A Day in Ancient Tikal
Jack C. Warner

We just walked past a “Beware of Crocodile” sign in Spanish and English. Our guide warns of poisonous snakes and insects. Raccoon-like long tailed coti scamper across the trail. Colorful tropical birds and howler monkeys flitter about the towering trees—their voices break the silence of the windless and clinging humid air. It is hot, nearly 100° F, in this tropical Peten jungle of the Guatemalan lowlands. The massive buttress root structures of the legendary Maya ceiba “world tree” are a frequent sight. Just now, an acrobatic spider monkey stretches his long limbs as he moves through the branches of a low tree. Our group follows our Maya guide along the trail, once an ancient Maya road. Suddenly, through a gap in the jungle trees—there it is! The unmistakable iconic form of the most famous structure of the Classic Maya and “the landmark of Guatemala to the world”. Tikal’s Temple of the Great Jaguar (Temple I). (1, 5)

The Maya civilization had its origins about 3,000 years ago. It was the largest and most sophisticated ancient civilization to arise in the Western Hemisphere. They developed their own writing system and had expertise in construction, art, astronomy, and mathematics. The first lowland documented date is 292 AD, on stela 29 found in Tikal. The height of the Maya civilization is referred to by Maya archaeologists as the “Classic Period”, dated as 200-900 AD. The Maya never had a central political system. They were divided into over 60 city-states, each ruled by a „holy lord”. During this period Tikal, as a leading city-state, influenced much of the Maya region politically, artistically, economically, and militarily. Tikal’s greatest era was the period following 682 AD with the rise to power of its greatest king, Jasaw Chan K’awill. At its peak the Tikal metro area covered 60 sq km and had a population estimated by some archaeologists as over 100,000. Its influence extended as far as Coba in the Yucatan, almost 400 km north. Its power declined by the late 800’s AD, along with most of the other southern lowland Maya city-states. The last recorded date on a stela in Tikal is 869 AD. (1, 2, 3, 4, 6)

The Maya people did not abandon the area; they abandoned the urban life and its political-religious structure. A smaller population continued to live a hunter, gatherer, and small-scale farming lifestyle. Today over half of Guatemala’s modern population is Maya. (5)

Tikal was “rediscovered” by the modern world in 1848. Today Tikal is a Guatemalan National Park and a UNESCO World Heritage site. It protects 576 sq km of biological preserve and over 3,000 Maya structures on 16 sq km. The University of Pennsylvania conducted a major project from 1956-69 to uncover and restore many important parts of the city, long buried by the Peten jungle. Archaeological fieldwork led by the Guatemalan Institute of Archaeology (IDAEH) continues to this day. (1, 6) Now Tikal is considered the top international tourist destination in Guatemala. (Indeed, Tikal’s Temple of the Great Jaguar is the image on Guatemala vehicle license plates.)
My day at Tikal was one of the most fascinating and moving of my entire archaeological experience. In this short newsletter piece I can only summarize the highlights:

One of the two Group Q flat top pyramids with commemorative stelae (771 AD)

My wife, Mary, and I met our Tikal National Park expert guide and trained archaeologist, Noah, at the park visitor center. Using a large model of the archaeological part of the park, he gave us a background talk about the Park and the Maya. We then proceeded on a jungle hike that was to last most of the day.

Our first visit was to a twin pyramid complex called Group Q, built in 771 AD to commemorate the end of a 20-year Maya calendar cycle, called a Katun. The 20-year Katun cycle was an important rhythm of Maya life and was often commemorated in architecture. Small stelae were erected to commemorate each 5-year period. There are 9 Tikal twin pyramid complexes commemorating Katun. All contain 2 flat top pyramids, a palace, and a shrine. (1, 3)

Our next stop was the stunning Grand Plaza—the core of Tikal. The Grand Plaza is in the rectangular shape of, and somewhat larger than, an American football field. On the north long side, the massive stone North Acropolis complex borders it. This complex was built in over a 1,000-year period. Many of the rulers of Tikal were interred here. On the long south side, is another large complex built of stone, the Central Acropolis. This has several residential palaces and administrative offices. (1) Throughout the Grand Plaza are many commemorative stelae and a Maya ball court. The Grand Plaza is still a sacred place for some modern Maya, and the government allows rituals to be held in some clearly visible places in the Plaza. Visitors are allowed to wander around this area, but are not allowed to climb the pyramids. We climbed around much of the Central Acropolis. The views and the feelings while wandering this beautiful “lost city” are very memorable yet.

Part of the North Acropolis, viewed from high on the Central Acropolis

The two iconic, steep, roof-combed Maya pyramids that face each other on the two short sides of the Grand Plaza dominate the eye. The Temple of the Great Jaguar (Temple I) is the largest and best known. It is on the east side. Indeed, its image is often used as an icon for the entire Maya Civilization. This pyramid was completed around 740-750 AD. Under the pyramid is the tomb of Jasaw Chan K’awil, who was the king that led Tikal into its greatest era. He was entombed here in 734 AD. The tomb contained many interesting and artistic grave offerings. The pyramid is 154 ft high. The shrine at the top has three rooms, each behind the other. The roofcomb was once a large, colorful image of the enthroned king. Our guide, Noah, compared it to a very large modern roadside billboard. (1, 3)
Temple of Masks on the west side of the Grand Plaza, with Mary and a tour group

Facing The Temple of the Great Jaguar on the west side of the Great Plaza is the Temple of the Masks (Temple II). It was dedicated to Lady 12 Baby Macaws (Lachan Unen Mo’), Jasaw Chan Kawi’s Queen, and was built during his reign. It is one of the outstanding tributes to a woman in the entire ancient world. The summit shrine also has 3 rooms and a large roof comb. (1, 3, 5, 6)

Wandering at leisure among this fascinating Grand Plaza complex and contemplating this past civilization is truly a memorable experience.

Noah next led us on an uphill track through dense jungle with massive unexcavated ruins next to the path. All of a sudden, the very impressive Temple V loomed ahead. This is thought to be the first temple pyramid in Tikal. A ruler known as Animal Skull constructed it about 600 AD. He was not entombed here as his grave was found in the North Acropolis. At 187 ft high it is the 2nd tallest in Tikal.

Its clean appearance is due to a recent Spanish archaeological project.

One of the Temples in the Plaza of the Seven Temples

While pyramids are the “headline story” at Tikal, there are several monumental architectural complexes that take different forms. The Plaza of the Seven Temples is a large rectangular plaza surrounded by 7 similar temples and 2 palaces. This is the only place known with triple Maya ball courts. (1) It was very pleasant to sit in the shade and breeze here and listen to Noah tell us of the ancient Maya, with the sounds of the jungle as a background.

Lost World Pyramid

Nearby is the Lost World complex. This is the oldest major area in Tikal, dating to the very early AD Preclassic Period. The Lost World Pyramid is 98 ft high and has a flat top that some archaeologists believe was an astronomical observatory. In its era it was the largest structure in the Mayan world. (1,3)
The Temple of the Two Headed Snake from a National Park rest area

Our last tour stop was a refreshing rest area next to the tallest Pyramid (at 230 ft) in Tikal, the Temple of the Two Headed Snake (Temple IV). It was built in honor of the son of the ruler who built Temples I & II in the Great Plaza. The door that leads to the shrine on the top has a date of 741 AD. It is now the tallest remaining ancient structure in all of Mesoamerica. (1, 3)

After hours walking in the heat, humidity, and tropical sun, the Guatemalan National Park Service is to be complemented for having very reasonably priced ice-cold beer and soft drinks at this point furthest from the Visitor Center.

Tikal is a most fascinating world-class archaeological park to visit.

References
1. Tikal-Mapa del Parque, Merca Mapas de Guatemala, info@mapasdeguaatemala.com
3. Tikal, wikipedia.com, 2013


All photos are the property of Jack and Mary Warner

June General Meeting: June 9th at DMNS in Ricketson auditorium at 7 PM.

Speaker: Michele L. Koons, PhD, Curator of Archaeology at DMNS

Abstract: This talk will explore the Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed exhibit currently on display at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. The lecture will discuss the planning and design process of exhibit and the role that DMNS played. Through a virtual tour, we will explore many aspects of the world of the ancient Maya and dive deeper into some of the themes and topics covered in the exhibition.

Bio: Michele Koons, PhD, is Curator of Archaeology in the Anthropology Department at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and lead curator for the Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed exhibit. Michele holds degrees from Harvard University (Ph.D.), the University of Denver (M.A.) and the University of Pittsburgh (B.A). She specializes in South American archaeology, ancient complex societies, archaeology of desert environments, geophysical/ remote sensing archaeology, and ceramic analysis.

May 6, 2014 DC-CAS Board met at Metro State University Denver Campus March 4, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Jack Warner

Attending were Jack Warner, Linda Sand, Preston Niesen, Teresa Weedin, Anne Winslow, Craig Baniester, Kathy Barzen, Rosalie Hewins, Jack Hewins, Kendra Elrod, Ken Andresen and Bob Rushforth.

Vice President/Speakers (Linda S) announced the May lecturer will be Dr Scott Ortman. Michelle Koons, curator of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science Maya Exhibit will be the guest speaker in June. There will be no July general meeting. Guest speakers are lined up through October.

Scientific (Jack W for Neil H) announced the schedule for upcoming field and lab events. It was noted this information was not available for inclusion in the May APB but will be available in the June issue of APB. The survey at Ken Caryl Ranch will begin May 17. Curation at the repository in Castle Rock will continue May 24. Neil H will host the lithic analysis session at his house May 27/28. The Blackfoot site excavation will begin May 30 for the season. Anyone interested in volunteering for these events contact Neil H.
**Membership** (Rosalie H) reported she had conducted a membership audit with CAS. Membership numbers are down from last year at 123 individuals and 162 members including family memberships. Rosalie reminded DC-CAS membership dues have been switched to the prorated system as of March.

The board discussed ideas regarding increasing membership and meeting attendance. It was suggested the group signs up and utilizes the social site Meetup to reach out to the local community. **Motion was raised to begin a six-month trial at Meetup with Jon Kent and Teresa Weedin setting up the DC-CAS profile on the website. Motion to invest in the six-month trial with Meetup was passed.**

Another suggestion was brought up to encourage members and nonmembers alike to attend the monthly meeting at Annies Café at 5:15 PM for dinner and to meet the guest speaker prior to the general meeting.

Finally the board agreed to open the Ricketson auditorium at 6:30 PM for general meeting attendees to take part of a Meet and Greet session prior to the meeting as well as bring in additional information or objects for attendees to view and discuss while the auditorium is open. It was noted that the auditorium will need to be cleared by 8:50 PM.

**CO-CAS** (Teresa W) announced the next quarterly meeting will be held in Montrose. The previous meeting in Niwot went well.

**PAAC** (Anne W) reported the PAAC course being held in Denver is Lithics and is currently underway. The survey course that is also offered through PAAC will be held at Pawnee National Grasslands. Anyone who is interested in the survey needs to sign up by May 19 and will need to contact Kevin Black directly.

**Treasurer** (Preston N) noted the amount in Total Liabilities and Funds item in the May APB is incorrect, the amount should be $13,252, not $13,752. It was also noted KCR is not a Fund. The task to request permission from Richard and Audrey Marlar to transfer funds from the Lab/Library Space to the Scientific Applications Fund has been completed. The transfer has been done.

**Events** (Teresa W) announced the upcoming trip to Sand Creek will not be going to Calhan due to the distance from Sand Creek and Calhan. There are a few seats available for anyone who is interested in attending this trip. The upcoming Chaco Canyon field trip taking place May 17-25 has just a few open slots left. Finally the field trip scheduled late June to the San Luis Valley is being finalized, more information will be posted soon.

**Library** (Teresa W) reported the library plans will be developed over the summer.

**eAPB** (Team) reported the May issue of APB has been posted and members have been notified. The Board members thanked the APB team for their work in gathering the APB articles and getting them published.

**WEB** (Craig B) announced the agreement with iContact is available for DC-CAS announcements. Jack W thanked Craig B for his diligence and for posting more information on the DC-CAS website.

**Old Business:** The April Board minutes have been approved.

**New Business:** Jon K raised an issue regarding the Board meeting locale for the June 6 Board meeting. He will follow up with the board on next month’s meeting location as soon as a meeting place is confirmed.

Jack W announced Todd McMahon will make an announcement at Monday’s General Meeting about an educator’s event and volunteer opportunity at History Colorado and Ken Caryl Ranch.

Michele Koons from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science Maya exhibit has offered a personal tour open to CAS members of the Maya exhibit in July 18th. More information will be posted as plans develop.

The next DC-CAS Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 3, location will be determined soon.

The DC-CAS Board meeting was adjourned by Jack W at 8:07 PM. **Kendra Elrod, Secretary**

**GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

The DC-CAS General Meeting was held at the Ricketson Auditorium at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science May 12, 2014. Approximately 40 people attended. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Jack Warner.

Jack relayed the plans discussed at the DC-CAS Board meeting regarding ideas on how to boost membership and meeting attendance. He reported the Auditorium will be open at 6:30 PM for a social meet and greet session before the meeting and will remain open through 8:50 PM for anyone who would like to remain for more socializing. Jack also announced beginning in June there will be a sort of ‘show and tell’ opportunity for attendees to view as part of the general meeting social gathering.

Membership numbers have been decreasing. Jack announced ideas on how to increase interest and therefore we will start a ‘mentor recruiting' membership drive where DC-CAS members will reach out to personal acquaintances who have interests in archaeology. The program will involve bringing in and walking in the new recruits through DC-CAS activities.

Jack, for Anne Winslow reported the current PAAC course being taught in Denver is ending soon. The Pawnee National Grasslands field survey begins soon.
Anyone interested must sign up by May 18 and needs to contact Kevin Black at History Colorado.

Teresa Weedin reported the Sand Creek field trip from last weekend was well attended. The next field trip to Chaco Canyon scheduled May 17-25 has three slots open.

Neil Hauser ran through the list of upcoming field opportunities for CAS members. The survey at Ken Caryl Ranch begins this weekend, May 17. Curation in Castle Rock will continue May 24. Artifact analysis sessions will continue this month as well. Finally Blackfoot Cave site excavations will begin May 30 for the season.

A Special Announcement was made by Todd McMahon from History Colorado regarding ‘Project Archaeology’, a program dedicated to educating the educators about archaeology. For anyone interested in volunteering there are two opportunities, a teacher's workshop will be held at History Colorado July 28-29 and educators attending this workshop will be taken on a field trip to Ken Caryl Ranch where the educators will interact with archaeological advocates to learn more. Anyone interested in volunteering for the workshop at History Colorado or volunteering for the field trip to interact with the educators need to contact Todd McMahon for the field session or Dani Hoefer at History Colorado by June 15.

Linda Sand relayed the upcoming speaker lineup. The June speaker will be Michele Koons, Curator of Archaeology at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Michele has also offered to hold a tour of the Maya Exhibit in July open to DC-CAS. More details will be announced soon. There will be no general meeting in July. August will be the traditional joint meeting with the Egyptian Study Society.

Linda continued by introducing guest speaker of the meeting Dr Scott Ortman. Dr Ortman began his lecture titled ‘What the Pueblos Can Teach Us About Economic Growth.

Following the conclusion of Dr Ortman's lecture Jack thanked Dr Ortman for his brilliant presentation.

Jack continued the business portion of the general meeting. Jack announced the May issue of APB has been published and the new email system has had a successful implementation. He thanked the APB team for their work. Jack also noted if anyone who is supposed to receive the APB notice and did not should check the Denver CAS website.

Old Business: April General Meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

New Business: No new business was brought up

Jack adjourned the DC-CAS General Meeting at 8:37 PM.

Submitted by Kendra Elrod, Secretary

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Blackfoot Cave Site Open House

**When:** June 28, 2014

**Where:** Meet at 9 am at the Franktown Fire department parking lot (SW corner of CO 83, Parker Rd, and CO 86)

We will host visitors to the site from 9 am until noon on 28 June. We will have some of the better artifacts found at the site on display at the site. We have several of the most productive excavation grids open and will show where we will be working this year as we concentrate on investigating a possible paleo period activity discovered last year. We will discuss the history of the site and some of the things we have learned. The analysis of the artifacts is just starting.

It is about a 10 mile drive from Franktown to the site. There is room for a fair number of cars but we will car-pool depending on the number of participants. Contact Neil Hauser for questions: hauserndigger@gmail.com

Lamb Spring Archaeological Preserve Talks & Tours

-- Learn about the Paleo-Indian and Columbian mammoth archaeological site in the SW Denver Metro area. Talks and tours are scheduled on Saturdays 5/3, 6/7, 7/19, 8/2, 9/6. 10/4 from 9:30 AM-- 12:30 PM. Contact Laura at laker@metcalfarchaeology.com for reservations. More information is on www.lambspring.org.

DMNS Maya Exhibit on Friday, July 18th

Michele Koons has graciously consented to guide a CAS group through the DMNS Maya Exhibit on Friday, July 18th. Participants will need to obtain tickets for the 10:30 am entrance. They will NOT be specially discounted for this tour.

More details on max number of participants, meeting location, etc. later. Since this tour request originated with the State CAS Education Committee, those members will be first on the list. Contact Linda Sand at llsand@comcast.net for questions.

Nominations for Chapter, Ivol Hagar, and C.T. Hurst awards are being solicited by the State Awards Committee. The person to contact with nominations is Jack Warner at jakeagle@aol.com.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION or RENEWAL
Denver Chapter/Colorado Archaeological Society
Please check the address label on your APB to determine when your membership expires.

- Application or Renewal

Membership Type
- Individual $30.00
- Individual w/o SW Lore $22.00
- Family $45.00
- Family w/o SW Lore $35.00
- Student (include copy of ID) $16.00
- Current State CAS Life member or Full member of another chapter $14.00. Primary chap. ____________

Contributions to these funds:
- General $_____
- Swallow Site $_____
- Scholarship fund $_____

TOTAL of membership and contributions $___________

Name(s)____________________ _______________________
Address____________________________________________
City________________ State______ Zip____________
Phone #_____________________________________________
Email_____________________________________________

- Exclude my/our contact information from printed roster

Note: Payment of dues for renewal is considered reaffirmation of your consent to the CAS Code of Ethics.

Make checks payable to: Denver Chapter/CAS
Mail to: Denver Chapter/CAS, P.O. Box 100190
        Denver, CO 80250-0190

DC/CAS
April, 2014 Financial Report
Prepared by Preston Niesen, Treasurer

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June/July, 2014