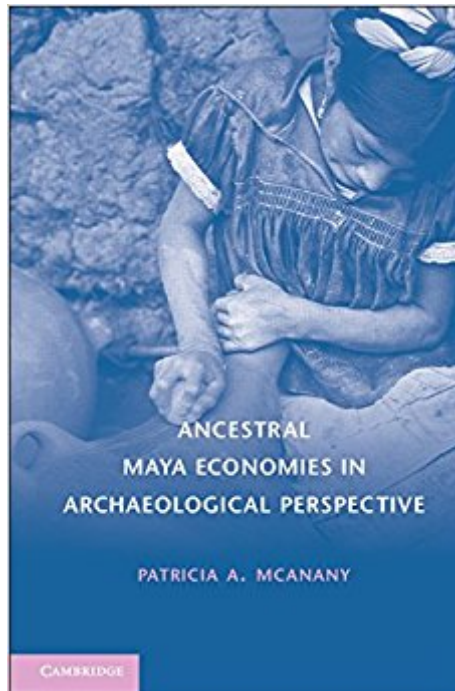




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Ancestral Maya Economies In Archaeological Perspective



Synopsis

The decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs has enabled scholars to better understand Classic society, but many aspects of this civilization remain shrouded in mystery, particularly its economies and social structures. How did farmers, artisans, and rulers make a living in a tropical forest environment? In this study, Patricia McNany tackles this question and presents the first comprehensive view of ancestral Maya economic practice. Bringing an archaeological approach to the topic, she demonstrates the vital role of ritual practice in indigenous ecologies, gendered labor, and the construction of colossal architecture. Examining Maya royalty as a kind of social speciation, McNany also shows the fundamentality of social difference as well as the pervasiveness of artisan production and marketplaces in ancestral Maya societies. Her analysis of royal iconography and hieroglyphic texts provides evidence of a political economy dominated by tribute extraction, thus lifting the veil of opacity over the operation of palace economies. Written in an engaging and accessible style, this book situates Maya economies within contemporary social, political, and economic theories of social practice, gender, actor-networks, inalienable goods, materiality, social difference, indigenous ecologies, and strategies of state finance.

Book Information

Paperback: 386 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press (October 13, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 110743601X

ISBN-13: 978-1107436015

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Patricia McNany is Kenan Eminent Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and President of the Society for Economic Anthropology. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dumbarton Oaks, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. Dr McNany is the principal investigator of the Xibun Archaeological Research Project (in Belize, Central America). She is the author of *Living with the Ancestors: Kinship and Kingship in Ancient Maya Society* and editor of *K'axob: Ritual Work and Family in an Ancient Maya Village and Sacred Landscape and Settlement in the Sibun River Valley*.

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