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Maya enthusiasts providing public education for 46+ years

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July 4, 2019 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.6.11.6 • 11 Kimi' 14 Sek • G1

## Opinion: The Dangers of Looking for the Ancient Maya in the United States

by **Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, Ph.D.**

Visiting Assistant Professor, Davidson College, Davidson, NC



A side view Monk's Mound at the site of Cahokia, IL. This mound, standing 100-ft-tall today, is the largest earthen mound in the Americas. Photo by the Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, May 2019.

One of the things I cherish most, as a member of the “professional Mayanist community”, is the level of engagement and serious interest we receive from the general public, lifelong learners, and younger students. Groups like the Institute of Maya Studies play a central role in fomenting this strong interest which makes of Maya studies such a uniquely engaging and rewarding field.

The level of cultural complexity achieved by the ancient Maya of the broader Yucatán Peninsula is inspiring to anyone who has had the chance to witness their art, writing system, architecture, and landscape modifications. Not unlike the ancient Mayas, many indigenous archaeological groups of the broader U.S. developed incredibly rich material cultures.

While these groups unlikely ever used Precolumbian writing systems or erected free-standing monumental stelae, they developed intricate sociopolitical structures and wide ranging economic networks, and built

monumental sites featuring large earthen mounds situated around public plazas.

While the most famous U.S. mound sites are Mississippian (ca. 800–1,500 CE) such as Cahokia (IL), Etowah (GA), and Moundville (AL), others predate these by far, such as Poverty Point (LA), dating to the Archaic Period (ca. 1,700–1,100 BCE), and Watson Brake (LA) – the earliest monumental site in the entire Americas, dating to ca. 4,000–3,500 BCE; way before the apparition of monumentality in the Maya world. In addition to these famous examples, hundreds of Native American mound sites dot the southeastern landscapes, including the Gulf Coast.

In addition to creating impressive mounded sites, Precolumbian cultural groups of the central and southeastern U.S. developed large residential settlements, encompassing sizable populations which included craft-specialists who developed beautiful art styles, along with elaborate decorated pottery and fine chipped and ground stone technologies. Countless monographs, volumes, and

peer-reviewed articles have obviously been written on this topic. Yet, while these facts about the archaeological, cultural heritage of the U.S. are unsurprising to some, they are not part of most K-12 curriculums, and are therefore unknown to most Americans – as I've come to realize while teaching in American universities.

As scholars and students of both ancient and modern Maya culture, it is a privilege to explore the Maya Lowlands and Highlands to discover

*continued on page 4*



**Jim Reed,**  
Editor

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Colorful, informative, and spacious displays are the hallmark of the Royal BC Museum Maya exhibition.

## Maya: The Great Jaguar Rises

New exhibition at the Royal BC Museum – May 17 thru December 31, 2019

As the Royal BC Museum in Victoria prepared for another exhibition that will take visitors back in time, artifacts were slowly being unveiled.

In early May, the museum removed a rare artifact (at right) from its crate for the upcoming Maya: The Great Jaguar Rises exhibition.

The artifact – La Corona Altar 5 – is from the year 544 CE and was discovered in the Peten jungle in the northern part of Guatemala.

Hieroglyphic text on the altar tells the story of a king, Chak Tok Ich'aak, who led the fight against the Tikal Dynasty, allowing the Kaanul Dynasty to become the new leaders.

Later on, Chak Tok Ich'aak went on to become a very well-known, powerful ruler.

According to the director of the National Museum of Guatemala, Daniel Eduardo Aquina Lara, the altar helps piece together and confirm significant research around the La Corona archaeological site.

“We have something relevant to construct the nation’s history of Guatemala,” Aquina Lara said. “It confirmed how complex Maya society was in the past.”

Aquina Lara said the hieroglyphics on the altar also show how different communities and aspects of Maya society came together for a larger goal – not unlike today, where smaller and larger powers form alliances. The altar depicts an image of Chak Tok Ich'aak carrying a scepter with a double-headed snake and two deities who protect the local La Corona Dynasty.

A team of archaeologists from Guatemala and the USA uncovered the altar when researching and investigating a pyramid structure that was buried under earth and trees in 2017 and 2018.

“In this case, the monuments don’t change history but give us more elements to understand details about relationships, how the politics were and what was going on in the Late Classic Period, 13 to 15 centuries ago,” noted Aquina Lara. “For Guatemala, it’s an opportunity to share the relevant history and how centuries of research and preserving our cultural heritage can be shared with people.”



La Corona Altar 5 after removal from its crate at the Royal BC Museum. (Shalu Mehta/News Staff)

### Maya: The Great Jaguar Rises

spotlights the mystery, legacy and resilience of one of the world’s great civilizations, the Maya of Mesoamerica.

The exhibition boasts the world’s largest and most impressive display of Maya objects including jade, ceramic, gold, stone and textile artifacts never before seen outside of Guatemala. In celebration UNESCO’s Year of Indigenous Languages, the exhibition will highlight 30 Mayan languages spoken today.

For more information, visit [www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/maya](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/maya)



**Editor’s note:** My wonderful Facebook friend, Sofia Paredes Maury, was a big part of the opening of the Jaguar Rises exhibit. She is on the Board of Directors of the Association of Private Natural Reserves of Guatemala and Executive Director at Fundación Ruta Maya/Outreach. She helps stage Maya exhibits worldwide on behalf of Fundación Ruta Maya and has been a previous contributor to the *IMS Explorer*. Above left, Sofia posted a unique way the museum is promoting the exhibit on the streets of Victoria and, above right, poses with Nikolai Grube during the opening events.

Look in an upcoming issue of the *IMS Explorer* for an interview with Sofia Paredes Maury by Teena Clipson!





Note: Photo of Fragment 1 was taken in Graz, Austria.

**Fig. 1:** Fragment 1.

**Fig. 2:** Fragment 2.

**Fig. 3:** Fragment 3.

**Fig. 4:** Fragment 4.

Photos by Karl Herbert Mayer, 2006. All images digitally enhanced by Guido Krempel. Courtesy of the Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Guatemala.

## Four Unidentified Fragments of Maya Monuments

by Karl Herbert Mayer (KHM) – Mexican Staff

Previous investigations of stone sculptures created by the ancient Maya have focused almost exclusively on objects which originated from scientifically controlled surveys and excavations.

In the past 60 years, monuments and fragments thereof, whose exact place of origin could not be determined with certainty, appeared on the international art market as well as in private and public collections.

In 1975, I initiated a personal project with the aim of cataloging such unprovenanced stone objects, resulting in seven illustrated catalogs in order to make them available for scientific studies. Published between 1978 and 1995 the “floating” and “orphaned” objects that were scattered all over the globe were documented.

In 2006, I inspected the exhibited collections as well as the storerooms in the Guatemalan Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología (MUNAE). In the course of my search, I focused predominantly on unprovenanced stone sculptures preserved in the basement of the museum. In my brief endeavors, I was kindly assisted by Rodolfo Yaquia Colon, staff member of the MUNAE.

I recorded several relatively small limestone fragments and only one could be recognized as a part of a known stela from Piedras Negras. There remained only four damaged and badly broken fragments, the provenance and typology of which I was unable to identify. It can be surmised that they stem from

carved stelae. While two fragments show glyphs, the other two show iconographic details.

Fragment 1 (**Fig. 1**) measures 32 cm in height, 20 cm in width and 17 cm in depth, the depth of the relief being 1 cm. The reverse side is broken. This smashed fragment has a carved surface bearing a vertical frame element on the left-hand side and three mutilated glyphs on the right-hand side. The middle glyph compound shows four dots and thus, eventually, represents part of a calendrical statement.

Fragment 2 (**Fig. 2**) has a roughly triangular shape and a vertical plain frame element on top. It is 35 cm high, 27 cm wide, and 8 cm thick; the depth of the bas-relief being 2 cm. It bears remains of two glyph compounds.

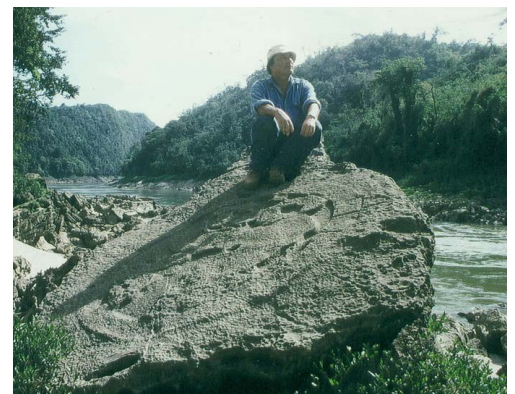
Fragment 3 (**Fig. 3**) is broken on all edges and exhibits remains of iconography. Guido Krempel

interpreted (written communication, June 2019) the design as follows:

“Even though only a few details survive, what remains can be attributed to the lower legs of a standing human figure. Parts of the heels of both of their feet, as well as portions of their footgear that have zoomorphic supernatural beings as decorative elements, are still discernable.”

Fragment 4 (**Fig. 4**) renders a decorated human head, facing to the left, most likely representing the head of a supernatural entity. It shows curvilinear elements surrounding the profile head. The general style suggests an Early Classic date.

The purpose of this note is to present the four carved small stone fragments to Mayanists so that, eventually, indications could be offered in order to specify a particular provenance and sculpture type. 🏛️

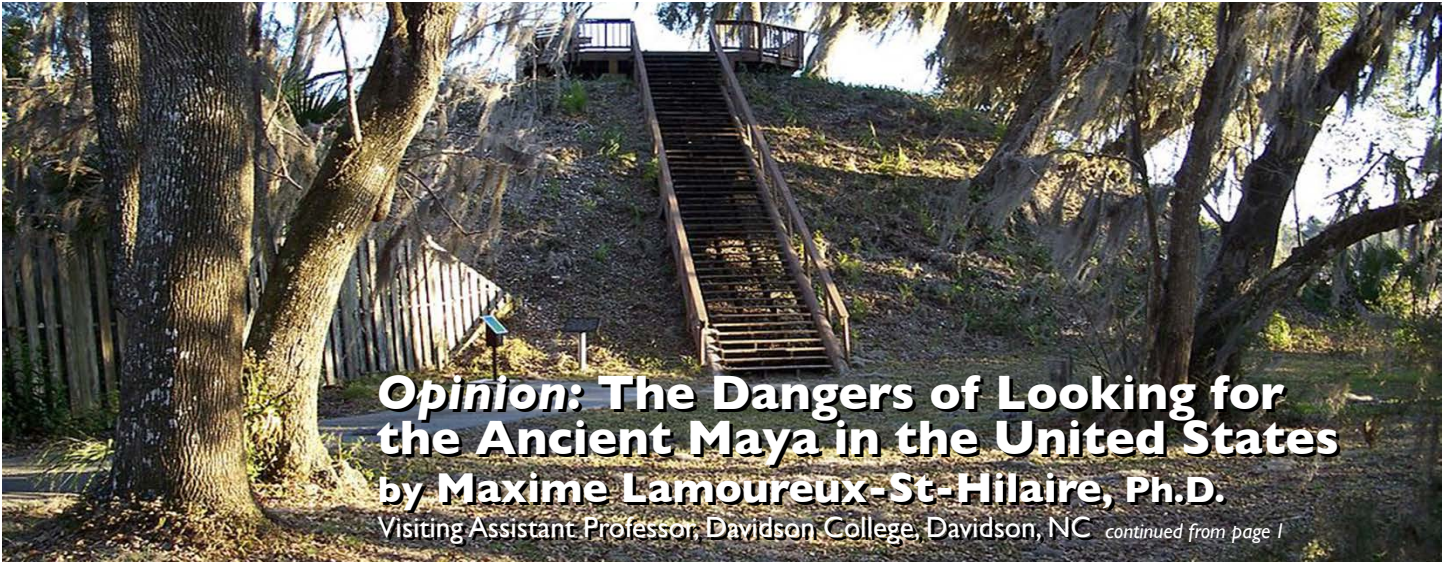


### KHM Blasts from the Past

Above left: Karl Herbert Mayer (KHM) poses with Nicholas Hellmuth during Hellmuth's visit to Graz, Austria, on 3/22/2011. Above right: Karl sunning himself on what's known as the “Sacrificial Rock” at Piedras Negras. Photo by Christian Prager, 1997.







## **Opinion: The Dangers of Looking for the Ancient Maya in the United States**

**by Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, Ph.D.**

Visiting Assistant Professor, Davidson College, Davidson, NC *continued from page 1*

*Mound A from the Crystal River Archaeological Site, FL. By John Bradley, from Wikipedia Commons: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crystal\\_River\\_Archaeological\\_State\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crystal_River_Archaeological_State_Park).*

their many archaeological sites and rich cultural traditions. Yet, upon returning to the U.S., it is important to remember that there are many dynamic indigenous cultures in these lands whose ancestral cultural groups created amazing anthropogenic landscapes and striking material cultures. For a reason that escapes me, certain aficionados of ancient Maya culture find it incredibly appealing to search for evidence of the ancient Maya having canoed across the Gulf of Mexico and settled along the northeastern shores of the Gulf of Mexico.

This idea can be traced back to the colonial-era, racist myths of the Mound-Builders, whereas the “poor Native American tribes” could never have built such large mounds; therefore they must have been constructed by allochthonous groups. This theme pervaded popular culture in the 20th century, with a good example being the movie *Kings of the Sun*, directed by J. Lee Thompson in 1963 and starring a predominantly white cast of “Mayans” from Chichen Itza in exile in the American Southeast where they founded what looks a lot like Moundville. Many of these ideas are still repeated today on the History Channel and on many non-scientific, non-peer-reviewed blogs.

These ideas are highly colonialist and reductionist for Native Americans. They suppose that the only way to explain the creation of such an awesome site in Native American lands was to involve “more advanced” groups from overseas. This type of idea also pervaded, for example, colonialist interpretations of the

Southeast African city of Great Zimbabwe, which was attributed by European invaders to anyone but the autochthonous African population.

In other words, when modern “scholars” try to relate superficial similarities between Native American sites in the American Southeast to elements of Classic Maya culture – for arguing an allochthonous explanation to cultural complexity – they replicate this colonialist and reductionist ideology. There are many parallels between the Precolumbian cultures of the Southeastern U.S. and broader Mesoamerica. These can be explained by many factors.

For example, similarities in creation myths are shared across the entire Americas – a fact which has been proposed to go back to shared Paleindian mythologies. The construction of sizable pyramidal mounds is, equally, shared among a large swath of the Americas; and much further, obviously. Cruciform patterns and many other fairly simple symbols (such as spirals) are also common in great many cultures. Whether these are related to millennia-old atavisms, to independent innovations, or – who knows – to marginal trade contacts, each archaeological culture should first be studied in its own right and within its immediate cultural matrix.

Before tracing parallels between sites like Crystal River and Chichen Itza, one should immerse in the literature of local indigenous archaeology. Because to insist on exogenous inception of such cultural traits by the “higher culture” of the Maya is, in its own strange way,

a slippery colonialist reflex.

As students and scholars of the Precolumbian past, we must thus be careful when playing the interpretation game. Getting lost in an art-historical interpretative framework or focusing on a question to the point of wearing blinders can be a dangerous hermeneutic exercise. The field of archaeology is currently in transformation. Nonscientific epistemologies, in particular emanating from indigenous ontologies, are gaining traction among anthropological archaeologists. These alternative epistemologies are, however, far from pseudoscientific; they do not pretend to use scientific methods to argue for far-fetched points. In addition, the decolonization of archaeology has become a central part of the discipline. Consequently, anyone who seeks to advance the field should do so responsibly. This begins with a self-reflective approach aimed at removing colonial, culturally deterministic interpretations from one’s mental framework. Beyond advocating for the exploration of the Maya archaeological world, we must educate our peers to the great cultural achievements of ancient and modern indigenous groups, and be receptive to indigenous knowledge.

Ultimately, when someone wants to see ancient Maya sites, they should cross the Gulf of Mexico themselves. Meanwhile, visiting major archaeological mound sites in Florida and the broader Southeast is a good alternative, and an ideal occasion to witness the great, autochthonous cultural achievements of Native American cultural groups. 🏰





# LIVING MAYA TIME

SUN, CORN, AND THE CALENDAR

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THE MAYA • MAYA SUN • CALENDAR • CORN AND MAYA TIME • 2012: RESETTING THE COUNT



The Calendar System  
Using their knowledge ...  
[LEARN MORE »](#)



Maya Calendar Converter  
Any date in the Gregorian ...  
[LEARN MORE »](#)



Reading the Calendar Glyphs  
The Maya developed ...  
[LEARN MORE »](#)

How I was able to calculate the glyphs in the masthead of this month's *IMS Explorer* for July 4, 2019

## Gregorian–Maya Date Conversion with Jim Reed



For almost a Katun, I have utilized the “*pauhtun.org*” Gregorian-Maya date conversion app to get the dates for the glyphs that I use in the *IMS Explorer* masthead. These date conversions are usually calculated for the date that our public speaker presents at the IMS at Miami-Dade College.

Since we take a break in July and August, like the students do, for July, I tried accessing the same app to coincide with our National Day to celebrate freedom, and our mascot Itzamna’s Annual Fire Cracker ritual. I received notices that *pauhtun* was no longer accessible or had moved. So, I was moved to search for other academic Gregorian-Maya date conversion apps, and I am happy to say that I’ve identified two that are even better than *pauhtun* ever was!

The graphics that I’ve reproduced here are from two of my new favorite conversion calculator sites. The colorful screen captures are from the one sponsored by the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). I appreciate greatly that the default conversion factor is 584283 (GMT) which is the same that the modern Maya daykeepers use.

Therefore, December 21, 2012 was the end of the last 13 Baktun cycle. Most academic scholars use the 584285 “Astronomical” conversion factor, and please note that some of the dates in our “Unbundling” series have been calculated by scholars using this factor.

I invite you to utilize and explore the NMAI site at this hyperlink: <https://maya.nmai.si.edu/calendar/maya-calendar-converter>




**MAYA CALENDAR CONVERTER**

Any date in the Gregorian calendar can be converted into a corresponding one in the Maya calendar system. A particular day, month, and year can be expressed as a Long Count date using baktun, katun, tun, uinal, and k'in units of time together with a Haab and a Tzolk'in calendar dates. Use this interactive tool to convert Gregorian calendar dates into the Maya calendar system.

Find the meaning of each day in the Tzolk'in calendar system [here](#).

**Instructions:**  
To convert a date, begin by selecting the month from the drop down menu, next type in the day and year. Click the Convert Button to view the corresponding Maya Long Count date, both visually and numerically. You can change the date by using the +1 and -1 buttons or enter in a new date and use the convert button again. You can enter a new date and press the Convert Button to convert any other date between 3000 BCE and 4000 CE. For BCE dates enter a negative year number. For example, November 26, 2360 BCE would be entered as November 26, -2360.

“Each day in the sacred Maya calendar has a meaning. It tells us about the relationship among all things, including the animals, the land, humans, and everything in the cosmos.” —Hermelinda Sapon Pu, K'iche' Maya, Day Keeper

MONTH:

DAY:

YEAR:

**Long Count Date**  
**13.0.6.11.6**

**13 baktun**  
13 X 144,000 days = 1,872,000 days

**0 katun**  
0 X 7,200 days = 0 days

**6 tun**  
6 X 360 days = 2,160 days

**11 uinal**  
11 X 20 days = 220 days

**6 k'in**  
6 X 1 day = 6 days

**Tzolk'in Date:** 11 Kimi  
**Haab Date:** 14 Sek  
**Lord of the Night:** G1

Of note, the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (FAMSI) also offers a Gregorian-Maya date conversion app that offers 8 different ways to convert dates. Plus, you can print out a monthly calendar at: [http://research.famsi.org/date\\_mayaLC.php](http://research.famsi.org/date_mayaLC.php)

Print Current Month Calendar

research.famsi.org/print\_cal.php

May 2019						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
			13.0.6.8.2 12 Ik' 10 Wo	13.0.6.8.3 13 Ak'bal 11 Wo	13.0.6.8.4 1 K'an 12 Wo	13.0.6.8.5 2 Chikchan 13 Wo
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
13.0.6.8.6 3 Kimi 14 Wo	13.0.6.8.7 4 Manik' 15 Wo	13.0.6.8.8 5 Lamat 16 Wo	13.0.6.8.9 6 Mukuk 17 Wo	13.0.6.8.10 7 Ok' 18 Wo	13.0.6.8.11 8 Chuwen 19 Wo	13.0.6.8.12 9 Eb' 0 Sip
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
13.0.6.8.13 10 Ben 1 Sip	13.0.6.8.14 11 Ix 2 Sip	13.0.6.8.15 12 Men 3 Sip	13.0.6.8.16 13 Kib 4 Sip	13.0.6.8.17 1 Kaban 5 Sip	13.0.6.8.18 2 Etz'nab 6 Sip	13.0.6.8.19 3 Kawak 7 Sip
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
13.0.6.9.0 4 Ajaw 8 Sip	13.0.6.9.1 5 Imix 9 Sip	13.0.6.9.2 6 Ik' 10 Sip	13.0.6.9.3 7 Ak'bal 11 Sip	13.0.6.9.4 8 K'an 12 Sip	13.0.6.9.5 9 Chikchan 13 Sip	13.0.6.9.6 10 Kimi 14 Sip
26	27	28	29	30	31	
13.0.6.9.7 11 Manik' 15 Sip	13.0.6.9.8 12 Lamat 16 Sip	13.0.6.9.9 13 Mukuk 17 Sip	13.0.6.9.10 1 Ok' 18 Sip	13.0.6.9.11 2 Chuwen 19 Sip	13.0.6.9.12 3 Eb' 0 Soj'	

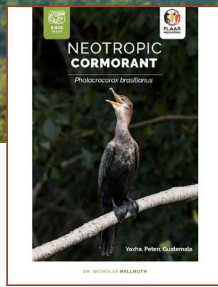


# FLAAR Mesoamérica: Reports on Plants and Animals of Parque Nacional Yaxha Nakum Naranjo

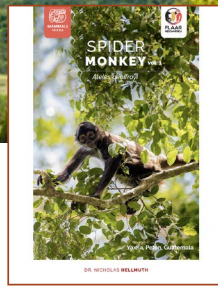
by Nicholas Hellmuth



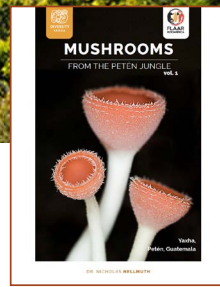
**Aquatic Orchids?**  
*Bletia purpurea*



**Neotropic Cormorant**  
*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*



**Spider Monkey**  
*Ateles geoffroyi*



**Mushrooms**  
From the Peten Jungle

**FLAAR Mesoamérica** (Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research), is a nonprofit Guatemalan institution founded under the direction and enthusiasm of Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth, Classic Maya Art specialist, with the aim of wanting to see our country recognized throughout the world for its landscapes, culture, and natural resources.

We believe knowledge and ancestral wisdom of natural resources can be offered to all kinds of persons through education. At the same time, it will awake admiration and desire in people who follow our work to preserve these resources. One of our main objectives is to create consciousness about looking after Mesoamerican natural diversity. Thus, the FLAAR team creates educational materials to raise public awareness of it.

The work done in FLAAR Mesoamérica consists on the methodological compilation of facts about nature, flora, fauna, history, and culture of Mesoamerica, and to spread it up to the general public who play an important role in the conservation of ecosystems. One example is by making material that is easy to read, entertaining, reliable, and visually pleasing, just like this *IMS Explorer* article!

We are open to work, share, and to expand the efforts we do with other organizations, institutions, or companies that share our vision.

## Yaxha Nakum Naranjo National Park

Yaxha Nakum Naranjo National Park is a site

Sorted by “newness”, these free downloadable PDFs are at: <https://flaar-mesoamerica.org/shop/>

of great natural and cultural importance for our country. Because of the diversity of species it holds, both flora and fauna, it is also listed as a RAMSAR site. It includes three types of wetlands identified by the Wetland Convention: temporal lagoons, karstic systems, and peat bogs. From these systems stand out the Lagoon Yaxha and Lagoon Sacnab, Lankaja, Champoxte and Juleque reservoirs from the Lagoon Yaxha.

The cultural importance of this protected area is that it contains heritage from the ancient Maya periods, including 292 recognized sites of which four are architecturally monumental: Yaxha, Nakum, Naranjo, and Topoxte.



If you'll be traveling to the park, go to the Mundo Maya airport in Santa Elena, near Flores, and there you'll find the services of tourist vehicles to take you to the park and to visit the archaeological sites.

Six other intermediate sites have also been discovered in the area: Naranjito, El Carmen, La Pochitoca, Poza Maya, El Bajón and El Pital.

Continue your Maya studies by exploring our various websites:

[www.flaar-mesoamerica.org](http://www.flaar-mesoamerica.org)

[www.maya-ethnozooology.org](http://www.maya-ethnozooology.org)

[www.maya-ethnobotany.org](http://www.maya-ethnobotany.org)

## Sad news to share...

“It is with an aching heart that I announce the passing of Joaquin Rodriguez, past president of the Institute of Maya Studies and, until now, active member of its Board of Directors. Jack was a structural engineer, and as such, lectured often on the construction methods of the ancient Maya. Personally, many of us at IMS, considered him a close friend, and his absence will be felt at all levels. We send our heartfelt condolences to his three children, Joaquin, Elena and David, and his grandchildren. And, in particular, to his wife of many decades, Eli. Bye, mi queridísimo amigo.”

– Marta Barber



**Joaquin J. Rodríguez III**  
Administrative Vice President/  
Director of Research

We'll bring you an indepth memorial in the August *IMS Explorer*. Until then, please leave your messages, memories, and comments on this notice posted on the *IMS Facebook* page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MiamilIMS/?ref=bookmarks>

# Unbundling the Past: The King of the Land of Mosquitoes

## Events in Ancient and Contemporary Maya History for July by Zach Lindsey

If you've been to the Maya area in July, you know there is sometimes no respite from the heat.

K'inich Lakamtuun, the king of Yaxha, probably did not feel much respite from the heat in July 799 CE, as he was chased through burned villages and his former territories by his enemies. When those enemies described this chase on the Komkom vase, they present it as an almost satirical affair, the buffoon king being chased from place to place before the people of Naranjo finished it all off – with what's being called a "frog-like turtle dance".

But for the king of Yaxha, 9.18.8.16.6 6 Kimi' 19 Ch'en G2 (20 July 799 CE) was a deadly serious day. It was the day that the army of Naranjo arrived in the middle of the Yaxha settlement, "axed" it as the glyphs describe it, and put it to the torch. They devoted particular attention to smashing statues, symbolically killing the gods of Yaxha.

The king himself fled to an *usu'l ta baay*, which Christophe Helmke and Julie Hoggarth described as a "place with lots of mosquitoes" in their discussion at the 2018 Mesoamerica Meetings. His fate after that is a bit sketchy, though he may have been reinstated when Tikal stepped into the conflict. Then again, he may also be the one bound at the feet of Naranjo ruler Itzamnaaj K'awiil on Naranjo Stela 12.

Just three days after burning Yaxha, the Naranjo army was on

In 2015 and 2016, the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR) project recovered a remarkable polychrome vase through its excavations of artifact-rich deposits at the site of Baking Pot in western Belize. On his blogsite, David Stuart, notes:

"An important new publication is out on the fabulous "Komkom Vase," written by Christophe Helmke, Julie Hoggarth and Jaime Awe. Their excellent study provides a detailed epigraphic and historical look of this important Maya vase dating to the early ninth century. Beautifully published by the Precolumbia Mesoweb Press, it is: *A Reading of the Komkom Vase Discovered at Baking Pot, Belize*, by Christophe Helmke, Julie A. Hoggarth, and Jaime J. Awe. Monograph 3. Precolumbia Mesoweb Press, San Francisco. Paperback, 144 pgs, fully illustrated in color. Available for purchase via: [www.mesoweb.com](http://www.mesoweb.com)



The Komkom Vase. Photo by David Stuart. <https://mayadecipherment.com>

the march again, burning town after town. They burned so many towns the scribe of the Komkom vase apparently forgot to mention one, making a mathematical error in the dating in the process, according to Helmke and Hoggarth.

The war between Naranjo and Yaxha began in February 799, but the advance paused, possibly so soldiers could return to harvest crops. The war was part of the broader Tikal-Calakmul wars, and Naranjo and Yaxha were old enemies according to Martin and Grube (2000). But the spark of this particular conflict is lost to time.

It doesn't help that the writer of the Komkom vase (or the codex on which it may have been based) uses the narrative technique of beginning in media res, making for a more interesting but less clear narrative. Whatever caused it, the Naranjo-Yaxha conflict was swift,

violent, and decisive.

However, eventually, the army met its match, probably on the borders of Tikal. Pushed back, the soldiers returned to Naranjo for the "capstone" dance.

Be it the Late Classic love of writing or the wonderful job groups like the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project have done of identifying finds like the Komkom Vase, the conflict between Naranjo and Yaxha produced a number of descriptions, including Stelae 12 and 35 at Naranjo.

But these works sometimes disagree with each other. For example, some of the dates of city burnings on the Komkom Vase are different from the dates listed on Stela 12.

Helmke and Hoggarth argued for the Komkom Vase being closer to correct since it was probably copied from a book recording the events. 🏰

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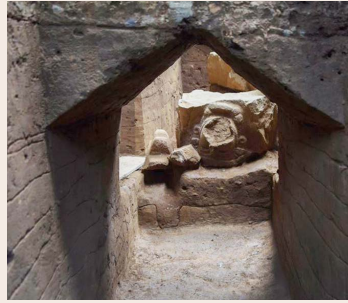


## 2,500-Year-Old Olmec Monuments Discovered at Tak'alik Ab'aj

Two large fragments carved of pumice stone, designated monuments “253A” and “253B”, dating to the Middle Preclassic Period (800-350 BCE) of the Olmec era, have been found in the Tak'alik Ab'aj archaeological park, said the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports (MCD).

The first monument excavated is an Olmec head with symbols of power and corresponds to an authority figure called “Grandfather” (*avô*), said archaeologist Christa Schieber de Lavarreda, one of the specialists who codirects the excavations at the ancient site in the municipality of El Asintal, 125 km northwest of Guatemala City.

The monument is placed “on its head” which signifies



Two views of the Olmec head that corresponds to an authority figure called “Grandfather”.

“the descent from the heavens of the ancestor”, explained Schieber de Lavarreda,.

The second piece is “exquisitely” carved with ritual symbols of the world view of the Precolumbian cultures of Mesoamerica, including the K'an cross, a distinctive predecessor of the sign or Venus.

A monumental stela weighing approximately five tons was also found at the site, identified as Stela 86.

The Minister of Culture, José Luis Chea, added that the pieces found were part of other

“monumental” structures which were mutilated “to mark the end of the Middle Preclassic period, corresponding to the Olmec occupation and dedicated to the start of a new cycle, according to the evolving Maya era.” This discovery strengthens the proposal raised by the archaeologists of the site, that Tak'alik Ab'aj experienced a transition between the two cultures.

Source: <https://archaeologynewsnetwork.blogspot.com/2018/07/2500-year-old-olmec-monuments.html?m=1#GsBOvJHZsJMjrSdk.97>

Submitted by Cheryl Norman.

## Mike Ruggeri's Ancient Americas Web Pages

Did you know that besides the link to Mike Ruggeri's comprehensive list of upcoming Ancient Americas Lectures, Conferences and Exhibits which is always on page 8 of any *IMS Explorer*, that Mike maintains more than 50 sites where he posts everything about the Ancient Americas? Go to this first link for URLs to all of his sites. Here is a sampling complete with hyperlinks. *Start Exploring!*

**Mike Ruggeri's Ancient Americas Web Pages**

<https://mikeruggerispages.tumblr.com>

**Mike Ruggeri's Ancient America's Breaking News**

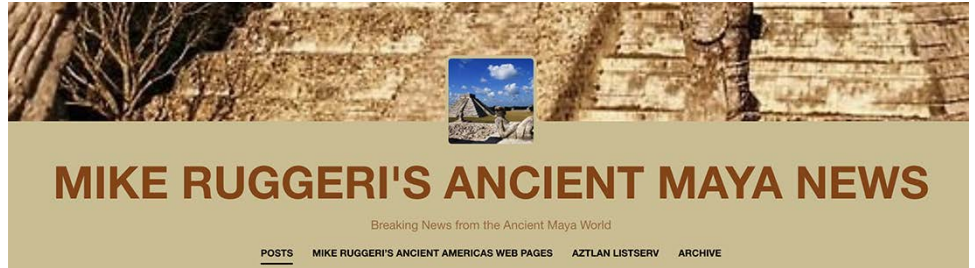
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**Mike Ruggeri's Ancient Americas Magazine**

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**Mike Ruggeri's Maya World**  
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**Mike Ruggeri's Aztlan World**  
<http://mikeruggerisaztlanworld.tumblr.com>

**Mike Ruggeri's Olmec World Magazine**  
<http://bit.ly/1E4bDrG>

**Mike Ruggeri's Teotihuacan; City of the Gods Magazine**  
<http://bit.ly/1z57bpL>

*Next month, we'll get to know Mike a lot more personally, and he'll invite you to join the scholarly Atzlan eserv list!*

### IMS Program Note:

In alignment with MDC's summer break, there are no IMS public programs in July or August. For more information, contact our Hotline at: 305-279-8110; or by email at: [info@instituteofmayastudies.org](mailto:info@instituteofmayastudies.org)

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