Ancient Maya Codex

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also known as the Dresden Codex or *Codex Dresdensis*

by

The Maya

bluebalam

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This reproduction is based on Linda Schele's (`https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Schele`) copy of the Ernst Förstemann photo-chromolithographic edition of the Dresden Codex, published in 1880, and again in 1892, in Dresden. We would like to thank the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (FAMSI) who made available a digital copy of the aforementioned edition through the following link (retrieved January 22, 2016):

`http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/dresden_fors_schele_all.pdf` .

Notes about the Dresden Codex are based on the following Wikipedia articles:

- Dresden Codex. In Wikipedia. Retrieved January 22, 2016, from `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dresden_Codex` .
- Maya Codices. In Wikipedia. Retrieved January 22, 2016, from `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_codices` .

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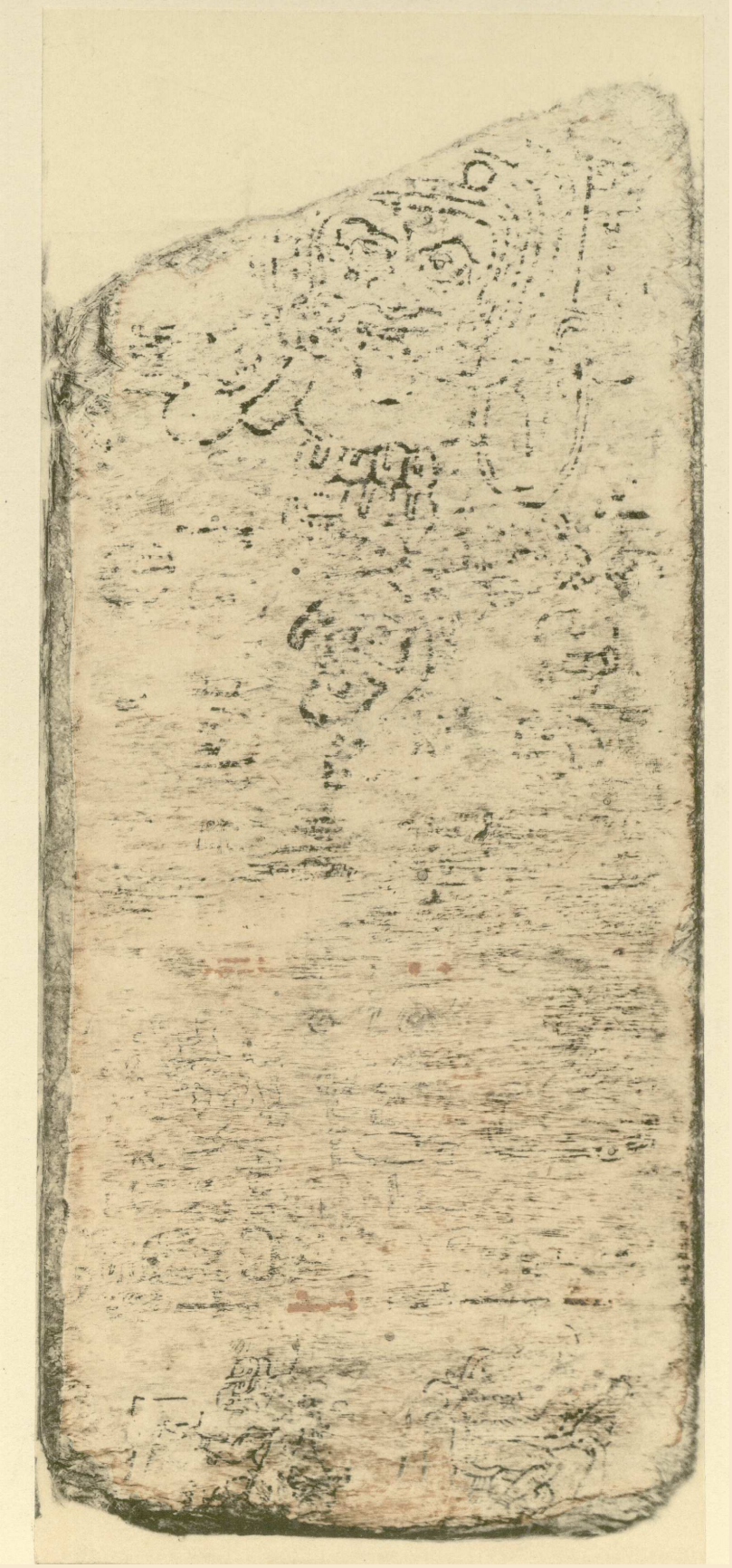

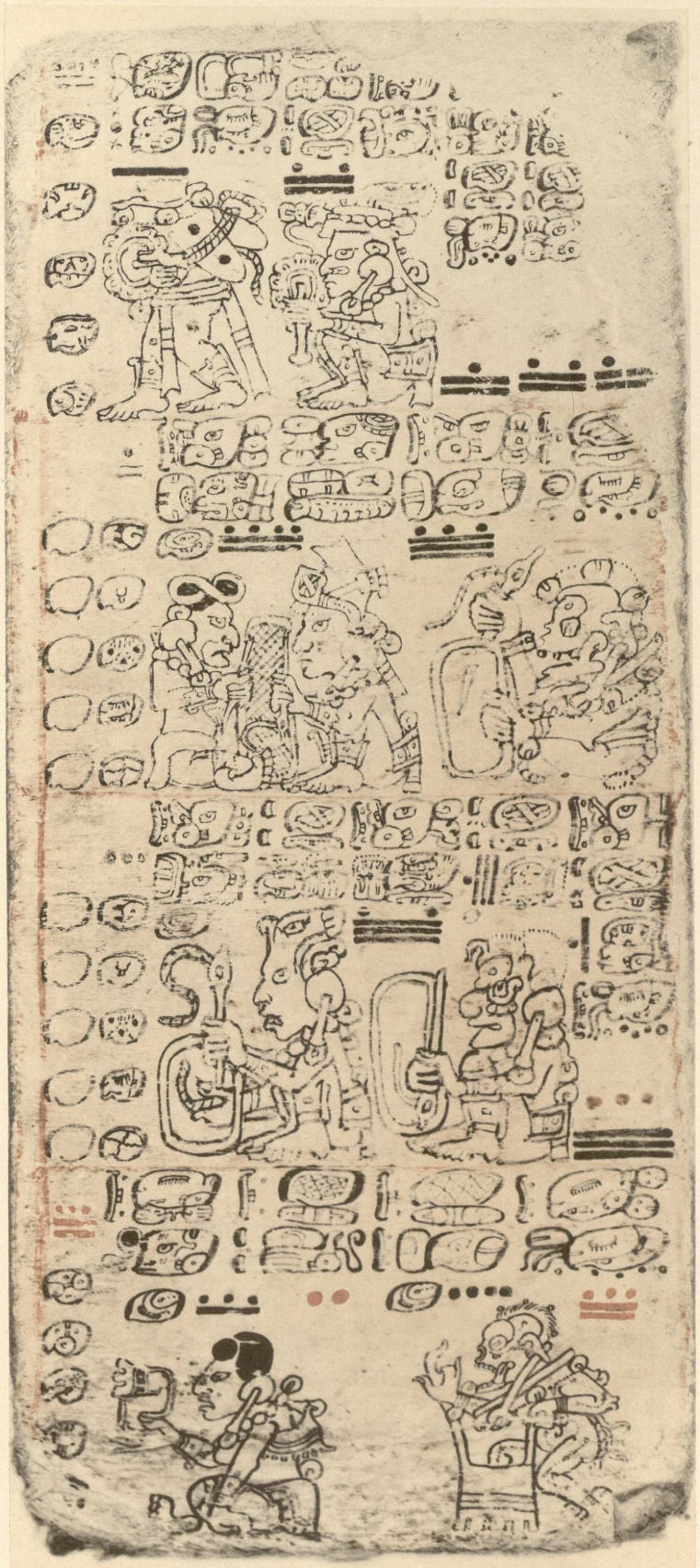

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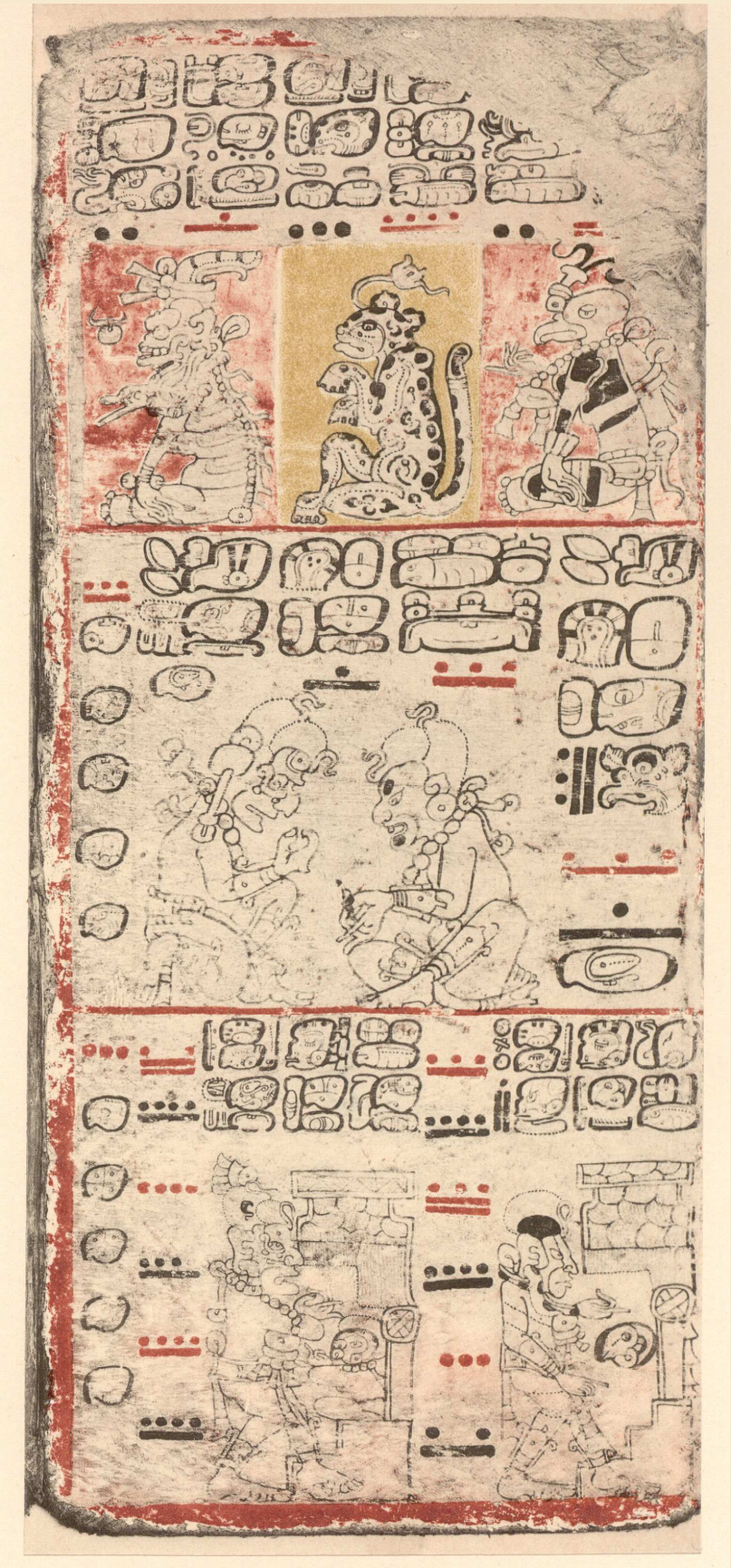

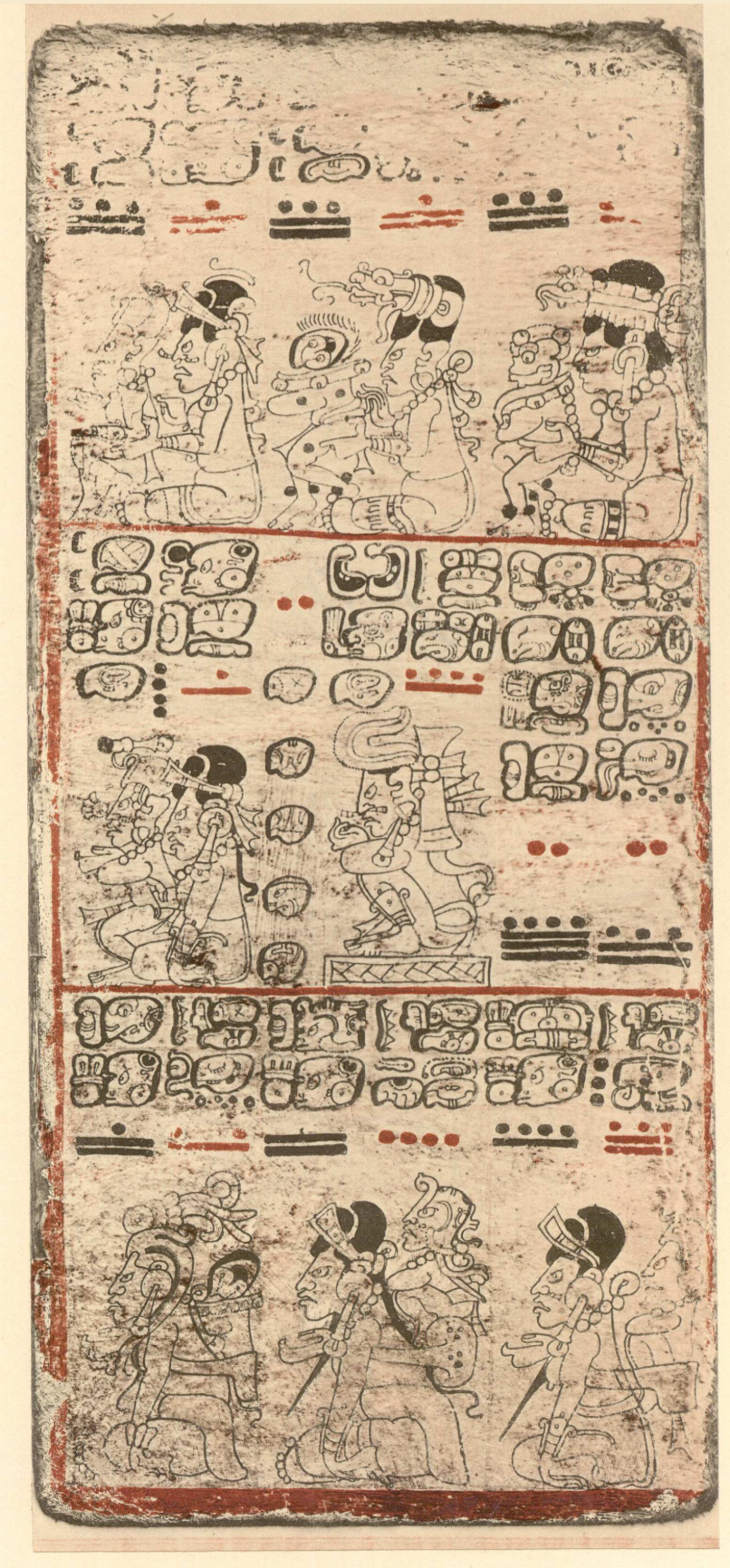

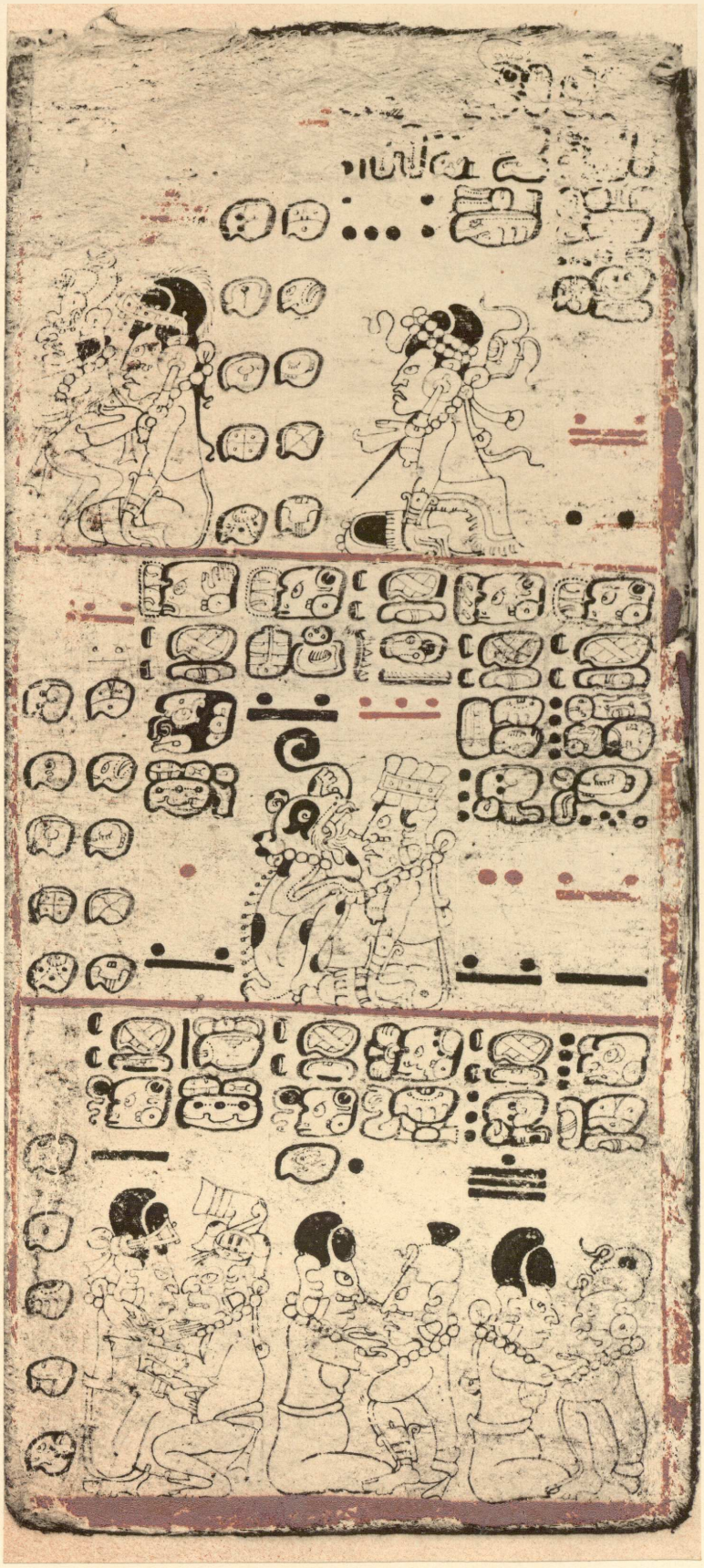

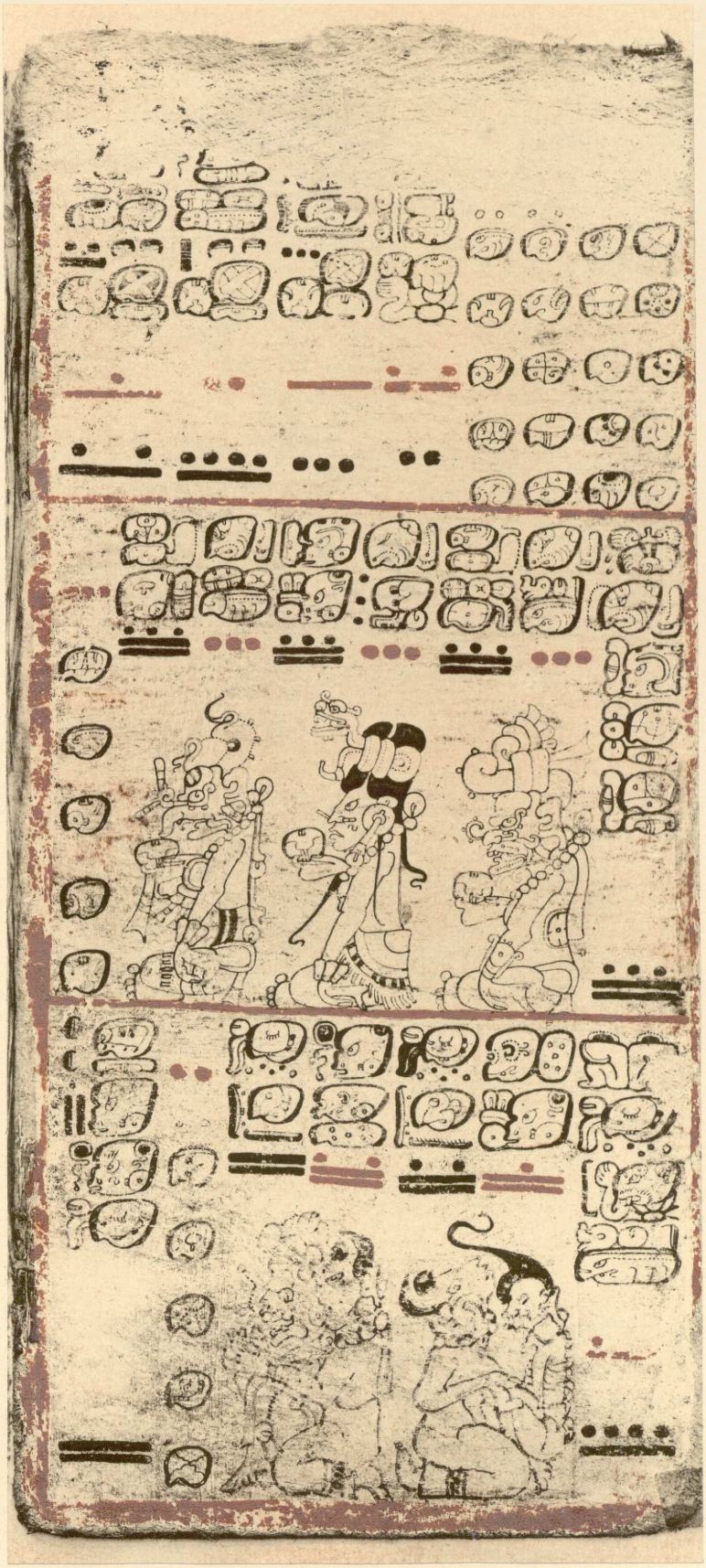

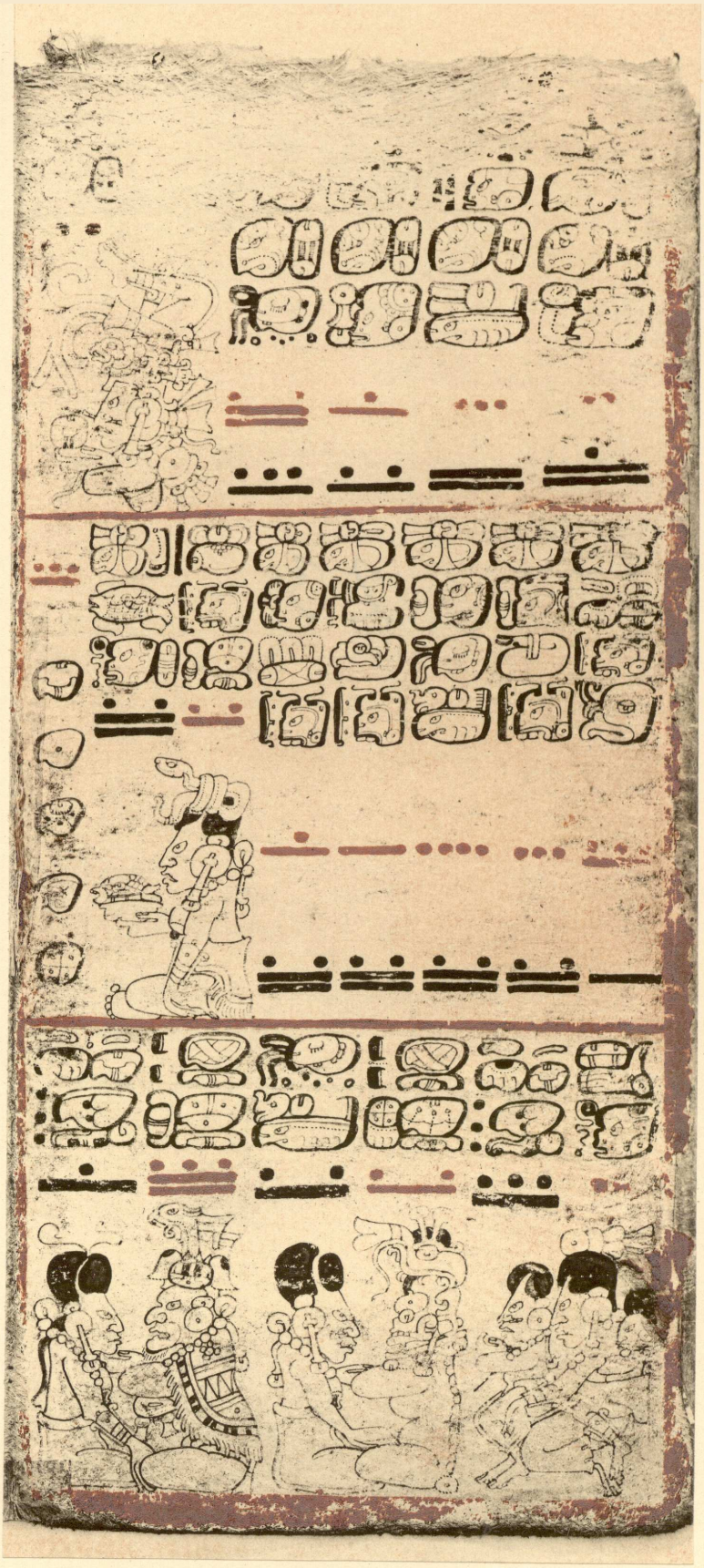

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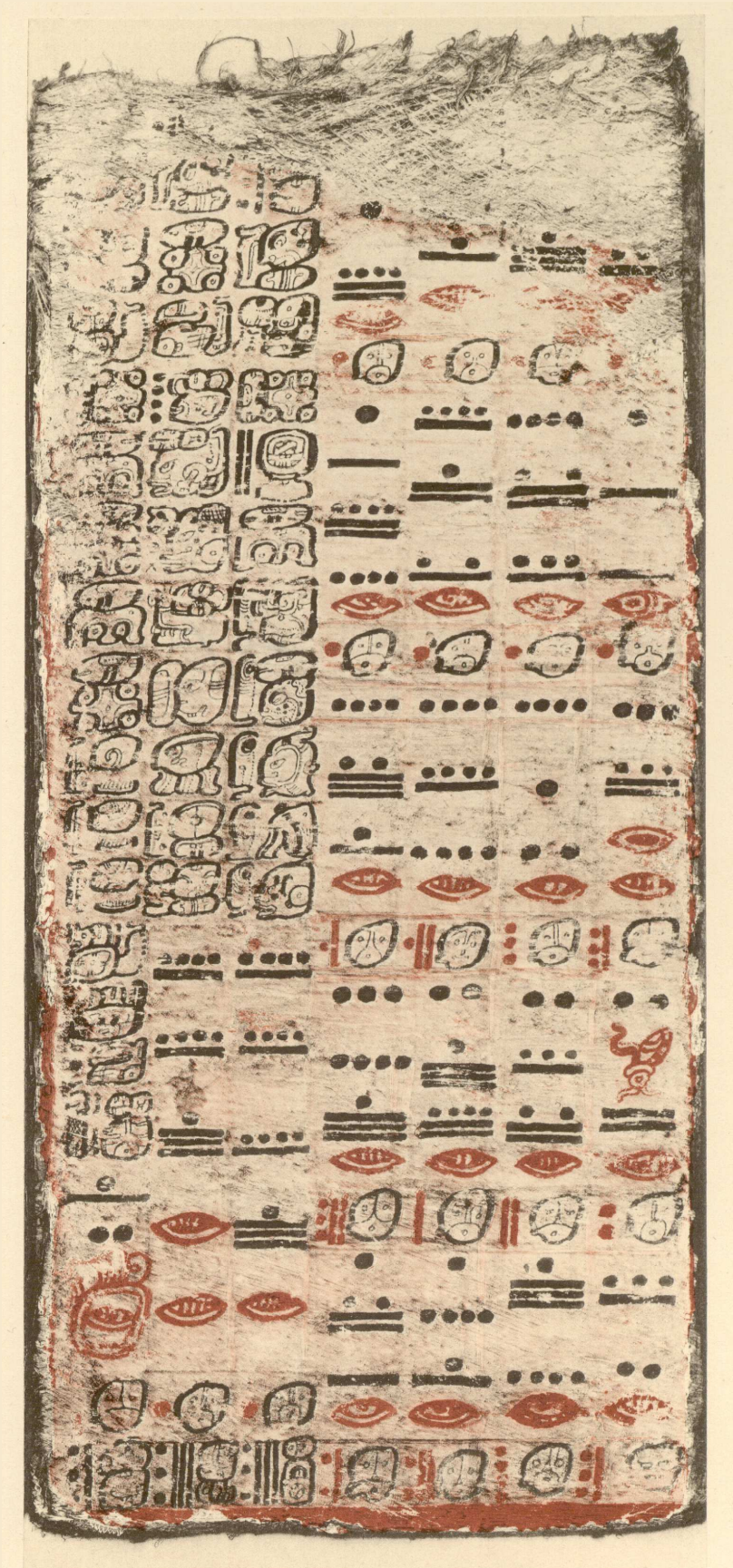

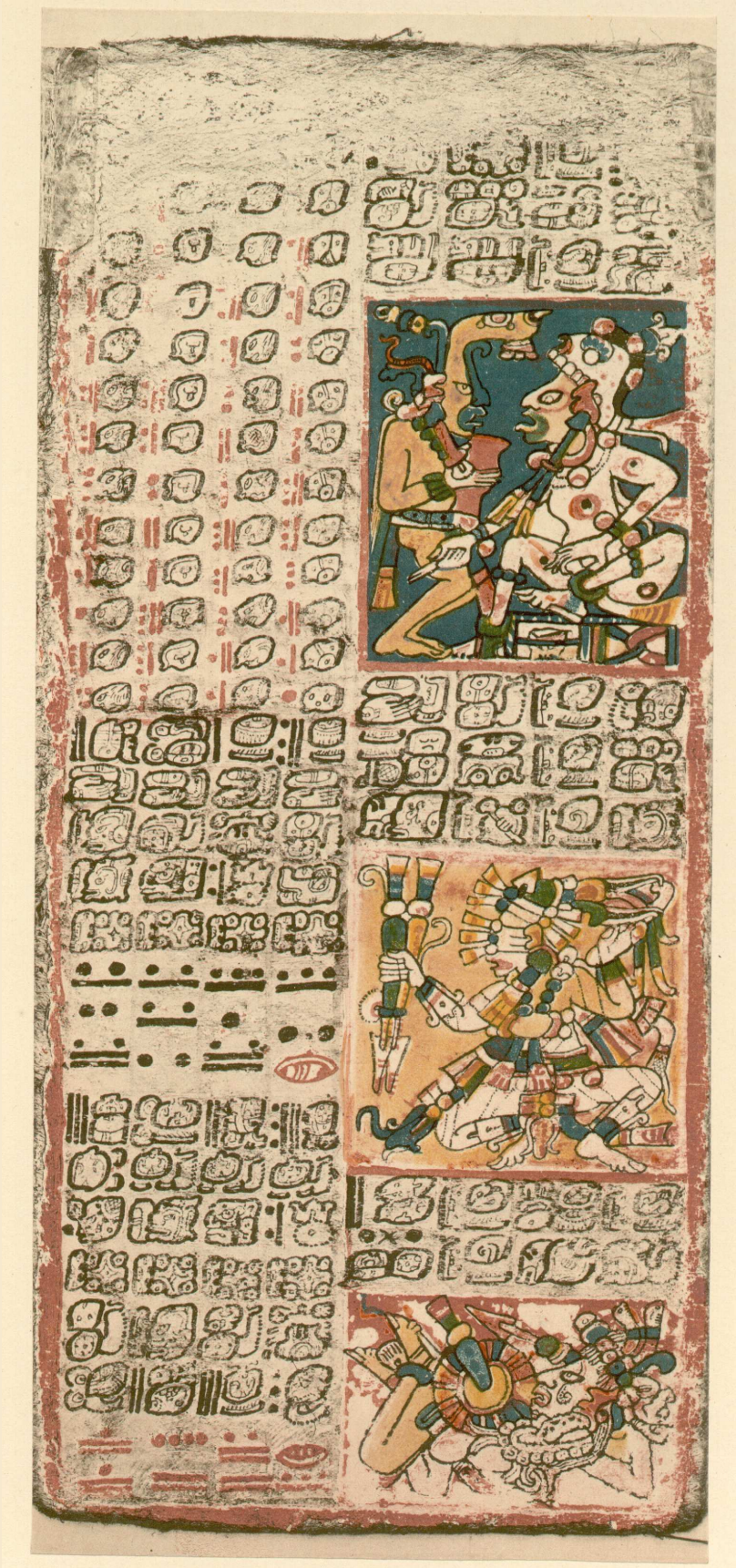

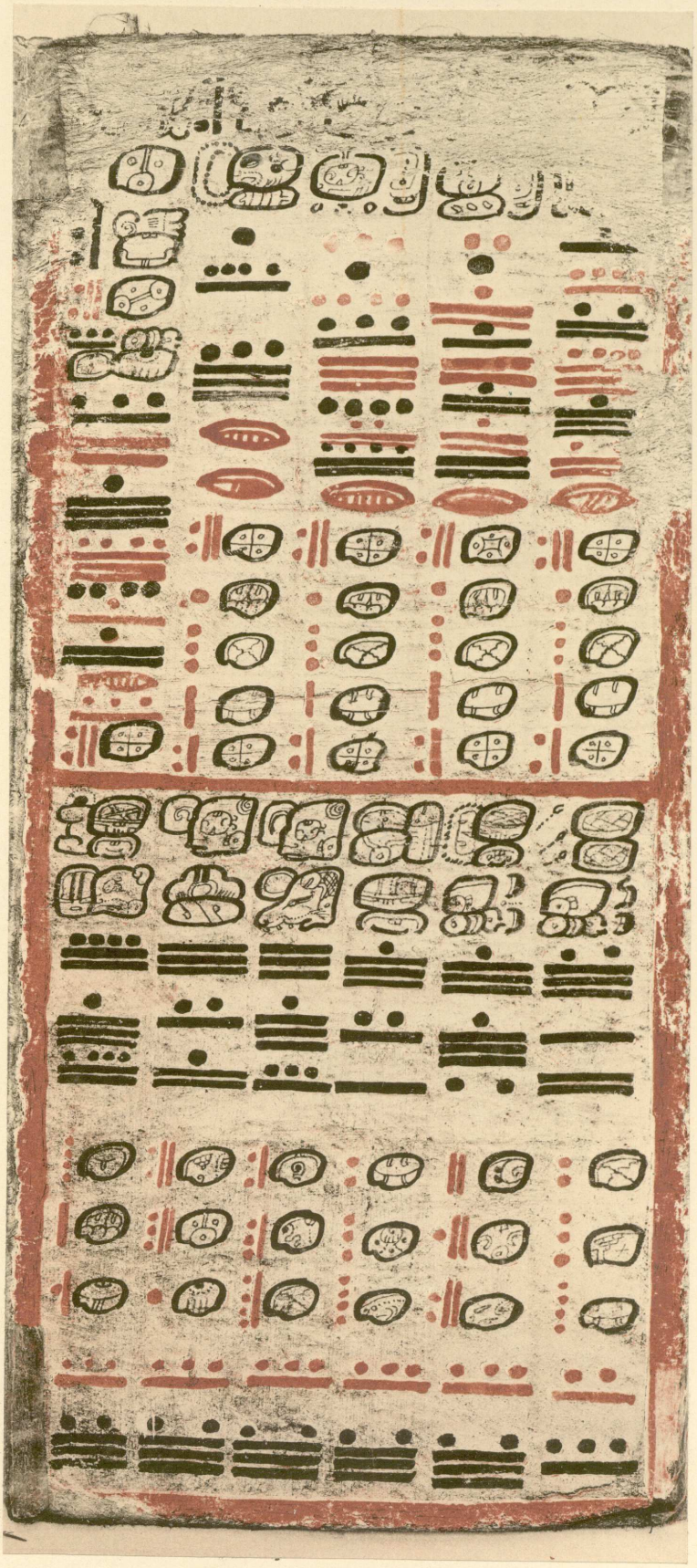

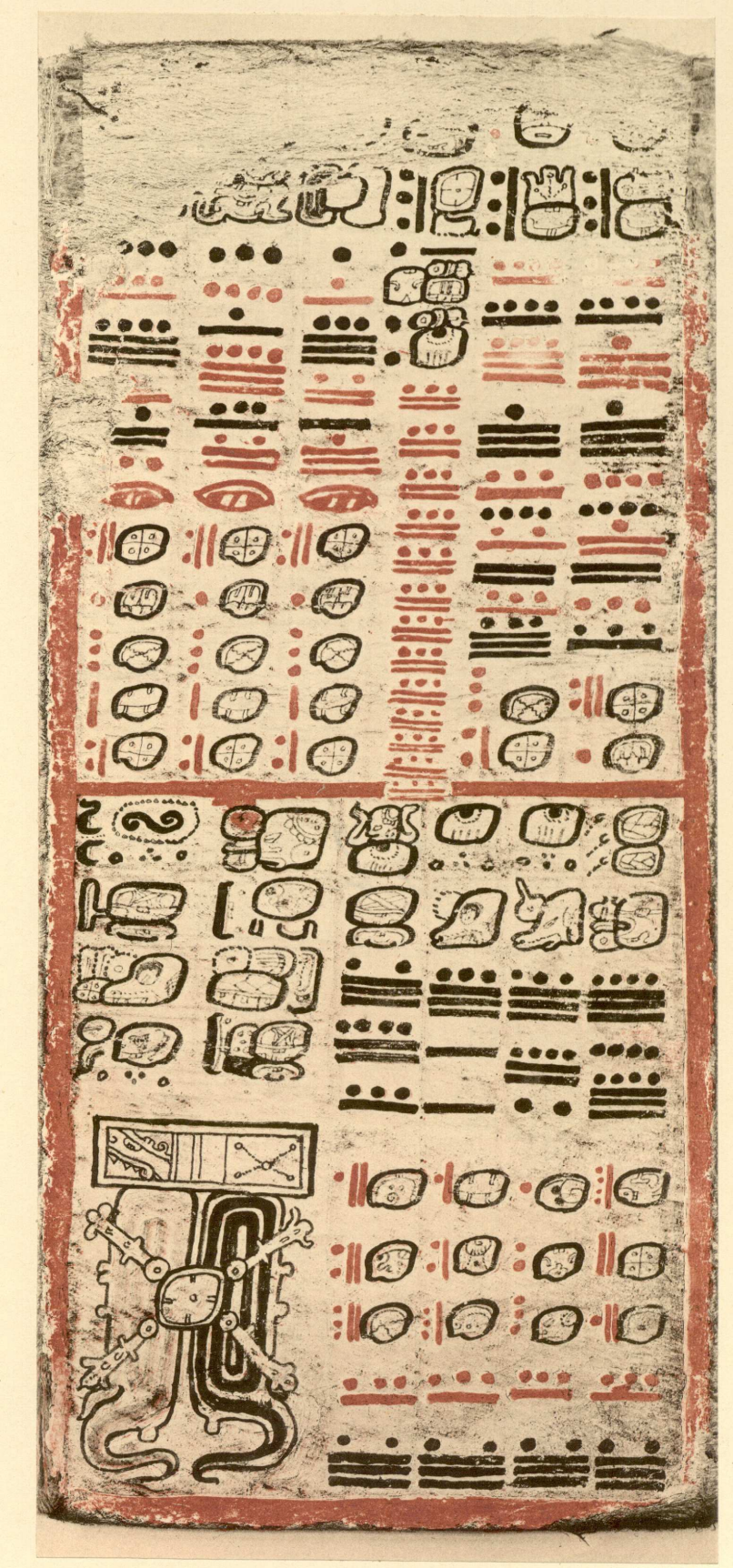

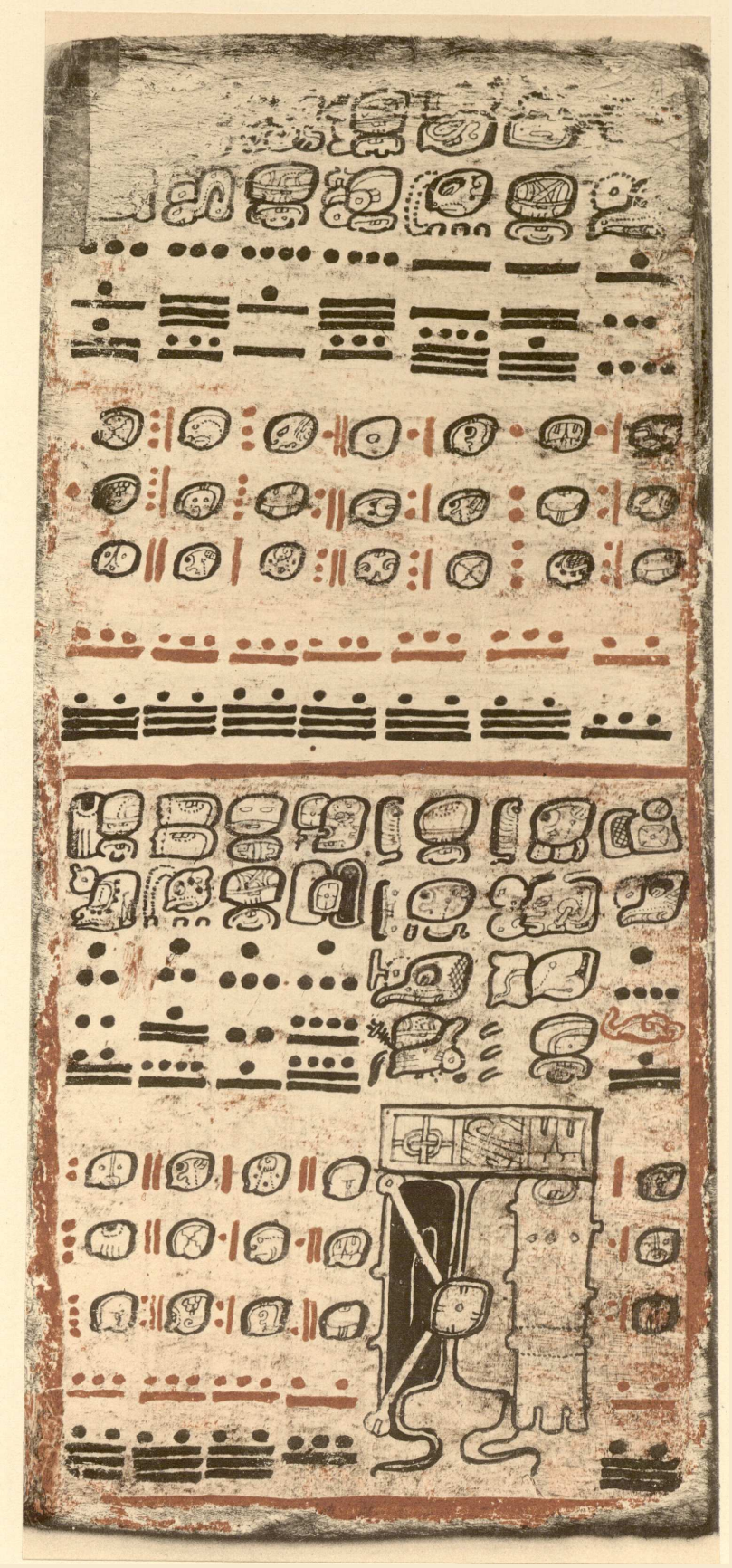

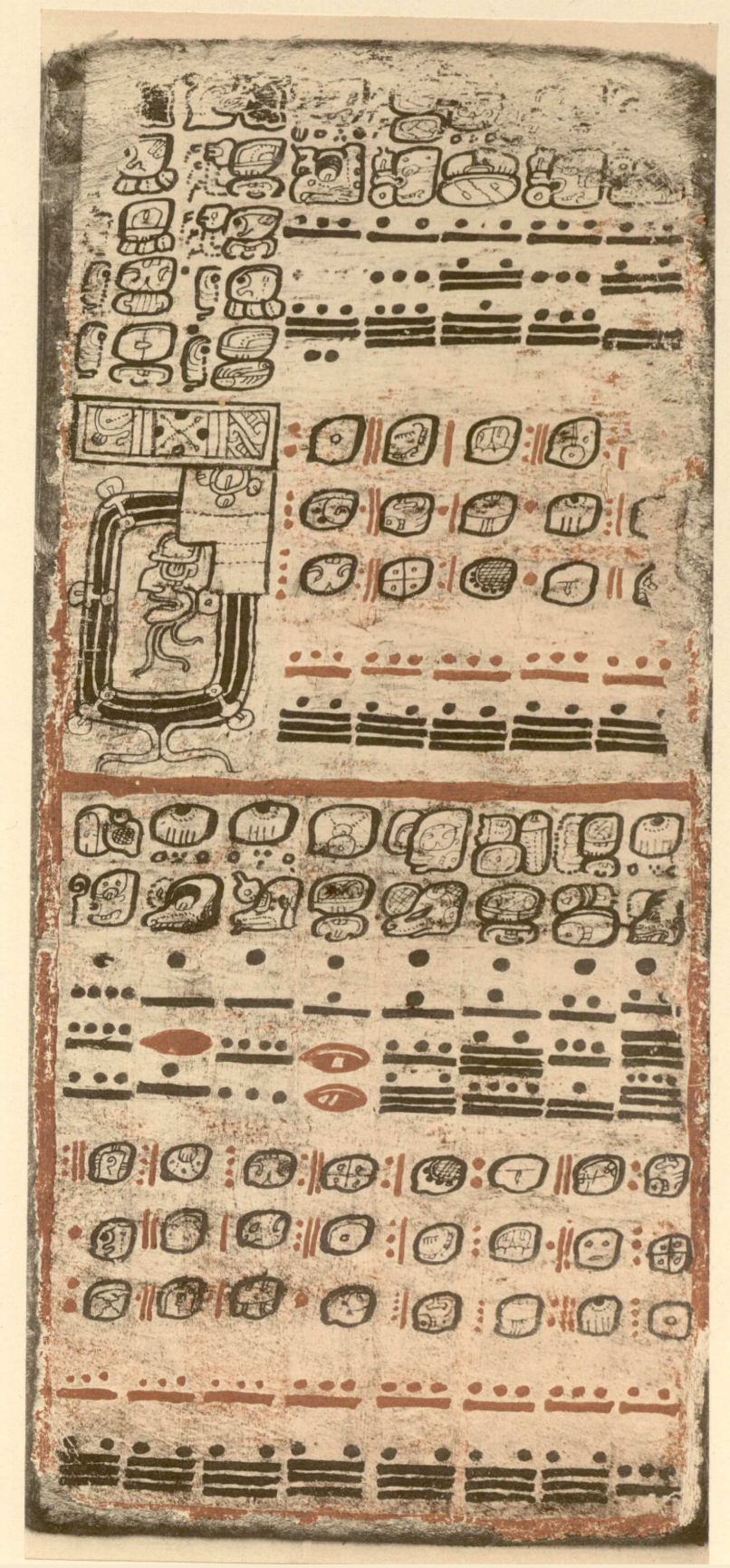

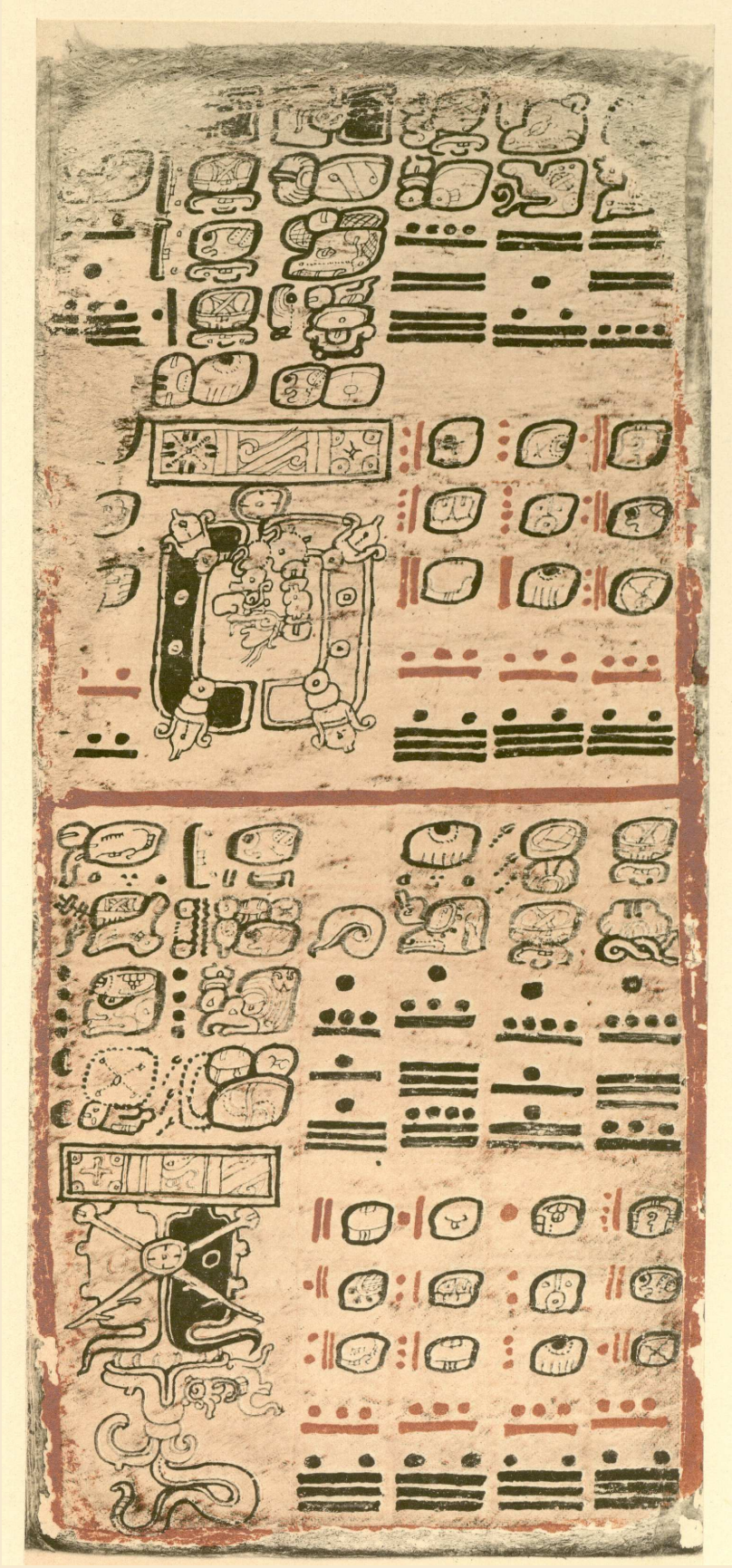

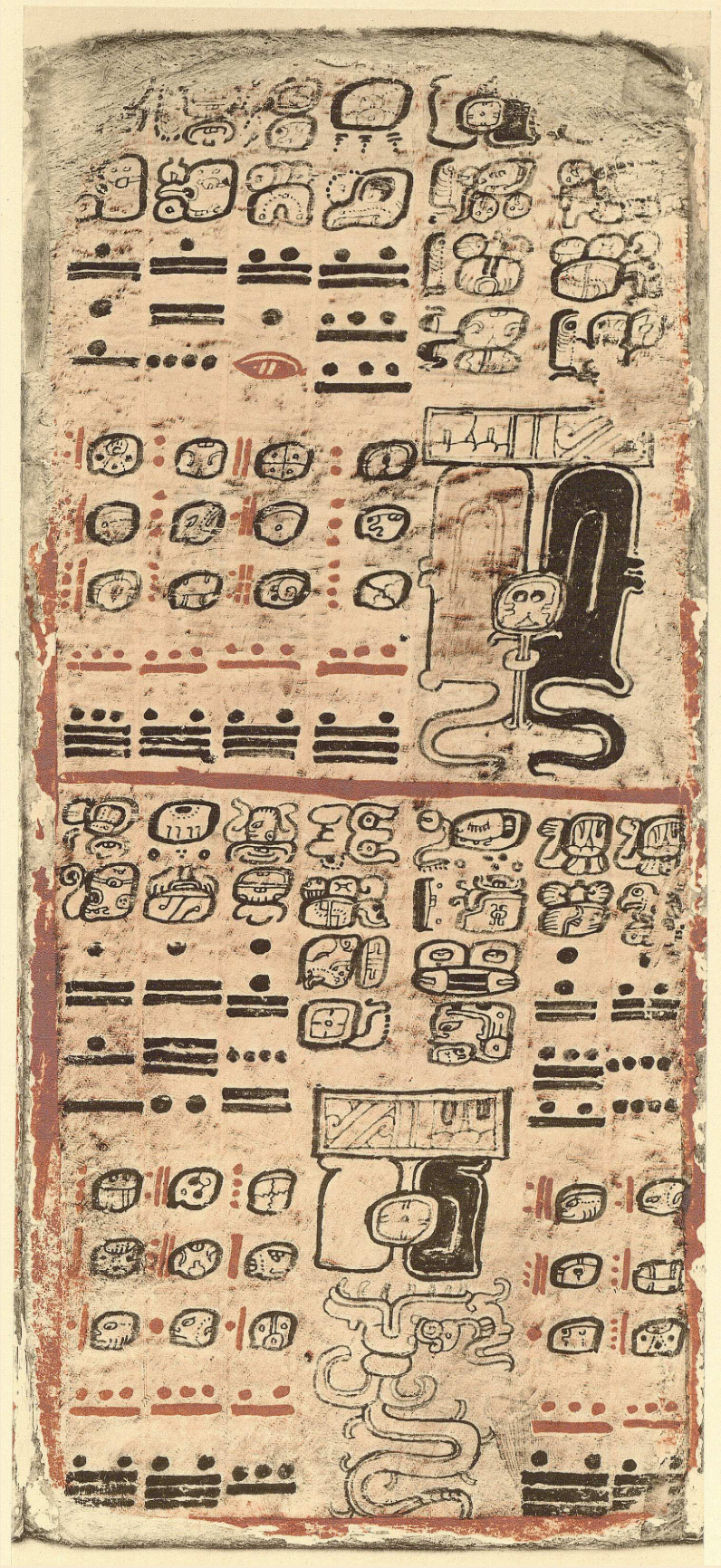

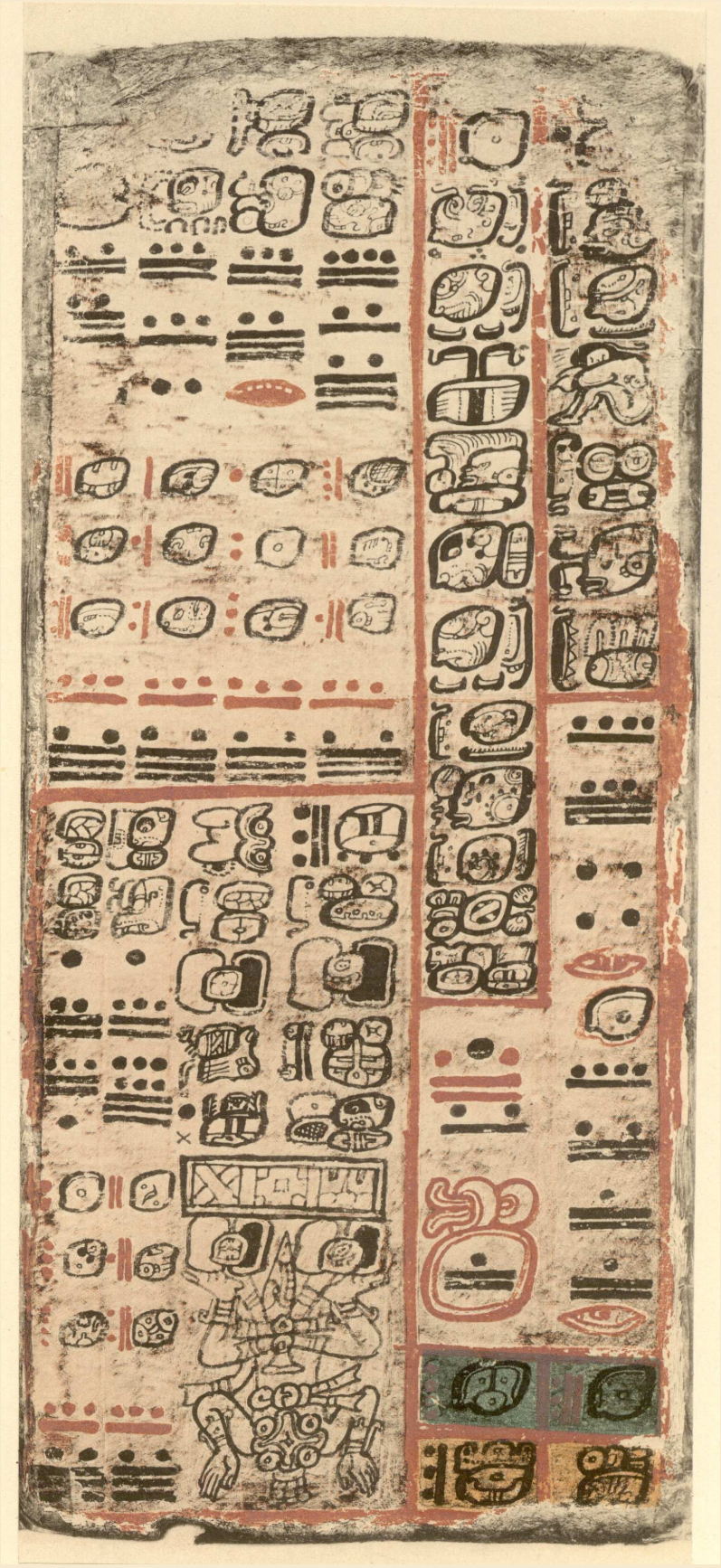

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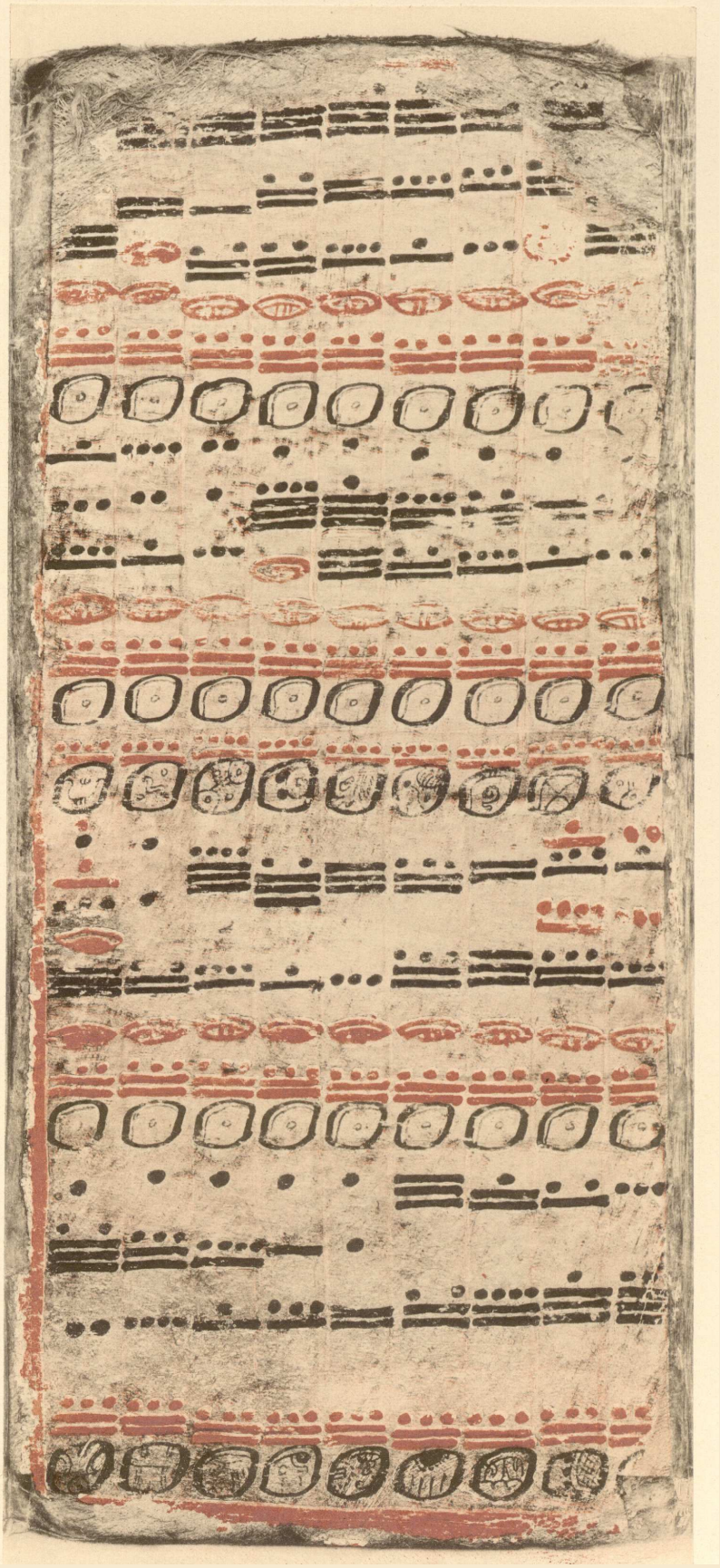

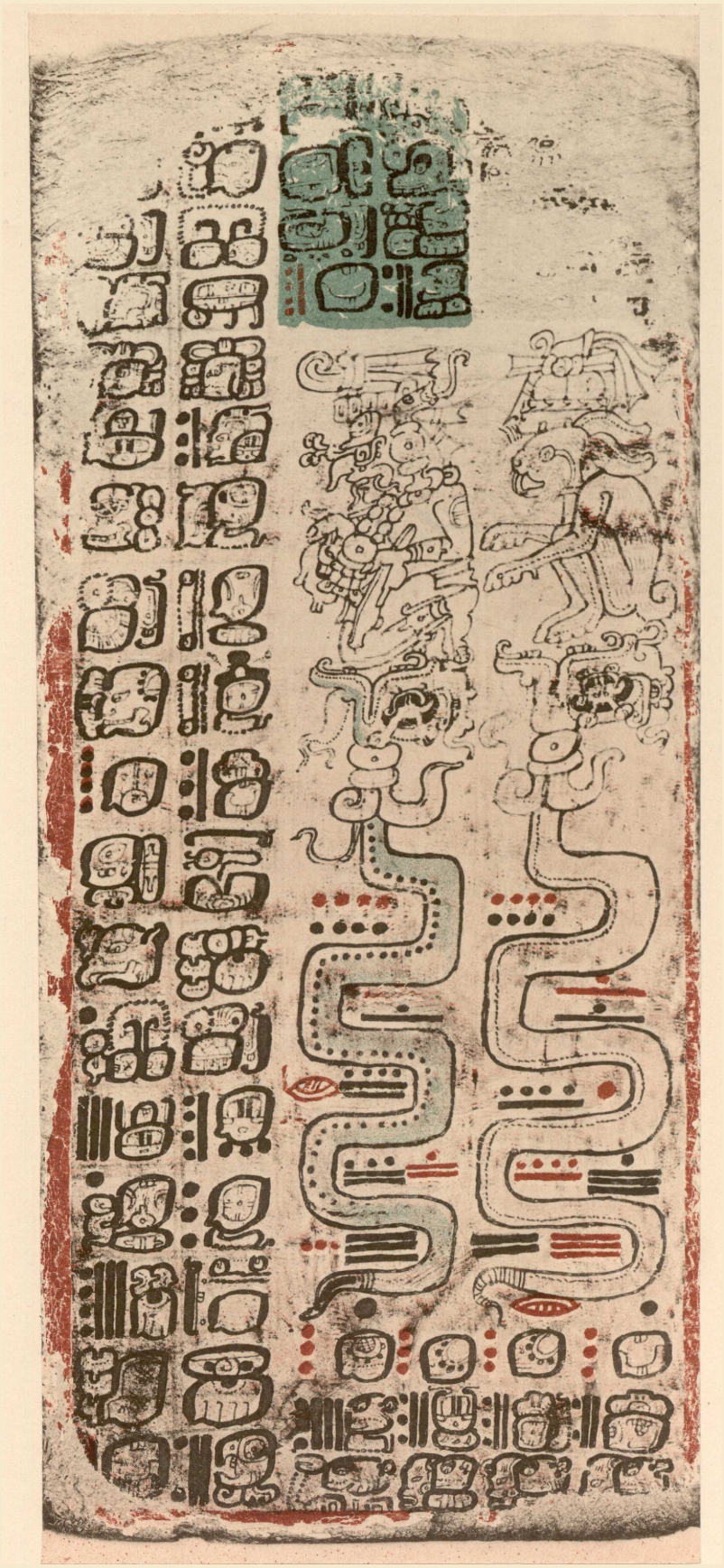

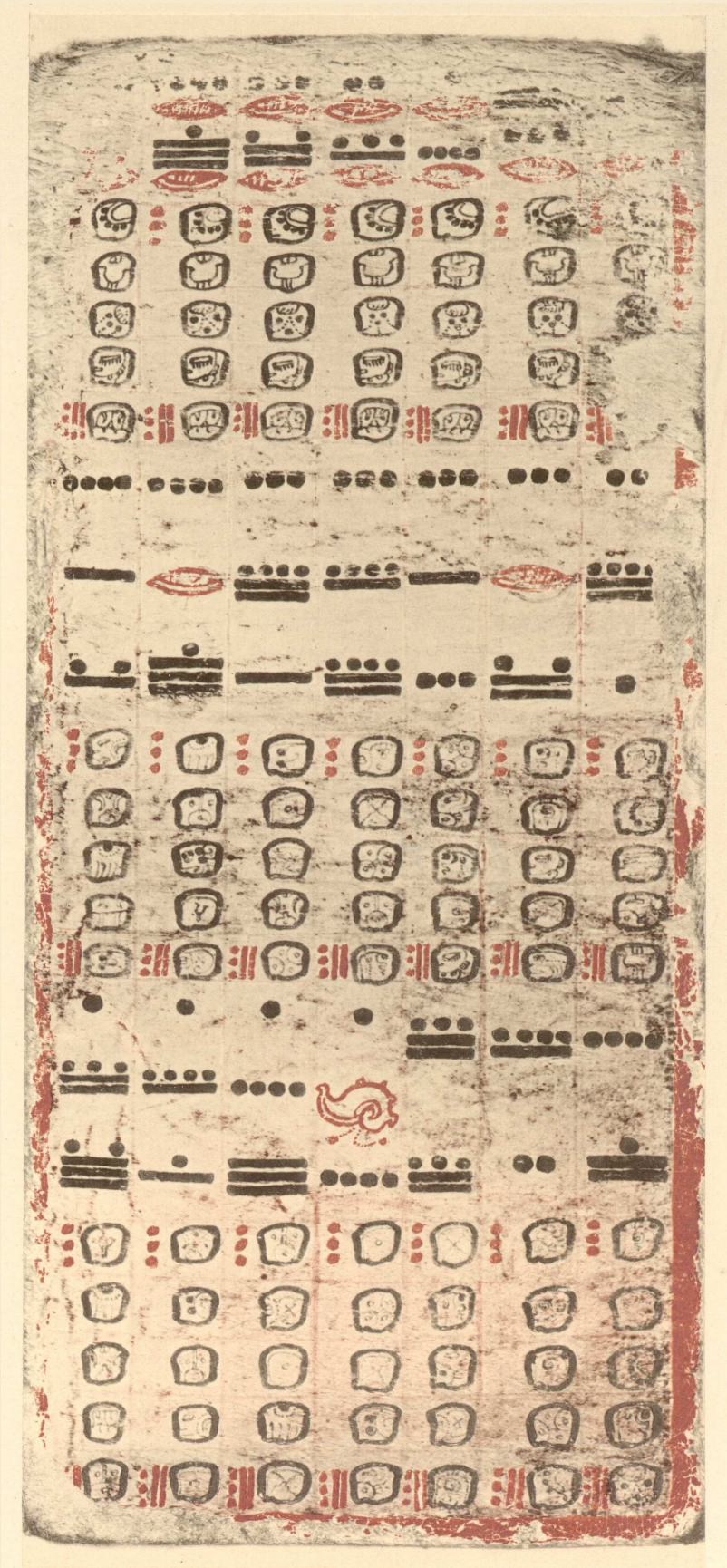

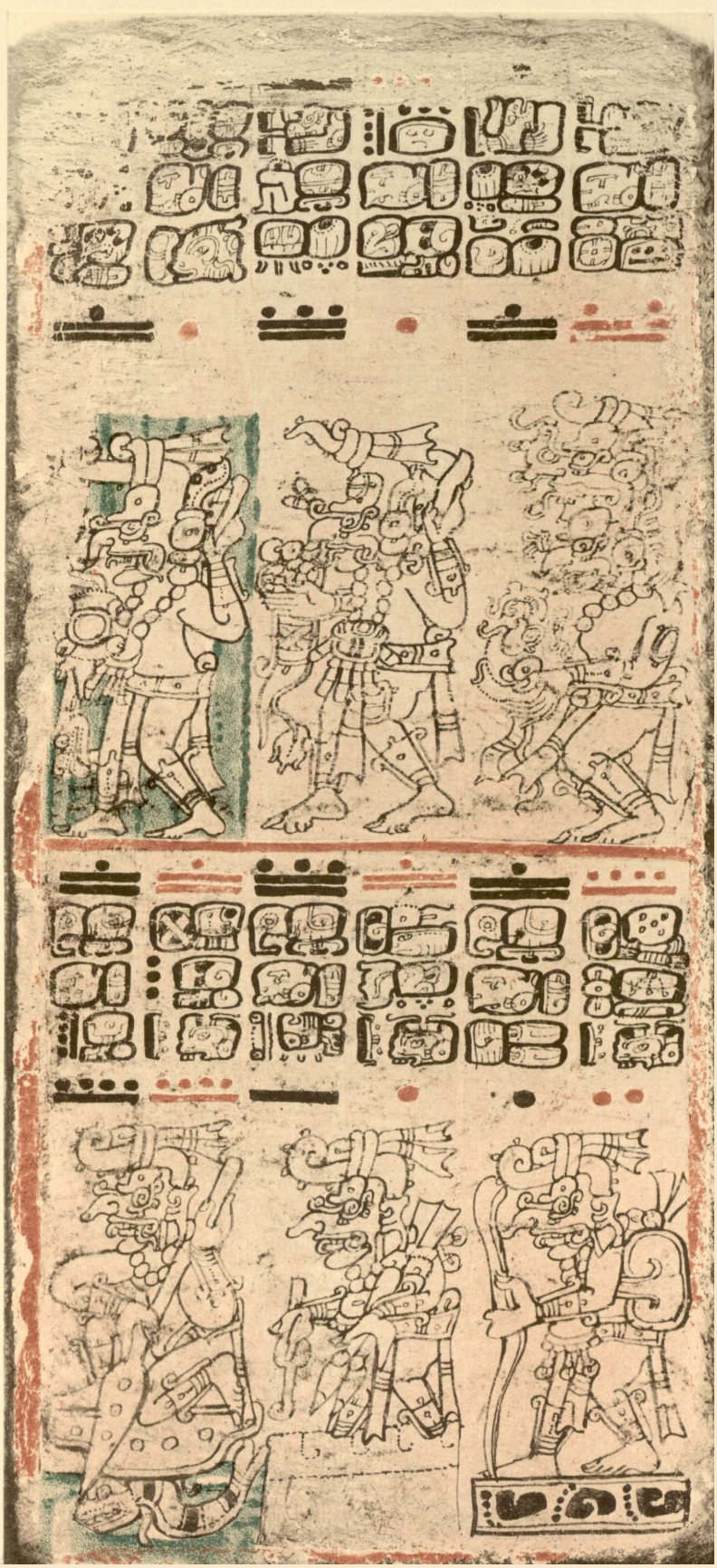

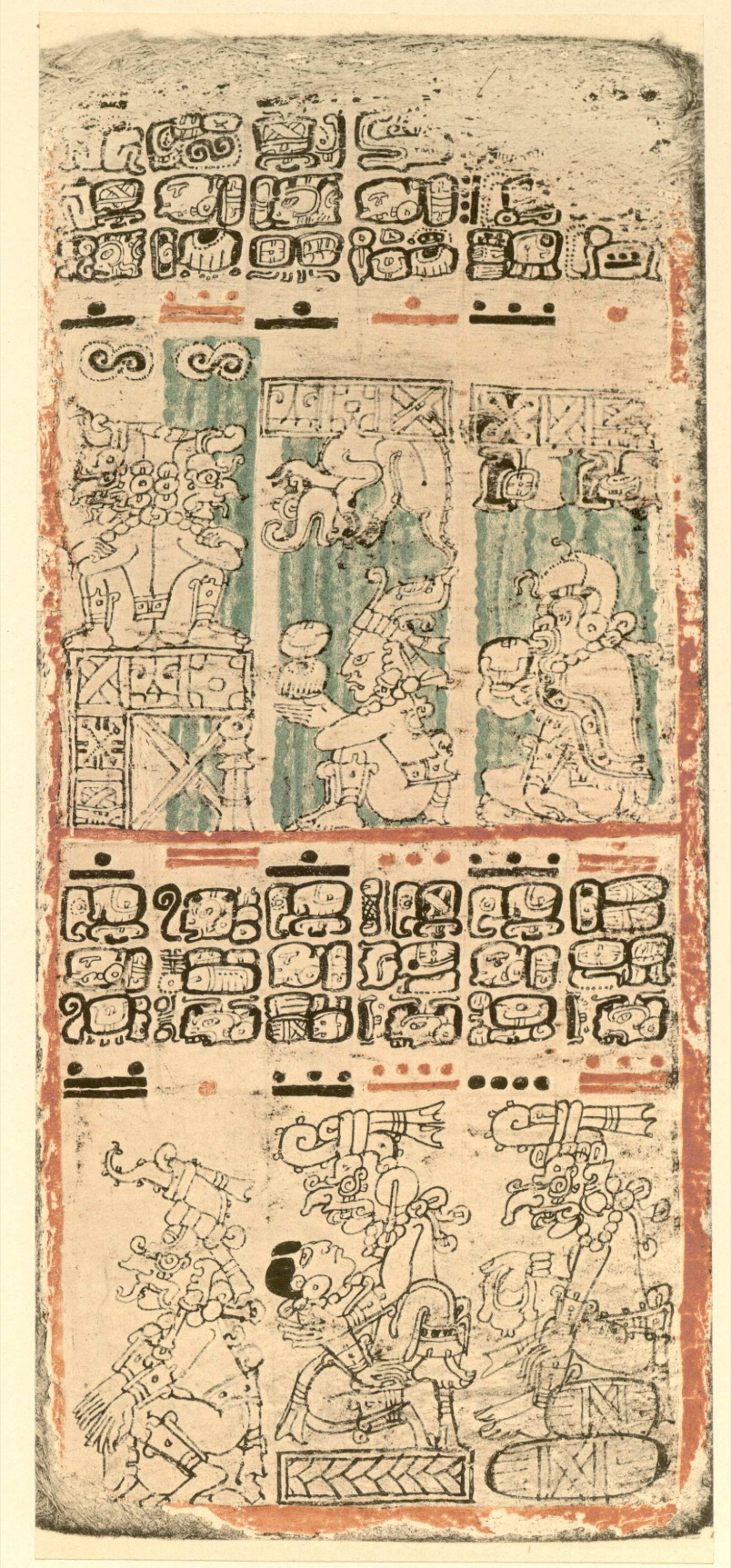

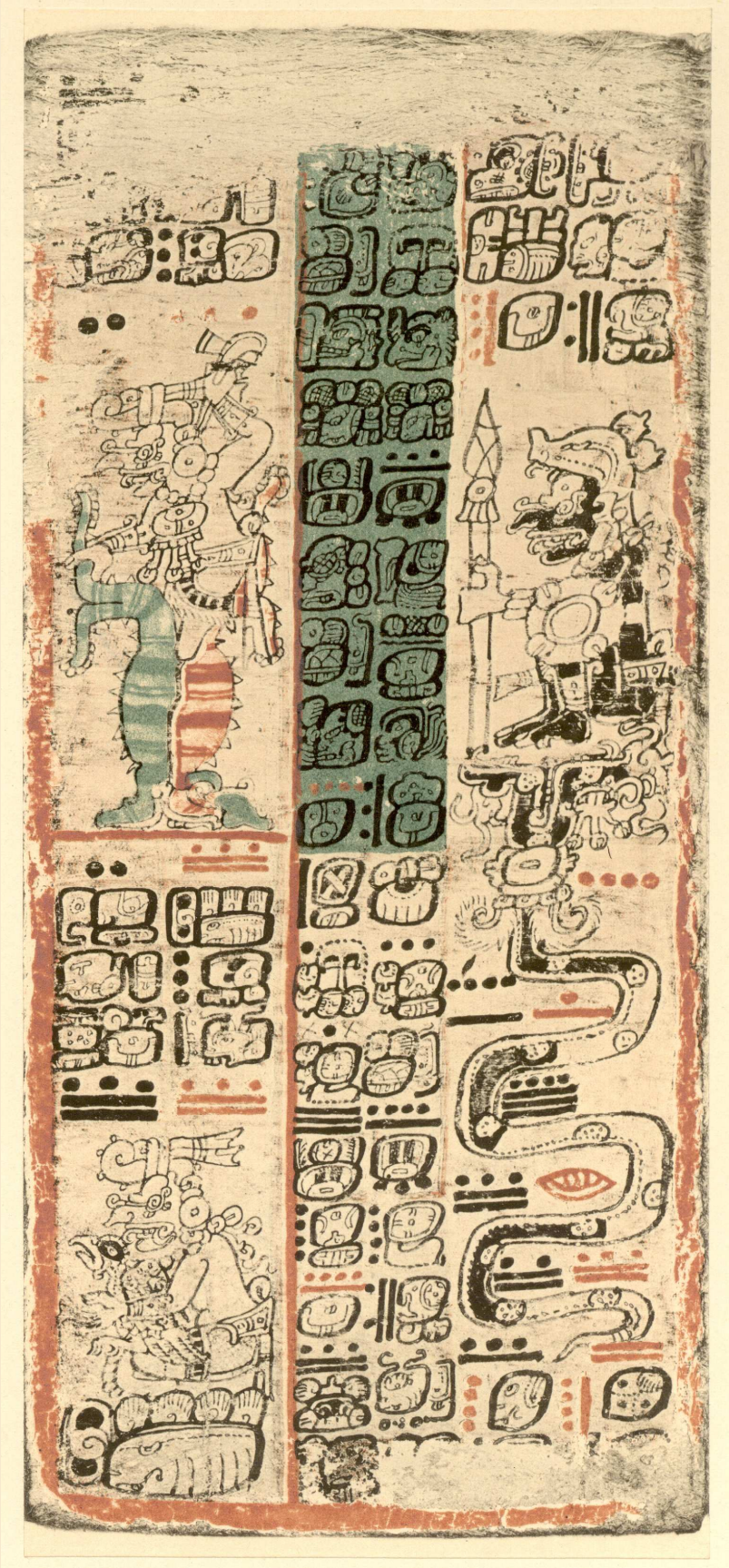

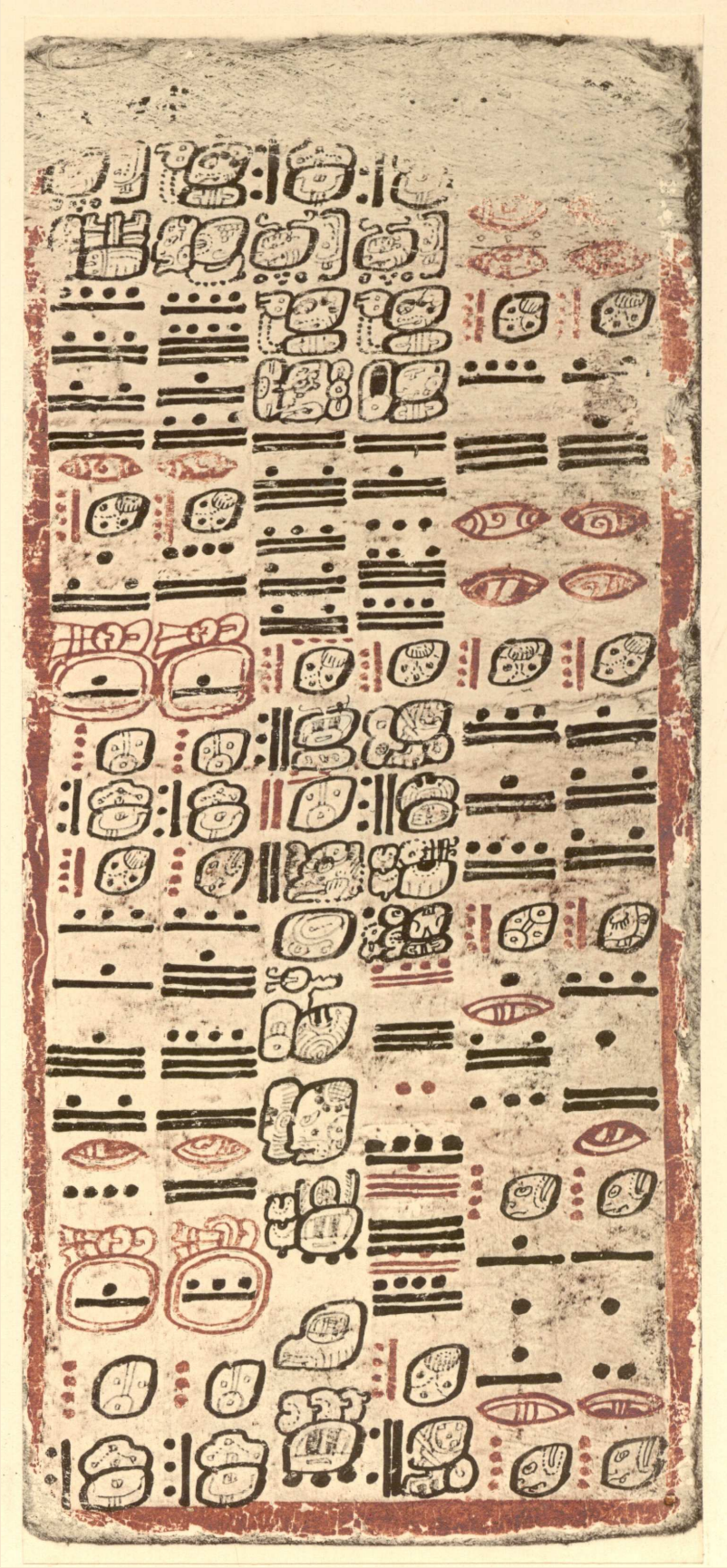

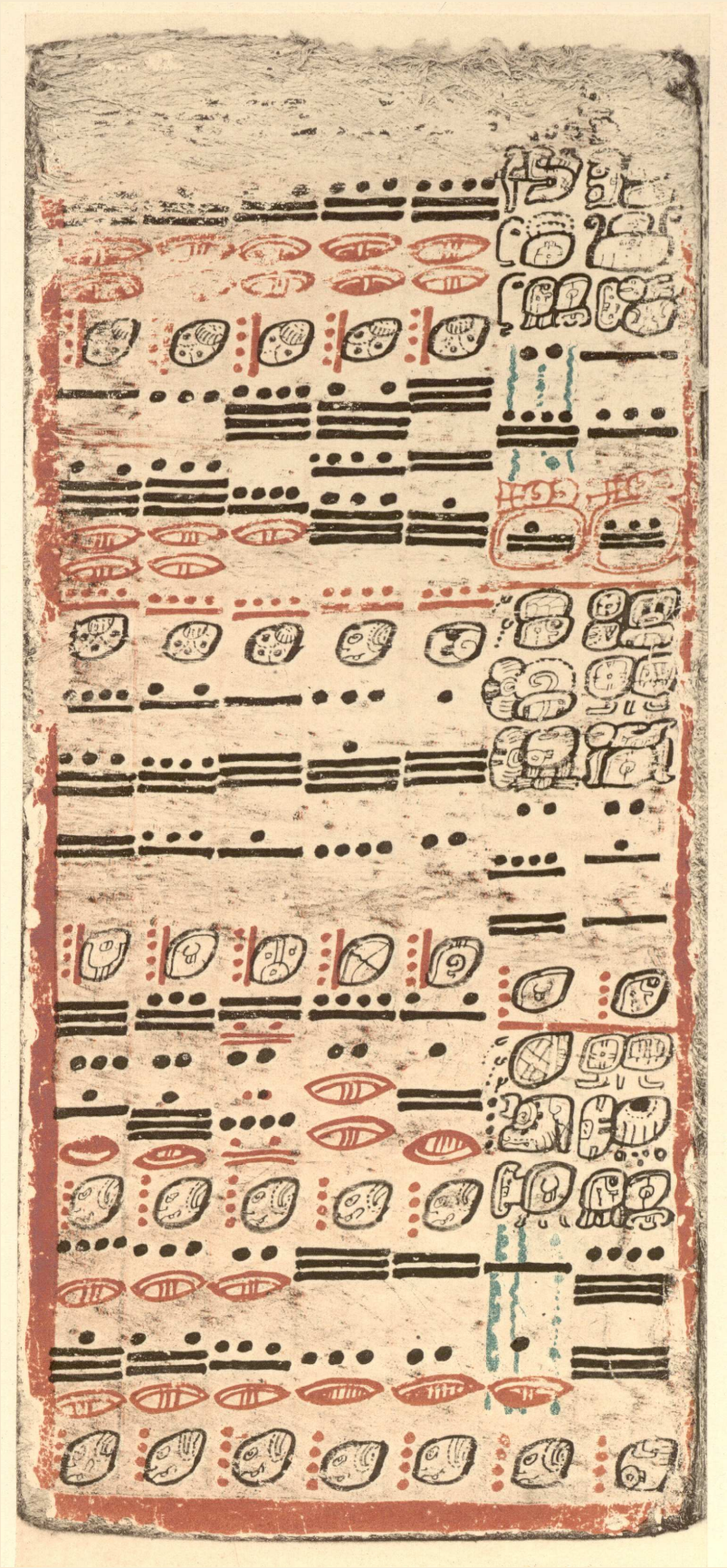

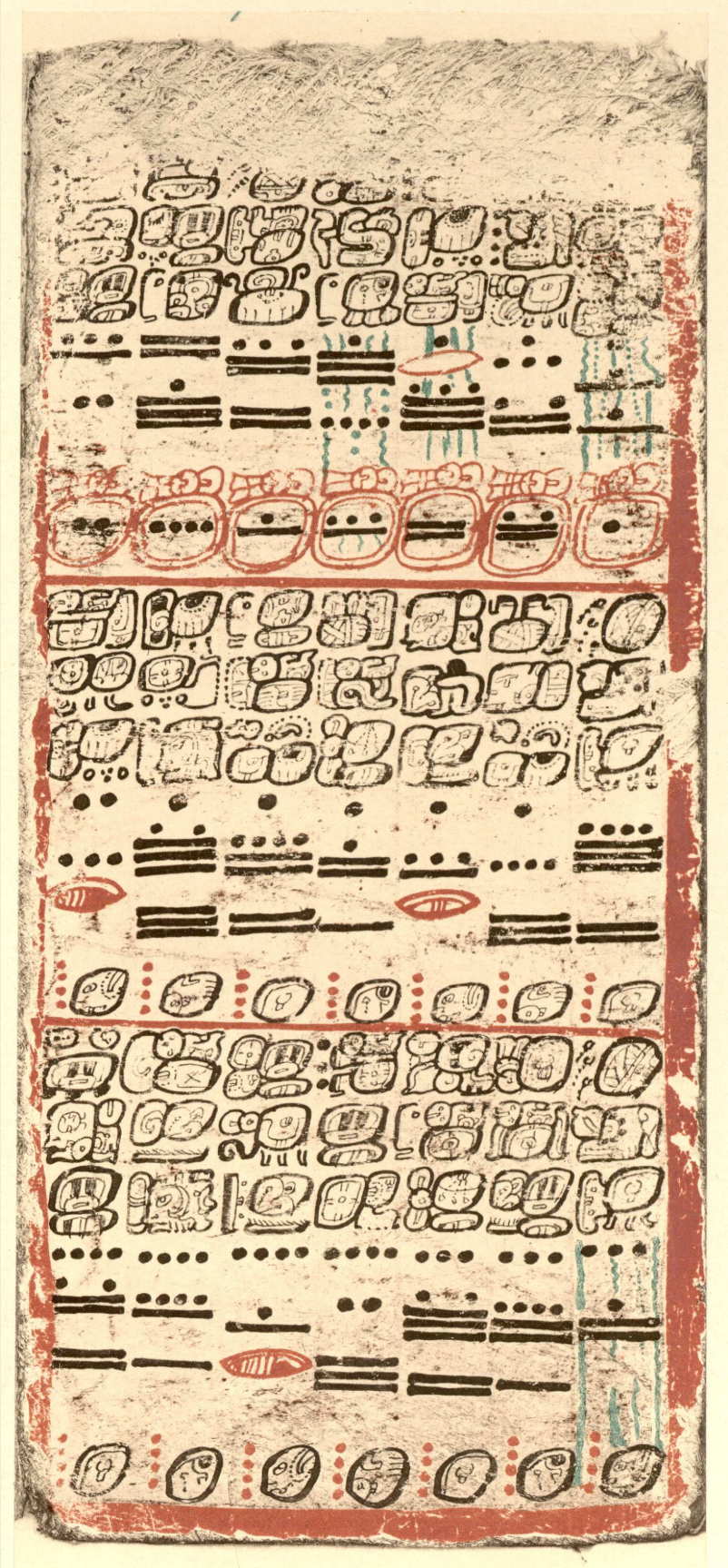

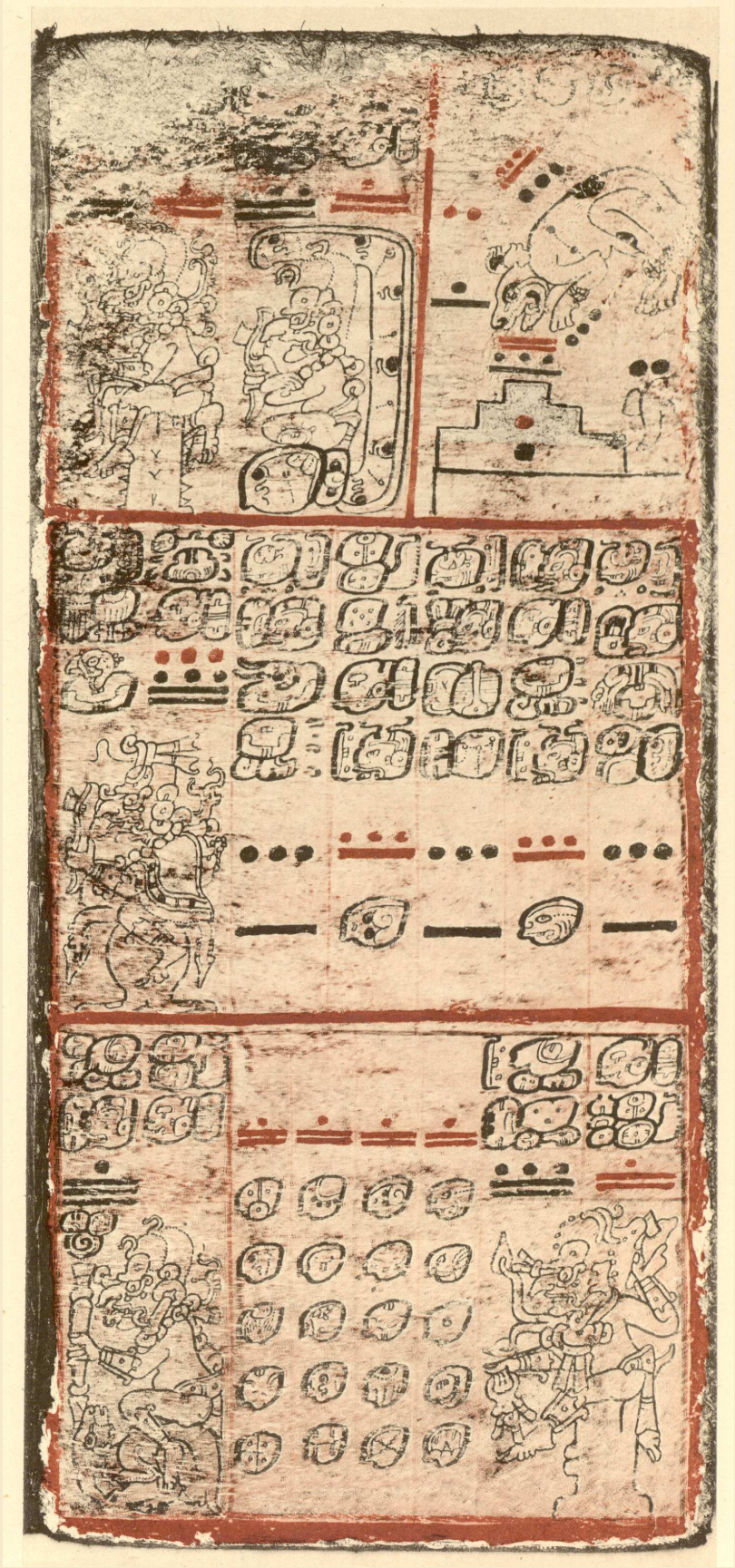

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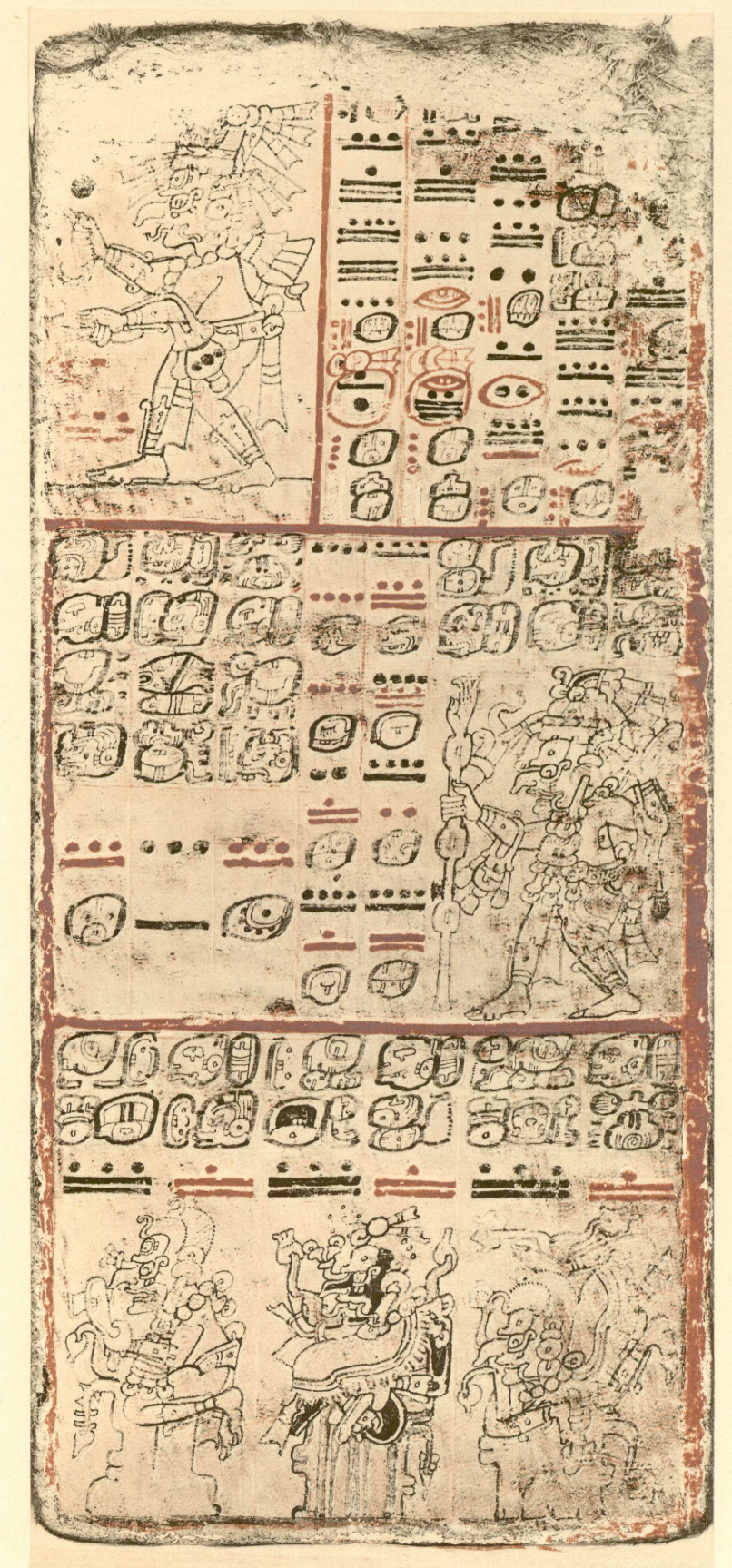

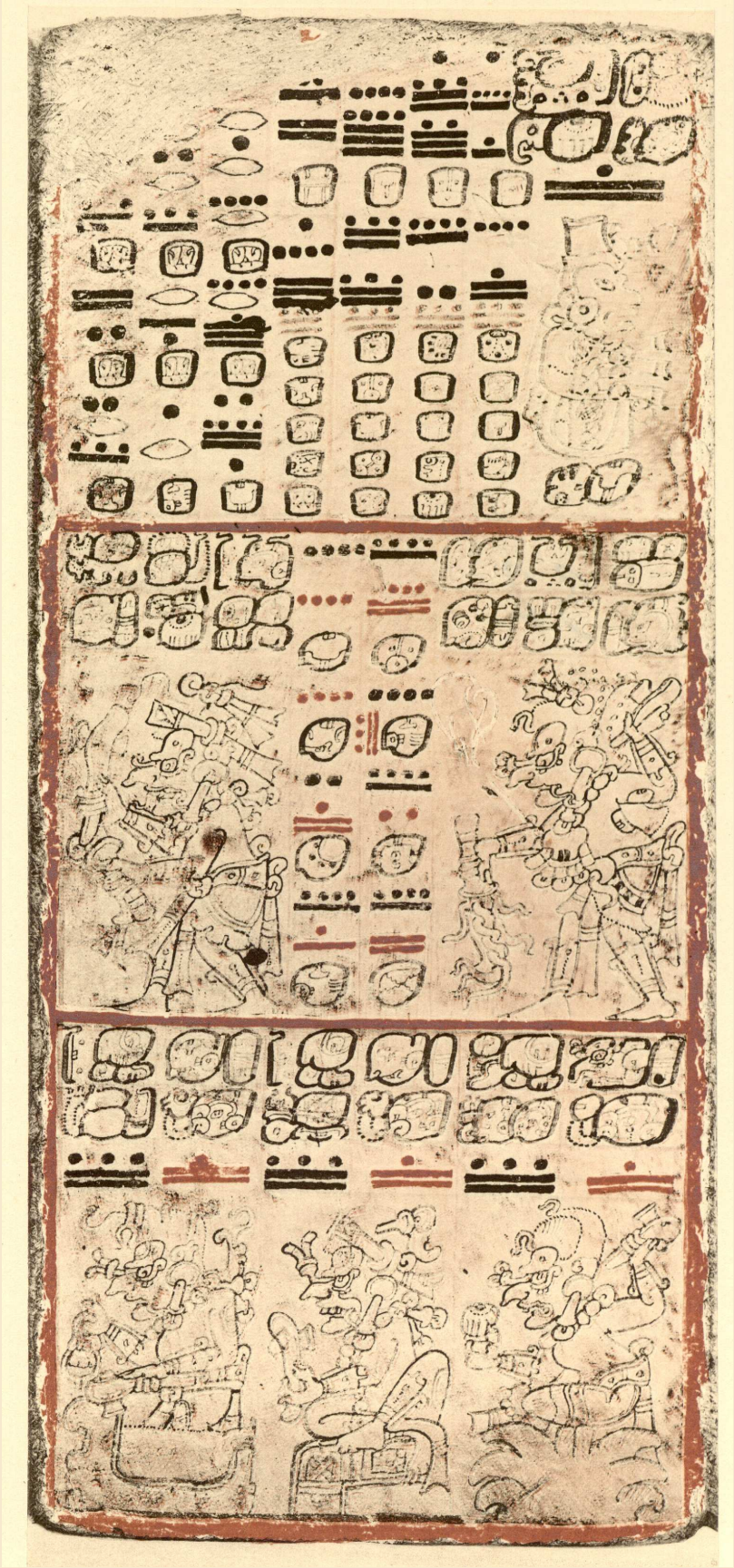

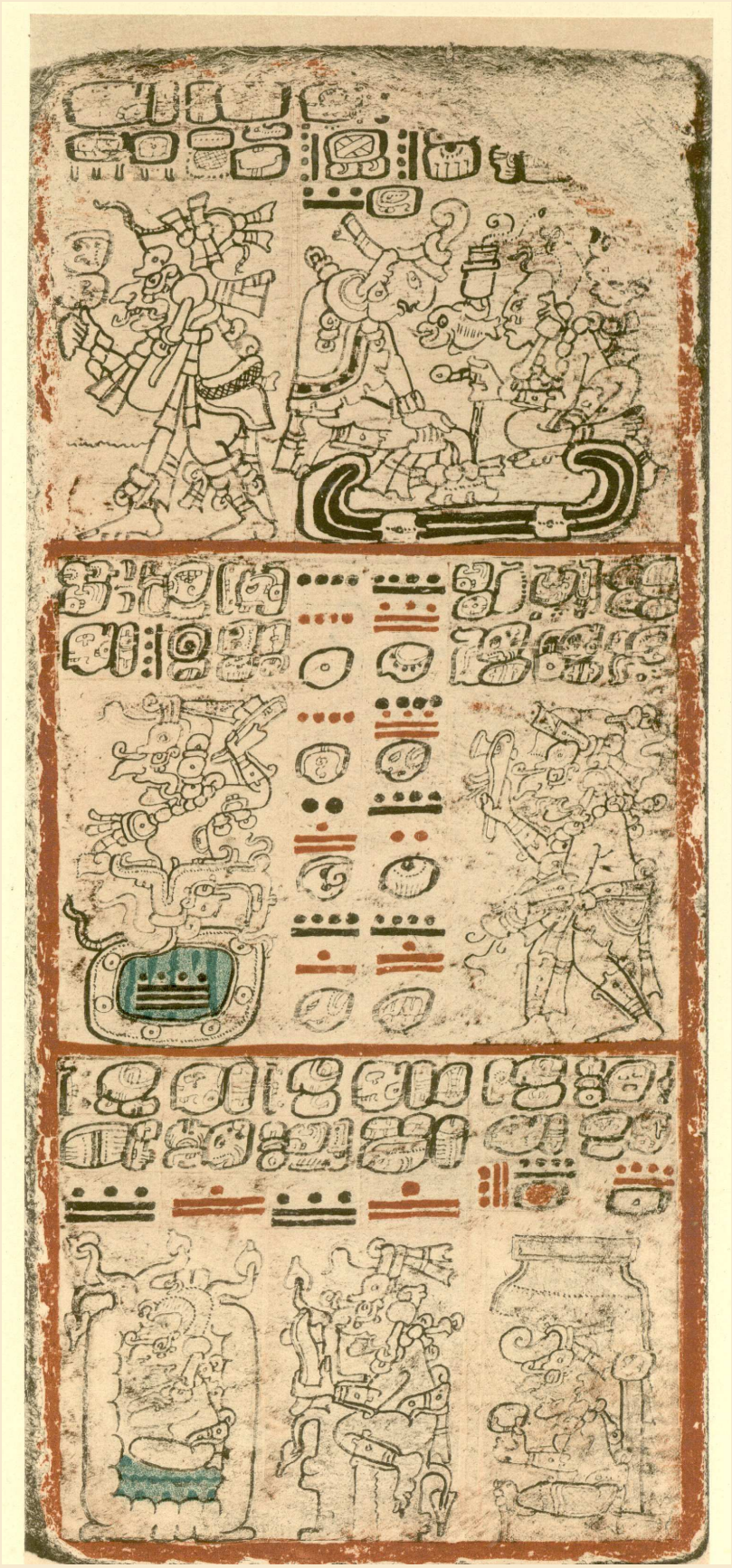

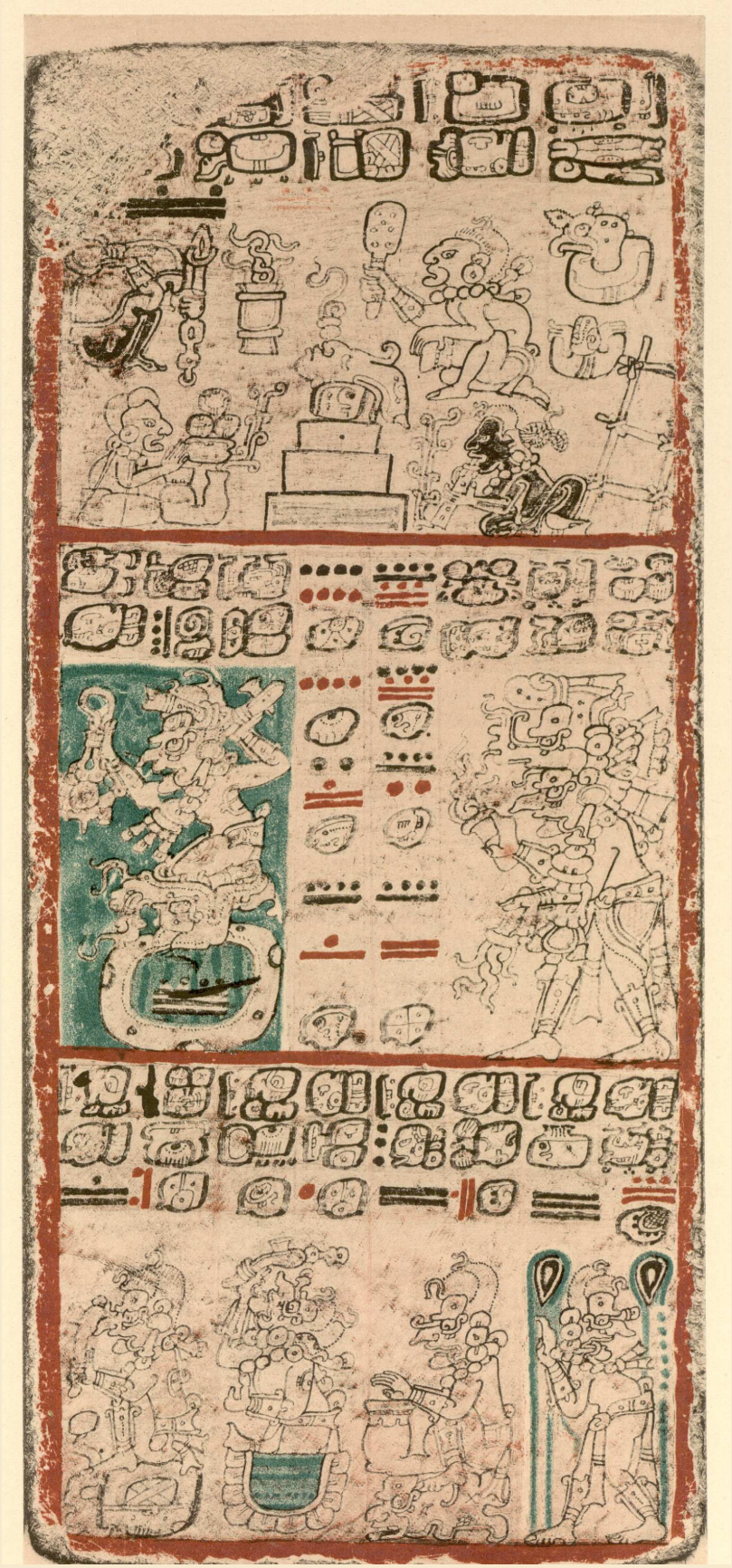

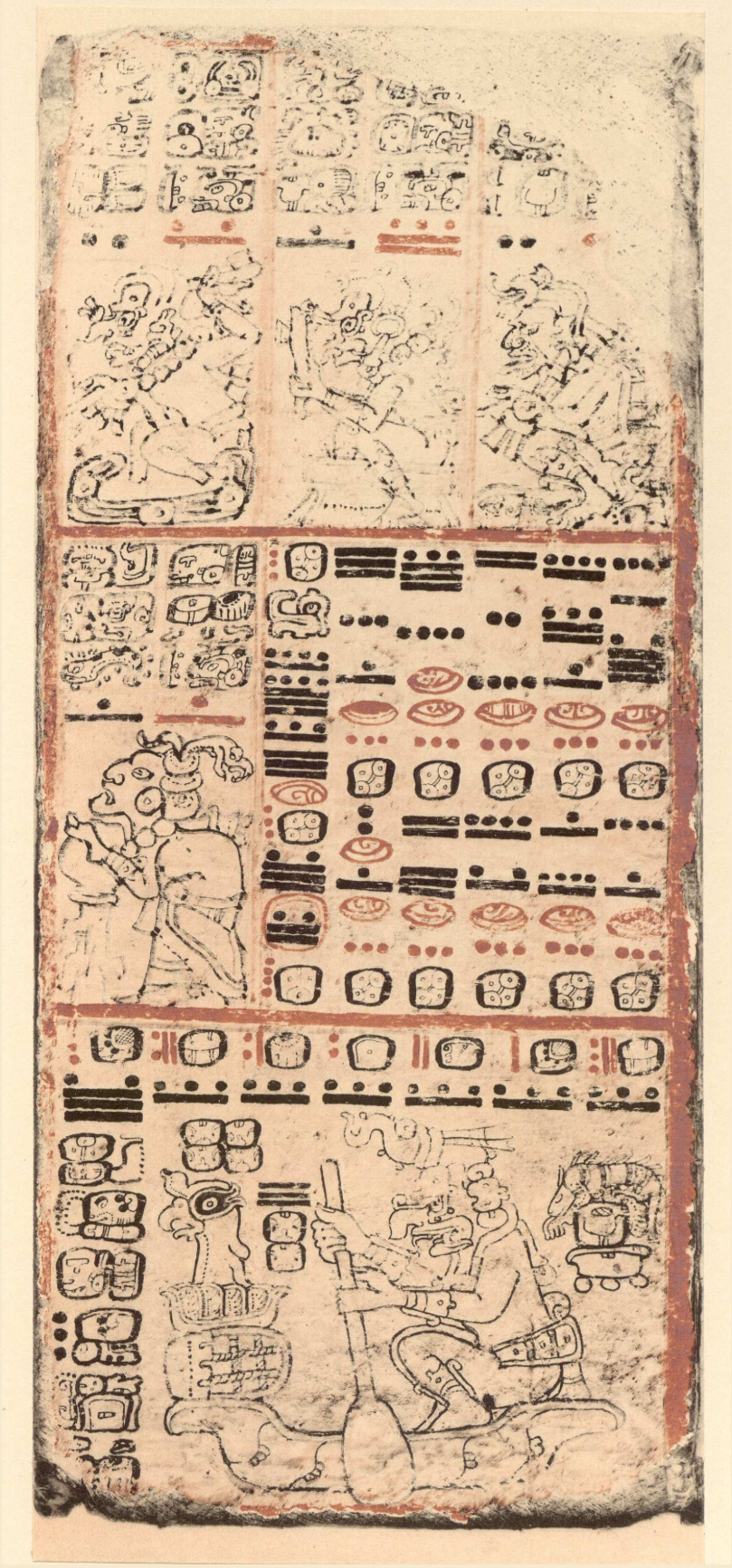

Notes

The **Dresden Codex**, also known as the *Codex Dresdensis*, is a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh or twelfth century of the Yucatecan Maya in Chichén Itzá. This Maya codex is believed to be a copy of an original text of some three or four hundred years earlier. It is the oldest book written in the Americas known to historians. Of the hundreds of books that were used in Mesoamerica before the Spanish invasion, it is one of few that have survived to the present day.

There were many books in existence at the time of the Spanish invasion of Yucatán in the 16th century, however most were destroyed by the Spanish invaders and Catholic priests. In particular, many in Yucatán were ordered destroyed by Bishop Diego de Landa in July of 1562. De Landa wrote:

> *''We found a large number of books in these characters and, as they contained nothing in which were not to be seen as superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they regretted to an amazing degree, and which caused them much affliction."*

There are only three codices whose authenticity is beyond doubt. These are:

1. The Madrid Codex, also known as the Tro-Cortesianus Codex (112 pages, 6.82 meters (22.4 feet));
2. **The Dresden Codex** or *Codex Dresdensis* (74 pages, 3.56 meters (11.7 feet)); **reproduced in this book**, and
3. The Paris Codex, also known as the Peresianus Codex (22 pages, 1.45 meters (4.8 feet)).

The Dresden Codex is considered the most complete of the three indisputably authentic Maya codices. The names of the codices indicate where they are housed. The Dresden Codex is made from Amatl paper ("kopó", fig-bark that has been flattened and covered with a lime paste), doubled in folds in an accordion-like form (sometimes called leporello) of folding-screen texts. The codex of bark paper is coated with fine stucco or gesso and is eight inches high by eleven feet long.

The Dresden Codex totals 78 pages on 39 double-sided sheets, with an overall length of 3.56 meters (11.7 feet). Four pages are empty. Each sheet measures 20.5 centimeters (8.1 in) by 10.0 centimeters (3.9 in). Originally, the codex had been accordion-folded. Since 1835 it has been exhibited in two parts, each of them preserved between glass panes. The first part contains 20 sheets, the second 19.

The codex was written by six different scribes using both sides. They all had their own particular writing style, glyphs and subject matter. The images of the codex were painted with extraordinary clarity using very fine brushes. The basic colors used for the codex, made of vegetable dyes, were red, black and the so-called Mayan blue (■).

Around 250 of the approximately 350 signs of the Dresden Codex have been decoded. Most of them refer to the accompanying figures. They comment on the images in short phrases. There are also numbers, consisting of bars (meaning "five"), dots (meaning "one") and stylized shells (meaning "zero").

The Dresden Codex contains astronomical tables of great accuracy. It is most famous for its Lunar Series and Venus table. The lunar series has intervals correlating

with eclipses. The Venus Table correlates with the apparent movements of the planet. The codex also contains almanacs, astronomical and astrological tables, and ritual schedules. The specific numen references have to do with a 260-day ritual cycle divided up in several ways. The Dresden Codex also includes instructions concerning new-year ceremonies as well as descriptions of the Rain God's locations.

The Dresden Codex is held in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek (SLUB), the state library in Dresden, Germany. Johann Christian Götze, Director of the Royal Library at Dresden, purchased the codex from a private owner in Vienna in 1739. It was described, at the time of acquisition, as a "Mexican book." How it came to Vienna is unknown. It is speculated that it was sent by Hernán Cortés as a tribute to King Charles I of Spain in 1519. Charles had appointed Cortés Governor and Captain General of the newly conquered Mexican territory. The codex has been in Europe ever since.

Such codices were primary written records of Maya civilization, together with the many inscriptions on stone monuments and stelae that survived. With their destruction, the opportunity for insight into some key areas of Maya life has been greatly diminished.

This reproduction in your hands is Mayan ancient knowledge that has transcended time and survived extermination.