¡Híjole! It’s hard to believe this editorial is for the tenth issue of The Mayanist. When we first dreamed up this journal and shared our thoughts with colleagues, some offered dire warnings and doubts that it was achievable (others were also encouraging). And while launching and leading The Mayanist through its first ten issues was not easy, it has been an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. Importantly, we believe we are slowly contributing to shift the paradigm in academic publishing towards a freer, more caring, and public friendly model.

Let us drop down some numbers here, because we can. We have now published 42 papers: 30 research articles and 12 research reports (along with three book and one film reviews). Every single article and research report: (1) features three original gorgeous pieces of collaborative art; (2) was promptly published in about six months from submission; (3) went through a caring, triple peer-review process (96% of which with disclosed reviewers); and (4) was published in open-access, free of charge for the authors.

On the language front, 37 papers were originally published in English and five in Spanish, while our translation team – consisting of Jocelyne Ponce, Abril Jimenez, and Julio César López Otero – has now translated 10 of those 37 articles into Spanish, with more in the pipeline. We are extremely proud of the level of accessibility we have reached, especially considering that the only people getting paid are the six artists who have produced our artwork and a handful of student copy-editors. In other words, we are incredibly thankful to the many volunteers who continue to make our journal possible. As a sidebar, AFAR, which funds the production of The Mayanist and hosts it on its website, is a not-for-profit, and the very limited proceeds from donations and printed copies sales do not come close to supporting the cost of production; so thanks to AFAR for its undying support.

The Mayanist is also increasingly diverse. When excluding issue 1, which was not diverse by any
metric, 37% of both first and all authors have been female and 49% of all authors and 42% of first authors are from Latin America. Those numbers are quite similar for guest editors. In terms of our authors’ background, they have come from a broad spectrum – spanning graduate students, early, mid, and late career professors, researchers, professionals, and artists – which helps bolster the multivocality of our journal. We are committed to continue elevating the voices of diverse authors, and the issues currently in production certainly go in that direction; stay tuned.

The six artists who have contributed their talent to the journal should be celebrated not only for their art, but also for their patience in their admirable collaborations. It is not exactly easy to realize the vision of anthropologists and archaeologists, as the corollary communicational back-and-forth in this process can be taxing. So, we really, really appreciate you all: Aaron Alfano (issues 1 and 2), Luis Fernando Luin (issue 3), Michael Thomas (issue 4), Walter Paz Joj (issues 5, 6, and 8), Daniel Parada (issue 7), and Lucerito Ochoa Say (issues 9 and 10).

Besides continuing to publish many great issues, we have two major goals for the next few years: (1) resuming the printing of physical copies of the journal and (2) getting all our articles indexed to further elevate our journal and its authors. Both projects require time and resources, so if you find yourself interested in helping, please do email us. You can also simply make a donation through the AFAR website.

It is important to highlight how *The Mayanist* has evolved since its inception. Back in 2019, we were still fully dedicated to hosting two conferences per year – *Maya at the Playa* and *Maya at the Lago* – and so *The Mayanist* was baked into these, as a way to rapidly publish key papers from the conferences (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire et al. 2019:i-ii). Yet, since these conferences have unfortunately been discontinued, we pivoted to a special issue format, where our guest editors choose a topic and invite their colleagues to contribute four to six papers (see Lamoureux-St-Hilaire et al. 2023:i-ii). If you are interested in spearheading such an issue, please do not hesitate to contact the editor-in-chief to pitch your idea.

Before moving onto this issue, we would be remiss not to recognize the pivotal role of Joel Skidmore: our advisor and layout maestro, without whom none of this would be possible. Not only has he laid out every single issue, but he also spends considerable effort in laying out each translated paper; ensuring that the Spanish version matches the page numbers of the English one. This system allows to reference or cite the Spanish version in the exact same format as its English counterpart (see Lamoureux-St-Hilaire et al. 2022:ii).

### This Issue

This issue is devoted to the archaeological and anthropological study of the Western Guatemalan Highlands and the adjacent Pacific Coast. Victor Castillo has done a remarkable guest editorial job in assembling an excellent crop of four papers, lead-authored by Monika Banach, Victor Castillo, Javier Estrada, and J. Raúl Ortiz. Beside the geographic emphasis, three of the papers focus on question of religion: its practitioners, effects, and material correlates. This issue is once again embellished by the watercolors of the talented Lucerito Ochoa Say. It is expertly laid out, as always, by Joel Skidmore. Finally, it was copy edited by four Anthropology students from Mount Royal University: Kento Ammond, Morea Carle, Robin Gimón Serrano, and Abigail Urizar. I now leave the page to our guest editor, Victor Castillo.
From Our Guest Editor

The tenth issue of *The Mayanist* is not structured around a specific topic. Instead, a regional focus has been favored to highlight the great potential of the Highlands and the Pacific Coast of Guatemala for advancing Maya and Southern Mesoamerican studies. Compared to the Maya Lowlands, research in the Highlands and the Pacific Coast of Guatemala has lagged in many regards. This, in part, is the result of the excruciating sociopolitical issues that Guatemala experienced in the recent past, such as the violence that stemmed from the civil war that ravaged the country from 1960 to 1996. Challenging social conditions made investigations in remote highland areas a perilous undertaking for archaeologists and anthropologists, who often turned their inquiries to other Maya regions. Nevertheless, the Highlands and Pacific Coast of Guatemala remain key loci for understanding – for example – the emergence of complex societies in Southern Mesoamerica and the development and downfall of long-distance economic and political networks. Whereas the Pacific Coast has been acknowledged as a cultural and economic corridor with intense social interactions with other regions of Mesoamerica, the Highlands have been regarded for decades as the final stop of unidirectional waves of cultural diffusion, such as its alleged Postclassic “Mexicanization”. New research, however, is revealing the complex historical trajectories of these regions and their peoples. From a methodological standpoint, the Highlands also offer a stimulating case for exploring the relationship between archaeological evidence, historical records, and social memory.

Archaeological sites in the Maya Highlands possess intricate qualities making them unique places for the practice of archaeology and ethnography as scientific and professional endeavors. These sites have different meanings for different peoples: they are sacred places for contemporary Maya spiritualities and they play important roles in oral tradition and social memory as places of origin, memory, and history. Some of them remain in communal property while others stand in private land; a few are visited as touristic attractions, and many are endangered by uncontrolled urban growth and the expansion of agricultural frontiers. The papers in this issue forefront the relevance of archaeological sites as arenas of inquiry about ritual practices and ancient landscapes of the precolonia, early colonial, and contemporary periods. Although the articles do not follow a thematic thread, all of them implicitly acknowledge the importance of place as a departure point for asking larger questions about the region’s past. Three of the contributions focus on the material correlates of ritual activities, such as buildings, maize, or the figures of Christian saints in contemporary contexts, while one of the articles sees place from a broader regional perspective for the reconstruction of paleoenvironments.

In their research report *Maize and Community: Examining a Ritual Sequence at Kixpek, Guatemala*, J. Raúl Ortiz and María Estela Flores describe and interpret an interesting ritual context from Kixpek: a site located in the relatively unknown Zona Reina of northwestern Guatemala. At Kixpek, maize was burned as part of a construction ritual in one of the structures. The authors highlight the salience of maize in Maya religion and stress the importance of maize and fire in the architectural renovations at Kixpek. This research report is a welcome contribution for advancing our understanding of this area, which is poorly known from an archaeological perspective.

In the following contribution, *Prácticas de Construcción y Destrucción en las Plataformas Altas de Chiantla Viejo*, I discuss the idea of destruction in the architectural practices of the Mam Maya of northwestern Guatemala; not necessarily as part of termination rituals, but as a
practice rooted in deep ideas of renovation and continuity that turned buildings into necessary fragments of the past in new constructions. Chiantla Viejo is a small site of the contact period on the southern slope of Sierra de Los Cuchumatanes. The historical context in which the destruction and reconstruction of low platforms occurred at Chiantla Viejo reflects that traditional precolumbian ritual architecture experienced a short revitalization during the first decades of the Spanish colonial order. Further excavations in other Highland contact-period sites should reveal similar patterns of abandonment and reconstructions which, in turn, might be helpful for understanding abandonment processes in precolumbian times from a broader perspective.

In the next article, El Paleoambiente de la Planicie Costera del Pacífico de Guatemala: Una Reconstrucción Desde las Investigaciones en Montana, Escuintla, Javier Estrada, Ashley Sharpe, Victor Mendoza, and Oswaldo Chinchilla provide a compelling reconstruction of the paleoenvironment of Montana, an important archaeological site on the coastal plain of Escuintla that has been linked to Teotihuacan. The methodological approach of this article is most compelling. The authors have taken advantage of data from zooarchaeology, iconography, paleobotany, archaeology, and local toponyms to reconstruct a long-vanished landscape populated with diverse fauna and flora. The article stands as a reminder of the lasting ecological transformation of many areas in southern Mesoamerica and the utility of using multiple lines of evidence from the past for palaeoecological reconstruction.

Finally, ethnographic data from the Ixil region in northwestern Guatemala is discussed by Monika Banach in her article Destiny’s Saints: a Re-Emergence of Divination, Prophecy-Making and Devotion to Saints in Chajul, Guatemala. Banach discusses the contemporary emergence of religious specialists in the Ixil Maya town of Chajul in the context of the procurement of counselling and guidance for important life events, such as the decision to migrate to the U.S.A. By discussing theoretical concepts from relational and non-naturalist ontologies, Banach proposes to expand our understandings of rituals and ritual specialists beyond rigid religious affiliations and to explore how distinct beings interrelate outside dualisms imposed by researchers, such as the dichotomy between nature and culture.

It has been a great honor to be the guest editor for this issue of The Mayanist. I hope that the Guatemalan Maya Highlands and Pacific Coast receive renewed research efforts, as these regions can still offer important contributions to Maya studies to supersede old paradigms and set new questions for future research.

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