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The Maya Forest Garden: Eight Millennia of Sustainable Cultivation of the Tropical Woodlands (New Frontiers in Historical Ecology)

Anabel Ford, Ronald Nigh

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The conventional wisdom says that the devolution of Classic Maya civilization occurred because its population grew too large and dense to be supported by primitive neotropical farming methods, resulting in debilitating famines and internecine struggles. Using research on contemporary Maya farming techniques and important new archaeological research, Ford and Nigh refute this Malthusian explanation of events in ancient Central America and posit a radical alternative theory. The authors-show that ancient Maya farmers developed ingenious, sustainable woodland techniques to cultivate numerous food plants (including the staple maize);-examine both contemporary tropical farming techniques and the archaeological record (particularly regarding climate) to reach their conclusions;-make the argument that these ancient techniques, still in use today, can support significant populations over long periods of time.

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