In Search of Ancient Maya Marketplaces: Soil Chemical analysis of a modern Maya Marketplace. (S06-terry174610-Poster)

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Abstract:

There is ample evidence of an extensive trade network in ancient Mesoamerica. Despite their importance in ancient Maya cities, relatively little is known of the location of ancient marketplaces. Because of the lack of permanent architecture and artifactual evidence, soil chemical analysis becomes even more essential to identification of ancient marketplaces. In this ethnoarchaeological study, we analyze a modern Maya open-air marketplace in Antigua, Guatemala. We compare the superficial structure of the market (including vendor stalls, pathways, refuse areas, etc.) to the P and heavy metal chemical pattern found in the marketplace soils. Specifically, we found increased soil P levels in areas where vegetables were sold and food was served, in comparison with pathway and control soil samples. The results prove to be an invaluable tool in the identification of suspected ancient marketplaces in Mesoamerican archaeological sites and the activities that took place therein.

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