

A photograph of a pond with lily pads. In the foreground, a large, vibrant red lily pad with intricate vein patterns is partially submerged. Above it, a smaller green lily pad floats on the water. In the background, more lily pads and a line of trees are visible under a cloudy sky. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery.

EXPLORING

THE ANCIENT MAYA UNDERWATERWORLD

NICHOLAS M. HELLMUTH

An underwater photograph showing a clear blue water background. In the upper left, a large, green lily pad is partially visible. A single, large, clear bubble rises from the bottom left towards the center. On the right side, there are several lily pads, some green and some brown, with water droplets on their surfaces.

EXPLORING THE ANCIENT MAYA UNDERWATERWORLD

Nicholas M. Hellmuth

Preface

Forward

Introduction: Interest, Goals, and Experience

Antecedents (other scholars who have written on water lilies)

Water Lily

- Water lily flowers
- Water lily seed pods
- Water lily pads (leaves)
- Columns of bubbles associated with areas of water lilies
- Fish associated with water lilies
- Snails associated with watery areas with water lilies
- Turtles associated with water lilies
- Crocodiles in areas of water lilies
- Birds associated with ecosystem with water lilies
- Insects associated with water lilies

Cosmology: Surface of the Underwaterworld

Questions: where is the geographical origin of water lily iconography?

- Water lily world in Olmec areas?
- Water lily world in Izapa area?
- Water lily world in Tabasco?



- Water lily world in Campeche and Yucatan?
- Water lily world in Quintana Roo?
- Water lily world in Belize?
- Water lily world in Honduras?

Appendix A

Plant species:

- Arroyo Pucte
- Monterrico
- Mangrove areas
- Tule areas
- Water lily areas
- Rio San Pedro Martyr, Naranjo portion

Appendix B

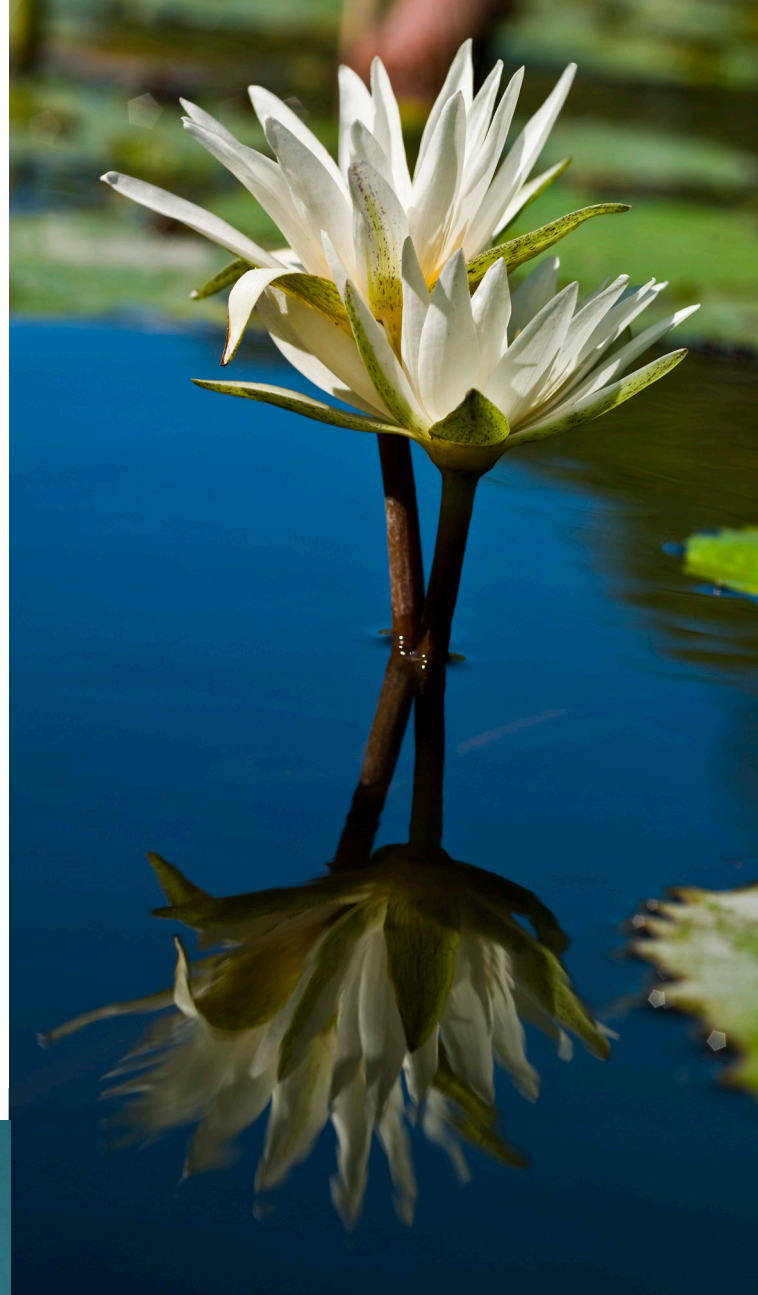
Photography for this book

- 35 mm macro
- Large format
- Medium format
- Software used

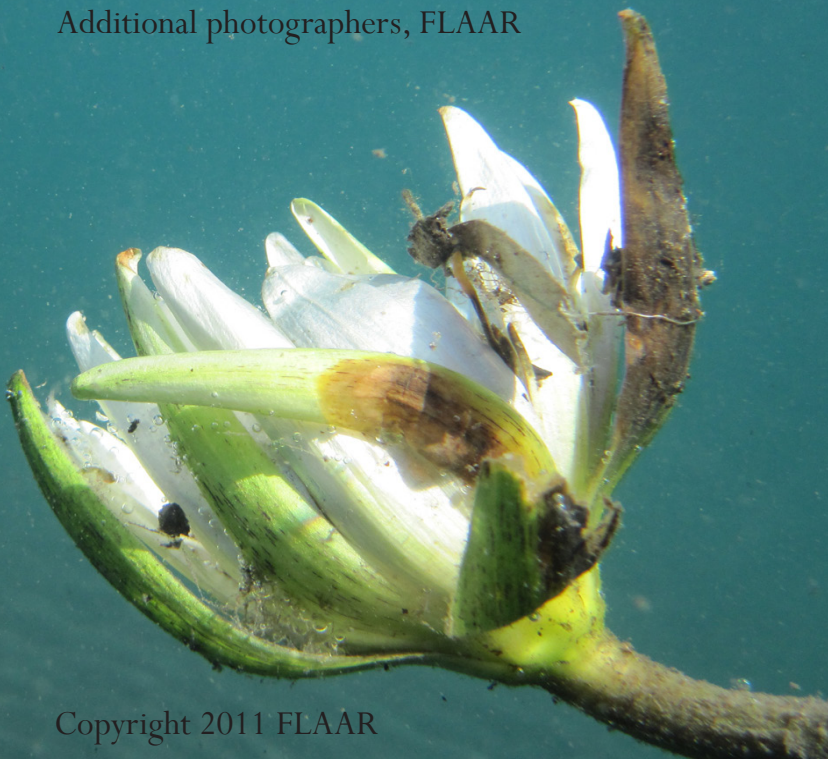
Glossary

Bibliography

Index



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PREFACE

This PDF is a proposal for the completion of over thirty years of research on Mayan ethno-botany and ethno-zoology related to Mayan cosmology, iconography, and epigraphy. The completion will be a coffee-table photo album of the Surface of the Underwaterworld based on photography of the last five years.

We are fully aware that a significant portion of Mayan cosmology is related to the sea; I already demonstrated that relative to shark's teeth in my PhD dissertation twenty-five years ago. The sea aspect has recently been reemphasized in beautifully illustrated exhibit catalog "The Fiery Pool" which takes many drawings (in their two page spread) that were featured throughout my PhD dissertation.

And naturally we are fully aware of cave springs and caves per se being crucial in Mayan underworld cosmology. FLAAR has several publications on caves and there are excellent monographs by other scholars on caves already in past decades.

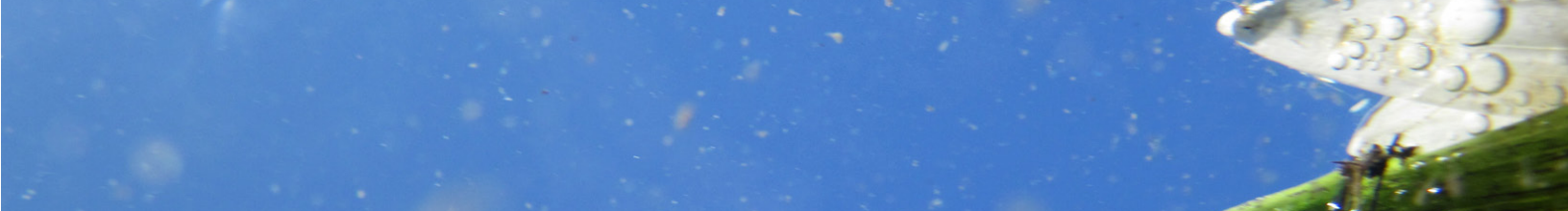
But in this forthcoming book I wish to concentrate on the water lily aspect of the Underwaterworld because water lilies are plants that are readily accessible throughout Guatemala. Instead of attempting to hop, skip, and jump from niche to niche (sea, cave rivers, fresh water), in this book I intend to concentrate on one very specific ecological niche: water lily eco-systems.

There are hundreds of experienced and capable archaeologists, there are scores of talented iconographers and epigraphers, and many good botanists and zoologists. But there are not many teams that have intimate familiarity and decades of experience with the water lily eco-system.

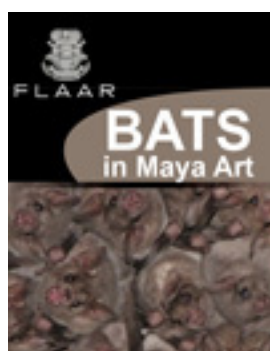
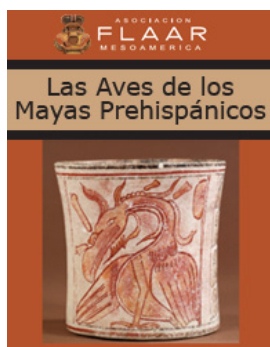
I have been in Guatemala since I was 17 years old and have lived in Peten over five years (at age 19 at Tikal and in my 30's at Lake Yaxha). Several years ago FLAAR added a team of botanists and zoologists to our staff and began to explore the water lily eco-systems in depth (pun intended). Frankly it is amazing how much more you can learn when you are out in a crocodile infested lake or river with Guatemalan biologists who know the plants and animals. There is no monograph I have yet seen that has offered the knowledge comparable to what I have learned from being underwater, under the water lilies and then surfacing with all my questions to a botanist and a zoologist waiting in the nearby boat.

FLAAR has projects on a dozen different aspects of Mayan ethnobotany and ethnozoology but the project on water lily iconography, cosmology, and eco-system I wish to turn into a coffee table book in order to share my experiences with students, scholars, and the many lay people who enjoy learning about ancient Maya civilization.





MAYAN ETHNOZOOLOGY



MAYAN ETHNOBOTANY

