

Acknowledgments

The production of this volume has been a collective effort from the beginning, and, like the pre-Mamom period itself, seems to have sprung to life simultaneously at sites across the lowland Maya region. Our first expression of gratitude goes to all the teams of researchers and field crews, many of whom endured hardships in the bush to collect the data that made this venture possible. Not all ancient Maya communities are easily accessed today, and we the authors acknowledge the local support and experience needed to make prehistory available to us to study. In recognition of this, some authors have added additional acknowledgments at the end of their respective chapters to thank individuals, institutions, and granting agencies.

I would first like to thank Rob Rosenswig, both for agreeing to compose a chapter for the volume, and for steering it through the first stages of publication via the Institute for Mesoamerican Studies at SUNY, Albany. His ability to see the big picture among the administrative weeds is a gift, and his support ensured a smooth transition to our publisher, the University Press of Colorado. At UPC, I would like to thank the two editors I worked with: Charlotte Steinhardt, Darrin

Pratt, and Dan Pratt. Assistant Director and Managing Editor Laura Furney was quick to respond to my publishing minutia queries, for which I am grateful. Copy editor Sonya Manes somehow managed to make a cohesive volume out of the various spelling peculiarities associated with pottery type names, complex names, site names, and other minutia characteristic of the discipline.

Next, I would like to thank all the participants in our 2016 SAA forum, who chose to work collaboratively to solve a knowledge problem that really is bigger than any one of us. The elephant analogy applies here: the sightless person touching an ear might find it hard to imagine the actual dimensions of a tail, belly, or trunk. Again, the big picture requires vision, cooperation, communication, and hard work to approach an accurate result. I am thankful that so many talented researchers agreed to provide clues to the oddly shaped chimera that is the pre-Mamom period. Together, we are sensing something likely avian and crocodilian coming into focus but still shadowy in resolution.

One of the best additions to the volume is the chapter by Jon Lohse, who agreed to discuss dating the transition to ceramic use. His focus in chapter 2 on radiocarbon dating is spot on, and his recommendations are appropriate for researchers of all time periods. He organized appendix 1 and made certain all dates listed were documented accurately and calibrated to the current standard. Clarity over fuzziness is crucial when comparing ceramic complexes over a broad area. Thanks also go to Michael Love, for agreeing to expand our perspective beyond the Maya lowlands, comparing pre-Mamom to contemporary pottery from La Blanca on the Soconusco coast.

I would also like to thank Jarek Żrałka for agreeing to report on the remarkable north group at Nakum, one of few locales currently known that likely spans the Preceramic-ceramic transition. Likewise, Betsy Kohut's work developing information on the very early Ecab complex is reported here for the first time. I am grateful they joined our group of authors; the volume is improved because of their contributions.

A special thanks goes out to Travis Stanton for agreeing to participate; material he excavated in 2017 was still in the ground when the volume was initiated. In addition to writing the chapter, and responding promptly to all my author emails, Travis agreed to be backup editor in March when the pandemic hit, in case I should become incapacitated or worse. I was much less anxious during the lockdown, which continues for me as I write this, because Travis was there to back me up. As I am about to push the send button, he can take a thankful breath and cross that task off his no doubt extensive to-do list.

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the initial draft of this volume; their efforts improved the volume considerably, better focusing the salient components of our message. The reviewers thought something like appendix 2 was needed to make the material more accessible to the general reader.

Although I agree, it required considerable extra effort to produce. I thank the authors who helped with this part of the task as well, and I trust the reviewers will appreciate the result. In addition, I would like to thank Norman Hammond for reviewing initial drafts of the document and for his copious prior research on the Preclassic era that has informed all our work.

I am also indebted to several mentors who led me down the pre-Mamom path. First, there is David Freidel, for teaching me more about the Preclassic than I imagined there was to know. Second, Robin Robertson, a brilliant ceramicist and archaeological thinker, refined my ceramic analysis skills and made sure I developed the thick skin to survive a bout of academia—a great life lesson there. Before that, I thank Tom Hester for allowing me to participate in the Colha Project, and Dick Adams for teaching me Maya ceramic analysis in the first place. His primary job at Colha had been to teach the type: variety/mode system to Fred Valdez, but I paid attention as well! And ultimately, thanks are due to David Grove, who first taught me about Mesoamerica and the Olmec. His infectious enthusiasm for all things Olman started me on the path that led to Yaxnohcah.

After eight seasons of field research, my extended Yaxnohcah family probably exceeds 200 individuals, including local staff and international colleagues. I thank them all, collectively, but will mention a few here. Collaboration is essential at the remote Villahermosa research station, which has been our home since 2013, and I would particularly like to recognize Ciriaco Requena, the best camp administrator in the world: the bush is his Home Depot. We all benefited from his advice, leadership, common sense, and extraordinary knowledge of the flora and fauna around him. He manages an incredible team of logistics and construction specialists who made Villahermosa home and who proved equally capable at all manner of survey and excavation. Because of the remoteness of the camp, logistics is an essential component to camp success. I would like to express deep thanks to Francisco Barahona Salazar, who has been with the project since its inception and who drove me to and from the site on more than one occasion. On our rainy 2013 entry, we got stuck in the mud only 1 km down the 52 km trail that leads to camp. We had no winch, no other vehicle; it was just the two of us. I was, to say the least, skeptical of the success of this endeavor. He went off in the bush and collected some sticks, wove a wooden mat atop the ditch, and got us out of the mud in only a few minutes. I never doubted his capabilities again. The importance of local knowledge cannot be overstated, ever.

In my capacity as lab director, I worked especially closely with Judy Nahuat, who joined the team in 2017. She kept the lab clean and organized, washed artifacts, counted piles of potsherds, and proactively assisted however she could. She was one of the first to see new pre-Mamom pottery as it came in from the field. Sadly, Judy succumbed to a Covid-19 infection in the spring of 2020; we grieve with her family over her loss.

The Yaxnohcah Archaeology Project has been blessed with great researchers who investigated the Preclassic period. Some stayed for multiple seasons, including Jeff Brewer, Chris Carr, Nick Dunning, Atasta Flores, Helga Geovannini Acuña, Félix Kupprat, David Lentz, Shawn Morton, Meaghan Peuramäki-Brown, Thomas Ruhl, and Verónica Vázquez López. I thank them all for the great conversations, excellent research strategies, and friendship; they all informed my views about the pre-Mamom era and broadened my perspectives on the Yaxnohcah landscape, ancient and modern.

And, of course, the directors of the Yaxnohcah Archaeological Project—Kathryn Reese-Taylor and Armando Anaya Hernández—deserve my huge thanks for asking me to participate. Not only are they both brilliant, field-tested researchers, but they are also my great friends. On their first visit to Yaxnohcah in November 2010, and with Ciriaco leading the way, they transited a 3 km wide section of the then-flooded Bajo Laberinto on foot, followed by a farther 7 km trek to the site. Of course, they had to repeat the walk immediately to get back to camp on the dry rim of the *bajo*. Despite that soggy first expedition, they had the vision to return to excavate. The nearly pristine condition of the ancient community has produced significant results; however, we rarely ventured there in November after that experience. My life is much richer for having known both researchers, and I thank them for that gift.

And finally, as always, my family has been supportive throughout, even though I am away too long on occasion. I have missed my daughter's birthday eight successive times as a result of excavation seasons, and I still feel guilt for missing my son's eighth grade graduation. Both are thriving now out in the world, having survived my absences without incident. My husband, Marshall Walker, remains my anchor, and has my love and thanks for his steadfast presence.