

# **Chalchuapa, El Salvador excavation records**

1111

**Finding aid prepared by Bianca Buccitelli.**

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Last updated on March 01, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

2003

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Coe, William R., 1926-
<b>Creator</b>	Sharer, Robert J., 1940-
<b>Title</b>	Chalchuapa, El Salvador excavation records
<b>Call number</b>	1111
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1954-1970
<b>Extent</b>	5 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	The records of the excavations at Chalchuapa, El Salvador include correspondence, administrative records, field notes, photographs, manuscripts and reports. The bulk of these materials originate from the 1954 excavation by William R. Coe and the 1966 analysis by Robert J. Sharer, as well as the 1969-1970 re-excavations.

**Cite as:**

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Chalchuapa, El Salvador excavation records. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

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## Biography/History

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Located in the transitional region between the Maya highlands and the Pacific coastal plain, the archeological site of Chalchuapa is one of the largest sites in this area consisting of a total of 145 structures (both large and small). This site is defined by a series of separate mound groups that include (from South to North: Tazamul, Casa Blanca, El Trapiche, and Pampe). In addition, at least three other cultural areas have been identified including Lago Cuzcachapa, Laguna Seca, and Las Victorias. Lago Cuzcachapa and Laguna Seca yielded cultural deposits and evidence for ceremonial activity, while Las Victorias consists of Olmec boulder-sculptures.

The origin of this project began with A.V. Kidder's site survey of the El Trapiche and Casa Blanca mound groups in 1953. Kidder's goal at this time was to encourage a chain of "archaeological connectives" from the heart of the Maya region, traveling through its peripheral Southeastern regions, and down into the non-Maya regions of Southern Central America. After conducting this survey, Kidder reported the possibility of Preclassic occupation at Chalchuapa that may have been related to the Middle and Late Preclassic stages found at the nearby Maya center of Kaminaljuyu.

Then in 1954, this project was taken up by William R. Coe, of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, who proceeded to conduct preliminary research focusing on the mound grouping El Trapiche. Although Coe was able to corroborate Kidder's report of a Preclassic occupation at Chalchuapa, his artifact findings were confiscated by the El Salvador government and analysis of these artifacts was prevented for over a decade.

It was in 1966 that Robert J. Sharer, with Coe's support, was finally able to recover these artifacts and begin their long overdue analysis. In addition to his lab work, Sharer also conducted four months of archaeological excavation at the El Trapiche mound grouping in 1967. It was the synthesis of the 1966 lab work and the 1967 excavation that comprised Sharer's Ph.D. dissertation. Some important evidence found as a result of the 1967 excavation of El Trapiche was the presence of both Early Preclassic and Late Preclassic occupation at the site as well as a layer of volcanic ash covering certain late Preclassic monuments. The latter finding is significant because it provides possible evidence for a major volcanic event, occurring in the Late Preclassic, that may have had a considerable impact on the settlement at Chalchuapa and the surrounding region.

After the completion of Sharer's 1968 dissertation, it was concluded that additional research would be necessary in order to fully explore the nature of Preclassic occupation at the site. The result was the formation of the Chalchuapa Archaeological Project in 1967 with William Coe as Project Director, Robert Sharer as Field Director and with the support of the University Museum. In the 1968 field season preparatory work was conducted at the previously untested mound grouping of Casa Blanca in the form of site survey and test pit excavation. The information gathered was then used in the subsequent 1969 field season.

In 1969, five months were spent excavating the mound groups at El Trapiche and Casa Blanca as well as the cultural deposits at Lago Cuzcachapa and Las Victorias. In addition, continued surface survey and test pit excavation was conducted throughout the site. In 1970, the final year of the Archaeological Project, much of the field season was occupied with lab analysis, while minimal excavations were also conducted at Lago Cuzcachapa and Laguna Seca.

William Robertson Coe was born in New York City in 1926 and attended a succession of private schools before enrolling at the University of Pennsylvania. Coe referred to his early educational institutions as "snob schools" that "had little pertaining to what went on in the world." A self-described "lazy as hell" student, Coe's interest in anthropology was fueled during a family trip to pre-Castro Cuba. While in Cuba, Coe and his brother, Michael, also to become a Maya scholar, embarked on a side trip to the Yucatan seeking the monuments they had seen in books.

Coe received his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. His association with the Penn Museum began as a student assistant during the 1952-1953 school year. He was named assistant curator of the American section in 1959. Dr. Coe also worked as an instructor in the department of anthropology beginning in 1958 attaining full Professorship in 1970.

Robert J. Sharer, an Internationally renowned archaeologist and Mesoamerican scholar, was the Emeritus Curator, American Section, Penn Museum, and the Emeritus Sally and Alvin Shoemaker Professor in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania. He conducted research in Central America for nearly 50 years. His research career focused on two major Penn Museum excavation projects at two UNESCO World Heritage Maya sites—Quirigua in Guatemala (1974-79) and Copan in Honduras (1988-2003).

Sharer was author, co-author, editor or co-editor of more than twenty books and monographs including, in 2006, with Loa P. Traxler, *The Ancient Maya* (Sixth Edition, revised), Stanford University Press, and in 2004, *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Museum. Sharer's strong desire was to see all the archaeological research from his many projects through to publication. Sharer was well known for his fieldwork in Maya sites, such as Copan, El Mirador at Copan. He directed the Early Copan Acropolis Project (E-CAP). His team created more than three miles of tunnels into the early levels of the city, and in 1993, discovered the founder's tomb. Sharer was always intrigued by how advanced the Maya civilization was and how it produced major findings in astronomy, mathematics, art and agriculture.

**Below is a list of the abbreviations used in the notes for this expedition.**

**BU**

Bustamante (area)

**CB**

Casa Blanca (group)

**CH**

Chalchuapa (areas in general region without designation, town)

**EB**

El Beneficio (area)

**EC**

El Cementerio

**LC**

Lago Cuzcachapa (area)

**LL**

La Lagartija (area)

**LS**

Laguna Seca (area)

**LV**

Las Victorias (group)

**PA**

Pampe (group)

**SM**

San Martin (group)

**TA**

Tazamul (group)

**TR**

El Trapiche (group)

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## Scope and Contents

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The origin of the Chalchuapa, El Salvador excavation began with A.V. Kidder's site survey of the El Trapiche and Casa Blanca mound groups in 1953. Kidder's goal at this time was to encourage a chain of "archaeological connectives" from the heart of the Maya region, traveling through its peripheral Southeastern regions, and down into the non-Maya regions of Southern Central America. After conducting this survey, Kidder reported the possibility of Preclassic occupation at Chalchuapa that may have been related to the Middle and Late Preclassic stages found at the nearby Maya center of Kaminaljuyu.

Then in 1954, this project was taken up by William R. Coe, of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, who proceeded to conduct preliminary research focusing on the mound grouping El Trapiche. The artifacts recovered were seized by the government of El Salvador.

It was in 1966 that Robert J. Sharer, with Coe's support, was finally able to recover these artifacts and begin their long overdue analysis. In addition to his lab work, Sharer also conducted four months of archaeological excavation at the El Trapiche mound grouping in 1967. It was the synthesis of the 1966 lab work and the 1967 excavation that comprised Sharer's Ph.D. dissertation.

The Chalchuapa, El Salvador excavation records consist of six archival boxes of records, six card file boxes of catalogue, operation and lot cards, and oversize materials. The records were divided into nine series: correspondence, administrative records, field notes, operation and lot cards, catalogue cards and catalogues, manuscripts and reports, student ethnographic research, maps, plans and drawings, and photographs.

Most of the records are arranged chronologically with the operation and lot records(in file boxes)arranged by site and year.

The Manuscripts and Reports series contains published and unpublished material by Robert J. Sharer and his colleagues.

Student researchers, Linda Knowles and Elizabeth Voorhees completed their senior project in Chalchuapa with the support of Robert Sharer. Their findings, centering on the lenten rituals of the residents (Semana Santa), were integrated into the records.

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## **Administrative Information**

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

2003

Finding aid prepared by Bianca Buccitelli.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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**CORPORATE NAME(S)**

- University of Pennsylvania. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

**FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Correspondence
- Field notes
- Manuscripts for publication
- Photographs

**GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)**

- Chalchuapa (El Salvador)

**PERSONAL NAME(S)**

- Anderson, Bruce
- Coe, William R., 1926-
- Kirkpatrick, Muriel
- Sharer, Robert J., 1940-

**SUBJECT(S)**

- Archaeological expeditions
- Excavations (Archaeology)

## Collection Inventory

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### CORRESPONDENCE.

	Box
Correspondence 1952-1953.	1
Correspondence 1954 (1 of 2).	1
Correspondence 1954 (2 of 2).	1
Correspondence 1955-1963.	1
Permissions & Official Correspondence 1966-1970.	1
Correspondence 1964-1967.	1
Correspondence 1968-1969.	1
Correspondence 1969-1970.	1
Correspondence 1970-1972.	1
Correspondence 1973-1978.	1
Publication Correspondence 1971-1974 (1 of 2).	1
Publication Correspondence 1975-1977 (2 of 2).	1

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**ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS.**

	Box
Proposals 1968.	1
Proposals 1969-1970.	1
Research & Publication Standards.	1
Project Info & Student Applications 1969.	1
Pay Record 1969.	1

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**FIELD NOTES.**

	Box
Bolinas 1968.	1
Casa Blanca 1968 (1 of 3).	1
Casa Blanca 1969 (2 of 3).	1
Casa Blanca 1969 (3 of 3).	2
Chalchuapa 1969.	2
El Trapiche 1954 (1 of 2).	2
El Trapiche 1954 (2 of 2).	2
El Trapiche 1967.	2

El Trapiche Field Drawings 1966-1967 (1 of 2).	2
El Trapiche Field Drawings 1966-1967 (2 of 2).	2
El Trapiche visit 1968.	2
El Trapiche 1969 (1 of 2).	2
El Trapiche 1969 (2 of 2).	2
Lago Cuzcachapa 1967.	2
Lago Cuzcachapa 1969.	2
Notes & Profiles for Lago Cuzcachapa 1970; Laguna Seca 1970.	2
Laguna de Chalchuapa, Las Victorias, Pampe 1954.	2
Las Victorias 1969.	3
Miravalles 1968.	3
Peñate 1969.	3
Peñate Field Drawings 1969.	3
Surface Survey 1969.	3
Miscellaneous.	3
Lot Bag Inventories 1954.	3
Object Catalogue 1954.	3
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Final Ceramic Counts.	3

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Chalchuapa Loans.	3
Pottery Vessel Drawings.	3
Pottery Sherd Drawings 1966-1967.	3
Pottery Sherd Drawings 1969-1970.	3
Pottery Type Descriptions.	3
Ceramic Analysis Notes (1 of 2).	4
Ceramic Analysis Notes (2 of 2).	4
Ceramic Analysis 1954 (1 of 3).	4
Ceramic Analysis 1954 (2 of 3).	4
Ceramic Analysis 1954 (3 of 3).	4
Ceramic Analysis 1968-1970 (1 of 2).	4
Ceramic Analysis 1968-1970 (2 of 2).	4
Thermoluminescence Samples.	4
Ceramic Album.	4
Artifact Drawings.	4
Organic Material.	4
Bone Analysis.	4
Radiocarbon Analysis.	4
Volcanic Ash Analysis.	4

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**OPERATION AND LOT CARDS.**

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Operation and Lot Cards-1954.	5
Operation and Lot Cards-Surface Survey (SS) 1969.	6
Operation and Lot Cards-Casa Blanca (CB) 1968-1969.	6
Operation and Lot Cards-Chalchuapa (CH) 1969.	6
Operation and Lot Cards-Laguna Cuzcachapa (LC) 1969-1970.	6
Operation and Lot Cards-Laguna Seca (LS) 1970.	6
Operation and Lot Cards-Las Victorias (LV).	6
Operation and Lot Cards-Peñate (PN) 1969.	6
Operation and Lot Cards-El Trapiche (TR) 1969 (1 of 2).	6
Operation and Lot Cards-El Trapiche (TR) 1969 (2 of 2).	7
Operation and Lot Cards-Casa Blanca (CB) 1970.	7
Operation and Lot Cards-Chalchuapa (CH) 1970.	7
Operation and Lot Cards-Museum (MU) 1970.	7
Operation and Lot Cards-El Beneficio (EB) 1970.	7
Operation and Lot Cards-El Cementerio (EC) 1970.	7
Operation and Lot Cards-La Lagartija (LL) 1970.	7
Operation and Lot Cards-Surface.	7

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Catalogue Cards by Operation-Laguna Cuzcachapa (LC) (1 of 3).	7
Catalogue Cards by Operation-Laguna Cuzcachapa (LC) (2 of 3).	8
Catalogue Cards by Operation-Laguna Cuzcachapa (LC) (3 of 3).	9
Catalogue Cards by Operation-Laguna Seca (LS).	9
Catalogue Cards by Operation-Peñate (PN).	9
Catalogue Cards by Operation-Surface.	9
Catalogue Cards by Operation-Chalchuapa (CH).	9
Catalogue Cards by Operation-El Cementerio (EC).	9
Catalogue Cards by Operation-El Beneficio (EB).	9
Catalogue of Caches, Burials, Monuments.	9
Catalogue of Artifacts by Type (1 of 2).	9
Catalogue of Artifacts by Type (2 of 2).	10
Catalogue Cards by Operation-La Lagartija (LL).	9
Catalogue of Photographs.	11

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**MANUSCRIPTS AND REPORTS.**

	Box
Preclassic Investigations at Chalchuapa, El Salvador Robert Sharer 1967.	13
A Preliminary Report of the Archaeological Program at Chalchuapa, El Salvador-Robert Sharer 1969.	13
Información de las Investigaciones del Proyecto Arqueologico en Chalchuapa-Robert Sharer 1969.	13
The Prehistoric Artifacts of Chalchuapa, El Salvador Robert Sharer 1970.	13
The Prehistory of Chalchuapa, El Salvador Payson Sheets 1973.	13
Cultural Processes and Change at Chalchuapa-Robert Sharer 1974.	13
Lago Cuzcachapa & Laguna Seca- David Sedat.	13
Excavation of Structure C-1-Robert Sharer 1973.	13
Chalchuapa Geology-Bruce Anderson.	13

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**STUDENT ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH.**

	Box
Notes-Elizabeth Voorhees (1 of 5).	13
Notes-Elizabeth Voorhees (2 of 5).	13
Report-Summary (3 of 5).	13

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Report-Observations (4 of 5).	13
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Report-Holy Week Ceremonies (5 of 5).	13
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Plan-North view (28x20).	M-64
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Drawing of Pottery bowl-Muriel Kirkpatrick.	P-47-13

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Oversize mounted photos.	M-73