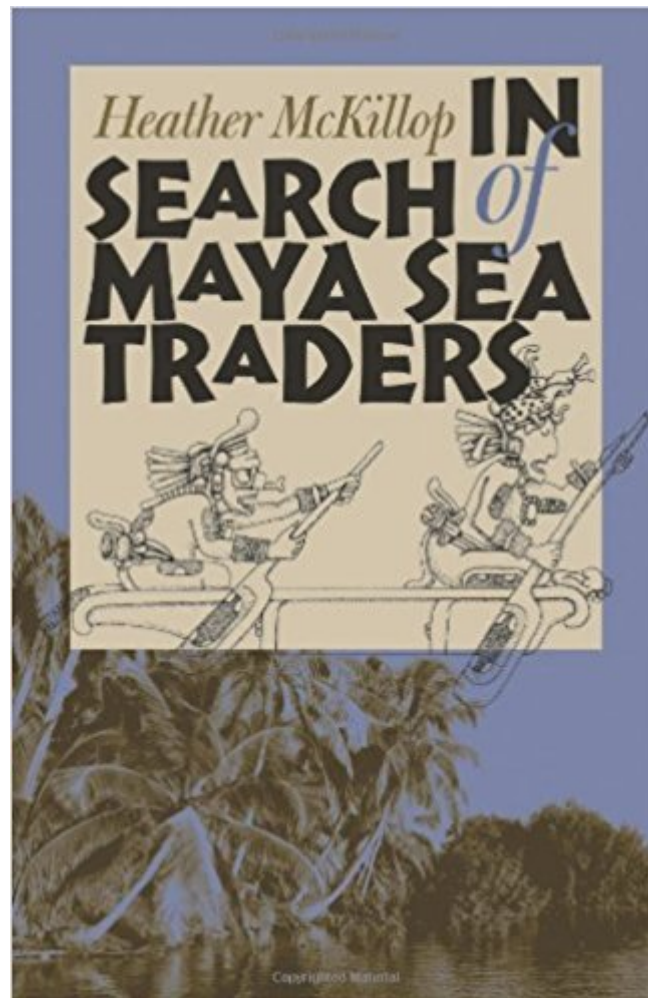


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# In Search Of Maya Sea Traders (Texas A&M University Anthropology Series)



## Synopsis

Stone temples rising above the rainforest canopy and elaborate hieroglyphs carved onto stone monuments give silent testimony to the high culture of the Maya ancestors of the indigenous peoples of Central America. They have inspired generations of archaeologists, professional and avocational, to take to the field in search of the past. One such archaeologist is Heather McKillop, who in 1979 first visited the coast of Belize in search of a little-known aspect of ancient Maya life: the sea trade that helped move salt, obsidian, coral, and other goods around the interior of the empire. In 1982, she began bringing volunteers and students to the islands off the coast of Port Honduras, Belize. Since then she has returned many times to excavate sites that reveal the scope and diversity of the trade that passed by water throughout the Maya world. In this book, McKillop tells the story of the search for the Maya sea traders, as well as the story of the traders themselves as it emerges from the excavations. *In Search of Maya Sea Traders* describes the trading port of Wild Cane Cay, where exotic obsidian, jade, gold, and other goods—including highly crafted pots—were traded from distant lands. McKillop also tells us about the more coastal-inland trade of salt, seafood, and other marine resources. Through the story of her own work and that of her students and volunteers, McKillop models both the research design and the field work that are required to interpret the civilizations of the past. She includes the adventure of discovery, the challenges of working in wild environments (from snakes and rising sea levels to falling coconuts) and the tedium of daily measured digs in a near-tropical setting. Through her experiences, the reader also gets to know some of the local residents of Port Honduras and Wild Cane Cay, descendants of the ancient Maya. *In Search of Maya Sea Traders* will appeal to that part of each of us that longs to explore distant places and cultures, in quest of a seldom-glimpsed past.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Dr. McKillop is an accomplished writer . . . [this] will be a welcome addition to the literature available for potential volunteers on archaeological projects. McKillop’s work didn’t involve the high excitement of Heyerdahl’s voyages, but does involve the romance of fieldwork in a remote and occasionally dangerous locale. Very few readers will attempt to follow in Heyerdahl’s steps, but this volume may inspire many to follow in McKillop’s. —Thomas H. Guderjan, Texas Christian University (Thomas H. Guderjan, Texas Christian University)

Heather McKillop is William G. Haag Professor of Archaeology at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Much of her career has been devoted to study of the coastal areas and islands off Belize, focusing on an aspect of the Maya archaeological record not widely known. Her Ph.D. is from the University of California; Santa Barbara.

McKillop describes her team’s significant (but not headline-making) archaeological discoveries in waterlogged coastal environments of Belize, where sea level has risen (and/or land has subsided) since the ancient Maya were actively trading along that coast. The discoveries were made possible by her innovative techniques and insights into the economic and cultural activities of the ancients under different social and other conditions across a considerable span of time. The field team’s practical obstacles of many kinds were very considerable, and only great hardihood and perseverance made archaeological success possible. That said, the book is rather drab. Much of the text reads as transcribed humdrum field notes, which are merged with anecdotal material that, although of some little interest in the vein of travelogue, is less than exciting, and devoid of fascination. In several places, the author cannot resist language that is conspicuously self-congratulatory and a bit bombastic.

A well written and unpretentious narrative about the archeological process of excavations of Maya trading posts on the islands off Belize. Ms. McKillop leads us through the every day excitement of discovery and the inevitable hardships of organizing volunteers and the shared joy of learning.

Written to appeal to the casual reader as well as advocates, a gracious nod to those who are not professional Mayanists. I found her study of marine sites insightful and rewarding, Thanks Heather.

I bought this book because I once spent two weeks on an expedition in Belize with the Author and group of wonderful memorable people..I was very pleased to see the expedition I was on and many of the people I was there with were well represented.While this is an academic paper and it has a lot of scientific results it is written in a style about the people and the adventure that obtained the information.However there was a small mistake in the book. While I was referenced and a couple discoveries that I had made were mentioned she had my last name wrong. I contacted the author and she found the mistake. But my hope for academic immortality is crushed ;>(

good book on this subject=one of the few

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