

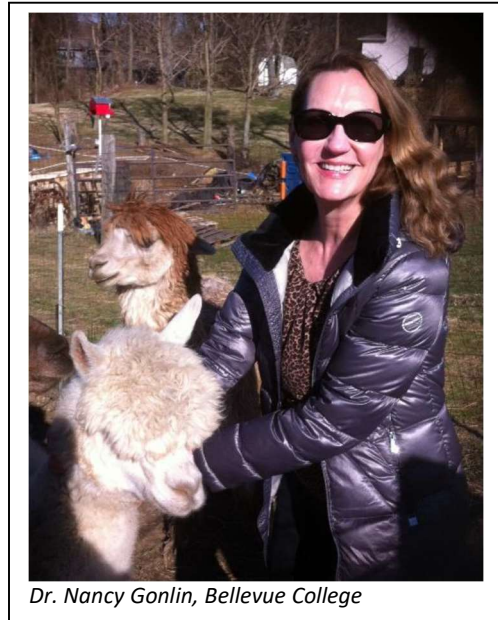
Anthropology Section Today

Volume 1, Number 1 October 2021

FREE LECTURE ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28th AT 7:30 P.M. ON ZOOM

Torches, Fireflies, and Moonlight: The Brilliance of Classic Maya Lightscapes, by Dr. Nancy Gonlin

(Presented by the Archaeological Institute of America Rochester Society & the Anthropology Section)



Dr. Nancy Gonlin, Bellevue College

As far back as Paleolithic times, humans illuminated their world with an ever-increasing diversity and sophistication of lighting devices. We are now at the point in our history where day and night blend, and dark night skies are a rarity for much of humanity. Archaeological knowledge about how ancient nights were illuminated varies widely: while lighting technology is well studied for the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Middle Easterners through the field of lychnology, far less is known about how ancient Mesoamericans lit up dark spaces. Explicit attention to these devices has been minimal. To determine possible lighting technologies created by the Late Classic Mayas (600-900 CE) of the American tropics, Dr. Gonlin's research utilizes the abundant archaeological record, from the remains of humble houses to palaces. Just as critical are the hieroglyphs in which the ancient Maya wrote about their world, the night, and darkness, including glyphs to describe certain objects used for lighting. (text continues below). To register for the event, just go to:

https://hselaw.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7dEsc3gaRLeSm_Tb26xqlA

ANTHROPOLOGY SECTION PARTNERS WITH AIA TO HOST ACTIVITIES AT ROCHESTER MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

On Saturday, October 23rd, seven members of the section and of the AIA partnered to put on an educational event for children and adults celebrating International Archaeology Day. The team set up seven tables and two stations with displays, demonstrations, and hands-on activities. Although museum attendance has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, those of us attending had many visitors and enjoyed discussing the artifacts and doing the activities with them.



Left to right back, Sydney Greaves (IAI & Memorial Art Gallery), Alex Smith (RAS-Anthro & IAI), Karen Wolfe (RAS-Anthro & IAI), Michael Grenier (RAS-Anthro). Front, Karen's grand-niece & grand-nephew, Clara & Oliver

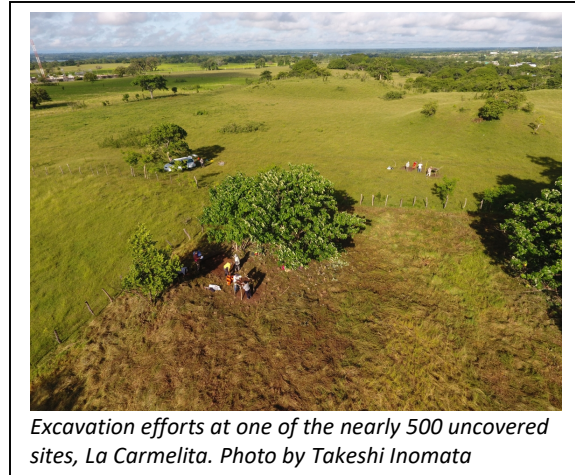
ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS - Nearly 500 Ancient Ceremonial Sites newly found in Southern Mexico (10/25/2021)

A team of international researchers led by the University of Arizona reported last year that they had uncovered the largest and oldest Maya monument – Aguada Fénix. That same team has now uncovered nearly 500 smaller ceremonial complexes that are similar in shape and features to Aguada Fénix. The find transforms previous understanding of Mesoamerican civilization origins and the relationship

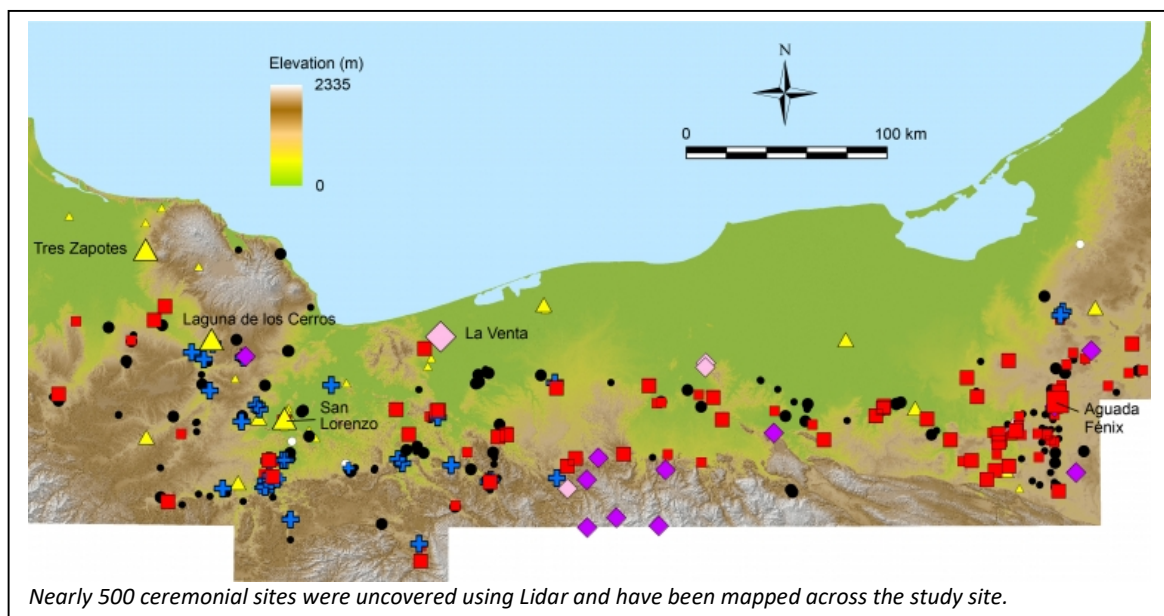
between the Olmec and the Maya people. The team's findings are detailed in a new paper published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*.

There's a longstanding debate over whether the Olmec civilization led to the development of the Maya civilization or if the Maya developed independently. The newly uncovered sites are located in a broad area encompassing the Olmec region and the western Maya lowlands. The complexes were likely constructed between 1100 B.C. and 400 B.C. and were built by diverse groups nearly a millennium before the heyday of the Maya civilization between A.D. 250 and 950. The researchers found that the complexes share similar features with the earliest center in the Olmec area, San Lorenzo, which peaked between 1400 and 1100 BC.

Aguada Fenix in the Maya area and other related sites began to adopt San Lorenzo's form and formalize it around 1100 BC (from University of Arizona press release, <https://news.arizona.edu/story/uarizona-led-team-finds-nearly-500-ancient-ceremonial-sites-southern-mexico> for more information).



Excavation efforts at one of the nearly 500 uncovered sites, La Carmelita. Photo by Takeshi Inomata



Nearly 500 ceremonial sites were uncovered using Lidar and have been mapped across the study site.

ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS - Cosmic event could explain biblical stories (10/8/2021). Could the biblical description of the destruction of Sodom be explained by an exploding meteor? A research team has presented evidence that a Middle Bronze Age city called Tall el-Hammam, located in the Jordan Valley northeast of the Dead Sea, was destroyed by a meteoric cosmic airburst.

Archaeological excavation of the site began in 2005 and researchers have been particularly interested in a citywide 1.5-meter-thick destruction layer of carbon and ash. The layer, which dates to about 1650 B.C.E. (about 3,600 years ago), contains shocked quartz, melted pottery and mudbricks, diamond-like carbon, soot, remnants of melted plaster, and melted minerals including platinum, iridium, nickel, gold, silver, zircon, chromite and quartz. evidence of high-temperature burning was found throughout the entire site (from East Carolina University press release, <https://news.ecu.edu/2021/10/12/cosmic-event-could-explain-biblical-stories/> for more information).