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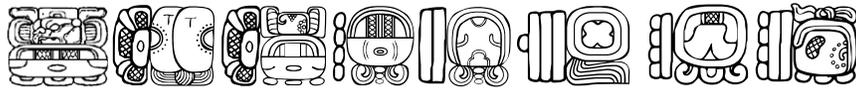
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July 4, 2017 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.4.10.16 • 9 K'ib 14 Sek • G9

**Exploring with BVAR
Notes from the Field:**

***Been There, Done That!*
by Zach Lindsey**

It was perhaps the fifth time our guide to Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM) cave mentioned the name that I began to realize what most Belizeans already know: Dr. Jaime Awe is pretty darned important down here. There are very few sites in the Belize River Valley, or even around the country, that haven't seen his trowel. Love him or hate him (most seem to love him, but you can't please everybody), every Belizean tour guide knows Dr. Awe.

That's one reason studying for two weeks with the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR) Project was such a pleasure. Dr. Awe is one of those rare academics who can research, teach, and express himself to lay audiences, all with



Zach Lindsey (L) together with Dr. Jaime Awe (R) in front of the stairs up Pyramid B1 at Cahal Pech, shortly before Dr. Awe got fed up and decided to choke the author with his own bandana.

a glitter in his eye, an impatient drive to his well-honed anecdotes and punchline-laden stories, and a loving insistence that the word "caca" is a valid scientific term.

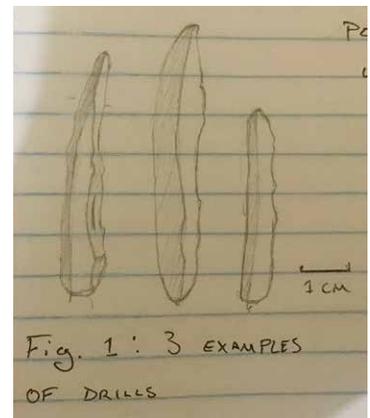
I worked at Cahal Pech, a Maya site that was occupied as early as 1200-900 BCE and seems to have had Maya residents return even after the collapse of the Terminal Classic period. These residents lived in the ruins, as it were, according to Dr. Awe, and you can see the evidence of their crudely-constructed buildings, modifications to plazas, and impressive, confusing intrusive burials all over the site.

Digging right out front of the temple structure called B1 in the main plaza at Cahal Pech was a real pleasure. However, as is often the case in archaeology, you sometimes don't know what you'll discover.

Our site supervisor, Dr. Claire Ebert, was looking for evidence of the earliest inhabitants. Instead, we found a beautiful cache of Middle Preclassic pottery, possibly the remains of a termination ritual. But my

IMS program note:

In alignment with MDC, we will take a summer break during the months of July and August. This gives you time to prepare for Michael Callaghan and Brigitte Kovacevich on September 20!



Quick field sketches of chert drills (or perhaps perforators) found associated with Preclassic potsherds.

lips are sealed on much of what we found inside the vessels. You'll have to check out the annual field report when the season is over for that information!

BVAR focuses on its students, which surprisingly

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View of our excavation unit from the top of Pyramid B1 at Cahal Pech.



**Jim Reed,
Editor**

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Notes from the Field: Exploring with BVAR



The view from El Castillo at Xunantunich, another site where BVAR folks get to dig. (Photo by Zach Lindsey)

Been There, Done That! by Zach Lindsey *continued from page 1*



A late Terminal Classic potsherd found at Cahal Pech, possibly associated with Maya who returned to the site after the collapse.

at Hode's Place, you'll be ready for well-deserved sleep every night at nine.

But if you love Maya archaeology (and why are you reading this if you're don't?), when the sunrise at Mana Kai in San Ignacio, Belize, drags you awake in the morning, I have no doubt you will hop out of bed, excited to see what the ancient ruins will yield.

Link to BVAR's website, including information on the field school, research, and publications: <http://www.bvar.org/> 🏠

isn't always the case. If you're there for credit, you'll be taking tests, and even if you're not, you won't get away from setting up a unit. But it's not just for college students: it's a great atmosphere for any adults interested in archaeology or the Maya.

My roommate was in his 70s and on his first dig after having spent more than 50 years visiting the Maya region – and he wasn't the oldest person who came to Belize with us!

That said, it's hard work. Dr. Awe might go easier on the older folks (if they want; my roommate sure didn't), but between fieldwork, lectures, tests, trips to other sites, and maybe a quick glass of rum or a Belikin



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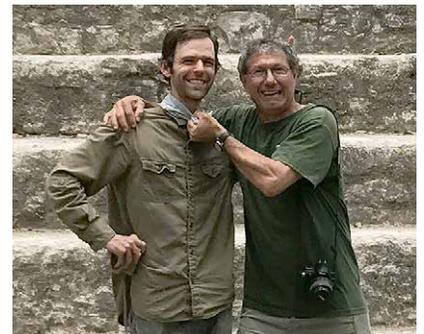


Exhibit A! Caught in the act. Dr. Jaime attempts to choke Zach with his own bandana!



Digger's blog photos from the 2017 Belize field season posted to the IMS Facebook page by Janet Miess. L) Cassina Colleen's team with BVAR at Cahal Pech. C) Julie Haggarth's group with BVAR at Cahal Pech. R) Kevin Austin's team with the Maya Research Program at Blue Creek.

IMS Mexican Highland Adventure!

Nine Days with 8 Old Friends and 1 New



by **Marta Barber**

IMS President Rick Slazyk taking a picture of Cantona. Photo by Marta Barber.

“Never go on trips with anyone you don’t love,” wrote Ernest Hemingway in his early book of his life in *Paris, A Moveable Feast*. Traveling with a tribe of explorers, no matter how small the group, can be demanding.

On IMS’ last trip, one that took us through important sites in Central Mexico, 8 members and one addition – the winner of Miami Dade College’s scholarship – blended like tequila and salt, like tacos and chile, like bread and butter. It was a constant moveable feast of learning, laughing and... eating!

We planned our yearly trip for the end of April to beginning of May, on a loop that would take us from Teotihuacan to Cantona, at the border of Puebla and Veracruz, to Tula, northwest of Mexico City, south to Malinalco, and return to Mexico City.

The trip fulfilled IMS’ commitment to MDC to offer a scholarship to a student. The winner, Jackie Neal, soon became part of the group: From her easy demeanor to her desire to learn, she quickly became part of the laughter and quirkiness.

As usual, our loyal friend and trusted companion, Jose Loeza,



Breakfast. We were so hungry that they opened the restaurant for us. Foreground right, IMS President Rick Slazyk ponders the taste while author Janice Van Cleve takes her first bite! Photo by George Fery.



L) The group first visited the Temple of Quetzalcoatl in Teotihuacan. Goggle-eyed Tlaloc sculptures are prevalent. R) Ruben Cabrera, the INAH archaeologist who has worked in La Ventilla for more than 20 years, shows us the floor glyphs in the Temple of the Glyphs in Teotihuacan. The glyphs are covered by a wooden enclosure, which he agreed to let us remove to take the pictures. Photos by George Fery.

joined us Friday, April 28 at 9:30 am in the heavily polluted morning air that greeted us upon arrival at Benito Juarez International Airport. By 11:30 we were in Teotihuacan, ready for our first intellectual endeavor – except, we must eat first (see below). With our group, food is as important as the greatest Precolumbian treasures!

Voices rumbled as high as stomachs begging for food. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are as chiseled in our itinerary as goggle eyes are on the Tlaloc sculptures on the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, our first stop at the site.

Teotihuacan, the city named by the Aztecs as *The Place Where the Gods Were Born* (or something similar), can be defined as grandiose. Its size, its meticulous urban planning, its monumental pyramids and, at least for me, its magnificent murals, distributed throughout the whole city, make it the most majestic among Precolumbian cities.



Our guide, Ruben Cabrera, explains the history of La Ventilla to Jackie Neal. Photo by Rick Slazyk.

Our trip was made special by the visit to the ancient residential area known as La Ventilla, excavated a couple of decades ago and still closed to the public. Our guide, INAH archaeologist Ruben Cabrera, who named the “barrio” after the private land on which it was discovered, took us around, showing the different levels of construction found so far. La Ventilla has a long history of habitation. Its most intriguing area is La Plaza de los Glifos, where small glyphs (?) can be found on the plaster covered floor at what appears

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Above: Marta with Crown of Roses. It was May 3, Holy Cross Day (my mom's birthday); crown would be offered to the Virgin of Guadalupe (a MB selfie!). Second: Malinalco: A cyclist carries the cross he will offer to the Lord of Chalma (photo by George Fery). Third: Bikes bearing their offerings gather in front of the Sanctuary of Chalma (photo by Rick Slazyk). Fourth: Jackie Neal, our MDC student, in Malinalco (photo by George Fery).

IMS Mexican Highland Adventure!

by **Marta Barber** continued from page 3

to be precise intervals. For years, linguists have been debating which language the Teotihuacanos spoke. Nahuatl, the language of the Aztec, common in the Altiplano? Mixe-Zoquean or Isthmian, that language many attribute to the Olmec? Evidence of writing is scant, which makes the deciphering of glyph-like paintings difficult.

What do the floor glyphs of La Ventilla want to tell us? Christophe Helmke and Jesper Nielsen write this: "Based on a careful review of previous interpretations of the glyphic La Ventilla floor, the writing system, and the possible language(s) of Teotihuacan, we suggest that the majority of the 42 glyphs are not references to toponyms or titles, but are related to disease-causing entities and curing rituals."

Having exhausted our allotted time at Teotihuacan, we continued to Cantona, in the State of Puebla close to the border with Veracruz. For 14 years now, we've been offering these trips as a way of adding to our coffers. We've ventured out of Mesoamerica twice: once to Egypt and once to Cambodia and Thailand. On a few occasions, we've traveled to non-Maya areas, such as the Gulf Cultures in the State of Veracruz; States of Puebla and Tlaxcala, with their magnificent Mexican Baroque churches; Olmec and Mixe-Zoque of Tabasco; Zapotec-Mixteca in the Oaxaca area; and the sites of Central Mexico, as varied culturally as historically.

Cantona is a city that flourished after the fall of

Travelers ready to climb up to the Aztec Retreat (photo by George Fery).

Teotihuacan, and developed as one of the largest in Mesoamerica, due mainly to the obsidian trade between the Gulf of Mexico and the Highlands. The roads in and out of the city were built by its ancient population, whose origin is in doubt, though elements of Chichimeca ceramics have been found. (Sadly, INAH archaeologist, Angel Garcia Cook, who excavated Cantona for decades, died this past March.)

At 8389 ft. above sea level, this mountain site is challenging.

Several of us needed to stop constantly to give our legs a break and to catch the thin air that, fortunately, had left the polluted clouds way below us. With its 24 ball courts, its rocky appearance and stunning views of the surrounding terrain, Cantona is well worth a visit.

But our climbing was not over. Malinalco was on our itinerary. If I were fluent in emojis, I would enter here a face of desperation. The town of Malinalco sits at 5700 ft. above sea level. The Aztec site, whose name is Cuauhtinchan, is 705 ft. above the town, reached by modern stairs going up the mountain like a railroad track with switches, 425 steps zigzagging up, and then down.



L) Jose Loeza and Marta at Malinalco (photo by George Fery).

R) Rick, Jackie and Marta pose in front of work being done at Tlaltelolco in Mexico City (photo by Rick Slazyk).

Holy Itzamna! A repeat of the Cantona climb: climb a few steps; catch your breath; wonder what made you do this. But there it was, the Cuauhcalli, the Temple of the Idols in the Aztec retreat of the Eagle and Jaguar Warriors. Carved out of the solid mountainside it is as impressive for its carvings as it is for its human achievement.

Malinalco was and is a special place. Visitors who limit themselves to the archaeological site, will miss two spots of intense spirituality: the Convent of San Salvador and the Sanctuary of the Lord of Chalma.

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Located around the main plaza on the largest island, the Guajil Pyramid, as viewed from the lake.

El Lagartero, is an ancient Maya settlement located in Lagos de Colón, Chiapas, near the border with Guatemala, 68 kilometers from Comitán. Its ceremonial center is situated on an island and is surrounded by crystalline bodies of water.

The site was described in the 19th century by explorer John L. Stephens as “A site of wild and incomparable beauty, with shady banks shaded by some of the majestic trees of the woods – tropical, water as clear as crystal and fish a foot long, swimming as calmly as if the hooks did not exist.” Almost two centuries later, Lagartero continues to be a small paradise, combining natural beauty with archaeological interests.

Among the bodies of water lie the remains of a Maya city, whose inhabitants skillfully exploited the water environment to create channels, possibly used for irrigation and defense.

The site has been known as “Lagartero” since 1972, when the first settlers arrived. Lagartero is related to lizards/iguanas and the nearby river also bears the name Lagartero. Archaeologists from INAH Chiapas excavated four Prehispanic copper pendants on the site that have the shape of a lizard’s head, confirming the site’s name and thus alluding to the importance of reptiles as being a symbol of the underworld.

From ceramic analysis, researchers note Lagartero was initially settled around 300 CE, in the Early Classic, and the society reached its peak during the Late Classic (600 to 900 CE). The site was continuously occupied well into the Late Postclassic period, between 1200 and 1400 CE. One of the largest islands – El Limonar – was probably the regional nucleus and ceremonial center. There are 186 mounds, fifteen main constructions: four pyramids, a ballcourt, and the vestiges of structures on platforms, and residential foundations.

Cultural Importance

Lagartero played a very important role during the Late Classic period, serving as an intermediary between the culture of the Lowlands and Maya Highlands of Guatemala, and the central depression Chiapaneca.



A) The ceremonial center of the city stretches across the island of El Limonar (named for the abundance of lemon trees). B) Pyramid of God of Wind where archaeologists have uncovered 40 polychromatic ceramic vessels, stone masks, basalt, and numerous flint and obsidian artifacts. C) The Guajil Pyramid, named after a tree of the same name growing out the back side. D) In 2009, a 2-meter (6'5") tall stela was discovered within the Tomb Pyramid (Museo Regional de Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico). E) The ballcourt at Lagartero is 50 meters (160') long and 17 (56') meters wide, with a very low pitch angle.

It is possible that Lagartero was the origin point of a certain codex style of polychrome effigy vessels that later spread to many other places in Mesoamerica.

Dr. Sonia Rivero Torres, director of the archaeological project in this site, notes that “towards 700–900 CE, in the Late Classic, Lagartero was influenced by the Petén. There are similarities with Tikal (Guatemala) in terms of Codex style ceramics; while the use of the talud-tablero system in its architecture, and the location of pieces of green obsidian, refer to connections with the Mexican Central Plateau.”

Sources: Condensed by the editor from various sources including <http://chiapas.gob.mx/arqueologia/zona-arqueologica-el-lagartero/> and <http://www.zonaarqueologica.com.mx/zona-arqueologica-de-lagartero-en-chiapas/>. This article was originally inspired by a blogspot post by Boguchwala Tuszynska forwarded by Karl Herbert Mayer at: <http://przedkolumbem.blogspot.com/2017/04/miasta-majow-lagartero-stan-chiapas.html>. You can access one of Sonia’s papers at: <https://revistas-filologicas.unam.mx/estudios-cultura-maya/index.php/ecm/article/view/75719151>. INAH TV has a nice YouTube video (in Spanish) at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WzvE4HsDm8I>.

Treasure Trove of Jadeite Stones Used in Maya Rituals Discovered in Guatemala

The greenstones are thought to have been used in ceremonies to establish a ruling class

Polished greenstone objects made of jade and serpentine were discovered in Ceibal, Guatemala, dating from about 1000 to 450 BCE. The artifacts are elongated objects called celts, thought to have been used in public ceremonies.

The early years of the Maya civilization are relatively poorly understood. Many of the archaeological remains from this time have been buried by those of the later Maya and by modern developments. A rare find in Ceibal, Guatemala, has led to new insights into the early Maya culture.

A total of 18 cross-shaped holes in the ground called caches were discovered, with a total of 72 polished greenstone celts. This is the largest single find of celts in the Maya Lowlands dating from the era.

“Among the items highly prized by Precolumbian Mesoamerican people were objects carved in hard greenstone. The polished greenstone celts from Ceibal were manufactured from jadeite, metagabbro, serpentine and other metamorphic greenstone,” notes Kazuo Aoyama of Ibaraki University, Japan, who discovered the celts.

The color of the stones is thought to have spiritual significance for the early Maya, as green was associated with the center of the Maya cosmos.

The celts were buried in caches in the central plaza of the settlement.

Greenstones discovered in Ceibal, Guatemala. They date from the early stages of the Maya civilization and were used in public rituals to establish an elite class. Takeshi Inomata / Antiquity.

They were placed close to large ceremonial structures, hinting that they held a ritual or ceremonial role in the culture.

Fine-scale analysis of the celts’ surface has shown that they weren’t systematically worn down by fabrics, suggesting that they weren’t worn as an ornament. Instead, they’re thought to have been used in ceremonies to establish the elites during the Preclassic Maya experience.

“Many of the celts were made specifically for ritual purposes, although a smaller number of them were used for wood carving,” Aoyama writes.

A majority of the celts were buried in a public plaza, suggesting their ceremonial role. It’s thought that they played a role in integrating the community and political negotiation among the society’s newly forming elite class.

“The emerging elite probably played a primary role in these rituals, setting a template for later public events centered on rulers.”

Many of the celts were buried aligned with the points of the compass. This becomes more pronounced in the later burials, suggesting a growing importance of the movement of the Sun among the Maya.



The greenstones showed no use of wear and so are not thought to have been personal ornaments. Takeshi Inomata / Antiquity.



The greenstones during excavation (left) and rearranged to how they are thought to have been originally arranged (right). Takeshi Inomata / Antiquity.

“The emerging elites at Ceibal were probably actively engaging with concepts associated with cardinal directions and the Maya cosmos during the Middle Preclassic period,” Aoyama writes. “Ideology, expressed in material form and through aspects of public rituals and public ceremonial structures, played a significant role in the development of Maya rulership.”

Source: Article by Martha Henriques, released May 30, 2017 on the International Business Times website at: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/treasure-trove-jade-stones-used-mayan-rituals-discovered-guatemala-1623929>. Submitted by Mike Ruggeri to the IMS Facebook page.

About Takeshi Inomata

Takeshi Inomata is a very accomplished archaeologist who studies Maya civilization, social change, warfare, architecture, and ceramics. He has worked at the Maya sites of Aguateca and Ceibal, Guatemala. Check out his presence on the University of Arizona website at: <https://anthropology.arizona.edu/user/takeshi-inomata/>

Takeshi has been co-directing explorations at Ceibal since 2005: <http://www.ceibal-aguateca.org/>

IMS Mexican Highland Adventure!

by **Marta Barber** *continued from page 4*

The history of the evangelization of the peoples of the Americas contains many dark episodes of brutality. But it also left behind expressions of faith quite unique. One example is the atrium of the San Salvador convent. Built in 1540, the Augustinian Convent was home to one of the main religious orders that traveled to Mexico after the fall of the Mexica empire in 1521. The atrium walls were painted by native artists copying the European art of the time. This gave birth to “tequitqui” art, of which, the Paradise Gardens murals of the Malinalco convent are a prime example.

After a hearty breakfast, it was time to head to the nation’s capital, but we had a stop to make first. The Sanctuary of the Lord of Chalma is one of the top pilgrimage sites in Mexico, second only to the Shrine of Guadalupe. On our visit, large groups of cyclists were bringing their bikes to be blessed (see photos on page 5). With tears in his eyes, a young man, in his cycling garb, obviously part of a team, upon reaching the door of the sanctuary, lifted his bike to the sky, knelt, and extended his arms toward the altar, as if asking for protection of his bike, and thus him. Whoever has driven on the mountain roads and highways of Central Mexico realizes how important this act must be for cyclists.

Next, Tenochtitlan was on our list. “Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave

Shield of Mexico: Used from 1864 -1867 during the Second Mexican Empire of Maximilian I. At the Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico City (photo by Marta Barber).

London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.” I wouldn’t go as far as Samuel Johnson in describing Mexico City, but the National Museum of Anthropology and History in Chapultepec park, comes close to Johnson’s description.

There we were, for the nth time for many of us; but, there’s always something new.

This time, there was an illuminating exhibit on the origins and different manifestations of the Shield of Mexico, the eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its beak. The United States of Mexico became an independent nation in 1810, and the shield, the exhibit shows, has gone through as many changes as governments have ruled this nation of many cultures.

We spent three days in Mexico City, visiting museums of all kinds, and eating all kinds of foods. There’s never enough time to visit the amalgam of



L) George Fery and Rick Slazyk discuss the best angle from which to take a photo inside the National Museum of Anthropology and History. R) A bowl of esmaloles. Delicious! (photos by Marta Barber).

archaeological sites, museums and historical homes found in Central Mexico. Not to mention the restaurants we tried in search of Mexican specialties. In season at this time of the year were the delicious “escamoles.” That’s ant eggs! A most memorable trip indeed! 🍷

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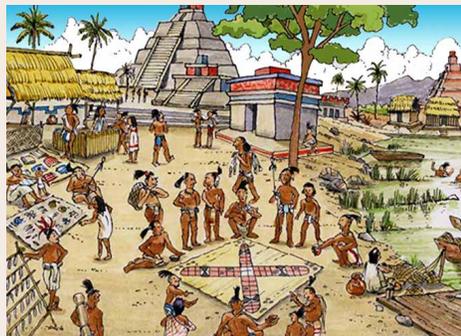
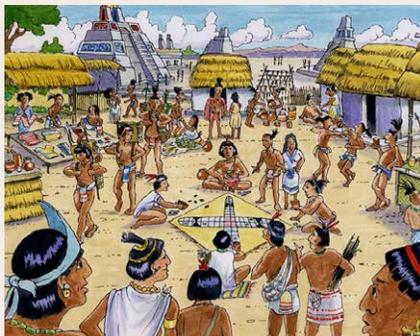
L) "El Castillo" or Structure N10-43, viewed from afar. C) Left mask at the Temple of the Jaguar. R) A ceramic artifact in the site museum.

Lamanai, by Stanley Paul Guenter

Some pictures from our visit to Lamanai on June 4 with AFAR and their students. We even managed to see Liz Graham and David Pendergast and had a delicious Belizean picnic lunch at the site. Go Stan!



L) Temple of the Masks (Pyramid N9-56). R) Close-up of "El Castillo" which is the largest Preclassic structure in Belize. 🏰



The betting game of Patolli was played by all Mesoamerican cultures over millennia. The object of the game is for a player to win all of the opponent's treasure! Strategy and luck, it is one of the oldest known games in the Americas.

Steve Radzi, a lot more than meets the eye!



Our good friend artist Steve Radzi has been doing a lot more than illustrating ancient Maya sites. Here are examples that focus on the lifestyles of the Maya, published on numerous travel sites.



Pedro – Steve



The copal is burning, bets are placed, and the ballgame is on! his soul captured by Pedro Poot – the best darn Maya site guide out there!

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