as symbols of and payments for water, fertility and prosperity (see Arnold 2001, 78-117, Graulich 1992, Millbrath 2013, 18-36, Seler 1990, 45-48 for overviews and in-depth discussions of these rituals).

Tlaloc on page 23 of the Codex Laud

Having discussed the god Tlaloc in detail, we can now return to the image on page 23 of the Codex Laud. Immediately, many elements in this image of (the impersonator of) Tlaloc and his surroundings fall into place when we consider the functions, symbolism, and depiction conventions associated with Tlaloc. Some of these elements will be discussed in separate sections below; in this section, I will focus on the figure of Tlaloc and his attributes.

From the description of the depiction conventions of this god, the identification of the central figure as Tlaloc seems to be confirmed beyond any semblance of a doubt. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this figure is not Tlaloc himself – instead, it is a priest who is impersonating Tlaloc. This creates two layers of interpretation for this figure: 1) a superficial level concerning the divine aspect, meaning Tlaloc and his associations; and 2) a deeper level concerning the human aspect, meaning the priest impersonating Tlaloc and his actions.

At first glance, and thus on the first level, this figure is Tlaloc in close connection to his functions as god of rain, water, earth, storms, and fertility. This notion is confirmed by the watery setting of the page, the dominance of the colour blue on the figure, and the attributes pertaining to Tlaloc, most of which are in some manner related to water or earth. As previously mentioned, the ring around the eye shows a connection to springs; the half-closed eye is associated with the sky and thus connects the figure with celestial water: clouds and rain (Arnold 2001, 37-38; Heyden 1983; López-Austin 1994, 178). His teeth are associated both with the jaguar and the ‘Earth Creature’, connecting him to earth and thunder. The ear spool is likely made of bluestone, which was associated with water, thunder, and lightning in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (Staller and Stross 2013, 173-176). The forked tongue is reminiscent of the tongue of a serpent, which is another symbol of lightning, as well as earth. His rich, blue costume stands for wealth and water, indicatingf fertility. The paper decorations on his arms and legs are symbols for water and growth, as water plays a role in the process for making paper from wood (Arnold 2001, 157; for a full discussion of Aztec papermaking

see Hagen 1944). The rubber spattered on the paper and the clothes of the figure is the sap of the rubber tree, and was so associated with water and plants (Arnold 2001, 159). Rubber was also a favoured offering to the rain god, as it produced a thick, cloud-like smoke when burnt (Miller and Taube 2003, 144).

Tlaloc also makes sound. It is unclear whether this sound is ritual speech or general sounds associated with storms. The white curls indicating this sound are connected to the sky and the day sign jaguar. This supports the idea that the sound he is making is at least connected to the sound of thunder, and could well indicate that the sound of his voice is like thunder (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257).

The feathered axe and the serpent staff in his hands also point to a connection to water and storms, and symbolize both the growth and destruction caused by them. These two attributes are the weapons of Tlaloc, and stand for thunder and lightning respectively. The stone axe was a symbol for the sound of thunder (Staller and Stross 2013, 173-176). This is further emphasized by the white curls attached to the axe, indicating that the axe is making sound (see chapter 4.3.1). Additionally, the blue colour of the axe associates it with water, while the quetzal bird on the axe was an indicator of wealth and fertility.

The serpent was identified with lightning because of its long, undulating body. It was seen as a servant and weapon of the god of rain and lightning, renowned for its destructive force. This symbolism is evident in this image. The snake is long and undulating, and is held by Tlaloc, emphasizing both its association with lightning and its status as servant and weapon of Tlaloc (López-Austin 1994, 197-201; Staller and Stross 2013, 163-168). Additionally, this serpent staff is feathered, which may hold a reference to the god Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, who was associated with maize and priests (Boone 2007, 40-41). This seems to foreshadow the second, deeper layer of meaning.

When we pay closer attention to the image, we find that the first layer is a mask, which melts away under scrutiny. While the figure's face seems to be the face of Tlaloc, the white square next to his eye and the presence of the beard underneath the fangs betray his true identity. He is not the god Tlaloc, but rather an older, mortal man, who is impersonating Tlaloc. Although the black face paint

may be counted among Tlaloc's attributes, it is also an indication of the man's status as a priest (Boone 2007, 40). Another sign that this figure is a human impersonator rather than the god himself is the blue body paint. The usual body paint of Tlaloc is coloured black, not blue (Boone 2007, 42). The blue paint also does not cover the entire body, as the hands and feet seem to be unpainted, and the face is covered in black paint. This may well confirm the notion that the figure is not the god himself, but rather someone dressed like him.

There are further elements on the costume of the figure that do not belong to Tlaloc, and as such, express this figure's status as an impersonator. He is wearing several elements belonging to the costume of a warrior. These elements are the jaguar part of his headdress (which is actually a jaguar helmet), the loincloth, and the *tezcacuitlapilli* on his lower back. The jaguar helmet was associated with physical strength and authority. As the most dangerous land predator in the Mesoamerican world, the jaguar was used to signal both danger and power. It was often depicted in the form of a helmet or a skin worn by a figure of authority, such as members of the elite, warriors, and various gods (Boone 2007, 62; Saunders 1994, 112-113). However, the jaguar is also associated with thunder, mainly because of the loud sound of its roar (Staller and Stross 2013, 163-168).

In this image, the jaguar helmet has an earring of its own, in the shape of a sun ray. The sun ray is a reference to the sun, and connects the sun with the jaguar. The jaguar was a creature that was associated with the sun throughout Mesoamerica. In the Aztec creation myth of the Five Suns, the first sun was called the Jaguar Sun, which ruled over a world that was eventually destroyed by primordial jaguars (Miller and Taube 2003, 70, 88); the animal jaguar in its current form was thought to be born out of the solar pyre during the creation of the fifth and current sun (Miller and Taube 2003, 158). The sun ray earring on the jaguar is reminiscent of these myths, and surely the reader of this page would make these connections as well.

The *tezcacuitlapilli* appears in attires of warriors throughout Mesoamerica, and may be considered the sign of a warrior's identity. It has many associations,

not the least of which are with water and the sun, and it is considered to be part of the gear of a warrior (Taube 1992, 172-177, 180-198). Alone, this element would already be a strong indicator of the status of this figure as warrior; in combination with the jaguar helmet expressing physical strength and the loincloth, the *tezcacuitlapilli* leaves little doubt that this figure should be considered a warrior as well as a priest.

There are also indications that this figure is considered to be 'precious'. The jewels painted on his body are the main elements signalling the preciousness of the figure. The notion is reinforced by the appearance of the quetzal head and feathers on the headdress. Aside from preciousness, the quetzal elements and the jewels also indicate associations with beauty, wealth, and fertility (Boone 2007, 35). Both wealth and preciousness were associated with high status, suggesting that this figure is part of the elite – possibly an elder priest with a history as a warrior – or perhaps he is a warrior about to be sacrificed, as sacrifices were often granted high status once they had been chosen and properly attired (see Arnold 2001, 83-84 for an example of this practice). As the figure has an obvious beard, indicating that he is an older man, it is more likely that he is an elder priest than a warrior sacrifice.

As has been noted in the previous chapter, the figure is not simply standing there; he is moving forward, brandishing the weapons of Tlaloc, and making some sort of sound that is aimed towards the sky. It seems that this figure is engaged in some sort of ritual, probably designed to make rain. Instead of simply walking, the figure might be dancing, waving his attributes in ritual patterns to ensure rain. The sound coming from his mouth would then be ritual speech, as he prays to the sky to give rain. This is reinforced by the clouds coming down from the sky on the left of the image, showing the success of the ritual. This further supports the notion that he should be interpreted as a priest rather than a sacrifice – however, it was not unheard of that sacrifices would perform additional rites before they were sacrificed (see Arnold 2001, 105-106 for a description of such rites).

From this analysis of this figure, we may conclude that the preliminary identification of this figure as a priest impersonating Tlaloc is correct. Through his impersonation, the figure reflects the duality of the world. He is part of both the divine and human worlds: he is a human performing a ritual to ensure rain, and he is Tlaloc, the giver of the rain. At the same time, the figure expresses the themes of water, earth, life, death, fertility, growth, and wealth. All of these elements in turn point back to the dualities of Tlaloc (see above), and thus the duality of the world. As we will see, this interpretation is supported by the other elements on the page.

5.2.2 The twenty day signs

In the previous chapter, the twenty elements surrounding Tlaloc have been identified as the twenty day signs of the *tonalpohualli*. A correct interpretation of their presence and positioning on the page cannot be made without first investigating the Mesoamerican calendar that these day signs are a part of. After all, one cannot fully understand the meaning of these signs without understanding the context in which they were used. Otherwise, they would just be a collection of animal heads, a building, plants, and some abstract signs. Thus, before continuing the interpretation of our page of the Codex Laud, we must now turn to a brief description of the context these signs originate from: the Mesoamerican understanding of time, which manifests itself in a complex calendrical system.

The Mesoamerican calendar[9]

In precolonial Mesoamerica, time was extremely important. Time governed and ordered actions, events, space, and beings, whether these were natural or supernatural, historical or mythical. Through links with multiple overlapping and repeating cycles of days, months, and years, everyone and everything was given a place, and thus meaning (Boone 2007, 13). All temporal units had multiple associations with the natural and the supernatural, with colours, regions of the

[9] For extensive discussions of the Mesoamerican calendar and the conceptions of time in Central Mexico, see, among others: Boone 2007; Hassig 2001; Seler 1990.

cosmos, and implicit truths. The actions, events, space, and beings connected to time added extra meaning to the temporal units they were linked to. The gods, while being governed by time, were at the same time the forces that governed time, and influenced the units under their control (Boone 2007, 13). Time even played a role in Mesoamerican cosmogonies, in which its importance was marked by its early creation or birth, and its role in the creation of the rest of the world. In this manner, time connected all aspects of cultural and natural life, and played a central role in the human understanding of the world (Boone 2007, 2, 13-14).

Time was organized into various different cycles that were interconnected and at work at the same time. The fundamental unit of time was the count of twenty days. The number twenty was associated with the human body, signifying the total count of fingers and toes, and was considered the principal unit of counting in Mesoamerica. One unit of twenty was called *cempohualli*, or 'one count' in Nahuatl, and formed the numerical base of counting systems throughout the region (Boone 2007, 14-15). Other, secondary units were those of five and one, as articulated in the bar and dot counting system, in which a bar represents the unit of five, and the dot the unit of one (fig. 18). While the bar and dot system was used in the calendrical counts in the Maya region, this count did not appear in the context of the calendar in Central Mexico. Instead, each day within the unit of twenty had its own sign associated with it, which gave it a name and correlating meaning (fig. 20; Boone 2007, 15, 35-38; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 22-25). Additional meaning for each day was created by its connection to various supernatural forces, such as the thirteen Lords of the Day and their Volatiles, the nine Lords of the Night, the Patrons of the Day Signs, and the lords of the (half-) *trecenas* (Boone 2007, 66-80; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 27).

This twenty-day count was closely related to another count. This count consisted of thirteen days, each expressed by a number between one and thirteen, and ran concurrently with the count of the twenty day signs (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 26). Although it is unclear where the origins of this count lie, it

Figure 18: Example of the bar and dot counting system. As each bar represents 5 and each dot 1, the number depicted here is 18.

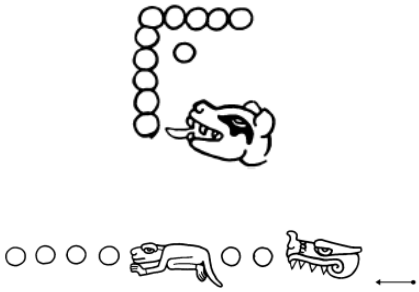

Figure 19: Above: day number and day sign for 11 Dog from the Codex Borbonicus. Below: spacers separating day signs from the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer (after Boone 2007, 39 (fig. 14 and 15)).

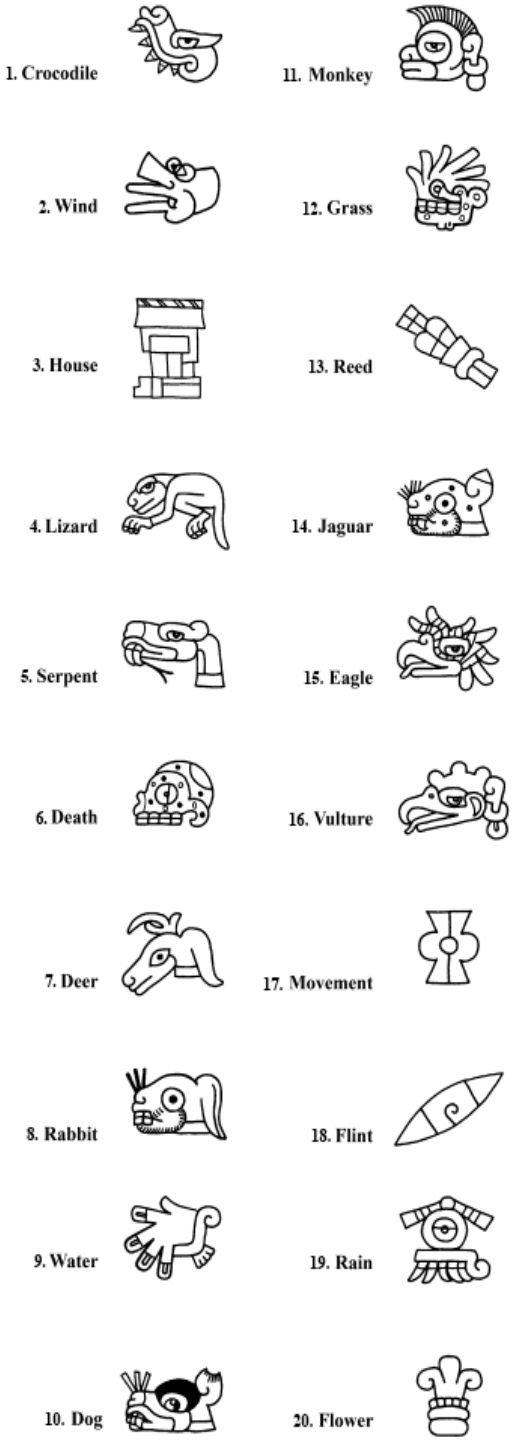

Figure 20: The twenty day signs of the tonalpohualli (after Boone 2007, 37 (fig. 12)).

seems to be conceptually related to the Mesoamerican belief in a heaven consisting of thirteen layers (Boone 2007, 15). The thirteen numbers of this count functioned as cardinal numbers, not as a representation of quantity; they reflected the order of the twenty day signs, and their position within the cycle of thirteen. In Central Mexico, these numbers were depicted as series of individual discs that were often strung together (as opposed to the bar and dot system used for non-calendrical counting; fig. 19; Boone 2007, 15). In the codices, however, discs in combination with the day signs are sometimes replacements of day signs, serving as spacers indicating the amount of days between two painted day signs. If this is the case, the discs were always painted separate from one another. As complete day names (that is, the day sign combined with the appropriate number) rarely feature in the divinatory codices, keeping them apart from historical time as much as possible, most discs depicted near day signs within these codices are spacers, not numbers (Boone 2007, 15, 36-39).

These counts of twenty and thirteen combined formed a larger cycle of 260 days called the *tonalpohualli*, Nahuatl for 'day count'. The length of this cycle was related to the duration of human pregnancy, from discovery to birth, and to various astronomical cycles and events (Boone 2007, 16-17; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 27). It was created by assigning both a day sign and a number to each day, which allowed for 260 uniquely named days (see also Boone 2007, 16, table 1). Within this 260-day count, there were various secondary cycles, creating groups of basic time units related to this count (for example, cycles of 26, 40, 52, or 65 days). These cycles and units carried divinatory meanings, resulting in an intricate calendar used for various purposes, including dating events, naming individuals, determining destinies, offering personal guidance, and giving general prognoses of the future based on the names of the days and the (super)natural forces associated with them (Boone 2007, 14-18).

The *tonalpohualli* was accompanied by yet another, but independent count of 365 days, the *xihuitl* or "year" in Nahuatl. This count served a function similar to our civil year, and was not part of the divinatory system. It was divided in eighteen periods of twenty days and one period of five days (*nemontemi*) at the

end of the year, and governed a series of festivals and feasts dedicated to various gods connected to the landscape and agricultural practices (for an overview of these festivals see Millbrath 2013, 18-36). The period of five days at the end of the year was considered to be an unlucky period, and therefore was a period of fasting and silence, without any feasts or rituals (Boone 2007, 17).

Each of these years was named after one of four days from the *tonalpohualli*, the so-called 'year-bearers': rabbit, reed, flint, and house. These 'year-bearers' were connected to the numbers 1 to 13, creating yet another cycle of 52 years. The length of this cycle is again associated with human life – 52 years was the average human life span. If a person was older than 52, thus having completed one entire 52-year cycle, they were considered old and wise. Subsequently, they were counted among the elders of society, granting them elevated status as advisors (Boone 2007, 14, 17; Millbrath 2013, 5-10, 18-36).

All these counts were similar throughout Central Mexico in both form and function, only differing in the names of the days according to the language spoken, and in the naming of the *xihuitl* years (Boone 2007, 17). Within the Codex Laud, only elements of the *tonalpohualli* are present, often appearing in the form of the day signs, with or without spacers to aid their count. These day signs are mostly part of various almanacs representing different *tonalpohualli* counts, associated with various gods and portents (see Boone 2007, 66-80 for a discussion on almanacs in the Borgia group codices).

The twenty day signs on page 23 of the Codex Laud

With this information on the calendar, we can now return to page 23 of the Codex Laud, where the twenty day signs of the *tonalpohualli* hold an important place. The appearance of these twenty day signs around the central depiction of (the impersonator of) Tlaloc creates a close connection between Tlaloc and time. As mentioned in chapter 4.3.2, the placement of the elements in the image functioned as its syntax and grammar, and thus must be considered in the places they hold within the image. At the same time, the twenty day signs cannot be separated from the *tonalpohualli* and the order in which they appear within this calendar. Thus,

for a correct interpretation, these day signs must be considered, or 'read', in the order of the *tonalpohualli*, and with the associations made by their spatial arrangement on the page. Because the individual meanings of the day signs are always multiple and have not been documented fully, the interpretations presented here are achieved through combining the existing knowledge with logical reasoning. As a result, these interpretations are highly speculative.

Five signs are more or less directly attached to the body of Tlaloc or his clothing. Crocodile (1) and Death (6) are tied to his feet; House (3) is attached to the sky and to the sound volutes coming from his mouth; Jaguar (14) is situated between the sound volutes and Tlaloc's tongue; and Rain (19) is fastened onto the reed cane on top of his headdress.[10] Through these connections, the qualities of these day signs are transferred to these parts of Tlaloc, which in turn seem to function as a reinforcement of the meaning of the day signs.

The signs for Crocodile and Death, both of which are closely connected to the earth, are connected to his feet. The crocodile was considered to represent the earth and is associated with fertility and determination (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257; Seler 1990, 119-120, 123). Deaths associated with Tlaloc always resulted in burials of the dead in the earth, which was deemed as a fertilization of the earth (Arnold 2001, 140). Thus, Tlaloc's feet here are intricately connected to the earth he is treading, leaving fertile soil in his wake. Furthermore, as the first sign of the calendar, Crocodile was also associated with beginnings, while Death symbolized endings (personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas). These associations are reinforced by their connection to the foot in front and the foot behind respectively. As Tlaloc is stepping forward, not only in space but also in time, he ends one period and begins a new one.

The day sign House was the only sign that represents a human construction, and is a symbol of rest (Boone 2007, 36; Seler 1990, 122). Its connection to the sky as well as Tlaloc may refer to the rainy sky being the human understanding of Tlaloc's presence in the world. It may also refer to rituals to

[10] Nowotny 2005, 227 considers Rain to stand alone. I disagree – looking at the image, it is quite clear that Rain is connected to the reed element on the headdress.

Tlaloc that were held inside the house (personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas). This idea is reinforced by the sign's connection to Tlaloc's speech, which, as we have seen, may refer to ritual speech. House may also be associated with darkness through its Mixtec name (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 23) – perhaps it then refers to the darkness of the sky during a rainstorm. Or perhaps one might take this connection quite literally, and say that the rainy sky was the house of Tlaloc, and that his presence there can be ascertained by the presence of clouds as well as the sound of thunder, here produced by Tlaloc, symbolized by the connection with Jaguar (Anders *et al*. 1994, 257).

The day sign Jaguar was associated with warrior elites and thunder. Its connection with the tongue and the sound produced by Tlaloc seems to suggest that Tlaloc's sound (or speech) had the qualities of a jaguar's growl, loud and rumbling, which in turn connected it to the sound of thunder, or perhaps a warrior's cry (Boone 2007, 62; Seler 1990, 128-129; Staller and Stross 2013, 163-168).

The day sign Rain was related to rainfall and fertility, which are the main forces governed by Tlaloc. It is attached to the reed on the headdress, referring to the ritual reed canes used in rituals to Tlaloc (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257). This connection to the headdress also indicates that this sign functions as the name of the figure. Simultaneously, Rain was the starting day of the seventh *trecena*, of which Tlaloc was the patron (Boone 2007, 42; Seler 1990, 133-134). These connections suggest that the day Rain (and especially the day 1 Rain) was considered to be a suitable time to perform rituals in honour of Tlaloc.

The other fifteen signs are arranged loosely around Tlaloc. However, despite the lack of direct connections between these signs and any other elements, their placement still affects these other elements, and thus the meaning of this page. Therefore, they should be understood in reference to their immediate surroundings in the image.

The sign for Wind (2), commonly associated with the blowing of the wind and with breathing, is depicted near Tlaloc's curled nose. This indicates that the wind in this case was understood as Tlaloc's breath, which was likely seen as a

life-giving element of Tlaloc (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257). After all, Tlaloc was a god of life and death, and it would not be a stretch to assume that his breath was associated with the breathing of all living beings, relating it to life itself (Arnold 2001, 39; Miller and Taube 2003, 186). Another connection between wind and Tlaloc was made through the association of wind with the Tlaloque, the assistants of Tlaloc (Arnold 2001, 46-47). Perhaps, then, the wind, or Tlaloc's breath, should be understood as a manifestation of the Tlaloque – as an aid for the god in his life-giving function. However, as the Tlaloque could also be understood as aspects of Tlaloc himself, this latter association does not preclude the first (López-Austin 178-180). In fact, both connections support and strengthen one another, making the association between wind and Tlaloc as a giver of life abundantly clear.

The sign for Lizard (4) is located near the sea, just below the lightning serpent's tail in front of Tlaloc. Lizards were associated with prosperity and sexuality, and thus with (aspects of) fertility and an abundance of water (Boone 2007, 80; Seler 1990, 122). Its position in front of the god may indicate that this lizard is a guide, leading the way as Tlaloc walks forth, towards a prosperous earth (Anders *et al*. 1994, 257). At the same time, its association with the lightning serpent may stand for the means through which the earth would become prosperous, i.e. Tlaloc's power in the form of rain- and thunderstorms, and serves as another confirmation of Tlaloc as a god of fertility. Of course, the lizard's association with the abundance of water could also be interpreted negatively, as an overabundance of water or floods, in which case the Lizard sign could be a guide in the shape of a warning.

The sign Serpent (5) is depicted underneath Tlaloc, in association with his legs, his loincloth, the space between his legs, and the sea. The sign is repeated in the form of the head of the lightning serpent in his hand. Snakes were often associated with fertility of the earth, death, and sexuality (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257; Boone 2007, 52). These three associations were interconnected by the figure of Tlaloc as a god of both (agricultural as well as human) fertility and death, and all three appear to be relevant for the Serpent sign in this particular image. Its

placement near the leg connected to the sign for Death through its foot indicates the association between Tlaloc, death, earth, and Serpent; its position between the legs and close to the loincloth could well refer to sexuality as the loincloth was designed to cover the genitals; and its position underneath Tlaloc indicates a connection with the earth. Thus, one can say that the Serpent here is another confirmation of Tlaloc's function as a god of fertility, and perhaps serves as an indication that the day Serpent was good for sowing.

The signs for Deer (7), Rabbit (8), Water (9), Dog (10), and Monkey (11), which form a sequence within the normal order of the *tonalpohualli*, are depicted behind Tlaloc, from just above the maize stalk (Deer) to just under the sky on the far right of the image (Dog and Monkey). All of these signs are oriented around the thunder axe (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257): two are painted below the axe in Tlaloc's left hand (Deer and Rabbit); the other three (Water, Dog and Monkey) are situated above this axe. Deer, as an animal of the forest, was associated with hunting, fertility, and growth (Benson 1997, 34-36; Seler 1990, 123). This connection is further emphasized by the proximity to the maize stalk on the bottom right and the paper ornament on Tlaloc's arm, which are both symbols for fertility as well.

While Tlaloc was considered the patron of the day Deer (Boone 2007, 42), this specific connection between the god and this day sign does not seem to play a direct role here. However, the association would have still been made within the mind of the indigenous interpreter upon seeing this sign. Rabbit, a burrowing animal living often between the roots of maguey plants, was associated with *pulque*, and thus was a symbol for fertility and wealth (Benson 1997, 42-44; Seler 1990, 123-124). Again, the closeness to the paper ornament on Tlaloc's arm serves to confirm this connection, which is further supported by the position of Rabbit near the feathers of the quetzal head on the axe. The sign Water was associated with rain and the rainy season, relating it to life and fertility, while at the same time being a symbol of sickness and death (Seler 1990, 124). Its placement in close relation to the thunder axe confirms its connection to rain. Dog, as a domesticated animal, was connected to the hunt and the elite, which is

confirmed by its spatial association with the feathers on Tlaloc's headdress. At the same time, it was associated with death – it was thought to transport the dead to the underworld, and was therefore often sacrificed and cremated with dead bodies (Benson 1997, 22-23, 59; Seler 1990, 124-126). Finally, Monkey was associated with artistic skill, cheerfulness, and elegance. However, as a wild animal of the forest, the monkey was also connected to the sky – confirmed by its proximity to the sky – wind, vegetation, and death (Benson 1997, 60-66; Seler 1990, 126).

If we compare the associations of these five signs to one another, it becomes obvious that these signs, and thus the days associated with them, are all somehow connected to life or death. The two signs depicted underneath the axe were associated with fertility, while the two of the signs painted above the axe were connected to death. The sign in the middle, the Water sign, was related to both life and death. Perhaps this means that the thunder axe should be seen as a deadly weapon wielded by Tlaloc to maintain the circle of life; in this scenario, the signs in the path of its blade would be dying and thus refer to death, while signs pointing to life could be found behind it, surfacing after it passed.

The sign for Grass (12) is positioned behind Tlaloc, almost attached on one side to the *tezcacuitlapilli* on his back, and on the other to the rubber spattered paper dangling from his arm. Grass, as a plant sign, was connected to growth and fertility; bluestone and rubber spattered paper were both closely related to water. Thus, the positioning of this sign seems to indicate a general relationship between Tlaloc, water, and fertility (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257; Staller and Stross 2013, 173-176). However, the sign Grass was also associated with difficulty or adversity (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2011, 24; Seler 1990, 126-127). Combined with the depicted relation to the paper and the bluestone as symbols for water, this perhaps refers to difficulties caused by water or the lack thereof, serving as a reminder of the power wielded by Tlaloc – it was in his power to create or prevent watery calamities as he desired. Perhaps the positioning of this sign behind Tlaloc could also indicate that the adversity connected to water had passed, would pass with the day Grass, or that the day Grass was the start of difficulties related to water as Tlaloc had his back to it.

The day sign Reed (13) is located in front of Tlaloc, beneath his right arm, and between the serpent staff held in his right hand and the paper ornament hanging from the arm. As another plant sign, Reed was associated with growth and fertility. As bodies of water were necessary for this plant to grow in, Reed was also connected with water. Reed canes were favoured objects in rituals dedicated to Tlaloc, illustrating their close relationship with the god (Arnold 2001, 154-159). Additionally, they were often decorated and used as staffs by priests, and functioned as shafts of spears used by warriors (Arnold 2001, 78-79, 105; Boone 2007, 58). These connections to priests and warriors suggest that Reed was associated with the elite, wealth, and physical strength. Perhaps this indicates that the day Reed was thought of as a good day for Tlaloc, with high chances of rainfall. Taking these associations into account, the placement of the Reed sign here may well express the strength of Tlaloc's arm, but also his power over water through the proximity of the paper, and the might of his thunderbolt symbolized by the serpent staff (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257; Staller and Stross 2013, 163-168).

The sign for Eagle (15) is situated above Tlaloc's head, close to the sky. It is depicted slightly towards the back of Tlaloc's head, but can still easily be read in association with it. This sign was connected to intellect as well as to warriors, and thus to (military) strength (Benson 1997, 79-80; Sharpe 2014, 11-13). Here, it probably refers to both of these aspects, presenting Tlaloc as a god with a strong intellect (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257; Seler 1990, 129-130). Additionally, the Eagle was the Volatile assigned to Tlaloc in his function as one of the Lords of the Day (Boone 2007, 46), which may help to explain its position over Tlaloc's head and in association with the sky, where an eagle in flight would be.

Just as the signs for Deer, Rabbit, Water, Dog, and Monkey are oriented around the thunder axe in Tlaloc's left hand, the signs for Vulture (16), Movement (17), and Flint (18) are arranged around the lightning serpent in Tlaloc's right hand (Anders *et al.* 1994, 257). The sign for Vulture was associated with warriors and old age, the latter of which was in turn associated with wisdom (Seler 1990, 130; Sharpe 2014, 13-14). Its placement between the sound produced by Tlaloc and the serpent's body seems to affirm both of these associations at once – the

lightning serpent was one of Tlaloc's weapons of choice, marking him as a warrior, while the closeness to Tlaloc's speech may well indicate that this speech was considered to be wise in nature.

The sign for Movement is placed between the undulating body of the serpent and the curl of sound produced by the animal on the far left. This sign was associated with movement, earthquakes, and duality (Seler 1990, 130-132). Its position near the lightning serpent emphasizes its undulating movement, as well as the duality of this serpent as symbol of thunder and lightning, as well as its function as a deadly weapon, able to transform the living into the dead. By attributing the quality of duality to Tlaloc's staff, we are once again reminded of Tlaloc's own dual nature as the governing force of life and death.

The sign for Flint or Knife was connected to drought, infertility, lightning, fire, war, and human sacrifice (Miller and Taube 2003, 88; Seler 1990, 133; Staller and Stross 2013, 174, 180). In Mesoamerican thought, flint tools and knives were created where lightning struck (Staller and Stross 174-176). This could have been a factor in placing the sign for Flint just above the head of the lightning serpent, and just under the sky, where the lightning would come from. The connections to war and human sacrifice directly connect this sign to death, and the association with drought and infertility implies a relationship with the rain (and thus the rain god) in the sense of its (and his) absence.

The sign for Flower (20) is depicted in a central position over Tlaloc's head, suggesting not only a connection to his headdress and his head, but also to the entire figure of Tlaloc. This sign was directly associated with beauty and elegance, and thus can be taken as referring to the beauty of Tlaloc himself, of his headdress, and, by proxy, also of his clothing. The decorations on his clothing and the jewels painted on his legs seem to support this idea. Various jewels are attached to the clothing, and his headdress features quetzal feathers, both of which are associated with beauty and wealth (Boone 2007, 35, 80; Seler 1990, 134; Sharpe 2014, 7-10).

From this extensive consideration of the day signs as they appear on page 23 of the Codex Laud, it seems that their primary function on this page is not to

count the days, but to designate Tlaloc as a Lord of Time (see Anders *et al.* 1994, 255-256 for a similar notion). The days are associated with various aspects of Tlaloc, and to connect Tlaloc to the meaning of each day sign. Their spatial arrangement shows these mutual connections and reinforces them, resulting in an image that tells us of the attributes of this rain god, and how he both influences the days and is influenced by them. As all twenty day signs appear on this page, they possibly reflect the entire *tonalpohualli*. This means that, together, they may well refer to pregnancy, and thus to fertility (Boone 2007, 15-17). The associations of these day signs with the body of Tlaloc and the landscape around him as described here may have offered augural information for births and destinies of children, agricultural predictions, or general predictions about the character of each day. Another purpose of the arrangement of the day signs around the body of Tlaloc may have been in order to offer information to cure illnesses (compare with the diagrams featuring Tezcatlipoca and the twenty day signs on Borgia 17 and Fejérváry-Mayer 4; Borgia 53 also shows similarities to these diagrams, but instead of showing the day signs in relation to a supernatural, it depicts them in relation to a deerskin). In any case, it would show the diviner what would be the appropriate associations for each day in relation to Tlaloc (Boone 2007, 30-31). Thus, in these day signs and their placement, we see an emphasis on water, rain, fertility, life, and death, as well as time and space. This supports and strengthens the interpretation of Tlaloc on this particular page as the agricultural Tlaloc of dualities, and designates him as a Lord of Time.

5.2.3 The maize and the frog

The final two elements depicted on the middle band, and thus belonging to the realm of earth, are the plant on the right and the animal on the left. In the previous chapter, the plant has been identified as a maize stalk; the animal is most likely a frog or a toad. Often, this sort of elements are considered to be simple embellishments or count them as indicators of the setting (Boone 2007, 52-53, 55). However, it would not do them justice. Both of these elements carry deep significance of their own, which is part of the correct interpretation of this page.

They are in no way simply decorative elements or just showing the setting – they are part of the story told in this image.

As the most important source of food in Mesoamerica, the maize stalk was the symbol of agriculture for most Mesoamerican people. Maize was associated with Tlaloc, as it was considered to be a creation and property of the Tlaloque. In their need for food in the far past, humans had stolen the maize from the Tlaloque for their own use, which was the origin of the ritual reciprocity between Tlaloc and humans (Arnold 2001, 47). Maize was further associated with water, earth, and fertility (Miller and Taube 2003, 108). These connections are visible in the placement of the maize stalk on the page, as it is connected both to the sea on the bottom and to the earth of the middle band, where it grows. The water is the life-giving force that makes its growing possible, while the earth is the soil upon which it grows. Its position behind Tlaloc could well refer to the idea that Tlaloc's powers cause the maize to grow, sprouting up on the land that he has passed over. Additionally, maize grains were used in divination (Boone 2007, 24-27). This could indicate that the maize is depicted not only for its close association with Tlaloc, but also for its mantic powers. Perhaps it is a tool for the Tlaloc impersonator to use in his rituals, or even a reference to the act of divination in progress while the page is being read.

The frog and the toad were connected to water, earth, rain, fertility, underworld, and Tlaloc (Benson 1997, 93-97). A frog's croaking could herald rain, but also death. At the same time, it was associated with plants and agriculture, and was often considered to be the voice of the rain god (Benson 1997, 93; Werness 2004, 190). Again, the connection to water and earth is articulated by the position of the animal in the image; it is depicted as part of the middle band, thus in relation to the earthly realm, and its proximity to the sea indicates a close relationship with water. In the Maya area, toads and frogs were symbols of the calendar and time (Brennan 1998, 141; personal communication with Dr. A. Rojas). As such, it is not unlikely that this frog or toad, too, has such an association with time, connecting it to the day signs and Tlaloc as a Lord of Time. Additionally, frogs were used for their venom (Benson 1997, 93-94). Toads were

used to make psychoactive drugs for rituals, connecting them to shamans, and were the only amphibians to serve as sacrifices to Tlaloc at the Templo Mayor (Benson 1997, 94-95; López Luján 1994, 102; Werness 2004, 190). This means that frogs and toads were also connected to the circle of life and death, each in their own way.

It is clear that this frog or toad is not just any frog or toad. The animal is making sound and holding a precious jar, from which it is pouring water onto the earth and into the sea. However, it is difficult to determine exactly what this means. It could be referring to a ritual; the sound would then be ritual speech, and the pouring of water as an offering to the earth. Or perhaps the water is poured onto the maize stalk on the far right, allowing it to grow. The bracelets around its wrists may well indicate a certain status, or perhaps mark it is as a sacrifice for Tlaloc, which would mean that we are dealing with a toad. Perhaps this animal should be seen as an assistant of the priest impersonating Tlaloc, aiding him in the ritual; or perhaps it is a helper of Tlaloc himself, announcing the rain with its croaking and pouring water over the earth to create of rain and storms (Nowotny 2005, 46).

It appears that the maize and the frog (or toad) fit perfectly in the themes of this image. The clear associations of these elements with water, earth, rain, fertility, life, and death, as well as their ritual connotations support the identification of the central figure as a priest impersonating Tlaloc, as well as the notion that Tlaloc was a deity intricately connected to agriculture and duality.

5.3 The sky

Previously, it has been established that the upper band is a representation of a cloudy or rainy sky. Both a cloudy and a rainy sky were associated with Tlaloc. The presence of clouds in the sky was considered to be a sign of the presence and power of Tlaloc and the Tlaloque (Arnold 2001, 46). Clouds were announcers of rain, the celestial water. As any type of water, rain was associated with fertility and life, but also with violence, disease, and death (Arnold 2001, 143-146; Seler 1990, 133).

The descending clouds on the left side of the image are, as mentioned above, either mist or clouds gathering around the mountaintops (fig. 13; see chapter 4.4). These descending clouds connect the sky and the earth. They simultaneously announce the presence of Tlaloc in that specific place, and show the result of the ritual being performed by the Tlaloc impersonator in the earth band, announcing its success and the subsequent coming of rain.

Another element that forges a direct connection between sky and earth is the placement of the House day sign. It is an element that belongs to the middle band; however, it is attached to the sky as well. Indirectly, this sign also connects the speech of the Tlaloc impersonator with the sky (see chapters 5.2.1 and 5.2.2).

Like the sea and earth bands, this sky band is part of the setting of the image (Boone 2007, 55). The cloudy or rainy sky strengthens the watery character of the setting. It is a reflection of the power of Tlaloc, and again confirms the connection to this god.

5.4 Conclusions

Having discussed and interpreted the various elements depicted on this page in such detail, a brief moment of recapitulation is desirable, as well as necessary. While the many details of the iconography of this page are important, and should not be forgotten, we may summarize them by identifying several themes that appear to be central to this page, appearing in all three levels of this interpretation: water, earth, rain, (agricultural) fertility, life, death, and time. These themes are reflected in the associations that are connected to each individual element, and in their spatial connections with one another. Together, they tell a story of dualities related to life and death, and thus to Tlaloc.

Aside from these main themes, this image shows a complex web of layered meaning. Generally, we may distinguish three levels of meaning in this page. At the most superficial level, there is Tlaloc in a watery setting, accompanied by a frog, a stalk of maize, and the twenty day signs. This layer refers to the god Tlaloc and all his associations. The setting may be perceived as an image of Tlalocan, the realm of Tlaloc. As such, at this level, we see Tlaloc in

the divine world, as a Lord of Time and a god of dualities. Looking deeper into the image, we can see that we are actually dealing with a priest impersonating the rain god Tlaloc. At this second level, we see a more human world, in which a ritual is conducted to ensure rainfall, with the frog and the maize as signs of rain and divination. At the third and deepest level, we may see in this image a reflection of Central Mexican cosmology, with Tlaloc at its centre. In the following chapter, this notion is explored further as we will slowly move beyond the page to catch a glimpse of the society that created it.

6. From iconography to iconology

In the previous two chapters, page 23 of the Codex Laud has been described in detail, each element has been identified and interpreted individually as well as in combinations, and the main themes of the page have been uncovered. In this chapter, these themes will be examined more closely, and form the basis for a global interpretation of the page. Next, I will propose a reading for this page. This reading will be followed by a consideration of the page in relation to the central themes of the Codex Laud, and its function within the codex. Finally, I will attempt to describe how page 23 of the Codex Laud relates to Central Mexican society.

Through careful examination of these themes, contexts, and functions, which are the shaping factors of this page, we will gain insight into the iconology of the page. However, one must keep in mind that much of the reading and interpretations of this page presented in this chapter are based on the descriptions and interpretations of the previous chapters, and are thus reliant on them – if the initial descriptions, identifications, and interpretations are in any way incorrect, our perception of the iconological meaning will be incorrect as well (Panofsky 1939, 7-8). Accordingly, the meaning presented here should not be considered as the one true meaning of this page. Instead, it should be seen as a possible meaning of the page, based on the previous descriptions and interpretations.

6.1 A story of dualities

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, page 23 of the Codex Laud is permeated by a set of interrelated themes: water, earth, rain, (agricultural) fertility, life, death, and time. Each element depicted on the page is in some way connected to any of these seven themes, and all of these themes are related to the rain god Tlaloc. A priest in the guise of this god appears as the central figure of the page in a quite literal manner. In terms of spatial arrangement, this Tlaloc impersonator forms the centre of the entire composition, around which the other elements are oriented. The positioning of the elements associates each of them with one or

multiple meanings, and at the same time, confirms the meanings they already carried. As such, the day signs on this page should be interpreted in association with the Tlaloc impersonator and his surroundings, through which they are defined, and to which they lend their own meanings within this image. The elements creating the watery setting derive and assign meanings in the same manner. Combined, they address various aspects of the central figure of the rain god impersonator, whose image itself can also be interpreted in different ways.

This multitude of meanings and possibilities for interpretation is a deliberate feature of this page as part of a divinatory codex, which were often obscure and indirect. The meanings of the images within this kind of codex are presented in a complex of layers and combinations of various chapters, which only someone with training in deciphering them could unravel and interpret properly (Boone 2007, 4, 11). As such, this page does not have any single interpretation that is the correct one. However, any interpreter of this page (for example, a priest using this page for divination) was required to take all aspects of the page into account, before choosing the appropriate meanings for the situation in front of him – much like a tarot card reader (Boone 2007, 32; Rojas 2012, 150).

Despite the possibility for variation of interpretation of this page, it is possible to discern a thematic story of dualities within this page. The most prominent of these dualities is formed by the pairing of the themes water and earth. This duality is clearly visible on this page by the depiction of the setting elements: the watery sea, the rainy sky, the maize stalk, and the frog pouring water out of a jar. It is also communicated through the spatial arrangement of the day signs as well as their associations, as many of them are in some way related to earth or water. The second duality found is that of life and death, which is expressed by spatial association. Several of the day signs can be associated with either life or death (or both). The lightning staff and thunder axe in Tlaloc's hands can be considered deadly weapons, symbolizing the transformative process between life and death. The rainy sky indicates the life-giving rain and abundance of water as much as it does the life-taking storms and overabundance of water (for the ambiguity of water, see Arnold 2001, 144). Even the figure of Tlaloc himself

expresses the duality of life and death through his associations with earth and water. The third and fourth dualities are closely related to the first and the second; these are the dualities of fertility and infertility, and of drought and rain. These dualities, too, are expressed through association with the day signs and the setting elements (see chapter 5 for a more in-depth discussion of the various associations with the elements depicted on the page).

6.2 A possible reading

In chapter 3.1, it was established that the Central Mexican codices should be seen as works of art and writing. While the iconographic approach has so far been mostly addressing the art of our page and its meanings, this page should also be considered to contain text (see chapter 3.1). As such, it is possible to read this image as one would read a story, following the reading orders and associations established in chapters 4 and 5. To date, Anders *et al*. (1994, 255-258) have been the only scholars to propose such a reading for this page. Since this thesis argues in favour of this kind of approach, I would be remiss not to propose a reading of my own for this page after making such a thorough and detailed analysis of its iconography in the previous chapters.

While reading the following text, one must keep in mind that this reading is my personal attempt at recreating how an indigenous person might have read this page. Of course, this image was originally read in an indigenous language, most likely Nahuatl. However, because I lack the linguistic knowledge to propose a Nahuatl reading for this page, my proposed reading is in English. As such, this reading must be seen as a reflection of how I imagine this page may have been read. Considering its iconography, its multiple layers, and the conventional reading orders, this page may be read as follows:

This is the world, a cosmos of water.

Here is the sea, filled with molluscs and other animals.
In the sea floats the Precious Crocodile, the earth.

On the earth strides Tlaloc, who is called Rain, lord of water and earth.
He wields the lightning serpent and thunder axe.
His mouth brings forth a mighty roar.
His left foot is 1 Crocodile, life, the beginning of the calendar.
His right foot is 6 Death, both the end of life and giver of new life.
He is heralded by the frog, his helper, and maize grows in his wake.
He is lord of life and death.
He is surrounded by the calendar, the full count of 260 days, over which he rules.
He is lord of time and space.
He is at the centre of the world.

But look close, he is not Tlaloc.
He is an impersonator, a man who becomes Tlaloc.
He is decorated with jewels and feathers, and wears precious clothing.
He is precious.
He wears the jaguar helmet with the sun ray ear spool on his head, the warrior loincloth around his waist, and the tezcacuitlapilli on his back.
He is a warrior, ready to strike.
He is wearing a mask, his black beard and skin are visible underneath.
He is a priest.
His body is painted blue, and rubber spattered paper decorates his arms, signs of water.
He is a maker of rain, life-giving water, performing his ritual under the rainy sky.
He calls for rain.
The frog helps him, pouring water and chanting prayers.
They call for rain, and the clouds descend.
The sky maw opens, giving rain.
The maize grows.

This is the world, the cosmos of Tlaloc.

6.3 The page in its direct context

While this thesis so far has mostly focused on a single page, this page does not stand alone. It is part of a book, which tells a story of its own. In the case of the divinatory codices, this story is told through the presence a set of related general themes within each codex. Despite the fact that the various almanacs and protocols in a single codex are more or less independent of one another, they are supposed to be read in relation to one another (Boone 2007, 3). As such, they share general themes between them, confirming the thematic character of the codices. As the codices were painted and put together with the greatest care, we cannot assume that the order of their contents was random. Instead, we should assume that there is a reason for the order presented to us within the codices. Thus, the direct context of an almanac or protocol, i.e. the preceding and following pages, influences the meaning of the almanac or protocol in question, just as the general themes of the codex to which it belongs do (Anders *et al.* 1994, 11; Boone 2007, 3). In this section, I will discuss the direct context of the page and the page in relation to the main themes of the codex, in order to shed further light upon this page and its position within the codex.

In the past, page 23 of the Codex Laud has been interpreted in various ways, but almost always without regard for its direct context.[11] It has been called a weather prognosis (Nowotny 2005, 46), an agricultural almanac (Boone 2007, 145), a corporeal rain almanac (Boone 2007, 247), and a depiction of Tlaloc as Lord of the Days (Anders *et al.* 1994, 255-258). While the almanac presented on this page is clearly a diagram-almanac of some sort (see also chapter 6.2.1), and the Tlaloc depicted on the page indeed seems to appear in his functions as god of rain and agriculture, none of these interpretations seem to quite cover the deeper meaning of the page as has been uncovered in this thesis. With the exception of the interpretation of Anders *et al.*, they seem to focus heavily on the water aspect of Tlaloc, and overlook the other aspects associated with Tlaloc. As a result, only

[11] Anders *et al.* (1994) seem to be the only scholars who truly attempt to connect the page to the previous and following ones, as well as to the themes of the codex. Boone (2007) does tell us about the importance of the connection between the pages, but she does not offer a comprehensive analysis of the Codex Laud, just a simple overview of the contents of this codex.

the superficial layer of the image has been touched upon, while the deeper, less obvious meanings seem to be forgotten. Anders *et al*. offer a more comprehensive reading of the page, taking into account the relationship between the Tlaloc figure, the different day signs, and various other elements of the page. But even this interpretation is simpler than the previously presented examination of the meanings and associations that are tied to the elements on the page suggests (see chapter 5). As we will see in this section, the direct context of the page sheds additional light on the importance of the deeper layers of meaning for this page.

Our page is an almanac on the second-to-last page of the Codex Laud. Within this codex, the themes of death and destiny take a central place, and thus may be considered to be the general themes that govern the codex (Anders *et al.* 1994, 11). As such, references to these themes are expected to appear in each almanac and protocol of this codex, including our page. However, if one considers that most of the previous interpretations of this page revolve around its more obvious connections to water and rain, the general themes of the Codex Laud are rather neglected. While the interpretation of Anders *et al.* does relate the contents of this almanac to the general theme of destiny by presenting Tlaloc as a governing force of the *tonalpohualli* (Anders *et al.* 1994, 255-258), this seems too limited an interpretation if we consider the analysis of the elements on the page presented in the previous chapters.

The symbolism of the individual elements on this page indicates an intricate relation not only with the theme of destiny, but also shows clear connections to the theme of death. In Central Mexican beliefs, Tlaloc was not only a god of rain, but also had a close relationship to the circle of life and death, through which he was automatically connected to destiny (Arnold 2001, 39; see chapter 5.2.1). At the same time, the day signs were related to destiny through their function in the *tonalpohualli*, and several of them have direct associations with death (see chapter 5.2.2). In this manner, page 23 of the Codex Laud fits well into the main themes of this codex as a whole.

The direct context of the page confirms these notions. The Tlaloc almanac on page 23 is preceded by a protocol for a ritual, spanning the pages 17 to 22 (see

fig. 21; see also chapter 2). Spread over six pages, this protocol shows a long procession of twenty-two human and supernatural figures, each of them either carrying offerings, or performing ritual actions. Through the depiction of the creation of fire, this protocol has been thought to be related to the New Fire Ceremony, a symbol for new life. The depictions of human sacrifice connects the ritual to the circle of life and death, while the depiction of a cave – a part of the landscape closely associated with Tlaloc – and the presence of Tlaloc himself provide a visual link to the Tlaloc in our almanac (see Anders *et al.* 1994, 245-254 for a more detailed analysis of this protocol).

On the other side of the Tlaloc almanac is another one-page almanac. This almanac is the final page of the codex, and thus forms the end of the document. It shows a depiction of the sun being eclipsed by the breath of the Death God. This central scene is surrounded by the *tonalpohualli* in combination with eight supernatural figures. As the Death God takes a central place on this page, its connection to death and destiny seems obvious. The presence of Tlaloc and the earth bands on either sides of the scene again provide visual links to the Tlaloc almanac (see fig. 22; see Anders *et al*. 1994, 259-263 for a more detailed discussion of this almanac).

This brief consideration of the direct context of the almanac on page 23 of the Codex Laud clearly shows the visual and conceptual connections between the various chapters, as well as those to the main themes of the entire codex. It confirms that the obvious, superficial interpretation of page 23 of this codex as a simple almanac related to water and rain, while not incorrect, is not sufficient to understand the full meaning of the page. Of course, one may argue that water and rain are also connected to death and destiny, just as Tlaloc himself is, and that this page is thus connected to the main themes of the codex – and they would be correct. However, being satisfied with any superficial explanation would mean ignoring an entire dimension of the page: its offer of a glimpse into Central Mexican society, as well as into the cosmology as outlined by Arnold in his *Eating Landscape*.

Figure 21: The Long March ritual protocol (pages 17-22 of the Codex Laud, taken from the digitized ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25)

Figure 22: The Eclipse almanac (page 24 of the Codex Laud, taken from the digitized ADEVA edition of the Codex Laud at http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/Aztec/id/25)

6.4 The page and Central Mexican society

Just as much as this page is part of the Codex Laud, it was also part of the Central Mexican culture. In this culture, codices were important; they were tools of divination and a means of communication with the gods, depicting rituals and providing predictions (Boone 2007, 28-32, 237-238). As our page is part of such a divinatory codex, it was likely used by priest in acts of divination as well; at the same time, it is also a reflection of the cosmology and has an intricate connection to ritual as it was (and to a certain extent still is) performed in Central Mexico (Arnold 2001, 213 n. 67). In this section, I will discuss these iconological connections to the codex and this page in particular.

6.4.1 The page as a tool for divination

Page 23 of the Codex Laud, as this phrase already states, is part of the Codex Laud. As has been mentioned before, the Codex Laud is a Postclassic Central Mexican pictorial manuscript belonging to the divinatory Borgia group codices (Boone 2007, 5; see also chapter 2). These codices were usually painted and used by priests with a special knowledge of the religious calendar, and played a central role in the practice of divination, which in turn had an important place within Central Mexican religion (Boone 2007, 20-21). They served as the instruments for understanding the cosmos and predicting destinies, and as the containers of the knowledge necessary to do so. The contents of these books allowed the diviner to communicate with the gods and gain knowledge of cosmic forces in order to understand life and assign meaning to it (Boone 2007, 237-238).

During divination, the diviner (often a priest or soothsayer) would consult his divinatory book to gain insight in the situation of the person looking for guidance (Boone 2007, 28-32, 237-238). However, this was not a matter of simply looking up the correct answer in the book. Divination was a complex ritual performance in Central Mexico, in which the diviner, the patron, and the codex were required to interact in order to find the correct answers regarding the patron's situation. With the information gained from the dialogue between diviner and client in mind, the diviner would then consult his book, in which the knowledge of the cosmic forces was recorded. He would combine data from multiple almanacs within the codex, carefully weighing and judging their multiple meanings and associations, in order to reach a balanced prediction that fit with the situation of his patron (Boone 2007, 32).

The information necessary to create any prediction was codified within the images of the codex. These images were deliberately and carefully composed, in order to convey a multitude of meanings waiting to be 'read' and interpreted. Each element depicted had meaning, and when interpreted together, they produced a story, or a verbal text of sorts, that corresponded to the meaning expressed in the entire image. As such, the codices may be regarded as containers

of text similar to our own European-style books, in which images take the place of words and sentences (Boone 2007, 33; see also chapter 3.1).

Within these images, the ordering of the individual elements in the available space on the page is vital to the understanding of the image. The Central Mexican pictorial system relies on the spatial arrangement of its elements to structure the information encoded in these images, as well as to convey meaning (Boone 2007, 33-34). In this manner, spatial organization functions as the grammar and syntax of the 'text', governing the complex relationships between the elements and their meanings, and guiding the reader in 'reading' and interpreting them. For a complete understanding of the meaning of the page, it is just as important to understand the graphic structures of the pages as it is to understand each individual element depicted on them (Boone 2007, 34, 66-68).

The contents of the divinatory codices can be roughly divided into two categories: almanacs containing divinatory information related to the calendar, and protocols for rituals (Boone 2007, 3). Both of these types of content have their own internal graphic structures. Ritual protocols are often varied in their spatial organization, as they are not structured according to the calendar. These protocols exist of a depiction of the ritual to be performed, appropriate dates, and (counted stacks of) offerings, indicating how and when the ritual should be performed, and what should be offered (see Boone 2007, 157-169 for a detailed discussion of ritual protocols).

Almanacs, on the other hand, have a strict spatial organization. They are usually organized in one of three basic structures: list, table, or diagram (Boone 2007, 68). Each of these three structures has its own manner of organizing the calendrical information. The list links one temporal unit (usually in the form of one of the twenty day signs) with one mantic element that are depicted in two separate cells, creating a one-on-one correspondence between the two. Sometimes, several units of time are grouped together and connected to a single mantic element (Boone 2007, 68-72). The table is an extension of the list, and often depicts all 260 days of the *tonalpohualli* in relation to mantic elements. This type of presentation continues across multiple pages. The day signs are ordered

horizontally; their mantic associations appear vertically, above or below the sign they belong to. The table can also be compressed, resulting in groups of day signs that are associated with individual mantic elements and are read in a repeating cycle (Boone 2007, 73-78). Finally, the diagram is a form of spatial organization that connects the day signs or other temporal units to an image that expresses a conceptual understanding. In a diagram, the day signs are located on or around this image, and often appear out of sequence. Instead, the day signs are separated and dispersed over the image without any lines to indicate how they should be connected – within the almanacs organized in this manner it is the placement of the elements alone that associates and disassociates the elements on the page with one another (Boone 2007, 78-80).

As has become evident in the course of this thesis, page 23 of the Codex Laud is a diagram-almanac. Its primary function was likely the same as that of the codex; as a tool for divination. With its multiple layers of meaning, this page may be read in various ways. It would have been used to make auguries about a certain person, or perhaps about a certain day; perhaps it would have been used to determine when the ritual depicted should be held, or even to predict the weather or agricultural events (see chapter 6.3). None of these interpretations are wrong or mutually exclusive. In fact, based on the iconography of the page, and the way that the codices were meant to be used, I believe that the interpretation of our particular page should be inclusive rather than exclusive. It should be considered as a presentation of an array of possible meanings, of which the one most applicable to the situation would be chosen.

6.4.2 The page as a reflection of Central Mexican cosmology

As has been mentioned at the end of chapter 5, our page can be seen as a reflection of Central Mexican cosmology. Throughout this thesis, the relationship of all elements on the page with the themes of water, earth, rain, fertility, life, and death has been noted repeatedly. The repeated and constantly reinforced presence of these themes on this page is only logical when we consider that the central figure of this page is Tlaloc, the god of rain and agriculture. However, Tlaloc is

not so straightforward. In addition to being the god of rain and agriculture, he was also considered the god of water in general, of earth, of fertility, and of life and death (see chapter 5.2.1). These concepts were all intricately connected to one another in Central Mexican cosmology.

Tlaloc took a central place in this cosmology. He was the embodiment of the supernatural forces associated with the earth and rain, through which he was responsible for all life. He was a living force that was central to agricultural life and its creative aspects, but also represented the destruction of life in order to sustain other life, which manifested itself through the act of eating (Arnold 2001, 39, 163). When eating, humans consumed parts of the landscape (plants and animals), which were thought to be parts of Tlaloc. In return, they were expected to become the food of Tlaloc through ritual human sacrifice performed at certain prescribed places in the landscape. These places also had a calendrical significance, creating a dynamic interplay between time, landscape, and humans (Arnold 2001, 118, 136-138). This is what Arnold calls the 'eating landscape'; Tlaloc stood at the centre of a reciprocal, consumptive cosmos, in which eating and being eaten was the daily reality (Arnold 2001, 39, 234-236; see also chapter 5.2.1).

These cosmological views on Tlaloc seem to be reflected within the image on page 23 of the Codex Laud. In the 'eating landscape' cosmology, as well as on the page, Tlaloc is the central entity. On the page, Tlaloc is surrounded by the day signs placed within the landscape around him, just as the rituals in his honour would be performed at certain places in the landscape that were connected to time, centred around the Tlaloc shrine at the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlan (Arnold 2001, 136). And finally, all things associated with Tlaloc are found on the page, just as they are found within the landscape. Water, earth, rain, thunder, lightning, fertility, life, and death are central and recurring themes on this page. As a result, the page reminds us of Tlaloc's place at the centre of the 'eating landscape' as the governing force of life and death, emphasizing the duality of this god. In this manner, this page becomes a mirror of Central Mexican cosmology.

6.4.3 The page and the *tiempero*

Ritual held a central place in Central Mexican cultures. It was not considered something separate from day-to-day life. On the contrary, ritual was thought to be the basis of life (Arnold 2001, 143). Life was a performance in which the actors, i.e. the humans and other living beings, were required to strive for an existence in balance with the cosmos. This balance was achieved through ritual activity that connected living beings to their material surroundings as well as to the supernatural (Arnold 2001, 62-63, 179, 198).

Especially water ritual was important in Central Mexico. Natural sources of (potable) water were (and still are) scarce in this region, limited to rainfall, (underground) springs, a few small rivers, and the sweet water lakes around Tenochtitlan. Due to the volcanic activity in the region, as well as the tropical nature of the region, the availability of water was often unpredictable (Arnold 2001, 144). Because of its scarcity and unpredictability, water was considered to be a sacred resource, necessitating ritual behavior around any source of water in order to ensure its continued availability. As such, many of the rituals that were performed were held in the honour of Tlaloc or other gods associated with water (see Arnold 2001, 77-103; see also chapter 5.2.1). These rituals were mainly aimed at creating an abundance of water (Arnold 2001, 143). Even today, similar water rituals take an important place in the lives of many indigenous Central Mexicans (see among others Fernández 2010 and Juárez 2009).

As we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, our page is an image of a water ritual: a priest impersonating Tlaloc seems to be dancing and singing (or praying) to make it rain. This kind of ritual was and still is common in Central Mexico. In present times, they are performed by rain priests called *tiemperos* or *graniceros*. The *tiempero* is considered to be connected to rain and to time (*tiempo* is the Spanish word for both weather and time); the *granicero* is in charge of the irrigation systems that have existed since precolonial times, and is thought to be connected to hail, water, and healing. These priests are the ones who are able to communicate with *ahuaques* (water spirits) and saints to ask for rain or healing of injuries tied to water (Fernández 2010; personal communication with Dr. A.

Rojas). As the cultural continuity of Central Mexico is considered to be high (Juárez 2009), we may assume that this type of priest also existed in precolonial Central Mexican societies. In fact, we know from several manuscripts that *graniceros* indeed already existed in Aztec society, and that they served much the same purpose as they do today: to take care of the irrigation systems and rituals connected to water (Fernández 2010, 529).

There are more correspondences between the rituals of today and the rituals of the past than just the performing priest. As described in chapters 3.2 and 5.2.1, the precolonial rituals to Tlaloc had a direct connection to the landscape, which was considered to be an embodiment of Tlaloc himself (Arnold 2001, 118, 134-138). In present times, these kinds of rituals are still performed in connection to the landscape, mostly in reference to Mount Tlaloc, the home of the rain god Tlaloc and origin of all water (Fernández 2010, 530-532, 541-543). The Tlaloque of the Aztecs, the helpers of Tlaloc, are easily comparable to the present-day *ahuaques*, the water spirits (Fernández 2010, 522). Even some of the offerings are the same; while there is no more human sacrifice, things like rubber, incense, paper, water, and seeds are still offered to the *ahuaques* to ensure rain and good health (Fernández 2010, 539-541).

Applying this information about Central Mexican society to our page, it is likely that the priest impersonating Tlaloc on our page is one of these *tiemperos* or *graniceros* – most likely the former, as they are and were considered to be the rain makers and the ones connected to time. At the same time, we see the depiction of the sea, earth, and sky as the connection to the landscape that is central in ritual past and present. If we look closely, there may even be hints of Mount Tlaloc within our image, hidden in the combination of the ridges on the back of the Precious Crocodile, which stand for mountains, in the descending clouds as they gather around the mountains, and the overall connection of the page to Tlaloc. The frog pours water on the earth in offering, and the priest clearly communicates with the cloudy sky, most likely asking for rain. All these elements are reflections of Central Mexican water ritual within this image, confirming that our page offers

us much more than just an image of Tlaloc – it is a window giving us a view into past Central Mexican societies.

7. Conclusions

In this thesis, it has become clear that page 23 of the Codex Laud is not only a complex and carefully constructed image in form, but also carries a complex set of meanings. Through a detailed description and a systematic analysis and interpretation of this page, a great amount of associations and meanings have been uncovered within the page. Each element on the page is related to and defined by those around it, resulting in a loop of confirmation and reinforcement of the associations and meanings between the individual elements. Together, these individual elements form an intricately woven web of meanings, hiding behind the visual images on the page.

This web of meanings allows for multiple interpretations of this page, none of which are necessarily mutually exclusive. From the immediately obvious interpretation of this page as an almanac concerned with water and rain, to its associations with agriculture, death, and destiny, to the deeper connection between this page and the Central Mexican cosmology and society uncovered in the final chapter of this thesis, each of these interpretations is governed by and discovered through several sets of dualities present in the page. Through its associations with water and earth, fertility and infertility, rain and drought, and life and death, this page is closely related to the main themes of the Codex Laud, as well as to various aspects of life.

Returning, then, to the aims of this thesis, it would seem that by analysing this single page with the iconographical method developed by Panofsky and combining it with Arnold's theory of Central Mexican cosmology as being centred around an eating landscape embodied by the god Tlaloc, we have gained a deeper understanding of page 23 of the Codex Laud. Simultaneously, it has become clear just how intricately connected the various parts of a single codex can be through the sharing of themes, and how the Central Mexican worldview played a central role in their creation and reading.

While this study was meant to produce a comprehensive description of the page and offer a possible interpretation based on the imagery, the interpretations

and meanings presented in this thesis are by no means conclusive, and many avenues of research are still to open for exploration. In fact, I believe it would be prudent to pursue this type of detailed analysis for more pages and chapters of the Central Mexican codices, in order to uncover possibilities for interpretations that would otherwise remain hidden within the masterful compositions created by ancient Mesoamerican people. A second potentially prosperous avenue of research could be to find the links between the different almanacs and protocols within the codices, and in doing so, discovering whether main themes such as those governing the Codex Laud also exist within other codices. A third direction for future research may be of an ethnographical nature – by studying current Central Mexican societies, we may uncover more information about their rituals, which is likely to contribute to our understanding of the Central Mexican codices.

In any case, this thesis shows that the imagery in Central Mexican divinatory codices is more than meets the eye at first glance. It displays an intricate reflection of the cosmos as it was understood by the Central Mexican people, and is very much worth investigating in order to gain further understanding of the cultures behind it.

Abstract

In modern research of the Central Mexican manuscripts, the Codex Laud has always remained in a position of obscurity. Barely a handful of comprehensive studies of this codex have been published over the past century. Mostly, the Codex Laud is only mentioned briefly in studies of other divinatory codices, and simply regarded as one of the Borgia Group codices, often serving as material for comparison with the other codices of this group. As such, a closer look at this codex is warranted. In this thesis, a single page of the Codex Laud takes the centre stage: page 23, the second-to-last page of the codex, which features a complex composition of calendrical and various other elements around a single central figure. This page forms the subject for a detailed analysis using the iconographical method of Panofsky in order to gain insight into the various layers of meaning hidden within its imagery. In this manner, this thesis will attempt to do what the ancient Mexican diviners did – to determine the associations and meaning(s) of the page in all its aspects and contexts.

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Figures

Tables