

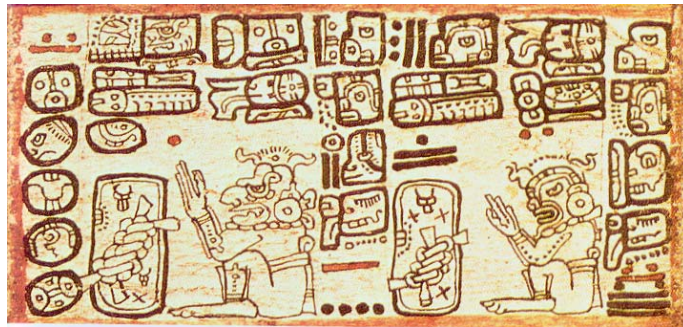


ETHNIC
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COLLO
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FALL '08

The bees who gave me the sweetness of the *k'ahoolal* (Maya knowledge)

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Wednesday, October 15, 3:00pm
Social Science Building, Room 107
Reception Follows in SSB 103



Almanacs of the Madrid Codex Beekeeping section

As part of my research I conducted a systematic review of the Maya linguistic and writing system and its interpretation from a broad and multidisciplinary framework. As a bee biologist I reviewed and studied the beekeeping section in the ancient Maya book '*Madrid Codex*' which contains the most extensive descriptions of the sociobiological development of the stingless bees *Melipona beecheii*. I applied a bio-cultural approach and entomological empirical testing within an emic perspective of the theory of knowledge or "indigenous epistemology" in order to understand the complex morphology of their glyphical compounds.

By applying the comparative and analogical mode used in systematics for the insects classification, I discovered that the phonetic and the meanings of the glyphical compounds revealed their correct identity as iconic referents, not only when analyzed through syntagmatic relations and context within the narrative, but also by following some phonetic laws from their geometric rearrangement.

It was only after I translated/decoded the entire beekeeping narratives when I started to understand that the Maya writing system is in fact highly sophisticated, rich in literary and philosophical concepts. One of the most amazing outcomes of my research was to confirm that the scribe who painted the beekeeping section observed, analyzed and wrote similar observations with the same species of bees, which I was able to film, record and study more than 2000 years later. This bio-cultural phenomenon demonstrated that the Maya certainly developed and reached an astonishing level of knowledge within all its complexity.