

# ScienceNews

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Feature

Archaeology

## Openings to the Underworld

### The ancient Maya may have dug caves with spiritual abandon



by Bruce Bower

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For more than 100 years, archaeologists have hacked through jungles in Mexico and Central America in a quest to uncover pyramids, temples, and other majestic ruins of Maya civilization. James E. Brady of California State University, Los Angeles appreciates the backbreaking work that goes into finding such monumental structures, but he has his sights set lower. As he's probed the ancient Maya's sacred landscape, he's come to realize that this group's belief system invested immense supernatural power in caves and the mountains that surround them.



**ENLIGHTENING FINDS.** At a Maya cave site in Guatemala, an archaeologist sits on a mound of artifacts that were thrown into a cave after ceremonies were conducted in a plaza near its opening. ~~ A. Cobb