

ARCHAEO MAYA

THE NEWSLETTER OF MAYA EXPLORATION CENTER



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Call to Action - Support a Maya Cultural Revival

500 years ago the Maya people were forcibly separated from their written language, outlawed by the Spanish priests as pagan idolatry. The Maya script remained lost to the world until the 1970's when a team of Western scholars in Palenque put the puzzles of the puzzle back together. Now, the Maya themselves are regaining the script of their ancestors. And it's



A modern Maya stela erected in front of Iximche

not just a handful of curious Maya-born scholars, but hundreds of Maya people. And those hundreds are banding together with the goal of teaching hundreds of others Maya to read and write in hieroglyphs. It's truly a cultural revival.

Not only is this growing group of glyph-literate Maya reading ancient texts, they are creating new ones. At first it was simple histories and poems on paper, but now new stelae are being erected! In front of Iximche, the former Kakchiquel capital burned by Pedro de Alvarado in 1526, the local Maya erected a new stela recounting their long history, their continued survival, and celebrating the arrival of the 13th Baktun in 2012. The Maya community of Pisté, next to Chichen Itza, did the same for 2012. In all eight new stelae have sprouted up across Mexico and Guatemala. After 500 years of acculturation and marginalization, the Maya are proclaiming in their own original written language - we are still here!

In just a few months this group of trail blazing Maya will hold their Third International Congress of Maya Epigraphers. The plan is for hundreds of Maya people from near and far to meet in El Remate, Guatemala under the shadow of the ancient Maya capital of Tikal. For many would-be attendees the costs of travel and lodging are

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Letter from the Director

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Hello again! In response to a wave of concerned emails, no, the MEC e-newsletter has not been discontinued. We've just decided to make it bi-annual instead of quarterly. With changing times and rolls for MEC, we've concluded that two a year will suffice. From now on you can expect just spring and fall editions.

For the lead article in this first ArchaeoMaya of 2016 we chose a rallying call to support modern Maya efforts to regain their ancestors' written language. The 3rd International Congress of Mayan Epigraphers promises to be their largest teaching workshop to date. The more we can donate to its organizers, the more dedicated, Maya born scholars can afford to attend the event. Other articles in this edition of ArchaeoMaya include an explanation of our wonderful new relationship with the Yucatec community of Yaxuna and a brief history of research at El Zotz. Once a virtually unknown archaeological site, El Zotz is now the talk of the Maya academic community. For that reason, MEC will be leading a tour there in June!

This edition also presents our 2016 tour schedule and our exciting new program - Mini Trex. Four new, short length tours are now offered for busy people who want to explore Mesoamerica but simply can't find the time for a full tour. Mini Trex are tailor-made for today's "weekend warriors". Join me as I personally lead short adventures to Teotihuacan, Palenque, Chichen Itza and Oaxaca. Also, back by popular demand, we're offering another adventure to the Pre-Classic Mega-City of El Mirador. The dates in early June are coming up fast in order to avoid the start of the rainy season, so don't delay if you want to join.

As the days warm and the flowers bloom here in Austin, I look forward to MEC's potential growth in 2016. We've already started off well, with community service work in Yaxuna, support for MAM's campaign, and a public lecture presented in Houston's Natural History Museum. I have high hopes for the popularity of our new Mini Trex programs and hope to see many of you with me on the adventure trail. We are also on target to surpass 2000 people on this vetted e-newsletter list. I usually end my letter saying MEC would not exist without you, but this time I feel like saying thanks for helping MEC thrive in 2016.

Happy Spring,

Call to Action... (continued from page 1)

beyond their financial reach. That's where MAM comes in. MAM stands for Mayans for Ancient Maya and is a non-profit association that has supported Maya glyph workshops since 2005. While the Maya are now organizing their congresses by themselves, they still welcome MAM's financial support. Towards that end, MAM has launched a crowd funding campaign to raise \$29,000. 100% of those funds will be given out as 100, \$290 scholarships for Maya scholars and students to attend the conference. MEC had donated \$500 to MAM's campaign, and a handful of generous MEC community members have collectively given much more. Please consider joining us in supporting this exciting cultural revival. Just think about - when has such a thing ever happened? When has a culture regained its lost script 500 years later? This is a first in world history and you can say you helped make it happen. The online crowd funding campaign will continue through April, but please don't delay your participation. Learn more and donate at:

<http://www.generosity.com/education-fundraising/maya-revival--2>

General Public Educational Tours from MEC

El Mirador, Nakbe and El Zotz

June 3 – 8, 2016

If you've visited many Maya ruins, you probably know the largest of all the ruins were built very early and in the heart of the Peten



rainforest. The Pre-Classic cities of El Mirador and Nakbe are both gigantic and wonders to behold with your own eyes. While MEC will make every effort to provide a comfortable trip, the journey out to see them is not easy. It will involve helicopters, jungle camps, and long treks through the rainforest. In addition to these Pre-Classic mega-cities, participants will also visit the site of El Zotz, its red painted "Diablo Temple" and the royal tomb found within.

http://mayaexploration.org/tours_el_mirador_june16.php

Palenque to Copan

November 18 – 27, 2016

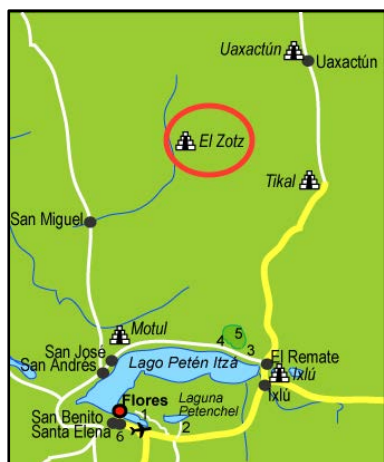
Running over the Thanksgiving Holiday week, the journey will begin with tours of Palenque, Bonampak and Yaxchilan in Southern Mexico.



Crossing the Usumacinta River into Guatemala, you'll arrive to the island of Flores in time to tour Lake Peten all afternoon. Then its up at dawn and all day exploring Tikal's vast metropolis. The next day continues south to a beautiful Lago Isabel where a Maya-style Thanksgiving dinner will be served. Last stop, Copan, where an entire day will be spent exploring the ruins, the tunnels underneath them, and Copan's incredible sculpture museum.

http://mayaexploration.org/tours_palenque-copan_nov16.php

Exciting New Discoveries at El Zotz



Until about a decade ago, El Zotz was simply that big Maya ruins you could visit if you went to the chiclero camp at Uaxactun and hired them to bring you there by horse back. Today, its one of the most exciting ruins under active investigation.

The most recent find - a second royal tomb, this time a Late Classic ruler named Bakab K'inich. Add that tomb to massive temples, stunning stuccos facades and another, older royal tomb and you get an archaeological site that's catching headlines around the world.

Only looters knew about El Zotz until 1977 when people from a nearby village reported its desecration to the Guatemalan government. Authorities were sent in to deter robbery and George Andrews made an initial map in 1978, but then the site slipped back into obscurity until 2001 when a new, more expansive map was published. A few artifacts and a wooden lintel at the Denver Art Museum had by then been securely associated to El Zotz, so the Guatemalan Departamento de Monumentos Prehispanicos and Stephen Houston of Brown University surveyed the site in 2006 for more monuments. Test pitting proved its architecture to be of fine quality and determined a Pre-Classic origin for the site. That was enough to initiate a formal excavation project, which began in 2008. The first excavations targeted not the city center, but a 45-meter tall temple dubbed El Diablo for its dangerously steep sides. By 2009 they had uncovered a massive stucco façade carved in deep relief and painted red. Stephen Houston identified its subject matter to be the Sun God portrayed as various phases of the Sun and posited its symbolism was about royal dynastic legitimacy and connection to the landscape. Then in 2010, a royal tomb was discovered inside El Diablo, dating to an important time in the Peten - the generation

during which Teotihuacan arrived. Bejucal, an El Zotz subsidiary site about 4 miles to the southwest had a stela that named Siyah K'ak' of Teotihuacan as El Zotz's overlord at that same time.

Since 2012 a top-notch team led by project co-directors Edwin Roman of the University of Texas at Austin and Thomas Garrison of the University of Southern California has conducted the excavations. Their investigations in the city center have added intriguing new dimensions to the site's history. Evidence in the Five Temples section shows that El Zotz broke with its Early Classic overlord Tikal to become part of the Calakmul hegemony. Its ties with El Peru were strong and it shared an emblem glyph with Yaxchilan, both also Calakmul allies. While Tikal stagnated under Calakmul's thumb, El Zotz was thriving. But when Tikal broke free, their fortune quickly turned. A 744 text at Tikal mentions an assault on El Zotz and now excavations have found a corroborating rapid decline. Indeed, El Zotz fell silent at just about the same time.



Archaeologist Edwin Roman under an El Zotz Sun God mask

After the January 2016 announcement of a second royal tomb, all eyes are on this coming field season. Will we learn more about El Zotz's role in the Peten Wars? Why does it share an emblem glyph with distant Yaxchilan? Growing interest in El Zotz has also opened up new roads into the region and tourists are starting to visit with greater frequency. How will that affect the challenges of site preservation? For these and many other reasons, El Zotz is the site to watch in 2016.

Community Engagement at Yaxuna, Yucatan, Mexico

Two MEC study abroad programs visited the Yucatec community of Yaxuna in March, staying in their village and working along side its residents. The students stayed in simple rooms built on the lands of local families and slept in hammocks. They learned about Maya culture in locally lead workshops, swam in the community cenote, and shared meals at local homes. Most importantly, they worked side by side with the community re-painting the walls of their schools and basketball courts.

Grace Bascope of the Maya Research Program and her Yucatec partner Elias Alcocer arranged this wonderful cultural exchange and community service program for MEC. For over 13 years the Maya Research Program has been working with the Yaxuna community, helping them to interface with the world and enrich their lives. Their work with Yaxuna's community began as an annual botany/ethnography field school, a program that continues today. That program inspired the Yaxuna community to invite more visitors, students and volunteers to their village. By 2010 they had built a Historical and Cultural

Interpretative Center and simple housing to welcome guests all year long.

MEC's David Hixson introduced us to Grace, who introduced us to the people of Yaxuna. Elias acted as our liaison to plan out the activities before our arrival. The students of Millersville University and Carroll University stayed for two nights each and loved it. Some of the students have already expressed an interest in returning to stay for longer as a volunteer. Programs like this that gives students from the USA a chance to really get to know and work with Maya communities are rare and exactly the kinds of experiences MEC seeks to provide. We plan to send many more students Yaxuna's way.

If you would like to learn more about the Maya Research Program and the other field opportunities they offer, visit their website at:

<http://www.mayaresearchprogram.org> .



Carroll University students, community members, Raymundo Osario, and course instructor Heather Teague at Yaxuna

News from the Field

[Costa Rica at 10,000 BC?](#)

On March 23, the Costa Rican Electricity Institute announced that they have discovered a village dating back to 12,200 years ago. It was first found in 2006 during a hydroelectric construction project but artifacts are just being removed now. The site is said to contain 66 discrete settlement sites, many of which stone dwelling foundations, petroglyphs, stone tools, cooking utensils and many pieces of pottery. Site wide evidence also indicates farming and stone roads or walkways. If the dates turn out to be correct, this is a startling discovery. The rest of the Americas were in the Paleo-Indian period at 10,000 BC, nomadically hunting mastodon and other mega fauna. Agriculture, much less pottery, was not to be developed for thousands of years. MEC believes these claims of antiquity will be reversed, but if they are confirmed get ready to crown Costa Rica as the origin place of New World civilization.

[Cuidad Blanca Update](#)

Last year National Geographic made the faux pas of publishing claims that the mythic Cuidad Blanca (the "White City") had been discovered in Honduras. Those falsehoods were quickly dispelled but still - an archaeological site had been found. Now the city has been renamed City of the Jaguar and professional excavations have begun. Thus far they have mapped the center city and uncovered a cache of artifacts in one of its plazas. While the ruins are located on the edge of the Maya region, its artifacts are not Maya. An unexcavated pair of buildings appears to be a ball court, which would suggest a blending of Maya and other cultural traits. Early dating evidence estimates the city functioned been 1000 and 1520 AD.

Mini Trex - New MEC Tour Programs

For many people in America these days, we simply don't have time to take a full week out of our lives for a proper vacation. That's concept behind *Mini Trex*, MEC's new travel program. Mini Trex are 4 day, 3 night adventures over a long weekend, perfect for today's fast paced life. Instead of planning for months to make the time, you can just pick up and leave. Come join MEC's Director Dr. Ed Barnhart for a Mesoamerican adventure!

Teotihuacan, Cholula and Mexico City

May 28-31, 2016

Fly in and out of Mexico City to visit two of the three largest pyramids of the world.



http://mayaexploration.org/tours_mini_TeoCho_may16.php

Palenque, Bonampak and Yaxchilan

August 4-7, 2016

The dates of this rainforest tour are timed to zenith passage to see the tricks of light and shadow in the temples of Palenque.



http://mayaexploration.org/tours_mini_PalYax_aug16.php

Chichen Itza and Ek Balam

September 21-25, 2016

Yucatan for fall equinox. The shadow snake at Chichen Itza also descends in September!



http://mayaexploration.org/tours_mini_ChiEk_sept16.php

Monte Alban, Mitla and Oaxaca City

October 21-24, 2016

Explore the ruins of the Valley of Oaxaca and visit the city one week before their famous Day of the Dead festivities.



http://mayaexploration.org/tours_mini_Oaxaca_oct16.php

The Maya Calendar App



The Maya Calendar App from MEC's Director Dr. Ed Barnhart has been updated and improved. Available through the iTunes AppStore, the Maya Calendar App tells you today's date and displays the hieroglyphic long count, tzolk'in and haab. The app also includes a calculator to find any date in the past or future back and forth between the Maya and Gregorian systems. Best of all, the Maya Calendar App can calculate your Maya birthday with personality and destiny details.

<http://ancientexploration.com/apps.html>

Bookmark this link:
www.mayaexploration.org/amazon

Thanks to everyone who donated to MEC last fall and winter

James Sievers • Betty DeGroh • Colleen Christensen • Chris and Gary Fossett • Daniel Maddux

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