

CONSERVATION OF MAYA ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
EARLY EXPERIENCES 1891-196

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ABSTRACT

The Mayan civilization is, undoubtedly, the most advanced of those that flourished in America during pre-Columbian times. During its heyday period, the ancient Maya built large cities and created large residential areas where they erected an impressive architecture in harmony with the ferocious nature that surrounded them. Today, the testimony of these settlements comes immersed in a wild environment, buried under abundant vegetation and even the collapse of the same architectural structures itself.

The rediscovery of these ruins arose scientific curiosity for this culture. Since then, research and conservation approaches have been evolving, influenced by several factors that have determined the state in which these remains have survived to this day.

The history of Maya architectural heritage conservation that is shaped by these interventions not only expresses the spirit of an era, but also provides precise clues to understand its current state, the reasons for its decline and the chances of recovery.

The present study addresses the critical analysis of this history and, in particular, the early experiences of conservation, which were performed by institutions that, at the eve of the 20th century, started systematic long-term research projects, that represented a real turning point for the safeguarding of this heritage.

For this purpose the research presents a comparative analysis of the regulatory environment and institutional framework related to the conservation of the Maya architectural heritage and its evolution over the course of history in the different countries that now occupy the Maya area. Once this context is set, a documentary study addresses those first interventions providing the analysis of unpublished sources preserved in the archives of the responsible institutions for such works.