



# IMS EXPLORER

Institute of Maya Studies

A monthly newsletter published by the  
**Institute of Maya Studies**

An affiliate of The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science, Miami, FL

Maya enthusiasts providing public education for 44 years

Volume 44  
Issue 4  
April 2015  
ISSN: 1524-9387



April 15, 2015 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.2.6.5 • 4 Chik'chan 13 Phop • G8

## The Maya Ruins of Pok ta Pok, Cancun, Quintana Roo

by **Karl Herbert Mayer**,  
Mexicon, Austrian Bureau

The so-called East Coast archaeological zone is located in the Northern Maya Lowlands, in the eastern section of the Yucatan peninsula. It is a region defined by particular archaeological, architectural, cultural and ecological conditions and occupies a large part of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. This area encompasses the coast on the Caribbean side and includes a few karstic islands like Cancun, Isla Mujeres and Cozumel – all featuring vestiges of ancient Maya settlements.

### The Island of Cancun

Isla Cancún, variously spelled Can Cún, Can Cun, Cancún, Cankún, Cancúm, Kankúm, and in old reports also Cancuen, is shaped roughly like a number 7. The island is 21 km long and its maximum width is 400 m. The highest elevation is 10 m above sea level. Cancun is one of the easternmost points in Mexico and the seat of the municipality of



**Fig. 2:** Close-up of Hole No. 3, Pok-ta-Pok Golf Course, Isla Cancun. Google Earth image enhanced by Jim Reed.

Benito Juárez. The city of Cancún is located on the mainland, north of the Riviera Maya, the large resort area on the coast. The island is now a famous major tourism center and

**Fig. 1:** Isla Cancún. Google Earth image, provided by Ivan Šprajc.



is connected to the mainland by two bridges (**Fig. 1**).

In 1968, when I visited the general region for the first time, it was unpopulated. Years later, an enormous touristic project and development by the Mexican government were initiated. In 1970, land was cleared by developers for founding Ciudad Cancún on the mainland and in 1974, the first hotels were built on the island. Forty years later, the population of Cancun had increased to more than 720,000.

### The Archaeological Zone of Cancun

The first archaeological work was conducted in 1963 on the small Preclassic site called El Conchero de Cancún (*Yox Xixim*) on the north shore of the island (Andrews IV 1974) and in subsequent years other Prehispanic sites were found, explored and registered.

Located in the present-day

### Inside this issue:

The Maya Ruins of Pok ta Pok, Cancun, Quintana Roo, by Karl Herbert Mayer, <i>cont. from pg. 1</i>	2,5,6,8
Squash, Gourds and Pumpkins in the Ancient Maya Diet, Art and the Ballgame, by Dr. Nicholas M. Hellmuth	3,6
Malpasito Ballcourt Complex, by Eric Slazyk	4
April IMS Programs; Membership Application	7
Upcoming Events	8

### IMS Presentation: April 15, 8 pm



Miami Space Transit Planetarium

### The Maya Sky: A Voyage Through the Seasons

with  
**Claudia Hernandez**

Hotel Zone, a total of eleven sites are encompassed within the Cancun archaeological zone (Andrews 2006:1), and they present a perplexing and confusing variation of toponyms (Andrews IV et al. 1974, Cervera Rivero et al. 1976,

*continued on page 2*



**Jim Reed,**  
Editor

©2015 I.M.S. Inc. The *IMS Explorer* newsletter is published 12 times a year by The Institute of Maya Studies, Inc. The Institute is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Membership and renewal application on page 7. As a member you receive the monthly newsletter and personal access to the Member's Only pages on our website, access to IMS program videos, photo archives, past issues and more. **Get your password by contacting our Webmaster at: keith@merwin.com**

# The Maya Ruins of Pok ta Pok, Cancun, Quintana Roo

continued from page 1

Vargas Pacheco 1978: 98-101, Mayer Guala 1978: 5, Andrews 1986: 13-15, 2006, González de la Mata 1988: 76).

Presently, only two groups of the Cancun archaeological zone are open to the public: El Rey (*Nisuc, Nisucte, Kin Ich Ahau-Bonil*) and San Miguelito (*San Miguel, X Lab Multun*). The generally unaccessible groups of Tamul (*Talmul, Yamilum, Yamil Lu'um, La Duna*), Punta Cancun (*Ni Ku, Ni'Ku'*) and Tacul (*Taacul, Villas Tacul*) are inside the premises of hotel compounds, and the group known as Pok ta Pok lies on the grounds of a popular public golf course.

## The Pok ta Pok Group

Sites within the Cancun archaeological zone were facing considerable damage, destruction and looting. Motivated by the development and construction of so many hotels in the huge international tourist resort on the northern East Coast, the then Centro Regional Sureste (CRS) of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) and the Municipality of Cancun, sponsored a large archaeological project that encompassed the entire island.

For 18 months, from 1975 through 1976, the extensive project consisted of surveying, mapping, test-pitting, excavating and consolidating some of the standing architecture. INAH cooperated with the Fondo Nacional de Turismo (FONATUR) which provided financial support. The director of the project was archaeologist



**Fig. 4.** Pok ta Pok Structure I. Photo by Karl Herbert Mayer, 2014.



**Fig. 5.** Structure I with inner columns. Photo by Karl Herbert Mayer, 2014.

**Fig. 3.** The location of Cancun and Pok-ta-Pok (from Kelly 1993:310, 6A).



Norberto González Crespo, and Pablo Mayer Guala was the field director. Three sites were of major concern: El Rey, San Miguelito and Pok ta Pok (Robles and Andrews 1986: 62-63, Con Uribe 2005: 22).

In the work undertaken by INAH, all of the groups on the island were given imprecise Yukatek Maya names. As one ruin group was found on the terrain of a golf course, it was given the erroneous Yukatek name of the ancient Maya ballgame as invented by Frans Blom (1932: 496-497) in a study entitled "The Maya Ballgame POK-TA-POK". Blom, in searching for original designations pertaining to the ballgame and ballgame court in the Maya language, refers correctly to the entries *pok* for the rubber ball and *pokolpok*, etc., for ball playing in the Yukatek dictionary by Juan Pío Pérez (1866-1877: 282-283).

Inexplicably, Blom declared, that after "discussing the question with Juan Martínez Hernández, the outstanding Maya linguist of today, I have adopted the word *pok-ta-pok* to signify the game".

In addition to the Pío Pérez edition, the entry *pokol pok* is also found in four important Colonial Yukatek sources: *Vocabulario de Mayathan de Viena*, *Diccionario Maya de Motul* (a.k.a. Motul II-Spanish-Maya), *Diccionario de Ticul*, and the *Diccionario de San Francisco* (David Bolles, written communication, 2015).

The term *pokol pok* proves to be a definitely documented and correct Yukatek term referring to the ballgame and equally to the ballcourt (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 663). Blom's expression *pok ta pok* is missing in any Yukatek dictionaries and was doubtlessly based on a misunderstanding. Thus, the terminus spelled *pok-ta-pok* or *pok ta pok*,

## 2015 IMS Board of Directors:



### Rick Slazyk, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP

President/Membership/Website  
arcwerks@bellsouth.net

### Marta Barber

Executive Vice President/  
Programming  
msmiami@yahoo.com

### Joaquín J. Rodríguez III, P.E.

Administrative Vice President/  
Director of Research  
rod44@comcast.net  
954-786-8084

### Janet Miess, MLS

Secretary/Library Chair/Website  
jmiess@gmail.com

### Ray Stewart

Treasurer/Subscription List  
rstu@bellsouth.net

### Patricia Manfredi

pmanfred2003@yahoo.com

### Keith Merwin

Website Chair • webmaster@  
instituteofmayastudies.org

### Dr. Anne Stewart

Education Chair

### Beth Wein

Hospitality • bethwein@ymail.com

### Gerald Wolfson

Public Relations  
gerald.wolfson@att.net

### Jim Reed

Newsletter Editor  
mayaman@bellsouth.net

used for decades to refer to the ancient ruins and the modern golf course, is definitely a misnomer and fictitious. In order not to confuse matters more, the toponym used by Mayer Guala and inaccurately claimed to be a local name (Mayer Guala 1977: 207) will be retained here (but without the hyphens).

In the early literature on the site, it was apparently without a name. Ernesto Vargas Pacheco (1978: 100) describes the existence of two explored and consolidated structures (**Fig. 2**, page 1),

continued on page 5



# Squash, Gourds, and Pumpkins in Maya Diet, Art and the Ballgame

by **Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth**, Director of the Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research

Squash are eaten; squash vines are present in sculptures from the Olmec through to later Maya and Cotzumalhuapa sculptures. Ceramic effigy bowls clearly reproduce (a thousand years ago) the typical ribbed pumpkin-like squash. As recorded in the *Popol Vuh*, a squash takes the place of a head for one of the Hero Twins in the Xibalba ballgame (after the Death Bats slice off his head). So, we find there are many reasons to study squash, gourds and pumpkins, especially as it pertains to the ancient and modern Maya of Mesoamerica.

Squash flowers are edible. On some plants you can eat the fresh vine parts. Actually you can eat almost everything but the roots. A close relative in the *Cucurbitaceae* gourd plant family is *wiskil* (*güisquil*, *chayote*, *perulero*, *Sechium edule*); the roots are one of my favorite foods.

You also eat the *wiskil* vegetable (that is technically, in botanical terms, a fruit). The tender sprouts of *wiskil* vines are also eaten. We grow *wiskil* here in the FLAAR research garden, in Guatemala City. In addition to being edible, some parts of squash are medicinal.

We have studied the “gourd tree” for many years throughout Guatemala, since this tree (either *Crescentia alata* or *Crescentia cujete*) is commonly pictured in Maya murals, sculptures, and vase paintings. But this article for the *IMS Explorer* is on squash, gourds and pumpkins of the



At every food store in Guatemala you can find squash for sale (both in supermarkets in international neighborhoods as well as local markets in Maya villages).

botanical plant family *Cucurbitaceae*, that would be *ayote*, *chilicayote*, *pepitorio* and many other terms (depending on which species of squash and which part of the Maya area: Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize and El Salvador all use slightly different terms).

See the Squash & Pumpkins FLAAR PDF on the IMS website, at: [www.instituteofmayastudies.org](http://www.instituteofmayastudies.org)

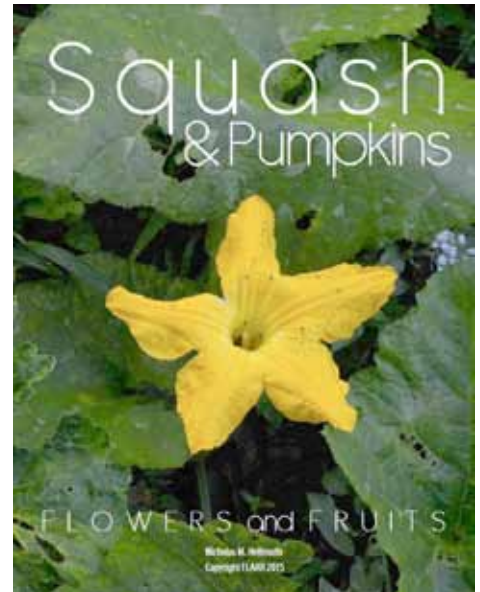
At least four species and innumerable varieties of squash are grown throughout Mesoamerica (and for centuries, also in Italy, where they are known as zucchini, and in England as mallows). Squash is considered one of the three most important Maya food plants, in a plant trinity called “maize, beans and squash.” But after living in Mesoamerica for many decades, it is clear that squash, gourds and pumpkins are neither raised nor eaten as often as are maize and beans. Plus, Mayanists suggested decades ago that root crops were a major part of ancient Maya diet (Bennet Bronson, 1966). Note our bibliography appears in the PDF.

There are several reasons why squash is of interest to me, first, I enjoy eating local squash in Guatemala. Second, the flowers, leaves and vines are pictured in Olmec, Cotzumalhuapa, and possibly Chichen Itza Maya sculptures. So, I raise squash in order to see whether what appears in this art is really a squash vine (since there are hundreds of other interesting vine species in Mesoamerica).

Several of the more respected translations of the *Popol Vuh* mention gourds were used as containers to hold wasps and bees during warfare. “Gourds” were also used to hold tobacco. Although “gourds” could be a mistranslation for *jicaro* or *morro* (calabash tree), you can also use some dried gourds as containers. And a “carved squash” was used to replace the head of Hunahpu.

Actually, you can find natural squash of precisely the size and

Another is a series of FLAAR Reports created exclusively for the Institute of Maya Studies by Nicholas Hellmuth and his research team in Guatemala City.



FLAAR Maya staff working on on the Squash report: Standing, left to right: Abigail Gabriela Cabnal, Maria Josefina Sequen Subuyuj, Linda Ixchel Bac Cojti, Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth; in front: Pedro Choc, Luz Maria de los Angeles Caal Caal.

shape of a human head. We searched thousands of squash during the main harvest season throughout both the Highlands and the Costa Sur. By pure luck, we found a head-shaped squash, (even with a nose), in the car of a person driving through the Costa Sur. We kept this head-sized and shaped squash for over a year, until it unfortunately totally rotted. (We are considering a separate article about this discovery, so here we're not yet ready to show an image of this special squash!)

A major reason for studying squash is to figure out how this bunch of related species got stuck in the repetitive mantra

continued on page 6



**Malpasito Ballcourt Complex**  
 by **Eric Slazyk**, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C

On our most recent trip to the southern region of Tabasco, we visited the Zoque site of Malpasito. This site was a pleasant surprise, and I found the Zoque architecture and site-planning intriguing. Malpasito is positioned strategically on high ground looking down on the valley below. A system of terracing was utilized and its main buildings and agriculture were organized on these terraces. When entering the site, one first encounters the ballcourt complex that consisted of four structures. As a building type, ballcourts are a favorite of mine and the ballcourt at Malpasito is an exceptional example.

Most interesting are its similarities and differences with that of Maya ballcourts. Malpasito's ballcourt is in the shape of a "T", having a closed end and an open end. This configuration varies from the Maya ballcourt which is typically, but not always, "I-shaped" (both ends enclosed or defined). Malpasito does share a similar configuration with Copan, where at both sites, a monumental stairway creates the closed end of the ballcourt while the opposite end remains open.

The playing field of the ballcourt utilizes a drainage system designed to keep the court free of excess water. Being located on a lower terrace, it makes sense that water accumulation would have been a constant drainage problem especially during the rainy season. Leaving one end open would also lessen the likelihood of creating a collection pool.



*The steam bath, Structure 18, sits on the South side of the ballcourt (ES).*

*Ground zero, Malpasito ballcourt, looking West (ES).*



*The Malpasito ballcourt is an exceptional example of Zoque architecture (looking East). All photos by Eric Slazyk (ES).*

A rare feature, one I am not aware of in Maya architecture, is the direct adjacency of a sweat bath to the ballcourt. Located on the south side of the ballcourt, the purpose of the sweat bath is conjectured to have been for ritual purification of the ball players. This ritual is believed to have occurred in the morning, one day prior to commencement of the game. By noon, the ballplayers were moved to a structure on the east side of the ballcourt (Structure 21) for vigil, assumed, till the beginning of the game.

The steam bath (Structure 18) varies significantly in layout from the typical Maya working sweat baths (Structure B2 at Palenque, Structure P7 at Piedras Negras, etc.). It incorporates an access stairway down to a subterranean steam room that has a continuous bench on each side the length of the room. The room size would have accommodated two teams, one team on each side facing one another with a separate compartment which appears to have been for the captains of the teams.

The rear wall of the steam room is a common wall shared by a pit on the opposite side where a fire would have been kept. Steam would have been created by throwing water against this hot wall. It is believed that the roofing material of the steam room may have been constructed of perishable materials. This being in direct contrast with the typically small, on grade, masonry vaulted



*View of the ballcourt, looking West (ES).*

steam bath enclosures that were utilized by the Maya. Little remains of the two other complex structures and their purpose is inconclusive. Similar steam baths have been discovered at Chiapa de Corzo and San Antonio Ozcocoautla.

**What INAH says**

Malpasito was a contact point among other sites in the Valle de Las Flores. Its construction is based on blocks of sandstone and the site is adapted to its terrain by building on artificial terraces. Its cultural context is different from the Maya and the Olmec, giving us the opportunity to consider the Zoque as a different ethnic group that added cultural diversity that still exists in southeast Mexico, especially in Tabasco.

It is possible that Malpasito was subordinate to larger sites in the northwest of Chiapas, such as San Antonio or San Isidro, with which it shares cultural traits in regards to ceramics and architectural details. It was at its peak in the Late Classic, from 700 to 900 CE.

An avid traveler to Mesoamerica, **Eric Slazyk** is President of the Institute of Maya Studies and has lectured on the architecture of sites and styles in the region.





# The Maya Ruins of Pok ta Pok, Cancun, Quintana Roo

continued from page 2

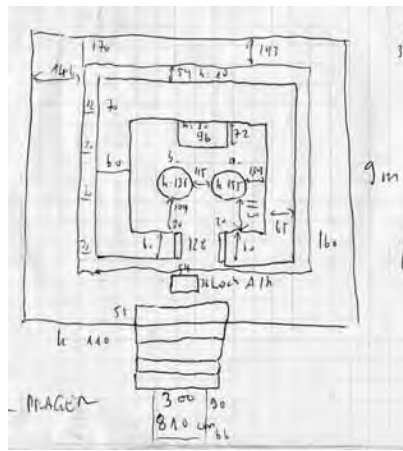
pertaining to the Late Postclassic, that are located on what is actually “el campo de golf”, not mentioning a site name. Mayer Guala (1984:167) baptized the ruins simply “Campo de Golf”. Several sources report this particular small group (Cervera Rivero et al. 1976; Mayer Guala 1977: 207, 1978, 1984; Vargas Pacheco 1978; Andrews 1986: 13, 2006; Robles Castellanos and Andrews 1986; González de la Mata et al. 1988: 76; Andrews and Vail 1990; Con Uribe 2005: 22), but no geographical coordinates, detailed descriptions of the two structures, plans, or drawings had been published so far, with the exemplary exception of Joyce Kelly who provided a brief description, a regional map (Fig. 3, page 2) and one photograph of Pok ta Pok Structure I in her guide book (1993: 313-314).

In the course of a preliminary architectural survey of a strip of the East Coast of Quintana Roo, a team from the German journal *Mexicon* visited a series of ancient Maya sites in March of 1997 (Mayer 1998), including Pok ta Pok. Christian Prager and Karl Herbert Mayer took notes, measurements and photographs of the small and unimposing ruin group and established the geographic coordinates with a hand-held GPS navigator.

In 2014, Mayer briefly revisited the site in order to take further photographs. In the following, the larger building will be provisionally designated as Structure I and the smaller one as Structure II. Both are on the fenced-in grounds of the “Club de Golf Pok-Ta-Pok”, near Hole 3, and are properly protected and preserved. The site lies close to a boulevard and can be reached from the convention center in the Cancun Zona Hotelera. A satellite view shows both buildings exposed in a lawn of the golf course close to the edge of a strip of bushes flanking the road (Fig. 2, page 1).

## Structure I

The remains of this masonry building reflect the characteristic architectural style of the Late Postclassic period (ca. AD 1200-1520) of the East Coast Zone. The shrine is collapsed and roofless. To what degree the structure has been consolidated or even reconstructed is not known.



**Fig. 6.** Structure I, ground plan. Field sketch by Christian Prager, 1997.

Comparative one-roomed masonry structures are distributed all over the Quintana Roo East Coast and also on the Island of Cozumel. These standard buildings are erected in the simplest form possible. The walls are made of roughly-laid crude limestone blocks and lime mortar, with a cover of thick stucco. Interior spaces usually consist of a single small rectangular room with a low altar attached to the rear interior wall. The single doorway is rectangular. Roofs are either vaulted or feature a flat ceiling composed of a beam-and-mortar construction. Façades often display medial and superior moldings. The whole superstructure rests on a supporting rectangular platform, connected by a staircase.

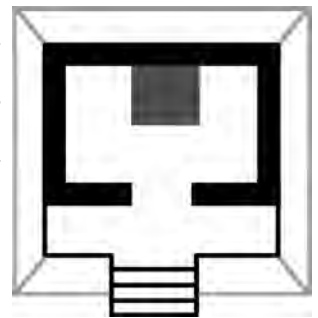
The modest size of such diminutive structure types indicates that they were not created as dwellings and are generally interpreted as religious buildings. Early colonial accounts describe such modest edifices as idol houses, oratories, sanctuaries, chapels and temples. Archaeologists commonly refer to them as shrines (for further discussion, see Andrews and Andrews 1975: 56-60).

Structure I (Fig. 4, page 2) belongs to the general category of a shrine. However, it has an unusual feature in the center of the interior: two masonry columns – a rather rare architectural element for inside a room (Fig 5, page 2). Monolithic and masonry columnar supports usually form doorways of shrines. Double columns in interiors occur, for example, at Chichen Itza and Mayapan, but on the East Coast, they seem to be absent, with the exception of Structure 3 at Tulum, where a column pair topped with square capitals supported a beam-and-mortar roof (Lothrop 1924: 82-83).



**Fig. 7.** Structure II. Photo by Christian Prager, 1997.

**Fig. 8.** Structure II, ground plan. Graphic by Stephan Merk, 2014, from a sketch by Christian Prager, 1997.



Kelly (1993: 313) calls the miniature shrine “the columned structure” and published a photograph showing the ruin with part of the base and low walls, two columns and a high wall section “that rises to almost its original height, and part of a simple, three-member molding”.

The structure was erected over an elevated rectangular platform and smaller base, and contains a single room, with the remnants of a small staircase in front of a rectangular doorway (Fig. 6). Five steps lead to the entrance that is 128 cm wide. The walls of the room vary from 60 to 70 cm in thickness. The remaining multi-lithic columns are 135 and 155 cm high and share the same diameter of 55 cm (Fig. 5, page 2).

The masonry rectangular altar built against the back wall is 96 cm wide, 72 cm deep and 30 cm high. It is covered with a stucco layer. The consolidated three-member molding on the high exterior wall is a typical East Coast element, and while still observed in 1997, it was absent in 2014. Structure I has the following geographical coordinates: latitude 21° 7.571' N, longitude 86° 45.965' W.

## Structure II

This miniature masonry structure (Fig. 7) is in the typical East Coast architectural tradition and located 100 m SSW of the larger Structure I. The original edifice is collapsed, but the principal architectural plan can be recognized, as the staircase and the lower walls are still standing (Fig. 8). A rectangular substructure measuring

continued on page 6

April 8, 2015 • IMS Explorer Session • Gods, Legends and Rituals Series

## Of Maize and Men with Marta Barber

IMS Executive Vice President and Programming Chair

When agriculture developed in Mesoamerica, the people became a sedentary society organized in different levels of hierarchy. One crop, above all, was the staple food: corn. There was a certain magical quality about corn for this ancient society: plant the seeds, wait for rain, long stalks of green leaves would appear, and on them, these elongated fruits with golden nuggets. After picking the fruits for a season, the stalks would dry and they were left in the fields to die, until the following season. The myth of the Maize God is pan-Mesoamerican and based on this principle of birth, death, and resurrection. So important was maize, that during the Classic Period, only the elite could manifest themselves as the Maize God. Our presentation will focus on the development of the Maize God of the Olmec and the Maya, and manifestations of each in their art.



Late Classic plate showing the rebirth of the Maize God from a crack in a turtle's back. Drawing by Linda Schele (No. 5505), courtesy of FAMSI, at <http://research.famsi.org>



Maize God, Copan, Honduras, 680-750 CE. Courtesy of the National Museum of Art. ©Justin Kerr.

April 15: IMS Feature Presentation

## The Maya Sky: A Voyage Through the Seasons

with Claudia Hernandez, Planetarium Assistant Manager and A/V Technician

Stars in the night sky were relied upon by every developing civilization throughout history. Our ancestors use the stars for navigation and time keeping. For this presentation, we will journey from the brightly lit city of Miami to the nocturnal world of the Maya. We will witness the stars seen by the Maya and become familiar with their night sky by engaging in a bit of naked-eye astronomy at the Miami Space Transit Planetarium. During this presentation, we will identify star patterns that are relevant to indicating a change in the seasons. We will learn to navigate with the stars and locate planets that are visible throughout the spring season. After this presentation, any ventures to Maya sites will be even richer after sunset.



The machine that still functions in the present dome at the Miami Science Museum is a Spitz model STP, or "Space Transit Planetarium"



The Weintraub Observatory houses two powerful Meade telescopes and every first Friday of each month there's a free Planetarium show.

All meetings begin at 8 pm • Institute of Maya Studies • The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science

## New Membership and Renewal Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**The IMS has gone Green!** Join today

You can also become a member by using PayPal and the on-line application form on our website at: <http://instituteofmayastudies.org>

- New    Renewal
- Benefactor: \$350
- Patron: \$150
- Century: \$100
- Member: \$50



Membership in the IMS includes attending two lectures a month; a year's subscription to our downloadable monthly **IMS Explorer** newsletter; and access to all features on our website: past newsletters, videos of IMS lectures, upcoming program announcements, IMS photo archives, and more!

Members: Be sure to get your password by contacting our Webmaster at: [keith@merwin.com](mailto:keith@merwin.com)

Mail payment to: The Institute of Maya Studies, Inc. • Attn: Membership • 3280 South Miami Avenue • Miami, FL • 33129

The Institute of Maya Studies is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Membership dues and contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by the I.R.S.

## Institute of Maya Studies

The Institute of Maya Studies is totally member-supported! If you are not a member, please take a moment and join us. Membership brings benefits and helps the IMS offer educational programs to the public. If you are already a member, please encourage your friends to join. If you need any assistance, call our Maya Hotline at: 305-279-8110





# Squash, Gourds, and Pumpkins in Maya Diet, Art and the Ballgame

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

*continued from page 3*

of Maize-Beans-and-Squash. Clearly squash is raised, and it must have been really common enough somewhere to have locked into the imagination of early Mayanists. Perhaps they took their notes at the height of the squash harvest season? But so far, squash is simply not that common in most of Guatemala today (outside modern agro-business plantations, and outside the perhaps two harvest times a year).

Maize is definitely No. 1, Beans are clearly No. 2, but then you not only get root crops, you also get dozens, even scores, of fruits. Not to mention a few nut trees and lots of edible leaves. There are more fruit trees native to the Maya areas than there are species of maize, beans, squash and root crops put together.

But first, I am studying these diet items group by group. I introduced the unexpected diversity of beans in the January *IMS Explorer*. Now, I have gathered together four years of



A squash cut in half: of other squash varieties you eat just the seed (and throw away the textured material), but of this you eat all the textured material and throw away the seed!

photography of gourd flowers and fruits for a full color photo reference album for the IMS website.

We are tracking down as many color varieties of maize for a comparable maize report; searching for all tomato-like plants for a tomato report; looking for root crops; and other plants theme by theme. We did a field research project on *güisquil*, *chayote* and *perulero* about four years ago, and I will bring these photographs together for IMS report later this year.

Although *wiskil* is in the family *Cucurbitaceae*, I don't personally conceptualize it as a gourd or pumpkin, and so I don't (as yet) include it in the Maize-Beans-Squash trinity. It would be interesting to document the early Mayanists who dreamt up the Maize-Beans-Squash concept, to see whether they included any of the varieties of *Sechium edule*. I can still remember



Most of the squash we purchased in a Guatemala City market are grooved, but some are smooth.



Tiny copper-colored ants encircle the base of a wilting flower, where the squash itself begins to develop.

as a student intern living for twelve months at Tikal (in 1965), having *wiskil* for meals.

In the meantime, since squash, pumpkin, and several of the seeds are easily obtainable in supermarkets across the USA and around the world, I hope you will consider adding more of these to your diet. Avoid the pre-cooked or packaged, over-salted, over-chemicalized, over-sugared normal microwave eating style that we all are tempted into (including yours truly). I trust you'll enjoy the high resolution photographs from the milpas and mercados of Guatemala in the associated full-color PDF, at: [www.instituteofmayastudies.org](http://www.instituteofmayastudies.org)



*Cucurbita ficifolia* squash flower, San Lorenzo El Tejar, Guatemala (FLAAR September 2013).

## The Maya Ruins of Pok ta Pok, Cancun, Quintana Roo *continued from page 5*

525 x 480 cm still exists and it is (on an average) 50 cm high. A 105 cm wide stairway with three steps leads to a rectangular, 96 cm wide doorway on the NW side of the superstructure. The front side is 290 cm wide. The average thickness of the fallen walls is 55 cm. Attached to the interior rear wall is the usual rectangular masonry altar, 120 cm wide, 90 cm deep, and 37 cm high. The roof no longer exists, but it can be assumed it was of a beam-and-mortar construction. Vaulted shrines are not common in the Cancun zone. Vaults

are overwhelmingly reserved for more complex shrine

types and larger palaces and temples. The GPS coordinates of this shrine are 21° 7.523' N, 86° 45.988' W.

### Bibliography


- Andrews, Anthony P.  
1986 Reconocimiento arqueológico de Cancún a Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo. *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán*, Vol. 13, No. 78, pp. 3-19.
- 2006 Some Historic Notes and Observations on Isla Cancún, Quintana Roo. *FAMSI Journal of the Ancient Americas*. Crystal River, FL. Electronic

document: <http://research.famsi.org/aztlan/uploads/papers/Andrews-Cancun-Aztlan-06-2.pdf>.

- Andrews, Anthony P., and Gabriela Vail  
1990 Cronología de sitios prehispánicos costeros de la península de Yucatán y Belice. *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán*, Vol. 37-18, Nos. 104-105, pp. 37-66.
- Andrews IV, E. Wyllys, and Anthony P. Andrews  
1975 *A Preliminary Study of the Ruins of Xcaret, Quintana Roo, Mexico*. Middle American Research Institute, Pub. 40, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

*continued on page 8*

## The Maya Ruins of Pok ta Pok, Cancun, Quintana Roo continued from page 6

- Andrews IV, E. Wyllys, E. Wyllys  
Andrews V, M. P. Simmons, and E. S. Wing  
1974 *Excavation of an Early Shell Midden on Isla Cancún, Quintana Roo, Mexico*. Middle American Research Institute, Pub. 31, pp. 147-197. Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
- Barrera Vásquez, Alfredo (Editor)  
1980 *Diccionario Cordemex, Maya-Español, Español-Maya*. Edición Cordemex, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico.
- Blom, Frans  
1932 *The Maya Ballgame POK-TA-POK (Called Tlachtli by the Aztec)*. *Middle American Research Series*, No. 4, pp. 485-527. Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
- Cervera Rivero, Pura, James Callaghan, and Tomás Gallareta Negrón  
1976 *Prácticas de Campo en el Proyecto Can Cun*. *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán*, Year 3, Nos. 17, 18, pp. 36-38.
- Con Uribe, María José  
2005 *The East Coast of Quintana Roo: A Brief Account of Archaeological Work*. *Quintana Roo Archaeology*, Justine M. Shaw and Jennifer P. Mathews, Editors, pp. 15-29. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ.
- González de la Mata, Rocío, et. al.  
1988 *Guía Oficial. Quintana Roo*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. México, D.F.
- Kelly, Joyce  
1993 *An Archaeological Guide to Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK.
- Lothrop, Samuel K.  
1924 *Tulum: An Archaeological Study of the East Coast of Yucatan*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Pub. 335. Washington, D.C.
- Mayer, Karl Herbert  
1998 *The Maya Ruins of Paso de la Viuda, Quintana Roo*. *Mexicon*, Vol. XX, No. 2, p. 28.
- Mayer Guala, Pablo Miguel  
1977 *Can Cun: Informe preliminar*. Los procesos de cambio: XV Mesa Redonda de la Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, Guanajuato, Tomo II, pp. 207-213.
- 1978 *Can Cún. Guía Oficial*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México, D.F.
- 1984 *Interpretaciones preliminares de la cerámica de Can-Cun*. Investigaciones recientes en el area maya. XVII Mesa Redonda de de la Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Tomo II, pp. 167-175.
- Pérez, Juan Pío  
1866-77 *Diccionario de la Lengua Maya*. Imprenta Literaria de Juan F. Molina Solís, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico.
- Robles Castellanos, Fernando, and Anthony P. Andrews  
1986 *A Review and Synthesis of Recent Postclassic Archaeology in Northern Yucatan*. *Late Lowland Maya Civilization: Classic to Postclassic*, Jeremy A. Sabloff and E. Wyllys Andrews V, Editors, pp. 53-98. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.
- Vargas Pacheco, Ernesto  
1978 *Los asentamientos prehispánicos y la arquitectura en la isla Can Cun, Quintana Roo*. *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, Vol. XI, pp. 93-112. 

### Upcoming Events at the IMS:

- April 8 • 8 pm: *IMS Explorer Session Gods, Legends and Ritual Series: Of Maize and Men* – IMS Executive Vice President and Programming Chair **Marta Barber** will focus on the development of the Maize God of the Olmec and the Maya, and the manifestations of each in their art.
- April 15 • 8 pm: *IMS Presentation The Maya Sky: A Voyage Through the Seasons* – with **Claudia Hernandez**, Planetarium Assistant Manager of The Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science.
- May 13 • 8 pm: *IMS Explorer Session Gods, Legends and Ritual Series: Gods of the Maya* – IMS Secretary and Library Chair **Janet Miess** discusses the pantheon of Maya deities.
- May 20 • 8 pm: *IMS Presentation The Mesoamerican Ballgame and Its Architectural Settings: A Three Millennia Tradition* – with Professor **Eric Taladoire**.

### Upcoming Events and Announcements:

- April 10-11: *Maya Symposium In the Realm of the Vision Serpent: Decipherments and Discoveries in Mesoamerica* – A symposium in homage to **Linda Schele**. Among the speakers are Mary Miller, Karl Taube, Marc Zender, David Stuart, David Freidel and Peter Mathews. At California State University. Get more info at: [www.ahscsula.wordpress.com](http://www.ahscsula.wordpress.com)
- 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. At Hamline University, St. Paul, MN. Go to: <http://sites.hamline.edu/mayasociety>
- April 30 – May 3: *M@L Conference Fifth Annual Maya at the Lago Conference* – Lectures, workshops and social activities in Davidson, NC. This year's event honors the memory of George Stuart. Presenters include

Kenneth Garrett, Karl Taube, David Stuart, Michael Coe, Stan Guenter, and Bruce Love. See: <http://www.mayatthelago.com>

May 1-3, 2015: *ASNM Annual Meeting Archaeology in the Rio Grande: A Collaboration* – Theme of the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Society of New Mexico, at the Sagebrush Inn, Taos, NM. Details at: [www.TaosArch.org](http://www.TaosArch.org)

Through July, 2015: *Museum Exhibit San Diego Museum of Man Exhibit Maya: Heart of Sky, Heart or Earth* – at the San Diego Museum of Man, San Diego, CA. Get more info at: [www.museumofman.org/html/exhibitions.html](http://www.museumofman.org/html/exhibitions.html)

Editor's Tip: *Online all the time Mesoamerica and Ancient America Lectures, Conferences and Exhibits* – Check out Mike Ruggeri's comprehensive list of upcoming events at: <http://bit.ly/1aKJzE>



## 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](mailto:mayaman@bellsouth.net)