Cotlow Award Application 2011
Department of Anthropology
The George Washington University
Washington, DC 20052

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1. Personal Information

Applicant’s name: Justin Greco

Degree sought: Bachelor of Arts

Field of study/major/minor/concentration: Archaeology and Biological Sciences

Expected date of graduation: Spring 2012

Faculty advisor(s) (who have served as your mentor or mentors for this proposal): Dr. Jeffrey Blomster and Dr. Linda Brown.

2. Language Skills

Does the proposed project involve the use of a “field language”? yes or NO

If yes, state what the language is and your degree of fluency in speaking, reading, and writing it: Belize is an English speaking nation, therefore my interactions on the excavation will only require English. In the event of the excavations that pottery is found with Maya Glyphs, I will have a book for reading and translating Maya glyphs.

3. Title of the Project and Abstract

Project Title: Determining Site-Status Via Analysis of Maya Ceramics from Say Kah, Belize.

Abstract of the Project (provide a summary description of the project’s goals, location, methods, and relevance to anthropology) [80 word maximum]:

Say Kah, a secondary Classic Maya site in Northwestern Belize, is located 3.7km southwest of La Milpa, a major urban center from the Classic Maya Period. Previous investigations at the site revealed a number of elite markers, challenging taken-for-granted notions about the status and socio-political roles of residents occupying secondary centers in the Maya Lowlands. To better evaluate the roles of secondary sites in political organization and regional integration, I will conduct analysis of ceramics using the type:variety method.

80 Words.
4. Description of the Project (describe your overall research goals, what the project is generally about, and where you will conduct the research and why) [250 word maximum]:

Say Kah is a secondary Maya center located in the Three Rivers Region of Northwestern Belize and Northeastern Petén (Adams et al. 2004:175). The site consists of three courtyard groups (A, B, C) located on limestone ridges in La Lucha Uplands of the Orangewalk District of Belize (Guderjan 1991, Houk and Lyndon 2005:45, Jackson et al. 2010). Previous investigations at the site revealed a number of elite markers that challenge scholars’ assumptions about the status and socio-political roles assumed by secondary site residents. During 2011, the Say Kah excavation will carry out investigations in the previously unexcavated Group C. Research goals include the location and excavation of middens to better understand the roles and socio-political relationships cultivated by the ancient Maya residents. My research will contribute to this understanding by conducting ceramic analysis on pottery from Courtyard Group C and any in-situ ceramic caches. Ceramic data will be used to: 1) define the socio-political interactions of Say Kah residents with their contemporaries in the Three Rivers Region; 2) aid in understanding inter-site relations in the Three Rivers Region and 3) contribute to our understanding of Classic Period Maya “secondary” sites and their levels of regional integration and autonomy.

198 Words.

5. Significance of the Project to Anthropology (in this literature review describe how the proposed research relates to other anthropological research on the topic, and/or region as relevant; use American Anthropological Association style for works cited--no footnotes) [500 word maximum]:

Early Maya studies focused on large regional centers with impressive elite architecture and monuments; more recent studies focus on the remains of small agricultural groups (Demarest 2007; Sheets 2002, 2006). The investigation of these two ends of the socio-economic spectrum supports an interpretation that ancient Maya society was strictly hierarchical with those in centers controlling access to power. This interpretation overlooked a large section of ancient Maya society – those who lived in secondary sites; residential groups between large urban socio-political metropolises and farmers who sustain themselves with personal milpa gardens (Iannone 1997:3). As a result, secondary centers have become important to archaeologists and new heterarchical socio-political models (Crumley 1995:3).

Secondary sites are vital to understanding ancient Maya societies because of their variability in socio-economic exchange. Say Kah is geographically close to, and has a large connecting causeway with La Milpa, suggesting substantial site interactions. This relationship, however, is “by no means understood.” (Guderjan 1991:109). Previous excavations at Say Kah revealed a surprising number of elite markers for a secondary site including: jade ear spools, painted polychrome vessels, ceramics with fragmentary hieroglyphics, vaulted masonry structures, and a large square monument (Jackson et al. 2010:12). These discoveries suggest site residents held high status with significant access to resources. My proposed research project will contribute to the understanding of the status of Say Kah by focusing on ceramics. Comparison with ceramic data from other secondary sites, Las Abejas, Cozumel and Seibal, will aid this process.
Archaeological data are the consequence of rationalized reactions of conditions that cannot be tested for, excavated, nor reproduced, (Giddens 1984:5). Ideally, Say Kah findings can be used to infer the structures and “properties of social systems” that were dependent on organized and regular social interactions in the Three Rivers Region (Giddens 1984:25). Interactions between cores and peripheries were based on modes of production and social reproduction of luxury and stable goods (Peregrine 1996:4). Comparing levels of consumption and production of elite goods at Say Kah and other sites, Say Kah’s status can be better understood as a more important semi-peripheral site or not. The flow and distribution of elite and utilitarian ceramics can determine regional exchange and production patterns.

Maya pottery served in “structural roles in a society that had already achieved complex levels of organization” (Rice 2007:158). Site pottery types and distribution patterns can be compared to the rest of the region. Production and exchange of these goods relates to socio-political organization, economic production, and the dynamics of relationships between sites (Rice 2007:160). Elite codex and polychrome styles were probably only produced at the largest Petén centers and distributed to the periphery (Rice 2007:161). This exchange was directly overseen by elite administration in order to control the imagery and symbolism of Maya rulership. For elites, these ceramics were critical in the identification and definition of their relations (Demarest 2007:284). Rulers controlled the trade systems of “items of an ideological nature” that were politically and economically essential for the Maya Lowlands (Demarest 2007:284).

499 Words.

6. Methods (clearly outline or list your research questions; describe the data you will collect and how you will collect it; discuss your analytical methods; and show how the data will address the research questions) [300 word maximum]:

My research will focus on materials excavated from 6/16/2011 to 7/10/2011 from Courtyard Groups B and C. In conjunction with the principal investigators (Dr. Linda Brown and Dr. Sarah Jackson), a sample of ceramics will be selected for analysis from primary contexts or middens. Finding and classifying ceramics from these contexts is one of the goals of the excavation as previous ceramics have come from structure fill (Jackson et al. 2010:12).

All analysis will occur at the R.E.W. Adams Research Station Laboratory where the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project (PfBAP) ceramist, Dr. Lauren Sullivan, will serve as my mentor for ceramic analysis. The PfBAP uses a type:variety model, which separates and condenses ceramic data in terms of physical, decorative, composite, material, and regional attributes. Ceramic typology follows the work of Sabloff (1975) and Gifford (1976) where two levels of analysis are used. The first level is quite detailed and involves sorting and recording ceramic types, forms, and counts. The second level is more general and involves taking notes on the types present to establish the chronology of a particular excavation unit, and identify any atypical types or forms present in the assemblage (Argo, 2009:49). Following this protocol, markers I will use to identify type will include: ceramic slip color and texture, décor, temper, paste and general form (Argo 2009:51). I will assign chronology age to each type by using regional chronologies and dates established by Sabloff (1975) and Gifford (1976). Any ceramics too eroded for typing will be assigned to an “Unidentified” category.
Ceramic findings from the sites of La Milpa, Seibal, Chan Chich, and Las Abejas will be compared with the data from Say Kah in order to define socio-economic status of Say Kah.

286 Words.

7. Research Ethics (describe how you will ensure that your research project is conducted in accordance with anthropology guidelines and the guidelines of your particular field within anthropology, and in the case of “Human Subjects Research,” according to the criteria of GW’s Institutional Review Board. For the former, consult the Web site of the American Anthropological Association (http://www.aaanet.org). For the latter, discuss requirements with your faculty mentor and/or with Professor Barbara Miller, the IRB rep in the Anthropology Department. Most student projects involving living humans fit in the IRB category of “excluded” meaning that IRB forms do not need to be submitted, if they follow AAA ethical guidelines in terms of informed consent and avoidance of harm to participants, do not involve medical topics and do not identify particular individuals. In some instances, IRB approval does need to be sought, usually in the “expedited” category.” Information on these categories is also available at http://www.gwumc.edu/research/human/aboutus/html) [150 words maximum]:

I have reviewed the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association and will work within their code to execute my research. I hope to further the study of Maya Archaeology and will publish my results so that the Academic and Public Communities may review and critique my research. These findings will remain confidential until published. I solemnly promise to work within the allowances of the Rio Bravo Project’s archaeological permit to excavate at Say Kah, Belize. I am opposed to and will not remove artifacts from the site or aid looters and antiquities dealers in acquiring or appraising looted artifacts.

I have reviewed the guidelines and policies of the George Washington University Institutional Review Board. My study does not deal with living human subjects, however in the event that human remains are found, I would adhere to the IRB’s guidelines for research and seek approval for my work.

149 Words.

8. Research Product (discuss how you will use and present your findings including, for example, a presentation at a professional meeting, a film, a museum exhibit, a publishable paper, a thesis) [150 words maximum]:

My research will result in a report that will be submitted to the principal investigators of Say Kah, Dr. Brown and Dr. Jackson. The findings of this research will be presented at the Annual Conference on Student Research and shared with George Washington University students and faculty. I will also give a final report to the GW Anthropology and Archaeology Departments, if desired by the departments. Lastly, I may possibly turn this research material into a thesis in Archaeology, or at least as a step towards executing one during my Senior year.

92 Words.
9. **Timetable** (briefly describe the schedule of your research activities week-by-week or as appropriate):

   6/15/2011 or 6/16/2011 - Depart from San Francisco and land at Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport, Belize.


   7/10/2011 – Leave Say Kah and Depart from Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport for San Francisco California.


   10/2011- Present findings at the Annual Conference on Student Research, on the Friday of Colonials Weekend in October

10. **Budget Amount and Projected Expenditures**

**Projected Expenditures** (list the expenditure categories for your project, for example, transportation—international, domestic, local; room and board; and research supplies). Funds from a Cotlow award cannot be used for tuition, academic fees, or for purchasing equipments such as a laptop or camera [awards range from a few hundred dollars to $1800]

   **Total Amount Requested:** $1800

   Lodging – $700 estimated costs of lodging at the R.E.W. Adams Field Station for approximately 4 weeks

   Food and Water – $700 estimated cost of food and water at the R.E.W. Adams Field Station for approximately 4 weeks.

   Transportation to and from Airport and R.E.W. Adams Field Station – estimated $125.

   Transportation to nearby Archaeological Sites and Entrance Fees – $150-$200 depending on sites visited.

   $700 – estimated Cost of Airfare round trip to San Francisco International Airport and from Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport, Belize.

   $71.97 - 3x $23.99 – Edison Quad-Ruled Laboratory Notebook with Carbonless Copy Paper.

   $14.27 - 5'' Heavy Duty Philadelphia Style Pointing Trowel w/ Wooden Handle
11. **Staff** (if others are to participate in the project as researchers or research assistants, please give their name and qualifications): None

12. **Outside Financial Support** (list any other sources of funding for the project, either obtained or applied for, with amounts and restrictions): None

13. **References Cited/Select Bibliography** (list the sources you have cited in the proposal and/or used as background research. Use the style defined by the American Anthropological Association [see http://aaanet.org]; list a minimum of 10 sources cited to a maximum of one page; more than 10 references are expected in proposals submitted by MA and PhD students).


Argo, Lindsay


Binford, Lewis R.


Crumley, C. L.


Coe, Michael D.


Demarest, Arthur A.


Giddens, Anthony

Gifford, J.C.

Guderjan, Thomas H.

Friedel, David A., and Linda Schele

Houk, Brett A., and Michael Lyndon

Houk, Brett A., Rebecca E. Bria, and Shelley Fischbeck

Iannone, Gyles

Jackson, Sarah E., Lindsay Argo, and Meredith Coats

McAnany, Patricia A.

Peregrine, Peter N.
Rice, Prudence M.

Sabloff, Jeremy A.

Sabloff, Jeremy A., and William L. Rathje,

Scarborough, Vernon L.

Scarborough, Vernon L., Fred Valdez, Jr. and Nicholas P. Dunning

Sheets, Payson D.

Sheets, Payson D.

Sullivan, Lauren A.

14. Permits (demonstrate that you have, or are seeking, any necessary permits such as a research permit, a research visa, an antiquities permit, letter of welcome from an institution, etc. Attach copies to this proposal).

Courtesy of Dr. Linda Brown:
Dr. Fred Valdez, University of Texas, Austin, is the director of the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project. Dr. Valdez holds an archaeological permit from the Archaeological Institute of Belize for excavations on the more than 60 Maya sites located on the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area. The Say Kah principal investigators (Dr. Linda Brown and
Dr. Sarah Jackson) have permission to conduct excavations and they have granted me permission for this project.