

January 21, 2015 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.2.2.1 • 11 'Imix 14 Muwan • G5

Rather than the Maya influencing the Olmec or vice versa, similarities between their cultures represent a general shift in ancient Mesoamerica.

Evidence Suggests Maya Roots More Tangled Than Previously Thought

with **Takeshi Inomata**, PhD, Professor, University of Arizona

The ancient Maya were mathematical, engineering and artistic experts, but anthropologists still aren't sure exactly how they developed such a rich culture. Most adhere to one of two theories when discussing the Maya's origins. One group assumes that the Maya developed on their own in the Central American jungles without the influence of other cultures. The second group believes that the Maya were indeed significantly influenced by other civilizations, specifically the older Olmecs, the first major civilization to evolve in Mexico.

New research by lead author Takeshi Inomata, published in the journal *Science* (Vol. 340, No. 6131), tells a third story. This new study, which is based on ten years of excavation work in Guatemala, found that ancient Maya benefited from a melting pot of contact with other peoples across Mesoamerica between 1,000 to 700 BCE. This wider world of cultural experience may have helped kickstart and shape Maya culture.

A husband-and-wife duo led the research team that undertook excavations at Ceibal, a Maya site in the Peten Lowlands of Guatemala.



Excavations at Ceibal suggest that the origins of early Maya civilization are more complex than previously envisioned. The image above shows the temple plaza at Ceibal. By Sébastian Homberger.



Archaeologists excavate through the A-24 platform at Ceibal to reach the foundations, dated to about 1,000 BCE. Courtesy of Takeshi Inomata.

The site, they found, was built before La Venta, a major Olmec center, by around 200 years. This means that, since it did not exist yet, La Venta couldn't have been a significant influence on Ceibal.

Still, the Olmecs were around at the time, and they could have come into contact with the Maya. The researchers think that both La Venta and Ceibal represent a general, complex shift in cultures around that time period. In other words, one site did not provide the model for the other, even though similarities such as pyramids and evidence of ritual practices unite them.

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IMS Presentation:

January 21, 8 pm



Origins of Maya Civilization Viewed from Ceibal, Guatemala

with **Takeshi Inomata**, University of Arizona

"Basically, there was a major social change happening from the southern Maya lowlands to possibly the coast of Chiapas and the southern Gulf Coast, and this site of Ceibal was a part of

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Jim Reed, Editor



50,000 sacred objects found below Temple of Quetzalcoatl Ongoing Excavations Within Tunnel in Teotihuacan Reveal Amazing Artifacts

Within the sacred tunnel discovered below the Temple of Quetzalcoatl in Teotihuacan, Mexico, archaeologists have discovered more than 50,000 ritual artifacts. They are anticipating more than ever that these objects are a trail that may lead to royal tombs.

The entrance to the 1,800-year-old tunnel was first discovered in 2003, and its contents came to light thanks to excavations by remote-control robots and then human researchers, noted archaeologist Sergio Gómez.

The artifacts found inside the tunnel, located below the Temple of the Quetzalcoatl (Plumed Serpent), include finely carved stone sculptures, jewelry and shells.

An estimated 50,000 objects, 4,000 made of wood, as well as scores of obsidian blades and arrow heads, provide clues into how the city's priests and rulers conceived the underworld.



Close-up of the head of one of the sculptures ceremoniously deposited in the tunnel.



A portion of the enormous amount of shells that were unearthed by investigators still in situ.



(AP Photo/Proyecto Tlalocan, INAH)



The tunnel entrance is located deep below plaza level, in front of the main stairways of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl.



Mexican archaeologists hard at work. They successfully concluded a year's-long exploration within the tunnel that was sealed nearly 2,000 years ago.

“Due to the magnitude of the offerings that we’ve found, it can’t be in any other place,” said Gómez, who works for Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), referring to the possibility of finding royal tombs.

“We’ve been able to confirm all of the hypotheses we’ve made from the beginning,” he added, saying ongoing excavations could yield more major discoveries in 2015.

No depiction of a ruler, or the tomb of a monarch, has ever been found at Teotihuacan, setting the metropolis apart from other Prehispanic cultures that deified their rulers.

Vertical excavations begun in 2009 to reach the mouth of the tunnel suggest it was a ruler’s tomb, archaeologist Sergio Gómez said in 2010.

Rich offerings were tossed into the tunnel at the moment it was closed up, including almost 50,000 objects of jade, stone, shell and pottery, including ceramic beakers of a kind never found before at the site.

“I think the tunnel was the central element, the main element around which the rest of the ceremonial center was built,”

Note: The results of the election to the 2015 IMS Board of Directors will be published in the February Explorer.



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Gómez noted. “This was the most sacred place. There is a high possibility that in this place, in the central chamber, we can find the remains of those who ruled Teotihuacan”.

Source: From an article by Mark Prigg for Reuters, released 10.29.2014 on www.dailymail.co.uk. Images not credited to INAH are by AFP/Getty Images and Reuters. Submitted by Mike Ruggeri on the IMS Facebook page.

IMS Explorer color-web subscribers: See page 8 for additional images of artifacts.

Slash-and-burn milpa agriculture reconsidered: Maize, BEANS and Squash in the Maya Diet

by **Dr Nicholas Hellmuth**, Director of FLAAR

All of us who studied the Maya in the early 1960s were taught, repeatedly, that the Maya diet a thousand years ago was maize, beans and squash. This maize-beans-squash concept is so deeply entrenched in the popular literature that it has created a challenge for Maya ethnobotanists, archaeologists and agricultural specialists to erase this basic ideology.

Then in 1966, Bennet Bronson suggested that root crops were a previously overlooked source of potential food resources for large Maya populations. Two years later, Dennis Puleston launched his concept that Ramon nuts, stored in underground cells (*chultuns*) were a major food crop for the Classic Maya (especially of the Tikal area). Over the following years, one agricultural specialist after the other introduced new concepts, including that many Maya areas had either ridged fields or agricultural potential along rivers or in other wetlands.

One by one, Mayanists spent over 30 years trying to dismantle the concept that maize, beans and squash supported the high populations of the Classic period.

I was caught up in this tide, and I did research first on Spanish eye-witness discussion of Maya agriculture in the former Carnegie Institution of Washington microfilm database and related files in the Peabody Museum (while I was a student at Harvard). Then I worked in the Archivo General de Central America for several years and published my



L) Picking beans in the garden of our office in Guatemala City. R) Cover design of the new report composed especially for the IMS. View and download the PDF on www.instituteofmayastudies.org.

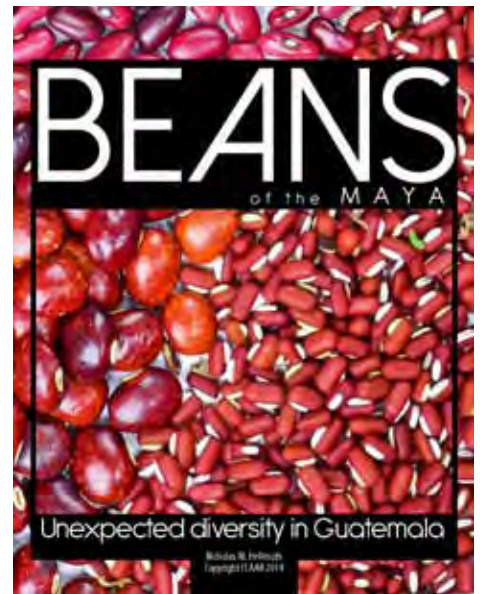
findings on Chol(ti) Lacandon agriculture before impacted directly by the disruption of the Spanish conquest.

Over the last decade, I have continued to visit milpas throughout many areas of Guatemala. Sorry, no ridged fields; no raised fields in watery areas; no special intensive agricultural practices in vast areas of the Highlands and adjacent Alta Verapaz, Izabal and El Peten. In other words, no matter how intensive agriculture may have been in Belize, portions of the Yucatan peninsula or elsewhere, today for sure, the basic milpa is feeding huge populations of the Maya.

Once we even hiked through the mountain ranges and valleys for



Hi-resolution digital image of a variety of beans utilized by the Maya, including Rice beans, Stick beans and Piloil beans.



10 hours (6 hours in, 4 hours out) because we had found two people who had seen barkless, fur-less dogs in the area 20 years ago. At the end of the exhaustive hike, we learned the last of this species died out two years ago. But the point is, that even in an area far from junk food, the Maya are still focusing on traditional milpa agriculture. Even though I have spent three years making an exhaustive list of fruits, vegetables, and every single edible plant of Mesoamerica, when I hike through the mountains for exercise on weekends (and to learn the Q'eqchi' Mayan language), I see maize, beans and some squash.

So we have initiated a photographic goal to



L) "Beans" of sacred Palo de Pito tree, mentioned in the Popol Vuh; the wood of the tree was used to create the early (non-functional) versions of human-kind. R) A Guatemalan favorite, Rice beans, their seed pods and leaves.

Evidence Suggests Maya Roots More Tangled Than Previously Thought

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that broader social change,” noted Takeshi Inomata. “The emergence of a new form of society – with new architecture, with new rituals – became really the important basis for all later Mesoamerican civilizations.”

Early Ritual Spaces

The Maya are usually associated with monumental architecture. Massive pyramids and immense plazas testify to a complex and fascinating culture. One can hardly hear the word “Maya” without imagining elaborately decorated kings and priests climbing the long, steep stairs of pyramids like those at Tikal.

But pyramids don’t just spring out of the jungle overnight, nor does a complex culture merely appear. Inomata and his team dug below the monumental architecture at Ceibal to see how such structures began. Inomata assumed that the now iconic classic architecture probably stood on earlier sites used for similar purposes. His assumption turned out to be correct. He found smaller platforms built of earth



“In archaeology, we examine changes in society and culture systematically through large amounts of data rather than relying on single unique finds. But in the course of our careers, unforgettable discoveries can happen. One of these magical moments came to me in 2009 when we were excavating Ceibal’s Central Plaza. At a depth of 2.5 meters, we found a cache of 12 axes placed in a pit dug into the natural soil. This was a ritual deposit that marked the beginning of major settlement at Ceibal.”

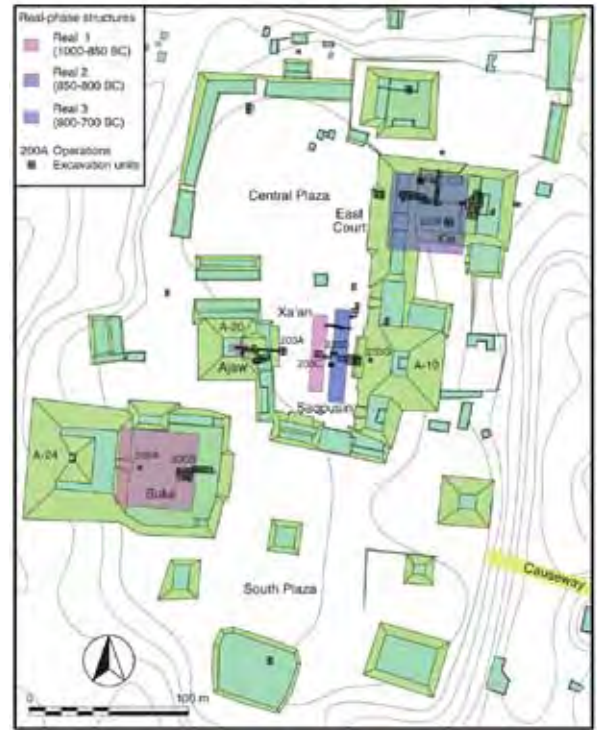
From Takeshi Inomata’s blogspot.

beneath the pyramids of stone, signaling a formal ritual complex at Ceibal dating to around 1000 BCE.

The presence of ritual architecture early in the development of the Maya is an indication of a settled lifestyle with complex agriculture, religion, and a stratified society –

all of which add up to a unified culture and the beginnings of a larger culture.

Inomata’s point of view is that the culture that went on to dominate Mesoamerica until the arrival of Europeans got its start during a power vacuum that lasted for about 200 to 350 years in a period of Olmec rule. That allowed the people who built the ceremonial structure at a site known as Ceibal to interact with others from nearby areas and begin forming a new culture. They probably had influences



Map of Ceibal Group A with the locations of excavation units and final-phase structures.



“An important component of our research is the study of the past environment and climate changes. A team of Japanese geologists and plant scientists addresses this by analyzing lake sediments as part of the project financed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and directed by Kazuo Aoyama.”

From Takeshi Inomata’s blogspot.

from as far away as Chiapas and the Pacific Coast, both about 200 miles away. 🏰

Sources: Condensed by the editor from various sources including an article by Rachel Nuwer at: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com>; an article by Nicholas Mott at: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com>; and an article by Eryn Brown at: <http://articles.latimes.com>. All released 4.25.13.

> Be sure to check out Takeshi’s periodic updates on his blogspot at: <http://scientistatwork.blogs.nytimes.com/author/takeshi-inomata/>

Takeshi Inomata at the IMS on January 21!
See program announcement on page 7.



“Our group of workers, made up of the Q’eqchi’ Maya and ladinos from nearby villages, are teachers, guides and protectors for lost, clueless foreign archaeologists in the jungle. When we are being worn down in a long field season, our Q’eqchi’ friends treat us with their traditional turkey stew and dazzling village festivals.” Here, a Kodak moment after a traditional Deer Dance.

From Takeshi Inomata’s blogspot.



Maize, BEANS, and Squash in the Maya Diet

by **Dr Nicholas Hellmuth**, Director of FLAAR

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find and capture images of as many species and varieties of beans as possible. Plus, to find and document as many species and varieties of maize and squash as possible. This present article is to introduce this new high-resolution concept. Due to the quantity and high-resolution of the photographs, the initial examples of this corpus will be in a separate PDF that we are donating to the Institute of Maya Studies for your website.

Our goal is to recognize that, if maize, beans and squash are important, then let's learn more about maize, beans and squash. And the first observation is to ask, in how many monographs or articles on Maya agriculture are beans simply mentioned in the jingle "maize, beans and squash"? Our inspiration is to show what "beans" really means. In the weeks of preparing the full-color PDF, I learned more about frijoles than in the previous 50 years of being in Mesoamerica. I am now taste-testing each variety to learn this aspect as well.

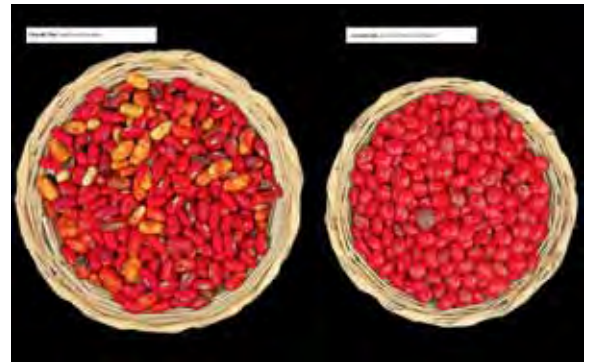
We hope you enjoy the images of the diversity of beans of the Maya. We have a long way to go, but even with our preliminary notes, we have contributed a photographic record of the reality of about 40% of the jingle (since maize is by far No. 1, and squash is by far No. 3, of the trinity of traditional Maya foods).

Fifty Years with an Interest in Things Maya

At age 16, I was already at Palenque (1962, and the hotel cost 50 cents a night). By age 18, I was a student volunteer at Bonampak with the INAH Bonampak team. By age 19, I spent 12 months excavating and recording monumental architecture at Tikal, including two months excavating the Tomb of the Jade Jaguar under Tikal Structure 5D-76. My Harvard thesis is about 200 pages of text along with photos, architectural drawings and artifacts. You may download it for free on our www.maya-archaeology.org website.



Flower of the Frijolillo, San Juan La Laguna, Lake Atitlan, a bush, not a "bean" vine. We are still struggling to identify the genus and species. It is important to recognize that not all beans are part of the Maya diet.



*L) The Maya ceremonialist's favorite, Palo de Pito, *Erythrina berteriana*. R) Carboncillo, *Ormosia isthmensis* Standl.*



Frijolillo flowers and "bean pods." The beans inside are identical to edible black beans but frijolillo is not a bean vine nor a plant of the milpa.



View and download the complete FLAAR Report on www.instituteofmayastudies.org.

Shucking beans on the floor of our office, with my Maya friends and assistants Luz Maria Caal, Josefina Sequen, and Pedro Chub.

During five years (1970-1975), I worked to preserve the ruins, flora, fauna and fragile ecosystem of Lake Yaxha and adjacent Lake Sacnab. I was able to lobby to create a national park there. I mapped Yaxha alongside Miguel Orrego where we were assisted by Carlos Rudy Larios. I also mapped Topoxte and adjacent islands as well as Nakum. I got to meet Hal Ball and his wife when they visited Yaxha.

For the past decade, I have focused on plants and animals of Mesoamerica to document that, in addition to archaeology and colonial attractions, that people from around the world should come to visit Guatemala also to experience

the frankly remarkable Neotropical flora and fauna. We are especially interested in medicinal plants, dye colorants from plants (for clothing, etc.), tobacco, seasonings for cacao, plants for roofing local homes, and fruits, leaves, roots and vegetables, that are more healthy than popular junk food.

www.maya-ethnobotany.org will introduce you to our digital photography techniques and results. Plus, we study centipedes, millipedes, arachnids, reptiles, felines, birds, etc., using high-resolution digital cameras and careful lighting to bring out details, which can be seen on www.maya-ethnozoology.org and www.digital-photography.org.

Interesting and Unusual Ancient Artifacts:

What in the World is a Veracruz “Coast Watcher”?

by Mark F. Cheney

Sometimes we come across the strangest things when we're exploring, Googling or researching information about the ancient Maya and other Mesoamerican cultures. Most of what you'll discover is known to the scholars, but some of it, not so much; it may not be a part of their realm of familiarity or expertise and they may not wish to discuss it; so who knows what's really true?

Let's explore what is not-so-commonly referred to as a Veracruz “Coast Watcher”. This seems to be a term with no ancient Huastecan reference, but it has been used by auctioneers and other sales sites to designate certain terracotta pottery pieces in anthropomorphic forms, mostly sculpted sitting in cross-legged postures. Usually from 4 to 12 inches in height, they were supposedly created between 400–900 CE to “watch” for invaders on the coast of Veracruz.

Some are referred to as Remojadas figures, and a few appear in the form of 6-inch whistles with “dulcet tones”. The seated posture is certainly reminiscent of Veracruz pottery as noted in all of these examples of Coast Watchers from the Kerr archives.

Many are female forms. If any scholars, researchers or Maya enthusiasts other than these sellers are aware of what these figurines represent, they ain't talkin'; so we can pretty much dispense with this name as correctly designating the originally intended purpose for these artifacts.



Could these be representations of previously living personages? It would seem that the makeup, personalized ear plugs, necklaces, tattoos and scarification, may indicate so.



Above: An array of ceramic figurines usually referred to as “Coast Watchers”. Left: An exceptionally large Veracruz seated figure. This is by far a very large example. Constructed of tan (buff) terracotta. Seated with crossed legs and hands held to the knees as is typical. The head is large and angular. The figure has a wide (plumbed) ornament across the top of the head. The areas of red pigment remaining are an uncommon feature.

If you, dear reader, know more about these figurines, please contact me. I'd also like to also refer you to a previous article on fake artifacts I composed for the *IMS Explorer*, May 2012.

Future articles will discuss similar unusual or seldom seen (or heard of) terms for artifacts excavated, encountered or referred to regarding Ancient Americans. I hope they will open some new doors into the past for readers, as they have for me.

Send your correspondence to: mfcheney@hotmail.com 📧

Cracking the Maya Code

A NOVA film documentary

This one-hour program is divided into five chapters:

The Forgotten Maya Temples:

In 1774, Spanish explorer José Calderón rediscovers the temples of Palenque and the ancient hieroglyphs of the Maya.

A Hidden History: Toiling away in the basement of Harvard's Peabody Museum, archeologist Tatiana Proskouriakoff discovers that Maya monuments contain a decipherable history rather than mere pictures and symbols.

January 14, 8 pm,
at the IMS!

Political Roadblock:

Working behind the Iron Curtain, Russian linguist Yuri Knorosov posits that Maya glyphs may represent sounds, but his ideas are discredited in the West.

Child's Play: David Stuart submits his first scholarly paper on glyphs at age 12 and later becomes a major player in Maya studies.

Cultural Revelations: An image of the ancient Maya comes to life, and their descendants in modern-day

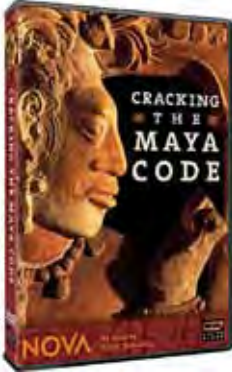


Mexico and Central America begin to relearn their lost language and history. 📧

Source: From <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com>. and www.pbs.org. For those outside the South Florida area, the video is viewable at: <http://video.pbs.org/video/980048895/>

January 14, 2015 • IMS Explorer Session • Gods, Legends and Rituals Series

Cracking the Maya Code



This NOVA film based on the book by Michael Coe not only tells of how the decoding of the Mayan script was done by the actual experts who were so involved in the ingenious breakthrough that has allowed the reading of one of the world's most elaborate and exotic scripts, but has brought about a complete reversal in the way we think about the Maya. Tatiana Proskouriakoff's work that brought about this dramatic change is graphically shown.

It's the day when Gods became men.

For centuries, scholars considered deciphering the Maya hieroglyphics as too complex ever to understand – until recently, when an ingenious series of breakthroughs finally cracked the code and unleashed a torrent of new insights into the Mayas' turbulent past.



A way-too-young David Stuart is presented in the documentary. Here he is discussing Altar Q at Copan in the late 1980s.

January 21: IMS Presentation

Origins of Maya Civilization Viewed from Ceibal, Guatemala

with Takeshi Inomata, University of Arizona

Our recent investigations at Ceibal, Guatemala, documented the earliest ceremonial complex in the Maya lowlands, dating to the Middle Preclassic period (1000-350 BCE). Our chronological study demonstrates that Ceibal was founded before the Olmec center of La Venta became a dominant power, and thus its beginning cannot be explained in terms of direct influence from La Venta. Still, the formal complex of Ceibal shows close similarities to contemporaneous buildings in Chiapas, suggesting that inter-regional interactions played an important role.



Takeshi Inomata, PhD.



Editor's note: This is one of my all-time favorite Maya stelae. Stela 13 stands a little to the west of the South Plaza in Ceibal. It dates to 870 CE. Rubbing courtesy of latinamericanstudies.org.

Takeshi Inomata is Professor of Anthropology, Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Arizona. He is an archaeologist who studies Maya civilization, social change, warfare, architecture, and ceramics.

All meetings begin at 8 pm • Institute of Maya Studies • Miami Science Museum

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Ongoing Excavations Within Tunnel in Teotihuacan Reveal Amazing Artifacts

continued from page 2



Additional images of the sculptures and artifacts unearthed within the tunnel excavations. Credit: INAH, AFP/Getty Images and Reuters. 🏰

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

The theme of the 2015 Explorer Sessions series is **Gods, Legends and Rituals**.

The series will include such diverse topics as Kinship as Kingship and Ancestors, Dragon Mouth Doorways, The Cult of Ixchel, Jade, Manifestations of the Corn God, and the Day of the Dead.

January 14 • 8 pm: IMS Explorer Session **Gods, Legends and Ritual Series:**

Cracking the Maya Code – This NOVA film relates the story behind the centuries-long decipherment of the ancient Maya script.

January 21 • 8 pm: IMS Presentation: **Origins of Maya Civilization Viewed from Ceibal, Guatemala** – with **Takeshi Inomata** of the University of Arizona. See program announcement on page 7.

February 18 • 8 pm: IMS Presentation: **She Gives Birth: Reproductive Strategizing in Precolumbian Maya Culture** – with **Pamela L. Geller** of the University of Miami.

Upcoming Events and Announcements:

January 13–17, 2015: **UT Maya Meetings Body and Sacrifice: New Interpretations of Ancient Maya Art, Ritual and Performance** – Theme of the 2015 Maya Meetings at The University of Texas at Austin. Registration is open to all, visit: www.utmesoamerica.org/maya/registration

January 21: **Peabody Archaeology Lecture The Thrill of the Find: Murals and Mysteries of the Maya** – with William Saturno, PhD. Hear tales of Saturno's adventures and discoveries, and learn what these stunning murals reveal about the Maya, their lives, and their society. At the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Get additional info at: <http://www.peabody.harvard.edu/node/2118>

February 19: **G.R. Willey Public Lecture Gordon Willey's Legacy: New Insights into the Origins of Maya Civilization** – with Takeshi Inomata, PhD, professor, and Daniela Triadan, PhD,

associate professor, School of Anthropology, University of Arizona. At the Geological Lecture Hall in Cambridge, MA. Get details at: <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/node/2135>

March 19–22, 2015: **Tulane Symposium Royal Chambers Unsealed: Tombs of the Classic Maya** – Theme of the 12th Annual Tulane Maya Symposium in New Orleans, LA. The keynote speaker will be William A. Fash. Presenters include Ricardo Agurcia Fasquelle, Jaime Awe, David Freidel and Marc Zender. Info at: <http://mari.tulane.edu/TMS/>

April 16–17: **Maya Society of MN Lectures The Early Rise of Maya Civilization in Yucatan and The Game of Thrones in the Puuc Hills** – with Dr. Tomás Gallareta Negrón, Professor and Researcher, INAH Yucatan, Merida. Hamline University, St. Paul, MN. See: <http://sites.hamline.edu/mayasociety/>



IMS EXPLORER

Join in the **Explorer-ation!** Scholar or not, we welcome submissions from IMS members. Share what interests you with others. All articles and news items for the **IMS Explorer** should be forwarded to the newsletter editor at: mayaman@bellsouth.net