Ancient Maya
*The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization*

In this new archaeological study, Arthur Demarest brings the lost pre-Columbian civilization of Maya to life. In applying a holistic perspective to the most recent evidence from archaeology, paleoecology, and epigraphy, this theoretical interpretation emphasizes both the brilliant rainforest adaptations of the ancient Maya and the Native American spirituality that permeated all aspects of their daily life. Demarest draws on his own discoveries and the findings of colleagues to reconstruct the complex lifeways and volatile political history of the Classic Maya states of the first to eighth centuries. He provides a new explanation of the long-standing mystery of the ninth-century abandonment of most of the great rainforest cities. Finally, he draws lessons from the history of the Classic Maya cities for contemporary society and for the ongoing struggles and resurgence of the modern Maya peoples, who are now re-emerging from six centuries of oppression.

**Arthur Demarest** is the Ingram Professor of Anthropology at Vanderbilt University, Tennessee. For more than twenty-five years he has directed archaeological field excavations at ancient sites in the highlands, coasts, and rainforests of Central America and is considered a leading authority on the Olmec, Aztec, Inca, and, particularly, the ancient Maya civilizations.
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Ancient Maya

The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

Arthur Demarest
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I found it very difficult to synthesize more than thirty years of reading and research on the ancient Maya into a short, general text. I was finally able to construct this extended essay only with the help of many people. My first thanks go to virtually all of my colleagues in the field for their advice and information (much unpublished) on the Classic period of Maya civilization. To all, I apologize for the necessarily brief coverage of their discoveries and interpretations demanded by the length and format of a general overview. To those scholars working in the Postclassic period, I express my regret that their work was not more fully covered, as my text was intended to focus on the nature, prehistory, and history of the Classic Maya kingdoms. Special appreciation for reactions, suggestions, and critique on sections of this text goes to David Freidel, Don and Pru Rice, Federico Fahsen, Rita Wright, Sarah Jackson, and Ron Bishop. My own ever-shifting views on the ancient Maya were refined with the help and inspiration of these scholars, as well as Bill Fash, Bob Sharer, Will Andrews, Richard Hansen, Juan Antonio Valdés, Diane and Arlen Chase, Pat Culbert, Hector Escobedo, Takeshi Inomata, Nick Dunning, Norman Hammond, Peter Mathews, David Stuart, Mike Love, and the late Linda Schele. These and others whose works are cited in this text were generous with feedback on specific and general points and access to unpublished data, drawings, and photos.

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I hope that any future references will cite the full title of this book, *Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rain Forest Civilization*, so as not to confuse this extended, interpretive essay with *The Ancient Maya* by Robert Sharer (with previous editions by Sharer, Morley, and Brainerd;
Morley and Brainerd; and Morley), which is a much longer and more comprehensive (almost encyclopedic) text. That work has been for many decades, and continues to be, an essential reference work for our sub-field.

As always, I am grateful to the late Robert Wauchope and Gordon Willey, who (through their mentorship and guidance) are partly to blame for inflicting me and my intense perspective upon the field of Maya archaeology and my Mayanist colleagues.

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