

CASO, ALFONSO. *Interpretación del Códice Colombino (Interpretation of the Codex Colombino)*. MARY ELIZABETH SMITH. *Las glosas del Códice Colombino (The glosses of the Codex Colombino)*; Appendices by Luis Torres, A. Sotomayor, and Ticul Alvarez. México, Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, 1966. 189 pp., facsim., illus.

This important monograph is the end product of one of the most interesting scholarly detective stories in the history of Mesoamerican studies. It began in the mid-nineteenth century when two fragmentary scraped and battered painted strips skin screen-folds turned up in the city of Puebla. One of the two was first reported in the possession of Manuel Cardoso, a lawyer, in 1863. After passing through various hands (principally those of the well-known German merchant-consul of Puebla, Josef Dorenberg), it was acquired by the Junta Colombina for Mexico's National Museum and published (without the annotations) in the Junta's monumental 1892 commemorative volume under the name *Códice Colombino* (with a very brief, unsatisfactory commentary by Chavero; Batres had previously [1888] published one page [III], with the annotations). It bore extensive glosses in a non-Nahua language which was variously identified as Mixtec or Zapotec. In 1912, James Cooper Clark published the first serious study of the *Colombino*. Considering it Zapotec, he traced its history of 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw" (whose importance had first been recognized by Zelia Nuttall in her concise commentary to the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* facsimile [1902], which he compared throughout with parallel scenes in the *Códices Becker I* (which he regarded as probably not part of the *Colombino*), Bodley, Zouche-Nuttall, *Vindobonensis*

and *Selden*. Although a laudable pioneer effort, Clark's study was superficial and studded with errors. In 1935, Alfonso Caso initiated his landmark Mixteca pictorial decipherment project, in which the *Colombino*, of course, was included. His many publications over the years which stemmed from this project frequently cited the *Colombino* but contained no comprehensive discussion until the appearance of the volume under review.

Then, in 1963, Mary Elizabeth Smith, analyzing the annotations on the original of the *Colombino*, published (*Tlalocan* IV, 3: 276-288) evidence that they listed the 1541 boundaries of over 14 communities in the Tututepec region of south Oaxaca and did not, as many students had assumed, explain the pictorial scenes depicting the career of 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw." She also suggested that the *Colombino* was introduced as evidence in a 1717 lawsuit (Archivo General de la Nación-Vínculos: 272-10, part of which was published by Berlin in 1947 and by Fernández de Recas in 1961) between Tututepec and neighboring Sola over land rights and that the court interpreter had translated two of the town boundary lists from Mixtec into Spanish. Since one of the most prominent *Colombino* place-glyphs was identified in the annotations as Yucudzaa (Mixtec for Tututepec, "Hill of the Bird"), the powerful, independent Oaxaca south coast *cabecera* at Contact, she also went on to identify as Yucudzaa-Tututepec similar place-glyphs in the *Bodley* and *Zouche-Nuttall*. Following this convincing demonstration of a Yucudzaa-Tututepec area affiliation for *Colombino*, she suggested that its narrative of the career of 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw," who is shown in the *Colombino* as the ruler of Yucudzaa-Tututepec, was naturally "a south-coast version," differing in certain significant respects from the Mixteca Alta-oriented versions. Caso, accepting Smith's postulates, prepared to publish, as the third in the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología's series of facsimiles of Mesoamerican native tradition pictorials, his detailed commentary to the *Colombino* and invited her to prepare, for publication in the same volume, her complete transcription of the Mixtec annotations, accompanied by a full discussion of their significance. Thus the volume really contains two separate though related studies: Caso's interpretation of the pre-Hispanic screenfold and Smith's transcriptions and analysis of the post-Hispanic annotations which, in effect, constitute a separate document concocted long after the screenfold was painted and for an entirely different purpose, to protect the territorial integrity of the colonial Tututepec *cacicazgo*.

The second screenfold fragment was (according to de Saussure) brought to Puebla in 1852 by an otherwise unknown "Indien de la Mysteca" as evidence in a legal action "en revendication de ses biens héréditaires," following which it passed into the hands of

his attorney, Pascual Almazán, in whose house it was copied shortly after this time by Henri de Saussure, the prominent Swiss linguist, who, long afterwards, in 1891 (1892), published his copy under the title "Le manuscrit du Cacique". By this time it had passed into the possession of Philipp J. Becker, a German businessman who spent some years in Mexico and who apparently purchased it from an unknown party in Puebla. After Becker's death, in 1896, through the munificence of a wealthy Austrian it was acquired the following year, along with the rest of Becker's extensive Mexican archaeological collection, to what is now the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna. De Saussure attempted no real study, and it was not until 1961 (though Caso had cited it to a limited degree in various of his publications, especially his 1955 article on the life of 4. Wind "Xiuhoatl") that an adequate, albeit somewhat generalized, analysis of it was published, by Nowotny (who, earlier [1959], with Strebinger, had published its detailed description and a technical analysis of its pigments), accompanying its first color photographic reproduction (Vol. IV of the Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt's [Graz, Austria] "Codices Selecti" series [INAH Spanish translation, 1964]).

One of the knottiest problems connected with these two Puebla-derived fragmentary screenfolds is the nature of the relationship between them. Seler, the first leading Mexicanist to have the opportunity to examine both, in 1888, suggested they were parts of the same document, and this view was gradually—in spite of Clark's demurrer—accepted by the majority of students. However, no thorough analysis of the precise nature of this relationship was ever published prior to the present monograph, and one of its most important sections is Caso's detailed discussion and hypothetical reconstruction—based especially on parallel passages in *Zouche-Nuttall*—of a single (incomplete) screenfold which included interdigitated sections of *Colombino* and *Becker I*. His commentary, therefore, covers both *Colombino* and *Becker I* (somewhat more detailed than Nowotny's), although the latter is not reproduced.

Further complicating the *Colombino-Becker I* saga is the existence of three falsifications ("Codex Moguntiacus", partially published in 1958 by Mengin, and two copies, both unpublished, by Manuel de Velasco) based on the *Colombino*. Most of their pages clearly derive from the surviving pages of the *Colombino* but some do not, giving rise to the possibility that they might be based on lost pages of this screenfold. After some discussion, however, Caso discards this possibility.

As Caso emphasizes, the *Colombino-Becker I* is remarkable among the other Mixteca meander histories in that it is not concern-

ed with genealogy but rather consists of a straight narration of the earlier portion of the life of 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw," the ruler of Tilantongo and Tututepec, and his son-in-law, 4. Wind "Xiuhcoatl," the later ruler of "Flint". It most closely resembles the reverse of *Zouche-Nuttall*, which is also entirely devoted to the earlier portion of the career of 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw." Caso takes the opportunity in this monograph to reconstruct, more or less in full, that segment of his life which is covered in *Colombino-Becker I*, also utilizing relevant data in other Mixteca pictorials; however, the final stages of his career, not covered in what survives of *Colombino-Becker I*, is only briefly referred to. A truly comprehensive, fully illustrated account of this important Early Postclassic Mixteca ruler is still somewhat of a desideratum, therefore, and it is to be hoped that Dr. Caso will contribute such a study in the not too distant future.

Also adding to the interest and importance of *Colombino-Becker I* is its status as the only one of the five Mixteca meander histories which can with virtual certainty be assigned to the Mixteca de la Costa (Caso [p. 24] suggests that, because of the exaggerated importance ascribed to an otherwise obscure figure, 5. Rain "Popocatepetl," lord, according to *Zouche-Nuttall* 56, of "Disk with Star Eyes and Necklace," it might have been painted in this particular place, surely located somewhere on the South Coast). And, perhaps lending it even greater significance, Caso feels that it is probably the earliest surviving Mixteca pictorial (13th century?), and thus perhaps one of the earliest of all extant Mesoamerican pictorials.

Certainly the great majority of Caso's interpretations can be accepted, although some other students might occasionally differ on details. The sadly mutilated condition of this beautiful screenfold, particularly the systematic scraping off of most of the day signs in the calendric names, greatly increased the difficulty of Caso's task, but, through judicious comparisons with parallel passages in the other meander histories, especially *Zouche-Nuttall* reverse, he was able to increase considerably his "interpretational output" over and above what might have been deduced solely from the representations in the *Colombino* by themselves. Various trivial errors, other than typographical, can occasionally be spotted (e.g., "Conejo" for "Venado," p. 16), and one might differ on a few minor interpretations, of which the following could be cited as examples: the readings "León-Ahuizotl" and "Tigre-Perro-tigre" sic; p. 31) for the surname-glyphs of the two possibly Tlaxcalteca leaders on *Zouche-Nuttall* 52 seem a bit dubious; judging from the facsimile, out-of-place *Colombino* XVI appears to be glued to adjoining page XV rather than sewn (p. 32; the stitching visible seems to be too far into the page to have effectively performed the job of attaching this

inserted sheet); some might have reservations about a specific "sacrificio gladiatorio" interpretation (p. 34) of the eagle-jaguar combat in the man-dog sacrifice scene of *Zouche-Nuttall* 69; the "tres caudillos" said (p. 37) to be in canoes on *Colombino* XXIII-XXIV seem to be only two; the interpretation (p. 44) of the first place-glyph of *Becker I* 16 (39) as "Cerro del Sol" could perhaps be challenged (the solar deity hovering above and to the right of the lord of this place is probably not an element of the place-glyph); and "split" or "cleft" hill would probably be preferable to "Cerro de la Boca" (p. 25) for the left hand element of the last place-glyph of *Colombino* IV-12, which would be consistent with Caso's interpretation of this and equivalent place-glyphs in his previous publications.

Caso himself clearly recognizes the difficulties in attempting to construct an indisputable model of a combined *Colombino-Becker I*, particularly the placement of *Colombino* XVI and XX-XXI. Guided by certain ostensibly parallel conquest sequences in *Zouche-Nuttall* 71-74, Caso opts for the placement of *Colombino* XX-XXI before the first fragment of *Becker I* (p. 1-4). Although this placement does undeniably find some support in *Zouche-Nuttall's* conquest sequences, judging solely from the facsimile itself there does not seem to be any break between *Colombino* XXI and XXII, which this hypothesis would appear to require. And it is noteworthy that earlier, in a 1963 communication addressed to the ethnohistory group of the *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, Caso positioned *Colombino* XX-XXI after *Becker I* 1-4 (which would place the conquests depicted in *Colombino* XX-XXI after the visit of 8. Deer and 4. Jaguar to 1. Death, differing from the *Zouche-Nuttall* version). Also, it might be pointed out that in either of these reconstructions *Colombino-Becker I* would directly join at only one point: in Caso's earlier hypothesis, at *Becker I* 4- *Colombino* XX, and, in his later and final version, at *Becker I* 4- *Colombino* XXII. However, the right edge of *Becker I* 4 (with part of the following page visible) would not seem to lend much support to either of these reconstructions, and the possibility might be suggested that at least one page intervened between *Becker I* 4 and the adjoining *Colombino* page. It should also be mentioned that the chart illustrating the "probable model" contains one obvious error, namely, the failure to indicate two lost pages between *Colombino* XXI and *Becker I* 1, which should have been specified in conformity with the statement on p. 36 (also missing from the *Colombino-Becker I* page sequence list on p. 16, while in the list on the same page of "los lugares donde pueden faltar páginas" the notation of missing pages after *Colombino* XXIV has also been omitted).

Smith's study of the Mixtec annotations of *Colombino* is an important contribution to colonial Oaxaca ethnohistory even though there is almost no direct tie-in with the pre-Hispanic pictorial. Her transcription of the glosses in itself constitutes a significant contribution to our knowledge of Mixtec toponymics as well as the South Coast dialect of Mixtec in the 16th century. One must say "almost" in regard to the tie-in with the pictorial for, after all, it was the annotation on the Yucudzaa-Tututepec place-glyph which led to the breakthrough which resulted in her important revelations concerning the likely provenience of *Colombino* and the real significance of the glosses. And two other glosses also seem to relate to the place-glyphs they annotate. The most important is that which identifies as "ñuusiquaha" (Mixtec for San Pedro Jicayán) the large place-glyph on *Colombino* XIII-40 where 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw" is invested as a *tecuhli*. As Smith points out, in one part of this place-glyph are depictions of cattails and the feather mat which—as Caso has demonstrated—symbolizes a plain, thus, in Nahuatl, Tulixtlahuaca, which she identifies with a community of that name to the north of Jicayán and a former dependency of that center. She goes on to point out that one literal translation of Ñuusiquaha might be "town that says much," i.e., a seat of political authority, and, in support of this translation, identifies a band of scroll elements on the place-glyph as speech scrolls. She therefore suggests that Jicayán-Tulixtlahuaca might have served, due to its political-religious importance, as the proper place for *tecuhli* investiture, at least on the South Coast. The other significant annotation for the pre-Hispanic pictorial is that which identifies a temple (XII-36) just before a place-glyph representing the moon on a hill (XIII-37) as "yucu yoo," "Hill of the Moon". Yucuyoo was and is the Mixtec name for "Santa María Acatepec", northeast of Tututepec, with which she identifies the *Colombino* place-glyph and which she suggests might have rivaled Tututepec itself in power at the time of the accession of 8. Deer "Jaguar's Claw," necessitating its conquest (chronicled in both *Colombino* and *Bodley*).

Caso does not discuss these interesting suggestions. In his section (p 30), the place-glyph annotated as ñuusiquaha is merely identified as "Tula." It is particularly regrettable that he does not discuss Smith's Tulixtlahuaca identification of this place-glyph, for it has important implications for the question of the locations of the "Tulas" in the Mixteca pictorials—which have often been identified with the principal seat of Toltec power, Tula, Hidalgo.

In addition to the principal articles of Caso and Smith, the volume contains various appendices: 1) a discussion, by Smith, of various colonial documents pertaining to the Tututepec *cacicazgo*

which provide the names of its constituent communities (summarized in a chart, p. 83); 2) the genealogy of the Tututepec *cacizgo*, by Caso, wherein he discusses the various elements of the Tututepec place-glyph in various Mixteca pictorials and constructs a detailed genealogical chart, based on AGN documents, of the Tututepec ruling family between Contact and the time of the 1717 litigation; 3) the analysis, by Luis Torres and A. Sotomayor, of the pigments used in the *Colombino*; 4) an analysis, by Ticul Alvarez, of the material of the *Colombino* screenfold (probably the hide of the pronghorn antelope, *Antilocapra americana*, or, less likely, the white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*). These appendices considerably enhance the usefulness of the monograph as a whole, but it is rather puzzling that in the appendix devoted to the pigment analysis no cognizance was taken of the similar analysis of the *Becker I* pigments published by Nowotny and Strebing in 1959.

It is perhaps not really fair to criticize a work for what it does not contain, but a few observations along this line might be in order. Although it was probably not done for financial reasons, it would obviously have considerably enhanced the volume's usefulness to have included at least small black-and-white photographs of *Becker I*, which would have reassembled in one work for the first time this long divided screenfold and greatly facilitated the reader's comparison of the pictorial scenes with Caso's interpretational text. As it is now, one must have both the present volume and Nowotny's publication in hand in order satisfactorily to follow the Caso analysis. It would also have been appropriate for Smith to have included as much transcription and analysis as possible of the few *Becker I* annotations (Nowotny only listed their occurrence, by page); although seemingly mostly illegible and all quite brief, some consideration of them in this volume might have been expected. Finally, because of its possible relevance to the thorny "*Colombino-Becker I* problem" a somewhat more detailed physical description of the *Colombino* might have been desirable, with particular attention to the number and dimensions of individual sections of the skin strip, a precise specification of their positioning, and a description of the exact manner of their attachment to each other.

It is difficult to judge the quality of the facsimile itself without being able to compare it carefully with the original. On my copy, p. XVIII is double-imaged. Judging from the few photographs of *Colombino* pages published elsewhere, the annotations came out a bit dimmer than might have been expected. In general, however, it is obviously a very usable facsimile which clearly reveals, in spite of its mutilated condition, *Colombino's* superior esthetic quality.

This monograph, prepared with scholarly zeal and dedication, constitutes a major contribution to Mesoamerican studies. Not the least of its merits is the high degree of scholarly cooperation it exhibits, joining the foremost interpreter of the Mixteca pictorials with a relative newcomer to the field who, in her first substantial publication, has made an important scholarly contribution. It is also an excellent demonstration of the value of a combined attack on problems of this kind, wherein archival investigations, questioning of informants in the field, and painstaking comparative analysis of all relevant sources can result in a much more penetrating study than any more limited single line of research could achieve. And it is to be hoped that this important monograph signals, along with certain other recent contributions, a positive trend in the direction of greater utilization of this broad front brand of scholarship. Finally, it should be especially noted that with the appearance of this volume, Alfonso Caso's great project to decipher all surviving Mixteca pictorials takes another sizable leap forward towards completion, a signal event which is sure to be received with considerable satisfaction by all those currently active in the challenging but rewarding field of Mesoamerican ethnohistory.

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