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0521592240 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

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## 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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## Contents

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<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<b>1 The mystery and the challenge of the ancient Maya</b>	<b>1</b>
Images and realities of the ancient Maya	1
True mysteries and central themes in Maya archaeology	6
<b>2 Background: geography, chronology, and theoretical perspective</b>	<b>8</b>
Geographic setting	8
Chronological frameworks: an overview of Mesoamerican culture history	12
The nested civilizations of Mesoamerica: interpretive frameworks	17
Theoretical perspectives	20
The search for regularities and theories of cultural evolution	21
<b>3 The exploration and archaeology of the Maya: a brief history</b>	<b>31</b>
The Spanish and Colonial historians and explorers	31
The nineteenth-century explorers and archivists	34
The genesis of early scientific archaeology: 1880 to 1920	37
Modern multidisciplinary archaeology begins	41
Traditional views of ancient Maya civilization	43
Revisions and breakthroughs: 1955 to 1990	45
<b>4 Obscure beginnings and the Preclassic florescence</b>	<b>53</b>
New World antecedents: before 12,000 to 3000 BC	53
The beginning of village life, ceramics, and complex societies: 3000 to 1300 BC	56
The “Olmec civilization” and the “Olmec problem”	62
The southern “corridor” of interaction	67
The Late Preclassic highland Maya centers	72
The beginnings of lowland Maya village life	79
Suddenly civilization	83
The coalescence of the Maya state in the lowlands: theories and the new evidence	86

vi	Contents	
5	The splendor of the Classic Maya florescence in the lowlands	89
	The elusive essence of Classic Maya civilization	89
	The Classic Maya centers	92
	The search for patterns in Classic Maya settlement and society	99
	The broad sweep of Classic Maya culture history	100
6	Settlement and subsistence: the rain forest adaptation	113
	The Maya household group	113
	Urban landscape and settlement patterns	117
	Population sizes and distribution	118
	The rain forest adaptations: the true secret of Maya civilization	120
	Ancient Maya agricultural systems	130
	Minor and major hydraulic systems and the Maya state	139
	Arboriculture and timber exploitation	144
	Animal husbandry, hunting, and fishing	145
	Subsistence and the Classic Maya state	146
7	Classic Maya economics	148
	Local products and raw materials	149
	Local and regional markets and exchange systems	150
	Commodities trade: salt, chocolate, textiles, and hard stone	152
	Long-distance trade in high-status goods	160
	Routes of trade and exchange	162
	Craft production and specialization	163
	Warfare and tribute	172
	Maya economics and the state	172
8	Religion and ideology: beliefs and rituals of the theater-states	175
	Ancestor worship	176
	Gods and the cosmos	177
	Shamanism	183
	Royal bloodletting	184
	Sacrifice	188
	Divination	191
	Astronomy and astrology	192
	The 365-day “ <i>Haab</i> ” and 260-day ritual cycle	193
	The Calendar Round	194
	The great cycles of time	196
	Other sacred cycles and astronomical knowledge	198
	Architecture, astronomy, and sacred geography	201
	Ceremonial centers as sacred stages	205
	Ideology and the Maya theater-states	206
9	Classic Maya politics and history: the dynamics of the theater-states	208
	Maya history and the forms of the Classic Maya state	208
	The dynamics of the Classic Maya galactic polities	215

Cambridge University Press

0521592240 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

Arthur Demarest

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents	vii
Regional histories of the Maya states	217
Overview	238
10 The end of Classic Maya civilization: collapse, transition, and transformation	240
Concepts of causality in the decline of civilizations	240
Structural problems of the Classic Maya political order	243
Infrastructural stress and counterproductive responses	245
The nature of the “Classic Maya collapse”	246
The beginning of the end: political devolution and warfare in the Petexbatun collapse	249
Causality in the Petexbatun collapse: alternative hypotheses	255
Collapse in the western Petén	257
Migration and enclave formation in the Pasión Valley and other regions	260
Decline of the Classic tradition in the central Petén	262
Decline, transition, or transformation in the eastern Petén	265
Florescence, conflict, and decline in the northern lowlands	268
Rethinking the “collapse” of ancient Maya civilization	274
11 The legacy of the Classic Maya civilization: Postclassic, Colonial, and Modern traditions	277
The Postclassic: what ended, what continued, and what changed	277
The lowland Postclassic	279
Postclassic Conquest states of the southern highlands	284
The Spanish Conquest of the highland and lowland Maya kingdoms	286
The continuing tradition and the impact of Conquest: the Colonial and modern Maya	289
The enduring and resurgent Maya	291
12 The lessons of Classic Maya history and prehistory	294
<i>Bibliographical essay</i>	298
<i>References</i>	303
<i>Index</i>	364

## List of figures

---

1.1	Fallen monuments at the Petén site of El Peru	<i>page</i> 2
1.2	Map of eastern Mesoamerica	3
1.3	Catherwood drawing of the ruins at Palenque, Chiapas	4
2.1	Mesoamerica, showing major geographical features	9
2.2	Map of Mesoamerica showing cultural macro-regions	10
2.3	Chronological periods for eastern Mesoamerica	13
2.4	Schematic interregional chronology using the “horizons” concept	19
2.5	Schematic chronology based on assumption of continuous interregional interaction	20
3.1	Catherwood drawing of the site of Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico	32
3.2	Castañeda’s drawing of the palace and tower at Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico	34
3.3	James Churchward map showing the lost continents of Atlantis and Mu	35
3.4	Page of the Dresden Codex	36
3.5	Maudslay in tower in Palenque palace	38
3.6	Edward Thompson and divers at the sacred cenote of Chichen Itza (courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University)	39
3.7	Profile of a temple at Holmul showing cache placement and construction levels	40
3.8	Landa’s recording of a “Mayan alphabet” (actually a syllabary)	46
3.9	Glyphs phonetically readable in ancient Maya using CV-CV or CV-C(V) syllabic combinations	48
3.10	Map of settlement in greater Tikal (courtesy University of Pennsylvania Museum [neg. #61-5-5])	50



	List of figures	ix
4.1	Clovis and Folsom style spearheads	54
4.2	Map of Mesoamerica showing some zones of Archaic and early village finds	55
4.3	Some Locona and Ocos phase ceramics	59
4.4	Map of Mesoamerica showing Early Formative sites	61
4.5	Colossal head from Olmec site of San Lorenzo, Veracruz, Mexico	63
4.6	Reconstruction of a portion of La Venta, Tabasco, Mexico ceremonial center	63
4.7	Olmec jade celt (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum [MMO33969])	64
4.8	Sherd from El Mesak, Guatemala, with “Olmec” were-jaguar figure	65
4.9	Map of eastern Mesoamerica with some Preclassic sites	68
4.10	Stela 5, “Maya style” monument at Abaj Takalik, Guatemala	69
4.11	Stela 25 from the site of Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico (courtesy of the New World Archaeological Foundation)	70
4.12	“Potbellied” style monument from Santa Leticia, El Salvador (courtesy of Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University)	71
4.13	Reconstruction drawing of a portion of the site of Kaminaljuyu	73
4.14	Irrigated gardens at Preclassic Kaminaljuyu	76
4.15	Monument 65, Seated Preclassic rulers at Kaminaljuyu	77
4.16	Reconstruction drawing of terrace and artificial monuments at Santa Leticia, El Salvador (courtesy of Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University)	78
4.17	Cross-section of the North Acropolis of Tikal (courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum [neg. #67-5-113])	80
4.18	Mamom style ceramic vessel	81
4.19	Monumental stucco mask at Nakbe (courtesy of Richard Hansen)	84
4.20	Tripartite style Preclassic temple from El Mirador, El Tigre Group (Frontispiece, courtesy of Richard Hansen)	85
5.1	Stela and altar at Tikal	91

Cambridge University Press

0521592240 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

Arthur Demarest

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x	List of figures	
5.2	Tikal epicenter in jungle	92
5.3	Range structure at Uxmal	93
5.4	Reconstruction drawing by Tatiana Proskouriakoff of the Late Classic epicenter of Copan (courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University)	94
5.5	Cross-section of corbelled vault construction	95
5.6	Excavation of a royal tomb at Dos Pilas, Petén, Guatemala (© Enrico Ferorrelli)	97
5.7	Hieroglyphic text, Copan, Honduras (courtesy of Matt O'Mansky)	98
5.8	Early Classic (Tzakol style) vessel	101
5.9	Late Classic polychrome (Tepeu style) vase (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	102
5.10	Pyramid of the Sun, Teotihuacan, Mexico	106
5.11	Map of grid system of Classic Mexican city of Teotihuacan	107
5.12	Drawing of Teotihuacan diagnostics: (a) talud-tablero architectural façade; (b) slab-tripod vessels; (c) ruler with Teotihuacan style "Tlaloc" eye treatment and Mexican headdress (Stela 32, Tikal) (courtesy University of Pennsylvania Museum [lower right field of Tikal neg. #69-5-22])	108
6.1	Maya thatched-roofed residence (photo courtesy of Matt O'Mansky)	114
6.2	Typical Maya household courtyard group	115
6.3	Modern Maya hamlet (photo courtesy of Matt O'Mansky)	115
6.4	Residences, box terraces, dam, and reservoir at the Late Classic site of Tamarindito, Petén, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	118
6.5	Maya lowlands, showing principal environmental features (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	122
6.6	Schematic view of the layers of subtropical forest canopy (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	123
6.7	Petén rain forest vegetation (courtesy of Andrew Demarest)	124
6.8	Howler monkey (courtesy of Andrew Demarest)	125
6.9	Clearing and burning of forest <i>milpa</i>	131
6.10	Cross-section of simple terrace forms	134
6.11	Possible agricultural terraces near the site of Caracol, Belize (courtesy of A. Chase and D. Chase, University of Central Florida Caracol Archaeological Project)	135

	List of figures	xi
6.12	Cross-section of raised field agricultural systems	136
6.13	Stone box gardens at the site of Punta de Chimino, Petexbatun, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	139
6.14	Fragments of typical Late Classic striated water jars (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	141
6.15	Water control systems at the site of Edzna, Campeche, Mexico (courtesy of the New World Archaeological Foundation)	142
6.16	Canal systems around the site of Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico	143
7.1	Modern highland Maya market at Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala	151
7.2	Maya use of a spindle whirl to prepare thread	155
7.3	Grinding chili with a stone <i>metate</i> and <i>mano</i>	156
7.4	Obsidian and chert eccentrics from Dos Pilas (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	157
7.5	Some major trade routes of the Petén	159
7.6	Point-plotting of craft production evidence at the site of Aguateca, Petén, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	168
7.7	Scene from Late Classic polychrome vase showing elites with serving vessels (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	170
8.1	“Plaza Plan 2” residential group from Punta de Chimino with east side household shrine	177
8.2	Burial with modest grave goods, from Cancuen (courtesy of Andrew Demarest)	178
8.3	Schematic representation of one Classic Maya conception of the cosmos, showing world tree ( <i>axis mundi</i> )	180
8.4	Some glyphs for Maya deities and sacralized units of time:	
	a) K’inich Ajaw, “sun-faced lord”	
	b) Night Jaguar, sun of the night	
	c) a Pawahtun	
	d) a Chaak	
	e) Bak’tun	
	f) K’atun	181
8.5	Cosmogram of Preclassic temple at Cerros, Belize (© David Schele)	182
8.6	Drawing of Lintel from Temple 1, Tikal, Guatemala (courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum [neg. #69-3-96])	185

Cambridge University Press

0521592240 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

Arthur Demarest

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii	List of figures	
8.7	Ruler making a blood offering (Lintel 2 from La Pasadita) (© David Schele)	186
8.8	Maya queen experiencing a vision (Lintel 25 from Yaxchilan, Chiapas, Mexico) (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum [MMO33711])	187
8.9	Ruler Wataklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil (sometimes referred to as "18 Rabbit") after a blood autosacrifice (Stela H from Copan)	189
8.10	Maya queen making an autosacrificial blood offering (Lintel 24 from Yaxchilan) (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum [MMO33783])	190
8.11	Schematic of the meshed "Calendar Round" cycles of the 260-day ritual almanac, or <i>Tzolkin</i> , and the 365-day "vague solar year" or <i>Haab</i>	195
8.12	Long Count date from Quirigua, Stela F	197
8.13	Circular Caracol temple/observatory at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico (courtesy of Mark Ochsner)	202
8.14	Drawing of "E-group temple" showing solar alignments at solstices and equinoxes	203
8.15	Cosmogram at Dos Pilas, showing central position of the Murcielagos royal palace	204
9.1	Emblem glyphs of some Classic Maya centers	210
9.2	Some glyphs for political titles of lords, vassals, and overlords	211
9.3	Glyphs for major events in rulers' life histories	212
9.4	Royal court scene on Late Classic Maya vase (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	212
9.5	Some major Classic Maya centers	219
9.6	Stela 1, Tres Islas, Guatemala	221
9.7	Caana temple at Caracol (courtesy of A. Chase and D. Chase, University of Central Florida Caracol Archaeological Project)	224
9.8	Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 4, discovered in 1990	225
9.9	Dos Pilas Panel 19 (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	226
9.10	Late Classic subregions and sites of the Maya lowlands (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	227
9.11	Western entrance to the sprawling royal palace of Cancuen, Petén, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	230

List of figures	xiii
9.12 Battle scene from the Bonampak murals (© Bonampak Documentation Project)	231
9.13 Part of the Late Classic epicenter of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico	232
9.14 The Copan epicenter (with ballcourt and hieroglyphic stairway)	233
9.15 Stela E from Quirigua, Guatemala	234
9.16 Puuc style arch at Labna, Mexico (courtesy of Nicholas P. Dunning)	237
9.17 Puuc stone mosaic decoration on the façade of the House of the Governor at Uxmal, Yucatan (courtesy of Nicholas P. Dunning)	237
10.1 Levels of causality in the decline of civilization	241
10.2 Some salient characteristics of most Classic Maya states	243
10.3 Some structural problems of Classic Maya states (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	247
10.4 Petexbatun region and some major sites (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	250
10.5 Dos Pilas Western Group (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	251
10.6 Eighth-century defensive systems around the El Duende complex, Dos Pilas, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	252
10.7 Portion of the fortification system at Aguateca (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	253
10.8 Fortified hilltop village in the Petexbatun (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	254
10.9 Late Classic site of Punta de Chimino with defensive moats and protected intensive garden zones (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	254
10.10 Schematic interpretation of causality in the collapse of the Late Classic Petexbatun kingdom (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press)	258
10.11 Monument 3 of Seibal showing unusual Terminal Classic iconography and garb (courtesy of John A. Graham 1973)	262
10.12 Tikal in ruins in the (Eznab) Terminal Classic period	264
10.13 The Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal (courtesy of Nicholas P. Dunning)	270

Cambridge University Press

0521592240 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

Arthur Demarest

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv	List of figures	
10.14	Map of defensive walls around Cuca, Yucatan, Mexico (courtesy of David Webster)	272
10.15	Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico (courtesy of Mark Ochsner)	273
11.1	Map of the Postclassic capital of Mayapan (courtesy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington)	281
11.2	Ruins of Postclassic temple complex at Tulum	282
11.3	Map of the Postclassic highland Kaqchikel capital at Iximche'	285
11.4	Colonial map of the center of Iximche'	288
11.5	A modern Q'eqchi' Maya Wa'atesink ritual (courtesy of Christopher Talbott)	291
11.6	Archaeologists participating in a Q'eqchi' Maya Hac ritual at the archaeological site of Cancuen (courtesy of Andrew Demarest)	292

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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;

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0521592240 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization  
Arthur Demarest  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

xvi Acknowledgments

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.

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