ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURISM: LOOKING FOR ANSWERS ALONG MEXICO'S MAYA RIVIERA

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Located on the Caribbean coast of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, the village of Cancún was radically transformed when mass tourism development began there in the early 1970s. Cancún and the surrounding "Maya Riviera" quickly became a wildly popular tourism destination offering a variety of cultural experiences, including visits to ancient Maya archaeological sites. Now, some of those archaeological sites are in danger of being "loved to death," while others are only just beginning to appear on the tourist radar. There is increasing pressure to balance tourist accessibility with conservation of the ancient buildings and to find a balance that incorporates architectural and ecological conservation, management of the tourist procession through the site, and effective interpretation of the site to enhance the visitor experience. Sites need to be presented within historical, temporal, and geographical contexts, and tourists must be educated about the host region and local indigenous cultures to enhance the tourism experience and encourage tourist behaviors that promote sustainability at the site. Key Words: Mexico, tourism, archaeological sites, public interpretation, sustainability

Heritage tourism has been called "travel designed to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past" (Hoffman et al. 2002:30; National Trust for Historic Preservation 2001). This definition incorporates travel to archaeological sites, parks, museums, and places of traditional or ethnic significance, as well as to foreign countries for the opportunity to experience "exotic" cultures.

Archaeological ruins are compelling to tourists for at least three reasons. Visitors are often genuinely interested in archaeology or history and want to view the archaeological remains firsthand. Others may have enough curiosity

about the ruins that they will make time to visit an archaeological park when on vacation, while still others will sign up for organized excursions or accompany companions for the opportunity to experience something new and different. For example, as the construction of Cancún as a tourist destination got under-way, it became apparent that tourists were indeed enthusiastic about venturing into the countryside to take day trips to such famous Maya archaeological sites as Chichén Itzá and Tulum. As Henry Cleere succinctly puts it:

> 'Cultural tourism,' visiting primarily monuments and art galleries, represents only a minor proportion of the visitors to such monuments: for every 'cultural' tour group visiting Ephesus or the Pyramids at Teotihuacan and spending several hours studying them in detail there are 20 groups arriving by bus *en route* between one visit and the next, spending half an hour in a hurried and unprepared tour before buying their souvenirs and boarding their buses for their next destination. The value of such tours is debatable; for the individuals concerned it is probably minimal, since they will have little time to absorb even the basic facts about these important and complex sites. Nevertheless, there is an intangible benefit in that many of them will be almost subconsciously influenced by a feeling of respect for the past and for the human achievement that such monuments represent— though few are likely to be able to articulate these feelings in such terms—and as a result they may well be instinctively sympathetic to 'archaeology' when they are confronted with it in their home environments, whether in a television programme or an excavation in their home town. [Cleere 1989:9]

Archaeological tourism has become a particularly important economic asset for developing countries, where archaeological sites are often situated in remote settings, on dramatic promontories or within lush forests, and thus also offer opportunities for other non-archaeological or even ecotourism interests as well. For example, the relatively protected archaeological parks often serve as havens to many species of birds, providing excellent bird-watching opportunities. Archaeological sites also provide access to exotic and indigenous plants, while hiking enthusiasts may seek out archaeological sites to explore the trails and surrounding landscape. Local people interact with heritage sites too. There is a visible interdependence between the community and nearby archaeological ruins that contributes a sense of vitality to the site's atmosphere that is especially conducive to tourism (Nuryanti 1996:256).

Archaeologists and public officials who are concerned with managing ar-chaeological sites as tourism venues face many problems in trying to balance the goals of education, sustainability, and conservation. Even as funding oppor-tunities are declining, more archaeologists are turning to the public to support their scholarship. However, to gain public recognition and much-needed

financial and political support, archaeologists are challenged to demonstrate that there is value in the past and to publicize the importance of archaeology in ways that will convince the public they should care about it in the present. Lessons learned from this type of interdisciplinary research are useful for breaking down intellectual and political barriers by promoting cultural understanding and, ultimately, contributing to the larger field of anthropology (Beltrán and Rojas 1996).

Because archaeological sites are popular with tourists, they also provide an important perspective for understanding the delicate balance between sustainable tourism and sustainable development. In a discussion on sustainable tourism at World Heritage Sites, Anne Drost (1996:479) makes the point that these sites not only generate revenue and attract public interest, but tourism can provide a potential means for their preservation. If revenue from archaeological tourism could be applied to meeting a site's maintenance and educational needs, it might actually be contributing to the sustainability of the site, including its ecological, social, cultural, political, economical, and educational concerns.

Many archaeologists, concerned about the public consequences of their research and restoration, especially at major sites such as Chichén Itzá, Copán, Tikal, Angkor Wat, and Cuzco, are making important efforts to provide archaeologically and environmentally responsible, sustainable, and educationally sound contributions to local communities and national governments. However, the solutions are as complicated as the problems. In this paper, I discuss the major issues confronting archaeologists and archaeology in relating to the touring public and suggest ways they have tried to assist in both simultaneously protecting and making accessible the architectural achievements of earlier human cultures. My own experience has brought me into frequent contact with Mesoamerican archaeology, so I will illustrate these contributions through the discussion of tourism to Mexican sites.

TRADITION IN MEXICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Mexican archaeology has a very old tradition going back to at least 1776 with the establishment of an *Instrucción* of the Royal Cabinet of Natural History (León 1994:70). The purpose was to build up royal collections by excavating antiquities in Spanish territories, with soldiers and bureaucrats performing the first excavations of Maya ruins at around this time (León 1994:69–72).

By the turn of the 20th century, Mexican officials already understood that archaeological tourism showed great promise for making use of the country's natural and cultural resources. Captain Leopoldo Bartres began work on the magnificent ancient city of Teotihuacan under the appointment of then-President Porfirio Diaz as part of a program to celebrate the centenary of Mexican independence and stress the importance of archaeology to the Mexican heritage (León 1994:70–71; Muriel 2001:57).

Marketing archaeological tourism was such an obvious course of action that Teotihuacan, just 50 kilometers northeast of Mexico City, became the first archaeological site to be specifically promoted for tourism purposes (Muriel 2001:57). Eventually, the Mexican government also began to promote several other sites because they demonstrated certain features: they were famous enough to attract public interest, they were fairly easy to get to, and they were located in spectacular landscapes. As this strategy proved successful for tourism, especially tourism from North America, the Mexican government began to consider strategies conducive to attracting the newly emerging mass-tourism market. Mass tourism offered affordable vacations in locations with cultural attractions and beautiful landscapes, and became an important component of modern life in North America, Europe, and Asia. This kind of tourism concentrated on bargain destinations in developing countries such as Mexico.

Over time, Mexico has developed five integrated tourism centers that are associated with mass tourism: Los Cabos, Ixtapa, Loreto, Huatulco, and the most wildly successful of them all, Cancún. Within these beach resorts designed for international mass tourism, various state and federal agencies took on a series of roles that ranged from buying and selling land to planning and provisioning the essential infrastructure to making loans to private investors and overseeing local governance of the development (Clancy 1999:10).

ARCHAEOLOGY AND TOURISM ALONG THE MAYA RIVIERA

Located on the eastern coast of the Yucatán Peninsula in the state of Quintana Roo, the small village of Cancún was radically transformed when mass tourism development began there in the early 1970s. For the Mexican government and major investors, Cancún tourism development has clearly been an economic success—so much so that plans for development are ongoing and the Cancún model has been replicated elsewhere (Bosselman et al. 1999:127–128).

Although the Cancún model began with an overall plan to integrate development with responsible environmental considerations, the enormous success of tourism marketing, combined with pro-tourism growth and loose oversight in the enforcement of regulations, has earned the Cancún model a mixed reputation at best among various concerned groups. Now, some environmental groups, residents, tourists, and even a few politicians regard the rampant development as a less desirable alternative for the long-term health of the region.

Prior to the early 1970s, Cancún was a small village with about 400 inhabitants, used primarily as a base for hunters and *chicleros*. Over the last 30 years, an average annual growth rate of more than 20 percent has resulted in a permanent population of more than 400,000 residents, with millions of tourists rotating through as temporary "residents" (Daltabuit and Leatherman 1998:320).

Although the vast majority of Mexican tourism is of the sun-and-sea variety, an estimated 10 to 15 percent is specifically related to ethnic and cultural tourism, making it a profitable niche for the industry (van den Berghe 1999:568–599). The presence of ancient Maya archaeological sites became an important selling point to distinguish this part of the Caribbean from other, more established destination resorts in the Bahamas and Virgin Islands. Cancún became a tourism destination that offered a variety of cultural experiences, with visits to ancient Maya cities as one of many exotic enticements. As expressed by Miguel Borge Martin, head of the Cancún Convention and Visitors Bureau, "Modern Cancún, with all the quality and variety that it offers, is also the gateway to a thousand years of Mexico's archaeological history—and to a natural history that is even older" (Sidron 2000:1).

Quintana Roo's eastern Caribbean coastline offers plenty of the requisite attractions for mass tourism: sun, sea, sand, and sex ("the four S's"), but there are also what tourism anthropologist Valene Smith (1996:287–300) has called the "four H's" of cultural or indigenous tourism: habitat, history, handicrafts, and heritage. Habitat refers to the geographic setting and underlying platform for the visit, whereas the term history implies post-contact relations between Westerners and aboriginal groups. Handicrafts, often manufactured by indigenous groups, commemorate a tourist's visit and reflect the market demands of tourism. Lastly, heritage is used to describe the body of knowledge and skills associated with human survival in terms of individual values and beliefs. The tourism interaction sphere around Cancún offered all of these attractions and more, thereby earning the designation of the "Maya Riviera," referring

to the expansion of tourism development along the coastline of Quintana Roo:

> The Maya Riviera is a tourist-industry designation for the coastal strip of land and beaches that begins at Cancún and extends about 160 km south to the modern town of Tulum. Much of this area has been, or is being, developed with hotels, resorts, and so-called "ecoparks." The development of Cancún and the Maya Riviera has resulted in striking contrasts and conflicts between modern development and the "traditional" Maya way of life. [Fedick 2003:158 n. 3]

In many respects, Quintana Roo has now become an economic extension of the United States and Europe (FONATUR 1993:12; Pi-Sunyer, Thomas, and Daltabuit 2001:129). Private owners—often expatriates from the United States, Canada, or Europe—control many of the beachfront resort enclaves south of Cancún, and at least some of these resorts have inadequate waste disposal and use up huge quantities of water, to the detriment of surrounding communities. However, this is unfortunately a generic problem in the enclave tourism of the Caribbean and not specific to archaeological heritage sites alone.

HERITAGE INTERPRETATION AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological tourism is often considered to be a variation of heritage tourism, and is associated with the term "inheritance," suggesting the transfer of cultural traditions from one generation to another. The ramifications of transferring cultural traditions between generations can easily be seen in the modern world of Cancún, where the debate between tradition and modernity has become especially reverberant. However, budgetary problems within the Mexican government and the need to reduce the fiscal deficit have led to reducing federal support for archaeological programs in the Cancún area and elsewhere in the nation and have necessitated finding new funding sources.

In a study (Beltran and Rojas 1996) on public visits to three important Mexican archaeological parks, Templo Mayor in Mexico City, Cacaxtla, and Cholula were all chosen for their historical significance and for the disparity in their accessibility to the public. The study by Beltrán and Rojas (1996:463–478) concluded that visitors were not currently able to appropriately enjoy Mexico's enormous archaeological heritage, but if services were improved, visitors would get higher levels of utility and satisfaction from their visits. Therefore, these authors advocate the establishment of self-financing mechanisms at each site, reasoning that if the public learns to value archaeological zones, they will be

more likely to contribute support for their preservation. Most importantly, the research by Beltrán and Rojas (1996) confirmed that Mexicans do assign a significant overall value to the preservation of their archaeological heritage and will support conservation techniques if they are adequately informed about them.

Tourism is an activity that requires some degree of interpretation and representation, which people then re-interpret through the filter of their own experiences. It is often the case that interpreted messages reflect different, competing interests and that a popular place for tourists to visit may change over time, making tourism both a cause and consequence of globalization (Mowforth and Munt 1998:7–8). Archaeological interpretation is important for discovering the story of a place, although this does not seem to be acknowledged by many archaeologists today (Slick 2002:221). Few of the archaeology courses offered in U.S. universities relate to appropriately interpreting ancient artifacts and sites for the public. Moreover, even though there is some thought in the United States about trying to rectify this situation, little is being done here at home, and far less is being done abroad.

The U.S. National Park Service, the U.S. government's leading preservation agency, has developed a number of strategies for public interpretation in national parks. From the 1930s to the present, standards in U.S. policy have evolved and are outlined in the Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management; these guidelines also closely parallel the laws and guidelines for managing the nation's natural resources (Jameson and Hunt 1999:35; National Park Service 1994).

Schwimmer states, "Tourism is now the primary mode of reciprocity between countries, ethnic groups, regions, and classes" (1979:232). Although international tourism has long been touted as a valuable educational experience, a study by two educational anthropologists, J. M. and Gaetane Thurot (Crick 1989:328; Thurot and Thurot 1983) raised serious doubts about the validity of this conclusion. Their study suggested that tourists actually tend to be rather poor culture-bearers because they have temporarily left behind their usual cultural roles and the symbols that would make them more understandable to others. Additionally, tourists are often more intent upon hedonism and conspicuous consumption than in education and cultural understanding (Crick 1989:328-331). As the study states, "Tourism is very much about *our* culture, not about *their* culture or about our desire to learn about it" (Crick 1989:328; Thurot and Thurot 1983:187).

Some would go so far as to argue that tourism perpetuates and reinforces stereotypes rather than breaking them down (Crick 1989:329). Tourism has

often been accused of contributing to commodifying cultures, especially in situations where visitors and their hosts regard each other as exploitable resources rather than as human beings, and it is not uncommon for host communities to consider tourists as a nuisance (Castañeda 1996; Crick 1989:329; Pi-Sunyer 1978:155). On the other hand, indigenous people are not always satisfied with the way their country's image has been presented to tourists by the dominant commercial interests (Crick 1989:317; Pi-Sunyer and Thomas 1997:201).

In Mexico, the long period of colonialism disrupted the organization of indigenous traditions, and as with other colonized nations, this disruption was eventually counterbalanced by political interests determined to build a national character (Mexico Profundo) and to demonstrate a continuous cultural identity in which colonialism was just one of many episodes. Over the intervening years, Mexican politicians employed the archaeological heritage to symbolize the strong sense of a shared cultural identity before, during, and after the Mexican Revolution, particularly with the social movements of "mestizaje" (a blend of indigenous and imported traditions into a new synthesis) and "indigenismo" (the idealization of indigenous cultures)(Gutiérrez 1999:19; van den Berghe 1995:569–570).

Around the wildly successful tourism destination of Cancún, a growing number of lesser-known archaeological sites are currently undergoing tourism development. Effectively interpreting an archaeological site plays a critical role in guaranteeing a successful visitor experience, and includes putting the site within historical, temporal, and geographical contexts. Effectively educating tourists about the host region and local indigenous cultures not only enhances the tourism experience but also encourages tourists to engage in behaviors that promote sustainability at the site (Drost 1996:481; Moscardo 1996:377). Proper interpretive techniques can distribute visitors to different locations throughout a site by incorporating self-guided walks, for example, to relieve traffic pressure on any one particular monument or location.

DISCUSSION

According to Henry Cleere (1989:1), academic archaeology and archaeological heritage management are twins that developed at different rates. Numerous articles feature archaeology in periodicals and television documentaries and testify to a keen public interest in archaeological sites and ancient civilizations. The thrill of discovery is inherent in the pursuit of archaeology and offers

a fundamental link between the past and the present that is meaningful to most everyone. However, funding by the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities in support of archaeological research has been steadily declining over the last several years.

On the other hand, public interest in archaeology continues to thrive and has been successfully exploited by numerous pseudoscientific books and television programs that spew out dubious information about archaeology (McManamon 2000:20). These popularizers have even been known to accuse archaeologists of participating in conspiracies to withhold information about exciting discoveries from the public for reasons that remain unclear. Even though these popularizers rarely have archaeological training, they continue to successfully communicate their own uncontested conspiracy theories in books and documentaries, detailing fabulous tales such as the Sphinx being built by a pre-Egyptian civilization over 10,000 years ago (Fagan 2003:47–50; McManamon 2000:20). They have proposed that Teotihuacan was built by extraterrestrial visitors and can be linked to the Nazca Lines in South America and to the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. In the last several years, Chichén Itzá and Tulum in the Yucatán have become meccas for New Age devotees who are captivated by legends of virgin sacrifices and promises of spiritual healing. In many respects, professional archaeologists have allowed their own field to be usurped by these archaeology popularizers, who essentially disregard scientific theory and methodology along the way to selling their stories.

It is important for the public to learn about archaeological work from professional archaeologists themselves. Archaeologists, in turn, need the financial and political support of the public to ensure that their research, conservation, and education efforts will continue. Therefore, archaeologists should try to balance the excavation and subsequent conservation of a site with the appropriate educational and aesthetic expectations of a visiting public (Kwas 2000; McManamon 2000).

In a discussion on effective interpretation and education approaches, Gianna Moscardo (1996:381–392) adapted E. J. Langer's work (1989) on "mind-ful" and "mind-less" behaviors to identify two sets of factors for determining whether visitors to heritage sites will have a mindful (meaningful), or a mindless (non-meaning) experience. Langer considered that "Setting Factors" include maps, signs, brochures, and guided tours, while "Visitor Factors" are concerned with a visitor's companions, familiarity with a place, and motivation for the visit. Interpretive techniques that produce a more mindful visitor experience are much more likely to be associated with a satisfying and enjoyable visit. Equally

important, mindful visitors generally report a deeper appreciation after a visit to a heritage site and come away with a heightened awareness of the consequences of their own behaviors.

Oftentimes, the marketing of heritage tourism has missed the mark by emphasizing Maya archaeological ruins as somehow separate from the forest rather than resulting from a long-term and complex cultural interaction with the environment. Extensive removal of vegetation from around archaeological buildings gives the impression that the Maya don't belong in the forest and may even set up a subconscious oppositional perspective of people versus forest (Fedick 2003:134–136). To the contrary, there is growing evidence that removing the protective forest not only exposes the ancient buildings to even more rapid decay, but also that the forest may actually have protected the buildings for thousands of years (Ford 2001:2–3). Archaeological, architectural, and botanical data support the premise that the Maya supported large populations over a long period of time by utilizing highly efficient forest-management techniques (Gomez-Pompa and Bainbridge 1995; Gomez-Pompa and Kaus 1999).

Maya archaeological sites such as Muyil in the Yucatan and Lamanai in northern Belize provide examples of sites that combine excavated, consolidated buildings with unexcavated mounds while still preserving a strong sense of the forest around them. Muyil and Lamanai stand in contrast to stripped cities like Chichén Itzá or parts of Mayapan, which now have the vegetation almost entirely cleared away from their ceremonial centers.

A primary objective of interpretive archaeology is to instill in the public a sense of stewardship toward the archaeological record and to make clear the connection between people and their heritage. The underlying idea is that if citizens are able to understand the tangible evidence of ancient monuments and artifacts, they may come to value and be more likely to support conservation issues and trade laws that are designed to protect them. A successful approach to archaeological interpretation for the visiting public can be facilitated by using unobtrusive and simple informational signs, providing brochures or other explanatory literature, employing the use of personal guides whenever possible, and combining several different informational techniques whenever feasible. Emphasizing the value of interpretation not only offers a more satisfying tourism experience, but also garners support for the often tenuous political and economic realities of the site.

As archaeological sites are opened for tourism, more reconstruction and consolidation of the structures may be seen as necessary. This quickly becomes controversial because there is always a component of subjectivity, not only in

the technical methodology used in the reconstruction, but also in the extent to which the reconstruction is to be accomplished. In Quintana Roo, as in all of Mexico, decisions on the philosophical merits of the reconstruction or consolidation of monuments are made by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH). INAH has a pattern of working with some combination of three approaches: consolidate and reconstruct certain of the more imposing or prominent buildings, display others as they were left after excavation, and leave other mounds in an unexcavated state. Alejandro Muriel's (2001) experience with INAH suggests that a visit to a site is most successful when there is an appreciation of architectural variety, urban design, and different periods of occupation, which must be supported by appropriate signage and a printed guidebook. It has also become important to show visitors something of the ordinary life through exposure to different types of houses and food-production activities, for example.

In the Yucatán Peninsula, the pattern has been to heavily promote the megasites of Chichén Itzá and Tulum, with the interpretation mainly provided by tour guides and guidebooks. A number of other lesser-known sites—Ek Balam and Mayapan, for instance—have been opened for tourism but receive far fewer visitors, probably due to a lack of promotional marketing, a minimal effort toward interpretation, and the fact that they are not yet on the beaten path of mass tourism. There is an advantage to this in that lesser-known sites will be better preserved for the future, though the extensive visitations by tourists endanger the conservation of the mega-sites. In the light of this case and others like it, tourism to archaeological sites has a very mixed record. On the one hand, archaeological tourism promotes the development of local cultural and social identities and provides income to the national (and often the local) coffers, but, on the other hand, tourism itself makes it harder to preserve the site for future generations.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND NATURE TOURISM

Xcaret Ecoarchaeological Park, located a short distance south of Cancún in the Maya Riviera, is a highly controversial natural history theme park literally built around the ruins of an important ancient Maya settlement. These ancient archaeological buildings—not replicas—are treated as opportunities for amusement and unfettered exploration in the model of Disneyland theme parks. Xcaret, whose name refers to "inlet" in Yucatec Mayan, attracts crowds

of tourists who are bused in from Cancún and resorts along the Maya Riviera. Once there, tourists are entertained by glamorized presentations of the Maya culture, including reenactments of ancient Maya ceremonies and the famous ball game. By paying an entrance fee of about $39 per person, visitors are able to view exotic animals such as jaguars, sea turtles, spider monkeys, and dolphins housed around the archaeological ruins. The initial building and subsequent expansions of Xcaret Park have been highly controversial among archaeologists and environmentalists, who became particularly alarmed by the massive amount of dynamiting and bulldozing done to produce the two underground rivers now used for swimming and snorkeling.

Occasionally, tour agencies attempt to market a visit to a Maya community in conjunction with a tour to an archaeological site, implicitly linking the ancient and modern Maya. In most situations, however, tourists to the Maya Riviera are left with the overall impression that the Maya are now extinct, despite the presence of more than a million Maya living there today. Enlisting the cooperation of local communities as stakeholders for archaeological tourism may help to reduce conflicts now and in the future—especially conflicts that arise from continuing conditions of poverty, loss of cultural identity, and destruction of the environment.

Currently, there are many threats to the biodiversity of the Maya Forest, to the archaeological sites, and to the cultural heritage of the contemporary Maya people. Problems associated with the cutting down and burning of vast sections of the forest for development have been extensively documented (Nations, Primack, and Bray 1998:xvi–xvii; Pi-Sunyer and Thomas 1997:198), making preservation of the remaining forest more than a noble goal; it is an economic necessity for the socioeconomic future of the entire region (Galleti 1998:33–46; Primack et al. 1998). In addition, many of Mexico's archaeological sites are in danger of literally "being loved to death," as there is little effort to mitigate against the destructiveness associated with mass tourism. In writing about protecting archaeological sites from being damaged by tourism, Mexican archaeologist Nelly Robles Garcia has this to say:

It is equally important to point out that in spite of the noteworthy growth in tourism, and that its promotion has become an important part of government policy vis-à-vis INAH and the Secretary of Tourism, with few exceptions there is little long-range planning for conservation. A few sites such as Cacaxtla or the Templo Mayor have received some of the infrastructure needed to reduce degradation caused by constant use, e.g., walkways and railings, but these are the exceptions. The result is that while more visitors generate more

income they also generate greater deterioration through increased use of the original architectural elements such as floors, stairs, walls, or tombs, yet there is little recognition of this in the allocation of funds and human resources. [Robles Garcia 2002:3]

Ultimately, in order to lessen the harmful effects for both present and future scenarios, sustainable tourism planning must combine education and regulation strategies in a sort of "carrot and stick" approach (Drost 1996:481–482). Educating the visiting public about archaeological, cultural, and environmental issues—such as heritage preservation, the development of cultural identities, sustainability, etc.—has the potential to raise the level of awareness in visitors, particularly when it is reinforced by a clear code of behavior when visiting archaeological sites.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism and sustainable development are linked together ethically, and require a compromise between balancing the needs of the past and the present with the needs of the future. However, sustainability is as difficult to define as it is to measure, assess, and monitor at each and every location.

It should be a priority to understand which aspects of low-impact, sustainable tourism can be adapted to archaeological sites in the Cancún area, as well as other regions undergoing tourism development. It may also be possible to remedy some of the more negative repercussions at sites previously developed for archaeological tourism. When a major archaeological park such as Chichén Itzá has been excavated, reconstructed, and successfully promoted as a major tourism destination, it is usually marketed as a commodity, which externalizes the site. As such, it may come to be seen as lacking in authenticity, even though the buildings are authentic in the archaeological sense. In any event, as Quetzil Castañeda (1996:105) points out, because archaeological investigation is inherently a destructive process, uncontested authenticity is an unrealistic concept under any circumstances.

The state of Quintana Roo is currently trying to diversify its travel market, which in November 2001 was reported to have dropped by about 30 percent after the tragedy of September 11. Although Americans still represent 60 percent of the total visitors to the region, Cancún has been trying to appeal to European, Asian, and Latin American travel markets to maintain the usual high numbers, as well as to diversify the market base. An especially successful

but problematic niche has been established by appealing to "spring breakers," the college students who visit on cheap package plans during spring vacation. Additionally, several more golf courses are planned, along with a new $600 million tourism and residential project. Probably the most controversial plan involves the building of a $35 million cruise ship terminal called Puerta Cancún-Xcaret, already under construction in the Puerto Morelos area. This homeport, the first in all of Mexico, will have the capacity to berth four mega-ships with a capacity of 2,500 passengers each, and will be able to process customs and immigration services for up to 10,000 passengers at a time (Arellano 2001:1–2).

Thus, the juggernaut of tourism development continues at breakneck speed along the Maya Riviera, providing a wealth of research opportunities for archaeologists and other anthropologists. It is crucial that we are prepared to meet the challenges that lie ahead. It is also essential that the local Maya be included in seeking solutions to those challenges. The Yucatec Maya have been living here for hundreds if not thousands of years. The Yucatán was already a large, urban, developed community prior to the arrival of the Spanish, and Yucatecans fought long and hard against them. They did not succumb until the mid–20th century, and Maya resistance continued even while Cancún was being considered for development. Tourism, and archaeological tourism in particular, can help either to destroy or to revitalize the value and the beauty of Yucatec Maya history and tradition.

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