successful captors would have gathered. Other figures are engaged in post-battle dances and scenes of captive sacrifices as part of ruler accession celebrations. The reading demonstrates that this complicated visual text marked Uxmal as a central place that celebrated its king, while also demonstrating his recent expansion of political power.

Meghan Rubenstein and Philipp Galeev reveal new interpretations of the hieroglyphic platform at Kabah, a low, four-sided structure covered with a carved inscription. In an attempt to overcome the issues of worn panels and missing blocks, the authors created a catalogue, compiling photographs and drawings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries combined with detailed documentation conducted in 2013. The resulting work allows for new interpretations, including the presence of calendrical dates and glyphs that suggest royal accession and military activity. Although these characteristics are shared with other Puuc inscriptions, they also detected three separate writing styles, which may suggest an evolving structure that was enlarged over time.

Maline D. Werness-Rude refines the definition of the Chocholá style of ceramics from the Late Classic, characterized by gourd-shaped cups with incised texts and deeply carved iconographic panels. These elite vessels conveyed the subtle agendas of the elite when given as gifts and during feasting events, in particular through their dedicatory texts along the rim or in diagonal or vertical text boxes. Calendrical dates reveal that they were manufactured for only 100 years, and artists placed their emphasis on titular phrases, toponyms, and personal names, giving this corpus a particularly strong association with the historical record.

Lastly, Carlos Pallán Gayol and Antonio Benavides Castillo discuss the carved hieroglyphic monuments from H’Wasil in Campeche. The site includes a strong tradition of sculpture, similar to other sites in the region. This includes a hieroglyphic doorway with 33 carved glyphic blocks that was once part of a building with extensive iconography. Although lacking in the historical richness of the texts found in other regions, careful documentation has revealed that H’Wasil was a secondary site that was ruled by a historical figure identified at the rank of sajal.


Reviewed by Meaghan M. Peuramaki-Brown, Athabasca University

Scott R. Hutson’s edited volume, *Ancient Maya Commerce: Multidisciplinary Research at Chunchucmil*, is both a surprise and a delight. From the main title, I mistakenly believed this to be a standard edited volume on a current “hot topic,” presenting a series of loosely related articles. When I then noted the subtitle, I assumed this hefty topic was the focus of research at a single archaeological site, dealing primarily with activities of Maya elites within the monumental core. The volume is far more complex. Although focused primarily on the northern lowland site of Chunchucmil, its reach encompasses the entire Chunchucmil Economic Region (CER) and beyond, considering multiple socioeconomic strata of ancient urban and hinterland communities.

The goal of the volume is to explore the role of commerce—defined in the book as market exchange, as opposed to reciprocity and redistribution—in the development and maintenance of Early Classic lifeways at Chunchucmil and in the Maya world in general; that is to say, it strives to provide an understanding of how households supported themselves in what is generally characterized as an agriculturally barren region of the Yucatan Peninsula. In essence, it summarizes the decades-long Pakbeh Regional Economy Program initiated by Bruce H. Dahlin and colleagues in the 1990s, and also successfully incorporates results of earlier and ongoing research in the region. What differentiates this examination from similar endeavors is a focus on a broad variety of actors involved in commerce, as regards geographic distribution (the urban center and beyond), socioeconomic status, and gender. Although much of the data and interpretations have been previously presented elsewhere, all of the related streams of inquiry are brought together in a combined and updated format. The volume is touted as a multidisciplinary pursuit, and it does successfully incorporate scholarship from archaeology, ethnography, ethnohistory, history of commerce and industry, and environmental sciences (geomorphology, biology, hydrology). The contributing authors are all well-regarded in their respective fields.

The volume begins with a foreword by Anthony P. Andrews, recalling the beginnings of archaeological investigations at Chunchucmil. The first chapter introduces the main question of commerce, which has served as the focus of investigations at Chunchucmil since initial mapping efforts in the 1970s. This section also unravels the key laden terms—commerce, market, marketplace—and summarizes previous approaches to Maya market exchange. What follow are nine
co-authored chapters presenting relevant contextual lenses of evidence required to address the issue of commerce, highlighting the research methods and strategies adopted as well as their results. These include sections on site mapping, architectural typologies, and excavation sampling (chapters 2 and 3); applied ceramic and architectural chronologies (chapter 4); the character, distribution, and size of populations in the various urban and hinterland zones, alongside macro- and micro-environmental descriptions (baselines) for the CER (chapters 5, 6, and 8); and water and soil access and quality, agricultural carrying capacities, and the availability of perishable resources suitable for commercial activity (chapters 7, 9, and 10).

The in-depth introduction to the site, region, methods, and results was unexpected but appreciated. The supplementary electronic file of the full Chunchucmil site map and transects was a welcome addition, replete with relevant data, including the many movement-related (callejuelas, sacbeob) and commerce-relevant (metates, sascaberas) features. There are data-heavy sections within the text, more akin to a technical report, which can weigh down the narrative, but their presence is not purposeless. Regarding chronologies, I was surprised at how few radiocarbon dates were presented (two), and equally surprised that no petrographic analyses of pottery were available—particularly given the environmental data collected and a research focus on commerce—although the authors address these deficiencies and the need for future studies.

In chapters 11 and 12, co-contributors outline a three-pronged strategy for understanding marketing at Chunchucmil (distributional, contextual, and configurational approaches) and a regional spatial approach to investigating connections beyond the CER, including the southern Maya Lowlands and Central Mexico. Concluding the volume (chapter 13), Hutson addresses questions typically ignored by Maya archaeologists, including the management of marketing; the origins and transport of traded foodstuffs; and the political and social consequences of a regional economy which, he argues, was heavily based on commerce early on in the Classic period, and focused on a site that does not exhibit all of the usual trappings of a Maya city, such as divine kingship.

Many of the themes addressed require much speculation, particularly with regard to the commercial role of perishable goods. The contributors, however, support their views with the multidisciplinary lines of evidence presented in chapters 1 through 10. They are aware of the limitations of their existing datasets, and, as a result, present clear directions for future research. On a more personal note, I hoped the grand conclusion of the volume would suggest that the honeycomb appearance of Chunchucmil’s settlement, due to the albarrada-enclosed houselots, along with the historic and current involvement of local communities in beekeeping, was reflective of a citywide focus on apiculture as a commercial endeavor; alas, the authors are clearly too grounded in actual evidence to make such an unsubstantiated leap at this time.

Overall, the volume fits uniquely within the recently renewed focus on marketplaces and human-environment relationships in Maya archaeology and offers something for everyone, with the possible exception of epigraphers, as the site has no hieroglyphic texts. A particularly useful contribution is the demonstration of how the ancient Maya embraced environments that many would consider undesirable, such as seasonal wetlands—showcasing the diversity of lifeways, and therefore potential commercial contributions, within a single region—emphasizing how the overgeneralization of Maya Lowland environments has significantly hampered and delayed our understanding of ancient economies.

Although focused on a particular region and time, the volume is also broadly relevant to other locations and periods, especially those typically characterized as “frontier zones” and underappreciated by typical agricultural standards. I would recommend pairing this volume with Hutson’s The Ancient Urban Maya (University Press of Florida, 2016), where he discusses, among other topics, the role of marketplaces as attractors to Maya cities from an experiential standpoint. The research strategy outline is ideal for anyone initiating or reevaluating a large-scale, long-term research program. It is also particularly helpful to learn how established research methods can become flexible enough to handle diverse geographic and environmental zones, alongside shifts in interpretive trends over time. In addition to serving as a valuable comparative dataset for researchers, assigning Ancient Maya Commerce as part of a senior undergraduate or graduate seminar would prove a wonderful means of critically engaging students with a well-developed and beautifully executed research project focused on the trifecta of archaeology: people, places, and things.