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**ENERGIZE AND RENEW  
FOR BAK'TUN 13:**  
Once-in-a-Lifetime  
Experiences for 2012



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**A TRUE MAYA LEGACY**  
for the 21st Century  
by Tomás Gallareta

# Haciendas

## DEL MUNDO MAYA

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**Ancient Endings  
and New Beginnings:**  
**Maya Cosmology for 2012**  
BY CARL CALLAWAY

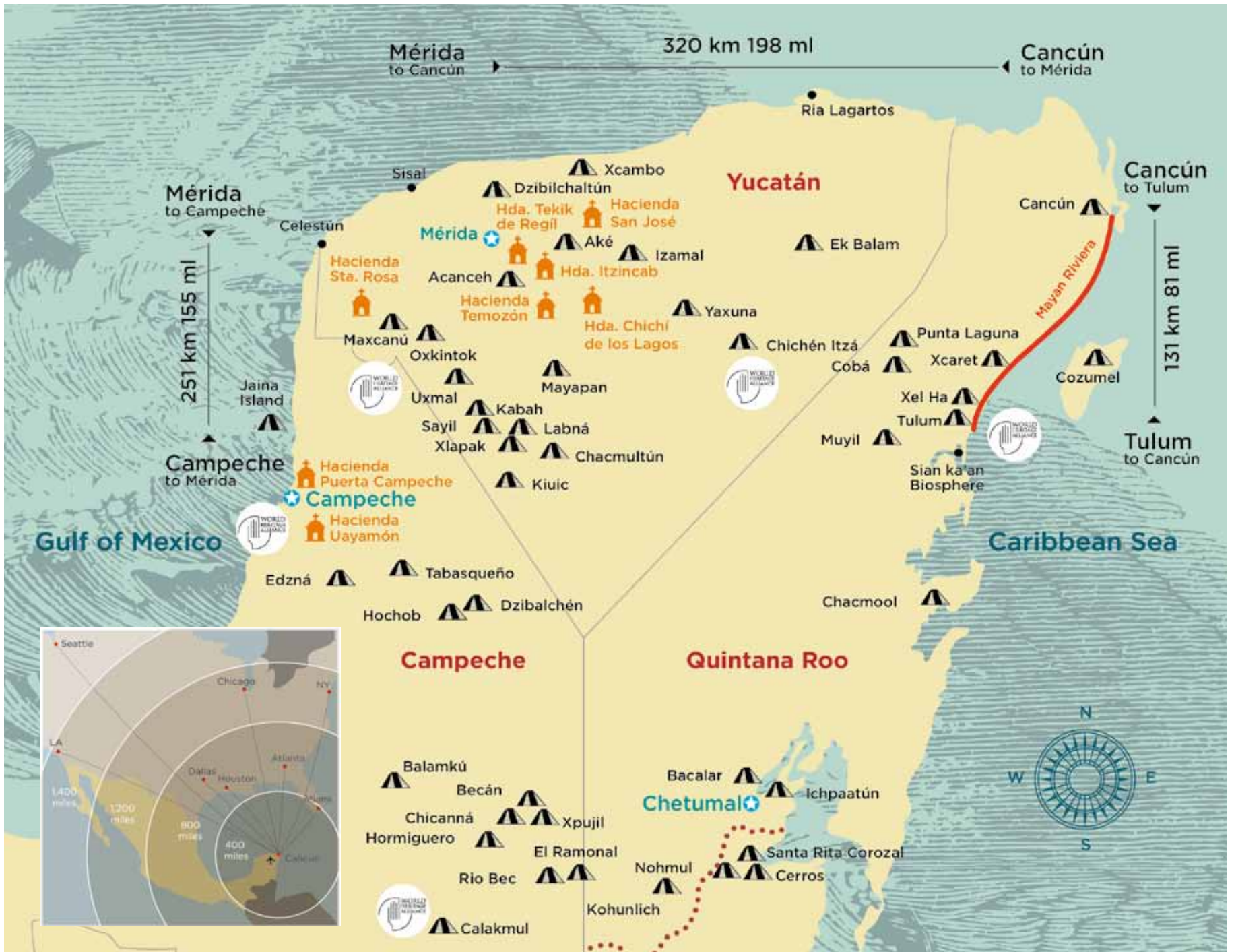


Guillermo Pineda



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**DEEP MAYA ROOTS,  
STILL GROWING**  
Traditional Maya Herbal  
Medicine in the Yucatán



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# I ♥ YUCATÁN

ONCE AGAIN, HACIENDAS DEL MUNDO MAYA CHECKS IN WITH SOME OF ITS VERY FAVORITE LOCALS TO HEAR WHAT THEY LOVE MOST ABOUT YUCATÁN LIFE.



**CAROL KOLOSZ,**  
FIVE-YEAR MÉRIDA TRANSPLANT,  
ORIGINALLY FROM RUMANIA

In the Yucatán there is such an incredible feeling of relaxation, but not in the common sense: it's deeper, like feeling protected—an in-the-womb sort of a feeling. I love the people, and it's really like a family, because you have every kind of relative—uptight ones, fun ones, silly ones and melancholy ones—but you accept that they're “family” and you love them for it.



**REBECA COBO,**  
OWNER, LA PIGUA RESTAURANT

I love that Mérida is such a traditional city, with true family values that are deeply rooted. And it's a city that has everything: culture, nearby beaches, entertainment, chic as well as down-home restaurants and some of Mexico's very best recreational attractions. Not least of all, it's such a laid-back, clean and safe city. No traffic problems! Plus lots of work and development opportunities for all of us who live here.



**LAURA KINAR,** PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF LAURA KINAR DESIGN

The Yucatán is a land of hidden treasures. I like that it takes patience to uncover the mysteries: ruined temples, haciendas, the Maya people and the magic of exuberant gardens behind courtyard doors. Our dream is to restore our hacienda as a place to contemplate and create. We want to bring artists from around the world to experience the magic of the Yucatán as we interact and exchange ideas with its people.



**BÁRBARA MACKINNON,**  
ARCHAEOLOGIST AND CONSERVATIONIST

I'm a devoted birdwatcher and I love to walk dirt trails through forests and Maya villages, looking for and listening to almost innumerable feathered friends. The smell of nectar from the flowers on sak katsim trees penetrates my senses—as does the friendliness of the Maya campesino, who stops his bike to greet me on his way to the cornfield. Often there is a late, hearty breakfast of sak kool with freshly made tortillas before departing the village. What's not to like?!!



**DR. JULIA MILLER,**  
ARCHAEOLOGIST

There so many reasons I love living in the Yucatan. The people are wonderfully friendly and helpful. When we first moved here, we would get to towns in search of a cenote (or other interesting place) and would ask strangers where to find it. Without fail, they would direct us cheerfully and helpfully with suggestions on where else to visit. And the food is wonderful—a fascinating mix of local and European ingredients and techniques that creates a unique and intriguing flavor combination. And I even like the climate. I don't enjoy cold weather and in Yucatan, it's warm year-round! I also feel safer in Merida than in other places I've lived.



**SALVADOR REYES,**  
ARCHITECT

I love the Yucatán because here Maya culture is still a living, real presence in the collective mindset of its rural people—something rare and noble. The Yucatán is where I've lived and worked for the past fifteen years—where I've been privileged to give and receive, to contribute and to learn. I met my life's companion and watched our two beautiful children grow up here. I've learned great philosophical lessons: time is cyclical, ordered by the wisdom of nature; and that the concept of perfection in the Maya world is organic—and separate from cold, straight lines. As a designer and architect, the Yucatán is an enormous source of inspiration.

# What's New in the Maya World

## ENERGIZE AND RENEW FOR BAK'TUN 13: ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCIES FOR 2012

CATHERWOOD TRAVELS DESIGNS ALL-NEW ADVENTURES FOR 2012'S MAYA CALENDAR CLIMAX—WITH SOMETHING FOR NATURE-LOVERS, HISTORY BUFFS, FAMILIES, EXPLORERS, SPIRITUAL SEEKERS... AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN.

2012 WILL BE *THE YEAR FOR ADVENTURE* IN THE YUCATÁN AND THE MAYA WORLD AND **CATHERWOOD TRAVELS** IS CELEBRATING WITH A SERIES OF SPECIAL ITINERARIES. EACH IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCOVER THE YUCATÁN'S UNIQUE, HIDDEN TREASURES, SACRED SPACES AND CEREMONIAL SITES, AMID NATURAL SPLENDORS AND HISTORICAL PLACES ONLY THE LUCKIEST TRAVELERS REACH. LED BY ARCHAEOLOGISTS, HISTORIANS AND REGIONAL EXPERTS, CATHERWOOD ADVENTURES LEAVE YOU ENERGIZED, INTRIGUED AND MOVED BY WHAT YOU SEE.

BUT DON'T FORGET FUN AND RELAXATION—WITH **CATHERWOOD**, THERE'S ALWAYS DOWNTIME AT CENOTES, VISITS TO MAYA HOMES OR DEEP MEDITATION AMID JUNGLE SOUNDS—AND SILENCE.

## CATHERWOOD'S SPECIAL 2012 ADVENTURE ITINERARIES\*



Gregory Allen



Guillermo Pruneda

### INITIATION INTO MAYA CULTURE: FROM PYRAMIDS TO HACIENDAS 4 DAYS

SCHEDULED 2012 ITINERARIES: 3-6 FEBRUARY; 1-4 NOVEMBER;  
(CUSTOM ITINERARIES ALSO AVAILABLE)

A JOURNEY THAT OPENS THE DOORS TO MAYA CULTURE AND ALL ITS knowledge, subtlety and architectural splendor.

Visitors see mysterious archaeological sites and splendid restored haciendas in door-to-door VIP style. Highlights include newly discovered, fantastically preserved Ek Balam, Xocnaceh, and a Maya ritual cleansing at a sacred cenote.

**TOUR INCLUDES:** Ek Balam with archaeologist Guillermo de Anda • Delicious outdoor/restaurant/hacienda meals • Private cenote swimming • Dzibilchaltún with archaeologist Alfonso Morales • Maya ritual cleansing • Hacienda visits.

### UNDERSTANDING THE COLLAPSE AND RENEWAL OF THE MAYA 4 DAYS

SCHEDULED 2012 ITINERARIES: 16-19 MARCH; 11-14 OCTOBER;  
(CUSTOM ITINERARIES ALSO AVAILABLE)

THE FIRST OF TWO DEEP-DIVE EXPEDITIONS INTO THE SECRET world of the Maya. What can the modern world learn from the Mayas' rise and fall?

Culture experts lead visitors to newly discovered archaeological sites and hidden jungle cenotes, starting out from the Puuc region with one of the Yucatán's most esteemed archaeologists. You learn how the Maya developed

enormous, densely populated cities and masterfully harnessed the region's scarce natural resources. Contemplate theories that propose to explain the collapse of Ancient Maya civilization.

**TOUR INCLUDES:** Uxmal with archaeologist Tomás Gallareta • Maya ritual cleansing at Xocnaceh pyramid • Delicious outdoor/restaurant/hacienda meals • Hacienda Xocnaceh • Kankirixche cenote swimming/scuba • Mayapán with archaeologist Guillermo de Anda • Mérida city tour.

### THE MAYAS' RISE AND FALL: CHICHÉN ITZÁ, UXMAL AND DZIBILCHALTÚN 4 DAYS

SCHEDULED 2012 ITINERARIES: 5-8 APRIL (HOLY WEEK); 16-19 AUGUST;  
(CUSTOM ITINERARIES ALSO AVAILABLE)

Did Maya civilization just collapse? If so, how? And yet it continues, five centuries later. Has the modern world learned the lessons of the Ancient Maya?

The journey begins at Uxmal, thought by many to feature the most beautiful pre-Columbian architecture anywhere. Then it's on to Chichén Itzá, and of course, El Castillo pyramid. Finally we reach the sacred cenote, where Maya gods have been worshipped until very recent times.

**TOUR INCLUDES:** Uxmal with archaeologist Alfonso Morales • Maya ritual cleansing at Hacienda Ochil cenote • Delicious outdoor/restaurant/hacienda meals • Hacienda Xocempich cenote swimming/scuba • Chichén Itzá with archaeologist Guillermo de Anda • Dzibilchaltún with archaeologist Julia Miller.

**PILGRIMAGE TO SACRED SITES, ANCIENT AND MODERN  
4 DAYS**

**SCHEDULED 2012 ITINERARIES:**

**25-27 MAY; 13-16 SEPTEMBER; 16-19 NOVEMBER;**

**(CUSTOM ITINERARIES ALSO AVAILABLE)**

Participants explore the most sublime aspects of the Mayas' ceremonial and sacred spaces at sites whose spirituality stretches from the remotest chapters of Maya history right up to the present day.

Renowned underwater archaeologist Guillermo de Anda dives in with a visit to the Maya underworld's caves and archaeological sites, particularly Oxkintoc Labyrinth—one of the most extraordinary sacred constructions known. Then travelers pilgrimage to the Sacred Cenote at Chichén Itzá.

**TOUR INCLUDES:** Oxkintoc with archaeologist Guillermo de Anda  
• At-hacienda Maya ritual cleansing • Delicious outdoor/restaurant/hacienda meals • Uayma Church • Chichén Itzá with archaeologist Luis Millet • Cenote swimming at Hacienda Xocempich • Izamal with archaeologist Alfonso Morales.



Guillermo Pruneda

**ONE TIME ONLY**



Guillermo Pruneda

**END OF BAK'TUN 13 WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION  
6 DAYS**

**20-25 DECEMBER 2012**

**THE CULMINATION OF THE MAYA CALENDAR IN 2012 IS A CELEBRATION** of powerful new beginnings. Participants focus on Maya cosmic cycles and time systems—in the place where a new age begins—at the historic end of the *Bak'tun* 13 calendar cycle.

Led by Maya-specialist archaeologists, visitors journey to the most important Maya sacred spaces and archaeological sites for a full understanding of the cyclical in Maya cosmology. The end of one cycle means the beginning of a new era. We celebrate endings with a blessing of thanks for the planet—as did the Ancient Maya—and open the new cycle with enhanced consciousness of the love and care Earth will need for the future.

Tour includes: Uxmal with archaeologist Tomás Gallareta • Maya-priest-led celebration of the winter solstice and the end of the *Bak'tun* 13 calendar cycle • Hacienda Xocnaceh tour • Delicious outdoor meals • Chichén Itzá with archaeologist Guillermo de Anda • Cenote swimming at Hacienda Xocempich • Maya-priest-led new calendar opening ritual at Hacienda Xocempich • Dzibilchaltún with archaeologist Julia Miller • Mérida city tour • Kankirixche cenote snorkel/scuba • Gala Christmas Eve dinner.

**\* TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

- All described tours are shared experiences, open to the public (private tours also available; contact Catherwood for details).
- A minimum of twelve travelers are required on all shared tours.
- Payment to be made at least 30 days prior to departure.
- Prices and itineraries subject to change without previous notice.



**THE AVANT-GARDE TRADITION:  
MEXICAN COOKING WITH CELEBRITY CHEF PATRICIA QUINTANA  
4 DAYS**

**SCHEDULED 2012 ITINERARIES: 21-24 JUNE AND 25-28 OCTOBER**

**PATRICIA QUINTANA—CELEBRITY CHEF AND AUTHOR OF OVER TEN** cookbooks—leads visitors on a fascinating journey into the very soul of Mexican cooking. Quintana begins by explaining its Maya heritage and then considers European influences, along with her own personal innovations to traditional recipes.

Quite possibly the best part is what happens after school: you, your classmates and Patricia all sit down to the splendid meals you've just prepared.



Taller de Ignacio Urquiza

**PHOTOGRAPHING THE MAGIC OF EVERYDAY LIFE:  
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP WITH IGNACIO URQUIZA  
4 DAYS**

**SCHEDULED 2012 ITINERARY: 19-22 APRIL**

**WORLD-RENOWNED MEXICAN PHOTOGRAPHER IGNACIO URQUIZA** leads a one-time-only photographic adventure into the very heart of the Maya world. Participants will learn by doing, at a workshop conducted entirely in the field, at Maya villages and homes, archaeological sites and even in the Yucatán wilderness.

Urquiza focuses on helping photographers discover the magical and the artistic in the everyday world: the subtle expressions, the unlikely portrait subject, or the tiny detail that describes the big picture with imagination and creativity. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from a true photographic master. All experience levels welcome.

VISIT [www.catherwoodtravels.com](http://www.catherwoodtravels.com) FOR COMPLETE DETAILS.

# Spice of Life: Celestún's Superb, Sustainable Salts

UNLIKE THE PROCESSED STUFF YOU FIND ON MOST TABLES, SEA SALT IS FULL OF MINERALS YOUR BODY NEEDS—AND CRAVES. AS SEAWATER EBBS AND FLOWS, STRIKING ROCKS AND BOULDERS, IT STRIPS MINERALS FROM THE STONES AND THOSE MINERALS REMAIN IN THE WATER AS SUSPENDED PARTICLES. THIS KIND OF SALT IS A TRUE NATURAL, SINCE ANALYSIS REVEALS THAT SEAWATER PRESENTS PROPERTIES NOT UNLIKE BLOOD PLASMA.

By Carolina Medellín

**INDIGENOUS CULTURES HAVE VALUED SALT** since pre-Hispanic times. Evidence of its earliest production in Mesoamerica dates from 1000 BC, here on the Yucatán Peninsula, where the Maya used solar evaporation techniques to harvest the mineral and cultivated its commercial trade in markets ranging from Chiapas to Central America, the Caribbean and Guatemala. The region's salts went on to achieve global renown: records from the nineteenth century attest to a thriving Yucatán salt trade in Liverpool, where it was sold both as granulated seasoning and a food preservative.

Enter *Ser Sal* in 2011. *Ser Sal* is a company whose mission is the preservation of traditional Maya knowledge and the sustainable use of local natural resources as the best means of producing high-quality gourmet salt. Its first offering featured rare salts harvested from tidal pools along the beaches of Celestún, prepared and marketed by Maya women from the village of Santo Domingo, near Maxcanú, in Yucatán State. The villagers' proximity to the beach allows them to both benefit from and protect a valuable local resource at the same time their community reaps the developmental benefits of sales proceeds. Perhaps

not coincidentally, the production area is near the town of Chunchucmil, which archaeologists have determined was a commercial hub whose trade routes reached indigenous civilizations as far away as the Inca Empire. Chunchucmil's favorable geographic placement, close to the sea, made it a natural trading center for Celestún's sea salts.

Harvesting by hand, as did the ancient Maya 1500 years ago, allows all the mineral's essential properties to be retained. During the harvest, local producers collaborate with salt experts such as Anaïs Mouroux, from France, whose on-site expertise allows the salt to be harvested according to the most exacting quality standards, and at the same time helps local producers open up markets for *Ser Sal's* three signature salt lines: *La Flor de Sal*, *Sal Rosa* and *Espuma de Sal*.

*La Flor de Sal*—"salt blossom"—is a magnificent salt for the kitchen. Painstaking harvest techniques assure it retains its delicate crystalline structure and impeccable purity. In foods, *Flor de Sal* confers subtle, complex notes. Its taste is like that of no other salt on the planet and it's turning up in some of the world's most distinguished kitchens.

*Espuma de Sal* comes from Celestún's youngest salt deposits, and is harvested early in the season between April and August. For reasons related to local climate conditions—and as its name implies (*espuma* means foam in Spanish)—*espuma de sal's* fragile crystals form on the liquid surface of tidal pools, later to accumulate along the pools' edges. Brilliantly white and impossibly fine, it's ideal for table use, and for adding that final touch to piping hot dishes freshly served.

Finally, *Sal Rosa*—"pink salt"—is a mature mineral harvested when salts form throughout tidal pools. Not unlike the region's famed flamingoes, this salt is pink—thus tinted due to contact with rhodophyta algae. Pink salt granulates more coarsely, creating a signature texture and body unmistakable in foods—and highly sought after by demanding, ambitious chefs worldwide.

The *Fundación Haciendas del Mundo Maya* initiated its *Ser Sal* operations as part of its *Traspatio Maya* program, which seeks to encourage sustainable, artisanal industry among local, underserved households. Under Mouroux's guidance, the women of Santo Domingo work toward standardizing salt-harvest techniques and also participate in seminars focused on skills-building in administration, marketing and product design.

Celestún salts can be purchased at Taller Maya General Offices, The Taller Maya at Casa Montejo, The Taller Maya at Izamal and Taller Maya Campeche.

Translated and adapted by Michael Parker-Stainback  
www.tallermaya.org



# An Old Plan for a New Era: The Shamanistic Take on 2012

RETO KADE, SPA MANAGER, PHYSICAL TRAINER AND MASSAGE THERAPIST AT HACIENDA TEMOZÓN, TAKES TIME OUT TO TALK TO US ABOUT SHAMANISTIC APPROACHES IN LIFE AND THEIR SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN 2012.

**Q:** Reto, though you say you're not a shaman, you do bring a shamanistic approach to what you do. My first thought is that a lot of people don't even know what a shaman is, or may have some inaccurate ideas on the subject. Take us through shamanism 101, no?

**Reto Kade:** As you note, I'm just a shamanistic practitioner, sometimes on a shaman's path, sometimes not... But I'm happy to try to shed light on what a shaman is. A shaman is someone who is in contact with the other side, who sees or feels things most people can't. Experienced shamans see auras and detect energy blocks within them; or sense the presence of a ghost that may be holding someone back. Some can even see fear that a person may be carrying with him and that is disrupting that person's proper energy flows. A shaman is in close contact with nature; both his or her own, as well as the nature that exists all around us, and can hear the messages it sends us. In a basic sense, the shaman is a healer, a counsellor, herbalist or medicine man, even a priest... Somebody aware of his/her inner and outer worlds, who has studied and developed tools that function well in both realities.

**Q:** Tools that function in both realities?

**RK:** Certainly: think of a fundamental shamanistic healing element like copal smoke. We perceive it in our everyday reality and it soothes our waking senses. But it also has the power to attract spirits whose help we need, or drive away others that may be holding us back. Hens' eggs are another popular shaman's tool here in the Yucatán. What could be more common in our reality, right? Yet many believers find them very effective for lifting curses and ridding us of negative energies.

**Q:** Not at all. But are you saying a shaman is someone inaccessible, not of this world?

**RK:** No, he could be a doctor, and she could be a psychotherapist, a transpersonal therapist or a person deeply involved in meditation. And I recently heard of quantum physicists who are Shamans or just steps away from getting there. My best friend suggested that the best transpersonal psychotherapists could be the next good source for Shamans. Authentic shamanistic practitioners are hard to find these days...

**Q:** I believe you...

**RK:** But for me maybe the most important feature of a shamanism is having an open heart, being compassionate and having little or no sense of self-importance!



"YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT AS THE MAYA DID: ONE CYCLE ENDS, YES, BUT ANOTHER BEGINS. FOR THEM IT WAS NATURAL—SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE..."

**Q:** With all that, what do shamans—or people on a shamanistic path—think about the significance of 2012?

**RK:** Well, a shamanistic explanation of what will happen is difficult because there are many traditions to account for and they may not all agree. What a Bönpo Rinpoche, or Tibetan shaman, says about 2012 will probably differ from a Wyoming, Amazon, Mongolian or Yucatecan shaman's ideas.

**Q:** So what about the notion that with 2012 comes end of the world?

**RK:** You need to think about it as the Maya did: one cycle ends, yes, but another begins. For them it was natural—something to celebrate—not something to fret over. It's similar to what some people believe as part of other belief systems. The Age of Aquarius is starting, but no one's in a panic. For some the Messiah is coming—a happy change—and for some, he is already here.

**Q:** So does that mean 12 December is just another day?

**RK:** Absolutely not. There is a thread that goes through all the prophecies: a great change is coming. According to an old Chinese proverb, to live in interesting times is a curse. But I believe it's a blessing to live in interesting times. More than twenty years ago an Indian Guru who lived for a long time in a cave told me that change was imminent and that spirituality was leaving India and coming to Central and South America. That's

only one opinion of many, but I don't think it's coincidental that Maya spirituality has become so "fashionable." Important things are happening here and that makes being in the Maya World for 2012 a real privilege.

It helps to think of it this way: giving birth is commonly seen as a painful process. It even hurts just to adapt to a change, and it's difficult to discard values and adopt new ones. A teacher of mine said that there are only two ways to walk in this world, either walk with fear or walk with Love. The decision is absolutely ours! Both ways involve struggle. For most of us things look really dark right now—but we can always choose light, through love. If nothing else, I look at 2012 as a reminder of that eternal possibility—that always-present second chance.

**Q:** And we have to keep moving no matter what, right?

**RK:** We are blessed because we will be present at the birth-moment of a new world—and each of us can participate. Each woman can reach total enlightenment "simply" by giving birth to a new child. We can meditate, cultivate love, work on shedding energies—emotional baggage—that holds us back or drives us to destructive behaviour. With courage we can make the jump into to this great unknown. And imagine if 100,000 could make that jump! That's a "quantum leap" that might create a new reality where beauty, compassion and wisdom reign. ▲

# Ancient Endings and New Beginnings: Maya Cosmology, Just in Time for 2012

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PROFESSOR CARL D. CALLAWAY, OF AUSTRALIA'S LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, CUTS THROUGH THE HYPE TO LOOK AT OUR CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF 21 DECEMBER 2012. THE LATEST ADVANCES ARE FASCINATING, BUT MUCH REMAINS TO BE DISCOVERED.

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**DECEMBER 21, 2012 MARKS A MOMENTOUS** occasion on the ancient Maya calendar: the close of the 13th *Bak'tun* period. This transition is a cyclic event that occurs approximately once every 5125 years—every 13 x 144,000 days, to be exact—so the last time a 13th *Bak'tun* ended was at the start of the current Maya era, on 11 August 3114 BC. It was a day that straddled the cusp of a new era—the point between a cycle just ended and one about to begin. Fast forward to today: in the entire corpus of Classic Maya (250-900 AD) inscriptions, there is but one surviving text that speaks of 2012, found in the final passages of the stela known as Monument 6 at Tortuguero, an archaeological site in the southernmost part of Tabasco, Mexico.

As 2012 approaches, an exact interpretation of the Tortuguero inscription has become the subject of much scholarly and popular debate—a Google internet search on “Maya 2012 prophecy” produces a mere 1,200,000 hits! There is no consensus within current academic discussion about whether the Tortuguero inscription is linked to a prophetic statement. Yet that said, there can be little doubt the ancient Maya would have seen the date as a numerological echo of the current era's start date, and they would have marked the occasion of 13th *Bak'tun* with great solemnity and fanfare—as they had done throughout their history—erecting temples, altars and carved stone pillars called stelae. Inscribed stelae recorded time's passage (typically in 20-year spans called “*k'atuns*”) by charting the sun and moon's exact positions, as well as by celebrating those gods and sacred acts thought to preserve community order and life.

For the ancient Maya time's custodial gods were tangible beings resembling humans, worshiped and deified as living gods (for example, the number eight was the Maize God). The dedicatory date on a stela was often expressed in fully animated portraiture, featuring the custodial gods of time hoisting, dragging, and carrying the day and month cycles into place, like packaged goods being toted to a modern day marketplace. Copan's Stela D, from Honduras, illustrates this time anthropomorphism wonderfully, depicting

personified and animated numbers who carry Long Count cycles and days' names in tumplines strapped across their foreheads. The gods rest just long enough to be recorded and then return to fetch a new burden for a new day.

As mentioned, the last time the end of the 13th *Bak'tun* occurred was at the start of the current Maya era on 11 August 3114 BC. Its modern notation is 13.0.0.0.0, 4 *Ajaw* 8 *Kumk'u*. The era date corresponded to the start of the Maya Long Count Calendar that tracked the number of days from a “zero date,” or fixed point in time, from which all mythical and historical dates were later calculated. Historically, 3114 BC predates Classic Maya civilization by at least 2500 years, so the 3114 BC zero date was most likely conceived of as having taken place within the murky, mythic depths of primordial time—a period of cosmogenesis when germinal energies awakened and the drama of creation unfolded. Fortunately for students of Maya mythology, there are about fifty ancient Maya inscriptions that detail events thought to have occurred on this first day of the new era. According to these texts, day one was very busy, with at least fifteen distinct events on the agenda. As a whole, events emphasize the orderly framework of the cosmos. It is an order not only related to knowledge of the world, but a

cosmic order that arises out of the great mystery of the universe—the *mysterium tremendum*—a secret that revealed itself both through the Maya calendar's intricate mathematical machinations as well as through the culture's priestly divinations.

In virtually every era-day text, this cosmic order is in some way reaffirmed. One era-day inscription is found on a chocolate cup known as the *Vase of the Seven Gods*. The vase boasts a fine-line painting that is the mythic “snapshot” of a pivotal era-day event that occurred in the underworld mountain palace of God L, who is





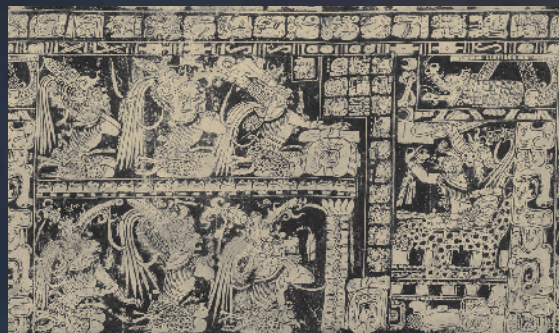
Tortuguero Monument 6

Drawing by Sven Grönmeyer



Copan's Stela D

Drawing by Linda Schele



Vase of the Seven Gods

Photo by Justin Kerr

Stela C  
at Quirigua in Guatemala

Drawing by Annie Hunter



Dresden Codex

Photo courtesy of the Foundation  
for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies (FAMS).

pictured on his jaguar throne inside a caiman-topped temple. Like a group of ancient calendar priests, the gods gather within the dark interior of a primordial mountain. The accompanying text says that on the day 4 *Ajaw 8 Kumk'u*, the gods present were “ordered.” The word—*ts'ak*—that describes this ordering of the gods, is intrinsically linked to the same eternal and meaningful order embedded in the natural world: cycles of wind and rain, sun and moon, light and darkness. Incidentally, this cosmic order—first practiced by the gods—later became part of a sacred charter that governed elite Maya conduct, so ultimately, cosmic order became moral order. The vase scene

also shows that the gods arrive bearing tribute caches and a bundled altar capped by feathers (the altar is pictured in the lower register beside the lower, front-most god seated before God L), that will likely be set as a foundation stone to mark this auspicious occasion.

Another era-day passage from Stela C at Quirigua in Guatemala recounts the next stage in the story, when four primordial gods set three like-in-kind altar stones in a triad-based arrangement. A jaguar-, serpent- and water-stone are placed at the edge of the sky, at a sacred locale called the New “Three-Stone” Place.

A creation event that is participatory, and where no single god or causal force brings forth the world, is a key pan-Mesoamerican idea. As in the opening chapters of the *Popol Vuh*, a Colonial-era document detailing the Quiché Maya creation story, the world is built not by a single cosmic force or god, but through a conversation between two or more primordial gods. Specifically, the opening chapters of the *Popol Vuh* state that the Heart of Sky, along with the Sovereign and the Quetzal Serpent, created the world through council, by reaching agreements and consolidating their ideas. This meeting of the minds is not unlike how we humans might initiate a building project: gathering together to draw up a set of blueprints. Thus every invention, divine or human, begins with a conversation.

Prior to this renewed order, another era-day inscription reveals a glimpse of the frenzied disorder that existed in what were most likely the nocturnal hours prior to the first dawn. Page 60 of the Dresden Codex, one of few surviving Maya screen-fold books, shows two gods engaged in combat. The god holding a spear thrower and darts (on the viewer's right) is *Bolon Yokte'*. The deity on the left, under attack, is God N. What forces of nature do God N and *Bolon Yokte'* represent? Brandishing such fearsome weapons as the spear thrower (and in other cases a rope, a spear and a shield), the *Bolon Yokte'* is shown to possess a war-like destructive force and is a god associated in the inscriptions with major calendar transitions and death (though his exact duties and profile are yet to be fully understood). God N is well known as a sky-bearer akin to Atlas from Greek mythology. An attack by the *Bolon Yokte'* is nothing short of disastrous. Logic dictates that as God N, the sky-bearer, falls, the sky's supports are threatened, and with them, the space-time continuum. It seems ancient scribes understood that order only exists in juxtaposition to disorder.

Notably, *Bolon Yokte'* is the primary god linked to Tortuguero Monument 6's\* inscribed 2012 passage. So Maya scholars must learn more about this enigmatic deity as a way of fully understanding the significance of his presence in the context of the 2012 event.

Maya cosmology is a rich and varied realm that in part expresses how the cosmic order first came into being. So while the study of Maya mythology is still in its infancy, the future holds great promise for new insights and revelations. As new texts come to light, scholars continue to make inroads into the core mythos that shaped and guided one of the great civilizations of the Americas. Our hope is that 2012 will be a year of new discoveries in Maya mythic history—a year that will have us remembering the gods of the ancient Maya as they take their rightful place alongside those of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece.

\*For more information on this text see [http://www.wayeb.org/notes/wayeb\\_notes0034.pdf](http://www.wayeb.org/notes/wayeb_notes0034.pdf)

# A True Maya Legacy for the Twenty-first Century

ARCHAEOLOGIST TOMÁS GALLARETA RE-POSITS POPULAR NOTIONS OF THE MAYA AND WONDERS IF WE CAN LEARN FROM THE MAYA PAST.

THOUGH SPANISH CONQUISTADORS ARRIVED and colonized the Maya world beginning in the sixteenth century, the West only came to know the region's indigenous culture some 170 years ago, through John Stephens's famed *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, first published in 1843. An account of the writer's adventures in the region, it became an international sensation, not least of all because of its magnificent illustrations of still-standing palaces and temples, sculptures and inscribed monuments by Frederick Catherwood, Stephens's traveling companion.

Based on the book's reception, the pyramids' original builders suddenly became the object of historical mystery. Who were they and where did they originate? How did they survive, with only stone tools, in such an inhospitable environment? What do the signs on their monuments mean?

A generation later, famed archaeologists Sylvanus Morley and Eric J. Thompson of Harvard University's Peabody Museum undertook major expeditions to the Yucatán and Honduras. Their work attracted worldwide attention because it offered the first interpretations of Maya mathematical and astronomical inscriptions as well as of the culture's hieroglyphics, popularizing a notion of Maya mathematical and cosmological genius while creating an incomplete cultural image that, to some degree, is still with us.

It featured Maya rulers who, using the magic derived from combining astronomy with astrology—along with the power to predict the future by discovering patterns in astral movements—consolidated power over the masses. Maya civilization was re-created as an entirely *sui generis* civilization: highly religious yet peaceful, its leaders were priests who lived in temples and ceremonial structures fashioned in masonry, from which they observed the heavens and performed sacred ceremonies. The remaining population was said to consist of illiterate peasants living on hardscrabble farms or towns, in dwellings made of perishable material. The masses' work in the fields went to support the priestly class and provided labor for the construction of pyramids and temples.

These first interpretations have since been largely discredited and amended, based on knowledge gained via later archaeological digs, radiometric dating, deciphering a great many hieroglyphic texts and the use of other cutting-edge technologies. These contribute to a new vision of the pre-Hispanic Maya that focuses more on social, political and economic issues than on religious or ideological concerns. And this new

vision can inform us as we approach the end of the current long-count calendar cycle, as controversy arises regarding the event's true meaning.

Correlations between the Maya calendar and the calendar we use today allow us to know the start-date of the present temporal cycle, 3114 BC, as well its end-date: 21 December 2012. Much has been written on the subject, but every indication suggests that to the Maya, the end of the cycle did not imply the end of the world. Rather, 22 December 2012 was the beginning of a new opportunity to re-create that world—our world, and just in time. Concerns related to our current social and natural habitat demand responses to challenges that arise precisely from feeding a growing population and an ever more degraded environment—problems the Ancient Maya confronted as well.

Experts now assert that from the seventh to ninth centuries, the Maya region was made up of some twenty autonomous political units centered around capital cities which controlled surrounding areas. Such independent states included numerous secondary urban centers featuring lesser examples of public architecture; ample rural populations resided between the settle-

ments. Many parts of the Maya world were much more populous in pre-Hispanic times than they are today; the Puuc region, for example, supported dozens of urban centers with populations of 5000 or more—in spite of no permanent water supplies—obliging ancient residents to store water in underground cisterns for use during months-long annual dry seasons. Today the Puuc population is dramatically reduced and there are no large settlements—populations in its few principal towns do not exceed four or five thousand. In ancient times, major conurbations extended between 20 and up to 50-75 km<sup>2</sup>, with maximum populations from 20,000 to 100,000.

We can deduce that the Yucatán Peninsula produced sufficient tons of corn to feed dense populations for centuries. Additionally, the Ancient Maya enjoyed ample knowledge of natural resource management, supporting centuries of self-sufficiency. Products besides corn—palms, lianas, various wood varieties—must also have been managed to avoid scarcity in resources required for roofs and walls in almost every dwelling. In short, a lack of certain technologies did not prevent the society from prospering in an environment little suited for permanent human habitation. What lay behind the ability to feed a population of two million—a population almost equal to today's?

We do not precisely know if that population, after 2000 years of growth, exceeded the land's carrying capacity, or if administrative failures with regard to territorial resources arose. Were rulers inept as decision-makers, or too warlike? Did low-lying areas experience climatic changes—or some combination of all the abovementioned factors—that culminated in a halt to monumental construction and the abandonment of large ceremonial centers?

Seen through twenty-first century eyes, Maya pre-Hispanic society still offers an opportunity to learn from the past, specifically about highly contemporary issues such as food production, water management, the use of local materials for residential construction, etc., all as a fundament to our own society's material and intellectual prosperity.

The end of the Maya long-count calendar can therefore be seen not as the catastrophic situation that some latter-day prophets have predicted, but rather, as a new beginning where the Maya—and their own historical experiences—warn of our need to take action and protect our habitat, as a strategy to extend our own evolutionary development at least to the end of the next long-count calendar. Can the twenty-first century and its ensuing generations learn from the past and recognize the true legacy of the Maya? ▲

Translated and adapted by Michael Parker-Stainback



Guillermo Pruneda

## BOOK REVIEW

David Stuart's *The Order of Days*

FORMER US DIPLOMAT, PRONATURA PRESIDENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERT JOANN ANDREWS—A LONG-TIME YUCATÁN RESIDENT—REVIEWS A MASTERFUL NEW ADDITION BOTH TO THE HISTORY OF MAYA STUDIES AS WELL AS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE 21 DECEMBER 2012 “PROPHECY.”

AT A TIME WHEN INTEREST IN MAYA CIVILIZATION centers on apocalyptic interpretations of a handful of Maya glyphs, we are fortunate to have David Stuart, the eminent Maya hieroglyph scholar, and his refreshingly clear explanation of Maya writing and calendrics. His recently published book, *The Order of Days* (Harmony Books, New York, 2011) presents a fully updated scholarly review for those seeking to understand the Ancient Mayas' notions of cosmology and time.

In his opening chapter, Stuart offers a fascinating account of sundry explorers and scholars who attempted to understand ancient Maya culture—particularly its writing system—in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Stuart's treatment of Maya hieroglyphs and numerical symbols describes what he labels “the survival of Maya timekeeping.” This survival, starting with re-discovery on the part of Western scholars, is in part serendipitous, and begins with American explorer and writer John Lloyd Stephens. Yucatecan scholar and linguist Juan Pío Pérez befriended Stephens on his travels and showed the American certain valuable documents he had collected, Maya copies of ancient manuscripts. Stephens thought them worthy of publication and included some of Pérez's collected material as an appendix to his bestselling account of the trip, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, from 1843. Pío Pérez's material included an explanation of the Maya 260-day calendar. As Stuart points out, no student of ancient cultures in the 1840s had knowledge of Maya hieroglyphs as used to express days—or calendar structures—until the publication of Stephens' book and the Pío Pérez appendix.

The next stroke of luck, in 1863, fell to Charles Brasseur du Bourbourg, a French priest, who discovered a copy of Friar Diego de Landa's indispensable study of sixteenth century Maya life in the Yucatán, within the Royal Library at Madrid. Written by the priest after having been sent back to Spain for his overzealous efforts proselytizing the Maya, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán* is a

remarkable, detailed account of Maya life in the sixteenth century, lost for almost three hundred years. Made public in 1864, the book includes Diego de Landa's attempts to explain Maya writing and counting systems. His drawings of day signs and numbers allowed scholars to match such drawings with known Maya codices and became essential to deciphering them.

Stuart moves on to describe contributions by renowned twentieth-century scholars, each an engrossing narrative in itself, followed by accounts of boyhood experience in Cobá, Quintana Roo, where he describes a warm personal relationship with today's Maya. Subsequent chapters, written simply and clearly illustrated, concern Maya cosmology. He deals with Maya hieroglyphs and calendrics straightforwardly, and includes an explanation of the creation date (long-count 13.0.0.0.0 4 *Abau* 8 *Kumk'u*)—corresponding to 11 August 3114 BC—which the Maya considered the beginning of the world. Long-count 13.13.13.0.0.0.0. 4 *Abuau* 3 *K'ank'in*—21 December 2012, now widely publicized as doomsday—is, as Stuart demonstrates, “not actually the ‘end’ of anything; rather it's a mathematically predetermined recurrence of the date of ancient Maya creation” (p.244).

One of the most intriguing accounts of world creation that comes to us from Maya mythology is that presented in the *Popol Vuh*, a Maya text first brought to light in 1704 by Dominican monk Francisco Ximénez. Ximénez copied it from the Maya language known as *K'iché* and translated it into Spanish. For Stuart it is “perhaps the foremost example of Native American literature” and

the opening lines he quotes are masterful. “This is the account of when all is still silent and placid. All is silent and calm. Hushed and empty is the womb of the sky” (from Allen J. Christenson, *Popol Vuh: The Second Book of the Maya*; Winchester: O Books, 2003, p. 65). Yet Stuart also expresses reservations about the *Popol Vuh* as the sole Maya creation story.

Though so many hieroglyphs are carved on stelae that still stand at Maya sites—and this despite harsh climatic conditions and occasional human desecrations—it has only been recently that these glyphs have begun to be deciphered. Stuart very clearly illustrates their use by Maya cities' rulers, especially at Palenque, as records of kingly deeds and prowess for succeeding generations.

As we collectively approach the long-count calendar “doomsday” on 21 December 2012, alarming predictions for our planet abound. Stuart dedicates his final chapter, “Seeing Stars,” to a deft analysis of apocalyptic predictions for the “prophetic” equinox. These include a detailed description of the *Tortuguero* monument, in Tabasco, which bears the only clear reference to 2012 as the end of *bak'tun* thirteen—but nothing else. Stuart smartly remarks that the frenzy surrounding end-of-the-world speculation probably reveals more about our own way of thinking than it does about ancient Maya cosmology.

A scholarly, well-reasoned essay, *The Order of Days* is a welcome addition to Maya studies, and makes a worthwhile companion to travelers on their way to the Maya world and its spiritual as well as architectural splendors.

## ABOUT DAVID STUART

Professor of Mesoamerican Art and Writing at the University of Texas at Austin, David Stuart recently received a fellowship to study the remarkable late pre-classic murals at the base of a pyramid in San Bartolo, in the Petén region of Guatemala. The murals appear to depict elements of Maya creation mythology, yet present a number of ambiguous figures and symbols. Readers who enjoyed *The Order of Days* will also want to read Stuart's soon-to-be published interpretation of the murals, artworks described by fellow epigraphist Karl Taube as the “Sistine Chapel of the Maya.”

# Deep Maya Roots, Still Growing

**TRADITIONAL MAYA MEDICINE CURANDERO FELICIANO “DON FELIZ” PATÓN CANUL, FROM IZAMAL, IS A LIVING EXAMPLE OF MEXICO’S RICH AND DIVERSE INDIGENOUS CULTURE, STILL VIBRANT SOME 500 YEARS AFTER THE CONQUISTADORS’ ARRIVAL. CLAUDIA MADRAZO RECENTLY SPOKE WITH DON FELIZ AND THE CONVERSATION INCLUDED BOTH PERSONAL HISTORIES AS WELL AS A VISION FOR CONSERVING MAYA CULTURE.**

**IT STARTS WITH THE HOUSE:** A VERITABLE microcosm of Maya culture itself. The front room is where Don Feliz’s wife and daughters have set up their workshop to sew and embroider traditional Yucatecan clothes. The second room is an apothecary, filled with medicinal plants and herbs, where Don Feliz sees patients; and to the rear is the first patio, where the family dries herbs and makes piñatas for sale at Christmastime. Finally, in the very rear, you reach the *patio maya*—a perennial feature in traditional Maya

they left behind is what you see all around us, and we use it for the benefit of our people—not just in the Yucatán, but wherever Maya people may be.

**CM: So how did you acquire this knowledge?**

**DF:** It started when I was about eight. We were working on a ranch, planting zacate grass for the livestock. This kid woke up with a really high fever. So my grandfather went up into the hills and picked the leaves off this plant (I still have a sample of it) and then made a hot drink that

**DF:** I was always very close to him. We’d come down from the hills and I was always right by his side. I’d ask him, “what is this herb for?” and he’d answer, “this herb is good for curing this or that ailment.” He’d say this herb goes with that and you prepare the medicine this way. He was a teacher, showing me the way. So I wrote everything down in a notebook—that I still check for cures, or how to make combinations and mixes.

**CM: Have you heard what they’re saying about 2012? What’s your take?**

**DF:** I don’t believe all that—it’s not true—the world will not end. But everyone has a right to think of things their way. They’ve been saying the world’s going to end for years, but no one knows when that will really be. I don’t think the world is going to end, but I do think the world is changing—it’s breaking down.

**CM: How do you see the world right now?**

**DF:** I feel like we’re losing things. I was talking with some friends and we said that now that Christmas festivities are coming, we can see that things aren’t the same. In the old days, at seven, they’d start the *vaquería* dances and the street fair; the music would start and we’d dance. It’s not that way any more; now they blast recorded music, start at midnight and it’s rowdy. There are a lot of changes and that’s just the way it is—everything changes. The bad part is that the changes affect people and they get sick, or grow unhappy; they start to fight, or become rude.

The other day I was talking to the woman who’s the director of the public health service here. I said: “Forgive me, doctor, but why are there so many sick people, with diabetes and kidney stones, high cholesterol?” She told me it was what people eat. That in the old days people would have a sweet potato or corn *atole* drink for breakfast, and eat what came from the fields, but it’s not that way any more. Now people have a soft drink for breakfast. They don’t pay attention to what they eat and they get sick. “But if you say that to people then they’ll say we’re crazy. They don’t get that they’re the ones bringing the sickness and problems on themselves.”

“You’re right,” the doctor told me. “People don’t eat what comes from the land, from the fields. What they’re really eating is all the chicken feed that’s in the chickens now.”

You can’t miss it: we Maya live off the land, care for our animals, live healthy and have more contact with nature. The other day a lady from Kantunil passed by on her way to sell flowers—she’s 88. I asked her, “Doña Cony, what do you eat?” She answered she eats lentils, beans, pumpkin seeds, corn tortillas and fruit. Only stuff that comes from the land. “Aha,” I said, “and for meat?”

“I go into town and see what they’re feeding their animals,” she replied. ▲

*Translated and edited by Michael Parker-Stainback*



**“THERE ARE A LOT OF CHANGES AND I THINK THAT’S JUST THE WAY IT IS—EVERYTHING CHANGES. THE BAD PART IS THAT THE CHANGES AFFECT PEOPLE AND THEY GET SICK, OR GROW UNHAPPY; THEY START TO FIGHT, OR BECOME RUDE.”**

residences—crammed with fruit trees and medicinal plants. Not least of all, the family just set up an area where another daughter offers massage and other physical therapies. Don Feliz invited us to the patio for a chat.

**Claudia Madrazo: Don Feliz, what happened to Ancient Maya knowledge?**

**Don Feliz:** There was a great deal of Maya wisdom in the old days. But Bishop Diego de Landa burned many books, right here in Maní. Still, I always say this: yes, the Spaniards wanted to destroy Maya wisdom; they thought they were cutting down a tree: chopping up its parts and burning them. But they were wrong, because the roots remain. Those are the roots that are still growing throughout the Yucatán, and we’re still here, like growing plants. Here we cultivate and care for what our ancestors left behind. What

turned the water green. You say a prayer in Maya: take this and you’ll be all right. The young man threw up, then lay down and slept. The following day he was perfectly fine—it was like a miracle. He sprang up and said, “let’s get to work”—in Maya! I thought: what a great remedy! How miraculous plants are! It’s something that stays with me to this day.

Since I started, my knowledge has expanded and I’ve discovered other cures for all the people who come to see me. Some people spend thousands of pesos on doctors, in vain. Then they come here and with simple herbs they get well. With God’s help they heal.

**CM: How was it that your grandfather passed all his knowledge to you?**