What Is This Crystal Skull?
By Professor Marcus Bellad

What is this Crystal Skull? Not surprisingly, information varies widely depending on where you look and whom you ask. In our current internet age, the myths have no doubt increased in number, but frustratingly indiscernible from fiction. Let us begin in the past, then, specifically with a quote (circa 1955) from famed archaeologist Dr. Henry "Indiana" Jones, Jr.: "Legend has it that a Crystal Skull was stolen from a lost city in the Amazon, supposedly back out of world, guarded by the living dead. Whoever returns the skull to the city temple will be given control over its power!"

Jones is typically tarantuling and vague as to what, exactly, that power is. Those who knew him (even briefly) attest to his tendency toward dour portentousness and/or smirky wit, a punchline-in-waiting for each and every solemn pronouncement.

Rumor has it the above statement was made in the company of fellow explorers during an actual quest to retrieve the Crystal Skull, though any evidence of said journey has been lost to the winds of time (albeit of which, uncorroborated, has not prevented Hollywood from making a movie about the professor's exploits, titled, rather tongue-tiedingly, *Indiana Jones And The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*). If I may quote one of the real Dr. Jones' more famous pronouncements (date of record, 1930), "Archaeology is the search for fact," something I sensibly doubt this upcoming film will help to settle as regards the Crystal Skull. Indeed, I harbor a dreadful suspicion that we will soon see numerous Crystal Skull-derived hokum-O-Ware, from keychains to budding head figurines to movable-mouth cellular phones (sure to put a crimp in the hamburge phone craze post-2005), which will only confuse the reality further.

This is not the first time a motion picture has made a muddle of the Crystal Skull's myths. The television series *Stargate SG-1* addressed the legend in an episode entitled, quite cleverly I admit, "Crystal Skull." But for a firm grasp of the object's origins we must turn away from the skim-deep ephemera of pop culture and look to an entirely unassailable source of information... Wikipedia.

*From the first part of the wiki entry on Crystal Skull*:

"The crystal skulls are a number of human skull models fashioned from blocks of clear or milky quartz crystal rock, claimed to be pre-Columbian Mesoamerican artifacts by their alleged finders. Contemporary mainstream scientific opinion is that the skulls are instead of 19th century European manufacture. None of the specimens available for scientific study have been authenticated as pre-Columbian in origin. The skulls are often claimed to exhibit paranormal phenomena by some members of the New Age movement, and have often been portrayed as such in fiction, most notably in the movie *Indiana Jones* and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull but also in Season 3, Episode 21: "Crystal Skull" of the sci-fi TV-show *Stargate SG-1*." Busted fiction again! Introducing on even the most reputable of sites, community-written encyclopedias! Still, the entry remains valuable for its notations on the bead-studded crystal skulls that began appearing in the mid-19th century and for its acknowledgement of the article by William Henry Holmes (*The Trade in Pre-Columbian Artifacts*) that helped to debunk a good many of the fake crystal skulls even then making the rounds among archaeologists, collectors, and black marketers.

It is also in this entry that we will learn about the famed Mitchell-Hedges skull, supposedly fashioned from a single crystal of quartz and of the Panamanian antiquarian Eugene Bolten, who is reported to have possessed several Crystal Skulls, though I personally find that a rather dubious proposition. And then there is, the again, imaginatively titled *Crystal Skull*, which examines the spiritual properties of the artifact and then claims, via website contributor Sherry Woodhead Merrell, to actually have it in possession. (That the skull in question is named "Brenya" casts serious doubts on Mr. Merrell's assertions. The great Crystal Skull would certainly never consent to bearing such a malodorous moniker.) I fear we are no closer to a full and complete understanding of this fascinating object. For this I blame Hollywood, for what, indeed, is a better target for a better academic such as myself to ret against in times like these? The Crystal Skull, alas, continues to confuse all attempts at concrete discovery and categorization.

It is rumored that Professor Marcus Bellad sometimes writes under the nom-de-plume *even* which...