

INSTITUTE OF MAYA STUDIES

OF THE MIAMI MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

Newsletter

Hal C. Ball, Editor



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MEETING NOTICE:

The July meeting of the Institute will be held in the Museum of Science auditorium at 8:00 P.M. on Wednesday the 19th. The program for the evening will be presented by Ellen Jacobs, whose topic will be "News From Palenque".

IMS SECTION MEETINGS IN JULY:

Travel Section: July 12, 8:00 P.M. Library of Ponce de Leon High School.

Art Section: July 25, 8:00 P.M. Home of Dr. Allan Kaplan.

RE: IMS OCTOBER SYMPOSIUM "NEW HORIZONS IN THE MAYA WORLD":

Please be advised that information received from the Program Committee listing Richard E. W. Adams as one of the participants in the IMS October symposium, was in error, as Dr. Adams will be unable to attend at that time. Besides the other five named in the June IMS Newsletter, however, there will be an additional guest speaker invited to complete the roster.

Enclosed with this month's Newsletter you will find a brief review of the new and interesting material that will be presented at the symposium, and in addition a ticket form and envelope that are provided for your return reservations. Members are asked to send in their reservations as soon as possible, and reminded that the cost is tax deductible...

TERCERA MESA REDONDA DE PALENQUE - 1978:

The 1978 Mesa Redonda concluded its week long series of meetings on June 17. 131 persons registered for the meetings and 13 different countries were represented. Although the majority of the papers read were relative to Palenque, there were several on other Maya sites. IMS members attending were: Hal and Alberta Ball, Ellen Jacobs and Peggy Wilner...

MAYA ARCHAEOLOGIST DENNIS PULESTON DIES IN UNUSUAL ACCIDENT AT CHICHEN ITZA:

It was with deep regret that information was received on July 3 of the tragic death of Dennis E. Puleston, well known Maya archaeologist and professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota. According to a telephone call to the Editor from one of his colleagues, Dr. Puleston's death was the result of his being struck by lightning while he was climbing the stairway of the Castillo pyramid at Chichen Itza. Our sincere sympathy is extended to his family, wife and two small children...

SALINAS DE LOS NUEVE CERROS - AN INTERIOR SALT SOURCE OF THE MAYA LOWLANDS:

Although the Maya site of Salinas de los Nueve Cerros has been mentioned in various publications since 1878 (Habel), it had not been explored archaeologically until 1975, when Brian Dillon, Edgar Torres and Mark Johnson spent 3 weeks there. At this time the trio discovered Stela 1, Monument 2, collected salt samples, ceramics and other artifacts. They returned in 1976, discovering Stelae 2 and 3, and Monuments 3 through 7, and this year Dillon is spending a full working season at the site. He is a doctoral candidate at the U. of California, Berkeley, funded by Fulbright and others.

The site is of particular interest because it apparently controlled the only source of inland salt in the interior of the southern Maya Lowlands. It is located in the Dept. of Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, on the south bank of the Rio Chixoy, a river sometimes described as... "an artery of ancient trade, migration and cultural influence ranging from the Gulf of Mexico to the Guatemalan Highlands". The actual source of the salt, however, was not from the Rio Chixoy, but from a small tributary called the Arroyo Salinas. This is a perennial brine stream that drains the nearby Tortugas salt dome and passes through the occupation area north of Salinas de los Nueve Cerros. At this point it is about 8 m. wide and 3 or 4 m. deep, and it eventually empties into the Rio Chixoy 1 km. east of the site.

According to Dillon, the ancient method of salt production at the site was by fire-evaporation of brine in very large (2 to 2.5 m. in diameter) ceramic vessels. These were placed along the banks of the salt stream and apparently used for a considerable length of time. It is not known who the early inhabitants of Nueve Cerros were, possibly Chol or even Ixkil, but research shows that the Kekchi, who expanded north from the Verapaz highlands after the conquest, were manufacturing salt here until just a few decades ago.

In some of the stone structures at the site, as in Group A, chambered tombs have been reported, and the ceramic offerings found there seem to emphasize a link with the Pasion River and Central Peten. In front of some of the structures, stelae and other sculptured stones have been discovered, all of which, with the exception of one, are of red sandstone...

GUATEMALA'S UNITED NATIONS PARK TO FEATURE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPRODUCTIONS:

According to an article in Guatemala's Prensa Libre newspaper, the first phase of the new Parque de las Naciones Unidas will be completed in July and will have on permanent exhibit replicas of temples and pyramidal platforms from Zaculeu. Future plans call for adding replicas of carved stelae from Tikal, Seibal, Dos Pilas and other Maya sites located throughout the northern part of the country. The park is located near Guatemala City and is reported to have been built at a cost of 4000,000 quetzales...

DR. EVON Z. VOGT AWARDED THE ORDER OF THE AZTEC EAGLE:

In recognition of his 20 years of anthropological work among the Tzotzil Indians in the Chiapas Highlands, Harvard Anthropology professor Dr. E. Z. Vogt has been awarded Mexico's exclusive Order of the Aztec Eagle...

DIGGING IN SHELL HEAPS OF EL CHAPERNAITO
REVEALS EXQUISITE PRE-COLUMBIAN POTTERY:

While in El Salvador this past March, the Editor had an opportunity to visit El Chapernalito, an archaeological site in the eastern part of the country where recent digging of ancient shell heaps has led to the discovery of an abundance of pre-Columbian pottery---much of it polychrome. El Chapernalito is located in the Dept. of La Union between the Estero La Manzanilla and the Rio Amatillo, and to reach there a flight was made from San Salvador to the airfield at Hda. San Cayetano, after which the remaining 15 km. to the site was made by Jeep. Accompanying the writer on the trip were Stanley Boggs, Chief Archaeologist for El Salvador, Roberto Huezo, Director del Patrimonio Cultural, and Tony Andrews, Maya archaeologist presently conducting research on pre-Columbian salt manufacture and trade.

The primary purpose of the trip was to photograph and record data relative to the large shell heaps that are situated in an approximate north/south orientation along the western edge of the nucleus of the site. These had been brought to the attention of Boggs because of the large amount of pre-Columbian pottery that was being found as local workers dug out the shell for removal and sale to a nearby chicken farm. Previous reports had indicated that a surprising amount of this was polychrome, probably dating back to the Late Classic period. (A.D. 700-900). In addition, a great deal of monochrome ware was uncovered, and several intact and restorable dishes and bowls were found. Besides pottery vessels, however, fragments of wind instruments, shell ornaments, bone beads, wheeled whistle-flutes and figurines have been discovered. Also of special interest has been the amount of faunal (shells and animal bones), florex (burned seeds and maize), and rope or cord remains that have been found.

An example of one of the El Chapernalito polychrome figurines may be seen in the photograph above. It is believed to portray a woman, stands 25.5 cm high and is painted red, black and orange on a cream background. The figurine is hollow and has pellets enclosed that provide the qualities of a rattle, although the purpose of these may have been for use as a noise-maker to attract attention, rather than to serve as a musical instrument. (Photograph by José López, Del Museo Nacional "David J. Guzman")...



Fig. 1. Polychrome figurine.

NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE DISCOVERED IN CHILE:

A new archaeological site called La Chimba has recently been discovered in the Segunda Region of northern Chile. Believed to be one of the oldest in the Americas, its discovery was made possible by the use of the new scientific techniques known as "bioindicators", which consists of the study of the remains of animals and plants as indicators of human habits and behavior. Investigation of La Chimba has been under the direction of Prof. Agustin Llagostera, director of the Regional Museum of Antofogasta, who submitted samples of some of the material recovered at the site to the University of Pennsylvania for radiocarbon dating. An analysis of these has been tentatively given as 9,400 to 9,700 B. P., which compares favorably with two other old sites in Chile: Tagua Tagua (11,380 B. P.), in the central part of the country, and Cueva De Feli (10,710 B. P.), in the extreme north.

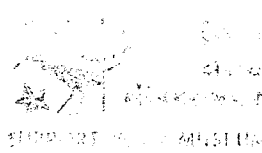
Prof. Llagostera also reports finding the remains of hallucinogenic drugs, which he believes had similar effects as "ayahuasca" or "enredadera de los muertos" (vine of the dead). This, according to some of the present day Indians, was used in a ceremonial brew which was combined with certain magic-religious rites and produced fantastic hallucinogenic visions that permitted supernatural contacts with the gods. Because of the antiquity of the hallucinogenics, the Institute of Technology of Stockholm and the Ethnographic Museum of Gothenburg are collaborating in a more thorough study of this part of the project. (From "El Mercurio", Santiago, Chile)...



NEWSLETTER

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