

January 15, 2020 • Maya Ceremonial Era Long Count: 0.0.7.3.1 • 11 Imix 9 Muwan • G7

A Recent Visit to Chelemí, Campeche by Antonio Benavides C., INAH Campeche

During November 2019, we once again had the chance to visit this little Maya site with Puuc architecture that still preserves some remnants of mural painting. The first researcher documenting this settlement was archaeologist Harry Pollock of the Carnegie Institution, who was there during the 1930s, but published his information fifty years later (Pollock 1980: 465-470). Previously, the site had been registered by Florencia Müller (1960: 29), but her report was based on research in the office, because she never visited Chelemí.

Pollock reported the group that included the “Paintings Building” that featured a patio and another compound, all badly collapsed, and all located around 200 meters northwest of the site center.

During the 1980s, architect George F. Andrews of the University of Oregon was at the site on several surveys (Andrews 1995: 19) and documented the still-standing building, although he referred to it as Chelimi. A few years later, Edmundo López de la Rosa and Lorraine Williams-Beck visited the archaeological



The “Paintings Building” as seen from the southeast by Harry Pollock in the 1930s.



Eastern view of the “Paintings Building,” also by archaeologist Harry Pollock.

site (Williams-Beck 1998: 125-126) and initiated the toponym Chelemí. Their observations noted the patio on top of a low hill. Ascending from the southeast, they also registered two distinct artificial levelings on the upslope.

The first intervention on the architecture that still remained took place in 1997 (Benavides 1998), at a time when



Hard work brings change. L) A southeastern view of the “Paintings Building” in 1997 and R) after its consolidation. Photos:ABC, INAH.



Jim Reed,
Editor

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IMS Presentation: January 15, 7:30 pm



Yucatec Maya Balché Ceremony

Shamanic Arts of the Americas

with
Constantino Manuel “Manny” Torres,
Professor Emeritus of Florida International University

the nearby community of Dzotché had wire-fenced one *hectare* around the ancient building. INAH hired people from Dzotché and Cumpich to cut vegetation, excavate, and restore the Maya structure. Those works
continued on page 4

Unbundling the Past: Events in Ancient and Contemporary Maya History for January

by Zach Lindsey



While this column is typically a celebration of the ancient Maya past, two of the most important events for the Maya in January actually happened in the last 100 years. Also, is it a coincidence that all these events involve strong ladies? *Let's go with no!*

6 January 2006: On 12.19.12.16.19 11 Kawak 17 K'an'k'in, the Zapatista leader and the Tzotzil Maya **Comandanta Ramona** entered the road to Xibalba. While there are plenty of folks who disagree with the Zapatistas, including people in other Maya communities, they did something extraordinary in the latter half of the 20th century and brought the struggles of Maya people into the world's consciousness. The Revolutionary Women's Law she created with other indigenous women is probably her biggest legacy; in it, the writers argue for basic rights such as education and just salaries.

You can read a Spanish version here: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1993/12/31/ley-revolucionaria-de-mujeres/>

9 January 1959: Speaking of awesome ladies, on 12.17.5.4.15 7 Men 8 K'an'k'in G5, **Rigoberta Menchu** was born in Laj Chimel. This K'iche' civil rights activist exposed atrocities during the Guatemalan Civil War and genocide against Maya people. She frequently risked her own life, and could very easily have ended up dead for her troubles. Instead, she won a Nobel Prize and an Order of the Aztec Eagle among other awards. She continues to promote indigenous rights and raise awareness of climate change. 🏹

Who was Comandanta Ramona? (1959-2006)

Comandanta Ramona was a guerrilla and activist in Chiapas, Mexico. She was born near San Andrés de Larrainzer, in 1959; and died near San Cristóbal, January 6, 2006.

When Mexico's balaclava-clad Subcomandante Marcos launched his Zapatista rebellion in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas in January 1994, a tiny woman in a gaily embroidered native *huipil* blouse was often seen alongside him, all but her eyes masked by a pink bandanna. She looked as though she had never used the Vietnam-era rifle that almost dwarfed her, and some say she never did.

Marcos, clearly white or *mestizo* with his honey-colored eyes, explained that he might be



Oval Palace Tablet from House E (palace), Palenque. Lady Sak K'uk' wearing a jade net skirt and cape, offers the drum major headdress decorated with a jester god of rulership to her son K'inich Janaab Pakal. Janaab Pakal sits cross-legged on a double-headed jaguar bench. The hieroglyphs name both figures. Schele Number: 143 from the Linda Schele Drawings Collection at <http://research.famsi.org>

25 January 633 CE: Still speaking of awesome ladies, on 9.10.0.0.0 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab, Palenque Queen Regent Sak K'uk' celebrated a k'atun ending. K'atun endings were normally celebrated by men, but her grandson, K'inich Kan B'ahlam, made sure to give her the credit on the inscription on his father's sarcophagus. 🏹

Florida State University Hosted Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum



Activist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchú Tum gave a public talk on April 8, 2016, at Florida State University as a part of the PeaceJam Southeast Public Talk and Conference, a program coordinated by the FSU Center for Leadership & Social Change.

Born to a poor family of the K'iché branch of the Maya culture on Jan. 9, 1959, Menchú grew up in Laj Chimel, a village in the northwest mountains of Guatemala. When Menchú was 20 years old, her brother was arrested, tortured and killed by the Guatemalan army, beginning the persecution of her family during the country's 30 years of dictatorship, war and violence.

The traumatic events of her young adult life led to a lifetime of activism and peaceful resistance that earned her the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. She was the first indigenous person to receive the honor and one of only a handful of women.

Menchú's public talk, "Healing Communities Torn by Racism and Hate," focused on how today's society is affected by racism and hate and how we can work to alleviate suffering and oppression. The College of Social Work and the Center for Graduate Students hosted a reception following the talk, and Menchú held a book signing at that time. 🏹

Source: <https://csw.fsu.edu/article/fsu-hosts-nobel-laureate-rigoberta-menchu-tum>

continued on page 6





The Lacandon Maya: Their Past & Present

by Mark F. Cheney



L) An elusive Lacandon. Photo courtesy of Miguel Dewener-Plana, Germany. R) The Lacandon arrow set vendors I encountered at Palenque.

I cherish the memory of my encounter with the Lacandon Maya in 1995 on the fringe of the restored Maya site of Palenque, in Chiapas, Mexico. I purchased a colorful bow and arrow set that was small enough to fit in my luggage from a couple of Lacandon (above right). They were wearing their distinctive white tunics and long hair, and had an air of confidence that Perera and Bruce styled as “poised”.²

As a people, the Lacandon Maya are unique and have an important story to be told. When the Spanish were doing battle with and subduing the other Maya tribes, the Lacandon remained relatively untouched by the conflict and culture of the European invaders due to their seclusion in small groups in the deeper forests and jungles of what is today Yucatan, Mexico, and the Peten of Guatemala. When they finally did come in contact with Europeans,



A Lacandon arrow set.



Chan K'in Viejo enjoys a cigar.

it was devastating. Through disease and contempt of others, they dwindled to a tribe of approximately 200 people. Let's take a brief look at their history.

The name Lacandon is derived from Mayan words that mean “those who set up stone (idols)”. The origin of “Lacandon” is the Mayan plural form *ah akan-tun-oob**, which derives from the agentive *ah*, meaning “he” or “they”; *akan*, “standing” or “set up”; and *tun*, “precious stone” or “stone idol(s).” Thus, the *ah okantunoob* were “those who set up (and worship) stone idols.”

This name was used to describe them by the Spaniards and the Christianized Maya groups, so it is not an ancient name in regards to the antiquity of the Preclassic or Classic Maya culture. The Lacandon were both agrarian and hunter-gatherers, which seems to indicate that they were adaptive to whatever situation or environment wherein they had to survive. They still carve the long, elegant dugout canoes from local mahogany trees (see photo page 5).

The Lacandon worship their own pantheon of gods and goddesses in small huts set aside for religious worship at the edge of their villages. These sacred structures



L) Chan K'in Viejo involved in a ritual. R) Chan K'in Viejo and two of his wives. Chan means “little” and K'in is “sun, prophecy, prophet.” He lived at a place called Naha' (Great Water) on the lake of the same name. Chan K'in ti' Naha' could be translated Little Prophet of the Great Water. He was the firstborn son of the previous “great one,” Bol Kasyaho.^A

contain a shelf of clay incense burners, each decorated with the face of a Lacandon deity. The Lacandon also make pilgrimages to nearby ancient Maya cities to pray and to remove stone pebbles from the ruins for ritual purposes.

They believe that Maya sites are sacred places where their gods once dwelled before moving to new domains they constructed in the sky and below the earth.^B

The Lacandon are grouped in what they call *onen*,

continued on page 5



A Recent Visit to Chelemí, Campeche

by Antonio Benavides C., INAH Campeche *continued from page 1*

used cement mortars (15% added to the *sascab* and limestone mixture).

Chelemí is located about 3 km northwest from Dzotché. The only structure still standing originally had three rooms; a central one looking to the east and another two vaulted spaces to their sides crosswise displayed. Each room had its own entrance. The northern room collapsed before Pollock's arrival and should have had a northern access. In the roofless space in front of the central room, there are two low benches and on the eastern wall of that room there was once a roofcomb of which today only its base can be seen.

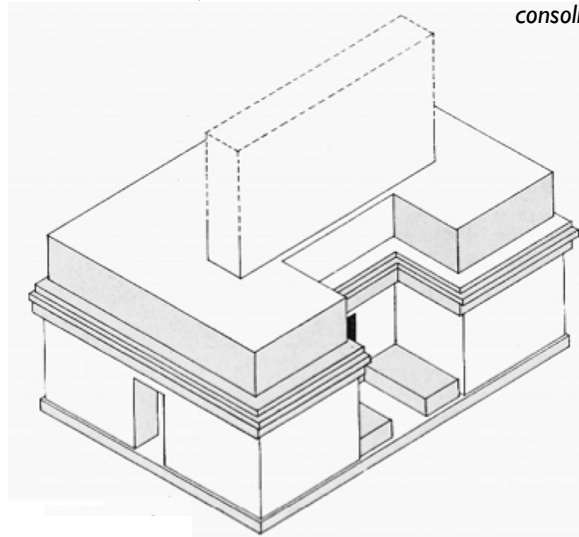
Chelemí is one of the 74 sites in the Puuc region. The site registers 156 buildings with the Early Puuc architectural style, dated between 650 and 750 CE. Its constructive precedent is the Proto Puuc architecture (600-650 CE), a style that also exists at the site and featuring small ashlars, with less quality, and frequently using vaults resembling inverted stairways.

The vestiges of a mural painting that were registered in 1997 were located inside the central and the southern rooms of Structure I. The first area of mention had red strokes on some sections under the soffit. At the same time, on the western vault of the southern room, there was the representation of a blue bench or throne with red circles.

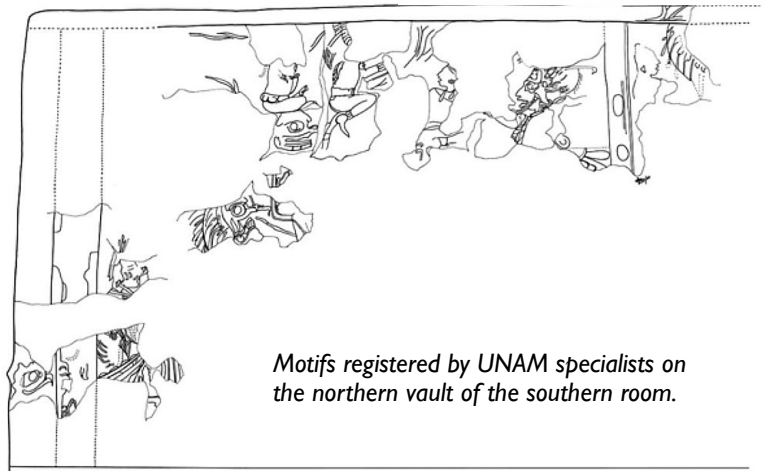
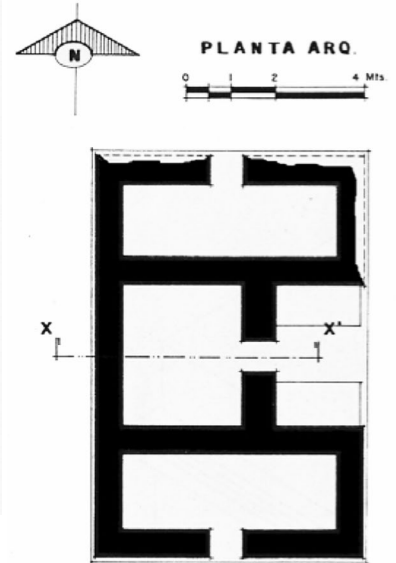
A team of specialists from the UNAM's Aesthetics Research Institute also visited Chelemí during the 1990s, studying and analyzing the mural paintings. María Elena Ruiz Gallut (2001: 292), for example, noted that there was a representation of the profile of a character



L) A view of the eastern side of the "Paintings Building" in 1997 and R) after its consolidation. Photos: Antonio Benavides C., INAH.



Above) Reconstructive illustration of Chelemí's Structure I or "Paintings Building": R) The original architectural plan.



Motifs registered by UNAM specialists on the northern vault of the southern room.



L) Vestiges of the mural painting showing a blue and red bench (western side of Chelemí's southern room). R) A comparison with a similar bench scene from Bonampak. This image courtesy of www.latinamericanstudies.org

with a big headdress and a chinstrap resembling that of a solar god. She added that on another wall there were traces of a bench that resembles the same motif painted within Bonampak's Room 2 (at right).

Complementing that information, Tatiana Falcón Álvarez (2001: 204) also reported human figures seated in the lotus flower position. And, Diana Magaloni Kerpel (2001: 173) identified seven pigments, mentioning colors like carbon black, gray, Maya blue, green, ochre, red, and orange.

continued on page 6

The Lacandon Maya: Their Past & Present

by Mark F. Cheney

continued from page 3

i.e. lineages or clans; the northern being the Monkey or Boar *onen*, and the southern *onen* being either Boar, Deer, or Curassow. Since the death of the northern group's leader Chan K'in Viejo in 1996, their land has suffered deforestation and pseudo-legal colonization of other groups from outside Maya tribes, encouraged by the government to become agrarian and raise cattle. Chan K'in Viejo was the oldest and the most respected of the Lacandon elders, and the highest authority and spokesman for the religion and cultural traditions of his people.

Since 2002, a group known as the Lacandon Cultural Heritage Project (LCHP) under the purview of the Dokumentation Bedrohter Sprachen (DOBES) and the VolkswagenStiftung, have been documenting the language and culture of the Northern Lacandon, which may be in danger of disappearing, as more and more of the Lacandon are forced by circumstances to rely upon and to associate with those of outside cultures.

It seems that linguistically, the Lacandon are most closely related to the Yucatecan Maya, whose language is most similar to the original Mayan language. Over time, there were over 30 Mayan-derivative languages spoken. Only about eight distinct languages are still spoken today in Mesoamerica.

In their own language, they call themselves *Hach Winik* ("Real People"), and they call their language *Hach T'ana* ("Real Language"). The Lacandon have long been traders with other Maya in the area and have adopted some words of Ch'ol and Tzeltal into their lexicon.^A

The Lacandon migrated from the Peten jungle of Guatemala and the Yucatan peninsula in the late 18th century, to the area near Palenque. In 1982, when *The Last Lords of Palenque* by Victor



Traditional Lacandon dugout canoe, hand-carved from a single Mahogany Tree.



Author Mark Cheney at Palenque, 1995.

Editor's note: My initial intention was to find a map of the Northern and Southern Lacandon Maya areas to accompany this article, but while searching, I discovered that there aren't any colorful examples by scholars to be found. So, I created a totally new map by combining hints from Mark's references below, while incorporating actual Google satellite imagery. Enlarge for more clarity. Enjoy!



Perera and Robert D. Bruce² was first copyrighted, the Northern Lacandon at Naha' near Palenque numbered about 250. The Southern group, living in Lacanja' near Bonampak, numbered fewer than 150, according to Perera and Bruce – a total of less than 400. Today, the combined Lacandon Maya number between 800 to 1000 individuals.

institute, it was founded in 1951 by archaeologist Frans Blom and his wife, photographer Gertrude "Trudi" Duby Blom. Casa Na Bolom ("House of the Jaguar") does advocacy work for the Lacandon, sponsors research on their history and culture, returns to them copies of photographs and other cultural documentation done by scholars over the years, and addresses environmental threats to the Lacandon Jungle, such as deforestation. Among its many projects, Casa Na Bolom has collaborated with a group of Swedish ethnomusicology students who recorded traditional Lacandon songs. A publication of those recordings in CD form is now planned.^A

For more information on the current problems faced by these threatened Maya people, please explore the online references below. 🏠

Online References:

^A<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lacandon>

^Bhttps://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lacandon_Jungle

^C<https://codigo-sur.com.mx/2019/11/15/que-metan-guardia-nacional-en-selva-lacandona-piden-lacandones/>
(Note: this page has now been deleted from their server)

^D<http://web.uvic.ca/lacandon/>

^Ehttp://www.lacandonespordeladefensademontesazules.org.mx/index.html?fbclid=IwAR2pajJnliTZOmL-3ETVHCe-ZUL8EojV5Gx1HzG9_gjIEv04qy-qbfifeCsc

^F<https://apnews.com/4b0666cf65ee494ab36c144904994725>

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A Recent Visit to Chelemí, Campeche by Antonio Benavides C., INAH Campeche *continued from page 4*

The exterior walls of Structure I also have painting strokes under the medial moulding; there is a red strip around 8 cm wide, then some vestiges of an ochre/yellow section (around 15 cm wide) and once again faint red traces under that sector. Those strokes are still visible on the east, south and west walls.

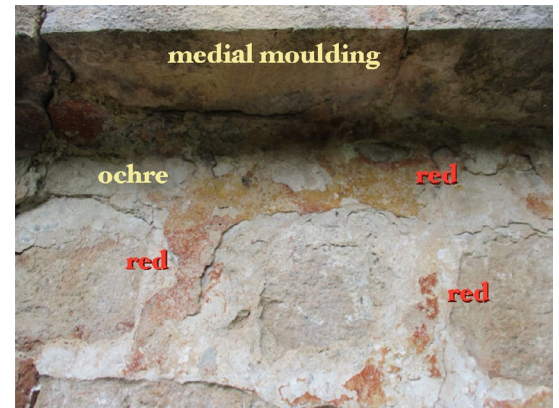
The 2019 inspection revealed that the paintings have partially faded even more, and we anticipate the arrival of a team of restorers in order to further clean and stabilize the still-existing painting vestiges. The principal goal of this visit was to seal the entrances and holes of the rooms to avoid the passage of birds, bats and iguanas, and provide conditions for the preservation of the paintings.

Wooden frames covered with wire mesh were installed at the entrances to the central and southern rooms; their

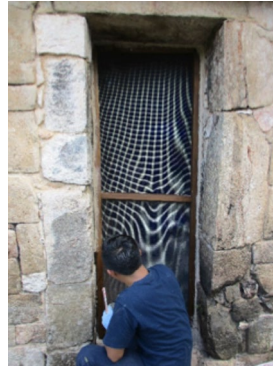
union to jambs and lintels was covered with a limestone mixture. In a similar way, the small quadrangular windows of both rooms were sealed with stones and covered by the same mixture.

During this visit to Chelemí, we accompanied the INAH Campeche team of restorers formed by Félix Albano Camacho Zamora, Valentín Hernández Canché and Gaspar Pantí Dzul.

We also want to acknowledge the logistic support of Jorge Blanco Novelo (vehicle operator), Perfecto Ucán Canul (mason from Cumpich), and Teodoro Uh Chi (municipal authority from Dzotché).
Closing the entranceway to the southern room and the sealing of a little "window" in the central room. Photos: Antonio Benavides C., INAH.



Traces of ochre and red color on the southern side.



Closing the entranceway to the southern room and the sealing of a little "window" in the central room. Photos: Antonio Benavides C., INAH.

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Who was Comandanta Ramona? (1959-2006) *continued from page 2*

the public face of the so-called Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), but he was merely a Subcomandante. The woman was Comandanta Ramona, one of a Revolutionary Committee of Tzotzil and Tzeltal Maya he said were the real leaders of the guerrilla group. He spoke for them because they did not speak fluent Spanish, only their native tongues. His modesty was something of a PR exercise

by the charismatic poet-guerrilla billed by many at the time as a new

Che Guevara and seen to this day as the public face, or at least eyes, of the Zapatistas. But, it was Ramona who led the rebels into the town of San Cristóbal de las Casas on New Year's Day 1994, demanding greater rights for the indigenous people of Chiapas and protesting Mexico's involvement in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that came into force that very day. *continued on page 8*



A selection of the so-called "Ramona Dolls" available in markets.

Shamanic Arts of the Americas

with
Constantino Manuel "Manny" Torres



Professor Emeritus,
Florida International
University,
Book Author



Courtesy: www.thesacredscience.com
Photo: Rose De Dan.

There is something primordial within us that connects smoke with spirituality. The most common smoke-purification ritual is a technique called smudging. This practice (or some variation of it) is embraced by almost every one of the native cultures in the Western Hemisphere. When we see a unique method used by different tribes across multiple continents or land masses, it's a strong indication that it yields very real physical and/or spiritual benefits.

A Maya Rose Petal / Copal ceremony in Tikal. Courtesy: Free Press. Photo: Ricky López Bruni.

Our presenter this month is Constantino Manuel "Manny" Torres. Manny is an archaeologist and ethnobotanist specializing in the ethnobotany of Precolumbian Mesoamerica, South America, and the Caribbean. A book author and expert in various fields, he'll be talking on January 15 about the various shamanic arts of the indigenous cultures of the Western Hemisphere.

Shamanism is the oldest spiritual practice known to mankind, and interestingly, this ancient practice has been brought right into our modern society. The actual word Shaman comes from the Tungus-speaking region of Siberia meaning "one who knows" and/or "one who sees". The Maya use the term *h'men* to describe a shaman. The ability to heal the human soul remains as beneficial today as it has from our ancient past.

**The IMS is a Community Partner with Miami Dade College – Kendall Campus, Miami, FL
January 15, 2020 • 7:30 pm • Room R-402**

Note January-only room change to: R-402 (in Building R-4, Room 02)

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Who was Comandanta Ramona? (1959-2006)

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Throughout Chiapas, in spite of the overpowering military presence of the well-equipped Mexican Army, people are working within their own communities to increase resistance to the repressive complicity of the Mexican government and international capitalism and to strengthen their own commitment to a self-determined life of dignity and independence from corporate control.

Ramona's strength was in her commitment to her own people and the realization of their ancestors' prophecy of the native people of the Americas uniting to claim their freedom. Not a prominent speaker or public representative of the EZLN, she spoke simple Spanish and preferred to work among her own; however, she gained attention when she addressed a crowd

of thousands in the main square of Mexico City. With her face covered by a mask, she was the first EZLN leader to speak in person publicly in the national capital. She called for solidarity, strength, and courage to the millions of Mexicans who saw her there or in the media. Her slight frail presence was transformed into a gigantic icon of hope for the Mexican masses. The response gave lie to the Mexican government claim that the EZLN is only relevant to a small rural ethnic group.

"The great global power has not yet found the weapon capable of destroying dreams. As long as it does not find it, we will continue to dream, in other words, we will continue to triumph."

(EZLN statement)

Ironically, she was on the road from San Andrés de Larrainzer to



Another influential woman's rights activist, Major Ana Maria, of the EZLN.

Go to: <https://schoolsforchiapas.org/category/women/page/5/>. There you will find the text of a short and dignified message from Comandanta Ramona to the students of UNAM in Mexico City on March 11th, 1997, marking International Woman's Day, March 8th.

San Cristóbal, because there was no hospital in the former, when her kidney finally failed. Her real name and details of her pre-revolutionary life were never revealed. 🏠

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

Jan. 15 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Presentation in R-402*
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 Presentation in K-413*
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.

Mar. 18 • 7:30 pm: *IMS Presentation in K-413*
Making a Home at Yaxnohcah, Campeche, Mexico – with **Debra S. Walker**, PhD University of Florida; Book Author. Debra is a Registered Professional Archaeologist, specializing

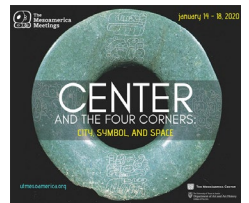
in the ancient Maya and pottery analysis. She has undertaken research in Belize (Cerro Maya), Guatemala (Naachtun), and Mexico (Yaxnohcah 2011-present). Currently, she is a research curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History (Gainesville, FL).

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.

Check out and get in on the fun on our IMS Facebook page: Get in on all the action! IMS members post interesting links and more. Join the **Explorer-ation!** at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MiamilMS/>

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://utmesoamerica.org/2020-mesoamerica-meetings>

Editor's Tip: *Online all the time*
Ancient Americas Events – Get in the know with Mike Ruggeri's "better-than-ever!" comprehensive list. mikeruggerisevents.tumblr.com/

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