



School of Historical and European Studies



Archaeology Program

Professor Peter Mathews

Professor

Qualifications

BA(Hons) in Archaeology *Calgary*, MPhil, PhD *Yale*

Professor Peter Mathews joined the Archaeology Program in 1999 as an ARC Senior Research Fellow. He has also taught at Harvard University, the University of Calgary, and the University of Copenhagen. He was awarded a MacArthur Prize Fellowship in 1984, and in 2002 was elected a Fellow of the Academy of the Humanities in Australia.

Research interests: Maya and Mesoamerican archaeology; Maya hieroglyphic writing; the archaeology of complex societies; writing systems.

Research Projects

Proyecto Arqueológico Naachtun (the Naachtun Archaeological Project)

Naachtun is a major Maya site in the far north of Guatemala, Central America. One of the few large sites to survive the social and political disruption in the region shortly after the time of Christ, Naachtun went on to become the capital of a Classic Maya kingdom between AD 250 and 850. The site was swept up by the power politics of that time: it was situated directly between the two 'superpowers' of the Classic Maya world, Tikal and Calakmul. Although there are indications that Naachtun was conquered by Tikal in the 5th century, the kingdom appears to have lasted until the end of the Classic period some 400 years later. The Proyecto Arqueológico Naachtun is investigating the process by which the Naachtun kingdom survived the political turmoil of the centuries around the time of Christ (the so-called Late Preclassic-Classical transition as well as how it managed to negotiate its survival during the Classic period.

This project has been funded by a large grant from Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (2003-2006) and smaller grants from La Trobe University and Canadian private and corporate donors.

Who's Who in the Classic Maya World

This project is one which documents the numerous historical individuals recorded in ancient Maya hieroglyphic texts and art. Most are from the Maya Classic period (AD 250-900), from sites in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras. References to several thousand individuals have survived, from powerful kings to lowly captives. In the case of some individuals there are almost 100 references and over a dozen portraits, and so we can reconstruct fairly detailed biographies. In other cases we have just one or two fleeting references—a poignant reference to a captive about to be sacrificed, for example. The Who's Who project was commissioned by a major foundation involved in funding research into ancient Mesoamerica, the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (FAMSI). (www.famsi.org)

A Dictionary of Maya Hieroglyphs

This project, also commissioned by FAMSI, is a long-term project to record the words recorded in ancient Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. Several thousand Maya texts have survived, and increasingly over the past 50 years we have been able to decipher them, to the point where nowadays on average over 90% of inscriptions can be 'read' in ancient Mayan and translated. The Dictionary will list the attested words and provide commentary on their occurrences and dating, variation in hieroglyphic spellings, and use in phrases and clauses, as well as relating the hieroglyphic words to cognate forms in modern Mayan languages, some two dozen of which are still spoken in the Mayas' traditional homeland.

Recent Publications

2004

Workbook for the Maya Hieroglyph Weekend, October 2-3, 2004. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland State University.

2001

Gold from the Americas. in: Gold and Civilisation (pp. 199-207) Canberra: The National Museum of Australia.

Notes on the Inscriptions on the back of Dos Pilas Stela 8. in: The Decipherment of Ancient Maya Writing (Stephen Houston, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, and David Stuart, eds.):394-415. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

Maya Epigraphy. Encyclopedia of Archaeology: History and Discoveries (Tim Murray, ed.) 2:855-858. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc.

1999

Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Volume 6, Part 3. Tonina. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. (Ian Graham and Mathews)

1998

The Code of Kings: The Language of Seven Sacred Maya Temples and Tombs. New York: Scribner. (Linda Schele and Mathews).

1997

La Escultura de Yaxchilan . Colección Científica del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, vol. 368. Mexico City : Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

1996

Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Volume 6, Part 2. Tonina . Cambridge , Massachusetts : Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University . (Ian Graham and Mathews)

1991

Classic Maya Emblem Glyphs. in: Classic Maya Political History: Hieroglyphic and Archaeological Evidence (T. P. Culbert, ed.):19-29. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

1985

A Consideration of the Early Classic Period in the Maya Lowlands (Gordon R. Willey and Peter Mathews, eds.). Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York at Albany , Publication 10. Albany , New York : Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York at Albany.

1983

Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Volume 6, Part 1. Tonina . Cambridge , Massachusetts : Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

1979

The Bodega of Palenque , Chiapas , Mexico . Washington , D.C. : Dumbarton Oaks. (Linda Schele and Mathews)

1974

Lords of Palenque - The Glyphic Evidence. Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque Part I (Merle Greene Robertson, ed.):63-76. Pebble Beach , Calif. The Robert Louis Stevens School . (Mathews and Linda Schele)