WHY HAS AN AZTEC HISTORY BOOK RETURNED TO MEXICO?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A rare manuscript called the Azcatitlan Codex has returned to Mexico for the first time since 1840. It is being displayed in Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology after being loaned by France. The codex was made in the Valley of Mexico in the late 1500s or early 1600s. Its pictures and writing describe the Mexica migration, the rulers of Tenochtitlan and the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Tenochtitlan was the capital of the Mexica Empire and stood where Mexico City is today. The codex combines Indigenous picture-writing traditions with European-style writing. France has held the manuscript for many years, and questions remain about who should own important Mexican historical objects kept in European collections. The temporary return is part of celebrations marking 200 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and France. Mexico has also loaned another important manuscript to France, so both countries can display parts of their shared and contested history.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

The codex is more than an old book. It preserves an Indigenous account of migration, rulers, conquest and survival. Its return raises questions about who should care for historical objects and where they should be displayed. It also reminds us that the history of the Spanish conquest can look different depending on whose records are being read.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"What can this codex tell us about the Spanish conquest?"

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/a-rare-aztec-codex-detailing-the-rise-and-fall-of-tenochtitlan-returns-to-mexico-for-the-first-time-in-nearly-two-centurie