



Defining the Main Plaza and Ritual Use of Space in the Ceremonial Precinct at Paquimé

Presentation by Archaeologist Michael D. Mathiowetz, PhD



*View of Paquimé and the Mound of the Offerings (Unit 4),
photo courtesy of the Amerind Foundation*

Advances in the modeling of social, religious, and political organization at Paquimé and its regional hinterlands allow us to examine the use of public and private space at the paramount center.

In this presentation Michael Mathiowetz identifies a previously unrecognized "Main Plaza" in Paquimé's ceremonial precinct that may have served as a locus of public dancing linked to solar and maize ritualism in feasting contexts. If this interpretation is correct it provides a model for the development of plaza-pueblo ritualism in the Pueblo world of the Southwest.

The development of plaza-oriented pueblos across Arizona and New Mexico by the late thirteenth century was part of significant socioreligious and political changes across the region. The rise of the Casas Grandes tradition during the Medio period (1200-1450 CE) coincided with these changes, although its role in these social transformations remains poorly understood.



*Feasting oven at the Mound of the Pit Ovens (Unit 1), Paquimé,
photo by Michael Mathiowetz*

(See next page.)

Thursday October 15, 2026

7 pm Mountain Standard Time
(Same as Pacific Daylight Time)

To register for the Zoom program, click on this link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_w73hqmngToCIR5cIU_VQcw

For more information contact Old Pueblo at info@oldpueblo.org or 520-798-1201.



*Mathiowetz at Casas Grandes cliff dwelling
Cueva de la Serpiente, Chihuahua, photo by Mark Varien*

Since 2023 Dr. Mathiowetz has been a Research Specialist on the Pre-Hispanic Art Provenance Initiative at the Getty Research Institute – which examines the history of looting and the art market for Mesoamerican antiquities – and now is a Research Assistant for the exhibition “Stendahl’s World: Marketing Ancient Mexico and Modern Art in Los Angeles.”

His co-edited volumes include *Flower Worlds: Religion, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Mesoamerica and the American Southwest* (with Andrew D. Turner, 2021) and *Reassessing the Aztatlán World: Ethnogenesis and Cultural Continuity in Northwest Mesoamerica* (with John M. D. Pohl, 2025).

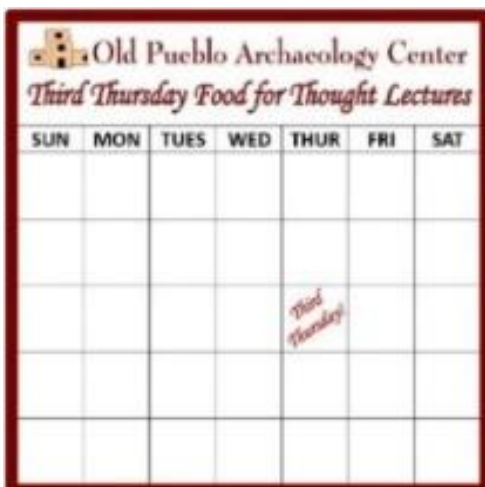
Ritual Use of Space at Paquimé . . .

Our Presenter Michael Mathiowetz, PhD earned his doctorate in Anthropology in 2011 from the University of California, Riverside, specializing in the archaeology, ethnology, and visual culture of Indigenous societies in Mesoamerica, West Mexico, and the U.S. Southwest/Northwest Mexico. He has engaged in field surveys, excavations, and museum and archival research on the Casas Grandes and Aztatlán traditions for two decades.



*Illustration of ritualism at the Mound of the Cross (Unit 2),
Paquimé, courtesy of the Amerind Foundation*

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