

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

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

LA SUFRICAYA

Excavation

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

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

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

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

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

Further excavation within the tunnel revealed a doorway opening from Structure 1 sub1 to the north where a later room (Structure 1 room 3) was built onto an open portico (as described above). From this room, a sealed doorway led to a second room to the west. The removal of the plaster and rubble that sealed the doorway revealed the outer walls (south and east) of a buried small structure with a cornice and plastered walls. In style and size, this building resembles Structure 5D sub 10-1st in the Northern Acropolis of Tikal (Coggins pers. comm.). This structure, the outer walls of which were elaborately painted also served as a funerary temple (Coe 1990). While La Sufricaya Structure 1 sub 3 certainly resembles the Tikal structure in construction and layout, no paintings were evident on the outer walls of our building.

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

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

Conservation

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

HOLMUL-SITE CENTER

Group III – The Palace

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

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

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

Group II – Protoclassic Tombs

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

CIVAL

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

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

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

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

Further down into the stratigraphy of this centerline location a large cruciform cut into bedrock was detected. Four large jars were found smashed in each of the four arms of the cross and one in the center. The southern jar was red while all others were black.

Under the central jar was a depression containing five upright plain jade celts (ca. 25 cm long) in cruciform patterns. The central and western celts were shaped out of blue jade while all others were of green jade. Surrounding the celts was a scatter of 115 pebbles of green and blue jade.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Figures



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



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



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



Figure 4a. Cruciform cache of five jars and underlying jades cut into bedrock on centerline of E-Group at Cival. Scale is 25 cm.



Figure 4b Detail of center of cruciform cache.



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



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

HOLMUL 2003 REPORTS PART I

Conservation and Excavations at La Sufricaya

Jennifer Foley, Field Supervisor

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

Conservation

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

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

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

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

Excavation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Excavation ST17

Introduction

Excavation ST17 was placed on top of Structure 1, which surmounts the main platform of La Sufricaya Group 1, north of Excavation ST10 from the 2002 field season. The 2 meter by 3.5 meter trench was placed on the central axis of Structure 1, with the intention of clarifying the layout of Structure 1 and to test the hypothesis that the structure served as a site for elite rituals or as a royal palace.

When a staircase was uncovered during the excavation, a tunnel extension was placed in the northern section wall to follow the staircase. Due to the fragile condition of the painted plaster covering the stairs, the extension was terminated after approximately 1 meter of further excavation. A second tunnel extension was placed in the eastern section wall in an attempt to understand the relationship between the staircase and an early phase of construction uncovered in Excavation ST20. This tunnel continued into the center of the structure and opened into the mural room found during the 2001 field season (Structure 1 sub 1, formerly Room 1). The tunnel continued through the mural room and reached the backside of the northern façade of Structure 1.

The main excavation and tunnel revealed five phases of construction within the mound, beginning with a small temple or shrine buried within the core of Structure 1, and culminating with perishable structures built on top of the mound. The excavation revealed that Structure 1 was not a single edifice, but rather a collection of rooms and sub-structures which comprised a multi-room complex.

Contexts

Excavation ST17 began with the removal of a humus layer consisting of dark brown, moist soil with plant material. This layer of topsoil was assigned context number ST17.01. ST17.02, which was a layer of loose, light brown soil with medium (ranging from 0.06-0.10 meters in size) cobble inclusions, was directly below ST17.01. Artifacts encountered in this context included ceramic sherds, unworked chert flakes, and daub cobbles. Initial analysis of the ceramic sherds identified them as Late/Terminal Classic utilitarian wares. This context was interpreted as a layer of accumulation fill. ST17.03 was approximately 0.30 meters below ST17.01 and consisted of large stones (ranging from 0.10-0.20 meters in length), and densely packed, brown soil with pebble inclusions. This layer was distributed throughout the trench, but formed a distinct East-West line at the 2 meter mark of the trench, which appeared to be a foundation for a wall. Ceramic sherds, unworked chert flakes and daub were also found in this context, which was interpreted as fill for a floor or foundation wall. ST17.04 was a circular deposit, approximately 0.40 meters in diameter, of packed daub with small pebble inclusions near the foundation wall formed by ST17.03. ST17.05 was uncovered below ST17.03 and ST17.04. This context consisted of densely packed, gray/brown marl unevenly distributed throughout the trench. The marl, which could have been the remains of a floor, was most prevalent in the northern and southern edges of the trench. The absence of the context in the middle of the trench was probably due to tree root disturbance. The same types of artifacts found in association with the later contexts, (ceramic sherds, unworked chert flakes, and daub), were also encountered in ST17.05. ST17.05A was found in association with the marl of ST17.05, and consisted of a rough line of stones, (approximately 0.40-0.60 meters in length), placed in the northwest corner of the trench (Figure 3). The two contexts, ST17.05 and ST17.05A were likely deposited at the same time, but a different context number was assigned to the stones to distinguish them from the marl. The marl of ST17.05 was below and surrounding the stones of ST17.05A. A mano fragment was found in association with the stones of ST17.05A, which led to the conclusion that the stones comprised a foundation wall for a perishable structure. ST17.06 consisted of a poorly preserved limestone plaster floor of varying thickness (0.20-0.40 meters), which was beneath ST17.05 and covered ST17.07. A small (0.16 meters in length), well-preserved patch was uncovered in the southwest corner of the trench. Beneath ST17.06 context ST17.07 was encountered, which consisted of large (ranging from 0.30-0.40 meters in length), limestone blocks packed with white limestone plaster with small pebble inclusions. A few ceramic sherds and chert flakes were included in the plaster. The blocks formed a rough line running east to west in the southwest corner of the trench, and a perpendicular line running north to south (Figure 4). These blocks were originally believed to be a wall, but further excavation did not reveal additional courses of the wall so the context was reinterpreted as a construction fill or a low retaining wall constructed to level the surface of Structure 1. ST17.08 appeared to be a cut into ST17.07, but further investigations proved that it was merely a depression formed by tree root disturbance. As a precaution the fill of cut ST17.08 was assigned a different context number, ST17.09. The fill consisted of loose, light brown/tan soil, and was devoid of artifacts. Context ST17.10 consisted of a limestone plaster marl that was very similar in consistency to ST17.05, but

slightly lighter in color. ST17.10 was covered by ST17.07, and overlaid ST17.11. This context was interpreted as construction fill deposited in order to even the surface of the mound.

Beneath ST17.10 context ST17.11 was encountered, which consisted of a thin lens of white/tan limestone plaster, which in turn sealed the rubble fill of ST17.12. ST17.12 consisted of 2-meter deep rubble fill including rocks of various sizes, (ranging from 0.20-0.70 m), packed with loose sand. The fill was used to cover the staircase (Context number ST17.14, ST17.15, ST17.16, ST17.17, ST17.18 and ST17.19) and to fill in the mural room of Structure 1 sub 1 (formerly Room 1) (Figure 5). Loose, light brown sand with small pebble inclusions was encountered beneath ST17.12 and immediately above the plaster floor of ST17.14 and stairs ST17.15 through ST17. 19, and was assigned a distinct context number, ST17.13. A green obsidian blade fragment was found in association with ST17.13 above stair ST17.17. Stair ST17.15 was the first step of the staircase, which is aligned on the east-west axis of the center line of Structure 1, to be uncovered during excavations in Excavation ST17. Stairs ST17.16, ST17.17, ST17.18 ST17.19 and floor ST17.14 were also uncovered and are situated about stair ST17.15 in that same order (Figure 6). Stairs ST17.15, ST17.16 and ST17.17 are roughly equal in depth and height, measuring roughly 0.40 m deep. Stair ST17.15 is just 0.20 m high, while ST17.16 and ST17.17 are approximately 0.40 m high. All of the stairs are covered in fine limestone plaster and also have traces of red and orange paint.

After uncovering stair ST17.17 the excavation was interrupted in ST17 and a 1 m wide tunnel was opened in its northern section following context ST17.18. The stair of ST17.18 is deeper than the rest of the stairs, measuring 1.44 m deep and 0.30 m high, and could be a terrace rather than a stair. The riser of Stair ST17.19 extends 0.34 m above stair ST17.18 and is painted with what appears to be a glyph or face (Figure 7). Dr. Gene Ware of Brigham Young University took several photographs of the painting with multi-spectral imaging equipment, which should help identify the painted image. Due to the fragile condition of the painted plaster, excavation of the tunnel was halted after just 1.40 meters. Since only a small section of the upper extent of the staircase was exposed, it was not possible to determine its exact form and function.

A tunnel extension was initiated in the eastern section wall following stairs ST17.16 and ST17.17 (Figure 8). These stairs terminated approximately 2.7 meters into the tunnel, resulting in a total excavated length of 4.7 meters. The stairs could be longer than the excavated 4.7 meters, since they also continue into the western section wall of Excavation ST17. Once the eastern edge of the staircase was uncovered, the tunnel turned a corner to follow this wall to the north (Figure 9). Our excavations revealed that the stairs were built up against a wall, which was later identified as the western wall of Structure 1 sub 1. An interface between the edge of the stairs and wall ST17.25 (which extends east to west for 0.58 m, is approximately 2.25 m tall and 0.34 m thick), is clearly visible on the southern side of the wall of Structure 1 sub 1 (ST17.25) covered in polychrome plaster. The stairs may cover additional murals on the south side of this wall.

A later burial (context ST17.21, Burial number 13), was placed within the fill of ST17.12 near the corner of the tunnel by the edge of the stairs. A clearly defined cut was not apparent in our excavations. The remains of the burial consisted of just a few poorly preserved long bone fragments. No grave goods were found in association with the burial. This simple burial must have consisted of a bundle of bones placed in the fill. The bone fragments may also just be refuse faunal remains incorporated in the fill. The poor preservation of the bone fragments made a conclusive identification in the field impossible.

Wall ST17.26 (1.5 m long, 1.7 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (north to south) to ST17.25 and is also covered with painted plaster. The only preserved portions of the mural (Mural 6) are on this wall. The mural is not very well-preserved but appears to consist of human figures. A yellow tassel of the headdress of one of the figures is clearly visible (Figure 10). The squared goggles of the headdress of another figure are less clear, but discernible. An orange, wavy line is also visible and may serve as a divider between panels of the mural (Figure 11). Wall ST17.27 (0.73 m long, 1.65 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (east to west) to ST17.26, and along with ST17.26 and ST17.25 forms a small alcove in the tunnel, and also the western wall of Structure 1 sub 1.

The removal of the rubble fill of ST17.12 continued to the north and revealed a series of doorways (Figure 12). The first doorway encountered was 1.22 meters wide and interrupted the north wall (SLT05.10) of Structure 1 sub 1 uncovered during the 2001 field season. Wall ST17.28 (0.56 m long, 1.60 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (north to south) to ST17.27, and forms the western doorjamb of this doorway. Wall ST17.39 (0.36 m long, approximately 1.60 m tall, thickness unknown), forms the eastern doorjamb of the doorway and extends perpendicular (north to south) to wall SLT05.10, the north wall of Structure 1 sub 1. The corners of the walls, as well as the first, outer doorjambs, were painted with vertical, solid red bands. A layer of white wash appears to have been laid over some portions of the walls and mural.

After the first doorway was cleared of rubble, a second narrower (spanning only 0.74 m) doorway was uncovered, which provided access to Structure 1 room 3. Wall ST17.29 (0.31 m long, approximately 1.60 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (east to west) to and abuts ST17.28 and with wall ST17.30 (0.64 m long, 1.52 m high, thickness unknown), which extends perpendicular (north to south) to and abuts ST17.29, forms the western doorjamb of this second, inner doorway. Wall ST17.38 (0.20 m long approximately 1.60 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (east to west) to and abuts ST17.39 and with wall ST17.37 (0.34 m long approximately 1.60 m tall, thickness unknown), which extends perpendicular (north to south) of ST17.38 forms the eastern doorjamb of the second, inner doorway.

Removal of the rubble ST17.12 from the doorways revealed the entrance to Structure 1 room 3 (Figure 13). A later cache was found in the fill (ST17.12) of this room just north of the doorway. The cut of the cache (ST17.23), which was cut into the rubble fill of ST17.12, was roughly oval in shape (1.10 m long at the N-S diameter and 0.55 meter wide at the E-W diameter), and lined with burned stones. The cache itself (ST17.24) consisted of numerous large conjoinable ceramic sherds, none of which could be reconstructed to form a complete vessel. The initial analysis of these sherds indicates that they are typical of Late Classic forms and wares. A carbon sample was taken from the cache for radio-carbon dating. The cache was sealed with plaster floor ST17.22, which was not excavated since it was revealed in the roof of the tunnel. The high amount of carbon, burned stones and pottery fragments also suggest that the deposit served as a midden or fire pit, perhaps in association with the perishable structure on top of Structure 1 built during a later, post-abandonment occupation.

Contexts ST17.31, ST17.32, ST17.35 and ST17.36 form the walls of Structure 1 room 3, which was also filled by rubble fill ST17.12. Wall ST17.31 (0.44 m long, approximately 2.3 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (east to west) to and abuts the doorjamb formed by ST17.30. Wall ST17.32 (2.4 m long, 2.3 m tall, thickness unknown), extends perpendicular (north to south) to and abuts ST17.31. Walls ST17.35 and ST17.36 were not fully exposed because the rubble fill was unstable due to a large looter's trench which cut into the northern face of Structure 1. The excavated portion of wall ST17.35, which forms the northern wall of Structure 1 room 3, is only 0.90 meters long. The excavated portion of wall ST17.36, which forms the eastern side of the southern wall of Structure 1 room 3, is only 0.65 meters long.

All of the walls of Structure 1 room 3 are covered in rough limestone plaster unlike the finely painted walls of Structure 1 sub 1. Faint traces of red and orange paint are visible, implying that the walls were once painted with the same colors as the mural room. Evidence of burning in the form of dark gray patches in the northwest and southwest corners of the room on the floor and on the western wall ST17.32 indicates that this room was used for some sort of ritual activity, alternatively the burned patches may have been caused by a termination ritual fire. A line of dark brown residue approximately 1.1 meter in length extends across the lower portion of wall ST17.32, just above a burned patch on the same wall. This residue may have been from copal incense, although a sample must be analyzed in order to make a conclusive identification.

Doorway ST17.33 (0.83 meter wide and 1.9 meters high), was built into this same wall (ST17.32), and later filled with rubble and sealed shut with white limestone plaster (ST17.34). The plaster sealing the doorway also appeared to have been burned, as there were gray burned patches on the lower portion of the door. Once the layer of plaster was removed, rubble fill was found inside the doorway, ST17.39, consisted of limestone plaster, large squared, limestone blocks, pieces of painted plaster, and brown soil. A significant amount of ceramic sherds and charcoal (of which a sample was taken) were included in the fill.

Once the rubble of ST17.39 was removed, a wall extending north to south was uncovered approximately 0.50 meters from the western edge of the doorjamb (ST17.32) of doorway ST17.33 (Figure 14). This wall, ST17.41 (2.09 m long and approximately 2.3 m tall), abuts the northern wall (ST17.43) of Structure 1. Another wall (ST17.42) built perpendicular to the south of ST17.41 runs east to west and is 1.84 meters long and approximately 2.3 m tall. The two walls form a corner of an earlier structure, Structure 1 sub 3, which was buried within Structure 1. Structure 1 sub 3 appears to share a northern wall with Structure 1. The western wall has not yet been excavated, and it is assumed that access to this structure was gained through a door in the western wall, since neither the eastern or southern walls contain a door. Another possibility is that access to this room was gained through a door in the northern façade of Structure 1. If so, the door may be below or incorporated into the mask uncovered in Excavation ST08E.

Walls ST17.41 and ST17.42 have plinths along their bottoms, although the plinth of the eastern wall has been partially covered by the plaster floor extending through the doorway from Structure 1 sub 1 Room 3. There is also a cornice extending outward approximately 0.20 meters and upward approximately 0.50 meters from the walls which has traces of plaster and orange paint covering it (Figure 15). Structure 1 sub 3 was enclosed on the south by wall ST20.25, which also abuts wall ST20.31; both walls were uncovered in

Excavation ST20 and are discussed below, but are also visible from the tunnel of Excavation ST17. Within the meter of space between wall ST17.42 and wall ST20.25 is a square cut, which chopped off a portion of the plinth of wall ST17.42, and was filled with dark gray soil (Figure 16). The purpose of this cut was not determined during our excavations, since the fill was not removed due to time constraints.

Conclusions

The excavation and tunnel of Excavation ST17 revealed an enormous amount of information regarding the layout of La Sufricaya Structure 1. The tunnel extension of ST17 revealed the western half of Structure 1 sub 1 (formerly Room 1), which is a C-shaped structure with a 4 meter- wide open entrance on the south side, a narrow doorway to the north, and a flat beam and mortar roof. The inner walls of this structure contain painted figures – Mural 6, located on the western wall is coeval with Murals 1-3 discovered on the northern and eastern walls of Structure 1 sub 1 during the 2001 field season. Further excavation and close examination of the wall interfaces is required to determine the exact sequence of construction and relationship between Structure 1 sub 1, Structure 1 room 3, and Structure 1 sub 3. The analysis of the ceramic artifacts and radiocarbon samples from each of these construction phases will shed more light on the absolute dating and function of the rooms.

Based on the available data however, tentative sequence can be formulated (Figure 17). The sequence begins with the construction of Structure 1 sub 3, which consists of walls ST17.41 and ST17.42 as well as the northern façade of Structure 1, identified in this excavation as ST17.43. Structure 1 sub 1 may be contemporaneous with sub 3, but it is more likely that it was constructed after Structure 1 sub 3. Structure 1 sub 1 which contains the Teotihuacan mural, consists of walls ST17.25, ST17.26, ST17.27, SLT05.10 and SLT05.08 identified in 2001. Structure 1 room 3 appears to be a later addition to Structure 1 sub 1, since the construction material and methods appear to be less sophisticated and the plaster floor extending through the doorway (ST17.33) leading to Structure 1 sub 3 covers the plinth at the base of the western wall (ST17.41) of Structure 1 sub 3. The interfaces of the walls, floors and doorways of Structure 1 sub1, Structure 1 room 3 and Structure 1 sub 3 need to be examined in more detail to conclusively define the construction sequence. It may be possible that the construction phase involving the completion of Structure 1 room 3 involved the removal of a portion of the northern wall (SLT05.10) to provide an entrance to Structure 1 room 3. Structure 1 room 3 provided access between Structure 1 sub 1 and sub 3, and also seems to have been the site for ritual activities possibly involving offerings of burned incense.

The fourth phase of construction encountered in this excavation included the staircase, which covers the southwest and western walls of Structure 1 sub 1. However, while the staircase was in use, the rest of Structure 1 sub 1 was left exposed since the staircase and Structure 1 were both later filled with the same 2-meter layer of rubble fill (ST17.12), when use of the area was discontinued. The rubble fill was then sealed with the plaster floor and marl of ST17.11 and ST17.10. The poorly preserved limestone floor of ST17.06 may have been the living surface and foundation of a much later, perishable structure of which daub cobbles and a rough line of stones forming the foundation wall are the only remaining traces.

Although the exact construction sequence has yet to be clarified, the ST17 excavation has revealed that Structure 1 is not composed of a single structure, but is rather a later mound platform (and façade) that covers several distinct stand-alone structures that were in use at the same time and may have formed a multi-room complex or structure. The excavations carried out during the 2003 field season seem to provide more questions than answers concerning the exact sequence of construction and relationship between the sub-structures. Future investigations focusing on the northern and western half of Structure 1 may supply answers to the questions resulting from this field season.

Excavation ST20

Introduction

Excavation ST20 was placed 2 meters to the north of Excavation ST17, on top of and on the central axis of La Sufricaya Structure 1 in Group 1. The main objective of the operation was to determine the function of the staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17. Specifically, we hoped to encounter a platform or bench at the summit of the staircase. The excavation was also initiated with two secondary objectives - to contribute more information regarding the layout and function of Structure 1- since the data recovered from Excavation ST17 resulted in as many questions as conclusions. The operation began as a 2 meter by 2.5 meter trench, and was later extended one meter to the west and one meter to the north, over the northern edge of Structure 1.

Excavation ST20 revealed several construction phases as well as the western (outer) face of the western wall of Structure 1 sub 1, which is elaborately decorated with a molded and painted stucco frieze. Later construction phases included a crude bench flanked by walls that could support the staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17. The location of this bench on the central axis of the structures suggests that it was used as a throne, despite the undecorated and crude construction materials. The latest construction phase included a terrace or structure placed near on the northern edge of Structure 1.

Contexts

Excavation ST20 began with the removal of ST20.01, which was a humus layer consisting of dark brown, moist soil and plant material. The artifacts found in association with this context included two ceramic cylinder seals (Small Find numbers ST20.01.03.01 and ST20.03.02) (Figures 18 and 19), three obsidian blade fragments, a mano fragment, as well as ceramic sherds and unworked chert flakes. A layer of light gray, loose soil, ST20.02, was uncovered below the layer of topsoil. The nature and associated artifacts of these contexts suggest that they could have comprised a midden or ritual offering site. ST20.02 covered a two-course wall made of large, unshaped limestone blocks ST20.03. A plaster floor, ST20.04, was laid in front of the wall of ST20.03, and the plaster lipped up to cover the lower edge of the stones of the wall. There were patches of burned plaster on the floor directly in front of wall ST20.03. A one-course row of limestone blocks, ST20.05, was placed in front of and below the floor of ST20.04, which formed a step. Another plaster floor, ST20.06, was laid in front of the step ST20.05. The wall ST20.03, step ST20.05 and plaster floors ST20.04 and ST20.06 seem to form a terrace near the northern edge of Structure 1 (Figure 20). The relationship between this terrace and the perishable structure discovered in Excavation ST17 remains unclear.

The northern extension of Excavation ST20 revealed a layer of fill (ST20.07), which consisted of packed stones and light brown/tan soil on the outer, northern edge of Structure 1 was uncovered immediately behind wall ST20.03 and below the humus layer. Below ST20.07 a sequence of three plaster floors were uncovered. These floors represent several phases of resurfacing, as they lie directly on top of one another. The floors were poorly preserved, however, and small patches no larger than 0.40 m are the only remaining traces. A small patch of a tan, preserved plaster floor was uncovered on the western side of the trench, immediately above the tumbled rocks of ST20.08. This plaster floor, ST20.09, must have once led up to or extended over the face of Structure 1. The subsequent floor, ST20.10, was made of white limestone plaster and was best preserved in the western corner of the trench. Floor ST20.11 was tan in color and was best preserved in the middle section of the trench, immediately behind ST20.03, and in the northeast corner of the trench. Floor ST20.12 was the earliest of the three floors and was off-white in color. The only remnants of this floor consisted of a small patch to the north of and partially below floor ST20.11.

Large limestone blocks (ranging from 0.40 to 0.80 meters in length) were encountered below the layer of fill ST20.07 and the patches of plaster floors, and were assigned the context number ST20.08. These stones were packed with white/gray mortar on the northern façade of Structure 1. Most of these blocks appeared to be tumble, so their original form and function was not apparent. Due to time constraints, the excavation of the northern façade of Structure 1 was interrupted and efforts were refocused on the original portion of the excavation; none of the tumbled stones comprising ST20.08 were removed.

In order to preserve the architecture of the terrace, the western meter of the trench was left unexcavated. The stones of wall ST20.03, step ST20.05 and floors ST20.04 and ST20.06 were removed to the east of this section. A layer of limestone plaster and rock marl, ST20.13, was uncovered below floor ST20.04. ST20.14, which was a layer of marl very similar to the consistency of ST20.13, was uncovered below floor ST20.06. The northern wall of Structure 1, ST20.21, was revealed once the plaster floors were removed from behind wall ST20.03.

Below the terrace a two-course wall in the shape of an L (extending N-S, W-E), and abutting wall ST20.21 was uncovered (Figure 21). Wall ST20.15 was constructed of large (ranging from 0.40-0.60 meters in length), square limestone blocks packed with whitish gray mortar. This mortar, ST20.17, was poured on top of the corner of the wall and over the southern edge as well. A white limestone plaster floor (ST20.18) was laid to the west of wall ST20.15. The fill of wall ST20.15, (ST20.16), was only distinguished from the mortar of ST17.17 by the few ceramic sherds included in the context.

Wall ST20.15 was built directly on top of a tan limestone plaster floor, ST20.19. This floor also lipped up to cover a portion of wall ST20.21. A fissure ran east to west across the surface of the floor and was probably caused by uneven settling of the fill below floor ST20.19. The fissure was assigned a context number, ST20.20, in case excavations revealed that it was a deliberate cut into the floor rather than a fissure; it was later determined that ST20.20 was not a deliberate cut.

Another fissure in floor ST20.19 along the eastern edge of the trench revealed a cut (ST20.26) for Burial 11 (ST20.27). This simple burial was placed in a cut approximately 0.60 meters long, and did not contain any grave goods. The burial was poorly preserved and consisted of long bone and vertebrae fragments, as well as several molars and incisors. A textile impression made on a chunk of plaster found in association with Burial 11 suggests that the burial was originally wrapped in a textile to form a bundle.

Rubble fill (ST20.22), consisting of unshaped rocks of various sizes and light brown soil was uncovered directly below floor ST20.19. This layer of fill was approximately 3.7 meters deep and covered all of the features described below. A plaster surface, ST20.23, was uncovered in the southeast corner of the trench. This surface has a distinct edge and is approximately 0.20 meters high. It was left unexcavated since it seemed as though the exposed section was possibly the upper edge of a stair from the staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17 (See Excavation ST17 above), and it needed to be preserved. Two square-shaped stones covered with plaster with traces of orange paint were also uncovered in the fill. One of the stones jutted out from the eastern section wall, while the other jutted out from the unexcavated portion of the trench. Together, these stones (ST20.24) could be the remnants of a bench or wall associated with stair or floor ST20.23.

The removal of the rubble fill also revealed two walls built perpendicular to and abutting each other (ST20.34 and ST20.25). They are made of similar construction material, which implies that they are contemporaneous. Both consist of large limestone blocks covered with tan mortar. Wall ST20.34 extends north to south and is located directly below the unexcavated portion of the trench, this wall also forms the western section wall of the trench. Wall ST20.25 extends east to west and was constructed 0.50 meters to the south of wall ST20.21, which forms the south side of the northern façade of Structure 1. Wall ST20.25 is approximately 3.3 meters high and 4.7 meters long. A plaster floor, ST20.30, was uncovered in the corner between walls ST20.25 and ST20.34 at a depth of 5.1 meters.

The removal of the fill ST20.22 continued to the east, where an elevated platform or bench (ST20.28) was uncovered at a depth of approximately 4 meters (Figure 22). Since the terminus of wall ST20.25 had not yet been discovered, a tunnel extension was placed in the eastern section wall. This extension continued for approximately 2.2 meters and ended when wall ST20.31 was encountered. The exposed 0.70 m section of this wall runs north to south and has a painted plaster mask on the cornice with a motif of red painted arrows and molded stucco quatrefoil crosses (Figures 23 through 25). The face of the mask is painted red with black lines which could represent tattoos or face paint. The mouth is open to reveal yellow teeth with painted black spots, perhaps representing jade inlays. Long strips of paper or cloth hang from the figure's ears, and the figure also appears to have a beard or bib below the chin. The wall below the cornice also has traces of red painted plaster. Wall ST20.25 abuts wall ST20.31 approximately 0.05 m to the north of the mask.

More of the rubble fill of ST20.22 was removed from the area directly in front of wall ST20.31, and revealed plaster floor ST20.30 at a depth of 5.1 meters. This floor was also uncovered in the area in front of bench ST20.28, as well as below it. The removal of the rubble fill of ST20.22 revealed more of bench ST20.28, and it became apparent that the bench was very crudely constructed (Figure 26 through 28). The bench was constructed in front of wall ST20.25 and is 2.1 m wide and 1.7 m deep. The uneven surface of the bench consisted of tan mortar/plaster overlying large, unshaped stones, which explains the varying height of the bench. The square-shaped stones covered in white plaster which formed the sides of the bench were the only indication that it actually was a bench and not a platform. The front of the bench was not present and is assumed to have been ritually destroyed in antiquity. A small test excavation was placed in the middle of the bench which revealed its construction of large, unshaped rocks and mortar. The test excavation was interrupted when plaster floor ST20.30 was encountered.

Two walls were visible in front of the bench in the southern section of the excavation. Wall ST20.32 was constructed to the east of the bench, and wall ST20.33 to the west of the bench. The exposed section of wall ST20.32 extends east to west for approximately 1.1 m, while the exposed section of wall ST20.33 extends east to west for approximately 1 meter. Both walls were made of large, crudely shaped, square limestone blocks, some of which had remnants of plaster on their surfaces. These exposed sections appear to be the unfaced backside of walls which may flank the staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17 and face the south. Continued investigation is required to determine the exact form and function of these walls, but they could have served to cover the bench, or perhaps to support or flank the stairway uncovered in Excavation ST17. They could also be related to the plaster surface of ST20.23, which is approximately 2 meters above the surface of the bench.

Conclusion

Excavation ST20 did not provide conclusive evidence regarding the purpose or function of the staircase encountered in Excavation ST17, but it did provide a wealth of information regarding several successive phases of construction and ritual activity in Structure 1.

The earliest phase of construction uncovered in Excavation ST20 consisted of floor ST20.30 and wall ST20.31. During a later phase of construction, wall ST20.25 was built directly abutting the corner of wall ST20.31, leaving the mask, cornice and painted wall exposed. During the same phase wall ST20.34 was built to the west and perpendicular to wall ST20.25. The bench ST20.28 was also built directly in front of the south side of wall ST20.25 during the same phase. It is worth noting here that this bench was placed only slightly to the west of the centerline of Structure 1 sub 3, which is directly behind (on the north side of) wall ST20.25.

The next phase consisted of the construction of walls ST20.32 and ST20.33 flanking the bench. Wall ST20.32 also covered the rest of wall ST20.31, leaving approximately one meter of the wall and decorated cornice visible. These walls (ST20.32 & ST20.33) may serve as flanking walls to the stairway in Excavation ST17, but their construction also effectively terminated the use of bench ST20.28.

The entire area was later filled with a 4.7 meter deep layer of rubble (ST20.22). The presence of the plaster surface of ST20.23 and demolished wall or bench of ST20.24, indicates that there was another phase of construction activity before the area was sealed by floor ST20.19, but further excavations are required to determine the exact form and nature of this intermediate phase.

Floor ST20.19 was laid to seal off the area. Wall ST20.15 was constructed on top of this floor, but the exact layout and function of the wall has yet to be determined. During the next phase, wall ST20.15 was covered with a 0.20 m thick layer of fill, then a terrace (composed of ST20.03, ST20.04, ST20.05 and ST20.06) was constructed during the subsequent phase. Our excavations failed to determine the precise function of the terrace, but the burned plaster and the nature of the artifacts found in association with the context on top of it would indicate that it served either as a midden, a site for ritual offerings, or possibly a later structure.

The northern extension of ST20, which was placed over the edge and façade of Structure 1 revealed tumbled construction fill (ST20.08), which could be the remnants of a staircase, and the northern façade wall (ST20.21) of Structure 1. The northern wall was surmounted by four successive plaster floors (ST20.09-ST20.12) and a 0.10 m thick layer of construction fill (ST20.07).

All of the phases of construction and ritual activity exposed in Excavation ST20 take place in an area that corresponds with the centerline of Structure 1 sub 3 buried on the northern side of wall ST20.25. The unusual number of rebuilding episodes in such a small space suggests that the structure held a great deal of significance for later inhabitants of the platform, who may have sought to commemorate the structure or affiliate themselves with its significance through later construction phases.

Excavations ST08 and ST08E

Introduction

Excavation ST08 from the 2002 field season was reopened with the hope of shedding light on the function of the staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17. In 2002 the operation was placed in the northern façade of Structure 1, the main platform at La Sufricaya. During the 2002 field season a wall was discovered in ST08, which was believed to be contemporaneous with the ST17 staircase. After Excavation ST08 was reopened, the trench was extended to 1.5 meters to the west and connected with the extension of Excavation ST20, this extension and its corresponding context numbers was called Excavation ST08E.

Contexts

Excavation ST08 began with the removal of loose, dark brown soil and large limestone blocks, which comprised the backfill of the 2002 excavation, and was assigned the context number of ST08.00. ST08.01 and ST08.02 were uncovered during the 2002 field season, and correspond to ST08E.01 and ST08E.02 described below, but were not encountered during this excavation as they were removed in 2002. After the back fill was removed, large limestone slabs approximately 0.6 to 1.1 meters long and 0.2 meters wide were discovered (Figure 29). These slabs (ST08.03) were placed vertically to form a niche, and actually form the eye and eyebrow of a mask built on the façade of Structure 1. A large stone block approximately 0.60 meters long and 0.45 meters wide and covered with plaster was placed perpendicular to the slabs of ST08.03 (Figure 30). This block may form the nose of the mask. The context ST08.05 consisted of tumbled stones of various sizes, which may or may not form part of the mask.

The excavation of extension ST08E began with the removal of ST08E.01, dark brown, loose soil with plant material, which comprised a humus layer. A layer of fill, ST08E.02, was encountered below the humus layer, and consisted of loosely packed stones and light brown soil. Ceramic sherds were found in association with both ST08E.01 and ST08E.02. Below the layer of fill a mortar wall running east to west was uncovered. This wall, ST08E.03, approximately 1.5 meters long and 0.40 meters high, could form the cheek of the mask. Immediately in front of wall ST08E.03 tumbled stones comprising ST08E.04 were uncovered. These stones may or may not form part of the mask.

Conclusions

Unfortunately, the ST08 excavations did not elucidate the function of the staircase in Excavation ST17. They did however uncover a crude mask on the façade of Structure 1. What was originally believed to be a wall uncovered in ST08 during the 2002 field season was reinterpreted as the nose of the mask. The mask is formed of large limestone blocks and limestone plaster. There is no evidence that the plaster was once painted. The clearly visible parts of the mask are the eye and eyebrow formed by the limestone slabs of ST08.04, the cheek formed by ST08E.03, and the nose formed by ST08.04. It is assumed that the mask was constructed during the Early Classic period, and is contemporaneous with the latest phase of construction of Structure 1, but an analysis of the ceramic sherds found in the fill covering the mask will help confirm the suggested dating of the sequence.

Future investigations could include an operation placed to the east of ST08 to uncover the other eye of the mask, as well as an operation placed below ST08 to uncover the mouth.

FIGURES

Figure 1 Map of La Sufricaya

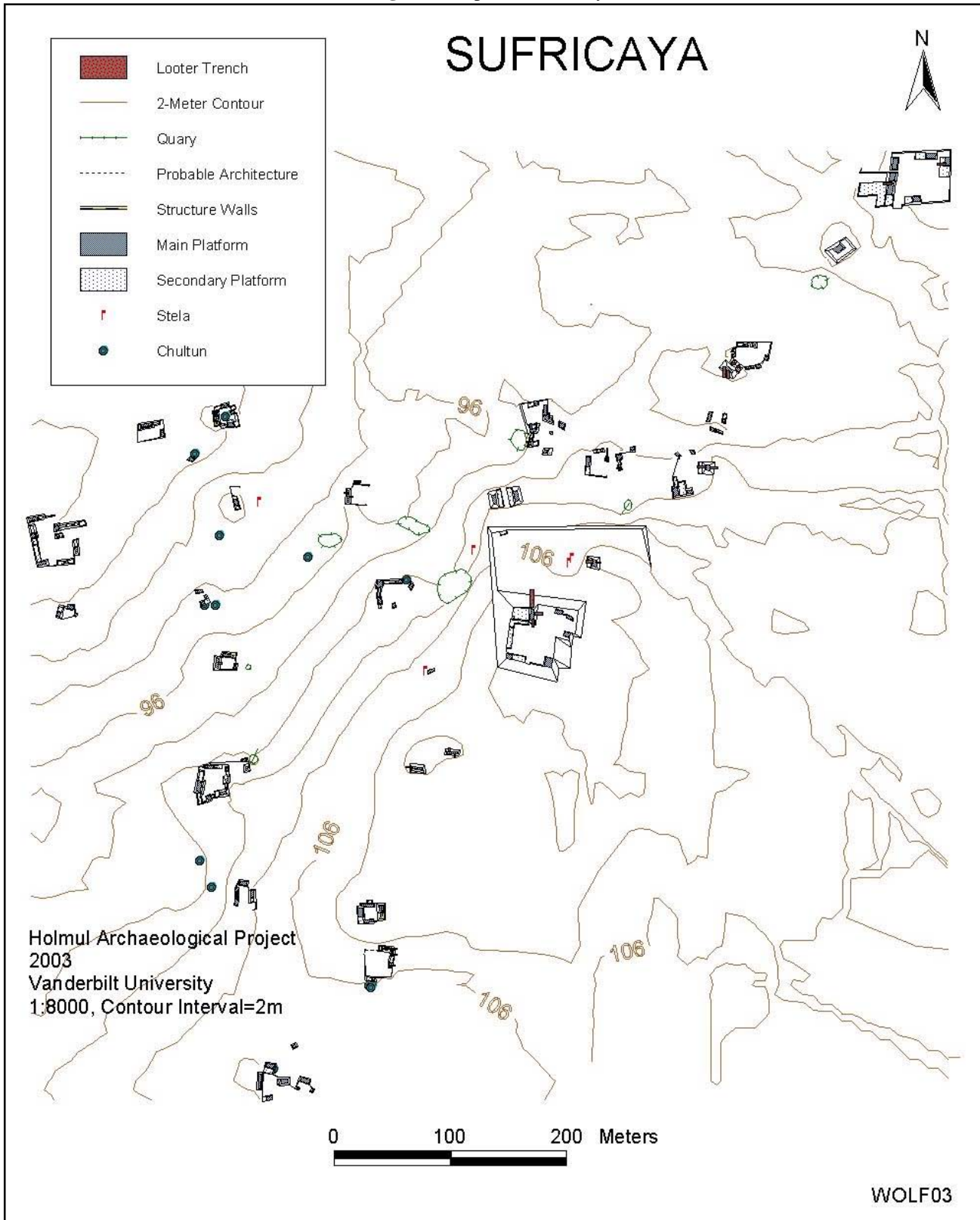


Figure 2 Map of La Sufricaya Group 1 detailing excavations conducted during the 2003 field season

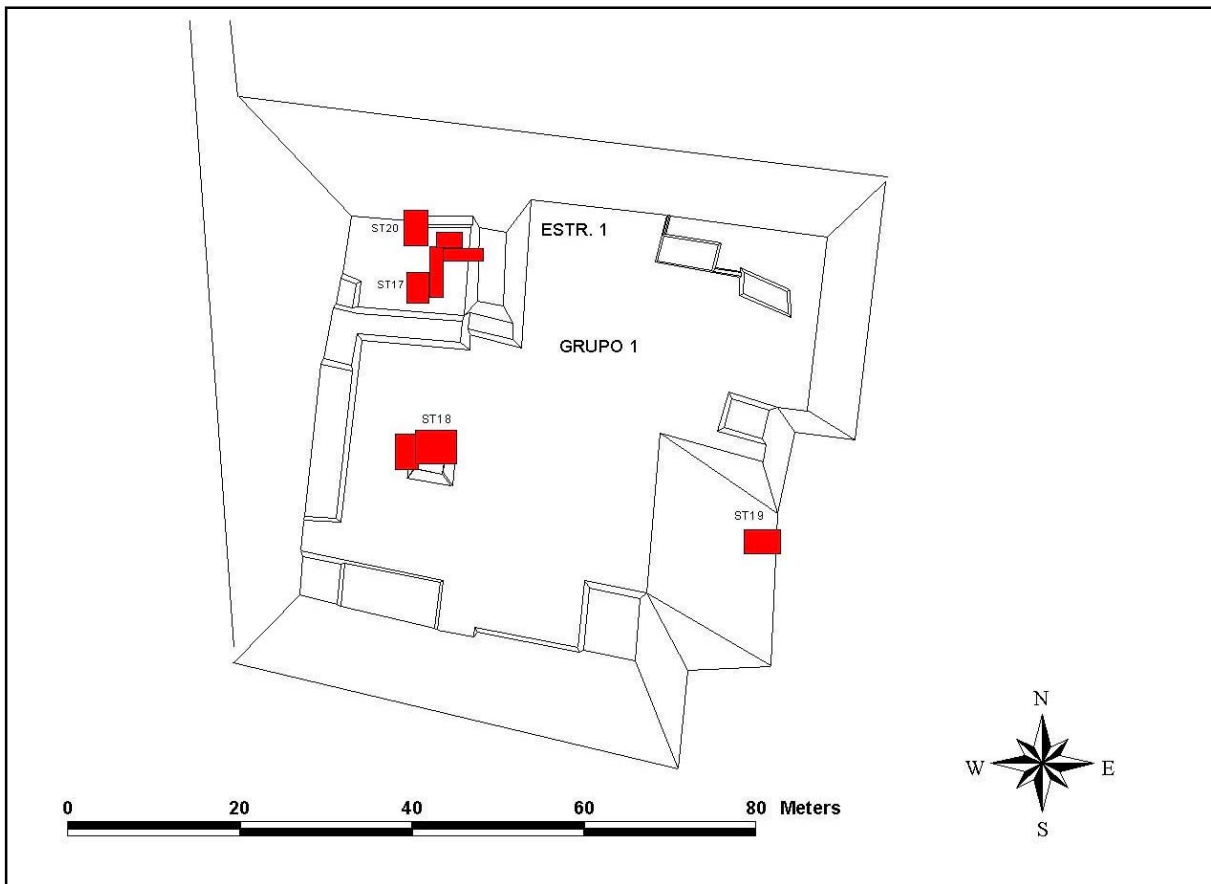


Figure 3 Excavation ST17 with the row of stones comprising context ST17.05 in the northern edge of the trench



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



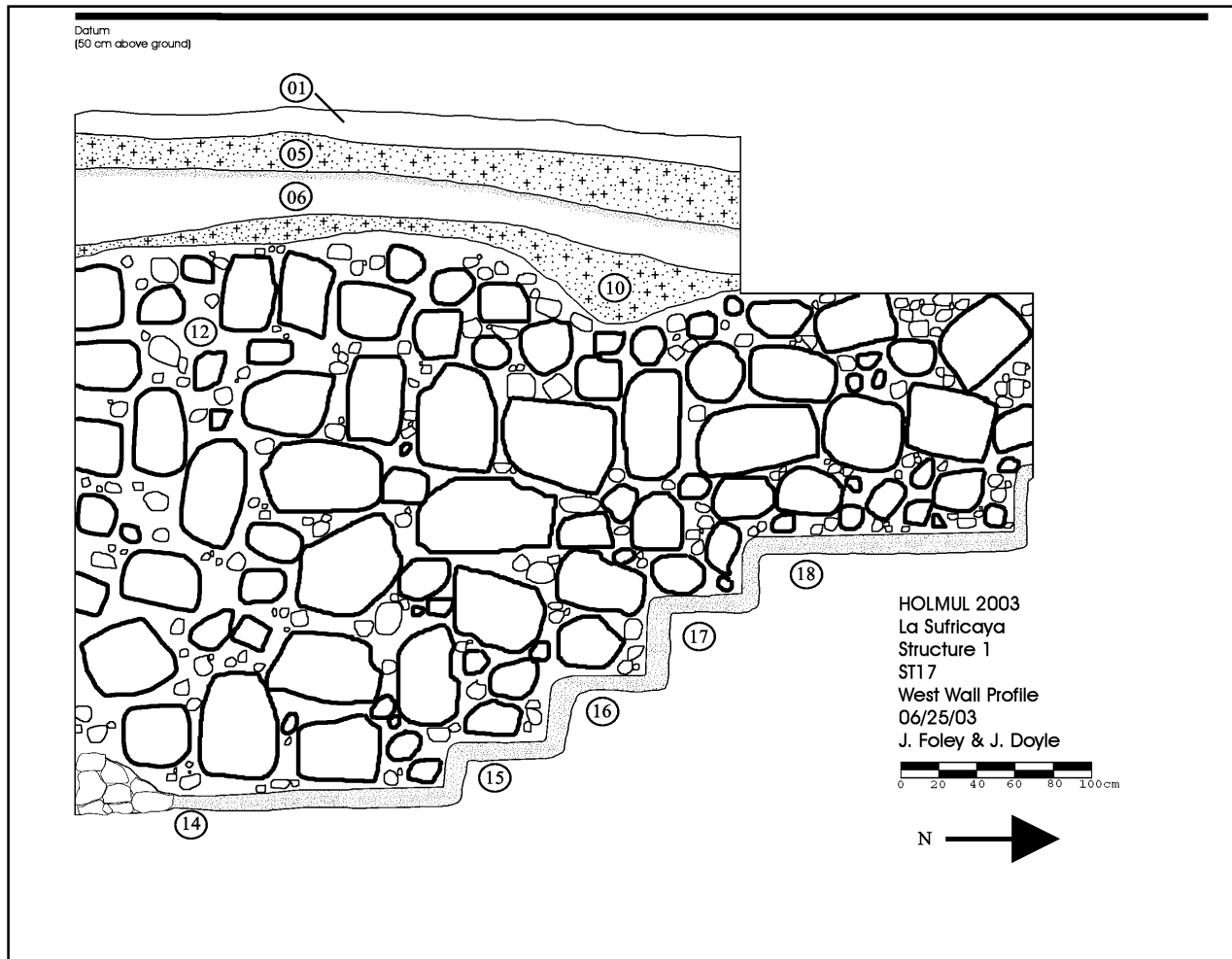


Figure 5 Profile of the western section of Excavation ST17

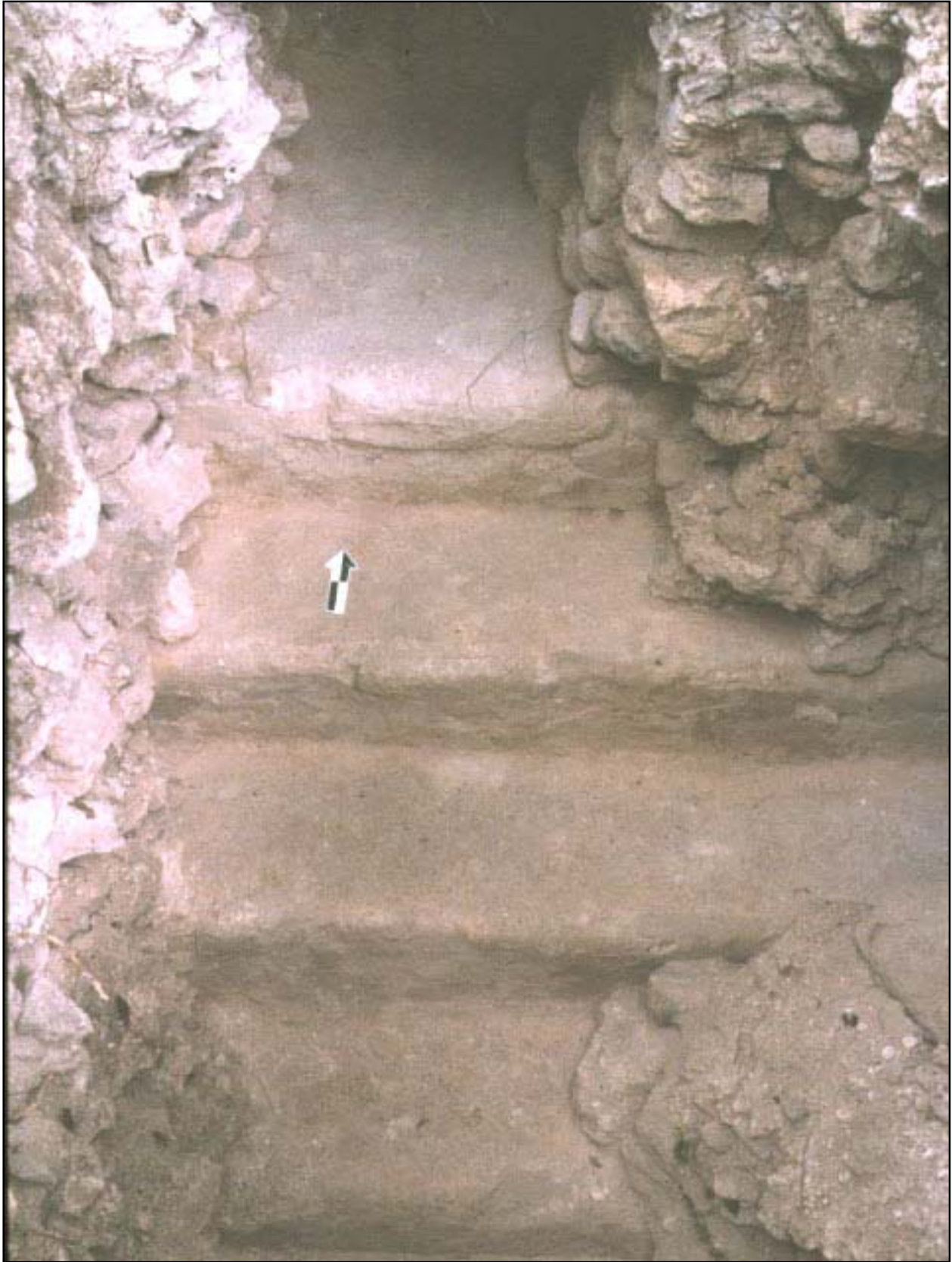


Figure 6 Staircase uncovered in Excavation ST17



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



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

Figure 9 Plan of tunnel extension of Excavation ST17

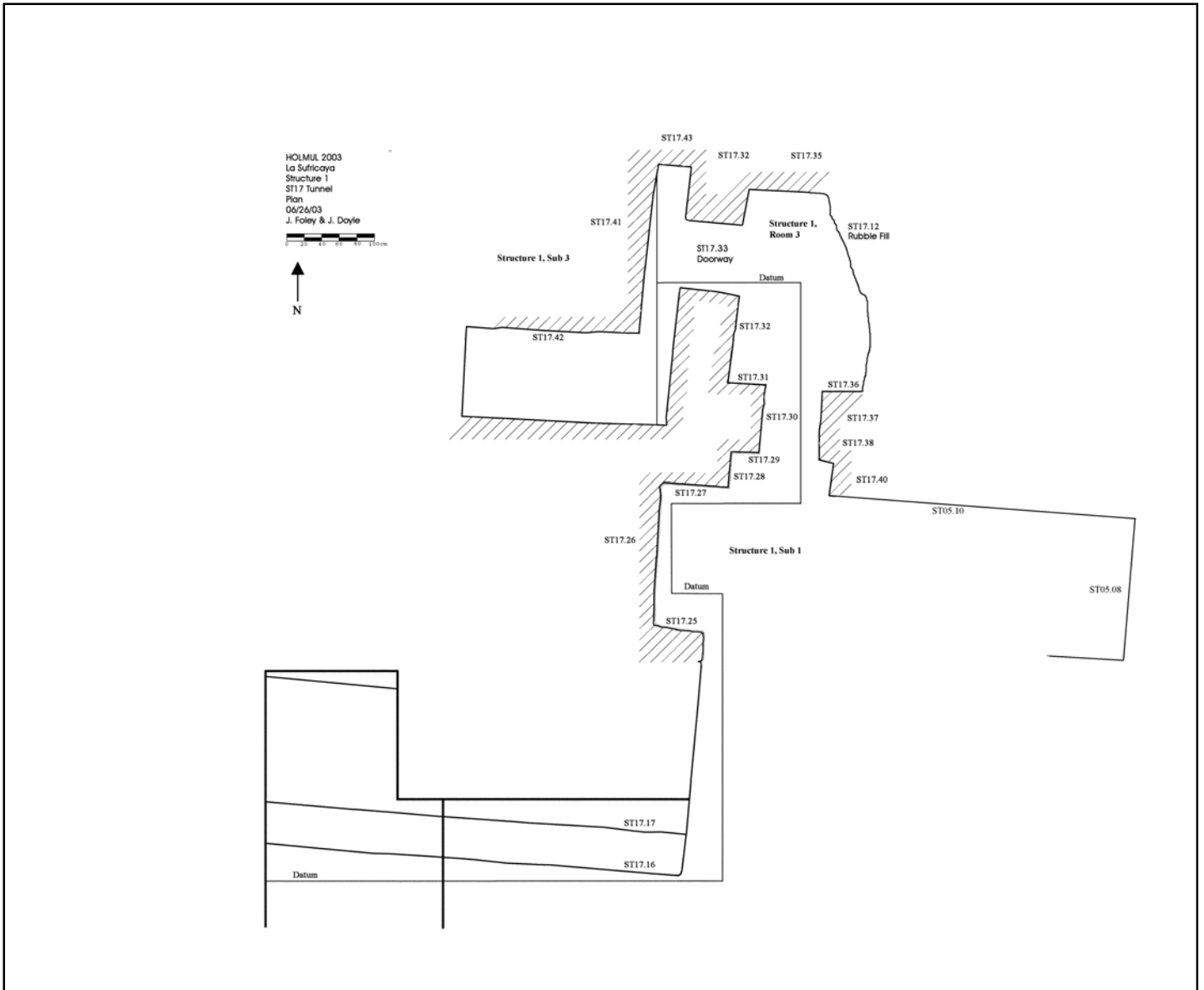




Figure 10 Rubble-filled doorway to Structure 1 room 3



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



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



Figure 13 Southern wall of Structure 1 sub 3 with cornice



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

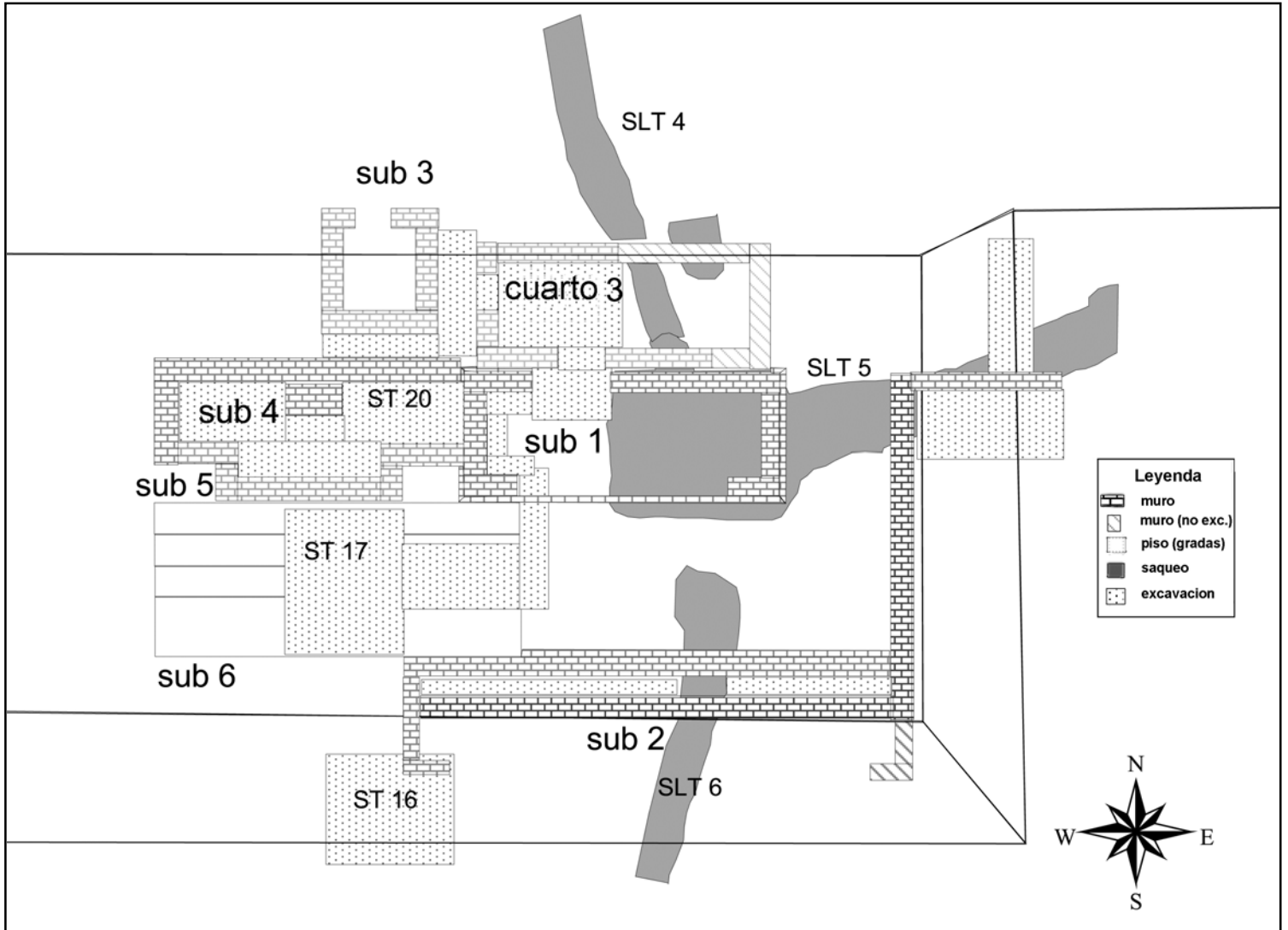


Figure 15 Layout of Structure 1 including construction phases, excavations and looters trenches



Figure 16 Cylinder seal recovered from Excavation ST20



Figure 17 Cylinder seal recovered from Excavation ST20



Figure 18 Terrace uncovered in Excavation ST20



Figure 19 L-shaped wall uncovered in Excavation ST20



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



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



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





Figure 24 Bench uncovered in Excavation ST20

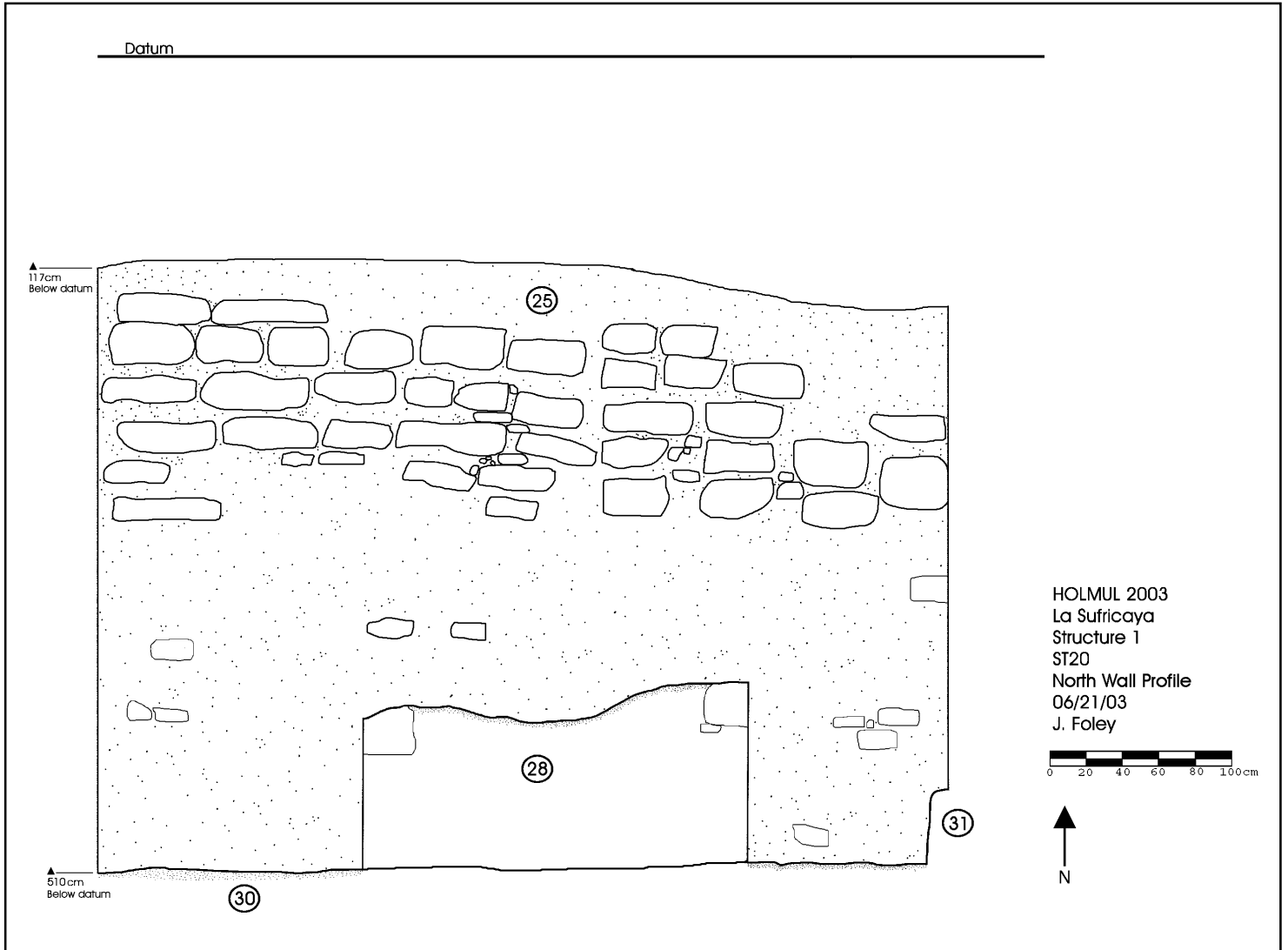


Figure 25 Profile of northern section wall of Excavation ST20, including the bench

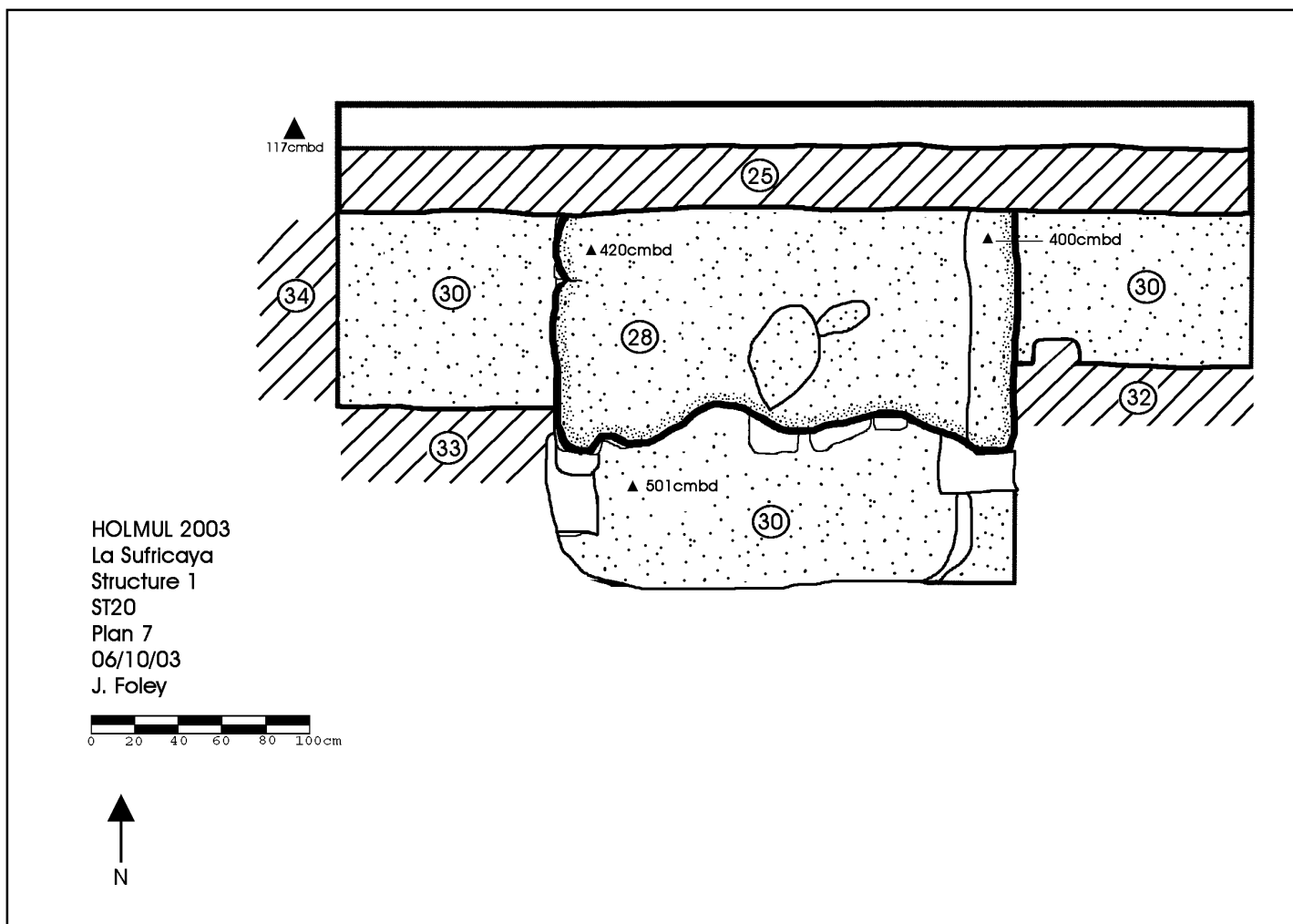


Figure 26 Plan of features uncovered in Excavation ST20



Figure 27 Eye of mask uncovered in Excavation ST08E



Figure 28 Nose of mask uncovered in Excavation ST08E

La Sufricaya- ST 18 and SL07

Niña Neivens
Holmul Archaeological Project
2003

Introduction

The investigations SL07 and ST 18 examined a small, low mound on top of the Structure 146, located in the center of the elevated Group 1 acropolis and south of Structure 1 at La Sufricaya. This subcenter of Holmul is of particular significance because of the murals found in 2001 containing Central Mexican iconography, in the form of several individuals shown in profile with elaborate headdresses, similar to those illustrated at Teotihuacan (Techinantitla murals), Monte Alban (Estela Lisa), and on a ceramic vessel from Tikal (Burial 10), which are referred to as Teotihuacan emissaries (Millon, 1992). Investigations at La Sufricaya in 2002 revealed another mural in Structure 1 as well as several pieces of Pachuca green obsidian within this structure and from the area surrounding its platform (Estrada-Belli and Tomasic, 2003). In 2003, three excavations examined the Group 1 Platform; ST 17 and ST 20 in Structure 1, ST 19 on the east side of the platform, and ST18 in the center of Structure-146.

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

Investigations began with the cleaning and documentation of the looter's trench, SL07. This trench ran from the structure's eastern extent to its interior, revealing a masonry wall running north-south and a cavity within the rubble fill beneath. Then a 3.5 m by 5 m trench, ST18, was laid out across the building's northern side, adjacent to SL07. This trench was extended 3 times; 1 m to the west, then 3 m to the south, then 1 m south, and 1 m west in the southwest corner. This excavation revealed 2 structures, the latter of which with 2 major phases of construction, and 2 caches each with one ceramic vessel of Late Classic period interment.

Discussion and Stratigraphy

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

The excavation (ST18) was placed adjacent to SL07, running 3.5 m to the north and 5 m to the west. The stones on the surface were called ST18.01, covering several layers of humus, ST18.02-06 (see site notebook for minor distinctions). Then I found walls running from the looter's trench to the north, ST18.09, and perpendicular to that across the trench east-west and stopping 3 cm before the west section wall of the same trench, ST18.10 and ST18.33. These were abutted in the center of the excavation or on their east face by a layer of densely packed grey soil, ST18.08, probably coeval with the last plaza floor. On the top of the mound there were many tumbled stones from some sort of superstructure, ST18.20, including one large rectangular stone set perpendicular to ST18.09 adjacent to the looters trench. East of, and parallel to, this stone was a substantial earlier wall running north-south, ST18.11, in the middle of the mound. Beneath ST18.08 there were 2 overlying floors outside the building; a yellow plaster floor, ST18.13 above a grey one, ST18.14. In the western part of the trench ST18.08, the densely packed grey soil and came down almost immediately on the fragmentary remains of a different thick plaster floor, ST18.16, which was interrupted by a cut along the west section and along the wall ST18.33. Inside the cut,

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

alignment of the removed stone wall. A number of small walls were laid to the west of the structure, ST18.29, ST18.42, ST18.43, and ST18.44 to extend the structure. A number of cuts were made into the floor ST18.16; cut ST18.30 to the north of the building, cut ST18.31 between walls ST18.12, cut ST18.29, and cut ST18.48 on the centerline of the building between and in front of walls ST18.42 and ST18.43. These cuts were then filled with fills ST18.27, ST18.28, and ST18.49 respectively. Then the room was filled with rubble layers ST18.07, ST18.06, ST18.26, and ST18.34, which included some of the square stones from the wall that had been removed.

The eastern room was filled in at the same time or later. It was first filled with rubble ST18.22, then ST18.20. Then both rooms were covered with stones found in the humus layers, ST18.06, ST18.05, ST18.04, ST18.03, ST18.02, ST18.25, ST18.32, ST18.36, and on the surface in ST18.01.

On the southwest corner, two caches were made before (?-it had to be before unless it was cut through the fill) the mound was filled. The first cut, ST18.40, was filled with ST18.41 containing one complete ceramic vessel. Then ST18.52 was cut directly above it, extending slightly to the south. This was lined with flat stones and filled with ST18.39 containing another ceramic vessel of the same style. This was covered by a layer of stones, ST18.38, and a layer of chert debitage, ST18.37. The whole thing was then covered by a large flat stone. The area around the mound continued in use through the Late Classic and a layer of densely packed gray soil occurred around the building, ST18.08, and finally the humus layer ST18.32 and ST18.36 covered the area.

ST18 –Illustrations

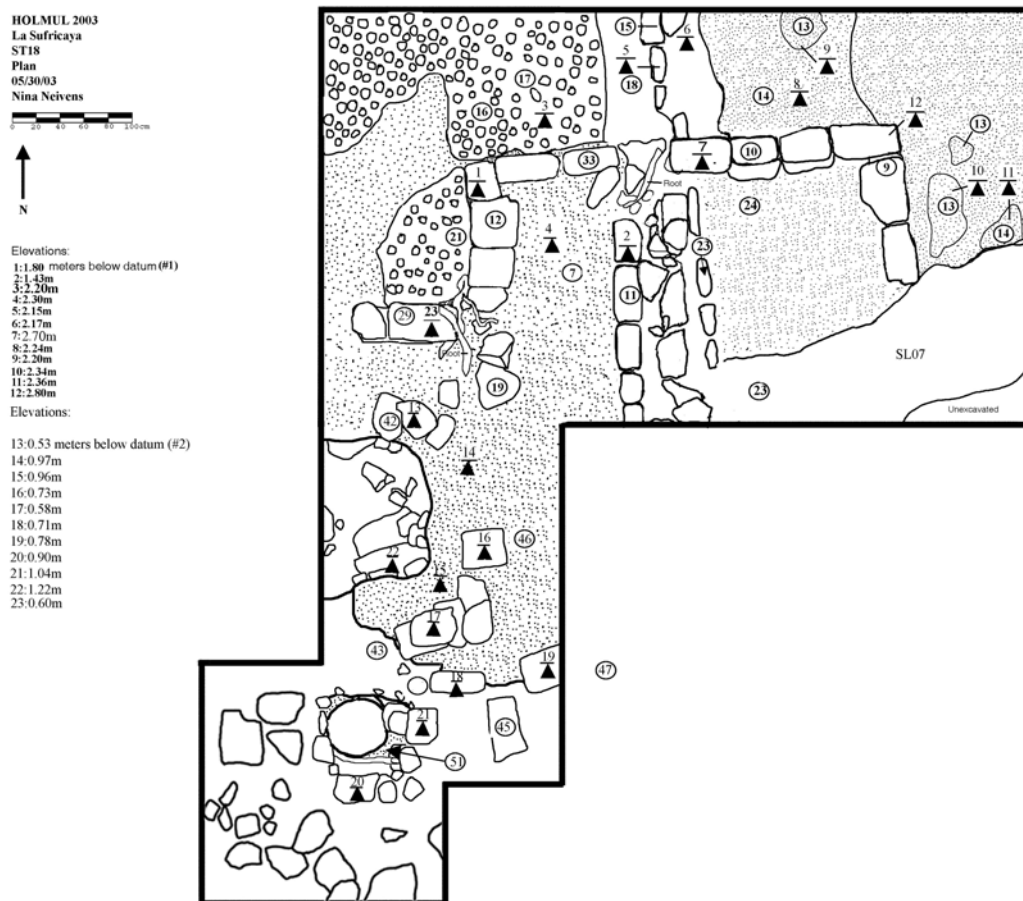


Figure 1. Final plan of excavation

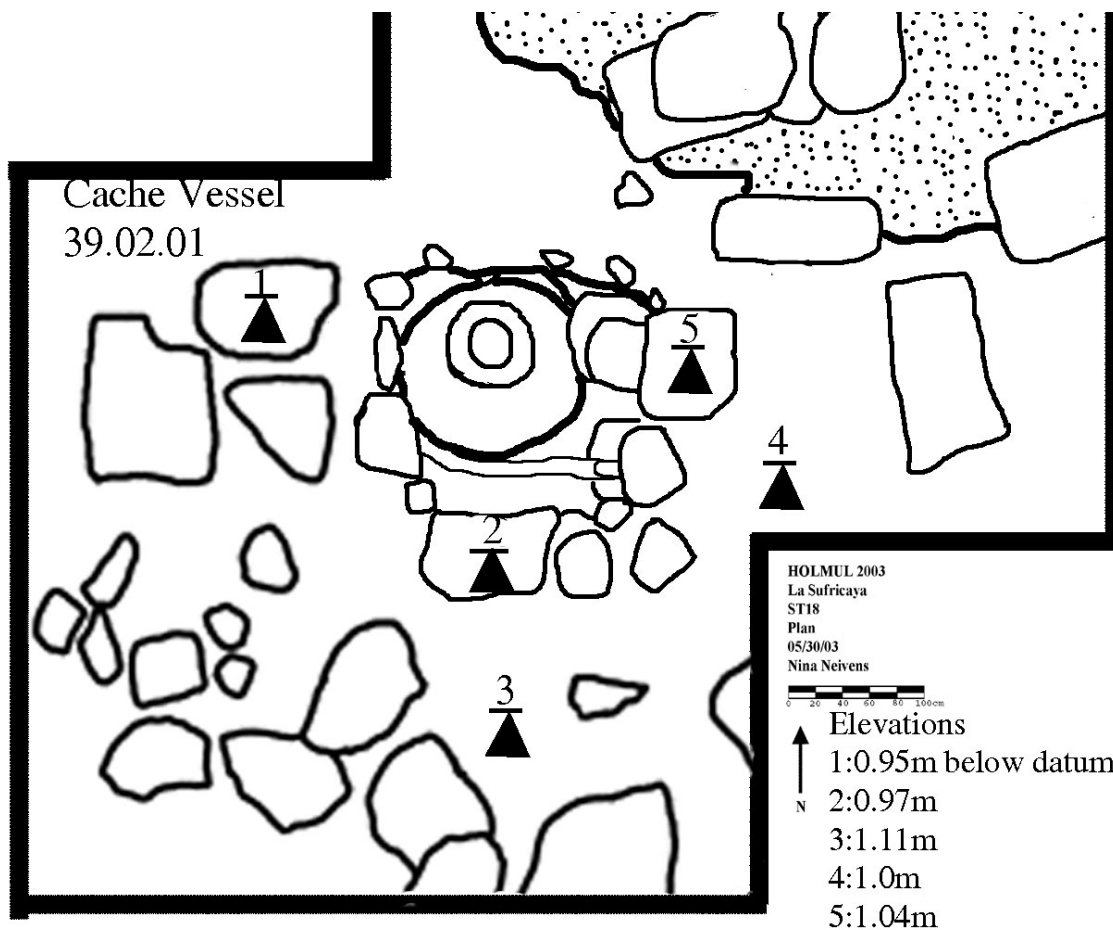


Figure 2. Detail of SW extension and cache #1

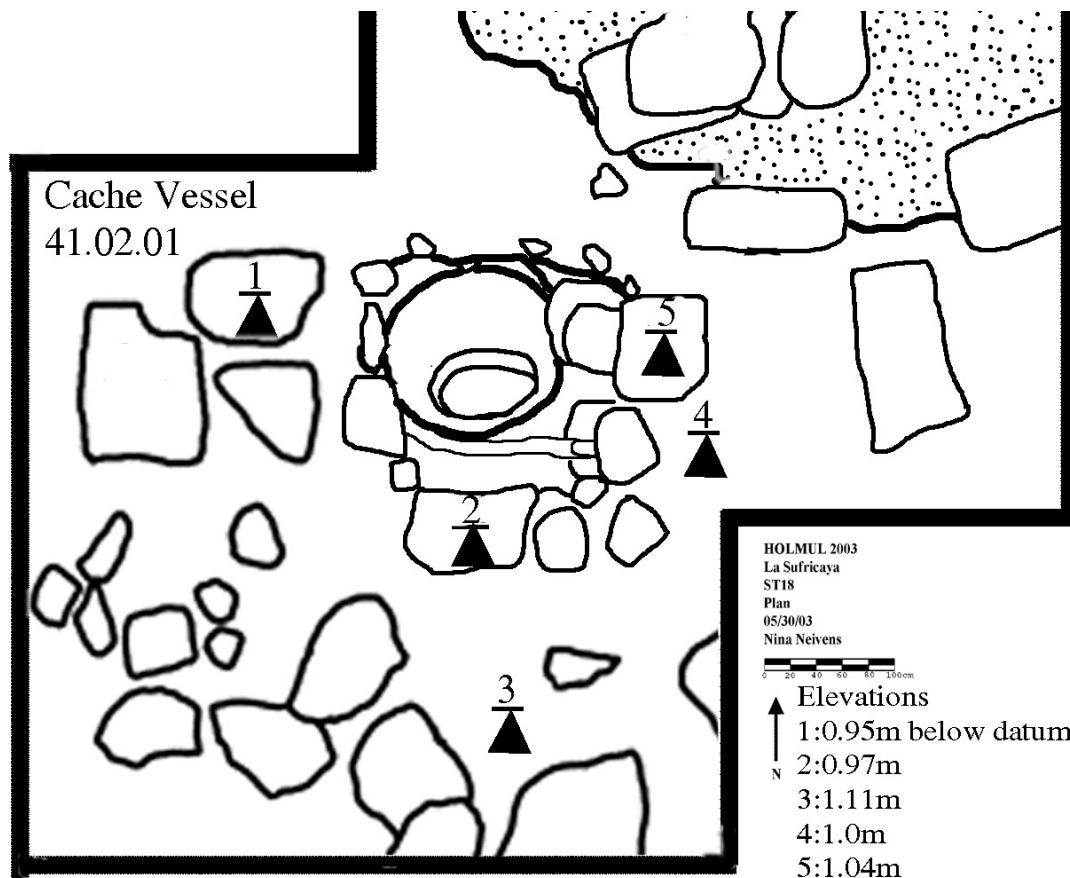


Figure 3. Detail of SW extension and cache #2.

Excavations in Group III court A, Season 2003

Chris Hewitson

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

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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

The second area of excavation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overview of the Complex

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

At the front of the complex two twin sets of cells Structure 58 (MA2 and MA4) and Structure 57 (MA10 and MA12) flanked the arched entrance revealed during excavation of T42. These four rooms opened onto the main plaza through doorways either collapsed or unexcavated at present. To the rear of Structure 57, a range of narrow contemporary rooms appeared to have existed revealed at either corner in T42 and LT14. T36 (MA6) excavated this year may also be contemporaneous as well.

A further cell was located to the south of Structure 57, MA16. It was a later addition to the range and seemed to relate to a similar wall located in LT15 to the south. However, the form of the later structure south is unclear at present. The northern wall of MA16 was of similar construction material to MA12 and probably delineates an earlier room between the two (MA14).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figures

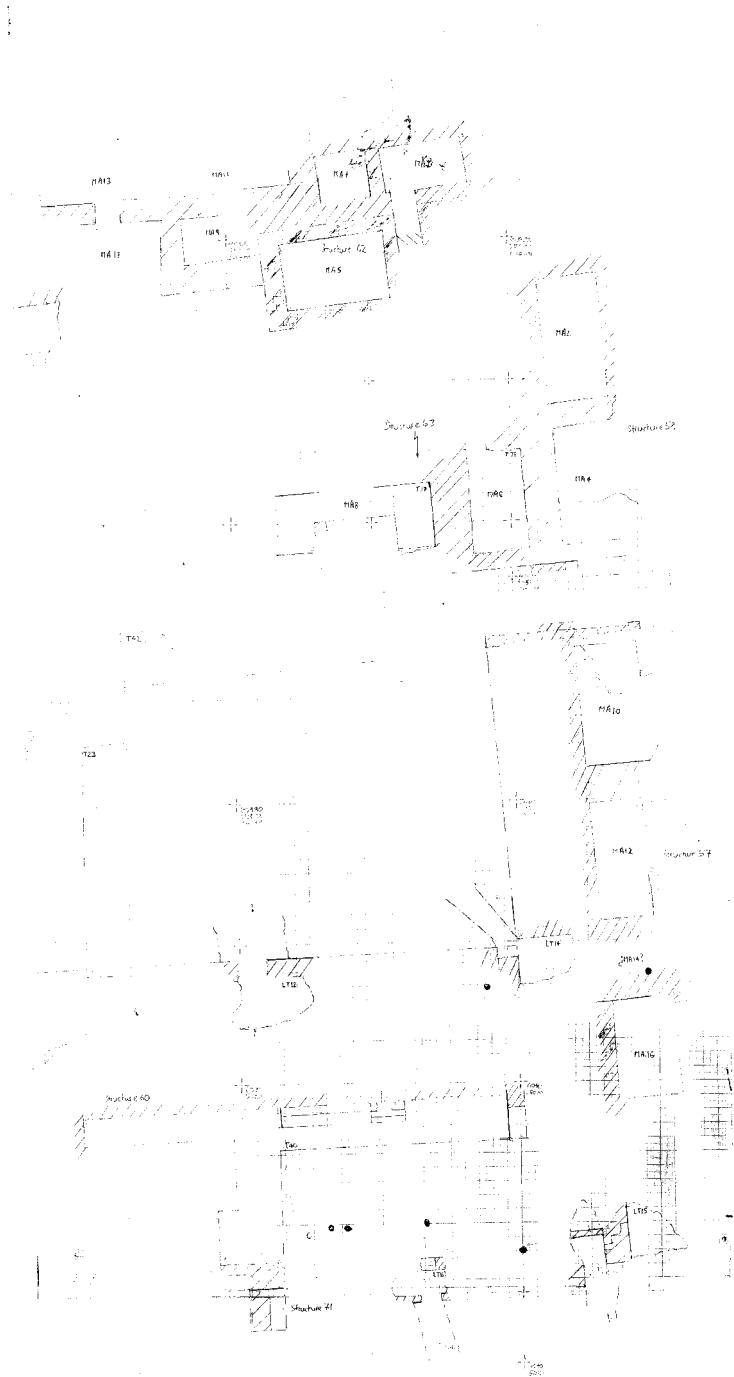


Figure 1. Preliminary plan of eastern half of Group III, C. Hewitson.

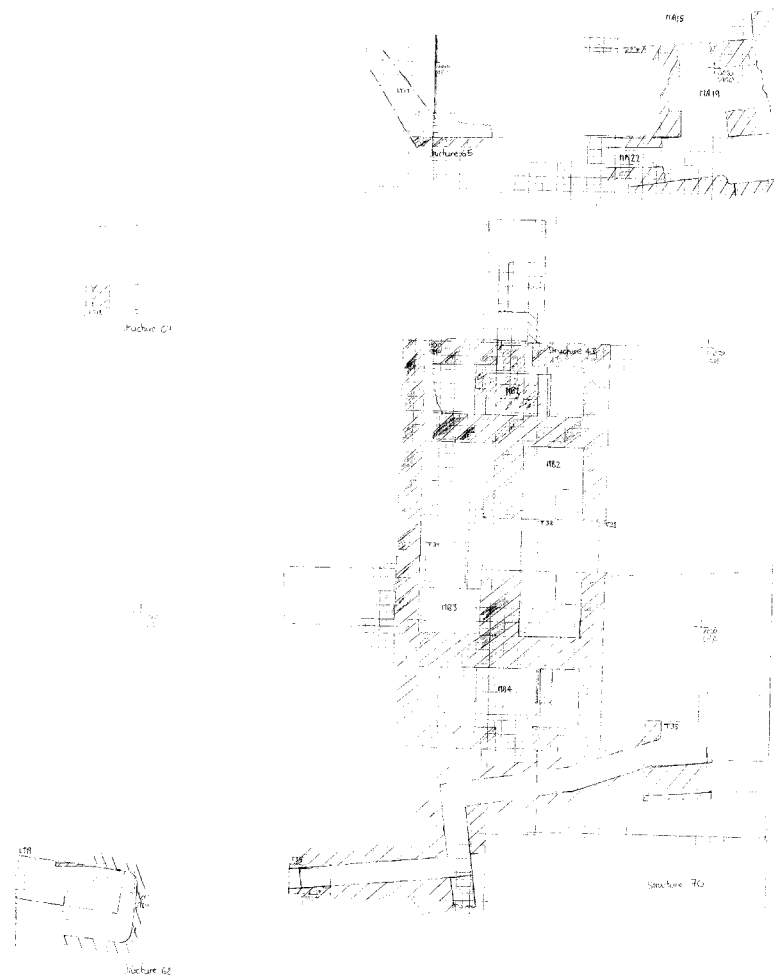


Figure 2. Preliminary plan of western half of Group III, C.Hewitson.

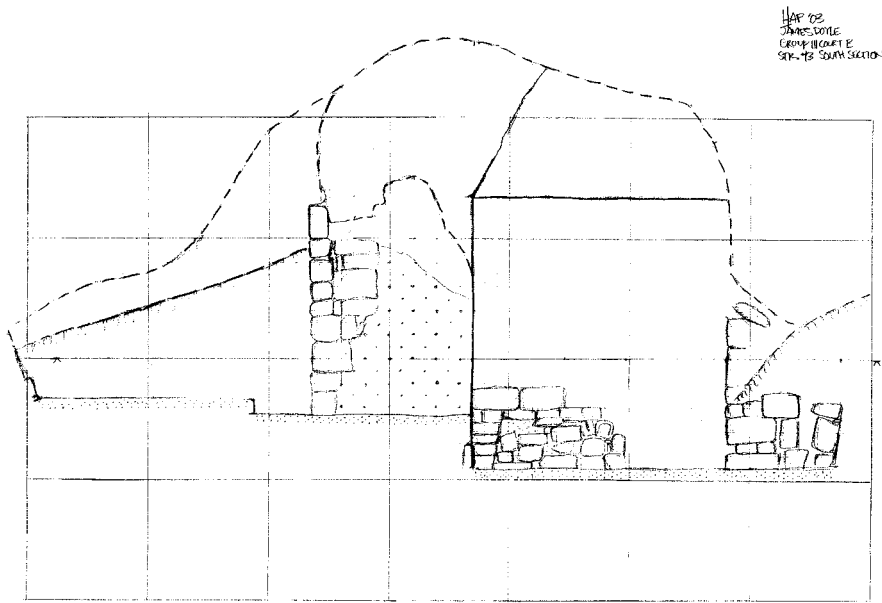


Figure 3 South profile of Str. 43, James Doyle.

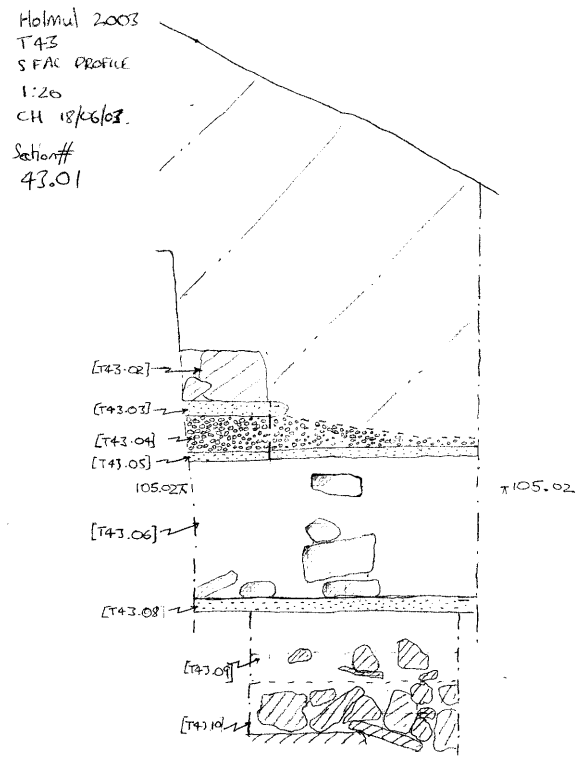


Figure 4 North Profile of HT43 in Str. 43, C. Hewitson

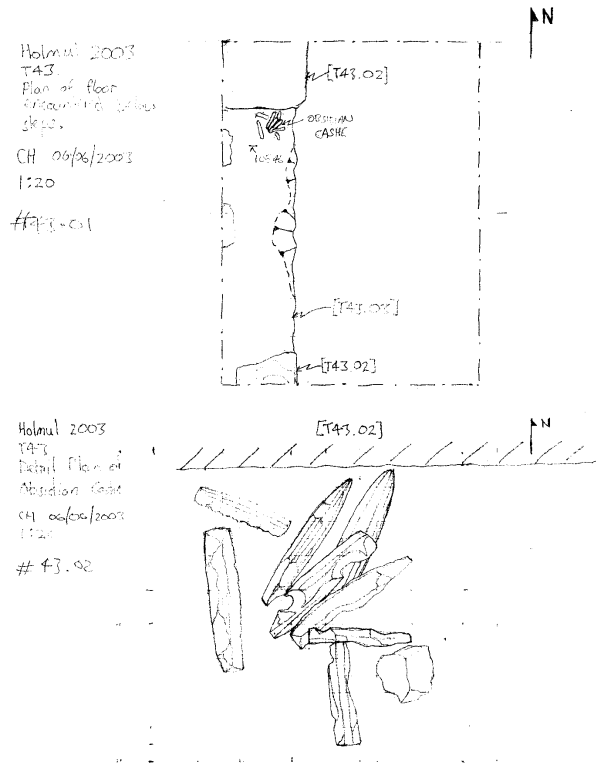


Figure 5. Plans of obsidian cores cache in HT43.

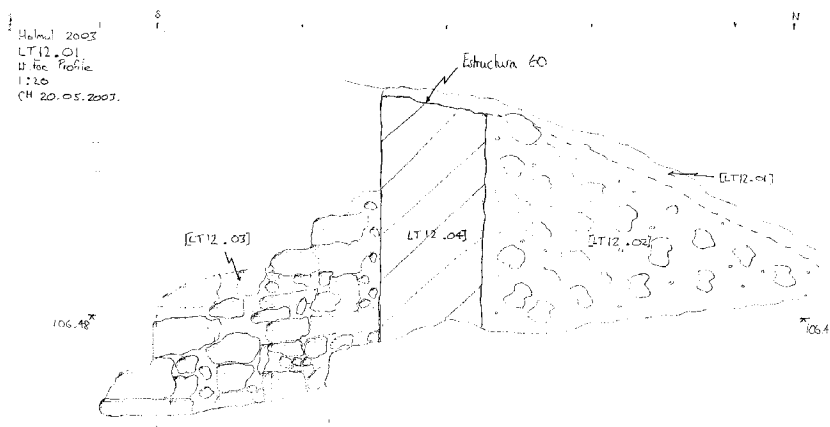


Figure 6. East profile of Str. 60

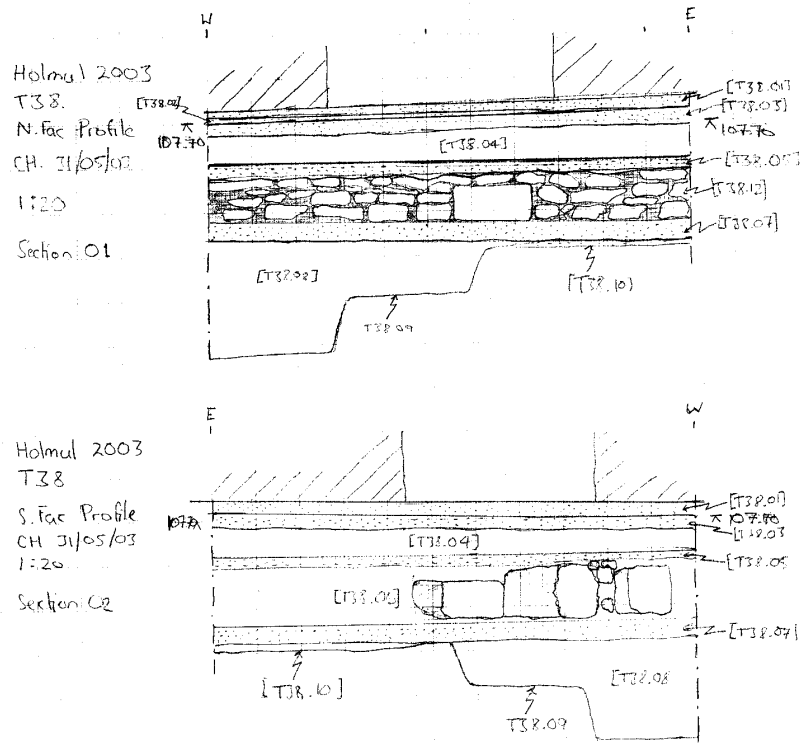


Figure 7. North and South profiles of HT38 test pit in east room of Str. 43.

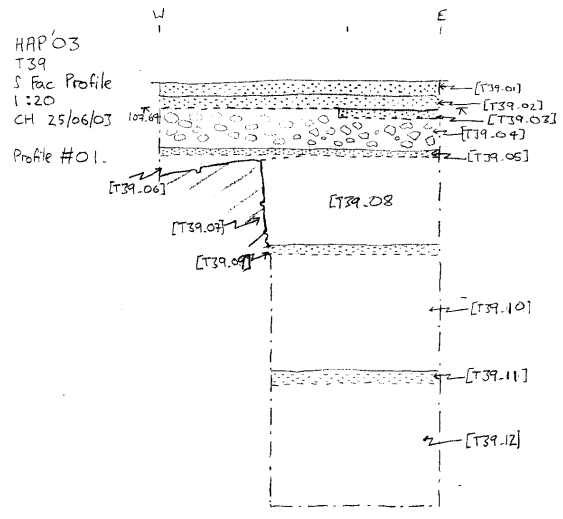


Figure 8. North Profile of HT39 test pit in plaza in front of stairway of Str. 1

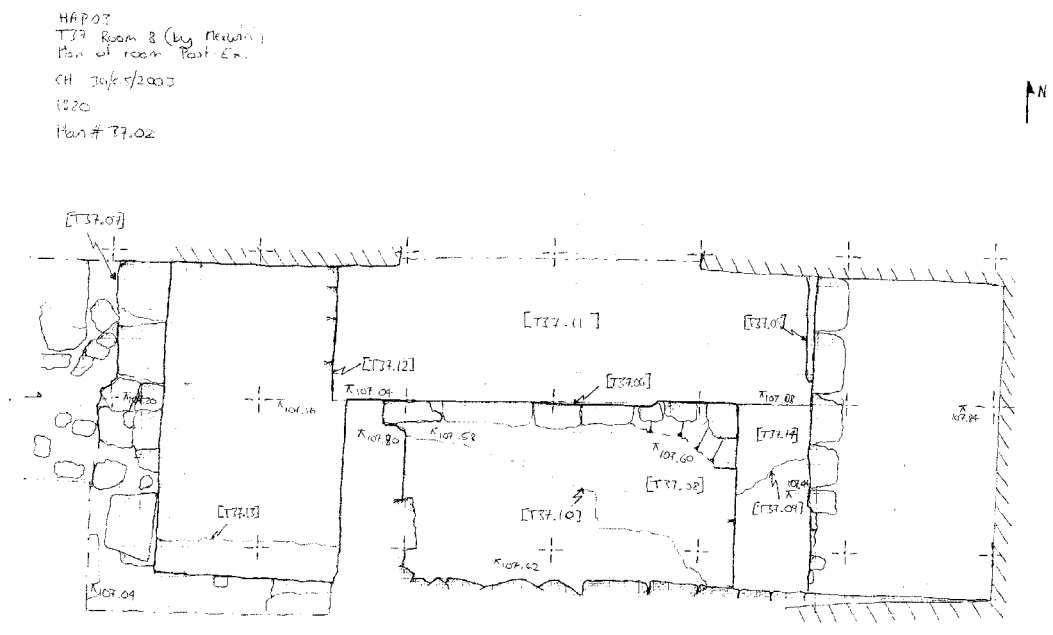


Figure 9. Plan of HT37 in Room 8 building, Group III.

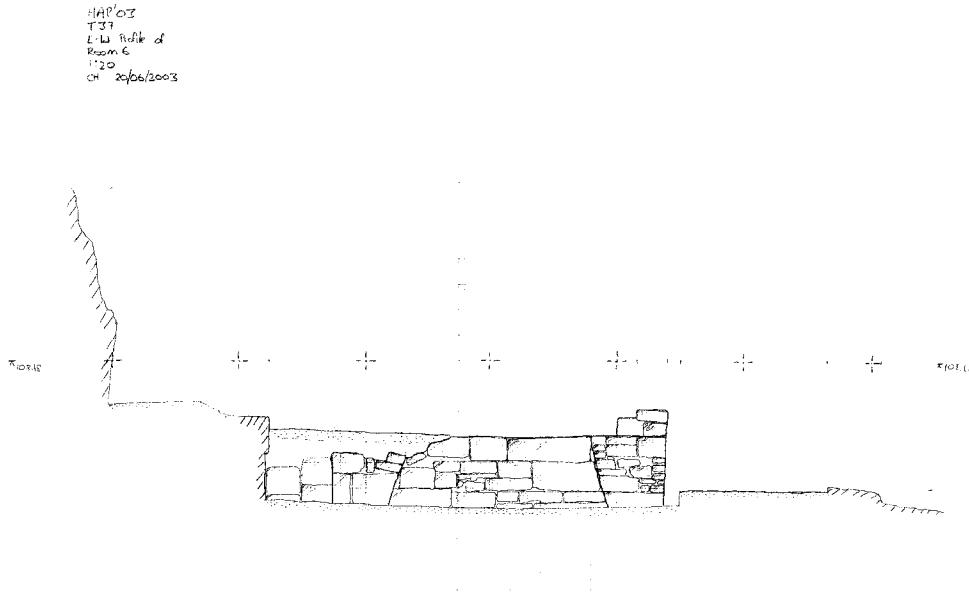
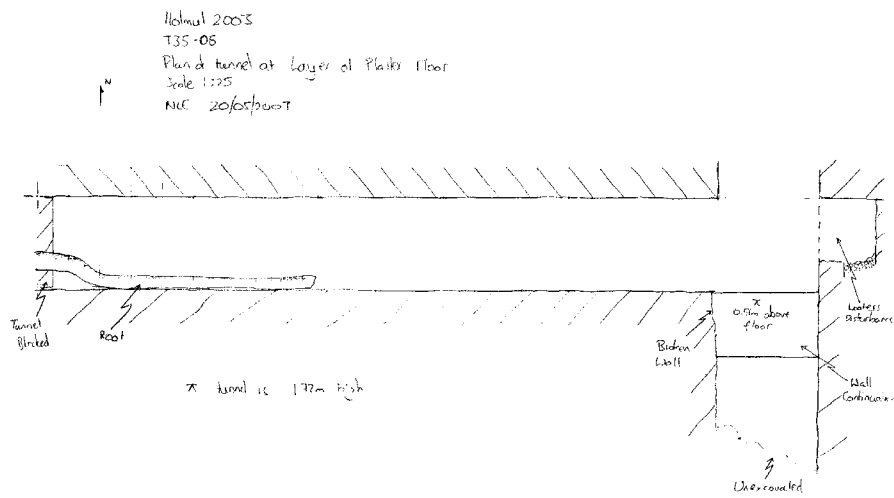


Figure 10. South profile of HT37 in R. E. Merwin's Room 6, Group III



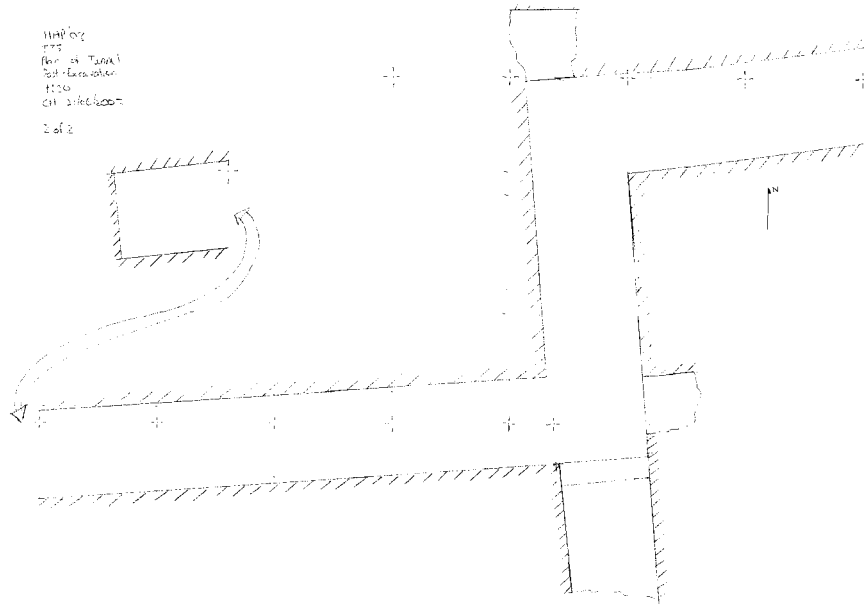


Figure 11. Plan of vaulted passage under Str. 43.

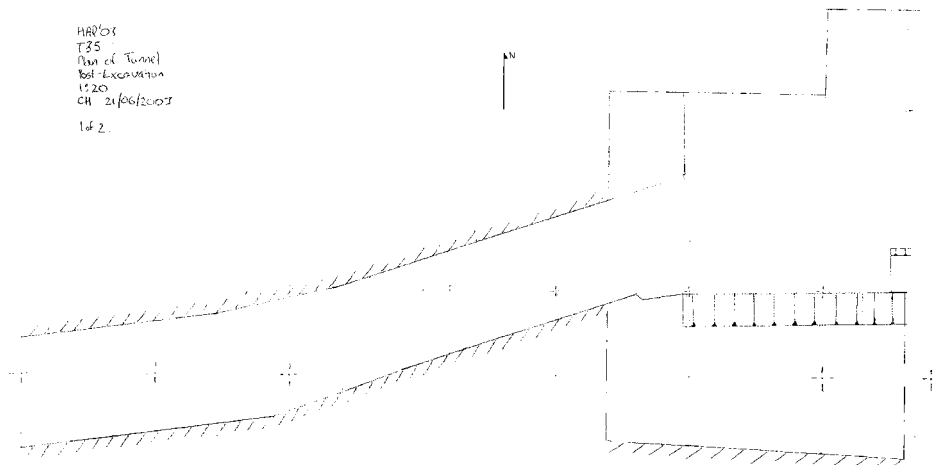


Figure 12. Plan of entrance of vaulted passage under Str. 43.

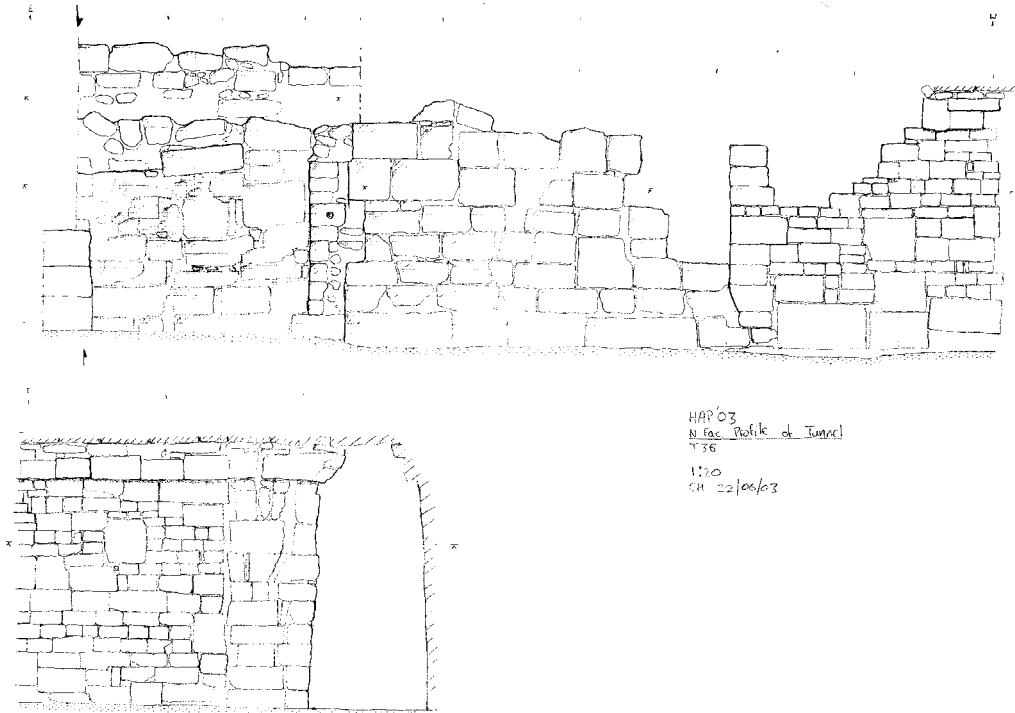
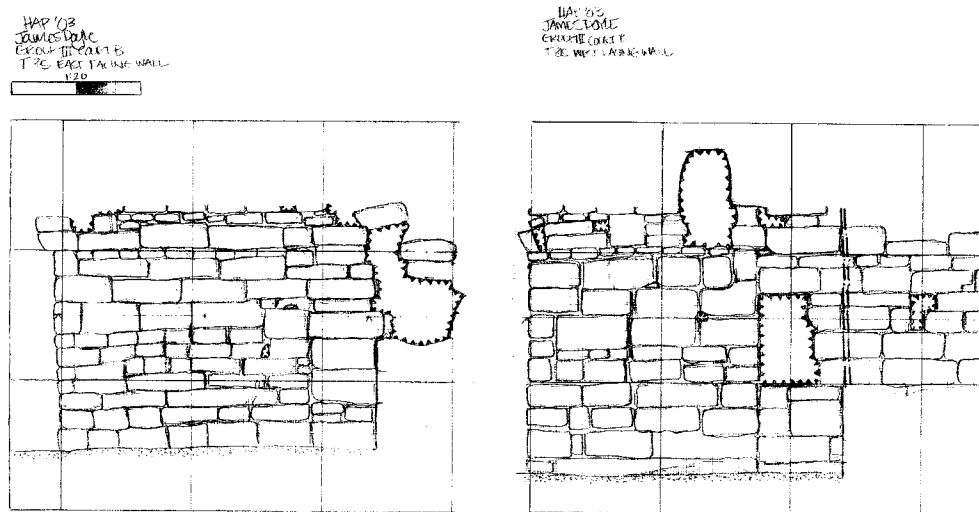


Figure 13. Profile of South wall of vaulted passage under Str. 43 (HT36).



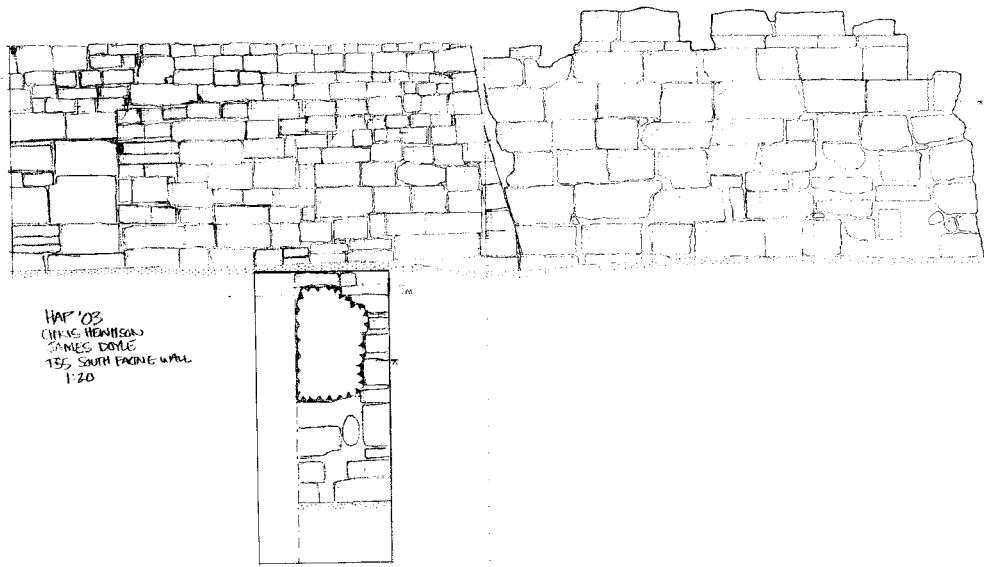
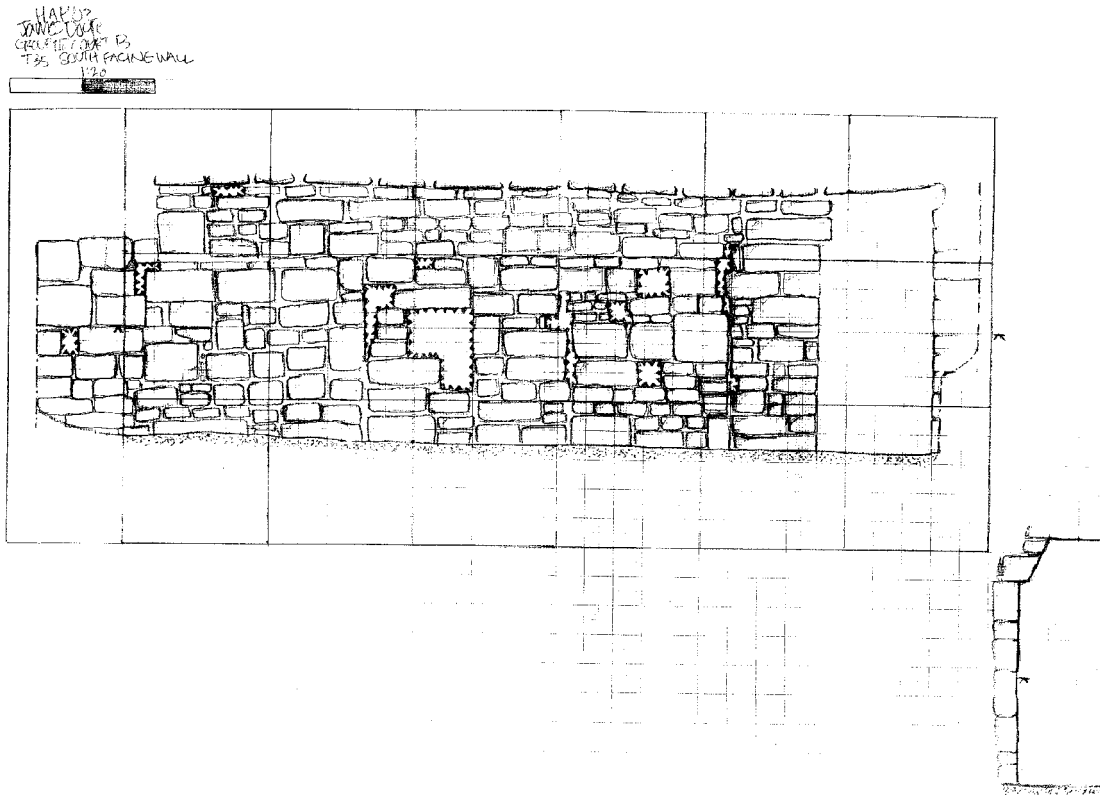


Figure 14. Profiles of wall of vaulted passage under Str. 43 (HT35).



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SOMERS DOOR
CEILING COURT B
T35 NORTH FACING WALL
1:20

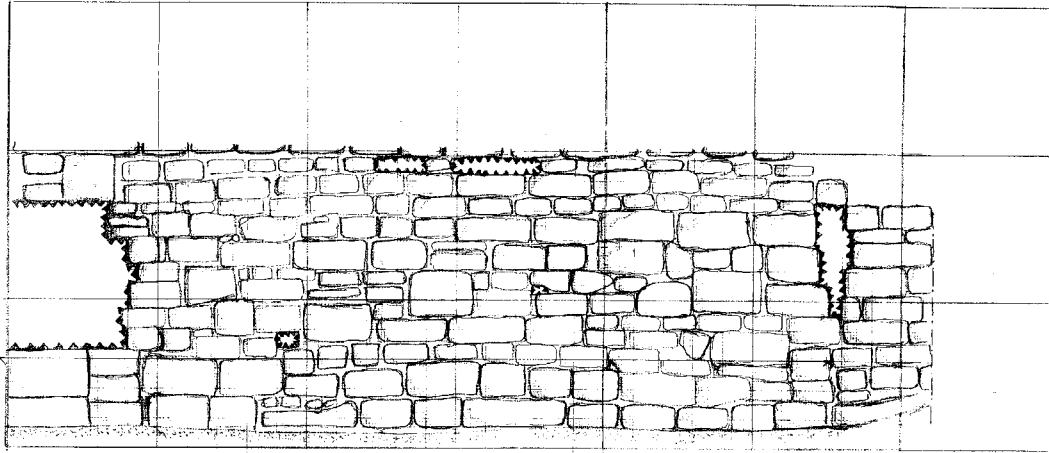
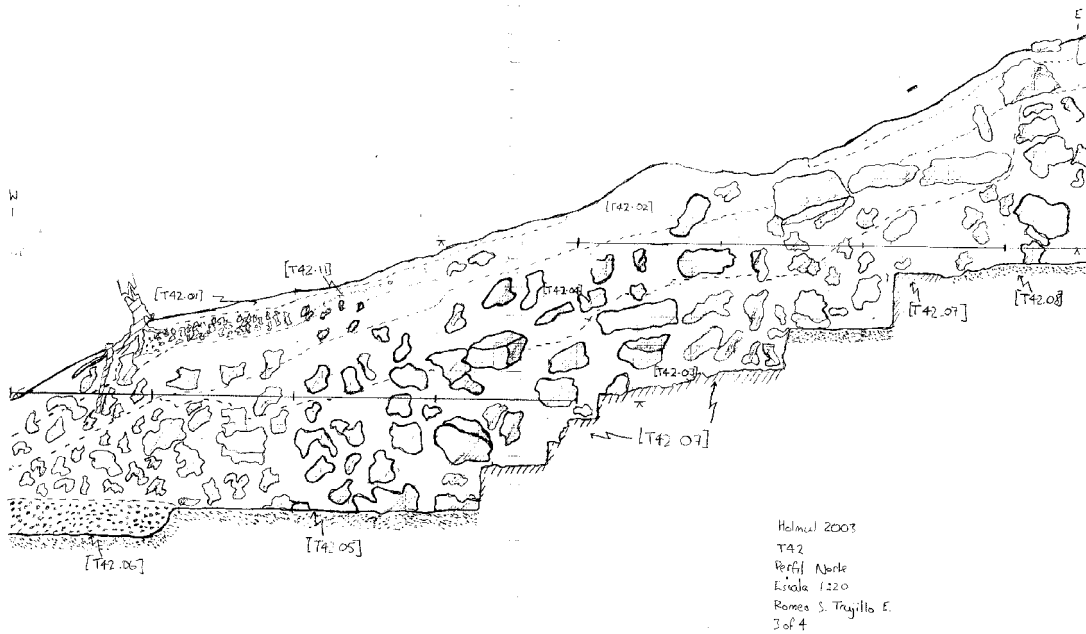


Figure 15. Profiles of walls in vaulted passage under Str. 43.



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T42
Perfil Norte
Escala 1:20
Rancho S. Tzucillo E.
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Figure 16. North profile of HT42, stairway into courtyard B.

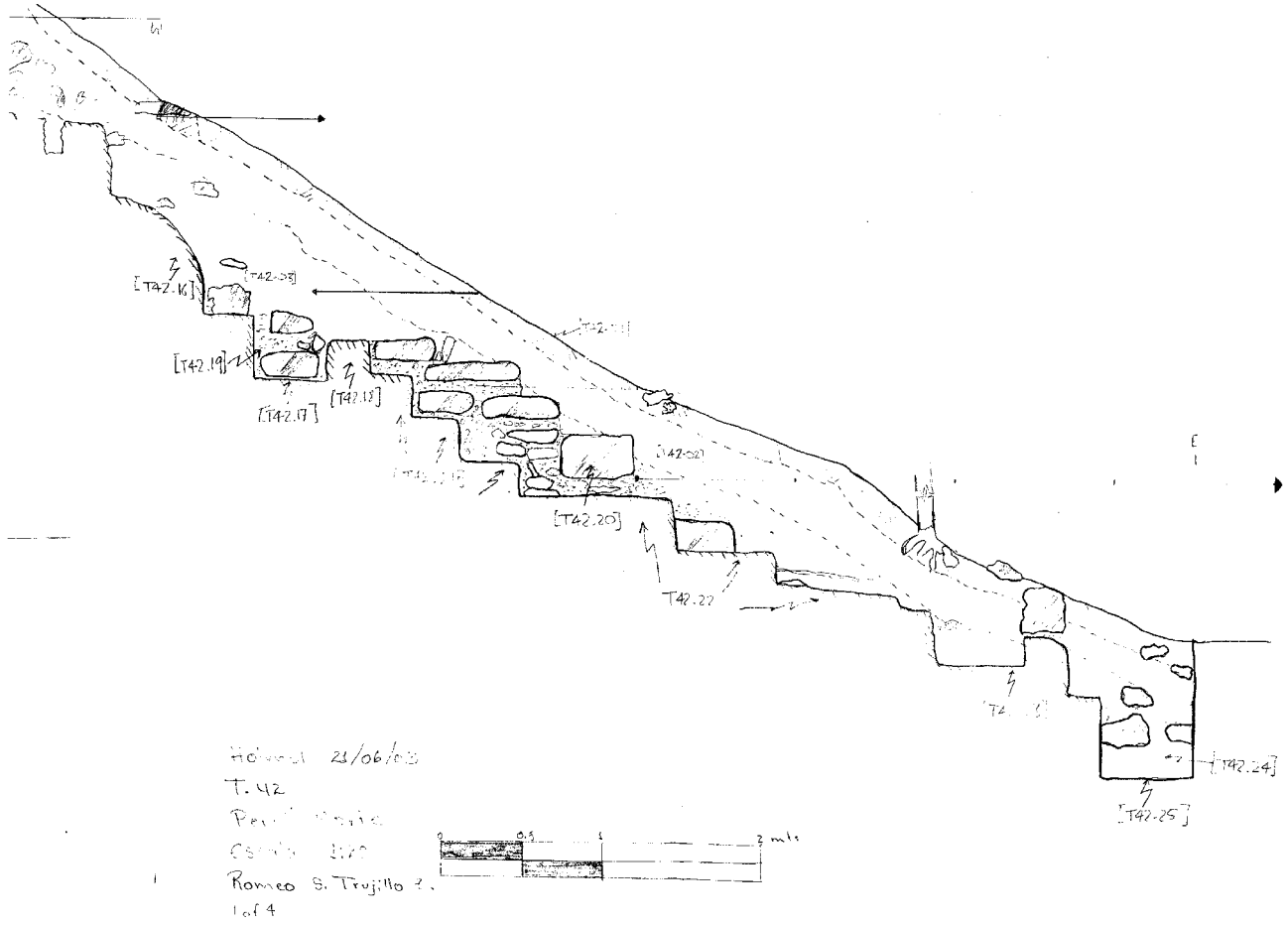


Figure 17. North profile of HT42, stairway leading to Court B from Main Plaza.

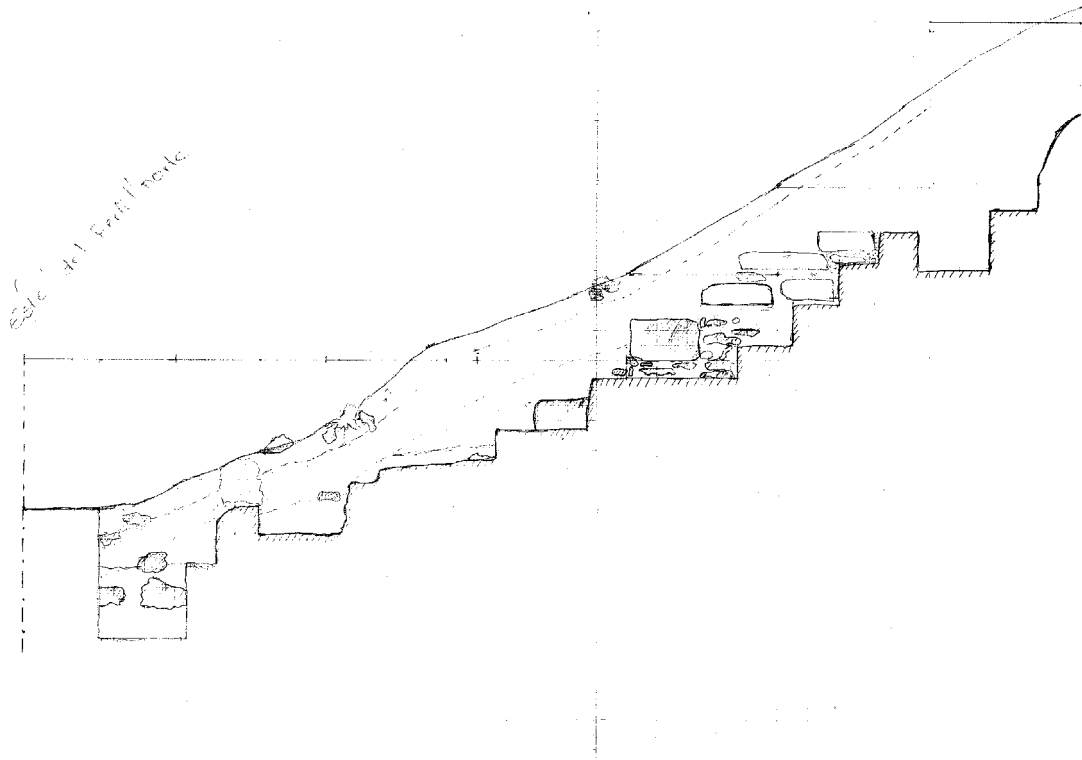


Figure 18. South profile of HT42, stairway leading to Court B from Main Plaza.

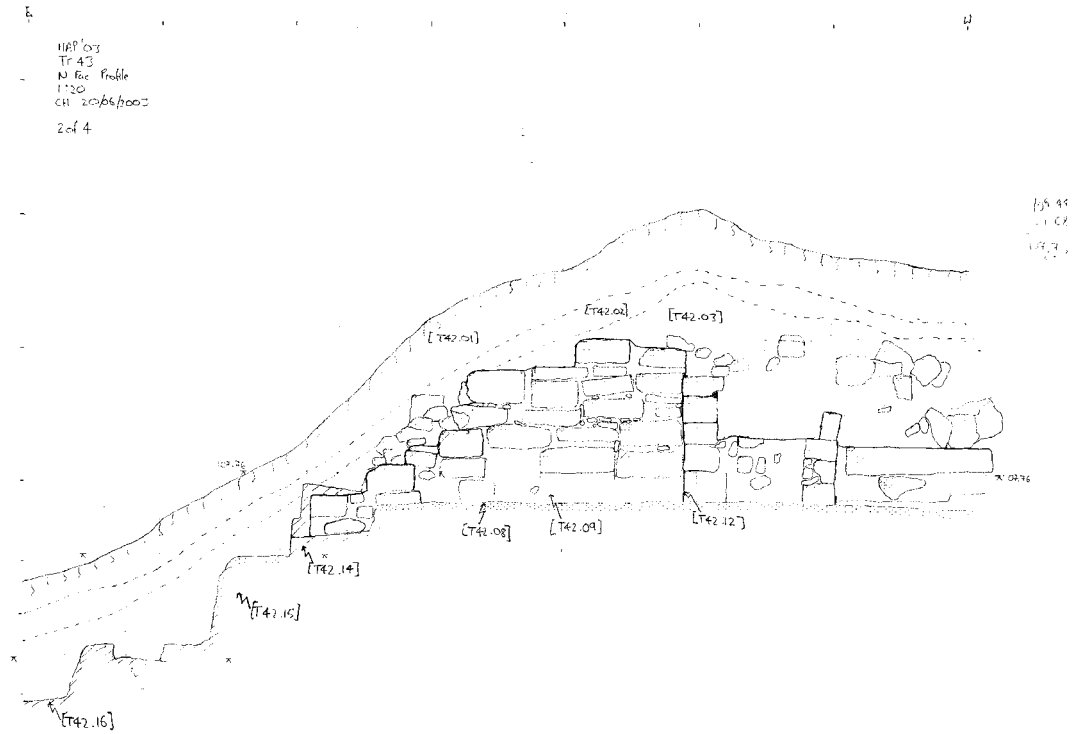


Figure 19. South profile of HT42, upper structure on stairway leading to Court B from Main plaza.

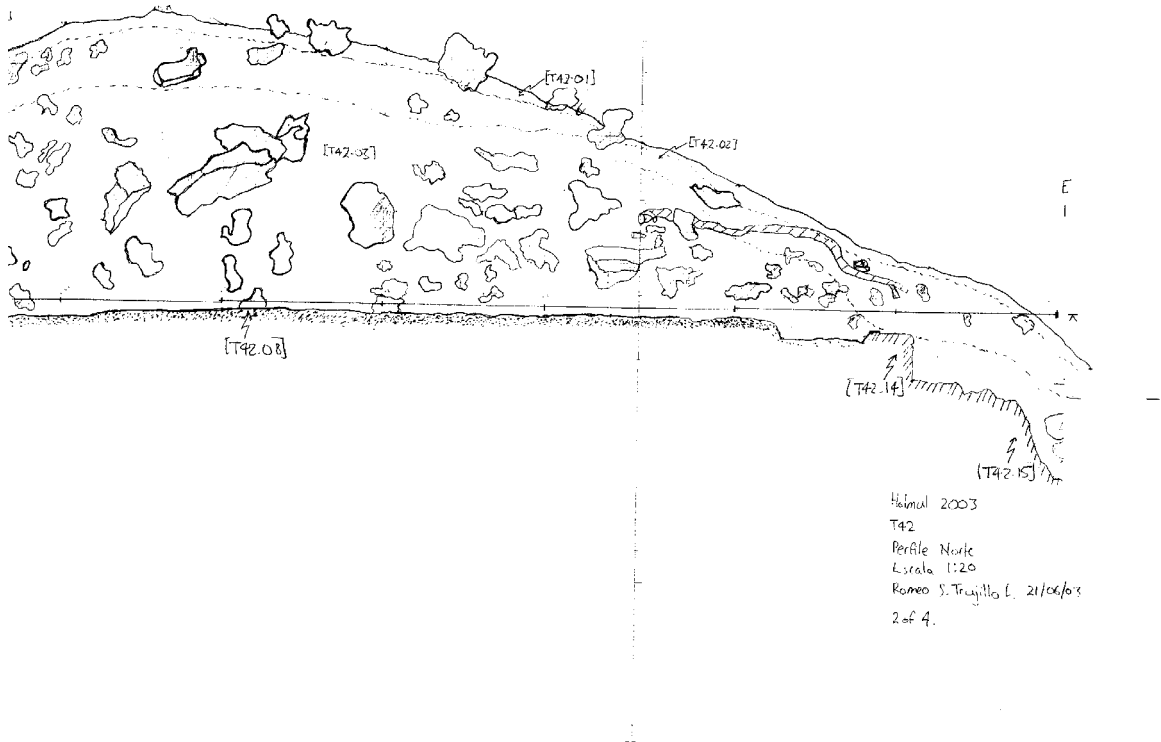


Figure 20. North profile of HT42, upper structure on stairway leading to Court B from Main Plaza.

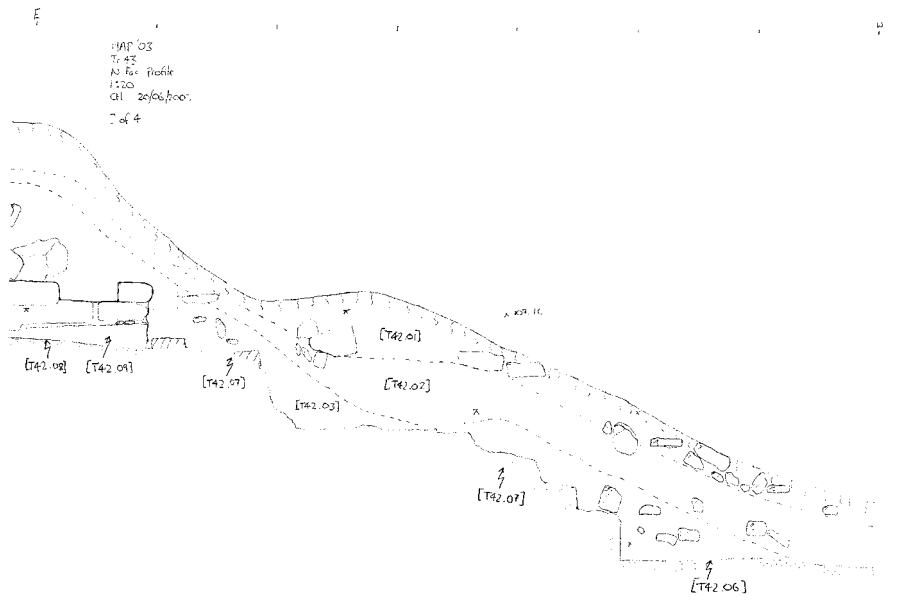


Figure 21. South profile of HT42 (courtyard section), stairs leading into courtyard.

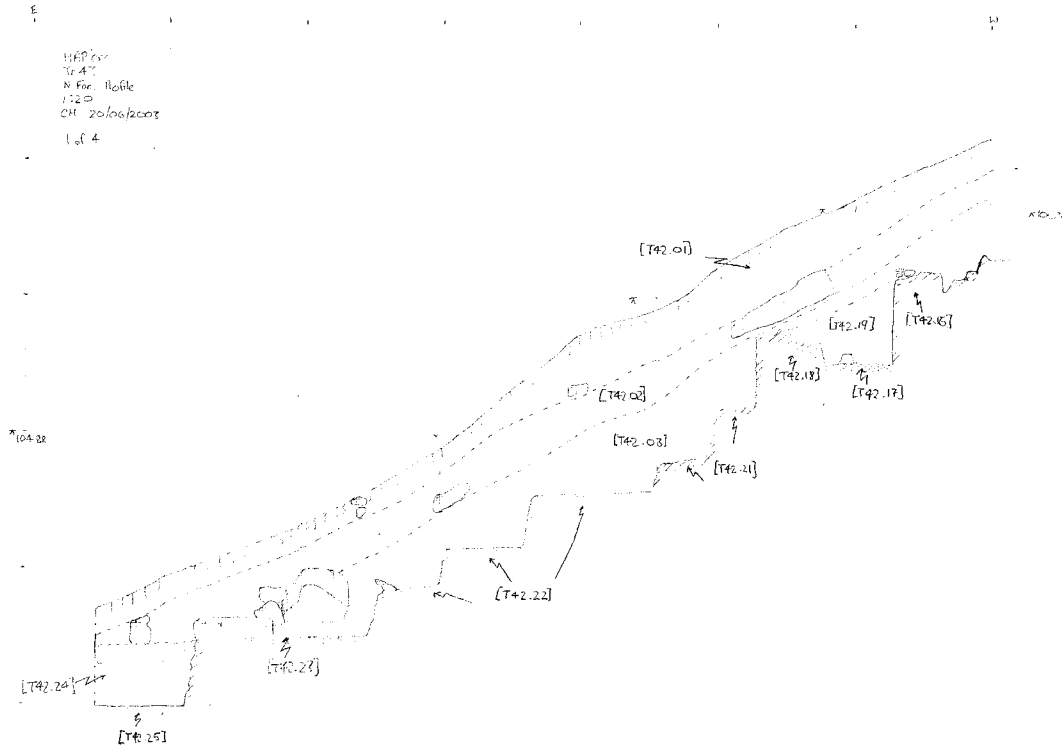


Figure 22. South profile of HT42 (plaza section), stairs leading to Court B.

