

“A Royal Tomb from Early Classic Copan, Honduras”

by

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Molly Fierer-Donaldson is currently the curator of the Lost City Museum in Overton Nevada. However Molly’s talk centered on work she performed while a graduate student at Harvard University. While at Harvard, Molly was excavating the ruins at Copan Honduras from 2003 to 2009.

Molly began her talk by giving an overview of the Mayan culture and describing the typical life in Copan Honduras today.

She then went on to describe the Mayan ruins at Copan. Excellent overviews can be found at http://thisishonduras.com/Copan_Ruinas.htm, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copán>, and <http://www.livescience.com/37533-copan-ruins.html> among others. The Mayan rule at Copan lasted from 426 to 822 AD. There were 16 known kings, whose reins were documented on various stone hieroglyphs and other documents.

Molly’s task was to excavate “structure 16” and attempt to locate the tomb of a king who was thought to be buried in a temple that was buried in the depths of large pyramid/ plaza structure. This involved elaborate and painstaking tunneling, done using hand tools.

She and her team were successful in locating the tomb, the remains of the king and the artifacts buried with the king. It is thought that the tomb belonged to either ruler 3 or 4, which dates the tomb to the 455-465 AD time period.

The remainder of Molly’s talk centered on the artifacts found in the tomb. Her team found, shells from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, jade carvings and beadwork, and pyrite mirrors. However the bone fragments were such poor condition that dating and forensic analysis could not be done. Details of this work and findings can be found at http://archive.archaeology.org/0909/maya_copan/, <http://coolsciencenews.blogspot.com/2009/10/new-royal-maya-tomb-emerges-from.html>, and <http://historum.com/natural-environment/8117-daily-dose-archaeology-4.html>.

Molly’s work at Harvard was part of a large archaeological program carried out by a number of universities and research organizations whose goal was to better understand Copan and its role in the Mayan culture.

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John Mangels