Introductory Note in English

Maya America Editors
For several thousand years, corn has been an integral part of the daily life and worldview of Mesoamerican peoples. Sometime during that remote past, the tamale became an important and widespread food, and its preparation and consumption remained after the arrival of the Spaniards to the Americas. Today, the tamale continues to be a primary element in the diet and in diverse cultural, festive and ritual practices in Mexico, Central America, much of the Americas, and increasingly worldwide.

Maya America, Volume 6 Number 1, is dedicated to the history, rituals and culinary practices associated with tamales among the Maya of Mexico and Guatemala. Based on varied methodologies, such as archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, history, epigraphy, and iconography, the essays and commentaries presented in this issue present insights into the world of the Maya. Our authors discuss representations of tamales in codices and mural paintings; changes in the forms of preparation and consumption; questions on commodification; the role of women in elaboration and innovation; transmission of knowledge; and ritual ceremonies. Some of the authors presented their research during the XII Congreso Internacional de Mayistas, (June 2023), in the panel: Tamales mayas: Sabores en el tiempo, coordinated by Laura Elena Sotelo Santos.

We included in this issue of the journal an immigration report on indigenous family separation at the border (U.S.-Mexico), covering current and past immigration policy which continues historic patterns of colonial abuse. Discussion on US policies towards indigenous immigration will be continued in the Fall/Winter 2024 issue of Maya America, along with current questions of indigenous identity, and an examination of the concept and practice of “education” as in critical review.

Cover Design: Original art with words created by Briana Castro-Balbi.

An ear of corn transforming into a tamale. The corn husks reach around and merge into leaf wrappings. As the gods created us from corn, the tamales too were given to us.
BACK COVER ART

Photographs by Rosa Margarita Jaramillo Contreras and Karla Valletzi Rincón Bejarano

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