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Scholars have long debated the nature of Maya political organization during the Classic period (AD 250-950). Complex questions regarding political centralization, economic change, and the role of politics and economics in the rise and collapse of the civilization have been examined and reexamined from a variety of perspectives. Antonia Foias and Kitty Emery have assembled a broad collection of essays all focused on a single polity, that of Motul de San José.

By presenting a coherent interdisciplinary body of archaeological and environmental data, the volume offers an intensely deep, focused investigation of the various models of the ancient Maya political and economic systems. Research conducted over six seasons of fieldwork reveals a more centralized political system than expected and uncovers the workings of the ancient economic structure. The contributors offer new details concerning how involved royals and nonroyal elites were in the politics of nearby states, as well as an extensive tribute system