



# ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

[www.mayaexploration.org](http://www.mayaexploration.org)

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## Lost Worlds, Palenque on the History Channel

"Lost Worlds: Palenque, Metropolis of the Maya" was broadcast on the History Channel on April 4. The one-hour documentary focused on the innovative research conducted by Maya Exploration Center. MEC scholars Ed Barnhart, Kirk French, Alonso Mendez, and Christopher Powell appeared on camera throughout the course of the film.

This was the first time Christopher Powell presented his theories on Maya Sacred Geometry to a vast viewing audience, and the documentary succeeded in showcasing Christopher's complex ideas in a very accessible way. It was also the first public explication of Alonso Mendez's incredible solar observations in the Temple of the Sun. Kirk French, though erroneously labeled as an engineer, did a first-class job describing the intricacies of Palenque's water management features. Actor Domingo de la Torre of the Maya theatre group Sna Jtz'ibajom did his troupe proud in his portrayal of a Maya king in the process of bloodletting. For the record, Maya Exploration Center does not believe Maya kings stabbed at the genitals as the film indicated. We believe it was a more gentle, cautious movement....

British archaeologist and author David Drew lent his screen-savvy presence to the production. His colorful commentaries on the ballgame, Pakal's court, and the discovery of the tomb balanced the scientific information presented by MEC archaeologists. Stressing the violent na-



*French and the Filming Crew at the Picota Aqueduct*

ture of ancient Maya society, his narrative added heart-thumping drama to the scenario.

The true highlights of the documentary were the 3D reconstructions and fly-throughs expertly rendered by the Atlantic Productions graphics team. Though the art work on the building facades was overly speculative, the architectural details were superb. In a few short weeks, Atlantic Productions achieved what Maya Exploration Center has wanted to see for years—a reconstructed Palenque brought to life in living color.

Director Tom Whitter and his crew from Atlantic Productions are to be credited with a job well done. The documentary will air regularly throughout the summer on the History Channel, and DVD's of the broadcast should be available through their website in the future ([www.atlanticproductions.tv](http://www.atlanticproductions.tv)). Work is currently underway to create versions that will air on History Channel International and History Channel en Español.



## Letter from the Director

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### MEC Staff

#### *Director*

Edwin L. Barnhart

### Editors

Edwin L. Barnhart

Carol Karasik

### Contact MEC

#### United States

1901 Big Canyon Drive

Austin, Texas 78746

Phone: 512-350-3321

#### Mexico

El Panchan

Apartado Postal 142

Palenque, Chiapas 29960, Mexico

Phone: 916-348-2896

#### On the Web

[www.mayaexploration.org](http://www.mayaexploration.org)

#### Email

[info@mayaexploration.org](mailto:info@mayaexploration.org)

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What a great start to the year! MEC has already doubled the number of study abroad courses we ran in 2004. The word is getting out and our reputation now precedes us. Professors and tour organizers are contacting us based on the recommendations of our former program participants. A community is forming around MEC, and we're proud to be their connection to the Maya World.

2005 has also been a banner year for MEC in the news. In this current newsletter you can read about the History Channel documentary featuring our research and the "junglecast" radio broadcasts that are now floating around the internet. One of our study abroad students returned home and wrote an article on MEC for Boston's Natural Awakenings magazine. The Austin edition of Natural Awakenings is about to run the same article.

Our presence in Palenque is also growing. Plans to establish Palenque's first bookstore in El Panchan are moving right along. Though we are still at the very beginning of our capital campaign, the concept plan for our public

outreach center is set and our quest for funding is in full swing. The paperwork for establishing MEC's Mexican business affiliate, "Centro de Exploraciones Mayas," should be completed by the summer solstice.

For my part, I'm bracing myself for a busy summer. I write this letter from Austin, where my wife Angela and I are anxiously awaiting the mid-May birth of our second child. Then, family priorities allowing, I'll fly down to Merida to run our program for the Mathematical Association of America. (You can read more about the event in this newsletter.) The summer continues on with me hop-scotching back and forth between Texas and Mexico, taking care of my growing family in between teaching three new Chautauqua courses for National Science Foundation. I'll be stretched a bit thin, but MEC team members Kirk French, Carol Karasik, Alonso Mendez, and Christopher Powell will be there to handle MEC's growing activities with passion and professionalism. Thanks to all for your continuing interest in and support of Maya Exploration Center!

Regards,



## CHAUTAUQUA SHORT COURSES FOR COLLEGE TEACHERS

### 2005 FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

To see the National Science Foundation Chautauqua courses

offered by Dr. Ed Barnhart visit [www.ahautravel.com](http://www.ahautravel.com)

To register for a course, visit [www.chautauqua.pitt.edu](http://www.chautauqua.pitt.edu)

## MEC Study Abroad Programs in 2005



*Alonso Mendez with the SMSU students at Tulum*

Study abroad courses are really picking up at Maya Exploration Center. Four courses have already been conducted this year, and more are scheduled. In January we led our first study abroad in Quintana Roo, a challenging Maya Mathematics course, organized for the colleagues and students of South Minnesota State University's Paul Enersen. During the weeklong lectures, participant Sherwin Skar made an important discovery: how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide using Maya bar and dot numerals! Skar and Ed Barnhart plan to present the method in a forthcoming article.

Our team returned to Chiapas for MEC's second course, organized for Professor Daisy McCoy of Lyndon State College (Vermont). Her group was a pleasure to



*Lyndon State students entering the Yaxchilan Labyrinth*

teach and some of the most adventurous students we've had yet. Participant Elisabeth Taylor returned home and wrote an article about her experience for the April edition of Boston's Natural Awakenings magazine, referring to the course as a "healing journey."

In March, MEC had its first course overlap. While Alonso Mendez and Christopher Powell taught Professor Rick Warner's 18 students from Wabash College (Indiana) in Chiapas, Ed Barnhart headed up to Quintana Roo to meet Professor Isabelle Champlin and her students from University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. In addition to visits to the ruins of Quintana Roo, her group also got the opportunity to spend a day in the modern Maya village of Ek Balam meeting its residents and learning about their daily life. Professor Champlin is now the first professor to bring a group of students for a second year and says she looks forward to making MEC courses an annual offering through her Anthropology Department.



*U. of Pitt Student Savannah Klunder in Ek Balam*

Professors Sam Claussen and Conrad Gubera of Missouri Southern State University are bringing classes for a second time this May and have organized scholarships so that all of their students can attend. They also plan to make courses with MEC an annual offering at MSSU.

The climax of MEC's scholastic year will be our upcoming program for the Mathematical Association of America. From May 23 to June 2, MEC will be hosting 28 college math professors from all over the US on a trip from Merida to Chiapas. The days will be dedicated to site visits, and evenings to a variety of presentations on Maya mathematics as seen through calendars, architecture, and hieroglyphic texts. MEC is looking forward to the kind of intellectual breakthroughs "think tanks" like these can produce.

You can learn more about this special MAA trip by visiting [www.maa.org/prep/mexico/Mmain.html](http://www.maa.org/prep/mexico/Mmain.html).

## Gringo Collapse “Junglecasts”



*Nicco and Ed talking in Palenque’s Cross Group*

Documentary filmmaker Dave Pentecost and Nicco Mele, creator of Howard Dean’s groundbreaking internet campaign, stopped by Maya Exploration Center in mid-March to hone in on our current work. Dave and Nicco were on a special fact-finding mission, “The Gringo Collapse Tour.” To document and share their

journey, they recorded a number of “podcasts,” or more accurately, “junglecasts.” For those unfamiliar with the term, podcasts are audio recordings that people can download from the internet on to their Apple Ipods. Content for Ipods has now expanded from just music into news reports, talk shows, and just about anything else you might hear on conventional radio. The new format is rapidly gaining popularity among users who prefer to “choose their news.” Dave and Nicco are at the forefront of this movement. At Palenque, they recorded four junglecasts with Ed Barnhart and have since posted them on their websites. Their interviews with Barnhart include discussions of the Maya collapse, archaeoastronomy, and ancient political propaganda. Go to Dave’s site [www.gomaya.com](http://www.gomaya.com) or Nicco’s sites [www.nicco.org](http://www.nicco.org) and [www.echoditto.com](http://www.echoditto.com) to hear those junglecasts and other interesting reports from their journey. Dave and Nicco’s broadcasts also made it to the prestigious “blog” website [www.boingboing.net](http://www.boingboing.net). Our thanks and praise go out to these two internet pioneers.

## French To Represent MEC

This May 12-16, board member Kirk French will be representing MEC at the *Encuentro Mundo Maya* in Guatemala. *Encuentro* is an invitation-only event put together by the Guatemala Tourist Commission to promote the ruins of the Peten. French will be traveling with a group of archaeologists, tour operators, and government representatives to the remote ruins of Ciebal, Aguateca, and Punta de Chimino. With the logistics information he collects and the business relationships he forges, MEC will be able to plan more tours and courses in the Peten area. MEC is pleased to receive Guatemala’s support for our programs, and we look forward to working with their Tourist Commission.



*Board Member Kirk French*

## UPCOMING TOURS

### *Education Through Exploration*

#### *Pillars of the Classic Maya:*

##### *Palenque to Tikal*

October 7-16, 2005

#### *Thanksgiving in Chiapas:*

##### *Palenque and the Highlands*

November 19-30, 2005

Sign up at:

[www.mayaexploration.org/tours.php](http://www.mayaexploration.org/tours.php)

## The 2005 Maya Meetings at Texas

*MEC colleague Alonso Mendez traveled to Austin this last March to attend the Maya Meetings at Texas. The following is his review of the meetings.*

A rare blend of groundbreaking scholarship and unbridled passion are hallmarks of The Maya Meetings, held every March in Austin, Texas. This year, deep friendships and personal memories were added to the mix. Hosted by famed epigrapher Dr. David Stuart, the 29<sup>th</sup> annual meeting drew the largest crowds since the death of its founder and guiding light, Dr. Linda Schele. Participants, eager to attend the lectures and workshops, were also there to honor ceramics expert Justin Kerr, and to celebrate the recent appointment of David Stuart to the Linda Schele Chair of Mesoamerican Art and Writing.

A tangible air of excitement filled the auditorium as scholars and students waited to hear about the latest discoveries in the field. And once again, The Maya Meetings lived up to its reputation as a major arena for new interpretations of Mesoamerican art, iconography, and writing systems.

The three-day Hieroglyphic Forum brought together a formidable panel of archaeologists and epigraphers to discuss ancient Maya ceramics. Potsherds have always played a central role in piecing together history. As works of art, painted ceramics also tell us about the culture.

Dr. Mary Miller, Professor of Art History at Yale University, took the audience on a provocative tour of mural and ceramic painting. "What does art tell us that writing cannot?" she asked. Concentrating on the human figure, Dr. Miller viewed the depiction of action in Maya art as a reflection of Maya concepts of time and space.

Focusing on technique, Steven Houston presented a detailed description of Maya colors, their use in painting, and their specific hieroglyphic names. Houston's survey of new methods for color analysis provided a solid scientific basis for students studying painted ceramics.

Recently excavated hieroglyphic texts are crucial to archaeologist Federico Fahsen's understanding of Cancuen. Located near the headwaters of the Rio Pasión, the city once controlled the flow of trade goods and is now yielding important information about political alliances during the Late Terminal Classic Period (850-900AD) in northern Guatemala.

Continuing the odyssey of discovery, Dr. Nicolai Grube discussed his current archaeological work in the Calak-

mul Biosphere Preserve of Campeche, Mexico. The latest pottery found at sites dominated by Calakmul display a surprising variety of individual styles. Greater artistic freedom went hand in hand with political independence, according to Dr. Grube.



*The Stuarts and Taubes at the Maya Meetings*

Pre-Columbian art and religion was the topic of Dr. Karl Taube's thrilling presentation on the beautiful murals recently uncovered at the pre-Classic site of San Bartolo, Guatemala. After years of studying images of the Corn God, Taube was visibly moved as he described his first glimpse of the murals, which contain the earliest portrait of the Corn God yet found. Masterpieces in style and subject matter, the San Bartolo murals represent one of the greatest finds in Maya archaeology.

Photographer Justin Kerr's keynote lecture, "Round and Round We Go," summarized the extraordinary breakthroughs in hieroglyphic decipherment made during the 1970's, when Kerr developed the rollout camera. Kerr's invention made it possible to produce flat pictures of the images painted on round ceramic vessels. His vast collection of rollout photographs (available through the FAMSI web site) has become an invaluable resource for researchers studying the complex scenes on Maya pots. His expertise was evident in the ease with which he identified details that most viewers seldom perceive.

Kerr ended his talk by reading a passage from his personal journal about a curing ceremony held for Linda Schele shortly before her death. Kerr received a standing ovation as David Schele and David Stuart presented him with the first Linda Schele Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Study of Mesoamerican Art and Culture.

## News from Palenque

*Palenque's First Theatre* Long overdue, Palenque has its first theatre. Built on the grounds of Hotel Kin Ha, the dinner theatre offers a grand performance space. Designed to hold over 500 spectators, the theatre is circular, with two floors of tables surrounding a central stage. In the middle of the stage rises a living ceiba tree (the Maya "world tree"). Trap doors in the stage floor will allow actors to emerge from the trees roots. For now, the Kin Ha plans to run performances depicting episodes from the Maya epic, *Popol Vuh*. As attendance grows, so will the theatre's repertoire. Kudos to the owners of Kin Ha for giving Palenque this much-needed cultural venue.

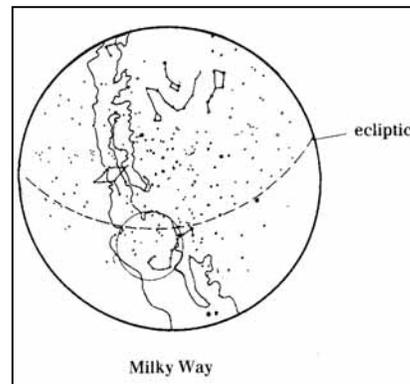
*New Director of INAH* In early April, Luciano Cedillo assumed the position of National Director of INAH, replacing Sergio Raul Arroyo in the post. Cedillo, who received Mexico's Order of the Polar Star Award in 2003 for his achievements in INAH's Restoration Department, announced that he would work to strengthen INAH's relations with CONACULTA and to reform the laws protecting Mexico's pre-Columbian and colonial artifacts. When asked about outgoing Director Arroyo's decision to allow Wal-Mart to build within the ruins of Teotihuacan, Cedillo said he would try to revise federal laws in order to better protect archaeological zones from future intrusions.

*Wooden Artifact Found* While investigating ancient salt production workshops along the coastal lagoons of Belize, Louisiana State University archaeologists made a very rare discovery. Among the typical assemblage of pottery, stone tools, and occupational refuse they found the remains of a 1300-year-old canoe paddle. In over a century of Maya archaeology, this is one of only a handful of intact wooden objects ever discovered. The rain forest environment usually reduces organic artifacts into little more than stains. Project Director Heather McKillop's discovery gives hope that the soils in the region where she is working may yield more rare objects from the Classic Period.

## Chabot's "Maya Skies" Project

The Chabot Space and Science Center in Oakland, California, has invited MEC Director Ed Barnhart to serve as a consultant on an exciting new project called "Maya Skies." The full-dome planetarium show will teach elementary and junior high school students about how the ancient Maya viewed the night sky. Using the latest computer technology and graphics, the 25-minute presentation will feature celestial observations made from Chichen Itza and Palenque.

Dr. Barnhart will advise the Chabot staff on Maya cultural content and, of course, archaeoastronomy. The full-dome format, with its ability to set the



sky in motion, should be capable of illustrating the brilliant theories presented by Dr. Linda Schele and David Freidel in *Maya Cosmos*. Soon Bay Area residents will be learning about the beauty of the Maya creation story as played out in the movements of the stars and the Milky Way.

## MEC Bookstore Plans in Palenque

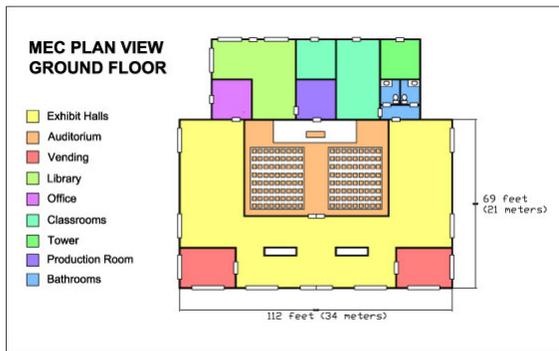


Plans are in the works for a Maya Exploration Center bookstore in Palenque. Currently, Palenque has no bookstores, much less English language reading materials for international visitors. MEC wants to fill that void by establishing a small bookstore in El Panchan. Chato Morales, owner of El Panchan Cabañas and Restaurant Don Muchos, has agreed to let MEC transform his front reception area into a retail space. With the

assistance of John Bloebaum, retired bookseller from Portland, Oregon, MEC has spent the last year choosing appropriate books and arranging shipping routes. After working for over 20 years at Powell's Books, John retired in 2004 and came to Palenque looking for new opportunities. There he met MEC and offered to help develop our bookstore plans. John's first five boxes of books are currently with Texas border brokers and should be shipped to Palenque by mid-May. Remodeling of El Panchan's 10'x20' reception space is set to begin this June. With John's assistance, the Maya Exploration Center Bookstore should be offering books about the Maya by this fall.

## The MEC Center Plans in Palenque

MEC's mission to build a public outreach center in Palenque needs your support. The appropriate site for building has been found and agreements to purchase it are in place. With the current rate of growth in Palenque, MEC must act quickly to acquire the property. The initial land purchase, for one hectare along the road to the ruins, requires \$US100,000. MEC is currently seeking individual, corporate, and foundation support for this purchase. While large donations are certainly invited, smaller contributions for this capital campaign are most welcome.



Please contact [edbarnhart@mayaexploration.org](mailto:edbarnhart@mayaexploration.org) to get a copy of the full proposal and concept plan.

## Why Donate to MEC ?

If you're interested in the search for the lost knowledge of the ancients, you should support Maya Exploration Center. MEC is at the forefront of research that is making a real difference in our understanding of the ancient Maya. In addition, our education programs encourage students to step away from classrooms and into to the ruins to see for themselves.

Our education programs are enriched by current research and, in turn, ongoing research is supported through the funds raised through our education programs. Support MEC's non-profit organization today and help us carve new paths between the ancient Maya and modern public awareness.

*Thanks to Everyone Who Has Donated to MEC This Winter and Spring*  
 Lynn Kirk • Nicco Mele • Paul and Dixie Enersen

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