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Inside this issue:

In Memoriam: IMS Member Susan Hangge; Ancient Burial Site Unearthed in El Salvador

Early Maya Urban 3 Planning at Nixtun-Chi'ich'

Spectacular Discovery 4 of Maya Stucco Masks at El Mirador, by Mike Reed; Hunt for Royal Tomb in Teotihuacan, *cont. from pg. I*

Adventure Travelogue 5 with the IMS!: A Trip to La Venta, by Janet Miess

Mayas: Revelation of 6 an Endless Time, by Antonio Benevides C., INAH Campeche; Ancient Burial Site Unearthed in El Salvador, *cont. from pg.*2

June IMS Programs; 7 Membership Application

Ancient Burial Site 8 Unearthed in El Salvador, cont. from pg. 6; Upcoming Events

IMS Presentation: June 17, 8 pm



Kennewick Man: The Debate Over the Oldest Human Remains Found in the Americas with Janet Miess

June 17, 2015 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.2.9.8 • 2 Lamat 16 Sots • G8

Hunt for Royal Tomb in Teotihuacan Takes a Mercurial Twist

Within the bowels of Teotihuacan, INAH archaeologist Sergio Gómez Chávez has discovered "large quantities" of liquid mercury in a chamber at the end of a sacred tunnel sealed for nearly 1,800 years.

"It's something that completely surprised us," Gómez said at the entrance to the tunnel below Teotihuacan's Temple of Quetzalcoatl (Pyramid of the Plumed Serpent). Some archaeologists believe the toxic element could herald what would be the first ruler's tomb ever found in Teotihuacan, a contemporary of several ancient Maya cities, but so shrouded in mystery that its inhabitants still have no name.

Unsure why the mercury was put there, Gómez says the metal may have been used to symbolize an underworld river or lake. Previously uncovered in small amounts at a few Maya sites much further south, it had never been found in Teotihuacan.

Difficult to mine and prized for its reflective properties, mercury was rare in ancient Mexico; archaeologists believe that this may have lent it a supernatural significance for ritual ends.

Royal Tomb Sought

Deeper into the complex comprising three chambers, Gómez expects to find the elusive last resting place of a king. If Gómez is correct, it could

help settle a debate over

Jim Reed,

Editor



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As part of the Tlalocan project, an INAH archaeologist hunting for a royal tomb in a deep, dark tunnel beneath the Temple of Quetzalcoatl complex has made a discovery that may have brought him a step closer: liquid mercury. Courtesy of INAH.

how power was wielded in Teotihuacan, a city boasting massive stone pyramids, that was home to as many as 200,000 people and the heart of an ancient empire that flourished between 100 and 700 CE.

Teotihuacan, or "abode of the gods" in the Aztec language of Nahuatl, was distinct from the Maya civilization. Its inhabitants left behind no written records, abandoning the city long before the Aztecs came to power in the I4th century. Spaniards dug at Teotihuacan in the 1670s, but rigorous scientific excavation of the site did not begin until the 1950s.

Gómez's six-year slog in the tunnel has already yielded tens of thousands of artifacts including stone sculptures, fine jewelry and giant seashells leading to the three chambers. The painstaking excavation has slowed due to extreme humidity, mud, and now, the need for protective gear to avoid mercury poisoning. *continued on page 4*

In honor of all the souls who travel the white road before us...

In Memorium: **IMS Member Susan Hangge**

Susan Hangge, 72, an active member of the Institute of Maya Studies for many years, passed on Mother's Day 2015 in Miami of pancreatic cancer. She attended all meetings with a pad on her knees taking notes of issues being discussed. Susan was not shy about asking questions, and we always knew her hand would go up at any time during a lecture.

Susan's incredible thirst for knowledge not only extended to archaeology, (she held the post of Secretary for the South Florida Archaeology Association) but to art (she was a docent at the Lowe Art Museum); botany (Native Plant Society; Gifford Arboretum, Fairchild Garden) and serving others. Every year, she attended Maya at the Playa, a conference held in Palm Coast, Florida, where she volunteered as an extra hand in the kitchen at the Hilton Gardens, where conference events were held.

Two years ago, she traveled with a group from the IMS to Puebla and Oaxaca. She had a blast. Here's is what Tony Ariza, one of our loyal fellow travelers, says about Susan. "I often reminisce about the time she and I made up our minds that we wanted a better photo of where we happened to be and decided to sneak up the unguarded bell tower of the church we were visiting (in the Mexican State of Puebla).

"Opportunities like that don't present themselves very often... so we opted to take advantage of it. Upon reaching the summit, we hugged each other and took a moment to take in

My tribute to Ceibal Stela 18.

"In this dream we share together, be a light in the dark to each other." By IMS Facebook page contributor Rory Eade Arte.





Susan poses with a pineapple in Puebla's main market.

the beautiful view while the breeze blew ever so softly past us. I will always cherish that memory."

Born in St. Louis, MO, Susan was an ardent structural engineer and a Miami resident for 58 years. She was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church. She graduated from Southwest High School in 1960 and then the University of Miami in 1965.

Susan is survived by her daughter, Laura Hadden; her son, Sam V. Hadden; daughter-in-law, Jennifer Hadden; and grandson, Sam Hadden VI.

We will all miss you, Susan; fare thee well on your continued travels.

Ancient Burial Site Unearthed in El Salvador

A recent archaeological finding in El Salvador, which included six complete pots from the late Classic period and human remains next to two vessels placed as a ritualistic offering and apparently at least 1,200-years-old, has thrown light on ancient Maya settlements in the region.

In an interview, the director of Archaeology at the Salvadoran National Cultural Heritage Office, Shione Shibata, said that the discovery in western

Nuevo Lourdes, in Colon,

about 20 km from San Salvador, was historically important because the distribution of the remains indicated they formed part of a village.

The finding was first reported by workers at a residential compound construction site who were digging a ditch to lay down water piping and came across pieces of broken pottery and obsidian shards. They halted work immediately: they knew they had found an archaeological site and had to call in the experts.



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Shibata, who is Japanese but has acquired permanent residency in El Salvador, said that archaeologists who went to Nuevo Lourdes immediately noted that the area had been affected by the eruption of the El Boqueron or Quezaltepeque volcano.

"There was a layer of volcanic ash one meter thick covering what was later exposed," he explained. Work began in late May to remove the earth and study the archaeological remains.

Early Maya Urban Planning Evident at Nixtun-Chi'ich'

An ancient Maya city followed a unique grid pattern, providing evidence of a powerful ruler, archaeologists working at Nixtun-Ch'ich' in Peten, Guatemala, have found.

The city, which contains flat-topped pyramids, was in use between roughly 600 BCE and 300 BCE, a time when the first cities were being constructed in the area. No other city from the Maya world was planned using this grid design, researchers say. This city was "organized in a way we haven't seen in other places," said Timothy Pugh, a professor at Queens College in New York.

"It's a top-down organization," Pugh said. "Some sort of really, really, powerful ruler had to put this together."

The ancient Mexican city of Teotihuacan also used a grid system. But that city is not considered to be Maya, and so far archaeologists have found no connections between it and the one at Nixtun-Ch'ich', Pugh said.

People living in the area have known of the Nixtun-Ch'ich' site for a long time. Pugh started research on it in 1995 and has been concentrating on Maya remains that date to a much later time period, long after the early city was abandoned. However, in the process of studying these later remains, his team has been able to map the early city and even excavate a bit of it.

Ceremonial route

From the mapping and excavations, Pugh can tell that the city's main ceremonial route runs in an east-west line only 3 degrees off of true east. "You get about 15 buildings in an exact straight line – that's the main ceremonial area," he noted. These 15 buildings included flat-topped pyramids that would have risen up to almost 100 feet (30 meters) high. Visitors would have climbed a series of steps to reach the temple structure at the top of each of these pyramids.

At the end of the ceremonial procession-way, on the eastern edge

Archaeologists have mapped an early Maya site, revealing the city used a rigid grid system with the main ceremonial procession-way aligned east to west. Photo by Timothy Pugh.

> of the city, is a "triadic" structure or group, which consists of pyramids and buildings that were constructed facing each other on a platform.

Structures like this triadic group (the name comes from the three main pyramids or buildings in the group), have been found in other early Maya cities.

The residential areas of the city were built to the north and south of the ceremonial route and were also packed into the city's grid design, Pugh said.

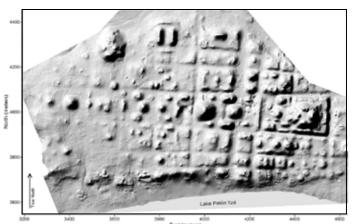
From the excavations, archaeologists can tell that many of the city's structures were decorated with shiny white plaster. "It was probably a very shiny city," Pugh exclaimed.

The city's orientation, facing almost directly east, would have helped people follow the movements of the sun, something that may have been of importance to their religion. A wall made of earth and stone also protected the city, suggesting defense was also a concern of these Maya.

Were the people happy with their lives?

While the city was a sight to behold, its people might not have been happy with it. Most Maya cities are nicely spread out. They have roads just like this, but they're not gridded," said Pugh, noting that in other Maya cities, "the space is more open and less controlled."

Cities in early Renaissance Europe that adopted rigid designs were often unpleasant places for





In the course of excavating, archaeologists uncovered a corridor containing shiny white plaster that originally would have covered the city. Photo by Evelyn Chan.

their residents to live, Pugh said. It's "very possible" that the residents of this early Maya city "didn't really enjoy living in such a controlled environment," Pugh remarked.

Preserving the city

Archaeologists agreed they are thankful to the cattle ranchers who own the land the site is on and are protecting it against looters. This location is one of the few Maya sites in the area that hasn't been looted, and that's because the ranchers are "really protective, and they don't want people messing with the Maya ruins," Pugh said.

Additionally, the ranchers use a type of quick-growing grass, which, in addition to helping feed cattle, also protects the site from erosion, helping preserve it.

Pugh's team recently presented their research at the Society for American Archaeology's annual meeting, in San Francisco, CA.

Source: From an article by Live Science contributor Owen Jarus, released 4.29.2015 at: www.livescience.com. Submitted by Scott Allen.



Spectacular Discovery of Maya Stucco Masks at El Mirador

by Mike Reed

A stunning collection of stucco masks unearthed at El Mirador was presented on Maya 15 at the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City by Mirador Basin Project Co-Director Richard Hansen.

The life-sized masks found in remarkably excellent condition were discovered by project team members excavating a Late Classic period palace complex located in an area close to the Danta Pyramid.

Hansen pointed out that the structure containing the masks was a place of ceremonies in which the masks played important roles. They pertain to recognizable members of the pantheon of Maya dieties from the Classic period whose attributes pertained to the specific rituals being carried out. The masks are expressions of the highest level of Maya sculpture in the round.

Some of the masks still show remnants of the colors painted over the stucco. Their remarkable state of preservation offers a unique opportunity to appreciate the expressive beauty of Maya sculpture.

El Mirador was the largest city in Mesoamerica during the Late Preclassic period, between 350 BCE and 250 CE, and is considered to be the capital



Most of the masks still reveal remnants of the colors the ancient Maya used to paint over the stucco. All photos by Mike Reed, who was in attendance at their presentation in Guatemala City.

of the earliest lowland Maya state. El Mirador and surrounding cities experienced a series of environmental disasters near the end of the Preclassic period leading to the near-total abandonment of the Mirador Basin by 200 CE.

During the Late Classic period, small populations were re-established throughout the Mirador Basin at new sites and in the shadows of the ruined pyramids and palaces of the abandoned preclassic cities. The small complex from which the masks were unearthed belonged to one of the small late classic communities located within El Mirador.

The functions of these "ancient sites within older ancient sites" is not understood, but according to Hansen, they may have been destinations for pilgrims visiting the holy places where Maya civilization began.

Hunt for Royal Tomb in Teotihuacan Takes A Mercurial Twist archaeologis

continued from page 1

George Cowgill, a U.S. archaeologist who has spent more than four decades excavating Teotihuacan, says the mercury find increases the odds of finding a tomb. "But it's still very uncertain, and that is what keeps everybody in suspense," he added.

Mercury is toxic and capable of devastating the human body through prolonged exposure; the liquid metal had no apparent practical purpose for ancient Mesoamericans. But it has been discovered at other sites. Rosemary Joyce, a professor of anthropology at the University

of California, Berkeley,

archaeologist Sergio Gómez stands above the entrance to the shaft that leads down to the tunnel when they first started excavating in 2010. Photo: INAH archives, by Mauricio Marat.

said that archaeologists have found mercury at three other sites around Central America.

INAH archaeologist Linda Manzanilla believes that at its peak, the city was ruled not by a single king, but a council of four lords, and that Gómez may find the remains of one of them.

To bolster her argument, she cites the absence of a single palace or the presence of kings in any of the city's many murals.



The excavation of the chambers should be finished by October, Gómez said, with an announcement of findings by the end of 2015.

Source: Original report not released by INAH but through Reuters. Composed by David Alire Garcia on 4.24.2015 at: www.reuters.com. Posted by Mike Ruggeri to the Atzlan eServe and the IMS Facebook page.

Adventure Travelogue with the IMS!

A Trip to the Olmec Site of La Venta by Janet Miess

The site of La Venta is about an hour and half from the city of Villahermosa in the state of Tabasco. This area of the state is located close to the Gulf of Mexico coast and at the confluence of the Grijalva and Carrizal rivers which makes the area very swampy. La Venta, which was an island in the swamp at one time, was occupied from about 1000 BCE to 400 BCE. The site was rediscovered in the 1940s.

Today, when you visit La Venta, you will see more than 30 pyramids and platforms covered with grass, as the Olmec did not build with stone. There was very little stone available in the area. Instead they transported enormous boulders of basalt from the Tuxtla Mountains and carved huge heads, stelae, thrones and altars from the stone. Some of the sculptures are estimated to weigh up to 35 tons.

The restoration of the site is well done; you will see all of the sculpture originally found at the site, in their original places, all replaced with replicas, with one or two exceptions. The originals have been moved to Parque–Museo de La Venta in Villahermosa. However, the stars of the site, a tomb built with stone logs and three mosaic pavements made up of 500 serpentine blocks, can only be seen in Villahermosa.

There is a walking path that leads you through the site. Only the pyramids and mounds in Complex A, B and C are viewable. There were also 5 tombs located in Complex A. During excavations, researchers discovered many caches and offerings of jadite.

We did take a path to see Complex D, which is in a forested area that has not been cleared. While we were walking through there, we encountered an Olmec altar that appeared to be original.

There is an excellent on-site

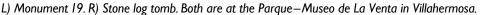


La Venta Pyramid C-1. All photos are courtesy of Janet Miess unless otherwise noted.



Replica of one of the stone heads at the site.



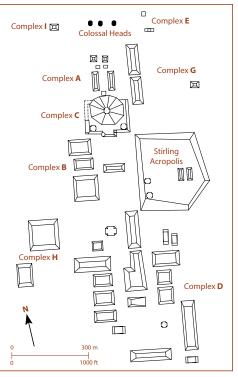


museum that features many of the smaller artifacts found in these tombs and caches, although some of them are reproductions.

On the day we visited, we only saw a couple of other people at the site, so you will probably have the site to yourself. Although the site is grass covered, it is still worth the trip. It takes approximately 2 hours to see the site and museum – don't miss the second room in the museum.

What INAH says:

The Prehispanic name of the city is unknown. The site's name, La Venta, comes from a local oral tradition that indicates the place was a market for precious woods at the end of the



La Venta site plan. Recreated by Jim Reed.





One of the La Venta mosaic pavements. Courtesy of Ruben Charles at www.rubencharles.com.

19th and beginning of the 20th century. (Venta means "sale" in Spanish.)

Janet Miess is secretary for the Institute of Maya Studies and helps organize trips for IMS members. All photos are courtesy of Janet Miess unless otherwise noted.



A sampling of some of the more than 380 stunning Mesoamerican artifacts on display at the exhibition. A) The "Queen of Uxmal" limestone sculpture. B) Jaina figurine of a ball player. C) Golden frog with turquoise eyes. D) Small belt mask of jade, hematite and shell. E) Monument 114 of Tonina. ©Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes – Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). Photographer: Ignacio Guevara.

Mayas: Revelation of an Endless Time by Antonio Benavides C., INAH Campeche

England's west coast city of Liverpool will have a splendid motive to celebrate next June 18. In that dynamic city, the World Museum will open the exhibition: *Mayas: Revelation* of an Endless Time. Highlighted by more than 380 artifacts of exceptional esthetic quality, the exhibition offers a panoramic view of Maya archaeological treasures from the Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Tabasco and the Yucatan states of Mexico.

The exhibition is presented by defining eight topics that assist one to have a closer view of the cosmovision and way of life of the ancient Maya. The themes of the museum exhibition are:

- I) Man and nature;
- 2) Community and daily life;
- 3) The core of the cities;
- 4) Man, time and heavenly bodies;
- 5) The governing elites and their historiography;
- 6) Deities;
- 7) Rituals; and,
- 8) Enter the Road.

Visitors will have a clear perspective of Precolumbian Maya life and activities; including their millenary relationship with their habitat, their development through centuries, their social stratification, their particular features of urbanism, their mathematical and calendrical achievements, their cosmovision, and their conception of the Underworld.

Liverpool city, cradle of the legendary Beatles, has also played a fundamental role for the commercial and economic development of Great Britain since the beginnings of the XVIIIth century (CE 1715). Interestingly, one section of the Liverpool 12-km-long docks system was recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage site in 2004.

2015 celebrates the good relationship between Mexico and Great Britain with a series of events related to business, cultural exchange and cooperation within the framework termed the "Dual Year." The globalization phenomenon of today is also expressed in this type of fortunate experience that gives all of us a chance to look closely at the achievements and relevance of the historical and archaeological heritage that has survived the millennia, and



On May 14, the British royal house, represented by Charles, Prince of Wales, attended a preliminary presentation of Maya artifacts destined for the exhibition that originated from within the coasts, valleys and mountains of Belize, Guatemala, and the

western regions of Honduras and El Salvador. Smart phone moment by: Antonio Benavides C.

has originated from several regions of southeastern Mexico.

Editor's note: This exhibition has been produced by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e



Historia (INAH) in Mexico. It is part of the 2015 "Year of Mexico in the United Kingdom" and "Year of the United Kingdom in Mexico". Get more info about the exhibition at the World Museum in Liverpool at: www.liverpool museums.org.uk/wml/exhibitions/mayas/

Ancient Burial Site Unearthed in El Salvador

continued from page 2

Archaeologists also found evidence of a sugarcane field located below the first section that was excavated and uncovered. The field, measuring about 500 sq m, is apparently at a depth of between 2 or 3 m.

They found that under the first layer of ash there was yet another layer of ash that resulted from



the eruption of another volcano, the llopango, now a lake. The Quezaltepeque and the llopango volcanoes are both on the rim surrounding the valley where the capital San Salvador lies.

Shibata explained that the human remains (whose sex have yet to be determined) in the burial site, the adobe wall and the field were strong evidence that ancient settlers had specifically chosen to live in the Nuevo Lourdes region, which is near two rivers, the Sucio and the Lempa.



Historic pieces found by Salvadorian experts at the archaelogical site. Credit: Gulf Times.

"Based on these findings we can understand scientifically how and continued on page 8 June 10, 2015 • IMS Explorer Session • Gods, Legends and Rituals Series

Coba: Maya City of Extremes

with **Dr. Anne Stewart**, IMS Education Chair



Nestled among five lakes, Coba is indeed an amazing site. The estimated 650 structures are located in 20 different groups.

The Peten style city, built in northeastern Yucatan, is one of the largest cities, covering approximately 40 sq. miles. Its sacbe system is the most extensive known, with widths the widest known. The number of stelae exceeds 32. Many of these have been moved from their original location, broken in pieces and erected in different locations. Coba has the longest

date ever written by the Maya. Its ballcourts revealed cache offerings as did other structures.



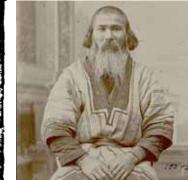
Drones are being used at Maya sites now, offering us fantastic new views. At 42 meters, "Nohoch Muul" at Coba is the tallest pyramid in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Kennewick Man: The Debate Over the Oldest Human Remains in the Americas

June 17: IMS Feature Presentation

with Janet Miess, IMS Secretary and Library Chair

A skeleton was found along the



to be among his closest relatives, were the

Man's reconstruction. Courtesy of Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institute inspiration for Kennewick

Institute National Anthropological Archives.

Columbia River near the town of Kennewick in Washington State in 1996. After the initial discovery a sample from the bones was sent out for radiocarbon dating; the test came back with an amazing 9000 years old. A battle lasting IO years was fought through the United States court system over the right to study the bones. Eighteen years after the bones were found, scientists have Photos of the Ainu people of Japan, thought

finally been able to publish the results of the most complete analysis of a Paleo-American skeleton ever done.



Doug Owsley (far right) is a forensic anthropologist for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and the lead scientist studying Kennewick Man. He recently released a book about Kennewick Man based on a nine-year study. Photo by Chip Clark/Smithsonian Institution.

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Ancient Burial Site Unearthed in El Salvador

continued from page 6

where people lived, not only because of the proximity of the rivers," Shibata said.

"What is interesting is that in the Terminal Preclassic period people had settled there to farm the land and when the volcano eruption hit, it buried those populations," he noted.

"Then, hundreds of years later people returned, perhaps because it was near to the river, a source of water, to make their lives, and another volcano eruption occurred and now yet again there are people who want to live there," said Shibata.

He said the discoveries correspond to the Terminal Preclassic period. "There is much discussion about when

L) So far, researchers have not determined which Precolumbian culture the Nuevo Lourdes archaeological site belonged to, and Hugo Díaz (above), one of the archaeologists involved in the study, said it could be Maya. R) Some of the artifacts uncovered in the excavations.

the llopango volcano eruption occurred... However, it has been established that it occurred between 400 and 536 CE, but the pieces at the burial site found are attributed to the late Classic period: between 600 and 900 CE."

Regarding the way the Nuevo Lourdes finding was reported to the National Cultural Heritage Office, Shibata said that it was quite common for luck to play a role in archaeological discoveries in El Salvador.

He said that often, "by chance,"

workers find something of major importance for the country, and then "by chance" a resident of the community reports it to the Cultural Heritage Office.

Although a small country, El Salvador has over 670 recorded archaeological sites, most of them belonging to the ancient Maya civilization.

Sources: Original article by *GulfTimes* reporters Juan José Dalton and Gerardo Arbaiza. First appearing online at: *http://archaeologynews network.blogspot.com*. The article was re-released by Luis Alfredo Martínez with additional photos at: *http://latino.foxnews.com*.

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

June 10 • 8 pm: IMS Explorer Session Gods, Legends and Ritual Series: Coba: Maya City of Extremes – Indeed, the estimated 6500 structures nestled among five lakes, make Coba an amazing site, with IMS Education Chair Dr. Anne Stewart.

June 17 • 8 pm: IMS Presentation Kennewick Man: The Debate Over the Oldest Human Remains Found in the Americas – New insights are intriguing, with IMS Secretary and Library Chair Janet Miess.

July 8 • 8 pm: IMS Explorer Session Gods, Legends and Ritual Series: Defining the Religion of Prehispanic Mesoamerica – Marta Barber shares a video on the subject by Dr. Ed Barnhart.

July 15 • 8 pm: IMS Presentation New Evidence of Links Between the Dresden Codex and the Central Mexican Codices – with Harvey M. and Victoria R. Bricker.



Upcoming Events and Announcements:

June 13, 10 am: Workshop and Lecture Eclipse Records in Postclassic Maya Texts and Iconography – with Dr. Gabrielle Vail, New College of Florida. The workshop will focus on identifying calendrical, iconographic, and/ or hieroglyphic references to eclipses in codices and murals painted by Maya scribes during the Postclassic period. At the Pre-Columbian Society at the Penn Museum, Philadelphia, PA. Details at: www.precolumbian.org/nextmeeting.htm

June 5, 6:30 pm: *PCSWDC Lecture* The inaugural talk in the occasional lecture series honoring of George Stuart, presented by the Pre-Columbian Society of Washington D.C. **The Cross Group Temples at Palenque: New Readings and Interpretations** – presented by **Dr. David Stuart**. At Hurlbut Memorial Hall, 3rd Floor, Sumner School, Washington, D.C. Additional info at: www.pcswdc.org/events/ Through July, 2015: Museum Exhibit Maya: Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth – at the



San Diego Museum of Man, San Diego, CA. Get more info at: www.museumofman.org/html/exhibitions.html

Through Oct. 11, 2015: Museum Exhibit Gold of the Americas – This Walters Museum exhibit showcases more than 50 artifacts, including cast animal pendants, a hammered gold disc, beaded necklaces and nose ornaments made by the indigenous peoples of the ancient Americas from Peru to Panama. At the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD. Further details at: http://thewalters. org/events/event.aspx?e=3998

Ongoing: Museum Exhibit Art of the Ancient Americas –

Theme of a permanent exhibit at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Info at: http://carlos.emory.edu/new-art-of-americas

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