



Volume 13 Number 7 Newsletter July 1988

President: Beth Read Editor: Debra Goldman

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

July's Board of Directors meeting will be held on Thursday, July 21 at 6:00 p.m. at Beth Read's office, 1489 South Miami Avenue. All interested members are welcome to attend.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Dr. Stan Bercovitch, an expert in Biblical Archaeology, will give a presentation at July's meeting. Dr. Bercovitch has taught at Hebrew University in Israel and other universities in the Middle East and Europe and is fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, French, German and Spanish. He has worked on excavations in Lachish, Megido, Tel Chai, Jericho and Jerusalem.

The meeting will be on THURSDAY, JULY 21 at 8:00 p.m. at SIMPSON PARK, 55 S.W. 17th Road (off South Miami Avenue). Call 856-6801 for directions.

BALLOONIST BARBARA

Balloonist Barbara Tansey has been appointed to the A.S.S.F. Board, filling the position vacated by Jack Erne who has moved to Indiana.

Barbara was the only female pilot in the annual hot-air balloon race in Homestead last month. She has graciously donated a balloon ride to the A.S.S.F. to be raffled off at July's meeting (a \$100.00 value!). Tickets are \$1.00 each and can be purchased at the meeting or in advance by sending a check payable to the A.S.S.F., 1489 S. Miami Ave., Miami, FL 33131. As always, proceeds from the ticket sales benefit the A.S.S.F.

YOU NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN THIS FABULOUS RIDE! TICKETS MUST BE PURCHASED BEFORE JULY 21, 1988.

BILTMORE TOUR

The Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables is offering tea and a tour on Sundays, 3 - 5 p.m. The tour includes the Everglades Suite in the 315 foot tower and the possible sighting of one of the Biltmore's rumored ghosts - a 1920's gangster murdered there at a party!

A.S.S.F. FIELD SCHOOL

The first session of the A.S.S.F. Field School was held on June 19. Pits were staked out using a surveyor's transit and excavation began on 3 units. Session 2 is scheduled for Sunday, July 24 beginning at 10:00 a.m. More units will be opened and new members are encouraged to get their hands dirty and discover what South Florida's aboriginal people left behind. Archaeological tools will be available for purchase.

Call Wes at 226-6788 if you would like to attend and for directions to 10 NW 124th Avenue.

F.A.S. BACK ISSUES

F.A.S. back issues are being offered to members for \$3.50 (\$1.50 discount) for single numbers and \$5.00 (\$5.00 discount) for double numbered issues. The back issues are a donation from Wes & Daryl Ries, A.S.S.F. members who have recently moved to Montana! Thanks Wes & Daryl, and good luck! The issues will be available for purchase at our monthly membership meetings. Thanks, too, to Seth Lefkow for the donation of a bottle collection and to Jim Lord for a number of interesting books for June's raffle.

The Tampa Tribune
Thursday, June 16, 1988

Pineland was once holy ground

By GEORGE LANE JR.
Tribune Staff Writer

PINELAND — Long before Florida was a state, even before the first Spanish explorers arrived, people were living on Pine Island Sound at Pineland.

Pineland is the site of a major pre-Columbian religious center. According to a marker that gives a brief history of the area, it's thought to be one of the larger villages of the Calusa Indian civilization.

Calusa tribes dominated the southwest coast of Florida for thousands of years until the coming of the Spanish explorers.

The Pineland mounds, on northwestern Pine Island in Lee County, form a complex of pyramids and other hills that are believed to possess religious significances to the Calusas. A large canal excavated by the Indians connects the site with Matlacha on the eastern shore of Pine Island.

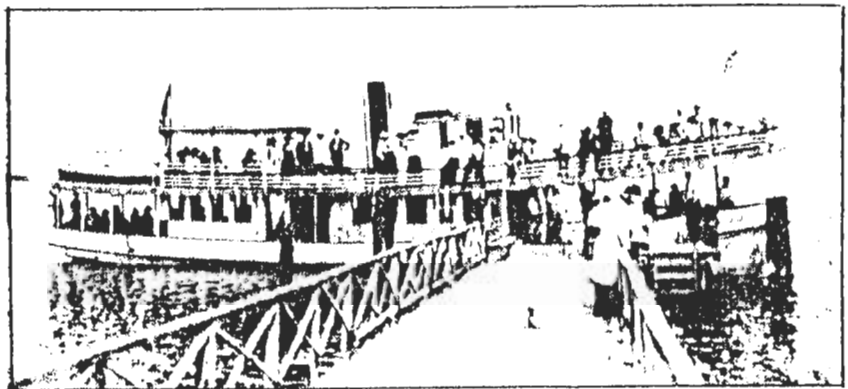
In 1895, archaeologist Frank Cushing traveled to Southwest Florida to investigate and explore the remains of the Calusa civilization.

He visited Pineland — then known as Battey's Landing, and other important coastal sites — including: Demorey's Key (Demere Key), Useppa Island, Johnson's Key (Mound Key) and Key Marco (Marco Island).

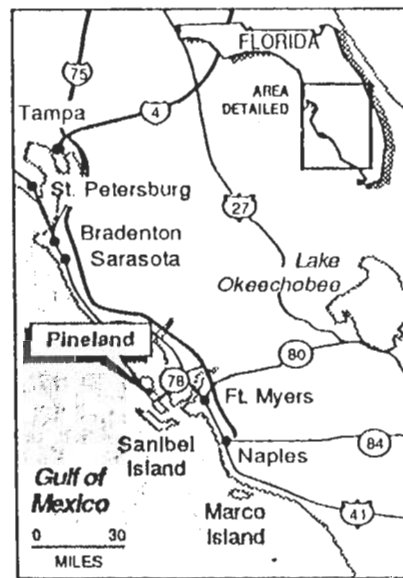
Cushing returned to Marco Island in 1896, unearthing artifacts and wood carvings that are the most important remnants of Calusa civilization discovered to date.

The mounds at Pineland and others like them often provided the early white settlers with a convenient source of road fill.

The mounds also provided high



The Steamer Gladys of the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line served the Pine Island area until the early 1960s.



Tribune map

and dry building sites, as they did in the time of the Calusas, and tend to be preserved when used in this fashion.

Many historical homes and buildings, including the small frame Pineland post office, remain today as reminders of early white settlement here nearly 100 years ago.

Col. Donald H. Randell donated

a small marker and monument site on Pine Island Sound for public review.

Pineland postmaster Kay Hanson says, "This is a quaint, quiet community of close-knit folks. It gets pretty busy around here in the winter months, but the summers are slow and easy with lots of humidity and a few mosquitoes."

She acknowledges that "you've got to almost know where you're going to find us. Pineland is not on the main road."

But she adds, "I love it out here."

The Pineland post office, established Sept. 6, 1902, is the second-oldest in the Pine Island area.

Saint James City got the island's first post office Sept. 1, 1886. Neighboring Bokeelia got its post office in May 1906. It was 1953 before Matlacha's opened.

The Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line carried passengers, U.S. mail and freight to all of the islands out of Fort Myers and Punta Gorda. The company served the Pine Island area until the early 1960s.

Located on Pine Island off State Road 767, west of Cape Coral and Fort Myers, Pineland is 140 miles south of the Tampa Bay area.

NEWSDAY
Tuesday, May 17, 1988

Language scholars
have deciphered
ancient hieroglyphics
and uncovered tales of
a bloody civilization

Solving Mysteries In Mayan Stone

By David Kahn

IMAGES OF BLOOD and mythic heroes and painted tombs leaped into the minds of listeners recently at a conference in Wisconsin on the decipherment of lost languages.

The scholars who were discussing these ancient tongues told of Mayan kings in ancient Central America who bled themselves in pagan religious rites, of colorful frescoes in Etruscan burial chambers in central Italy, and of the labyrinth in Crete that imprisoned the Minotaur, the man with the head of a bull. The conference, at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, honored a retiring professor, Emmett L. Bennett Jr., who greatly contributed to the decipherment of a Cretan script.

The event raises the question: What is the state of the art in the decipherment of the main lost languages today? In one case — that of Mayan hieroglyphics — the answer may surprise many. For a great many people think, as the Encyclopedia Britannica still reports, that its mysterious symbols are "not yet deciphered." In fact, progress in the past 15 years has made it possible to read most of the Mayan inscriptions. In other cases

— Etruscan and Linear A — the answer is disappointing, for their texts are mute.

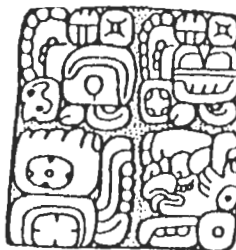
What is a lost language? It is a language that is no longer spoken, that is "lost" to today's world because the people who once used it have shifted to a new language — just as many American Indians now speak English. When such a language is not recorded, it vanishes forever. Some such languages, however, have survived in writings. The modern decipherer seeks to interpret these and so learn about the culture that produced them.

The writings can be carved into stone monuments, scratched into clay tablets, inked onto parchment or papyrus, painted on walls. They can be in the alphabet the West uses today. More often, they utilize utterly different signs and symbols that represent unknown sounds, syllables or words.

So how can a decipherer reconstruct a language without being able to read its writings? If both are totally unknown, he or she cannot. But sometimes the lost language has relatives. Parallels from these

Please see TALES on Page 6

The linguistic signs here, part of a Mayan carving, describe the accession to the throne of a king and queen, giving the date and their titles and describing the scene.



TALES from Page 1

known languages and the laws of linguistic change help the decipherer recreate the lost tongue and determine the meanings of its writing system.

This happened with the writing on clay tablets found on Crete at the turn of the century in what was thought to be the palace of the King Minos later immortalized in the Greek myth of the labyrinth. This writing was called Linear B. The term "linear" differentiated the writing from the drawings of a Cretan hieroglyphic script, and the "B" distinguished it from an older form, Linear A. The number of signs in Linear B — 87 — suggested that each stood for a syllable. Everyone thought the language was some Near Eastern one.

EMMETT BENNETT had done much essential preliminary work on the tablets when, in 1952, Michael Ventris, a young English architect, guessed at the sounds of several signs on the basis of their resemblance to a syllabary from Cyprus. Testing them, he found that they produced rough equivalents of Cretan place names, such as "Knossos," and of words that — to his great surprise — seemed a primitive form of Greek. This cracked the Linear B script, now the oldest European writing known. Though the tablets merely inventory wheels, wheat, jugs and the like, they represent a Greek written around the time of the Trojan War in 1200 B.C.

But Linear B has not much helped in the attempts at solving its predecessor scripts, Linear A and the pictographs. Many of the Linear A symbols are the same as those of Linear B, so, as Yves Duhoux of the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium noted at the conference, "It is tempting to transfer the Linear B phonetic values to Linear A." But though such a transfer helped solve Linear B, it hasn't produced intelligible text for Linear A. Even the language of Linear A has not been determined.

A key reason for the lack of progress is the paucity of text on which to work: The total known corpus of Linear A consists of 7,366 signs, the equivalent of about 10 pages of typewriting. (Linear B had eight times as many.) Moreover, most consist of only a single sign, and nearly all of the rest are accounting tables, which appear to be merely lists of names. The texts of connected words total only 807 signs, or about one typewritten page. This is hardly enough with which to reconstruct a lost language. Success will come only with the discovery of many new Linear A tablets or of an inscription in both Linear A and a known language. A modern example would be "Gentlemen" on a men's room door.

The situation is even worse for the Cretan pictographic script, according to Jean-Pierre Olivier of Belgium's National Foundation for Scientific Research. The signs total only 1,537. Again the only real hope lies in excavation.

Etruscan tantalizes. It was spoken by a people who were eventually absorbed by the Romans and who left underground mausoleums with polychrome wall paintings. Etruscan writings are in the Latin alphabet, which means the words can be pronounced. Some 250 to 300 words are known from glosses (explanations) in Latin text, from cultural context, from internal study. The inscriptions total 13,000. But most are very short, and even the longer ones are mostly prayers, contracts, religious rites or names on graves. Narrative literature does not exist. Though Etruscan is clearly not an Indo-European language, it has not been persuasively linked to any other. So Larissa Bonfante of New York University said, despite intensive study, little progress in understanding Etruscan has been made.

These are not the only languages that have not been deciphered. The script on clay of the ancient civilization of the valley of the Indus

River in northern India, a civilization that may have been as rich as that of ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia, remains unsolved. This is so despite several claimed decipherments, none of which have been accepted by ancient language scholars. Likewise, Lydian, from the 5th and 4th Centuries B.C., in Asia Minor, remains unread. And Linear Elamite, from the Mesopotamian area and dated from around 2300 B.C., has had only some 18 of its 58 signs, on stone and clay, determined. Paucity of material has kept these civilizations mute to posterity.

In the most famous decipherment of all, that of Egyptian hieroglyphics, parallel texts of Greek and Egyptian inscribed on a block of basalt called the Rosetta Stone (from the Egyptian village where it was found in 1799) proved critical. The decipherers of Mayan, too, had a Rosetta Stone, but it was much inferior to the Egyptian. It was set down one hot afternoon

around 1568 in what is Yucatan by a Spanish priest. He asked a literate Mayan for the Mayan forms of the Spanish letters. The Mayan gave him not the symbol for the plosive sound that "h" represents, for example, but — to use an English example — a picture of a bee.

When the priest's manuscript, long buried in Spain's archives, was discovered in the 19th Century, the linguistic mix-up sent many would-be decipherers on false trails. The myth

of the indecipherability of Mayan hieroglyphics grew. Expert cryptologists, such as the late William F. Friedman, who had led the efforts to crack the Japanese PURPLE diplomatic cipher before Pearl Harbor, were stumped. And indeed, the path to the solution was not easy.

Progress began with the determinations of the number system and the calendar. Theories took hold that the carved symbols, or glyphs, that covered the gray stone pyramids towering

in the Mexican jungle mainly described religious rituals or astronomical calculations of a peaceful agricultural folk.

Then, in 1952, a young Russian, Yuri Knorosov, showed that the Mayan signs represented syllables, whole words (such as "q" stands for "percent") and semantic indicators. These specify which of several meanings a word should take, as in English "pool" can mean a place to swim or a game. The difficulty

of reading the writing stems in large measure from this complexity.

Progress continued in 1960 when a Harvard epigrapher (specialist in ancient inscriptions), Tatiana Proskouriakoff, showed that, in a series of monuments, the range of dates on each never exceeded 62 years. This suggested that the texts dealt with events in a human being's lifetime. Furthermore, one glyph, looking like an upended frog, always accompanied the earliest date, and another, the "toothache," accompanied a second date, 12 to 31 years after the first. Proskouriakoff concluded that the frog glyph represented the birth and the toothache the enthronement of a king. The texts on the monuments were thus not just religious and astronomical but historical. This demonstration let decipherment proceed on the extremely useful basis that the inscriptions recorded things that people — and especially kings — are likely to do.

The final link in the decipherment was forged during a series of mini-conferences at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., beginning in 1974. Mayan scholars including Linda Schele, Peter Mathews, Floyd Lounsbury and David Kelley began connecting the glyphs with the spoken language — putting the signs together in sentences. Historical linguists have reconstructed earlier forms of the Mayan languages spoken in Central America, and the Mayan scholars fitted these to the syllabary of Knorosov and to the syntax of Mayan. So it was possible for Schele, of the University of Texas, to read out at the Madison conference a sequence of glyphs as easily as if she were reading some ordinary foreign language. And then she translated it into English almost as easily.

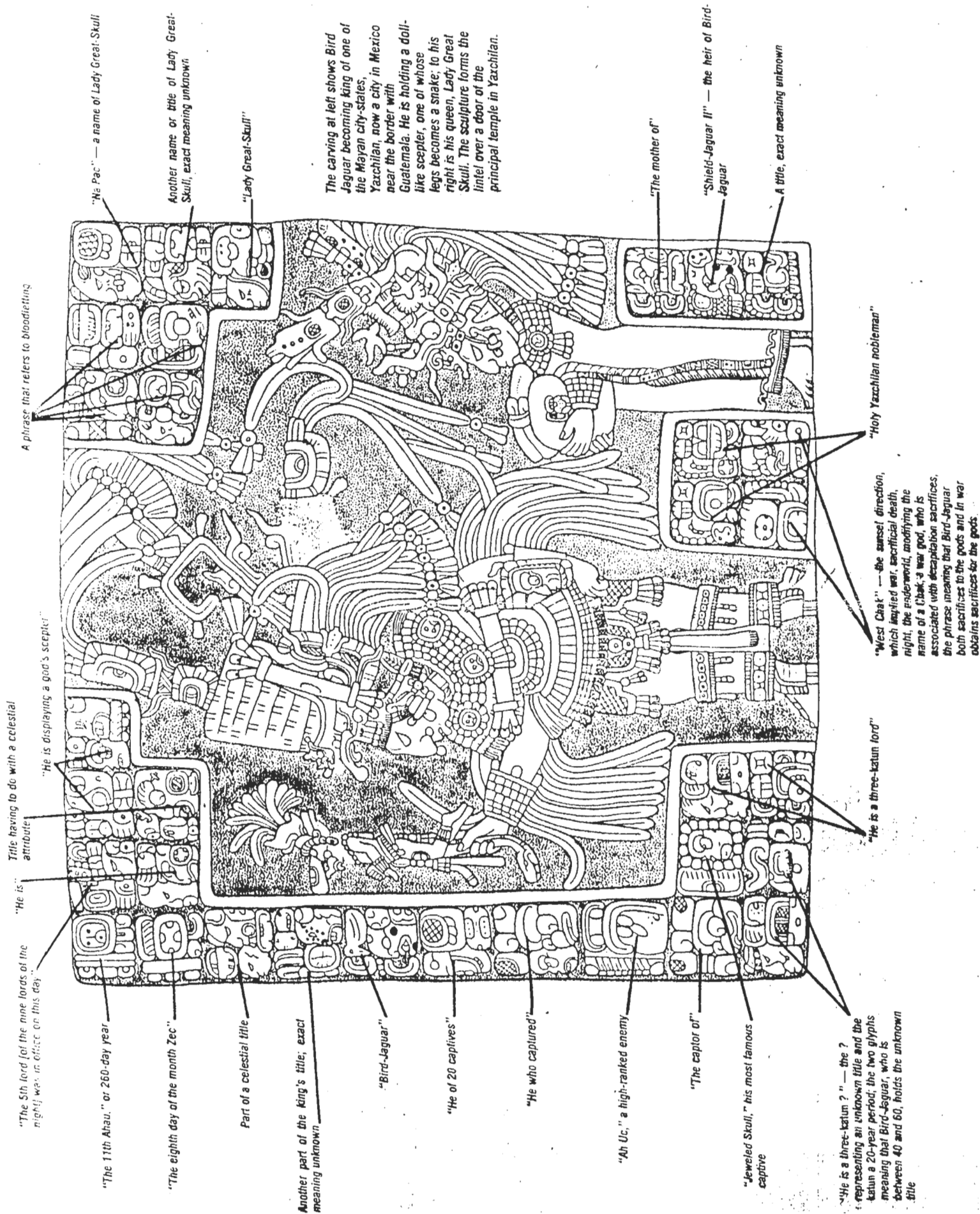
THAT THE SOLUTION was gradual and multistep, unlike the single dramatic breakthrough of Ventris' Linear B solution, has perhaps made it less widely known. This may be why the expositions at Madison surprised even aficionados of the mysteries of lost languages, and why many amateur Mayanists still look to solve what has largely been solved. Another reason may be that, although some 85 percent of the inscriptions that are "captions" for sculptures can be read, much work remains to be done. Nevertheless, the decipherment has given voice to a whole civilization. What stories does it tell?

Like most monumental inscriptions from all over the world, the Mayan ones mainly relate the genealogy of a king, boast of his prowess in war and proclaim his adherence to the rituals of his faith. They depict a bloody civilization, with city-states continually at war with one another and with rites of bloodletting. Kings would pierce their forearms, queens would pass vines with thorns through their tongues, and then both would scatter the blood and drip some on paper, which was ritually burned. Captives taken in war were tortured and eventually killed; some were forced to play a kind of terrible soccer game, in which human heads served as balls — and in which the losers were themselves put to death. Some captives were rolled into human balls, then bounced down the steep steps of a 15-story pyramid.

"The written history of the Americas began in 50 B.C., and from that moment on it re-sounds with the names and lives of individuals: Pacal of Palenque, Bird Jaguar of Yaxchilan, Yax-Pac of Copan, among many others," Schele and Mary Miller have written in "The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art" (Braziller with the Kimbell Art Museum of Fort Worth).

"The dead speak through their art and architecture," they conclude. "Although these messages were never intended for us, they speak across the centuries; once again we can utter the names of their kings and remember their actions. We do not share their beliefs, but we can perceive what they believed. And by doing so, we can add their accomplishments and their perceptions to the human inheritance that we pass on to our children and our children's children." ■■■

David Kahn, an editor in *Newsday's* Viewpoints section, is the author of "The Codebreakers."



"The 5th lord of the nine lords of the night was in office on this day"

"He is"

"He is displaying a god's scepter"

A phrase that refers to bloodletting

"The 11th Ahau," or 260-day year

"The eighth day of the month Zec"

Part of a celestial title

Another part of the king's title; exact meaning unknown

"Bird-Jaguar"

"He of 20 captives"

"He who captured"

"Ah Uc," a high-ranked enemy

"The captor of"

"Jeweled Skull," his most famous captive

"He is a three-katun?" — the ? representing an unknown title and the katun a 20-year period; the two glyphs meaning that Bird-Jaguar, who is between 40 and 60, holds the unknown title

"He Pac" — a name of Lady Great-Skull

Another name or title of Lady Great-Skull, exact meaning unknown

"Lady Great-Skull"

The carving at left shows Bird Jaguar becoming king of one of the Mayan city-states, Yaxchilan, now a city in Mexico near the border with Guatemala. He is holding a doll-like scepter, one of whose legs becomes a snake; to his right is his queen, Lady Great Skull. The sculpture forms the lintel over a door of the principal temple in Yaxchilan.

"The mother of"

"Shield-Jaguar II" — the heir of Bird-Jaguar

A title, exact meaning unknown

"Holy Yaxchilan nobleman"

"West Chak" — the sarsel direction, which implied war, sacrificial death, night, the underworld, modifying the name of a Chak, a war god, who is associated with decapitation sacrifices, the phrase meaning that Bird-Jaguar both sacrifices to the gods and in war obtains sacrifices for the gods.

"He is a three-katun lord"

New Members

Welcome to Eugene Donaldson and Holly Sandler, our newest A.S.S.F. members.

Dates

July 21 Board of Directors Meeting
July 21 Membership Meeting, Simpson Park, 8:00 p.m.
July 24 Field School, Session 2
August 18 Membership Meeting on Cape Florida
October Southeastern Archaeological Conference, New Orleans



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John Carruthers
5740 Twin Lakes Dr.
South Miami, Fl. 33157

