

# INSTITUTE OF MAYA STUDIES

OF THE MIAMI MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

## Newsletter



ETZNAB

Hal C. Ball, Editor

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### MEETING NOTICE:

The Institute's September meeting will be held in the Museum of Science auditorium on Wednesday the 21st at 8:00 p.m. We are privileged to have as our special speaker for the evening, Dr. John E. Hall, who will present a program on "Techniques of Underwater Archaeology." Dr. Hall is a well known underwater archaeologist and a professor at the University of Miami in Coral Gables. Prior to coming to Miami, he spent five years in Greece, where he worked as an archaeologist-diver with the Ministry of Archaeology, and during the past few years he has done considerable underwater exploration in the Caribbean area. This will be the second lecture that Dr. Hall has given for IMS members, and we look forward to a very interesting evening...

### IMS SECTION MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER:

Archaeology, Wednesday 28, 8:00 p.m. Museum of Science Classroom "C."  
Hieroglyphics, Tuesday 13, 8:00 p.m. Museum of Science Library.

### JADE STOLEN FROM COPAN MUSEUM:

During the past summer a thief broke into the Village Museum at the important Maya site of Copan, Honduras, and stole all of the large jadeite plaques illustrated in Longyear's C.I.W. monograph on Copan Ceramics. Also stolen from the museum was a valuable clay Olmec figurine and several other small artifacts. Since then the exhibits have been reorganized in a new format and permission to photograph within the museum is included in the \$1.00 (U.S.) admission fee to the ruins...

### THE SEMITES AND THE MAYA:

Although the controversial theory that the Semites migrated to Mexico long before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century has been discussed and written about for several years, a recent UPI article of an interview in Mexico City with Dr. Alexander von Wuthenau, has once again brought the subject to public attention. He contends that small groups of Semitic people crossed the Atlantic as far back as 1500 B. C., first settled along the Gulf coast of Mexico, and later became a part of the Maya civilization. Anyone interested in further information on von Wuthenau's theory may find it in his book entitled Unexpected Faces in Ancient America...

RESEARCH ON ANCIENT MAYA SALT PRODUCTION EXTENDED TO GUATEMALA:

The study and research on ancient Maya salt production and trade, which was begun by Anthony P. (Tony) Andrews in 1976, was continued this year in the highlands and along the Pacific coast of Guatemala. The project, which is sponsored by the National Geographic Society, deals with the history of the economics of the Maya salt trade from its inception in Formative times to the present. (See IMS NEWSLETTER, Vol. 5, No. 12.)

Andrews reports that during the first part of 1977 he visited a total of 12 salt sources in the western highlands of Guatemala, half of which were not known previously, and as he believes there may be several more, he plans to return there in the fall. While in Guatemala he spent quite a bit of time at Sacapulas and San Mateo Ixtatan, which are reported to be the only two sources still being exploited, and found that the present methods of extracting salt are remarkably similar to the pre-Hispanic techniques. He also visited archaeological sites which are related to the highland salt sources and is of the opinion that many of these were in use in pre-Columbian times.

Investigation along the Pacific coast consisted of observations and photographs both from the air and on the ground and during his survey he was able to isolate eight major salt production areas. On the southwest coast near the El Salvador border, he located ongoing primitive salt works that were still in operation and in which the people were boiling estuary water in vats, rather than utilizing the solar evaporation process. During conversation with the salt workers, Andrews was told that at one time they had boiled it in cauldrons, and that up to about 150 years ago the brine was boiled in large ceramic ollas. Because of Andrews keen interest in the subject, one of the older men dug up a few potsherds from the old ollas, and it was later found that they were very similar to those collected at the estuary salt making site of Acapan on the south coast of the Department of Retalhuleu. It thus appears that the pottery associated with salt-making in southern Guatemala has changed little in over at least 1500 years, and it is believed that a clearcut ceramic type has now been established for salt production in this part of Mesoamerica...

TIKAL:

According to information recently received from a visitor from Guatemala, the airfield at the well known Maya site of Tikal has now been expanded and Aviateca Airlines is now providing daily service from Guatemala City in DC-6 aircraft (round trip: \$75.00). Admission to Tikal is now \$1.00...

ANCIENT MEXICAN POTTERY REPORTED FOUND IN FLORIDA:

Dr. Orsenigo, a member of the Florida Anthropological Society, is reported to have recovered sherds from the "Chosen" mound in Palm Beach County which appear to be Mexican. Dr. J. J. Milanich of Gainesville, is evaluating these, and agrees that there is a similarity. One of the sherds being studied is tempered with volcanic material and additional information may be obtained from IMS member Irving Eyster...

AN UNUSUAL MAYA VASE FROM GUATEMALA:

Although square bowls, plates and cache vessels are occasionally found in the Maya area, it is rather unusual to find a square polychrome vase. However, one such vase was photographed last year by Nicolas Hellmuth, director of F.L.A.A.R., and may be seen in the illustration to the right. It is from the Central Maya Lowlands and is classified as Late Classic or of the Tepeu 2 period (ca. A.D. 800). It is identical in color and iconography to normal round vases of this period and only its four flat sides make it unusually distinctive.

Each panel presents a spotted jaguar upholstered throne with a fringed cloth hanging below, and between the legs of the thrones is a crossed bands symbol. On each throne is a seated maya noble, two of which are shown in profile, and the two others showing their bodies in front view but their heads in profile. (Very few Late Classic Maya vases are known with front view faces and most of the Early Classic vases with front faces are believed to be of Teotihuacan origin.)

The noble at the left (see photograph) has a stylized fanged reptilian form protruding from under his nose, which is a part of his costume and not a speech scroll. The glyphs on the rim band are simplified and not a Primary Standard Sequence and the vertical glyphs next to each personage is presumably a name, but the glyphs are poorly done and difficult to identify. The vase is about 8 inches high and painted on an off-white background with orange and black...

EXCAVATIONS TO CONTINUE AT CHAN-CHAN:

The Peruvian government's National Institute of Culture has recently provided funds for four more months of excavation at the ruins of the ancient Chimú capitol of Chan-chan. The site is located in northern Peru near the city of Trujillo and covers some 20 kilometers. The ruins of Chan-chan have been known about for sometime and excavations have uncovered catacombs, sunken gardens, irrigation systems, wall sculptures, shrines, temples, and various other types of structures. It is divided into 10 walled sectors or "barrios," separated by very straight, narrow streets and well planned plazas. Several sculptures of pelicans, sea otters and complicated geometric designs have been uncovered, and one part known as the "Huaca del Dragón," has a scene that may represent the heavens. The present director of the Chan-chan project is Sr. Miguel Cornejo, who believes it will take 20 more years to complete the proposed excavations...

"THE MAYA AND THEIR NEIGHBORS":

Now available from Dover Publications, Inc., is a new unabridged re-publication edition of the scholarly book entitled The Maya and Their Neighbors. First printed in 1940 in a limited prestige edition, the book is sometimes referred to as the Tozzer Memorial Volume, as it was written as a tribute to the distinguished Harvard University anthropologist, Professor Alfred M. Tozzer.

The book is divided into 4 categories: "The Background of the Maya," "The Maya," "The Northern Neighbors of the Maya," and "The Southern Neighbors of the Maya." Included in the 4 categories are 34 chapters that cover almost every aspect of Maya study and research. Each chapter was written by a specialist in his field, and most of the authors were former students of Professor Tozzer. Although some of the articles may appear a little out-dated, all of them provide background information which serves as a basis for additional study on the Maya civilization. (620 pp., 20 plates, 40 figures, a fold-out linguistic map in full color and many tables - \$7.50.) From: Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick Street, New York, N. Y. 10014...

FLORIDA STATE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER:

The IMS is now exchanging NEWSLETTERS with the Florida State Museum and copies will be kept in the Institute's library. It is published bi-monthly by the Department of Interpretation and includes numerous illustrations...

NEWSLETTER

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