

THE CODEX BORGIA

A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript

Gisele Díaz and Alan Rodgers

With a New Introduction and Commentary by Bruce E. Byland



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"The mission of man is to remember. To remember to remember. To taste everything in eternity as once in time. All happens only once but that is forever."

HENRY MILLER

Remember to Remember

To Richard Gutherie, artist, and Tomás Díaz—each, in his own way, proving that when enough pressure is applied a diamond appears from within.

G. D., 1993

Thanks to Alberto and Gualberta Trejo, papermaker, San Pablito, Mexico; Armando Arriaga, woodcarver, Puebla, Mexico; Beckey Reisberg, conservator and bookmaker; Jeff Baker, photographer; Carl and Terrie Huff, whose door was always open; Patricia Morris, Lenny Lamm and Henry Miller, for showing the way.

A. R., 1993

My thanks go to John Pohl, Betsy Smith and Nancy Troike, inspiring students of pre-Columbian writing; to Cara Tannenbaum for almost everything; and to Leah Madeline for giving reason to being.

B. B., 1993

ARTISTS' PREFACE

The aim of the Díaz-Rodgers version of the Codex Borgia was to reproduce the codex using traditional methods and materials, and to restore as accurately as possible all damaged sections of the book; in short, to see the book in the pristine condition it had existed in during the time of the Aztecs.

Of course, the idea of codex restoration is not new. This project was heavily influenced by the restoration work done on the Codex Dresden and, most importantly of all, the work on the Codex Nuttall, which has been reprinted by Dover Publications.

Work on this project began with drawings made from photographs of the Codex Borgia. The first set of drawings was made to become familiar with the symbols and characters within the manuscript. The object at this point was to copy the original artwork as closely as possible. After the first drawings were completed, the entire book was redrawn again using pen and ink on Herculene film. In these final drawings, the restoration of the codex was conducted. First, each character (separate image) was centered within its defined space. For example, if the original artist(s) implied a division of one-half page in the original text, exactly one-half page was used to reproduce that portion of the codex. With regard to the characters, no changes were made. If a temple leaned in one direction or another, it was left as it was. Here, the process of extrapolated restoration occurred. The easiest restoration was the connecting of the lines based on other undamaged parts of the manuscript. This was relatively easy in some parts, as the figures were easily identifiable with just small parts of the figure worn away.

Of course, other sections were not so easily reproduced and some value judgments were called for. It is here, in the more difficult restoration parts, that some criticism is possible. An example is Plate 2. According to Alexander von Humboldt, the first and last pages of the original codex were partially burned by servant children of the Giustiniani family. In one of the burned areas (upper right), a scorpion is partially visible. Therefore, in the final series of drawings it was reproduced as a whole scorpion using other scorpions in the codex as guidelines. For example, Plates 13, 18, 59 and 69 each contain stylized versions of the scorpion. What may be wrong or lacking is the direction or curve of the scorpion's stinger on Plate 2. In order to fill and balance the given area, the scorpion was drawn with the straight extended stinger as found on Plate 59. The stylistic traits of the partial scorpion on Plate 2 served as the foundation of the new scorpion. In the final drawings, implied symmetry was formalized. All red dividing lines were made straight in the horizontal and vertical directions.

In the section of the book comprising Plates 61 through 70, the day signs, or symbols, are accurate. What may be lacking are certain characteristics unique to that particular day according to its place within the sacred order of 260 days. For instance, it should be noted

that each half of these pages has 13 day signs associated with it. This order was noted by Sahagún in his monumental work *Historia de las Cosas de Nueva España*. What will be found lacking are certain aspects of characteristics of the day signs which would have borne specific significance for that specific time period. For example, "Ollin," or Movement, can take several forms. In all the different forms, Movement is still Movement but it has several ways of being represented in this manuscript. On Plate 65 (upper half) it is seen upright and entwined with a red side dominating the right half of the symbol. On this same plate, in the bottom row of day signs, Movement is found again entwined, but this time it is lying down with the red half of the symbol on the bottom side. Plate 70 again shows Movement in the top row of the day signs. Here it is exactly as found on the bottom row of Plate 65, except the blue half is found on a totally different form. It is no longer entwined, but rather a star or flower form. That is by no means all of the possible forms of "Ollin." Sometimes the color and the shape of the center point varies. Each aspect that "Ollin" assumes has an important symbolic meaning and something distinct to say about that particular moment in time and space.

The bottom parts of Plates 28, 57, 58, 61 through 64 and 66 through 70 were especially difficult to reproduce. In all of these plates, the day signs were entirely missing, which called for quite a few judgment calls during the restoration process.

Concurrent with the drawing process was the investigation of different types of traditional *ámatl* bark paper. This investigation led to San Pablito, Mexico, and to Alberto and Berta Trejo. The Trejos were traditional makers of the paper that was used in this project. The process for this handmade paper has been well documented in many papers and several books; however, because of the special size requirement of the paper and the fact that the paintings were to be mounted onto an accordion-like book, several new methods of producing oversize pieces of paper were investigated. The new process for large-format paper quickly became the standard for the entire village.

After the final drawings were completed and the *ámatl* paper selected, the drawings made on the transparent film were transferred to the *ámatl* paper using a blackline undercoating. Because of the variation in the paper's color and quality, approximately 20 copies of each plate were transferred. The best copy of each plate was then carefully selected, based on paper characteristics and accuracy of line reproduction.

The next phase was the application of color. First, two coats of titanium-white watercolor were applied as a base. This served to stretch the paper and fill the porous surface of the paper. Colors were then applied by hand starting with yellow. Red was the final color to be applied. Experiments were conducted using natural dyes; however, it quickly became apparent that this was beyond the

scope of this project. Instead, watercolors were used. To insure uniformity in paint color, some portions of the plates required as many as four or five separate coats of paint. Although the plates were produced over several years, every effort was made to insure uniformity and consistency in color from Plate 1 through Plate 76. Finally, after all the colors were applied, the black lines were hand painted with tiny brushes, thereby encasing the characters of the manuscript. Two coats of acrylic fixative were finally applied to protect the colors. The plates were produced in order.

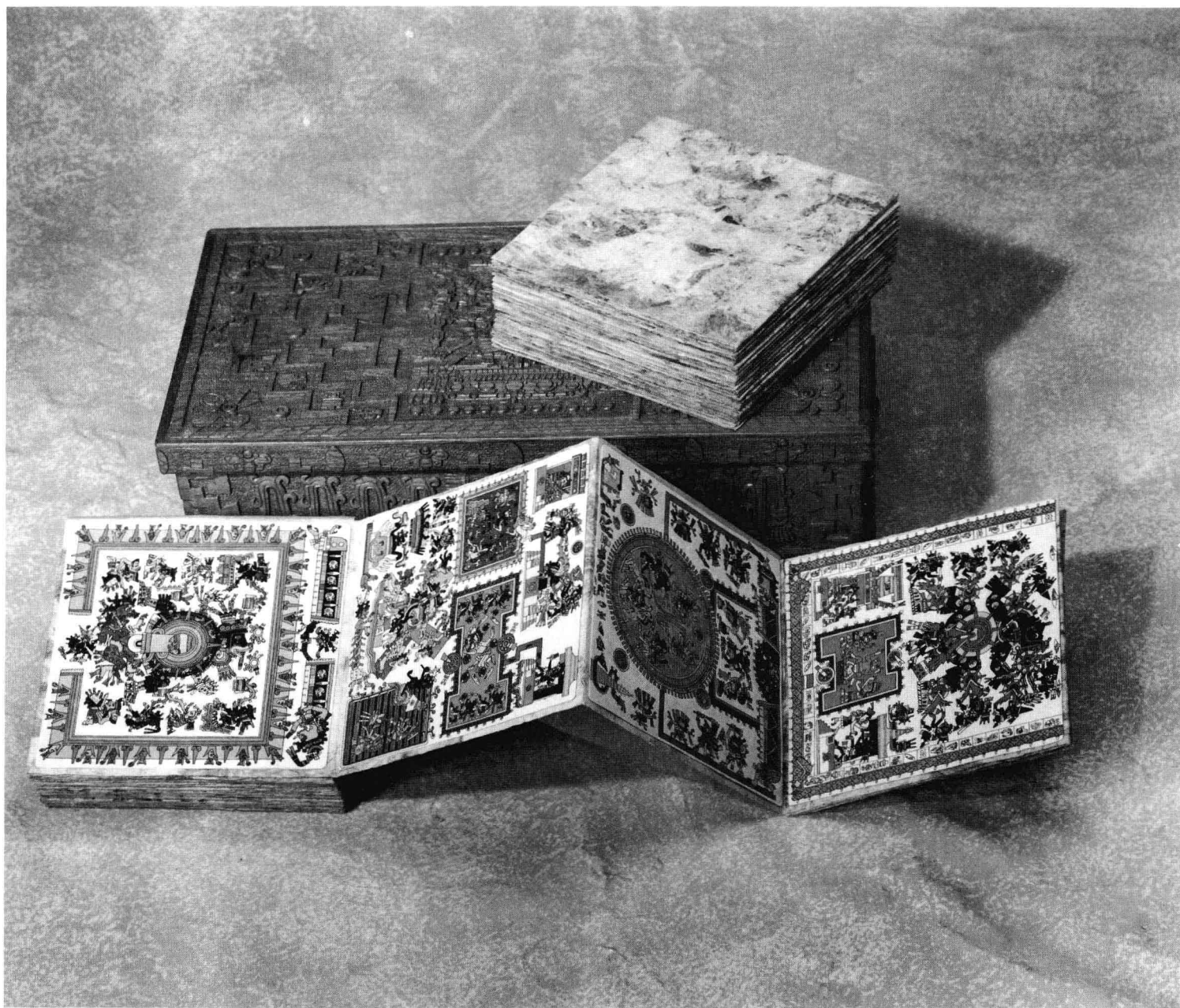
After the paintings were completed, they were photographed by Dallas photographer Jeff Baker. The plates were then taken to

Becky Reisberg, who assembled them into a unique accordion-style book using proper conservation techniques and methods. Two 40-foot *ámatl* sheets were produced. Each painting was then mounted on one of these long sheets, which then folded into an accordion-style book. Plates 1 through 38 are in one of these original books and Plates 39 through 76 are in the other. The books are stored in a hand-carved cedar box produced by Armando Arriaga, one of Mexico's finest woodcarvers.

Total time to complete the project was seven years.

G. D.

A. R.



The original painted Díaz and Rodgers restoration of the Codex Borgia, showing its screenfold (accordion-fold) nature, its *ámatl* paper and the handsome box crafted for it.

INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

BY BRUCE E. BYLAND

The Present Edition of the Codex Borgia

The present edition is a new hand-painted restoration of the Codex Borgia designed to recreate the sense of awe and wonder that the original manuscript must have inspired before the depredations of time and ill treatment took their toll. Over the five or more centuries since the original was painted by some unknown Mexican scribe or scribes, much has happened to it. It has been opened and closed countless times. Its fragile pages have been touched and manipulated, folded and rubbed, photographed and drawn. It has been exposed to heat and humidity. It has survived the abuse of children, who folded some of its pages and burned others. It has lost its original wooden end pieces. The result of all this activity is that the images painted so carefully by the original artist or artists have been damaged. In many places flakes of pigment have been rubbed off and lost, thus obscuring the original images to varying extents. Most seriously, parts of three leaves have been damaged by fire.

This has left a document which, though still recognized as one of the finest and most important original sources for the study of pre-Columbian religion, has been seriously compromised. Ms. Gisele Díaz and Mr. Alan Rodgers are to be commended for their efforts to recover the grandeur of the original manuscript. The Dover edition will, for the first time, make a reproduction of the manuscript accessible to the general public. That it is not a photographic or precise facsimile may possibly trouble some among the corps of professional codex scholars, though they are among the few who have access to the costly photographic facsimiles already published (Kingsborough 1831–48, Ehrle 1898, Seler 1904–09 [Spanish translation as Seler 1963], Nowotny 1976). Although these rare, expensive editions remain preferable for serious scholarship, that does not lessen the inspirational and broad educational value of this restoration.

Just as Dover's edition of Zelia Nuttall's copy of the Codex Zouche-Nuttall is not an exact rendition of the original, the reproduction published here is not an exact copy of the Codex Borgia, even in its current state. It is, rather, an informed attempt at a restoration, a careful reimagining of the original beauty of the manuscript. Even though the restoration has omitted the glosses added to the manuscript by a European hand after the conquest, it is not intended to be a definitive reconstruction of the original as it was painted before the arrival of the Spanish. It is not a precise copy of the extant portions but rather a redrawing that includes tiny differences of detail throughout. (Any significant differences will be pointed out in the commentary later in this introduction.) Colors are rendered close to their appearance in the original as it exists today, not as they were when the Codex Borgia was new; for example, some original greens are now a shade of tan, and it is the tan that appears here.

Because of its very availability and because of the care that Díaz and Rodgers have put into this faithful restoration of the manuscript, students can learn much from it. Those who want to study the original in fine detail should first use this edition as a guide but should also seek out a copy of the fine photographic facsimile published by ADEVA (Nowotny 1976). They should also look for the outstanding commentaries on the codex published by Nowotny (1961a) and Seler (1963). In addition, the serious student should not neglect the important studies of the Codex Borgia and the other members of the Borgia Group of codices published by Humboldt (1810), Caso (1927), Noguera (1927), Robertson (1963), Spranz (1964), Glass (1975), Sisson (1983), Biedermann (1989) and others. The present edition will become a starting point for study of the religious codices of highland Mexico just as the Dover publication of the Codex Zouche-Nuttall (Miller 1975) has become the principal introduction to the Mixtec historical codices for so many modern students.

The original codex was painted on a long strip of folded animal skin as a screenfold book. Fourteen strips of skin were attached end to end, trimmed to a standard height of 27 cm, folded into a screenfold and prepared for painting with a white lime-plaster ground. The artist or scribe then painted the manuscript with an extraordinarily artistic hand, using both mineral and vegetable pigments. The book was intended to be read in continuous fashion from one end to the other, from right to left, on one side and then turned over so that the reading could continue on the other side. Even though the current binding does not reproduce that screenfold format, the reading order in this edition does recreate the linear form of the original by binding the pages in reverse order so that the text begins at the back and is read from right to left and from back to front, in much the same way as the Dover edition of the Codex Zouche-Nuttall.

The History of the Codex Borgia

The Codex Borgia has long been recognized as one of the most elegant and beautiful of the few surviving pre-Columbian painted manuscripts. Its special significance has been seen in its detailed depiction of highland Mesoamerican gods and the ritual and divination associated with them. Substantial portions of the codex convey various aspects and attributes of the 260-day ritual calendar. The more detailed ceremonial aspects of the images have been harder to understand.

The Codex Borgia is today housed in the Apostolic Library of the Vatican in Rome, Italy. It was originally painted somewhere in the central highlands of Mexico as a unique manuscript. The exact

place at which it was painted is not now known and is the subject of much discussion. During the summer of 1982, the Pre-Columbian Studies Program at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., sponsored a summer research seminar on the codices of the Borgia Group at which much attention was paid to this problem (Sisson 1983). While no final conclusion could be drawn, the opinion of most of the participants in the seminar was that the Codex Borgia was probably originally painted somewhere in central or southern Puebla, the area around Tepeaca and Cuauhtinchan or the Tehuacán Valley. Others would expand this potential area of origin to include nearby areas of the Mixteca Alta in Oaxaca. Since various aspects of the manuscript seem to point with equal validity to each of these areas, we cannot choose one over the others. Perhaps we should conclude, rather, that central and southern Puebla and northern Oaxaca shared a religious and iconographic scheme and that the pronouncements of the Codex Borgia would have had equal validity in all of these nearby regions (Pohl and Byland n.d.). Seen in that light, the precise point of origin is not so important as the information that can be gained from careful study of the codex.

It is generally believed that the Codex Borgia was originally painted in the decades immediately before the arrival of the Spanish. This presumption is based on the observation that its style shows no hint of European influence. In addition its religious content was more apt to have been repressed rather than encouraged after the arrival of Catholic priests. It is not possible now to determine exactly how long before the beginning of the Colonial period it was painted, though it probably dates to the late fifteenth or very early sixteenth century.

The Codex Borgia was sent back to Europe at some point in the early Colonial period, though when, by whom and to whom is not known. Its early movements in Europe are also obscure. It has been argued that at some time in the sixteenth century the manuscript was sent to Italy either directly from Mexico or from an intermediate stop in Spain (Ehrle 1898). This supposition is based on the paleography of a gloss on page 68 of the manuscript that appears to have been written in poor Italian (presumably in the hand of a sixteenth-century Mexican or Spaniard not fully fluent in Italian). At any rate, from then until very late in the eighteenth century nothing is known of the whereabouts of the codex.

It first came to the attention of scholarship when in 1805 Alexander von Humboldt saw it in Rome among the effects of Cardinal Stefano Borgia, who had died the previous year. Humboldt wrote, with some authority, that Cardinal Borgia had acquired the codex from the Giustiniani family, neighbors who had entrusted the document to some servants, who in turn had given it to their children as a plaything. As a result, before Humboldt ever saw it the manuscript had been burned and mistreated. When Cardinal Borgia died he left almost all of his possessions to the branch of the Vatican which he had directed for many years, the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide; his brother was to inherit the family museum. Although the codex was not located in the family museum at the time of the Cardinal's death, his brother sued for its possession. After a few years of legal wrangling the Congregatio was awarded the codex and housed it in its library. Late in the nineteenth century it was transferred to the Apostolic Library of the Vatican, where it remains today.

Pre-Columbian Manuscripts

The painted books of Mesoamerica represent an amazing legacy of the religious and historical knowledge acquired by the pre-Columbian people of Mexico and northern Central America. A

scant few of these documents survive to this day. The vast majority of them were destroyed in the misguided efforts of early Spanish priests to stamp out all vestiges of the heathen religions of the native peoples. Accounts of the burning and destruction of hundreds and thousands of native books can bring tears to the eyes. We can only wonder today at the range and depth of information lost through the destruction of so vast a cultural resource. Despite this tragedy, much can be said about the manuscript-painting traditions of Mesoamerica. We have perhaps fifteen or so surviving books and manuscripts that were produced either before the Conquest or in a native style in the years directly after the arrival of the Spanish (Glass 1975:11–12). In addition to these works, there are about two dozen pictorial documents made by indigenously trained native scribes and artists for the Spanish conquerors as illustrations of native history, religion, custom and practice. Finally, there are literally hundreds of pictorial manuscripts produced by native artists during the early Colonial period in many ordinary contexts: maps to go with geographic descriptions, genealogies or histories to support claims to titles and tribute, lists of tribute actually paid or due, evidence for cases tried in Spanish courts, calendrical documents and many others.

The surviving pre-Conquest-style screenfolds include three classes or groups of books: Mixtec histories, Maya religious books and highland religious books. The histories include the seven Mixtec historical manuscripts, which deal with local history and royal genealogies from various communities in the Mixteca Alta and surrounding regions (Smith 1973, Byland and Pohl in press). A second group comprises the three or four surviving Maya screenfolds, all of which are painted on paper rather than animal skin (Glass 1975:77). These codices are substantially divinatory and calendrical in content and are written in a distinctively Mayan style incorporating much Maya hieroglyphic text. A third group of pre-Conquest books is known as the Borgia Group, named after their most prominent member, the Codex Borgia (Nowotny 1961a). These are all screenfolds on animal skin that are concerned with religious and ritual matters. They are painted in styles very similar, though not identical, to those of the Mixtec historical codices.

The Mixtec historical manuscripts include the Codex Zouche-Nuttall (Miller 1975, Troike 1987); the Codex Colombino-Becker I, composed of two rejoined parts (Troike 1980, Smith 1963, Caso and Smith 1966); the Codex Becker II (Nowotny 1961b); the Codex Bodley (Caso 1960); the Codex Selden (Smith 1983, Caso 1964); the Codex Vindobonensis (Furst 1978, Adelhofer 1963); and the Codex Egerton (Burland 1965).

The three widely accepted Maya codices are the Codex Paris (Anders 1968), the Codex Dresden (Anders and Dekkert 1975) and the Codex Madrid (Anders 1967). Each appears to be dedicated to the calendar, the deities of the Maya pantheon and the supernatural aspects of the calendar associated with ritual divination. A fourth codex, the Grolier Codex, may also be a member of this group though it is not yet universally accepted.

The Codex Borgia is the leading member of a small group of pre-Columbian manuscripts known collectively as the Borgia Group. The Borgia Group is particularly significant because of its pre-Conquest date and its religious content. The many manuscripts treating religious subjects that must have existed before the sixteenth century were particularly sought out for destruction by zealous Spanish priests and friars who were charged with ending idolatrous practices. The manuscripts of the Borgia Group seem to have been spared this fate by the happy accident of their having been sent to Europe, probably to Spain, early in the Conquest period.

In addition to the Codex Borgia, the principal screenfold members of the Borgia Group are the Codex Cospi (Nowotny 1968),

which is a ritual calendar with some ritual information on its reverse side; the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer (Burland 1971), which is a ritual calendar; the Codex Laud (Burland 1966), which is a ritual calendar with several other kinds of ritual information included; and the Codex Vaticanus B (Anders 1972), which is also a ritual calendar. The other related documents sometimes included in the group as minor members are the Fonds Mexicains no. 20, a single page of deerskin, and the Codex Porfirio Díaz, a screenfold that includes a section with similar ritual and religious content.

From these extant native-tradition books we may discern several characteristics of Mesoamerican written records. We know, for example, that books were not published in a European sense. That is to say, they were all handmade in single copies without the use of any type of impression-making device: no movable type, no stamps or rollers. It is arguable that every book was unique, made in one place by one patron and for one set of purposes. Information is shared among several of the codices but its form is never identical. Of course, the very small sample size of surviving manuscripts makes this generalization difficult to prove. It is certainly possible that books were exactly copied in a scribal tradition similar to that of the European monastic tradition, though no proof of this possibility exists.

It can be argued that the written literature of the pre-Columbian peoples was divided into categories in their minds as well as ours. Historical books deal with people, places, politics and genealogy. Religious documents deal with the calendar, ceremonialism and divination. Overlap between them is found in areas where historically important people participate in divination or other ceremonies and where politically significant places have sacred significance.

The content of the post-Conquest documents suggests the possibility of other written genres that have not survived. The codices do not contain two-dimensional maps of the landscape in forms familiar as such to European eyes. Despite this observation, the fact that space is represented in the codices in various ways (Pohl and Byland 1990) and the existence of many post-Conquest maps (see Glass 1975) suggest that space had been graphically represented in pre-Columbian times. In addition, the lists of tribute obligations of towns prepared for the Spanish tax collectors suggests the likelihood of similar record keeping before the European arrival. We can imagine the rulers of native communities making a sincere effort to keep such documents, if they ever existed, out of the hands of the new oppressors.

Pre-Columbian Religion

The religious beliefs of pre-Columbian peoples in Mesoamerica were vastly complex. There was a shared religious system over much of Mexico and northern Central America with regard to the calendar, the major deities, the structure of the world and the hierarchy of the supernatural world. Nevertheless, each town and region had its own nuances of belief that set it apart from its neighbors. Different deities were held in esteem in different places and many gods, even major ones, had differing characteristics of dress and behavior. Much of this complexity is not now discernible but some has been preserved. We know, for example, the patron deities of many communities whose particular charge was the protection of the local people and land.

The behavioral range covered by religion in ancient Mesoamerica was like that of any complex religious system. The gods were organized in a hierarchy reflecting that of the people. They came equipped with family ties, affections and jealousies, indeed with all the complexities of human life. They had potential influence over

the very existence of the world, having caused its destruction and re-creation as many as five times, according to Aztec chroniclers. On a smaller scale they were thought to have the capacity to affect the forces of nature and the success of human endeavor. Rain would come only if the rain deity was properly propitiated. Wind would blow too strongly or too weakly unless the wind deity was correctly worshiped. Spirits inhabited the night air and the wild animals of the hills. Auguries and oracles could predict the success or failure of any activity. Patterns in nature were explained by the interaction of the forces of the supernatural world with those of the physical one. In all these ways and more, the supernatural was present in the daily lives of the people of Mesoamerica.

The people of the various towns and cities of ancient Mesoamerica had to be able to deal with the potent forces of the transcendent world above, below and around them. These interactions were often made on a personal level, at a family shrine, or by repetition of a special prayer or incantation in the fields or while doing some task. At other times connection to the power of the supernatural required a trained specialist, a priest. For this task a wide variety of specialized priests was available. There were priests dedicated to each of the many gods and other supernatural forces. There were bureaucratic priests dedicated to the ancestral deities of each town or region. There were priests who performed autosacrifice and human sacrifice. There were those who prophesied the future of natural phenomena and those who prophesied the future of human activity. There were priests who preached and others who taught.

For priests to be able to fulfill all these complex roles they had to have immense knowledge. Part of that knowledge was acquired in formal schools called *calmecac*. More was learned on the job as junior priests working with older, more experienced priests. Among the things required of priests was the ability to read books and interpret the information contained in them. That was nowhere more evident than in the case of the religious books, which served as densely packed compendia of vital information about the nature of the supernatural world and its relationships with the physical one. The Codex Borgia was just such a book.

Much of the capacity to interpret the codex was based on intimate knowledge of the gods and their many characteristics. The pantheon of ancient Mesoamerica was amazingly complex. The many deities often had multiple identities, different names and characteristics apparently being associated with a single deity. Similarly, the iconographic representations of deities often seem to display substantial overlap. Attributes associated with two or more individual deities could be represented on the person of a single god in a particular context. All this makes the study of pre-Columbian religion a daunting task. The most encyclopedic analysis of which I am aware is the masterly work of H. B. Nicholson (1971). A very strong, and more accessible, recent study is by David Carrasco (1990).

It is not possible in any brief treatment to expound fully the intricacies of pre-Columbian religion and its extraordinarily complex deities. A few characteristics of a handful of the deities will have to suffice as an introduction here.

Quetzalcóatl is the Feathered Serpent. He is a god of rebirth and renewal. In one of his most important capacities he is known as Ehécatl, the god of the wind. He is at one and the same time the god of the wind, the four winds of the four directions and the 400 little winds that blow everywhere. In another identity he is known as Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the embodiment of the planet Venus as the morning or evening star. Quetzalcóatl was one of the creators of the sun and the world.

Tezcatlipoca is the Dark Smoking Mirror. He is an all-knowing, ever-present and all-powerful god. He, too, is a god of several capacities or personalities. Tezcatlipoca is sometimes represented as

the Red Tezcatlipoca (Tlatlahqui Tezcatlipoca) and sometimes as the Black Tezcatlipoca (Yayauhqui Tezcatlipoca). He is the sower of discord and conflict, a god of darkness and warfare.

Tláloc is the god of rain and storm. He is the god of waters in the sky. Tláloc is a creator of life; his rain brings regrowth in the spring. He also carries the lightning and is responsible for destructive storms.

Chalchiuhtlicue is the consort of Tláloc. She is the goddess of running water, waters on the earth like lakes, rivers and springs. Her name literally means "Precious Green Stone Skirt."

Tlazoltéotl was a very basic and very complex deity. She was a goddess of the earth. She had a role as the goddess of the moon. She was sometimes known as Tlaelcuani and in that capacity was known as the eater of filth and excrement. In this role she was also a sensual goddess of enticement and sexuality. Other names for Tlazoltéotl included Teteoinnan, "mother of the gods," and Toci, "our grandmother."

There were, of course, dozens of other deities both high and low, some of whom will be identified briefly in the commentary below.

The Nature of the Codex Borgia

Purpose or Function

The Codex Borgia is a native-tradition religious manuscript from an unidentified part of the southern central highlands of Mexico, perhaps from somewhere in what is now the states of Puebla and Oaxaca. Though we do not know from what indigenous context it was first extracted by the Spaniards, it is not hard to surmise that it was a ritual document taken from a sacred place—perhaps a temple, a priest's residence or a sacred shrine of some sort. Its content suggests that it was used for several purposes. It seems to have been a prognostication tool for divining the future in various ways. Parts of the codex are ritual 260-day calendars. These are augmented by substantial sections delineating the signs of the days and the deities of the days and the nights. Other pages characterize various portions of the ritual calendar and still others relate the ritual calendar to the solar year. Another part of the manuscript presents a sort of numerological prognostication of the lives of wedded couples. Other sections concern the cardinal directions of the world and the supernatural characters and attributes of these regions. Other portions describe the characteristics of various deities, forming a sort of catalog of supernatural beings who can influence the world. Still other passages may contain a pattern for ceremonies for the installation of rulers in certain pre-Columbian kingdoms. These aspects will all be discussed below in an abbreviated commentary based largely on the work of Seler (1963) and Nowotny (1961a).

An underlying level of meaning within the Codex Borgia is found in its frequent depictions of the various deities and other supernatural beings. The interpretation of auguries depended on the priest's reading of the images and his knowledge of the characteristics of the various powerful creatures represented.

Approaches to Reading the Codex

The Codex Borgia is composed of 39 equally sized leaves. The first and last of these, the outside surfaces of the stack of folded pages, were affixed to end pieces, presumably fashioned of wood. Every exposed side of the manuscript was painted with information by the

artist or artists who created the document. We thus have 37 leaves that are painted on both sides and two end leaves painted on only one side, for a total of 76 painted pages.

The wonderful character of a screenfold manuscript, in comparison with a modern binding, that the reader is not restricted to seeing only two pages at once. When a screenfold book is opened two, four, six or more pages can be seen at a time. Indeed, the pages being consulted simultaneously do not need to be consecutive or even on the same side of the manuscript. This structure allows for easy transgression of a simple linear reading order. Flashbacks, flashforwards and cross references can be found entirely out of the simple flow of time.

As a result of this versatile format, reading order for a learned scribe could be very diverse. He could read a book from beginning to end in a linear form similar to ours, or else read several pages at once, referring back and forth as needed through many images to follow different aspects of the information being studied. Clearly the skill required to read these books was not easily obtained.

The Content of the Codex

Though the content of the Codex Borgia is only partially understood, we can say with assurance that it is a ritual book. Substantial parts seem to be a text of standard ritual information, to be used like a reference book. Other parts seem to be mnemonic devices encoding more arcane ritual information. Yet another part seems to have been a prescriptive set of directions for the performance of a particular series of ceremonies. The best and most detailed commentaries on the manuscript are those written by Eduard Seler (1904–09) and K. A. Nowotny (1961a). Their work notwithstanding, much of the interpretation offered to date is limited. While codex scholars have been able to work out much of the calendrical order and to recognize some of the deities, creatures and objects depicted in the manuscript, the contexts in which they have been portrayed are still not fully understood. It is still necessary to identify the more obscure images and to divine the relationships between the deities and activities depicted and the calendar to which they are attached. Efforts to do so are ongoing. Similarly, it is still necessary to pinpoint the language spoken by the original authors of the Borgia Group codices; many separate languages were spoken in the likely regions of origin. Recent work on these manuscripts has been conducted by a handful of scholars from around the world, among them Peter van der Loo, John M. D. Pohl, Maarten Jansen, Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Mark King and Edward B. Sisson.

What follows here is a very brief redaction of the commentaries of Seler and Nowotny, informed by the more recent work of Pohl (Pohl and Byland n.d., 1991) and van der Loo (1982, 1987 and personal communication) and with a few ideas of the present writer. It is intended to help the novice reader begin the search for understanding. All readers of this introduction are encouraged to pursue the study of ancient Mexican religion by referring to more extensive commentaries on the codex and to other more general studies of pre-Columbian religion (Carrasco 1990, León-Portilla 1963, Lopez Austin 1973, Nicholson 1971) and writing (Benson 1973, Marcus 1992, Smith 1973). The text of the Codex Borgia has been arbitrarily divided into a number of groups of pages or parts of pages that seem to make sense when taken together. Though these divisions seem today to be reasonable, they should not be considered to be absolutely authoritative. New insight may be gained by trying new ways of seeing and understanding the images of highland pre-Columbian writing systems.

An Abbreviated Commentary on the Codex Borgia

Plates (Original Pages) 1–8: The First Calendar, a 260-Day Ritual Calendar

A fundamental tool of ritual prognostication and divination throughout ancient Mesoamerica was the 260-day ritual calendar, known to the Aztecs as the *tonalpohualli*, or “the book of the days.” (In many ancient Mesoamerican languages the term for the ritual calendar had much the same meaning; the Mixtecs, for example, had several names, including *tutu yehe dahui quevui*, “the book that has the days.”) This ritual calendar, covering a period that is shorter than the solar year, was used for various purposes. It was much more than just a list of days: it expressed the relationship between time and space and between both of them and the world of the gods. The Mixtecs had another term for the calendar that conveys some of this interconnection: *nee nūhu duyū dusa*, meaning more or less “all the spirits who support the disc of the earth” (Alvarado 1962[1593]:41v, Arana and Swadesh 1965). The disc of the earth is the plane upon which we live. It is composed of four cardinal directions and linked to the realms above and below by a central hinge that constitutes a fifth direction. Periods within the calendars are associated with specific supernatural figures and are linked to the five directions. Here the relationship of time, space and the supernatural world becomes evident.

The 260-day ritual calendar was constructed using two continuous sequences, one of 13 numbers and the other of 20 day signs. The 13 numbers run in sequence and then start again. Similarly the 20 day signs run in sequence and then start again. The total number of uniquely identified days using this system, then, is 13 times 20 or 260. In Figure 1, the 260 days of the calendar are arranged in 13 columns and 20 rows. To the left of each row is found the day sign, and in each cell of the diagram is the corresponding day number. The calendar in this form should be read from top to bottom and from left to right through 260 days. In this illustration the first day is 1 Alligator, the second day is 2 Wind and so on. The thirteenth day is 13 Reed, but be sure to note that the fourteenth day is 1 Jaguar, not 14 Jaguar, because only 13 numbers are used in the day-number cycle.

The first eight pages of the Codex Borgia enumerate the 260 days of the *tonalpohualli* together with images that seem to carry information about the qualities of these days. Here the 260 days are arranged in five narrow rows of day signs with the 13 numbers omitted. Above and below the rows of day signs are 104 taller images laid out in two rows. These 104 images are unique depictions of people, deities, places or things that presumably have supernatural qualities. They are usually taken to be qualifiers for the five specific days shown between each upper and lower pair. Some are clearly of standard deities. Tonatiuh, Tezcatlipoca, Xipe Tótec and others.¹ Others represent natural objects and artifacts: the scorpion, offerings, bundles, serpents, the sky, the sun and many other things. Still others seem more religious and iconographic: images of human sacrifice and other offerings, serpents descending from the sky, blood flowing from the sun, complex sacred bundles and other things laden with unknown meaning. The actual significance to a pre-Columbian priest of these many

different images remains obscure but can certainly be the subject of further study.

The enumeration of 260 days begins with a drawing of the Alligator at the lower right corner of the five narrow rows on Plate 1. It then proceeds from right to left across all eight pages of the *tonalpohualli*. At the end of that row, at the bottom left corner of Plate 8, the day sign for Grass is found. It is the fifty-second day sign and should, if 1 Alligator was the first day, represent the day 13 Grass. The next day in the sequence should be the day 1 Reed. The only place that Reed is found at either end of one of these five rows of day signs is at the right end of the next row up, the second row from the bottom on Plate 1. If the reading continues there, Reed is followed by Jaguar and Eagle and Vulture and so on. Following this pattern, the calendar is read as five rows of 52 day signs from right to left and from bottom to top. The last day in the calendar is the day Flower, which should be 13 Flower if the first day was indeed 1 Alligator.

Plates 9–13: The 20 Deities of the 20 Named Days

The next five pages of the Codex Borgia are also meant to be read as a unit, as they depict 20 deities, four to a page. Each quarter-page contains a deity, an elaborately drawn day sign and another figure or group of figures. These five pages undoubtedly carry information important to the interpretation of the supernatural qualities of each of the 20 days.





















The five pages of the deities of the days are meant to be read in the order of the days, beginning with Alligator in the lower right quadrant of Plate 9. The reading order then proceeds from right to left along the lower register across pages in succession until the lower left quadrant of Plate 13 is reached with the deity of the day named Dog. The next day sign in sequence is Monkey, which is found on page 13 just above Dog—that is, in the upper left quadrant. The reading order then proceeds from left to right until you reach the day Flower in the upper right quadrant of Plate 9, just above the first of the 20 day names. This arrangement of the days sets up a cyclic structure: the reading can proceed continuously through the circle of 20 names again and again in a never-ending cycle, just as the calendar goes on and on.

The deities associated with each day sign are characters who have some relationship with the natural qualities of the name of the day, though these relationships are not always obvious. The identification of these 20 deities was accomplished by both Seler and Nowotny, who used the iconographic associations of the images as drawn here and in other native-tradition manuscripts. Another detailed analysis of the intricacies of the imagery and inter-deity associations is to be found in Spranz (1973). A summary is offered here; extensive explication of the main areas of influence of each of these deities is beyond the scope of this introduction.

DAY SIGN	DEITY (NAHUATL)	DEITY (ENGLISH)
Alligator	Xochipilli/ Tonacatecuhtli	Prince of Flowers/The Supreme Male Deity
Wind	Quetzalcóatl/ Ehécatl	Feathered Serpent/Wind Deity
House	Tepeyóllotl	Heart of the Mountain
Lizard	Huehucóyotl	Old Coyote
Serpent	Chalchiuhtlicue	Goddess of Running Water/Precious Green Stone Skirt
Death	Tecciztécatl	Goddess of the Moon
Deer	Tláloc	Rain and Storm (Rain of Fire)
Rabbit	Mayáhuēl	Goddess of Maguey

¹Since we do not know the language spoken by the authors of the Codex Borgia the Nahuatl (Aztec language) names for deities will be used. The Nahuatl names are well known thanks to many records from the early Colonial period. The reader should understand that the attributes of the deities depicted in the Codex Borgia may not have exactly coincided with those of their Aztec counterparts.

FIGURE 1: DAY SEQUENCE FOR THE 260-DAY CALENDAR.

	Alligator	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
	Wind	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
	House	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
	Lizard	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
	Serpent	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
	Death	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
	Deer	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13
	Rabbit	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
	Water	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
	Dog	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
	Monkey	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4
	Grass	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
	Reed	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
	Jaguar	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
	Eagle	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
	Vulture	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
	Movement	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
	Flint	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
	Rain	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
	Flower	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13

DAY SIGN	DEITY (NAHUATL)	DEITY (ENGLISH)
Water	Xiuhtecuhtli	God of Fire
Dog	Mictlantecuhtli	God of the Underworld
Monkey	Xochipilli	Prince of Flowers
Grass	Patécatl	God of Pulque
Reed	Tezcatlipoca- Ixquimilli	The Smoking Mirror with Bandaged Eyes
Jaguar	Tlazoltéotl	Goddess of Filth and the Earth
Eagle	Tlatlahuqui Tezcatlipoca	Red Smoking Mirror
Vulture	Itzpapálotl	Obsidian Butterfly
Movement	Xólotl	God of Twins
Flint	Chalchiuhtotolin	Turkey of the Precious Stone
Rain	Tonatiuh	The Sun
Flower	Xochiquétzal	Flower-Quetzal Feather

Plate 14: The Nine Deities of the Night

The next page of the Codex Borgia changes the format to an arrangement of three rows of three deities each. These nine divine beings are generally understood to represent the supernatural rulers of the nine hours of the night, and are connected to the first nine day signs from the list of 20 days. Each of these gods stands offering a bundle of sticks, a rubber ball and a quetzal feather as the components of a burnt offering that perhaps symbolizes the night in some way.

The nine deities of the night hours are read in a serpentine pattern beginning at the bottom right and proceeding from right to left across the lower register. As the end of that register is reached, the reading proceeds, in the order of the days, directly up to the middle register at the left margin and then proceeds from left to right, and finally up to the upper register and there from right to left. The identifications of the deities who rule these nine parts of the night are indicated below. You will note that, though the calendrical signs tied to them are the same as the beginning of the list of 20 days given in the previous five pages, the deities are different (or at least associated with different day signs).

NIGHT HOUR	DEITY (NAHUATL)	DEITY (ENGLISH)
Alligator	Xiuhtecuhtli	God of Fire
Wind	Itztli (Yayauhqui Tezcatlipoca)	Flint (Black Smoking Mirror)
House	Piltzintecuhtli	God of Youth (a solar deity)
Lizard	Cintéotl	God of Maize
Serpent	Mictlantecuhtli	God of Death (the Underworld)
Death	Chalchiuhtlicue	Goddess of Running Water/Precious Green Stone Skirt
Deer	Tlazoltéotl	Goddess of Filth and the Earth
Rabbit	Tepeyólotl	Heart of the Mountain
Water	Tláloc	Rain and Storm

Plates 15–17: 20 Deities and 80 Days

The next two and one-third pages are filled with 20 images of deities connected to 20 groups of four days each. The signs of the days form a continuous sequence of 80 days. Each deity is depicted with subordinate characters who are shown as sacrifices, offerings, newborn children or nursing infants. The purpose of these subordinate figures is not clearly understood but seems in a way to characterize groups of the main deities.

Five groups of four day signs are needed to go through one complete set of 20 days. Only five of the 20 possible day signs can be found in the lead position in each group of four days. The first day of each group of four will always be Alligator, Serpent, Water, Reed or Movement. As a result of this peculiarity, the 20 deities can be grouped in two different ways. The five deities who illustrate one group of 20 consecutive days belong together. Similarly, the five deities who illustrate the same set of four day signs can be said to belong together. As it turns out, each of the four groups of five consecutive deities is also linked by their actions. Hence, one of each group is connected to each set of four day signs.

Seler assigns directional qualities to the days and their deities. The directional system of Mesoamerican religion has five cardinal directions—North, South, East, West and Center, with Center being a kind of linchpin connecting the four directions and linking them to the abodes of the gods above and below the disc of the Earth. Seler has suggested that the directional associations of the five groups of four days—the groups that begin with Alligator, Serpent, Water, Reed and Movement—are West, South, Center, East and North.

The reading order of days is the same as in the day lists given above. It begins at the lower right corner of Plate 15 with the day sign Alligator, and then proceeds from right to left across Plates 15 and 16. After 20 days, five groups of four days and five corresponding deity images, the count of day signs begins again in a continuous cycle. Each of these first five deities is seen to be sacrificing the eye of a smaller human figure with a sharpened bone awl. The reading then continues to the last image on the lower register of Plate 16 and, following the order of the days, moves up to the center register at the left side and from there continues from left to right back across Plate 16 and Plate 15. These five deities are all offering small figures who share attributes with them and indeed generally seem to be smaller versions of these very deities. On Plate 15, in the center panel of the page, the day-sign sequence begins again and the behavior of the deities again changes. This group of five deities is shown holding the umbilical cords of small figures that are in the pose of a newborn baby. Midway in this sequence the reading has moved up to the upper register of Plate 15 and has changed direction again to move from right to left. All five of the birth figures are found on Plate 15. As the reading continues to Plate 16, the fourth and last group of five deities and 20 days begins. In this group the deities are all female and four of the five are nursing infants, three of whom are human children and one an animal. The fifth deity is nourishing a full-sized skeletal figure with blood rather than milk, thus maintaining the pattern with an altered image. The last two images of this sequence are found on the upper register of Plate 17, a placement necessary to complete the pattern of 20 deities and 80 days.

A result of this structure is that the first five deities in the list of 20 may be taken to characterize the five cardinal directions for a certain quality, perhaps that of sacrifice. The second group of five may characterize the five cardinal directions for offering, the third for birth and the fourth for sustenance. Alternatively, we might group together the four deities who are linked calendrically to the West (and similarly for each of the other directions) and say that they describe four qualities of that direction, the qualities of sacrifice, offering, birth and sustenance.

An identification of most of the deities in this list of 20 is as follows (each will be listed with its directional association following Seler). The first group of five: W–Cintéotl (God of Maize); S—a complex deity not yet identified; C–Mictlantecuhtli (God of the Underworld); E–Quetzalcóatl (God of the Wind); and N–Xochipilli (Prince of Flowers). The second group of five: W–Xochiquétzal (Flower-Quetzal Feather); S–Tláloc (God of Rain and

Storm/Rain of Fire); C–Mictlantecuhtli (God of the Underworld); E–Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (God of Venus as the Morning Star); and N–Mixcóatl (God of the Hunt). The third group of five: W–Xochipilli (Prince of Flowers); S–Tonatiuh (God of the Sun); C–Tezcatlipoca–Ixquimilli (Smoking Mirror with Bandaged Eyes); E–Xipe Tótec (Our Lord the Flayed One); and N–Macuilxóchtli (5 Flower, God of Games). The fourth and last group of five: W–Mayáhuēl (Goddess of Maguey); S–Tlazoltéotl (Goddess of Filth and the Earth); C–Mictēcacīhuatl (Goddess of the Underworld), E–Chalchiuhtlicue (Goddess of Running Water); and N–Xochiquétzal (Flower-Quetzal Feather).

Plate 17: Tezcatlipoca with the 20 Day Signs on His Body and Costume

The lower portion of Plate 17 contains a large and beautiful image of the deity Tezcatlipoca in his black guise. This image expresses the magical relationships between certain parts of his body and costume and each of the 20 day signs. The association of day signs with body parts presumably has at least some connection with ritual curing, but since several day signs are associated with costume elements rather than with body parts, the curing explanation is limited. Selser and Nowotny believe that these day signs express attributes that are in some way appropriate to the form or function of the costume elements involved. Why Tezcatlipoca rather than some other deity is used as the base upon which to show these relationships is not clear.

Plates 18–21: Eight Supernatural Scenes with Calendrical Associations

The next four pages of the codex form an abbreviated 260-day calendar that follows the structure of the first *tonalpohualli*, found on the first eight pages of the manuscript. Each of these four pages is divided into upper and lower halves, with each half further divided into a band of five day signs and a wider band of images of supernatural characters and their appurtenances.

The reading order begins with the lower register of Plate 18, proceeds from right to left across all four pages, moves up to the upper register of Plate 21 and from there proceeds from left to right until Plate 18 is again reached. The five day signs on each of these eight panels are equivalent to a single column of five day signs in the *tonalpohualli* found on Plates 1 to 8. For example, the first panel—the lower panel on Plate 18—shows five day signs beginning with Alligator and continuing with Reed, Serpent, Movement and Water. These are not in the order one would expect from the sequence of 20 day signs, but if you direct your attention to the rightmost column of day signs on Plate 1 you will find these same five day signs in identical order from bottom to top. At the left side of the larger panel on the lower half of Plate 18 there are six red dots. These represent the next six columns of day signs found in the first *tonalpohualli*. The eighth column of day signs in the *tonalpohualli* (Plate 2, second column from the right) includes the day signs Rabbit, Flower, Grass, Lizard and Vulture. These are the same as the day signs depicted in the lower register of Plate 19. The entire ritual calendar is represented in this fashion: a column of day signs (that is, a column in the first *tonalpohualli*), red dots as spacers, a column of day signs, red dots as spacers and so on.

With this explanation, the pattern of reading the day signs and interpreting them as an abbreviated 260-day calendar has been established. The five day signs on each half-page of Plates 18–21 represent one column of days in the calendar arranged as five rows of 52 days each (Plates 1–8). The dots between pages on Plates

18–21, to the left on the lower register and to the right on the upper register, serve as spacers or place holders and represent the given number of columns of days. Each of the sets of enumerated days can be found in the first *tonalpohualli* by skipping over the number of columns equal to the number of red dots indicated, and then looking at the next column of days. Adding up all of the dots and the eight groups of days that are actually enumerated, we get 52 groups of five days, the entire 260-day *tonalpohualli*.

This unusual arrangement suggests that the images in the eight larger panels were not intended to qualify or characterize eight periods within the *tonalpohualli*. Rather, they seem to refer to five separate short periods of seven or five days each (interpreting the red dots as time included with the five named days) or five single days separated by six or four days each (reading the red dots as spacers between the relevant periods). In either case, the possibility that images in the major bands were intended to have significance apart from the simple counting of days must be considered.

The first panel, on the lower half of Plate 18, contains an image of the solar deity, Tonatiuh, who is making an offering in front of a temple.

The second panel, found on the lower half of Plate 19, contains the image of Quetzalcóatl standing in front of a platform that supports a tree and the God of Venus as the Morning Star.

The lower half of Plate 20 contains an image of Chalchiuhtlicue, the Goddess of Running Water. She stands making an offering of blood before a smoking stream that contains a fire serpent and supports minimal images of two deities identified by Selser as Xochiquétzal, Goddess of Love, and Nanahuatzin, a God of Lechery and of the Evening Sun.

The lower part of Plate 21 contains the fourth scene of this series. It is dominated by the image of the Black Tezcatlipoca to the right of a ball court and the smaller image of the Red Tezcatlipoca to the left.

The reading order reverses now as we move to the upper register of Plate 21. Here the Red and Black Tezcatlipocas have changed their relative sizes and their sequence. The Red Tezcatlipoca is shown as a traveler with a walking stick and a backpack. The smaller Black Tezcatlipoca is placed at the end of the path.

The next image, on Plate 20, shows the rain deity Tláloc cultivating corn using a *coa* or wooden digging stick. A smaller Tláloc shown at the center of the image throws curved lightning at a corn plant, which is thus destroyed.

The seventh panel of this group is found at the top of Plate 19. It shows the God of the Planet Venus (perhaps as Evening Star) chopping branches from a tree with an ax.

The last of the eight scenes follows on the upper half of Plate 18. Here the background is obscured in a representation of the night or the darkness of the underworld. The two main deities seen here are the male and female gods of death and the underworld, Mictlantecuhtli and Mictēcacīhuatl. An inset rectangle placed between them represents the dark sky with the moon and stars.

The manner in which these eight pages would have been used by an ancient Mesoamerican priest remains obscure. The physical pattern of relationship to the calendar is very clear. The significance of that relationship is far from clear. How the eight panels are related one to the other, and what directional significance should be attached to the days tied to each of them, is difficult to interpret.

Plate 22: Two Deer That Represent One Half of a 260-Day Calendar

The upper portion of Plate 22 uses the same shorthand system of referring to the first *tonalpohualli* that we have just seen in the

previous four pages. In this case the page is divided into two halves, right and left. Each half is divided into three bands, the upper band containing the image of a deer and 12 place-holding red dots, and the middle band containing five day signs. (The lower band is part of the next passage, to be discussed below.)

The two rows of five day signs in the middle register represent columns of day signs from the *tonalpohualli* found at the beginning of the Codex Borgia, on Plates 1 through 8.

As we read from right to left across the upper two registers, the first half of the page contains the image of a white male deer, which is apparently dead, and the five day signs of the first column of the *tonalpohualli*. The 12 red dots drawn to the left of the deer mark the place of the next 12 columns of days and, together with the five day signs enumerated below, represent one quarter of the days in the *tonalpohualli*, those shown in the first quarter of the calendar. Note that these are not the first 65 consecutive days of the calendar round of 260 days. They represent five discontinuous groups of 13 days each.

Continuing the reading on the upper two registers of the left half of the page, we find a tan male deer, which is being pierced by an arrow, and the five day signs of the fourteenth column of the *tonalpohualli*. Just as before, to the left of the wounded deer we see 12 red dots, which this time represent the fifteenth through twenty-sixth columns of day signs in the *tonalpohualli* from the first eight pages of the Codex Borgia.

These images are odd in that they refer to only half of the *tonalpohualli*, the first two quarters of the calendar. No reference is made to the third and fourth quarters. The directional associations generally identified with the first two parts of the calendar are East and North. Why these two clusters of days are defined here and the others are not mentioned is not yet completely understood.

Plates 22–24: 20 Supernaturals Associated with the 20 Day Signs

The bottom third of Plate 22, and the next two pages, contain another list of 20 deities or their representatives in association with the 20 day signs. These figures are not all images of deities. Some seem to be priests dedicated to deities, others seem to be objects symbolic of deities and one seems to be a world region. Many of the deities are unusual composites and are difficult to identify. The relationship of this list to that of the deities of the day signs enumerated on Plates 9 through 13 of this codex is not understood. Clearly, the supernaturals associated with the day signs are different but we do not know why. It may be that this list is of patrons of some particular parts of the days or that it refers to the numbers 1 to 20 rather than to days.

The reading order of this series of 20 images is serpentine. The day signs are found in normal order, beginning with Alligator at the bottom right of Plate 22. Reading then flows from right to left across Plates 23 and 24. Upon arrival at the bottom left panel of Plate 24, with the day sign Rabbit, the sequence moves up to the middle register and the day sign Water. Reading proceeds from there from left to right back across Plates 24 and 23 until the day sign Jaguar is reached and the order moves up to the top right of Plate 23, where Eagle is found. From there again reading proceeds from right to left until the top left of Plate 24 is found at the day sign Flower.

The relationship, if any, of the 20 days and their supernatural figures is unknown. Rather than belabor what we do not know, I will conservatively follow Seler in attempting to identify the 20 images on these three pages. Where an identification has eluded us a question mark will be found.

DAY SIGN	SUPERNATURAL (NAHUATL)	SUPERNATURAL (ENGLISH)
Alligator	priest of Quetzalcóatl	Feathered Serpent/Wind Deity
Wind	?	a god of death and blood
House	Quetzalcóatl	Feathered Serpent/Wind Deity
Lizard	Quetzalcóatl as bird	Feathered Serpent/Wind Deity
Serpent	Chalchiuhtlicue as bird	Goddess of Running Water
Death	?	jaguar supporting sky
Deer	Nanahuatzin?	God of Lechery and Evening Sun
Rabbit	Xipe Tótec	Our Lord the Flayed One
Water	Xochipilli?	Prince of Flowers in his solar or fire aspect
Dog	Tamoanchan	The Western Region (a place)
Monkey	?	An animal/human god of music
Grass	Tonatiuh	Sun God
Reed	Tonatiuh	Sun God as autosacrificer
Jaguar	Teyollocuani	priest—eater of hearts
Eagle	?	black priest—related to Tláloc
Vulture	Patécatl (symbolically)	pulque vessel and rabbit
Movement	Tlazoltéotl	Goddess of Filth and The Earth
Flint	Íztac Mixcóatl	Old God of the Heavens
Rain	Chalchiuhtlicue	Goddess of Running Water
Flower	Xochipilli (symbolically)	corn plant and fire serpent

Plates 25–28: The Five Directions with Calendrical Notations

Here follow four pages in each of which the world is shown divided into five parts. In each of these representations the implication is that there are four cardinal directions and a fifth, central, direction. Of course, in addition to the spatial significance of these images there is in each case a calendrical significance as well. Plate 25 presents four deities, placed in the four corners of the page. They are divided by a peculiar arrangement of the 20 day signs. The day signs are arranged in a cross surrounding an enlarged Movement sign, which is given the number 10 (the ten dots). Three leftover day signs are tacked on in the upper left corner of the page. The order of the day signs can easily be followed but is very unusual, beginning with Alligator in the upper arm of the cross but then going to the left arm with Wind, House and Lizard, and from there to Serpent, Death and Deer in the lower arm, and from there to Rabbit, Water and Dog in the right arm, and from there to Monkey, Grass and Reed in the upper arm, from there jumping to the three signs in the corner, Jaguar, Eagle and Vulture, and finally hopping back to finish the count from the central Movement and then Flint from the left arm, Rain from the lower arm and Flower from the right arm. Though there is a pattern, there is no readily apparent reason for this odd display.

The four deities are the patrons of the four cardinal directions. Each is tied physically to an arm of the cruciform calendar by a red line. The patron of the West is Xipe Tótec, Our Lord the Flayed One, shown in the lower left corner. The patron of the South is Tláloc, the god of rain and storm, shown in the lower right corner. The patron of the East, shown in the upper right corner, is a complex figure who bears elements of the solar deity and a god of pulque. The patron of the North is Mixcóatl, the god of the hunt, shown in the upper left corner. No patron deity is shown for the central direction. It is simply named “10 Movement.”

Plate 26 contains another unusual display of the five-directional scheme coupled with an unusual arrangement of the 20 day signs.

The human skull in the center is surrounded by the 20 day signs in a new and unusual array. These, in turn, are surrounded by four deceased and bundled deities, who have been placed on thrones, and by four human figures interspersed between them.

The calendrical figures (the day signs) begin, as usual, with Alligator at the bottom of the group of four signs on the right side of the central skull; one reads up that column and from there across the second group of four day signs, above the skull. That gets the reading through Rabbit and up to Water. The day sign Water is found at the corner next to Rabbit, and the reading order proceeds counterclockwise around the four corners of the square (Dog, Monkey, Grass). After the day sign Grass (located at the top right corner) the reading picks up again at the top of the left column of day signs with the sign for Reed and proceeds down that group of four and on to the fifth and last group across the bottom of the square, which is read from left to right.

The four deities located at the four sides of the calendar square and the skull in its center are to be associated with the cardinal points of the compass. The deities are shown as deceased: their eyes are closed, they are wrapped in cloth and tied in funerary bundles, and they bear funerary banners. The figure at the right side of the page is Chalchiuhtlicue, the goddess of running water, as patron of the four day signs of the West. At the top of the page we find Mixcóatl, god of the hunt, as patron of the day signs of the South. At the left side of the page is Xochipilli, the young prince of the flowers, as patron of the day signs of the East. At the bottom of the page is a dark deity as patron of the day signs of the North. This character seems to be the same as the unidentified patron of the Eagle day sign at the top right corner of Plate 23. The central direction is characterized by a skull and four long bones painted within the square formed by the 20 day signs.

The directional associations given here disagree with those given by Seler in his discussion of this part of the manuscript, but agree with his determination of the directionality of the day signs as discussed earlier, in the analysis of Plates 15–17.

The use of a death's-head as the symbol of the Center direction and of the dead deities on the four sides suggests that this page describes the directional scheme of the world in the land of the dead and relates that spatial information to five divisions within the sequence of 20 day signs.

Plate 27 repeats the basic theme of these pages, the division of the world into the five directions and their relationship to the calendar. This page, however, is different from all the previous temporal information presented in the Codex Borgia because here, for the first time, the year being referred to is not the magical 260-day *tonalpohualli* but the solar year of 365 days.

The solar year can be formed from the 13 day numbers and the 20 day signs by using 18 cycles of 20 signs plus 5 other named days ($(18 \times 20) + 5 = 365$) or by using 28 cycles of 13 numbers plus 1 other day number ($(28 \times 13) + 1 = 365$). A mathematical consequence of these relationships is that every year will begin one day number and five day signs ahead of the previous year. That means that all the solar years will start with one of only four possible day signs and will count smoothly through the 13 day numbers and then begin again in a perpetual cycle. A further consequence of the comparison between the 365-day solar year and the 260-day magical year is that the initial dates of the years do not repeat until 52 solar years have passed. This 52-year period can be divided into four parts of 13 years each. As it turns out, each of these quarters begins with a date that has the coefficient of 1 and one of the four year bearers.

If the calendar starts with the day 1 Reed, as most Mesoamerican calendars do, then the four quarters of the 52-year period are begun by days named 1 Reed, 1 Flint, 1 House and 1 Rabbit. These days

are shown on Plate 27, one in each quarter of the page. Oddly, there are four other days indicated besides these normal year-bearing days. These other days are 1 Alligator, 1 Death, 1 Monkey and 1 Vulture. These four days are separated from each other in exactly the same fashion as the more normal year bearers. If the solar calendar began on the same day as the ritual calendar, then the year bearers would have these four day names. These four days, 1 Alligator, 1 Death, 1 Monkey and 1 Vulture, would be the initial dates of the four quarters of the 52-year period in such a calendar. Their association here with the more normal solar calendar seems to show the relationship of the *tonalpohualli* as related in the Codex Borgia to the familiar solar calendar. How this relationship influenced the interpretation of the days is not fully understood.

Plate 27 is composed of four quarters and a central panel, representing the four cardinal directions and the Center. Each of these five sections contains an image of Tláloc, the god of rain and storm, looking skyward and pouring water onto the earth below. Each of these deity figures is colored and dressed differently, though each is clearly a manifestation of the rain deity. In the four corners the Tlálocs are standing over fields of corn which are, in turn, resting on two day signs with the numerical coefficient of 1, indicated by an embellished dot. In the center Tláloc is standing over a representation of the earth with two small figures of Chalchiuhtlicue, goddess of running water. The Tláloc in the center is a White-and-Red-Striped Tláloc, who embodies both fertility and pestilence. Since the 52-year period is completed by the periods associated with the four quarters or directions, there are no time markers associated with the Center direction.

The four cardinal directions and the years associated with them are each shown to have different qualities. In the lower right quadrant the Black Tláloc represents the first quarter of the 52-year cycle and the direction East. His period of 13 years begins with the year 1 Reed (1 Alligator). He sheds rain on a healthy field of corn, suggesting that the East is a fertile and fecund region. The upper right quadrant contains a Yellow Tláloc representing the second quarter and the North. His period begins with the day 1 Flint (1 Death). Here locusts are shown destroying the corn despite the rain. The upper left quadrant contains a Blue Tláloc representing the third quarter and the West. His period begins with the year 1 House (1 Monkey). The cornfield here is inundated with water, perhaps suggesting excessive rain. The lower left quadrant completes the 52-year period and depicts a Red Tláloc representing the fourth quarter and the South. His period begins with the day 1 Rabbit (1 Vulture). In this panel the ears of corn are being eaten by small furry animals with little skeletal jaws.

Plate 28 has much in common with the previous page of Tlálocs in their relation to the solar year and to the 52-year period, but it is also quite distinct. This page, too, contains five images of Tláloc, set in the center and the four corners. It, too, shows rain falling on corn and it, too, has indications of a solar calendar in the dates painted below the Tláloc figures. It stands apart, though, in that the dates are different, each containing a year sign and two day dates seemingly selected at random. It is also different if Seler's interpretation is correct and the directions are placed differently on the page. It is further different in that supplementary supernaturals are shown in containers or on the earth below each Tláloc.

A guiding characteristic of this arrangement is that each of the directional panels is labeled with a date that incorporates a year sign. These years are consecutive and are the first five years of the 52-year cycle. The bottom register of the page is badly damaged in the original and is not completely reconstructed by Díaz and Rodgers. Seler has been able to infer some information about this row of dates that cannot now be seen. For example, in the lower right panel there are three dates. The leftmost of these must have

had a year sign, in the form of an intertwined capital A and O, behind it and must have been the year 1 Reed. We know this because the pattern continues in the upper right quadrant, where the rightmost date is 2 Flint with an A-O year sign behind the Flint. From there the upper left quadrant has the year 3 House with the A-O year sign as its rightmost date. The lower left quadrant should have 4 Rabbit with the year sign as its leftmost date but it, too, is illegible. The center, which here has time indicators unlike on the previous page, has the year 5 Reed as its leftmost date. These five years are the first five of the 52-year period of solar years. It is this interpretation by Selser that unequivocally ties this page to the solar-year cycle.

Though the day dates seem to be chosen at random, there may be some as yet unrecognized underlying order to them. It seems unlikely that they are truly insignificant.

The five directions with their Tláloc figures are differently located and characterized when compared to the previous page. Here reading begins as before at the lower right quadrant, where the first year sign was once located, the year 1 Reed. Tláloc is black in this panel and has the face paint of Tezcatlipoca, the God of the Smoking Mirror and God of the Night. This conjoined Tláloc/Tezcatlipoca is interpreted by Selser as the patron of the North. The second year, 2 Flint, is found in the upper right panel, where a White-and-Red-Striped Tláloc has the face paint of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the god of Venus, in this case as the Evening Star. This compound deity is said to be the patron of the West. The third year is 3 House, found at the upper left corner of the page. Tláloc here is yellow and has the face paint of Xiuhtecuhli, the god of fire, thought to be the patron of the East. The fourth year, 4 Rabbit, is at the lower left and is protected by the black figure of Tláloc. This Tláloc has only two elements of facial adornment to suggest a composite nature. They are a yellow beard, barely visible in the original and not reproduced in the Díaz and Rodgers restoration, and a yellow line at the front of the face. These tiny features are characteristic of Quetzalcóatl, the Feathered Serpent and the wind deity. His presence is further indicated by the small effigies of Quetzalcóatl that emerge from the ears of corn and the streams of water in other parts of the image. This Tláloc/Quetzalcóatl is conceived as the patron of the East. It is noteworthy that this rain/wind deity also has smoke coming from his eye. This is a nonstandard trait of Quetzalcóatl that will be important in identifying a particular person in the long ritual passage on Plates 29 through 46. The fifth year, 5 Reed, is located in the center image and is again seen in front of a partly hidden A-O year sign. Its Tláloc, said to represent the Center, has a red body and wears the face paint of Xochipilli, the young prince of flowers.

Plates 29–46: A Long Supernatural Journey and Ritual Sequence

This passage of 18 pages is the longest and most elaborate of the entire Codex Borgia. It has the character of a story or narrative rather than a calendar, and in that is unique. The narrative, if such it is, is filled with ritual acts and with apparently real as well as supernatural characters. It is certainly religious in nature, though there does seem to be an element of physical reality that runs through the pages. This has been recognized by Nowotny (1961a) as well as by many others.

In this section of the codex the orientation of the pages shifts from that of a long horizontal strip read from right to left to that of a long vertical strip read from top to bottom (from the right edge of the page to the left edge of the page). This orientation prevails through page 46, the end of the current passage, after which the

earlier orientation returns. The imagery of these pages is consummately complex. It is out of the question here to describe these plates fully or to discuss all the potential interpretations, even concisely. Nevertheless, an overview of the structure may be helpful.

This long passage begins with a series of five enclosures (Plates 29–32) that serve to make supernatural statements. Two major temples dedicated to heaven are then identified (Plates 33 and 34). Then begins a ceremonial sequence in which a principal participant, known to us as Stripe Eye (a name given to him by Peter van der Loo), engages in a long ritual journey in which he performs several specific deeds (Plates 35–44). Finally the series is closed by a short passage (Plates 45 and 46) from which Stripe Eye is apparently missing but in which a new fire, symbolizing a new beginning, is ignited.

The account begins on Plate 29, the first of several enclosures formed by the body of a goddess of death. Within this enclosure is a large black disc. On the disc is a large blue vessel from which emerges a dark foamy substance. From this substance emerge numerous animate creatures who are characterized as winds by the Quetzalcóatl features they display. In addition to the many winds, two skeletal figures are shown, one a deity of death and the other a representation of Tlazoltéotl as the earth below the blue vessel. At the left edge of the page (the lower edge of the image) two intertwined starry wind serpents spit out smaller wind figures to lead the reader to the next page.

There (Plate 30) a similar scene is found. The body of the death deity forms an enclosure containing a large circular device that in turn contains the two intertwined wind serpents and their two small wind figures. Other significant features of this page are the 20 day signs arranged counterclockwise around the central device and the presence of four Tláloc-plant combination figures at the corners of the enclosure. Among the day signs four have been singled out by their placement in medallions that are pierced by the four Tlálocs wielding sacrificial instruments. These four days are Alligator, Death, Monkey and Vulture. The Tlálocs are each adorned with trees. This page can be said to represent the abundance of the Eastern direction.

The selection of these four day signs for special treatment is indicative of the use of a different form of the 260-day calendar from that which we have encountered so far. The *tonalpohualli* on Plates 1–8 of the Codex Borgia is arranged with 52 day signs in a row, a layout that requires five rows to include all of the 260 days. If, instead, 65 days comprised a row, then only four rows would be needed to incorporate all 260 days. As it turns out, the four days singled out here on Plate 30 would be the first day signs in each of these four rows. The directional qualities of this calendar are such that these four days and the four groups of 13 days that they begin are days ruled by the East. In a calendar composed of four rows rather than five, the days governed by one direction are found together. It is important to understand which form of the *tonalpohualli* is being used in any given case, because the directional qualities and the supernatural patrons of the days and periods of the calendar are different.

Plate 30 ends with the intertwined wind serpents again leading the way to the next page by spitting out two small wind creatures.

Plate 31 is divided into two halves, each of which depicts enclosures similar to those of the previous two pages. Calendrical medallions are found at the four corners of these two enclosures. The first of these scenes, on the right side of the page (top half of the image), has Deer, Grass, Movement and Wind singled out. These are the day signs that begin the third, Western, section of the calendar as laid out in four rows. The colors of this scene are generally dark and obscure, appropriate to the direction in which