

## The Editorial

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We are proud to offer you the first issue of the second volume of *The Mayanist*. As we continue to hone our editorial skills and refine our workflow, we are becoming more confident in the future of our open-access, peer-reviewed journal. Before we further introduce this issue, we'd like to report that our second issue was downloaded at least 1,700 times directly from our *goafar.org/publications* website. This is excellent news, especially since this number does not include the many downloads of the individual papers posted on our authors' personal webpages and "scholar media" pages. Yet, we would like to emphasize that AFAR is a not-for-profit and that everyone on our editorial and layout team donates a generous amount of their time. Unlike most open-access journals, we also allow authors to make their articles freely available to all at no cost (i.e., most open-access journals require a few thousand dollars from first authors). If you enjoy our journal and would like to encourage our open-access endeavor, feel free to donate (any amount helps) when downloading issues from our website. These funds will help us pay our artists – who make our journal so unique – and continue to print a limited amount of hard-copies.

In these strange times, continuing our work on *The Mayanist* has been a beacon of normalcy and inspiration. This issue was originally planned in tandem with our 2020 Maya at the Lago (M@L2020) conference, scheduled to honor the career of Patricia McAnany, and centered on the timely topic of "Community Engaged Archaeology". While we had to postpone this conference to 2021 due to the global health crisis, we decided to continue with the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue of the journal. As further described below by our guest editor, we have kept true to the theme by both featuring an article on community engaged archaeology and by providing a fine publication platform for Maya scholars. We still hope to produce another complete issue dedicated to community engaged archaeology, which should be published in a year from now.

As the format, mission, and scope of our journal continue to evolve, we are adding new stones to our foundations. This issue contains three *articles*, a *report*, along with a new category of contributions, a *book review*. This first book review was written by our Editor-in-Chief, but in the future we hope to publish book reviews by guest authors.

We are proud to feature two new artists in this issue. Our principal illustrator – who produced a full-page illustration and two marginaliae for each paper in collaboration with their authors – is Luis “Guicho” Luin. He is a renowned Guatemalan illustrator who has worked for several archaeological projects over the past decades. We are also delighted to feature a custom epigraphic illustration by Kaqchikel artist Walter Paz Joj, a leading figure in the world of contemporary Maya scribes. Amongst other things, Walter Paz Joj is the designer of the glyphic form of our Maya at the Playa/Lago logos. His artwork graces the back cover of this issue and was created in collaboration with our author Iyaxel Cojti Ren. Beyond our artists, we are incredibly lucky to continue to rely on Joel Skidmore’s most excellent layout expertise. We have also benefited from the work of our new Copy Editor, Isabel Nowak, an anthropology student at Davidson College. We thank Davidson College’s Dean Rusk Fund for sponsoring Isabel’s excellent proof-reading work. We are also thankful to our generous and prompt anonymous reviewers who help us make this journal a strong contribution to our field. Finally, this journal is only possible thanks to our dedicated and responsive authors, and to our generous guest editor, Brent Woodfill, to whom we now give the floor.

### **From our Guest Editor**

It has been a great honor to be the guest editor of this third issue of *The Mayanist*, and I’m excited to introduce the diverse batch of articles that follow. The themes contained within – collaborative research, ontology, and large-scale production of basic resources – are dear to my heart. The list of authors is an exciting mix of new blood and established scholars from Guatemala, Mexico, the U.S., and Canada.

Archaeology in Mesoamerica has always had more than a whiff of the colonialist about it. It began as a pastime for the Anglo, continental, and Latin elite – gentlemen of leisure, Ivy League professors, independently wealthy collectors, and associates of Porfirio Díaz and other powerful dictators. One can still visit the field camps set up by the Carnegie Institution, the University of Pennsylvania, and others from our field’s storied heyday, some of which were so decadent that they now serve as luxury hotels! Even as international travel has become faster and more affordable, national infrastructure has improved, and the middle class has expanded – all of which have made the field more accessible – Maya archaeology continues to be largely the purview of foreigners and non-Indigenous Latin Americans. The 23+ contemporary ethnolinguistic groups we refer to as the Maya, in contrast, continue to be secondary players in the study of their own ancestors. Many of the benefits obtained by conducting archaeological fieldwork—tourist dollars, development projects, and opportunities for education and career advancement—are still channeled away from contemporary Maya communities along with the scientific knowledge gleaned from archaeological investigations.

As mentioned above, this issue of *The Mayanist* was designed alongside M@L2020, itself planned to honor Patricia A. McAnany. Patricia has been one of the leaders in forging an inclusive archaeology that not only incorporates descendant communities but finds ways for the field to be directly relevant to them. The timing for such a session feels notable. The struggle for inclusion has played out in ways big and small this year, from the protests of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others at the hands of the police and other agents, to the legal

rulings that led to the closing of the Dakota Access Pipeline and the acknowledgement that half of Oklahoma is tribal land. Closer to the issue at hand, there is a heated battle over a proposed US law that would transform the way El Mirador and other archaeological sites in the center of the Maya Lowlands would be managed, inspiring renewed cries for decolonization within our field and the inclusion of Maya voices in our research and management plans.

M@L 2020 was to be a step towards that new model; although it was ultimately postponed due to the current global pandemic, the diversity of voices and topics lives on in this issue. The report by Palka *et al.* is an eloquent argument for the need to involve descendant communities in scientific research. The subsequent two articles, written by Iyaxel Cojti Ren and Adolfo Iván Batún Alpuche, drive this point home. They are K'iche' and Yukatek Maya, respectively, and their articles are stellar examples of how the field benefits exponentially from the inclusion of archaeologists who can seamlessly incorporate both Maya and Mayanist perspectives.

The first paper in this volume, “Long-Term Collaborative Research with Lacandon Maya at Mensäbäk, Chiapas, Mexico” by Joel Palka and his team, is a reflection upon the fifteen years they have been conducting collaborative research with contemporary Maya villages. The resulting text is invigorating, managing to model how to integrate descendant communities meaningfully into research paradigms while at the same time presenting concrete examples of how that integration benefits both the scientific and local communities. The project has benefited from the incorporation of community knowledge and input in multiple realms—the ways different forest resources are valued and used as well as the ramifications of a worldview in which *incensarios* and other important objects are conceived of as living beings. Their long-term relationship has resulted in dissertations, publications, and research experience for the academic stakeholders and in honing computer skills, acquiring supervisory experience, and building resumes for locals. I was particularly inspired by the process Hernandez and Palka used to acquire informed consent for their LiDAR survey, which resulted not only in obtaining permission for this potentially invasive project but a relatively enthusiastic buy-in, with multiple individuals content to know that there would be a permanent record of their community.

Cojti Ren’s “The Emergence of the Ancient Maya Kaqchikel Polity as Explained through the Dawn Tradition in the Guatemalan Highlands” highlights the compatibilities between Western science and Maya mythohistory. She convincingly argues that conquest-era documents record the history of the highland Kaqchikel kingdom during the preceding 600 years, although these texts use the metaphor of “dawning” rather than the more familiar language related to the human experience of the West (the “birth” and “death” of capitals and dynasties). Settlement patterns and archaeological chronology give credence and refined dates to ethnohistorical records, while the specifics of migration and alliance not only identify the lineages who left behind the archaeological remains but provide a convincing explanation for long-observed linguistic idiosyncrasies.

“The Archaeology of Intensive Beekeeping in Postclassic Yucatán” by Batún Alpuche draws from ethnography, biology, and history to identify the massive role beekeeping played in the Postclassic northern lowlands. Through a careful reading of traditional apiary practices, Batún draws attention to often overlooked artifacts and architectural features—stone disks, niched walls, and semi-circular structures—which survive long after the bee hives move on.

Marc Zender’s “Disaster, Deluge, and Destruction on the Star War Vase” touches on the same

basic theme as Cojti Ren, using a detailed reading of a single Late Classic polychrome vase to interrogate long-held assumptions about Maya mythology, warfare, and language. The vessel depicts multiple deities and animals aboard a canoe heading through a tempest towards an Underworld temple. Two deities observe from a star sign above. While this scene has been depicted in other contemporaneous works of art, including the famous Tikal bones, this piece allows Zender to propose a possible translation of the “star wars” glyph and open a window onto Classic Maya conceptualizations of warfare.

From our vantage point, one *k’atun* into the twenty-first century, Maya archaeology got off to a rough start, with a very narrow set of voices discussing their narrow set of interests with a mountain of problematic assumptions. While the gatekeepers of scientific knowledge are more open to hearing a diversity of voices today, we still have a long way to go before we have a truly inclusive archaeology. In the little corner of Guatemala where I work, for example, only a small number of families can afford to send their children to middle school, much less the distant universities in the nation’s capital that would allow them to become professional archaeologists, doctors, or teachers. As long as the majority of Maya communities struggle to survive, they will continue to be underrepresented, and inclusion and equity remains a dream.

Still, I feel optimistic that we are at a significant turning point. The field is opening itself up to more and more diverse voices. More archaeological projects are finding value in, and investing in, building up descendant communities in addition to the corpus of archaeological knowledge. Amartya Sen (1999) defines development as the freedom for individuals and communities to choose their own destiny, and as education, income, and infrastructure develop that freedom throughout the Maya world, I see a future in which our field becomes a vital arena for discussions, explorations, and collaborations among a wide swath of local, regional, and international stakeholders. We still have a long way to go, but this volume shows me that we are heading in the right direction.

## Reference

Sen, Amartya  
1999 *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press, New York.