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Maya enthusiasts providing public education for 44+ years

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September 21, 2016 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.4.9.10 • 6 Ok 8 Sotz • G1

Editor's note: *It is perhaps unprecedented in archaeological investigations, but the recent revelations at the ancient Maya site of Xunantunich in the Cayo District of Western Belize, combine the timing and importance of three major discoveries. First, carved panels with hieroglyphics are thought to tell the origins of the Snake dynasty at far off Calakmul. Pieces of a giant puzzle are filled in and major historic connections are revealed between the Lowland Maya sites of Caracol, Xunantunich, Naranjo, and Calakmul. Second, the panels were unearthed in front of a recently excavated pyramid that contains the first-ever tomb of a royal to be encountered at Xunantunich! ... Now, archaeologist, professor and friend of the IMS Kathryn (Kat) Brown, and her team, have discovered a hidden chamber deep within El Castillo pyramid itself – revealing more than 200 never-before-seen inscribed images on the walls. It was a classroom where Classic Maya scribes taught their students! Read it here before you hear about in National Geographic, Archaeology, Mexican or the SAAs! Absorb and enjoy!*

An Ancient Maya Scribe's Classroom at Xunantunich
with **Kathryn Brown**, Ph.D., Dept. of Anthropology of the University of Texas at San Antonio

Members of The University of Texas at San Antonio Department of Anthropology spent the summer digging season exploring ancient Maya sites in the Cayo District of western Belize.

Wonderful friend of the IMS, Kathryn Brown, associate professor of anthropology, has been directing a team of researchers at the site of Xunantunich since 2008, investigating the site's origins and political history. One target of those investigations is El Castillo, a 39-meter (128-ft) tall acropolis which served as the site's royal palace for decades.

Team member and UTSA doctoral student Leah McCurdy has focused her dissertation research on El Castillo, examining the architectural history of this impressive acropolis.

In 2014, McCurdy discovered a blocked doorway of



A sample of the Maya drawings discovered by Kathryn Brown and Leah McCurdy. Credit: UTSA DoA.



Xunantunich, in western Belize, where archaeologists found a royal tomb and hieroglyphic panels that tell of the history of the Lowland Maya. The hidden chamber with graffiti lies deep within "El Castillo" pyramid, featured in this recent photo by Dr. Jaime Awe.

7/22: Kathryn being interviewed in the chamber, deep within El Castillo. Credit: www.7newsbelize.com.

a in El Castillo. Brown suspected the room was an important location for the ancient Maya; the occupants took great care to cover the walls and purposefully fill the room when

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September 21, 6 pm
IMS Feature Presentation:
A New Look at Stephens and Catherwood
with **Keith Merwin**,
IMS Webmaster
See program announcement on page 7



Jim Reed,
Editor

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An Ancient Maya Scribe's Classroom at Xunantunich

featuring **Kathryn Brown**, Ph.D., Dept. of Anthropology of the University of Texas at San Antonio
continued from page 1

the acropolis was enlarged.

This summer, Brown secured a grant from Alphawood Foundation to explore this important feature. After four weeks of careful excavation, Brown and McCurdy discovered the walls of the room were covered with symbols and images that have been hidden from view for more than 1,300 years. More than 200 incised images graced the walls. Brown believes the room was a sacred place where an ancient Maya scribe trained apprentices. The walls of the room have been partitioned into sections and a red painted register surrounds the base of the room.

"We see incised images repeated as if young scribes were practicing their skills. We know that the Maya had accomplished artists and scribes, but we know little about how this important sacred knowledge was passed on.

"The discovery of this room helps shed light on this important aspect of Maya civilization. The images carved onto the walls of this room, ranging from simple sketches to sophisticated renderings, are like snapshots in the development of a Maya scribe's skills," said Brown.

The following comments were made by Kathryn while being interviewed in the chamber. Though the etchings might initially look like careless scribbles and sketches done by kids, Kathryn notes that the images were purposeful and artistic.

"What we discovered initially on this door jamb were some really beautifully executed incised images. Some are more graffiti-like and others are obviously rendered by an ancient artist or scribe. The individual that you can see here is sort of a royal personage with diamond shapes and his headdress holding something out in front with a belt element hanging down. And this



Sorry for the dark, low-res images, but how often do you get a glimpse down into the chamber of drawings while Kathryn Brown describes the specifics. All photos above courtesy of www.7newsbelize.com.



Kathryn Brown leads a 2016 group of field school students around the grounds of Xunantunich. Credit: UTSA DoA.

particular image would be something you would see similarly depicted on a polychrome ceramic vessel, like an elite vessel," noted Brown.

But these ancient scribes didn't just construct this room and randomly draw on these walls – it was precisely sectioned off:

"The Maya inscribed panels like a register where they've cut here and here, and here across the entire register of this room. It's been incised into small registers here and in these registers there's individual types of iconography or carved images and this one over here particular is really interesting. You see a jaguar head carved into the stone and you see another jaguar head an exact replica of that jaguar head. Another exact replica, another one," said Kathryn.

"This is the first of its kind found in the Maya world, its closest parallel being the scribal training location found at the nearby site of

Xultun a few years ago, which has a painted mural and glyphs but not incised designs like this," said Jason Yaeger, professor and chair of the UTSA Department of Anthropology.

Every summer, Yaeger, Brown and about 25 others, including undergraduate and graduate students from the top-tier UTSA Department of Anthropology spend a couple of months in Belize excavating ancient Maya ruins. Brown and Yaeger's team of archaeologists have worked at the Maya sites of Xunantunich, Buenavista del Cayo, Las Ruinas del Arenal, Callar Creek, and San Lorenzo.

Some of their most recent findings from the Belize digs include an Early Classic royal burial from Buenavista del Cayo. 🏛️

Source: Combined by the editor from an online report of Kat's discovery by Kara Mireles, Public Affairs Specialist, released 8/1/2016 at: www.utsa.edu. And an online report with video of the interview with Kat, posted 7/22/2016 at: www.7newsbelize.com.



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Structure A-9 during excavations. The hieroglyphic panels are covered by tarpaulins. A glimpse down into the tomb. Both photos by Jaime Awe.¹

Royal Tomb with Treasures Discovered at Xunantunich

Archaeologist Dr. Jaime Awe of Northern Arizona University has excavated a tomb at the Maya site of Xunantunich. “What’s amazing about the discovery of this tomb is that, we know that archaeologists have been working at Xunantunich since the 1890s,” says Awe. “That’s more than a century of continuous archaeological work at the site. And, never before have we found a tomb here. This tomb is also remarkable in other ways – it is one of the largest burial chambers we have ever excavated in Belize.”²

Nestled within the jungle of the Cayo District lies Xunantunich (Stone Woman), one of Belize’s most popular Maya archaeological sites. Not only does it attract hundreds of curious visitors, but it also draws archaeologists from around the world who hope to unearth new findings. During recent excavations, the first Maya burial tomb to be discovered at Xunantunich was located some five to eight meters deep, and according to archaeologists, it is the largest tomb discovered in Belize.

According to the Belizean Department of Archaeology, the discovery sheds new light into the history of the important ceremonial center, which became one of the most powerful in the region. The discovery at Xunantunich located just across the Mopan River from San Jose Succutz and a mere kilometer away from the Guatemalan border, was made by excavators within its department and from Northern Arizona University.

Archaeologist Jaime Awe confirmed that skeletal remains of a Maya ruler were found inside the beautifully styled tomb. According to him, the tomb dates back to the Late Classic Period. However, more tests need to be done in order to confirm the time period. But what makes the find even more impressive is the objects found near the skeleton. “It was purposely to enclose the tomb



L) A cache of 9 eccentric flints. Photo by Kelsey Sullivan.¹ R) Dr. Jaime Awe from onsite interview.⁴



L) Dr. Awe points out the male’s large femurs, skull and teeth. R) Then shows the ceramics in situ.⁴

of an individual who very likely was a ruler,” said Awe. “Going from the skeleton of the individual found in the tomb, we know that he is a male person due to the characteristics of the bones. By that, we can also calculate that he was between the ages of 20 to 30 years old.”

Awe explained that the person was buried and adorned with a notable amount of polychrome ceramics, jade beads, a small piece of pyrite, and a complete winkle shell. “The individual

had many revealing objects around him including eccentric obsidian blades. Interestingly, at the north-western side of the chamber, we found animal remains, some are the femur and long bones of probably a sacrificed jaguar or deer,” said Awe.

Dr. Awe said that they plan on conserving the tomb, making a replica of the skeletal remains and later installing a Plexiglas enclosure, so visitors can get a glimpse of the tomb from above.³

Sources: Photos released by Jaime Awe and NAU were shared on numerous news service websites. ¹The top two photos by Jaime Awe and the eccentric flints are from www.dailymail.co.uk, released 08/12/2016. ²Italic intro text condensed from www.archaeology.org, released 07/29/2016. ³Article text condensed from www.sanpedrosun.com, released 07/28/2016. ⁴Remaining three photos are screen captures made by the editor from the video and interview with Jaime Awe created by Belize Channel 7 news and posted at www.cahalpech.com, released 07/22/2016.

Inspiring Achievements of Visual Communicators



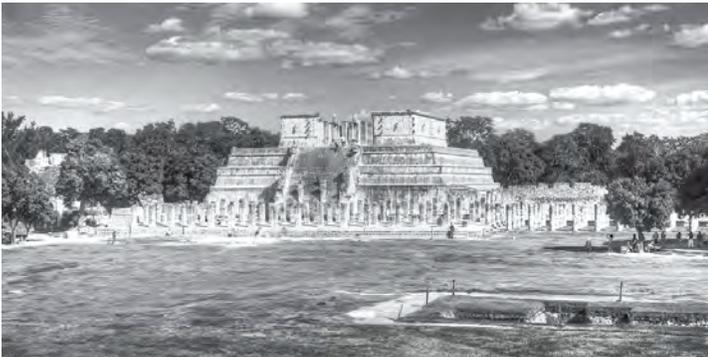
The Pyramid of Kukulcan, taken from atop the Temple of the Warriors.



El Caracol; the Observatory (from the front of the Mayaland Hotel).

Chichen Itza: Sacredness Revealed The Intriguing Photography of Pedro Tec

Pictures tell a thousand words, and the cliché is never more true than when viewing the artful, haunting photography of Yucatec native Pedro Tec. Last week, Pedro was a finalist for a prestigious award in youth arts from the state of Yucatan.



The Temple of the Warriors; across recent excavations below Kukulcan.



Exquisite; sneaking in at dawn before the vendors and all the others arrive.



My favorite. Part of his art is not having any other humans in his photos.



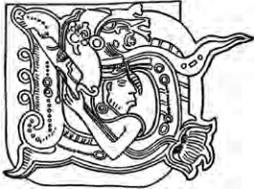
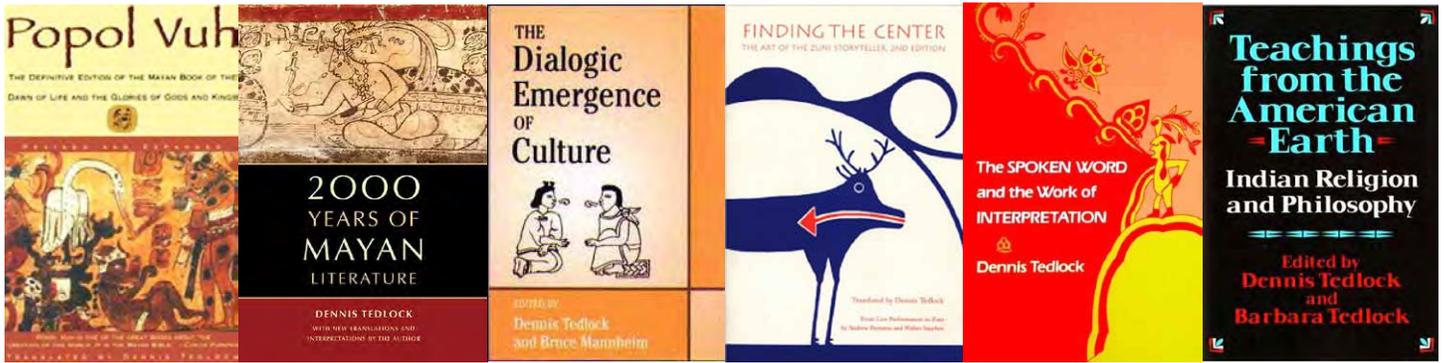
Before the guards wake up; from "up there" (off limits for many years now).



This month, Pedro has a personal photography exposition in Merida. Next month, we'll see his photos of Dzibilchaltun and Teotihuacan. 🏰

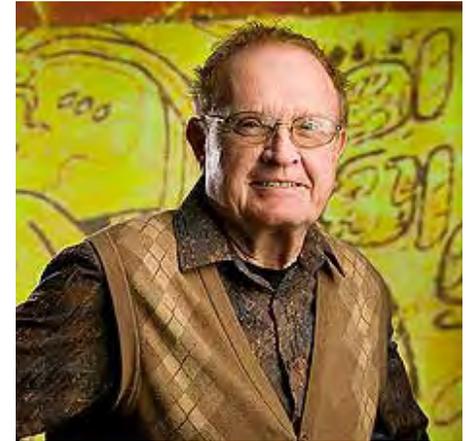


The House of the Deer, located near the Observatory.



**Pioneers in Maya Studies:
In Memoriam:
Dennis Tedlock
June 19, 1939 – June 3, 2016**

Dennis Tedlock,
from his
page on the
University at
Buffalo website,
by Douglas Levere.



Dennis Tedlock, State University of New York (SUNY) Distinguished Professor, James H. McNulty Professor in the Department of English and distinguished ethno-poeticist, translator, linguist and poet, passed on the road to Xibalba on June 3. He was 76.

A memorial service will be held at 11 am, September 17 in 306 Clemens Hall, North Campus, University at Buffalo SUNY.

A world-renowned scholar of Maya culture and the arts of indigenous people in the Americas, Tedlock is perhaps best known for his definitive translation of the *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, for which he won the PEN Translation Prize.

Tedlock was raised in Taos and Albuquerque, New Mexico, and received a BA in anthropology and art history from the University of New Mexico. He went on to earn a PhD in anthropology from Tulane University. He joined the UB faculty in 1987 after holding academic

appointments at Boston University, at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, and at Yale.

He conducted most of his field work over three decades with his wife, Barbara Tedlock, UB professor emeritus of anthropology. While they made periodic visits to the Zuni reservation, and did research in Nigeria, Brazil and Mongolia, the Tedlocks conducted most of their field work among the Maya peoples of Guatemala and Belize.

Dennis Tedlock's extensive scholarship includes 10 books and more than 100 articles, pamphlets and reviews. His *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* (edited with Bruce Mannheim, University of Illinois Press, 1995) has been credited with transforming the way ethnographers approach their work.

And when one of his most recent books – *2000 Years of Mayan Literature*, the first fully illustrated survey of two millennia of Mayan texts – was published in 2010 by the University of California Press, literary critics, cultural scholars and aficionados of the Maya called it “astounding,” “ground-breaking,” “stunning,” and “literally breathtaking.”

Source: From Dennis Tedlock's obituary on the University at Buffalo website, published 08/23/2016, at www.buffalo.edu

In Honor of Dennis Tedlock
by John Major Jenkins

Dennis Tedlock was one of the greatest Mayanists, who integrated ethnography, poetics, translation, mythology, oral performance, calendrics, and even astronomy

in his work. Consequently, he had to contend with more limited frameworks of understanding enforced by his more cautious specialist colleagues. His work seems at times under-appreciated, or perhaps operating influentially behind the scenes, as it were.

Another very important aspect about Dennis Tedlock's work is that he went beyond mere translation, and poetically articulated a deeper meaning in the texts he worked with. This is the challenge of translating native texts, especially something like the *Popol Vuh*, which Dennis explored and wrote about extensively in his translation work.

Maya texts, Dennis believed, are literary productions and contain all the nuances of great literature that is produced by individual writers. At the end of a translation process, there must be a poetic sensibility to accurately render the original sense expressed by the individual writer, even if that writer was a Classic Maya using hieroglyphs. This requires an almost intangible ability to get at the inner meaning, by incorporating many different factors relating to a text's construction, far beyond the linguistic rules and grammatical arguments of epigraphers. *continued on page 7*



An earlier photo of Dennis at Copan. Check out this image and a comprehensive tribute at: www.mayasites.com/dtedlock.html

Hieroglyphic Panels Excavated at Xunantunich Tell of the Origins of the Snake Dynasty and More

The royal tomb may be one of the largest found so far in the small Central American nation of Belize and the only at Xunantunich, but it is the two hieroglyphic panels that are currently fascinating archaeologists and epigraphers.

In 562 CE, Yajaw Te' K'inich II, ruler of the site of Caracol launched an attack on Tikal. The attack was successful, with the help of another site, Calakmul. Tikal went into a hiatus and Caracol remained dominant in that area. Lord Knot Ajaw succeeded his father, and shortly after, he was succeeded by his younger brother K'an II. The panels are believed to be part of a hieroglyphic stair that was originally erected at Caracol, about 42 km south of Xunantunich. Maya epigraphers believe the stair was commissioned by the ruler of Caracol, Lord K'an II, to record the story of his victory over the site of Naranjo, 15 km west of Xunantunich, in 626 CE.

However, when the ruler of Naranjo then defeated Caracol a few decades later, in 681 CE, it is believed the hieroglyphic stair was dismantled and taken away to Naranjo. The panels were then reassembled, but not in the correct order, with four segments clearly missing. "Epigraphers suggest the panels were purposely reassembled out of syntax in an effort to ensure that the stair's meaning would make no sense", noted Jaime Awe.

Previously, one of the four missing panels was found during explorations at the site of Ucanal. Another fragmentary panel was also discovered at Caracol. The panels recently discovered near the tomb at Xunantunich may thus be ones to complete the very start and end of the narrative once recorded on the original hieroglyphic stair – making the find very exciting for epigraphers studying the Maya world.

An analysis of the hieroglyphs by project member Dr. Christophe Helmke confirms that the panels were commissioned by Lord K'an II, in 642 CE. They also record the death of the Caracol's ruler mother, Lady Batz' Ek'.



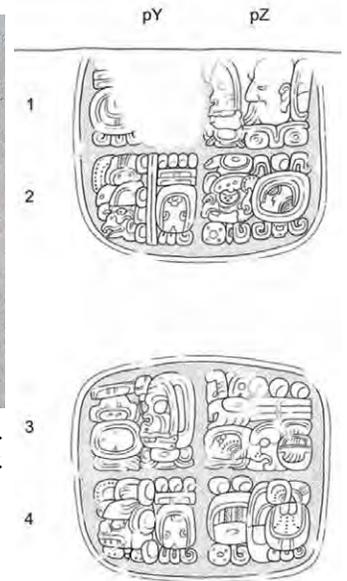
The panels with hieroglyphics were uncovered on either side of the stairway of Structure A-9.



L) Jaime Awe holding a flashlight on the left-side panel. It was uncovered after the split panel on the right side. Photo by Christophe Helmke. R) The right-side panel, by Northern Arizona University.



Above) Two detailed images of the hieroglyphics on the left-side panel. At right) Illustrations released by Northern Arizona University.



From her titles, it seems that she may have been from the site of Yaxha, in what is now Guatemala. She had married the ruler of Caracol as part of a marriage alliance between these sites.

Furthermore, the panels identify a previously unknown ruler from the site of Calakmul, in the present day state of Campeche, in Mexico. The final part of the narrative also relates the founding of the so-called Snake-head dynasty at the site of Calakmul, from where these kings would dominate much of lowland Maya politics during the Late Classic period (c. 550 to 900 CE). Thus, the panels shed a new light on the alliances, battles and power dynamics between Maya cities in the 7th century. 🏰

Sources: Text combined from an article released 06/15/2016 at www.sanignaciobelize.com and an article released 08/03/2016 at www.ibtimes.co.uk.

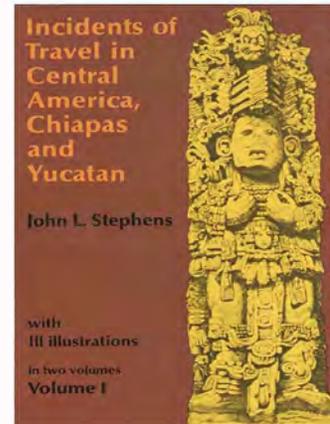
The top two photos are screen captures from the same Belize Channel 7 news video at: www.cahalpech.com released 07/22/2016. Other images by Northern Arizona University appear on www.dailymail.co.uk 08/12/2016 and in a Flickr show at <http://science.kjzz.org> 08/26/2016.

September 21 • 6 pm • IMS Feature Presentation

A New Look at Stephens and Catherwood with IMS Webmaster Keith Merwin

In 1841, John Lloyd Stephens and Fredrick Catherwood published the first detailed description of the Maya sites located in Central America with high quality, accurate illustrations. Their publications changed how people viewed the New World.

Both had traveled extensively in Europe and the Middle East. Stephens had written two very successful travel journals about his experiences and Catherwood had published drawings and maps of exotic places. But it was the three books describing their two trips to Central America that have captivated the world. *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1841) and *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1843) and Catherwood's volume of lithographs *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1844) were the bestselling books of the time. All three books are still in print and Catherwood's illustrations are considered some of the finest drawings of Maya monuments ever done.



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Go to the college website at: www.mdc.edu for directions and campus map.

Jaguar pelt border courtesy of Steve Radzi. See his portfolio of original Maya-themed artwork at: www.mayavision.com

In Memoriam: Dennis Tedlock

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Yet another thing, which qualified Dennis for this task but goes beyond merely possessing academic degrees, was his deep immersion in Native American cultures, among the Zuni and Quiché Maya for example. In the 1970s, he and his wife Barbara were initiates in the sacred calendar tradition of the Highland Maya. Their

ethnographic work among the Maya, and their understanding of the inviolable continuity of sacred traditions, resulted in them supporting, in no uncertain terms, the 584283 calendar correlation, making the 13-Baktun cycle-ending fall on 4 Ajaw, December 21, 2012. They had their own views on this Era-ending, drawing from Maya star-lore and astronomy.

In this regard, another important aspect of Dennis's work, especially

in his work on the *Popol Vuh* translation, the Dresden Codex, and the Palenque inscriptions, is that he identified astronomical features that were being referenced in Maya mythology, surviving codices, and hieroglyphic inscriptions. As such, he provided a key regarding how Maya texts and Creation Mythology consistently utilized certain astronomical locations and processes. *Rest in peace, our friend.* 🏹

2016 New Membership and Renewal Application

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- Member: \$50



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My Fond Memories of Dennis Tedlock by Editor Jim Reed

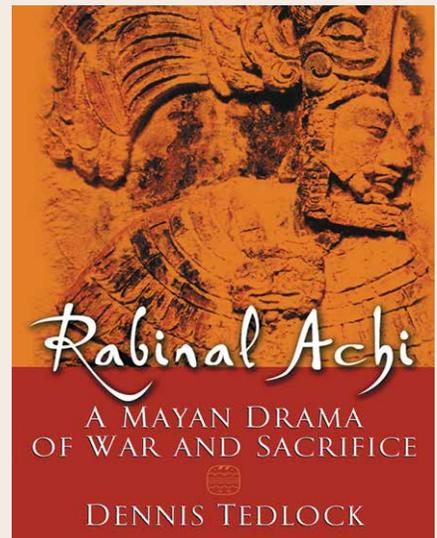
Dennis Tedlock lectured for the IMS on various occasions in the past. One such special occasion was in 1999, the year before I was president of the Institute. I invited Dennis and Barbara to stay at our home in South Florida, to save the IMS some hotel costs. I was on limited funds also, staying with my parents after returning from living 7-1/2 years in Guatemala and Belize.

Turns out that I have been the only person to ever challenge Dennis to perform one of his plays! I had an indigenous inspired musical group at the time, and we envisioned a program of acting out a few scenes from his play, accompanied by live music that attempted to re-create the sounds, and emotions of the past.

My band buddies and their wives, and Dennis and I, were costumed up, dressed in furs and suedes to play our parts. Imagine a Lacandon God-pot burning with copal incense. Dennis played the king, and I played the part of Cawek. It was a hit! *Read on . . .*

Recognized as one of the most important surviving works from a Precolumbian civilization, *Rabinal Achi*, is a Maya drama set a century before the arrival of the Spanish. Dennis created the first ever translation into English from Quiché Maya.

Rabinal Achi is the story of war, city-states, and nobility, of diplomacy, mysticism, and psychic journeys. Cawek of the Forest People has been captured by Man of Rabinal, who serves a ruler named Lord Five Thunder. Cawek is a renegade, a warrior who has inflicted much suffering on Rabinal. The drama presents the confrontation between the two during the trial of Cawek, who defies his captors and proudly accepts death by beheading. Despite being banned for centuries by Spanish authorities,



it has survived, and is still performed in the town of Rabinal today.

I cherish four autographed books by Dennis. At that time, he gifted me with *Breath on the Mirror*, and *Days from a Dream Almanac*. I feel very honored to have spent many special Days with Dennis. Plus, he loved my mother's cooking! 🍌

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

Sept. 21 • 6 pm: *IMS Feature Presentation*
A New Look at Stephens and Catherwood – Together, their three books about their two trips to Central America captivated the world; with IMS Webmaster **Keith Merwin**.

Oct. 19 • 6 pm: *IMS Feature Presentation*
What's New at Homul – Each year, the archaeological investigations continue, with our friend **Dr. Francisco Estrada-Belli**, of Tulane University.

Nov. 16 • 6 pm: *IMS Feature Presentation*
Kaxil Kiuc: Turning a Maya Site into a Center of Studies – We featured the Kaxil Kiuc Bioserve and its jaguars in our July Explorer. Now we feature the ancient Maya site itself; the focus of study by INAH and Millsaps College for almost two decades, in a lecture by one of its two co-Directors, **Dr. George Bey**, of Millsaps College.

All IMS events will take place in Room K-413 at Miami Dade College – Kendall Campus. That's Building K-4, Room 13. See map on www.mdc.edu

Upcoming Events and Announcements:

September 17: *PCSWDC Symposium*
Divine Kingship: The Political Ideology of Pre-Columbian Rulers – Theme of the annual symposium of the Pre-Columbian Society of Washington DC. Speakers include Simon Martin, Takeshi Inomata, Brian Bauer, Lori Boornazian Diel, Patrick Hajovsky, and Luis Jaime Castillo. At the U.S. Navy Memorial & Naval Heritage Center, Washington, D.C. Info at: www.pcswdc.org/symposium2016/

September 20: *AIA Lecture – Houston*
Maya Ritual Secrets Revealed: Sacrifice, Divination, and Astronomy – with Dr. Tomás Gallareta Negrón, INAH Yucatan. Tomás is the other co-Director of Kaxil Kiuc! Event to take place at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston, TX. Details at: www.archaeological.org

Sept. 29 – Oct. 2: *MATP Conference*
10th Annual Maya at the Playa Conference – This year marks the tenth anniversary of these popular Maya meetings. Presenters include: Stanley Guenter,

James Stemp, Harri Kettunen, Cameron Griffith, Arlen and Diane Chase, and Marc Zender. Jaime Awe, PhD, of the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project and Northern Arizona University, will be the 2016 lifetime achievement honoree. At the Flagler County Government Services Building, Bunnell, FL. 4-Day Lecture Pass at a \$240. IMS members are eligible for a \$20 discount. Use code: *ims* To register online, go to: www.mayaattheplaya.com/

October 17-22: *Wayeb Conference*
Hierarchy and Power in the Maya World – This year, the 21st Wayeb European Maya Conference will take place in Moscow, Russia. There will be 3-1/2-days of workshops and a 2-day symposium. Some of the invited speakers include: Tomás Barrientos, David Stuart, Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston, Takeshi Inomata, Simon Martin, Alfonso Lacadena Erik Velásquez, and Alexander Safronov. Get more info at: www.wayeb.org/conferences/events/emc_now.php



IMS EXPLORER

Join the **Explorer-ation!** Scholar or not, we welcome submissions from IMS members and other Maya enthusiasts. 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