

Be a Myth Busting Archeologist!

Power and Authority in Oaxaca, Mexico (1500-1700)

Myth #1: The Spanish completely subjugated the indigenous people of the region

Myth #2: Spanish completely destroyed indigenous faith and forced everyone to become Catholic

What archeologists do:

Archeologists investigate and preserve fragile clues of former cultures so that people today and in the future will be able to understand our link to the past.

What you are tasked with doing:

In groups, you will be given several pieces of evidence. It is your job to put the clues together to explain how the Spanish and the natives within the region of Oaxaca Mexico borrowed and shared ideas about art, architecture, religion and the leadership during the 16th century. Below, in italics, is a description from the [National Parks Services](#) of the steps archeologists must follow through their work. You too will be following similar steps....

Step 1:

Research

Before an archaeologist begins a site survey, the area's background must be researched. The history can provide information about who lived there, what structures may have been in the area, and how the landscape has changed over time.

You and your group will also be required to do preliminary research to develop a better context for the time and place of the artifacts that you are investigating.

Step 2:

Survey

An area is inspected to record and collect artifacts found on the surface or in subsurface tests to determine potential significance of a site and to decide where it would be appropriate to conduct further testing or excavation.

In this case I have surveyed the area for you.

Step 3:

Excavation

The portions of the site to be investigated are usually divided into 1 meter square areas that are meticulously excavated until no more cultural material is found. The site is not dug just with shovels. Soil may be removed with trowels, paint brushes or dental picks. Larger artifacts are left in place until entirely uncovered, photographed and mapped. All soil removed is carefully screened so that small artifact pieces are saved. Artifacts are bagged and labeled with information on the soil layer from which they came, the excavator's names and site number.

In your case, you will be receiving the “artifacts” in the form of photographs that have already been cleaned and labeled.

Step 4:

Analysis

The archaeologist examines the objects to learn how and when they were made and used. Artifacts that are difficult to identify are replicated and experimented with to determine how they may have been used.

You and your group mates will need to analyze the artifacts you are given and determine their significance as it relates to the research question above.

Step 5:

Reporting

A report containing all information gathered from the site must be written.

Once you have completed your written report, you and your group mates will be asked to present your findings to the rest of the class.

Group 1: ICONOGRAPHY

Christian and Mesoamerican iconography

Step 1: Research

Directions: When answering the following questions, you may refer to different sources either in print or on the Internet, but all sources must be cited and will be reviewed. Answers must be phrased in your own words. If you copy a text it must be quoted and properly cited.

1. What is “iconography?”
2. Why is iconography used? What purpose does it serve?
3. Give an example of iconography that is common in Spanish churches in the 1500s.
4. Give an example of iconography that is common in Mesoamerica pre-contact.
5. Give an example of iconography that you are familiar with
6. Who was Tlaltecuhli? (see:
http://books.google.ch/books?id=7tGyviw2ZHwC&pg=PA128&dq=Tlaltecuhli&hl=en&sa=X&ei=LBVqVTeRG4X0PI2PgJAE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Tlaltecuhli&f=false)

Step 3: Excavation

1. Where is the image of the saint and guardian angel from?
2. When was it build?
3. What is the Codex Zouche-Nuttall?
4. When was it created?

Step 4: Analysis

1. What do the guardian angel below the angel and the image from the Zouche-Nuttall Codex have in common? Describe in detail.
2. Why is this similarity significant?
3. Why would there be a relief of a Mesoamerican deity on the bottom of a church column?
4. Assuming the local population knew about the relief at the base of the column, how might they interpret this? (You can offer a few interpretations)
5. How might these artifacts help debunk some of the ideas of what happened during the conquest?

Group 2: ARCHITECTURE

Casa de la Cacia, Teposcolula

Step 1: Research

Directions: When answering the following questions, you may refer to different sources either in print or on the Internet, but all sources must be cited and will be reviewed. Answers must be phrased in your own words. If you copy a text it must be quoted and properly cited.

1. What is a *cacica* (sometimes spelled cacique/a)?

Step 3: Excavation

1. When was the Casa de la Cacica in Teposcolua constructed?
2. What function did it serve?
3. Who lived there?
4. What was Mitla?
5. What does Document 1 say about houses of important people in the region of Meixco before the conquest?
6. What does Document 2 reveal about how cities were planned post contact in Teposcolula?

Step 4: Analysis

1. What similarities do you notice between the house and the three images from the codex that have been “excavated”?
2. What does this similarity reveal about power and control during the period in which the house was constructed and in use? (Think about how it was possible for so few Spaniards to come and control masses of people abroad. How could this have happened?)
3. How might these artifacts help debunk some of the ideas of what happened during the conquest?

Group 3: CODICES

Spanish and Mesoamerican use of Codices

Step 1: Research

Directions: When answering the following questions, you may refer to different sources either in print or on the Internet, but all sources must be cited and will be reviewed. Answers must be phrased in your own words. If you copy a text it must be quoted and properly cited.

1. What is a codex?
2. What were codices used for?
3. Who was Lord 8 Deer?

Step 3: Excavation

1. What happened to most of the Mesoamerican codices? Where are they today?
2. What was the purpose of the Lienzo of Ihuitlan? How do you know?

Step 4: Analysis

1. Why would the Spanish want to translate the stories in the Nuttall codex into Spanish?
2. What might be significant about the fact that they translated the story of Lord Eight Deer (Jaguar Claw)?
3. What is drawn into the codes from the Rufino Tamayo Museum? What might that tell us about the relationship of the Spanish and the indigenous people of the region?
4. How might these artifacts help debunk some of the ideas of what happened during the conquest?

Group 4: CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

Open-air cathedrals

Step 1: Research

Directions: When answering the following questions, you may refer to different sources either in print or on the Internet, but all sources must be cited and will be reviewed. Answers must be phrased in your own words. If you copy a text it must be quoted and properly cited.

1. What are missionaries?
2. Why was it important for the Spanish to convert the people in the region to Christianity?
3. What are some strategies you already know that the Spanish used to convert people during this conquest?

Step 3: Excavation

1. Where are the churches located?
2. What was Monte Alban?

Step 4: Analysis

1. Why would Christian Missionaries build open-air cathedrals? (Try to come up with at least 3 reasons)
2. What are the advantages of an open-air cathedral as opposed to closed and covered cathedral?
3. How might the local residents have received these open-air cathedrals? How do you know?
4. How might these artifacts help debunk some of the ideas of what happened during the conquest?

Group 5: RITUALS

Feathers

Step 1: Research

Directions: When answering the following questions, you may refer to different sources either in print or on the Internet, but all sources must be cited and will be reviewed. Answers must be phrased in your own words. If you copy a text it must be quoted and properly cited.

1. What are religious rituals?
2. Why are they important?
3. Describe a ritual that you are familiar with, either from home, or from a local religious center, or even from a film?

Step 3: Excavation

1. Where are these pictures from?
2. When was the excerpt from Fray Pedro de Gante written?

Step 4: Analysis

1. What techniques did Fray Pedro de Gante use to work with indigenous converts?
2. What do you see in the Mapa de Cuahltantzincó that is notable?
3. What similarities do you see in the painted folded screen from 1690?
4. What do these artifacts reveal about how Christianity was accepted by the recent converts in the region?
5. What might this reveal about what happened to their own set of beliefs and rituals?
6. How might these artifacts help debunk some of the ideas of what happened during the conquest?

Group 7: RESISTANCE

María Achichina

Step 1: Research

Directions: When answering the following questions, you may refer to different sources either in print or on the Internet, but all sources must be cited and will be reviewed. Answers must be phrased in your own words. If you copy a text it must be quoted and properly cited.

1. Look up and define the word resistance?
2. What other historical moments of resistance are you familiar with? Why and how did those people resist?
3. What is the Codex Cardona?

Step 3: Excavation

1. Identify each document as either a primary or secondary source.
2. In your own words summarize separately, what Taylor, Wood and Katz explain about resistance by indigenous groups in the early stages of the Spanish conquest.

Step 4: Analysis

1. Why do you think indigenous groups did not band together to resist the Spanish as a whole?
2. Why were indigenous groups respectful of the King and Viceroy?
3. Why did they resist more on the small and local level?
4. Why do you think there is such scarce primary source evidence of resistance against the Spanish today?
5. How might María Achichina's story help debunk some of the ideas of what happened during the conquest?

Group 1 - ICONOGRAPHY



Photography of one of the statues placed on either side of the side entrance of the Church in Teposcolula. Photography by Nitzan Ziv.



Codex Zouche-Nuttall

(British Museum ADD.MSS 39671)

http://www.famsi.org/research/graz/zouche_nuttall/img_page80.html



Column base from a church carved from a prehispanic temple stone bearing a relief of the deity Tlaltecuhltli – Courtesy of Prof. Haskett



From the book "El Pueblo del sol" by Alfonso Caso



The Aztec earth mother goddess Tlaltecuhltli.
<http://www.natgeocreative.com/photography/135963>

Group 2: ARCHITECTURE



Casa del la Cacica as it stands in 2014. This structure was a pre-Columbian palace that housed the leaders of the community.
Photograph by Nitzan Ziv



Detail of the circular symbols of preciousness and nobility in the house of the Cacica.
Teposcolula. (S. Wood, 2009)

Note the Jade stone surrounding the iconic disc symbol.



Image of iconography from Mitla. Circles as a symbol of water. Mitla was inhabited as early as 650 CE by Zapotecs. Mixtecs took over around 1000 CE.

Document 1: ARCHITECTURAL FUSION AND INDIGENOUS IDEOLOGY
IN EARLY COLONIAL TEPOSCOLULA (<http://interamericaninstitute.org/teposcolula.htm>)

"..the buildings in which the ruler lived were of a type that had a special name, "Tlatocacalli," which described this special class or type of building, notable because it was "... a good, fine, cherished, proper house." And the most notable visual feature of the building in the illustration is the disk frieze. There was clearly an association of the ruler, "or him who is esteemed," with a particular and appropriate type of special building in the pre-contact world."

Document 2: ARCHITECTURAL FUSION AND INDIGENOUS IDEOLOGY
IN EARLY COLONIAL TEPOSCOLULA (<http://interamericaninstitute.org/teposcolula.htm>)

"Documentary evidence and standing buildings show that from an early date indigenous leaders in various parts of colonial Mexico were systematically manipulating elements of the incoming European architecture in a deliberate fusion with well known elements of pre-contact form culture, consciously creating new, distinctive, high status building types..."

In Teposcolula and elsewhere, then, the evidence shows that the indigenous leadership participated in the process of urban planning, successfully transmitting important elements of their traditional culture into the new era as permanent and highly visible components of their new built environment."



Codex Zouche-Nuttall

<http://www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/aztec-life/tying-the-knot/kids>



Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus I, p. 5.

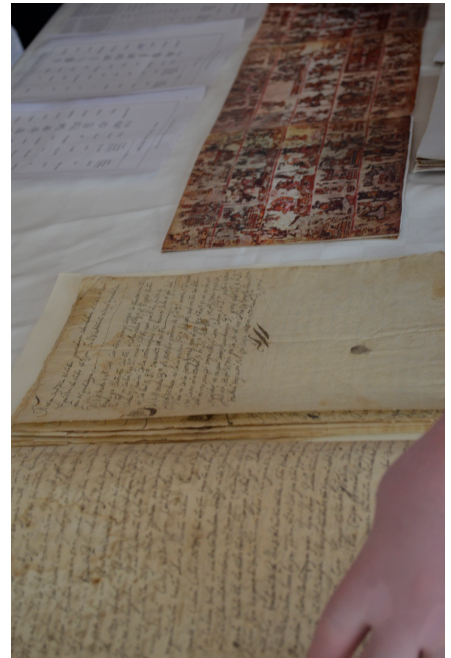
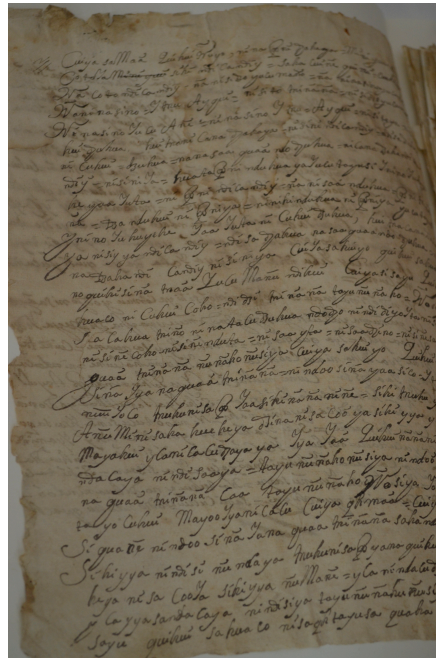
<http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/mexcodex/vind05.htm>



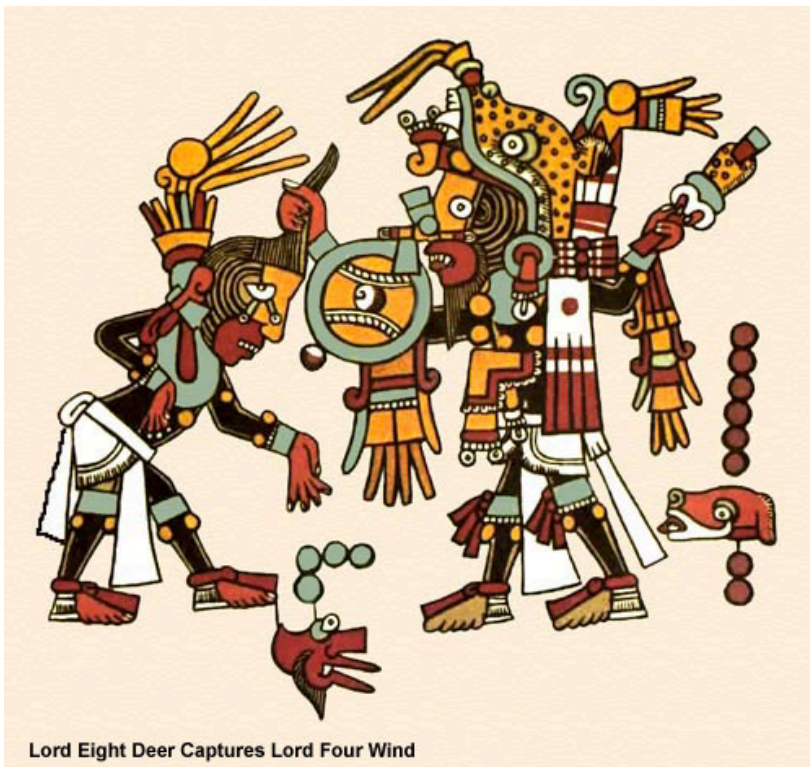
Vienna Codex

From the archives at
the British Museum

Group 3: CODICES

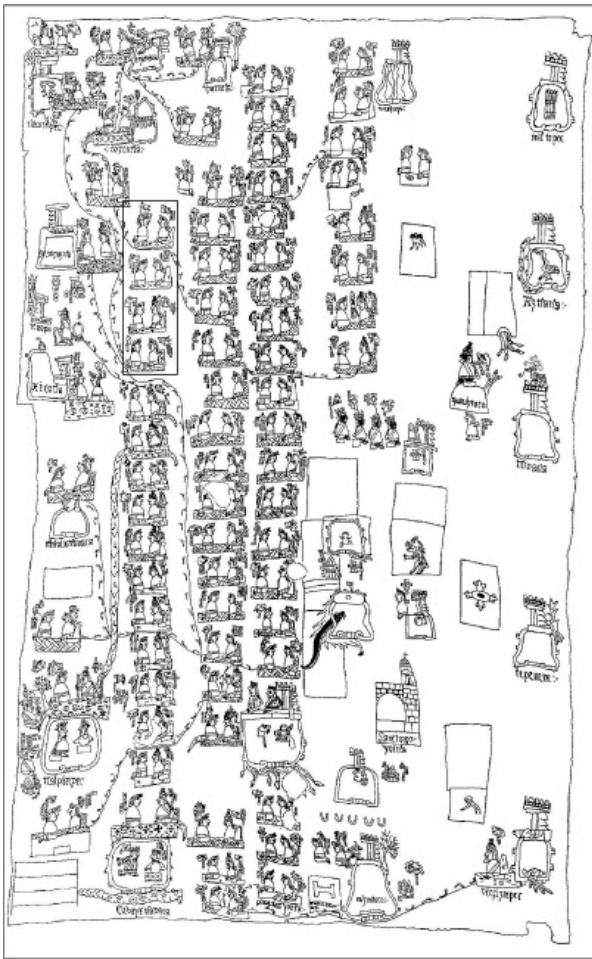


Dr. van Doesburg showing a group of teachers a Spanish translation of the story of Lord 8 Deer from the Nuttall Codex. Photos by Nitzan Ziv.



Lord Eight Deer Captures Lord Four Wind

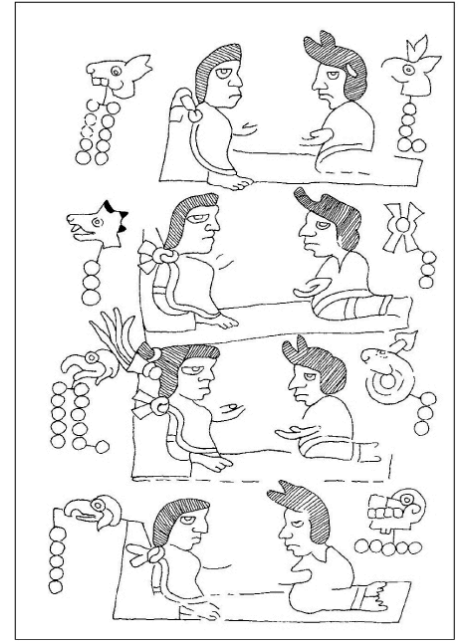
<http://www.famsi.org/research/pohl/jpcodices/pohlmiotec4.html>



Lienzo of Ihuitlan

Pictorial Mixtec genealogies from the early colonial period demonstrate that native societies had been highly stratified since the pre-Hispanic era. For indigenous people, hereditary status played a large part in one's social standing, much as it did for their European counterparts.

Brooklyn Museum



An indigenous-style mapa in Oaxaca's Museo Rufino Tamayo. Courtesy of Dr. S Wood.

Group 4: CHURCH ARCHITECTURE



Above: The church at Teposcolula with the open chapels on both sides of the central nave. (S. Wood, 2009)
To the Left: Close up view of Capilla Abierta (Open Chapel) at Coixtlahuaca. The architecture of these spaces allows for excellent acoustics. (Photo by Nitzan Ziv)



Images of Temples from Monte Alban (only 115 km away from Teposcolula approx. 1.5 hour drive). These Zapotec temples were constructed around 500 BCE, long before the Spanish arrived. Most of the religious rituals and ceremonies took place in the open spaces around the temples. (Photos by Nitzan Ziv)

Group 5: RITUALS

1557 -- Fray Pedro de Gante describing for King Philip II a technique he had developed in 1526 for working with indigenous converts: "Their whole worship had consisted in dancing and singing before their own gods.... Upon comprehending this and realizing that all their songs were composed to honor their gods, I composed a very elaborate one myself, but the subject-matter was God's law and our faith that Christ was born of the holy and undefiled Virgin Mary. About two months before Christmas I also gave them some designs to paint on their dancing togs because they always danced and sang in costumes that bespoke happiness, sorrow, or victory." (Stevenson, *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory*, 93.)



Dancing with feathers,
from the 17th-century Mapa
de Cuauhtlantzinco
(19th-century copy; University
of Oregon, courtesy of
Stephanie Wood)



Indigenous men
dressed in "pre-
conquest" outfits
dance the Mitote at a
wedding feast;
central Mexican
biombo (painted
folding screen) c.
1690

Group 7: Resistance

Document 1: In *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (1979), William B. Taylor writes that most rebellions of the ones he studies from 1680-1811 were not based on a banding together to resist intrusions on the whole but rather manifested as rioting and small-scale uprisings to particular local conditions (pg 133-134).

“The circumstances surrounding the village uprisings in...Oaxaca...despite impressive levels of violence...few are examples of complete breakdown in the system...between colonial rulers and village subjects. The community’s sense of outrage in an overwhelming number of cases was directed not against “the Ruler” – the king and the viceroy enjoyed unquestioned respect, but against individuals who personally embodied the abuse of authority in specific local cases of perceived deprivation of tyranny: the *alcalde* mayor [the Spanish official in charge of a district], his lieutenant in charge of the village, the royal tax collector, or the parish priest.”

Document 2: Dr. Stephanie Wood, or the University of Oregon
(<http://blogs.uoregon.edu/mesoinstitute/about/curriculum-unit-development/spanish-conquest/resistance/>)

“In his book, *The Nahuas* (1992), historian James Lockhart emphasizes how the micro-patriotism inherent in the independent socio-political entities or ethnic states, such as the altepetl, discouraged indigenous people seeing themselves as united with their neighbors and undermined pan-Indian unification. (One can imagine that fierce independence and community focus also ensured cultural survival to some extent; but these were not really “closed” communities. That was an exaggeration. Indigenous communities always traded with other communities and had marriage partners across communities.)”

Document 3: Historian Friedrich Katz, *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution*, 1988 (pg 79)

“The crown and the church, because of their efforts to control the hacendados [owners of the estates] and the encomenderos [those who received legal rights to specified number of local laborers], acquired legitimacy in many Indians’ eyes. For a long time, this legitimacy constituted a powerful deterrent to any serious attack on the Spanish colonial system. Most rebellions were directed at local officials, and the Indians mostly remained firmly convinced that the crown, if it only knew, would redress their wrongs.”

Document 4: Colonial Uprisings, Dr. Stephanie Wood of Oregon University.

(<http://blogs.uoregon.edu/mesoinstitute/about/curriculum-unit-development/spanish-conquest/resistance/>)

“There were some exceptions to the rule. A central-Mexican, sixteenth-century resistance movement is described in the possibly apocryphal Codex Cardona. In it, resistance efforts were led by a María Achichina (also spelled Axixina), who organized and armed people, only to be arrested by Spanish authorities and then hanged.”

Document 5: The Search for the Codex Cardona By Arnold Bauer (pg 92)

“The Codex Cardona devotes several pages and vivid illustrations to a second indigenous woman, Maria Axixina (or Achichina or Chichina), who was accused of gathering weapons in an apparent anti-Spanish conspiracy; she was discovered and hanged, and her house was burned. One of the Cardona’s illustrations shows her with accomplices carrying arrows; in another she’s dangling from the scaffold with co-conspirators.”



A portrait of María Achichina in the Codex Cardona, possibly a late-colonial manuscript in private hands.
(Courtesy of S. Wood)



**María Achichina (Left),
Executed for Leading Rebellion
(Codex Cardona)**

The Search for Answers about the Cardona
By Stephanie Wood