

2000

PVC-034-Wells-Field Notes-2000

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS CONDUCTED IN THE
NORTHERN MONUMENTAL PLAZA, SITIO EL COYTE,
NORTHWESTERN HONDURAS

• PROYECTO VALLE DE CACOMLAPA •

2000 FIELD SEASON

FIELD NOTES

E CHRISTIAN WELLS

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5-10-00

Investigations in the northern monumental plaza at Site Cocanhuza were initiated to achieve three primary goals: (1) to reconstruct activities that were performed in the plaza, (2) to reconstruct the architectural history of the plaza, and (3) to obtain chronological information that will place the results of (1) and (2) in historical context.

These goals will be met through three basic methods. First, the spatial patterning of artifacts will be used to infer plaza-focused activities, as well as to understand the timing of these events with respect to the site's overall history. Second, soil samples will be taken and analyzed chemically to provide supporting evidence for inferences created through studies of artifact distributions. Third, large, horizontal excavations will be carried out to sequence architectural constructions and renovations to the plaza and its component buildings.

These investigations hold the greater objective of understanding how Cocanhuza's ruling paramounts used the northern monumental plaza and its associated edifices to construct and maintain their social power. These data also will hopefully shed light on the degree to which local power strategies were exclusionary and individualizing or collective and corporate enterprises. To be sure, promoting socially integrative bonds among different groups and instilling feelings of solidarity that transcend sectarian distinctions are critical challenges that must be met by emergent elites if they are to fashion an enduring polity with themselves ensconced at the apex. In addition, centralized power that is diffused throughout a population must have a central stage in which collective decisions can

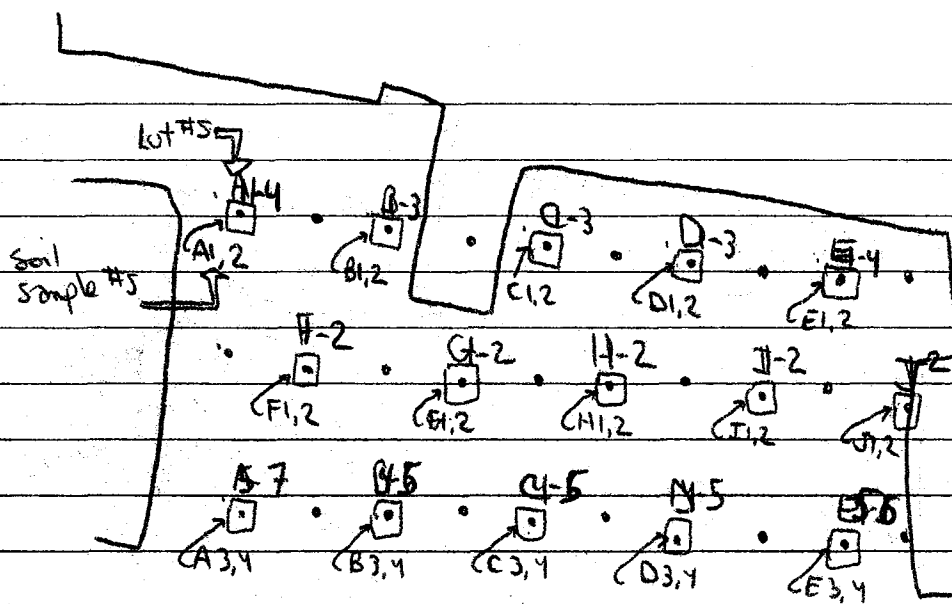
(5-10-00 cont'd)

be made publicly. One of the questions that the present investigation may be able to address, though in a preliminary way, is what the Northern monumental phase represented and whose interests did it serve.

Were activities in the phase engaged in by multiple social segments of the overall polity, that it presumably integrated? Or were activities carried out by a limited number of individuals with special status, such as "elites"? Was architectural growth sudden, suggesting the quick rise of an enterprising elite or foreign intrusion of another? Or was growth accretionary, hinting that sociopolitical power cemented slowly?

Excavations began in the phase on May 10, 2000, directed by Christian Wells, ASU, and carried out by 12 local workmen. In order to obtain a statistically significant and representative sample of the variety and kinds of activities in the phase, a sample grid of test-units was created using $2m^2$ test-pits, excavated down to the phase floor ($\sim 30cm$), spaced $10m$ apart in a "random staggered aligned sampling grid." Each North-South transect will be given a separate suboperation designation. The operation designation for these test-pits is Op. 24. Lot numbers will be given consecutively for each subop., beginning with #1. In total, 50 units $2m^2$ each are planned for excavation, which will cover the entire phase floor. Soil sampling will take place within units, as well as between them, just above the phase floor. The next page shows the locations of the subops.

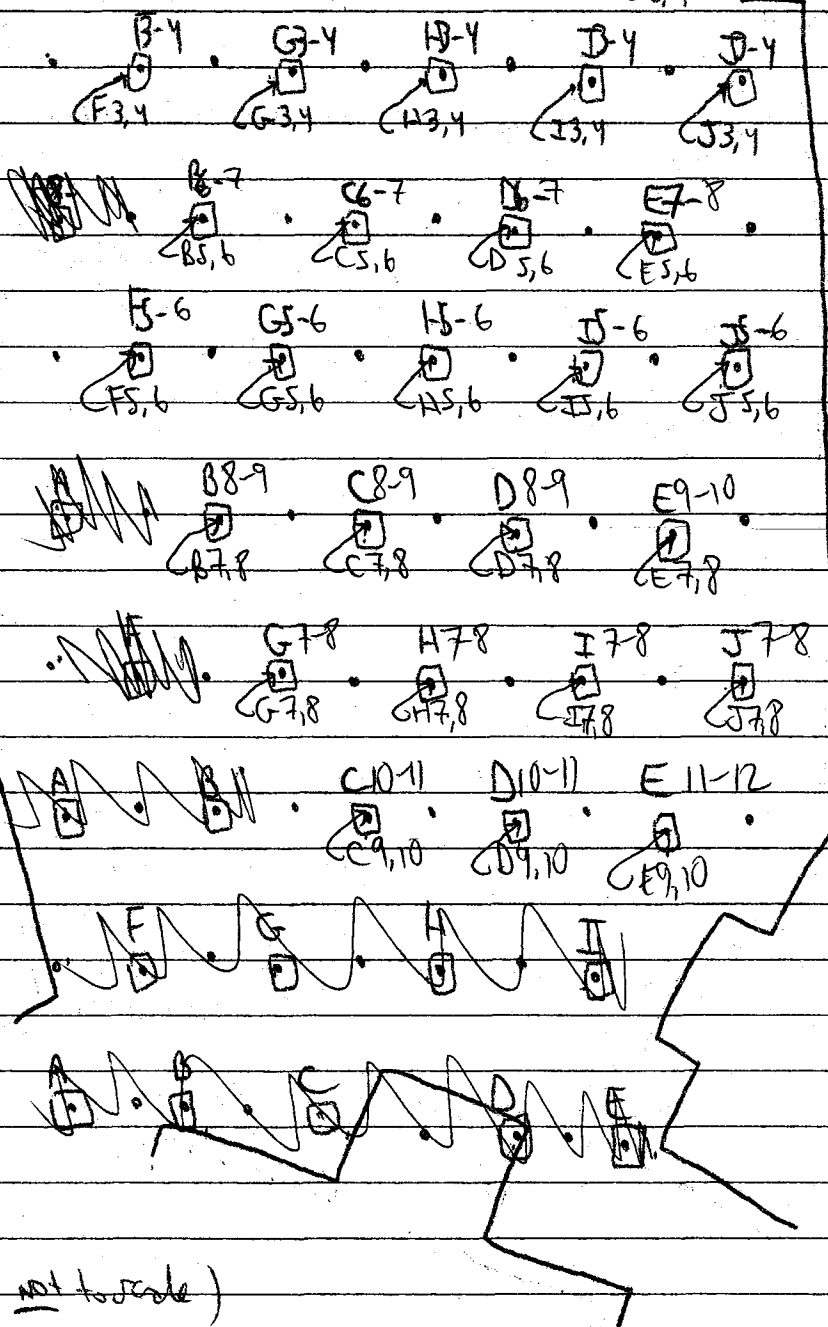
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Plan View
Northern Monumental
Phon

Pyramidal
SIRS

Range
SIRS



N
Mag
grid
(drawing not to scale)

10m apart
□ = 2m² unit
• = soil sample locus
5m apart

(5-10-00 cont'd)

Began Lots A1, B1, C1, D1, & E1, all at the same time. These lots are designed to remove the topsoil/humus layer, and so their depths vary slightly, although all depths average about 5cm. The topsoil is dark black with roots & pebble inclusions. Artifact density, interpreted here as post-occupational debris, is very light.

A1: 15 sherds
 B1: 11 sherds, 1 obsidian
 C1: 32 sherds, 3 biface, 1 metate foot
 D1: nothing
 E1: 1 greenstone - broken into 2 pieces.

Lots A2, B2, C2, D2, & E2 removed an artificial layer of 10cm, from 5-15cm below contemporary ground surface. Soil texture, grain size, color, etc. is the same as the previous layer, although root intensity is significantly diminished. Particularly large concentrations (~50%+) of small pebbles are noted for subops. C & D. Artifact density is increasing dramatically.

A2: 339 sherds
 B2: 289 sherds, 1 obsidian, 1 chert (large serving plate, noted)
 C2: 134 sherds, 4 obsidian
 D2: 15 sherds, 2 biface, 1 chert
 E2: nothing

Lots A3, B3, C3, & E3 begun. Plaza floor reached in D3 at ~30cm below ground surface. This lot removed an additional 10cm, from 15-25cm bgs. Plaza floor also reached in C3 at 25-30cm bgs.

AB: 508 sherds, 2 molded conser sherds, 1 large metate foot (ref. to) (5-10-00 cm/d)
 B3: 75 sherds, 1 large metate foot
 C3: 87 sherds, 7 chert
 D3: nothing
 E3: 2 fine paste ceramic sherds (ref. to)

No noticeable changes in stratigraphy. Art. fact density is increased in A3 and I see a small cobble platform emerging on the west side of the unit.

Lot #4 begun - from 25-35 cm bgs - 10 cm layer. Floor encountered at 35 cm bgs. ^{in E4} Floor also uncovered in C3 & B3 at ~30 cm bgs, but not in A.
 A4: 405 sherds, 1 obsidian, 2 chert
 E4: 5 sherds

Soil samples were taken in 2 sets - #1 is up to 2 cm of soil on top of the floor. #2 is up to 5 mm of the plaster surface. 24A-1, ~~24A-2~~, 24B-1, 24B-2, 24C-1, 24C-2, 24D-1, ~~24D-2~~, 24E-1, 24E-2. These are sample numbers and do not correspond to lot #5. Subop. A is the exception, as well as subop. D - where I have concluded that no floor was found. In these cases, only A-1 & D-1 samples exist, being taken at 30 cm bgs in the center of their respective units.

I think the floor once existed in D, but is now too eroded & close to contemporary ground surface to have survived. The same case may apply to A, but if there is an architectural feature present, then perhaps there was demand of a plaster surface, although this seems unlikely.

Lots F1, G1, H1, I1, J1 Begun - removing topsoil -
0-5cm bgs. (5-10-00 cont'd)

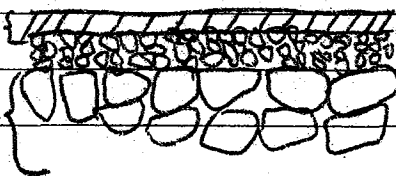
F1: 1 large, netate foot
G1: 7 slender
H1: 4 baryregne, 2 chert
I1: 2 slender, 1 obsidian
J1: 3 slender

NOTE: The large netate foot labeled as F1 collected, was actually found 1m to the E of the unit. I collected it anyway & gave it F1 status because of its size & quality.

5-11-00

Lots F2, G2, H2, I2, J2 begun - 5-25cm bgs. I decided to increase the size of the second lot to include the entire stratigraphic deposit below topsoil and above the phase floor. It appears that in all units, the phase floor is poorly or not preserved. The only indication of a floor is its surviving substrate which consists of small pebbles above & large river cobbles below:

very hard, compact
plaster floor ~3-5
cm thick, although
this varies



3 small pebbles, ~1-3cm dia.
Forming a layer ~10cm thick

cobble fill of phase - unknown
depth. Cobbles range from 10-20cm+ in diameter

(S-11-W cont'd)

All lots stopped at ~30cm bgs, just into fill of plaza floor.

F2: 13 sherds

G2: 1 sherd, 1 chert, 1 mano

H2: nothing

I2: 1 bayareque, 1 green stone (jade or jadeite?)

J2: 1 sherd

Began next row (E-W) of test units A5, B4, C4, D4, E5 - removing first 5cm + of topsoil & post-occupational debris. Of special note, in the SE corner of B4, were finding very large chunks of bayareque - from 3cm to 20cm in diameter - so far, about 2-3kg.

A5: 17 sherds, obsidian

B4: 35 bayareque, 1 quartz rock (~6-7cm diameter)

C4: 35 sherds, 1 obsidian, 1 chert, 2 bayareque

D4: nothing

E5: 7 chert

Began next series of lots in this E-W transect - A6, B5, C5, D5, E6. Still recovering large amounts of bayareque in B5, but no sign of architecture or any other feature to suggest where it's from. Bayareque concentration now appearing in A6.

A6: 358 sherds, 2 chert, 67 bayareque 4 animal bone, 1 jade, 4 obs.

B5: 5 chert, 2 sherds, 2 mano frags, 77 bayareque (~10kg)

C5: 8 sherds, 1 bayareque, 2 pigment stones?, 10 chert

D5: 1 obs, 3 chert

E6: nothing

Bayareque from A6 records a pole diameter of 3cm.

(5-11-00 cont'd)

Moving on to the next transect with F3, G3, H3, I3, J3, from ~5cm to ~25cm bgs. Similar stratigraphy continues - there seems to be one primary deposit resting at floor surface, then a post-occupational layer - seemingly undisturbed by early postclassic occupation to the north, and then topsoil, which is probably historic / recent.

F3: Nothing

G3: 37 sherds, 3 bajaregure

H3: Nothing

I3: 98 sherds, 3 chert, 1 obsidian, 3 bajaregure

J3: 1 sherd, 1 bajaregure

Decided to do one more level of 10cm in A6, to follow bajaregure layer down to the ballast of the photo floor. This level is A7.

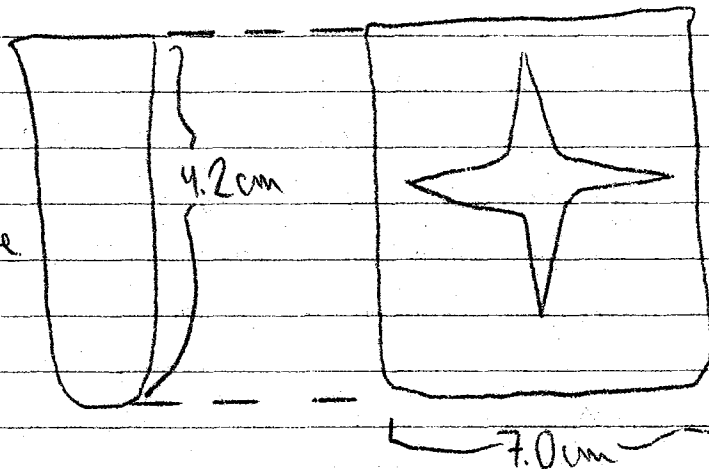
A7: 88 bajaregure (~15kg+), 1 obsidian, 1 chert, 6/8 sherds

Among the sherds in I3, I found a shab foot with a large 4-pointed star pattern on the exterior:

(drawing not to scale)

- dk. gray, med. to fine paste

2cm thick



Ultra Pressed?

1 sherd in A7 is a used comal, suggesting cooking activities

5-11-02 (cont'd)

Beginning next lot - F4, G4, H4, I4, J4 - from topsoil to ~25cm bgt, into the fill of the plaza floor.

F4: nothing

G4: nothing

H4: 14 shards, 1 bayareque, 3 obsidian

I4: 16 shards, 4 bayareque, 1 chert

J4: 3 shards, 12 bayareque, 4 chert, 1 pumice stone

Took soil samples from second ^{E-W} transect, F-1, F-2, G-1, G-2, H-1, H-2, I-1, I-2, J-1, J-2. Sample #1 is up to 2cm from top of plaza floor, while #2 is up to 10cm below floor, into fill/balk area.

* Fire-cracked rocks noted, but not collected, in F1, A5, B4. (F1 = ~12 fragments, A5 = ~15 fragments, & B4 = ~9 fragments).

Beginning next two series: A8, B6, C6, D6, E7 & F5, G5, H5, I5, J5, as I just received 10 extra workers for today. The procedure, now fully developed, is to excavate about the first 5cm to remove the topsoil, which likely contains post-occupational debris - from the Postclassic to the Present, and then to move down to about 25cm, which takes us into the floor of the plaza. I excavate a few centimeters into the floor for two reasons - 1) because in most places, the floor is so ephemeral, I can't see it until it's in profile (although I can guess pretty well where it ought to be), and 2) I'm hoping to encounter some ceramics that will allow me to establish a terminus ante quem date for the plaza floor. It is not terribly useful to go much further into the fill, as it consists mainly of large river cobbles and little else, i.e., no artifacts.

5-11-20 (cont'd)

The lack of artifacts in the bulk photo fill hints that the photo was constructed as one event (quickly), and was not accretionary being built up of multiple episodes of construction & removal (like we see in some elite residential compounds at Copan and other Maya sites). It is entirely possible, however, that the photo surface was re-surfaced multiple times in antiquity, although not growing in height or size. It's hard to evaluate this last possibility without excavating photo surfaces adjacent to the building which might yield information on plastering episodes that affected the junction of photo plaster with building plaster.

It is interesting to note that the photo ^{floor} has only been found to be very well preserved on the south end, somewhat preserved on the east side, and ~~to a~~ to a lesser extent on the west, and not at all in the center. I can, however, see the floor in most pit profiles, which greatly facilitates soil sampling.

Since the area around A5, B4, & F1 contained fire-cracked rocks, burned bone/ware in very large quantities (now up to about 50 kg/l), and burned/used coral sherds, perhaps this was an area of cooking/food production. In surrounding units, I found many L metate fragments and large storage jar sherds, again suggesting food production, perhaps on a large scale, such as feasting events.

05-11-00 (cont'd)

Also of note, to date, I have encountered numerous fragments of modeled vessels and fine paste ~~pottery~~ serving bowls, plates, and bowls. Again, however, these items are generally restricted to the SE corner & E side of the photo near the pyramidal structures. Test units placed near the range structures have yielded very few artifacts, in general.

It is interesting to also note the appearance of chert & obsidian tools - prismatic obsidian blades, pebble scrapers/multi-function tools, chert choppers & scrapers (although these are much more rare). I imagine, at this point in the excavation, that these items are also related to food preparation, although I won't venture to guess exactly their function.

One last note - the photo floor is buried under deeper sediments at the south end of the photo, & consequently, probably explaining the better preservation compared to the surface in the center of the photo, which is nearly at contemporary ground surface (& hence is not well preserved).

Structure 125, located in the center of the photo, was excavated in 1999. Here I summarize the results, just to give a handy reference - otherwise, see last year's interim, pgs 34-35.

The building was extensively looted prior to investigation - esp. the SE & NW corners. Approx. 15m^2 were excavated in 1999 - the platform summit & $\sim 2/3$ of its basal walls (subop. 2 m). Digging was carried out to a

5-11-00 (cont'd)

maximum depth of 0.6m bgs, exposing 2 major construction episodes.

Final version \rightarrow (STR 125-1st) a 0.15-0.35m high platform 4.45 x 4.8m, oriented 253/220°. Faced limestone blocks were used as the exterior, containing a cobble fill in a brown soil matrix. A summit enclosure with a plaster floor (~0.02m thick), is a chamber delimited with a .12m high x .33m wide cobble wall on the north. The summit room is 1.45m N-S x 1.85m E-W.

* The concentrations of bogoregne I encountered this season were found just to the east & a bit south of STR 125. The bogoregne could be associated with a perishable superstr. on top of STR 125.

STR 125-2nd - an earlier version - is composed of cobble & cut stone walls - & covered ~ 2.8m N-S x 1.85m E-W, with the same orientation as 125-1st.

The informe mentions an associated plaza floor with plaster ~.16m thick & at least 5 rebur burials, 2 of which run under 125-1st & one of which (the latest) lies up to the STR's basal stones. This suggests that STR 125 was a late addition to the plaza, although earlier structures could have come before & been torn down, & the plaster floor redone - as is often the case in the Copan Acropolis.

5-11-00 (cont'd)

* If STR. 125 is related to the Persting events, which I am gathering evidence for at present, then perhaps Persting was a latent mechanism for polity integration during the decline of chiefly power in the late phase of the Late Classic.

I plan to investigate STR. 124, immediately south of STR. 125. This seemed - perhaps the two are related & can be associated with Persting.

Back to the excavations:

~~A8~~: area falls on a STR, & so will not be investigated in this E-W ^{transit}

B6: nothing

C6: nothing

D6: nothing

E7: 9 shards, 6 bryozoa

F5: 94 shards, 34 bryozoa, 2 chert

G5: nothing

H5: nothing

I5: nothing

J5: nothing

I took soil samples A-3, A-4, B-3, B-4, C-3, C-4, D-3, D-4, E-3, E-4, F-3, F-4, G-3, G-4, H-3, H-4, J-3, J-4, I-3, I-4. #1 is at the base of excavations, ~25cm below modern ground surface in the very first bit of floor ballast, & #3 is up to 2cm on top of the plaster floor.

5-12-00

Beginning next lot series in the same E-W transect - F-J, 6.
B7, C7, D7, & E8.

F6: nothing

G6: 48 biface, 9 sherds, 1 chert

H6: nothing

I6: 1 biface, 1 stone ax or hoe (tool)

J6: 12 sherds, 2 chert

B7: 2 sherds, 6 biface

C7: 15 sherds, 5 biface, 1 chert

D7: nothing

E8: nothing

Also now working on 1st two lots for next transect series. (1st = 0-5cm, 2nd = 5-25cm bgs).

B8: nothing

C8: nothing

D8: nothing

E9: nothing

B9: 16 sherds, 146 biface, 2 chert

C9: nothing

D9: 11 biface, 1 obs, 4 chert

E10: 1 biface

Took soil samples yesterday & this morning from 4 transect. Samples are from floor surface (F) & bulk just underneath the floor at the base of excavations (B) [see map on pg. 3 for locations]. Samples include: A-2(F), A-3(B), B-3(F), B-4(B), C-3(F), C-4(B), D-2(F), D-3(B), E-3(F), E-4(B).

5-12-00 (cont'd)

F-3(F) F-4(B) G-3(F) G-4(B) H-3(F) H-4(B)
I-3(F) I-4(B) J-3(F) J-4(B).

B-5(F) B-6(B) C-5(F) C-6(B) D-4(F) D-5(B)
E-5(F) E-6(B)

F-5(F) F-6(B) G-5(F) G-6(B) H-5(F) H-6(B)
I-5(F) I-6(B) J-5(F) J-6(B)

B-7(F) B-8(B) C-7(F) C-8(B) D-6(F) D-7(B)
E-7(F) E-8(B)

5-22-00

I was out of the field for a week (5-15 → 5-19) in Mexico City at a conference. Excavations resumed today, finishing the last two transects of test-pitting in the central plaza: G7, H7, I7, J7, & C10, D10, & E11. The plaza is noticeably narrower at the north end.

G7: nothing

H7: 1 chest module (core with removals)

I7: nothing

J7: 42 sherds, 1 chest, 1 large metate, nearly complete

C10: nothing

D10: nothing

E11: nothing

These levels removed the topsoil, & were 5-10 cm in depth - depending on topography & vegetation. As in the other test units at this end of the plaza, the floor is very shallow, being seen at 10-15 cm bgs. Artifact density is extremely light.

5-22-00 (cont'd)

Finished second set of lots in the last 2 transects on the north side of the plaza:

G8: 30 bryozoa, 1 sherd
 H8: 8 sherds, 7 chert, 1 bryozoa
 I8: 2 sherds, 2 chert, 3 bryozoa
 J8: 10 sherds, 1 chert

C11: 1 sherd, 1 chert, 1 bryozoa, 1 volcanic stone
 D11: 22 sherds, 3 bryozoa, 8 obsidian, 1 chert
 E12: 6 sherds, 40 bryozoa, 1 obsidian, 3 chert (1 is a core)

These lots ranged minimally in depth - from ~ 5-10 cm bgs to ~ 20-25 cm bgs - from plaza floor to cobble ballast.

I'm beginning to think that what I have been calling cobble ballast is actually a cobble floor - there are substantial quantities of bryozoa resting on top of it - perhaps indicating semi-permeable structures that once rested on the cobble floor.

Also took the corresponding soil samples from on top of the plaster floor & on top of the cobble substrate:

G-7(F), G-8(b), H-7(F), H-8(b), I-7(F), I-8(b), J-7(F), J-8(b), & C-9(F), C-10(b), D-8(F), D-9(b), E-9(F), E-10(b) - where (F) = plaster Plaza floor surface & (b) = "ballast" or cobble floor surface.

I also took a series of soil samples from the areas in between units within the plaza. The next page shows their locations.

17

5-22-00 (cont)

A	1	2	3	4	5				
	K-1	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8	K-9
	6	7	8	9	10				
	K-11	K-12	K-13	K-14	K-15	K-16	K-17	K-18	K-19
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	K-21	K-22	K-23	K-24	K-25	K-26	K-27	K-28	K-29
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	K-31	K-32	K-33	K-34	K-35	K-36	K-37	K-38	K-39
	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
	K-41	K-42	K-43	K-44	K-45	K-46	K-47	K-48	K-49
	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46
	K-51	K-52	K-53	K-54	K-55	K-56	K-57	K-58	K-59
	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55
	K-61	K-62	K-63	K-64	K-65	K-66	K-67	K-68	K-69
	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64
	K-71	K-72	K-73	K-74	K-75	K-76	K-77	K-78	K-79
	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73
	K-81	K-82	K-83	K-84	K-85	K-86	K-87	K-88	K-89
	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82
	K-91	K-92	K-93	K-94	K-95	K-96	K-97	K-98	K-99
	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91
	K-101	K-102	K-103	K-104	K-105	K-106	K-107	K-108	K-109
	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

N (grid)

(Samples were taken 5m N & S of each unit)

* 74 samples taken overall - this set of samples belongs exclusively to suboperation K.

5-23-00

Today I'm probing deeper into 4 randomly selected test units → #5 6, 15, 26, & 37. The objective is to obtain ceramics that can help be date the cobble floor or substrate & to see what the bulk phase fill is composed of. The first lot will consist of removing the cobbles & associated soil (~20cm thick level, but this varies as much as 10cm, depending on the construction practices). The second lot will remove 20cm of fill below the cobble layer. A 3rd lot in each series will probe 20cm deeper.

cobble layer (10cm) { F9 (Unit 6): 22 sherds, 5 biface, 2 chert
 E 13 (Unit 15): 214 sherds, 10 biface, 5 chert, 31 obsidian
 G 9 (Unit 26): 13 sherds, 11 biface, 2 chert
 J 9 (Unit 37): 24 sherds, 2 biface, 1 chert

up to 20cm below cobble layer { F10 (Unit 6): 27 sherds, 9 chert, 46 obsidian
 E 14 (Unit 15): 575 sherds, 35 biface, 23 chert, 132 obsidian, 1 quartz
 G 10 (Unit 26): 16 sherds, 80 biface, 1 chert, 12 obsidian
 J 10 (Unit 37): 34 sherds, 4 biface, 2 chert, 5 obsidian, 1 greenstone

20-40cm below cobble layer { F11 (Unit 6): 3 obsidian
 E 15 (Unit 15): nothing
 G 11 (Unit 26): 17 sherds, 2 biface, 2 chert, 5 obsidian
 J 11 (Unit 37): 41 sherds, 16 biface, 3 chert, 32 obsidian

I am also excavating Structure 124 in the photo, designated Subp.K. STR. 124 is a small platform, probably about 20m², & no greater than one layer (or possibly 2) of piled stones in height. Excavations begin with a trench, starting from Unit 13.

N
 ↓ (grid)

	45	46	47	
13	41	42	43	44
	48	49	50	

(all units are 2m²)

24L-1 64 sherds
 Surface collection, Unit 41

24L-2 nothing
 Surface collection, Unit 43

24L-3 nothing
 Surface collection, Unit 44

24L-4 585 sherds, 1 obsidian, 1 stone object (possibly sacred), 10 basaltic/volcanic rocks, 1 conch shell
From ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, ~10cm bgs, Unit 41

24L-5 165 sherds, 1 obsidian

From ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 43

24L-6 Nothing

From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 44

24L-7 Nothing

Surface collection, Unit 42

24L-8 ~~1000~~ 585 sherds, 6 obsidian

From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 42

24L-9 50 sherds, 2 spondylus shells, (1 soil sample, 1 plaster sample)

Cache #00-1 (see notes below), Unit 42

24L-10 1 molded manzanillo fragment

24L-1

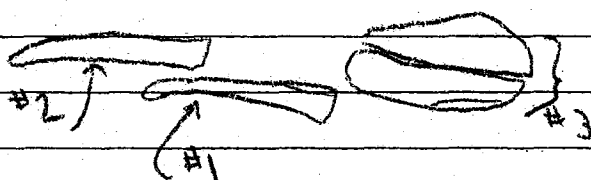
24L-2

From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 50

I encountered a cache of 2 spondylus shells in Unit 42 - 99cm E from NW corner of Unit 42 & 56cm S from N side of Unit 42. I designated this Cache #00-1, & collected associated artifacts as Lot 24L-9. I collected 50 sherds, all within a 20cm radius of the cache (these probably belong to lot 24L-8 and represent trash/debris & are not probably part of the offering). I also collected 2 soil samples - 24L-24, ~1cm of soil on the floor directly beneath the shells, as well as the soil matrix that each shell contained on the interior. 24L-25 is a sample of the plaster on which the shells sat (~0.3-0.4 cm thick with possible evidence of burning). The shells are numbered 1 & 2. #1 lies north of #2, & #1 lies below #2. Both shells were found face down. #1 was 17cm by 14cm and #2 was 14cm by 14cm. The next page shows a rough sketch of their positions relative to each other. Neither shell contained any artifact.

The 2 spondylus shells, #1 & #2, actually fit together, and a 3rd shell, fully articulated (top & bottom pieces still joined) was once connected to shell #1. Shell #1 must be the top, with shell #2 its corresponding bottom. Here's how the shells were found

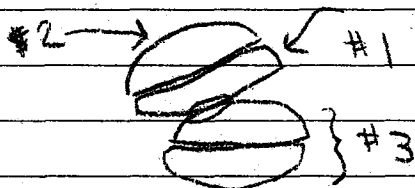
profile of
shells in
cache 00-1



(drawing not
to scale)

grid N →

Here's how I think the cache was originally arranged:

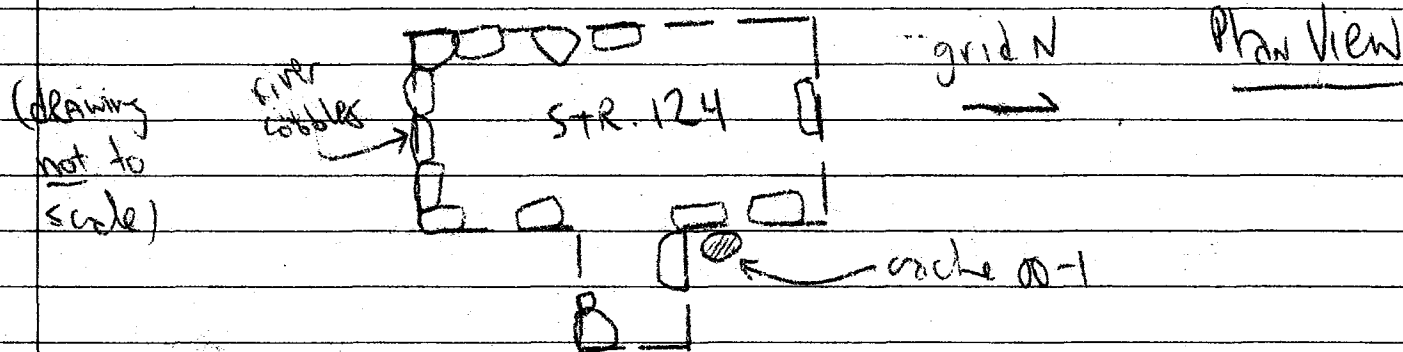


At some point in antiquity, #2 slide south about 10-15cm, #1 flipped over, & #3 rolled over and north about 5-10cm. This could have easily happened if pressure was applied to the top (on top/above #2) of the cache, as the joint between shell "A" (#1 & #2) & shell "B" (#3) seems to have been very weak. Evidence in support of this is a large heavy stone that I removed from the top of the cache, sitting on ground surface. The stone was not meant to be a lid of any kind, but rather, is a roundish smooth river cobble associated with the construction of STR 124. A more detailed description of the shells will be given when they are cleaned back in the lab. I see no other artifacts associated with these shells,

21

5-23-00 (cont'd)

Although we're still in the process of excavating STR. 124, it looks as though the shells were craked at the base of a platform:



A detailed drawing was made at 1:5 scale that provides horizontal & vertical measurement data for each shell & nearby stones of STR. 124.

Although the cache was encountered in a shallow excavation, its association with late Classic pottery forms & ultra polychrome sherds suggests a late Classic (vs. Early postclassic) date, although this cache could be an intrusion. I see no evidence to suggest an intrusive pit or disturbance & so will consider this cache in situ, though I believe it to be late, perhaps dating to the Late Period of the Late Classic.

More excavations:

24L-11 nothing

surface collection of unit 47

24L-12 17 sherds

From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 48

24L-13 nothing

surface collection of unit 50

24L-14 Nothing
Surface collection of Unit 46

24L-15 Nothing
Surface collection of Unit 49

24L-16 Nothing
Surface collection of Unit 48

24L-17 Nothing
Surface collection of Unit 45

24L-18 62 sherds, 2 obsidian
From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 46.

24L-19 270 sherds, 20 basaltic, 1 obsidian
From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 48

24L-20 175 sherds
From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 49

24L-21 99 sherds
From the ground surface to the top of the plaster floor, Unit 45

12/20 took measurements on the vertical location of the plaster phase floor & cobble floor in each test unit:

UNIT	Plaster floor	cobble floor
1	14.0	30.0
2	13.5	22.0
3	14.0	not excavated
4	11.0	25.0
5	31.0	not excavated
6	11.0	25.5
7	5.0	17.5
8	2.0	16.5
9	10.0	22.0
10	9.5	19.0
11	10.5	24.0
12	6.0	29.0

* these measurements are in cm below modern ground surface - the data therefore reflect deposition amounts on top of the plaster floor or fill on top of the cobble floor

Unit	Plaster Floor	Cobble Floor
13	9.0	26.0
14	3.0	13.0
15	4.0	11.0
16	9.0	24.0
17	7.0	10.0
18	2.0	10.0
19	8.0	13.0
20	4.0	13.0
21	15.0	25.0
22	12.0	26.0
23	9.0	24.0
24	13.5	19.0
25	14.0	28.0
26	10.0	21.0
27	4.0	13.5
28	12.0	21.0
29	20.0	30.0
30	13.0	25.0
31	17.0	22.0
32	10.0	23.0
33	13.0	22.0
34	15.0	33.0
35	13.0	26.0
36	7.0	21.0
37	9.0	20.5
38	9.0	23.5
39	8.0	19.5
40	7.0	17.5

* Note the drainage pattern for the cobble floor - deeper at all sides, noticeably shallower in the center of the plate. The plaster floor may follow this pattern.

5-24-00

Decided to go down 20cm more in each of the test pits - down to sterile. These lots, then, go from 40 - 60cm bgs.

F12: nothing

E16: nothing

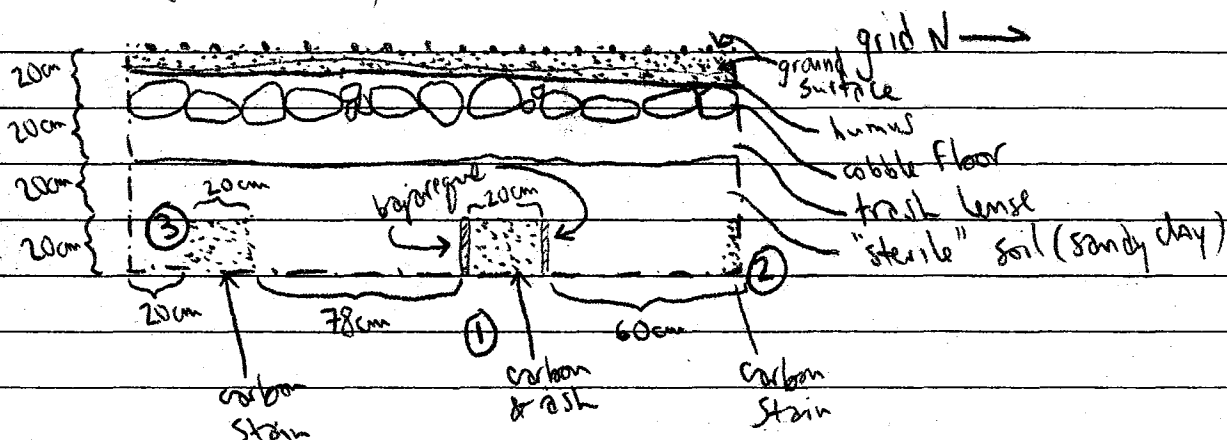
G12: 2 obsidian, 1 quartz flake, 1 chert, 3 slacks

J12: 4 obsidian

I should mention that the majority of what I list as "obsidian" in each of the lots inventoried is most likely pearlite. Most pieces are flakes & multi-functional tools, not blades, although a blade is found occasionally. I have seen no evidence for blade production, although I guess I shouldn't expect any in the phase area. Prismatic blade production at the site should not be ruled out, however, until the elite residential areas are sufficiently probed.

Of important note, toward the base of excavation in J12, I encountered 3 soil stains on the west wall of the unit which contain high densities of carbon flecks - resembling bed rotting, & baryopne. These stains start at about 50cm bgs, and continue until, at least 80cm bgs (the base of excavation). I probed farther down, & none of the stains continues down further. At this depth, no artifacts were found (for at least 20cm), so these features are very curious at this depth. The central one was drawn & excavated, & the entire contents saved as a soil/carbon sample (pieces of baryopne were included). The carbon sample is listed as Sample #10, & another sample, #2, was taken from the northern feature. On the next page, I document their locations, & describe them in more detail.

west profile, Unit 37
(drawing not to
scale, but measurements noted)

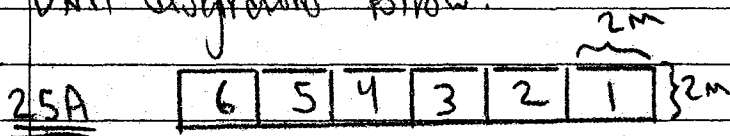


The bazarque tends to have a vertical form, & is darker orange than I'm used to seeing in the Late Classic, although heating/firing could have altered the color (for example, leaching iron deposits to the surface resulting in darker red hues). The bazarque is sandy & somewhat dense - not at all similar to the kiln bazarque I excavated in Op. 43 at La Sierra. The ash/carbon deposits are quite dense, & most carbon appears in flecks no larger than ~2cm long x 1cm wide. The carbon is very reminiscent of seed matting or small twigs. All attempts to collect whole pieces failed as it is very fugitive & delicate. I did collect samples however: carbon, Sample #1 (Feature 1)
carbon, Sample #2 (Feature 2)
carbon & soil with bazarque, Sample #1 (Feature 1)

Feature 3 (see above drawing) was too ephemeral to sample. No photos were taken, although I may return next week & try. The features are very light & won't show up well in a photo. I will try next week by wetting them down with water. Drawings were made, however.

Began two new trenches, each 2m wide x 12m long. One, 25A, is located at the SE corner of the plaza between STR 116 & STR 126. The other trench, 26A, is located at the NW corner of the plaza between STR 139 & STR 130. These trenches are to test the access - exits/entrances - to the plaza that are not formal (i.e., the SW & NE corners which likely support stairways or other formal architecture). The precise locations of the trenches is recorded on the excavation plan map & with transit (EDM) points.

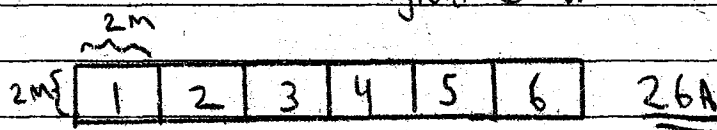
Unit designations follow:



* each unit is 2m²

* each trench is oriented to grid E-W

Grid N
↓



25A

Due to the heavy tumble of stone produced from nearby architecture, most levels (lots) will be 20cm deep, as the very large stones really preclude finer excavations. 1m x 1m test units are likewise too fine to excavate here & probably would not provide much data as stones are too numerous.

25A-1 (Unit 1, 0-10 cm bgs): 2 sherds, 2 obsidian

25A-2 (Unit 1, 10-20 cm bgs): 408 sherds, 2 obsidian, 2 chert, 23 bone, 1 figurine

25A-3 (Unit 6, 0-20 cm bgs): 120 sherds, 6 bone, 1 obsidian

25A-4 (Unit 4, 0-20 cm bgs): 247 sherds, 13 bone, 2 obsidian, 2 chert, 1 netate foot

25A-5 (Unit 4, 20-40 cm bgs): 45 sherds, 3 bone

25A-6 (Unit 6, 20-40 cm bgs): 159 sherds, 20 bone, 2 chert

25A-7 (Unit 1, 30-50 cm bgs): 414 ~~sherds~~ 12 bone, 5 obsidian, 3 chert

26A

Here there is much less rubble obstructing the floor. We will proceed with a 10cm level to remove the topsoil & take us to the top of the plaster floor, then step down in 20cm levels - one level removing the cobble floor & one level removing the trash layer substrate.

26A-1 (Unit 1, 0-10cm bgs): 73 sherds, 1 biquet

26A-2 (Unit 6, 0-10cm bgs): 2 sherds

26A-3 (Unit 6, 10-30cm bgs): 55 sherds, 1 chert, 5 obsidian

26A-4 (Unit 6, 30-50cm bgs): 189 sherds, 22 biquet, 19 obsidian, 1 chert

26A-5 (Unit 1, 10-30cm bgs): 488 sherds, 10 biquet, 18 obsidian, 6 chert

26A-6 (Unit 3, 0-10cm bgs): 385 sherds, 2 biquet, 3 obsidian, 1 chert

26A-7 (Unit 4, 0-10cm bgs): 345 sherds, 12 biquet, 2 obsidian, 7 chert

I also took soil samples from the test units that I went down to sterile in. I took two samples from each unit - 1 from the trash layer just under the cobble floor, & 1 from the base of excavations in the sterile soil.

E-7 (47cm bgs, Unit 6), E-8 (78cm bgs, Unit 6), E-11 (32cm bgs, Unit 15), E-12 (78cm bgs, Unit 15), G-9 (40cm bgs, Unit 26), G-10 (90cm bgs, Unit 26), J-9 (25cm bgs, Unit 37), & J-10 (75cm bgs, Unit 37).

I also took soil samples from the excavations of HR 124 - the locations of which are plotted on the map. All samples were scraped from the 1st 2 cm of the plaster floor, which constituted the base of excavations. Samples taken include: 24L-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6, -7, -8, -9, -10, -11, -12, -13, -14, -15, -16, -17, -18, -19, -20, -21, -22, -23.

5-25-00

Continuing excavations in SE & NW corners of the plaza

26A

26A-8 (Unit 5, 0-10 cm bgs): nothing

26A-9 (Unit 4, 10-30 cm bgs): 450 sherds, 16 obsidian

26A-10 (Unit 3, 10-30 cm bgs): 470 sherds, 4 obsidian, 3 biface

26A-11 (Unit 1, 30-50 cm bgs): 188 sherds, 166 biface, 16 obsidian, 7 chert

26A-12 (Unit 5, 10-30 cm bgs): 107 sherds, 6 obsidian, 1 chert

25A

25A-8 (Unit 4, 40-60 cm bgs): 50 sherds, 7 biface

25A-9 (Unit 6, 40-60 cm bgs): 174 sherds, 20 biface, 3 chert, 7 obsidian

25A-10 (Unit 1, 50-60 cm bgs): 265 sherds, 22 biface, 2 obsidian, 1 chert

26A

26A-13 (Unit 5, 30-50 cm bgs): 380 sherds, 37 biface, 13 obsidian, 6 palenque

26A-14 (Unit 3, 30-50 cm bgs): 400 sherds, 20 biface, 6 obsidian

26A-15 (Unit 4, 30-50 cm bgs): 710 sherds, 6 biface, 19 obsidian, 1 chert

26A-16 (Unit 2, 0-10 cm bgs): 131 sherds, 1 biface, 4 obsidian

26A-17 (Unit 2, 10-30 cm bgs): 1,082 sherds, 18 chert, 32 biface, 28 obsidian, 32 chert

26A-18 (Unit 2, 30-50 cm bgs): 1,055 sherds, 70 biface, 57 obsidian, 32 chert

25A

25A-11 (Unit 2, 0-20 cm bgs): 144 sherds, 7 biface, 2 chert

25A-12 (Unit 3, 0-20 cm bgs): 298 sherds, 16 biface, 7 obsidian

25A-13 (Unit 5, 0-20 cm bgs): 113 sherds, 10 biface, 7 obsidian, 8 chert

25A-14 (Unit 2, 20-40 cm bgs): 433 sherds, 1 biface, 5 obsidian

25A-15 (Unit 3, 20-40 cm bgs): 115 sherds, 5 biface, 3 obsidian, 1 chert

25A-16 (Unit 5, 20-40 cm bgs): 10 sherds, 8 biface, 11 obsidian, 1 chert

25A-17 (Unit 3, 40-60 cm bgs): 100 sherds

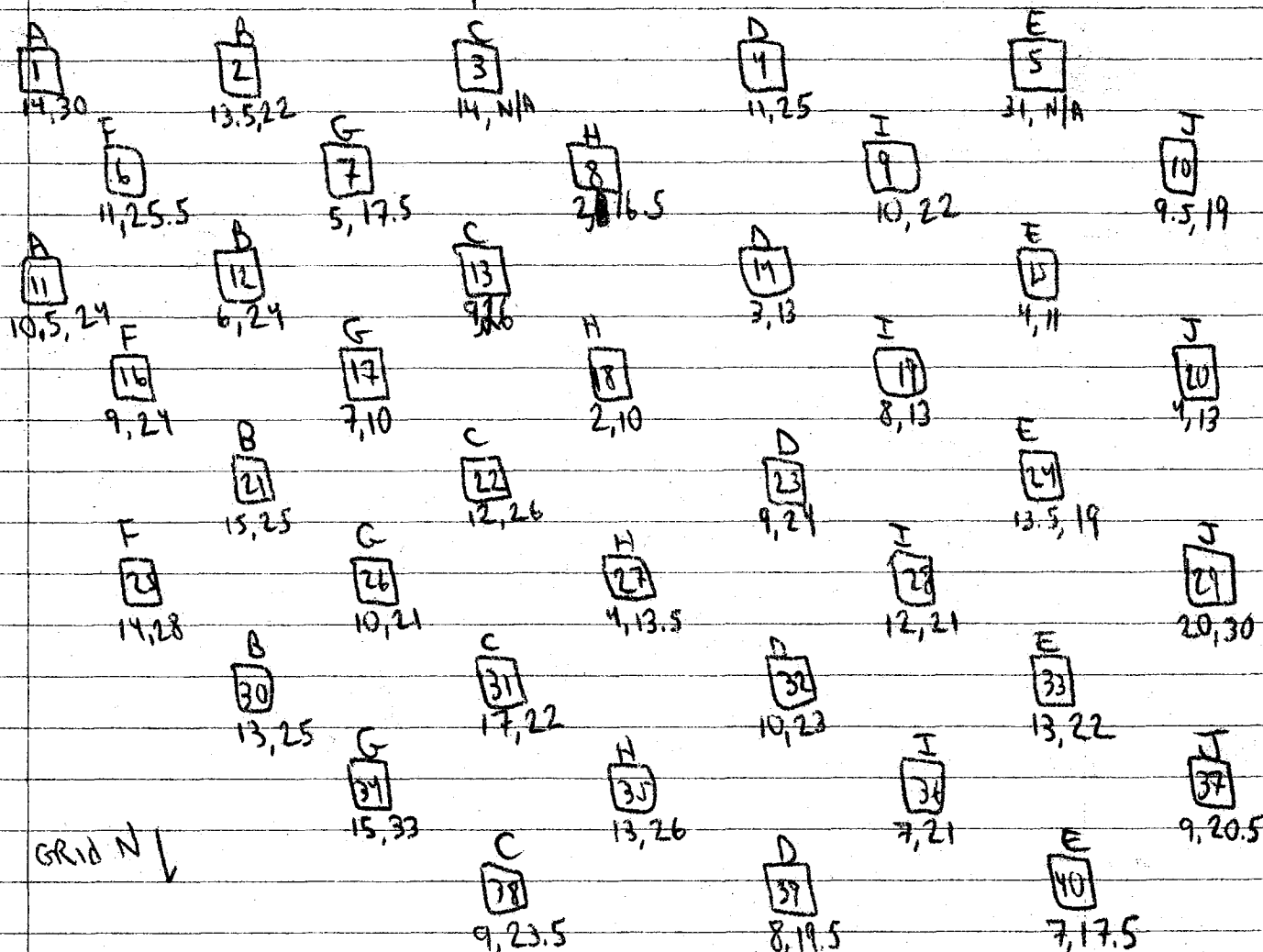
25A-18 (Unit 3, 40-60 cm bgs): 47 sherds, 20 biface, 1 chert

25A-19 (Unit 5, 40-60 cm bgs): 23 sherds, 12 biface, 2 obsidian

5-26-00

5-26-00

Finished up excavations ~~from~~ yesterday. Today I focused on cleaning all test units to photograph & to record the depth below ground surface of the plaster floor & cobble substrate. Below is a diagram of the test pits in the plaza (bottom is grid N). The first number records the depth of the plaster surface, while the second number reflects the top of the cobble substrate:



* All measurements are rounded to the nearest tenth, to take into account the slight variation in the surface where measured. In most cases, I recorded 4 spots & averaged them together. Units 3 & 5 have no measurements for the cobble layer, since those levels were not excavated (the plaster was too thick & very well preserved).

Photos

For each test unit, I took 2 B&W photos (100 speed film) - 1 at the recommended exposure, & 1 slightly under-exposed (due to the strong sunlight) - & 1 color slide photo (200 speed) at the recommended exposure.

Roll #	Exposure #	Provenience	Description
B&W #1	1-2	24A, Unit 1	Ø-base of excavations, view looking N
	3-4	24B, Unit 2	
	5-6	24C, Unit 3	
	7-8	24D, Unit 4	
	9-10	24E, Unit 5	
	11-12	24F, Unit 6	
	13-14	24G, Unit 7	
	15-16	24H, Unit 8	
	17-18	24I, Unit 9	
	19-20	24J, Unit 10	
	21-22	24A, Unit 11	
	23-24	24B, Unit 12	
	25-26	24C, Unit 13	
	27-28	24D, Unit 14	
	29-30	24E, Unit 15	
B&W #2	31-32	24L, STR. 124	view looking W
	33-34	24L, STR. 124	view looking E
	35-36	24L, STR. 124	view looking N
	1-2	24L, STR. 124	view looking S
	3-4	24F, Unit 16	Ø-base of excavations, view looking N
	5-6	24G, Unit 17	
	7-8	24H, Unit 18	
	9-10	24I, Unit 19	
	11-12	24J, Unit 20	
	13-14	24B, Unit 21	
	15-16	24C, Unit 22	

Roll #	Exposure #	Provenience	Description
Below #2	17-18	24 D, Unit 23	Ø - base of excavations, view looking N
	19-20	24 E, Unit 24	
	21-22	24 F, Unit 25	
	23-24	24 G, Unit 26	
	25-26	24 H, Unit 27	
	27-28	24 I, Unit 28	
	29-30	24 J, Unit 29	
	31-32	24 B, Unit 30	
	33-34	24 C, Unit 31	
	35-36	24 D, Unit 32	
Below #3	1-2	24 E, Unit 33	
	3-4	24 G, Unit 34	
	5-6	24 H, Unit 35	
	7-8	24 I, Unit 36	
	9-10	24 J, Unit 37	
	11-12	24 C, Unit 38	
	13-14	24 D, Unit 39	
	15-16	24 E, Unit 40	
	17-18	26 A, Units 1-3	
	19-20	26 A, Units 4-6	
	21-22	25 A, Units 1-3	
	23-24	25 A, Units 4-6	
Below #4	1	24 A, Unit 1	↓
	2	24 B, Unit 2	
	3	24 C, Unit 3	
	4	24 D, Unit 4	
	5	24 E, Unit 5	
	6	24 F, Unit 6	
	7	24 G, Unit 7	
	8	24 H, Unit 8	
	9	24 I, Unit 9	
	10	24 J, Unit 10	

Roll #	Exposure #	Photomicro	Description
Color #1	11	24 A, Unit 11	base of excavation, view looking N
	12	24 B, Unit 12	
	13	24 C, Unit 13	
	14	24 D, Unit 14	
	15	24 E, Unit 15	
	16	24 L, Str 124	view looking W
	17	24 L, Str 124	view looking E
	18	24 L, Str 124	view looking N
	19	24 L, Str 124	view looking S
	20	24 F, Unit 16	base of excavation, view looking N
	21	24 G, Unit 17	
	22	24 A, Unit 18	
	23	24 I, Unit 19	
Color #2	24	24 J, Unit 20	
	25	24 B, Unit 21	
	32	24 C, Unit 22	
	43	24 D, Unit 23	
	54	24 E, Unit 24	
	65	24 F, Unit 25	
	76	24 G, Unit 26	
	87	24 H, Unit 27	
	98	24 I, Unit 28	
	109	24 J, Unit 29	
	110	24 B, Unit 30	
	121	24 C, Unit 31	
	132	24 D, Unit 32	
	143	24 E, Unit 33	
	154	24 G, Unit 34	
	165	24 H, Unit 35	
	176	24 I, Unit 36	
	187	24 J, Unit 37	
	198	24 C, Unit 38	

Roll#	Exposure #	Provenience	Description
Color #2	20	24D, Unit 39	Ø-base of excavation, view looking N
↓	21	24E, Unit 40	↓
Color #3	22	26A	Ø-base of excavation, view looking W
↓	23	26A	Ø-base of excavation, view looking N
↓	24	26A	↓
↓	1	25A	Ø-base of excavation, view looking E
↓	24	25A	Ø-base of excavation, view looking N

5-29-00

Began new excavations in the NE corner of the plaza - a suspected formal entrance/exit to the plaza that leads just off the formal causeway running north of the plaza; between Str. B9 on the N & Str. B6 on the E.

I placed an axial trench on the architecture, which seems to be some combination of platform & stairway. The trench is 2m wide & 14m long, & will be excavated in 2m² units.

grid N 1	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7

* Each unit is 2m² & will be excavated down to surface architecture, which is very shallow here - about 20cm below ground surface.

* The trench is oriented 10° W of N(mg)

(I plan to expand the trench in 2m² units - one row to the W & 2 rows to the E.)

This is Operation 26B.

- 26B-1 (Unit 1): 255 sherds, 8 biface, 1 obsidian, 1 chert
 26B-2 (Unit 2): 45 sherds, 15 obsidian, 1 chert
 26B-3 (Unit 3): 40 sherds, 67 biface, 15 obsidian, 6 chert
 26B-4 (Unit 4): 76 sherds, 1 biface, 8 obsidian, 6 chert
 26B-5 (Unit 5): 54 sherds, 20 biface, 1 obsidian
 26B-6 (Unit 6): 84 sherds, 12 biface, 5 obsidian
 26B-7 (Unit 7): 282 sherds, 16 biface, 10 obsidian, 2 chert

I have expanded the trench 2m² to the E:

grid N 18	1	8
	2	9
	3	10
	4	11
	5	12
	6	13
	7	14

- 26B-8 (Unit 8): 670 sherds, 11 biface, 22 obsidian
 26B-9 (Unit 9): ~~703~~ 703 sherds, 15 biface, 31 obsidian, 2 chert
 26B-10 (Unit 10): 636 sherds, 54 biface, 19 obsidian, 12 chert
 26B-11 (Unit 11): 110 sherds, 9 biface, 10 obsidian, 2 chert (1 core)
 26B-12 (Unit 12): 335 sherds, 35 biface, 12 obsidian, 4 chert, 1 jute
 26B-13 (Unit 13): 95 sherds, 12 biface, 11 obsidian
 26B-14 (Unit 14): 100 sherds, 9 biface, 13 obsidian, 1 chert, 1 jute

All lots are excavated from modern ground surface to the top of all last-phase architecture, usually 20-25cm bgs. At this point, I am not going to penetrate the architecture, but may do so if there is time at the end of the season.

(2m² units have been selected because there aren't many artifacts, & the stored flint architecture are quite large.)

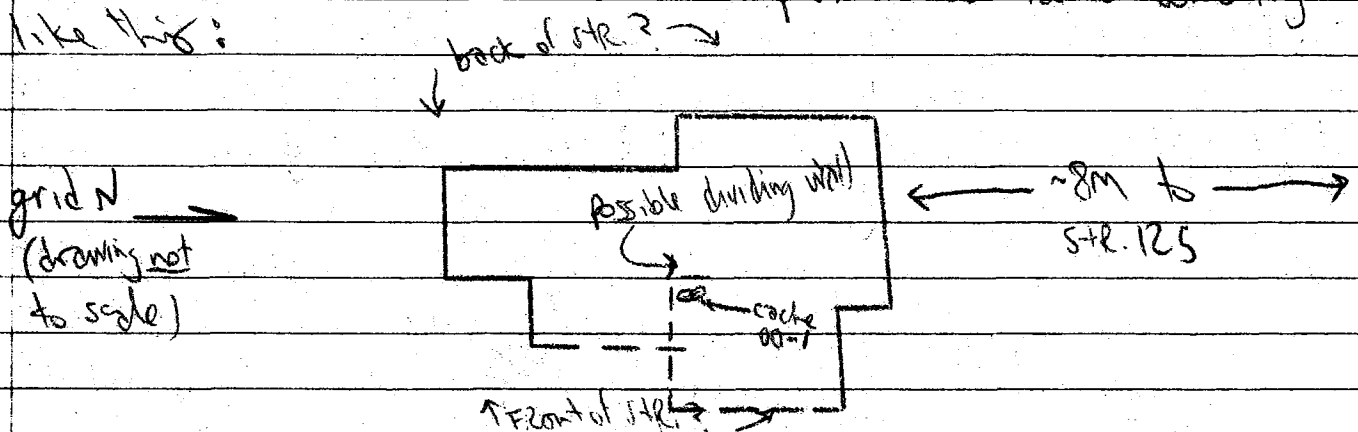
Notes on STR. 124 (Op. 24L)

Last Friday (5-26-00), STR. 124 was cleared & photographed. I can now make some comments on the structure & its excavation.

The STR. is a small, 2-chambered building, of which only the basal stones have survived in situ. Based on the low amounts of building stones excavated, I would guess that no more than 2 or 3 courses originally defined this structure. These are river cobbles - none are shaped. Average size is 30cm^2 , although there is a good deal of variation, with a range of $9 \times 10\text{cm}$ to $36 \times 58\text{cm}$.

While the architectural form is similar to Early Postclassic architecture excavated elsewhere, the shell assemblage appears Late Classic. This is difficult to assess however, since there are very few to no polychrome or bichrome sherds. There is a diversity of forms, & several distinctive modelled ceramic designs, both of which should help in dating this building.

The building lies approximately 8 m due S of STR. 125, a plastered edifice built of cut stone blocks - most certainly of Late Classic date. STR. 124's plan view looks something like this:



Complete drawings & photos have been made. The cache of 2 spondylus shells is marked in the sketch above.

The stones of the str. rest on a very hard plaster surface, which rises roughly 20cm off of the plaster floor of the photo. I have been told that this plaster surface (of the str.) resembles the plaster work seen during the excavation of str. 125 in 1999.

The structure's overall orientation is difficult to determine, but could be $20-30^\circ$ W of N. Currently the str. stands as high as 43 cm off the photo floor. Construction seems to have taken place in only one phase - I see no obvious additions or renovations. All wall segments appear to bond to one another - none abutt.

It is important to note that all stones rest on the photo surface & that the base of raised plaster serves as the interior floor surface of the structure. In this way, the walls contain the fill of the raised plaster cap. The size of the plaster cap is approx. 3m N-S x 2.2m E-W.

37

5-29-00 (cont)

I expanded the trench on both sides, as such:

28	1	8	15	22
29	2	9	16	23
30	3	10	17	24
31	4	11	18	25
32	5	12	19	26
33	6	13	20	27
34	7	14	21	35

grid N 1

2m² units

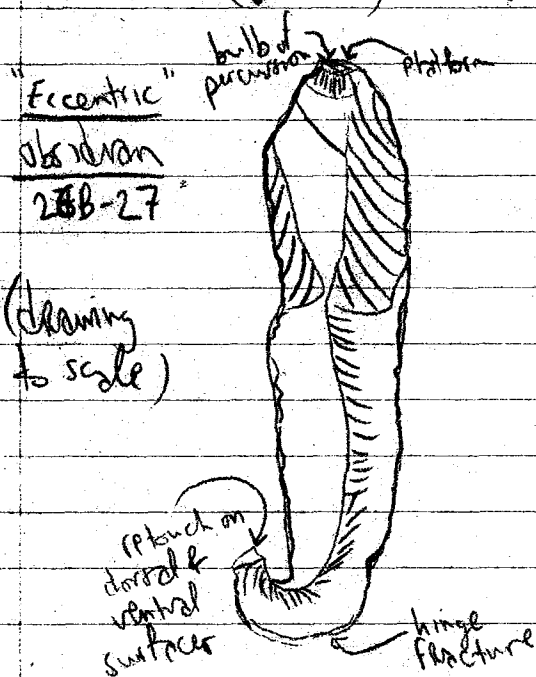
- 26B-15 (Unit 15): 1,565 sherds, 20 biface, 400 obsidian, 4 chert
 26B-16 (Unit 16): 4,680 sherds, 38 biface, 95 obsidian, 16 chert
 26B-17 (Unit 17): 3,000 sherds, 46 biface, 107 obsidian, 15 chert
 26B-18 (Unit 18): ~~1,300~~ sherds, ~~31~~ biface, 38 obsidian, 15 chert
 26B-19 (Unit 19): 485 sherds, ~~34~~ biface, ~~15~~ obsidian, 6 chert, 1 jute
 26B-20 (Unit 20): 2,065 sherds, ~~38~~ biface, 360 obsidian, 11 chert, 9 jute, 1 moccas
 26B-21 (Unit 21): 217 sherds, 43 biface, 19 obsidian, 8 chert, 1 moccas, 6 jute

5-30-00

Continuing excavations of the structure in the NE corner of the plaza.

- ~~26B-22 (Unit 22):~~
~~26B-23 (Unit 23): 4,880 sherds, 38 biface, 95 obsidian, 16 chert~~
~~26B-24 (Unit 24):~~
 26B-25 (Unit 25): 1,509 sherds, 173 biface, 49 obsidian, 1 moccas, 20 jute
 26B-26 (Unit 26): ~~1,300~~ sherds, 66 biface, ~~15~~ obsidian, 4 chert, 2 fauna
 26B-27 (Unit 27): 488 sherds, 36 biface, 29 obsidian, 11 chert, 34 jute, 2 fauna (1 u burnt)

- 26B-28 (Unit 28): 125 sherds, 7 biface, 12 obsidian, 6 chert
 26B-29 (Unit 29): 65 sherds, 8 biface, 2 obsidian, 3 chert
 26B-30 (Unit 30): 73 sherds, 47 biface, 4 obsidian, 2 chert
 26B-31 (Unit 31): ~~1000~~ 13 biface, 3 obsidian
 26B-32 (Unit 32): 161 sherds, 7 biface, 10 obsidian, 1 chert
 26B-33 (Unit 33): 33 sherds, 2 biface, 7 obsidian, 3 chert



[2° or 3° removal
 from a core about
 8-10 cm. long.]

* The entire piece has
 dorsal/ventral flake - this could be a
 tool or an eccentric

- cloudy gray obsidian with no visible
 inclusions.

Discovered a burial in unit 26 - it looks like 2 individuals -
 an infant and an adult. At present, only the skania are
 uncovered. They appear to be Early Postclassic interments -
 indicated by their location, burial treatment, & associated sherd
 assemblage. More notes will follow once they have been
 excavated.

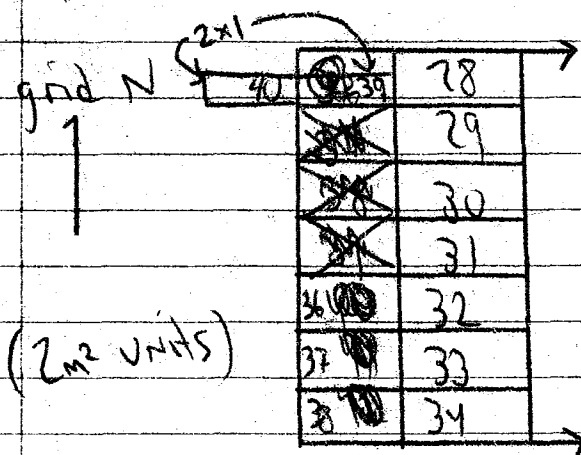
- 26B-34 (Unit 34): 38 sherds, 3 obsidian, 1 biface, 1 chert
 26B-35 (Unit 35): 1000 sherds, 16 biface, 7 chert, 16 obsidian,
 1 fauna bone

6-1-00

6-1-00

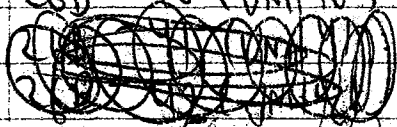
This morning, just after it rained, I took 6 color slide photos - bringing color #3 to 14 (exposures 8-13). - general site shots, work in progress, environment, etc. The burial is still being excavated - at the moment, there appear to be at least 6 crania. Carlos, the Instituto Rep from La Lima, is here supervising.

We have been very successful in uncovering the stairway/entrance, & more detailed notes will follow once all is cleaned. We are now opening up another row of $2m^2$ units on the W side of excavations - alongside units 28-34 - following the W corner of the stair case.



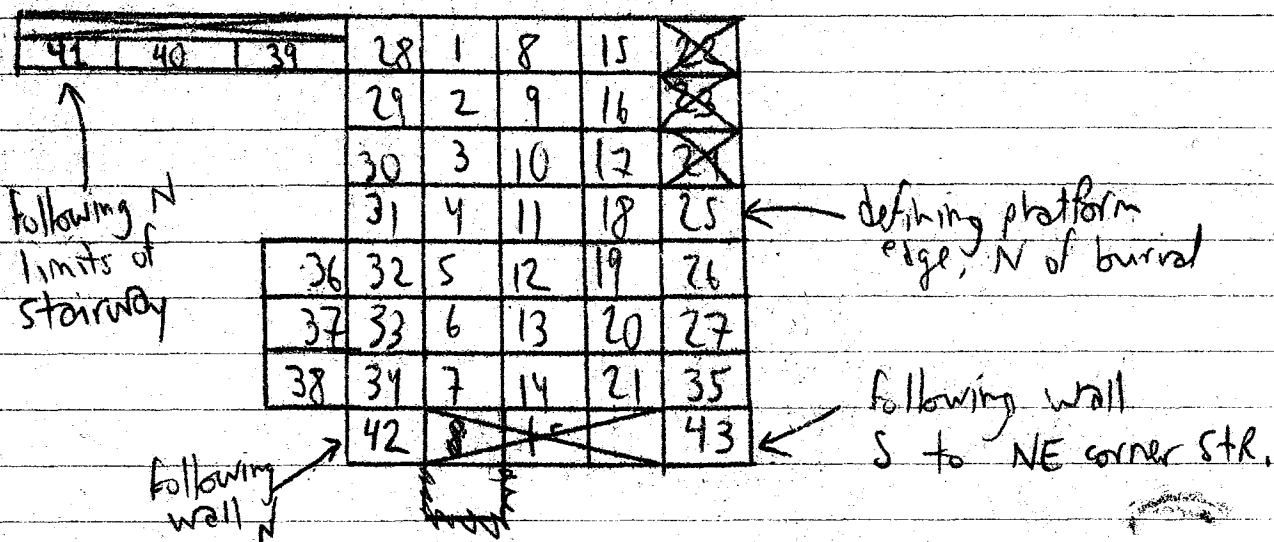
I have Miranda's workers today from Canas, so all is progressing quickly.

- 26B-36 (Unit 36): 7 sherds, 19 biquique, 6 obsidian, 3 chert
 26B-37 (Unit 37): 21 sherds, 20 biquique, 9 obsidian
 26B-38 (Unit 38): 2 sherds, 2 biquique, 5 obsidian
 26B-39 (Unit 39): 34 sherds, 2 chert, 10 obsidian
 26B-40 (Unit 40): 34 sherds, 3 biquique, 8 obsidian



6-2-00

Today I'm finishing up the burial in Unit 26, & I have opened 4 new units to help define walls & limits of architecture.



26B-41 (Unit 41): 68 sherds, 1 biface, 16 obsidian, 2 chert

26B-42 (Unit 42): 6 sherds, 12 biface, 1 chert

26B-43 (Unit 43): 210 sherds, 26 biface, 14 obsidian, 1 chert

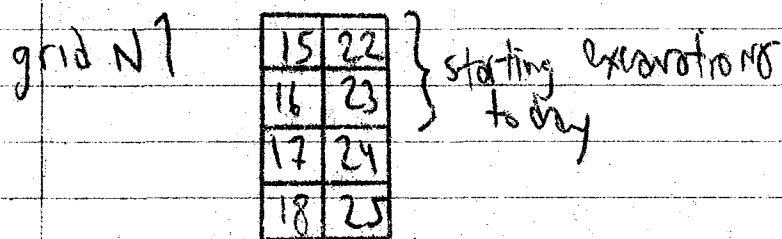
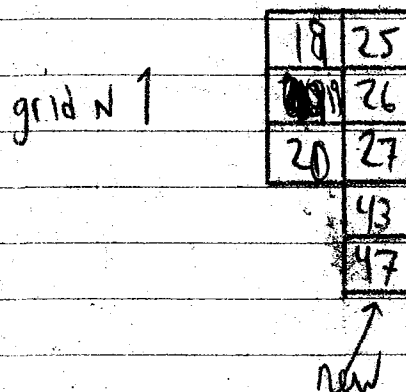
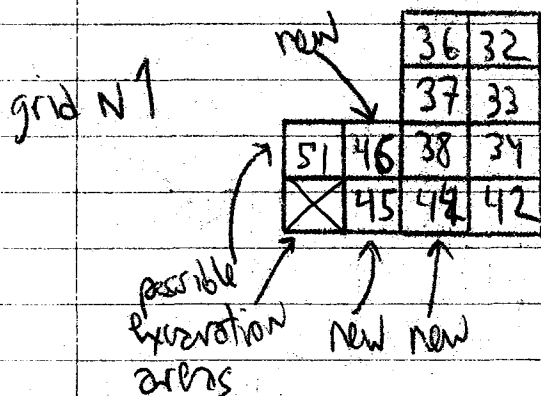
26B-25 (Unit 25): ~~100~~ 122 sherds, ~~11~~ 12 biface, ~~50~~ 51 obsidian, ~~11~~ 12 chert

burial found - probably Early Postclassic in date.

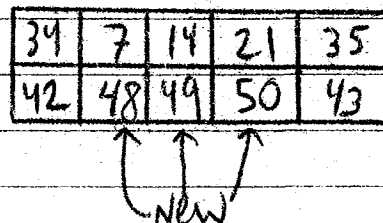
Still cleaning the tomb chamber & burials in Unit 26 - detailed notes to follow.

6-5-00

Today I'm continuing excavations of the burial found in Unit 25. I'm also extending some of the excavations to learn how the stairway articulates with the surrounding structures.



grid N1



In total, 9 new excavations units, 2m², have been defined today. It will likely take 2 days to excavate them all. All units have been opened to answer architectural questions - primarily, how does the stairway articulate with surrounding architectural elements.

- 26B-22 (Unit 22): 170 sherds, ~~38~~ 72 obsidian, 21 chert
 26B-23 (Unit 23): 2070 sherds, 38 biface, 90 obsidian, 14 chert
 26B-44 (Unit 44): 16 sherds, 1 biface, 1 obsidian, 1 chert
 26B-45 (Unit 45): 30 sherds, 1 biface, 17 obsidian, 1 chert
 26B-46 (Unit 46): 26 sherds, 1 biface, 54 obsidian, 8 chert + 1 quartzite
 26B-47 (Unit 47): 120 sherds, 40 biface, 15 obsidian, 3 chert
 26B-48 (Unit 48): 76 sherds, 8 biface, 3 obsidian, 1 chert
 26B-49 (Unit 49): ~~43~~ 43 sherds, 20 biface, 15 obsidian, 2 chert
 26B-50 (Unit 50): 102 sherds, 20 biface, 5 obsidian, 2 chert
 26B-51 (Unit 51): 288 sherds, 33 biface, 59 obsidian, 4 chert

2 m E-W x 2 m N-S

In general, each of these excavation units is only 20 cm deep, the exceptions being units 22 & 23, where the deposits are as much as twice as deep. Specific notes detailing stratigraphy (of which there is very little!), depths, etc. is forthcoming. ↓ (see below)

6-6-00

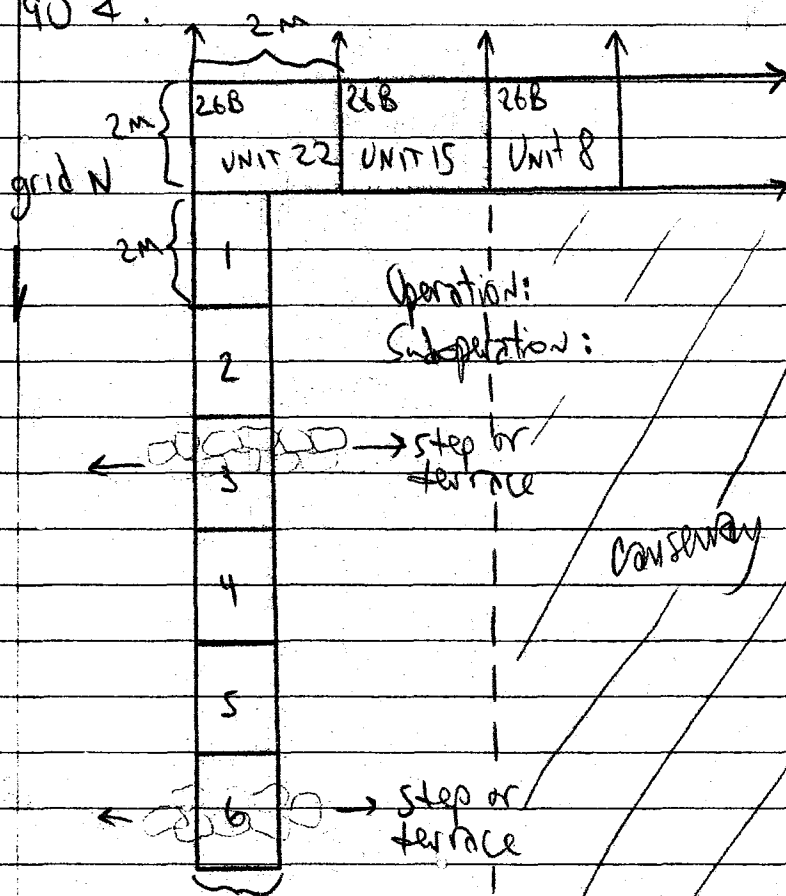
Continuing excavations noted above.

Excavations depth per lot (Unit):

1 = 30cm	11 = 30cm	21 = 10cm	31 = 30cm	41 = 70 70cm
2 = 30cm	12 = 20cm	22 = 20cm	32 = 10cm	42 = 20cm
3 = 50cm	13 = 20cm	23 = 30cm	33 = 20cm	43 = 50cm
4 = 30cm	14 = 20cm	24 = 30cm	34 = 20cm	44 = 20cm
5 = 10cm	15 = 20cm	25 = 50cm	35 = 30cm	45 = 20cm
6 = 20cm	16 = 30cm	26 = 50cm	36 = 20cm	46 = 20cm
7 = 20cm	17 = 30cm	27 = 20cm	37 = 20cm	47 = 60cm
8 = 30cm	18 = 50cm	28 = 30cm	38 = 20cm	48 = 30cm
9 = 30cm	19 = 10cm	29 = 30cm	39 = 30cm	49 = 20cm
10 = 50cm	20 = 10cm	30 = 50cm	40 = 40 40cm	50 = 30cm
				51 = 40cm

6-7-00

Yesterday I finished excavations on the main stairway & platform. Today I'm beginning a series of 2m N-S x 1m E-W units in a trench series extending N from the NE corner of excavations in 26B (Unit 22). This trench is designed to evaluate low nearby architecture, namely the causeway & nearby terrace, articulated with the stairway. I also plan to open a E-W-oriented trench cutting the causeway at a 90° &.



28A-1 (Unit 1): 5 sherds, 2 obsidian

28A-2 (Unit 2): 2 sherds, 1 biface, 7 obsidian

28A-3 (Unit 3): 10 sherds, 2 obsidian, 2 chert, 1 biface

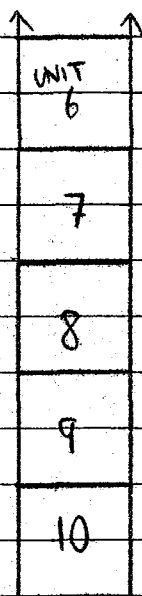
28A-4 (Unit 4): 8 sherds, 2 obsidian

28A-5 (Unit 5): nothing

28A-6 (Unit 6): 6 sherds, 2 obsidian, 1 chert

All excavations were 0-10cm bgs - broad stripping excavations to better map corresponding architecture.

I extended the trench 8m to the N, as shown below:



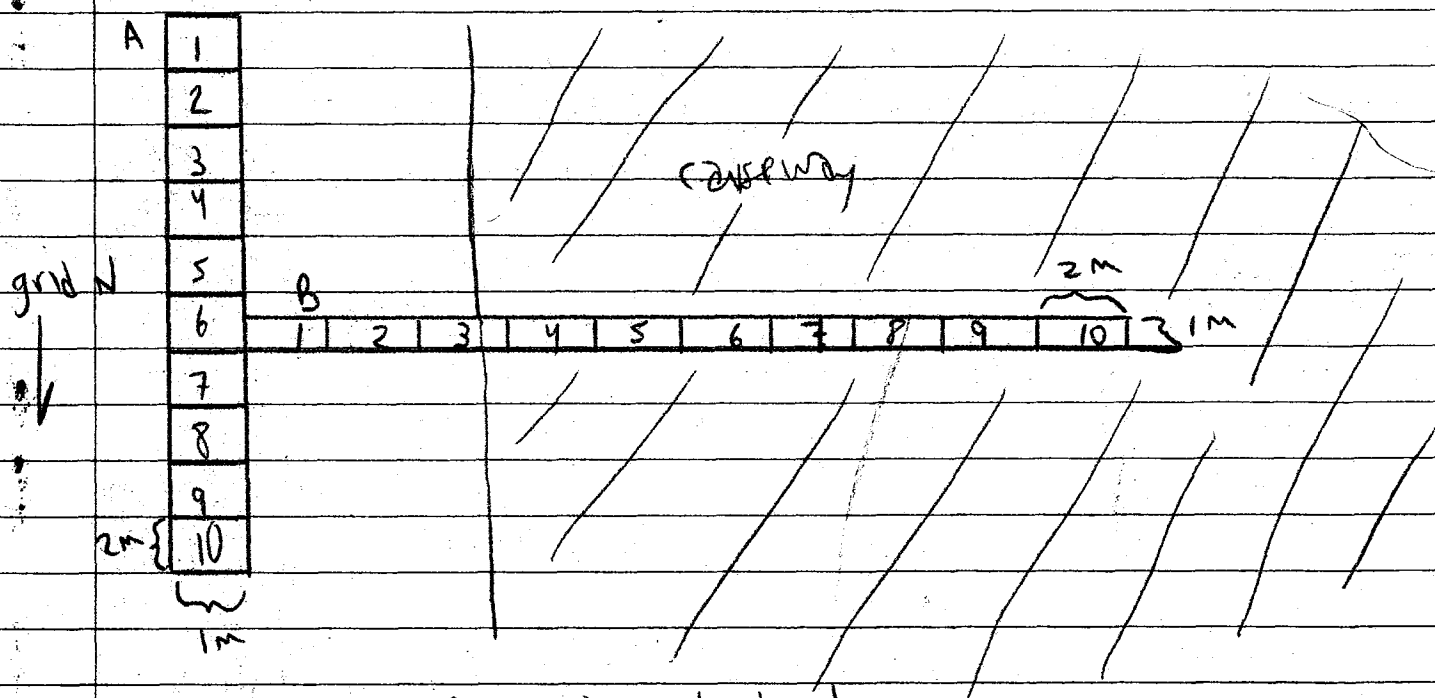
There appears to be a series of steps or terraces descending down the slope, away from the stairway, & seemingly at an acute angle to the causeway. Although I need to excavate more in the area of the causeway to see.

- A-7 (Unit 7): 135 sherds, 15 biface, 11 obsidian, 21 chert
- A-8 (Unit 8): 154 sherds, 11 biface, 47 obsidian, 2 chert
- A-9 (Unit 9): 42 sherds, 8 obsidian, 1 biface
- A-10 (Unit 10): 15 sherds, 13 obsidian, 8 chert, 1 biface

* All lots were excavated from 0-10cm bgs.

* All lots are 2m N-S x 1m E-W,

New trench laid out perpendicular to A:



B-1 (Unit 1): 10 sherds, 1 chert

B-2 (Unit 2): 8 sherds, 2 obsidian, 13 quartzite

B-3 (Unit 3): 6 sherds, 4 obsidian

B-4 (Unit 4): 4 sherds, 1 chert

B-5 (Unit 5): 1 sherd

B-6 (Unit 6): 5 sherds, 1 chert

B-7 (Unit 7): 40 sherds, 3 baroque, 4 obsidian, 3 chert

B-8 (Unit 8): 29 sherds, 1 baroque, 1 obsidian, 4 chert

B-9 (Unit 9): 16 sherds, 10 obsidian, 1 chert

B-10 (Unit 10): nothing

• All units are 2m E-W x 1m N-S

• All units excavated 0-10cm bgs.

→ I also took soil samples - A-1 to 10 & B-1 to 10

(soil taken at base of excavation (10cm down), & in center of each unit)

I also cut back the "wall" on the E side of the structure in 26B, looking for a better line - more work needs to be done, but it's looking much more clear.

- 3-4 mgs 26B-52 (Unit 17): 536 sherds, 10 biquere, 9 obsidian, 1 ^{stone} pebble
 5-8 mgs 26B-53 (Unit 18): 540 sherds, 22 biquere, 10 obsidian, 3 chert
 10-11 mgs 26B-54 (Unit 19): 185 sherds, 10 biquere, 17 obsidian, 1 chert, 30 jute

This is fresh trapped underneath fallen stones against the wall line.

6-8-00

Today, I did some extensive cleaning on 26B, & divided the artifacts recovered into 3 lots. Lot 26B-55 is primarily from Units 17, 18, & 19. Lot 26B-56 is primarily from Units 2, 9, 16, & 23.

- 26B-55 [general cleaning E side of 26B]: 154 sherds, 4 biquere, 26 obsidian, 3 chert, 10 jute
 26B-56 [general cleaning S side of 26B]: 79 sherds, 14 biquere, 4 obsidian, 1 figurine frag.
 26B-57 [general cleaning]: 350 sherds, 35 biquere, 23 obsidian, 6 chert, 2 jute

*The figurine fragment is a headpiece - Uluu style.

- ★ I also took soil samples from the entire structure - 1 sample from the center of each unit: 26B-1 to 51. I also took a sample from the posthole in UNIT 43 (sample 26B-52).

47

6-8-00 (cont'd)

I also took photos today:

Roll #	Exposure #	Provenience	Description
Color #4	3	26B-all water	view looking NE
	4		↓
	5		↓
	6		↓
	7		↓
	8		↓
	9		view looking NW
	10		↓
	11		↓
	12		view looking SW
	13		↓
	14		↓
	15		view looking SE
	16		↓
	17		↓
	18		pothole & wall of str. 136
	19		↓
	20		↓
	21		small cobble platform - unit 48
	22		↓
	23		↓
	24		west cobble wall
	25		↓
	26		↓
	27		East cobble wall
	28		↓
	29		↓
	30		view looking S
	31		↓
	32		↓

48

6-8-01 (cont'd)

Roll #	Exposure #	Place/View	Description
Color #4	33	26B all units	View looking S
	34		
	35		
	36	28A all units	view looking S
Color #5	1		
	2		
	3		view looking N
	4		
	5		
	6	28B all units	View looking W
	7		
	8		
	9		View looking E
	10		
	11		
B&W #4	21	26B all units	View looking NE
	22		
	23		
	24		
	25		
	26		
	27		View looking NW
	28		
	29		
	30		View looking SW
	31		
	32		
	33		View looking SE
	34		
	35		
	36		

49

6-8-70 (cont'd)

Roll #	Exposure #	Provenience	Description
Bew #5	1	26B all units	path hole R Wall of STR. 136
	2		↓
	3		↓
	4		Small cobble platform - unit 48
	5		↓
	6		↓
	7		West cobble wall
	8		↓
	9		↓
	10		East cobble wall
	11		↓
	12		↓
	13		View looking S
	14		↓
	15		↓
	16		↓
	17		↓
	18		↓
	19	28A	View looking S
	20	↓	↓
	21	↓	↓
	22	28B	View looking N
	23	↓	↓
	24	↓	↓

* Ran out of Bew film - did not photograph 28B.

50

6-8-00 (cont)

Roll #	Exposure #	Provenience	Description
Color #5	12	Plaza	Northern Monumental Plaza - from on top of
	13		hill to the W - also shots
	14		of surrounding mountains
	15		
	16		
	17		
	18		
	19		

Excavations finished - 6-8-00. 6-9-00 will be spent drawing, 6-12-00 doing EDM work, & 6-13-00 taking final notes & drawings. I plan to start back filling on 6-12-00 when we finish with EDM work.

* Soil samples from burials:

Unit 26 → sample 26B-53 → concentration I @ 36 cmbgr
 26B-54 → concentration III @ 41 cmbgr
 26B-55 → concentration IV @ 46 cmbgr
 26B-56 → concentration VII @ 49 cmbgr

Unit 27 → sample 26B-57 → concentration I @ 15 cmbgr
 26B-58 → concentration III @ 25 cmbgr
 26B-59 → general cleaning #5 @ 36 cmbgr
 26B-60 → general cleaning #7 @ 47 cmbgr

6-13-00

6-13-00

6-12-00 - pat & I shot EDM points (301 total), which have been downloaded into a database, & today & tomorrow will be spent backfilling - today - Ops. 24A-J, 25A, & 26A; tomorrow - Ops. 26B, & 28A-B.

Some final notes on the architecture uncovered in Op. 26B:

SE corner of Str. 139

2 courses high - shaped river cobbles; 29 cm preserved height; chinking stones present between stones & under basal stones. Average size = 7cm x 3cm. Possible 3rd course of stones seen in profile for a possible height of 42cm from plaza surface. Orientation = 10° E of N.

Plaza Surface near stairway

similar to the plaza surface elsewhere - cobble ballast layer topped off & mixed with pebbles - topped off with crushed white plaster stones - avg. size 4cm x 4cm x 1cm - limestone or gypsum? - here, encountered at ~15cm below modern ground surface, depending on soil deposition.

West Wall at top of stairway

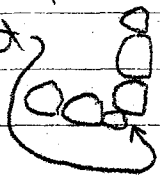
nearly 8m long (N-S) x 1m (max. = 110cm) wide (E-W) - made of unmodified river cobbles - avg. size 23cm²; large stones tend to be placed on facings of wall while smaller stones make up the core. The S end, where it terminates, may be rounded vs. squared straight. Chinking stones are present in between some stones. 1 course high - resting on plaster plaza surface - indicating that it was built after the plaza floor. The wall is presently ~20cm high. It seems to cut the stairway in half along the N-S axis (at the top) - suggesting two separate entrances. The wall seems to be integral with the construction of the stairway - the wall's N end is bonded with the uppermost step, & may even continue for the run of the first step down, as suggested by the

6-13-00 (cont'd)

W wall profile - but this needs to be tested next year. The largest stone is 54×37 cm. The wall may or may not have been covered with plaster - there's so much erosion, I can't say for sure - if I had to say, though, I think it was, based on the presence of a few tiny ($1-2\text{cm}^3$) white plaster fragments in the soil matrix on top of the wall, in between some stones.

Small platform

I originally thought this was an Early Postclassic addition, but now I'm not convinced. I course high - with chunky stones. The corners may be inset, but this could also be erosion & shifting.



The pattern, however, is visible to varying degrees at each corner. The orientation of the platform is $\sim 20^\circ \text{E}$ of N (most everything else here is 10°E of N). Present height = ~ 15 cm - made of unmodified river cobbles. The dimensions are ~ 110 cm (N-S) \times ~ 216 cm (E-W). I would like to open up more of this area next year - just to the N of this structure to see if the architecture continues. The largest stone is 20×32 cm. looks to have been plastered on top - it sits on the plaster ~~plaza~~ surface.

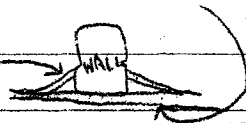
East Wall (Foundation or Footing)

Oddly-shaped wall or foundation - made of worn, unmodified river cobbles - 1 course high - ~ 15 cm high at present - ~ 8 m long, but the width (E-W) varies. On the west side, it was clear during excavation where the edge is, on the East side it's hard to tell because it intergrades somewhat with a cobble fill of other architecture to the East; drawings record its varying width. Chunky stones present. Avg. stone ~~weight~~ = 20cm^2 , the largest is ~ 52 cm in diameter. The wall/foundation rests on the plaster ~~plaza~~ surface - but also seems to have been covered with plaster itself (a thin coat of plaster rock frags. is visible on top).

Wall at NW corner of STR. 136

An impressive wall - 3-5 courses high - well made - present height of 62cm from plaza surface. Basal stones sit on a layer of chinking stones (~5cm thick), which rests on top of the plaster plaza surface. A second plaster surface is visible in the S wall profile - about 5cm higher than the plaza surface. The lower surface runs underneath the wall, while the higher surface abuts the wall.

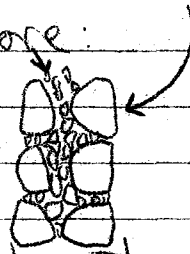
The wall was obviously added



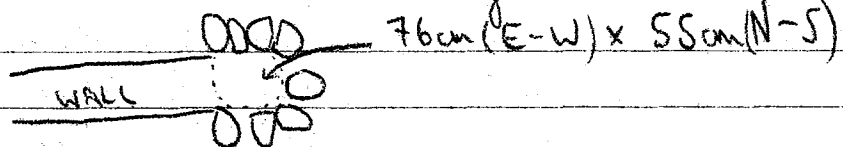
after the plaza surface was established. The added plaster covers most of the first course of stones (basal stones). None of the stones appear to be shaped; all are river cobbles - largest = $22 \times 36 \times 13$ cm, average = $20 \text{ cm}^2 \times 10$ cm. Chinking stones present between stones. Orientation = 20° E of N (that of the small platform just to the W, suggesting that they may be related or at least constructed around the same time). The larger stones form the face of the wall, while smaller stones make up the core.

This is quite similar to the construction practice of the "West Wall" (see pg. 51452).

The wall is ~45-50cm wide (E-W) & ~270cm long (N-S) - at present preserved height.



The wall ends with a "pothole" on its N end - made up of 8 stones - each ~ $26 \text{ cm}^2 \times 10$ cm tall - arranged in a circular shape.



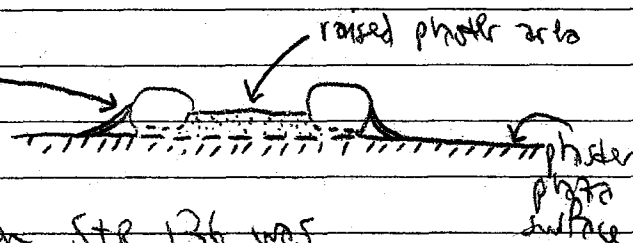
The bottom of the pothole is an area of raised, dense, polished plaster - ~10cm thick. - resting at ~10cm above the plaza surface - probably served as a footing for a post. I've seen similar constructions at other sites, including La Quemada in NW Mexico, where the "post" was actually an aggregate of ~50 thinner poles bound together & covered with bayer lime. It's impossible in the present case to say if the circle was added to the end of the wall.

at some later date than the wall's original construction, or if it is integral to it, being built at the same time of the wall. The basal stones of both the wall & the circle are at the same elevation, suggesting contemporaneity of construction. The stones that make up the circle rest on the plaster plaza surface, but also seem to have been treated with an extra coat of plaster:

Next year I will investigate other corners of STR. 136

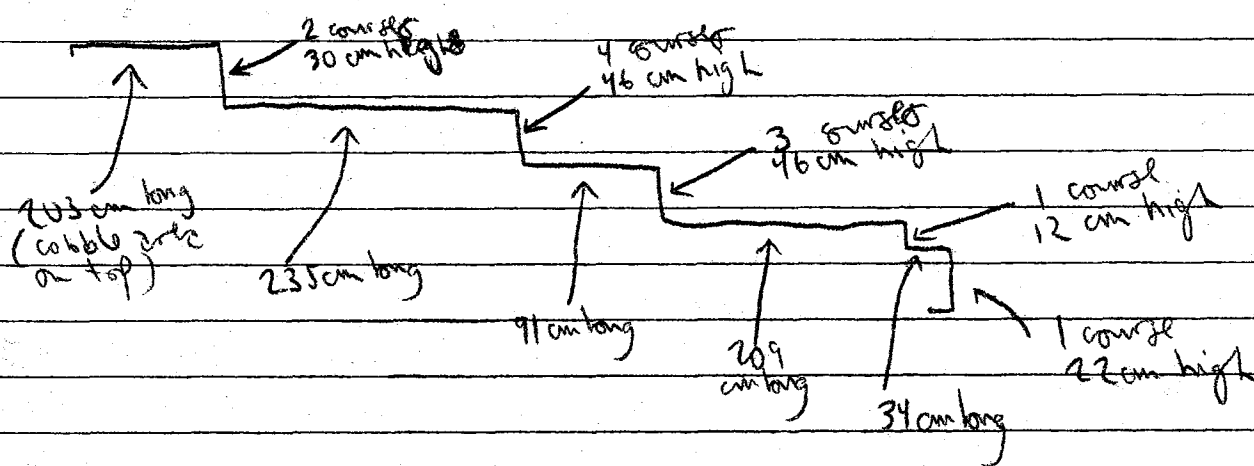
to see if there are other such

features. If there are, perhaps then STR. 136 was covered with a roof - similar to a ramada-like construction seen at Copán with the Early Classic mud-based structures (i.e., macawilla STR.).

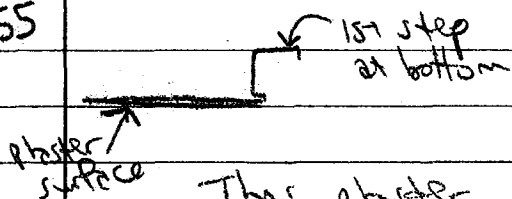


Stairway (STR. 138)

Made of unmodified river cobbles - largest = $52\text{ cm} \times 42\text{ cm} \times 35\text{ cm}$ (at the E edge of stairway, near the top), average = $\sim 20\text{ cm}^3 \times 10\text{ cm}$ high. There are 5 runs & 5 rises:



The basal stones of the 1st (lowest) step are the best preserved - everything else is stumped. Oriented 10°E of N. The plastered concave surface to the N meets the step's basal stones & does not run underneath it - nor does it tip up to it - it just ends where it touches.

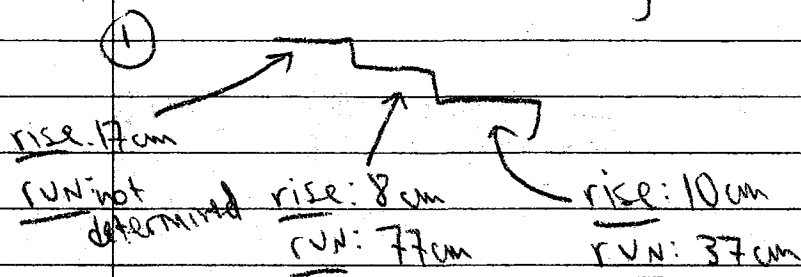


This plaster ends ~2-3M N of the stairway, but the cobble substrate continues on for some distance (see side map). The width of the causeway is the width (E-W) of the stairway → ~12M. The step's basal stones are all roughly the same dimensions ~35cm² x 20cm high - the faces have been shaped - pecked flat. There are a total of 32 such stones running E-W. Chinking stones are present throughout & the basal course rests on a layer (~5-10cm thick) of chinking stones. Test probes on the East side of the stairway indicate a brown sandy clay substrate mixed with domestic trash is immediately underneath the steps. There seems to be a natural slope here & architecture plus fill goes probably ~50-75cm deep - depending on the natural topography. This needs to be evaluated next year, however, with formal excavations down into the staircase. Generally, this season we took off only about 10-40cm of topsoil & terminal debris. Of special note - at the NE corner of the stairway at its base, we uncovered a sizeable midden of some 10,000+ shards, including a large modeled censer (in fragments), similar to those sealed figural censers in the Scribe Tomb at Copan.

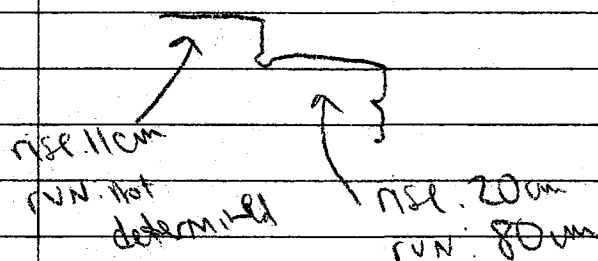
Earlier Architecture

An earlier phase of the steps was uncovered - about 10-15cm below the latest phase architecture, made entirely of cut limestone - bright white - average size = 40x30cm x 5cm tall - very flat stones. Importantly - no chinking stones are visible - & I see no evidence for plaster covering - a very different construction style than the later version, perhaps even Early Classic, though we'll need to punch through this architecture next year to collect datable ceramic assemblages.

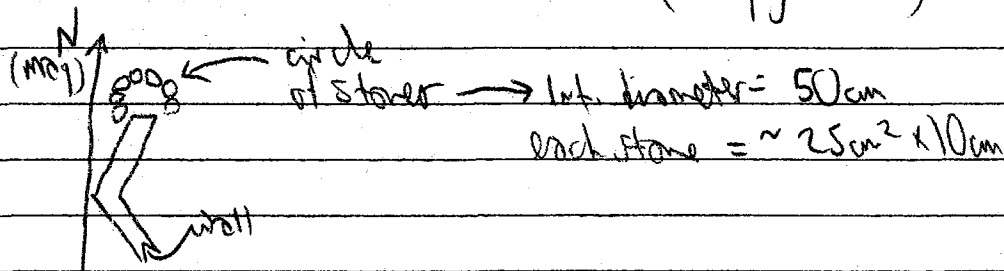
I found 3 architectural segments - the 1st 3 steps of the base of the stairway



(2) the top 2 steps:



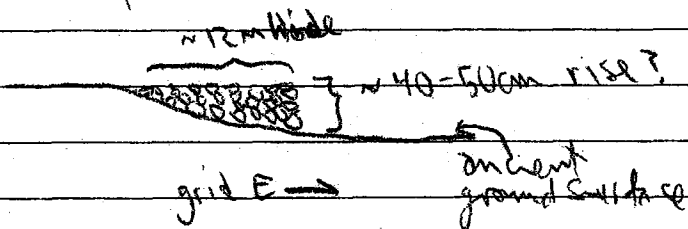
(3) wall segment - 22cm high (2 courses) - possibly a precursor to the NW wall of STR 136 - oriented 30° W of N. Average size stone = 30 x 20 x 5cm. All are unmodified river cobbles, although all are similarly formed - sort of square. All ^{segments} found inside a cobble see fill on the E side of the lower stairway. The wall ends to the NE with a possible circle of stones - similar to the NW corner of STR 136 (see pgs 53-54):



This circle of stones was noticed just before backfilling, & was not investigated this year.

Causeway

Made of unmodified river cobbles, average size = $20\text{cm}^2 \times 5\text{cm}$ high. There's no plaster visible - although we're very close to modern ground surface, ~10cm high, so if there was plaster, it could have eroded away. The width of the causeway is exactly the width of the stairway, & the two line up perfectly, as for the causeway. We did not penetrate into the causeway to determine its height - due to time constraints. It looks like it might partly follow a natural slope, but this needs to be tested:



There are two, possibly 3 architecture steps associated with the causeway on its East side that are recorded in detail in the plan & profile drawings. No profile of the causeway proper was done - since we only excavated 10m of topsoil on top of the causeway - see 1999 excavation notes & drawings for plans & profiles of another segment of the causeway, located about 10m N of the terminus of my excavation, which are about 25m N of the stairway.

6-14-00Notes on the burials:

I have waited until now to discuss in more detail the burials - waiting for analysis to be completed in the lab. Now that most bones have been washed, analyzed, & otherwise processed, I will describe each burial as excavated:

Unit 26

This burial consists of MNI = 7, based on the crania identified in the field. This number may increase once other data are used to determine the minimum number of individuals. The reason why this number is a bit tricky is that this is not a burial of particular individuals, laid out, flexed, or otherwise buried in a "traditional" sense. This is a crypt-like burial of several individuals, perhaps made over a period of time and involving more than one episode of cist re-entry.

The burial space - or cist - consists of several stones arranged in a circular or oval pattern. The south side of the cist is actually formed by early architecture, probably the top two steps of an early staircase - the lot of which was covered over with a later staircase & platform. The stones used to create the cist are exactly like those used in the construction of the early staircase that is, limestone laves, or thin (~5cm thick), flat white stones, approximately 30cm - 40cm². The "floor" of the cist consists of a rubble core fill of cobbles from some other construction, which "cancelled" the earlier staircase. There is, in essence, no flat surface for the cist bottom, but rather, an uneven, almost conical shaped depression, giving the interior cist space a maximum depth of ~50cm. The width (N-S) is approximately 150cm, & the length (E-W) is roughly 125cm.

Similar white, flat lumps were used to cover the cist, although these were not recorded in drawings or photos, as we did not know of the existence of the burial. In fact, we were merely clearing a few stones from the rubble core matrix for photos when we noticed human bones. Not much can be said, therefore, with respect to the lumps covering the cist, except that they were not formally arranged (I remember them to be canted randomly) & not lying entirely flat. This "uneven topping" may not have been purposeful, since these stones were no more than 5cm from the modern ground surface, & in the midsection of a slope of about 20° , where, undoubtedly much erosion & slump has occurred (this is detailed in excavation profiles at the base of the slope). Further contextual details are recorded in drawings & photos.

The burial (the contents of which are included in Op. 26B-26 [Unit 26]) was excavated in 4 levels - each consisting of about 10cm in depth. All levels were drawn in detail, but only the first received extensive photography, which included individual Blueprint & color slide photos of each crania, as well as general overview shots of the entire burial. After excavation & cleaning, the empty burial cist was also photographed. Levels 2, 3, & 4 were not photographed because details about bone articulation were generally not discernible through the camera lens. During excavation, all long bones, and a variety of other bone types, were drawn in situ & numbered. Later, each bone or bone concentration that received a number was identified & studied in the lab by K. Davis (PVC# 35).

These studies have revealed that there were at least 7 individuals - mostly males in their 20's - 30's, although these observations are preliminary. One individual was determined to be female, based on the very wide angle on the sciotic notch on the innominate bone. One individual was identified as a sub-adult,

based on the identification of an un-fused epiphysis of a radius. Generally, the preliminary analysis noted that all bones were fairly well-preserved, except for the proximal & distal ends of the long bones. Teeth from mandibles & maxilla were observed to be extremely worn & deteriorated, with obvious caries & calcareous bone growth at the bases of teeth. Of particular interest, the study identified two bones - a tibia & a humerus - with possible healed bone fractures, indicating some kind of physical trauma during the individuals' lives. There were also occasional "bone growths" observed on some bones at points of muscle attachment, suggesting repeated action traumas/stresses. These latter identifications are uncertain, however, & should be given further detailed examination.

Overall, the burial was generally arranged with skulls placed on the sides of the cist (especially the N & S sides), & long bones, etc. in the middle. There were very few articulations visible in the upper 2 levels, but the lower two levels seem to have yielded several - in particular, #83 - an articulated hand, & #85 an articulated torso (ribs, vertebrae, clavical). The only other visible articulation was associated with cranium "D" that maintained an attachment of a few cervical vertebrae and the axis (no axis). No post-mortem trauma or modifications were visible or obvious, although we are not particularly trained in this. Again, closer analysis may reveal otherwise.

The interpretation of the formation process of this burial based on the above data is as follows: A burial or cache/offering of seven individuals, which involved at least one, if not several, episodes of re-entry. Each time another individual (or individuals) was added, the other(s) would be moved to one side; The torso & possibly the hand, of the first individual interred remained

articulated at the bottom of the burial cist. The skull of the first individual, as well as those interred thereafter, was brought back to the top of the burial with the others. This burial is similar to those I have excavated in NW Mexico, & similar to the so-called "family crypts" in the Teuchitlan Region (near the site of Cuicachimontán) in W Mexico. Burial re-entry, such as the kind proposed here, is fairly common in Mesoamerica, & well-documented in the Maya area, in particular (Copán, Piedras Negras, Tikal, Caracol, Calakmul).

There seems to have been no artifacts purposefully interred, nor any other kind of grave furniture visible. All artifacts were preliminarily identified as Late Classic trash, possibly domestic in origin, based on vessel forms, the number & type of polychrome ceramics, & the associated inclusions of chert, obsidian/porphyry (an absence of green obsidian, generally associated with early Postclassic occupation here at the site), and jade (local river/everglade snail - freshwater). As such, all were included in one lot (268-26). Most (~95%) of the artifacts were encountered within the first level of excavation - some have likely since seeped to deeper levels. In addition to the human remains & artifacts (it should be noted, also, that we did find one small rodent bone), I also collected a soil sample from each level - destined for chemical (phosphates & heavy metals) analysis by ICP-MS back in the States.

Unit 25

This burial is strikingly similar to the Unit 26 burial, & perhaps not coincidentally, is located approximately 50-75cm North of the burial in Unit 26. This burial consists of approximately 4-5 individuals, minimally, & was similarly structured as Unit 26 burial - with skulls & long bones separated, & few to no articulations

discernible during excavation.

The burial space is not as formally delimited as in Unit 26. In Unit 25, individuals were placed on top of the cobble fill, with 4 stones lined up on the south & 4 stones lined up on the north - although the placement of these stones may be more related to the cobble fill than to purposeful location. No bars were used in the "cut" construction (& here I use the term "cut" lightly, since this is a really informal burial space), & I observed no capstones, aside from a few unmodelled river cobbles that were removed by excavators from the immediate area of the top of the burial. The dimensions of the burial "area" or "cut" are difficult to identify, but the distribution of human remains covered approximately ~125cm (E-W) x ~100cm (N-S) x ~50cm in depth.

The burial (the contents of which are included in Op. 26B-25 [Unit 25]) was excavated in 4 levels - each consisting of about 10cm in depth. All levels were drawn in detail, but only the first received extensive photography, which included B&W print & color slide photos of the general burial area. For details on excavation procedures, see notes pg. 59, paragraph 2 - the same as those described for the Unit 26 burial.

The preliminary laboratory analysis of the burial assemblage revealed 4-5 adult males, perhaps in their 20's - 30's. Generally, the study observed that the bones were generally well preserved - in fact, better preserved than those of Unit 26. In comparison to the Unit 26 burial, the teeth are in poorer "retained" condition - i.e. more decay, wear, & deterioration, & generally more & worse ^{dental} caries.

Overall, the burial was arranged with skulls to the south, & long bones, etc. to the north - although the two certainly intergrade to some degree. There were no visible articulations

at the time of excavation, nor were any discernible based on hb analysis & map IDs.

The interpretation for this burial follows suit of my comments for the burial in Unit 26 (see pg. 60), although "cist" re-entry is somewhat difficult to imagine in this case because of the lack of a formal burial space. I have a strange suspicion that this burial may have been a sort of "over-flow" space for the Unit 26 burial cist. Individuals once interred in the Unit 26 cist were eventually moved out onto the space to the North - no longer "in need" of the formal ritual setting - perhaps a necessity at an interment ritual. This reminds me, again, of W. Mexican burials where older ancestors are moved aside in shaft tombs, & long bones or crania are sometimes removed from the burial setting to serve in future interment rituals in the secular world above.

Artifacts were collected similar to that described for Unit 26 (see pg. 61, paragraph 2). All looked like a Late Classic trash assemblage. In fact, approximately 50cm - 100cm to the North (down slope), at the base of the stairway, at its NE corner, ~~we~~ ^{we} uncovered a very large midden which includes at least 10,000 sherds, among other trash items. The trash fill to cover these burials could have originated in this midden. As in the case of Unit 26, most artifacts were found within the first 10-15cm of excavation - on top of, & intermixing a bit with the human remains. Also, soil samples (approximately 100g each), were collected from each level for chemical analysis.

6-15-00

Future Plans:

Next year, before beginning to probe the larger mounds, a few items ought to be investigated a bit more:

- 1) test-pits extending 28A & 28B excavations to extend our understanding of the concave & their formal entrance to the plaza.
- 2) the Western half of STR. 138 (the stairway) to see how it articulates with STR. 139
- 3) a few 2m² test units just S of current 26B excavations to look for more architecture associated with the entrance.
- 4) probing the early architecture on the E side of the stairway
- 5) follow the NW wall of STR. 136
- 6) follow the NE corner of STR. 139

Next season, I would like to focus work on STR. 136 & 139, as well as the SW corner of the plaza - a second possible staircase leading to the ballcourt. I would also like to test pit the E side (back) of the pyramidal mound to look for trash middens - possibly representing refuse of plaza-focused activities. I would also like to re-excavate STR. 125 - the platform in the center of the plaza - mainly to take soil & plaster samples. The main focus of excavations, however, will be on uncovering the tops & bases of the large component mounds of the plaza - especially STR. 5, 124 & 128.

6-16-00

SUMMARY of Excavations & Depositional History

Investigations of the Northern Monumental Plaza in the Main Group (site core) of Sitio Cacabaja (aka El Capte) were initiated on 5-10-00, with ^{the} principal aims of reconstructing plaza-focused activities, reconstructing some of the architectural history of the plaza, and obtaining chronological information to situate the findings of the first two objectives in historical context. To these ends, excavations were ^{more extensive} conducted in a series of ^{2m²} test-pits, 40 in total, in the plaza, and in ~~some~~ clearing operations around structures 124, ~~and~~ 138, & 150.

Test pits in the plaza were situated roughly 10m apart from one another, although this precise grid could not always be followed, as I wished to avoid trees, disturbances, & excavations from the previous field season in 1999. Excavations in all test-pits removed the topsoil & terminal debris overlying the plaza floor in one level, & a second level investigated the plaza surface construction & its matrix of cobbles, pebbles, & plaster. Four units were selected to receive more in-depth investigation in each unit, 3 additional levels were excavated, down to sterile soil, that is, soil devoid of any noticeable cultural inclusions. From these excavations, we can describe the depositional history of the plaza.

Sterile soil, investigated down to 100cm below modern ground surface, intergrades somewhat with a layer of trash, consisting mainly of ceramic sherds (although quantities of obsidian and chert were also recovered ^{along} with pieces of bajorque), that extends upward from about 50 - 30cm below modern ground surface. This trash layer lies immediately underneath the main components of the plaza floor, & was most likely ~~was~~ purposefully used as a filling agent to level out the plaza area, since the ^{thickness of} trash layer varies somewhat across the

plaza area & the four deeper test pits indicate that the natural topography of the area slopes from west to east, at about 3-5 degrees. The plaza floor itself is composed of 3 distinct components - lowest down is a cobble (ballast) substrate, comprised of a layer (about 10-15cm thick) of unmodified river sabbler. Smaller pebbles ~~were~~ were mixed with gravel & hard down in between & covering the cobbles, to form another layer of about 5cm thick. This level layer was then topped off with crushed white "plaster" (perhaps limestone, gypsum, or some special recipe involving one or both rocks). In some areas, the plaster is well integrated & forms a solid, polished sheet of plaster surfacing; in other areas, the rocks seem to have been "sprinkled about" - giving the appearance of a well-made plaster floor. Alternatively, a plaster covering could have capped the entire plaza in antiquity, but is now incredibly eroded & broken up. The plaza surface was generally encountered at approximately 10cm below modern ground surface. Immediately on top of the floor, the 10cm layer contains a rich topsoil intermixed with terminal debris - most of which was encountered immediately above the floor, perhaps suggesting terminal debris versus post-occupational refuse. The artifacts encountered primarily consisted of plainware ceramics, ~~mostly~~ (mainly bowls & jars), although polychrome plates, ground stone objects, & some animal bones were recovered from the southeast corner of the plaza, perhaps ~~possibly~~ evidence for food preparation & consumption. Artifact densities were light elsewhere. Of particular note, however, were large quantities of beryllique, encountered in test units located in front of the pyramidal mounds STRS. 126, 127, 135, & 136. ^{Some} ~~Pieces~~ ~~these~~ are quite large and have rounded edges with a cross-hatch style arrangement of reeds & sticks, ~~possibly~~ suggesting that these pieces once covered the edges of steps or terraces on the pyramidal structures.

Excavations of STR. 124, located a few meters south of STR. 125 in the center of the plaza, resulted in the ~~uncovering~~ uncovering of a small cobble structure with a single interior room. Oriented roughly 30° W of N (similar to STR. 125), the building is composed of unmodified river cobbles ~~and~~ (presently, 1 course is preserved, for a height of 33 cm), & rests on a dense, polished plaster surface, approximately 10-15 cm thick ~~underneath~~ the main plaza surface runs underneath). The structure is approximately 4 m (N-S) x 3 m (E-W), and all architectural segments appear bonded at their ends, indicating one construction phase & an absence of detectable modifications/removals. The structure was encountered at about 10 cm below modern ground surface, and was moderately covered with ceramic sherd - some of which included modeled censur fragments. Of particular interest, a cache of 2 mature *Spondylus* shells was encountered at the base of a probable interior dividing wall. The shells were lined up N to S, & rested on the interior-plaster floor surface. No other artifacts were found in association with them. Immediately to the North, the plaster floor seems to have been burned in antiquity, & ^{such} events may have been associated with the placement of this cache.

Two slit trenches were excavated at the NW & SE corners of the plaza to determine where the plaza ended, & whether or not they were formally delimited edges. Each trench consisted of 6 2m² units oriented E-W (grid). Excavations in the SE corner revealed a purely cobble stone deposit; excavations ceased at 50 cm below modern ground surface for lack of time. Similar to the rest of the plaza, the surface ^{encountered} here ~~was~~ at about 10 cm bgs, was a plastered floor (poorly preserved), resting on a cobble substrate. The underlying fill was composed exclusively of unmodified river cobbles, & extended to the posterior edge (E side) of structure 126, where the plaza formally ends. The cobble fill is faced on its eastern edge by a cobble wall, which runs N-S & generally follows the backside ~~of~~ line of

STR. 126. The height of this construction facing is approximately 50cm, & creates a very formal edge to the plaza. Without a stairway or other way to ascend it would not be a comfortable feat to travel into the plaza from this direction. In contrast, the slit trench in the NW corner of the plaza revealed an informal end to the plaza - no architecture belimits this corner. Rather, the plastered plaza surface feathers out at the anterior edge (Front, or East) of Structure 130, and is completely ~~absent~~ ^{absent} beginning at the Westernmost edge of STR. 139. Here, the plaza surface is constructed in the same fashion as the rest of the plaza, maintaining a cobble substrate with a pebbles & gravel layer. Immediately below this layer is a thick (~30cm) deposit of trash, which contained ~~at least two~~ ^{at least two} nearly complete Ultra polychrome ~~vases~~ ^{vases}, along with a ~~rich~~ ^{rich} assortment of domestic trash.

An extensive clearing operation was conducted on & around STR. 138 (and, to a lesser degree, STR. 150), in an attempt to understand the large & formal entryway into the plaza from the wide causeway that approaches the site from the North. To this end, 48 2m² units, along with 3 2x1m units, were excavated - most no more than 20-30 cm below modern ground surface. The results of this work uncovered a complex array of architecture, most of which is Late Classic in date. The primary component is STR 138, a ~12m long (E-W) x ~8m wide (N-S) x ~2m high staircase composed of five main steps - all constructed of unmodified river cobble (although the faces of the basal step appear to be pecked flat). The structure is oriented 10° E of N and lines up perfectly with the partially plastered causeway that approaches from the North. Overall, the stairway is not well preserved, although the ancient use of chunky stones ^{among} the component stones has helped at least the upper & lower steps to retain their original shape, all else is slumped. Of special note, at the base of the steps at the Northeast corner, a sizeable midden was uncovered of some 10,000 sherds, including


Fragments of a modeled figural censer. A possible earlier version of the staircase was also unearthed on the eastern side of the steps in a cobble fill of unknown function. Two segments of the earlier stairway were ~~found~~ located - the basal 3 steps & the top ~~two~~² steps - both segments of which are constructed of flat, white limestone layers. Only about 2 m^(E-W) of each were investigated. A third segment, a wall (22 cm high, 160 cm long (SW-NE), oriented 30° W of N), was also uncovered, & discovered to pre-date the final phase STR. 138. Its relationship to the staircase is unknown, & rather, is thought to be an earlier version of a wall segment associated with the NW corner of STR. 136.

At the top of the latest phase stairway (STR. 136) are several architectural elements. First, we encountered the SE corner of STR. 139 - 29 cm preserved height, 2 courses high, built of shaped river cobbles. It is possible to discern the orientation at present, but if the profile is representative of the entire wall, then we could place the building at about 10° E of N. Approximately 5 m to the E, a long wall [8 m (N-S) x 1 m (E-W)] runs along the central N-S axis of the stairway, essentially dividing it in two halves. At present, the wall is preserved at 1 course of unmodified river rubble (20 cm high), & may have not been any higher, as it seems that it was likely plastered over.

This "wall" then, was likely ~~a~~ foundation or footing for a perishable wall - or, alternatively, was a formal, low divider that supported no wall at all. A little over 4m to the East, we encountered another foundation or footing on the eastern edge of STR. 138. Of irregular shape & varying width, this cobble footing, also about 8m long (N-S), follows the eastern edge of the stairway & seems to connect with a wall segment projecting out (to the NW) from STR. 136 - a component pyramidal mound of the plaza. Like the western wall this cobble paving also seems to have been plastered over at some point in antiquity, suggesting that its present height of ~15cm (1 course of unmodified river cobbles) was not much greater, originally. Also like the western wall, the eastern paving rests on top of the original plaster floor of the plaza.

In between these two cobble features is a small platform built of unmodified river cobbles - 140cm (N-S) x 216cm (E-W) x 15cm high, oriented ~20° E of N. As the platform rests very close to the southern extent of our excavations, it is impossible, at present, to say whether or not it extends to the South, or articulates with other architectural elements in that direction. Suffice it to say, it rests on top of the plaza surface & seems to have been constructed at the same time as the cobble paved features to its east & west.

Finally, we uncovered a wall segment that is most likely associated with STR. 136, situated to the southeast of our excavations. The wall, 3-5 courses high (62cm tall) & built of unmodified river cobbles, is oriented 20° E of N - only 270cm (N-S) was uncovered this field season. The wall is about 50cm wide & seems to be built of a core-veneer masonry style - with large cobbles on the outside as facings & smaller cobbles & pebbles as the core fill of the wall. The wall rests on top of the plaza surface, but also seems to have been given a coating of plaster on its basal surface that effectively made it seem as though the plaza surface lips up to the wall - indeed it does not - it is a separate plastering episode, suggesting that the wall may have been a later edition. The wall segments end abruptly on the north with a circular arrangement of stones, which define an interior circle of raised, polished plaster, 10cm thick - also resting on the original plaza surface. The interior diameter is 76cm (E-W) x 55cm (N-S), & in my opinion, may have been a "pothole" - or at least a footing for a post. The component river cobbles for this feature were treated like the wall segment with an additional plaster patch to blend it with the plaza floor, suggesting that both the wall & the circular feature were contemporaneously built.

Our final excavations of the season were concerned with the causeway to the north - mainly in defining its width, & how it interrelates with the Stairway (STR. 138). To this end, two slit trenches were excavated - one, oriented N-S, consisted of 10 2m (N-S) x 1m (E-W) units; the other, oriented E-W, consisted of 10 2m (E-W) x 1m (N-S) units. The former began at the NE corner of excavation of the Stairway, & the latter began at the midpoint, extending westward, of the first trench. It was found that the causeway is constructed of small- to moderately sized river cobbles, & measures 42m in width (E-W). As previously noted, it lines up with the stairway (STR. 138) - the stairway, in effect, being a vertical continuation of the causeway. I found no evidence that the causeway was plastered, although it must be noted that it was encountered at about 8-10cm below modern ground surface & any plastering could have, indeed, would have since eroded away. Near the stairway (within 2m of it), I did find evidence of plastering. Although poorly defined this season, I also located two architectural segments extending Eastward from the causeway. These appear to be steps or terraces following the natural terrain, & providing a less formal entry/exit to the patio.  Fashioned of unmodified river cobbles, these L-shaped "tongues" are no more than 10-15 cm high, & will be investigated during the next field season.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE NORTHERN MONUMENTAL PLAZA,
SITIO EL COYOTE, NW HONDURAS: PRELIMINARY INFORME, 2000 FIELD SEASON

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Report of Excavations for the Proyecto Valle de Cacaúlapa,
2000 Field Season

Pueblo Nuevo/Petoa, Santa Barbara, Honduras
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Investigations of the **Northern Monumental Plaza** in the **Monumental Core** of **Sitio El Coyote** were initiated on May 10, 2000, with the principal aims of (1) reconstructing some of the plaza-focused activities, (2) understanding the architectural history of the plaza, and (3) obtaining chronological information (ceramics, stratigraphic data) to situate the findings of the first two objectives in historical context. Some of the research questions that guided this research are, *Were activities in the plaza engaged by multiple social segments of the polity? Or were activities carried out by a limited number of individuals with special status? Was architectural growth sudden, suggesting the rapid rise of a local enterprising elite or the foreign intrusion of another? Or was growth accretionary, suggesting that social power cemented slowly?*

The plaza is a large, open space, measuring 107 m north-south by 51 m east-west, and is delimited on all sides by monumental buildings. Work this season involved an aggressive test-pitting program that covered nearly the entire space of the plaza, combined with broad, horizontal clearing operations of several buildings.

Operation 24A-K

A total of forty 2 m² test-pits were situated in the plaza approximately 10 m apart from one another in a staggered, random alignment, although their precise placement on the sample grid could not always be situated perfectly, as it was necessary to avoid concentrations of dense vegetation and trees, as well as disturbances affected by previous excavations from the 1999 field season. Excavations in all test-pits removed 0.1 m of topsoil and terminal debris overlying the plaza surface in one lot (there were no visible distinctions between the two strata), which yielded low-to-moderate amounts of ceramics and lithics. A second lot, approximately 0.2 m thick, removed the constituents of the plaza floor, mainly plaster fragments (perhaps limestone or gypsum) along with a substrate matrix composed of cobbles, pebbles, and gravel. Four test-pits, located near the four corners of the plaza, received further attention. For each, three additional lots were excavated: the first removed a 0.2-0.4 m thick trash-filled layer immediately underlying the floor, and the following two lots each removed roughly 0.2 m of culturally "sterile" soil (a dark brown, soft, compact sandy silt). The thickness of the trash layer varied somewhat as a function of the underlying topography, suggesting that the midden materials likely served to level out the plaza area, which naturally declines from west to east at a slope of roughly 2-3°. The overlying cobble layer provided a firm foundation for the plaza floor, and additions of pebbles and gravel created a generally level surface. The white plaster that tops the plaza surface was found in different states of preservation: floor segments near the buildings that flank the plaza were well preserved, while areas in the center of the plaza were badly eroded. This could suggest that surfaces nearer to architecture were more carefully constructed, perhaps because they were the loci of heavier foot traffic. Without exception, only one primary surfacing of the plaza was discernible in the excavation profiles. Due to generally poor preservation of the plaza surface, additional plaster coating and/or re-surfacing of the floor, which might have taken place in antiquity, was not visible.

From each test-pit, 2 soil samples were taken—one from approximately 0.02 m above the plaza surface and one from the cobble matrix immediately below the floor. These samples will be transported back to the United States for chemical analysis. More specifically, the soils will be analyzed for concentrations of phosphates and heavy metals (e.g., Fe, Mn, Pb, Cr, Al), which may have been generated through certain repeated activities in the plaza, such as feasting, for example. Along with these soils, samples were also taken from the plaza surface in between excavation units. Overall, a total of 151 samples were taken from the plaza area.

Of particular interest, a number of artifacts were recovered from the southeastern portion of the plaza surface that indicate food production and consumption on a significant scale. These items include fragments of burnt comals, large plainware bowls and jars, red-painted plates, groundstone implements, and faunal remains, as well as a variety of obsidian and chert flakes and blades. While it is uncertain to what degree these remains reflect Late Classic assemblages (versus Early Postclassic ones), it is certain that they are residues of activities that occurred in the plaza area, and do not represent *ad hoc* casual scatterings of domestic debris from other parts of the site.

Operation 24L

A more extensive clearing operation was focused on Structure 124, a small building constructed of unmodified river cobbles, unearthed 0.1-0.2 m below modern ground surface. This structure is located in the approximate center of the plaza, roughly 8 m to the south of Structure 125 (investigated in 1999), and rests on top of the plastered plaza surface. Measuring 5.6 m north-south by 4.2 m east-west (aligned roughly 330°), Structure 124 seems to have undergone a single construction episode, as all architectural segments are clearly bonded at their ends, presenting no solid evidence for renovation. Probable terraces on the south and west sides give rise to an enclosed chamber of 3 m north-south by 2 m east-west. The interior floor consists of an area of raised plaster, 0.15 m thick, that is well smoothed and heavily polished. A possible interior wall cuts an east-west path in the central portion of the room, although its current condition is so poorly preserved that it is difficult to be certain. Access to the room was probably gained from the east side of the structure, where a 0.48 m break in the wall line provides a pathway into the chamber.

Over 2,500 ceramic sherds were found littering the interior room and its immediate environs, including fragments of several different modeled censers. Significantly, two mature *Spondylus* shells were found cached on the interior side of the eastern wall at its midpoint, suggesting that the building maintained important status at least until the end of its use. Additionally, a nearby patch of floor plaster, 0.1-0.2 m to the north, was slightly burned and stained with soot, perhaps the result of activities associated with the caching of the shells.

Operations 25A and 26A

The investigations of the plaza also included two slit trenches, which were placed on the southeastern and northwestern margins of the plaza. Each trench, aligned on an east-west axis, consisted of six 2 m² excavation units, for a total length of 12 m for each trench. Each unit was excavated in the same fashion as in the test-pitting operations, with the goals of locating the plaza surface and following it to its eastern and western limits. On the southeastern side of the plaza, the trench was placed between Structure 121 (to the south) and Structure 126 (to the north). Here, the plaza surface is approximately 0.12 m below modern ground surface, and formally ends as it approaches the edge of a 0.48 m high cobble-faced terrace, which may have been plastered in a fashion similar to the plaza surface itself. The terrace runs north-south (at 10° Azimuth) and lines up with the eastern edge of Structure 126. In contrast, excavations in the northwest trench, situated between Structure 130 (to the south) and Structure 139 (to the north), revealed that the plaza surface (at 0.1 m below modern ground surface) ends informally over the span of several meters as the plaster fragments that define the plaza surface gradually become less abundant until they disappear altogether at the north-south line of the western edge of Structure 139.

Operation 26B

In addition to excavations in the plaza, Structure 138 in the plaza's northeastern corner was investigated. An excavation grid composed of forty-eight 2 m² units and three 2 m by 1 m units was

superimposed over the surface-visible architecture and its surroundings to investigate the formal route by which the plaza was accessed in antiquity. The results of this work revealed a complex array of cobble stone architecture, most of which is presumably Late Classic in date. The primary component is Structure 138-1st (oriented 10°), a 12 m wide (east-west) 8 m long (north-south) staircase that ascends to a height of approximately 2.1 m above the causeway surface. The structure is composed of 5 main steps built of unmodified river cobbles, although the faces of the basal course of stones appear to have been pecked flat. Only the eastern portion of the building was investigated during this season. Excavations ceased westward along the central north-south axis of the structure, where a low, cobble foundation, or wall (1 course of stones high), was uncovered at the top (south) of the staircase. The wall is 8.1 m long (north-south) and 1.1 m wide (east-west), and has a preserved height of 0.2 m. The wall, which lies on top of the plaza surface, is constructed of unmodified river cobbles and is speckled with white plaster fragments, suggesting that it was once covered with plaster at its current height. Approximately 4 m to the east of this feature, and running parallel with the eastern edge of the staircase, a second cobble foundation was unearthed. Although also 8.1 m long (north-south), this foundation has a widely varying width (east-west), between 0.75 m and 2 m. Further, it is covered with white plaster fragments, suggesting that it, too, was plastered over in antiquity. Between these two cobble foundations at their northern extremes, a small cobble platform (oriented 20°) was unearthed, measuring 2.16 m long (east-west) by 1.4 m wide (north-south). The platform's single course of cobbles has a preserved height of roughly 0.15 m, and also appears to have had a coat of plaster on its surface.

The eastern stone foundation meanders southward toward a 2.7 m long (north-south) cobble wall segment, oriented 20°, associated with Structure 136. The wall, which has a preserved height of 0.62 m, currently maintains 3-5 courses of stone and is 0.52 m thick (east-west). Like the other architectural elements described thus far, this wall also sits on top of the plaza surface. Unlike nearby architecture, however, the basal course of stones received an extra coating of plaster, which gives the appearance of the plaza surface lipping up to the wall. At the wall's northern terminus, a circular arrangement of eight cobble stones marks what may have been a post support. The stones delimit a plaster surface, raised 0.15 m off the plaza floor, creating an interior diameter of approximately 0.55 m. If similar features are revealed on the south and east corners of Structure 136, then it may be possible to surmise that they served to support posts and a ramada-like roof over the building, similar to those associated with Early Classic earthen structures recently excavated at Copán.

At the base of the northeastern corner of Structure 138, a sizeable midden was uncovered, which yielded more than 10,000 ceramics, including numerous polychrome vessel sherds and fragments of a large, modeled figural censer. The midden could represent special deposits of ritual paraphernalia associated with activities performed in the plaza or at its entrance on the staircase.

Approximately 2 m north of the midden on the eastern side of Structure 138, a massive burial comprised of at least 12 individuals was uncovered, which may, in fact, represent two, separate inhumations. The first group of individuals (MNI=7) was interred in a formal cist (1.5 m north-south by 1.25 m east-west, and 0.5 m deep) constructed of, and covered with, white limestone *lajas*. The second group (MNI=5) was buried informally on top of a layer of cobble fill, roughly 0.4 m to the north of the cist. Both burial spaces overlie an earlier version of the staircase (discussed below in more detail). All individuals appear to be males in their 20s or 30s, save for two. One individual has been identified as a female, based on what appears to be a very wide angle of the sciatic notch on the left innominate, and one as a sub-adult, based on the presence of an unfused epiphysis of a

radius. Overall, individual bones were not found articulated in their correct anatomical positions, but instead, were heaped together in large piles with the crania placed separately on the margins of the cist's interior. However, three concentrations of bones, found near the floor of the cist, maintained some articulations: a hand (carpals, metacarpals, phalanges), a torso (ribs, thoracic vertebrae, clavicle), and a head-and-neck (cranium, cervical vertebrae, atlas). These patterns could indicate either post-mortem partial disarticulation of individuals, or multiple cist re-entry episodes in a relatively short span of time.

Evidence for an earlier version of the staircase (Structure 138-2nd) consists of two separate parts, the basal 3 steps and the top 2 steps (only a 2 m east-west segment of each was investigated), both of which were uncovered approximately 0.15 m below the latest phase of the building on the east side of Structure 138-1st. Both constructions (oriented 10°) are made of flat limestone *lajas* and are distinguished from the later phase architecture by the absence of chinking stones. A lack of time prevented further investigation of these features, as well as of a 0.26 m long (northeast-southwest) wall segment (oriented 330°), unearthened roughly 2 m south of the top steps of Structure 138-2nd.

Operation 28A, B

Investigations to the south of Structure 138 were concerned with delimiting the width of the causeway and understanding how it articulates with the staircase. Excavations were carried out in two trenches, each made up of ten 2 m by 1 m units that were penetrated to a depth of 0.1 m. One trench was oriented along a north-south axis, following the eastern profile wall of the Structure 138 excavations. The second trench was situated along an east-west axis and cut the causeway at a right angle. The excavations found that the causeway is approximately 12 m wide (east-west) and that it lines up with the bounds of the staircase to the south. While clearings closer to the staircase determined that the causeway was plastered in that area, excavations of the causeway at this distance found no evidence for a plaster surface. Two cobble-faced terraces (each roughly 0.2 m high), 5.2 m apart, protrude from the eastern side of the causeway and follow the naturally sloping topography, which declines from south to north. These architectural steps provide an access route to the plaza that appears less formal than the causeway.

Overall, 239 lots were defined and a total of 286.65 m³ of soil was excavated. The total number of ceramic sherds collected from these operations is 42,391. Total numbers of artifacts from other major artifact classes include the following: 2,526 pieces of *bajareque*, 1,979 pieces of obsidian, 542 pieces of chert, and 12 groundstone fragments. Analyses of these materials will take place during next year's field season. In addition, a total of 264 soil samples were taken during the investigations of the plaza this year, and also will be analyzed in 2001.