

September 2019

KINAM crowdfunding campaign

Press kit



K I N A M

Making the world a better place,
one jacket at a time.

Overview

- Berlin-based social startup producing unique jackets composed of hand-woven garments made by indigenous Maya-descendant artisans from Guatemala
- 10% of revenues invested in social projects supporting Mayan communities in Guatemala to help fight the current refugee crisis ("the caravan") and to conserve the Mayan culture
- Hand-woven Mayan textiles are augmented by premium jacket components in Europe
- Direct-to-consumer model (no retail) - savings are invested in premium components
- Offers online tool that determines users' individual Mayan guardian spirit within the sacred Tzolkin calendar
- A patch with the customer's Mayan guardian spirit is sewed into every customer's jacket to personalize the product
- Production of electronic music telling the stories of ancient Mayan-legends to immerse customers into the Mayan cosmology and thus create an emotional connection to the brand
- Company is completely bootstrapped by co-founders - no external investors involved
- Global team of 20+ experts working without salaries until success of crowdfunding
- Project has been kept under the radar - almost no public info has been published
- Launch of crowdfunding campaign in Mid September 2019

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The brand

KINAM is a celebration of the ancient Mayan culture that brings age-old weaving processes into the 21st century in a sleek, modern way. Our high-quality jackets will be completely unique, personalizable with our customers' Mayan guardian spirits, and will embody the beauty, energy and harmony of the Mayans. 10% of purchases will go back to Guatemala via KINAM's social projects, to create opportunities for a better future for indigenous tribes.

The word "Kinam", for the Mayas, represents a force, or energy compared to that from the sun, used to describe strength, energy, and power. It is derived from the word "kin", which means sun. For the Mayas, people who live under the "KINAM" influence were considered natural leaders because they use their energies not for themselves, but to help others shine and to support those who need their help the most.



The KINAM logo represents the silhouette of the national bird of Guatemala, "El Quetzal", who is also a symbol of freedom to the Mayan people. The logo depicts the Quetzal flying away towards the horizon while spreading his wings.

The why

Despite the invaluable cultural treasures of the past, the majority of Mayan descendants in Guatemala has to live of only a few dollars per day. This situation is originating from a lack of education and missing job opportunities, as well as a limited access to the global markets. These circumstances have been the reason for many Mayan descendants to flee the country as part of the often mentioned refugee "caravan" moving from Central America to the southern border of the US. Oshko Meija Spiegeler, who comes from German/ Mayan family, learned about this situation in 2013 and subsequently started creating the first concept of KINAM to help the Mayan communities. When he accidentally met one of his co-founders Nicolas Reitmeier at Quarters Co-Living in Berlin in 2018, they clicked in the first moments and shortly after decided to build KINAM together as an integrated social brand intended to support the Mayan communities to gain access to the global market and generate better job opportunities while still conserving their culture and ancient traditions.

In 2017, Mayan archeologists & technology experts from Guatemala and the United States mounted advanced laser scanners onto helicopters to create the biggest ever 3D survey of the rainforest in Guatemala in order to find out how much of the more than 3500-year-old civilization, known as the Mayans, is still hidden underneath the canopy of the jungle today. The results were mind-blowing: The laser scans uncovered the ruins of more than 60,000 houses, palaces, elevated highways, and other human-made features - an incredible scientific treasure waiting to be uncovered and shared with the world. The descendants of this ancient world can still be found in many places in Guatemala today, where they still practice the same ancient craftsmanship for weaving the beautiful colorful clothes that have been worn for centuries.

We firmly believe that Guatemala is a land full of loving, hard working people, beautiful landscapes, cultural treasures and sheer endless ancient stories worth sharing with the world. We want to create awareness of the beauty of the Mayans using all forms of modern media. That is why we are combining music, video and hand-woven garments to tell these beautiful stories and give the Mayans descendants the chance to feel proud of their ancient roots and traditions again. We want to generate job opportunities for Mayan descendants through our archeological discovery projects in Guatemala and thereby contribute in unveiling and preserving the secrets of this ancient civilization alongside the people who are closest to them, the Mayan descendants themselves.

The mission & vision

Planting the seed

KINAM's mission is to re-define the consumption of fashion and create high quality and long lasting garments alongside Maya-descendant Artisans from Guatemala. We strive to empower the indigenous Maya descendants by creating jobs that provide stable incomes for their families and communities.

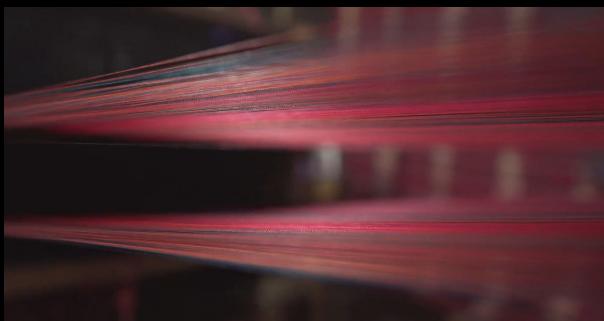
Building sustainable ecosystems

KINAM wants to bring the joy of the Mayan culture to the world. Our business model will help the Mayans regain control of their destiny by providing indigenous tribes opportunities for a better future, through small-business ownership and education programs that will strengthen local communities. We want our jackets to be a symbol for conscious consumption and sustainable production, a positive alternative to today's fast-fashion trends. KINAM wants to serve as a role model for future positive social impact organizations by sharing best practices and training young entrepreneurs. Thereby, we hope to kick off an exponential improvement process, not only for the Mayas but for the fashion industry as a whole.

The product & process

Garments Telling Stories

KINAM jackets are composed of high-quality, organic textile. The one-of-a-kind garments are where modern street style meets the ancient Maya civilization with 3,000-year-old weaving practices. Each jacket features a bold, unisex design, telling a story of the ancient Mayas. Our goal is a state-of-the art, sustainable, transparent production - designed in Berlin and handmade in Guatemala by Maya-descendant artisans in fair conditions.



Product Features

1. Hand-woven by Maya-descendant artisans in fair conditions
2. Personalized by a person's Maya guardian spirit
3. Composed by premium, organic materials
4. Design inspired by Maya legends
5. 10% of net revenue will be invested in social projects in Guatemala

Garment/ Textile Features (may be subject to change)

- Main fabric is of 100% cotton woven by hand in Guatemala.
- Lining is 100% certified organic cotton (GOTS - Global Organic Textile Standard) in a subtle shine satin weave in 160 gsm woven in Greece.
- Collar and hem are a heavy 440 gsm 2x2 rib made of GOTS certified cotton/elastane in Greece.
- Zipper is a polished 8M metal zipper called Superlampo, the flagship of Italian Zipper maker Lampo, made in Italy and certified with Oeko-Tex 100 standard.
- All parts are carefully sewn together in a small workshop in Poland under fair conditions, which are being audited by our production partner Good Garment Collective.
- The design and product development process took place entirely in Berlin with leading industry experts in the field of high and sustainable fashion.

- The beauty of the main fabric is its ancient heritage and the traditional craft.
- The focus of every other material decision without compromise on the most sustainable certificate and the highest quality available within the EU.

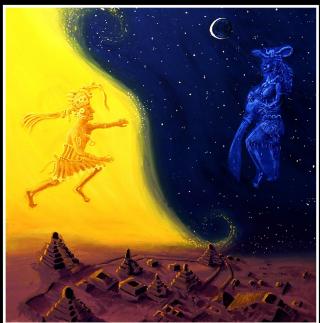


Weaving ancient threads

The fabric of every KINAM jacket is handwoven with love by Maya-descendant artisans in Guatemala, masterfully created over several weeks per garment. The textile is composed 100% of cotton yarn using a foot loom, then dyed with the Ikat technique, locally referred to as "Jaspé", in which threads are bound and knotted to achieve the desired patterns and colors. The handweaving technique is passed down through the Maya communities over generations to their children, to preserve traditions and tell the stories of their ancestors and land via the artful textile. With our jackets, we want to give the artisans recognition and respect by bringing their beautiful garments to the international fashion stage.



The music



Stories told by music

Music is what touches people emotionally. KINAM's mission is to share meaningful and emotional stories of the ancient Mayas while re-defining the consumption of fashion to create a sustainable and competitive textile industry in Guatemala. To help achieve these goals, we create art in the form of music tracks, hand-painted artworks and short stories centering around Maya legends that together immerse our customers into the world of the Maya people who invented the masterful weaving techniques that still create the fabrics today. Through this, we aim to create a real emotional bond between the heritage and craftsmanship of the products and our customers around the world who will hopefully consume these and other fashion products in a more conscious way. Our first three tracks are:

The Legend of Ixchel & Itzamna

The Legend Of Tecun Uman & The Quetzal

The Legend Of the Creation of Man

Link to music tracks based on Maya legends

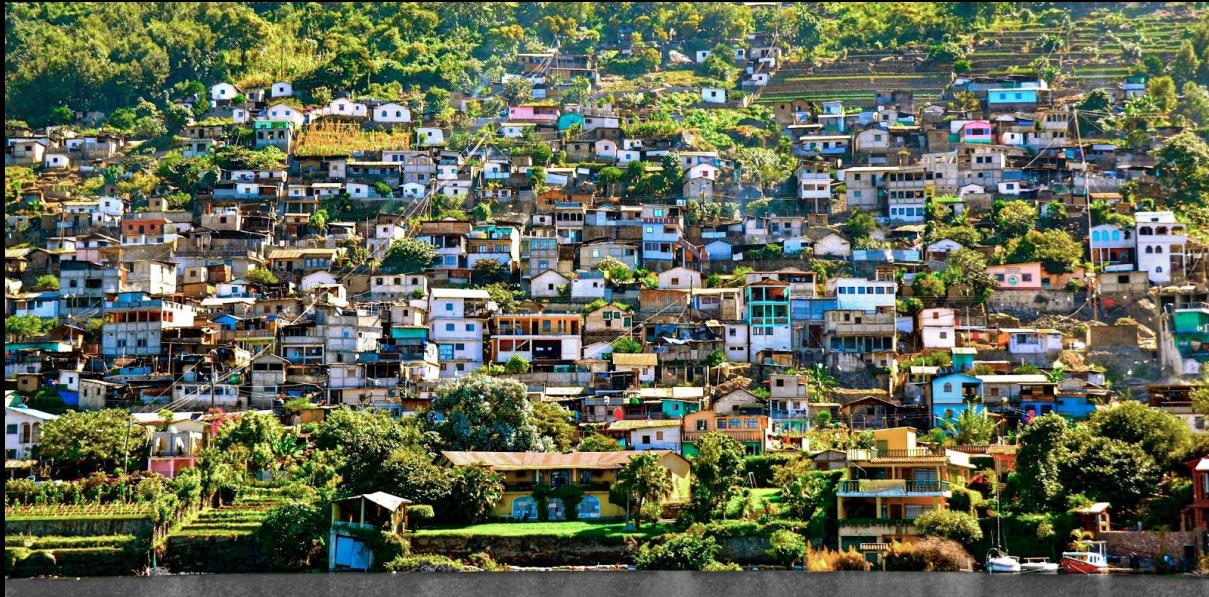
(each legend is shown in track info as short story):

https://soundcloud.com/kinam_music

The journey to create this special music took the team to Guatemala, to record live sounds from the jungle to tell the legends of the ancient Maya civilization and shoot the crowdfunding video for the entire project. The aim is to completely immerse the listener into the Maya world with 1) music based on actual legends described in the Maya's sacred scripture, the "popol vuuh" 2) artworks portraying the stories' iconic scenery and 3) a comprehensible version of the story to read on the website. As for all KINAM incomes, 10% of all streaming revenues will go back to Guatemala to support the social projects of KINAM.



The social projects



The core of KINAM

With KINAM's social projects, we aim to build pride and appreciation for the Maya culture amongst younger generations and equip them with the necessary tools for future success. Our first three projects include: education and skill-building through football, re-introduction of Maya art by teaching descendants how to read and write in original Glyphs, and financing Maya archeological projects to uncover ancient secrets. Another long-term goal in the pipeline is to create volunteer participation projects whereby we can stimulate an even greater cultural exchange. There is an opportunity for social projects in Guatemala to have a true impact, to preserve and protect the rich ancient Maya culture.

Social Project 1: Education Through Football



Situation

Football plays a big role in Guatemala's culture and represents a positive distraction from a rough everyday-life for many people, especially younger generations. However, suitable and safe spaces, appropriate equipment, and qualified coaches with pedagogical skills are rare. The social potential of football remains largely undisclosed / hidden.

Problem

Due to impoverished living conditions, things that are deemed essential for survival are at the focus of most families' efforts. As many children need to work in order to contribute to that, the built-up energy inside them often ends up being released in acts of violence or vandalism. Football is not yet regarded as instrumental in learning essential life-skills within the communities.

Solution

Football is an accessible and effective motor for positive social change. Local coaches are trained to apply established methods in their programs, promoting values like mutual respect, fair-play, and a sense of collective responsibility. Football is used as the "hook" to draw otherwise hard-to-reach children into further educational programs - playing in exchange for learning. Like a game of football, the program is composed of two halves. 45 minutes of play plus 45 minutes of education add up to 90 minutes of preparing for a better future. Receiving extensive training and being given various

responsibilities, local coaches and participants feel empowered, a sense of project ownership is created, and a generation of well-equipped future leaders emerges in Guatemalan communities.

Social Project 2: Unveiling Maya Art



Situation

After 30 years of civil war in Guatemala, a generational gap of Maya descendants who were not able to read and write in their original maya language was created. For 30 years they suffered oppression and were obligated to learn spanish as their main language. A vast majority of them spread into the highlands of Guatemala to hide from the guerrillas and the army. They assembled there and have been surviving for decades without access to proper education. As a consequence, the majority of the Maya descendants have lost the ability to interpret reading and writing in their original Maya Glyphs language.

Problem

The Maya descendant communities of Guatemala are lacking the resources for them to prosper and conserve their culture. The absence of basic human necessities such as decent jobs, basic living conditions, proper studying infrastructures or quality education are forcing large numbers of people to migrate to the US illegally with the hope of finding jobs that enable them to provide a better future for themselves. This dream for a better future outside of the country drives them to risk their lives and their childrens making the trip to the US border on foot, crossing rivers and deserts, facing the dangers of human trafficking and sexual violence.

Solution

Alongside Maya archeology experts and the local communities of maya descendants, we want to create awareness of the importance of learning and conserving their Maya Glyphs Language. Recent studies made by the University of California, Berkeley have shown that in order to explore all the Maya ruins that are still hidden in the jungles of Guatemala, it would take many generations and the collaboration of many people. By enabling locals to re-learn the traditional Maya language, we want to provide the indigenous communities with the opportunity to have access to new and better jobs in the archeological sector. The phase 1 of this project consists in creating workshops with schools and local artists and teach them about the glyphs and Maya art. The idea is to combine compact theoretical sessions with extensive periods of practice and implementation. The first project will be to design murals with locals and put into practice what was learned and decorate the facades of their schools, local businesses, parks and houses. Through this, we will help conserve their history and traditions while at the same time making their towns more colorful and attractive for tourists.

Social Project 3: Maya Archeology



Situation

In 2017, Mayan archeologists & technology experts from Guatemala and the United States mounted advanced laser scanners onto helicopters to create the biggest ever 3D survey of the rainforest in Guatemala in order to find out how much of the more than 3500-year-old civilization is still hidden underneath the canopy of the jungle today. The results were mind-blowing: The laser scans uncovered the ruins of more than 60,000 objects that could be houses, palaces, elevated highways, and other human-made features - an incredible scientific treasure waiting to be uncovered and shared with the world.

Complication

Those who have been to the jungle of guatemala know that due to the vegetation and climate it is incredibly strenuous and time-consuming to travel, let alone to excavate archaeologically. For this reason the same scientists who created the LIDAR maps assume that the exploration of the 60000 objects will not take years, but generations, and will require a great deal of resources, time and people.

Solution

Together with our own team of Maya archeologists, scientific research institutions in Germany and Guatemala as well as other public and private organizations, we want to help discover and preserve the cultural treasures of the Mayas. KINAM wants to become a long-term partner providing resources, people, media production and marketing capabilities to archeological projects in the jungle of Guatemala for many years to come. Similar to what companies like RedBull have achieved in the realm of extreme sports, KINAM wants to give archeology and science the global stage in terms of media quality and coverage it deserves. This will not only help generate the global awareness and excitement needed, but also create well-paying jobs for Maya-descendants working in these projects. We are currently in the process of developing the first official discovery missions, together with public universities and researchers from Germany and will provide details about our first mission about 2-3 months after the crowdfunding campaign.

The journey



The power of co-living

KINAM's 4 co-founders Oshko, Nicolas, Christopher and Orhan met in the QUARTERS Co-Living Space in Berlin. They booked flights to Guatemala almost immediately after first discussing the idea to shoot material for a crowdfunding video, to record jungle sounds for songs, and to establish supplier relationships overseas. Upon returning to Berlin, they recruited more than 20 experts from their networks in Germany, Sweden, Guatemala, Israel and the U.S. With a diverse set of skills and expertise, the team is comprised of a Maya archeologist, textile engineers, product developers, designers, marketing specialists, music producers, and venture builders, working remotely and unpaid until the end of the crowdfunding campaign.

Growing stronger together

The idea for KINAM was born in 2013 in Guatemala as a way to celebrate the ancient Maya traditions and create a steady income to aid impoverished indigenous tribes. After moving to Berlin in 2017, Oshko met Nicolas at a QUARTERS Co-Living party and shared goals and visions for the future. Nicolas dreamt of founding a music label and media production company with childhood friends Christopher, Orhan and Patrick. Oshko loved the idea and proposed to join forces to create KINAM.

Soon after, the four co-founders traveled to Guatemala to shoot content for the crowdfunding video, to record live audio from the jungle for an electronic music album inspired by the Maya culture, and to find a product for their brand. They decided on hand-woven jackets, produced in collaboration between Maya descendant artisans and Berlin product experts, to tell the stories of the Mayas in a sleek, stylish way. In the past 8 months, the team has grown to more than 20 members across 7 countries, creating a global team thrilled to bring the Maya textile art to the world.



The founders of KINAM



Oshko Meija Spiegeler

Descendant from both Maya & German great grandparents, born and raised in Guatemala where he got his basic education. In 2009 he moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA, where he studied film and tv production for 3 years and then moved back to Guatemala. In 2013 he traveled to Lake Atitlan and got to know the communities of Maya-descendant Artisans from the lake and was astonished by the quality of their garments and the dire living situations. The variety of products & colors showed him the necessity to share this art with the world in order to help improve their quality of life.



Nicolas Reitmeier

Born and raised in Stadtallendorf, an industrial town close to Marburg Germany, Nicolas went to study business administration and innovation management in the U.S., China and Germany. Subsequently, he worked 4 years in strategy consulting for PricewaterhouseCoopers in Frankfurt and Berlin. During his professional career, Nicolas gained extensive experience while working with more than 15 international corporate clients and a variety of startups on topics around business strategy, innovation management, venture development and product marketing. After moving to Berlin in 2017, he met Oshko Meija Spiegeler at QUARTERS Co-Living. Nicolas dreamt of founding a music label and media production company with childhood

friends Christopher, Orhan, and Patrick. Oshko loved the idea, and proposed to join forces to create KINAM.



Christopher Koziol

Born and raised in Stadtallendorf, an industrial town close to Marburg, Germany. Originating from a Polish-immigrant family, Christopher Koziol has had a passion for music since before he could walk or talk. From beating on his first set of drums at age 1 to learning to play the piano at age 7, he was already able to produce his own hip hop beats on his computer by the time he reached his teens. From age 17 until today, he has worked in the same iron factory as his father, working day and night shifts year-round melting iron for car engines at 1200 degrees Celsius. But even after a long day of hard physical labor at the factory, his drive for music has pushed him to continue tirelessly producing each and every day. Until 2017, he had virtually no exposure to electronic music. All of that changed when childhood friend Nicolas Reitmeier, enamored by the electronic music scene in Berlin, asked him to produce an electronic beat "just for fun". After just 15 minutes of playing around, Christopher's talent was obvious. Together with the help of childhood friends Orhan Kaygisiz and Patrick de Haan, they then decided to build a home studio and co-founded their own music label. In spring of 2018, Christopher and Nicolas met Oshko Meija Spiegeler in the QUARTERS Co-Living Space in Berlin, and decided to found KINAM.



Orhan Kaygısız

Born and raised in Stadtallendorf, an industrial town close to Marburg, Germany. Originating from a Turkish-immigrant family, Orhan Kaygısız was fascinated by photography since his teenage years. Despite numerous bone fractures caused by an inherent form of brittle-bone disease, he was always known for carrying his camera equipment everywhere he went, to capture the special moments he had with his family and friends. It was Orhan's love for photography which made him start studying media & communication at the university of Marburg. When Orhan was starting to build the foundations of his own media production company, he met Oshko Meija Spiegeler through his childhood friends Christopher Koziol & Nicolas Reitmeier in the QUARTERS Co-Living Space in Berlin and decided to found KINAM.

Our trusted supporters

KINAM has four partners that help make our project possible. SOULMADE, located in Guatemala, acts as the middleman between KINAM and the communities of Maya descendant artisans by providing supply chain and production logistics. Good Garment Collective (GGC) in Berlin takes care of our manufacturing in the EU. We have partnered with Football for Worldwide Unity (FFWU) to develop social projects, an organization with over 5 years of experience training coaches and kids to use football as a tool to develop social and leadership skills in Africa. Last but not least, QUARTERS Co-Living in Berlin has been a major support since day one, when Oshko and Nicolas met there and got all of the tools they needed to work on the project together.

The team

Archeological Projects & Maya Culture

- Douglas Quinonez (10+ years in maya archeology research in Guatemala)
- Achim Schnulze (7+ years in archeological maya research in Guatemala)

Product Design

- Vimal Panalickal (10+ years in high fashion design & textile engineering)
- Martina Davies (25+ years in mass production of fashionable garments)

Operations & Supply Chain

- Francisco Arriaza (15+ years in international supply chain management)
- Alejandro Mejia (13+ years in construction management)

Web & Product Design

- Yoshi Kame (5+ years in graphic-, light-, stage- & brand design)
- Tom Love (5+ years in graphic-, light-, stage- & brand design)
- Jose De Paz (2+ years in graphic & media design)

Marketing & PR

- Julia Schöniger (4+ years in online marketing management)
- Nina Stach (5+ years in brand management & social media design)

Video Production

- Orhan Kaygizis (3+ years in visual media production)
- Artur Nastir (5+ years in professional & urban photography)
- Stefania Boesche (5+ years in visual media production)

Tech Development

- Michael Gerullis (5+ years in software development)
- Manal Malik (2+ years in software development)

Social Projects

- Tobias Winter (5+ years in international social project development)
- Douglas Quinonez (10+ years international social project development)
- Miguel Messner (2+ years in project sourcing and business development)
- Katarina Messner (2+ years in international social project development)

KINAM Music

- Christopher Koziol (15+ years in music production & sound design)
- Pablo Sorribes (8+ years in music production & sound design)
- Carlos Hahmman (10+ years in music production & sound design)
- Tobias Koziol (10+ years in music production & sound design)
- Patrick de Haan (5+ years in business development & management)

Co-founder & Head of Video Production

- Orhan Kaygisiz (3+ years in visual media production)

Co-founder & Head of Music Production

- Christopher Koziol (15+ years in music production & sound design)

Co-founder, Angel Investor & Co-CEO

- Nicolas Reitmeier (5+ years strategy consulting & startup development)

Founder & Co-CEO

- Oshko Mejia Spiegeler (5+ years in media production management)

Company & campaign info

Company info

Kinam was founded in 2018 in Berlin.

Timeline

1. Start pre-launch phase (09.09.)

Events:

- Launch of website
- Launch of social media channels

2. Start crowdfunding campaign (start btw: 21.09. - 28.09. - duration: 3-4 weeks)

Events:

- Publication of press releases & interviews
- Start of crowdfunding campaign
- Launch of crowdfunding video
- Build-up of KINAM community

3. Phase 1 (month 1-6 after crowdfunding campaign)

Events:

- Production of textiles in GT with Maya artisan co-operatives
- Extension of KINAM Maya calendar on website (content & functionality)
- Setup of KINAM legal entities in Guatemala & Germany
- Setup of KINAM non-profit organization Guatemala
- Beginning of phase 1 KINAM social projects
- Production, personalization, packing and delivery of first drop of KINAM Jackets (6 months)
- Conclusion of phase 1 social projects

4. Phase 2 (month 6-12 after crowdfunding campaign)

Events:

- KINAM online platform expansion
 - Ecommerce
 - Social projects development status
 - Volunteer Program
- Start of second KINAM crowdfunding campaign
- Beginning of phase 2 KINAM social projects
- Setup of KINAM locations at Lake Atitlan

5. Phase 3 (month 12+ after crowdfunding campaign)

Events:

- Start of third KINAM crowdfunding campaign
- Beginning of phase 3 KINAM social projects

Background information

The Mayas

External Source: [History.de](#)

The Maya Empire, centered in the tropical lowlands of what is now Guatemala, reached the peak of its power and influence around the sixth century A.D. The Maya excelled at agriculture, pottery, hieroglyph writing, calendar-making and mathematics, and left behind an astonishing amount of impressive architecture and symbolic artwork. Most of the great stone cities of the Maya were abandoned by A.D. 900, however, and since the 19th century scholars have debated what might have caused this dramatic decline.

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The Tzolkin calendar

External Source: Carlos Barrios - "The book of destiny".

"The Maya have operated continuously as a theocracy for thousands of years, with one of the most balanced forms of social organization. Throughout this time, both rulers and subjects lived according to the sacred Cholq'ij or Tzolkin calendar: everyone assumed their role in society according to the sign or energy (Nawal) they were born under. This prevented conflict and allowed the Maya to develop in accordance with their abilities because everyone did what they were truly meant to do. The Dresden Codex shows that the Maya unerringly calculated lunar movements, solar and lunar eclipses, and the cycles of Venus, Mars, and other visible planets. One codex alone contains both lunar and solar eclipses perfectly calculated 3,500 years into the future.

The Maya also knew the orbits of galaxy clusters, the alignment of those that were closest, and their influence on our galaxy. They were thousands of years ahead of the Western world. In the Popol Vuh, for example, we read that millions of years ago Venus was one of Jupiter's moons. It fell out of orbit as a result of some kind of collision, possibly with a giant meteorite, and passed very close to the Earth, affecting our planet's axis and causing earthquakes, floods, and geographic changes. The counting of time is extremely important to the Maya, and they built astronomical observatories for exactly that purpose, such as those found in Uaxactun, Chichén Itzá, and countless other ceremonial centers throughout the Maya world.

The Tzolkin calendar: This is the sacred calendar, a human cycle consisting of 260 days, divided into 13 months of 20 days each. This calendar has been passed down from generation to generation since the date of creation—the year zero is depicted on Stela

C at Quiriguá—through the last 500 years without any modifications whatsoever. The Cholq'ij governs human aspects: it consists of 260 days or nine months of the Gregorian calendar, the time it takes for human gestation as well as the biorhythmic period after birth."

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The archeological discoveries

Source: [Nat Geo](#)

Laser Scans Reveal Maya "Megalopolis" Below Guatemalan Jungle:

A vast, interconnected network of ancient cities was home to millions more people than previously thought. In what's being hailed as a "major breakthrough" in Maya archaeology, researchers have identified the ruins of more than 60,000 houses, palaces, elevated highways, and other human-made features that have been hidden for centuries under the jungles of northern Guatemala. Using a revolutionary technology known as LiDAR (short for "Light Detection And Ranging"), scholars digitally removed the tree canopy from aerial images of the now-unpopulated landscape, revealing the ruins of a sprawling pre-Columbian civilization that was far more complex and interconnected than most Maya specialists had supposed.

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The refugee crisis

Source: [New York Times](#)

More migrants from Guatemala than from anywhere else are trying to cross the border into the United States, despite warnings about the perils of the journey north.

Over the past year, 42,757 Guatemalans traveling as families were either apprehended or otherwise stopped at the United States border with Mexico, according to Customs and Border Protection data. They accounted for nearly half of all migrants who sought to enter the United States with their relatives. And the numbers have been on the rise. Two years ago, just under one-third of families stopped at the border were Guatemalan. Interviews with dozens of people in Concepción Chiquirichapa, a town of nearly 10,000 residents with a vibrant public market, revealed that almost everyone has family—or knows someone with family—in the United States.

The reason for the diaspora is simple, residents said: extreme poverty.

About 76 percent of the population in Guatemala's western highlands is impoverished, and 67 percent of children younger than 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition, according to the United States Agency for International Development.

Over one million Guatemalans in the region's rural areas lack electricity. Many earn little to no profit from the coffee, corn, beans and other agricultural products they grow, given the steadily declining price of farm goods. Coffee production alone has dropped 6 percent since last year, according to the Department of Agriculture, and small farmers are unable to cover their costs.

Additionally, residents cited drug trafficking, widespread corruption in the local government and extortion by gangs as contributing to their decision to leave cities and towns in the western highlands.

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Contact

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