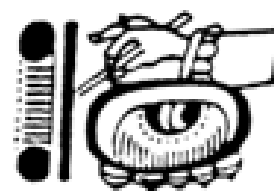


ArchaeoMaya

Maya Exploration Center's Newsletter



In this Issue:

The Maya Codex of Mexico

Ancient American
Pyramids Tour

Dr. Barnhart's new
Great Courses Series -
Ancient Civilizations
of North America

New: Web Resources
Spotlight

2019 Mayan Calendar

On the Horizon:

New Maya calendar
software developing

2019 Chautauqua
Courses announced

A March adventure to
Machu Picchu

A mapping project on
Easter Island?

The Maya Codex of Mexico

Sometime in the early 1960's local residents of the mountain village of Yajalón, Chiapas, Mexico found a wooden box buried in a cave. Inside was an extremely rare artifact – an ancient Maya book. Commonly known as the Grolier Codex, that book's authenticity had been the subject of debate for over 50 years. Now, as of August 2018, the Mexican Government has confirmed its antiquity and officially renamed it "The Maya Codex of Mexico".

Since the moment of its "discovery" by antiquities collector Josue Sáenz in 1964, the book was the subject of doubt and debate. Due to its undocumented removal from the cave in which it was found even its original location is speculative. Some reports suggest it was found closer to the ruins of Tortuguero in Tabasco. This article identifies its origin at Yajalón based

on eyewitness stories told to MEC by Moises Morales and older residences of the village itself. Sáenz obtained it from a still secret location in 1964 and a few years later lent it to American archaeologist Michael Coe who displayed it at the Grolier Club in New York City – hence its original names, the Grolier or Sáenz Codex.

The manuscript itself was unfortunately found already in tatters – just ten partially deteriorated pages. In comparison to the three other known Maya codices, its style is crude and its content has a more Central Mexican character. Its glyphs are definitely Maya and the subjects it covers include cycles of Venus and Tzolk'in divination almanacs. Michael Coe's analysis before its return to Mexico in 1974 concluded that it was authentic and possibly dating to the 13th century.

Coe managed to make a facsimile of the codex before returning it to Mexico, allowing epigraphers to continue studying and questioning its veracity. For a while, it seemed that the document's detractors were winning the debate. But then in 2016 Coe, Mary Miller and Stephen Houston published a multi-faceted analysis of its glyphic and pictorial content, once again arguing for its authenticity. Paris Codex expert Bruce Love fired back, dissecting the flaws in their argument, and thus the unresolved debate continued.

In response to the rekindled debate, El Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) decided to perform a new physical analysis of their own. Analyzing the pigments and obtaining new carbon 14 dates from its bark paper, they definitively



Page 6 of the Maya Codex of Mexico

continued on page 5

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Contents of this newsletter

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Maya Exploration Center

Letter from the Director



Our newsletter is reborn! After twice experiencing Microsoft software updates ending the ways we created the MEC newsletter, we took our first hiatus in a decade to research our options. We've decided to go with Adobe InDesign and after many tutorials, we're back on track. I hope you like the new look and feel as much as I do!

Our lead article in this edition of ArchaeoMaya is about the long overdue authentication of the 4th Maya codex – now renamed the Maya Codex of Mexico. As you'll read, not only is it a real ancient codex, it's the oldest of the four! Two other articles in this edition explain MEC's recent involvement in the study of ancient North America, a topic whose time is also long overdue the attention it deserves.

A new newsletter format also deserves new content. Towards that end, we're starting our "Web Resources Spotlight" section. This will become a standard feature of our newsletter, an acknowledgement that most of our community looks to the internet for archaeological education.

As always, this edition will also provide information about our upcoming educational tour programs. I hadn't looked in a while, so the other day I decided to count up how many education programs we've done over the years. Not counting campus lecture series, I was pleased to find that we've led 107 travel courses and 78 public education tours. To paraphrase Margaret Mead, its amazing what a small group of dedicated people can do!

This restarted newsletter comes out on the day of the Autumnal Equinox, better known as the 1st day of fall. And at least to me, that's also the symbolic opening of the holiday season. So let me be among the first to wish you and yours the best – may your hearts and tables be full throughout the season!

Happy Equinox,

Programs and Products from MEC

Palenque to Copan Tour Over Thanksgiving Break 2018 November 16 - 25



Join Dr. Christopher Powell on a journey across the Maya World

To learn more about this tour
[click here](#)

2019 Mayan Calendar With Maya Glyphs for Modern Dates



A 12-month wall calendar with Maya photos, glyphs and dates

purchase yours at:
<http://mayan-calendar.com>

The easiest way to donate to Maya Exploration Center



Just click and save this link:
[MEC's Amazon Donation Link](#)

Entering Amazon through this link instructs Amazon to donate 5% of any purchase to MEC without costing you an extra cent! Please consider using it while shopping online at amazon.com.

A Family Friendly Adventure to Machu Picchu March 16 -23, 2019



Join Dr. Barnhart on a Spring Break adventure into the Andes

To learn more about this tour
[click here](#)

Ancient American Pyramids Tour

MEC's first ever tour of Mississippian civilization sites occurred over Labor Day weekend and it was a grand success! In a van driven by Dr. Barnhart himself, six participants travelled 700 miles – from St. Louis to New Orleans – visiting major pyramid sites all along the way.



Monks Mound at Cahokia - 100 feet tall

First stop – Cahokia, an ancient metropolis and home to over 15,000 people at 1100 CE. Huffing and puffing to the top of its main pyramid, Monks Mound, the group gained a first-hand respect for its great size and scale. Discussions of the 100's of sacrificial victims found beneath certain buildings at the site conjured thoughts of just how powerful those that once ruled the city were. That afternoon they tracked south and into back woods country to find the ruins of Kincaid. Bumping down miles of dirt roads in Kentucky farmland, they found its giant platforms standing in forgotten silence – not a single other person there to admire them.

Day two began with a visit to the Toltec Mounds in central Arkansas, a city that pre-dates mighty Cahokia and significantly contributed to its 1050 CE migrant population surge. Park Ranger Amy Griffin kindly welcomed our group to the visitor's center and a walk around its impressive ancient plaza. As they walked, Dr. Barnhart explained what we know of the mounds and the multiple "state sponsored" feasting events that occurred in their shadows.

Continuing to follow the Mississippi River south, Day 3 landed at the oldest major pyramid in North America – Mound A at Pov-

erty Point in northern Louisiana. Standing 72 feet tall, the building covers an area equivalent to eight football fields! Perhaps more amazing, by 1500 BC Poverty Point not only had multiple pyramids, but a population of over 5000 people. How they did that in pre-agricultural, pre-ceramic times remains largely a mystery.

The tour's final day was dedicated to a Mississippian kingdom at European contact – the Natchez. The French who first made contact met the Natchez ruler, the Great Sun. He was a powerful and revered leader who lived in a pyramid top palace and was carried by an entourage everywhere he went. They recorded a kingdom of eight towns he presided over, albeit tenuously at times, and how many of the positions of authority were occupied by his blood relatives. Sadly, the French also recorded their decision to destroy and scatter the Natchez in 1730.



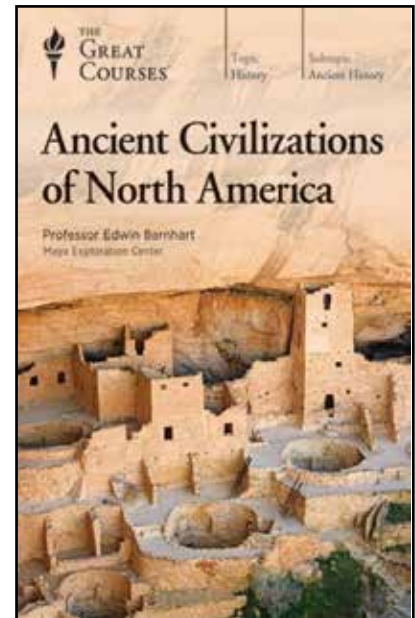
Winterville's main platform, tour group at its base

In the morning mist of September 4th, the group strolled the grounds of what is still called The Grand Natchez Village, lamenting what little is left of the Great Sun's palace mound and the temple where Natchez funerary ceremonies were witnessed. What we know, and still don't know, about ancient America was discussed on the way to the New Orleans airport. The group parted company with a new found admiration for American life before Columbus.

Ancient Civilizations of North America

MEC is proud to announce that Dr. Barnhart's third video lecture series is now available through the Great Courses. Entitled *Ancient Civilizations of North America*, it's a series of 24, 30-minute lectures covering the little-known history of North America from the first human migrations to the moment of European contact.

When most of us think about life in North America before European contact, we envision the forest warriors of the Iroquois or the buffalo hunters of the Great Plains – but's all wrong. Dr. Barnhart's new course reveals vast and sophisticated North American civilizations which existed 100's, even 1000's of years earlier. Thousands of earthen pyramids built by the Mississippian civilization once covered the eastern United States. Brilliant engineers and architects in the American Southwest created 100's of miles of irrigation canals, roads and stone buildings reaching five stories in height. Two thousand years ago the Hopewell people of Ohio were creating massive geometric earthworks and 3500 years ago the 5000+ people living at Poverty Point in Louisiana erected an 8-story tall pyramid. All of this and much more is illuminated by Dr. Barnhart's new course.



The response to the course has been overwhelming positive. One reviewer wrote:

"Wow. I'm tempted to recommend this course to anybody who is interested in human beings. The first lecture alone, which focuses on use of respectful terminology and on problems with dating archaeological finds, is worth the price of the entire course."

Another wrote:

"My husband and I consider ourselves well-educated people, yet Dr. Barnhart continually blows our minds with absolutely fascinating, up-to-date information we never learned in school."

Ancient Civilizations of North America is available in video and audio-only formats through the Great Course's website at: <http://www.thegreatcourses.com>. You can also find it on audible.com, amazon.com and in the Apple iTunes Store.

The Maya Codex of Mexico (continued from page 1)

confirmed its antiquity. The blue pigments are definitely Maya Blue, which modern researchers didn't even know how to reproduce until the 1980's. The carbon 14 dates came back with a range of 1021-1154 CE, even older than those of Coe's initial testing. Those dates place its author in a hiatus of Maya culture, just after the collapse of Classic Maya civilization, and perhaps explain the book's crude style and Central Mexican influence. Those dates also make the now officially renamed Maya Codex of Mexico the oldest known manuscript in all of the Americas! For now, it remains under lock and key in Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología with no plans for public display.

Web Resources Spotlight - [themayanruinswebsite.com](http://www.themayanruinswebsite.com)

If you're seeking reliable information on specific Maya archaeological sites, MEC recommends <http://www.themayanruinswebsite.com>. The site's author Steve Mellard has been visiting Maya ruins since the 1970's, often in the company of archaeologists. His research is responsible and reliable.

The Mayan Ruins Website is easily navigated and arranged by country and site, with a page dedicated to each of the over 60 featured ruins. Each page is populated with quality photos, basic descriptions of the site's history and helpful information for people who plan to visit them. While many Maya civilization related websites try to cover all aspects of their culture, Mellard's site focuses in on the ruins themselves, often providing information on lesser known sites that can be difficult to find elsewhere.



Whether you're a student, an arm-chair archaeologist, or planning to explore the ruins, *The Mayan Ruins Website* is an excellent resource and worthy of a place in your bookmarks.

Thanks to everyone who donated to MEC so far in 2018

Haden Linnington • Nicole Hill • Beth and Gary Spencer • Colleen Christensen
Zach Lindsey • Leonide Martin • Alan Tabler • Kenneth Turnbull

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