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KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana

Piazza di San Lorenzo, 9, 50123 Firenze FI

Form compiled by Davide Domenici, in collaboration with Sergio Botta

Introduction

The Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana is one of the oldest libraries in the world and holds collections that date back to the time of Cosimo the Elder (1389–1464). Its present premises, adjacent to the Basilica of San Lorenzo, were built to designs by Michelangelo Buonarroti and inaugurated in 1571. The Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana preserves what is perhaps the most important written source on the Nahua or Aztec world at the time of the conquest: the Florentine Codex (Mediceo Palatino 218–220), compiled around 1577 by a group of Indigenous scribes and artists working under the supervision of the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún at the Colegio de la Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco (Mexico).

Cultural Areas

Mesoamerica

Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Florentine Codex (Mediceo Palatino 218–220)
<i>Collector</i>	Ferdinando de' Medici (1549–1609)

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<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Nahua (New Spain)
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Florentine Codex (Mediceo Palatino 218–220) consists of three European-style volumes containing the bilingual Nahua/Spanish text of the encyclopedic <i>Historia Universal de las Cosas de la Nueva España</i> , compiled by the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún and a group of Indigenous collaborators at the Colegio de la Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco (Mexico). The version of the work contained in the Florentine Codex, completed around 1577, is the most complete known and is illustrated with 2,468 images painted by Indigenous artists. It is one of the most important sources – if not the most important of all – for the Nahua or Aztec world at the time of the Spanish conquest.
<i>History of the collection</i>	Bernardino de Sahagún entrusted the work, originally bound in four volumes, to Rodrigo de Sequera, who took it to Rome, where it was bought by Ferdinando de' Medici, then a cardinal. When Ferdinando returned to Florence in 1587 to become Grand Duke he brought the codex with him; it was recorded in an inventory of the cardinal's Roman belongings as “tre libri coperti di corame turchino dell’Indie” (ASF, GM, 132, fol. 484), indicating that it had already been rebound in three

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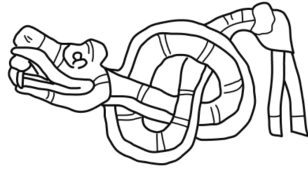
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	<p>volumes. While still a cardinal Ferdinando commissioned an Italian translation of the Spanish text of the Florentine Codex. The first volume of this translation is today preserved in the Hispanic Society in New York.</p> <p>Between 1745 and 1765 the manuscript became part of the Biblioteca Medicea Lotaringia Palatina, where it was described in a catalogue by Giovanni Gaspero Menabuoni. In 1783 Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo transferred it, together with other manuscripts, to the Medicea Laurenziana. In 1793 the prefect of the library, Angelo Maria Bandini, described it again in a catalogue. Between 1892 and 1898 Francisco del Paso y Troncoso produced the first complete transcription, thus initiating the long history of the scholarly study of the Florentine Codex and of the various editions of its text.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bustamante García, J. 1990. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: una revisión crítica de los manuscritos y de su proceso de composición. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.• Heikamp, D. 1972. Mexico and the Medici. Firenze: Edam.• Klor de Alva J., H.B. Nicholson H.B., E. Quinones Keber (eds.). 1988. The Work of Bernardino de

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	<p>Sahagun: Pioneer Ethnographer of Sixteenth Century Aztec Mexico. New York: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Magaloni Kerpel, Diana. 2011. "Painters of the New World. The Process of Making the Florentine Codex." In Colors Between Two Worlds: The Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún, edited by G. Wolf, J. Connors, 46-76. Florence: Villa I Tatti-Kunsthistorisches Institut-Max-Planck Institut.• Magaloni Kerpel, Diana. 2014. The Colors of the New World. Artists, Materials, and the Creation of the Florentine Codex. Los Angeles: Getty Publications.• Markey, L. 2016. Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.• Rao, G. 2011. "Mediceo Palatino 218-220 of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana of Florence." In: Colors between two Worlds. The Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún, edited by G. Wolf, J. Connors, 27-45. Florence: Villa I Tatti-Kunsthistorisches Institut-Max-Planck Institut.• Rao, G. 2017. "La fortuna del 'Codice Fiorentino' di Bernardino de Sahagun: la prima traduzione coeva in italiano." Archivum mentis 6: 185-202.
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