



ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

www.mayaexploration.org

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New Maya Funerary Cave Found in Chiapas

When Dr. Barnhart arrived to Chiapas last month to lead the Palenque to Tikal annual public tour, he was informed by MEC's transport coordinator Javier Scherrer that a new cave had been found just the week before and that the local folks wanted an archaeologist to look at the Maya artifacts they had found inside. The cave had been found by Maya farmers while clearing a new section

of forest for planting corn. Our contact in the area was Willy Fonseca, owner of the Valle Escondido restaurant along the highway in between Palenque and Bonampak. The cave had been found just a few kilometers from his property.

On the tour's way out to Bonampak Dr. Barnhart made contact with the farmers and a plan to visit the cave the next Saturday, on the way back to Palenque from Yaxchilan. Willy's son showed the group the neck of a large jar that had been pulled from the cave and Dr. Barnhart recognized it immediately as a funerary vessel meant to hold the ashes of a cremated body. This was clearly a sacred burial site.

When they returned on Saturday morning, the farmer was off to the market but his young son Alejandro knew the way. After assuring his mother that we would have him back to his chores shortly, Barn-



Javier Scherrer and Curt Vander Vere exploring the new cave

hart's group followed him across his fields towards the mountains. Just as they reached the foothills Alejandro said, "the cave is under our feet now". Shortly after they were at its mouth, peering down into the darkness.

Dr. Barnhart, along with Javier and tour members Larry Bartels and Curt Vander Vere followed the boy down the hole and through a low first chamber, carefully avoiding the soda straw stalactites. The cave opened up into a huge front chamber with a ceiling some 5 meters high. Alejandro quickly ran over to a large broken ceramic jar, banging it with his machete like a bell and calling out that it was there. Dr. Barnhart calmly asked him to stop hitting the artifact as he moved to quickly towards him on the slippery cave floor. Indeed, it was the base of the jar whose neck he had seen back on the farm, cemented into the floor of the cave by centuries of calcification. Probing around

Story continued on page 4



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Letter from the Director



Spring arrived early in Texas and the wildflowers are in full bloom. No one could be happier about that than my lovely wife Cassandra, who despises the cold. She has informed me that we will never live any further north than Austin. Good enough for me, I'm usually headed south anyway. Today is the Spring Equinox, when equal hours of light and darkness put the year in symbolic balance. At MEC we continue to seek a balance of our own, between our traditional activities and our new plans. As our travel courses reduce in frequency, our campus lecture program is growing. As our research in Mexico slows, our studies in other countries increase, such as Dr. Kirk French's upcoming hydro-archaeology project at Tikal.

Though our 501(c)3 non-profit status was not awarded until November of 2003, I'm pleased to announce that yesterday, March 19th, was Maya Exploration Center's 10th anniversary as a research and education institution. We actually opened our doors under a different name, Maya Art and Archaeology Center, but I felt like that name did not convey the spirit of our mission. So on May 20, 2003 we filed a certificate of amendment with the State of Texas and officially became Maya Exploration Center. I'm proud to say that over the last decade we have led over 100 educational travel programs, presented public lectures to no less than 30,000

people, and doubled our number of research associates. Many of our associates started out as students and have since achieved their Ph.D's, including Christopher Powell, Kirk French, Kirk Straight, Carl Callaway, and MEC Board Member LeAndra Luecke Bridgeman.

In this edition of ArchaeoMaya, you'll read about a brand new cave find in Chiapas and how I serendipitously ended up leading the first archaeological investigation of its depths. In other archaeological news, you'll learn about new finds at Teotihuacan, more extremely ancient civilization evidence uncovered in Peru, and the possible discovery of a legendary Viking artifact. It's been a busy first quarter of 2013 for me personally, so this edition will also explain the progress of my *Great Courses* lecture series and my new app, Tulum - Be Your Own Guide.

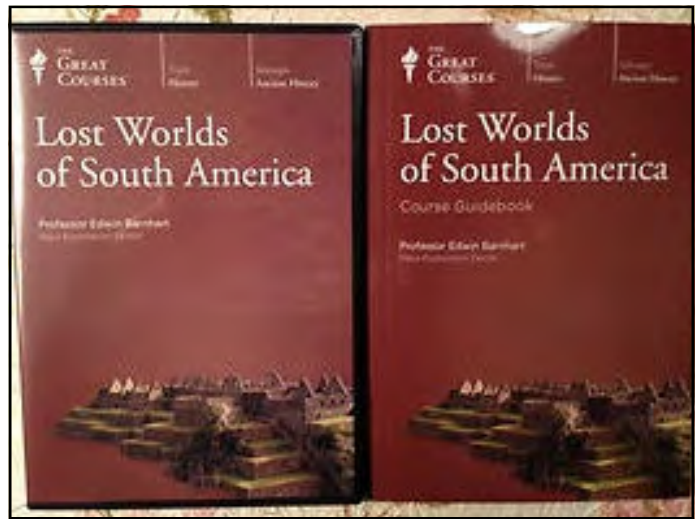
Looking into the future, we have a number of great educational travel opportunities for you. In May Dr. Grofe will lead a MEC course to the seldom visited ruins of Southern Yucatan. In July, I will lead two UT Chautauqua courses, one to Oaxaca and the other to Ecuador. In the fall there will be a September trip to Peru and a Thanksgiving week trip going from Palenque all the way to Copan. I hope you'll choose to join us for one of those adventures.

Yours Truly,

The Great Courses Lost Worlds Proving Popular

Dr. Barnhart's lecture series for the Teaching Company's *Great Courses* released in December and has been doing quite well from initial reports. Sales have been strong and the reviews posted on the Teaching Company website have been very positive. As of mid-March 2013 every single review has been 5 out of 5 stars, a rare distinction even among the 100's of excellent offerings in the Great Courses catalog.

One reviewer wrote: "A first class, up-to-date and eye opening course on the amazing new archaeology of South America. It is comprehensive and daring in its treatment and scope. Prof. Barnhart is thoroughly knowledgeable in his subject and the true archaeologist of the future." Another reviewer commented: "After listening to this series, I feel that for the first time in my life, I actually understand South America. If Teaching Company had charged me three times what I paid for this course it would have been worth every penny. I can't wait to hear future lectures from Dr. Barnhart." Yet another wrote: "Between my father and myself we have close to 100 "Great Courses". I have to say that this is one of the best. Prof. Barnhart is very knowledgeable on his subject and pleasant to listen to."



The disc cases for the Lost Worlds series

Lost Worlds of South America is available in DVD, download, and audio only formats though the Great Courses website - www.thegreatcourses.com. To complement the lecture series, Dr. Barnhart will be leading a public tour to Peru in September visiting Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Pachacamac, and the Nazca Lines. Find out more by clicking the banner below or the one on the top of MEC's home page.

Lost Worlds of South America Tour

Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Pachacamac, and the Nazca Lines

With Dr. Ed Barnhart

[Sign up today »](#)

September 2013

El Paraiso Older Than Previously Thought

Recent excavations at the site of El Paraiso on the Peruvian coast just north of Lima have found that the already very ancient city may have been even older. El Paraiso has long been recognized as one of the pre-ceramic cities of the northern coastal Peru, in fact the largest of them at 58 hectares and a peak population of perhaps 5000 people. Excavations by Michael Moseley in the 1970's and Jeffery Quilter in the 1980's both indicated a relatively late start date of around 2000 BC. But then in late 2012 restoration work on El Paraiso's main pyramid revealed a small passageway in its western wing that led back to a small temple, just 6x8 meters in size. It was a stone construction, coated in yellow clay plaster and traces of red paint. A hearth in the middle was carbon 14 dated back to a surprising 1000 years earlier than the main pyramid. With El Paraiso now dating to 3000 BC, it becomes the contemporary of sites like Aspero and Caral in the Supe Valley to its north and puts the expanse of early pre-ceramic cities much further out than previously known. It also identifies El Paraiso as one of the northern coast's primordial settlements and better explains why so many cities at the beginning of the early ceramic period choose to imitate its U-Shaped ceremonial complex.

New Cave Discovered in Chiapas (continued from Page 1)



Guillermo Fonseca holding the neck of a funerary jar

the floor, the group found many more ceramic fragments representing multiple vessels. The farmers had done an unfortunately thorough job of destroying the artifacts in the front chamber.

Flashing their lights around the chamber revealed multiple passages deeper into the cave. One wide opening led steeply down, but Alejandro pointed to a smaller opening that led to another chamber with more ceramics. They followed him through into an equally large chamber, the floor again littered with ceramic sherds from funerary jars. The cave's floor in this chamber led up to a ledge that fell off into a chamber so deep that their flash lights could barely illuminate its floor. Alejandro again pointed to a small opening leading yet deeper into the cave, though he had not been through himself.

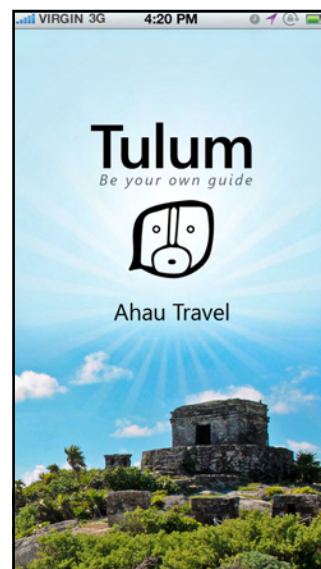
With no archaeological investigation tools and improper boots to navigate the slippery cave floor, Dr. Barnhart made the decision that they had gone deep enough for the time being. Water formed caves like this one can be dangerous, with deep cavities hidden by thin layers of what appear to be solid floor. The cave obviously goes much deeper, and artifacts at the mouth of such a cave are typically just indicators of much more sacred spots within. Future expeditions will tell, but on this day in February 2013 Dr. Barnhart and his tour group had the rare pleasure of being the first foreigners invited in for a look. As they left, Dr. Barnhart explained to Alejandro that it's likely that authorities will never come to protect the cave and that the responsibility of caring for it fell to he and his family.

Tulum - Be Your Own Guide

Dr. Barnhart is about to revolutionize the way people visit archaeological sites. Thanks to the generous support of the MEC community, his Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign was a success and the funds needed to develop a new kind of mobile device app were collected. Extra special thanks go out to major contributors Jim Roznowski, Liora Manne, and Daniel Maddux, without whose patronage the campaign would not have succeeded.

Tulum - Be Your Own Guide will let its users guide themselves around the ruins. Pointing their phone at a building will call up information about it and photos of what's inside. A list of site features can be chosen from and a "take me there" function will lead the user anywhere they want to go. One of the key features is that it will not use expensive cell data. Instead, a geo-coded map of Tulum will use the ever-present satellite signal to create internal navigation data. Each feature of the site will have the option of reading about it or listening to audio files narrated by Dr. Barnhart. There will also be an "Ed's Tour" option providing Dr. Barnhart's recommended route through the site.

The app's development team is right on schedule and it should be ready to launch in early May. Tulum was chosen for the first app of this kind because of its small size and popularity. There will no doubt be hiccups and lots of feedback for this first "Be Your Own Guide" app, but the learning curve will lead to improvements that will go into future apps. Which site will be next? Dr. Barnhart welcomes your suggestions.



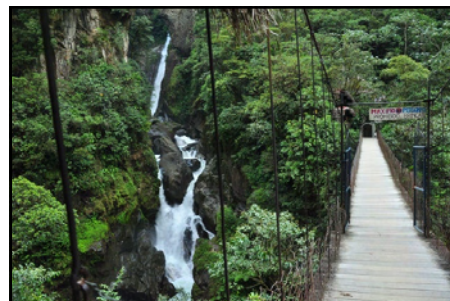
Dr. Barnhart's Summer 2013 Chautauqua Courses



Ethnobotany and Archaeology in the Valley Oaxaca, Mexico

Oaxaca - July 6 - 13, 2013

Locations visited during the trip include Oaxaca City's indigenous markets and botanical gardens, Santo Domingo church and museum, Monte Alban, San Jose Mogote, Mitla, Yagul, Dinzu, Zachilla, the Tule Tree, a mescal factory, a cochineal farm, and four craft villages scattered throughout the valley.



Experiments at the Equator, Volcanoes, and the Amazon Basin

Ecuador - July 28 - August 4, 2013

Locations visited during the trip include Quito, the exact line of the equator's visitor center, the Avenue of Volcanoes, Volcano Cotopaxi, Quilotoa Crater Lake, Baños, Pailon de Diablo Waterfalls, Puyo, and the Amazon Basin. In just one week this course will travel from snow covered volcanoes into the Amazon and back up again!

MEC's New Campus Lecture Series

Starting in the fall of 2013, Maya Exploration Center will be offering a variety of new public lectures for campus unions and activity centers. Dr.'s Powell, Grofe and Barnhart will be the presenters, each sharing their expertise in topics ranging from ancient Andean religion to the origins of chocolate.

Many of the professors who travel with MEC have expressed an interest in having our scholars speak at their schools, but alas, shrinking department budgets have often not been able to afford the invitation. However, Dr. Barnhart's experiences over the last few years while presenting his "Maya 2012: End of Days?" lecture have shown that we've been barking up the wrong tree. Every college campus in the USA has a student activities office with a budget dedicated to providing academically oriented programs to their student body. Music groups and comedians are relatively easy for them to find, but academic presentations that are also engaging and entertaining are not. MEC is currently reaching out to student activity offices around the country and is in the process of joining The National Association for Campus Activities (naca.org).

If you are a college professor or student who would like a MEC scholar to present at your school this coming fall, contact us and we will work with you to organize a visit through your student activities office. The lecture section of our website is currently being redesigned to promote our new list of presentations, but that list can be shared via email upon request.



Dr. Barnhart at Columbia College

News From the Field

Teotihuacan Fire God

INAH has announced the rare find of a statue of Huehuetotl, the Old Fire God, atop Teotihuacan's Pyramid of the Sun. Over 100 years ago archaeologist Leopoldo Batres, apparently in a rush to restore the pyramid in time to celebrate the 1910 centennial of the Mexican War of Independence, covered its top with little prior excavation. Then in late 2012 archaeologists Alejandro Sarabia of INAH and Saburo Sugiyama of Japan encountered what was left of a super-structure temple on top. Within that temple was a pit, dug into during pre-Hispanic times, and inside was found the partially destroyed statue of Huehuetotl. Sarabia theorizes that the pit and its contents represent the initial offering to sanctify the Pyramid of the Sun and that it was subsequently desecrated when Teotihuacan fell to internal rebellion in the late 600's AD. Whether or not Sarabia's interpretation is correct, finding Huehuetotl atop is an important clue as to the purpose of the world's second largest pyramid and in a wider sense to Teotihuacan's still very poorly understood religion.

Hidden Tombs at Machu Picchu?

French archaeologist Thierry Jamin has asked the Peruvian government for a permit to open what he says is a hidden tomb chamber in a cave underneath Machu Picchu. He claims that an electromagnetic survey has detected a staircase leading down into several subterranean rooms. Jamin further claims that the hidden chamber is possibly the tomb of Pachacuti, the most famous of all Inca rulers. In a public statement Peru's La Direccion Regional de Cultura has cast doubt on the integrity of Jamin's plan, calling him a treasure hunter. His permit is still under review and decision is expected some time in April.

MEC's 2013 Public Travel Courses

The Maya Ruins of Southern Yucatan

June 1 - 10, 2013

Led by Dr. Michael Grofe

Explore the seldom visited ruins of Southern Yucatan, including Kohunlich, Dzibanche, Becan, Xpujil, Balam Ku, Chiccana, and the massive remote ruins of Calakmul. Flying in and out of the convenient Cancun airport, this course will also visit Playa del Carmen, Coba, Lake Bacalar, the Maya Cultural Museum in Chetumal, and the famous Maya Talking Cross in Felipe Carillo Puerto.



Pillars of the Classic Maya

Palenque to Copan

November 22 - December 1, 2013

Led by Dr. Ed Barnhart



Our usual Thanksgiving week trip goes between Palenque and Tikal, but this year we've decided to run it all the way to Copan. In addition to those three major centers of the Maya Classic period, this trip will visit Bonampak, Yaxchilan, Lake Peten Itza, Rio Dulce, and Quirigua. Few journeys cover so much of the Maya world in a single trip.

Legendary Viking Artifact Found?

Ancient lore say that Viking sailors could navigate through fog and cloudy weather using a mysterious crystal object dubbed the "Viking Sunstone". Now one of those Sunstones may have been discovered in a 1592 British shipwreck near the Channel Islands. It was found in association with a pair of navigation dividers and chemically analyzed to be Icelandic Spar, the calcite crystal mentioned in the 13th century Viking Saga of Saint Olaf. French researchers studied Icelandic Spar and discovered that when held up to sunlight and looked through, it polarizes the light and breaks it into two separate beams. When the crystal is then positioned to look directly at the sun, the two beam merge and become one. Their studies confirmed that the effect would occur even in cloudy weather or when the sun had just set. Using such a tool, the Vikings could indeed have navigated without actually seeing the sun. This object was found on a British ship, not a Viking one, but 1592 was before sailors began using the modern compass for navigation, so this may still be evidence of the Viking innovation.



Crystal found at the Alderney Shipwreck (Alderney Museum)

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