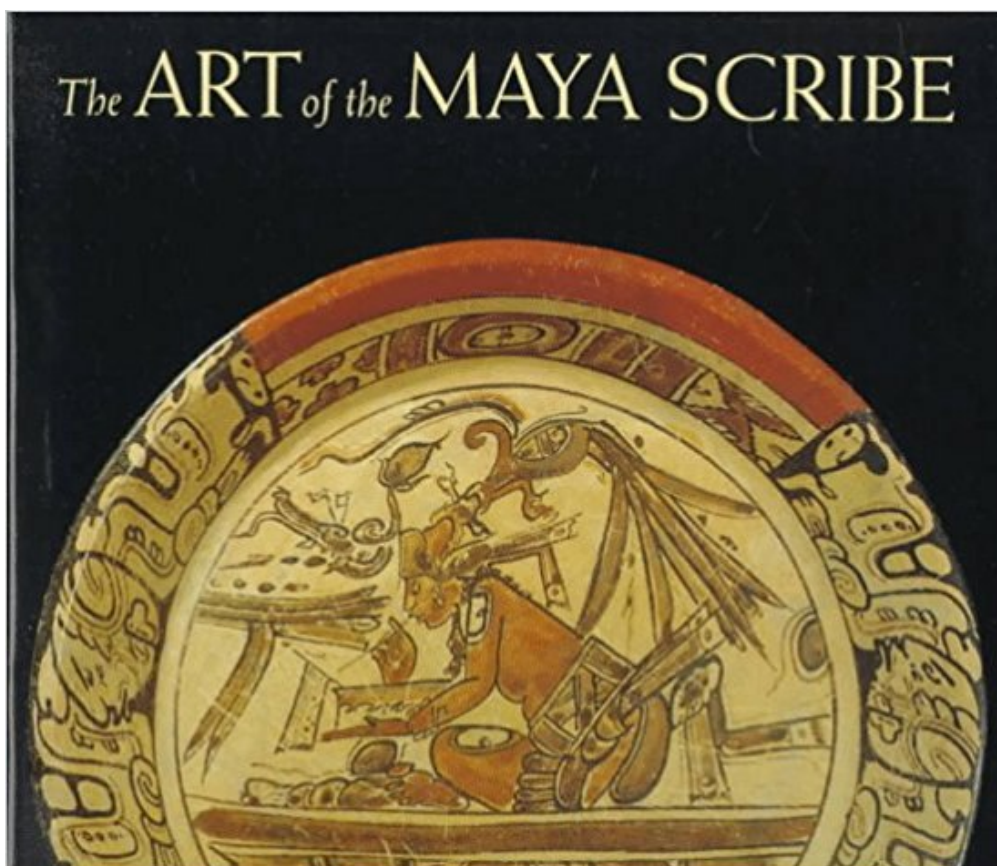


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# Art Of The Maya Scribe



## Synopsis

240 pp. & 280 illus. (117 in color), 1 map, folio.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams; y First printing edition (February 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0810919885

ISBN-13: 978-0810919884

Product Dimensions: 9.8 x 1 x 13 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #993,874 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in [Books > Arts &](#)

[Photography > Other Media > Illuminations](#) #2395 in [Books > History > Historical Study &](#)

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## Customer Reviews

Gorgeously illustrated and relating a fascinating linguistic tale, this look at the art of classic Maya scribes by anthropologist Coe and photographer Kerr includes the latest research into the deciphering of this mysterious writing. Maya scribes were both men and women, the authors write, and were much appreciated in a world where literature, art and mathematics had achieved unusual heights. The Classic Maya period lasted from about A.D. 250 until about A.D. 900, and its cities included Palenque in Mexico, Tikal in Guatemala and Copan in Honduras. Although the Olmecs in Mexico were the first in the hemisphere to have writing, the Maya, according to the authors, were "the only pre-conquest people in the New World to have a writing system sophisticated enough to express anything that was in their language." Maya writing, carved on stones such as jade, traced on pottery or painted on walls, deals almost exclusively with historical events--notably the constant wars waged between the city-states. Mythical characters appear, but mostly as part of paintings that represent actual historical figures, their places in the rich dreamworld of the Maya as well as where they rank in the pecking order of their cities indicated by fantastic headdresses. The authors mostly manage to keep the discussion accessible to the lay reader, but occasionally they do veer off into territory where only linguists would feel at home. Generally, the explanations are clear and compelling and the concrete examples of how Maya language developed and was rendered into art

by scribes will shed light not only on language but on history and culture. Copyright 1998 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This is an amazingly beautiful book both visually and because of the way the articles accompanying these glorious pictures illuminate our understanding of the role of the scribe in the Mayan culture and how they worked. The images provided are simply exquisite and well chosen. It is impossible for me to flip to a page and not learn or see something new even after owning this book and looking at it for several years. There is just so much here that even as your eyes become familiar with it, you begin to see more deeply into it. The authors show us how the writing developed, matured, and how the scribal tradition passed away. They also show us how western scholars tried to deal with this writing before the great decipherment happened in the second half of the twentieth century. Yes, this can make a gorgeous coffee table book and can spark much discussion, but unlike books found on such tables, this one deserves to be read closely and multiple times. It is a book I treasure deeply.

Many calligraphic traditions, such as Egyptian, East Asian, Islamic, and Western European, have been long studied and are generally well understood. However, much less attention has been given to Mayan calligraphy (from the South Americas). This magnificent book seeks to rectify the imbalance with an insightful, well written account of not only the meaning of Mayan calligraphy, but also its remarkable aesthetics. The Mayans seem to have written on everything: seashells, jaguar skins, walls, rocks, wood, pottery, dishes, vases, caves, etc. The book beautifully reproduces and deciphers these writings, many for the first time. The world that emerges is neither Eastern nor Western, spiritual yet at the same time profoundly secular. The Maya lowlands were known as "The Land of the Red and the Black," because their books were written with red and black pigments. Reproductions of some of their finest books are included here, though tragically, many of their books were destroyed. The Mayans still have a lot to teach us. This book offers the curious reader an essential foundation for understanding a brilliant, often neglected civilization.

Sumptuous, a true visual feast, Michael Coe's foray into the world of the Maya artist reveals the talents and personalities of the Maya scribes. Lushly illustrated by Justin Kerr, the world's foremost photographer of Precolumbian art, this coffeetable-style book looks at what scholars understand about the individuals who created the Maya's sculptural and painted repertoire. Coe brings his knowledge of hieroglyphic writing to bear on this previously little-known subject, revealing the names and titles of Maya artists and other significant facts. Following in the tradition of his

best-selling *BREAKING THE MAYA CODE*, which describes the scholarly-community's halting attempts at decipherment, Coe relies heavily on cutting-edge breakthroughs in reading Maya script. But more than this, he demonstrates an excellent knowledge of art history and archaeology, setting forth quite a rich array of information. A fine book by one of the great Precolumbian scholars of all time, amply supplemented with line drawings and an effective design strategy.

This is without a doubt, the best look at the ancient Maya by Michael Coe, a world renowned archeologist (Yale emeritus) and Justin Kerr, a photographer and specialist in ancient Maya artifacts and creator of the rollout camera which allows a 360 degree view of a vase, in order to study the whole story. If you ever wanted to know about the writing the Maya invented, their customs and calendar and their concept of zero, this is a most complete and interesting examination. The text holds your interest and is written with accuracy and depth and the photographic visuals are stunning. The design of the book is first-rate. A great book to give as a gift or to keep forever.

This is an oversized book written by one of the most respected Mayanists in the world. The photos are excellent and beautiful. More is known about the images and glyphs on the plates, vases, etc. now, so the text is a bit dated, but it really provides an excellent overview with great insights into the mind of the Maya scribe. The value on this volume will only go up with time.

This is a truly amazing trip through the minds of the ancient Maya who wrote in an elegant and complex system. Michael Coe clarifies and demystifies the beautiful texts on all forms of media; ceramic, stone, shell etc. But best of all, Justin Kerr's photographs are a thrilling excursion into the realms of an exotic society. This partnership of scholars enables the reader to sit back and explore the depths of the beauty and intellectual achievements of an ancient culture. Frankly, I was blown away!

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