

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE HOLMUL REGION, PETEN RESULTS OF THE FOURTH SEASON, 2003

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Preclassic mask on Structure 1, Group 1, at Cival.

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## INTRODUCTION

The present is a preliminary report of the archaeological work carried out at Holmul in 2003. The field season started on May 13 and ended on June 30, 2003. The analysis of artifacts was conducted in the USAC-CUDEP laboratory in Flores, Petén between June 30 and July 18, 2003. Further analysis of all data is in progress at the time of this writing. A brief summary is given here of the highlights of the season with the major excavations and finds from each of the site investigated. In the following chapters excavation supervisors provide a detail description of the stratigraphy and features encountered accompanied by illustrations.

### *LA SUFRICAYA*

#### **Excavation**

At La Suficaya, work directed by Vanderbilt University graduate student Jenn Foley focused on the Str. 1 mural building. Two excavations were placed on the centerline of the mound, 3 meters west of the location of previously found murals. An interesting sequence of construction stages emerged from these excavations. We were able to identify at least 5 different sub-structure stages within the mound. The latest phase is of Late/Terminal Classic date and includes mostly perishable buildings, probably residences, built on top of a flat-topped mound. Two consecutive staircases leading up to a perishable building on the north end of the mound were found underneath the Late/Terminal Classic construction. The ground plan of the building at the summit of the staircases is largely lost due to the collapse of the edge of the mound into the plaza below. The earliest staircase of the two had eroded painted decoration on the steps, possibly hieroglyphic in content.

A tunnel on the east side of this staircase led to the uncovering of a C-shaped wall with a painted mural. This wall was actually the western end wall of the room containing the Teotihuacan murals found in 2001. While most of the paint is still covered by a thin lime wash applied in ancient times, some of the figures are visible and can be identified as (more) seated warriors wearing goggle-eyed headdresses in Teotihuacan style.

In effect, the stairway was built on the outside of the C-shaped mural room, which actually resembles an open portico, and the murals could have been visible on the side of the stairway when it was in use.

The stairway covered an earlier construction on the outside of the mural room (Structure 1 sub 1, formerly Room 1). This consisted of a long E-W wall abutting the NW corner of the Room 1 building. A large masonry bench was constructed at the centerline of this wall (and the mound itself). The position and size of this bench suggests that it may have been a throne, even though it is not very elaborate. This centerline throne would have been accessed by walking past the portico with the Teotihuacán mural when it was in use. The excavation of the throne also reinforces our initial hypothesis that this structure functioned as a royal palace, at least for a short time in the Early Classic period (ca A.D. 200-550), and that the Structure 1 sub 1 mural depicts an accession ceremony presided by Teotihuacán warriors.

The outside (NW) corner of the mural room (Structure 1 sub 1), which is abutted by the E-W wall with the new bench, is decorated with a stucco frieze. This frieze included quatrefoils and a small stucco head painted in black and red. The rather devilish-looking head wears a bib and cloth in the ears and has inlaid teeth. According to Coggins (pers. comm.) it may be a representation of a captive with Highland Mexican connotations. This possible representation of a captive, as well as the Mural 5 scaffold sacrifice, may actually depict important components of Early Classic accession rituals.

Further excavation within the tunnel revealed a doorway opening from Structure 1 sub 1 to the north where a later room (Structure 1 room 3) was built onto an open portico (as described above). From this room, a sealed doorway led to a second room to the west. The removal of the plaster and rubble that sealed the doorway revealed the outer walls (south and east) of a buried small structure with a cornice and plastered walls. In style and size, this building resembles Structure 5D sub 10-1<sup>st</sup> in the Northern Acropolis of Tikal (Coggins pers. comm.). This structure, the outer walls of which were elaborately painted also served as a funerary temple (Coe 1990). While La Suficaya Structure 1 sub 3 certainly resembles the Tikal structure in construction and layout, no paintings were evident on the outer walls of our building.

It is difficult to determine the function of this small building although a small temple or a funerary shrine would be appropriate due to its centerline location, and the construction of a later throne on top of it.

We believe that an excavation from the north end of the mound will reveal the main entrance to this small building, its sub-floor contents and its function. Based on initial ceramic stylistic analysis, the tentative date for this building is A.D. 350-400.

#### **Conservation**

Also at La Sufficaya, Dr. A. Semeraro (Istituto Centrale di Restauro) cleaned and stabilized all of Mural 5 (the scaffold sacrifice) and a small section of Mural 1 (Teotihuacan figures). Dr. Gene Ware (BYU) completed the high-resolution documentation of Mural 5 with a multi-spectral camera. The images produced by the multi-spectral and infra-red photography are much more vivid and reveal details of great significance that are invisible to the naked eye, which will enable the creation of accurate reproductions. Earlier in the 2003 Spring, conservators Lesley Rainier and Angelyn Rivera inspected the murals and prepared a lengthy technical report on their conservation and long-term salvage. Plans for long-term preservation of the murals are still in progress.

#### **HOLMUL-SITE CENTER**

##### **Group III – The Palace**

At Holmul site center, work in Group III revealed a grand staircase leading up to the court from the main plaza. An arched entryway was uncovered at the summit of the staircase. This entryway was built between two multi-room buildings facing out to the plaza below. A stairway led from the arched entrance down to the courtyard facing the western throne room.

Removal of the rubble in the rooms adjacent to the arched entrance revealed a throne (with tapered legs and arm rests) in room 8. This throne may represent the latest official use of the court as a palace.

Clearing of a vaulted passage under the western throne room (Str. 43) revealed a Terminal Classic midden filled with fine ceramics, possibly from the palace rooms. The buildings at the southern end of the court (Str. 60) were cleared of rubble, and indicated that use of this area was discontinued during the Terminal Classic period. Access to the southern end was sealed-off, and the discovery of large midden indicated that this section of the court was used as a trash midden by the last occupants of the complex.

##### **Group II – Protoclassic Tombs**

Also at Holmul, the protoclassic tombs of Building B excavated in 1911 by R.E. Merwin were cleaned, and the deposits produced by the earlier excavations were investigated. A protoclassic tomb, not excavated by Merwin, was accidentally uncovered during the 2003 investigations. The stone crypt contained a single body accompanied by a complete mammiform vessel and a tubular jade bead. The burial was found stratigraphically below the earliest of the excavated tombs (Rooms 9 and 8) and under the broken floor of Room 1 (the earliest). Therefore, it is a most significant addition to the sample of protoclassic tombs in that it provides a secure dating for the beginning of the Holmul 1 phase in this group and for its stylistically interesting pot. Further excavation may reveal more burials and architecture undetected by the Merwin's excavation of the building.

#### **CIVAL**

Some of the most spectacular finds of the 2003 seasons were made at Cival. A tunnel in Str. 1 on top of Triadic Group 1 (the eastern structure) penetrated the later phase stairway of a Preclassic pyramid (dated stylistically to A.D. 100 in 2002). An almost perfectly preserved giant stucco mask (ca. 5m wide and 3 m high) was discovered on an earlier façade of this pyramid. The mask depicts a deity (perhaps G III), with an L-shaped eye and eyebrows with U-shape motifs, surmounted by merlons. The image has a squarish mouth with single fang, short nose, Kan-cross incised on the cheek, ear flare with four dots on a squared-circle and U-shape sign in the center. The flare is surmounted by a knot and a scroll with an unusual motif dangling from it.

Strong parallels with the Cerros lower terrace masks on Str. 5C-2<sup>nd</sup> support the identification of this anthropomorphic mask as a Sun God (Freidel and Schele 1988). It is located on the south side of the upper terrace of the pyramid. We believe that a lower terrace mask and a paring set on the opposing side of the stairway may well be preserved on this structure. Also, at the top of this pyramid is a largely preserved Late Preclassic masonry building only partially exposed by a looters' trench which may be explored in future excavations.

On the centerline of the east platform of Cival's E-group (Str. 7) an excavation conducted by Vanderbilt University graduate students Molly Morgan and Jeremy Bauer attempted to locate the stela setting of Preclassic Stela 2, which was stylistically dated by Nikolai Grube to ca. 300-200 B.C. A cut was found, with stone bracing and the correct dimensions to fit a stela. The bottom of this stela cut contained a cache of Sierra Red bowl with two *Spondylus* shells which encapsulated a jade fragment, a carved shell disc and a fragment of hematite as well as the remains of cinnabar. The Late Preclassic date of this stela

setting is consistent with Grube's initial stylistic dating of Stela 2 as one of the earliest carved stelae in the Maya Lowlands. A second, similar cache was found at an earlier level in this same area.

Further down into the stratigraphy of this centerline location a large cruciform cut into bedrock was detected. Four large jars were found smashed in each of the four arms of the cross and one in the center. The southern jar was red while all others were black. Under the central jar was a depression containing five upright plain jade celts (ca. 25 cm long) in cruciform patterns. The central and western celts were shaped out of blue jade while all others were of green jade. Surrounding the celts was a scatter of 115 pebbles of green and blue jade.

We identified the jars as Chunhinta black, Desprecio Incised and Joventud red types which date the whole cache to the Middle Preclassic Period. The content and shape of this cache closely approximates the early Middle Preclassic cache from Seibal and other jade caches from San Isidro Chiapas and La Venta (Lowe 1989). Structural and material similarities also link this cache to the Nohmul and Cerros Late Preclassic jade masks caches as well as the Pomona ear flare and associated figurines (four) as elaborated kan-cross or cruciform cosmograms (Justeson et al. 1986).

The new Cival deposit of jars and jade recalls water symbolism. The upright jade celts may also symbolize sprouting Maize plants (Taube 2000), while the scattering of jade is often equated with scattering of blood (Stuart 1988). A round post hole was found cut into the surface of fill covering the cache. Schele (1992) suggests a symbolic link between jades/sprouting maize plants and a central world tree, as part of a royal symbolism common throughout lowland Mesoamerica. Therefore, a ceremony of accession to power involving the erection of a world-tree may be associated with this offering.

Moreover the structural similarity of this cache with other Preclassic Maya cruciform caches reveals a Sun-God symbolism as well as a cardinal-direction cosmological order. Its placement on the centerline of the eastern platform of the E-group (i.e. on the equinoxial axis) reinforces the idea of a sun-based ritual and agricultural cycle/accession to power. The cache itself may help date the very first use of this long eastern structure as an E-Group complex in the Middle Preclassic.

In sum, we believe the significance of this cache may not only be in the early date, its material contents and its cosmological symbolism but also in the architectural context in which it was found which identifies it as part of a public ritual associated with accession to secular power (in homology to later Pomona Flare text and Nohmul, Cerros caches), and as such, it may be one of the earliest examples of dynastic rituals among the Preclassic Maya. Furthermore, at Cival there is clear continuity between the cache's early context and symbolism of secular power with Sun-God, maize, rain symbolism and the triadic group as a later monumental cosmogram formed by the Sun God mask (as at Cerros) and other yet to be discovered masks flanking an eastern building on the same E-W axis as the earlier cruciform cache.

Further research at Cival, will certainly uncover further evidence of monumental sculpture, burial and ritual deposits connected with the early development of kingship among the Preclassic Lowland Maya.

## **Synthesis of analyses of mural fragments by Artelab, s.r.l., Italy**

Seven fragments of painted stucco from La Suficaya murals 1-5 were submitted for analysis (C1-C7) to Artelab. The specimens were analyzed using thin-slices and spectrography (FT-IR) in order to characterize the stuccoes and the painted "film" they support.

In all, the specimens showed a similar composition consisting of a lime base mixed with an organic "fixative". It was not possible to identify with certainty which organic substances were used as fixative. However, either dairy or animal protein are likely to have been used.

As an temper ingredient in the stucco, both volcanic pumice or ash and plant fibers were used.

In addition, within the mix of the stucco grains of brown material were found. These appear to include particles of charcoal, quartz, feldspar, and fossil shell. These may be grains of bedrock material included in the limestone mix used to create the stucco or remains from the bottom of the firing pit in which the lime was melted.

In specimen C4, a second layer of stucco and paint overlaid the first layer of painted stucco. While the older paint is red in color, the more recent is dark grey. In both layers in this specimen, a layer of lime with an organic protein as fixative was laid down as primer before the paint was applied.

Also in the other specimens superimposed layers of painted stucco were found (at least two). The technique used was that of 'fresco' except in one case C6 which appears to have been done in the 'secco' technique. In some cases two layers of painted film were found (C5). In these cases a first coat of black paint is applied as background, followed by a second coat of the desired color.

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*Figures*



Figure 1. Stucco mask adorning the NW corner of Room 1. Paint is red and black. Traces of mural painting below the mask is also visible.





Figure 2. Mammiform vessel found in tomb in Building B, Group III.



Figure 3. Stucco mask adorning the southern side of the upper terrace of Str.1 sub-2<sup>nd</sup> in Triadic Group 1 at Cival, Petén. Viewer looks northeast. Scale bar is 2 m.



Figure 4a. Cru

ci form cache of five jars and underlying jades cut into bedrock on centerline of E-Group at Cival. Scale is 25 cm.



Figure 4b Detail of center of cruciform cache



Figure 5. Central pit in cruciform cache with five upright jade celts and 115 pebbles. Scale is 25 cm.



Figure 6. Cival Cruciform cache with partially reconstructed jars reassembled in the lab. Scale is 25 cm

**HOLMUL 2003 REPORTS PART I**

## **Conservation and Excavations at La Sufricaya**

*Jennifer Foley, Field Supervisor*

Since the discovery of several carved stelae and elaborately painted murals at La Sufri caya, the site has been an integral component of the Holmul Archaeological Project (Estrada-Belli 2001, 2002). The epigraphic and iconographic analysis of the monuments and mural art has revealed implications of cultural contact or interaction between the elite of La Sufricaya and the distant site of Teotihuacan in Central Mexico. The mural art of La Sufricaya also depicts unique details of Early Classic dynastic ritual activity. The evidence from La Sufri caya has the potential to contribute invaluable data to models of sociopolitical interaction during the Early Classic period and further our knowledge of the dynastic history of the Holmul region. For these reasons, La Sufricaya has been the focus of intense conservation and archaeological efforts over the past three years. The work conducted during the 2003 field season continued these efforts and contributed a vast amount of information which enhanced our understanding of the form, function and history of the site (Estrada-Belli & Foley 2004).

### **Conservation**

The long-term conservation project at La Sufricaya consists of a three-part program including the documentation, stabilization and reproduction of the murals. During the 2003 season significant progress was made toward these goals through the combined effort of professional conservators archaeologists and high-resolution photographers.

Professional conservators Leslie Rainier and Angelyn Rivera of The Getty Institute were invited to assess the condition of the murals within Structure 1 at La Sufricaya. The conservators visited the site in March of 2003 and evaluated the degree of preservation and stability of the murals. A long-term plan for the preservation, conservation and reproduction of the murals was designed and implemented with their assistance.

Dr. Gene Ware of Brigham Young University continued the documentation of the murals, which was initiated in 2002, through the use of multi-spectral and infra-red photography. During the 2003 season Dr. Ware completed the documentation of Mural 5 (the scaffold sacrifice scene). The images produced by the high-resolution documentation have elucidated details of the murals obscured by accretions of time and invisible to the naked eye. The photographs produced by Dr. Ware will be the basis for reproductions of the murals.

The conservation of the murals has been directed by Dr. Alberto Semeraro of the Instituto Centrale di Resauro for the past two field seasons. Dr. Semeraro has repaired damaged portions of the murals and removed calcium concretions from them as well. During the 2003 season his efforts were concentrated on Mural 5 and a small portion of Mural 1 (Teotihuacano figures). Thanks to Dr. Semeraro's efforts, the murals have been stabilized and their future study ensured.

### **Excavation**

The archaeological research program at La Sufricaya has been primarily focused on clarifying the construction sequence, layout and function of Structure 1, which surmounts the main platform of Group 1. The location of the murals inside Structure 1 and the number of carved stelae found in association with Platform 1 indicate that Group 1 was the focus of elite or dynastic ritual activity during the Early Classic period (Figure 1). During the 2003 field season a number of excavations were placed within the group to test this hypothesis and clarify the construction and occupation sequence of the site (Figure 2).

I directed a series of excavations placed on the central axis of Structure 1 (ST17, ST20 and ST08E), which sought to clarify our understanding of the layout and function of the structure. The excavations revealed an interesting sequence of at least five construction phases which greatly modified the mound during the Early Classic period.

The earliest phases include a small temple or shrine (Structure 1 sub 3) and a series of rooms (Structure 1 sub 1 and Structure 1 room 3), which formed a small complex on top of Platform 1. One of the more exciting results of these excavations was the discovery of the western wall of Structure 1 sub 1, which contains the Teotihuacan murals (Murals 1-3). The inner face of the newly discovered wall revealed additional murals which are probably a continuation of Murals 1-3. These murals are covered by a layer of whitewash, and will be focus of documentation and conservation efforts during the upcoming 2004 field season. The 2003 excavations also revealed the elaborately decorated outer face of the western wall, which is adorned with painted plaster and a frieze including a painted stucco mask and decorative motif.

Subsequent construction phases revealed in these excavations include a crude bench placed on the central axis, which may have also served as a throne, and a staircase – the stairs of which are covered in polychrome painted plaster. All of these construction phases were later buried by rubble fill, which was subsequently sealed by a plaster surface. The latest phases of construction revealed during the field season consist of perishable structures – probably residences – built on the evened surface of the mound covering Structure 1 during the Late/Terminal Classic period.

The complex construction sequence including several rooms, a possible temple or shrine and a throne, revealed during the 2003 excavations supports the initial hypothesis that Structure 1 served as a royal palace during the Early Classic period. During the upcoming 2004 field season further excavations should provide a conclusive construction and occupation sequence and determine the function of Structure 1 sub 3.

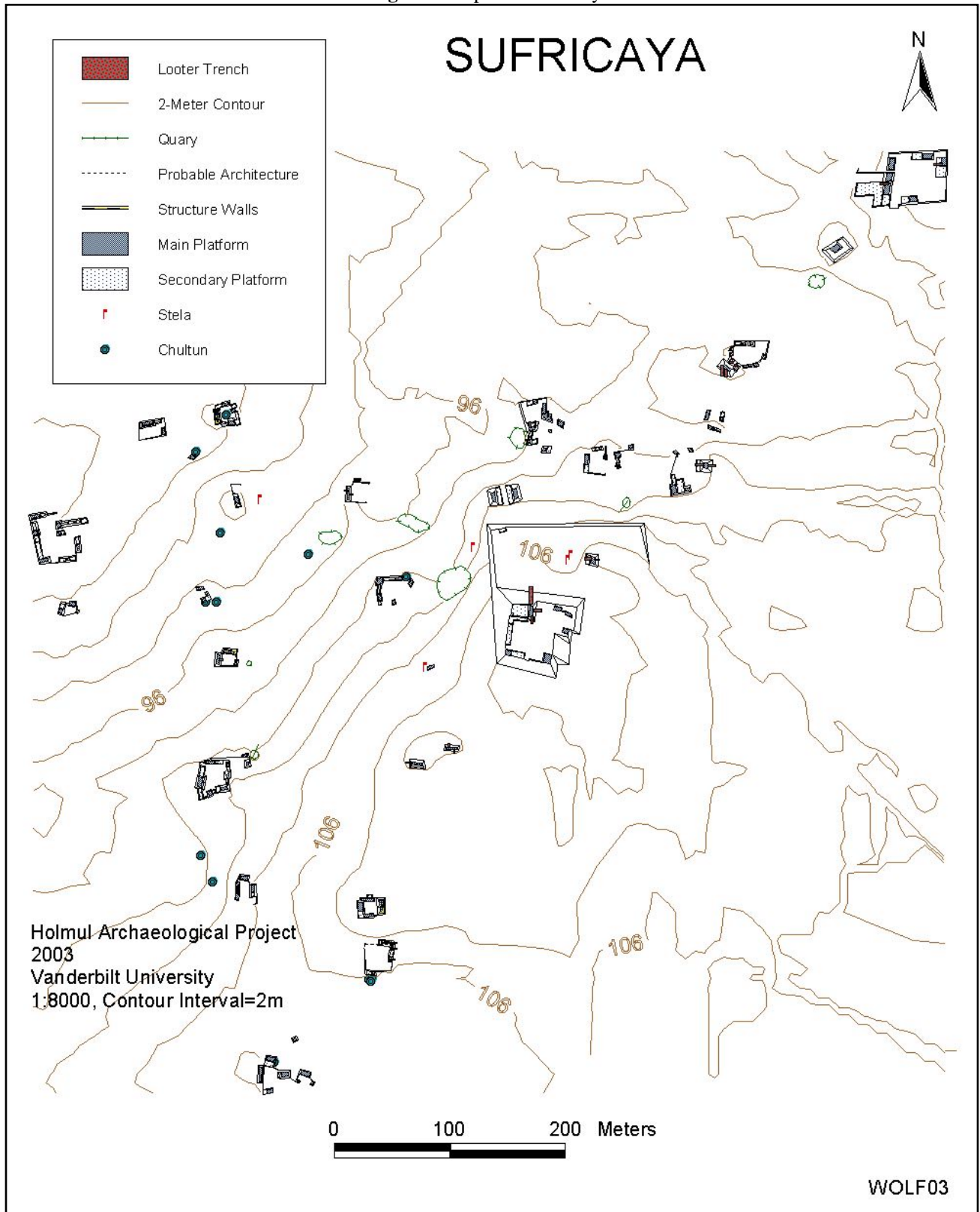
Nina Neivins directed the excavation (ST18) of a small structure (Structure 146) situated on top of Platform 1 directly south of Structure 1. This structure is aligned with the central axis of the Structure 1, and was initially believed to be a temple platform or funerary shrine associated with the Early Classic phase of Structure 1. Excavations revealed a number of construction sequences culminating with a Late Classic deposit of cache vessels beneath a patio outside the northwest wall of the structure. The excavation of this structure will be continued during the upcoming field season in order to fully understand the construction sequence and function of the structure as well as its relation to Structure 1 and Group 1 in general.

Jeremy Bauer directed an excavation (ST19) on the southeastern edge of Platform 1 of Group 1 which sought to discern the access to Platform 1 from the plaza below. Unfortunately this excavation did not locate a staircase or other means of access, indicating that the platform was not approached from the southeast side of the platform, and the staircase visible in a looter's trench cut into the northern façade of Structure 1 was the main, and perhaps sole, access point.

Jeremy Bauer also directed the excavation of small structure (Structure 147) on the northeast edge of the plaza below Group 1. The objective of this excavation was to clarify the function of the structure and its relation to Group 1. The \_\_ meter structure is aligned with a pyramid with an Early Classic construction phase (Structure 2), and the initial hypothesis was that Structure 147 served as a residence or funerary shrine for the ruler associated with Structure 2. The excavation however, revealed a single phase of crudely constructed walls, but little else. The ceramic evidence from the excavation indicates that Structure 146 was part of a Late Classic occupation.

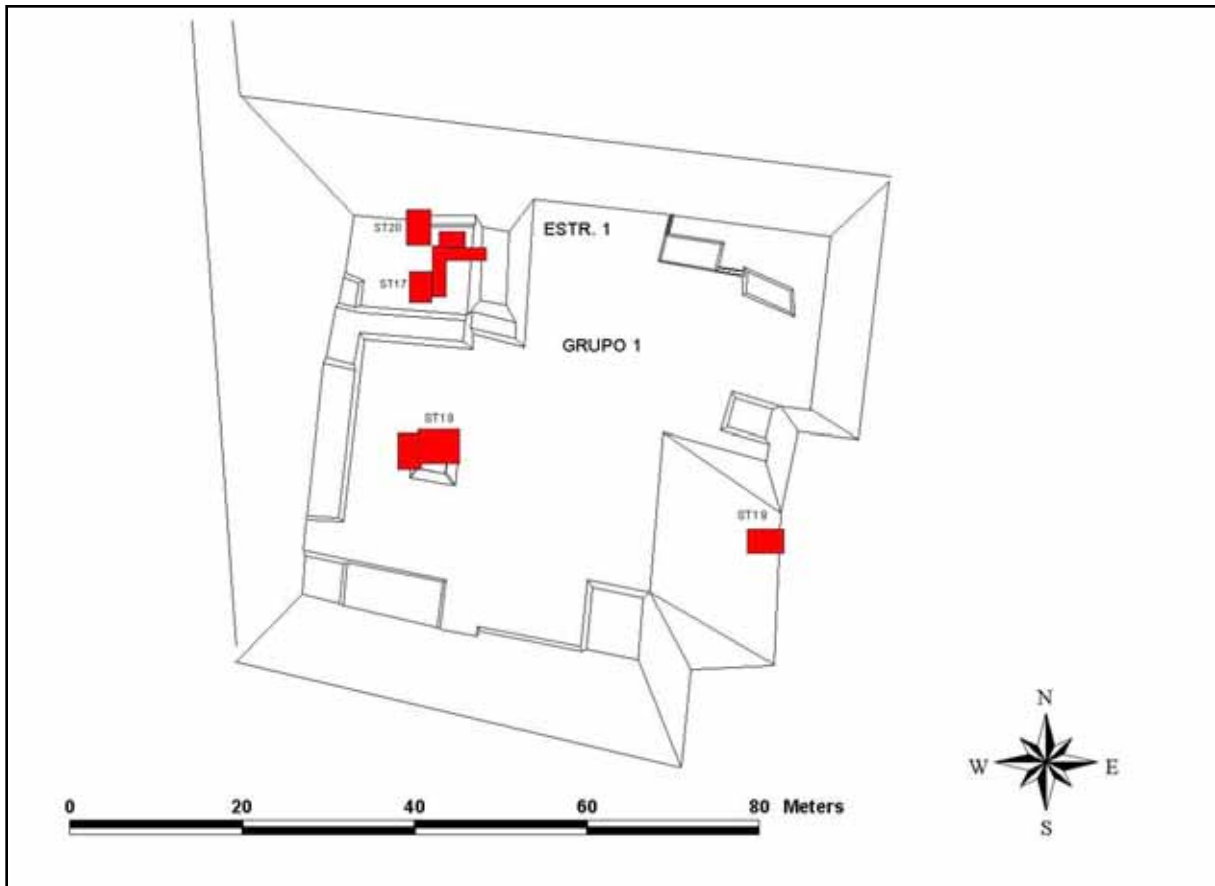
FIGURES

Figure 1 Map of La Sufricaya





**Figure 2** Map of La Sufricaya Group 1 detailing excavations conducted during the 2003 field season



**Figure 3** Excavation ST17 with the row of stones comprising context ST17.05 in the northern edge of the trench



**Figure 4** Excavation ST17 with row of blocks comprising context ST17.07 in the southeast edge of the trench



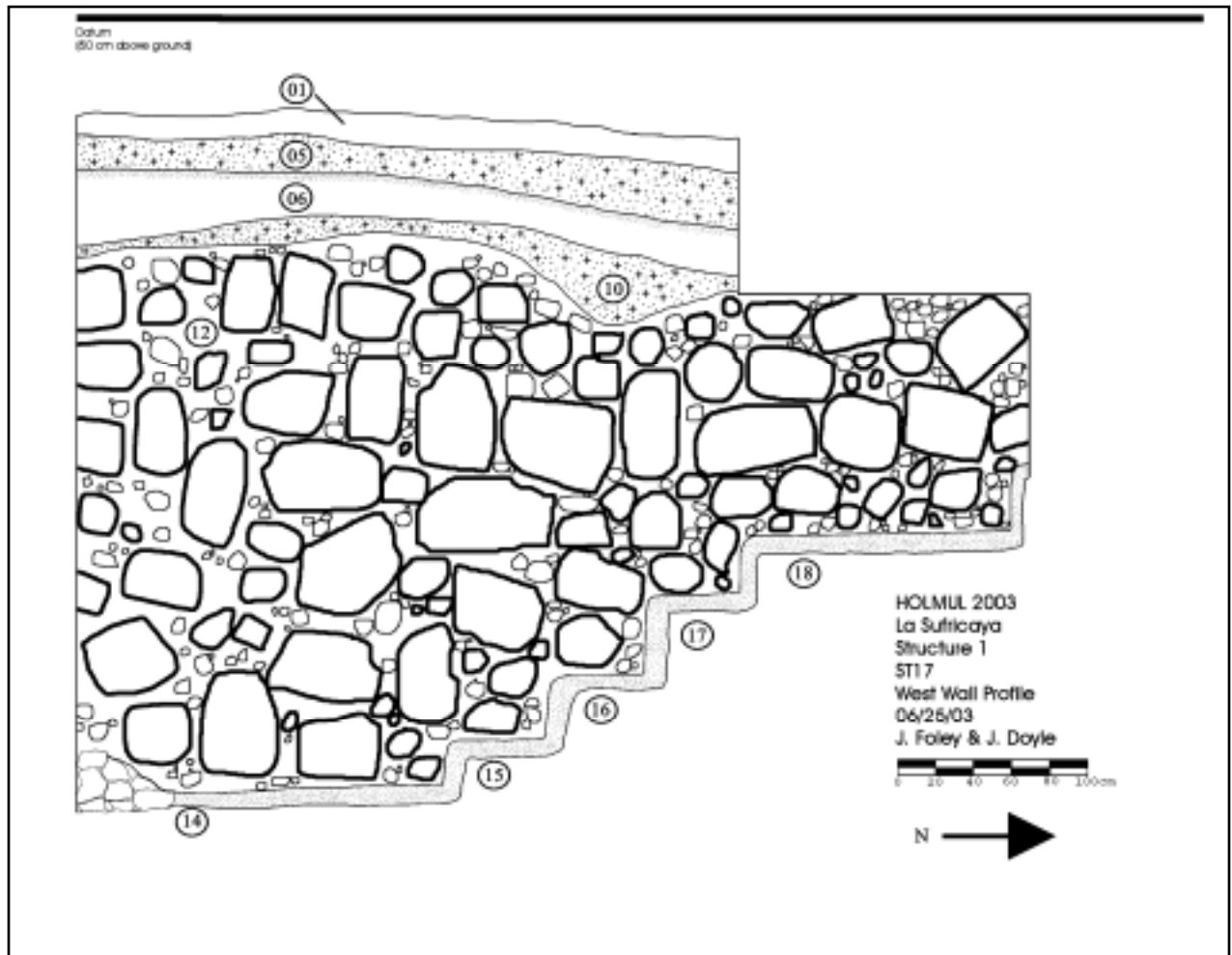


Figure 5 Profile of the western section of Excavation ST17



**Figure 6** Staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17

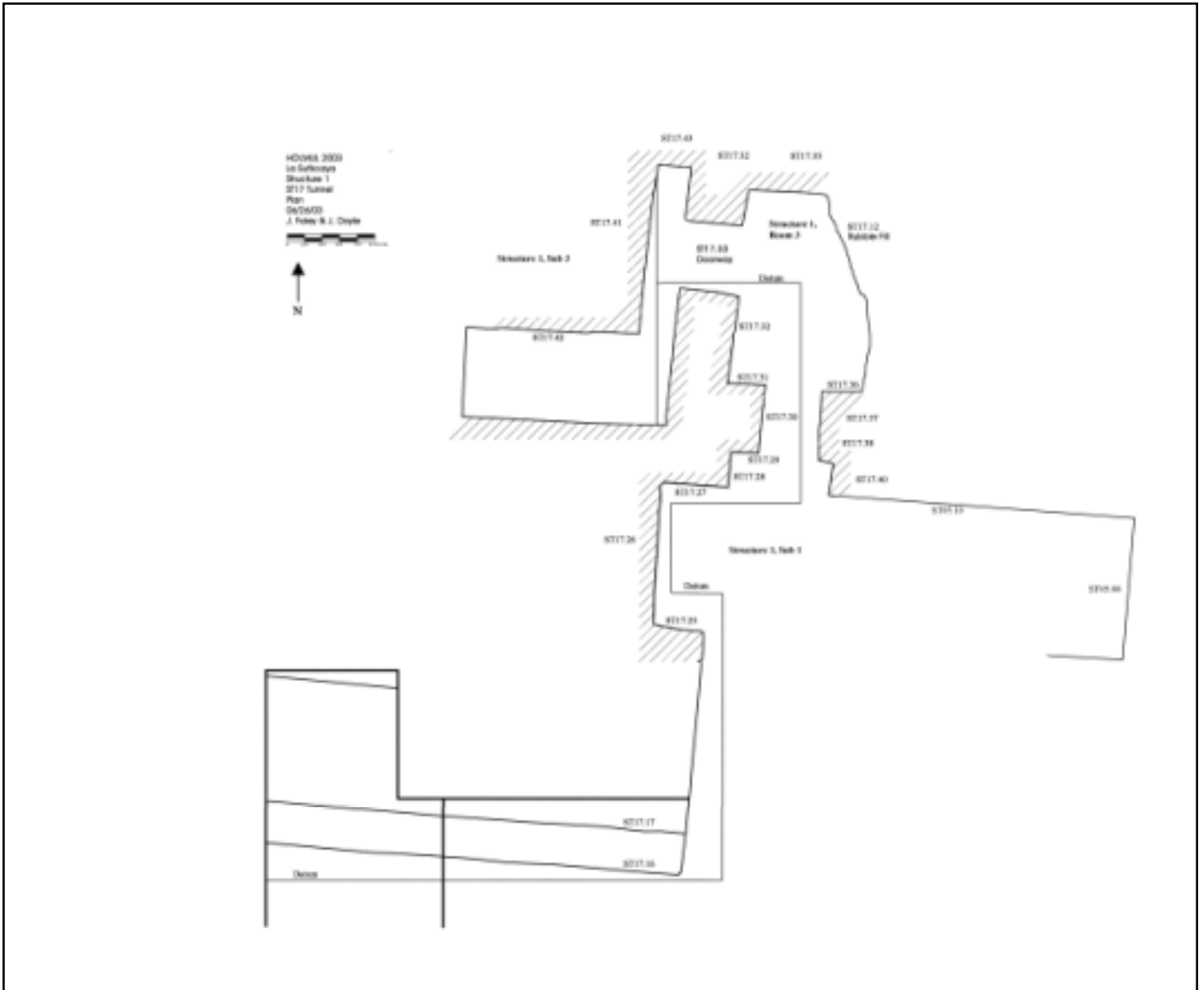


**Figure 7** Utmost stair of Staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17, with polychrome painted plaster and possible glyph.



**Figure 8** Eastern end of stairs ST17.16 and ST17.17 and entrance to tunnel extension of Excavation ST17 in the eastern section wall

Figure 9 Plan of tunnel extension of Excavation ST17







**Figure 10** Rubble-filled doorway to Structure 1 room 3



**Figure 11** Entrance to and interior of Structure 1 room 3, with doorway leading to Structure 1 sub 3



**Figure 12** Eastern wall of Structure 1 sub 3 with doorway leading to Structure 1 room 3 to the east



**Figure 13** Southern wall of Structure 1 sub 3 with cornice



**Figure 14** Structure 1 sub 3 with plinth at the base of the wall in foreground. Cut ST17.44, wall ST20.25 and wall ST20.31 in background

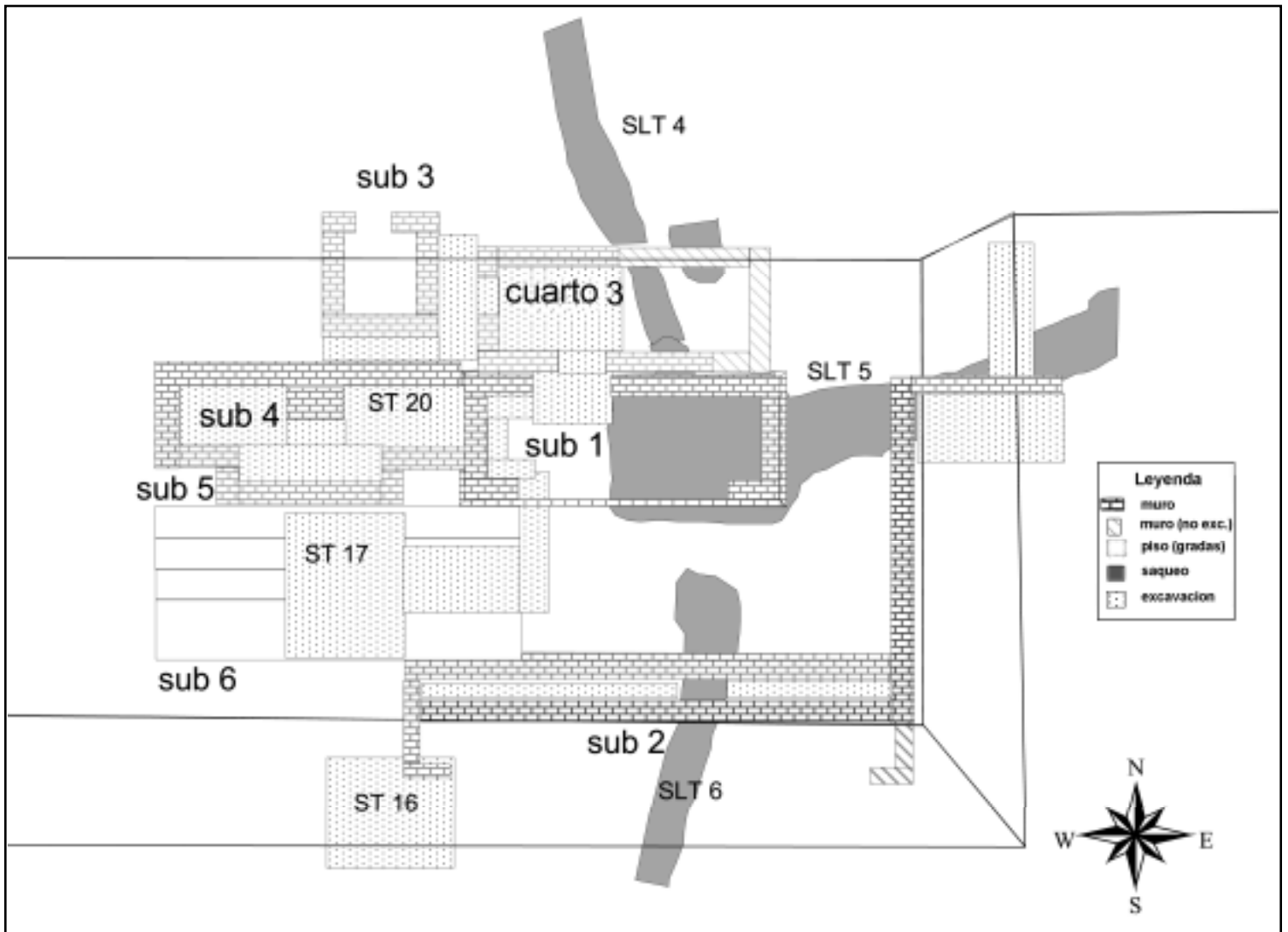


Figure 15 Layout of Structure 1 including construction phases, excavations and looters trenches



**Figure 16** Cylinder seal recovered from Excavation ST20



**Figure 17** Cylinder seal recovered from Excavation ST20





**Figure 18** Terrace uncovered in Excavation ST20



**Figure 19** L-shaped wall uncovered in Excavation ST20



**Figure 20** Overhead view of Excavation ST20 with wall ST20.25, bench ST20.28 and floor ST20.30 visible



**Figure 21** Decorated frieze adorning outer face of western wall of Structure 1 sub 1



Figures 22 & 23 Detail of Structure 1 sub 1 frieze (Drawing by Jessica Mundt)





**Figure 24** Bench uncovered in Excavation ST20

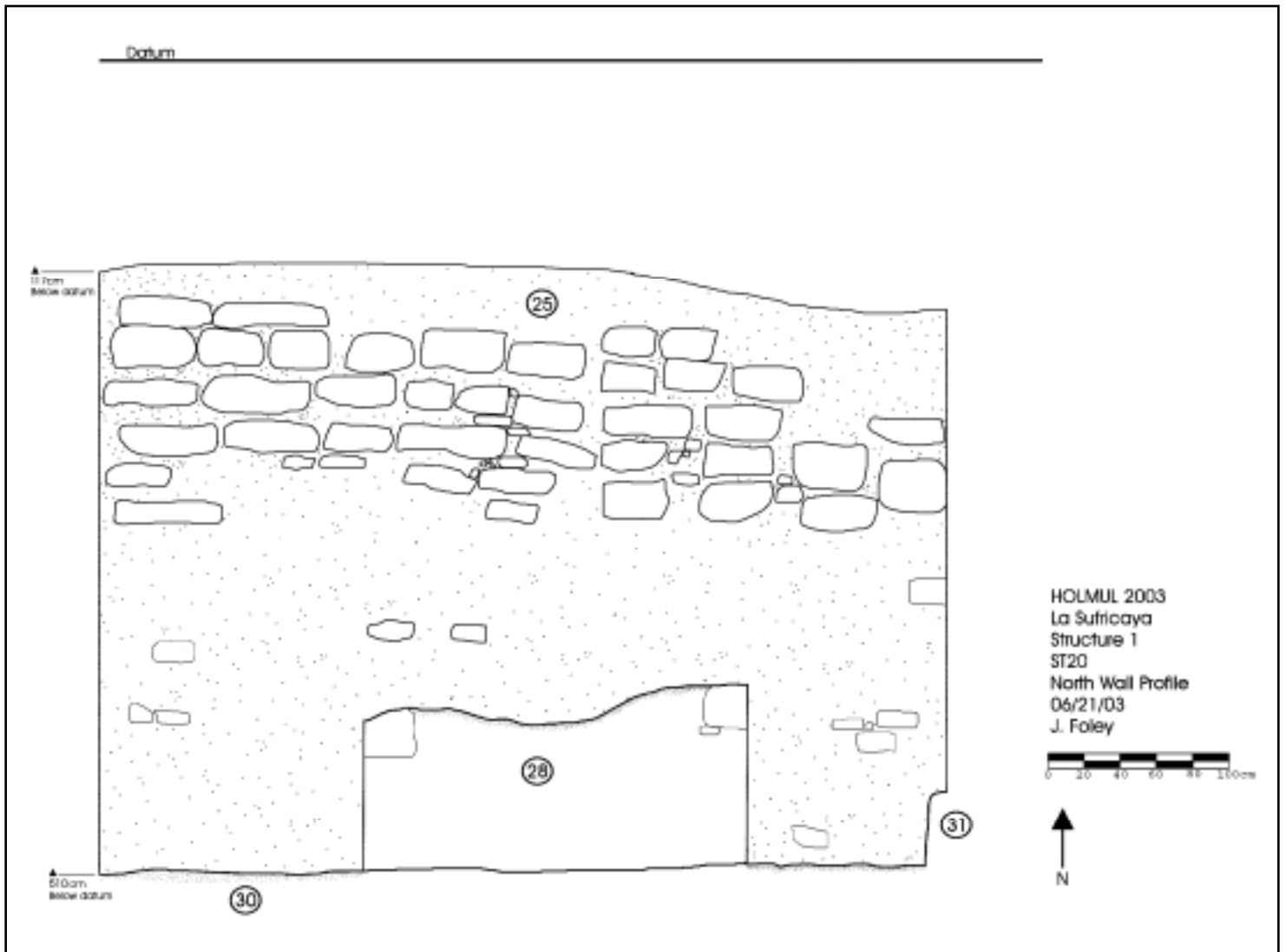


Figure 25 Profile of northern section wall of Excavation ST20, including the bench

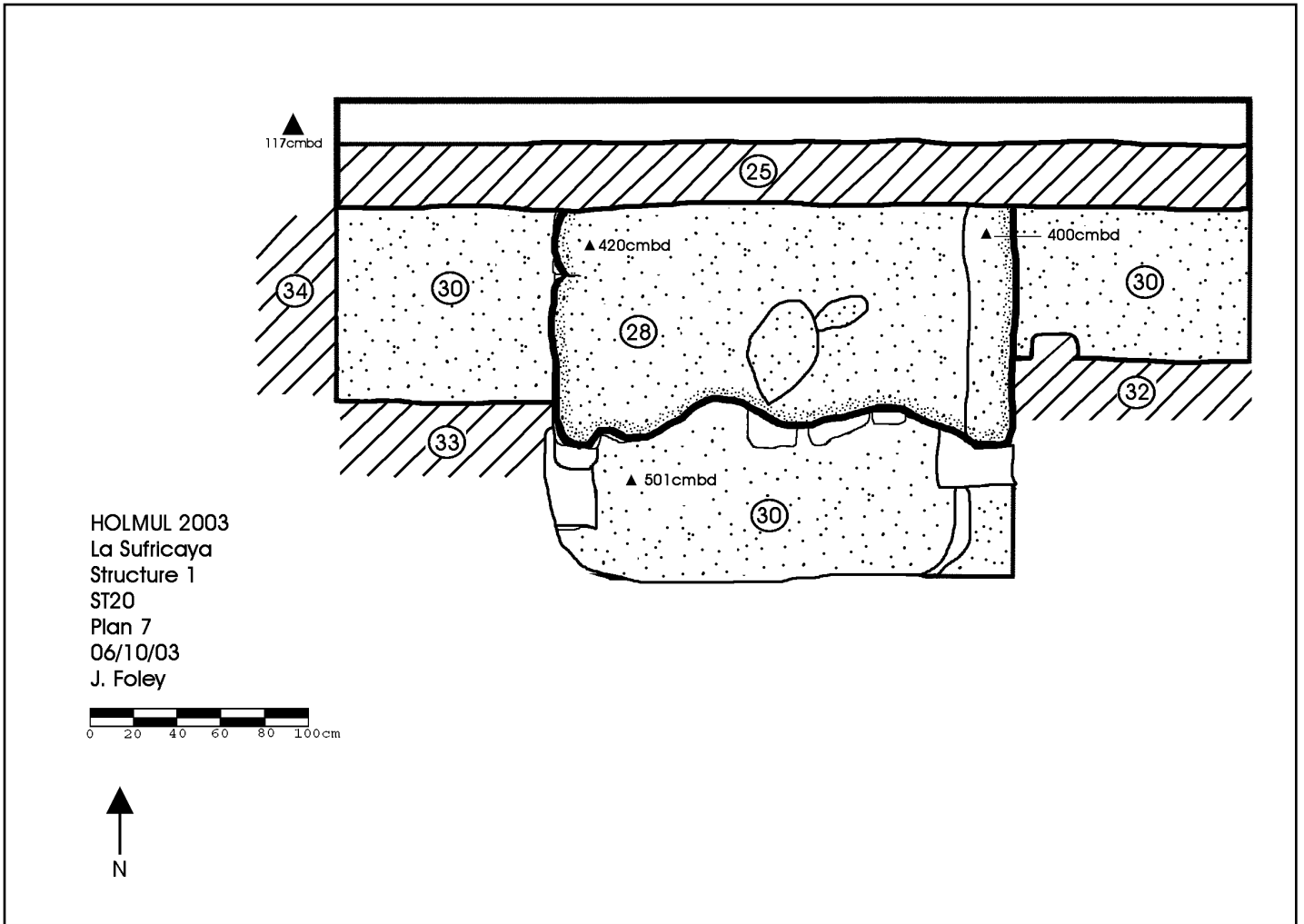


Figure 26 Plan of features uncovered in Excavation ST20





**Figure 27** Eye of mask uncovered in Excavation ST08E



**Figure 28** Nose of mask uncovered in Excavation ST08E

**La Sufricaya- ST 18 and SL07**

Niña Neivens  
Holmul Archaeological Project  
2003

Introduction

The investigations SL07 and ST 18 examined a small, low mound on top of the Structure 146, located in the center of the elevated Group 1 acropolis and south of Structure 1 at La Sufricaya. This subcenter of Holmul is of particular significance because of the murals found in 2001 containing Central Mexican iconography, in the form of several individuals shown in profile with elaborate headdresses, similar to those illustrated at Teotihuacan (Techinantitla murals), Monte Alban (Estela Lisa), and on a ceramic vessel from Tikal (Burial 10), which are referred to as Teotihuacan emissaries (Millon, 1992). Investigations at La Sufricaya in 2002 revealed another mural in Structure 1 as well as several pieces of Pachuca green obsidian within this structure and from the area surrounding its platform (Estrada-Belli and Tomasic, 2003). In 2003, three excavations examined the Group 1 Platform; ST 17 and ST 20 in Structure 1, ST 19 on the east side of the platform, and ST 18 in the center of Structure-146.

These excavations were designed to define the sequence of construction and use of the building before, during, and after the period exhibiting Teotihuacan characteristics. These investigations aim to illuminate the nature of this period and the relationship of the Maya at Holmul with the Central Mexican city of Teotihuacan. Structure 146 was investigated because its orientation and placement on the platform seemed to be related to Structure 1, and because of its unusual size and shape which seemed incompatible with what we would expect of a residential structure. Therefore, these excavations aimed to determine the nature of the building and its relationship to Structure 1.

Investigations began with the cleaning and documentation of the looter's trench, SL07. This trench ran from the structure's eastern extent to its interior, revealing a masonry wall running north-south and a cavity within the rubble fill beneath. Then a 3.5 m by 5 m trench, ST 18, was laid out across the building's northern side, adjacent to SL07. This trench was extended 3 times; 1 m to the west, then 3 m to the south, then 1 m south, and 1 m west in the southwest corner. This excavation revealed 2 structures, the latter of which with 2 major phases of construction, and 2 caches each with one ceramic vessel of Late Classic period interment.

***Discussion and Stratigraphy***

The looter's trench, SL07, revealed three main contexts; the humus layer (SL07.02), a very thick layer of grey marl (SL07.03), and a plaster floor of 10 cm thick (SL07.04) supported by a thick layer of rubble fill (SL07.05). The plaster floor ran under the masonry wall in the west profile of the trench (see Multiphase Plan). The eastern side of the trench revealed a small line of stones running north-south with 2 floors outside it, one on top of the other. Section drawings of the north, south, and west walls were completed, followed by a plan view of the trench (see Multiphase Plan). The trench was also cleared of the backfill left by the looters (SL07.01) revealing the rubble fill (ST07.05) beneath.

The excavation (ST 18) was placed adjacent to SL07, running 3.5 m to the north and 5 m to the west. The stones on the surface were called ST 18.01, covering several layers of humus, ST 18.02-06 (see site notebook for minor distinctions). Then I found walls running from the looter's trench to the north, ST 18.09, and perpendicular to that across the trench east-west and stopping 3 cm before the west section wall of the same trench, ST 18.10 and ST 18.33. These were abutted in the center of the excavation or on their east face by a layer of densely packed grey soil, ST 18.08, probably coeval with the last plaza floor. On the top of the mound there were many tumbled stones from some sort of superstructure, ST 18.20, including one large rectangular stone set perpendicular to ST 18.09 adjacent to the looters trench. East of and parallel to, this stone was a substantial earlier wall running north-south, ST 18.11, in the middle of the mound. Beneath ST 18.08 there were 2 overlying floors outside the building; a yellow plaster floor, ST 18.13 above a grey one, ST 18.14. In the western part of the trench ST 18.08, the densely packed grey soil and came down almost immediately on the fragmentary remains of a different thick plaster floor, ST 18.16, which was interrupted by a cut along the west section and along the wall ST 18.33. Inside the cut,

ST18.30, were a fill, ST18.27, fill, and a layer of greymortar ST18.18, abutting a low 2 stones-wide wall, ST18.15 (aligned N-S) (see Multi-phase plan). Then we excavated inside the the western room, formed by walls ST18.11, ST18.33, and ST18.12 which was filled by ST18.07, revealing the floor ST18.16 continuing through the room. There was another wall perpendicular to ST18.33, ST18.12, both these walls were only one stone high. Then the trench was extended 1 m west to examine the cut in floor ST18.16 and the articulation of a cut stone with wall ST18.12. This wall, ST18.12, was perpendicular to ST18.33, both of these walls were only one stone high. Then the trench was extended 1 m west to examine the cut in floor ST18.16 and the articulation of a cut stone with wall ST18.12. The stone turned out to be part of a 2 stone-high wall, 1 stone long, perpendicular to ST18.12, which was called ST18.29. The floor, ST18.16, continued underneath both walls, ST18.12 and ST18.29, cut by ST18.31, interrupted it along the outside of the walls. Also in this NW section of the excavation the other cut, ST18.30, continued to the west. The trench was then extended another 3 meters to the south and 2 meters west, to examine the entrance to the room. Meanwhile the fill was removed from the eastern room, ST18.20, and ST18.22 to reveal the thick floor beneath, ST18.24. This also revealed that floor ST18.24 was continuous beneath wall ST18.11, as could be seen by the continuation of the floor and of the small plinth stones, ST18.23, running along the east side of both ST18.11 and ST18.15. Either these two walls are the same, the earlier having been cut when the perpendicular walls (ST18.10, ST18.33) were constructed, or the later one was built on the foundation of the earlier. The second extension revealed numerous collapsed stones, under which there was a pile of 2 stones (ST18.42), roughly rectangular, parallel to ST18.29 but separated from it by fill, ST18.35. To the south, there were two similar parallel stone piles, ST18.43 and ST18.44, each separated from the floor by a thin lens of fill. Perpendicular to these and also on top of fill was a rectangular stone, ST18.45. Behind these, running under the east section wall was a cut stone block, ST18.47 similar to and parallel to the stones of ST18.33 and sitting directly on floor ST18.16. In the southwest corner of the trench was a flat rectangular stone with a considerable quantity of chert debitage around it (see Multiphase Plan). Recognizing that this could be a cache, we extended the trench one meter south and one meter west. This area was covered in tumbled stones, probably from another structure to the southwest. Under the flat stone was a roughly square area of chert debitage lined with flat stones. Beneath the chert was a layer of stones, ST18.38, and under these a layer of fill, ST18.39 with one ceramic red-slipped bowl placed upright (ST18.39.02.01). Beneath the fill was an earlier floor, ST18.51, with a circular cut, ST18.40, in it (see Plan of Cache #1). The cut contained fill, ST18.41 and the fill contained a second, identical ceramic red-slipped bowl placed upright (ST18.41.02.01) (see Plan of Cache #2). To the west, in front of the room there was another cut into floor ST18.16, roughly square and extending into the west section wall, ST18.48, which contained only fill, ST18.49. Within this fill was a stone, ST18.46, which looked very similar to the stones of wall St18.12, leading me to believe that the symmetrical wall on the south side had been removed in a termination ritual. Then the trench was back filled to be investigated in the upcoming season.

### ***Conclusion***

The earliest contexts found in ST18 are wall ST18.15 and floor ST18.51. The latter is a floor seen only in the profile of cut, ST18.52, and itself cut by ST18.40, the two Late Classic caches, nothing more will be known about this floor until further excavation is completed. ST18.15 is a wall, the same as ST18.11 and ST18.23, together these form a broad wall of 2 stones thick and 3 high at the center of the mound and of the excavation. It had a plinth, a layer of smaller uncut stones laid to the east. Then a floor was laid to the east, forming either the interior of a structure or the outer plaza floor, ST18.14 and ST18.24. Then the northern part of the wall was destroyed leaving only the lowest layer of stones and the part to the south was reused, ST18.11, forming the eastern wall of a room. From this wall a floor ST18.16, and 2 walls built on it, ST18.33 was laid to the west, consisting of one course of rectangular stones, and ST18.12, a one-course wall of square stones was laid at its western extent running south, parallel to ST18.11. On the south side another wall, ST18.47, of rectangular stones was laid parallel to ST18.33.

Then a wall, ST18.10, was built running east of ST18.11 and another, ST18.09 from its eastern end to the south. These walls are made of two courses of rectangular blocks, and are one block wide. They sit directly on mortar which was laid over floor ST18.14/24. The inner floor, ST18.24, was reused for the interior of this room. Outside of it, a plaza floor, ST18.13, was laid over ST18.14. Either these two rooms were used simultaneously, or the earlier one was filled in while the latter was in use.

It is possible that the earlier room was ritually terminated with the removal of the square stones of the wall to the south that would have been symmetrical to ST18.12, and a layer of fine grey fill was laid, ST18.35. Then the building was enlarged to the south with the stones, ST18.45, along the same (E-W)

alignment of the removed stone wall. A number of small walls were laid to the west of the structure, ST 18.29, ST 18.42, ST 18.43, and ST 18.44 to extend the structure. A number of cuts were made into the floor ST 18.16; cut ST 18.30 to the north of the building, cut ST 18.31 between walls ST 18.12, cut ST 18.29, and cut ST 18.48 on the centerline of the building between and in front of walls ST 18.42 and ST 18.43. These cuts were then filled with fills ST 18.27, ST 18.28, and ST 18.49 respectively. Then the room was filled with rubble layers ST 18.07, ST 18.06, ST 18.26, and ST 18.34, which included some of the square stones from the wall that had been removed.

The eastern room was filled in at the same time or later. It was first filled with rubble ST 18.22, then ST 18.20. Then both rooms were covered with stones found in the humus layers, ST 18.06, ST 18.05, ST 18.04, ST 18.03, ST 18.02, ST 18.25, ST 18.32, ST 18.36, and on the surface in ST 18.01.

On the southwest corner, two caches were made before (?-it had to be before unless it was cut through the fill) the mound was filled. The first cut, ST 18.40, was filled with ST 18.41 containing one complete ceramic vessel. Then ST 18.52 was cut directly above it, extending slightly to the south. This was lined with flat stones and filled with ST 18.39 containing another ceramic vessel of the same style. This was covered by a layer of stones, ST 18.38, and a layer of chert debitage, ST 18.37. The whole thing was then covered by a large flat stone. The area around the mound continued in use through the Late Classic and a layer of densely packed gray soil occurred around the building, ST 18.08, and finally the humus layer ST 18.32 and ST 18.36 covered the area.

ST18 – Illustrations

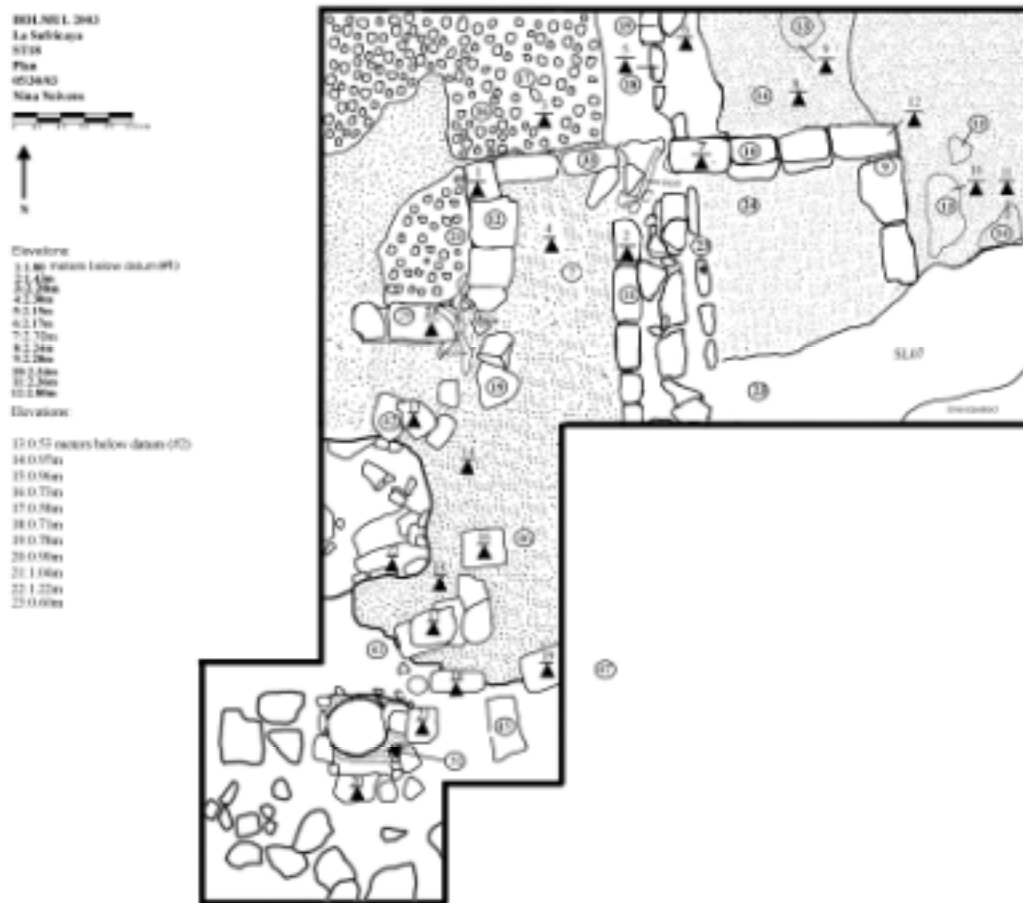


Figure 1. Final plan of excavation

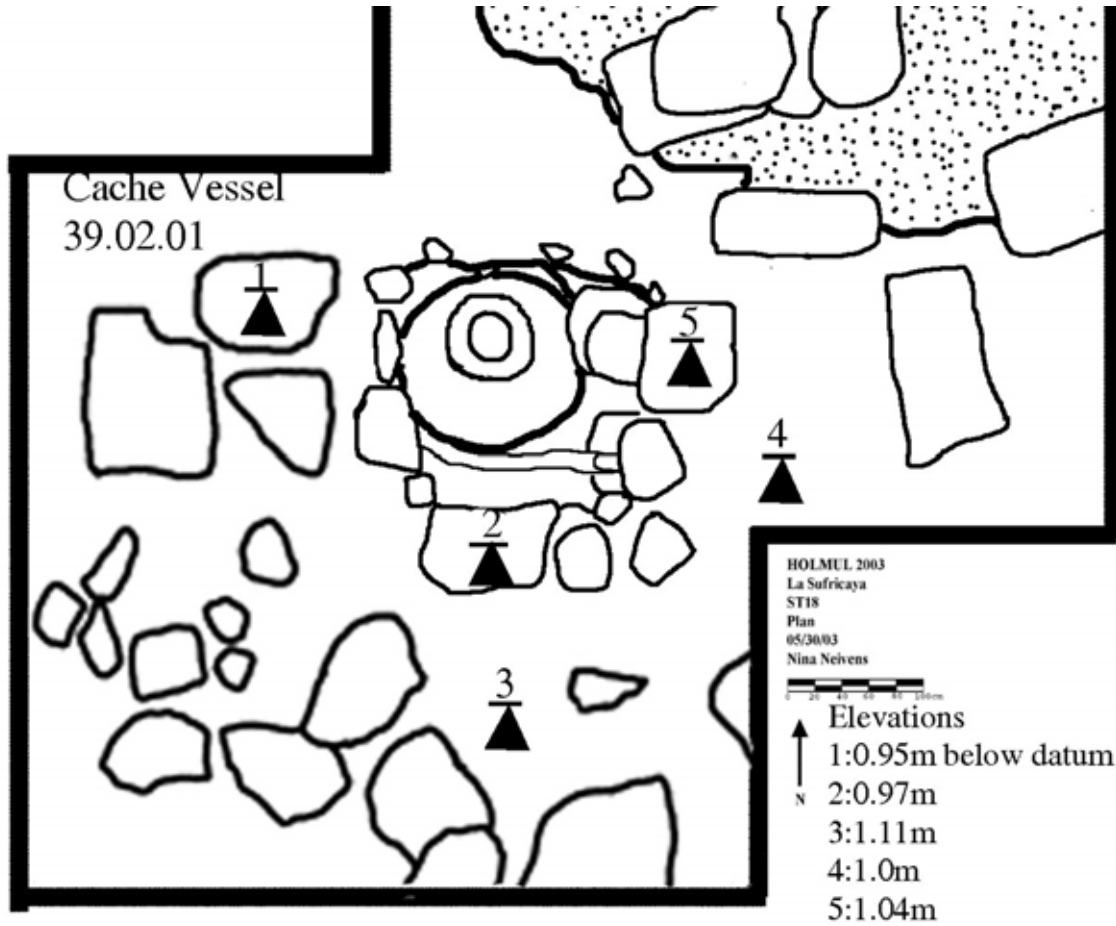


Figure 2. Detail of SW extension and cache #1

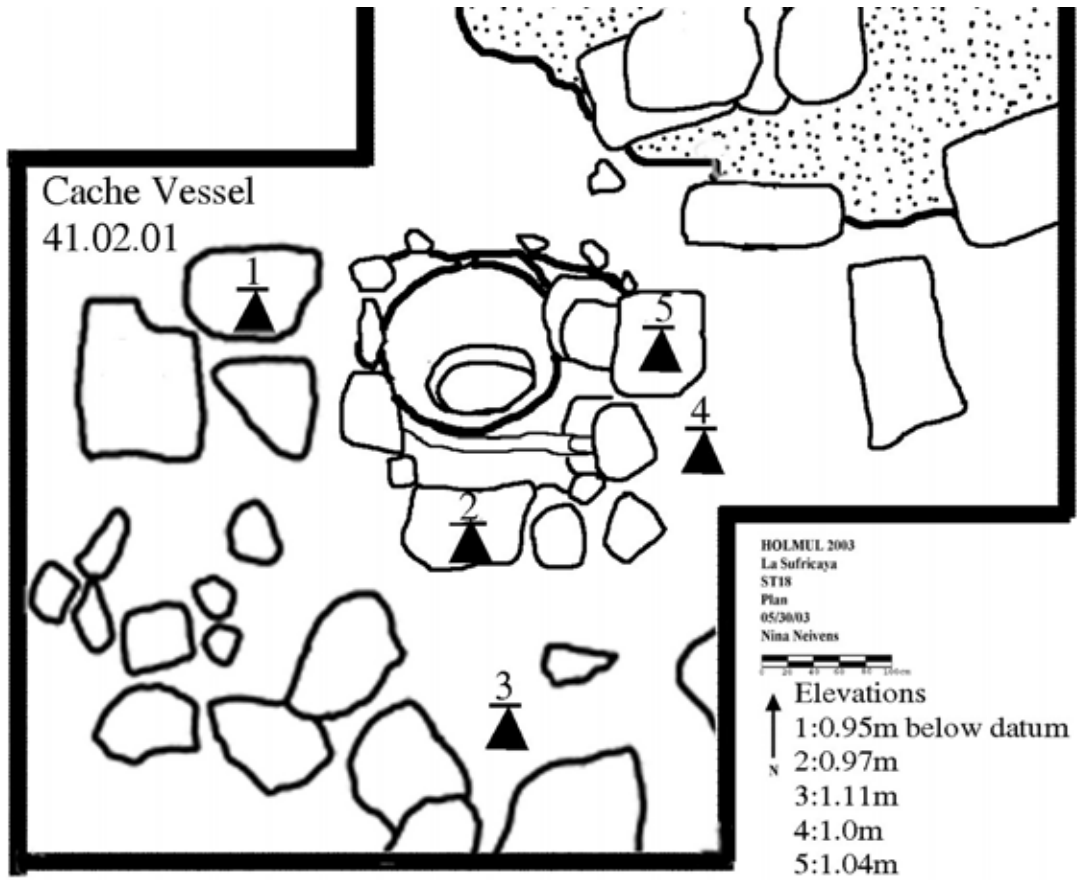


Figure 3. Detail of SW extension and cache #2.



## **Informe Preliminar de Las Excavaciones Realizadas en el Patio B Del Grupo III de Holmul,**

**Temporada 2003**

*Judith Valle*

### Discusión estratigráfica

#### Excavaciones en la Estructura 60

La Estructura 60, forma parte del conjunto arquitectónico del Grupo III B, localizado en el Centro de Holmul. Está ubicada al sur del grupo, dividiendo los patios B y B1, es decir que está al norte del patio B1; al oeste tiene la Estructura 70; al este la 57; y al sur la 71 (Fig 1). Las excavaciones en esta estructura se realizaron con el objeto de responder a los siguientes interrogantes.

- Definir su arquitectura.
- ¿Qué relación tenía con el resto del conjunto?
- ¿Qué función tenía?

#### Metodología

La metodología empleada en el campo consistió en la preparación del terreno eliminando de la superficie hojas secas y arbustos, con el objeto de trabajar de una manera ordenada una excavación básicamente vertical.

Durante la excavación se realizaron tres trincheras y un pozo, bajando en estratos naturales, así que cada estrato tuvo una considerable diferencia de grosor. A cada estrato se le llevó un cuidadoso registro con fotografía digital.

Según la metodología del proyecto el material arqueológico recuperado se separó de acuerdo al número de operación y estrato, colocándose en bolsas etiquetadas. Toda la tierra extraída de la excavación se coló para tener una mejor captación de los materiales.

En gabinete se realizó una limpieza húmeda y seca dependiendo del material y luego se marcó.

El desarrollo de la discusión estratigráfica se basa en la excavación de cuatro trincheras denominadas T40, T40A, T40B Y T40C.

#### Trincheras T40, Extensión oeste de T40 y T40A

Estas trincheras se realizaron con el propósito de definir el muro sur de la Estructura 60, y los accesos que debido a las depresiones alineadas y alternas de bloques de piedra canteados se observaban en la superficie del montículo.

#### La trinchera T40

Se trazo en eje norte – sur, inicialmente de 1.50 m de ancho por 2.74 m de largo, tomando como referencia el punto de topografía HHP'03 E6030.03 N5920.06 Z108.61.

#### Estrato T40. 01

Este estrato consiste en la capa de humus y tierra café, de 0.20 m, de profundidad donde la tierra cambia de color y aparecen piedras grandes. La cerámica recuperada consiste en fragmentos muy erosionados, algunos con mínimos restos de engobe rojo del tipo Tinaja Rojo y un fragmento de navaja prismática de obsidiana negra.

#### Estrato T40.02

En este nivel es de tierra color beige y piedras que varían de 0.35 a 0.40 m de largo por 0.23 a 0.30 m de ancho por 0.10 a 0.30 m de grosor lo que muestra que está canteada y que posiblemente correspondían al muro que ahora se encuentra derrumbado. Aparecen pocos restos de cerámica muy erosionada; pedernal fragmentos de lascas de descortezamiento, destrozos de talla, varios nódulos de y dos piedras relativamente esféricas. Al llegar a 1.16 m de profundidad tomado de la superficie del montículo, se encuentra un piso de estuco en regulares condiciones de conservación.

Durante el proceso de excavación se observan piedras de derrumbe por lo que se procede a levantarlo y detrás de éste se encuentra el muro buscado, en la parte inferior del perfil este, perpendicular al muro y sobre el piso se observan tres piedras que forman dos escalones. (Fig. 3)

Entre el derrumbe se recupera cerámica utilitaria y un hacha bifacial de pedernal familia mediana, clase tallada. Este estrato tiene 0.96 m

#### Estrato T40.03

En el extremo sur de la trinchera se traza un poso de 1 m de largo por el ancho de la trinchera, esta es la parte más baja del patio, pero el nivel está tomado de la parte que corresponde a la Estructura 60. Se continúa con la numeración correlativa de los estratos.

Se rompe el piso que muestra un grosor de 0.13 m debajo de éste hay tierra café con pedrín y piedra de regular tamaño, lo que sugiere la base de preparación y nivelación para el piso en cuestión, aquí se encuentra cerámica y pedernal en escasa cantidad. Este estrato tiene 0.40 m de grosor, 1.56 m. (Figs. 2 y 3)

#### Estrato T40.04

En esta parte la tierra cambia a un color grisáceo y suave para excavar. También tiene piedra de regular (0.10 a 0.15 m), tamaño igual a la del estrato anterior. Este estrato alcanza un grosor de 0.16 m 1.72 dato de superficie, aquí empieza a aparecer la superficie de piedras grandes y una superficie estucada, por lo que se cambia de estrato. El material recuperado consiste en un fragmento de navaja de obsidiana y cerámica Sierra Rojo.

#### Estrato T40.05

En este estrato la tierra continúa siendo grisáceo, pero compacta y con piedra grande sin trabajar. Al levantar las piedras aparece la superficie estucada de un talud que posiblemente tenga una figura modelada en estuco hacia el perfil este y hacia el perfil oeste posiblemente un nicho o una ventana (?), pero para esclarecer esta duda hace falta más investigación.

Se recolecto cerámica muy erosionada, algunos monocromos con restos de engobe negro o rojo y escasas lascas de pedernal. Este estrato tiene 0.44 m de grosor y 2.16 m de profundidad según dato de superficie (Fig 3)

#### Extensión de T40

Hacia el oeste se traza una extensión de T40, para seguir el muro, y encontrar los accesos de la Estructura 60, siguiendo, como se dijo antes, las depresiones alineadas y alternas de bloques de piedra canteados que se observaban en la superficie. Por tratarse de una extensión se toman los mismos estratos, ya que la textura y el color de la tierra son los mismos. La cerámica es poca y muy erosionada pero se identifica como del Período Clásico Tardío.

Al detectarse el cambio de color de tierra se toma el estrato T40.02, la tierra es de color beige con piedra grande y bien canteada, por lo que se infiere que forma parte de la Estructura 60; se baja hasta el nivel del piso encontrado en la parte trazada en eje N-S.

El muro sur está desplomado en la parte superior que corresponde al Estrato T40.01, pero el resto hasta el nivel del piso está alineado, en buenas condiciones, no presenta estuco, los boques de piedra están bien trabajados, tiene un sistema de cuñas y argamasa

El piso presenta un desnivel posiblemente debido a su deterioro, hacia el extremo oeste se encuentra roto posiblemente se trate de una intrusión que se investigará posteriormente.

Al alcanzar 7 m de largo hacia el oeste se encuentra un muro que corre perpendicular al de la Estructura 60, es decir que pasa por detrás de ésta, lo que indica que corresponde a una fase constructiva anterior. Ambos muros corresponden al mismo período, pero de distintas fases constructivas. (Fig. 4.

No se detectaron accesos tal como los sugerían las depresiones alternas en superficie.

La muestra de material recuperado consiste en una hacha bifacial, un percutor y lascas de pedernal; el extremo de mano de piedra de moler cutrifacial de granito de la casa pulida, que posiblemente fue utilizado con una piedra de moler de lados abiertos ya que termina en punta; un fragmento medial de una mano de piedra de moler; un aro de concha nácar; entre la cerámica se encontraron tiestos monocromos que corresponden a formas de cuencos, platos de lados abiertos, cueros de ollas utilitarias, que corresponden a los tipos Tinaja Rojo, Encanto Estriado y tres tiestos del tipo Zacatal Crema Policromo; un disco de cerámica reutilizada con engobe rojo y un fragmento de una figurilla moldeada, se trata del rostro de un viejo o del Dios Viejo con el hueso nasal y la mandíbula descarnados con bigotes cuyos extremos van hacia los pómulos y terminan en espirales, representación característica del Clásico Tardío.

#### T40A

Es una operación que se traza hacia el este, para detectar el muro sur de la Estructura 60 en esta dirección. Está a 3.40 m de distancia, a 263° y a 0.28 m del nivel del DD HHP'03 E6030.03 N5920.06 Z108.16.

Durante el proceso de limpieza de la superficie se recuperó una piocha cuatrifacial de pedernal, denominando este estrato como T40A.00

#### T40A.01

Este estrato corresponde a la capa de humus y tierra café, su grosor varía entre 0.20 y 0.40 m de profundidad, es posible que esto se deba a que el muro aparece en la parte donde la capa es más delgada y luego desaparece. Esta operación alcanza una extensión de 9 m a partir del rostro de las gradas mencionadas en T40.02.

El material recuperado consiste en tiosos de vasijas utilitarias en muy mal estado que corresponden al Clásico Tardío y pocas lascas de pedernal. Al remover esta capa de humus aparecen piedras bien canteadas que posiblemente corresponden al derrumbe del muro. Aquí la excavación se detiene para tomar las fotografías y cambiar de estrato.

#### T40A.02

Al remover las piedras del derrumbe se descubren las piedras observadas en la parte inferior del perfil este de T40. Estas son dos hileras de piedras que forman dos escalones, están sobre el piso y adosadas al muro sur de la estructura 60. El piso frente a ellas está en mal estado y en algunas partes sólo se observa la base de pedrín y argamasa.

De momento es difícil atribuirle una función a estas gradas ya que la de altura entre la huella de la segunda y la parte superior del muro es de 0.60 m, una relación demasiado grande para ascender a la estructura, además de que no se detectó ningún acceso. Otra posibilidad es sea un muro de contención, pero para ello su altura es muy poca. (Fig. 5)

Algunas de las piedras de las gradas están relativamente desalineadas, en muy mal estado de conservación y se desasan con facilidad, en esta parte la excavación se hace con cuchara y brocha. Las gradas alcanzan un largo de 4.55 m hacia el este. En el extremo este las gradas presentan tres escalones. Al terminar estas se encuentran fragmentos de una vasija de paredes curvoconvergentes, en la unión de cuerpo y base una moldura basal, con engobe rojo, a unos 0.25 m de esta vasija, siempre en dirección Este se encuentran restos de carbón del cual se toma muestra.

Al concluir las gradas el muro está muy destruido y únicamente dos hileras de piedras alineadas, aquí el nivel del piso es más alto que el de la Extensión de T40 al oeste. En el extremo este el muro sur de la Estructura 60, muestra piedras de poco grosor con relación al resto del muro y las que se encuentran debajo de estas y sobre el piso. En esta parte el nivel del piso es todavía más alto y bien conservado.

A 3.80 del rostro este de las gradas se encuentra una jama que da acceso, posiblemente a la Estructura 57, cuyo nivel de piso es 0.24 más alto que el piso que se encuentra frente al muro sur de la Estructura 60. (Fig. 5), dentro de la estructura se recuperó una buena muestra de carbón.

A 2.90 m del rostro este de las gradas se detecta un vacío que será investigado posteriormente. (Fig. 5 Y 6)

En esta operación se recuperó escaso material que corresponde al Clásico Tardío.

#### T40B

Esta es una trinchera que se traza en eje N-S seguida de T40 (Fig. 2) El objetivo de esta operación es encontrar la estructura que sierra el Patio B 1 en el lado sur.

#### T40B.01

Este estrato consiste en una capa de tierra café y humus, su grosor varía entre 0.20 y 0.40 de grosor. Aparecen fragmentos de cuellos de ollas, bordes, cuerpos, pocos tiosos monocromos con engobe rojo y un tiesto Pabellón Modelado Tallado y un malacate.

Al encontrar una capa de piedras grandes se cambia de nivel.

#### T40B.02

Este estrato se inicia al levantar las piedras grandes y tierra beige, conforme se va bajando el estrato aparece abundante cerámica utilitaria posiblemente del Grupo Encanto y del Grupo Tinaja Roja, fragmentos de hueso de animal y pocas lascas de pedernal, también

se recupera otro fragmento del Pabellón Modelado Tallado que encaja con el encontrado en el estrato T40B.01.

Se baja hasta el nivel del piso encontrado en T40, se sigue este piso en dirección sur. A una profundidad que varía entre 0.90 y 1.28 m de profundidad asentadas sobre una mezcla muy compacta y difícil para excavar aparece una ofrenda que consiste en varias vasijas fragmentadas posiblemente completas del Grupo Tinaja Rojo y Encanto Estriado.

Por la posición del hallazgo de la ofrenda se hace necesario ampliar la excavación 0.60 m más hacia el oeste. Al hacer esta ampliación aparece el muro que sierra el patio por el lado sur, a rostro de este muro y junto a la ofrenda aparecen huesos y una mandíbula posiblemente de un herbívoro. (Fig.7 y 8)

El muro es de bloques pequeños bien canteados, sin estuco y presenta el mismo sistema constructivo que el muro sur de la Estructura 60, con cuñas y piedras pequeñas que dan sostén a las grandes, la parte superior del muro está muy destruida y muestra un desplome de 0.10 m en la parte superior de la fachada norte esta parte se encuentra a una profundidad de 0.40 m.

#### T40C.01

Esta operación se realiza con el propósito de conocer el grosor del muro denominado Estructura 71 y la fachada sur de este. La trinchera es de 1 m de ancho por 2 de largo en dirección sur, hacia la pendiente o escarpa que tiene aproximadamente de 7 a 8m de alto. La capa de humus y tierra café tiene un grosor de 0.38 m y la cerámica recuperada está muy erosionada y corresponde al Clásico Tardío.

#### T40C.02

Aquí se encuentra tierra beige y piedra de regular tamaño. Debido a la topografía del montículo la parte superior del muro aparece a una profundidad de 0.32 m, mostrando la fachada sur del muro y a una profundidad de 1.16 m se observa un posible muro de contención con una terraza, pero para esclarecer si se trata de los elementos antes indicados o de una escarpa natural es necesario ampliar la investigación.

Destrozos de talla de pedernal, un hueso cortado, huesos de animal y fragmentos de cuellos y cuerpos de ollas utilitarias monocromos constituyen los hallazgos de este lote.

Al terminar este estrato se pueden apreciar las fachadas norte y sur del muro de la Estructura 71, el cual tiene un grosor de 0.92 m

#### T40C.03

En este estrato se encuentra una tierra gris, fina y suave, posiblemente mezclada con ceniza y al llegar a una profundidad de 1.36 m se encuentra un piso estucado en buen estado de conservación cuyo nivel está 0.20 m más alto que el piso del patio, aquí también se encuentra un adosamiento que podría ser una terraza adosada al muro. Esta es otra terraza más baja que la mencionada en el nivel anterior (T40C.02), bien canteada y con estuco, pero como ya se dijo es necesario ampliar la investigación.

Según, el Dr. F. Estada Belli, (Comunicación personal, 2003), podría tratarse del acceso de un recinto que da hacia la escarpa y que este patrón es similar al que se encuentra al lado este del Grupo III B de Holmul.

En este estrato no se recupera ningún material.

#### Resumen

Con base al fechamiento de los materiales arqueológicos y especialmente la cerámica, se puede afirmar que tanto la ocupación del conjunto arquitectónico de las Estructuras 60, 57, 70 y 71 del Patio III B, corresponden al Período Clásico Tardío, y a que en todas las operaciones los materiales recuperados en cada uno de los estratos son comunes, siendo los predominantes los tipos Tinaja Rojo; Encanto Estriado; Zacatal Crema Policromo, Variedad Cabrito y Pabellón Modelado Tallado. También se recolectaron fragmentos de manos de piedras de moler de granito; una piocha cuadrifacial, hachas, lascas y destrozos de talla de pedernal; los dos fragmentos de obsidiana negra recuperados en el estrato 02 de las operaciones, posiblemente provengan de El Chayal, aunque para asegurar tal afirmación es necesario el respectivo análisis. El aro y el fragmento de concha nácar, correspondientes a los estratos T40.02 y T40.02 sugieren que los ocupantes de este grupo también tuvieron acceso a los artículos suntuosos.

#### Consideraciones finales

La investigación en la Estructuras 60, fue motivada por las interrogantes planteadas al inicio de este informe.

- Definición de su arquitectura
- ¿Qué relación tenía con el resto del conjunto?
- ¿Qué función tenía?

Pero conforme avanza la excavación se hizo necesario investigar que sucedía con las estructuras que la rodeaban Estructuras 70, 71 y 57, así como el patio frente a ella, por lo que se pudo determinar que esta estructura fue construida en una fase posterior al resto del conjunto arquitectónico del Grupo III B, ya que sus muros están perpendiculares y por encima de los muros de las Estructuras 57 y 70 y que cerró la plaza durante la última época de ocupación del grupo, quedando un patio al norte, Patio B 1, (Fig. 1), con acceso restringido que posiblemente fue por la estructura 57, tal como lo muestra la jamba de acceso que da al patio.

La Estructura 60, posiblemente tiene el o los accesos hacia el norte, fachada que da a la plaza principal del Grupo III, lo que demuestra que aún con la construcción de esta estructura la plaza del grupo no perdió su importancia durante el Clásico Tardío. El muro sur muestra una escalinata adosada de tres escalones, dispuesta en forma asimétrica, es decir, que no está en el centro del muro que mide más o menos 15.30 m de ancho. Es difícil atribuir una función a estas gradas, pues no son para ascender a la estructura ya que no se encontró un acceso; tampoco se puede decir funcionan como un muro de contención pues su altura es mucho menor en relación a la altura del muro. J. C. Pérez Calderón, sugiere que podrían funcionar para una observación escénica por su relación con el patio B1 y que un ejemplo similar existe en Copan.

En cuanto a la función de esta estructura podría suponerse que fue habitacional. Pero poder dar mayor respaldo a estas propuestas es necesario ampliar las investigaciones especialmente en el lado norte.

La construcción de las Estructuras 60, 57, 70 y 71, aunque no presentan estuco, muestran que la talla de las piedras fue bien procesada y el ajuste con cuñas da solidez y buen soporte a los muros, este sistema de cuñas es característico del Clásico Tardío.

En general los hallazgos especiales se recuperaron entre el derrumbe y el relleno del conjunto, posiblemente utilizado como basurero por los últimos ocupantes durante el Clásico Tardío, pero antes de darle esta función, se encontró una serie de vasijas ollas de gran capacidad con boca restringida de los tipos Tinaja Rojo, Encanto Estriado y Chinja Impreso, que fueron puestas al frente a la fachada norte de la Estructura 71, que sierra el patio por el lado sur, además se puede inferir que estos habitantes tuvieron acceso a artículos suntuosos como lo muestran los fragmentos de manos de piedras de moler de granito, la obsidiana y la cancha nácar, lo que también es un indicativo que Holmul sostuvo un intercambio comercial a larga distancia.

#### Proyección para la temporada 2004

Para resolver con mayor claridad las interrogantes planteadas al inicio de este informe se propone excavar:

-La fachada norte de la Estructura 60, para detectar los accesos y la dimensión de sus recintos.

-La intrusión del piso próxima al muro de la Estructura 70 y el vacío detectado hacia el este frente al muro sur de la Estructura 60.

-Que sucede con la Estructura 71 hacia la escarpa al sur del conjunto.

#### Listado de Figuras

- Fig. 1 Plano del Grupo B.
- Fig. 2 Planta de excavación
- Fig. 3 Perfil N –S de la Estructura 60, Patio B1 y Estructura 71.
- Fig. 4 Planta de los muros de las Estructuras 60, 70, 57, y 71.
- Fig. 5 Fachada sur de la Estructura 60.
- Fig. 6 Planta de referencia de los hallazgos.
- Fig. 7 Fachada norte Estructura 71.
- Fig. 8 Planta de excavación de ofrenda de vasijas.

### Group III, Courts A and B

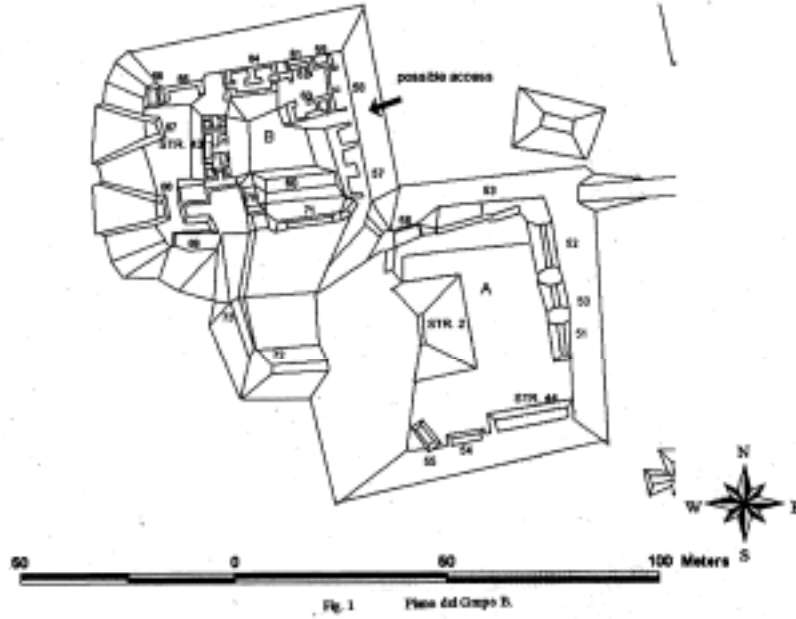


Figura 1

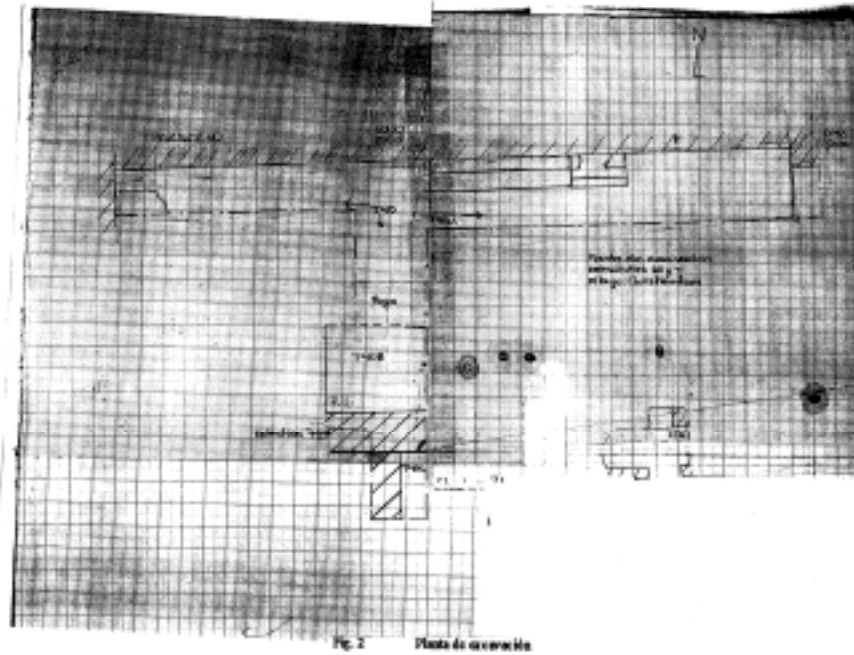


Figura 2



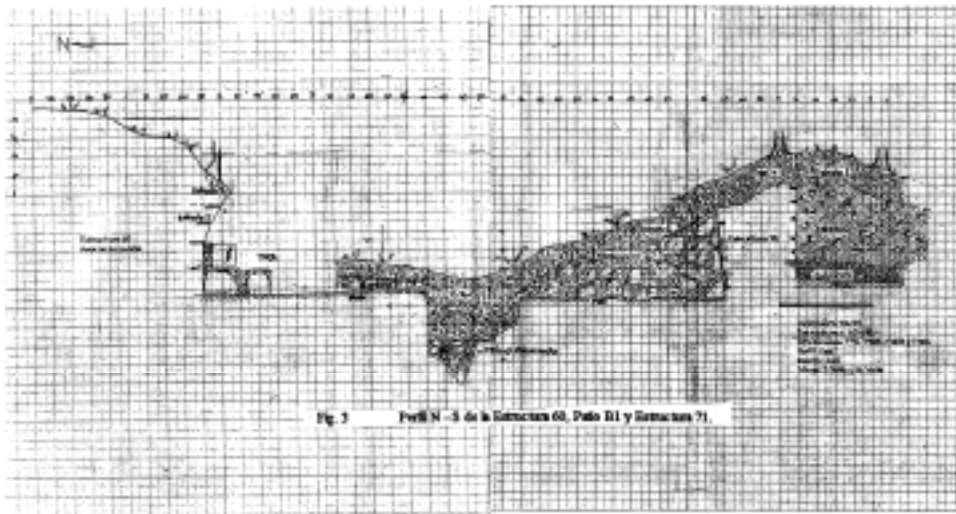


Figura 3

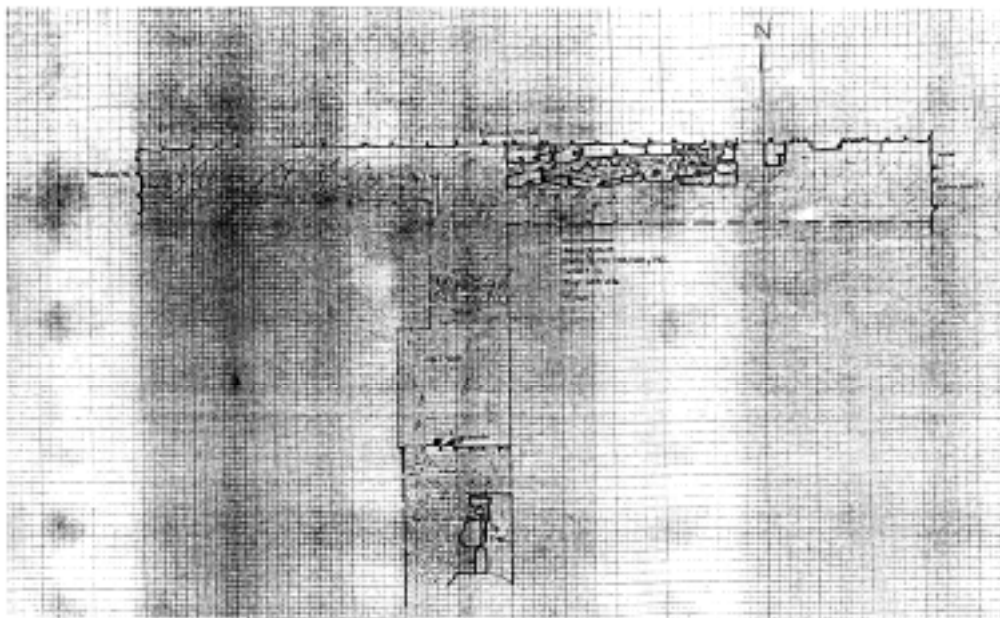


Figura 4

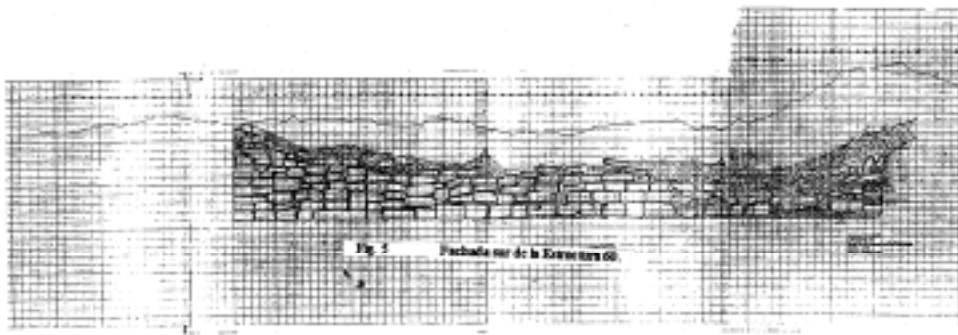


Figura 5

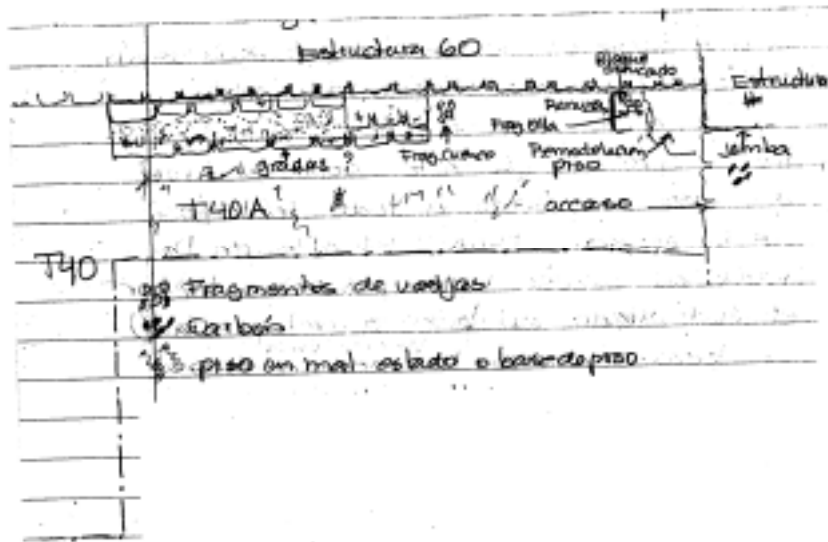


Fig. 6 Planta de referencia de los hallazgos.

Figura 6

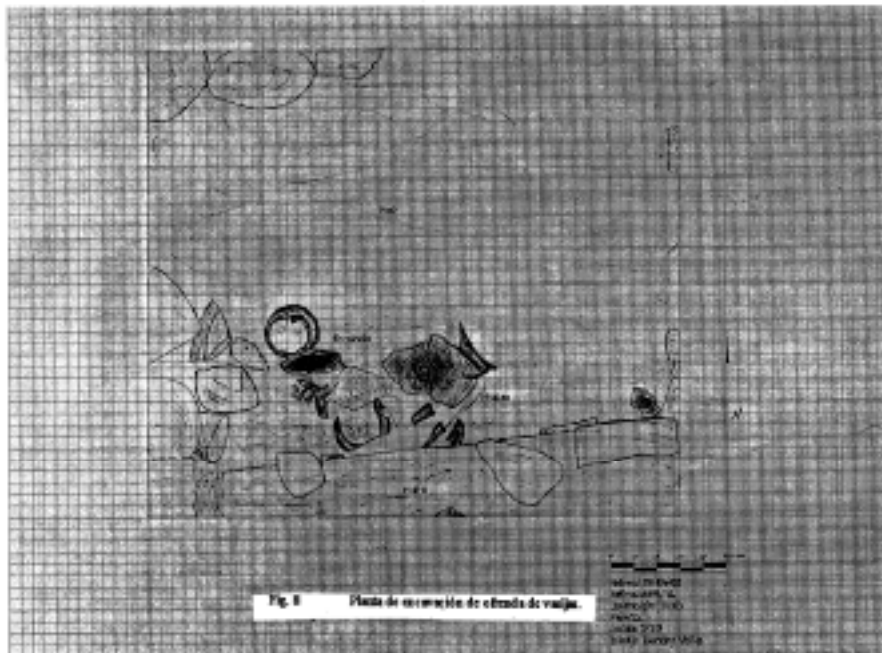
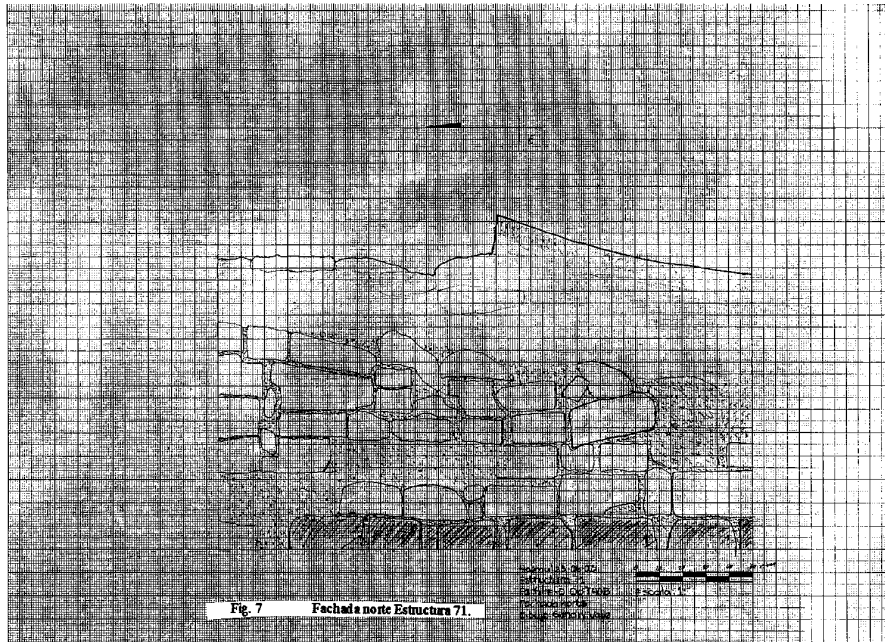


Figura 7

## **Excavations in Group III court A, Season 2003**

*Chris Hewitson*

In Group III Court A, excavation T32 was placed in the center of the plaza in order to obtain a continuous section from the eastern side of the plaza at structure 50 (Excavated in 2002) to the western side at Structure 2 (Looter's Trench recorded in 2000). The latest plaster floor was uncovered and followed into Structure 2, revealing a cut capped by large stones that may have been a cyst burial at one time. However, expansion of excavation to the south revealed that the capstones had been disturbed and the cut did not contain any human remains. Therefore, this grave was most likely emptied in antiquity for reburial.

Continuation of tunneling occurred perpendicular to looter's trench LT11. This revealed the nature of the third from last phase of construction within Structure 2. This phase of construction formed a projecting corner at the north-eastern edge of the structure. West of this corner the pyramid was indented by c.3.5m and continued west for a further c.5.5m before turning south in what appears to be a near-vertical face. The second to last phase was located during tunneling and in the looter's trench and appeared to be a later addition to the northern and western side of the temple designed to provide a greater base width at the rear of the temple. Excavations at the north-west corner of Structure 2 (T44) revealed poorly preserved remains of the last phase of the pyramid. This was also located in LT11 but in better preservation condition. The plan of this phase is unclear but appears to have involved a more whole-scale re-modeling of the pyramid than the previous phase adopting the projection at the north-east corner of the earlier phase whilst incorporating the expansion to the west of the temple for greater structural integrity.

A looter's trench LT 13 bisecting Structure 53 on the north side of Court A was cleaned and the profile was drawn to reveal at least four different phases of construction, the earliest of which was a large plaster staircase with a red-painted stucco wall perpendicular to it. A later plaster floor phase covered this associated with a circular façade that faced northward away from the platform. Further excavation is needed to understand the exact construction of this rounded building.



## **Excavations within Court III B, Holmul Site Center, 2003 Season**

### *Introduction*

This seasons excavations within Court III B were aimed at a three-fold investigation within separate areas of the court.

1. Intrusive key-hole excavation in the interior and western exterior of Structure 43 (The Palace Building) designed at establishing the extent of earlier phases of the palace complex (C. Hewitson, T38, T39, T43)
2. Examination of occupation evidence in the southern area of the complex, in order to establish the extent of the southern court and its relationship with Structure 60, Structure 70 and Structure 71 (J. Valle T40). Combined with this an examination of the nature of the complex west of Structure 70 and south of Structure 43 by the excavation and recording of the passageway between the west and central courts (N. Erwin T35).
3. Extensive open excavation of the area between the central court and the plaza floor designed to establish a continuous relationship between the interior and exterior of the court (D. Bell, R. Trujillo, G. Valle, T42). Complimentary to this investigation of domestic structures to the north and south in order to establish their relationship and nature in respect to the rest of the complex (Structure 57, Structure 58, and Structure 63, C. Hewitson T36, T37).

Further survey-work was undertaken in order to establish the extent of remaining standing architecture, its alignment and relate this to the excavations undertaken in the previous two seasons (2001, 2002)

### *Discussion*

Excavations within and surrounding Structure 43 were carried out in three locations, centrally within the eastern room numbered 2 by Merwin (T38) in the western room (3 by Merwin, T39) and at the base of the access staircase east of Structure 43 uncovered during excavations of 2002 (T43).

Excavations within the palace revealed a latest phase of construction directly relating to the upstanding architecture of Structure 43, consisting of thick repeated re-plastering of the floor surfaces contemporary with the re-modeling of the benches in this phase. A discontinuous floor located in the western room directly below these floors suggests an earlier phase with a bench located centrally against the rear wall that was removed prior to re-modeling of this room. This phase appeared to relate to the latest phase of floor beneath the main stairwell in excavation T43. This was excavated initially in 2002 but discontinued after approximately c.0.5m and was visible only as a gravel construction layer beyond this until it becomes visible again at the far side of the court (see excavation T42).

A limestone-rubble construction layer of c.0.2m separates a plaster floor that appeared to be contemporary with the well-preserved court floor located in T43 and the previous seasons excavation (2002). Within T43 located underneath the first step of the stairway were the remains of an obsidian cache directly over-lying the floor. This consisted of 8 large obsidian blades, two blades with opposing notches at either end, a well-formed symmetrical knife blade and a series of other single edged blades that suggested these to be the remnant of a personal tool kit.

Below this with evidence of a rough built partition construction wall running east-west within the excavation in the eastern room (T38) and in the central court (T43) that directly overlay a good quality plaster floor. This floor does not appear in the western room (T39) and it is suggested that is due to the presence of a bench or platform here that extends beyond the limit of excavation.

A layer of construction fill within T38 containing large quantities of burnt limestone lay below this sealing a set of two well preserved stucco covered steps. The corresponding floor was not located within the court (T43) but a similar layer of construction fill suggests the floor existed at one time but preservation was exceptionally poor. The upper stucco step appears to be a later addition designed to meet the theorized bench or platform (see above), and the original floor level of the lower step continued to meet a floor located in the western room (T39). This is contemporary with a faced limestone wall (T39) running north-south that appeared to be the rear wall of the earliest structure constructed in the palace.

Excavations in T39 and T43 were continued to a depth of c.2.5m revealing a single poor quality construction floor in T39 and deep layers of limestone block construction fill. It is therefore suggested four phases of construction can be seen in the palace. However, it cannot be theorized whether these are sub-phases or distinct phases of construction.

### *The second area of excavation*

Excavation of the passageway between central and western courts was primarily designed to establish construction phases of this feature and relate them to the topography visible on the surface. The majority of the fill within the tunnel related to episodic looters disturbance. This revealed the remains of several unstratified well-preserved ceramic vessels of late and terminal classic dates. These included a polychrome vessel located at the far western end of the tunnel.

At the eastern end of the tunnel located at the entrance to the central court were the remains of a deep midden deposit of terminal classic domestic wares. This confirms the theory that the complex as a whole was used in the terminal classic period as a squatter settlement, in common with the evidence from the south court of the complex and Court III A.

The architectural evidence revealed by the excavation suggested the passageway was of multi-phase construction incorporating the elements of the surrounding structures.

The earliest visible phase within the passage is located within looter's disturbance on the northern wall. A hole excavated by looter's reveals an earlier phase of what can be presumed to be a structural wall of the platform for Structure 43. It is sealed by a later wall constructed in front, of small but well-cut limestone blocks that discontinue towards the eastern end of the tunnel in a sloped face. This is structurally identical and presumably contemporaneous with the wall on the southern side of the passage that discontinues at the eastern end at the same point as the northern wall except in a vertical wall break that over-hangs at its base. At the western end this turns sharply and turns south to form the western wall of what is presumed to be a narrow structure. The wall terminates at the south and turns east again in a vertical wall break. Looters disturbance at this location clearly reveals the wall continuing eastward and forming the southern wall of this structure.

Abutting the corner here and stratigraphically later is another wall of a structure located south of that above. The wall continues directly south and forms the eastern half of the discontinued passage described below.

At the western end of the passageway were twin structures that the topographic evidence suggested to be of similar dimensions, aligned east-west with the passageway in-between running east-west. The passage in its final form turned at a right-angle and continued north following the line of the northern structure wall before turning west. However looters disturbance suggested the passage originally had a more open and inter-connecting plan. The passage originally appears to continue to the south through a passage that had been terminated at a later date by blocking using material sympathetic to the surrounding structures.

At the eastern end the passage turned at a slight angle and continues until it met the corner of the central court. The construction material of the walls on both sides of the passage was of larger rough block



construction and it appeared that this was a later addition designed at enclosing the passageway and changing its direction. It seemed probable this phase of construction was contemporary with the alteration of the central court by the construction of the staircase located north of structure 60 during the previous seasons excavation. This would have necessitated a change in access due to the restriction created by this construction.

It is unclear at present whether the passage was covered in its original form or this was a later alteration. The final phase of alteration appears to have been the blocking of the western end of the passage in order to remove access to the western court.

The third area of excavation centered on the western side of the central court. The largest excavation T42 was designed to link the excavation of the staircase of the previous season with an extended excavation locating the entrance to the complex from the central court to the plaza in a single continuous section. Excavation revealed the remains of a platform enclosed to the south and north by two ranges of buildings Structures 57 and 58. Centrally located door jambs suggested the presence of a formal arched entrance to the complex, but the platform did not appear to be roofed. Descending to the west was a series of wide platform steps before a series of three smaller steps led to the floor of the central court. Two plaster floors were located within the court. The latest was of poor condition but was contemporary with the floor located at the foot of the stairway to Structure 43.

To the east of the entrance platform the access was more complex. Two wide and deep stucco platform steps were encountered in poor condition. These led to a narrow trench with a plaster floor at the base. The purpose of this trench at present is unclear but it bears striking parallels to a similar construction located in LT16 on the southern edge of the complex. It is possible this was a continuous trench around the side of the complex. However, this requires further investigation to be confirmed. A series of three narrow limestone steps continued below this before a series of wide plaster steps descended to the plaza floor. These were covered by five to six later limestone steps located only in the northern section of the excavation. Access appears to have been located either side of the entrance platform via these later steps. In turn, the wide platform steps would have provided access to the rooms of Structures 57 and 58.

Two phases of plaza floor were encountered. The first was in poor condition and survived for only a short distance where a cover of rubble collapse had preserved it. Beyond this it was of very poor condition and only visible in the change of the nature of the soil. A second plaza floor of superior quality was located below this at a depth of c.0.8m.

To the north of T42 two rooms of Structure 63 were excavated. These were originally excavated by Merwin and were labeled Room 6 and Room 8 of Building A. The re-excavation revealed Room 6 (T36) to be a simple unadorned room with access to the north of probable domestic function. Room 8 was more complex with two benches. The earliest was centrally located facing north towards the central access from the north. It was decorated with two sloping feet at either end with an armrest on the western side. Originally a low bench appeared to have been located to the east of this. An L-shaped bench that filled the space between the eastern wall and the central bench replaced this later. Within the northern wall adjacent to this bench were located two niches.

## Overview of the Complex

Detailed assessment of the complex included assessment of all available looter's disturbance revealed a far more complex construction sequence than initially thought.

At the front of the complex two twin sets of cells Structure 58 (MA2 and MA4) and Structure 57 (MA10 and MA12) flanked the arched entrance revealed during excavation of T42. These four rooms opened onto the main plaza through doorways either collapsed or unexcavated at present. To the rear of Structure 57, a range of narrow contemporary rooms appeared to have existed revealed at either corner in T42 and LT 14. T36 (MA6) excavated this year may also be contemporaneous as well.

A further cell was located to the south of Structure 57, MA16. It was a later addition to the range and seemed to relate to a similar wall located in LT 15 to the south. However, the form of the later structure south is unclear at present. The northern wall of MA16 was of similar construction material to MA12 and probably delineates an earlier room between the two (MA14).

Structure 71, revealed during excavations of T40, defined the southern edge of the complex. The extent of this structure at present is poorly defined and may merely relate to a wall with buttress supports designed to enclose the southern court. The central and southern courts have been partitioned by the construction of Structure 60 an east-west range. This appeared later than both Structure 57 to the east and Structure 70 to the west and suggested a departmentalizing of the complex in its latest form. The southern area between the southern and western courts is poorly understood at present. Excavation of the passage (T35) suggests a series of small interlinked domestic structures.

The area to the north of the central court is a complex of small domestic style rooms originally described by Merwin. They are non-symmetrical, of varying form and size and appear to represent a gradual expansion of the area in a minimum of five separate sub-phases. It is presently unclear what the stratigraphic relationships of these phases are. However, broad categorization has been possible.

Structure 62 may relate to an un-numbered structure to the east with a passageway in-between.

West of Structure 62 a series of 6-7 small rooms appear to a stratigraphically later construction phase in two to three corridor ranges.

In the north-eastern corner of the complex are a minimum of two late rooms of poor construction built out over the north of the complex edge.

Structure 62 and the two excavated rooms of Structure 63 (see above) appear to be separated by a small raised court.

Towards the western end of this area a late arch-way (MA22) and Structure 65 located in LT17 appear to bear the same alignment as Structure 43 and may represent part of a construction phase relating the palace building to the domestic range.

The major questions still to be addressed by excavation appear to revolve around establishing the sequence of construction between Structure 43 and the surrounding domestic ranges. A sequence has been established between the Front Range and the palace complex. However, further excavation adjacent to the eastern range is necessary to establish whether this merely relates to the latest phase or earlier sequences exist. The area of northern domestic construction appears to be the key to understanding the relationships within the complex and excavation within this area will hopefully resolve the relationships between the two areas.

In the southern area of the complex it remains unclear how the southern court operated within the whole complex. Access to this court is presently un-established. The nature of the complex of buildings that lie to the west, adjacent to the passage (T35) require further investigation. The relationship between Court III

A and Court III B remains a mystery and clearly the area where the two courts meet needs investigation and may provide clues as to how the two courts interacted.



Figures

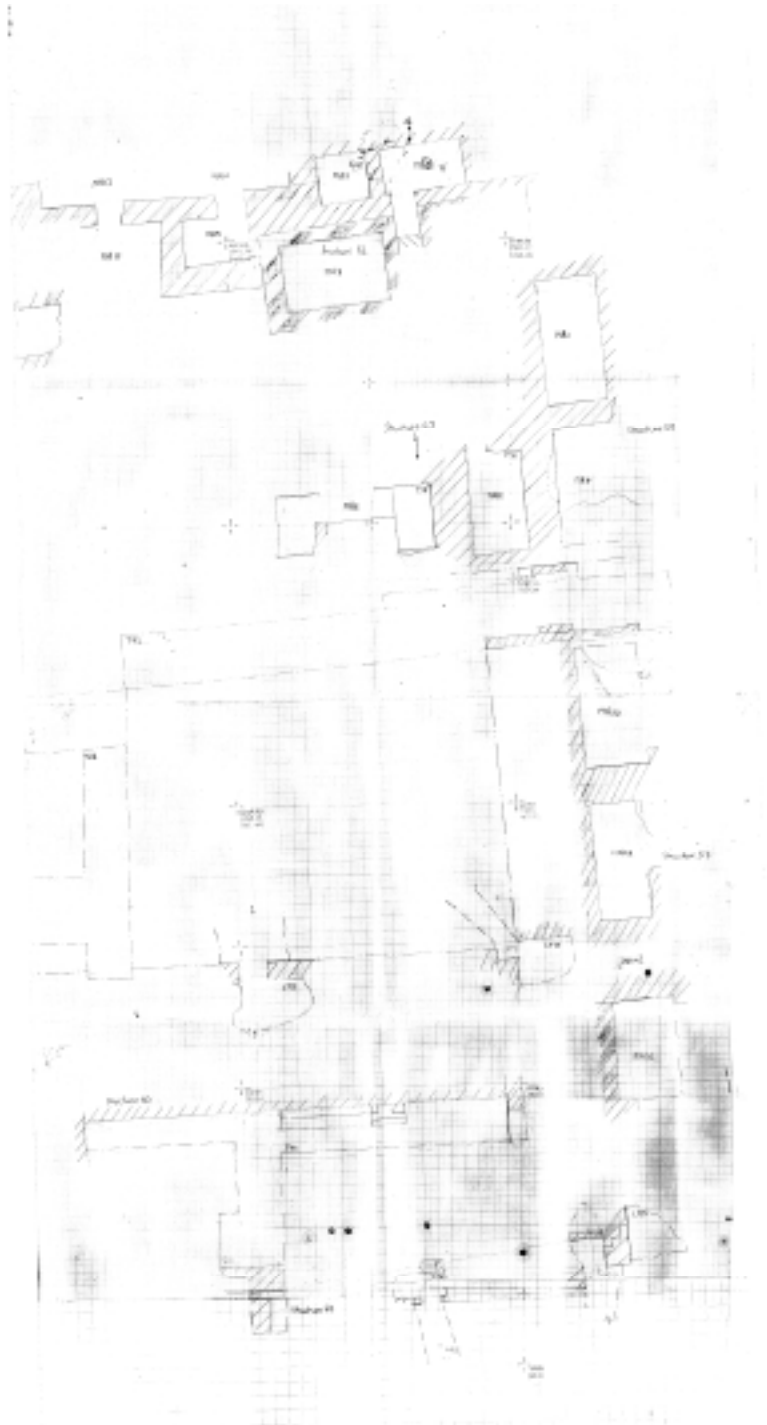


Figure 1. Preliminary plan of eastern half of Group III, C. Hewitson.



Figure 2. Preliminary plan of western half of Group III, C.Hewitson.

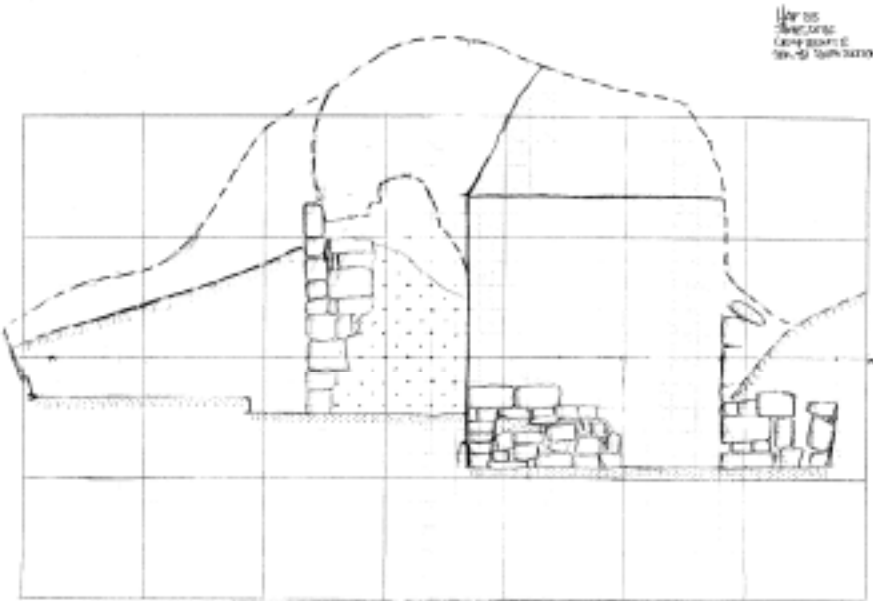


Figure 3 South profile of Str. 43, James Doyle.

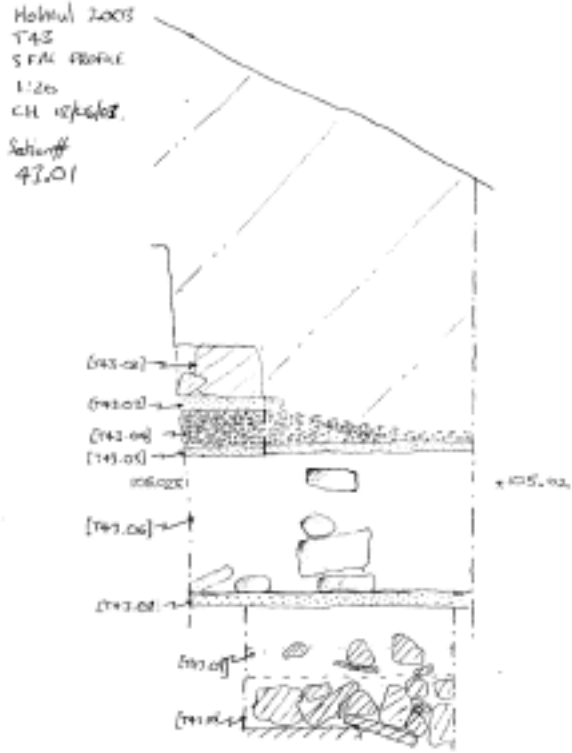


Figure 4 North Profile of HT43 in Str. 43, C. Hewitson

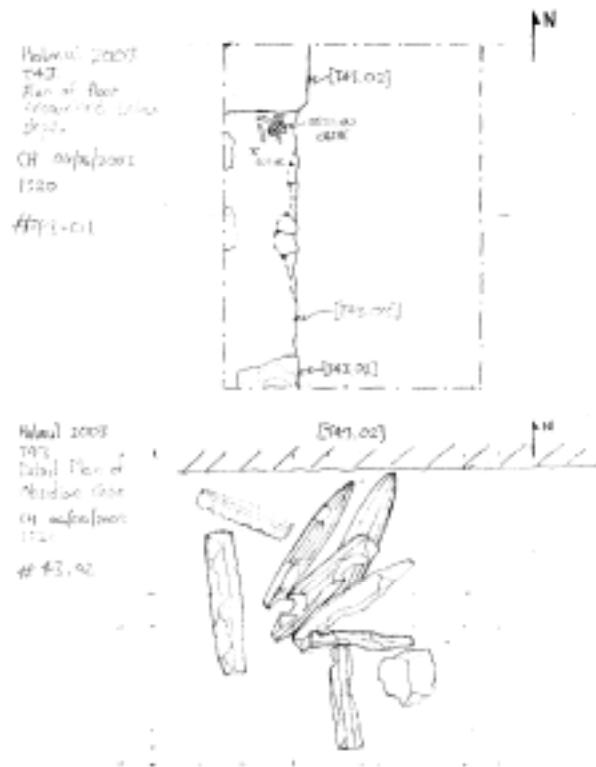


Figure 5. Plans of obsidian cores cache in HT43.

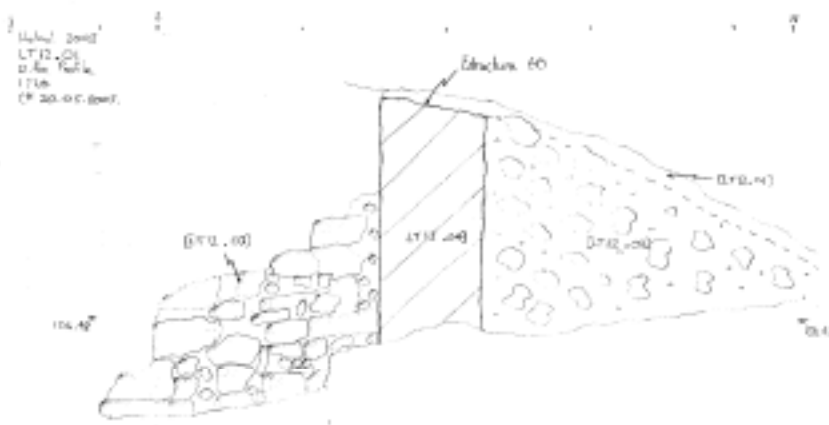


Figure 6. East profile of Str. 60



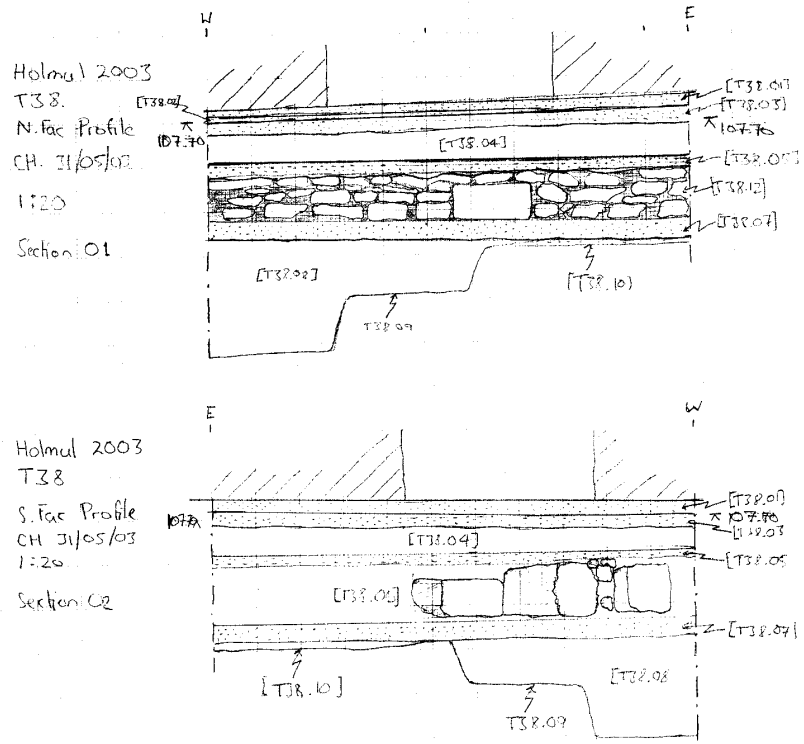


Figure 7. North and South profiles of HT38 test pit in east room of Str. 43.

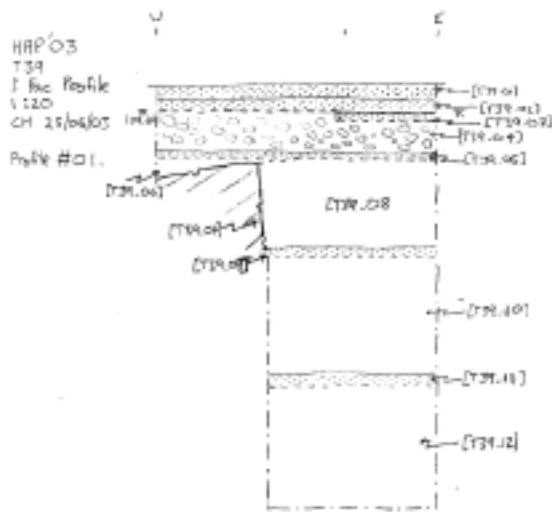


Figure 8. North Profile of HT39 test pit in plaza in front of stairway of Str. 1

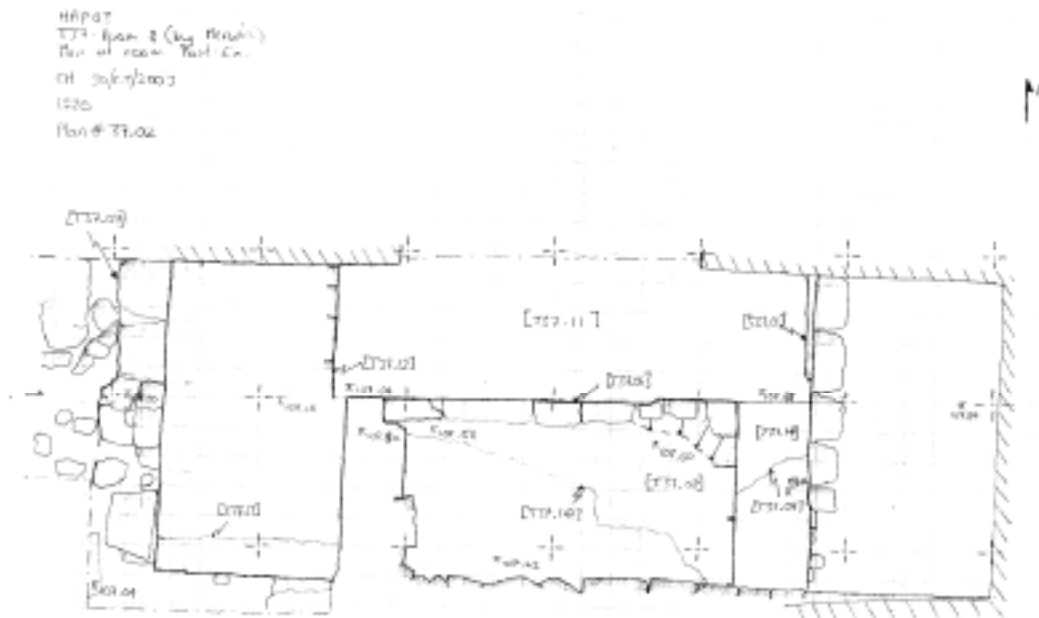


Figure 9. Plan of HT37 in Room 8 building, Group III.

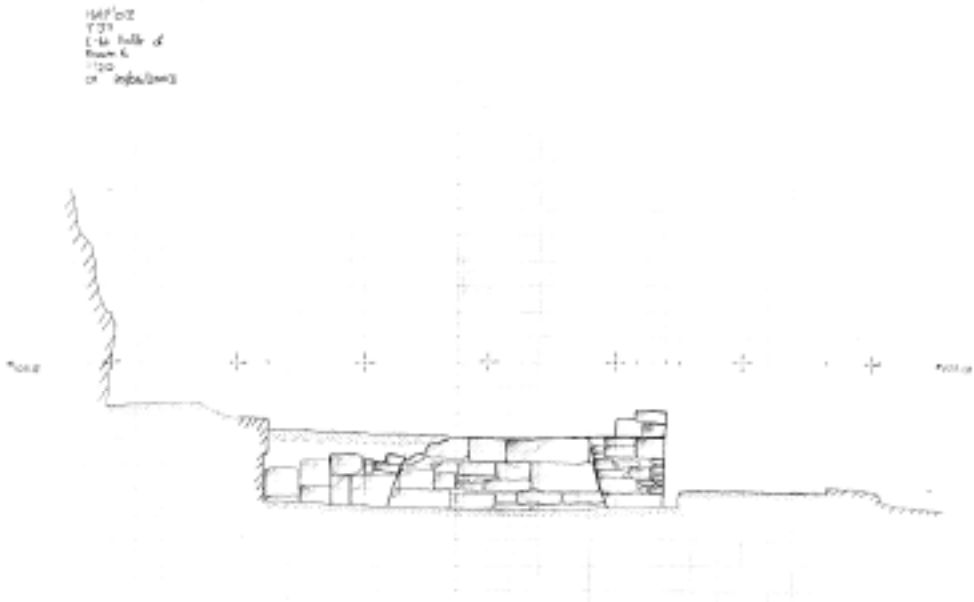
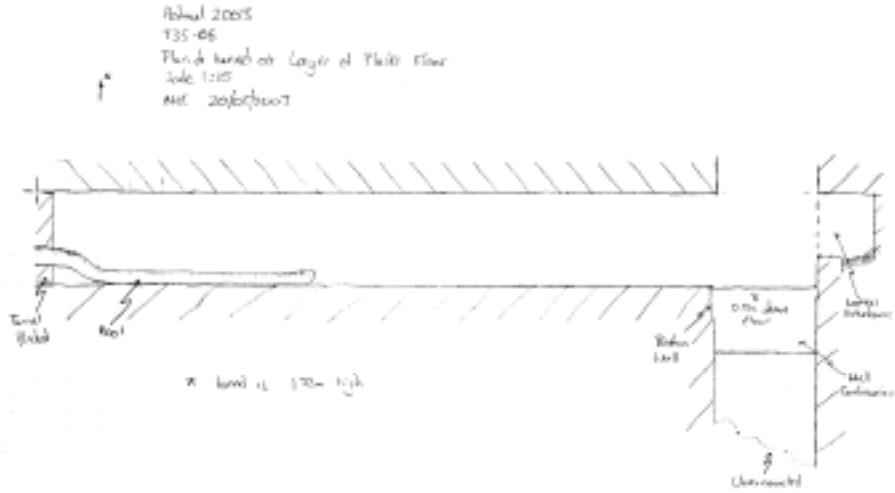


Figure 10. South profile of HT37 in R. E. Merwin's Room 6, Group III



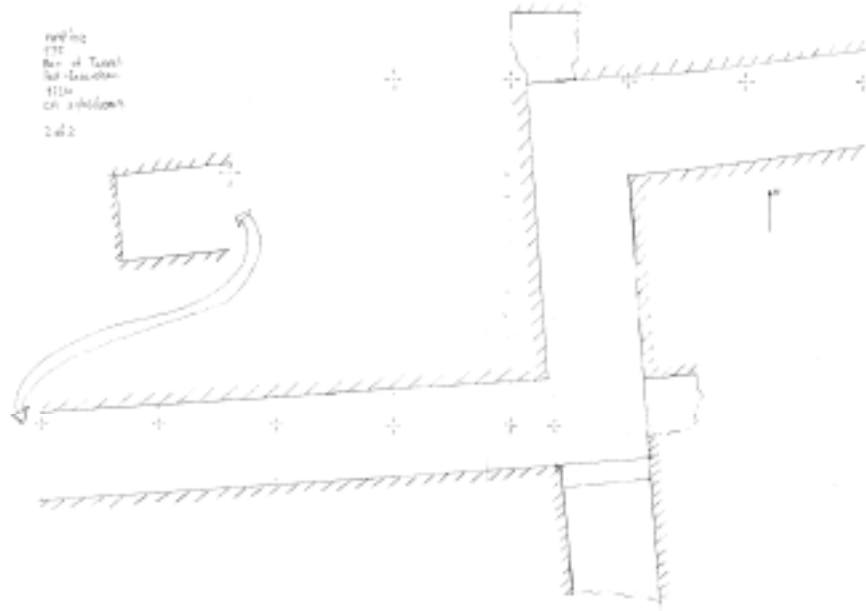


Figure 11. Plan of vaulted passage under Str. 43.

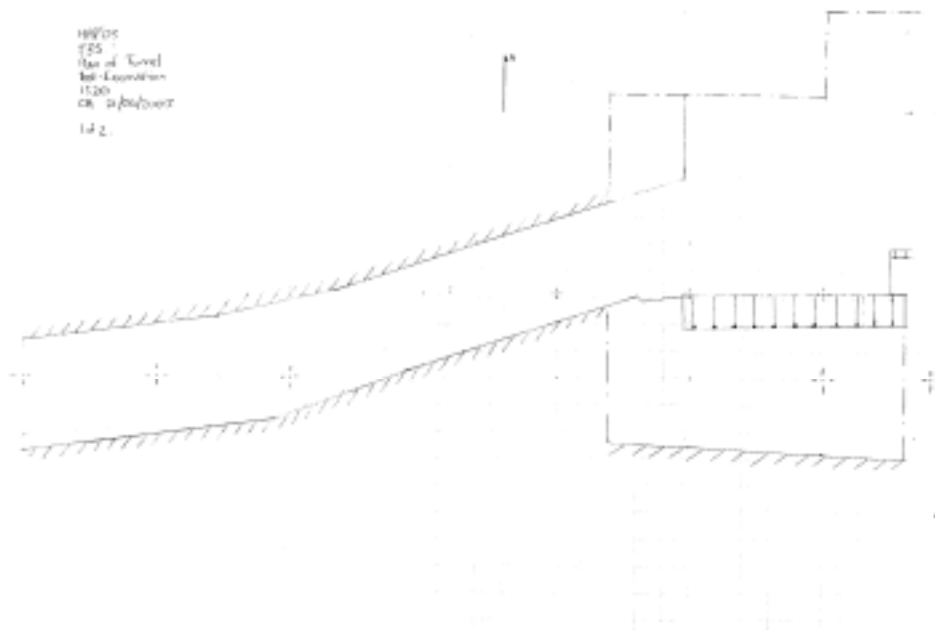
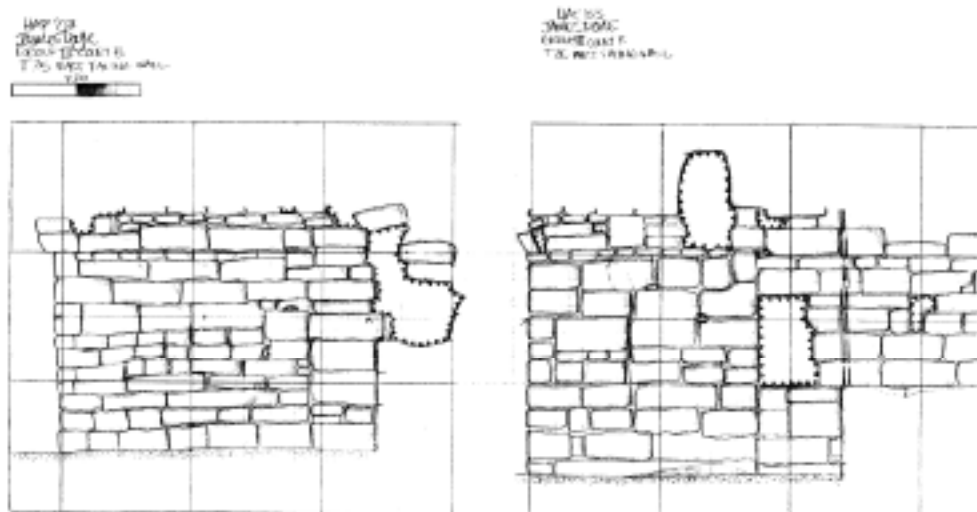


Figure 12. Plan of entrance of vaulted passage under Str. 43.



Figure 13. Profile of South wall of vaulted passage under Str. 43 (HT 36).



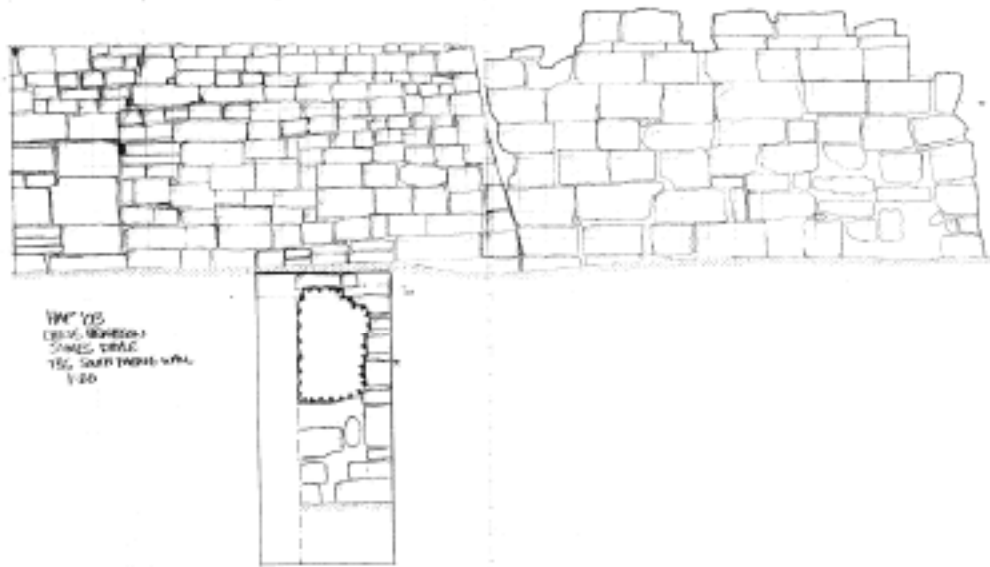
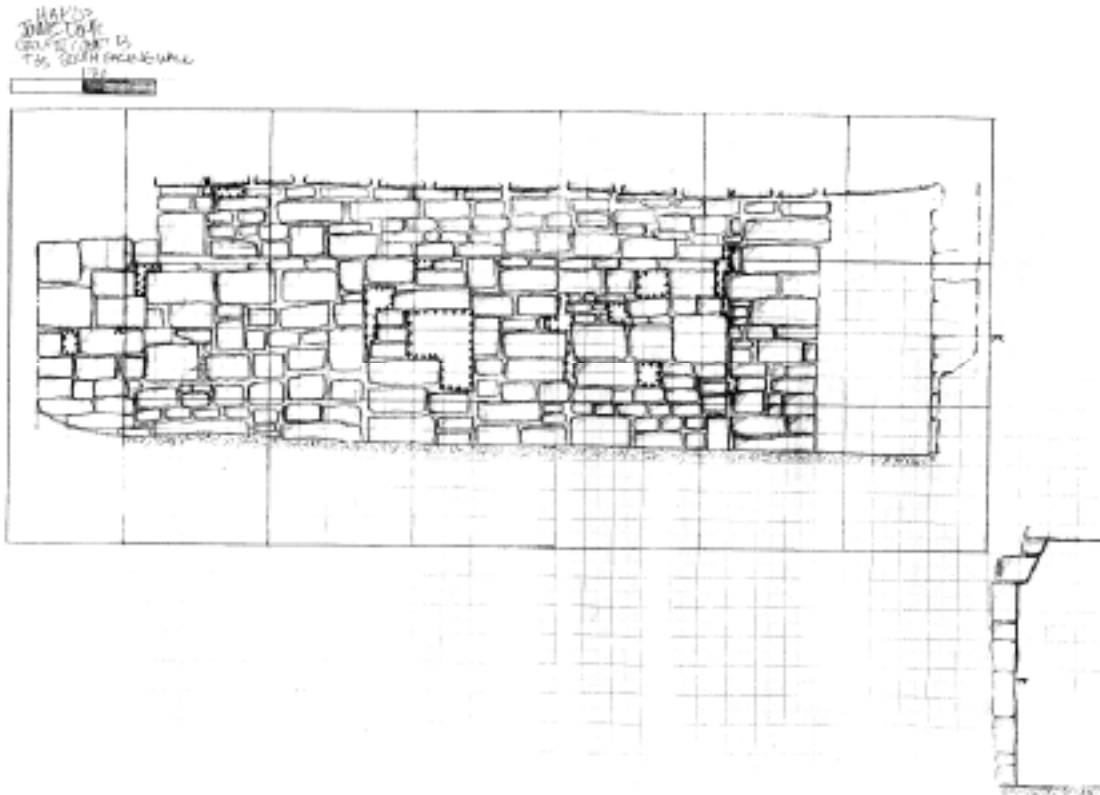


Figure 14. Profiles of wall of vaulted passage under Str. 43 (HT35).



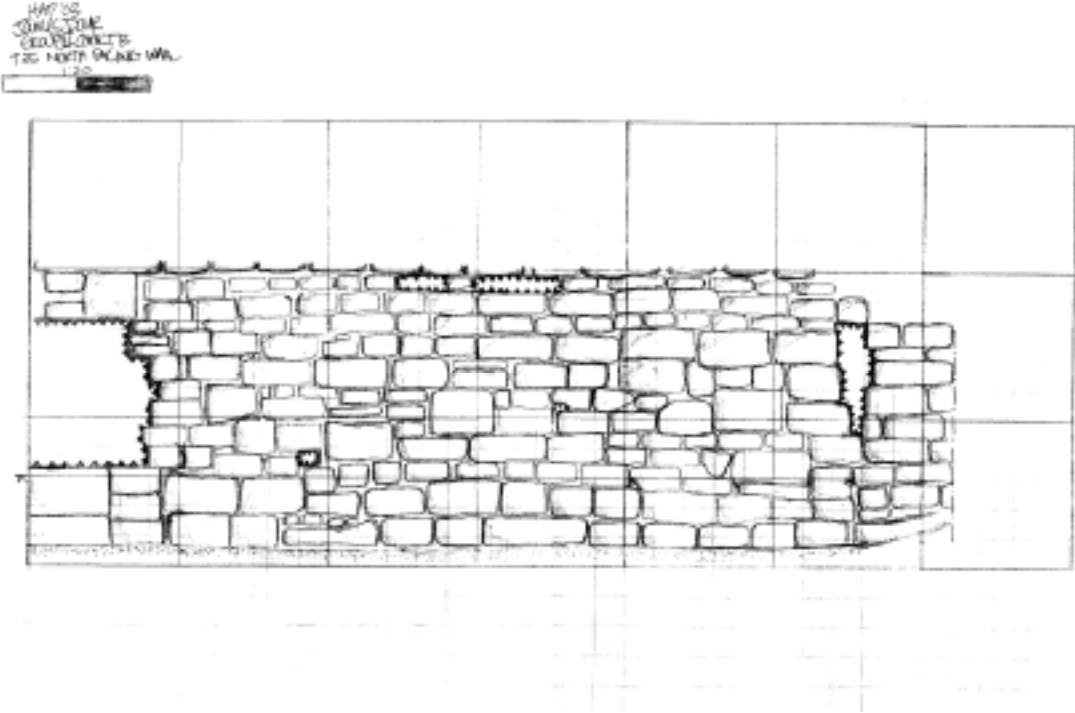


Figure 15. Profiles of walls in vaulted passage under Str. 43.

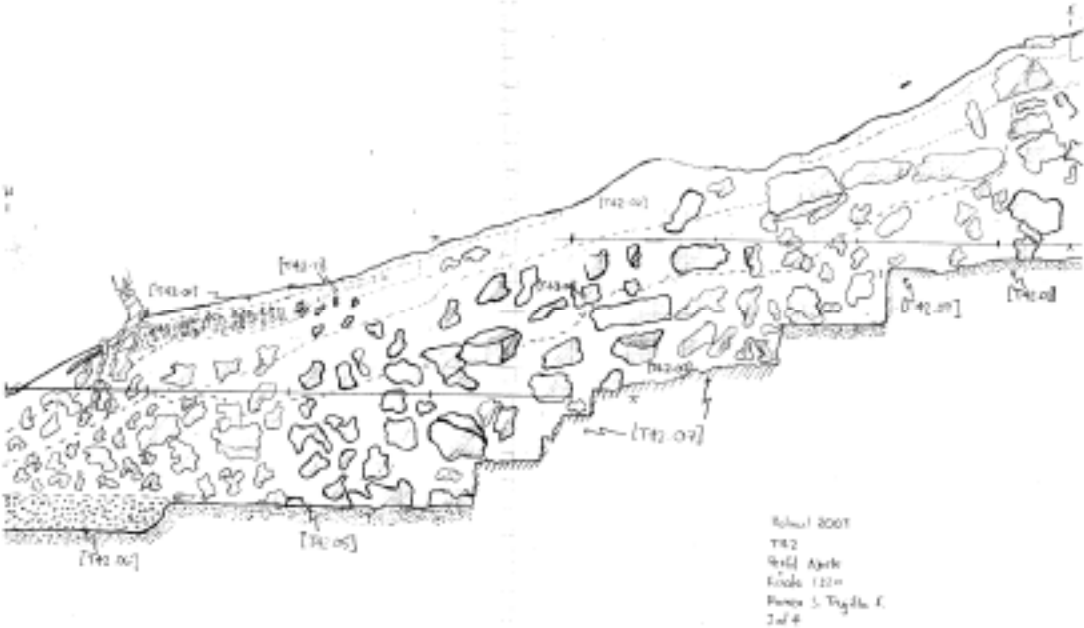


Figure 16. North profile of HT42, stairway into courtyard B.

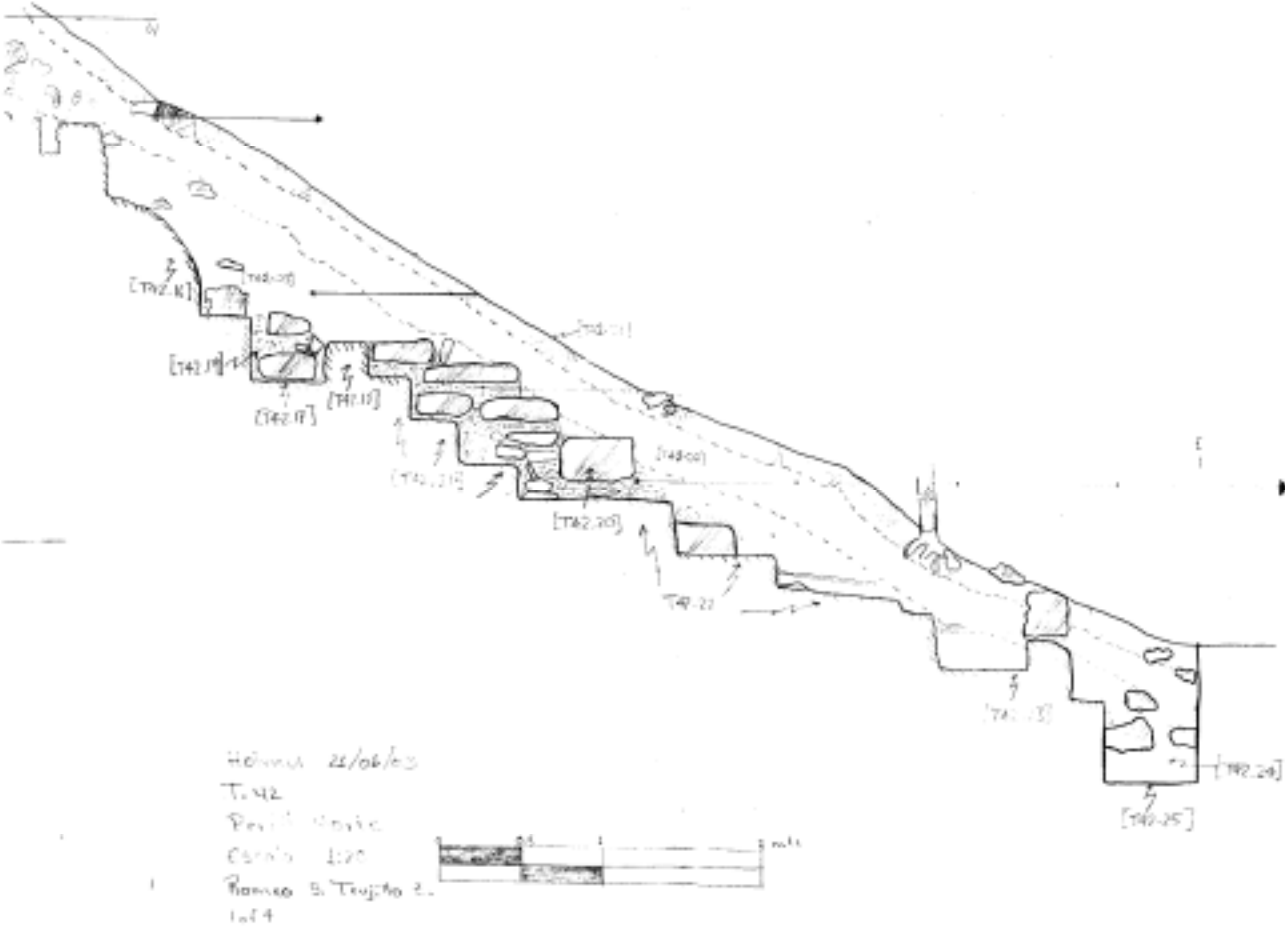


Figure 17. North profile of HT42, stairway leading to Court B from Main Plaza.



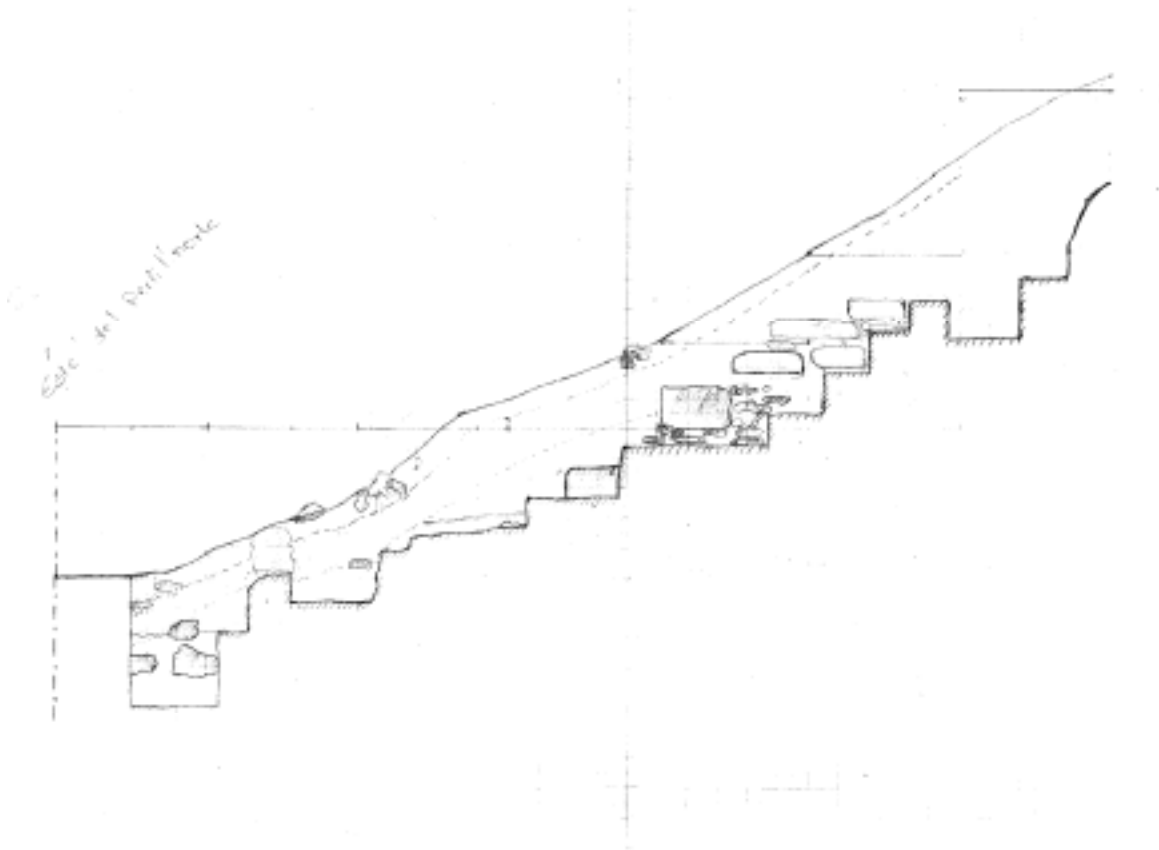


Figure 18. South profile of HT42, stairway leading to Court B from Main Plaza.



Figure 19. South profile of HT42, upper structure on stairway leading to Court B from Main plaza.

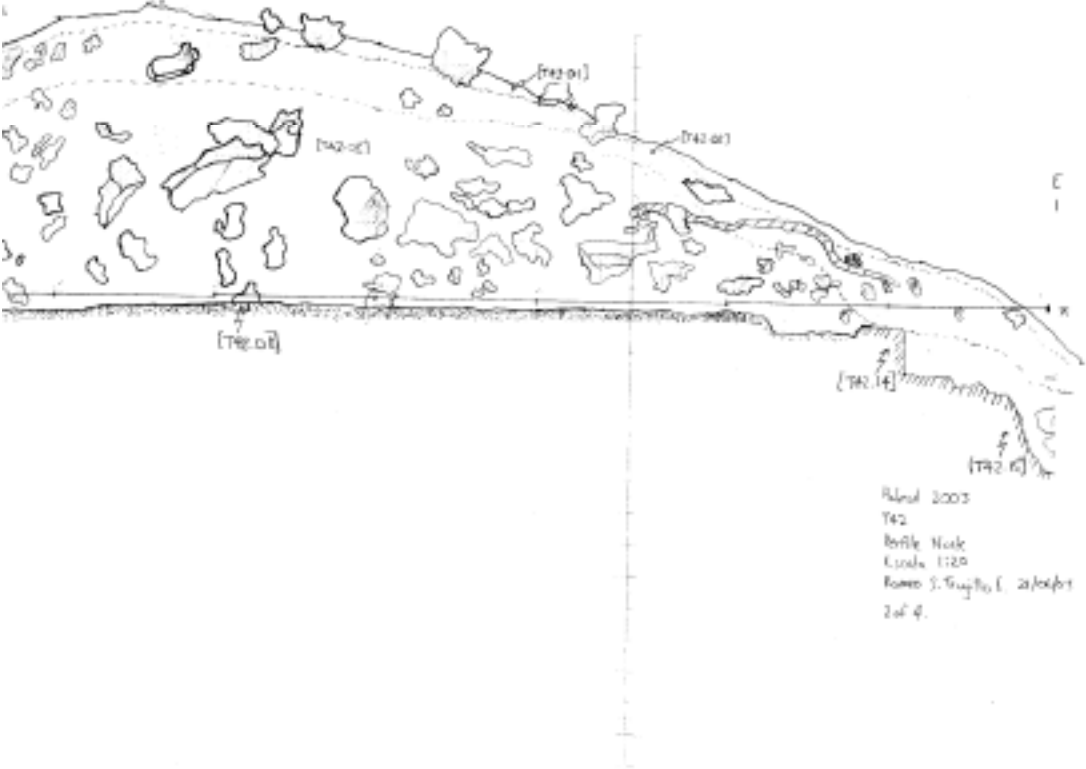


Figure 20. North profile of HT42, upper structure on stairway leading to Court B from Main Plaza.

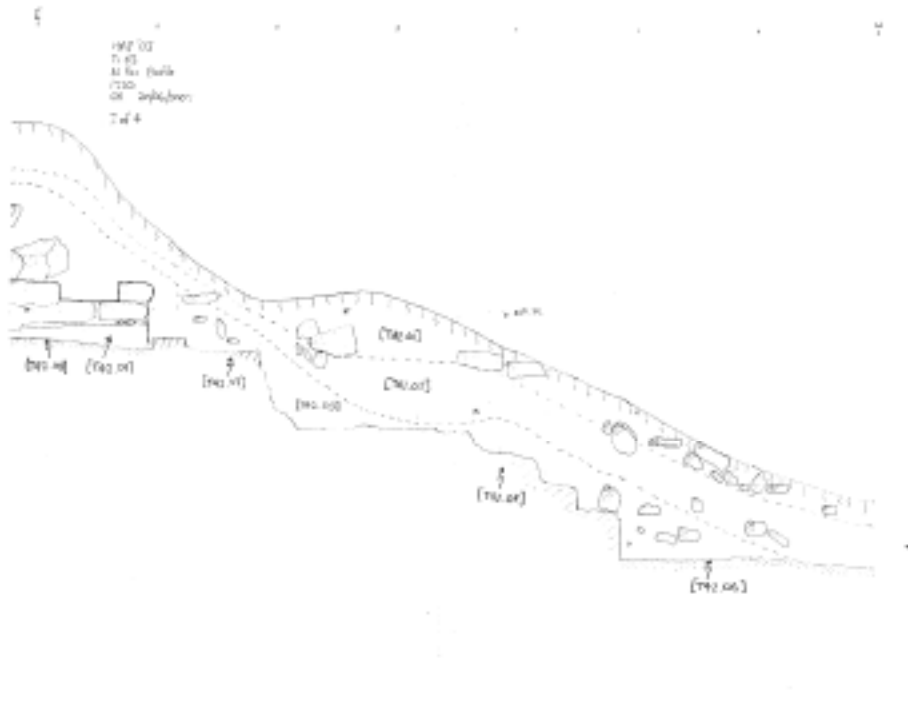


Figure 21. South profile of HT42 (courtyard section), stairs leading into courtyard.

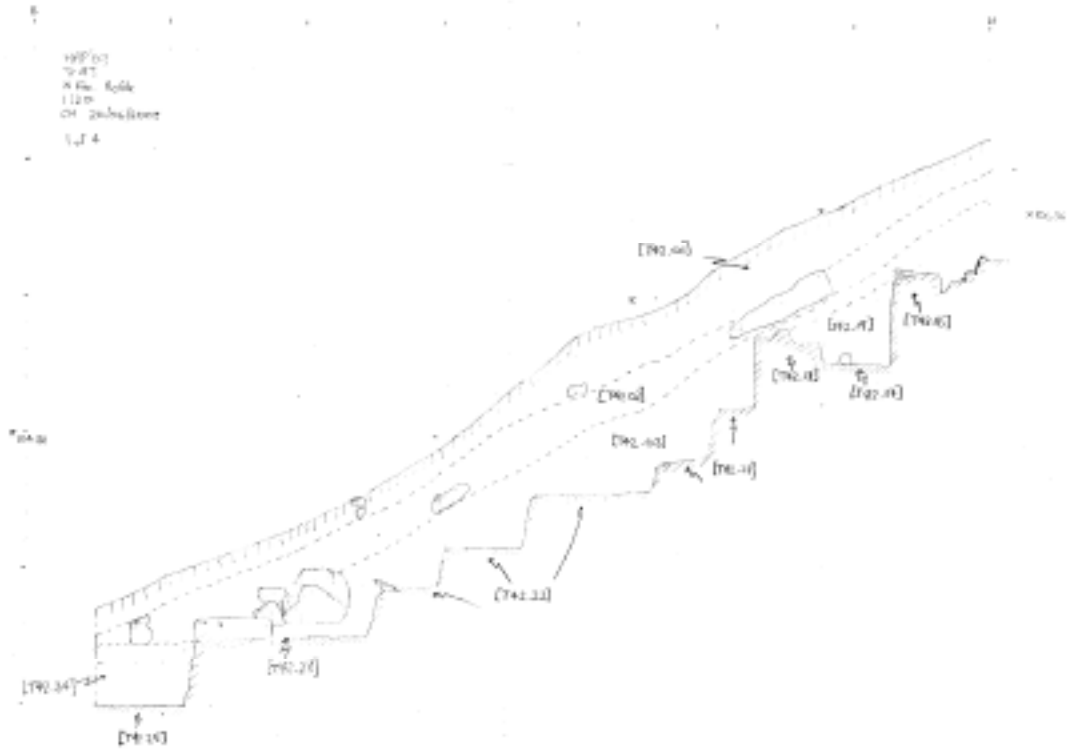


Figure 22. South profile of HT42 (plaza section), stairs leading to Court B.

