

TO: CLAIS-CFA Fellowship Committee  
RE: Summer 2007 Travel Grant Award

September 10, 2007

Dear Committee Members,

Thanks in large part to your fellowship award, during the past summer I was able to spend five weeks conducting pre-dissertation research in the Jequetepeque Valley of north-coastal Peru. My work encompassed three separate points of focus: observation and limited participation in Proyecto Huaca Prieta, excavations at the Pre-Ceramic Period mound site of Huaca Prieta co-directed by my advisor Dr Tom Dillehay and Dr Duccio Bonavilla; investigations at the site of Jatanka/Canyoncillo and limited participation in the Proyecto Jatanka directed by Dr Ed Warner of Leister University, Canada; and investigations conducted with Proyecto Huaca Prieta geologists Dr Mario Pino and Dr Steven Goodbred throughout the roughly 10-kilometer area surrounding Huaca Prieta.

The first and last part of my trip was spent working with participants in the Proyecto Huaca Prieta, which provided me with an enhanced understanding of Pre-Ceramic (as well as later periods) architecture and subsistence patterns. The project involved detailed analysis of stratigraphy at the site, which was invaluable for two reasons. First, this is a very basic archaeological skill that is described in classroom settings but can really only be learned by experience, and the site had many interesting strata, both anthropogenic and natural. Second, the stratigraphy included strata associated with El Nino events, as well as possibly severe storm or tsunami deposits, which are the focus of my prospective dissertation research. Additionally, the project was conducted entirely in Spanish, allowing me to improve my language proficiency during participation in the research.

I was also able to spend a week working with and near the Jatanka Project at Canyoncillo, which is a large site with an unusually long occupational sequence involving several cultural groups, in an area susceptible to nearly all of the environmental hazards I propose to study in my dissertation research, namely drought, El Nino flooding, dune formation, and soil erosion associated with deforestation. I was able to view extant algarrobo forest encroachment into the nearby site of Tecapa, yardang formations in the desert south of the site, and irrigation canal features in the adjacent landscape. I was able to observe dune progression throughout the area, and spoke with a worker who provided details on the degree and extent of local flooding during the last severe El Nino event in 1998. The research area was strewn with ceramic fragments produced by several different cultures, allowing me to improve recognition of ceramic types through hands-on evaluation, a skill which will be critical during my dissertation research.

The main emphasis of my summer research was the time spent with Proyecto Huaca Prieta geologists Dr Mario Pino and Dr Steven Goodbred evaluating the stratigraphic record and geomorphology at the site and the surrounding vicinity. We examined strata from excavated units at Huaca Prieta and many nearby agricultural drainage ditches that included well-defined El Nino depositional layers interspersed with natural and anthropogenic strata. This was a particularly valuable experience as I was able to observe ancient land use technologies recorded in the stratigraphy, as well as to learn how to distinguish natural from man-made organic strata within the natural environment in addition to learning to identify El Nino signatures in the natural and built landscape. A second element of the geological research was the development of a better understanding of the local site formation processes, including issues of sea level rise and fall and regional climatic changes such as periods of increasing aridity and their geological correlates.

Throughout the summer, I gained valuable, hands-on experience with stratigraphy, both natural and anthropogenic, especially as concerns natural disasters such as El Nino and tsunami deposits, while working with some of the best geologists in the field. Secondary benefits were a better understanding of early Andean architecture and subsistence technologies and better oral proficiency in Spanish. I greatly appreciate the financial assistance provided by the Center for the Americas through the CLAIS Summer Field Research Award that enabled me to participate in this research.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Lucas