Thomas S. Barthel

Methods and Results
of Indo-Mexican Studies

A Preliminary Report

Los manuscritos pictográficos del grupo Borgia co-
rresponden a una religión sincretista que denota nexos
con el Asia Suroriental. Con antiguos medios mexicanos
de expresión se han integrado y traspasado conceptos hin-
duistas. El análisis de los regentes de los veinte signos
del día del Códice Borgia 9-13 lleva al descubrimiento
de dos sistemas politeistas parciales regidos por Viṣṇu,
respectivamente por Śiva, que fueron transpuestos a
Quetzalcouatl, respectivamente a Tezcatlipoca. Se ofre-
ce un conjunto detallado de tales equivalencias transpací-
ficas de deidades así como un bosquejo del marco gene-
ral de semejantes relaciones indo-mexicanas.

Research of Transpacific influences on Mesoamerican cultures centers on
four time-levels. The two earlier ones (1000 B.C. Olmecs; 300 B.C. Monte
Alban I to 300 A.D. Teotihuacan II) are connected with possible diffusion from
East Asia and will not be discussed here. Contrary to the exploration of "Sino-
Mexican" cultural relationships a study of the two later Transpacific waves
of diffusion is in a more favourable position, given the wealth of sources and
the suitability for comparisons with donor-cultures in Asia. We are dealing
with two focuses, where clusters of parallels with the Old World can be found.
In the later Middle Classic syncretistic forms do appear at Palenque and
throughout an area under its influence. "Focus A" – as discovered and des-
cribed first by Ekholm (1953) – promises to gain sharper contours and greater
depth in the course of increasing decipherment of Maya glyphs but it seems to
me premature to discuss such progress at this moment. The subject of my

preliminary report will be, rather, the latest stratum of Transpacific influences discernible in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica that is to say the religious system detectable in the codices of the Borgia-group. I refer to the program deposited in those codices as "Focus B", to be dated in early Post Classic (about 1000 A.D.?).

"Focus A" and "Focus B" can be understood as specific syncretisms which resulted from stimuli from Greater India upon receptive cultures in Mesoamerica south or north of the isthmus. While one can not yet be sure whether new ideas stemming from Palenque passed beyond the Maya region, the new creed dubbed by me "The Borgia Program" appears to have diffused across ethnic boundaries on the Mixteca-Puebla horizon. The consequences of "Focus B" can be studied up to the time of the Spanish conquest, though in a modified and re-mexicanized manner. Therefore, a re-evaluation of Aztec religion might come from this fresh perspective.

"Focus A" and "Focus B" are the subject of a special discipline just emerging for which I have suggested the designation "Indo-Mexican Studies". The field for investigation in Indo-Mexican Studies comprises all the syncretistic manifestations in Mesoamerica which have received and transformed traits from South Asia and South-East Asia, above all influences from Hinduism. Indo-Mexican Studies analyzes archaeological and pictorial evidence, iconographic and epigraphic information by using the standard methods of Mesoamerican Studies as well as by paying attention to and using knowledge of cultural and religious phenomena in the presumed donor-regions on the other side of the Pacific. For the time-period of the first millennium after Christ the Asiatic area under comparison is delimited by India, Western Indonesia and Indochina (as well as the area influenced by Buddhism, like Burma, Tibet and Ceylon on the one hand and the Hellenistic and Late Classical cultures to the west of India on the other hand). It goes without saying that the closest cooperation with traditional Indology and its specialized branches and neighbouring disciplines must be striven for. Those who work in Indo-Mexican Studies ordinarily start with a competence in one area of Transpacific connections only, but must make themselves competent in the opposing area. In the same way as research on syncretistic phenomena in Late Classical time required simultaneously a command of the most important languages of that time and area, in the future a qualified specialist for Indo-Mexican Studies will have to make himself sufficiently conversant with Sanskrit as well as with Nahua and Maya.

Indo-Mexican Studies suffers from an imbalance that can not be avoided. The profusion of published and unpublished sources in Greater India contrasts with a dearth of documents from pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. These disparities in number (resulting from the destruction or loss of almost all of the pre-Columbian libraries leaving only a handful of codices) are furthermore aggravated by the differences of ancoding techniques. Whereas the donor-cultures in Greater India used a developed full-writing system for encoding their texts and thus were able to fix permanently the archaic language of Sanskrit, the receiving cultures in Mesoamerica had at their disposal merely notational sys-

tems falling far behind. Partial writing systems necessarily are very imperfect for recording language; providing mostly a series of catch-words, they required contemporary oral commentaries and explanations. Those components of the tradition have been lost irretrievably and can not be compensated for by a modern scholar using risky conclusions of analogy.

A further difficulty for Indo-Mexican Studies in the comparison of intercontinental styles must be mentioned. Both Greater India and Mesoamerica for their religious art made use of exact iconographic rules within the traditional frame work utilized by the appointed artisans. A mere visual comparison brings out in most cases restricted motif-linkages only and furthermore is burdened down with subjective views. The limits of such comparisons have become evident for instance in the studies of the late Heine-Geldern. The recognition of more or less identical information clothed in utterly different historical costumes needs analytical methods of novel capacity for probing new depths. Indo-Mexican Studies gains additional potential for understanding by including literary sources from Greater India for comparative use. As opposed to the conventional method of comparing form with form visually, we now enquire whether textual information of the donor-culture has been transformed into pictorial information of the receiving culture. Our new method principally reckons with a change of the media, in accordance with the different niveaus of writing-systems in Asia and Ancient America respectively. One has to take into account that Transpacific contacts did not produce any mass immigrations which would have caused strong changes in the field of artisans as well as a spread of Asiatic languages or writing-systems as it happened so often in Hinduized South-East Asia. An implantation of a new religious pattern caused by a small number of contact-bearers (presumably of high standing at Mesoamerican courts) could only be successful by taking up and remodelling traditions and styles already existent in Mesoamerica in order to have as far as possible native media for the spread of the "new creed". Indo-Mexican Studies reckons with "new wine in old bottles" and with a strong tendency towards formal adaptations. Possibly the rôle of single brahmans and their pupils in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica can be compared to the techniques of infiltration used by the Jesuits in the China of the 16th and 17th century, when the missionaries tried to adapt themselves as far as possible to Chinese culture and philosophy.

Traditional Mexican Studies has analyzed the syncretistic documents of "Focus B", that is the codices of the Borgia group, in one way only. Ever since the days of Seler their contents was defined by direct comparison with Aztec religion and calendrics of the 16th century. This is not wrong but it yields only half of the truth. Indo-Mexican Studies presents as a supplementary hypothesis that a religious pattern imported from Greater India served as an original program for a specific priestly school. First suspicions are raised by observing peculiarities completely isolated in Mesoamerica but wellknown among the supposed Transpacific donor-cultures. We are dealing both with series of a calendrical nature and assemblages of an iconographic nature. Two examples may help to illustrate this:

a) Codex Laud 24-17 is a calendrical chapter with a length of 35 days, but such a cycle has no parallels in Mesoamerica. The pattern of pictorial sections shows that sets of five days are segmented, thus revealing that the entire chapter was built up out of seven parts. Transpacific working-hypothesis recognizes in such patterning wellknown properties of the Javan-Balinese calendar. There the so-called tumpak-cycle comprises 35 days combining a five-day week (panchawara) with a seven-day week (saptawara) and functions as an astrological almanac. Those who work in Indo-Mexican Studies now explore the background of Hinduized Western Indonesia to find additional parallels, for instance planetary rulers of the seven-day week. Above all, the planetary working-hypothesis produces intriguing results for a deeper understanding of certain other series in Mesoamerica.

b) Codex Laud 9 presents a cluster of icons quite isolated within Mesoamerica but easy to connect with Chinese cosmography. "Turtle with Snake" corresponds to the Chinese animals ruling the northern quarter of the world; "female deity, rabbit and intoxicating drunk" refer to the Chinese mother-goddess and the lunar hare who prepares the life-elixir. Even the weapons in Laud 9 find their explanation in a Chinese concept because "Turtle with Snake" as rulers of the northern stellar quadrant was designated "Black Warrior". A further investigation of this chapter makes clear that other icons can be explained as being derived from Indian tradition. Those who work in Indo-Mexican Studies therefore begin to suspect that a donor-culture for Transpacific influences was located in an area where Chinese and Indian cultures overlap – and that was Indochina.

Such specific peculiarities may help to initiate the first step towards more specific linkages across the Pacific. Of course, the crucial proof that such hypothetical linkages are correct is brought about if they can serve as a key to lock up additional parallels which could not be foreseen. Indo-Mexican Studies started at Tuebingen seven years ago brought in a rich harvest, only part of which has been published so far. We have already surpassed the stage when parallels were confined to single series or isolated icons. At the present state of investigation one can announce a successful linkage between half of the 28 chapters in Codex Borgia with Hindu prototypes both in general themes and in specific textual details. To continue the decipherment of "The Borgia Program" will be the main task for Indo-Mexican Studies in the next decade. Special attention should go to refining the use of the relevant Asiatic sources. At the Ethnological Institute of the University of Tuebingen a systematic archive for the study of Transpacific cultural relationships is accumulated in the course of a middle range research project sponsored by the Breuninger Foundation, Stuttgart. This comprises the encouragement of international discussion and interdisciplinary cooperation.

Indo-Mexican Studies today has two tasks: investigation of a complex calendar system oriented towards astrology and prognostics and explorations in the field of History of Religions. My main interest is to define the relationship of Hindu polytheism in the first millennium after Christ and the various poly-

theistic systems of Classic and Post-Classic Mesoamerica. I start from the hypothesis that partial influences and modifications did occur across the Pacific. This intercontinental approach may contribute to solving the much-discussed problem of "continuity and discontinuity" of Mesoamerican culture history by adding new criteria. The novel thesis postulated by Indo-Mexican Studies assumes the existence of religious movements of a syncretistic nature rooted in Hinduism. I see the religious patterns manifest in "Focus A" and even more clearly in "Focus B" as complicated melting-pots highly relevant for Mesoamerican history. The partial Hinduization certainly was not forced upon Ancient American polytheism by invaders from overseas. Rather, this partial Hinduization consisted of processes like filtering, rearranging, shift of accents and the modification of earlier traditions. Such deep changes in theology and faith can only occur in times of political unrest. One might consider a possible connection of "Focus A" and the repercussions of the fall of Teotihuacan and of "Focus B" and the disintegration of Classic cultures and the emergence of new centers and lines of communication.

The basic components of "The Borgia Program" are the divine rulers of the twenty day-signs. You may recall that other scholars already tried to explain the polytheistic inventory of Codex Borgia 9-13 as a religious pattern derived from Asia. Kirchhoff (1964), for instance, proposed a twelve-fold central block and worked with direct comparisons in linear sequence. Although his selection of certain sources is valuable for future research, I feel that he has not proven his case. Instead, my findings show that permutations within sequences of Hindu deities occured often in the course of Transpacific diffusion. To the receiving cultures of Mesoamerica their indigenous sequence of day-signs was canonical and incontestable. As the calendrical matrix had to stay constant, integration or change of a ruler of a day-sign was adapted to the existing sequence. Within the given limits of this traditional matrix acceptable innovations could be included according to the requirements of specific subject matters or had to be rearranged into new subgroups. As long as the somewhat naive assumption prevailed that day-signs and rulers of day-signs were created simultaneously in their given sequence and in a constant relationship to each other "The Borgia Program" remained locked for Transpacific comparisons as well. It seemed quite plausible to extend the sequence "first day-sign Cipactli to twentieth day-sign Xochitl", which was strictly enforced to the ritual calendar, to a supposed sequence "first day-ruler Tonacatecuhtli to twentieth day-ruler Xochiquetzal". The contents of historically later systems, such as that of the Aztecs, seemed to justify such a conclusion.

However, it can be shown that the sequence of day-rulers according to the calendrical pattern of 1, 2, 3 up to 20 does not represent the original order. Two subsystems of deities ordered in opposite directions define the structure of the pantheon in "The Borgia Program". Two icons in the frames of the 18th and the 19th day-signs which have not been understood so far signal the start of a sequence towards the left of "thirteen" and a sequence to the right of "sixteen". Thus the 29 anthropomorphs depicted in this chapter are divided into

two opposing subgroups. From the 18th to the 10th day-sign 13 anthropomorphs follow each other _against_ the calendrical order, from the 19th to the 9th day-sign 16 anthropomorphs _comply_ with the calendrical order. To summarize: the entire chapter is divided into two subsystems, each starting with an icono-graphically unequivocal signal. These directionally contrasting subsystems contain a distinct opposition between positive and negative aspects of the ac-companying deities. The deities belonging to the left sequence are involved in sorcery and death, those belonging to the right sequence are concerned with life and prosperity. Such a division of day-rulers by contrasting qualities based on a dissection of the traditional sequence of day signs was never considered in Mexican Studies before. An Indo-Mexican interpretation begins with con-templating the division 29 equals 13 plus 16. If 29 is understood as stating the length of a synodical month the natural division of lunar phases from new moon to full moon and vice versa would be 15 plus 14. The division 13 plus 16 does not reflect observation of nature but is a culturally determined tradition in India. There the moon is thought to fill with the beverage of immortality during the "light half" of the month, which lasts 16 days. During the ensuing 13 days, the "dark half" of the month, the gods drain the moon of its immortalizing contents. This is a period of dangerous forces according to Indian beliefs. The negative quality of the shorter subsystem in the Codex Borgia may have roots in that notion. Furthermore, contra-rotating subsystems may emphasize a "road leading to the right" and a "road leading to the left". Hindus saw the former as a form of worshipping Vishnu, the latter as a veneration of Shiva.

Let me summarize the structural properties: A subsystem with positive qualities runs clockwise from the 19th to the 9th day-sign and comprises a set of anthropomorphs corresponding in its total to the light half of a lunar month. In contrast another subsystem with negative qualities runs counter-clockwise from the 18th to the 10th day-sign consisting of such a number of anthropo-morphs that the dark half of a lunar month is defined. Those who work in Indo-Mexican Studies propose to explain such an opposition as a model based on the contrast between (mostly) vishnuite deities and (mostly) shivaite deities. As a matter of fact, this interpretation has turned out to be highly productive. In the course of lengthy investigations – details must be reserved for a future publication – I succeeded in obtaining an almost complete set of equivalences between Hindu an Ancient Mexican deities.

An "equivalence" does not indicate total identity, which could only be expected by a mechanical acceptance of imported patterns. An "equivalence" is given when an adequate number of traits do exist signaling the original character of deities in the donor-culture. "Equivalences" resulted from a well-defined se-lection of characteristics. The selection of characteristics followed the prin-ciples of economy and simplification concentrating on salient traits of Hindu deities. As far as we know today, quite a number of different techniques for transformation have been used in order to translate significant details from the visual and literary world of Hinduism into the pictorial representations of the Codex Borgia-group. Transformation rules reach from taking over facial paintings of Hindu sects and imitating certain characteristic attributes of Hindu

deities to using condensed reproductions of mythical episods from epic-puranic sources. Equivalences of names and epitheta are sometimes based on wordplays in Sanskrit, expressing abstract terms by concrete items. Functional correspondences between Hindu and Ancient Mexican deities have been underlined by adding specific traits from the donor-culture. It makes no difference whether Hindu epitheta were taken from iconographic or literary prototypes – the visual result was always couched in the artstyle of the receiving culture.

I designate "equivalences" with a star before the Sanskrit name. A "starred name" indicates the hypothetical prototype of a deity in the frame of "The Borgia Program". Traditional Mexican Studies will be able to continue using terms like "Red Tezcatlipoca" or "Chalchiuhtlicue". Those who work in Indo-Mexican Studies offer an additional information concerning possible genetic relations by using terms of equivalences like *Rudra or *Lakṣmī. To avoid unnecessary misunderstandings let me emphasize the following: We are not propagating a trivial reductionism which might claim Ancient Mexican deities to have been "merely copies" of Hindu polytheism. Indo-Mexican Studies systematically strives towards more historical precision by trying to show that Old World pattern participated in shaping New Worls configurations.

My list of equivalences for Codex Borgia 9–13 is almost complete. When several alternatives continued to be available, a general description of function is given.

Equivalences of Ruling Deities in Codex Borgia 9–13:

Shivaistic Subsystem	Vishnuistic Subsystem
(counter-clockwise, lunar darkness, unfavourable)	(clockwise, solar, light, favourable)
18. *Gaṇeśa	19. *Sūrya
17. *Anaṅga	20. "Wives of the Sun"
16. *Jyeṣṭhā Alakṣmī	1. *Brahmā
15. *Rudra	2. *Viṣṇu Vāyu
	3. "Guardian of *Kubera" / *Candra Saśin
14. *Devī	4. *Kāma-type
	5. *Lakṣmī
13. *Śiva	6. *Varuṇa's consort
12. *Soma/*Skanda	7. *Indra

11. *Prajāpati? / *Pradyumna?   8. *"Goddess of Intoxicating
                                            Drink "

10. *Yama Mṛtyu   9. *Agni

Quite a number of conclusions can be drawn from our proposed solution. I
will cite only one example which is instructive for its systematic nature. After
having filled up the two subsystems step by step in deciphering the individual
equivalences to my surprise something quite unexpected was found. A further
purely Asiatic pattern appeared to have been embodied in the set of day-rulers.
Among the resulting equivalences a complete set of eight world-direction rulers
came to light. This set followed a systematic distribution, being fitted into the
series of Mexican day-signs in pairs on the positions 2,3 - 6,7 - 9,10 - 15,16.
A comparison with Hindu standard tradition is revealing.

Rulers of World Directions in Codex Borgia 9-13:

List of Equivalences

East	Indra	cf. 7.	*Indra	
Southeast	Agni	cf. 9.	*Agni	"uneven"
South	Yama	cf. 10.	*Mṛtyu (= Yama)	
Southwest	Nairṛta	cf. 16.	*Jyeṣṭha (= Nirṛtī)	"even"
West	Varuṇa	cf. 6.	*Varuṇa's consort	
Northwest	Vāyu	cf. 2.	*Viṣṇu as wind-god	"even"
North	Kubera (or moon-god)	cf. 3.	*Kubera's guardian (and Candra Saśin)	
Northeast	Īśāna	cf. 15.	*Rudra	"uneven"

(Puraṇic Tradition
according to
Mallmann 1963; 127)

Evidently, the distribution of the world-direction rulers was carefully adopt-
ed to the calendrical position of the day-signs, at the same time following the
principle of "uneven" and "even". A divine pair "ruler of main world-direction
and ruler of intermediate world-direction" always belongs to the same class.
The four world-directions from north to southeast have their rulers placed on
uneven days, the four following world-directions from south to northwest use
even days. Such a pattern of distribution does not come about by chance. The

result is a balance in space between "uneven world-direction rulers" and "even world-direction rulers". Furthermore, a balance in numerology is achieved. Both groups are in a "gematric balance", as can be found out by adding their calendrical positions to the same sum $(3 + 15 + 7 + 9 = 34$ total of uneven positions versus $10 + 16 + 6 + 2 = 34$ total of even positions). Both the technique of contrasting two classes of "uneven" and "even" and the technique of transforming non-numerical information into numerical information, according to the principles of gematria, are well-known practices in Greater India.

We have no difficulty to fit in the set of these newly discovered world-direction rulers into the available sources of the donor-culture. Our discovery corresponds exactly to the system transmitted in the Purānas. The eight world-direction rulers * Aṣṭadikpāla cut across the subdivisions of vishnuite and shivaite deities and help to reconcile the two described subsystems. The mere existence, not to speak of the skilfully planned distribution, of Hindu world-direction rulers among Mexican day-rulers has been completely unknown so far. Only with the help of the combinatory analysis of Indo-Mexican Studies such deep structures are coming to the fore.

One need not be a prophet to predict that years full of intensive struggle between Indo-Mexican Studies and Traditional Mexican Studies lie before us. Indo-Mexican Studies demands a keen rethinking and reevaluation as well as the abandonment of supposedly warranted conceptions by colleagues who for the most part are entrenched isolationists. One can only wish that the unavoidable controversies ought to be debated with a maximum of objectivity and a minimum of polemics.

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