

Idaho State University
Institute of Mesoamerican Research
Archaeological Field School

**The Mirador Basin: El Mirador,
Peten, Guatemala**

2nd Course Session
June 18- July 30, 2009

Dr. Richard D. Hansen, Ph.D.
Project Director

The Idaho State University Department of Anthropology is offering an Archaeological Field School experience in the remote Maya sites of the Mirador Basin in the northern department of Peten, Guatemala. The research encompasses one of the most exciting research projects on the ancient Maya, and is focusing on the origins, incipient dynamics, and collapse of Preclassic Maya civilization via a variety of multidisciplinary research endeavors. The Mirador Basin is home to one of the last tracts of pristine tropical forest left in Central America, and shelters dozens of ancient Maya cities dating to centuries prior to the time of Christ, many of which are now being explored and excavated for the first time. The ISU field school, under the direction of Dr. Richard Hansen, will provide a unique opportunity in the research and exploration in the largest ancient Maya cities of El Mirador, Tintal, and Nakbe. These sites are renowned for having the largest and earliest structures ever constructed by the Maya, and offers the student the unique opportunity to be on the cutting edge in the application of innovative conservation measures, sophisticated electronic technology, excavation and research strategies and methodologies, and theoretical considerations relative to the origins and demise of complex societies. Experts and scholars from more than 38 universities and research institutions will provide an intellectual backdrop for the research.

Students will have the opportunity to hike into the Basin from a small village, providing unique perceptions of the variations of the tropical flora, fauna, and archaeological sites in the Basin. The primary base will be the site of El Mirador and students will be assigned specific excavation projects of theoretical and methodological interests. These projects will range from test pits in plazas and salvage of looters trenches to providing assistance in excavations of residence structures and monumental architecture dating to the Middle and Late Preclassic periods of Maya history (ca. 800 B.C.- A.D. 150). In some cases, architecture dating to the Late Classic period (A.D. 600-900) may be examined. Students will gain an understanding of excavation strategies, ceramic collection and recognition, lithics, bone and shell collection, and chronometric methods in addition to a basic understanding of Maya architectural art, archaeology, and tropical forest ecology. Students interested in tropical botany and biology will have an opportunity to work with leading experts in various fields ranging from botanical

inventories to feline and avian studies. A basic understanding of mapping using sophisticated technology in tropical forests will be obtained, and the opportunity to observe new mapping technologies, radar instrumentation, and remote sensing technology will be available. Additional knowledge relevant to the excavation, stabilization, consolidation, and conservation of Preclassic Maya art and architecture will be obtained from specialists and experts working on site.

After a rigorous 6 week training sessions, students are encouraged to examine the project laboratory in Guatemala City while attending a conference on Maya Tombs the 19th, 20th, and 21st. Then you will fly Monday morning to Flores. You will visit Tikal on the 22nd and then Tuesday off to the jungle.

About the director.....

**Idaho State University
and
The Foundation for Anthropological Research &
Environmental Studies (FARES) (02-08)
Richard D. Hansen, Ph.D.**

Dr. Richard D. Hansen is a specialist on the early Maya and is the Director of the Mirador Basin Project in northern Guatemala leading archaeological research and scientific studies for over 28 years.. He is currently Executive Senior Scientist for the newly formed Institute for Mesoamerican Research (Anthropology) at Idaho State University. He is the founder and president of the Foundation for Anthropological Research and Environmental Studies (FARES), a non-profit scientific research institution based in Idaho. He graduated with a Ph.D. in Archaeology from UCLA in January 1992. He previously held a double major B.S. degree in Spanish and Archaeology from Brigham Young University in 1978, and a M.S. degree in Anthropology in 1984. While a Ph.D. student at UCLA, he was :

- selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Graduate Fellow
- Selected as a Jacob Javits Fellow from all college and university students throughout the U.S. in the arts, humanities, and social sciences for five years.
- Selected as the UCLA Distinguished Scholar in 1988
- named a Fulbright Scholar in 1990,
- selected as the UCLA Outstanding Graduate Student in 1991
- selected as the UCLA Chancellor's Marshall in 1992

Since he graduated, he has been a scientific researcher at the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics at UCLA for 12 years, and was awarded the National Order of the Cultural Patrimony of Guatemala by Guatemalan President Oscar Berger in the National Palace of Guatemala in December 2005.

He has published 89 papers and book chapters in scientific and popular publications and has presented more than 184 professional papers in scientific symposia throughout the world. He has conducted and/or directed archaeological research in Israel, the U.S. Great Basin, the U.S. Southwest, and Central America. Some of his most recent publications include:

Hansen, Richard D., Wayne K. Howell, and Stanley P. Guenter

2008 *Forgotten Structures, Haunted Houses, and Occupied Hearts: Ancient Perspectives and Contemporary Interpretations of Abandoned Sites and Buildings in the*

Mirador Basin, Guatemala. In *Ruins of the Past: The Use and Perception of Abandoned Structures in the Maya Lowlands*, edited by Travis W. Stanton and Aline Magnoni, pp. 25-64. University Press of Colorado, Boulder.

Castañeda, César and **Richard D. Hansen**

2007 Estudios Botánicos en la Cuenca Mirador: Desarrollo de Vegetación y su Significado Cultural. In *XX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, edited by Juan Pedro Laporte, Barbara Arroyo, and Hector E. Mejia, pp. 111-120. Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Asociación Tikal, Fundación Arqueológica del Nuevo Mundo.

Hansen, Richard D.

2007 Mapping the Ancient Cities and the Environmental Features of the Mirador Basin: Exploration and New Technology in the Cradle of Maya Civilization. Paper presented at the International Map Collectors Society, IMCoS, Universidad de Francisco Marroquin, Guatemala City Feb 5, 2007
<http://newmedia.ufm.edu/pagina.asp?nom=hansenmiradorbasin>

Hansen, Richard D., Edgar Suyuc-Ley, Abel Morales, Carlos Morales, Thomas Schreiner, Enrique Hernandez, and Douglas Mauricio

2007 La Cuenca Mirador: Avances de la Investigación y Conservación del Estado Kan en los períodos Preclásico y Clásico. In *XX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, edited by Juan Pedro Laporte, Barbara Arroyo, and Hector E. Mejia, pp. 349-362. Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Asociación Tikal, Fundación Arqueológica del Nuevo Mundo, Guatemala City.

Wahl, David, Roger Byrne, Thomas Schreiner, and **Richard Hansen**

2007 Palaeolimnological Evidence of late-Holocene Settlement and Abandonment in the Mirador Basin, Peten, Guatemala, *The Holocene* 17 (6):813-820. Sage Publications. (<http://hol.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/17/6/813>)

Wahl, David, Thomas Schreiner, Roger Byrne, and **Richard Hansen**

2007A Paleoeological Record from a Late Classic Maya Reservoir in the North Peten. *Latin American Antiquity*, 18(2): 212-222. Society for American Archaeology.

Hansen, Richard D., Beatriz Balcarcel, Edgar Suyuc, Hector E. Mejia, Enrique Hernandez, Gendry Valle, Stanley P. Guenter, and Shannon Novak

2006 Investigaciones arqueológicas en el sitio Tintal, Peten. In *XIX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, edited by Juan Pedro Laporte, Barbara Arroyo, Hector E. Mejia, pp. 683-694. Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Asociación Tikal, Fundación Arqueológica del Nuevo Mundo.

Hansen, Richard D., Edgar Suyuc, Adriana Linares, Carlos Morales Aguilar, Beatriz Balcarcel, Francisco Lopez, Antonieta Cajas, Abel Morales Lopez, Enrique Monterroso Tun, Enrique Monterroso Rosado, Carolina Castellanos, Lilian de Zea, Adelzo Pozuelos, David Wahl, and Thomas Schreiner.

2006 Investigaciones en la zona cultural Mirador Peten. In *XIX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, edited by Juan Pedro Laporte, Barbara Arroyo, Hector E. Mejia, pp. 867-876. Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Asociación Tikal, Fundación Arqueológica del Nuevo Mundo.

Wahl, David, Roger Byrne, Thomas Schreiner, **Richard Hansen**

2006 Holocene vegetation change in the northern Peten and its implications for Maya prehistory. *Quaternary Research*, 65:380-389. University of Washington. (www.sciencedirect.com; www.elsevier.com/locate/yqres)

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2005 Perspectives on Olmec-Maya Interaction in the Middle Formative Period. In *New Perspectives on Formative Mesoamerican Cultures*, edited by T.G. Powis, pp. 51-72. BAR International Series 1377, Oxford, England.

2004 El Mirador, Guatemala: El Apogeo del Preclásico en el Área Maya. In *Arqueología Mexicana*, Vol. XI, No. 66, pp. 28-33.

Hansen, Richard D., and Stanley P. Guenter

2005 Early Social Complexity and Kingship in the Mirador Basin. In *Lords of Creation: The Origins of Sacred Maya Kingship*, edited by Virginia M. Fields and Dorie Reents-Budet, pp. 60-61. Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Scala Publishers.

Suyuc, Edgar and **Richard D. Hansen**

2003 Significado de la Cuenca Mirador. *Arqueología Guatemalteca*, Year (Año) 1, No. 1, pp. 33-41.

Hansen, Richard D., Steven Bozarth, John Jacob, David Wahl, and Thomas Schreiner

2002 Climatic and Environmental Variability in the Rise of Maya Civilization: A Preliminary Perspective from Northern Peten. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 13 (2002): 273-295. Cambridge University Press.

Clark, John E., and **Richard D. Hansen**

2001 The Architecture of Early Kingship and the Origins of the Mesoamerican Royal Court. *The Royal Courts of the Ancient Maya*, Vol 2: *Data and Case Studies*, edited by T. Inomata and S. D. Houston, pp. 1-45. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.

Hansen, Richard D.

2001a Marvels of the Ancient Maya, Guatemala: The Past Engages the Future. *Archaeology*, September/October 2001, pp. 51-58.

2001b The First Cities- The Beginnings of Urbanization and State Formation in the Maya Lowlands. In *Maya: Divine Kings of the Rain Forest*, edited by Nikolai Grube, pp. 50-65. Konemann Press, Verlag, Germany.

2000 Ideología y Arquitectura: Poder y Dinámicas Culturales de los Mayas del Período Preclásico en las Tierras Bajas. *Arquitectura e ideología de los antiguos mayas: Memoria de la Segunda Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, edited by Silvia Trejo, pp. 73-108. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Consejo Nacional Cultura y Artes. Mexico.

1998 Continuity and Disjunction: The Preclassic Antecedents of Classic Architecture. *Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture*, edited by S. Houston, pp. 49-122. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Hansen has conducted research in the remote rainforests of northern Guatemala since 1978 and is the director of the Mirador Basin Project which is a long-term, multi-disciplinary investigation of a vast unexplored area of the northern Peten. This on-going project represents a comprehensive scientific study of the ancient Maya, and currently involves scholars from 38 universities and research institutions from throughout the world. As a project, his team has currently published 176 scientific papers, abstracts, and books, and 374 technical reports and scientific presentations. Hansen's studies have identified some of the largest and earliest ancient cities in Central America, and his work has been an important contribution to the developmental history of Maya civilization. His work has recently been featured in film documentaries on the Learning Channel, the Discovery Channel, ABC's 20/20, 60 Minutes Australia, ABC's Good Morning America, ABC's Primetime Live, CNN Global Challenges, The History Channel, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) of London, and a National Geographic special entitled *Dawn of the Maya*. He has been a consultant for many national and international television and major motion picture networks. He is currently involved in the investigation and conservation of a preserve system in northern Guatemala with the government of Guatemala, the U.S. Dept. of Interior, Global Heritage Fund, Foundation for Free Expression, Fundación del Patrimonio Cultural y Natural Maya (PACUNAM), Asociación del Patrimonio Natural y Cultural de Guatemala (APANAC), and many other private and governmental institutions. He and his wife, Jody, live with their children in Idaho and Guatemala.