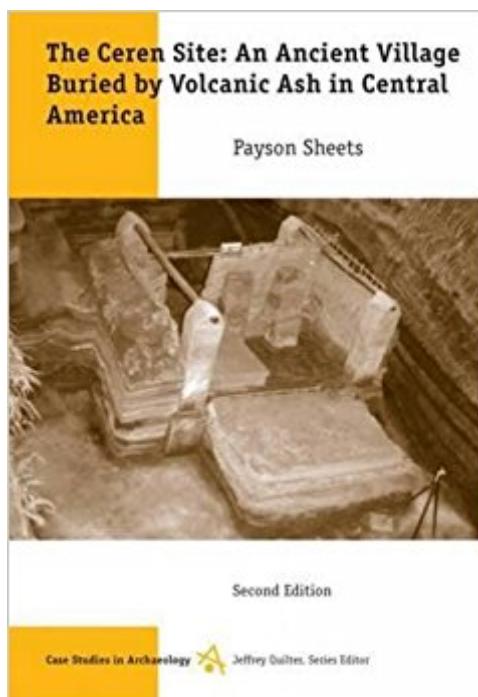


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The Ceren Site: An Ancient Village Buried By Volcanic Ash In Central America (Case Studies In Archaeology)



Synopsis

Discovered in 1976 by Sheets, and under continuous excavation and study since, the spectacular Ceren site provides us with an unusually clear window into the ancient past with which to view family activities on the frontier of the Mayan civilization. Since volcanic ash did not allow people to selectively remove artifacts, the site is well-preserved and it also largely stopped natural processes of decomposition offering this rare opportunity to study the Mayan past through household archaeology. Known as the New World Pompeii, this study provides a detailed portrait of the life, houses, artifacts, and activity areas of the people who supported the elites with labor, food and goods. As Sheets says, "With any civilization that's being studied, if the households of commoners aren't being investigated, you've eliminated the bulk of the population. How can you understand the society if you ignore most of the people? It's like an ethnography. Only we can't interview people, so their possessions have to speak for them." Art and images from the author's own collection help illuminate the discussions and bring them to life, while the author's discussion of his personal trials and triumphs add a more human dimension to working in the field.

Book Information

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Foreword. Preface. 1. Introduction. 2. The Theoretical Framework: Household Archaeology. 3. Multidisciplinary Studies: Geophysics, Volcanology, and Biology. 4. The Ceren Site: Household 1. 5. Household 2. 6. Other Structures at Ceren. 7. The Religious Complex. 8. The Site in Perspective. Epilogue -- Doing Research: The Inside View. Endnotes. References.

Payson Sheets' research interests include the archaeology of Mesoamerica and the Intermediate Area of lower Central America, focusing on the interrelationships between human societies and volcanic processes in tropical climates. He has incorporated remote sensing with geophysical data to detect and explore the remains of human activity in various countries of Central America. Recent research has focused on the Ceren site, catastrophically buried by the eruption of nearby Loma Caldera volcano in AD 590. At this remarkable site, structures are preserved, including their thatch roofs and their entire artifactual contents, and fields with their cultigens are intact.

Though I purchased this book because it was assigned reading for a course in school...I would recommend it to anyone interested in the Maya. Ceren is a Classic site and since it was preserved in time by the volcano it is a good (but not perfect) example of what life was like for Maya in the subsequent centuries. Since household archaeology in the Maya is not exactly rare, but is truthfully difficult to find intact, Ceren is a great example to look to in that context. Sheets is an excellent anthropologist with a love of the Maya and the subject, which makes thus book all the more interesting to read.

The book came as fast as they promised and I enjoyed getting it so quickly for school. I have browsed through the book and enjoyed it's contents.

My husband thoroughly enjoyed this book. He liked it so much that he described it to several of his friends.

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