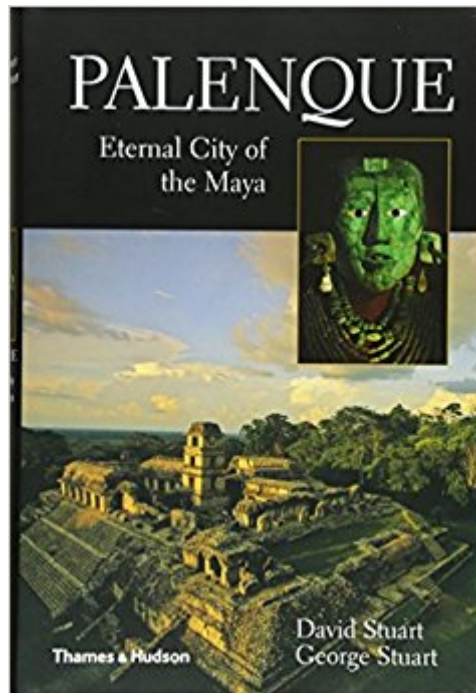




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Palenque: Eternal City Of The Maya



Synopsis

The story of the city's rediscovery, deep in the forest-clad mountains of southeastern Mexico, told with panache by two leading Maya scholars. Sunday, June 15, 1952. Having spent four years clearing a secret passage inside Palenque's Temple of the Inscriptions, Mexican archaeologist Alberto Ruz gazed into a vaulted chamber. There, beneath a gigantic carved stone block, he would make a spectacular discovery: the intact burial of King Pakal, complete with jade jewelry and an exquisite burial mask. Pakal was one of the greatest ancient rulers and the most prominent among a long line of monarchs who held sway at Palenque from AD 300 to 800. This "queen of Maya cities," as Palenque has been called, fell into ruin and was abandoned along with other great urban centers when Maya civilization suffered a mysterious collapse more than 1000 years ago. Through the eyes of David and George Stuart, we travel with pioneer artists and archaeologists from the eighteenth century on as they rediscovered Palenque and attempted, in the oppressive tropical heat, to document the city's graceful and ornate palaces, temples, bas-reliefs, and hieroglyphic inscriptions. These inscriptions lay largely unread until, in the late twentieth century, major breakthroughs in decipherment revealed Palenque's history. David Stuart, one of the leading decipherers, portrays a lost world of palace intrigue, of brilliant architects, of gods and revered ancestors. Today Palenque, proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a place of new reverence and relevance for millions of modern Maya, New Age spiritualists, and all those fascinated by the history of the Maya. 150 illustrations, 40 in color

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Customer Reviews

“The story of a great ancient city that should not be missed.” - American Archaeology

David Stuart is Professor of Mesoamerican Art and Writing at the University of Texas, Austin. George Stuart is founding president of the Center for Maya Research in North Carolina and the former Staff Archaeologist of the National Geographic Society.

The writing in this book is excellent, and the subject matter, the history of the ancient Mayan city of Palenque, is deeply interesting (to me, anyway), but I give this book only three stars because basically it reads like a laundry list that never quite came to life for me. Here is the ancient history of the city, here is the history of its rulers, here is the modern history of the city, etc. It's a book of lists, and that has limited appeal. I have to admit that when learning about the Maya I prefer the storyteller's point of view, or the shaman's viewpoint. Tell me a story of plumed serpents or characotels, sing me a song of gods and spirits and monsters, give me a fresh translation of the Popol Vuh with its myths and legends. That sort of material really comes to life for me. A book of lists is interesting, and rest assured this book has a place on my Maya shelf, but it doesn't engage my very soul. So approach this book with appreciation, but don't expect it to move the heavens for you. Unless, of course, ancient Mayan cities are your thing!

Wow, this book is high quality. Not meant to be read once and discarded, you can tell no expense was spared in producing it, and it looks like it would last a lifetime of intensive reference use. The paper is very thick and has a great texture. The pictures are high quality and it's the right size for a normal bookshelf. I love my kindle, but there's no substitute for a book like this. If you're buying this book, you probably already know who David Stuart is so I won't waste any words reinforcing what an ultra-qualified author he is on this subject.

My first trip to Palenque was in 1964..and I've been back over ten times since. Oh my, how far we've come. If you are a casual one day tourist this may be difficult for you. On-the-other-hand, it may inspire you go dig deeper in which case you'll want to read anything by Linda Schele.

In the mid-'70s, I traveled to Guatemala City for a convention addressing the latest breakthroughs in translating the Mayan glyphs. Things were just beginning to move in this area. I was lucky enough to meet the late-great Linda Schele and Peter Matthews, among others. David Stuart, co-author of

this book, may have been at the convention, but if so, he was less than 10 years old and Linda was his mentor. I have a very clear recollection of sitting in a booth of the hotel bar observing with much fascination and awe as Linda and Peter shared their latest theories and breakthroughs. Needless to say, we all ended up drunk as "ahaws" ("lords") that night! All this time later, one would be very hard-pressed to find better-informed authors on the Maya than George Stuart and his son, David. They are top experts in the field. I really enjoyed this book as it provides a real concept of the history of this famous and beautiful site, bringing it and its rulers to life in a way I've not encountered elsewhere. The authors do go into the history of the rediscovery of the site, as some other reviewers have complained, but I found it all fascinating. It's astounding to realize just how much we now know about the dynastic rulers of this powerful city, including one female ruler, its battles with neighboring cities and about specific buildings. It's overwhelming to see how far our knowledge of the Maya has come in just the last 3 decades or so. And still only about 2% of the city has been carefully excavated! This book strives to provide a lot of information without confusing the reader. Details can be difficult to follow at times, particularly when the text refers to specific aspects of drawings or photos that are sometimes too small for the details to be clearly seen, a universal problem with reproductions of Mayan art. Maya symbolism is so difficult, it is often hard to believe anyone can actually read their ultra-complex writing system, but the Stuarts almost make it sound easy. Included among the numerous and excellent line-drawings and photos are the best of the magnificent, recently discovered carvings and huge incense stands found in Temples XIX and XXI, all of which were part of a recent traveling exhibit here in the U.S. called "The Courtly Art of the Maya." Of course, Pakal's life, death and tomb are thoroughly explored in a logical fashion, unlike the garbage interpretations being proposed by more and more authors and TV filmmakers out to exploit the totally unfounded apocalyptic predictions for December 21 (or 23rd) of 2012. Two sections at the end of the book, "Summary Histories of the Rulers of Palenque" and a chart of "The Palenque Dynasty", are invaluable to the reader. Without these, the curious fact that 5 rulers preceding the great Pakal shared names in reverse order with 5 of his successors, leading the authors to cautiously speculate that Pakal and his successors may have actually foreseen the portents in the calendar round that predicted the abandonment of the city a couple hundred years before it happened. Or did the prediction help bring about the abandonment? It's all fascinating! I highly recommend this book and am currently reading David Stuart's most recent volume, THE ORDER OF DAYS. Good stuff as well! they

First class job by the reigning expert on Palenque.

Well written and comprehensive. An essential book for understanding the physical, social, cultural and political nature of Palenque. It explores both the visual beauty as well as the inner workings of this marvelous Maya city. Read it before you visit and then afterwards again.

One of the most beautifully sited and preserved Classic Maya cities. David Stuart is also one of the premier Classic Mayanists. A great combination.

Beautiful just doesn't do it justice.

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