

## Foreword

There are many ways of thinking about time.

As with most other ancient peoples, the Maya were concerned with all aspects of time. The Maya calendar not only incorporated a count of days, it also detailed astronomical information pertaining to the moon and Venus. Some of their architectural groups were constructed in the shape of time, and many of their ritual deposits served to memorialize time. Their communities were ordered and galvanized by time. While linear aspects of time were incorporated in Maya histories, past, present, and future events and activities were also tied together in cyclical time, providing the opportunity to predict or even influence the future.

Academic interpretations about the significance of time for the ancient Maya have varied over the years. In the early part of the twentieth century, hieroglyphic texts were viewed as only being concerned with marking calendrical time and as being devoid of historical reference. The Maya were believed to have been ruled by calendar priests who were essentially time lords studying the heavens. This interpretation was largely premised on the counts of different temporal intervals that were found on the vast majority of their carved stone monuments, but it also reflected the desires of modern populations to believe that there had once been a utopian past.

Beginning in the early 1960s, breakthroughs in the translation of Maya epigraphic texts contradicted such views. Tatania Proskouriakoff firmly established the historical content of Maya texts at Piedras Negras, demonstrating that they referred to events in the lives of dynastic rulers. Other research followed her work and continued to advance our historical understanding of certain Maya people and events in the past. But as the focus turned to Maya history, considerations concerning the nature and uses of Maya time were largely set aside.

This volume infuses the field of Maya studies with a new appreciation of time and with the importance of reconsidering multiple aspects of time for these ancient peoples. It demonstrates that an overt appreciation of time

existed at the very beginning of the Maya developmental sequence, how time manifested itself in many components of ancient Maya societies, and how the recording and memorialization of time continued to be important to ancient Maya societies for over three millennia.

*The Materialization of Time in the Ancient Maya World* is the second volume in a set of three works that have been and are being prepared and inspired by collaborations at the Santa Fe Institute. The institute's Maya Working Group, led by David A. Freidel, Arlen F. Chase, Anne S. Dowd, and Jerry Murdock, has been meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, since 2011, interrupted only by the pandemic in 2020. The initial volume that resulted from these multi-day meetings was published in 2017. The product of assemblies that occurred in 2011, 2012, and 2013, it examined a distinctive architectural complex that formed a basic building block for early Maya societies (and continues to be of interest to the working group today). The present volume was conceived in the 2013 meeting and came to fruition through meetings of the group in Santa Fe in 2015, 2016, and 2017. It seeks to establish that an ideological consideration of time was central to all Maya societies. These meetings also spawned a third volume, for which the working group has met in 2018 and 2021. The third volume is tentatively titled *Being Maya* and builds on both *Maya E Groups* and *The Materialization of Time in the Ancient Maya World*, intending to complete what should be a cohesive set of works that together will help us better understand the ancient Maya.

It is our hope that the chapters in this book will spur future scholars to focus not only on the material aspects of the past archaeological record but also on the ideological beliefs that can be inferred through careful archaeological analysis. If such is the case, then this volume will have served its purpose of ensuring that generational research transcends time.

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