



ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

www.mayaexploration.org

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- New public lectures from Dr. Barnhart

The 13th Bak'tun – The Mundo Maya Report

The world watched as the clock ticked through 12/21/12 with anticipation and in many cases fear, but in the Maya world itself it was a celebration. Members of the MEC community were at various sites and here's what they had to report.

From Chichen Itza, Cathi Considine reported:

"We got there roughly 7am (before 8am opening) with the Synthesis 2012 crowd, which was truly bedlam. But somehow, everything came off amazingly well. There were not even 1000 people at 7am...with much dancing (on the east face of the Castillo), copal burning, group circles, incantations, blessings...and HunBatz leading the "tribe" around to the west side. There were also rave and dance events that went on I think...but I only saw the stage. I do know that the police were in force the night of the 20th and locked out half of the campers from their camp site (just a little east of the Ik-il hotel). This has been a truly organized event on the part of the police...they were out in force but I don't think abusive...most of them I think were just voyeurs! I can tell you there were some wild costumes...not to mention tattoos!"

From Copan, Michael Grofe reported:



A Zapatista March in Palenque on December 21, 2012 (photo by Rob D'Amico)

"There was a nice fire ceremony with about 150 people in Las Sepulturas, then a local drunken murder in town which blocked traffic for everyone coming back from the fire ceremony. Eerie sacrifice."

From Belize, Josh Berman reported:

"At Caracol, Dr. Jaime Awe, director of archaeology of Belize, organized the event. Maya elders came from southern Belize to perform a sacred fire ceremony, and the camp cooks prepared traditional Maya feasts for dinner and breakfast. There were about 300 people from all over, only a handful of

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Letter from the Director



Happy New Year! Normally this winter newsletter comes out on winter solstice, but we were a little busy that day this year. The Maya calendar continued in to the 14th bak'tun and we at MEC are looking forward to turning the conversation away from false doomsday predictions to what is admirable and true about Maya Civilization. Our New Year's resolutions are to put yet more useful resources on our website and to make more programs based on teaching grade school children about Maya scientific achievements.

The lead article of this edition of ArchaeoMaya is a roundup of what happened in the Maya world as the 13th bak'tun completed. Christopher, Carol and I were in Palenque. Where else would we have been? This edition also has the report on my latest journey to Java. It was a wonderful experience, though not the discovery I was hoping for. Much of this edition is filled with announcements of new books, papers, and venues to learn about ancient Maya culture. And as always, our upcoming travel opportunities are presented.

The year 2012 was a mixed bag for MEC. The mostly misguided buzz about the Maya calendar ending provided many lecture and documentary opportunities, but strangely very few travelers. In fact, MEC had the least attendees for our study abroad programs and public tours since we opened our doors in 2003. Though global econo-

mies and politics seem to be improving, people just aren't travelling much these days. We at MEC recognize that fact and see this coming year as a good time to change our ways. Not only is it the turn of a bak'tun, but 2013 is the ten year anniversary of MEC's non-profit incorporation. We will still lead adventures, but they will no longer be our focus. Instead, we will work to increase our public lecture offerings and the resources on our website.

On a personal level, I also plan to embrace the Maya philosophies of transformation and renewal as the new bak'tun rolls into 2013. My new Great Courses series, "Lost Worlds of South America" is already generating a lot of interest and opportunities for me to pursue research in Peru. Southeast Asia, with its virtually unknown evidence of ancient astronomy and geometry, is also calling me. But perhaps my most fulfilling and important adventure lies at home, where my five children are growing up fast and need their father at the house more often these days. Maybe it's time for me to stay home and write some books.

What kinds of changes will you incorporate into your life as both the Maya Long Count and the Gregorian calendar click to 13? Whatever they are, I hope you'll continue to support MEC through your interest, involvement, and donations. We don't exist without you!

Happy New Year!

A Great New Book - *Royal Cities of the Ancient Maya*

Eminent Maya scholar and Yale emeritus Michael Coe has teamed up with world class photographer Barry Brukoff to produce one of the most visually stunning and informative books ever written about the ancient Maya. And what's more, their offering special edition signed copies exclusively to the MEC community!

There were only 50 special edition copies made and the early purchase discount price ended January 1. However, they have generously extended the discount price only to the MEC community through the end of January.

Here's the link directly to the special edition on Brukoff's website:

<http://www.brukoffphoto.com/maya-special-edition/index.html>

You can also purchase the regular edition through Amazon.com at this link:

http://www.amazon.com/Royal-Cities-Ancient-Maya-Michael/dp/0865652848/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1357058407&sr=8-1&keywords=royal+cities+of+the+ancient+maya

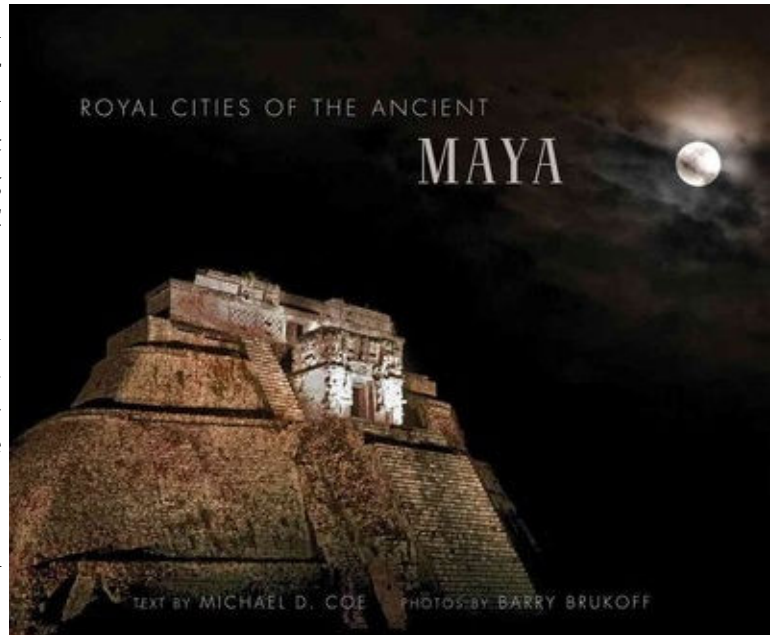
Here's what our fellow Mayanists are saying about this fantastic new book:

"Stunning photographs by Barry Brukoff illuminate insights and smart prose from Michael Coe, one of the most knowledgeable scholars of the ancient Maya, in *Royal Cities of the Ancient Maya*. For both general readers and specialists, this highly readable book offers wonderful surprises, along with the latest and most up-to-date interpretations. No bookshelf should be without it." *Dr. Mary Miller, Dean of Yale College, Sterling Professor of Art, author of The Art of Mesoamerica: From Olmec to Aztec.*

"This book is glorious. Panoramic in two senses, it offers masterful commentary by Michael Coe, doyen of Mayanist scholars, along with Barry Brukoff's atmospheric photos, the next-best-thing to visiting the great Maya cities. Any reader will feel the immediate urge to board a plane, book in hand. If ruins can be brought to life, Coe and Brukoff have done so with this elegant volume." *Stephen Houston, Dupee Family Prof. of Social Sciences, Brown University*

"This book takes us to the ancient Maya civilization, and in each locale we are given a unique private tour of its remarkable art and architecture through Barry Brukoff's masterly photographs. . *Royal Cities of the Ancient Maya* is an experience adventure not to be missed." *Prof. Andrea Stone Dept. of Art History, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

"A sumptuous presentation of all things Maya. The Maya created one of the most distinctive of ancient civilizations, here wonderfully revealed by Michael Coe, a leading authority in the field, and the superb photographs of Barry Brukoff. *Royal Cities of the Ancient Maya* is a feast for the eye and the mind. *Dr. David L. Webster, Professor of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania*



The 13th Bak'tun... (continued from Page 1)

whom witnessed the Maya sunset ceremony atop Caana and the 4 a.m. solstice offering. A few revelers were among the crowd, but the distance from civilization kept things rather quiet."

From Tikal, Grace Jeffers reported:

"There were a few thousand people about one-third Guatemalans (both Maya and Guatemaltecos), one-third gringos and one-third "back packers". On the evening of the 20th the Guatemalan government hosted a celebration that included a speech made by the President of Guatemala and dances performed by a troupe of professional dancers.



A fire ceremony in Tikal's main plaza on December 21, 2012 (photo by Grace Jeffers)

There was a procession by a "king" and "queen" followed by two scarlet macaws and a costumed entourage. Somewhere between 4:30 and 7 am the day keepers took over and started performing ceremonies in front of temple I. Perhaps the most remarkable thing was that the park was open all night. People came in and out of the park and at about 4 am there was a scramble to get to the top of temple IV and El Mundo Perdido. There were some protestors. Apparently a few Maya groups felt they had been excluded from the festivities and they showed up with signs. Day keepers performed ceremonies at Yax-Ha, Uaxactun and Tikal on the 19th, 20th and 21st."

From San Cristobal de Las Casas, a modern Maya community, Chip Morris reported:

"It rained and as far as I know nothing happened."

Christopher Powell, Carol Karasik, and Ed Barnhart were at Palenque where a torrential downpour kept visitors hidden inside the temples, peeking out to watch the plazas fill with water. The biggest crowd to enter the ruins was the Rainbow Family (google it), who walked from their camp for kilometers to arrive at the front gate by dawn. After chanting "somos familia" (we are a family) for about 45 minutes, the INAH finally decided to let hundreds of them into the ruins for free. They played in the rain, knelt before the temples, and were generally respectful of the park's rules. The only Maya present were the ones who are there every day, selling their t-shirts and trinkets to tourists. The Rainbow's weren't buying.

Perhaps the most exciting event at Palenque that day occurred not in the ruins but in town, when 1000's of Zapatistas in black masks appeared and marched through the center of town. It was a peaceful demonstration for indigenous rights, but no doubt at least a few soaking wet tourist thought this herd of men in black masks had indeed come to end the world, at least for them. But no, they and the entire world persist. The holiday presents were opened, the egg nog was imbibed and we all stepped into the next bak'tun unscathed. So when is the next doomsday? We hear it's the Hopi's turn at bat.

Zenith Passage on the Island of Java

Java, the largest island of the thousands that make up the nation of Indonesia, sits at 7° south of the equator. That makes its two zenith passages October 13th and March 15th. In October of this year Dr. Barnhart led a small group of intrepid travelers to see if the island's ancient temple complexes were designed to interact with the sun during zenith passage.

Why Java? Because the great city of Angkor in modern day Cambodia, where Dr. Barnhart clearly found evidence of zenith passage interaction, was founded in 802 AD by Jayavarman II, a man who spent his childhood as a captive in the royal courts of Java. In the 8th and 9th centuries two great families



Prambanan, 7th century Hindu temples in Eastern Java

ruled eastern Java and built fantastic Hindu and Buddhist temple complexes, many quite similar in design to the architecture of Angkor.

The Sanjaya family established the Hindu complex of Prambanan and a whole series of surrounding temples just to the east of modern day Yogyakarta. They were likely built in response to the magnificent Buddhist temple built by the Sailendra dynasty which, roughly 40 kms to the west of Yogyakarta. Its ancient name is lost, but today it's called Borobudur. Constructed in the late 700's AD, it was soon after covered in volcanic ash and hidden from the world until its rediscovery in the late 1800's. Though it was lost for 1000 years, it remains the largest Bud-

dhist temple ever built.

A few important clues had led Dr. Barnhart to seek the zenith passage in Java. For one, the work of mark Long had recognized 224 small temples surrounding Prambanan's central compound - the number of days between eastern Java's two zenith passage dates. There was also a wall surround the complex aligned to the place on the horizon that zenith passage sunrise emerges. A final clue at Prambanan was its central temple, dedicated to Shiva, which has a nearly identical design to Angkor Wat's central temple.

The team visited incredible Borobudur early in the week, suspecting its pyramid-like structure would not yield any zenith passage sighting tubes. It was the Hindu temples to the east that held that potential. After hunting through various ancient Hindu monasteries the morning of October 11th, they entered Candi Plaosan Lor hopeful to find the roof holes they sought. But that hope faded as they saw the extreme destruction of the unconsolidated temples and learned about the reconstruction methods. Javanese archaeologists, faced with nothing but rubble piles, decided to use examples from India to reconstruct the temples. In doing so, they recreated the roof tops without the holes. Lotus flower designs with holes in the center as the interior capstones of the temples and roof stones



Lotus flower shaped hole in the interior roof of a temple at Candi Plaosan Lor

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News From the Field

[Santiago Atitlan's Altar in Danger](#)

There is a concern that the current leaders of the main church in Santiago Atitlan, on the shores of Guatemala's Lake Atitlan, may decide to replace its central altar with one that is more purely catholic. The current altar has a wonderful blend of catholic and Tz'utujil Maya iconographic elements. It was carved by members of Santiago Atitlan's community in the 1970's as part of a reconstruction effort to repair earthquake damage. Since that time it has become a symbol of Santiago's proud tradition of syncretic religion, in which both Maya spirituality and Catholicism have co-existed in harmony for decades, perhaps centuries. It has also become a major tourist attraction for visitors from all around the world.

The proposal to replace the altar was brought to the attention of BYU's Dr. Allen Christenson, who wrote his doctoral dissertation about the altar, by concerned community members. Dr. Christenson is now rallying a campaign of letters in support of the altar's importance. Above all, he wants potential advocates to know this is a campaign in honor of the altar and not against the priests who have proposed its removal. The community of Santiago Atitlan saw many years of rancor and suffering during the time of government persecution and have no need of further discord.

If you would like to write a letter in support of the altar, you may send it to Dr. Christenson at:

allen_christenson@byu.edu

Zenith Passage at Java (continued from page 5)

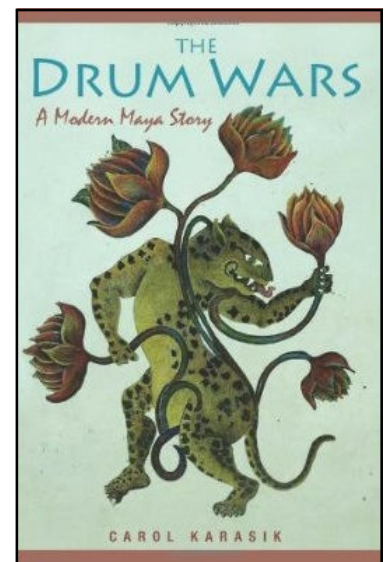
with holes in the rubble piles were clues that the tubes may have once existed, but alas the buildings no longer functioned that way.

Try as they might over the next two days, Dr. Barnhart's team could not find a single temple that was reconstructed with its original stones. 1300 years of earthquakes had taken their toll. Zenith passage came and went without shining a single beam of light into the temples as they had witnessed in Angkor. Were they reconstructed wrong, or was Dr. Barnhart's theory disproven? The data is inconclusive. But hey, good science is about disproving theories, not validating assumptions. Next stop, Thailand and the ancient Khmer temples along the Cambodian border.

[The Drum Wars, A Modern Maya Story](#) by Carol Karasik

MEC's Carol Karasik has published a book about the strange happenings at El Panchan, the place where we lived during our years of field work at Palenque. It's a hilarious and at times very moving story, much of which was taken from real life events in the jungle next to Palenque's ruins.

The Drum Wars is a guide to the ancient Maya world as it collides with the 21st century. Past and present intersect at an offbeat hotel near the famed jungle ruins of Palenque, in Chiapas, Mexico. In this steamy landscape, American archaeologists, besieged Indians, and the dysfunctional hotel owners clash with spiritual seekers awaiting the apocalypse. While tribal drumming reaches out to the galaxies, feuds between the family patriarch and his heirs escalate into all-out battles gripping the entire community. Vying for space and time are a wild assortment of true believers: New Age gurus, fire dancers, Russian psychics, and Black Muslims. Add a few love stories and a few Maya ghosts to this dark comedy and the canvas is complete. The Drum Wars is a real-life adventure full of mysterious, unpredictable events that leave the characters breathless but unbowed on their elusive quest for paradise.



You can pick it up through Amazon.com at this link:

[http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_12?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=the+drum+wars+karasik&prefix=the+drum+war%2Caps%](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_12?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=the+drum+wars+karasik&prefix=the+drum+war%2Caps%26)



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