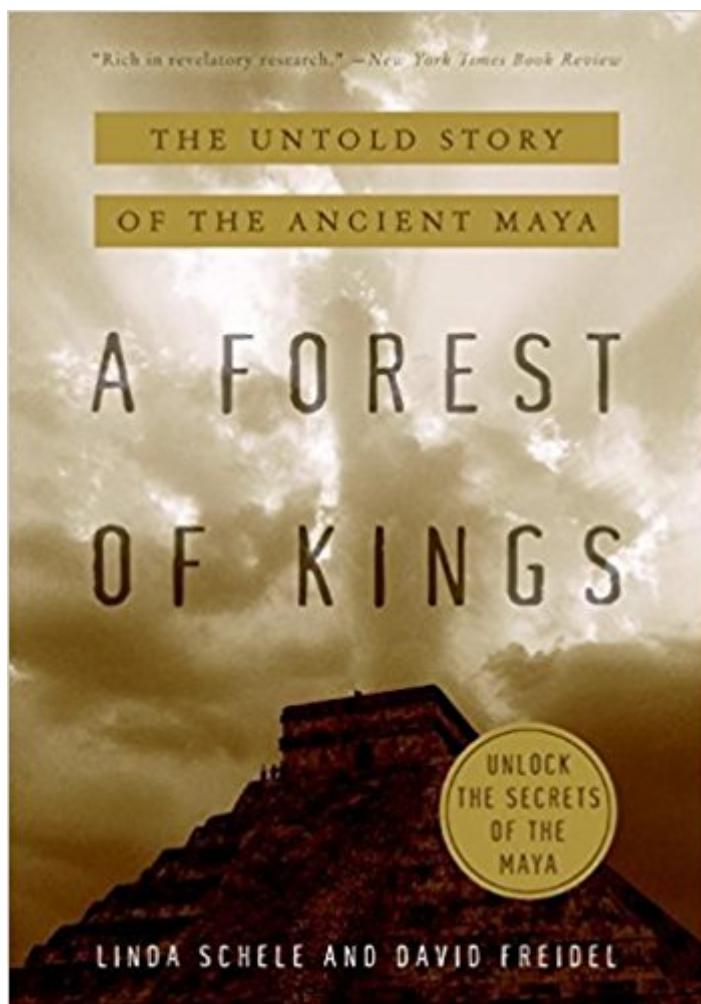


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A Forest Of Kings: The Untold Story Of The Ancient Maya



Synopsis

The recent interpretation of Maya hieroglyphs has given us the first written history of the New World as it existed before the European invasion. In this book, two of the first central figures in the massive effort to decode the glyphs, Linda Schele and David Freidel, make this history available in all its detail. *A Forest of Kings* is the story of Maya kingship, from the beginning of its institution and the first great pyramid builders two thousand years ago to the decline of Maya civilization and its destruction by the Spanish. Here the great historic rulers of pre-Columbian civilization come to life again with the decipherment of their writing. At its height, Maya civilization flourished under great kings like Shield-Jaguar, who ruled for more than sixty years, expanding his kingdom and building some of the most impressive works of architecture in the ancient world. Long placed on a mist-shrouded pedestal as austere, peaceful stargazers, the Maya elites are now known to have been the rulers of populous, aggressive city-states. Hailed as "a Rosetta stone of Maya civilization" (Brian M. Fagan, author of *People of the Earth*), *A Forest of Kings* is "a must for interested readers," says Evon Vogt, professor of anthropology at Harvard University.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Two Maya archeologists base this tale of war, expansion and ritual on recently deciphered Mayan hieroglyphics and artifacts. According to PW, the authors "vividly conjure the Maya world of cyclical time and multiple levels of reality, a universe where all things are alive with meaning." Illustrated.

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The mystique of the pre-Columbian Maya has prompted much speculation about the nature of this sophisticated people. With the recent breaking of their elaborate hieroglyphic code, Schele and Freidel, Mayan scholars of note, provide a new look at the Maya. Structured on sound scholarly principles, their presentation abounds in notes, references, indexes, and chronologies with profuse line-drawings of temple and other inscriptions. They devote a chapter to each of the major Mayan city-states. What makes this volume more accessible and of greater impact than the average scholarly study are the frequent vignettes of great events, kingly acts, etc., told dramatically, in a fictive but plausible style that allows the ancient Maya at last to speak for themselves.

Recommended for informed laypersons, as well as specialist and YA readers. See also William Ferguson and others' Mesoamerica's Ancient Cities, reviewed in this issue, p. 122.--Ed.- Jo-Ann D. Suleiman, Sanad Support Technologies, Rock ville, Md. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Having just returned from the Yucatan Peninsula and explored Tulum and Chitzan Itza, this book is an extremely well researched and documented history of the Mayan Civilization. Likely not one for the casual reader, but I'm a student of history and this definitely fills the bill.

really enjoy the in depth study and examination of the ancient maya. Good for those looking for details and meanings of these sacred sites.

Excellent. Engagingly written and scholarly, yet accessible for someone like me with no background in ancient Maya culture. Probably the best up-to-date comprehensive overview of the subject.

Very detailed. I learned a lot about Mayan culture before our trip to Mexico. A little too academic from time to time

My first love in archaeology was the reading about the ancient Maya. I still find information about their culture fascinating though I have never worked in that area in my archaeological experience. This is a very interesting book for those who want more than just a 'coffee table' view of Maya ruins and culture.

It is so sad that we have lost Linda Schele. But we can rejoice that we still have her wonderful books. This book is among her best. It is almost magical in the way she and David Freidel create

the atmosphere of the Mayan culture. There are wonderful pictures and illustrations. She unfolds the stories of the archaeological discoveries and then helps us understand the real lives revealed in the evidence. The book also shows how the Mayan glyphs and counting systems work. There are nowadays very good texts on the writing system itself, but this book shows us how the glyphs are woven into the culture and religion of these people. We learn how the lineage worked and how the monuments were used as what we would call propaganda to support one line over other possibilities. We learn about the role of magic and visions and the way the leaders were the empowered by those visions. There is just so much here that any reader will be richly rewarded. The Mayan civilization is incredibly fascinating because it is so foreign to our own and yet it is a part of the heritage of the American continents. This book isn't just a text, it is a work of art in itself. You will have a hard time putting it down.

10 chapters
Approximately 40 rulers in dynasty timelines (12 rulers in each of 4 lists)
Main cities of the Yucatan Peninsula and south to Guatemala including Tikal, Naranja, and Carachol with list on pg 168
Palenque dynasty on 219
Copan 311
Chichen Itza 362
Rule of brothers
1st Chapter Geography
2nd Chapter Calendar count
3rd Chapter Temple Architecture
4th Chapter Expanding empire
Tikal against Uaxactun 700AD
5th Chapter Carachol
6th Chapter Mythology
First beginnings
Palenque 3000BC
7th Chapter Contested succession
Yaxchilan
8th Chapter End of Copan
9th Chapter Chichen Itza foreign influence from Mexico and Spain
10th Chapter Last stelae (stone inscriptions) in many cities
900AD
First stelae dates to 50BC
Only a few color photographs. Most pictures are small, detailed black and white outlines.
Glossary of gods and notes in the back. (pg 400-500)
Main gods are mother, father tree of life, first son water monster (crocodile?), second son smoking mirror with an ax through forehead and a serpent foot associated with witz monster (mountain) and maize, third son who is second born? jaguar sun is probably a fire type. Sacred tree is ceiba which grows out of caves. This is associated with the father and mother of the gods.
As for the calendar, no doomsday stuff here associated with the end of the age in 2012. While the end period is a time of change and fear, there is also a belief in the renewal and cycling of the world.
There are a lot of place names and the names of the Mayas are difficult to grasp as they are foreign as well. This book is not an easy read, but there are short imaginative segments included that narrate a victory celebration, etc. Forest of Kings can get monotonous, repetitive, with blood sacrifices all over the place.
1990. There is a newer book out Chronology of Kings from 2000 that is supposed to include dynasty lists with 250 names. It is half the size of this book at 250 pgs. I haven't read it. There may also be some better picture books out there. That said, Forest of Kings gives a

good summary of the regions it does cover and links them with both wars and alliances. the book is not a dictionary but does enable you to read some glyphs. I bought Thompson's 1965 guide for further vocabulary and Maya religion. Thompson's is not the best organized or perhaps most accurate and updated book. Sir Eric Thompson thought the calendar dates were all that could be read from the rocks. Personal names and events like births, accessions, and war trophies are not mentioned. Have fun exploring!

very good overview of the culture, easy to understand

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