



A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya

By David Freidel, Linda Schele

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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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

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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From Library Journal

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.*

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About the Author

David Freidel has been a Maya archaeologist for twenty years. He teaches at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

Linda Schele was a well-known authority on Maya writing and art, and the co-author of many books on the Maya including *The Blood of Kings* and *The Code of Kings*. She died in 1998.

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