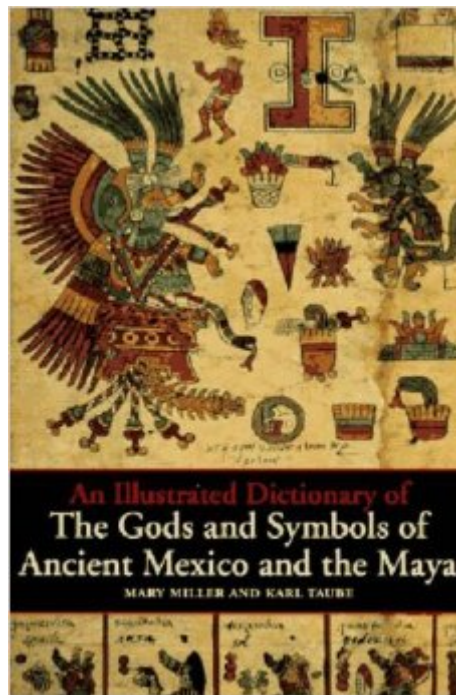


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# An Illustrated Dictionary Of The Gods And Symbols Of Ancient Mexico And The Maya



## Synopsis

The myths and beliefs of the great pre-Columbian civilizations of Mesoamerica have baffled and fascinated outsiders ever since the Spanish Conquest. Yet, until now, no single-volume introduction has existed to act as a guide to this labyrinthine symbolic world. *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* is the first-ever English-language dictionary of Mesoamerican mythology and religion. Nearly 300 entries, from accession to yoke, describe the main gods and symbols of the Olmecs, Zapotecs, Maya, Teotihuacanos, Mixtecs, Toltecs, and Aztecs. Topics range from jaguar and jester gods to reptile eye and rubber, from creation accounts and sacred places to ritual practices such as bloodletting, confession, dance, and pilgrimage. In addition, two introductory essays provide succinct accounts of Mesoamerican history and religion, while a substantial bibliographical survey directs the reader to original sources and recent discussions. Dictionary entries are illustrated with photographs and specially commissioned line drawings. Mary Miller and Karl Taube draw on their research in the fast-changing field of Maya studies, and on the latest Mexican discoveries, to produce an authoritative work that will serve as a standard reference for students, scholars, and travelers. Photographs and illustrations throughout

## Book Information

Paperback: 216 pages

Publisher: Thames & Hudson (April 17, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0500279284

ISBN-13: 978-0500279281

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 0.7 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 48 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #39,542 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Mayan](#) #4 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Aztec](#) #9 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Ethnic & Tribal](#)

## Customer Reviews

Well-written and comprehensive...the book has not left my desk. -- Latin American Antiquity

Mary Ellen Miller is the Vincent Scully Professor of the History of Art at Yale University. Her previous books include *The Art of Mesoamerica*. Karl Taube is Assistant Professor in the Department of

Anthropology at the University of California at Riverside. Conversant in Yucatec Mayan, Professor Taube has conducted archaeological and ethnographic research in Yucatán, and is a leading scholar of Mesoamerican writing and iconography.

As a kid, I used to love paging through the dictionary, stopping here and there to read the definition of an interesting word. You can do the same with this book, but it's a lot easier to find words you don't know. The depth of detail, and the occasional mysteries that turn up, are fascinating. You can't help but learn about ancient cultures of Mexico through reading this wonderful dictionary. Here's an illustration of what I mean, from the definition of calendar (which was only 260 days long!) concerning Venus: "In both Mexican and Maya records, Venus was recorded to appear for 236 days as the morning star, then to disappear for 90 days during Superior Conjunction, reappear as the evening star for 250 days, then briefly vanish into Inferior Conjunction before reappearing as the morning star. For reasons impossible to reconstruct, these calculations ignore the pattern of Venus that can be observed by the naked eye: roughly equal periods of 263 days for both morning and evening star, divided by disappearances of 50 and 8 days." WHY would such a people, who were very observant of the sky, describe the cycle of Venus so at odds with what anyone can see? This book is full of this type of information.

Wow! What a spectacular book. This book is a must if you're interested in the mythology of the Aztecs, Mayans or other Mesoamerican civilizations. It is profusely illustrated with black & white line drawings and photographs and is written in an easy to understand text that covers just about everything you could possibly ever want to know. I have learned a great deal from perusing this book and you will, too. This certainly is a book to add to your library.

I enjoyed looking through this "dictionary," but I hope it is revised with separate sections on the Olmec, Maya, and Aztecs (the alphabetical format could be retained). As a "dictionary," it also should have been much longer (four or five hundred pages instead of two hundred). Nevertheless, the general reader interested in Mesoamerica will enjoy this book. I have a large collection of books on Mesoamerica, and I found several illustrations that I have not seen before. There is a fascinating picture of a jaguar skeleton with a jade ball in its mouth (Aztec). The illustration of a Maya dancer is also fascinating. "In a state of shamanic transformation, a May lord would take on an animal self or 'uay,' most commonly the jaguar." Another shows a "Maya figure wearing a War Serpent headdress." The fangs of the serpent rise above the figure's head. Still another shows "The monkey

scribal gods painting a codex." The monkey-headed men are dressed like Maya scribes. I would recommend buying a used copy of this book.

A thin book, just a little over 200 pages. However, it is packed with information on the various deities of Aztec and Mayan Religion.

I just received this book a couple of days ago, so this is an early review. This "dictionary" is more like an encyclopedia and is an excellent and unique primer on Mesoamerican deities and symbology. I am not aware of any other similarly accessible books available for a popular or non-academic market. Overall, this is a very good book and a useful tool for beginning your research into Mesoamerican religion. I give it four stars instead of five because I would have liked the book to be stratified by culture area (e.g. a Central Mexico section, a Maya Section, etc.). As it stands now, deities, symbols, and concepts from across Mesoamerica are simply organized alphabetically.

This is a great book for anyone wanting to understand the Mayan culture. It has many great illustrations as well as understandable descriptions. You don't have to be a student or professor to be able to understand the writing! It was also delivered on time and the book was in wonderful condition!

still reading it but I am learning a great deal

Beautiful book - I love it!

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