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Maya enthusiasts providing public education for 46+ years

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Inside this issue:

Pioneer in Maya Textiles: 2
Walter F. "Chip" Morris,
In Memoriam by Ed Barnhart

Pioneers in Maya Studies: 3,5
When Cahal Pech Became
What It Is Today, featuring
Joseph W. Ball and Jennifer
Taschek (*cont. from pg. 1*)

IMS Program and Speaker 4
Recap for 2019; *Peru in the
News: International Airport
for Machu Picchu?*

Peru in the News: New "Toad" 5
Mural Revealed at Vichama

Index for Volume 47, 2019 6

IMS Annual Affair Promo; 7
Membership Application

Peru in the News: 7,8
Archaeologists Discover
Elite Incan Tomb

Upcoming Events 8,9



December 11, 2019 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.7.1.6. • 2 Kimi' 14 Mak • G8

Pioneers in Maya Studies: When Cahal Pech Became What It Is Today

Featuring Joseph W. Ball and Jennifer Taschek

*An interview with Joseph W. Ball
by Donald H. Harrison (May 2011)*

Anthropology Professor Joseph W. Ball of San Diego State University is someone who appreciates both archaeology and tourism. Unlike some of his colleagues, he doesn't view the two activities as being in conflict, but rather as complementary.

Yes, tourists might sometimes wander off approved paths at archaeological sites, or be less-than-careful with their litter, but they are far from as troublesome or malicious as the looters who ruthlessly ravage burials and monuments at unattended sites. A steady supply of tourists prompts the hiring of guardians, custodians, and guides, who in turn can protect archaeological treasures from such marauders.

Ball agreed to an interview at a café near the San Diego Museum of Man, where he has been an advisor on exhibits about the Maya culture. He said because of the revenue that tourism can earn, countries like Belize and Mexico are incentivized to develop high-quality attractions such as the archaeological park and ecological reserve at Cahal Pech, that he and his wife Jennifer Taschek, a fellow SDSU archaeologist, helped to restore between 1988 and 1992.

Cahal Pech is a five-acre site sitting atop a mesa above the town of San Ignacio in the Cayo district of Belize, not far from the country's western border with Guatemala. Around the site, the government of Belize now maintains a 60-acre tropical hardwood forest as an ecological reserve,



Excavation, consolidation, and restoration in the courtyard of the royal residence at Cahal Pech. Photo: Jennifer Taschek.



A view of the same courtyard as visitors to the site see it today. (Look ma, no ticks!)

a vestige of the woodlands that once covered western Belize before being cut down by loggers and converted into pasture by ranchers in the 1970s and '80s. Within the reserve, one will find howler monkeys, toucans, numerous other birds, and a field guide's worth of flora. There is plenty for visitors to see and for knowledgeable guides to explain.

Before the Maya culture waned in the 9th Century of the Common Era, kings and queens reigned both as political

December 11, 7:30 pm

**IMS Annual
Business Meeting
and December
Birthday Party**

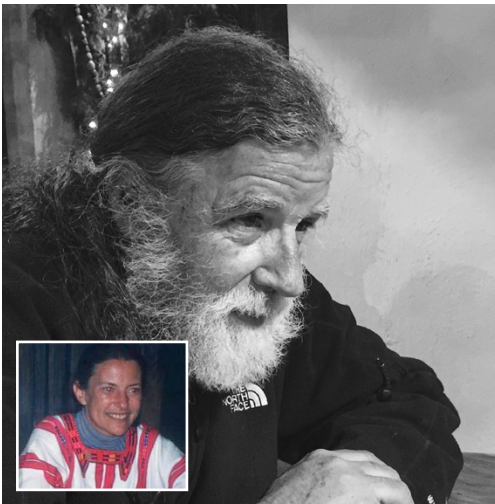
Be there!

figures and as intermediaries between the people and their ancestors. A king, known as the *k'ul ajaw* or holy lord, kept his private residence at Cahal Pech (a decidedly non-regal *continued on page 3*)



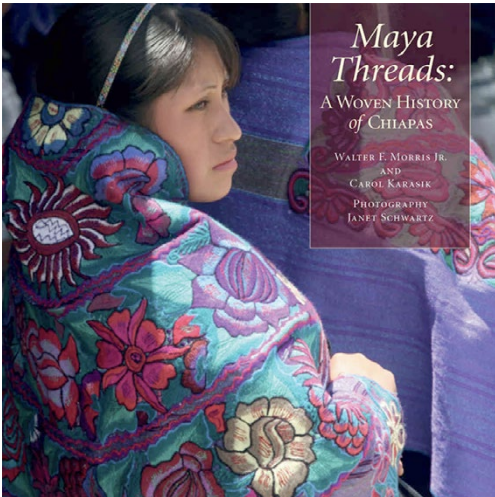
**Jim Reed,
Editor**

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Walter "Chip" Morris. Inset: Friend Carol Karasik.

discovered the mythological, calendrical, and astronomical underpinnings of Highland Maya designs. His analysis of costumes from Yaxchilan and Largartero revealed that contemporary Maya designs dated back to Classic Maya civilization.



Paperback: 224 pages; 224 pages; 9" x 11"; 245 color photos; 16 b/w illustrations; 6 maps; ISBN: 978-0-9838860-6-8; Published by: Thrums Books

Editor's note: We last heard of Chip Morris in the April 2016 *IMS Explorer*, Volume 45, Issue 4, with the release of the book pictured above: *Maya Threads: A Woven History of Chiapas*. In Chip's own words: "This book isn't about fashion per se, but how a culture preserves traditions, adopts ideas, and adapts to changing times.

"Throughout their turbulent history, the Maya have clung to tradition while riding the waves of change. This remarkable resilience has guaranteed their survival, and nowhere is their success clearer than in their beautiful and diverse costumes. History and change are woven into Maya clothing. As we have seen, some textile traditions can be traced back to Classic Maya civilization."

Pioneer in Maya Textiles: Walter F. "Chip" Morris

In Memoriam by Ed Barnhart
of the Maya Exploration Center,
submitted by Elaine Schele

When Chip Morris first arrived in Chiapas in 1972, the meaning of Maya textile symbols was nearly lost. While living in the isolated village of San Andrés and learning the Tzotzil Maya language, I became fascinated by the weaver's art. Having studied Chinese at Columbia University, I was especially interested in symbolism.

With grants from the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution, Chip

discovered the mythological, calendrical, and astronomical underpinnings of Highland Maya designs. His analysis of costumes from Yaxchilan and Largartero revealed that contemporary Maya designs dated back to Classic Maya civilization.

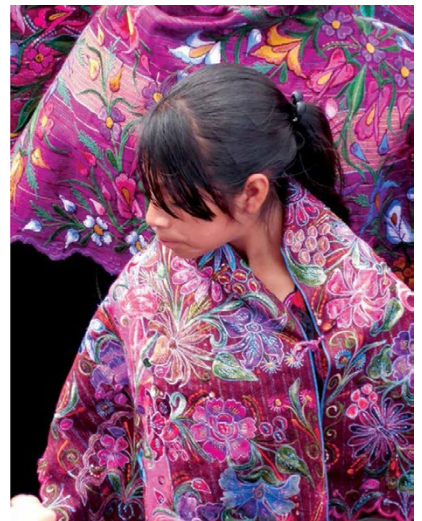
Along with research, Chip has devoted his career to preserving and promoting highland Maya weaving. He was a co-founder of San Jolobil, an 800-member weaving cooperative based in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. He had organized indigenous artisan groups throughout Chiapas, Yucatan, and Guatemala, and had established community-run museums for the Lacandon Maya and the Itza of Peten. He was engaged in a long-term study of costume changes among the Highland Maya. Chip received the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship Award for his groundbreaking ethnographic and archaeological work. He was the author of *Living Maya*, along with numerous articles on textiles and artisan development programs. A former director of Na Bolom, Chip lived in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. He spent his free time making mobile sculptures out of spinning whorls and weaving swords. They are quite unique and sought after.

Check out *The Maya Exploration Center* at: www.mayaexploration.org



Walter F. Morris, Jr ("Chip") went to Chiapas as a tourist from Boston in 1972 and had stayed on to become deeply expert in the textiles and culture of the Highlands. His fluency in Tzotzil and his extensive

The "flowering" of Maya culture is more than a metaphor in Zinacantan where local dress is a lavish field of ever-changing flowers for every major festival, when families wear new sets of clothing embroidered with fresh designs and the current color palette. Photo by Chip Morris.



A Tojolabal man in his embroidered shirt, Chiapas. Photo by Janet Schwartz.

time in Maya villages had given him unique insights into the history and symbolism of Maya textiles, which he has shared generously in his writings. The book, cowritten with his friend Carol Karasik, is still available.



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Pioneers in Maya Studies:

When Cahal Pech Became What It Is Today

continued from page 1

Featuring
Joseph W. Ball
and
Jennifer Taschek

A view from inside the "Audiencia" looking towards the plaza. Courtesy of ChaaChreek.com

name given by latter-day archaeologists, meaning "place of the ticks") and likely held public ceremonies there and at the Buenavista del Cayo complex, four times as large, that sits along the banks of the Mopan River, about four miles to the west.

Ball estimated that between 80 and 120 people might have lived with the king at Cahal Pech, whereas the population of greater Buenavista was somewhere between 200 and 300. The king and his court ruled over a farm population that numbered at least 6,000 to 8,000 individuals.

From 1984 to 1992, Ball and archaeology students from SDSU studied the relationship between the Buenavista del Cayo site and the Cahal Pech citadel, and determined that the royal residential quarters at the two were interchangeable – not only built exactly the same, but also decorated in the same manner. The big difference between the two was in their garbage, from which the archaeologists found that the royal diet varied according to the season.

Because it was up on a mesa 360 feet higher than the river bank, Cahal Pech generally experienced weather that was 12° Fahrenheit cooler than that at Buenavista del Cayo. By studying "macrobotanicals, food remains and faunal remains, the bone residue from meal preparation," his student archaeologists determined that the king spent the dry season up at Cahal Pech and the rainy season from October to February down by the river. "Shielded by low-lying hills to the immediate north," the Buenavista de Cayo site "doesn't get the heavy rainstorms that usually come during the rainy season and

The "Audiencia" at Cahal Pech during restoration. Photo: Jennifer Taschek.

you actually get a kind of toasty feeling there," said Ball.

In the rainy season, the king and his court typically ate river fish, turtles, and tamales, while in the summer, they ate more venison, birds, and small animals.

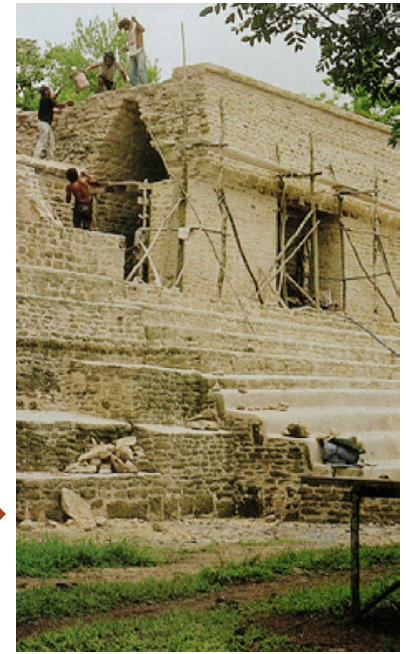
"By the way," said Ball, "if you want a good tamale, you have to try one in Maya country. It's a Maya invention, a creation that spread through the rest of Mesoamerica. They make the best tamales to this day – steamed in plantain or banana leaves!"

Both Cahal Pech and Buenavista del Cayo have ballcourts at which important Maya ceremonies were conducted. The ball game, often played between the *k'ul ajaw*, and another captive (and weakened) member of the royalty from a defeated neighbor, was understood by the Maya to be a real-time reoccurrence of the events surrounding the creation of the world and the growth of corn in their centuries-old Creation Tale.

When the *k'ul ajaw* played the ball game, it was understood not as a reenactment, but an actual repetition of the Creation story, a repetition that assured the success of the people of his realm.

During the course of their time at the site, Ball and his wife Jennifer, who is a trained architect, were asked by the Minister of Tourism & the Environment to undertake its partial restoration. This entailed putting in real foundations, with rebar, concrete, etc., and then (after dismantling the site stone-by-stone and creating a reverse blueprint of the structure) putting back what was there, so you wind up with a true restoration of what was there, only done with modern materials and safer – safe for the tourists and safe for the site."

Besides persuading the Tourism Ministry to restore rather than reconstruct the site, said Ball, "the second thing that we argued for was to not take out all the trees;



don't trash the environment. Instead, combine archaeotourism and ecotourism in the same place. Treat these as mini nature reserves, keep specimen trees, and let them provide shade. Don't pave over the plaza, leave it grassy. People will come for picnics and parties, they will enjoy it. Put in trails, label the trees, hire guides who know the local fauna."

When work first began on the restoration, it was quite controversial, in part because the project was being run by outsiders. Nevertheless, work proceeded under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism & the Environment. In 1990, Ball and Taschek partnered with Jaime Awe and his own BVAR project to secure two years of funding (1991-1992) from the United States Agency for International Development to initiate large scale architectural stabilization and restoration at the site. Taschek, who has postgraduate training in Historic Preservation from the University of Oregon's School of Architecture, oversaw the restorations.

While architecturally and historically accurate rather than "politically correct," the restorations remained

continued on page 5



Institute of Maya Studies Program and Speaker Recap for 2019

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



Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire



Francisco Estrada-Belli at Homul



Carl Abbott at Dzibanche



Dominique Rissolo at Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve



Mark Brenner at Edzna



MDC Student Nicholas Gonzalez, on IMS Adventure

January 16:

Ancient Design and Modern Destruction at the Royal Court in La Corona, Guatemala, with Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, PhD, MA, BSc, George Stuart Residential Scholar, Boundary End Center; Middle American Research Institute; Tulane University; Director of Publications, AFAR

February 20:

New Revelations from LiDAR Survey and Excavations in the 2018 Field Season, with Francisco Estrada-Belli, Research Professor at Tulane University

March 20:

Maya – Resonance and Wonder, with Carl Abbott FAIA, Architect, Planner, PA

April 17:

Making a Home at Yaxnohcah, Campeche, Mexico, with Debra S. Walker (postponed until 2020)

May 15:

The Hidden World of the Maritime Maya: Reconstructing Coastal Landscapes in Northern Quintana Roo, Mexico, with Dr. Dominique Rissolo, University of California – San Diego

June 20:

Dense Human Populations, Overexploitation of Resources, and Protracted Severe Droughts: A Recipe for Classic Maya “Collapse”, with Mark Brenner, Department of Geological Sciences & Land Use and Environmental Change Institute, of the University of Florida (postponed until 2020)

November 18:

Our Grand MDC/IMS Maya Adventure!, with MDC student Nicholas Gonzalez and IMS President Rick Slazyk

December 11:

IMS Annual Business Meeting and Anniversary Party

Peru in the News: International Airport for Machu Picchu?

Plans are in an advanced stage to build an International airport near the historic citadel in the Andes, to increase the number of tourists in Peru. The construction of an airport would mean that more people could directly fly to Chinchero, a valley in the vicinity of Machu Picchu, which is 7972 feet (2430 meters) above sea level. Construction has already begun work and bulldozers are already scraping clear millions of tons of earth in Chinchero.

The Inca citadel in the Peruvian Andes is now so popular that along with railway development, plans have been on the table since 2012 for an International airport in its vicinity. *Science* magazine reports that authorities say this could help to increase

Bulldozers and workers clearing the land in Chinchero, Peru, for the construction of a new International airport. Source: Jorge De La Quintana / Fair Use.



the number of visitors to 6 million per year. But, there are great fears that it could threaten not only the integrity of Machu Picchu, but also the historic landscape in this part of the Andes.

Peru in the News continues on page 5

Pioneers in Maya Studies:

When Cahal Pech Became What It Is Today

Featuring Joseph W. Ball
and Jennifer Taschek

continued from page 3

controversial. Over the years, however, the site gradually grew in popularity and today it is the Number One spot for weddings, *quinceañeras*, and other festivities for families from all Belize.

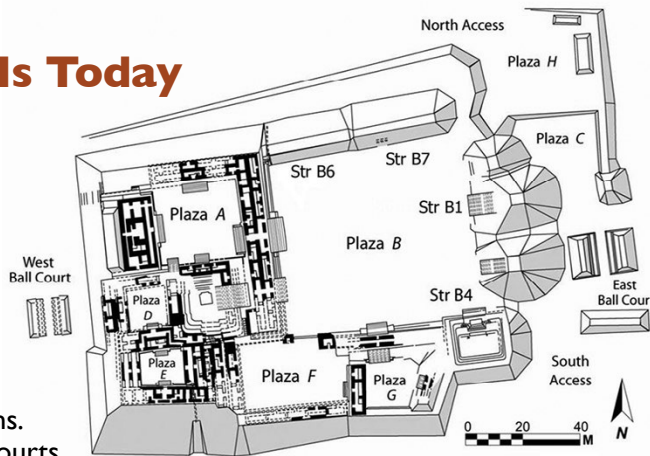
Visitors to the site today (2011) can take a taxi cab from San Ignacio, up to Cahal Pech, a ride that typically costs around \$5 US. The cab will drop visitors off at the Cahal Pech Visitor's Center, where artifacts from the site are displayed, and maps and models help visitors understand the site.

The walk from the museum to the entrance is about 300 yards, and there visitors enter the main plaza to see its ancestor monuments and the *audiencia*, which was similar to a reception hall. They will pass through the reception hall into the residential quarters, and descend a three-story labyrinthine stairway by which servants must have delivered food and water to the royal family. Inside the family compound, one will see empty chambers with benches for sleeping.

There are stelae on the site – but unlike those displayed at San Diego's Museum of Man, these were painted red but bore no sculpted decoration or inscriptions. There are also two ballcourts and a sweat bath, likely used for ritual cleansings.

Ball hopes that eventually a gift shop and small café will be constructed at the site, but he is no longer in a position to influence that decision. In 1993, control of the Belize government changed political parties, the Ministry of Tourism & the Environment was restaffed with new personnel, and the Balls' assignment as tourism consultants came to an end. For two decades now, the couple has been addressing themselves to their first love: archaeology.

Ball, who in the 1970s and '80s set the standard for Maya



Cahal Pech site core map. Courtesy of Jaime Awe.

ceramic studies internationally, and revitalized household archaeology studies in the Maya area, said that in addition to his ongoing "lab" work (now primarily focused on work notes from twenty years ago), he continues to study the Maya sociopolitical system, which he described as a mosaic of kingdoms of many sizes and strengths, ever rising, failing, warring, allying, and breaking apart.

Source: From an interview of Joseph Ball by Donald H. Harrison, editor of *Jewish World* online magazine in San Diego, at: <http://www.sdjewishworld.com/2011/05/17/sdsu-archaeologists-restored-maya-royal-residence-in-belize/>

Peru in the News: New "Toad" Mural Revealed at Vichama

A mural decorated with sculpted figures depicting a smiling toad perched above a human face has been discovered at the 3,800-year-old site of Vichama, an ancient center of Peru's Caral culture, which originated some 5,000 years ago.

Ruth Shady Solís, director of the Caral Archaeological Zone, said that the toad represented water for ancient Andean cultures, and that the mural may represent the toad bringing rainfall to the human waiting below. It's possible that the mural was made during a time when an increasingly arid local climate was contributing to internal stress in the community, which led the inhabitants of Vichama to focus on water-themed iconography.

The wall, unveiled by archaeologists on August 19, 2019, was found inside a public ceremonial building. The Vichama site is located in Huaura province in modern-day Peru, about 150 km (90 miles) north of the capital of Lima. Excavations began there in 2007 and experts believe it was an ancient agricultural and fishing community. They consider it one of the most important population centers from the Caral civilization, also known as Norte Chico.

The sacred city of Caral-Supe, in Peru's Barranca Province,

The complex carved scene depicts iconography including a human-like toad and representations of people. Another depiction found nearby shows four human heads with snakes encircling them and what appears to be a seed with a face. Courtesy of Peru's Ministry of Culture.



is described as the oldest center of civilization in the Americas. The site was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009. Caral-Supe is one of 18



By Christopher Kleihege via unesco.org

urban settlements in the Caral Archaeological Zone that feature complex and monumental architecture, including six large pyramidal structures, that show clear evidence of ceremonial functions. 🏠

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

Index for Volume 47, 2019



Joaquin "Jack"
Rodriguez



IMS Member
Suzette Pope



Mayanist
Michael D. Coe

Vol 47, Issue 1: January

Rituality, Persistence and Daily Life: An Approach to Maya Women in Colonial Times, by Dr. Juan Carrillo González, Yucatan, Mexico; New Book Release: *Maya Gods of Time*, by Jennifer and Alexander John; Unbundling the Past: Events in Ancient and Contemporary Maya History (EACMH) for January, by Zach Lindsey; Evidence Reveals Maya Elites Lived in Teotihuacan.

Vol 47, Issue 2: February

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) in the Guatemalan Peten – 2018 Survey, An interview with Francisco Estrada-Belli, PhD, by Teena Clipson, IMS Field Reporter based in Playa del Carmen, Mexico; Maya on the Mountain: *The Inscriptions of Cobá*, Glyph Workshop led by David Stuart, at The Boundary End Center; What do the Mysterious Green Crosses in the Houses of the Yucatan Mean?; Jaw-Droppers from the 2019 Mesoamerica Meetings by Zach Lindsey; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for February, by Zach Lindsey; Painting with Urine! Ancient Peruvian Culture used Chameleon Waste to Create White Paint.

Vol 47, Issue 3: March

The Maya Puuc Ruins of Dzékilná, Campeche, by Stephan Merk, Ancient Altar at La Corona Reveals Maya "Game of Thrones" Dynasty; Unbundling the Past: Unique Rock-Carved Steam Bath Discovered at Nakum, Guatemala; Maya on the Mountain; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for March, by Zach Lindsey; Oldest Known Human Burial Identified in Lower Central America.

Vol 47, Issue 4: April

The Maya Image Archive: A New Open Access Image Database for Maya Studies by Christian Prager, Katja Diederichs, Céline Tamignaux; The Journey of the IMS Library; Destroyed Maya Murals at Chilonche, Petén, Guatemala, by Karl Herbert Mayer, Mexican, Austrian Bureau; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for April, by Zach Lindsey; INAH May Have Found the First Aztec Royal Burial; Seibal Looted Sculpture Was in the United States, by Karl Herbert Mayer.

Vol 47, Issue 5: May

Survey Reveals New Discoveries in the Northern Sector of Calakmul Biosphere, Interview with Ivan Šprajc by Teena Clipson; Golden Kingdoms: Luxury & Legacy in the Ancient Americas Exhibit; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for May, by Zach Lindsey; Exploring Lamanai, Ka'Kabish, and Marco Gonzales, featuring Dr. Elizabeth Graham; First Human Remains Found in El Salvador's Joya de Cerén

Vol 47, Issue 6: June

Paleoclimate of Florida, with Mark Brenner; Unique Maya Jadeite Gouge with Wooden Handle Discovered Underwater in Belize, featuring LSU's Heather McKillop; Survey Reveals

New Discoveries in the Northern Sector of Calakmul Biosphere: Interview with Ivan Šprajc, by Teena Clipson, (cont. from May); Unbundling the Past: EACMH for June, by Zach Lindsey.

Vol 47, Issue 7: July

Opinion: The Dangers of Looking for the Ancient Maya in the United States, by Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, PhD, Visiting Assistant Professor, Davidson College, Davidson, NC; *Maya: The Great Jaguar Rises*, a new exhibit at the Royal BC Museum, Canada with Sofia Paredes Maury; Four Unidentified Fragments of Maya Monuments, by Karl Herbert Mayer; Gregorian–Maya Date Conversion, by Jim Reed; FLAAR Mesoamerica: Reports on Plants and Animals of Parque Nacional Yaxha Nakum Naranjo, by Nicholas Hellmuth; Unbundling the Past: The King of the Land of Mosquitos, by Zach Lindsey; 2,500-Year-Old Olmec Monuments Discovered at Tak'alik Ab'aj; Mike Ruggeri's Ancient Americas Web Pages.

Vol 47, Issue 8: August

The 2018 Field Season at Santa Rosa Xtampak, by Antonio Benavides C. and Sara Novelo O., INAH Campeche; Ancient Burial Site Off Manasota Key, FL, is 1,000 Years Older Than Estimated; Fundamentals of Maya Archaeology: Settlement Patterns, by Zach Lindsey; *In Memoriam* by Marta Barber: Joaquin "Jack" Rodriguez; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for August, by Zach Lindsey; *IMS Explorer* Readers: Here's an Invite to Join the "Atzlan" Listserv, by Mike Ruggeri; The PCSWDC Symposium.

Vol 47, Issue 9: September

El Muñeco de Jade: Lost Treasures of the Ancient Maya, Interview with Sofia Paredes Maury, by Teena Clipston; *In Memoriam*: Lifetime IMS Member Suzette Pope; PCSWDC Symposium Update: Alexandre Tokovinine and his 3D Imaging in Maya Archaeology; The Amazing Talent of Walter Paz Jo; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for September, by Zach Lindsey; *Maya@Playa* Update: Artist Steve Radzi; Jade Hearth of Creation, by Joseph W. Ball; "Palenque V" now online from George Fery.

Vol 47, Issue 10: October

Unreal Archaeology: How The Ancient World Is Being Recreated In Virtual Reality, Featuring David R. Hixson and Jeffrey R. Vadala; Dsinábila-Xul: A Maler Maya Site Revisited, by Stephan Merk; Maya Magic at Xaman Ha, by artist Steve Radzi; *The Birth of the Universe*: The Maya Science of Pregnancy, featuring Apab'yan Tew, by Zach Lindsey; Unbundling the Past: EACMH for October, composed by Jim Reed; Settlement Patterns: Archaeology of the 99%, Interview with Jeremy Sabloff.

Vol 47, Issue 11: November

Pioneer in Maya Studies: Michael Douglas Coe, *In Memoriam*, compiled by Jim Reed; *Pioneers in Maya Studies*: Influential Mayanist Seminar, by Joseph W. Ball; Coe Awards and Recognition; Yucatec Mayan Language Will Be Taught In All Schools in the Yucatan; Michael Coe at the IMS; Teo Mask Adds to Corpus of Isthmian Script; Michael Coe & Izapa; My Grand Maya Adventure: From Río Bec to Calakmul, by MDC student Nicholas Gonzalez; *Remembering Sophie!* The True History of *The True History of Chocolate*, by Aylin Öney Tan; Resources: Explore Coe Hyperlinks.

Vol 47, Issue 12: December



Chip Morris

When Cahal Pech Became What It Is Today, featuring Joseph W. Ball and Jennifer Taschek; *Pioneer in Maya Textiles*: Walter F. "Chip" Morris, *In Memoriam* by Ed Barnhart; IMS Program and Speaker Recap for 2019; Index for Volume 47, 2019; *Peru in the News*: Airport at Machu Picchu; New Mural Revealed in Vichama; Elite Inca Tomb.

IMS Annual Business Meeting and Anniversary Party – December 11



As established in the bylaws, the event takes place on the second Wednesday of December, in this case December 11. We combine our anniversary party with a short business meeting, and a few short committee reports; celebrating with an *a la carte* dinner. This year, there are no new board members up for election to the 2020 Board of Directors.

The IMS has now been together for 48 years!

Officially dubbed the Annual Members Meeting, members seldom think of it as that. Think fellowship, food and fun!

Think “Happy Birthday” to the IMS.

Ki'imak óolal yo'olal u k'iin a k'aba'!

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

Artwork courtesy of Walter Paz Joj.

Peru in the News: Archaeologists Discover Elite Incan Tomb at Mata Indio Dig in the Northern Lambayeque Region

In February, 2019, Peruvian archaeologists announced that they had made an important discovery that will add to their knowledge of Inca society and culture in a remote area of northern Peru. They encountered a tomb of a member of the Inca elite in the northern deserts of Lambayeque.

This find is expected to help experts to understand the impact

*The Inca tomb found at Mata Indio dig site
The tomb had been broken into multiple
times, possibly in search of treasure.*

Source: Andina News Agency (Fair Use).

of the Inca on the provinces that they conquered. The remains of five adults and four 6-year-old children have so far been identified, and it seems the children were sacrificed. A YouTube video of the find is at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y-9zIpo-EQ>



Continued on page 8

2019 New Membership and Renewal Application

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Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

The IMS has gone Green! Join today

You can also become a member by using PayPal and the on-line application form on our website at: <http://instituteofmayastudies.org>

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

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Peru in the News: Archaeologists Discover Elite Incan Tomb at Mata Indio Dig in the Northern Lambayeque Region

continued from page 7

The tomb's occupant is believed to have been buried with his companions. So far, the team has discovered a total of five adults and four young children (all estimated to be around 6 years old) who appear to have been sacrificed. The children were placed beneath the tomb's stone floor lined up from east to west. According to archaeologist Alfredo Núñez, this is "a very important symbolic axis for the time."

The researchers concluded that the tomb likely held someone of importance as it contains a collection of rather fancy sea shells from mollusks belonging to the *Spondylus* genus, aka thorny oysters. The Incas used to bury important members of society with these beautiful shells, a trade item among royalty.

The team also uncovered a number of vases despite the fact that the tomb appears to have been broken into and looted multiple times. The tomb also has some other interesting features – it includes various hollows in which symbolic idols could be placed.

"We are lucky to have documented the structure and recovered some objects that allow us to date [the tomb]," noted Luis Chero Zurita, Director of the Huaca Rajada-Sipan site museum. Zurita likened the site to the Valley of the Kings in Egypt, noting that the River Zaña would have been a vital



Here you can see artifacts found in the tomb, including the *Spondylus* shells. Source: Ministerio de Cultura del Perú.

resource to the Incas, just as the Nile was to the ancient Egyptians.

The tomb covers over 60 square meters (645 sq. ft.), which is impressively large for a burial chamber found in the area.

Source: This news was shared at the time by numerous news venues across the globe, including <https://www.ifscience.com/>, <https://www.bbc.com/>, <https://www.archaeology.org/>, and an article by Ed Whelan on: <https://www.ancient-origins.net/>

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

Dec. 11 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Major Gathering! IMS Annual Business Meeting and December Birthday Party!* – Think fellowship, food and fun! The IMS has now been together for 48 years! Think "Happy Birthday" to the IMS

Jan. 15 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Public Presentation Shamanic Arts of the Americas* – with **Constantino Manuel Torres**, Professor Emeritus of Florida International University. Manny is an archaeologist and ethnobotanist specializing in the ethnobotany of Precolumbian Mesoamerica, South America, and the Caribbean.

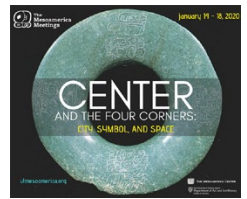
Feb. 19 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Public Presentation Soft Technologies and the Role of Plants in Classic Maya Identity* – with **Traci Ardren**, PhD. Traci is an anthropological archaeologist interested in New World prehistoric cultures. Congratulations to Traci on being awarded a prestigious Dumbarton Oaks fellowship for the spring of 2019. In her program, she'll discuss her latest research gleaned at Dumbarton Oaks.

March 18 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Public Presentation Making a Home at Yaxnohcah, Campeche, Mexico* – with **Debra S. Walker**, PhD University of Florida; Book Author. Debra is a Registered Professional Archaeologist, specializing in the ancient Maya and pottery analysis. She has undertaken research in Belize (Cerro Maya), Guatemala (Naachtun), and Mexico (Yaxnohcah 2011-present). Currently, she is a research curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History (Gainesville, FL).

April 15 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Public Presentation Dense Human Populations, Over-exploitation of Natural Resources, and Protracted Severe Droughts: A Recipe for Classic Maya "Collapse"* – with **Mark Brenner**, PhD, University of Florida. Mark is a limnologist/paleolimnologist with special interests in tropical and subtropical lakes and watersheds. Mark's research addresses interactions among climate, environment, and humans.

Upcoming Events:

January 14-18, 2020: *Meso Meetings Center and the Four Corners: City, Symbol, and Space* – theme of the 2020



Mesoamerican Meetings at The University of Texas at Austin – TX. We'll explore the structures and symmetries of the ancient Mesoamerican cosmos, and address the overlapping features of cosmology, sacred geometry, and structural symmetry. Over the course of nearly three millennia, the basic world model of a center with four sides or quarters exerted a great influence on urban design, architecture, and numerous artworks, and it continues even today in many ritual settings. For more details, go to: <https://lutmesoamerica.org/2020-mesoamerica-meetings>

Check out and get in on the fun on our IMS Facebook page: Join the **Explorer-ation!** Copy & paste: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MiamiIMS/>

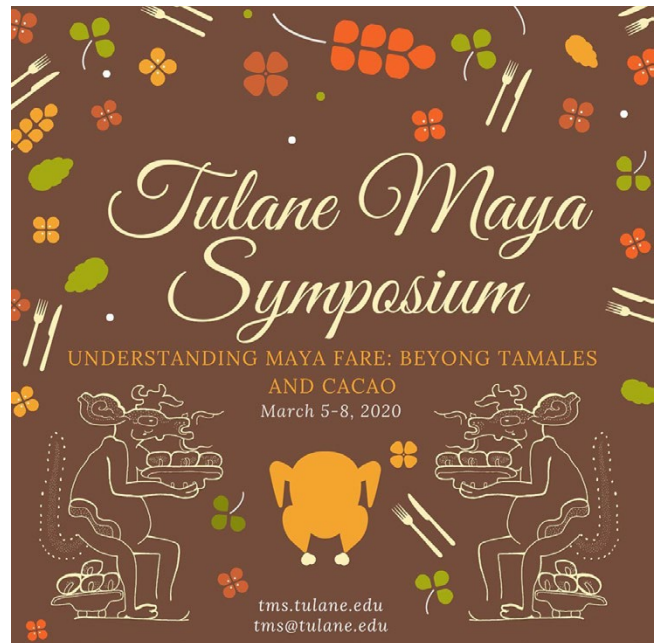
IMS EXPLORER

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



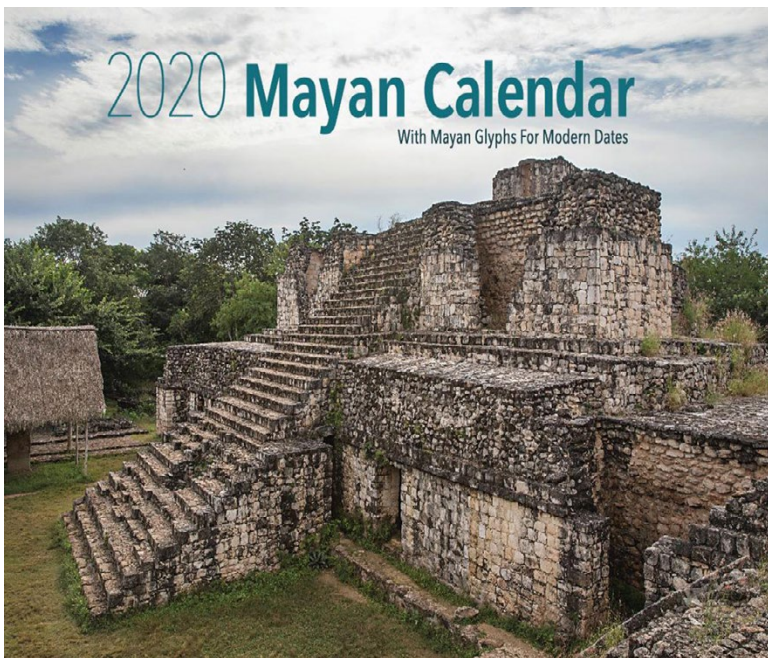
The Mesoamerica Meetings
Center and the Four Corners:
City, Symbol, and Space
January 14-18

Go to: < utmesoamerica.org/2020-mesoamerica-meetings >



The Tulane Maya Symposium
Understanding Maya Fare:
Beyond Tamales and Cacao
March 5-8

Go to: < tms.tulane.edu > for details



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