

# INSTITUTE OF MAYA STUDIES

OF THE MIAMI MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

## Newsletter



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Hal C. Ball, Editor  
Vol. 5 No. 11  
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(November 10, 1976)



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### FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING:

The fifth annual meeting of The Institute of Maya Studies will be held in the Museum of Science auditorium on Wednesday, November 17th at 8:00 p.m. The president will present a review of the Institute's activities during the past year and reports will be read by the other officers and chairpersons of the organization's different committees and special sections. The results of the election of new members to the IMS Board of Directors will also be announced, and at the conclusion of the meeting refreshments will be served in celebration of the Institute's fifth anniversary. (Y'all come)...

### ARCHAEOLOGY SECTION MEETING:

The November meeting of the IMS Archaeology Section will be held in Museum Classroom "C" on Monday the 22nd at 8:00 p.m. Additional papers will be read and discussed on the subject of "Archaeological Research in the Maya Area." Members wishing to join this study group contact Hal Ball, Chairman.

### HIEROGLYPHIC RESEARCH SECTION MEETINGS:

The Institute's Hieroglyphic Research Section is now meeting every Tuesday in the Museum of Science at 7:30 p.m. At present the group is pursuing two special projects: (1) Compilation of a dictionary of Maya hieroglyphic radicals and compounds, and (2) Application of astronomical data to tables in the Maya codices. All IMS members are invited to attend...

### TWO PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE MAYA IN LATEST PUBLICATION OF MARI:

The Middle American Research Institute's most recent publication, No. 22, contains two papers by Arthur Demarest that should be of particular interest to Mayanists. A preprint of the first one, "A Critical Analysis of Yuri Knorozov's Decipherment of Maya Hieroglyphics," was commented on in an earlier issue of the NEWSLETTER (Vol. 5, No. 7). In his second one, entitled "A Re-Evaluation of the Archaeological Sequences of Preclassic Chiapas," Demarest suggests that "the archaeological evidence from Preclassic Chiapas has a far greater significance than simply representing a regional ceramic sequence," and he reviews the Chiapa De Corzo ceramic complex as he believes it relates to the early Olmec/Izapa/Maya cultures. He also discusses the Olmec "mother culture" hypothesis and concludes his paper with a summary of the origin of the Maya civilization as it might be interpreted through his recent study of Preclassic Chiapas ceramics...



Mr. Hector G. Cebrian	Sgt. Robert T. Coates
Mr. Robert S. Couban	Mrs. Vera Ruth Filby
Mr. Peter Tompkins	Mr. Charles P. Harty
Mr. Jose Luis Molins R.	Ms. Carmen Morrina

#### THE FORTIFICATIONS AT THE MAYA SITE OF BECAN:

One of the most unusual features of the Maya ceremonial center of Becan is the large ditch that completely encloses the site. This was first noticed in 1934 when members of Carnegie Institution's "Third Campeche Expedition" were mapping the ruins and discovered what they referred to as a "moat." Upon further examination it was identified as an artificial fortification and Becan was thus given the distinction of being the oldest fortified site in the Maya area. It was not until many years later, however, that there was any intensive investigation made of the interesting ditch. This was in 1970 when David L. Webster began work at Becan on a project co-sponsored by the National Geographic Society and Tulane University. The results of his investigations are presented in the newly published (October) monograph: Defensive Earthworks at Becan, Campeche, Mexico, in which he reveals, among other things, that the ditch had no artificial lining or seal and in his opinion was not designed to serve as what is generally classified as a moat. This theory is further substantiated by the fact that the seven causeways that cross the ditch are not pierced in any way that would allow water to flow between them.

In addition to the deep trough that encircled the site, it was determined that a second part of the fortification was formed by an earthen embankment that evidently was constructed from material removed during the digging of the ditch. From the eleven test pits that were made in different sections of the center of the ditch, it was found that there was a layer of sediment at the bottom that averaged about 2.8 m. The average depth below the rim was 5.3 m., and considering the height of the embankment, it is believed that when defenses were first erected an attacking enemy would have been confronted by a barrier (measured from bottom of ditch to top of parapet) of more than 11 m. Also, judging from the bedrock outcrops still visible along the sides of the ditch, it appears that they are almost vertical, which would have made it very difficult for attackers to climb up without the use of some type of ladders. From ceramic evaluations and other archaeological data, Webster assigns the fortification to the early part of the Classic Period and believes that Becan is probably the earliest well-tested fortified site in all of Mesoamerica...

#### F.L.A.A.R. ANNOUNCES MAYA ARCHAEOLOGY EXPEDITION FOR 1977:

The Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research in Guatemala City has announced a ten day Maya Archaeology Expedition that is scheduled to start on March 7. Maya sites near the Usumacinta and Pasion rivers will be visited and will include Yaxchilan, Altar De Sacrificios, Aguateca, and Dos Pilas. (See Bulletin Board for detailed information)...

NEW INVESTIGATIONS OF RIO BEC:

In March of 1976 a team, under the direction of Dr. Prentice M. Thomas, launched the first excavations at the Classic Maya site of Rio Bec, Campeche, Mexico. The investigations focused on the excavation and consolidation of Temple B, (Fig. 1) the site's most famous structure. First discovered in the early 1900's by Robert Merwin and Clarence Hay, the structure was relocated in 1973 after having been "lost" in the forest for 61 years. Investigations show that Temple B was constructed during the Classic Period, with occupation continuing into the Early Postclassic. In addition to the concentrated work on the temple however, Thomas' project also included an intensive survey of the vicinity for mapping purposes and future exploratory excavations of the surrounding housemounds. Field operations were terminated in late June and the artifacts and other materials that were found are currently under analysis...

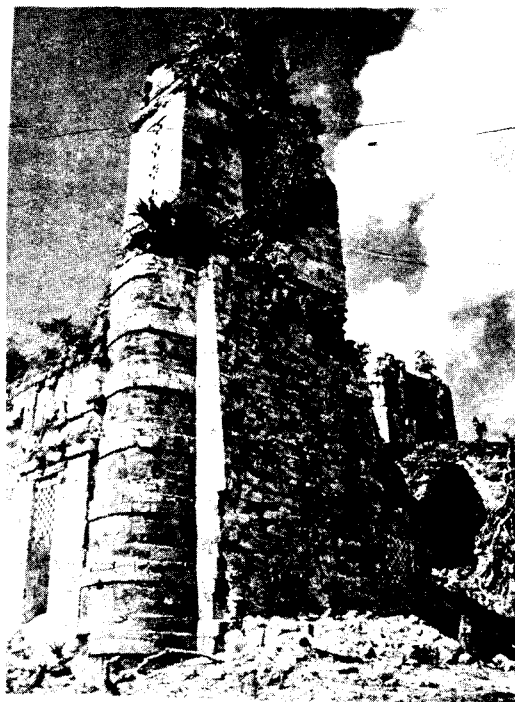


Fig. 1 - Rio Bec Temple B

EARLY MAYA OCCUPATION AT CUELLO, BELIZE:

During the recent symposium in Cambridge, England, on RESEARCH IN MESO-AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY, Norman Hammond, Director of the Corozal Project, presented a paper in which he cited radiocarbon dates from excavations at the site of Cuello, that indicate an occupation around 2600 B. C. and a sedentary pottery-using settlement there by 2000 B. C. According to Hammond, this evidence antedated the hitherto earliest known Maya occupation of the Yucatan Peninsula by well over a thousand years. The early date is derived from radiocarbon determinations of partially burnt wood that was found in a primary midden at the bottom of an excavation trench at the base of structure #35. The midden was 4.50 meters below ground level and almost directly onto bedrock. It is designated as Level 28 and during excavations to this point 17 separate floors and two burials were found. In addition to the burnt wood material, the midden contained large quantities of Swasey Complex pottery, mollusc shell and animal bones. A carbon sample from the midden gave a determination of  $4000 \pm 155$  b.p., or 2000 B. C. (UCLA-1985e.) There were also five other acceptable early dates from the site and Hammond believes that these constitute a Formative sequence, which at its latter end, is compatible with what is already known about Maya Lowland and Mesoamerican chronology. He believes, however, that the information he has obtained from Cuello, now takes the prehistoric occupation of the Yucatan Peninsula back well into the third millenium B. C...

"MAYA STONE MONUMENTS OF UNKNOWN PROVENANCE":

One of the research projects of Karl Mayer of Graz, Austria, is the compiling of a list of various Maya stone monuments for which there is no definitely known provenance. In February of this year he completed a preliminary list with the sub-title "Objects in the U.S.A. Collections," in which he presented detailed information and a bibliography on 39 different sculptured Maya stone monuments presently in the United States, the provenance of which is unknown. He has recently finished his preliminary list on "Objects in European Collections," a paper that gives information on 33 more carved stones of unknown provenance, and he is continuing his research in order to have his final paper on the subject as complete as possible. If interested write: Karl H. Mayer, Herrengasse 28/I, A-8010 Graz, Austria...

NEW QUEST FOR EVIDENCE OF FIRST NORTH AMERICANS:

The National Geographic Society and the National Park Service have announced a three year project in Alaska and Canada to find artifacts and bones of the first North Americans. It is believed that the project will be the most intensive quest in history in seeking direct information on the tribes of hunting people that emigrated from Asia over the Bering Sea "Land Bridge" thousands of years ago. During the first summer's work, tools and animal bones in charred remains have been dated to about 12,000 B. C., and preliminary evidence, although not yet official, suggests that a jawbone and tooth from an early man are probably more than 20,000 years old!..

**NEWSLETTER**

**Institute of Maya Studies** **TIME VALUE**

**Museum of Science**

**3280 South Miami Avenue**

**Miami, Florida 33129**

