Ancient Mesoamerica, **13** (2002), 265
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DOI: 10.1017/S0956536102132214

SPECIAL SECTION: HISTORICAL CLIMATOLOGY IN THE MAYA AREA, PART 2

Introduction

In this issue's Special Section we offer the second part of a group of studies dealing with the impact of climate change on ancient Maya civilization. As mentioned in the Introduction to the first part (Fowler 2002), Mayanists have been aware of the possible effects of climatic factors on Maya culture since the early decades of last century. At first, comments on the effects of climate change in the Maya area were largely speculative. By the 1980s such work became increasingly compelling and sophisticated, including correlations of worldwide glacial, palynological, and other climatological data, as reflected in several publications (Dahlin 1983; Folan et al. 1983; Gunn and Adams 1981). Soon after, Lewis Messenger provided a broad global correlation with specific reference to archaeological sequences in Mesoamerica and the Maya area (Messenger 1990). Perhaps it would be fair to say that Maya paleoclimatological studies may have peaked with the massive work of Richardson Gill (2000), which has attracted much critical attention. David Webster (2002:241–247), for example, praises the book for its directness and clarity of purpose but expresses skepticism about the climatological bias and stresses that much more research is needed.

In that vein, we offer some of the results of additional research. In the first paper, **David Rue, David Webster, and Alfred Traverse** discuss the pollen and charcoal analysis from Aguada Petapilla, in the Copan Valley of Honduras, to illustrate the possibility of domestic *Zea mays* as early as 2300 B.C. and the clearing of forests using fire during the Late Holocene. Next, **Richard D. Hansen, Steven Bozarth, John Jacob, David Wahl, and Thomas Schreiner** present archaeological, phytolith, palynological, and pedological data to suggest climatic and environmental factors, primarily a perennially wet marsh system which supported large Preclassic populations in the Mirador Basin of the northern Peten.

In the third paper, **Joel D. Gunn, John E. Foss, William J. Folan, María del Rosario Dominguez Carrasco, and Betty B. Faust** analyze river discharge, weather patterns, lake bottom sediments of the Calakmul Basin, Campeche, and settlement patterns at Calakmul and Edzna to reveal highly variable climate, geology, and cultural adaptations in this regional setting. **Earnesto Vargas Pacheco** describes the impact of changing water levels along the Candelaria River in Campeche on the local Chontal Maya. His discussion of water and Chontal cosmovision is especially interesting.

Bruce H. Dahlin discusses the adaptability of Maya sites in the northern lowlands using a Hazards Research Approach, using Chichen Itza as an example of successful adaptation that may threaten the strength of a drought based theory for the collapse of the Maya. Finally, **Hubert R. Robichaux** suggests that the role played by droughts in the collapse of the ancient lowland Maya civilization should be considered within an interplay of cultural/historical events and ecological factors. While stressing that droughts occurred during Late Classic times in the Maya area, he sees them as only one possible factor in the collapse.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536102132214 Published online by Cambridge University Press