

The permits required that inspectors from the archaeology institute be on site during construction. They also set a number of restrictions on everything from construction materials to the ochre colour of exterior paint. The store's height was limited to 30 feet to avoid obstructing the view of the nearby domes of the 1548 Church of St. John the Baptist. From the top of the 200-foot-tall Pyramid of the Sun, visited by tens of thousands of people annually, Wal-Mart is barely visible.

However, on August 25, archaeology institute inspectors found a 3-foot-square altar 1 foot under Wal-Mart's parking lot. The altar was excavated and conserved on-site, but it touched off new claims that the store was destroying archaeological treasures. Nevertheless, UNESCO gave the structure its blessing, as did the Paris-based International Council on Monuments and Sites, a group that advises UNESCO.

Test excavations in the Burned Palace of Cihuatán, El Salvador

SAN FRANCISCO (Karen Olsen Bruhns, Paul E. Amaroli, Vladimir Avila, Fundación Nacional de Arqueología de El Salvador). In June–July 2004, the Fundación Nacional de Arqueología de El Salvador (FUNDAR) sponsored preliminary testing on the Acropolis of Cihuatán, a large Early Postclassic urban centre in the north central part of the country. Although the Western Ceremonial Centre of this site has been known since the late 1800s and has been subject to repeated, if fairly minor, investigations, the only excavation of the Eastern Ceremonial Centre or Acropolis, a huge platform and architectural complex on top of a hill directly to the east of the better known centre, was in the early 1960s when Stanley Boggs, then of the National Museum of El Salvador, excavated a huge sherd dump and found it covered a tiny platform containing a sacrificed woman, a dog and some 70 miniature vessels. This discovery was never published in any detail and the collections and field notes have been lost.

Preliminary mapping of the Acropolis took place in 1977, under the auspices of the San Francisco State University/Earthwatch sponsored Cihuatán Settlement Archaeology Project, directed by Dr. Karen Olsen Bruhns.

Further mapping was done in 1999 when the Salvadoran government sponsored a modern high tech map of the site, but the data were lost and all that remains is a pa-

per copy. Paul Amaroli and Vladimir Avila of FUNDAR did more detailed survey and mapping during the dry season of 2003–2004 and, as did the earlier maps, their survey revealed a large quadrangular feature on the northwest of the highest platform/terrace of the Acropolis, facing the Monumental Stairway, the formal entry to the Acropolis. In the dry season and after pesticide and hand clearing, this feature was revealed to be a large hollow rectangle approximately 33 × 24 m (measurement on unexcavated building) with the eastern side being noticeably higher than the other three. The ground was strewn with architectural debris of a sort which indicates fancy architecture (volcanic tuff slabs, hard stone slabs, worked pumice). Accordingly in June, 2004, Dr. Bruhns, now working with FUNDAR, Lic. Paul Amaroli, and Vladimir Avila began limited test excavations in the quadrangle. A 4m square unit was placed in the southeast interior corner of the structure, that is, on the western side of the highest structure within the quadrangle.

Since Cihuatán was burned in an apparent single episode of violence and never reoccupied, with the unlucky inhabitants leaving their possessions in place on the floors, we hoped for a similar situation in the palace. We were not disappointed. Our small excavation has shown that the palace was indeed burned and summarily abandoned. The debris of the fallen structure confirms our guess that the building was constructed in an unusually elaborate manner and the limited artefact collection shows a preponderance of elaborate painted wares and large serving vessels. These occur in numbers far in excess of other sampled contexts at Cihuatán. The discovery of numerous spindle whorls suggests that this structure was a residence, perhaps of the ruler's family.

This is the first Prehispanic elite residence to be identified and excavated in El Salvador and one of the few Early Postclassic palaces to be located and tested. The situation of rapid destruction and abandonment, with materials left in situ as the inhabitants fled (or were otherwise disposed of) promises a unique opportunity to look at the actual functioning of an elite administrative and residential structure and, through this, to gain some understanding of elite life ways in south eastern Mesoamerican elite in the 11th century A.D.

Las Ruinas Mayas de Chakil, Yucatán

MÉRIDA (Miguel Covarrubias y Rafael Burgos, Centro INAH Yucatán). Al hacer recorridos de superficie para un peritaje en arqueología que presentó el Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán a la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, el cual ayudará a resolver el conflicto limítrofe entre los Estados de Yucatán, Campeche y Quintana Roo, en un lugar cercano al camino de San Juan Tekax, Yucatán, a Iturbide, Campeche, a unos 18.5 kilómetros al norte de esta última población, en compañía de los custodios del INAH en la Región Sur de Yucatán, Mario Magaña y Pedro Góngora, localizamos en la porción noreste de la Región Chenes un sitio arqueológico que hasta entonces no estaba registrado en el "Atlas Arqueológico de Yucatán" (Garza y Kurjack, 1980). Hemos denominado a este sitio "Chakil" ("Lugar de la Lluvia" en Lengua Maya) debido a que se encuentra junto a un rancho ganadero que lleva este mismo nombre. Un GPS portátil nos dio las siguientes coordenadas para el centro del sitio: 19° 41.350' de latitud norte, 89° 27.820' de longitud oeste (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Upper wall fallen on a slab-constructed bench with a large vessel broken on the floor by the collapsing building.