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Lori Boornazian Diel. *The Codex Mexicanus: A Guide to Life in Late Sixteenth-Century New Spain.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. Illustrations. x + 216 pp. $55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4773-1673-3.

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Lori Boornazian Diel's recent study of the colonial book known as the Codex Mexicanus is a welcome addition to the literature on sixteenth-century manuscripts from central Mexico. Nahua intellectuals created the Codex Mexicanus in Mexico City in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. It is part of a large corpus of pictorial manuscripts created in the century following Spanish incursion, a compendium of information of special interest to the indigenous inhabitants of New Spain. The manuscript is a bound codex painted on native bark paper. Its format draws on both Aztec pictorial writing systems and European alphabetic text and images. The Codex Mexicanus is a valuable resource for scholars studying pre-Columbian and early colonial Mexico because it contains a wide variety of information. Its contents range from calendrical matters to astrology, beliefs about the natural world, the ancient lineage of Mexica rulers, and the history of the Mexica from their pre-Columbian migration to the arrival of Spaniards and Christianity.

However, as Diel notes in the introduction (chapter 1), because of the seemingly disparate nature of its contents, scholars have not generally investigated the Codex Mexicanus in its entirety. Studies of the manuscript have tended instead to refer to discrete sections, particularly its correlations of Aztec and Christian calendars and its extensive genealogical records. The author makes a compelling case for reading the manuscript as a cohesive whole. Diel demonstrates that the creators of the book based its framework on the genre of imported Spanish books known as ***Reportorios de los tiempos***, adapted for the needs of Christian Nahuas in late sixteenth-century Mexico City. Diel contributes to the recent body of important scholarship on colonial Mesoamerican manuscripts in emphasizing that the scribe-painters who created the Codex Mexicanus would have viewed the legacy of their indigenous traditions through the lens of their present circumstances in colonial New Spain. Thus, the Codex Mexicanus is not merely a compilation of "seemingly miscellaneous information" but is rather a "carefully curated" document

bringing together "information that its native compilers must have considered essential to know and remember, a guide to life in New Spain" (pp. 1, 3).

Diel's book is arranged around a number of important themes, each of which is situated within the intellectual climate of Mexico City in the late sixteenth century. These include calendrical and religious information (chapter 2); questions of astrology, health, and medicine (chapter 3); the genealogy of the Mexica royal dynasty (chapter 4); the history of the Mexica from migration to Spanish colonization (chapter 5); and, finally, a brief conclusion and epilogue. Throughout the volume, Diel, an art historian, considers how the book's producers negotiated Aztec and Spanish communication systems; in some places, the native scribe-painters maintained local pictorial writing traditions while elsewhere they combined those with imported European forms and alphabetic texts, as appropriate to the subject matter.

Chapter 2 brings together the calendrical materials that appear in various sections of the Codex Mexicanus. A Christian calendar, drawn from ***Reportorios***, maps out the liturgical cycle and holy days that would have been important for Christian Nahuas in colonial New Spain. That calendrical information is also correlated with Aztec timekeeping systems, such as the 365-day solar cycle during which the Aztecs had celebrated a series of eighteen monthly feasts. The manuscript also includes the Aztec calendar known as the ***tonalpohualli***, a cycle of 260 days that had been recorded in divinatory almanacs, and correlates that with the monthly feasts of the 365-day solar cycle. This chapter will be useful to scholars of Mesoamerican calendars and ritual systems as well as the practice of Christianity in early New Spain. Throughout the chapter, the author maintains that because the book's creators were Christians, their alignment of Christian and Aztec calendars worked to create a "new conception of time,... a hybrid calendar suitable for New Spain" (p. 19).

The third chapter considers the manuscript's medical and astrological contents. Medical astrology, examining the influence of the moon, stars, and zodiac on health and the body, had been a viable part of medical practice in Europe since ancient times and came to New Spain with the Spanish colonists. As with the Christian calendar, Diel identifies the ***Reportorios*** as the major source for this kind of information, which would have been crucial in the context of recent deadly epidemics in New Spain. Thus the imported Spanish ***Reportorios*** provided a framework for Nahua readers to gather information deemed critical for treating imported European diseases. Although divination and astrology had also been important in pre-Hispanic central Mexico, such that medical astrology found a ready audience in New Spain, in this case European practices ultimately supplanted native Nahua traditions.

Few scholars have studied the important genealogy of the Mexica ruling house examined in chapter 4. Genealogical records of families and, especially, rulers were important traditions for both native Mexicans and Spaniards. Genealogies are chronicled in indigenous records, while kings' lists are known from ***Reportorios***. Diel carefully guides the reader through the individual figures and lineage questions and argues that this royal lineage also establishes divine ancestry for the Mexica rulers of Tenochtitlan. Thus the creators of the Codex Mexicanus sought to elevate the status of Tenochca Mexica rulers (those who had ruled Tenochtitlan) above other ethnic groups, perhaps in response to recent changes in control of the native government of Mexico City. The discussion also explores related questions of the imported Spanish discourse of ***limpieza de sangre***, or blood purity.

Chapter 5 provides a close analysis of the extensive annals history of the Codex Mexicanus. While scholars often turn to this chronicle of Mexica history for its contents, a thorough study of that section had not yet been published. The Mexicanus chronicles a cohesive history of the Mexica

from the migration that began at Aztlan, to settlement at Tenochtitlan, through their imperial period, and finally to the arrival of Spaniards and Christianity in the New World. Diel deciphers the native writing system used to record the names of major historical figures, important place-names, and the dates of major events, particularly accessions and conquests. The author's careful explication of the Aztec pictorial language allows even those readers unfamiliar with indigenous systems of communication to access the contents of this history. Here as elsewhere, Diel situates the Codex Mexicanus in the context of late sixteenth-century Mexico, wherein historical events were "reinterpreted and reconfigured" in the context of contemporary life (p. 95). Diel makes the case that this Mexican chronicle demonstrates pride in the ancient Aztec heritage of New Spain, while at the same time heralding the arrival of Christianity.

Diel's study of the Codex Mexicanus is underwritten by the premise that the manuscript was the product of knowledgeable, educated Nahuas, representing autochthonous intellectual, cultural, and religious traditions as the bedrock of their present Christian world. The Mexicanus evinces a clear pride in the Aztec past while still communicating fidelity to their Christian present. The volume includes full-color plates illustrating the original manuscript along with numerous details and comparative images. This book will be of use to scholars interested not only in indigenous histories and calendars but also in the intellectual culture of late sixteenth-century New Spain.