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A Mixtec-Language Atlas of the Mixteca Alta



Research Year: 2007

Culture: Mixtec

Chronology: 15th to 20th century / Postclassic, Colonial, Post-Independence

Location: Oaxaca, Mexico

Sites: Nochixtlán Valley, Mixteca, Teposcolula Valley, Coixtlahuaca Valley

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Abstract

The decipherment of place glyphs continues to challenge our understanding of the Mixtec codices. A rich but unused source of information on Mixtec place names are colonial and independence-period land boundary documents. These include early twentieth-century copies of nineteenth-century town boundary maps in the Mapoteca Orozco y Berra (Mexico City); sixteenth- to twentieth-century alphabetic land litigation documents, some of them with accompanying maps, in the Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico City), and nineteenth- and twentieth-century alphabetic texts and maps in the Archivo General Agrario (Mexico City) and the Archivo General del Estado de Oaxaca (Oaxaca City). This final report presents the results of my FAMSI-funded research in these archives. Project results include a) a .pdf index compiling all of the towns and Mixtec place names encountered in my research, organized by document; b) dozens of small-scale maps in which the place names for each particular document have been plotted; c) a large-scale map which combines the information from each individual document-map; and d) alphabetic transcriptions of the various documents consulted and from which the data in the index and maps have been taken. In addition, this final report presents a) an explanation of the methods used in this research, b) a User's Guide to the above-mentioned resources, and c) a discussion of some of the patterns found in these documents. In particular, I discuss what these land documents reveal about how place names changed over the course of the colonial and independence periods, and how these diachronic changes shape how we can use place names attested in colonial and independence-period documents to interpret the rich topographies painted in the prehispanic and early colonial Mixtec screenfolds.

Resumen

El desciframiento de los glifos topográficos continúa desafiando nuestra comprensión de los códices mixtecos. Una fuente rica--pero inusitada--de la información sobre topónimos mixtecos son los documentos alfabéticos de linderos de las épocas coloniales y nacionales. Actualmente se puede encontrar estos documentos en varios fondos: copias del s. XX de mapas del s. XIX en la Mapoteca Orozco y Berra (México DF); documentos alfabéticos de litigios sobre tierras (algunos con mapas) del s. XVI hasta el s. XX en el Archivo General de la Nación de México (México DF); y documentos alfabéticos y mapas de los siglos XIX y XX en el Archivo General Agrario (México DF) y el Archivo General del Estado de Oaxaca (Ciudad de Oaxaca). Este informe presenta los resultados de mis investigaciones apoyadas por FAMSI. Los resultados incluyen a) un índice formato .pdf que combina los nombres de todos los pueblos y nombres topográficos mixtecos que encontré en mis investigaciones, organizado por documento, b) docenas de mapas de escala pequeña en que los nombres topográficos de cada documento han estado registrado; c) un mapa de escala grande que combina los datos de cada mapa de escala pequeña; d) transcripciones mecanografiadas de los documentos originales que generaron los datos en el índice y mapas. Además, este informe presenta a) un explicación de los métodos utilizados en este proyecto; b) una Guía del Usuario para los recursos generados en este proyecto; c) una discusión de unos de los temas temáticas que aparecen en estos documentos.

Específicamente, ¿Qué indican estos documentos sobre los cambios de nombres topográficos a lo largo de las épocas coloniales y nacionales? ¿Qué es el impacto de estos cambios diacrónicos en la utilización de nombres topográficos encontrados en documentos coloniales y nacionales para interpretar las topografías ricas que se encuentran pintadas en los códices mixtecos prehispánicos y coloniales?

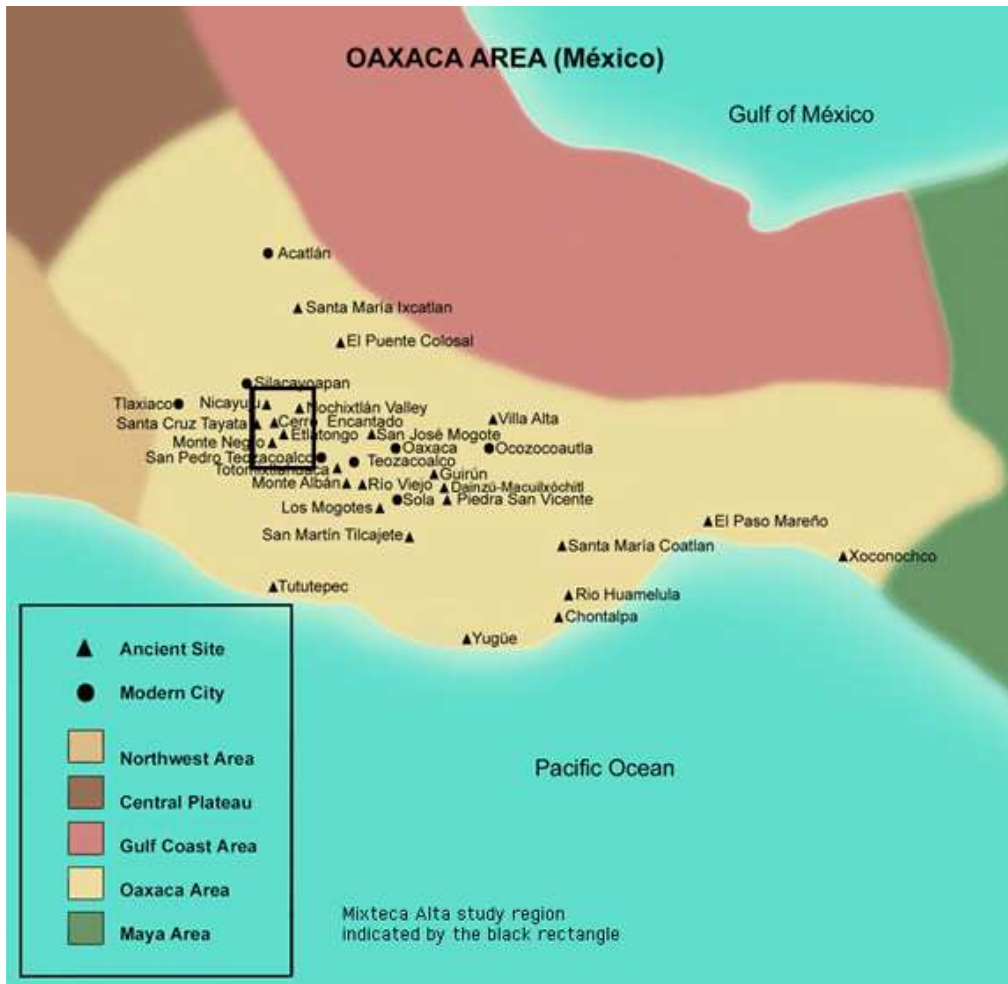


Figure 1. Location of the Mixteca Alta indicated by the black rectangle.

Introduction

The pages of the Mixtec screenfolds—created in Oaxaca, Mexico, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—are painted with hundreds of unidentified place signs (Figures [2 a](#) & [2b](#)). Geography was essential to Mixtec accounts of pre-Hispanic history, religion, and politics. The goal of this project was to create resources to study these prehispanic place signs by consulting colonial- and independence-period land litigation documents from the Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico ([Figure 1](#)). Research focused on a series of archives and documents: early twentieth-century copies of nineteenth-century maps in the Mapoteca Orozco y Berra in Mexico City; sixteenth- to twentieth-century alphabetic

texts (some with accompanying maps) in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City; alphabetic texts and maps from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Archivo General Agrario (Mexico City) and the Archivo General del Estado de Oaxaca in Oaxaca City. The generosity of Prof. Carlos Reyes allowed me to also consult documents in the Municipio of Yucuita. Thanks to FAMSI funding, and the generosity of these archives and their staff (in particular the aforementioned Carlos Reyes and Sr. Carlos Vidali Rebolledo of the Mapoteca Orozco y Berra) I have created a series of resources to aid future investigations into the nature of Mixtec perceptions of the landscape, both before and after the arrival of the Europeans. These include a) a .pdf index compiling all of the towns and Mixtec place names encountered in my research, organized by document; b) dozens of small-scale maps in which the place names for each particular document have been plotted; c) a large-scale map which combines the information from each individual document-map; and d) alphabetic transcriptions of the various documents consulted and from which the data in the index and maps have been taken.

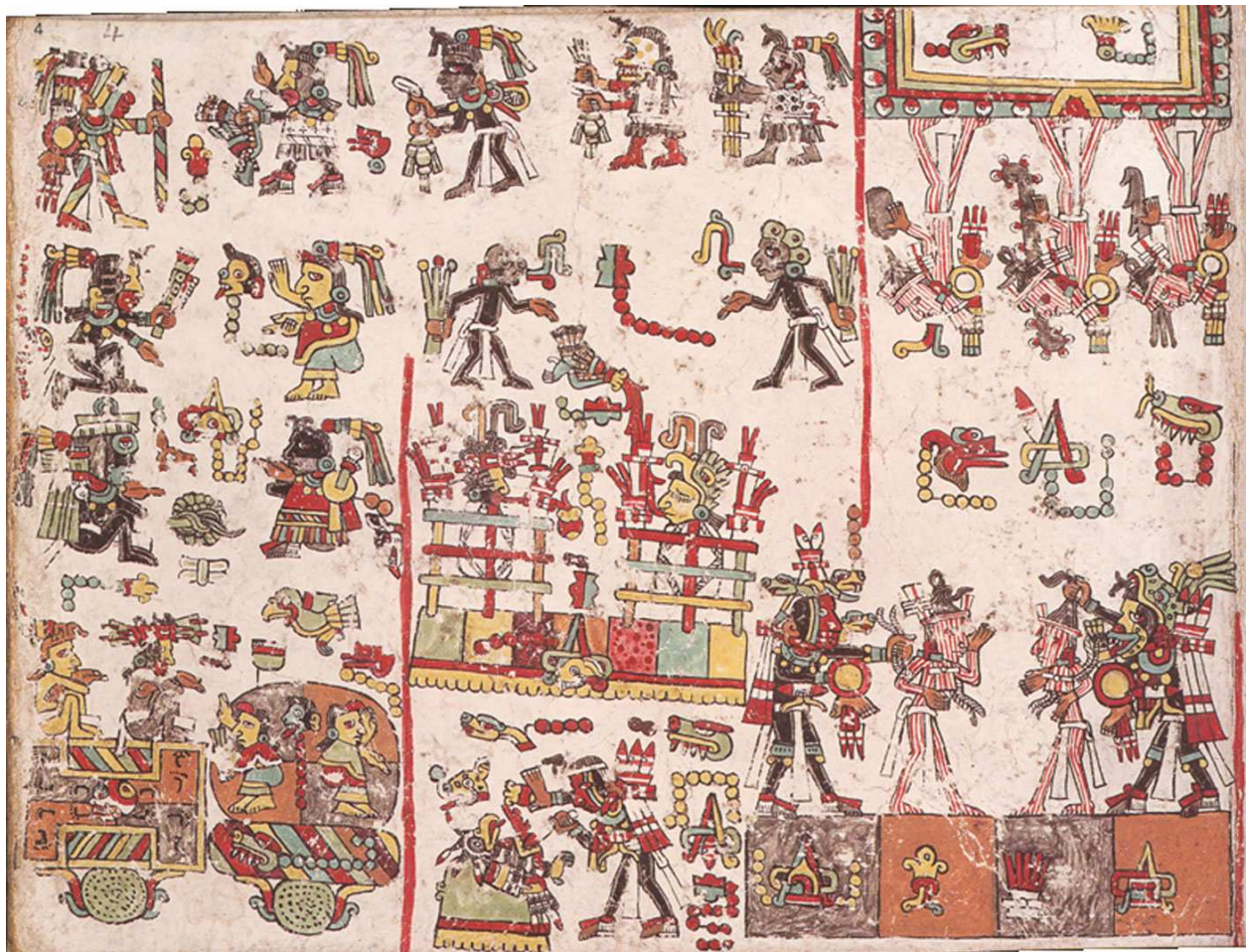


Figure 2a. Mixtec place signs on page 3 4 of the Codex Nuttall.



Figure 2b. Mixtec place signs on page 4 of the Codex Nuttall.

These resources will be made available online at the FAMSI website: <http://www.famsi.org/reports/07002/index.html>. This report has three main goals. First, I talk about the methods behind this project, beginning with the differences between prehispanic documents and colonial ones, and the ways in which the nature of colonial documents shaped the way I conceived of this research. Second, I present a “User’s Guide” for navigating the resources this project generated. Third, I present a synthesis of some of the patterns found in these documents. In particular, I discuss what these land documents reveal about how place names changed over the course of the colonial and independence periods, and how these diachronic changes shape how we can use place names attested in colonial and independence-period documents to interpret the rich topographies painted in the prehispanic and early colonial Mixtec screenfolds.

Method

Colonial-era land boundary documents, like colonial-era elite genealogies, were created using criteria that differed from their prehispanic precedents. Mary Elizabeth Smith

(1994:121) has pointed out that colonial-era genealogies center on the genealogy of a single town, whereas prehispanic genealogical records combine the genealogies of a number of different royal families. Similarly, while colonial-era land documents record the land boundaries surrounding a single town, prehispanic images of geography traverse the Mixtec landscape. The colonial one-point-perspective view of the landscape would, of course, continue after Mexican national independence in the early 19th century. Colonial and national-era land documents and prehispanic Mixtec screenfolds thus view the landscape with very different eyes. In order to use single-site-centered colonial and national land documents to interpret prehispanic Mixtec screenfold geographies, this project has brought together the contents of many individual colonial land documents. This combinatory approach has generated a large-scale map (AtlasMixteco.tif; overview in [Figure 3](#)) which transcends the narrow single-town vision of colonial land documents, and thus reconstructs a pan-Mixtec geography more in keeping with the geographic vision of the prehispanic screenfolds. There is an obvious caveat in this project: land documents tend to focus on boundaries between towns, and so the names of places within those boundaries (which are often places from which towns take their names) are often not attested in colonial sources.

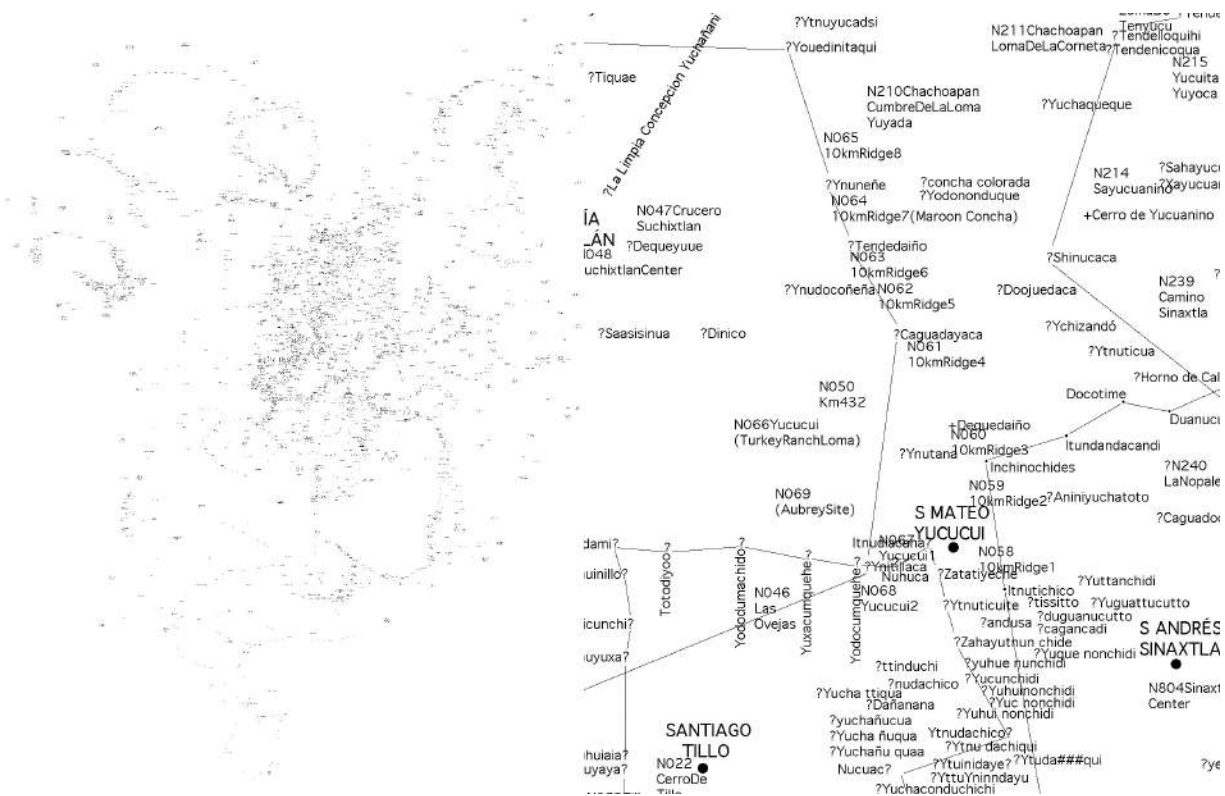


Figure 3. AtlasMixteco main map; overview (left) and detail (right).

Significantly, although this study has drawn on some pictorial maps (above all from the Mapoteca Orozco y Berra), these have not been the focus of my research. In part this is because a forthcoming study of colonial Oaxacan maps is being prepared by William

Autry of the University of Chicago. But it is mostly because I was interested in finding out what could be learned from the rich alphabetic accounts of Mixtec topography recorded in land litigation documents. These documents, although usually unillustrated, often present a “relational” map of land boundaries. That is, they are centered in one town, and then guide the reader through a virtual walking-tour of the town’s boundaries (often tours which actually took place in vistas de ojos boundary-affirmation rituals). For example, AGN Tierras Legajo 3688 Expediente 3 describes the land boundaries of Magdalena Zahuatlán in 1717. Early in the morning, over several days in that year, the residents of Zahuatlán left their town center and walked with a Crown official to the various boundary markers that separated their lands from those of other towns. The names of these boundary markers are recorded in the document, in Mixtec, and the reader is given a relative spatial coordinate for each: between Zahuatlán and Tecomatlán, between Zahuatlán and Etlatongo, between Zahuatlán and Jaltepetongo, etcetera. These alphabetic records do not—like a 21st-century Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática (INEGI) map—record an absolute geography (where each place is located according to latitude and longitude coordinates). They instead record a relative geography, giving us an idea of the names of places that once existed in the Mixteca, and a general position of these places on the ground (between which two or three or sometimes four towns). By combining these alphabetically-described relational geographies, a relational map of the Mixteca Alta has been generated. Again, this map does not tell us exactly where, on the ground, each place is located (and thus most place names are prefaced with a ? mark on the maps). However, it does tell us what places were near each other, and where they are, relatively speaking, in relation to nearby towns. In its imprecision, then, this project has thus been much like an archaeological survey. Archeological surveys cover a lot of ground, and provide general contours for the occupational history of a region. But they are notoriously incomplete: taphonomic processes mean that certain sites may not be registered at all, and that the time period of potsherds registered on the current land surface may offer a very incomplete register of the actual history of occupation of the area. This is why archaeological verification is a central, subsequent stage to initial settlement pattern surveys. Similarly, my own project covers a lot of ground, and records thousands of Mixtec place names and their general location on the ground. What is now needed is further in-depth research to correlate these names more precisely to geographic features that can be seen today.

These, then, are the basic assumptions, and main end product, of my FAMSI-funded research. However, this single Atlas has been generated from a number of different kinds of documents (alphabetic texts as well as pictorial texts) originally created over a span of five centuries, from the late 1500s to the late 1900s. Using the place names recorded on this single Atlas map, then, raise a number of additional questions of method. These will be addressed in the next section, which presents a User’s Guide to the various resources generated in this study. This “User’s Guide” is thus broadly defined: it covers not only what kinds of resources have been generated by this study, but also theoretical issues that should be considered when drawing on them in future research.

User's Guide

The research for this project took place in two basic stages. First, I consulted documents in a number of Mexican archives. I made transcriptions of these documents, as well as ordered photographs and photocopies of maps when available. Transcriptions of the alphabetic information on these maps were then made as well. I then generated visual maps which plotted the general locations of these place names relative to the surrounding towns. As a base for plotting these maps, I used 300-dpi scans of 1:50,000 scale maps of the Mixteca Alta (D25, D26, D35, D36, D45, and D46) produced by Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática (INEGI). A grayscale copy of the base map over which I drafted all of the small-scale drafts is downloadable on this project's page in the [GENERAL RESOURCES](#) of the FAMSI website (INEGIMixtecaAlta.jpg). [Figure 4](#) shows the map generated from the all-alphabetic vista de ojos performed around Zahuatlán in 1717. As you will see, most of the Mixtec-language place names are prefaced by a ? mark, indicating that their location on-the-ground is relative, not absolute. And you will also see that most names include a listing of multiple spelling variants found in the document.



Figure 4. Map generated from the 1717 Zahuatlán vista de ojos.

My transcriptions of the 1717 Zahuatlán vista de ojos and all of the other documents I consulted are downloadable (arranged by archive) in the [SPECIFIC RESOURCES](#) section of the online presentation of this project's resources. Each is accompanied by the visual map I drafted (such as that in [Figure 4](#)) based on the information recorded in the document in question. These transcriptions have been saved as text-searchable .pdf files; names of Mixtec communities are highlighted in yellow; names of Mixtec place names are highlighted in green. These transcriptions are important because they provide the context in which place names are mentioned. Users can thus verify the locations of place signs that I have plotted on the accompanying maps. Users can also discover when certain place names, or their locations, were challenged by neighboring communities. Users can occasionally also get an idea of what local conflicts influenced

a decision to bureaucratically-record place name locations (such as the destruction of crops or even the murder of farmers). I should stress that although these transcripts are extensive, they are still usually excerpts from a larger document. Many of the Expedientes in the Tierras section of the AGN in Mexico City run hundreds of pages, only a few of which may deal with town boundaries. Thus a great deal of documentation connected to these place-name registers has not been transcribed, and awaits further study in the archives. My own project, it should be stressed, was designed as an initial survey which future research could use as a starting point.

Significantly, all transcriptions of archival documents, even those published on paper, will contain errors and omissions. Transcriptions of archival documents should always be checked against the text of the original files. Transcriptions of documents are thus a starting point for further archival research, and it is in this spirit that we present the document transcriptions found here. Handwritten colonial texts contain a number of abbreviations that do not translate easily to a typewritten document. I have used the following transcription system:

- Except where indicated, line breaks follow those found in the original document.
- Colonial-era spelling allowed a great deal of freedom, and in these transcriptions we have not modernized spellings or inserted accents. Common spelling variations in early modern Castilian made the letters b, “u,” and “v,” equivalent, as well as s, “ç,” and “z.”
- Items in [brackets] are comments or explanations inserted by the 21st century transcriber.
- The carat ^ indicates that the text after the carat is written in a superscript. If two carats are found in the same word, the text between the carats is in superscript, and the text outside the carats is in normal script. A common abbreviation for “que” consisted of the letter “q” followed by a flourish; this has been indicated by writing “q^” and “dho” is a common abbreviation for “dicho.”
- Uncertain transcriptions have been marked with ?question?marks? Where the document is torn or damage, missing paper is marked with ### signs.
- Pages are normally indicated using a number plus “r” or “v”, indicating whether the text is on the front (recto) or back (verso) of the page.
- The following abbreviations have been used to title the map and transcription files:
 - AGA ARCHIVO GENERAL AGRARIO, MEXICO CITY
 - AGEO ARCHIVO GENERAL DEL ESTADO DE OAXACA, OAXACA CITY
 - AGN ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACIÓN, MEXICO CITY
 - MOyB MAPOTECA OROZCO Y BERRA, MEXICO CITY

Archive names are usually followed by the name of the subsection (such as Tierras), the number of the Legajo the document is found in, and finally the number of the Expediente (Exp) within that Legajo. The .pdf file and map labeled AGNTierras3688Exp3 thus refer to documents in the Archivo General de la Nación, Section Tierras, Legajo 3688, Expediente 3. Folio numbers can be found by consulting

the .pdf of the transcribed text.

The first stage of this project, then, involved transcribing and mapping the geographic information from scores of individual documents. The second stage involved joining all of these separate geographical registers into large-scale compilations. These compilations, both alphabetic and visual, are also downloadable in the [GENERAL RESOURCES](#) section of the online presentation of this project's resources of the FAMSI website.

All of the individual document-maps have been joined together to create the AtlasMixteco, a 300 dpi .tif file. This is the main visual result of this project: an attempt to connect single-town landscape perspectives in colonial and national-period geographic registers into the pan-Mixteca Alta vision recorded in prehispanic documents. In addition—so as not to disguise the fact that this pan-Mixteca Alta vision has been generated from documents spanning 5 centuries), 5 other maps have been created that join all of the geographic information from documents from a given century: AtlasMixteco16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. The numbers, of course, refer to the century from which the plotted documents come (16th, 17th, etc.). A final large-scale map found in the [GENERAL RESOURCES](#) section is SporesNochixtlán1972.tif, a map of the archaeological sites compiled from Ronald Spores' 1972 *An Archaeological Settlement Survey of the Nochixtlán Valley, Oaxaca*. The location of these sites has been included in the AtlasMixteco, as well as in AtlasMixteco20.

If the AtlasMixteco presents a visual compilation and summary of all the place names recorded in the individual documents transcribed and mapped in my study, the AtlasMixtecoIndex.pdf presents an alphabetic compilation of these place names. This text-searchable .pdf file provides an outline-summary of all of the documents studied in this project, arranged by archive and by document. [Figure 5](#) shows the Index entry for the Zahuatlán 1717 *vista de ojos*, AGNTierras3688Exp3. The first column to left lists the name of the document in question. The second column lists the date or dates of the document. The third column lists all of the towns implicated in the document's geographic information. Usually this list begins with the "central" town, the town about which, and from whose perspective, the document has been written. The final column lists the place names (usually in Mixtec, but occasionally in Spanish) listed in the document. When multiple spelling variants of specific places are included in the document, they are listed here, usually separated by a column on the same line, but sometimes listed on the subsequent line (when extremely long).

AGNTierras3688Exp3 1717	MAGDALENA ZAHUATLÁN	
	TECOMATLÁN	tototindoo , tototindo sahaitnucaa yique, sahaynutiCaieque Ytnuticahuio, SahaynutiCahuio sahayuhuitifee, sahayuhutifehe
	JALTEPEC	yodo nochuico, diqui yodo noho huico saha yuhuiyte, saha yuhui ite saha huiti yeche, sahayuhitiyechi
	S ANDRÉS SACHIO	Ytnusiyoyuu, Ytnutiyo yuu deque itnu tindeye, deque ytnu tindeye itnumana, Ytnu nama
	NOCHIXTLÁN	itnu tisacoto, Ytnutisaha coto
	ETLATONGO	Ytnudachiqh, Ytnu saha Chico sahaitnudachiqh, saha ytnu daha Chico Sa[ha]itnutiyayu, saha ytnu tiyayu dumayahui, duma yahui

Figure 5. AtlasMixtecoIndex page for the 1717 Zahuatlán vista de ojos.

The Index is intended as a way to navigate the visual information in the various maps, as well summarize as the prolix contents of the various transcribed documents. If a user is interested in the place names around a certain town, s/he can look at the AtlasMixteco map, see a place name of interest, and then search for that place name in the Index to find out what document that place name is recorded in. One can then turn from the Index's schematic view to the full transcription of the primary source document, to see the context in which said place name is listed. Alternatively, a researcher interested in the use of a particular Mixtec word in place signs can simply search for that word in the Index, and then follow the citational information to find out where place names with that word show up on the ground, and in what documents they are mentioned.

Finally, much as the AtlasMixteco is accompanied by 5 maps that plot place names according to their appearance over time, the Index begins with three pages that list all of the documents consulted in this study in chronological order.

Of course, the best way to understand what kinds of resources this study has compiled, and how they can be used together, is to simply explore these resources on your own. I will now move on to the final section of this report, which considers some of the initial findings that this study has produced about the history of place names, and their documentation, in the Mixteca Alta.

Findings

Using colonial and post-independence documents to understand the prehispanic past is

a complex task. In some cases several centuries will separate a colonial or post-independence land document from a pre-Hispanic screenfold. Place names, like all other cultural phenomenon, may change over time. Indeed, Mixtec place names had already been transformed in the decades prior to the arrival of the Spaniards: Aztec conquests in the Mixteca gave Nahuatl names to many Mixtec sites. The Spaniards continued this transformative process, giving towns the names of saints. The name of the Mixtec town of Santiago Tilantongo combines a Spanish saint with an approximate Nahuatl translation of the town's Mixtec name, *Nuu Tnoo*. Furthermore, over the centuries of colonial and post-independence rule, many Mixtec names for places were replaced by Spanish names. This study, by compiling data from 5 centuries of land documents, allows us to see some basic features of how place names have changed, and how they have stayed the same. Attentiveness to when certain clusters of land documents were produced also allows us to contextualize these sources within larger currents of Mexican and world history. Since these questions of temporal context are fundamental to consider when thinking of using colonial and national-era texts to interpret the prehispanic past, I will begin by making a few observations.

First, it is useful to consider when and why the various documents studied in this project were produced. Sometimes documents were produced for specific genealogical reasons: the deaths of indigenous caciques motivated the discussion of their land ownership in Teposcolula in 1569 (AGNTierras24Exp6) and Tidaa in 1642 (AGNTierras3690Exp2). Specific murders or uses of violence to take over territory could also motivate land documents, such as the use of Remington rifles by residents of Nuñú y Tlatayapam to take over lands belonging to Yodocono in 1882 (AGEOConflicto79Exp29). But broader historical contexts could also affect the production of land documents. Eleven documents with *vistas de ojos* were produced in the years 1717 and 1718 (AGNTierras1180Exp3, AGNTierras1462Exp11, AGNTierras2257Exp1, AGNTierras3539Exp5, AGNTierras3559Exp1, AGNTierras3688Exp3, AGNTierras3689Exp5, AGNTierras3690Exp4, AGNTierras1443Exp1, AGNTierras3690Exp10, AGNTierras3691Exp6). The motivation for this flurry of land-documentation was events in New Spain's broader imperial world. The death, without an heir, of King Charles II in 1700 provoked the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), which ended with the ascension of the (French) Bourbon King Philip V to the throne of Spain and its empire. One of his early acts as ruler was to issue royal decrees asking for detailed information about all of his newly-acquired realms. These decrees (which began as early as 26 October 1715; AGNTierras2084Exp12) were the trigger for a number of land-surveys in the Mixteca, as this account at the beginning of a 1718 *vista de ojos* document from Santa Catarina Adequez makes clear:

Por quanto su Magestad (que Dios guarde) por R.^{al} sedula expedida en Madrid a diez del mes de marzo del año pasado de setesientos y diez y siete refendado de Don Andres de Corouarnutia y s^o pide su secretario fue seruido de dar comision al Señor Liz^{do} Dⁿ diego de Suniga del mismo orden de Sⁿ tiago ? en su consejo en el R.^{al} y supremo de las Yndias y Junta de guerra de el para recaudar todo lo que se estubie# deuiendo decomprar de Villas, lugares, Jurisdiziones, Dehesas Vozques Plantios Alcaualas Pechos y Derechos, y otras Cosas que se aian enagenado y toquen a la RI

Corona tierras sittios Aguas, y lo demas que pertenesca... (AGN Tierras 3539 Exp 5 f. 1r)

Eight land boundary documents were produced in 1862 and 1864 (AGEOAdjuLeg20Exp9, AGEOConflictoLeg70Exp1, AGEOConflictoLeg79Exp26, AGNTierras3690Exp7, MOyB3365, MOyB3504, MOyB3419, MOyB3038); references to 1862 also appear in AGEOAAIII24Exp 11 and AGEOConflicto70Exp1. In this case, the context for the generation of land boundary documents is specifically national. During the rule of Mexican President Ignacio Comonfort (1855-1858), a number of attempts at Liberal reform were made. These included a new Constitution in 1857, and a year earlier, the Ley Lerido of 25 June 1856. This law abolished all corporate property in Mexico, forcing the privatization of both church lands and civil landholdings—such as the community lands that had been important for towns throughout the colonial period in the Mixteca Alta. These various reforms, however, were not met with universal acclaim, and triggered a civil war—the War of Reform—from 1857 to 1861. The war ended with a Liberal victory under president Benito Juárez, and thus it was not until the early 1860s that legislation forcing the privatization of communal lands from 1856 began to take effect. Privatization, of course, required knowing exactly what lands were owned by different communities, and hence a great deal of land-boundary documentation was produced in 1862 and 1863.

Global contexts again appear behind the ten land boundary documents produced in 1907 and 1909. The background here is probably dictator Porfirio Díaz's decision to move Mexico to the gold standard in 1905 and the world financial crisis of 1906, which impacted Mexico as it did much of the rest of the globe (MOyB3257, MOyB3269, MOyB3263, MOyB3325, MOyB3412, MOyB3412a, MOyB3418, MOyB3483, MOyB3506, AGEOAAIII Leg23Exp6; references to 1906 also appear in AGEOConflicto70Exp1 and AGEOAdju20Exp9).

Finally, a total of eleven land boundary documents were produced between 1920-1923, probably connected to the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920 and subsequent attempts to realize its pretensions to land reform (AGEOAAIII Leg23Exp16, AGEOAAIII Leg23Exp17, AGEOAAI Leg76Exp5, AGEOAAIII Leg23Exp14, AGEOAAIII Leg24Exp11, AGEOAAIII Leg24Exp12, AGEOAAIII Leg24Exp14, AGEOAAIII Leg24Exp15, AGEOAAIII Leg24Exp17, AGEOAAIII Leg28Exp4, AGEOAAIII Leg40Exp3).

Given that issues of land ownership in the Mixteca Alta were, from at least the early 18th century to the early 20th century, connected to historical developments both national (the War of Reform, the Revolution) and global (the War of Spanish Succession, the 1906 financial crisis) in scale, it should come as no surprise that place names in the Mixteca Alta have not remained frozen prehispanic fossils for the past 500 years. A number of changes—and specific moments in which place names were changed—are attested in the documents studied in this project. And yet some place names have indeed remained the same since the moment in which they are first archivally documented. No general laws can be proposed for how place names change or remain

the same. However, by understanding the range of different ways in which place names have changed or remained the same, we can make more informed decisions about how to apply names attested in more recent history to the prehispanic past.

Of course it has long been known that certain place names attested in both prehispanic screenfolds and in 16th-century sources are still used in the 21st century. The town of Tilantongo—the Nahuatl translation, presumably from the late 15th century, of the Mixtec name *Ñuu Tnoo*—provides a classic example. And, indeed, a number of place names encountered in this study remained unchanged from their first to their most recent attestation. Several places around Chachoapan mentioned in 1696—*totocoho*, *yucudahuico*—are also mentioned near Chachoapan in 1923 (*totocóo*, *yucudahuico*). *Yucudahuico* also appears on a late-20th-century INEGI map of the region (AGNTierras3036Exp3, AGEOAIIIIILeg24Exp11). *Dsequeyucunduhua* is listed north of Tiltepec in 1809; a late 20th-century INEGI map lists a *Yucundua* north of Tiltepec (AGNTierras985Exp1)

Processes of translation can have varying effects on place names. As Mary Elizabeth Smith pointed out long ago (1973), the Aztec conquest of the Mixteca Alta in the late 15th century meant that a number of Nahuatl names were applied to Mixtec towns. Some of these names—such as Tilantongo—were relatively accurate renditions in Nahuatl of the original Mixtec name. But other Nahuatl translations differed significantly from the Mixtec original. If one looks at contemporary INEGI maps of the Mixteca, one sees not only place names in Nahuatl, but also in Spanish: Cerro de la Campana, Cerro el Cacahuate, Cerro Prieto. My study suggests that, in some cases at least, these Spanish place names are reasonably accurate renderings of the place's original name in Mixtec. Thus in 1736, one of the boundaries of Nativitas is listed as *Yussa quini*. In 1907, one of the boundaries of Nativitas, roughly in the same region as *Yussa quini*, is “Loma de Agua Puerca” (MOyB3269). This is probably a rough, somewhat transformed translation of *Yussa quini*: River (*yussa*) of the Pig (*quini*, written as *quene* in Fray Francisco de Alvarado's 1593 Spanish-Mixtec *Vocabulario*). Places called *Dsiniyucutiyahua* (peak of the hill of the frog) and *Dsequeyucundaayaa* (peak of the hill of ash) listed north of Yanhuitlán and in 1809; a late-20th-century INEGI map names a Cerro de la Rana and Cerro de Ceniza in the same area (AGNTierras895Exp1).

A number of the documents studied in this project provide Spanish-language glosses on Mixtec place names, suggesting the process by which Mixtec names gave way to Spanish ones. The earliest bilingual place name mentioned in the documents studied is a Mixtec-Nahuatl one from near Teposcolula in 1590: “Estando en un sitio destançia para ganado menor llamado en la lengua misteca dzocotechi y en la mexicana Aguacaltcotiolco” (AGNTierras2696Exp21). Spanish glosses on Mixtec place names become common in the 18th century. The boundaries of Etlatongo in 1765 included “Yuyette, que en casttallano quiere desir tepettatte, o piedra de tepettate,” “Ytundocoñaña que en casttallano quiere Desir Loma del Coyotte,” and “Yutatema, que en casttallano dise coosaguatte y señalaron por este Arbol una plantta con varias Ramas, o baras como Nasidas Retoñode algun tronco de altto como de dos varas”—and in this latter case we have a fascinating example in which a Nahuatl term

(*ahuehuete*) for an indigenous New World tree has been appropriated as a Spanish (castellano) term! (AGNTierras3693Exp5).

The transformation of a Nahuatl term into one viewed as “castellano” points to the ways in which place names were transformed over time. Another fascinating example of linguistic mixture is in the term “sahaloma,” used to begin place names. This is a hybrid Mixtec-Spanish term which appears in the early 20th century: *saha* is Mixtec for “at the foot of,” and “loma” is a Spanish hill-category. Thus in 1904 two places near Topiltepec are listed as “Saha loma hignuquecoho” and “Sahaloma Dicacusi” (AGNConflictoLeg79Exp28); around 1930 “Sahaloma Itnucayu” is a place between Nuxañu and Tilantongo (AGEOAAIII Leg23Exp8). This is probably a translation of an originally fully Mixtec place designation, *sahayucu*, “at the foot of the hill” (as in AGA276.1/209: *sahayucuyoco*).

The previous discussion of translation and change has focused on cases where the change in a place name from Mixtec to Spanish maintains the older Mixtec-language signification of the place. However, other changes in place names point to more radical changes in signification. With Mexican independence in the early 19th century, it became fashionable to rebaptize boundaries with the names of national revolutionary heroes. A large number of Tecomatlán’s eastern boundaries listed on the Mapoteca Orozco y Berra’s 1907 map (MOyB3483) take their names from Mexican national heroes: Yturbide, Allende, Abasolo, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Morelos, and Dequeyuhuite ó Trujano—this final example suggesting that the names of these national heroes have replaced older Mixtec-language boundary names. Similarly, a 1917 boundary of San Miguel Achiutla is listed as having two names: “Félix Díaz” or “Tihillo” (AGEOAAIII Leg50Exp6). Similarly, a 1928 list of the boundaries of Santa Inés del Rio lists a “Yucuticino” or “Miguel Hidalgo” near Jaltepec (AGEOAAIII Leg26Exp7).

Newly-established boundaries might be given new Spanish names. “La Paz” (Peace) was a frequent (if perhaps optimistic) boundary name starting at least in the 19th century. In 1898 one of Yodocono’s boundaries was moved 150 meters, and this new boundary was given a new name, La Paz (AGEOConflicto71Exp11). The boundaries of Nochixtlán listed on the 1907 Orozco y Berra map include not one but two different boundaries named La Paz (each a boundary with a different town), as well as boundaries with the similarly optimistic names of La Unión and La Amistad (MOyB3263).

Such optimistic boundary names point out an obvious fact: most of the documents studied in this project were created because there were disagreements over the boundaries between towns, or in situations where such disagreements might arise (such as in the early 1860s). Crosses placed at boundaries might be moved, or destroyed, and in 1765 the residents of Sayultepec accused their neighbors of destroying a large (natural) rock that had once served as a boundary marker (AGNTierras3693Exp5). Towns might disagree both on where a boundary was located and what it was called, might agree on where a boundary was located but call the place by different names, or might agree on what the boundary was called but disagree on its

location. All of these kinds of conflicts show up in the 1864 map of the two conflicting boundary lines drawn by the residents of Apoala and Apasco (MOyB3038). One of Tecamatlán's boundaries in 1907 had two names, "Yucutindoó ó Yucahuido," but it is unclear if these are both names accepted in Tecamatlán, or if one represents the name given to the boundary by a rival town (MOyB3483). In contrast, an 1850 map of the boundaries of Jaltepetongo and Tecamatlán names one point as "Dequyuniñe de Jaltepetongo ó Cuitcano de Tecamatlán." The same map also shows the location of the different place that Tecamatlán names as Dequeyucuiñe ("Dequeyucuiñe de Tecamatlán," says the map) And as James Lockhart pointed out long ago in his study of indigenous "Títulos Primordiales" (1991), towns were not above forging ancient documents (and thus all of the document dates presented in my study are all subject to revision). One interesting example encountered in this study is in the copy of the 1642 will of the cacique of Tidáa. It begins by listing his various possessions, then gives the names of some fields owned by the cacique in Amatlán, and then, moves onto a list of other fields owned in different towns surrounding Chindúa. This list of fields, as it turns out, almost perfectly replicates the land boundaries for Chindúa listed in documents from a century later. When this slightly disguised land boundary circuit is completed, the will then lists the names of fields in Andúa, a list that does *not* specify where these various fields are located relative to Andúa and its neighbors. What this suggests is that the original 1642 will listed the names of fields in Amatlán, and the in Andúa. What 17th century copyists seem to have done is insert a disguised *vista de ojos* into their recopied version of this will (AGNTierras3690Exp2).



Figure 6. Lady 6 Eagle at Dark Hill—Stem—Twisted River—Reed Arroyo on Codex Vienna 1.

In sum, although place names do change over time, and the names of places and their specific location have certainly been subject to debate over the past 400 years, the 4 centuries of topographic history compiled in this study do suggest that place names often do remain the same, and may even survive translation from Mixtec to Spanish. With this in mind, I will conclude by suggesting, tentatively, some of the ways in which these resources could be applied to the interpretation of the Mixtec screenfolds. Since many place names are fairly common and given to many different locations—*Yucudzaa*, “Hill of the Bird,” being a classic example—the challenge is not to simply match a single place sign in a screenfold to a single place name from a colonial or post-independence document. Rather, the challenge is to find groups of places which appear together both

in colonial/post-independence sources and screenfold representations. This “clustered” strategy is one used by John Pohl in his 2004 “The Archaeology of History in Postclassic Oaxaca.” He focuses on the northern Nochixtlan Valley, and argues that a series of places represented on page 3 of the *Codex Nuttall* (reproduced on the right side of Figure 1). Although he does not draw on the kinds of colonial/post-independence documents studied here, he does use the place names on 20th-century INEGI maps to suggest that the “Hill of the Jewel” (the green hill with the blue and white “jewel” disk at the center of *Nuttall* page 3) may correlate to a hill labeled on INEGI maps as *Sayucunda*, “at the foot of the blue hill,” near the town of Yucuita. (Indeed, the representation of this hill and its feather-marked pair on *Codex Vienna* 4 presents it as a fully blue hill). Not surprisingly, looking at earlier sources from 1900 and 1920 reveals that a place simply called *Yucundá* or *Yucundua* (“Blue Hill”) was also attested near Yucuita (AGNTitulosPrimordiales2Exp1, YucuitaMunicipio). *Sayucunda* is listed as a boundary of Sinaxtla in 1907 (MOyB3418). This is a minor point, but confirms Pohl’s hypothesis (and also explains why there is no image of a foot for *sa[ha]* in the image of this hill on Nuttall 3: there were indeed once place names that differentiated the Blue Hill from the Foot of the Blue Hill at its base).



Figure 7. Dark Hill—Stem--Twisted River—Reed Arroyo on Codex Vienna 38.

To the right of the Yucundaa on *Nuttall 3* is a representation of the nearby Hill of Flowers (Yucuita), on which the goddess Lady 6 Eagle is shown brandishing a spearthrower and shield. She also shows up as the patroness of a compound Dark Hill—Stem--Twisted River—Reed Arroyo place sign on *Codex Vienna 1* ([Figure 6](#)). The same series of places also show up on *Codex Vienna 38*, appearing immediately after the place sign for Yucufñadahui, a hill located just to the north of both Yucuita and Yucundaa ([Figure 7](#)). The 1695 portion of AGNTierras3036Exp3 mentions a “Yusacahua, ò Rio torcido y ser divisoro de las tierras de Coyotepeque y Choachapa” which is said to be by a “Cerro Prieto.” Fray Francisco de Alvarado’s 1593 *Vocabulario*

suggests that the “cahua” in Yusacahua could indeed mean twisted, as in spinning: “hilar torcido. yocahuandi, yocahicutundi.” In addition, “Cerro Prieto (Dark Hill) is the name given to the extensive northward-thrusting eastern side of the mountain of Yucuñudahui in INEGI maps. This is probably a (fairly accurate) translation of an original Mixtec place name. A “Yucutnu” (Dark Hill) is named as west of Coyotepec in the same 1695 AGNTierras3036Exp3 document that mentions *Yusacahua*. A series of topographic connections, then, are suggested by *Nuttall 3*, *Vienna 1*, and *Vienna 38*, linking a series of places on the ground to a goddess, 6 Eagle ([Figure 8](#)).

Another example of how to apply this relational-places approach is on Codex Vienna 43. A River of the Cradle-Ñuhu is in the lower right-hand corner; a Hill of the Insect in the upper right-hand corner, and to the left of that hill is a hill with a crisscrossed “cage” patterning of lashed sticks surmounted by a bleeding ñuu frieze. A River of the Cradle (*Yucha dzoco*—but which does not mention a Ñuhu) is listed as near Chindúa and Andúa in AGNTierras3690Exp2 (1758). A place translated as “Hill of the Cage” (“serro de haula”) is listed as a boundary between Sayultepec and Nochixtlán in the 1695 portion of AGNTierras3693Exp5; the 1765 portion of the same document lists *yucudoco* (which can be translated as “Foot of the Hill of the Cage”) as the boundary between Nochixtlán, Sinaxtla, and Sayultepec. This place is said to be adjacent to a *Yucuque*, which may be represented by the Hill of the Insect on *Vienna 43*: the 1593 Alvarado *Vocabulario* lists translates a mountain bee (“abeja montesa”) as *tequee nduu* (the te-animal-word marker is often dropped in place names). Alternatively, this bee hill may refer to the *Yucutiucun* (“Cerro de Moscas”) by Sayultepec. In either case, we are dealing with three places which occur in the same general region on the ground and which are painted in close proximity on the page of a Mixtec screenfold. Clearly, this interpretation could be strengthened if the three composite place signs separating the River of the Cradle-Ñuhu from the Hill of the Insect on *Vienna 43* were to be identified.

In conclusion, this project has brought together a large number of documents pertinent to the interpretation of the Mixtec screenfolds. It has suggested some of the ways the place names in these colonial and post-independence documents may and may not relate to prehispanic topographies. This study, I want to stress, is intended as a preliminary exploration. I certainly hope its resources will be critiqued, challenged, and expanded: this would mean that the project has indeed served as a starting point for further research.

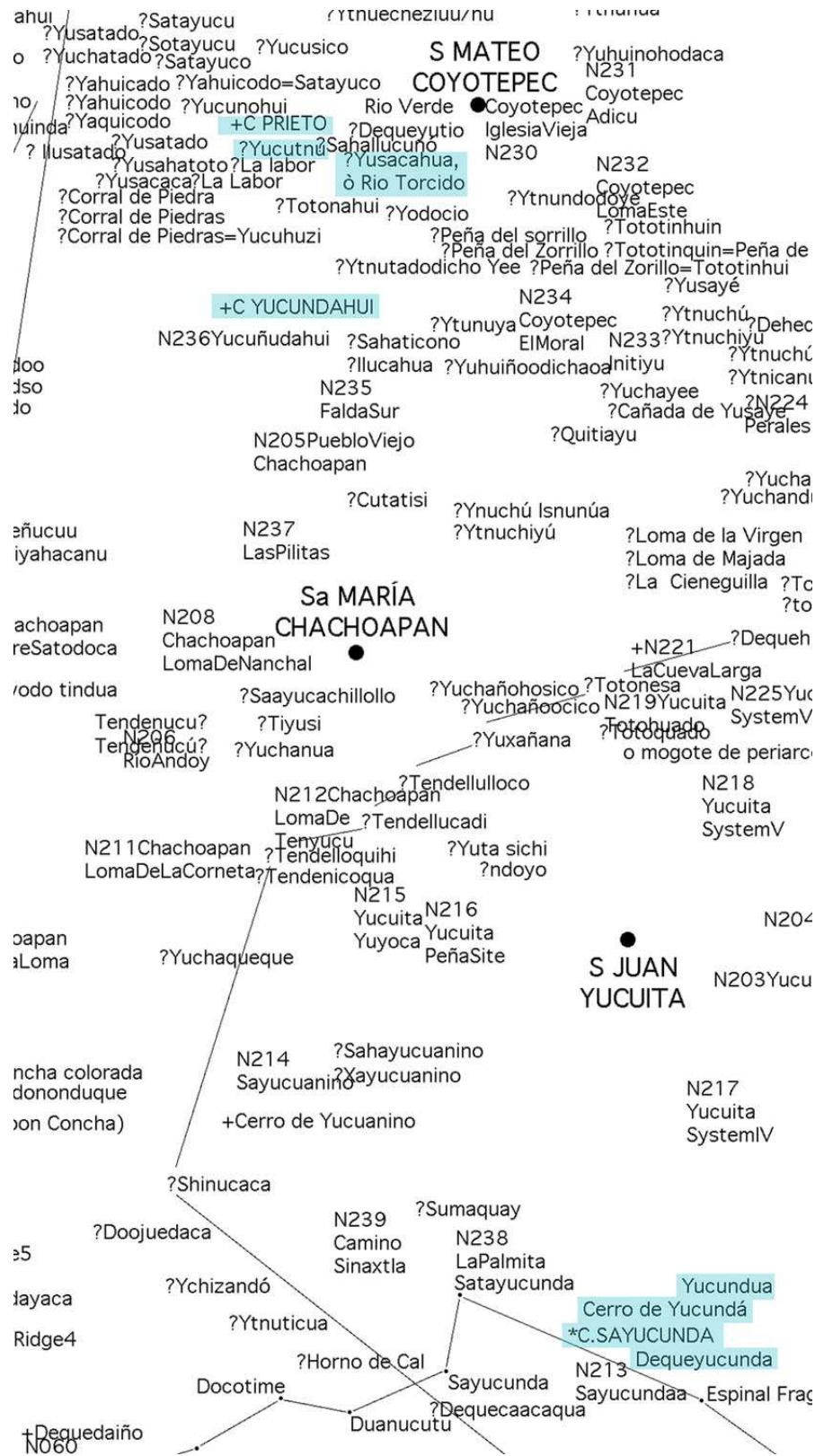


Figure 8. Relative locations of Yucundaa—Yucutnu—Yusacahua.



Figure 9. Right half of Codex Vienna 43.

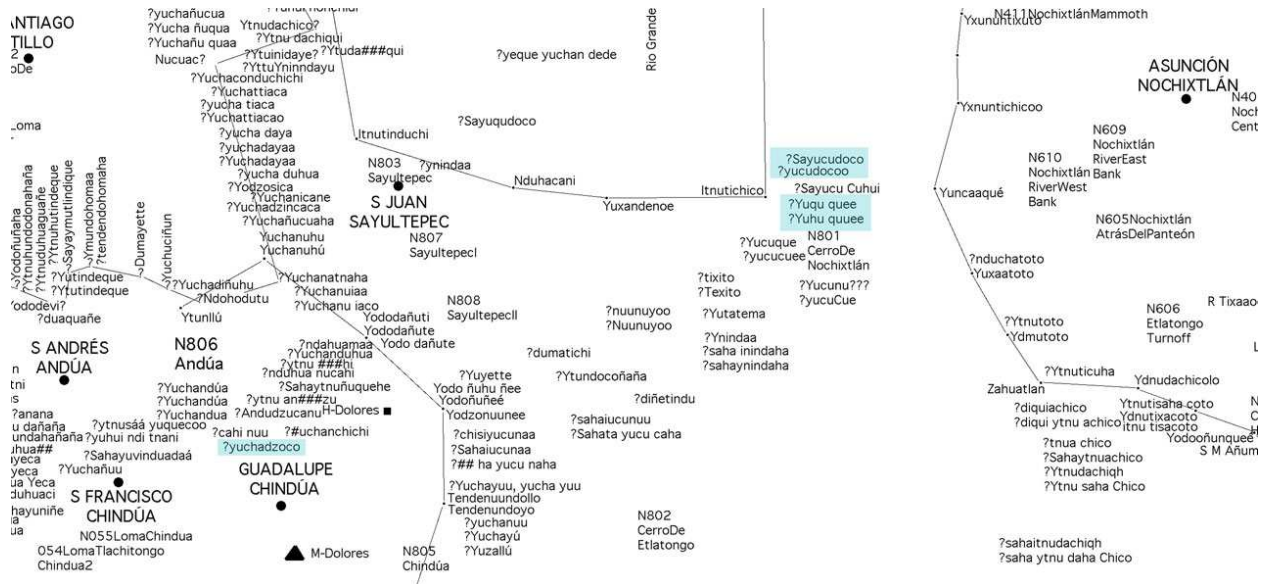


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