

Preserved ancient mural found in Guatemala

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Archaeologists say they've uncovered an elegantly painted well-preserved 2,000-year-old, 30-foot-long mural in a ceremonial chamber beneath a Guatemalan jungle pyramid.

Archaeologist William Saturno of the University of New Hampshire and Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology says the mural at San Bartolo, in Guatemala's Peten wilderness, is "the find of a lifetime," The Washington Post reported.

The mural, the scientists said, provides new evidence that Mayan civilization was fully developed about 150 B.C.

Scientists said the mural, painted in vivid colors, depicts the Mayan creation myth and the crowning of a king. It is so well preserved, Saturno said, it appears as if "parts of it ... were painted yesterday."

The painting is the oldest intact mural ever found in Mesoamerica, dating to the Mayan "pre-classic" period, the Post reported.

Saturno discovered the San Bartolo site in 2001. The find will be profiled by National Geographic magazine in next month's issue.

The three-foot-tall mural that survived for centuries beneath the pyramid is accompanied by archaic Mayan writing that has not yet been deciphered.

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