

HOLMUL 2003 REPORTS PART 2

Group II, Building B, Excavation HT41

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Holmul Archaeological Project 2003

Introduction

The excavation HT41 investigated the construction fill of Room 1, the southernmost room of Building B, on top of the acropolis Group II. This building was excavated extensively by Raymond Merwin, who conducted investigations at Holmul in 1909-1911. His findings are reported in a posthumous monograph authored by him and George Vaillant (Merwin and Vaillant 1932). Building B, Group II was of particular interest to Merwin because it revealed a high number of burials, 17, which included many complete ceramic vessels that he used to create his ceramic chronology of the site. The building has been of particular interest to scholars of the ancient Maya because it revealed several burials from the Protoclassic period. This period occurs in the transition from the Pre-classic to Classic periods and is defined primarily as a ceramic facet which has been argued to exist primarily in burial contexts. Intriguingly, this building is one of few examples of the Protoclassic ceramic phase excavated archaeologically. Mayanists have yet to define exactly why these ceramics first appeared in this area, and its relationship with the Cimi phase at Tikal and Tzakol 1 at Uaxactun. The primary goal of this excavation was to determine the dates of the Protoclassic tombs found by Merwin.

The initial investigations included sweeping the tombs excavated by Merwin in hopes of finding some human skeletal remains that could be dated using the radiocarbon method. Therefore, the backfill left by Merwin was removed to screen for skeletal material. Serendipitously, the excavation uncovered a previously unknown Protoclassic cyst-type burial, providing a new example of the ceramic sphere and ample skeletal material for radiocarbon dating.

Discussion and Stratigraphy

The examination of Building B, Group II, was initially undertaken by Donna Yates, and completed by the author. Donna began by sweeping the floors of the tombs found by Merwin, hoping to reveal some remaining fragments of human skeletal material. Unfortunately, the tombs had been thoroughly emptied when Merwin excavated them. She then began to investigate the area in front of (west) Room 1. Merwin removed the final floor of this room across three quarters of its surface, revealing an earlier plaster floor, he then backfilled this area with the removed building material. Donna opened excavation HT41, which consisted of a trench into this backfill (HT41.01/04) left by the earlier excavations conducted by Merwin. Beneath the backfill she located the earlier floor and noted a cut into it on the central axis of the building, also filled with the earlier archaeologist's backfill. At the base of the backfill left by Merwin was a tin can, presumably left there to identify the extent of his excavations, which rested upon two large cut-stone rectangular slabs. These slabs were removed, revealing the interior of a cyst-type burial, lined with roughly cut blocks and capped by four rectangular blocks which were supported by large upright rectangular blocks placed intermittently within the stone lining. The human remains, Burial 10, HT41.11, were placed in an extended supine position on a east-west axis with the head towards the east, then the body was covered with dirt (HT41.06/08) and the grave filled before placing the capstones over the grave. Donna Yates removed three of the four capstones and the majority of the grave fill, except in the western end over the feet, and discovered a ceramic vessel, Mammiform Tetrapod (HT41.10.02.01) of the Protoclassic period. She then left the project. The excavation was completed by the author. I excavated the grave fill, the Protoclassic vessel, the skeletal remains, and cleaned the base of the grave before closing the excavation.

Conclusion

The earliest context encountered in HT41 is the plaster/mortar base of the grave. This layer was placed in the interior of the building while it was being constructed. Then the stones (HT41.13) lining the grave were placed around the plaster/mortar base, held upright by the surrounding construction fill. Then the human remains (Burial 10, HT41.11) were placed in an extended supine position with the head towards the east. The deceased individual was wearing a necklace including one tubular asymmetrical bead made of jade (HT41.10.06.01) during interment. Then an offering of an unidentified animal bone and an object of perishable material covered in plaster and painted green was placed over the individuals thighs (HT41.09). The Mammiform Tetrapod vessel (HT41.10.02.01) was then placed inverted over these offerings on top of the thighs. A fill containing a high concentration of charcoal was then placed over the body. Then the grave was filled with soil containing some potsherds and other cultural material (HT41.06/08, see site notebook for minor distinction). Finally, the grave was covered by four rectangular cap stones. The entire grave was surrounded and buried by construction fill. Above approximately 20 cm of construction fill a plaster floor was laid across the area, which also serves as the base for the tomb of Room 8, excavated by Merwin. This floor was later covered by another 40 cm of construction fill and covered again by a plaster floor, the final floor of the building's Room 1. In 1911 Merwin made a cut into the floor removing the floor and its fill, from 2 meters south of the western wall of Room 1 to the eastern wall, revealing the earlier floor (HT41.05). Merwin then made a second cut into this floor at the central axis of the building, revealing the three southernmost capstones of the grave of Burial 10. The final event in this stratigraphy was the filling of both these cuts with backfill (HT41.01/04) by Merwin.

REFERENCES:

Merwin, Raymond E. & George Vaillant
1932. *The Ruins of Holmul*. Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. III no. 2. Cambridge: Harvard University

FIGURES

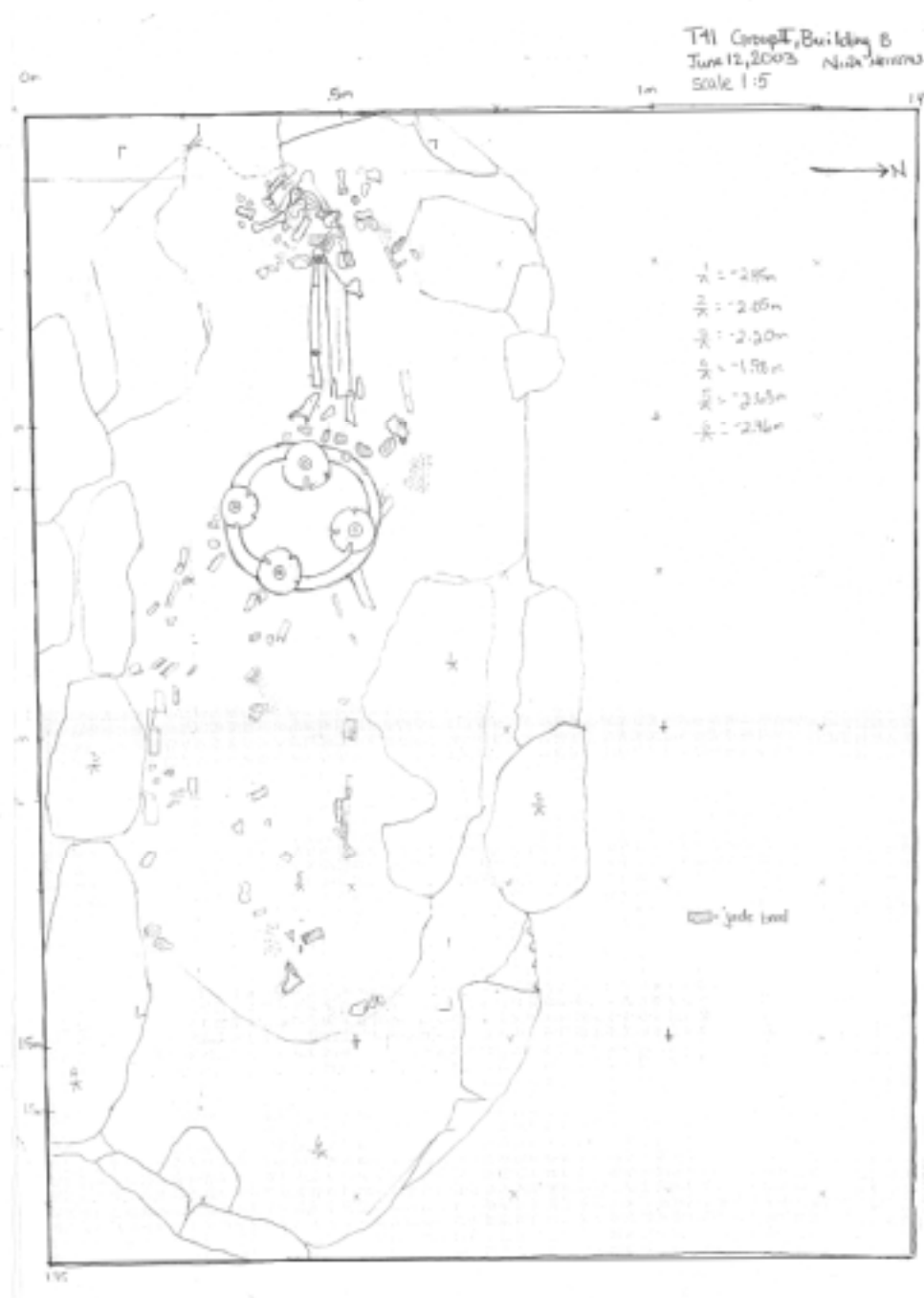


Figure 1. Plan of Burial 10 in Building B, Group II (drawing: Nina Neivens).

Archaeological Investigations at South Group 1: The 2003 Field Season Results

Justin Ebersole

One facet of the Holmul Archaeological Project (HAP) has been the investigation of South Group 1 and its associations with the site center of Holmul. Excavations initiated last year within the group were continued this year and expanded upon. The objective was to elicit further data about the plaza group and the Maya who lived there: their daily lives, their relations with Holmul proper, and eventually their demographics (as assessed through burial remains). To do this, Trench 28 (T28) was reopened and expanded and new trenches (30, 31, 33, 34, and 45) were excavated by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderón, Justin Ebersole, and Antoline Vasquez. These trenches will be described and preliminary analyses discussed in the following report.

South Group 1

At the basis of this investigation are the mounds of South Group 1. This small site is a cardinaly oriented plaza group located at approximately one kilometer from the site center of Holmul and just west of the south transect datum line. The group contains six main mounds, all less than three meters in height, laid out along the sides of the plaza. Within the barely 30-meter wide plaza are several additional low mounds and a chultun. The entire site was erected on a low hill of limestone bedrock covered by a shallow soil layer. The mounds rest on top of a main basal platform whose truncated surface forms the plaza foundation. A visual investigation of the basal mound suggests that the eastern side was built up to level out the hill for use as a living area. The plaza then fades almost imperceptibly into the western half of the natural hill. In addition to having been shaped by human intervention, the eastern side also appears to have served as the formal entrance into the plaza. This is arguable on the basis of two stelae: one at approximately ten meters from the basal mound's edge and the other directly east at nearly another ten meters. If this is the formal entrance, then steps may be present beneath the surface on either side of Structure 3 (Str. 3), or this structure may itself have been a stairway. Whatever the case, this probable entrance would direct a visitor to face west towards Structures 5 and 6, while being flanked on either side by low range structures. To the north lies Structures 1 and 2 and to the south Structure 4. The focus of the 2003 excavations were directed towards Str. 1, Str. 5, and the low mounds within the plaza.

Trench 30 of Structure 1

Structure 1 was the subject of intensive excavations by Justin Ebersole during the 2002 field season. At that time Trenches 28 and 29 were opened. This year, a new trench, T30, was initiated to the immediate west of T28. It resulted in a rolling excavation that expanded northward (1.5 by 3.5-meters) and westward (2.65 by 2-meters and 3.20 by 2-meters) from the initial 4 by 4-meter trench. The natural strata overlaying Str. 1 here were the same as those exposed in T28 and thus excavation proceeded rapidly. Members of the team utilized trowels, picks, and shovels for soil removal and sifted 100% of the material through ¼ inch screens. All excavations proceeded by using the existing stratigraphy without the need for arbitrary layers.

The result of this work was the exposure of two more rooms (numbers 2 and 3) within the structure, as well as uncovering more of the front terrace, the southwest corner of the building, the western facade, and portions of the front or eastern facade of Str. 6 (see Figure 1 for a general plan of Structure 1).

Room 2

Room 2 is a slightly skewed 3-meter (E/W) by 2.5-meter (N/S) centrally located living space (see Figure 2 for a photo and Figure 1 for the plan drawing). Entered from the south by a 1.16-meter wide threshold, it was the largest of the three rooms. Its floor was plastered and smooth but not perfectly level. Above it, the investigators encountered context 22--a 4 to 24-cm thick layer comprised of very loose, dark-grayish brown silt believed to represent an ash deposit consistent with a living surface. This deposit contained the majority of artifacts and ecofacts found, as well as the greatest diversity of such. This diversity included two chert celts, worked conch shell items, animal bones, painted sherds, utilitarian sherds, obsidian nodules, and charcoal. Moreover, once the layer was removed, it was evident that the floor was penetrated by five cuts (numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7) along the northern and eastern walls. Three of these cuts were investigated. Of the three, two contained human interments. These will be discussed in turn.

Room 3

Immediately west of Room 2 and partitioned by a 52-cm wide wall, Room 3 was the final and smallest chamber in the structure (see Figure 3 for a photo and Figure 1 for the plan view). Excavators removed nearly two thirds of its contents to reveal a rectangular room 1.45-meters (E/W) by ~2.5-meters (N/S). Room 3 was entered via a 68-cm wide door built in the partitioning wall. It was adjacent to the front wall of the building. The threshold is also a step above the actual plaster floors of the two chambers. A second door was further added to this last room. The door was an obvious later addition that was literally punched out of the western wall. It has a width of 64-cm and a thickness of about 68-cm. The threshold is not level and slopes upwards towards the outside of the wall. Beyond this door, a small midden was encountered. It is of note because an entire whitetail deer antler measuring 21-cm in length was found within this context (#30). Room 3 also contained a visible floor cut averaging 80 by 86-cm. Due to time constraints and the suspicion that more human remains lay within, it was deemed unfeasible to attempt an excavation this season. As for the artifacts recovered here, utilitarian ceramics constituted the majority of finds followed by debitage. More importantly, perhaps, a spindle whorl was recovered. Once again, the artifacts were principally removed from context 22 immediately above the flooring.

Structure 6

This mound located just west of Structure 1 intrigued excavators because of its close proximity. Therefore, T30 was extended further in order to catch part of the eastern face of Str. 6 and to ascertain its construction style. The east wall was finally encountered 76-cm beyond Str. 1. A doorway was also exposed. It too had a raised threshold just like the other known doorways. Moreover, the limestone apron around the wall's base is also the same style as that of Str. 1. The last interesting find was the terrace corner. The terrace reaches out 67-cm in front of the door and rises 42-cm above the bedrock of the plaza floor (see Figure 1). The same plaster terrace also formed a narrow alleyway between Structures 1 and 6, suggesting that either a close relationship existed between the inhabitants of the building or that the same people occupied both.

The Interments

Burial 9

Initial excavations down to the floor of Room 2 uncovered a subcircular anomaly in the plaster of the southeastern corner. The floor here was noticeably softer, with roots penetrating it. Excavators immediately recognized it as a floor cut (#2) and began to remove the deposit from the 64-cm (E/W) by 56-cm (N/S) feature. At approximately 28.5-cm below the floor level or 196-cm below datum, the remains of an adult human male were located thereby confirming speculations that this was indeed a burial cut (see Figure 4 for a photo and Figure 5 for the plan view drawing). Fortunately, the level of preservation was better than expected despite the natural destruction of the cranium and pelvis. The bones remained largely articulated. As a result of this, it was assessed that the individual was interred intact, on his left side, and in a flexed position. His head pointed westward while his face gazed northward. From the mandible and adjacent area, many teeth were recovered. Several of the teeth were incisors displaying the characteristic shovel-shaped lingual surface common to Native Americans. Two of these incisors were also modified by human means. One of the two, a central upper incisor, revealed a modification that suggests that the individual had his two central upper incisors filed to form a T-shape. This was perhaps an attempt to mimick the T-shaped tooth of the sun god Kinich Ahau. Based on this, it appears reasonable to assume that this Maya was a person of considerable standing within his social sphere. There were not, however, any mortuary items to support further claims, though a fragment of carved bone was associated with the stratum. After the removal of the bones, the rest of the deposit was excavated down to an earlier plaster floor layer (Context 21) at 224-cm below datum or 66-cm below the upper floor. In total, the burial resided within an 18-cm thick layer of soil (Context 20).

Burial 14

The second burial to be removed from Room 2 was number 14 (see Figure 6 for the photo and Figure 7 for a plan view). It was located in the northwest corner. Originally, this cut was labeled #4 and contained large sections of an olla rim and body within the fragmented and soft plaster that once capped the burial (see Figure 8). As before, it was this difference in plaster along with the presence of root penetration and large cobbles that enabled investigators to easily recognize the feature. The cut was given the Context #32. The fill within the 94-cm (E/W) by 80-cm (N/S) feature was excavated as Context #33. The first bone material to be encountered emerged at a depth of 209-cm below datum or 24-cm below the floor. As with Burial 9 this individual was found rather well preserved, largely articulated, and lying in a flexed position on his/her right side. The remains revealed that this person was also laid to rest with his/her head to the west. This time, however, the face looked south. Despite the differing position of the face, the burial

was altogether strikingly similar. The preservation was also nearly the same, for in both cases the crania and pelvises were destroyed by collapse. Both individuals were flexed and laid such that their spines were adjacent to the walls and their faces gazed into Room 2. They both lacked definitive grave goods. And lastly, they were both buried after Structure 1 Phase II was completed. It is further thought that Burial 14 represents an adult male based on the protrusion of the chin. The last of these bones came out at a depth of 223-cm below datum or 38-cm below the floor. Once again excavations continued down to the earlier stucco floor (Context 34 in this cut), which is the same floor found in cut 2 (Context 21), and then proceeded further down to sterile bedrock.

Feature 3

Feature #3 came to light when an extension trench was added in order to verify the location of the back wall of Str. 1. Once located, this feature, which was recognized as a floor cut (Context 23) was excavated in the belief that it too would contain a burial. Oddly, human remains were never found in the fill (Context 24). What was found was the stucco floor of the earliest phase of Str. 1's construction as well as an apparent posthole (Context 26). The posthole was carved directly into the bedrock (see Figure 9 for a plan view and profile). Both of these features are at a depth of 230-cm below datum or 66-cm below the floor of Room 2. The plaster floor (Context 27) extends a further 3-cm down and is once again the same as Contexts 21 and 34. The floor abutts against the bedrock containing the 23-cm deep semicircular (21-cm by 20-cm) hole. This discovery proved to be the most definitive evidence for the presence of an earlier phase of construction for Str. 1. It was also possible to speculate that this previous building was constructed with mostly perishable materials, perhaps as a wattle and daub design. Unfortunately, the artifacts associated with it were rather sparse and may limit temporal dating. To alleviate this problem, a soil sample was taken of the deposit (Context 25) just below the floor and within the hole. A radio carbon analysis should be possible as this layer contains ash.

Trench 28

One of the last objectives remaining after the completion of T30 and the exposure of the western portion of Str. 1 was to uncover the rest of the eastern front facade. In order to do this, T28 had to be reopened, cleaned, and then extended eastward via a 2 by 3-meter unit (see Figure 1). The excavators followed the terrace and front wall seeking a terminus. In so doing it was soon ascertained that the terrace continues onward connecting up with Str. 2. Here, it serves the same function of a basal platform. More importantly, the southeastern corner of Str. 1 was located thereby enabling an accurate measure of the length of the building: 10.40 meters (see Figure 10). In the process of seeking this information, two mano fragments and two complete obsidian blades were recovered from context 3 above the terrace. The majority of other artifacts found included the prevalent utilitarian ceramic sherds, many of which came from Context 3 just above the plaza surface.

Conclusion: Structure 1 Reappraised

After two seasons of investigation at Str. 1, excavators have been able to provide a detailed description of the structure as well as a concise history. Of equal importance, it has been possible to significantly revise previous notions about Str. 1.

In terms of the history of the edifice, two construction phases are now known. Both date to the Late Classic. In Phase I the building was erected directly on limestone bedrock. From Trench 30, Floor Cut 3 evidence in the form of an apparent posthole suggests that the Phase I version had pole walls. These walls were possibly a wattle and daub construction style supporting a thatched roof. Inside, the Maya laid a layer of plaster directly over bedrock to form a leveled living surface. The dimensions of this first building are undetermined, but the flooring does extend from Floor Cut 1 in Room 1 to Floor Cut 4 in Room 2.

The structure that remains today represents the Phase II construction completed during the Late Classic. To build this final phase, the Maya retained the Phase I flooring as a foundation. On and around this the front terrace and major load bearing walls were erected. They then commenced to place varying depths of dirt and rubble fill as a core for the new structure's basal platform and internal flooring. The inside fill reached a final depth of approximately 60-cm before a 4 to 6-cm thick plaster floor surface was installed. With the floor in place, the major external walls could be continued upwards to form a vault. At the same time, two interior walls were raised to provide support for the heavy vault and also to delineate three chambers. The end result of this second phase of construction was a 10.40-meter long by ~3.64-meter wide box-like building complete with two doorways and a front terrace.

Within the building, the Maya had established their three rooms for daily usage. The first room on the eastern side has an estimated length of 3.28-meters and a width of 2.54-meters. It was entered through a single doorway 1.39-meters wide. A large bench occupied the majority of this room. It rises 60-cm

above the floor and extends 1.82-meters to the back wall. In front of the bench, nestled within the southwestern corner of the room, the Maya interred human remains. This was discovered in the 2002 field season and labeled as Burial 8. The presence of the burial seems to indicate that this room was for daily human occupation. If the bench is added to this assessment, then there is a real possibility that the room functioned as a sleeping quarters.

The second room exposed by Trench 30 appears to have a very different function from the first. Given its large size, absence of a bench, central placement within the building, and its direct connection to Room 3, it is arguable that Room 2 was the main activity room. Context 22, which was the layer of ashy soil denoting a living surface, supports this. Just what activities occurred cannot be definitively proven but food preparation and cooking are possible because of the discovery of animal bones, utilitarian ceramic wares, and two celts.

Similarly, Room 3 likely had a related function, perhaps as a preparation room or even temporary storage. The ceramics here were all utilitarian. Interestingly, a spindle whorl was removed from Context 3 inside this room. No other weaving paraphernalia were located and so it cannot be suggested that this room functioned solely for such. The fact is, the floor of this chamber was largely devoid of artifacts.

All three chambers unfortunately lacked definitive evidence for any specific activity aside from perhaps sleeping in the first room. But the inability to delineate specific activity areas rather confirms the general-purpose nature of these rooms. Future excavations within adjacent structures may help to solve this question of room usage.

The last issue concerning Str. 1 is its proximity to Str. 6. It appears plausible that Str. 1 served as living quarters for a group of Maya, perhaps a family. It would also seem likely that Str. 6 functioned in the same or very similar manner. This inspires several questions: 1) Did each structure house a single family, extended family, or simply a group of Maya?; 2) If families did indeed occupy these structures, were they related and how, or did a single family occupy both units?; and 3) What kinds of relations can be surmised as existing between the Maya living in Structures 2 through 5 if these also are verified as living units? Once again, future excavations will need to address these issues. In the mean time, excavators are confident that Structures 1 and 6 were likely affiliated units, especially since they shared the same terrace and had doorways approximately 5 meters apart from one another.

Trench 31

The second major unit opened during the 2003 season was T31. Under the supervision of Antolin Vasquez, this trench was centrally located in the southern portion of the plaza. T31 was a 4-meter (N/S) by 3-meter (E/W) trench laid out over a low mound. Excavators agreed that the barely one-meter tall mound warranted investigation because of its odd position within the plaza, its adjacency to the much larger Str. 5, and the presence of many rocks upon its surface. These traits combined led to the suspicion that the mound might represent a Terminal Classic reoccupation of South Group 1.

As excavations commenced it soon became evident that this mound was not commensurate in form with Str. 1. The architecture was noticeably different. At approximately 10-cm below ground level two walls were located. These walls demarcated the southern side of a house and proved to be more crudely constructed than Str. 1. The walls still exhibited the general tendency towards cardinal orientation, but unlike Str. 1 each displayed a greater degree of error in direction. Moreover, the walls of this newly discovered room had a doorway set in the southeastern corner rather than being centrally located, with respect to the room, as seen elsewhere on site. The doorway was also awkwardly narrow at 44-cm wide. An additional difference was the fact that the plaster floors were quite thin, barely 3-cm thick. All of these attributes suggested a rather shoddy structure comprised of a low foundation wall supporting some type of perishable superstructure (see Figure 11 for a general photo and Figure 12 for a general plan view).

Further work just south of the walls revealed that the structure was set on top of multiple construction layers used to level the contoured bedrock basement (see Figure 13 for a profile of the layers). A total of four layers of leveling fill were noticed below the plaster flooring. These strata were not excavated but merely observed in profile from a cut. At the base of the cut, where the fill meets the bedrock, the Maya established a small midden. They exploited a natural depression in the bedrock to dispose of ash, carbonized material, ceramics, and debitage (include burned debitage).

Additional discoveries in T31 included a probable wall along the eastern edge of the unit. This two-meter long row of limestone blocks terminated in a well-dressed, 40 by 50-cm block. This probable wall links up with the remaining plaster floor of the existing room. To the south of the large block excavators encountered three massive chert quadriface tools (the longest is 29 cm). By all appearances, their stacked arrangement suggests that this was a possible cache (see Figure 14). Root disturbance,

however, is also likely.

With the completion of this primary unit, an additional 10.5 by 1-meter test trench was ran northward from the northwestern corner (see Figure 15 for a plan view and Figure 16 for a profile). The intention was to gain a cross-section of the plaza and these mounds so that further architecture could be viewed. The test unit uncovered a total of four more walls and three plaster floor surfaces (see Figure 17 for a general photo). These walls and floors were all contemporaneous and confirmed the presence of at least two adjacent structures. A 40-cm wide alley-way or channel separated them. The walls fronting this channel exhibited considerable care in construction (more so than the first walls in T31) and ran east/west. On either side of the walls were plaster floors. The floor to the north extends about 1.20-meters before terminating in a cut. At the base of this 44-cm deep cut, where fill meets bedrock, excavators uncovered an articulated human foot and lower leg. This became Burial 15. Oddly, no wall bearing east/west exists to the north of the remains to suggest an enclosed room. There is, however, a north/south bearing wall (Context 16) along the east side of the trench. It begins 50 cm beyond the east/west bearing wall (Context 15). This 50-cm gap was identified as another narrow doorway. Unfortunately, the test unit still did not allow for the demarcation of definitive houses, only walls with undetermined associations. The situation was further complicated by the discovery of another find: Burial 12. This interment was positioned adjacent to wall Context 16 at roughly 30-cm above bedrock. A formal burial cut was never identified around the bones.

The last major find was two cubes of soft, white limestone. Each was incised with ~4-cm wide bands such that the stones had the appearance of wrapped presents. The objects, which possibly represent weights, were removed from soil Context 25, where they were found as a pair adjacent to wall Context 16. No floor was associated with the two.

Burials 12 & 15

Evidence of human remains was prevalent throughout T31 and its extension. The initial 4 by 3-meter unit revealed several teeth and many bone fragments within Context 2. The poor condition, high degree of fragmentation, and general scattering of the bone caused excavators to refuse acknowledgment of it as a true burial. The northern extension, on the other hand, proved more conclusive, offering two genuine interments (see Figure 15).

The first to be discovered was Burial 12 at a depth of 1.25-meters below datum or 55-cm below ground level. The poorly preserved remains were adjacent to a well constructed wall (Context 16) built directly on bedrock. The unsexed individual was incomplete and not within a recognizable burial cut (see Figure 18 for a photo and Figures 19 and 20 for plans). Despite this, many bones were identifiable and their positions suggest that the body was still intact when interred. The head of this individual was placed to the south with the spine apparently to the west. Excavators believe, however, that the person may have been buried with his or her face downward based on the position of the mandible and remaining cranial fragments. Lastly, no grave goods were recovered in association with the remains.

The last burial to be observed in the 2003 season at South Group 1 was number 15. Workmen located it at a depth of 1.56-meters below datum or 1.34-meters below ground level. Only a foot and part of the lower leg were observed in the northern extension. They were directly on top of limestone bedrock within Context 25 and may be associated with the apparent cut in the floor, Context 18. Given the bone placement, the body probably lays in an east/west direction with the head to the west. The excavators chose not to further disturb the burial this season because of a lack of time.

Conclusion: T31 in Context

The architectural remains discovered in T31 provide evidence that South Group 1 was subject to a reoccupation by the Maya at some point in the closing years of the Classic Period. This is an important find as it reveals a longer, more complex history concerning the group. If confirmed as a true reoccupation then South Group 1 underwent three major phases of construction. The first two, as revealed in Trenches 28 through 30, likely date to the Late Classic Period. The third, dating to the Terminal Classic, is now hypothesized based on the findings in Trench 31. Ceramic analyses and carbon dating will hopefully support this conclusion. Even without such data, the architectural style, construction methods, and building location hint at some measure of cultural change or at least a deviation from the Maya who originally occupied Str. 1. For example, these structures are comprised of smaller blocks; they lack apron stones around the foundations; and they exhibit more error in orientation towards the cardinal points. Moreover, the buildings were not vaulted. Instead, they likely had walls and roofs of perishable materials set on a stone foundation. The fact that these mounds were also built within an existing plaza group further suggests a reoccupation. These later Maya were, in a sense, squatters who seemingly took advantage of

existing structures by utilizing materials (i.e. blocks) from them to build new homes or by literally reoccupying the abandoned buildings. Both of these behaviors are plausible. In the case of the first, many of the blocks used in the construction of the latest structures are smaller than those found in Str. 1. This is perhaps evidence of recycling building materials. In the second instance, the doorway added to the west wall of Room 3, Str. 1 is not in keeping with the architectural style. It was a later addition and was literally just cut through the wall. Its function was apparently to allow access to a new, small midden deposited in a tumble layer and not on any floor surface. This suggests that enough time elapsed prior to reoccupation and the beginning of the midden to allow for some erosion of Structures 1 and 6.

In essence, then, T31 uncovered structures seemingly inconsistent with the rest of South Group 1. It revealed a wholly unexpected chapter in the history of South Group 1. Excavators hope to further define this history by delineating more of the mounds and verifying the likelihood of this hypothesis of reoccupation by a new group of Maya.

South Group 1 In Perspective

As of the end of the 2003 field season at South Group 1 excavators are growing ever confident of the beneficial knowledge to be gained from these ruins. Future objectives are being modified to better address the questions being generated about the group. It is our objective to excavate every structure within the group. From this, better assessments of the functions and construction phases of the various rooms and units will be possible. Special interest will also be directed at the Terminal Classic reoccupation of the group subsequently discovered during the 2003 season. We seek, therefore, a greater understanding of the daily lives of these Maya of Holmul and what differences there may exist between the Late Classic and Terminal Classic peoples. Further objectives include in depth burial analyses, with the hopes of demographic studies as well as testing the degree of relatedness between the human remains from the various structures and time periods. Lastly, we desire to preserve the archaeological remains of the group as they presently stand and may one day be capable of consolidating it for the benefit of possible public tourism at Holmul, that they may see a prime example of a plaza group preserved in the jungles of the Petén.

Introduction to the Excavations at Cival, Petén Guatemala: Season 2003

Jeremy R. Bauer

The investigation of the Preclassic minor center of Cival, located within the Holmul Archaeological Region, continued during the 2003 field season. Previous field seasons in 2001 and 2002 saw the continuation mapping program by Marc Wolf, the discovery of an early dynastic stela (Estrada Belli 2003b), and the realization that much of the site's architecture dated to the Preclassic period (Estrada- Belli et al. 2003a, Estrada-Belli et al 2003b, Estrada Belli et al 2003c). All of the efforts expended in these previous two field seasons, suggested that Cival was an important center of chiefly or dynastic power within the Holmul Region during the Preclassic period, and that it likely served as the seat of power for the region. Due to these discoveries, we sought to elucidate more of the history of Cival in order to understand its role in the formation of more secular rule at Holmul center during the Terminal Late Preclassic period (see also Estrada-Belli this volume and Neivens this volume), and its role in interregional exchange networks of goods and ideas. We also wanted to expand our understanding of the settlement of Cival through continued mapping in the periphery. To these ends, our continuing research in 2003 focused on several key objectives:

- 1) Continue the mapping program in the site center and into the hinterland surrounding Cival. Site center mapping continued with the explicit purpose of assessing the correlation between Ian Graham's 1984 map, and Wolf et al's recent map. Hinterland mapping sought to gain a greater understanding of the time frame and scale of the settlement supporting Cival.
- 2) Investigate and record the numerous looters trenches that penetrate the structures at Cival with the intent of understanding of each looted structure's chronology
- 3) Open test excavations to determine the chronological placement of stelae in order to understand the site's monument chronology.
- 4) Continue investigations on the summit of the large Triadic Group-One. Earlier research showed that the majority of the construction on the summit dated to the late Preclassic period. We hoped to continue excavation of sealed (not looted) deposits to thoroughly access this assertion.

At seasons end, we have completed all of these objectives. The mapping program has remapped a large portion of the site center including the E-Group assemblage and many of the structures located to the west of it. Wolf and crew have now completed a holistic and corrected map of the site's center and are processing the map data gained from the periphery of the site.

Four of some of the largest looters trenches at the site were cleared, recorded and excavated. After the clearing and recording of the structural sequence, test units were opened within each in an attempt to understand the nature of the architecture that we could only view in profile. Operations within many of the looters trenches sadly revealed the disruption of several tombs. In Structure 31 Dan Leonard exposed the walls of a Late Preclassic temple that had housed a vaulted crypt. This structure appears to have been built with a construction technique not well documented at Cival, but quite common in the Late Preclassic at El Mirador (Hansen 1998: 99). The structure was built in several phases, and in its final phase, the summit was turned into a mausoleum. In Structure 18 Rodgers and Clark cleared a looters trench that penetrated a structure located on the eastern side of a raised platform group. Built of a finely dressed limestone blocks, the structure excavated by Rodgers and Clark similarly housed a late Preclassic crypt that also was sadly looted.

Despite these lamentable discoveries, there were several positive outcomes from our examination of looters trenches. In Structure 1 on Group 1, it was revealed that looters had terminated their efforts just short of reaching the backside of a beautifully preserved Late Preclassic stucco mask (see Castillo this volume). The excavation unearthed a modeled stucco mask of immense proportions and exquisite preservation. Preliminary iconographic analysis of the mask indicates that it represents a sun deity, and based on correlation to similar masks found at Cerros, Uaxactun and El Mirador, we expect to find a complete suite of four masks decorating the western face of Structure 1 (Estrada-Belli et al 2003d). This structure will clearly become a focus of research for years to come.

In Structure 7, the investigation of looters trenches by Morgan and Bauer were quite fruitful on many levels. We were able to provisionally sort out the construction phases of Structure 7, starting with its earliest Middle Preclassic component, leading up to its late Preclassic final phase. At the western terminus of the looters cut, we were able to clarify the disturbed stratigraphy, and were eventually able to correlate some of the plaza floors to Structure 7. In our research near Stela 2, several Preclassic cached offerings and buried monuments came to light, including a large monolithic stela-like slab, an elaborate cruciform shaped offering of

ceramic jars and jade, an empty stela cut with the stone bracing and cached offering still *in situ*, and two other offerings, dedicated to monuments that have since been removed or demolished.

Additionally, Nick Bentley conducted investigations into the chronology of plaza floors and stela dedications. His excavations in and around Stela 6 located at the western edge of Cival's center, revealed a sequence of plaster floors underlying an un-carved and badly damaged stela. Unfortunately, no datable offering was discovered behind or in front of the stela and the preservation of the ceramic material associated with the stela prevents an accurate placement. However, given what we have learned from the excavations in the plaza near Structure 7, future excavations beneath Stela 6 may yet yield results that support our speculation that Stela 6 also dates to the Preclassic period.

In sum, the results of the 2003 field season have dramatically reshaped our understanding of the complexity and wealth of Cival in the Middle to Late Preclassic period. The findings of Angel Castillo in Structure 1 reveal that Cival was integrated in a Preclassic interaction sphere that connected it to widely distributed Preclassic sites. The similarity in detail and iconography of the exposed mask clearly links Cival to other prominent Preclassic centers both within the Central Lowlands and the coast of Belize; sites such as Kohunlich, El Mirador, Uaxactun and Cerros. At the same time, the artistic style of the mask is clearly unique to Cival. The size and complexity of the Triadic Group and stuccoed masks at Cival clearly demonstrate access to skilled craftsmen, massive amounts of labor, and resources that were unexpected for this region.

Research by Leonard, Rodgers, Clark, and Bentley has demonstrated the antiquity of many of the structures at Cival. Although we are certain there was Late Classic occupation at the site, we did not know just how much of Cival's architecture dated to the Late Classic Period. We are now certain that all of this season's examined structures date almost exclusively to the Preclassic period, and that, although disturbed, many of Cival's monuments similarly date to the Preclassic period.

The discoveries by Morgan and Bauer indicate that construction and ritual activity at the site dates back at least to the end of the Middle Preclassic period, and likely even earlier. The dedication of monuments clearly was part and parcel of Cival's early ritual activity, as evidenced by a monolithic stone monument dedicated near the completion of the earliest phase of Structure 7. The area west of Structure 7 quickly became a locus of continued ritual activity for the ensuing centuries, and appears to have been one of Cival's most sacred. The cruciform offering found in front of Structure 7 not only symbolically marked the center of Cival's ritual world, but it also attests to the wealth wielded by Cival. This offering radically demonstrates the long-distant trade connections and resources controlled by Cival. Given its proximity to the Holmul River and its location upon a promontory, it is not unsound to speculate that Cival's prominence derived from its riverine location. Cival is strategically located to reap the benefits of the local water and bajo resources for cultivation, and to oversee the trade that entered the Central Lowlands through the Holmul River via the Rio Hondo.

Future research hopes to build upon the solid foundation of research already laid at Cival. Future efforts aimed at Structure 1 are expected to thoroughly document and record the stucco mask, and to consolidate the unstable looters trench to its rear. Further exploration of other masks may also ensue. Research into Structures 7 and 9 is also planned for upcoming seasons in order to assess the supposition that the two formed an E-Group for solar/astronomical observations. We also hope to explore the construction phases of the Triadic Group, and correlate those phases to the E-Group.

In the not too distant future, we hope to implement a sampling regime to gain an understanding of the lives of the support population. While uncovering the Preclassic houses of commoners is admittedly difficult, we intend to gain some understanding of the urban settlement. Also, investigations of the defensive wall surrounding the site's center should elucidate the date of the wall, and will hopefully provide insights into the site's precipitous abandonment at the end of the Late Preclassic period. All of these proposed efforts will illuminate the place of Cival in the history of the Holmul Region and in the Central Maya Lowlands as well.

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Investigations of Structure 7 and Stela 2 at Cival, Petén, Guatemala

Molly Morgan and Jeremy Bauer

Introduction:

During the 2003 field season, the excavation of Structure 7 began. Structure 7 is approximately 129 meters long, 5 meters high, and 8 meters wide structure oriented along a north-south axis. On the summit of this structure are located three small pyramidal structures: one to the south, one to the north, and one in the center equidistant from both terminal ends (Figure 1). Together with Structure 9, Structure 7 forms an “E-Group” assemblage like those found at Uaxactun, El Mirador, and other sites in the central and southeastern Maya Lowlands. The exact astronomical or solar observational properties of Cival’s E-Group are not yet known. In order to better understand the temporal placement of this structure, clearing and excavation of the structure was initiated.

It had been known since the 2001 field season, that a large looters trench penetrated the western side of the central pyramid located on top of Structure 7. This looters trench had almost completely bisected the structure and left a gaping hole in its western front. The result was a large cave at the summit with the roof intact, although some of the fill above had fallen since the time of looting. Since we had little indication of the date of Structure 7, aside from the associated Stela 2 which clearly had been moved from its original location but still dated to the Preclassic period, it was decided that the clearing of the looters trench would help us clarify the dating of Structure 7 and its relationship to Stela 2. Clearing and recording of the looters trench began with Operation CL 02. In addition, Operations CT 02 and CT 07 investigated the standing architecture of Structure 7 through excavation of deposits at its base (CT 02) and at its summit (CT 07). Furthermore, two other Operations (CT 05 and CT 08) saw the excavation of a trench in the plaza west of Structure 7 and beneath Cival Stela 2. Operations CT 05 and 08 sought to examine the relationship between Stela 2 and Structure 7, and to search for the Stela 2’s original location in the plaza.

The results of the excavations revealed that Structure 7 was built in at least five phases, with several minor sub-phases or additions added to existing structures. The earliest phase appears to have been created through the shaping of a natural bedrock rise, while later phases were constructed of cut and faced limestone blocks and mortar. The final phase of Structure 7 shows armatures for modeled stucco outsets on either side of a recessed central stairway. Unfortunately, the modeled stucco had eroded so that the original decoration is unknown.

All of the known construction phases of Structure 7 date to the Preclassic period. The earliest phase likely dates to the Middle to Late Preclassic period transition (c.a. 500 BC), based on its association with a large cruciform cache (see discussion below). The final phase likely dates to the end of the late Preclassic period (c.a. 150-200 AD). These dates are tentative, awaiting absolute ceramic placement, although it is almost certain most of the construction occurred in the Preclassic period.

Associated with Structure 7 was a series of offerings and monuments which radiated westward from its base. Each monument had originally faced west, and new monuments and offerings were dedicated with each successive phase of Structure 7. As Structure 7 grew outward, earlier monuments were buried or removed. In all, 5 offerings were discovered that were dedicated to both Structure 7 and the monuments located to its western face.

Excavations in Structure 7

Operation CL 02:

Introduction

Cival Looters Trench Two penetrates the western side of Structure 7. Operation CL 02 sought to gain some understanding of the construction of this building by using the destruction of looters activities.

The methods used to accomplish this included the removal of looters back dirt and debris, and the cleaning of the profiles created by the looting activity.

A discussion of each context appears below. Please refer to Figure 2 for all stratigraphic discussions of CL 02

Stratigraphy

CL 0201 Loose fill of assorted colors and consistencies and varying inclusions. Context CL 0202 delineated from stratified contexts by the looseness of its make-up.

Interpretation: This context includes all of the disturbed building material and other debris left behind by the looters.

CL 0202 Limestone bedrock used in the construction of Structure 7. The bedrock was modified by the carving of shallow steps in front of the earliest construction phase. There is also a natural terrace in the bedrock that was used to create the structure. The looters encountered this bedrock terrace in their excavation and followed it into the earliest structure.

CL 0203 Cut into bedrock (60 by 80 by 20 cm). Looters uncovered this cut and cleaned out anything that may have been in it. Presumably, it was a cache dedication made upon the building of the second construction phase. It is located directly outside the west wall of the earliest structure, flush with the line of the wall.

CL 0204 Brown, fine, silty soil located directly above bedrock. Approximately 20 cm thick. Fill for first floor CL 0205.

CL 0205 Plaster floor. This floor goes beneath the first structure construction. Moving westward, it meets bedrock CL 0202 and is associated with four steps carved into bedrock.

CL 0206 Construction fill between floors CL 0205 and CL 0207. Fine, brown, silty soil with no inclusions. Abuts first structure construction. Moving westward in the section, this floor is lost, as it was removed for later construction.

CL 0208 Construction fill used in the first major phase of construction. Supports construction of CL 0207. Fine gray limestone marl matrix with inclusions of large (50-30 cm) irregularly shaped stones and smaller (15 cm rocks). Covers floor CL 0205, and is roughly 1m thick.

CL 0207 First major construction phase. Looters revealed a 5-7 course wall with what may have been a 2 course inset at the top. This is the west wall of the earliest structure in this location. This also includes the floor that was built with this structure, on top of sub floor fill CL 0206, which is lost in section further west. This structure was penetrated roughly 40 cm by looters activities. The structure is about 1m high and probably functioned as a platform. It also has a floor topping it, which could be seen in the back (east) section of the looters trench.

CL 0209 Thick (2.5m) layer of construction fill used to build up platform for the second major construction phase. Loose limestone rocks, mostly large (60 by 40 cm). Some appear to be cut stones that are reused cut masonry blocks. Color is predominantly white. Covers floor CL 0207. Also contains retaining or construction assisting walls CL 0210 and CL 0211.

CL 0210 Only seen in part in profile. Includes a cut limestone block (60 by 30 by 20 cm) that is oriented for possible building purposes and has a floor moving over it like a step. The floor does not extend very far in either direction, and must have been demolished in the building of major construction phase two.

CL 0211 Three to four course wall made of large (50 by 30 by 20 cm) cut limestone masonry blocks. Clearly visible in both the north and south profiles. Retaining wall to assist in construction of platform addition in construction Phase Two.

CL 0212 Plaster floor (third), 10 cm thick. Includes two steps moving westward away from the structure, it disappears in section wall and must have been destroyed in later construction phases. Supported by construction fill CL 0209.

CL 0213 Compacted crushed limestone marl with cobble inclusions. Construction fill for next floor, roughly 50 cm thick. Above floor three.

CL 0214 Plaster floor covering fill CL 0214 (fourth floor). Final major building phase of platform Structure 7 construction. 5-1-cm thick. Includes 5 steps leading to the plaza to the west. Floor goes beneath the small structure (central of three) on top of the platform.

CL 0217 Construction fill for the small structure (small platform) that was built on top of platform Structure 7. This construction phase is the last major phase in this location. This context covers floor CL 0214 and supports wall CL 0216 and CL 0215. Large irregularly shaped limestone rocks (20-40 cm), limestone cobble inclusions, and gray marl fill.

CL 0215 Plaster floor and plaster facing of the small structure on platform of Structure 7. West and front face of structure includes 4 steps. It is seen in the back (east) profile of the looters trench and is 5 cm thick. This small structure is the last phase of construction on this building.

CL 0216 Outer wall of final phase of small building on top of platform. This wall is the same phase as the inset stairway CL 0215 that it was built with. Has stuccoed masonry blocks. This wall was investigated in operation CT07.

CL 0218 Rubble above the final construction phase. Irregular limestone rocks and reused masonry blocks (to size 40 by 30 cm). Perhaps piled on at the end of the use of this building. Light brown soil.

CL 0219 Humic layer, 10-30 cm thick covering the entire mound. Rich brown organic silt.

Conclusions

Operation CL 02 successfully identified the major construction phases of Structure 7. First, directly upon bedrock (CL 0202), the first floor (CL 0205) was constructed. Upon this floor, another floor and associated building (CL 0207) form the first major construction phase on Structure 7. Later, it appears that a cache dedication was made into bedrock in front of this first structure commemorating further construction. Then, the platform was significantly raised (2.5 m) and a new floor (CL 0212) was constructed. Later, another increase (.5 m) in the height of the platform occurred, and the construction of the last floor (CL 0214) of this large platform Structure 7. On top of this platform Structure 7, three smaller mounds are seen from the surface. Cival Looters Trench Two penetrates the central structure. This structure has a plastered inset staircase (CL 0215) built into its western wall (CL 0216). Excavation of operation CT 07 revealed that there were sub phases of minor construction after the last major phase on this structure. They included the addition of a lengthened first step on the structure, and an addition of a small terrace at the front, or western side of the structure. When the structure was abandoned, it appears that rocks were purposefully stacked on top of it. Future excavations at this location should further investigate the possible presence of features on the face of the small structures on top of platform Structure 7; consider the possibility of the structure functioning as an E-Group by investigating its association with other related structures, and sample ceramics from construction levels for dating purposes.

Operation CT 02:

Introduction

The looters trench into Structure 7 was investigated previously in operation CL 02. Operation CT 02 was a continuation of that investigation. At the western base of the structure, just below the looters back dirt, a few stratified layers were left in context, and those were excavated in this operation. The goal of the excavation involved uncovering remaining layers of construction on Structure 7. The excavation extends the length of the looters trench before it enters the structure itself, beginning on the west side at the location

of a large limestone monolith, running eastwardly, to a natural rise in bedrock upon which the structure was built. The trench was about 3 m long and 1.10 m wide. All excavated soil was sifted through a 6 mm screen.

Stratigraphy

CT 0205 Hard, impenetrable bedrock. Carved into shallow steps in construction and used for its natural slope upon which to build Structure 7.

CT0208 Cut into bedrock. 40 cm diameter, 20 cm deep, and circular in shape. Filled with above layer CT 0202.

CT 0206 Cut in bedrock into which monolith CT0204 was placed. Exposed by this excavation only on the east side of monolith.

CT 0204 Large monolithic dense limestone rock. 40 cm thick and at least 100 cm wide as is seen in this excavation. Placed into cut CT 0206 in bedrock.

CT 0207 Compacted gray friable soil with limestone cobbles (15-20 cm). Packing for monolith CT0204 in cut CT0206.

CT 0203 Thin (5-10 cm) layer of dark gray clay-like soil. Covering bedrock.

CT 0202 Soft brown soil matrix with limestone inclusions (10 cm) and pebbles (2-5 cm). 55 cm thick. Sub floor fill.

CT 0201 Soft, patchy plaster layer, 20 cm thick, with pebble inclusions (2-5 cm). Abuts monolith CT 0203. Eroded floor.

Conclusions

Operation CT 02 successfully uncovered the first construction levels of Structure 7. It is now known that the first floor built above bedrock was not penetrated by looters activity, and that it was cut through by two cuts, one with no purpose discernable, and the other in which to place a large, monolithic stone. Excavations done on the other side of the stone, in CT0205 and CT0208, as well as future research, will hopefully shed more light on the purpose of this monolith placement.

Operation CT 07

Introduction

Structure 7 at Cival was investigated previously in Operations CL02 and CT02. These previous investigations revealed construction phases of the building. Operation CT07, attempted to uncover the face of the final construction phase of the central pyramid upon Structure 7. The nature of other buildings and groups of this type (E-Groups) led the archaeologists to believe that there could be a feature on the face of this building, worth investigating. The trench was 3.5 X 4.5m, oriented north-south. All soils were sifted through a 6 mm screen.

Stratigraphy

CT0710 Plaster floor on top of the platform for Structure 7, upon which the little structure under investigation was built.

CT0702 This context was given to the little structure under investigation, on top of the platform for Structure 7. The eroded west wall of this structure was the subject of investigation. Excavation revealed a heavily eroded feature built into this wall. The time constraints of the project did not allow for full investigation of this feature. Two stone tools were uncovered within the construction of the wall, presumably forming a ritual dedication during construction.

CT 0708The face of the structure appears to have been stuccoed, but most of the stucco decoration has fallen off. This context was assigned to a small chunk of stucco decoration still connected to the wall CT 0702.

CT 0709Plaster floor topping wall CT 0702 forming the top if this structure.

CT 0711The first post phase to the construction of the structure involved a plastered masonry wall that extended the first step of the building above the platform.

CT 0706Masonry wall that is a part of the second post phase construction added to the front of the structure. This wall formed a terrace extending from the wall CT0702. Three courses in height, and composed of shaped limestone blocks.

CT 0707Irregularly shaped limestone rocks (20 cm) used with loose gray soil as fill for the addition of terrace and wall CT0706. Located below floor CT0705.

CT 0705Plaster floor forming the surface of the terrace addition of wall CT 0706. This floor abuts wall CT 0702.

CT 0704Plaster floor found only in patches. Resurfacing of floor CT 0705.

CT 0703Tightly compacted irregularly and regularly shaped limestone blocks (20-40 cm). Covering wall of structure CT 0702 and addition of CT 0706.

CT 0701Mixed matrix of topsoil, wall fall, and looters debris that covered the final phases of Structure 7.

Conclusion

Cival Excavation Seven revealed much about the final constructions of Structure 7. Now it is understood that the final major phase of construction involved building a feature in the construction of the west wall of the central small structure on Platform Structure 7. The nature of this feature was not determined in the time limits of the project. After this final major construction phase, there were two additional post phases to the building. First, a plastered wall was built onto the first step of the building, extending this step. Then, a short terrace was built in front of the building, covering the lower half of the original face of the building, and part of the feature that it included. Future excavations on the face of this building will better reveal the nature of these construction activities.

Excavations near Stela 2

Operation CT 05:

Introduction

The purpose of Operation CT 05 was to investigate the area around Cival Stela 2 in order to determine its original location and to attempt to associate it with Structure 7. The Holmul project team located the stela in 2002 (Estrada Belli et al. 2003) sitting on its side, to the west of Structure 7, directly in front of Cival Looters Trench 2. The trench for Operation CT 05 was set around the Stela, and was 2m by 4m. The eastern limit of the operation abutted the west face of the monolithic rock (CT 0515/0844) in the looters trench. Soil excavated was screened through a 6 mm screen.

Stratigraphy

CT 0517Bedrock. Operation CT 05 encountered many cuts that were carved into bedrock.

CT 0509Plaster floor below floor CT 0508. Floor CT 0509 was directly above bedrock.

CT 0508Plaster floor layer above floor CT 0509. Perhaps a resurfacing of this floor.

CT 0518Fill beneath layer CT 0405 and above floor CT 0508. This is a tightly compacted layer of soft grayish white silt.

CT 0504Dark gray/black sandy silt. Below looters backdirt, marking the extent of looters activity. Only in the east part of this trench. 15 cm thick. Fill.

CT 0514Cut into which monolith CT 0515 was placed. Filled with CT0516. Cuts through CT 0518 fill and is covered by fill CT 0504. At E edge of excavation, so that only the west part of this cut is included in this trench.

CT 0515Monolithic limestone boulder resting on its side, oriented north-south. At least 140 cm long and 40 cm wide. Placed into cut CT 0514.

CT 0516Not completely excavated fill for cut CT 0514. Stone inclusions (10-15 cm) probably used as packing stones for the placement of monolith CT 0515.

CT0512 Cut filled with packed stones CT 0506, which went beyond the limits of this excavation, and was further investigated in CT 08.

CT 0506Loose brownish gray soil filling cut CT 0512. Packed stones and one metate fragment (10-12 cm).

CT 0505In the southern part of the trench, where there was no looters activity, this is gray friable soil below layer CT 0503. It has large (30-40 cm) limestone inclusions and covers floor CT 0508. Fill.

CT 0511Cut that reaches beyond the limits of this excavation and was investigated in CT 08. Filled with CT 0507. Cut through floors CT 0508 and CT 0509.

CT 0507Dark brown silt matrix filling cut CT 0511.

CT 0510Cut packed tightly with rocks CT 0513 that goes through floors CT 0509 and CT 0508. Also investigated in CT 08.

CT 0513Tightly packed rocks (10-30 cm) and grayish loose soil. Deposited in cut CT 0510.

CT 0503 Grayish brown sandy silt below topsoil CT 0501. In south part of trench, where there was no looters activity. Fill.

CT 0502 Looters backdirt. Friable crushed limestone, mixed matrix. Only in northern part of trench.

CT 0501 Rich brown organic layer 2-10 cm thick. Humic layer.

Conclusion

This operation determined that Stela 2 at Cival is likely not in its original location, since no stela base was located. The excavation also uncovered several cuts that could not be investigated within the scope of this operation. After moving the stela, operation CT 08 more carefully investigated the cuts located by this operation.

Operation CT 08:

Introduction:

The decision to begin Operation CT 08 was based on two main factors: the disturbed nature of the deposits encountered in Operation CT 05, and the fact that Operation CT 05 could not be extended westward until Stela 2 had safely been moved to accommodate an excavation unit beneath it. A new operation number (CT 08) was created so as not to confuse the ceramics and stratigraphy of Operation CT 05 with those of the westward extension (CT 08). Many of the contexts that were excavated in CT 08, actually were found in the area demarcated by Operation CT 05. In reality, both Operations CT 05 and CT 08 formed a single unit that was 2 X 5 m and reached the base of Structure 7.

The initial excavation of CT 05 revealed a series of cuts into plaza floor fills and bedrock that warranted careful examination. Thus, CT 08 was carefully excavated to determine the relationship between each of the cuts. As a result of five major cuts (four excavated in 2003, the other awaiting completion in 2004) were discovered. Within each cut was discovered an offering dedicating each cut and the monument that each cut had originally supported (i.e. stela, altar, post, etc.). Each successive cache offering shifted westward away from Structure 7 through time. These offerings display considerable wealth, especially during the Middle to Late Preclassic transition.

Excavation of Deposits:

Excavation of Operation CT 08 began with the removal of looters backdirt CT 0800. This was an array of mixed fills of gray and brown silt. There were many inclusions in this fill, including limestone cobbles (.05-.15 m diameter) and boulders (.20-.50 m diameter). Beneath the backdirt of the looters, topsoil CT 0801 was removed. This context was an organically rich layer of dark brown humic soil with many rootlets that was roughly .15-.20 m thick where excavated. Within this context were many limestone pebbles inclusions.

Beneath CT 0801 were encountered the remains of an eroded plaster surface CT 0802. All that remained was a few patches of plaster, and the cobble packing that underlay the plaster. Beneath this cobble floor fill, several cuts and fills were encountered. Fill CT 0855, a dark brown clayey silt with frequent cobble and pebble inclusions, was the fill for a cut that was not excavated this season.

Another fill was encountered at the extreme western end of Operation CT 08 under the eroded floor CT 0802. This fill, CT 0803, was encountered in cut CT 0809 and consisted of cobbles arranged in a circle, overlying fill CT 0810. Fill CT 0810 was soft light-brown silt with numerous limestone cobble inclusions. CT 0810 covered the remains of a limestone boulder CT 0811, which appears to be a stela fragment that was re-deposited into CT 0809 after the removal of the original monument. All of these fills were found filling cut CT 0809.

At a lower level within cut CT 0809 and clearly representing a different assemblage of contexts, an offering and the fragmentary remains of a monument were found. Presuming that the Maya would not have made a dedicatory offering for an eroded stump of a monument (CT 0845), we can only assume that this offering was for a more substantial monument, perhaps an altar. Thus, below CT 0811, the fragmentary *in situ* remains of CT 0845 were encountered. CT 0845 consisted of a slab of broken and eroded limestone approximately .5 X .8 m in width and breadth and .35 m thick. The limestone used for this monument

fragment was low quality and the internal bedding of the limestone layers ran horizontally (i.e. parallel to the ground). This would make the monument fragment and unlikely candidate for a stela, but a perfect candidate for an altar.

Beneath CT 0845, we encountered fill CT 0851: gray-brown friable silt with frequent pebble inclusions. Fill CT 0851 surrounded a series of lip-to-lip ceramic vessels. In all, there were four sets of cylinder vessels capped by four shallow vertical-walled bowls. To the north was uncovered cylinder vessel CT 0854.02.01 and bowl CT 0858.02.01. In the west, cylinder vessel CT 0856.02.01 was found capped by bowl CT 0860.02.01. To the east, CT 0853.02.01 capped cylinder vessel CT 0852.02.01. To the south, the badly damaged remains of a cylinder vessel were found along with a capping bowl CT 0857.02.01. Unfortunately, the cylinder vessel was so badly eroded and damaged, that much of its remains were commingled with the fill CT 0851. Once fill CT 0851 and all of the ceramic vessels were removed, the base of cut CT 0809 was exposed. CT 0809 cut through context CT 0808 and was in the shape of an oval approximately 1.1 m x .7 m and .4 m deep.

Thus, within cut CT 0809, an offering of 8 ceramic vessels arranged in a cruciform pattern was encountered. The *in situ* remains of an eroded monument fragment (CT 0845), which appears to have been an altar whose upper remains were removed prior to the laying of floor CT 0802, which capped the offering.

Just east of the offering in cut CT 0809 and truncated by it, another offering cut (CT 0805) was discovered. Like the offering in CT 0809, the offering within cut CT 0805 was likewise cut through fill CT 0808 and capped by eroded floor CT 0802: indicating that they were both coeval and co-terminus. At the uppermost levels of cut CT 0805 we exposed the remains of a small out-flaring walled bowl (CT 0807.02.01). The vessel was poorly preserved with no slip remaining: the ceramic dating still pending. The bowl was placed in a declivity created by the junction of three large limestone boulders CT 0806, 0813 and 0814. The boulders were of very dense limestone similar to the type used for other stelae at Cival, and they varied in size between 4-.6 X .3-.4 X .4-.7 m. The presence of shaped edges and uniform thickness (.3-.4 m thick) indicated that these boulders were in fact fragments of stelae that had been re-deposited into cut CT 0805 after the original monument had been removed: likely some time in the Late Preclassic period. All three boulders overlay fill CT 0812, fine and compact gray clayey silt with few pebble and cobble inclusions.

As was the case in cut CT 0809, the upper fill of stelae fragments (CT 0806, 0813 and 0814), ceramic offering (CT 0807.02.01) and fill (CT 0812) were clearly deposited into cut CT 0805 after the original monument had been removed. This supposition was confirmed when we encountered the intact bracing (CT 0815) for a stela packed into the lowest levels of cut CT 0805, just beneath fill CT 0812. CT 0815 was a collection of limestone rocks which varied in size (none of which were larger than .3 x .4 x .2 m) and were arranged along the exterior edges of cut CT 0805, but were not found in the center of CT 0805. In the center of the bracing, fill CT 0816 filled the .6 X .25 m void created by the arrangement of stones CT 0815. CT 0816 was friable gray clayey silt with few pebble inclusions (much like CT 0812 above it, and perhaps the lowest level of the same fill). Once CT 0815 and 0816 were removed, the base of cut CT 0805 was exposed. At its lowest level, CT 0805 had dimensions 1.8 X 0.9 meters. The overall depth of cut CT 0805 was approximately 0.75 meters. This depth was more than adequate to support a stela at least 2.5 meters tall. CT 0805 cut through two distinct floor and fill layers. To the north and west, it cut through fill layer CT 0808, to the east it cut through eroded floor CT 0804.

In the base and center of cut CT 0805, a smaller circular cut CT 0817 was encountered. The cut was roughly 0.4 meters in diameter, 0.5 meters deep, and was capped by a thin (.03 m) layer of plaster CT 08.67. Just beneath CT 08.67 we unearthed a capping stone for a cache. This stone (CT 0818) was .2 m thick, and roughly .35 meters in diameter. It surmounted fill CT 0819: a soft, tan clayey-silt with few pebble inclusions. Fill CT 0819 in turn covered another capstone CT 0820: a limestone rock roughly .2 X .3 X .15 m which capped the offering beneath. The offering that we discovered beneath capstone CT 0820 consisted of a Sierra Red Bowl (CT 0822.02.01) with vertical walls and a flat base. The bowl was in fragmentary condition, as the weight of the capstone CT 0820 had applied undue pressure on it and the offering beneath it, causing the lower offering to break through the bottom of the vessel. The lower offering was discovered beneath the Sierra Red bowl (CT 0822.02.01) and consisted of two non-matching marine shell halves (CT 0824.10.01 & CT 0824.10.02), placed upright and facing one another. Between the two shells were a tubular jade bead (CT 0825.06.01), a hematite disk (CT 0825.14.01), a perforated shell disk (0825.10.01), soil fill CT 0825 and traces of cinnabar. Surrounding the shells and the bowl was fill CT

0821: a silty tan clay with no inclusions. A fill with exactly the same characteristics (CT 0823) filled the void within bowl CT 0822.

Thus, within cut CT 0817, found at the base and center of cut CT 0805, an offering of two marine shell halves, a tubular jade bead, a perforated shell disc, a hematite flake, cinnabar, and a Sierra Red bowl were encountered. Two capstones and a plaster layer sealed the whole offering. The offering clearly was a dedication offering for what appears to have been a stela cut.

As noted already, both cuts CT 0809 and CT 0805 cut through fill CT 0808. CT 0808 is an odd fill consisting of brown, compact clayey-silt with frequent (.01-.03 m) blue-gray, burnt daub inclusions. Fill CT 0808 was not excavated completely in 2003 and its relationship to nearby floor CT 0804 is not entirely certain, as there was no interface encountered within the limits of the excavation between the two contexts. It appears that their interface lies beyond the northern limit of the excavation. However, it seems most likely that CT 0808 postdates floor CT 0804 based on absolute elevations, and the precedent (to be discussed below) for the movement of monuments westward away from Structure 7.

CT 0804 was an eroded plaster floor of which mainly the cobble fill (CT 0826) for its makeup survived. A few patches of intact plaster were encountered, but not many. Combined with its cobble fill CT 0826, floor CT 0804 was approximately .04-.06 m and only survived as a small "peninsula" between cuts CT 0805 and the western limit of excavation of the original Operation CT 05. Much of the eastern remains of floor CT 0804 were likely obliterated in the excavation of Operation CT 05 by untrained workers. However, enough of it survived to determine that floor CT 0804 capped the fill for cut CT 0827. Floor CT 0804 directly overlay the fill (CT 0830) of cut CT 0827 and floor CT 0828, which cut CT 0827 truncates.

Floor CT 0804 was found sealing an offering located just east of stela cut CT 0805 and its associated offering cut (CT 0817). The cut for this stratigraphically earlier offering was CT 0827, a pit whose eastern and southern extent was originally cut through floor CT 0828, had been lost due to overzealous and untrained workers in Operation CT 05. Regardless, the western edge of CT 0827 was located and it cut through floor CT 0828. The lowest limits on all sides of cut CT 0827 were also found. At its lowest level, cut CT 0827 was roughly oval in plan 1 meter along its east-west axis, and .85 m along its north-south axis, and roughly 0.8 m deep from the top of floor CT 0828. The whole of cut CT 0827 was filled by CT 0830: brown clayey-silt with frequent limestone cobbles (.03-.10 m diameter) and pebbles (.01-.02 m diameter) inclusions. At the lowest levels, CT 0827 was filled with what appears to be packing (CT 0835) for a monument. Some of the northern half of CT 0835 was mistakenly removed in Operation CT 0805. However, enough of CT 0835 remained to reveal that it consisted of several limestone rocks (.10-.20 m average diameter), filling the lowest levels of cut CT 0827. These stones CT 0835 clearly followed the slope of the bottom of the cut. Due to the loss of the northern extent of CT 0835, we are uncertain as to what kind of monument the cut had originally supported, however, given what we learned later on (see cruciform cut discussion below), it seems likely that this cut supported a wooden post. The cut seems too small to have supported a stela, and too deep to have been for an altar.

At the base of the aforementioned cut CT 0827 and to the west of the stone packing (CT 0835), an offering was encountered. This offering consisted of several items. The first item removed was a small, restricted neck jar or olla (CT 0832.02.01) filled with gray-brown silty-clay (CT 0834) and capped by a .06 X .08 X .04 irregularly shaped limestone cobble (CT 0833). Although broken, the vessel was complete and appears to be of the Pital Cream ceramic group dating to the Late Preclassic period. A sample of the soil was removed from the pot for residue analysis.

Twenty centimeters to the east of vessel CT 0832 and also within cut CT 0827, another vessel was found. This vessel (CT 0836.02.01) was fragmentary and incomplete. Although we know that some of the vessel was accidentally removed during the excavation of Operation CT 05, analysis of the ceramics of Operation CT 05 failed to reveal the complete remains of CT 0836.02.01. What remained of CT 0836.02.01 revealed that it too was a small restricted-neck jar or olla. This one however had a dark-red, almost maroon slip and paste. The vessel has yet to be succinctly identified ceramically. Beneath the vessel, more artifacts were discovered. A single marine shell half (CT 0840.10.01), two fragments of greenstone (CT 0830.06.01 & CT 0830.06.02), and a piece of hematite (CT 0830.14.01) came to light.

As mentioned, cut CT 0827 truncated floor CT 0828. Cut CT 0831 was also cut through the same floor CT 0828 along the northern edge of the excavation unit. CT 0831 was not thoroughly excavated in

2003, but it appears to be a circular cut of unknown dimensions (but probably not exceeding 0.50 m in diameter). It may have served as a post-hole.

Beneath floor CT 0828, another floor was noted in the section wall. This floor (CT 0829) varied in color from black to brown and from orange to yellow. Its remains were approximately .03-.05 m thick and it showed evidence of heavy burning and erosion. We suspect that this floor may have originally capped the cruciform offering (to be discussed below). However, we have no direct evidence of this supposition. The authentic cut CT 0827 and under-supervised workmen had obliterated whatever remained of the floor sealing the cruciform cut. In 2004 we hope to ascertain the placement of this floor within the stratigraphic sequence and determine its relationship to the cuts that truncate it. Currently we are only certain that CT 0828 postdates floors CT 0837 and CT 0838, and predates floor CT 0828.

As just mentioned, we suspect that floor CT 0829 originally capped a cruciform offering that was uncovered only after cut CT 0827 was completely excavated. Cut CT 0827 was located to the west of the cruciform cut (CT 0846) and truncated its western end. Thus we are certain that CT 0827 postdates cut CT 0846. This new cut (CT 0846) was quite elaborate and contained a great wealth of offerings that we can only begin to describe in this report.

The discovery of the cruciform cut occurred near the season's end and its excavation spanned several weeks. Initial excavation involved the removal of a thick (.12-.18 m) layer of black sticky clay loam (CT 0865) which covered the remains of a poorly defined cut with dimensions roughly 1.5 m by 1.5 m. Thankfully the composition of its fill was sufficiently distinct from the edges of the cut that we were able to define its edges. The fill of cut CT 0846 was light-brown sandy silt with few limestone pebble inclusions (CT 0866). While excavating the fill of the cut, we encountered soft and loose soil (CT 0842) that had collapsed into a circular void (CT 0841) located roughly in the center of the cruciform cut. The void was roughly .45 m in diameter, .25 m deep and appears to have been created when the stump of a wooden post rotted and the surrounding fill (CT 0842) collapsed into the space originally occupied by the post; thus void CT 0841 appears to be a post hole left by the rotted remains of a post. Beneath fill CT 0866, we removed a plaster cap which sealed the whole of cut CT 0846 (save for its western edge which had been disturbed by cut CT 0827). This plaster cap (CT 0843) was made of coarse plaster with frequent pebble inclusions and the plaster appears to have been swathed into the cut, after several limestone blocks and stones (CT 0867) had been deposited. These stones (CT 0867) had dimensions roughly .10-.15 X .20-.25 X .08-.15 m and were spread regularly throughout the cut as if they had been arranged intentionally. These stones directly overlay five ceramic vessels. Once the stones were removed, we encountered great quantities of pottery sherds lining the edges of the cut. After we had clearly defined the edges of the cut, we realized that the cut was in fact shaped like a cross, and that a complete, although broken, vessel had been deposited into each arm of the cross with a fifth vessel was placed in the center in a deeper cut. To the west was vessel CT 0850.02.01, to the north was vessel CT 0847.02.01, to the east was vessel CT 0848.02.01, to the south was vessel CT 0849.02.01 and in the center was vessel CT 0859.02.01. The western jar CT 0850.02.01 clearly suffered irreparable damage due to the truncation of the plaster sealing caused by cut CT 0827. The other vessels however, were well-preserved and are in the process of reconstruction.

All of the vessels were restricted-opening globular jars or ollas, and all appear to have been of similar dimensions and shape. The central, western and northern vessels were black-slipped, the southern jar was red-slipped, and the eastern jar was black-slipped with a chamfered neck and post-slip, pre-firing incision. For the black vessels, there was notable variation in color: from brown to deep-lustrous black. Preliminary ceramic analysis tentatively places these black vessels as part of the Chunhinta Ceramic Group and the red vessel as part of the Joventud Ceramic Group. These vessels likely date to the end of the Mamom ceramic sphere and the beginning of the Chicanel ceramic sphere (roughly 500 BC).

While excavating the central vessel (CT 0859.02.01), we encountered two large jade celts located underneath it in the southern and eastern cardinal points. Given the cruciform shape of the cut and offerings, we expected to find three more celts in a similar orientation. As such, we removed the central vessel after photographing and planning the whole offering and vessels *in situ*. We were not disappointed in our speculation, as once the central vessel was removed, three more celts appeared: giving a total of five celts. In each cardinal direction a jade celt was found standing with its cutting edge upright. In the center of the whole cut and in a deeper circular cut another jade celt was found. This central jade (CT 0861.06.120) was clearly the most prized of all due to its fine finish and deep translucent green-blue color.

The other jade celts however, varied in quality and finish. The north (CT 0861.06.116), south (CT 0861.06.118) and east (CT 0861.06.117) celts were complete and all appear to have been green jade or serpentine. The west celt (CT 0861.06.119) however, was a fragmentary, highly-polished blue- jade axe with evidence of use: only about $\frac{3}{4}$ of it remained. Some 110 more pieces of blue and green jade polished pebbles ranging in size from .01 m in diameter to approximately .13 m in diameter were found scattered around the base of the cut, with the highest quality translucent blue jade pebbles circling the central jade celt. All of the jade offerings are currently being recorded and drawn by Licda. Judith Valle for submission to IDEAH.

Once all of the offerings were removed, the cut was cleared out (Figure 26). The overall shape of the cut was cruciform. The north-south dimension was 1.4 m and the east-west dimension was 1.5 m. We do not know the overall depth of the cut, as we are not entirely certain from which elevation the cut was originally made. However, the depth of the cruciform part of the cut from the top of bedrock (thorough which the cut was made) averaged approximately .5-.7 m. The central sunken cut within the cruciform cut was a .56 X .62 m square approximately 1.20 m deep from the top of bedrock. The circular cut located within the central square cut was approximately 1.4 m deep from the top of bedrock and was .2 m in diameter.

After we had completely removed the offerings within cut CT 0846, we turned our interest to the large monolithic boulder originally encountered in Operation CT 05. Because the cut (CT 0862) for the monolithic boulder CT 0844 was cut thorough the same material as the cruciform cut, we suspected that the two might have been roughly contemporaneous. The boulder appeared to have been sealed by a floor CT 0201 on its eastern side (see Operation CT 02 discussion above), but that floor did not appear in the CT 08 excavation. Due to the limits of time, we were unable to fully investigate monument CT 0844, but we are certain that it is a large, shaped monolithic boulder without inscriptions. It was placed in front of Structure 7, parallel to its long axis (north-south) and it has dimensions similar to that of a stela, but curiously, has been placed into the ground on its lateral side. The stone was deposited into a cut CT 0862 made through a mottled gray/white fill CT 0864 (unexcavated in 2003), which extends from the front of the monolith, westward out to the preserved plaster floor CT 0837. We were able to expose most, but not the entire monument. The exposed portion of the monument was 1.4 m long and .4 m wide. The rest of the monument extended beyond the limits of the excavation. We hope to fully excavate this monument in 2004.

The only others contexts we encountered in 2003 were two floors, both of which surmounted bedrock CT 0839. Directly upon bedrock was floor CT 0838. CT 0838 was not excavated in 2003, so we are unsure of its extent and thickness. CT 0838 was located in the western end of Operation CT 08 beneath cuts CT 0805, 0809 and 0827. Cuts 0846 and 0862 did not cut through this floor. Floor CT 0837 was a 4-5 cm thick resurfacing of floor CT 0838 and only survived in a patch approximately .6 X .8 m just along the southern edge of the excavation. Both of these floors, along with floors CT 0828 and 0829, await complete excavation in 2004 to reveal their relationships with the offering cuts.

Stratigraphic Interpretations and Conclusions

In Operation CT 08, many thin and complexly interrelated contexts were encountered. Based on the stratigraphic relationships outlined above, we can reconstruct the currently known history of the area located to the west of Structure 7 and underneath Stela 2. The description that follows is a reconstruction of these events in time, starting with the earliest event and working to the most recent.

Construction at Cival on Structure 7 began on bedrock (CT 0839) which underlies all of Cival. It is soft, chalky and much like soapstone. Interestingly, all of the preexisting paleosol was stripped off the bedrock prior to the construction of plaza floors. It appears that the creation of the first version (phase) of Structure 7 may have been carved directly out of a natural rise in the bedrock. As noted earlier in this report, it appears that steps were carved into the face of a natural rise in bedrock. This act created a freestanding structure from the bedrock. It would only follow that the builders would also carve the bedrock into a plaza floor in front of the structure. Future excavations will explore these possibilities in more detail.

After the first phase of Structure 7 was erected (or possibly at the same time), a floor (CT 0838) was laid over bedrock. This floor may predate the earliest offerings to the west of Structure 7; however, many of the interfaces between the floor and the deposits have been lost. Clarification on this waits future excavation. Another floor (CT 0837) was laid over the original floor (CT 0838), but its stratigraphic relationship to the cuts is not entirely certain either, although it appears to precede the dedication of monument CT 0844 and the cruciform cut (CT 0846).

Some time later, a large monolithic limestone slab (CT 0844) with a regular shape and no decorative carving was placed on its side in front of Structure 7, parallel to its long axis (north-south). The stone has dimensions similar to that of a stela, but curiously, had been placed into the ground on its lateral side. It is likely that the dedication of the monolith was accompanied by an offering. The monolithic boulder is certainly intriguing and warrants further investigation. Given that its stratigraphic placement is somewhere in the Middle-Late Preclassic transition, it could be one of the earliest *in situ* stone monuments yet discovered in the Maya Lowlands. Perhaps even more interesting, is the fact that no other monument of this type has been discovered in the front of an E-Group eastern range structure.

At the same time that the monolithic monument was dedicated, or shortly thereafter at around 500 BC, an elaborate offering was interred just west of Structure 7 and in front of the large monolithic boulder. The offering clearly was made to commemorate the dedication of a single large post, of which only the void (CT 0841) from its rotted stump remains. The offering was begun as a series of concentric cuts, the most central being the deepest. The cardinal oriented, cruciform cut into bedrock created was the main cut (CT 0846), while another square and another circular cut were dug in the center of the cruciform cut.

After the completion of the three concentric cuts, an offering was placed into the cut. Into the deepest central circular cut, a single jade celt was placed upright with its cutting edge facing upwards. In the square cut above this jade celt, four more jade celts were placed. Each jade was originally placed upright with the cutting edge facing upwards in each of the cardinal directions. In the space between the celts, some 110 more pieces of blue and green jade polished pebbles were scattered, with the highest quality translucent bluegreen jade pebbles circling the central jade celt. Covering the jade offering, a single large, restricted neck, black-slipped ceramic jar was placed. In the west and north arms of the cut, two black slipped jars were placed, to the south a red-slipped jar was placed, and finally to the east a black-slipped jar with a chamfered neck and post-slip, pre-firing incision was deposited. The overlying fill had crushed all five vessels, but each was crushed in its original location.

Several layers of stone fill, marl fill, plaster and black clayey soil capped the whole of the offering. First, several large limestone blocks were placed upon the vessels, and the whole offering was capped by a plaster seal. On top of the plaster capping, a post was placed and secured with fill CT 0866, however, all that remained of the post was the void (CT 0841) left from its rotted base (CT 0865). It is interesting to note that a layer of thick black clay was deposited over the whole offering and nearly up to the base of monolith CT 0844. At the moment the purpose of the black clay fill (CT 0864) is unknown, although a layer of black fill covered Cache 7 at Seibal: a similar cruciform offering of jade celts and ceramic vessels dating to the Real/Xe (c.a. 900-800 BC) ceramic sphere (Smith 1983: 115, Fig 98c). The black clay may have accumulated naturally, or, given the presence of a similar fill in the Seibal cache, may represent a specific aspect of the ritual deposit.

Although unconfirmed by the disturbed stratigraphy, the cruciform cache was likely capped by burnt floor CT 0829. Given the wealth buried within the cruciform cache, it would not be surprising if the ceremony were accompanied by the burning of massive amounts incense on the floor that sealed the offering. The burnt floor (CT 0838) was later resurfaced with floor CT 0837.

In the Late Preclassic period, another offering was made in this location. This one was placed just to the west of the previous cruciform offering and it cut through part of its plaster cap and fill. Into this cut (CT 0827), two ceramic vessels, a marine shell, a piece of hematite and two pieces of greenstone were interred. Although unconfirmed by the disturbed stratigraphy, this offering was likely dedicated to a wooden post, which was secured with stone bracing. The offering was then sealed with a plaster floor (CT 0804).

After the dedication of the previous monument and offering (within CT 0827), another offering and monument were dedicated in the area some .6 m to the west. This new offering was likewise made during the Late Preclassic period. It cut through the pre-existing plaza floor (CT 0804) and contained

bracing to support a stela. The stela had been removed in antiquity, but the dedication offering at its base still remained. The offering consisted of Sierra Red bowl placed above two marine bivalve shells which encapsulated a perforated shell disc, a tubular jade bead, a hematite flake, and cinnabar powder. The cut for the monument was large enough to have received Cival Stela 2 or any other stela of the same size for that matter, however, there is no direct connection between Cival Stela 2 and this cut other than the fact that Stela 2 was found to lie directly above the cut above topsoil.

Just .6 m west the stela offering, and likely dedicated at the same time, another monument and offering were made. The cut (CT 0809) for this offering was too small and too shallow to have supported a stela, and it appears to have been made for a stubby altar, the stump of which (CT 0845) was still *in situ*. This altar fragment surmounted an offering of 8 ceramic vessels arranged in a cruciform pattern. The vessels were arranged in pairs, lip-to-lip and each pair consisted of a cylinder vessel and a shallow vertical-walled bowls.

It is probable the two monuments originally placed into cuts CT 0805 and CT 0809 were contemporaneous. Both offerings cut through the same fill layer CT 0808, and both were filled with large broken stela fragments after their original monuments had been exhumed. The same cobble fill/sub-floor fill layer CT 0802 also capped both groups, indicating that both were ritually de-sanctified and then later sealed by the same floor. If contemporaneous, the two offerings may represent the introduction of the stela-altar cult at Cival and may be one of the earliest such monument assemblages documented in the Maya Lowlands.

These two monuments stood for some time, perhaps even until the end of the majority of the occupation of Cival had dispersed, before they were ritually removed and a new and final plaza floor (CT 0802) was paved over the voids left by their absence. Into the unoccupied voids that previously had supported the monuments, several fragments of stelae were deposited: on top of which, a single ceramic bowl was placed.

After the abandonment of the site, topsoil (CT 0801) accumulated and then looting took place (CT 0800).

Conclusions:

Excavations carried out on the western face of Structure 7 revealed a great deal about the structure's history and the history of the monuments dedicated to it. No fewer than five stone and wooden monuments were dedicated on the western front of Structure 7, and perhaps more. Nearly all of these monuments were dedicated with the deposition of a cache. Excavation of the large monolithic boulder CT 0844 in 2004 may reveal another offering. As Structure 7 grew, each monument was either removed or buried, and a new monument was dedicated just west of the preexisting one. Some of the monuments appear to have been contemporaneous, so that two monuments were visible during a single phase of Structure 7. The last monuments erected in front of Structure 7 likely formed a stela-altar assemblage that was completely removed and paved over by a new plaza surface. At least five plaza floors were created in the E-Group plaza; however, the relationship between the earliest floor (CT 0838 and 0837) to the chronology of Structure 7 and its monuments and offerings is as yet unclear. Likewise, the relationship between the burnt plaster floor CT 0828 and Structure 7's monuments is also unclear.

Investigations of Structure 7 itself revealed a sequence of building phases dating back to the Middle Preclassic period. The earliest version of Structure 7 appears to have been carved out of bedrock. Subsequent versions were fashioned with stone and mortar. In all, at least five phases of construction have been noted in the looters trench examinations. In its final phase, Structure 7 appears to have supported large stucco masks, as evidenced by armatures for modeled stucco. According to preliminary ceramic analysis, all phases seem to date to the Preclassic period.

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1982 *Excavations at Seibal, Department of Petén Guatemala. Major Architecture and Caches*, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Memoirs Volume 15, Number 1, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Figures

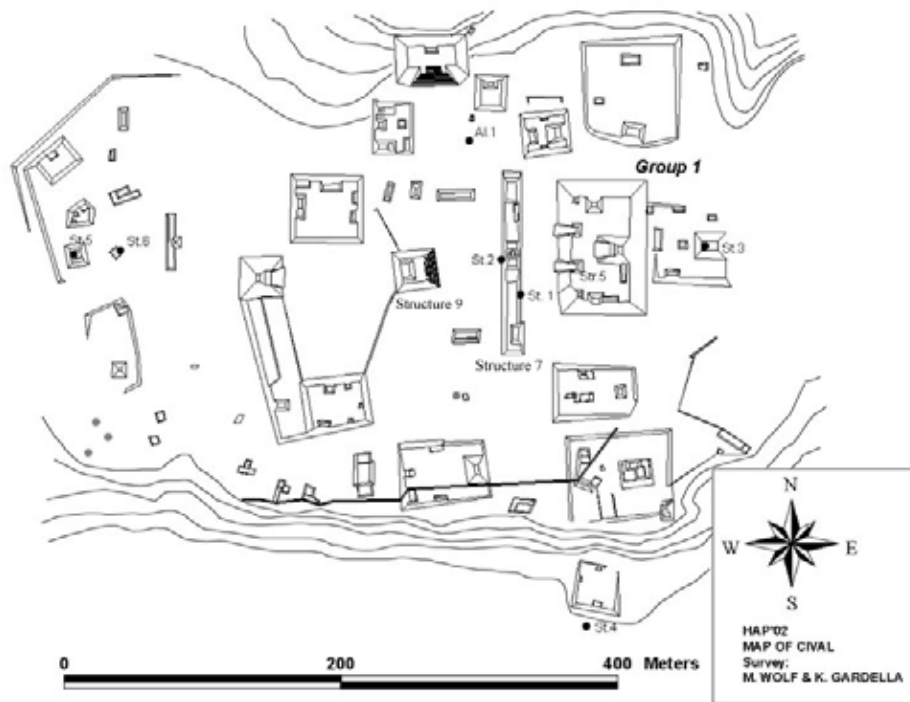


Figura 1. Map of Cival (as of 2002)

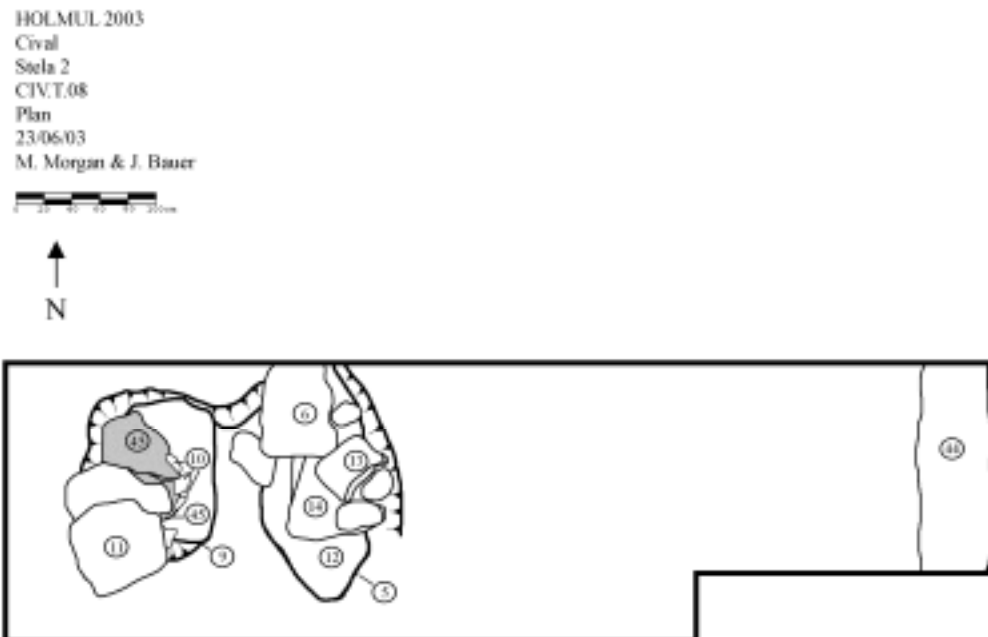


Figure 2.

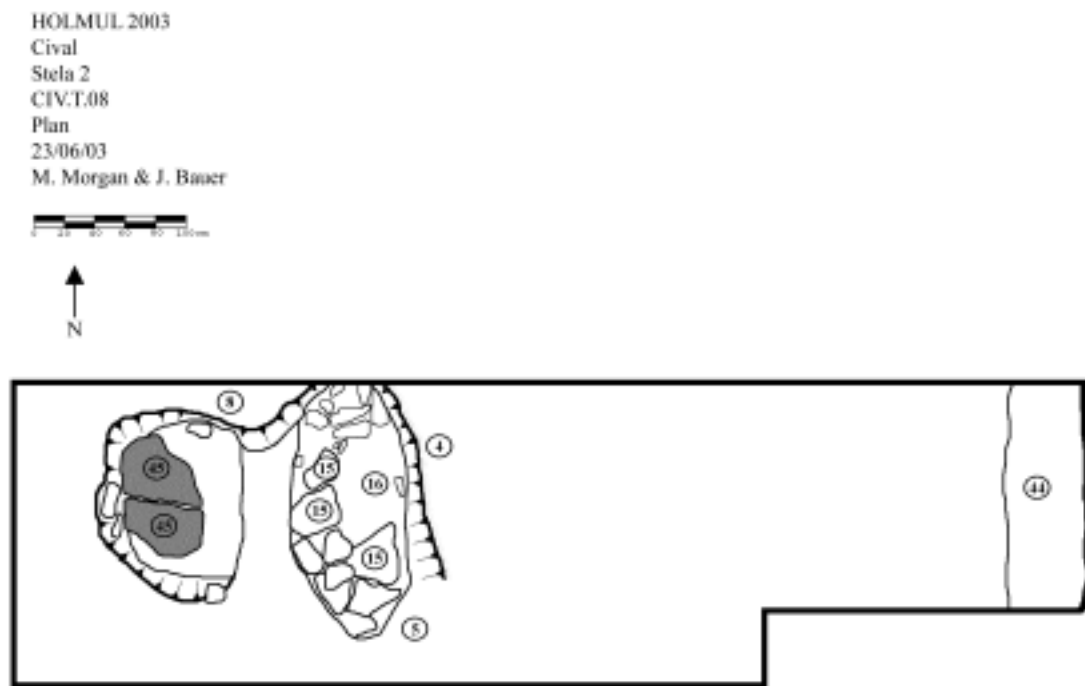


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12. Cut CT08.17



Figure 13. Cache CT08.17



Figure 14. Cuts CT08.05 and CT08.17

HOLMUL 2003
 Cival
 Stela 2
 CIV.T.08
 Plan
 23/06/03
 M. Morgan & J. Bauer

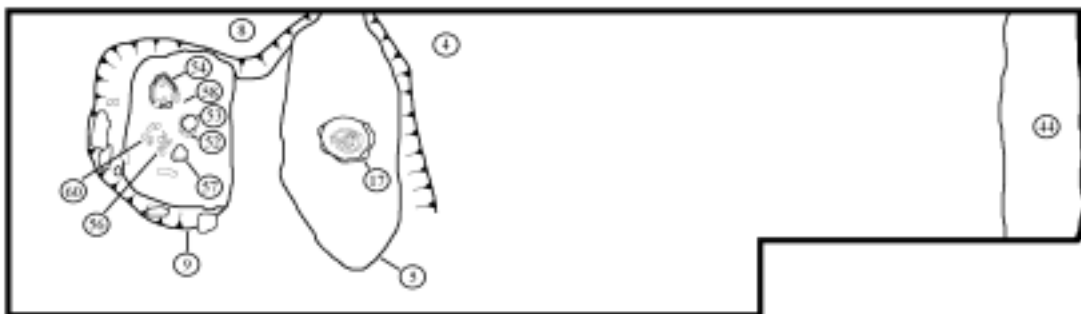


Figure 15. Cuts CT08.09, CT08.05 and CT08.07.



Figure 16. Cache CT08.27



Figure 17. Cache CT0825



Figure 18. Pital Cream jar in cut CT08.27

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Cival
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23/06/03
M. Morgan & J. Bauer

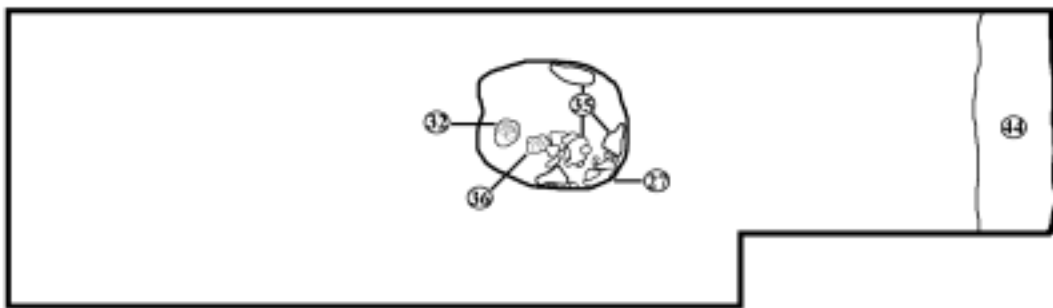


Figure 19. Offering CT08.27.



Figure 20.

HOLMUL 2003
Cival
Stela 2
CIV.T.08
Plan
23/06/03
M. Morgan & J. Bauer



Figure 21. Cuts in cache CT08.46 including post hole CT08.41.



Figure 22.



Figure 23. Cruciform cache of jars and jades (CT08.46).



Figure 24. Cache of 5 celts and 114 jade pebbles in cruciform arrangement.



Figure 26. Plan view of bedrock cut CT08.46 with central round pit where upright celts was found.

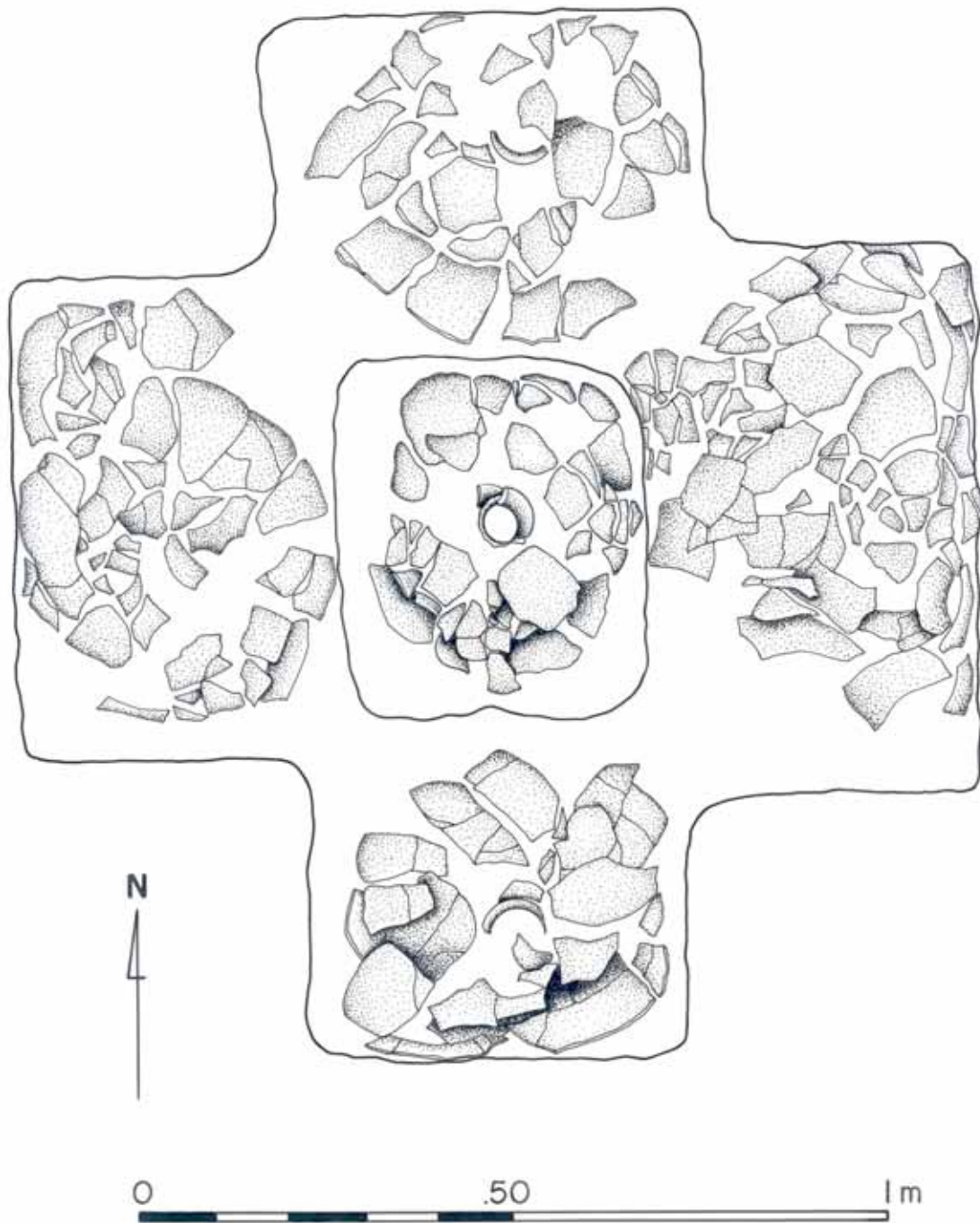


Figure 27. Plan of cache in cut CT08.46

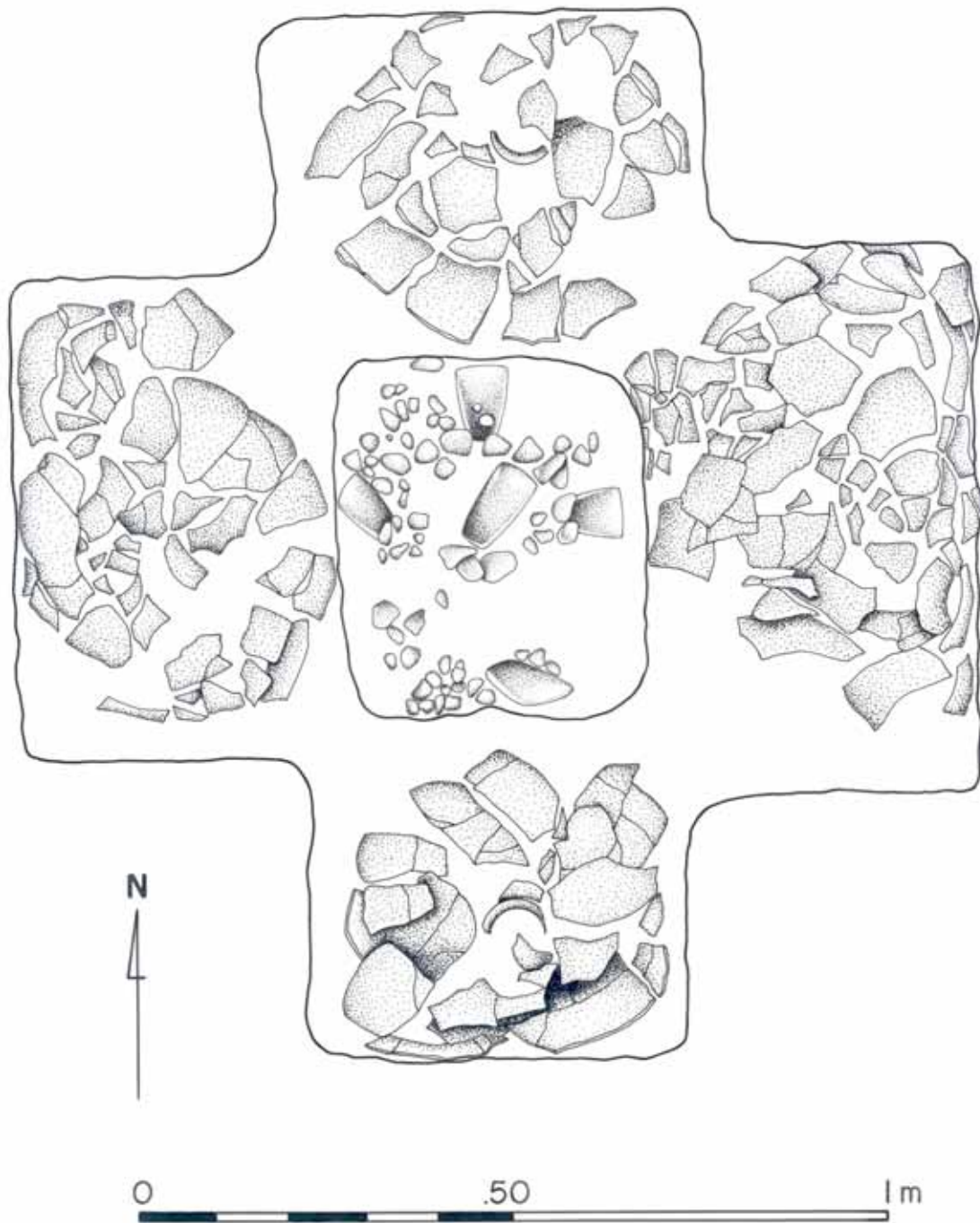


Figure 28. Plan of cache in cut CT08.46, showing jades in lowest central pit.



Figure 29. Partially reconstructed jars and lithics from offering CT08.46.



Figure 30. Artist's reconstruction of cache CT08.46. (Joel Zovar)



Figure 31. View to east of trench CT08.

HOLMUL 2003
Cival
Stela 2
CIV.T.08
Plan
23/06/03
M. Morgan & J. Bauer

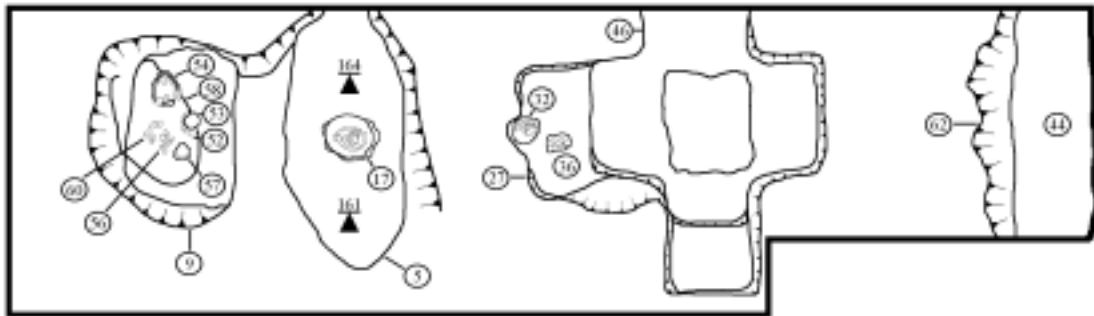


Figure 32. Excavation plan with main features cut into bedrock exposed in 2003.

Operation CT 03: Excavation of Stela 6 at Cival, Petén Guatemala

Nick Bentley

Introduction

Operation CT 03 investigated Stela 6 at Cival during the 2003 field season. Stela 6 is located at the extreme western part of the site and its fragmentary remains were strewn about the plaza in a circle approximately 4 m in diameter. Due to the badly shattered remains of the stela, a primary goal of this operation was to see if we could determine the original location and context of the stela and to see if any of its broken pieces contained inscriptions. A second goal was to dig a test unit down to bedrock in order to determine the plaza's various construction phases. Our efforts in Operation CT 03 discovered the eroded remains of at least five plaza floors, the last of which appears to have been cut for the placement of Cival Stela 6, the butt of which still remained *in situ*. Excavations to the north and south of Stela 6 failed to produce a dedicatory offering with which to date the stela.

Methodology

A 4 m x 2.5 m trench was dug around the largest pieces of the stela, and soil was removed until plaza floors were encountered. A 2 m x 0.5 m extension later was added to the south of the original trench, just behind Stela 6. Test units were dug to the north and south of the supposed stela base, and a third one was dug in the northwest corner of the trench. All dirt was screened using 6 mm screen. A profile of Test Unit-1 was drawn at 1:10 scale, and an overview of the entire trench was drawn at 1:20 scale. All of the descriptions that follow begin with the latest (most recent) event and work back to the earliest (most ancient).

Description & Interpretation

CT 0301: The first layer of the trench, bounded on the bottom by one of the several floors encountered in the structure. The sherds obtained in this area were generally too damaged by root growth to yield any valuable analysis. Soil was light brown, and contains large amounts of organic matter.

CT 0302: The highest of the plaza floors (Floor 5). Any smooth surface that this floor may have once possessed has since been completely eroded. This context was composed primarily of large cobbles held together with plaster. CT 0302 generally only appeared in the eastern half of the excavation.

CT 0303 The next highest floor (Floor 4). Composed of large cobbles and plaster. The surface of the floor was generally well preserved when found underneath floor 5, but much more eroded when directly under CT 0301.

CT 0311 The various parts of the fragmentary stela found throughout the excavation.

CT 0312 The cut for the stela butt.

TEST UNIT 1

Test Unit 1 was dug with the goal of reaching bedrock in order to determine the various construction phases of the plaza. The dimensions of the trench were 1 m x 1 m, and it was located 60 cm from both the northern and western limits of the excavation. Bedrock was ultimately reached at a level of 189 cm, and the unit yielded six additional contexts, corresponding to three additional construction phases.

CT 0304 The best preserved of all the floors in this trench (Floor 3). Furthermore, this floor was found throughout the trench, at the bottom of both Test Unit-2 and Test Unit-3. This and all subsequent contexts were found in the excavation of Test Unit-1.

CT 0307 Very large limestone rocks with light gray soil. Interpreted as a layer of fill for floor 3. Artifacts from CT 0307 have been bagged together with CT 0304.

CT 0305 A thin layer of plaster surmounting cobbles, more or less flat, but very eroded. Called Floor 2.

CT 0308 Very fine gray soil. Very few rocks, and no organic material. This context also held a large amount of small finds including beads, obsidian, and several pieces of animal bone, which contained a large canine tooth. Artifacts from CT 0308 have been bagged together with CT 0305.

CT 0306 Several large limestone rocks separating two distinctly different types of soil. Called Floor 1.

CT 0309 Very dark gray soil with bluish tints. No large rocks, but very little material passed through the screen. This context appears to have been paleosol.

CT 0310: Bedrock.

TEST UNIT 2

Test Unit 2 was excavated to see if there was evidence of any earlier cuts to the North of the stela. The dimensions of the trench were 50 cm x 50 cm, and it was located 1 m from the east wall and 1.4 m from the north wall. After 20 cm, Floor 3 was encountered, a construction phase that predates the placement of the stela.

TEST UNIT 3

Test unit 3 was dug in the southern extension in order to investigate a possible cut in Floor 5. This test unit also hit floor 3 after 10 cm, yielding little more than a small fragment of a jade bead. The dimensions of the trench were 50 cm x 170 cm, and it was located entirely within the southern extension.

Conclusion

The original location of Cival Stela 6 was near the southeast corner of Operation CT 03, and the butt of the stela was still in its original place in cut CT 0312 with stone bracing used to support the stela still in place. The fragmentary parts of the stela failed to reveal any inscriptions, suggesting that the stela was originally blank, or that any original inscriptions have since eroded.

We can determine that the date of the stela postdates or coincides with the final construction phase of the plaza floor (Floor 5). There was, however, no evidence of any caches to the north or south of the monument. We know this because test units on either side of Stela 6 encountered Floor 3: a floor that predates the stela dedication. This does not preclude the possibility that an offering was placed *beneath* the stela, as opposed to behind or in front of it.

Further research may be warranted for the context CT 0305. The presence of what was quite possibly a jaguar tooth (as well as several bones) and fine grain dirt distinctly different from the contexts below and above might indicate that this context was some kind of offering which was later capped and covered by Floor 3.

Cursory ceramic analysis has failed to place a date for the dedication of Cival Stela 6, but future investigations may yield a relative date for its dedication. As mentioned the offering dedicating Stela 6 may yet lay beneath it. Given the discoveries by Morgan and Bauer near Structure 7 (see Morgan and Bauer this volume) the likelihood that an offering exists beneath the *in situ* stela is high, especially if the stela was dedicated during the Preclassic period.

Cival Looters' Trench CL04

Daniel Leonard

Introduction

During the 2003 season I had the pleasure of working at Cival, a satellite center located 4km northeast of Holmul. My work focused on a structure, Str. 31, at the western periphery of the ceremonial sector, about 30m west of stela 6. A looter's trench, 20m long x 1 m wide x 5m high, had been cut into the east side of the mound, more or less along the center line. The goals were to clean out the trench, draw the profile, and lay out the construction sequence and temporal span of the building's use.

Methodology

Looter backdirt was removed with shovel and bucket down to the point where the original stratigraphy resumed. All dirt was screened using 1/4in. mesh. Both walls of the trench were scraped down to expose clearly the cross-section, and the south profile was drawn at 1:20 scale.

Description and Interpretation

3 construction phases were identified for this building, and based on preliminary ceramic analysis, all phases date to the Preclassic period.

Phase 1

CL4.19 (Wall 3) – Deposit: this is a north-south running wall 3 courses high made of large, cut-faced limestone blocks (55cm tall x 40cm deep) and mud cement.

CL4.5 – Deposit: construction fill consisting of very large, irregularly shaped limestone boulders mixed with all sizes of cobbles, pebbles, and loosely packed grey and light brown soil.

CL4.20 – Deposit: retaining wall made of 12 irregularly shaped limestone blocks, placed 60cm behind (to the west of) Wall 2; 130cm tall.

CL4.17 (Wall 2) – Deposit: north-south running wall, 7 courses, made of cut-faced blocks with mud cement; 136cm tall x 40cm deep.

C0L4.18 (Floor 3) – Deposit: poorly preserved lime plaster floor 6cm thick.

CL04.16 (Floor 2) – Deposit: rough, choppy lime plaster floor 4cm thick.

Phase 1 is a two-terraced structure, 2m high, made of cut limestone blocks, rubble construction fill surmounted by plaster floors. The construction sequence begins with a 1meter high retaining wall made of cut limestone blocks (CL04.19), behind which a layer of rubble (CL04.05) is laid down. The inset retaining wall (CL04.20) is then placed on top of this layer of rubble (about 3m west of Wall 3) and the

area behind it is then packed with more of the same rubble (CL04.05). Next, Wall 2 (CL4.17) is erected just in front (to the east) of the retaining wall (CL04.05), and the space between the two is filled with yet more rubble fill. Finally, Floor 3 (CL4.18) is laid on top of rubble fill (CL05.04) and overlaps Wall 3 (CL4.19), forming the first and lowest terrace. Floor 2 (CL4.16) is then laid on top rubble fill (CL04.05) and overlaps Wall 2, thus forming the second terrace of the first phase of the structure.

Phase 2

CL4.15 (Wall 1) – Deposit: north-south running wall composed of cut limestone blocks and mud cement; 7 courses, 1.64m tall. The top course forms a cornice, overhanging the rest of the wall by 10cm.

CL4.03 – Deposit: construction fill composed primarily of very large, irregularly shaped limestone blocks as well as pebbles, plaster clumps, and a layer of plaster close to the top. Medium-packed, grayish brown silty soil fills the spaces in between.

CL4.21 (Floor 1) – Deposit: very smooth, well preserved, 6cm thick plaster floor with a thin layer of brown at the top, most likely due to some burning event.

During Phase 2, a third terrace is added to the building. It begins 3m west of Wall 2 (CL4.17) and sits directly on top of Floor 2 (CL4.16). Wall 1 (CL4.15) is erected first. The space behind Wall 1 (CL4.15) is filled with large-block rubble (CL4.03), and finally Floor 1 (CL4.14) caps the construction fill (CL4.03) and overlaps Wall 1 (CL4.15).

Phase 3

CL4.14 (Floor 1a) – Deposit: very smooth, well preserved, 6cm thick plaster floor with a thin layer of brown at the top, most likely due to some burning event.

CL4.22 – Deposit: eastern wall of the tomb, made of large, flat, roughly cut limestone blocks held together with mud cement.

CL4.23 – Deposit: western wall of the tomb, made of large, flat, roughly cut limestone blocks held together with mud cement.

CL4.04 – Deposit: 10cm thick layer of probable disturbed gray soil, the remains of the fill for the burial.

CL4.24 – Deposit: capstones for the tomb made of massive, cut rectangular limestone blocks measuring approximately 80cm wide x 30-50cm wide.

CL4.13 – Deposit: rubble piled above the tomb, including massive, irregular limestone blocks, patches of plaster, cobbles, pebbles, all surrounded by a matrix of grayish brown dirt.

Phase 3 is represented by a tomb built on top of Floor 1a (CL4.14), about 5m in (west of) from Wall 1 (CL4.15). The tomb is oriented along a north-south axis; its interior dimensions are 60cm wide x 70cm high x 180cm long. A small pillow of plaster (6cm high x 15cm deep) at the south end of the tomb may indicate that the head was laid at the south. The position of the tomb is probably the center of the third

terrace. Floor 1a (CL4.14) appears to be a repaving of Floor 1 (CL4.21), and like Floor 1 (CL4.21), it shows a thin layer of burning at its top. It seems reasonable to suggest that Floor 1a (CL4.14) is associated with the construction of the tomb: before the burial of the deceased, Floor 1 (CL4.21) was repaved to form Floor 1a (CL4.14); the tomb was built, then there was a burning event, probably connected with the interment of the individual. Floor 1a (CL4.14) was laid down, then the sides of the tomb were built (CL4.22 and CL4.23). Subsequently, the body was interred and the rest of the tomb filled with rubble. The capstones were placed to cover the tomb, and finally, rubble was piled around the tomb in order to bury it.

Features

CL4.25 – Cut:

CL4.09 – Deposit: fill for cut CL4.25. Loosely packed brown dirt with many pebbles and small cobbles.

CL4.26 – Cut:

CL4.10 -Deposit: fill for cut CL4.26. Slightly darker brown soil than that in CL4.09, with an even greater percentage of pebbles and cobbles.

CL4.27 – Deposit: curved wall of large, irregularly shaped limestone cobbles place on top of Floor 3 (CL4.19) and abutting Wall 2 (CL4.17).

CL4.11 – Deposit: fill behind the curved wall (CL4.27): dark brown soil with 30-40% small cobbles and pebbles.

Several events, resulting in the above features, occurred at some point after the first phase of construction, but the relationship of these events to the other phases cannot known without further excavation. A 130cm deep cut (CL4.25) was made into Floor 2 (CL4.16) between Wall 2 (CL4.17) and the retaining wall (CL4.20). The cut was filled with soil (CL4.09) and presumably capped by a repaving of Floor 2 (CL4.16), although the section of Floor 2 (CL4.16) above the cut (CL4.25) is missing. (In the north profile the cut is capped by Floor 2 (CL4.16); in the south profile this section of the Floor 2 (CL4.16) most likely was destroyed by erosion or slumping after abandonment of the structure). Later, another cut (CL4.26) was made, presumably again through Floor 2 (CL4.16), into the preexisting pit (CL4.25/CL4.09) but this time only about 50cm deep. This later cut (CL4.26) was filled with soil (CL4.10) and again, presumably capped by Floor 2 (CL4.16) as we see in the north profile, but this section of the floor (CL4.16) is absent in the south profile.

Outside (to the east) of Wall 2 (CL4.17), a small, arching wall of stones (CL4.27) was placed on top of Floor 3 (CL4.18) with the top course abutting Wall 2 (CL4.17). The arched wall (CL4.27) enclosed a small space 80cm tall x 40cm wide, and contained a dark brown soil (CL4.11).

All three of these features may have contained burials, perhaps linked to a new phase of construction. However, no skeletal remains were recovered from these features in either the north or the south profile during cleaning. Since the looter's trench is located roughly on the east-west center line of the building, if the features had contained burials the skeletons were destroyed or removed by the looters.

CT6 Test Unit

In order to expose the entire sequence of construction for this building down to bedrock, a 1m x 1m test unit was placed into the floor of the looters trench just behind (to the west of) Wall 2(CL4.17). The south wall of the test unit is flush with the south profile of the looters trench. The unit was excavated using pick and trowel, and all dirt was screened in 1/4 in. mesh.

Description and Interpretation

Phase 3-sub

CT6.01 – Deposit: Gray, silty dirt mixed with dark brown soil, limestone pebbles, and irregularly shaped cobbles measuring 5-10cm in diameter. This level is approximately 40cm thick. Artifacts include 28 pot sherds and 1 chert flake.

CT6.02 – Deposit: light gray marly fill with lots of bits of plaster and large limestone cobbles up to 40cm in diameter. The level is 60cm thick and artifacts include 67 sherds, 1 shell bead made from a conch, and a Preclassic figurine head.

CT6.11 – Deposit: 10 cm thick layer of brown soil with 40% limestone pebbles. It is visible in the east profile but not clear in the others. This layer was missed in plan view and no artifacts were taken.

CT6.03 – Deposit: light gray soil with many plaster inclusions, lots of gravel, and limestone cobbles from 20-40cm in diameter. Level is 20cm thick and 14 sherds were collected.

Except for CT6.01, which is a mixed context of looter backdirt and Maya construction fill, Phase 3-sub contains several types of Maya construction fill that merge with the fill (CL4.05) seen in the looter's trench profile, and therefore are part of Phase 1.

Phase 2-sub

CT6.04 – Deposit: rough, gray marl layer 30cm thick with small pebbles 2-5cm in diameter. Artifacts include 22 sherds and 1 conch shell bead.

CT6.05 – Deposit: dark brown, compact soil with specs of plaster, approximately 40% pebbles, and a few cobbles measuring 10-30cm in diameter. Level is 40cm thick and 72 sherds and 7 chert flakes were collected.

CT6.06 – Deposit: dark brown, compact soil with specs of plaster, approximately 40% pebbles, and a hard, smooth layer of marl at the top. The level is 25cm thick and artifacts include 64 sherds and 5 chert flakes.

CT6.07 – Deposit: 30cm thick layer of limestone cobbles ranging from 15-40cm in diameter with very little dirt in between. Artifacts collected include 24 sherds and 2 chert flakes.

CT6.08 – Deposit: dark brown, very compact layer of soil 20cm thick with few inclusions. Artifacts include 16 sherds and 6 chert flakes.

Phase 2-sub is construction fill for floor CT6.04. Contexts CT6.05, CT6.06, and CT6.07 are similar in consistency and could have been excavated as one context. Context CT6.08 is distinct from the above fill (CT6.05/CT6.06/CT6.07), but is fill nonetheless for floor CT6.04. Floor CT6.04 was laid on top of fill (CT6.05/CT6.06/CT6.07/CT6.08). However, floor CT6.04 was absent in plan view, and only could be seen in the south section wall and the corner where the south and east section walls meet. Perhaps it was cut by the Maya, or simply it did not preserve in the small area encompassed by the test unit. Still, it represents the plaza floor that existed before the above structure was erected, and should connect with plaza floors identified in Nick Bentley's test unit at stela 6.

Phase 1-sub

CT6.09 – Deposit: plaster floor of mediocre preservation, about 3cm thick and only present in 50% of the plan.

CT6.10 – Deposit: paleosol – extremely compact layer of clay, nearly black in color, with some small cobble up to 20cm in diameter and pebbles.

Phase 1-sub represents the earliest plaza floor (floor CT6.09). It was laid down on top of the paleosol (CT6.10), which sits directly on bedrock. The Maya initially probably used the bedrock as a floor surface, then later put a small layer of fill(CT6.10) on top of the bedrock and built the first true plaster floor(CT6.09).

Conclusions

Together, excavation of CT6 and cleaning of the CL4 looter's trench revealed 5 phases of construction in the vicinity this structure: first plaza floor(CL4.09), second plaza floor(CL4.04), first two terraces of the structure, addition of a third terrace to the structure, and finally a tomb built on top of the third terrace and covered in rubble. Sierra Red sherds, many with gouged lines running around the rim, show up in all five phases. Other ceramic types present include Joventud Red, Polvera Black, and possibly Pital Creamware. Along with Sierra Red, these types, all dating to the Preclassic, occur consistently in almost all contexts of all phases. The initial impression was that the structure dated to the Late Classic based on the somewhat mediocre limestone block and mud cement construction. However, preliminary ceramic analysis suggests that all phases of construction here – the 2 plaza floors and the subsequent structure with its three phases – date to the Late Preclassic and possible earlier.

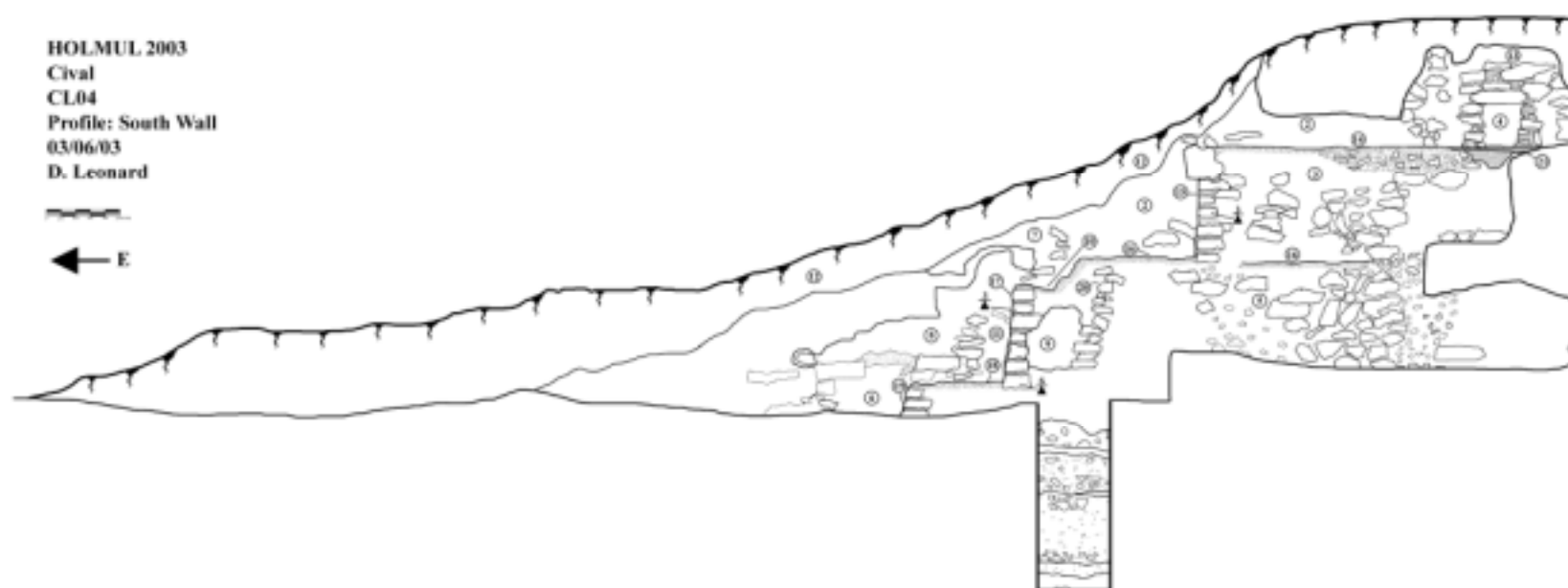


Figure. South profile of CL04 looters trench in Cival Str. 31

Excavación en la Estructura 1 de Cival

Angel Chavez Castillo

INTRODUCCIÓN

El Proyecto Arqueológico Holmul, (HAP por sus siglas en ingles), abarca en su totalidad cinco sitios o grupos de mucha importancia, y uno de estos sitios se le conoce como Cival.

El sitio de Cival, un sitio preclásico, primeramente fue reportado, nombrado y mapeado por Ian Graham en 1984 y desde el año 2001 se le han estado haciendo investigaciones por el proyecto ya anteriormente mencionado. Su centro ceremonial o ritual esta situado en el margen izquierdo del río Holmul, en una cordillera muy alta de un área de 1000 * 500m viendo hacia una pequeña aguada al sur y el río Holmul hacia el este. Dicho sitio se encuentra en las coordenadas NE – SW, aparentemente un lugar estratégico para el acceso a la ruta del río hacia el norte.

La plataforma mas alta del sitio, el Grupo 1, localizada en el extremo este de la cordillera, es una plataforma de templos múltiples midiendo 70 * 40m soportando 5 pequeños templos – pirámides. Estos cinco edificios forman en conjunto un grupo triádico lo que nos hace recordar un diseño bien reconocido para unos pocos sitios preclásicos del Petén.

DESCRIPCIÓN

La temporada del Proyecto Arqueológico Holmul se inicio el 16 de mayo del 2003. En el sitio de Cival se situaron varios puntos de investigación uno de estos puntos estaba en la Estructura 1 de la pirámide triádica anteriormente mencionada. Dicha estructura anteriormente había sido dañada por saqueadores, tiene dos enormes trincheras de saqueo, una del norte hacia el sur y la otra del este hacia el oeste.

En la trinchera que esta hacia el poniente, los saqueadores mejor conocidos como “huecheros”, dejaron expuestas las paredes de la sub estructura de la Estructura 1. La pared norte de la sub estructura se encuentra aun con estuco y tiene una pequeña ventan por la cual se nota una franja aproximadamente de unos 15cm de ancho pintada de rojo. Luego siguieron destruyendo la sub estructura y llegaron a una esquina de la pared este y le hicieron un corte de unos 20cm de ancho. En esa pequeña abertura fue que nos dimos cuenta de que la pared este de la sub estructura posiblemente podría estar decorada con un mascarón. La forma por la cual nos pudimos dar cuenta de esto es que por la abertura ya mencionad se podía meter la mano en espacios libres que había entre pared y relleno y al meter la mano se podía sentir algo moldeado en alto relieve.

La investigación en esta pirámide seria pues tratar de ver si en realidad la sub estructura de la Estructura 1 estaba decorada por un mascarón, y la única forma de hacer esto seria haciendo un túnel empezando del frente de la Estructura 1 hacia el poniente tratando de llegar al punto exacto de la abertura de la esquina ya mencionada de la sub. Para lograr esta meta tuvimos que tomar medidas exactas alrededor de la estructura. Primero se tiro una pita nivelada hacia el este, esta pita tiro de la esquina de la sub

estructura anteriormente mencionada hasta la falda de la estructura 1, luego se puso otra pita en dirección sur aquí ya solamente siguiendo la falda de la Estructura 1, al llegar a la esquina de la estructura se tiro otra pita hacia el oeste nuevamente al llegar a la otra esquina de la estructura se tiro otra pita hacia el norte, esta con la misma medida que tenia la primera pita que estaba en dirección sur, luego de haber tomado la medida se tiro la ultima pita nuevamente hacia el este. El punto de esta pita fue a dar a unos cuatro metros de la base de la estructura, al haber llegado a este punto todavía se le bajo se le bajo un metro mas para poder llegar al punto deseado de la sub estructura.

Al haber logrado este punto se midió un metro hacia el norte lo cual sería el ancho del túnel, luego de haber trazado el cuadro del túnel se le tomo fotos para referencia y el 17 de mayo del 2003 se empezó a excavar, a esta excavación se le llamo CT1. Se quito la capa de humos, en la cual no se encontró mucha evidencia de cerámica, a esta capa se le llamo contexto 1. Al haber quitado se llevo a la tierra gris ya mezclada con relleno a esto se le llamo contexto 2 y en este contexto ya se empezó a ver cerámica y como era de esperaba la cerámica es preclásica. Siguiendo la excavación en el mismo contexto, el 18 de mayo se encontraron las gradas de la Estructura 1, esto solamente a 2m 6cm del inicio de la excavación. En esta parte el túnel ya tenia 2m 36cm de alto lo cual nos hizo posible ver cuatro gradas de la Estructura 1. Luego de haberlas descubiertas se extendió la excavación un metro mas esta vez para el sur, se hizo esto por la razón de era necesario quitar las gradas para poder continuar con el túnel y era necesario dejar evidencia de la existencia de gradas por este lado de la estructura y también para ver si dichas gradas continuaban y no hacían esquina precisamente en este punto. Ya teniendo todo esto se procedió a dibujar para dejar record de las piedras de gradas que se iban a quitar de sus lugares. Se dibujo el perfil norte, planta y perfil este de la excavación. También se le tomo fotografías. Al tener todo esto hecho se procedió a quitar las gradas en el mismo metro en el que se había empezado. Dichas gradas fueron muy difíciles de quitar por la razón de estaban pegadas con especie de mezcla muy compactada de unos 40cm de ancho. A esta mezcla se le llamo contexto tres.

El 20 de mayo ya se empezó a excavar en lo que es el relleno que hay entre la ultima fase de construcción y la sub estructura. A este se le llamo contexto cuatro, en esta parte ya se empezó a ver mas cerámica siempre preclásica, esta cerámica muy bonita con engobe pero también se nota la presencia de la cerámica utilitaria. El 22 de mayo se llevo a lo que podría ser un pequeño muro de contención, este muro que era piedra sobre piedra pudo haber sido para que el relleno ya con una masa de piedras grandes no fuera a dar directamente a las gradas de la estructura. A este muro también se le tomo foto y se dibujo. Ya registrado se quito para poder seguir con la excavación del túnel.

Al tener unos cinco metros de profundidad en el túnel la visibilidad ya no era muy buena así que hubo necesidad de poner focos de luz los cuales generaban la luz por medio de una planta. Se siguió excavando pero se notaba que el túnel no estaba muy seguro, el relleno se miraba muy flojo, esto debido a que la estructura se veía aun mas debilitada con el túnel por que ya como habíamos dicho antes tenia dos trincheras de saqueo.

El 27 de mayo luego de haber excavado seis metros de profundidad en el túnel se llevo al punto que intentábamos llegar y resulto que las formas podíamos tocar por el lado de atrás era una enorme orejera de un mascarón. Lo que primeramente se encontró fue una forma como de caracol y abajo pegado a este un lazo con un nudo, todo esto tallado en alto relieve y muy bien conservado. Como esto se encontró en la esquina de la sub estructura se tuvo que seguir el túnel en dirección norte tratando de descubrir el mascarón. De este día en adelante se le fue descubriendo mas el rostro al mascarón. Se le descubrió el ojo izquierdo que lo tiene en forma de L, solamente el ojo mide 86 cm de ancho lo cual indica que el mascarón es enorme. Sobre la pestaña de este dos cachos tipo Olmeca. La pestaña esta tallada en bajo y alto relieve y tiene tallada una forma de U. Todo esto por el momento muy bien preservado con estuco. En la frente tiene tallado un ovalado. Se siguió descubriendo hacia el norte y cada día se le encontraba al sorprendente.

El relleno que se iba quitando al frente del mascarón se le llamo contexto 5 y la cerámica que se iba encontrando siempre era preclásica lo cual indica que el mascarón podría ser preclásico o quizá preclásico terminal. El mascarón solamente se descubrió hasta el inicio del ojo derecho por la razón de se hizo obligado ampliar mas el túnel por la grandeza del mascarón y se le podría derrumbar el relleno. Hasta el punto que de excavar el mascarón mide 3m 36cm de ancho lo cual nos dice que en total el dicho

maskaron podría tener 5m de ancho. Los diseños que se le encontraron al maskaron aparte del enorme ojo son dos arrugas sobre una enorme nariz, un pequeño diseño bajo el ojo una gota en la frente.

Para saber la altura del maskaron se tuvo que excavar hacia abajo siendo la orejera. Se descubrió la enorme oreja de este, la cual tiene cuatro círculos en cada esquina unido con líneas, el centro de esta también esta tallada en bajo y alto relieve y en el centro se puede observar la misma forma de U al igual que la de la pestaña. Hasta el momento tiene características similares a los maskarones del mirado, las dos U, los dos cachos sobre la pestaña, el lazo con el nudo y el caracol. Debajo de la oreja esta otra decoración que parece un signo de exclamación y luego se encontró el piso. Aquí si ya se pudo medir lo alto del maskaron y este mide 2m 78cm de alto.

Luego de haber llegado al piso se siguió excavando hacia el norte nuevamente esta vez siguiendo el nivel del piso. Se encontró la mejilla y en esta un forma como de cruz, luego descubrió bien el grosor del labio y le descubrieron los dientes que están pintados de negro. Pegado a la esquina en donde se une el labio con el la mejilla se le descubrió un colmillo como de serpiente parcialmente pintado de negro. Luego se le descubrió lo podría se la lengua pintada de rojo y si esto fuera la lengua dicho maskaron solamente tendría el labio superior por que la lengua esta pegada al piso.

El maskaron como ya habíamos mencionado a pesar la cantidad de años que tiene de estar se encuentra en muy buen estado. Las únicas partes que se encuentran deterioradas debido al peso del relleno son en parte la nariz, parte del enorme labio y la mejilla o cachete. También tiene un parte de gretaduras que se le han hecho mas que todo en la frente porque esta parte esta soportando una buen parte del relleno debido a que los saqueadores prácticamente le llegaron al maskaron por el lado este como ya habíamos mencionado. Como habíamos dicho que solamente se descubrió la tercera parte del maskaron por la razón anteriormente mencionada y también por que se supone que la otra parte tendría las mismas características, se procedió a tomarle fotos ya estando al descubierto aun que se le había estado tomando fotos conforme se iba descubriendo. Del 6 al 11 de junio se utilizo para dibujar lo que es el perfil norte del túnel lo cual incluye el perfil del maskaron, luego se dibujo el maskaron viéndolo de frente y también la planta del túnel con la planta del maskaron.

Ya habiendo hecho todo esto se vio la necesidad de que el maskaron necesitaría esta cubierto por si al caso se derrumbara el cielo del túnel y como ya iba a terminar la temporada del proyecto se procedió a ponerle soporte o pontalear la parte del túnel que esta pegada al maskaron y a este se le puso “guano” para que formara un colchón y luego se le puso tablas encima por si acaso el puntaleado fallara el maskaron siempre estuviera cubierto. El 19 de junio se cerro la investigación de este lugar mas que todo por que no se podía seguir trabajando por lo inseguro del túnel. Para que el maskaron no quedara expuesto a depredadores la boca del túnel se dejo prácticamente sellado con relleno solamente de piedras de unos tres metros de profundidad en el túnel, las gradas se dejaron cubiertas también con el relleno de piedras y luego se procedió a rellenar un poco también el lado de atrás del maskaron para que este no soportara solo el relleno.

CONCLUSIÓN

Se cree que como el sitio de Cival es Preclásico Tardío, el maskaron junto a la sub estructura pueden ser preclásico medio fechando de unos 200 a.c. y esto se puede verificar con la clase de cerámica que es en su totalidad del periodo preclásico. Se cree que el maskaron sea una representación del dios viejo que se encuentra viendo hacia la caída del sol. También se puede decir que la razón el por que esta pintado el de negro es por que esta representado la puesta del sol y se ponía la oscuridad, lo cual los mayas representaban mucho ya sea con el color negro, con monos en las paredes que están viendo hacia el poniente, y con calaveras. Pueda que este maskaron haya representado a un dios de la oscuridad por su característica zoomorfa de rostro de humano con colmillos de serpiente y pueda que la lengua sea también de serpiente.

En muchos casos los maskarones que se encuentran están parcialmente o totalmente destruidos, pero lo que este maskaron haya sido para los mayas fue de mucho importancia por que lo dejaron muy conservado al rellenar para construir sobre esta estructura o quizás el señor que mando a edificar esta

estructura no estuvo mucho tiempo gobernando y por eso el mascarón no estuvo tanto tiempo expuesto a los deterioros de la naturaleza porque fue rellenado. Todo esto tendría que ser investigado con mucho tiempo.

El 22 de junio se inició una pequeña excavación en el sitio de Lechugal ahora conocido como K'o. Esta fue una excavación de rescate en una trinchera de saqueo. Aquí los saqueadores excavaron en una estela que se encuentra frente a una pequeña estructura circular dicha estructura es circular con un muro también circular. Esta estructura también fue destruida parcialmente.

Se limpio bien lo que los saqueadores habían hecho de lo que tomo foto de referencia y se dibujo. Luego de haber hecho esto se empezó a excavar sin mover la estela y su altar, aquí la presencia de cerámica es en abundancia, pero al parecer solamente cerámica posclásica y utilitaria porque los tiestos que se recogen están muy deteriorados.

El siguiente día se llegó al piso el cual no se encuentra muy bien conservado por la razón de que esta muy cerca del humo y las raíces lo han roto. A este se le tomo fotos y luego se dibujo junto con el perfil de la estela y el altar. Ya al haber realizado esto se rompió solamente un pedazo del piso que esta pegado al perfil norte de la trinchera. Debajo del piso el cual ya es otro contexto la presencia de cerámica no es mucha. A unos cuarenta centímetros después de haber roto el piso se llegó a la roca madre y para comprobar si en realidad era esta se abrió un pequeño hoyo en la esquina de los perfiles norte y este. Se dibujaron la planta junto con la roca madre, el perfil norte mostrando los cortes, perfil este mostrando un pedazo de la trinchera de saqueo, también se dibujo el perfil sur mostrando la estela.

El 26 de junio se aterro nuevamente la pequeña trinchera a la cual se le denominó KLT2.

PLANES PARA EL FUTURO

Se supone que la sub estructura haya tenido este mascarón luego una escalinata y otro mascarón por lo cual la siguiente temporada se tratará de abrir otro túnel para verificar esto. También se cree que puede tener otros dos mas abajo lo cual implica que se tendrá que seguir el piso en el que montado el mascarón y ver en donde hace corte y luego excavar hacia abajo, en otras palabras la sub estructura podría tener cuatro mascarones y la siguiente temporada se tratará de ver si esta teoría se aplica a esta sub estructura.

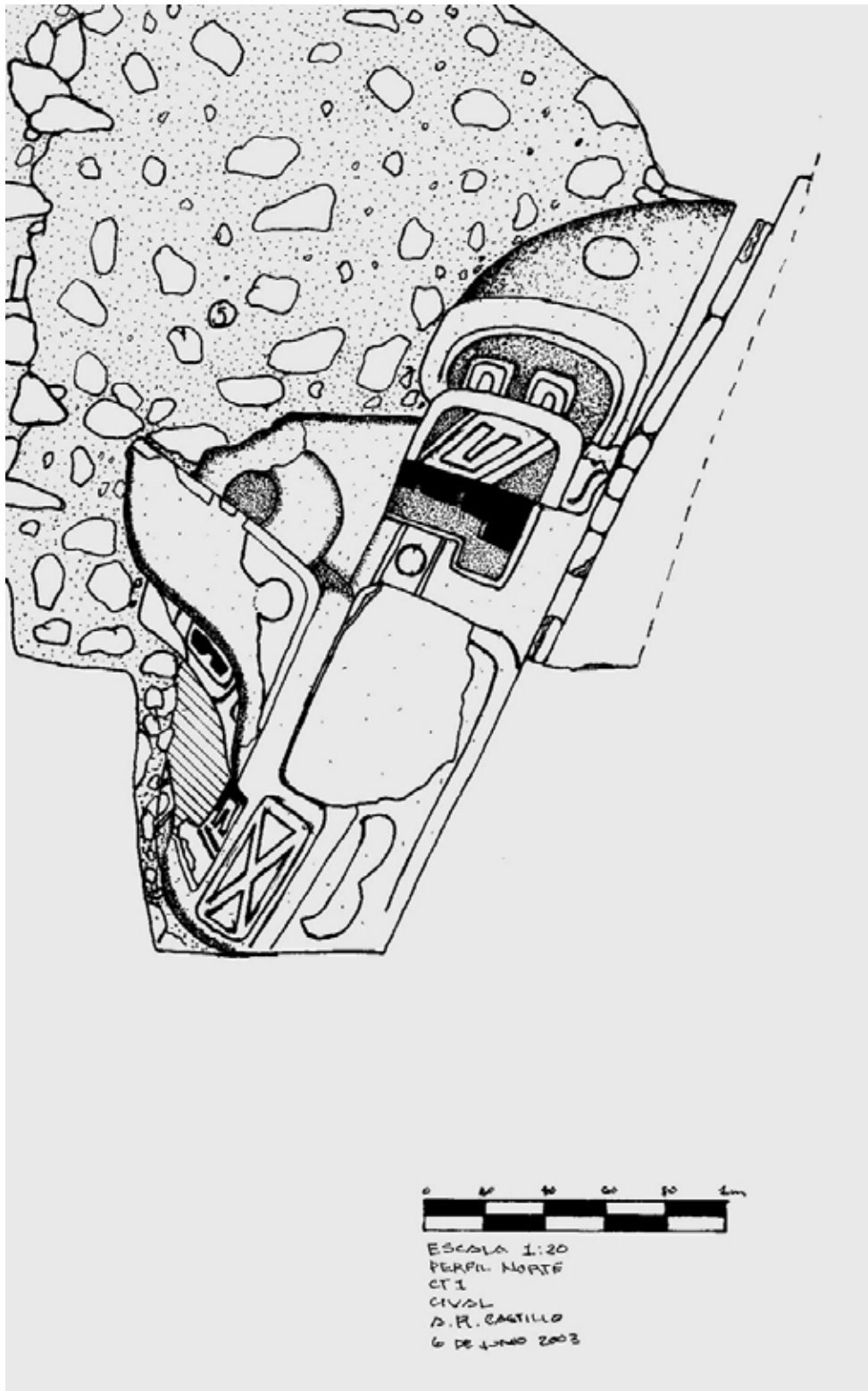


Figura 2. Perfil del Mascaron de Cival.

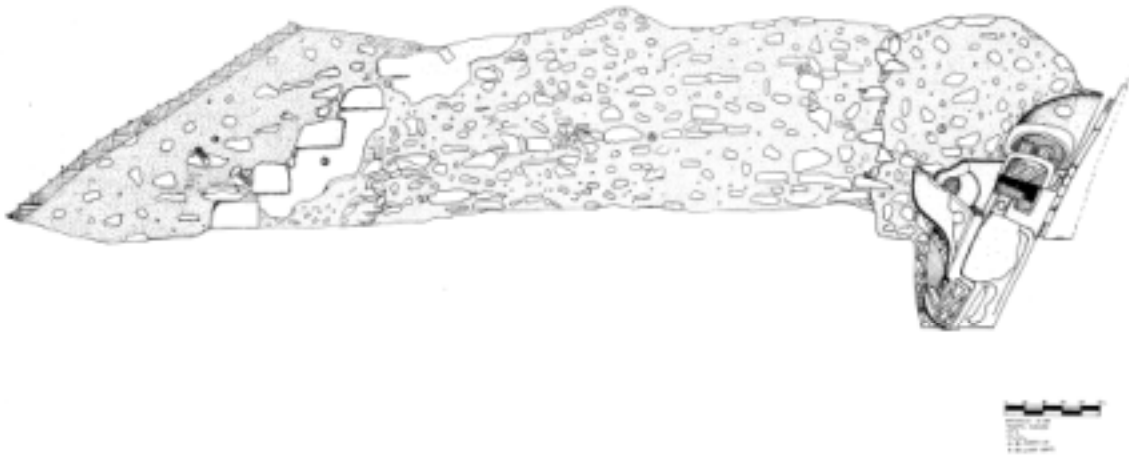


Figura 3. Perfil de la excavación CT1



Figura 4. Vista al oeste del Mascaron estucado policromo en la Estructura 1, de Cival (excavación CT01).