Biography
Mikael Fauvelle received his M.A. in Anthropology from California State University, Northridge in 2010 and is currently a doctoral candidate in the Anthropology department at the University of California, San Diego. His research focuses on the role that regional and long-distance connections played in the development of complex political systems. He examines this issue on two levels, studying both hunter-gatherer societies from pre-colonial California as well as archaic states in Mesoamerica. In California, Fauvelle has focused on exchange systems in the Santa Barbara channel region, examining the role played by trade in plant, shell, and mineral resources on the development of coastal chiefdoms. He has argued that California and adjacent areas of North America were connected through intensive trade networks that played important roles in the area’s historical development. In Mesoamerica, Fauvelle has worked on projects in Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico. Since 2015 he has been the director of investigations at the site of Fracción Mujular, located on the pacific coast of Mexico in the state of Chiapas. At Fracción Mujular, Fauvelle has been investigating the relationship between coastal Chiapas and the famous Central Mexican city of Teotihuacan. Fauvelle is especially interested in how the influence of Teotihuacan during the Early Classic Period (circa 200-600 CE) affected the lives of non-elites at Fracción Mujular, and how the site’s relationship with Central Mexico changed following the collapse of Teotihuacan in the sixth century CE. Fauvelle has published his work in journals including American Anthropologist, American Antiquity, and the Journal of Archaeological Science.

Project Summary
Located over 700 km away from Fracción Mujular, the ancient city of Teotihuacan was one of the largest urban centers to ever develop in the ancient Americas, reaching its height of population around 500 C.E. (Cowgill 2015). Teotihuacan influence has been identified at sites throughout Guatemala, Honduras and Belize, some located over 1000 km away from Teotihuacan’s center of power in the Basin of Mexico. The degree to which Teotihuacan was able to effectively control these far-flung areas, however, has provoked considerable debate. While some scholars argue for military incursions and conquests by Teotihuacan, others suggest that parallels in artistic styles and material culture represent the elite emulation of foreign styles (Braswell 2003; Cowgill 2015). Part of the problem in resolving this debate stems from the fact that the majority of work on Teotihuacan influences abroad have focused on royal or elite centers of power. The present study aims to address this problem by conducting one of the first investigations of Teotihuacan’s impact on the lives of common people at a small-scale site in coastal Chiapas.