

INSTITUTE OF MAYA STUDIES

OF THE MIAMI MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

Newsletter



CHICCHAN

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Hal C. Ball, Editor

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SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING:

The Institute of Maya Studies will hold its Seventh Annual Meeting in the Museum of Science auditorium at 8:00 P.M. on Wednesday, November 15th. As this will be a business meeting, no special program will be presented. Ballots for the election of 6 members to the IMS Board of Directors were mailed in October, and the results of the election will be announced by the president at this meeting. In addition, there will be a review of the last year's activities and reports from the officers and chairpersons of the Institute's various committees and departments. Time will also be allowed for questions from the members and any suggestions they may have...

IMS SYMPOSIUM CONCLUDES WITH CHAMPAGNE AND CHEESE PARTY:

The Institute's symposium, "New Horizons in the Maya World", was concluded Saturday night, October 21, with an enjoyable Champagne and Cheese Party. It was a fitting climax to three evenings of interesting and informative lectures and slide presentations by Elizabeth Benson, Michael Coe, Norman Hammond, David Joralemon, David Kelly, Arthur Miller and George Stuart. Several different aspects of the Maya civilization were discussed, and although there were some minor differences of opinion, all of the material presented was impressive and thought-provoking.

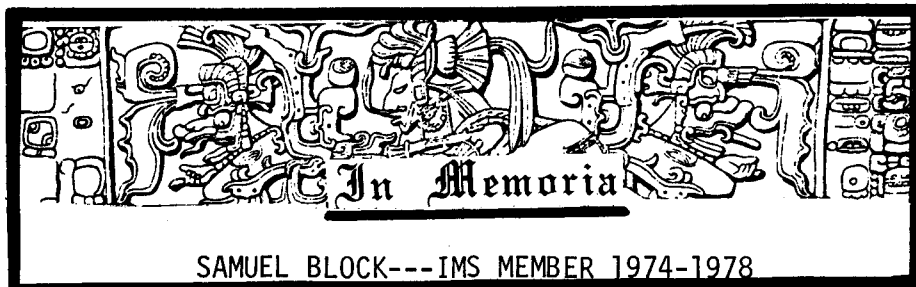
The entire membership is grateful to Karyn Kaplan and her Program Committee for their part in organizing and supervising the 3 day symposium, and we also wish to extend thanks to The Quetzal Dance Ensemble, Joan Levi, Charles Lacombe and the many others who assisted in the unusual and entertaining "Pagent of the Ancient Maya"...

LIBRARY NOTE:

During the past three months the IMS Library has acquired almost 50 new books through donations and purchases. Why not stop in next Saturday and look over these new additions? They are all interesting and educational...

AAA MEETING TO BE HELD IN LOS ANGELES:

The 77th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association will be held at the Hilton and Hyatt Regency Hotels in Los Angeles on Nov. 14-19. Of particular interest to IMS members will be symposia on Mayan Languages, Current Research in Mesoamerica and Ethnicity in Belize...



EXCAVATIONS CONTINUING IN THE CAVE OF LOLTUN:

An I.N.A.H. project under the direction of Ricardo Velazques is continuing its search for additional information on the early inhabitants who once occupied the multi-chambered Cave of Loltun. The cave, which is located 7 km south of Oxcutzkab, Yucatan, is well known to Mayanists and reports have been written on the exploration of Loltun as early as 1897. (Edward H. Thompson, Peabody Memoirs Vol. 1, No. 2). However, because of the cave's size and many connecting chambers, there are still several areas where excavations have not been completed, and it is in these parts that Velazquez and his workers are now investigating.

Noberto Gonzalez, from whom this information was obtained, states that digging in a place called Huechil (Armadillo) to a depth of 4.50 m., revealed good stratigraphy, including well defined ceramic sequences. Of particular interest was the discovery of crude stone tools with the remains of an ancient animal believed to be a horse. This suggests a pre-ceramic period at Loltun, and Gonzalez is of the opinion that this is the first evidence of this type to be reported in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula. Bones tentatively identified as mammoth or mastadon were also found, but there were no artifacts associated with these...

PRE-HISPANIC MAYA AGRICULTURE:

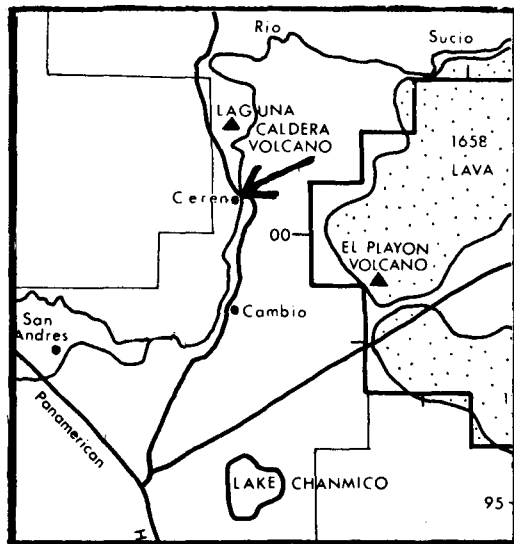
Scheduled for release in December, is this new book on Maya agriculture edited by Peter D. Harrison and B. L. Turner. It will present 17 up-to-date responses to the question: "How did the Maya feed themselves?" According to the publisher, this volume demolishes the swidden thesis and records several investigations that suggest more efficient and productive systems of ancient agriculture. Order from: U. of New Mexico Press. 424 pp., cloth. \$20.00...

"THE ART OF MEXICO":

For those interested in a somewhat different interpretation of pre-Columbian art we suggest you read the article written by Octavio Paz in the September issue of the Americas magazine. Paz, who is a famous Mexican writer-poet-philosopher, presents a review of pre-Hispanic art in Mexico and states that he believes the word that best describes the art is "expression". It is an art, he writes, that "says", but what it says is said with such concentrated energy that the saying is always expressive...

THE BURIED STRUCTURES AT CEREN, EL SALVADOR:

The Proclassic Project of El Salvador, continued in 1978 under the direction of Dr. Payson Sheets (University of Colorado), and spent most of the first half of the year conducting archaeological surveys and excavations, and sampling soils, pollen and tephra. However, one of the most significant discoveries during this year's work were the buried structures of Ceren, a small site consisting of a multiroom farmhouse and a work platform. It is located about 5 km north-east of the well known ruins of San Andres, and according to Sheets, sometime during the 6th century A. D., Laguna Caldera suddenly erupted and deposited some 4 m. of hot ashes, cinders, and pumice on the surrounding area, including Ceren.



Location of Ceren

The eruption apparently struck the area with little warning, as the walls and freestanding columns were intact, indicating that no major earthquake presaged the eruption. It appears that both the house and the adjoining agricultural fields were struck simultaneously by large hot lava bombs and a fall of ash and pumice, and according to local informants, bodies were found on the floor when the structure was first discovered in 1976. Evidently the people were trapped and killed by the eruption, and death may have come from asphyxiation, by volcanic gasses, burning, suffocation from tephra or a combination of these factors.

In the area of the farmhouse described as the pantry, two large ceramic vessels were found full of beans, two other nearby vessels were found empty and there was also a grooved stone maul on the elevated floor. In another section of the farmhouse (Area 2), a prepared ball of potters clay and the ground hematite encountered on the western side indicate it was probably a pottery making area. This presents a particularly interesting aspect of the small farmhouse, for if tests on the clay and hematite indicate polychrome pottery was being manufactured here, some rethinking of archaeological assumptions will be called for. This is, of course, because commoners living in a rural farmhouse in the middle part of the Classic Period just are not supposed to be using large numbers of polychrome vessels, let alone making them.

All five areas of the farmhouse so far excavated suggest an association with female activities, and the finding of several spindle whorls indicates the weaving of cotton garments. A storage and work area was appendaged onto the house and several different types of artifacts were found on its floor, including obsidian flakes, a figurine head, some broken pots and a grass mat. Little is known of the sleeping portions of the house, as these were destroyed by bulldozer operation prior to archaeological investigation...

ON THE TRACK OF MAYA JADE:

Earthwatch Research Expeditions has announced a three phase project during 1979 to further investigate the source of Maya jade along the banks of the Rio Motagua near the town of San Agustin Acasaguastlan, Guatemala. All participants in the project will share the cost of the expedition, and those interested in becoming a member of the Research Team should write to: Earthwatch, 10 Juniper Road, Box 127, Belmont, Mass. 02178...

THE SOCIETY OF WEAVERS OF TENEJAPA:

This is a society in Tenejapa, Chiapas, Mexico, that was formed in order to make available to the public, garments which formerly had been produced only for the personal use of the local Tzeltal-Maya Indians. The weavings are made by a unique technique called finger-brocading, and the pattern designs or symbols woven into the cloth are specifically related to ancient clan signatures and the Mythology of the Maya culture. The art itself is believed to be a God-given facility, and ceremonies and prayers are often offered to Santa Lucia, the patroness of the craft. Interested persons may obtain more information from the SOCIEDAD DE ARTESANIA SANTA LUCI, Domicilio Conocido, Tenejapa de Vincente Guerrero, Chiapas, Mexico...

A REMINDER: A file, is where documents are lost systematically...



NEWSLETTER

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TIME VALUE

