though the narrative tends to skate on the surface, one senses that this is not due to weak ethnographic material but to the fact that there may be too many stories to tell about Santa Brigida and too many ways to tell them. Pessar’s reflexive sections are brief but sensitive and intelligent. One might hope that Pessar is not yet finished with Santa Brigida and her engagement with it. A fuller and deeper account of her relationships with its residents—and their voices—would surely make for provocative reading on the nature of anthropological fieldwork, its ethical dilemmas, and the passions of the religious imagination.


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This important volume brings together recent findings and interpretations by many of the archaeologists active in and around the Belize Valley, one of the most intensively studied regions of the Maya lowlands. The twenty-one chapters offer a wealth of new data encompassing more than 2000 years of ancient Maya occupation—from the beginning of the Middle Formative (1100 BC) to the Terminal Classic to Postclassic transition (ca. AD 1000)—and more than 20 sites of various sizes and complexities.

The volume is comprised of five sections. The first includes two papers, one by Arlen Chase and James Garber and the other by Gordon Willey, that examine Belize Valley archaeology from a historical perspective. Chase and Garber provide an overview of the history of archaeology in the Belize Valley, a region that gained notoriety some 50 years ago as a result of the seminal settlement pattern research conducted at Barton Ramie by Willey and his colleagues. Willey shifted the focus of archaeological investigation away from major civic-ceremonial centers, placing greater emphasis upon the diversity, composition, and distribution of various levels of settlement. In his contribution to this volume, Willey narrates the goals, opportunities, and challenges of that research.

The chapters in the second section summarize research from various sites in the Central Belize Valley, an area characterized by continuous, dense residential settlement interspersed with minor centers. The sites discussed include Blackman Eddy, Baking Pot, Saturday Creek, and Yalbac. In two chapters, James Garber and colleagues present the results of their research at Blackman Eddy. They begin with a summary of ceramic and architectural data from the Middle Formative period (1100–350 BC) and suggest that the earliest settlers of the Belize Valley were participants in a pan-Mesoamerican interaction sphere involving long-distance trade of exotic items and a shared symbolic system. In the following chapter, they provide an overview of the 2000-year occupation and construction sequence of the site. James Conlon and Terry Powis focus on possible economic relationships between the inhabitants of the Bedran group and the community of Baking Pot, while Lisa Lucero and colleagues examine the relationship between agricultural potential, settlement patterns, and social organization in the Valley of Peace area.

The third section of the volume focuses on the Upper Belize Valley, an area with more nucleated settlement and larger ar-
chitectural concentrations such as those found at Cahal Pech, Xunantunich, and Buenavista del Cayo. Paul Healy and colleagues examine Middle Formative data from Cahal Pech, arguing that the diagnostic traits of Maya complex society developed during that period. David Cheetham discusses the possible origins and functions of terminus groups—architectural concentrations found at the end of causeways—with particular reference to Zopilote, a terminus group located 750 m from the core of Cahal Pech.

In the first of two contributions, Joseph Ball and Jennifer Taschek review the development of Buenavista del Cayo, a center occupied from the Middle Formative to the Terminal Classic. In their second paper, they adopt a regional perspective and discuss possible relationships between Buenavista, Xunantunich, and Cahal Pech, the three largest sites in the Upper Belize Valley during the Late to Terminal Classic.

Two chapters focus on Xunantunich. Richard Leventhal and Wendy Ashmore review the results of survey and excavations in and around the site and argue that during the Late and Terminal Classic (AD 650–1000) Xunantunich was the paramount political, administrative, and religious center in the Belize Valley. Virginia Fields interprets the iconography of the monument stucco frieze decorating the largest temple platform at Xunantunich.

Papers in the fourth section focus on sites located just outside of the Belize River Valley. Paul Healy and colleagues summarize the rich dataset from Pacbitun, a community that evolved from a Middle Preclassic village into an important Late Classic civic-ceremonial center. In a second chapter, Healy and colleagues evaluate the tombs discovered at Pacbitun in light of broader patterns in lowland Maya royal burial practices. Anabel Ford discusses community organization and regional integration in the greater Belize River area, paying particular attention to the large center of El Pilar. Heather McKillop reviews evidence for long-distance trade between the Belize Valley and Moho Cay, a trading port situated at the mouth of the Belize River on the Caribbean coast.

Two of the chapters in the final section of the volume focus on medium-sized, or “minor,” centers in the Belize Valley. Gyles Iannone considers the range of variability found within the category of “minor center.” He stresses that not only may mid-level settlements have been characterized by significant differences in layout, architectural configuration, and developmental trajectory, but they may also have served different specialized functions. David Driver and James Garber likewise examine formal variability and functional distinctions among mid-level settlements, with an emphasis on regularities in the spatial distribution of such sites. Other contributions in the final section situate the Belize Valley within broader sociopolitical contexts. James Aimers discusses ceramic and architectural data relating to the Terminal Classic to Early Postclassic transition, a period of major social transformation throughout the Maya lowlands. Arlen Chase also contextualizes the Belize Valley, comparing patterns found there with data from the major site of Caracol, located to the south. He posits that the valley was a contested region between competing Maya polities (i.e., Naranjo and Caracol) in the Late Classic. The volume concludes with a chapter by Diane Chase, who summarizes all of the contributions and critically evaluates the current state of Belize Valley archaeology.

There are some inconsistencies in the
terminology used by the various authors in the volume, and a number of the chapters would benefit from a more explicit consideration of the meaning of certain key but abstract concepts, such as “elite” and “royal.” Despite these issues, the quantity, breadth, and quality of the data presented by all of the researchers are quite impressive. The volume is a substantial contribution to Maya archaeology in particular, and Latin American anthropology in general.


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This is Professor LaFrance’s second major monograph on the Mexican Revolution in Puebla, an important state in central Mexico about 60 miles southeast of the capital. His first book dealt with revolutionary upheaval during the “Maderista” years, from 1908 to 1913. This one looks at the remainder of the 1910s, the “Huertista and Carrancista years,” a critical period in the revolutionary process.

The study is presented in three chronologically arranged parts, each of which is divided thematically: the regime of Victoriano Huerta, from 1913 to 1914; the chaotic 1914–1917 period of confrontation between Venustiano Carranza’s “Constitutionalists” and the Zapata/Villa “Convencionista” factions; and the Carrancista years from 1917 to 1920. Each part is, in turn, subdivided into chapters dealing with politics; socioeconomic policies and issues (finances and taxes, business and industry, labor, property and land, food, transportation, public health, education, and the church); and the war itself, although the sequence of these chapters is not the same for the book’s three parts.

LaFrance’s main sources are local and national periodicals and archival holdings. He regrets the limited information available about Puebla’s executive branch and Catholic Church, noting that the archives involved were either destroyed or unavailable for consultation. To make up for the missing information he gathers data indirectly from other relevant sources. Based on his ample documentation he offers some revisionist interpretations. For instance, unlike Alan Knight and several other historians, LaFrance describes the Huerta period in Puebla as reformist, tolerant, and pragmatic rather than counter-revolutionary and repressive. In other cases, the book’s findings confirm old research. For example, as in other regions studied by Héctor Aguilar Camín, Gil Joseph, and Allen Wells, the Carranza years created a negative reaction in Puebla. The Carranza project, perceived as being imposed by outsiders, was greeted with widespread suspicion. For other local events, LaFrance adopts a mixed historiography. Overall, the revolution in Puebla appears to be a hybrid between Knight’s “social revolution” and Ruiz’s “great rebellion.” It was not for the most part a grassroots movement but one controlled to a considerable extent by self-serving federal officers and their local cacique allies.

The author nonetheless contends that the most important encompassing force behind the revolution was the desire for local autonomy. In his opinion, this took precedence over other forces, including nationalism and agrarian reform. He also claims that by the 1940s the central state had largely curtailed local and regional au-