

The Maya of the Cochuah Region

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE
NORTHERN LOWLANDS



EDITED BY

Justine M. Shaw

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For Bernard Selz, without whom there would be no CRAS project

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The Maya of the Cochuah Region

The Cochuah Region and the CRAS Project

Justine M. Shaw



Despite some 40 years of formal surveys throughout portions of the Northern Lowlands, many lacunae remain in the knowledge base of archaeologists working in the Maya Lowlands. While the state of Yucatán completed an archaeological inventory of sites some years ago (Garza Tarazona and Kurjack 1980; Velazquez Morlet et al. 1988), no such inventory exists for Quintana Roo. In fact, a casual glance at most archaeological maps of the Yucatán shows a large, apparently unoccupied zone in the center of the peninsula, an area assumed to be without documented sites. A significant portion of this “blank” area is within the Cochuah region. Yet the name Cochuah (literally, “our bread food,” which has been interpreted as “well-fed province that has never found itself in need” [Flores Colin and Kaeding 2004, 149; RHGY 1983, 198]) implies that the region was considered a breadbasket for the rest of the Northern Lowlands and therefore should be filled with archaeological sites from a variety of time periods. When archaeological work has been done, this has indeed been shown to be the case, as the chapters in this volume will demonstrate.

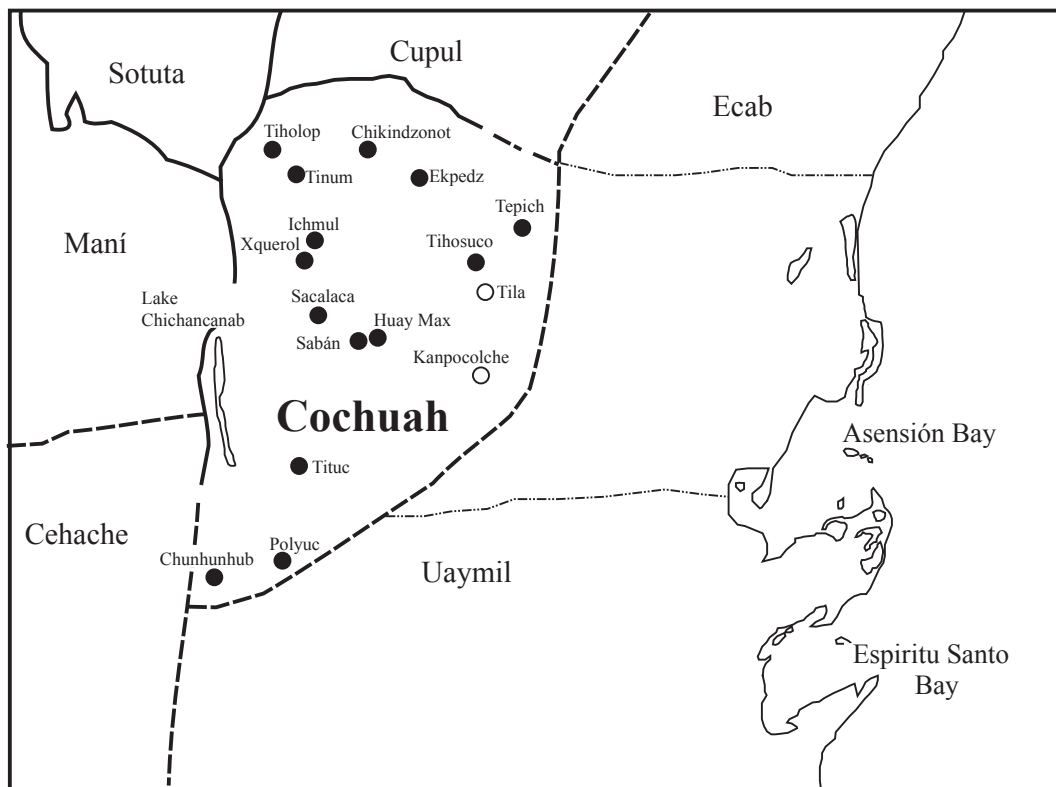
DEFINING THE COCHUAH REGION

The contact-period Cochuah province was located in the east-central portion of the Yucatán peninsula, between the provinces of Cupul (to the north), Sotuta and Maní (to the west), Uaymil (to the south), and Ecab (to the east). In terms of modern pueblos, the province extended to the south of Chunchunhub and Polyuc, to the southeast of Tepich, to the north of Chikindzonot, and to the northeast of Lake Chichancanab (Flores Colin and Kaeding 2004, figure 67; Roys 1957, 135–36).

Within this region, the Cochuah Regional Archaeological Survey (CRAS) has documented over 84 archaeological sites with occupations spanning from the Middle Formative through historic times. While some of the sites could only be visited for a few hours due to logistical or temporal constraints, 29 of the sites have



Figure 1.1. Yucatán peninsula with archaeological sites. Map by Justine M. Shaw.



* Redrawn from Roys (1957) and Gerhard (1991).

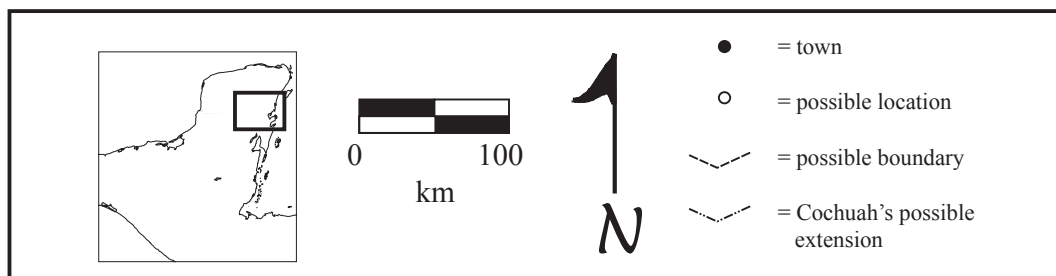


Figure 1.2. Cochuah province. Map by Alberto G. Flores Colin.

been the subject of more systematic study, including excavations and thorough recording. Others have merely been mapped; some have also been surface collected; and a few have only been registered with the most basic data.

The Cochuah region has geographical and geological traits in common with much of the karstic northern Yucatán peninsula. It is characterized by relatively little topographic variation, a paucity of surface water, and thin, reddish soils directly over often-exposed bedrock (Weidie 1985). However, upon closer examination, it can be divided into two geographic zones: the northwest and the southeast, based on hydrological, climatic, geological, biological, and limnological characteristics (Cervantes-Martínez et al. 2002; Connors et al. 1996; Gondwe et

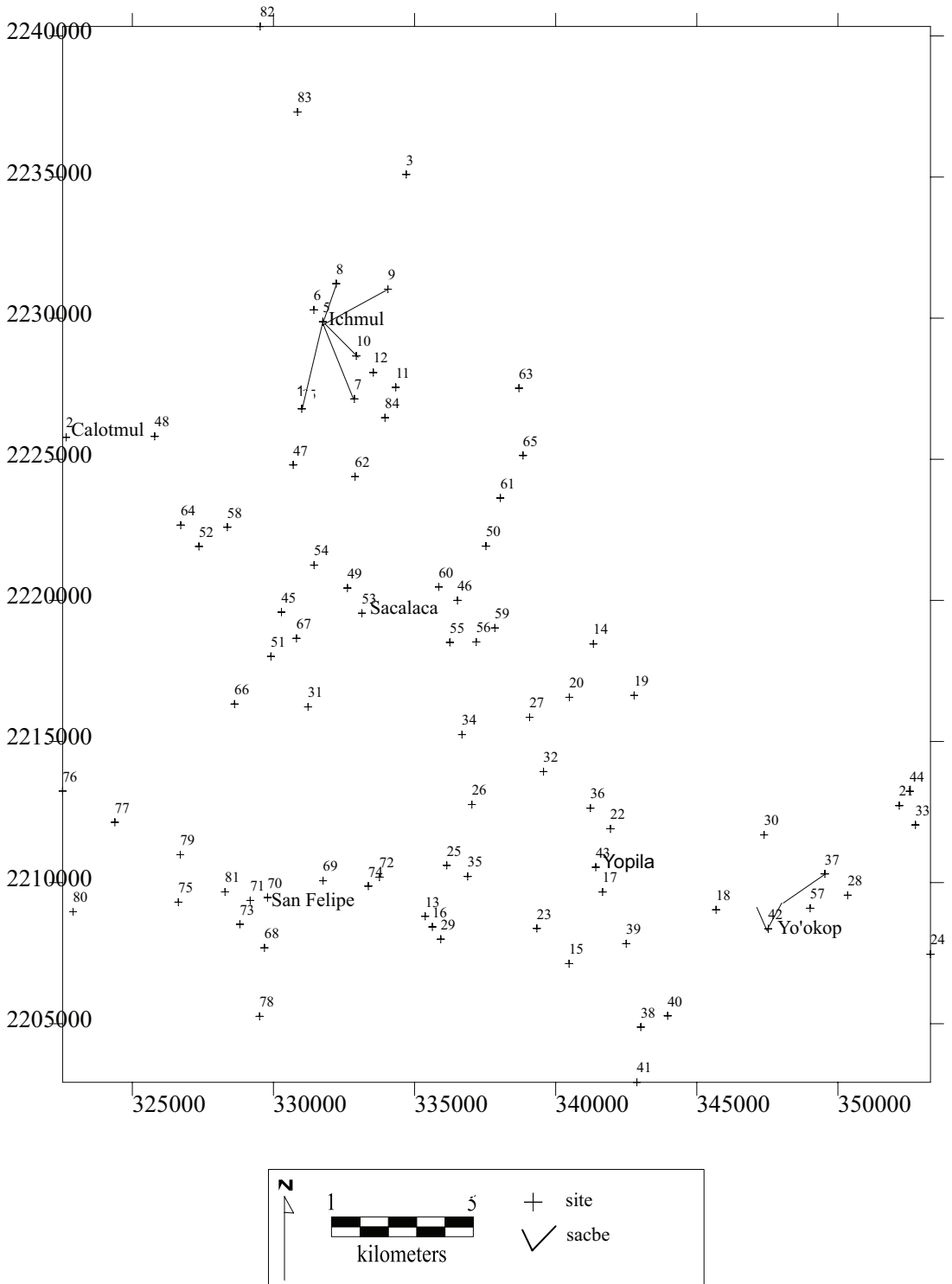


Figure 1.3. Cochuah Regional Archaeological Survey research area. See key on facing page for site number references. Map by Justine M. Shaw.

Figure 1.3 Site Key

1. Xquerol	22. La Trinchera	43. Yo'pila	64. Xbaquil
2. Calotmul	23. Nenela	44. Ramonal	65. Xtojil
3. Chan Mahas	24. Palomar	45. Aktun	66. Yo'aktun
4. Chikin Ichmul	25. Pancho Villa	46. Chakal Ja'as	67. Yo'dzonot
5. Ichmul	26. Rancho Rosales	47. Cortada	68. Hopemul
6. Poxil	27. Saban	48. La Esperanza	69. Ramonal Quemado
7. San Andres	28. Sakhbach'en	49. Parcela Escolar	70. San Felipe
8. San Cristobal	29. Sak Chikin	50. Ramonal Oriente	71. San Fernando
9. San Juan	30. San Francisco	51. Ramonal Poniente	72. San Jose Sisal
10. San Pedro Chan Ichmul	31. San Isidro	52. Rancho Guadalupe	73. San Lorenzo
11. X-ma-kabba	32. San Manuel	53. Sacalaca	74. Sisal
12. Xbequil	33. San Pedro	54. San Andrés	75. Candelaria
13. Abuelos	34. Santa Rita	55. Trincheras	76. Rancho Chankunai
14. Aktun Huay Max	35. Venadito	56. San Diego	77. Rancho San Francisco
15. Balche	36. Xkanil	57. San Isidro	78. San Salvador
16. Chuun Katzin	37. Xnichteil	58. San Juan	79. Santa Elena
17. Chuun Pich	38. Yache 3 (x-Copó)	59. San Pablo	80. Tabasquito
18. Fortín de Yo'okop	39. Yaxche	60. San Pedro	81. Benito Juarez
19. Gruta de Alux	40. Yaxche 2	61. Santa Cruz	82. Xlapak
20. Huay Max	41. Yaxche 4	62. Santa Elena	83. Xnichteil
21. Kancep	42. Yo'okop	63. Xbalcheil	84. Nohcacab

al. 2010; González-Herrera et al. 2002; Schmitter-Soto et al. 2002; Winemiller 2003).

The northwestern portion of the Cochuah region contains a limited number of cenotes through which groundwater may be accessed and undulating plains punctuated by rounded bedrock protrusions. Here, the ancient Maya practiced water storage in *chultunes*, and there is also evidence of water-catchment features being constructed in low-lying depressions. Sites tend to be generally less organized, more organic in form, with extended settlement zones built on the marginally higher topography (often bedrock) above somewhat deeper soil depressions. Caves are more common than in the south, and surface rocks tend to pertain to the Eocene (Gondwe et al. 2010, figure 1).

In contrast, the southeast does not contain cenotes, although a substantial, culturally modified *aguada* is present at Yo'okop. Otherwise, water is accessed through wells, many of which Flores Colin and Shaw believe to be prehispanic in origin based on their form, consistent association with prehispanic architecture, and—in a limited number of cases—absence of colonial or recent occupations nearby. Soils are generally deeper, and there is more topographic relief in some locations as a result of the extension of the Sierrita de Ticul (Connors et al. 1996), the tail end of ejecta deposits from the Chicxulub impact (Gondwe et al. 2010), and more recent Holocene surface materials (*ibid.*, figure 1). This zone also receives somewhat more rainfall than adjacent areas to the north, east, or west

(Gonzalez-Herrera et al. 2002, figure 2). Sites in the southern portion of Cochuah, including Yo'okop, Ramonal Quemado, San Felipe, and Sisal, tend to be organized around formal plazas, and some include architectural forms not found in the north, such as a ballcourt or a sweatbath (see chapter 5, this volume). Archaeologically, the south is also characterized by a moderately elevated number of southern ceramic tradewares (see chapter 3, this volume) and epigraphic references to the south (see chapter 4, this volume), potentially evidence of the existence of the Petén trade corridor (Harrison 1982).

In spite of these differences, there is no evidence that the inhabitants of the region recognized these two zones as being culturally distinct. The same general household architecture and artifacts pervade both regions, today and in the past. Observations of the current condition of sites in the portion of the Cochuah region thus far examined by the CRAS imply that during Classic times there were two large sites in the region, Ichmul and Yo'okop (the former is in the north and the latter in the south). Based on their aerial extent, the monumental scale of their architecture, and the presence of extensive, largely Terminal Classic *sacbe* (causeway) systems at each (Shaw 2008), they might be termed cities or perhaps regional capitals (see chapter 8, this volume). Equidistant between the two, Sacalaca also appears to have been an important center, with its multiroom vaulted palace upon an acropolis and several nearby pyramidal mounds. Numerous medium and small sites are scattered across the landscape, most frequently around natural features such as water sources and caves, with few tracts of land entirely lacking cultural remains of any sort. However, a static picture in no way represents the reality of the region's settlement pattern through some 2,500 years of change; modern and historic occupations have significantly altered these sites, and populations have ebbed and flowed, possibly moving from one site to another, as well as into and out of the Cochuah region (see chapter 7, this volume).

COCHUAH IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The long history of the Cochuah region may be examined using the relatively standardized chronology of Maya archaeologists, although the particular dates used to divide these time periods and the existence of a prolonged Terminal Classic differ from configurations used in other parts of the Maya area. As chapters in this volume reveal, the events and settlement patterns that typify the Cochuah region at times follow the general patterns seen elsewhere; on occasion, however, the region has defied expectations. For this reason, it is helpful to review its cultural history in the context of the larger Maya area.

The Middle Formative

Throughout the Maya area, the Middle Formative appears to have been characterized by the movement of people from coastal and riverine areas (Hammond

TIME PERIOD	DATES
Middle Formative	6/500–300 BC
Late Formative	300 BC–AD 250
Early Classic	AD 250–550
Late Classic	AD 550–750
Terminal Classic	AD 750–1100
Postclassic	AD 1100–1546
Colonial	AD 1546–1821
Historic Mexican	AD 1821–late 20th century
Modern	late 20th century–present

Table 1.1. Occupational Periods in the Coahuah Region. Table by Justine M. Shaw.

et al. 1979) to inland zones that had previously been unoccupied (Ford 1986). This was a time when the earliest elites were emerging, utilizing Olmec-derived iconography and setting themselves apart with behaviors such as the consumption of cacao (Powis et al. 2002). There seems to have been a shared belief system, with individuals of all classes conducting domestic rituals. At some sites, such as El Mirador, Lamanai, Nohmul, Tikal, Cerros, and Nakbe, monumental architecture was constructed (Freidel and Schele 1988; Hammond 1986; Hansen 1998; Lucero 2006); other substantial works include water-management systems like those seen in northern Belize (Scarborough 2003, 50). Long-distance trade networks brought items such as obsidian and jade into the Maya Lowlands during this time (Hammond 1986).

Consistent with some of the oldest sites in the interior of the peninsula, the earliest occupations thus far detected in the CRAS study area date to the Middle Formative. To some degree, the identification of these early occupations appears to be tied to the intensity with which a given site has been excavated, since the two sites that have been subject to the most excavation (Nohcacab and Yo'okop) have yielded the largest Middle Formative samples. Limited numbers of test pits at each of the sites of Hopemul, Parcela Escolar, Ramonal Quemado, Sacalaca, Sahcabchen, San Felipe, San Lorenzo, San Pedro, Sisal, and Xquerol have likewise produced these early ceramics. Ceramically, Middle Formative Coahuah sites possess many of the types present in the Komchen sphere, although they lack a strong Achiotes component. Two sites with Middle Formative occupations, Sacalaca and Yo'okop, have reliable water sources, but the others lack these critical natural features, and their inhabitants apparently relied upon water-storage capabilities. A more common characteristic at sites with these early occupations is the presence of relatively deep soils, potentially critical for the farmers who first settled the region. Unfortunately for archaeologists, to date, all Middle Formative materials in the Coahuah region have been encountered in secondary contexts, reused as fill for later building projects; no intact architecture or features dating to the Middle Formative have yet been recovered in the region.

The Late Formative

By the Late Formative, the Maya institution of kingship was well developed, with rulers claiming their authority through connections to the supernatural (Freidel et al. 1993). Elite tombs appeared, and portable objects were used to record ceremonial events (Schele and Miller 1986). El Mirador and Nakbe emerged as major centers in the south, only to be abandoned by the end of the period; this may have been due to failed water management or conquest (Lucero 2006; Marcus 2003; Scarborough 1993). Forms of monumental architecture became more standardized, with astronomically oriented E-groups (Chase and Chase 1995), ballcourts, and triadic arrangements seen at a number of sites. For many longer-lived sites, such as Yaxuná (Shaw 1998; Stanton 2000), this was when the basic layouts of the sites' monumental cores were established; the first significant phase of acropoli and temples, which were elaborated upon later, was erected during the Late Formative.

The CRAS survey area experienced a dramatic increase in the number and size of sites occupied during the Late Formative, the second most populated period of prehispanic occupation in the Cochuah region. During the Late Formative the region can be included in the Chicanel ceramic sphere, dominated by Sierra group ceramics. There is evidence of plaza construction and public architecture at the largest sites in the region, with all of what became the medium and large sites being occupied during this period. While no E-groups have been detected in the Cochuah region, acropoli with triadic groups were built for the first time at a number of sites. The presence of later occupations at all the Late Formative sites has unfortunately significantly disturbed and buried most of the materials dating to this period. Interestingly, all of the excavated sites with caves experienced their first detected occupation during the Late Formative, possibly indicating not only the increased size and wider distribution of the population, but also the localized replication of the ritual concepts that were being implemented in the public architecture of larger centers.

The Early Classic

Throughout the Maya Lowlands, the Early Classic was a time of population movements, with overall growth. Kings were depicted in full-scale public monuments, altars, and stelae, holding the manikin scepter to symbolize rulership (Freidel and Schele 1988). The rulers emphasized the importance of their own royal ancestors, building upon the practice of ancestor veneration (McAnany 1995), while also referencing foreign powers, most notably Teotihuacan (Braswell 2004). This strong kingship was architecturally expressed at Palenque, Copán, Tikal, and other major centers through elaborate palace complexes (Marcus 1998). Some sites, such as Becan, exhibited a clear concern for defense (Webster 1977); inscriptions included conquests and the capture of royal personages; and more military themes emerged in artwork (Stuart 1993). During this time, kings were primarily concerned with achieving a superordinate position within the regional hierarchy, rather than with any actual control of terrain or boundaries Golden and Scherer (2013). The

population at many southern sites became concentrated in major centers, while the intervening terrain settled during Formative times was depopulated.

During the Early Classic, most of the sites in the Coahuah region contained little to no population. Some sites in the center of the survey area, including Sacalaca, Nohcacab, San Andres, and Xbalcheil, seemed to have maintained very small resident occupations for a portion of this period, however. Ichmul, which appears to have thrived during the Early Classic, may have absorbed populations from its immediate vicinity. Yo'okop, too, grew during this period, based on ceramic counts, epigraphic materials, and architecture. Two relatively small sites that flourished during this time were San Felipe and Sisal in the southern portion of the current CRAS study area. These two sites, like Yo'okop, display unusually high percentages of Early Classic tradewares from the Petén, with more local ceramics placing the sites within the Xculul ceramic sphere. This pattern may represent the "Peten corridor" of trade described by Harrison (1982, 120–21).

The Late Classic

By the Late Classic, much of the Southern Lowlands and portions of the north were dominated by two rival kingdoms, Tikal and Calakmul (Martin and Grube 1995). The influence of each was extended through alliances, warfare, and vassal relationships with the rulers of other centers. In general, this is a period of growing population (Rice and Culbert 1990), along with an increase in competition and warfare as major powers vied for greater control. Hieroglyphic inscriptions include the title *k'ujul ahaw* (divine lord), and rulers emphasized their close connection to important deities and the otherworld (Houston and Stuart 1996; Schele and Freidel 1990). Rituals that were pictured or referred to include period-ending rites, ball games, royal marriages, elite visitations, and bloodletting (Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986), which were accompanied by elaborate feasts of festive food served in distinctive ceramics (LeCount 2001). Venerated ancestors, from the most elite to commoners, were buried in elaborate manners (relative to their stations in life), and deceased royals became the subjects of major public rituals (McAnany 1995). The palaces of primary and secondary centers drove the production of elaborate polychrome ceramics made by skilled artisans, which were used by local elites and traded or gifted to more distant centers (Rice 2009). By this point, there is evidence that monarchs were more focused on the demarcation of boundaries and physical control of the landscape; this is likely because growing populations would have been taxing the available natural resources, including arable land, and to control trade routes. As part of the means to govern more well-defined territories beyond the major centers, the number of secondary centers increased, repopulating the hinterlands of the Southern Lowlands (Golden and Scherer 2013). While they lacked some forms of monumental architecture found in primary centers, these secondary sites commonly had large platforms that could have housed mass spectacles.

Although extremely small populations have been detected at several of the sites that had Early Classic occupations, the Late Classic represents the period of lowest

occupation levels in the CRAS study area since the Middle Formative. Only Yo'okop, which seems to have maintained its ties to the Petén based on the prevalence of tradewares such as Saxche Orange Polychromes, contained a sizable resident population during this period. Elsewhere, people largely abandoned the Cochuah region, possibly being drawn to large sites thriving to the south or failing to survive in the area as a result of climatic or sociopolitical conditions.

The Terminal Classic

In the Pasion-Usumacinta zone, settlement reached its greatest density at the start of the Terminal Classic, then quickly declined (Culbert 1988). Elsewhere in the Southern Lowlands, the Terminal Classic does not exist for many sites, particularly those in the interior. Instead, there was a “collapse” at the end of the Late Classic, which leads directly into Postclassic phases. At some centers, such as Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan (Golden and Scherer 2013), the collapse of legitimate royal authority and subsequent population losses appear to have occurred quite rapidly. However, what would have been otherwise anomalous activities, such as building monumental architecture and constructing monuments away from the site center, as well as a greater reliance on war captains (Martin and Grube 2008), suggests that kings were becoming increasingly desperate to maintain control by placating lesser elites through a greater dispersal of “social currency” by the late eighth century (Folan et al. 2009; Iannone 2005; LeCount 1999; Reents-Budet 1994). The southern collapse, most severe in zones such as the western Petén and more gradual in other areas, including northern Belize, culminated in the abandonment, or at least significant depopulation, of most major centers; the absence of long count dates; the cessation of kingship with its associated rituals, construction projects, monuments, and elite goods; and escalating violence that came to target all levels of society at some sites (Desailly-Chanson 2012; Webster 2000).

The Terminal Classic was radically different in the Northern Lowlands, making it quite evident that the whole of Maya society did not collapse, even though “profound social change” was certainly evident in much of the south (Aimers 2007, 329). In the north, this was a period of florescence, most famously in the Puuc region, where a *mul tepal* (joint rule) system may have been adopted (Schele and Mathews 1998). During the ninth and tenth centuries, a number of fortified sites and destruction events indicate increased competition and warfare, some of which appears to have been instigated by the major center of Chichén Itzá (Braswell et al. 2004; Dahlin 2000). The northern site of Ek Balam also peaked during the late Terminal Classic, and a population remained at the site until the sixteenth century (Ringle et al. 2004). Sites in northern Belize persisted into the Postclassic, likely as a result of their strategic location relative to the northern Yucatán, which may have resulted in new trade opportunities (Aimers 2004, 2007; Masson and Mock 2004).

In the Cochuah region, the Terminal Classic is an abrupt reversal of the earlier Classic depopulation of the region, with a strong population evidenced at every site in the survey area during the period. Ichmul and Yo'okop both experienced

population booms and invested in extensive sacbe networks to connect newly revitalized outlying groups and site centers (Shaw 2008). However, the population was not simply nucleated at these two centers; the marked growth of Ichmul and Yo'okop coincided with a widely distributed, dense population throughout the region. Many of these other sites also invested in monumental architecture at this time, exemplified in constructions such as the acropoli at the lesser centers of Sacalaca and Yo'aktun. Although it is difficult to be certain of the tempo of this population surge when measured in archaeological time, it appears to be so great as to imply that significant immigration took place from other portions of the Maya area (see Shaw, chapter 7, this volume). Ceramically, sites in the region can be included in the western Cehpech ceramic sphere.

The Postclassic

While many southern sites entered a Postclassic period after the “collapse,” in the Northern Lowlands the Postclassic generally began during the time of transition from the domination by Chichén Itzá to that of Mayapan, around AD 1000–1150 (Masson et al. 2010; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003). Archaeologists’ understanding of the Postclassic continues to be hampered by a number of factors, including the location of settlements in different places than earlier remains and the dominance of simple foundation braces, rather than elevated platforms, making settlements relatively difficult to discover, particularly in the dense vegetation that characterizes much of the Maya area (Chase and Chase 2010). Where significant Postclassic occupations continued in the same location as their predecessors, as in Ichcantiho (Mérida), Dzibilchaltún, Izamal, Aké, and Cobá, the larger and more numerous Classic remains tend to receive the most archaeological attention (A. P. Andrews 1993). As a result, many of the characteristics assigned to the Postclassic are those of absence: an absence of Classic markers, such as stone monuments with long count dates, elaborate polychrome ceramics, and monumental architecture. However, some specialization continued, as did short- and long-distance trade in exotics, with salt, cotton cloth, and honey moving south and obsidian, chert, and greenstone entering the north (A. P. Andrews 1983, 1993). Ceramics during this time are characterized by a substantial amount of decorative variation. Status differences continued to exist, as expressed in housing, burials, and items of personal adornment. Regional capitals existed at Mayapan, Santa Rita Corozal, and Lamanai, among other places; these appear to have been governed by politically shared or rotated leadership. Rather than being a period of decline, the Postclassic, it has been argued, was a cultural regeneration of sorts, with some elements of Classic Maya society, such as Puuc-style architecture, returning while other aspects, such as dynastic kingship, were rejected (Chase and Chase 2010; Masson et al. 2010; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2009).

Although there is some evidence for a possible transitional phase associated with open-fronted architecture and limited quantities of foreign ceramics (Shaw and Johnstone 2006), the Postclassic is characterized by a depopulation of the

Cochuah region, which is represented by only minor ritual architecture at some sites. Thus far, Yo'okop appears to evidence the most activity during the Postclassic, with numerous temples, shrines, altars, and a possible accession structure having been constructed. Ichmul, known to be active during Postclassic times, has thus far evidenced virtually no Postclassic ceramics, indicating that the Postclassic occupation may have been spatially distinct from the Classic and historic settlement (Kaeding and Flores Colin 2005, 44). Project members have also investigated whether round foundation braces that were constructed near the end of the occupation of several sites might date to the Postclassic, but evidence from adjacent excavations has not been definitive. In general, identifying resident Postclassic occupations at Yo'okop and elsewhere has been challenging, due to the nondiagnostic nature of the residential architecture during this period, the ephemeral nature of the structures, and activity focuses away from the plaza test pits placed in Classic site cores. The vast majority of the Postclassic ceramics that have been recovered have been Chen Mul *incensario* fragments found in the vicinity of small ritual architecture that was built reusing components of earlier constructions, such as Puuc-style cut stones, lintels, and metates. These structures tend to be built upon the largest architecture at a given site.

Spanish Colonial Occupations

The Spanish arrived in the Yucatán during a period of turmoil, after the Xiu overthrew the Cocom in 1441, destroying much of Mayapan; the Chel moved to Tecoh, the Cocom went to Sotuta, and the Xiu relocated to Maní. The Xiu were among the first Spanish allies (Hanks 2010). At the time of contact, the 16 *cuuchcabal'ob* provinces fell into three categories: highly organized areas ruled by one individual (the *halach uinic*, who had *b'atabs* under him, ruling individual towns); leading families from the same patrilineage controlling individual towns; and loosely affiliated territories (Roys 1957). The *b'atabs* became the caciques under the Spanish. Many Maya settlements continued to be occupied following the arrival of the Spanish, with monumental architecture, particularly temples, being recycled into colonial structures. Dispersed populations were commonly resettled into fewer, larger towns more readily controlled by the Spanish under a policy of *congregación* or *reducción* (400 or more Yucatecan towns were reduced to 177 between 1549 and 1582; Farriss 1984). Some Maya were able to escape to more distant zones, known as the *despoblado* or the *montaña* (Hanks 2010). Chapels and churches tended to be the most dominant constructions in early colonial settlements (A. P. Andrews 1993), and Maya symbols, beliefs, and practices were creatively adapted in combination with those of Spanish Catholicism as part of the continual process of culture change (Astor-Aguilera 2010).

The Spanish arrived in the Cochuah region in 1511, and the province was divided into *encomiendas* in 1548 (Gerhard 1993, 77). Ichmul, a *cabecera*, became an important place once more, with populations concentrated into the center as a result of the *congregación* policy; these forced movements resulted in drastic

demographic losses of up to 90 percent in some cases (Flores Colin and Kaeding 2004; Gerhard 1991). In addition to Ichmul, colonial towns in the Coahuah region included Chikindzonot, Chunchunhub, Ekpedz, Huay Max, Polyuc, Saban, Sacalaca, Tepich, Tiholop, Tihosuco, Tinum, Tituc, and Xquerol (Roys 1957). CRAS project members have documented colonial occupations at the sites of Ichmul, Ramonal Este, Ramonal Oriente, Rancho Guadalupe, San Andres, San Juan, and Xbalcheil, and more informal studies of regional churches also have taken place (Flores Colin and Kaeding 2004).

Historic Mexico

Independence from Spain came in 1821, bringing new challenges and opportunities. Encomiendas were replaced by haciendas, though debt peonage meant that little changed for the Maya people working on such estates (Meyers 2012). Sugar remained the Yucatán's largest export crop until it was overtaken by henequen in 1870; the profit that could be made in these crops led to increased encroachment on Maya land, including those communities that had remained relatively isolated during colonial times (Robins 2005). B'atabs, without the halach uinic they once served under, continued to exist in the Yucatán following Mexican independence; they collected taxes, assisted the priest, oversaw labor drafts (*fagina*) for communal construction projects, and were expected to set an example of loyalty for the other peasants (Rugeley 1995). Tensions over economic disparities and political manipulations by Hispanic leaders before and after the American invasion of Mexico led to the Caste War, which lasted from 1847 to 1901. During periods of active fighting, the Maya rebels razed towns and captured booty that could be used to trade for arms and ammunition as they gained territory, while the Hispanic-led Mexican army aimed to retake and hold what they had lost; both strategies resulted in widespread destruction and death. The cyclical violence, with periodic Maya attacks interspersed with sporadic attempts at suppression by the Mexican military, was finally ended by General Ignacio Bravo. The territory of Quintana Roo was established in 1902, encompassing much of what had been rebel territory (Alexander 2004; Robins 2005; Rugeley 2012).

As with the rest of the peninsula, the most significant event in the Coahuah region following Mexican independence was the Caste War. Located just west of the heart of the rebel territory in Chan Santa Cruz (now Felipe Carrillo Puerto), the Coahuah region witnessed a number of battles and hosted significant army encampments (Alexander 2004). Caste War fortifications have been noted at the major battlefield of Ichmul and at more minor locations, including Sacalaca's Northeast Group and the Fort of Yo'okop between Saban and Yo'okop (see chapter 12, this volume). In addition to evidence of the Caste War, historic remains in the region include some of the less ancient churches and remnants of hacienda-era architecture in towns, such as Sacalaca and Saban, and adjacent to wells scattered across the countryside. Some smaller ranchos also continued to utilize colonial architecture.

Modern Occupations

Beginning in the latter decades of the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century, the Yucatán has seen a tremendous amount of development. Following the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mérida and its port of Progreso were targeted for maquiladora development (Baklanoff 2008). Around the time that Quintana Roo became a state in 1974, the northeastern part of the state was selected as Mexico's first "tourist integral center" for planned development; this zone went from an "empty quarter" to "Gringolandia" (Torres and Momsen 2005) and has continued to grow at an astounding rate. Many Maya have migrated from the towns and villages of the interior of the peninsula to the east coast or to the expanding strips of touristic development leading westward through Chichén Itzá or southward through Tulum, seeking employment in construction and the tourism industry as artisans, masons, waitstaff, and in other aspects of the service industry and infrastructure development. While some have achieved the financial success that attracted them to these settings, most have found themselves faced with limited social mobility and restricted job opportunities (Castellanos 2010; ReCruz 2008). Maya people have also migrated to the United States, with some forming permanent communities and others returning to the peninsula after a period of time (Ruiz 2004). While male agricultural laborers have typically received the most attention, females too have left the peninsula, seeking both economic benefit and increased personal freedom (Castellanos and Boehm 2008).

Although the Caste War was marked by extreme disruption and population loss for the Coahuah region, the twentieth century was a period of recovery, increasing stability, and opportunity. An influx of inhabitants from the state of Yucatán helped population levels to return to pre-Caste War levels by the mid-twentieth century. Following the Mexican Revolution and its subsequent social changes, ejidos were established throughout the region, and these communally held territorial units still constitute the vast majority of all land outside towns and villages today. While one ejido adjacent to the study area (San Juan) has been dissolved, the other units have thus far resisted the dissolution trend seen elsewhere in the peninsula. This is somewhat due to a lack of outside pressure to develop commercial enterprises for tourism or manufacturing, since the region is distant from the "Maya Riviera," Cancún, and Mérida; it also may be related to the continued dominance of swidden agriculture, which requires extensive tracts of land to be viable.

RESEARCH METHODS

The Coahuah Regional Archaeological Survey (CRAS) project has involved archaeological research of the ejidos of Ichmul, Saban, Sacalaca, San Felipe, Tabasco, and Xquerol since 2000. Although the project's specific research goals have evolved over the years, it has generally aimed to locate and register sites, map as much of each site with as high a degree of accuracy as is logistically possible, record diagnostic

architectural styles, and recover ceramics and other materials that could be used to investigate regional settlement dynamics through time. Samples have been gathered through surface collections, 2 x 2 m test pits, and a limited number of extensive excavations. As a small project, CRAS has tried to balance registering and recording as many sites as possible with covering individual sites thoroughly; this has resulted in some sites being subject to more attention than others, but subsequent seasons have often been used to improve the mapping or samples from sites that initially received only basic registration.

The CRAS relies on local consultants as the primary means to locate archaeological sites. Because the research is conducted in a rural area that retains most of its ejidos, many older local men have worked in milpas, hunted, or utilized forest resources throughout their shared territory. They are keenly aware of the cultural features that pepper the landscape and are able to guide project members to new sites, sometimes using long-abandoned paths from their youth. However, this strategy has two major drawbacks: larger architecture is clearly disproportionately reported; and, as younger generations increasingly pursue more education and nonagricultural employment, fewer individuals possess this knowledge each year. This latter issue has prompted the CRAS project to stress the locating of new sites over intensive coverage of known sites in order to take advantage of the rapidly disappearing knowledge base. To attempt to rectify the large-site bias, the project also regularly surveys agricultural fields, which readily reveal even the smallest surface remains once they have been cut and burned. The summer field seasons are the ideal time to take advantage of this clearing.

In 2002, the CRAS hired cultural anthropologist Sandra Bever to conduct a survey to assess the needs and wants of the local community with respect to the archaeological project. The principal findings were that residents would like the project to work year-round, be considerably larger, and finance the development of infrastructure for tourism; unfortunately, none of these were immediately implementable goals due to the nature of the principal investigators' work responsibilities in the United States and the project's financing sources. The presence of Bever and her assistant, Veronica Miranda, was valuable in facilitating the flow of information between locals and archaeologists, however. Since that initial study, Miranda has returned to the region, at times assisting the CRAS project in the distribution of educational materials to schools and libraries, but largely conducting her own independent cultural research with local women, midwives, and physicians (see chapter 13, this volume). Her presence and input have provided a vital bridge between the project's studies of past peoples and its modern Maya collaborators.

THIS VOLUME

In addition to simply helping to fill in the map of the peninsula, this work seeks to portray the Coahuah region from varied points of view, examining diverse topics

using a number of theoretical perspectives. While it is largely a project-driven tome, it does not seek to analyze the archaeological record from a single, narrow viewpoint. The book is arranged in roughly chronological order, although the topics of some chapters do crosscut multiple time periods (see table 1.1). The authors have selected subjects and tools that each feels have the most utility for illuminating some aspect of life in the Cochuah region and relating it to the context of the larger Maya world.

Linnea Wren and Travis Nygard, who have worked at Yo'okop as epigraphers, provide a thorough review of the cultural history of research in the Cochuah region, from Mason and Spinden's 1926 visit to Yo'okop until the present. They use a variety of historical sources to provide remarkable details and set their story in the context of regional, national, and international events that initially prohibited, and then facilitated, access to the region during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They consider the exploration, documentation, and research of the Cochuah region, which has principally focused on the largest sites of Yo'okop and Ichmul, in terms of a series of episodes in which both the Maya and their visitors were active participants. It should be noted that, through time, the local Maya have served as protectors of their archaeological resources, wary of outsiders who might seek to remove their cultural patrimony; this attitude has protected the Cochuah region from any large-scale looting, even as pressure mounts to develop tourism in the area.

Dave Johnstone, the CRAS project's ceramicist, focuses on ceramic exchange in the form of tradewares in chapter 3. During the Early Classic, the principal tradewares were Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome, Balanza Black, and Tituc Orange Polychrome, while during the Late Classic, only Saxche Orange Polychrome was imported in any significant quantity. Similarly, during the Terminal Classic, Ticul Thin Slate is the sole tradeware of note. In the absence of chemical characterization of the clay sources for these nonlocal wares, Johnstone uses the areas with the highest relative frequencies of each type as their likely source. He suggests that an overland trade route was used to import goods from the Southern Lowlands during the Early and Late Classic, with Terminal Classic materials coming from the Puuc region. Not only sources, but also forms, change through time, possibly relating to changing behaviors in feasting. Johnstone also argues that the means of, and motives for, exchange changed through time; during the Early Classic it appears that the rulers of larger sites used tradewares to curry favor with distant relatives at smaller sites, while a pattern more consistent with market exchange is apparent by the Terminal Classic.

In chapter 4, Travis Nygard, Kaylee Spencer, and Linnea Wren explore Maya queenship during the Classic period through an analysis of sculpture at Yo'okop. Their research proposes that a key facet of rulership involved the intersection between the bodies of rulers and the world around them as seen in artists' emphasis on royal feet, which suggests their importance. Particular attention is paid to the case of Kaloomte' Ix Chaak Kab of Yo'okop, who appears to have been installed by the Kaan family from Calakmul. The queen, referenced on a hieroglyphic stairway