

KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

Piazza dei Cavalleggeri, 1, 50122 Firenze FI

Form compiled by Davide Domenici, in collaboration with Sergio Botta

Introduction

The Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze is one of the most important libraries in Italy and in Europe. Its original core derives from the collections of Antonio Magliabechi, donated by testamentary bequest in 1714. In 1771 it was joined by the collection of the Biblioteca Palatina Mediceo Lotaringia.

In 1861, the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze was established, and from 1885 it became the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. Its present premises were inaugurated in 1935. The library preserves a colonial-period Indigenous Mesoamerican manuscript, known in Mesoamericanist studies as the Codex Magliabechiano, which contains pictorial images and alphabetic texts in Spanish. It is one of the most important historical sources on Aztec religion and mythology.

Cultural Areas

Mesoamerica

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Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Codex Magliabechiano – Banco Rari 232 (Magl. XIII.3)
<i>Collector</i>	Antonio Magliabechi (1633–1714)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Nahua (New Spain)
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	<p>The Codex Magliabechiano – Banco Rari 232 (Magl. XIII.3) is a book-form manuscript on European paper, consisting of 92 pages, produced in the course of the sixteenth century. The title on the frontispiece reads “libro de la vida che los yndios antiguamente hacían y supersticiones y malos Ritos che tenían y guardavan”. Its content, made up of images painted by Indigenous artists and explanatory glosses in Spanish, is divided into several sections devoted to ritual mantles (2v–8v), the days of the ritual calendar or tonalpohualli (11r–13v), the 52-year cycle or xiuhmolpilli (14v–28r), ceremonies of the annual cycle or veintenas and other festivals (28v–48r), the gods of pulque (48v–59r), games and dances (59v–64r), death (64v–76r), and various rites (76v–92v).</p> <p>The manuscript forms part of a group of related texts known as the Magliabechiano Group, which includes the</p>

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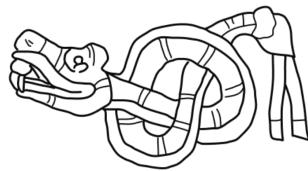
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	<p>Codex Tudela (Museo de América, Madrid) and other texts both manuscript and printed. It is possible that both the Codex Magliabechiano and the Tudela – the two most important members of the group – derive from a common prototype that is now lost.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	<p>The first secure information about the manuscript dates back to 1714, when it was included in the testamentary bequest of Antonio Magliabechi. It is not clear how Magliabechi came into possession of the manuscript: the various hypotheses advanced by scholars suggest that the text may have reached Italy via Nicolás Antonio, an agent of the king of Spain who travelled to Rome in 1654, or via Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Carreri, the famous Florentine traveller who in Mexico City met Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora in 1698; the latter might also have sent the text to Magliabechi by other routes. In fact, the recent discovery of a document among the manuscripts of Ulisse Aldrovandi suggests that the Codex Magliabechiano, or its prototype, was already in Italy in the second half of the sixteenth century.</p> <p>The manuscript was rediscovered in 1890 by Zelia Nuttall, who the following year made it known to the scholarly community. A handwritten note on one of the covers in fact indicates that already in 1885 a certain Henry Harisse had identified it as the work of a Mexican artist. In 1903 Zelia Nuttall edited the first facsimile edition with commentary of the Codex Magliabechiano, published by the University of Berkeley.</p>

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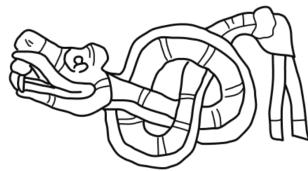
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<i>Web page</i>	
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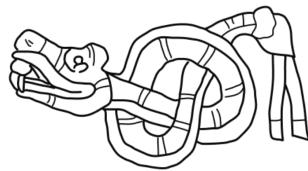
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