

Alabama Archaeological Society

Associate Editors

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MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

NOTES ON THE WINTER MEETING

There will be a luncheon-board meeting at the Winter Meeting December 5 at the Huntsville Hilton.

The Hilton Hotel is saving room reservations at a greatly reduced rate for our Winter Meeting. To take advantage, make reservations for December 4 or December 5 by November 15.

The program will be in the November issue of the STONES & BONES.

The Editors

ARCHES AND VAULTS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

It is almost a truism among students of architectural history that the use of the arch and the vault began with the Romans. And indeed the Romans exploited those structures to the fullest, building them not only often but also on a monumental scale, in bridges and aqueducts, triumphal gates and amphitheaters that are still scattered through southern Europe. Yet the Romans did not invent the arch; nor were they the first to combine arches into vaults. By the time the Colosseum was erected, arches and vaults had been built in the Near East for about 3,000 years.

The few archaeologists who have studied the question are unanimous in the view that arches and vaults originated in the marshlands of Lower Egypt or Mesopotamia. The prototype was a structure built of bundles of reeds, which were placed upright in the ground, bent inward and tied together at the top to form a roof. Early Egyptian drawings, including hieroglyphs, depict reed vaults over sanctuaries, boat huts and other structures. Although no ancient reed buildings have survived, the technique has - in southern Iraq, at the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates, where a people called the Marsh Arabs still construct enormous vaulted buildings of reeds.

The outer surfaces of some of these buildings are covered with mud plaster. This type of construction, known as wattle and daub, is probably a relic of an intermediate stage in the evolution of the vault. Eventually most Near Eastern builders dispensed entirely with reeds (which in any case would have been available only in marshy areas) and came to rely on a more durable and massive construction material: sun-dried mud brick. Nearly all the surviving Near Eastern

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arches are made of mud brick, or adobe (a Spanish loanword from the Arabic at-tub). Even after fired brick was introduced, most buildings in the Near East continued to be built of the sun-dried kind.

(From an Article by Gus W. Van Beek in "Scientific American", Vol. 257, No. 1, July 1987.)

The Editors

SOUTH ALABAMA FACULTY MEMBERS CONDUCT RESEARCH IN HONDURAS

During July University of South Alabama faculty members Read Stowe and Gene Wilson conducted an archaeological survey and test excavations on Barbareta Island. The project was funded in part by the owner of the Island. Barbareta is located approximately 30 miles off the Honduran coast near the southern edge of the Mesoamerican Culture Area. The islands, actually the tops of submerged mountains, range from 122 meters to 147 meters above the Bay of Honduras. During the summer the temperature averaged about 85 degrees F and it rained (poured) several times each day. These daily deluges usually caught us on way to and from one of the sites.

Those sites investigated were located along the coast, on hill tops and on ridge spurs. One of the more interesting was a midden about the size of a football field on the top of Indian Hill. The island and site have a historical connection for Barbareta is shown on the Columbus' map (circa A.D. 1505-06) as "Oaque Cocaos" a Payan Indian phrase that translates roughly to "five hill house". A single 1m x 1m test pit in the Indian Hill midden produced over 5,000 sherds, imported lithics (including huge boulders carried up from the beach), and fish and mammal bones. The majority of the sherds were sand tempered incised, pinched and punctated. This is the most common type of pottery on the Bay Islands and is associated with the Cocal Horizon which lasted from around A.D. 1000 to the historic period. Apparently, the Cocal initially developed to the south in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Also, a few polychrome sherds, perhaps associated with the Selin Horizon, were recovered. The Selin dates from the Late Classic and the pottery is similar to that from the Ulua valley and the Mayan areas to the west and north.

One of the most interesting aspects of Honduran Bay archaeology/history is that Columbus visited the Islands on his fourth voyage (1502-1504). A first hand account of this voyage describes an encounter with a large merchant canoe from the province of "Maïam". This has often been cited as the first encounter between Europeans and Indians from the North American Continent. Even though there is an enticing photograph of Spanish olive jars in William Davidson's Historical Geography of the Bay Islands, Honduras we didn't find any colonial Spanish artifacts.

Only a small portion of Barbareta has been investigated archaeologically. Hopefully, additional surveys can be conducted and a cultural resources management plan developed before the yaba ding-ding (local name for artifact) hunter's shovels destroy all of the significant sites.

Read Stowe
Archaeology Lab
University of South Alabama

ALABAMA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

Society members chair the Anthropology Section of the Alabama Academy of Science. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively, are:

M. J. Gilliland and Elisabeth S. Sheldon

Please see article below for additional information on submitting papers for the Anthropology Section.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The annual meeting of the Alabama Academy of Science will be held at Auburn University March 23-25, 1987. In recent years, few anthropologists have participated that a movement is under way to drop anthropology as a separate section and combine anthropology papers with the general social science section. To avoid losing our section status, I am asking members of the Alabama Archaeological Society to present papers at the annual meeting. Papers are limited to 15 minutes and can be from any field in anthropology.

Student papers are welcome and may be entered in the Student Research Award Competition. Student papers must conform to eligibility rules. A copy of the eligibility rules will be sent on request. Abstracts must be submitted, but manuscripts are not required.

For more information call 348-7947, or write: Janice Gilliland; The University of Alabama; P. O. Box 6291; Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487.

Janice Gilliland
Tuscaloosa

CHAPTER NEWS

Cullman County Archaeological Society

Hope everyone had a good summer! Thank you for your support and presence at our 20th year anniversary this past June. We had well over 60 people attending, with some of the best artifacts on display that you would ever want to see. Mr. Calvert from Guthery Crossroads brought some of his collection for display to be viewed by many for the first time. DeWitt Coleman (as usual) displayed part of his outstanding collection. These were just two of the many displays shown. We thank everyone who brought artifacts to the show.

The chapter resumed its fall schedule by meeting on September 21.

Huntsville Chapter

Chapter President Roy Blair, Jr. was the speaker at the September 22 meeting. Roy's presentation was on lithic technology, and sources for raw material in Alabama

and surrounding states. He showed slides of various point types and identified those points found in Northern Alabama.

The Huntsville Chapter now meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the Huntsville Public Library on St. Clair Avenue. For more information on chapter programs and other activities, please call Program Chairman Bart Henson at 881-9389.

THE FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

The Florida Anthropological Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1948. Its primary goal is to promote the careful scientific study of the past and present peoples of Florida and adjacent regions.

To disseminate information on anthropology and archaeology, the Society publishes a quarterly journal, The Florida Anthropologist, and a semi-annual newsletter. An annual meeting is held during the spring, at which research papers are presented.

We invite you to become a member and help us preserve and protect our historic and cultural heritage.

Types of membership are:

Regular (Individual)	\$ 12.00
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Institutional	15.00
Sustaining	25.00
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Checks and money orders should be made payable to The Florida Anthropological Society, and sent to:

Membership Secretary, FAS
308 6th Street, NW
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Jeffrey M. Mitchem
Gainesville, Florida

BOOK REVIEW

"The Mound Building Age in North America". By Dr. C. A. Peterson. Sixteen pages. 1902. Available as a reprint for \$1.50 including postage, from Mini-Histories, 5311 Indiana Avenue; Nashville, Tennessee 37209. This booklet is a paper

read by Dr. Peterson before the Missouri Historical Society on February 13, 1902. It is interesting reading from the standpoint of how the mound builders were viewed around the turn of the century and various quaint theories as to who, when and how they were built.

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BOOK REVIEW

"Artifacts of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and the Caribbean, 1500-1800". By Kathleen Deagan. 1987. Paperback. 222 pages. This book is Volume I and covers "Ceramics, Glassware and Beads". It is filled with numerous photographs and a few tables. Many of the objects are small (beads, etc.) and fail to show up clearly in the photographs since the camera distance from the object is too far. Hopefully this will be corrected in Volume II. Most of the artifacts come from sites in the Caribbean. The author does a good job providing detailed descriptions and comparisons of artifacts from the various sites. However, the "jargon" used in the introduction is distracting from an otherwise good volume. Available from the Smithsonian Institution Press.

The Editors

PALENQUE TOUR

We're planning another Mexico trip - this time to fabulous Palenque! Palenque has been called the most impressive and beautiful site in all of Meso-America.

In addition to Palenque, we plan to visit the beautiful waterfalls and pools of Agua Azul. We will also tour the ruins at Uxmal, Kabah, and Edzna, visit several museums, and stop at a number of small archaeological sites. We'll stay overnight in the old fortified city of Campeche on the Gulf of Mexico and will spend two two days in Merida, the colonial capital of Yucatan.

This trip is offered at a cost of \$1,050. This includes airfare from Atlanta to Merida and return, hotel accommodations, trip-related ground transportation, admission to sites, and Mexican departure tax.

For more information call Dr. Patrick Morris; 704/227-7268; or write him at P. O. Box 1086; Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723.

The Editors

SCIENTIFIC SPECULATION

The Serpent and the Saint - When Cortez left Cuba with his band of merry men in 1518 to make the short trip to the mainland, he was primarily on a mission of exploration for the greater glory of Charles I of Spain, who would soon be upgraded

to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. Upon arrival in Mexico, the Spaniard was treated with the awe and respect befitting the emissary - if not the reincarnation - of the ancient bearded god, Quetzalcoatl. And, coupled with such honor and unaccustomed regard, the word which filtered down about the City of Gold, said to be somewhere in the interior, made all thoughts of exploration pale in the dazzling quest for the greater glory of Hernando Cortez.

Quetzalcoatl - also called Kukulcan by the Mayans - was the ancient Mexican name for Venus as the morning star, and means feathered or bearded serpent. But it seems that this name also was applied to some bewhiskered white man who sojourned throughout Mexico a thousand years earlier, who passed the time by teaching the natives industrial arts and preaching religious reform.

This latter-day Quetzalcoatl had arrived, as did Cortez, in a "winged" boat from the Atlantic and stayed on for a number of years, bringing peace and prosperity to the Mayans and Toltecs. When he left again, a pyramidal temple was erected in his honor at Cholula. He had sailed away to the east in a boat, ostensibly clad in stretched snakeskins which embellished the legend of his cognomen of Quetzalcoatl, and he promised to return someday from his "holy land" of Hapallan.

Upon hearing this tale, Cortez capitalized upon and encouraged the native beliefs, and thus was able to conquer and subdue an empire of millions with just a few hundred men. At that time, the capital, Tenochitlan, on the site of present-day Mexico City, was perhaps the most populous metropolis in the world.

This amazing conquest was unprecedented in the annals of history. And, what may be even more astonishing, the Aztecs capitulated based on a strange reverence for a personage so unlike themselves: a tall old man with dark hair, who wore a long garment bedecked with crosses, and who practiced a pious austerity unknown in that culture.

There were stone crosses throughout the land, and stories of a Moses-like leader who commanded the seas to part while his people passed over to safety, and rituals which closely paralleled and resembled baptism and transubstantiation.

Eventually European enlightenment determined that the bizarre mimicry of Mexican beliefs to that of Christianity was the work of the Evil One, and all the books and codices of Mesoamerican culture were consigned to the flames of purification. Today, only three documents on astronomy remain relatively intact, so efficient were these missionaries' destructive efforts.

Such a barbaric but peculiarly cultured people, who spent considerable time and effort in detailing astronomical events with a precision far in advance of their contemporaneous 16th century European counterparts, also had described their human Quetzalcoatl with equal detail - albeit not without embellishment.

In 1889 Dominick Daly wrote a persuasive polemic (American Antiquarian 11, 14-30), which called attention to the ecclesiastical zeal which overran Europe during the 6th to the 8th centuries of our era, and especially that of the Irish prelates whose missionary work has not been equalled since.

Daly pointed to St. Brendan of Clonfert, of the mid-6th century, as one of the most intrepid seafarers, and who was also known as "the Navigator". Brendan set out on a seven-year voyage searching for "the mysterious land far from human ken", but returned without success, according to later commentators. Some years after, he undertook a second voyage which was reportedly more successful, and some Irish historians claimed that he actually discovered America some 900 years in advance of Columbus, but this has been severely disputed.

The voyages of St. Brendan, like the deeds of King Arthur, have been so interwoven with other medieval tales of such a fanciful nature that it is nearly impossible to separate fact from fable. Yet, it is known that Brendan set out on his first voyage at about the age of 60, and the second while he was in his 70's. He lived to a ripe old 93.

The Mexicans relate that the namesake of Quetzalcoatl was advanced in years, and was well-versed in civil and monastic matters, as well as the practical arts, diplomacy, and administration - something almost every medieval missionary had to have to survive the rigors of foreign barbarisms.

Could Hapallan be the Hibernia of old: Ireland? If the bearded Brendan wasn't the apotheosis of the bearded star, Quetzalcoatl, the question remains: Who was?

(By an article by Frederic B. Jueneman, FAIC - "Research & Development" - November 1986.)

The Editors

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of <i>Journal of Alabama Archaeology</i> Vol. 20-29 each issue	(\$2.50 to Members) \$5.00 pp
<i>Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations</i> (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue	\$5.00 pp
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Special Publication 3 — <i>Archaeological Investigations at Horseshoe Bend</i>	\$6.50 pp
<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types</i>	\$10.00 pp
Lively, Long, Josselyn - <i>Pebble Tool Paper</i>	\$3.00 pp
<i>Investigations in Russell Cave</i> , published by the National Park Service	\$7.50 pp
<i>Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology</i> (Juvenile)	\$7.00 pp

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