Investigating Maya Terminal Classic Period Architecture at Plaza H, Cahal Pech, Belize

Rachel A. Steffen

University of Montana, Missoula
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Department of Anthropology

Acknowledgements
Special thanks to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Montana, and particularly my advisor Dr. John Douglas. As well as the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) for funding and support.

Methods
• Excavations were in partnership with the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) archaeology field school.
• Excavations were conducted using vertical and horizontal control, using both arbitrary and natural levels when necessary.
• Levels were halted when there was a significant change in the deposits, generally signifying architectural features: fill, walls, or floors. All deposits were screened through a ¼” screen.
• All material cultural materials were collected; with the exception of undiagnostic ceramic body sherds smaller than 2.5 cm.

Results
• Total of 18 units excavated.
• Range of artifacts uncovered including special finds such as shell beads, cores, bifaces, projectile point, ceramic hand figurine among others.
• Concluded there were no additional structures.
• Discovered two phases of construction in feature C-3.

Significance
• Excavations this field season gave further insights into the Terminal Classic construction phases of the structure, including the possibility of two phases of construction evident by the units opened.
• Allowed us to have a deeper understanding into the activities on the structure from the artifacts uncovered.

Plaza H, Cahal Pech
During the Terminal Classic period (750-900 A.D.) in the Upper Belize River Valley the Maya went through extreme sociopolitical change. This is often referred to as the ‘collapse’ of the Maya, a time period characterized by the decline of their divine kingship. The Plaza is semi-restricted and is made up of four total structures: two ceremonial, and two residential. This plaza represents the last elite residential holdout for the site of Cahal Pech.

Research Questions
• What role did Plaza H play in the last occupation of the site?
• What household activities took place at Plaza H?
• What inferences can we make from the construction of feature C-3?
• Was there another existing structure on the western portion of the plaza?

Table 1. Artifact categories, frequency, and percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carbon</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramic</td>
<td>1295</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chert</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daub</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faunal Remains</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshwater Shell</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine shell</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obsidian</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Finds</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>2321</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Plaza H (Douglas)
Figure 2: Location of 2019 Excavations (Douglas)
Figure 3 & 4: Map of Cahal Pech (Awe)
Figure 5: Structure C-3
Figure 6: Feature C-3
Figure 7: Jar Figurine fragment with a hand & arm, Calcite temper.
Figure 8: Chert biface

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