

ARCHAEO MAYA

THE NEWSLETTER OF MAYA EXPLORATION CENTER



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The Grolier Codex Finally Authenticated

Ever since its 1964 discovery by looters in a cave near Yajalon, Chiapas, there have been questions about the authenticity of the Grolier Codex. But now a definitive study published in the journal *Maya Archaeology* has put the rumors to rest – its real. Not only is it real, a new carbon 14 test proved that it's the oldest of the four known Maya codices.

The study was led by Stephen Houston of Brown University and supported by a team of prominent Maya scholars. They reviewed every previous analysis of the codex and added a number of their

own. The ten pages of the tattered old manuscript are made of 13th century amate bark. The content includes a collection of major Maya deities and tables to track the planet Venus through a cycle of 104 years. In addition to the carbon 14 dating, Houston and his co-authors cite certain elements of the book's nature as further proof of its authenticity. For one thing, the Grolier features deities that had yet to be discovered in 1964, making forgery unlikely. For another, virtually no one in the 1960's had access to examples of ancient Maya Venus tracking methods. Perhaps the most convincing evidence was the verification that the book's blue paint is indeed Maya Blue, a special part-organic, part-mineral paint that wasn't even chemically understood until the 1980's.

So, there we have it – the Grolier is definitely real and can finally take its rightful place alongside the other three – the Dresden, the Paris and the Madrid codices. Now we need the same professional studies on the Prague Codex, a little known but potentially 5th codex in the Czech Republic.



Page 6 of the Grolier Codex (from Wikipedia)

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Letter from the Director



Hello MEC Community!

We usually get this newsletter out right on equinox, but this year I was at Chichen Itza with a small group to watch the shadow snake descend down El Castillo. It rained... Oh well, I've never regretted visiting Chichen Itza no matter what the weather. Since our last publication in March, MEC has led many adventures - to Greece, Scotland, the Yucatan, Teotihuacan, Cholula, El Mirador, Chiapas and even Cuba! As the global economy continues to improve, we've come to recognize that our most effective forms of public outreach are the journeys we lead to ancient places. Nothing compares to experiential learning. Towards that end, we've endeavored to increase our travel offerings. That goal has been reached by the addition of Dr. Heather Teague to our team and through our new Mini Trex program. We still have three public tours planned for 2016 and many more in the works for 2017.

As always, this ArchaeoMaya also keeps our readership aware of what's happening in Mesoamerican archaeology and new online

resources. Our lead article is about the Grolier Codex and how a definitive new study proves without doubt its authenticity. We also relate the new finds at Xunantunich and how they are revealing intriguing new facts about the Peten Wars of the Maya Classic Period. On the education front, this edition informs our readers about new online resources including The Journal of Astronomy in Culture and Bruce Love's amazing book about Maya Shamanism. For art lovers, we're thrilled to introduce you to Alonso Mendez's new studio in El Valle, New Mexico - *Reviving Ancient Ways*.

I'm looking forward to the change of gears that fall provides. Our 2017 Mayan Calendar is available for pre-order now and its always gratifying to see how many of you use our Amazon Affiliates Program to support MEC while doing your holiday shopping. Fall is my time to dream about future adventures. We'll be finalizing our 2017 travel program plans over the next month, so please feel free to contact us with your own adventure ideas. Already on my list are returns to Cuba, Greece, Peru and a brand new Chautauqua Course into the Brazilian Amazon. Where do you want to explore the ancient past?

Happy Fall!

The Journal of Astronomy in Culture

The *Journal of Astronomy in Culture* is an exciting new, publically accessible online resource. All too often regular people with an interest in archaeoastronomy run into the issues of hard to find trade journals and subscription only information, but the JAC is open source and free to all. Its first issue was published this summer and features studies from around the world including Africa, the Amazon, Japan and Ancient North America. It can be accessed through the University of California e-scholarship system at: <http://escholarship.org/uc/jac>

JAC is the latest initiative of the International Society of Archaeoastronomy and Astronomy in Culture (ISAAC) in its ongoing mission to disseminate knowledge regarding ancient astronomy around the global. Long before this new online journal was conceived, ISAAC was in charge of organizing the Oxford Conferences, a semi-annual meeting of archaeoastronomers in existence since 1981. Many of the journal's future papers will come out of the Oxford Conferences, but anyone is invited to submit a paper, providing it adheres to the submission guidelines and pertains in some way to "astronomy in culture". Kudos to the journal's Editor in Chief Gerardo Aldana of UC Davis and Managing Editor Stanislaw Iwaniszewski for providing the academic community with this important new resource.



Available for pre-orders now

<http://www.mayan-calendar.com>

The 2017 Mayan Calendar

Congratulations to our Photo Contest Winners!

January – Allen Christenson

March – Chris Considine

May – Stan Chladek

June – Kristen Serina

July – Richard Garriott

August – Doug Bailey

November – Leo Ravina

The New Finds at Xunantunich

It's like something out of a movie. Lost artifacts found in places that reveals a story of intrigue, betrayal and revenge. That's what just happened at Xunantunich in the El Cayo District of Belize. Excavations this year focused on a pyramid designated Structure A9. The team, led by Dr. Jaime Awe, found a large tomb inside full of interesting treasures, but it was a carved stone block found in the exterior rubble that stole the show. Its now called Panel 3, being the third panel found at Xunantunich, but that's the thing – its not from Xunantunich. It's from Caracol. It's a piece of a Caracol hieroglyphic staircase taken as a war trophy.



Structure A9 at Xunantunich, Belize (photo: Jaime Awe)

That much alone is fascinating, but the story is more complex. Panel 3 is one block of the staircase, but other blocks of the same staircase were found at Ucanal and Naranjo. There's just one mounted in Ucanal's ball court, but Naranjo has multiple blocks reset in a jumbled order into its Structure B5. The Naranjo blocks were first recorded over 110 years ago by Maler and even back then it was apparent that they were out of place. When the age of decipherment arrived decades later it became clear that the panels were from Caracol and even with the inclusion of Ucanal's piece, an incomplete text. Gaps in the narrative pointed to missing panels, unlikely to be ever found. Then amazingly another turns up miles away in Xunantunich!

The panels at Naranjo relate events between 623 and 642 AD, primarily Caracol Lord Kan II's defeat of Naranjo in multiple battles. Naranjo and Caracol had been 6th century allies when they were both vassal states of Tikal, but Caracol's siding with Calakmul had caused regional turmoil. Later texts note a Naranjo retaliatory attack against Caracol in 680 AD, the probable battle during which the staircase panels were sacked. Apparently, Naranjo was offended



*Panel 3 found inside Xunantunich Structure A9
(photo: Jaime Awe)*

by Caracol's staircase celebrating their defeat and decided to remove it. Then they shared pieces with their allies so that everyone would know that they had taken their enemy down a peg. That went beyond defending themselves - that was vengeance and pay back.

We knew that Ucanal was Naranjo's ally during the fight, but now this other fragment at Xunantunich makes it three on one, Team Naranjo vs. Caracol. Evidence of a Naranjo – Xunantunich connection in the 9th century was already known, but now we know that their alliance went back into the Peten Wars. Even better, the panel set is still incomplete. Is there yet a fourth member city of the 680 siege still out there? This unlikely find makes another one not so impossible.

Alonso Mendez's New Art Studio in New Mexico

One of MEC's founding members, Alonso Mendez, has a new art studio in El Valle, New Mexico. Called Reviving Ancient Ways, Alonso's art seeks to do exactly that. Some of his pieces are faithful reproductions of ancient Maya pottery, some are original pieces with a distinctive Maya style and some are completely unique creations from his artistic mind's eye. About his new studio, Alonso has written, *"Our studio emerges out of the need to connect with the ancient wisdom of a borderless land that welcomed trade and traditions from far and wide."*

After months of preparing the space and moving his equipment from his former studio at Fireseed Clay Art in Austin, he opened his studio to the public in mid-September as part of the Highroad Tour. It was a grand success and a number of his major pieces were bought on the spot. To see some of Alonso's wonderful work and learn more about the Reviving Ancient Ways Studio, check it out at: <http://butzchan.wixsite.com/revivingancientways>



November 18-27, 2016

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

February 17-26, 2017

http://www.mayaexploration.org/tours_palenque-copan_feb17.php

News from the Field

Clovis Inland Migration Invalidated

A new paleo-environmental study has disproven the theory that Clovis Man travelled through an ice-free inland corridor from Alaska down into the southern parts of North America. Gathering C14 dates, pollen, fossils, and DNA taken from lake sediment cores in Canada, researchers have proved that there were no plants or animals in the corridor until after 12,600 years ago. It was still covered with a thick layer of ice. That means that Clovis Man, who arrived to the continental US before 13,000 years ago, would have had nothing to eat along that track. While this new study does not solve the mystery of human migration from Asia into the Americas, it invalidates our longest standing theory. Co-author of the study David Meltzer concluded that Clovis Man had to come by route of the Pacific Coast, or much earlier, or both.

Cahokia Gender Bender

Melvin Fowler excavated Cahokia Mound 72 in 1967. Of the 270 bodies he found, the primary burial was a pair of individuals lying on a bed of thousands of shell beads. Fowler determined both to be male and the bead bed to be a cape or blanket in the shape of a bird. That led to decades of interpretations involving a male warrior ruling class and the reenactment of Mississippian creation stories. But now, archaeologists have determined that one of the pair is female. That simple fact breaks the male warrior theory. It's a couple, probably royal, which suggests Cahokia had a royal dynasty. It also elevates the role of women in ancient Cahokia. Reanalysis of Mound 72 continues and more surprises are likely on the way.

Love's Book on Maya Shamanism



Acclaimed scholar Bruce Love has made his wonderful 2012 book, **Maya Shamanism Today: Connecting with the Cosmos in Rural Yucatan Today**, available as a pdf on mesoweb.com . Here are Bruce's own words about the book from his preface:

"The publisher and I are pleased to offer this new edition of Maya Shamanism Today, a summary of thirty years of fieldwork among the rural Mayas of the Yucatan Peninsula. Do not look for extraterrestrials, hallucinogenic trances, or prophecies for the end of the Maya calendar. This book is about the working shamans who in their daily lives perform the job of intermediary between their fellow villagers and beings in the spirit world that control the rains, the harvest, sickness and health, birth and death. The color photos and the descriptions in this new edition span the period from 1978 into the new millennium, and I can tell you there is no sign that these ritual practices are disappearing. Please accept the contents of this book as a gift to you from the Mayas themselves who accepted me into their communities and encouraged me to tell the outside world about their lives and their manner of living. It would do the living Mayas a disservice to ascribe to them supernatural powers that fit only our own notion of spirituality. How much better to let them tell us themselves, through their actions in their daily lives, about life in a world controlled by spirit forces. I pray I have honestly conveyed their message."

Anyone interested in the connection between modern Yucatec Maya and the wisdom of their ancestors should read this!

Download it at:

<http://www.mesoweb.com/publications/Love/Shamanism.pdf>

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Thanks to everyone who donated to MEC this spring and summer

William Huguley • Sara Kennedy • Jeb Brooks • Oliver Bolger

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