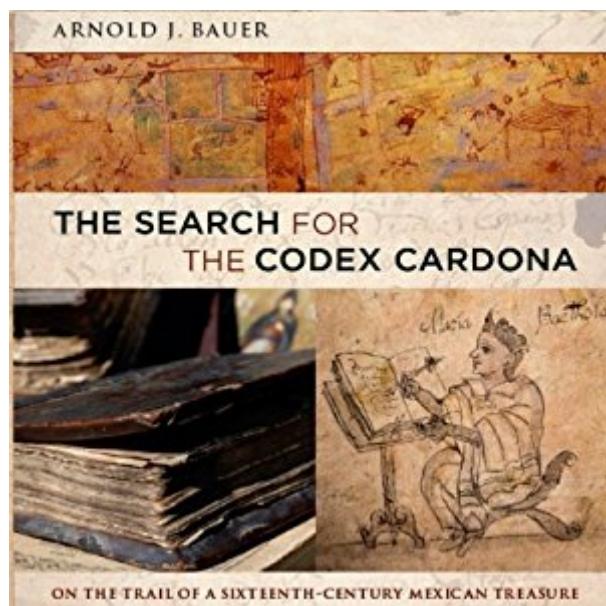


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The Search For The Codex Cardona



Synopsis

In *The Search for the Codex Cardona*, Arnold J. Bauer tells the story of his experiences on the trail of a cultural treasure, a Mexican "painted book" that first came into public view at Sotheby's auction house in London in 1982, nearly 400 years after it was presumably made by Mexican artists and scribes. On folios of amate paper, the Codex includes two oversized maps and 300 painted illustrations accompanied by text in 16-century paleography. The Codex relates the trajectory of the Nahua people to the founding of the capital of Tenochtitln and then focuses on the consequences of the Spanish conquest up to the 1550s. If authentic, the Codex Cardona is an invaluable record of early Mexico. Yet there is no clear evidence of its origin, what happened to it after 1560, or even where it is today, after its last known appearance at Christie's auction house in New York in 1998. Bauer first saw the Codex Cardona in 1985 in the Crocker Nuclear Laboratory at the University of California, Davis, where scholars from Stanford and the University of California were attempting to establish its authenticity. Allowed to gently lift a few pages of this ancient treasure, Bauer was hooked. By 1986, the Codex had again disappeared from public view. Bauer's curiosity about the Codex and its whereabouts led him down many forking paths - from California to Seville and Mexico City, to the Firestone Library in Princeton, to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles and Christie's in New York - and it brought him in contact with an international cast of curators, agents, charlatans, and erudite book dealers. The Search for the Codex Cardona is a mystery that touches on issues of cultural patrimony, the workings of the rare books and manuscripts trade, the uncertainty of archives and evidence, and the ephemerality of the past and its remains.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A fascinating account of what may have been the only undocumented ancient Aztec Codex in existence. The author traces the events and persons involved in the rare occurrences when this codex, or portions of it, surface publically to be briefly examined by experts. This narrative is convincing, and the book includes photographs of the supposed codex that the author also examined. Whether this document still exists in the hands of some collector, or has been broken up, or was a counterfeit item to begin with, remains uncertain. For readers who enjoy a good mystery and are interested in the possibility of the existence of an undocumented Codex manuscript, this book presents a unique and enjoyable read.

I enjoyed this book. It was factual without being taxing to read. It was a fast read, that felt like I had had a long chat with a very interesting historian regarding an unsolved puzzle! I would read more by this author and more on this topic.

This true story reads like the very best mystery fiction. Bauer is a stunning writer, with the subtlest characterizations of the people who show up in his quest and a sense of timing that is delicious. The book has an exquisite ending. It is an international romp, suspenseful and colorful, and in another sense, a travelogue through Mexico, its upper crust, its lower depths. A page turner. Priscilla High

Professor Bauer's book is one of the most fascinating historical works I've read recently. When I first heard Dr. Bauer on NPR's THE STORY, I knew THE SEARCH FOR THE CODEX CARDONA would be a book I couldn't get my hands on fast enough. Finally published by Duke UP, I received my copy this week after having placed my order a couple months ago. Reading Bauer's account makes me feel like I'm back in Dr. Ott's Latin American History course at UNA. I recommend enthusiastically THE SEARCH FOR THE CODEX CARDONA. The book is a smart mixture of history, mystery, and the rare book trade. Additionally, it's the sole existing work on the Cardona -- a unique treatment of the subject!

This book is between the real thing and the fantasy. Is well informed on the topic of mexican codices, but it lack to know mexican experts, and a better understanding on the production of codices, the autor only make a point in the paper to discuse autenticity, just a bit the style of writing,

but never the style of the images. The codex Cardona possibly is a fraud, would be better to follow the line of who can made this work in modern times. And to look for other pages in private hands. But the book is really entretaining, with real data, but not very good ending. Hope there will be a second part. Worth to read and learn.

Very enjoyable read. Do be careful of the "dream"scene in Chapter 17. Though the author and his friendhave lapsed into fantasies about the outcome before, therewas always a warning of sorts. Chapter 17 purports tohave actually have found The Cordona. Only after reading whatone thinks is fact does the author inform us -oops another fantasy!If you start skimming this book you will miss this. This is nota suitable device for non-fiction---perhaps just filler.

Good.

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