

Abstract

What we present herein is the first scientific study of the Codex Mendoza's painting materials, an accomplishment long awaited by Mesoamericanist scholars. The study has been carried out within the framework of a wider research project using an integrated array of spectroscopic instruments of the European mobile facility MOLAB, of the Center of Excellence Scientific Methodologies Applied to Archaeology and Art of the University of Perugia and the Institute of Molecular Science and Technologies. This study seeks to describe the chemical characterization of the painting materials used in the production of pictorial manuscripts in pre-Hispanic and colonial Mesoamerica (Miliani et al. 2010; Domenici et al. 2014; Brunetti et al. 2016). In November 2013, within this framework and thanks to the financial support of the European project CHARISMA, a MOLAB non-invasive campaign was performed on five Mesoamerican manuscripts held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford; these included the codices Laud (or Mictlan), Bodley (or uu Tnoo-Ndisi Nuu), Selden (or A ute), Selden Roll, and Mendoza.1 Besides the work carried out in situ on the codices, the scientific project has been constantly supported by studies carried out in the laboratory on reference materials and pictorial models which were created based on the historical sources (Buti 2012; Grazia 2015). The research strategy applied to the Codex Mendoza has been based both on our own inspection of the manuscript at the Bodleian Libraries as well as on observations made by scholars that previously worked on it, who studied the painting technique, colors, and materials involved in making the Codex Mendoza.