

**Eleventh Annual  
South-Central Conference  
on Mesoamerica**



**UTSA<sup>®</sup>**

**November 17-18, 2023  
UTSA Downtown Campus**



## **Conference Organizers**

M. Kathryn Brown, UTSA  
Bernadette Cap, San Antonio College  
Jason Yaeger, UTSA

## **Sponsored by**

UTSA Department of Anthropology  
UTSA College of Liberal and Fine Arts  
UTSA Vice President for Research, Economic  
Development, and Knowledge Enterprise

## **Locations and Times**

Friday 9:00am-6:15pm  
Buena Vista Building, Aula Canaria Lecture Hall  
Parking in the Cattleman's Square Lot

Saturday 9:00am-7:00pm  
Durango Building, La Villita Room  
Reception in the Riverwalk Room  
Parking in the Durango Lot

## **Keynote Address**

### **Beyond the Beautiful Map: Toward Large-scale Modeling and Community-engaged Settlement Pattern Research**

**Dr. Marcello A. Canuto**  
*Tulane University*



Dr. Canuto is currently the Director of the Middle American Research Institute and Professor of Anthropology at Tulane University. He has conducted archaeological excavations in several regions of the Maya area at sites that span the Preclassic to Classic periods. His research has focused on the development and growth of socio-political complexity, and he is a leading expert in the application of lidar analyses.

**Friday, November 17, 2023**

**5:00 – 6:15 pm**

**UTSA, Downtown Campus**

**Buena Vista Building, Aula Canaria Lecture Hall**

# Conference Schedule

**Friday, November 17**

*Presentations will be held in the Aula Canaria Lecture Hall*

- 9:00**      **Registration with Doughnuts and Coffee**
- 9:55**      **Welcome**
- 10:00**      **Seawalls as Vernacular Architecture Under Climate Change in Coastal Belize**  
*Patrick Gallagher (University of Texas at San Antonio)*
- 10:20**      **Come for the Monuments, Stay for the Monkeys: The Potential for Archaeological Sites to Support Monkey Conservation in Central Belize**  
*Alexandra Sheldon (University of Texas at San Antonio)*
- 10:40**      **Genuine or Fake?: A Study of a Mixtec Mosaic Mask**  
*Bernadette Cap (San Antonio College)*
- 11:00**      **Art and Rule, Stylistic Trends of the Dolores Region**  
*Jake Lozano (Texas State University)*
- 11:20**      **Community Engagement as a Means of Decolonizing Archaeological Practice in Belize**  
*Antonio Beardall (Texas State University)*
- 11:40**      **Lunch**
- 1:40**      **The Pine Ridge Preceramic Project: Highlights from the Initial Field Season**  
*Mike McBride (Pine Ridge Preceramic Project)*
- 2:00**      **Back to the Present: Recent Research Interest at Colha, Belize**  
*Manda Adam (University of Texas at Austin), Liwy Grazioso (University of San Carlos of Guatemala), Alana Pengilley (University of Texas at Austin) and Fred Valdez (University of Texas at Austin)*
- 2:20**      **Examining Late Preclassic Economic Complexity Using PXRF: Revisiting the Colha Sphere of Exchange**  
*Michael Maddox (Yale University)*

- 2:40**      **Sea-Level Rise and Settlement at Ek Way Nal: Coring the Past**  
*Cheryl M. Foster (Louisiana State University)*
- 3:00**      **Break**
- 3:20**      **Azcorra Ivory and Pellejo Buff, Native Polychrome Ceramic Traditions of Northern Belize, Modeling their Production, Distribution, Consumption, Deposition, and the Implications of All of the Above**  
*Keith Eppich (Tyler Junior College)*
- 3:40**      **The Symbolic Value of Marine Shell in Middle Preclassic Ritual Deposits at Blackman Eddy and Las Ruinas de Arenal**  
*M. Kathryn Brown (University of Texas at San Antonio), Jennifer Cochran (Perennial Environmental Services) and Rachel Horowitz (Washington State University)*
- 4:00**      **Questioning Early Ceramic Dating in Northern Belize: New Data from Santa Rita Corozal, Belize**  
*Arlen F. Chase (University of Houston), Diane Z. Chase (University of Houston), Rick W.A. Smith (George Mason University), Angelina Locker (Vanderbilt University) and Adrian S.Z. Chase (University of Chicago)*
- 4:20**      **The Nature of the BEAST: A Preview of 650-km<sup>2</sup> of Newly Acquired Lidar Data in Northwestern Belize**  
*Brett A. Houk (Texas Tech University), Amy E. Thompson (University of Texas at Austin), Marcello A. Canuto (Tulane University) and Francisco Estrada-Belli (Tulane University)*
- 4:40**      **Break**
- 5:00**      **Keynote Address**  
*Marcello A. Canuto (Tulane University)*

## Saturday, November 18

*Presentations will be held in the La Villita Room*

- 9:00**      **Living on the Edge: Exploring Archaeological Landscapes of Eastern Honduras through Geospatial Practice**  
*Juan Carlos Fernandez-Diaz (NCALM; University of Houston) and Anna Cohen (Utah State University)*
- 9:20**      **The Great Displacement: A Systematic Analysis of the “First Maya Collapse.”**  
*Luke Auld-Thomas (Tulane University)*
- 9:40**      **To Be or Not to Be: Questioning Early Postclassic Occupation and Continuity in the Upper Belize River Valley**  
*Jaime Awe (Northern Arizona University) and Julie A. Hoggarth (Baylor University)*
- 10:00**     **Political Authority and Royal Mortuary Practices in Feature 385-30 at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize**  
*Jason Yaeger (University of Texas at San Antonio), Bernadette Cap (San Antonio College) and M. Kathryn Brown (University of Texas at San Antonio)*
- 10:20**     **Break**
- 10:40**     **Problems in the Fragmentation of Early Classic Veracruz Yokes**  
*Rex Koontz (University of Houston)*
- 11:00**     **Salvage Excavations of a Painted Maya Tomb at Ayiin Winik, Northwestern Belize**  
*Victoria A. Ingalls (Acacia Heritage Consulting), Mara De Gregori (Texas Tech University) and Brett A. Houk (Texas Tech University)*
- 11:20**     **Methodological Approaches to Recording Ancient Maya Incised Graffiti: A Case Study from Structure A-5-2nd at Xunantunich**  
*Lauren Nowakowski (University of Texas at San Antonio)*
- 11:40**     **Noxi’ nah, Nene’ nah: House Size Differentials and Multi-Scalar Wealth Inequality in the Maya Region**  
*Amy E. Thompson (University of Texas at Austin), Yashoda Joshi (University of Texas at Austin), Zhewei Chen (University of Texas at Austin), Adrian McKee, Amelia Verhaert (University of Texas at Austin) and Yuhana Khan (GrantWorks Inc)*

- 12:00**      **Lunch**
- 2:00**      **Deities in the Popol Vuh and recent K'iche' Maya Expressive Culture**  
*Garrett Cook (Baylor University)*
- 2:20**      **From Councilors to Kings: Excavations of the Kuche Palace at Kiuic, Yucatan, Mexico**  
*George Bey (Millsaps College), Thomas Gallareta N. (INAH), Ros-sana May (BRAP), Kyle Winter (BRAP) and Magill Grunfeld (BRAP)*
- 2:40**      **100 years of Archaeology at Xunantunich: Emerging Complexity**  
*Douglas Tilden (Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance)*
- 3:00**      **Place and Privilege: Recent Research from a Late Classic Household at Las Ruinas de Arenal, Belize**  
*Madeline Stone Snyder (University of Texas at San Antonio)*
- 3:20**      **Break**
- 3:40**      **The Kings' Highway: The Dolores Plateau in the Longue Durée**  
*Nicholas Carter (Texas State University)*
- 4:00**      **Political Life in an Ancient Maya Town: The Shrine Groups of Wari Camp**  
*Laura J. Levi (University of Texas at San Antonio)*
- 4:20**      **Building High-Precision AMS 14C Bayesian Models for the Formation of Peri-Abandonment Deposits at Baking Pot, Belize**  
*Julie A. Hoggarth (Baylor University)*
- 4:40**      **A Mashup of the History of Mesoamerican Avocados**  
*Jennifer Mathews (Trinity University) and Scott L. Fedick (UC-Riverside)*
- 5:00**      **Reception in the Riverwalk Room**

Coffee generously  
provided by



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## Abstracts

(In order by first author's last name)

**Adam, Manda (The University of Texas at Austin), Liwy Grazioso (University of San Carlos of Guatemala), Alana Pengilly (University of Texas at Austin) and Fred Valdez (University of Texas at Austin)**

*Back to the Present: Recent Research Interest at Colha, Belize*

The 2023 archaeology field research season included an effort at the Maya site of Colha. Research interests were intended for four significant aspects: 1) the early Maya community at the site center, 2) Postclassic settlement and occupation at Colha, 3) chert resources at Colha and the chert-bearing zone, and 4) early settlement/activity near Cobweb Swamp. Each aspect will be discussed in terms of accomplished research as well as remaining interests for future endeavors. A preliminary look at Colha LiDAR imagery is also presented.

**Auld-Thomas, Luke (Tulane University)**

*The Great Displacement: A Systematic Analysis of the "First Maya Collapse."*

Collapse is a quantitative phenomenon. Despite this, archaeologists generally discuss it in categorical terms: Site X collapsed, Site Y did not. This tendency has hampered understanding of the Protoclassic period, when the fortunes of individual Maya communities diverged sharply but relatively few experienced the kind of total demographic collapse associated with the later Terminal Classic. This paper presents a database of occupation spans at nearly 8,000 settlement loci (houses, patios, "sites") from all parts of the Maya Lowlands, which forms the basis for a spatially-explicit analysis of population increase, decline, collapse, and movement from Late Preclassic to Early Classic times.

**Awe, Jaime (Northern Arizona University) and Julie A. Hoggarth (Baylor University)**

*To Be or Not to Be: Questioning Early Postclassic Occupation and Continuity in the Upper Belize River Valley*

In 1976, in the volume "Prehistoric Pottery Analysis and the Ceramics of Barton Ramie in the Belize Valley", James Gifford established the New Town ceramic phase to account for pottery which he identified as dating to the Early Postclassic period. The ceramic chronology established by Gifford's early work was eventually accepted as dogma by later archaeologists who followed in the footsteps of the Harvard project in the Belize Valley. What is ironic about this blind acceptance of the Postclassic dating of New Town pottery is that from its very inception its temporal placement had been seriously questioned by project director, Gordon Willey. In this presentation, we revisit Willey's concerns for the dating of New Town pottery, and, from the vantage of having considerably more data than Willey and Gifford had in the 1970, we renew questions regarding the validity and accuracy of the Early Postclassic New Town phase in the Belize Valley.

**Beardall, Antonio (Texas State University)**

*Community Engagement as a Means of Decolonizing Archaeological Practice in Belize*

Archaeological research in Mesoamerica spans more than a century, helping to create academic interest on the varying cultural subregions and building careers of many esteemed scholars in the process. Recent shifts have placed academic attention on the importance of community/collaborative archaeological inclusion with local/indigenous populations. This paper briefly examines varying facets of community archaeology in Belize, the need for further efforts in decolonizing archaeological research, and future initiatives that aim at investigating the impact participating on a project has on a young Belizean on their sense of cultural identity and cultural heritage.

**Bey, George (Millsaps College), Thomas Gallareta N. (INAH), Rossana May (BRAP), Kyle Winter (BRAP) and Magill Grunfeld (BRAP)**

*From Councilors to Kings: Excavations of the Kuche Palace at Kiuic, Yucatan, Mexico*

The Bolonchen Regional Archaeological Project (BRAP) has been carrying out research at the Maya center of Kiuic, in the southern Puuc or Bolonchen Region of Yucatan for over two decades. Kiuic was founded in the early Middle Preclassic (900-700 BC) and continued to be occupied until the Terminal Classic (approximately AD 1000). By AD 600-650 the early Palace, known as the Yaxche Group was taking shape, centered around an Early Puuc Ceremonial Complex (EPCC) with a vaulted *popol nah* or Council House. The Yaxche Group served as the royal center of Kiuic for the next 150 years undergoing a significant transformation around AD 800 during which time a new Palace took shape west of the early Palace. Although the Kuche/Chulul Palace was mapped and tested over the history of the project, it is only in the last four years it has become the center of attention for the project. Excavations are focused on understanding what we believe to have been the throne room of this new and greatly expanded Palace. Although throne rooms have been defined and studied at other Puuc sites by Tomas Gallareta, the Kiuic throne room is the first to be systematically excavated. This presentation provides an overview of the findings from the excavations of the Kuche Palace within the context of our regional study of Puuc archaeology and the development of socio-political organization in the Late and Terminal Classic Period (AD 600-1000). We believe our efforts are making an important contribution to the understanding of Late/Terminal Classic Maya society in the Puuc as well as the function of so-called Maya Palaces.

**Brown, M. Kathryn (University of Texas at San Antonio), Jennifer Cochran (Perennial Environmental Services) and Rachel Horowitz (Washington State University)**

*The Symbolic Value of Marine Shell in Middle Preclassic Ritual Deposits at Blackman Eddy and Las Ruinas de Arenal, Belize*

Marine shell was a highly valued long distance trade material for the ancient Maya beginning as early as the Middle Preclassic. Symbolically, marine shell represented the watery underworld and was often used in ritual offerings that reference cosmological ordering of the universe. Evidence for Middle Preclassic marine shell bead production, predominately using *Strombus*, has been identified at several sites in the Belize River valley including Pacbitun, Blackman Eddy,

and Cahal Pech. Ritual offerings of marine shell have also been widely documented in the Middle Preclassic in a variety of deposits in both public and private spaces. In this paper we compare Middle Preclassic marine shell production and use at the sites of Blackman Eddy and Las Ruinas de Arenal in order to better understand patterns of purposeful symbolic deposition. At Blackman Eddy, marine shell production debitage was used in ritual deposits, while at Las Ruinas de Arenal, evidence suggests that marine shell beads were preferred for ritual offerings. We suggest that economic factors may have contributed to these differences, but that the underlying symbolism and cosmological references to the underworld were consistent at both sites.

**Canuto, Marcello A. (Tulane University, Middle America Research Institute)**

*Beyond the Beautiful Map: Toward Large-scale Modeling and Community-engaged Settlement Pattern Research*

Despite the long-standing interest in Maya settlement patterns in Maya archaeology, the tropical forest has imposed practical and methodological constraints that have led academics toward local-scale analysis. Ambitious efforts to scale up local models using remote sensing have been continually thwarted by the regionalism and heterogeneity of the Maya Forest. The use of airborne laser scanning (lidar) as a direct-discovery technique capable of mapping enormous areas in minute detail has given the discipline's macro-scale objectives new life. Lidar provides new approaches to reconstruct Maya settlement patterns at previously unreachable scales by simultaneously recording topography, archaeological settlement, anthropogenic landscape modification, and vegetation. Here, we use lidar-derived settlement and topographic data to develop a settlement suitability model that identifies constraints on settlement patterning and historical contingencies in the growth of individual cities. We also demonstrate how this approach might give significant information for local modern communities to better manage and steward the natural and cultural resources of locations where the Maya Forest still exists.

**Cap, Bernadette (San Antonio College)**

*Genuine or Fake?: A Study of a Mixtec Mosaic Mask*

A commonality among turquoise mosaiced objects attributed to the Mexica and Mixtec peoples of the 1400-1500s is that they are each unique. This has led to scrutiny of authenticity for some such objects held in museum collections. This presentation reviews the provenance and material analysis of a turquoise mosaiced mask held by the San Antonio Museum of Art that had been suggested to be a forgery. The object biography of this mask reveals common issues with attributing provenance to looted Mesoamerican art, but also what can be gained with material research of such objects.

**Carter, Nicholas (Texas State University)**

*The Kings' Highway: The Dolores Plateau in the Longue Durée*

Varying facets of ancient Maya visual expression have long documented cultural elements of identity, political relationships, and social organization. These components manifest in a spectrum of archaeological material and cultural remains. Within the abundant regions and

polities, evidence suggests the existence of local artistic and scribal traditions. The goal of this paper is to examine the epigraphic and iconographic records of several sites throughout the region of Dolores, located in Petén, Guatemala with the aim of identifying examples of regional artistic and scribal styles. In addition, this paper also seeks to acknowledge indications of external political and social pressures, concealed within the monumental texts and iconography. In doing so, this paper will add clarity and supplemental knowledge to the histories of minor Maya kingdoms, enriching our insight into the roles of these polities within the ancient Maya sociopolitical structure.

**Chase, Arlen F. (University of Houston), Diane Z. Chase (University of Houston), Rick W.A. Smith (George Mason University), Angelina Locker (Vanderbilt University) and Adrian S.Z. Chase (University of Chicago)**

*Questioning Early Ceramic Dating in Northern Belize: New Data from Santa Rita Corozal, Belize*

Some of the earliest known Maya burials accompanied by ceramic vessels were excavated at Santa Rita Corozal in 1979. The burial vessels were immediately identified as being related to Swasey phase ceramics from Cuello. Between 1977 and the present, the Swasey complex has been subdivided into two phases at Cuello accompanied with continued claims that Swasey dates circa 1000 BCE. In 2022 the early skeletal material excavated at SRC was systematically dated using radiocarbon methods. The results of this dating suggest that the Swasey/Bladen materials in northern Belize date after BCE 800, consistent with earlier contextual arguments made at Colha.

**Cook, Garrett (Baylor University)**

*Deities in the Popol Vuh and Recent K'iche' Maya Expressive Culture*

K'iche' pilgrimages and folk narratives from 20th century research in Santiago Momostenango uncover linkages of deities in the Popol Vuh (hero twin Xbalanque, and Awilix the patron of the Nijaib lineage) with Maria Candelaria and her shrine in western Guatemala. Folklore about Pascual Abaj clarifies the meaning of a pre-Hispanic image worshipped in Chichicastenango until 2008 and relates it to the failure to seduce the 4 ancestors in the Popol Vuh suggesting that this account in the Popol Vuh needs rethinking. Finally, an enduring sacred geography of deities and shrines of the east and west is suggested.

**Eppich, Keith (Tyler Junior College)**

*Azcorra Ivory and Pellejo Buff, Native Polychrome Ceramic Traditions of Northern Belize, Modeling their Production, Distribution, Consumption, Deposition, and the Implications of All of the Above*

This paper studies two ceramic types from Northern Belize, Azcorra Ivory Polychrome and Pellejo Buff Polychrome. These two ceramics map out a complex series of political, economic, and social relations across Northern Belize and extending outward to the larger Classic Maya World. Identified in the 1970s, scholars noted these ceramics in the Classic cities but with the largest concentrations in Belize. The working hypothesis presented here is that both types were

likely produced in the settlement of El Pozito, in Belize's Orange Walk district. From there, they were gifted, traded, bought and sold along networks of political and commercial exchange.

**Fernandez-Diaz, Juan Carlos (NCALM; University of Houston) and Anna Cohen (Utah State University)**

*Living on the Edge: Exploring Archaeological Landscapes of Eastern Honduras through Geospatial Practice*

Eastern Honduras, understood here as the departments of Olancho, Colon, and Gracias a Dios, has long been considered a cultural transitional or frontier zone between Mesoamerica and the Isthmo-Colombian region. This presentation integrates over twenty years of geospatial data collection, including legacy and recent airborne lidar, drone lidar, satellite imagery, and historic maps, to provide new and broader insights of this region situated on the edge of better-known cultural traditions. The geospatial data provides a visual overview of site architecture and settlement patterns of the region, highlighting similarities and differences with Mesoamerica.

**Foster, Cheryl M. (Louisiana State University)**

*Sea-Level Rise and Settlement at Ek Way Nal: Coring the Past*

Excavations were carried out at the underwater ancient Maya salt work of Ek Way Nal in Punta Ycacos Lagoon in Paynes Creek National Park, Belize. Ek Way Nal provided salt to the ancient Maya during the Late and Terminal Classic periods (600-900 C.E.). In addition to excavations in buildings at the site, a 1x2m unit was excavated to extract a sediment column for examining the relationship between the ancient Maya settlement and sea-level rise. The results from the datum core excavation indicate that sea-level rise occurred before, during, and after the ancient Maya occupation at Ek Way Nal.

**Gallagher, Patrick (University of Texas at San Antonio)**

*Seawalls as Vernacular Architecture Under Climate Change in Coastal Belize*

In this paper, I examine the way in which tensions in coastal Belize between the making of ecological value and its loss manifest themselves in evocative ways in debates around the building of a seemingly very mundane object with a long history: the sea wall. The paper is an ethnographic exploration of the making of sea walls as a mode of vernacular architecture and climate adaptation in Ambergris Caye, Belize. By placing the building of sea walls within a larger historical, social and ecological context, this paper considers the role of the shifting littoral zone in materially and symbolically encountering and managing the experience of a changing climate in coastal Belize.

**Hoggarth, Julie A. (Baylor University)**

*Building High-Precision AMS 14C Bayesian Models for the Formation of Peri-Abandonment Deposits at Baking Pot, Belize*

Deposits linked to abandonment have been widely recorded across the Maya lowlands, associated with the final activities occurring in ceremonial areas of Classic Maya centers. Various models have been applied to explain the activities that lie behind the formation of these contexts, including those linked to rapid abandonment and others focused on more protracted events. Here, we assess Bayesian models for three chronological scenarios of varying tempo to explain the formation of peri-abandonment deposits at Baking Pot, Belize.

**Houk, Brett A. (Texas Tech University), Amy E. Thompson (The University of Texas at Austin), Marcello A. Canuto (Tulane University), Francisco Estrada-Belli (Tulane University)**

*The Nature of the BEAST: A Preview of 650-km<sup>2</sup> of Newly Acquired Lidar Data in Northwestern Belize*

The Belize Estates Archaeological Survey Team studies ancient Maya settlement in a large, mostly forested tract of land in northwestern Belize. In 2022, we collected 650-km<sup>2</sup> of lidar data across our permit area, and the results are radically expanding our understanding of the scale and scope of ancient Maya occupation in the region. In this paper we present a preview of our lidar data, including over 30 previously unrecorded “big sites” and evidence for extensive terracing, hydrological engineering, diverse land-use practices and settlement patterns, and unexpectedly high population density without massive urban centers.

**Ingalls, Victoria A. (Acacia Heritage Consulting), Mara De Gregori (Texas Tech University) and Brett A. Houk (Texas Tech University)**

*Salvage Excavations of a Painted Maya Tomb at Ayiin Winik, Northwestern Belize*

In 2023, the Belize Estates Archaeological Survey Team (BEAST) documented a previously unknown large ceremonial center, Ayiin Winik, located between the La Lucha Escarpment and the Rio Bravo in Belize in northwestern Belize. The site boasts a rare double ball court, a parapet-lined sacbe, a large palace, a hilltop acropolis, several large altars, and stelae. At a large hilltop group about 280 m south of the main plaza, BEAST identified a painted tomb in a looters’ trench that resembles Early Classic period tombs at Rio Azul. This paper presents the results of BEAST’s salvage excavations of the tomb.

**Koontz, Rex (University of Houston)**

*Problems in the Fragmentation of Early Classic Veracruz Yokes*

To Be Submitted.

**Levi, Laura J. (University of Texas at San Antonio)**

*Political Life in an Ancient Maya Town: The Shrine Groups of Wari Camp*

It is established practice to interpret Maya temples as loci of ritual activity. A close connection is also drawn between temples and political authority – unless the temples in question are found outside monumental precincts. In the latter case, they are argued to index domestic rites

associated with ancestor veneration. This paper explores the possibility that archaeologists have overlooked an array of diverse political actors who announced their presence through the construction of temples in proximity to their homes and workspaces. Also discussed are the implications that a well-defined political class has for our understanding of ancient Maya society and polity.

**Lozano, Jake (Texas State University)**

*Art and Rule, Stylistic Trends of the Dolores Region*

Varying facets of ancient Maya visual expression have long documented cultural elements of identity, political relationships, and social organization. These components manifest in a spectrum of archaeological material and cultural remains. Within the abundant regions and polities, evidence suggests the existence of local artistic and scribal traditions. The goal of this paper is to examine the epigraphic and iconographic records of several sites throughout the region of Dolores, located in Petén, Guatemala with the aim of identifying examples of regional artistic and scribal styles. In addition, this paper also seeks to acknowledge indications of external political and social pressures, concealed within the monumental texts and iconography. In doing so, this paper will add clarity and supplemental knowledge to the histories of minor Maya kingdoms, enriching our insight into the roles of these polities within the ancient Maya sociopolitical structure.

**Maddox, Michael (Yale University)**

*Examining Late Preclassic Economic Complexity Using PXRF: Revisiting the Colha Sphere of Exchange*

Colha in northern Belize represents a notable example of economic specialization with many groups at the site found to have produced oval bifaces and other lithic tools as early as the Late Preclassic Period. The distribution of these tools comprises a sphere of economic exchange that included numerous sites throughout the region. This paper outlines the results of compositional analysis of 416 ceramics from sites of Colha, San Estevan, Kichpanha, Pulltrouser Swamp, Wari Camp using portable x-ray fluorescence (PXRF) to suggest that the distribution of ceramics in the Late Preclassic and Early Classic is consistent with their use as commodities.

**Mathews, Jennifer (Trinity University) and Scott L. Fedick (UC-Riverside)**

*A Mashup of the History of Mesoamerican Avocados*

The earliest avocados of the Americas were dispersed by extinct megafauna, and later by human populations, including Olmec, Maya, and Aztec peoples. Prized for their flavor and rich caloric content, avocados were portrayed on a Maya king's tombs, served as the municipal symbol of ancient Mesoamerican cities, symbolized a month in the Maya calendar, and were given as tribute to ancient lords. While the Aztecs touted the plant's curative and aphrodisiac properties, during the colonial period, the Spanish used the fruit as food for enslaved people on sugar plantations across their land holdings. In the early 19th century, the US Consul based in Campeche, Mexico brought avocados to Florida, and by the mid-1900s seedlings were transported from Nicaragua and Mexico to California. This paper will discuss the development

of the Mesoamerican avocado as a commodity, focusing in particular on the 19th and 20th centuries and the role that amateur horticulturists played in establishing the crop in California.

**McBride, Mike (Pine Ridge Preceramic Project)**

*The Pine Ridge Preceramic Project: Highlights from the Initial Field Season*

The Pine Ridge Preceramic Project was developed in 2023 by Jon Lohse and Mike McBride to research the recurring reports of Paleoindian and Archaic period artifacts recovered in the area of August Pine Ridge, Belize (APR). We report on the first field season in May-June, and the initial successes of documenting previously recovered APR-area artifacts. These including over 40 individual projectile points, fragments, and other lithics clearly tied to the fluted lanceolate tradition (Clovis, “Waisted Clovis”, and Fishtail types). Additionally, we documented over 50 projectile points and fragments from the Late Paleo and Archaic periods, including at least 2 types not previously described.

**Nowakowski, Lauren (University of Texas at San Antonio)**

*Methodological Approaches to Recording Ancient Maya Incised Graffiti: A Case Study from Structure A-5-2nd at Xunantunich*

Ancient Maya graffiti is a historically understudied topic within Maya archaeology. Recent scholarship demonstrates a growing interest in this ancient artform, but it is hampered by the variable quality of past documentation methodologies. This paper analyzes the documentation techniques of Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), hand mapping, and Mylar tracing, and the conversion of these methods into digital line drawings, using a case study of Structure A-5-2nd in the main acropolis of El Castillo at Xunantunich in Belize. By applying these techniques to the graffiti of Structure A-5-2nd, this study identifies the advantages and disadvantages of each technique to different field settings.

**Sheldon, Alexandra (University of Texas at San Antonio)**

*Come for the Monuments, Stay for the Monkeys: The Potential for Archaeological Sites to Support Monkey Conservation in Central Belize*

Central Belize is home to two monkey species: the black howler (*Alouatta pigra*) and the Yucatan spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*). Archeological sites and the surrounding forests provide a potentially rich habitat for them. I used participant observation and unstructured interviews with tourists, guides and archaeologists at Xunantunich, a Mayan site near San Ignacio, Belize, to understand the history and current status of monkeys in and around the site. My research pointed me to the area's eco-lodges as the source of potential primate conservation. While tourists visit this area to view the Mayan sites, their income could also support monkey conservation.

**Snyder, Madeline Stone (University of Texas at San Antonio)**

*Place and Privilege: Recent Research from a Late Classic Household at Las Ruinas de Arenal, Belize*



The reuse and modification of public and private places by the Maya has long been studied as part of settlement archaeology in the Belize River valley. This invocation of social memory and association with historic places and peoples allows for the manipulation of socio-political status. In this paper, I present recent research from a Late Classic household group at Last Ruinas de Arenal, Belize. Excavation on and off the platform provides insight into how the spatial relationship between the group and nearby public ritual architecture was negotiated through time, cultivating a more privileged status within the broader Arenal community.

**Thompson, Amy E. (University of Texas at Austin), Yashoda Joshi (University of Texas at Austin), Zhewei Chen (University of Texas at Austin), Adrian McKee, Amelia Verhaert (University of Texas at Austin) and Yuhana Khan (GrantWorks Inc)**

*Noxi' nah, nene' nah: House Size Differentials and Multi-Scalar Wealth Inequality in the Maya Region*

Abstract: Differences in socioeconomic status and inequality are present in nearly all human societies. In many ancient and some modern societies, general trends exist in the size or location of houses and wealth or social status, wherein larger houses and houses in more desirable locations are associated with individuals of more power and authority or are socioeconomically advantaged compared to those residing in smaller houses or houses in less desirable locations. Here, we evaluate house size differentials among 60 Maya communities spanning from the Late Preclassic (400 BCE – 250 CE) through modern times. Using pedestrian survey data, legacy maps, and satellite imagery to calculate house size, we measure inequality using a Gini coefficient, which measures the unevenness in a distribution and is often interpreted as a metric of inequality. In addition to regional trends across the Mundo Maya and shifts in inequality through time, we take on a multi-scalar approach, modeling and measuring inequality within neighborhoods among six Classic period (300-800 CE) and seven modern Maya communities in southern Belize. These findings elucidate trends and changes in inequality across space and time based on a single-proxy approach, providing a foundation for future comparative studies on inequality in the past and today.

**Tilden, Douglas (Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance)**

*100 years of Archaeology at Xunantunich: Emerging Complexity*

Structure A7, a pyramid in the Late Classic Maya ceremonial site core at Xunantunich in Western Belize, has attracted the attention of the Xunantunich Archaeological and Conservation Project (XACP) since 2017. The other structures that define the eastern and western boundaries of the site core are single construction episodes. In unexpected contrast, A7 has complex Late Classic penultimate architecture and two Preclassic levels, the only Preclassic at the site. This paper will detail XACP's investigations of A7, discuss its findings to date and outline its future research objectives for 2024 which will be on the 100th anniversary of research at Xunantunich.

**Yaeger, Jason (University of Texas at San Antonio), Bernadette Cap (San Antonio College) and M. Kathryn Brown (University of Texas at San Antonio)**

*Political Authority and Royal Mortuary Practices in Feature 385-30 at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize*

Since 2014, we have conducted excavations at the Maya site of Buenavista del Cayo, Belize, dedicated to reconstructing royal mortuary patterns and subsequent commemoration and veneration of royal ancestors through excavations at Structure 3 and the Central Plaza. These excavations have discovered five royal and noble burials to date, along with numerous related offerings. In this paper, we present one of these royal tombs, Feature 385-30, which was found in Structure 3b at Buenavista del Cayo. We describe in detail the tomb's location, its contents, and its architectural context. We use that data to reconstruct the sequence of events from the creation of the tomb chamber, through the preparation of the body for burial and the burial process, to the sealing of the tomb, to subsequent practices of veneration of the person buried therein. We conclude with a discussion of the insights this information provides about the nature of political authority at Buenavista del Cayo.