

## Re: New Mel Gibson film to be in Mayan

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-07/msg01002.html>

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- *From:* [jlawler@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:jlawler@xxxxxxxxxx) (John Lawler)
  - *Date:* Wed, 27 Jul 2005 16:25:40 GMT
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Nathan <ntspam2@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> writes:

>Peter T. Daniels writes:

>> "Mayan" isn't a language. It's a language family with 20-odd distinct  
>> languages spoken today, and three or four ancestral ones recorded in the  
>> inscriptions.

>I assume this is why the article used the phrase "a Mayan dialect".  
>I took it to mean they have a specific language in mind, but the  
>general public wouldn't recognize the name. And we're all familiar  
>with this misuse of the word "dialect".

Yeah, like "Macbeth" is in 'an English dialect'.

Seriously, though, 'Mayan' is what Yucatec is called in Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo. This is the flatland part of Mayalandia, and Yucatec is the only Mayan language spoken in all this area (except for the closely related Lacandón in the Campeche jungle). Down south in the mountains there's a different language in practically every valley, the usual speciation pattern.

Language Log <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language-log/archives/002356.html> is speculating about the topic. If it's about Classic Maya civilization, my guess is the language will probably be Quiché, the language of the codices, but if it's about the Caste War of Yucatán (a great choice, but unlikely, since the news story indicates a time depth of at least hundreds of years ago, and the Caste War didn't end until the twentieth century), then the Mayan language involved would be Yucatec.

—John Lawler <http://www.umich.edu/~jlawler> U Michigan Linguistics

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"The fundamental delusion of humanity is to suppose that I am here and you are out there." — Yasutani Roshi

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- *References:*
  - ◆ *[New Mel Gibson film to be in Mayan](#)*

Re: New Mel Gibson film to be in Mayan

◇ *From:* Ben Zimmer

◆ ***Re: New Mel Gibson film to be in Mayan***

◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels

◆ ***Re: New Mel Gibson film to be in Mayan***

◇ *From:* Nathan

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