



ARCHAEO MAYA

The Newsletter of Maya Exploration Center

www.mayaexploration.org

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Greenpeace Threatens the Nazca Lines

In a misguided attempt to catch the attention of the Lima Climate Change Conference in Peru this month, Greenpeace activists laid a gigantic cloth-made message on the desert next to one of the most famous Nazca Lines. The entire Nazca Plateau has been a restricted access area since it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994, but the activists

broke the law and entered anyway. The stunt was pulled on December 8th and by December 10th the Peruvian Government announced their intention to sue Greenpeace for damages.

At dawn on December 8th, 20 Greenpeace activists walked out onto the desert plains and laid down massive yellow letters reading "Time for Change! The Future is Renewable" right next to the geo-



It looks like Photoshop, but its not. This is the real photo.

-glyph called "The Hummingbird". Peru's Deputy Minister of Culture Jaime Castillo said, "It's a true slap in the face at everything Peruvians consider sacred." Greenpeace apologized, stating "Without reservation Greenpeace apologizes to the people of Peru for the offense caused by our recent activity laying a message of hope at the site of the historic Nazca Lines. We are deeply sorry for this."

Peru is suing Greenpeace for violating the laws of their country and Deputy Minister Castillo has accused them of destroying one of the most recognizable lines. However, while drone footage shows that the activists left footprints and disturbed patches on the desert surface, the lines themselves were not touched. It was undeniably a culturally insensitive and illegal act on the part of Greenpeace, but thankfully it did not cause significant damage to one of the world's most wonderful ancient sites.



Greenpeace activists laying the letters down



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Letter from the Director



Sunday marked the 2nd anniversary of the day that the world didn't end - Dec 21, 2012. If we consider the date in the Maya long count, we're actually 12 days past the two year, or "tun" mark. Either way, we're still here and as I had hoped, interest in Maya civilization remains high and now free of doomsday prediction stigma. MEC's Maya travel course programs attendance has increased and I'm in the process of producing a 48-lecture video series exclusively about Mesoamerica.

2014 was a good year for MEC and our scholars, full of humanitarian giving projects and new travel course locations. Thanks especially to our newest team addition, David Hixson, we were able to support indigenous communities in Mexico and Peru. In the spring, the entire MEC community chipped in to financially support an association of modern Maya who held the first ever all Maya epigraphy conference in Ocosingo, Chiapas, Mexico.

In this issue of ArchaeoMaya you'll start off by learning about Greenpeace's embarrassing blunder in relation to Peru's famous Nazca Lines. Inside this issue you'll also read about our latest tour in partnership with Crow Canyon Archaeological Center and our hypothesis that the figure identified as Tlaloc at Caracol is in fact the bird Seven Macaw from the Popol Vuh. In our "News from the Field" section you'll learn about new discoveries in Teotihuacan and Colombia. And as always, you'll see ads for our upcoming programs and current offerings of educational materials.

As the end of 2014 quickly approaches, I look forward both to a break with my family and to the potential 2015 holds for MEC. With the economy improving and our community network ever increasing, I anticipate another exciting and enlightening year. I personally plan to lead three adventures to places I've never been. In early May I will lead a group to the extremely remote mega-cities of the Pre-Classic Maya in the Peten rainforests of Guatemala. We will helicopter in and then go by horseback to the sites of El Mirador, Nakbe and Tintal. Then in early June I and my lovely wife Cassandra will lead a Chautauqua course in a place where my archaeoastronomy interests have been pulling me for years - Ireland. Though not well known, Ireland has mega-lithic astronomical observatories that are over 5000 years old and I'll be getting my group permission to crawl inside them.

After brief stops to my niece's wedding in Washington D.C. and Florida with my children, I'll meet my second Chautauqua course group in La Paz, Bolivia. We will go directly out to Tiwanaku in time for the June Solstice, then to Lake Titicaca, and finally to one of the most remote and bizarre landscapes on the planet—the Salt Flats of Uyuni.

We still have room on all three of my summer adventures, and also on our annual Thanksgiving week trip from Palenque and Copan. Come join us on the path of adventure and discovery in 2015!

Happy Holidays,

Crow Canyon in Remote Ruins of the Peten Rainforest

For a second year in a row, Maya Exploration Center and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center teamed up to bring a group of intrepid travelers to some very remote Maya ruins. The adventure started in Belize, led by MEC's Director Dr. Ed Barnhart and Crow Canyon Explorations Coordinator David Boyle. The first few days were at the relatively accessible sites of Xunantunich in Belize and Tikal in Guatemala. On day three of the trip they visited their first remote site - Uaxactun. Slipping and sliding down the muddy road, the 23kms to Uaxactun from Tikal took just over an hour to traverse. They arrived as the only tourist group that had been there all week and the village folks were happy to see them. They were greeted warmly at the Chiclero Camp and served a delicious local lunch. As an unexpected and special treat, the camp's owner brought her collection of ancient Maya pottery out for everyone to see and hold.



Holding ancient pottery at Uaxactun



Taking photos of original stelae at Siebal

Back in Belize, the group was now ready for their most remote ruins of the trip - Caracol. Caracol was a major force during the Maya Classic Period, boasting to have defeated mighty Tikal at one point. Now its ruins lie far away from any modern community. Accompanied by military convoy over almost 3 hours of dirt roads, the group arrived to the site about 11am in the morning. Most of the city is still under the jungle but a three year project completed in 2005 unearthed and consolidated its largest temple - the Caana. As the stood atop its upper platforms surveying the jungle, they knew it was well worth the arduous journey. As Dr. Barnhart is fond of saying, "they don't call them remote sites because they're easy to get too."

The expedition was not easy, and we at MEC salute those hardy adventurers who made it through. They'll be telling the stories of their adventure to friends and family this Christmas in just a few days, and hopefully telling them how they plan to join us for another Crow Canyon - MEC trip in December 2015, that time to the Guatemalan Highlands.

By then the group had hiked hard for days and it was time for a break on the island of Flores in Lake Peten Itza. After a day of easy boat rides and time to shop for gifts, they were refreshed and ready to get back on the adventure trail. Heading south to the Passion River, they motored up river for an hour and a half to the infrequently visited ruins of Siebal. Again, not another soul was there as the group walked through its monuments and learned about its convoluted history from Dr. Barnhart. The group headed back to Belize the next day, making a stop into the ancient city of Yaxha along the way. Since the reality TV show "Survivor" had filmed there in 2005, much of the site has been consolidated and there are plenty of pyramids to see and climb. As an added bonus, two troops of howler monkey's decided to have a yelling match right over the group's heads in the ruins.



Dr. Barnhart on top of the Caana Temple at Caracol

and hopefully telling them how they plan to join us for another Crow Canyon - MEC trip in December 2015, that time to the Guatemalan Highlands.

2015 Offerings from Maya Exploration Center

The 2015 Mayan Calendar - Mayan Glyphs for Modern Dates

We printed a limited quantity this year, so get yours before they're gone.

To order, log on to:

www.mayan-calendar.com



El Mirador, Nakbe, and Tintal The Pre-Classic Mega-Cities of the Ancient Maya

May 2 - 7, 2015

The adventure of a lifetime! Led by Dr. Edwin Barnhart, this tour will helicopter into the heart of the Peten rainforest, stay in the research center at El Mirador and travel by horseback to the even more remote mega-cities of Nakbe and Tintal. These are the Maya ruins that few people ever get to see.

Pillars of the Classic Maya: Palenque to Copan November 20 - 29, 2015

Led by MEC archaeologists, this Thanksgiving week tour will begin in Palenque and go by land, river and rainforests all the way to Copan in Honduras.

<http://www.mayaexploration.org/tours.php>



Caracol's Tlaloc is Actually Seven Macaw

By Dr. Edwin Barnhart

During my first ever expedition to the Classic Maya city of Caracol this month, I saw what Christopher Powell had mentioned to me years ago – an image of the Popol Vuh character Seven Macaw had been incorrectly identified as Tlaloc, Central Mexico's rain god, at the site. There are actually two depictions of Seven Macaw at Caracol, one of each side of the staircase of Temple B-5. The temple and its staircase-flanking images look across a plaza to Caracol's massive primary temple, the Caana. B-5's prime position means that its art program was directly related to the city's public image.



Left mask stack on Caracol's Temple B-5

The Seven Macaw images are part of a stacked mask art program and sit atop a larger jaguar mask. The reason they were identified as Tlaloc is simple – they have circular eyes, like goggles. However, the elements that argue against their identity as Tlaloc are many more. First of all, Tlaloc's goggle eyes are always right together and touching – these are separated. Second, the eye circles have smaller dots all along their exteriors. A circle ringed with dots is the hieroglyphic symbol "mo", which means Macaw in multiple Maya languages.

If it were just the "mo" eyes I wouldn't be so sure, but it's the creature's mouth that makes its id as Seven Macaw so clear. The mouth has a gum line full of teeth and all but one is a corn kernel. The mouth also slumps to the left, as if broken. This is a dead

ringer for the story of Seven Macaw in the Popol Vuh! In short – the hero twins found Seven Macaw sitting atop the World Tree with jeweled teeth and proclaiming he was the Sun. They didn't like his false boasting so they shot him out of the tree with their blowguns, breaking his jaw in the process. To finish him off they had an old couple pose as travelling dentists and replaced his teeth with corn kernels. Seven Macaw was no longer beautiful and he couldn't chew properly, so he died of hunger and shame.



Close up of the Seven Macaw image on Temple B-5

I'm convinced that the image on B-5 is Seven Macaw, but what is this cautionary tale against false pride and aggrandizing one's self doing on the front of a Maya king's temple? I believe the time at which it was commissioned may provide the answer. Hieroglyphic texts and architectural styles at Caracol both indicate that it lived through the Classic Period and into the Terminal Classic for a while. The end of the Classic Period took with it the age of despotic kings and councils led the new Maya cities. The Terminal Classic cities of the Yucatan stopped displaying kings on public stelae and went back to the Pre-Classic tradition of flanking temple stairs with supernatural masks. They also began depicting simple Maya thatch houses on the facades of temples, apparently conveying a message something like "we are just like you." So, considering those were the Terminal Classic messages in Yucatan, what was Seven Macaw doing on a Terminal Classic building at Caracol? His presence may mean that Caracol's elite had learned his message and a promise that they would no longer rule with false pride. If so it a good attempt, but not enough. Caracol was soon after abandoned, left to be swallowed up by the jungle, forgotten for 1000 years.

News From the Field

Teotihuacan's Imported Masks

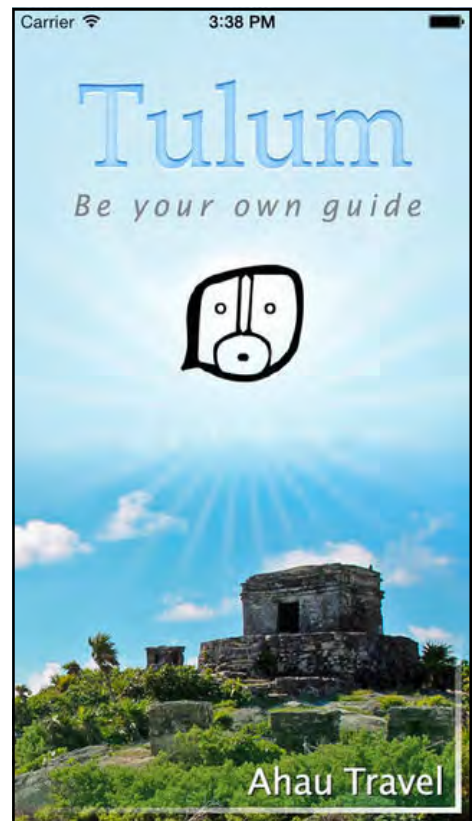
A new analysis technique has revealed that most of Teotihuacan's hundreds of funerary masks were not manufactured there. Instead, evidence indicates they were produced in Puebla, likely the ancient city of Cholula. About 150 masks from museum collections around the world were studied with an analytical scanning electron microscope. The study not only revealed their manufacture origin, but also discovered that many masks thought to be made of jadeite were in fact made of softer stones like serpentine and polished quartz. Timothy Rose, a geologist at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. conducted the study and presented the results at a Baltimore conference in November.

Ancient Village Found in Colombia

A 12-acre village site dating back to 900 BC has been discovered in the highlands of central Colombia. It was found just southwest of Bogota when energy company EPM was starting to construct a new energy network. Before this find, archaeologists believed that the early cultures of the Colombian highlands were nomadic. This large village and the more than 20 metric tons of artifacts recovered from within it completely dismiss that theory. According to the involved archaeologists, the village was inhabited from 900 BC all the way until Spanish contact in the 1500's AD.

Tulum – Be Your Own Guide

It's been one year since Dr. Barnhart's iPhone app "Tulum - Be Your Own Guide" went on sale through Apple's online Appstore and we're happy to report its sold over 1000 copies! It's the first of its kind and has the potential to revolutionize how people visit archaeological sites. It works somewhat like a museum audio tour, but its gps navigation capabilities allow its users to go anywhere in the site in any order. The "what is that" function allows them to point their phone at any building to receive information about it. The "take me there" function allows them to choose from a list of site features and to be guided there. As the user walks toward their destination, a navigation arrow keeps them on course and the distance in meters reduces. Once they arrive, information is provided in both text and audio file. Photos confirm they're in the right place.



"Tulum - Be Your Own Guide" is not only a self-guiding tour tool, but it's also the most complete source of Tulum information ever compiled. The site's chronology, temples, and excavations history are all available in both text and audio accompanied by many photos and drawings. Even if one has no plans to visit Tulum, it stands alone as a scholarly publication about the site.

It's the first app of its kind, but hopefully not the last. Plans to make more "Be Your Own Guide" apps are already being drafted by Dr. Barnhart, but he's looking for more reviews and constructive criticism to improve this first one. Please download it from the Apple Appstore and give him your feedback.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tulum-be-your-own-guide/id731412870?mt=8>



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