



# IMS Explorer

A monthly newsletter published by the **Institute of Maya Studies**



May 20, 2009 • Maya Long Count: 12.19.16.6.9 • 6 Muluk 7 Sip • G3

An affiliate of the Miami Science Museum

## Fruit from the Chocolate Tree

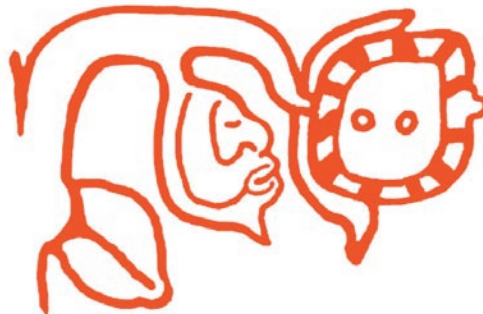
by **Dr. Michael Grofe**

University of California at Davis

I came to study the Maya through my interest in cacao. As a graduate student of anthropology, I took a side job as an apprentice to a chocolatier south of San Francisco. When I soon found myself as the new owner of the small company, I became interested in the natural and cultural history of cacao as a way to familiarize myself with the origins of this tantalizing "food of the gods". I was particularly fascinated with the little known Mesoamerican origins of cacao, and this soon became an excuse to study the ancient Maya. One result of this has



Almost human head-like, cacao pods hang in a tree at Palenque.



Anthropomorphic cacao pod from K5615.

Detail from K4331. Maize deity as anthropomorphic cacao tree. After Coe and Coe (1996).



been an exploration of the mythology related to cacao among the Maya, recently published on FAMSI (Grofe 2009). See full report at: [www.famsi.org/research/grofe](http://www.famsi.org/research/grofe).

I was initially surprised that cacao did not feature more prominently in the *Popol Vuh*, the K'iche' Maya creation story. However, Karl Taube (1985) and Sophie and Michael Coe (1996) both noted that some iconographic images from Classic Period ceramics reveal a curious association between the Maize God and a cacao tree. Simon Martin (2006) has since explored this association further. Taube first suggested that the Maize God is the counterpart of Hun Hunahpu in the *Popol Vuh*, whose head is hung in a barren tree after his defeat by the Lords of Death in the underworld of *Xibalba*. In fact, one vase from Nebah, K5615, depicts a cacao tree with the head of the Maize God transforming into a cacao pod. Yet another stone, gourd-shaped vessel (K4331) shows the Maize God himself as a personified cacao tree.

In the *Popol Vuh*, the underworld maiden, *Xkik'*, is impregnated by the head in the tree when it spits into her hand, and she later gives birth to the Hero Twins, who return to *Xibalba* to defeat the Lords of Death. At a celebration intended to bring about their end, the Hero Twins consent to being burned by the Lords of Death in a fire used to boil fermented fruit wine. Following this, their bones are

*continued on page 4*

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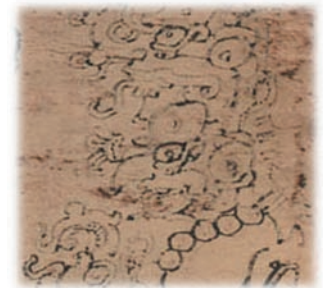
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### IMS General Meeting May 20:



**"Maya Creation Mythology: A Post-classic Perspective"**  
with **Dr. Gabrielle Vail**



**Jim Reed,**  
Editor

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## A Letter from Our IMS President: *To Our Faithful Readers*

As you may have noticed, we changed the original title of our monthly publication, plainly known as *Newsletter*, and changed it to *IMS Explorer*. Our editor Jim Reed not only provides the exciting articles that appear month after month, but has shown his design talents in the new masthead and overall "look and feel" of our publication.

We have had complimentary comments like "It says exactly what the IMS organization is all about," and some from others who believe "why change it when it's been called the *Newsletter* for over 30 years?" It is my belief that stagnation is the killer of all good ideas. Our monthly newsletter has been published for more than three decades. If you compare its look now to that of 30 years ago, you will immediately notice how far we've come. It *is* time to give our best communication publication a new name!

Notice that Jim added a small map of the Americas to his masthead design, to show that we not only cover the Maya and Mesoamerica, but report on anything new and important archaeologically involving indigenous cultures in all of the Americas. He also has designed the masthead to include an image that will change each month to feature any "exploration" IMS members are aware of, or any particular image of relevance. We encourage you to send in your favorite photo for possible publication as our "Explorer image of the month."

We are moving forward as a group devoted to research. Our yearly visits to the Maya world have produced a wealth of information that we are translating into written research projects. *See our new publication below!* We consider ourselves "explorers" of this magnificent world of the original peoples of the Americas.

Please let Jim or me know if you agree with our new look and newsletter name choice. We promise you that the content will remain as good as ever!

([mayaman@bellsouth.net](mailto:mayaman@bellsouth.net) or [siliobarber@bellsouth.net](mailto:siliobarber@bellsouth.net))

Marta Barber, *President*

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### On the Cover:

Featured  
*IMS Explorer*  
image of the

month: Workers uncover a prehistoric canoe at Weedon Island Preserve.



See full story on page 6.

### Available now!

Announcing a new publication of the **Institute of Maya Studies**



### ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF LINTEL BEAMS IN MAYA BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

By Joaquín J. Rodríguez III, PE, SECB



A Joint Project of  
The Institute of Maya Studies  
and  
The Broward County Archaeological Society

This publication concludes several years of research. It concerns stress analysis and proportional reviews of structural lintel beams in Maya buildings, a topic rarely studied by archaeologists.

As an archaeologist friend said, "We are not engineers." We are happy at the IMS to count among our members (and past presidents) a structural engineer who also happens to have a passion for the Maya!

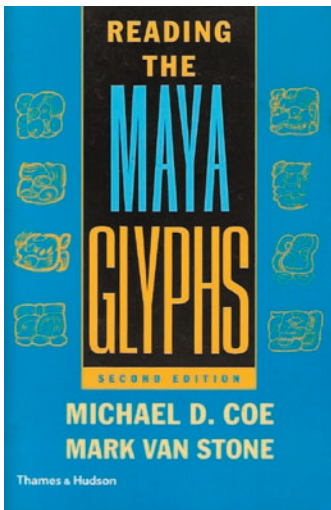
The lintels reviewed are those built from stone (cursorily) and from wood (in detail). The wood lintels reviewed include simply supported and fixed-ends.

The paper involves evaluation of construction techniques and statistical analysis of reduced data. We have taken into consideration a comparison of techniques and levels of technology along a chronological time line and across cultural and political subgroups. We have also attempted an interpretation of cultural trends.

### Analysis and Evaluation of Lintel Beams in Maya Building Construction

42 pgs with a Forward by Dr. D. Clark Wernecke, University of Texas and Afterward by Dr. Ed. Kurjack, professor emeritus at Western Illinois University.

\$15 plus S&H available from the IMS. To order contact Marta Barber, [siliobarber@bellsouth.net](mailto:siliobarber@bellsouth.net)

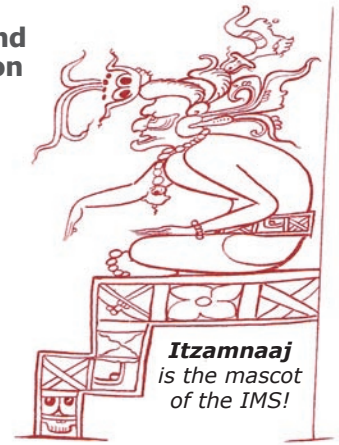


# Reading the Maya Glyphs

by Michael D. Coe, with  
illustrations by Mark Van Stone

Second  
Edition

*In the recent past, a working knowledge of the Maya script has been confined to epigraphers, art historians and other specialists. It's very unfamiliarity to the general public, and the daunting aspect of its approximately 800 signs, have made the system appear more complex and arcane than it really is. Reading the Maya Glyphs is a compact, portable guide to enable students, tourists and armchair travellers to read and understand commonly encountered Classic Maya texts. Topics covered include the nature of the script, the intricate Maya calendar, dynastic and political texts, and every aspect of the natural and supernatural world in which the Maya lived.*



**Itzamnaaj**  
is the mascot  
of the IMS!

Once designated "God D," this deity is known to be **Itzamnaaj**, the supreme creator deity, the originator of writing, and consort of the old goddess Ix Chel.

Written by the world's leading authority in Maya studies, Michael D. Coe, and illustrated with the drawings of Mark Van Stone, one of America's outstanding calligraphers, the book presupposes no previous training in Maya epigraphy or archaeology. Whether in the hands of visitors to the great Maya sites of Mexico and Central America or consulted by museum-goers, this guide should enhance their appreciation some of the world's greatest art and architecture.



The codical form of his name glyph takes the phonetic complement **na**, from these examples inscribed on Maya monuments.

## From the Preface, Michael Coe writes:

"As in Egypt, among the Maya there was a strong linkage between text and picture, one providing a commentary on the other, and the reader to whom this book is directed will be well rewarded when he or she discovers that relationship in a particular stela or tablet. The fact that a ruler or scribe who lived over a thousand years ago can speak to us across the gulf of time and space, and be understood, is a reward in itself.

"We have presumed no previous knowledge of the Maya or their script. Our aim has been to take the reader step by step into decipherment, with examples taken from real texts. Our hope is that the amateur traveler visiting the Maya sites, and perhaps even the beginning and intermediate student, will be able through this manual to read relatively simple texts, and to gain a deeper understanding of the remarkable civilization that produced them.

"The junior author, Mark Van Stone, a trained calligrapher, has produced nearly all of the drawings in this book. For each and every glyph, he has tried to find order in the variation, concentrating on the distinctive features which differentiate that sign from all others."

## Logograms with phonetic complements

"To aid in their reading, logograms are usually accompanied by one or more syllabograms; as a rule, these latter are added to affixes to the main signs. The syllabograms may express the first sound of

-  **wi-WITZ** *witz*  
"hill"
-  **BAHLAM-m(a)**  
*bahlam* "jaguar"
-  **ka-KAN**  
*kan* "snake"
-  **wi-WINIK-k(i)**  
*winik* "man, human"

the logograms, or the last, or both together, or even the entire phonetic equivalent of the word. And, given the Maya writing system, they may not even substitute for the logogram itself." At left, some examples from page 24 of the book.

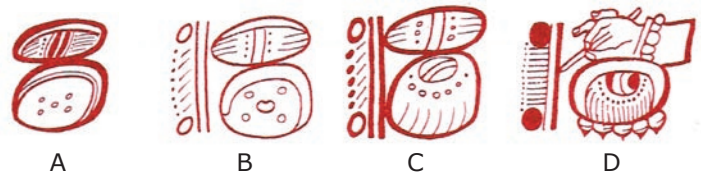
## In an email to the IMS Editor, Mark Van Stone writes:

About my contribution to *Reading the Maya Glyphs*:

When Mike first asked me to co-author, I was under the impression that he wanted me to write as well as draw ... Linda Schele quickly disabused me of that notion: "Mike is the best and most concise writer in our field. You couldn't possibly explain anything as well as he can." 'Twas true; he wrote the main text and consigned to me the illustrations. However, I did contribute a few paragraphs to Chapter 10, as I was more up-to-date on the reading of the vase inscriptions than he.

The illustrations consist for the main part of drawings of individual glyphs. I developed my method of inscriptional rendering under Linda's able tutelage. She had first asked me to draw a few illustrations for *Code of Kings*, and I remember the process well: After tracing a photograph to the best of my ability with drafting pens on a light-board, I'd photocopy and present it to her. She'd mark it up, in red, correcting

*continued on page 5*



**Users of brush pens:** As can be seen here, the signatures of great Maya artists appear on Late Classic stone monuments. Artist-scribes were also proud to put their names and titles on Late Classic pictorial vases. More importantly, in Classic Mayan and throughout the Mayan linguistic family, exactly the same word is used for "writing" and for "painting." This is **tz'i-b(i)**, *tz'ib*, written as above (A). Adding the male proclitic *aj-* to this glyph produced the title of the painter or scribe:

- (B): **AJ-tz'i-b(i)** *aj-tz'ib*
- (C): **AJ-tz'i-b(a) (-li)** *aj-tz'ib(-al)*
- (D): **AJ-TZ'IB-b(a) (-li)** *aj-tz'ib*

"the scribe, the painter" from pages 94-95.



# Fruit from the Chocolate Tree

by Dr. Michael Grofe *continued from page 1*

pulverized on a *metate*, and poured into a river. The Lords of Death thought the twins would never return, but in five days, they both reappeared as two fish-men, or catfish, which then transformed back into disguised human forms. The twins knew that this process was designed precisely as a recipe for rebirth, and it was they who convinced the advisors of the Lords of Death to dispose of them in this way.

## Metaphors and cacao glyphs

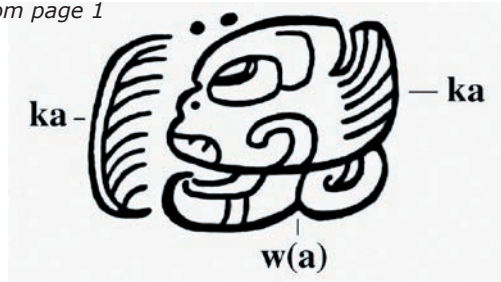
As I read this chapter from the *Popol Vuh*, I was struck by what appears to be a metaphorical account of the processing of cacao. If the father of the twins is likened to a cacao pod, his children seem to have been equated with cacao seeds, which are removed from the pod, fermented, roasted, ground, and mixed with water. Furthermore, the transformation of the twins into two fish may itself be a pun on the word *kakaw*, which sounds like the words *ka* "two" and *kar* or *kay* "fish" in many spoken Mayan languages.

Indeed, in the hieroglyphic script, the word *kakaw* is partially written with two glyphs derived from an image of a fish or a fish fin, representing the syllable **ka**, with the addition of a syllabic **wa** suffix.

In some cases, the two-dotted reduplication symbol appears before a single **ka** fish glyph, indicating that the following glyph is to be repeated twice. In other instances, only a single, abbreviated fish glyph comes to represent *kakaw*. In a famous rare example from the Rio Azul cacao pot, *kakaw* is written using both versions of the **ka** glyphs, as well as the reduplication symbol (see glyph at top of middle column). Since puns derive from similar sounding words, it would seem that the written form of cacao may have reinforced and echoed a spoken pun, while it is unlikely that the glyphs themselves would have been intentionally chosen to encode this pun.

Puns are widely evident in Mayan literature, particularly puns on food in the *Books of the Chilam Balam*. While we can not definitively prove that the authors of the *Popol Vuh*, or the Maya of the Classic

●●●●● Period for that matter,



*Cacao glyph from Río Azul cacao pot. After Coe and Coe (1996).*

observed a pun on *kakaw*, the case for the transformation of the twins as a metaphor for cacao processing supports this idea.

Furthermore, this story provides insight into the symbolic value of cacao as a sacrament that is evocative of rebirth, and the self-sacrifice of the twins. We can certainly trace antecedents of this story within the Classic period, and I have attempted to do this in the course of my research.

## The GI and Venus connection

One particularly compelling association can be found in the figure of GI from the Palenque Triad, who is an anthropomorphic fish-man (see glyph top of right column). As David Kelley (1965) first noticed, GI is associated with both the planet Venus and the Central Mexican Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, born on the date 9-Wind. From the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, we find a story of the self-immolation of Quetzalcoatl that parallels that of the Hero Twins, where Quetzalcoatl burns himself on a pyre, enters the water, and four days later, his heart rises in the east as the planet Venus. Hunahpu, and his Classic Period counterpart Hun Ajaw, is similarly associated with the planet Venus, and in the Dresden Codex, the day 1-Ajaw is directly related to the first appearance of Venus as "Morning Star".

Therefore, it would seem that all of these stories reflect the astronomical phenomenon of the inferior conjunction of Venus, when Venus appears to dive into the burning sun in the evening, symbolically "reborn" in the morning several days later.

The mythological stories of the ancient Maya are recognizably interwoven with their astronomical observations, and it was likewise cacao that inspired my interest in this area of study in another



*Michael Grofe studying his drawings of glyphs that he transformed into delectable edibles.*

*GI portrait (T1011) after Looper in Macri and Looper (2003).*



way. As I was dipping handmade chocolates, the shiny, melted chocolate fell onto sheets of parchment, reminding me of the smooth curves of Maya glyphs. It was then that I conceived of sculpting Maya glyphs and casting them into molds to create chocolate glyphs. I had hoped that this creative project would help to reconnect cacao with its Maya roots. So I arbitrarily chose to sculpt the nineteen glyphs from the Haab' calendar series, simply because of their variety, and that they would make an attractive chocolate box.

As I began to sculpt the Haab' glyphs, I also became curious about their meaning, and I was surprised to learn that their Yucatek names did not always reflect their names as written in the script from the Classic Period. Indeed, even less was known about the original meanings of these glyphs, and I found myself with yet another captivating excuse to study the ancient Maya. Quite unexpectedly, this exploration eventually led to my doctoral work on the astronomical calculations in

*continued on next page*



*Haab' calendar glyphs sculpted into clay and cast in chocolate.*

# Reading the Maya Glyphs

continued from page 3

things I had not seen or misread, and striking out the bits I had fancied but which were not really there. She called the latter "Rorschaching." Sometimes my drawings would end up more red than black. Then I would erase and correct, or simply redraw. This went on for a year or so, until the day she handed me back a drawing lacking any corrections. "Congratulations," she smiled, "Now you can draw."

My final task for her was finishing her Copan stela drawings. You can find them on the *FAMSI.org* website. She had pencil-drawn every stela in 1986, but had only finished a few of them in ink. During the furious activity of her final year (1997-98), when she commissioned us grad students to catalog her slide collection, library, drawings, etc., she tasked me with finishing these. (You can usually spot my signature at the lower right, along with Linda's and the date of completion, and sometimes a log of the hours I spent tracing. Often, though, this scribble was left out of the FAMSI scans.)

## Getting down to the gritty-nitty

I standardized my drawings in RMG: I traced each glyph about an inch square, using three or four different-sized Pigma Micron® pens on drafting mylar. Careful drawing took about an average of 30-40 minutes per glyph. I scanned them at 1200 dpi (grayscale) and then cleaned up in Adobe Photoshop®, often spending as much time cleaning as the original drawing, so I estimate I spent about an hour per glyph. Because I



Various forms of the numeral Zero.



Dresden Codex forms of the numeral Zero. All from page 40 of the book.

wanted the reader to have some idea of the variety and range of shapes, I collected at least two forms of each variety of glyph. A lot of different handwriting styles! Some glyphs have many varieties, so I drew usually from



Note this scan of Mark's beautiful glyphic signature from when *IMS Explorer* Editor Jim Reed asked him to autograph his copy of *Reading the Maya Glyphs* at the *Maya at the Playa Conference*, October 4, 2008. Jim Reed (left) and Mark Van Stone (right). Photo courtesy of Moses Hudon Huicho.



Four variations of Emblem Glyphs from the site of Copan, from page 71 of the book.

three to eight versions of each ... up to twenty for the "u" syllable, which has the most forms. I also noted the source of many of them (Palenque Palace Tablet, etc.). The source data and many of the versions were excised by the editors ("Too cluttered!"), and maybe some electronic third edition of the book may contain a set of "deleted scenes" ... at least in my dreams!

Researching and drawing all the glyphs Mike ordered, in their multifarious forms, was one of the most pleasurable tasks of my adult life!

The final images were transformed to bitmaps and reduced to 5/8" high for printing. The glyphs inserted into the text were shrunk about 3/8", I think.

Mark Van Stone

*Reading the Maya Glyphs*; Michael D. Coe and Mark Van Stone; Thames & Hudson; 176 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-500-28553-4; ISBN-10: 0-500-28553-5. Article condensed by the editor. All glyphic images by Mark Van Stone, used with permission. Some intro book review text from: <http://bookstravellatinamerica.blogspot.com>

## Fruit from the Chocolate Tree

continued from previous page

the Serpent Series from the Dresden Codex.

The Haab' calendar comprises a cycle of 365 days, much like our own measurement of the year, though the Haab' is vigesimal divided into eighteen twenty-day *winals*, with an added five-day period at the end of the year, giving 365 days. Like the 260-day Tzolk'in cycle, the Haab' repeated consecutively and unendingly. Clearly, the Haab' was designed to measure the year, but without any leap year correction, it drifts from its seasonal position in the tropical

year by approximately one day in four years. By the time it reaches one cycle of the 52-year Calendar Round, the Haab' falls thirteen days short of the tropical year anniversary of the starting date. It is reasonable to assume that the Haab' originally corresponded with seasonal positions in the tropical year, but these would have rapidly become obsolete. Nevertheless, the Maya continued to use the Haab' *winal* glyph collocations, while the names of these *winals* appears to have changed over time.

Dr. Michael Grofe is particularly interested in the confluence of mythological narrative and participatory science in Mesoamerica. In his doctoral research at the University of California at Davis, he explored a new astronomical interpretation of the Serpent Series

within the Dresden Codex, and he is currently expanding this research to incorporate the theoretical astronomy found in the Palenque inscriptions. Dr. Grofe is currently teaching anthropology at American River College in Sacramento, CA.

**Dr. Grofe continues this article next month, attempting to tie in an ancient Maya awareness of the cycle of precession. His full bio and references from this article will be included.**

## Travel Warning:

Due to the recent outbreak of Swine Flu, as of Tuesday, April 28, the government of Mexico has closed its archaeological sites and museums in all of the country to the public. All cultural and artistic activities have also been postponed until further notice. For updates, access [www.inah.gob.mx](http://www.inah.gob.mx)

## Recent Archaeology in Florida: 1,100-Year-Old Prehistoric Canoe Found in Pinellas County

Buried in the sand along the shoreline, a prehistoric pine canoe was found on **Weedon Island Preserve**, located on the southeast region of the peninsula that is Pinellas County on Tampa Bay. An early mode of transportation, the canoe is attributed to the late Weedon (alt. spelling) Island Culture of Florida Gulf Coast dwellers.

Measuring 39'-11" in length, (but believed to have been upwards of 45' in total), the pine canoe holds the distinction of being the longest prehistoric canoe ever

found in Florida. The canoe features a raised bow that indicates it was used on open water. Under the canoe, a pine pole, used perhaps for paddling, poling, and/or docking the canoe, was also unearthed and dated to the same prehistoric period, approximately 1,100 years ago.

The principal archaeological investigator is Phyllis E. Kolianos, M.A., R.P.A, manager for the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. She worked with local Pinellas County resident, Harold Koran, the first to discover

"This discovery expands our understanding and the significance of the not-well-known people of the Weedon Island Culture," said Dr. Bruce Rinker, Environmental Lands director for Pinellas County.

the canoe while fishing among the Weedon Island Preserve's mangroves. Since the discovery, Pinellas County has arduously taken every step to document, conserve, and protect the canoe and pole as well as the non-peat environment that is the archaeological site.

Source: Condensed by the editor from an article at [www.weedonislandpreserve.org](http://www.weedonislandpreserve.org).



## Join in Maya-related Exhibition and Workshops at the Weedon Island Preserve

May 3, 2009: Opening for the exhibition **Woven Threads through Time: Maya Women, Weavers, and Their Stories** 1 to 4 pm at Weedon Island Preserve, St. Petersburg, FL.

Attend a discussion of the exhibition by curator Dr. Gabrielle Vail; videos showing traditional Maya weavers in Guatemala; a demonstration of backstrap weaving by master weaver Concepción Poo Coy Tharin; and activities for kids of all ages. The exhibit will be open from May 3 through August 31, 2009. Visit [www.weedonisland-preserve.org/pagesHTML/about/about2000.htm](http://www.weedonisland-preserve.org/pagesHTML/about/about2000.htm) for directions and further information.

### Workshops in conjunction with the Woven Threads exhibition:

**Maya Weaving Workshop** at Weedon Island Preserve. A six-hour workshop that meets on May 16 and May 23, 2009:

Learn the basic techniques of weaving with the traditional backstrap loom, used by Maya women for over a millennium. Participants will work on creating a table runner under the expert guidance of master weaver Concepción Poo Coy Tharin from the Cobán region of Guatemala. Beginners welcome. For ages 16 and up. Cost: \$100 (tuition, plus loom and materials).

### Maya Hieroglyphic Texts: Exploring the Lives of Royal

**Maya Women** at Weedon Island Preserve. A six-hour

workshop that meets on June 13 and June 20, 2009:

Join epigrapher Gabrielle Vail for an in-depth look at hieroglyphic texts detailing the lives of royal women from Classic period Maya civilization who lived during the fifth through eighth centuries CE. Workshop participants will learn to decipher dates in the Maya calendar, read simple clauses, and take part

in discussions about recent advances in the field of decipherment that allow us to translate these centuries-old texts. Enrollment limited to 20. No experience necessary but must be 16 or older to participate. Cost: \$90, plus \$10 for the workbook.

For more information about any of these events, contact Weedon Island Preserve at 727-453-6500.

### Extended Program Abstract for IMS Meeting May 20, 8 pm:

#### "Maya Creation Mythology: A Post-classic Perspective" with Dr. Gabrielle Vail, New College of Florida

The surviving Maya codices, which are believed to have been painted in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, record texts that focus on a variety of themes including divination and prophecy, weather, planting and other agricultural pursuits, and celestial events. To determine auspicious and inauspicious days for different types of activities, the daykeeper or diviner consulted sacred texts contained within the codices, consisting of data compiled by scribes over a period of many generations, dating back into the Classic period and referencing much earlier (mythological) time.

#### Biography:

Dr. Vail specializes in the study of prehispanic Maya culture, specifically as it is understood through hieroglyphic books (codices)

that feature texts pertaining to astronomical and divinatory topics. She holds research positions at New College of Florida (where she is also an adjunct member of the faculty) and the Middle American Research Institute at Tulane University. Her most recent publications include *The Madrid Codex: New Approaches to Understanding an Ancient Maya Manuscript*, co-edited with Anthony Aveni (released in paperback in 2009 by University Press of Colorado); *The New Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs, Volume Two: The Codical Texts*, with Martha Macri (forthcoming from University of Oklahoma Press), and a chapter in *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage* (John Wiley and Sons, 2009). Her analysis of the content of the Maya codices is also available through the Maya Hieroglyphic Codices Website at [www.mayacodices.org](http://www.mayacodices.org).

# Institute of Maya Studies' Line-up of Presentations!

## May 13: IMS Explorer Session (Classroom-style):



Architectonic elements at Kakab photographed by Larry (inset) resemble the same Late Classic Puuc style evident at Tekax and other nearby Maya sites.

### "In Search of Ancient Maya Cities"

with **Larry S. Marks**

Join former IMS President Larry Marks as he recounts his "deep back in the woods" Maya adventure to the little-known site of **Kakab** in the Puuc Hills of the Yucatán. Apparently named after a type of red soil in the area (the type that shows evidence of ancient human habitation), this Late Classic period site is nine miles from Uxmal and near the quaint Maya village of San Simón.

After his slide presentation on Kakab, Larry will share the DVD video "Who Killed the Maya? – The Vanished Civilization" in which a famous archaeologist discusses the re-discovery of the Lost City of Masuul and the demise of the Maya. Larry will sort out all of the mystery for you!



The emblem glyph representing the name of Masuul. References to the Masuul kingdom are found not only in hieroglyphic inscriptions at Naachtun, but also on scattered monuments throughout Guatemala and Mexico.

## May 20: IMS Presentation (in the Museum Auditorium):

### "Maya Creation Mythology: A Post-classic Perspective"

with **Dr. Gabrielle Vail, New College of Florida**

What is of particular interest with respect to the almanacs and tables contained in the Maya codices is that events associated with creation (such as the establishment of the original celestial hearth, dated by Quirigua Stela C to 3114 BC, and the setting up of world trees to support the sky following a flood described in the *Books of Chilam Balam*) are recurring events that, although deriving their meaning from mythological accounts, provided a framework to guide the lives of the Classic and Post-classic Maya.

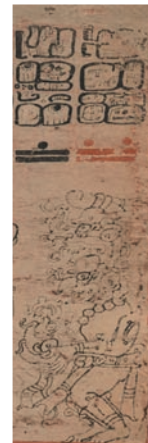
This presentation explores the ways in which imagery and textual references to key events in creation stories inform our understanding not only of the Maya codices, but also of painted murals from Late Post-classic contexts, in particular those from the site of Santa Rita on Chetumal Bay in present-day Belize.



The rain god Chaak with his K'awil lightning axe emerging from the open mouth of a serpent whose body forms a cenote or other body of water (Dresden 35b).

See more of Dr. Vail's program abstract and complete bio at bottom of opposite page.

Chaak conjures K'awil, who represents his lightning axe and the god of sustenance. In creation mythology, K'awil is the deity responsible for rescuing cacao and other fruits and seeds needed for humans to survive from the Underworld realm (Dresden 65a).



**The Institute Maya Studies** • All meetings are Wednesdays • 8-9:30 PM • Miami Science Museum 3280 South Miami Avenue, across from Vizcaya • \$6 donation requested from non-members Inquire about IMS Membership benefits • Maya Hotline: 305-235-1192

Note our new Website address: [www.instituteofmayastudies.org](http://www.instituteofmayastudies.org)

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## Upcoming Events at the IMS:

### May 6: **IMS Board Meeting**

All IMS members are welcome to attend.

### May 13: *IMS Explorer Session*

#### **"In Search of Ancient Maya Cities"** –

Join former IMS President **Larry S. Marks** as he recounts his back-woods Maya adventure in search of the Late Classic site of Kakab in the Puuc Hills of the Yucatán. After his slide presentation, Larry will share the video *"Who Killed the Maya? – The Vanished Civilization"* where a famous archaeologist discusses the re-discovery of the Lost City of Masuul and the demise of the Maya.

### May 20: *IMS Presentation in the Auditorium*

#### **"Maya Creation Mythology: A Post-classic Perspective"** –

Explore recurring creation events that, although deriving their meaning from mythological accounts, provided a framework to guide the lives of the Classic and Post-classic Maya. **Dr. Gabrielle Vail**, of New College of Florida, explores the ways in which imagery and textual references to key events in creation stories inform our understanding not only of the Maya codices, but also of painted murals. See full program abstract on pages 6 and 7.

## Upcoming Events and Announcements:

### May 15–16: *Conference*

#### **"Continuity and Change in Mesoamerican History from the Pre-classic to the Colonial Era"** –

Theme of the 2009 Conference on Mesoamerica, at California State University, Los Angeles, CA. Conference Keynote Speaker: Prof. David Carrasco  
Get more info at: <http://calstatela2009.conferenceonmesoamerica.blogspot.com>

### June 4 – Dec. 31: *Museum Exhibit*

**"Fragile Memories: Images of Archaeology and Community at Copan, 1891–1900"** – A photo-essay featuring the best visual records of early Peabody expeditions chosen from their recently completed two-year project to digitize over 10,000 19th-century glass-plate negatives, especially from the museum's expeditions to Copan. Peabody Museum of Archaeology, Cambridge, MA. Get more info at: [www.peabody.harvard.edu](http://www.peabody.harvard.edu)

### June 11–12: *Conference*

**"Creating Sustainability in American Southwest Archaeoastronomy Research"** –

Theme of the Conference on Archaeoastronomy of the American Southwest, to be held in Camp Verde, AZ. Get more info at: [www.caasw.org](http://www.caasw.org)



### June 19–21: *Convention*

#### **"The Tombs of the Sacred Lords and the Secrets of Jade"** –

Theme of the World Convention of Maya Archaeology. The event will present a series of lectures by world renowned experts in Maya archaeology and anthropology, such as Arthur Demarest, Federico Fahsen, Mary Louise Ridinger, Christa Schieber de Lavarreda, Miguel Orrego, Francisco Estrada Belí, Jaime Awe and Richard Hansen. In La Antigua, Guatemala. Get more info at: [www.eventosantiguaguatemala.com](http://www.eventosantiguaguatemala.com)

### July 1–3: *Symposium*

#### **"Ancient Maya Ritual and Religion in Belize" and "Archaeology in Belize: Current Research Investigations Results"** –

Themes of the Institute of Archaeology 2009 Belize Archaeology Symposium. Belize City, Belize. Get more info at: <http://sites.google.com/site/belizearchaeologysymposium>

# IMS Explorer

Please note that all articles and news items for the *IMS Explorer* must be submitted to the Newsletter Editor by the second Wednesday of the month. E-mail news items and images to [mayaman@bellsouth.net](mailto:mayaman@bellsouth.net) or forward by postal mail to: Jim Reed, 936 Greenwood Ave NE, Apt. 8, Atlanta, GA 30306