

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT HOLMUL, GUATEMALA.

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 2001 SEASON

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CONTENTS:

Introduction.....	3
Methodology	3
SITE CENTER.....	4
East Plaza.....	4
Main Plaza	5
Group III, Court A	6
Group III, Court B.....	6
Ball Court I.....	8
Str. 13 Elite Courtyard	9
Stela 5	9
Altar 3	10
Group II,	10
Building B	10
Building F	10
CIVAL.....	10
T’OT.....	11
RIVERONA.....	12
LA SUFRICAYA	12
K’O	13
Conclusions and future directions.....	14
Acknowledgements	16
References.....	17
Illustrations.....	18
APPENDIX A, T’ot profile drawings.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPENDIX B, misc. profile drawing.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPENDIX C, ceramics sample illustrations	62
APPENDIX D, conservation illustrations.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Cover page: Stela 5 from La Sufricaya.
Photo: Justin Ebersole.

Introduction

The present report summarizes the results of the 2001 field season of the Holmul Archaeological project at Holmul, Petén and other sites in its vicinity. This field season was made possible thanks to funding from the National Geographic Society, Vanderbilt University, the Ahau Foundation, and government permits extended by IDAEH of Guatemala. The HAP'01 team included 20 participants from US and Guatemalan academic institutions, 40 workmen and three cooks, and the help of several outside individuals. The field work was carried out between May 5th and June 30th 2001, and was followed by an extended period of data processing during the fall.

The aim of the Holmul Archaeological Project is to develop and test new interpretive models on the nature and dynamic development of ancient Maya political, economic and ideological institution by analyzing the material correlates of such institutions in the context of a medium-sized Maya city of the Classic period. This research focuses on the archaeological investigation of the city of Holmul which is a key location in the region between Tikal, Naranjo and other major Maya cities. The site was first investigated in 1911 by Raymond E. Merwin of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and it has the potential of providing an uninterrupted sequence of development from Preclassic to Terminal Classic times, of ceremonial, residential, burial and other contexts (Merwin and Vaillant 1932). We believe that through field survey and excavations, patterns of social organization, economic specialization and long distance interaction at Holmul will test new theoretical models of Classic Maya society. Specific research questions focus on the crucial historical, social and economic processes that led to the formation of dynastic lines at cities in the southern Maya Lowlands during the transition from the Late Preclassic to the Early Classic period (ca. A.D. 100-400). We are also interested in how the trajectory of architectural growth and decline of a Maya city can reflect historical and socio-economic processes that operate at different rates through time and space. How do land use and trade change over time during the Classic period? Is there any evidence from the perspective of a long-lived medium-sized city that can help us understand the Terminal Classic period in the Southern Lowlands? These topics will occupy several years of multi-disciplinary collaborative research including several sub-projects involving graduate dissertation work by Guatemalan and US students.

Methodology

The goal of the 2001 field season was to continue the program of systematic mapping and excavation initiated in 2000 in Holmul's site center and peripheral areas (Estrada-Belli 2000, 2001, 2002):

Phase 1

- 1) Exploration and detailed mapping of the site center and
- 2) of the residential areas by survey transects; use of GPS and geo-referenced aerial photos and satellite imagery to guide surveyors to important landform features and possible archaeological sites beyond the site core (Figure 1).

- 3) Investigate site chronology and architectural development through recording of looters' trenches profiles and test pit excavations

Phase 2

- 4) Mapping of outlying minor centers within a 6 km radius.
- 5) Expanded archaeological excavations through axial trenching on plaza structures and sub-floor excavations within the site center.
- 6) Excavations at outlying minor centers,
- 7) stabilizing looted or damaged structures,
- 8) analysis of artifact chronology, manufacture technology, and long-distance interaction, using ceramic and stone tool data.

Phase 3

- 9) Further expanded investigation of site center and outliers through large area clearings, trenching and sub-floor testing to include full range of architectural types, function and sizes in public and residential contexts.
- 10) stabilize architecture exposed by archaeological excavations.

During the 2001 season mapping was continued in the site center, adding detail to the maps of Groups I and III and further expanding the mapped area of the East plaza. 250 m transects were mapped from the site center up to 1 km outwards in the four cardinal directions. Mapping was also carried out at the minor centers of Cival, T'ot, La Sufricaya, Riverona, and K'o. Excavations were placed in the East and Main plazas, near Group I, in Ball-Court I, in an elite courtyard (Str.13), on Group III Courts A and B and at other locations in the site center. These produced several important discoveries, including midden deposits, plaza floors, a ball-game marker, and a complex "throne room" (Group III Court B). Excavations and looters' trenches were also recorded at La Sufricaya and T'ot, which uncovered carved monuments, large stucco masks, and mural paintings of some significance beyond the local Holmul context.

SITE CENTER

East Plaza

The East Plaza is about 1 hectare in area and 130 by 68m, bounded by Ruin X to the west, Structure 7 on the east, Structure 5 to the north and Structure 46 on the south (Figure 2, 3).

The paired layout of Ruin X and Structure 7 appears to match the model of Late Preclassic Group E at Uaxactun, and Tikal's Mundo Perdido, as well as the Late Classic version of the same model known from several Eastern Petén sites as Complejo Ritual Publico (see Fialko 1988: 13-21; formerly known as "E-Groups").

In addition, three stelae (1, 2, 12) and two altars are located in this plaza along E-W and N-S axes and three fragments of monuments are on the south end of the plaza. Stelae 2 and Altar 2 are located in front of Structure 5 at the north end of the plaza, while a small altar (#9) is located to the south end. Stela 12 is located centrally on the summit of

Structure 7 and forms an E-W alignment with the eastern doorway of Ruin X at the opposite end of the plaza. In the center of the plaza, are Stela 1 and Altar 1, oriented east-west and at the midpoint between the E-W alignment between Ruin X and Stela 12, and across the N-S axis connecting Stela 2 with Altar 9. Finally, it is worth noting that these stone monuments are located at the north, east and south end of the plaza and form a quincunx pattern with the Ruin X on the west and Stela 1 in its geometric center. At the same time, the pattern followed by the main E-W axes of the Ruin X and Structure 7 appears to be in line with the equinoctial point on the horizon.

To the north, the East plaza extends behind Structure 5, facing Group I to the west and three small structures to the east. A large multi-chambered *chultun* with an orifice of about 3.5 m in diameter is located in the center. The combined areas of the northern and southern portions of the East plaza which are separated by Str. 5 measure 2.4 hectares.

Two test pit excavations (TP 1, 2) in East plaza left unfinished in 2000 were reopened in 2001 and completed to bedrock. TP 1 was placed in front (west) of Stela 1 in the middle of the East Plaza. This unit encountered 4 plaster floors with associated pre-floor fills. A feature cut under the in situ fragment of altar 1 produced feline teeth and other animal bone fragments only. The earliest floor in the sequence measured only 2-3 cm in thickness and may date to the Late Preclassic. All subsequent floors dated to the Late Classic.

TP 2 was placed in front (south) of Stela 2 and Altar 2 on the northern edge of the East plaza in front of Structure 4. This unit uncovered the stela butt associated with the last of four plaza floors. The first floor in the sequence was thin (2-3 cm) and may date to the Late Preclassic.

In the northern half of the East Plaza a test pit investigated the nature of a large chultun/cave opening in the center of the plaza. This 1x2 m test pit failed to uncover midden deposits in the chultun but was able to ascertain that the chultun had been composed of several adjacent oval-shaped chambers radiating out from the opening, and carved into the bedrock.

Main Plaza

The main plaza is bound by Group I terrace to the north, Group 3 to the south, Ruin X to the east and a small structure to the west with a total area of 0.9 hectares.

A test unit in front of Stela 7 (west side) uncovered a large round altar measuring 2m in diameter and 25 cm in thickness. The stela was found to be lying on its back and no indication was found of its original stela butt. The altar was found to be resting on the last floor of the plaza (Terminal Classic). A small feature cut through the last floor was found off-set to the south of the altar and contained a censer pot (Pedregal Modeled: Head appliqué variety ([Figure 4](#))) decorated with red, and black-on cream paint on a God Kin mask stylistically dated to the Terminal Classic (see Sabloff 1975).

Group III, Court A

Group III Court A is a rectangular elevated courtyard whose access might have been through a ramp on the northeastern corner from the East Plaza and a narrow passage/bridge linking the northwestern corner with the adjacent Court B (Figure 5). The court is elevated 6 m above the surrounding plaza level. The west side of Court A is occupied by a 12 m high pyramid, the north east and south sides are occupied by several low range structures of apparent residential function. A massive looter's cut bisects Structure 2 (western pyramid) and was recorded in 2000 to document the 6 earliest stages of the ceremonial building from a small early Classic stucco-decorated building with apron molding and inset corners within its core which raised 3-4 m above the court (see Estrada-Belli 2000, Fig. 14).

A test pit was placed in the center of Court A, in front of Structure 2. A Terminal Classic midden was found under the humus layer up to a depth of 50 cm. One small jade earflare, obsidian blades, ball-player figurines, ocarinas, and other artifacts were recovered from this midden. Below the midden a plaster floor was found to be cut along a N-S line. Below this floor, a second floor was found to be associated with a step leading towards the east. This step is probably associated with a structure on the east edge of the courtyard to be investigated in 2002. Below this floor a third floor was found to be laid onto a thick platform fill of large limestone blocks.

Str. 44 is a 18 m-long range structure on the south edge of Court A. It was investigated by a large-area clearing excavation which uncovered a narrow central room with a central doorway, two side benches and two blocked doorways to the east and west. A rear central doorway also leads out to the steep-sloped back of the elevated Court A. The last phase of the structure appears to be associated with a termination ritual by which benches and walls were razed and buried with a fine-grained fill of gray marl. The structure construction and abandonment may date to the Terminal Classic.

Group III, Court B

Court B is a rectangular platform rising 6 m from the main plaza to the east and 12 m from the western sloping terrain. It supports vaulted multi-roomed buildings on all sides. The main access may have been from a stairway leading up the Main Plaza and through an alley (possibly vaulted, Figure 5) between two structures with two and three rooms (vaulted) facing the plaza below. This access leads into a small courtyard dominated by Structure 44 on the west. To the south of this inner court is another narrow rectangular court between two long range structures. Another open but narrow court exists between the back of Structure 44 and the western edge of the elevated platform.

Excavations in Court B were designed with the goal of determining the function of its main buildings, mainly Structure 43, and the possible nature of this entire elevated courtyard as an elite "palace complex".

A set of shovel test pits were excavated along the outer southern and western slopes of Court B in order to locate possible midden deposits. One such location was found near the southwestern corner of the court. It produced large quantities of fine Late and Terminal Classic polychrome ceramics, including Saxche/Palmar polychromes, and a cache of obsidian blades and cores in an almost complete red-slipped narrow-necked jar.

Large clearing operations were initiated in the four main rooms of Str. 43. Structure 43 is a 15x6 m rectangular vaulted structure rising 3 m above the courtyard level (both to the east and west). It has two main N-S oriented rooms in the center with a main doorway facing to the east side of the court and two side rooms with doorways to the north and south. These two side rooms appear to be later additions to the core of the building.

In the eastern room, two L-shaped benches are tucked against the N and S corners flanking a doorway into the western (rear) room ([Figure 6](#)). In the middle of this doorway is a short (30 cm) step-up decorated with two stuccoed tapered legs (Bench 3, [Figure 7](#)). Behind this doorway, in the western room three of the originally four cord holder insets were found, one of which held its original bone cord-holder.

The tapered legs in the low doorway Bench 3 and the cord-holders suggest that the bench may have been used as a *throne* from which the occupant could have been seen from the outside of the structure within the courtyard.

A few (50 cm) centimeters inside the western room, Bench 3 abutted an earlier bench with a overhanging lip and a further step up from the level of Bench 3. Upon excavation of its front (east side), the red-painted front of this bench (Bench 2) was uncovered. The front of Bench 2 occupied the center of the room from side to side. On the southern corner of the western room a further step up from Bench 2 was noticed. Excavation of its front leaved this step to be a 60 cm high bench (Bench 1) abutted by Bench 2. The front of Bench 1 was decorated with red paint over two large tapered stuccoed legs and a central trapezoid niche and an overhanging lip ([Figure 8](#)). Traces of burned copal and red-paint were found on the top of Bench 1. A small blocked-out window is visible in the southern wall against which Bench 1 rests.

On the southern side of Structure 43, and abutting the southern wall of the western room an additional room was built blocking the window over Bench 1. This southern room was almost completely occupied by a large bench with slanted masonry built and stuccoed side-arms ([Figure 9](#)). The front and sides of the bench seems to have undergone several remakes and additions, finally resulting in two side benches occupying the areas to the east and west of the central bench (Bench 4). On the eastern side of Bench 4 and tucked against the northern wall of the room a round feature was found to have been cut into the bench/floor surface. This feature contained the buried skeleton of a 6-10 year old individual in flexed position with head facing east and body flexed on the left (north) side ([Figure 10](#)). No grave goods were associated with this skeleton but a slump of plaster was found in front of the face. In the gap between the face and the plaster slump textile impressions were noted and a mold was taken with dental plaster

revealing a possible textile-lined wooden mask placed in front of the face. The exact nature of the mask may be revealed by further analysis of its cast.

On the northern side of Structure 43 a room was added to the outer wall of the central rooms. A large bench with masonry slanted and stuccoed side-arms occupies the center of this northern room facing a northern doorway (Figure 11). On the west doorjamb, a niche was found to contain charred copal. The excavation of the area in front of this room revealed a stucco-ed talud sloping from the doorway to a black-painted floor two meters below, thus access to the north room was precluded directly from the north of the building.

Abutting the northern talud of the building were the foundations of a building which extended to the northeast of Structure 43 and which appears to be covered by a later building on the north side of the courtyard, as well (Figure 12). This find stratigraphically puts the building and use of Structure 43 relatively early within the occupational history of Court B during the Late Classic. Additionally, large numbers of artifacts recovered from the tumble inside all rooms included abundant Saxche/Palmar polychrome sherds and rare Pabellon Modeled-carved Fine-orange barrel sherds (Figure 13) indicating the possibility that the rooms of Structures 43 were used as garbage dumps during the Terminal Classic period by the occupants of nearby structures.

The sequence of benches in the central rooms within Structure 43 can be summarized as follows. First an elaborate *throne* bench with large tapered legs, a central niche and overhanging lip was built against the southern wall of the inner western room. A possible additional and yet undiscovered bench may exist in the unexcavated half of the western room mirroring Bench 1 in position and decoration. At a later time, a new *throne* bench was built in the center of the room and in axis with the doorway (Bench 2). Then, a new and third bench was placed at a lower level from Bench 2 within the door pillars of the central doorway between the western (inner) and eastern rooms of Structure 43. From this low bench the occupants may have been more visible from the lower level of Court B. Additionally, L-shaped benches in the eastern room may have been used by attendants to the occupant(s) of the inner room's throne bench. At a later time, two new throne rooms were built on the north and south end of the central rooms with two large benches with larger-than-life side-arms. Access to the north and south rooms was possible through walkways along the structure's corners and large doorways facing the small court areas to the north and south of the structure.

At the end of the 2001 excavation, rooms and benches were covered with tarps and a thin layer of file soil to protect the stucco and painted decorations. A large thatch roof was built over the entire structure (see Appendix D).

Ball Court I

Structures 11 and 12 are located about 100 m west of Group 1 along the edge of a causeway connecting Group I and Group II. These two structures are N-S oriented, have

identical dimensions (17x10x4m) and are separated by a 5 m-wide alley. Excavations for a 1 m wide trench for the length of the alley located a ball-game marker in its center. The round marker measures 70cm in diameter and 30 cm in thickness and was found shattered in several conjoined pieces and propped up onto its side facing southeast and resting on the last floor of the alley. The marker displays a ring of eroded glyphs and an eroded central relief of difficult interpretation, possibly including two standing figures and a central skull-shaped altar (Figure 14).

The long trench in the alley uncovered a total of three plaster floors below the humus, in a small 1x1m sounding on the south end; bedrock was not reached.

The clearing of a 1 m wide trench on the slope of the western Structure 12 uncovered the relatively well preserved stucco-ed facing of the first step (60 cm) up from the alley followed by a 2.5 m long talud with a 20 degree slope angle, then a 75 cm deep bench, a 75 cm high wall sloping at a 55 degree angle and finally a 1 m high wall at 60 degree angle (see drawing Figure 15). A looters' trench penetrates Structure 11 slightly to the south of the central marker revealing an earlier construction phase for this building, which also appears to have a ball-court slope and bench façade.

Str. 13 Elite Courtyard

Adjacent to Ball-Court I and to the west of it, is a C-shaped courtyard open-ended to the south. Structure 13 is the main building of this courtyard enclosing it on the north side and measuring 32x7x3m. The rubble on the summit of this structure revealed the possible existence of collapsed vaults and an excavation was placed on its center. Below the rubble of the top of the structure a small bench was uncovered which had been partially cut on its northern half, or the back of the room. The excavation did not probe below the floor of the room and it failed to uncover doorjambs or a stairway leading to the room and bench, however, three dry walls were placed on the southern face of the structure and will be investigated in the future.

A test excavation on the patio floor in front of structure 11 uncovered the buried remains of a wall built with large rectangular dressed stones later covered by the patio floor and an ash-rich midden deposit. The midden contained large quantities of mostly fine quality ceramics, including polychromes with PSS inscriptions and complex designs (some partially reconstructable), figurines and stone tools. These material may date to the Terminal Classic (Figure 16).

Stela 5

Stela 5 is a roughly carved stone stela standing upright 75 m west of Group III in a wide sloping area leading toward Structure 8, but not directly associated with any particular structure (Figure 17). It measures 3.16x1.6x0.5m and it was found to be set in a 0.45m deep cut into the final floor of the plaza/platform. Two earlier plaster floors were uncovered in this excavation below the final floor. There was no cache associated with the stela and ceramic material found in the fill may date to the Terminal Classic.

Altar 3

Altar 3 is a large round stone found in front of the western stairway of Group I. It measures 1.75 m in diameters and 0.45 in thickness (Figure 18). Two floors were recorded above bedrock in an excavation in this locality. The altar was laid onto the second and final floor and a step was found behind it (east) perhaps as part of the Group I stairway, also associated with the second (final) floor.

Group II,

Building B

Building B is a small pyramid temple structure located on the northern end of Group II, behind Building A and to the west of Building F. Its rooms and sub-floor burials and tomb chambers were left opened to the elements since the Harvard 1911 excavations. The rear of the temple presents an Early Classic vaulted room with well known stucco frieze with 'lak' motives and narrow windows. Recently, the tree cover of the temple had been removed and the frieze was once again exposed to the elements (see Merwin and Vaillant 1932, plate 9a, Estrada-Belli 2000, Fig. 13). In 2001 cleaning of the excavation rubble was carried in the interior temple vaulted rooms. Interior walls were buttressed with timbers and were roots removed to prevent water from penetrating the walls. Finally a thatch roof was placed over the entire area of the temple rooms (see figures in Appendix D).

Building F

Building F is a 4-5 m high mound on the northeastern corner of Group II platform. A tunnel on the eastern side was investigated and a profile drawn (Figure 19). Eight consecutive construction phases were noted on the profiles of the tunnel. The earliest construction phases are characterized by large dressed stone blocks and stucco facing with traces of red paint. Large numbers of Sierra Red sherds were found in the interior of the tunnel suggesting the date of the earliest construction within the Late Preclassic phase.

Cival

Cival is a large ceremonial center located on a hill overlooking the northeastern shore of a natural pond (*cival*) 6.5 km due north of the Holmul site center (Figure 1). It was visited and mapped originally by Ian Graham in 1984 (pers. comm. 1992). The 1000 x 500 m area mapped in 2001 revealed massive architecture arranged in E-W site axis including over 50 large structures, pyramids, platforms, and range structures. The main group is a 27 m-high triadic-temple platform measuring 70x40m in size on the summit (Figure 20). The back of the eastern building (Str. 1) is looted showing the outer wall of a sub-structure with a masonry vaulted room and a red-painted window (Figure 21).

Below the buried rubble and in the front of the buried room the looters' cut bisected three stucco-faced steps of the outer façade of the sub-structure. On one step, the fragment of stucco-ed mask was noted.

In the plaza below the western front of Group I is a 120 x 10 m long range structure with three main rises on its summit, on the center and ends. This appears to be laid out as a mirror image of Uaxactun E groups or Classic Period CRP due to its western orientation.

A looters' trench in Structure 5, located on the summit of the western stairway of Group I revealed the buried remains of a well-preserved red-painted stucco-ed step of the façade of a sub-structure of possible Late Preclassic date (Figure 22). To the west of this complex is a succession of two pyramids (Str. 9 and Str. 20) 15 and 18 m in height, facing east.

A tall pyramid (Str. 41) is located on the northern edge of the site core measuring 17 m in height.

T'OT

The site of T'ot ("edible snail", a.k.a Caracol,) is located exactly 4 km southwest of the Holmul site center on a narrow ridge at 160-170 m elevation overlooking the Holmul river to the east and the Bajo de La Lucha to the west and south. The T'ot site center stretches over a 500 x 300 m area on a SW-NW axis following the natural topography of the ridge.

Structure 1 is a 15m-high pyramid on the eastern edge of the main site core. In 2001 it was found to have been cut by 8 separate looters' tunnels of which five were thoroughly investigated by recording the stratigraphy on profile drawings and collecting artifacts samples. This structure was found to contain five subsequent stucco-faced building stages. The second in the sequence, was found to be decorated with a partially preserved stucco mask on the south side. A large round ear flare and a modeled moustache modeled on the façade were visible in the narrow tunnel indicating that the mask may have represented a "Sun God" face (Figure 23, see also Appendix A). The first sub-structure was build on a thick layer of dark-gray/black clay and it contained several sherds of orange bowls with everted rims similar to the Savana Orange type of the early facet of the Jenny Creek complex from Barton Ramie (Gifford 1976: 73) which may date the first T'ot building to an early facet of the Middle Preclassic period (ca. 800-600 B.C.).

The main plaza at T'ot measures about 70 x 65m and is bounded by a 4 m high platform group on the north, a tall structure to the west and a long range structure to the east. This arrangement closely resembles the Group I/East plaza complex at Holmul site center and Group B at Naranjo. The western pyramid-eastern range structure also recalls the Uaxactun E group and CRP layouts of eastern Petén mentioned earlier for Holmul's

East plaza. Two rectangular plain stela were found lying flat in the main plaza. The T'ot site center was mapped by Marc Wolf and Kristen Gardella (map in preparation).

RIVERONA

Riverona is a minor center located 3.4 km south of Holmul site center on a hillock in close proximity to the Holmul river course. Three main groups of structures are laid out on a 400x150 m area on a SE-NW ridge mapped in 2001. Three main pyramids (up to 8 m high) and four plain stelae were located at this site. The Riverona site center was mapped by Marc Wolf and Kristen Gardella (map in preparation).

LA SUFRICAYA

The minor center of La Sufricaya, found by Ian Graham in 1984 (Graham, pers. comm. 1992) was re-located 1.2 km west of the main Holmul plaza. The area mapped in 2001 measures 1000 x 500m in size although much of the built space is confined along a (150 m) narrow band along a SW-NE ridge. The site comprises a dense cluster of elite residence groups and small temples around an elevated platform supporting an 11 m-high temple-pyramid. Scattered in the main courtyard were seven fragmentary stelae, of which five were carved (Figure 24).

Stela 5 (Figure 25) has a Long Count date of 8.19.6.8.5 8 Chicchan 3 Xul (August 6, A.D. 422); the rear (eastern) face of the stela has five or six rows and three columns of eroded glyphs. Two crania associated with Late/Terminal Classic material were deposited in front of the stela in a shallow pit covered by limestone slabs, indicating that the stela had been repositioned with a new sacrificial offering. Nikoali Grube read an accession sign and the name of the Holmul ruler Ah-woj-sal on the main stela face (Grube pers. comm. 2001). Stela 5's main fragment bearing the Long Count inscription was transported to Melchor and it is temporarily housed there of IDAEH.

La Sufricaya Stelae 1 features a ruler in profile wearing a God K headdress and holding a shell-disk headdress on his right hand. Style and posture recall Stela 31 at Tikal (Figure 26). Stela 1 was first reported by Ian Graham (Mathews 1985). A photograph of its main fragment was recently published by K.H. Mayer (2001).

Stela 2 as found on the spoil heap of a looters' trench into Structure 2 at La Sufricaya (Figure 27). Structure 2 is a 4 m high building with a sub-structure with a vaulted room covered by later construction fill (Figure 26). Stela 2 features complex Early Classic scroll designs, braided motif, trefoils and other decoration in red-painted stucco (Figure 28). Stela 2's only fragment was transported to Melchor and is temporarily housed care of the IDAEH. All other monuments have been covered by thatch roofs and remain in their original locations.

Stela 3 is Early Classic in style and features two left-facing legs and feet with sandals on an earth band motif (Figure 29). The left side of Stela 3 may have the carving

of a mask. This stela was photographed by Merwin in 1911 and since then was thought to be at Cival, however 2001 excavation evidence shows that it was placed in its current location in the Late/Terminal Classic.

Stela 6 was found broken in several pieces in front of a small house-mound south of Str.1 a La Sufricaya. On Stela 6's main fragment Nikolai Grube identified seven columns of glyphs with a possible Long Count 8.17 coefficient and the name Siaj Kak. Grube suggests that this monument might commemorate the visit of Tikal/Teotihuacan warlord Siaj Kak (Smoking Frog) to a local (yet unnamed) local (Holmul) ruler (Figure 30). These carved monuments suggest intense royal activity at Holmul early in the Classic Period, when only a handful of other Maya cities, among them Tikal, Uaxactun, Copan, Balakbal, Tres Islas and El Peru (Mathews 1985) are known to have dated monuments.

Under the rubble of Structure 1 at La Sufricaya a 3 x 2 m section of wall from an earlier building phase, exposed by a looters' tunnel, revealed red, yellow and black lines and figures (Figure 31, 32). The composition is divided into two parts, with small 10 x 20cm red-lined frames on the left, and 5 stacked 20 cm-high registers, each with five figures, on the right. All 25 individuals are seated and face left (west); each holds spear-thrower darts, some with trilobe-shaped points. Most wear a drum-shaped headdress, while some have eye-goggles and feathers; the outfit also includes knee-pads, thigh bands and belts with feather tails. The body proportions are unusual for Classic Maya art, showing traits more common in coeval central Mexico (Figure 32, 34). On the left, one standing figure wears a jaguar-skin loincloth and tail, another a ball-game yoke around the waist. Both are in recognizably Maya style (Figure 34).

The depiction of Teotihuacan warriors and Maya elites dressed as ball-players on this mural might show ceremonies associated with the arrival of foreigners; the only comparable example of such a representation is incised on a black vessel found in Tikal Burial 10, the ruler "Curl Nose" who died in A.D. 420 (Harrison 1999: 87, Figure 49). A fragmentary Teotihuacan-style cylinder vessel (Urita Gouged Incised, see Culbert 1993, Fig. 124a, PD 22) found on the room floor dates the termination ritual which buried the room to the fifth century A.D. (Figure 36) A green obsidian blade found in the ball-court near Structure 1 shows contact with central Mexico.

K'O

The site of K'o (a.k.a. "Lechugal") was known from local informants during the 2000 season. It is located 4.6 km southeast from the Holmul site center on a SW-NE trending ridge overlooking the bajo El Jobal and the arroyo leading to Yaloch to the east. Although, it was not mapped in 2001, this site appears to be the largest of the minor centers so far located in the 4-5 km radius of Holmul (Cival is not included in this radius). It has a large elevated N-S plaza with tall masonry-vaulted building upon massive platforms. The main plaza is bound by tall range structures on the east, north and south sides. A tall pyramid and a ball-court are located further to the east of the main plaza. To the west of the main plaza are two stela. K'o's Stela 1 is lying flat on its narrow

side in a partially excavated looters pit and may have carving on its main face, although closer inspection was not carried out.

A looted vaulted tomb was noted in a 4-5 m tall building to the west of the main plaza and will be further explored when the site is more thoroughly investigated by mapping and test excavations in the forthcoming 2002 season (Figure 37).

Conclusions and future directions

An intensive field season in 2001 uncovered important architecture and monuments at Holmul and the nearby minor ceremonial centers of Cival, T'ot, Riverona, Sufricaya, and K'o. The main groups and plazas at Holmul and T'ot appear to follow a similar pattern. The East plaza layout recalls the CRP pattern of ceremonial centers elsewhere in eastern Petén (Fialko 1988). The pattern of CRP plaza bound by a northern acropolis at Holmul (Group I and East Plaza) and T'ot (in smaller scale) is found at Naranjo in Group B.

Ashmore (1998) has proposed the hypothesis that replication of major architectural layouts at sites within a regional settlement system might indicate political affiliation of smaller centers to a higher order center. The replication of the plazas and political affiliation hypotheses of T'ot to Holmul are supported by the smaller size of T'ot and its proximity to Holmul. Similarly, Holmul (may be of smaller size than Naranjo and it) is located only 17 km from Naranjo, a distance that is less than the average 28-30 km distance among major NE Petén centers. Thus, the replicated patterns and the proximity of T'ot, Holmul and Naranjo may indicate political affiliation across three centers, at three different tier-levels of a hypothetical political system centered at Naranjo in the Late/Terminal Classic (see case of Xunantunich and Naranjo in Ashmore 1998).

Alternatively, it is interesting to note that the monumental record for Naranjo after the end of the eighth century is slim while at Holmul most monuments and major architecture may date to the ninth century. Thus, the similarity of the Holmul and Naranjo layouts may indicate a shift in location of royal capitals during the Late/Terminal Classic from Naranjo to Holmul. The Naranjo to Holmul capital shift that may find an antecedent in the early surge of monuments at La Sufricaya, and a possible La Sufricaya-Holmul capital shift, as well. It is expected that further research at Holmul and Naranjo will help evaluate these hypotheses.

The map of the site center was expanded to include much of the southern edge of the east plaza and more architectural detail of Groups I and III. Four 250 m wide transects were carried out to the north, east and south to 1 km distances. From the transects we have learned that the settlement is rather sparse in the first 800 m from the main groups, with scattered elite architecture, but becomes more dense toward the 1 km marker. At the particular 1 km distance, along each of the four transects, a larger elite group with an eastern shrine and one or more plain stelae was found (Gonzalez et al. forthcoming).

Excavations in the site center focused on the Main and East plazas, Group III (Courts A and B), on several monuments, on the ball-court and on a high-end elite group (Strs. 13-15). The East plaza test pits uncovered an initial leveling of the area in the Late

Preclassic and three construction stages dated to the Late Classic. The last floor and all tested plain stela monuments and a censer cache near Stela 7 were laid in the Terminal Classic

A test pit on the west of Group I revealed three construction phases of the plaza floor which may coincide with an equal number of building stages for the massive platform of Group I, as well.

Excavations in Group III Court B uncovered a sequence of five well-preserved masonry thrones pertaining to a special function structure, a *throne room* building, dated to the Late Classic. The burial of a child was found on the floor of one of the rooms. Investigations in 2001 of this structure will focus on the outer facades (north, east, and south) and earlier stratigraphic deposits below the interior floors. The size and complexity of the thrones in this structure suggest that it may have been used by a ruler of royal status, rather than a noble of lesser status and therefore that Holmul may have been the seat of a royal dynasty in the Late Classic period.

Further insights on royal activities at Holmul came from the peripheral site of La Sufricaya where several Early Classic monuments were found. The carved monuments hint at an early flourishing of Holmul's dynastic line and possible links to Tikal and Teotihuacan visitors. The presence of Teotihuacan warriors painted in one of the La Sufricaya structures further indicated a strong link between Teotihuacan-Tikal and the emerging Holmul dynastic line.

The forthcoming 2002 field season will focus on several research points stimulated by the 2001 finds. 1) Testing within and around Str. 43 to gather evidence on the chronology and function of the Group III palace complex. 2) Expanded clearing and deep sounding in Group Court A to explore the site's earliest architectural phases (see Early Classic temple in Str. 2 found in 2000); 3) Testing in Group II and nearby elite residential court (Str. 13). 4) Expanded testing of La Sufricaya plazas and major architecture, including areas in association with monuments. 5) Further testing of interior and exterior decoration of La Sufricaya Str.1. 6) Systematic recording of Str. 1 mural painting with a multi-spectral camera. 7) Testing of outlying elite groups at 1 km distance 8) Clearing of the stucco-ed mask inside T'ot's Str. 1 by way of tunnels. 9) Testing of plaza and looters tunnels at Cival, T'ot and K'o. 10) Most importantly, during the 2002 season extensive analysis of ceramic artifacts from the last three seasons will be carried out by Nakum project's director Lic. Bernard Hermes (for a preliminary ceramic analysis see also Kosakowsky 2001).

It is hoped that continued research at Holmul and its territory will help document further evidence of early and Late Classic public and residential architecture and associated monuments. These new data will ultimately allow us to gain broader insights into the dynamics of social, economic and ideological institutions within Classic Maya society.

Acknowledgements

We thank our sponsors the National Geographic Society, Vanderbilt University, and the Ahau Foundation and especially Prof. Norman Hammond, Dr. George Stuart and Dr. Peter D. Harrison for their support of the 2001 research. We are also very grateful to the Department of Archaeology at Boston University for initial support of this project in 2000 before it moved to Vanderbilt University with its director. Our heartfelt thanks to the Jefa de Departamento de Monumentos Prehispanicos of IDAEH, Guatemala Licda. Nora Lopez Olivares, and inspectors Bertila Bayley, Gustavo Gomez, and Francisco Moro for facilitating our work. The 2001 season benefited from the collaboration of Dr. Nikolai Grube and the participation of Ryan Mongelluzzo, Justin Ebersole, Katie South, Jason Gonzales, Marc Wolf, Kristen Gardella, Dan Slater, Emily Dawson, Megan Hoffman, Molly Morgan, Angel Chavez, Samuel Vasquez, Mario Penados, Enrique Monterroso, Luis Salazar, Mynor Silvestre, and Britta Watters. We are grateful to Mr. Ian Graham, Dr. Clemency Coggins, Dr. David Stuart, and Lic. Bernard Hermes for their invaluable assistance and insightful comments. We also thank the Blanco family of Melchor for their hospitality. A very special thank you to Mr. Julio and Lyn Maldonado.

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Illustrations

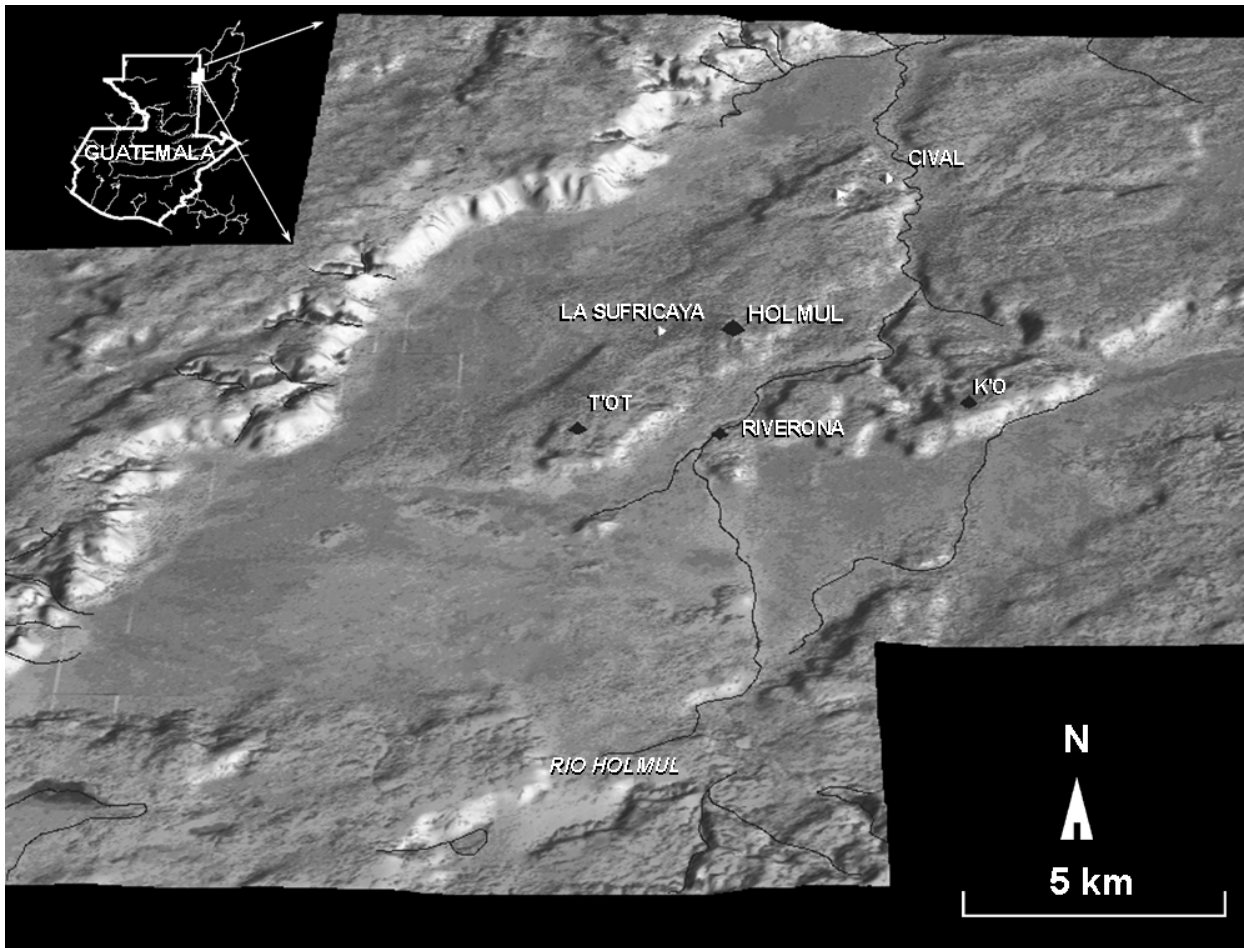


Figure 1. 3-D view of the Holmul environmental setting. Landsat image draped on surface model obtained from 1:50000 topographic maps. Sites investigated in 2001 are noted.

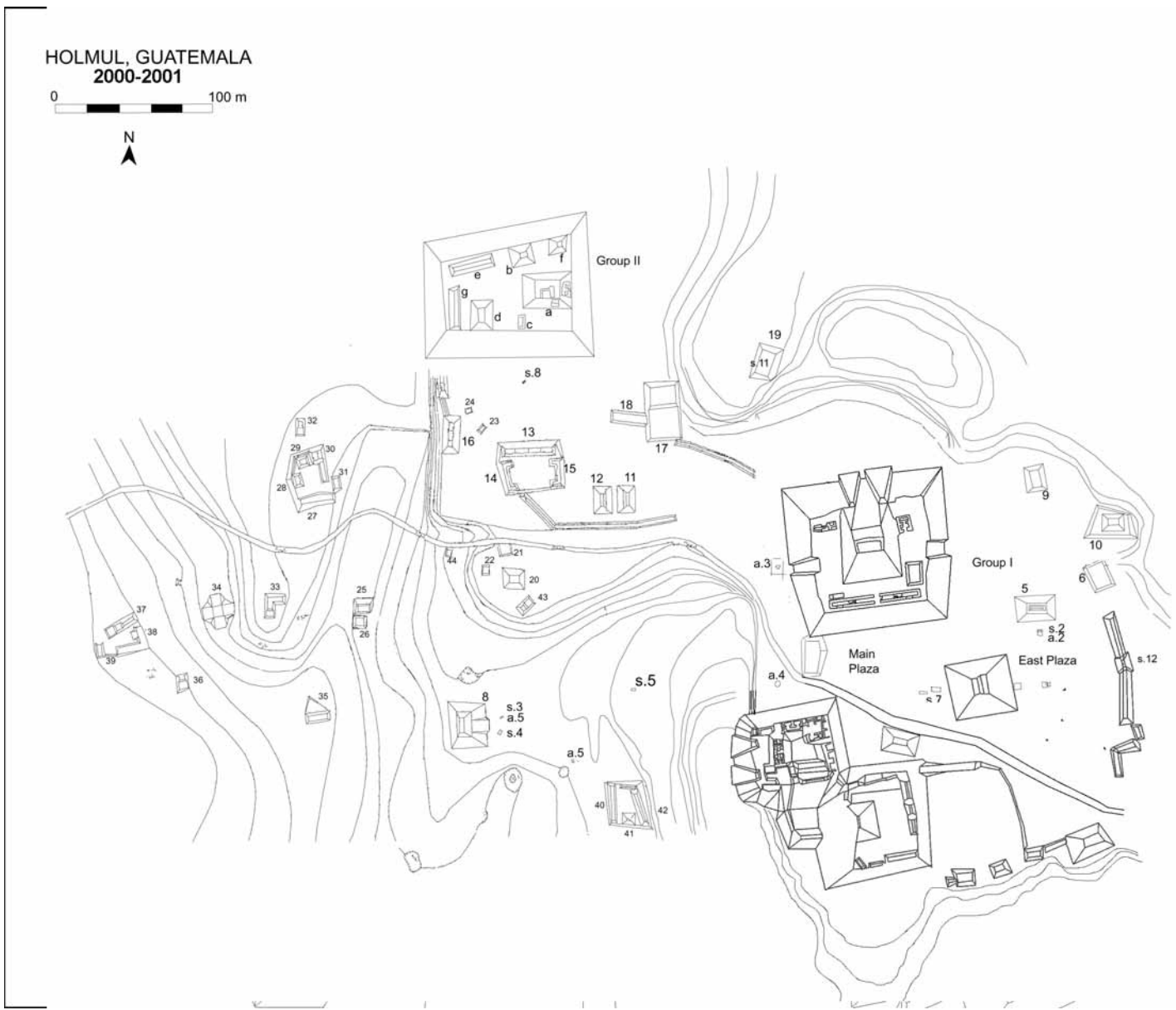


Figure 2. Area of the Holmul site center mapped as of 2001. Areas re-mapped in 2001 are in bold lines. Survey transects to the east, north and south are not included.

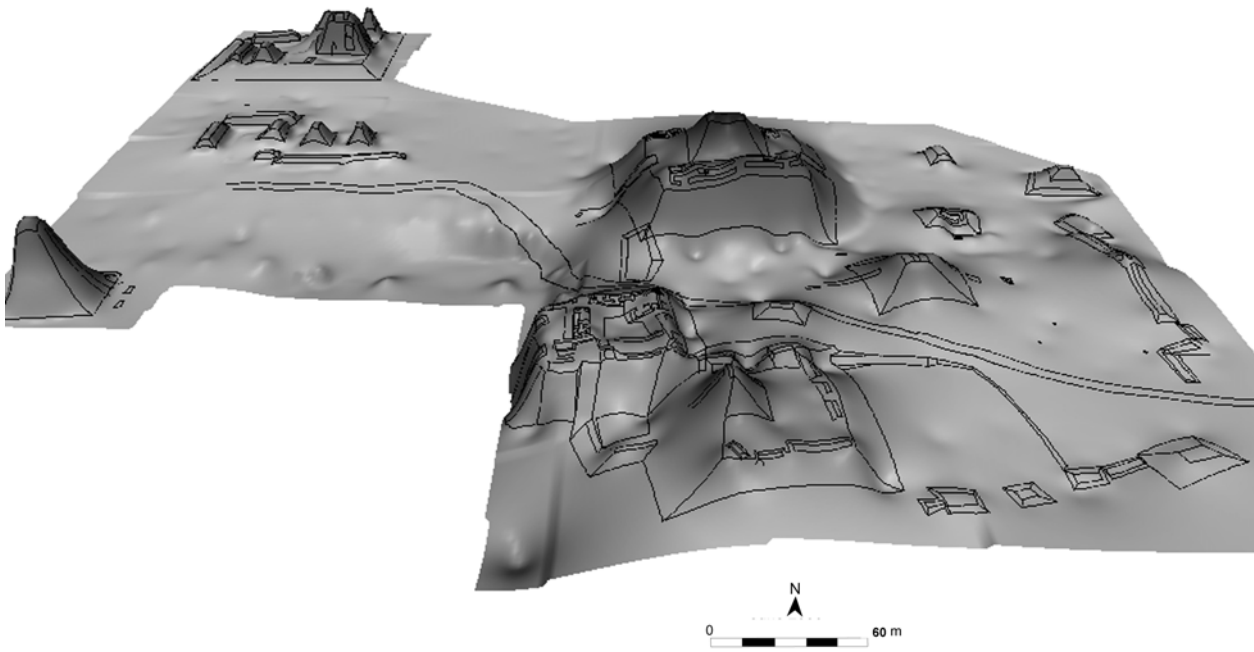


Figure 3. 3D view of the Holmul site center as mapped in 2001.



Figure 4. Pedregal Modeled-carved pot found in association with Stela 7, west front of Ruin X. Terminal Classic.

Group III, Courts A and B

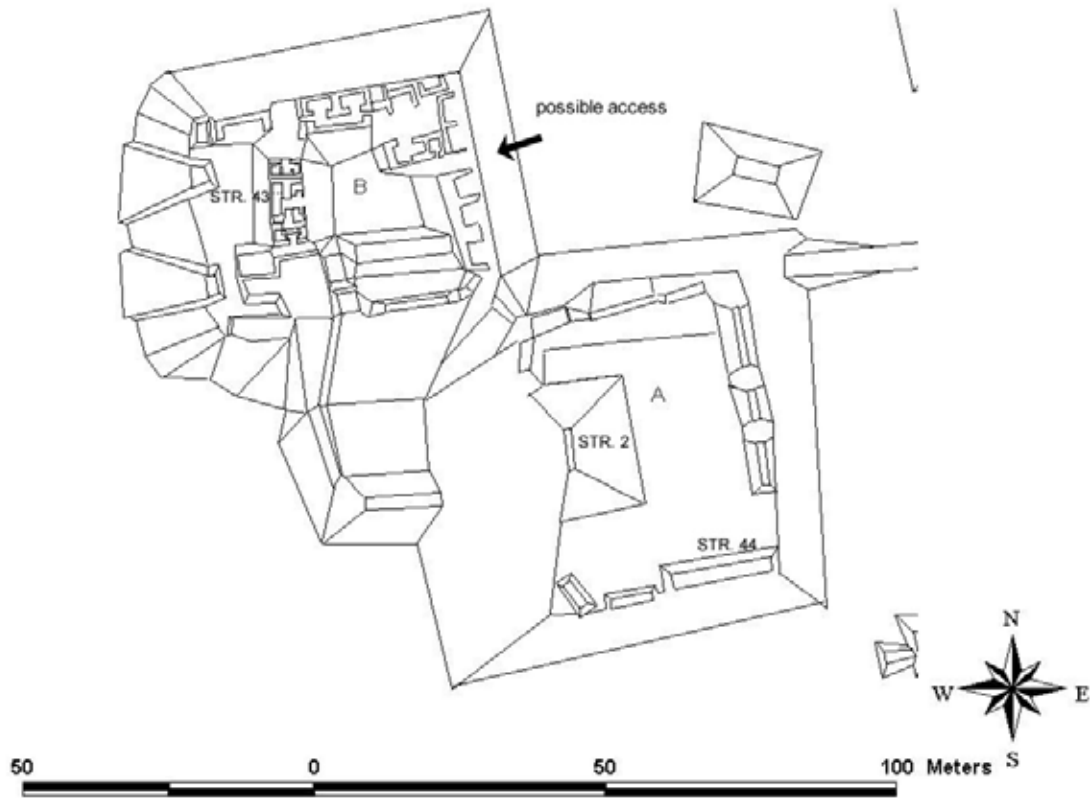


Figure 5. Plan view of Group III Courts A and B, showing access and location of Structures 43, 44 and 2.

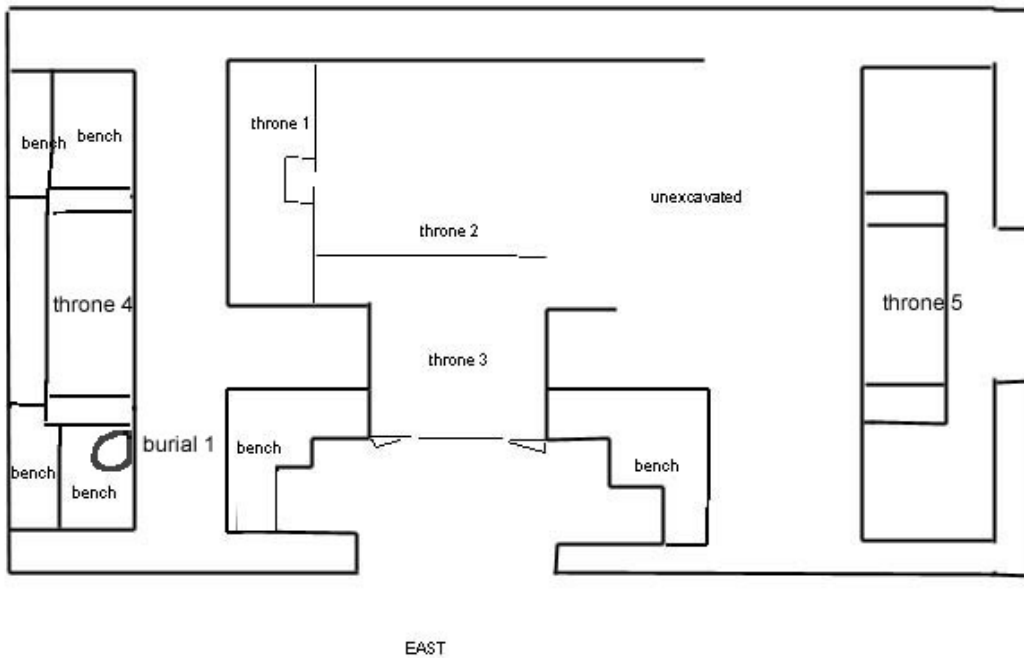


Figure 6. Sketch of Structure 43 with excavated rooms and benches.



Figure 7 View of central rooms in Structure 43 from the eastern doorway. Interior doorway and Bench 3 are in the foreground. Bench 2 is in the background (unexcavated). Side benches are visible to the right and left of Bench 3. The structure is now covered by a thatch roof.



Figure 8. View of Bench 1 in the south corner of the west room (interior room) of Structure 43.



Figure 9. View of Bench 4 in south room of Structure 43.



Figure 10. Flexed burial of a juvenile on the east side of Bench 4 in Structure 43. A cloth impression was found in the area around the face. No grave goods were associated.



Figure 11. View of Bench 5 in north room. Niche in pillar on the lower right was found to contain burned copal.



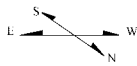
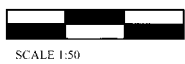
Figure 12. view of excavated area in front of north room in Structure 43. In the background is Bench 5, a step down and the sloping talud of the structure's façade. Below the talud, in the foreground is a black-painted floor surmounted by the foundations of a later structure extending to the east (left).



Figure 13. Pabellon Modeled-carved fine orange ceramics from Str. 43's rubble.



Figure 14. Calcite stone ball-game marker with bas-relief inscription and central decoration. Terminal Classic period. Diameter: 70 cm.



HAP01
WEST STRUCTURE
BALL COURT
CUT-AWAY VIEW
MYNOR SILVESTRE

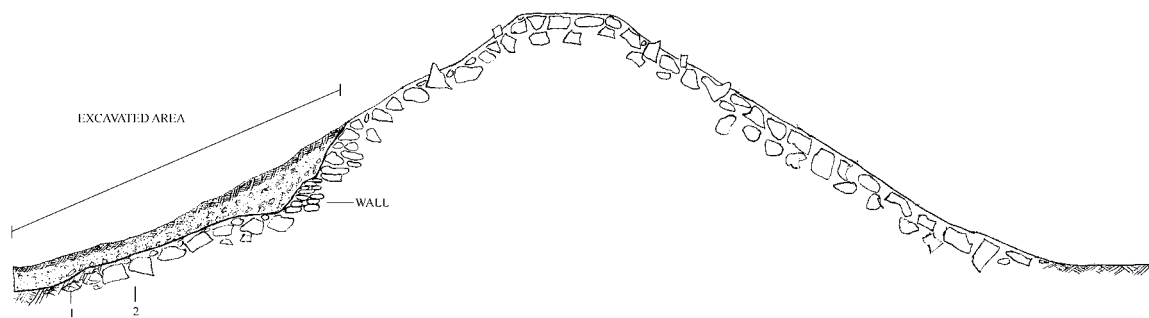


Figure 15. Profile drawing of Ball Court 1 at Holmul. Drawing Mynor Silvestre.



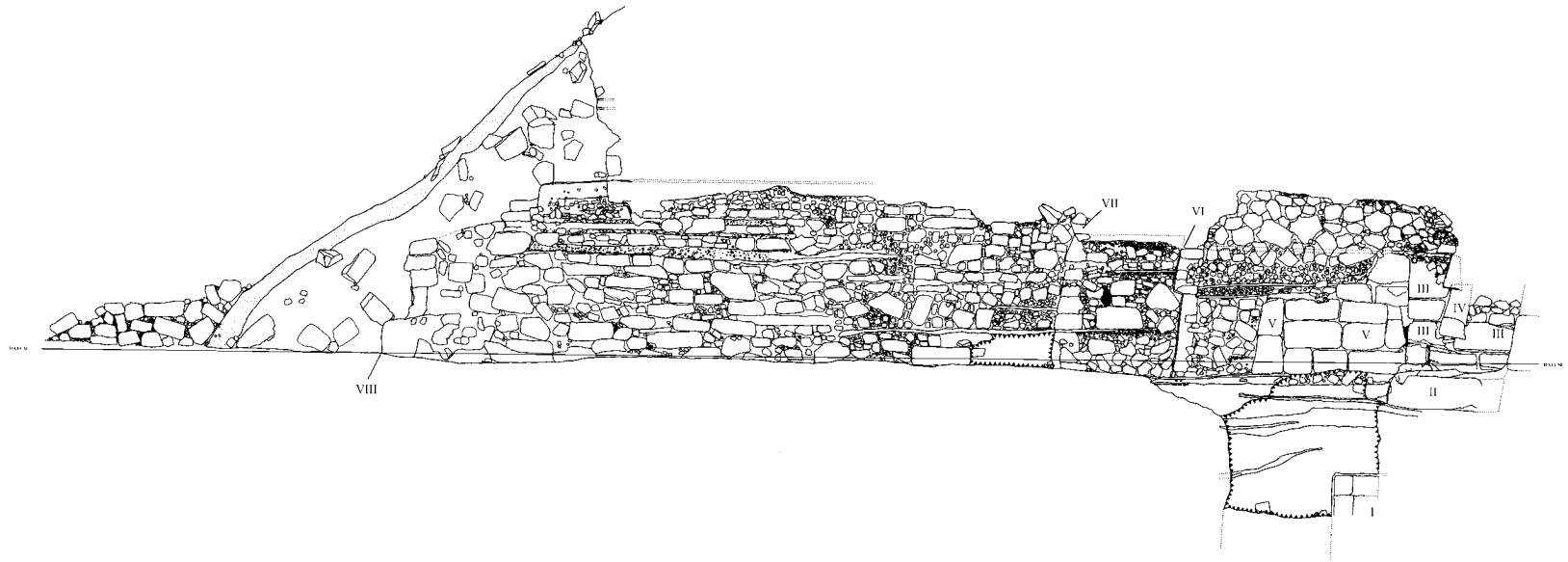
Figure 16. Fragment of polychrome ceramic bowl from midden deposit in front of Str. 13.



Figure 17. Excavation of Stela 5. The stela is set into a cut into bedrock and was surrounded by a layer of rough stones.



Figure 18. View of excavation of Altar 3 showing bedrock layer. The first step of Group I's stairway is in the foreground.



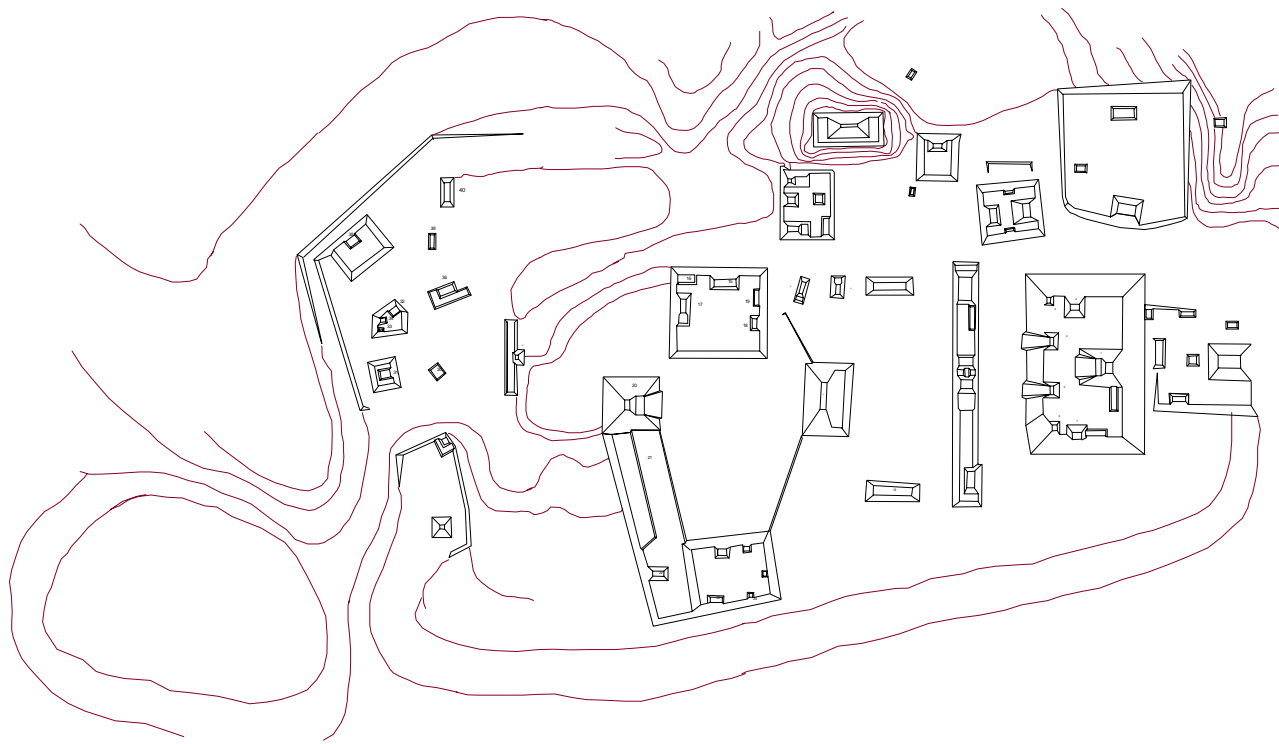
HOLMUL 2001

Group II, Structure F
Looter's Trench 1
South Wall Profile

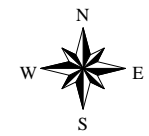


Drawn by Justin F. Ebersole

Figure 19. Profile of looters' tunnel in eastern side of Building F, Group III exposing eight construction stages. Drawing: Justin Ebersole



**CIVAL, PETEN
GUATEMALA**



Holmul
Archaeological
Project 2001
Survey:
Marc Wolf,
Kristen Gardella



Figure 20. Map of Cival. Survey by Marc Wolf and Kristen Gardella with partial adaptation of initial map by Ian Graham.



Figure 21. Interior of looters' trench in back of Cival Str. 1 exposing southern exterior wall and window in stucco-ed sub-structure.



Figure 22. Interior of looters' tunnel on south side of Cival Str. 5 exposing earlier painted stucco-ed architectural façade.

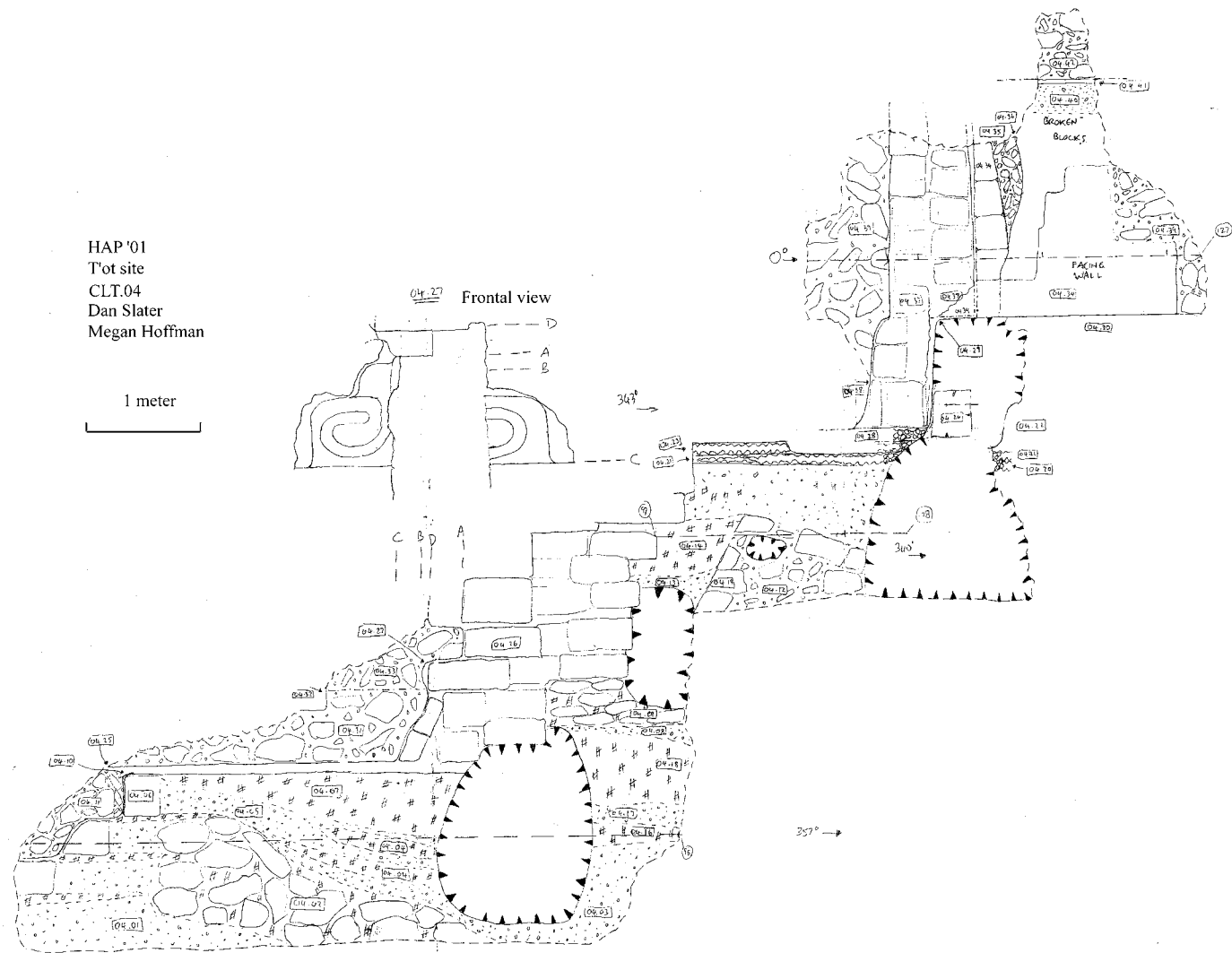


Figure 23. Profile of tunnel (CLT04) in southern side of T'ot's Str. 1 showing preserved stucco decoration on construction phase II. Drawing: Dan Slater and Meg Hoffman. See also Appendix A..

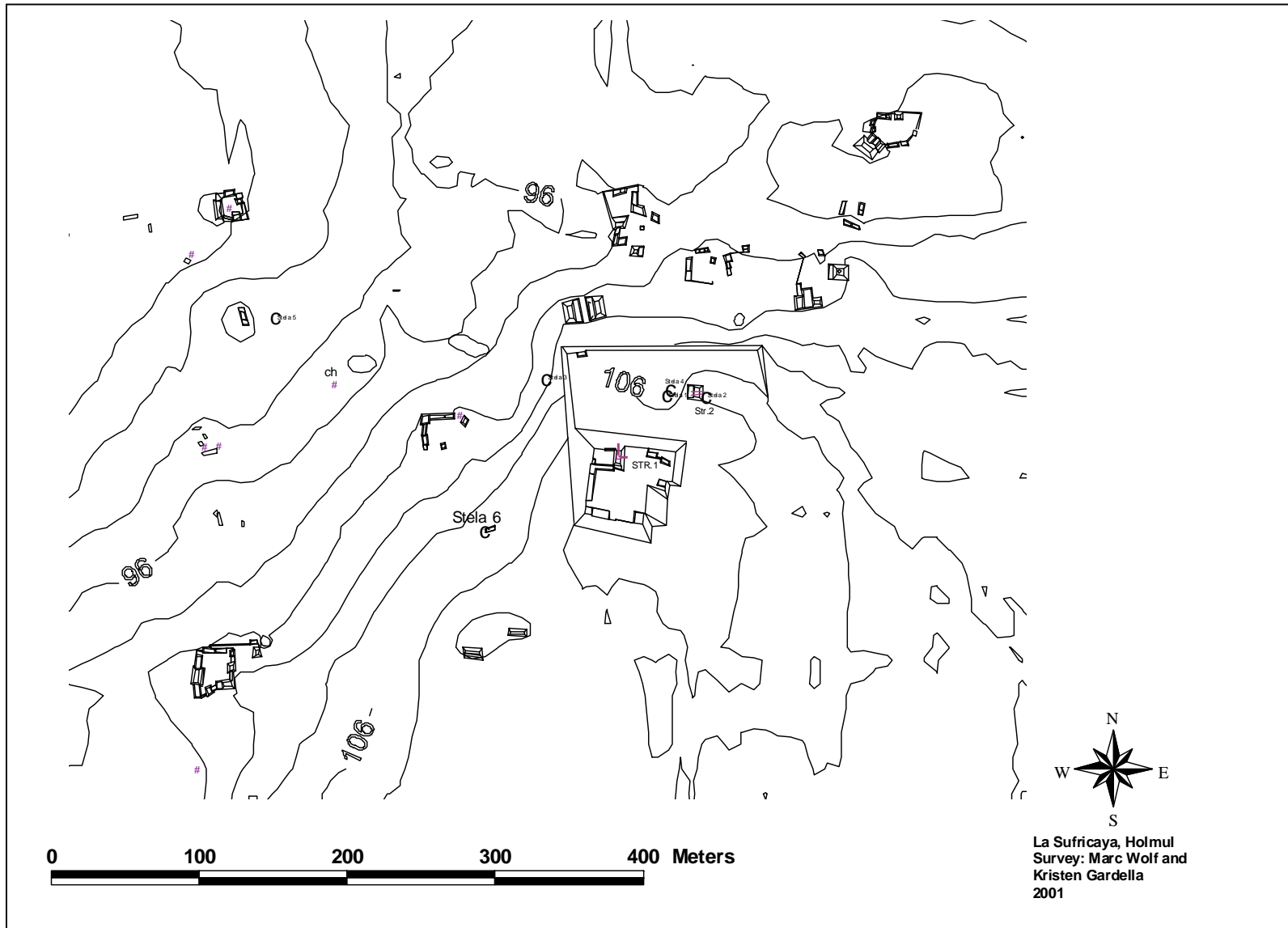


Figure 24. Map of La Sufricaya groups, located 1.2 km west of Holmul site center. Survey: Marc Wolf and Kristen Gardella, 2001.

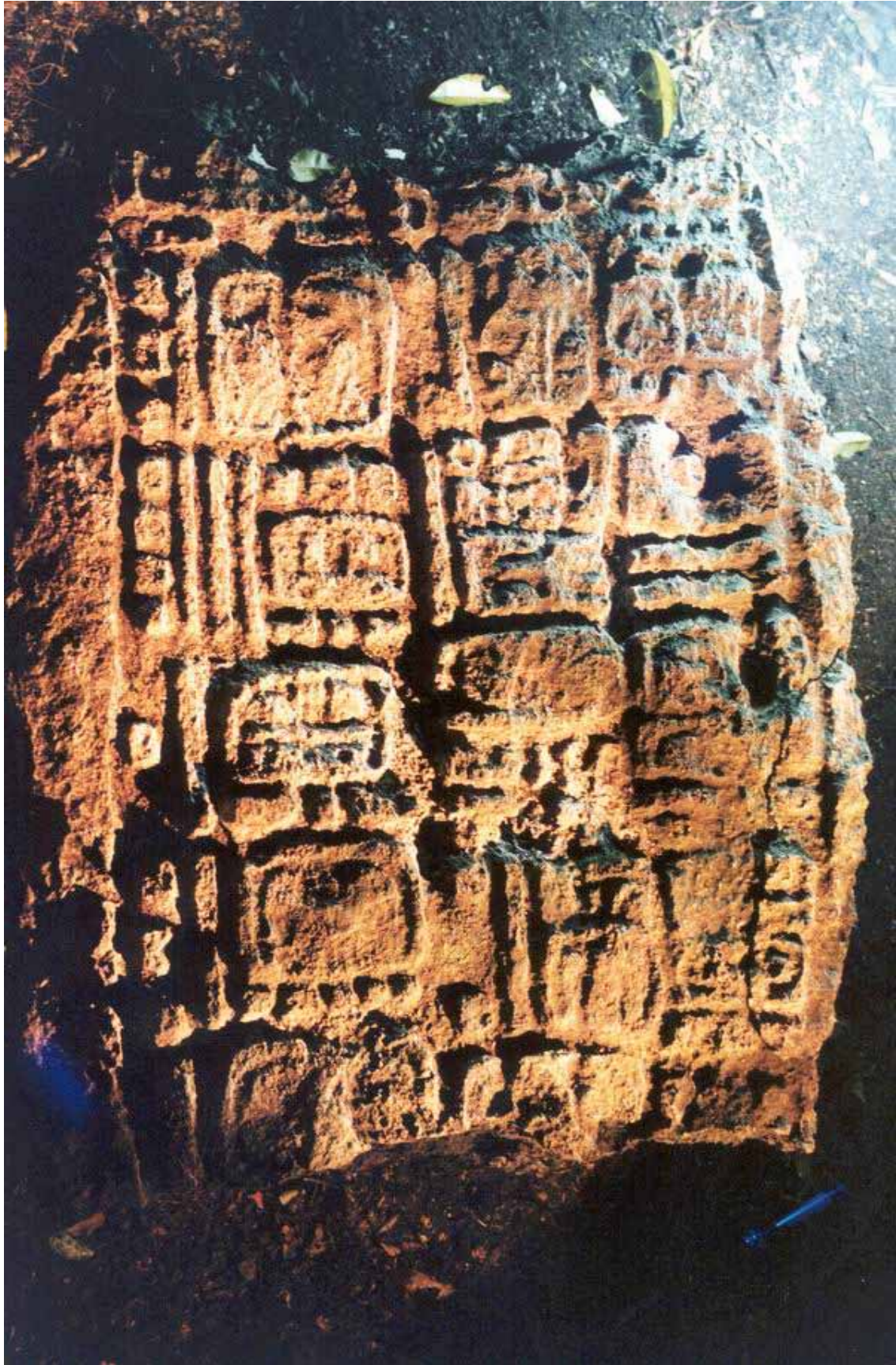


Figure 25. Night photograph of Stela 5 at La Sufriçaya. Photo: Justin Ebersole.



Figure 26. Stela 1 at La Sufricaya. Photo: Justin Ebersole.

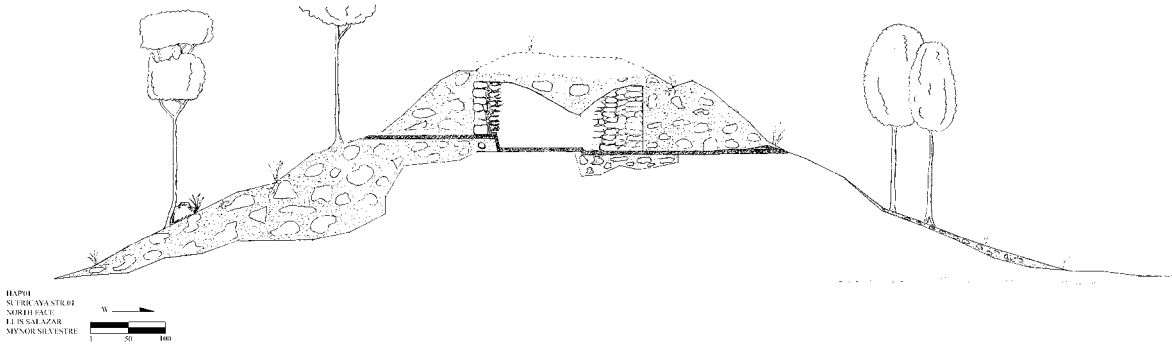


Figure 27. Profile of Structure 2 at La Sufricaya. Drawing: Mynor Silvestre.



Figure 28. Stela 2 from La Sufricaya. Bas-relief decoration on red-painted stucco.



Figure 29. Stela 3 at La Sufricaya showing two lower limbs with sandals facing left on an earth motif band.



Figure 30. Stela 6 at La Sufricaya. Photo: Justin Ebersole.



Figure 31. Eastern half of mural in Structure 1 at La Sufricaya.

HOLMUL '01
 SLT 05 11/06/0'
 DAN SLATER

W ← → E

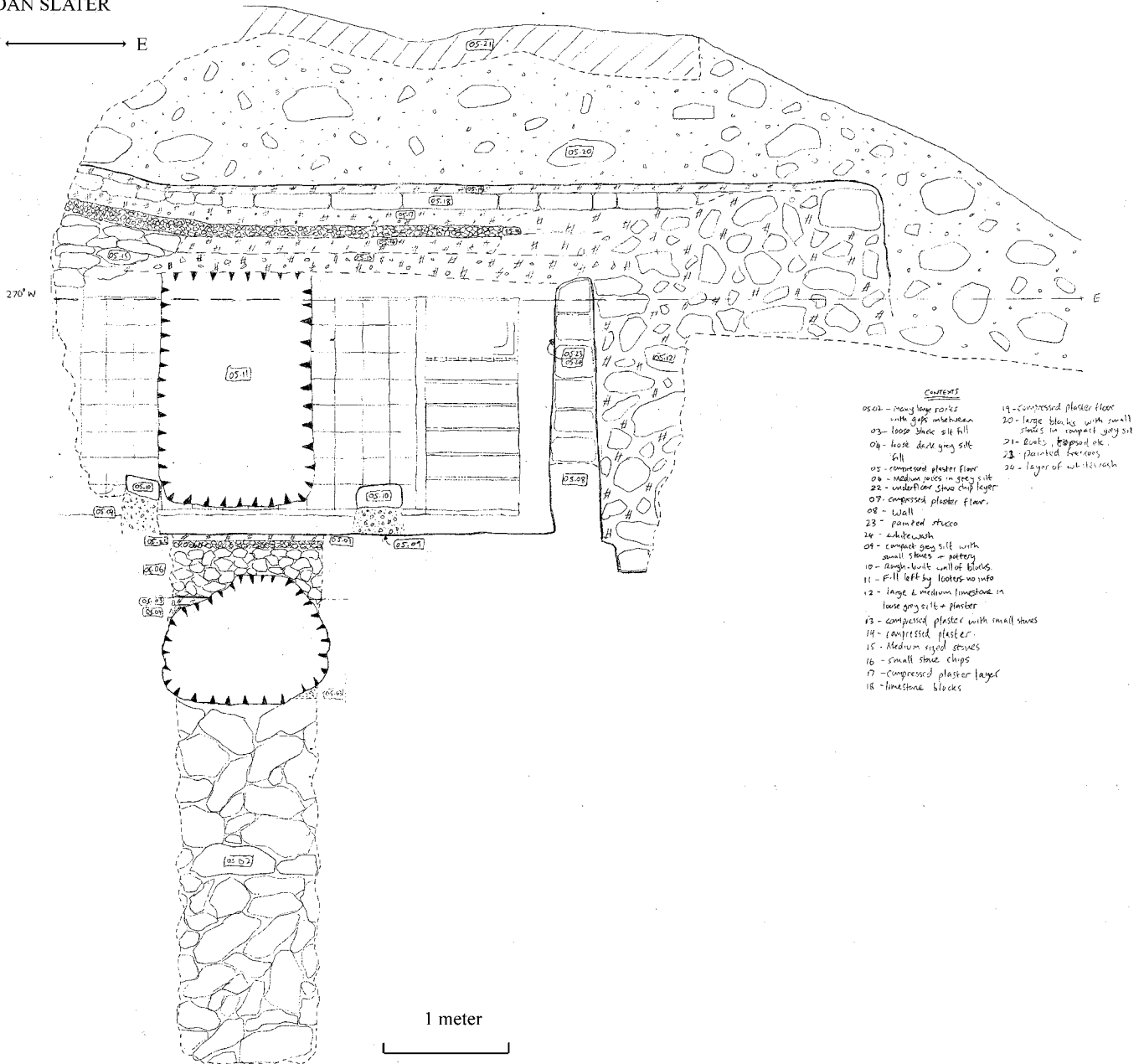


Figure 32. Profile of looters' trench in Structure 1 at La Sufricaya.



Figure 33. Detail of two figures on mural in Str.1 at La Sufricaya.



Figure 34. Detail of figure wearing jaguar loincloth and tail. La Sufricaya Str. 1.



Figure 35. Detail of seated figures facing left (west) wearing goggle-headaddress, feathered tail and holding yellow darts. La Sufricaya Str. 1.



Figure 36. Urita Gouged-Incised, brown slip with red paint in incisions and appliqué cacao beans. La Sufricaya Str.1.



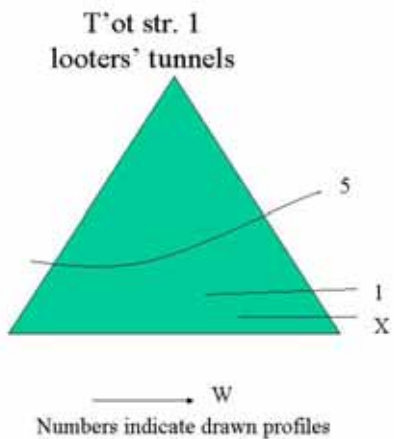
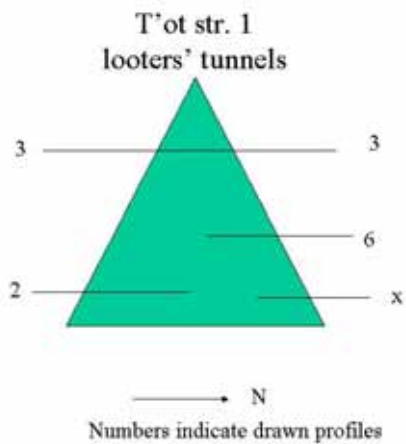
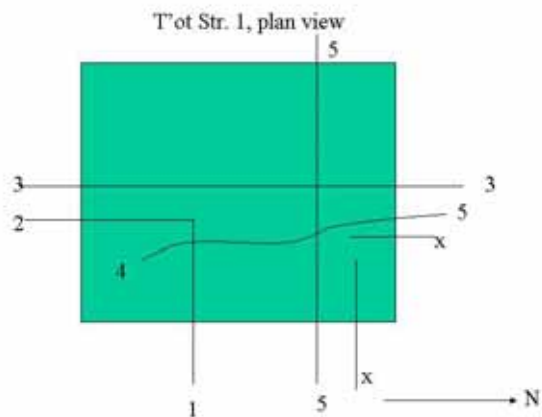
Figure 37. Vaulted room exposed by looters tunnel at K'o.

APPENDIX A

T'ot site, Structure 1

Stratigraphy recorded from looters tunnels 1 through 6

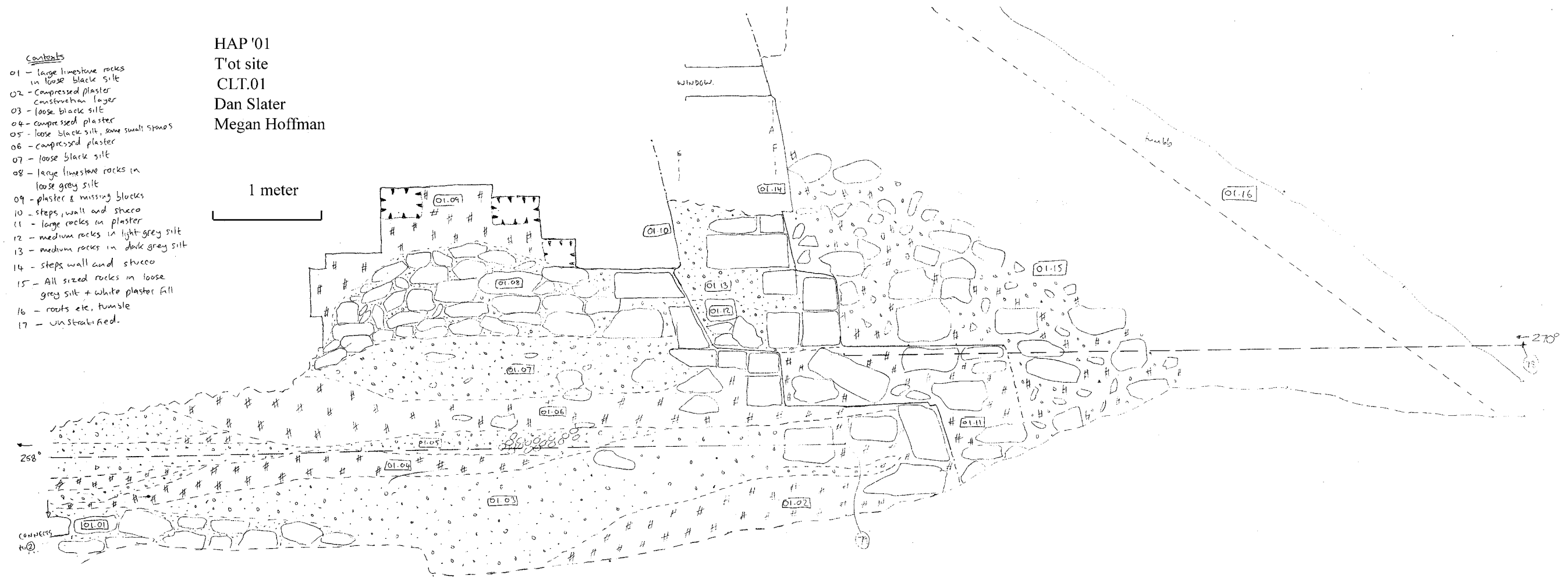
All drawings by Dan Slater and Meg Hoffman



- Contacts
- 01 - large limestone rocks in loose black silt
 - 02 - compressed plaster construction layer
 - 03 - loose black silt
 - 04 - compressed plaster
 - 05 - loose black silt, some small stones
 - 06 - compressed plaster
 - 07 - loose black silt
 - 08 - large limestone rocks in loose grey silt
 - 09 - plaster & missing blocks
 - 10 - steps, wall and stucco
 - 11 - large rocks in plaster
 - 12 - medium rocks in light grey silt
 - 13 - medium rocks in dark grey silt
 - 14 - steps wall and stucco
 - 15 - All sized rocks in loose grey silt + white plaster fill
 - 16 - roots etc, tumble
 - 17 - unstratified.

HAP '01
 Tot site
 CLT.01
 Dan Slater
 Megan Hoffman

1 meter

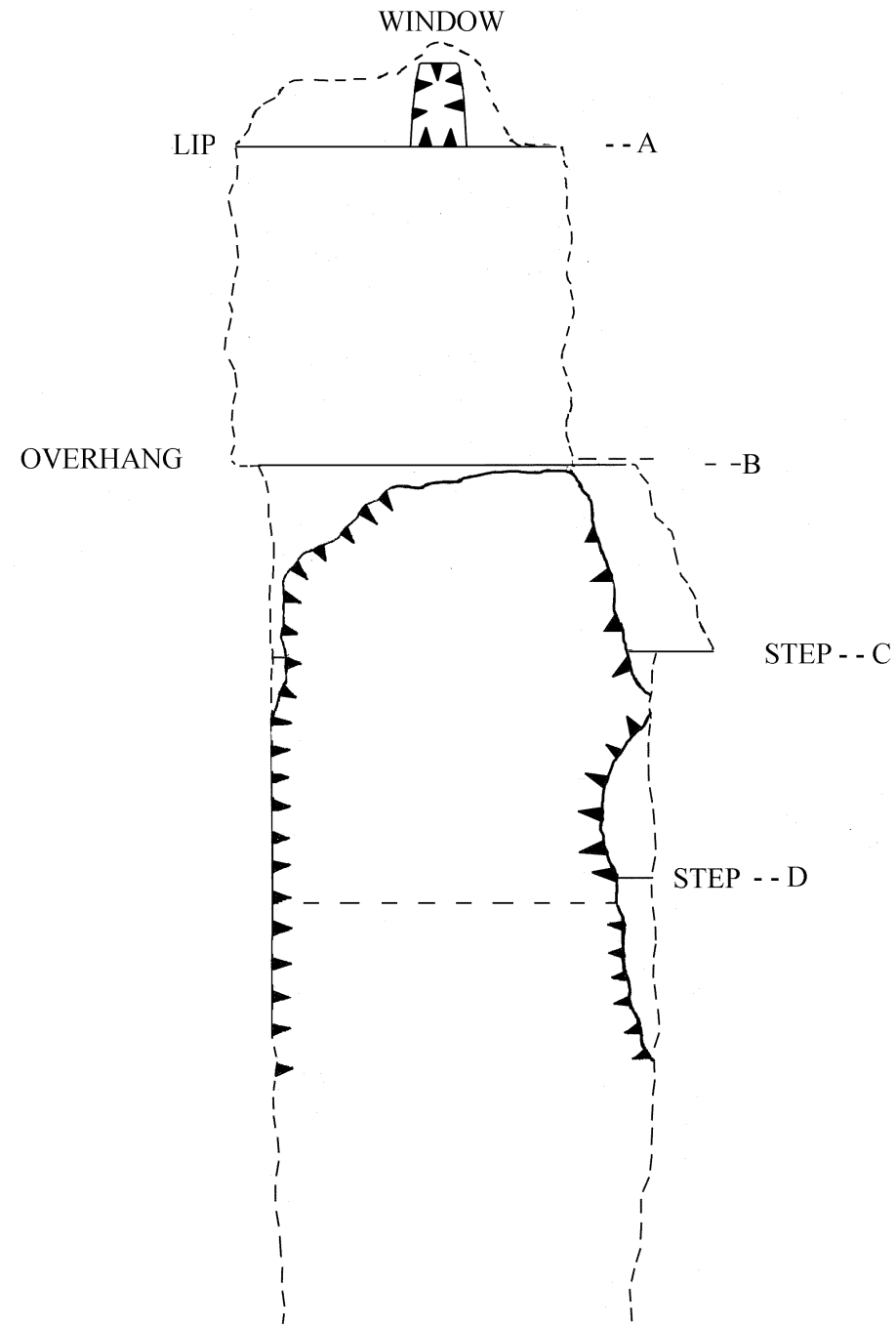


all v. small & small clumps

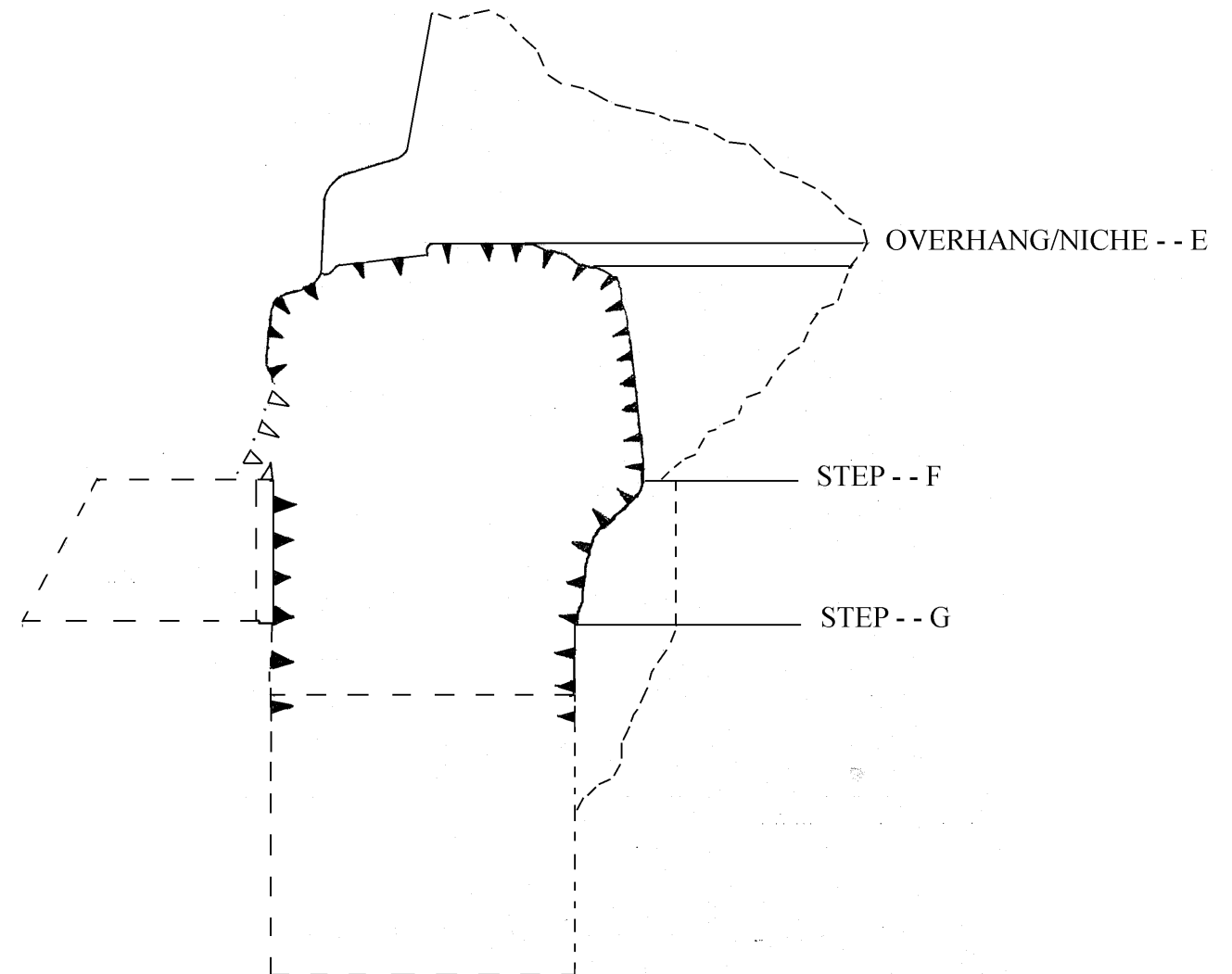
--- estimated trajectory
 - - - datum
 ~~~~~ ground/grading contours  
 - - - contacts

Profile of tunnel 1

HAP'01  
CLT01.14  
ANTERIOR PROFILE DETAIL  
CARACOL LOOTER'S TRENCH  
SCALE 1:20



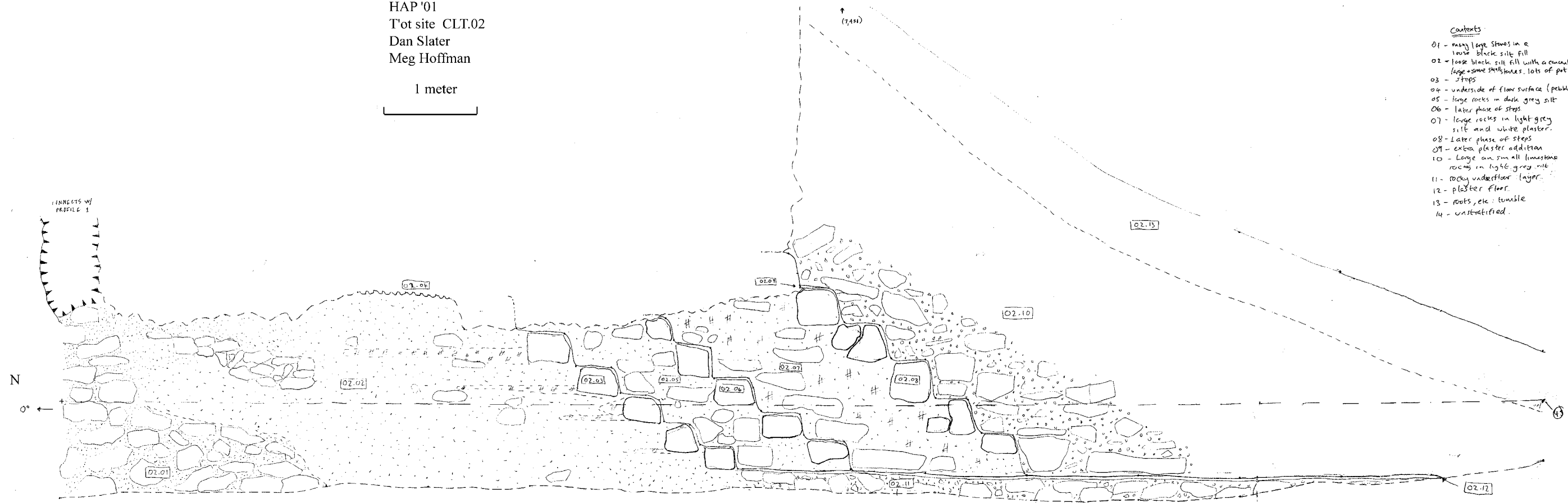
HAP'01  
CLT01.14  
ANTERIOR DETAIL  
DAN SLATER



Anterior profiles of tunnel 1 (entrance cutting through stucco-ed masonry façade)

HAP '01  
 Tot site CLT.02  
 Dan Slater  
 Meg Hoffman

1 meter



- Contexts
- 01 - many large stones in a loose black silt fill
  - 02 - loose black silt fill with a concentration of large + some small bones, lots of pot
  - 03 - steps
  - 04 - underside of floor surface (pebbles)
  - 05 - large rocks in dark grey silt
  - 06 - later phase of steps
  - 07 - large rocks in light grey silt and white plaster
  - 08 - later phase of steps
  - 09 - extra plaster addition
  - 10 - large and fine all limestone rocks in light grey silt
  - 11 - rocky underfloor layer
  - 12 - plaster floor
  - 13 - roots, etc: tunable
  - 14 - unstratified

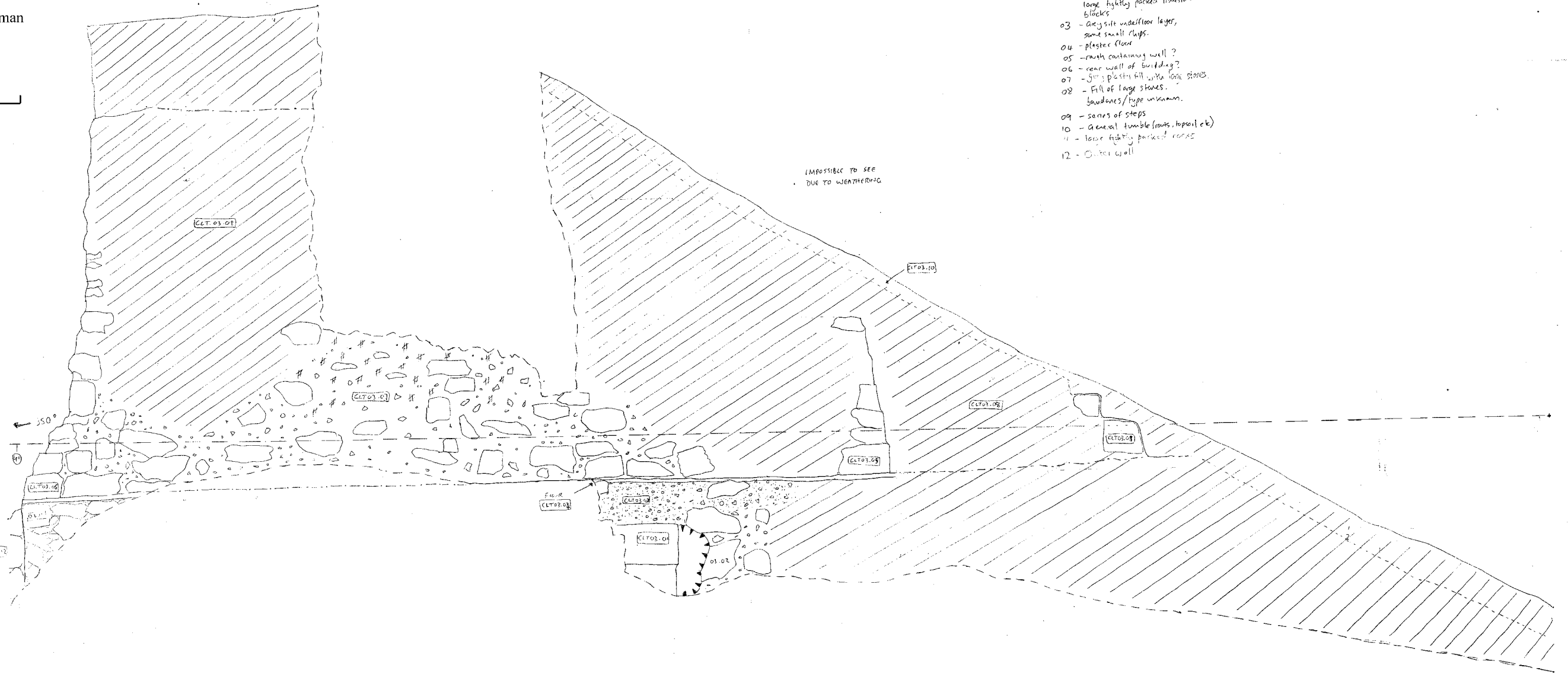
Profile of tunnel 2



HAP '01  
 Tot site  
 CLT.03  
 Dan Slater  
 Megan Hoffman

1 meter

N



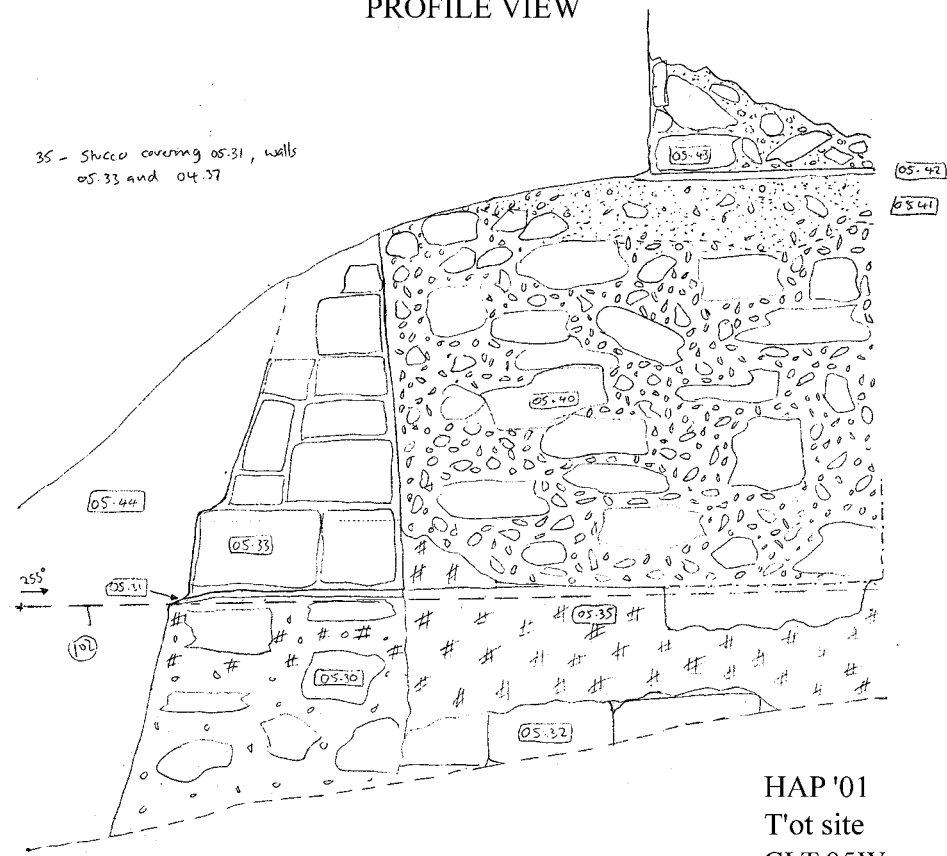
- Contexts
- 01 - Sheer wall and roof of building
  - 02 - base grey silt fill with large tightly packed limestone blocks
  - 03 - grey silt under floor layer, some small clumps
  - 04 - plaster floor
  - 05 - rough containing wall?
  - 06 - rear wall of building?
  - 07 - fill plaster fill with large stones
  - 08 - fill of large stones, boulders/type unknown
  - 09 - series of steps
  - 10 - General rubble (roofs, topsoil etc)
  - 11 - base tightly packed ramp
  - 12 - Outer wall

Profile of tunnel 3



Profile of tunnel 5 (east half)

PROFILE VIEW

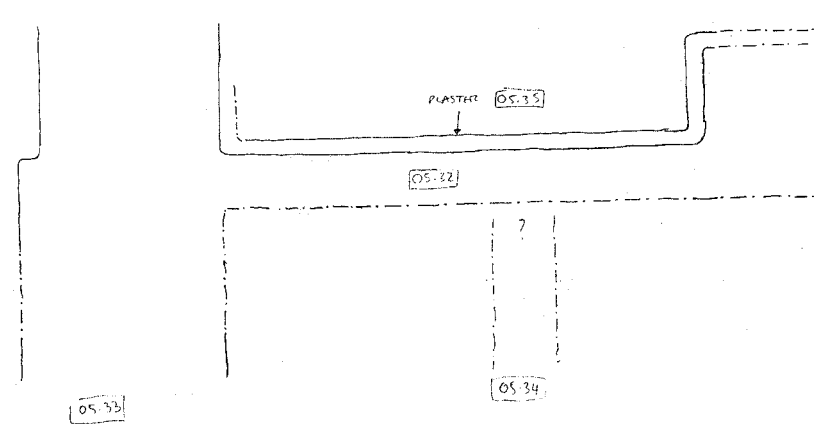


35 - Shucco covering 05.31, walls  
05.33 and 04.37

HAP'01  
Tot site  
CLT.05W  
Dan Slater  
Megan Hoffman

PLAN VIEW

1 meter



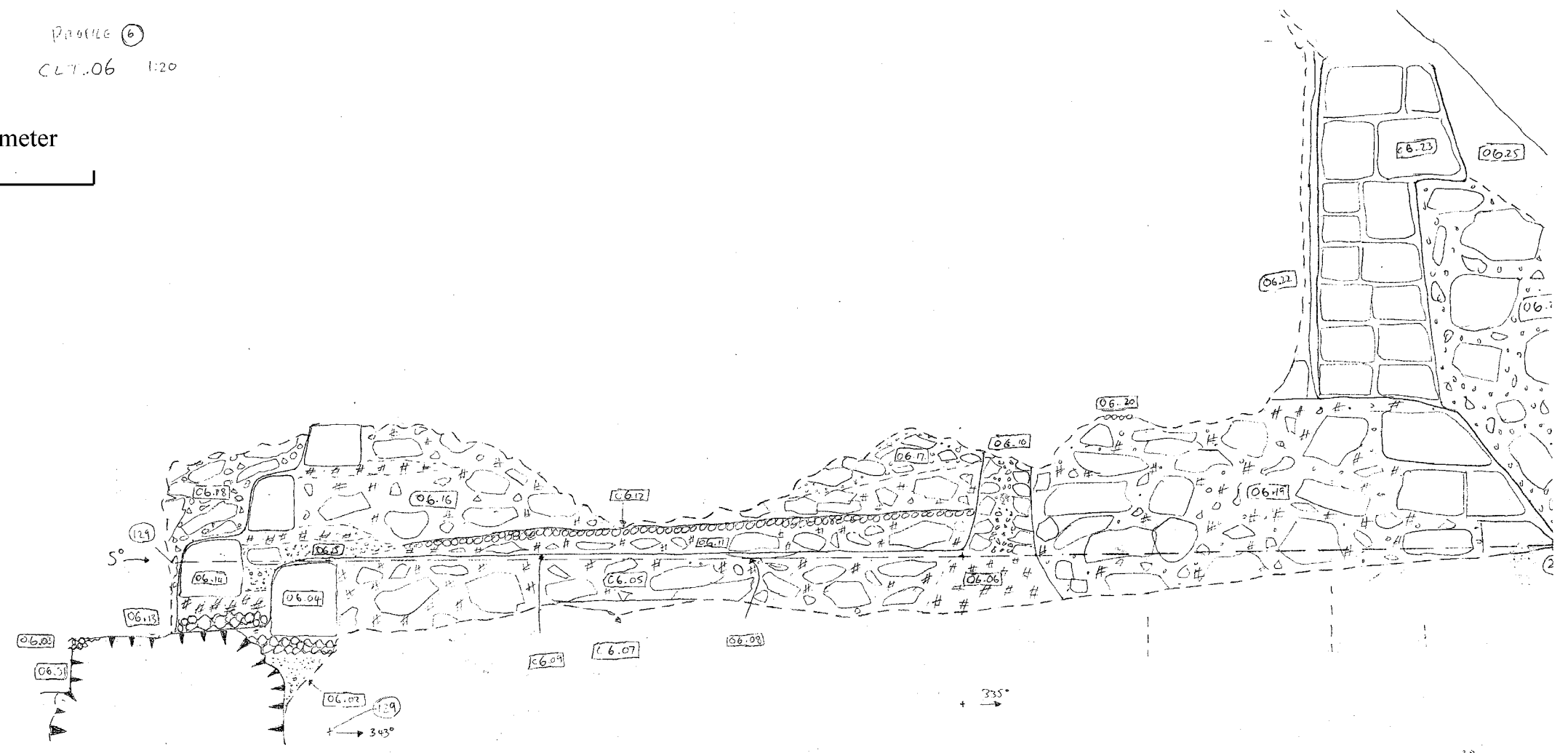
Profile and plan of tunnel 5 west.

HAD'01 1/6/01 PROFILE 6  
 DAN SLATCH  
 +  
 NIGAN HOFFMAN  
 CLT.06 1:20

Contexts

- 01 - step block
- 02 - loose black silt fill
- 03 - stone & plaster floor
- 04 - step
- 05 - large and medium rocks in white plaster
- 06 - white plaster underfloor construction
- 07 - possible earlier floor layers - plaster and stones
- 08 - Irregularity in floor surface [06.08], Previous dip that has been filled?
- 09 - plaster floor surface
- 10 - External wall, small cavity construction
- 11 - large & medium rocks in plaster
- 12 - possible very rough plaster + stone floor, or construction layer
- 13 - plaster + stone chip step support
- 14 - Stucco'd steps
- 15 - loose light grey silt fill
- 16 - large and medium limestone rocks in plaster fill
- 17 - As above, in black silt fill
- 18 - As above in grey silt fill
- 19 - All sizes of stones with plaster and grey silt fill
- 20 - stone & plaster floor layer
- 22 - Stucco'd wall (front)
- 23 - large external wall = [03.12]
- 24 - tumble
- 25 - roots, topsoil etc.

1 meter



188  
206

Profile of tunnel 6

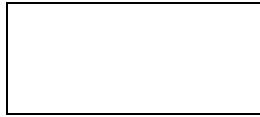




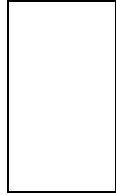
## APPENDIX B

Images also available on companion CD-ROM (open html file in drawings directory)

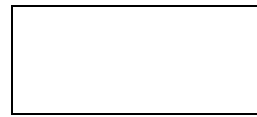
### Holmul\_2001\_drawings



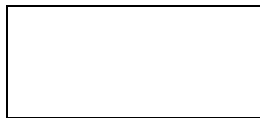
[BALLCOURT-PROFILE.JPG](#)



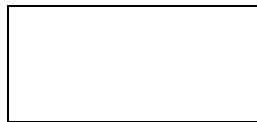
[BALLCOURT-WEST.JPG](#)



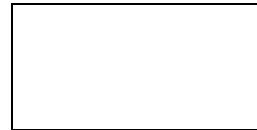
[CLT\\_01.JPG](#)



[CLT\\_02.JPG](#)



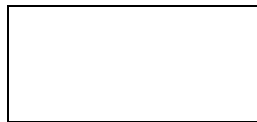
[CLT\\_03.JPG](#)



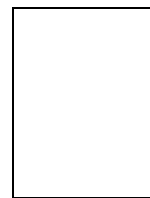
[CLT\\_05.JPG](#)



[CLT\\_05W.JPG](#)



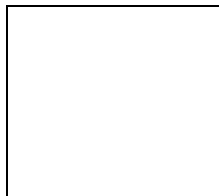
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[clt1\\_mask.JPG](#)



[CLT1-14DETAIL-ANTERIOR-PROF.JPG](#)

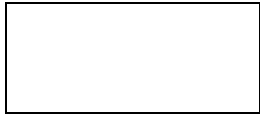


[G3BuildF.JPG](#)

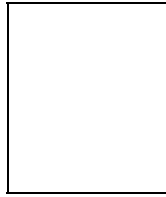
Page: [1](#) [2](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

Holmul\_2001\_drawings



[PROFILE-S-WALL-SV.JPG](#)



[SLT\\_05\\_room.JPG](#)



[stela5\\_closeup\\_plan.JPG](#)



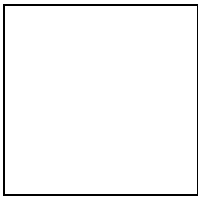
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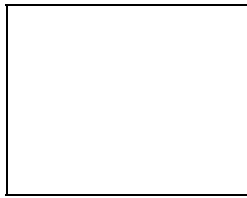
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[T02WPROFILE.JPG](#)



[T17WPROFILE.JPG](#)



[T2EPROFILE.JPG](#)

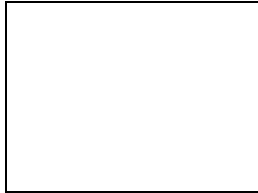
Page: [1](#) [2](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

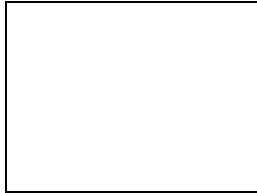
## APPENDIX C

Images also available on companion CD-ROM (open html file in ceramics directory)

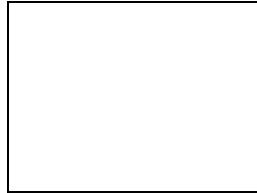
### Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



[GII\\_str43](#)



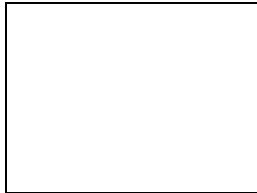
[GIII\\_midden\\_.JPG](#)



[GIII\\_midden\\_0008\\_2.JPG](#)



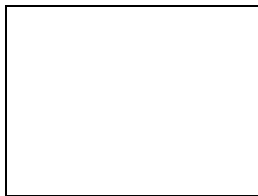
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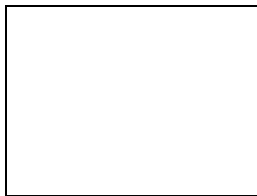
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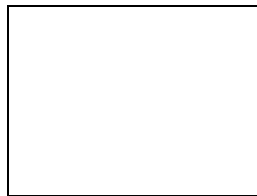
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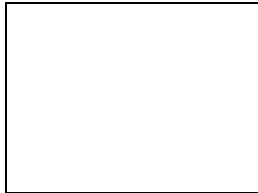
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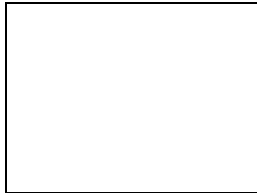
[GIII\\_midden08.JPG](#)



[GIII\\_midden2.JPG](#)



[GIII\\_midden2\\_2.JPG](#)



[GIII\\_midden2\\_5.JPG](#)

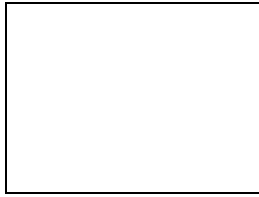


[GIII\\_midden23.JPG](#)

Page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



[GIII\\_midden2b.JPG](#)



[GIII\\_midden2midden2G](#)



[GIII\\_middenA\\_025.JPG](#)



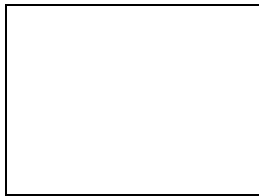
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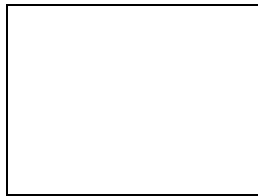
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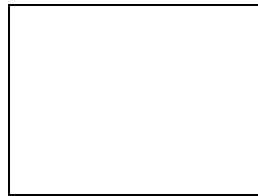
[south\\_looters\\_3.JPG](#)



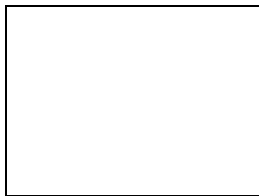
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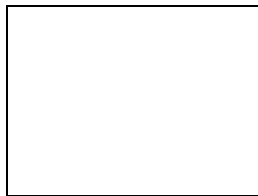
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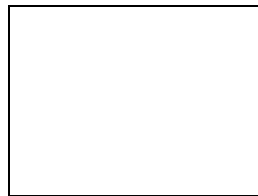
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[south\\_transect\\_0013\\_3.JPG](#)



[south\\_transect\\_011\\_3.JPG](#)



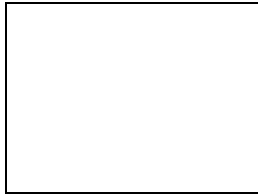
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Page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

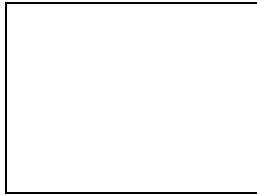
[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]



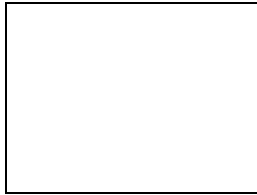
Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



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[str\\_13\\_0025\\_2.JPG](#)



[str\\_13022.JPG](#)



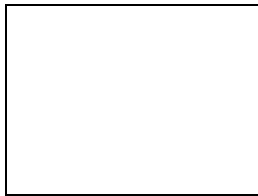
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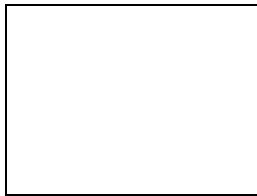
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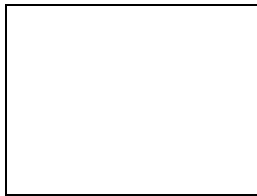
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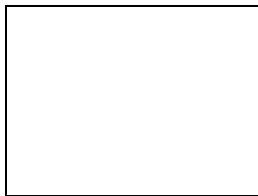
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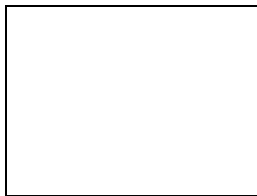
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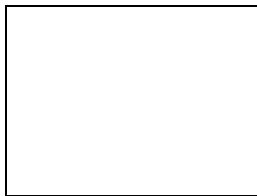
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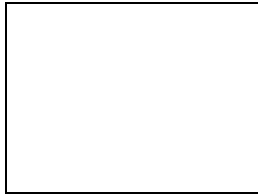


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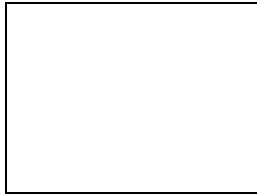
Page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

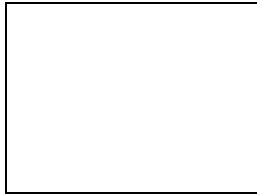
Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



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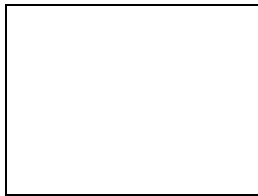
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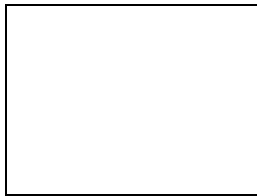
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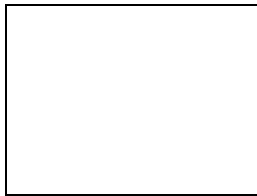
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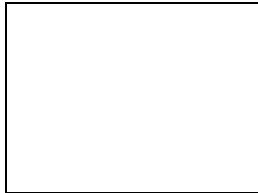
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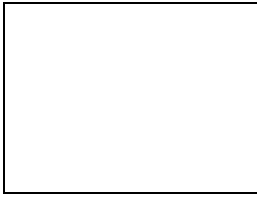


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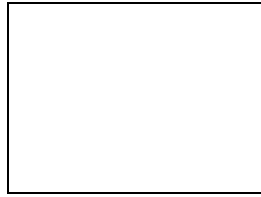
Page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

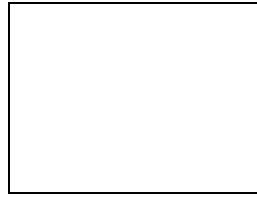
Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



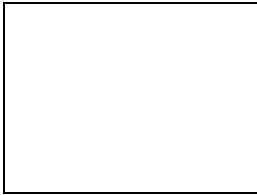
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[sufricaya\\_L026.JPG](#)



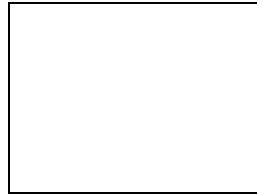
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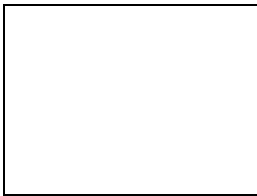
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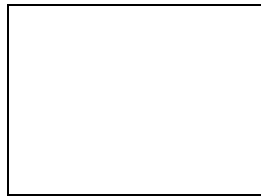
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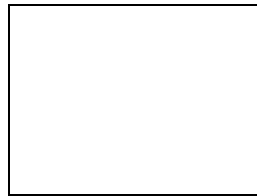
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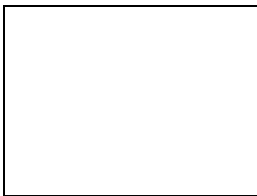
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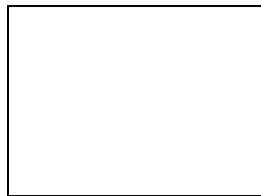
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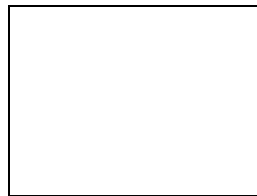
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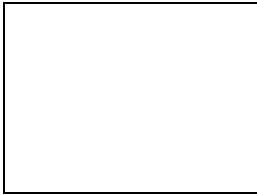


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Page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

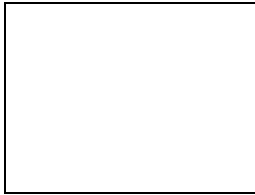
Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



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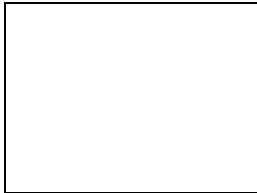
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[Sufricaya\\_looters014.JPG](#)



[Sufricaya\\_looters016.JPG](#)



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[sufricaya\\_looters05\\_4.JPG](#)



[sufricaya\\_looters05\\_5.JPG](#)



[sufricaya\\_looters1.JPG](#)



[sufricaya\\_looters1.TIF](#)



[Sufricaya\\_looters18.JPG](#)



[Sufricaya\\_looters5\\_3.JPG](#)



[Sufricaya\\_looters7.JPG](#)

Page: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) **[6](#)** [7](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]



Holmul\_2001\_ceramics



[Sufricaya\\_looters9\\_2.JPG](#)



[sufricaya\\_looters\\_0011\\_2.JPG](#)



[Sufricaya\\_teo\\_room.JPG](#)

**Page:** [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ Next ]

## APPENDIX D

Images also available on companion CD-ROM (open html file in conservation directory)

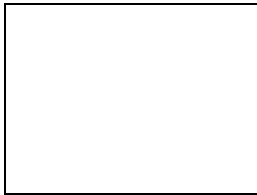
### Holmul\_2001\_conservation



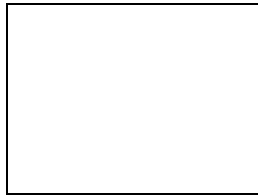
[buildB\\_butress.JPG](#)



[BuildB\\_front.JPG](#)



[Conservator Enrique Monterroso.jpg](#)

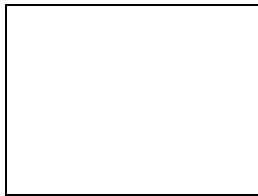


[DSCN0011.JPG](#)

Page: [1](#) [2](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

### Holmul\_2001\_conservation



[GIII\\_str43.JPG](#)



[GIII\\_str43\\_butress.JPG](#)

Page: [1](#) [2](#)

[ [Prev](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]