

Mayan find references 2012 "end date"

June 28, 2012 12:00 PM Mike Strecker
mstreck@tulane.edu

Tulane archaeologists working at the site of La Corona in Guatemala have discovered a 1,300-year-old Maya text that provides only the second known reference to the so-called "end date" of the Maya calendar, Dec. 21, 2012. The discovery, one of the most significant hieroglyphic finds in decades, was announced on Thursday (June 28) at the National Palace in Guatemala.



A detail of carved steps shows 1,300-year-old Maya text that provides only the second known reference to the so-called "end date" of the Maya calendar. (Photo by David Stuart)

"This text talks about ancient political history rather than prophecy," says [Marcello A. Canuto](#), director of the [Middle American Research Institute](#) at Tulane University and co-director of the excavations at [La Corona](#).

Since 2008, Canuto and Tomas Barrientos of the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala have directed excavations at La Corona, a site previously ravaged by looters.

“Last year, we realized that looters of a particular building had discarded some carved stones because they were too eroded to sell on the antiquities black market,” says Barrientos, “so we knew they found something important, but we also thought they might have missed something.”

What Canuto and Barrientos found was the longest text ever discovered in Guatemala. Carved on staircase steps, it records 200 years of La Corona history.

David Stuart of the University of Texasâ€“Austin recognized the 2012 reference on a stairway block commemorating a visit to La Corona in AD 696 by the most powerful Maya ruler of that time, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' of Calakmul.

The visit took place only a few months after the ruler's defeat by long-standing rival Tikal in AD 695. Thought by scholars to have been killed in this battle, the ruler was instead visiting allies and allaying their fears after his defeat.

The 2012 reference places this king's troubled reign and accomplishments into a larger cosmological framework.

“In times of crisis, the ancient Maya used their calendar to promote continuity and stability rather than predict [apocalypse](#),” says Canuto.