The Antiquities Market

CHRISTINA LUKE AND MORAG KERSEL

Editorial Introduction

In 1969 Clemency Coggins shed light on the rampant looting of monuments from the Maya world (Coggins 1969). The 1970 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illict Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* provided an international tool to help countries cooperate in thwarting damage to sites and in combating the illicit trade in antiquities. All Central American countries today are party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention. In 1972 the United States-Mexico Treaty went into force, followed by the United States' 1972 *Pre-Columbian Monumental Architectural Sculpture and Murals Statute* (implemented in June of 1973). In 1974 *United States v. Hollinshead* focused on material from Guatemala, the first U. S. court case to apply the *National Stolen Property Act* (NSPA) to archaeological materials. In 1979 the NSPA was used again in a case involving material from Mexico, leading to the *McClain Doctrine,* which held that U. S. courts recognize foreign ownership laws as they pertain to cultural heritage. In the 1980s the United States ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention by enacting the *Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act* (CPIA). Since that time a number of Memorandums of Understanding with countries in Central America have been implemented. Furthermore, a number of regional legislative tools have enabled Mexico and Central American countries to cooperate in these matters. Over the years each country has also sought to clarify its own laws, making clear that cultural heritage is to be protected.

The range of legislative tools at the national, regional, and international levels would seem to put cultural heritage sites in Central America and Mexico on a secure footing for protection. At least all the legal instruments are in place. But, what happens on the ground? Sites continue to be looted, largely because of an international market. In this seminal piece, we learn about a grassroots initiative to help understand the issues of cultural heritage protection in Central America and Mexico. The Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative (MACHI) aims to involve local populations. In doing so, much of the initial work by MACHI is to talk to people, and to listen. MACHI uses an applied anthropological approach to regional cultural heritage protection that goes beyond many legislative efforts. The two approaches together may provide an ideal combination to save archaeological sites from plunder, development, and exposure to the elements, and to work with local populations and governmental institutions.

Coggins, Clemency Chase
1969 "Illicit Traffic in Pre-Columbian Antiquities," *Art Journal* 29: 94–98.

C. L.

The Conservation of Maya Cultural Heritage: Searching for Solutions in a Troubled Region

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Maya archaeological heritage continues to be a victim of looting, urbanization, and development despite the increased visi-

bility of the issue within the field of archaeology. This article provides a generalized network analysis of the destruction of Maya cultural heritage in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, western Honduras, and El Salvador based on interviews conducted in 2006 by the Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative (MACHI) with archaeologists, government officials, non-governmental organizations, and Maya leaders. According to informants, interest among local people to conserve archaeological sites has been deeply affected by a lack of education about both Maya archaeology and the national and international laws assuring protection of cultural heritage; many local people, including members of modern Maya groups, see little value in the conservation of the Precolumbian past. MACHI suggests that an effective way to mitigate looting and the wanton destruction of Maya cultural heritage is through the promotion of a variety of educational initiatives (ranging from informal to institutional, for both children and adults) that seek to combine the knowledge of Western archaeological science with indigenous ways of knowing the past. Such initiatives could encourage the construction of positive relationships between indigenous and other local peoples and archaeological remains.

Introduction

Maya cultural heritage has experienced a vicious assault from looting over the last 40 years. Thousands of archaeological sites throughout the region have been plundered in order to acquire antiquities for the international art market (Coggins 1969, 1995, 1998; Coe 1993; Gilgan 2001). An increased demand for well-preserved antiquities has expanded the market for illegally acquired artifacts, which can be bought in the field for a fraction of the price they fetch down-the-line when purchased by art collectors (Gerstenblith 2001: 201–202). Local residents living near archaeological sites in the developing countries of the Maya region can be approached by middlemen with the promise of monetary compensation in exchange for antiquities acquired only through the indiscriminate looting of archaeological sites (Pendergast 1991: 90). Though looting takes a variety of forms ranging from opportunistic to professional, the consequence is always the same: the destruction of archaeological sites to satisfy the desire of wealthy collectors. Increased globalization has only exacerbated the problem due to heightened awareness on the part of both looters and buyers of the ease with which artifacts can be moved across international boundaries. Furthermore, looting is no longer the only major threat to the preservation of the past. In recent years, rates of urbanization and development have increased in many parts of the Maya region resulting in the destruction of archaeological sites on a scale that exceeds that of looting.

The Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative (MACHI) was conceived within this climate of sustained damage to ancestral Maya archaeological sites, and is enabled by the financial support provided by a philanthropic benefactor for the investigation of the rapid loss of Maya cultural heritage. MACHI, under the direction of principal investigator Patricia A. McAnany, is investigating patterns of looting and the impact of industrial/urban expansion throughout the five countries of the Maya region: México, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. The goals of this survey have been to determine the present state of archaeological heritage, to examine existing projects of conservation and education about the archaeological past, and to take note of movements of cultural revitalization among modern Maya groups. The project's initial phase has included site visits in each country and interviews with both national and foreign archaeologists, government agencies responsible for archaeological remains, non-governmental organizations, and Maya leaders.

A driving factor behind these initial investigations is the relatively unregulated commercial market in developed countries that has failed to adequately control the circulation of illicit archaeological materials (Gilgan 2001; Mackenzie 2005: 252; Brodie and Doole 2001: 2). Market analysis, however, is not an objective of this article. Rather, we look at the networks on the ground involved in looting, ranging from that of opportunistic or subsistence digging to the organized, international dealings of looters and middlemen. As MACHI is currently in its preliminary stages, the following data are by no means an exhaustive examination of the present networks of looting and other forms of destruction of Maya cultural heritage, but rather an attempt to broadly illustrate current threats to archaeological patrimony throughout the region. Although our most thorough analysis comes from Belize, we hope to acquire more information from México, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador during the course of the project. Further, due to time constraints, we have not yet had the opportunity to investigate the Chiapas region of México and therefore do not discuss in this article the complexities of Maya cultural heritage conservation in that area.

The following discussion—based upon over 50 interviews conducted in person, via telephone, or by email between January and August, 2006—provides a general overview of the present condition of archaeological patrimony through a grassroots survey of informants living and/or working in the Maya region. Given the politically sensitive nature of these discussions, the identities of most interviewees are not revealed. While there is extensive legislation throughout the Maya region regarding archaeological remains, we do not attempt here to illustrate these

top-down efforts at protecting cultural patrimony because their implementation is ultimately determined by the behavior of local people. We begin with results of the survey based on the interviews and site visits conducted in 2006 in the nations of Belize, Guatemala, México, Honduras, and El Salvador, respectively. The last section introduces potential approaches to mitigate the destruction of cultural patrimony and the sustainable solutions for the preservation and promotion of ancestral and modern Maya cultural heritage now under development by MACHI members and affiliates.

Destruction of Archaeological Sites

Each of the five countries that comprise the Maya area—México, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—faces a distinctive set of challenges to the preservation of ancestral Maya sites. Here we outline some of those challenges based on interview data and ground reconnaissance.

Belize

Looting remains a major problem in the nation of Belize. Despite a small population size and a high standard of living relative to other countries of the Maya region, Belize suffers from a weak infrastructure and low levels of gainful employment in rural areas. Within these sparsely populated areas, unprotected archaeological sites number in the thousands. In the last two to three decades, local residents have come to recognize that archaeological sites—house mounds, monumental architecture, and caves—are potential sources of income that, while requiring high levels of exertion to access artifacts hidden underground, provide substantial returns (see the extended review of the situation in the mid 1990s in Matsuda 1998a). According to data collected by Shoshaunna Parks in 2006, rumors in the Toledo District of southern Belize suggest that a single jade artifact may bring as much as U. S. $25,000—a price that far exceeds the average yearly income of around U. S. $1000 to U. S. $2000.

Much of the looting in southern Belize, however, takes place at the subsistence, or opportunistic, level. While some target known archaeological sites with picks and shovels, others encounter artifacts by chance. In a physical environment in which soil is subject to erosion due to high levels of precipitation, artifacts and even stone monuments are regularly exposed in *milpas* (agricultural fields), in the bush, around features such as caves and rivers, and even outside modern homes. Some villages in the Toledo District have been targeted by middlemen who appear to operate on two levels: some as local runners entering Toledo from central and northern Belize or neighboring Guatemala on a semi-regular basis to acquire artifacts, and others from North America who make visits specifically to identify artifacts for sale that can then be smuggled out of the country for sale in the international art market. The regular influx of visitors in missionary tourism programs and eco-tourists has also brought a number of amateur collectors into the region seeking their own pieces of the past. Even so, residents are rarely confronted with a direct demand for antiquities; this activity, like the looting in the area, often occurs opportunistically.

In all parts of Belize, archaeological looting also is conducted on a semi-professional level. For these individuals, looting has become a means of supplementing income through regular efforts to expose valuable artifacts at known archaeological sites. This behavior appears to be driven by foreign antiquities collectors and middlemen native to the region; the existing demand for antiquities stimulates looting with the promise of providing monetary compensation for illegally acquired artifacts (Coggins 1998: 55). The difference, however, between opportunistic looting and semi-professional looting is that for those engaged in semi-professional looting, there is a known contact, and possibly a contractual agreement, providing the individual with immediate compensation for well-preserved artifacts. Those functioning on an opportunistic level seldom maintain connections to buyers but, rather, acquire what they can and wait until they are approached, or alternatively, initiate contact when there is a pressing need for immediate income.

Looting continues in western Belize at levels that can be characterized as both semi-professional and professional. Professional looting is an activity in which highly organized and armed "gangs" acquire looted antiquities for known dealers and middlemen on a regular basis by targeting unprotected rural sites with dynamite, picks, and shovels (Matsuda 1998b: 57–62). Sites are often mined for extended periods of time and may yield a large number of well-preserved artifacts that are offered to one or more buyers. In professional looting, some sites are mined until they are depleted, whereas others are targeted selectively (for tombs and caches). At El Pilar, a Classic period Maya site that straddles the western border of Belize and Guatemala, Anabel Ford (personal communication, 2006) recorded over 65 looters' trenches located mostly in house mounds throughout the site. The proximity of this region of Belize to the Department of El Petén in Guatemala—well known for organized antiquities trafficking dating back to the 1970s—may suggest that the looting taking place over the Belizean border either stems from or is influenced by Guatemalan professionals. According to information provided by the Institute of Archaeology in Belize, many of those who are caught looting in Belize are foreign

nationals of other Central American states (Gilgan 2001: 77).

Guatemala

Ironically, organized looting on the Guatemalan side of the border, though ongoing, appears in some areas to have declined relative to the antiquities boom which depleted the cultural heritage of this region in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Coggins 1969, 1998). This decline may be a result of restrictions implemented by the United States in 1991 on the import of antiquities from El Petén. An emergency agreement was put into place initially, focused on material from El Petén specifically, and in 1997 a full *Memorandum of Understanding* was put into place that covered certain classes of artifacts from the entire country. Unable to import illicit antiquities to the United States with the ease and impunity of previous decades, some collectors and art dealers appear to have turned to lowland Maya regions such as western Belize where fewer hurdles exist to the transport of looted Precolumbian artifacts (Gilgan 2001: 81–83). Similarly, strong agreements between Guatemala and the governments of Japan and Germany may be depressing the international antiquities trafficking that originated with archaeological sites of El Petén.

Looting in El Petén, however, is far from eradicated and demand still exists in developed countries (Gerstenblith 2001: 201–202; Pendergast 1991: 95; Coggins 1995: 69). Sites throughout the region, from large monumental centers to small residential sites, are riddled with looters' trenches. Nevertheless, much of the looting in Guatemala today appears to be semi-professional, or even opportunistic. Piedras Negras, for instance, is not subject to large-scale industrial looting, but rather is the victim of local people attempting to generate supplementary income by returning year after year to locate tombs among the monumental architectural complexes. Similarly, an unpublished report (available at www.famsi.org) prepared by Sophia Paredes under a grant from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., indicates that opportunistic looting is undertaken by transitory laborers in seasonal extraction industries who regularly encounter archaeological ruins while harvesting *xate* plants or tapping *chicozapote* trees for chicle. Gang looting continues to be prominent in the northern Petén. "Arqueo-traficantes," however, no longer focus solely on looting. Instead there has been an increased emphasis on drug trafficking, a black market trade which is much more lucrative and not as physically intense as illegally dynamiting and digging archaeological sites (Smyth 2005).

Unlike El Petén, highland Guatemala seems to experience very little archaeological looting at either professional or opportunistic levels. Low levels of looting in this region are the result of both Prehispanic cultural patterns (fewer Classic period sites boasting multiple ostentatious burials and caches in which antiquities are regularly found), and the lack of demand in the antiquities market for Highland Maya Precolumbian artifacts (or perhaps a lack of knowledge within local communities of the potential value of these objects within the antiquities market). Local residents, by and large, do not perceive ancestral Highland Maya artifacts to be valuable in a monetary sense. A more palpable threat to Maya cultural heritage in this region is population encroachment, which brings with it the impetus to level sites for construction or to rob stones from ancient architecture to provide modern building materials. The spreading urbanization of Guatemala City, for instance, has left only a tiny fraction of the site of Kaminaljuyu untouched as an archaeological park.

Similarly, sites located in western Guatemala and the on Pacific Coast face the greatest threat not from looting, but from urbanization and development. Unlike the Guatemalan highlands where the continuity of human occupation extends back to the Precolumbian period, the Pacific piedmont of Guatemala experienced a long period of depopulation following early colonization. Recently, large sugarcane and coffee plantations have provided an impetus for increased immigration into the region on both a seasonal and permanent basis. Large towns have grown around former plantations, bringing with them infrastructural development that has proven devastating to archaeological sites such as El Baúl.

México

This pattern of destruction through urbanization is found on a much larger scale throughout the Yucatán Peninsula of México, particularly in northern Quintana Roo around the tourist destinations of Cancun and Playa del Carmen and in NW Yucatán around the metropolitan center, Mérida. In these regions, countless archaeological sites have been leveled to provide space for the construction of highways, tourist infrastructure, and homes, requiring the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) to devote a large portion of its resources to archaeological mitigation. In less developed areas of the Peninsula, larger populations have resulted in the dismantling of stone structures by local residents to build garden walls and buildings. While this activity is seldom accompanied by searches for Precolumbian artifacts, it is likely that some material remains have been taken opportunistically by stone robbers.

Looting in the Yucatán Peninsula is more common in remote locations or border regions. According to data pre-

sented at the Archaeological Commission of INAH by Rafael Cobos and colleagues in 2004, the site of Uaymil near the coast of Campeche has been one target of highly organized gangs involved in the trafficking of both antiquities and drugs. Archaeological sites along the southern border of Quintana Roo and Belize have also been subject to heavy looting, most likely at a semi-professional or professional level that parallels that taking place on the Belizean side of the border.

Honduras

In Honduras, unlike the Yucatán Peninsula, both Maya sites and those which are arguably non-Maya have long been subject to rapid and devastating destruction through looting, a practice which shows few signs of decline. Here, too, a recent *Memorandum of Understanding* with the United States (2004) indicates increased international attention to the problem. The pattern of looting takes opportunistic, semi-professional, and highly organized professional forms. In the Naco Valley, looting is undertaken on an opportunistic or recreational level by middle-class residents of the region. The destruction of archaeological sites in the Ulua Valley, famous as the origin of looted Ulua marble vases, has been exacerbated by antiquities dealers from the United States (Luke and Henderson 2006). In response to regular visits by dealers, some families have become semi-professional looters, indiscriminately searching for well-preserved artifacts in the archaeological sites of the area.

All forms of looting are present in the region of Copán and are rapidly eating away the edges of the protected archaeological park of Copán, a major Classic period Maya site. As in other places, high-volume looting at unprotected Precolumbian sites is often coupled with other illegal activities. In 2002, Honduran authorities rescued over 200 antiquities, both prehistoric pieces looted from sites in the Copán region and historical pieces stolen directly from churches throughout western Honduras. These valuable artifacts of cultural heritage were confiscated by authorities after the discovery of their clandestine sale in a shop in San Pedro Sula operated by a family from the Copán Valley.

In addition to the sustained looting in Honduras, population encroachment and infrastructural development also pose great threats to the preservation of the nation's cultural patrimony. Ed Schortman and Patricia Urban (personal communication, 2006) estimate that at least 80% of all recorded archaeological sites in the Naco Valley have been destroyed or severely damaged in large part as a result of factory construction, mechanized agriculture, and the building of homes for a growing population. An estimated 50% of the recorded archaeological sites of the lower Cacaulapa Valley have already been severely disturbed, while a proposed dam for the Chamelecon River may cause the destruction of at least another 80 prehistoric sites, including Las Canoas, a Late Classic political and economic center. Similarly, industrial development and construction along the Caribbean coast have been responsible for the mass destruction of archaeological sites.

El Salvador

The Honduran pattern of destruction of archaeological sites through the combined threats of development, population encroachment, and looting also characterizes the assault on the cultural patrimony of El Salvador. With the largest population (6,704,932 as of July 2005) and the smallest land size (21,040 square miles) of any country in Central America, the struggle for the preservation of Precolumbian archaeological sites will likely only intensify with time. Despite a *Memorandum of Understanding* with the United States dating back to 1995 (related to an emergency in the Cara Sucia region in 1987), the governmental organization responsible for archaeology and cultural patrimony, the National Commission for Culture and Art (CONCULTURA), and its civil counterpart the National Foundation for Archaeology (FUNDAR), estimate that 90% of the 1500 sites in the country have been looted in response to a series of stimuli including the Salvadoran civil war of the 1980s.

In El Salvador, professional antiquities trafficking rivals that present in northern Guatemala and western Honduras and is organized by gangs that likely engage in other illegal activities such as drug trafficking. In this case, however, the large population of El Salvador helps to protect the country's cultural patrimony to some degree. As most archaeological sites are situated in plain view of local residents, the impunity with which antiquities traffickers can operate is limited. What is more, the majority of looting in El Salvador occurs at an opportunistic or semi-professional level. Though most in the country are respectful of their nation's patrimony, few within the majority of the population are aware of national laws that render the removal of antiquities from archaeological sites illegal. This absence of knowledge combined with extreme poverty often incites those living around archaeological sites to loot antiquities in exchange for monetary compensation, no matter how meager.

As with the other four nations of the Maya region, development remains a grave threat to the cultural patrimony of El Salvador. The country's large population coupled with its small areal extent means, in very practical terms, that the remains of the past must make way for the needs of the present. With only a handful of national archaeologists, FUNDAR, a private organization created for the

promotion of archaeology and preservation of sites, struggles to perform the salvage operations, or *rescates,* now required by law, thus encouraging the development of other private cultural resource management firms. Even so, the archaeological sites of El Salvador continue to be destroyed at a rapid rate that shows no signs of slowing.

Conservation of the Past

Though looting patterns vary throughout the Maya region from opportunistic looting in Belize, to highly organized looting in Honduras, to increasing urbanization and development in Yucatán and Quintana Roo, the threat to the preservation of Maya cultural heritage stems from common problems. The landscape of the Maya region is densely covered with structural remains of the past. While many sites have been recognized by archaeologists, thousands remain unrecorded and unprotected due to a general lack of resources by government agencies responsible for the protection of cultural patrimony. While legislation exists in each of the five nations making it a criminal offense to plunder, law enforcement in many areas is sparse, corrupt, or impotent against heavily armed looters or the clandestine efforts of local people.

The historical particularity of racial and economic discrimination within the region has left large populations of people, predominately Maya descendents, living below the poverty level. Infrastructure and fair employment are limited and, particularly in rural areas, do not come close to alleviating this destitution. Education, too, is limited. For example, until recently Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya people living in rural southern Belize seldom completed primary school. Even today, only those few families in which the patriarch is engaged in wage labor in other parts of the country can afford to send one or more children to secondary school. In most nations, the prehistory of the region and ancestral Maya society is not a part of the school curriculum (with the exception of recent additions to national Belizean primary school curricula). Many Maya and non-Maya people alike live their lives in view of Precolumbian archaeological sites but have no knowledge of the people or historical events that created them. The need to conserve archaeological sites is equally unknown to most populations, and few are aware of the illegality of looting antiquities or removing stones from ancient architecture. While the governmental agencies responsible for cultural patrimony often make an effort to inform local people about conservation and the archaeological past, a lack of human and economic resources generally restricts these efforts to areas proximate to government offices (such as the work of the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History in San Pedro Sula, Honduras) and those locales with a high volume of archaeological fieldwork, conservation, and/or tourism (such as Tulum in Quintana Roo, México).

The interview data collected by MACHI point to several factors that could mitigate looting and archaeological site destruction in the Maya region[1]. While international agreements banning the importation of illegal antiquities to the United States and other nations have not halted the activities of the illicit art market in the Maya region1, they are likely responsible for the perceived decrease in professional looting taking place in locales like El Petén in Guatemala (Gilgan 2001: 80). International agreements, therefore, may be essential in the fight for the preservation of cultural patrimony within the Maya region. At present, the only nation within the region lacking a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States is Belize (Luke and Kersel 2005: 196). During the spring of 2006 and with the financial support of MACHI, Polly Peterson (Research Associate, Boston University) assisted the staff of the Belizean Institute of Archaeology in the preparation of a dossier that requests the U. S. State Department to restrict importation of archaeological materials originating in Belize. This document has been signed by the Director of the Institute, Jaime Awe, as well as higher level government officials and is presently awaiting transfer to the U. S. State Department from the U. S. Embassy located in the Belizean capital of Belmopan.

There are a number of other potential projects capable of mitigating the destruction of Maya cultural heritage, including increased local law enforcement, the development of sustainable economic opportunities, and education through both formal and informal conduits. While archaeologists have long understood the need to develop economic alternatives to the allure of deriving income from the looting of archaeological sites, increased economic opportunities do not necessarily provide a solution to the looting of archaeological sites. There are a number of examples of regions, such as the sw United States, in which looting is practiced despite high economic standards and employment (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004). Providing economic alternatives cannot fully address the problem of looting unless they are combined with a means of teaching

[1]According to David M. Pendergast (1991: 89–90), since the ratification of UNESCO conventions on the illicit importation of antiquities by the United States, antiquities have been illegally looted and exported from Belize at an increasingly alarming rate. Belize, however, does not have a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States by which this assertion can be further tested. Paul M. Bator (1983: 89) and Clemency C. Coggins (1995: 61–62, 69), among others, have similarly commented on the ineffectiveness of export controls in archaeologically rich countries and of import restrictions in developed countries.

local people about the value of conserving the past and protecting archaeological remains. Unlike the multiple attempts at developing economic programs (ranging from eco-tourism to agriculture) in this region, educational programs intended to inform local populations about ancient Maya civilization and the conservation of Maya cultural patrimony have never been attempted on a wide or sustainable scale.

Education about the archaeological past must be understood as a construct of Western science. It should complement and enrich oral histories and indigenous ways of knowing the past (Cojti Cuxil 1995; Harrison 1991). Within regions with large modern Maya populations, particularly those experiencing social and political movements of cultural revitalization such as in Guatemala and western Honduras, increased knowledge about the archaeological past may encourage a sense of stewardship over Maya archaeological sites as a source of modern indigenous identity. Problems of looting and the wanton destruction of archaeological sites for development often stem from the fact that local people have extremely limited access to archaeological knowledge and no framework for thinking about the remains of the past in terms of their own identity. Due to disruptions in the passage of oral histories and the failure of local school systems to teach Precolumbian histories alongside those of European colonizers, some indigenous peoples feel no connection to Maya archaeological sites despite their cultural and biological descent from ancestral Maya people.

While education will not provide the economic improvements so badly needed throughout much of the Maya region, nor discourage the trafficking of antiquities in the international art market, it will help strengthen the connection between local people and the Precolumbian past by making archaeological remains a familiar and valuable source of modern identity and cultural and/or national pride. Due to the vast differences among (as well as within) these nations, education about the ancestral Maya must take place through a variety of channels using multiple materials and approaches. Though changes in school curricula to include Precolumbian archaeology and conservation would represent great strides toward informing the general population about the past, small-scale projects tailored to specific regional audiences ranging from children to the elderly may be the most effective way to develop stewardship among those living in close proximity to archaeological sites. In communities such as these, it will be sustained, regular visits by trained educators and the strengthening of local "teachers," combined with the distribution of a variety of free, non-academic materials about local archaeology and conservation, that should make the greatest difference in the long-term preservation of Maya cultural heritage.

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