

Mayan Esteem Project Report

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A slide presentation was held for the general public at the municipal auditorium in Chilón, Chiapas, Mexico on August 14, 1999. Mario Vera Solis from the office of the President of the municipality of Chilón made a brief statement that the President's office was neutral and that the ultimate decision to allow any kind of excavation or preservation of the ruins belonged to the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH).

The Project was explained in terms of being a very slow process without promises of becoming a major tourist development any time in the immediate future. I stated that although the final approval of any proposal was clearly with INAH it is important for the Mayan Esteem Project to confirm that the people of the community want the ruins developed. A vote was taken by ballot after the presentation asking for individuals to vote "Yes, I want the Mayan Esteem project to make a proposal to INAH and conduct investigations, excavations, preservation and development in general of the Mayan ruins in my community of Chilón." or "No, I do not want the ruins in my community developed."

The ballot was available in Spanish or Tzeltal. Of those voting on the Spanish ballot 104 voted "sí" (affirmative) and 69 voted "no". Of those voting on the Tzeltal ballot 43 voted "ya'k" (affirmative) and 16 voted "ma'uk" (no). There were 122 spoiled ballots that were disqualified because they were double marked (yes and no), not marked, or were submitted in the ballot box in multiples folded together with the same markings (of these multiples there were far more affirmatives than negatives). The result of this vote was 147 for development of the ruins and 75 against.

The following day, 15 August 1999, the same presentation was given to the Tzo'olja community who actually own the land on which the ruins lie. After the presentation 20 adults generally deemed qualified to vote on community matters voted on the same ballot used the day before with all voting on the Tzeltal ballot. 18 voted "ya'k" and 2 voted "ma'uk."

Ballots were also distributed to all of the elementary and secondary schools in Chilón as well as to the preparatory school (COBACH, plantel 25) and the local National Institute of Adult Education (INEA). All were asked to administer the ballots and return them by mail. The Niños Héroe elementary school ballots were the only ones to be received from the elementary and secondary schools with 113 voting "sí," 25 voting no, with 5 spoiled ballots. Of the ballots returned from COBACH 190 voted "sí," 26 no and there were no spoiled ballots. INEA voted unanimously for the Mayan Esteem Project to make a proposal to INAH with no negative votes or spoiled ballots.

More thorough polling will be conducted in the future to find reasons for dissent and if those reasons can be mitigated. Evidence of a rudimentary excavation of the Na Tenzum edifice in Chilón was discovered in the photo archives at Na Balom in San Cristóbal de las Casas. Photographs taken by Franz Blom and Gertrude DUBY Blom reveal stone structures with most stucco and ornamentation stripped away with the exception of what Wolfgang Cordan has described as a katun glyph. There are also photos of tabular stones showing no apparent inscriptions. Still another photo shows a very clumsy stacking of ornamentally carved stones that may give the slightest clue to style and period to trained eyes.

These photos are being exhibited at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin from March 10 to May 7, 2000. Also in this exhibit are the works submitted in the art contest held by the Mayan Esteem Project last spring in Chilón.

There is promise of finding more information at Na Balam. Danish researcher Toke Sellner has been cataloging Gertrude Duby Blom's notes and has promised to advise of any references to the ruins at Chilón. There also may be more clues in Franz Blom's notes.

James E. Franklin, a professional surveyor, has supplied the Mayan Esteem Project with good topographical maps of the site area. These maps coupled with the GPS readings taken at the site last summer will help in developing a picture for future discovery.

A request for proposals has been drafted to find a lead archaeologist to help prepare the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) proposal. Given the impending political change in Mexico after September's presidential election it now appears prudent to wait to make any proposal at year end.

The Mayan Esteem Project's application for funds from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies was denied. We are currently applying for City of Austin Cultural Contracts funding.

I have change departments at Southwest Texas State University. I am currently in interdisciplinary studies in the Occupational Education department which will allow more course freedom to facilitate work with the Mayan Esteem Project.

The Mayan Esteem Project has been granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service and is now a 501 (c) (3) organization. We will gladly accept contributions of any denomination with the benefit of a tax deduction for you.

The Mayan Esteem Project held its second annual Oversight Board meeting on December 15, 1999 at noon in the office of Henry A. Selby at the University of Texas at Austin. Present were Dr. Selby, Carol Hayman, Scott Henson, Eric Samson, and Marco O. Iniguez, who was unanimously accepted as the new Oversight Board member, replacing Francisco McFarland who formally resigned in September 1999. The year's business and activities were discussed and the meeting adjourned at about 1:00 p.m.

What follows is a balance sheet for the last two years. The Mayan Esteem Project will not be required to make financial filings with the IRS until there are revenues greater than \$25,000 per year.

1998

Expenditures.....	\$4,939.54
Revenues.....	<u>\$4,000.00</u>
Total.....	-\$ 939.00

1999

Expenditures.....	\$4,855.92
Revenues.....	<u>\$2,483.00</u>
Total.....	-\$2,372.92

The next trip to Chilón will ideally be this June and July depending on educational and financial logistics.