



PEABODY MUSEUM
of ARCHAEOLOGY & ETHNOLOGY

Harvard University, 11 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138-2019

PRESS RELEASE

Fragile Memories

Images of Archaeology and Community at Copan, 1891–1900

What: New Exhibition

Exhibit Dates: June 4, 2008 – March 29, 2009

Opening Reception: June 4, 2008
5–7pm Exhibition opening and Reception; Curator's Gallery Talk 5:45pm
Free and Open to the Public

Where: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 11 Divinity Ave. Cambridge. Harvard Square T stop, #1 Bus, handicapped accessible. Information: 617-496-1027

(Cambridge, March 30, 2008) The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology presents a new exhibition that explores the archaeology of one of the most important Maya sites and its effect on the development of the local community. The exhibition opens June 4, 2008 and will remain on view through December 2008.

In the late nineteenth century, Peabody Museum expedition teams set out to remote areas of Mexico and Central America, such as Copan, Honduras, often with little inkling of what they might experience and barely prepared to navigate the cultural encounters essential to their missions. The Peabody Museum holds the written and visual records of these early expeditions and recently completed a two-year project to digitize over 10,000 nineteenth-century glass-plate negatives taken then. The earliest images in this amazing and unique collection were photographed at Copan, during the museum's pioneering archaeological expeditions to the site. These images, "visual time machines," offer a wealth of archaeological information with continuing importance for current research along with a visual narrative of the budding town and the archaeologists' interactions with the local community. As the excavations unfold before our eyes, scenes of the Copan community also emerge. But, who are the people in these images, and what effect did the excavations have on their community? Peabody Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphics director Barbara Fash, who has worked on archaeology projects at Copan for 30 years, set out to recover what lingering memories survive

of the people and places in these fragile images. Working with Harvard and Honduran students, Fash interviewed members of the Copan community to reconnect this lost history with the images. ***Fragile Memories*** highlights the changed nature of archaeological practices, how these newly digitized images advance ongoing studies, and how archaeologists and communities continue to shape one another's lives.

The Curator

Barbara Fash is director of the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions project at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. Barbara Fash has illustrated and studied Maya monuments for more than thirty years. She co-directs the Copan Mosaics Project with William L. Fash, directed the Hieroglyphic Stairway Conservation and Research Project (1997–2001), the Copan Research Library and Archive Project (1999–2001), and was head museographer and exhibit designer for the Copan Sculpture Museum (1993–96). She co-edited *Pre-Columbian Water Management: Ideology, Ritual and Power* (2006) with Lisa Lucero, and curated the *Distinguished Casts* (2001) exhibit at the Peabody Museum.

About the Peabody Museum

The Peabody Museum is among the oldest archaeological and ethnographic museums in the world with one of the finest collections of human cultural history found anywhere. It is home to superb materials from Africa, ancient Europe, North America, Mesoamerica, Oceania, and South America in particular. In addition to its archaeological and ethnographic holdings, the Museum's photographic archives, one of the largest of its kind, holds more than 500,000 historical photographs, dating from the mid-19th century to the present and chronicling anthropology, archaeology, and world culture.

Location: *The Peabody Museum is located at 11 Divinity Avenue in Cambridge. The Museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.*

Hours: 9 AM to 5 PM, 7 days a week. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Admission is \$9.00 for adults, \$7.00 for students and seniors, \$6.00 for children, 3–18. Free with Harvard ID or Museum membership. The Museum is free to Massachusetts residents Sundays, 9 AM to noon, year round, and Wednesdays from 3 PM to 5 PM (September to May). Admission includes admission to the Harvard Museum of Natural History. The Peabody Museum participates in the City Pass and WGBH programs. For more information call (617) 496-1027 or go online to: www.peabody.harvard.edu.

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A wedding (?) at the ruins. The gentleman on the left (in all his finery but barefoot) appears to be the groom and the young girl on the right, the bride. Some years later they appear in another photo with a young son. This image may be a family photograph or a wedding.

Although the focus of the photograph is on the event, behind the group the Hieroglyphic Stairway lies collapsed and awaiting reconstruction. This photo has been influential and a valuable tool in reconstructing the correct sequence of the inscription on the Hieroglyphic Stairway, which was reconstructed out of order and has considerably degraded in the past 100 years. Photo by Edmund Lincoln, 1893. PM 2004.24.452.



Altar U (left and below) and several other monuments were located on the village square. Photo by Edmund Lincoln, 1893. PM 2004.24.249. Photographs of the objects from all sides also captured a panoramic view of the square with early dwellings and civic buildings.

