

CONTESTING GLOBAL HERITAGE IN THE CHICLE WORKERS' MUSEUM

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Abstract: In the village of Ch'umil in northern Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve, competing heritage claims to Maya archaeological sites and artifacts politicize the region's cultural and ecological landscapes. Using a geographical understanding of the production of space (Lefebvre 1991), I ethnographically unpack Ch'umil residents' definitions of cultural and ecological heritage that reflect village-level histories of living and laboring in forests and archaeology sites surrounding Ch'umil. Villagers' definitions of heritage contrast sharply with the spatial claims made by global heritage advocates who campaign to designate the region as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Analyzing the politics of scale underpinning these conservation practices reveals that when global heritage advocates speak on behalf of a universal humanity, they often render local-level heritage claims invisible and illegitimate. This article urges heritage managers and cosmopolitan theorists who debate the ethics of mitigating global and local heritage claims to reconsider this spatial binary altogether.

As a first-time tourist in the Maya archaeological site and small town of Ch'umil in northern Guatemala, I checked into the only tourist accommodations around, the Chicle (chewing gum resin) Workers' Camp.¹ After a few days, the camp's owner, Gloria, nonchalantly told me the property also housed the Museo Chiclero, or the Chicle Workers' Museum. The museum's name reflects Ch'umil's modern history and also pays homage to the owner's late husband, who was a *chiclero* (chicle extractor). With little prodding, Gloria took me to an unmarked building adjacent to the camp's six modest rooms for guests. After Gloria opened the padlock on the door, I entered the museum and was dumbfounded. Shelf after shelf, case by case, the museum's marvels slowly revealed themselves. Hundreds of Maya artifacts lined the shelves running along the room's walls. Flanking the shelves, several large display cabinets called attention to the museum's best-preserved treasures, such as intact multicolored terra-cotta plates and painted ceramic bowls.

As I took in the museum for the first time, I was immediately struck by the paradox of such ancient and valuable objects of Maya material culture on display

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1. Chicle is sticky resin extracted from sapodilla trees found in northern Guatemala and the Mexican Yucatán Peninsula. Chicle was a key ingredient in chewing gum until manufacturers began using a synthetic substitute (Schwartz 1990).

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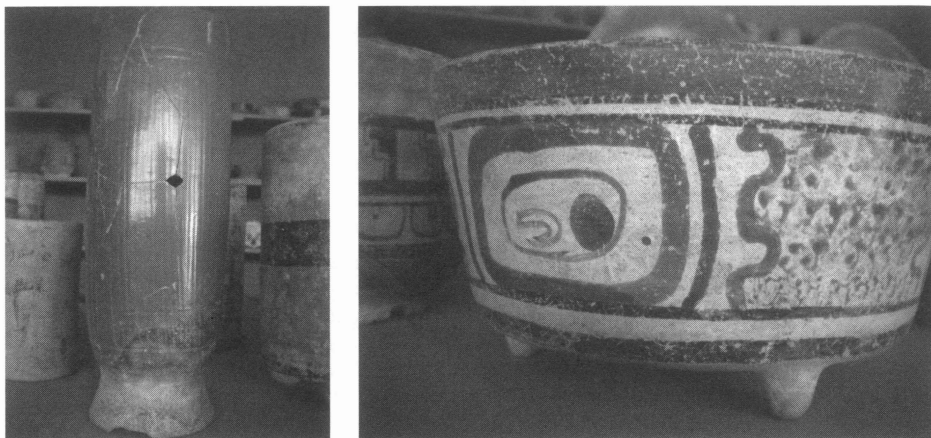


Figure 1 Artifacts in the Chicle Workers' Museum. Photos by author.

in the humblest of places. A few minutes into my impromptu tour, Gloria paused in her narrative and grabbed a large orange and red artifact, decorated with skillfully drawn lines running up and down its eighteen-inch sides. She handed it to me. "Shake it," she said. I looked at her like she was joking, and she laughed out loud. "Shake it like this." She gently but firmly shook the vase and I heard clanking, earthy noises emerge. "It is for hot chocolate. There are pellets in the bottom making that noise. The Maya put the container over fire to heat the pellets to keep the chocolate hot." She handed it back to me. Reluctantly, I took the thousand-year-old artifact into my hands, turning it carefully. For reasons I could not quite put my finger on, I felt nervous and perhaps a little guilty for doing so.

This awkward and unexpected experience raised multiple, interrelated questions for me that analytically underpin this article: Why is a museum of Maya artifacts named the Chicle Workers' Museum? What relationship, if any, does chicle production have to do with Maya archaeology and artifact preservation? Why do Gloria and I have such different attitudes and practices toward Mayan antiquities? How do these differences reveal unique historical and geographical articulations of heritage?

To answer these questions, I explore how Ch'umil residents describe their ties to the Maya archaeology sites and forests surrounding the village and narrate Ch'umil's foundational histories and affective cultural and ecological landscapes. In contrast to definitions of global heritage, many Ch'umil residents stake claim to space, Maya culture, and forest resources based on their shared histories of labor migration, chicle production, archeological excavation, and sustainable forestry. Ch'umil is located in northern Guatemala's immense 53,000-hectare Maya Biosphere Reserve, which is home to a few dozen small contemporary settlements as well as hundreds of Maya archaeological sites. Ch'umil serves as an aspiring

tourism gateway to the Preclassic-era (200 BC–150 AD) site of Mirador, which boasts one of the world's largest pyramids, some of the oldest Mayan glyphs, and exquisite works of art (Hansen 2012). Nevertheless, Mirador currently receives only an estimated three thousand tourists a year, and Ch'umil even fewer (GDT Consultores en Turismo 2010).

The Maya Biosphere's relative obscurity from the global tourism industry, however, is quickly coming to an end. Today Mirador occupies center stage of several economic development and conservation initiatives, like a \$30 million World Bank project (IADB 2006) that seeks to convert the Maya Biosphere into a global ecotourism site. National elites simultaneously campaign to designate Mirador as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Residents of Ch'umil, however, fear that conservation and Mirador megaprojects and their elite interests threaten to destroy their village, histories, and livelihoods. These concerns are not unfounded but are informed by ongoing histories of peasant land dispossession and foreign exploitation of the area's cultural and natural resources, which come to life in Ch'umil residents' heritage claims.

This article brings critical geographic theory to bear on interdisciplinary debates about heritage management by attending to the "politics of scale" (Cox 1998; Swyngedouw 1997) at play in global heritage discourses, like those surrounding Mirador's UNESCO World Heritage nomination. I argue that global heritage discourses and conservation efforts implicitly conceive of the global scale in terms of a nested hierarchy that pits the local as particular and in opposition to the global, which is equated with universalism. This spatial framing scales up heritage claims from Ch'umil, to the nation, and then to the globe, rendering Ch'umil heritage claims particular, invisible, and illegitimate. In contrast, I use critical spatial theory to historically and geographically explore the social production of multiple, dynamic, and often-competing heritage claims to Maya sites and antiquities in northern Guatemala. The article empirically privileges an analysis of Ch'umil place-routed heritage claims encapsulated in the Chicle Workers' Museum. In doing so, it details how villagers criticize elite practices of antiquities collecting that characterize the Carlos F. Novella Museum (Museo Carlos F. Novella) in Guatemala City and the Mayan World Museum (Museo Mundo Maya) in the department of Petén. This intervention speaks to debates among cosmopolitan theorists and heritage managers that attempt to ethically mitigate "universal versus particular" heritage claims (e.g., Appiah 2006; Meskell 2009). Through an analysis of competing heritage claims in northern Guatemala, I offer an alternative reading of the socio-spatial production of heritage, which does away altogether with binary oppositions between the local and global and the particular and universal.

These arguments are grounded in six months of ethnographic research in Ch'umil in addition to another ten months of living and working in the northern department of Petén, Guatemala. In Ch'umil, research methods included participating in and observing community events and organizational meetings, conducting twenty-five oral histories with individuals representing a diversity of class and ethnic perspectives, and interviewing another twenty-five people occu-

pying leadership or occupational positions in the region's archaeology, tourism, and forestry industries.

PLACE-ROUTED HERITAGE AND THE POLITICS OF SCALE

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre defines world heritage as “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations” (UNESCO 2008, 5). For UNESCO, what makes “World Heritage exceptional is its universal application” of outstanding natural and cultural value (UNESCO 2008). This definition may appear straightforward, but critics suggest it has inherent biases that reproduce unequal power relations between wealthy Western nations and the rest of the world. To start, claims to cultural universality in and of themselves are reflective of European, Enlightenment ideals about objectivity that underpin positivist science (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2009). Furthermore, UNESCO conventions define cultural value imprecisely, leaving it open to subjective interpretation that reproduces Eurocentrism (Keough 2011). World heritage conservation practices also reflect capitalist notions of property and ownership that turn heritage into commodities to be bought and consumed by tourists (Meskell 2002). Noting the intertwined practices of spatial occupation, enclosure, and commercialization that often follow UNESCO World Heritage designation, the most strident critics have denounced global heritage conservation as a form of imperialism and neocolonialism (Calhoun 2002; Meskell 2011).

Building on these critiques, my understanding of heritage aligns closely with that of cultural anthropologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), who conceptualizes heritage as a mode of cultural production in the present that makes recourse to the past. I define “place-routed heritage” as a contemporary resource claim that is justified in discourses and practices of historical, socio-spatial belonging, and forged through power-laden transnational relations and embodied lived experiences. The concept of “routing” captures how global flows, histories, and routes of labor migration, sustainable forestry, and Maya archaeology articulate in place, where place is an intersectional node in these translocal processes. Routing emphasizes globalism and transnational relations and flows as productive of place, rather than defining the local in opposition to the global.

In “place-routed” and “global heritage” discourses, belonging has two meanings. One meaning refers to whether or not a person is part of a national, ethnic, racial, sexual, or religious group, as well as the individual and collective practices of identification associated with that group. Belonging, however, also flags possession; belongings are things that are claimed or owned, either symbolically or materially, by an individual or group. Herein lies the tie between practices of identification in heritage conservation and resource claims. To claim heritage is simultaneously a practice of identification as well as an assertion about who has the right to manage that cultural and natural resource. The recognition of cultural heritage, in other words, also recognizes a heritage rights-bearing subject designated as patrimonial trustee.

UNESCO's recognition of world heritage constitutes the subject position of world heritage trustee, a type of world or global citizen. Universality in global

heritage conservation signifies that the site's preservation supersedes the needs of any geographically or historically specific group (Di Giovine 2009). UNESCO states, "World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located"; "Without prejudice to national sovereignty or ownership, [the sites] constitute a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate" (UNESCO 2008, 5).

UNESCO's global heritage discourse with its rights-bearing subject, the global citizen, draws on ideas of subject formation that have their normative grounding in cosmopolitan theory. Cosmopolitanism dates back to third- and fourth-century Cynics and Stoics, who idealized a cosmic citizen and a community of humankind living harmoniously beyond the borders of the Greek polis (Held 2011). During the eighteenth century Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant reinvigorated the concept, not in terms of cosmic belonging but as *Weltbürger*, "world citizen" (Held 2011, 229). Today, diverse engagements abound but they share a vision of humanity as a singular, shared community of world citizens who are attentive to and celebratory of cultural difference. For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2006, xv) influential *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* frames the cosmopolitan as a world citizen who has obligations to others that stretch beyond kith and kin and formal ties of citizenship, and who values all forms of human life and the practices that make them meaningful.

Many contemporary cosmopolitan theorists attempt to mitigate the neocolonial underpinnings of world heritage conservation by trying to resolve what Lynn Meskell refers to as "the tensions of universalism and particularism" (2002, 6). Likewise, Appiah (2006, xv) notes, "there will be times when these two ideals—universal concern and respect for legitimate difference—clash" in cosmopolitan projects. Efforts to reconcile claims to human universality with a celebration of cultural difference have produced "rooted" (Appiah 2006), "quotidian" (Breglia 2009), and "vernacular" (Bhabha 2000) cosmopolitanisms that recognize the enduring importance of nation-states, local loyalties and ties, and the partiality of the universal. These projects also attend to unequal power relations defining universality to explore how the term "might be employed as a counter to globalization from below" (Meskell 2009, 25). For example, Slavoj Žižek sees the political potential of a type of universality in cosmopolitanism made up of those who are "below us," the neglected, and outcast (Žižek and Daly 2004, 160, quoted in González-Ruibal 2009, 113).

Despite the progressive political underpinnings of many cosmopolitan projects (e.g., Breckenridge et al. 2002; Cheah and Robbins 1996), cosmopolitan theorizations of scale, identity, and heritage run the risk of supporting the hegemony of global heritage claims at the expense of other articulations. For example, touching on the topic of antiquities, Appiah (2006) concludes that although many museums around the world have large collections of artifacts that were looted and stolen from colonial territories, those items should not necessarily be returned to their places of origin. He argues that since artifacts are part of a shared human history, they should be made available to those who benefit from experiencing them and put into the trusteeship of humanity (see also Cuno 2008). Implicit in Appiah's

formation is that the cosmopolitan, the global citizen, is altruistically managing world heritage on behalf of humanity, a humanity that is inclusive of all people.

However, not everyone or every place benefits from Maya antiquities being moved to museums in Guatemala City. Critical archaeology scholarship has explored the unequal power relations underpinning all facets of archaeological excavation, antiquities collecting, and cultural heritage conservation. Lena Mortensen (2009) uses the term “archaeology industry” to foreground practices of embodied labor, wealth accumulation, and capital circulation defining the Maya site of Copan, Honduras. Critical analysis of the archaeology industry also animates debates regarding legitimacy and legality in antiquities collecting. Scholars like Julie Hollowell (2006) and David Matsuda (2005) argue that the distinction between legal and illegal antiquities collecting, between “conservation” and “looting,” is more a reflection of power differentials between collectors than of altruism. They recognize, as many Ch’umil residents do, that many people “loot” out of economic necessity. They advocate the use of the term “subsistence digging” to capture the types of practices taking place in Ch’umil that I describe later in this article.

The distinction between looting and subsistence digging is just one of the ways archaeological practice is an inherently political act that territorializes claims to space, identity, and history for some but not others (Abu El-Haj 2001; Weiss 2007). These inequalities were established during colonialism and are reproduced in contemporary archaeological practices (Lydon and Rizvi 2010). These enduring inequalities motivate scholars to theorize socially just ways to recast questions of archaeological heritage in terms of well-being (Hodder 2010), care (Breglia 2006), and patrimonial ethics (Di Giovine 2015). This article offers the archaeological ethics and postcolonial archaeological literatures a critical geographical analysis of the spatialities and practices of subject formation at play in global heritage discourses that enable certain resource claims while disabling others.

In contrast to the universalism of UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre and many readings of cosmopolitan theory, critical geography insists on historically and geographically situating practices of identity production in particular places to understand how identity, culture, and heritage claims coevolve through power-laden extralocal relations, movements, and connections. Scale here refers to the scope, extent, and depth of socio-spatial relations and connections articulating people and ecologies across space (Leitner and Miller 2007; Rocheleau and Roth 2007). These translocal associations are conceptualized in terms of unequal, materially grounded networks of relations (and the lack thereof) that produce places like Ch’umil. This framing echoes Liisa Malkki’s (1992) critique of anthropological theorizations of identity that “root” identity in the soil of national and local territories and thus define identity in terms of immobility instead of mobility.

The argument that Ch’umil heritage claims are *place-routed* also distinguishes my understanding of culture, place, and identity from Arturo Escobar’s (2001) reading of *place-rooted* identities.² Escobar eloquently and most visibly exemplifies an anthropological perspective that equates culture with place and the local.

2. I thank Donald Moore for his clarification of the difference between *place-rooted* and *place-routed* practices of identity production.

In this "culture sits in places" framing, place is bounded, insular, and opposed to the global (Escobar 2001, 152). This definition of place resonates loudly with Uma Narayan's (2000) critique of a "package picture" of culture, which she describes as an objectified, static, black-box understanding of culture whose inner workings and power struggles fall outside of analytical purview. Like the package picture of culture, conceiving of place in terms of a bounded unit obfuscates the ways in which place, equated with the local, is relationally produced through uneven global connections.

Critical geography defines place as a socio-spatial articulation of translocal connections that shape, and are shaped by, previous material and cultural relations that are etched into the physical landscape (Massey 1994, 120; Moore 2005, 20). This view runs counter to the "culture sits in places" equation whereby place, the local, and culture are equated with one another, and the UNESCO framing that equates global with universal, and local with particular. For spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991), power-laden and often conflict-ridden relations across places and scales produce our understanding of place and mold people's understanding of their culture and identity. This is not a predetermined practice of socio-spatial subject formation but a project of place making and subject making that unfolds dialectically, and often through political struggle. The production of space conditions the path of subject formation, and, in turn, the precarious, profane, ongoing reproduction of space is shaped as well (Lefebvre 1991, 57). In contrast to arguments that suggest place and place-based identities form a "defense" against the global (e.g., Escobar 2001, 142), I argue that Ch'umil identity, culture, and claims to Maya heritage are globally *routed* in place and defined by translocal historical geographies of unequal mobility, power-laden connections, and exploitative practices of resource extraction.

Despite their differences, cosmopolitan debates about heritage management and anthropological concepts of culture that equate place with "the local" reproduce global/local spatial binaries that have direct political impacts for heritage and cultural resource management. In defining the global and the local as antithetical rather than mutually constitutive, global heritage claims like those at Mirador in northern Guatemala are universalized as timeless and inclusive of all humanity rather than seen as the product of situated historical practices and particular stakeholders' interests.

PLACE-ROUTED CH'UMIL HERITAGE IN THE CHICLE WORKERS' MUSEUM

A starting point for unpacking these translocal processes and their implications for heritage claims is the historical geography of chicle extraction in Ch'umil. In the early twentieth century, migrant workers for the Wrigley Company founded the village as a chicle extraction camp. Today, roughly one hundred years later, the village of 1,600 people is home to nearly 40 percent Q'eqch'i residents, one of twenty-four Maya ethnic-linguistic identities that does not neatly translate into the categories of "indigenous" or "Maya" (Nelson 1999). The other 60 percent of residents identify either as ladino (nonindigenous) or mestizo, another slippery, polyvalent identity that sometimes serves as a synonym of ladino or signifies a

hybrid identity that recognizes histories of racial miscegenation between Spanish and indigenous peoples (Hale 2006).

For eighty years during the *chiclería* (1890–1970), chicle dominated the political economy of Petén. During its apogee (1940–1950), perhaps up to half of all people living in the department depended on the chicle economy (Schwartz 1990, 153). Following the chicle boom, there was a chicle bust. During World War II, the creation of a synthetic substitute for chicle marked the beginning of the end of the *chiclería* and Petén's economic prosperity associated with the "white gold."

To fill the chicle void, many *chicleros* began harvesting a leafy palm called *xate* used in floral bouquets in the United States, a market that emerged just as chicle demand fell. Work on archaeological excavations at the Maya sites of Mirador, Tikal, Ch'umil, and Nakbé has also provided roughly 10 percent of *ch'umiltecos* (Ch'umil residents) with seasonal, part-time employment on and off since the mid-1950s. From 1956 to 1979, archaeologists from the University of Pennsylvania hired about one hundred men for four or five months out of the year. From 1985 to 1995, a Guatemalan archaeological team excavated Ch'umil and Tikal. In 2009, University of Bratislava archaeologists commenced excavations in Ch'umil again. For three years the Slovakian researchers led a crew of about thirty men during the academic summer and also conducted excavations in a remote site called Nachtún. More steadily across the years, another fifteen Ch'umil residents have found work year-round as excavators in the national park and UNESCO World Heritage site of neighboring Tikal. Unfortunately, *xate* production and labor in archaeological excavations never filled the financial void left by chicle, which has only strengthened nostalgia for the *chiclería* in Ch'umil and for village place-routed practices of *chiclero* identification.

A few older Ch'umil *chicleros* told me that they not only served as guides to the first archaeologists working in the region but they showed archaeologists the locations of sites they knew of. David, my neighbor and landlord in Ch'umil, told me of such a trip when he claimed he led archaeologists to Mirador for the first time. *Chicleros* like David knew of Mirador first and foremost not as an archaeological site but as a *chiclero* camp called Juleque, where David worked as a foreman in October 1968. While David and his team waited for the chicle resin to cool and harden before making the trek by mule back to Ch'umil, a friend on the job told David he knew of a place with beautiful hills to climb where they could pass some time. David explained how he and his coworker scaled Mirador's highest pyramid, Danta, hacking away at the bush, getting filthy, until they reached the very top and took in the majestic views: "No one had gone up there, no one, no one, no one. We cut down the brush at the top, cleaned it up, and sat down to eat lunch. We were like tourists that day. We looked in all directions and it was so pretty and clear, it was a beautiful view. I said, "It is so beautiful, we have to name it. This is a *mirador* [lookout] because you can see in all directions." From that day forward in his reports detailing the volume of chicle collected and transported from the camp to Ch'umil, David said he no longer referred to the place as El Juleque. "I put we are in the Mirador Chicle Camp."

The veracity of village folklore and personal histories like David's is not as important as the political messages they convey. David most likely was not the

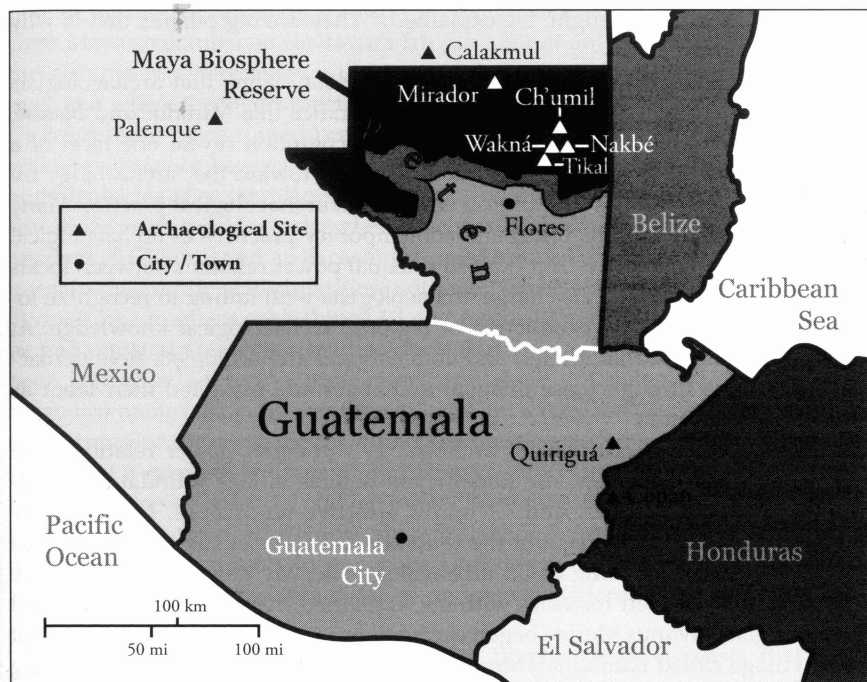


Figure 2 Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve. Map by Claire Saraille.

first person to use the name "Mirador" to refer to the site. However, David was certainly working in and around archaeological sites, including Mirador, long before North American archaeologists and their celebrity supporters set foot in the jungles of Petén. He and other workers in the chicle industry knew of the existence and locations of archaeological sites among the *chico zapote* trees they worked, and they often used ancient Maya buildings, watering holes, quarries, and other man-made landscape features built by the ancient Maya to survive in the forest while working. Like the ancient Maya, the history of the *chiclería* is evident in the forest landscape in the form of abandoned *chiclero* camps often located near or on top of archaeological remains.

In interviews and informal settings, several locals, like David, begrudgingly related how knowledge about archaeological sites at the personal or village level was misrepresented as the achievements and discoveries of archaeologists. As *ch'umilteco* Julio explained, "The archaeologists didn't discover any of the sites, not one. It was all people from here." Julio is not alone in his sentiments. Another longtime resident, Oscar, tells a similar story of robbed intellectual recognition. He was excavating on the Mirador Basin project in 2008 and discovered a pictograph of the symbol of Kan, Mirador's longest dynastic ruler. Oscar complained to me that he received no recognition for this discovery, and instead, an archae-

ologist snatched the limelight. He explained, "They are big people, that is why they get the fame."

As these residents attest, several chicleros resent claims that archaeologists "discovered" archaeological sites of great importance like Mirador and Nakbé. These stories of stolen knowledge and failed recognition reveal one facet of a multipronged critique many local residents espouse toward the "archaeology industry" (Mortensen 2009), the political economy of archaeological practice. Many ch'umiltecos argue that historical and contemporary practices of archaeological knowledge production have reproduced unequal power relations between locals and outsiders. At best, locals charge archaeologists with failing to recognize locals' contributions to the production of regional archaeological knowledge. At worst, locals suggest that foreign and elite national archaeologists stole vernacular knowledge through these unequal exchanges and exploited their labor as guides and excavators.

Despite residents' critiques of archaeology's unequal power relations, the Ch'umil Maya archaeology site nonetheless defines village foundational narratives, people's identities, and Ch'umil's affective landscapes. Nearly every villager today can easily recount the foundational story of Ch'umil as a chicle camp and its rechristening as an archaeology site. My neighbor Miguel, like many who shared their histories with me, explained that when Harvard-based archaeologist Sylvanus Morley began excavations in 1916 the town was a nascent chicle village called Bambonal. Morley rebaptized the town Ch'umil, meaning "stars" in Maya, for the astronomical observatory and hieroglyphic references found on one of the site's stelae. As Manuel recounted this story, he peppered the narrative with claims of cultural continuity and belonging, saying, for example, "The inscriptions that are found there [on the stelae] were made by our ancestors." For locals like Miguel, the place-routed histories of Maya antiquity and modern-day chicle extraction seamlessly meld in village folklore and foundational narratives.

Ch'umiltecos learn about Ch'umil's ancient history as schoolchildren, in multiple community festivals, and in documentary film screenings held periodically throughout the year. Community-certified Ch'umil tour guides receive introductory lectures about the site from archaeologists working in Tikal. On the level of the mundane, the archeological structures surrounding and underneath the village constitute the canvas of everyday life and are part of people's childhoods and coming of age experiences. During my first trip to Ch'umil, four young boys around seven or eight years old pretended to be my archaeological "tour guides." With unbridled eagerness, the boys pulled me from one structure to the next, remarking on the grandeur of Ch'umil's well-preserved astronomical observatory, high-relief masks, and large pyramids. They also showed me a narrow entrance to an underground cave called the *respirador* (respirator) that refreshingly "blew out" cold air, according to the boys. This was surely a sacred site for Ch'umil's Classic-era residents, who believed caves were entrances to the underworld populated by gods. Later, I came to find out that when these boys were not guiding the occasional groups of tourists that visit Ch'umil a few times a week, they would

play in the site for hours on end. To the chagrin of many archaeologists, the ancient Maya structures on the town's fringes are not only children's playgrounds but also places where many villagers go to have parties on holidays like Christmas, and where teenagers meet to steal a first kiss.

From these place-routed practices of living in and around Maya sites, local residents claim to be part of Maya culture even while they recognize histories and ideologies of racial miscegenation that limit nonindigenous or mestizo identifications with the Maya elsewhere (Nelson 1999; Wade 1997). Jorge, a lifelong resident of Ch'umil and an excavator turned tour guide, made an interesting request in the middle of his interview with me: "Guess if I am indigenous," he said. "I don't like to guess such things," I answered. I knew what he was getting at; he had unusual green eyes, balding short dark hair, and might have presumably been labeled a ladino (nonindigenous) anywhere in Guatemala. "My grandfather's last name is Pop, he was Q'eqchi', so I am a mestizo." Jorge, like most folks who discussed the categories of ladino and mestizo with me, said that both terms suggested a mixture of Q'eqchi' and Hispanic ancestry. He explained that as a mestizo he feels a spiritual connection to the archaeological sites and the nature that surrounds them, which not only reflects this shared ancestry but also a connection to the place itself. Jorge echoes a perspective I heard iterated by dozens of local residents in the two villages, and across different political and ethnic cleavages.

Regarding the Yucatán Peninsula, Lisa Breglia (2006) suggests that Maya families working in and living around Chichén Itzá for generations identify the archaeology site as inheritable family patrimony, based on these embodied experiences, rather than as heritage based on racial genealogy. Families claim that caring for the site, in their employment as guards and groundskeepers and in everyday practices of care (e.g., picking up litter, deterring damaging behavior), is "in their blood" and interweaves with their right to benefit from the site economically (Breglia 2009, 218). Similarly, for many ch'umiltecos, a lifetime of living, working, and studying the archaeological sites around them produces a strong place-routed identification with Maya landscapes and history.

Gloria, the owner and curator of the Chicle Workers' Museum, also feels a strong emotional and historical connection with the ancient Maya—"our ancestors," she calls them. She says this connection exists because she was born in Ch'umil, which is a special place for the Maya. She explained, "The Maya have left great legacies to humanity like the chewing gum they used, the ball game they practiced, the chocolate they drank. They used the zero. . . . All the pyramids they built were so exact without the use of any machinery." Explaining that her family has ties to Petén since the beginning of the *chiclería*, she says, "My family is from Petén and that also makes me love and respect my culture." She explains, "There is something inside me that makes me want to take care of things from my culture, as well as protect the forest, because my culture is so important."

Gloria's place-routed articulation of identity, heritage, and culture inspired the creation of the Chicle Workers' Museum. While a few town residents suggest Gloria and her husband were active *huecheros* (looters), Gloria explains she acquired

the pieces left behind by professional looters who thought they had little value.³ Gloria is one of the relatively wealthier individuals in the village who has had the relative luxury of holding onto pieces. Gloria lightheartedly explained that when she started the collection in the 1970s, she put artifacts in plastic bags and then hid them around her property, worried that archaeologists, large-scale looters, or the authorities would take her collection. She never imagined she would one day have a museum.

Gloria bought antiquities from unemployed and underemployed xate and chicle workers and sometimes acquired them for free. Within a decade, she had accumulated so many antiquities that they could no longer be easily hidden on her property—in cabinets, buried in bags, bobbing in cisterns. Gloria did not know what to do with her pieces. In 1995, an American master's student of museology advised Gloria to register her collection with the Guatemalan Institute of Archaeology and History. Over the course of two months, the student helped Gloria legally register 95 pieces. The Chicle Workers' Museum opened on December 9, 1995. After that, people from the village of Ch'umil brought Gloria pieces to build her collection to what it is today. Today the Chiclero Museum houses 533 registered pieces and is the second largest collection in Petén outside of the museum at the nearby World Heritage site of Tikal.

ELITE HERITAGE CLAIMS AND THE CARLOS F. NOVELLA MUSEUM

Village rumors that Gloria and her husband were huecheros speak to common knowledge that Maya artifacts are not simply material objects of world heritage but commodities embedded in social relations of capitalist production, poverty, and inequality. Walking through the forest en route to Mirador today, tourists constantly encounter the remains of ancient Maya structures dotting the forest landscape. Tunnels hastily dug into the side of once symmetrical buildings evidence the legacy of *huechería* (looting) in the Petén. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s are infamously known in Petén as the time of the "*fiebre de saqueo*" (looting fever), or the heyday of Maya artifact looting.

Experienced huecheros came to Ch'umil from all over Central America and taught a few local people the illicit trade. Not coincidentally, looting fever began at the moment that chicle markets dried up and the *chiclería* came to end. Just a few years later, in the early 1960s, over twenty years of seasonal excavating work also came to a halt. During the looting fever, many poor *chicleros*, xate workers, and excavators turned to looting, or "subsistence digging" (Hollowell 2006; Matsuda 2005), as a means of providing for their families. Ch'umil-born resident Fermina explains, "They didn't have any money to support their families. People who sell antiquities do it because they have no other way to make money, and there are buyers." Looters often become scapegoats of an international trade that destroys precious archaeological knowledge and cultural heritage. However, many people in Ch'umil participated in the looting fever out of economic neces-

3. The vernacular term for looter, *huechero*, is based on the Hispanicized Q'eqch'i word *hueche*, which means armadillo.

sity. Poverty in these villages is deep and enduring with an estimated 65 percent of the population living in poverty (INE 2011). Maya artifacts hold important cultural and historical significance for many locals, but they are simultaneously recognized and valued as a source of immense commercial wealth in an impoverished place.

The lack of options for underemployed Maya Biosphere residents combines with the widely shared view that antiquity conservationists are often hypocritical, act out of personal interest, and are enmeshed in histories of illegal excavation and trade led by military generals and national elites. Despite strict laws prohibiting the excavation and international sale of Maya antiquities, police officers, state bureaucrats, custom agents, and airport security workers have historically been implicated in the trafficking of Maya antiquities in the Petén (Paredes Maury 1999).⁴ "Secure" rooms for confiscated artifacts at the airport became boutiques where regional black-market brokers could shop, buy, or exchange a piece of inferior quality (Paredes Maury 1999, 25). During the civil war (1960–1996), the Guatemalan military used the army to systematically loot Petén's archaeological sites (Paredes Maury 1999). A tour guide who has lived and worked in northern Petén for almost thirty years described army-led excavations by a previous military dictator at the El Zotz and Rio Azul sites. "I know it happened," he said, "because I watched. The general loves Maya art and has one of the greatest collections of jade in Guatemala."

In conversation with critical archaeologists who unpack the field's ethics (Meskell and Pels 2005; Nicholas and Hollowell 2007) and question the distinction between looter and scientist (Hollowell 2006; Matsuda 2005), Ch'umil residents similarly describe their experiences with the archaeology industry in exploitative terms. Village-level histories of laboring in archaeology and the transnational 1970s–1980s "looting fever" suggest that the line distinguishing "legal" and "illegal" antiquities collecting is a porous and mobile one, and that legality does not equal legitimacy in excavation and collecting practices for Ch'umil residents.

Since the official end of Guatemala's civil war, army-led excavations have been largely replaced by scientific and conservation projects. Protection of Maya sites and antiquities are key objectives of conservation organizations working in the Maya Biosphere, yet, to many villagers, excavating Maya artifacts for conservation purposes does not seem any more legitimate or equitable than excavating them for purposes of personally enriching military officials. Comparably wealthy "outsiders" from Guatemala City, the United States, and Europe benefit in both cases. Many residents argue that when antiquities are preserved as cultural heritage by governmental organizations, they end up in private collections or in museums far from the Petén where locals cannot afford to visit or economically benefit from their exhibition.

4. In 1978, the Guatemalan Congress ratified the 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and in 1997, passed strict penalties for looting under the Law for Protection of National Cultural Patrimony. The 1997 law states those involved in excavations or investigations without the permission of the Ministry of Culture are subject to imprisonment of six to nine years and a fine of 100,000 to 1,000,000 *quetzales* (US\$12,500 to 125,000).

The Carlos F. Novella Museum in Guatemala City, housing Mirador artifacts, exemplifies this critique.⁵ The Novella family made its fortune in the cement industry, reflected in an imposing company headquarters located in Guatemala City. The immense compound houses two small museums, one heralding the civilizing achievements of the cement industry and another showcasing the ancient Maya of the northern lowlands of Petén. Named for the company's founder, the museum is a private institution that "registers, conserves, promotes, and diffuses the patrimony of the cement industry in Guatemala and the cultural and natural patrimony of the Maya civilization of the Mirador Basin."⁶ Despite scheduled times when the museum is open to the public, accessing the exhibitions is not easy, even for foreigners. Visitors are stopped at the security entrance to the compound. If visitors are wearing arbitrarily defined appropriate attire, an escort eventually meets them and takes them to a museum located past office spaces, several dried-up gravel digs, and an on-site Catholic Church. The museum's exhibition of 84 Maya pieces from the Mirador site opened in 2001 with a one-year agreement with the Ministry of Culture. Following this first year, the Ministry of Culture and the Novella family renewed the contract for another three years. In 2006, an additional 40 pieces were added to the collection for a total of 124 antiquities on display at the time of writing. Successive three-year agreements have kept the pieces in the private museum.

The Novellas are not the only wealthy family in Guatemala possessing Maya antiquities. A private collection in the wealthy tourism mecca and world heritage site of Antigua, Guatemala, includes seventeen vases from the Mirador region depicting the history of Mirador's ruling Kan dynasty. In Flores, Petén, where the wealthiest families in the state live, the exact number of unregistered pieces held is unknown but is believed to be extensive (Paredes Maury 1999). Village residents and even a few state bureaucrats critically note the hypocrisy of conservation efforts, pointing out that Guatemala's previous lead representative to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee displays privately owned Maya antiquities in her own home.

One Maya Biosphere resident, José, told me about his personal stash of antiquities hidden underground deep in the forest that includes jade necklaces and intact polychrome ceramics. When I asked why he chose not to give the pieces to the Mirador archaeology project for conservation he explained, "I am not going to give my pieces to the archaeologists for their business. They have done well enough." José explained that he planned to keep them and give them to his kids one day.

National and foreign elites supporting Mirador research and artifact conservation do not intend to perpetuate unequal relations of wealth and political power between themselves and local residents through their conservation practices. Nevertheless, this is how many residents from Ch'umil understand the legal, but not necessarily legitimate, process of antiquities excavation and collection. Everything in the jungle is precious and priceless, yet the majority of villagers

5. Carlos F. Novella Museum website: <http://fundacioncarlosfnovella.org/museo-carlos-f-novella/>.

6. Cementos Progresos website: <http://www.cempro.com>.

from Ch'umil and surrounding villages live in poverty without access to clean drinking water, sanitation, or power. Military officials and archaeologists who have excavated Maya artifacts keep them in private or public collections far from where local residents can socially or economically benefit from them. More often than not, these "legal" channels of mobility and traffic of Maya antiquities have made generals and politicians wealthy and built scientific careers. Yet poverty endures at the site where these objects were found and in the homes of the men and women who unearthed them.

GLOBAL HERITAGE IN THE MAYAN WORLD MUSEUM

Efforts to designate Mirador as a UNESCO World Heritage site today are inseparable from the contested cultural, political, and economic landscapes of antiquity and archaeology of the past. These efforts are also situated in relation to what Michael Di Giovine (2009) calls a global "heritage-scape," the current socio-spatial temporal conjuncture in which the recognition and preservation of a thing called global heritage is taken for granted and makes common sense. In Guatemala, the global heritage-scape has produced three UNESCO World Heritage sites. The colonial capital of Antigua and the Maya archaeology site of Quiriguá were designated Cultural World Heritage sites in 1979 and 1981 respectively. Tikal, Guatemala's most famous archaeology site and a national park, received designation in 1979 as both a Cultural and Natural World Heritage site.

Following Tikal's model, in 2002 a national task force of Guatemalan elites initiated efforts to obtain world heritage designation for Mirador and fifteen other sites in the country. To aid in the nomination process, representatives from UNESCO's World Heritage Centre undertook a preliminary mission to Guatemala in 2004 to provide the Ministry of Culture assistance. The mission focused on Mirador, but kept the Maya Biosphere in view by exploring potential links with other proposed sites like Ch'umil and Tikal. The UNESCO mission aspired to "promote an integral reading for the future of Mayan World Heritage in Guatemala, and by extension throughout Central America" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.). UNESCO explains that Mirador meets World Heritage criteria because it "presents exceptional natural and cultural characteristics. The site was at the heart of the development of Mesoamerica during the Preclassic and Classic periods corresponding to the development of many social practices and the emergence of ruling elite in Maya society" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.).

The 2002 UNESCO nomination process stalled for several reasons, including its inseparability from a highly polemical presidential initiative to expand Mirador's existing park boundaries at the expense of communally managed forestlands. In tandem with UNESCO nomination efforts, President Alfonso Portillo amplified the extant Mirador-Rio Azul national park boundaries containing the Mirador site by cutting away nearly 10 percent of Ch'umil's community forest concession and a staggering 60 percent of a neighboring concession and village. Mirador archaeologists and scientists justified the action by arguing that the new boundaries better reflected the natural and cultural ecology of the land and ancient sites. Biosphere residents identified this conservation maneuver as land dis-

possession. This act combined with the memory of the forced relocation of people living around Tikal just prior to its recognition as a national park in 1955. Today, the villages and businesses of former Tikal residents and their children are mere pit stops for tourists on the way to the archaeology site, a tourism gold mine generating US\$2 million a year in revenue (GDT Consultores en Turismo 2010). In an uncharacteristic grassroots legal victory in Guatemalan politics, Guatemala's highest court overturned the presidential decree in 2005 and restored villagers' forest concession rights.

Despite this politically contentious climate, Mirador advocates in 2010 resumed efforts to obtain UNESCO World Heritage recognition for Mirador. Two organizations leading the pack include the Northern American-based Global Heritage Fund and the Guatemalan Foundation for Maya Cultural and Natural Heritage (Fundación Patrimonio Cultural y Natural Maya, PACUNAM).⁷ Both organizations explicitly state that their missions hinge on achieving World Heritage recognition for Mirador. PACUNAM is a philanthropic organization comprised of representatives from Central America's wealthiest companies, including Walmart Central America, Cementos Progreso, the Pantaleon Group, and Blue Oil, among others. Since 2006, the Global Heritage Fund and PACUNAM have collaborated in a gift-matching program that has raised US\$6 million directed toward Mirador archaeological research, cultural heritage preservation, and tourism development. Program leaders explain that "all efforts lead to UNESCO recognition" (personal interview, November 25, 2010).

These advocacy effects have recast proponents of Mirador's Global Heritage recognition as global citizens. This global citizen subject was brought to life during a 2009 CNN special entitled "Mirador: The Forgotten City." Then-vice president Rafael Espada explained to the international audience the links he identifies between Mirador, the Maya, and cultural heritage: "Guatemala is a Maya nation. We are all Maya. That is what it is all about. We have to have a program to preserve the park . . . but at the same time preserve the jungle . . . not just for Guatemala, but for the whole western hemisphere and Latin America."

Contrary to the former vice president's claim, not everyone in Guatemala is Maya. In fact, the Guatemalan state has been a bastion of white privilege since its inception as a Spanish colony (Grandin 2000; McCreery 1994; Smith 1990). In a multicultural miststep, the vice president nullifies racial difference and centuries of ongoing racialized exploitation and dispossession by claiming, "We are all Maya." He is also flagging discourses of *mestizaje* that emphasize racial miscegenation in order to discredit contemporary indigenous claims to ancestral cultures and lands (Wade 1997). In saying that "Guatemala is a Maya nation," however, his next assertion seems logical. If "we" are "all Maya" then indeed, the region's resources need to be preserved "not just for Guatemala, but for the whole western hemisphere and Latin America." This interview quote reveals the power of global heritage discourses and conservation practices to scale up heritage claims in ways

7. For more information about these organizations please visit the Global Heritage Fund at www.globalheritagefund.org and the Foundation for Maya Cultural and Natural Patrimony (PACUNAM) at www.pacunam.org.

that constitute global citizen subjects empowered as trustees to make claims to contested resources and land in the name of humanity.

This practice of scaling up heritage claims—from the place-routed expressions of Ch'umil identity and culture to the abstract, universal idea of the global—employs a popular and pernicious understanding of scale as a set of nested hierarchies. An understanding of scale as nested hierarchies is illustrated by the metaphor of concentric circles whereby “the local” is encircled and encompassed by the national, and then the global (Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005). In this framing, all “local” spatial relations are enveloped by larger scales. In other words, defining Mirador and other sites in the Maya Biosphere as World Heritage sites challenges Ch'umil place-routed claims by usurping geographically and historically situated claims with the ancient archaeological evidence of global patrimony.

The practice of scaling up heritage claims at Mirador directly influences the material allocation of international aid designed to promote sustainable development in the Maya Biosphere. With a World Bank loan for the Program for Petén's Development for Conservation of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Programa de Desarrollo de Petén para la Conservación de la Reserva Biosfera Maya) (IADB 2006), Guatemalan development practitioners have built a new museum called the Mayan World Museum, not in Ch'umil but outside Petén's urban tourism hub of Flores. Despite the blockbuster budget, the museum has few permanent archaeological pieces to exhibit. To make matters worse, following completion of the building in 2014, the museum has still not been inaugurated or officially opened nearly two years later because promised additional funding for operations, security, programming, signage, and so on has yet to arrive from Guatemala City. Tourists who hear of the museum by word of mouth and are able to find it despite the lack of signage or publicity can tour the sparsely stocked museum free of charge. It is rumored, or joked, that regional development practitioners have suggested that discussions are also under way to purchase the Chicle Workers' Museum collection. For many, this move seems logical. The privately and locally owned collection in Ch'umil has hundreds of exquisite pieces held in a derelict building. Gloria rightly laments the decrepit state of the museum in the humid heat of lowland Petén, as well as the museum's lack of security. The collection is invaluable in terms of its historic and cultural worth, yet it is secured by just a rusty old padlock and chain. Gloria has also been forced at times to sell off pieces of the collection. She explained that she didn't want the pieces to leave Ch'umil yet admits that during the toughest of times she has had to part with a few pieces to stay afloat.

The future of the Chicle Workers' Museum is uncertain. Gloria feels pressured to sell her pieces to the Mayan World Museum or another buyer because of her own financial needs and the lack of institutional support to physically secure and preserve the collection. She also feels an immense sense of injustice that millions of dollars are being invested in Petén in the name of heritage conservation and poverty alleviation, yet few dollars if any will trickle down to the Chicle Workers' Museum in Ch'umil. Several development practitioners operating under the umbrella of the World Bank's Sustainable Development Program identify Ch'umil

and its residents as targeted beneficiaries of their efforts, yet the opportunity to build tourism infrastructure around the Chicle Workers' Museum and further integrate local, grassroots efforts in the project is passing them by. As development practitioners invest millions of borrowed World Bank dollars into Petén's tourism sector, the Chicle Workers' Museum is sidelined in favor of building new facilities. The funding disparity between these two museums illustrates how practices of global heritage conservation scale up resource claims to Maya sites and antiquities while making unintelligible, even to this researcher at first glance, the meanings and practices of acquisition, collection, and exhibition defining the Chicle Workers' Museum.

CONCLUSION

This article sketched out the complex constellation of Ch'umil residents' practices of identification with Maya sites surrounding them. For many, the forest and archaeological landscapes meld into one, symbolically and literally, as root systems in the earth mirror the forest canopy above, working their way into every nook and cranny of the ancient Maya structures. These cultural-ecological landscapes reflect Ch'umil's history as a hundred-year-old chicle extraction village, chicle workers' archaeological labor since the 1950s, and continued practices of sustainable forestry today. In contrast to blood-based understandings of racial belonging, ch'umilteco place-routed definitions of identity and history claim the Maya sites as their own, not necessarily through lines of genealogical descent but through generations of embodied, lived experiences of living near, working among, and caring for the sites. At the same time, labor experiences in archaeology and the "looting fever" of the 1970s–1980s taught residents that antiquities are also commodities inserted into already existing, unequal, transnational relations of economic and political power. The Guatemalan army legally dug up antiquities for the personal enrichment of generals, while archaeologists have advanced their careers by depending on the knowledge and work of residents from towns like Ch'umil. Efforts to designate Mirador and other sites in the Maya Biosphere as UNESCO World Heritage sites fall on this contested terrain of cultural heritage. To many residents, arguments by the nation's and the world's wealthiest individuals that Mirador is global heritage, and thus is in need of foreign management and protection, sounds like another chapter in a longer history of primary resource and wealth extraction by people living outside the region.

Practices of heritage conservation have direct implications for resource allocation and management. UNESCO World Heritage discourses, as well as many readings of cosmopolitan theory, scale up heritage claims from the local level to the nation, and then to the globe. In Guatemala's northern Maya Biosphere, this takes the form of global heritage advocates arguing "we are all Maya" and that Maya sites and antiquities around Ch'umil need to be preserved not just for the nation but the entire world. In this spatial formation, the local is conceived of as particular and encompassed by the global, while the global represents everywhere and everyone but not anywhere or anyone in particular. In contrast, a criti-

cal geographical perspective turns the focus away from abstract binary framings of the universal versus particular, or the global versus local, to analyze how heritage claims evolve through everyday practices of spatial reproduction and subject formation. Recognizing that *all* heritage claims are place-routed suggests that heritage managers should empirically focus on unpacking the multiple historical geographies producing identity, place, and cultural heritage and steer clear of abstract spatial binaries altogether. This move shifts heritage management debates away from focusing on genealogical descent to a cultural rights framework that also takes into account place-routed heritage, well-being, patrimonial ethics, and social justice.

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