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The Lost Secrets Of Maya Technology



Synopsis

"The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology reveals what a scientifically advanced people the Maya really were. Relying on his background as a professional engineer, James O'Kon is able to analyze Maya architecture and write about it with the scientific terminology it truly merits. The book places Maya engineers shoulder to shoulder with the Romans or any other ancient culture one could compare them against. As an archaeologist with 20+ years of field experience, this book opened my eyes to Maya scientific achievements that I would previously not thought possible."--Edwin Barnhart, Ph.D., archaeologist and Director of Maya Exploration Center

James O'Kon's book addresses a neglected field, and his wide-ranging discussion sheds new light on many aspects of Maya studies. His training as an engineer keeps the book focused on reality. His writing is full of sudden insights--when he gets to the nitty-gritty of real science, this book shines. The final chapter addresses the engineering flaws that led to their fall--they pushed their environment too far."--Mark Van Stone, Ph.D., author of 2012: Science and Prophecy of the Ancient Maya

Great introduction to the unrecognized technological achievements of the Maya. This was my first introduction to Maya tool making. I found those chapters very interesting. Very informative well written and provided me with new material on Maya technology."--Thomas L. Sever, Ph.D., NASA Archaeologist

The Maya have been an enigma since their discovery in the mid- 19th century. Maya science developed an elegant mathematic system, an incredibly accurate astronomy, and one of the world's five original written languages. This technology was more advanced than similar European technology by more than a thousand years. In this book, you'll see how James O'Kon, a professional engineer, synergistically applied field exploration, research, forensic engineering, and 3-D virtual reconstruction of Maya projects to discover lost Maya technological achievements. These lost principles of technology enabled Maya engineers to construct grand cities that towered above the rainforest, water systems with underground reservoirs for water storage, miles of all-weather paved roads tracking through the jungle, and the longest bridge in the ancient world. Maya engineers developed structural mechanics for multi-story buildings that were not exceeded in height until the first "skyscraper" built in Chicago in 1885, invented the blast furnace 2,000 years before it was patented in England, and developed the vulcanization of rubber more than 2,600 years before Charles Goodyear. Discover a host of unknown wonders in The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology.

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: New Page Books; 1 edition (April 22, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 160163207X

ISBN-13: 978-1601632074

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 25 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #912,263 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #146 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Mayan](#) #498 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Tribal & Ethnic > Native American](#) #885 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Latin America](#)

Customer Reviews

James A. O'Kon, P.E. is a professional engineer with decades of experience designing award-winning projects. He has also spent 40 years investigating Maya engineering feats and lost Maya technology. His investigations have taken him to more than 50 remote Maya sites. He has delivered numerous scientific papers to scientific symposia dealing with Maya technology. He was inducted into the Explorers Club as a National Fellow for his work on Maya technology. A resident of Atlanta, he is currently an expert witness on construction failures and a problem-solving consultant to global corporations when he is not in the rainforest. Read more about him at www.theoldexplorer.com

If you want detailed information about James O'Kon's book or his credentials that support the fact that he is an amazing expert of the Maya civilization, read other reviews. If you want to know if it's a good book that a history buff would enjoy, read on. O'Kon is an Engineer who wanted other's too "see" the Mayas that he fell in love with as a young man. He works with facts and makes them understandable. It's wonderful to read a book that isn't expecting me to figure out the story. It's a history that I - not being an Engineer, Architect or Archeologist - can read, enjoy and understand. My mother - who is somewhat older than me, started reading my copy of the book and she has stated that she is enjoying the read, and can follow the history and understand the information that Mr. O'Kon has shared. Simply put, he talks about who, what, why and where based on the Maya civilization having great engineers. Thanks to the Arthur for sharing his knowledge.

James O'Kon's "The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology" is the masterpiece that should have been written years earlier by professional archaeologists who wanted to understand the Maya but inexplicably slighted Maya engineering. Jim O'Kon is an engineer who not only spent years whacking his way through Mesoamerican jungles to study Maya ruins and admire their towering achievements, but he also studied how the Maya carved their rich glyph writing into stone and wood. He found colleague and sculptor Philippe Klinefelter, who spent years rediscovering the Maya craftsman's toolmaking techniques and mastering them, making his own jadeite blades, harder than iron, along with handheld, finger-held, and hafted chisels, gouges, and a hand-held bow drill with jadeite drill bit - Klinefelter carves today as the Maya did centuries ago - and you get to see photographs of the tools displayed and being used. The shaping of jadeite and steel-sharp obsidian for Maya bloodletting ceremonies and endless warfare are also skills Klinefelter has mastered. This book opens the whole toolbox of the Maya craftsman for your inspection. Instead of digging for the meaning of the Maya temples, O'Kon rediscovered how to make the Maya cement and concrete that held Maya civilization together - and it's the technical equivalent of good modern Portland cement. O'Kon shows photos of a Maya-built blast furnace capable of melting limestone to create cement - at 1,450 degrees Celsius (2,642 degrees F.), a good trick for a furnace built only with wood that burns at 300 - 500 degrees Celsius. O'Kon built a scale model to show that it works. He also suggests that the Maya cement furnaces required such a large amount of timber (arranged in a long-secret shape) not only built hundreds of Maya cities, but may also have stripped too many trees from an area running from Chiapas, Mexico to northern El Salvador and contributed to the collapse of three eras of Maya dominance. That vast region once held hundreds of Maya cities, many connected by an "Interstate Freeway" system of raised roads twenty feet wide and one of them - between Coba and Yaxuna in Yucatan and Quitana Roo - was nearly arrow-straight for almost a hundred miles. Maya roads were paved with water-resistant plaster and crowned in the midline to shed stormwater. O'Kon measured many of these roads and deduced their design criteria and construction methods. He did the same with Maya bridges, including even double-pier suspension bridges, for example the one over the Usumacinta River at the city of Yaxchilan. This bridge, constructed with a center span of 63 meters, is considered to be the longest bridge in the ancient world. Since the Maya had no beasts of burden, no horses or oxen or donkeys or llamas, they had no use for the wheel, which they knew well and made wheeled toys for their children. That meant humans were the beast of burden, and so construction materials, stones, cement bags, food containers were all human size and carried with tumplines - strapped to the forehead and slung over the back where the load rested in sack-like containers. So these roads had only footsteps to wear

them down and made trading and commerce routes between capital cities of various polities easy to maintain with hand tools and a massive labor force. There's much more to this book, which more than lives up to its title. It shows the reader exactly how the Maya built their pyramids, corbeled arches, exquisitely carved stone stelae, richly colored fresco story-telling walls and all the rest. It's dazzling. Be warned, though. This thrilling book was written by an engineer and it sounds like it in two ways. It gets submerged in jargonitis technicalia and it repeats repetitious redundancies over and over again more and more singing the glories of Maya technology. We got it, Jim, by about the 500th time. The editor was not too swift, too. For example, Guatemala's Motagua River is misspelled Montagua dozens of times. But "The Lost Secrets of Maya Technology" would have to be virtually unreadable before I'd downgrade it to four stars. This book is absolutely a masterpiece and a life achievement any author should be proud of. I've never met you, Jim O'Kon, but I've been to Tikal, Copan, Chichen Itza and other Maya sites, and after reading your book I feel that I know you like you were my best friend.

Many people will see "Lost Secrets" or "Maya" and think this is another bizarre book on 2012, aliens or other esoteric strangeness. In fact, this book is quite the opposite. This is written by an engineer who has explored these ruins. It is a detailed look at the Mayan's technology and how they achieved sophistication on par with the Old World ancient civilizations, in both similar and different ways. The author also interweaves the history of the Mayans, but this isn't a book on their culture and ways, but mainly their science and engineering. It seems at odds with the Mayan mysticism and human sacrifices. Yet, like all cultures, they are one of contradictions, successes and failures. Eventually, their technology couldn't save them from their shortsightedness and nature. Yet another warning from history. A must read for students of ancient history, engineering and technology. See also *Engineering in the Ancient World* and *Aztec & Maya: The Complete Illustrated History*.

As an armchair Mayanist, I enjoyed the different perspective this author provides. Archaeologists rarely delve into the actual engineering aspects of the Maya, but those aspects are the author's specialties. I had no idea the Maya used cement and concrete in the construction and decoration of their pyramids, temples and homes for one thing. It makes so much sense! They built roads leading from city to city that can still be found today; I knew about them, but knew nothing about how they were constructed. My favorite part was the author's theory about a suspension bridge (the world's longest at the time) having existed in the ruins of Yaxchilan. He discusses a variety of other subjects

such as how the Maya trading boats were constructed, how they managed to transport large amounts of stone and trade goods overland across large distances without beasts of burden, how they carved such amazing art into stone without metal tools, the ingenious ways they collected, filtered and stored water, and much more. This author isn't a new age wacko proposing wild, unlikely theories. He knows what he is talking about and carefully explains how the Maya achieved so many ingenious means of overcoming basic, vital technological problems in near-total isolation. The writing is a bit slow at times, but I found the book very rewarding overall. It's not an exciting adventure, but it really contributes to one's understanding of how such a fragile culture made incredible advances despite an extremely hostile environment.

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