Krejci, Estella
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Looting at Laguna Perdida, Peten

GRAZ (Karl H. Mayer). Laguna Perdida is a large lake in the northern central region of the Guatemalan Department of Petén, approximately 45 km northwest of Flores, the capital of the Petén. On an archaeological map of the “Central Lowlands of the Maya Area” by Ian Graham (Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions 3 (3), Cambridge, 1982), two archaeological sites on the northern shore are shown: Laguna Perdida I on the northwestern shore and Laguna Perdida II on the northeastern show the latter site marked as having Maya inscriptions. The Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, houses a rectangular limestone panel representing two ballgame players accompanied by a glyphic text. It was allegedly found at a chicle station on the northeastern shore of Laguna Perdida, presumably the site named Laguna Perdida II by Graham.

In March 1996 Karl Herbert Mayer of MEXICON, accompanied by Haroldo Tesucun and Benjamín Granados, employees of the Guatemalan-German archaeological Triangle Project, visited the ruins of Laguna Perdida II, which are still unpublished, rarely visited, but now easily accessible. The main section of the site is located on a range of hills on the northeastern side of the lake, about 450 m north of the shore. The ruins are mostly in a forest with high trees, although the surrounding areas are deforested and used for milpas. Allegedly, the Guatemalan Instituto de Antropología e Historia (IDAEH) has posted guards at Laguna Perdida, but no guard was seen during our visit. However, numerous traces of recent illegal digging activities by looters were observed. According to a local Indian informant, Mario Adolfo Oxok, in January 1996 about 10 looters were working at the site. There are numerous small mounds as well as several high mounds visible, two of them at least more than 20 m high, and most of them show recently dug holes, trenches, and tunnels. The highest mound, a steep temple-pyramid, probably 30 m high, has been deeply trenched from the base to the top, and exposes cut stone elements and various architectural features (Fig. 1). On top of the structure a complex sub-structure has been excavated, showing remains of an entrance, vaulted rooms, and as an unusual feature, two

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News and Notes

Palenque museum robbed

MIAMI (IMS Newsletter). On June 8 or 10, 1996 (the IMS Newsletter is unclear on the dates and some other details) the Regional Museum of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico, fell victim to a team of heavily armed thieves who robbed it of a huge treasure of small stone, mainly jade, artifacts. Among the estimated 150 pieces stolen were two obsidian blades (34 cm and 32.8 cm long), several flint ear loops, 39 exquisite apple-green jade objects from the 500- to 700-piece collection found during the 1992-94 excavation of the Temple of the Skull (Temple XII), and a number of pieces from Bonampak, Tonina, and Yaxchilan.