



ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

www.mayaexploration.org

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MAA May 2005 Tour a Big Success



MAA Group in Loltun Cave, Yucatan

In May, 28 members of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) flew down to Mexico to learn about Maya mathematics. Professors came from different parts of the US and from diverse branches of the mathematical field. MAA President Tina Straley and Director Lisa Kolbe were among the enthusiastic participants of this first MEC-MAA joint venture.

Alonso Mendez, Christopher Powell, and Alfonso Morales guided the group on their intensive journey. The tour started off in Merida with lectures on Maya calendrics, the bar/dot counting system, and astronomy. A survey of Maya history and culture provided the necessary background for the trip.

During visits to Dzibilchaltun and Chichen Itza, tour members were introduced to the mathematical and astronomical underpinnings of Maya architecture. At Mayapan, they measured the major temples and verified the geometric formulas discovered by Christopher Powell. Later they met with staff archaeologists at the site and were able to witness excavations first hand. At Uxmal,

the group took part in Alonso Mendez's observations of zenith sunset. At Kabah and Labna, discussions also focused on Maya astronomy. Arriving in Chiapas, participants toured the ruins of Palenque

and attended lectures on our latest astronomical discoveries at the site.

There were plenty of cultural detours along the way. Stopping in the colonial town of Mani, the group stood in the church atrium where, in 1542, Bishop Diego de Landa had burned thousands of Maya codices. A number of those books probably contained vital astronomical and calendrical information. Traveling back in time, the group descended into Loltun Cave to view the 10,000-year-old Maya hand prints that adorn the walls. Tour members also had a chance to see the beautiful murals of Bonampak and the great Olmec monuments located in the rainforest of La Venta Park.

MAA Director Lisa Kolbe wrote, "*The trip was educational, informative, congenial, and lots of terrific fun with the guides. Many, many thanks for the lectures, guidance, understanding, enthusiasm, and conviviality that you showed the group from the MAA.*" From all reports, the tour was a great success. We have been invited to present at the MAA's annual conference in San Antonio next January, and talks are underway to create more joint MAA-MEC educational tours.



Letter from the Director

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Christopher Powell

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

Email

info@mayaexploration.org

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I love my job. I get to meet interesting people and talk about subjects that have inspired me for years. Now they are inspiring others. Our educational programs are beginning to have an impact in American college classrooms. All across the country, professors who have participated in our programs are incorporating Maya mathematics, astronomy, and cosmology into their courses. Slowly but surely, MEC is spreading information about the Maya outside the field of anthropology and into a broad range of sciences and humanities.

I'm also proud of how our website is developing. Each quarter we introduce new features and announcements for new programs. Amazingly, in less than two years on the internet, hits to our website crossed the one million mark. I'm not really sure what that means—I envision Matrix-like web bots bouncing off our hull in cyberspace—but our web-savvy friends assure us it's a big deal.

As readers can see, this has been another busy summer for MEC. On a personal level, my wife Angela and I welcomed our second child, Eleanor, into the world on May 20. While I attended

the birth in Austin, my colleagues hosted 28 members of the Mathematical Association of America on a trip through the Maya world. Although it's difficult to pry myself away from my growing family, I've led two more successful courses for NSF's Chautauqua Program.

Calls and emails are pouring in with inquiries about our research and education programs. Both Japanese Public Television and History Channel are requesting our involvement in future documentaries. New professors are requesting study abroad courses. Christopher Powell and I have been invited to give five lectures during Missouri Southern State University's "Mexico Semester" in September.

This summer we added another scholar, LeAndra Garrsion Luecke, to our board. Perhaps most exciting, the Alamo Pre-Columbian Society honored us with one of our largest donations to date. MEC is growing by leaps and bounds, and I feel like one of the luckiest people on the planet to be a part of it. Thanks to all who receive this newsletter. Without your support and interest, MEC would not exist.

Sincerely,

Barnhart on News 8 Austin

On July 27, News 8 Austin aired a piece on Dr. Barnhart and his work. The three-minute interview, conducted by senior anchor Paul Brown, aired every hour for 24 hours and reached a viewership of over one million people. To see the segment over the internet, log on to:



http://www.news8austin.com/content/your_news_/your_neighbors/?ArID=140304&SecID=461
and click on "watch video."

New Tombs and Texts Discovered at El Perú



Stela 3 from El Peru, Lady Yohl Ik'nal

In the remote jungle of Northern Guatemala, discoveries at the site of El Perú are changing the way we look at Classic Maya politics. Led by two of the most talented archaeologists in the Maya world, Guatemala's Hector Escobedo and SMU's

David Freidel, the project is also a model of international and interdisciplinary cooperation. Why is El Perú so important? Because it played a pivotal role at the beginning and end of the wars that raged across the Maya world from 400-800 A.D. David Freidel calls the city "a crossroads of conquerors."

Carved inscriptions at the site tell us that emissaries from Teotihuacán, the powerful city-state in central Mexico, visited El Perú before their historic arrival at Tikal in 378 A.D. Three centuries later, in a risky political move, the seventh-century ruler, K'inich Balam, severed ties with Tikal and married a princess from Calakmul, Tikal's arch-enemy. In her portrait the bride carries a shield and bears the title of "war lord," two signs of the bellicose times as well as the important role of women in warfare. K'inich Balam's decision to marry the warrior princess was ill-fated. During the reign of K'inich Balam's son, Tikal exacted its revenge and sacked the turncoat city.



Stela 40 lifted from an excavation

One of the project's main initiatives is to find the missing pieces of the story. Project epigrapher, Stanley Guenter, is using digital photos and computer software to put the broken monuments back together for decipherment.

Meanwhile, on April 18, graduate students Michelle

Rich and Jennifer Piehl made one of the most important discoveries to date. While excavating a shrine midway up a central temple, they found a sealed tomb containing the bodies of two young noblewomen. A third burial, that of an older woman, yielded pottery dating to 350 A.D. Considering the good health of the young women and the fact that one of them was pregnant when she died, Freidel concluded that they were sacrificed. A similar pattern of royal deaths was found at Tikal and Uaxactun. The newfound evidence suggests that Teotihuacán's presence created a crisis that led to the sudden deaths of Maya royalty.

The city's ancient name, we now know, was Waka', not El Perú as it is known locally. Established as early as 500B.C., the city boasts an unbroken lineage of 22 rulers. Its 672 structures, surrounding a massive reservoir on a high plateau, surely hold many more secrets. Archaeologists have barely scratched the surface.

The remote location of the Waka' Archaeological Project and field camp presents a number of challenges. Open opposition from displaced looters, loggers, and poachers has put archaeologists and crew in real danger. Despite adversities, the Waka' team forges on, not only conducting their important research, but also working with local and federal authorities to protect the ruins and the depleted rainforest around them. Unlike teams working at sites comfortably located near modern communities, the Waka' Archaeological Project is boldly out where the research needs to be done.



Waka' Crew and David Freidel

To learn more about their project and how to support their ongoing work, log on to:

<http://smu.edu/smunews/waka/default.asp>

Missouri Southern State University's 2nd Study Abroad

For the second year, Professors Sam Claussen and Conrad Gubera of Missouri Southern State University brought their students down to Palenque. Though some schools prefer to visit a different place every year, MSSU chose to return to Chiapas. The 16 students and faculty landed in Villahermosa on May 20, and the next day Christopher Powell introduced them to the Olmec monuments in La Venta Park.



MSSU Group under a Ceiba Tree in Yaxchilán

That evening the group arrived at El Panchan, the hotel the tour organizers had enjoyed so much the year before. Over the next four days, students attended lectures, visited waterfalls, took jungle walks, and visited Palenque, Bonampak, Yaxchilán, and the recently discovered Plan de Ayutla with Alonso Mendez. During

the closing ceremony at El Panchan's Restaurant Don Mucho's, they discussed the week's events over good food and live music.

The course was fun, the students gained a newfound respect for ancient Maya culture, and the MEC team enjoyed another opportunity to share our knowledge. Louise Simon, a teacher from the Washington D.C. area, wrote, "The lectures and the visits to sites were exactly what I was hoping

for. I have lots of new material for my classroom. Thank you for making it possible." Claussen, Gubera, and faculty participant Linda Hand have already suggested a new trip—Palenque to Copan—for May 2006. As always, we said, "consider it arranged," and look forward to leading the course.

A New MEC Board Member



LeAndra Luecke

Two weeks after her nomination at MEC's June 10 board meeting, LeAndra Garrison Luecke was unanimously welcomed as MEC's newest board member. A native Texan and the mother of two children, LeAndra is a biological anthropologist currently working on her PhD at

Washington University in St. Louis. She earned her Bachelor's degree from Texas State University and her Master's degree from The University of Texas at Austin. For her dissertation, LeAndra will study primate populations in Pantanos de Centla Biological Reserve, Tabasco, Mexico. The topic complements her Master's research on monkey populations at five Maya archaeological zones in southern Mexico and Northern Guatemala. Her involvement in primate studies will make her a perfect liaison to the scientific community, and her knowledge of environmental conservation will be a great asset as MEC develops plans to protect Palenque's flora and fauna. To read an article on LeAndra's latest research in Tabasco, log on to:

www.mayaexploration.org/research.php

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

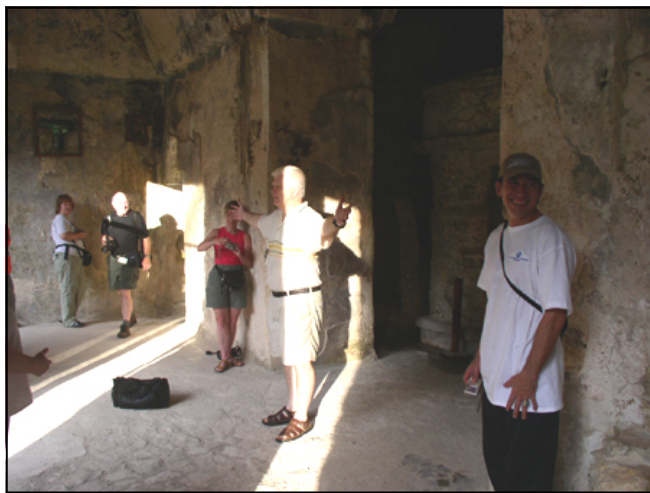
Sign up at:

www.mayaexploration.org/tours.php

2005 NSF Chautauqua Courses

For the fourth year in a row, MEC Director Ed Barnhart was invited to be an instructor for National Science Foundation's Chautauqua Short Course Program. As NSF defines them, "Chautauqua Short Courses are an annual series of forums in which scholars at the frontiers of various sciences meet intensively for several days with undergraduate college teachers of science." This year Dr. Barnhart offered three Chautauqua courses: Maya Archaeoastronomy, Maya Mathematics, and, a new course, Maya Ethnobotany. MEC associates Christopher Powell and Alonso Mendez helped conduct the archaeoastronomy and mathematics courses.

Maya Archaeoastronomy was held in Palenque during summer solstice. Twelve scientists were engaged in a full round of lectures and tours to nearby archaeological sites. The highlight of the course was the sunrise hierophany that occurs in Palenque's Temple of the Sun. The clouds blanketing the sky all week parted and the morning sun shone brightly, allowing the group to witness the brilliant shaft of light that cuts across the temple floor and illuminates the innermost corner of the sanctuary.



Summer Solstice sunrise in Palenque's Temple of the Sun

Maya Mathematics was conducted in the state of Quintana Roo. Twenty-six professors attended talks on Maya arithmetic, geometry, calendrics, astronomy, and numerology. During the week, we visited the sites of Tulum, Coba, and Chichen Itza. The tour of Ek Balam was led by Juan Canul, an archaeologist, tour guide, and direct descendant of the Yucatec Maya. Canul presented the

inside story of Ek Balam's excavations and spoke intimately about the history of his people.



Maya Mathematics Group under Ek Balam's entry arch

The Maya Ethnobotany course is scheduled for mid-August. Fifteen professors will travel with Dr. Barnhart and Alonso Mendez through the diverse ecological zones of Tabasco and Chiapas, visiting lowland cacao (chocolate) plantations, tropical coffee ranches, and highland maize fields. In San Cristóbal, participants will hear lectures by noted anthropologists Dr. Robert M. Laughlin and Walter "Chip" Morris, visit weaving co-ops, and observe the festival of San Lorenzo in the Maya community of Zinacantán. Tour members will spend the final days of the course in Palenque, taking jungle walks and learning to cook with indigenous plants and herbs.

Chautauqua is a great opportunity for MEC to meet and share information with the scientific community. As a result of the relationships we forge with professors and their universities, many return with groups of students to participate in MEC study abroad programs.

To learn more about the Chautauqua program and its many courses, visit www.chautauqua.pitt.edu.

News from Palenque

NASA in Palenque This year's summer solstice was marked by a visit from members of the NASA Sun Earth Connection. On June 21 MEC's National Science Foundation tour met up with the NASA team at the site to take part in observations from the Temple of the Sun. As the morning rays shone into the temple, enthusiastic observers broke into resounding cheers.

The Sun Earth Connection Education Forum (SECEF) is a partnership between U.C. Berkeley's Space Sciences Laboratory and the NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center. The mission of this program is to share NASA's discoveries with educators, students, and the general public. With a goal to increase scientific literacy and to focus particular attention on the active sun and its effects on earth, SECEF organized a conference and workshop on June 23, hosted by Ricardo Romano Garrido, general manager of the Chan Kah Resort Village. NASA astronomer Dr. Isabel Hawkins talked about the sun; archaeologist José Huchim Herrera showed slides of solar hierophanies in the Yucatan; and Dr. Nancy Maryboy, a Navajo-Cherokee from Utah, discussed the relationship between Native American philosophy and modern astrophysics. Along with Robyn Higdon, they engaged 70 schoolchildren in interactive workshops. Afterwards, students toured the archaeological site and met Lic. Roberto Martinez Aguilar, the new Director of Palenque. MEC will be participating in the educational program when the NASA team returns next January.

Full Circle: A Triple-Wammy For the 1413-year anniversary of Pakal's accession to the throne, on July 26, three anthropologists raised modest bowls of *balché* in a quiet toast to the great ruler. Meanwhile, dozens of New Age fans flocked to the Temple of the Inscriptions to celebrate the opening of the Gateway to the Galactic Center. This cosmic event happened to coincide with the "day out of time," or New Year, in the 13-moon Dreamspell calendar. A heady mix of Maya day names and bad science, the Dreamspell is the confabulation of art historian José Arguelles, who claims to be the incarnation of Lord Pakal. Followers devoted the day to prayers for the well being of the planet. Guards at the site dismissed the proceedings with a philosophical shrug, even though all forms of worship are prohibited in the ruins.

APCS Passes The Baton to MEC

After years of hosting lectures, organizing symposia, and being a nexus for Maya enthusiasts living in Central Texas, the Alamo Pre-Columbian Society (APCS) dissolved their non-profit organization this summer. Upon dissolution, a non-profit organization such as APCS must gift their accumulated resources to a like institution. Having kept abreast of MEC's programs and plans to create an education and research center, the APCS Board of Directors voted to donate their standing resources to our efforts. In June, \$7000 were transferred to MEC and deposited in a separate account devoted to purchasing land in Palenque.



We are honored by the faith APCS placed in us, and though APCS no longer exists, MEC is committed to keeping former members aware of ongoing Pre-Columbian research.

New Resources on the MEC Website



As of July, the new MEC website had received 1.2 million hits! This means our primary vehicle of communication is running like a dream. In order to meet this intense level of web traffic, we are continually increasing and updating the information we provide. This summer we added new information on the Dresden Codex to our "Research" section and expanded the list of Suggested Books

in our "Resources" section. The Suggested Books section is also now linked to Amazon.com and MEC makes a small percentage on all books purchased through our gateway. Our "Other Websites" section has also grown; at the bottom of each page you'll notice a new link to Pentecost and Mele's Junglecast interviews with Dr. Barnhart.

This fall we plan to launch our new "Maya Maps" page, a resource for anyone seeking maps of or to ancient Maya cities. If there's something you'd like to add to MEC's website, please let us know. We're glad to know people are coming to us for information about the Maya and we intend to deliver!

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 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 Spring and Summer

Alamo Pre-Columbian Society • Mark Sullivan and Lynda Colombo • Gary Wood • Tom Higgins • Kevin Reeves • Timothy Barker

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Your support is crucial. Please help us to continue to do this important research. Donate today.

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