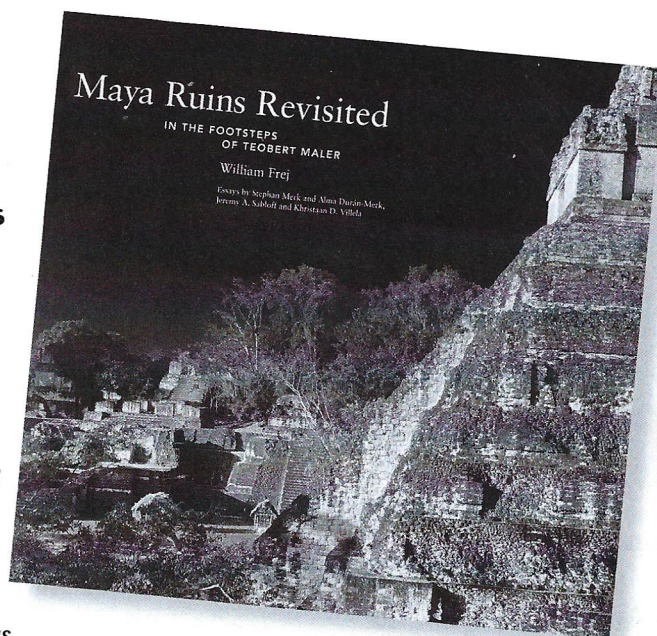


## Maya Ruins Revisited: In the Footsteps of Teobert Maler

By  
**William Frej**

(Peyton  
Wright  
Gallery  
Press, 2020;  
240 pgs., illus.,  
\$60 cloth; [oupress.com](http://oupress.com))



This stunning, large format book is a collection of black and white photographs of Maya ruins in the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico and Guatemala. The photographers are William Frej and Teobert Maler, and their works are separated by almost a hundred years. Maler, an Austrian, who first went to Mexico in support of the ill-fated Emperor Maximilian in the 1860s, returned to make numerous expeditions to the region between 1886 and 1908. Working for Harvard's Peabody Museum, he was the first to document and photograph many important Maya sites in the Yucatán. Lugging three heavy cameras, Maler often hacked his way through dense forest to reach more than a hundred unexcavated ruins never before seen by Europeans. Travel was difficult, uncomfortable, and often dangerous.

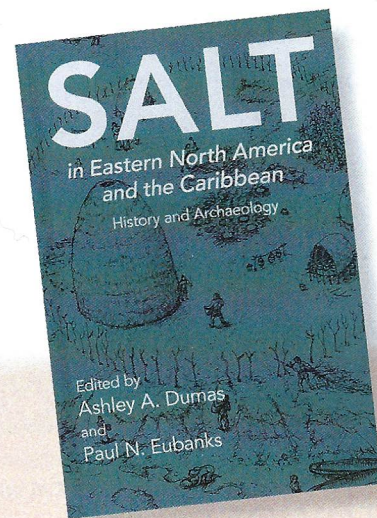
Since 1971, William Frej has spent some forty-five years traveling in Maler's footsteps, returning to many of the ancient cities to use modern technology to find, photograph, and document the ruins. These cities include popular tourist destinations like Palenque and Tikal, as well as many sites seldom seen even now. Often the difficulty of reaching these lost cities today is little different from Maler's era.

These photographs are not just works of art, but important scientific documentation of a civilization that is deteriorating due to the harsh environment and the ravages of looters. The unrelenting forest both knocks down massive walls and also holds fragile buildings together. Torrential rains and high humidity dissolve the limestone of which the walls and buildings are constructed.

Frej does not re-photograph Maler's work, but rather offers his original interpretation of similar scenes. This unique juxtaposition gives the viewer a more in depth view of the ruins and the environment than could be seen by only one photographer. Detailed captions provide the setting, as well as historical context.

In addition to the 160 photographs, three engaging essays round out the volume. Alma Durán-Merk and Stephen Merk contribute a fascinating biographical sketch of Maler. Kristaan Villela explains the role of photography in documenting archaeological sites. Noted Maya archaeologist Jeremy Sabloff offers a primer on Maya culture and history. *Maya Ruins Revisited* is an important addition to the study of the art of the Maya and it documents over a hundred significant ancient cities. —Mark Michel

american archaeology



## Salt in Eastern North America and the Caribbean

Edited by  
**Ashley A. Dumas**  
and  
**Paul N. Eubanks**

(University of Alabama Press, 2021;  
240 pgs., illus., \$70 cloth, \$70 ebook;  
[www.uapress.ua.edu](http://www.uapress.ua.edu))

Salt is essential to human health, especially in hot, humid climates like Eastern North America. As such it was an important commodity to Native Americans from the earliest settlement of the Americas, and it became even more important with the introduction of corn and other plant foods that lack natural salt. In historic times, it became important in processing hides as well as preserving fish and meat. Since salt does not readily survive in the archaeological record, it has been often ignored by archaeologists. Yet we do know that it was mined, processed, and refined in prehistoric times. It was traded over vast distances, and it had important spiritual qualities.

In this book, fourteen scholars contribute twelve essays on the use of salt in various regions and cultures. Geographically, they range from southern Alabama to Upstate New York, and from Tennessee to Jamaica. Temporally, they cover the early Paleo sites to historic salt industries. Though its lack of preservation in the archaeological record makes salt difficult to study, its ubiquitousness and importance to society demands that archaeologists focus on it. This informative volume addresses that demand.