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Temples lost in the rainforest. Strange inscriptions and ritual bloodletting. Such are the images popularly associated with the ancient Maya of Central America. But who really were the people of this lost civilization? How and why did their culture achieve regional dominance? Could such pressing contemporary problems as climate change and environmental degradation hold the key to the collapse of Maya civilization?

Of interest to scholars and general readers alike, *The Ancient Maya* brings the controversies that have divided experts on the ancient Maya to a wider audience. Heather McKillop examines the debates concerning Mayan hieroglyphs, the Maya economy, and the conflicting theories behind the enigmatic collapse of the Maya civilization. The most readable and accessible work in the field, this book brings the general reader up to date with the latest archaeological evidence.