

Memory of the World Register - Nomination Form
Mexico - Codices and Dossiers from the Marquisate of the Oaxaca valley

Abstract

The Marquisate of the Oaxaca Valley was the land granted by the Crown on 6 July 1529 to Hernán Cortés in recognition of his services. This three codices were drafted by indigenous scribes (tlacuilos) using their own writing system and written on agave (maguey) paper. They are accompanied by documents drafted by the descendants of Hernán Cortés. They constitute indigenous testimony after the Conquest and reflection of pre-Hispanic documents. The codices have allowed the testimony of the indigenous culture to be preserved, as most of the pre-Hispanic originals were destroyed.

Identity and Location

Name of the Documentary Heritage: Codices and Dossiers from the Marquisate of the Oaxaca valley (Marquesado del Valle de Oaxaca)

Country: Mexico

State, Province or Region: Mexico City

Address: Eduardo Molina y Albañiles, Colonia Penitenciaría Ampliación, Postal Code 15350

Name of Institution: Archivo General de la Nación

Legal Information

Owner: I Archivo General de la Nación

Custodian: Archivo General de la Nación

Legal Status: A decentralized body under the authority of the Secretaría de Gobernación

Category of ownership: Public

Details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage: Constitution of the Archivo General de la Nación, published in the Diario Oficial de la Federación on 13 April 1946 Presidential resolution published in the Diario Oficial de la Federación on 14 July 1980, which stipulates that the Archivo General de la Nación is to be the central consultation body of the Federal Government for the handling of administrative and historical archives of the Federal Public Administration.

Other decrees and resolutions

Accessibility: With the exception of documents from 1976 to the present time, all documents may be consulted once minimal formalities have been complied with.

Copyright status: All the documents kept here are in the public domain except those covered by access restrictions as laid down in the relevant legal provisions.

Responsible administration: Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico.

Identification

Description: Codices of various sizes dating from 1545, 1549, 1564 and 1595 on agave (maguey) paper located in the documentary group Maps, Plans and Illustrations. Number 280 in the Archive Guide (Guía General del Archivo General de la Nación: Catalogue No. 3052.1 to 3052.33). The dossier and related information are kept at the Hospital de Jesús, bundle 276, file 78, sheets 14-21, 23-29, 314 and file 79, sheets 24, 33, 42, 51, 62, 71, 78, 89, 100, 115, 129, 143, 150, 157, 164, 171, 178, 187, 196, 205, 212, 219, 226, 233, 242 and 251.

There are 33 codices:

Tlatoanis (2), Acapixtla Morelos, 30 x 21cm;
Pazolco, Auztoc, Texcala and Yecatepec, Morelos, 30 x 21 cm;
Indigenous heads (18), Yacapixtlam, Morelos, 30 x 21 cm;
Tlatoanis (10), Yecapixtla, Morelos, 30 x 21 cm;
Indigenous heads (22), Yecapixtla, Morelos, 30 x 21 cm, which were written in Nahuatl;
Tolulco, Caltengo and Tequepan district, Puebla, 42 x 122 cm;
Teizcalco, Coliquen, Analco and Xalapan district, Oaxaca, 93 x 71 cm;
Caltengo district and Tequepan, Puebla, 100 x 75 cm;
Tlaltengo and Panchimalco, Cuernavaca, Morelos, signed by Juan Gallego - interpreter, 44 x 37 cm;
Cuachanco and Apanchimalco districts, 81 x 68 cm;
Tianquistengo and Tetlan, Hidalgo and Puebla, 44 x 95 cm; Colicuepa district, Tlacomulco, Puebla, 44 x 55 cm;
Teteltitlan, Puebla, 41 x 51 cm;
Panchimalco, Aquavititlan, Morelos, 47 x 43 cm;
Colinquen and Atltengo, Mexico State, 52 x 41 cm;
Tultenango, Caltengo and Caltepan, Puebla, 50 x 88 cm;
Molotem district, Quatepeque, Mexico State, 34 x 46 cm;
Molotlan district, Xiutepeque, Morelos, 47 x 44 cm;
Tlalnahuacque, Tepeaconque, Morelos, 20 x 26 cm;
Tlalnahuacque district, Tepeaconque, Morelos, 26 x 20 cm;
Tliltlacotepec, 21 x 21 cm; Altotoquen district, Axiuhtepene, 26 x 42 cm;
Tetlactalac, Quernavacan, Morelos, 41 x 36 cm;
Tepequetlacuac, Atiquichpanque and Suchatepeque, Oaxaca, 42 x 50 cm;
Antoquepaque, 32 x 26 cm;
Tlacaqualo and Zaquautequepanetl, 41 x 21 cm;
Tetelpa, Cuernavaca, Morelos, 37 x 43 cm;
Huehuetitlan, Quernavacan, Morelos, 49 x 43 cm;
Tletliihuan, 46 x 45 cm;
Tememelcingo, Quernavacan, Morelos, 42 x 40 cm;
Tememelcingo, Quernavacan, Morelos, 40 x 24 cm;
Tetelac and Analco, Puebla, 44 x 41 cm; town of Cuernavaca, Morelos, 46 x 25 cm, on agave (maguey) paper using black scribe's ink (huizache), the same as the foregoing.

Bibliographic details:

Visual documentation: Photographs of the codices are attached

History: As from 1529, the Marquisate of the Oaxaca Valley was divided as follows: Jurisdiction de Coyoacán, Mayoralty of Cuernavaca, Jurisdiction of Acapixtla, Jurisdiction of Oaxtepec, Mayoralty of the four towns of the marquisate (Oaxaca), Jurisdiction of Tehuantepec (taken over in 1560, it became Jalapa de Tehuantepec), Mayoralty of Tuxtla and Cotaxtla, Jurisdictions of Toluca and Charo Matalcingo. The file which accompanies these codices deals with the lawsuit initiated by Martín Cortés, Marqués del Valle, against the Prosecutor regarding the injury he claimed to have suffered during the visit and tax appraisal carried out by Doctor Quezada in the towns of his jurisdiction, and the reduction of tributes made by Licenciado Tello de Sandoval. Among the other documents which accompany these codices is the testimony of the people of Yecapixtla regarding the dreadful conditions in which they lived and the lack of water and land, as well as the excessively onerous tributes imposed on them consisting of seven silver coins (tomins) per annum, half a fanega (0.8 bushel) of maize, half a chicken, two loads of firewood and sowing Martín Cortés's wheat. Many people fled for fear of being imprisoned when they could not pay their dues. There is also a list of Mayec Indians with the names of the Chiefs and taxpayers of a number of settlements belonging to the marquisate. These documents are drafted in nahuatl.

Bibliography: Indigenous codices of some settlements of the marquisate of the Oaxaca valley, published by the Archivo General de la Nación for the First Mexican History Congress held in Oaxaca, Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1933.

Management Plan**Assessment against the Selection Criteria**

Influence: Even after the Conquest, the indigenous peoples bore witness to the survival and lasting nature of the cultural elements reflected in these codices (indigenous documents). They were also effective tools for communicating with the new dominant culture.

Time: Documents produced during the second half of the sixteenth century.

Place: The Marquisate of the Oaxaca Valley was the land granted by the Crown on 6 July 1529 to Hernán Cortés in recognition of his services.

Subject/Theme: Controversies regarding land ownership and the payment and collection of taxes. The importance of these documents lies in their record of how indigenous cultural forms adapted to the new order imposed by the conquistadors.

Form and Style: Documents drafted by indigenous scribes (tlacuilos) using their own writing system and written on agave (maguey) paper. They are accompanied by documents drafted by the descendants of Hernán Cortés.

Social Value: They reveal a form of expression which is different from European culture and show how these two cultures fused.

Contextual Assessment: Indigenous testimony after the Conquest and reflection of pre-Hispanic documents. The codices have allowed the testimony of the indigenous culture to be preserved, as most of the pre-Hispanic originals were destroyed.

Evaluation of Authenticity: All three codices are authentic. This is proved by the support media, the authorship, content and pictorial technique.

Assessment of Rarity: Conversion to Christianity and adaptation to Spanish customs brought about the destruction of most forms of expression current in the indigenous societies.

Such documents as these therefore constitute a valuable record of indigenous writing.

Consultation

Independent institutions and experts:

Dr. Miguel León Portilla, President of the Academia Mexicana de la Historia

Dr. Joaquín Galarza, researcher at the CNRS (France), expert in indigenous writing systems

Nominator

Name: Lic. Patricia Galeana

Relationship to documentary heritage: Director General of the Archivo General de la Nación

Contact person: Víctor Manuel Pérez Pineda (Engineer)

Contact details: Director of Information and Documentation

Assessment of Risk

Political Climate - voluntary information: The political climate in Mexico is stable and social conditions are peaceful. Possible differences are resolved through democratic channels.

Environmental Conditions: Environmental conditions are being taken into account and a stable, controlled air conditioning system will soon be operational. Although the archive is located in an urban area, the necessary preventive measures are in place.

Physical Conditions: These documents are kept in a building of solid construction capable of withstanding environmental onslaughts. They are stored on flat metal shelving.

Preservation Budget: -

Extent and Nature of Use: The originals are used only in exceptional cases, as reproductions of the documents exist.

Preservation Assessment

Present Physical State: They are in good condition.

History of Preservation: In order to guarantee their preservation, the bundles into which the folded documents were sewn were opened up and the documents have been stored flat with a document cover of de-acidified paper on which is a reference to the description of the documents.

Current Preservation Policy in relation to proposed nominated documentary heritage:

The area where the documents are kept is fumigated periodically, and the temperature and humidity measured in order to ensure that the documents are being kept under acceptable conditions.

Person or organization responsible for preservation: Dept. of Preservation and Restoration which depends on the Archivo General de la Nación.