
Codex Tro-Cortesianus

Autor:

Data de publicació: 10-05-2016

Mayan Codex Facsimiles

Only four Mayan pictorial manuscripts have survived the organized book-burnings of Franciscan missionaries following the Spanish Conquest. Our collection includes the Codex Dresdensis, the Codex Tro-Cortesianus (Madrid Codex), and the Codex Peresianus (Paris Codex). The recently (1971) discovered Grolier Codex is the fourth one. J. Eric S. Thompson has argued that the books Cortés sent to the Spanish court as gifts were Mayan.

None of these remaining Mayan codices record any type of history or chronicles, they instead contain astronomy, divination, rituals and calendars. All four of them are pre-Conquest manuscripts, although the origin of Tro-Cortesianus has recently been questioned based on the presence of European paper and writing pressed in between two sheets of bark.

Mayan paper was made out of the inner bark of wild fig trees, and the sheets were folded like an accordion. On this kind of paper the Mayas recorded their hieroglyphic writing, the only true writing system in the Americas before the European arrival.

Following is a brief representation of two of the three Mayan codex facsimiles at our collection.

Codex Dresdensis

Codex Dresdensis (Mscr. Dresd. R 310)

Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden

(Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1975).

Note: Commentary in German by H. Deckert and F. Anders.

Issued in a case (27.5 x 28.5 cm).

F1435.3 P6 C54 1975 Spec. Coll.

Codex Dresdensis is the oldest Mayan manuscript and was written and painted on amatl paper, around 1200 and 1250 in the Yucatán. The codex depicts calendars of Venus, almanacs, predictions, divination and astronomy. The reputation of Mayan astronomy derives from the calculations within this manuscript. Artistically the Dresden Codex is superior to the other three surviving Mayan codices.

In 1739, D. Johann Christian Götze, head of the royal library of Dresden purchased the manuscript in Vienna and brought it to Dresden. Before this event, the manuscript has no recorded provenance. During the bombing of Dresden in the Second World War, the manuscript suffered significant damages, due to which the hieroglyphs in the upper left corner of each leaf are illegible.

The manuscript is 39 leaves and 3.5 m long. Page dimensions are 9 x 20.4 cm.

Selections from Codex Dresdensis

Click on the thumbnails to view the images and commentaries.

p. 26. p. 50. p. 74.

Codex Tro-Cortesianus

Codex Tro-Cortesianus

(Codex Madrid)

Museo de América, Madrid

(Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1967).

Note: Introduction in German (F. Anders), summary in English.

Issued in a case (28 x 28.5 cm).

F1435 C6 1967 Spec. Coll. Oversize

Abbé C. E. Brasseur de Bourbourg published a Mayan manuscript called the Codex Troano in 1869, after having studied the original in the possession of paleographer Don Juan de Tro y Ortolano. After the death of Juan de Tro, the manuscript was sold to the Museo de América de Madrid.

In 1872, José Ignacio Miró, a collector in Madrid, purchased another Mayan manuscript, known as Codex Cortesiano, which he sold to the Museo de América de Madrid, where the Codex Troano was held. When Léon de Rosny learned that the Spanish government had acquired the Cortesiano, he went there to examine it. After discovering that the two manuscripts were two parts of the same, the complete manuscript was named Codex Tro-Cortesianus, and later Codex Madrid.

Recently (February, 1999) the age of the codex was brought into question when Yale archaeologist Michael D. Coe claimed that a European paper fragment within p. 56. suggested that the codex was from the seventeenth century.

In the codex, we find information on Mayan astrology and divinatory practices, and a number of the pages are devoted to the gods of the four cardinal directions and to New Year rites. Although the style of the hieroglyphs is uniform, the

codex is the work of eight or nine scribes.

The united manuscript is 6.7 m long with 56 leaves. Page dimensions are 12 x 24 cm.

Selections from Codex Tro-Cortesianus

Click on the thumbnails to view the images.

[p. 7.](#) [p. 56.](#) [p. 75.](#) [p. 79.](#)

[Home](#) | [Introduction](#) | [Featured Codices](#) | [Other Codices](#) | [Contact](#)
[Special Collections](#) | [UA Library](#) | [University of Arizona](#)