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Frances F. Berdan, Patricia Rieff Anawalt. *The Essential Codex Mendoza.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. xii + 436 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-20454-6.

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Among the primary pictorial manuscripts for Aztec Central Mexico, the *Codex Mendoza* is certainly one of the crown jewels. Commissioned and compiled circa 1541-42, during the administration of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, the codex consists of native-style, handsomely-colored pictorial scenes on European paper, recording important information about Aztec/Mexica imperial history, economic organization, and society. It was commissioned by royal officials (it is not entirely clear if Viceroy Mendoza or officials in Spain initiated the project), and executed by Indian scribes and informants who still had first-hand knowledge of pre-conquest conditions twenty years after the fall of Tenochtitlan.

The original purpose of the *Codex Mendoza* seems to have been to provide royal policymakers with reliable information about the functioning of the former Aztec empire now controlled by the Spaniards. Beyond its practical value to the Spanish, the antiquarian value of the codex to modern scholars is immense, since two-thirds of the document may have been copied directly from pre-Hispanic pictorial sources. If so, then this is a truly amazing survival since such pre-Hispanic codices were all but completely destroyed during the extirpation campaigns waged by the first bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumarraga. Hastily finished before the departure of the semi-annual flotilla back to Spain, the codex was captured along with other goods and riches bound for the Spanish king by French corsairs in the Caribbean, and thence was deposited with the French royal cosmographer Andre Thevet–whose autograph and annotations are copiously present on the text.

The codex itself was divided into three distinct sections. Part One, "the conquest section," is a history of the Mexica kings from the founding of Tenochtitlan to the arrival of the Spanish. For each king's reign, a standard "annals" format was employed by native artists: Native-style year glyphs run along the margins of an initial page (corresponding to his years of rule), followed by a series of place-glyphs pierced by flaming-spears (representing the towns and regions captured during his military campaigns). Part Two, "the tribute section," is an account of the provinces which owed tribute to the Mexica kings. Again a standardized format is employed by the native artists with each page corresponding to a distinct tribute-paying region: Place-glyphs of the towns within each tribute province are drawn along the left and lower margins of the page, while the type and quantity of tribute paid during the year are represented by images of tribute goods with Spanish glosses. Like its sister-document the *Matricula de Tributos*, Part Two of the *Codex Mendoza* provided the Spanish with practical information about Aztec tribute patterns and levels that served as a guide and yardstick for their own tribute-collection activities. The third part of the *Codex Mendoza*, "the daily-life section," contains ethnographic data pertaining to the life cycle of individuals from birth to marriage (fs. 57r-61r), as well as about the various occupations of priests, warriors and other professions. While Parts One and Two seem to have been copied from extant native pictorial manuscripts, the third section was added specifically for the codex.

The *Codex Mendoza* is rivaled only by Sahagun's *Florentine Codex* as an indispensable source of historical, political, and ethnographic information about Central Mexico immediately before Spanish Conquest. Over the years, Parts One and Two of the codex have served as the basis of numerous reconstructions of the expansion and maintenance of the Aztec Empire. Publications by Barlow, Hassig, Van Zantwijk, and others have essentially summarized the information contained in the codex and made it available to wider audiences. Up to now, however, there has been no compendium of authoritative studies or facsimile reproduction of the entire *Codex Mendoza* readily available to scholars and students. Five years ago, the publication of Berdan and Anawalt's magisterial four-volume *The Codex Mendoza* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992] was the first major reproduction with English translation of the entire text since James Cooper Clark's three-volume edition of 1938. In

addition, Berdan and Anawalt gathered and wrote state-of-the-art, up-to-date essays and commentaries about the codex that should serve us well into the 21st century. Unfortunately, at a suggested retail price of $495.00, the four-volume edition remains affordable mainly to major university libraries and wealthy collectors.

Enter *The Essential Codex Mendoza*. In a move for which someone at the University of California Press deserves a great deal of credit, the publication of *The Essential Codex Mendoza* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997] marks one of the smartest academic "packagings" of any Mexican pictorial codex to date. Berdan and Anawalt have combined Volumes Two and Four of their earlier four-volume edition into an extremely handsome, single volume that individuals, public libraries, and even university libraries suffering from humiliating budgetary constraints should be able to afford.

The most "essential" part of *The Essential Codex Mendoza* is a complete black and white, line-image replica of all 71 folios of the codex "with Transcriptions and Translations of the Spanish Commentaries and Translations of the Spanish Glosses." This line-image reproduction, while sacrificing much of the effect of the original painted manuscript, is expertly executed and generously displayed on large 9"x12" pages for easy handling. In addition, the editors and publisher have included 16 colorplates from the original manuscript (also on large 9"x12" pages) which give an ample sense of the manuscript's aesthetic qualities as well as some sense of the importance of color and color symbolism to its iconography.

The remainder of *The Essential Codex Mendoza* consists of folio-by-folio analytical commentaries for the three parts of the manuscript. For Part One of the codex, Berdan and Anawalt have provided detailed maps showing the regions conquered by each Mexica king, followed by separate discussions entitled "The Years," "The Ruler," and "The Conquests." These discussions synthesize information contained in the codex itself, combined and cross-referenced with other primary sources and scholarly studies. For Part Two of the codex, Berdan and Anawalt separately treat each of the thirty-seven tribute provinces depicted in the codex by presenting two maps (one showing the towns in each province, the other showing the location of the province within the greater empire); a summary of the basic information provided by the codex (the Nahuatl names for the tributary towns and their translation; the type and quantity of tribute goods; and the rate of payments); followed by analytical descriptions of the conquest history of these provinces and their inhabitants–again synthesized from the codex and other sources. Particularly noteworthy is Berdan and Anawalt's inclusion of information about ethnicity and the languages spoken by the inhabitants of these regions. Likewise, in their analysis of the tribute paid by each province, they cite and compare tribute information contained in other 16th century documents such as the *Matricula de Tributos* and the 1554 *Informacion sobre tributos* studied by Scholes and Adams (1957). For Part Three, Berdan and Anawalt describe the content of each folio page, and then proceed to analyze the iconography of individual images.

The Essential Codex Mendoza is the smartest, most economical, most user-friendly packaging of any Mexican pictorial manuscript (with analysis) to date. It is a major scholarly sourcebook containing all the tools and background necessary for understanding the Mexican system of writing and record-keeping. The format and presentation of the book have been rigorously thought out and executed so that readers can easily shuttle between the codex reproduction and the authoritative commentaries about its individual parts, folios, and images. The entire book is copiously detailed and footnoted. There are exhaustive "Place-name" and "Subject" indices to facilitate locating particular topics. Hopefully, others will find *The Essential Codex Mendoza* as stimulating and useful as I have found it. Perhaps someone might even be moved to labor towards a similar sourcebook treatment of another major Mexican codex in the near future?

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