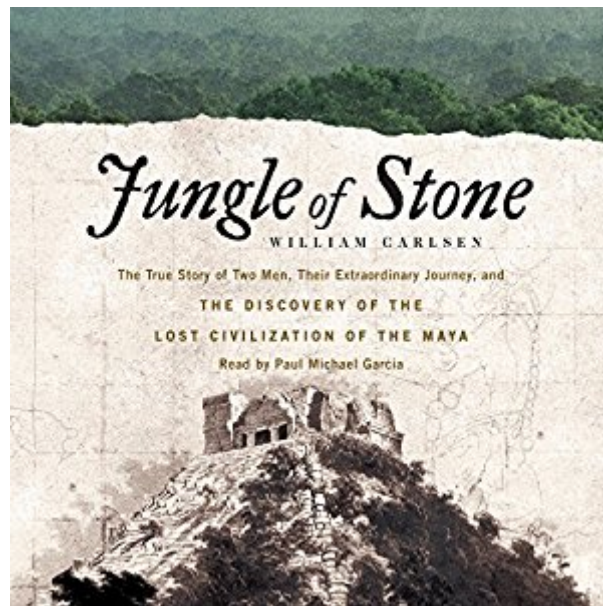


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Jungle Of Stone: The True Story Of Two Men, Their Extraordinary Journey, And The Discovery Of The Lost Civilization Of The Maya



Synopsis

"Thrilling.... A captivating history of two men who dramatically changed their contemporaries' view of the past." (Kirkus) In 1839 rumors of extraordinary yet baffling stone ruins buried within the unmapped jungles of Central America reached two of the world's most intrepid travelers. Seized by the reports, American diplomat John Lloyd Stephens and British artist Frederick Catherwood - each already celebrated for their adventures in Egypt, the Holy Land, Greece, and Rome - sailed together out of New York Harbor on an expedition into the forbidding rainforests of present-day Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. What they found would rewrite the West's understanding of human history. In the tradition of *The Lost City of Z* and *In the Kingdom of Ice*, former San Francisco Chronicle journalist and Pulitzer Prize finalist William Carlsen reveals the unforgettable true story of the discovery of the ancient Maya. Enduring disease, war, and the torments of nature and terrain, Stephens and Catherwood uncovered and documented the remains of an astonishing civilization that had flourished in the Americas at the same time as classic Greece and Rome. Their remarkable book about the experience became a sensation and is recognized today as the birth of American archeology. Most importantly, Stephens and Catherwood were the first to grasp the significance of the Maya remains, recognizing that their antiquity and sophistication overturned the West's assumptions about the development of civilization. By the time of the flowering of classical Greece (400 BC), the Maya were already constructing pyramids and temples around central plazas. Within a few hundred years, the structures took on a monumental scale. Over the next millennium dozens of city-states evolved, each governed by powerful lords, some with populations larger than any city in Europe at the time. The Maya developed a unified cosmology, an array of common gods, a creation story, and a shared artistic and architectural vision. They created dazzling stucco and stone monuments and bas reliefs, sculpting figures and hieroglyphs with refined artistic skill. At their peak an estimated 10 million people occupied the Maya's heartland on the Yucatan Peninsula. And yet, by the time the Spanish reached the "New World", the classic-era Maya had all but disappeared; they would remain a mystery for the next 300 years. Today the tables are turned: The Maya are justly famous, if sometimes misunderstood, while Stephens and Catherwood have been all but forgotten. Based on Carlsen's rigorous research and his own 2,500-mile journey throughout the Yucatan and Central America, *Jungle of Stone* is equally a thrilling adventure narrative and a revelatory work of history that corrects our understanding of the Maya and the two remarkable men who set out in 1839 to find them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a wonderful book, one that brings to life the tremendous efforts of two exceptional explorers/adventurers in the early 1800s. These men collaborated to find and document many of the major ruins left by the indigenous natives of southern Mexico and Central America. Says author William Carlsen: "Today the ancient Maya are recognized for having achieved one of the most sophisticated early civilizations on earth. Tourists by the millions, from every part of the globe, annually descend on Maya ruins in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize." But it was not always this way, and that is what this book is about: The story of the earliest explorations into the jungles of Mexico and Central America and the words and thoughts produced by these two explorers about what they found and what they surmised. In the Acknowledgements section of the book, Carlsen states his passion for his work: "I will hold in my heart always the extraordinary Maya people. May you forever keep your rich culture alive for the benefit of us all." I've personally had the pleasure of traveling in Mexico and Central America. I've been to many of the places talked about in the book. But I really treasure the way "Jungle of Stone" puts the pieces together, capturing the historic details and bringing the people involved in the early explorations to life. The story starts in the early 1800s, in the Age of Discovery. This was a period when Europeans and Americans knew little about the Latin American before Columbus. The Spanish conquistadores were all about enriching themselves. They were not in the New World to learn about and/or preserve indigenous native culture. In fact, the Spanish shut off the New World south of the emerging United States for centuries.

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