



IMS EXPLORER

Institute of Maya Studies



August 19, 2015 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.2.12.11 • 13 Chuwen 19 Yaxk'in • G8

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Researchers Discover Incredible Maya Monuments at El Achiotal, Guatemala

Posted by Tomas Barrientos to La Corona Archaeological Project Facebook Page



Archeologists happened upon a previously undiscovered, but well-preserved Maya stone monument and two other hieroglyphic panels, while exploring Guatemala on a recent trip, they announced in July.

"We gasped and looked in, and there's the face of a king just staring straight out at us," Luke Auld-Thomas, a graduate student at Tulane University in New Orleans, told *National Geographic*.

Auld-Thomas and colleagues found the monument, deemed a stela, in nearly pristine condition at the El Achiotal archaeological site in Western Peten, Guatemala.



Marcello Canuto (left), proudly poses with Luke Auld-Thomas, a Tulane anthropology graduate student who discovered the Maya stela. Courtesy of Tulane Public Relations.

"This stela portrays an early king during one of the more poorly understood periods of ancient Maya history," said Dr. Marcello A. Canuto, director of the Middle American Research Institute at Tulane, and a participant in the excavations.

"It had been very carefully placed by the ancient Maya so that it was looking out a doorway, like a museum piece in a display case," Auld-Thomas said.

It turns out that the monument, which scientists have dated back to the 5th century, may provide new insight into the reign of a mysterious ancient El Achiotal king and the area's tumultuous politics.

Dr. David Stuart, a Maya epigrapher at the University of Texas at Austin, deciphered hieroglyphs on the back of the stela. He estimates the monument dates back to November 418 CE, a time of great political upheaval in the region.

It is believed that a Teotihuacan warrior-ruler named Siyaj K'ahk' arrived in the area in 378 CE and set up a new political order. Shortly thereafter, the king whose face was part of the unearthed stela came to power, Stuart commented in a recent statement.

Thus the stela places the reign of the El Achiotal king into a larger historical framework.

IMS Presentation: August 19, 8 pm



Miam by Janet Miess

**Maximón:
Maya Cultural
Hero in the Navel
of the World**
with IMS Explorer
Newsletter Editor
Jim Reed

"Based on parallels known from other sites, we think that this stela relates to this watershed event in Maya history – the installation, in the Maya

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**Jim Reed,
Editor**

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Deciphering of an Important Maya Glyph

The finding provides a leap in understanding the tomb of Janaahb K'inich 'Pakal

Sixty-three years since the discovery of the tomb of Maya King Pakal located inside the Temple of Inscriptions in Palenque, Chiapas (southern state of Mexico), researcher Guillermo Bernal Romero from the Maya Studies Center of the Institute of Philological Investigations of the National University of Mexico (UNAM), deciphered the T514 glyph, meaning YEJ: "sharp edge".

The scholar explained that "the name is related to the nine warriors depicted on the walls of the tomb, also refers to the war, capturing prisoners, and conquering cities."

The YEJ glyph is associated with Te' which means "spear", so this finding allows us to read, for the first time, the name of the chamber where the sacred tomb of the ruler is: "The House of the Nine Sharp Spears."

The enigma was solved by studying different elements, including the jaguar – a sacred animal of the Maya universe – by analyzing various skulls and observing their molars. Bernal Romero was able to relate that information with the glyphs, and determine that the glyph in question is the schematic representation of the upper molar of a jaguar. This glyph is registered in more than 50 Mayan inscriptions, each with a war focus.

Bernal Romero, explained that after 1700 years of being hidden, and by using the glyph YEJ, we can now decipher the full name of the "C House of the Palenque Palace" as "The House of the Sharp Spear", which is the residence of King Janaahb K'inich 'Pakal.

"This finding provides a leap in accuracy and understanding of Maya life. Today, we know that there were few wars, but they had a warrior philosophy, and that is why deciphering his glyph helps determine the rate of wars in the Late Classic, between 700 and 800 CE", said Bernal Romero.

"Is important to note that there are about 20,500 Mayan glyphs, and 80 percent have already been decoded. Of the glyphs at Palenque, 90 percent have already been interpreted."

The announcement of the discovery was made on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Maya Studies Center, of the Institute of Philological Investigations of the National University of Mexico.



"Pakal's tomb itself is a glorification of war, and has a symbolic relationship with various elements, for example, the nine levels of the Maya underworld."
– Guillermo Bernal Romero (Photo: Investigación y Desarrollo)



Illustration: Investigación y Desarrollo (INVDES).



Jaguar teeth. Photo courtesy of www.rainforestcruises.com

Source: From an article released 7/22/2015 at: www.heritagedaily.com. This article was originally released in Spanish on Mexico's Consulting Press and Communication (INVDES) society's website at: <http://invdes.com.mx>



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Correction for an article published in *IMS Explorer*, Vol. 44, Issue 7, July 2015:

A Study in Sunsets by John Spoolman

The correct orientation for the Codz Po'op is 283.6°, not 283.36°. The alignment angle in Figure 2 should be 13.6°. Direct alignment days were likely April 27 and August 17, not April 26 and August 18. All other observations and conclusions remain essentially unchanged. The author apologizes for this error.

John Spoolman

Exploring the Archives of Louis Capitan at the Collège de France

In May of this year, Dr. Éric Taladoire, Professor of Precolumbian Archaeology at the University of Paris I, gave a lecture at the IMS about the Mesoamerican ballgame. He mentioned an important photographic archive project that he coordinated along with Dr. Jane Walsh of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington for the Collège de France.

Launched in 2013 and known as “Salamander”, the portal provides access to heritage collections and digitized archives of the Collège de France. It offers access to old books, as well as archival documents, images, sounds and texts, from the work of the teachers at the college.

Fifteen digitized collections are already online, but Drs. Taladoire and Walsh focused on the archives of Louis Capitan, who was a professor and lecturer at the Collège de France at the turn of last century. Thanks to Dr. Taladoire, the archive is available and searchable to *IMS Explorer* readers at the following address: <https://salamandre.college-de-france.fr>. Here you can discover original glass-plate photos of archaeological sites at a time when most were barely emerging from the dense vegetation, Precolumbian artifacts either newly acquired by the teacher or other collectors, hand-painted reproductions of Mesoamerican codices, and colorful illustrations of the countryside.

Louis Capitan (1854–1929)

Louis Capitan, who taught American antiques at the Collège de France from 1908 to 1929, left abundant



Louis Capitan poses with his wife, during one of his adventures to Mexico (ca. 1910).



Louis Capitan and visitors stayed many days touring and photographing the massive site of Teotihuacan.

Although an excellent photographer, his black-and-white glass-plate photos didn't always convey the enchanting colorful landscapes he visited. At right, a worker cutting maguey for pulque.



Capitan and fellow travelers as they pass through a field of maguey cactus near Teotihuacan. The Temples of the Sun and Moon are barely visible in the background.



Louis Capitan posing in front of a mule-drawn carriage somewhere in Mexico. The glass plate was heavily damaged.



L) As a teacher and lecturer, Louis Capitan prepared many drawings to illustrate his numerous classroom lectures and museum presentations. Here, the feathered-headdress of Aztec king Moctezuma. R) A worker's habitation within a cultivated sisal field in the Yucatan (ca. 1910).



archives: over 2,000 photographs that were used to illustrate his lectures about the indigenous cultures of Mexico, the United States, and ancient Peru.

Louis Capitan was an extraordinary scholar. He originally studied to become a physician and was a student of Claude Bernard. In the first part of his career, he was the Clinical and Laboratory Director at the Faculty of Medicine. During this time he became interested in the prehistory, archaeology, and

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The Chachapoya city of Kuelap was huge and rivals other architectural feats in the ancient Americas. Photo courtesy of Martin St-Amant.

Discovery of Unique Silver Vessels in Peru

Two decorated silver cups found in the Chachapoyas region of Peru may rewrite the history of the enigmatic ancient people, who had never been known to do metalworking before this discovery.

Popularly known as the “people of the clouds,” the name Chachapoya, in fact, may be a corruption of the Inka (Quechua) name for the province called Chachapoyas: *sacha* (tree) and *puyu* (cloud) which can be roughly translated as “cloud forest.” This is an apt description for much of the Chachapoya territory.

The culture had cities, a form of Inka writing and long-distance trade, but they were not known as metalsmiths. It is still possible, however, that the two cups were from the Inka people, with whom the Chachapoya had warred.

The silver vessels were excavated by an archaeological team in the Soloco Purunllacta in Chachapoyas of the Amazonas department. They are unlike anything found there before.

Incredible Maya Monuments continued from page 1

lowlands, of a foreign power,” Canuto said. “Indeed, although details of this event remain murky, this stela provides another piece of the Maya historical puzzle.”

Two hieroglyphic panels were also discovered at the site. According to Stuart, they reference rituals of kingly accession that involve travel, costuming, dancing and reverence of ancestors.

Editor’s note: The image at right is a screen capture from a nice video of the discovery, viewable on the website at right.

“The finding of these vessels will change the story about Chachapoyas,” commented José Santos Trauco Ramos of the Decentralized Department of Culture of the Amazonas.

The vessels, which have similar, raised decorations, each weigh 152 grams (5.36 ounces) and are 112 millimeters (4.4 inches) high and 117 millimeters (4.6 inches) in diameter. They are between 0.8 and 1 mm thick and show no corrosion of any type. They will go display at the Museum of Chachapoyas, that has yet to open.

The decorations in relief on the cups show male and female characters with hands joined and wearing headdresses, dressed in clothing with geometric designs. Some of the figures carry a bag and some an ax. There are points and notches as decorations, also in relief.

“The two vessels have recently finished a 60-day restoration period at the conservation area of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional



Two metal vessels discovered at Purunillacta de Soloco, Amazonas. Photo by Wilfredo Sandoval.



A closer view of one of the silver cups. Photo by James Crandall, courtesy of www.message.toeagle.com

Bruning of Lambayeque. Trauco says it is too early to be sure, but there is a possibility that the vessels with Inka influence, could have been offerings.”

The Chachapoya people, who had a type of circular architecture and zig-zag decorative motifs, lived in a large, inaccessible territory at the headwaters of the Amazon River between the Huallaga and Marañon rivers in the cloud forests of the slopes of the eastern Andes mountains. Their culture flourished between 900 and 1500 CE.

Archaeologists know it was an egalitarian society because of the equal concern shown to people of all societal strata who were mummified. The society of more than 500,000 people controlled trade routes between the peoples of the Andes and the Amazon, says the British Museum, which has several Chachapoya artifacts.

The Chachapoya appeared to use the communication system called Quipu, which used twining and knots in different colors that conveyed information that could be read by a person literate in Quipu. The British Museum calls Quipu or Khipu “one of the great mysteries of archaeology as they have never been totally deciphered.”

Source: From an article by Mark Miller released 6/20/2015 at: www.ancient-origins.net



Source: From an article by Jacqueline Howard, Associate Science Editor of *The Huffington Post*. Posted 07/27/2015 at: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>



Book Review by Janice Van Cleve
The War for the Heart & Soul of a Highland Maya Town
by Robert S. Carlsen

University of Texas Press, Austin, TX
 Original edition: 1997
 ISBN: 0-292-71194-8
 Revised edition: 2011
 ISBN: 978-0-292-72398-6

Robert Carlsen's study of cultural change in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, is an eye-opening account of the clash between the religious/economic/military domination by the upper class and the resistance/adaptation tactics by the native Maya population in response.

His book, *The War for the Heart & Soul of a Highland Maya Town*, is heavily researched and backed by his own personal experience during the military repression of the 1990s.

Carlsen points out that at first the highland Maya were largely left alone by the Spanish. Right up to the middle of the 19th Century, Maya social/economic structures controlled over 70% of the best agricultural land. The Spanish were few and they preferred to use local Maya leaders for the collection of taxes.

The Catholic Church adopted the same tactic, establishing *cofradías* or clubs of converts devoted to this or that saint. These were left pretty much on their own to conduct financial and religious business which resulted in a largely traditional religion with some Catholic overtones. Whenever the demands of state or church became too onerous, the Maya would rebel or simply leave for the countryside. From 1550 to 1900, the population of Santiago Atitlan barely topped 3000 and at its low point was only 800.

Coffee changed all this. The indigo market collapsed and the economy turned to coffee – which required lots of land and labor. Ladino and European entrepreneurs expropriated Maya communal landholds usually by force. This resulted in over a century of oppression, disenfranchisement, and persecution of the Maya population. Complicating the issue were Evangelical missionaries whose activities prompted a resurgent Catholic reaction. Caught in the middle were the *cofradías* and their attachment to Maximon.

This is where Carlsen's book really gets interesting. He weighs the social, political, economic, and

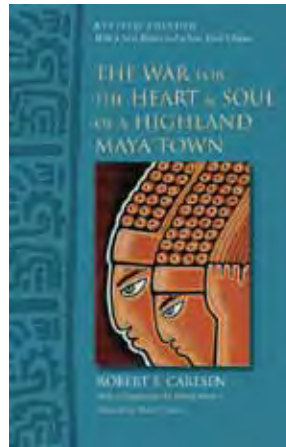


Maximón, by Juan Sisay. Sisay was the premiere and most well-known Maya painter from Santiago Atitlan.

religious upheavals caused by this “second conquista” and how the Maya of Santiago adapted, rebelled, came apart, and changed in the process. He discusses how the Atitecos – totally uprooted – struggled to find themselves and ultimately arrived at a measure of political autonomy but with a fragmented religious landscape.

I met Maximon in 2010. He is an idol with no hands or legs. His torso is clothed in various hanks of cloth. He wears two hats, one atop the other, both with pink and purple veils hanging from them. In his mouth is always a cigar or cigarette that an acolyte keeps lit during ceremonies. These ceremonies include lots of beer and rum and after a few communions, I was thinking this was a darned good religion!

Carlsen tells of atrocities committed by the Guatemalan army and how the Atitecos finally got them to leave. He tells how the shamans and Maximon struggled to regain their place in society and how the rivalry



During the year, Maximon is kept in the home of the chosen *cofradía* elder. Once during a visit with John Major Jenkins, the attendants were in a very festive mood and they sang two songs for us. Photo: Jim Reed.



Once a year, right before Easter, Maximon is brought to his special chapel in front of the church, to be the focus of ritualistic ceremonies that take place late at night, out of sight and off-limits to the uninitiated. Editor's note: During my presentation, I will relate my own experience concerning the night I was invited behind the closed door. Photo: Jim Reed.

between Catholics and the various Evangelical sects continue to tear the society apart. His analysis shows how occupations, land ownership, and education have tended to shift along religious lines.

This is an important book and unlike most studies, it tells a gripping story. 🏰

Janice Van Cleve's account of her Maximon experience is contained in *Maya Investigations Vol. 1*, available from Amazon or your local bookseller.

Editor's note:

Thank you, Janice, for this timely book review! This is one of the books that I will be referencing in my presentation about Maximon at the IMS on August 19.

IMSers, if you'll be attending, I have a lot of personal experiences with Max to relate and a new Stetson hat to show off for the occasion. To assist me with my “costume”; please bring a few scarves or neckties to place around my neck ... I'll return them if they don't catch fire! JR



Capitan revealed just about every site that was accessible to him, always with camera and sketchbook in tow. L) Capitan's photo of the giant stucco mask at Izamal, Yucatan, and (C) his hand-drawn illustration of the same mask. R) Mushroom/phallic sculptures at Uxmal, Yucatan (ca. 1910).

Exploring the Archives of Louis Capitan at the Collège de France

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ethnography, all disciplines that have, since the nineteenth century, taken a new turn. Throughout his life, he published books and articles on these topics, sometimes in collaboration with leading scientists, like the famous pre-historian Henri Breuil.

Editor's note: Thank you, Dr. Taladoire for creating this valuable archive and sharing the link with our IMS Explorer readers. IMSers, have fun exploring the archive on your own at: <https://salamandre.college-de-france.fr>.



For his college lectures and his public presentations, (L) Capitan reproduced Diego de Landa's tentative Mayan alphabet, and (R) the corbelled arch made of bricks at Comalcalco, by Charnay.



L) Louis Capitan's process with glass-plate photography involved each image always developing out into double frames. Here, a fun photo of a friend in the floating gardens (chinampas) of Xochimilco (ca. 1910). R) Next month, we explore photos by Louis Capitan of Chichen Itza and Palenque.



Both of these images courtesy of www.latinamericanstudies.org

L) Striking in its detail, this is the stucco bas relief of the north frieze of Acanseh, Yucatan (ca. 1910). C) In the interest of Maya studies, here are modern photos of the same frieze taken a century later. R) Today, the frieze is covered by a thick layer of protective panels. 🏗️

August 12, 2015 • IMS Explorer Session • Gods, Legends and Rituals Series Sacred Geometry in Maya Art and Architecture

IMS Executive Vice President and Programming Chair **Marta Barber**, shares a video on the same subject by **Dr. Ed Barnhart**

For decades, archaeologists have tried unsuccessfully to identify a Maya “unit of measure.” Then, in the early 1990s, archaeologist and Maya Exploration Center staff member Christopher Powell presented a new theory on Maya geometry.

While doing ethnographic research in Central America, Powell found that modern Maya shamans use standard geometric proportions when measuring the dimensions for new houses. Later, Powell discovered that many of the buildings and art panels at Palenque exhibit these same geometric proportions, which are based on a set of rectangles whose diagonals are calculated as the square roots of 2, 3, 4, and 5. Along with these planar proportions, the Maya employed the Golden Mean.



Maya Exploration Center Director Dr. Ed Barnhart has over two decades of experience in Mesoamerica as an archaeologist, an explorer, and an instructor.

August 19: IMS Feature Presentation

Maximón: Maya Cultural Hero in the Navel of the World

with IMS Explorer Newsletter Editor **Jim Reed**



The Lord of Looking Good. That's his humorous – yet ironically apropos – nickname as christened by North American researcher Robert S. Carlsen.

There's no way that I could say this any better myself – the following words speak of Maximón from a native's point of view. This story comes from local oral tradition and was written down by an Atiteco (a citizen of Santiago Atitlan), and is published on the town's own website at www.santiagoatitlan.com

“At times very wise and times very crazy, the figure of Maximón has confused outsiders for many years. The combination of saint/devil is one of the strongest remnants of the native philosophy in Santiago Atitlan. Although encouraged at first by the Catholic Church, Maximón was eventually persecuted and at one time made to go underground. Because of his great influence, he was very much feared by the Church and, in order to deal with him, they represented him as Judas of Iscariot, the betrayer of Jesus. To the people of Santiago, however, he represents something completely different. Maximón means ‘he who is tied with string or lasso’. *Ri Laj Mam* means ‘great grandfather’ or, in other words, the grandfather of all the people of the village of Santiago Atitlan”

Special notice:

The Institute of Maya Studies is proudly moving on! This presentation on August 19 will be the final event held by the IMS at the former Miami Science Museum. Come and celebrate with us!

All meetings begin at 8 pm • Institute of Maya Studies • Miami, FL • www.instituteofmayastudies.org

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Ancient Maya Patolli Board Discovered at Tikal

A research team from the University of Kanazawa, Japan, and the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports, announced in an official presentation on July 9 in the Peten, the discovery of an ancient Patolli board that was encountered in excavations in Tikal on May 13.

Researchers uncovered the design etched in a stucco floor within an excavation pit in the northeast corner of the North Acropolis. According to these researchers, Patolli means “play” or “beans,” and the game dates to the Early Classic period, between 250 and 550 CE.

In the Maya world, most Patolli board designs are square, but examples have been encountered that are round.



L) The official schematic drawing of the Patolli board released by the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports. R) Researchers examining the etched design in the stucco floor.

This Patolli board is a diamond-shaped square made up of 57 smaller squares that form a cross. The approximate measurements are 60 by 65 centimeters, and one corner of the diamond points to magnetic north.

In ancient times, Patolli had widespread use in Mesoamerica, including the Maya area, where, according to some experts, the game had a deeper connotation than just a game, as the design could be associated

with some kind of ceremonial rite.

According to Makiha Gokita in a paper posted on *Academia.edu*, “It seems that there is a close connection between Patolli and ancient Maya people’s lives. Patolli can be a media to connect the feeling of the person who created that design with people nowadays.”

Source: From a press release posted July 9, 2015 by the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports in “News” at <http://mcd.gob.gt>. Reposted by Janet Miess to the IMS Facebook page. 🏠

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

August 12 • 8 pm: *IMS Explorer Session*
Gods, Legends and Ritual Series: Sacred Geometry in Maya Art and Architecture – **Marta Barber**, IMS Vice President, shares a video on the same subject by **Dr. Ed Barnhart**.

August 19 • 8 pm: *IMS Presentation*
Maximón: Maya Cultural Hero in the Navel of the World – *IMS Explorer* editor **Jim Reed** has created a new program to tell the colorful and controversial story of this ancient Maya cult that still survives today.

September 9 • 8 pm: *IMS Explorer Session*
Gods, Legends and Ritual Series: Maya Temple Portal Doorways: Masks of the Spirit – with IMS President **Rick Slazyk**.

September 16 • 8 pm: *IMS Presentation*
Southern Belize in the Ancient Maya World: Recent Research at the Classic Sites of Nim Li Punit, Lubaantun, and Pusilha – with **Geoffrey E. Braswell**, of the University of California, San Diego.

Upcoming Events and Announcements:

August 14: *Museum Lecture*
Maya Art at the British Museum – Theme of the British Museum Gallery talk. In Room 27 in the British Museum, London, England. More info available at: <http://bit.ly/1Mt78hd>

September 11: *Maya Society Lecture*
Abbreviational Conventions of Classic Maya Writing – Theme of a Maya Society of Minnesota Lecture by Dr. Marc Zender, Assistant Professor, Tulane University. At Hamline University, St. Paul, MN. Get the full scoop at: <http://sites.hamline.edu/mayasociety/>

September 17-20: *MATP Conference*
Maya at the Playa – American Foreign Academic Research, Davidson Day School, and the Archaeological Institute of America present the 9th Annual Maya at the Playa Conference in Flagler County, FL. Get more info when the details are posted on their website at: www.mayaattheplaya.com

Sept. 26: *PCSWDC Seminar*
Amazonia and the Making of the Andean World – Theme of the 22nd annual symposium sponsored by The Pre-Columbian Society of Washington, D.C. At the U.S. Navy Memorial & Naval Heritage Center, Washington, D.C. Get full details at: <http://www.pcswdc.org/symposium2015/>

Through Oct. 11, 2015: *Museum Exhibit*
Gold of the Americas – This Walters Museum exhibit showcases more than 50 artifacts made by the indigenous peoples of ancient America. At the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD. Details at: <http://thewalters.org/events/event.aspx?e=3998>

November 11-14: *Chacmool Conference*
Shallow Pasts, Endless Horizons: Sustainability & Archaeology – Theme of the 48th Annual Chacmool Conference to be held at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Additional info at: <https://anthyky.ucalgary.ca/chacmool2015/>



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Join 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