Kukulkan's Realm

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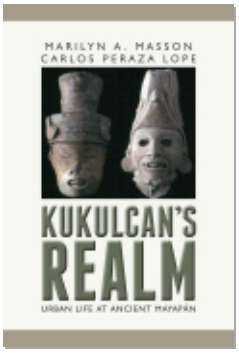

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Archaeological Investigations of an Ancient Urban Place

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This book presents new perspectives on the complexity of ancient urban life at the last regional political capital in late Maya history at Mayapán, Yucatán, Mexico. This city was the largest urban center of the Postclassic Maya world for about 250 years; its apogee dates from around AD 1200–1450. Analysis of archaeological assemblages of dwellings and public buildings at ancient cities like Mayapán advance historical and comparative anthropology's contributions to understanding urban life in the premodern world. City dwellers from lowly to exalted social ranks in world history shared important experiences and sought to resolve parallel problems. They contended with the advantages and disadvantages of congested living that impacted health and hygiene, food supply, economic codependency, social and economic opportunities and constraints, and the need for monetary units and services. Like populations today, residents of premodern cities navigated through state sanctions on individual liberties, challenges to identity in a pluralistic social landscape, the allure of living in a cosmopolitan and prestigious place, and, for some, the pull of hometown connections in the countryside. Comparative research on ancient urbanism has long been a central focus of anthropological archaeology, and innovative new studies of individual cities or regions continually refresh this topic (e.g., Nichols and Charlton 1997; Sanders, Mastache, and Cobean 2003; Storey 2006; Stone 2007a; Marcus and Sabloff 2008). An emphasis on typological or demographic classifications hinders the investigation of ancient cities, and the Maya area has been no exception. In contrast, a functional definition of urbanism requires that a central place host activities and institutions on behalf of its

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hinterlands; functions can be administrative, religious, economic, or a combination of these, and urban centers can range in size from small to large (Hirth 2003a; Smith 2005, 2008:9). Mayapán is one ancient center that combined multiple urban functions and also fits conventional Western expectations of crowded urban life in the preindustrial world. Mayapán's profound influence in the hinterlands is reflected in surges of economic and religious life and activity timed with the city's thirteenth-century rise to power (Masson 2000). Hinterland elites emulated social and political conventions at secondary centers such as Caye Coco (Rosenswig and Masson 2002) or such practices were transmitted directly by diasporas of influential ethnic groups that departed the city at various points in Mayapán's relatively brief history (Rice and Rice 2009).

It is our hope that this book will contribute toward expanding existing models of Maya state organization through time and that our colleagues will find this investigation of Mayapán's urban patterns to represent a useful and relevant case study. There has been a tendency for Postclassic Maya society to be considered a world apart from its Classic-era predecessors. Here we add weight to the case against longstanding erroneous and dismissive characterizations of the confederacy of Mayapán that have lingered since the era of the Carnegie Institution of Washington's (CIW) Mayapán project in the 1950s. Potent new data reveal the complexity of the city's urban organization, particularly with respect to integrating principles of planning and administration as well as the economic foundations of city life. While the field of Maya studies has come to recognize Mayapán as an important historical landmark, the evidence in support of this accreditation has yet to be amassed in a single volume. This book provides much new information, although it is far from comprehensive. Ideally it will rekindle interest in this late capital city that will inspire future investigations.

URBAN COMPLEXITY, POLITICAL ECONOMY, AND HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

Evaluating the complexity of ancient states has long driven scientific inquiries into cultural evolution and remains a top priority for current research as new, sophisticated data and methods topple longstanding monolithic characterizations of ancient cities and their regions (Kowalewski 1990:39; Pyburn 1997:156; M. Smith 2007:17; Chase et al. 2011). Documenting the complexity of the city of Mayapán sheds light on the regional Postclassic domain that this capital governed or influenced. Our theoretical approach may be characterized

as "empirical urban theory," which Michael E. Smith (2011a:171–72) advocates as a useful tool for asking research questions more closely bound to data compared to higher level theories that generate abstract ideas—often from an ideological viewpoint—about ancient civilizations in general. Smith (2011a:169). proposes empirical urban theory as an archaeological adaptation of middle-range theory (unlike Lewis R. Binford's use of the term) that has been used in other social science disciplines. Some of the more sophisticated recent studies of ancient cities have been employing this type of theory without defining it as an explicit research strategy, including those that consider the relationships between residents and the built environment, the materialization of power in monumentality, planning principles, and other examples provided by Smith (2011a). We have been hesitant to unite our investigations of the ancient city under a single approach, as diverse data are suitable for different frameworks for understanding urban life.

In this book's chapters, we characterize the patterned diversity of everyday life in terms of labor specialization, affluence, social identity, and religious practice within the urban environs. A consideration of top-down strategies evinced by monumental buildings and art is complemented by a tandem commitment to investigating bottom-up perspectives offered by household archaeology. Working down the social scale from the archaeology of governing elites and upward from the commoner labor force has led us to conclude that these realms are difficult to fully separate and conceptualize as partitioned spheres of interaction and activity. This conclusion, one of our primary findings, is in line with reports from other late Mesoamerican cities (M. Smith 2002; Cyphers and Hirth 2000). An interrelated set of societal institutions at the city underscores its complexity by governmental design that was affirmed in the daily routines and economic strategies of subject populations who resided at the city and its confederated towns and in its more distant allied trading territories (figure 1.1).

Some theoretical approaches to the archaeology of urbanism have particularly influenced the questions that we ask here of Mayapán's data. Foremost is an archaeological political economy approach, which by definition calls for the investigation of linkages of political officials, economic foundations of power, and extractive strategies that funneled the fruits of commoner labor into the needy reserves of the governing class. Implicit in an archaeological political economy approach is the importance of household archaeology to this line of inquiry (Masson 2002; Masson and Freidel 2002; M. Smith 2004:77). The processes of surplus extraction through such mechanisms as tribute, taxation, or commerce can vary in the degree to which they fulfill top-down preroga-

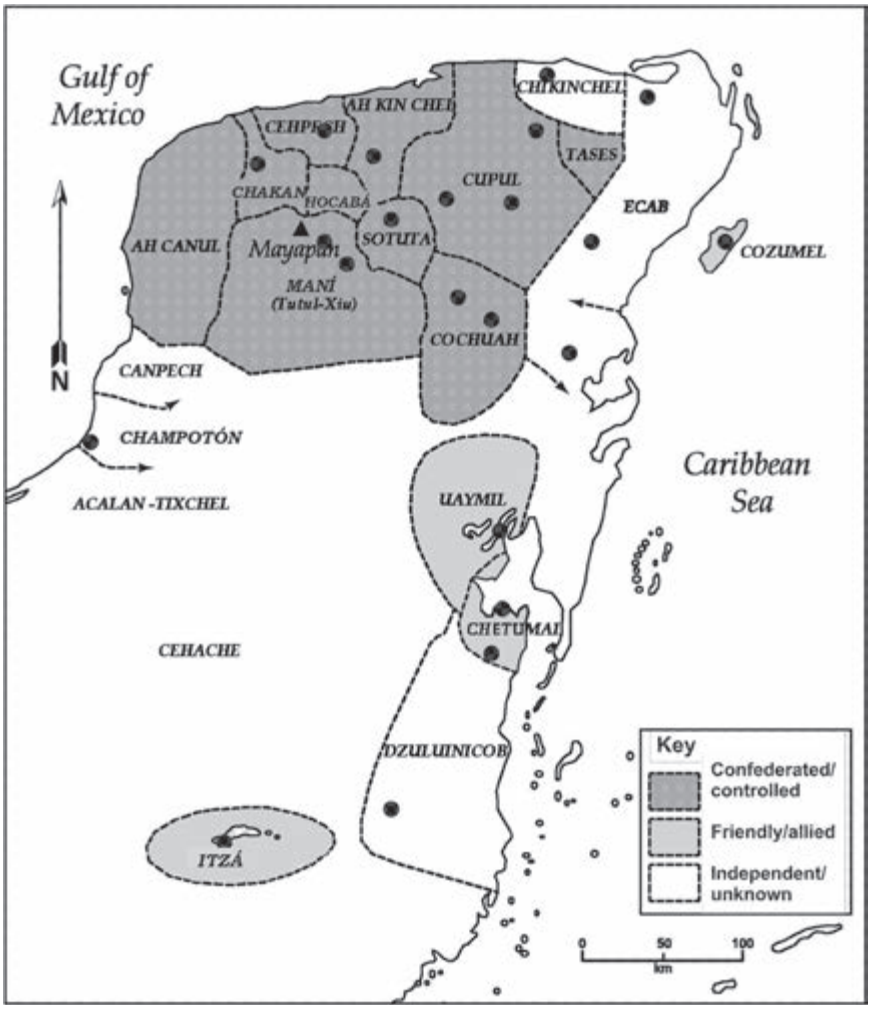

Figure 1.1. *Polities and territories contemporary with Mayapán. The Mayapán confederacy was comprised of polities of the northwestern portion of the Yucatán under the city's direct control. Other polities to the east and south were closely allied and may not have been under tight control while others were clearly independent. Map by Bradley Russell, compiled from Roys (1962), Jones (1989), and A. Andrews (1993).*

tives. Grounding the analysis of ancient political economies in household archaeology permits the evaluation of the degree of surplus production and its relationship to household wealth and thus provides a commoner perspective on economic life, obligations, and strategies for negotiating household burdens (Hutson, Dahlin, and Mazeau 2012). We do not define a "domestic economy" at Mayapán as separate from a "political economy" (e.g., D'Altroy and Hastorf 2001:4), as our data reveal that these realms cannot be analytically separated due to the interpenetrating effects of urban life and regional economic exchange (Kepecs, Feinman, and Boucher 1994; Kepecs 2003). Eric Wolf (1982:19) recognized long ago that households are embedded in community, polity, and regional frameworks. The connections of domestic economies to regional market systems, as well as to high-level elite activities, have been broadly recognized across Mesoamerica (e.g., Sheets 2000; M. Smith 2002; Feinman and Nicholas 2000; Smith and Berdan 2003a). In contrast, the "domestic mode of production" defined by Marshall Sahlins (1972) characterizes a generalized and autonomous existence geared toward meeting the needs of household residents, and the term best applies to nonmarket societies. Terence N. D'Altroy and Christine Anne Hastorf (2001:9–11) highlight important considerations for the study of household economic activities that include linkages to larger social groups in which domestic units are embedded. They also advocate an analysis of labor allocation across gender lines, the potential for pooling resources or labor, and, as we emphasize in this book, household economic participation in production and consumption relationships with one or more communities.

Our emphasis on dwelling assemblages is due to the fact that households represent the fundamental social and economic building blocks of society, as has long been acknowledged in Maya settlement archaeology (e.g., A. Smith 1962; Rathje 1983; Ashmore 1981; Wilk and Ashmore 1988). Newer to the field is the quest to reconstruct diverse household strategies and lifeways within larger settlement units ranging from villages to regions (e.g., Levi 2002; Yaeger and Robin 2004; Scarborough, Valdez, and Dunning 2003; D. Chase and A. Chase 2004; Lohse and Valdez 2004; Rice and Rice 2009). In many ways, household archaeology has come into its own, and sub-elite domestic units are no longer viewed as homogenous or constant (M. Smith 1994, 2002; Tringham 1996). In the Maya area, the study of occupational heterogeneity has promoted the recognition of the importance of household investigations (Becker 1973; Chase, Chase, and Haviland 1990; Haviland 1985; Shafer and Hester 1983; King 1994; McAnany 1989). Complexity and variation, particularly in the agrarian base, is now widely reflected across the region (Kepecs and

Boucher 1996; Fedick 1996; Sheets 2000; Scarborough, Valdez, and Dunning 2003; Lohse and Valdez 2004; Alexander 2005; Robin 2006; Chase, Chase, and Haviland 2011; Dunning, Beach, and Luzadder-Beach n.d.). More assessments of the degree to which Maya domestic units were enmeshed in regional and interregional commerce through all periods are needed, given the potential for regional variation (Kepecs 2003; Berdan et al. 2003; Masson and Freidel 2012). Diverse home production is an integral part of the formation and maintenance of regional market dependencies (Hirth 1998; Stark and Garraty 2010). In Yucatán, polities clearly specialized in specific products—salt, fish, and copal in Chikinchel, cacao in Cupul and Ichmul, and wax and honey at Tiquibalón and Cozumel Island, for example (chapter 5; Piña Chan 1978:38–40; Freidel and Sabloff 1984:190). Beyond social and economic considerations, elite residences can also serve political and religious functions in the neighborhoods in which they are embedded, as we suggest in chapters 3 and 4 (Hare and Masson 2012).

Beyond the household, neighborhoods represent another important analytical unit at ancient cities, but these can be harder to isolate archaeologically in the absence of walls or other clear features of neighborhood division (M. Smith 2011b; Arnauld, Manzanilla, and Smith 2012). The identification of residential zone units at Mayapán holds promise, as gauged by spatial clustering and shared houselot boundary walls; such efforts have just begun, as houselot walls are not yet fully mapped for the city (chapter 4; Brown 1999; Hare and Masson 2012). Our survey of portions of neighborhoods in sizeable cleared milpa fields across Mayapán has failed to reveal conclusive evidence of socially distinct enclaves (chapter 5). In some cases peculiar house styles tend to cluster but do not share other distinctive attributes such as greater quantities of atypical pottery (chapter 5; Masson and Peraza Lope 2010). But three neighborhoods have been discerned at the city: downtown Mayapán, in which the largest palaces frame the monumental center; a second zone of concentrated elite residences next to the city's primary market plaza; and a crafts barrio located within the downtown zone, just to the west of the site center (chapter 4). Most residential zones that we have surveyed lack distinctiveness and conform to site-wide typical patterns in house form. Atypical dwellings, when found, are amidst more traditional Mayapán houses. Our initial analysis of larger residential zones compared composite settlement characteristics of individual milpa samples, but this approach masked considerable variation at individual houselot units within these mapped areas. This realization, coupled with a lack of clear distinctions among household pottery assemblages (Masson and Peraza Lope 2010), led us to designate the dwelling over the neighborhood as our primary unit of analysis.

Adopting an archaeological political economy approach causes us to skirt, but not completely avoid, the allure of the ritual economy approach that currently enjoys popularity (e.g., Wells 2006; McAnany and Wells 2008; McAnany 2010). These authors demonstrate the exceptional importance of the ritual dimensions driving ancient Maya production economies, yet it is our view that production for ritual existed within a continuous matrix of enmeshed economic activities that included distinctly secular realms. Succinctly put, overlap was partial across the sacred and mundane fields of activity (chapter 9). A limited number of specialized, highly skilled artisans met the particular needs of high art and religion at Mayapán, as is observed at earlier Maya cities, and these top-down activities served key purposes in achieving an articulated economy. Loftily symbolic luxury goods were encoded with tangible values, and this process was directly tied to the use of shell, greenstone, cloth, and cacao beans as currencies for the exchange of staple and wealth goods in everyday commerce (Freidel and Reilly 2010; Feinman and Garraty 2010:176; Masson and Freidel 2012).

Temples, for example, were key institutions of consumption. Activities sponsored at these edifices stimulated the production and acquisition of all manner of goods, including ordinary pots and foodstuffs for celebratory meals, common forms of knives and projectiles used in sacrifice and ceremony, and special paraphernalia such as deity effigy censers (Landa 1941:92, 106, 141, 158). Commoners at the city made all of these items, which were consumed by patrons and their guests at events held at temples, colonnaded halls, and other civic-ritual buildings. Except for the special paraphernalia, these inventories of foodstuffs and tools were also used in daily life for mundane occasions at ordinary houses where they were produced. Calendrical ceremonies and rites of passage called for the consumption of all of the valuable and useful goods at Mayapán, and in effect, this contributed to the reification of these goods. The affirmation of the sacred qualities of life's staples is also commemorated in monumental art (chapters 2, 3). These observations fit well within the ritual economy paradigm, and there is no denying that a devout citizenry undertook the activities of daily life through the lens of religious beliefs propagated by the Mayapán state. There is room to consider, however, that some portion of staple products and a significant number of valuables were available through mundane market transactions. It is also true that a system of norms with a religious foundation bound some practices associated with market commerce (Freidel 1981; Freidel and Sabloff 1984), but as we discuss in chapter 6, pilgrimage market fairs were but one form of market exchange (Masson and Freidel 2012).

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF V. GORDON CHILDE

Our study owes a profound intellectual debt to V. Gordon Childe's work on the urban revolution (Childe 1936, 1950, 1956). Mayapán's status as a secondary state means that our research is more concerned with the specific operations of a late state polity rather than the transformations associated with the emergence of a primary state. The latter topic has been an overriding concern in evolutionary anthropology. Some political structures at Mayapán were innovative, if not revolutionary, even if they can be historically understood and explained in terms of predecessors such as Chichén Itzá. The phenomenon of urban life emerged early in the Maya area—around 1,500 years prior to Mayapán at the metropolis of Late Preclassic era El Mirador—and continued through the Classic Period where networks of cities home to populations 10,000–100,000 strong crisscrossed the lowland Maya landscape (Chase, Chase, and Haviland 1990; Chase et al. 2011; D. Rice 2006). We share Childe's interest in the topics of urban social and economic diversity, in particular the mutual dependencies fostered by the fabric of city life.

Childe highlighted the importance of occupational specialization and its correlate, urban interdependency. This connectedness represents a critical variable for evaluating complexity within cities and their larger regional contexts. Even a cursory read of the sweeping historical treatise of Fernand Braudel (1981) or selections of Contact Period Maya ethnohistorical documents reveals the resounding effects on households wrought by changes in regional political and ecological climates. Connectedness, or connectivity, as Michael Smith (1994:144) phrases it, exposes the linkages of domestic units to one another through nonlocal economic and political institutions. On a more conceptual level, arguments for "entanglement" tie a range of routine daily activities to the underpinnings of *costumbre*, rooted in social identity and religious beliefs (McAnany 2010). Gary M. Feinman and Christopher P. Garraty (2010) have recently argued that a significant degree of embeddedness of socioeconomic institutions is not limited to preindustrial societies. As Jeremy A. Sabloff (2007:21) has recently surmised, "the breadth and interconnectedness of Mesoamerican polities in the Late Postclassic is undeniable," and this regional articulation is observed in ideological exchanges of high art and mythology and the commercial realm (Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a; Smith and Berdan 2003a; Sabloff 2007:21; Barrera Rubio and Peraza Lope 2004; Masson and Peraza Lope 2007). Close ties between the Maya area and central Mexico date to at least the Terminal Classic period at Chichén Itzá in Yucatán (Kepecs, Feinman, and Boucher 1994; Kepecs 2007), and it is arguable that external exchange was more important for that great city than for Mayapán (Braswell

2010), which seems to have consolidated some of its important trade networks to an area that lies within the expansive Maya realm (chapter 6).

Our assessments of codependency in chapter 6 document the quantities of goods that were made at the city's dwellings or acquired through exchange from destinations across the Maya lowlands and highlands. Despite interregional connections emphasized in studies of Mayapán's art, research in the settlement zone at Mayapán reveals as much about the importance of regional dependencies within the Maya area than beyond it—in part because this study is limited to nonperishable artifacts and also due to the fact that such exchanges were of greatest importance to the city's commoners. Elsewhere in the Maya area, codependency has been analyzed at various scales—for example, between small settlements outside of major centers in a region (Scarborough and Valdez 2009), within large centers, and between these nodes and their hinterlands via market exchange (West 2002; Masson and Freidel 2012).

The concept of heterogeneity provides a useful framework for evaluating societal complexity (McGuire 1983), particularly for craft production (chapter 6). It is relatively simple to document heterogeneity in terms of evidence for the spatial segregation of manufacturing stages or products (M. Smith 1994; Berdan 1988). Other straightforward archaeological reflections of complexity are found in the number of settlement units within a regional system, and more importantly, in the segmentation of social and functional space within a site or residential group (Kent 1990a, 1990b). At Mayapán, segmentation is manifested in separate constructed spaces for living, storage, entertaining, cooking, animal raising, and ritual within elite domestic groups, and at the site level in differentiated spaces for agriculture, commerce, education (possibly), ritual, water collection and socializing, houselot and city wall boundaries, workshop buildings, and other features (chapters 3–5). A proliferation of types of ritual buildings at this city is also a correlate of religious complexity (chapter 2; Proskouriakoff 1962a); Harry E. D. Pollock (1962:15) tallied over 100 such edifices.

MAYAPÁN AND MESOAMERICAN URBANISM

Three case studies in Mesoamerican political economy have used particularly innovative approaches that have guided our investigations. Michael Smith's examination of household activities before and after the formation of the Aztec empire has pioneered key methods for assessing wealth (Smith and Heath-Smith 1994; M. Smith 1987, 1999). Our analyses also emulate parallel queries made at the Epiclassic center of Xochicalco in quantitatively comparing commoner and elite wealth variation and the relationship of affluence to

craft production and market exchange (Hirth 1998; Cyphers and Hirth 2000). Research at Xochicalco also fostered Kenneth G. Hirth's (2003a) model of segmental urbanism that interprets an array of outlying elite architecture as the seats of subject polities (*altepetl*) of the Xochicalco state. Leaders of these annexed territories maintained a residence in the urban center. This model may have interesting parallels to the Mayapán confederacy, in which lords of affiliated polities lived at least part of the time in the city, and we attribute replicated civic-ceremonial architecture to this sector of governing elites (chapters 3, 4). Research at the Early Classic center of Chunchucmil, a unique Classic-era Maya city that specialized in commercial exchange, has motivated and emboldened our efforts in reconstructing a market economy. The differences, as well as the striking parallels in residential zone organization and trade observed at Chunchucmil and Mayapán, serve as a testimony to the diversity and complexity of cities within the Maya region (Dahlin 2009; Dahlin et al. 2010; Hutson, Dahlin, and Mazeau 2012).

Characterizations of Maya cities of the Classic Period prior to Chichén Itzá and Mayapán have been plagued by a lack of consensus, in part due to paradigmatic disagreement, but also due to real variation in the size and importance of specific places across the lowlands, as should be expected for ancient cities (Marcus 1983). Characterizations of all Maya cities as "regal-ritual," weak, or undifferentiated (Sanders and Webster 1988; Webster and Sanders 2001; Ball 1993; Inomata 2001) are no longer tenable due to evidence that the largest Maya cities were functionally and economically diverse, covered extensive areas with large-scale landscape modifications, and some were home to enormous populations of 50,000 to 100,000 or more (Folan 1992; Haviland 1992; Moholy-Nagy 1997; Chase, Chase, and Haviland 1990; A. Chase 1998; A. Chase and D. Chase 2004; A. Chase et al. 2011; Sabloff 2003; Dahlin and Ardren 2002 et al. 2010; D. Rice 2006; Masson and Freidel 2012). Settlements in the Maya countryside also exhibit social and functional diversity (Scarborough, Valdez, and Dunning 2003; Iannone and Connell 2003; Lohse and Valdez 2004; Yaeger and Robin 2004). Impediments to recognizing the complexity of Maya states in general (Pyburn 2008; A. Chase et al. 2011), including Mayapán, trace their origins to Betty Meggers's (1954) assertions in her "Law of Environmental Limitation on Culture," which held that tropical environments in general impose limiting factors on the evolution of civilizations (Sanders 1962, 1973; Sanders and Price 1968; Puleston 1982). The erroneous foundations of this position have been overturned in New World archaeology to the extent that it has become part of the public discussion as exemplified in science writer Charles Mann's (2005) bestseller *1491*.

Mayapán has generally been overlooked as a case study useful for building models about Maya urbanism due to two flawed assumptions about the city: first, that Postclassic society was a devolved and thus unproductive—even unworthy—civilization for comparative study; and second, that Mayapán and its larger societal context were fundamentally different from earlier Maya history due to the importance of mercantile commerce over theocratic political structures of the past. While Jeremy Sabloff and William L. Rathje's (1975) mercantile model illuminated key differences that helped to explain the shift away from investment in monuments of monarchical power, many remaining threads of continuity and historically informed transformations merit deeper analysis. For example, market institutions were likely amplified rather than invented in the centuries following the collapse of Classic-era southern monarchies (West 2002; Braswell 2010; Masson and Freidel 2012, 2013). The study of Maya religion represents a general exception, as it has long taken into account the material indicators of belief systems manifested throughout the Formative, Classic, Postclassic, and Contact Periods, and in some instances, persist among traditional Maya societies today (e.g., J. Thompson 1970; Taube 1992; Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993).

ILLUMINATING THE DARK AGES

This investigation into urban life finds general inspiration in selected works from historical urban geography, as have some other recent works in Mesoamerican archaeology (M. Smith 2005, 2007, 2011b; Russell 2008a). Kevin Lynch's (1960) definition of urban landscapes in conceptual and functional terms in his book *The Image of the City* has many applications for the reconstruction of Mayapán's landscape. Identifying focal nodes, roads, gates, and edges has suggested to us ways that residents and visitors navigated and perceived the city via meaningfully connected features or viewsheds that lent structure to the city's morass of stone-encircled house groups. Although our work does not delve deeply into the cognitive effects of monumental landmarks and other features contributing to perception and urban worldview, we acknowledge their probable importance for triggering and generating social memory (e.g., Alcock 2002:28–30; Moore 2005). Such processes are not accidental; and Mayapán's defining features represent some of the best evidence for top-down strategies linked to state-making planning and administration. Susan Alcock (2002:39) eloquently characterizes this phenomenon, which broadly applies to ancient political capitals: "The victorious power's own sense of history is transformed to reflect success and its consequences, while

central authorities re-inscribe provincial memories in order either to undercut opposition or encourage compliance." Cultivating a sense of state identity is potentially fraught with dialectical obstacles, especially when residents are frequently replenished with new arrivals from diverse countryside locales. The effectiveness of efforts to grow allegiance to polity over the roots of hometown loyalty can be variable but is often successful through time (e.g., Oudijk 2002; Janusek 2002; Kristan-Graham 2001).

Regional historical syntheses such as those of Josiah Cox Russell (1972) and Norman J. G. Pounds (1973) consider the institutions of town and city life in the late medieval landscapes of Europe north of the Alps in terms that provoke our thinking about parallels in urban life (chapters 6, 8, 9). Such works also attest to considerable geographic variation within a given century and reinforce the fact that life at Mayapán may have been atypical for the Postclassic peninsula in a myriad of ways. Informed by more detailed history than other preindustrial states, these studies reconstruct changing variables such as city size; the relative authority of political, religious, and merchant sectors; economic differentiation and affluence; residential density; and societal implications of amplifying scales of regional commerce. Susan Kepecs's comparisons of Postclassic Maya mercantilism to emerging commercial institutions in Europe in the century prior to the Black Death have drawn on evocative patterns detailed by Janet Abu-Lughod and Fernand Braudel (Kepecs 2003; Abu-Lughod 1989; Braudel 1981). Other analogies to medieval Europe, particularly the feudal estate system (Adams and Smith 1981), have carried little weight in Maya archaeology due to fundamental differences in the specifics and the use of the term *feudal* for the Maya area. But some comparisons that R. E. W. Adams and W. D. Smith (1981) made regarding proprietary hierarchical class relationships, horizontal family obligations, and elite authority over land use remain worthy of consideration. The fact that these authors did not consider the contributions of merchants, craftspeople, and other free laborers in both societies is unfortunate (Pirenne 1925:103; Dyer 1989:11–25), as their analysis primarily focused on the relationships between high elites and agrarian peasants. A closer look at late medieval economies indicates that relationships between social groups and land were variable and not limited to feudal estates (Pounds 1973:353–54, 370, 375, 403). Aside from the specific details of feudal estates and Christianity, the growth of city life in northern Europe from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries AD presents some interesting parallels with those of the Postclassic Maya in the realm of the "structures of daily life" (Braudel 1981). Town and city life drove the emergence of socioeconomic diversification and created niches for town-dwelling craftspersons, urban peas-

ants, and merchants operating from local-to-distant scales toward the end of the Middle Ages (Pounds 1973:355, 403–7). Late medieval town life added new options for independence in practice, even if official authority under castle or monastic patronage was asserted (Pounds 1973:344–55). Regional bulk goods exchange and distant luxury exchange linked town and city economies over considerable distances, although history reveals significant regional variability in the directions and quantities of trade (Pounds 1973:425–27). As we surmise for Mayapán (chapter 6), most towns in fourteenth-century northern Europe strove to grow much of their own food supply, but some degree of food importation was inevitable. Trade was subject to taxation and other forms of political intervention (Pounds 1973:422). Complex economic institutions south of the Alps, such as those of Venice, are much less useful for comparison to late Mesoamerican states.

Full comparisons across the Atlantic among contemporary (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD) cities such as Mayapán and larger walled cities north of the Alps await future attention and do not represent a major focus of this book, tantalizing as we find them to be. Here we skirt the edges in questions raised in chapters 8 and 9. We are not the first, however, to wonder about the potential of late medieval-Postclassic Maya cross-cultural comparisons, even while we assume from the outset that key differences existed. Sabloff (2007:25) recently remarked, "With the new data and insights into the Late Postclassic political economy in mind, when you read volume 2 of Fernand Braudel's 1992], important and highly influential . . . volume entitled 'The Wheels of Commerce', you cannot help but be struck by the parallels between Europe and the Maya world and the rich possibilities for future comparative analyses." Beyond the allure of potential Maya-medieval analogies, it is important not to neglect many other preindustrial towns—in northern Europe or beyond—where residents also contended with the challenges, conflicts, and potential opportunities afforded by city life (chapter 9).

MAYAPÁN: A STORIED CITY

Mayapán was one of the most densely nucleated cities in Maya history, and it has long been an easily recognizable urban site, even by conventional standards (Pollock 1962; A. Smith 1962). This city represents one of the best Mesoamerican cities for the study of preindustrial urbanism due to its chronological placement on the threshold of Pre-Columbian and European Contact Period history. Much of the city's walled settlement dates to the Postclassic Period (around AD 1200–1450), which allows for the spatial analysis of a

largely contemporaneous distribution of artifacts and architecture (chapter 2). Colonial-era descendants of the city's lords chronicled rich details of social, political, religious, and economic institutions that can be compared to the archaeological record. Diego de Landa was informed that Mayapán fell in K'atun 8 Ahau (AD 1441–1461), only one hundred or so years before the Spanish conquest of Yucatán in 1542. Some accounts were given directly to Spanish writers while others were compiled from indigenous writings (Roys 1962). The archaeological data presented in this book broaden and revise what is known from historical accounts. The name of the city itself is a matter that is occasionally treated in various ethnohistorical documents.

Names for the City

The city was referred to as "Mayapán" at the time that Landa (1941:26) wrote his *Relaciones de las Cosas de Yucatán*. The name combines the words *Maya* and *pan* (probably derived from the Nahuatl word *pantli*), which may be translated as "the standard or banner of the Maya" (Tozzer 1941:26n137). Banners were emblematic for Maya political capitals from at least the Classic Period forward (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993), and the deeper meaning of this term probably signifies the city's status as the capital of the confederacy. The city may also have been known as Zaklaktun or Zaklaktun Mayapán, according to the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, which may mean "the place where white pottery is made" (Roys 1933:81) and could refer to fine examples of Pelé Polychrome or other Buff Polbox group pottery that has a cream-to-buff slip that is not recovered at contemporary sites along the Caribbean coast of Yucatán (R. Smith 1971:231). This name may have originally been Zacal Actun, meaning "white cave" or "white stone building" (Roys 1933:81). The site's numerous cenote cavities in white limestone or the white-plastered public buildings could have easily fit this description. Bradley W. Russell (2008a) argues that this name has Terminal Classic origins in the vicinity of the far eastern Itzmal Ch'en ceremonial group, where earlier pottery is more ubiquitous, even though it is mixed thoroughly with later Postclassic material. Ichpaa Mayapán is another term that may refer to the city, translated by Ralph L. Roys as "walled enclosure." Mayapán was the largest walled city of the Postclassic Maya region. Tancah Mayapán may also refer to the city or one of its districts (Roys 1933, 1962:78). Prudence M. Rice (2004:77) points out that Mayapán could refer to *may* combined with the Nahuatl suffix *apan*, which could stand for "cycle water place." The east coast settlements of Tancah (near Tulum) and Ichpaatun (near Chetumal) are alternative places that may have

been referred to as Tancah and Ichpaa Mayapán (Jones 1989). Notably, Tulum and Ichpaatun, like Mayapán, were walled towns, and both were within allied territories of the Mayapán confederacy (Roys 1962).

Environs

Mayapán is located in a seemingly inhospitable inland location near the center of the northwestern part of the peninsula on the extensive northern plain of Yucatán (figure 1.1). Aside from certain coastal strips, this area is the driest portion of the Maya lowlands, with an average of 1 meter of rainfall per year, amenable to the growth of desert plants like henequen and Standley cactus (*Cereus Yucatánensis).* The latter species is concentrated in remnant stands within Mayapán (Brown 1999:255) and may have been cultivated for its edible fruit and its interior wooden branches that make excellent arrow shafts. Telchaquillo resident Fernando Flores demonstrated to members of our project in 2001 his inherited knowledge of the simple process of extracting straight wooden shafts from these cacti. Carnegie investigators lamented the heat of the city (e.g., Proskouriakoff 1955:84), which exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit from March through the summer months. The forest consists of many dry scrub species, and residents of the ancient city derived their water from numerous cenotes in the area. Mayapán is near the brim of the Chicxulub crater that is marked by a ring of such subterranean depressions, known as the "ring of cenotes" (Brown 1999:157; Brown et al. 2006). The city was probably founded in this location for historical reasons that have been lost to us, as many other similar localities exist with multiple cenotes and cultivable land that would have been suitable for founding a political capital. Like the founders of Chichén Itzá, the lords of Mayapán probably chose an inland location favorably situated within a network of key towns and overland exchange routes (Piña Chan 1978:39) despite the importance of maritime trading for both of these political capitals. Sites nearer to the coast have poorer options for agriculture and fresh water (Dahlin and Ardren 2002), but closer proximity would have been possible, as modern Mérida (the site of ancient Tihó) and Classic era Dzibilchaltun are both within 15–20 kilometers from the sea.

Exploration and Research at Mayapán

The chapters of this book draw on our joint investigations at Mayapán, including Carlos Peraza Lope's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

Figure 1.2. *The Temple of Kukulcan. Illustration by Luis Góngora, courtesy of Carlos Peraza Lope.*

(INAH)-Mayapán Project at the site's monumental center (1996–present) and our combined Economic Foundations of Mayapán Project (Proyecto Económico de Mayapán, or PEMY) (2001–present). This latter effort primarily undertook household archaeology in the settlement zone outside of the monumental center in order to evaluate the economic relationships of the noble and commoner social classes. Our studies have had the luxury of building on the legacies of former Mayapán projects, especially the CIW seasons from 1949 to 1955 (Pollock 1962:iii; Pollock et al. 1962; R. Smith 1971) and Clifford T. Brown's (1999) doctoral dissertation research on the city's social organization. In the ensuing chapters we consider the findings of the INAH, PEMY, and Carnegie Mayapán projects.

Initial explorations of Mayapán produced illustrations of the Temple of Kukulcan, the site's principal pyramid, as well as the Round Temple (Templo Redondo) (figures 1.2–1.5). In 1841, John L. Stephens and Frederick Catherwood (Stephens 1843:1:133) described the site center. They also examined and reported the city wall (Stephens [1843] 1963; Pollock 1962:2). Charles Brasseur de Bourbourg (1867:234–49) later described the center, as did Augustus le Plongeon (1882) in 1881, Antonio García Cubas in 1885, and Carl Sapper in 1897 (Pollock 1962:2–3; P. Delgado Kú 2004:18). Other notable Mayanists who visited the city include Sylvanus Morley and Thomas Gann,

Figure 1.3. *The Temple of Kukulcan (Q-162), with the Hall of the Sun Disks (Q-161) in the foreground.*

Figure 1.4. *View of Mayapán's Round Temple Q-152 and associated colonnaded halls.*

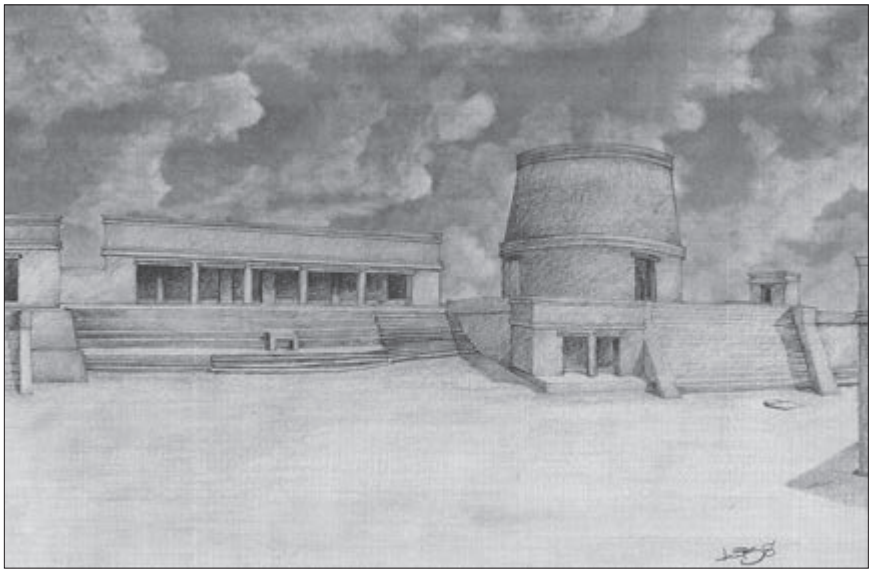

Figure 1.5. *Mayapán's Round Temple Q-152 and associated colonnaded halls.*

and Lawrence Roys initially performed more detailed architectural studies (L. Roys 1941; Pollock 1962:3). The CIW study of E. Wyllys Andrews IV and R. T. Patton in 1938 has remained unpublished (Andrews and Patton n.d.), but it was useful to subsequent Carnegie efforts in mapping and exploring the city wall (Pollock 1962:3). Andrews also briefly reported some of his observations at Mayapán (E. Andrews 1942:261–63, 1943:81–82; Pollock 1962:4). G. W. Brainerd excavated a few test pits at the site in 1942 in order to gather pottery samples for his regional ceramic monograph (Brainerd 1958; Pollock 1962:4).

The Carnegie project was methodologically and theoretically innovative for American archaeology of the 1950s due to its emphasis on settlement and household archaeology (figure 1.6, A. Smith 1962:169; Pollock 1954). The program of research was designed to respond to critiques leveled at more conventional Maya projects that focused on monumental architecture and the recovery of descriptive historical data (Pollock 1951; A. Smith 1962; Brown 1999:102–3). As a consequence of this effort, Mayapán remains one of the best-mapped Mesoamerican cities thanks to the efforts of the Carnegie and surveyor Morris R. Jones (1952, 1962), newly augmented by Bradley W. Russell's multiyear mapping efforts beyond the Great Wall. (figure 1.6). In 2013

Figure 1.6. *Morris Jones's (1962) map of the walled portion of Mayapán.*

a LiDAR remote sensing project, directed by Timothy S. Hare and codirected by the authors and Bradley Russell, will begin to fully document the surface features of the city and a 40-kilometer-square area of its environs.

The bulk of the Carnegie fieldwork took place between 1949 and 1954 under the direction of Harry E. D. Pollock. Mayapán was the last large-scale program of study for the Carnegie's archaeological division, and a team of exceptionally accomplished Mayanists took charge of the research, including Pollock, Tatiana Proskouriakoff, A. Ledyard Smith, Karl Ruppert, William R. Bullard, Jr., Edwin W. Shook, Robert E. Smith, Gustav Strömsvik, and their graduate students who authored the CIW *Current Reports* (Masson 2009; Weeks 2009). Two seminal publications were produced, including a summary report (Pollock et al. 1962) and a ceramic monograph (R. Smith 1971); the annual *Current Reports* have much detailed information from specific investigations and have recently been republished and amassed together for the first time in a single volume (Weeks 2009).

Although the Carnegie work at Mayapán was of exceptional quality and broke the mold in terms of research questions pertaining to settlement and Postclassic Period archaeology for its day (Brown 1999:103–8), it was a difficult project for the investigators. As the fieldwork unfolded, Harry Pollock

and his team were aware that this would probably be the last big investment in archaeology for the Carnegie's Division of Historical Research (Solomon 2002). World War II had disrupted the momentum of the archaeological team, and the strong sense of camaraderie was eroding (Solomon 2002:123–25). Mayapán is a difficult place to work. For example, Pollock (1962:1–2) stated, "Present day vegetation . . . is . . . thorny, difficult of passage, offering limited shade, and generally inhospitable to one accustomed to . . . a more temperate climate." He added, "Soil is so sparse that one often has the impression of viewing more rock than earth" and "To make this rocky, shadeless plain even less friendly to the use of man, there is almost no surface water." Travel from Mérida was difficult during the 1950s, and accommodations in Telchaquillo were stark in comparison to earlier team housing at southern Maya sites. The project marked the decline of the archaeology program, and in a parallel fashion, Carnegie investigators outspokenly expressed their dismal regard of Mayapán and the aesthetics and accomplishments of the Postclassic Maya society that it represented (A. Smith 1962:269; Pollock 1962:17; Proskouriakoff 1962b:330). It is worth pondering how the morale and comfort of the research team affected the lens through which its members viewed the site. Nonetheless, the team maintained a high level of professionalism when it came to the duties of fieldwork and publication. Long before it was required, the team restored several of the buildings at which they worked (P. Delgado Kú 2004:23), including Structures Q-71 (Venus Temple), Q-82 (Temple of the Warriors), Q-126 (The Observatory), and Q-151 (Hall of the Chac Masks).

Starting in 1996, the INAH project, supported by the government of the State of Yucatán, the Patronato de las Unidades de Servicios Culturales y Turísticos (CULTUR), and the Secretaría de Desarollo Social (SEDESOL), undertook major excavations and restoration work in the site center. Carlos Peraza Lope directed this work, assisted over many years by field directors Pedro Delgado Kú and Bárbara del C. Escamilla Ojeda. Other field archaeologists whose contributions were especially significant include Miguel Angél Delgado Kú and Mario Garrido Euán (P. Delgado Kú 2004:26) as well as ceramicists Wilberth Cruz Alvarado and Luis Flores Cobá. INAH owns the central portion of Square Q in which the monumental zone is concentrated, and this area is open for tourism and has been targeted for excavation and restoration. Square Q is only one of twenty-six 500-x-500-meter grid squares that cover the walled portion of the city, and dozens of local farmers and ranchers privately own the remainder of the settlement. INAH investigated and restored a total of sixty-seven structures between 1996 and 2000 alone (P. Delgado Kú 2004:27). The project has continued, at a slower

pace, to this day. This work has been reported in a large suite of technical reports prepared for INAH (Peraza Lope et al. 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2003; Peraza Lope, Delgado Kú, and Escamilla Ojeda 2002, 2003; Peraza Lope, Escarela Rodríguez, and Delgado Kú 2004) and has been the foundation of four dissertation-length Licenciatura theses by graduates of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. These theses analyze the details of the city's monumental architecture, obsidian industry, mural traditions, and pottery (P. Delgado Kú 2004; Escamilla Ojeda 2004; M. Delgado Kú 2009; Cruz Alvarado 2010).

Fortunately for our purposes, the fastidious standards of reporting by members of the Carnegie team in the *Current Reports* series, including inventories and photographs of artifacts recovered, have permitted us to compile assemblages of materials from specific contexts and fold these data into newer results, particularly with respect to ceramic, stucco, and stone sculptures (chapter 7). Although the Carnegie project sampled many dwellings, methods often involved the trenching of central axes or other features that were likely to yield offerings or burials, as was customary for the archaeology of the 1950s. These data remain a valuable asset because of the costs of research today and newer regulations about partial architectural exploration that make such a large sample of these types of features difficult to obtain. Our own investigations of dwellings have been complementary to prior efforts and employed three modern methods: midden sampling with test pits, screening of all excavated deposits to obtain systematic samples of materials, and full horizontal exposure.

Clifford T. Brown was the first scholar to return to fieldwork at Mayapán following the Carnegie project. His investigations in the 1990s formed the basis of his comprehensive and insightful dissertation on social organization at the city (Brown 1999). He identified key differences in artifact assemblages among domestic groups and demonstrated the importance of cenotes as resources not just for water but as features critical for defining the landscape and social units of the city (Brown 1999, 2005, 2006). Brown's work at Mayapán's houselots paved the way for the investigations of the PEMY project, and we are indebted to him for his help in the field during the early years of our study. His fractal model (Brown 1999; Brown and Witschey 2003) characterizes the organic principles of the city's array of dwellings across the site. This model merits consideration in any subsequent assessments of residential growth and development at the site. Brown also oversaw a valuable survey in Mayapán's hinterlands that has located several contemporary and earlier sites (Brown et al. 2006).

The PEMY project owes its inception to Bruce H. Dahlin, who simply asked Marilyn A. Masson, "Why not perform a study of the economy of Mayapán's dwellings?" during a casual conversation at the 1999 Society for American Archaeology Meeting. His encouragement and direct contributions to questions of the city's economy and ecology helped to launch and sustain this project. The PEMY project performed six field seasons from 2001 to 2009 (figure 1.7). All of the architecture in thirty-six cleared milpa fields (encompassing 52.99 hectares) was fully mapped and has been entered into a GIS database (Hare 2008a, 2008b). A surface survey of all of these milpas was performed and 131 systematic surface collections were collected, primarily from domestic refuse zones (Masson et al. 2008; Masson, Delu, and Peraza Lope 2008). The project also completed 189 test pits, 63 of which were near structures outside the city wall (Russell 2008a, 2008b). Nine domestic buildings have been fully excavated, including eight dwellings and one workshop structure located in a residential area (Masson, Peraza Lope, and Hare 2008; Masson et al. 2012). A colonnaded hall and a temple of the outlying Itzmal Ch'en ceremonial group were also fully excavated and restored in 2008–2009 (Masson et al. 2012; Delgado Kú, Escamilla Ojeda, and Peraza Lope 2012a, 2012b).

The recent book *The Kowoj: Identity, Migration, and Geopolitics in Late Postclassic Petén, Guatemala* represents, in many respects, a study of Mayapán from a hinterlands perspective in the Petén Lakes region of Guatemala (Rice and Rice 2009). This work evaluates the results of years of field research on the Postclassic- to Colonial-era settlement of Zacpetén. The Kowoj were one of the important ethnic groups of Mayapán's confederation, closely tied to the Xiu of western Yucatán who, along with the (Itza-affiliated) Cocom, dominated the governmental affairs of the city (P. Rice 2009a, 2009b; Milbrath 2009; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2009). Members of the Kowoj group probably left Mayapán just before AD 1400 and resettled (or joined allies and family) after a major political upheaval (chapter 8), according to correlating lines of evidence in historical documents and archaeology (variously interpreted by Jones 1998; P. Rice 2009a; P. Rice 2009c:82). Parallels in architecture, religious ritual, and a specific type of pottery at Mayapán have been tracked archaeologically at Zacpetén, and these patterns support the model that Kowoj ethnogenesis in the Petén region arose from Mayapán roots (Pugh 2002; P. Rice 2009a:15, 2009b; Pugh and Rice 2009a:94, 112). Many references in *The Kowoj* cite specific findings of our study at Mayapán, particularly Prudence M. Rice's interpretations of the similarity of Zacpetén's Chompoxte Red-on-Cream pottery slip color and decoration and Mayapán's Tecoh Red-on-Buff and Pelé

Figure 1.7. *Cleared milpa fields at Mayapán that have been fully mapped and surface collected by the PEMY project.*

Polychrome vessels, which were recovered in abundance at elite Residence Y-45a, perhaps a Kowoj dwelling (P. Rice 2009a:15, 2009d:37, 49; Pugh and Rice 2009a:92; Rice and Cecil 2009:242). We evaluate some of these interpretations in chapters 3, 5, and 6, along with other lines of evidence for social diversity in Mayapán's dwellings.

MAYAPÁN'S PLACE IN MAYA RESEARCH

As one of the last great centers of commercial, political, and religious centralization in the Maya area prior to the arrival of Europeans to the New World, Mayapán is different in a number of important ways from most of its better-known Classic-era predecessor kingdoms in the Maya region. These differences include its temporal placement within the Postclassic Period, its unique position as an unrivalled political capital in the Maya realm, and its highly nucleated, dense, walled settlement.

Decadence

The city dates to the Postclassic Period, a temporal interval from AD 1100 to AD 1500 that has received comparatively little scholarly attention and recognition relative to its Classic and Preclassic antecedents. Postclassic Period scholarship has labored long and hard in the trenches over the past thirty years to overturn branding of this era as "degenerate" (Pollock 1962:16), "the death of a civilization," or the "dramatic culmination of a long process of cultural decay" (Proskouriakoff 1955:88). Harry Pollock's (1962:17) summary statement at the end of his introduction to the impressive Carnegie project report offers, "Looking at the results of the work as a whole, I think that it has been worthwhile, even though we were dealing with a degenerate civilization, devoid of great art, that to all intents and purposes reached a dead end in the Spanish Conquest."

Reframing the Degenerate Model

Important works that treat Postclassic Maya society in its proper anthropological context and emphasize its accomplishments over its supposed shortcomings with respect to the Classic Period have emerged since the 1970s (Carmack and Wallace 1977; Freidel 1981; Freidel and Sabloff 1984; A. Chase and Rice 1985a, 1985b; D. Chase 1985a, 1985b; Rice and Rice 1985; Freidel 1985; Pendergast 1986, 1993; D. Rice 1986; P. Rice 1987; Robles Castellanos and Andrews 1986; Sabloff and Andrews 1986; Fox 1987; Chase and Chase 1988; Graham 1991; Jones 1989, 1998; Andrews 1993; Alexander 2005; Restall 2001; Masson 2000; Kepecs 2003; Smith and Berdan 2003a; Sabloff 2007; Pugh 2001, 2002; Rice and Rice 2009; Paris 2012). For recent summaries of this transformation in scholarly thinking, see Sabloff (2007) and P. Rice (2009a). Many of these works draw on the ethnohistory and archaeology of Maya settlements that continued to be occupied during the transformations associated with the Contact and Colonial Periods of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the topic of an eloquent recent synthesis by Elizabeth Graham (2011). A world-systems perspective has been employed to consider the political, economic, and ideological interactions of the entire Postclassic Mesoamerican world that helped to put the Maya area, along with many other regions, into comparative context (Smith and Berdan 2003a; Kepecs and Kohl 2003).

What about Mayapán and Postclassic Period archaeology in general initially provoked derogatory assessment? The traditional list is short and has been well-refuted: the architecture is smaller, the ruins are less well preserved,

fewer hieroglyphic records are carved in stone, the aesthetics are judged to be poorer, the long count was no longer used to reckon linear time, and the institution of divine kingship was eroded—and with it the practice of interring rulers in lavish tombs and recording lengthy dynastic records. The size and quality of buildings, construction materials, and the media of art and writing are perhaps most easily dismissed. As much Postclassic Maya architecture was built anew, it lacks the size contributed by larger, earlier building foundations. It also true, however, that massive buildings were not desired in this period, as is generally the case for secondary states (Rathje 1975). The heavy use of stucco would have made these structures glorious in their day, but this medium is especially vulnerable to erosional annual rains. Poorer ruins do not a poorer civilization make, and it has been argued that it is unfair to judge a society by the endurance power of building styles (Webb 1964; Sabloff 2007:16). A preference for mural programs and bark paper books also resulted in poor preservation and recovery in the present day, made worse by Friar Diego de Landa's religious inquisition in which 400 codex books were collected and burned in a single day. Miguel Delgado Kú's (2009) thesis reveals that murals covered the interior rooms of most of the monumental edifices of Mayapán's epicentral plazas. Columns of temples and halls were routinely stuccoed and painted multiple times or sculpted into images of gods or dynasts (Peraza Lope 1999; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a). A confederacy-style council government that replaced divine kingship also disseminated wealth across a plethora of noble families, whose chief monumental investment tended to be in colonnaded halls. Dynasts no longer commissioned funerary monuments to celebrate their deaths, although temples proliferated in number to commemorate a complex polytheistic set of deities and calendrical ceremonies that attest to an amplified religious bureaucracy (Masson, Hare, and Peraza Lope 2006). Principal temples such as the Temple of Kukulcan, the Temple of the Painted Niches, the Round Temple (Q-152), and burial shaft temples that include the Fisherman Temple and the Crematory exemplify Mayapán's mythological charter while secondary temples are located in surrounding groups along with colonnaded halls that frame the city's monumental center (Proskouriakoff 1962a; chapter 2). Portraits of dynasts and ancestral gods were created at Mayapán at secondary temples, halls, shrines, and oratories. In fact, most of these edifices have remnants of modeled plaster or stone portraits of such personages. Credit and acclaim for revered dynasts was abundant, but the numbers of important players increased, diluting the impact of any single governor.

Mercantile Model

What did nobles do with wealth, given the ethnohistorical and archaeological evidence for maximal commercial development during this period? Sabloff and Rathje proposed a rise in the power of the mercantile sector and with it the implication that wealth (proceeds from commercial exchanges) was reinvested into trading ventures and pursuits other than monumental construction (Sabloff and Rathje 1975; Rathje 1975). Specifically, merchant elites tended to keep their "capital liquid" (Sabloff 2007:17). This model most easily fits what is known for regional merchants who trafficked high-value items along seaborne routes of the Gulf and Caribbean coasts of the Yucatán Peninsula as far as Xicalanco, Tabasco, and Naco or Nito in Honduras. Such far-ranging ventures were a privilege reserved for members of the noble class, although such individuals would have also been active within smaller trade circuits such as northern Yucatán. A nested set of vendors and merchants, operating over shorter geographic distances within polities or cities, handled local trading activities (chapter 6). Sabloff and Rathje proposed a mercantile transformation to explain Classic to Postclassic societal differences. Masson (2000) has been one promoter of this view, but she has recently tempered this interpretation as a matter of degree (Masson and Freidel 2012, 2013). Sabloff and Rathje's research had the effect of setting the Postclassic Maya Period apart—perhaps too much so—from earlier Maya traditions. Commercial development in this period has even led to its characterization as one of Mexicanization and the implicit assumption that the Classic Maya, by definition, engaged in little commerce of relevance. More recently, the question of commerce and market exchange has been reopened for the Classic Period, and, by extension, to the dawn of Maya states during the Late Preclassic era (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004; Dahlin et al. 2010; Masson and Freidel 2012). For some scholars, the time depth of market exchange was always suspected (e.g., Fry 2003; Culbert 2003; Moholy-Nagy 2003). We favor the interpretation that commercial exchange was amplified during the Postclassic Period, but that the Postclassic Maya did not invent it. An amplification occurred in scale—specifically in the matter of regular exchanges and dependencies across the Maya area among coastal and inland zones, among the Maya lowlands and highlands, and among major towns and trading centers at the margins of the Maya area. While maritime trade networks were advantageous for the movement of goods to the boundaries of the Maya area (Sabloff and Rathje 1975), overland routes never ceased in importance (Roys 1957; Piña Chan 1978). From a household perspective, greater quantities of nonlocal goods used in daily life, such as obsidian or Gulf Coast Matillas Fine Orange pottery that could be

purchased at the city market, reflect the impact of trade (Rathje, Gregory, and Wiseman 1978; P. Rice 1987; Masson 2000). Earlier sites such as Tikal and Chunchucmil were similar to Mayapán in terms of the volume of trade goods reaching ordinary households, but such access varies markedly between sites located within different political alliance networks (Braswell 2010; Masson and Freidel 2012, 2013; Hutson, Dahlin, and Mazeau 2012). This unevenness at Classic Period sites contrasts with the Postclassic, where even small sites like Laguna de On or Caye Coco had obsidian blade to chert tool ratios of 2:1 or 3:1 (Masson, Hare, and Peraza Lope 2006:201). The evidence for a Postclassic commercial amplification lies in a consistently high level of regional trade goods at households irrespective of site size, location, or political significance in the Postclassic Maya world.

The well-developed marketing institutions of the Postclassic Period are also indicated by extensive Contact Period accounts of these systems, including monies and prices, tiered market and merchant hierarchies and functions, trading regulations, and officials who presided over marketplaces (chapter 6). Greater time depth for these types of systems has been demonstrated prior to Mayapán at Chichén Itzá (Kepecs, Feinman, and Boucher 1994). It is probable that marketing systems were foundational to the stability of Classic and Late Preclassic Maya kingdoms as well. The archaeological correlates of production heterogeneity and widespread distributions of valuables across social status lines are similar among Classic Period sites and Mayapán (Masson and Freidel 2012, 2013). The issue of earlier market systems is not central to the pages of this book, which focuses on the specific aspects of a known market society on the temporal threshold of European arrival. It is our hope, however, that documenting the material signatures of market processes on the household archaeology at Mayapán will make possible better comparisons for investigators working in different regions and time periods of Mesoamerica.

A Primate City

Mayapán is distinguished by its status as a single, dominant political center in the Maya lowlands region, an area that extended across parts of the modern nations of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras. In this realm, it had no rivals of equivalent size or power, as its population exceeded all other settlements by an order of magnitude (M. Smith 2005). When the entire Maya area is considered, including the Guatemalan highlands, only one political capital approaches Mayapán's significance—the K'ich'ean center of Utatlán/K'umarcaj in Guatemala (chapter 2; Carmack 1977; Carmack and Wallace

1977; Wallace 1977). In contrast, during the preceding Classic Period, multiple competitor kingdoms arrayed in mosaic alliance networks dotted the Maya realm. Power plays of the most influential central places in this realm, such as Calakmul, Tikal, Caracol, Copán, and Palenque, created a competitive atmosphere (Martin and Grube 2008). Relatively speaking, Mayapán was regionally more important in its day than individual centers of the Classic Period—it was the literal center of the Maya realm of its time. Similarly, Chichén Itzá was likely unrivalled in the ninth and tenth centuries AD. It is unfortunate that regional Postclassic archaeology in northern Yucatán has not yet documented the network of towns and secondary centers of Mayapán's era. The fact that some modern towns are the probable sites of Postclassic centers complicates this task. For example, the post-Mayapán Cocom province of Sotuta had as its seat the town of Tibolon, which is visible as a small place on modern maps just outside of the modern town of Sotuta (Tozzer 1941:37n178). In such places, it is possible that Postclassic settlement has not been completely obliterated by later development. Recent survey work by Brown and his colleagues (2006) also reveals an ancient landscape dotted with towns in the Mayapán area.

Population

The settlement of the city of Mayapán is dense and concentrates within the Great Wall (9.1 kilometer circumference). A recent survey outside the city wall reports additional settlement to a distance of around 500 meters in all directions—this work reveals that Mayapán was home to a total population of 15,000–17,000 souls (Russell 2008a). House counts at the site may have been underestimated, which prompted Brown (1999:149, 189) to offer a similar population range for the zone inside the wall alone. If both Brown and Russell are correct, then the city's population may have approached 20,000 (see also Proskouriakoff 1955:85). The nucleation of Mayapán's settlement is unlike the more spatially dispersed sprawling metropoli of prior centuries (e.g., Folan 1983; Tourtellot and Sabloff 1994; Cobos 2004; Chase et al. 2011; M. Smith 2011b). The walled settlement would have housed an average of 33 people per hectare, based on conservative dwelling counts and an average of 5.6 persons per dwelling. But densities varied within Mayapán, and this figure would have been higher in the downtown area compared to neighborhoods closer to the city wall. Some neighborhoods had 77–126 people per hectare (chapter 5). Classic-era northern Maya cities such as Sayil and Chunchucmil housed an estimated 20–23 people per hectare, a figure higher than some of largest southern cities that exhibit lower densities (Barnhart 2001). As for earlier Maya

societies, warfare was a defining characteristic of the Postclassic Period, but in the case of Mayapán, this concern permeated life of a dense urban character within the refuge offered by one of the largest city walls reported for a Maya site. The ruined wall foundations presently reach up to 2 meters in height, and they were probably higher in the past. Stone parapets lined the interior of the wall in places (Shook 1952:9). The wall is penetrated by twelve gates, including seven elaborate entrances, some vaulted.

KUKULCAN'S REALM

Mayapán is said to have been founded by a priest and statesman, the charismatic deified figure of Kukulcan, or the Feathered Serpent. If such a personage existed in the flesh, he was represented several times by individuals claiming the name. Kukulcan is credited with leadership at Tula, departure and exile from Tula, and founding the key centers of Cholula, Chichén Itzá, and Mayapán, among others (Ringle 2004). This personage at Mayapán was Ah Nacxit Kukulcan, probably also known as Hunac Ceel, who defeated Chichén Itzá (Tozzer 1941:34n172). Accounts of Hunac Ceel, who may have been cast to his death in the cenote at Chichén Itzá (Tozzer 1941:183n956), are contradictory and have long confounded ethnohistorians. Foundation myths involving Kukulcan/Quetzalcoatl were broadly claimed at Mesoamerican sites as indicated by art at sites like Xochicalco and Uxmal that include massive Feathered Serpent facades (Hirth 1989; Kowalski 2008). Many fine publications analyze Feathered Serpent mythology that is chronicled in documentary accounts, monumental art, and religious ritual and paraphernalia (Carrasco 1982; Ringle, Gallareta Negrón, and Bey 1998; Ringle 2004; Bey and Ringle 2007; Pohl 2003a, 2003b). Whether he was a living personage or not, Kukulcan represented a visionary statesman credited with founding a civil, urban society at Mayapán. That society—his realm and the realm of those who adapted and perpetuated his charter in subsequent generations—is the subject of this book. Carlos Peraza Lope has spent nineteen years investigating the monumental vestiges of the lords and priests that carried on Kukulcan's legacy at Mayapán. Together we have dedicated the past fourteen years to gather a more complete picture of urban life from the city at large—for the ranks of the realm itself reflect the best measures of the effects of governance.

This book evaluates the evidence for a high degree of integration of political, social, economic, and ideological institutions at the political capital of Mayapán and, by extension, throughout portions of its confederacy. Of key interest is the middle ground, where linkages occurred among the governing

class and the governed. We endeavor to consider both top-down, idealized strategies for state-making as well as bottom-up perspectives reconstructed from the material realities of household activities. From the beginning of our research at Mayapán, we anticipated that no simple, monolithic models would emerge from our research, as might be expected for any archaeological investigations of a city—especially a capital of a late-stage secondary state with ample and far-reaching ties. Many of the cumulative developments of the *longue durée* of Maya civilization resided in the social memory of Mayapán's residents, and this historical reservoir merged with a new cosmopolitan world context that brought an influx of goods, ideas, and exotic newcomers into the urban zone (Smith and Berdan 2003a). As Harry Pollock concluded at the end of the Carnegie Mayapán project, the city was a place with diverse social constituents and influences that meshed with the unifying efforts of the confederacy's governors. It is these pluralistic signatures that we unveil in the analyses of monuments, settlement, artifacts, and art in the ensuing chapters. Despite clear variation, patterns do emerge at analytical scales varying from the most general to the most specific. At best, we have succeeded in making Mayapán an archaeological case study of significance to anthropological archaeologists in the Maya area, in Mesoamerica, and beyond.

CHAPTERS OF THIS VOLUME

As Mayapán fell only decades before the arrival of the Europeans, we take advantage of the opportunity to employ the direct historical approach and vet ethnohistorical accounts with the archaeological record for details of political history and religious practice (chapters 2, 7, 8). Information on the political organization of the city is rich. Efforts to correlate names and events with archaeological chronology perpetually strive for greater accuracy, although few works today can approximate the epic insights on Mayapán and contemporary towns provided by Roys (1957, 1962, 1972). We review a cross section of most pertinent diachronic and synchronic documentary descriptions of the development and operation of the confederacy of Mayapán, as well as our archaeological chronology for the city, in chapter 2. The environs of Mayapán were occupied from the Late Preclassic period (350 BC–AD 250) forward, and the area was populous during the Terminal Classic Period from around AD 800–1000. But settlement in the vicinity of the city prior to the Postclassic Period was dispersed near the margins of the city wall or beyond it, and there is little evidence for a coherent town that would have served as a direct precursor to the Postclassic capital (chapter 4; Peraza Lope et al. 2006). The modern

town of Telchaquillo, located 1 kilometer north of Mayapán's epicenter, has Classic-era mounded architecture and residential architecture, and it is likely that this was the center of political activity prior to Mayapán's founding; a survey indicates that other clusters of Terminal Classic settlement exist beyond 500 meters of the city wall in several directions (Russell 2008a).

Influential players in the polity's council government built and used enduring monumental symbols in the form of the site center's temples, colonnaded halls, and supporting ritual buildings. The varied architectural and artistic programs of the site center reflect dynamic visions of the foundational charters of the Mayapán state as expressed through creation mythology (Pugh 2001; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a, 2003b; Milbrath, Peraza Lope, and Kelgado Kú 2010; Barrera Rubio and Peraza Lope 2004; M. Delgado Kú 2009). Layers of political strategies for legitimation—ranging from divine birth to supernatural communication and sanction to state terror—are revealed from analyses of monumental center features. Chapter 2 highlights the most important public art at the site center, and in chapter 3 we zoom in on three case studies of focal architecture in the settlement zone that have been investigated in our collaborative research, including the Itzmal Ch'en Temple H-17 and Hall H-15, which form two of six major edifices of this outlying ceremonial group, and secondary elite Residence Y-45a. These edifices provide examples of peripheral groups where activities were closely synchronized with those of the center. Following the presentation of these examples, we zoom out to a broader scale and extend our knowledge of these cases to similar features across the city's landscape.

Considering the strategic placement of focal nodes such as Itzmal Ch'en has assisted us in identifying important planning principles of the urban zone. Chapters 3 and 4 present our argument that such groups facilitated administrative reach into the urban neighborhoods, yet at the same time we are doubtful that they were perceived as hegemonic symbols of state control. On the contrary, they were probably perceived as place markers, not unlike the way that smaller cathedrals or chapels defined multifunctional plaza spaces, intersections, and navigational referents in larger medieval towns and cities that also possessed a central cathedral and principle town square (Pounds 1973:347). On a general level, monumental plazas served similar functions broadly for historical and ancient cities (Lynch 1960; Rapoport 1990). Like cenotes, outlying ceremonial plazas were landmarks with a sacred aura; but unlike them, citizens of the city who had the means to sponsor the construction of civic-ceremonial buildings chose their location. Outlying focal architecture would have had its own particular history and set of sponsors and perhaps were

dedicated to specific patron gods. Such groups would also have differentiated and defined the residential zone. Monuments shaped the perception of the city's built environment for residents and other pedestrians who navigated their way through the urban mazeway of houselots (Lynch 1960). Loosely following Lynch's nomenclature for functional attributes of city landscapes, chapter 4 summarizes our improved understanding of the lanes that traversed the city and its neighborhoods and open spaces that could have served as commons areas and marketplaces. The nuts and bolts of administrative duties such as tribute collection, organizing labor for festivals, coordinating military service, and the like were probably performed by secondary officials living in the city's residential zones, as documentary accounts suggest. In chapter 4 we also consider the distribution of elite palaces and secondary residences and the implications of these data for social differentiation of the residential zone. Overall, evidence for planning at Mayapán is greater than previously suggested, and we argue that the activities of the residential populace were well articulated with the objectives of the city's governing elites.

Dwellings were the essential units that comprised Mayapán's neighborhoods, society, and economy, and we fully explore their spatial and metric characteristics in chapter 5. Inspired by John W. Janusek's (2004) approach to studying the articulation of state and hometown identities in the multiethnic landscape of Tiwanaku, at Mayapán we also track integrative and transformative material signatures of polity. A diverse citizenry filtered emblematic state norms at the household level, yet overall, the city's residents adopted relatively homogenous styles of domestic architecture and styles of pottery and tools. Mayapán is unusual in terms of its standard house type with highly specific features, and this dwelling form is scarcely observed in allied territories (Freidel and Sabloff 1984). As might be expected for any large ancient city, idiosyncratic variations in domestic architecture are also detected archaeologically, but these are small in number and tend to cluster, perhaps indicating ethnic or other social distinctions. House form is only sometimes an indicator of state-encouraged emblematic style (Aldenderfer and Stanish 1993:7) Beyond form, other variables, including house size, orientation, the number of houses per group, and the size distribution of houselots, represent an insightful set of indices that aid us in characterizing urban life across the residential zones (chapter 5). Houselot analysis has been pursued at Mayapán since Bullard began to document domestic enclosures as part of the Carnegie project (Bullard 1952, 1953, 1954). The term *houselot* refers to a dwelling or set of dwellings and their yard spaces most often defined by encircling boulder walls, or *albarradas*, at Mayapán. Rare at Maya sites, the houselot boundary wall

tradition provides special analytical opportunities to assess emically defined social space (chapter 5).

The economic organization of the city, the topic of chapter 6, considers production and consumption patterns reflected in the assemblages of residences and public buildings investigated by the INAH (1996–2004) and PEMY (2001–2009) projects. Readers of this book will hopefully receive our extended treatment of this topic with the patience it deserves, considering the fact that it represents the major thrust of our collaborative research over the past decade under the auspices of a project titled "The Economic Foundations of Mayapán." The analyses of artifact frequency distributions is used to determine the importance of local and regional scale market exchange for ordinary residents, as measured in the quantities of nonlocal finished goods, nonlocal raw materials (for household industries), locally made valuables, and the scale of surplus production destined for exchange. Detailed data in chapter 6 supports the argument that occupational specialization was well developed at Mayapán, and accordingly, that households at the city were quite dependent on one another and on regional market exchange for the materials used in everyday life. Some residents opted to perform part-time craft production of mundane items while other craftspeople were highly skilled artisans who made the most sacred or valuable of objects. Other residents processed surplus food and engaged in general service activities. Some dwellings were homes to farmers while other edifices housed men who were perhaps performing temporary obligatory service to the state. The quantity of valuable possessions reflects the degree of wealth obtained by commoner and noble classes (chapter 6), and this line of inquiry addresses a key aspect of urban life: How prosperous were ordinary residents, and what kind of variation is observed? We conclude that crafting families, who presumably engaged in some degree of trade in the city's marketplace, were the wealthiest commoners. Other ordinary residential groups that did not engage in crafting tended to have fewer valuable goods. Evidence suggests that some commoners were poor, especially at briefly occupied dwellings in the periphery of the walled settlement. In this regard, Mayapán's commoner affluence cannot be simply characterized, and it meets expectations for a populous urban landscape in terms of variable wealth below the elite sector. New migrants or transitory sectors of the population might be expected to have lower wealth than established urban families.

Religion was an important industry at Mayapán, although one that is difficult to separate from politics, as discussed in chapter 2. By all accounts, parallel sets of hierarchically organized officials populated the political ranks as well as the priesthood during the Postclassic Period (Landa 1941:27; Carmack

1981a:16; Restall 2001:table 11.3). Sons of the nobility tended to find their life's work in political, priestly, or military posts, and some noblemen engaged in long-distance trading. High-ranking priests meddled transparently in Mayapán's political affairs, and there is little doubt that countless calendrically and spatially coordinated ritual observances provided a critical adhesive that helped to bind together the factions of the confederacy. Despite evidence for an amplified religious bureaucracy compared to the Classic Period (chapter 2), religion at Mayapán and its lowland contemporaries has routinely been characterized as decentralized (Proskouriakoff 1955:88, 1962b:136; J. Thompson 1957:624; Pollock 1962:17)—a claim that is oddly linked to the potential portability of deity effigy censer vessels that tend to be ubiquitous in contexts dating to the last half of the Postclassic period. We refute this assertion in chapters 3, 5, and 7, based on the paucity of ritual objects and features at ordinary houses and their concentration at civic-ceremonial edifices and elite residences. Evidence for household shrines and altars at Mayapán is also minimal for commoner dwellings. One might facetiously point out that evidence is greater for religious decentralization in the Classic Period given the frequency of domestic funerary shrines and the close association of caches and burials (e.g., Becker 2003; McAnany 1995). Although Mayapán's commoner houses, including affluent examples, have funerary features, these tend to be compartments within dwellings or simple graves in front of or alongside house groups, and private funerary temples are absent for sub-elite contexts. But we do not doubt that residents of Mayapán were devout and that they practiced ritual at the domestic scale, perhaps with a suite of perishable materials. Many Mesoamerican cultures through space and time widely shared this characteristic. It is interesting that Mayapán's figurines—mostly female—are scarce in commoner houses and thus do not reflect their common use in domestic ritual, as has been argued for contemporary regions in central Mexico (M. Smith 2002; Masson and Peraza Lope 2012).

Effigy censer ceramic sculptures, along with stone and plaster portraits, represent the most direct material icons of religious practice at the city. Chapters 3 and 7 present the results of a contextual analysis of sculptures of these media at edifices investigated by the Carnegie, INAH, and PEMY projects. This analysis represents a comprehensive attempt to analyze the entire corpus of sculptures per context. Masson (2000:tables 6.1, 6.2) analyzed an array of stone and stucco sculptures published by Proskouriakoff (1962a). Chapter 7 expands this study to include ceramic effigies and other portraits reported in the Carnegie *Current Reports* (Weeks 2009), Robert Smith's (1971) ceramic monograph, and new finds by Peraza Lope and the INAH team. The distributions reveal

two important patterns. First, most edifices were used on multiple occasions that involved the invocation or propitiation of different patron gods. Second, despite this varied use, some civic-ceremonial structures had concentrations of specific, clearly identifiable Maya gods while others exhibited a focus on individualistic, unique entities that may have represented the apotheosized ancestors of particular lineages. Chapter 7 builds on J. Eric S. Thompson's (1957) deity classifications for Mayapán with the advantage of a larger, more varied sample of effigy ceramics and other sculptures found by the INAH project.

Mayapán rose and fell rather quickly for an ancient state. The center and the settlement zone were probably up and running by AD 1200. The city staggered to its knees during the fourteenth century, briefly recovered, but then suffered collapse and abandonment by around AD 1448. The apogee of the city may have lasted for a brief 150-year (or so) interval, yet its full sequence of occupation and political capital status endured around 270–300 years. Chapter 8 reviews the tumultuous documentary history on the travails of Mayapán, especially during the final one hundred years prior to collapse. The accounts are inexact and chronologically insecure, but we consider Roys' thoughtful interpretations alongside new archaeological and paleoenvironmental evidence that lends credibility to the retrospective histories. In the tale of the prolonged decline of Mayapán we read in the subtext a baseline of resiliency and strength. The city was capable of withstanding a battery of hardships for an extended period of time. Given the impacts of climatic disasters to the food supply, we also infer a reasonably flexible market economy that moved food across the peninsula from east to west in times of shortages, as was the case for many preindustrial states (chapters 7, 8). When the city's end finally came, it is clear that options for recovery were dismal, and the collapse of the confederation and the great urban center are best understood as the culmination of a long series of disasters that may have been difficult for any ancient state to overcome. Much has been made of the balkanized Postclassic Maya landscape at the time of Spanish contact, but as summarized in chapter 8, the plagues of the Mayapán provinces did not desist with the city's fall, as drought, hunger, epidemic, and warfare cycles ravaged the land until the eve of European arrival. When peace may have finally been achieved, and with it the stability upon which a new era of centralization may have been possible, the onset of the Colonial era truncated such options.

The separation of political, social, economic, and religious institutions into different chapters of this book is counterintuitive to our fundamental premise that Mayapán's organizational systems were profoundly integrated, as we claim in the book's concluding chapter (chapter 9). The city's political economy was

founded on complementary and overlapping exchange systems involving gifting, tribute, corvée labor, and the marketplace. As a productive place, Mayapán and its craftspeople made various combinations of pots, shell objects, stone tools, obsidian blades, and luxury or restricted goods like copper ornaments or ceramic effigies. Generalists also resided at the capital, presumably farming and raising game and fowl and performing service duties as required. While the full occupational diversity of the city has likely yet to be documented, it is clear to us that households at Mayapán depended on local and regional trade for the material needs of daily life. The city also imported much of its own raw material sources.

The noble class at Mayapán had a vested interest in the production and consumption of the essentials (real or perceived) of daily life and in the mechanisms for their circulation. The valuation of goods originated in the symbolic realm of prestigious social display; currency units were as easily worn as jewels as traded in strands or jars for corn, cloth, services, or any other desirable. The social fabric was literally conjoined by a network of houselot walls that grouped clusters of relatives and neighbors together in neighborhoods that were probably named according to the nearest cenote or outlying ceremonial group (Brown 2005, 2006). Walls, gates, lanes, and monuments also articulated neighborhoods and facilitated pedestrian thoroughfares that traversed the small worlds of neighborhood life. Overseer houses did the governors' bidding in the barrios by tapping the productive energies of residents for contributions of labor and taxes. Ward leaders also coordinated festivals, ceremonies, processions, and proclamations that beckoned neighborhood families toward a sense of citywide social identity. Priests and politicos contributed to the monumental landscape across the city. Replicated architectural arrangements and parallel artistic objects testify to great coordination among center and periphery that we attribute to governmental decree and strategic urban planning. A plethora of gods at public buildings parallels what we know from documentary sources: calendrical ceremonies were frequent and complex. The archaeology of the city now documents the layers of ritual practice at individual buildings and an undeniable concentration of ritual paraphernalia use at elite residences or civic-ceremonial edifices (chapters 3, 7).

Our advancement of an integrated and complex model of Postclassic Mayapán society directly challenges prior characterizations of this period as inherently weak and decentralized. In a very real sense, Mayapán and its contemporaries have often been assessed retrospectively—from the scattered political landscape of townships (*cahob*) encountered one hundred years after the city's fall by Spanish chroniclers (Restall 2001). Judging Mayapán by its collapse and

post-collapse periods is akin to judging Tikal by its degree of political coalescence during the ninth and tenth centuries—that is, during the time of its disintegration. The fractious rivalry that led to the Xiu aggression on the Cocom that terminated the confederacy during K'atun 8 Ahau (AD 1441–1461) has been used to characterize Mayapán as fundamentally weak and decentralized despite the fact that the polity held together for at least two and a half centuries and survived episodic bouts of pestilence and the correlating rocky political aftermaths. The tenacity demonstrated by Mayapán during troubled times reflects to us the wiry resiliency of the Mayapán state. Many ancient states are functionally managed by potentially divisive forces from among the roster of politicians, military captains, or priests. Factionalism at Mayapán was not unique.

Deriving models of Mayapán from the political scramble leading to its fall and the ensuing regional balkanization of the Contact Period is a good example of an inappropriate application of the direct historical approach. Long-term state cycles have a dynamic quality (Marcus 1993) and a conjunction of external and internal forces collided in the "segmented century" that followed the city's abandonment, resulting in a fragmented, decentralized realm (Restall 2001). Even centralized periods, including the height of the K'ich'e empire at Utatlán, have been characterized as *segmentary*, a term that refers to component parts of a unitary government tied to a political capital (Fox 1987). John W. Fox's detailed investigation into the social, political, and ideological makeup of Utatlán's confederation is invaluable, but the segmentary state model emphasizes the trees (corporate groups) over the forest (empire).

Religious institutions were also critical for cementing Maya geopolitics (P. Rice 2004). Towns across Yucatán rotated the burden of responsibility for festivities and ritual observances associated with each 20-year k'atun of the 13 k'atun cycle of 256 or so years, referred to as the *may* cycle. Alfred M. Tozzer (1941:38) describes k'atun stones being "set" at these various towns, and multiple towns were sometimes accorded this honor for a particular k'atun (P. Rice 2004:78; P. Rice 2009d). A number of large and enigmatic stone drum altars populate the edges of Mayapán's Main Plaza and North Plaza that may be related to such procedures. Political geography was closely bound to passages of calendrical intervals. This time and space matrix was affirmed through territorial, ritualized circumambulation and a variety of pageants, pilgrimages, and celebrations (P. Rice 2004). Prudence Rice (2004) has argued for great time depth for may-oriented monumental construction and shifts in politico-geographic power and prestige. Given the importance of this institution in the Postclassic and Contact Periods, the probability of deep historical roots is

strong. An open question is the degree to which shifting may burdens correlate with shifting centers of political power, as the may model suggests periodic willful abdication of power by dynastic centers so that others could assume the cycle's burden (P. Rice 2004:270). Even if this was the ideal scenario, it is easy to imagine how self-interested political agents might have worked around expectations of power concession. Intriguing, however, is that the duration of Mayapán as a political capital falls quite close to the may interval of 256 years—according to both archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence; at the minimum, this fact would have been convenient to later purposes of mythical history. The proposition that may and k'atun cycles influenced politically motivated construction surges at monumental centers is quite compelling (Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a, 2009; P. Rice 2004; P. Rice 2009d:31), and it is noteworthy that archaeological periods such as the Early Classic and Late Classic mark transitions in material culture that also approximate the length of may cycles (P. Rice 2004:53–54, 83).

The chapters of this book step back in time and precede the protohistoric slump in the cycle—when integrative political, religious, and economic institutions bound the confederated units into a polity that amounted to an entity much more powerful and complex than the sum of its parts. It is not our intent to paint a utopian view of Mayapán or any other ancient city. Urban places, then and now, were arenas where dialectical struggles played themselves out in contexts that would have ranged at Mayapán from political meetings at the resplendent Hall of Kings (Q-163), to the daily gatherings of women at the waterhole of Itzmal Ch'en. Mayapán had its critics, its simmering internal resentments, its enraptured priests, its enlightened statesmen, its thuggish war captains, its cagey entrepreneurs, its coerced or enslaved laborers, and more. But in this regard the political capital would have been on par with many ancient cities of similar size and regional significance. The earnest objective of this book is not to reify Mayapán but to place this settlement on the list of complex and important ancient cities that contribute to ongoing anthropological goals of obtaining insight through comparative analysis of ancient urban life.