



Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs

Elizabeth Hill Boone

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Winner, Arvey Award, Association for Latin American Art, 2001

Honorable Mention, Honorable Mention, George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award, Art Libraries Society of North America, 2001

The Aztecs and Mixtecs of ancient Mexico recorded their histories pictorially in images painted on hide, paper, and cloth. The tradition of painting history continued even after the Spanish Conquest, as the Spaniards accepted the pictorial histories as valid records of the past. Five Pre-Columbian and some 150 early colonial painted histories survive today.

This copiously illustrated book offers the first comprehensive analysis of the Mexican painted history as an intellectual, documentary, and pictorial genre. Elizabeth Hill Boone explores how the Mexican historians conceptualized and painted their past and introduces the major pictorial records: the Aztec annals and cartographic histories and the Mixtec screenfolds and lienzos.

Boone focuses her analysis on the kinds of stories told in the histories and on how the manuscripts work pictorially to encode, organize, and preserve these narratives. This twofold investigation broadens our understanding of how preconquest Mexicans used pictographic history for political and social ends. It also demonstrates how graphic writing systems created a broadly understood visual "language" that communicated effectively across ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

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