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**AIA Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship Final Report: Belize**

**Archaeology Field School**

With the funds from the AIA Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship, I participated in the Belize Archaeology Field School under the direction of Dr. Marisol Cortes-Rincon of Humboldt State University. I had the opportunity to work on the Dos Hombres to Gran Cacao Archaeology Project (DH2GC), which is a transect survey that is concerned with the role and function of hinterland communities between the sites of Dos Hombres and Gran Cacao. The research questions focus on the relationships between subsistence strategies and the chosen environments of settlement, which can reveal more about socioeconomic conditions of the Maya. These questions are addressed by the examination of lithics, ceramics, and the various features found along the transect.

Over the course of four weeks, I had the opportunity to learn about excavation methods and techniques in the field, as well as lab analysis. On a typical day, we woke up around 5:30 a.m. After a truck ride and hike through the jungle, we would start work around 8:30 a.m. In the evenings, we would work in the lab processing and analyzing artifacts. Students were rotated to different units in order to familiarize ourselves with and learn about different structures and features. I had the chance to excavate one commoner household group and one elite group along the transect.

Both instructions in the field and in the lab were incredible learning experiences. At the commoner household group, our team set up a three by one meter unit along what we believed to be a front exterior wall and doorway. At this unit, I learned how to establish a datum, set up excavation units, and how to set up lot records. Excavating at the commoner household group,
we had the chance to become familiar with Maya building practices, such as the use of ceramics as construction fill, which can indicate time period, purpose of the vessel, and possible sources of trade. In the lab, we worked on post-processing and ceramic analysis by sorting sherds based on their form, paste, and decoration. The work in the lab helped me to understand the different aspects of ceramic analysis and artifact preservation.

I also worked on a unit from an elite group which contained polychrome sherds and a well preserved plaster floor. Here, we had the opportunity to learn how to delicately excavate with brushes and dustpans. Likewise, this unit called for careful backfill planning in order to preserve the floor’s condition. I was on this unit’s team the latter part of the field season, which also happened to be the beginning of the rainy season. The sudden weather changes gave us the chance to refine our engineering and management skills as we dug drainage channels and reinforced our tarps to prevent any damage to the unit. During this time, my lab work involved processing and digitizing field notes and records.

Aside from training in archaeological methods, this was an incredible opportunity to learn about Maya archaeology first hand. Being only one of the many schools and projects as part of the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project (PfBAP), we had the pleasure of attending lectures given by various PfBAP researchers on topics ranging from Maya chronology of the Three Rivers Region to the impacts of the Maya’s land use on present day forest ecology. On our free days, we visited the archaeological sites of Lamanai in Belize and Tikal in Guatemala, where we were able to appreciate the scale of the engineering feats and political influence of these Maya administrative centers.

This experience has given me the tools to pursue a career as a professional archaeologist and to attend a graduate program in cultural resource management. My participation in the
Belize Archaeology Field School could not have been possible without the financial assistance from the AIA’s Jane C. Waldbaum Field School Scholarship. I am extremely grateful to the AIA, Dr. Waldbaum, Dr. Cortes-Rincon and all the field school staff for their support, and I will never forget how their assistance helped me to pursue archaeology.

DH2GC. One of the units covered with tarps due to the afternoon thunderstorms.

DH2GC. Getting shelter from the rain during one of the thunderstorms.
At the archaeological site of Tikal.