

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Darwin Dickens Schopenhauer Rilke George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Bronner Melville Grimm Jerome Bebel Proust  
Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo  
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht  
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz  
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
von Ossietzky May Lawrence Irving  
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka  
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko  
de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



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**Commentary Upon the  
Maya-Tzental Perez Codex with a  
Concluding Note Upon the  
Linguistic Problem of the Maya  
Glyphs**

William Gates

# Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: William Gates

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-6607-6

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

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## NOTE

In presenting this Commentary on the Codex Perez to students of American Archaeology, the Peabody Museum adds another paper to its series relating to the study of the hieroglyphic writing of the ancient peoples of Mexico and Central America.

The Museum is fortunate in adding to its collaborators Mr. William E. Gates, of Point Loma, California, who for more than ten years has been an earnest student of American hieroglyphs. From his lifelong studies in linguistics in connection with his research in "the motifs of civilizations and cultures," he comes well-equipped to take up the difficult and all-absorbing study of American hieroglyphic writing. Mr. Gates has materially advanced this study by his reproduction of the glyphs in type. These type-forms he has used first in his reproduction of the Codex Perez, and now in this Commentary they are used for the first time in printing. The method used in the construction of this font of type is explained by Mr. Gates in the following pages. This important aid to the study will be highly appreciated by all students of American hieroglyphs, as it will greatly facilitate the presentation of the results of future research.

It will be seen that this Commentary is more in the line of suggestion to be expanded after further studies, than in the way of conclusions.

At the close of the paper the author presents the general deductions he has drawn from his comparative study of languages and cultures. His concluding paragraph forcibly presents the hope that the understanding of the Maya glyphs will furnish new and important data in the life history of man.

F. W. Putnam

Peabody Museum  
October, 1910

[4]

[5]



PEREZ CODEX: PAGE 6

[6]



PEREZ CODEX: PAGE 17

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## THE PEREZ CODEX

The Perez Codex was discovered just fifty years ago by Prof. Léon de Rosny, while searching through the Bibliothèque Impériale, Paris, in the hope of bringing to light some documents of interest for the then newly awakened study of Pre-Columbian America. It was found by him in a basket among a lot of old papers, black with dust and practically abandoned in a chimney corner. From a few words with the name Perez, written on a torn scrap of paper then around it but since lost, it received its name.

Being restored to its proper place in the Library, it was in 1864 photographed by order of M. Victor Duruy, Minister of Instruction, and a few copies issued without further explanatory notes than the printed wrappers. The number of copies is stated by Prof. de Rosny to have been very small; in Leclerc's *Bibl. Amér.* (1878, No. 2290) it is given as only 10, and in Brasseur's *Bibl. Mex.-Guat.* (page 95), as 50. A copy is in the library of the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington, and referred to in their publications as a most fortunate acquisition. I had the good fortune to secure a copy some ten years ago, and one other has recently appeared in a Leipzig catalog at a high price. Beyond these I have not traced any other copy.

In 1872 Prof. de Rosny published a reproduction, drawn by hand, which, as stated by him later, may be disregarded for practical purposes. 7-\*

[8] In 1887 he issued a facsimile edition in colors, 85 copies, which up to the present time has remained the only attempt to show the Codex in its proper colors, and has become exceedingly difficult to procure; so much so that it was only after seven years search that I was able to secure my own copy. 8-\*

In 1888 he reissued the Codex, uncolored, with the same letterpress, and in an edition of 100 copies. This has also become scarce.

Each of these three editions has its advantages and disadvantages. The colored edition of 1887, having been worked over by hand, in lithography, is defective in various places, both as regards the black of the figures and glyphs, and in the colors. Coloring exists on the original codex which was not reproduced at all in the

edition, and the colors given are in many cases not exact. Thus on pages 19 and 20 two different reds are used for the backgrounds, whereas but one is found in the original; on pages 15, 16 the figures are a turquoise green, and on pages 17, 18 an olive green, the correct color for all four being turquoise green.

I have been able to find no inaccuracy in the 1888 edition, which is indeed stated in the introduction to be entirely by mechanical process, without hand intervention; but being reproduced by printer's ink in black only, not only do the colors not appear, but the chromatic values are actually far inferior to the photographs of 1864. It was stated further by Prof. de Rosny that some features of the MS. had been lost by deterioration in the 25 years previous to his editions of 1887 and 1888, but this I have not been able to verify in any important point.

The photographs and the edition of 1888 are to all general purposes identical; but, notwithstanding that the photographs are steadily yellowing by age, the chromatic values are so far superior that I have continually come to find them the court of final decision in doubtful matters. In a very considerable number of instances a close examination of the photographs [9] has suggested the presence of faint lines of color on glyphs or figures, which was entirely indistinguishable in both of the printed editions, and which was yet in every case confirmed, although sometimes with difficulty, by the examination of the original MS.

The proved value, as well as the scarcity, of these photographs was so great, that in 1905 I had my set photographed twice, by dry and wet plate processes, and a few copies printed after a careful comparison and selection of the two sets of plates. It is from these that the present edition has grown. 9-\*

The present edition, save for the photographs thus reproduced, having been entirely redrawn, and partly restored, it is fitting to detail just what has been done in this respect.

At the very beginning of my introduction to Maya studies the enormous burdens placed on research therein at every turn, bore upon me as upon every other student. The subject and its possibilities stimulate enthusiasm to the highest degree; the rewards of success are greater than those of any like problem today; and yet, fifty

years since the present Codex was discovered, and thirty years since Dr. Förstemann's unsurpassable edition of the Dresden Codex, the actual workers on the problem are the barest handful. A few scattered and obscure references amongst the volumes on volumes of Spanish writers, nearly all untranslated, most of them scarce or almost unprocurable, and many not even printed, make up the literature to be searched out. And a few points of decipherment won and safely fixed by the researchers, from Brasseur, de Rosny, Pousse, Brinton and others a generation ago, to Messrs. Bowditch, Seler, Goodman and a few others of today, are all we have—standing out in a wilderness of guesses by many writers, needless of naming.

[10] Of course the prime and absolute necessity of such a study is true facsimiles; but the task of using even these, taken as they must be from much defaced inscriptions and manuscripts, is too obvious for comment. So from the very first of my studies I began to cherish thoughts of the day when Maya could be printed with type, and classified indexes to the glyphs at hand. From one point of view such facilities can only be expected to come *after* decipherment; from another, in absence of bilingual keys, they are a necessity *before* that can be attained. So far as his work covers, a great deal has been done in this line by Mr. A. P. Maudslay in the field of the inscriptions.

At the very outset therefore I must enter acknowledgment of the assistance that I owe to the courtesy at that time of Prof. F. W. Putnam, of Peabody Museum, and Mr. Chas. P. Bowditch, in placing, with a freedom by no means universal among curators and researchers, their material at my disposal, with privilege of copying. I am safe to say that while I have reclassified the glyphs for my own use as my studies went on, yet without the copy which by Mr. Bowditch's courtesy I was allowed to make of his card index to the glyphs of the three codices, as a start, this edition of the Perez Codex would not yet have reached daylight through the many other occupations among which Maya studies have had to take their chances.

At first it seemed possible to prepare a font of separate types for the various elements of the compound glyphs we find in the texts;

but after having such a font made a number of years ago, and printing a couple of pages of the Dresden Codex, the result was unsatisfactory; it became evident that the proper Maya font of type must be both separate and composite, as is used in Chinese, and not separate only as we have for Egyptian. The type for the text cards of this edition have therefore been made this way.

As to the colored plates of the Codex herewith, it is evident that nothing whatever is gained by preserving the irregularities of the defaced parts of the Codex, while everything is to be gained by making all as clear and distinct as possible. The [11] first step therefore was to have a set of photographed enlargements of two diameters, made direct from the 1864 issue. From these I made careful tracings, myself, of the black figure and glyph lines of the original, making at the same time the separate enlarged drawings from which the type were afterwards made. At this first drawing only the evident, the indisputable parts were drawn. The type forms were then classified, arranged in parallel columns, and compared. All was then gone over, and new points settled on the basis of the familiarity thus gained. It is a fair estimate to say that this process of checking and verifying was gone through, first to last, down to the final proof-reading of the printed sheets, some fifty times.

One most important fact was established by this process, and must be noted. In the Perez Codex at least, *nothing is to be taken for granted*, nothing charged to a careless scribe, and no variants regarded as being identical in value—with a very few exceptions, to which I shall advert later. Wherever there remains enough of any glyph to show its characteristic strokes, it can be regarded as safely indicated; whenever the strokes are not just those characteristic of any glyph, it cannot be inferred. Down to the very end of the various revisions I found myself able to add glyphs which at first seemed hopeless, and yet when once seen became clear and plain. Relying on the presence of the photographs to check the work, I have thus added a very considerable number to the glyphs at first apparent. In some cases, as in 6-b-11 and 17, and especially in 8-b-7, 8, 10, where glyphs were only partially erased, but no other instances of perfect glyphs existed to compare them with, I have let them alone, without attempting restoration. In short, I may have made some errors of eye, but I have guessed nothing.

In a very few places I have restored glyphs totally erased, relying on the parallelism of the passages. Such are some of the Ahau-numbers in the upper sections of pages 2 to 11, and in the central sections on those pages, the initial pairs of glyphs on pages 15 to 18-a, b, c, the first columns of pages 19 and 20, [12] and a few day-signs on pages 21, 23 and 24. These glyphs are all necessitated by their different series, and hence can cause no confusions; while it seemed advantageous to have them before the eye. A fair instance of the procedure is shown on page 3-b-1, 3. The temptation was strong to



put the usual glyph here as on all the other pages, but the slight variation in the lines left of glyph 3-b-3 forbade it.

The restoration will further be found a little bolder on the type-cards than in the colored plates, where I have in general only endeavored to reproduce what could be seen actually present. The glyphs restored on the upper part of page 7 would seem hopeless at first sight; but they are well-known and common forms, and the characteristic traces shown on the photographs belong to these and to no others known.

The cards of type-printed text, in parallel columns for convenience of study, are self-explanatory. Such an arrangement has from the first seemed to me indispensable for proper study and comparison. The paging of the de Rosny editions I have retained, except to change the practically blank page 1 to be page 25, since to number this as 1 is confusing. For the divisions and the numbering of the glyphs I have made my own arrangement. It is possible that section *b* on pages 2 to 11 should only go to the bottom line of the central figure, leaving section *d* to read clear across the page, and another section to be made to the left of the nearly erased figures at the bottom; but the chances as shown by the lining and arrangement of the columns seemed to favor it as I have given it. Only final decipherment can decide definitely.

7-\* In *Archives paléographiques de l'Orient et de l'Amérique*, atlas, t. I, pl. 117-142.

8-\* In his *Commentar zur Pariser Mayahandschrift*, Danzig, 1903, Dr. Förstemann does not know of the existence of this edition.

9-\* *Codex Perez: Maya-Tzental*. Redrawn and Slightly Restored, and with the Coloring as it originally stood, so far as possible, given on the basis of a new and minute examination of the Codex itself. Mounted in the form of the Original. Accompanied by a Reproduction of the 1864 Photographs; also by the entire Text of the Glyphs, unemended but with some restorations, Printed from Type, and arranged in Parallel Columns for convenience of study and comparison. Drawn and edited by William E. Gates. (*Privately printed.*) Point Loma, 1909.

[13]

## THE COLORS

The colors of the Codex afforded a number of questions for solution, some of which I have cleared up and embodied in the plates; a few are I believe insoluble. I have also been able to add a few wholly new points, not indicated by any of the preceding editions.

Being unable to make a personal examination of the original, I prepared from my enlarged black drawings, above mentioned, another full set including the figures and all glyphs or other parts showing any suggestions of color. Upon these I prepared a list of nearly 200 questions covering every detail, together with certain general specifications, and had the whole made the subject of a careful and exhaustive comparison with the original at the Bibliothèque Nationale. This report, when duly returned with the various details set out, with the various colors shown in their exact tints by water-colors, and with a special analysis of the question of the fading of the colors, was again checked and verified by the evidence of the three editions.

In doubtful questions arising from faded colors, I have sought to show the condition of the original as it exists today. In the solid red backgrounds and other places I have aimed to show as far as possible what the Codex looked like when fresh.

This question as to what all the colors in detail were when fresh, I do not feel that I have quite solved. The following palette scheme seems to me about as near as the data permit us to formulate.

A permanent black, being the parts reproduced in black in the present edition.

A brick-red, tinged with crimson, used for backgrounds, red numerals, and probably elsewhere. This we may call unfading red.

A genuine brown, as on the animals, pages 5-a, 8-a; perhaps also elsewhere as lining ornament.

A pale pink as flesh color on the human figures.

[14] A blue, as on the possible katun number series on pages 23 and 24.

A turquoise-green, with varying amounts of blue tinge, on the spotted figures and in the numeral columns of pages 15 to 18; also, with somewhat less of the blue, for the "water" bands on pages 21 to 24.

The above colors are all definite and positive.

Then next appears a brownish color used for lining or ornamenting various glyphs, and the clothing, headdress, etc., etc., of the figures. We find many shades from a pale neutral up to a darker clear brown, and also a definitely reddish, as on the tail of the bird on the right side of page 23. This brown may be a fading of the red of the backgrounds and numerals, but the permanence of the color in these latter places is so positive that I believe it is not so. I think it should be regarded as separate.

We next come to a color question related directly to decipherment, that of the very difficult numeral columns on pages 15 to 18. There is no practical reason discernable for the use of alternating colors save the avoidance of confusion between bar combinations. Three bars together of different colors stand of course for three 5's; of one color they would make a single number 15. We therefore find here our above black, red and blue-green alternating and clearly marked in places; but we also find many numerals of varying shades of brownish, bistre and grayish. I called for especial care in the examination of these points on the original Codex, and the water-color sheets and explanatory notes show in detail the facts of the present state of the Codex. Prior to the examination I supposed that these faded numerals were a faded red, but this is stated in the report to be certainly not the case; the suggestion is made that they are probably faded blacks.

From the latter conclusion I am inclined in part to dissent, at least as to certain passages, for two reasons. These are, first the actual permanence of the above noted main colors, everywhere else; and second, passages in the second columns of pages 16 and 17. In each of these we find faded brown or [15] gray bars, so placed between or next to plain black bars as would give, were they faded blacks, more than three black bars together.

Another point on page 17 is to be noted. In the top section, first column, are five blue 3's. Some of these blue dots, as shown in the

1887 edition and in my water-colors, have faded to the same light brown seen elsewhere. The brown and the blue 5 in the second column of this page, middle division, as just mentioned, have also an identical chromatic value in the photographs.

My whole conclusion therefore, so far as I can formulate one, is that in these columns we have:

Red, black, and blue-green numerals, as shown. Some of the blue numerals seem to have been *outlined* with black, of which traces still appear on the original, are seen in the photographs, and indicated in the present color plates.

Several instances where the Codex has been rubbed so as to leave only the outlines of original black numerals. These are now gray in the original, and I have left them as black outlines, touched in with gray.

Finally, a number of pale brown numerals which are either faded blue-greens, or else indicate a fourth color in the original. Which of these alternatives is the true one, I cannot say.

The original Codex is still in practically as good condition as when the three editions were taken from it. The material of which it is made is a maguey paper of grayish tinge, and not a yellowish brown as would be inferred from the 1887 edition. This is noteworthy, as the wearing away of the coating with which the paper was surfaced for the writing, does not leave a brownish place which, as in the 1887 edition, might be mistaken for traces of applied color. This coating is indeed better preserved in places than is shown by the 1887 edition; thus the headdress at the extreme left of page 20, just to the right of the restored 8 Ezanab on the present color plates, is shown with the coating all erased and the black writing as if left on the ground-paper – which is incorrect.

[16]



## THE PAGES IN DETAIL

Coming then to the question of the subject-matter of the Codex, I feel that little is in order beyond a simple analytical description of the different pages, rather than any attempt at an interpretation. The road of general deductions from superficial resemblances between unknown elements and the details of other known things from other times and places, is strewn by the wrecks of too many theories to be attractive traveling. I am firmly convinced of the greatness and importance of the study we have before us, and the exalted civilization which produced it; but I do not know how to interpret these monuments. Indeed the very persistence with which the interpretation (which will certainly be self-evident and everywhere applicable when it does finally come) still eludes us, is a sufficient proof that we have not yet found the right road. When we do, great doorways to the past of mankind will open of themselves, and we will know more of human life and evolution than we now guess. Until then we can only describe, classify, and try to get rid of some of the mechanical impedimenta of the search.

What we have of the Perez Codex is manifestly but a fragment; the extent of it originally we have no means of even guessing. It is fortunate however that what we have gives several practically complete chapters or portions of the work. Taking first the side of the MS. paged 2 to 12, we find the entire side covered by a series of pictures with text, all identical in arrangement. The few remaining traces on page 12 show its likeness to the others, for we see in their proper places parts of the Tun-glyph on which the figures on the upper section are seated; of the Cimi, Tun and Cauac glyphs just as in pages 11-c-2, 6 and 8; also of the columns of glyphs to the left, and traces of the headdress. As will appear further, at least two more pages are required to complete this series, and it is as good a supposition as any other that they were those which would be numbered 1 and 13—that is, one before page 2 and [17] one after page 12. For convenience of reference the divisions of these pages may be lettered from *a* to *e*; *a* being given to the upper portion, *b* to the left columns of glyphs, *e* to the large middle picture, and *c* and *d* to the text divisions above and below this.

Taking up first the central figures, section *e*, we find in each a standing figure, with ceremonial headdress of varying character, offering a dragon's head (a universal symbol of wisdom) to another figure, seated on a cushioned dais, the side of which bears various "constellation" signs. The latter in turn extends his hands, either holding some object, or else in a simple gesture. The standing figures are all almost completely preserved; the seated ones unfortunately largely or wholly obliterated. In front of the standing ministrant is a vase of offerings, usually a triple Kan figure, and in two cases with knives. In the upper part of the picture, facing in every case but one towards the ministrant, is a bird figure, different on each page, and having in two cases a human head. On each page is an Ahau sign with red numeral, all of them together forming a series which (starting on the supposed page 1 with 4 Ahau) gives the succession 4, 2, 13, 11, 9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 12, 10, 8, 6; in other words the numbers of thirteen consecutive katuns. The Ahau numerals 13, 11, 9, on pages 3, 4 and 5, are entirely distinct, and enough traces appear on other pages to establish this as a katun series beyond question. If this chapter includes just a round of numbers it would of course be complete in 13 pages. The chapter may be historical in contents, but the presence of this numeral Ahau-series clearly relates these pages to successive katuns in some way, whatever other bearings they may have. The ten pages thus in some way definitely have to do with the lapse of 72,000 days, or not quite 200 solar years, and the extension of the series to a full cycle of 20 katuns is quite likely. The background of this section *e* is red on each alternate page.

Returning now to section *a*, we find on each page three figures, nearly all of persons or animals, seated on a large base [18]



practically identical with the tun-glyph. Fourteen of the backgrounds to these figures are red. Above each figure there seems to have been at least six glyphs, of which but very few are left. Above these is a space entirely erased. In the center of the section on each page is a column containing at least two Ahaus with red numerals. The numerals of the upper row exceed those of the lower by 6; each row decreases from page to page by 4. The erased margins