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December 13, 2017 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.5.0.18 • 2 'Etz'nab 16 Mak • G9

## Exploring the Scope of Women's Work in Colonial Maya Society<sup>1</sup>

by **Juan Carrillo González, PhD**, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

The threads that weave together the lives of indigenous women shortly after the Hispanic incursion in Mesoamerica include the role of femininity, its importance, and its performance in daily life. The early relationships documented by chroniclers and scribes indicate that figures like Malinche helped the conquistadors, in this case Hernán Cortés, to consolidate their dominion in central Mexico.

In addition, recent historiography shows that, in the case of the subjugation of Chiapas and Guatemala headed by Pedro de Alvarado, the so-called Indian conquistadors who loaned their service to the Crown entered into marital alliances with the Spaniards to cement their loyalty. Hispanic captains established relationships, whether matrimonial or of concubinage, with the daughters of indigenous *caciques* (Asselbergs, 2010).

Beyond these events, the task of clarifying the importance of the specialized work between Maya women and men becomes possible because of colonial documents that record distinct types of compulsive labor. The importance of native labor became evident and increased during the centuries of colonial rule. The machinery integral to the system of compulsory labor that agglomerated the distinct activities related to the generation of tributes, the loan of personal services, the distribution of goods and ecclesiastical reimbursements – all paint a complex social radiograph that revolved around the corporate organization of the villages. This also allowed indigenous societies to confront distinct levies implemented by the colonizers, which formed the pillar of organized social response.



A Maya woman tends to her fruit and vegetable stand in Lucas de Gálvez Market, Merida, Yucatan. Photo by Juan Carrillo González.



Weaver from Teopisca, Chiapas, MX. Photo by Juan Carrillo González.

On the Yucatan Peninsula, for example, the specialized work of Maya women can be glimpsed through the production of various woven blankets. Besides making thread, the weavers employed

<sup>1</sup>The present text forms part of a broader research project financed by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT, Mexico).

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**December 13, 7:30 pm**



Dance Ritual II, by Reinhard Zink

**IMS Annual Business Meeting and December Birthday Party**  
**Be there!**

individual backstrap looms to make garments; *huipiles* used by the women and *huinok* used by men. Weaving became an important activity during the second half of the sixteenth century and

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**Jim Reed,**  
Editor

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# Ten Lessons from the South-Central Conference on Mesoamerica

by **Zach Lindsey**

This year's logo for the South Central Conference on Mesoamerica is based on New Orleans' sewer covers because, as Marcello Canuto explained, the sewers of New Orleans are as mysterious as the goings-on in Xibalba.

While saying something about New Orleans, this doesn't help understand the Maya much. Fortunately, forty scholars at the conference did discuss much more than the hidden terrors in the New Orleans sewer system.

Here are ten of my favorite lessons from presenters on the Maya. (No offense to those fine students of central Mexico.)

**10:** Phosphorous is not a great method for studying specific human activities. Cheryl M. Foster said that, while phosphorous content does show evidence of human habitation, it cannot show specifics, like if a feature was used as a garden or animal pasture. That means it's best to look for other chemical compounds in soil if you want to know where ancient Maya house gardens were, for example.

**9:** The Maya can make a lot of salt! Kobi Weaver is researching ancient Maya salt production, but even today some Maya place clay pots full of brine over fires and cook them to produce salt. This might have been the process used in antiquity. How much can they produce?



The Middle American Research Institute's small but impressive museum of Mesoamerican artifacts currently highlights faces and masks in both ancient and contemporary Maya culture.



Tulane's Marcello Canuto explains the significance of the conference's logo. All photos in this article by Zach Lindsey.

Well, according to Weaver, two people over two days can produce 250 pounds of salt.

**8:** Mold-made figurines might have helped apprentices learn their art. Terance Winemiller and his wife and colleague have been using 3D scans to find examples of mold-made figurines that later had details like ear plugs added. One mold produced figurines found in both Calakmul and Cahal Pech, which aren't exactly neighbors! Apprentices may have used molds to learn how to sculpt without having serious consequences if their work wasn't perfect.

**7:** Graffiti, too, may sometimes be examples of young nobility learning the iconographic language of the elite. Graffiti has often been dismissed by archaeologists, but a building with repeated imagery at Xunantunich may represent learning, not the Maya equivalent of 'Kilroy was here,' according to M. Kathryn Brown, who suggests the mixture of iconographic elements, the repetition, and the fact that you can sometimes see improvement all point to the small building on the side of the Castillo being a schoolhouse.

**6:** A good hammerstone is hard to find in the Maya region. Where there's chert, there is rarely high quality hard stone. In the western Belize Valley, Rachel Horowitz (one conference organizer) and her colleagues discovered 30,000 pieces of lithic debitage... and eleven hammerstones. This means manos might have been repurposed after use and imported tools were used until they broke. Some Maya may have even used chert cores, but in Horowitz's experimental archaeology these frequently shattered.

**5:** LIDAR detects about 30 percent of what ground surveyors can detect... but which 30 percent is a debate. Bernadette Cap

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compared LIDAR in the Mopan region of Belize to previous ground surveys. LIDAR showed 135 features, compared to 385 features from the ground survey. Unsurprisingly, smaller structures were the most frequently missed, though there was some debate about the way canopy coverage affects results. So is LIDAR useful? It can be, if coupled with other tools. Canuto called LIDAR "the answers at the end of the math textbook," but just like in school, you've still got to show your work.

**4:** E-groups started as communal sites and slowly morphed into elite sites... except sometimes they didn't. The most famous e-group at Uaxactun went from communal to private

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## Exploring the Scope of Women's Work in Colonial Maya Society

by **Juan Carrillo González, PhD**,  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

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continued to be significant in the centuries that followed. On the peninsula, the gendered division of labor permitted colonial authorities to obtain a constant supply of goods at low cost. Besides woven garments, coercion was used to obtain distinct goods, including cotton, corn, beeswax, ornaments such as flowers, and pieces of ceramic.

In Guatemala, a regional variation of the division of labor compelled the participation of indigenous society in the construction of buildings, roads, bridges, and ports. This meant that besides the division of labor, the Maya lent different personal services that included the transport of goods by *tamemes* (head straps), either from the loading or haulage of goods and provisioning water and firewood.

Maya women lent their services to the Spanish as *tortilleras* and *molinderas* of both wheat and corn. Because of their importance in food preparation, women performed these labors at ports, as intercontinental shipping increased. Documents from the first third of the seventeenth century allow us to conclude that, despite the restrictions established by the Crown, Maya women also worked as wet nurses. Thus, the so-called *chichiguas* nursed the

Women with traditional attire preparing tortillas (Yucatan). Photo by Jorge Méndez Estrada.



offspring of the Spanish, as the prelate Juan Gómez de Parada indicated a little more than a century later. This activity was carried out in rotating shifts of temporary labor, compensated by the tiny payment of two pesos. As maids, the women were obligated to not only sublet their breasts, but also raise the descendants of the colonizers (Solís, 2003: 55-56; Solórzano, 1985; AGI, Mexico, 1038).

The personal services that the Maya offered to the representatives of the Crown paralleled their obligations to the Church, an institution which demanded a large share of goods. Despite the fact that these activities, at least in appearance, were done “voluntarily,” in reality, they all involved coercion. Young girls, as well as adult and elderly women worked at grinding chocolate and corn. Likewise, they functioned as washer women and as *tortilleras*.

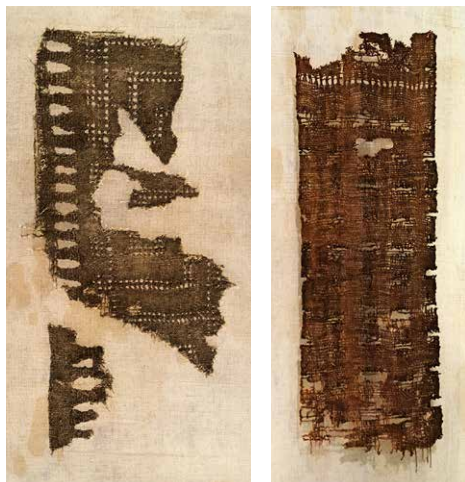
The Church demanded that its congregation pay alms or religious retributions to support the clergy. These contributions would be collected at certain times over the year, and included a long list of things, including: corn, distinct types of meat (fowl, iguana, pork, venison, beef, and fish), eggs, achiote, salt, pumpkin seeds, and tortillas. The Church had close ties with the criollo elite and the colonial bureaucracy. Because of this, it diversified its revenue, venturing into the distribution of goods in Indigenous villages. Likewise, it applied onerous fees to the usufruct use of the *cofradía* lands, such as happened in the villages of San Miguel Tucurú, Rabinal, and Cubulco, in Verapaz, Guatemala (Solís, 2003: 50-58; Solórzano, 1985: 116-120; Farriss, 1992).

To conclude, Maya women played an important role in the internal dynamics of native

settlements. The sphere of social organization in colonial villages highlights a complex scaffolding that allowed women, in some cases, to actively participate in the performance of important roles within religious associations.

During the colonial period, Maya communities restructured exogenous elements imposed by the colonizers. A reliable test of this concerns the *cofradía*, an association which enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and was recognized by the Church. The Precolumbian corporate organization in charge of public worship and calendric festivities used the *cofradía* as a tool to develop social assistance and organization of collective ceremonial life. In terms of the economic environment, this grouping helped the accumulation of capital and goods derived from commercial activities, raising livestock, agriculture, and the production of textiles that reached commercial circuits at competitive prices (Carrillo, 2017: 64-65).

At present, the historiography shows that the performance of activities of the *cofradía* fell mainly on the shoulders of the *mayordomos*. These figures of traditional power were charged with regulating the funds implemented in an environment of mutual credit between the members (revenues and commercial activities). The proceeds added to the capital destined for feast days. Nevertheless, in a recent study, I noted that, in the north of Guatemala, a number of *cofradías* were managed exclusively by female *mayordomas*. Thus, *cofradía* activities in Guatemala present important variations that have not been recorded in Yucatan and



Fragments of Prehispanic textiles from Cintalapa displayed in the Regional Museum of Chiapas, INAH, San Cristóbal de las Casas. Photos by Juan Carrillo González.



## Institute of Maya Studies Program and Speaker Recap for 2017

*Offering educative public programs on Mesoamerican studies with a focus on the Maya*



Harvey and Victoria Bricker    Marcello A. Canuto    C. Andrew Hemmings    Stanley P. Guenter    Steve Radzi    Michael G. Callaghan, & Brigitte Kovacevich    Francisco Estrada-Belli    James O'Kon

Announced January 18:

**Lunar Calendars of the Precolumbian Maya**, with Drs. Harvey and Victoria Bricker, PhDs Harvard – Sadly, good friend of the IMS Harvey Miller Bricker passed at the age of 76 on January 18, 2017, in Gainesville, Florida, after a short illness.

February 15:

**The Crown Spoils: La Corona and the Hegemonic Rule of the Kaanul Kingdom**, with Marcello A. Canuto, Director of the Middle American Research Institute (MARI); Associate Professor of Anthropology at Tulane

March 15:

**The Old Vero Site and Its Place in Florida's Paleoindian Record**, with Dr. C. Andrew Hemmings, Florida Atlantic University – Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute – Old Vero Ice Age Sites Committee

April 19:

**Central Mexico and Its Connections to the Maya**, with Eric (Rick) T. Slazyk University of Miami School of Architecture AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C (President of the IMS)

May 17:

**Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: A Comparison with Other Ancient Writing Systems**, with Stanley P. Guenter, PhD, Southern Methodist University

June 21:

**Illustrative Travels Along the Maya Coast of Quintana Roo**, with Steve Radzi, Illustrator/Artist

In alignment with Miami Dade College, we now offer nine IMS presentations in conjunction with their calendar year: January – June and September – November. During the summer months of July and August, as well as December, there are no public lectures.

Announced September 21:

**The Naked and the Dead: Ritual and Sacrifice at the Dawn of Maya Civilization in Holtun, Guatemala**, with Michael G. Callaghan, Ph.D., and Brigitte Kovacevich, Ph.D. – Professors at the University of Central Florida, (Presentation cancelled due to the effects of Hurricane Irma)

October 18:

**Holmul: The Maya City That Doesn't Stop Giving**, with Francisco Estrada-Belli, PhD, now at Tulane University

November 15:

**Corn, Cotton and Chocolate: How the Maya Changed the World**, with James O'Kon, PE

December 13:

**IMS Annual Business Meeting and Anniversary Party**

## Ten Lessons from the South-Central Conference on Mesoamerica

by **Zach Lindsey**

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during the expansion of kingship in the Maya region, according to Borislava Simona (one conference organizer). But they weren't all that way: At Actuncan, which has one of the earliest known e-groups, the e-group seems to have stayed public for most of its use.

**3:** Ritual spaces can change meaning very quickly, even within a decade. People came to one rock near Lake Atitlan in the 1990s to ask that community events be well-attended. When Michael Saunders returned ten years later, folks were asking that their businesses be well-attended.

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*Independent scholar Fernando Arturo Rodriguez describes the results of more than a decade of research into Maya and Aztec astronomy.*



Sale of tortillas made especially for panuchos, a traditional food, Lucas de Gálvez Market, Merida, Yucatan. Photo by Juan Carrillo González.

## Exploring the Scope of Women's Work in Colonial Maya Society

by **Juan Carrillo González**, PhD,

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, *continued from page 3*

Chiapas. During the eighteenth century, the organizations regulated by Maya women accumulated important sums of capital (called principal funds), just as male *cofradías*. Besides the female *cofrades*, the *mayordomas* also oversaw other associations of shared stratification, in which the socioethnic hierarchy allowed both men and women to perform the same tasks.

The degree of specialization required to spin threads and weave textiles permitted the *cofrades* managed by women to consolidate capital and gave them autonomy in the administration of the funds. Thus, the strength of these associations allowed them to perpetuate themselves

until the final years of the eighteenth century, despite the problems that they confronted during the sunset of colonial domination.

However, at the dawn of the new century, the Bourbon Reforms, which had already caused a notable erosion of these groups, resulted in the confiscation of the capital of the *cofradías*. As a consequence, most of the native *cofrades* gradually lost their economic support, transforming themselves into wholly religious organizations. Despite this, even today in the interior, fortune tellers, healers, and time counters still exist, fulfilling the role the *cofradías* fulfilled for centuries: forming an important refuge for the survival of Maya villages (Rojas, 1989: 267).

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### Archives

AGI: Archivo General de Indias (Seville, Spain).

**Juan Carrillo González** received his PhD from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in history. His research focuses on themes of rituality, cosmovision, processes of ethnic resistance, and musical practices of the colonial Maya of Yucatan and Central America. He has published in Mexico, the United States, France, Germany, and Guatemala. His current work focuses on clarifying the social function of Maya women. 🏠

## Ten Lessons from the South-Central Conference on Mesoamerica

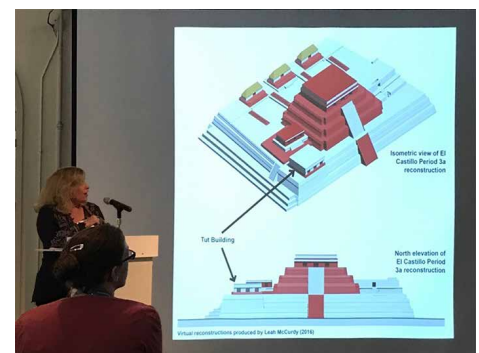
by **Zach Lindsey** *continued from page 4*

**2:** Sometimes what a culture chooses to forget is as important as what it remembers. La Unión at the southern tip of the Maya region used circular architecture in its early days and may have been influenced by Isthmo-Colombian cultures, but when the institution of kingship spread, the site took on a more Maya feel and the original structures were abandoned, according to Erland Johnson. But the structures were

*Kathryn Brown shows the location of a structure at Xunantunich's Castillo which contains graffiti that may be the work of young Maya learning the glyph system.*

clearly on desirable land: the Maya of La Unión built to the north, south, and east of the original site but seem to have intentionally avoided building near their early roots.

**I:** The subterranean galleries at Palenque may have allowed Pakal to symbolically enter the underworld and recover the city's lost gods.



Kendyll Gross used iconography to suggest Pakal built the structure to publically enter the underworld. When he returned from this portal, he brought back with him the gods

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Dedicated to IMS members and cherished Mayanists who have entered on the road to Xibalba this year...

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**Erik Boot:**  
His archives and popular blogsite is still up at: <http://mayannewsupdates.blogspot.com>

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**Harvey M. Bricker:**  
Harvard University, Tulane University, Florida Museum of Natural History

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**John Major Jenkins:**  
Over the years, independent researcher JM presented twice at the IMS. Here with IMS Explorer editor Jim Reed (pre-2012)

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**Ian Graham:**  
British Mayanist and Peabody Colleague

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## IMS Annual Business Meeting and Anniversary Party – December 13

Officially dubbed the Annual Members Meeting, members seldom think of it as that.

Think fellowship, food and fun!

Think bargain books and other desirable items.

Think “Happy Birthday” to the IMS.

### The IMS has now been together for 46 years!

As established in the bylaws, the event takes place on the second Wednesday of December, in this case December 13. We combine our anniversary party with a short business meeting, and a few short committee reports; celebrating with the a la carte dinner. This year, there are no new board members up for election to the 2018 Board of Directors.



Let it Rain! by Reinhard Zink. Reinhard is a professor of art and lives in Speyer, Germany. Befriend him on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/reinhard.zink](http://www.facebook.com/reinhard.zink)

Wear your favorite Maya get-up! • Also, support our Book Sale! Bring some, buy some!

## Institute of Maya Studies Annual Affair

This event will take place at 7:30 pm at La Carreta Restaurant

3632 SW 8th Street, Miami, 33135 • Dinner will be a la carte • Menu at <http://lacarreta.com>

Call the Maya Hotline: 305-279-8110 for additional info and specifics

Jaguar pelt border courtesy of Steve Radzi. See his portfolio of original Maya-themed artwork at: [www.mayavision.com](http://www.mayavision.com)



MARI staff member Caroline Parris and conference organizer Bobbie Simova welcome people to the conference.

## Ten Lessons from the South-Central Conference on Mesoamerica

by Zach Lindsey *continued from page 5*

of Palenque that had been taken from the city in wars decades earlier. Once he returned their gods, it was only a matter of time until the city became the masterwork of the Maya region that we know and love today.

No word on whether Pakal encountered any of the denizens of the New Orleans sewers while he was down there!

*It was a really successful symposium – try and attend next year! ZL*

## 2017 New Membership and Renewal Application

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New  Renewal

Benefactor: \$350

Patron: \$150

Century: \$100

Member: \$50



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

### Institute of Maya Studies

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

**Members: Be sure to get your password by contacting our Webmaster Keith Merwin at:** [webmaster@instituteofmayastudies.org](mailto:webmaster@instituteofmayastudies.org)

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## Ancient Peruvian Mural at Ventarrón Destroyed in Fire

A fire at the Ventarrón archaeological complex in northern Peru has destroyed a mural dating back to 2000 BCE, officials say.

The fire at the 4,500-year-old archaeological site is believed to have been caused by farm workers burning sugarcane nearby.

The mural, one of the oldest documented in the Americas, has suffered smoke damage. The painting shows a deer caught in a net and was discovered in 2007. It adorns the wall of a temple in the Lambayeque region of Peru.

Peruvian media reported that 95% of the archaeological complex has been damaged in the fire which, fanned by strong winds, spread rapidly across the site.

Local residents tried to extinguish the flames but could not save the archaeological



Walter Alva points to the mural at Ventarrón in a pre-fire photo.

artifacts, some of which were damaged when the plastic tarpaulin covering the site melted.

“We are losing an exceptional monument unique to its generation,” said Walter Alva, one of the archaeologists who excavated the site. Carbon dating suggested the murals were painted in 2000 BCE.

Archaeologists think that the temple complex was built by a culture that predated other Precolumbian cultures such as the



A video of the fire taken by archaeologist Ignacio Alva Meneses shows the extent of the blaze. See it at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-41972208>

Moche, who lived in the northern coastlands of Peru from the first to the seventh century.

“I can only express my outrage and sadness for this irreparable loss,” noted Alva. Authorities will investigate those responsible. 🗑️

Source: From a BBC on-line report from Agencia Andina released 11/13/2107. Check out the video of the fire at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-41972208>

## Upcoming Events at the IMS:

December 13 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Annual Affair! IMS Annual Business Meeting and Anniversary Get-Together* – Join with us as we celebrate 46 years together! We’re planning food, fun and fellowship. We mix a short business meeting with a few annual committee reports and add in a bunch of celebrating. Join us at: La Carreta Restaurant, 3632 SW 8th Street, Miami, FL, 33235.

### IMS Program Note:

In alignment with MDC, we now offer nine IMS presentations in conjunction with their calendar year: January – June and September – November. During the summer months of July and August, as well as December, there will be no public lectures. The programs will continue to be held at 6 pm in Room K-422 at Miami Dade College – Kendall Campus, 11400 SW 104th Street, Miami, FL. For more information, contact our Hotline at: 305-279-8110; or by email at: [info@instituteofmayastudies.org](mailto:info@instituteofmayastudies.org)

## Upcoming Events and Announcements:

December 2: *Museum Lecture Cosmos and Rulership Materialized at the Pyramids of Teotihuacan* – with **Saburo Sugiyama**, Saburo Sugiyama is currently Professor of Aichi Prefectural University in Japan, and also serves as Research Professor for Arizona State University. He carried out intensive research in the Quetzalcoatl Complex, the Pyramid of the Moon, the Pyramid of the Sun, and, currently, the Plaza of the Columns Complex, at Teotihuacan. He has also worked at the Maya cities of Palenque, Becan, Cacaxtla and several sites in Guerrero, in addition to the Templo Major of Tenochitlan. His research interests include Mesoamerican urbanism, monuments, symbolism, and, recently, theories of Cognitive Archaeology. At the Koret Auditorium, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA. More info at: <http://deyoung.famsf.org/calendar/cosmos-and-rulership-materialized-pyramids-teotihuacan-guest-lecture-saburo-sugiyama>

Through August 2018: *Museum Exhibit*

**Coiling Culture: Basketry Art of Native North America** – Baskets were one of the first art forms in the Americas, with basket fragments dating to 9,400 years ago. This exhibition explores the intersection between material, making, and meaning in the fragile basketry art of the Southeast to the Southwest and up into the Arctic. At the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Info at: <http://www.carlos.emory.edu/visit/calendar>

Editor’s Tip: *Online all the time*  
**Ancient Americas Events** – Get in the know with Mike Ruggeri’s “better-than-ever!” comprehensive list of upcoming Ancient Americas Lectures, Conferences and Exhibits: Go to: <https://mikeruggerisevents.tumblr.com/>  
**Check out and get in on the fun on our IMS Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MiamilMS/>



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