

Fourteenth Annual South-Central Conference on Mesoamerica



**October 23 to October 25, 2026
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas**

TEXAS ★ **STATE**®
ANTHROPOLOGY

Keynote Address
Heather McKillop
Louisiana State University

Discoveries, Challenges, and Innovations
at the Paynes Creek Salt Works, Belize

Twenty years of research at the Paynes Creek Salt Works provided stunning new evidence on the economy and lives of the ancient coastal Maya, created challenges in working at shallow underwater sites and conservation of salt waterlogged material, and developed new ways to investigate and communicate the findings. We discuss how we addressed challenges and the finds. The 2004 discovery of wooden building posts preserved below the sea floor required innovative methods to discover and map. We adapted methods from terrestrial and underwater archaeology to address challenges of working in shallow underwater sites. Teams snorkeled on Research Flotation Devices (RFDs) to locate and map posts and artifacts. We developed a pulley system to move excavated material in floats to off-site screening stations. We desalinated material and used 3D digital imaging to preserve and record salt waterlogged pottery and wood. Was all the effort worthwhile? Unexpected discoveries of 4042 wooden posts that formed the outlines of pole and thatch residences, salt kitchens, and other structures were previously unknown in the Maya area. The only ancient Maya wooden canoe paddle radiocarbon dated to the Late Classic (conserved and stored in the Museum of Belize) is the only direct evidence of canoe travel by the Classic Maya. Years of discovery, mapping, and excavation revealed community specialization in surplus household salt production by resident workers, with dedicated salt kitchens. Use of 3D technology to record and 3D printed replicas for displays in Belize expand communication to academic and public audiences in Belize and beyond.



LSU archeologist Heather McKillop is best known for her research into ancient Maya coastal trade routes and for her related discoveries of a roughly 1,200-year-old wooden canoe paddle and jadeite scraping tool, both found underwater in a mangrove peat bog below the sea floor in Belize.

14th Annual South-Central Conference on Mesoamerica

Hosted by Texas State University



Conference Organizers

Jake Lozano, Texas State University
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Supported by

Texas State Department of Anthropology
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Reilly Center for Art and Symbolism of the Ancient Americas
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Ruta Maya Coffee

Location

Texas State University, San Marcos Campus
Evans Liberal Art Building
Lecture Room 114

Friday October 15, 2026

1:00-1:15 Registration and Welcome Statement

1:15-1:30 A Karst Plateau in the Central Maya Lowlands: The Landscape of El Mirador
Rodrigo Guzman Piedrasanta (Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University), Michael Callaghan, Bridgitte Kovacevich, and Karla Cardona Caravantes

1:30-1:45 Building Ch'ulel: A Study of the Hieroglyphic Texts of the Cenote Sagrado
Santiago Sobrino (University of Texas-San Antonio)

1:45-2:00 The Lost Lienzo of Ixhuatan: The Titulo de Santa Maria Ixhuatan and its Colonial Cousin
Aaron Stevens (University of Texas-Austin)

2:00-2:15 Constructing the Past: New Architectural Evidence from Group D, Xunantunich
Whitney Lytle (Mopan Valley Preclassic Project), and M. Kathryn Brown

2:15-2:30 Beyond Lidar: Building, Rebuilding, and Landscape Reuse at Laguna Seca, Belize
Chris Ploetz (University of Texas-Austin), Amy E. Thompson, Brett A. Houk, Timothy Beach, Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach, Jesse Dalton, and Fred Valdez, Jr.

Coffee Break 2:30-3:00

3:00-3:15 Curiouser and Curiouser: Excavations of Structure 53 at Tz'unun in Northwest Belize
Cheryl Foster (Louisiana State University), Tom Guderjan, and Colleen Hanratty

3:15-3:30 Where Water Flows: Climate, Culture, and Human Settlement at Colha Belize
Melanie Langgle (University of Texas-Austin), and Fred Valdez Jr.

3:30-3:45 Comparing Classic and Postclassic Fishing Weights from the Placencia Region in Belize
Michael Nunez (University of Texas-Tyler) and E. Cory Sills

3:45-4:00 Wood Species Use at Ch'oc Ayin Maya Residential Household Group, Belize
Sarah Miller (Louisiana State University), Heather McKillop and E. Cory Sills

Coffee Break before Keynote Address 4:00-4:30

4:30-5:30 Keynote Address by Dr. Heather McKillop (Louisiana State University).
Title: Discoveries, Challenges, and Innovations at the Paynes Creek Salt Works, Belize, 2004-2026

Saturday October 24, 2026

9:30-9:45 Coffee, Registration, and Opening Remarks

9:45-10:00 Reading T1013/T1058a as AHAN, "Victory, Conquest"

Nicholas Carter (Texas State University), Barb MacLeod, and Dana G. Moot III

10:00-10:15 The Road to San Jose: Interrogating a Cultural Landscape

Brett Houk (Texas Tech University), Jason Yaeger and M. Kathryn Brown

10:15-10:30 Urban-rural Settlement Organization and Land Management in the Central Maya Lowlands: A View from Lidar-derived Map Data

Fransico Estrada-Belli (Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University)

10:30-10:45 Moving from There and Then to Here and Now: Settlement Systems and Travel Times

Adrian Chase (Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University)

10:45-11:15 Coffee Break

11:15-11:30 Building a Body: The Connection of Maize and Wheat in Maya and European Understandings During the Spanish Conquest of Guatemala

Kendall Rander (Louisiana State University)

11:30-11:45 New Perspectives on El Pozito, Orange Walk District, Northern Belize: Recent Archaeology, Results, and Hypotheses on a Classic-era Market Town

Keith Eppich (Tyler Junior College-East Texas)

11:45-12:00 Excavations of the South Ballcourt at Buenavista Del Cayo

Jake Nelson (University of Texas-San Antonio), Bernadette Cap, and Jason Yaeger

12:00-12:15 Muddles in the Models: How Anthropology Led Maya Archaeology Astray

Arlen Chase (University of Houston), Diane Z. Chase, and Adrian S. Z. Chase

12:15-1:45 Lunch

1:45-2:00 Ixchel's Canoe: Maya Women and the Maritime Sacred, Classic to Contact

Andi Ester (ZOOM Presentation)

2:00-2:15 Felines and Chalchihuitl: A Comparative Study of Aztec Murals and Pecos River-Style Rock Art

Diana Radillo Rolon (Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center)

2:15-2:30 Who is Looking at Late Classic Gulf Coast Art? Searching for Late Classic Elites in Viewing Experience at El Tajín, Veracruz

Rex Koontz (University of Houston)

2:30-2:45 Learning from Your Neighbors: Pseudoglyphs across the Mesoamerican South
Janic Agurrie Fukuno (University of Texas-Austin)

2:45-3:00 The Ritual Interment of Infants and Children in a Royal Funerary Complex in Buenavista del Cayo, Belize

Jason Yaeger (University of Texas-San Antonio), Bernadette Cap, Carolyn R. Freiwald, and Lindsey N. Hall

3:00-3:30 Coffee Break

3:30-3:45 Maya Ballcourts in the Southeastern Three Rivers Adaptive Region

Mara De Gregori (University of California-Riverside) and Brett A. Houk

3:45-4:00 It's a Family Tradition: Rethinking Household Production at Ka'kabish

Eli Muller (Louisiana State University)

4:00-4:15 Keeping Bees, Changing Practices: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of Bee Husbandry in Northern Belize

J. Greer Testa (Texas Historical Commission), Manda K.S. Adam, and Fred Valdez, Jr.

4:15-4:30 Nahualá Textiles: An Analysis of K'iche' Maya Huipiles

Clark White (University of Texas-Austin)

4:30-4:45 What Is Old Is New Again: New Perspectives on the Archaeology of Placencia Lagoon, Belize

E. Cory Sills (University of Texas-Tyler)

SCCM Reception

Flowers Hall 5:00-6:30pm

Libations and Conversations

Zelicks 7:30-9:00 pm with Live Music from Autumn and the Pearls and a special “Garber Punch”

Sunday October 25, 2026

9:45 Coffee and Opening Remarks

10:00-10:15 Preservation of Archaeological Collections from Placencia-1 (Rum Point Airstrip), Belize

Hyrum Adams (University of Texas-Tyler) and E. Cory Sills

10:15-10:30 Finding New Data from Old Sources: Exploring the Monuments of Quiriguá Through Photographs and Casts by Alfred Percival Maudslay. Preliminary Observations and Results

Fabian Domiguez (Independent Researcher)

10:30-10:45 Power in the Making: Ritual Economy at a Late Classic Maya Household

Madeline Snyder (University of Texas-San Antonio) and Carolyn Freiwald

10:45-11:00 Photogrammetric Methods, Modeling and Epigraphic Results of a Study in El Chal

Michael Buley (Texas State University)

11:00-11:15 Walk This Way: New Investigations of a Sacbe, Group G, and Access to the Marketplace at Xunantunich

Anna Tolley (University of Texas-San Antonio), Bernadette Cap, and M. Kathryn Brown

Abstracts

Adams, Hyrum, and E. Cory Sills

Preservation of Archaeological Collections from Placencia-1 (Rum Point Airstrip), Belize.

Legacy archaeological collections often contain materials and records that weren't fully analyzed and are sometimes poorly preserved. These collections can provide ample opportunities for new research and interpretation. This paper examines ongoing efforts to organize, digitize, and document materials from Placencia-1 (Rum Point Airstrip), a site in Belize excavated in the 1980's. Archival organization, digitization as well as 3d imaging and printing have been used to preserve site maps, level forms, artifact sketches, photo slides, and artifacts, effectively creating a digital archive. These efforts allow for further progress in site reconstruction, GIS development, and analyses of previously understudied ceramic assemblages.

Aguirre Fukuno, Janic

Learning from your Neighbors: Pseudoglyphs across the Mesoamerican South

The field of Maya studies in recent years revisits the topic of pseudoglyphs with increasing interest. Copador is a ceramic style from Western El Salvador and Copán, which have iconographic patterns and pseudoglyphs distinct from those found in other Maya sites. This study examines continuities of pseudoglyphs within and beyond Copador style vessels. Comparing Copador to the Ulúa and Nicoya style demonstrates that pseudoglyphs transcend regional boundaries. In doing so, the study reimagines pseudoglyphs not merely as mimicry of conventional hieroglyphs, but an expression of shared traditions beyond the Maya.

Buley, Michael

Photogrammetric Methods, Modeling and Epigraphic Results of a Study in El Chal

This brief presentation intends to disseminate the potential benefits for photogrammetric modeling in the field of Epigraphy, particularly in the Maya Region. At El Chal, several monuments in poor condition were documented and analyzed using photogrammetric methods of varying degrees of success. The process of photogrammetry will be articulated on a step by step-by-step basis, some insight to the modeling process will be provided followed by a discussion of the results of the research efforts.

Carter, Nicholas, Barb MacLeod, and Dana G. Moot III

Reading T1013/T1058a as AHAN, "Victory, Conquest,"

A widespread Maya glyph, T1013, depicts the face of a jaguar or feline-human hybrid with a missing jaw and bleeding mouth. Important as a component of royal names, T1013 has hitherto resisted decipherment. We propose the reading **AHAN**, “victory,” “conquest,” identify the supernatural character it depicts in a few scenes on polychrome painted vessels, and connect this being to ancient Maya religious narratives of primordial war.

Chase, Adrian

Moving from There and Then to Here and Now: Settlement Systems and Travel Times

Cities exist within fully anthropogenic landscapes that intertwine people, places, and materials from urban cores to rural regions. These interactions create networks that facilitate the movement of individuals, objects, and ideas across systems of settlements. While previous research efforts have teased apart some common patterns and sets of distances among population centers, integrating this research with travel time analyses yields striking comparisons and similarities across modern, historic, and archaeological settlements. Consideration of how space and time play into daily interactions allows archaeologists to connect the ‘here and now’ to the ‘there and then’ to showcase common trends in human mobility.

Chase, Arlen F., Diane Z. Chase, and Adrian S.Z. Chase

Muddles in the Models: How Anthropology Led Maya Archaeology Astray

Simplified social models borrowed from anthropology have been inaccurately used to frame Maya archaeological evidence. Early twentieth century views depicted Maya society through two classes, vacant ceremonial centers, and elite controlled economies. However, extensive archaeological research, particularly in Belize, has invalidated these binary concepts. Contrasting with anthropological models focused on simpler societies, the archaeological data instead reveal that the ancient Maya were part of complex state systems with urban centers featuring multiple social classes and the widespread use of markets to facilitate commodity distribution. Yet, remnants of earlier models are still found in current archaeological interpretations.

De Gregori, Mara, and Brett A. Houk

Maya Ballcourts in the Southeastern Three Rivers Adaptive Region

Twenty-six Maya ballcourts in the southeastern Three Rivers region, many of which are newly identified, provide an opportunity to examine architectural variability and integration within broader ceremonial landscapes. Analysis of their form, dimensions, orientations, and spatial contexts reveals similarities in design and placement. A case study at Ayiin Winik shows how the ballcourt’s association with a sacbe and evidence for feasting activities connected ballgame spaces with communal gatherings. Statistical comparisons with neighboring regions show shared architectural norms alongside regional variation, particularly in alley width and proportions. These patterns suggest a shared architectural template adapted through regional choices in ballcourt design.

Dominguez, Fabian

Finding new data from old sources. Exploring the monuments of Quiriguá through photographs and casts by Alfred Percival Maudslay. Preliminary observations and results.

This study investigates archaeological history using late 19th-century archival materials, including photographs, plaster casts, and site reports. Focusing on Alfred Percival Maudslay's foundational work at Quiriguá, this paper integrates historical data with contemporary analytical frameworks. Through online access to Maudslay's archival photography, high-resolution digital restorations were generated and compared with original physical casts and modern 3D digital models. This multi-modal analytical approach yields new, previously unexplored perspectives on monument deterioration and past recording methodologies. Ultimately, combining restored archival photography, physical casts, and digital spatial data demonstrates a new framework impacting digital heritage, digital forensics, Maya epigraphy, conservation, and education.

Eppich, Keith

New Perspectives on El Pozito, Orange Walk District, Northern Belize, recent archaeology, results, and hypotheses on a Classic-era market town

This research focuses on a settlement in Northern Belize, El Pozito in the Orange Walk District. Current research argues that El Pozito served as a market-town for the surrounding agricultural countryside, a node of economic functionality on a landscape of rural complexity. This presentation features recent archaeology at El Pozito, examining the social/political aspects of this economic functionality. This research features the 2026 walking survey of the site, the assessment of its current state, and its suitability for future archaeological investigation. El Pozito stands as a critically endangered site, evidenced by the recent destruction that made national news.

Estrada-Belli, Fransico

Urban-rural settlement organization and land management in the Central Maya Lowlands: a view from lidar-derived map data

This paper explores the relationship between urban populations and surrounding rural agricultural production in the Classic Maya world. Focusing on the low-density urban continuum with the benefit of large-scale lidar-derived maps, I analyze the spatial distribution of landesque capital investments alongside elite and non-elite households across two case studies. The findings reveal close spatial associations between settlement density, household status, and agricultural fields of various sizes, demonstrating that urban and rural populations were deeply interdependent. These data challenge the traditional dichotomy between separate urban and rural political and economic worlds.

Foster, Cheryl, Tom Guderjan, and Colleen Hanratty

Curiouser and Curiouser: Excavations of Structure 53 at Tz'unun in Northwest Belize

Excavations of Structure 53 at the ancient Maya site of Tz'unun in northwest Belize raise questions about the building's function and history. The 80m-long structure occupies the eastern edge of the site's main eastern platform. Aerial and axial excavations at the structure's southern end investigated its construction and use. Ceramic analysis indicates that Structure 53 underwent building phases spanning the Early Classic and the Late-to-Terminal Classic Periods. Despite evidence for repeated construction and use, its function remains unclear. The structure's complex architectural history and artifact assemblage have yet to reveal how this building contributed to life at Tz'unun.

Guzman Piedrasanta, Rodrigo, Michael Callaghan, Bridgitte Kovacevich, and Karla Cardona Caravantes

A Karst Plateau in the Central Maya Lowlands: The Landscape of El Mirador

The Mirador plateau contains a dense archaeological landscape, including major sites such as El Mirador and Nakbe. Pedestrian surveys have documented the settlement at these major centers and satellite imagery has provided topographic detail. More recently, the Pacunam LiDAR initiative 2 (PLI2) survey covered this region. The unprecedented detail provided by LiDAR reveals the topography and settlement of the plateau at a new scale, expanding the scope of analyses. The morphology of the plateau played an important role in shaping the complexity of settlements and infrastructure, including water management systems conditioned by the characteristics of the karst landscape.

Houk, Brett A., Jason Yaeger, and M. Kathryn Brown

The Road to San Jose: Interrogating a Cultural Landscape

The landscape of northwestern Belize has a range of historic sites, including Maya villages, chiclero camps, and logging camps and infrastructure. Most of these places are only known from brief mentions in archival documents. Some appear on imprecise and inaccurate historic maps. While their exact locations may be lost or forgotten, the roads that once connected them may persist on the landscape, giving archaeologists and historians another way to locate these sites. In this case study, we discuss the roles that archaeological reconnaissance, landscape-scale lidar, and archival sources played in locating the "lost" historic Maya village of San José Yalbac.

Koontz, Rex

Who is looking at Late Classic Gulf Coast Art? Searching for Late Classic elites in viewing experience at El Tajín, Veracruz

This essay explores the construction of viewing spaces for major artistic programs at El Tajín, Veracruz, during the period ca. 600–1000. The study posits that at least among the peoples of the north-central Gulf Coast between ca. 600–1000, there were several related but distinct traditions

of massing audiences for viewing major artistic programs and the rites associated with them, and further, that these traditions were dynamic, changing throughout the region as the Epiclassic turned into the Early Postclassic.

Langgle, Melanie, and Fred Valdez Jr.

Where Water Flows: Climate, Culture, and Human Settlement at Colha Belize

The site of Colha in Northwestern Belize, one of the Maya's major lithic distribution centers, is an estuary— a region consisting of swamps, rivers, and access to the Atlantic Ocean. The geographically favorable territory for agriculture and trade was also significantly susceptible to fundamental geographic changes. Occupied intermediately from the Late Archaic Period (3400 CE) to the Postclassic Period (1000-1500 CE), Colha offers a unique context to study long-term adaptations within a climate-variable region. Through survey and climate modeling, this research aims to identify potential spatial and economic responses to fluctuating water levels in the region during the Late Classic.

Lytle, Whitney, and M. Kathryn Brown

Constructing the Past: New Architectural Evidence from Group D, Xunantunich

Since 2012, the Mopan Valley Preclassic Project (MVPP) has investigated Group D at Xunantunich, Belize. Connected to Plaza A by sacbe, Group D was initially interpreted as a Late Classic residential compound. Excavations reveal a substantially longer architectural sequence, changing functions, and ritual uses, challenging conventional interpretations of eastern shrine complexes. Recent investigations of two of the largest structures within the group, D-6 and D-7, illuminate episodes of construction and modification. This presentation examines the architectural development of Group D, its significance within Xunantunich's ritual landscape, and MVPP's ongoing preparations for potential consolidation and preservation of this important architectural group.

McKillop, Heather, and E. Cory Sills

Discoveries, Challenges, and Innovations at the Paynes Creek Salt Works, Belize, 2004-2026

Twenty years of research at the Paynes Creek Salt Works provided stunning new evidence on the economy and lives of the ancient coastal Maya, created challenges in working at shallow underwater sites and conservation of salt waterlogged material, and developed new ways to investigate and communicate the findings. We discuss how we addressed challenges and the finds. The 2004 discovery of wooden building posts preserved below the sea floor required innovative methods to discover and map. We adapted methods from terrestrial and underwater archaeology to address challenges of working in shallow underwater sites. Teams snorkeled on Research Flotation Devices (RFDs) to locate and map posts and artifacts. We developed a pulley system to move excavated material in floats to off-site screening stations. We desalinated material and used 3D digital imaging to preserve and record salt waterlogged pottery and wood. Was all the effort worthwhile? Unexpected discoveries of 4042 wooden posts that formed the

outlines of pole and thatch residences, salt kitchens, and other structures were previously unknown in the Maya area. The only ancient Maya wooden canoe paddle radiocarbon dated to the Late Classic (conserved and stored in the Museum of Belize) is the only direct evidence of canoe travel by the Classic Maya. Years of discovery, mapping, and excavation revealed community specialization in surplus household salt production by resident workers, with dedicated salt kitchens. Use of 3D technology to record and 3D printed replicas for displays in Belize expand communication to academic and public audiences in Belize and beyond.

Miller, Sara, Heather McKillop and E. Cory Sills

Wood Species Use at Ch'oc Ayin Maya Residential Household Group, Belize

Identification of wood species used in the construction of ancient Maya pole-and-thatch buildings can provide insight into where the wood was sourced. During the construction of these structures at the Paynes Creek Salt Works, Belize, wooden posts were sharpened and driven into mangrove peat. Following the abandonment of the site, the area became inundated, forming a saline lagoon system. The above ground portions rotted away, leaving behind only the ends which were preserved in the peat. In 2025, posts were sampled from Ch'oc Ayin and exported to LSU for identification in the Maya Wood Lab. Samples were then cut into 3 planes and photographed on a microscope. 13 species were identified, which are found in 3 different habitats.

Muller, Eli

It's a Family Tradition: Rethinking Household Production at Ka'kabish

In this paper, I examine data from 20 utilitarian ceramic jars recovered from a Late Classic chultun deposit at Ka'kabish, Belize, to investigate the organization of production and exchange at a nearby household group. Employing multiple statistical methods, results indicate that the vessels form a continuum of technological variability, with three clusters closely related, and one markedly divergent. This pattern suggests production by multiple potters operating within a related yet technologically distinct tradition, consistent with decentralized, household level production.

Nelson, Jake, Bernadette Cap, and Jason Yaeger

Excavations of the South Ballcourt at Buenavista Del Cayo

In 2024 and 2026, the MVAP undertook excavations of the South Ballcourt at the Maya site of Buenavista del Cayo, focusing efforts on the southern end of the ballcourt. We exposed the final phase of the playing alley and two flanking structures, and excavated the alley to identify deposits or caches. We present the stratigraphy and architectural history of the South Ballcourt, discuss the morphology of its final phase, and describe a turtle shell cache. We discuss this data in light of the broader comparative set of ballcourts from the region, and contextualize it within Buenavista del Cayo's political history.

Nunez, Michael, and E. Cory Sills

Comparing Classic and Postclassic Fishing Weights from the Placencia Region in Belize.

Fishing weights provide some of the most direct evidence for fishing practices as nets and lines are rarely preserved in the archaeological record. This study examines 59 artifacts interpreted as net weights from Classic and Postclassic sites in the Placencia area and nearby cays of Belize. Variables including weight, dimensions, notch sizes, material, and evidence for repurposed versus purposeful net weights were compared. Statistical analyses reveal differences between Classic and Postclassic weights, with Postclassic net weights exhibiting greater standardization in size and form. These results suggest consistency in net weight production over time and provide evidence of changing fishing practices.

Ploetz, Chris, Amy E. Thompson, Brett A. Houk, Timothy Beach, Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach, Jesse Dalton, and Fred Valdez, Jr.

Beyond Lidar: Building, Rebuilding, and Landscape Reuse at Laguna Seca, Belize

Airborne lidar is widely used for archaeological prospection but it cannot reveal the construction histories of archaeological features. Pedestrian and lidar surveys documented two civic ceremonial complexes and agricultural terraces at the ancient Maya center Laguna Seca in NW Belize. Excavations, multi-proxy chronology building, and sediment analyses demonstrate a cumulative landscape history with palimpsests of construction in the core from the Middle and Late Preclassic (800 BCE – 250 CE) and Late Classic (600 – 810 CE) periods but terraced fields dating to the Postclassic (1030 – 1270 CE). These results highlight the varied occupational sequences and landscape modifications in ancient cities.

Radillo Rolon, Diana

Felines and Chalchihuitl: A Comparative Study of Aztec Murals and Pecos River-Style Rock Art

This paper presents a comparative analysis of felines and chalchihuitl, two iconographic elements depicted in Aztec murals from central Mexico (AD 1–650) and Pecos River style rock art from the Lower Pecos, Texas (5,500–1,300 cal BP). Although these two pictorial traditions are separated by more than 4,000 years, both regularly connect felines, chalchihuitl, and water. I argue that this recurring imagery illustrates a symbolic relationship and embodies interconnected conceptions of living water, fertility, sacrifice, and solar transformation. Together, felines and chalchihuitl renew a cyclical narrative associated with the earth and the journey of the sun through the underworld.

Rander, Kendall

Building a Body: The Connection of Maize and Wheat in Maya and European Understandings During the Spanish Conquest of Guatemala

Diet reflects our culture, identity, and beliefs. For the K'iche Maya, to be Maya was to be made of maize. The consumption of maize symbolically marked your initiation into society and reaffirmed your culture. Similarly, for the Spanish, to eat wheat was to mark yourself as a Christian. Examining these cultural similarities, this presentation investigates how this idea of you are what you eat was used as a way to convert the K'iche Maya. Utilizing documents such as the Popol Vuh, missionary manuals, and contemporary medical ideas, I propose how these two ideologies of the creation of the body and identity synthesized and created a new understanding for the new colonized state.

Sills, E. Cory

What Is Old Is New Again: New Perspectives on the Archaeology of Placencia Lagoon, Belize

Archaeological investigations in the Placencia Lagoon area of Belize have documented occupations from the Early Classic, Late Classic, Postclassic, and Historic periods. Recent efforts to organize and analyze the collections and records of Jeff MacKinnon, along with ongoing research, provide an opportunity to further investigate the region. This paper highlights evidence from current research, including studies of settlement patterns, obsidian, economic activities, and site chronology. Together, these investigations contribute to providing new perspectives on the archaeology of the Placencia Lagoon area. The results also demonstrate the continued research potential of legacy collections and their value for addressing ongoing archaeological questions.

Snyder, Madeline, and Carolyn Freiwald

Power in the Making: Ritual Economy at a Late Classic Maya Household

Archaeological research into Maya ritual economy is often centered on the consumption, rather than the production, of ritually significant goods by the elite. Ongoing research at a Late Classic period household at the site of Las Ruinas de Arenal, Belize provides insights into the non-elite group's multi-faceted engagement with the ritual economy. Through provisioning feasts, craft production of ritual objects, and ancestor veneration, they situated themselves within the community through their connections with the ritual landscape. In this way, even everyday community members can be seen to negotiate their status and reinforce their ancestral ties to place and community.

Sobrino, Santiago

Building Ch'ulel. A study of the hieroglyphic texts of the Cenote Sagrado

The Cenote Sagrado at Chichen Itza presents an abundant corpus of archaeological materials closely related to the long-standing use of the landmark as a space for ritual performance.

Amongst the recovered materials, a series of inscribed artifacts stands out given the diversity of their graphic characteristics and styles which, in most cases, don't match Chichen Itza's own scribal tradition. This paper analyzes the inscriptions focusing on their origin, chronological dating, and nominals, also considering that their role as part of ritual strategies that placed the Cenote Sagrado and Chichen Itza itself as the axis mundi during the Terminal Classic.

Stevens, Aaron

The Lost Lienzo of Ixhuatan: The Titulo de Santa Maria Ixhuatan and its Colonial Cousins

The Titulo de Santa Maria Ixhuatán is the largest surviving example of a colonial-era Nahuatl manuscript in Guatemala. Written around 1620 using the Latin alphabet, the Titulo outlines the community of Santa Maria Ixhuatan's history and land claims. However, portions of the document are clearly modeled on an older lienzo. By comparing the drawings and captions of the Titulo to indigenous maps from the Relaciones Geograficas in the collections of the University of Texas at Austin, this paper aims to partially reconstruct the original Ixhuatán lienzo and situate it within the larger understanding of Spanish and indigenous mapmaking.

Testa, J. Greer, Manda K. S. Adam, and Fred Valdez, Jr.

Keeping Bees, Changing Practices: An Ethnoarchaeological Study of Bee Husbandry in Northern Belize

Archaeological evidence demonstrates that stingless bee husbandry was an important component of ancient Maya resource management, yet its relationship to contemporary beekeeping in northern Belize remains understudied. This research employs an ethnoarchaeological approach to examine transformations in bee husbandry through archaeological, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic evidence. Interviews and participant observation provide insight into contemporary beekeeping and contextualize these changes within broader historical processes. Preliminary findings indicate a shift from native stingless bee husbandry toward European and Africanized honeybee management, reflecting introduced species, resource competition, changing land use, colonial influences, and economic priorities, while stingless bee husbandry persists at a limited scale.

Tolley, Anna, Bernadette Cap, and M. Kathryn Brown

Walk This Way: New Investigations of a Sacbe, Group G, and Access to the Marketplace at Xunantunich

Xunantunich has a long history of archaeological research, including the discovery and investigation of a Late Classic marketplace where materials like obsidian and chert objects were exchanged. Analysis of LiDAR survey data shows one of the site's sacbeob continues down a ridge west of the site core, terminating at a large, long platform (G-1). Household groups were documented from foot survey and LiDAR, suggesting this western hinterland zone was well populated. By analyzing access to and from the marketplace, we hope to shed light on market activities and contribute to discussions of elite control of marketplaces and site access.

White, Clark

Nahualá Textiles: An Analysis of K'iche' Maya Huipiles

This research examines two K'iche' Maya garments from Nahualá, Guatemala, dating to the 1970s: a women's ceremonial *cofradía* huipil and a men's everyday shirt. Through close visual and material analysis, I consider how their weaving, embroidery, motifs, and alterations express community identity across ceremonial and daily contexts. The huipil's brocaded imagery and applied ribbons speak to the adaptation of colonial religious forms within Maya practice, while repairs and added fabric on the shirt reveal its continued use. Together, these garments show how textile making and wearing carry cultural knowledge, even as their forms respond to changing needs and histories.

Yaeger, Jason, Bernadette Cap, Carolyn R. Freiwald, and Lindsey N. Hall

The Ritual Interment of Infants and Children in a Royal Funerary Complex in Buenavista del Cayo, Belize

Since 2014, the Mopan Valley Archaeological Project has been investigating the nature of divine kingship at Buenavista del Cayo through excavations of royal and elite burials and associated deposits in Structure 3. In this paper, we describe four deposits that contained the remains of at least 12 different perinates, infants and young children. We describe the context of these deposits and their contents. We explore these young individuals as *k'ex* payments to the deities, made to ensure the release of the souls of dead kings and queens from the Underworld and their apotheosis into the Heavens.