

ancient Egypt, as John Lloyd Stephens called it — is about to reach the public consciousness.⁴

Representative of the vast body of hieroglyphic texts which survive in stone, stucco, clay, and more rarely, in shell, wood, and paper, is this inscription on a conch shell which had been fashioned into a calligrapher's ink well. Brief as it is, it promises to breathe at least a fragment of life into the ancient scene on the Island of Jaina, off the Yucatecan coast, where a Maya noble dipped his pen into the brilliant red pigment contained in this inscribed well to write some of the texts that promise to open wide the ancient American world to us now, twelve centuries later.

The conch shell was given to the Library by Frank E. Taplin, Class of 1937, and Mrs. Taplin. The glyphs on our cover were drawn for us by calligrapher Marjory Pratt of Pennington, New Jersey.

— ALFRED L. BUSH
*Curator, The Princeton Collections
of Western Americana*

⁴ Two works that have begun this process are Linda Schele and David Freidel, *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* (New York: Morrow, 1990), and Linda Schele and Mary Miller, *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art* (New York: Braziller, 1986).

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