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Lawrence G. Desmond, Ph.D.
3097 Cowper St.
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Dear Dr. Desmond,

First, I want to sing the praises of your book, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009), which I think is one of the most novel additions to the literature on early explorations of the Ancient Maya to come along in many years. Yes there are the familiar and wondrous ruins peeking through the steamy hot jungles, but now these are seen and interpreted through the eyes of a refined, articulate, persistent, and adventurous young European woman from the Victorian Age. It is a great read, not only for its description of the earliest days of explorations of the ancient Maya, but especially for its detailed and sympathetic portrait of this very unique young woman whom you describe working there. Moreover, it is exquisitely illustrated with period photographs and drawings, a feast for the eyes, making it even harder to put down.

Indeed, your book is special and rare precisely because *it is about a woman* carving out her place in a realm heretofore thought to be inhabited only by rugged men wearing pith helmets and tall leather boots, sitting at their writing tables amid the ruins and smoking their pipes. Move over Stephens, Catherwood, Maudslay, Thompson, Morley, and all the other Old School Mayanists, and make room for Alice Dixon!

Certainly your book will take its place among reputable scholarly works describing the early days of archaeological explorations of the Ancient Maya. But I also think it may eventually take its place as part of an emerging trend in the literature of Mexican history which is increasingly bringing to light the lives of women who have been influential in Mexican history--poet Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz, for example, artist Frida Kahlo, photographer and revolutionary political activist Tina Modotti, and soon explorer, archaeologist, and documentarian Alice Dixon.

A sleeping giant of possibility for your book, therefore, will be its discovery by women in academic circles, especially those who teach courses in women's studies and their students--a potentially huge market, indeed one that is *far larger* than the potential readership in Mesoamerican studies. After all, your heroine was not only an early explorer of the ancient Maya civilizations, she was also a pioneering feminist in the 19th century who worked to secure voting and working rights for women.

So while I treasure my cloth-bound copy of your book, to reach this potentially wider readership I think your book needs to be made available in a less expensive and more readily accessible form. Thus, I hope you might be able to convince your publisher to release a paper-bound version that would be more affordably priced, and to also consider releasing online, eBook, and other digitized versions, as well as

rented books--all of which are currently seeing a great upsurge in sales in the higher-education market. Inasmuch as your book has already been published, and especially given the economies in publishing these days that are made possible by computer-assisted design and digital information technology, the costs of these more-affordable productions should be minimal while their potential return may be great indeed.

I have taught the history of Mexico and Mesoamerica at the University of Colorado ever since 1973, and for the required readings have repeatedly sought out new texts which represent sound scholarship, exciting reading, sensitivity to gender issues, and which my students can afford to buy. And if your book were available in less-expensive formats I feel sure that many faculty members would adopt it as required reading for their courses--again, not only for courses in Mesoamerican studies, but also for those that are concerned with women and women's issues. And in both of the foregoing contexts combined, I think your book might enjoy a phenomenal distribution indeed.

Your book reflects careful and old-fashioned scholarship, but with a unique focus. And it tells an exciting true story about a refined young woman who lived in the remote and rugged Yucatán in the 19th century. No refried beans, it is an original--and a significant new contribution.

Congratulations and best wishes,



James R. McGoodwin,
Professor Emeritus