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SPECIAL SECTION: BORDERS, FRONTIERS, AND BOUNDARIES IN THE MAYA WORLD: CONCEPTS AND THEORY

INTRODUCTION

Borders, frontiers, and boundaries affect lives, whether in the past or present. They can manifest themselves as material impediments but conceptual ones influence people's thoughts, behaviors, and movements just as critically or even more. Chronological, political, social, economic, ideological, linguistic, and psychological in nature, borders act on cultural practices from the quotidian to the exceptional. This Special Section, "Borders, Frontiers, and Boundaries in the Maya World: Concepts and Theory," emphasizes the role that borders played in shaping people's lives on a daily basis and in the wider scheme of things. People, pottery, and points moved across borders, alienating some while uniting others and creating identities through exclusion and inclusion. The coverage of Classic, Postclassic, Colonial, and contemporary time periods highlights the significance and prominence of borders throughout Mesoamerican history.

A salient point made by **Christina Halperin**, **Carolyn Freiwald**, and **Gyles Iannone** in their "Introduction to the Special Section: Borders, Frontiers, and Boundaries in the Maya World: Concepts and Theory" is that current political borders affect our perceptions of the past, and, in particular, the eastern Maya Lowlands that share the contemporary geopolitical borders of Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. The authors clarify essential differences between the three concepts and their utility in applying them to the archaeological record. Seven case studies illustrate how one can usefully employ the concepts of borders, frontiers, and boundaries to the Maya lowlands.

Polychrome pottery serves as one of the many hallmarks of Mesoamerican complexity and the Classic Maya produced some of the most artistically complex messages in this medium. The first case study features "Political Alliances and Trade Connections Observed in the Ceramic Record of the Classic Period: The Perspective from the Maya Site of Nakum, Guatemala " by **Jarosław Źrałka**, **Christophe Helmke**, **Bernard Hermes**, **Wiesław Koszkul**, **Carmen Ting**, **Ronald Bishop**, and **Dorota Bojkowska**. The large collection of such vessels emanates from the decade of research by the Nakum Archaeological Project of the Jagiellonian University. Iconographic, stylistic, petrographic, and chemical analyses illustrate the fluid relations in which the rulers of Nakum engaged with royalty at Naranjo and Tikal. Allegiances were marked by such exchanges that evolved through time.

Christina T. Halperin, **Jose Luis Garrido Lopez**, **Miriam Salas**, and **Jean-Baptiste LeMoine** synthesize recent fieldwork from the Proyecto Arqueológico Ucanal in "Convergence Zone Politics at the Archaeological Site of Ucanal, Peten, Guatemala." The pivotal role that a provincial settlement plays among large, belligerent political centers brings out the larger lesson applicable to other times and circumstances. Today, Ucanal's location is near the Guatemala-Belize border but in the past it was located near the crossroads of the ever-changing polities of Caracol and Naranjo. It is in this convergence zone, a term aptly deconstructed by the authors, that the K'anwitznal polity of Ucanal sought opportunity and eventually forged its own independence

In the third case study of this Special Section, we once again encounter the ancient city of Naranjo. In contrast to the perspective from Ucanal or Nakum, **Jaime J. Awe**, **Christophe Helmke**, **Diane Slocum**, and **Douglas Tilden** examine Naranjo through the application of new data from Xunantunich in their article on "Ally, Client, or Outpost? Evaluating the Relationship between Xunantunich and Naranjo in the Late Classic Period." Recent models by other archaeologists serve as the starting point for analyses. Their findings both support and conflict with previous reconstructions of the Xunantunich-Naranjo connections.

Eleanor Harrison-Buck and **Timothy W. Pugh** emphasize a relational perspective in their article on "Boundary Things in the Eastern Maya Lowlands: Negotiating Allied Relations from Terminal Classic to Postclassic Times." They consider how Maya settlements in Belize and Guatemala were influenced by the influx of northern-style traits (building styles and certain artifacts) particularly during the fractious time when Classic dynasties dissolved. The roles of women and men figured significantly, as their relations and behaviors expressed political fluctuations. Both continuity and change can be detected in the multiple movements of people to and from the Eastern Lowlands.

In the fifth case study, "The Porous Boundary: Comparing Late Postclassic–Early Colonial Maya Projectile Technologies Across Peten and Belize," **Nathan J. Meissner** employs lithic analysis to discern how numerous Maya groups in the Peten-Belize area expressed fluid identities during the turbulent Postclassic period into the Early Colonial period. Meissner's data support the interpretation that Maya ethnopolitical boundaries correlated with physical differences in the production of chipped stone tools across the region. Through social network analysis, various characteristics of the point technology database highlight economic aspects of exchange that can be related to boundary formation.

Carolyn Freiwald, **Katherine A. Miller Wolf**, **Timothy Pugh**, **Asta J. Rand**, and **Paul D. Fullagar** evaluate "Early Colonialism and Population Movement at the Mission San Bernabé, Guatemala" through isotopic studies, archaeology, and historical accounts. Founded in A.D. 1712, this relatively late outpost of the

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Spanish sought to resettle the Itza Maya. Rather than large population movements that one might envision, it appears that the Spanish targeted local populations for resettlement. Though no stranger to migration and mobility throughout their history, the Itza Maya nevertheless faced harsh conditions within the mission that was eventually abandoned by the 1770s.

In the last case study, **Brett A. Houk** and **Brooke Bonorden** examine "The 'Borders' of British Honduras and the San Pedro Maya of Kaxil Uinic Village." In this historical study using archival and archaeological data, the authors flesh out the challenges faced by the Maya fleeing conflict in Mexico during a dynamic time in that country's formation. The authors note that, due to current borders, their study examines the San Pedro Maya groups living in Belize rather than including groups who settled in Peten, Guatemala. The issue of research constrained by modern borders persists within archaeology in general. The interplay of private companies (in this case, the Belize Estate and Produce Company) and English colonial forces added to the dynamics of settlement and perception of the cultural boundary that continues to this day.

The concepts of border, frontier, and boundaries can expand archaeological interpretations because they capture the fluidity of various entities through time and space. Dynamism can be viewed retrospectively, as archaeologists well know. How that dynamism translates to material evidence has been shown in numerous ways in this Special Section. We hope you find these concepts applicable to adding another dimension to elucidating the cultural practices of ancient, historical, and contemporary peoples.

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