

INSTITUTE OF MAYA STUDIES

OF THE MIAMI MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

Newsletter



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Hal C. Ball, Editor

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MEETING NOTICE:

The May meeting of the Institute of Maya Studies will be held in the Museum of Science Auditorium at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, the 18th. The program for the evening will be on: "The Lost Treasure of The Well of Sacrifice---An Untold Chapter in the Legend of Thompson's Loot." Our guest will be Mr. Edward G. Thompson, son of Edward H. Thompson, U. S. Consul in Yucatan who is considered to be the first person to dive into the well in search of Maya artifacts in 1904. Narration will be by Charles Lacombe...

IMS MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE MUSEUM'S PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE PLAZA MAYA:

Two IMS members, Hal Ball and Sam Block, have been asked to serve on the Museum's planning committee for the alteration and improvement of the Plaza Maya and adjoining outside patio. Under consideration are: the changing of both entrances, the addition of two new murals (one inside and one outside), a replica of a stela from Copan, a model of Chichen Itza, a large map of the Maya area, an easy to read Maya chronological table, and a special exhibit on El Salvador archaeology, to be located in the open patio.

"PRECOLUMBIAN MUSIC IN MESOAMERICA":

A special exhibit is being prepared by the Museum of Science on "Pre-Columbian Music in Mesoamerica," and anyone wishing to loan artifacts or other related material to the exhibit should contact Hal Ball or Hinda Finn...

PLANS MADE FOR MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN SANTA CRUZ DEL QUICHÉ, GUATEMALA:

After many years without a regional museum in which to exhibit the numerous collections of artifacts from nearby sites, the local council of Santa Cruz del Quiché has initiated steps towards the construction of a new building that will be used solely for this purpose. According to present plans, the museum will be part of a new Civic Center that will be constructed on the land now occupied by the old Juan De Leon Institute. This new regional museum will be of special interest because several private collectors have offered to donate valuable archaeological pieces that the public has not previously had an opportunity to see. In addition, many of the jade objects and other artifacts from Utatlan will be on exhibit, and it is hoped that even the exquisite gold necklace that is claimed to be a gift from an Inca king to one of the Quiché princesses, will be obtained...

NEW DATA ON THE MIDDLE PRECLASSIC POPULATION OF CENTRAL PETEN:

The results of archaeological settlement surveys in the region around the Peten lakes of Yaxhá and Sacnab during the past few years, have provided new data on the nature of the Maya Preclassic population in this part of Guatemala. Thus, according to Don S. Rice in his paper in volume 3 (1976) of the Journal of Field Archaeology, information obtained from a study of these two lake basins indicates that full-time farmers probably entered this particular part of the Maya area ca. 1000 B. C. These early people evidently first settled near the two lakes because of their resources and means of transportation and communication, and subsequently established communities around small special function platforms. Such communities are believed to have represented the status segment of the society of the lake region, and served as a source of social, judicial, and religious stability. Also, the finding of exotic trade goods in some of the early archaeological materials, suggests that the inhabitants participated in a broad Mesoamerican sphere which may have been instrumental in the forming of a functioning supervisory group. Rice states that most of the chronologically significant data that was recovered was ceramic material, and an analysis of this was based on sequences established at other sites in the Maya Lowlands. However, specific names were assigned to the Yaxhá-Sacnab "complexes," with the earliest being called Ah Pam, and the author used the resulting ceramic analysis as an important basis for his theories relative to the occupation of the Preclassic Maya in the Peten of Guatemala...

EXCAVATIONS AT EL TANKE:

Excavations were begun in February of this year in order to further investigate the El Salvador site of El Tanke prior to its becoming inundated by a lake being formed by the new dam on the Lempa River at Cerrón Grande. Preliminary work, however, was done at the site in September of 1975, when William Fowler spent three weeks digging test pits in Mound #3, but other than that there was no other excavation until this year's project was begun under the direction of Richard Crane of Tulane University.

The writer had an opportunity to visit the site with Stanley Boggs in late March, at which time digging was being done in the ball court and 3 other mounds in the North Group. The ball court appears to be the best preserved structure at the site and enough of it has now been excavated so that its basic architecture can be determined. This consists primarily of the use of river stones of varying size for construction of walls, stairways, etc., finished in some places with a smooth layer of mud plaster. The ball court is of the "open type," with its axis in an east/west orientation, and is 29 m. long and 12 m. wide. The remains at its highest point is a little over 3 m., and the earliest pottery found in association with the structure is Late Classic. Other artifacts besides pottery that have been unearthed include manos, metates, spindle whorls, and obsidian blades.

The project is part of the "Programa de Rescate Arqueológico Cerrón Grande," and will continue until the end of the dry season...



IN MEMORIAM: LEN AND BETH SCHAFER---IMS MEMBERS 1972-1977

THE LAMANAI PROJECT---1977:

The fourth season of archaeological investigation of the Maya site of Lamanai began in January and will continue until the first week in July. As in previous years, the project is being conducted under the auspices of the Royal Ontario Museum of Toronto, and the excavations are under the direction of David M. Pendergast.

This year, in addition to continuing work on the large terraced pyramid referred to as "Lip," and the smaller mounds of "Cib" and "Buul," clearing and initial excavations have begun on "Sac," "Lag," and "Kambel." The largest of these, "Lag," is over 100 feet high and encloses the north side of an irregular shaped plaza that is located near the center of the site. It is within this plaza that there are two rectangular parallel mounds that are believed to be the remains of the only ball court at Lamanai.

Two new caches have been found in "Lip" this year, and digging in the lower part of the north side of the pyramid has revealed a "sanctuary" that is flanked on the east and west sides by an old stairway. The two caches which were discovered in "Lip" both contained several eccentric flints, the one near the upper part of the structure having 9, and the other found below the floor on the "sanctuary" having 28. These interesting flints vary in size from 19 to 46 cm. in length, and some are in the form of stylized human figures and animals, while others suggest different geometric designs. In each of the two caches containing the flints, there was a large ceramic bowl which had a decorated plate for a cover. Inside of these there were several flint chips, beads, coral and shell objects.

In "Cib," an insignificant looking mound east of the "Lip" plaza, more burials have been unearthed, bringing the total from this structure to almost 50. Of particular interest with the new-found burials, were two well carved bone tubes about 15 cm. long that were discovered at the foot of a seated individual within the lower part of the mound. This year's excavations have also produced two types of censors not previously found at Lamanai. One of these is a tall (41 Cm.) nicely decorated cylinder type, and the other a tripod censor having unusually long tapering legs that are formed in the shape of bird beaks.

According to Director Pendergast, the site to date has provided more different artifacts and architectural features than previously expected, and the information being recorded should add greatly to the present knowledge of the Post Classic period in this part of the Maya area...

THE AZTECS AND THEIR UNUSUAL PROTEIN DIET:

According to a report by Dr. Michael Harner, a professor of anthropology at New York's New School for Social Research, the Aztecs not only sacrificed human beings for religious reasons, but also because it was necessary to eat people to obtain protein for their diet. This, he contends, is because the Aztecs, unlike nearly all other civilizations, lacked domesticated herbivores (plant eating animals), such as pigs and cattle. Dr. Harner also believes that the Aztecs had the most cannibalistic culture known to modern anthropology, and that just prior to the Spanish arrival in Mexico, they were sacrificing one per cent of the region's population each year, or approximately 250,000! (New York Times)...

THREE NEW BOOKS ON MESOAMERICA FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS:

1. The Zapotecs: Princes, Priests and Peasants, J. W. Whitecotton. 340 pp., 100 illustrations. \$14.95.
2. The Toltecs Until the Fall of Tula, Nigel Davies. 350 pp., 25 illustrations, 4 maps, appendices, bibliography. July, \$14.95.
3. A Guide to Mexican Ruins, C. Bruce Hunter. 325 pp., 31 color plates, 152 black and white illustrations. June, \$9.95 (\$5.95 p.)

A CORRECTION: In reference to the Mayan Calendar Reform article in the April issue of the NEWSLETTER, the correct date of the reform is July 30, 1539...

NEWSLETTER

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