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Cave archaeology in the New World, now a focus of intense research, was still a peripheral area of inquiry just fifteen years ago. Stone Houses and Earth Lords is the first volume dedicated exclusively to the use of caves in the Maya lowlands, covering primarily Classic Period archaeology from A.D. 100 through the Spaniards' arrival. Although the caves that riddled the lowlands show no sign of habitation, most contain evidence of human use—evidence that suggests that they functioned as ritual spaces. Demonstrating the importance of these subterranean spaces to Maya archaeology, contributors provide interpretations of archaeological remains that yield key insights into Maya ritual and cosmology.

Compiling the best current scholarship in this fast-growing area of research, Stone Houses and Earth Lords is a vital reference for researchers and readers interested in Mayan archaeology, Mesoamerica, and the human use of caves.