

Archeology of the Avocado in Latin America

Eugenio Schieber

Antigua, Guatemala, Central America

George A. Zentmyer

Department of Plant Pathology, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521, USA

Abstract. Archaeological and other evidence indicates that avocados were cultivated in Mexico, Central America, and western South America in very early times, possibly up to 6000 years ago. There are also prehistoric records of avocados in California. Information will be presented on all of these aspects, including pre-conquest avocados in Mexico and Guatemala, results of explorations in Peru, and fossil records from California.

Mexican records include those from Tehuacan Valley and Oaxaca Valley. Avocados in Guatemala have been recorded from the Ocos region on the Pacific Coast toward the Mexican border, in Kaminaljuyu in the Finca Las Charcas Archaeological site near modern Guatemala City from approximately 800 B.C., in ancient excavations of the Sacatepequez phase in the Department of Sacatepequez, in Iximche in the central highlands of Guatemala, and at San Andres Sematabaj near Lake Atitlan.

Remains of avocado seeds have also been reported as frequent in archaeological sites on the coast of Peru, and in the Moche Valley of Peru, the latter dating to 2000 B.C. Schroeder has reported fossil records of *Persea* in central and northern California which may come from the Eocene period, possibly 50 million years ago.