



Translating Maya Hieroglyphs (Recovering Languages and Literacies in the Americas)

Scott A. J. Johnson

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Maya hieroglyphic writing may seem impossibly opaque to beginning students, but scholar Scott A. J. Johnson presents it as a regular and comprehensible system in this engaging, easy-to-follow textbook. The only comprehensive introduction designed specifically for those new to the study, *Translating Maya Hieroglyphs* uses a hands-on approach to teach learners the current state of Maya epigraphy.

Johnson shows readers step by step how to translate ancient Maya glyphs. He begins by describing how to break down a Mayan text into individual glyphs in the correct reading order, and then explains the different types of glyphs and how they function in the script. Finally, he shows how to systematically convert a Mayan inscription into modern English.

Not simply a reference volume, *Translating Maya Hieroglyphs* is pedagogically arranged so that it functions as an introductory foreign-language textbook. Chapters cover key topics, including spelling, dates and numbers, basic grammar, and verbs. Formal linguistic information is accessibly explained, while worksheets and exercises complement and reinforce the material covered in the text. Glyph blocks and phrases drawn from actual monuments illustrate the variety and scribal virtuosity of Maya writing.

The Maya writing system has not been fully deciphered. Throughout the text, Johnson outlines and explains the outstanding disputes among Mayanists. At the end of each chapter, he offers sources for further reading. Helpful appendices provide quick reference to vocabulary, glyph meanings, and calendrical data for students undertaking a translation.

The study of Maya glyphs has long been an arcane subject known only to a few specialists. This book will change that. Taking advantage of the great strides scholars have made in deciphering hieroglyphs in the past four decades, *Translating Maya Hieroglyphs* brings this knowledge to a broader audience, including archaeologists and budding epigraphers.

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