

# Oaxaca

## A Photographic Essay

City of Oaxaca de Juarez	<a href="#"><u>Page 2</u></a>
Early Colonial City Church Architecture	<a href="#"><u>Page 9</u></a>
Early Colonial Village Church Architecture	<a href="#"><u>Page 15</u></a>
Early Colonial <a href="#"><u>Ex-Convento</u></a> Architecture	<a href="#"><u>Page 25</u></a>
Early Colonial Stone Arches and Lintels	<a href="#"><u>Page 32</u></a>
Zapotec Pre-Historic Archeological Sites	<a href="#"><u>Page 36</u></a>
Indigenous People	<a href="#"><u>Page 38</u></a>
Flora	<a href="#"><u>Page 44</u></a>
Arts and Handicrafts	<a href="#"><u>Page 50</u></a>
City Museums	<a href="#"><u>Page 58</u></a>
Pre-Hispanic Art	<a href="#"><u>Page 60</u></a>
Miscellaneous	<a href="#"><u>Page 64</u></a>
Notes	<a href="#"><u>Pages 66-68</u></a>

# City of Oaxaca de Juarez

[Cafe Culture and City Parks](#)

[Typical Streetscapes and City Buildings](#)

[Typical City Buildings Continued](#)

[Typical City Buildings Part 3](#)

[Municipal Palace and Museum](#)

[City Markets](#)



# OAXACA

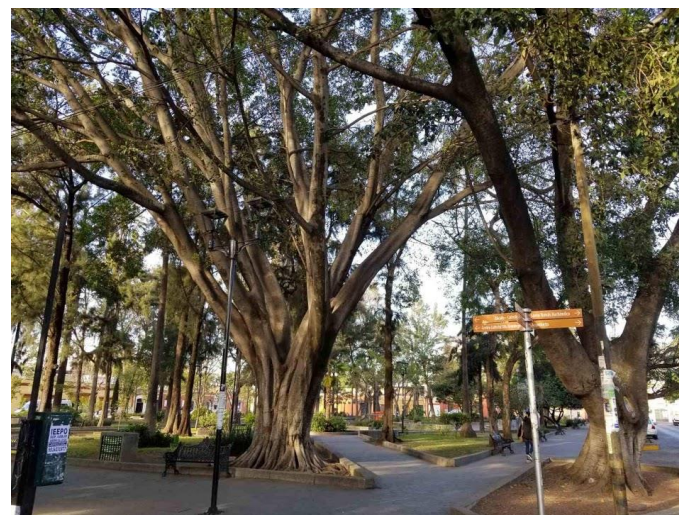
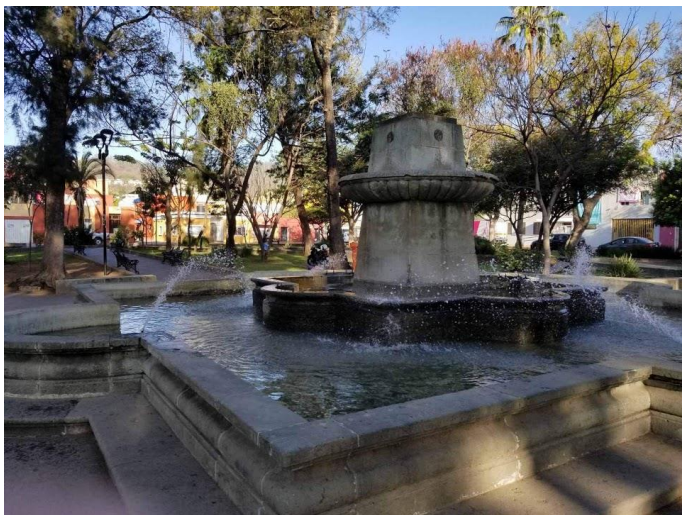
## A Photographic Essay

Oaxaca is safe, smart, ancient, indigenously cultured, artistic, sophisticated, gourmet, clean, exceedingly affordable with perfect weather and gracious, dignified people of incomparable talents and sensitivity.



### Cafe Culture on the Zocalo

On my first visit to the city on New Year's Eve in 1980 the streets in front of the cafes were full of broken crockery as the tradition was to finish the last meal of the year and throw the dish out with old year



### City Parks

filled with Indian Laurel (Banyan) trees – actually in the fig family



## Typical Stone Paved Streetscapes and City Buildings



The streets are paved with smooth green stones in a four part pattern of diagonals and straights. Oaxaca was first named Antequera Verde (Antequera after the city in Spain, Verde after the green color of the local Cantera stone).





# Typical City Buildings Continued



The Opera House Teatro Macedonia Alcala



Art Nouveau Window



# Typical City Buildings Part 3

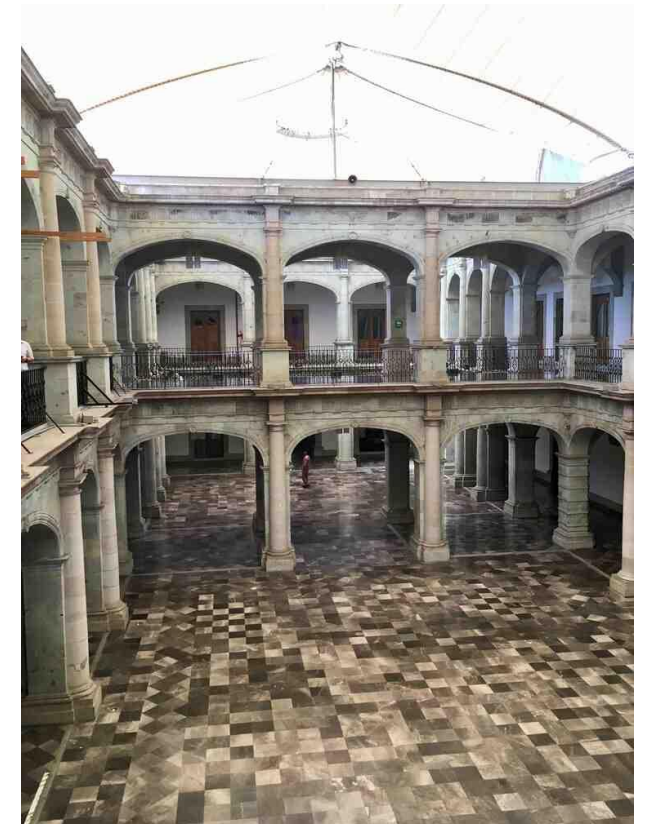




City Buildings: [Municipal Palace](#) and Museum (Former State Government Building)



Mural of the History of Oaxaca by Arturio Garcia Bustos





# City Markets

The City Mercados of 20<sup>th</sup> of November, Benito Juarez, Abastos, La Merced and De Artesanias offer every imaginable fruit, grain, seed, pepper, bean, spice, coffee, fowl, cuts of beef, pig, goat, fish and lamb, grasshoppers, grubs, prepared Mole sauce, bread, pastry, hat, shoe, sandle, basket, incense, chocolate, leather good, wood carving, Mezcal liquor, embroidery, knitted and woven apparel and plant-based products known to Meso-America.



Grasshoppers



Beans



Baskets



Oaxacan cheese wrapped in woven leaf containers



Honey from Chiapas: The 3 Varieties Depend Upon the local Flowers



Poultry



# Early Colonial Oaxaca City Church Architecture

Santo Domingo de Guzman

Virgen de Soledad

San Felipe Neri and La Catedral

San Augustin and San Francisco

De La Merced and San Matias de Jalatlaco

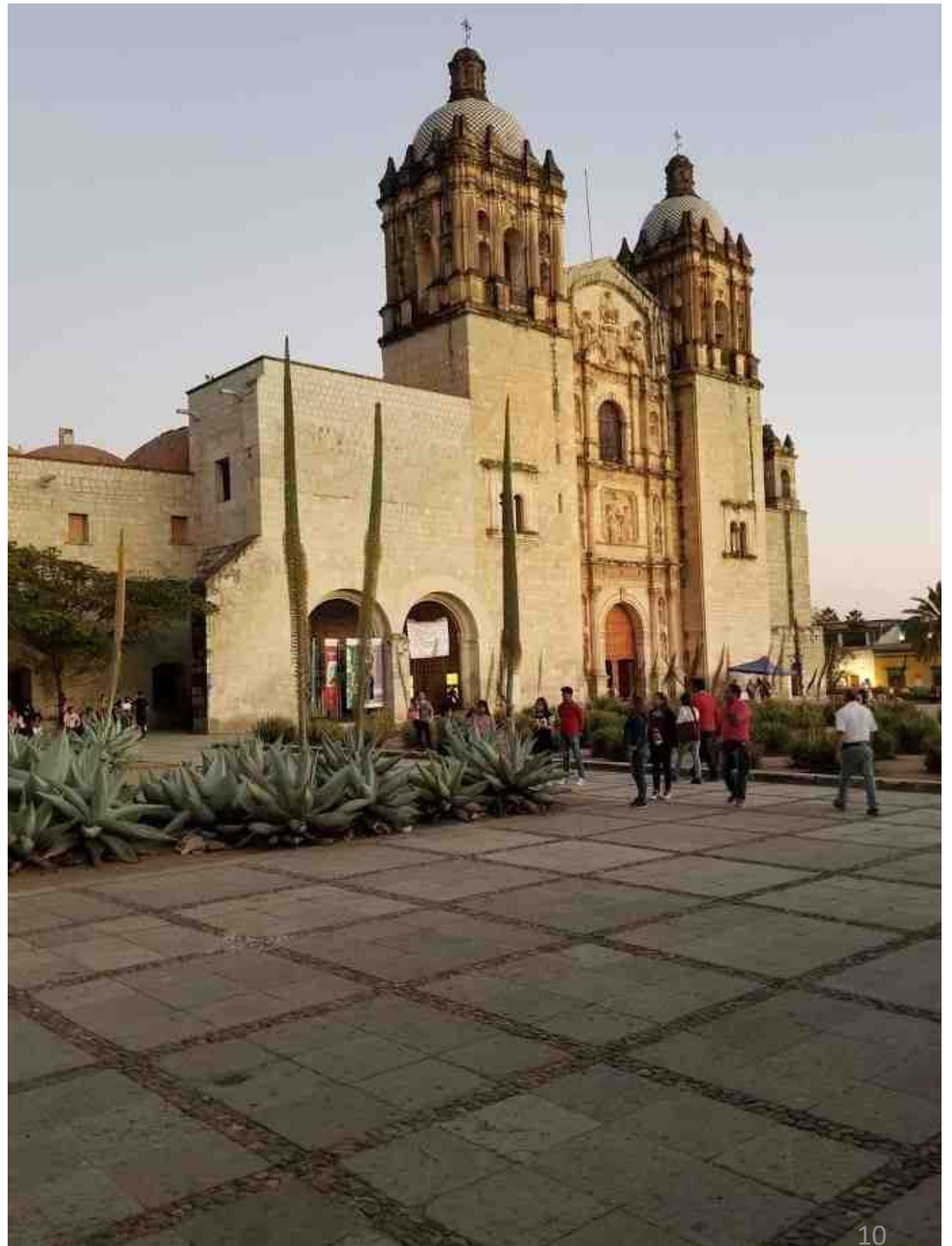


## City Churches: The Golden Stone of Santo Domingo

“The church is enormous, dazzling, overwhelming in its baroque magnificence, not an inch free of guilt. A sense of power and wealth exudes... from this church”

Oliver Sacks in his *Oaxaca Journal*

Sybill Bedford: “a baroque church covered every foot inside from niche to vaulting with a splendid absurdity of saints and angels in gilt and painted high-relief.”





## City Churches: Virgen De La Soledad, Patron Saint of the City of Oaxaca

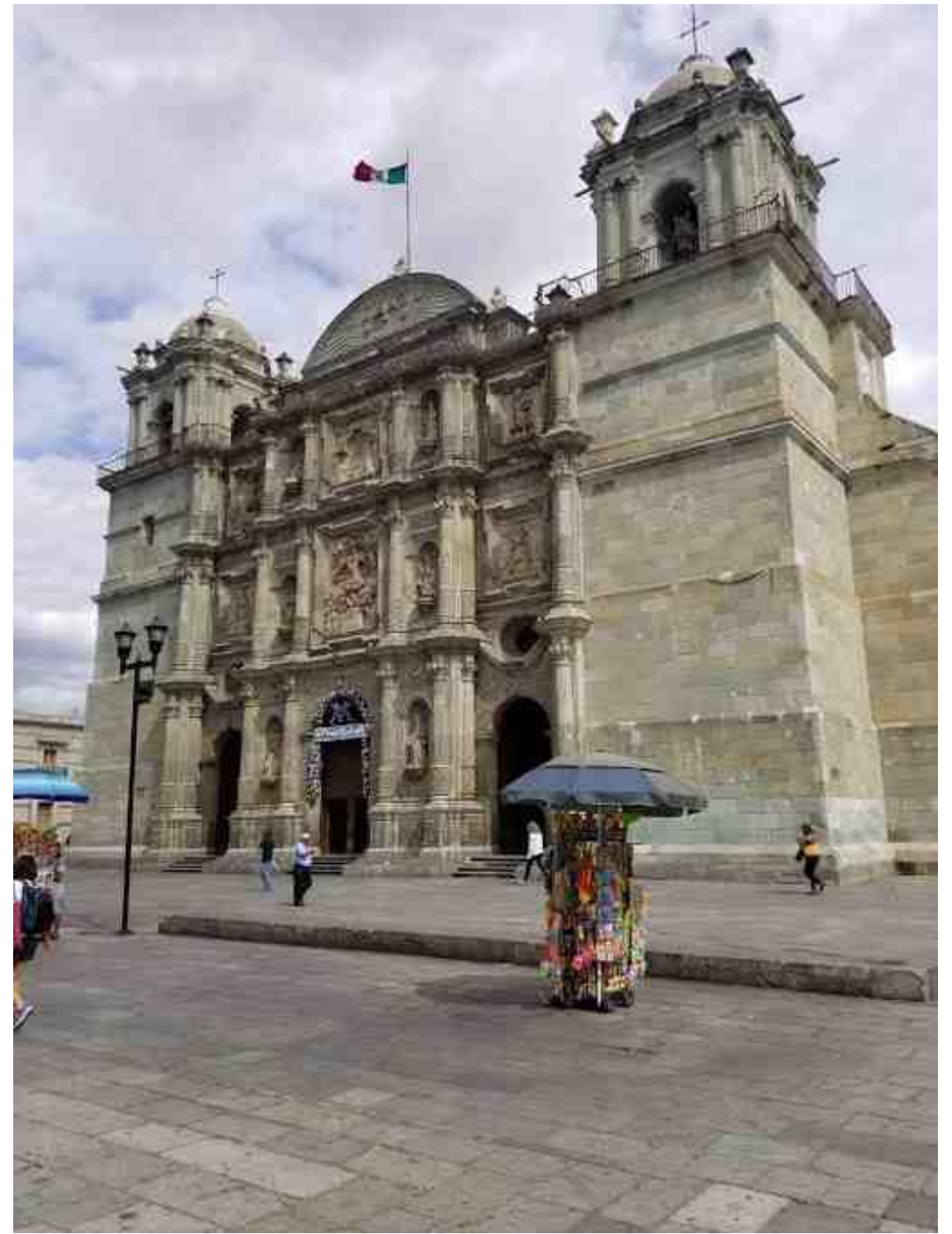


Known as a “Picture Book in Stone” and famed for its intricately carved “Retablo-Facade”



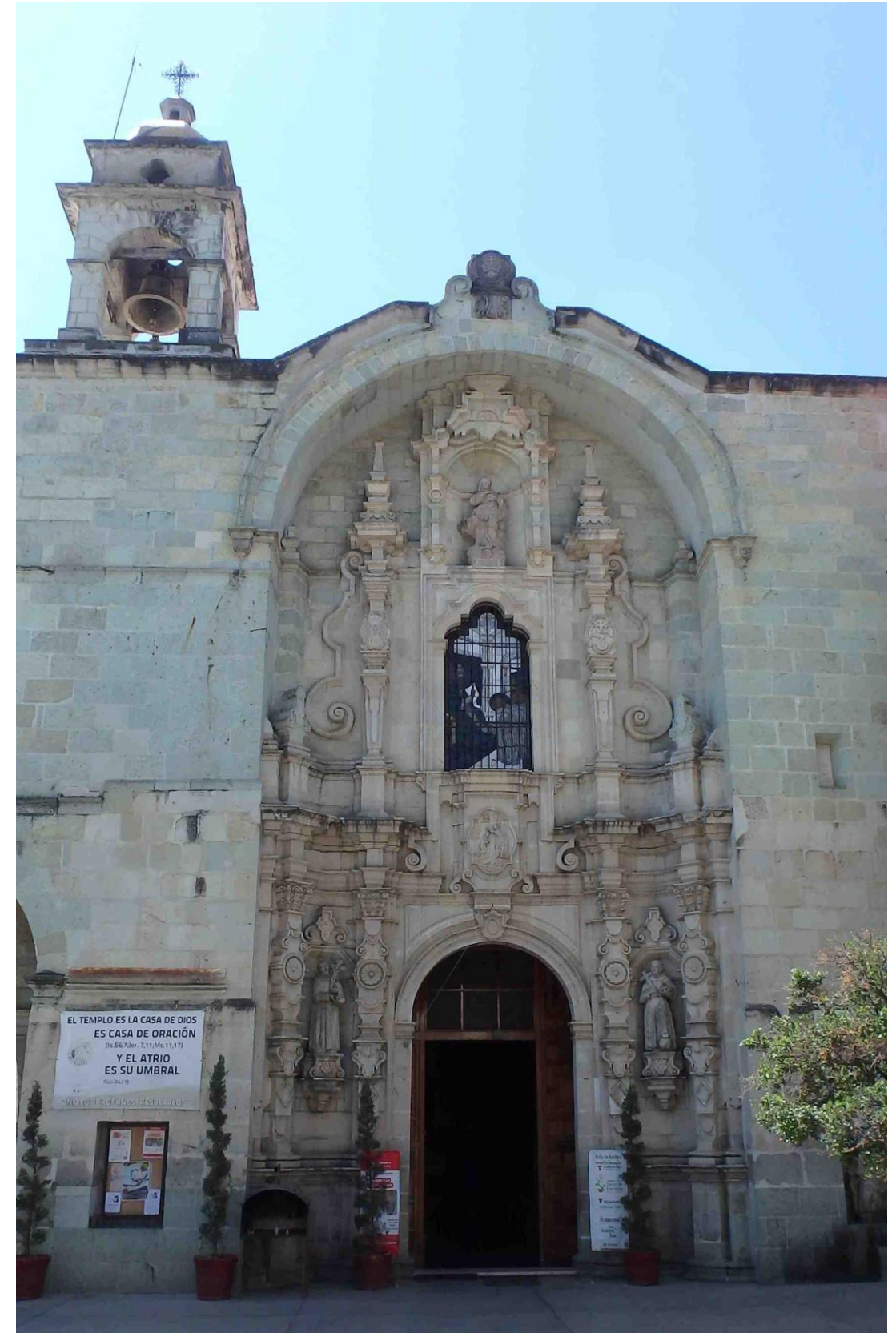


## City Churches: San Felipe Neri and La Catedral





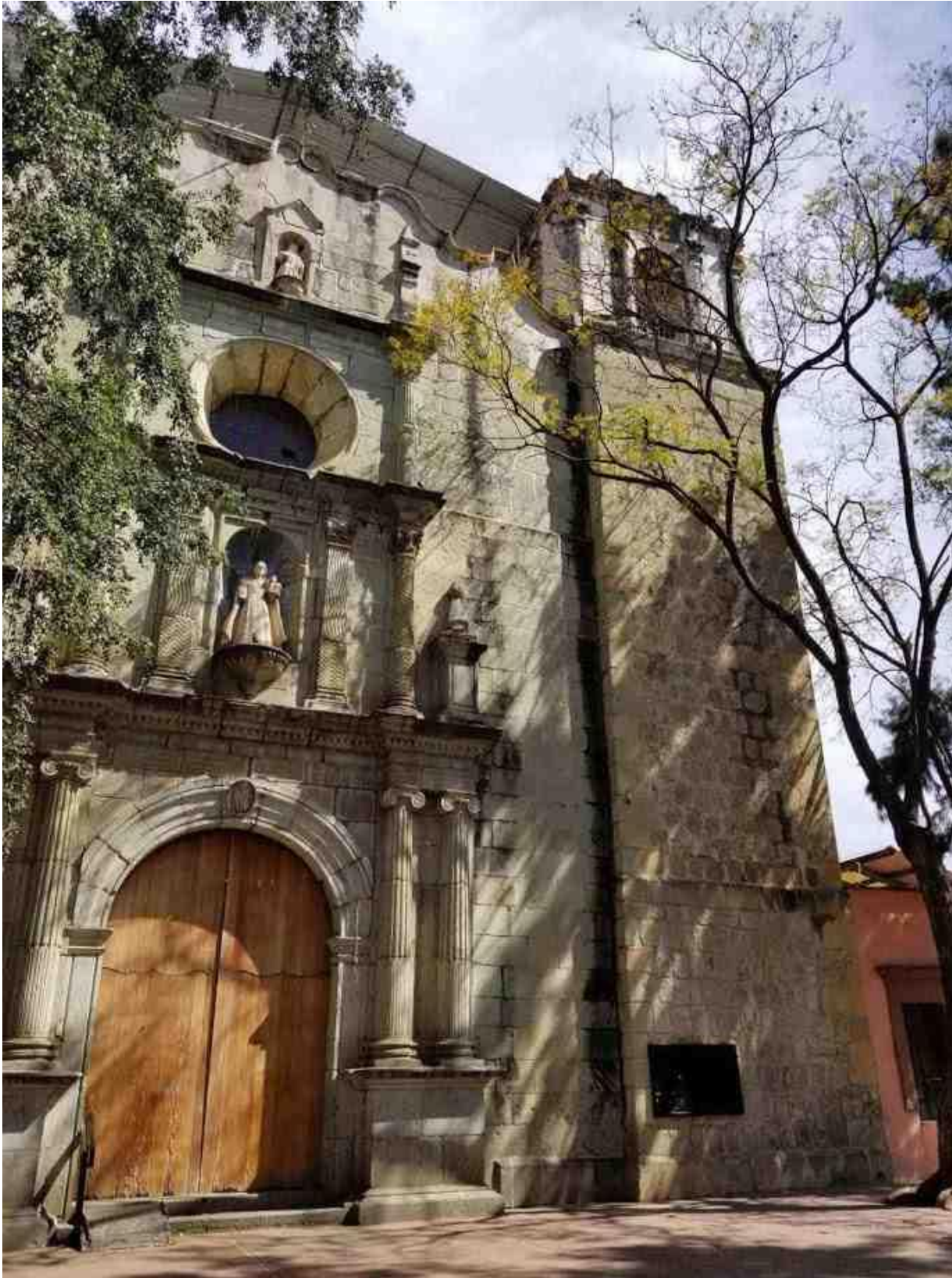
## City Churches: San Augustin and San Francisco



Please note that Oaxaca State is earthquake prone and that the friar architects learned quickly from the 1696 earthquake to tremblor-proof their structures with massive stone walls and abutments and/or buttresses



## City Churches: De La Merced and San Matias de Jalatlaco



De La Merced (on the left) was re-built a number of times with a riot of different styles



# Early Colonial Village Church Architecture

[Tlacolula Valley Churches 1](#)

[Tlacolula Valley Churches 2](#)

[Tlacolula Valley Churches 3](#)

[Etla Valley Churches](#)

[Ocotlan Valley Churches](#)

[Mixteca Alta Churches: Yanhuitlan](#)

[Mixteca Alta Churches: Tamazulapam and Coixtlahuaca](#)

[Mixteca Alta Churches: Teposcolula](#)

[Zimatlan Valley Churches: Cuilapan](#)



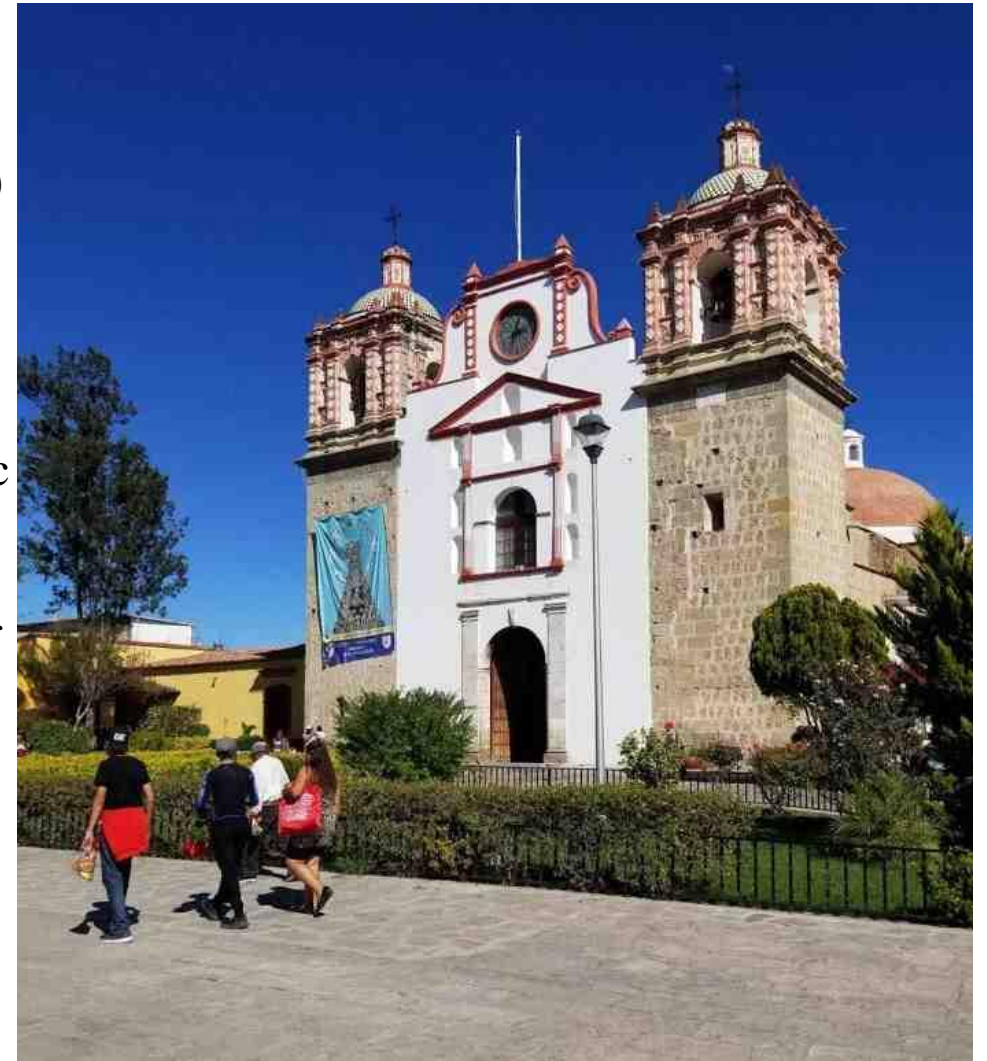
## Village Churches: Tlacolula Valley



Left: San Pablo  
Villa de Mitla  
(Place of the Dead)

Right: Tlacolula  
(Place of the  
Crosses)

Below: Exposed  
Carved Pre-Historic  
Stone at Sangre  
De Cristo Teotitlan  
del Valle (Home of  
the Gods)



Left and  
Right:  
Exposed  
Stones with  
Ancient  
Carvings at  
Teotitlan del  
Valle





# Village Churches : Tlacolula Valley, Part 2

Clockwise from  
Upper Left: Santa  
Domingo  
Tomaltepec  
(Tomato Hill), San  
Juan Teitepec  
(Raised Above  
Stones), San Andres  
Huayapan (River of  
Big Water), San  
Dionisio Ocotepec







In the Sierra Juarez, North  
of the Valley of Tlacolula

Left: Iglesia De La Asuncion  
De Ixtlan De Juarez

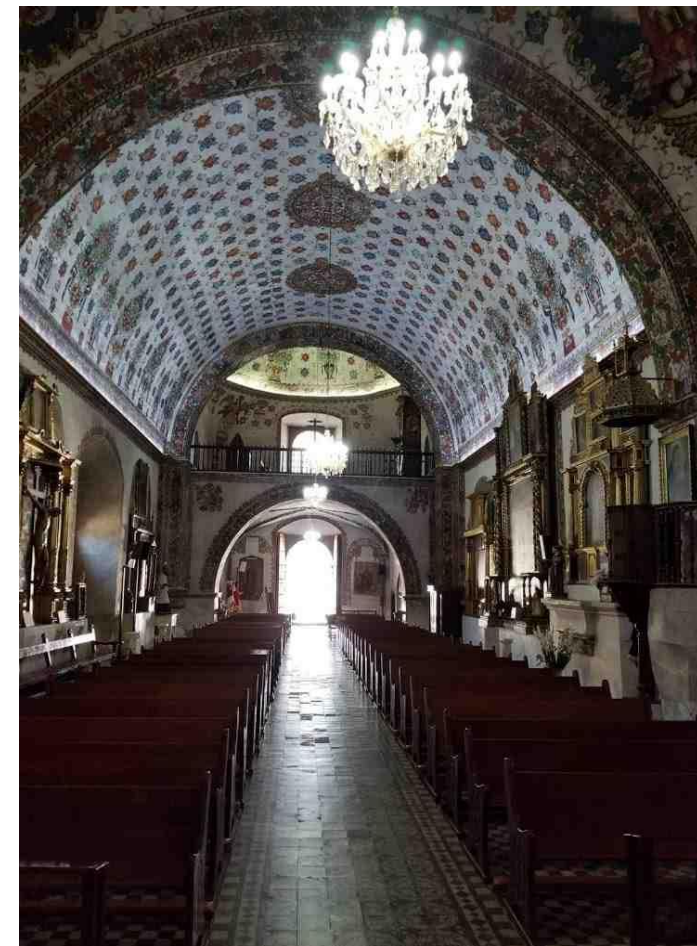
Right: Iglesia Evangelica  
Maranatha De Ixtlan De Juarez



### Village Churches : Tlacolula Valley, Part 3

Left: Exterior of  
San Jeronimo  
Tlacoahuaya  
(Watering Place)

Right: Interior  
Vaulted Ceiling  
of San Jeronimo





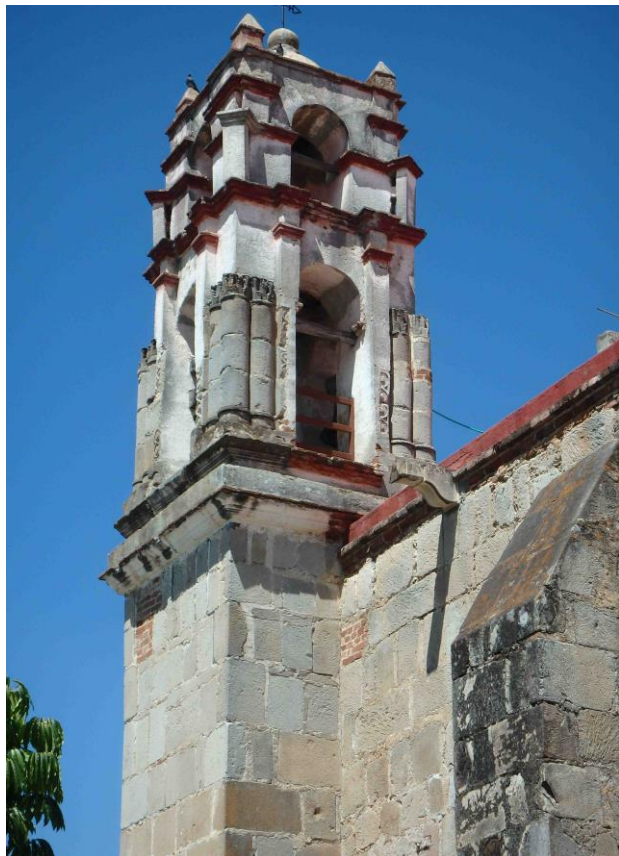
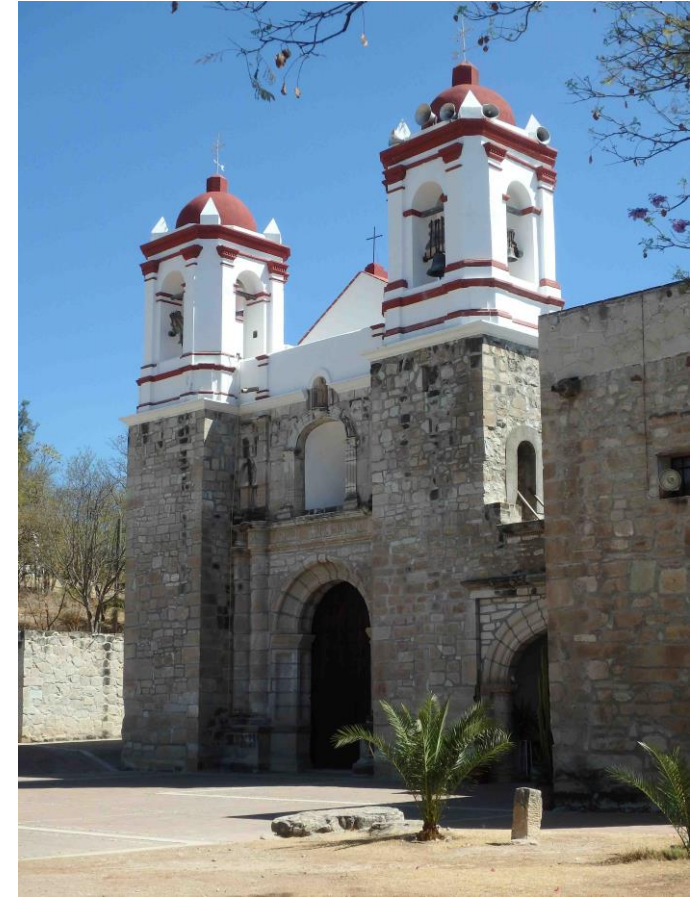
# Village Churches: Etna (Land of Beans) Valley



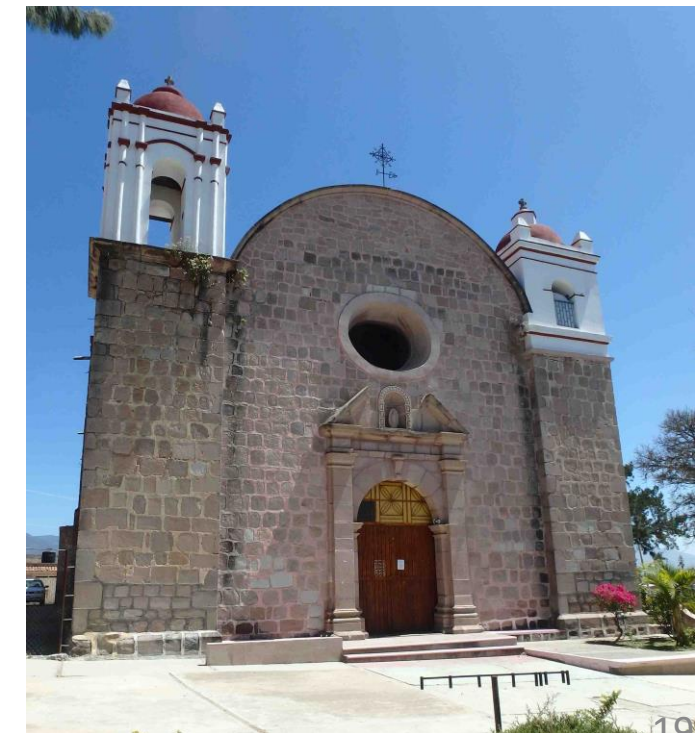
Left: San Pedro y San Pablo de Etna (Place of Beans)

Right: San Pablo Huitzo (Watchtower)

Below Left and Middle: San Francisco Telixtlahuaca (On the Plain of Stones)



Right: Santiago Zuchilquitongo (Molcajete or mortar bowl for Mortar and Pestle)





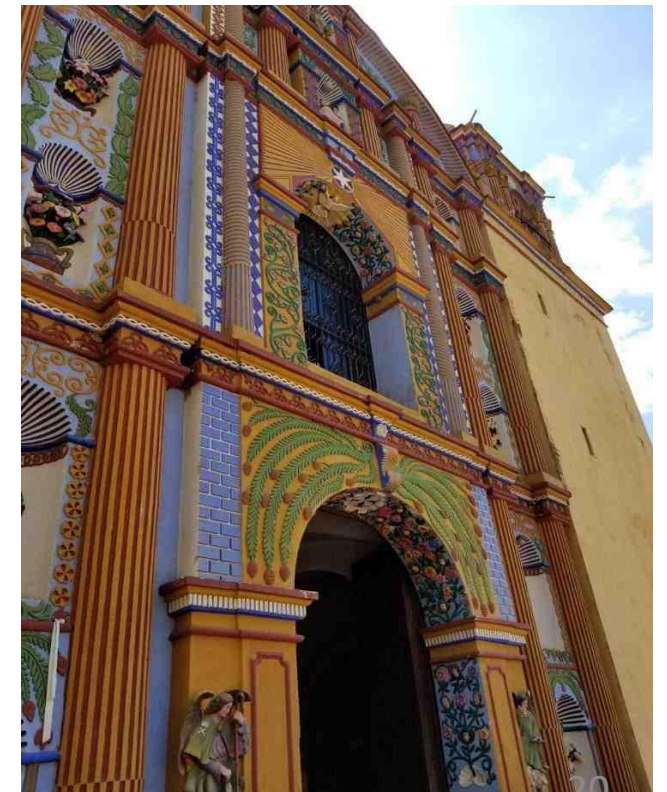
# Colorful Village Churches: [Ocotlan](#) (Place of Pines) Valley



Above and Right: Santa Ana Zegache  
(Seven Mounds)

Left and below: Santo Domingo  
Ocotlan (Place of Pines)

Below: Santa  
Ana





# Mixteca Alta Village Churches: Santo Domingo Yanhuitlan (Wide and Spacious Valley)



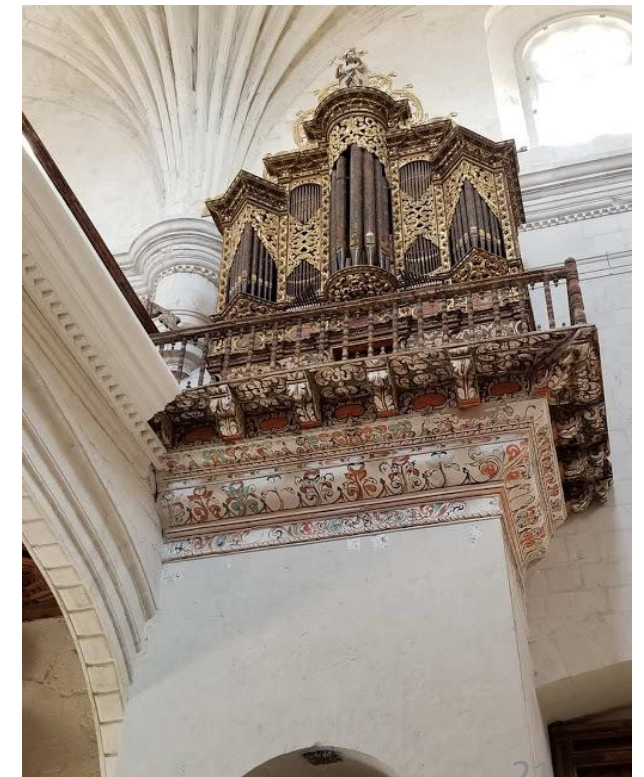
From Paul Theroux: “tall, high sided and austere, braced by stepped squarish buttresses rising almost to its roof...most impressive was its unadorned immensity, its fortress-like solidity, its stark and solitary position...the biggest thing in the landscape, bigger than any hill and perfectly preserved”



Left: “facade inset with niches (with) stony glazed saints”

Sagrario Chapel

1<sup>st</sup> Ribbed vaults in the Americas and the Restored Organ





# Mixteca Alta Village Churches: Tamazulapam and Coixtlahuaca

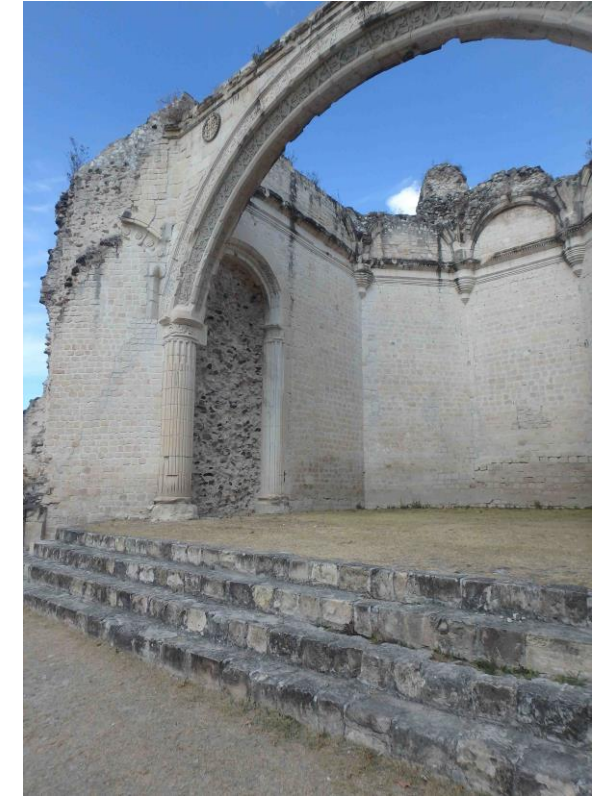


Above, Left and Below: Santa Maria de la Natividad de Tamazulapam "Toad River"

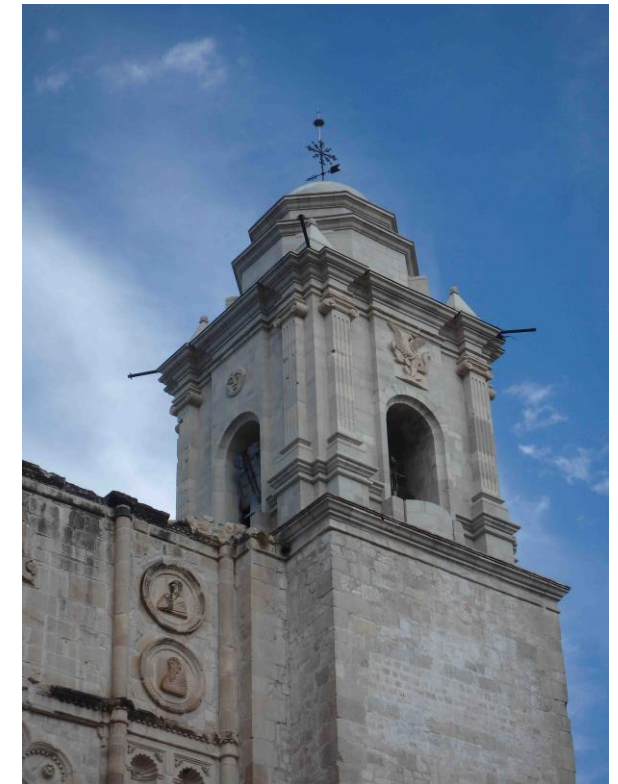
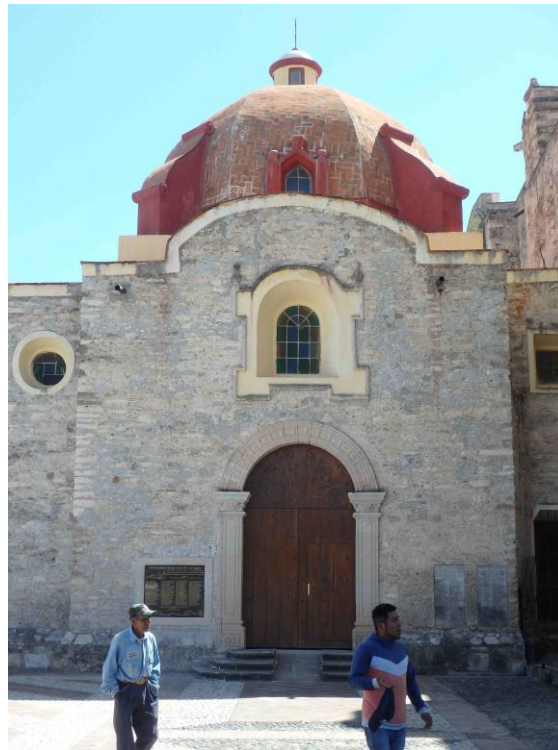
4 Photos on the Right: San Bautista de Coixtlahuaca "Plain of Snakes"



West Facade Above, North Portal Below



Above: Collapsed Vault of the Open Chapel





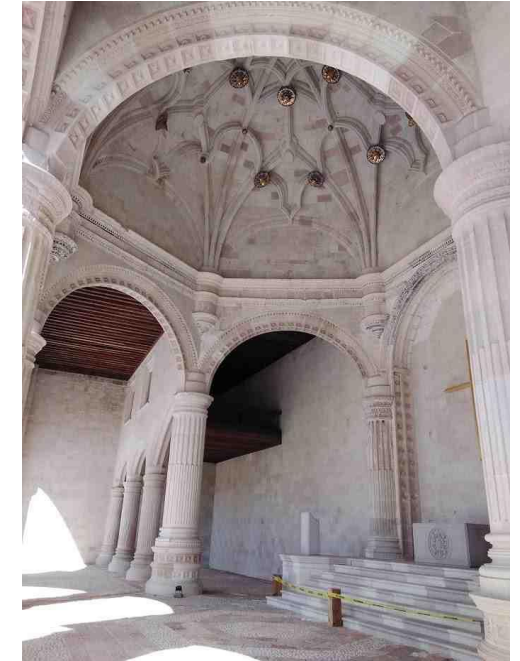
# Mixteca Alta Churches: San Pedro y San Pablo Teposcolula (Place of the carved Copper Axes)



3 Buildings in One: Priory, Main Church and Ex-Convento



Giant Doric Colonnade



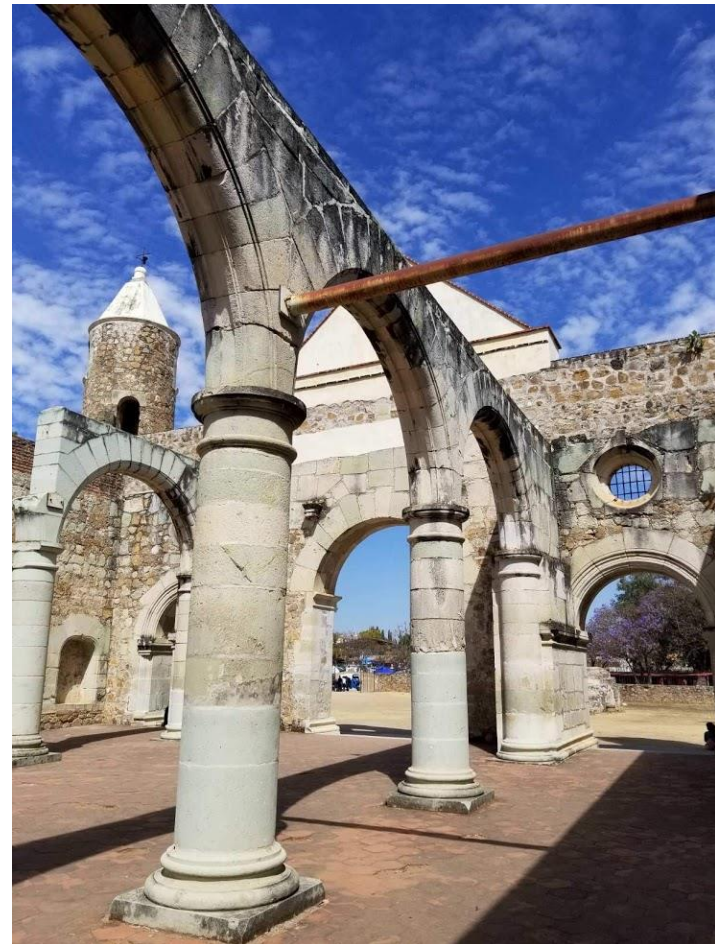
Gothic Star Vault



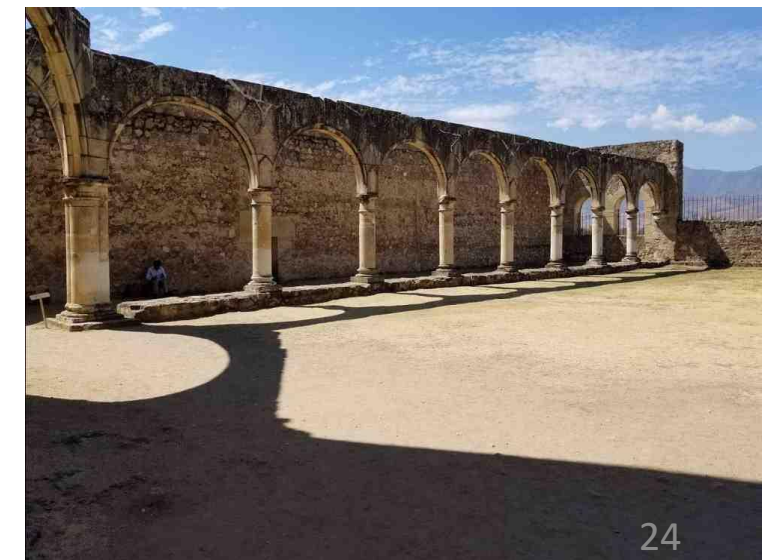
“The Priory, particularly Its magnificent open chapel...dedicated to St. John the Baptist, displays an audacity of design unique in 16<sup>th</sup> century New Spain...considered the Apogee of Dominican Architecture in Oaxaca” - Richard D. Perry in *Exploring Colonial Oaxaca*



# Zimatlan Valley Village Churches: [Santiago de Cuilapan](#) (River of Palms)



Clockwise From Above: Corbel and Doorway, Basilica Nave and Colonnade, Pilgrim's Portico, Pope John Paul II at Cuilapan in 1979, and Basilica Facade.





# Early Colonial Ex-Convento Architecture

[Arcaded Cloisters 1](#)

[Arcaded Cloisters 2](#)

[Arcaded Cloisters 3](#)

[Cloister Niches](#)

[Cloister Stairways 1](#)

[Cloister Stairways 2](#)



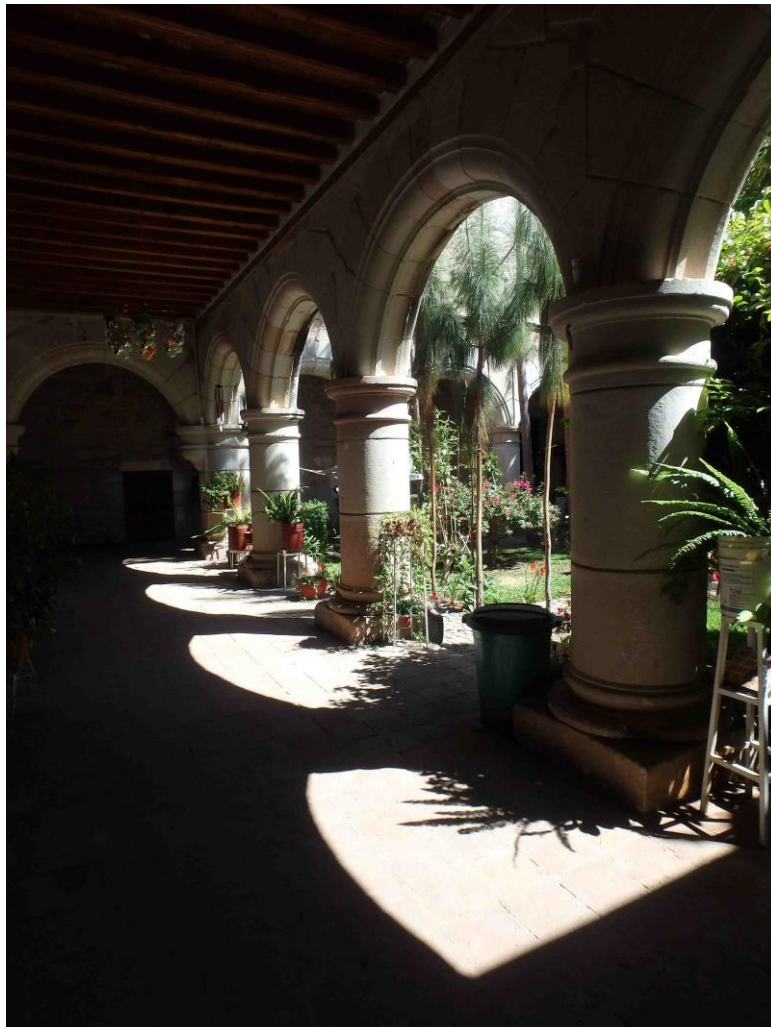
# Monasteries: Arcaded Cloisters with Column Buttresses – Coixtlahuaca, Etna, and Mitla



Left and Above: Coixtlahuaca



Above and Below: Cuilapam



Left and Above: San Pedro  
y San Pablo Etna

Right: San San Pablo  
Villa de Mitla





# Monasteries: Arcaded Cloisters Showing Columnar Earthquake Buttresses (Page 2)

San Pablo Villa de Mitla

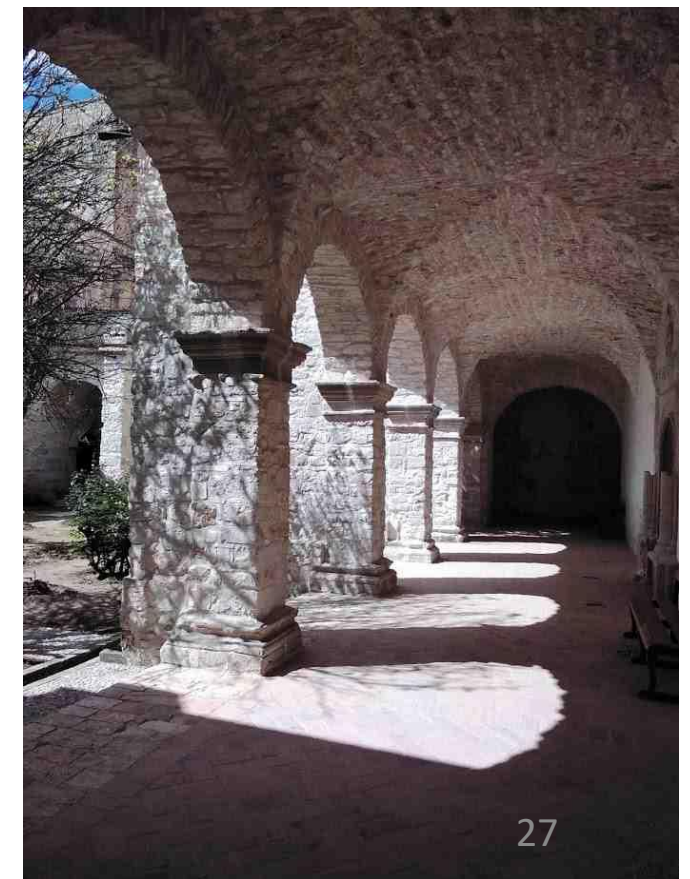
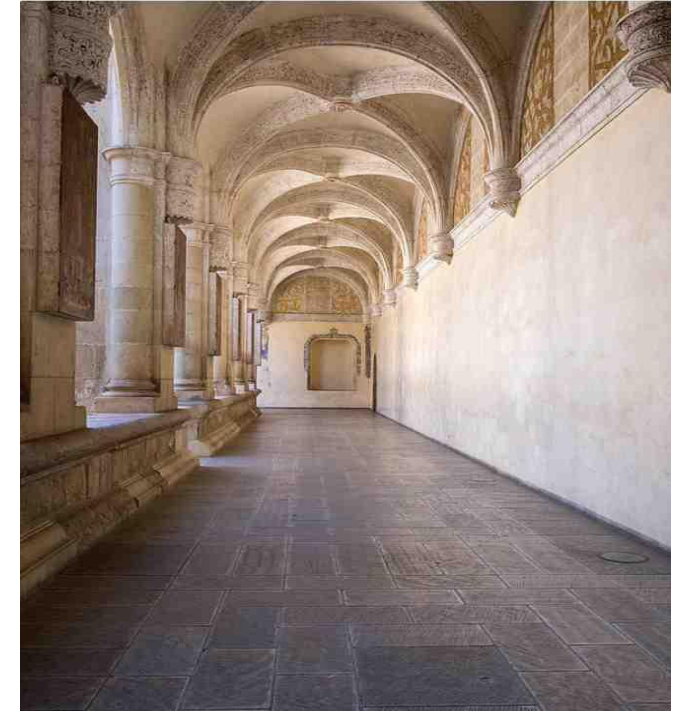


Below: Wonderful Vaulted Cloister at Cuilapan outside of which Pope John Paul II spoke in January, 1979



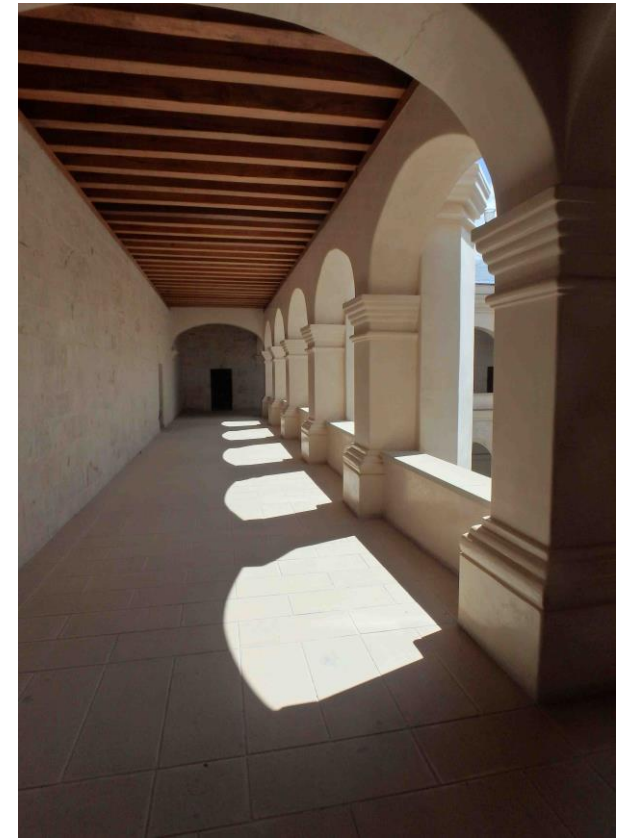
Above: Santo Domingo De Oaxaca; Lower Left, Lower Right: Teposcolula; Latrines at Yanhuitlan Below

San Domingo de Oaxaca

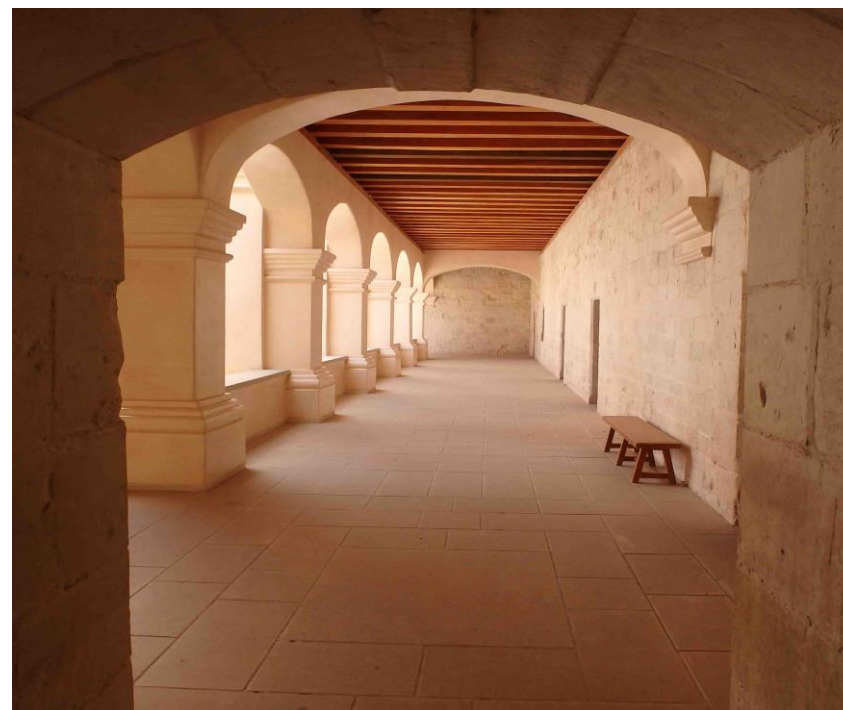




# Monasteries: Arcaded Cloister at Yanhuitlan with Columnar Earthquake Buttresses (Page 3)



Dominican Cross Syncretic to Meso-American Cosmic Tree

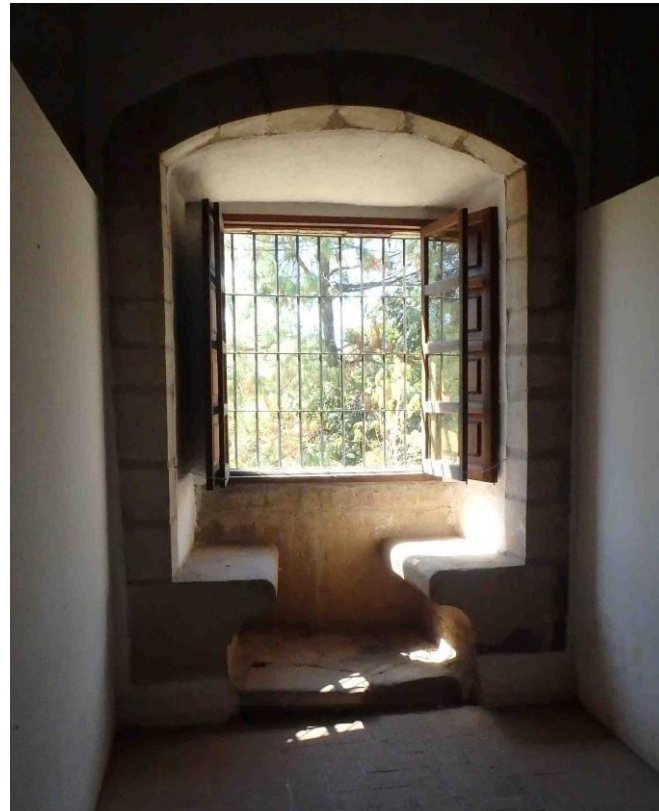




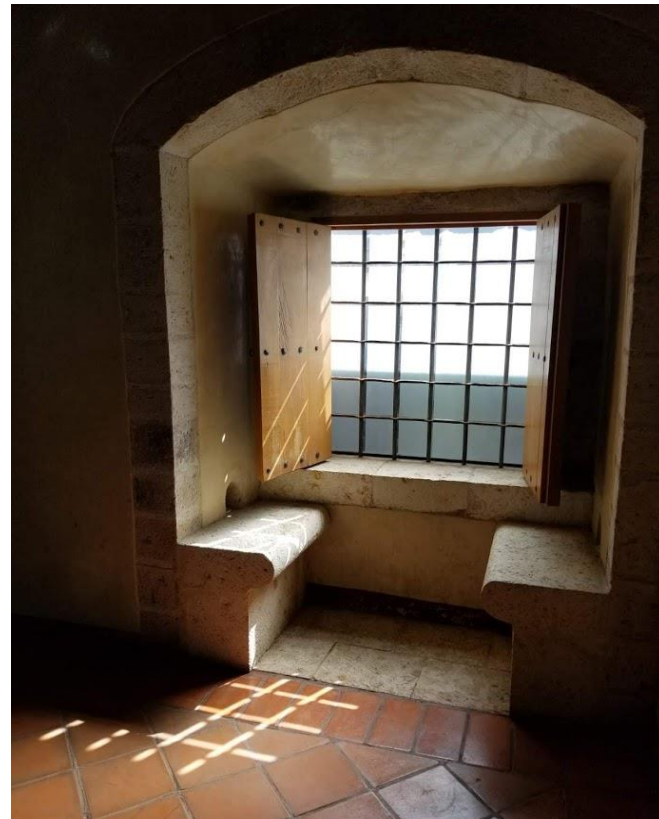
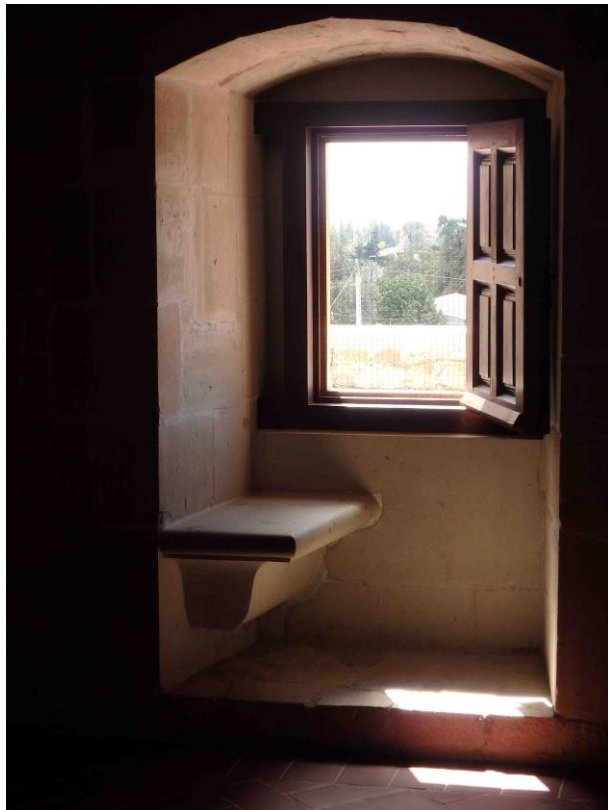
San Juan Bautista Coixtlahuaca  
(Plain of Snakes)



San Pablo Huitzo  
(Watchtower)



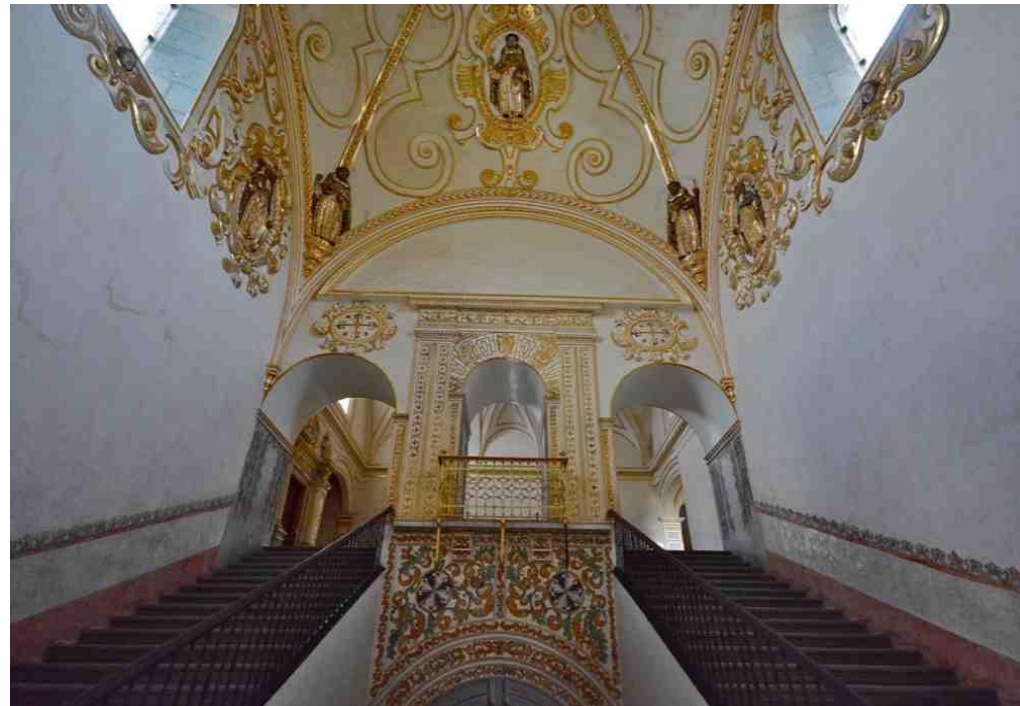
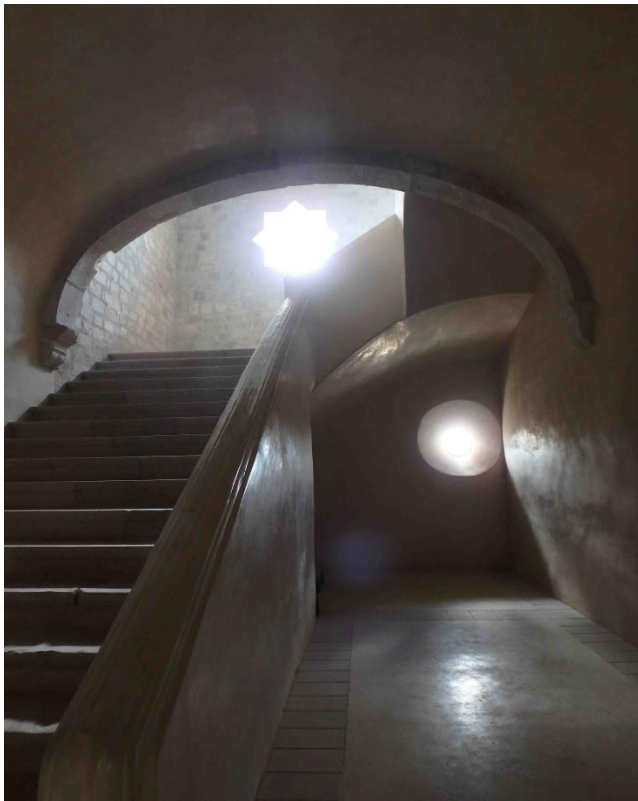
Ex-Convento Cloister  
Niches



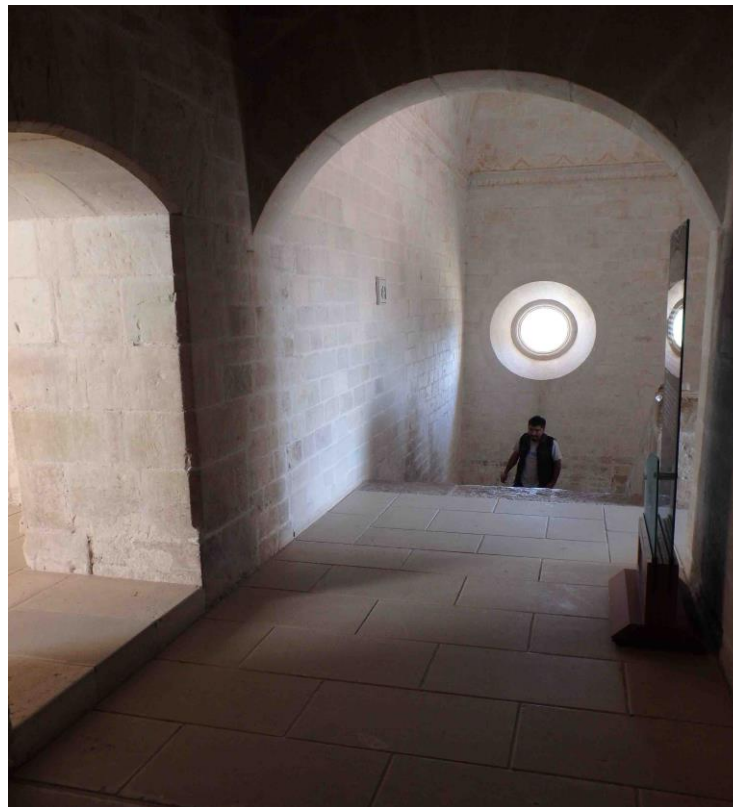
Far Left, Left and Above: Santo Domingo  
Yanhuitlan (Wide and Spacious Valley)



# Monasteries: Cloister Stairways



Upper Left: Coixtlahuaca; Santo Domingo Oaxaca: Above, All others: Yanhuitlan (Mudajar influence)



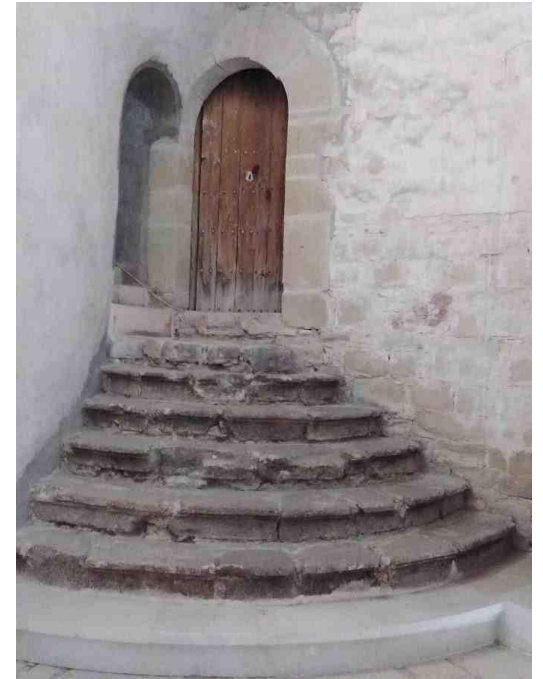


# Monasteries: Cloister Stairways (Page 2)

Teposcolula



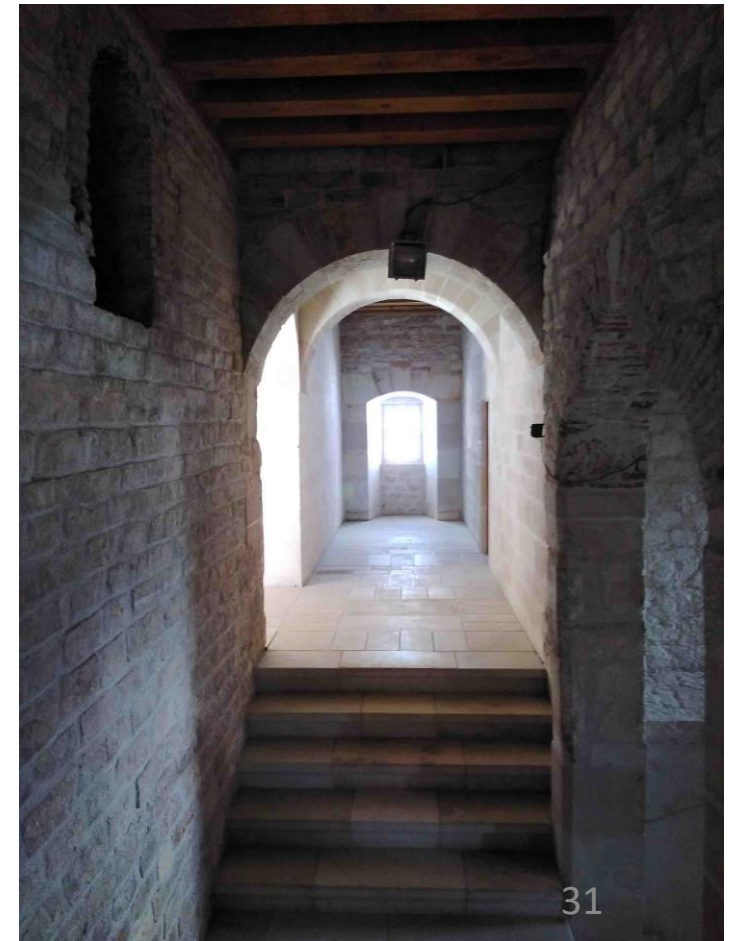
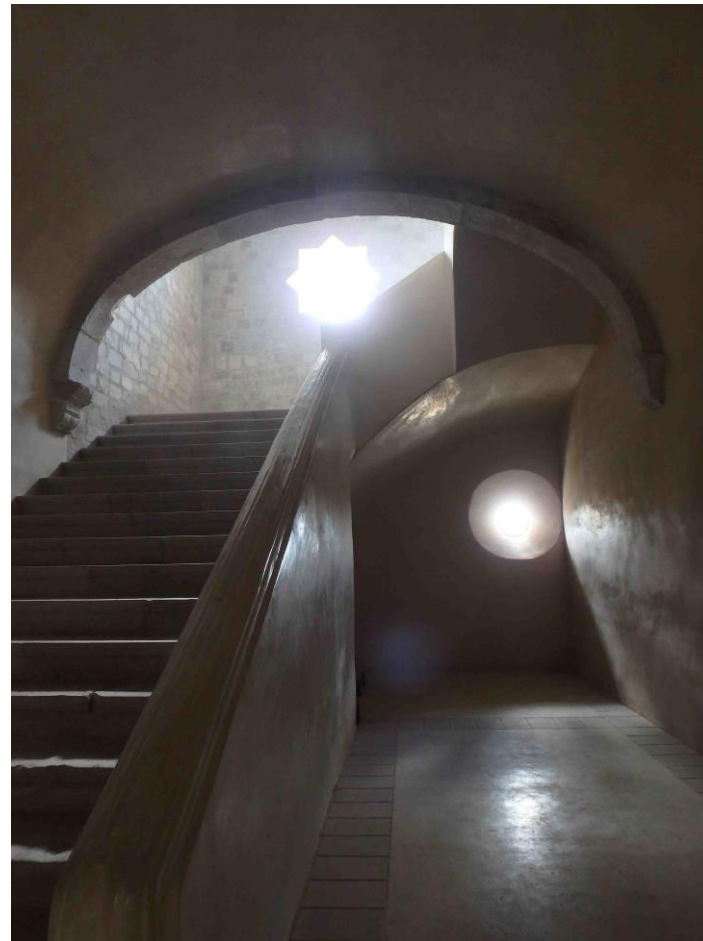
Teposcolula



Above: San Pablo Villa de Mitla,  
Below: Coixtlahuaca

Below: Cuilapam

Below: San Pablo Huitzo





# Early Colonial Stone Arches and Lintels

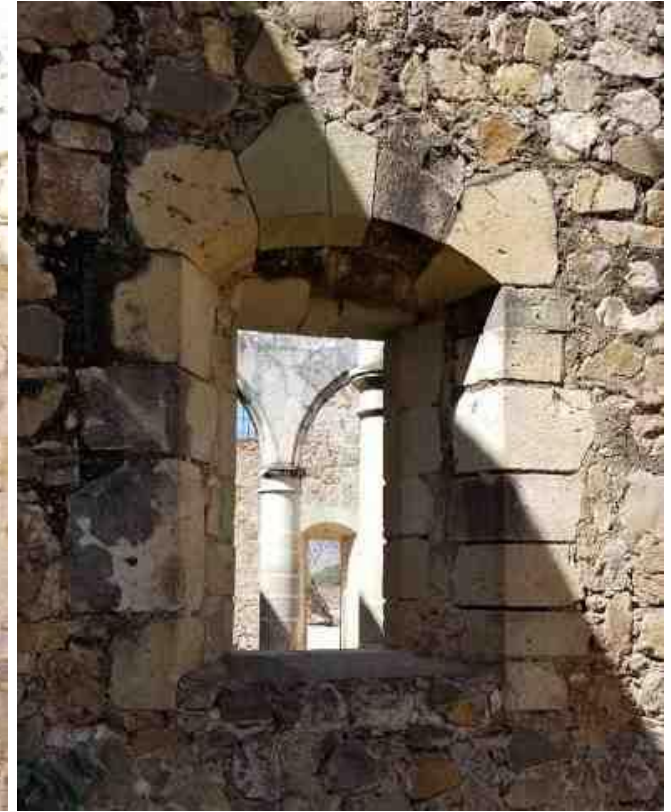
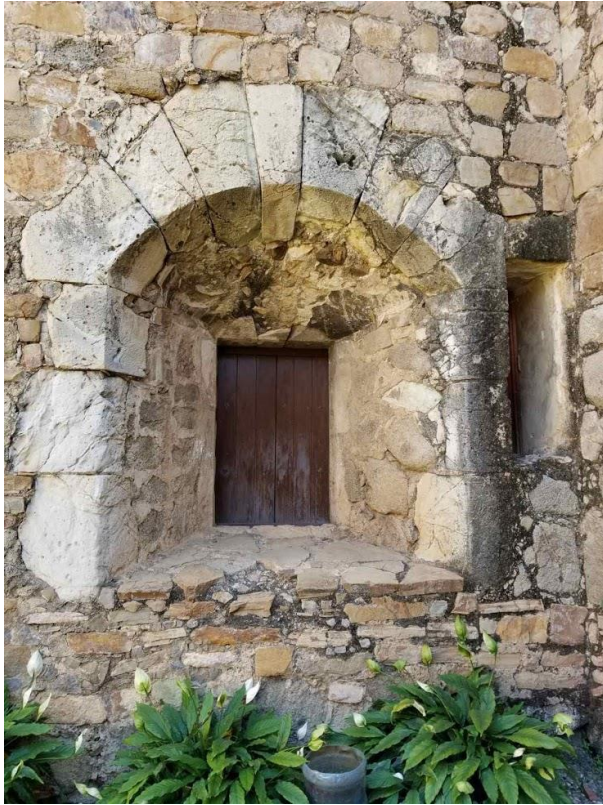
[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)



# Ancient Stone Arches and Lintels



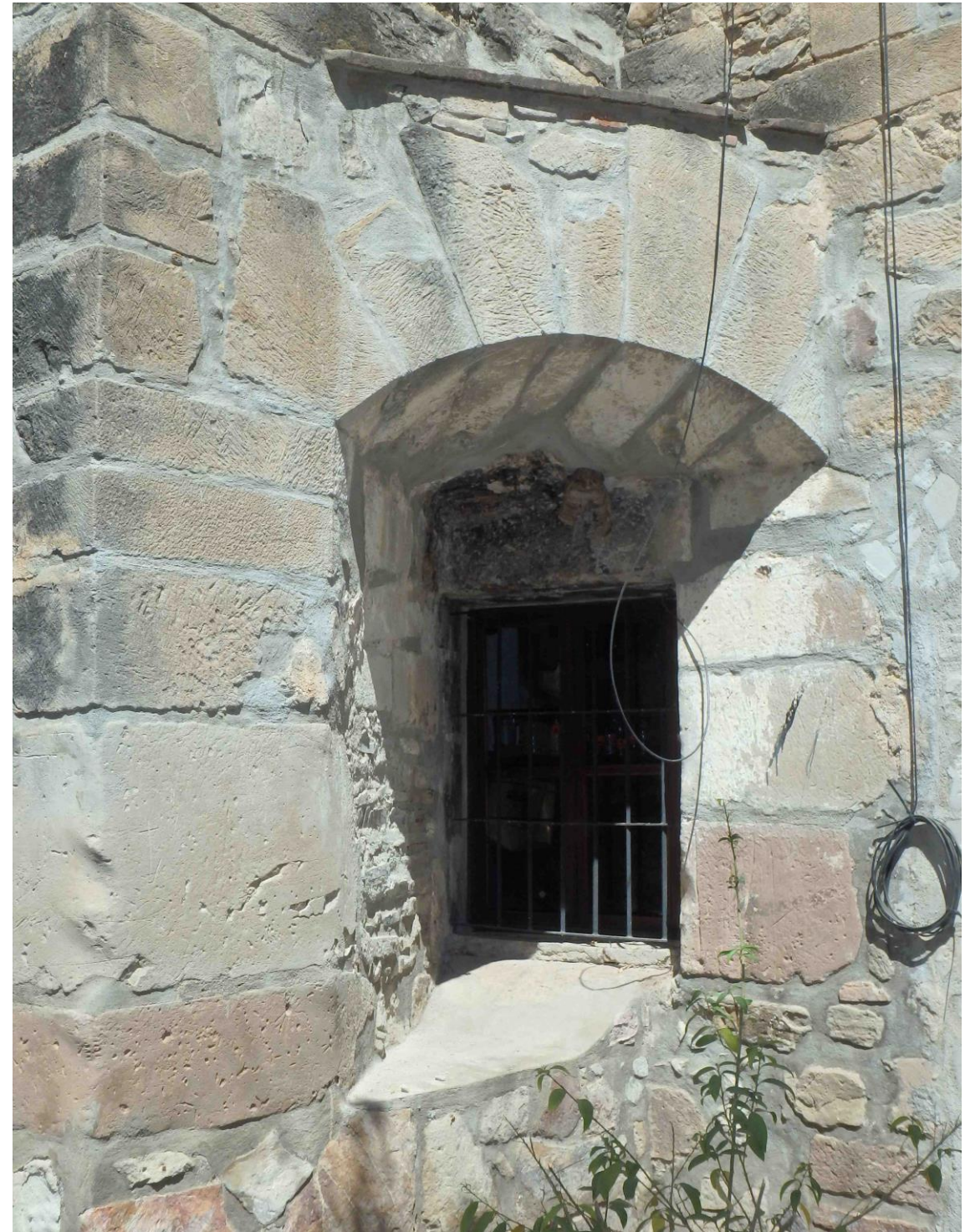
Ex-Convento and Open Chapel at Cuilapam (River of Palms): Bulding Project Abandoned in 1580s





# Ancient Stone Arches and Lintels: Part 2

San Pablo Huitzo (Watchtower)



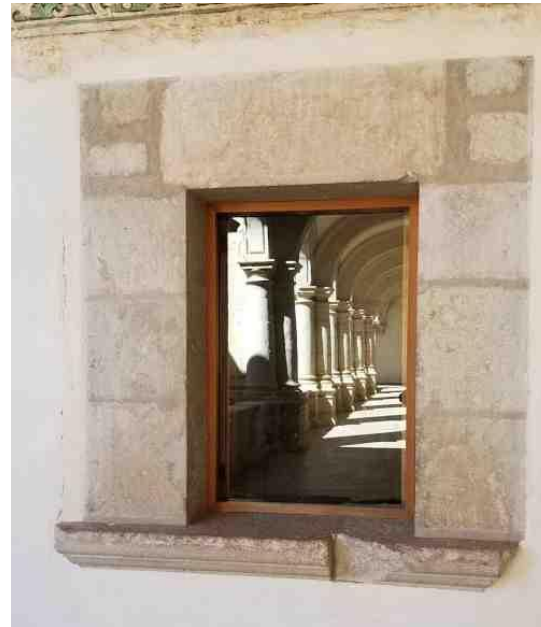


# Ancient Stone Arches and Lintels: Part 3

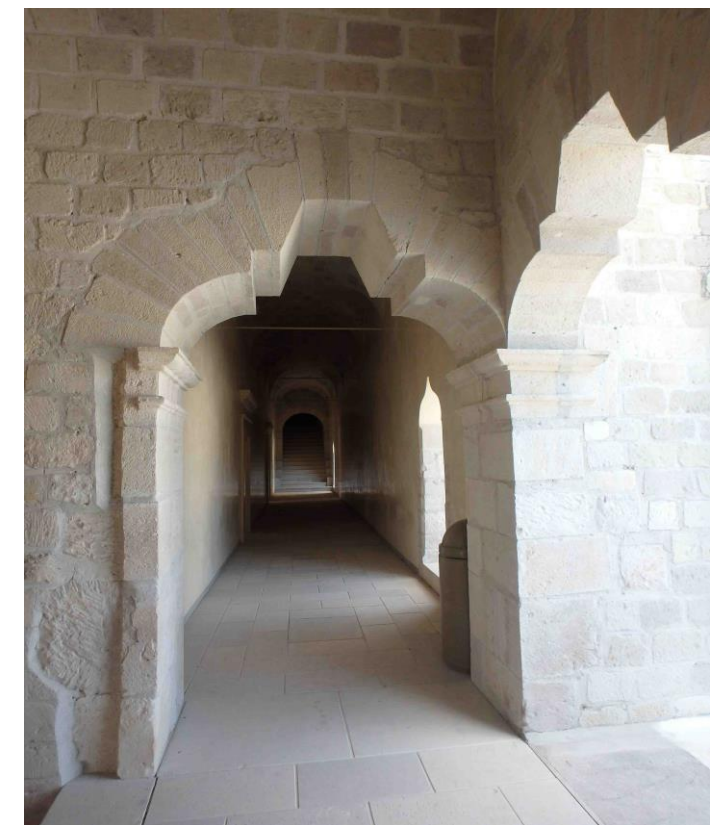
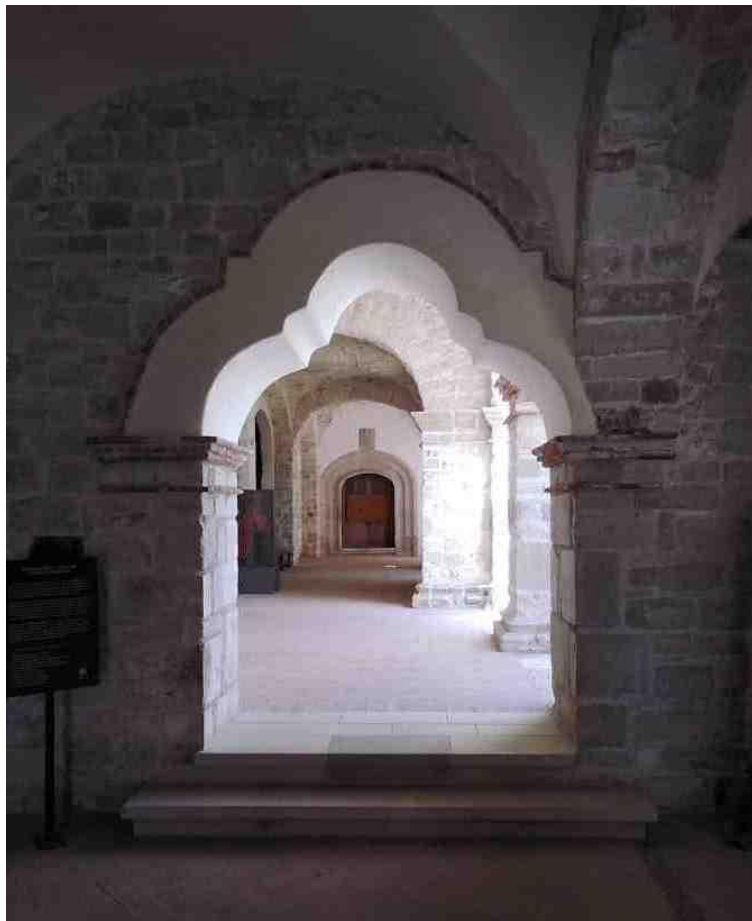
San Pablo Huitzo



Santo Domingo Oaxaca



Teposcolula



[Teposcolula \(Place of the Carved Copper Axes\)](#)

[Coixtlahuaca \(Plain of the Snakes\)](#)



# Zapotec Pre-Historic Archeological Sites

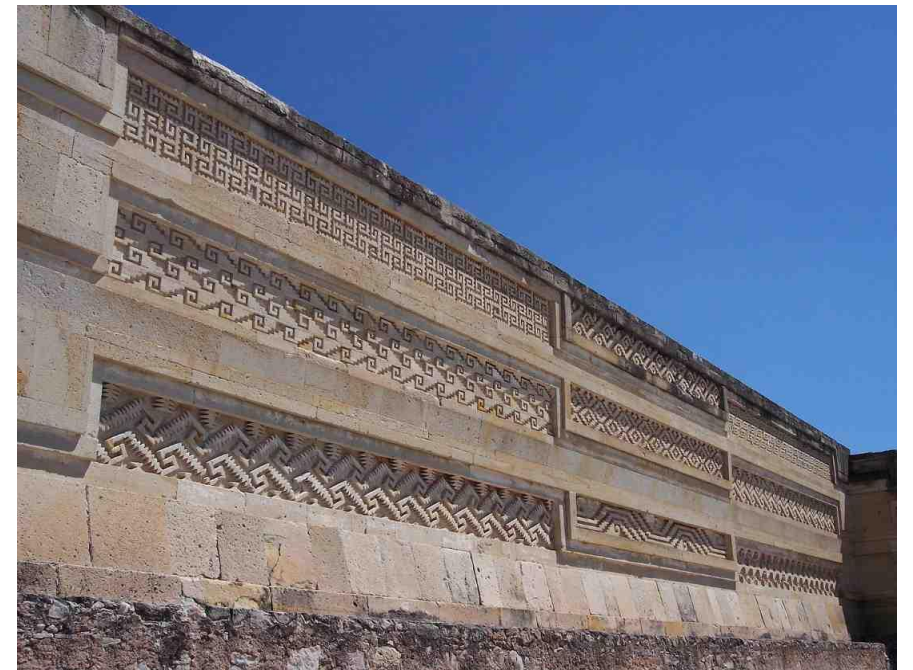


# Major Zapotec Pre-Historic Archeologic Sites: Monte Alban and the Mosaics at Mitla

Middle Below: Monte Alban Bas-Relief Stone Carving of Captive Castrated and Then Fattened for Sacrifice to the Gods



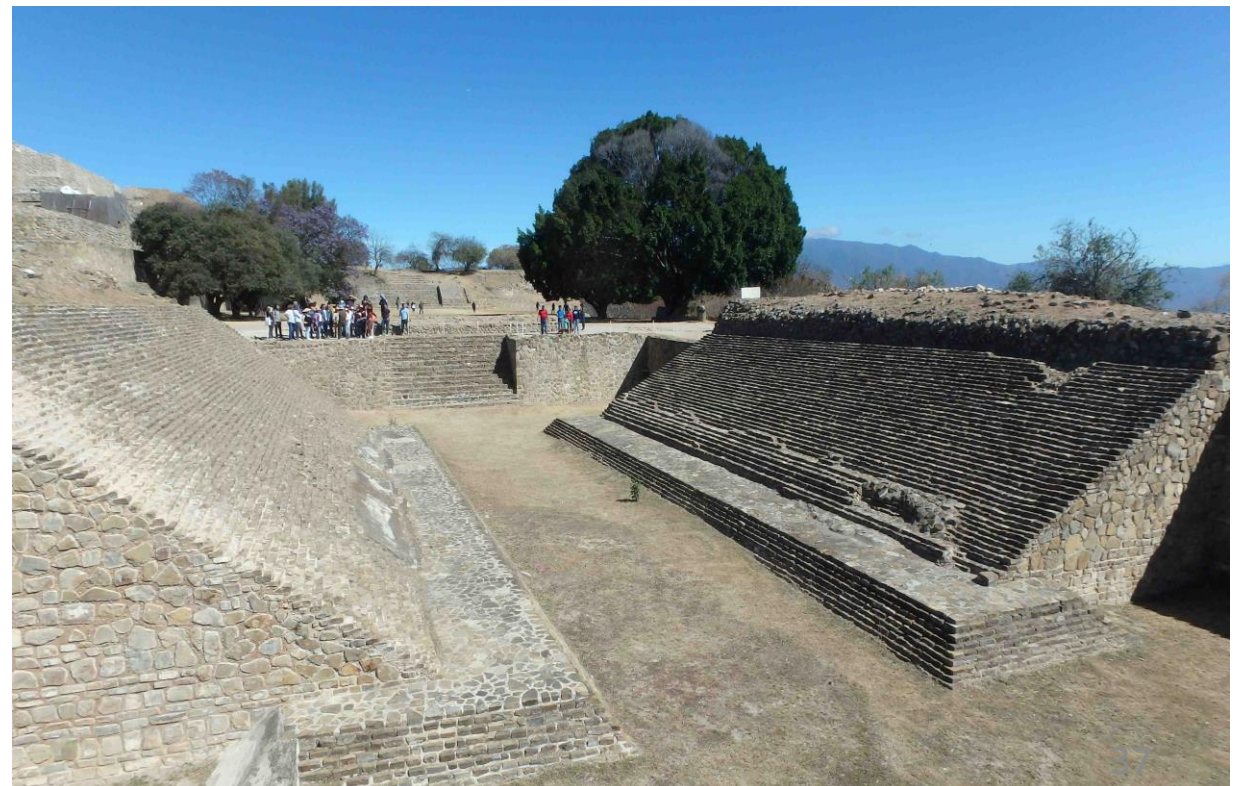
Monte Alban: One of 4 Platforms and 2 Temples



“Surrealistic ... Non-Objective to the Core”

Mitla: Stone Mosaics Set in Adobe to Counter Damage from Earthquakes

Monte Alban Ball Court





# Indigenous People

[People](#)

[Oaxaqueno Traditional Dress](#)

[Food and Drink](#)

[Zapotec Woman Making Tlayuda Tortillas](#)

[Carnaval](#)



# Indigenous People



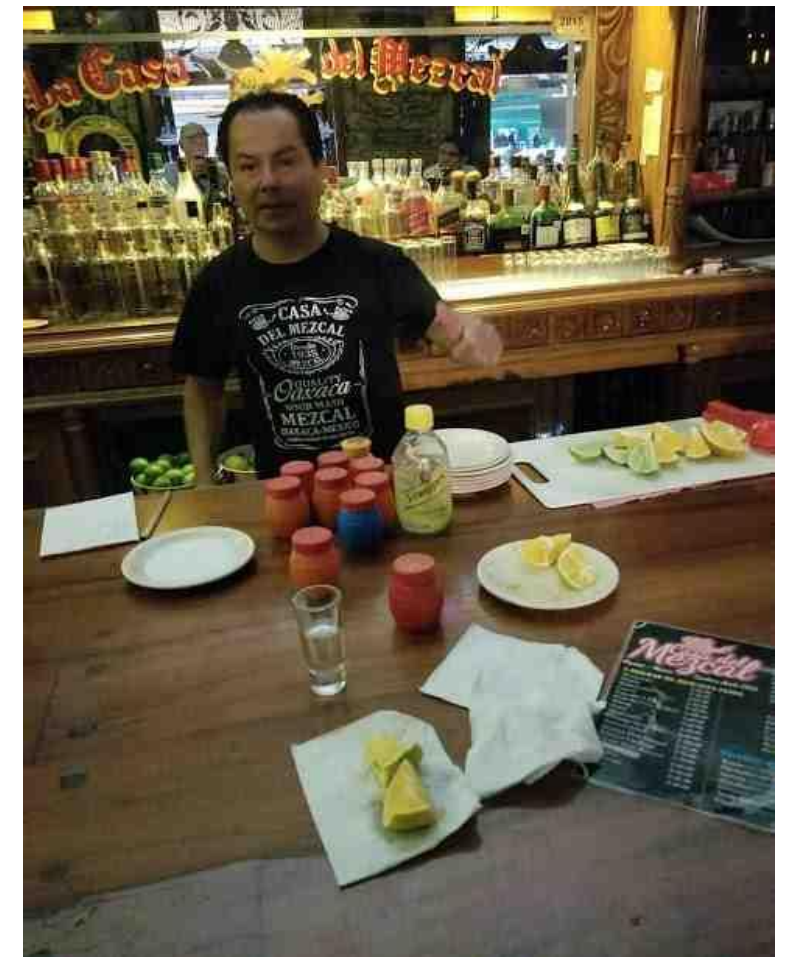


# Haute Couture - Oaxaqueno Traditional Dress





## Food and Drink

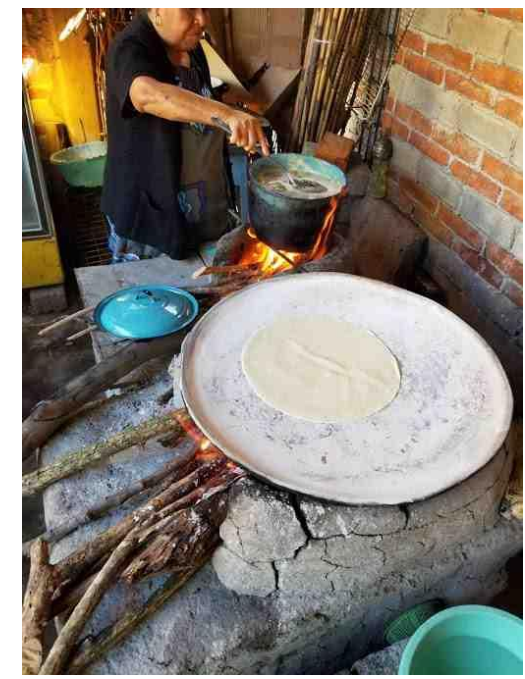


Clockwise from  
Upper  
Left: Drinking Tejate,  
Making Chocolate,  
Mezcal with Lime,  
Pescado Trucha  
Entero Frito al Mojo  
de Ajo (Whole Trout  
Fried in Garlic Gravy,  
Grilling Tasajo y  
Puerco (Beef and  
Pork)





## Zapotec Woman Making Tlayuda Tortillas from Masa



The Very Best Tortillas Ever.



# Carnaval





# Flora

[Typical Plants](#)

[Ethnobotanical Garden](#)

[El Tule Ancient Tree](#)

[Oaxacan Topiary](#)

[Mountain Flora](#)



# Flora



Blossom Left, Kapok Tree Below





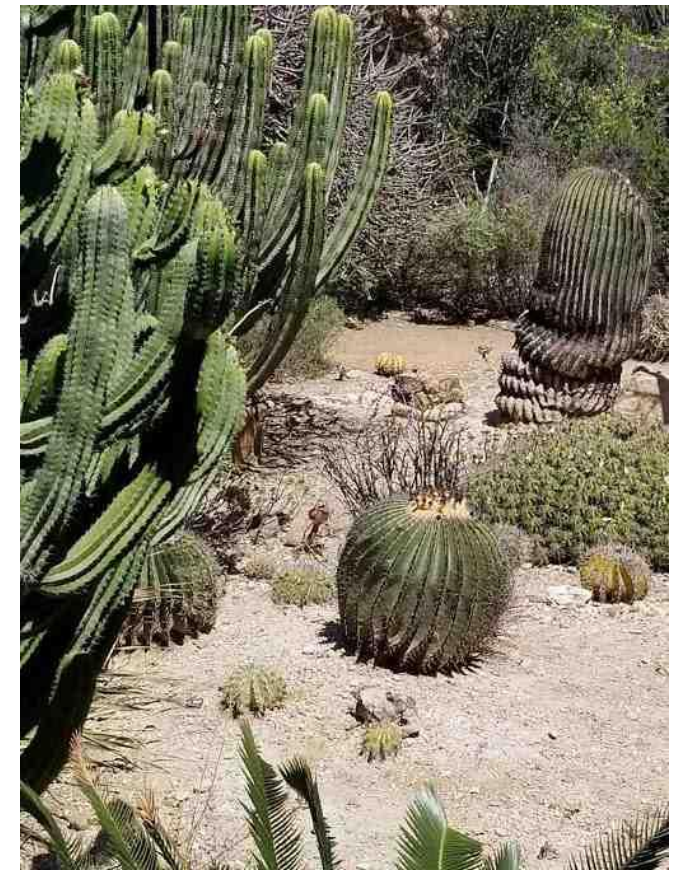
# Ethnobotanical Garden



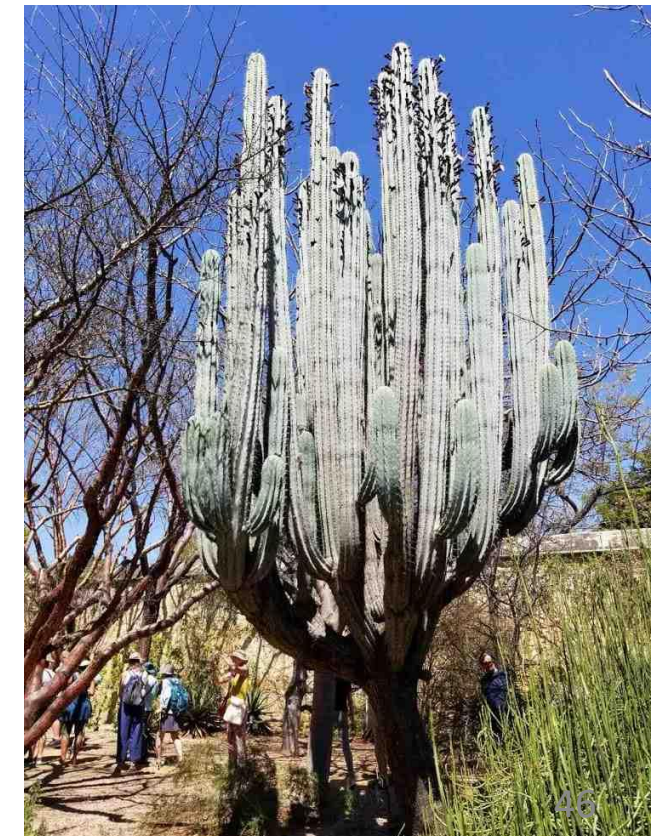
Amate Tree and Maguey



Garden Variety and Nopal Below



Cacti

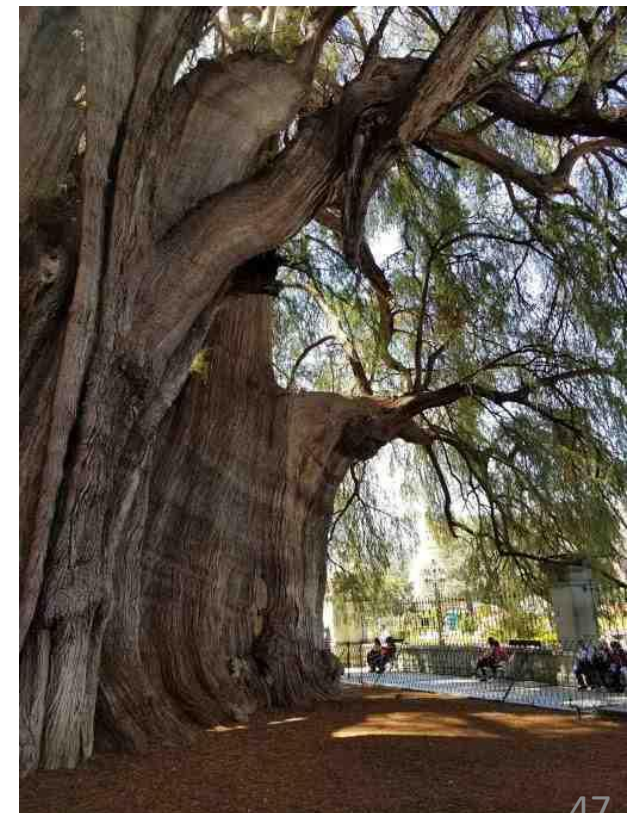




## El Tule Ancient Tree



It is almost impossible to express the enormity of this bald cypress: at least 2,000 years old and 345 feet tall with a girth of 145 feet. Alexander Von Humboldt made a detour just to view this specimen.





Oaxacan Topiary and a Natural Hot Springs in the Sierra Sur



Hot Springs near San Pablo Guila





# Mountain Flora: Sierra Sur and Sierra Norte: [Cupalapan de Mendez and Cuajimolyas](#)



Clockwise from Upper Left: Sierra Sur, Giant Maguey, Pine/Oak Forest in Sierra Norte, Cupalapan – village in the “Pyrenees” of Oaxaca, Poster for the Annual Summer Magic Mushroom Festival in Cuajimoloyas (10,000’ above sea level)





# Arts and Handicrafts

[Alebrijes](#)

[Village Weaving](#)

[Art Galleries: Informal Gallery](#)

[Art Galleries: Devil Masks](#)

[Art Galleries: Yarn](#)

[Informal Street Art 1](#)

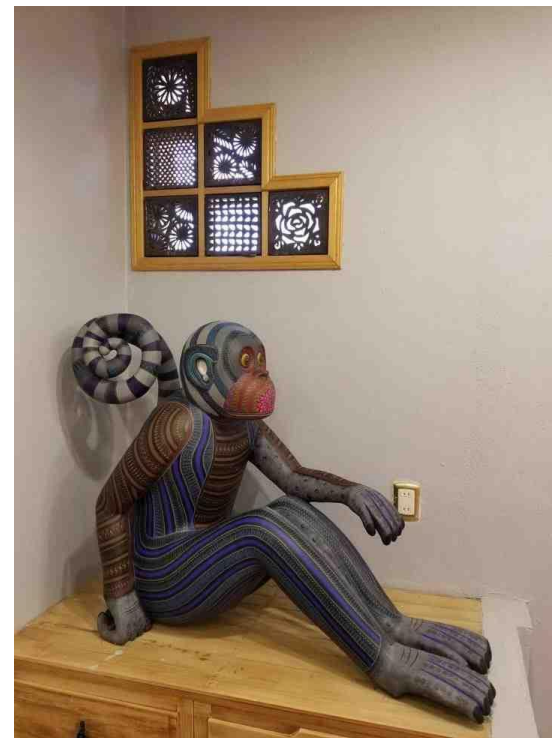
[Informal Street Art 2](#)



# Alebrijes: Hand-Carved of Copal, Hand-Painted Mythical Figures



Itinerant Oaxacan artist Pedro Linares fell ill with a febrile nightmare wherein he imagined mythical creatures that the dream described in the nonsense word *Alebrijes*. Linares worked with local traditional wood carving Zapotec artisans who turned his magical papier mache creations into painted copal wood carvings which were discovered and celebrated by well-known Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. The Ocotlan Valley village of San Martin Tilcajete is given over almost exclusively to the creation of these magical creatures.





# Village Weaving: Teotitlan del Valle





Art Galleries: Informal Gallery (No Prices, No Acknowledgements, No Host – Art for Art's Sake





# Art Galleries: Devil Masks by Alejandro Vera



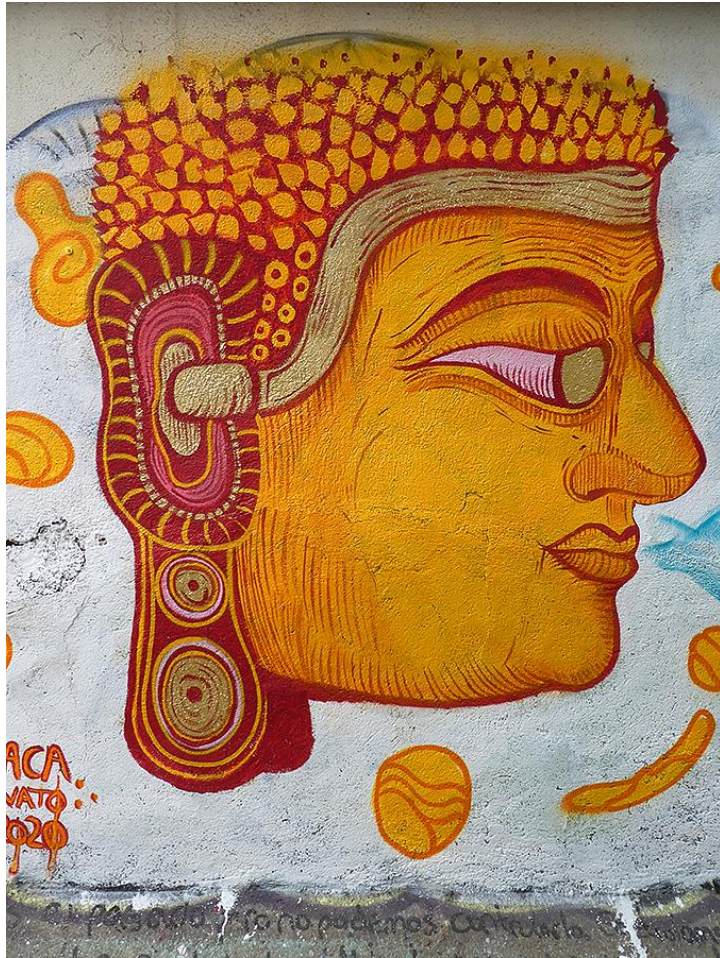
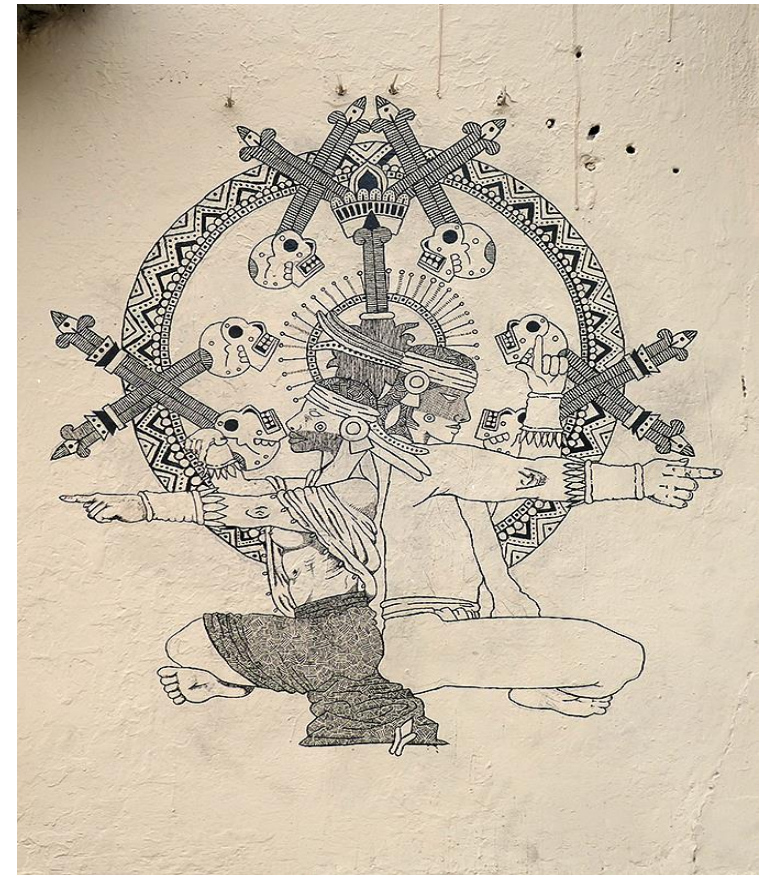


Art Galleries: Yarn



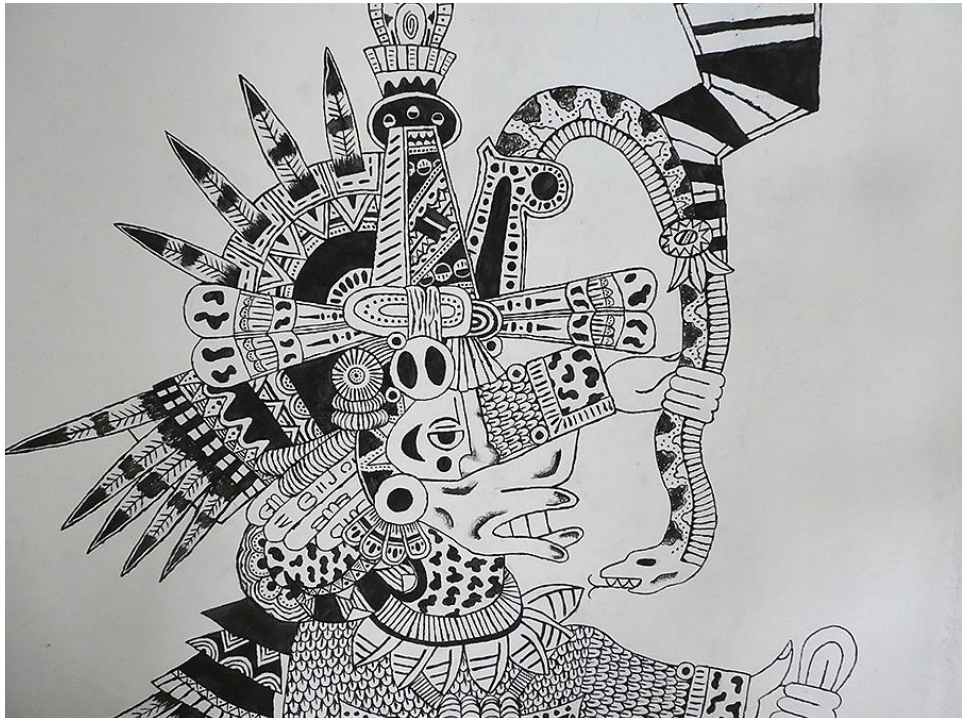


# Informal Graffiti Street Art





Informal Graffiti Street Art (2)





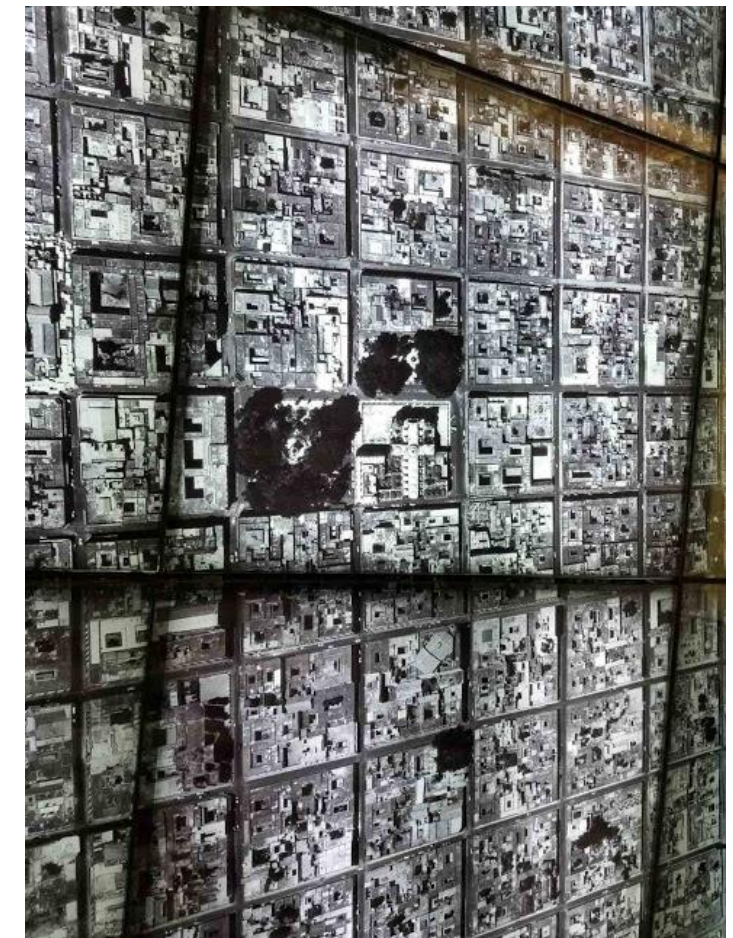
# City Museums



# City Museums



Clockwise From Upper Left: San Pablo Cultural Center, From Oaxaquena Painters (2), Stamp Museum, Back-lit Floor Map of City, City Museum and Library



Oaxaqueno Painters





# Pre-Hispanic Art

[Pre-Hispanic Art](#)

[Pre-Hispanic Art \(2\)](#)

[Pre-Hispanic Art \(3\)](#)



Pre-Hispanic Art



ARRIBA: BRONCE REPRESENTA AMOR; FIGURA UN MURCHER.  
ABAJO: SACA DIO DE LA FOLIA DE POLLEN; FIGURA UN MURCHER Y UN P.





## Pre-Hispanic Art (2)



Some of These Pieces  
Are as Old As As  
3,500 Years





# Pre-Hispanic Art (3)



Truly An  
Astounding  
Variety





# Miscellaneous



# Miscellaneous



Real Coco (Mama Elena) in San Martin Tilcajete  
Hip Mezcal Bar



Village Home, Aqueduct and Mi Companera

Polished Yet Unglazed Black Pottery





# Notes

Page 1: An ex-convento is not an ex-convent or an ex-monastery. It is best translated as a defunct residence built for Spanish Catholic friars. The conventos were always attached to the side of a church and had a square plan that incorporated sleeping and dining rooms to the outside with cloistered walkways surround either a stone paved or garden patio at the center. The walkways were often vaulted, 2 stories and arcaded at least on the 1<sup>st</sup> story.

Page 3: Cafes are located on the east and west sides of the Zocalo. The Cathedral is on the north and the municipal government palace is on the south. The parks on the left and right are EL Llano and the middle photo is Conzatti.

Page 4: The photograph on the upper right is of the entrance to Ethno-botanical Garden, formerly the stables for the state cavalry.

Page 6: The photo on the upper right shows the Moorish influence on the architecture. On the lower right is of a rare, unstuccoed brick facade.

Page 7: The Municipal Palace twin courtyards were initially open to the heavens.

Page 9: There are many more churches in the city of Oaxaca.

Page 16: Place names are first Christian (Saint) names followed by the Nahuatl place name translated to English in parentheses. San Pablo Mitla was built right on the top of the ancient Zapotec Mitla.

Page 20: The photos on the lower left and lower right are by others.

Page 22: Coixtlahuaca is in the process of restoration.

Page 23: Teposcolula's open chapel purpose was to convert the indigenous Mixtec population *en masse*.

Page 24: Construction of the basilica of Cuilapan was abandoned in 1580, most likely because of lack of labor due to the last of 3 major pandemics in the 1576. Speculation is the last *Cocolitxtli* was an ebola-like disease brought from Africa by the importation of slaves. The Church and Ex-Convento were completed, however. Pope John Paul II spoke here on his visit to Mexico on January 1979.

Page 30: Upper middle photo of the grand stairway at the city of Oaxaca Santo Domingo Ex-Convento is by others.

Page 35: The bottom 3 slides show the very strong *Mudejar* or Moorish influences on Dominican architecture.



## Page Two of Notes

Page 39: The devils emerge periodically to frighten children and warn people of the consequences of immoral behavior. The owner of the Frida Kahlo Restaurant in Ocotlan certainly dresses the part. There is a Frida Kahlo Day when many women participate. The older gentleman is my friend Cesar Garcia's 88-year-old grandfather who was in the process of shucking and enormous pile of corn.

Page 39 continued: The Zapotec woman with the long braids sold weaving products in Teotitlan del Valle. The short bald man in rags was not begging. Zoom in on his fingernails. Perhaps he was a *magico* or magician in the tradition of the Olmec priests who brought culture to the indigenous tribes and never cut their fingernails.

Page 40: These dresses are displayed in a Oaxaca city museum.

Page 41: The gentleman drinking the cold Tejate is my Zapotec friend Cesar Garcia. The chocolate is ground to taste for the customer from roasted cacao beans. Differing amounts of cinnamon, sugar, milk and almonds make for personal choices. Most of the chocolate is melted into hot chocolate which the Oaxaquenos seem to drink more than once a day. Mexcal is sipped, held, and cocktail mixed in the mouth with a sucked chili peppered slice of lime. Many fish of different species are called trout. In the villages the fish are kept live in ponds and freshly dressed for your order.

Page 42: The woman making fresh tortillas is Cesar Garcia's mother. She served hot chocolate with a challah like bread before our meal of freshly butchered chicken in a broth containing several vegetables which was served with the *tlayuda* tortillas.

Page 43: Photos by Chistopher Stowens.

Page 45: The photo of the iridescent blossom was taken on a tour of the Ethnobotanical Garden. The upper middle and right photos were taken at the stamp museum. Kapok seed pods were used for pillow stuffing and, more particularly, since they were very water resistant, for life jackets until synthetic substitutes were invented in the 1960s.

Page 46: The Amate tree's bark was used by the indigenous people for their complex hieroglyphics and writings that to this day have no codex.

Page 47: Notice how El Tule dwarfs the large 3 plus story church it partially shades.

Page 48: There is a voluminous topiary garden in the large plaza and park in front of the church at Tamuzalapam del Progreso. Which is featured here.



## Page Three of Notes

Page 49: I have never seen a cleaner municipality – neither in Switzerland nor Germany. Capulapan is one of the principle *Mancomunidades* of villages joined together for eco-tourism. They are on the whole communist in political and governmental structure, with the land held in common. Laws are not Mexican but generational *usos y costumbres* uses and customs. Individualism is rejected. Men and women are not at the center of the natural world, are not “owners of nature, but are owned by nature.” Hence, eco-tourism comes natural. See <https://truthout.org/articles/across-latin-america-a-struggle-for-communal-land-and-indigenous-autonomy/>

Page 53: One evening after a concert at the Zocalo I was waiting for a bus on Calle Xicotencatl when approached by a woman of a certain age who insisted that I walk around the corner to an exhibition. There was only a brightly back-lit stoop with a few young people loitering about the sidewalk. I was motioned inside to an informal 2 room gallery of sorts. There was nothing there but art. No signs, no guards, no owner, not even the artist. Purely “art for art’s sake.”

Page 55: Weaving and yarn are an integral part of Oaxaca state. Why was I so surprised to see an abstract representation of the arts of knitting with yarn?

Pages 56 -57: From Christopher Stowens. Please visit his blog on the night of the *rabanos* radishes held on Christmas Eve eve where there is an enormous contest for radish carving: <http://oaxacanyear.blogspot.com/2019/12>

Page 59: The painting featuring the fantastic snail is by world famous Oaxaqueno Francisco Toledo.

Pages 61-63: Exhibits from the Oaxaca State Museum and the Rufin Tamayo Museum.

Page 65: The real Mama Elena from Coco works in the kitchen at the Alebrijes workshop of Jacobo and Maria Angeles in the village of San Martin Tilcajete. This photo is from just outside the kitchen where she cooks. The village home is that of *mi amigazo* Cesar Garcia. The unglazed black pottery is from San Bartolo Coyotepec south of Oaxaca city in the Zimatlan Valley.