

Jerome A. Offner

Why the Mapa de Metlatoyuca is not the Map of Metlatoyuca : it is the Mapa de Taxco (Tlachco), Municipio Tetela de Ocampo, Puebla, Mexico

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WHY THE *MAPA DE METLATUYUCA* IS NOT THE MAP OF METLATUYUCA: IT IS THE *MAPA DE TAXCO (TLACHCO)*, MUNICIPIO TETELA DE OCAMPO, PUEBLA, MEXICO

JEROME A. OFFNER

Houston Museum of Natural Science, Texas, United States

Abstract

This article provides additional context for the acquisition of the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* by the British Museum in 1876. Comparison with published sources reveals the document comes from Taxco, *municipio* Tetela de Ocampo, Puebla instead of Metlatoyuca. Prior claims of provenance are examined and evaluated. The risks of localizing such documents solely through comparison of glyphs and proposed place names with colonial and modern maps are discussed.

Resumen

El presente artículo proporciona un contexto adicional de la adquisición del *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* por el Museo Británico, en 1876. La comparación del contenido del mapa en cuestión con las fuentes publicadas revela que el documento proviene de Taxco, un municipio de Tetela de Ocampo, Puebla, y no de Metlatoyuca. Se examinan y evalúan las afirmaciones anteriores acerca de su procedencia. Asimismo, se discuten los riesgos de la localización de este tipo de documento únicamente a través de la comparación de los glifos y topónimos propuestos con los mapas coloniales y modernos.

INTRODUCTION

Specialization in Mesoamerican studies is inevitable, given the extent to which the cultural content of pre-contact societies has been lost or destroyed. One persistent research division has been between those who study colonial, alphabetic sources and those who devote their energies to the surviving mostly post-contact pictorial manuscripts generated by several indigenous peoples in the area. Early efforts by Charles Dibble (1951) to coordinate carefully the content of pictorial documents with often dependent alphabetic sources were insufficiently appreciated and developed, perhaps because they dealt with Texcoco instead of Tenochtitlan (Offner 2014: 25-27). In recent years, researchers such as Maria Castañeda de la Paz and Michel Oudijk (2012), Patrick Lesbre (2007), Katarzyna Mikulska (2010), Guilhem Olivier (2003), Justyna Olko (2014) and others have begun to bridge this gap in productive ways. Nevertheless, it is largely this division in research that has prevented the proper localization of the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* (Figure 1), although it has been in the British Museum and well known since the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the evidence for the correct localization of this striking document has been hiding in plain sight for more than a century, requiring only simultaneous examination of published alphabetic and pictorial sources to the east of the Basin of Mexico.



Figure 1. The *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The key alphabetic source to compare with the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* is the *Relación de Xonotla y Tetela* (1905-06)¹ dating from 1581 and arising from the *Relación Geográfica* initiative of that time (Cline 1972). The *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* is directly related to these reports from Tetela and may well have been presented but not recorded at the time the information for that *Relación Geográfica* was gathered. By placing the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* in the context of the reports from Tetela and its subjects, it becomes possible to forward the comprehension of the *Mapa* itself, including its very local and limited geographic scale and the deep historical processes depicted on it. Additionally, because several divergent positions have developed in recent times concerning the origin of this document,² it is useful to review briefly the methodologies used in these efforts to provide enhanced perspectives for future identification of the few remaining similar documents and any that may yet be brought to light.

HOW THE *MAPA DE METLATUYUCA* CAME INTO THE COLLECTIONS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

A letter from Mr. Porter C. Bliss of the U.S. Legation in Mexico to the Honorable Simon Stevens dated June 5th, 1872 that accompanies the *Mapa* in the British Museum provides a report of its discovery in 1865 or 1866 in the ruins of Metlatoyuca (Figure 2) by Colonel Juan Bautista Campos, Sub-Prefect of Huauchinanco. The letter explains:

Many idols and other curiosities from these ruins [of Metlatoyuca]³ were placed in the Museum of Mexico; others were sent to Europe with the personal effects of Maximilian. Colonel Campos, the discoverer, retained for himself, as the most curious trophy, a hieroglyphical Map, which, according to his account, was found in a stone chest which served as a pedestal to a large idol, in the edifice which seemed to have been the principal temple (Breton 1920: 17).

In the letter, Bliss reports that he purchased the *Mapa* from Campos in April 1871 for \$ 200 and he transfers it to Stevens for that same sum. The British Museum then acquired the *Mapa* from Stevens (BM Add MSS catalogue 1876-1881) in 1876 (Berger 1996: 40; Breton 1920: 17).

Both Bliss and Stevenson led adventurous lives. Bliss had overlapping careers in journalism as well as foreign and American government service, including a harrowing misadventure and captivity in Paraguay in 1868 (US, Congress 1870 provides one side of events), and Stevens was the president of the failed Tehuantepec Railway Company, a predecessor concept to the Panama Canal. Bliss reports what he describes as his unexpected appointment by President Ulysses S. Grant as Secretary of the United States Legation to Mexico in his letter to his parents of July 18th, 1870.⁴ Shortly thereafter, he

¹ A later edition was produced by René Acuña in 1985. The Paso y Troncoso 1905-06 edition is also available via Google Books at the following URL: <http://books.google.com/books?id=absTAAAYAAJ&pg=PA124&lpg=PA124&dq=Relaci%C3%B3n+de+Xonotla+y+Tetela&source=bl&ots=Ugx3Ow4GDn&sig=t5N7g0EtYvTD7hPMLy662JKITol&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZGpSVOnwCMmUyQShr4GYDQ&ved=0CCEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Relaci%C3%B3n%20de%20Xonotla%20y%20Tetela&f=false>.

² See below for further discussion. Brotherston (1995) and Berger (1996) arrive at two different northern Puebla origins, largely following Breton (1920) and Nuttall and Breton (1920) in their acceptance of the origin story expounded in a June 5th, 1872 letter that accompanies the *Mapa* in the British Museum. Haley and colleagues (1994) favor a Oaxaca origin, which Mundy (1998), dissatisfied with Berger's proposed localization, offers as an alternative avenue for investigation.

³ Metlatoyuca is underlined in the original letter. The full letter is transcribed by Breton (1920).

⁴ Excerpts from Porter C. Bliss's letters are all from the collection at the New York State Library (Bliss 1870-72), except for the letter of June 5th, 1872 in the British Museum. The date of each letter is given when cited.

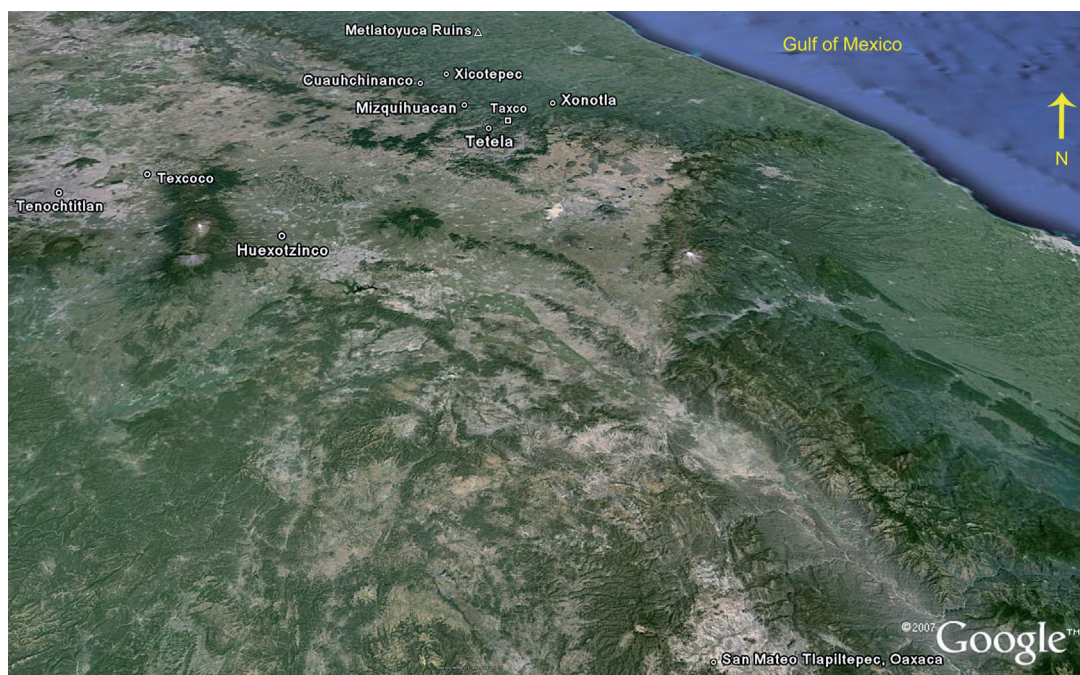


Figure 2. Important places mentioned in this article. Map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, GEBCO © 2014, DigitalGlobal, via Google Maps.

visited in Jamestown, New York with Reuben Fenton, governor of that state who provided him with letters of introduction to, among others, “the officers of the Tehuantepec R.R. and Canal Co.,” of which Simon Stevens was president.⁵ This group in turn provided Bliss with letters of introduction to their Mexican contacts. Stevens quickly generated such confidence in him that Bliss, on the day of his departure by steamer for Mexico, recommended Stevens’s address in Barnet, Vermont to his parents as a suitable place to send and receive mail from Mexico (letter of August 20th, 1870 to his parents).

Porter Bliss (1838-1885), was one of four children of Asher Bliss and Cassandra Hooper, missionaries to the Seneca Indians in New York. Born on the Cataaugus Reservation with studies later at Hamilton and Yale Colleges, Bliss spent several years “in the service of several Boston societies to investigate the condition of the Indian tribes” and had hoped to secure an appointment with the Interior Department “to continue his studies of the Indians beyond the Mississippi”. Because he only received a clerkship, he soon chose to become private secretary to General James Watson Webb, Minister to Brazil. After Webb returned to the United States, Bliss secured a commission from the government of Argentina to explore and investigate the Gran Chaco and its indigenous groups (Bliss 1864; New York Times 1885), before his misfortunes in Paraguay. Bliss was thus keenly interested in archaeology and ethnology and in his letter of July 18th, 1870, he tells his parents about his acceptance of the appointment to Mexico:

⁵ This was a time of intellectual ferment in upstate New York. The Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly, still prospering as the Chautauqua Institution today, was founded in 1874 beside nearby Lake Chautauqua. See <http://www.ciweb.org/about-us/>

At first I was undecided as to whether I would accept it, but the advice of scientific friends, who hope that I may do good service to archaeology and ethnology has induced me to accept. The Trustees of the Peabody Fund for a Museum of Ethnology at Cambridge have furnished another important inducement by appropriating me \$500 for the current year; to act as their agent in investigating the antiquities of Mexico. The key to the hieroglyphics of the inscriptions on the ruins of Yucatan has just been found (by accident) in an old manuscript in Spain, and published in this country.⁶ I hope to be the first person to read them (Bliss 1870-72).

Bliss's acquisition of antiquities had already begun by the time he reached Orizaba in 1870 on his way to Mexico City, with prior stops in Veracruz and Merida (letter of September 5th, 1870). He reports a visit by Stevens in Mexico City in March or April, 1872, which was shortly before his sale of the *Mapa* to Stevens (letter to his mother, May 1st, 1872). The transaction itself is not mentioned in any letters to his family that I have been able to locate to date.

Simon Stevens (1825-1894) was one of eleven children of Henry Stevens and Candace Salter of Barnet, Vermont. Henry was "an avid book collector and antiquarian" (Vermont Historical Society 1995: 1-2). His son Henry, Jr. (1819-1886) went to London in 1845 "which became his home. While attending school [Yale, Harvard], he was employed copying manuscripts for Peter Force and became interested in the buying and selling of books. He turned this interest into a career, serving as an agent for the Smithsonian Institute, the British Museum, John Carter Brown, and others".⁷ Simon Stevens became an attorney and "[f]rom 1860 to 1864 he was in partnership with his brother Benjamin Franklin Stevens [1833-1902] in the New York/London book trade". "In early 1861 Stevens was involved in what became known as the 'Hall carbine affair.' He purchased 5000 Hall carbines from Arthur Eastman, who had purchased them from the government. Stevens then sold the guns to General John C. Fremont to be used by his troops in the Civil War. Although the guns had originally sold for \$3.50 each, Fremont purchased them from Stevens for \$22 each. There was a public outcry, and Simon was called to testify before Congress. He was cleared of wrongdoing and remained in business in New York City" (Vermont Historical Society 1995: 1-2). By 1868, Simon Stevens was president of the Tehuantepec Railway Company until 1877 when it began to fail amidst acrimony and litigation (New York Times 1880).

Within this fuller context, the careful drafting of the letter accompanying the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* to the British Museum can be better appreciated. It is on the letterhead of the United States Legation, written by its secretary, soon to be acting "chargé d'affaires" (Bliss letter of October 4th, 1872). It duly notes acquisition of an utterly abandoned and discovered article from a Mexican government official (Campos) who had been introduced to Bliss "for the purpose of treating of this matter, by the distinguished Judge Zerecero of the Supreme Court," as well as the no profit exchange from Bliss to Stevens, and the fact that a copy of the *Mapa* had been made and deposited with "the Library of the Mexican Society of Geography and Statistics, the interpretation of which has been attempted without success by the most eminent antiquarians of that body". This lawyerly presentation of important points of ownership and intent doubtless facilitated the acquisition of the item by the British Museum arranged almost certainly by Henry Stevens, Jr. as well as Simon Stevens as part of the ongoing stream of commercial transactions between Henry, Jr. and the British Museum. The British Museum recorded an acquisition cost of precisely \$ 200 for this item.⁸

⁶ Undoubtedly the Brasseur de Bourbourg edition of Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, published in Paris and London in 1864. Bliss probably means it was available in the United States.

⁷ This appears to have been a high dollar, profitable business. "Henry Jr. is in London and writes that he has been traveling in Europe with Mr. Brown of Providence, Rhode Island, and Bancroft Davis, son of Senator John Davis, and that Brown has paid him over \$30,000 for books. His letters in 1850 report how good business is in London" (Vermont Historical Society 1995: 6).

⁸ Sovati Smith (email to me of September 1, 2014) reported that she and Jim Hamill, both of the British Museum, had reviewed

This odd tale of discovery of an intact centuries-old cotton textile in an abandoned stone box in one of the world's hotter and more humid regions, with an average temperature exceeding 23°C and annual precipitation in excess of 1600 mm⁹ has been accepted with little critical examination (e.g. Breton 1920: 19; followed by Berger 1996 and Brotherston 1995), except by Haley (personal communication c. 1990), who rejected the story as recognizable deliberate misdirection (cf. Haley *et al.* 1994: 145)¹⁰ and attempted to locate the *Mapa* in the area of Coixtlahuaca, specifically in San Mateo Tlapiltepec, Oaxaca (Haley *et al.* 1994: 147).

THE HISTORY ON THE *MAPA DE METLATUYUCA* AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE *RELACIÓN DE XONOTLA Y TETELA*

All earlier studies of the *Mapa* mention that it measures 180 by 105 cm, and is painted on two strips of cotton cloth sewn together, thereby constituting a type of document that is often referred to as a *lienzo*. It is apparent that the *Mapa* was stored folded for a long time, apparently twice vertically as well as horizontally, with the second horizontal fold being only faintly visible. The figures are outlined in black and filled in with color: red, yellow, green and blue (Breton 1920; Berger 1996). "In one part of the map, man-made changes can be observed. Some symbols are hardly legible, having been washed away by spilled liquid. Berger notes that "the unusual position of some signs" suggests "changes" (Berger 1996: 40).

Near the top of the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, a paramount ruler (Figures 1 and 3) is shown installing a lesser ruler and his son¹¹ near a toponymic glyph for *tlachco* or 'at the ball court'. These represent the intrusive Nahuas; the Totonacs, many with calendar date names, are shown mostly with cotton cloth headbands. A genealogy (*tlācamecayōtl*, with descent apparently emphasized in this context) of as many as twelve generations¹² follows from the lesser ruler. The paramount ruler then goes to speak to the founders of two more shallow Nahua genealogies to the right. One four-generation and a pair of two-generation Totonac genealogies are shown near frontier roads and watercourses, while a complicated, compound mostly Totonac genealogy occupies much of the center of the *Mapa*. This genealogy is notable for two reasons. First, the original line ends after the first four figures with a man with a *cōmitl* ('olla, jar') glyph who has two daughters. These both marry a man through whom descent is then traced.¹³ Second, at the bottom right of this genealogy, the granddaughter of the same or perhaps another paramount ruler marries the last figure in the Totonac descent line.

available documentation and that "it appears that \$200 was paid for it". I thank them for their additional research on this point. In addition, I express my appreciation for Sovati Smith's interest and efforts over several years to facilitate my research into this document.

⁹ <http://en.climate-data.org/location/328485>, [Accessed July 6th, 2014]; cf. Breton (1920)

¹⁰ I met with Dr. Harold (Hal) Haley in Houston, Texas twice and once at a professional meeting during the late 1980s and the early 1990s and encouraged his research into this document, giving him some photographs I had obtained from the British Museum which he planned to visit for the second time soon thereafter. Decades later, I am not pleased to disagree with him but can and do give him credit for pointing my attention away from Metlatoyuca and for emphasizing the use of INEGI maps (cf. 1994: 147, 151). Such details are far more accessible at present through resources such as Google Earth.

¹¹ Elsewhere (Offner 2011), I have described a ritual depicted in the *Codex Xolotl* (Dibble 1951) that resulted in the simultaneous installation of the ill-fated Ixtlilxochitl Ome Tochtli as ruler of Texcoco and of his more fortunate son, Nezahualcoyotl as his legitimate successor. The *cozoyahualōlli* feather work device and priestly head cloth were involved in this ritual that has strong similarities to the scene in the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* and to a scene in the *Codex de Xicotepec*.

¹² There is no certainty that each person represents a separate generation. Siblings, collateral or even fictive kin may have been swept into the *tlācamecayōtl* to show lineal continuity, often emphasized in the colonial context and probably also in the pre-contact era as well in comparable circumstances. The *tlācamecayōtl* was not, in indigenous conception, a lineal concept but more closely resembled an ego-centered kindred as explained in Offner (1983: 197-201; see also Olko 2012: 54-57).

¹³ The man with the *cōmitl* ('olla, jar') glyph also has five of his ancestors shown. Barbara Mundy has commented (personal communication, July 2014) that concern over this female link in succession, viewed as problematic in the colonial era, may have been among the motivations for the creation of the *lienzo*.



Figure 3. Installation Ritual and Genealogy at Tlachco (Taxco). Detail from the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

A large year count is at the left center of the document (Figure 4). It begins with two elements combined: a bunch of grass (read as *centzontli*) and a jade (*chālchihuitl*) disk, representing 400 (20 x 20) years. There are then 17 maize ears (*centli*) symbols also on jade disks, each representing 20 years for a total of 340 years. The year count at this point totals 740 years. On top of these symbols are 23 circles representing 23 additional years (the last circle is colored white instead of blue). The total is therefore 763 years. This total is divided by a conventional date drawn from the fifty-two year calendar round, 4 *Tōchtli* ('Rabbit'¹⁴), into two subtotals: 400 years and 363 years.

How do we know these are years instead of money paid for tribute as Berger (1996: 46) proposes?¹⁵ And how do we know that the circles are part of the count? We know this is a year count and we know it is divided into two parts through a comparison of the fragmentary town histories presented by indigenous interpreters of indigenous documents in the *Relación de Xonotla y Tetela*.

The *Relación* deals first with Xonotla and then with Tetela. Xonotla and three of its subject towns provided migration histories (Figures 2 and 5). *Ysoztelotl*,¹⁶ with three unnamed others, founded

¹⁴ The gloss provided here is not offered or intended as a narrow translation of this year sign. Signs for each time period came to possess huge penumbrae of meaning in Mesoamerica.

¹⁵ Nuttall (Nuttall and Breton 1920) took an innovative approach and interpreted the document as economic: she proposed it was a census and proposed that the corn cobs represented payment of tribute in kind. Brotherston (1995) rejected this explanation in favor of a period of time.

¹⁶ Translated as "cara de tiguere" in the *Relación*, page 127. The founding date is given on page 126. This and other names follow strictly the spelling given in the PNE version of the *Relación*.

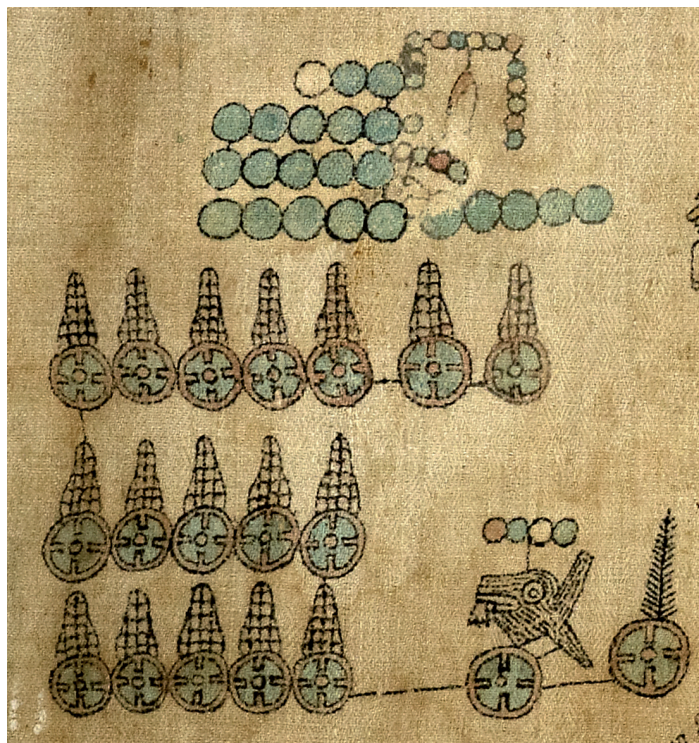


Figure 4. The 763 year count and year dates of 4 *Tōchtli* and 13(?) *Tecpatl*. Detail from the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*. ©The Trustees of the British Museum. An additional date has been deliberately obscured by the placement of circles, probably showing Nahua historiography in action in the colonial era.

Xonotla in 1180, further explained as 400 years before the 1581 date of the *Relación*. The people of San Martín Tutzamapa claimed instead that *Matlalecatl*¹⁷ from Culiacan founded their town in 1200 and that the founder of Xonotla came from (“deste procedio”) their founder.¹⁸ The people of San Francisco Ayotucho reported that *Atzonhuehuatl* with four “vezinos” established their town 400 years ago (ca. 1181) while Santiago Ecatlan said that *Ecatl* arrived more than 1100 years ago, perhaps meaning instead the year 1100.¹⁹

These reports are not atypical of accounts from other towns in the general area. For example, a lengthy Nahuatl gloss in the *Papers of Itzcuintepec* mentions two founding figures from 860 years ago. This text counts two four hundreds and three twenties of years (Brotherston 1995: 201). The reports from Tetela and its subject towns, however, distinguish themselves by being more detailed and concordant. Five towns reported histories of some length (Figures 2 and 5). Tetela and San Francisco Çuçumba²⁰ both report or directly imply that their founders came from Culiacan. Four

¹⁷ Also given as *Matlac Ecatl* and translated as “lumbre de diez vientos”, *Relación*, page 123.

¹⁸ *Relación*, page 133. Tutzamapan is also given as a variant of the town name.

¹⁹ *Relación*, pages 136, 139. Ecatl is translated as “nonbre de ayre” on page 140.

²⁰ Also reported as Tzotzanpan (*Relación*, page 146) and Tzutzipan (*Relación*, page 164). This town cannot be located although the mountain called Tzotolo (Zotolo) was visible to its north.

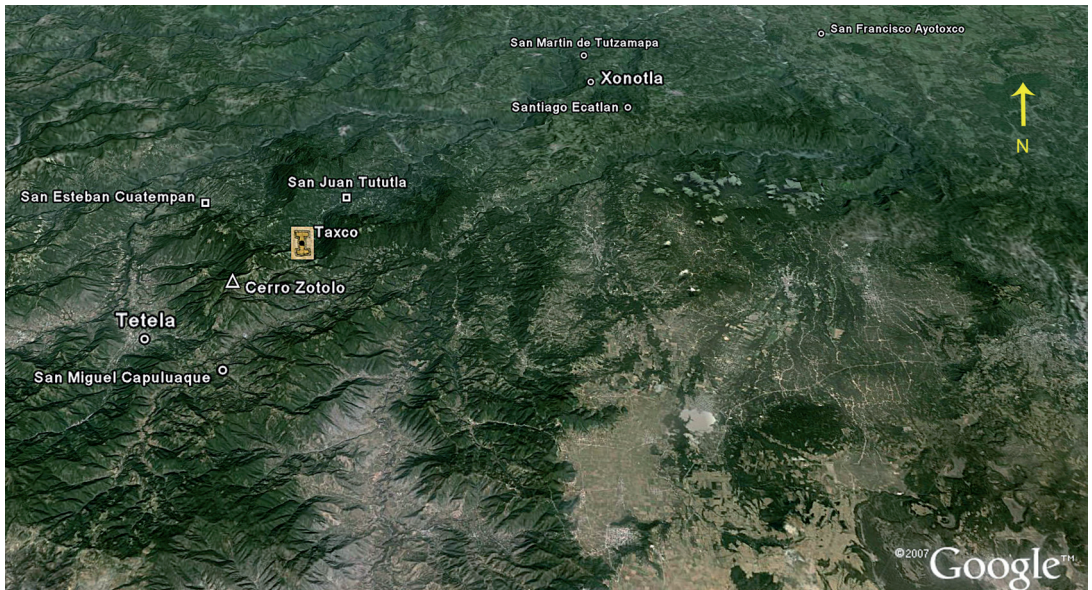


Figure 5. The Xonotla-Tetela area. Map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, GEBICO © 2014, DigitalGlobal, via Google Maps.

unnamed founders established Tetela 362 years ago (1219), *Ysticuçaahuictletl*²¹ and *Tequectilpoton* established San Francisco Çuçumba more than 362 years ago. This is similar to the 363 year portion of the 763 year count shown to the left of the date glyph on the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*. The people of San Miguel Capulapa reported that Tochintletl,²² “one of four who came to this conquest”, established their town with three others 340 years ago—the date shown on the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, less only the 23 circles.

It is, however, the reports from two towns founded in the second instance by Tetela that provided exact year counts of 763 years (Maps 2 and 3). San Esteuan Quatenco²³ stated that it was first founded by Totonac 763 years ago and that the four founders from Tetela came to it about 366 years ago. San Juan Tutula was less precise about the year of arrival of *Tezoquitl*,²⁴ the Nahua conqueror from Tetela, placing his arrival simply more than three hundred years in the past. The people from that town were precise, however, in stating that a Totonac, Tutul (a Nahuatl name, from *tōtolin* ‘turkey hen’, perhaps the simple reading of such a glyph on an earlier Totonac historical document) founded their town 763 years ago.

One of the principal problems with ascribing the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* to Metlatoyuca has been that the name of that place, which is shown in the *Codex de Xicotepec* (Stresser-Péan 1995; Offner 2010) and in the *Lienzos de Tuxpan* with readily identifiable *metate* elements, does not appear on the document. The glyph in association with the installation ritual on the document stands instead for *tlachco* ‘(at the) ball court’. This name often changed to Taxco in colonial times and a town with the name of Taxco is found in close proximity to Tetela and especially San Esteuan Quatenco and San

²¹ Also reported as Ysticutzahuic (*Relación*, 164).

²² Also given as Tuchintletli and Tuchintectli and translated as “señor de conexos” (*Relación*, pp. 159, 160).

²³ Also given as Tzanaquatla, Tehoquateno (*Relación*, page 152).

²⁴ Also given as *Teçoquil* (*Relación*, page 170) and translated as “boca de barro”.

Juan Tutula (Figure 6).²⁵ Taxco is contained in a small valley, perhaps perceived as a natural ball court, and it is likely only this valley is depicted on the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* between the carefully drawn linked boundary markers, along with a few mountain peaks visible from Taxco (Figures 1, 5 and 7). The closed eastern border and the more open western border of the domain probably correspond to the left and right borders of the *Mapa*²⁶ while the ceremonial center, symbolized by the *tēcpan* or *teōcalli* construct with linking road in the middle of the *Mapa*, probably occupied the same location on a rise as the current town center.

Taxco itself does not seem to be listed in colonial sources; repeated references to Quatenco and Tututla are instead found in the sixteenth century and later (Gerhard 1972: 388-390, 443). This leads to the possibility that Taxco was viewed as a mere *sujeto* or *estancia* of Tututla or perhaps Quatenco. García Martínez (1987: 214) notes that Tetela complained to colonial authorities in 1550 that Tututla was trying to escape its obligations as their subject and had seized some land belonging to its *principales*. It may not be coincidental that probably earlier, residents of Tututla had moved to Ahuacatlan, near Zacatlan to escape an epidemic (García Martínez 1987: 214). From that area would later come the Totonac pictorial history reported by Torquemada and a successful lawsuit involving Totonac towns being separated from the Nahuatl *cabecera* Zacatlan (Offner 2012). The preparation of not only the Taxco *lienzo* but possibly also *lienzos* for Tututla and Quatenco may have their origin

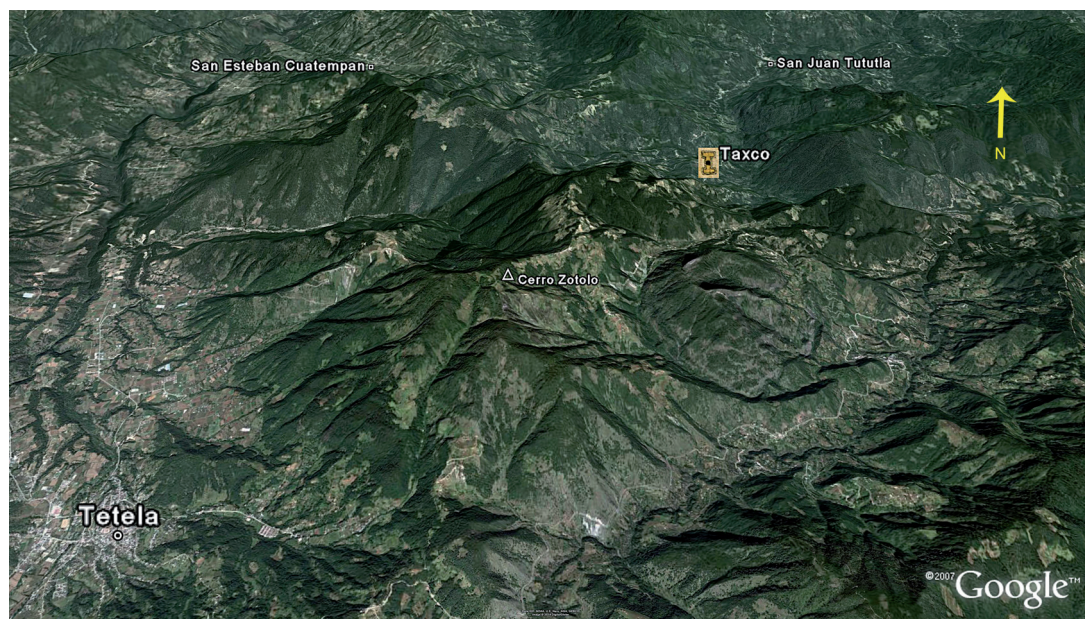


Figure 6. Tetela and the three towns with year counts of precisely 763 years. Map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, GEBCO © 2014, DigitalGlobal via Google Maps.

²⁵ Taxco, Municipio Tetela de Ocampo, 1:50,000 map E14, B14; North Latitude 19° 52' 39" West Longitude 97° 44' 21".

²⁶ Here compare with Berger (1996: 44): "Perhaps we can infer from the river system that the area on the left side of the map is higher and hilly, while the area of the main river should be more flat and in a valley". The drainage in the area is to the northeast, so the left side of the *Mapa* represents the east or east-southeast.



Figure 7. Taxco in its small valley with San Juan Tututla downslope to the North. Map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, GEBCO © 2014, DigitalGlobal via Google Maps.

in these circumstances.²⁷ As noted, the Taxco *lienzo* shows evidence of use for some time before the *Relación* inquiry. It is also apparent that colonial disputes and lawsuits at times led to the creation of indigenous documents from earlier pictorial sources, to their production during the colonial legal process and to their subsequent separation from their communities—not to mention their preservation to the present day.

Some sense of the scale of the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* can be obtained by the proximity of the two other towns reporting 763 years since their founding. San Juan Tututla is immediately downslope from Taxco, and San Esteban Quatenco occupies the second mountain valley to the west of Taxco—the intervening valley is currently sparsely populated. Taxco's claims in its *lienzo* may have extended outside its own valley and by the time of the *Relación* inquest may have been contested by the other two towns, leading to the exclusion of Taxco from the *Relación* and, serendipitously, to the survival of its *Mapa*. The intriguing possibility arises that companion *lienzos* for the two other towns may still exist.

²⁷ It is worth mentioning that itinerant *tlacuiloque* (indigenous manuscript painters), soliciting commissions for and creating such *lienzos*, may have been active in this general area, including Zacatlan/Mizquihuacan (Map 1) in the 1550s and that this may be a topic worth investigating through archival and published materials.

The small scale of the area depicted on the document explains the inability to match the toponymic glyphs with place names from the INEGI database or other colonial or modern lists of place names. This is a generalized rule that holds well in this particular region. Of the twelve hills or mountains named in the *Relación de Xonotla y Tetela*, only two are identifiable with INEGI data: Tzotolo (now Zotolo) and Tsitlattepec (Citlattepec). There still may be, however, some surviving local memory of place names among the residents of Taxco that can be investigated on the ground, along with the location of current and abandoned roads and paths, and current and dry springs.

Personal names glyphs are, not surprisingly, more difficult to identify. Most of the founding figures are not identified in the *Relación* text, including the founders of Tetela, and no clear matches are evident in the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*. The paramount ruler's glyph may contain an *ōcēlōtl* element but the other elements do not match with the *īxtli* in the name glyph related to *Ysotzelotl*, founder of Xonotla.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND RESULTS

The three most recent efforts to localize the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, by Haley *et al.* (1994), Brotherston (1995) and Berger (1996), are the products of considerable experience, cultural knowledge and familiarity with the maps available at the time for the area around Metlatoyuca and San Mateo Tlapiltepec in the Coixtlahuaca Valley in Oaxaca (Figure 2). Both Brotherston and Berger begin with acceptance of a Metlatoyuca provenance for the document and both conclude that the *Mapa* covers a substantial region of eastern Mexico. This conclusion is driven probably more by the methodology of finding or proposing matching Nahuatl place names for interpretations of glyphs than by the impressive physical size of the *Mapa* itself. Nahuatl place names are very often descriptive, with numerous similar or identical candidate names within a region.²⁸ Additionally, uncertainties in interpretations of the glyphs themselves make it all the more likely that candidates for one or another possible glyphic reading can be found within a region.²⁹

For example, Brotherston (1995: 181), following Breton (1920) and Nuttall and Breton (1920) considers the watercourses to be rivers and declares that they must flow through the valley of Pantepec. From there, it is a simple matter to identify proposed descriptive Nahuatl toponyms for several glyphs as Atlán, Molanco, Tototepec and Tlachco and match them to towns at considerable and considerably varying distances in appropriate directions. The readings of most of the glyphs (Tlachco excepted) are in fact indeterminate and the central location and the scale of the *Mapa* is declared rather than discovered. Glyphs that cannot be matched to known place names are then declared related to towns that are lost or no longer exist. The odd and insupportable association chain that Brotherston employs to identify a *centli* (maize ear) glyph within a *tepētl* (mountain) as a *pānitl* (banner) glyph to advocate for a location near the Pantepec River is especially revealing (1995: 193).

Brotherston's overall attempt to piece together corners of the *Codex Xolotl*, *Lienzos de Tochpan*, *Papers of Itzcuintepec* and the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* is vitiated by an incorrect identification of Tenamitec (a very common pre-contact place name) in the *Codex Xolotl* as not being near Zacatlan (1995: 190). Brotherston states that the far more authoritative Peter Gerhard "improbably" identifies it with Zacatlan,³⁰ oddly not mentioning that Ixtlilxochitl (1975: I: 302, 305, 314, 401, 423, 532, II:

²⁸ The INEGI database for Puebla contains, for example, 13 places named Ahuatepec, 4 Ahuatla, 3 Ahuateno, 4 Ahuacatlán, 6 Chapulco, 4 Chapultepec, 5 Coyotepec, 4 Huehuetla (and 1 Huehuetlan), 6 Ocotepec, 3 Tochtepec, 5 Xaltepec, 5 Xochimilco, 6 Zacatepec, etc. etc.

²⁹ Berger (1996: 41-42), in a very frank manner, provides a number of glyphs that can be read in various ways. Neither the lists nor the alternative readings were intended to be exhaustive.

³⁰ Gerhard (1972: 390); Brotherston does not give the page reference in the book.

15, 19) and Torquemada (1969: I: 63, 264) always mention these two sites in tandem, largely based on the *Codex Xolotl* where they are shown juxtaposed four times (pl. 1, 2, 3, 5), leaving no serious doubt that it and Zacatlan were very close, with Tenamitec perhaps being a predecessor name for Zacatlan.³¹ Brotherston's work is therefore undoubtedly creative and resourceful, but in the end, the small symbol for a spring in the lower left hand corner of the *Mapa* is not the great Aztec garrison town of Atlan as Brotherston claims: it is instead only a spring on the border of the tiny realm of Taxco.³² Here, an undisciplined and unrestrained use of iconographic methods has created, literally, a false landscape.³³

Berger's approach is more massive, providing one or more plausible readings for each toponymic glyph and comparing them to modern maps as well as lists from many earlier sources. Her evaluation of competing glyphic interpretations is far more candid and exhibits far less advocacy for preconceived positions than Brotherston's work. The result, however, is a very large landscape for the *Mapa* and the conclusion that "there is no real relation to space and distances but an abstract formal idea of spatial thinking directed to an apparent ritual centre, here shown by the pyramid and temple. The interpretation of the map is only possible with the support of other historical sources" (1996: 43). Although I agree with the second sentence of this passage, the first sentence is more a product of the methodology she uses than an accurate description of the expertise shown in indigenous cartography.

The approach used by Haley and colleagues (1994) is more subtle and restrained. Haley was primarily driven by attempts to match the watercourses shown on the *Mapa* with INEGI maps of scale 1:50,000. He thought he found a match in Oaxaca, but it was in a Chocho-speaking region. Chocho contact-period naming practices are undocumented, so it became necessary to infer that they were like those of the neighboring Mixtec so that the many calendric personal names on the *Mapa* could be explained. Haley and colleagues then noted a small number of iconographic details similar to the *Selden Roll*, the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* and the *Lienzo de Ihuítlan*. Possible toponymic name matches in the area are produced (in Nahuatl) and, in order to propose more toponymic name matches, selected personal name glyphs are hypothesized to be instead names of the town from which the person originated. Individuals with calendar name 12 Flint appear in the *Mapa*, the *Lienzo de Ihuítlan* and other related codices. A promising feature of this research was on the ground fieldwork, but the investigators were able to find only some suggestions of matching hydrology, ruins and roads, and to propose two additional toponymic hypotheses. Haley and colleagues did not in the end insist on their localization in Tlapiltepec, Oaxaca, but proposed it as an organized body of evidence for further study and evaluation.

The methodology that allowed me to happen upon the location of the *Mapa* was one of restraint and caution as the product of several years of attempting to locate the toponymic glyphs on the *Codex de Xicotepec* (Offner 2010; cf. Stresser-Péan 1995). Although there were many candidate place names for the possible range of meanings in the many obscure glyphs of that document, very few were identifiable with physically plausible distributions such as location in a common river valley or along an escarpment. Too many possibilities meant too great a chance of creating a false landscape. In addition, because Nahuatl glyphs are far from standardized, only the most disciplined glyphic reading techniques developed by Marc Thouvenot and others for the Texcocan and Huexotzincan materials allowed for the identification of even the nearest large town to Xicotepec: Cuauhchinanco (Figure 2).

In locating the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, my attention was initially drawn by Stresser-Péan's work³⁴ on the *Relación de Xonotla y Tetela* and the clustering of numbers that resembled the indigenous date

³¹ See also Muñoz Camargo 1998, para. 69: "llegaron a Tenanitic, donde está agora el pueblo de la provincia de Zacatlan".

³² Compare to Berger (1996: 44): "The little spring in the lower left corner may suggest the important place of Atlan [...] But, as there are many springs and rivers in this area, an unknown spring as landmark could be meant".

³³ One can only wonder how many false conceptual landscapes have been created by iconographic studies of the far less semantically determinate religious Nahua manuscripts and by what methods they can be identified and closed down.

³⁴ Stresser-Péan 1998: 59-68.

on the manuscript, and especially its division into 400 and 363 years. I then systematically read the *Relaciones Geográficas* from the region and determined that nothing like these numbers or historical accounts recurred in such documents or in other reports from the area, except for the gloss on the *Papers of Itzcuintepec* cited above and the Totonac history in Torquemada, for which I had also recently prepared an article (Offner 2012). With this information in mind, I used Google Earth in conjunction with the INEGI name database for the state of Puebla to map the towns from which these reports emanated and found a Taxco close by within a few minutes, confirming its location on INEGI maps.³⁵

Taken together, the division of 763 or 762 year counts into 400 and 363 or 362 years in the *Relación de Xonotla y Tetela* and in the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, the existence of exact 763 year counts for the two towns nearest Taxco, as well as the prominence of the toponymic glyph for *tlachco* on the *Mapa* are an extremely improbable coincidence indicating that they constitute no coincidence at all. The *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* emanates from and belongs to the town of Taxco, *municipio* of Tetela de Ocampo, Puebla, Mexico.

CONCLUSION

In the case of the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, the linkage of pictorial details with unique textual indigenous explanations of lost indigenous maps in a long-published colonial source proved more effective in localizing the *Mapa* than matching somewhat nearby similar place names to indeterminate glyphs, whether anthroponymic or toponymic. The method of matching glyphs to Nahuatl place names over unrestrained areas to localize such a pictorial document probably suffers the most in this case and becomes the most suspect method for the future. It remains, nevertheless, a necessary exercise and can be improved by paying attention to geographic features that lead to characteristic clustering and arrangements of settlements. The use of alphabetic sources, published and unpublished, in conjunction with pictorial materials fares better. As to the exact proportions of geographic, hydrologic, pictorial and alphabetic evidence to be used in future investigations, the measure of success is related to the nature of the problem—and a number of similar problems happily still exist to be solved.

There is no intent in this essay to place methodological strictures on the localization of pictorial documents. This example, however, has much to observe in it. The naiveté of the discipline in accepting such an odd provenance story over so many decades is notable. Readily gathered facts regarding the lives of the two Americans involved with the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* provided the context for its removal from Mexico. A chain of custody was deliberately constructed to facilitate the map's sale to the British Museum and the story in fact remained unquestioned until Dr. Haley, a medical doctor, free from conventional ethnohistorical training, had the scientific perspective to reject it. And the British Museum's resources and acquisition network seem to have prevailed over the Peabody Trust, whose agent Bliss was supposed to be. More attention to commercial motivations in studies of claimed provenance would have been warranted in this case.

The *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* was very probably presented during the information gathering occasioned by the local *Relación Geográfica* inquiry of 1581. At that point, its year count of 763 years stopped, probably as it was separated from its community. Taxco, never important enough to be mentioned in the colonial lists,³⁶ nevertheless persisted as a community into the twenty-first century

³⁵ The INEGI database is in the process of being integrated into Google Earth; nevertheless, there are often significant errors in Google Earth that need to be corrected against the geographic coordinates in the INEGI database. Taxco was at its expected INEGI coordinates in Google Earth.

³⁶ Gerhard (1972) does not mention it nor have I found it anywhere, although I would welcome its identification in any source.

where it is listed in the INEGI database and on INEGI maps and had a 2010 population of 454. Perhaps the *Mapa* should be re-named to recognize its proper place of origin in Taxco, *municipio* of Tetela de Ocampo, Puebla, Mexico.

The *Mapa* is a testament to the artistic, historiographic and cartographic expertise of an indigenous mapmaking school under severe pressure well into the late sixteenth century in a remote, disrupted and impoverished area. It is a detailed rendering of Taxco's immediate environs and records founding events and genealogies involving multiple ethnic groups to support claims to land and very likely also labor. More than one investigator has remarked on the quality and detail of the indigenous historical information in the *Relación de Xonotla y Tetela*. These features of the report are very likely the product of *lienzos* prepared in the area two to three decades earlier related to inter-*pueblo* disputes over land, labor and tribute. The same pattern of detailed Totonac histories and litigation to separate from a Nahua *cabecera* is seen in the area around Mizquihuacan (Figure 2), Ahuacatlan and Zacatlan (Offner 2012). As mentioned above, it is possible that companion *lienzos* for the two other towns, Quatenco and Tutla, may still exist.

I first looked at this document in 1977, hoping the paramount ruler was Nezahualcoyotl (1431-1472) of Texcoco. More recently, I pointed out similarities in the installation rituals of Nezahualcoyotl and his father in the *Codex Xolotl* to the installation ritual at Taxco (Offner 2011). Nevertheless, it was apparent then and it is apparent now that the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca* does not deal with Nezahualcoyotl. The personal name glyph is not a good match and the standard correlation dates for the date shown in the installation scene at Tlachco, 7 *Calli* (1421, 1473) are too early and too late for Nezahualcoyotl to have been in authority. Instead, the result is far more interesting. There is good evidence of a ritual and a succession commonality among certain groups that settled in or near the eastern Basin of Mexico and in the Tetela area that persisted for more than one hundred years and that are otherwise virtually unreported in the sources. The *cozoyahualolli* feather work device involved in the ceremony means more than just Chichimec status, at least among certain groups.

The persistence of such practices reminds us that groups of Nahua could be very similar and very different from each other. And the symbol for the 400 years on the *Mapa de Metlatoyuca*, representing a standardized unit of Totonac political duration (Offner 2012), reminds us of the depth and complexity of an ancient historical process in Mexico, the great majority of which remains unvoiced. The surviving data allow only narrow views into the past, and in this instance, only dim glimpses of layers of vanished worlds seemingly forever beyond our reach.

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