

## ANNUAL REPORT: PROYECTO ARQUEOLÓGICO SITIO DRAGO 2014 FIELD SCHOOL

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*Mora Polychrome, Chircote Variety found in Unit 61, Sitio Drago, Bocas del Toro, Panama.  
Imported from the Tempisque Valley, NW Costa Rica.*

The 2014 Sitio Drago Field School was a resounding success. Despite inclement weather (constant rain) during the first 3 weeks of the field school, the project achieved most of its goals, including providing a stimulating learning environment for the students, a receptive and reflexive teaching environment for the instructors and staff, and exciting archaeological practice and discoveries. The teaching staff was pleasantly impressed by the quality and attitude of the students and their evaluations were all quite positive and helpful. Three hot meals a day were

served and consumed on the beach in the Restaurante Yarisnori (<http://www.yarisnori.com>) which now has free wi-fi and television to watch the world cup.

The excessive rain forced some field exercises to be canceled or modified. We concentrated on readings, lectures and lab work in anticipation of the week to come. The extra lab sections involving cleaning, sorting and detailed examination of previously collected materials provided a considerable amount of information that came in handy once excavation, recovery and field lab routines began in earnest. With Saturday nights spent in Bocas town and Sunday's free, the weekends were a much-anticipated break.

After the first week of archaeological and ecological orientation Dr. Alexis Mojica visited the Field School for a week of instructional and participation in geo-electrical survey. We also began to re-open units closed in 2009 to access the units adjacent to them planned for excavation during the field school. The class divided into two sections and rotated through various iterations of survey and excavation during the second week of class. While all of the students received close instruction and practical experience in resistivity survey of Mound 6, the inclement weather resulted in poor field electrical survey conditions and ultimately in a blown capacitor in the new French resistivimeter. We did get positive results from the several 14 m survey lines that provided 2 m deep cross-sections of the mound – a compact layer spread across several square meters appears to represent a house-floor or some other activity surface that will be investigated in future field schools.

Weeks three and four saw the field school shift into an intensive excavation and field recovery and laboratory program. Students learned to fill all the necessary roles during this phase of operations; excavator, recorder, wet-screener, and lab-tech. Excavation involved physical removal of soil and careful exposure of artifacts. Soil was placed in 5 gallon buckets and taken to the wet screen for further processing. Diagnostic artifacts were collected in situ and given their own field catalog number by the recorder.

This year the project used an innovative data-gathering program and dedicated technology to record and photograph all finds in the field (<http://dailybruin.com/2014/11/13/ucla-student-veteran-creates-drogo-data-app-for-ibm-smartcamp-contest/>). The Drago Data application, developed in co-operation with Skeleton Key (<http://skeletonkey.com>) allowed entry of the contextual information of a diagnostic artifact or bag of more general finds (shell, bone, rock, sherds, etc.) into an expanding filemaker-based database, resulting in a field catalog that was updated daily and allowed easy tracking of each catalogued. A pre-printed waterproof tag bearing a QR code, a barcode and site and catalog numbers was placed in each find bag.

Scanning the QR code brought up a series of data entry windows where all provenience, context and content information was entered along with notes and photos. Scanning a new code automatically saves the previous data and opens a new entry window.

We excavated two 1 x 1 m units in 10 cm levels to a depth of 1.2 m. In the upper 4 levels we found several shell beads, many ceramics, lots of shell, bone, stone and carbon. A specific type

of ceramic, Bisquit Ware, was not found below 40 cm, further confirming a pattern seen in adjacent units and across the site. Below 40 cm we continued to find copious amounts of shell, bone and sherds, with noticeably fewer shell beads. Several exciting finds were recovered from the lower levels including bone of manatee and crocodile and a few *Spondylus* (red spiny oyster) shell tube beads. We recovered 4 functioning shell trumpets from these levels. We also found diagnostic sherds representing ceramic vessels imported from central Panama, Central Costa Rica, NW Costa Rica and SW Nicaragua – up to 500 km distant.

The field school students participated in all aspects of artifact collection, data recordation, cataloguing and basic field laboratory analysis. Field work included electrical resistivity survey, excavation, unit mapping, profile drawing, detailed data recordation, wet-screening, finds management and field recording on iPod touches protected by lifeproof cases. Lab work included washing, counting, weighing all finds and photographing diagnostic artifacts. All of these additional data were recorded into the existing Drago Data database. It was in the lab where everyone got a good look at some of the amazing imported and local ceramic finds, as well as the shell ornaments, stone tools, shell and bone types.

Preparing the report on results of the 2014 season to the Panamanian authorities (DNPH-INAC) is well underway, based primarily on finds and data collected by the IFR Field School students. This report will be submitted to the Panamanian authorities mid-Summer of 2015. A symposium organized by Wake for the 2015 Society for American Archaeology meeting entitled “Trade, exchange, production and consumption in pre-Columbian and colonial Lower Central America (Panama, Nicaragua and Costa Rica” will include two presentations on Sitio Drago; “Farming and foraging in late ceramic period society at Sitio Drago, western Caribbean Panama” by Lana Martin and “Trade, exchange, production and consumption at Sitio Drago, Bocas del Toro, Panama” by Thomas Wake. Research findings from the field school will be included in future articles along the lines of Wake (2014), Wake et al. (2012, 2013) and O’Dea et al (2014).

#### Literature Cited:

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