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**Sinopsis**

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Now shrouded in Guatemalan jungle, the ancient Maya city of Piedras Negras flourished between the sixth and ninth centuries, when its rulers erected monumental limestone sculptures carved with hieroglyphic texts and images of themselves and family members, advisers, and captives. In *Engaging Ancient Maya Sculpture at Piedras Negras, Guatemala*, Megan E. O'Neil offers new ways to understand these stelae, altars, and panels by exploring how ancient Maya people interacted with them.

These monuments, considered sacred, were one of the community's important forms of cultural and religious expression. Stelae may have held the essence of rulers they commemorated, and the objects remained loci for reverence of those rulers after they died. Using a variety of evidence, O'Neil examines how the forms, compositions, and contexts of the sculptures invited people to engage with them and the figures they embodied looks at these monuments not as inert bearers of images but as palpable presences that existed in real space at specific historical moments. Her analysis brings to the fore the material and affective force of these powerful objects that were seen, touched, and manipulated in the past.

O'Neil investigates the monuments not only at the moment of their creation but also in later years and shows how they changed over time. She argues that the relationships among sculptures of different generations were performed in processions, through which ancient Maya people integrated historical dialogues and ancestral commemoration into the landscape.

With the help of more than 160 illustrations, O'Neil reveals these sculptures' continuing life histories, which in the past century have included their fragmentation and transformation into commodities sold on the international art market. Shedding light on modern-day transposition and display of these ancient monuments, O'Neil's study contributes to ongoing discussions of cultural patrimony.