

social actors. With 62 pages devoted to royals and nobles (as compared with 32 pages to non-elite social actors labeled "farmers"), this book will not dispel that allegation. On the other hand, royal hieroglyphic texts and iconography provide insights into wealth, power relationships, and cosmology of ruling and sub-royal sectors that is not available for non-elites (or for parts of the lowlands in which royal dynasts did not hold sway). When the spotlight shifts to farmers and non-elite artisans (8 and 9), the voice and perspective shift understandably from agent-based to being more object-focused. Foundation narratives that metaphorically refer to Maya people as farmed from maize provide a theme of Chapter 8 alongside the proposal that a decrease in crop diversity (towards maize monoculture) typified Late Classic politics (p. 248). The diversity of artisan production roles, which deviated noticeably from the current archaeological paradigm of craft specialists, is amply documented and larger implications discussed in Chapter 9. Entanglements between social actors and a supernatural world that included gods, embodied "spiritual energy" (p. 193), and ancestors occupy a chapter of comparable length to that of farmers. The centrality as well as pragmatism of this practice-based and materially grounded cosmology is extremely well contextualized: this insightful chapter enlightens and deepens understanding rather than presenting an exotic other.

How the end of the Classic period is materialized at major political capitals across the lowlands provides the grist for Chapter 10—one of the strongest in the book. An even-handed review of possible causes of the dissolution of divine rulers—and dismissal of mechanistic relationships—is followed by an impressive tour of the final years at palace courts that includes discussion of the last stone monuments with dynastic Long-Counts dates, unfinished monumental constructions, abandonment of royal precincts, and deposits that allude to termination rituals. Variation by place in the material expression of this 150-year-long political transformation and demographic shift is striking: this chapter demystifies this political change while also highlighting the social turmoil of this time of troubles.

This expansive treatment of America's most visually compelling civilization does not engage with the debate over Late Classic population estimates. The northern lowlands, in which hieroglyphic texts are scarcer but with occupational depth and monumentality equal to the southern lowlands, are discussed only in the final chapter. Nonetheless, this book ranks as the most authoritative and multidimensional treatment of Classic Maya elite society ever published. Impressive in scholarly depth and breadth, the authors have succeeded admirably in producing a book that works as both an accessible textbook and a valuable research text. Quite consciously, they have crafted an interpretive frame through which we gaze steadily on social actors at royal courts and catch a fleeting glimpse of the lives and livelihoods of non-royal "people of maize."

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**Yucatán through Her Eyes: Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, Writer and Expeditionary Photographer.** *Lawrence Gustave Desmond.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009, 387 pp. \$ 45.00, cloth.

The area of gender and archaeology has received increasing scholarly attention. Some authors conceptualize gender in ancient societies, others discuss issues of gender and contemporary research, and others, perhaps a minority, write about women in the history of archaeology. Lawrence Desmond's fascinating biography of Alice Dixon—wife of Augustus Le Plongeon—contributes to the still-developing area of research that explores women pioneers in archaeology and anthropology. This work reveals that women approached archaeology on their own terms, not merely as companions to their husbands. This nicely written and visually beautiful book is not only an entrance to an early period

of Mayan studies, but also an exemplary history of archaeology crafted through the voices of its practitioners. Even though Le Plongeon's ideas about the origin and influence of the Mayan civilizations have proven incorrect, this book reminds us that archaeology, more than a history of successes and failures of theories, is a set of practices, techniques (photography among others), and human interactions occurring in the field.

The book is divided in four sections that follow Alice's life (1851–1910) chronologically. The first section briefly introduces Alice Dixon's family and their involvement with a photographic business in London. Although Alice never wanted to marry, her unexpected encounter with Augustus Le Plongeon in the streets of London changed the course of her life. In 1873, Alice and Augustus sailed to Yucatán and began an exciting journey as life partners and archaeological companions. The central and longer section of the book is Alice's diary, written while she was living in Yucatán. Desmond transcribed her handwritten diary, leaving it almost intact except for some specific clarifications. In this section, more information about Mexico would have been helpful, to better understand the relations—or lack thereof—between the Le Plongeon and Mexican archaeological authorities. However, the diary itself is a fascinating first-hand narrative that transports the reader to the Yucatán of the mid 1870s through the eyes of a detailed, sensitive Victorian observer.

From an anthropological point of view, Alice's diary is a jewel: full of meticulous descriptions of archaeological sites and narratives explaining how the archaeological couple managed to take photographs—several of them are included in this book, make molds of monuments, and finance part of their explorations by obtaining archaeological pieces that were later sold in the United States. The diary also describes the people they encountered in Yucatán. Through Alice's words we obtain a general picture of the convoluted relations between Mayans and foreigners at the end of the nineteenth century with the Caste Wars as the backdrop of Alice's daily life in Yucatán. Through Alice's daily annotations in the diary, we grasp her wider interest in the situation of the Mayans, their labor conditions, and the special attention she paid to the status of indigenous women. The last section of the book treats the period after 1884, a very productive time for Alice. While living in the United States, she wrote more than one hundred articles about a wide range of Mayan subjects. When she became involved with the women's suffragist movement in New York, Alice used her knowledge about the Mayans to talk about women's issues and social justice. Alice died in 1910, two years after her husband. Her papers and photographs were kept by her close friend Maude Blackwell with explicit orders to "destroy everything unless the American people showed an interest in the Maya" (p. 333).

Desmond's publication of Alice's diary sheds more light on a period of anthropology already recognized as welcoming to women. However, one would like to know more about how Alice's participation in the discipline, as with that of Sarah Yorke Stevenson, Alice Fletcher, Zelia Nuttall, or Matilda Cox Stevenson, was unique and different from that of her male colleagues. A gendered reading of Alice's diary and publications would have discussed whether Alice indeed saw "Yucatán through her eyes." It would also explore the characteristics she shared with other pioneering women anthropologists: they all traveled to unfamiliar terrains and somehow escaped Victorian gender roles, they reflected about the impact of colonialism on indigenous societies, and they popularized anthropology at a moment of disciplinary professionalization. Overall, this superb biographical book will appeal to scholars interested in the history of anthropology, gender, and scientific practice, as well as to the lay public.

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