

# Copan Association Newsletter

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## *It's Here!*

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Newsletter online!  
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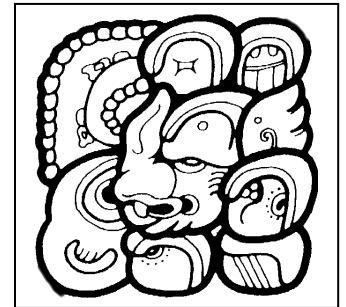
## **Casa Kinich Inaugurated March 25, 2008**

Located in the western highlands of Honduras, ancient Copan was one of the greatest Maya cities. Long known for its intricate stelae and exquisitely sculpted rock art, ancient Copan's quality of art on its steles and buildings has made it one of the most studied sites in the Maya world. Present day Copan is a UNESCO World heritage site and is visited annually by over 160,000 people.

**Casa Kinich** is a learning center for children. This center teaches children from all over the world about the ancient Maya's past. Casa K'inich, or "House of the Sun" has been featured in newspapers and magazines in six nations. Casa Kinich has welcomed over 60,000 visitors since its opening.

There have been three phases of Casa Kinich which is the only child based exhibit space located near a Maya site in the entire Maya world. Originally opened in February 2002, in a small-unused school classroom, it was expanded to double its size in 2004. In March 2008 Casa Kinich will move into its permanent location inside an old fort (see related article on Fuerte Cabañas) overlooking the modern village and the ancient site of Copan. During each planning phase, an international group of teachers and scholars collaborated on the learning center's design for the children of Honduras.

The name Casa Kinich blends the Spanish word for "house" and the Mayan word for of the "sun" and when



visitors; children and adults alike, enter this "House of the Sun", they are literally enlightened by a colorful, mentally stimulating environment. Casa Kinich has dedicated itself to raising awareness of the Maya Ruins. The exhibits feature the music of ancient Maya, written sentences using Maya glyphs, and Maya nobles who are dressed by the young visitor in colorful magnetic clothes. Tunkuls (drums) are beaten and rattles are shaken to replicate the musical sounds that the  
*(continues on page 4)*

## **DIPA (Integrated Development of Archaeological Parks)**

DIPA is a technical team formed in May 2004, headquartered at the Copan Association and directed by Honduran archaeologist, Ricardo Agurcia F. DIPA offers advice to the Honduran Ministry of Tourism (IHT) pertaining to certain aspects of the World Bank-financed Copan Valley Regional Development Project (PDRVC). The PDRVC uses archaeological

tourism as one poverty-reducing strategy to benefit rural Honduran communities. Using Copan's success as a framework, DIPA has advised the government about meaningful tourism infrastructure as well as cultivating informative and engaging experiences at

several undeveloped Honduran archaeological sites. Micro-credit loans, business grants, a series of educational trainings, guiding workshops, and craft courses have enhanced the opportunities of small entrepreneurs living near these five archaeological parks.



## Ricardo Agurcia speaks at University of Texas



**Artists rendering The temple of Rosalila discovered by Ricardo Agurcia F. in 1989.**

*Rosalila is the only ancient Mayan Building discovered to date that was completely preserved and not destroyed when there was the changeover of a ruler, instead it was lovingly preserved, entombed and buried. The reason is still unknown.*

### *On the Road*

Future Lectures and Seminars that will be presented by ASCOPAN Members & Directors....  
Sandra Guerra, Treasurer speaks to Rotary Club Members in U.S.  
Ricardo Agurcia and Mariella Guzman present at 5<sup>th</sup> Annual International Tourism Conference Tegucigalpa, Honduras May 16-18, 2007



On March 27, Ricardo Agurcia participated in the First Maya Weekend to be held in ten years at the University of Texas in Austin. His subject at the University of Texas of course, was Copan. As a matter of fact the whole

Seminar at the University of Texas fetured Copan. Ricardo and many of his associates from over the years met in Austin, Texas to present finds past and present This was the first in a series of talks that Ricardo will present over the next year. Other talks to be presented will include University of Pennsylvania's Maya Weekend in April and a seminar which will be presented at the Guatemalan Popul Vuh Museum in Guatemala City May 22.

and present. Speaking on his current projects as well as the past projects, Ricardo has been excavating and fighting to preserve the patrimony of Honduras for over thirty years. He started his 30<sup>th</sup> year as an archaeologist crawling down into the depths underneath the Rosalila Temple to show guides the excavation site of Oropendola.

Is Oropendula the next Rosalila?

## Semillas de Prosperidad, Seeds of Hope

Casa Kínich's new gift shop is not just a shop that is filled with "stuff". Each item was carefully thought out. The Copan Association with economic support from the Copan Maya Foundation wanted to be sure to include items for everyone from every walk of society. The shop not only has original designs that are exclusive to Copan Association, there are tiny turtles, snakes and frogs, animals that can be bought for as little as 10 cents.

Keeping the food items of the Maya in mind, and the Chocolate theme of Casa Kínich, two items were developed by a local Panaderia (Bakery). Jacqueline Yessenia Media and her husband Santos Rodriguez provide a variety of cookies and breads to the village of Copan Ruinas through their Bakery known as Dios es Amor (God is Love). Together they developed cookies with a

base of corn flour especially to sell in the Casa Kínich. Also developed are chocolate cookies with the Mayan Glyph for chocolate stamped on the top.

The Alfareria El Rubi, is a group of seven women who make hand thrown pottery. It is located in Santa Rita approximately eight kilometers from Copan Ruinas. The child sized cups with hand painted Monkeys, Jaguars, and Crocodiles were also designed exclusively for the shop. The cups take six weeks from start to finish.

The coloring books were chosen because they had trees and plants of Honduras, one featuring the fruits and vegetables are and the other featuring fruits and vegetables, all are native to the Country. Displays

of these Fruits and Vegetables can also be seen inside the Casa Kínich.

Colored stickers, showing animal species from all over Honduras that are endangered, books on the Maya, children's t-shirts with "balam" or the Jaguar, zotz the bat or 'mo the Macaw the store is targeted towards the youth of the world. Each item supports what was learned in Casa Kínich.

Future plans include locally made honey (very important to the Maya), and healthy snacks made from corn. All proceeds from this shop go to support Casa Kínich Learning Center, which does not charge for admittance





Bat City, Copan Association's newest original design, available in our gift shop in the Visitor's Center in the Ruinas de Copan, Copan Ruinas, Honduras

***Go Green, ASCOPAN has initiated its dues payment electronically through Paypal.com which eliminates the need for paper – if however you want to continue to be billed by mail, let us know when you send your dues payment.***

***Visit our Online Store  
Are you a member of the Copan Association but just can't get to those Gift shops to make your purchases to show your support? Well you can shop online and proceeds go to support ASCOPAN. Check out our products in our virtual Gift Store Balam at [www.cafepress.com/balam](http://www.cafepress.com/balam). This month we feature our special Track Suit with the Copan Glyph on the Left Pocket, available in Black or Pink, check it out***



**Download the Casa Kínich Children's Guide in English for free at [www.famsi.com](http://www.famsi.com). This is the seventh most downloaded publication on the FAMSI website. It is currently being re-edited and the new version will be available online through our websites [www.copanmaya.org](http://www.copanmaya.org), and [www.asociacioncopan.org](http://www.asociacioncopan.org)**



## ***The Metamorphosis...Fuerte Cabañas***



***Entrance November 2007***



***Entrance March 2008***



***Street Entrance 2007***



***One week before inauguration 2008***

## **Inauguration...** continued from page 1

ancient Maya played. The movable recycled materials and displays are non-electric and were designed to be portable and fit into small spaces. Casa Kinich has long been a model for other learning centers in Central America. Upcoming exhibits allow the visitor to turn knobs, lift doors and discover a plethora of images and information about the ancient Maya. The authentic ball game gear that is featured shows how the Maya dressed for their ritual ballgame as well as important information on environmental change, and how present day archaeologists gather clues about this ancient civilization. Videos, food, murals, and a nine-foot carved stone temple face are also in the works. A reconstructed "champa" shows not only how the ancient Maya lived but also the food they ate. Colorful graphic panels displayed throughout the exhibits have explanations in three languages, Chorti (Maya), Spanish, and English. The new center has an expanded play area, a gift shop, and future plans include a snack shop. In keeping with the preservation of Copan's historical sites, Casa Kinich is housed in a rescued and refurbished building that overlooks Copan. The main theme that the expanded Casa Kinich features is the history of Cacao, or chocolate. Chocolate was a precious food of the ancient Maya (and still a precious food to many of us today!). The word chocolate comes from the ancient Aztec language of Mexico and cacao comes from the Mayan word kakaw. Recent discoveries show, that chocolate was being used as a

drink in Honduras over 3000 years ago, 500 years earlier than thought before. The early chocolate drink was 5% alcohol and later the drink was seasoned with honey, chili, maize, and flowers and frothed and was drunk as well as inhaled. Served in palaces during banquets these chocolate drinks were only used on special occasions.

Of all museums in the area, Casa Kinich has been the most popular. The March 2008 inauguration of Casa Kinich culminates combined efforts of the Copan Association, the Copan Maya Foundation, and PDRVC (The World Bank) along with the expertise of Copan Association's DIPA team. Also to be applauded are the efforts from The Honduran Institute of Tourism under the guidance of its Director, Ricardo Martinez.

Admission to Casa Kinich is free, it is operated solely through donations. It is suggested that groups contact the Copan Association at 651-4105 to make reservations.



## Saving Copan's Past while providing for Copan's Future

### **Fuerte Cabañas**

Fuerte Cabañas was constructed in the 1940's to serve as a military base under the orders of General Tiburcio Carias Andino who was the military leader at the time.

Its function for many years was to defend the border of Western Honduras with Guatemala. In later years it was used as a training base for the national police until it was finally abandoned in the late nineteen eighties. Left to deteriorate and lie in ruins for almost thirty years Fuerte Cabañas became a favorite hangout for drug users and squatters. In 2004, the building was scheduled for refurbishment and rescue. Its location and unique design and the history of the building made it an asset to the community of Copan Ruinas if somehow it could be revitalized. Enter the project of Desarrollo Regional en el Valle de Copan (PDRVE), Copan Association, and the Institute of Tourism. It was decided to include the rescue of the old fort as one of the priorities to maintain the historical infrastructure in one of the outer areas of Copan. In order to guaranty that the location would continue after its transformation, and to serve the community as a whole, it was decided that Casa Kinich the only interactive children's center that exists next to ancient Maya ruins, would be relocated and permanently housed there. Casa Kinich was expanded to twice its size and permanently situated within the walls of the old fort as an anchor to the project. On March 25, the transformation was complete and the Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Culture, the Mayor and practically the entire village of Copan Ruinas, who had an open invitation,

inaugurated the building from military base to Children's Learning Center, metamorphosis!

### **While providing for its future**

El Centro regional de investigaciones Arqueológicas or CRIA or the Centro as its known in Copan, was originally constructed during the last years of the seventies and has served as a base for investigations of archaeological projects in the valley of Copan. Outdated, dilapidated and in need of repair, the PDRVC proposed that the renovation of this building be included in the modernization and preservation of Copan. This project has to be the most important of all projects as it houses all of the finds in the archeological site of Copan Ruinas and serves as a center of investigation for universities, scientists, and students from all over the world. The objectives of the project were 1. Create better conditions during the investigation process of archaeological discoveries. Build infrastructure according to the actual needs of current and future investigations. 2. Provide separate areas for investigation activities and housing of the collections. 3. Modernize and protect the collections to preserve the culture. Archaeologists, scientists and investigators would have the appropriate tools to document, house, and study the collections in a modern facility. During the whole project, strict control and protection was maintained to manage the collections and archaeological finds. All personal employed had years of experience and had worked under the professional direction and conservation of restorations.



## Three World Class Museums

*The Copan Association was responsible for the inception and completion of the original Sculpture Museum located in the Main Park.*

*After the Museums structure was damaged, the Copan Association lobbied furiously to shut down the building and remodel it before any of the original sculptures housed inside could be damaged by further deterioration. This was done in 2004 and the Museum was reopened in 2005 with the structure stabilized and the sculptures inside are once again housed in a safe environment.*



With the inauguration of the Casa Kinich Children's Interactive Learning Center, Copan Ruinas now has three world class museums within its boundaries.

The Sculpture Museum situated in the main park of the ancient ruins was another very important activity that was administered and supervised by The Copan Association.

The original project was initiated May, 1993.

The Museum represents the culmination of over fifteen years of work in the rescue of some of Copan's most important Sculptures, which are now housed within the walls of this structure.

The Sculpture Museum consists of over 4000, square meters and encompasses two floors. The structure stands over fifteen meters high. Its first phase was principally financed by the President of the republic at that time with a donation in 1993 of 4,500,000 lempiras and

another 1,400,000 lempiras donated in 1994.

The remaining L345, 443. lempiras was raised through the Copan Association with a series of fundraisers and through private donations from Copan Associations own membership.

In November 1995, the Copan Association obtained a financial contract with the FHIS to continue work on replicas in the park, which would replace original sculptures that would be removed from the park and housed in the Museum.



During that phase a metallic structure was also constructed over the original Temple known as Rosalila to protect it from any collapse over the temple. This exquisite temple is replicated at the entrance of the Sculpture Museum. It is the only mummified building ever discovered in the world.

For some mystical reason, the Maya did not want to destroy this building, but carefully preserved it and built on top of it. A tunnel has been built which permits visitors to observe Rosalila through special windows. All of these structures were built to protect the structure from elements of the environment human and natural.



The third museum is located in the Central Plaza in Copan Ruinas. The Pueblo Museum or Museo del Pueblo houses sculpture from Las Sepulturas, an outlying residential center and has rotating displays of discoveries from excavations in the ruins. Many of the most beautiful sculptures, jewelry, incense burners and even eccentric flints which were discovered as offerings in Rosalila are housed within its walls.





Juan Carlos Perez (above) was recently announced as the new head of the Institute of Anthropology in Guatemala. He worked with Copan Association's DIPA project for four years. He started his new post April 1, 2008. Pictured with him is Dr. Dorie Reents-Budet of the Smithsonian. She is currently helping Copan Association update the handbook for Casa Kínich Children's Interactive Learning Center. The photograph was taken at the III International Congress at Copan, where both made presentations.

WEBSITES & LINKS

- [www.asociacioncopan.org](http://www.asociacioncopan.org)
- [www.copanmaya.org](http://www.copanmaya.org)
- [www.famsi.org](http://www.famsi.org)
- [www.visitehonduras.org](http://www.visitehonduras.org)
- [www.hondurastips.com](http://www.hondurastips.com)

**Copan Association Welcomes Copan Maya Foundation's New Board of Directors 2008-2010**

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 Secretary: Loa Traxler

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- Whitney Hyder
- Dorie Reents-Budet

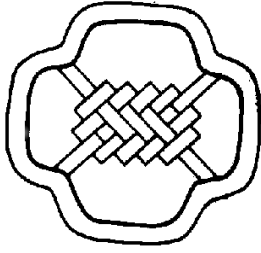
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The annual membership fee for the Copan Association is \$40. In the US, your donation is 100% tax deductible if you make your payment out to the Copan Maya Foundation and mailed to the address below.

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