

Indigenousheritage

Passed to Present
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Newsletter

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InHerit and PACOY Summer 2014

For the past three summers InHerit has been involved in a collaborative archaeology project in Yucatan, Mexico. Named PACOY (Proyecto Arqueológico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatán; Collaborative Archaeology Project of Eastern Yucatan), this project brings together archaeologists from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the Universidad del Oriente in Valladolid to work with community members in the investigation of the prehispanic to colonial transition in their communities.

The Team

The project co-directors are Dr. Patricia McAnany (UNC, InHerit) and Dr. Ivan Batun (UNO, AGEY). This summer's team also included InHerit's Program Director Dr. Sarah Rowe, Alf Berry (Surveyor for the Town of Wayland, MA), UNC graduate student Maia Dedrick, UNO Maya Studies students Lourdes Chan Caamal and Alex Tuz, and Ivan Batun Cante and Miriam Batun Meza. Alf coordinated the summer's mapping efforts and was assisted by Alex and Ivan Jr. Maia hopes to base her dissertation research at Tahcabo, and was very involved in both the archaeology project and the community collaboration. Lourdes was a powerhouse of community coordination. Sarah continued her role with community collaboration and Miriam returned to the project to assist with mapping and community activities as we closed out the season.



Above: The rear of the colonial church compound and Postclassic mound.

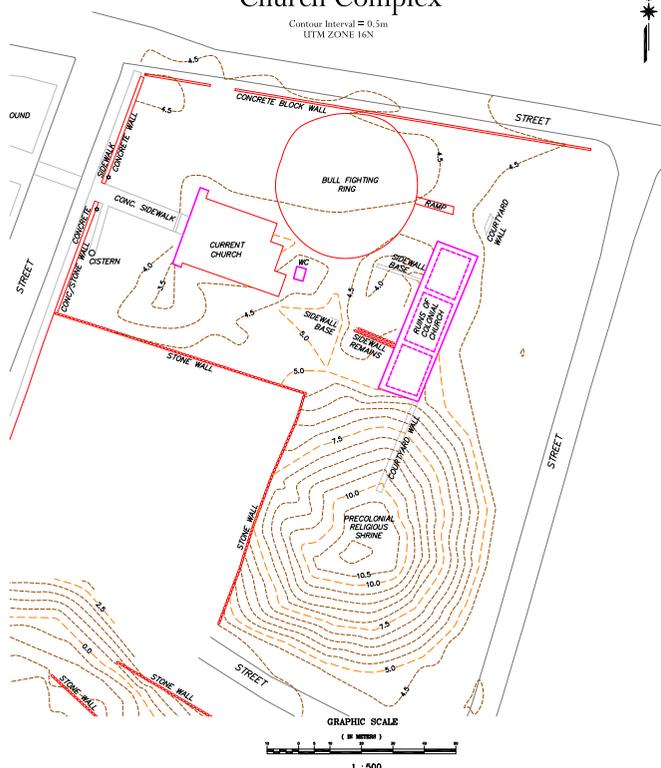
Below: A portion of the international team unloads the Total Station.





PACOY 2014
TAHCABO
Church Complex

Contour Interval = 0.5m
UTM ZONE 16N



We also collected a total of 768 artifacts this year, mostly from the disused residential areas on the outskirts of town. These areas are of particular interest as potential locations for colonial period residences, which would allow us to learn more about conditions of life in Tahcabo during this time. Although the Postclassic and colonial ceramic chronologies for the area have not yet been entirely sorted out, olive jar sherds are one ceramic type that can be clearly assigned to colonial period contexts. All four olive jar sherds located this season came from a burned milpa located to the northeast of the town center. In addition, one fragment of a ceramic type called *majolica*, introduced by Spaniards, was found located next to a house southwest of town.

The Archaeology and Mapping Project

During this season of PACOY, we made a topographic map of Tahcabo and continued surface collections in the town. To map, we used a Total Station and mapping-grade GPS equipment. Included on our map are natural features, including five *rejolladas*, or sinkholes located above the water line that accumulate soil and can be used as orchards, and a large *cenote*, or sinkhole that has year-round water. We included the architectural layout of the town square, which includes the contemporary church and plaza, as well as the ruined colonial church and the pre-Hispanic religious shrine, or mound. We were also able to add out-of-use residential areas that we located in cleared fields outside of town, and which are prime candidates for future excavation.



Upper left: Topographic map of the Tahcabo church complex, including large Postclassic mound.

Lower right: Maia lets local children try out the Total Station.



Apart from finding evidence for colonial-period occupations of residences located on the outskirts of the town, we also continued to find artifacts dating to a wide range of time periods, from Preclassic to the present day and nearly everything in between. While we had grown accustomed to finding Late and Terminal Classic period artifacts on a daily basis (due to high population levels during this time), it was exciting to learn based on that, as at nearby Ek Balam, Tahcabo is a place where people have lived for thousands of years. Archival research into census records later on in the season also demonstrated that even over the past few centuries, populations have fluctuated dramatically in Tahcabo. There is a lot more to tell about this town's history, and we are excited to continue to work at the site and with the people of Tahcabo in future seasons.



The PACOY team surveys burnt milpas and disused house lots for evidence of colonial and precolonial occupation.



Above: A small Postclassic chert projectile point.



Right: Olive jar base recovered from disused house lots in Tahcabao.





Community Collaboration

UNC graduate student Maia Dedrick took the lead on many of the community collaboration initiatives. She designed a photo-voice project for secondary students which utilized photography and discussion to identify good things about living in Tahcabo and the challenges that the community faces as well. A photo-voice project such as this is a first step in crafting action plans to address community concerns.

The PACOY team also worked with community members to develop a Heritage Committee, which will be the primary point of contact for the archaeology project. The purpose of this committee is not only to discuss what the archaeology team is finding. It will also discuss community needs and interests, and how the archaeology team can address those within our project. While this effort is still in its nascent stages, progress was made this summer in creating discussion about local heritage and its management.



Above: Maia, Lourdes and Miriam (left side) work with students on the photo-voice project.

Below: Community members participated in the first Heritage Committee meeting



Surveyor Alf Berry joins a local police officer Narciso Cham Pui on a ride around Tahcabo.

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Tricia, Maia, and Lourdes coordinated a tour of local archaeological site - Ek Balam - for secondary students. Though the site is located only a short distance from Tahcabo and welcomes thousands of visitors every year, most people in Tahcabo had never been there. The students toured the site with a guide and learned more about ancient Maya presence in the region. It was an important step in increasing awareness about local archaeology.



Lourdes was instrumental in getting permissions for the archaeological team to investigation parcels of land. A Mayan speaker, Lourdes lived in the village for several weeks prior to the start of archaeological investigations this summer. The relationships she formed were essential to nurturing the collaborative goals of this project.

Finally, Sarah designed a Heritage Day for the local primary school and with the help of Lourdes led 50 children through games and discussion about Maya archaeology and their community's heritage. We distributed the Yucatan version of the InHerit Soy Maya coloring book which contains information about local archaeological resources presented in both Spanish and Yucatec Maya. Sarah and Lourdes read select pages with the students and discussed the importance of original context when investigating archaeological material. The students were enthusiastic about learning about their community's past and helping to protect the archaeology as a source of this information and a shared community resource.

Above: Secondary students from Tahcabo visit Ek Balam with the PACOY team.

Below: Sarah and Lourdes share the "Soy Maya" coloring book with school children.



Strengthening Institutional Ties

This spring, PACOY co-director Dr. Ivan Batun was appointed Director of the State Archives of the Yucatán (AGEY), which is located in Merida. AGEY is home to the secular archives of the peninsula and houses a host of information about local communities over the past several centuries. On the closing day of the summer season we signed an agreement between AGEY and our nonprofit arm, The Alliance for Heritage Conservation, to work together to tell the stories of some of the earliest towns in this region. This agreement will open a number of opportunities for PACOY as the project moves forward and we continue our work in Tahcabo and the region.

This season was extremely productive and sets the stage for in-depth community collaboration in Tahcabo. The PACOY team is very excited for what the future will hold!



Above: Dr. Batun and Dr. McAnany sign an agreement between AGEY and the Alliance for Heritage Conservation.

Below: PACOY members gather for a celebration to close the field season.

