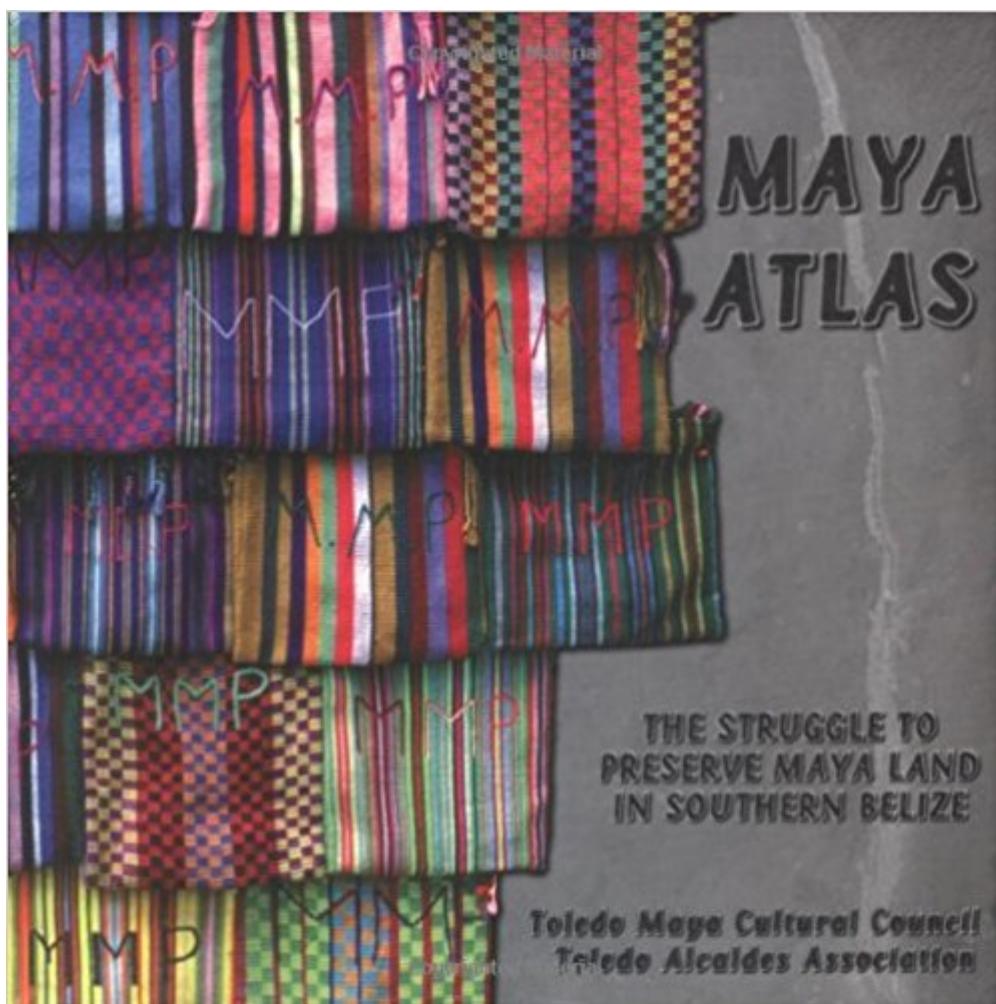


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# **Maya Atlas: The Struggle To Preserve Maya Land In Southern Belize (Literature)**



## **Synopsis**

The Maya Atlas was made by the forty-two Ke'kchi and Mopan Maya communities of southern Belize. The maps, text, drawings, photographs and interviews were done by Maya village researchers and cartographers elected by the communities. In their own words and with their own maps, the Maya describe their land and life, the threats to their culture and rain forest, and their desire to protect and manage their own Homeland. The Atlas is an important step in developing a Maya Homeland. The Maya researchers and cartographers made the Atlas so that their communities, young people and leaders would have a comprehensive, village-by-village, regional understanding of the state of Maya natural and human resources and their traditions of living in harmony with nature - what is being lost, and what needs to be preserved and developed. The Atlas is a window to both the ancient and modern Maya world. The Atlas will appeal to people interested in indigenous rights, environmental issues, Latin America, arts, ethnography, traditional knowledge, community-based conservation, and the New Cartography, which involves cartographers assisting local communities to map their own lands and land use.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"At a very basic level we are all geographers interested in how and where people live. The Maya Atlas taps a wellspring of that geographic interest and provides an authentic insider's view of the Mayan's traditional and modern worlds. The Maya Atlas instantly transports the reader to villages in the rain forest where the smell of wood smoke hangs in the air, the calls of birds mix with the

laughter of children, and the people till their fields by hand and burn incense to the spirits of the Hills and Valleys so the crops will grow abundantly."- Bernard Nietschmann, Professor of Geography, University of California, Berkeley"This village loves this village because its river banks are full of iguanas sunning themselves and its fishes love to bite."- Santiago Chub, Village Researcher, Maya Mapping Project: Santa Anna, Toledo District, and Belize

This is visually a beautiful book and obviously a labor of love for all parties involved. Since the book has such impeccable scholarly ties to U C Berkley, the National Geographic Society, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Lannan Foundation, however, I would like to have seen a disclaimer. The Maya of southern Belize are not historians. Like other people who hand down stories because they have no written language (or in the case of the Maya, have forgotten it), the "facts" depend on the memory of the person telling the story. About half of the book describes each Maya village in southern Belize, and some of the descriptions are simply inaccurate. The village of Santa Elena, for example, was not founded by Enriques, Martin, and Marto Choc; these men (except Marto) were middle-aged when I lived in Santa Elena, and they told me that Jose Tux and Pavian Chen had settled there before they did. They called their village Rio Blanco. Only the priest called it Santa Elena. (The people who live there still call it Rio Blanco when they speak among themselves.) I was teaching school when the first "santo" was brought it, and it was not a statue of Santa Elena--she cost too much. So the statues of three lesser saints were brought in. I have photographs of the ceremony, which took place in 1964. The history of Big Falls is similarly inaccurate. The people of Crique Sarco did not follow Don Owen-Lewis to Big Falls in order to work for him. They followed him because he had lived in Crique Sarco for many years and they were his friends. I met Manuel and Petrona Xi three years ago in Big Falls--I had first met them in Crique Sarco. Don Owen-Lewis, formerly Amer-Indian Development Officer, has never "employed" Maya workers.

Amazing book, great service!!!

This is a great reference material to have in your library. I'm learning a lot about my culture and history.

I lived in Belize for two years and was fortunate enough to travel extensively throughout southern Belize, the Toledo district that this book brings to life so well. The time that I spent with the Mayans in the region impacted my life dramatically, to the point I wrote my own book concerning my time

there ("Following Mateo" by Tom Molanphy, available through .com and trafford.com). The Maya Atlas was an invaluable resource for me while trying to portray a fair picture of the Mayans of southern Toledo; in fact, it was the only book I found that focused exclusively on the Belizean Mayan lifestyle and the challenges to that lifestyle. Full of wonderful color maps and photos, this book tells the story of Belize in the words of Mayans themselves. I'd recommend this book to anyone who wishes to learn about a fascinating and endangered culture.

My experience has been as part of medical and dental support to the villages in the Toledo District since 1988. The maps are accurate and give a feeling that you are walking down the trails with the writer. This is an excellent presentation of the villagers at a level rarely seen in such a book. It is mostly written by the villagers and has their perspective. Clearly written by those that love and are proud of their traditions and culture. The book is a beautiful reflection of a beautiful and kind people.

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