Framing Tzikin Tzakan: Archaeology, Tourism, and Conservation in Guatemala

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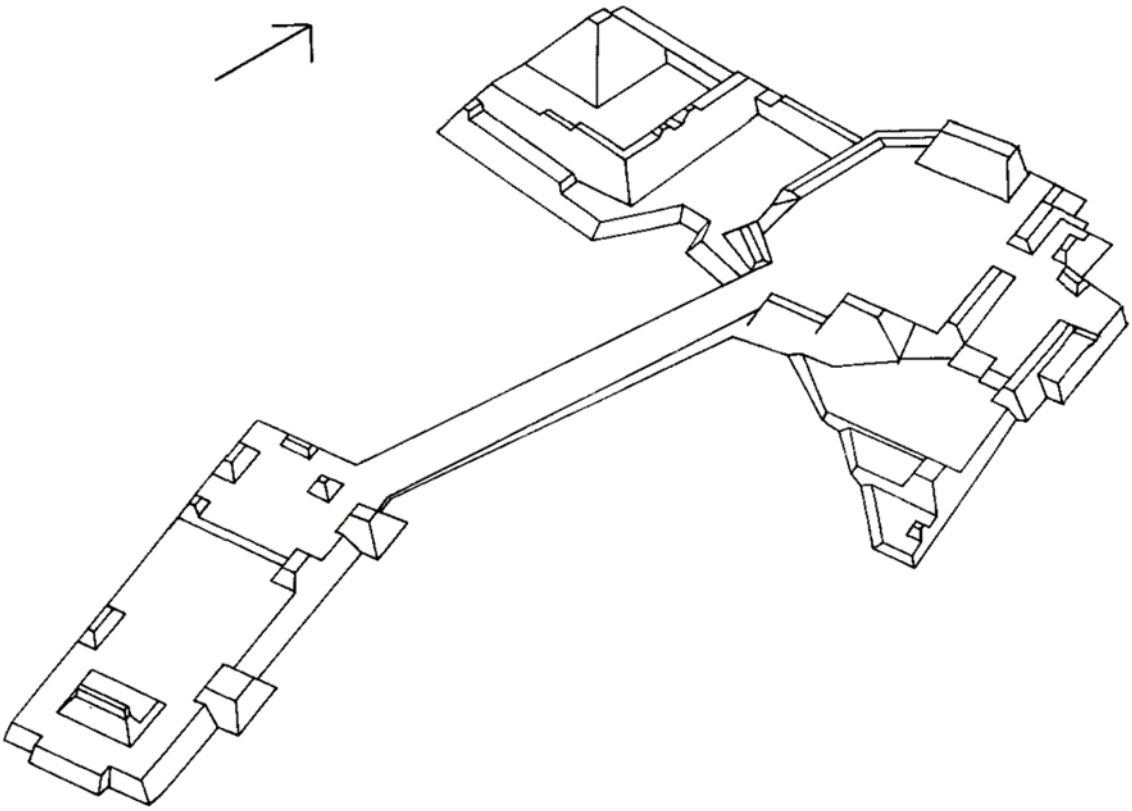

Juliette Hemelaar

Cover illustration: Isometric map of Tzikin Tzakan (Quintana Samoyoa and Würster 2001, 132).

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4 May 2022

Final version

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1) Problematizing the project

Barring unforeseen misfortunes, the first field season of the Tzikin Tzakan project will commence on May 9th, 2022. Focused on a medium-sized monumental structure from the Classic Maya period (AD 250–900) that has been on archaeologists' radar for quite some time without ever being excavated, this inaugural season aims to lay the foundations for a multiyear campaign that will combine archaeological and biological research with community outreach and possible tourism development (Chase and Chase 2004, 13; Quintana Samoyoa and Würster 2001, 132-133). After being delayed for two years on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, the international team consisting of Guatemalan, U.S. American, German, and Dutch researchers and students (author included) is eager to get started, though some precautions with relation to the virus still need to be taken.

However regrettable the delay might have been, it has given us ample time to prepare for and reflect upon this remarkable opportunity. For roughly half of the project's participants, the field season takes place in a foreign country, to which they need to travel a considerable distance. While not typically classified as such, this can be seen as a form of tourism, especially for those who participate as volunteers (Timothy 2020, 92). Guatemala, as a tourism destination, has a seemingly dualistic public image. On the one hand, it is known for its towering pyramids amidst lush yet endangered rainforest, colonial towns such as Antigua, as well as the traditions and languages of its large indigenous population. On the other hand, it has the reputation of being unsafe, both as a result of the civil war that only ended in 1996 and more recent threats of violence which are often related to drug trafficking. In some ways however, these two images combined can give the destination an adventurous and authentic feel (Becklake 2020, 36-38).

At the moment, tourism brokers in Guatemala will be more than happy to welcome any traveler venturing into the country, in an attempt to recover from pandemic-related travel restrictions and subsequent lack of revenue. Before this unprecedented drop, tourism was one of the most important and lucrative sectors of the Guatemalan economy (INGUAT 2020). As is the case in many developing countries,

tourism is hailed as an important development tool that could stimulate a more equal global distribution of wealth as well as providing an economic alternative for existence strategies that would otherwise damage the environment (Brockington *et al*. 2010, 132-138; Norris *et al.* 1998, 335-341).

Tourism is not always seen in such a positive light though, as the money generated by it rarely helps to alleviate poverty in the destination countries and its commercial nature can lead to unwanted commoditization (Chirenje *et al*. 2013, 9-10; Tegelberg 2013, 87-89). Amongst archaeologists, tourism also has a somewhat contentious reputation. Mass visitation of archaeological sites can threaten their preservation and increase looting, but can also generate enough income to sustain their excavation in the first place (Burtenshaw 2020, 44; Gillot 2020, 29; Hughes *et al*. 2013, 75; Mathews 2020, 154). Archaeological tourism is a relatively new and underexplored area of research that has started to gain more momentum as archaeologists come to realize its urgency (Timothy and Tahan 2020; Walker and Carr 2013).

In the case of Guatemala, the potential for tourism is in fact the prime motivation for the national government to invest in archaeological projects, though the majority of funds comes from abroad (Chinchilla Mazariegos 1998, 376-386; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 63). The country's most famous archaeological sites are located in the Petén district, an area that is also known for its rapidly shrinking tropical forest and recent population boom. Since the late 1980's, international conservationists have been strongly involved with creating and implementing a protected areas system that should protect both the region's natural and archaeological resources. Within this system, tourism is once again presented as a prime cure for economic woes (Rahder 2020, 14; Ybarra 2018, 49). Archaeology, conservation, tourism, and development thus seem to be strongly linked.

The forest that covers part of the Petén extends past Guatemala's borders is now commonly referred to as the 'Maya Forest', though that term is contested as it was not chosen by those who identify as Maya (Ybarra 2012, 480). In fact, tensions between the conservationists' agenda and indigenous peoples have led Megan Ybarra (2018, 6) to state: "Today, the fight to save the Maya Forest is often waged against Maya peoples." With regards to both Maya archaeology and Guatemalan tourism marketing, there also exists a certain tension and dissonance between professionals in those fields and the

actual Maya, though those categories are of course not mutually exclusive (Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 247).

It should be noted that 'Maya' is an umbrella term which today is generally used to refer to people who speak one of the many Mayan languages that make up the Mayan language family, of which more than 20 are spoken in Guatemala. The term is however often conflated with ethnicity and cultural practice, which has sparked considerable controversy as it would make a monolithic stereotype out of a culturally heterogeneous group of people, of whom not everyone self-identifies with the term (Castañeda 2004, 37; Magnoni *et al.* 2007, 356-357; Normark 2004, 136-137; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 250-251).

This thesis does not wish to erase the diversity of what is estimated to be rougly 60 percent of the Guatemalan population, but uses 'Maya' out of practical considerations when covering subjects relevant to its indigenous inhabitants who are not Xinca or Garífuna (Normark 2004, 121; Warren 2002, 150). Where necessary, specific socio-linguistic subgroups will be named individually. Phrases like 'contemporary Maya' or 'modern Maya' are used when it is useful to differentiate between people living in the current Guatemalan nation-state and the 'ancient Maya', the pre-Hispanic societies studied by Maya archaeologists (Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 250). Questions considering cultural and/or ethnic continuities between these two categories and the ways indigenous activists, archaeologists, and tourism marketers approach those questions will be covered in chapters 2 and 3.

Circling back to the Tzikin Tzakan project, which is in its infancy, it is clear that the upcoming field season will not start with a blank slate, but will rather take place and take part in a complex conjunction of sociopolitical currents that have been on the move for many years. Using that realization as a starting point, this thesis will investigate how and why archaeology, tourism, and biodiversity conservation became so utterly entangled in Guatemala, both by considering these strands individually and examining their relationships with one another. Moreover, the impacts and consequences of said interplay for the Guatemalan populace will be analyzed, with a focus on the role and responsibilities of archaeologists herein. Ultimately, it will be reviewed if this analysis can provide any lessons or council for the future of the Tzikin Tzakan project. A chapter overview outlining the contents of the thesis follows below.

1.2) Chapter overview

After the current introductory chapter, chapter 2 will provide the reader with an overview of the history of archaeological practice in Guatemala. External influences on Guatemalan archaeology have been strong for centuries, and continue to be so, as is also evident from the Tzikin Tzakan project, which is mainly organized from abroad. These influences are not separate from either international or national political events however, and their involvement therewith will form the heart of the chapter. Hereafter, the role of the Guatemalan government in the practice, management, and professionalization of archaeology will be discussed. The chapter closes with an analysis of how recent developments in archaeological theory have changed the way relationships with descendant communities are being approached.

Once this historical and theoretical background on archaeology in Guatemala has been established, chapter 3 will do the equivalent for tourism in the same country. Starting with an overview of how the industry grew over the last two centuries and the different niches that have developed, the chapter will then explore some of the controversies associated with cultural tourism like marketing tropes and the authenticity paradox. Finally, these issues are connected to the study of archaeological tourism in general, and the tension between nationalism and universalism in tourism in the Maya region specifically.

Chapter 4 will look at four different case studies of archaeological sites that tourists can visit in Guatemala today. Since it is a possibility that Tzikin Tzakan becomes a tourist attraction in the future, it is useful to look into some examples of projects that came before. These projects are far larger in scale than Tzikin Tzakan, and by accounts of their stature have helped shape how archaeotourism is approached in Guatemala. While the Tzikin Tzakan project is more modest in its ambitions, it does operate within the same overarching mechanisms of research, heritage management, and politics.

With a deeper understanding of the entanglement of archaeology and tourism with the sociopolitical history of Guatemala now in place, chapter 5 takes a closer look at the Petén district, home of many archaeological sites including Tzikin Tzakan, and with a complex history of land use, land distribution, colonization, and militarization. This context helps situate the project within both a geographical and social landscape, which will be further elaborated upon in chapter 6. Besides mapping the direct environs

of Tzikin Tzakan, this chapter also outlines the origins and aims of the project. Finally, chapter 7 will recapitulate and conclude the previous ones, paying special care to the research problems formulated above.

Chapter 2: History of Archaeology in Guatemala

With the exception of a handful of publications by authors who are themselves from Guatemala, like Luis Luján Muñoz (1972), Horacio Martínez Paiz (2001 and 2003), and Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos (1998 and 2012), it is quite rare to find reflections on Guatemalan archaeology at a national level. Accounts on the history of archaeological research typically cover either individual sites within the country or a supranational region like the Maya area or Mesoamerica as a whole. To a certain extend this lack of a nation-state oriented approach can be explained by the fact that most of the archaeological research in Guatemala has focused on the Classic period (AD 250–900) spread of Maya societies across geographies and territories extending significantly beyond what is today circumscribed by the modern national borders of Guatemala (fig. 1). On the other hand, archaeology has played a significant role in the creation of a national Guatemalan identity and is often used to inspire patriotism (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 55-56; Cojti Ren, A. 2006, 10; Frühsorge 2007, 42).

It appears therefore that Guatemala has often been overlooked in historiographical research of Latin American archaeology, as was also remarked in a recent comprehensive overview of Guatemalan archaeological practice (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012). Additionally, most scholars delving into the development of Maya or Mesoamerican studies focus on theory and methods primarily generated by European and North America-based archaeologists, without considering the socio-political context of the countries where the fieldwork is conducted (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 56).

Attempts to remedy this seeming lack of social awareness in Mayanist discourse have been made by authors like Yaeger and Borgstede (2004), who note the internalist nature of most historiography of Maya archaeology and analyze how the interaction between professional archaeologists and the modern Maya has evolved over the past few centuries. This relationship, while by no means mutually exclusive, often appears to be dichotomous and unequal, with Maya positioned as objects of study and the mostly Western archaeologists in the powerful position of interpretant, thereby shaping the public's view of the effectively silenced Maya (Cojti Ren, A. 2006, 14).

The general prevalence of Western scholars in Maya research is fairly characteristic of Guatemalan archaeology. Although the newly independent Guatemalan government's 1834 expeditions to Iximche, Utatlan, and Copán are now recognized as being among the first state-sponsored archaeological explorations in the Americas, it would take till 1975 for the country's first archaeology department to be established at the Universidad de San Carlos. To this day however, many projects are still largely initiated and directed by foreign archaeologists(Chinchilla Mazariegos 1998, 376; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 55). In order to understand how this 'academic division of labor' came to be, a historiographical dive into Maya scholarship is needed here.

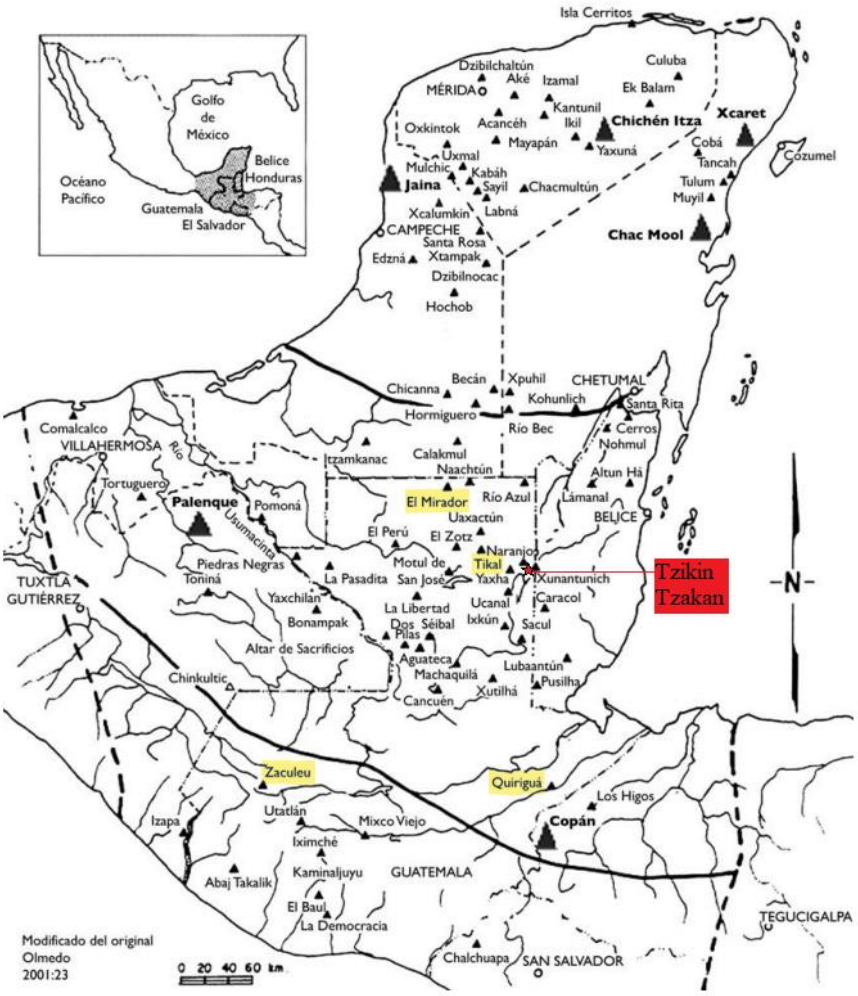

Figure 1: Spread of archaeological Maya sites. After Márquez Morfín and Hernández Espinoza (2013, 56), highlights of relevant sites and location of Tzikin Tzakan added by the author.

2.1) External influences on archaeological research in Guatemala

The colonial period, starting in earnest in the 16th century, saw the beginning of the West's fascination with Mesoamerica's indigenous inhabitants. In their influential historiography of American archaeology, Willey and Sabloff (1980) labelled this era 'The Speculative Period', which lasted till 1840 and was named after the wild speculation concerning the origin of the then so-called 'Indians'. Starting with the early chroniclers, both Spanish and indigenous, who wrote down descriptions of Mesoamerican cultures around the time of the Conquest, several possible explanations were put forth. Ideas about the forbears of native Americans ranged from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and Plato's Atlantis to more accurate arguments for an Asian origin. The now widely accepted Bering Strait hypothesis emerged in the mid-17th century and gained recognition throughout the 18th century, though rampant speculation persisted far into the 19th century as the authors of that time did not yet have a decent grasp on chronology and time-depth (Willey and Sabloff 1980, 13-17).

Discussions concerning the origin of the indigenous peoples of the Americas influenced not only the way Europeans saw the New World but also how newly emerging states endeavored to craft distinct national identities. The *mestizo* elite of the freshly independent republics used the indigenous past to separate themselves intellectually from the overseas Spaniards. However, most of the actual exploring and writing was done by foreign institutions or individuals which allowed them to become major players in shaping the public's view of the Maya (Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 262).

During the 19th century, inspired by the growing popularity of antiquarianism in Europe and aided by (post)colonial power structures that had now been in place for a few centuries, adventurers from mainly the U.S. and Europe launched countless expeditions into the Maya region. The books and illustrations published in tandem with these travels usually presented a romanticized or even fetishized view of the ancient sites, which were deemed exotic and mysterious. Many of these 19th century authors negated the ancestral link between the Pre-Columbian and modern Maya. Thought to lack the capacity for the complex social organization needed to build monumental sites, the role of contemporary Maya in this period was limited to manual labor during foreign

led and funded fieldwork (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 57; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 261-263).

Characteristic for the publications of this era is not just a general disdain for the local populace, but also the assertion that they are ignorant of and indifferent towards the ancient Maya past, making them undeserving of its splendor. This attitude is ubiquitous in the works of authors like John Lloyd Stephens (1841) and Anne Cary Morris Maudslay and Alfred Percival Maudslay (1899). Despite this dismissiveness, it should be noted that Stephens was one of the few explorers of his generation to acknowledge the indigenous origin of the monumental sites he visited. Backed and assisted by diplomatic connections and political influence of the U.S. and Great Britain respectively, Stephens and his successors the Maudsleys were able to create narratives of their explorations that emphasized their own enlightened achievements contrasted with the perceived inferiority of the local laborers (Aguirre 2012, 233-239).

As opposed to the direct colonization of the previous three centuries, the 19th century saw Western powers opt for informal imperialism instead, which focusses more on the extraction of resources, goods, money, and knowledge rather than territorial control (Aguirre 2004, 288; Díaz-Andreu 2007, 172). The aforementioned explorer-writers were key players in this new system, simultaneously benefiting from and contributing to its workings.

Besides the more abstract intellectual control of Maya research, informal imperialism in Mesoamerican archaeology manifested itself in the very direct reality of removing objects from their original sites. Stephens developed plans to transport monuments from Copán and Quirigua to ultimately display them in New York City's Central Park (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 58). Though these plans proved unsuccessful, Stephens's work did inspire a similarly failed plot orchestrated by Lord Palmerston, Britain's foreign secretary. The scheme, which ran from 1841 to 1855 and hinged on dozens of dispatches, aimed to provide the British Museum with a Mesoamerican collection to mirror their Near Eastern collection as a show of the empire's worldwide domination (Aguirre 2004, 286). In his writing, Palmerston also insists on the natives' lack of appreciation or estimation of their country's ruins while simultaneously warning his *chargé d'affaires* in Guatemala not to lead the natives to believe the monuments had

any “imaginary value”, as he feared the price would suddenly soar (Aguirre 2004, 287-288).

In the end, Palmerston’s plot fell short. However, the British Museum did not have to wait long for a new influx of Mesoamerican artifacts as the Maudsleys, travelling through Guatemala in the second half of the 19th century, did manage to transport numerous objects to their home country (Aguirre 2012, 238). As they were far from the only explorers to cart off treasure, the Guatemalan government first established laws that placed the protection of archaeological remains in the hands of the government in 1893 (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 58).

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century had many changes in store for the discipline of archaeology, inspired in part by scientific developments coming from Europe such as Darwin’s publication *On the Origin of Species*. In the U.S., archaeology was becoming more institutionalized as renowned universities started to offer formal training, which made the first distinction between professional archaeologists and amateurs. Additionally, archaeology became intellectually and practically allied with general anthropology, a trend that has remained strong in American archaeology in the decades thereafter (Willey and Sabloff 1980, 34; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 264-265).

This partnering with anthropology led to new types of research like acculturation studies and the Direct Historical Approach. The first method was a type of salvage ethnography, aimed to preserve information on indigenous American cultures before they were deemed too modernized. Paired with the Direct Historical Approach, which uses recently documented history to find links between archaeological findings and modern indigenous groups, it cemented the idea in Mesoamerican research that the contemporary Maya could play a central role in understanding the Pre-Columbian past (Willey and Sabloff 1980, 108; Yaeger and Borgstede, 246-247).

Like the explorers from before, the now professional researchers were, by and large, foreigners. However, rather than wealthy individuals financing their own projects, it was now mainly U.S. based scientific institutions who came to dominate Maya research as the 20th century began. Following the systematic excavation of Copán by Harvard University’s Peabody Museum, other institutions like the School for American Archaeology, the Chicago Field Museum, and the Carnegie Institution of Washington

(CIW) soon also sponsored fieldwork in the area, spurred on by the first successful decipherments of the Maya Calendar (Black 1990a, 63-64).

While these U.S. American institutions partially owed the permits and concessions they received from local governments to their strong reputations and quick progress they were making within the discipline (Black 1990a, 62), their relatively easy access to the region was also facilitated by the enduring structures of neocolonialism. Similar to the previous century, the vast majority of funds came from abroad, which also placed the control of archaeological data, interpretations, and theory making in the hands of foreign researchers. Though most Central American governments required them to collaborate with local archaeologists or personnel, these engagements were rarely meaningful or intellectually impactful on the project (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 60; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 267).

International politics, though present in Mesoamerican archaeology since the beginning, came to play an even larger role as the 20th century went on. Previously, the United States had used the Monroe Doctrine, named after a speech by President James Monroe from 1823, to justify their interventions in Latin America and challenge the presence of European powers in the Western Hemisphere (Livingstone 2009, 10). President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) doubled down on defending U.S. intervention in Latin America, through both economic and military means (Livingstone 2009, 12-13).

In Guatemala, this aggressive interventionism was most prominently practiced by the United Fruit Company, a U.S. company which gained absolute control of the banana trade first by building the necessary infrastructure needed for export and later by buying large shares of land. By the 1930's, United Fruit was the largest landowner in Guatemala (Livingstone 2009, 17; Schávelzon 1988, 341). This territorial control, combined with their ownership of much of the country's infrastructure and sky high income allowed them to not only greatly influence Central American politics, but also archaeological research. From 1910 to 1913, United Fruit partially financed excavations and restorations at Quirigua, giving 75 acres of land back to the government for the creation of Guatemala's first archaeological park (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 60; Schávelzon 1988, 345).

Further excavations at Quirigua were carried out in 1919 and 1923 under the leadership of Sylvanus Morley, founder and director of the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Historical Division which had signed contracts with both the Mexican and Guatemalan government. In the following two decades, the CIW came to dominate Maya archaeology, conducting projects at numerous sites but mainly focusing on Chichén Itzá in Mexico and Uaxactun in Guatemala (Black 1990a, 74-75; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 267-268).

The political situation of the 1940's and 50's greatly impacted the financing of archaeological projects in Guatemala. Firstly, the second World War thoroughly disrupted the CIW's Maya program as envisioned by Morley's successor Alfred V. Kidder, who had aimed to include an array of non-archaeological studies. Narrowly saved from dismantlement after the War, the Maya program would conduct one last project at Mayapan before being completely phased out by the CIW in 1958 (Black 1990a, 78-79).

Secondly, the 1944 Revolution ended the 13 year reign of Jorge Ubico, an ironfisted Guatemalan general who had not only been a constant ally of the U.S. but had also maintained close ties with United Fruit (Handy 1984, 95; Schávelzon, 342). In the following decade, known as the 'Ten Years of Spring', two revolutionary governments led by the democratically elected presidents Juan José Arévalo and his successor Jacobo Arbenz aimed to radically transform and modernize the Guatemalan economy. Intent on breaking free from the grip that large U.S. companies had on the Central American nation and instead utilizing capital to benefit broader society, both presidents antagonized the United Fruit Company with their reforms. Arévalo's 1947 Labor Code, which granted plantation workers the right to unionize, and Arbenz's 1952 Agrarian Reform Law, which distributed arable but uncultivated land among mostly indigenous poor Guatemalans, conflicted so directly with United Fruit's interests that the company started to strongly pressure the U.S. government to take action (Handy 1984, 124-141; Livingstone 2009, 26; Schávelzon 1988, 342-344).

At this point in time, U.S. foreign policy was heavily focused on containing the spread of communism. The Eisenhower administration (1953-1961) had numerous ties with United Fruit, making the company's excessive lobbying incredibly effective (Livingstone 2009, 27). Though it has since been established that Arévalo's and Arbenz's policies were decidedly capitalistic in nature, Guatemalan conservatives, U.S.

industrialists and U.S. politicians alike accused them either of being communists or endorsing communists (Handy, 103-121; Schávelzon 1988, 356). This steadily worsening relationship between Guatemala and the U.S. meant a decline in archaeological projects funded by U.S. companies and institutions (Black 1990a, 146-147).

Remarkably, United Fruit did sponsor a large project at Zaculeu from 1946 to 1950 in spite of the revolutionary government. Since archaeology was seen as a way to bolster national pride, this excavation was an opportunity for the company to possibly generate goodwill among the Guatemalan people. Though the team consisted of capable, mostly U.S. American specialists, some of whom had ties with the CIW, it is clear that United Fruit had a strong hand in the conception, execution, and publication of the project. The main objective was reconstructing the monumental site to make it attractive and accessible for tourists, leading to a very controversial approach of applying a full lime covering to the ancient ruins in order to make them appear new (Schávelzon 1988, 346-356).

Widely considered to be somewhat of a farce, the Zaculeu excavations did not better relations between United Fruit and Guatemala (Schávelzon 1988, 356-359). A massive publicity campaign launched by company president Samuel Zemurray in the early 1950's was highly successful in damaging Guatemala's reputation in the U.S. further (Handy 1984, 140). Illustrative of the heavy entanglement between United Fruit and Maya archaeology is the fact that the same Zemurray made possible the establishment of Tulane University's Middle American Research Institute, as well as other donations that greatly benefited archaeological research (Schávelzon 1988, 346).

Strongly urged by the lobby of United Fruit, the communism-obsessed Eisenhower administration authorized the CIA to plan the overthrow of Arbenz's government, which culminated in the successful coup of 1954. The Guatemalan coup deeply destabilized the country. National politics took a heavy conservative turn, elections became fraudulent, and the military grew into an increasingly dominant force. Soon, this would spiral into a 36-year civil war. Once again, Guatemala became a trusted ally of the U.S., which continued its interference mainly through periodic military aid and the enduring presence of the CIA (Handy 1984; Livingstone 2009, 98-99).

For archaeology, this meant a renewed impulse of U.S. backed projects, chief of which were the excavations at Tikal. This ambitious project had been a long time

coming, as the CIW had made plans for major excavations already in 1937. However, these plans failed to come to fruition before the CIW's dismantlement of its Maya program. Edwin Shook and John Dimick, at this point both involved in the Zaculeu project, attempted to breathe new life into the venture during the late 1940's by appealing to the president of the University Museum of Pennsylvania Percy Medeira. It was not until after the 1954 coup that the University Museum actually initiated the project, the link made abundantly clear by the following quote of Madeira: "when President Castillo Armas supplanted the Reds, the writer, who was familiar with Guatemala, revived the project" (Black 1990a, 145-147; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 62).

Located deep within the Petén district, near the previously excavated Uaxactun, the large monumental site of Tikal had, and still maintains, a reputation steeped in romanticism (Coe and Haviland 1982, 1). The on-site airstrip built in 1950 made Tikal far more easily accessible than Uaxactun had been decades earlier, when archaeologists had to rely on mule trains for transportation (Black 1990b, 260). The University Museum of Pennsylvania and Guatemala's new government reached an agreement in 1955 for a ten year project that would turn out to be unprecedented in scope and impact on lowland Maya archaeology. Almost half of the project's expenses, which are estimated at roughly two million dollars, were covered by the Guatemalan government, the rest being supplied by private donations, grants by several foundations, and funds from the University Museum (Coe and Haviland 1982, 11).

From the very beginning of the project, the development of the site for tourism stood at the forefront of its aims. Executed in a far more responsible and scientifically sound manner than the Zaculeu restorations, the preservation of the grandiose structures surrounding the Great Plaza and the creation of a National Park centered on that area formed a crucial part of the agreements between the Guatemalan government and the University Museum (Black 1990a, 149; Coe and Haviland 1982, 3).

While originally intended to finish in 1965, the project was extended thanks to a presidential decision in 1964, allowing the University Museum to continue excavations until the end of 1969 (Coe and Haviland 1982, 3). Besides becoming one of the country's prime tourism destinations, the legacy of the Tikal Project mainly lies with the generation of archaeologists trained in field methods at the site, who would later push

Guatemalan archaeology to new levels of professionalism (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 62; Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 271).

The second part of the Tikal Project roughly coincided with the rise of New Archaeology, a theoretic paradigm that sought to place archaeology more firmly among the sciences (Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 270). Though New Archaeology, or processualism, marked a strong shift in both theory and methods in American archaeology, the culture-historical approach has remained strong in Guatemala (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 64).

Another development in the latter half of the 20th century was the diversification of funding sources. Numbers of Maya archaeologists participating in fieldwork increased and research grants started to be provided by U.S. and Canadian government agencies like the Social Science division of the National Science Foundation. Alternatively, researchers started to seek out a larger range of private funds (Black 1990a, 129-140). The North American influence thus remained strong in this period, though archaeologists from other countries like France, Japan, and Spain became noticeably more active in Guatemala (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 62-63).

2.2) Role of the national government in Guatemalan archaeology

To this day, archaeology in Guatemala is still largely dependent on collaboration with and funding by foreign institutions. However, the Guatemalan government as well as Guatemalan archaeologists should not be viewed as entirely passive. For example, there are two known instances of state organized archaeological research in the early history of Guatemala. The first were a number of expeditions to the ruins of Palenque in the period from 1784 to 1787, promoted by the Spanish colonial governor of Guatemala José de Estachería. Driven by the question of the origin of the New World's impressive ruins, these explorations produced elaborate reports, plans and drawings, while a selection of artefacts was sent back to Spain (Chinchilla Mazariegos 1998, 382).

Half a century later in 1834, after Guatemala had become an independent state, the newly instated government sent expeditions to the sites Iximché, Utatlan, and Copán. At this point in time, Guatemala was part of the short-lived Federal Republic of Central America, which consisted of most modern Central American nations. Eager to

distance themselves from the Spanish colonial past, these countries engaged in several nation-building projects, many of which drew on pre-Hispanic archaeological remains (Chinchilla Mazariegos 1998, 379-380; Joyce 2003, 79).

It is clear from the original decree ordering the 1834 explorations that this project was part of an early effort to create a history of Guatemala that incorporated its pre-Hispanic past. Besides using this new creole patriotism to emphasize the country's separation from Spain, it also served to justify its independence from the Mexican empire, which had annexed Guatemala from 1821 to 1823. The contemporary indigenous people are largely overlooked in the writings of these times as authors like José Cecilio del Valle prioritized assimilation and societal homogenization. While archaeology continued to be an important aspect of the nation's self-image, there would be no follow-up on the 1834 project and the initiative for archaeological fieldwork would primarily come from abroad for the following decades (Chinchilla Mazariegos 1998, 376-386).

From 1834 onwards, the role of the Guatemalan government in archaeological research was mostly restricted to granting permits or concessions to foreign individuals or institutions wanting to excavate in the country (Black 1990a, 38). Alarmed by the amount of valuable artifacts that some of these explorers shipped away to their home countries, the government took a number of measures in the late 19th century that would give them more control over archaeological remains (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 58-59). Further legislation combating the exportation of archaeological finds was developed in the 20th century, when artifacts from U.S. American projects came to be stored in the National Museum in Guatemala City. Perhaps even more important was the creation of the Instituto de Antropología e Historia (IDAEH) in 1946, a national institution entrusted with the care for archaeological sites which still operates today (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 61).

Finally, in 1974, professional training became available for Guatemalan archaeologists when archaeology departments were established at the Universidad del Valle and the Universidad de San Carlos, the latter of which later also created an archaeology program at their campus in Santa Elena in the Petén (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 62; Martínes Paiz 2003, 105-107). Despite this professionalization, it remains difficult for Guatemalan archaeologists to enter the job market, partially due to the

continued prevalence of foreign institutions in the field (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 62-63).

Concurrent with these early steps towards the national institutionalization of archaeology, the 1970's and 80's were a period of severely escalating violence in Guatemala's civil war. A guerilla rebellion followed by years of brutal counterinsurgency warfare headed by the state disproportionally impacted indigenous communities as hundreds of Maya villages were destroyed, an estimated 200.000 people were killed and many more displaced, most of whom Maya (Ivic de Monterroso 2004, 298; McAnany *et al.* 2015, 3; Warren 1998, 52).

Peace accords between the National Revolutionary Unity of Guatemala and the Guatemalan government were signed in 1995 and went into effect in 1996, ending the armed conflict (McAnany et al. 2015, 3; Warren 2002, 150). Included in this agreement was the "Accord on Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People", referring not only to the Maya but also the Xinca and Garifuna, though the latter two groups are far smaller in number and tend to be underrepresented (Ivic de Monterroso 2004, 296).

A crucial part of the signed accords are Sections C and D, which deal with indigenous spirituality, temples, ceremonial centers, and sacred places. With regards to spirituality, the accords recognize its importance to indigenous people and include a pledge by the government to enforce the respect and protection of both public and private spiritual practices, and to promote the reform of Article 66 of Guatemala's Political Constitution to ensure this recognition by the State (Ivic de Monterroso 2004, 298). Section D, concerning temples, ceremonial centers, and sacred places, declares that although sites that are considered to have archaeological value are part of Guatemala's cultural heritage and thus property of the state, indigenous people should take part in their conservation and management as well as having unhindered access to places that are deemed sacred in order to freely practice spirituality there (Ivic de Monterroso 2004, 298-306).

The inclusion of indigenous right in the 1996 Peace Accords had been somewhat of a surprise, considering the centuries of oppression and previous decades of extreme violence which could be labeled as genocide (Warren 2002, 157). Much of the optimism that this had inspired among Maya activists would soon be dampened however, when the 1999 National Referendum blocked the incorporation of the Accord on Identity and

Rights of the Indigenous People into the constitution (Ivic de Monterroso 2004; Warren 2002). Despite the accord's non-constitutional status, sacred sites remain an important if not contested issue in Guatemala, especially with regards to the management of archaeological sites that have the potential to generate a large tourism-based income or that are vulnerable to looting and deterioration (Frühsorge 2007, 43-44; Ivic de Monterrosso 2004, 301-304).

2.3) Post-Processualism and the rise of indigenous archaeology

Thus far, the story of archaeology in Guatemala has mostly been one of foreign, predominantly Western, interference, and of limited yet steadily increasing input from the national government. In contrast, the indigenous perspective has been strongly marginalized for centuries and has only made its way into mainstream archaeological discourse in recent years. During the early 1980's, as waves of repressive ethnic violence swept through the Guatemalan countryside, the sister disciplines of archaeology and anthropology were going through a theoretical upheaval that would fundamentally alter the way their research is conducted (Yaeger and Borgstede 2004, 243). Spurred on by the winds of postmodernism, many archaeologists started to adopt an explicitly self-critical stance that questioned the existence of a singular objective truth and the authority of archaeologists as the only legitimate stewards of the past (Nicholas and Andrews 1997, 2-3). Growing in scope throughout the 1990's and becoming known as Post-Processualism, this critique also focused on the ethical implications of archaeological practice, acknowledging and emphasizing the discipline's societal impact and political repercussions (Atalay 2006, 290-292).

As an intellectual movement, Post-Processualism can be hard to define partly because of its strongly reactionary nature but mostly due to the fact that decentralization, deconstruction, and the recognition of different types of knowledge lie at its very core (Nicholas and Andrews 1997). However, a very clear example of how archaeological thought and practice has changed is an increased awareness and inclusion of different stakeholders that might have conflicting interests in and expectations of the archaeological process, especially when it comes to local communities who in Mesoamerica as well as other parts of the world often include or

consist of indigenous people. With this growing awareness came a push towards a more collaborative way of conducting archaeology, that sought to incorporate new methods of inclusion and participation in its research (Atalay 2012; Borgstede 2002, 27).

Building upon earlier calls for a more public archaeology from the 1970's paired with the steady growth and recognition of indigenous rights movements, different approaches towards community involvement were theorized and tried out, yielding a wide variety of results. At lower levels of inclusion indigenous people and other local actors are merely consulted, while deeper modes of involvement that move towards participation, collaboration, or even indigenous control allow the community to join archaeologists in determining research questions and goals, share in or control the flow of information, and generally have more of their needs met (Atalay 2012; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2016, 115-117). In an ideal situation, both archaeologists and local communities would benefit from this collaboration-oriented approach. The former are able to incorporate new perspectives and different ways of knowing into their research as well as ensuring the sustainability of their projects and having their work matter in the 'real world', while the latter can use archaeology to become more socially, politically, and economically empowered (Atalay 2012, 248-253; Borgstede 2002, 29; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2016, 119).

However, though born out of both internal and external criticisms of archaeology, the community-based or collaborative approach has itself also been subject to intense scrutiny. At its very core lies a complex issue: how does one define a community? The term community suggests a group of people who feel connected to each other through certain commonalities, but the exact nature of these commonalities can vary wildly between definitions. Archaeologists often assume a geographic starting point, regarding people living at or near an archaeological site as 'the community', though not all communities are location-based (Atalay 2012, 90-92; Borgstede 2002, 27-28). Moreover, it should be recognized that not only do communities differ from one another, but that great diversity exists within them, and that members might also belong to other groups as most communities are not exclusive. Failure by archaeologists to engage meaningfully with these complexities can result in certain members of a community being overlooked while other individuals have more agency and

consequently reap more benefits, possibly leading to increased inequality or social tension within the group (Atalay 2012, 97-100; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2016, 118).

Another contentious issue of a more skeptical nature is the question whether these methods actually do benefit the communities they claim to support and whether they truly serve to decolonize archaeology rather than just being a politically correct way to make researchers feel better about continuing to work within an inherently exploitative system (La Salle 2010, 412). Archaeologists, in spite of good intentions, are accused of perpetuating neocolonial power structures by merely talking about collaboration, which has become a buzzword, while actively maintaining control of the operation, resulting in participation without participation (Gnecco 2011, 63-64; Gnecco and Ayala 2011, 22-23). Besides being able to carry out business as usual, researchers further benefit by publishing extensively on the need for collaborative archaeology, essentially keeping themselves in a job through self-criticism (La Salle 2010, 416).

Though perhaps unfairly harsh, these criticisms do touch on a sensitive and relevant issue: the degree to which archaeologists are willing to relinquish control. Used to assuming the role of stewards of both material remains from and ideas about the past, archaeologists might feel threatened in their academic endeavors and by extension their livelihoods when asked to share or even give up their power (La Salle 2010, 415-416; Nicholas and Andrews 1997, 10). Nevertheless, for research to be truly community-driven and not just community-based, archaeologist will need to face this uncertainty and also learn how to work *for* the community instead of merely *with*. In some cases, this might mean abstaining from research as interference from archaeologists is not always desired (Gnecco and Ayala 2011, 24-26; La Salle 2010, 416-417).

At roughly the same time as the development of community archaeology and motivated by many of the same theoretical discussions and outward pressures, the concept of indigenous archaeology started to gain traction. While frequently utilizing community-based methodologies, indigenous archaeology goes a step further, by integrating indigenous knowledge and concepts into interpretations of the past while de-centering dominant western narratives and making archaeology suit the interests of descendant communities better (Atalay 2006; Atalay 2012, 39-42; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2016, 117-119).

Having gone through significant changes and developments since its inception in the late 1990's, indigenous archaeology is far from the strictly essentialist, unscientific, and unviable enterprise that scholars like McGhee (2008) have made it out to be. One does not need to be an indigenous person to engage in indigenous archaeology, nor should indigenous knowledge systems be seen as oppositional to science (Atalay 2006, 293-294; Colwell-Chanthaphonh *et al.* 2010, 232). Rather, it encompasses a wide spectrum of ideas and methods that aim to create counter-discourse to confront earlier interpretations of the past which are often rooted in colonialism and imperialism (Atalay 2006, 294-295; Colwell-Chanthaphonh *et al.* 2010, 229-230). Furthermore, it could potentially help ameliorate the relationship between archaeologists and indigenous people which has historically been fraught with tension and mistrust (Atalay 2012, 102-103; Nicholas and Andrews 1997, 8-11; Watkins 2005, 432-433).

Generally speaking, theoretical debates have only had a limited impact on Guatemalan archaeology. Even social archaeology, a school of thought developed during the 1970's and 80's based on the work of Karl Marx, one of the few truly influential pieces of theory making originating in Latin America, played only a partial role in Guatemala, due to the enduring legacy of the culture-historical paradigm, the rising dominance of processualism, and the repression of Marxist thought (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 64; Cojtí Ren, I. I. A. 2010, 87). Compared to North-America, nations in Mesoamerica have been relatively slow to incorporate indigenous rights issues into their policies of archaeology and heritage management, with the recognition of sacred places in Guatemala as a notable example (Parks and McAnany 2012, 2-3; Watkins 2005, 441).

Despite this apparent lag in both the production and the adoption of new theories and methods, which should also be understood along the lines of the ubiquitous foreign interference and internal unrest characteristic for many Latin American countries these past centuries (Politis 2003, 260-262), archaeologists working in Guatemala and the broader Maya region have shown increased awareness of their societal impact and the need to engage with local and indigenous communities in more sustainable ways. This is illustrated by a growing body of scholarship either urging Mesoamerican archaeologists to acknowledge the often political nature of the discipline and their own responsibilities towards the communities they work with, or works reflecting on the successes, pitfalls, and other complexities of collaborative

methodologies that have been tried in various archaeological projects (Cojti Ren, A. 2006; Hutson *et al.* 2020; McAnany 2020; Morgan and Leventhal 2020; Parks and McAnany 2012; Seligson and Chi Nah 2020; Woodfill 2013).

Additionally, more indigenous Maya scholars are starting to find their place among the ranks of archaeologists and other researches trained in Guatemala. Their numbers are still small however, owing largely to limited access to higher education for many Mayas living in rural areas and the strong racial discrimination still present in much of Guatemalan society (Cojtí Ren, I. I. A. 2010, 85-87; Cuxil 2010, 96-98). Nevertheless, the slowly growing involvement of Maya scholars in Guatemalan archaeology and the subsequent opportunities for greater self-representation and indigenous stewardship of Maya heritage are generally seen as a positive development for both the indigenous communities of Guatemala and the discipline of Maya archaeology as a whole (Cuxil 2010, 97-99; Parks and McAnany 2012, 5).

Chapter 3: Tourism in Guatemala

Tourism is a booming economic sector in Guatemala. In 2019, the country welcomed over 2.5 million international tourists within its borders, a number that has been growing steadily since the 1990's but has recently taken a massive hit in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (INGUAT 2020). Like elsewhere in Mesoamerica, archaeological sites are among the most popular tourist destinations. The contemporary Maya and their cultural practices are also often used to attract visitors, resulting in what is referred to as 'ethnic tourism'. The following chapter will explore the evolution of tourism in Guatemala, how it is promoted, the role of archaeology, and how it relates to indigenous people.

3.1) Emergence of a new economic sector

Before modern day mass tourism, the travel writers from the 19th century and the accounts of their explorations that were widely circulated in their (usually European) home countries were responsible for framing Maya culture in the eyes of potential western travelers to the region. Prime among these works is *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* by the aforementioned John Lloyd Stephens and his travel companion and illustrator Frederick Catherwood. First published in 1841, *Incidents of Travel* was an instant success, receiving praise from the likes of Edgar Allan Poe (Tegelberg 2013, 84). Stephens and Catherwood's work reads like a quest narrative and is steeped in an air of mystery and discovery. Maya culture is portrayed as timeless, while the indigenous local population is painted as ignorant, uninterested, and subordinate (Aguirre 2012, 232-233). These tropes have persisted well into the 21st century, as they have proven to be quite effective in attracting visitors (Hervik 1999; Tegelberg 2013, 84-85).

While exotic travel accounts were incredibly popular in the 19th century, very few people would actually have the resources to make these kinds of journeys themselves, making it a mostly upper class hobby. This changed in the course of the 20th century as traveling became more accessible and mass tourism as we know it started to emerge after the Second World War and is still growing in scope today. Currently a

billion dollar industry, the impact on local economies is potentially enormous (Timothy and Tahan 2020, 9; Walker and Carr 2013, 21-22).

In Guatemala, international tourism can be traced back to the 1930's, when towns like Antigua and Panajachel were incorporated in tours offered by travel agencies that presented them as 'Indian villages' (Little 2004, 36; Little 2008, 91). International tourists continued to visit Guatemala after the 1954 coup, though these numbers dropped dramatically in the 1970's and early 1980's, during the height of *la violencia.* Besides the fact that the threat of violence tends to be a strong repellant for tourists in general, this drop was further amplified by a historic tourism boycott (Becklake 2020, 37). In 1979, the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF), in an attempt to pressure the Guatemalan government to cease the violent oppression of their people, started a consumer boycott that was incredibly effective in reducing tourism to Guatemala, especially after the U.S. government surprisingly joined the effort in 1981 (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 8).

While the IUF's initiative was explicitly motivated by the human rights transgressions against the Guatemalan population, the U.S. government stepped in when a number of violent incidents had resulted in the kidnapping of one and the killing of two American citizens. The negative travel advisory that was then issued by the Reagan administration resulted in tension with the Guatemalan government, who were otherwise political and military allies (Castañeda and Burtner 2010,9). As the travel warnings were focused on the jeopardized safety of mainly U.S. tourists, the countercampaign launched by Guatemalan government officials who were eager to restore the floundering tourism market specifically challenged the notion that U.S. citizens were at more risk in Guatemala than anywhere else in the world. Additionally, anti-neocolonialist rhetoric was appropriated by placing the boycott and travel advisories in the long list of imperialist interventions by the U.S. in Central America (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 9-10).

These efforts, which were largely based on the dismissal of reasonable charges, backfired as the infuriated international community expanded sanctions to include the boycott of other industries like coffee and Coca-Cola (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 10). The Instituto Guatemalteco de Turismo (INGUAT), founded in 1967, responded with a new campaign aimed at increasing domestic tourism, pursuing alternative modes of

tourism such as ecotourism, and improving Guatemala's public image. The latter proved to be the most difficult, as the press highlighted the connections between INGUAT and the military government (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 12-13).

In spite of all this work, it would take until the election of a civilian president in 1985 for the boycott to cease. International tourism started to recover, helped by the fact that Guatemala's tourism industry had moved more towards attracting European visitors, especially those from Italy and Germany. Whereas tourism had previously been considered a sector of minor importance by the country's ruling elite, from the mid-1980's onwards it became increasingly recognized as a viable economic strategy and development tool (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 13-15).

Though the push towards developing alternative tourism routes has largely been successful, Guatemala has to a certain extend retained its risky image. While risk can also attract travelers in search of a more authentic and adventurous experience, no tourist actually want to come to harm (Becklake 2020, 36-37). Touristic securitization, defined by Becklake (2020, 34) as "the practice of securing tourists to sustain tourism", i.e. making sure that tourists are and feel safe enough to travel, has thus become a priority for the Guatemalan tourism industry.

3.2) Language schools, NGO's, and voluntourists

Besides ecotourism, the alternative markets capitalized upon in Guatemala include language learners, voluntourists, and cultural tourists, with significant overlap between those sectors (Becklake 2020, 37). Spanish language schools are incredibly popular among foreign tourists looking for an easy way to encounter and interact with the local culture. Mostly concentrated in the cities of Antigua and Quetzaltenango, though also available in more rural areas, these schools offer a wide range of activities meant to give their students a taste of Maya culture as well as providing opportunities for conducting social research or joining community development programs (Barrera Nuñez 2009, 112; Willett 2007, 25).

The latter links Spanish language schools to the concept of volunteer tourism, the realm of the voluntourist. Emerging in the 1950's in conjunction with the rise of NGO's and service agencies looking to improve the lives of those in need, volunteer

tourism mostly attracts those who are dissatisfied with traditional mass tourism and instead want to give back to the destinations they visit, becoming more deeply embedded in the social fabric of those places in the process. However, altruism is far from the only motivation of voluntourists, as the majority of their trips also have a recreational component and provide them with many personal benefits like new skills, expanded networks, padded resumés, cultural immersion, personal fulfilment, and increased social capital (Timothy 2020, 88-89).

Much like ecotourism, which was also initially branded as 'alternative' and has now bloomed into its own form of mass tourism (Stronza 2001, 275), volunteer tourism has received its fair share of criticism. Promoted on an increasingly large scale and widely considered fashionable, volunteer tourism can potentially have many of the same negative impacts on local ecology, economy, and society as the mainstream masses do while retaining the gleam of altruism. Moreover, voluntourists' good but sometimes paternalistic intentions can reinforce neocolonial relationships, essentially disempowering the people they aim to help by creating a dependency on volunteers (Timothy 2020, 89).

In the case of Guatemala, Barrera Nuñez (2009) has analyzed the disconnect between the desires and imagination of foreign volunteers and those of the Maya. Centering his argument around the experiences of the 20-year-old U.S. American Emily in Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Barrera Nuñez expertly and painfully reveals how volunteer tourism or humanitarianism can deepen the binary of 'Maya's' and 'Westerners' as well as how well intentioned projects inevitably end in disappointment when they are not properly aligned with local needs but rather seated on foreign expectations.

Despite these issues, it is recognized in Guatemala that the promise of volunteer work is highly effective in drawing tourists to the region and strengthening the tourism industry (Becklake 2020, 39; Willet 2007, 160). It is therefore no surprise that Guatemala is home to so many language schools and NGO's that can facilitate this sort of travel, though it should also be noted that the Maya, who are often portrayed as passive recipients of volunteering, can also be involved in reproducing and maintaining the 'Economy of Humanitarianism' (Barrera Nuñez 2009, 113-115). NGO's have become increasingly active in the tourism sector as they are both well suited to supply seemingly

ethical travel options that are known to attract voluntourists as well as being in need of volunteers and their capital to keep their operations running (Becklake 2020, 35).

As a city that was relatively untouched during the civil war, Antigua became the epicenter voor NGO's in Guatemala while also being an incredibly popular tourist destination (Becklake 2020, 39). After the peace accords, a "new violence" began to sweep the streets of picturesque Antigua as Maya handicraft vendors, who primarily sell to tourists, started to fall victim to seemingly random criminal acts like theft and assault (Little 2009a, 54). These new threats have led to an intensification of the city's touristic bubbling, keeping tourists spatially contained and going to extreme lengths to ensure their safety. Tourists, especially those already looking for a more alternative experience, often quickly become aware of these kind of bubbles which they consider inauthentic. NGO's, themselves aware of their increasing dependency on tourism, thus also offer entry into poorer, less touristy areas. Using Antigua as a base, NGO's only bring western tourists to places that are deemed safe enough, are not controlled by drug gangs, and often close enough to the city to return by nightfall (Becklake 2020, 40-41). This extreme focus on keeping primarily western tourists safe can obscure the fact that those same tourists can pose a threat to certain Guatemalans. Disadvantaged indigenous children tend to be seen as not only the most deserving of foreign aid, but also as the most attractive to westerners. Capitalizing hereupon, NGO's provide voluntourists with easy access to typically vulnerable children, possibly leading them to harm (Becklake 2020, 42-43).

3.3) Cultural tourism

Language learners, voluntourists, and combinations thereof have diverse motivations for venturing into Guatemala, but one very important reason that unites most of them besides possible altruism is the desire to encounter or even be immersed in a different culture (Barrera Nuñez 2009, 112; Timothy 2020, 89). Cultural tourism is an incredibly broad term that can be applied to a myriad of cases and is defined by Baud and Ypeij (2009, 4) as a strand of tourism that centers both past and present cultural heritage.

Two subsets of this phenomenon that are particularly relevant to Guatemala are ethnic tourism and archaeological tourism. In case of the former, indigenous people's

ethnicity and their subsequent Otherness is considered the main draw for tourists looking to have authentic interactions with living cultures, while the latter relies on the attractiveness of archaeological sites, parks, and museums (Timothy and Tahan 2020, 6; Van den Berghe 1994, 6-9 and 1995, 581). As continuity between the ancient and contemporary Maya has been an important issue in academic discourse, the indigenous rights movement, and tourism marketing alike, they cannot be seen as wholly separate (Van den Berghe 1995, 583). Besides cultural tourism, the term heritage tourism also gets used to describe much of the same activities, especially those related to archaeology, though a number of authors have stressed that archaeology and heritage should not be considered synonymous in spite of their entanglement (Timothy and Tahan 2020, 4-5; Walker and Carr 2013, 13-14).

Studies of ethnic tourism have mostly been the realm of social scientists and anthropologists and usually center on specific locales where these scholars have conducted their fieldwork. In Guatemala, these tend to be Maya towns in the highlands. Though initially often dismissed as a frivolous subject of study, tourism started to become a legitimate field of interest for anthropologists from the 1970's onwards in a movement that has proven to be particularly fruitful (Stronza 2001, 263-265; Van den Berghe 1994, 3-4). Throughout Latin America, which has been a locus for mass tourism since the late 1960's, areas with a large indigenous population are known to attract the largest numbers of cultural tourists who often consider Spanish colonial and republican heritage of secondary importance (Baud and Ypeij 2009, 1-2).

The fact that indigenous peoples and their cultures have become a major tourist attraction with tourism in turn being a major and still growing industry has caused a certain tension in several Latin American countries including Guatemala (Baud and Ypeij 2009, 10). During the time of the tourism boycott, Guatemala's elite did not consider contemporary Maya culture suitable for or worthy of celebration and promotion for tourism purposes. At the time, Maya people not only faced violent repression, but were also expected to assimilate to a national, homogenic, and Hispanized culture through the concept of *mestizaje.* Disguised as a call for national unity, *mestizaje* has been used in attempts to erase Maya cultural heritage and to delegitimize the indigenous rights movement, essentially being a tool of neo-colonization (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 14; Cojti Ren, A. 2006, 9; Little 2004, 264; Warren 1998, 137).

Only after the democratic elections in 1985 did the Guatemalan government explicitly include strategies to conserve and protect indigenous cultural heritage in conjunction with a renewed attempt to develop tourism in their official policy (Castañeda and Burtner 2010, 15). With the Peace Accords signed in 1996 and the rise of the Pan-Maya movement, the place of indigenous peoples within a multicultural Guatemalan society became even more solidified (Ivic de Monterroso 2004; Warren 1998). However, this new recognition of indigenous heritage and its subsequent use in the promotion of tourism did bring to light issues of the representation and framing of Maya culture for foreign eyes.

3.4) Tropes in tourism marketing

Drawing tourists in from abroad requires enticing marketing. It is at this point that expectations are created which tourists will mostly be looking to confirm during their travels (Baud and Ypei 2009, 6-7; Fyall *et al.* 2020). Cultural tourism and by extension ethnic tourism face a big challenge in this regard, for how does one market a people without resorting to stereotypes, essentialism, and othering? For the Maya, many of these stereotypes had already found a place in the collective western consciousness long before modern tourism marketing.

A study conducted by Traci Ardren (2004), which examined the advertisements in a number of magazines available in Mexico, showed that besides having a noticeable nationalistic tone, advertisements that use or appropriate Maya culture tend to conflate indigenous people with aspects of natural history, rely strongly on exoticism exacerbated by the eroticized portrayal of native women, and an overall notion of a timeless and unchanging culture. The popularity of this particular combination of elements that are meant to make travel to the Maya region as desirable as possible and are often used to frame Maya culture in general, can partially be traced back to perhaps the most iconic magazine of them all: National Geographic (Ardren 2004, 108; Hervik 1999).

A product of the National Geographic Society, which has also been an avid sponsor of archaeological projects in Mesoamerica, this magazine has played a central role in constructing a specific image of Mayaness for the consumption of the western

public (Hervik 1999, 169-171). The fact that foreign tourists in Guatemala often cite National Geographic as inspiration for their visit illustrates the continuing relevance of the magazine (Little 2004, 38-44). Interestingly, two of the four articles that Hervik (1999) identifies as being crucial to understanding Nat Geo's approach to framing the Maya were written by Sylvanus Morley, an influential archaeologist with the Carnegie Institution of Washington who conducted extensive fieldwork throughout the Maya region during the early 20th century and who was already briefly mentioned in the previous chapter (Black 1990a, 63-64).

The two Morley articles, published in 1925 and 1936, were not yet geared towards the promotion of tourism, as the Central American tourism market had yet to arise in earnest and political relations with the U.S. were strained. Morley himself had been actively involved in espionage for the U.S. Naval Intelligence Office (Harris and Sadler 2003; Hervik 1999, 178). However, later articles written for the same magazine by La Fay (1975) and Garrett (1989) that were very much aimed at convincing potential tourists to visit the Maya region, draw on many of the same concepts and strategies that Morley's did. Mayas are portrayed as mysterious, exotic, timeless, but also largely ignorant and inept when it comes to being stewards of their own identity in the modern world (Hervik 1999, 181-186). Instead, the continuity between the ancient and contemporary Maya is presented in a racialized and essentialized manner, primarily through the use of pictures and captions, which have always been the main draw of National Geographic as most readers skip the actual text (Lutz and Collins 1993, 76-77). Photographs of living Maya individuals are juxtaposed with archaeological sites accompanied by captions that serve to collapse past and present into one, even going as far as comparing the physical features of the photographed person with those of people portrayed on ancient stelae (Hervik 1999, 175-179).

While National Geographic Magazine is currently read world-wide, its original target audience was the U.S. American middle class who consume it in a leisurely way and use it as a marker of good taste (Lutz and Collins 1993, 1-9). However, it cannot be seen as existing in a different world from scientific archaeological discourse, as is already evident from the involvement of an academic heavyweight like Sylvanus Morley. Before the institutionalization of archaeology, the 19th century travel accounts of John Lloyd Stephens contain some of the earliest examples of the 'Mysterious Maya'-trope

presented to the western public. When placed next to the National Geographic articles, the similarities in framing devices are evident (Tegelberg 2013, 84-85).

Furthermore, the notion of a timeless, unchanging Maya culture occasionally seeps through in the way more recent archaeologists and anthropologists discuss cultural continuity. Especially during the 1970's and 1980's, when the search for cultural continuity between pre-Conquest and modern times became an increasingly important subject for Maya studies, did scholars emphasize the endurance of Maya cultural, religious, and agricultural practices using language that sounds eerily similar to National Geographic's conceptualization of temporal collapse. With Post-Processualism came a more self-reflective, nuanced approach and continuity studies became an important part of Maya cultural revitalization efforts (Hervik 1999, 186-189).

3.5) Authenticity and commoditization

The notion of cultural continuity is particularly relevant to ethnic tourism and cultural tourism in general as it ties in with perceptions of authenticity. Central to ideas about ethnic tourism is what Van den Berghe (1994) has called "the quest for the other", in which tourists are motivated by and actively search for the exotic and authentic native, who only retains that pristine status as long as they do not modify themselves to become more appealing to tourists. As soon as the tourist feels that the indigenous Other has been spoiled by modernity or, ironically enough, tourism, they might continue their search elsewhere, essentially destroying part of the ethnic tourism market that they helped create (Van den Berghe 1994, 8-10). Van den Berghe's work has been criticized for robbing the indigenous people in this equation, whom he has named 'tourees', of agency and control, which he places squarely in the hands of the tourists and the ladino or 'middlemen' in charge of piloting and exploiting the tourism industry, but the authenticity-commoditization paradox has relevant in cultural tourism studies to this day (Tegelberg 2013, 87-89).

'Authentic' can thus be a powerful label, not just as a strategy for building a tourism industry, but also in politics of identity and representation. As indigenous scholar Avexnim Cojti Ren (2006) has lamented, modern Maya identity is questioned when cultural and even physical traits associated with the 'real' ancient Maya are not

maintained, and this denial of the right of self-representation has significant repercussions for power relations in modern day Guatemala (Cojti Ren, A. 2006, 12-14). In this way, authenticity is a fragile concept as well, both threatened by the tourists it attracts and the contestation of links to the past.

Not all approaches to authenticity have such a strong essentialist character however, as constructivism has played an important role in the academic debate as well. Whereas essentialism places great emphasis on cultural continuity and a cosmological core constituting Mayaness that has persisted through centuries, constructivist approaches tend to view contemporary Maya culture as a recent social construct born from interaction with colonialism and later nationalization efforts by the respective Central American states (Kroshus Medina 2003, 354-357). These two conflicting ways of thinking each relates to tourism in their own way. As expected, an essentialist lens sees the commoditization of culture for tourism, i.e. making money from cultural practices and products, as a loss of authenticity and a hollowing out of meaning. Constructivism on the other hand conceptualizes authenticity in a more fluid manner, framing it as a product of negotiation between tourists and tourees. These new, collaborative expressions of culture are considered by constructivists to contain legitimate authentic meaning for their participants, even suggesting that tourism and associated cultural commoditization can facilitate new channels of accessing traditions and the promotion of cultural revitalization (Kroshus Medina 2003).

Though essentialism and constructivism often appear as two irreconcilable schools of thought within academic discourse, once applied to reality they become far more blurred and neither one nor the other can be said to fully encompass all nuances of the authenticity debate. In her study on Maya tourism in Succotz, Belize, Laurie Kroshus Medina (2003) utilized a constructivist approach, while noting that the actual Succotzeños leaned towards more essentialist ways of conceptualizing Mayaness. Likewise, scholarship that acknowledges or even highlights the asymmetrical power dynamics of tourism does not need to disregard the diversity of local perspectives or the way local actors navigate an increasingly globalized market (Tegelberg 2013, 88).

For example, the Maya handicraft vendors that Van den Berghe (1994) casted in a rather passive role within his tripartite tourists-middlemen-tourees model are more seriously recognized as businesspeople operating within challenging circumstances in

the influential and extensive work of Walter E. Little (2002; 2004; 2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2018). Based on nearly three decades of ethnographic research in and around Antigua, a town that as previously mentioned is extremely popular with tourists, Little's writings have shone a light on various strategies of the countless indigenous artisans who come from various parts of the country to sell their wares.

A UNESCO World Heritage property since 1979, Antigua gets primarily promoted by INGUAT as a romantic colonial city with a strong emphasis on its aesthetic of Spanish colonial architecture, seemingly frozen in time (Little 2018, 1278). Maya handicraft vendors do not fit well into this vision and many ladino Antigüeños, who claim the city as 'theirs', consider the vendors to be a nuisance and a threat to the social order. Attempts to sweep the vendors from the streets have been unsuccessful however, as they have actively sought out legal resources and other pathways to secure their presence within the city (Little 2009b, 224-226). The term 'ladino' has a complex history, and its definition has changed through the course of history, but is mostly used in present day Guatemala to refer to nonindigenous people (Handy 1984, 14; Ybarra 2018, 179).

Despite this vision of a Maya-free Antigua, ladinos and tourism promotors alike have come to realize that the majority of foreign tourists that visit the city expect to see the street vendors and enjoy interaction with them. Thus seen as both a hindrance and a major tourist attraction, Mayas occupy a ambiguous space within the tourism landscape of Antigua (Little 2009b, 230-233).

Knowing that tourists want to see them and using their support to more deeply entrench the legitimacy of their presence in Antigua is just one of the Mayas interact with ethnic tourism in Guatemala (Little 2008, 89-90; Little 2009b, 244). However, if this awareness and these strategies become too apparent to tourists, they risk being labeled as 'inauthentic' and subsequently undeserving of attention and investment. If for example a vendor does not look Maya or 'Indian' enough, or if their wares do not look convincingly handmade enough in the eyes of tourists, the latter party might refrain from purchasing anything (Little 2004, 61).

Conversely, Mayas who modify their sale strategies or performances to comply more closely to tourists' expectations of the Other as fostered by the likes of National Geographic can be successful in appearing authentic enough but can also still be denounced by skeptical tourists (Little 2004, 217). Gender plays an important role in this

dynamic, since Maya women, whose images are most prominently used in tourism advertisements and who tend to dress more traditionally then their male counterparts, are more likely to be perceived as authentic (Ardren 2004, 108-109; Hervik 1999, 175; Little 2004, 145-146; Little 2008, 94).

Selling handicrafts is a very obvious example of commoditization as tangible cultural products are directly exchanged for cash, but there are more subtle ways in which culture or ethnicity can be 'sold'. Tourists are also interested in intangible heritage like Maya spirituality, an interest that was intensified around the year 2012. Based on an incorrect interpretation of the Maya calendrical system, the idea that December 21st in 2012 would herald some kind of apocalyptic end of times became popular in worldwide imagination around 2009, though this notion had circulated for years within the New Age community (Bell 2012, 96-97; Macleod 2013, 448). The sensationalism surrounding the supposed 2012 prophesies provided opportunities for making money. Abroad, this translated to movies, books, and other apocalypse-inspired pieces of media being sold, while in the Maya region this mostly resulted in increased tourism (Bell 2012, 96-97; Macleod 2013, 457-458).

The commercialization of a misinterpretation of an important part of Maya culture, namely the calendar, understandably caused some commotion among indigenous Guatemalans. After two periods where Maya spirituality and religion had had to withstand tremendous repression and attempts at eradication, being the Conquest and the civil war, these expressions of cultural identity have become central to the Pan-Maya movement and cultural revitalization efforts (Bell 2012, 97-98; Little 2009c, 86; Macleod 2013, 448). Daykeepers, Maya spiritual guides with in-depth knowledge of the 260-day sacred count, serve their communities by performing ritual and divinatory services aimed at resolving a myriad of problems and conflicts but also by being at the forefront of discussions about Maya self-representation and indigenous activism (Bell 2012, 101-106; Little 2009c, 80; Macleod 2013, 453).

While it is not uncommon for daykeepers to receive gifts from satisfied clients, they do not traditionally accrue much personal wealth from their services, as the money clients pay for the ceremony is mostly used for acquiring the necessary ritual items. This mostly holds true for ceremonies performed within Maya communities, but has changed somewhat in recent years as daykeepers have gained new clientele due to the opening

up of Maya spiritual practices to outsiders after the 1996 Peace Accords. The new clientele, which includes ladinos, New Age spiritualists, and foreign academics, are typically both willing and able to spend more money than the average Maya client, though care is taken to ensure just rates (Little 2009c).

Similar to this adjustment of catering to outsiders, Maya daykeepers have seized 2012, or *Oxlajuj B'aqtun,* as the end of the 13th cycle of 400 years that lay at the basis of the apocalypse theories is known, as an opportunity to reclaim their cultural heritage and assert themselves as legitimate authorities on the calendar system (Bell 2012, 102). Heralded as a time of transformation and renewal rather than the end of the world, *Oxlajuj B'aqtun* has been interpreted in a diverse number of ways, though central to most of them is the ideal of self-representation and a strengthened sense of community and resistance (Macleod 2013, 462). In the face of increased international tourism, this is a strong statement against foreign appropriations of 2012, which are deemed inauthentic (Bell 2012, 103). The Maya's authority on the calendar based on ancestral ties and passed down knowledge can be placed among essentialist approaches to authenticity, while the strong reaction against outside forces fits more snugly amidst constructivist narratives on the same subject, illustrating again that the two discourses on authenticity are not mutually exclusive.

3.6) Archaeological tourism

Besides ethnic tourism, the most important and lucrative asset of the Guatemalan tourism industry is archaeological tourism, which includes visits to archaeological sites, monuments, parks, and museums (Timothy and Tahan 2020, 6). Both fall within the realm of cultural or heritage tourism and in many cases are deeply entangled with one another (Baud and Ypeij 2009, 9). Despite the traditional disdain of many archaeologists towards tourism, the realization that it has grown into a force that can no longer be ignored has prompted a new wave of scholarship on the intersection between archaeology and tourism (Timothy and Tahan 2020; Walker and Carr 2013). With this realization also comes a sense of responsibility, as archaeologists become faced with the fact that we are not only affected by but also actively contributing to the growth of the tourism industry (Joyce 2013, 311).

One of the main reasons for the academic distaste towards tourism is the potential prioritization of economic gain over scientific progress and conservation efforts, which could not only lead to the loss of valuable knowledge and the destruction of the fragile archaeological record, but also the 'Disneyfication' of archaeological sites (Mathews 2020, 160-161). This fear is not unfounded, since it is clear from examples like Petra in Jordan and the Lasceaux grotto in France that the physical wear and tear brought about my mass visitation can be a genuine threat to the preservation of the sites (Mathews 2020, 154; Tahan 2020, 122). Furthermore, the rise of archaeological tourism has been linked to increased looting and the illicit trade of archaeological artefacts (Hughes *et al*. 2013, 75; Timothy 2020).

However, the money generated from visits to archaeological sites can also be used for their benefit if that money gets allocated to research, preservation, and education. In fact, the high revenue potentially brought by visitors can be a strong motivation for archaeologists to include tourism development in their research proposals, considering the difficulties of accruing sufficient funds for archaeology. Whether archaeologists like it or not, tourism has become the main economic justification for approving archaeological work worldwide (Burtenshaw 2020, 44; Gillot 2020, 29; Timothy and Tahan 2020, 8; Walker and Carr 2013, 27). Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the money generated by these sites actually flows back to archaeology nor does it necessarily protect archaeology from austerity measures in case of economic recession (Jorayev 2020, 189; Mathews 2020, 156; Walker and Carr 2013, 29).

Similar to concerns present in the discussion on ethnic tourism (see above), archaeologists tend to view tourism with suspicion on account of questions regarding authenticity. Research has shown that tourists consider authenticity one of the most important aspects for their level of satisfaction with their experiences of archaeological tourism. However, what tourists perceive as authentic often varies either slightly or significantly from the opinion of archaeologists (Fyall *et al.* 2020, 74; Hughes *et al*. 2013, 77-81; Stronza 2001, 271). In general, archaeological sites seem to be considered more authentic the less they have been altered to cater to the needs and desires of tourists and the less they prioritize economic gain over the creation and distribution of knowledge (Hodges 2020, 179; Mathews 2020, 161; Walker and Carr 2013, 25-29). Still,

because many archaeological research methods are inherently destructive processes and the conclusions about the past drawn from these methods are always the result of present interpretations subject to modern day biases, it could also be argued that the concept of authenticity is largely irrelevant in this context (Evans-Pritchard 1993, 10; Walker 2005, 72).

In recent years, as the importance of public archaeology has become more embedded in both scientific discourse and practice, archaeologists have become increasingly aware of their impact on the local communities in which they conduct their research (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2016, 114-115). Combined with both the economic benefits but also the potential exploitation and stress that tourism can bring to local communities, studies on archaeological tourism are starting to become more geared towards community engagement, participation, and stewardship (Díaz-Andreu 2013, 231-232; Mathews 2020, 157-159; Pacifico and Vogel 2012, 1596; Walker and Carr 2013, 15-16).

Though it is often expected, or at least hoped, that community involvement with archaeological tourism will bring benefits, economic or otherwise, to said communities, recent studies have shown that these promises can remain unfulfilled due to several challenges that archaeologists are not always equipped to deal with (Hutson *et al.* 2020, 231; Seligson and Chi Nah 2020, 359; Woodfill 2013, 109). At any rate, archaeologists would do well to develop in-depth understandings of the cultural sensitivities and socio-political realities of the places they conduct their research in order to better take into account the possibly conflicting interests and agendas of various stakeholders, as this will result in more sustainable avenues for tourism development (Hodder 2003, 141-143; Wallace and Hannam 2013, 108-109).

3.7) Nationalism and universalism in archaeological tourism

Tourism, especially cultural tourism, has strong links to nationalism while being a fundamentally global enterprise, which can lead to some interesting tensions (Baram and Rowan 2004, 3-4). Being the world's largest economic sector, tourism presents national governments with a unique opportunity to generate significant income (Jorayev 2020, 195). However, in the international market this revenue does not always end up

with the host countries due to a phenomenon known as tourism leakage, when the money made from visits to a specific country do not come to circulate in that economy. Especially problematic in developing countries, the earnings are instead spend on imports or on paying foreign workers and businesses, limiting tourism's potential as an economic development tool (Chirenje *et al*. 2013, 9-10).

Besides being involved in the development of tourism to better reap its economic benefits, national governments are also provided with a new avenue to promote a sense of national unity and identity to a broad audience (Evans-Pritchard 1993, 25-26). It is widely acknowledged that effective marketing is crucial for the viability of tourism projects, and this chapter has already explored how cultural heritage, ethnicity, and archaeology can be commodified to fit popular marketing strategies, many of which hinge on the concept of authenticity (Fyall *et al.* 2020, 71-73). In many cases, the state is ultimately responsible for the development of cultural or heritage tourism, often resulting in the presence of nationalistic narratives in the associated marketing (Jorayev 2020, 195).

The entanglement of archaeology and nationalism has been a topic of much study and debate, and while it is often a controversial, because political, topic, it is one that archaeologists cannot and should not ignore (Kane 2003, 1-8; Trigger 1984, 358-360). Accordingly, it should also be considered in the study of archaeological tourism. In many formerly colonized countries archaeology became a tool to legitimize and celebrate the newly independent state. Using material traces of the past, the notion of a glorious past can be construed to foster national pride (Evans-Pritchard 1993, 24; Jorayev 2020, 187; Trigger 1984, 359).

In much of Latin America, in an attempt to create national identities distinct from yet as grandiose as those of their European colonizers, this led to an exaltation of the pre-Colombian, indigenous past through a phenomenon known as *indigenismo.* This glorification and appropriation of ancient indigenous achievements into a national past did not and does not automatically translate to an improvement of indigenous peoples' social standing nor to a recognition of their place in contemporary society (Baud and Ypeij 2009, 9; Evans-Pritchard 1993, 24; Trigger 1984, 359). Guatemala's approach to Maya archaeology and associated tourism illustrates this contradiction well. From the earliest state-sponsored excavations in 1834 that served as a nation-building project to

modern tourism marketing that presents Guatemala as the 'Heart of the Mayan World', the Guatemalan state makes frequent use of Maya heritage to create a certain national image while denying indigenous agency in these matters (Bell 2012, 98; Chinchilla Mazariegos 1998, 383-384; INGUAT 2010). In the words of Avexnim Cojti Ren (2006, 10): "Sadly and unfortunately, the history of our people has also been colonised."

Yet it is exactly these appropriated national symbols that are most effective in drawing tourists to the archaeological sites of Guatemala. In fact, the promotion of tourism is one of the main reasons why the Guatemalan government invests in archaeological research, a valorization of the discipline that is reflected in wider Guatemalan society as well. Most of this archaeological tourism is concentrated on monumental sites from the Classic period located in the Petén district (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 63; Cojtí Ren, I. I. A. 85). There are multiple factors contributing to this regional focus. Firstly, the primarily foreign archaeologists working in the Maya area have traditionally been most active in the lowlands and have applied most of their interest to Classic sites with monumental architecture commissioned by ruling elites. Though this professional interest has definitely diversified since the second half of the 20th century after intense criticism, the long shadow cast by the obsession with kings and pyramids is still visible in some Maya studies as well as having a strong influence on maps, guidebooks, and other materials developed for tourists (Farah and Seligson 2018, 29; Joyce 2013, 16; Magnoni *et al.* 2007, 365; Sabloff 2004, 13).

Secondly, the aforementioned nationalistic attempts to create a glorious past based on archaeological remains have also prioritized monumentality and 'high culture', as these efforts sought to mirror and compete with European models of antiquity (Gabbert 2015, 206). This brings us to a third, and paradoxical point: the exact elements that make Classic Maya sites appealing for incorporation into nationalistic narratives make them attractive to an international audience and global heritage institutions like UNESCO (Joyce 2013, 305; Magnoni *et al*. 2007, 365). While impressive monumental structures might give a country an easily recognizable, unique attraction that serves to distinguish that country from the rest of the world, these unique assets can be universalized as a commodity and sold on the global tourism market (Baram and Rowan 2003, 6; Trigger 1984, 359).

Especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and their World Heritage List have been instrumental in the transformation of specific cultural properties into universal heritage, an undertaking that has been both praised and condemned (Baud and Ypeij 2009, 11; Meskell 2002, 568-569). Though the exact economic impacts of a UNESCO World Heritage Listing remain hard to quantify and outcomes for the local tourism industry can be mixed, plenty of countries have shown themselves to be more than eager to get as many of their sites inscribed on the list as possible (Jorayev 2020, 191; Timothy and Tahan 2020, 9). After all, UNESCO is an internationally recognized, prestigious brand that only properties of 'Outstanding Universal Value' can get labeled with (Timothy and Tahan 2020, 205-206; UNESCO 2019, 20).

However, the criteria for what qualifies as 'Outstanding Universal Value' have been criticized for leaning too heavily on western understandings of beauty and monumentality, essentially imposing neo-imperialist attitudes on non-western heritage while claiming it as universal (Díaz-Andreu 2013, 236; Meskell 2002, 569). Despite UNESCO's promise to include local communities and indigenous peoples in their decision making process, their approach remains thoroughly top-down and the enforcement of the rules that sites on the list need to follow in order to maintain their protected status can result in the eviction of locals who might live and work in or around these sites (Baud and Ypeij 2009, 11; UNESCO 2019, 34).

Notwithstanding UNESCO's explicit desire to represent global, universal values, there is strong evidence that the World Heritage system actually fosters nationalism. The nomination process for heritage sites is highly competitive and can become embroiled with nationalist agendas pushed by the member states (Askew 2010, 20-23; Jorayev 2020, 190-192; Timothy and Tahan 2020, 205-206). This tension between nationalism and universalism is also present in the marketing of archaeological tourism in the Maya region. Like UNESCO, the word 'Maya' can, within the realm of tourism marketing, be seen as a brand that multiple countries are eager to exploit. Guatemala presents itself as the 'Heart of the Mayan World, but the slogan 'La Cuna de los Mayas'/'The Cradle of the Mayas' was displayed on Honduran billboards in the 1970's and 80's in reference to Copán, a major archaeological site located close to the border between the two countries (INGUAT 2010; Joyce 2003, 100).

This explicit positioning of Honduras as an important locale for Classic Maya civilization worthy of competition with neighboring Guatemala should also be understood in connection with tourism. Both countries are part of the transnational Mundo Maya project, a popular tourism route that is based on the idea that the Maya region is united by a common heritage that transcends national borders (Magnoni *et al*. 2007, 354-355). In the case of Copán, this initiative has been quite effective in increasing tourism (Joyce 2013, 300). Even though the Mundo Maya seems to disavow the importance of national borders on a conceptual level, they continue to matter on the ground. A document disclosed by the World Bank in 2019 (but written in 2005) lists the fact that Mexico initially spearheaded the project and its continued heavy political weight as one of the issues and challenges that skewed project goals (World Bank Group 2019, 3).

The Mundo Maya Organization emerged in 1990 as a fusion of the Ruta Maya and Mundo Maya programs, though both of the original names are sometimes used interchangeably when referring to the initiative. It is not entirely clear where the idea first arose, but the five participating countries, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador, signed the initial declaration its foundations in 1988 (World Bank Group 2019, 1). It was famously featured in a 1989 National Geographic article called "La Ruta Maya" by Wilburt E. Garrett, with whom the concept might have originated (Hervik 1999, 173; Joyce 2003, 82). Heralded as a revolutionary international cooperative project, the Mundo Maya Organization explicitly framed itself as a sustainable way to alleviate poverty through ecotourism development, providing economic alternatives to destructive economies and protecting fragile ecosystems throughout the Maya region (Van den Berghe 1995, 575; Magnoni *et al*. 2007, 355).

However, despite these ambitious goals and promises to improve local livelihoods, the Mundo Maya has received its fair share of academic criticism on account of its top-down approach, completely lacking in indigenous participation throughout its decision making process, commoditizing and overgeneralizing Maya culture, using overdone exotism tropes in its marketing, and mostly for neglecting to ensure that tourism revenues actually improve the economy on a local level rather than just benefiting the elites (Ardren 2004, 108; Brown 1999, 10; Little 2008, 5-6; Magnoni *et al*. 2007, 13).

To make matters worse, the initiative, which would benefit from tourists being able to travel easily across borders and between sites has been linked to the Puebla-Panama Project (PPP), a deeply controversial and heavily protested infrastructural enterprise aimed at facilitating trade for big businesses through the construction of super highways. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), besides championing the PPP despite strong opposition, also provided the Mundo Maya organization with 150 million US dollars from 2000 to 2004 for a sustainable tourism program (Grandia 2012, 176; World Bank Group 2019, 1). While the premise, promotion, and organizational structure have thus been thoroughly scorned, it is difficult to properly access the impact of the Mundo Maya on tourism in the region. Little, if anything, has been published on its actual implementation or consequences thereof, the organization itself remains vaguely defined, and its main legacy seems to be a conspicuous marketing strategy (Ardren 2004, 108).

Chapter 4: Case Studies

Having looked at a brief history of the development of archaeology and tourism in Guatemala as well as some of the associated theory and concepts, it is time to turn our attention towards a number of case studies that illustrate how specific archaeological sites have come to be developed for touristic purposes. Far from trying to be a comprehensive overview of every archaeological site in Guatemala that might receive visitors, the following examples were specifically selected for the central role that the potential for tourism played in the way these sites were excavated, preserved, and managed. For their location, see figure 1 on page 11.

4.1) Quirigua

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1981, the Classic Maya site of Quirigua has a relatively long history of archaeological research. As already briefly mentioned in chapter 2, influential travel writer John Lloyd Stephens became so enthralled with the site's intricately carved stelae that he started to concoct plans for transporting them to the United States for display purposes (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 58). Despite the ultimate failure of this plot, fascination with Quirigua's stone monuments was now firmly rooted in public imagination and prompted further research. At the end of the 19th century, it was Alfred P. Maudsley who led some early field seasons at the site, mostly focused on documenting the stelae through photography and the making of plaster casts which were then transported, with considerable difficulty, to the British museum (Aguirre 2012, 229; Black 1990a, 51; Looper 1999, 263; Sharer 1980, 6).

Thus already recognized as an important site in the early days of Maya archaeology, excavation began in earnest in 1910, when expeditions financed partially by the School for American Archaeology and partially by the United Fruit Company continued with the detailed recording of the stelae, generating an updated and valuable photographic record (Looper 1999, 263). Besides sponsoring part of the expeditions, the United Fruit Company, being the legal owners of the property which was located amidst a large banana plantation, granted 75 acres of land around the core of the site for the

designation of Guatemala's first archaeological park (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 60; Kelly 1996, 244; Schávelzon 1988, 345).

Sylvanus Morley, who was already involved with the expeditions sponsored by United Fruit, returned to the site in 1919 and 1923 with the CIW, which also conducted some minor excavations in 1933 and 1934 per request of the Guatemalan government that had plans for the conversion of Quirigua into a national park (Black 1990a, 74 and 109; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 60). Though surviving records of these early investigations are scarce, and those that are available do not provide much information about their methodology nor about interpretations of Quirigua's development as a Classic Maya site, they did contribute much to the in situ preservation and precise documentation of the stelae, making the site more appealing to visitors (Ashmore 1984, 366; Black 1990a, 74; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 60; Sharer 1980, 6).

Quirigua stayed under the care of United Fruit until 1974, when the plan to designate it as a national park finally came to fruition (Black 1990a, 110). In the same year, the Quirigua Project, formed after a contract between the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and the IDAEH, started a five year venture that not only consisted of excavations and restorations of the monumental center, but also thorough investigation of the site's periphery and wider settlement area (Black 1990a, 234; Sharer 1980, 5). Besides generating a wealth of new data and creating a both deeper and broader understanding of Quirigua's origins and role in wider Classic Maya society, the project took further care to clean and preserve the famous stelae (Ashmore 1984, 367; Kelly 1996, 244; Sharer 1978, 55). While the responsibility to secure and manage the funds for the archaeological excavations fell to the University Museum, who on top of being a major sponsor themselves also received extra financial support from a number of other institutions and private individuals with the National Geographic Society among them, the money needed specifically to consolidate and conservate Quirigua's major structures was provided by the Guatemalan government (Sharer 1978, 52; Sharer 1980, 5). The Quirgua Project ended in 1979, unfortunately leaving some excavations in the center of the site unfinished as the result of difficulties with funding and bureaucracy (Black 1990a, 234-235). No new excavations have been carried out at the site.

Two years after the close of the project, Quirigua was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The synthesis for the Outstanding Universal Value of the property

given on UNESCO's website primarily stresses the advanced artistic skill represented on the sculpted monuments and the scientific importance of the information that the hieroglyphic texts carved on said monuments convey (whc.unesco.org). It has been pointed out however, that similar artistic skill and archaeologically valuable information are also present at a host of other Classic Maya sites and that Quirigua's main distinction is its long history of archaeological investigation (Joyce 2003, 84).

Additionally, UNESCO praises the level of in situ conservation of the monuments, while also taking note the site's vulnerability to natural disasters due to the proximity of the Motagua river and geological fault. Shelters were built in the 1980's to protect individual stelae from rainfall, but a 1994 report marks them as insufficient and recommends to take further protective measures (UNESCO 1994, 30-31). Major flooding damaged the site in 1998 and 2010, leading UNESCO to look for financial support in order to better protect the site (UNESCO 1998, 23; whc.unesco.org).

Quirigua is currently one of Guatemala's 16 archaeological sites included in the Mundo Maya project, and one of the countries three World Heritage Sites (gomundomaya.com/guatemala). Had Stephens succeeded in whisking the stelae away, the site would in all probability not have this status, as their in situ preservation are both the Quirigua's largest draw for visitors and an important reason for its UNESCO inscription (Kelly 1996, 235-237). As we have seen in the previous chapter, archaeologists in general did not start taking their connection with and responsibility towards tourism development seriously until this millennium, and the researchers working on Quirigua from the 1910's to the 1970's certainly did not seem to have tourism high on their list of priorities (Timothy and Tahan 2020, 5-8). However, the involvement of both the United Fruit Company and the Guatemalan government with regards to the creation of an archaeological or national park, as well as the in situ restoration and preservation of the stelae shows a keen awareness of the potential of the site to attract visitors.

4.2) Zaculeu

A relatively small site in the western highlands, Zaculeu had a long, continuous occupation history from the Early Classic to the Conquest period, when Gonzalo

Alvarado besieged and defeated the Mam capital in 1525 (Kelly 1996, 207; Woodbury 1948, 122). Briefly visited by Stephens and Catherwood in 1840, the site was often visited and surveyed in the following decades, resulting in the drawing of several maps. In 1927, the government of Guatemala partially cleaned and restored some of the site, in an early preservation attempt (Kelly 1996, 207; Schávelzon 1988, 347-348).

As already touched upon in chapter 3, major excavations started at Zacaleu when the United Fruit Company sponsored a large project from 1946 to 1950. Taking place at a period in time when already tense relations between the state and United Fruit were steadily growing worse, tourism was very much at the front of the development of the project. Starting with the selection of the site, Zaculeu was chosen after a number of highland sites had been visited by a team of archaeologists with John Dimick as their director for its accessibility, proximity to Huehuetenango, and architecture that was deemed well preserved enough for precise reconstruction (Schávelzon 1988, 346-347).

It is exactly this reconstruction that Zaculeu is most known for today, both by tourists and archaeologists, though opinions are largely unfavorable. While the reconstructed buildings can make the site more interesting for visitors, they are also the most widely criticized part of the project (Kelly 1996, 203; Schávelzon 1988, 350). The use of stucco, applied in supposedly the same manner as had been done by the original builders, gave the site a glaringly white look that has been credited as an example of what *not* to do for later projects like Tikal (Coe and Haviland 1982, 15; Schávelzon 1988, 348-350). This disapproval falls firmly within wider concerns of the archaeological community for the 'Disneyfication' of sites as a result of tourism development (Gillot 2020, 33; Mathews 2020; 161).

All this criticism was in spite of United Fruit's furious publicity campaign carried out by the Middle American Information Bureau, a front group set up by Edward Bernays, an extremely effective propagandist who played a crucial role in the company's publicity campaign against Guatemala's revolutionary government. The Bureau served to boost banana sales in North American by educating its citizens on their southern neighbors, but the information it distributed was of course deeply biased in favor of United Fruit (Schávelzon 1988, 350; Tye 2006). In order to promote the excavations and restorations of Zaculeu, the Middle America Information Bureau put on radio

broadcasts, conferences, and published a number of booklets written by head archaeologists John Dimick. Written in English, this publicity, like everything published by the Bureau, was clearly aimed at U.S. citizens and showed an idealized view of both archaeology in general and United Fruit's role in the practice (Schávelzon 1988, 350-351). A small museum containing several items that were unearthed at the site was also established for a better visitor experience (Kelly 1996, 209).

Regardless of the controversy surrounding the way the excavations and restorations were carried out, Zaculeu remains one of the very few highland sites to have received any degree of protection and development at all. Most other archaeological sites in the highlands, as well as those on the Pacific coast, are exceptionally vulnerable to looting as they receive far less attention from both archaeologists and the state than the more prestigious lowland sites (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 64; Frühsorge 2007, 41-42).

Zaculeu was developed for visitors at a time before INGUAT was founded, and the economic potential of Maya tourism was just starting to be explored, something that would not fully kick off until the end of the 20th century (Black 1990b, 273; Castañeda 2009, 264; Tegelberg 2013, 85-86). Furthermore, the degree to which United Fruit's interests dictated project goals, and the degree to which the archaeologists involved were apparently willing to comply with these demands have significantly damaged Zaculeu's reputation in academic spheres (Schávelzon 1988, 359). At certain points in the project, the restoration program limited archaeological research and no further research has been carried out at the site since (Schávelzon 1988, 352; Woodbury 1948, 121). Though an early example of an archaeological project in Guatemala that included concerns related to tourism at its inception, it is highly doubtful that many archaeologists grappling with the challenges of tourism today will look at Zaculeu for guidance.

4.3) Tikal

Most famous of all sites in Guatemala and one with the most extensive history of research, Tikal can rightfully be called an icon of Maya archaeology. Prior to the large-scale excavations that begun in the 1950's, the site had already been visited by a slew of

explorers, including Alfred P. Maudsley. An expedition by the Peabody Museum from 1909 to 1910 cleared some of the structures surrounding the central plaza of vegetation as well as photographing, drawing, and mapping much of the architecture. These ventures brought to light the sheer size of Tikal and its buildings, lending it a fabled and romanticized air (Black 199a, 70; Coe 1965, 8; Coe and Haviland 1982, 1; Kelly 1996, 140).

Originally conceived in the 1930's by a number of archaeologists working for the CIW, the idea of major excavations at Tikal was passed on to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania by John Dimick and Edwin Shook in the late 1940's after it had become clear that the CIW would no longer conduct large projects in the Maya area. Dimick, already involved with the Zaculeu excavations, was expected to be able to raise much needed funds for the project through his connections with the United Fruit Company. However, rising tensions between Guatemala's revolutionary government and United Fruit made the company, as well as other U.S. American companies, hesitant to invest further in archaeological projects (Black 1990a, 145-146).

The 1954 coup appears to have improved conditions for a major U.S. American led project. An agreement between the University Museum and the Guatemalan government was signed in 1955, allowing the project to use the recently built airstrip as well as receiving significant government funding (Black 1990a, 147; Coe and Haviland 1982, 11). In turn, Tikal was transformed from an inaccessible, overgrown site to a prominent tourist destination that contributed significantly to the country's income (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012, 62). From the start, IDAEH's involvement and continued approval was tied to its development for tourism (Coe and Haviland 1982, 3). Fieldwork under the auspices of the University Museum, first directed by Edwin Shook who was later succeeded by William Coe, ran from 1955 to 1969, going down in history as one of the largest and most impactful projects in Mesoamerican archaeology (Black 1990a, 152-153; Culbert 2004, 312; Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes 2003, 110).

The successful touristic development of Tikal hinged on making the remote, abandoned site both more easily accessible and more appealing for visitors, who should be blown away by the grandeur of the ancient Maya civilization (Black 1990a, 148; Coe 1965, 8). Concretely, this meant that considerable effort was put into consolidating and restoring the towering monumental structures that had made Tikal so famous (Coe and

Haviland 1982, 22). For this purpose, crews of masons were hired to stabilize the buildings as well as make them look whole and presentable after the archaeologists had finished extracting data. Quite often these two approaches clashed and one of the greatest challenges of the Tikal project was balancing scientific interests with conservations efforts which prioritized aesthetics and visitor access (Coe 1965, 8; Coe and Haviland 1982, 13).

In this vein, several choices had to be made. Most of the excavations and restorations focused on the Great Plaza and the structures that surround it, a complex widely regarded to be one of the most spectacular and awe-inspiring recovered at any Maya dig (Black 1990a, 149). All carved monuments underwent resetting and, if necessary, repair, except incomplete or discarded ones which were instead moved to the excavators' camp or to the on-site museum that had opened in 1964. Shattered monuments, or piles of fragments were sometimes left untouched as a testament to the engulfing power of the surrounding forest (Coe and Haviland 1982, 15). Tikal's romantic and mysterious appeal partially lied with its status of abandoned ruins swallowed by the jungle which were bravely being recovered by machete-wielding archaeologists, and maintaining a certain level of dilapidation might give the site a more authentic feel than a completely cleared and reconstructed version would. In extension, no visual distinction between reconstruction and original would be possible, save for those in possession of the excavation records (Coe and Haviland 1982, 15).

Decisions regarding restorations are often controversial, and for the Tikal project none was more so than the backfilling of the gigantic, collapsing trench that had been dug into the North Acropolis with the debris from a dismantled Late Classic temple that was located near said trench. The total excavation of structure 5D-33-1st, as this latter structure was known, was justified by the project through the assessment that it was too poorly preserved for successful consolidation, on top of the scientific merit of both uncovering the step by step process of how this Late Classic structure was built and exposing the Early Classic architecture underneath, which is an otherwise rare sight at Tikal. Despite being sanctioned by the IDAEH, this move stirred up a significant debate about the ethical conundrum of site preservation, especially after Coe explicitly stated in print that the backfilling of the North Acropolis trench was a major consideration of the dismantling of 5D-33-1st (Black 1990a, 149-151; Chase *et al.* 2020, 439; Coe 1965, 43).

The restorations undertaken at Tikal should not be seen in a vacuum, when they were heavily informed by a number of projects that came before. Zaculeu has already been mentioned as a strong deterrent for the use of too much cement (Coe and Haviland 1982, 15-22). However, the simultaneous CIW projects at Uaxactun and the Mexican site of Chichén Itzá, perhaps provide a better framework for restoration strategies in Maya archaeology. Starting in the mid 1920's, these projects had widely varying approaches to site preservation, which were tied to expectations regarding tourism.

Chichén, located in the north of the Yucatán peninsula, was already easily reachable by train and car, facilitating both supply runs for the excavations and visitor access. Dubbed 'Chichén Itzá the Magnificent' by lead archaeologist Sylvanus G. Morley, the monumental site was purposefully developed as a major tourism destination from the start of the CIW project (Black 1990b, 273; Chase *et al.* 2020, 437). The excavation strategy prioritized clearing, stabilizing, and reconstructing impressive structures preferably with inscribed, painted, or sculpted architectural elements, while relatively few artefacts were collected (Black 1990a, 85). Inspired by Morley's vision of revealing the glory of the ancient Maya to the wider public, combined with the agreements signed with the Mexican government, Chichén became one of the most spectacular tourist destinations in the Maya region, growing in popularity in the 1960's when U.S. American tourists no longer able to travel to Cuba turned to Yucatán instead, and again in the 1980's, when the nearby town of Cancún was strategically constructed and launched as a major tourist attraction (Black 1990a, 89; Castañeda 2009, 264-265).

In contrast, Uaxactun in the 1920's was only reachable via a difficult journey through the Guatemalan rainforest using the same trails as chicle-hauling mule trains. The CIW project had to spend a considerable amount of money on mules themselves to move the necessary equipment and supplies from the point on the Belize river where they could no longer be transported by boat to the remote site, which for this reason was not conceived as a viable tourist destination (Black 1990a, 260-261; Chase *et al.* 2020, 437). As a consequence, no efforts were taken to consolidate any of the structures which were either completely removed or bisected by large trenches that were typically left open instead of backfilled (Black 1990a, 91-92). While this approach did yield a large dataset that has led Uaxactun to be recognized as one of the most important sites in

Maya archaeology, it has been criticized for being too destructive, shortsighted, or even irresponsible (Black 1990a, 92; Black 1990b, 257; IDAEH 2016, 37).

Out of the two projects, the approach towards site preservation employed at Chichén Itzá proved to be the most influential for future projects in the Maya region. Reconstructed architecture, as long as it is perceived as authentic, is capable of attracting large swarms of tourists (Black 1990b, 274). Though the University Museum's Tikal Project relied on the work done at Uaxactun in terms of chronology sequences and the field methods, the consolidation and restoration of its large structures seemed more inspired by Chichén (Black 1990b, 259; Coe and Haviland 1982, 5 and 44-45). Unlike that last site however, Tikal has not been completely cleared of vegetation. Not only would its location in the rainforest make such an approach genuinely difficult, Tikal's more naturalistic look is also one of its attractions, as a sense of mystery and discovery is maintained for visitors who are wowed by the towering pyramids and encroaching jungle alike (Coe and Haviland 1982, 15-17; Todras-Whitehill 2007).

After the close of the University Museum project at Tikal, care of the site was handed over to IDAEH, who are still in charge of it today. Some additional research sponsored by the Guatemalan government was conducted in the early 1970's with a focus on making an elite residence easily viewable for tourists (Black 1990a, 231). More thorough work was carried out between 1979 and 1984, when a team of Guatemalan archaeologists partook in the Proyecto Nacional Tikal. Primarily concerned with excavating the Mundo Perdido structures, this project deepened understanding of Tikal as well as enlarging the visitor area (Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes 2003, 111; Kelly 1996, 140).

Already in 1955, Tikal had been declared a National Park by the government, resulting in a protected area of roughly 576 square kilometers (Ponciano 1998, 100). In the decades following, the long-term preservation and touristic appeal of the site were enhanced through a 'Plan Maestro' developed in 1972 with the involvement of both IDAEH and INGUAT. Besides the continued restoration of Tikal's structures, the surrounding infrastructure was also greatly improved through the construction of an airport near Flores, now known as the Mundo Maya International Airport, and a paved road from Flores to the site (Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes 2003, 2).

Additionally, resources were put towards protecting the surrounding forest, and when the site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979 it became the first property to be listed according to both cultural and natural criteria, remaining one of very few sites to have this mixed status till this day (Ministerio de Culura y Deportes 2003, 2; whc.unesco.org). When the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) was established in 1990, Tikal national park became one of its protected core areas (fig. 3), and continues to be the most visited tourist spot in the reserve (Gretzinger 1998, 111; Hearne and Santos 2005, 305-307).

Yearly visitor numbers exceeded 200.000 in 2001, which contributed to the realization that a new and updated masterplan for site conservation was needed to keep up with the growing global popularity of Tikal. After all, in order to maintain a World Heritage Listing, the property in question needs to meet a certain conservation standard set by UNESCO (Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes 2003, 1-3). From 2012 onwards, more foreigners than Guatemalans visited the site annually, and it is estimated that roughly 300.000 people visited Tikal in 2017. This sharp increase since 2001 has raised even more concerns about the impact of mass tourism on the national park, although the entrance fees from 2017 alone did amount to about 3 million U.S. dollars, which can be used to fund site conservation (IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2020).

Even though tourism and park maintenance are clearly priorities at Tikal, archaeological research continues to be conducted at the site, mainly focused on ancient agroforestry and water management (Dunning et al. 2015, 2-4 Tankersley et al. 2020; Lentz et al. 2020). This long and ongoing history of research combined with the rare mixed UNESCO designation, its global reputation, and soaring visitor numbers all contribute to Tikal's status as a Guatemalan icon. It is not visited as much as Chichén Itzá however, which remains far more easily accessible and was recently voted one of the seven new wonders of the world. To accommodate visitors making the often long trip to Tikal though, three hotels and two campsites are available for overnight stays within national park boundaries (Todras-Whitehill 2007).

Often overshadowing other Maya sites in the region, Tikal's romantic image of mysteriously abandoned ruins in the tropical forest feeds well into the narrative tropes employed in much of the marketing surrounding Maya-oriented tourism as discussed in chapter 3 (Joyce 2003, 82-85). Besides being mainly seen as an archaeological and

touristic resource, Tikal has also been recognized as a sacred site after the signing of the Peace Accords. A number of altars were initiated in Tikal's squares for ceremonial use in November 2002 by Minister of Culture Otilia Lux de Cotí, herself of Maya descent (Ivic de Monterroso 2004, 299).

4.4) El Mirador

Few archaeological sites in Mesoamerica are shrouded in more controversy than El Mirador. Located a mere seven kilometers south of the border with Mexico, this large Preclassic (2000 BC – AD 250) site has only become the subject of intensive investigation relatively recently. The first sketch map of the site was produced by Ian Graham in the 1960's, when its massive size started to become apparent. Some test pits were dug in 1970, and the first archaeological research project ran in 1978 and 1979 under the leadership of Bruce Dahlin. Excavations mainly served to salvage information from trenches dug by looters as it became clear that El Mirador's Preclassic architecture, not covered by later constructions, was unique for the Maya region (Allen, R. M., 2011, 17-18). Research was expanded by Ray Matheny in the early 1980's to include surveying and mapping on top of excavations in order to start building a site chronology. Unfortunately, this project had to be prematurely abandoned in 1984 as a result of vague political circumstances (Allen, C. 2017; Allen, R. M., 2011, 18; Black 1990a, 234)

The first truly large scale project at the site began in 1987 under the name Regional Archaeological Investigation of the North Petén (RAINPEG) and is still running today. Headed by Richard Hansen, who had been involved in the earlier research under Matheny, and currently known as the Mirador Basin Project, this is where the controversy is born. Not so much related to the archaeological research, which has been crucial to a renewed understanding of the Preclassic period, but rather to the way the project handles conservation, both of the archaeological site and the forest in which it lies, tourism development, and its relationship with people living in the area (Rahder 2015, 300).

Head archaeologist Hansen, having conducted research at El Mirador for several decades now as well as being the president of the NGO Foundation for Anthropological Research & Environmental Studies (FARES), is somewhat notorious for making plans to

construct a rail system that would transport tourists from the town of Carmelita to a number of archaeological sites in the area by train (Clipston 2019). At the moment, tourism at El Mirador is limited as getting there requires a multiple day guided jungle trek that few are willing to undertake or a helicopter ride few are able to afford. According to Hansen, this proposed rail system would not only make visits to the archaeological sites easier and more affordable, it would do so without causing too much disturbance to local wildlife and, crucially, without having to construct roads in that part of the Petén. Besides damaging the rainforest, it is argued that a road system would facilitate numerous evils like poaching, looting, logging, and narco-trafficking (Allen, C., 2017; Escalón 2012; Global Heritage Fund 2011, 20).

It is true that the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR), which encompasses an area housing countless archaeological sites including El Mirador and Tikal, faces many struggles with issues like deforestation, looting of archaeological sites, unprecedented population growth, and drug-related organized crime, but it is very much the question if this vision of sustainable tourism would make any meaningful contribution towards easing these problems (Rahder 2020, 94-95). However, this is how the Mirador Basin Project presents and positions itself. The name of the project is in itself indicative of this positioning, as the term 'basin' has become the center of a massive controversy (Rahder 2020, 98).

The question of whether or not the area surrounding El Mirador can be classified as a geological basin is not just a matter of scientific investigation, but could also have direct repercussions on conservation practices and land use. When the MBR was established in 1990, lines were drawn on the map to create a number of different zones (fig. 3). Following UNESCO guidelines for biosphere reserves, 747.800 hectares were designated as strictly protected core zones, some of which coincided with already existing national or archaeological parks, 864.300 hectares were labeled multiple-use zones, and a buffer zone of 487.900 was established along the southern border of the reserve (Gretzinger 1998, 111; Ponciano 1998, 100; Sundberg 1998, 390).

A large part of the multiple-use zone has been divided into a number of community concessions where the Guatemalan government has granted specific communities legal residency within the MBR as well as the right to sustainably extract both timber and non-timber forest products (Devine *et al.* 2020, 2; Gretzinger 1998,

115-117). The boundaries of the supposed basin extend far beyond the current territory of the Parque Nacional Mirador-Rio Azul and cut across several community concessions. Those who argue for the existence of a basin tend to also argue for a redrawing of the different zones, expanding the core zones and taking away land and forestry rights from people whose livelihoods now rely on the concessions (Rahder 2020, 100).

Evidence for or against the existence of a basin and the need to redraw MBR boundaries is mostly supplied via satellite data and GIS maps, technologies that in this case do not guarantee an objective view of the problem (Rahder 2015, 308-309). Basin-supporters, with Richard Hansen as their figurehead, use imagery based on infrared signatures of different types of vegetation to show the presence of *bajo* forests in the area, a kind of forest that grows in swamp-like depressions, leading to the conclusion that water must be pooling there, into a basin (Rahder 2015, 306). On the other hand, basin-deniers point to the relatively flat nature of the landscape, calling it a plateau instead, while also declaring that the infrared satellite images of photosynthetic activity are not sufficient for making claims about topography (Rahder 2015, 317).

Besides being mobilized in the basin-or-not discussion, satellite images, aerial photography, and GIS models are used to make claims about the threat of fire, agriculture, and deforestation. Fires occur for a multitude of reasons in the MBR, though most of them are set by humans. In Laguna del Tigre National Park, which has one of the country's highest deforestation rates and has been a narco stronghold from the early 2000's onwards, illegal settlements are evicted by having the military burn them to the ground, eerily mirroring scorched-earth tactics infamously used by the state during the civil war (Devine *et al.* 2020, 2; Rahder 2020, 164). Drug cartels, having crossed over from Mexico, use fire as a deforestation technique to clear large swaths of land for cattle ranching. *Narco-ganadería*, as this phenomenon is known, allows the cartels to exercise territorial control to facilitate drug trafficking as well as exploiting the lucrative cattle industry to launder money (Devine *et al.* 2018, 1027-1028).

On a much smaller scale, fire has been used as an agricultural tool in the Petén for thousands of years. Often referred to as slash-and-burn or swidden agriculture, its Mesoamerican maize based variant known as milpa, this practice, if done in a controlled and responsible manner, is a sustainable way to farm otherwise easily exhausted rainforest soil (Devine 2018, 1032-1033; Rahder 2020, 178-180; Schwartz and Amilcar

Rolando 2015, 85). However, there is a long history in conservationist and even academic circles of framing swidden agriculture in a negative light and blaming it for the rapid deforestation of the Maya forest (Devine *et al.* 2020, 2; Garrett 1989; Morley 1925 and 1964; Stuart 1992; Ybarra 2018, 36-40).

Basin-supporters have adopted similar anti-milpa tendencies to lump together all fires occurring in the MBR as one unified threat sweeping in from the west and marching up to the as of yet unprotected basin (Rahder 2015, 318). A document published by the Global Heritage Fund (GHF), who are partners in conservation with FARES and PACUNAM and cite Hansen as their 'Leader in Conservation', marks slash-and-burn agriculture as a destructive activity that is listed alongside looting and poaching as major threats to El Mirador (Global Heritage Fund 2011, 11). A solution is also presented: transforming El Mirador into such an effective tourism magnet that the job opportunities generated by the new influx of visitors are solid enough for the inhabitants of the MBR to abandon their current destructive and/or illegal activities. Well-managed and legal activities like sustainable harvesting would still be approved of, as complementary income sources to tourism (Global Heritage Fund 2011, 11).

Despite this promised dedication to ensuring the continuation of community forest use, a promise echoed on the respective websites of FARES and the Mirador Basin Project, fact remains that a redrawing of MBR boundaries based on pro-basin evidence would substantially reduce the size several community concessions, taking self-determination away from the people used to managing and living from these concessions (Rahder 2020, 100-101). Herein lies the crux of the Mirador basin debate, which in the end has little to do with either geology or archaeology. Rather, it is about who has the right to decide how the land is managed and which conservation strategy is best: community forestry or archaeological tourism.

This entanglement of natural and archaeological resources in combination with tourism development is somewhat reminiscent of the situation of Tikal, currently the most visited archaeological site in Guatemala. In many attempts to promote tourism at El Mirador, Tikal is used as a mirror image, though typically mainly to make the former seem more grandiose. The 2011 GHF document does praise the success of Tikal's development as a sustainable tourist destination and consequent high revenue, but also stresses how much bigger El Mirador is (Global Heritage Fund 2011, 4-11). Right above

the paragraph claiming that the site's visitor facilities will be "similar to or better than" those of Tikal, a drawing of El Mirador's Tigre Pyramid is superimposed on an aerial photograph of Tikal's central plaza, illustrating a significant size difference (Global Heritage Fund 2011, 13).

Dwarfing iconic Tikal is also a strategy used by the Mirador Basin Project to exaggerate the nature and size of archaeological sites throughout the Mirador Basin, which has ruffled feathers among other archaeologists, many of whom only dare to criticize the project anonymously (Escalón 2012). In these exaggerations, not just the size but also the age of sites in the Basin is stressed, leading to the description 'Cradle of Maya Civilization', an epithet so far usually reserved for Copán (Global Heritage Fund 2011, 3; Joyce 2003, 100; Senate Bill 2019, 2). Jocye (2003, 85) has described this kind of one-upping among (potential) World Heritage properties on a transnational level as "discrimination *between* Maya sites", but it appears that that sort of discrimination can also occur *within* nations.

In 2002, the Mirador Basin was included, together with 15 other sites, in the Tentative List submitted to UNESCO by Guatemala's Ministry of Culture and Sports, which is the crucial first step towards possible nomination and inscription on the World Heritage List (Devine 2016, 115). Guatemala's Tentative List has been updated in 2012, bringing the total to 21 sites eligible for nomination, and is due for another update in 2022 (whc.unesco.org). According to the GHF, the Cuenca Mirador, as it is named in its official submission, is the nation's leading candidate for its first new UNESCO nomination since the 70's (Global Heritage Fund 2011, 14). However, the GHF's hopeful prediction that this nomination would be formalized before 2015 has not come true as the process has been severely stalled partially due to the conflict surrounding the redrawing of park boundaries (Devine 2016, 115; Rahder 2020, 103).

The push towards a formal nomination, which was renewed in 2010, is central to the GHF's mission who, together with philanthropic organization PACUNAM, have raised several million dollars for research, conservation, and development at El Mirador with the explicit end goal of putting the site on the List (Devine 2016, 116). So far, these efforts seem to fall short while the collaboration between the GHF, FARES, and PACUNAM has become seriously strained since the latter has recently shifted alliances towards the anti-basinist camp (Rahder 2020, 103).

In a recent and startling turn of events, Richard Hansen has upped the ante of the El Mirador controversy by being involved in the drafting of Senate bill S.3131, which, if passed and enacted, would give the U.S. government and by extension Hansen himself greater influence and power in the MBR. Introduced in 2019 as the Mirador-Calakmul Basin Maya Security and Conservation Partnership Act, its official goal is to found and fund a program that would create an ecotourism model providing tourists the opportunity to visit the Basin's archaeological sites in a sustainable manner while also creating economic opportunities for local residents. To do so, the U.S. government would collaborate with both the Guatemalan and Mexican governments, as the proposed basin extends far beyond the border (S.3131 2019, 5-6).

In these two countries, the proposed bill was met with an uproar. An open letter from a collective of Maya activists strongly denounced the Act for having been drafted without the consultation or consent of indigenous nations or organizations, calling Hansen an "imperialist and colonizing gringo" (Junajpu Winaq' *et al*. 2020). Concern has also been expressed by the Maya Biosphere Watch and the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), who lament how the proposed legislation would circumvent already existing conservation laws and regulations, like the community concessions that have proven to be Guatemala's most efficient and sustainable forest management tool. Representatives from both INAH and IDAEH have stated that they were not involved in or informed of the plans, and emphasize the importance of preexisting national legislation (Abbott 2020; mayabiospherewatch.com).

Considering the long history of U.S. intervention in Central America and its often catastrophic consequences, this backlash is neither surprising nor unfounded (Devine 2014, 579). Objections from Guatemala and Mexico were supported by the Society for American Archaeology (SAA), who add that the description of the relevant archaeological sites in the bill is inaccurate and simplistic to the point of being misleading, on top of their assessment that the Mirador-Calakmul Basin is actually a plateau. Furthermore, the SAA advocates for full community participation in the process of developing the region, especially with regards to tourism (Watkins 2020).

While the 2019 bill did not receive a vote and officially died in the 116th U. S. Congress, meaning it has since been cleared from the books, its provisions still have the possibility of becoming law if they are re-introduced in a new bill or added to larger ones

and subsequently passed by both the House and Senate (www.govtrack.us). It thus seems that the fight for El Mirador together with the basin/plateau discussion are far from over. The high stakes connected to the controversy combined with conflicting scientific claims have given rise to a number of conspiracy theories, rumors, and general paranoia (Rahder 2020, 95-96).

Chapter 5: The Lay of the Land: El Petén

The largest and northernmost of Guatemala's 22 departments, the Petén has always been distinct from the rest of the country, both geographically and conceptually (fig. 2). From an academic perspective, these lowlands have typically been the research domain of archaeologists rather than anthropologists or ethnographers, who mostly work in Guatemala's highlands (Schwartz 1990, 31-32). Archaeologists are drawn there by the lure of monumental Classic Maya architecture and the opportunity to study the supposed rise and fall of a complex civilization. Though the long prevailing narrative of a catastrophic Maya collapse at the end of the Classic period has become increasingly questioned, challenged, and destabilized in recent years, sometimes along with the validity of the entire Preclassic – Classic – Postclassic distinction, the notion of sudden and mysterious disappearance persists in the public's imagination of the Maya (Cojti Ren, A. 2006, 11-12; Rice *et al.* 2004, 1-2).

5.1) Kingdoms and conquest

Intense debate regarding possible causes and effects of what can also be referred to as a transition rather that a collapse aside, a significant amount of evidence does point towards a decline in both population and construction activity in what is now the Petén during the late ninth and tenth century (Demarest *et al.* 2004, 553-554). The area was never completely depopulated however, and when the Spanish invaded Central America in the 16th century they encountered several different ethnolinguistic groups living there, most famously the Itzá. Themselves divided among a number of smaller political units, the most dominant of which was centered around the capital Tayasal, the Itzá had moved south to Petén from Yucatán between 1200 and 1450 and managed to resist Spanish conquest until 1697 as the last of the independent Maya kingdoms. As a result of this longstanding autonomy in combination with the relative impenetrability of the rainforest, the Petén became a haven for indigenous groups fleeing the Spanish conquest, especially Yucatec Maya (Schwartz 1990, 33-34).

Considering the Conquest of Yucatán as incomplete as long as there was a Itzá stronghold in its southern reaches, especially one that continued to resist Christianization, provide refuge, and encouraged insurgence, the Spanish doubled down

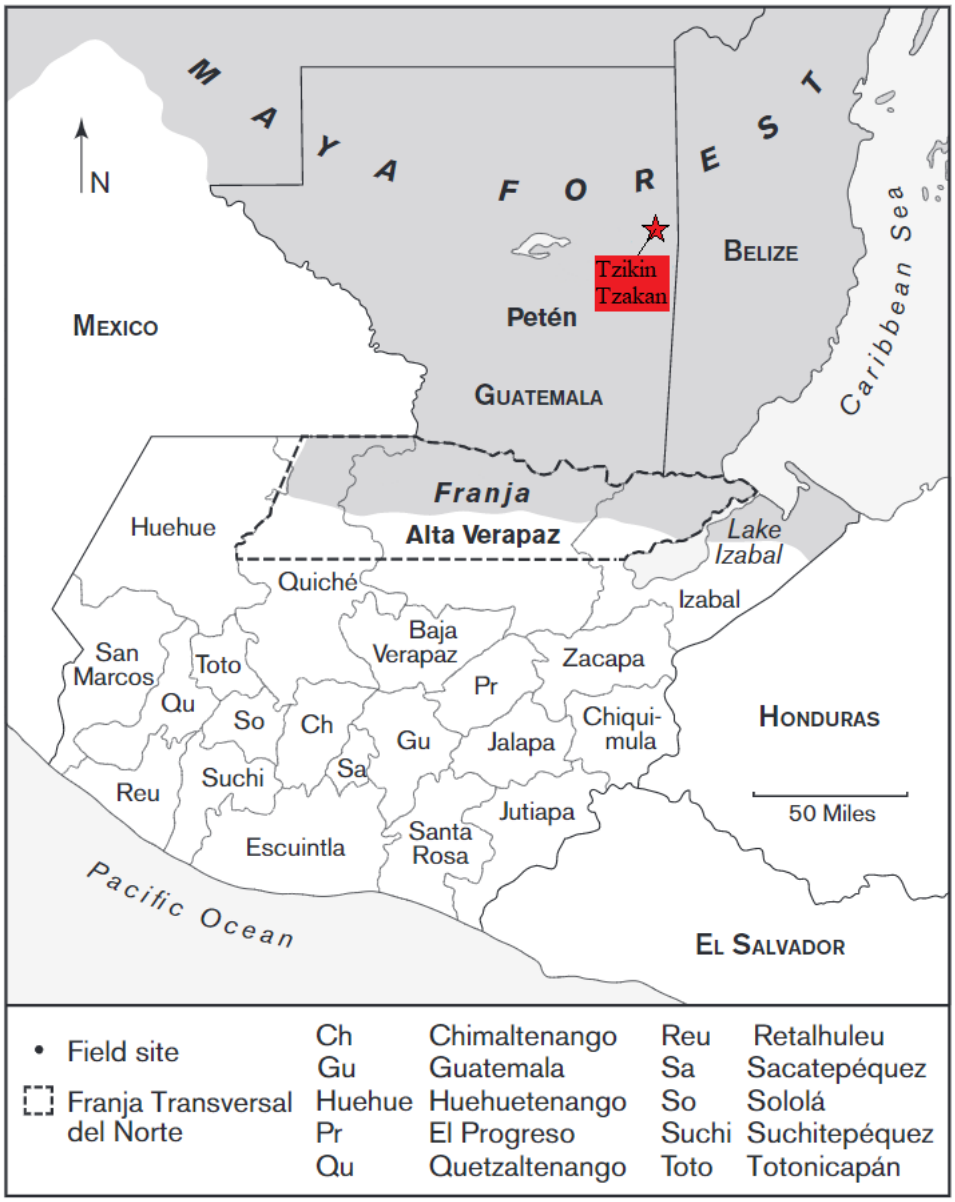

Figure 2: Map of Guatemala's districts, with the Franja Transversal del Norte and spread of Maya Forest. After Ybarra (2018, 51), location of Tzikin Tzakan added by the author.

on the Petén in the 17th century, culminating in the fall of Tayasal, which was first renamed Remedios and later Flores in 1831. Itzá numbers were greatly reduced not just by war but also by the devastating impact of European diseases (Schwartz 1990, 37-38). Remedios became the capital of the Petén, a status Flores has retained to this day. The sparse population, lack of the then highly demanded resource indigo, and an inadequate road system all made the Petén relatively unattractive to the Spanish colonists, leading to neglect and isolation. Most of the colony's economy depended on exporting livestock to Yucatán, but no true wealth was accumulated (Schwartz 1990, 39-40).

Throughout the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the Petén continued to be a frontier hinterland. With Remedios as a military base, which included a prison, between 60 and 80 Spanish soldiers were stationed in the area, led by a garrison commander whose power was rivaled only by that of the church. Both institutions however shared the common goal of controlling the indigenous inhabitants. Besides defending against potential attacks from the British to the east, the army also claimed that the forests harbored thousands of 'unpacified, barbarian Indians', meaning those who did not live in approved villages or who were not baptized (Schwartz 1990, 42-43). It is likely that these numbers were greatly exaggerated, and little military effort was actually put towards pacification of the rumored 'wild Indians'. Those who were considered 'domesticated' or 'pacified' were placed in nucleated villages by the Spanish. The dispossession and subsequent resettlement of what population remained after Conquest was a widespread colonial tactic of economic and political control (Schwartz 1990, 44-59).

5.2) Postcolonial hinterland

In the second half of the 19th century, coffee cultivation and export came to dominate the Guatemalan economy, which had far reaching consequences for society as a whole. Foreign investors with loans from the Guatemalan government constructed railroads for the transportation of coffee to successfully increase international trade (Handy 1984, 64-65). Specifically white foreigners from Europe and the United States were strongly encouraged to immigrate, settle Guatemalan land, and act as a civilizing influence on the local indigenous peasant class. This explicitly racial land dispossession project originally

had few takers, until the government of dictatorial president Justo Rufino Barrios managed to successfully invite a small group of mainly German planters who primarily settled in Alta Verapaz, the department directly south of the Petén, which became an important center for coffee production (Handy 1984, 66; Ybarra 2018, 90).

German control over the region was tight, and a system of forced labor enforced by the Barrios regime combined with extortionate practices of debt bondage drove many Q'eqchi' Maya from Alta Verapaz to move north into the Petén, which was not exploited for coffee (Handy 1984, 67-68; Schwartz 1990, 81). During the Second World War, the United States regarded Guatemala as a Central American 'Nazi Center' and assisted the Guatemalan government in dispossessing German plantation owners, though this was resisted in a number of ways (Ybarra 2018, 90).

Liberal regimes had thus sought to whiten Guatemalan society by inviting western settlers to take control of plantations while simultaneously passing laws that allowed them to snatch away communal lands from highland Maya villages. The modernization and reorganization of the Guatemalan army under Barrios, who established a professional military academy and prioritized the enrollment of ladinos while phasing Mayas out of the ranks, proved successful in repressing armed revolt in the highlands (Handy 1984, 71). Deprived of land that met their subsistence needs, indigenous Guatemalans became increasingly dependent on wage labor, a trend towards large-scale landlessness that would have severe repercussions for the century to come (Handy 1984, 75).

During this period of turmoil in the rest of the country, which was experiencing an unprecedented economic boom thanks to the coffee industry and was grappling with the aftermath of independence, life in the Petén would remain relatively stagnant until the 1890's. Independence from Spain had not significantly altered the political structure that had been implemented in the colonial period (Schwarz 1990, 82). For example, téquios, an originally colonial system of forced labor drafts that initially only targeted Mayas, continued to be used in some form or another in the Petén until 1944, though téquio duty came to be shared with ladinos as recruitment became based on community membership. While thus not strictly analogous to ethnicity, ladinos and Mayas were typically allotted different téquio duties (Schwartz 1990, 130-131). Those with enough money were able to pay exemption fees that would relieve them of their duties,

sometimes doing the same for workers they employed. For the average farmer however, this was unattainable (Schwarz 1990, 89-118).

Petén's isolation continued and even somewhat increased as a result of both the political upheaval in the south of Guatemala and the Caste War in Yucatán (1847-1901), the latter of which led to a decline in trade relations and interaction with the Petén, where livestock raising subsequently shrank in importance. Trade was redirected to British Honduras, which became Guatemala's most important foreign trading partner from the 1820's to the 1860's (Schwarz 1990, 77-81). The state did not have a strong presence in and even neglected the Petén, which would not become an official department until 1860. On the flip side, the political oppression faced by Peteneros was lighter than that throughout the rest of the country, though it was not completely absent. In extreme cases, people could flee to British Honduras, Mexico, or deeper into the forests, which were still not fully under the control of the authorities. Similar to the colonial period, the often exaggerated threat of 'wild Indians' hiding in and striking from the forests justified a military presence on the frontier (Schwartz 1990, 134).

5.3) La chiclería

It was chicle, a latex-like sap extracted from the *Manilkara zapota* tree that can be used as the base for chewing gum, that would eventually bring significant change to the economy of the region. Oro blanco (white gold), as chicle became known, was solely cultivated for overseas export, so while its collection was a massive source of wage labor that affected most of the Petén's population from the 1890's to the 1970's, there was insufficient revenue, opportunity, and willingness to invest in the department's productive infrastructure (Schwartz 1990, 239). Despite dominating the local economy for almost a century, chicle exports never reached the same level as those of the coffee or banana industries, and government interest remained small as a result (Schwartz 1990, 202).

Chicle is collected during the rainy season by workers, known as chicleros, who use machetes to make incisions in the bark of the tree in a herringbone pattern, allowing the sap to flow out. Care must be taken not to cut too deep, lest the risk of insect and fungus predation is increased and the health of the tree threatened. Once tapped, the

tree needs a period of three years minimum to recover before being cut again, though a healing period between four and six years is preferred (Dugelby 1998, 159-160). While chicle tapping is a physically demanding and even dangerous job, wages were usually quite high and chicleros tended to have a certain degree of autonomy (Schwartz 1990, 194).

Harvesting itself is done individually, but during the tapping season groups of chicleros venture into the forest together to establish base camps where they eat, sleep, and boil the collected chicle to remove excess moisture (Schwartz 1990, 144). Overall, ethnicity is said to matter little during the season and la chiclería is generally recognized to have accelerated the acculturation of Mayas to ladino culture (Schwartz 1990, 212-213). Combined with a lesser degree of institutionalized racism and the relative autonomy of the chicleros, this has led some Peteneros to claim that ethnicity has ceased to matter altogether and that the district is more democratic than the rest of Guatemala (Schwartz 1990, 229-233).

However, in other ways la chiclería also deepened preexisting social stratification and economic inequality in the Petén, as merchant elites in urban centers like Flores profited most, thereby strengthening their status. Furthermore, ethnicity continued to be a tangible albeit 'hidden' category, as ladinos tended to benefit more from the chicle economy than Mayas (Schwartz 1990, 207-209). Tensions also existed between chicleros from the Petén and migrant tappers, who are said to kill the forest by being less careful or even aggressive harvesters (Dugelby 1998, 161-170). The majority of these migrant tappers are Q'eqchi' Maya from Alta Verapaz referred to as 'Cobaneros', who were flown in during the 1930's to fulfill the labor demand (Grandia 2012, 71; Schwartz 1990, 187).

Chicle got replaced by synthetic alternatives as the primary base for the production of chewing gum in the mid-20th century, leading to the fall, or 'la caida', of Guatemala's chicle industry in the 1970's. By this time, depletion of chicle trees had also become a concern (Schwartz 1990, 195). Though it is still harvested today, it is done at a much smaller scale, among a variety of other non-timber forest products (NTFP) (Rahder 2020, 203). The national government has played an important role in this extractive industry through agencies like INFOP and FYDEP. With the formation of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in 1990, control was handed over to CONAP, the National Council of

Protected Areas which is in charge of the administration of Guatemala's national parks (Dugelby 1998, 163).

In the meantime however, life in the Petén had altered drastically. Even during the height of la chiclería, population numbers had stayed relatively low, having fluctuated somewhere between the 6.000 and 10.000 since the mid 1800's. Starting from the 1950's, the population increased dramatically, reaching over 20.000 in 1960, and more than 60.000 a decade later. In 1986, an estimated 300.000 people were living in the district, and the most recent national census from 2018 put this number at 545.600 (censopoblacion.gt). This rapid population growth starting in the mid-20th century was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but rather the result of a government led colonization project (Schwartz 1990, 11).

5.4) Colonization and the agricultural frontier

Often referred to as the "Second Conquest of the Petén", this project once again envisioned the lowlands as a frontier to be settled, as military planners used explicit comparisons with the Spanish Conquest to promote the endeavor (Ybarra 2018, 35). Unequal land distribution had long plagued the Guatemalan nation, and several attempts at land reform have been undertaken in its history. In the late 19th century, the Liberal governments were successful in expropriating significant tracts held by the Catholic Church, but these were then granted to affluent planters and foreign businesses. Secondly, Decree 900, the agrarian reform law launched by the Arbenz administration in the early 1950's, aimed to redistribute idle land owned by large corporations like the aforementioned United Fruit Company to the benefit of poor, landless farmers. After the coup of 1954, this revolutionary redistribution program was rolled back almost completely, leaving most initial beneficiaries dispossessed (Adams 1970, 395-400; Grandia 2012, 47; Ybarra 2018, 34).

The state-led colonization of the Petén was part of the third attempt to relieve the shortage of farmland. As the legal system of tenure itself was not changed, but land was merely distributed within the old tenurial system, this venture cannot properly be labeled as a reform (Adams 1970, 395-396). Besides failing to meaningfully change a clearly broken system, the push towards colonization of the Petén ultimately did little to aid land-poor peasants, instead mainly benefiting the military and other elites (Grandia

2012, 119). Informed by U.S. advisers who supplied funding mainly to reverse Arbenz's agrarian reform and ensure the prioritization of timber, oil, and mineral extraction combined with industrial development, the late 1950's saw the creation of both INTA and FYDEP, two state-backed colonization projects (Grandia 2012, 48).

The National Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA), after having saturated the southern Pacific coast with a colonization scheme aimed at export crop production, started to move its efforts to the north, into the Franja Transversal del Norte which had officially been established in 1962 through Decree 1551 (fig. 2). Incorporating the northern parts of Quiché, Alta Verapaz, and Izabal, this territory quickly became known as 'the Generals' Strip', due to the majority of available land being claimed by military officers. Individual plots as well as common titles were also awarded to landless settlers, though the titling process was so disorderly and subject to constant change that many small landholders sold their claims out of discontent, often moving further north (Grandia 2012, 48-51; Ybarra 2018, 35).

FYDEP on the other hand, which was a state company rather than agency, was given responsibility over the Petén, where they would not only grant land titles but also build the infrastructure necessary for the development of agriculture, industry, and tourism while administrating the exploitation of Petén's natural resources. Additionally, they were charged with settling farmers along the western border with Mexico to prevent both potential flooding caused by a purported hydroelectric project and Mexican migration into Guatemala. Like INTA was doing in the Generals' Strip, FYDEP prioritized awarding large swathes of land to cattle ranchers over helping small scale farmers (Grandia 2012, 147; Schwartz 1990, 252; Ybarra 2012, 485).

Dating back to the colonial hacienda system, cattle ranching has been both a very lucrative and a relatively prestigious business in Guatemala for centuries. A stark increase in per capita beef consumption in the U.S. during the mid-20th century then caused a boom in the already prominent industry, which added to the preexisting pressure on farmland (Grandia 2012, 146-147). Besides having easier access to land as a result of government support, cattle ranchers also had the upper hand in negotiations with Q'eqchi' farmers in the Franja who were often coerced into selling their land (Grandia 2012, 153).

Q'eqchi' lowlanders, making up the majority of non-ladino land claims during this period, were seen as less suitable for participation in colonization projects. Intent on creating an integrated Guatemalan cultural identity, INTA aimed at recruiting mainly Spanish speaking, acculturated colonists (Grandia 2012, 55; Ybarra 2018, 36). FYDEP, advised by foreign technical experts who attested that farming would do more damage to the Petén's tropical forests than ranching, controlled logging, and NTFP extraction would, even explicitly condemned Q'eqchi' settlement on the assumption that their preferred style of swidden agriculture leads to depleted soils and deforestation (Grandia 2012, 55; Schwartz 1990, 253-254; Ybarra 2018, 485).

The (un)sustainability of swidden agriculture, especially in the face of rapid population growth, has long been central to the discussion of land use in the Petén, also among archaeologists. Mayanist discourse in the late 1960's, roughly coeval with FYDEP's assessment that the department could not sustain a population beyond 50.000 unless preceded by decades of modern development, increasingly leaned towards pinning the then relatively unquestioned concept of the Classic Maya Collapse on deforestation and environmental degradation brought about by intensified agricultural practices that were ultimately insufficient to feed the burgeoning populace (Schwartz 1990, 253; Schwartz and Amilcar 2015, 69). More recent research has not only criticized the very nature of the 'collapse' itself, but has also highlighted other, non-swidden related causes for this transformation, tentatively concluding that ancient Maya milpa systems were in fact productive and sustainable enough to support three to four million people over a longer period of time. Furthermore, combined with ethnographic data, modern milpa practices show striking similarities to their pre-Columbian predecessors, which can help alleviate poverty, and are compatible with natural conservation (Schwartz and Amilcar 2015, 80-85).

Nevertheless, these newer conclusions are contrary to the negative image of milpa in the preceding decades, which existed, and in some cases still exists, along with the designation of the ancient Maya as irresponsible, failed environmental stewards (Ybarra 2012, 483). Policy makers were thus generally opposed to large numbers of milperos (milpa farmers) and their families moving north, voicing worries that poor peasants would overrun the Petén and deplete its natural resources, while continuing to favor big businesses (Grandia 2012, 54-55). So-called 'spontaneous migration' by

homesteaders practicing swidden agriculture was also seen as too unpredictable, leading them to be degradingly labeled as 'floating populations' (Ybarra 2012, 485). The military preferred to settle colonists in 'population nuclei', grid-organized concentrated villages reminiscent of the Spanish 'reducciones' from the Colonial Period, a system largely incompatible with Q'eqchi' ways of life (Ybarra 2018, 39-44).

Now, it should be noted that swidden agriculture does have its limits, especially when the pressure on land increases, which happened after the 1960's. The sprawling cattle ranch holdings, which generate far fewer employment opportunities per acre than farming or extractive economies do, leave less land available for milpas while often having their own land degraded by things like overgrazing and overexposure to the heat of the sun (Grandia 2012, 157-158). When swidden agriculture gets confined to smaller and smaller parcels of land while the population continues to increase, opportunities to let plots lie fallow for a sufficient amount of time will decrease and farmers will try to find ways to intensify their practices under optimal circumstances. This leads to soil depletion, especially if climatic conditions worsen. Out of options, farmers will often sell their land and move further north, or turn to alternatives like wage labor (Grandia 2012, 109-116; Schwartz 1990, 288).

The Second Conquest of the Petén thus did not solve the issue of unfairly skewed land distribution, and in many cases deepened socioeconomic inequalities. FYDEP's disdain for Q'eqchi' migrants and traditional milperos in general, combined with their catering to the elites accelerated the trend towards land concentration in fewer, rich hands, a situation that was already present in the highlands (Schwartz 1990, 270-271). The Q'eqchi', who after a long history of displacement and migration have often been mischaracterized and denounced as inherently nomadic, are typically not recognized as indigenous in the Petén (to the point of being compared to gringos) and receive much of the blame for its environmental degradation (Grandia 2012, 58-85; Ybarra 2012, 485; Ybarra 2018, 117-118). Peteneros already living in the area pre-1960's occasionally benefited from the increased investment in the department's infrastructure and diversified job market, but the scramble for land has also disadvantaged many. Local milperos often did not see the need to buy land they had already occupied for generations, leading to conflicts with FYDEP (Schwartz 1990, 272).

5.5) War, peace, and conservation

In the decades following the inception of these colonization schemes, the civil war in Guatemala would escalate. The two processes are interrelated, as land inequality is widely recognized to have been one of the main causes for the civil war, migration to the Petén was accelerated by people attempting to flee the extreme violence in the highlands, and when violent repression took place in the lowlands as well, the recently arrived were disproportionally affected (Grandia 2012, 63-64; Handy 1984, 278-279; Ybarra 2012, 485-487). While being projects of seemingly conflicting nature, it can be argued that both the state-led colonization of the lowlands and the bloody counterinsurgency campaigns in the same area were both attempts by the national government to "tame the jungle" (Ybarra 2018, 41).

Having maintained its place in the national imagination of remote wilderness since the Colonial period, and still not being integrated in the larger national economy despite the boom of la chiclería, the Petén finally seemed ripe for full-fledged incorporation during the second half of the 20th century, but only if it were settled in the 'right' way by the 'right' people. Indigenous farmers, who did not fit into the National Guatemalan Culture ideal and thus could not properly 'civilize' the jungle, quickly became targets of counterinsurgency when that same jungle came to be viewed as a guerrilla haven (Ybarra 2018, 41-46). There was guerrilla activity in the lowlands, as the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) had mainly found recruitment success among colonists who had become disillusioned with FYDEP and started to become more active in the late 1970's (Schwartz 1990, 277).

Promises of land ownership were central to FAR's recruitment strategy, which received mixed responses from the settler communities. However, when the army descended on the Petén in all its fury during the early 1980's, all villages that had been visited by FAR became targets, regardless of their response to the call (Schwartz 1990, 278-280; Ybarra 2012, 486). The military response, which is now generally recognized to have been completely disproportionate to the actual threat of the relatively low number of guerrillas, was based on the concept of "draining the sea to kill the fish", with Maya people as a sea of potentially disloyal subjects harboring and sympathizing with Marxist 'fish' (Ybarra 2018, 45). Counterinsurgency in the lowlands directly impacted settlement patterns. The army's scorched-earth tactics, primarily aimed at migrant communities,

destroyed entire villages, leaving the survivors without homes. Once the 'sea' was seen as sufficiently 'drained', the military started a resettlement campaign, placing people in 'development poles', again mirroring the Colonial practice of forcibly centralized villages (Schwartz 1990, 278; Ybarra 2018, 46-47).

Then, in the late 1980's, the civilian elected president Vinicio Cerezo was convinced by large conservation NGOs that a national protected-areas system needed to be created, specifically to save the Maya Forest, an area that encompasses the north of Guatemala, all of Belize, the Yucatán peninsula, and Mexico's southeastern coast and had been labeled a biodiversity hotspot (fig. 2). Rainforests in general had become a focus for BINGOs (Big International Non-Governmental Organizations) in that period, whose favored method of protecting biodiversity is 'fortress conservation' whereby as little human activity as possible is allowed in protected areas. While peace talks stalled, Guatemala's Law of Protected Areas was passed, creating the MBR and CONAP in 1990 as a way of counteracting the rapid deforestation threatening the Maya Forest (Dowie 2009, xv-xxi; Ybarra 2018, 49).

The timing here is crucial. Guatemala was slowly being demilitarized, but one million people were still internally displaced, tens of thousands had fled across the border, and the Peace Accords talks where indigenous and peasant representatives received a seat at the table were still a few years away. This allowed for an undemocratic and untransparent approach to the creation of parks without any meaningful community participation, and the majority of the Petén's inhabitants were unaware of the existence of the MBR until years after its conception, despite the fact that it takes up half of the district (fig. 3) (Sundberg 1998, 401-402; Ybarra 2012, 491; Ybarra 2018, 50). The creation of the MBR was heavily sponsored by USAID, with additional funding from various NGO's as well as the Guatemalan government, and their top-down approach has cemented the narrative that migrant swidden cultivators are to blame for the brunt of ecological degradation in the district (Sundberg 1998, 393-397).

In the meantime, the administration of the land claims of northern Guatemala's colonization projects had fallen into chaos. FYDEP's massive backlog of unfinished claims was passed on to INTA while the former was being dismantled, and when FONTIERRAS, a new state agency created during the 1990's peace process, took over responsibilities for land titling in the Petén, they were handed a stack of roughly 40.000 files (Grandia

2012, 121). Having started in the late 1980's, when it became clear that further land reform was necessary, Guatemala's policies had become more market-oriented. 'Land Bank' projects aimed at facilitating open market land purchases were promoted by the likes of USAID, but failed to satisfy demand (Grandia 2012, 119).

Following this shift, the World Bank, which had been present at the Peace Accords negotiations, gave out a $31 million loan for a large and ambitious cadastral project known as LAP I, that would survey and register the entirety of the Petén, ideally streamlining the move to a free land market (Grandia 2012, 122-123). Running from 1998 till 2007, LAP I was presented as a means to slow down the expanding agricultural frontier and protect the newly established MBR, where CARE-Guatemala had started but not finished a titling program for the buffer zone in the mid 1990's (Grandia 2012, 125). Both the World Bank's involvement and the supposed objectivity of technical surveys were hailed as a way to depoliticize the land distribution process, but this focus on neutrality ignored previously existing agrarian conflicts, and its added layers of bureaucracy made it nigh impossible for illiterate farmers to claim land (Grandia 2012, 129-133).

Another problem is the high rate with which land, either when a title has been granted or sometimes even before that, is being resold, resulting in a speculative market with prices being driven up. Furthermore, this framework privileges individual, private property rather than communal forms of land management. All in all, historical land injustices were solidified rather than solved and distribution remained thoroughly unequal as cattle ranchers or other large landholders benefited from the speculation (Grandia 2012, 140-142). Combined with land use limitations imposed by the new Law of Protected Areas and the upcoming need to resettle thousands of displaced people, the pressure on land in the Petén reached dazzling new heights.

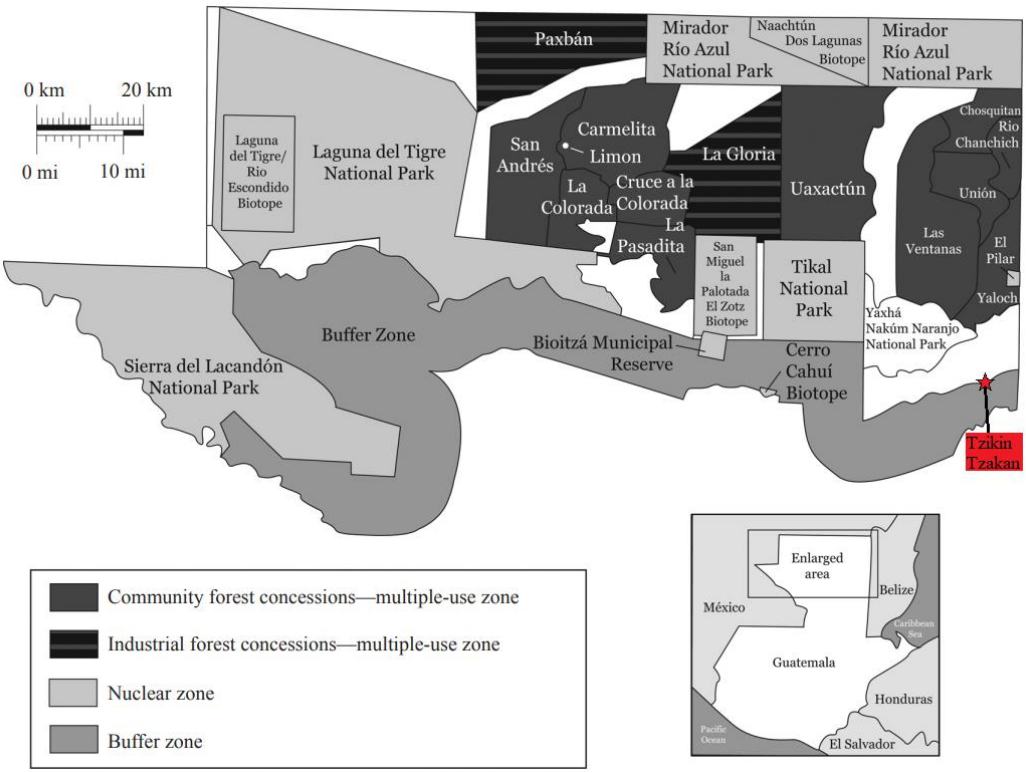

Figure 3: Different zones of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. After Devine (2014, 990), location of Tzikin Tzakan added by the author.

5.6) Laws of the jungle

The biosphere model with its differentiated zones that was applied in the MBR was advised by U.S. conservationists as a way to combine the more fortress-like approach to conservation as seen in national parks with a more flexible though still ecologically responsible approach to human activity and resource extraction within protected areas. While this aim is admirable and has been successful in some regards, it has proven difficult to implement in such a large region that has undergone so many changes in recent years. New lines on the map drawn for the MBR could not erase its turbulent history (Rahder 2020, 14). The demand for land had continued to grow and was not adequately met by the organizations in charge of administrating the claims. When settlement in the core areas of the MBR was outlawed except for a handful of families

that had been living there before 1990, a new, perceived, threat to the Maya Forest was born: park invaders (Devine *et al.* 2018, 2).

Ever since the Second Conquest of the Petén had attracted more and different migrants than the government had originally intended, the distinction between 'native' Peteneros and sureños (newcomers from the south) became increasingly important. Peteneros, a category that is not necessarily demarcated by ethnicity but rather by presence in the area before the big colonization projects, were seen as 'true stewards' of the forest, living in harmony with nature for generations. Sureños, by contrast, were thought to be too ignorant of the Petén's ecology to properly look after it, and simultaneously less motivated to do so if they belonged to supposed 'floating' populations that do not build long lasting ties with the land (Sundberg 2006, 247-248).

Sureños, and especially the Q'eqchi' among them, with their supposedly unsuitable swidden agriculture and greater likelihood to be displaced by the civil war, were most likely to be framed within the 'park invader' narrative. Contrary to what the term might suggest, these are not people who scaled a fence or forced a gate in order to raid a well-established and guarded area, rather, they either moved into an area after 1990 without knowing it had been designated a core area of a biosphere reserve or were already living in the area before the establishment but could not prove it due to the mismanaged administration of titling agencies. Those that were aware that they were moving into a protected area might not have had many alternatives in the aftermath of a decades long civil war and the steep rise of land speculation. Especially the western part of the MBR, which houses the rapidly deforesting Laguna del Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón national parks, became a site for the resettlement of civil war refugees from across the Mexican border where they promptly became illegal squatters in a reserve few even knew existed (Devine 2018, 568; Ponciano 1998, 107).

Park invaders are seen as a major threat to the Maya Forest, but they are definitely not the only one. These landless farmers and returning refugees are often lumped together with or even presented as more damaging than forces such as large scale industrial logging, oil development, cattle ranching, and narco-activity. Logging, an industry with a long history in the Petén, was outlawed in the MBR except under strict conditions, but continues illegally on both household and larger scales (Gretzinger 1998, 113; Ponciano 1998, 106-107; Ybarra 2012, 487). About 40 percent of the area covered

by the MBR has the potential for petroleum extraction, and foreign companies like the French Perenco have received concessions from the Guatemalan government to operate within certain parts of the MBR, including some core zones (Devine 2014, 995; Ponciano 1998, 108; Rahder 2020, 84; Reining and Manzanero 1998, 379-380).

Cattle ranching in the Petén, as previously discussed, not only contributes to land scarcity and deforestation, but has also become deeply entangled with drug cartels operating in the MBR. As a way to launder large sums of money and claim territory for smuggling routes, *narco-ganadería* has burgeoned into one of if not the largest force driving deforestation in the MBR (Devine *et al.* 2018, 1034; Devine *et al.* 2020, 8). The growing prominence of narco-gangs in northern Guatemala owes much to the U.S. War on Drugs, which failed to diminish cocaine demands, but managed to close key trafficking corridors in South America, resulting in a rerouting of trafficking flows through Central America in the 1990's. At the same time in Mexico, the Zetas shook the nation as the newly emerged paramilitary enforcement wing of a major cartel from which they would later break away to claim their own territory, including in Guatemala (Devine *et al.* 2018, 1019; Ybarra 2018, 140).

Many Zetas recruits either used to be part of Mexican or Guatemalan military special forces or received training from them. In Guatemala, these special forces are known as Kaibiles and before a number of them became embroiled in drug trafficking, they had achieved a status of severe notoriety by their involvement in some of the bloodiest massacres of the civil war like the slaughter of more than two hundred people in a village called Dos Erres. In 2011 a group of Zetas, most likely drawing on special forces training, achieved similar notoriety by torturing and beheading 27 farm workers on a ranch in central Petén close to Dos Erres, using their blood to write a threatening message on the walls (Rahder 2020, 59; Ybarra 2018, 141).

The most direct way in which the Guatemalan government has responded to this myriad of threats is renewed military presence and action. A state of siege was declared in the Petén directly after the 2011 massacre at the Los Cocos ranch, but despite the massive show of state force that accompanied this and other states of siege in northern Guatemala, narco activity does not appear to have actually lessened. However, the threat of cartel related violence was severe enough for otherwise

generally leftist conservationists to increase their support for army presence in the MBR (Rahder 2020, 62; Ybarra 2018, 141).

Besides quelling drug trafficking and related violence, enforcing forest conservation has actually been the main rationale for remilitarization in northern Petén, a shift in military self-identification already foreseen by USAID officials in 1995 (Devine 2014, 992). Part of this repurposing has been the establishment of Green Forces like the Batallón de Infantería de Selva (inaugurated in 2010 as the Green Battalion) which was stationed in Laguna del Tigre national park to protect it against 'predators'. Green forces are now based in multiple national parks, though their presence is mainly concentrated in the western part of the MBR (Devine 2014, 992; Ybarra 2012, 497). The National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) is deemed incapable of dealing with threats to these areas as they can only employ a small number of park guards, who are not allowed to carry arms. Fearsome reputation as result of civil war bloodshed aside, the military is deemed less corrupt than the police and is perhaps seen as a necessary evil to combat the greater evils threatening the precious Maya Forest (Devine 2014, 992-993; Ybarra 2012, 496-498).

However, the militarization of conservation, which has become a worldwide trend, has not necessarily led to the outcomes conservationists had hoped for. One of the primary tactics deployed by the Green Forces to defend protected areas is the eviction of illegal settlements (Rahder 2020, 83). As detailed above, these settlements only officially became illegal after 1990, and the so-called park invaders inhabiting them can have different reasons for their presence but most are connected to Guatemala's severe land inequality and civil war aftermath. The forceful evictions, which are sometimes paired with the burning of houses and crops stir up memories from that very same civil war and do not solve the underlying problems of widespread landlessness (Devine 2014, 993; Rahder 2020, 164; Ybarra 2012, 498).

The threats posed by narcos and park invaders are not approached as separate issues, but rather, the people who have become criminals by default through the space they occupy in the MBR are getting increasingly linked with drug trafficking in the eyes of the authorities. Beside 'park invader', the term 'narco-peasant' (narco-campesino) has now become a way to further frame those who farm inside parks as dangerous predators. Even the victims of the Los Cocos massacre were speculated to have been

involved with drug trafficking (Rahder 2020, 62). By implicating anyone who moves through protected areas in narco operations, often despite complete lack of proof, increased militarization becomes rationalized and normalized, like the various states of siege or emergency that suspended habeas corpus rights in the past decades (Devine 2014, 994; Ybarra 2012, 495-498; Ybarra 2018, 146). Evictions of local communities from protected areas is nothing new, and are in fact deeply entwined with the history of modern conservation practices (Dowie 2009, xxii).

The Maya Forest is thus presented as both threatened and threatening, containing breathtaking nature and dangerous criminals alike. So it needs to be saved, but for whom? Apparently not for the agricultural migrants who were encouraged to move there in the mid-20th century or anyone displaced by violence. From a purely conservationist's standpoint, one could argue that the protection of biodiversity is enough reason to warrant these measures, perhaps along with concerns for the deterioration of archaeological sites and looting. The latter concern was also explicitly included in the repurposing of the Guatemalan army (Ybarra 2012, 497). However, similar to the trend of archaeological projects primarily getting government funding when the site is expected to attract tourists, investments in biodiversity conservation are increasingly being justified through the development of ecotourism (Brockington *et al.* 2008, 131) In the case of the MBR, Jennifer Devine (2014) has outlined how ecotourism, which in Guatemala is often linked to archaeological tourism as well, can act as a catalyst for militarization.

Ecotourism, as the "fastest-growing sector of the fastest-growing industry in the world" (Dowie 2009, 255), is rather difficult to define. Especially the difference with nature-based tourism, wherein nature is used as its main attraction without necessarily taking wider concerns about the environment into account, is often unclear. The 'eco' label however is incredibly popular since ecotourism supposedly not only contributes positively to conservation by striving to keep its main attraction intact and bringing a flow of money to conservation projects, but also by serving as a way to develop and empower local communities (Brockington *et al*. 2010, 132-138).

Though this assumption has been heavily criticized both for its deeply neoliberal nature and the fact that these positive impacts are hard to prove, ecotourism has been presented as a sustainable way to exploit the economic potential of the Petén without

damaging its natural resources. Job opportunities provided hereby would keep inhabitants from 'resorting' to their spurned swidden practices (Norris *et al.* 1998, 335-341). Besides serving as an additional and powerful justification for conservation, ecotourism also contributes to the militarization of the MBR through touristic securitization, whereby an area needs to be made safe and controlled in order to ensure the flow of tourists (Becklake 2020, 36-37; Devine 2014, 987).

So far, the militarization of especially the western part of the MBR and the core areas does not seem to actually be slowing down deforestation rates. In fact, the most successful conservation initiatives are taking place in the multiple-use zone (MUZ) and are the result of a remarkable grassroots movement. Though born form the resistance of MUZ residents against the new restrictions that biosphere regulations put on the access of natural resources, the community forest concessions model that the movement ended up advocating for was originally developed by international NGO's and their establishment in the MBR was partially pushed for and funded by USAID (Devine 2018, 571; Ponciano 1998, 107-108). NGO's are ubiquitous in the MBR and often wield an authority similar to that of the state, yet report back to their typically foreign donors, leading to strategies that can conflict with the needs of local communities or even the wishes of other NGO's (Rahder 2020, 74; Sundberg 1998, 404).

In this case, however, community interests and NGO goals did align, and after years of extensive organizing and deliberating CONAP granted the first community concessions in the mid-1990's. Originally, the Guatemalan government had only planned to allow concessions for private companies, but the ones allotted to communities, of which there are now twelve, have since become an essential conservation strategy (Devine 2018, 571). Concessions do not grant land rights, only use rights, which can be taken away if the community fails to conform to CONAP guidelines, something that typically results in forced evictions (Devine 2018, 581; Gretzinger 1998, 116; Stoian *et al.* 2018, 6).

The existence of the concessions is not unchallenged, as was also made apparent in the El Mirador case study of the previous chapter. The permits were all given for a period of 25 years, meaning that the first concession will expire in 2022 (acofop.org). Recent studies showing that narco cattle ranching is the main driver of deforestation in the MBR while the community concessions have made large strides in

maintaining forest cover and reducing fires might help their renewal cases. In general, conservation strategies that involve the sustainable use of natural resources and are co-managed by communities have received much recognition in recent years, with Guatemala's community forest system as a shining example among them. They do however remain under pressure not just from ecotourism initiatives but also from narco cattle ranchers seeking to expand their territories (Devine *et al.* 2020, 8-9; Pearce 2020; Willman 2020). The Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP), which is an umbrella for a multitude of organizations that formed the social movement that pushed for these land use rights, is working to adapt to the increasing complexity of sustainable resource management by moving away from timber operations and towards NTFP extraction (Taylor 2012, 36).

Chapter 6: The Tzikin Tzakan Project

Had it not been for the swiftly advancing Covid-19 pandemic paralyzing the planet, the Tzikin Tzakan Project would have had its first field season in April 2020. A second attempt was made to launch a field season for June 2021, but this ultimately had to be cancelled for the same reason. At the time of writing, preparations are under way for a field season in May of 2022, with a lab season following directly after. If the third time is indeed the charm, this will be the start of a five year long project.

6.1) Situating Tzikin Tzakan

The site itself is located in the eastern part of the Petén, in the municipality of Melchor de Mencos, roughly ten kilometers from the border with Belize. Tzikin Tzakan's proximity to the border is noteworthy not just because of the potential of drawing in tourists from that region, but also because of the ongoing border dispute. Going back to the 18th century, when the majority of Central America was under Spanish colonial rule, Guatemala and Belize, which was known as British Honduras until its independence from the British Crown in 1981, have long disagreed over their respective territories. A convention signed between Britain and Guatemala in 1859 that defines the current border has since been called in question by the latter party, who has reduced its claim to all of Belize to just the southern two-thirds (Lauterpacht *et al.* 2001, 3-4).

While military action and violent incidents revolving the border have almost completely waned in recent years and relations at the moment are mostly cordial, it is still common to see maps of Guatemala that include part of that territory, or at the very least have the border between the two nations be drawn as a dashed line. The issue came close to being solved in the early 1990's, when Guatemala moved towards recognizing Belizean sovereignty, but this was reversed with a change of government. In a recent development, the border dispute and Guatemala's claim have been placed before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, a decision approved by two national referenda. The Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the submission of the initial pleadings, and the case is still pending (International Court of Justice 2020; Lauterpacht *et al.* 2001, 3-4; Mowford 2021).

With regards to its position within the MBR, Tzikin Tzakan is part of the multiple-use zone, though not of any existing community concession. The CA13 highway that the site lies directly north of is an important thoroughfare, facilitating traffic from Belize to Flores while also marking the border between the multiple-use zone and the buffer zone in the easternmost part of the reserve. Towards the east, the CA13 runs through the most important border town between Guatemala and Belize, Melchor de Mencos, which is also the capitol of the municipality, whereafter it becomes the Western Highway that connects all the way to Belize City on the Caribbean coast. Melchor de Mencos also houses a number of civil organizations that fall under the ACOFOP umbrella, tying it firmly into the larger network of community forestry initiatives in the Petén despite its seemingly peripheral location (acofop.org).

The buffer zone, which runs along the reserve's southern edge, is rarely mentioned in sources discussing the MBR, except to remark upon the seeming lack of conservation efforts taking place there, essentially rendering it similar to unprotected areas further south (Rahder 2020, 132). However, as it does mark the boundary with areas that do have tighter land-use regulations, there has also been a degree of militarization by means of military checkpoints (Devine 2014, 997). Tzikin Tzakan is located near one such checkpoint, manned by a deployment of Kaibiles. The proximity to the still disputed Belizean border might also factor into the presence of the special forces. La Pólvora, the hamlet in which the members of the archaeological project will most likely be staying is named after this connection to the army, as its name is the Spanish word for gunpowder.

The area around Tzikin Tzakan has mostly been deforested, though the site itself lies within a small pocket of rainforest roughly one square kilometer in size. First mentioned in academic literature by Teobert Maler in 1905, the site has been known in archaeological circles for a while, but no substantial research has yet been conducted. An initial survey was done in 1958 and some photographs were taken before part of the main structure collapsed in 1969. Most activity was undertaken in the mid to late 1990's, when vegetation was cleared, damage to the structure was recorded, and crucially its monumental center was mapped (fig.4) (Quintana Samoyoa and Würster 2001, 132-133).

Other, larger sites in the same region do have extensive histories of research like the previously discussed Tikal, which lies approximately 45 kilometers to the southwest. Even closer is the national park Yaxhá-Nakum-Naranjo (PNYNN), named for the three major Classic Maya sites within its borders. Established in 2003, this national park is co-managed by a department of the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports, CONAP, representatives of all twelve surrounding communities, INGUAT, and a representative of the national universities (Romero 2013, 7). Receiving funding from large international donors like USAID, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), and the Rainforest Alliance, PNYNN policy has a strong focus on sustainable community development, which is inevitably linked to ecotourism (Romero 2013, 20).

The communities surrounding PNYNN, with La Pólvora counted among them, are migrant communities of people who settled into the area during the 1960's and 70's. As anywhere in the north of the Petén, land rights became severely restricted with the establishment of the MBR and the emergence of new national parks. In the case of PNYNN, the conflicts that ensued were reportedly solved through thorough communication with and participation from local community leaders in the development of alternative economic strategies (Samayoa 2020, 66-68). Ecotourism is presented as the foremost strategy, not only as a source of direct and indirect income, but also as a dependable motivation to protect the park's cultural and natural attractions. Care is taken to ensure that the revenues from tourism are invested in community development and that local businesses are promoted in and around the park (Romero 2013, 19-21; Samayoa 2020, 69-71).

From an archaeological perspective, the proximity of Tzikin Tzakan to the major sites in PNYNN, Tikal, and even Caracol in Belize, raises interesting questions about political alliances and exchange routes during the Classic period. When Maya hieroglyphs started to be deciphered in the latter half of the 20th century, it became clear from texts mentioning strife between different kingdoms and the accomplishments of individual rulers, that the never politically unified Maya knew a complex dynastic system where autonomy and dominance over neighboring states were key to the ambitions of their divine rulers (Martin and Grube 2000, 17-21).

IDAEH investigations into the large sites of eastern Petén have paid special attention smaller sites in their periphery to see if their archaeological evidence can be

correlated with epigraphic data and possibly shed light on the degree and extent of territorial control by the more powerful states. For this purpose, archaeological sites in the region have been sorted into four different categories: major centers, intermediate centers, minor centers, and residential/rural centers (Fialko 2013, 265). Tzikin Tzakan has been classified as an intermediate center, possibly in the political sphere of either Yaxhá or Naranjo (Fialko 2013, 279).

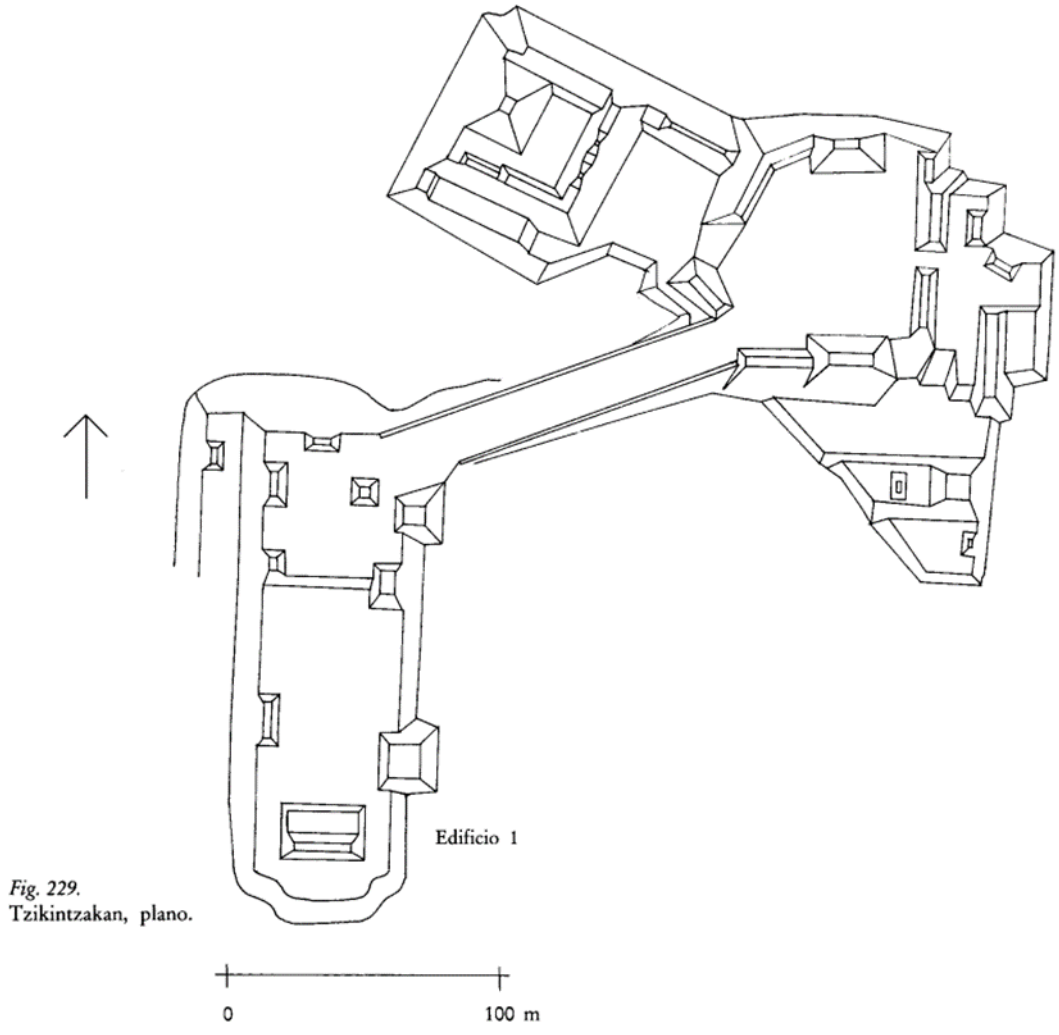

Fig. 229.
Tzikintzakan, plano.

Figure 4: Map of Tzikin Tzakan's monumental center. After Quintana Samoyoa and Würster (2001, 132), cropped by the author.

6.2) The project and its participants

The current Tzikin Tzakan project will be the first attempt at a multiple year excavation of the site and will hopefully shed more light on these questions regarding power relations in the area. Co-directed by Markus Eberl, associate professor at the Department of Anthropology at Vanderbilt University, and Mónica Antillón from Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala, who will be replacing original co-director Marie Vela from Universidad del Valle de Guatemala this season, the project has taken aboard specialists and students from Guatemala, the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands. As per official IDAEH regulations, the team will have at least the same amount of Guatemalan participants as it does foreign participants.

German architect Dieter Richter, who owns the Café Arqueológico Yax-ha in Flores and organizes guided tours numerous Maya sites in the region, first pitched the idea for a project at Tzikin Tzakan to dr. Eberl not just on the grounds that it is an uninvestigated intermediate monumental site possibly in the sphere of influence of nearby major sites, but also for its potential as a tourist attraction owing to its accessible location near a main road. The involvement of the Guatemalan government has thus far been minimal and mainly manifests itself through the IDAEH needing to approve the permits and paperwork of the project and its participants. It is not sponsored by the national government as all funds will be applied for from within the United States by Markus Eberl (M. Eberl, personal communication, February 15, 2021).

The aims of the Tzikin Tzakan Project are threefold: archaeological research, biological research, and community outreach. During this first field season, which will last three weeks, the archaeological research will be mostly exploratory, focusing mainly on digging test pits to better understand the sites chronology, creating an updated and more elaborate map, and looking into possible future conservation strategies as Structure 1 is in danger of further collapse. Besides working on the monumental center, initial excavations will also take place in the site's periphery, where a number of burials have already been located. The small square of forest surrounding Tzikin Tzakan is intended to be documented as well, through a botanical survey and with the assistance of local vegetation experts. If the site gets developed for visitors, a botanical garden exhibiting local biodiversity will be part of the experience (M. Eberl, personal communication, February 1, 2020).

Whether or not any such development will take place and in what form is dependent on the community aspect of the project, which is especially vital in these early stages. At the moment, after two cancelled seasons, we do not yet have a clear understanding of all the relevant parties and stakeholders who might affect and be affected by the project. We are not a neutral, unattached entity in this equation, but stakeholders in our own right, inserting ourselves into a preexisting complex setting that we will first need to become more familiar with before initiating potentially substantial changes. Good relationships with the communities surrounding Tzikin Tzakan are not only needed for the success of the present and possible future field seasons while we are there, but also to ensure the longevity of any development, touristic or otherwise, that might ensue. Whatever ideas we might have about the touristic potential of the site, if they are not supported by those who will ultimately live with the benefits and drawbacks tourism can bring, it would not be feasible nor prudent to try and impose those ideas.

One of the most important tools for this community outreach will be the community survey that is planned to be held in La Pólvora and other nearby hamlets during the field season. Not only should this help map who is living in the vicinity of Tzikin Tzakan, but also their interests, concerns, opinions, and knowledge regarding the site's past, present, and future. In return, information on the workings and intentions of the project from our side will also be shared in a transparent way. This exchange will hopefully foster trust between parties and lay the foundations for a truly collaborative approach that will shape how the project will be carried out in the coming five or possibly ten years. It is therefore not unthinkable that the aims of the Tzikin Tzakan project might be adjusted after the first season in accordance with community wishes and needs, which may also have changed recently as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (M. Eberl, personal communication, February 15, 2021).

After three weeks in the field from May 9th to May 28th, part of the team will continue with a lab season that runs until the beginning of August to analyze the gathered field data. Because the lab work requires facilities not readily available in the direct environs of Tzikin Tzakan, this leg of the project will in all probability be moved to El Remate, a town on the eastern shore of lake Petén Itzá. Both project locations are relatively close to popular tourist destinations in the Petén like Flores and Tikal. During

the days off there is the possibility to organize day-trips to these attractions so the participants can see more of the region (M. Eberl, personal communication, March 19, 2022). In this way, tourism is not just part of the project's long term development goals, but the project itself can also be seen as a type of tourism.

The concept of volunteer tourism, as discussed in Chapter 3, has received a decent amount of academic attention, but the subcategory of archaeology-based volunteer tourism has barely been explored or even recognized as such (Timothy 2020, 88-89). Volunteers have long been invaluable in many parts of the archaeological heritage industry, helping staff museums and visitor centers, but also archaeological digs. Using volunteers on excavations is a significant cost saver in a line of research where funds can be hard to come by, but it also makes archaeology more public. It is common for these volunteers to travel abroad for a dig, either if there are no suitable dig sites available in their home countries or because going abroad adds to the experience (Timothy 2020, 92).

The demographic of the demand for archaeology-based volunteer tourism is not yet well understood, but some provisional generalizations can be made. Typically, the traveling volunteers are relatively young, owing to the physically strenuous nature and adventurous image of archaeological excavations abroad, as well as the fact that many are students participate to fulfill requirements for their school, college, or university. Besides academic learning, other motivations can include pursuing a hobby or religious devotion (Timothy 2020, 93-94). In any case, the work mainly satisfies the volunteers' self-interests and tends to be less altruistic than more mainstream volunteer tourism. However, as volunteer vacations remain an intrinsically Western concept, most international archaeo-volunturists travel from more- to less-developed countries (Timothy 2020, 98). In general, it is a small, less directly profitable market whose consumers spend little money at their destination (Timothy 2020, 100-101). Archaeology students pursuing academic interests and requirements might be loath to view themselves as tourists, but it can be an angle worth considering with regards to the impact archaeological projects with foreign participants, like the Tzikin Tzakan project, have on the destination countries.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Maya archaeology as a whole, and Guatemalan archaeology in particular, has been dominated by Western, mostly U.S. American, researchers from the birth of the discipline onwards. Starting with 19th century explorer-writers like Stephens and the Maudsleys, this outsiders' perspective created a romanticized view of the supposedly mysterious ancient Maya that has proved so alluring that it still endures today. This predominance of foreign researchers exists in tandem with broader tendencies of imperialism and interventionism from the West in Guatemalan history. From diplomatic connections that allowed early explorers free access to sites from which they either successfully or unsuccessfully planned to remove artefacts, to the United Fruit Company using their vast wealth and landholdings to facilitate and sponsor archaeological projects, and the Tikal project not fully launching until after the 1954 coup, it is clear that archaeology has never been the politically neutral discipline we might want it to be.

In that same vein, the neutrality of archaeology has also been called into question by those studying its relationship with nationalism. Exactly who and what the national Guatemalan government is has gone through considerable and dramatic changes since independence in the early 1800's, some of which have been described above. It is therefore not surprising that the institutionalization of archaeology in a national program happened relatively late, in the 1970's. In general, the varying Guatemalan governments have mainly given their attention to grand monumental sites (a tendency also common with foreign researchers), that are suitable for incorporating into a venerable national identity, attracting tourists, or having the potential to be added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

It is here that a certain tension between nationalism and universalism becomes apparent. The sites that typically receive World Heritage nominations are often the same ones that are considered national icons. UNESCO listings, though supposedly indicative of universal, shared values, add to a country's national prestige, fostering competition between states in the process. Tourism also plays a role in this competition, as the World Heritage label can increase visitor flow. The different countries in the Maya region have attempted to work together in conjunction with National Geographic to promote the Mundo Maya tourism route, but there are few indications that this project

managed to reach its original objectives, which ambitiously included increased quality of life for local inhabitants. Guatemala continues to present itself as the "Heart of the Mayan World" in tourism marketing to differentiate itself from its neighbors.

This is the same marketing that relies on the mysterious, timeless Maya tropes that can be traced back to the origins of Maya archaeology and that have been amplified by archaeologists' preoccupation with the now outdated notion of the Classic Maya collapse. Archaeologists have been relatively slow to recognize the role of their research in the development of tourism or how tourism has impacted their discipline in return, though there have been some exciting publications on this subject in the past decade. Anthropologists studying the contemporary Maya tend to be more proactive with including tourism in their research, but a certain disjunction between anthropologists primarily working in the highlands and archaeologists primarily working in the lowlands persists, hampering the exchange of ideas between fields.

Within this relatively new field of study that is archaeotourism, there is a considerable diversity of opinions on the benefits versus the drawbacks of promoting archaeological sites for visitors. Concerns include the physical deterioration of sites, increased looting, limitations on research aims, and Disneyfication. On the other hand, tourism is a great source of funding and can make archaeology more accessible to the general public, which ties in neatly with Post-Processualist calls for a more inclusive kind of archaeology which considers multiple stakeholders and broader societal concerns. These calls have been answered with promising approaches like community archaeology and indigenous archaeology, though their application is fraught with both global and case specific challenges.

Community concerns also factor into the development of alternative forms of tourism like cultural, eco, and volunteer tourism. Stemming from the assumption that tourism can and should bring economic prosperity to the local population, these alternatives to mass tourism are often presented as development opportunities that empower communities and decrease illegal activities. While these goals are admirable and achievable in theory, in reality they are hindered by issues like tourism leakage, cultural commoditization and (perceived) loss of authenticity, misplaced paternalistic good intentions, and the fact that terms like 'community' and 'eco' can be used by any

tourism broker looking to attract a certain type of visitor regardless of their commitment to those causes.

As we have seen with the El Mirador case study, these issues can arise from top-down approaches that favor big, international, well-funded projects over local, bottom-up initiatives. Though the Mirador Basin Project claims devotion to the community cause as well, it is clear from the steep local resistance to proposals like the tourist train or the redrawing of park boundaries that theirs is a unilateral operation. This opposition is especially strong among the communities that manage the community concessions which were awarded after a complex struggle for the recognition of land-use rights in which NGO's allied themselves with a grassroots movement, as they do not wish to lose those rights to expanding core areas of the MBR.

Guatemala's protected areas system, established in 1990 with the Maya Biosphere Reserve as its crown jewel, was partially built around archaeological sites, some of which had already received the status of a park. Though still also managed by the IDAEH, these parks now became part of the same framework that aims to protect the so-called Maya Forest. The Tikal project's policy to restore its large buildings but keep surrounding vegetation largely intact to create an accessible swallowed-by-the-forest ambiance, of course combined with extensive and influential archaeological research, had proven very successful in attracting visitors, also earning the site the world's first mixed UNESCO listing.

Implemented only a few years before the Peace Accords were signed, the creation of the MBR marked a new chapter in the turbulent history of the Petén. The perception of its dense forests has gone from supposedly harboring 'unpacified Indians' during the Colonial Period and directly after, to an untapped and potentially lucrative well of natural resources like chicle, oil, timber, and farmland in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, only to return to being viewed as a stronghold of dangerous subversives during the civil war and as expanding narco territory in recent years. Throughout these changes however, the Petén remained distinct from Guatemala's other districts as a never entirely settled frontier that needed to be more tightly controlled.

With the MBR, a new dimension was added to the notion of the Petén as a wild place: that it should stay thus. At least, wild with regards to nature, with limited human presence and activity in order to preserve the jungle and its biodiversity. The biosphere

reserve model with its differentiated zones does allow for more flexible land use and controlled resource extraction than strict fortress style conservation, but the MBR was still explicitly created to halt the agricultural frontier and slow population growth. Ironically enough, in order to enforce this vision of a wild and pristine jungle, the Guatemalan government actually strives to increase their control over the region through the deployment of rebranded army units.

Meant to protect the MBR's core areas, that include parks constructed around archaeological sites, from a variety of real and perceived threats, this renewed military presence stirs up painful memories of the recent civil war. This time around, instead of being often groundlessly implicated with guerillas, peasants now run the risk of being deemed in league with the narcos and receiving the label 'narco-peasant'. Largely unable to deal with the narco threat head on, the Green Forces routinely target small-scale farmers under the guise of recovering governability of the region. These heightened securitization efforts can be linked to tourism, both by protecting the assets that attract tourists in the first place (i.e. the parks) and by making the tourists feel safe once arrived.

In this vision of a pristine Maya Forest that needs to be saved from invasive human settlement, tourism is the one human activity that is currently actively encouraged by the national government. Specifically ecotourism, an often very generously applied term, is seen as a sustainable way to both foster and fund conservation in the MBR, where archaeological sites are typically implied to be a part of the natural landscape that needs protection. This link between ecotourism and archaeology, that has only grown stronger in recent years, positions archaeological sites more as part of Guatemala's natural riches than as part of Maya cultural heritage. Even though it goes without saying that the famous sites of the Guatemalan lowlands were built by large and flourishing human societies, the area of their location gets conceptualized as empty, natural, and unspoiled, a perception exacerbated by apocalyptic tales of supposed catastrophic collapse.

Scientists, NGO staff, and policy makers that share concerns about the sustainability of swidden agriculture have either implicitly or explicitly compared current ecological degradation in the Petén to conditions at the end of the Classic period when, according to presently largely refuted or at least challenged archaeological theories, an

irresponsible intensification of agricultural practices failed to support a population that had grown too large. Despite recent research providing a more nuanced understanding of the end of the Classic period as well as illuminating how large scale cattle ranching conducted by drug cartels contributes far more steeply to deforestation rates than swidden farming, claims surrounding the population threshold of the Petén mirrored with the supposed failed stewardship of the ancient Maya persist.

Framing tourism as the most responsible and sustainable way to preserve the Petén's treasures in contrast with the perceived destructiveness of local economic strategies echoes 19th century assertions that the local populace was incapable of grasping the true value of the area's archaeological remains, which served as a justification for removing some of them to Europe or the U.S. Both perpetuate negative indigenous stereotypes in order to strip away self-determination. This attitude has contributed greatly to the issue of land inequality that has been so persistent throughout Guatemalan history. Whether it was Europeans being granted large coffee plantations on land expropriated from mainly Q'eqchi' Maya who then became dependent on wage labor in the coffee industry, the massive landholdings of the politically dominant United Fruit Company, the way military officers and large companies got prioritized over small-scale farmers during mid-20th century colonization projects, or the conflicts that have arisen from the implementation of Maya Biosphere Reserve regulations, land continues to be Guatemala's most heavily contested resource.

The trinity of archaeological research, biodiversity conservation, and tourism is therefore not innocuous. In fact, it can further the separation of contemporary Maya peoples from their pre-Hispanic heritage, it can criminalize them and other inhabitants of protected areas in the eyes of both the national government and international conservationists, and in doing so increase the problem of land inequality that has plagued Guatemala for centuries. Maybe not as immediately obvious as plantations, cattle ranches, farmland, logging, and NTFP extraction, but within the context of the context of the Petén, one could consider tourism, archaeology, and conservation, and most importantly the combination of those three, as forms of land use. After all, we have seen how archaeological projects have adapted their approach to excavation and restoration in order to be more appealing to visitors, an act that transforms the landscape. Furthermore, these archaeological projects have been partially responsible

for the spatial designation of the zones of the MBR, a conservation effort that champions ecotourism and restricts other forms of land use.

Yet, for new archaeological projects starting up in Guatemala, like the Tzikin Tzakan project, it would be unrealistic to avoid this trinity altogether. Rather than attempt to detangle these well-cemented strands, or worse, ignore their connection, they should be considered and understood together with their historical context and impacts on the region. This thesis aims to be the beginning of that understanding. The project's first field season will be crucial for continuing said aim on the ground, as very little is currently known about the direct surroundings of the site or how the project will be received.

Community outreach thus becomes not just another research focus, but the key to properly aligning project goals with local needs, keeping in mind that these might present conflicts as there are bound to be multiple, diverging local perspectives. When mapping different stakeholders in the area, we as archaeologists must not forget to count ourselves among them, as we are not a neutral party in this equation. For however long the project might run in the future, the impacts could be felt long after, depending on how deeply it ends up impacting the local economy and the local communities' relationships with the site. Without pretending that this enterprise will be in any way straightforward or easy, a hope can carefully be expressed that when the Tzikin Tzakan project is looked back on after several years, it is done without accusations of negligence towards our responsibilities as archaeologists working in a preexisting, complex social environment.

Abstract

In May 2022, the first field season of the Tzikin Tzakan project will commence after having been cancelled twice before as a result of Covid-19 related safety measures. An intermediate monumental site from the Classic Maya period (AD 250-900), it has only been preliminary mapped in the 1990's, but never before excavated. This is one of the goals of the Tzikin Tzakan project, whose other aims consist of biological research of the surrounding small patch of rainforest and community outreach, which will include exploring possibilities for tourism development. Connections between archaeology, biodiversity conservation, and tourism are ubiquitous in Guatemala, a country that has become increasingly dependent on its burgeoning tourism industry. Eager to get rid of its reputation as a risky destination, Guatemala has pursued the promotion of alternative forms of tourism like volunteer tourism, ethnic tourism, ecotourism, and archaeological tourism. Both the country's contemporary Maya population and the archaeological sites of mainly the Classic period feature heavily in this promotion, which presents Guatemala as the "Heart of the Mayan World".

Tourism is an incredibly lucrative business, and is often cited as a prime tool for economic development, distributing wealth more evenly across the world. While true to a certain extent, this notion is also heavily criticized as much of the money generated in the business is not retained in developing destination countries and the amount that does is often concentrated at the top. Criticisms of tourism also include the potential damage visitors can do to the sites they visit, loss of authenticity, reinforcement of neocolonial dynamics, increase in nationalist sentiment, and stereotypical, possibly harmful advertising. Archaeologists in general have been slow to incorporate tourism in their research, partially out of disdain. However, the history of archaeology is interwoven with that of tourism, which has now become one of its biggest sources of funding.

In Guatemala especially, early archaeological explorations lie at the root of how tourism is still promoted today. Mostly carried out by foreign researchers, both national and international politics have strongly impacted the practice of archaeology as well as how it came to be connected with conservation and in extension, ecotourism. A long history of extreme land inequality, darkened by a decades long civil war that mainly

targeted the Maya population features heavily in present day issues concerning land use in protected areas, which are partially protected for the sake of archaeological tourism.

If the Tzikin Tzakan project wishes to be a sustainable, community-based enterprise, a deep understanding of the area's sociopolitical context is needed. This thesis aims to lay the foundation for such an understanding, analyzing the history of both archaeology and tourism in Guatemala, considering influences from abroad, the national government, and the indigenous movement. A number of case studies of archaeological tourist attractions will be discussed, and special attention will be paid to the complex history of land use in the Petén district, where Tzikin Tzakan is located.

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List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

ACOFOP	Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén (Association of Forest Communities of Petén)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIW	Carnegie Institute of Washington
CONAP	Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas (National Protected Area Council)
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Armed Rebel Forces)
FARES	Foundation for Anthropological Research and Environmental Studies
FONTIERRAS	Fondo de Tierras (Land Fund)
FYDEP	Empresa Nacional de Fomento y Desarrollo Económico de Petén (National Enterprise for the Promotion and Economic Development of the Petén)
GHF	Global Heritage Fund
IDAEH	Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala (Guatemalan Institute of Anthropology and History)
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
INAH	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexican institute of Anthropology and History)
INFOP	Instituto de Fomento de la Producción (Institute of Production Development)
INGUAT	Instituto Guatemalteco de Turismo (Guatemalan Tourism Institute)
INTA	Instituto para la Transformación Agraria (Institute for Agrarian Transformation)
IUF	International Union of Food and Allied Workers
MBR	Maya Biosphere Reserve
MUZ	Multiple Use Zone
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

PACUNAM	Fundación Patrimonio Cultural y Natural Maya (Foundation for Maya Natural and Cultural Patrimony)
PNYNN	Parque Nacional Yaxhá-Nakum-Naranjo (Yaxhá-Nakum-Naranjo National Park)
RAINPEG	Regional Archaeological Investigation of the North Petén
SAA	Society for American Archaeology
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development