

ARCHITECTURE AND THE ORIGINS OF PRECLASSIC MAYA POLITICS

Architecture and the Origins of Preclassic Maya Politics highlights the dramatic changes in the relationship of ancient Maya peoples to the landscape and to each other in the Preclassic period (ca. 2000 BC–AD 250). Offering a comprehensive history of Preclassic Maya society, James Doyle focuses on recent discoveries of early writing, mural painting, stone monuments, and evidence of divine kingship that have reshaped our understanding of cultural developments in the first millennium BC. He also addresses one of the crucial concerns of contemporary archaeology: the emergence of political authorities and their subjects in early complex polities. Doyle shows how architectural trends in the Maya Lowlands in the Preclassic period exhibit the widespread cross-cultural link between monumental architecture of imposing intent, human collaboration, and urbanism.

James Doyle is an archaeologist and Assistant Curator of the Art of the Ancient Americas at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. His areas of expertise include the art and archaeology of Mesoamerica, Central America, and Colombia. He has contributed to major art exhibitions, writes for the museum's blog, and promotes pre-Columbian art and archaeology through social media.

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The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The two organizing principles of this book are to synthesize original field research and recent Preclassic Maya discoveries and to place the early Maya in the context of the anthropology of past political systems. The primary archaeological data presented here come from four seasons of field and laboratory research (2008–2011) that I conducted in conjunction with Guatemalan archaeologists Varinia Matute and Rony Piedrasanta at El Palmar, located approximately 15 km to the west of the great Maya city of Tikal. The work at El Palmar formed a part of the El Zotz Archaeological Project (Proyecto Arqueológico El Zotz – PAEZ), directed by Stephen Houston (Director, 2007–2012) and Thomas Garrison (Co-Director 2009–2012, Director 2012–present), Héctor Escobedo (Co-Director, 2007), Ernesto Arredondo (Co-Director 2008–2009), Edwin Román (Co-Director, 2009–present), and Timothy Beach (Director of Paleoenvironmental Studies, 2009–present).

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The manuscript and figures were completed at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I currently serve as Assistant Curator of the Art of the Ancient Americas in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. My curatorial colleagues Alisa LaGamma, Maia Nuku, and Yaëlle Biro have been extremely supportive in our collective writing projects. Joanne Pillsbury, Andrall E. Pearson Curator of the Art of the Ancient Americas, deserves special mention for her tireless mentorship and unwavering support in finishing this book. Above all, I thank Stephen Houston, who supervised both my education at Brown and my fieldwork at El Palmar and continues to inspire me as an archaeologist and a curator. His vision and intellectual spirit have influenced me greatly, and I am eternally grateful for his guidance. I also thank David Freidel and one anonymous reviewer for constructive criticism. At Cambridge University Press, Asya Graf has provided invaluable editorial guidance and support throughout the publishing process.

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