

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:05,000

There was a secret city built by the Maya known as Sokbalam,

2

00:00:05,000 --> 00:00:07,000

or the White Jaguar.

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00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:11,000

The Spaniards spent 120 years looking for this city,

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00:00:11,000 --> 00:00:13,000

deep in the jungle.

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00:00:13,000 --> 00:00:16,000

There is a myth from the Maya.

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00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:21,000

Some white jaguars will come from the sky to eat all humanity.

7

00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:23,000

Talking about the apocalypse?

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00:00:23,000 --> 00:00:26,000

You gotta admit it's a great name for a city

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00:00:26,000 --> 00:00:28,000

for trying to keep people out.

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00:00:28,000 --> 00:00:32,000

This is like a proper Goonies treasure map.

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00:00:32,000 --> 00:00:37,000

So right here should be the lost ruins of the last Maya city in Mexico.

12

00:00:37,000 --> 00:00:41,000

Careful, that board's not great.

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00:00:41,000 --> 00:00:43,000

Machetes are ready, here we go.

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00:00:43,000 --> 00:00:46,000

There's not even a hint of a trail in here.

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00:00:46,000 --> 00:00:48,000

Now it's just jungle.

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00:00:48,000 --> 00:00:50,000

Miren, estructura.

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00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:52,000

Structures.

18

00:00:52,000 --> 00:00:53,000

Structure.

19

00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:54,000

Oh my word.

20

00:00:54,000 --> 00:00:55,000

Wow.

21

00:00:55,000 --> 00:00:56,000

These are stones.

22

00:00:56,000 --> 00:00:58,000

This is not natural.

23

00:00:59,000 --> 00:01:00,000

Oh, look at this.

24

00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:03,000

This is incredible.

25

00:01:03,000 --> 00:01:05,000

She's alive.

26

00:01:05,000 --> 00:01:08,000

These are most likely foundations for houses.

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00:01:08,000 --> 00:01:09,000

Definitely.

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00:01:09,000 --> 00:01:12,000

I really think we are in Sokbalam right now.

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00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:14,000

This is incredible.

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00:01:14,000 --> 00:01:18,000

Buenos Dias from the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico.

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00:01:18,000 --> 00:01:21,000

These lands were once the dominion of the Maya.

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:24,000

Over the course of nearly 4,000 years,

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00:01:24,000 --> 00:01:26,000

they created a vast network of city-states

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00:01:26,000 --> 00:01:29,000

that rivaled anything else in the new world.

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00:01:29,000 --> 00:01:32,000

That is, until the Spanish arrived.

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00:01:32,000 --> 00:01:34,000

Driven by a lot of people,

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00:01:34,000 --> 00:01:37,000

the Maya was the only city-state in Mexico

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:39,000

that had ever been built.

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00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:42,000

That is, until the Spanish arrived.

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00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:46,000

Driven by a lust for gold and glory,

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00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:49,000

the conquistadors overwhelmed the indigenous people.

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00:01:49,000 --> 00:01:51,000

And by the early 16th century,

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:54,000

the Maya here in Mexico had fallen,

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:56,000

except for one city.

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00:01:56,000 --> 00:01:59,000

A small band of Maya fled into the jungle,

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00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:01,000

where they built a secret refuge

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00:02:01,000 --> 00:02:04,000

guarded by watchtowers and fierce warriors.

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00:02:04,000 --> 00:02:06,000

A place to live as their ancestors had,

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00:02:06,000 --> 00:02:08,000

called Sokbalam,

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:11,000

the city of the White Jaguar.

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00:02:12,000 --> 00:02:15,000

For over a century, they remained free and hidden.

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00:02:15,000 --> 00:02:18,000

The location of Sokbalam bedeviled the Spanish,

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00:02:18,000 --> 00:02:21,000

who hunted for it relentlessly.

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00:02:21,000 --> 00:02:24,000

The Maya who lived there were feared by the Spanish,

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00:02:24,000 --> 00:02:27,000

as fierce warriors, but also as phantoms,

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00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:29,000

who would disappear deeper into the jungle

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00:02:29,000 --> 00:02:31,000

whenever the Spanish got close.

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00:02:31,000 --> 00:02:34,000

But eventually, the conquistadors found and subdued

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00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:37,000

the last independent Maya city in Mexico.

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00:02:37,000 --> 00:02:39,000

Its people were forcibly displaced,

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00:02:39,000 --> 00:02:41,000

and Sokbalam was abandoned

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00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:44,000

and lost to the jungle and time,

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00:02:44,000 --> 00:02:47,000

falling off of maps and into legend.

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00:02:49,000 --> 00:02:51,000

People have been looking for it ever since,

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00:02:51,000 --> 00:02:55,000

and now one archaeologist is convinced he can find it.

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00:02:55,000 --> 00:02:58,000

In 2019, he led a mission into the interior,

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00:02:58,000 --> 00:03:00,000

but was rebuffed by the jungle.

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00:03:00,000 --> 00:03:02,000

Now, using a long-forgotten map

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00:03:02,000 --> 00:03:04,000

and aerial laser mapping technology,

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00:03:04,000 --> 00:03:08,000

he believes he can finally pinpoint the city's exact location.

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00:03:08,000 --> 00:03:11,000

Sokbalam remains an unfinished chapter

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00:03:11,000 --> 00:03:13,000

in the saga of Maya civilization,

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00:03:13,000 --> 00:03:16,000

and finding it would be a major discovery.

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00:03:16,000 --> 00:03:18,000

So what are we waiting for?

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00:03:18,000 --> 00:03:21,000

The city of the White Jaguar awaits.

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00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:28,000

My name is Josh Gates.

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00:03:28,000 --> 00:03:29,000

Hello!

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00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:30,000

Explorer.

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00:03:30,000 --> 00:03:31,000

Here goes nothing.

80

00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:32,000

Adventurer.

81

00:03:32,000 --> 00:03:33,000

Woo-hoo-hoo!

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00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:35,000

Oh, that's a long way down.

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00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:38,000

And a guy who ends up in some very strange situations.

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00:03:38,000 --> 00:03:40,000

I'm alive for now!

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00:03:40,000 --> 00:03:44,000

With a degree in archaeology and a passion for the unexplained,

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00:03:44,000 --> 00:03:46,000

I travel to the ends of the earth,

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00:03:46,000 --> 00:03:49,000

investigating the greatest legends in history.

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00:03:49,000 --> 00:03:50,000

Ready to rock and roll.

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00:03:50,000 --> 00:03:53,000

This is Expedition Unknown.

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00:03:57,000 --> 00:04:00,000

In every direction, a sea of green.

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00:04:00,000 --> 00:04:04,000

This untamed rainforest is known as the Lakhan Done Jungle,

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00:04:04,000 --> 00:04:07,000

which spreads out across nearly four and a half million acres

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00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:09,000

of Mexico and Guatemala.

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00:04:09,000 --> 00:04:14,000

To find my first clue to the location of the lost city of the White Jaguar,

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00:04:14,000 --> 00:04:19,000

I'm traveling to here, another Maya city, once lost, but now found.

96

00:04:19,000 --> 00:04:21,000

This is Bonampak.

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00:04:22,000 --> 00:04:27,000

A once bustling metropolis lorded over by a huge acropolis

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00:04:27,000 --> 00:04:31,000

that looms 150 feet above the open plaza below.

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00:04:31,000 --> 00:04:34,000

I'm here to meet an archaeologist who's been searching

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00:04:34,000 --> 00:04:38,000

for the lost city of Saqbalam for nearly a decade.

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00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:40,000

Dr. Woodfill, I presume.

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00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:42,000

It is indeed. Nice to meet you, Josh.

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00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:44,000

A little warm around these parts.

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00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:47,000

I was only going to get hotter, unfortunately.

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00:04:47,000 --> 00:04:49,000

But an absolutely incredible sight.

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00:04:49,000 --> 00:04:51,000

This is one of my favorite Maya cities.

107

00:04:51,000 --> 00:04:52,000

Awesome.

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00:04:52,000 --> 00:04:54,000

And this is a very impressive monument here.

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00:04:54,000 --> 00:04:57,000

This is actually one of the largest stele,

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00:04:57,000 --> 00:05:00,000

kind of these standing stone monuments, in the entire Maya world.

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00:05:00,000 --> 00:05:04,000

And I'm guessing this is our king or our lord here of this city.

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00:05:04,000 --> 00:05:07,000

This is the greatest and last king of this city,

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00:05:07,000 --> 00:05:09,000

Chanmuan II.

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00:05:09,000 --> 00:05:11,000

So our king here is ruling roughly when?

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00:05:11,000 --> 00:05:13,000

At the end of the eighth century,

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00:05:13,000 --> 00:05:16,000

So this is hundreds of years, like 700 years,

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00:05:16,000 --> 00:05:20,000

before the so-called lost city of Saqbalam that we're interested in.

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00:05:20,000 --> 00:05:22,000

So what is Saqbalam in simple terms?

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00:05:22,000 --> 00:05:27,000

Saqbalam is the very end of unconquered Maya civilization.

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00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:30,000

And the particular Maya that are at Saqbalam are who?

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00:05:30,000 --> 00:05:34,000

So they are a group of Maya called the Lakondon.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:38,000

They were a Maya group who splintered off to live deep in the jungles.

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00:05:38,000 --> 00:05:41,000

They spoke a language that was actually the direct descendant

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00:05:41,000 --> 00:05:43,000

of the language you see in this text.

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00:05:43,000 --> 00:05:44,000

Okay?

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00:05:44,000 --> 00:05:47,000

So how do we go from the height of this civilization here

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00:05:47,000 --> 00:05:50,000

to this lost city of Saqbalam?

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00:05:50,000 --> 00:05:54,000

So to really understand how the Maya got to Saqbalam,

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00:05:54,000 --> 00:05:59,000

you have to look and understand the rises and falls of the Maya over time.

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00:05:59,000 --> 00:06:02,000

For those of you asleep in high school history class,

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00:06:02,000 --> 00:06:05,000

the Maya civilization is the largest city in the world.

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00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:07,000

In the early 20th century,

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00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:10,000

the Maya civilization rose more than 4,000 years ago

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00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:14,000

and flourished throughout Central America all the way into the 16th century,

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00:06:14,000 --> 00:06:19,000

erecting advanced city-states with populations in the hundreds of thousands,

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00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:24,000

and making seriously badass achievements in astronomy, art, mathematics,

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00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:26,000

and written language.

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00:06:26,000 --> 00:06:29,000

They were also warriors who were not to be messed with,

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00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:33,000

and their powerful ritualistic faith in their gods and divine kings

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00:06:33,000 --> 00:06:36,000

led to an extended era of prosperity.

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00:06:36,000 --> 00:06:38,000

It was toward the end of this time,

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00:06:38,000 --> 00:06:40,000

in what's known as the Late Classic period,

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00:06:40,000 --> 00:06:44,000

when Bonampak's impressive acropolis was erected.

144

00:06:45,000 --> 00:06:46,000

Look at the scale of this.

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00:06:46,000 --> 00:06:47,000

It's insane.

146

00:06:47,000 --> 00:06:50,000

And you never feel smaller than climbing stairs like this.

147

00:06:50,000 --> 00:06:53,000

There is no way to go up here with any sort of dignity remaining.

148

00:06:53,000 --> 00:06:56,000

Any foreign dignitary is already humiliated

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00:06:56,000 --> 00:06:59,000

before they actually get to who they're going to meet with.

150

00:06:59,000 --> 00:07:01,000

I mean, it's like you're climbing a mountain.

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00:07:01,000 --> 00:07:05,000

The word that the Maya used for temples, at least, was wits,

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00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:07,000

which literally means mountain.

153

00:07:07,000 --> 00:07:11,000

At the top of the rise is a three-chambered temple,

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00:07:11,000 --> 00:07:13,000

and what archaeologists discovered inside

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00:07:13,000 --> 00:07:17,000

is what makes Bonampak a truly historic site.

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00:07:17,000 --> 00:07:20,000

Oh, my word.

157

00:07:20,000 --> 00:07:22,000

Are you kidding me?

158

00:07:22,000 --> 00:07:27,000

This is original, original paint, original murals from centuries ago.

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00:07:27,000 --> 00:07:31,000

This was actually done around 8790.

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00:07:31,000 --> 00:07:35,000

These are perhaps the finest Maya murals that survive today,

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00:07:35,000 --> 00:07:39,000

and the most complete view of Late Classic Maya civilization.

162

00:07:39,000 --> 00:07:42,000

The elites depict it as a kind of paradise,

163

00:07:42,000 --> 00:07:45,000

where the people live in harmony with the land and their gods.

164

00:07:45,000 --> 00:07:48,000

The murals in this room show a celebration,

165

00:07:48,000 --> 00:07:53,000

Bonampak's crowned prince being presented as the heir to the throne.

166

00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:55,000

This looks like a huge party, right?

167

00:07:55,000 --> 00:07:59,000

You've got this huge procession with people blowing horns and instruments.

168

00:07:59,000 --> 00:08:03,000

You can feel this life and wealth and celebration in this room.

169

00:08:03,000 --> 00:08:06,000

And what about our young heir here to the throne?

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00:08:06,000 --> 00:08:08,000

Is he going to take power?

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00:08:08,000 --> 00:08:10,000

No, he will not deceive the throne,

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00:08:10,000 --> 00:08:13,000

because there is no throne for him to deceive, too.

173

00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:15,000

Wow.

174

00:08:15,000 --> 00:08:19,000

Within a decade or two, the city has collapsed.

175

00:08:19,000 --> 00:08:21,000

The city is a ghost town.

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00:08:21,000 --> 00:08:23,000

And in the next room, I can show you why.

177

00:08:23,000 --> 00:08:26,000

In the second chamber, things are decidedly darker.

178

00:08:26,000 --> 00:08:29,000

Gone are the scenes of peace and harmony,

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00:08:29,000 --> 00:08:33,000

replaced with images of the Maya at war with each other.

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00:08:33,000 --> 00:08:37,000

You can see all of the successful warriors from Bonampak,

181

00:08:37,000 --> 00:08:41,000

flanking the king and presenting the captives.

182

00:08:43,000 --> 00:08:46,000

You can see some of them have been tortured.

183

00:08:46,000 --> 00:08:50,000

That man right there, he is bleeding from his fingertips

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00:08:50,000 --> 00:08:52,000

because his fingernails have been pulled out.

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00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:54,000

This is war.

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00:08:54,000 --> 00:08:57,000

There are many proposed reasons for the collapse that follows,

187

00:08:57,000 --> 00:09:01,000

including competition for resources, drought, and foreign invasion.

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00:09:01,000 --> 00:09:06,000

But it is clear that the centers of power fail to adapt and collaborate.

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00:09:06,000 --> 00:09:11,000

And by the 8th century, the Maya abandoned hard-to-defense cities like Bonampak

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00:09:11,000 --> 00:09:14,000

in favor of smaller communities in the jungle,

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00:09:14,000 --> 00:09:19,000

which is how most Maya are living when the Spanish arrive in the early 16th century,

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00:09:19,000 --> 00:09:22,000

led by conquistador Hernán Cortés.

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00:09:24,000 --> 00:09:28,000

Cortés is the first man in, but he is not really obsessed with the Maya.

194

00:09:28,000 --> 00:09:31,000

He is on a collision course with the Aztecs in Mexico City.

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00:09:31,000 --> 00:09:33,000

That is where a lot of the gold was.

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00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:37,000

Who are the conquistadors that start to take down the Maya?

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00:09:37,000 --> 00:09:40,000

There was Cortés's right-hand man, Alvarado.

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00:09:40,000 --> 00:09:42,000

There was Montego the Elder.

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00:09:42,000 --> 00:09:46,000

To their so-called New World, the Spanish brought steel,

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00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:49,000

muskets, cannons, and of course, disease.

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00:09:49,000 --> 00:09:53,000

Much of the indigenous population here was killed by smallpox,

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00:09:53,000 --> 00:09:58,000

and this, along with Spain's advanced weapons and divisions within the Maya world,

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00:09:58,000 --> 00:10:03,000

allowed the Europeans to conquer this great civilization in only a century,

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00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:05,000

but not without a fight.

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00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:07,000

So this is where Saqbalam comes in.

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00:10:07,000 --> 00:10:12,000

The Lacondon Maya ended up packing up shop and moving deep into the jungle.

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00:10:13,000 --> 00:10:19,000

By the mid-17th century, the Spanish have conquered every Maya city in Mexico, save one.

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00:10:19,000 --> 00:10:23,000

A jungle stronghold that continues to defy foreign rule,

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00:10:23,000 --> 00:10:28,000

with dozens of watchtowers protecting over a hundred wood and fat structures,

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00:10:28,000 --> 00:10:31,000

including three massive communal buildings.

211

00:10:31,000 --> 00:10:35,000

And the Spanish don't know where this place is, and I imagine this drives them nuts.

212

00:10:35,000 --> 00:10:39,000

Oh yeah, the Spaniards spent 120 years looking for this city.

213

00:10:39,000 --> 00:10:44,000

The people who lived there had become kind of boogie men who terrified the Spaniards.

214

00:10:44,000 --> 00:10:46,000

Right, because they were so elusive?

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00:10:46,000 --> 00:10:51,000

They were elusive, and any time there was an encounter, it was a violent one.

216

00:10:51,000 --> 00:10:52,000

Right.

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00:10:52,000 --> 00:10:56,000

They were kind of pioneers of guerrilla warfare, and it kept them safe and hidden for decades.

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00:10:56,000 --> 00:10:59,000

But the Spanish eventually fined Saqbalam.

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00:10:59,000 --> 00:11:03,000

The Spaniards fined Saqbalam in 1695 after the founding of Harvard.

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00:11:03,000 --> 00:11:05,000

Right, it's that late.

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00:11:06,000 --> 00:11:11,000

Conquistador Nicolás de Valenzuela is the man who finds and conquers the city,

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00:11:11,000 --> 00:11:14,000

quickly and brutally bringing it under his control.

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00:11:14,000 --> 00:11:18,000

The Spanish maintain it for a decade before abandoning it to history,

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00:11:18,000 --> 00:11:21,000

where it has stayed utterly missing for centuries.

225

00:11:21,000 --> 00:11:26,000

Finding it today would reveal the final secrets of the free Maya people,

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00:11:26,000 --> 00:11:30,000

a historical and cultural treasure beyond value.

227

00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:32,000

Can Saqbalam be found?

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00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:33,000

I think so.

229

00:11:33,000 --> 00:11:34,000

Can you find it?

230

00:11:34,000 --> 00:11:35,000

I hope so.

231

00:11:35,000 --> 00:11:37,000

The confidence was fading a little.

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00:11:37,000 --> 00:11:38,000

Okay.

233

00:11:38,000 --> 00:11:40,000

There's a reason for that.

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00:11:40,000 --> 00:11:43,000

Brent has gone looking for Saqbalam before.

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00:11:43,000 --> 00:11:46,000

In 2019, he went into the jungle to find it,

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00:11:46,000 --> 00:11:49,000

only to be stopped short by the impenetrable wilderness.

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00:11:49,000 --> 00:11:53,000

But now, he has new information and a new approach.

238

00:11:53,000 --> 00:11:54,000

How are you going to find it?

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00:11:54,000 --> 00:12:01,000

So, I have a colleague who's been using Spanish colonial texts and cutting-edge technology

240

00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:04,000

to really narrow down where the site could be located.

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00:12:04,000 --> 00:12:05,000

Okay.

242

00:12:05,000 --> 00:12:06,000

And we have a few good leads.

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00:12:06,000 --> 00:12:07,000

All right, well, that's a start.

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00:12:07,000 --> 00:12:09,000

Yeah, I'd love for you to meet this guy.

245

00:12:09,000 --> 00:12:10,000

Should we do it?

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00:12:10,000 --> 00:12:11,000

Let's go.

247

00:12:11,000 --> 00:12:12,000

To Saqbalam.

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00:12:12,000 --> 00:12:14,000

To Saqbalam.

249

00:12:19,000 --> 00:12:24,000

To meet Brent's colleague, we leave Bonampak and head north, deeper into Chiapas.

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00:12:24,000 --> 00:12:28,000

I've been to Mexico before, but I've never been to this Mexico.

251

00:12:28,000 --> 00:12:33,000

In 1994, the socialist Zapatista Uprising rocked the region with violence,

252

00:12:33,000 --> 00:12:35,000

and it hasn't really stopped since.

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00:12:35,000 --> 00:12:40,000

Today, the Zapatistas, the Mexican government, and let's not forget the cartels,

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00:12:40,000 --> 00:12:43,000

all operate along this border zone.

255

00:12:43,000 --> 00:12:46,000

And the roads through here are fine.

256

00:12:46,000 --> 00:12:47,000

It's not what I've read.

257

00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:50,000

I've read that we are basically in the middle of Narco territory here.

258

00:12:50,000 --> 00:12:51,000

Yeah, sure.

259

00:12:51,000 --> 00:12:52,000

And it's fine.

260

00:12:52,000 --> 00:12:53,000

It's fine.

261

00:12:53,000 --> 00:12:54,000

It's fine, right.

262

00:12:54,000 --> 00:12:55,000

Nothing's happened yet.

263

00:12:55,000 --> 00:12:56,000

Nothing's happened yet.

264

00:12:56,000 --> 00:12:57,000

Oh, boy.

265

00:12:58,000 --> 00:13:04,000

Brent and I drive as inconspicuously as possible to the shores of nearby Lago Cebal.

266

00:13:04,000 --> 00:13:05,000

Running out of road here, Brent.

267

00:13:05,000 --> 00:13:06,000

We are here.

268

00:13:06,000 --> 00:13:07,000

This is it.

269

00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:08,000

This is it.

270

00:13:08,000 --> 00:13:14,000

Where his colleague is waiting, an archaeologist with Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology

271

00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:16,000

and History, Josue Lozada.

272

00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:18,000

Josue.

273

00:13:18,000 --> 00:13:19,000

Hey, good to see you, Brent.

274

00:13:19,000 --> 00:13:21,000

Good to see you, man.

275

00:13:21,000 --> 00:13:24,000

So, Josh, this is Josue, the guy I was telling you about.

276

00:13:24,000 --> 00:13:25,000

Nice to meet you, Josh.

277

00:13:25,000 --> 00:13:26,000

Hola.

278

00:13:26,000 --> 00:13:30,000

He's been working in this area for about 15 years, and he has been looking for Sac-Balam

279

00:13:30,000 --> 00:13:31,000

for the last 10.

280

00:13:31,000 --> 00:13:33,000

So, you've been looking for 10 years?

281

00:13:33,000 --> 00:13:34,000

For 10 years.

282

00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:35,000

Has it driven you crazy yet?

283

00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:36,000

I think so.

284

00:13:37,000 --> 00:13:38,000

Okay.

285

00:13:38,000 --> 00:13:39,000

He has something very special.

286

00:13:39,000 --> 00:13:40,000

Okay, what's that?

287

00:13:40,000 --> 00:13:42,000

He may have a map to the lost city.

288

00:13:42,000 --> 00:13:43,000

You have a map?

289

00:13:43,000 --> 00:13:44,000

A map.

290

00:13:44,000 --> 00:13:45,000

Can we see?

291

00:13:45,000 --> 00:13:46,000

Yes, of course.

292

00:13:46,000 --> 00:13:47,000

Please, don't look at it.

293

00:13:47,000 --> 00:13:52,000

Is it possible that Josue and Brent have figured out a path that leads to the fabled lost city?

294

00:13:52,000 --> 00:13:53,000

This is the map.

295

00:13:53,000 --> 00:13:55,000

Look at this map.

296

00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:04,000

This is like a proper Goonies treasure map.

297

00:14:04,000 --> 00:14:05,000

Where did this come from?

298

00:14:05,000 --> 00:14:08,000

It's in the Arkay of the Indies in Seville, Spain.

299

00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:14,000

Archaeologist Brent Woodfill is attempting to locate the city of the white jaguar Sac-Balam,

300

00:14:14,000 --> 00:14:18,000

the last settlement of free Maya in Mexico before the conquest.

301

00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:25,000

Sac-Balam has been missing for 300 years, but now Brent's colleague, Josue Lozada, is showing

302

00:14:25,000 --> 00:14:29,000

us a map that could finally put the lost settlement within reach.

303

00:14:29,000 --> 00:14:31,000

Who made this map?

304

00:14:31,000 --> 00:14:38,000

So this is a friar named Diego de Ribas, who was actually stationed in Sac-Balam after

305

00:14:38,000 --> 00:14:40,000

it was conquered by the Spaniards.

306

00:14:40,000 --> 00:14:45,000

Like Spanish priests all over the Americas, de Ribas was sent to Sac-Balam to convert

307

00:14:45,000 --> 00:14:48,000

the indigenous people to Catholicism.

308

00:14:48,000 --> 00:14:53,000

When he was later reassigned, he drew this map to depict the route from Sac-Balam to

309

00:14:53,000 --> 00:14:56,000

another settlement in a lake in neighboring Guatemala.

310

00:14:56,000 --> 00:15:00,000

So we have this literal hand-drawn map here on the right and then a lot of writing on the left.

311

00:15:00,000 --> 00:15:01,000

What is this?

312

00:15:01,000 --> 00:15:04,000

This is a key of all the places that he marks on the map.

313

00:15:04,000 --> 00:15:08,000

So it's a literal key, so it's A-B-C-D-E-F and these are all locations on the map.

314

00:15:08,000 --> 00:15:13,000

These are all locations he was eventually going to put on the map had he actually finished it.

315

00:15:13,000 --> 00:15:14,000

The map's unfinished.

316

00:15:14,000 --> 00:15:20,000

This is, quite literally, a map to a lost city, but there is one big catch.

317

00:15:20,000 --> 00:15:25,000

Does he bother to mark the location of Sac-Balam? Does he do that?

318

00:15:25,000 --> 00:15:26,000

No.

319

00:15:26,000 --> 00:15:27,000

What?

320

00:15:27,000 --> 00:15:30,000

It's in the key under letter D.

321

00:15:30,000 --> 00:15:34,000

So, Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores.

322

00:15:34,000 --> 00:15:37,000

So this is the name of Sac-Balam. The Spanish rename it.

323

00:15:37,000 --> 00:15:38,000

Yes.

324

00:15:38,000 --> 00:15:39,000

But there's no D over here.

325

00:15:39,000 --> 00:15:40,000

No.

326

00:15:40,000 --> 00:15:41,000

Perfect.

327

00:15:41,000 --> 00:15:42,000

Okay.

328

00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:45,000

So looking at this map, what do we know for sure?

329

00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:49,000

For sure, this is the place where he ended the journey.

330

00:15:49,000 --> 00:15:51,000

So we have this labeled.

331

00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:53,000

That's the finish line. That's where he's going.

332

00:15:53,000 --> 00:15:54,000

Okay, so that's a lot.

333

00:15:54,000 --> 00:15:57,000

I mean, that gives us a geographical pole in the ground here.

334

00:15:57,000 --> 00:15:58,000

Right.

335

00:15:58,000 --> 00:15:59,000

Right?

336

00:15:59,000 --> 00:16:00,000

Okay, what else do we know?

337

00:16:00,000 --> 00:16:02,000

We have some directions.

338

00:16:02,000 --> 00:16:03,000

Here is the north.

339

00:16:03,000 --> 00:16:04,000

North.

340

00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:05,000

Here is the south.

341

00:16:05,000 --> 00:16:06,000

Sure.

342

00:16:06,000 --> 00:16:09,000

Okay, so we've got our endpoint and we've got cardinal directions.

343

00:16:09,000 --> 00:16:10,000

And what else?

344

00:16:10,000 --> 00:16:11,000

What is this symbol?

345

00:16:11,000 --> 00:16:18,000

So, the P is actually a really important salt production zone that the Maya were using the Spaniards took over.

346

00:16:18,000 --> 00:16:20,000

Okay, and we see that on here.

347

00:16:20,000 --> 00:16:21,000

Salinas.

348

00:16:21,000 --> 00:16:23,000

And so do we know where this location is today?

349

00:16:23,000 --> 00:16:26,000

Well, I've actually been working there for 12 years.

350

00:16:26,000 --> 00:16:28,000

So we better know where it is.

351

00:16:28,000 --> 00:16:29,000

Yeah.

352

00:16:29,000 --> 00:16:32,000

Okay, so this is another real geographical pin that we can put in this map.

353

00:16:32,000 --> 00:16:34,000

So how do we figure out where Sac-Balam was?

354

00:16:34,000 --> 00:16:39,000

Josh, there are two roads that might be the key to figuring out where it is.

355

00:16:39,000 --> 00:16:40,000

Okay.

356

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:42,000

The first is labeled O right here.

357

00:16:42,000 --> 00:16:46,000

O is the road from Sac-Balam to the Salt Works.

358

00:16:46,000 --> 00:16:48,000

Oh, that's huge.

359

00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:52,000

So that means you follow this dotted line somewhere out here should be Sac-Balam.

360

00:16:52,000 --> 00:16:53,000

Exactly.

361

00:16:53,000 --> 00:16:58,000

And then also this road that would lead from a town in Guatemala to Sac-Balam, but the road never got built.

362

00:16:58,000 --> 00:17:05,000

A planned Spanish road from the Guatemalan town of Isch-Catán to Sac-Balam, along with the road from the Salt Works,

363

00:17:05,000 --> 00:17:10,000

offers us two paths that lead to a critical intersection.

364

00:17:10,000 --> 00:17:11,000

May I?

365

00:17:11,000 --> 00:17:12,000

Yeah.

366

00:17:12,000 --> 00:17:13,000

Yeah, of course.

367

00:17:13,000 --> 00:17:17,000

So the road that marks the spot, now we just need to find X.

368

00:17:17,000 --> 00:17:20,000

The lost city of Sac-Balam should be there.

369

00:17:20,000 --> 00:17:22,000

So how do we figure out where that X is?

370

00:17:22,000 --> 00:17:25,000

The way to figure out is to look in these lines.

371

00:17:25,000 --> 00:17:26,000

These?

372

00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:27,000

Yes.

373

00:17:27,000 --> 00:17:28,000

Are these rivers?

374

00:17:28,000 --> 00:17:29,000

They look like rivers.

375

00:17:29,000 --> 00:17:30,000

Yes, there are rivers.

376

00:17:30,000 --> 00:17:33,000

We can identify the rivers to figure out the distance to Sac-Balam.

377

00:17:33,000 --> 00:17:35,000

I want to show you this map.

378

00:17:35,000 --> 00:17:36,000

Oh, a much better map.

379

00:17:36,000 --> 00:17:41,000

Looking at the modern map, we can identify the name of the rivers here.

380

00:17:41,000 --> 00:17:43,000

Okay, so what is this one with all the twists in it?

381

00:17:43,000 --> 00:17:46,000

This is the Lacan-Tun river.

382

00:17:46,000 --> 00:17:48,000

Yeah, you can totally see that.

383

00:17:48,000 --> 00:17:54,000

The many undulations of the Lacan-Tun river align with the twists seen on Don Diego's crude map.

384

00:17:54,000 --> 00:17:56,000

And then the one that goes across?

385

00:17:56,000 --> 00:17:59,000

This is the Usumacinta river.

386

00:17:59,000 --> 00:18:05,000

Don Diego's account was that he arrived at the intersection of the two rivers after five days on the Lacan-Tun,

387

00:18:05,000 --> 00:18:11,000

and continuing to work backward, he arrived at the river after four days of walking from Sac-Balam.

388

00:18:11,000 --> 00:18:13,000

And is that what this big circle is?

389

00:18:13,000 --> 00:18:14,000

Yes.

390

00:18:14,000 --> 00:18:16,000

This is a four-day walk?

391

00:18:16,000 --> 00:18:17,000

Yes, that's right.

392

00:18:17,000 --> 00:18:23,000

The diameter represents a four-day walk in any direction to this part of the Lacan-Tun river.

393

00:18:23,000 --> 00:18:26,000

But Don Diego wrote that he trekked from the west,

394

00:18:26,000 --> 00:18:33,000

which means that Hoseway has narrowed down the location of Sac-Balam to an incredibly tight search zone.

395

00:18:33,000 --> 00:18:37,000

So somewhere in this red arc is Sac-Balam.

396

00:18:37,000 --> 00:18:43,000

This is extraordinary because it really now, for the first time, is offering an actual target.

397

00:18:43,000 --> 00:18:51,000

Yeah, it still isn't a silver bullet, but it takes it down from about 1,500 square miles to about 150.

398

00:18:51,000 --> 00:18:53,000

Wow, that's a huge jump though.

399

00:18:53,000 --> 00:18:54,000

Yeah.

400

00:18:54,000 --> 00:18:56,000

So is there a way to get into this target zone?

401

00:18:56,000 --> 00:19:02,000

Yeah, we can come in from the west where there are actually several roads and established communities.

402

00:19:02,000 --> 00:19:05,000

It doesn't get us all the way there, but it'll get us close.

403

00:19:05,000 --> 00:19:07,000

So we've got awesome new data here.

404

00:19:07,000 --> 00:19:09,000

We've got a probable area.

405

00:19:09,000 --> 00:19:11,000

Now we need a real X.

406

00:19:11,000 --> 00:19:12,000

Yes.

407

00:19:12,000 --> 00:19:16,000

Fortunately, that X may already have revealed itself.

408

00:19:16,000 --> 00:19:23,000

Brent and Hoseway have been contacted by a park ranger who recently came across stones inside the target zone

409

00:19:23,000 --> 00:19:26,000

that he believes are man-made ruins.

410

00:19:26,000 --> 00:19:30,000

This could be a major break, but meeting him will be a journey in itself.

411

00:19:30,000 --> 00:19:40,000

We need to travel 120 miles through narco-traffic territory to the rangers' outpost on the edge of Montes Azules' Biosphere Reserve.

412

00:19:40,000 --> 00:19:46,000

But if this lead pans out, we might be able to locate the fabled lost city.

413

00:19:46,000 --> 00:19:51,000

Hoseway, why do they call Sac-Balam the white jaguar?

414

00:19:51,000 --> 00:19:57,000

Well, there is a myth from the Maya, which is in the end of the war,

415

00:19:57,000 --> 00:20:03,000

some white jaguars will come from the sky to eat all humanity.

416

00:20:03,000 --> 00:20:05,000

You talking about the apocalypse?

417

00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:06,000

That's right.

418

00:20:06,000 --> 00:20:08,000

Okay.

419

00:20:08,000 --> 00:20:12,000

I mean, you've got to admit it's a great name for a city for trying to keep people out.

420

00:20:12,000 --> 00:20:14,000

Right, a city at the end of the world.

421

00:20:14,000 --> 00:20:16,000

Wow.

422

00:20:17,000 --> 00:20:19,000

Two hours later, we enter the park.

423

00:20:19,000 --> 00:20:23,000

The rangers' station sits along a river further inside the reserve,

424

00:20:23,000 --> 00:20:27,000

and naturally, the hike begins with a challenge.

425

00:20:28,000 --> 00:20:30,000

Okay, well, that looks safe.

426

00:20:33,000 --> 00:20:35,000

Maximum capacity for people.

427

00:20:35,000 --> 00:20:37,000

What size people?

428

00:20:37,000 --> 00:20:39,000

What kind of people?

429

00:20:39,000 --> 00:20:41,000

I'm assuming not us.

430

00:20:41,000 --> 00:20:44,000

We're at least four and a half people right here, I feel like.

431

00:20:44,000 --> 00:20:45,000

Okay.

432

00:20:45,000 --> 00:20:47,000

What's the worst that could happen?

433

00:20:47,000 --> 00:20:50,000

We could fall to our deaths, I think is the worst that could happen?

434

00:20:50,000 --> 00:20:51,000

After you.

435

00:20:51,000 --> 00:20:53,000

So generous of you.

436

00:20:56,000 --> 00:20:59,000

Immediately sketchy.

437

00:21:02,000 --> 00:21:05,000

This is fine, these boards look great.

438

00:21:07,000 --> 00:21:10,000

Careful, that board's not great.

439

00:21:14,000 --> 00:21:16,000

Okay, okay.

440

00:21:22,000 --> 00:21:24,000

Okay.

441

00:21:25,000 --> 00:21:27,000

And we're alive.

442

00:21:28,000 --> 00:21:32,000

Safely across, we walk upriver and into another world.

443

00:21:34,000 --> 00:21:36,000

Look at this place.

444

00:21:36,000 --> 00:21:37,000

Woo!

445

00:21:37,000 --> 00:21:39,000

Wow!

446

00:21:39,000 --> 00:21:44,000

Finally, we descend down to meet the man who may have found the X on Don Diego's map,

447

00:21:44,000 --> 00:21:48,000

naturalist and ranger Efrain Guzman Gomez.

448

00:21:48,000 --> 00:21:49,000

Efrain.

449

00:21:49,000 --> 00:21:50,000

How are you?

450

00:21:50,000 --> 00:21:51,000

Hello.

451

00:21:51,000 --> 00:21:52,000

This is Josh.

452

00:21:52,000 --> 00:21:53,000

Josh.

453

00:21:53,000 --> 00:21:55,000

Hello, I'm good to meet you.

454

00:21:55,000 --> 00:21:56,000

Nice to meet you.

455

00:21:56,000 --> 00:21:59,000

So I understand that you saw something out in the jungle.

456

00:21:59,000 --> 00:22:01,000

What did he see?

457

00:22:01,000 --> 00:22:04,000

You saw something inside the jungle, exactly what did you see?

458

00:22:04,000 --> 00:22:06,000

Structures.

459

00:22:06,000 --> 00:22:09,000

There are structures made of shaped stone.

460

00:22:09,000 --> 00:22:11,000

Okay, ancient structures, old structures.

461

00:22:11,000 --> 00:22:13,000

Of the Mayans.

462

00:22:13,000 --> 00:22:15,000

There are many structures.

463

00:22:15,000 --> 00:22:17,000

I only saw a few.

464

00:22:17,000 --> 00:22:19,000

But it looked man-made.

465

00:22:19,000 --> 00:22:22,000

About how far is this site from right here?

466

00:22:22,000 --> 00:22:25,000

We're talking more or less 15 kilometers.

467

00:22:25,000 --> 00:22:27,000

Oh, 15 kilometers.

468

00:22:27,000 --> 00:22:30,000

15 kilometers as the crow flies through the jungle.

469

00:22:30,000 --> 00:22:32,000

Yeah, that's a long way.

470

00:22:32,000 --> 00:22:33,000

Yeah.

471

00:22:33,000 --> 00:22:34,000

Okay.

472

00:22:34,000 --> 00:22:36,000

Can you take us there?

473

00:22:36,000 --> 00:22:37,000

Of course.

474

00:22:37,000 --> 00:22:38,000

In the boat?

475

00:22:38,000 --> 00:22:39,000

Yes.

476

00:22:39,000 --> 00:22:40,000

The whole way?

477

00:22:40,000 --> 00:22:42,000

I'm not even going to ask.

478

00:22:42,000 --> 00:22:44,000

I'm not even going to ask.

479

00:22:44,000 --> 00:22:48,000

We can cut some of the distance to Efrain's find by traveling up river.

480

00:22:48,000 --> 00:22:52,000

He's leading us to his site where we'll camp while we investigate.

481

00:22:52,000 --> 00:23:00,000

We steam against the current as millions of gallons of jade-colored water flow from the far away highlands of Mexico.

482

00:23:03,000 --> 00:23:07,000

But while the views are stunning, it's not lost on any of us,

483

00:23:07,000 --> 00:23:12,000

that with each passing mile, the safety of civilization recedes further behind us.

484

00:23:12,000 --> 00:23:15,000

Luckily, we do have directions.

485

00:23:15,000 --> 00:23:18,000

So hypothetically, where are we on this map?

486

00:23:18,000 --> 00:23:21,000

We are way up this river.

487

00:23:21,000 --> 00:23:23,000

So this is the Lacantun River?

488

00:23:23,000 --> 00:23:24,000

Yes, the Lacantun River.

489

00:23:24,000 --> 00:23:26,000

And we're what, in like a tributary of that?

490

00:23:26,000 --> 00:23:27,000

Yeah, we're in one of the tributaries.

491

00:23:27,000 --> 00:23:28,000

It's called the Hatate.

492

00:23:28,000 --> 00:23:30,000

The Hatate River.

493

00:23:30,000 --> 00:23:31,000

Yeah, okay.

494

00:23:31,000 --> 00:23:38,000

We're moving along the same river system as Don Diego's map in the direction of the projected location of Saqbalam.

495

00:23:38,000 --> 00:23:42,000

So we're in a tributary of this river and we're headed upstream.

496

00:23:42,000 --> 00:23:43,000

Yes.

497

00:23:43,000 --> 00:23:46,000

So ultimately, this is getting us closer to your investigation zone, yes?

498

00:23:46,000 --> 00:23:47,000

Yes, in that point.

499

00:23:47,000 --> 00:23:48,000

Okay.

500

00:23:48,000 --> 00:23:50,000

And after that, we're on foot?

501

00:23:50,000 --> 00:23:51,000

Yes.

502

00:23:51,000 --> 00:23:54,000

And then we go straight to the X, right?

503

00:23:54,000 --> 00:23:55,000

Yeah.

504

00:23:55,000 --> 00:23:56,000

It's just that simple.

505

00:23:56,000 --> 00:23:58,000

Why hadn't I thought of that before?

506

00:23:58,000 --> 00:24:00,000

It should be home by dinner, I would think.

507

00:24:00,000 --> 00:24:07,000

To find Saqbalam, we have Don Diego's map and Efraín's memory, but we also have other clues.

508

00:24:07,000 --> 00:24:12,000

In detailed writings, Nicolas de Valenzuela, the Spaniard who conquered Saqbalam,

509

00:24:12,000 --> 00:24:17,000

described a number of distinguishing features to help us identify the city.

510

00:24:17,000 --> 00:24:24,000

He wrote that Saqbalam is in the northern part of a long, narrow valley surrounded by high ridges.

511

00:24:24,000 --> 00:24:29,000

Three large wood and thatched structures were set on platforms, atop mounds,

512

00:24:29,000 --> 00:24:32,000

with a hundred smaller house mounds nearby.

513

00:24:32,000 --> 00:24:35,000

All helpful if we can find them.

514

00:24:40,000 --> 00:24:41,000

Aki, this is us.

515

00:24:41,000 --> 00:24:42,000

Yes.

516

00:24:42,000 --> 00:24:43,000

All right.

517

00:24:43,000 --> 00:24:44,000

Okay.

518

00:24:47,000 --> 00:24:48,000

La Mapa, sí.

519

00:24:48,000 --> 00:24:49,000

Gracias.

520

00:24:49,000 --> 00:24:51,000

Don't want to lose this.

521

00:24:54,000 --> 00:24:55,000

All right.

522

00:24:55,000 --> 00:24:56,000

Run foot.

523

00:24:56,000 --> 00:24:57,000

Here we go.

524

00:25:08,000 --> 00:25:11,000

This is brutal.

525

00:25:11,000 --> 00:25:17,000

Deep in the jungles of southern Mexico, we're following a local ranger named Efraín Guzmán Gomez

526

00:25:17,000 --> 00:25:21,000

on an expedition to find the lost city of Saqbalam,

527

00:25:21,000 --> 00:25:25,000

which was conquered by Spanish conquistador Nicolas de Valenzuela.

528

00:25:25,000 --> 00:25:32,000

Finding the ruins would mean locating the last free Maya city in pre-Columbian Mexico.

529

00:25:32,000 --> 00:25:37,000

Okay, so we'll see how far away these structures are that Efraín's taking us to.

530

00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:43,000

But in terms of the historical sources, does Valenzuela tell us how far the hike is from the river to Saqbalam?

531

00:25:43,000 --> 00:25:46,000

He says that the river is about a league and a half from Saqbalam.

532

00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:47,000

A league and a half.

533

00:25:47,000 --> 00:25:48,000

It's Jules Verne.

534

00:25:48,000 --> 00:25:49,000

What the hell?

535

00:25:49,000 --> 00:25:50,000

How far is a league?

536

00:25:50,000 --> 00:25:51,000

A league is about two miles.

537

00:25:51,000 --> 00:25:52,000

Three miles.

538

00:25:52,000 --> 00:25:55,000

So we've got a four and a half mile trek here.

539

00:25:55,000 --> 00:26:00,000

That's also assuming that we parked our boat right at the closest spot.

540

00:26:00,000 --> 00:26:04,000

And just so I know, what's going to kill me in this jungle?

541

00:26:04,000 --> 00:26:06,000

Okay, so we've got lots of venomous snakes.

542

00:26:06,000 --> 00:26:08,000

Fertilances, things like that?

543

00:26:08,000 --> 00:26:11,000

Oh yeah, Fertulance, corals, and pit-fifers.

544

00:26:11,000 --> 00:26:14,000

Also jaguars and panthers.

545

00:26:14,000 --> 00:26:15,000

Okay, great.

546

00:26:15,000 --> 00:26:16,000

I love the jaguars.

547

00:26:16,000 --> 00:26:18,000

There's a lot of jaguars.

548

00:26:18,000 --> 00:26:20,000

I mean, this is the city of the white jaguar.

549

00:26:20,000 --> 00:26:21,000

Sure, fair enough.

550

00:26:21,000 --> 00:26:23,000

At least we're out of narco territory, yes?

551

00:26:23,000 --> 00:26:26,000

So there are clandestine airstrips all over this park.

552

00:26:26,000 --> 00:26:27,000

In the national park?

553

00:26:27,000 --> 00:26:28,000

Oh yeah.

554

00:26:28,000 --> 00:26:30,000

Okay, I'm sorry I asked.

555

00:26:30,000 --> 00:26:38,000

Also, tropical diseases, killer bees, enough rent, angry packs of peckery pigs.

556

00:26:38,000 --> 00:26:39,000

Good lord.

557

00:26:49,000 --> 00:26:51,000

Hiking here is super challenging.

558

00:26:51,000 --> 00:26:54,000

Not just because the trail is so uneven, but because there are trees here,

559

00:26:54,000 --> 00:26:57,000

you definitely do not want to touch.

560

00:26:59,000 --> 00:27:00,000

Very painful.

561

00:27:19,000 --> 00:27:20,000

Hey Josh.

562

00:27:20,000 --> 00:27:21,000

Yeah?

563

00:27:21,000 --> 00:27:23,000

You might want to roll your sleeves down.

564

00:27:23,000 --> 00:27:24,000

Why is that?

565

00:27:24,000 --> 00:27:27,000

These are plants that I call tears of sadness.

566

00:27:27,000 --> 00:27:29,000

Does that mean they're poisonous?

567

00:27:29,000 --> 00:27:31,000

Oh yeah, I mean, you're going to be itching for weeks.

568

00:27:31,000 --> 00:27:33,000

Oh god.

569

00:27:33,000 --> 00:27:39,000

We navigate past the sadness and then move up a slope covered in non-poisonous plants

570

00:27:39,000 --> 00:27:42,000

that instead are just trying to strangle us.

571

00:27:43,000 --> 00:27:49,000

We swing away for hours, but the foliage is so thick that we're making slow progress.

572

00:27:49,000 --> 00:27:53,000

I mean, there's not even a hint of a trail in here.

573

00:27:53,000 --> 00:27:56,000

Now it's just jungle.

574

00:27:59,000 --> 00:28:03,000

Eventually though, the vines thin out to let us pass,

575

00:28:03,000 --> 00:28:07,000

and we emerge into a clearing that causes Brent to stop in his tracks.

576

00:28:09,000 --> 00:28:10,000

Josh.

577

00:28:10,000 --> 00:28:13,000

Take a look at this valley.

578

00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:18,000

Remember I told you that de Valenzuela said that Sac Palame was a long, narrow valley

579

00:28:18,000 --> 00:28:21,000

in the northern part surrounded by ridges.

580

00:28:21,000 --> 00:28:22,000

Right.

581

00:28:22,000 --> 00:28:25,000

He even described a nice breeze, which we can feel right now,

582

00:28:25,000 --> 00:28:28,000

and we are at the very northern edge of this valley right now.

583

00:28:28,000 --> 00:28:29,000

Yeah.

584

00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:30,000

Right?

585

00:28:30,000 --> 00:28:31,000

And we're about how far from the river?

586

00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:32,000

It's over a league.

587

00:28:32,000 --> 00:28:35,000

So this valley matches that description to a T.

588

00:28:35,000 --> 00:28:37,000

To a T?

589

00:28:37,000 --> 00:28:43,000

So if this is the right location, then somewhere up there underneath all that jungle canopy,

590

00:28:43,000 --> 00:28:45,000

there might be a lost city.

591

00:28:45,000 --> 00:28:47,000

We might be on the outskirts right now.

592

00:28:47,000 --> 00:28:48,000

Okay.

593

00:28:48,000 --> 00:28:50,000

Well, now we're just going to find it.

594

00:28:50,000 --> 00:28:51,000

All right.

595

00:28:51,000 --> 00:28:52,000

Let's.

596

00:28:52,000 --> 00:28:53,000

All right.

597

00:28:53,000 --> 00:28:54,000

Machetes of the ready.

598

00:28:54,000 --> 00:28:55,000

Here we go.

599

00:28:55,000 --> 00:28:56,000

All right.

600

00:28:58,000 --> 00:29:04,000

Efraín leads us even further toward the area where he saw evidence of manmade structures.

601

00:29:04,000 --> 00:29:08,000

But if Sac Palame is here, it's well camouflaged.

602

00:29:08,000 --> 00:29:10,000

And so is the wildlife.

603

00:29:10,000 --> 00:29:16,000

In the jungle, you got to be careful what you touch because even the sticks are alive.

604

00:29:20,000 --> 00:29:22,000

There you go.

605

00:29:22,000 --> 00:29:24,000

Blend back into the jungle.

606

00:29:24,000 --> 00:29:38,000

We continue deeper into the humid rainforest and deeper and deeper.

607

00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:44,000

And just as I'm about to lay down and expire, I hear words that are music to my ears.

608

00:29:44,000 --> 00:29:46,000

Structure.

609

00:29:46,000 --> 00:29:48,000

Hey, structure.

610

00:29:48,000 --> 00:29:50,000

Hey, oh, look at this.

611

00:29:50,000 --> 00:29:51,000

Oh, my word.

612

00:29:51,000 --> 00:29:52,000

Wow.

613

00:29:52,000 --> 00:29:53,000

Wow.

614

00:29:53,000 --> 00:29:54,000

Look at the stones.

615

00:29:54,000 --> 00:29:55,000

Look at this.

616

00:29:55,000 --> 00:29:56,000

Yes.

617

00:29:56,000 --> 00:29:57,000

Amazing.

618

00:29:57,000 --> 00:29:58,000

This is not natural.

619

00:29:58,000 --> 00:29:59,000

Look at how squared off that is.

620

00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:01,000

Look at how this line extends all the way down there.

621

00:30:01,000 --> 00:30:02,000

You'll get this more right there.

622

00:30:02,000 --> 00:30:03,000

Yeah.

623

00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:04,000

This is a platform.

624

00:30:04,000 --> 00:30:05,000

We're on a platform.

625

00:30:05,000 --> 00:30:06,000

Yeah.

626

00:30:06,000 --> 00:30:07,000

On a platform.

627

00:30:07,000 --> 00:30:08,000

Hey, amazing.

628

00:30:08,000 --> 00:30:10,000

This is a platform.

629

00:30:10,000 --> 00:30:15,000

To conquer the unforgiving jungle terrain, the Maya had to create level ground.

630

00:30:15,000 --> 00:30:21,000

Stone platforms like this were the foundations for single and multifamily homes made of wood and

631

00:30:21,000 --> 00:30:22,000

a patch.

632

00:30:22,000 --> 00:30:27,000

Valenzuela, when he wrote his report, he actually said that there were about 100 small house

633

00:30:27,000 --> 00:30:28,000

mountains just like this.

634

00:30:28,000 --> 00:30:30,000

This might be one of them.

635

00:30:30,000 --> 00:30:32,000

Should we try and clear this off?

636

00:30:32,000 --> 00:30:33,000

Let's do it.

637

00:30:33,000 --> 00:30:34,000

OK.

638

00:30:34,000 --> 00:30:35,000

Let's see what else is under here, guys.

639

00:30:35,000 --> 00:30:36,000

All right.

640

00:30:36,000 --> 00:30:37,000

These pieces are big.

641

00:30:37,000 --> 00:30:38,000

Look at this.

642

00:30:38,000 --> 00:30:39,000

Yeah.

643

00:30:39,000 --> 00:30:40,000

Yeah.

644

00:30:40,000 --> 00:30:41,000

Yeah.

645

00:30:41,000 --> 00:30:42,000

Yeah.

646

00:30:42,000 --> 00:30:43,000

Yeah.

647

00:30:43,000 --> 00:30:44,000

Yeah.

648

00:30:44,000 --> 00:30:45,000

Yeah.

649

00:30:45,000 --> 00:30:46,000

Yeah.

650

00:30:46,000 --> 00:30:47,000

Yeah.

651

00:30:47,000 --> 00:30:48,000

Yeah.

652

00:30:48,000 --> 00:30:49,000

Yeah.

653

00:30:49,000 --> 00:30:50,000

Yeah.

654

00:30:50,000 --> 00:30:54,000

The ground is full of beautiful, man-made, right angles.

655

00:30:54,000 --> 00:30:59,000

It's just perfectly square.

656

00:30:59,000 --> 00:31:00,000

Look at this.

657

00:31:00,000 --> 00:31:01,000

More stone under here.

658

00:31:01,000 --> 00:31:02,000

Wow.

659

00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:05,000

You could just see stone peeking out everywhere on the jungle floor.

660

00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:06,000

There's a lot more here.

661

00:31:06,000 --> 00:31:07,000

Yeah.

662

00:31:07,000 --> 00:31:08,000

For sure.

663

00:31:08,000 --> 00:31:11,000

The structures that these stones supported for now are a mystery.

664

00:31:11,000 --> 00:31:16,000

But the good news is that where there's one building platform, there should be more.

665

00:31:20,000 --> 00:31:26,000

We ascend further up the hill at the end of the narrow valley, and soon see something

666

00:31:26,000 --> 00:31:28,000

that shouldn't be here.

667

00:31:28,000 --> 00:31:32,000

Hey, stone, right there.

668

00:31:32,000 --> 00:31:33,000

Yes.

669

00:31:33,000 --> 00:31:34,000

Is that man-made?

670

00:31:34,000 --> 00:31:35,000

Let's see.

671

00:31:35,000 --> 00:31:36,000

Look at that.

672

00:31:36,000 --> 00:31:37,000

Wow.

673

00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:38,000

Oh, yeah.

674

00:31:38,000 --> 00:31:39,000

These are some cut stones.

675

00:31:39,000 --> 00:31:40,000

That's a cut stone for sure.

676

00:31:40,000 --> 00:31:41,000

Oh, yeah.

677

00:31:41,000 --> 00:31:46,000

There's a natural outcrop down here, but these are definitely cut stones.

678

00:31:46,000 --> 00:31:47,000

So what is this?

679

00:31:47,000 --> 00:31:49,000

We're on a huge slope here.

680

00:31:49,000 --> 00:31:50,000

This is a watchtower.

681

00:31:50,000 --> 00:31:51,000

This is a watchtower?

682

00:31:51,000 --> 00:31:52,000

Yes.

683

00:31:52,000 --> 00:31:58,000

At Sockbalam, watchtowers like this might have ringed the entire city, which may have also

684

00:31:58,000 --> 00:32:00,000

helped to keep them hidden.

685

00:32:00,000 --> 00:32:05,000

The presence of a defensive structure here may be a sign that we're close to an important settlement.

686

00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:07,000

You can see through the trees.

687

00:32:07,000 --> 00:32:10,000

We've got a great view of a huge chunk of the valley here.

688

00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:11,000

Right.

689

00:32:11,000 --> 00:32:14,000

We're almost at the edge of this ridge here, and you can see everything here.

690

00:32:14,000 --> 00:32:16,000

Would there have been multiple watchtowers here?

691

00:32:16,000 --> 00:32:17,000

Yes, of course.

692

00:32:17,000 --> 00:32:21,000

The mayas put fire to communicate with another area.

693

00:32:21,000 --> 00:32:23,000

Like Lord of the Rings?

694

00:32:23,000 --> 00:32:24,000

Yeah, right?

695

00:32:24,000 --> 00:32:26,000

If somebody sees something in a one-watch tower, they light a signal.

696

00:32:26,000 --> 00:32:27,000

Yes.

697

00:32:27,000 --> 00:32:30,000

Somebody else lights a signal, and that's how you alert the perimeter.

698

00:32:30,000 --> 00:32:31,000

Yeah.

699

00:32:31,000 --> 00:32:33,000

We're looking for Sockbalam, and we found Gondor.

700

00:32:33,000 --> 00:32:34,000

That's right.

701

00:32:34,000 --> 00:32:35,000

That's incredible, though.

702

00:32:35,000 --> 00:32:39,000

The people of Sockbalam managed to evade the Spanish for over 100 years.

703

00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:43,000

They pulled out all the stops coming up with any defensive measures they could think of.

704

00:32:43,000 --> 00:32:45,000

So this would make sense.

705

00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:47,000

All right, let's keep moving. Come on.

706

00:32:47,000 --> 00:32:48,000

All right.

707

00:32:48,000 --> 00:32:50,000

We've got better and better.

708

00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:54,000

We trudge further uphill to see if there's more to find.

709

00:33:04,000 --> 00:33:05,000

This looks like more stone here.

710

00:33:05,000 --> 00:33:06,000

Is there something here?

711

00:33:06,000 --> 00:33:07,000

Yeah, for sure.

712

00:33:07,000 --> 00:33:08,000

Something here.

713

00:33:08,000 --> 00:33:09,000

Let's see.

714

00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:11,000

Is it natural or...?

715

00:33:11,000 --> 00:33:12,000

I don't think so.

716

00:33:12,000 --> 00:33:13,000

Oh, look at this!

717

00:33:13,000 --> 00:33:14,000

It's so tuned!

718

00:33:14,000 --> 00:33:15,000

This is incredible!

719

00:33:15,000 --> 00:33:16,000

This is tuned!

720

00:33:16,000 --> 00:33:17,000

Yeah, yes!

721

00:33:25,000 --> 00:33:26,000

There is something here?

722

00:33:26,000 --> 00:33:27,000

Yeah, for sure.

723

00:33:27,000 --> 00:33:28,000

Oh, look at this!

724

00:33:28,000 --> 00:33:29,000

This is tuned!

725

00:33:29,000 --> 00:33:30,000

This is tuned!

726

00:33:30,000 --> 00:33:31,000

Yes!

727

00:33:31,000 --> 00:33:32,000

Wow!

728

00:33:32,000 --> 00:33:35,000

This is all stone lined here, and it's just scalloped out.

729

00:33:35,000 --> 00:33:36,000

This is looted.

730

00:33:36,000 --> 00:33:37,000

Definitely.

731

00:33:37,000 --> 00:33:38,000

Yes.

732

00:33:38,000 --> 00:33:39,000

Tune, for sure.

733

00:33:39,000 --> 00:33:40,000

Tune.

734

00:33:40,000 --> 00:33:43,960

On a trek with archaeologists Brent Woodville and Josue Lesada, we're hunting for the

735

00:33:43,960 --> 00:33:48,240

ruins of the city of the white jaguar, Sac-Balaam.

736

00:33:48,240 --> 00:33:53,960

We found a tomb that may once have held precious Maya offerings or ceremonial jewelry.

737

00:33:53,960 --> 00:33:55,960

We're not the first ones here.

738

00:33:55,960 --> 00:33:57,960

Unfortunately not.

739

00:33:57,960 --> 00:33:58,960

Archaeologists really never are.

740

00:33:58,960 --> 00:33:59,960

Right.

741

00:33:59,960 --> 00:34:00,960

These are living landscapes.

742

00:34:00,960 --> 00:34:04,960

People come here and hunt and pass through and have for hundreds of years.

743

00:34:04,960 --> 00:34:10,660

A stone lined Maya tomb, even a looted one, is a remarkable find, and one that leads us

744

00:34:10,660 --> 00:34:12,960

to start considering other possibilities.

745

00:34:12,960 --> 00:34:16,960

At this point, there's a lot of architecture out here.

746

00:34:16,960 --> 00:34:20,960

There is no question that there is a community of people out here.

747

00:34:20,960 --> 00:34:21,960

No question at all.

748

00:34:21,960 --> 00:34:27,960

So in terms of our Sac-Balaam checklist here, we now have a lot going for us, right?

749

00:34:27,960 --> 00:34:30,960

Everything we've seen so far fits the bill 100%.

750

00:34:30,960 --> 00:34:31,960

So now what?

751

00:34:31,960 --> 00:34:34,960

So now I think it's time to call in some help.

752

00:34:34,960 --> 00:34:35,960

You're feeling that good about it?

753

00:34:35,960 --> 00:34:38,960

I'm feeling better and better about the fact that this could be the place.

754

00:34:38,960 --> 00:34:39,960

And you?

755

00:34:39,960 --> 00:34:40,960

Absolutely.

756

00:34:40,960 --> 00:34:41,960

You are?

757

00:34:41,960 --> 00:34:42,960

Yes.

758

00:34:42,960 --> 00:34:44,960

So I already have a team doing work over in San Cristal.

759

00:34:44,960 --> 00:34:46,960

They have a ladder scanner.

760

00:34:46,960 --> 00:34:50,960

There's also a great archaeologist who specializes in this time period.

761

00:34:50,960 --> 00:34:53,960

Some of Afro-Aryans guys could bring them out tomorrow.

762

00:34:53,960 --> 00:34:54,960

That'd be amazing.

763

00:34:54,960 --> 00:34:56,960

And as for us, what's our move?

764

00:34:56,960 --> 00:35:00,960

We need to find some flat ground to come for tonight.

765

00:35:00,960 --> 00:35:01,960

Flat ground?

766

00:35:01,960 --> 00:35:02,960

Yeah.

767

00:35:02,960 --> 00:35:03,960

I haven't seen that in a while.

768

00:35:03,960 --> 00:35:04,960

Yeah, good luck.

769

00:35:04,960 --> 00:35:05,960

Good luck.

770

00:35:05,960 --> 00:35:12,960

We fan out to find a level campsite, feeling like we're on the verge of completing Don Diego's map.

771

00:35:12,960 --> 00:35:18,960

But with any wood and thatched structures long since decayed, Brent and Josue can't be sure

772

00:35:18,960 --> 00:35:25,960

until an aerial lidar scan confirms the extent of the settlement by looking for more stone platforms.

773

00:35:30,960 --> 00:35:32,960

This is a good place to camp.

774

00:35:32,960 --> 00:35:33,960

This is pretty flat.

775

00:35:33,960 --> 00:35:35,960

This is a good place to camp.

776

00:35:35,960 --> 00:35:36,960

Is this our spot?

777

00:35:36,960 --> 00:35:37,960

This is our spot.

778

00:35:37,960 --> 00:35:38,960

Okay, let's do it.

779

00:35:38,960 --> 00:35:39,960

Cool.

780

00:35:39,960 --> 00:35:45,960

After we find a clearing, Brent calls in our GPS position with a sat phone so his lidar team can find us.

781

00:35:45,960 --> 00:35:48,960

And we set up camp for a night in the jungle.

782

00:35:56,960 --> 00:35:57,960

All right.

783

00:35:57,960 --> 00:35:59,960

Home sweet home.

784

00:36:03,960 --> 00:36:04,960

All right.

785

00:36:04,960 --> 00:36:06,960

Time to sleep.

786

00:36:18,960 --> 00:36:19,960

Mmm.

787

00:36:20,960 --> 00:36:22,960

Just another beautiful...

788

00:36:24,960 --> 00:36:27,960

Needless to say, I do not sleep in.

789

00:36:27,960 --> 00:36:33,960

Instead, we explore around the campsite and by early afternoon, we hear a welcome sound.

790

00:36:33,960 --> 00:36:34,960

Other humans.

791

00:36:36,960 --> 00:36:37,960

We got voices.

792

00:36:37,960 --> 00:36:42,960

Brent and Josue's lidar team has been hiking since before dawn to get here.

793

00:36:42,960 --> 00:36:43,960

Hey, how's it going, Nick?

794

00:36:43,960 --> 00:36:44,960

Hey, man, I'm Josh.

795

00:36:44,960 --> 00:36:45,960

Hi, Josh.

796

00:36:45,960 --> 00:36:46,960

Nice to meet you.

797

00:36:46,960 --> 00:36:49,960

Yeah, so this is the rest of the team that was over in San Cristobal.

798

00:36:49,960 --> 00:36:51,960

This is Nick and his crew from Juniper Unmanned.

799

00:36:51,960 --> 00:36:53,960

You guys are here to do the aerial scanning, yeah?

800

00:36:53,960 --> 00:36:54,960

Yes.

801

00:36:54,960 --> 00:36:55,960

Great.

802

00:36:55,960 --> 00:36:56,960

And these are the archaeologists working with me.

803

00:36:56,960 --> 00:36:58,960

This is Yuko and Ruben.

804

00:36:58,960 --> 00:36:59,960

Nice to meet both of you.

805

00:36:59,960 --> 00:37:01,960

So now that we're all here, what's planned?

806

00:37:01,960 --> 00:37:04,960

Yuko and Ruben are going to start digging some test pits.

807

00:37:04,960 --> 00:37:05,960

Okay.

808

00:37:05,960 --> 00:37:07,960

Just small little pits, seeing if we can hit anything.

809

00:37:07,960 --> 00:37:10,960

Should we get an idea of dates and times and people?

810

00:37:10,960 --> 00:37:11,960

Got it.

811

00:37:11,960 --> 00:37:14,960

And the lidar folks are going to start doing their thing.

812

00:37:14,960 --> 00:37:24,960

While the archaeologists begin excavating in this area, I walk to a small clearing with the lidar team as they set up to scan the valley.

813

00:37:24,960 --> 00:37:25,960

All right.

814

00:37:25,960 --> 00:37:27,960

So if you could talk to me, obviously this is a drone.

815

00:37:27,960 --> 00:37:28,960

What is this bad boy?

816

00:37:28,960 --> 00:37:31,960

This is a multi-rotor hexacopter made to carry heavy payloads.

817

00:37:31,960 --> 00:37:35,960

And in this case, the heavy payload is this black and yellow unit here.

818

00:37:35,960 --> 00:37:36,960

That's lidar?

819

00:37:36,960 --> 00:37:37,960

Yes, sir.

820

00:37:37,960 --> 00:37:38,960

That's the lidar unit.

821

00:37:38,960 --> 00:37:39,960

Okay.

822

00:37:39,960 --> 00:37:41,960

And lidar is obviously magic.

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00:37:41,960 --> 00:37:42,960

Yeah.

824

00:37:42,960 --> 00:37:44,960

So lidar stands for light detection and ranging.

825

00:37:44,960 --> 00:37:45,960

Or magic.

826

00:37:45,960 --> 00:37:48,960

Magic, yeah.

827

00:37:48,960 --> 00:37:52,960

Aerial lidar sends millions of laser pulses to the ground.

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00:37:52,960 --> 00:38:01,960

And measures the distance to fractions of a millimeter, allowing scientists to digitally peel away layers of foliage that have been growing for centuries.

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00:38:01,960 --> 00:38:07,960

Foliage that may be obscuring ancient structures, rendering them invisible to the naked eye.

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00:38:07,960 --> 00:38:12,960

In our case, we're hoping the lidar can show us the full extent of this settlement.

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00:38:12,960 --> 00:38:15,960

And if it's large enough to be socked by long.

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00:38:15,960 --> 00:38:16,960

So what do we want to see more of?

833

00:38:16,960 --> 00:38:17,960

Everything.

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00:38:17,960 --> 00:38:21,960

It's really hard to see anything here, as I'm sure you've seen for walking around.

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00:38:21,960 --> 00:38:29,960

What we know from Debalansuela is that he talked about three larger mounds in the center of the

site where there are communal architecture.

836

00:38:29,960 --> 00:38:30,960

Got it.

837

00:38:30,960 --> 00:38:32,960

But they're all made of wood with thatch roofs.

838

00:38:32,960 --> 00:38:33,960

Right.

839

00:38:33,960 --> 00:38:37,960

So all we're really going to see is probably structures about this high.

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00:38:37,960 --> 00:38:39,960

Maybe some a little bit higher, maybe some even lower.

841

00:38:39,960 --> 00:38:40,960

Right.

842

00:38:40,960 --> 00:38:42,960

But those are really hard to find.

843

00:38:42,960 --> 00:38:46,960

We can walk right next to a mound and not even know it's there.

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00:38:46,960 --> 00:38:47,960

Right.

845

00:38:48,960 --> 00:38:52,960

With our air game covered, it's time to see what else is on the ground.

846

00:38:52,960 --> 00:38:57,960

And it so happens that Yuko and Ruben are making discoveries in the test pits.

847

00:38:57,960 --> 00:38:58,960

Look at this.

848

00:38:58,960 --> 00:39:00,960

So this is flat limestone.

849

00:39:00,960 --> 00:39:03,960

It's really nicely cut and shaped.

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00:39:03,960 --> 00:39:04,960

This is crazy.

851

00:39:04,960 --> 00:39:06,960

This looks like a modern floor tile.

852

00:39:06,960 --> 00:39:08,960

So no question this is a cut piece, right?

853

00:39:08,960 --> 00:39:10,960

So this was primarily used for what?

854

00:39:10,960 --> 00:39:11,960

Floor surfaces?

855

00:39:11,960 --> 00:39:13,960

Floor surfaces on the also the wall facade.

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00:39:13,960 --> 00:39:15,960

This is like a facing stone.

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00:39:15,960 --> 00:39:16,960

So should we go a little deeper?

858

00:39:16,960 --> 00:39:17,960

See what's there?

859

00:39:17,960 --> 00:39:18,960

Yeah, I'd like to see the edge of the stone.

860

00:39:18,960 --> 00:39:19,960

Okay, great.

861

00:39:19,960 --> 00:39:20,960

Let's dig.

862

00:39:20,960 --> 00:39:25,960

Quarried limestone was quite literally the building block with which the Maya created

863

00:39:25,960 --> 00:39:26,960

their cities.

864

00:39:26,960 --> 00:39:30,960

To find it here is to see the Maya's hands at work.

865

00:39:30,960 --> 00:39:31,960

Look at this.

866

00:39:31,960 --> 00:39:32,960

Oh, is that pottery?

867

00:39:32,960 --> 00:39:33,960

Look at this.

868

00:39:33,960 --> 00:39:39,960

We've seen all this evidence of stone working up here, but now we've got pottery.

869

00:39:39,960 --> 00:39:40,960

So Yuko, you're the expert.

870

00:39:40,960 --> 00:39:41,960

What can you tell us about that?

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00:39:41,960 --> 00:39:43,960

Looks like a red slip on it.

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00:39:43,960 --> 00:39:46,960

Okay, red slip is like the coating or the surface decoration?

873

00:39:46,960 --> 00:39:47,960

Yeah, surface coating.

874

00:39:47,960 --> 00:39:48,960

Okay.

875

00:39:48,960 --> 00:39:52,960

Got the orange paste color and then some calcite temper.

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00:39:52,960 --> 00:39:54,960

So dating wise, we think this is from when?

877

00:39:54,960 --> 00:39:55,960

The post-classic period.

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00:39:55,960 --> 00:39:56,960

You think it's post-classic?

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00:39:56,960 --> 00:39:57,960

Yeah.

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00:39:57,960 --> 00:40:00,960

So this is what they would have been making at Sockballon up until that period.

881

00:40:00,960 --> 00:40:01,960

Yeah, that had been conquered yet.

882

00:40:01,960 --> 00:40:03,960

So they're still in the post-classic.

883

00:40:03,960 --> 00:40:04,960

Awesome.

884

00:40:04,960 --> 00:40:05,960

Okay, let's see if there's more.

885

00:40:05,960 --> 00:40:17,960

We've got limestone, we've got pottery, and soon enough, we have something even more

886

00:40:17,960 --> 00:40:18,960

special.

887

00:40:18,960 --> 00:40:19,960

Hey, what's that?

888

00:40:19,960 --> 00:40:21,960

Well, hey, yeah.

889

00:40:21,960 --> 00:40:22,960

Obsidian.

890

00:40:22,960 --> 00:40:23,960

Obsidian.

891

00:40:23,960 --> 00:40:26,460

It's a very, very tiny blade.

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00:40:26,460 --> 00:40:28,960

We're really far away from any obsidian source.

893

00:40:28,960 --> 00:40:30,960

So this was a very precious commodity.

894

00:40:30,960 --> 00:40:33,960

So obsidian really is like the steel of Mesoamerica, right?

895

00:40:33,960 --> 00:40:36,960

I mean, this is what you're making your cutting implements out of.

896

00:40:36,960 --> 00:40:42,960

Obsidian is a type of brittle volcanic glass that was crafted by Mesoamericans into both

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00:40:42,960 --> 00:40:45,960

household tools and lethal weapons.

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00:40:45,960 --> 00:40:50,960

Its presence here, far from the volcanoes to the south, may bolster the idea that this

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00:40:50,960 --> 00:40:53,960

place was a haven for fleeing Maya.

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00:40:53,960 --> 00:40:57,960

You look at this and you think, oh, this is nothing, this is just a tiny thing, but this

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00:40:57,960 --> 00:41:00,960

really is a razor-sharp implement.

902

00:41:00,960 --> 00:41:02,960

Oh yeah, be careful with it.

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00:41:02,960 --> 00:41:04,960

That is incredible.

904

00:41:04,960 --> 00:41:09,960

So from a mine somewhere in Guatemala to the middle of the jungle in Mexico.

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00:41:09,960 --> 00:41:10,960

Yeah, wow.

906

00:41:10,960 --> 00:41:13,960

That's a little piece of a Maya knife right there.

907

00:41:13,960 --> 00:41:16,960

I'm becoming more and more convinced that this is the place.

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00:41:16,960 --> 00:41:20,960

Yeah, we have a lot of good circumstantial evidence at this point.

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00:41:20,960 --> 00:41:22,960

It's all going to come down to the Lidar.

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00:41:22,960 --> 00:41:25,960

That's the only way we're going to see this place in its entirety.

911

00:41:25,960 --> 00:41:26,960

Yeah.

912

00:41:33,960 --> 00:41:34,960

Beautiful.

913

00:41:34,960 --> 00:41:35,960

Awesome.

914

00:41:35,960 --> 00:41:36,960

Nice work, man.

915

00:41:36,960 --> 00:41:38,960

Yeah, good flying.

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00:41:38,960 --> 00:41:44,960

The Lidar drone touches down, and then we gather around a nearby computer to analyze its results.

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00:41:44,960 --> 00:41:48,960

Okay, so do we have data?

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00:41:48,960 --> 00:41:49,960

Yes, we have lots of data.

919

00:41:49,960 --> 00:41:50,960

Do we have good data?

920

00:41:50,960 --> 00:41:51,960

Yeah, it's great.

921

00:41:51,960 --> 00:41:52,960

I like great.

922

00:41:52,960 --> 00:41:53,960

Let's take a look at it.

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00:41:53,960 --> 00:41:54,960

What do we got?

924

00:41:54,960 --> 00:41:55,960

Fantastic.

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00:41:55,960 --> 00:41:59,960

All right, so what we're looking at right here is about 200,000 people.

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00:41:59,960 --> 00:42:04,960

All right, so what we're looking at right here is about two square kilometers of this valley.

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00:42:04,960 --> 00:42:07,960

Brent is literally smiling ear to ear already.

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00:42:07,960 --> 00:42:09,960

It would take us months to machete through all that.

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00:42:09,960 --> 00:42:12,960

And how much data are we looking at here, visualized?

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00:42:12,960 --> 00:42:15,960

Around 500 million points covering the entire valley.

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00:42:15,960 --> 00:42:16,960

500 million?

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00:42:16,960 --> 00:42:17,960

Wow.

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00:42:17,960 --> 00:42:19,960

Half a billion data points.

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00:42:19,960 --> 00:42:22,960

Yeah, we have our canopy here, and now I'm going to strip that away.

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00:42:24,960 --> 00:42:25,960

Look at this!

936

00:42:25,960 --> 00:42:26,960

Wow.

937

00:42:30,960 --> 00:42:37,960

After a long day of trekking in the Mexican jungle, we gather around the campfire hoping to relax.

938

00:42:37,960 --> 00:42:39,960

Well, first of all, cheers.

939

00:42:39,960 --> 00:42:40,960

Cheers.

940

00:42:40,960 --> 00:42:45,960

I have to say, even though I'm exhausted, I feel thrilled because of where we might be sitting.

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00:42:45,960 --> 00:42:53,960

If this is Saqbalam, then just over 300 years ago, there would have been hundreds of Maya people right in these jungles, right here.

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00:42:53,960 --> 00:43:00,960

If this is where we think it is, this is one of the last holdouts of free indigenous people anywhere in the Americas.

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00:43:05,960 --> 00:43:06,960

Hollermunkey?

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00:43:06,960 --> 00:43:07,960

Yeah.

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00:43:07,960 --> 00:43:08,960

Yes.

946

00:43:08,960 --> 00:43:09,960

Or King Kong just got out.

947

00:43:09,960 --> 00:43:11,960

Hollermunkeys are like this big, right?

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00:43:11,960 --> 00:43:12,960

Oh yeah, they're tiny.

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00:43:12,960 --> 00:43:14,960

They're buff, but they're tiny.

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00:43:14,960 --> 00:43:15,960

But they sound like that.

951

00:43:15,960 --> 00:43:21,960

Yeah, I heard that they actually have bones in their larynx, so you can hear them three miles away at the winds right.

952

00:43:21,960 --> 00:43:22,960

Terrific.

953

00:43:22,960 --> 00:43:23,960

Terrific.

954

00:43:23,960 --> 00:43:24,960

Terrific.

955

00:43:30,960 --> 00:43:31,960

This is incredible.

956

00:43:31,960 --> 00:43:36,960

Look at all the geography that you can see that you totally can't detect under that canopy.

957

00:43:36,960 --> 00:43:37,960

Oh, that's amazing.

958

00:43:37,960 --> 00:43:46,960

In the jungles of Chiapas, Mexico, we're examining the lidar data of a site we believe could be the legendary Maya city of Saqbalam.

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00:43:46,960 --> 00:43:49,960

Question is, did you find structures?

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00:43:49,960 --> 00:43:50,960

Yes, yes, we did.

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00:43:50,960 --> 00:43:51,960

Yes?

962

00:43:51,960 --> 00:43:52,960

Yeah.

963

00:43:52,960 --> 00:43:53,960

Show us where.

964

00:43:53,960 --> 00:43:57,960

On the valley floor, we found some mound structures.

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00:43:57,960 --> 00:43:58,960

Look at these.

966

00:43:58,960 --> 00:44:00,960

These are foundation mounds.

967

00:44:00,960 --> 00:44:02,960

Brent, does this look like where a house would be built?

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00:44:02,960 --> 00:44:03,960

Definitely.

969

00:44:03,960 --> 00:44:05,960

About how big are they?

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00:44:05,960 --> 00:44:07,960

They're approximately seven meters by seven meters.

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00:44:07,960 --> 00:44:09,960

These are the perfect size for a Maya house.

972

00:44:09,960 --> 00:44:11,960

That's incredible.

973

00:44:11,960 --> 00:44:13,960

These are most likely foundations for houses.

974

00:44:13,960 --> 00:44:14,960

Definitely.

975

00:44:14,960 --> 00:44:15,960

So people are living here.

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00:44:15,960 --> 00:44:16,960

People are living here.

977

00:44:16,960 --> 00:44:18,960

This is awesome.

978

00:44:18,960 --> 00:44:20,960

Did you find any other structures?

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00:44:20,960 --> 00:44:22,960

Oh yeah, we found more along the ridges.

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00:44:22,960 --> 00:44:23,960

Really?

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00:44:23,960 --> 00:44:24,960

What's on the ridge?

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00:44:24,960 --> 00:44:27,960

Up on the ridge, we found these rectangular structures.

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00:44:27,960 --> 00:44:28,960

Look at that.

984

00:44:28,960 --> 00:44:29,960

Wow.

985

00:44:29,960 --> 00:44:34,960

Sitting right at the top of the ridge that would lead me to believe they were muridores or lookouts.

986

00:44:34,960 --> 00:44:37,960

Which we think we found in the jungle, one of these watch tower structures.

987

00:44:37,960 --> 00:44:39,960

Watch tower, right?

988

00:44:39,960 --> 00:44:41,960

It's approximately 10 meters by 10 meters.

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00:44:41,960 --> 00:44:47,960

Sitting right at the top of the ridge, it allows them a full view of the valley from the north to the south end.

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00:44:47,960 --> 00:44:52,960

As we go farther south along the ridge, we found more groupings of these rectangular shapes.

991

00:44:52,960 --> 00:44:56,960

Small platforms just raised above the ridge.

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00:44:56,960 --> 00:45:01,960

This shows us that there is a perimeter of defensive structures up there.

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00:45:01,960 --> 00:45:09,960

This shows that the people who lived here were investing a lot of time and energy trying to make the best defensive system they could.

994

00:45:09,960 --> 00:45:10,960

Absolutely.

995

00:45:10,960 --> 00:45:11,960

Okay.

996

00:45:11,960 --> 00:45:12,960

Anything else?

997

00:45:12,960 --> 00:45:16,960

We found one more structure that I think you guys will like.

998

00:45:16,960 --> 00:45:17,960

Holy s\*\*\*.

999

00:45:17,960 --> 00:45:18,960

It's the largest one we found.

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00:45:18,960 --> 00:45:20,960

It's approximately 34 meters in length.

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00:45:20,960 --> 00:45:22,960

That's a 100 foot long structure.

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00:45:22,960 --> 00:45:29,960

De Valenzuela says that there are three big public structures in the middle, which he says were actually 36 meters long.

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00:45:29,960 --> 00:45:31,960

36 meter long structures.

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00:45:31,960 --> 00:45:32,960

That's incredible though.

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00:45:32,960 --> 00:45:35,960

I mean, that's almost an exact match.

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00:45:35,960 --> 00:45:37,960

This is what we've been looking for.

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00:45:37,960 --> 00:45:44,960

This discovery not only mirrors the description from the conquistadors, but its sheer size speaks volumes.

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00:45:45,960 --> 00:45:55,960

The fact that there is a 100 foot long structure sitting in this valley definitely tells us that this is not some backwater place with a few inhabitants.

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00:45:55,960 --> 00:45:57,960

That is a larger scale project.

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00:45:57,960 --> 00:45:59,960

This might end up being the silver bullet.

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00:45:59,960 --> 00:46:00,960

Right here.

1012

00:46:00,960 --> 00:46:01,960

Right here.

1013

00:46:02,960 --> 00:46:04,960

Do you think this could be Saq Balaam?

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00:46:04,960 --> 00:46:10,960

I think when we first saw it, it was maybe about 80 percent sure.

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00:46:10,960 --> 00:46:11,960

Uh huh.

1016

00:46:11,960 --> 00:46:12,960

I'm up to like 99.

1017

00:46:12,960 --> 00:46:15,960

All of this screams Saq Balaam.

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00:46:15,960 --> 00:46:16,960

That's incredible.

1019

00:46:16,960 --> 00:46:17,960

Yeah.

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00:46:17,960 --> 00:46:18,960

What about you?

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00:46:18,960 --> 00:46:20,960

I think we find Saq Balaam.

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00:46:20,960 --> 00:46:21,960

You do?

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00:46:21,960 --> 00:46:22,960

Yes, for sure.

1024

00:46:22,960 --> 00:46:23,960

Lost city?

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00:46:23,960 --> 00:46:24,960

Found.

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00:46:24,960 --> 00:46:25,960

Absolutely.

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00:46:25,960 --> 00:46:26,960

Amazing.

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00:46:26,960 --> 00:46:27,960

Brent, what a pleasure.

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00:46:27,960 --> 00:46:28,960

Jose, awesome.

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00:46:28,960 --> 00:46:29,960

This is incredible.

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00:46:34,960 --> 00:46:38,960

It's no wonder that the fabled Saq Balaam has been so elusive.

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00:46:38,960 --> 00:46:41,960

After all, it was built to not be found.

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00:46:41,960 --> 00:46:47,960

But here in the deepest reaches of the jungle, the white jaguar seems to have revealed itself.

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00:46:47,960 --> 00:46:53,960

In the weeks that follow, the lidar data is refined and the results are remarkable.

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00:46:53,960 --> 00:47:00,960

The laser scans detected more platforms buried in the jungle, including a huge set of terraces for homes.

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00:47:00,960 --> 00:47:07,960

And on the ridge above us, what appears to be a sizable building with what may be an altar at one end.

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00:47:08,960 --> 00:47:17,960

If we have found Saq Balaam, it's impossible to overstate how historic a discovery it is and how important the work ahead will be.

1038

00:47:18,960 --> 00:47:21,960

Now, it must be fully ground truthed, as they say.

1039

00:47:21,960 --> 00:47:30,960

An excavation will need to be launched to interrogate these hidden features, which will help us preserve the final refuge of the free Maya in Mexico.

1040

00:47:31,960 --> 00:47:37,960

Though Saq Balaam fell, the fact is the conquistadors failed to extinguish Maya culture.

1041

00:47:39,960 --> 00:47:50,960

Throughout Mexico, it endures in the people, in the traditions, in the history, and even here, intertwined with the rainforest itself.

1042

00:47:50,960 --> 00:47:57,960

The Maya are a part of the land, and this discovery shows us they always will be.