

# Professor argues Mayan culture urban

By JOHN PIPER  
Of the Emerald

The ancient Mayan Indian culture was probably more urban than agricultural, a University architecture professor contends in a book to be released next spring.

George Andrews, who spent 14 years gathering material for his book "Maya Cities—Place Making and Urbanization," says he believes many Mayan settlements were full-scale cities, rather than just ceremonial centers as first believed.

He has spent eight summers in Mexico, British Honduras and Guatemala exploring Mayan ruins. The book—which was underwritten partly by a \$8,500 grant from the National Science Foundation—will be published by the University of Oklahoma Press as part of its American Indian Series.

The sudden collapse of the highly advanced Mayan civilization—which existed from the first through the ninth centuries A.D.—has never been adequately explained, and Andrews says his book makes an attempt to clear up the mystery.

#### Mayan life

Instead, Andrews is concerned primarily with the nature of Mayan settlements. He looks at the ancient civilization from the standpoint of an environmental designer, trying to make inferences about what Mayan life was like.

"Up until the last 5 or 10 years, most of the attention of archeologists focused on artifacts, monumental architecture and the hieroglyphic writing of the Mayans," he says.

But work by archeologists doesn't "provide any information about the nature of the settlement itself," he explains because mapping during this early phase was confined almost entirely to monumental structures.

Andrews says it has been assumed that Mayan settlements consisted of buildings that were used only for religious or ceremonial purposes. Such an assumption infers the Mayans didn't live in the settlements, but merely used them as ceremonial centers on special occasions.

#### Urban buildings

But Andrews says he tried to make a case in his book that the larger settlements—"not all of them by any means because they vary in size considerably"—can be called urban.

"If you accept that proposition, then you also have to accept the idea that the buildings represent a whole range of activities, beyond that you would associate with religion or ceremonial activity."

The settlements "become

much more analogous to a contemporary city, which is made up out of a great variety of buildings."

If the larger settlements can be called urban, Andrews says, "then you have to assume a fairly large resident population carried on quite a different kind of life. They were not agriculturalists living out in the brush, in rural areas, but rather urban residents."

#### Negative evidence

Andrews says the assumption that Mayan settlements were only ceremonial centers was made by using negative evidence. "It's as though you drew a map of Eugene and only showed the central business area and reasoned from that there isn't anything more."

He says at the six or seven sites where extensive mapping has been done, it is clear in all cases that the settlements "are much more extensive than just looking at the central core portion would suggest, and that some of them are indeed very large."

Large Mayan settlements had a central precinct (analogous to downtown), he explains, with a number of "sub-centers" (suburban shopping centers) surrounded by houses.

#### Mapping and excavation

The major problems Andrews faced in the eight summers he spent exploring Mayan ruins were those of mapping and excavation.

Mapping is "extremely difficult," he says "because the areas you're dealing with are

completely covered over with a very heavy growth of jungle. The character of that varies depending on where you are—from a kind of scrub-thorny jungle in the northern part of the Maya area to a rain-forest in the southern part."

"You can be within 20 feet of a 50-foot high structure and not realize it's there—that's how thick the growth is," he says.

Machetes and axes are used to "cut down enough to see what's there," he explains, and the "amount of clearing required is fantastic."

Smaller mounds are more difficult to find, Andrews says, but in many cases they tell more about the life-style of the Mayans than do the larger monuments.

#### Accidental interest

Andrews says he became interested in Mayan culture accidentally.

"The first time I went to that part of the world, I was fascinated by what I saw, I guess partly because it was so obvious from even the little bit you could see at that time that the architecture was very sophisticated and somehow it just appealed to

me very much personally."

He decided to work on studying the culture seriously in 1958.

"I look at it from the point of view of the environmental designer, trying to reason about it from the reference of how all of the aspirations of a society are given form through what they do in making buildings and what they do in making cities," he says.

Andrews' book—which will include 75 original detailed drawings, 250 photographs and more than 500 pages of text—is

not intended to be a text book or a picture book, but somewhere in between.

"I'm really trying to get more people interested in Maya architecture and Maya settlements by trying to make more clear what they represent," he says.

And, even after spending 14 years preparing "Maya Cities—Place Making and Urbanization," Andrews says he wants to write another book on the Mayans—this one about their architecture, rather than their settlement patterns.

## You really know how to hurt an elephant

OQUAWKA, Ill. (AP) — Norma Jean, a 6,500-pound circus elephant struck and killed by lightning, was buried Monday night in Oquawka's village square, where she was to have performed in a benefit with the Clark and Walters Circus.

The elephant, 27 years old and the featured animal attraction of the circus, was killed earlier Monday during a severe thunderstorm.

The circus, which was in Oquawka for a benefit for a softball league, borrowed an elephant from another circus touring in western Illinois, and the show went on as planned.

Jim Silverlake, general manager of the circus, said Norma Jean was buried in a 12- by 14-foot grave near the tree at which she was tethered when the lightning struck.

## Not fond of Fonda

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Fletcher Thompson, R-Ga., Tuesday accused actress Jane Fonda of treason and said the Justice Department should take action against her.

Fonda, Thompson told the House, was quoted last week by Radio Hanoi as urging U.S. military personnel in Vietnam to disobey orders.

"This is treason," he said, and "is giving aid and comfort to the enemy."

He said he was asking the attorney general to bring charges of treason against Fonda, a recent visitor to North Vietnam. Oregon Daily Emerald

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