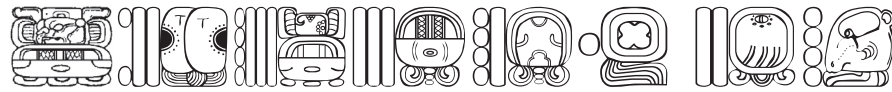




# INSTITUTE OF MAYA STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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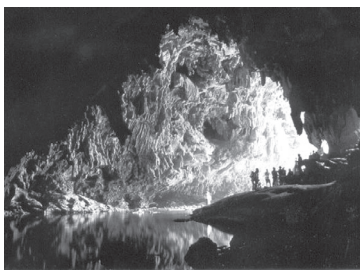
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### New Road Construction Through Izapa Diverted at Last Moment

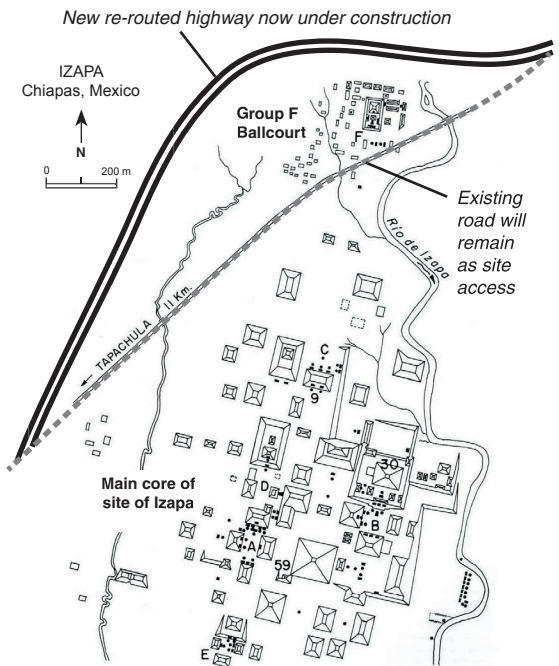
A road widening project that was slated to occur – and in fact was begun last year – threatened to destroy or seriously compromise the Group F ballcourt at the site of Izapa, in southern Mexico. Right now, the existing road runs just on the southern edge of Group F – far enough away that it is not a bother. Plans were to have the existing road widened and "modernized", and because Izapa was not considered a very important site, this expansion project was being rammed through with little resistance by the highway department of the state of Chiapas.

### Centro INAH Chiapas to the Rescue

Earlier this year, realizing the severity of the threat to the site of Izapa, archaeologists, researchers and scientists of Mexico's Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) based in the state of Chiapas, mounted a



View of Group F ballcourt. Some of the important carved monuments are protected under tin roofs. (Photo courtesy of John Major Jenkins, Izapa, May 2008)



concerted effort to oppose the highway department's intentions. They compiled a detailed and informative report, and were then able to successfully influence the authorities and change the course of the intended highway construction. The English version of the report, titled "Izapa, Chiapas: Considerations and Alternative Proposal for the Encroachment on the Archaeological Site by the Tapachula-Talisman Highway" has been published by Mesoweb and is available at [www.mesoweb.com/reports/Izapa.pdf](http://www.mesoweb.com/reports/Izapa.pdf)

### Partial Introduction Reproduced from the INAH Report:

The archaeological site of Izapa was the most important as well as one of the largest of the prehispanic settlements of southern Chiapas, the Pacific coast, and a considerable part of Central America during the Preclassic or Formative Period. The various material expressions present at Izapa manifest great

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# Crystal Skulls at the Forefront Once Again

By Dr. Anne Stewart

Since the release of the movie *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, attention is once again focused on crystal skulls. The skull that receives the most attention is the famous

skull that was, according to legend, discovered by Anna Mitchell-Hedges and her father on an altar inside a building at the Maya site of Lubantuun. All of this happened on Anna's seventeenth birthday. The skull of beautiful rock crystal was missing a lower jaw which when attached could be moved as in speech. This jaw was recovered several months later. All of this took place in 1927 while F. A. Mitchell-Hedges was at this site in southern Belize looking for evidence of Atlantis.

Previous to their expedition to Belize, they had discovered three pirate chests on the island of Roatan and had managed to escape from the island with two chests of pirate booty. Many of the items from that adventure made their way into the collections of the British Museum. To some people who do not believe that the story of the finding of the crystal skull, believe that it was part of the pirate booty.

Most disbelievers question the ability of the Native American to create an object in crystal. We know that the Mixtecs and Aztecs both worked in crystal creating exquisite objects such as the goblet from Monte Alban and animals in the Aztec collection at the Mexican National Museum. Other objects have been found in the U.S. At Jamestown, a beautiful arrowhead is finely worked. In Tallahassee, at the site of San Luis de Apalachee, a native-carved cross of crystal was excavated. Did the Maya work in crystal? They certainly had the ability. After all they worked in jadeite which is a harder rock.

Both Mitchell-Hedges and his daughter are now deceased. Both stuck to their original story. She even returned to the site



People in Palenque, Mexico, watch as Maya priests participate in a ceremony that involves a crystal skull. Some believe the skulls can emit and focus light, project visions and even influence terrestrial forces, though scientists disagree. Photos courtesy of Alexandre Meneghini / AP.



*Jane MacLaren Walsh is an anthropologist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. She and Scott Whittaker, director of the Smithsonian's Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) Facility, examine the Mitchell-Hedges Skull. Silicone molds of the skull's carved features were analyzed by SEM for evidence of tool marks. In 1992, this hollow rock-crystal skull was sent to the Smithsonian anonymously. A letter accompanying the 30-pound, 10-inch-high artifact suggested it was of Aztec origin.*



Photos courtesy of James Di Loreto and Donald Hurlburt/Smithsonian Institution.

Lubantuun to show others exactly where it had been discovered. At one time, she permitted Hewlett-Packard to test the skull for evidence of modern tool marks. They found none, but chipped one of the teeth. She refused all future testing.

Both Dr. Jamie Awe, the Commissioner of Archaeology in Belize and his predecessor, the late Harriet Topsy have asked for the return of the skull to Belize. It is now in the possession of Ana's husband. Belize still pleads for its return. Since it has no unquestioned place of origin, why not return it to the country in which it was reborn?

#### Image sources and further investigation:

Check out these recent articles by searching the title or author on the indicated Web site:

**The Smithsonian's Crystal Skull**, by Owen Edwards, at: [www.smithsonianmag.com](http://www.smithsonianmag.com)

**Indiana Jones and the Fake Crystal Skull**, by John Tierney, at: <http://tierneylab.blogs.nytimes.com>

**Legend of the Crystal Skulls**, by Jane MacLaren Walsh, at: [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)

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# Scholar's Not-impossible Dream: To Preserve Language of the Inkas

Demetrio Túpac Yupanqui's translation of "Don Quixote" into Quechua is a landmark in reviving the indigenous tongue

*"Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago."*

Simple enough, right? But not for Demetrio Túpac Yupanqui.

Instead, he regales visitors to his home in the gritty port city of Callao on the outskirts of Lima, Peru, with his Quechua version of the opening words of "Don Quixote": *"Huh k'iti, la Mancha llahta suyupin, mana yuyarina markapin, yaqa kay watakuna kama, huh axllasqa wiraqucha."*

Túpac Yupanqui, theologian, professor, adviser to presidents and, now, at the sunset of his long life, a ground-breaking translator of Cervantes, greets the perplexed reactions to these words with a wide smile.

"When people communicate in Quechua, they glow," said Túpac Yupanqui, who at 85 still appears before his pupils each day in a tailored dark suit. "It is a language that persists five centuries after the conquistadors arrived. We cannot let it die."

Once the lingua franca of the Inka empire, Quechua has long been in decline. But thanks to Túpac Yupanqui and others, Quechua, which remains the most widely spoken indigenous language in the Americas, is winning some new respect.

Túpac Yupanqui's elegant translation of a major portion of "Don Quixote" has been celebrated as a pioneering development for Quechua, which in many far-flung areas remains an oral language. While the Inkas spoke Quechua, they had no written alphabet, leaving perplexed archaeologists to wonder how they managed to assemble and govern such a large empire without writing.

Since the Spanish conquest, important writing in Quechua has emerged, but linguists and Quechua speakers hope that the new version of "Don Quixote" will be a step toward forming a public culture in the language, through Quechua magazines, television



*Demetrio Túpac Yupanqui contemplates his work at his Quechua school in Lima, Peru.*  
Image courtesy of Tomas Munta of The New York Times.

and books, that will keep its speakers engaged with the wider world.

After centuries of retreat in the Andes, Túpac Yupanqui's efforts in fortifying Quechua, through teaching and translating, are being complemented by various other ventures.

Microsoft has released translations of its software in Quechua, recognizing the importance of 5 million or so speakers of the language in Peru and millions elsewhere in the Andes, mainly in Bolivia and Ecuador. Not to be outdone, Google has a version of its search engine in Quechua, even if some linguists say that these projects were carried out more for corporate image polishing than for practical reasons.

The workings of Andean democracy are also reminding the world of Quechua's importance. The government of President Evo Morales of Bolivia, for instance, is trying to make fluency in Quechua or another indigenous language mandatory in the civil service.

Also in Peru, two legislators from the highlands have begun using Quechua on the floor of congress. And Peru's current president, Alan Garcia, signed

a law prohibiting discrimination based on language.

These are small steps for a language threatened by the dominance of both Spanish and English amid Peru's feverish link-up with the global economy following a bloody civil war in the last decades of the 20th century.

After a stint in politics in the early 1980s, Túpac Yupanqui returned to teaching Quechua at his one-room academy on the second floor of his home, where he still lives with some of his nine children. He also continues making translations into Quechua, completing in 2006 his work on "Don Quixote," a rare accomplishment in what has essentially been an oral language for more than a thousand years.

"The translation of 'Quixote' is important not as a curiosity, but as a sign of what is to be done on a broader scale in the Andean republics if Quechua speakers are to be brought fully into their respective national communities," said Bruce Mannheim, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan who specializes in Quechua.

Indeed, the intricacies of the translation were celebrated by linguists and literary critics alike, recognizing the challenges involved in translating the antiquated Spanish of Cervantes into a living language that, somewhat like Chinese or Arabic, has diverging dialects that can be mutually unintelligible.

Túpac Yupanqui's eyes still light up when he discusses the grammar of Quechua (seven pronouns!) and what can be done to make it more resilient, like more radio projects and teaching it in schools alongside English.

"If Latin is said to be the language of the angels, then Quechua is the language for expressing the subtleties of existence on Earth," he said. "That is why it is still alive."

Source: Condensed from an original article by Simon Romero that appeared as a "Sunday Profile" at: [www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/world/americas/07tupac.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/world/americas/07tupac.html?_r=1&oref=slogin). The version reproduced here is from The Star Tribune at: [www.startribune.com/world/19931829.html?page=1&c=y](http://www.startribune.com/world/19931829.html?page=1&c=y). Submitted by Scott Allen.



# Izapa: “The Place Where Time Began”

## New Road Construction Diverted at Last Moment!

continued from page 1

cultural advancement and social complexity, in the absence of which it would be impossible to envision the beginnings, characteristics, and development of the many peoples and societies that constitute prehispanic Mesoamerica.

The origins of Izapa circa 1500 BC remained buried and forgotten for many centuries after its abandonment somewhere around AD 1200. Nevertheless, at this site you can recognize elements that permit you to infer, if not the origins, at least one of the earliest manifestations of one of the cosmologies and creation myths that gave unity and cultural identity to the peoples of southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras.

In some of the extraordinary sculptured monuments discovered at Izapa, scholars have identified elements and characters from the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Quiché Maya of Guatemala.

The archaeological wealth of Izapa is evident in the massive pyramidal structures scattered across the site, the great platforms built of packed earth veneered with stone, the dozens of sculptural elements such as stelae, thrones, and altars, all of which can be enjoyed by the visitor and appreciated as but a small sample of the importance of the site.

Cutting edge research, both national and international, has recognized the importance of Izapa for understanding and explaining the development



Artistic rendition in slate of Izapa Stela 5. Numerous researchers believe this incredible monument known as the “tree of life” is some form of prototypal Mesoamerican Creation drama, clearly related to the Popol Vuh.

of the cultures such as the Olmec that anteceded it or were contemporaneous, while the societies that followed Izapa inherited characteristic cultural features that helped define a vast and complex cultural zone known as the Maya area. The Classic Maya would be difficult or even impossible to understand without our knowledge of Izapa and other communities that developed an original and advanced culture on the coastal plains of the Soconusco.

Despite its importance, Izapa is threatened today by a project that seeks to widen the old road that crosses part of the core area of the site. This project would substantially affect one of the most representative architectural groups (Group F) of Izapa’s greatest period of development circa 300 B.C.

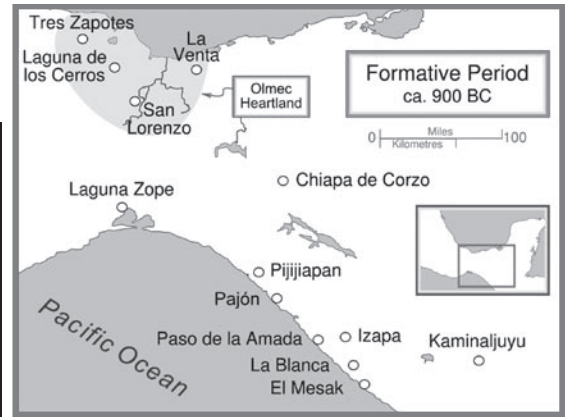
The researchers at the Centro INAH Chiapas consider that it is necessary and timely to evaluate the risks of damage by the projected road development and



Left: Stela 1 from Izapa on display at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. Right: Izapa Stela 25 possibly contains a scene from the Popol Vuh. The image depicted on Stela 25 is most likely the Maya Hero Twins shooting a perched Principle Bird Deity with a blowgun. This scene is also shown on the Maya pot called the “Blowgunner Pot”. It is also suggested that Stela 25 could be seen as a map of the night sky, which was



used to tell the story of the Hero Twins shooting the bird deity.



Izapa and other sites from the Formative Period. As the INAH report emphasized, Izapa is fundamental to the understanding and explanation of the processes involved in the cultural transformation of the region in particular, as well as that of the Olmec and Maya regions.



The quadrangular plaza of Group B was the focus of ritual activity by 300 BC. While the Group B plaza contains many stela-altar combinations, it is most famous for its triadic arrangement of pillars. Each of the three pillars, measuring about 130 cm tall, holds a stone sphere that is about 70 cm in diameter. Various researchers now theorize that the three pillars represent the “three hearth stones of creation,” called “Oxib’ Xk’ Ub”, the triangle formed by stars found within the constellation Orion.

Image courtesy of James Q. Jacobs.

propose, with the protection of the site in mind, an alternative route as the only and best alternative. This alternative proposes re-routing the road to the north of the site, leaving the existing section as a service road and/or visitors’ access.

### Comments about Izapa from Vincent H. Malström

Izapa is a large Formative site located in the far southeastern corner of the State of Chiapas, Mexico, immediately adjacent to the Guatemalan border. It was once the thriving cultural and commercial center of a rich agricultural region called Soconusco which extended along the Pacific coastal plain from the area around present-day Tonalá, Mexico in the north to about San José, Guatemala in the south. Among the early exports of the region were cacao, quetzal feathers and rubber. The nearest modern city is Tapachula, some 10 km (6 miles)

continued on next page



Vincent H. Malmström was the first to validate magnetic qualities in some stone sculptures found in the Izapa/Soconusco area. In 1975, he discovered the earliest magnetic sculpture discovered in Mesoamerica was this turtle-head located about 30 m (100 ft) off the main pyramid of Group F at Izapa. It is sculpted with a strong north polarity in its snout and an equally strong south polarity in the extreme back of its head. (Figure 4, page 37, *Cycles of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon*, VHM).

## Izapa

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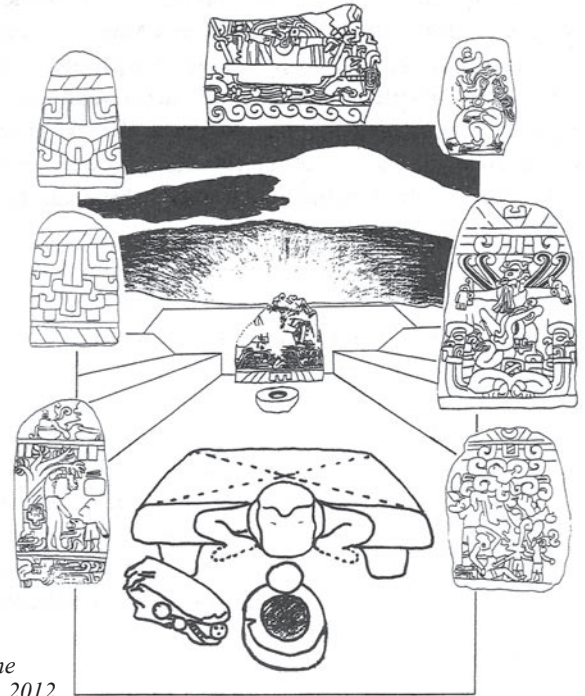
to the west. The geographic coordinates of the site are latitude 14.8° N and longitude 92.2° W.

In 1973, when I made my first field trip to Mexico and formulated my hypothesis of calendrical origins which was published in *Science* in early September of that year, there were three clues which prompted me to select Izapa as the “place where time began” in Mesoamerica:

- 1) Astronomically, it lay at the only latitude in North America where a 260-day interval (the length of the sacred almanac used throughout the region in pre-Columbian times) can be measured between vertical sun positions – an interval which happens to begin on the 13th of August – the day the peoples of the Mesoamerica believed that the present world was created;



The imagery carved on Stela 11 is interpreted by John Major Jenkins as representing the December solstice sun in the “dark-rift”, a visual portrayal of the astronomical alignment of December 21, 2012. (Diagram 166, page 283, *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012*, JMJ).



Numerous carved monuments located around the Group F ballcourt point to a profound cosmology hidden within Izapa’s pictographic code that is “initiatory” in nature. (Diagram 181, page 297, *Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012*, JMJ).

- 2) Historically, it was the only site at this latitude which was old enough to have been the cradle of the sacred almanac, which at that time (1973) was thought to date to the 4th or 5th centuries BC; and
- 3) Geographically, it was the only site along the required parallel of latitude that lay in a tropical lowland ecological niche where such creatures as monkeys, alligators, and iguanas were native – all of which were used as day-names in the sacred almanac.

### Izapa’s Connection to 12/21/2012 – Comments about Izapa from John Major Jenkins

After twenty years of research and many field trips to the site, my work shows that Izapa – especially the Group F ballcourt – is a key to understanding the 2012

calendar, and early Maya cosmology in general.

The astronomical alignment of Izapa’s ballcourt to the solstice horizon is part of my pioneering work, and encodes the rare “galactic alignment” that culminates in era-2012. Also, the carved monuments of Izapa contain the earliest depictions of the Hero Twin Creation myth – a mythology that:

- 1) Encodes the galactic alignment process;
- 2) Contains a prophecy for 2012; and
- 3) Contains spiritual teachings related to sacrifice and cycle endings.

For a more in-depth study of the importance of Izapa, take a glance at my Izapa pages listed below in the references. Kudos to Centro INAH Chiapas for saving the site of Izapa!

### References

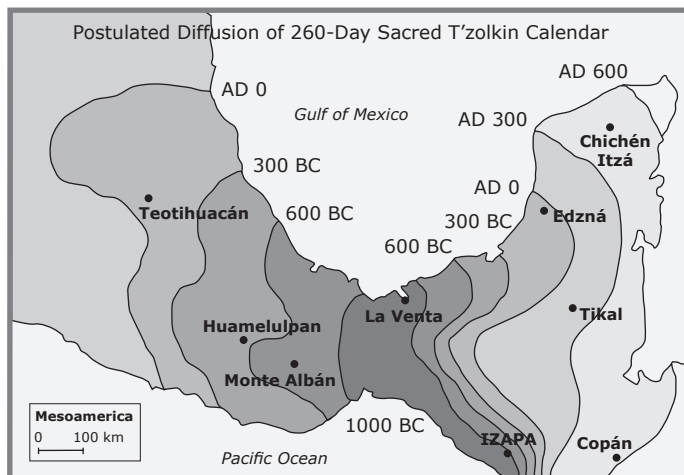
See the original INAH Izapa report on Mesoweb at: [www.mesoweb.com/reports/izapa.pdf](http://www.mesoweb.com/reports/izapa.pdf).

*Cycles of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon*, by Vincent H. Malmström, 1997, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX, ISBN 0-292-75196-6.

*Maya Cosmogogenesis 2012*, by John Major Jenkins, 1998, Bear & Company, Inc., Santa Fe, NM, ISBN 1-879181-48-7.

JMJ’s Izapa pages at: [www.alignment2012.com/ballcourt-schematic-and-description.html](http://www.alignment2012.com/ballcourt-schematic-and-description.html); [/izapa-solstice-2006.html](http://www.alignment2012.com/izapa-solstice-2006.html); and [/izapa.html](http://www.alignment2012.com/izapa.html)

Check out more Izapa images by James Q. Jacobs at: [www.jqjacobs.net/mesoamerica/izapa.html](http://www.jqjacobs.net/mesoamerica/izapa.html)



From the work of Vincent H. Malmström, this map summarizes his proposed diffusion of the sacred 260-day T'zolk'in Mesoamerican calendar system from its hearth in Soconusco westward onto the Mexican plateau and eastward into the Maya region, using isochrones of 300–400 years.

(Figure 58, page 247, *Cycle of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon*, VHM).

# New Excavations at the Site of Tazumal in El Salvador

Since 2004, excavations at the site of Tazumal have been carried out by archaeologists and researchers from the university of Nagoya, Japan. Their fourth season of digging took place in the months of February and March of 2008. In early April, the Salvadorian Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y el Arte (Concultura) announced an important discovery that was made during those two months of excavation.

Efforts were concentrated on uncovering earlier constructions beneath Structure B-1, the principal pyramidal construction at the site. The levels they uncovered may correspond to the Late Preclassic or Early Classic period.

Under the direction of Nabuyuki Ito, the archaeologists excavated in two areas of the structure. The first, located under the eastern section, consists of a small stairway (2.4 meters) that was constructed using “argamasa”, a mixture of cal, sand and water. In this same area, they found a circular disk made of slate that may have served as a mirror.

“The discoveries made within Structure B-1 are very important for El Salvador, since it is the largest pyramid we have in the whole country. Now, we are getting a glimpse of what is inside of it”, explained Héctor Sermeño, the director of Concultura.

Sermeño also said that the discovery of unseen other structures within the

*At 27 meters high, Structure B-1 is the largest Maya pyramid in El Salvador. In the local indigenous language, Tazumal translates to “the place where the victims were burned”. The site is located near the town of Chalchuapa, in the department of Santa Ana.*



*Left: Beneath the center of the main stairway, archaeologists discovered a burial with some bones and pieces of green-colored stones that may be jadeite. Right: During the excavations, they also uncovered many vessels and some may be funerary vessels. Images courtesy of Franklin Zelaya.*

larger visible pyramid will add much understanding to the history of the site. And being the largest site, Tazumal is very important in understanding the archaeological legacy of El Salvador.

The authorities also said that for reasons of preservation, these recent excavations will not be maintained for permanent public viewing but be backfilled and closed off until further excavations in the future. But visitors to Tazumal will be able to view the archaeologists’s photos, diagrams and drawings in the onsite Stanley Boggs

Museum which is located adjacent to Structure B-1.

Tazumal was nominated for UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 1993 but is still awaiting a decision. The site reflects 3200 years of continuous human occupation. The central sector covers 4 square miles but has only been partially excavated. Tazumal was known as a trading post for obsidian, ceramics and cacao between Mexico and Panama.

Source: From an original article (in Spanish) by Regina Miranda for the El Salvadorian national newspaper El Diario de Hoy, posted online at: [www.elsalvador.com](http://www.elsalvador.com). Submitted by Mike Ruggeri.

## Ichic Willcahuain, Peru

The Peruvian news service ANDINA recently released a short press release that archaeologists are starting to investigate the site of Ichic Willcahuain, which is located 4 miles northeast of Huaraz, in the department of Áncash, in the high Andes of northern Peru. The site is located near the more popular excavations going on at Chavín de Huántar, which is one of the oldest major sites in Peru, thriving between 1500 and 400 BC.

The head of the Regional Institute of Culture (INC), José Antonio Salazar Mejía, said that the Ichic Willcahuain archaeological complex appears to date back to 700 BC and may have been built under the

influence of the Wari Culture (based in the Ayacucho region). He also said that it seems to have encouraged its inhabitants to change their burial customs.

According to previous findings, Chavín culture’s funerals were subterranean, burying their dead out of view, but with this with new research, we can see a change evident at Ichic Willcahuain.

“Now we can observe that the funerals of this culture were not subterranean. Their homes were built very close to the ceremonial center and they constructed mausoleums here. In this way, the population actually lived together with their ancestors, keeping them very close to their daily lives,” said Salazar.



*Surviving structure of cut stone at Ichic Willcahuain. Image courtesy of ANDINA/PromPerú.*

Salazar stressed that the remains are remarkable well preserved and will provide a great opportunity for further archaeological research.

Source: Condensed from a short article at: [www.andina.com.pe/ingles/Noticia.aspx?idB5nvpUwrl](http://www.andina.com.pe/ingles/Noticia.aspx?idB5nvpUwrl) Submitted by Mike Ruggeri.