



ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

www.mayaexploration.org

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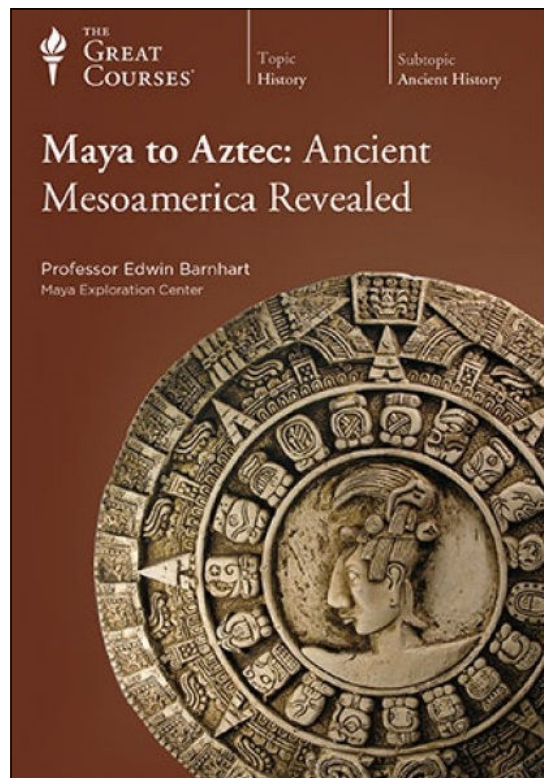
- Three new travel courses in South America
- Chautauqua courses in Bolivia and Megalithic Ireland
- Palenque to Copan Thanksgiving Tour
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Maya to Aztec: Ancient Mesoamerica Revealed

Maya Exploration Center is proud to announce the release of Dr. Barnhart's next course in the Great Courses series – *Maya to Aztec: Ancient Mesoamerica Revealed*. Based on the success of his first course, *Lost Worlds of South America*, the Teaching Company invited him back to create a second on Mesoamerica. Over a period of three weeks last September he delivered 48 lectures in their Virginia studios. The completed course was released in early March.

The course focuses in depth on two cultures: the Maya, who have been in Mesoamerica for thousands of years, and the Aztecs, who entered the region late but swiftly rose to unprecedented power. In addition to those two major cultures, other lesser-known cultures are brought to light including the Olmec, Zapotec, Mixtec, Toltec, and Tarascan civilizations. *Maya to Aztec: Ancient Mesoamerica Revealed* is richly illustrated with Dr. Barnhart's own photos taken in the field, along with museum quality images of artifacts, maps showing the locations of the different sites, and graphics that decode Mesoamerican writing and iconography.

There are many books and documentary films about varying aspects of Mesoamerica, but never before has a single work covered the region so completely. More than just a compendium of city



descriptions and artifacts, this course represents the culmination of Dr. Barnhart's twenty years of exploration, archaeology and discovery in Mesoamerica. As with his first Great Course, he was grateful for the opportunity to share all of the theories he's developed over the years.

The course is available on DVD, CD and both video and audio download through www.greatcourses.com and on 70% off sale from now until April 2nd. You can also find it in audio-only format through Amazon's audible.com.

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Editor

Edwin L. Barnhart, Ph.D.

Contact MEC

3267 Bee Caves Rd

Suite 107-161

Austin, Texas 78746

Phone: 512-350-3321

On the Webwww.mayaexploration.org**Email**info@mayaexploration.org

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Letter from the Director



Happy Pakal's birthday! The grand old man of Palenque would have been 1412 years old today. It's with heavy hearts that we report on the death of Palenque's modern grand old man, Moises Morales Marquez, in this edition of ArchaeoMaya. Moi was my neighbor in Palenque for six years and a constant inspiration to me during the Palenque Mapping Project. I will miss him dearly and this newsletter is dedicated to him.

This edition of ArchaeoMaya begins with the announcement of my new Great Course for the Teaching Company – *Maya to Aztec: Ancient Mesoamerica Revealed*. I have never worked harder on a project in my life and consider it a true magnum opus. I hope you give it a look and enjoy it as much as I did the making of it. Also included in the following pages is a personal message from MAM president Dr. Bruce Love, updating us on the progress of MAM and sending a thank you to the MEC community for our support. Our other big article for this edition is about the recent controversy over Ciudad Blanca in Honduras and National Geographic's less than respectable role in the confusion.

2015 is shaping up to be another successful year for MEC. We continue to co-organized learning adventures

with Crow Canyon Archaeological Foundation, such as the two-week Olmec/Maya trip being led by Dr. David Hixson as I write this letter. I myself will lead MEC's first ever expedition to El Mirador in May. Our presence in South America continues as well, with three summer courses in Bolivia and Peru planned. This fall, Alonso Mendez will return to lead our annual Thanksgiving Palenque to Copan adventure. I'll even be leading our first ever trip to Ireland this summer. Why Ireland? Because the world's oldest archaeoastronomy evidence is found there in the "passage tombs" of County Meath. I can't wait to crawl inside!

MEC's Facebook page "likes" have suddenly tripled this month, no doubt a result of the release of my Great Courses series. I welcome the new members of our community with open arms. At the same time, I honor those of you who have supported us all along and pledge never to forget who helped us keep running for more than a decade now!

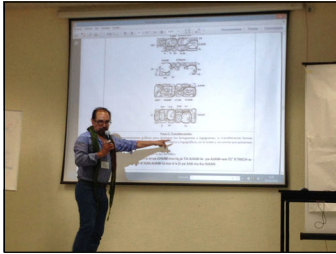
With Sincere Thanks,

A Message from MAM President Dr. Bruce Love

Thank you, Ed, for this opportunity to speak directly to MEC members. We at MAM owe you, Ed, and your members a thank you that cannot be expressed in words. A little over one year ago, we were in the midst of our internet-based fund raising campaign to sponsor the Second International Congress of Maya Epigraphers in Ocosingo, Chiapas. Ed stepped up and openly encouraged members of MEC to contribute, which you did, generously!



The 2nd International Conference



Bernal teaching advanced students

The event was a landmark success, more than 100 indigenous Maya participants representing 17 Maya languages. The beginner workshops were all taught by Maya instructors and the instructors also had a chance to advance their own knowledge through an advanced course taught by well-known Mexican epigrapher Guillermo Bernal.

As many of you know, we trace our own ancestry to the 1980s and the efforts of Linda Schele, Nick Hopkins, Kathryn Josserand, and others to bring the glyphs back to the Maya people.



Schele teaching glyphs in the 1980s

We formed Friends of the Maya Meetings in 2006 when we saw the need to continue Linda's efforts to bring Mayas to the Maya Meetings in Texas, but in 2010, at a workshop in Antigua we realized we could do much more by taking the workshops to the Mayas in their own countries rather than try to bring the Mayas to the workshops in the U.S.



Cubulco workshop

We re-invented ourselves as MAM and planned the *Congresos de Epigrafitas Mayas* held in 2012 and 2014 and the mini-grant programs supporting Maya-led workshops during the off years, as is happening currently in 2015 as this picture shows from Cubulco, Guatemala from a MAM-sponsored workshop in Achí-speaking territory March 1 of this year.

Next year, 2016, will see MAM turn over everything we have to the Mayas themselves at the Third International Congress of Maya Epigraphers in Guatemala. We will officially dissolve ourselves and turn the future of Maya epigraphy over to the Mayas. Thank you all for coming along on the ride, which has been and continues to be one of the most satisfying and meaningful efforts I have ever been privileged to be part of.

Please visit us at www.discovermam.org and feel free to write to me personally at discovermam@gmail.com.



The Ciudad Blanca Controversy

On March 2nd the National Geographic website posted an article entitled "Exclusive: Lost City Discovered in the Honduran Rain Forest" with a subtitle reading "In search for the legendary 'City of the Monkey God' explorers find the untouched ruins of a vanished culture". The article immediately drew sharp criticism, notably from renowned Honduran archaeologist Ricardo Agurcia who was quoted to say, *"I see a lot of tinges of adventure, of Hollywood frills, as if it were from an Indiana Jones movie. That is not science"*. Indeed, the National Geographic article was short on facts and long on hyperbole. It hyped the long standing quest for the mythic "Ciudad Blanca", exaggerated the impenetrable nature of the Mosquitia region of Honduras and sung the praises of LiDER as a space-age piece of technology. Quite unlike National Geographic, the article did not include a single photo of the alleged "Lost City".

Colorado State University Anthropologist and project member Christopher Fisher released an articulate rebuttal in the form of a media FAQ, dispelling many of the worst claims against the project. He verified that the project had legitimate permits from the Honduran government, that Honduran archaeologists were involved in the research, and clarified that the National Geographic article was not based on any official project report. At the end of the FAQ was a list of 30 project personnel, which included three archaeologists. The project leads were all from Under the LiDER Productions (UTL), the film company who initiated the project.

There in lies the problem – this was first and foremost a filming expedition, not an archaeological project. It was inspired by the need for documentary film content, not the pursuit of science. On UTL's website, they have already named the film "In the Point Cloud". The project's timing would suggest that it was inspired by the 2013 book *Jungleland*, in which author Christopher Stewart recounts the myth of the Ciudad Blanca and Theodore Morde's 1940 expedition that claimed to have found it. Morde was a radio announcer and journalist, not an archaeologist. His experience covering wars in foreign lands led George Gustav to hire him as the lead for an expedition to Honduras for the Museum of the American Indian. Previous Gustav-funded expeditions had produced rumors of a "Lost City of the Monkey God" in

the Mosquitia region. Morde spent four months in Honduras and returned claiming that he had found a great walled city with the statue of a monkey god resembling Hanuman from Hindu culture myths. He

brought back thousands of artifacts to validate his claim, though none were of the gold and silver he said was in plenty there. Despite statements that he would return and finally reveal the city's location, he never did. Morde hung himself in a closet of his Dartmouth, Massachusetts home in 1954, taking his secrets to the grave. His popular writings fueled the flames of the mythic city among Hondurans, inspired Stewart's 2013 book, and ultimately UTL filmmaker Steve Elkin's eleven day expedition in February of this year.

Combining documentary filmmaking and archaeology is not a bad thing. Neither is wanting to engage the public's excitement for archaeology. But hyping fallacies to garner public attention under the guise of scientific discovery is. The caliber and integrity of UTL's film has yet to be seen and may well turn out to be a responsible piece of journalism, but what National Geographic did crossed a line. They put aside the important work of fact truthing in favor of catching an "exclusive" and knowingly used a misleading title to attract readership. In the process, they almost discredited what appears to be a legitimately important find. The researchers reported an unlooted settlement with at least one modestly sized pyramid in a previously unexplored location. Is it a city on the scale of other Honduran ruins like Copan or Naranjo? Probably not. Is it "The City of the Monkey God"? Absolutely not. But now whatever it is, thanks to National Geographic's disturbing trend towards sensationalism, the find will henceforth be stained with the distinction of *not* being the Ciudad Blanca. Shame on you National Geographic. Be the institution we all used to trust and admire again.

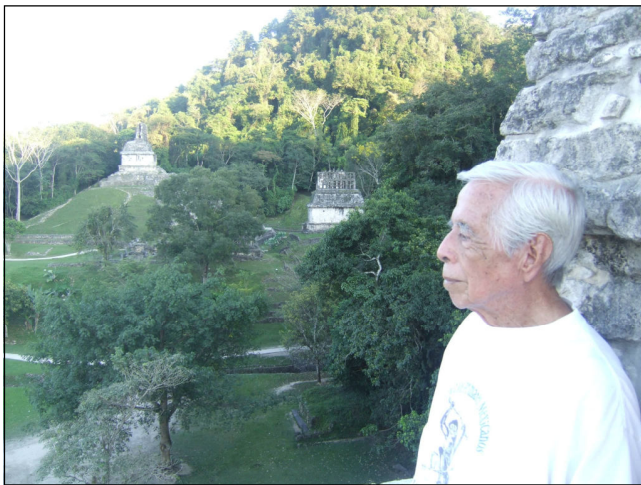


Drawing of Morde's City of the Monkey God

In Memory of Moises Morales Marquez (1925-2015)

By Ed Barnhart

Moises Morales Marquez was a maverick. An entire book should be written about his many exploits and a short essay like this can barely scratch the surface. At 16 he lied about his age and joined the Mexican air force, ultimately flying bombing missions with allied US forces in WWII. After the war he married and moved to a small farming town in Sorona. When the area's water dried up, the community asked the well-traveled Moises where he would go. He replied, "Palenque". Many families followed him there, but they were not welcomed at Palenque. The locals forced them to live in the trash dump and within a few months only Moises and his brother Carlos' families remained. They cleaned up the dump and now that place is called "La Cañada", Palenque's most beautiful neighborhood.



Moises at Palenque (photo by Alonso Mendez)

Moises fell in love with the ruins and learned all he could. He became Palenque's first tour guide. Because he spoke English and French, he served as the guide to the many heads of state and famous people who came to see the Tomb of Pakal. At one point, he even skinny-dipped with Jackie Kennedy! When the ruins were threatened by a corrupt mayor's attempt to sell them off as parcels of land, Moises blew the whistle. Many angry townsfolk who had bought parcels wanted to kill him, but Moises stood his ground and saved the ruins.

In the 1960's Merle Green Robertson came to Palenque and Moises built her a home in La Cañada. When the team that broke the Maya code of hieroglyph-

ics assembled there in 1973, the meeting took place in that very same house. Though the room was full of Ivy League scholars, it was Moises who led them to using Maya language dictionaries and discovering the name "Pakal".

Palenque was proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage site in the 1980's and the investors who established the boundaries of the park gifted 10 hectares of land at its edge to Moises, stating that he was the only man worthy of living so close to the ruins. At the time, it was a denuded cattle pasture. Year by year he planted trees and a decade later it was a forest again. When the governor of Chiapas asked Moises how his reforestation project had succeeded while so many others had failed, he responded, "I didn't accept a centavo of government support".

Moises lived on that land for the rest of his days, in the beginning just him and a spider monkey also named Moises. He named it El Panchan ("Above the Sky" in Maya) and eventually gifted parcels to each of his eleven children. Today, it's Palenque's most popular campground and full of rustic cabanas. His first-born son Chato runs the famous Restaurant Don Mucho there, named after his joking nickname for his father. Moises spent his final years with his fiercely loyal pack of dogs, tinkering in his odd home there in El Panchan, which he called a "cosa", not a "casa". Though sometimes disillusioned by modern society's apathy, he continued to champion the public's rights to enjoy the ruins of Palenque.



Moises in el Panchan with his dogs (photo by Alonso Mendez)

After a protracted battle with pneumonia, Moises died on January 27, 2015 at the age of 89, surrounded by family and friends. There will never be another like him.

News From the Field

A Rare Olmec Artifact Found

A small, brown-and-white jadeite artifact was recently found in the underwater site of Arroyo Pesquero, about 16 km southwest from the Olmec capital of La Venta. By style and context, researchers date it to between 900 and 500 BC. In form, it resembles a corn-cob and project lead Carl Wendt of California State University suspects it was once the handle of a blood letter or perhaps the top of a ceremonial staff. The site itself has produced thousands of artifacts over the last 50 years, but this one of rare brown-and-white jadeite is one of the finest. Oddly, no evidence of settlement has ever been found at the site. Wendt theorizes that the location was a sacred spot for offering because it's a point in which freshwater and saltwater intersect.

Pre-Inca Mummies Discovered

Just outside of Lima, researchers have found a surprisingly unlooted cemetery full of pre-Inca tombs. At the time of this article 26 tombs have been found but the archaeologists are confident that there are many more at the site. Of the 26 so far excavated, they contain people of both sexes, young and old, and even a well-preserved and mummified baby. An on-site museum has been built to allow further study of the mummies and for the Peruvian public to admire the finds. The project was commissioned by the Peruvian Government ahead of plans to construct a highway through the area. That section of the cemetery is now cleared, the road construction has begun, and excavations in other parts of the hillside cemetery continue. Not far away is the Puruchuco-Huaquerones cemetery, where over 2000 Inca tombs were discovered.

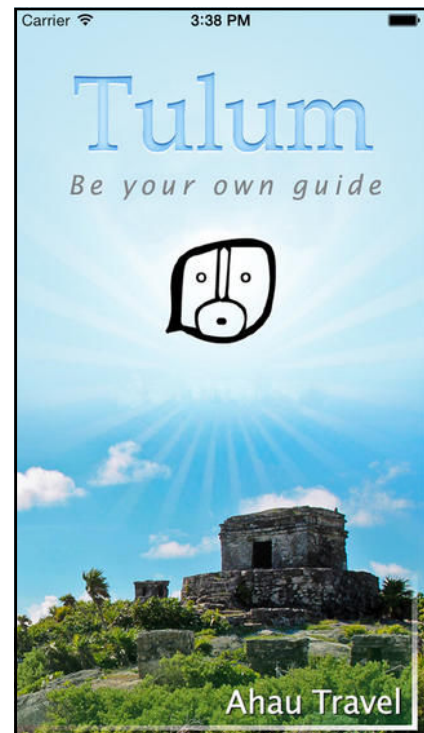
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**Pillars of the Classic Maya: Palenque to Copan
November 20-29, 2015**



Led by Alonso Mendez, this tour Thanksgiving week adventure will begin in Palenque and go by land, river and rainforests all the way to Copan in Honduras.

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