

ANNUAL REPORT: EL RAYO, NICARAGUA 2015 FIELD SCHOOL

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The 2015 El Rayo field season was a wonderful success. The field school team returned to a mortuary complex located on a small hill and excavated nine additional burial urns. A second team worked at a low mound to expose a large public building consisting of well-arranged foundation stones in two rows, suggesting that they supported a palisade wall. This public building was associated with relatively few artifacts on three superimposed walking surfaces, indicating that the platform was regularly swept clean. A higher artifact density was found outside of the foundation wall. Diagnostic ceramics from both excavation locales date to the Sapoa period, 800-1250 CE, consistent with the research goal of further investigating the period when Mesoamerican migrants colonized Pacific Nicaragua.

IFR field school students worked alongside Nicaraguan archaeologists and graduate students. They were engaged in all phases of the project, including excavating burial urns, mapping the structure, and various phases of artifact analysis. Students received detailed instruction on excavation techniques and recording. One student, for example, assisted with the analysis of over 3000 human bone fragments, while another worked with the extensive assemblage of lithic remains.

Results of the field school project will be disseminated widely. A public presentation has already been made as part of the University of Calgary's lunch time lecture series, and additional presentations are planned for Managua and Granada, Nicaragua. A Spanish language presentation will be made at the El Salvador Archaeological Congress in November, and a presentation of ceramic results will be made at the annual Chacmool conference in Calgary. More formal presentations will be made at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Orlando, Florida, in April. A field report has been published through Academia.edu on Dr. McCafferty's web page, and a Spanish language report has been turned in to the Nicaraguan Institute of Culture. A bilingual popular account of the results will soon be published in the Mi Museo journal in Granada, and an exhibition poster will be put on display at the museum.