Text and photographs describe seven ancient cities and what they reveal of the civilizations that produced them.

The plaza has been a defining feature of Mexican urban architecture and culture for at least 4,000 years. Ancient Mesoamericans conducted most of their communal life in outdoor public spaces, and today the plaza is still the public living room in every Mexican neighborhood, town, and city—the place where friends meet, news is shared, and personal and communal rituals and celebrations happen. The site of a community’s most important architecture—church, government buildings, and marketplace—the plaza is both sacred and secular space and thus the very heart of the community. This extensively illustrated book traces the evolution of the Mexican plaza from Mesoamerican sacred space to modern public gathering place. The authors led teams of volunteers who measured and documented nearly one hundred traditional Mexican town centers. The resulting plans reveal the layers of Mesoamerican and European history that underlie the contemporary plaza. The authors describe how Mesoamericans designed their ceremonial centers as embodiments of creation myths—the plaza as the primordial sea from which the earth emerged. They discuss how Europeans, even though they sought to eradicate native culture, actually preserved it as they overlaid the Mesoamerican sacred plaza with the Renaissance urban concept of an orthogonal grid with a central open space. The authors also show how the plaza’s historic, architectural, social, and economic qualities can contribute to mainstream urban design and architecture today.

The Aztecs ruled much of Mexico from the thirteenth century until the Spanish conquest in 1521. Outside of the imperial capital of Tenochtitlan, various urban centers ruled the numerous city-states that covered the central Mexican landscape. Aztec City-State Capitals is the first work to focus attention outside Tenochtitlan, revealing these dozens of smaller cities to have been the central hubs of political, economic, and religious life, integral to the grand infrastructure of the Aztec empire. Focusing on building styles, urban townscapes, layouts, and designs, Michael Smith combines two archaeological approaches: monumental (excavations of pyramids, palaces, and public buildings) and social (excavations of houses, workshops, and fields). As a result, he is able to integrate the urban-built environment and the lives of the Aztec peoples as reconstructed from excavations. Smith demonstrates the ways in which these city-state capitals were different from Tenochtitlan and convincingly argues that urban design is the direct result of decisions made by political leaders to legitimize their own power and political roles in the states of the Aztec empire.

Hailed by The Guardian and other publications as "a real-life Indiana Jones," Slovenian archaeologist Ivan Sprajc has been mapping out previously unknown Mayan sites in
Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula since 1996. Most recently, he was credited with the discovery of the Chactún and Lagunita sites in 2013 and 2014, respectively, helping to fill in what was previously one of the largest voids in modern knowledge of the ancient Maya landscape: the 2,800-square-mile Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in central Yucatán. Previously published in Sprajc’s native Slovenian and in German, this thrilling account of machete-wielding jungle expeditions has garnered enthusiastic reviews for its depictions of the efforts, dangers, successes, and disappointments experienced by the explorer-scientist as he searches out and documents ancient ruins that have been lost to the jungle for centuries. A skilled communicator as well as an experienced scholar, Sprajc conveys in eminently accessible prose a wealth of information on various aspects of the Maya culture, which he has studied closely for decades. The result is a deeply personal presentation of archaeological research on one of the most enigmatic civilizations of the ancient world. Generously illustrated, this book follows the chronology of Sprajc’s discoveries, focusing on what he considers the most interesting episodes. Those who specialize in Mesoamerican prehistory and archaeology will certainly relish Sprajc’s reports concerning his many field surveys and the discoveries that resulted. General readers, too, will enjoy his accounts of previously undocumented sites, ancient urban centers overtaken by the jungle, massive sculpted monuments, and mysterious hieroglyphic inscriptions.

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One of Apple’s Most Anticipated Books of Winter 2021 A quest to explore some of the most spectacular ancient cities in human history—and figure out why people abandoned them. In Four Lost Cities, acclaimed science journalist Annalee Newitz takes readers on an entertaining and mind-bending adventure into the deep history of urban life. Investigating across the centuries and around the world, Newitz explores the rise and fall of four ancient cities, each the center of a sophisticated civilization: the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Central Turkey, the Roman vacation town of Pompeii on Italy’s southern coast, the medieval megacity of Angkor in Cambodia, and the indigenous metropolis Cahokia, which stood beside the Mississippi River where East St. Louis is today. Newitz travels to all four sites and investigates the cutting-edge research in archaeology, revealing the mix of environmental changes and political turmoil that doomed these ancient settlements. Tracing the early development of urban planning, Newitz also introduces us to the often anonymous workers—slaves, women, immigrants, and manual laborers—who built these cities and created monuments that lasted millennia. Four Lost Cities is a journey into the forgotten past, but, foreseeing a future in which the majority of people on Earth will be living in cities, it may also reveal something of our own fate.

This volume presents a long-overdue synthesis and update on West Mexican archaeology. Ancient West Mexico has often been portrayed as a ‘marginal’ or ‘underdeveloped’ area of Mesoamerica. This book shows that the opposite is true and that it played a critical role in the cultural and historical development of the Mesoamerican ecumene.

The legacy of past civilizations is still with us today. In Ancient Aztecs, readers discover the history and impressive accomplishments of the Aztec civilization, including their military power and feats of engineering. Engaging text provides details on the civilization’s history, development, daily life, culture, art, technology, warfare, social organization, and more. Well-chosen maps and images of artifacts bring the past to life. Aligned to Common Core Standards and correlated to state standards. Essential Library is an imprint of Abdo Publishing, a division of ABDO.

Born in France, Charnay (1828-1915) travelled extensively through commissions from the French government and with private patronage. He made several visits to the region between 1857 and 1886, producing in his work both a journal of his adventures and an archaeological examination of past civilizations. Beginning in Mexico, Charnay notably examines the ancient city of Tula and also the history of Yucatán, discussing aspects of Toltec and Mayan culture. He explores the ruins of Chichen Itza, Kabah and Yaxchilan (which Charnay dubbed ‘Lorillard Town’ after a benefactor), among many other settlements. Surveying art, pyramid architecture, ancient customs and history based on extant sources, this account was a major contribution in its field and remains of interest to scholars of Latin American archaeology.
First comprehensive English-language book on the largest city in the Americas before the 1400s. Teotihuacan is a UNESCO world heritage site, located in highland central Mexico, about twenty-five miles from Mexico City, visited by millions of tourists every year. The book begins with Cuicuilco, a predecessor that arose around 400 BCE, then traces Teotihuacan from its founding in approximately 150 BCE to its collapse around 600 CE. It describes the city's immense pyramids and other elite structures. It also discusses the dwellings and daily lives of commoners, including men, women, and children, and the craft activities of artisans. George L. Cowgill discusses politics, economics, technology, art, religion, and possible reasons for Teotihuacan's rise and fall. Long before the Aztecs and 800 miles from Classic Maya centers, Teotihuacan was part of a broad Mesoamerican tradition but had a distinctive personality that invites comparison with other states and empires of the ancient world.

Examines ancient cities in the Americas, revealing how settlements evolved and how urban centers grew and functioned.

Mobility and Migration in Ancient Mesoamerican Cities is the first focused book-length discussion of migration in central Mexico, west Mexico and the Maya region, presenting case studies on population movement in and among Classic, Epiclassic, and Postclassic Mesoamerican societies and polities within the framework of urbanization and deurbanization. Looking beyond the conceptual dichotomy of sedentism versus mobility, the contributors show that mobility and migration reveal a great deal about the formation, development, and decline of town- and city-based societies in the ancient world. In a series of data-rich chapters that address specific evidence for movement in their respective study areas, an international group of scholars assesses mobility through the isotopic and demographic analysis of human remains, stratigraphic identification of gaps in occupation, and local intensification of water capture in the Maya lowlands. Others examine migration through the integration of historic and archaeological evidence in Michoacán and Yucatán and by registering how daily life changed in response to the influx of new people in the Basin of Mexico. Offering a range of critical insights into the vital and under-studied role that mobility and migration played in complex agrarian societies, Mobility and Migration in Ancient Mesoamerican Cities will be of value to Mesoamericanist archaeologists, ethnohistorians, and bioarchaeologists and to any scholars working on complex societies. Contributors: Jaime J. Awe, Meggan Bullock, Sarah C. Clayton, Andrea Cucina, Véronique Darras, Nicholas P. Dunning, Mélanie Forné, Marion Forest, Carolyn Freiwald, Elizabeth Graham, Nancy Gonlin, Julie A. Hoggarth, Linda Howie, Elsa Jadot, Kristin V. Landau, Eva Lemonnier, Dominique Michelet, David Ortega Zapata, Prudence M. Rice, Thelma N. Sierra Sosa, Michael P. Smyth, Vera Tiesler, Eric Weaver

Fifteen hundred years ago, Teotihuacan was one of the world's greatest cities. Some 200,000 people lived in this Mexican metropolis, with its massive public buildings, grid plan of streets and imposing murals and sculpture. Its trading empire dominated much of ancient Mexico. Then, in the 8th century, came a mysterious collapse. Even knowledge of the original name was lost; Teotihuacan, City of the Gods, was a title bestowed by the Aztecs six hundred years later.

The authors have thoroughly revised the text for this new edition, and they have added over thirty new photographs and illustrations as well as a completely new chapter by Richard E. W. Adams on regional states and empires in ancient Mesoamerica."--BOOK JACKET.

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The Decipherment of Ancient Maya Writing is an important story of intellectual discovery and a tale of code breaking comparable to the interpreting of Egyptian hieroglyphs and the decoding of cuneiform. This book provides a history of the interpretation of Maya hieroglyphs. Introductory essays offer the historical context and describe the personalities and theories of the many authors who contributed to the understanding of these ancient glyphs.

An accessible overview of archaeological knowledge of the seat of the Aztec empire, Tenochtitlan.

This guide is a must for anyone interested in personally exploring Mexico's prehistoric ruins. Author Andrew Coe takes an in-depth look at Mesoamerican culture, from the early mammoth hunters to the magnificent civilizations encountered by Cortes, and explores the newest and most exciting scientific theories on each site.

A beautifully illustrated look at the forces that help cities grow—and eventually cause their destruction—told through the stories of the great civilizations of ancient America. You may think you know all of the American cities. But did you know that long before New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or Boston ever appeared on the map—thousands of years before Europeans first colonized North America—other cities were here? They grew up, flourished, and eventually disappeared in the same places that modern cities like St. Louis and Mexico City would later appear. In the pages of this book, you'll find the astonishing story of how they grew from small settlements to booming city centers—and then crumbled into ruins.

A complementary resource for the historical fiction novel, this guide is for experienced teachers of young people ages 10-12. Learn more about the history, geography, culture, religion, lifestyle, heroes, government, medicine, language, alphabet, writings, art, and music of this place and time. Guides include age-appropriate curriculum elements such as historical reading material, worksheets, writing projects, puzzles, arts & crafts, tests and timeline events.

A historical exploration of events and daily life in Mexico City in both ancient and modern times.

William Ferguson's classic photographic portrayal of the major pre-Columbian ruins of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras is now available from UNM Press in a completely revised edition. Magnificent aerial and ground photographs give both armchair and actual visitors unparalleled views of fifty-one ancient cities. The restored areas of each site and their interesting and exotic features are shown within each group of ruins. The authors have thoroughly revised the text for this new edition, and they have added over 30 new photographs and illustrations as well as a completely new chapter by Richard E. W. Adams on regional states and empires in ancient Mesoamerica. Over a span of three thousand years between 1500 B.C. and A.D. 1500 great civilizations, including the Olmec, Teotihuacan, Maya, Toltec, Zapotec, and Aztec, flourished, waned,
and died in Mesoamerica. These indigenous cultures of Mexico and Central America are brought to life in Mesoamerica's Ancient Cities through stunning color photographs. The authors include the most recent research and most widely accepted theoretical perspectives on Mesoamerican civilizations. Ideal for the general reader as well as scholars of Mesoamerica, this volume makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the Americas.

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Fifth Sun offers a comprehensive history of the Aztecs, spanning the period before conquest to a century after the conquest, based on rarely-used Nahuatl-language sources written by the indigenous people.

Popular Lost Cities author David Hatcher Childress takes to the road again in search of lost cities and ancient mysteries. This time he is off to the American Southwest, traversing the region’s deserts, mountains and forests investigating archeological mysteries and the unexplained. Join David as he starts in northern Mexico and searches for the lost mines of the Aztecs. He continues north to west Texas, delving into the mysteries of Big Bend, including mysterious Phoenician tablets discovered there and the strange lights of Marfa. He continues northward into New Mexico where he stumbles upon a hollow mountain with a billion dollars of gold bars hidden deep inside it! In Arizona he investigates tales of Egyptian catacombs in the Grand Canyon, cruises along the Devil’s Highway, and tackles the century-old mystery of the Superstition Mountains and the Lost Dutchman mine. In Nevada and California Childress checks out the rumors of mummified giants and weird tunnels in Death Valley, plus he searches the Mohave Desert for the mysterious remains of ancient dwellers alongside lakes that supposedly dried up tens of thousands of years ago. It's a full-tilt blast down the back roads of the Southwest in search of the weird and wondrous mysteries of the past!

What made ancient cities successful? What are the similarities between modern cities and ancient ones? The Social Construction of Ancient Cities offers a fresh perspective on ancient cities and the social networks and relations that built and sustained them, marking a dramatic change in the way archaeologists approach them. Examining ancient cities from a “bottom up” perspective, the authors in this volume explore the ways in which cities were actually created by ordinary inhabitants. They track the development of urban space from the point of view of individuals and households, providing new insights into cities’ roles as social centers as well as focal points of political and economic activities. Analyzing various urban communities from residences and neighborhoods to marketplaces and ceremonial plazas, the authors examine urban centers in Africa, Mesoamerica, South America, Mesopotamia, the Indian subcontinent, and China. Collectively they demonstrate how complex networks of social relations and structures gave rise to the formation of ancient cities, contributed to their cohesion, and sustained their growth, much as they do in modern urban centers. The authors’ analyses draw from ancient texts as well as archaeological surveys and excavations of urban architecture and other material remains, including portable objects for daily use and comestibles. They show clearly how early urban dwellers consciously developed dense interdependent social networks to satisfy their needs for food, housing, and employment, forged their own urban identities, and generally managed to thrive in the crowded, bustling, and competitive environment that characterized ancient cities. Not least of all, they suggest how urban leaders and urban dwellers negotiated a consensus that enabled them to achieve both mundane and extraordinary goals, in the process establishing their unique ritual, legal, and social status.

Published by the Field Columbian Museum, this book is an archaeological study of the ancient sites of Mexico.