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Part I: Conflict in the Maya World

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Disentangling Conflict in Maya and Mesoamerican Studies

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*It may help to understand human affairs to be clear that most of the great triumphs
and tragedies of history are caused, not by people being fundamentally good or
fundamentally bad, but by people being fundamentally people.*

(Pratchett and Gaiman 1990, 39)

For decades prior to the 1980s, when our ability to read ancient texts became more fully developed, the narrative of the ancient Maya as peaceful stargazers dominated and even directed early studies based in ethnography, ethnohistory, art history, and archaeology (best exemplified in Morley 1946; see discussions in Sullivan 2014; Webster 2000; Wilk 1985). Alongside more general narratives surrounding the "noble savages" of the Americas (Deloria 1969; Otterbein 2000a), these biases served to limit earlier considerations of conflict in the ancient past. Since the 1980s, significant contributions to the study of ancient Maya—and, more generally, Mesoamerican—conflict have appeared in peer-reviewed articles, books and book chapters, and popular media. Although this volume is intended as a follow-up to previous scholarly contributions, such as Brown and

Stanton's (2003) *Ancient Mesoamerican Warfare* and Orr and Koontz's (2009) *Blood and Beauty*, it is also unique. We present a conscious effort to consider a range of human conflict processes—from interpersonal violence and crime, to intergroup aggression and political instability, to institutional breakdown and the collapse of civilizations—and to include contributions for which archaeological materials, ancient and not-so-ancient text, and preserved images all serve as complementary touchstones.

While this volume presents new sources, new translations, and new interpretations, it also attempts to explore Maya—and comparative Mesoamerican—conflict through an *emic* (insider, subjective) approach alongside the more traditional *etic* (outsider, objective) perspective, both of which are critical to developing more social and holistic understandings of the complex, often multigenerational processes that make up conflicts (Gilchrist 2003). By including studies that intentionally adopt cognitive and experiential approaches alongside more operational considerations, this volume acts as a valuable counterpoint to its more etic predecessors. Thus while many treatments of conflict, including that of this volume, focus on the degree to which its prevalence, nature, and conduct varied across time and space, we explicitly attempt to understand how the Maya themselves—along with their Mesoamerican neighbors—understood and explained conflict, what they recognized as conflict, how conflict was experienced by various parties, and the circumstances surrounding conflict.

We are, as always, limited in our ability to fully achieve emic understandings of the past. This is the result of the physical limitations presented to us through the various disciplines encompassed in this volume, alongside the ever-present lack of a working time machine. Issues such as the psychology of conflict, including what it was like to live through periods of conflict or the beliefs that propel conflict (e.g., superiority, injustice, vulnerability, distrust, helplessness; see Eidelson and Eidelson 2003), are often within the untouchable realm for most scholars of history and prehistory, unless chance should have it that individuals recorded these thoughts and experiences for us to discover. To a degree, we might be able to take more modern experiences of conflict and project them onto the past; however, this is an extremely difficult and tentative task.

The aims of this introductory chapter are twofold. In the first half, we consider a brief history of conflict research in Maya and Mesoamerican studies and discuss the notion of conflict itself as a dynamic of emic and etic perspectives critical to understanding the concept as a process and total social fact—a common thread throughout the volume. We also elaborate on the three aforementioned categories of approaches (operational, cognitive, experiential) and consider how multiple theoretical frameworks demonstrate that conflict can, and in fact should, be viewed from a variety of angles. In the second half of the

chapter, we introduce the structure of the volume and how individual contributions move forward our stated goals.

WHY STUDY CONFLICT?

> We live in an age that is said to be ahistorical. It is difficult to remember the past—or even acknowledge it—living as we do, focused on an "eternal present," driven by busy schedules and information overload, and wrapped up in anxieties about careers, family, health, the environment, terrorism, the future of the world. It can be both comforting and discouraging to know that many of the issues we confront today have been with us in different forms for a long time.
>
> (Lucht 2007, xv–xvi)

Conflict. The term is pervasive across news headlines around the globe. "The Middle East Conflict." "The Syrian Conflict." "The Columbian Armed Conflict." "The Conflict in South Sudan." "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." Beyond the most recent headlines, terms such as *class conflict*, *inner conflict*, *conflict resolution*, *conflict of interest*, *conflict diamond*, and *conflict tourism* surround us throughout our daily lives—at home, at work, and at play.

Since 1980, the number of studies of conflict among the ancient Maya and their Mesoamerican neighbors has risen dramatically (a small sample of such studies includes Brown and Stanton 2003; Chase and Chase 1989; Demarest et al. 1997; Dillon 1982; Freidel 1986; Hamblin and Pitcher 1980; Inomata 1997, 2014; Johnston 2001; Marcus 1992b; Miller 1986; Nahm 1994; Pohl and Pohl 1994; Redmond and Spencer 2006; Vázquez López, Valencia Rivera, and Gutierrez González 2014; Webster 1993, 1998, 1999, 2000), although the Aztec have long drawn such fascination primarily as a result of significant ethnohistoric accounts from the Conquest period (see Hassig 1995). Why has conflict become such a focus in Mesoamerican studies, particularly of the Maya, when prior to the end of the twentieth century CE it was largely avoided? The most obvious reasons are disciplinary-based, internal to modern Western approaches to the material past (e.g., archaeology, epigraphy, iconography). Conflicts, in particular violent events of interference, are "real" processes that can leave telltale signs within the physical record of the past, including dramatic shifts in human behavior (Saunders 2004). We tend to believe that we can easily define conflict as disruption or discord within the white noise that is peace. When this disruption takes the form of violence, involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill, it becomes more visible in the archaeological record (Vencl 1984).

Other explanations are more broadly and historically contingent. As Wilk (1985, 307) noted in the mid-1980s, "archaeological discourse has a dual nature: at the same time that it pursues objective, verifiable knowledge about the past, it also conducts an informal and often hidden political and philosophical debate

about the major issues of contemporary life." Post–World War II archaeology focused heavily on the peaceful nature of the Maya, perhaps as a direct reaction against and escape from the reality that many soldier-scholars had recently faced. A noticeable increase in the number of American scholars dealing with the topics of collapse and warfare in the 1960s to 1970s is suggested by Wilk (1985) to be a reflection of US involvement in Vietnam. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the eventual dissolution of the British Empire and the Soviet Union—both a series of large-scale, long-term events serving as a culmination of multigenerational conflicts (Gluckman 1955, 1963)—increased interest in conflict and even collapse among scholars the world over focused on Mesoamerica and the Maya. Perhaps even the origin of archaeology as a discipline, within the realms of military and nationalistic pursuits, foreshadowed our inevitable interest in past conflict (Evans 2014; Trigger 2006).

Finally, we must consider that this fascination is not entirely our own but is shared with the peoples of ancient Mesoamerica. The textual corpus of the Maya region and its neighbors, at least that portion recorded on (semi-) public stone monuments, shows a similar concern with conflict. In general, this typically includes events that embroil rulers against their neighbors, such as inter-site or inter-dynastic conflict involving armed engagements (militarism, conquest, and coercion) (Kettunen 2012). While the database associated with Kettunen's Corpus Epigraphy project is continually developing, we are currently able to note at least 117 different Maya monuments that specifically discuss warfare. Of these, there are 166 individual references to acts of physical domination or violence, representing 98 "events of interference" (see below), either part of the same or diverse conflict processes. References[1] to warfare in the hieroglyphic corpus include verbs such as *chuk-* "to capture" or "to tie up," *jub-* "to overthrow," *ch'ak-* "to chop, destroy," *pul-* "to burn," *nak-* "to fight," as well as the so-called star-war glyph that appears to refer to large-scale warfare. The most common of these references in the corpus of Maya inscriptions is the verb *chuk-* and its passive form *chuhkaj* "was captured." However, we must be careful when interpreting these records, as they are in many cases abundant in one geographic area and all but absent in another. This is especially the case with the *pul-* verb, which is a characteristic feature in the rhetoric of the Eastern Lowlands around Naranjo but practically nonexistent elsewhere, except for a few rare references beyond that region (Kettunen 2015).

In addition to these verbs, there are indirect references to aggression in Maya texts. One of these is *och ch'e'n* "cave entering," which may be a reference to entering a city with armed forces. Another phrase is *nahbaj uk'ik'el witzaj ujolil*, or the "pooling" of blood and "mountaining" (i.e., piling up) the skulls of enemies (?), as well as *na'waj*, or the "presentation" of captives. Besides verbs, we have nouns and compound nouns that are associated with warfare, including

baak "captive," *to'k' pakal* "flint-shield," or "army"—appearing frequently in the phrase *jubuy uto'k' upakal*, or "defeating the army"—and titles such as the guardian (captor) of so-and-so (*ucha'n . . .*) and "he of so-and-so many captives" (*aj . . . baak*). In addition to these references, we have military titles and military offices in the corpus, including *baah te'*, *baah to'k'*, *baah pakal*, *ch'ahom ajaw*, *lakam*, *sajal*, *yajaw k'ahk'*, and *yajaw te'*. The precise meaning and function of these titles is still under debate, and in the end, some of them may not have direct military associations. Other nouns include *to'k'* "flint," *pakal* "shield," and *ko'haw* "helmet." Kettunen (2014) has expanded this list by attempting to identify more subtle terminology and imagery related to warriors, weaponry, armor, strategies, tactics, and military geography, along with political motivations as presented in both the ancient corpus and colonial documents.

The subjective differences between various terms describing conflict are important. Languages can and do reflect the changes societies undergo; they naturally evolve over time under "normal" circumstances, and when change is rapid or traumatic, as is often the case with conflict, new words and phrases or secondary meanings of existing words and phrases often tell their own story of impact and change. In Ch'olti, *lacael* may indicate either a war or plague, the outcomes of each presumably thought of as broadly similar (Boot 2004, 8). Likewise, to "take in war" may be likened to the hunting of animals by the term *colom* (Boot 2004, 41). In K'iche', *ch'o'j* and its related terms may be used to indicate variations on an impassioned or angry dispute, while *labal* and its related terms clearly link the concept of "war" with the qualities of "badness" and "barbarism" (Christenson n.d., 24, 68). In Ch'ol, modern speakers borrow from the Spanish *guerra* to describe inter/intra-state conflicts or warfare (Hopkins, Josserand, and Cruz Guzmán 2011, 60). In Mopan, speakers distinguish between "warfare" (in the modern Western sense) and other conflicts by using the term *guerra*, while *p'isb'aj* and its related terms are used to indicate general conflicts or fights, and *lox* refers to small skirmishes or fistfights (residents of Maya Mopan, Stann Creek District, Belize, personal communication to M. Peuramaki-Brown and S. Morton, 2015; Hofling 2011, 662). Interestingly, *guerra* is a loanword from Germanic (Vandal/Visigoth) *warra*, as are some other war-related words in Spanish—in a similar way as the word was borrowed from Spanish to Mayan languages—perhaps reflecting the difference of native warfare as opposed to a "foreign" type/style of warfare. It would be foolish to expect any less variability in the ancient past. Thus the language of conflict is a critical focus in this volume.

Returning to considerations of conflict as process and total social fact, peace and negotiation are equally part of the equation, as are periods of coexistence (liminal events, discussed below), and they should be expressly included in our examinations whenever possible. While less frequent to be sure, the ancient Maya also felt compelled to record events and interactions that likely served to

ameliorate or suppress the threat of conflict and maintain the peace. On Altar 21 from Caracol, the inauguration of Yajaw Te' K'inich is supervised and sponsored by the Tikal king Wak Chan K'awiil (Martin and Grube 2008, 89). On Altar 5 from Tikal, the Tikal lord Jasaw Chan K'awiil and a lord from Maasal cooperated in a joint exhumation ritual despite a long history of conflict between these two centers (Martin and Grube 2008, 37, 47). The affirmation of political domination and cooperation, while perhaps preserving the peace, could similarly be seen to foment discord. In 556 CE, three years after witnessing the inauguration of Yajaw Te' K'inich, Tikal "axed" Caracol (Martin and Grube 2008, 89)—an event that foreshadows a series of attacks and counterattacks so significant that we have taken to using the eventual fall of Tikal at the hands of its longtime rival Calakmul and its allies (Caracol included) as the marker for the end of the Early Classic period in the late sixth century CE. Such an example highlights the importance of perspective and the reality that lines between conflict and peace are not so easily drawn, as is often believed. In pointing to these issues, it is not our intention to undermine existing contributions to the study of conflict among the ancient Maya but rather to emphasize that the study of conflict, both cross-culturally and through time, may benefit from more nuanced approaches than are typically employed, an issue this volume explicitly attempts to address.

Ancient Mesoamerican Warfare (Brown and Stanton 2003) was the first comprehensive edited volume on warfare in Mesoamerica and acted as a watershed to previous studies by putting them in comparative context. What the volume may have lacked in specificity (being regionally broad), it more than made up for by showcasing the diverse ways Mesoamerican researchers, Mayanists included, were identifying and interpreting the material remains of warfare. As Brown and Stanton (2003, 2) point out, terms used to denote forms of violent aggression, along with other conflict-related concepts, are notoriously ill-defined. Confounded by arguments over motivation, scale, and even basic human nature, the task of succinctly defining such terms is daunting (Simons 1999). The editors unified the various chapters through use of the shared terms *aggression* and *conflict*, leaving particular examples to the discretion of the individual authors. This use of the broad term *conflict* belies the fact that the associated volume discussions were much narrower. As noted above, existing literature on the topic reveals that, despite significant and detailed treatments of acts and concepts that might be subsumed under the category of conflict in ancient Mesoamerica, a narrow semantic field dominates this discourse, specifically, discussions of "warfare" and related aspects of physical "violence" (Hassig 1992; Webster 2000). While both terms are frequently treated in the literature, there has historically been little attempt to define these concepts in a meaningful way, with the result being the discouragement of more nuanced, culturally relevant, or emically derived discussions of these subjects and overall processes of conflict.

DISENTANGLING CONFLICT

> *Man is a competitive creature, and the seeds of conflict are built deep into our genes. We fought each other on the savannah and only survived against great odds by organising ourselves into groups, which would have had a common purpose, giving morale and fortitude. Our aggression is a deep instinct, which survives in all kinds of manifestations in modern man.*
>
> (WINSTON 2005)

Conflict is a complex concept, taking myriad forms: personal and interpersonal, public and private, identified and anonymous, aggressive and passive (and passive aggressive), intimate and distant, local and global. Conflicts rarely consist of singular events; rather, they are often multi-event processes that can evolve over many days, years, or even generations. An example from recent history would be the conflict between the US government/military and the various indigenous groups of the Great Plains. In his book *The Day the World Ended at Little Bighorn*, Marshall (2007, 227–228) wisely notes:

> The Lakota world did end at the Little Bighorn because of the government's intent to end it, not because we won a great victory. But that day was the culmination of any number of days that might have been the beginning of the end over the course of several generations. It might have been the day the French explorers . . . laid coveting eyes on the northern plains, or the day someone took to heart . . . [the] angry suggestion to force the Lakota into a dependence on the government's will. Or perhaps it was the day a white man discovered gold in the Black Hills. Or any of the days a peace talker drafted a treaty that was more favorable to his side. Or the day ethnocentric arrogance declared the West to have land free for the taking.

In light of such understandings, we believe Schmidt and Kochan's (1972) definition of conflict lends itself to broad comparisons on an etic, functional level, alongside more emic, subjective pursuits of understanding and in consideration of the long time scales often required. Conflict is any overt behavior arising out of a *process* in which one or more decision-making units (individuals or collectives, each with their own motivational forces and goals) seeks the advancement of its own interests in its relationship with other units (figure 1.1). This advancement must result from determined action as opposed to fortuitous circumstance and includes coercive and hegemonic actions alongside exercised force, couched within preexisting political, social, economic, and ideological power networks (Mann 1986, 22–27). Conflict, including its various forms of disputes and negotiations, is therefore the struggle between groups or individuals over incompatible goals, scarce resources, or the sources of power needed to acquire them (Avruch 1998; Hsiang, Burke, and Miguel 2013).
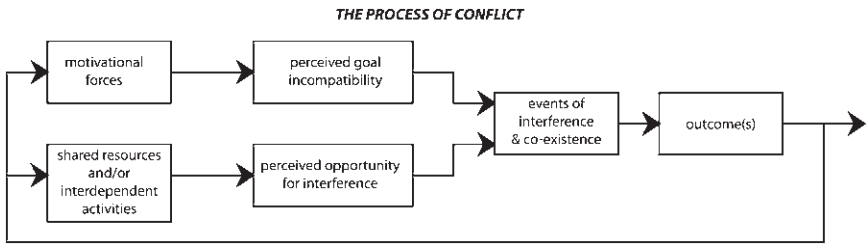
FIGURE 1.1. *The process of conflict (modified from Schmidt and Kochan 1972, figure 2)*

The struggle that is conflict is determined by perceptions of goals, resources, and power, which may differ greatly between individuals and collectives. Today, the United Nations recognizes that any discussion of conflict and its associated events, activities, and perspectives must consider a minimum of three parties: the performer, the victim, and the witness (Galtung 2000). Therefore, critical to any attempt at understanding etic as well as emic aspects of conflict in the past is a consideration of various perspectives represented on all sides of a given process. The importance of the perception factor is best portrayed in Service's (1966, 58) use of an "old Arab proverb" to discuss differing instances of conflict, quoted as "I against my brother; I and my brother against my cousin; I, my brothers, and my cousins against the next village; all of us against the foreigner." Overall, culture remains an important determinant of perceptions, and conflict that occurs across cultural boundaries also occurs across cognitive and perceptual boundaries—as it is between individuals and groups—and is especially susceptible to problems of intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding (consider Graham's discussion of "rules of engagement," this volume). Such problems can exacerbate conflict, no matter what the root causes may be. Culture, therefore, is an important factor in many conflicts that at first glance, particularly to the archaeologist, may appear to be solely about material resources or tangible interests.

As part of this overall definition, which serves to outline an entire process, conflict is disentangled from general notions of competition, contrary to the works of many scholars that are strongly based in the sociological writings of Georg Simmel and Karl Marx (Helle 2008; Turner 1975; Wolff 1950). Competition as compared to conflict occurs where, given incompatible goals, there is no interference with each unit's goal attainment. In the case of ancient Maya and Mesoamerican states, each can compete for resources but not engage in a process of conflict until the activity of one disrupts the success of another (e.g., warfare, trade route blockades).

Key to the process of conflict is an understanding of "perceived" goals and accepted forms of interference (passive or active, violent or non-violent) from the perspective of each unit involved, as opposed to simply focusing on the events

of conflict as categories of analysis (Chagnon 1988, 2009; Fry and Björkqvist 2009). It is within this context that Maya and Mesoamerican studies continue to lag; we remain uncertain of the perceived goals and accepted forms of interference within conflict processes, as many of the chapters in this volume address. This expands our considerations of conflict to include not only a sociological focus on people and practice but also the entanglement of places and things, which broadens the narrative of conflict cross-culturally and cross-temporally (Leverentz 2010). This is critical, as the causes of conflict and the experiences behind it are often understood and represented differently by the various positions of instigators, accomplices, rivals, observers, winners, losers, and other parties (Yoffee 2005). Conflict is both imagined and performed—a duality that is critical when examining its nature in diverse cultural contexts (Arkush and Stanish 2005; Schröder and Schmidt 2001). This is exemplified in a consideration of the ongoing conflicts in the Near and Middle East, where an individual's or a group's perceived goals surrounding the various engagements, whether they be economic, political, religious, or some other, will directly relate to their experience with given situations and impact what they conceive of as acceptable forms of interference (e.g., blockades, diplomacy, warfare). In addition, coexistence is presented as liminal events within the conflict process and can occur over short periods in multiple forms, including ritually regulated truces, war payments, cycles of fighting and feasting, norms allowing trade between enemies in certain places or contexts, and "neutral" groups or specialized traders.

Each dimension of the conflict process is accessible to comparative analysis; however, this assessment of the distant past has proven elusive. To date, most archaeologists have focused on developing etic classifications of conflict events, often noting the outcomes and possible motivations typically linked to resource arguments but rarely considering emic, phenomenological understandings of perceived goals and opportunities for interference. By focusing solely on events, typically in the form of etic categorizations of outcomes, we fail to achieve the more emic approaches currently on trend in archaeological theory and practices (Hegmon 2003; Oland, Hart, and Frink 2012; Schmidt 2001).

APPROACHES TO CONFLICT

Schröder and Schmidt (2001) identify three primary approaches to understanding and identifying conflict in anthropology—(1) operational, (2) cognitive, and (3) experiential approaches—which we recognize as also employed in Maya and Mesoamerican studies today. The former category typically espouses more cross-cultural, etic considerations of conflict, while the latter two categories attempt to address individual-, group-, and culture-specific, emic understandings. The majority of chapters in this volume strive to engage one or both of the latter two approaches to conflict in some manner, alongside the former.

Operational approaches have a long history in archaeology and focus on etic links between conflict and general properties of human nature and rationality (Thorpe 2003). Such studies attempt to link general concepts of social adaptation to measurable material conditions (the aforementioned etic categorizations of conflict and associated events/outcomes) and aim to explain conflict by comparing structural and innate conditions as causes affecting specific historical conditions (Fried 1967; Gat 2006; Service 1962). These are employed to create generalized "big history" and cross-cultural narratives (e.g., Bowles 2009; Flannery and Marcus 2012; Fry and Söderberg 2013; Pinker 2011; Trigger 2003, 240–263). Within these approaches, conflict is considered never so specific and culturally bounded that it cannot be cross-compared. There is a long tradition in archaeology and anthropology of linking, for better or worse, types of collective conflict to types of society and arranging them on an evolutionary scale (e.g., Otterbein 1994; Reyna and Downs 1994). This practice is controversial, but comparative approaches remain one of the primary goals of ancient studies. In many respects, such discussions can be boiled down to the essence of "what it means to be human." Is the state of nature a state of conflict—of war, dominance, and strife in the Hobbesian sense? Or are all those living in a state of nature at peace, as in a Rousseauian sense? Is civilization our road to utopia or the source of our corruption? (For a timeless example in the world of fiction, one needs only to turn to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.)

By contrast, cognitive and experiential approaches focus on the emics of the cultural construction, negotiation, and agency of conflict in a given society, primarily through the "framing" of mental orientations that organize perception and interpretation (Goffman 1974). They consider narratives of individual engagement and cultural templates of appropriate behavior and decision-making (Shiv and Fedorikhin 1999). Cognitive approaches, which include affective behavior, attempt to understand conflicts as culturally constructed and representative of cultural values and are seen as contingent on cultural meaning and its form of representation. This is approached with careful attention to the socio-cultural specificity of a given historical context. Experiential approaches are often difficult to distinguish from cognitive studies, as they consider conflict to be related to individual subjectivity and narrative—something that structures people's everyday lives, even in its absence (Johnston 1995). The true nature and impact of conflict can therefore only be grasped through a consideration of individual experience and discourse, its meaning unfolding primarily through the individual's perception of a given situation (Briggs 1996). It is within these approaches that we tend to observe more holistic considerations of the people, places, and things involved in conflict processes and more complementary considerations of archaeological, textual, and visual materials of the past.

CHAPTER CONTRIBUTIONS

The inspiration for this volume derived from an invited session at the 2012 Chacmool Archaeological Conference in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. A number of the presentations sought to specifically address conflict through an emic lens. Inspired by such attempts, we solicited additional contributions (both original chapters and discussant chapters) that fit the theme to produce a unique, timely, and valuable collection of integrated papers. Through reference to art, text, and archaeology, the contributors to this volume consider how the ancient Maya and their neighbors defined, sought, and engaged in processes of conflict. Although the volume is weighted toward a Maya focus, additional chapters provide an essential contextual scope by dealing with neighboring culture areas of Mesoamerica (figure 1.2). The volume is also temporally expansive, including chapters that discuss a number of different periods in the archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic past.

Each of the chapters is authored or coauthored by leaders in the field of Maya and Mesoamerican studies. In part I, as is typical of much archaeological research, we will move through time, starting with the most recent periods of the Maya world—in particular the Conquest (chapter 2)—and moving through to the Postclassic and Classic periods (chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). We then jump to the western side of Mesoamerica in part II and visit some of the neighboring cultures of Central Mexico (chapters 8 and 9) and the Gulf Coast (chapter 10). Part III concludes the volume and features two chapters (chapters 11 and 12) that discuss the various themes presented in the previous sections. In addition, the authors present their own unique insights into the nature of conflict among the Maya and their neighbors and our attempts to pursue such understandings through both emic and etic lenses.

In part I of the volume, the authors focus on two key aspects of Maya conflict. The first is the entangled roles and agencies of people, places, and things within the processes and embodiments of conflict and the natural and supernatural forces believed and observed to be at play throughout. Each author emphasizes the role of both material and immaterial factors that are central to the causes, development, and outcomes of conflict, including the importance of embracing an entangled understanding of conflict, ritual landscapes, power, and divine protection.

Christenson (chapter 2) adopts a Tz'utujil Maya perspective to understanding the Spanish Conquest, perceived not as a catastrophic event that ended Maya culture but as a kind of death followed by rebirth, similar to other periodic world renewals. The conflict involved magic rather than force of arms, with the symbol of the Virgin Mary borne on the Spanish banner playing a decisive role in the defeat of the K'iche' warriors. This serves to remind us of the multiple perspectives that might exist regarding the causes and outcomes of a given conflict.

FIGURE 1.2. *Map of Mesoamerica, denoting prominent sites/locations discussed in this volume.*

Hernandez and Palka (chapter 3) contemplate how the protection and destruction (desecration) of material manifestations of supernatural forces, such as human remains, and the practice of Maya warfare were inextricably linked to the ritual landscapes of Chiapas and Petén. Through their discussion, they demonstrate the temporal continuity of many aspects of Maya conflict, from the Pre-Columbian into Post-Columbian periods.

Covering similar themes but with particular emphasis on iconography and ethnohistory, Bassie-Sweet (chapter 4) considers the detailed information presented in the colonial document the *Popol Vuh*, in particular the information concerning the war gods of the Postclassic K'iche' and similar deities found in Classic Maya art and writing. A common attribute of these gods is their relationship to thunderbolts and meteors and the important role these atmospheric phenomena and their material representations on earth—chert and obsidian—played in both Maya and Mesoamerican conflict. In her considerations, Bassie-Sweet highlights instances of conflict that bridge cultural, cognitive, and perceptual boundaries and the resulting implications.

Finally, Tokovinine (chapter 5) adopts an emic approach to understanding Classic Maya ways of writing about conflict—its causes and outcomes—confronting head-on the complexity of Mayan language and terminology. Of particular interest is the tying of conflict events to place names and deities. Tokovinine has identified a series of shifts in how these are referenced by the Maya over time, suggesting change in written discourse dealing with landscapes and conflict, including a move

away from a focus on raiding toward political, territorial, and hegemonic warfare (later reversed). This is an interesting observation toward our understandings of perceived and accepted forms of interference among the Maya over time.

The second key aspect addressed in part I involves the process of conflict itself, its defined forms (goals, interferences / coexistence, outcomes), and roles played in the development, denouement, and collapse of complex Maya organizations.

Haines and Sagebiel (chapter 6) consider shifting political power structures and associated conflict processes in Northern Belize during the Classic period, carefully knitting together disparate lines of evidence. In particular, Stela 9 at Lamanai is considered, less in terms of context of the text but rather on its treatment and disposition as related to processes of conflict between Lamanai and Ka'kabish. A consideration of titles of rulership and overlordship is central to their discussion.

Bey and Gallareta Negrón (chapter 7) argue that warfare in the tenth century CE was the final form of interference following an almost 2,000-year process of conflict among the Puuc Maya of the Yucatan Peninsula. Traditionally, the development of social complexity in this region has been considered relatively free of conflict when compared to the southern Maya lowlands. New archaeological and iconographic information considered in this chapter focuses on the fact that the rise of social complexity in the Puuc began much earlier than has been traditionally argued, dramatically changing our view of both the nature and structure of conflict in this region. The authors propose a model for the Puuc consisting of highly institutionalized militarism that incorporated wider Mesoamerican influences in its perceived goals, forms of interference, and successful outcomes.

In part II of the volume, we turn to comparative examples of conflict from outside the Maya world; specifically, we look to the regions of Central Mexico and the Gulf Coast.

Nielsen (chapter 8) discusses how archaeologists, epigraphers, and art historians have just begun to map and understand the extent of the influence of Teotihuacan conflict during the fourth and fifth centuries CE. He considers the iconographic and architectural symbol sets of a Teotihuacan imperial expansion and subsequent local emulations in Querétaro and Michoacan, perhaps commissioned by imperial representatives.

Abtosway and McCafferty (chapter 9) continue the discussion of the people, place, and thing embodiment of conflict through reference to Mixtec codices and archaeology of the Mixteca Alta. Mixtec pictorial manuscripts contain the longest historical accounts from ancient Mesoamerica, spanning the period about 900–1600 CE. Included in these "mythstories" are genealogical registers, ritual events, political interaction, and military action within broader narratives of natural and supernatural conflict. Through their cataloging of a wide variety of weapons used in Mixtec warfare, the authors provide a cross-cultural perspective for a region and topic that is typically dominated by discussions of the Aztec and the Maya.

Finally, Koontz (chapter 10) interprets multiple levels of representation and contexts of banner stones associated with military procession as possible evidence of hierarchy within military ranks and social mobility at El Tajín, Veracruz. This discussion brings the main body of the volume full circle to Christiansen's initial discussion of the role of things, namely, the banners of saints, in the interferences and outcomes of conflict.

Part III features retrospective and discussion in the form of two chapters that conclude the volume. Both Stanton (chapter 11) and Graham (chapter 12) take pains to further define and engage the various processes of conflict addressed in the volume. Stanton emphasizes the messy, disorganized, and widespread impacts of "organized violence," ultimately asking more questions than providing answers and thus charting a path forward. Graham's deconstruction of but one of the terms addressed in many of the chapters of this volume, *war*, serves to ably highlight the aforementioned variability of the concepts, processes, and practices of conflict in the ancient past. She further considers what might have been the perceived goals and accepted forms of interference within conflict among various groups. Were rulers engaging in warfare for the purpose of captives, tribute, land, or other resources (economic and social)? What were the underlying causes that led individuals and groups to select some goals rather than others as premises for their interference decisions?

The expressed goal of this volume is to explore the topic of conflict in its various guises across the Maya area and broader Mesoamerica, with a particular attempt to develop emic understandings alongside the etic. By including ethnohistoric, art historical, epigraphic, and archaeological studies that intentionally adopt cognitive and experiential approaches alongside more operational considerations, we aim to present a volume that acts as a valuable counterpoint to its more etic predecessors.

NOTE

1. We realize the limitations such lists present, as they are dependent on our subjective linking of terms to existing concepts in English, Spanish, and other languages.