

**SEEDS “You Choose” Award Application**

**Traci Ardren**

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## **Abstract**

Funding is sought to foster scientific collaboration between Ardren and Dr. Vera Tiesler, a physical anthropologist working in Mexico. Ardren would use SEEDS funds to visit the osteological laboratory of Tiesler in order to plan, draft, and finalize a joint publication on human materials recovered in 2006 from the archaeological field project directed by Ardren, now housed in Tiesler's lab. Collaboration in person would enhance the quality of the research experience and facilitate a potential long term professional relationship between Ardren and another senior female scholar in her field.

## **Project Goals**

The Proyecto Arqueologico Xuenkal (PAX), directed by Drs. Traci Ardren and T. Kam Manahan, is an on-going program of archaeological, environmental, and osteological investigation into how household economies and political economies articulated during the Late Classic (A.D. 600 – 900) to Terminal Classic (A.D. 900 – 1000) transition, a time marked by great sociopolitical transformations, at the ancient Maya center of Xuenkal, Yucatan, Mexico. The site of Xuenkal is significant because it contains both substantial occupations that predate the emergence of the great urban center of Chichén Itzá and subsequent settlement associated with the site's greatest regional influence. Using osteological data already recovered this proposal seeks to facilitate a microscale perspective on how household economic strategies adapted to regional political influence, and in turn examine the organizational structure of Chichén Itzá's political economy from a macro view across the regional landscape. Skeletal remains of up to 19 individuals recovered from 5 burials at Xuenkal during the 2006 field season, suggest the presence of adults, sub-adults, and infants of high status buried over a period of 200 years during the period of greatest sociopolitical revolution.

Human osteological materials are extremely valuable resources in the reconstruction of a scientific understanding of the past. Trace element analysis for evidence of dietary patterns and regional origin can now supplement bioarchaeological analyses of disease, trauma, or occupational indicators. PAX has been fortunate to collaborate in the field with physical anthropologists on the faculty of the Universidad Autonoma de Yucatan (UADY), in Merida, Mexico. Dr. Vera Tiesler and her students supervised excavation of human skeletal materials in the field and produced a preliminary report on the significance of the materials for the Mexican government.

Further detailed analysis of this osteological material has been conducted by Dr. Tiesler in her laboratory at the Universidad Autonoma de Yucatan. The results of this analysis, which includes chemical testing of human teeth to discern local versus extra-local origin, as well as taphonomic analysis of injuries and occupational indicators, demonstrates the significance of the Xuenkal burials, especially the mass internment of eight individuals, which could provide key information on the political interactions of elites in this period. Before publication of these results can proceed the osteological data analyzed by Dr. Tiesler must be integrated into the overall archaeological framework for the site. This proposal seeks funding to facilitate two visits to the laboratory of Dr. Tiesler by PAX Project Director Dr. Traci Ardren, to further a collaborative relationship

already in place. PAX osteological materials are curated in Dr. Tiesler's lab and on-site collaboration between Drs. Tiesler and Ardren would greatly assist the timely and accurate publication of these materials. One visit would occur during the UM spring break period to consist of meetings between Ardren and Tiesler to work directly on the bone materials and draft a joint publication, and a second visit would occur while Ardren is in the field this summer to finalize the publication and discuss future projects.

### **Personal Career Enhancement for Ardren**

Collaboration with colleagues trained in specialties that complement my own skills and interests has been a cornerstone of my career. By its nature archaeological research is best conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, each with a specific skill base that contributes to an understanding of the material remains of ancient cultures. Collaboration with Mexican colleagues is not only a reality of my research but a privilege, as the deep of familiarity they often bring to analysis is impossible to match.

Dr. Vera Tiesler has been a colleague of mine for almost ten years. We have known one another through our shared research in Yucatan, although we had not had an opportunity to publish together or work closely in the field prior to the 2006 PAX field season. She has distinguished herself since arriving at the UADY and is the author of many publications and monographs on osteological analysis in the Maya area. I was enthusiastic about inviting her students to participate in the PAX burial excavations and I consider the project fortunate that she was able to add our materials to her already very busy lab.

While we currently have NSF funding for further research at Xuenkal, the budget is almost exclusively dedicated to expenses related to further excavation and fieldwork. SEEDS funding would allow me to foster the collaborative relationship I have begun with Dr. Tiesler, and accelerate a joint publication on the Xuenkal burial material. My own objectives of increased publication would be fostered but more importantly, by traveling to Dr. Tiesler's lab for discussion of her analysis of the bone materials and my understanding of the archaeological implications most appropriate for a joint publication, I would demonstrate a commitment to learning from a very significant senior colleague and thereby position myself for further collaborations with a scholar who has a specific skill set complimentary to my own.

### **Budget**

#### Travel

Ardren Miami/Merida r/t 3/15-3/19	\$487.75
Car rental for 4 days in March, 4 days in July	\$180.00

#### Housing

Single room at Maison Lafitte Hotel, Merida 3/15-3/19 and 7/18-7/22	\$509.57
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#### Food

40./day for 8 days	\$320.00
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Publication subvention for color images \$400.00

**Total** **\$1897.32**  
(no matching funds available)

## **Traci Ardren, BIOSKETCH**

### **Professional Preparation**

1988 B.A. in Anthropology, New College of Florida  
1991 M. Phil in Anthropology, Yale University  
1997 Ph.D. in Anthropology, Yale University

### **Appointments**

Director of Program in Women's and Gender Studies, University of Miami (2008-present)

Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Miami (2007-present)

Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Miami (2001-2007)

Visiting Instructor, Florida State University (1996-2000)

### **Publications**

#### **5 selected publications**

- 2008 Little Artefacts: Rethinking the Constitution of the Archaeological Child, (Lally and **Ardren**) *Childhood in the Past*, 1(1):62-77.
- 2008 Masculinity in Classic Maya Culture. *In Proceedings of the Chacmool Conference, Que(e)rying Archaeology: the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gender Conference*. Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary: Calgary, Alberta.
- 2008 Apuntando hacia un modelo regional de desarrollo de Chichén Itzá: historia de una plataforma Sotuta en Xuenkal, Yucatan, (Manahan, Alonso, and **Ardren**) *In Los Investigadores de la cultura Maya Encuentro Internacional Volumen 16, Tomo 2*, M Rosario Dominguez C. ed:93-104. Universidad Autónoma de Campeche: Campeche, Mexico.
- 2008 Cambios y conflictos en la region Cupul: resultados preliminares de la temporada 2006 en Xuenkal, Yucatan, (Manahan and **Ardren**) *In Los Investigadores de la cultura Maya Encuentro Internacional Volumen 16, Tomo 2*, M Rosario Dominguez C. ed: 255-266. Universidad Autónoma de Campeche: Campeche, Mexico.
- 2005 Recent Investigations at Xuenkal, Yucatan, (**Ardren**, Burgos, Manahan, Gongóra, and Estrada) *Mexicon XXVII*: 92-97.

### **5 other significant publications**

- 2007 Studies of Gender in the Pre-hispanic Americas. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 16:1-35.
- 2006 The Unusual Sculptures of Telantunich, Yucatan: Phalli and the Concept of Masculinity in Ancient Maya Thought, (Ardren and Hixson) *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 16(1):7-25.
- 2006 Setting the Table: Why Children and Childhood are Important in an Understanding of Ancient Mesoamerica, In The Social Experience of Childhood in Ancient Mesoamerica, T. Ardren and S. Hutson, eds: 3-24. University Press of Colorado: Boulder.
- 2006 Early to Terminal Classic Maya Diet in the Northern Lowlands of the Yucatán (Mexico), (Mansell, Tykot, Freidel, Dahlin and Ardren) In Histories of Maize: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Prehistory, Biogeography, Domestication, and Evolution of Maize, J. E. Staller, R.H. Tykot, and B. F. Benz, eds: 173-185. Academic Press: New York.
- 2002 Ancient Maya Women, Editor. AltaMira Press: Walnut Creek, California.

### **Synergistic Activities**

2007-present Editorial board member, peer reviewed journal *Childhood in the Past*, Oxbow Press.

2003, 2005 Developed and led the first field based course for learning archaeology at the University of Miami to train undergraduate students in the techniques of excavation and analysis.

Manuscript reviews for Oxford University Press, University of Arizona Press, and journals *Archaeologies*, *Ancient Mesoamerica*, and *American Anthropologist*, etc.

2001-present Regular scientific workshops on archaeology and human osteology at Carver Elementary and Middle Schools (majority of population is from underrepresented minorities), Miami, Florida

2007-present Member of Science Advisory Committee, Historical Museum of Southern Florida/Carver Middle School History Channel Challenge grant

### **Names of collaborators**

- i) Collaborators in last 48 months: Alejandra Alonso, University of Calgary; Bruce Dahlin, Howard University; David Freidel, Washington University; David Hixson, Tulane University; Scott Hutson, University of Kentucky; Mike Lally, University of Southampton; Aline Magnoni, Tulane University; T. Kam Manahan, Kent State; Eugenia Mansell, University of South Florida; Robert Tykot, University of South Florida; Julie Wesp, University of California-Berkeley
- ii) Graduate Advisor: Michael D. Coe

iii) Thesis advisees, graduate: Justin Lowry, SUNY-Albany; Eric Stockdell, Indiana University, Trent Lawton, Tulane University

**Current funding**

NSF# BCS0852233, Manahan, PI, Ardren, co-PI, *Late to Terminal Classic Political and Economic Transformations: Archaeological Investigations at Xuenkal* \$199,910. / 2 yrs