

ALL THE KING'S MEN?

POLITICAL CHANGE, COURTLY ELITES, AND
URBAN LANDSCAPE IN CLASSIC MAYA SOCIETY



Alexandre Tokovinine

atokovinine@ua.edu

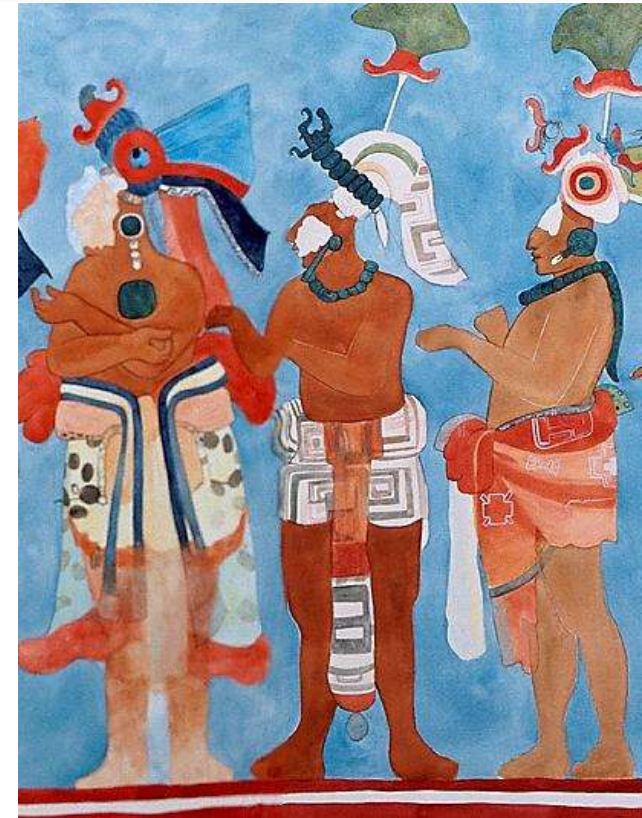
Department of Anthropology,
The University of Alabama

POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF ARCHAIC AND TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES:
CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

Russian State University for the Humanities, November 29 – December 1, 2017

This presentation

- The royal court model and the ancient Maya cities
- The place of sub-royal households in a courtly urban landscape
- The historical context of Holmul and La Sufricaya
- Sub-royal elite residences at La Sufricaya (some preliminary data)



Bonampak Str. 1
murals

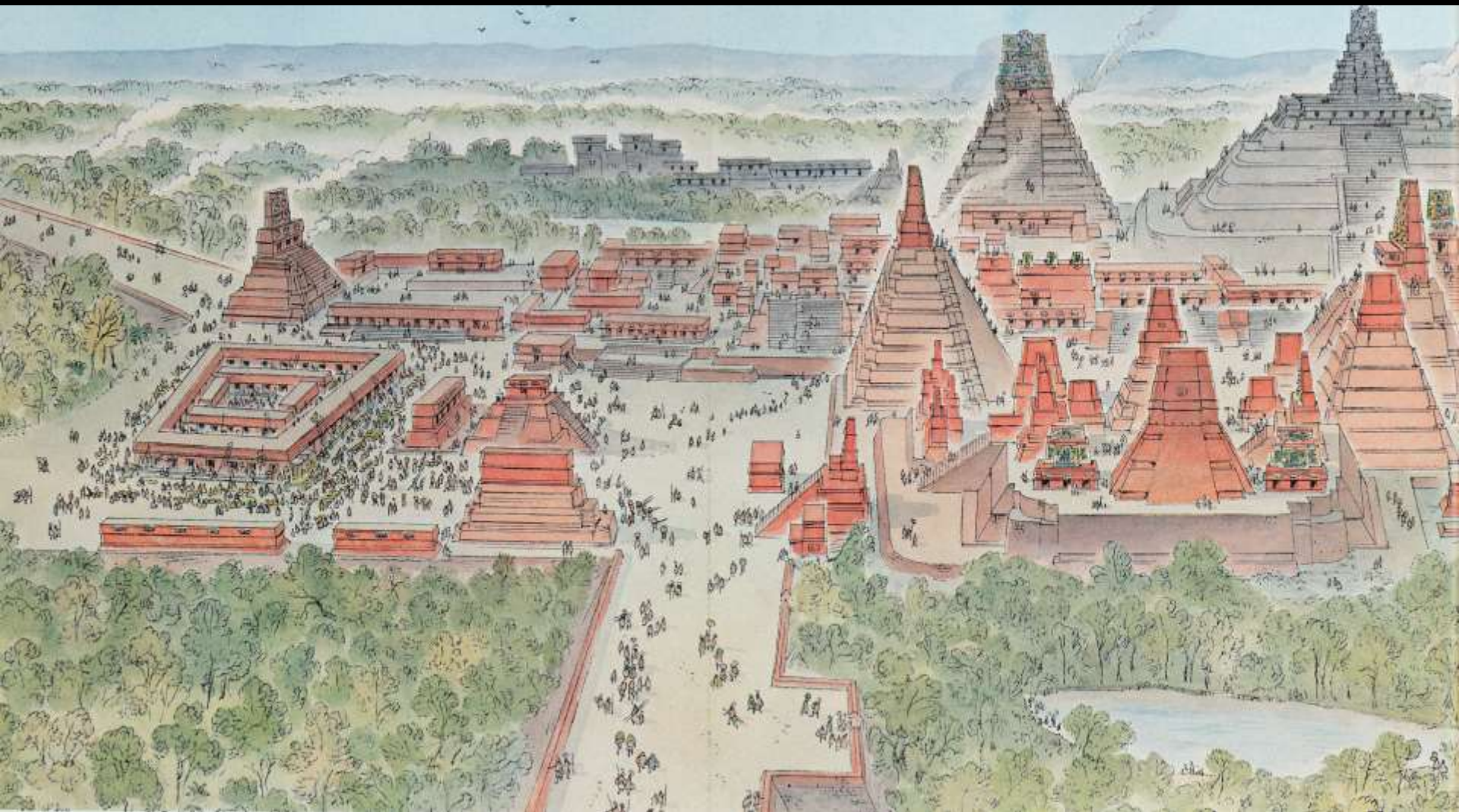
What is a court?

- Place + people + practices
- Centered on the ruler
- Royal household



Bonampak mural

Just a house, only bigger...



View of the center of Tikal

Places of tension and paradox

- Information flow vs. privilege
- Family-like and yet mostly of people with no blood ties to each other
- Hoarding treasure and giving it away as gifts
- Opportunity and danger



Household of a king

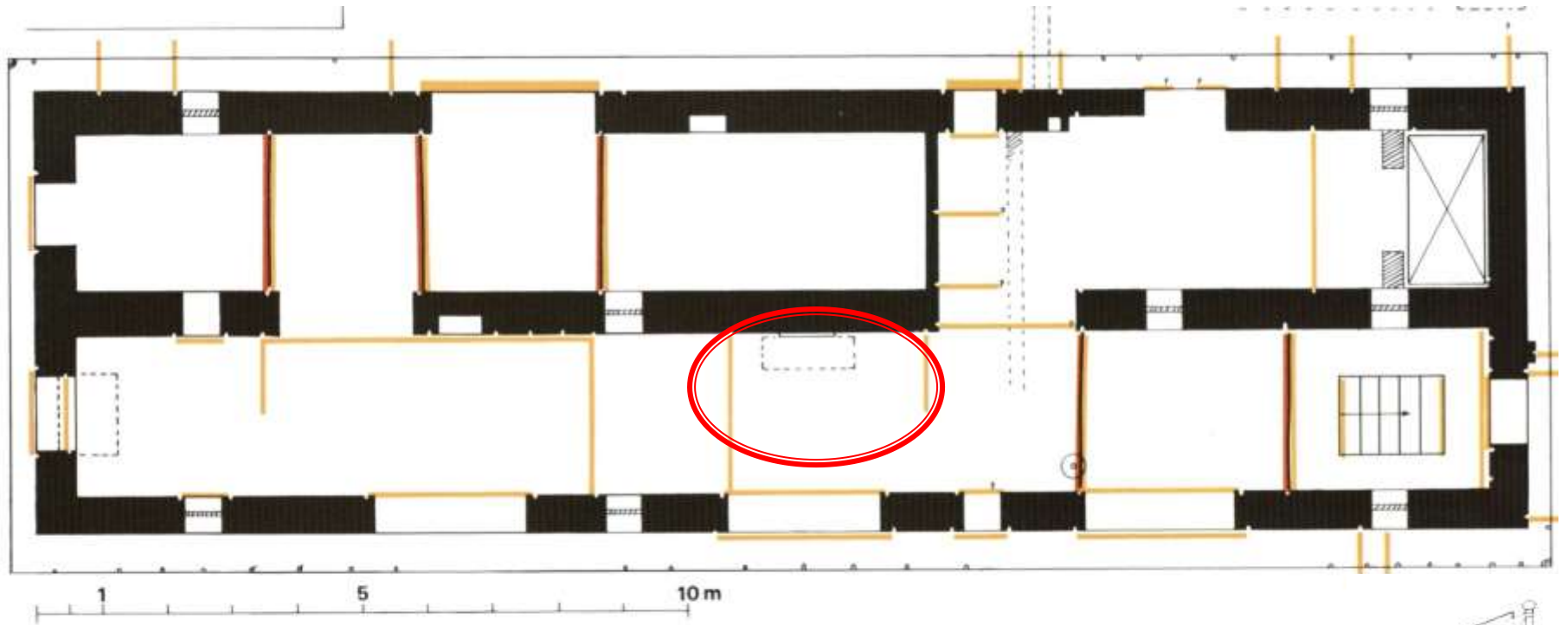


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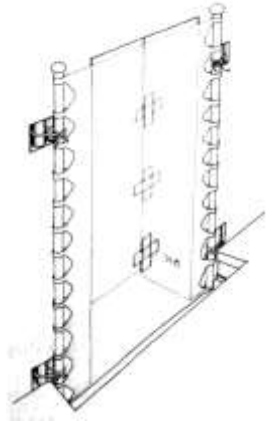
Household of a district tax collector



Throne hall

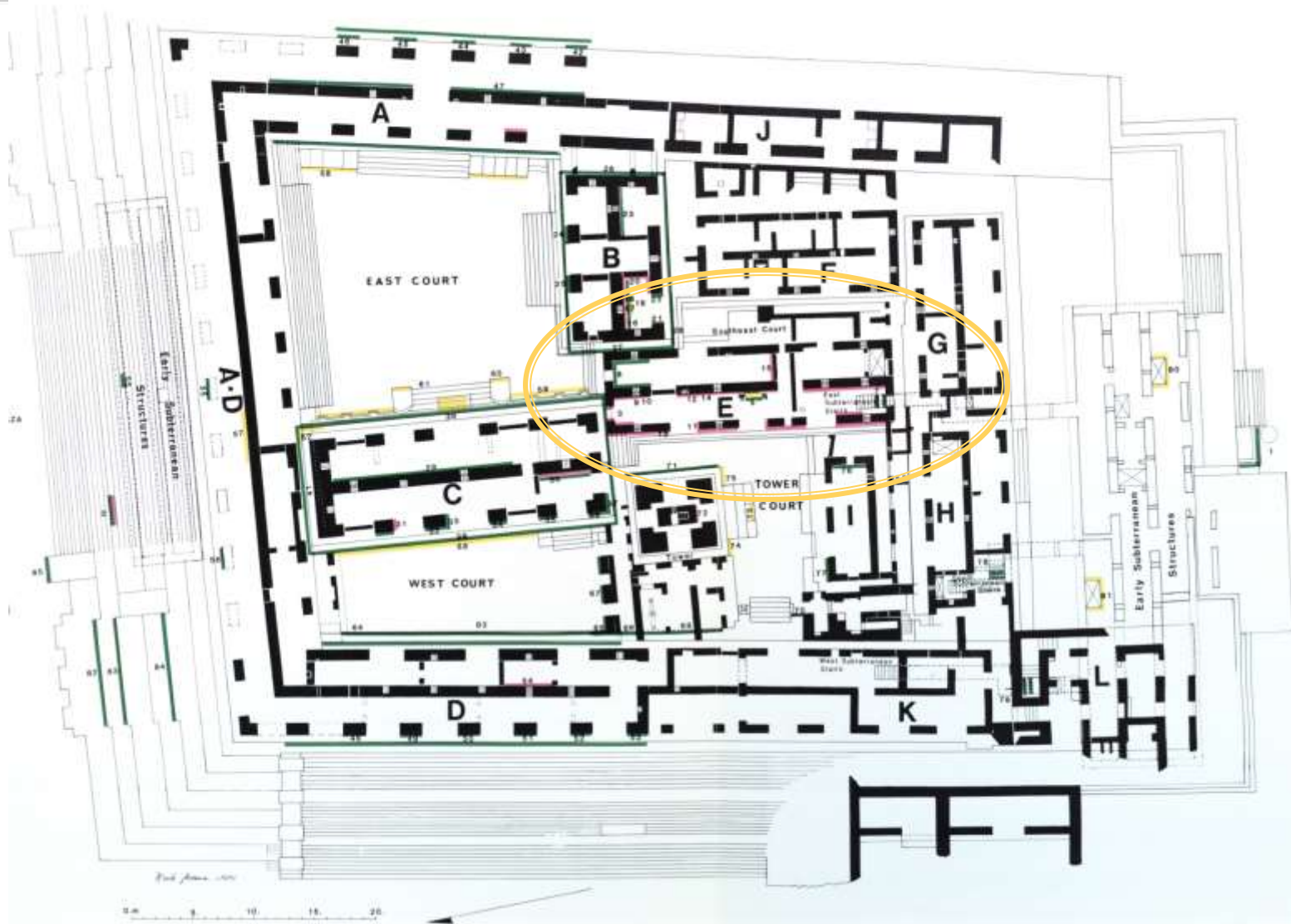


House E, Palenque



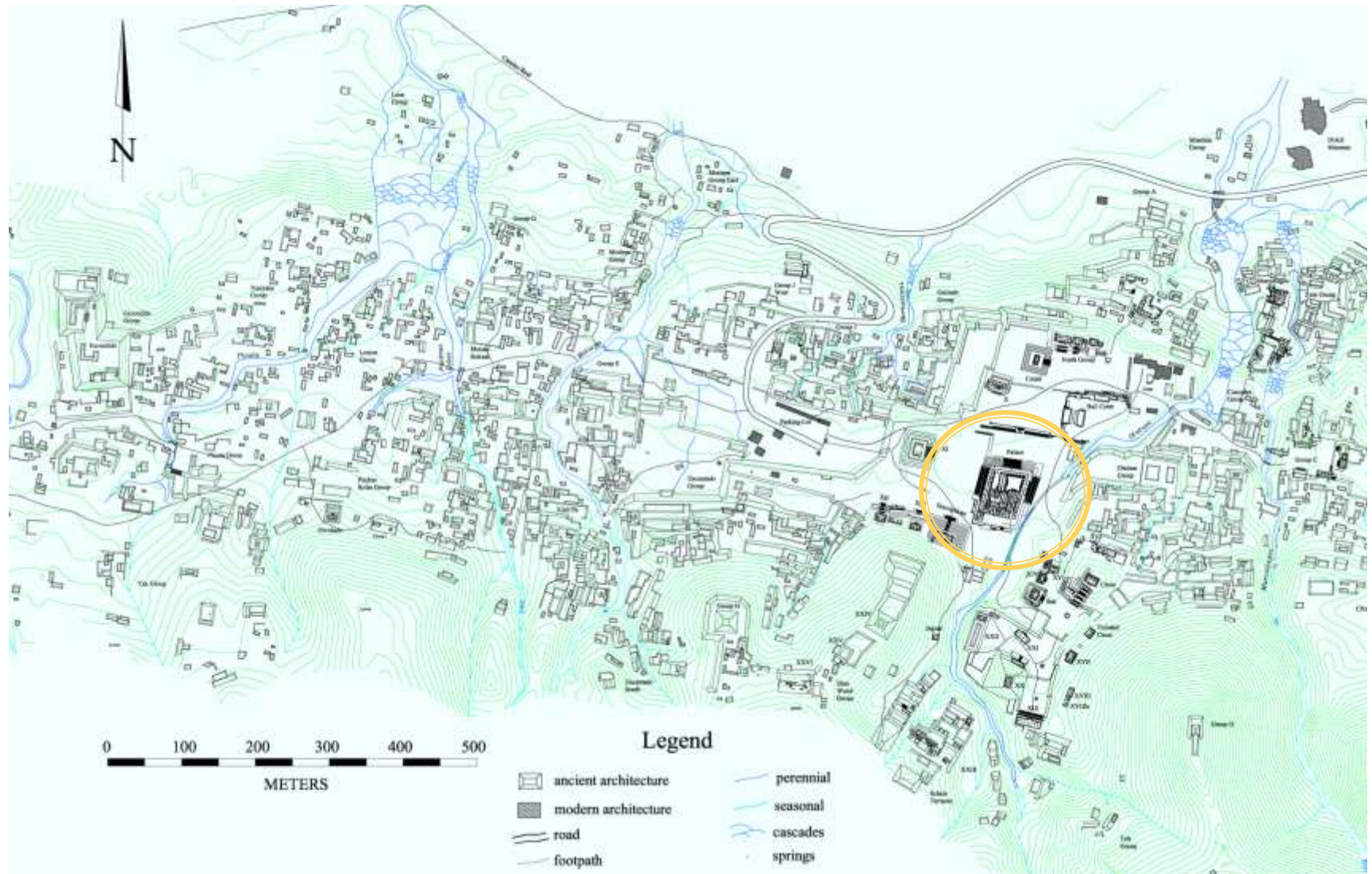
Throne hall > palace

Public spaces
north of the
palace...

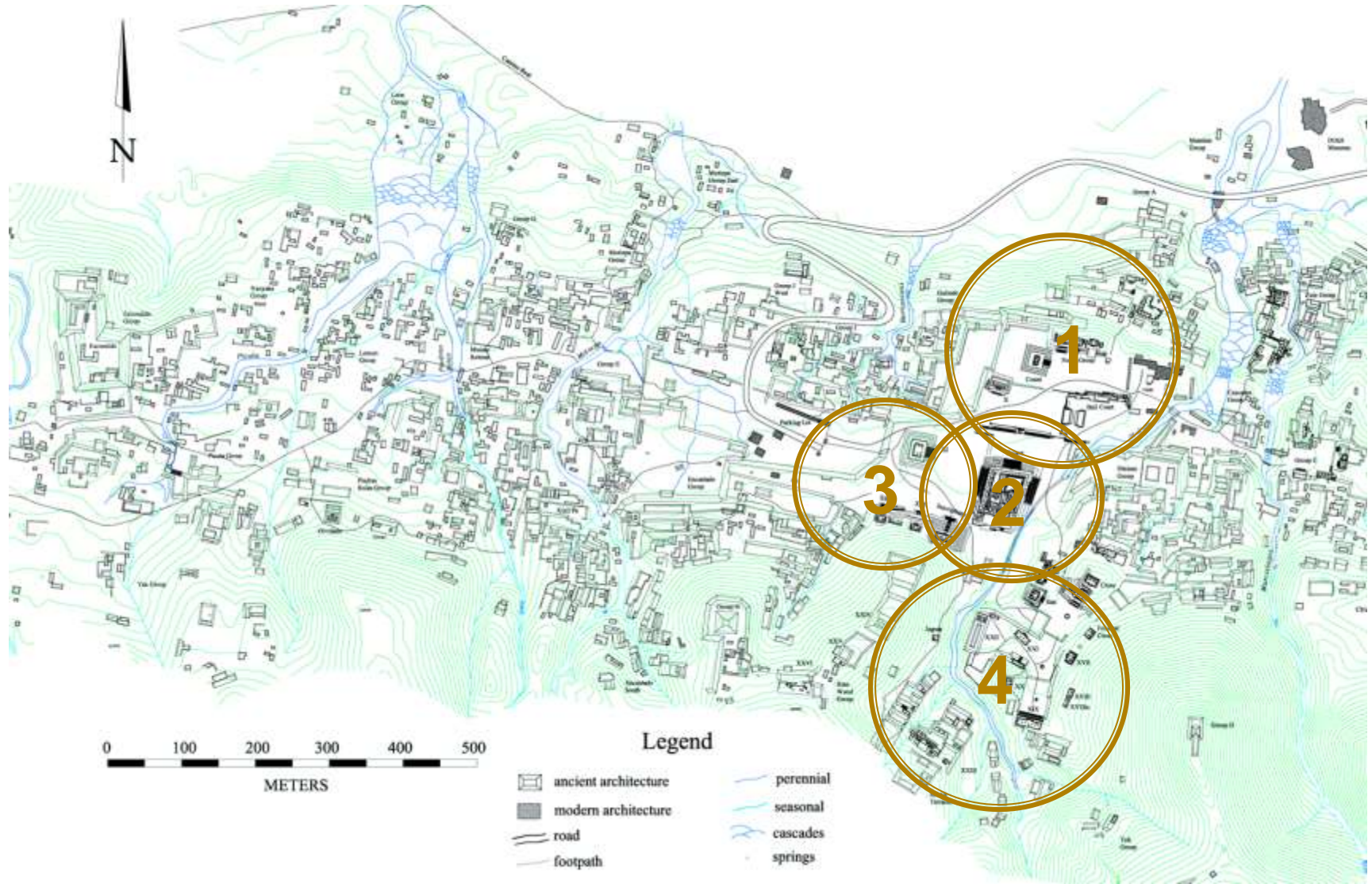


Royal palace,
Palenque

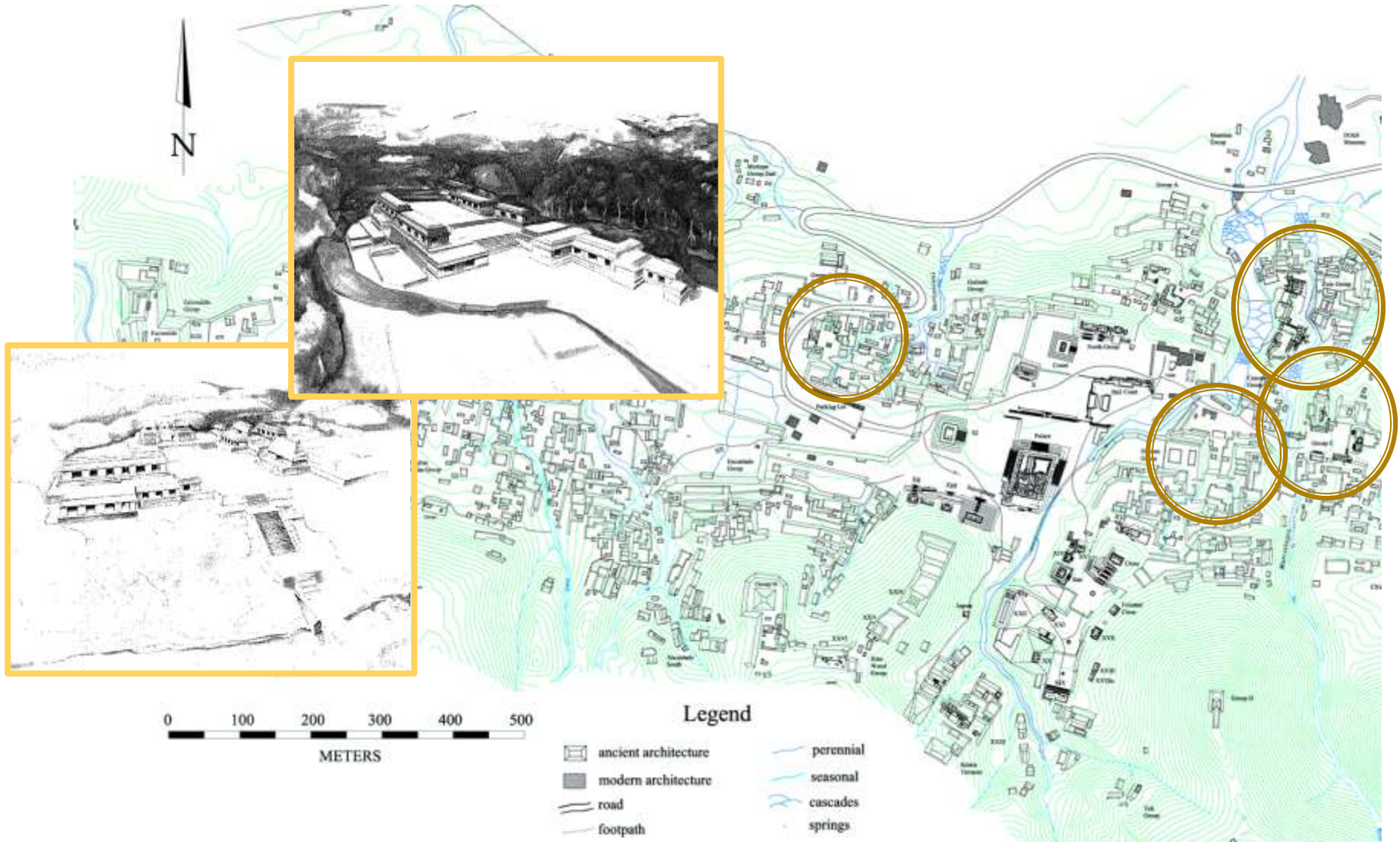
Throne hall > palace > city



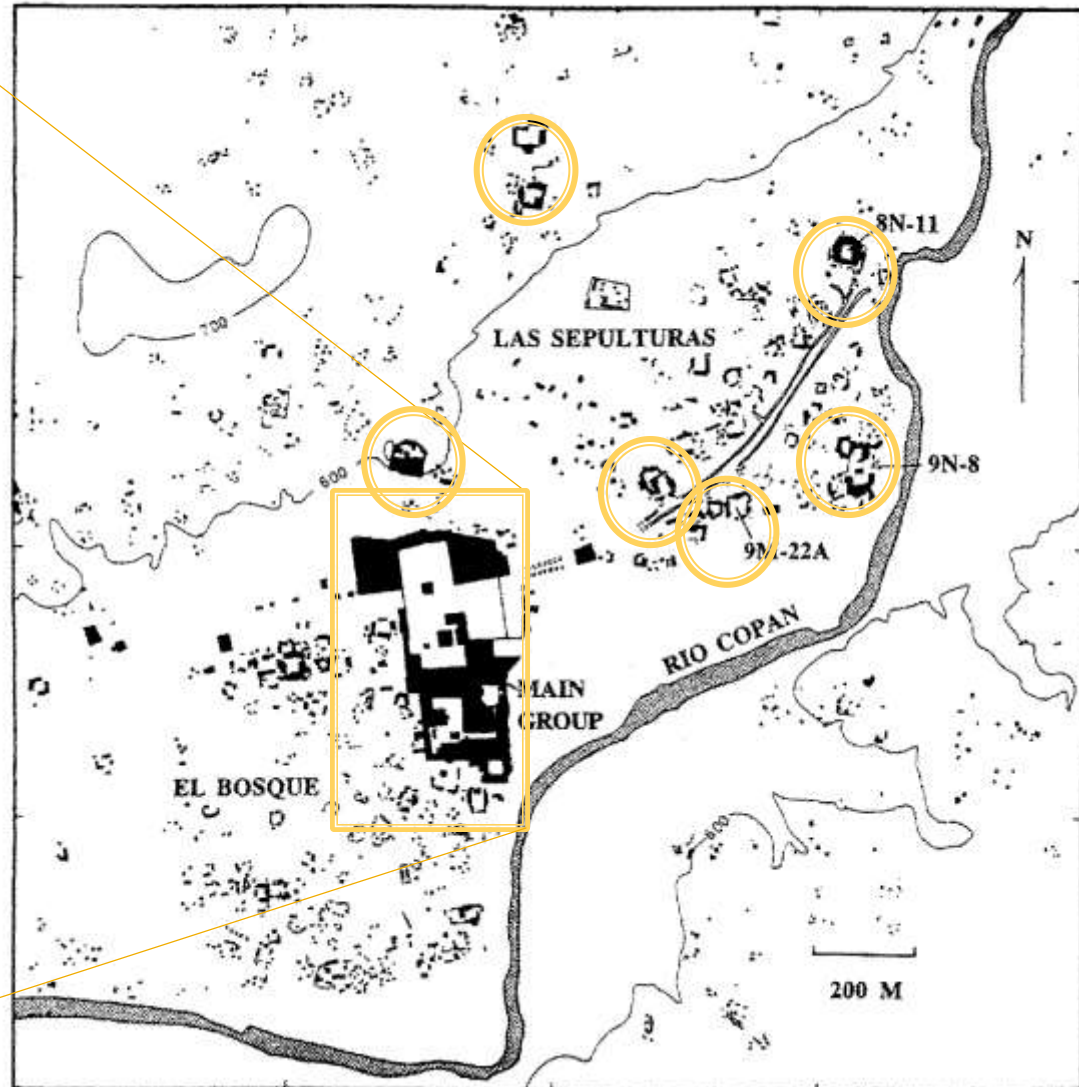
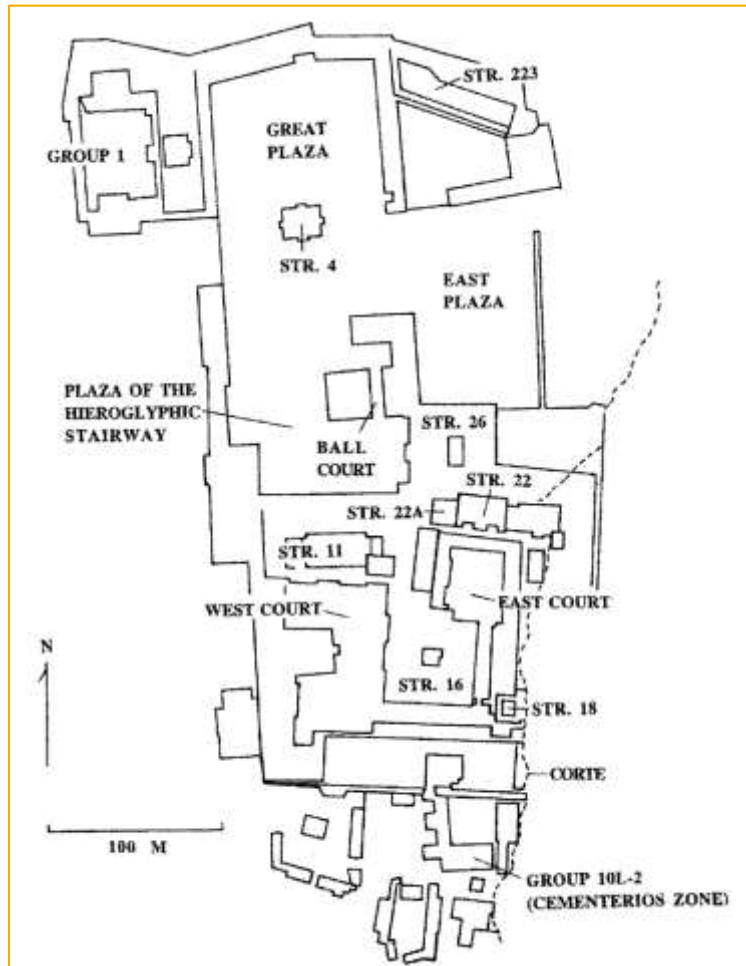
Palenque: 1) public spaces; 2) palace; 3) ancestral tombs; 4) temples of the gods



Palenque: 5) residences of courtiers



Throne hall > palace > city



Copan

Replication

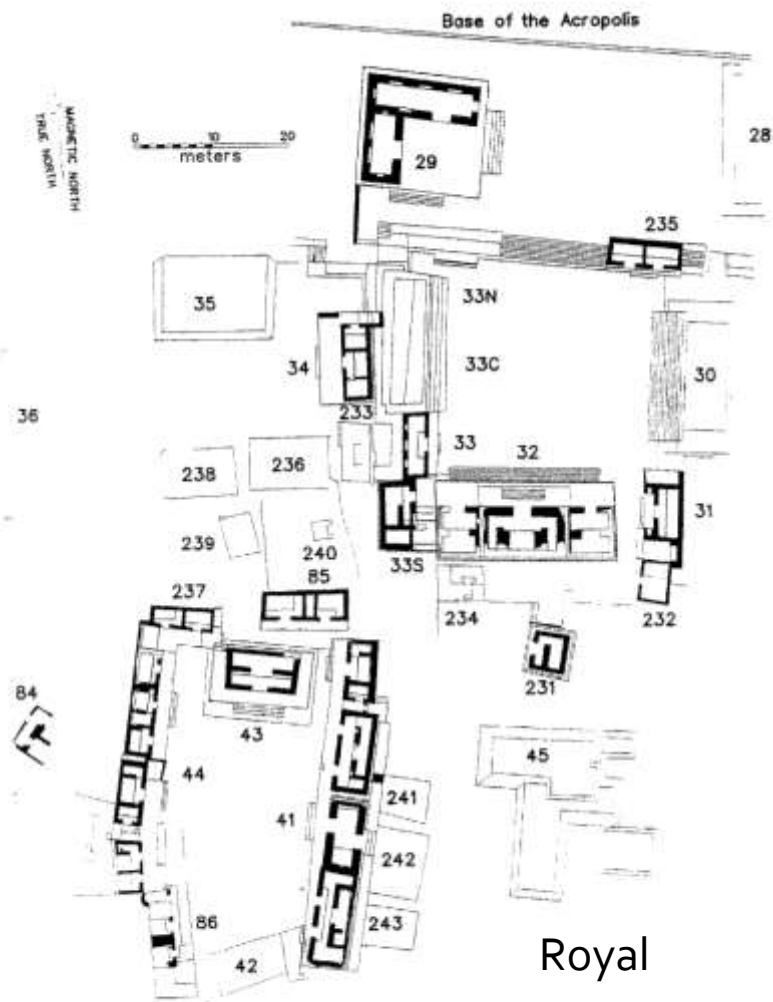


FIGURE 5.6 Group 10L-2, Copan; royal compound attached to southern edge of Acropolis. Courtesy of E. Wyllys Andrews V.

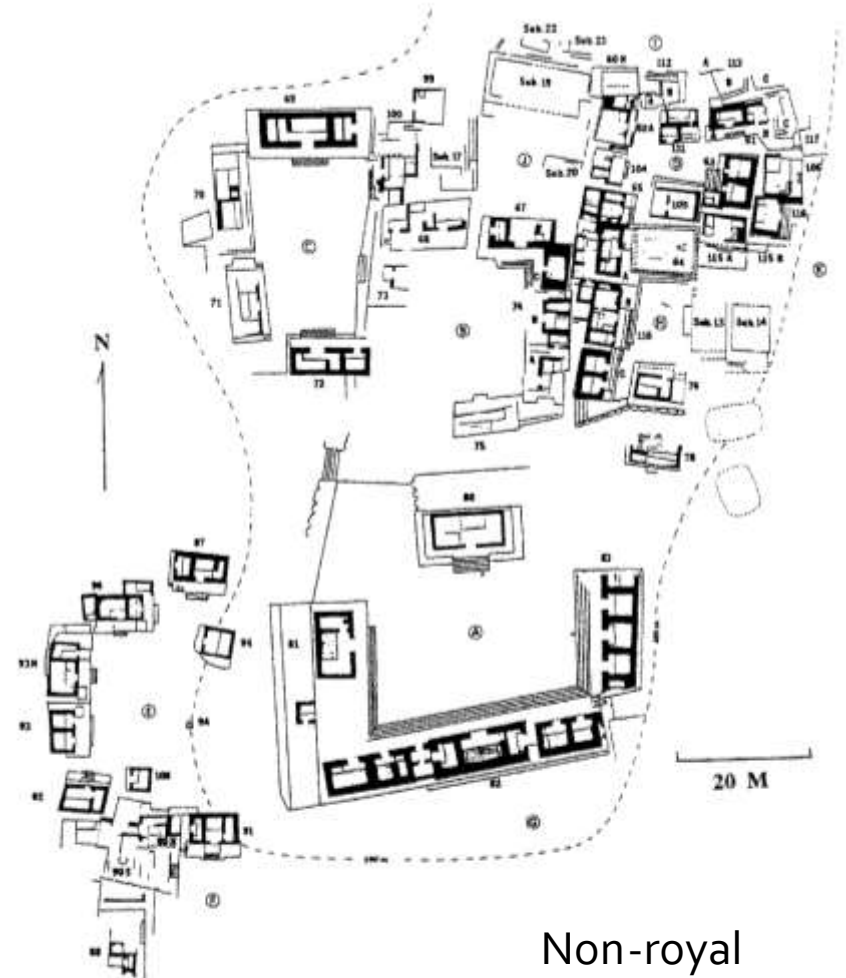
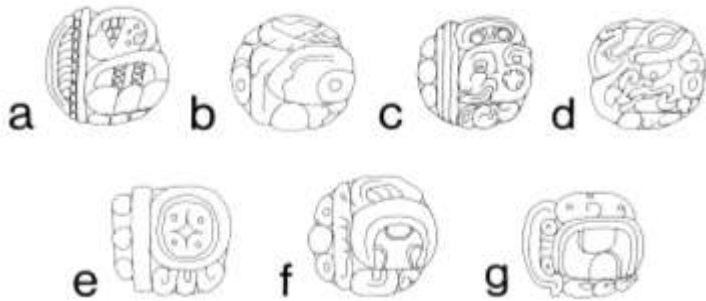
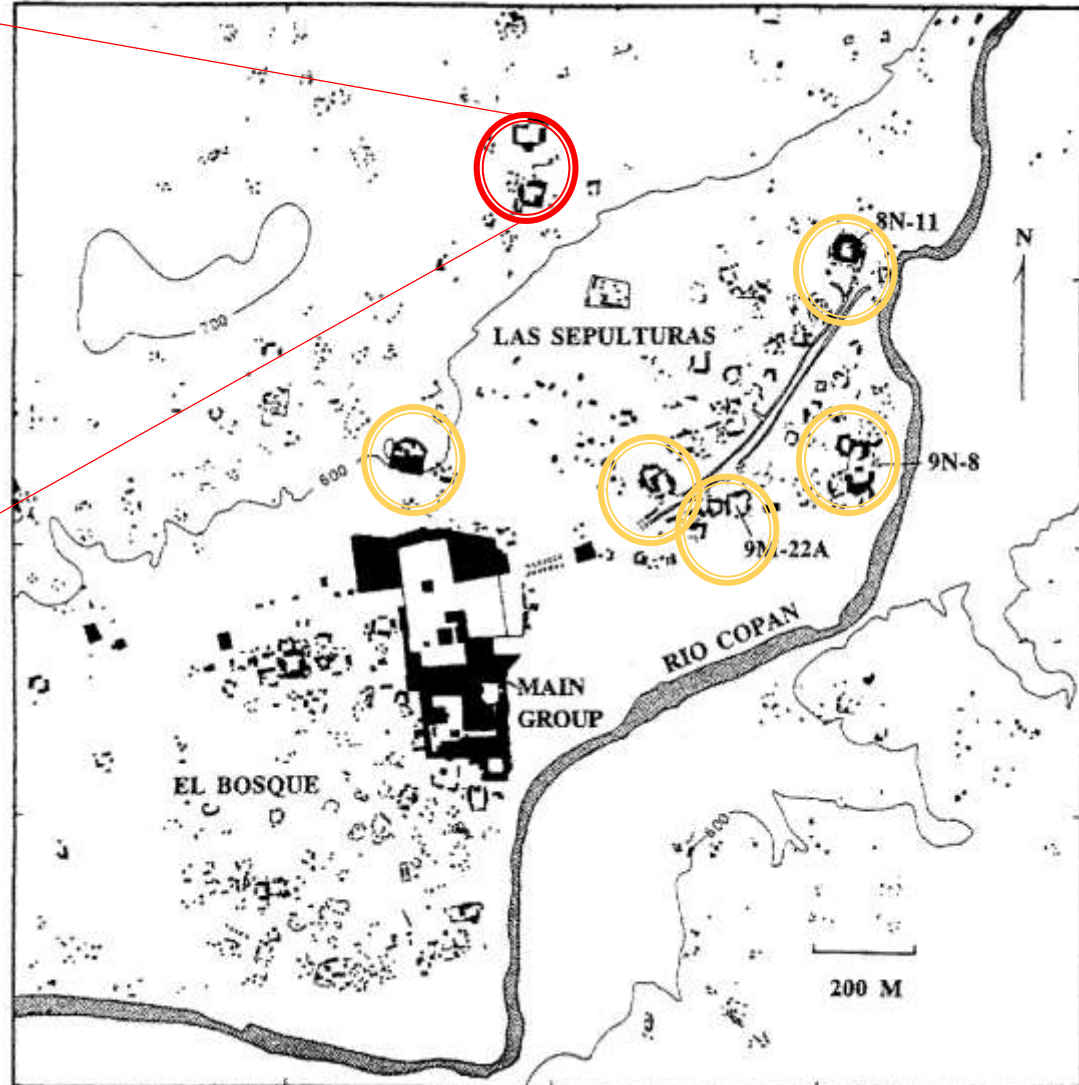
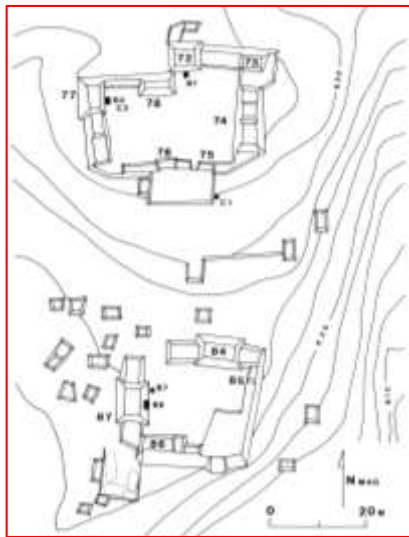


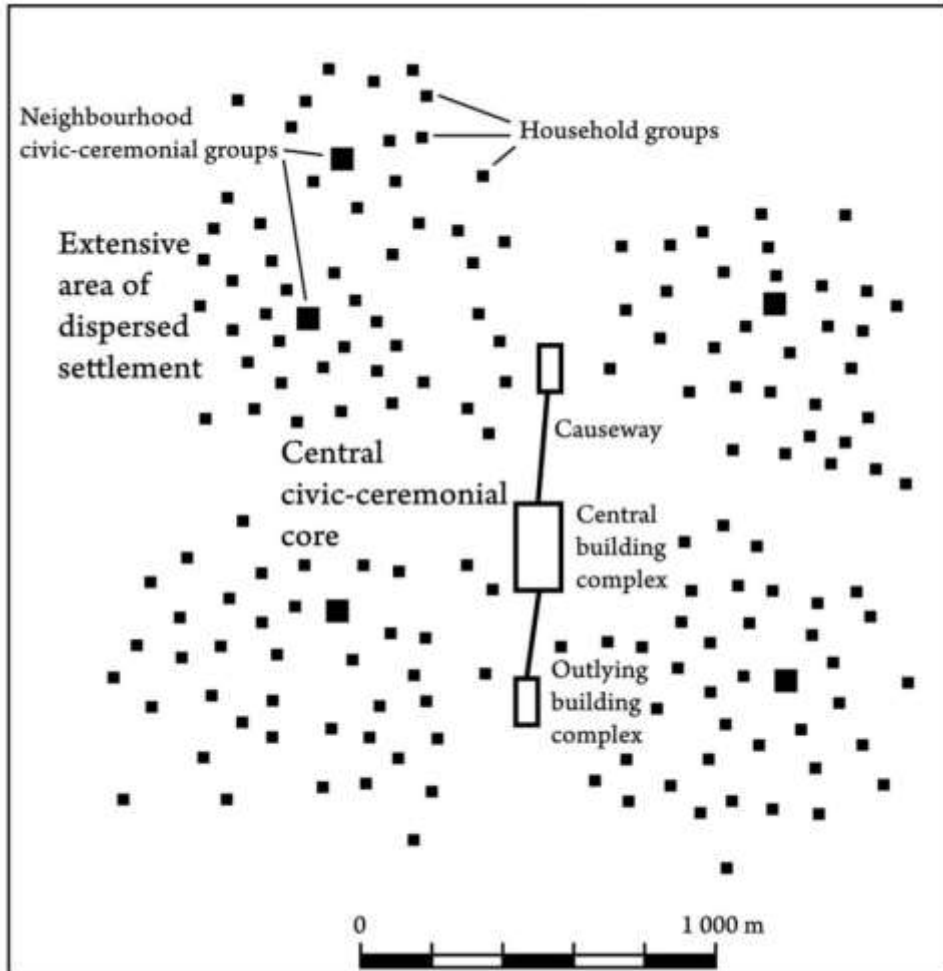
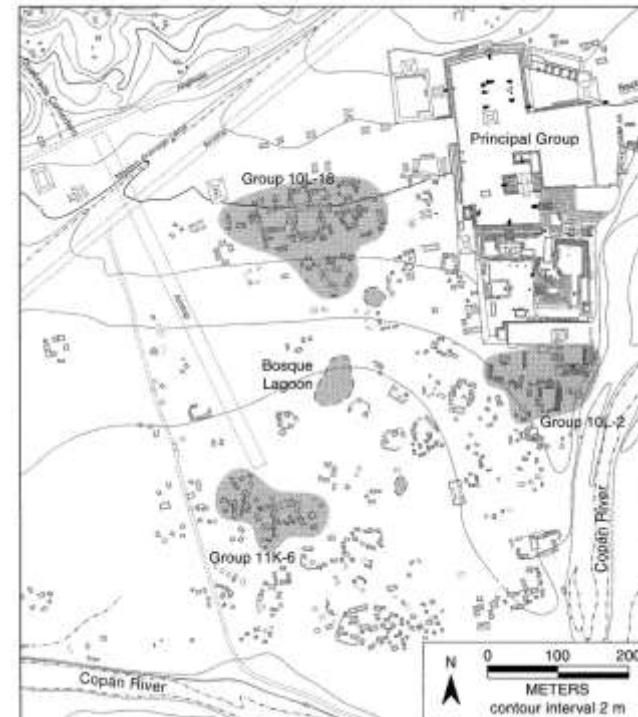
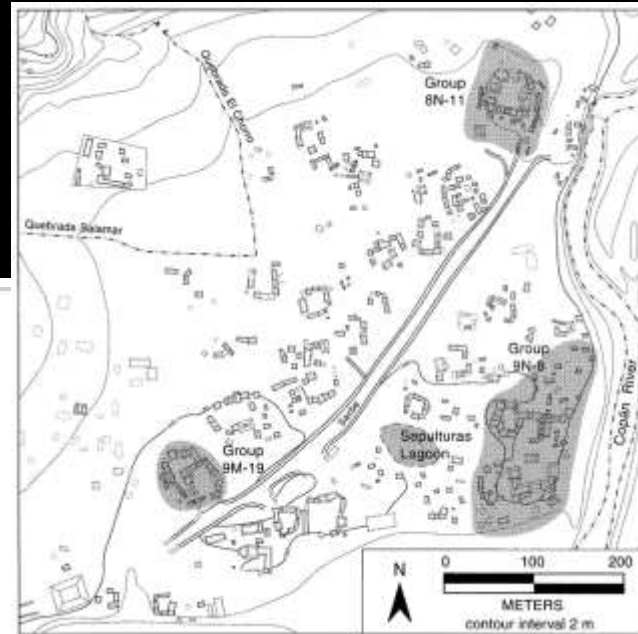
FIGURE 5.7 Elite residential Group 9N-8 in the Copan urban core. Courtesy of David Webster.

Not always....



The location of the "obsidian order" of calendar specialists

Low-density urbanism

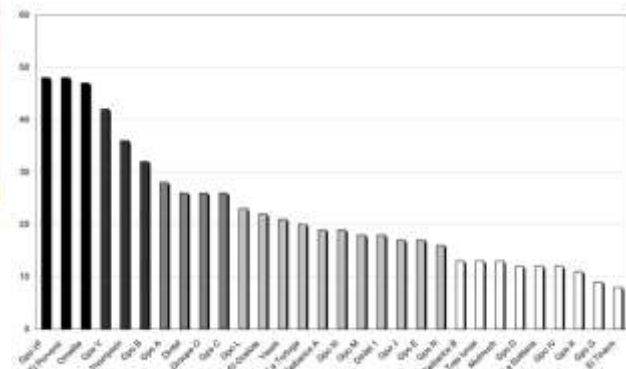
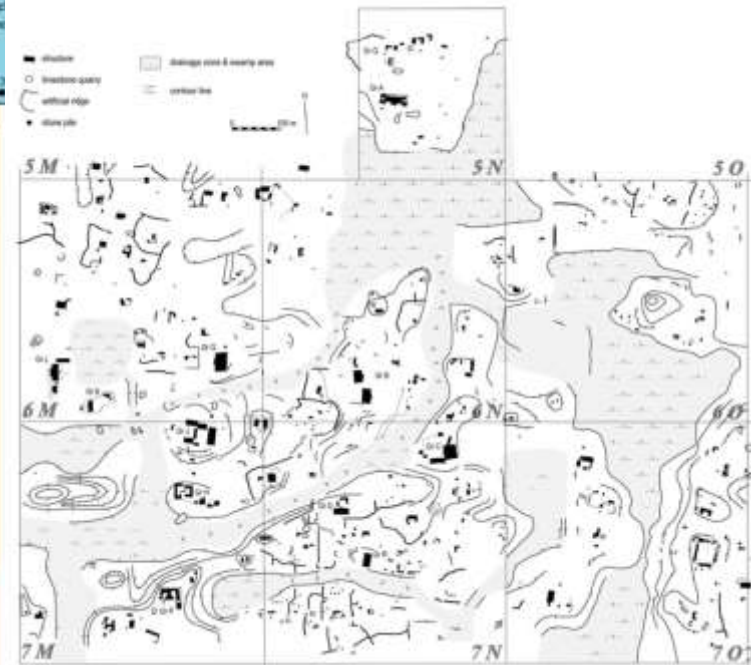
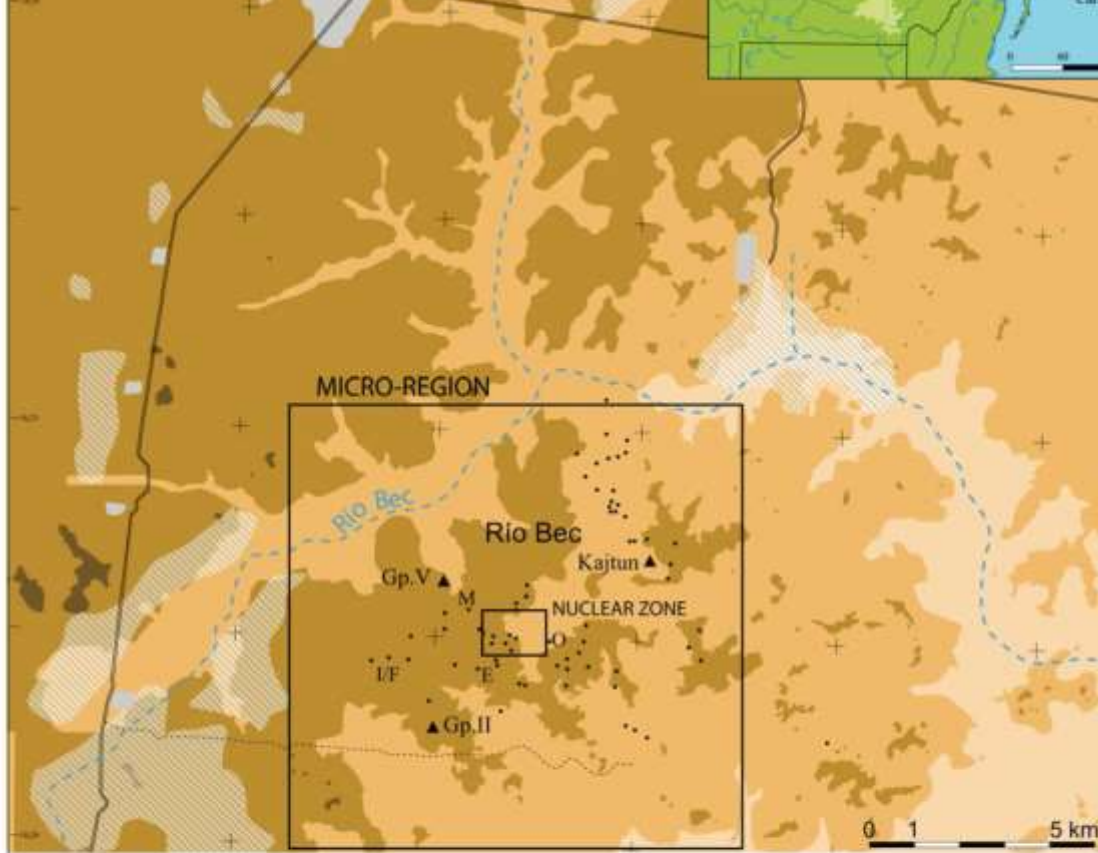


Maya cities in the courtly paradigm

- No cities, no courts (Rio Bec)
- Cities, no courts (Chunchucmil)
- Cities, courts (low density)
- Cities, megacourts (Tikal, Calakmul)



Rio Bec: a region with no cities and no courts



- present-day cultivated fields
- modern village
- road
- Rio Bec group
- Rio Bec plaza
- archaeological site
- 300 m
- 250 m
- 200 m
- 150 m

Figure 5. Rank-order of 22 natural groups in the 100 km² micro-region. Chart by Philippe Nondédéo.

A city without a court: Chunchucmil

Chunchucmil

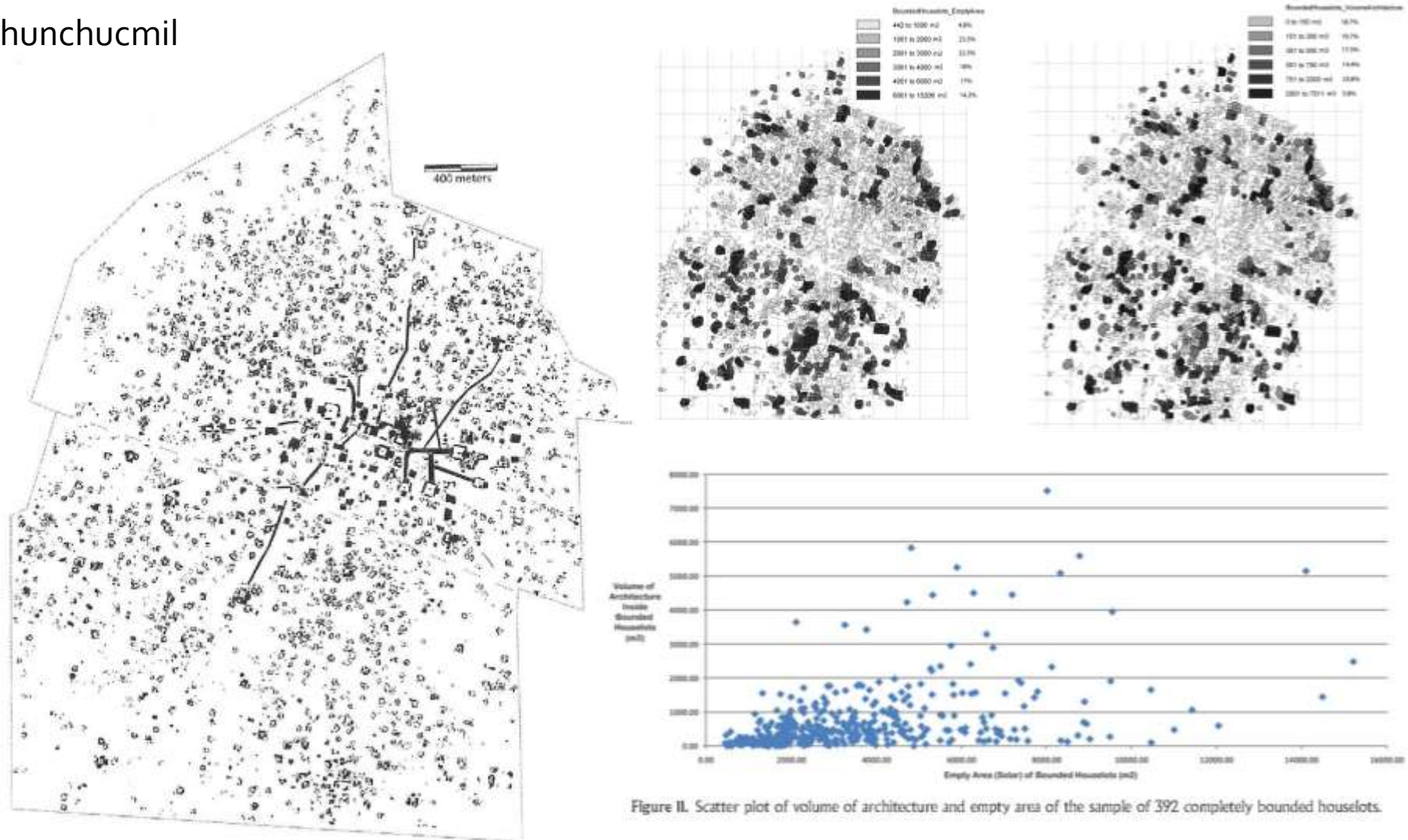
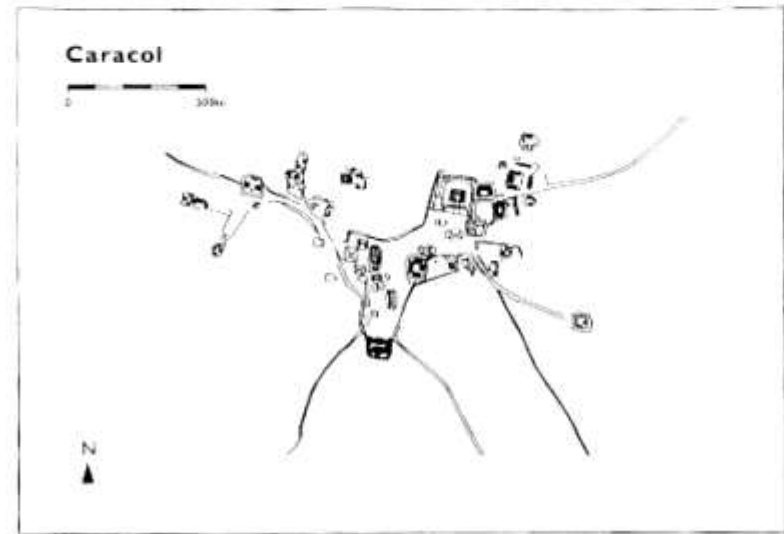
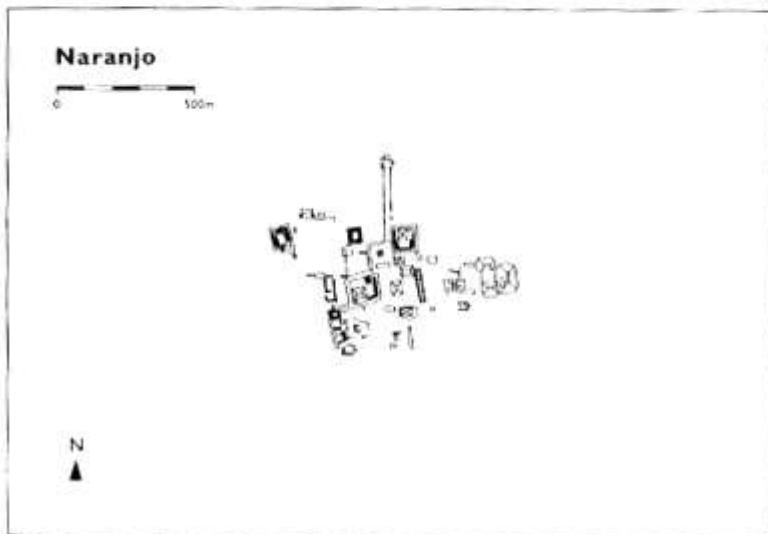
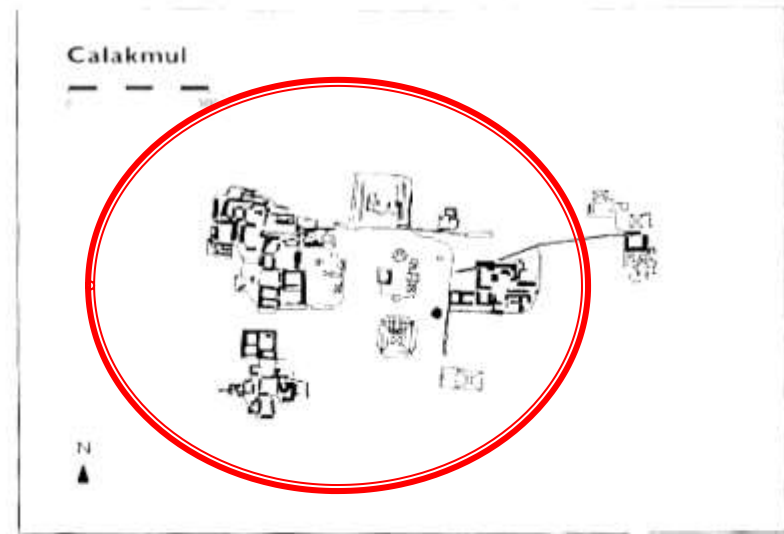
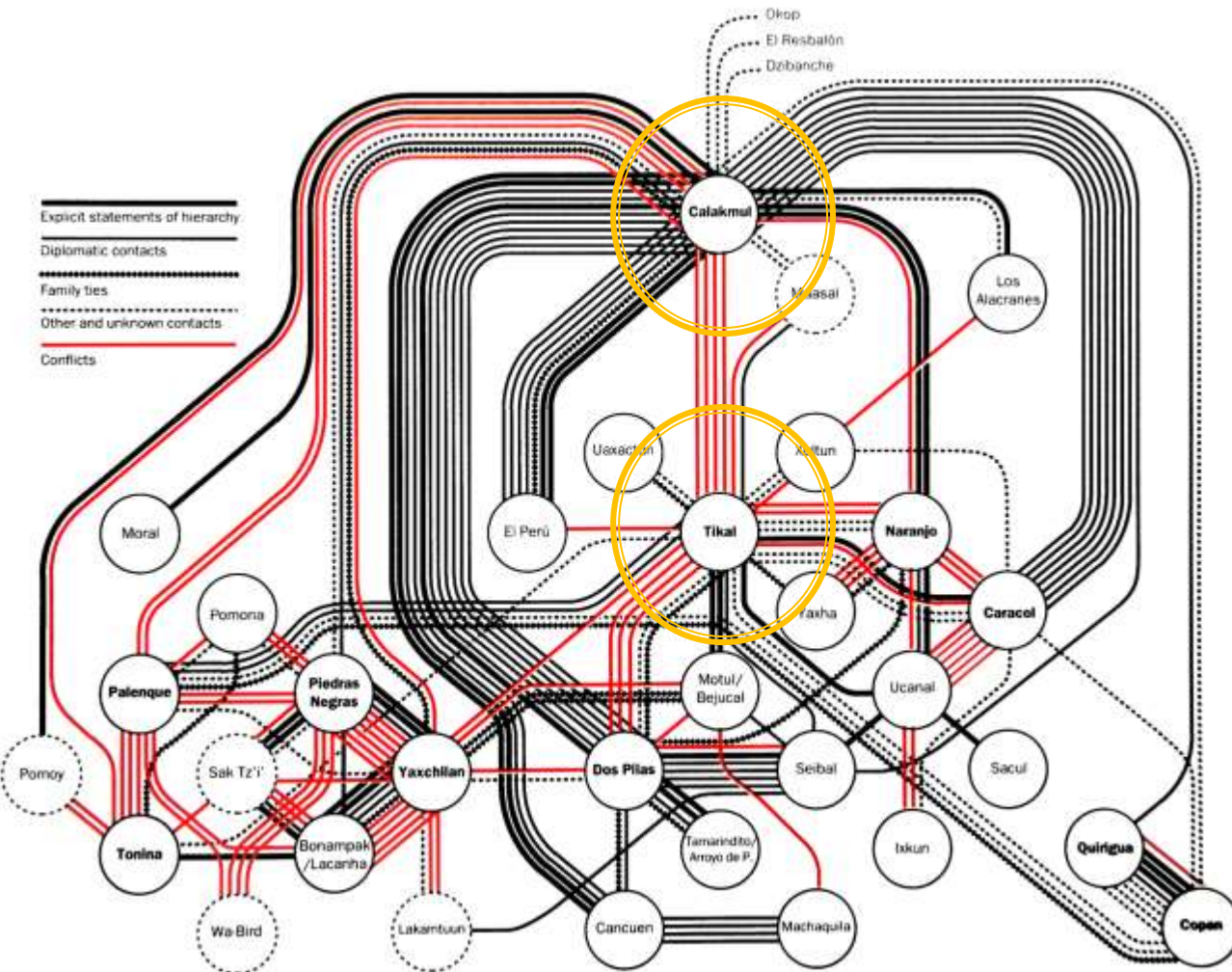


Figure II. Scatter plot of volume of architecture and empty area of the sample of 392 completely bounded houselots.

Megacourts (megapalaces)



Megastates = megacourts



A synchronic view of sub-royal elites

- Spatial proximity to the royal household
- Spatial proximity to the public spaces
- Possession of special items / knowledge
- Production of special items / knowledge

Courtly officials: similar numbers

- **Motul de San Jose:** 3 *ajk'uhuun* officials, 3 *lakam* officials
- **Yaxchilan:** ~6 *sajal* officials, 1 *ajk'uhuun*
- **Piedras Negras:** ~5 *sajal* officials, 1 *ajk'uhuun*
- **Bonampak:** ~5 *sajal* officials, 1 *lakam*

Aguateca: a perfect synchronic view

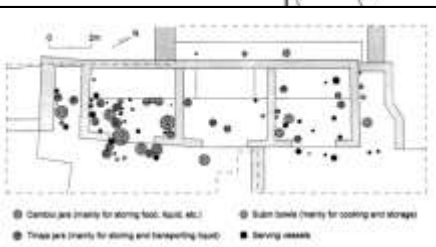
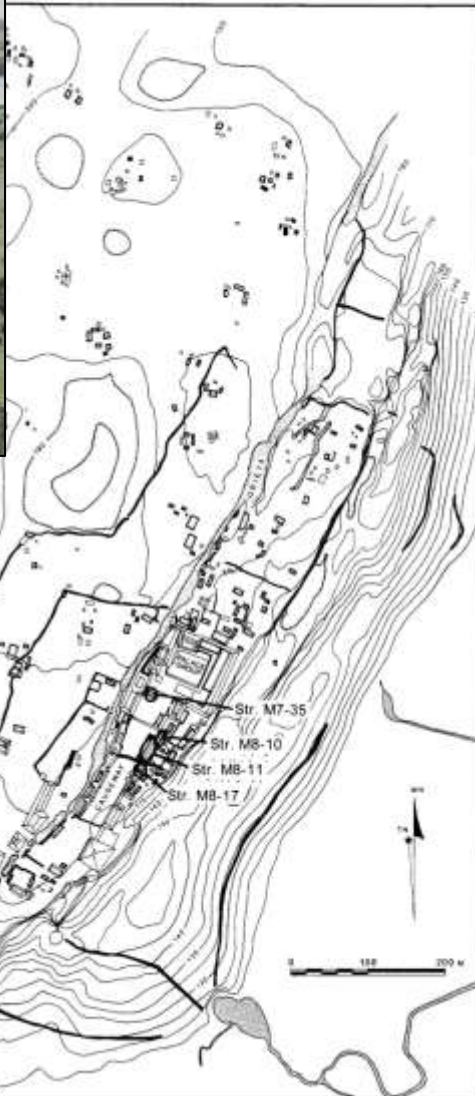


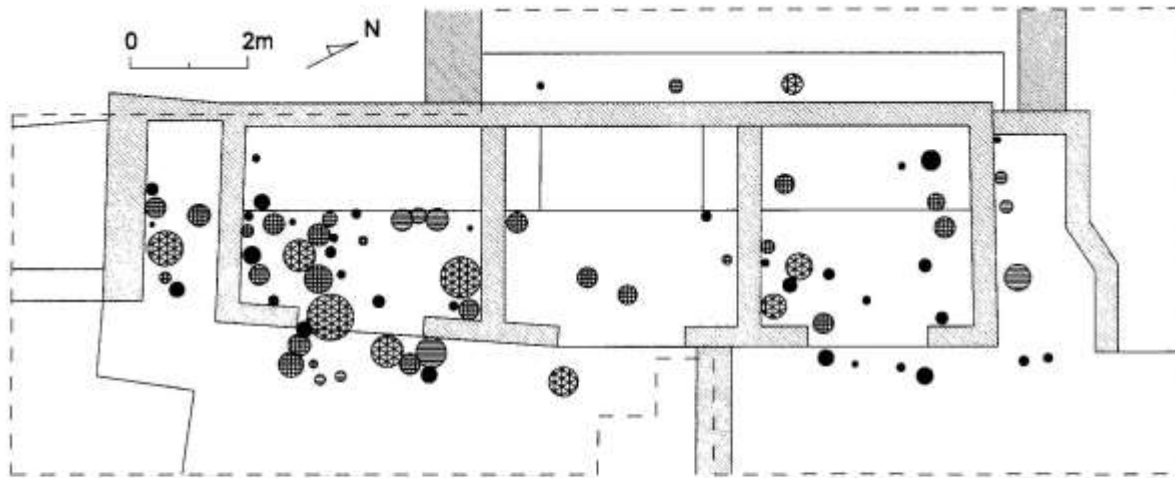
Figure 5. Distribution of ceramic vessels in the MB-10. The size of symbols are in scale. The location of a related subsoil shows the base of a significant portion of the vessel use level. More vessels shown in line of the masses appear to have fallen from the house when the building collapsed.



Figure 6. Distribution of stone related to textile work and textile production in the MB-10. The size of symbols are in scale.

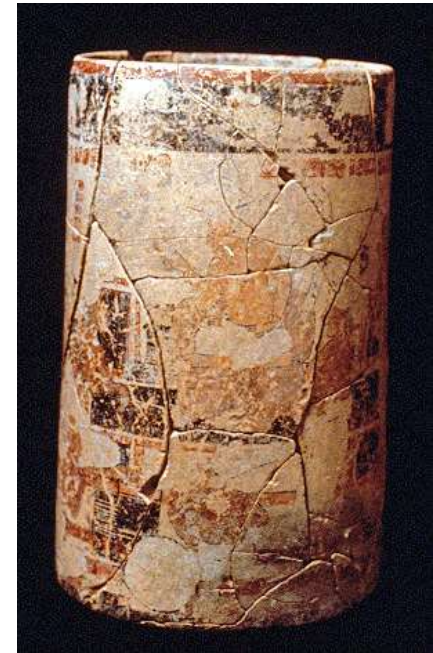


Special possessions and knowledge



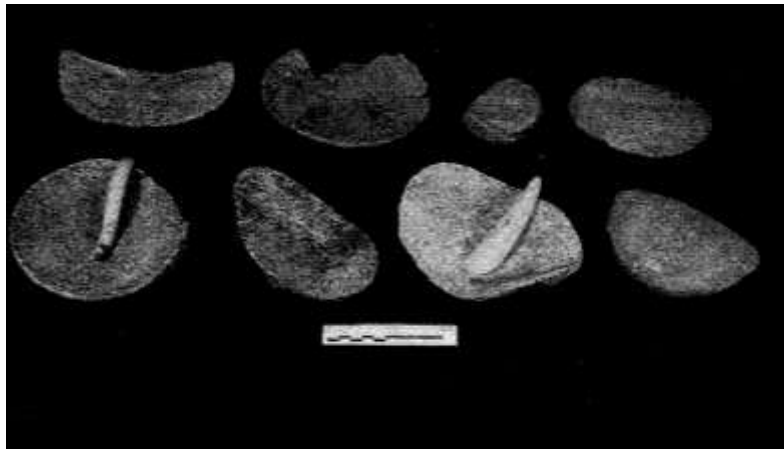
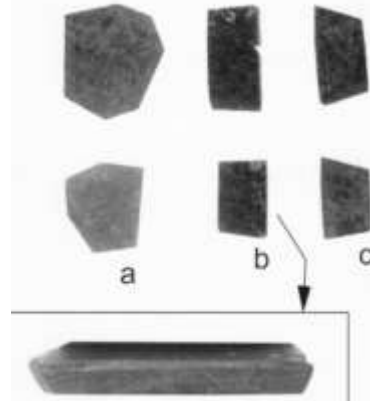
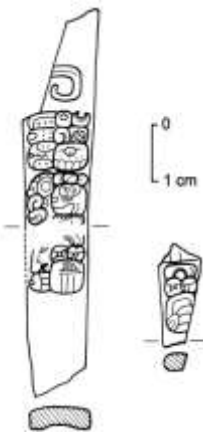
- Cambio jars (mainly for storing food, liquid, etc.)
- Tinaja jars (mainly for storing and transporting liquid)
- Subin bowls (mainly for cooking and storage)
- Serving vessels

Figure 5. Distribution of ceramic vessels in Str. M8-10. The sizes of symbols are to scale.

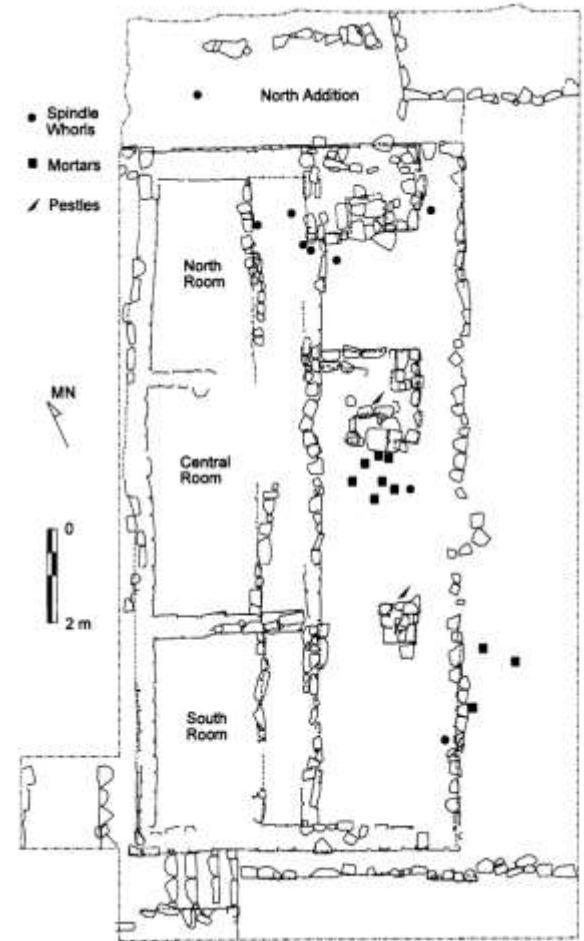


Production of inequality

Str M8-4 and its artifact assemblage



Mortars for pigment preparation (Str M8-4)



(Str M8-4)

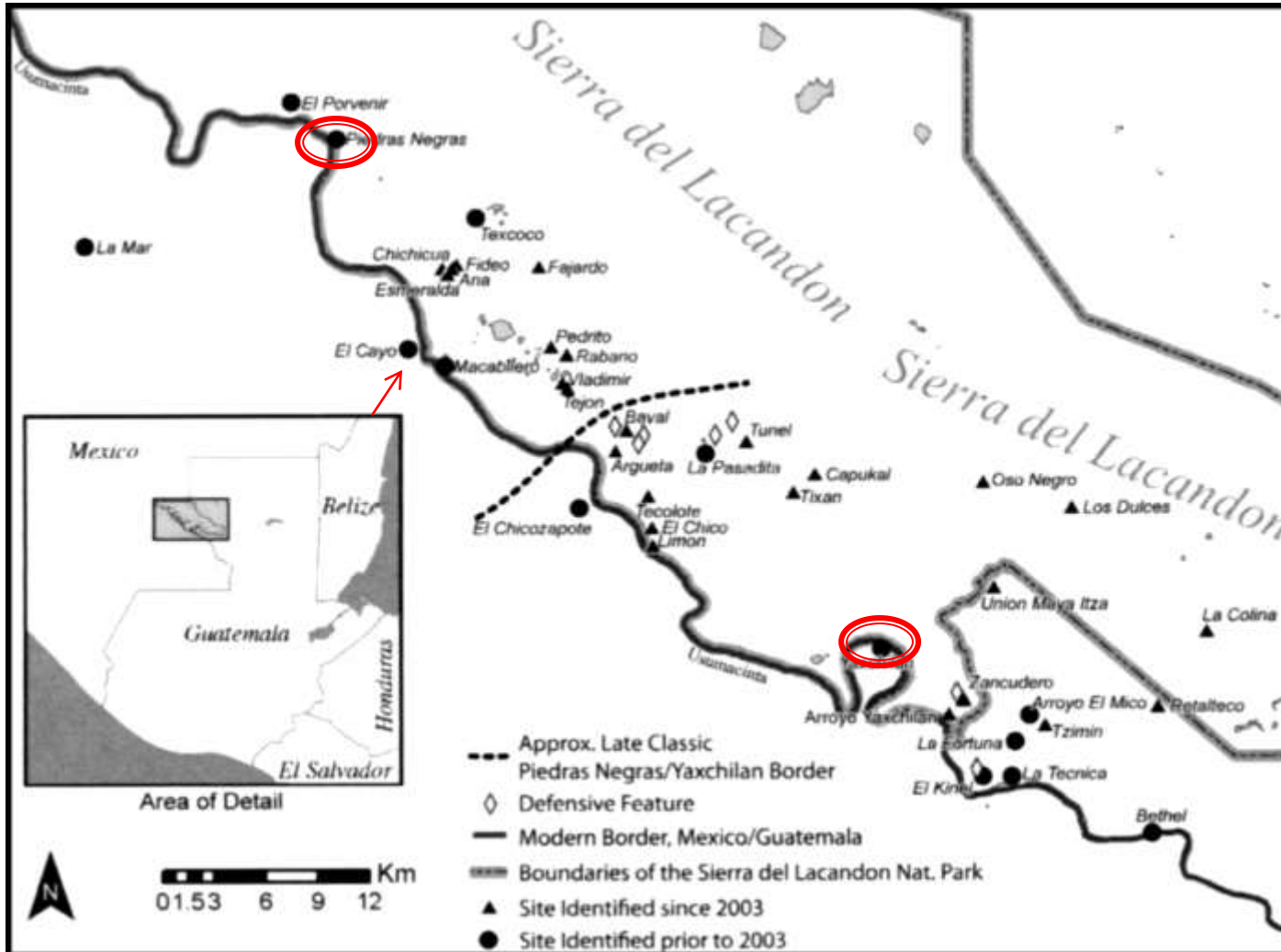
A diachronic view of sub-royal elites

- Sub-royal dynasties
- Accumulation of power/wealth at the expense of the royal household
- Greater spatial distance from the royal court
=> greater threat to the court

Sub-royal dynasties: the case of El Cayo

- (1) ♂ Ochnal K'uti[im] = ♀ Ix Baah Ajaw
- (2) ♂ Aj Chak Wayaab K'utiim (birth, September 1, 664) = ♀ ?
- (3) ♂ Aj Chak "Bat" K'utiim (accession, June 1, 763) = ♀ Ix Yuknoom Ch'e'n Joob or Ix Joob (birth, ?March 3, 731)
- (4) Chan Panak Wayaab (birth, June 29, 755) = ♀ ?
- (5) Aj Yax "Bat," active in 795

Managing the realms



Altar 1, El Cayo



References to Maya nobles

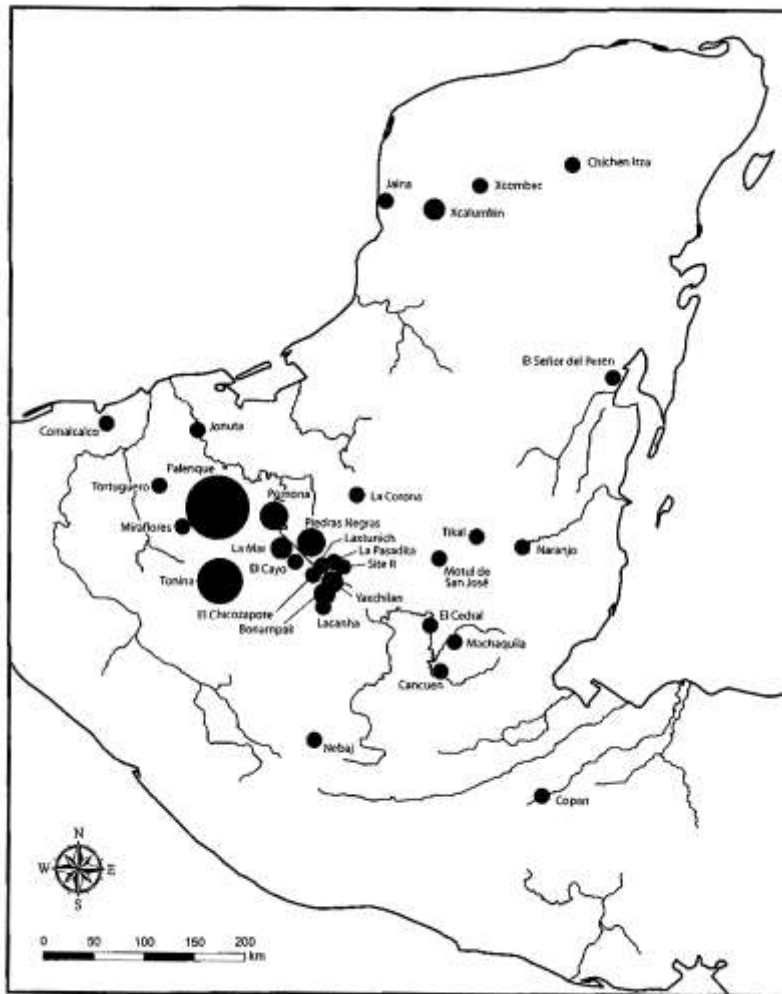


Figure 6.4. Spatial distribution of noble titles with circles corresponding proportionately to number of occurrences (redrawn from Jackson 2005, fig 3.5).

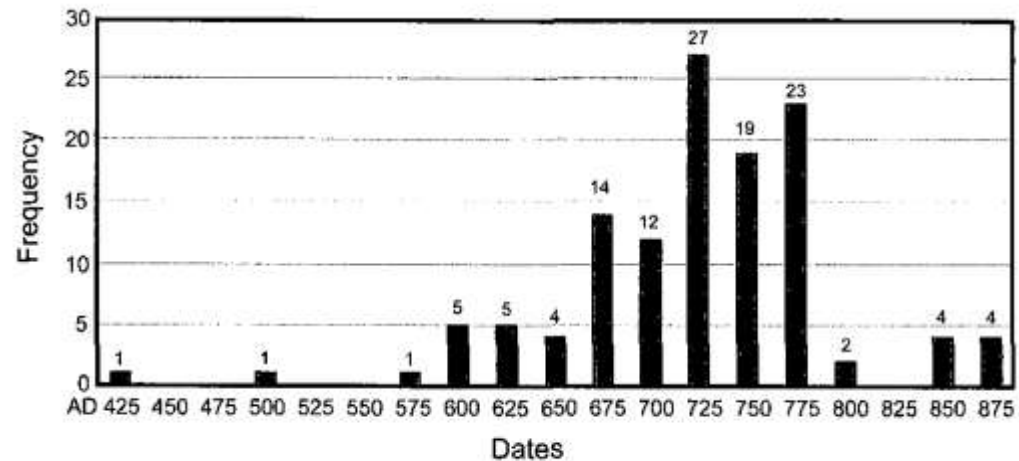


Figure 6.5. Temporal distribution of noble titles (redrawn from Jackson 2005, fig. 3.9).

- Predominantly in the west
- Mostly Late Classic

Classic Maya moral communities

- Responsibility to gods, kin, and ancestors
- A covenant with gods who made human flesh (phagiohierarchy with gods on top and humans in the middle)
- Shared practice and restricted special knowledge
- Congregational nature of moral communities with an emphasis on public rituals and events

One big happy family



Greater spatial distance from the court => collapse of Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan

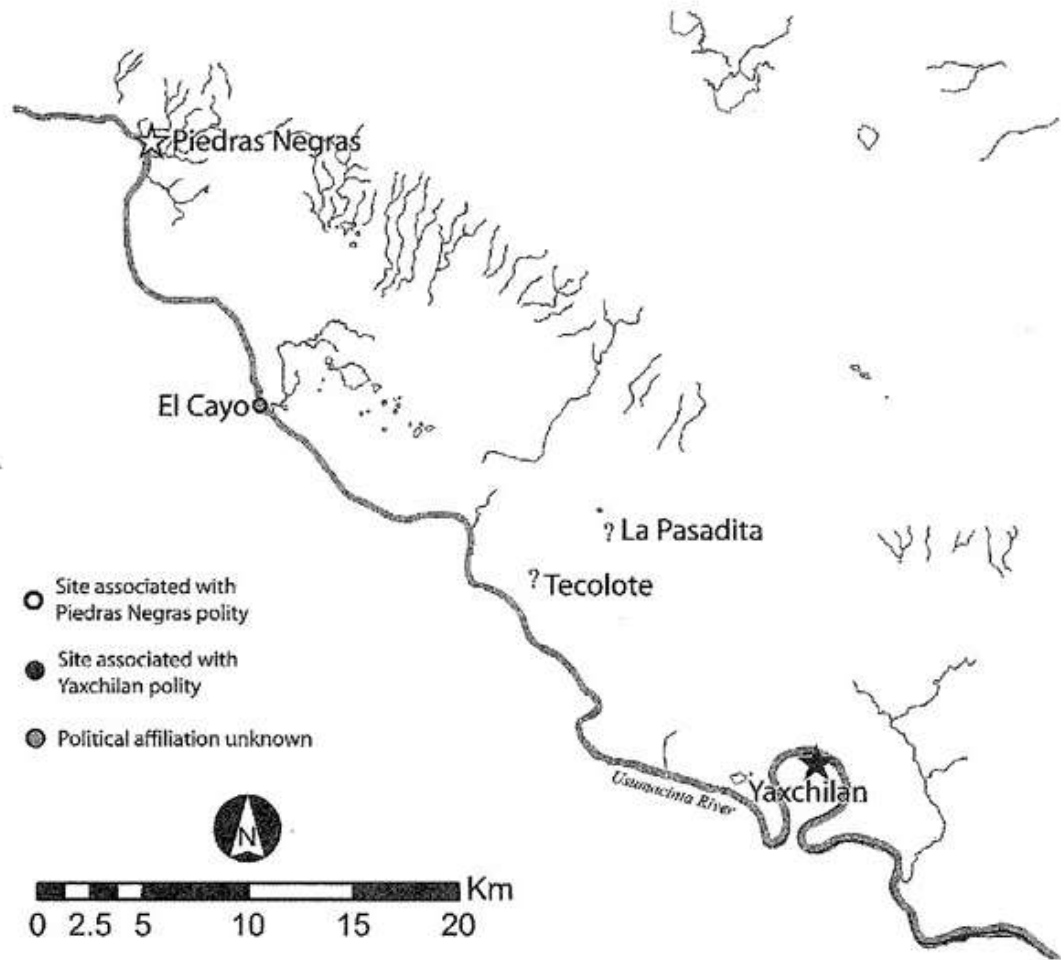


Figure 3. Map of the research area indicating sites with archaeologically demonstrated Early Classic period (c. A.D. 350–600) construction. Sites indicated by question marks yielded Early Classic materials in cave deposits not directly associated with architecture.

Greater spatial distance from the court => collapse of Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan

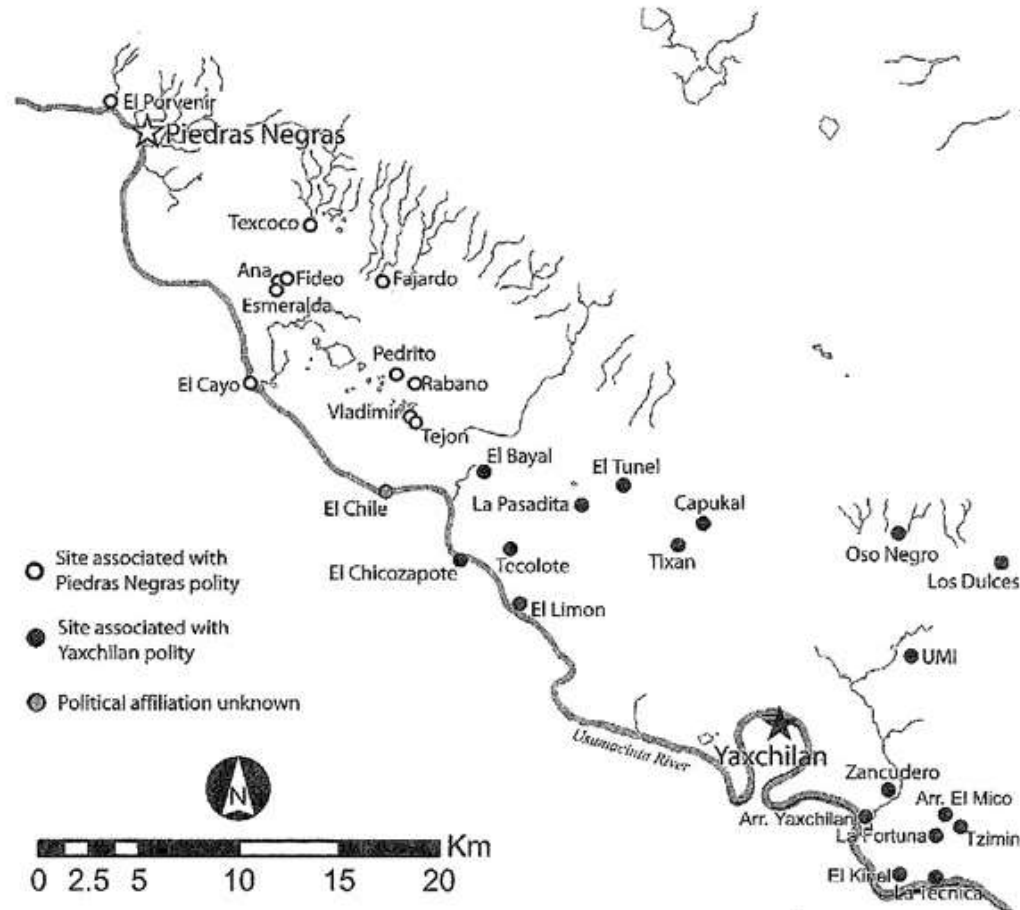
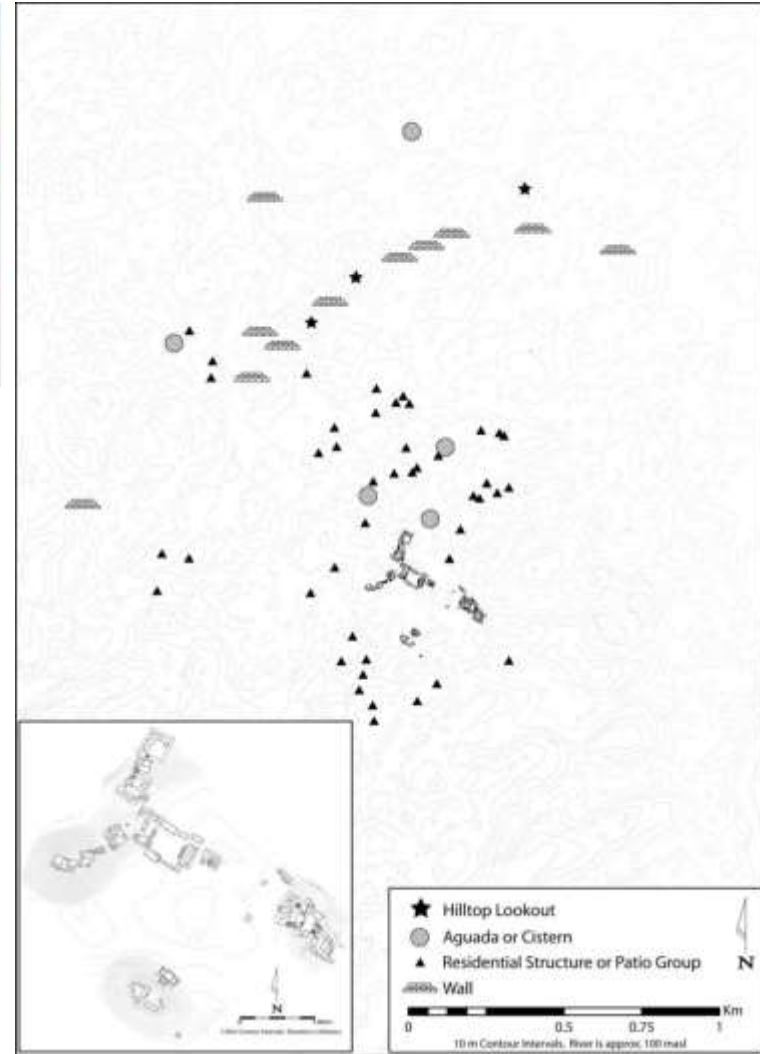
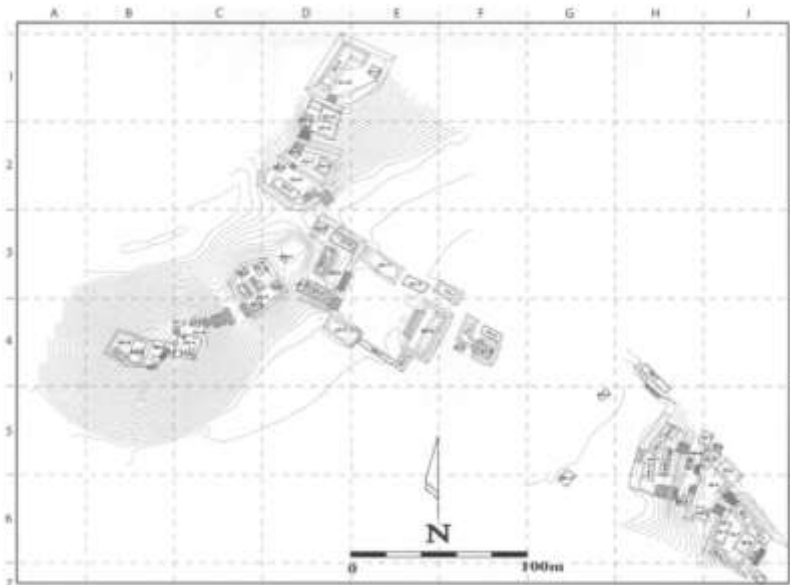


Figure 4. Map of the research area indicating sites with archaeologically demonstrated Late or Terminal Classic period (c. A.D. 600–930) construction or surface deposits.

Yaxchilan secondary centers: the seeds of self-destruction



Figure 8. Eastern façade of Structure D3-1 at the site of Tecolote (photo by Azlen Heginbotham).



Individuals vs. dividuals

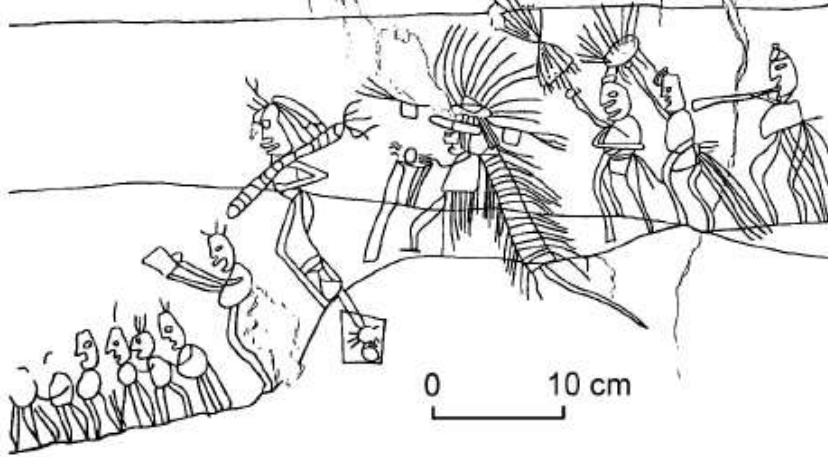


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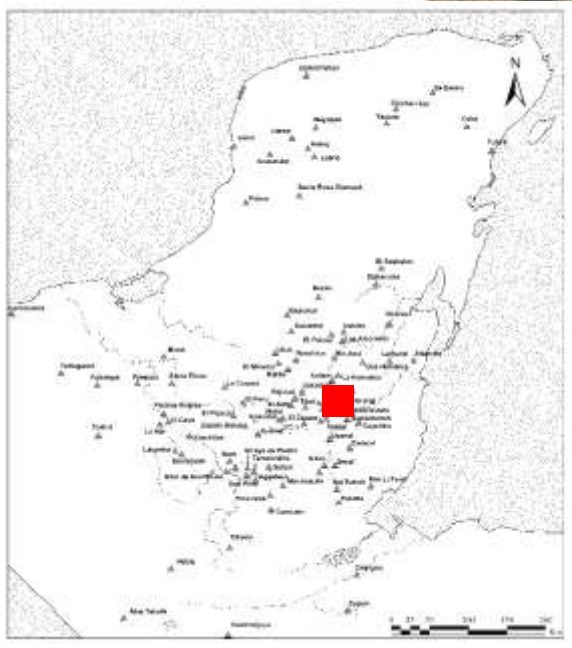
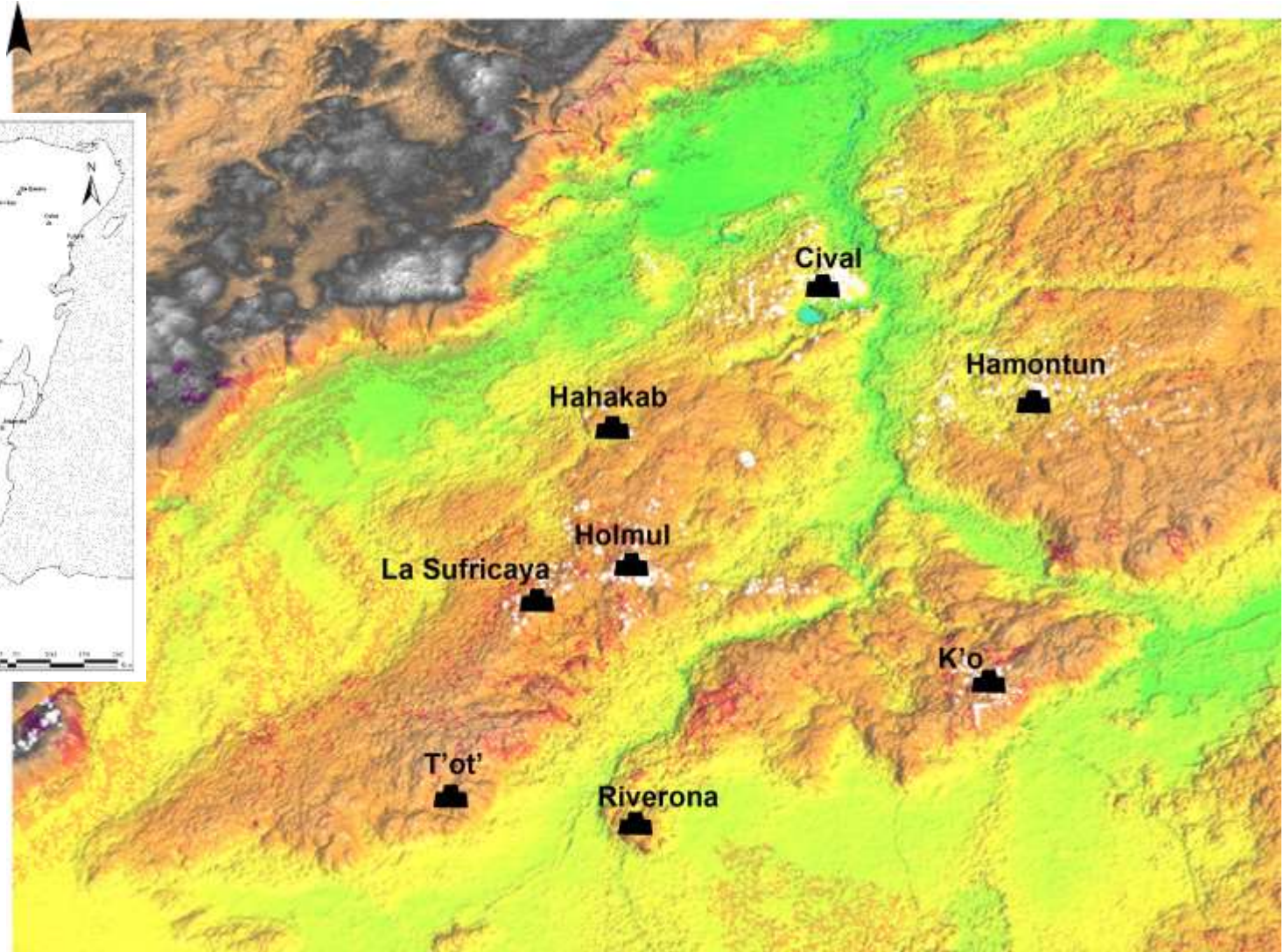


Early Classic Maya vessel

Dividuals and trust



Case study: the Holmul Region

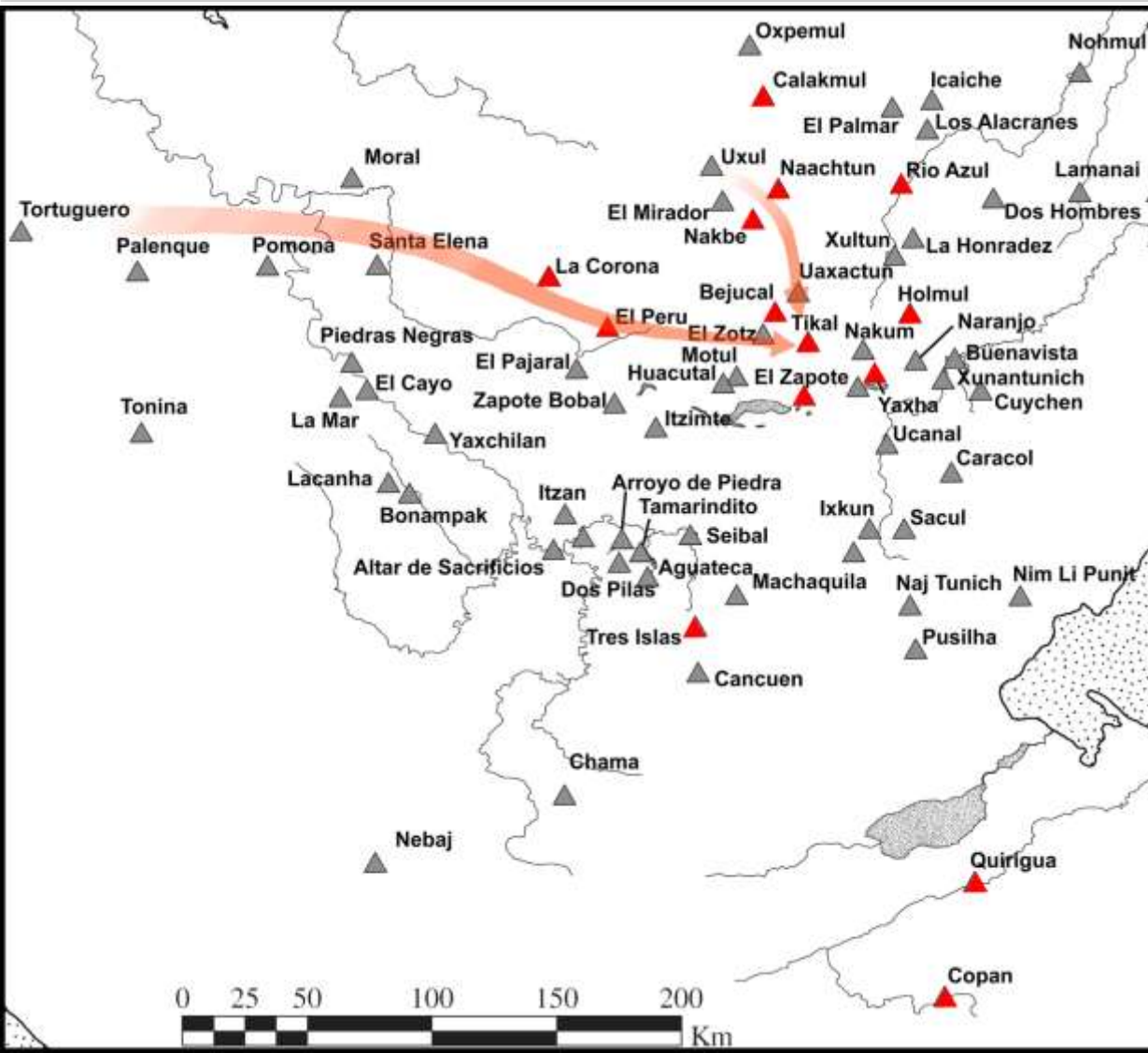


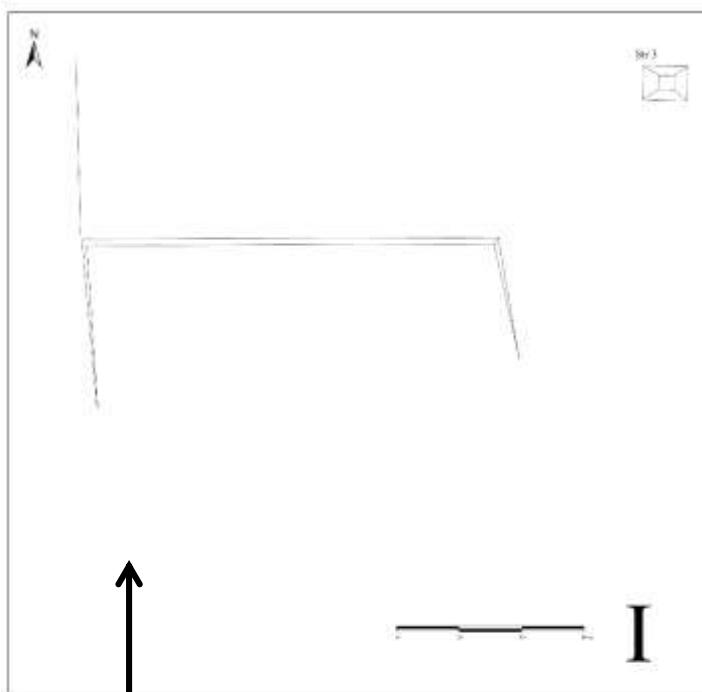
Holmul (dynastic) timeline

- Formative > Early Classic: power and population shift from Cival to Holmul (Group II, Holmul)
- 379 C.E. a new palace is built at La Sufricaya; the local family is part of the new regional order
- ~550s C.E. the royal residence moves back to Group II, Holmul (Group I by early 600-s); dynastic union with Naranjo and subordination to the Kaanu'l royal family
- 626-640 C.E. Naranjo wars and the Kaanu'l dynastic war
- 682-710s C.E. crisis and recovery at Naranjo
- 744-748 C.E. Tikal conquers Naranjo and Holmul
- 780-820s C.E. Naranjo as a regional power
- 830+ C.E. Naranjo collapses

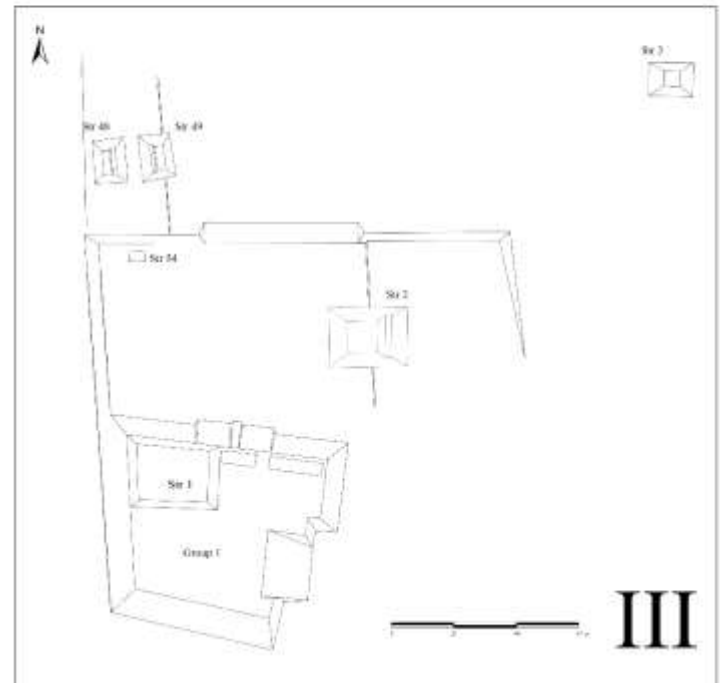
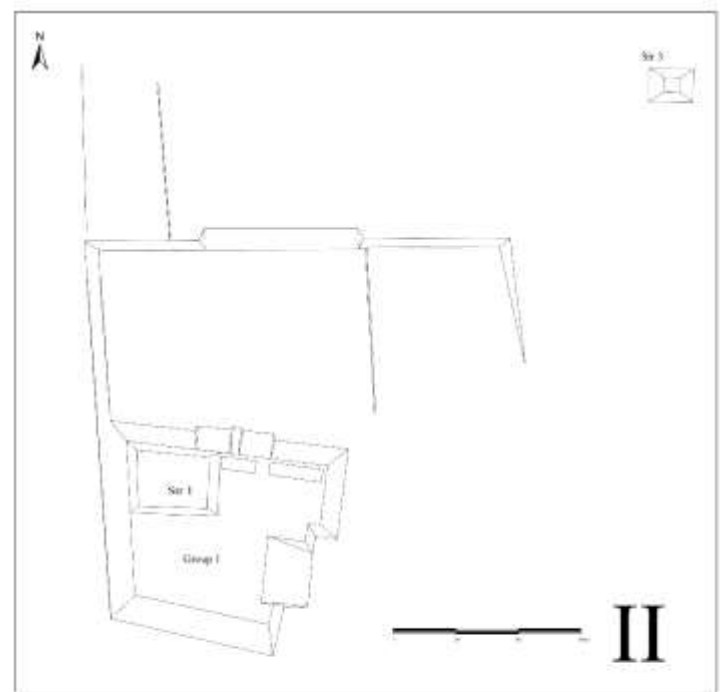
Teotihuacan *entrada*

- Sihyaj K'ahk'
- 1st arrival in 378 C.E.
- Yax Nuun Ahiin & Wiinte' Naah
- 2nd arrival in 406 C.E. after Yax Nuun Ahiin's death





A construction phase with no occupation?



Building La Sufricaya:

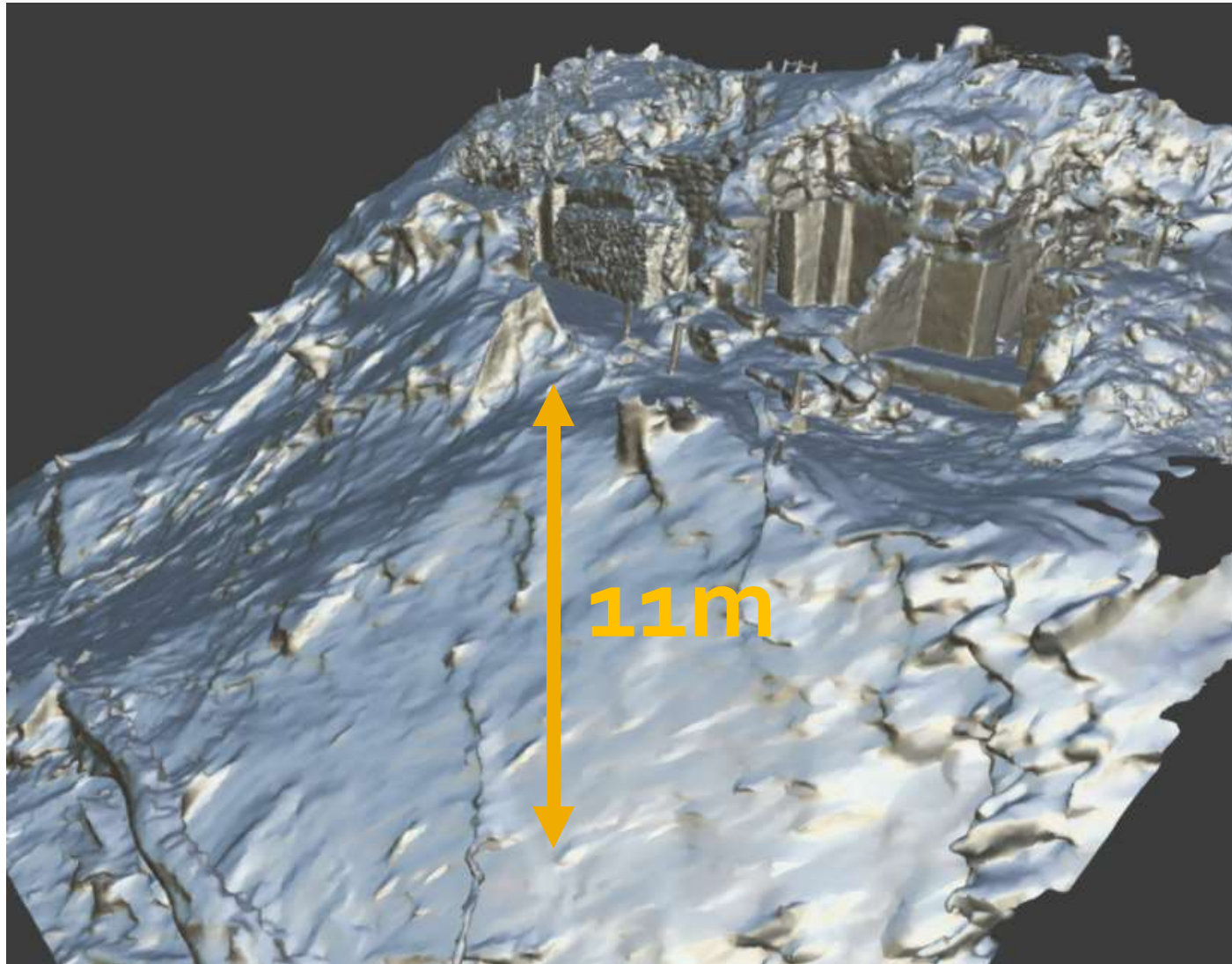
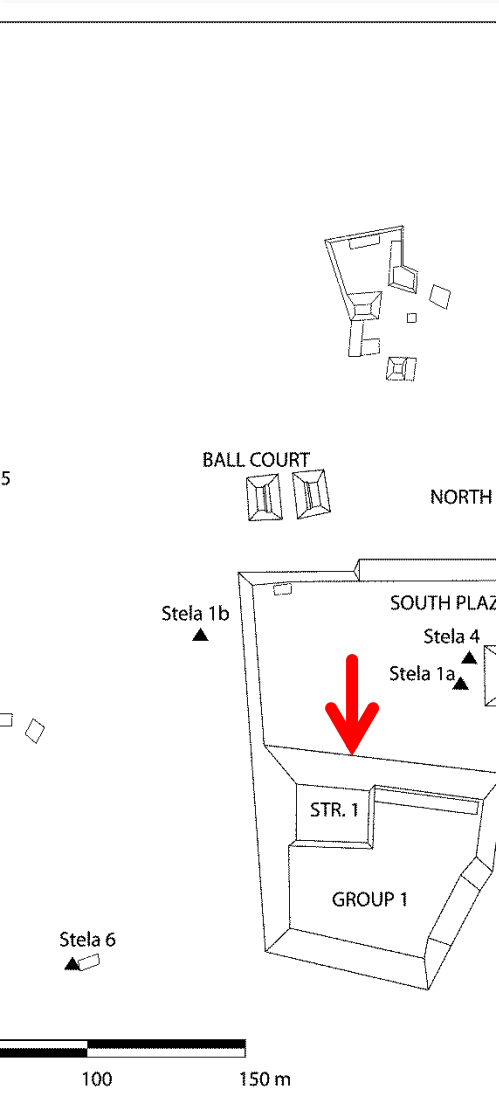
~45,000 m³ if 50% is a modified hill

~170,000 person-days

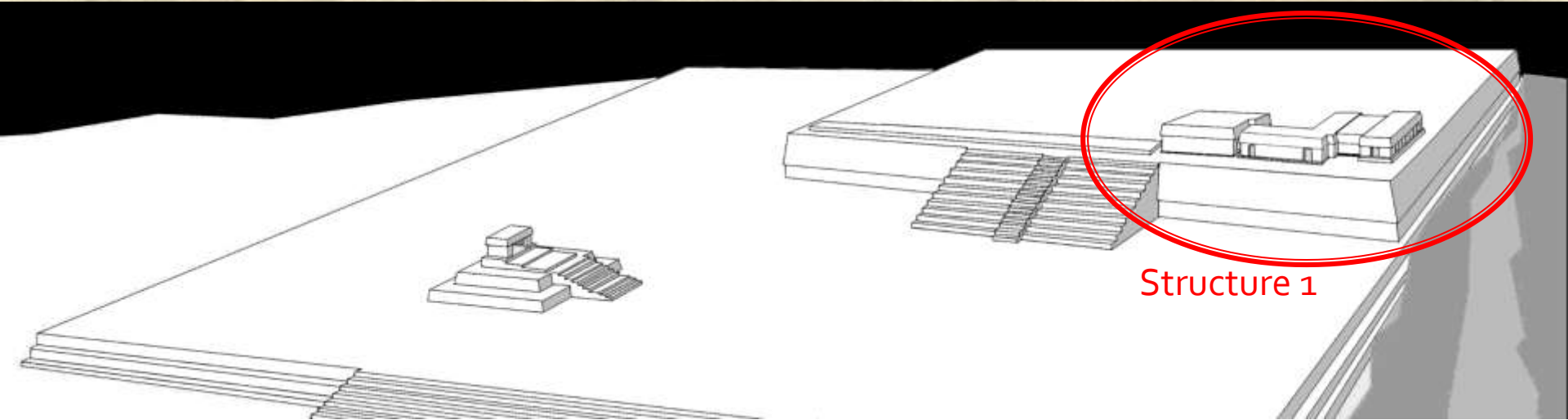
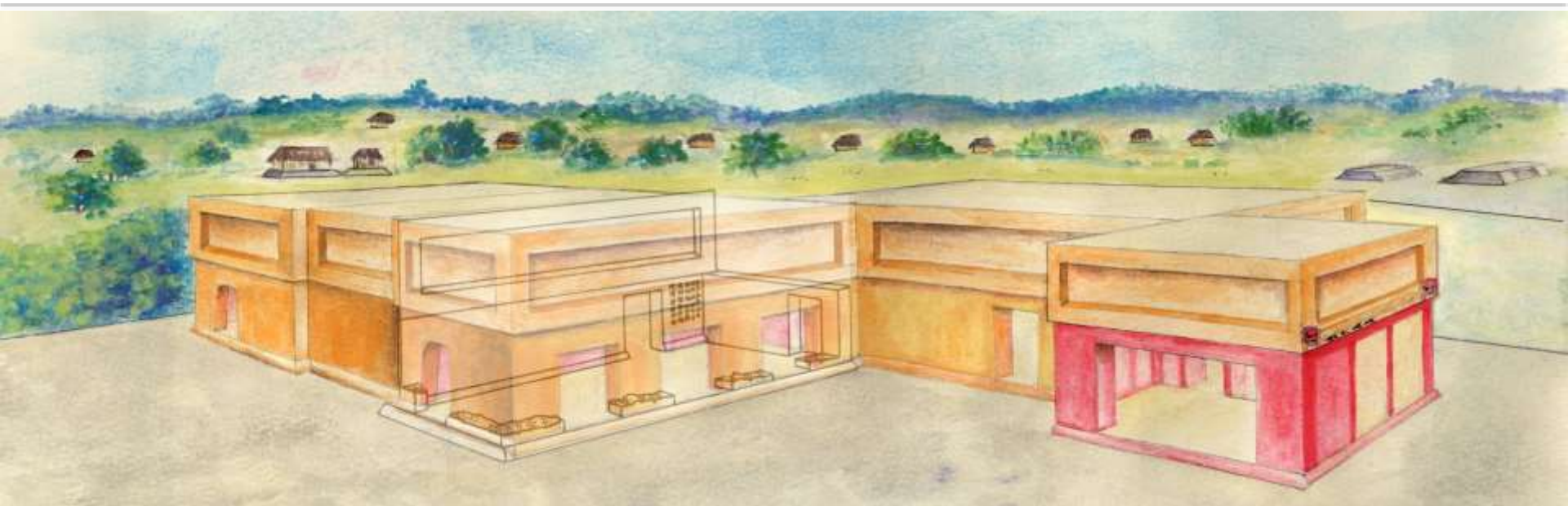
~470 people to build it in a year

<5,000 total population in the region

La Sufricaya: Group 1



The story of La Sufricaya



Mural 7



Xochicalco Palace Stone



● place name ● place category ● road (travel)



La Sufricaya Mural 6

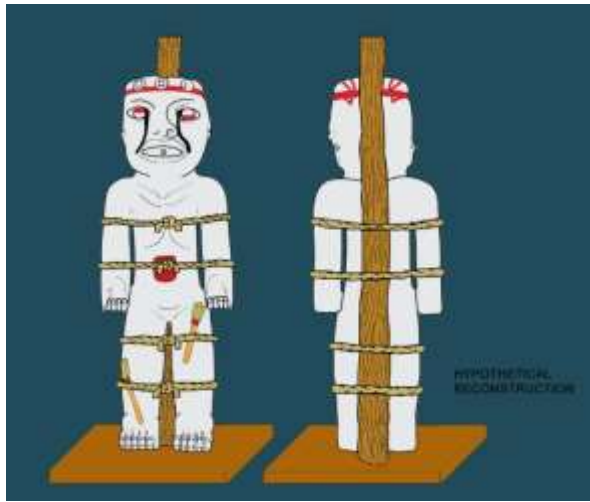
Murals 1-2: an image of a city?



Scale 1:5
10cm

Sutrisman, Satrikandji
02. June 02
Jawa, Indonesia

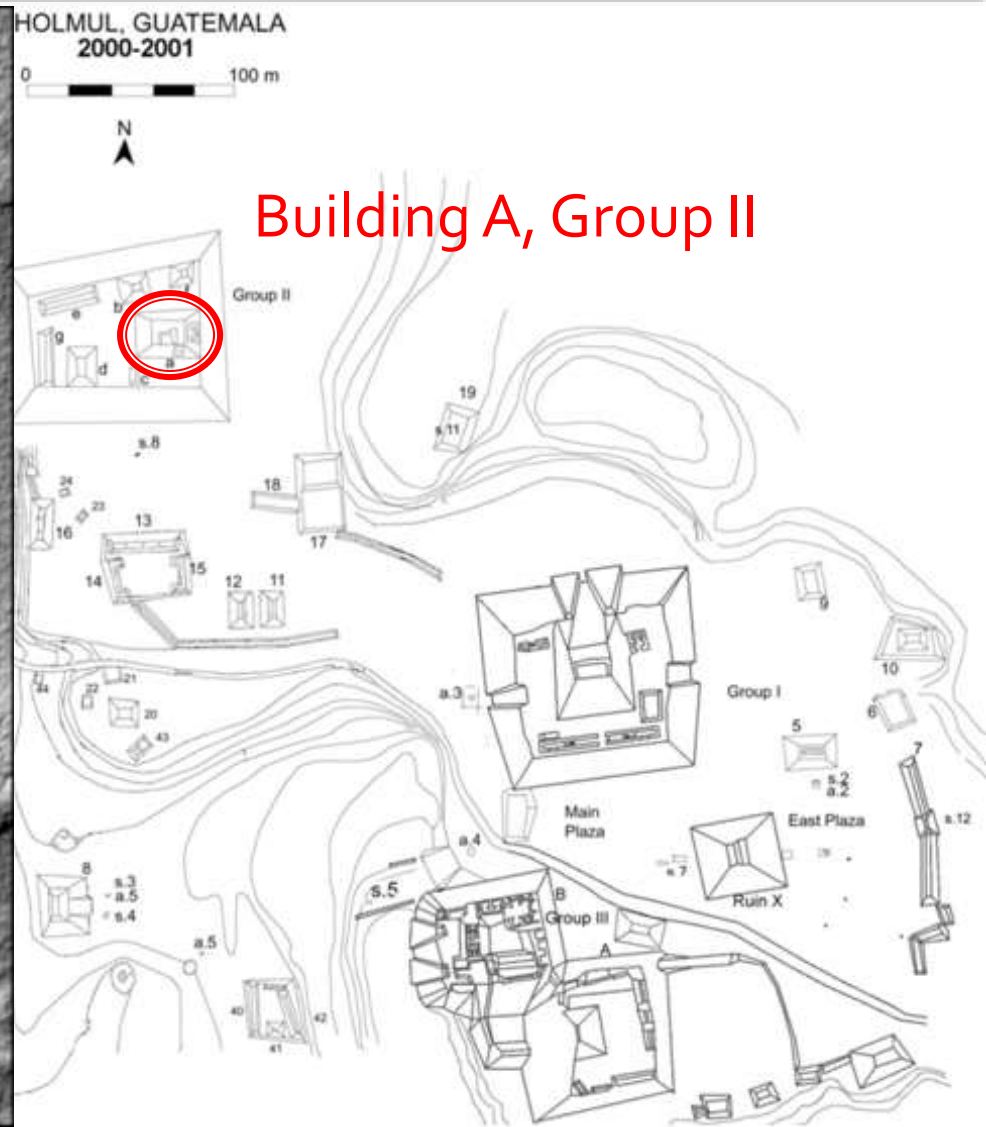
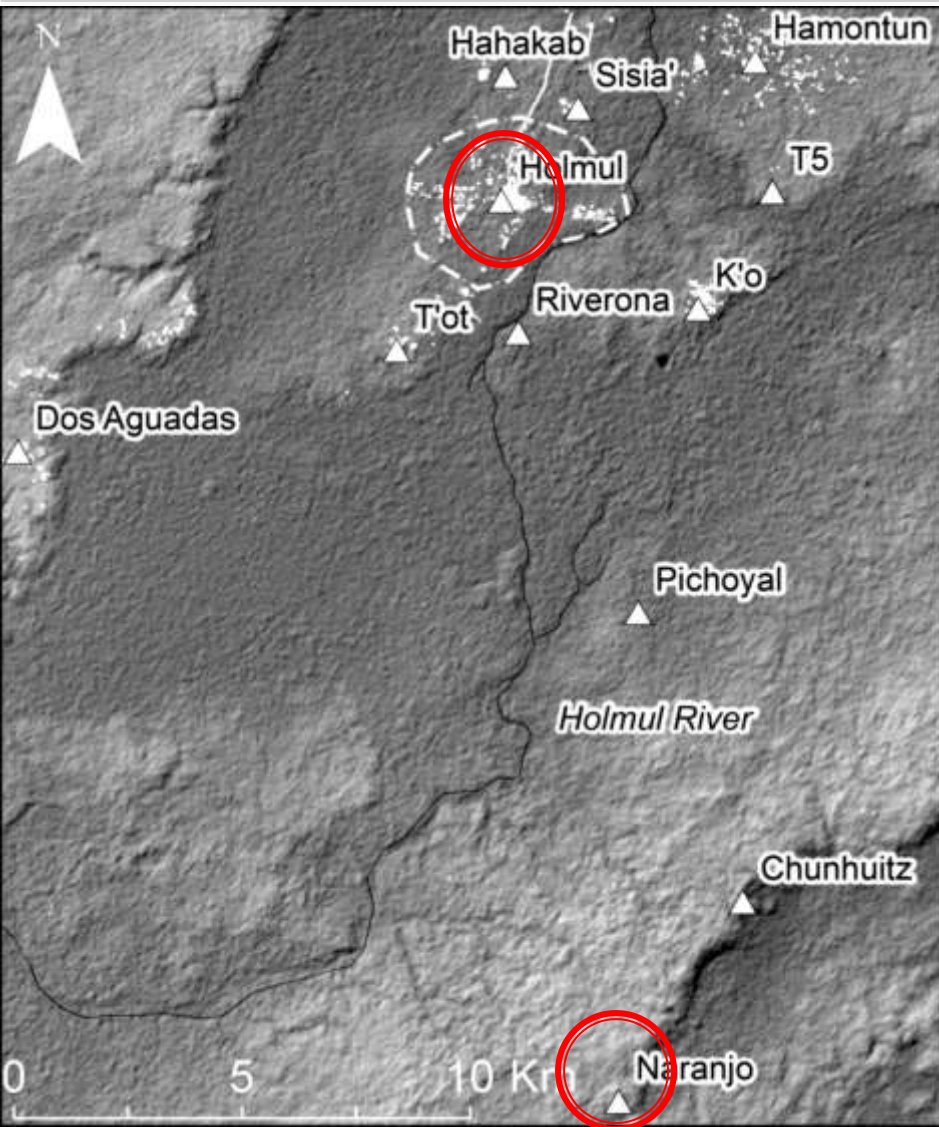
Mural 5: new gods and rituals



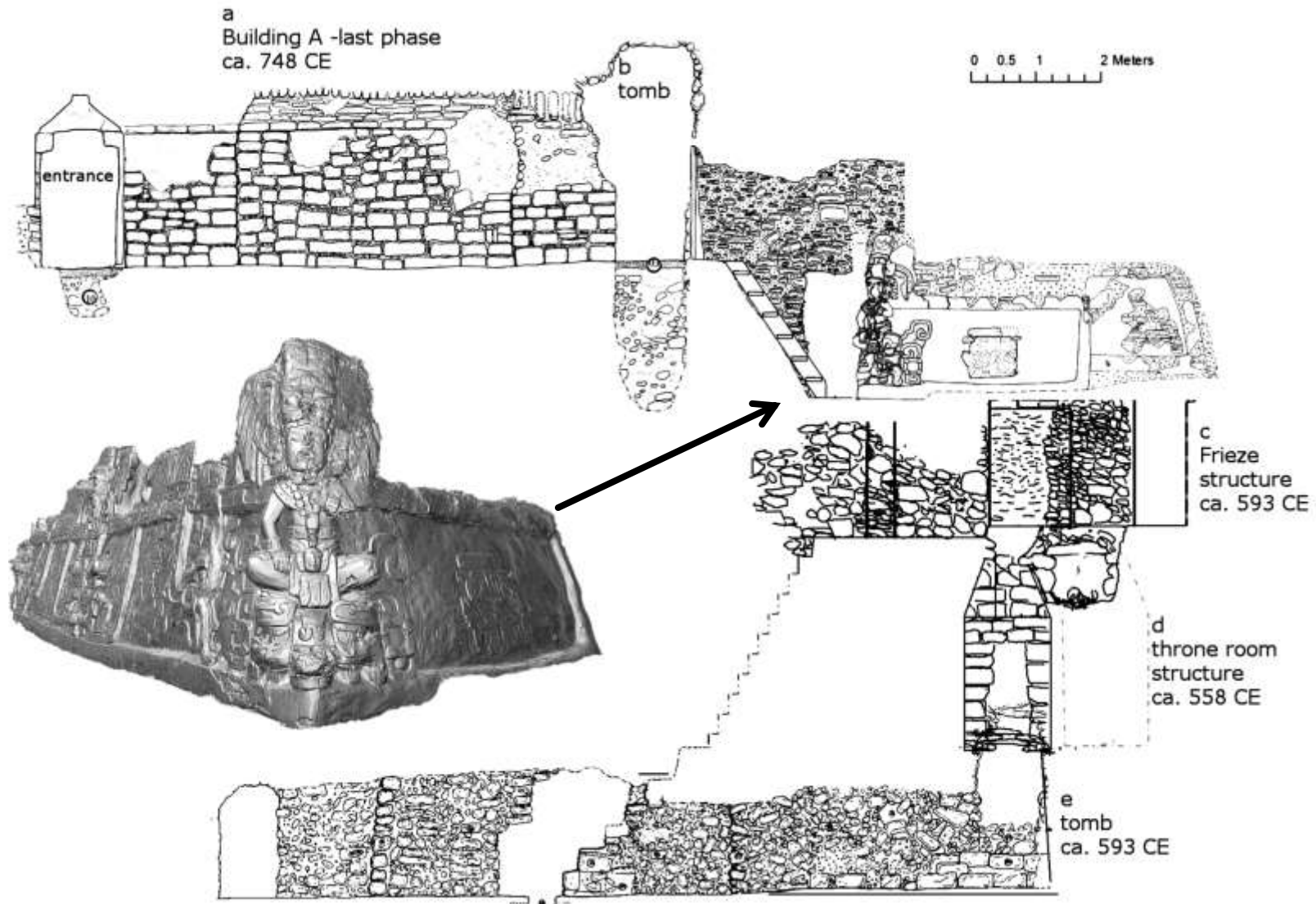
Real and look-alike imports



Back to Holmul



Building A: palace > shrine

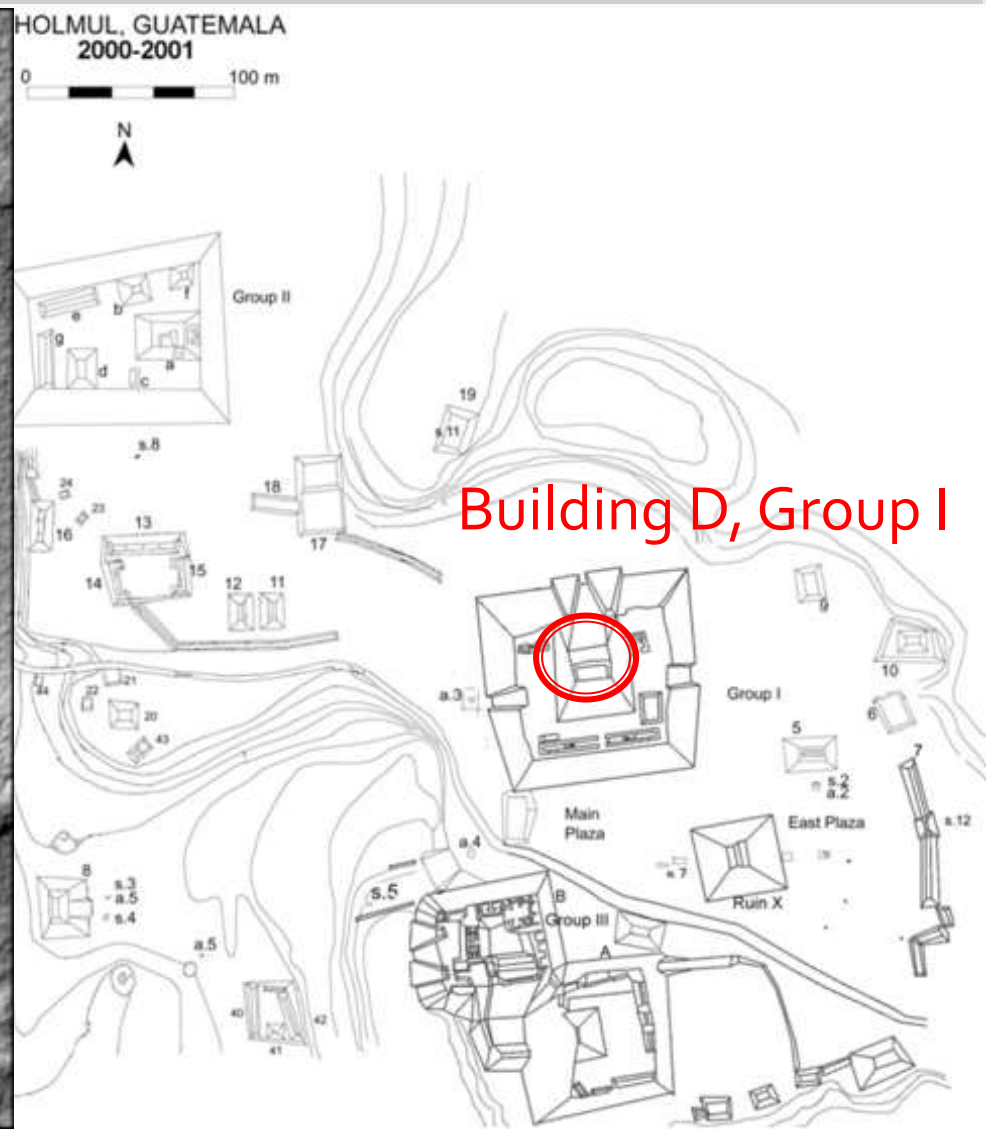
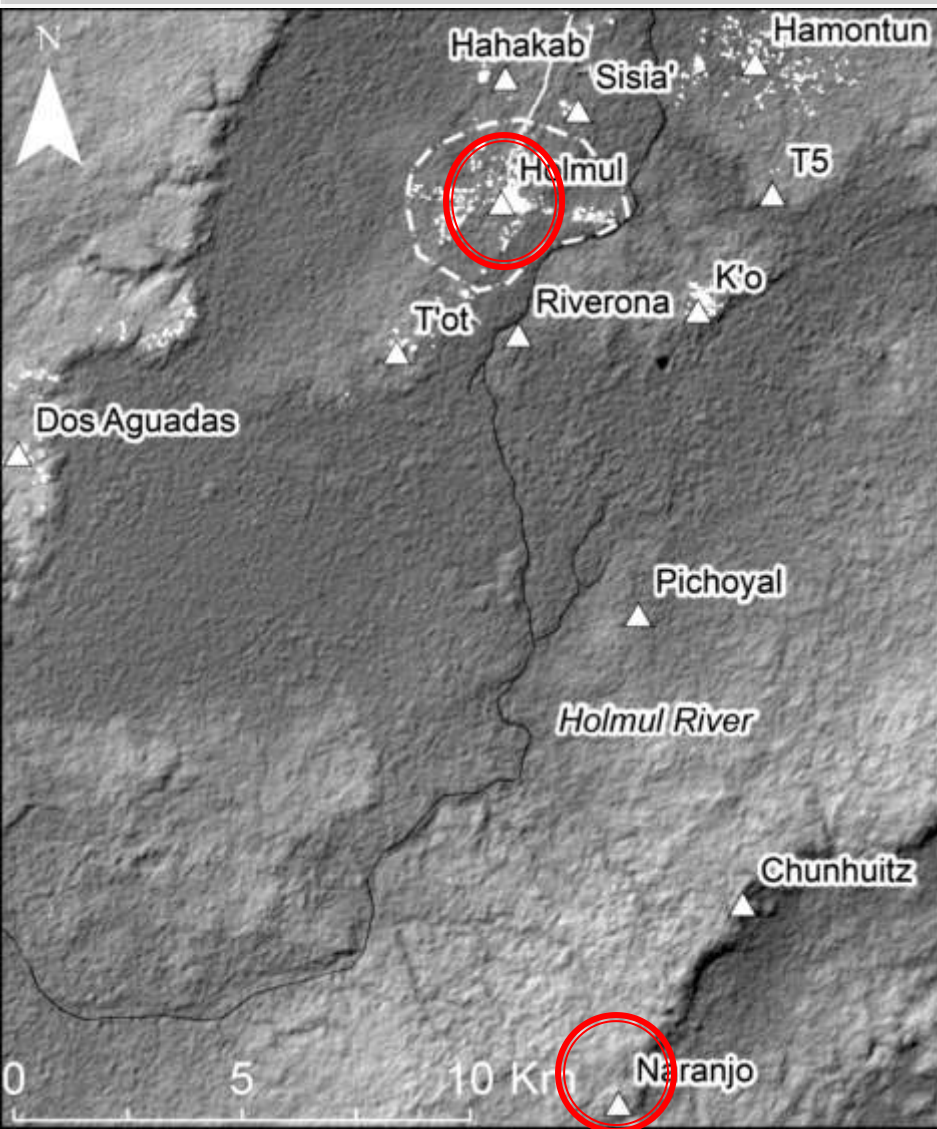




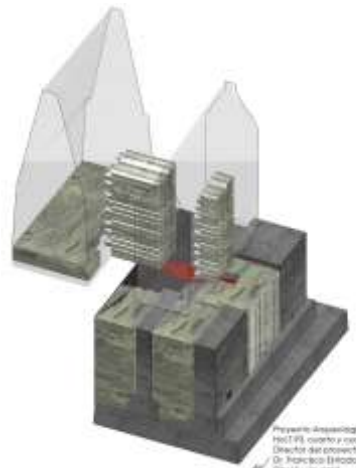
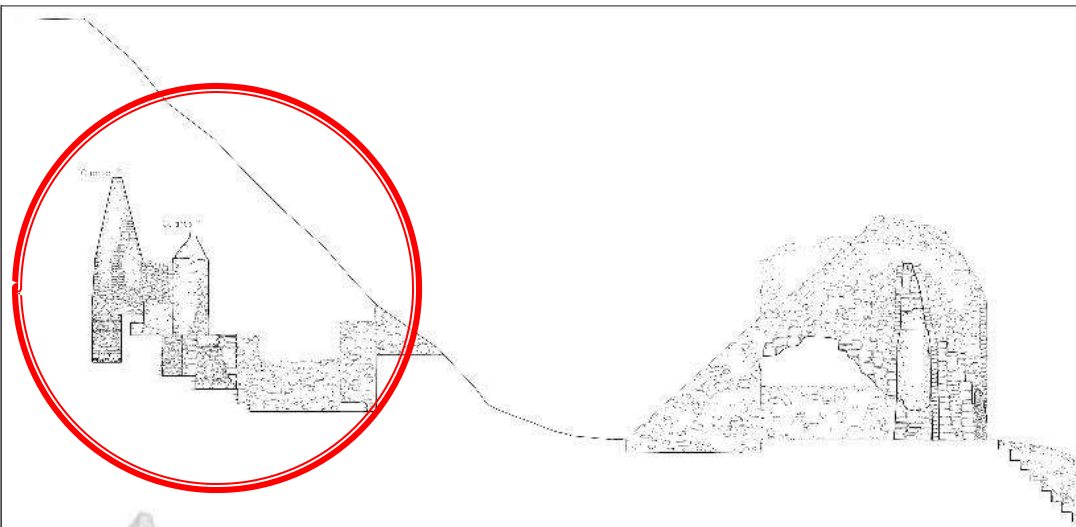
Building A-sub, Group B, Room 2. 3D model (PBR) rendering by A. Tokunomi, CMH ICJ President and Fellow, of Harvard College

Building A-sub, roof frieze (west side)

New friends and overlords



Precious gifts



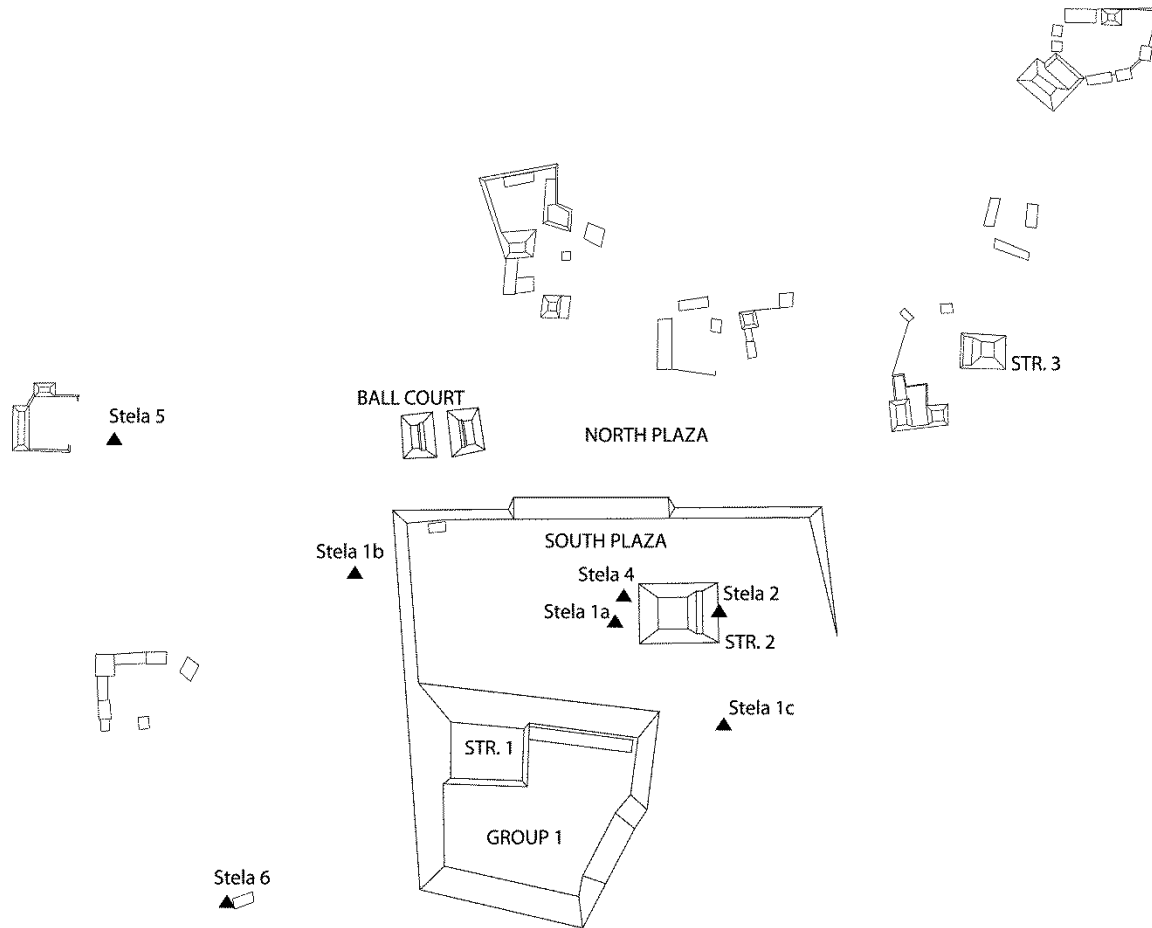
Building D, Group I, Holmul

Programa de Investigación en Humanidades
 INAH (I), Consejo y Consejo
 Director del proyecto
 Dr. Ignacio Branda (Investigador)
 Olmedo y Iván
 www.inah.gob.mx

- A
- 1  **yu-ha**
y-uuh
"(es) su collar"
 - 2  **u-no-?YUK-ma-?-?TI'-na**
YUK-no-ma-u-TI'-CHAN-na (?)
Yuknoom Uti' Chan
 - 3  **K'UH-ka-KAN-AJAW**
k'uh[ul] Kaan[ul] ajaw
"sagrado señor de Kaanul"

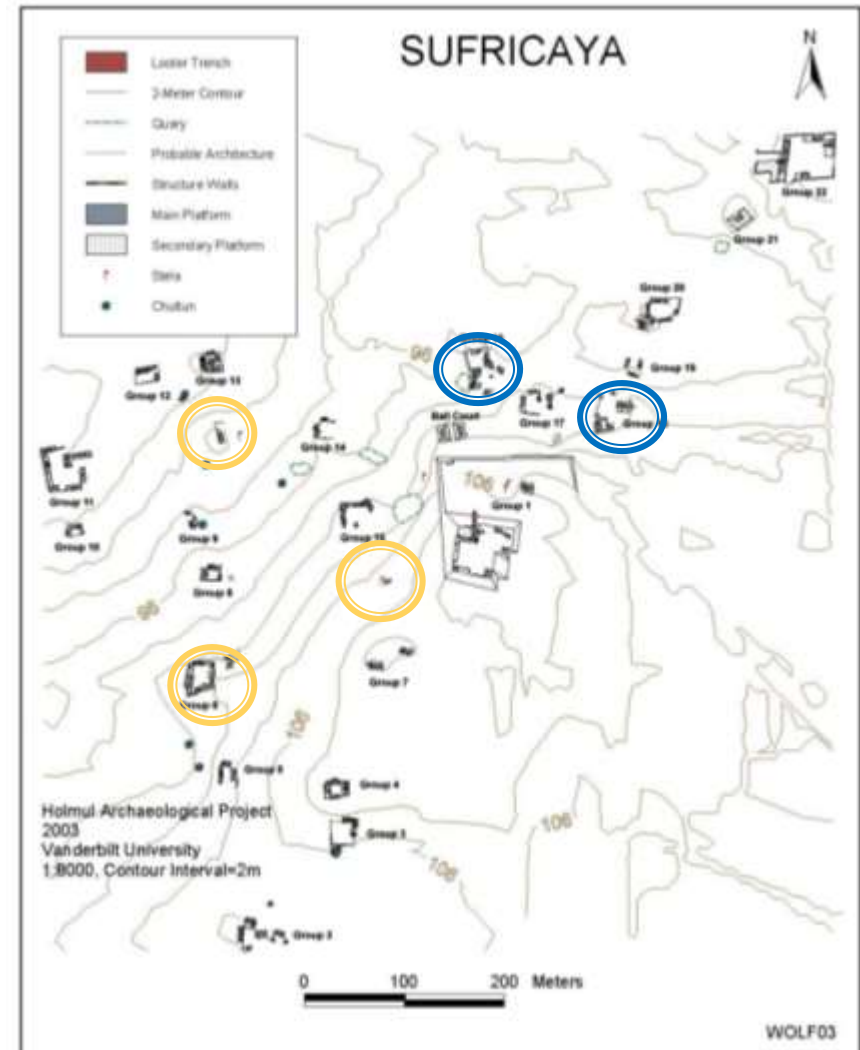
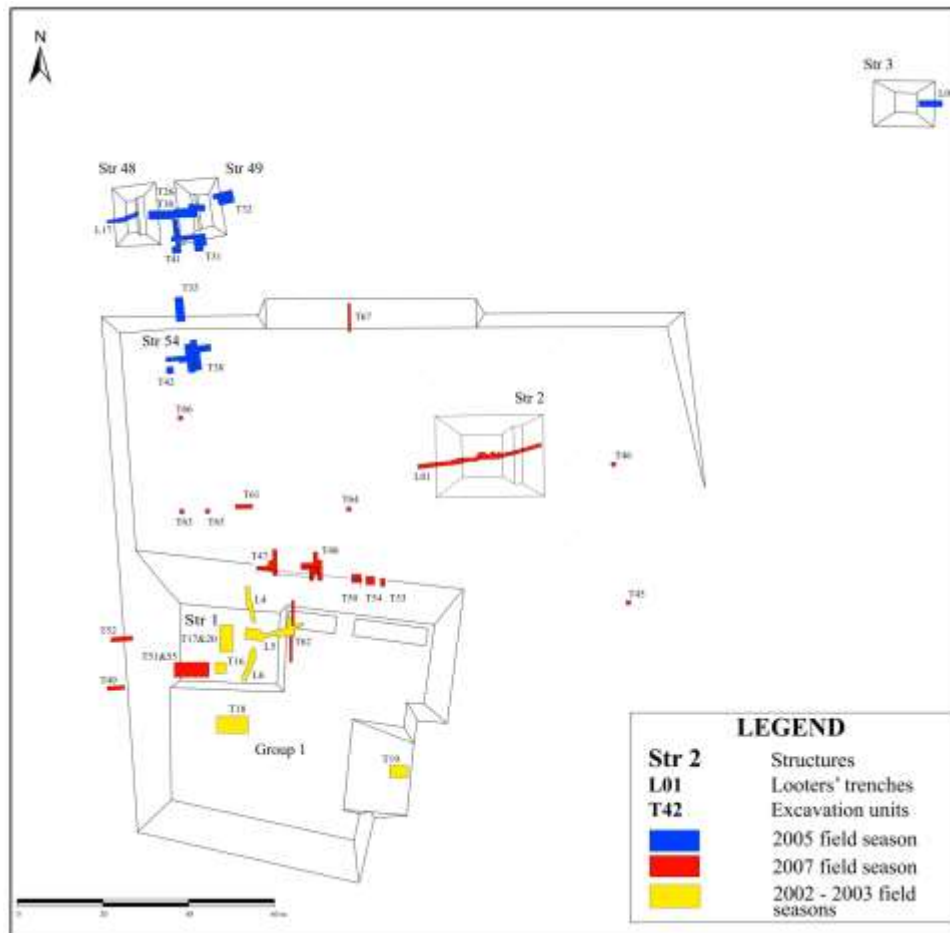


Back to La Sufricaya

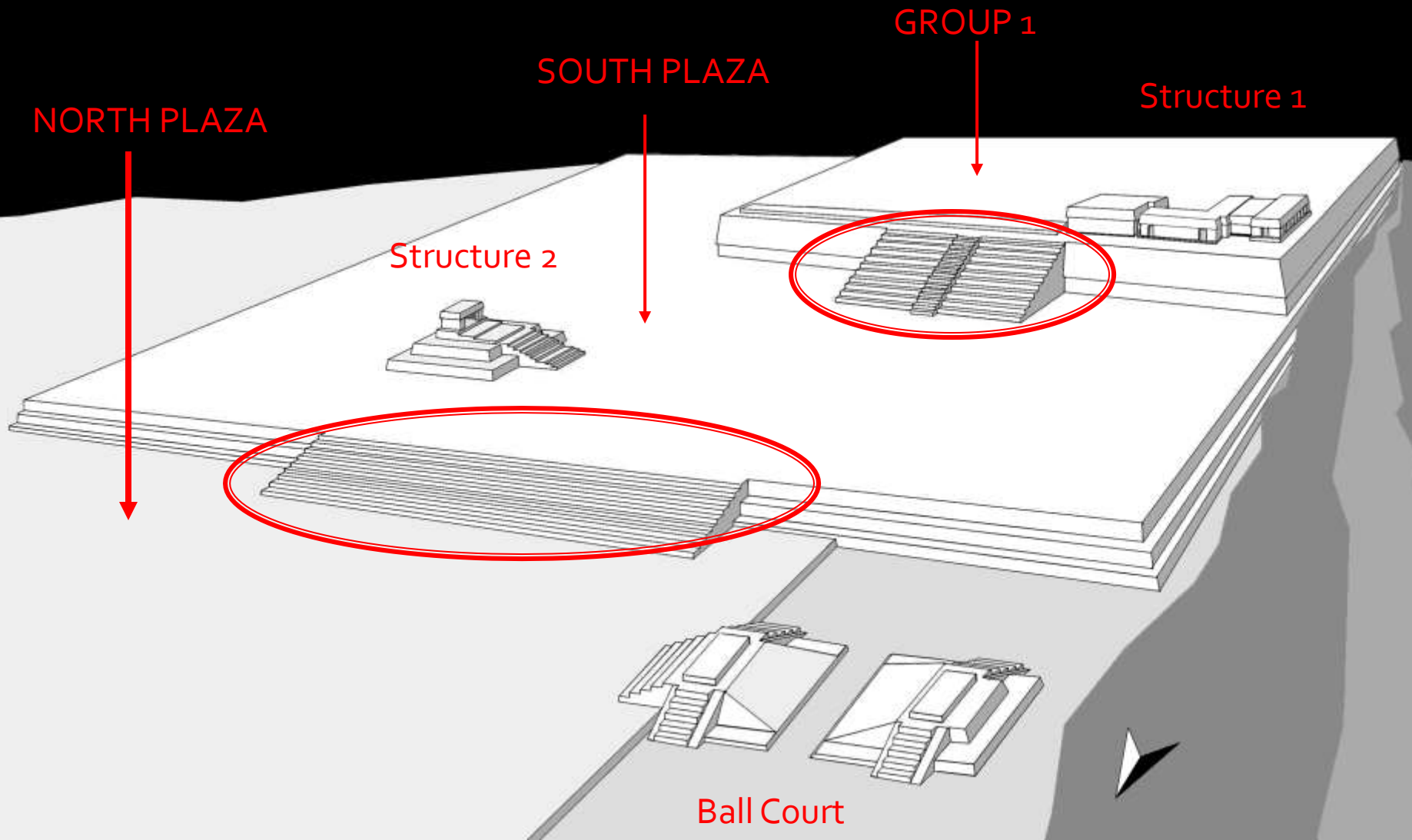


- Late Preclassic ceramics but no structures
- 3 construction phases in the Early Classic period
- Dedication in 379 C.E.
- Monuments 387-435? C.E.
- Abandoned by 550-s
- Terminal Classic residential groups

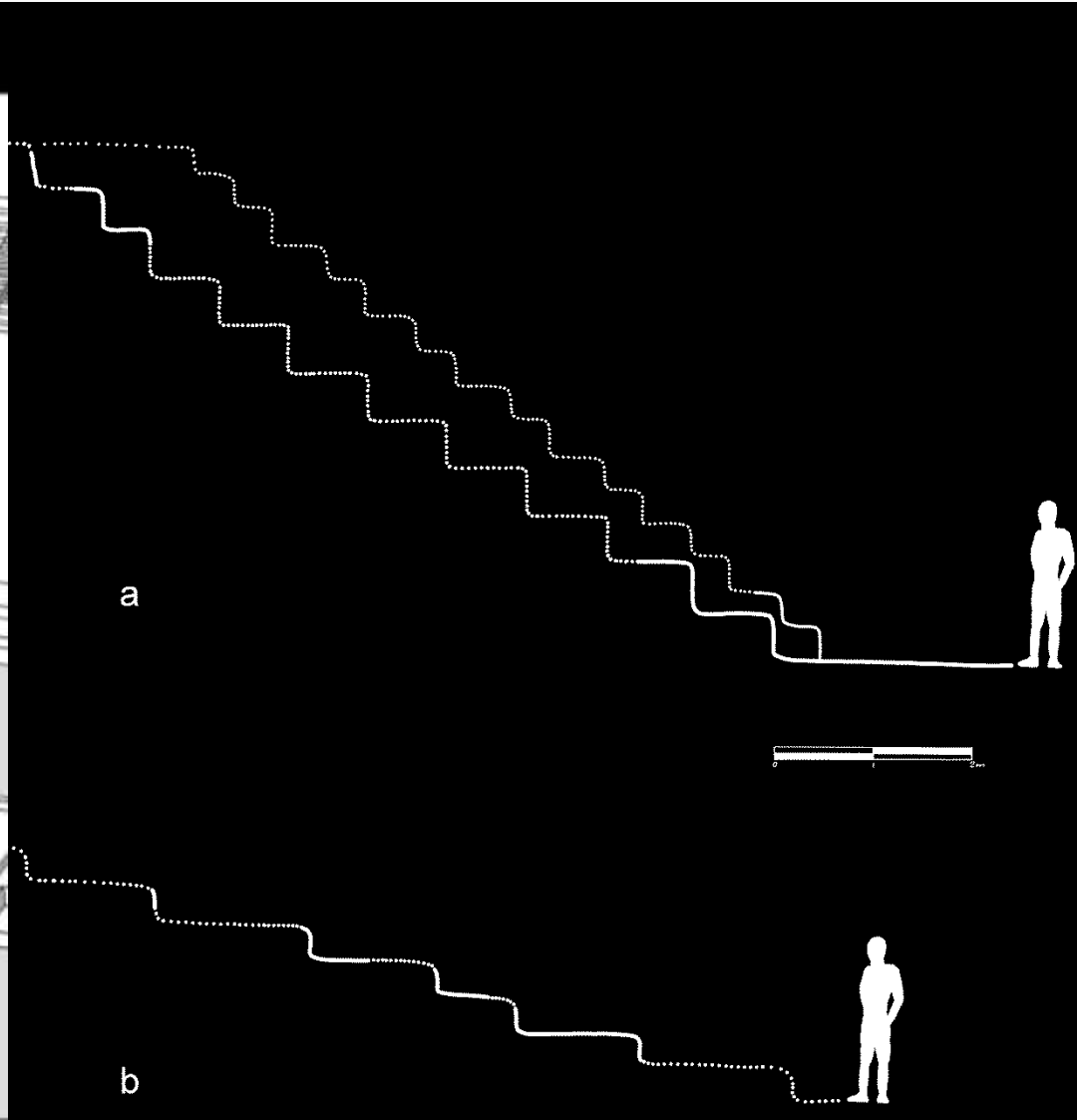
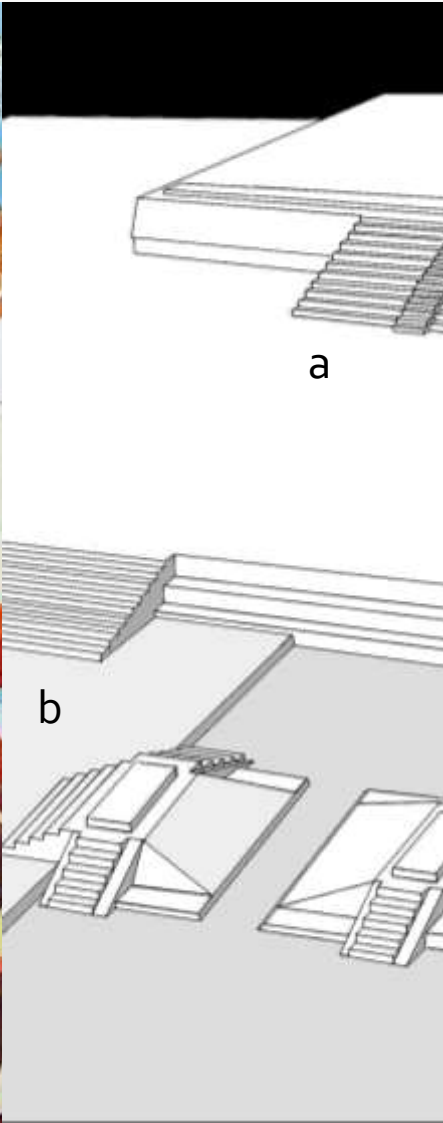
Studies so far: mostly the palace



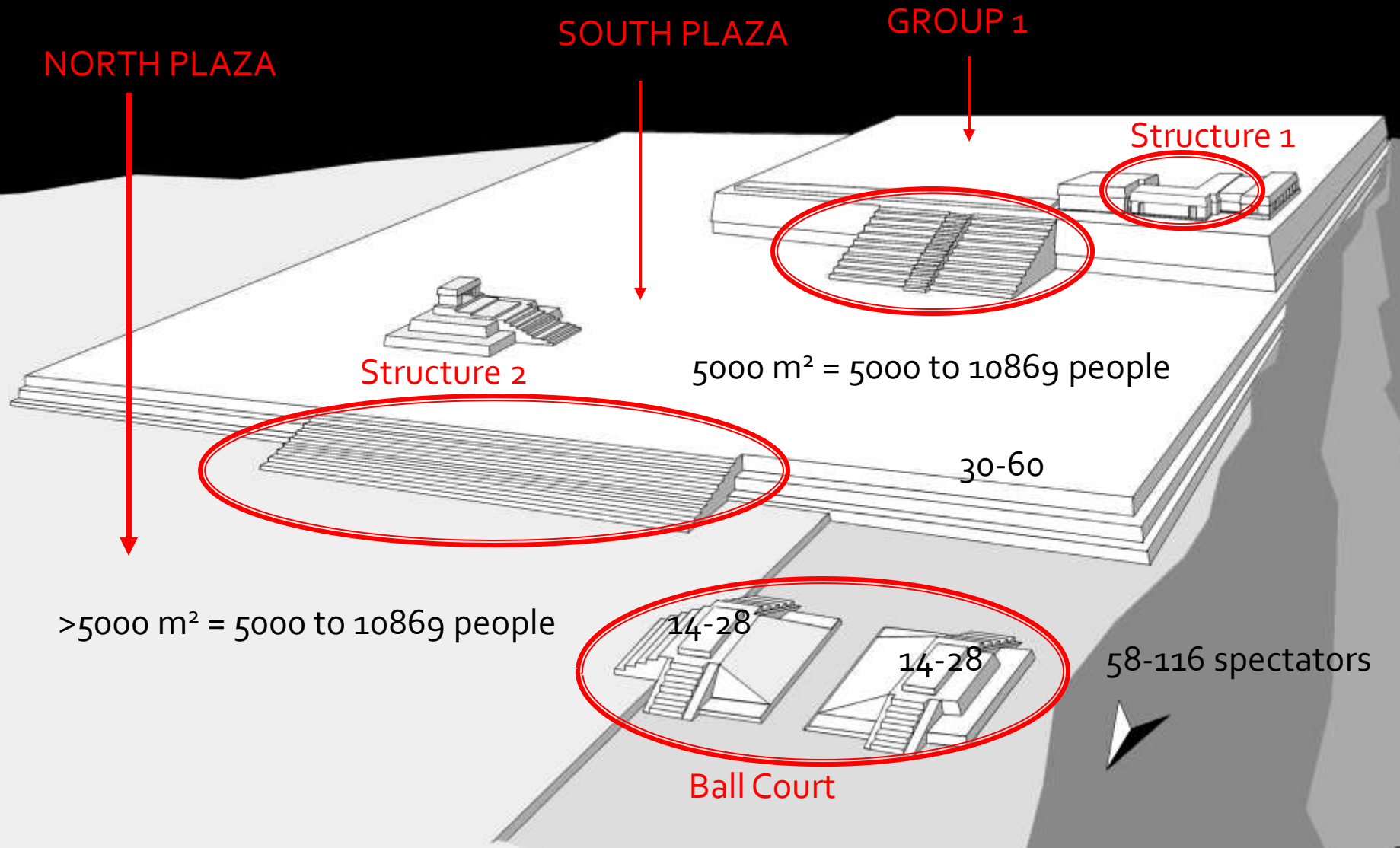
A place for a good show



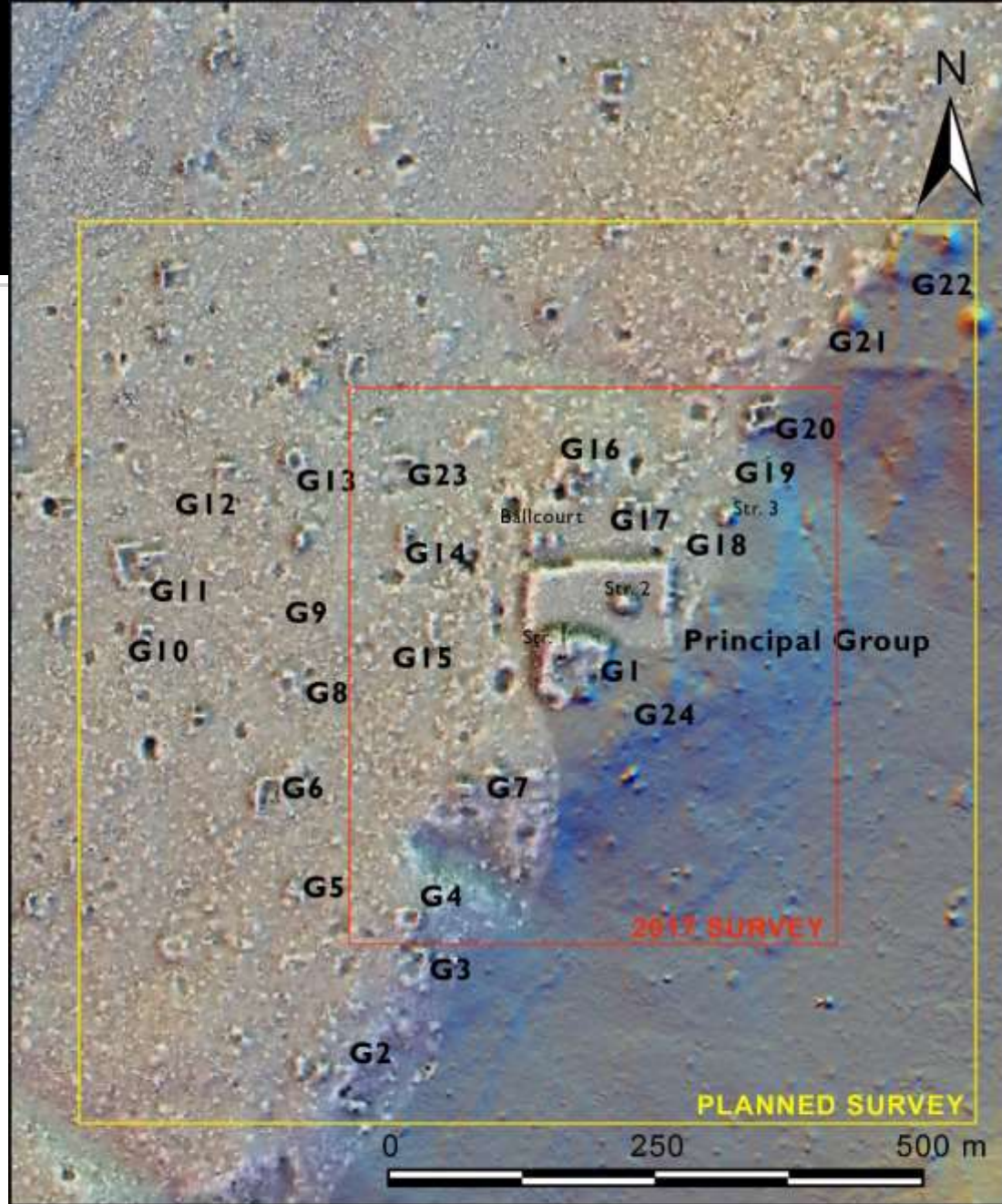
Steps: Access & Performance



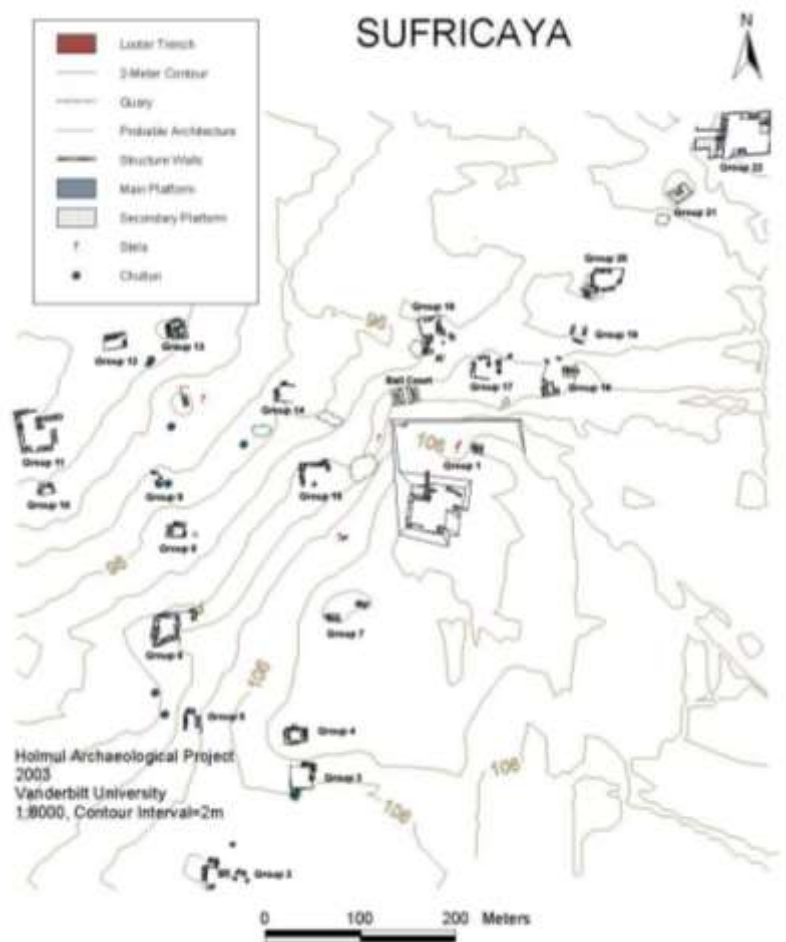
Different audiences or different political communities?



Lidar data > New survey



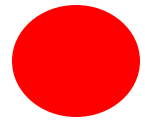
SUFRICAYA



WOLF03

Figure 1. Lidar-based digital elevation model of La Sufricaya (unmapped residential groups are unlabeled)

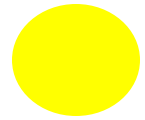
New data



378-550



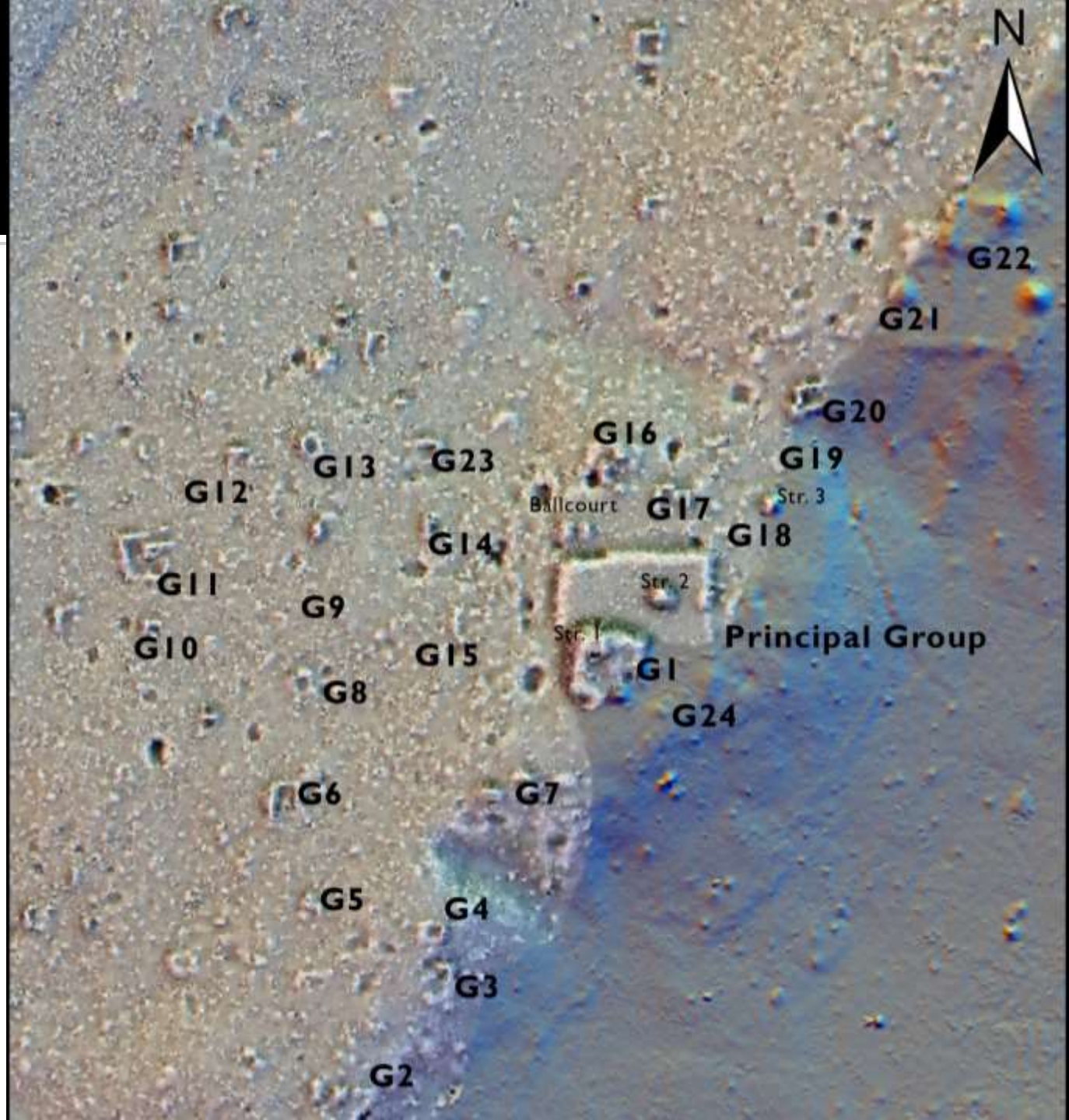
550-750



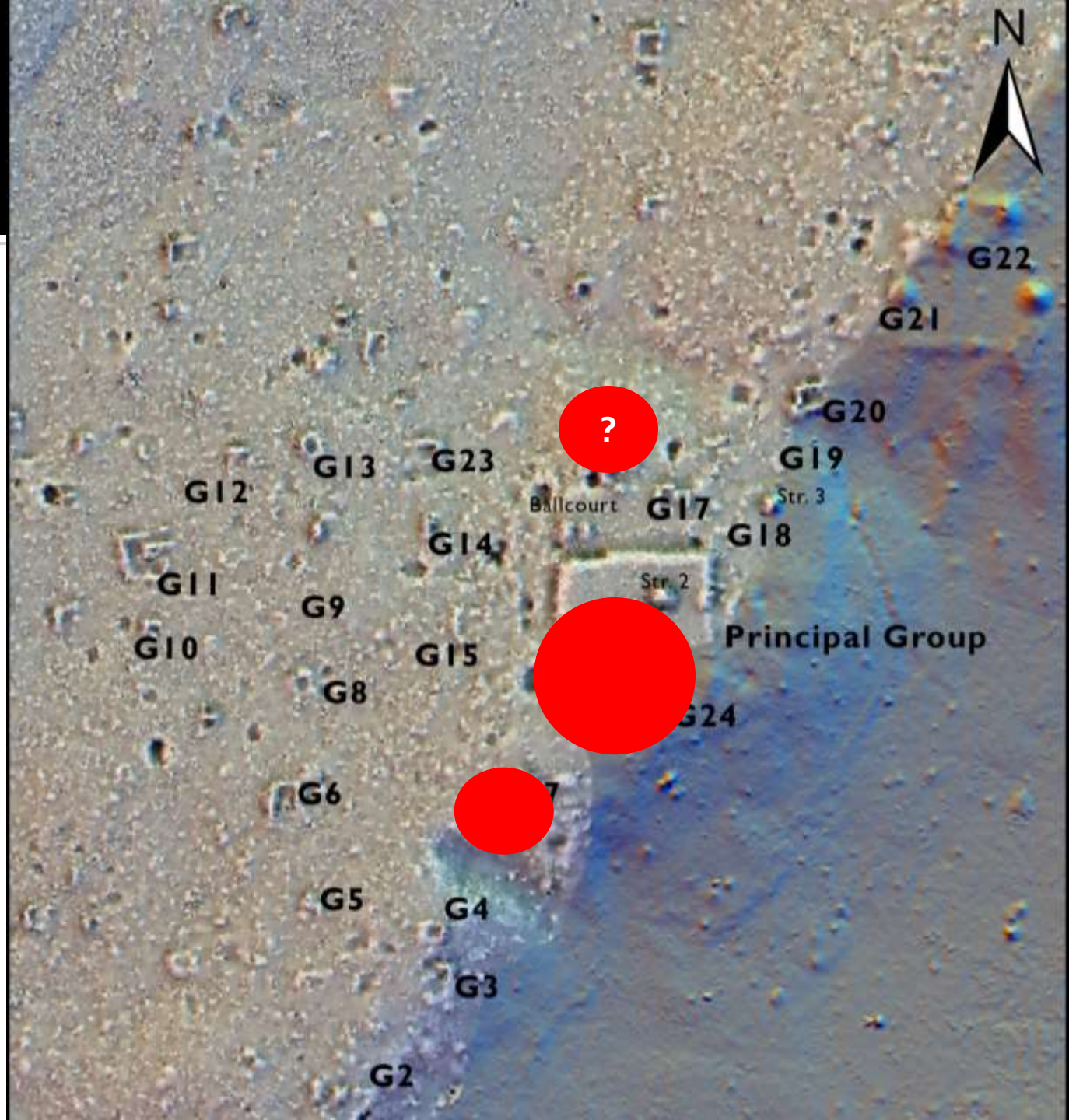
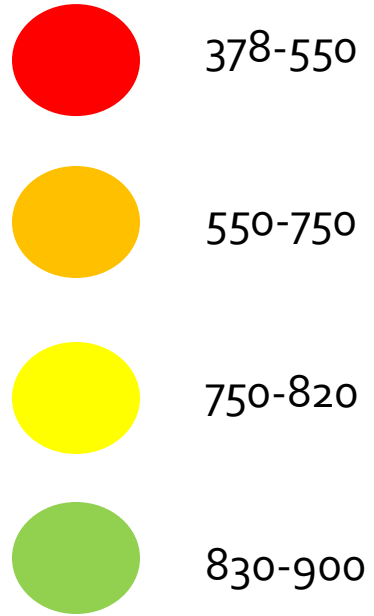
750-820



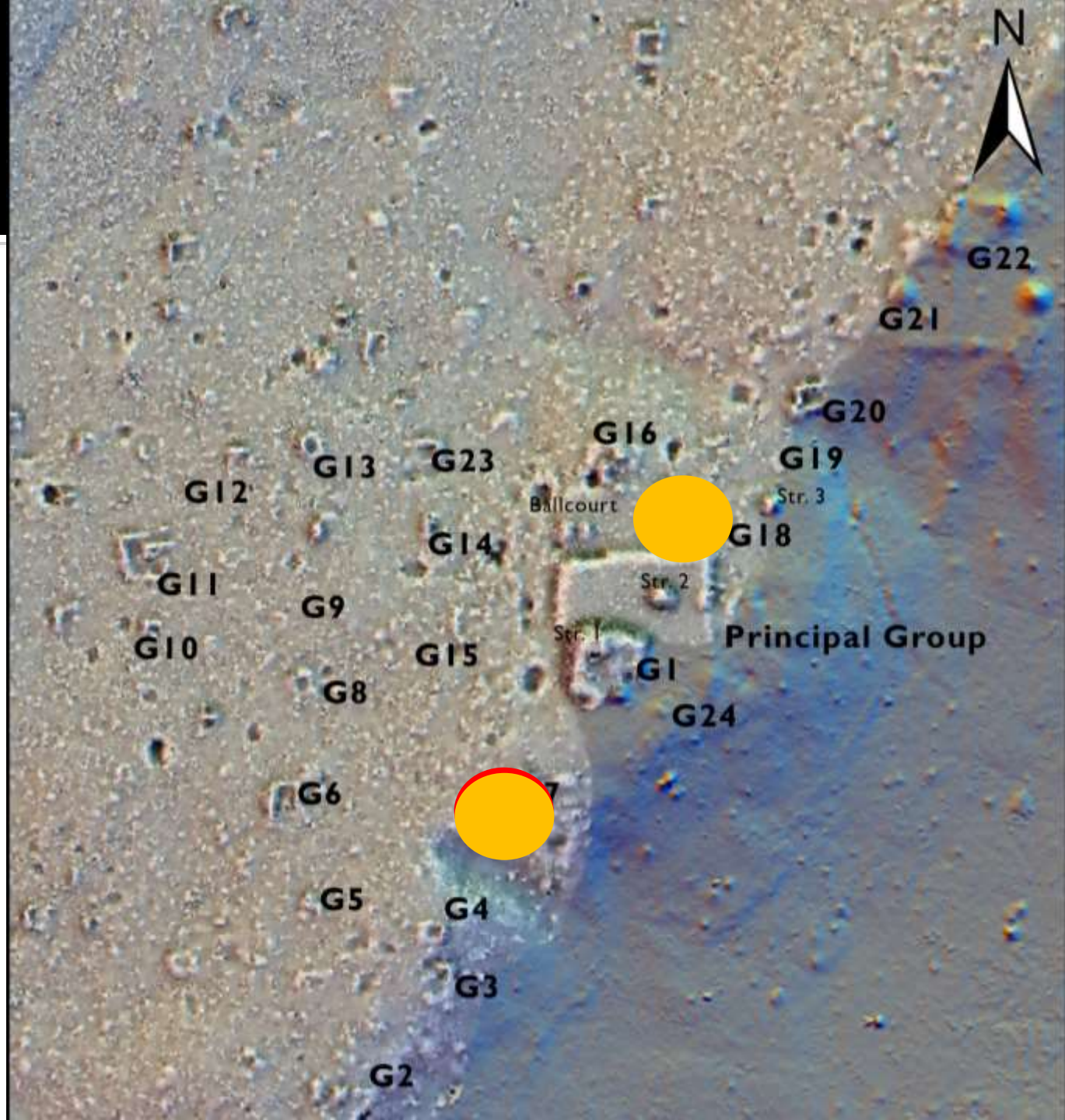
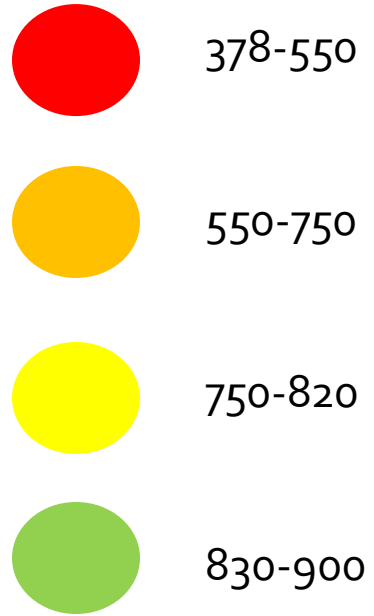
830-900



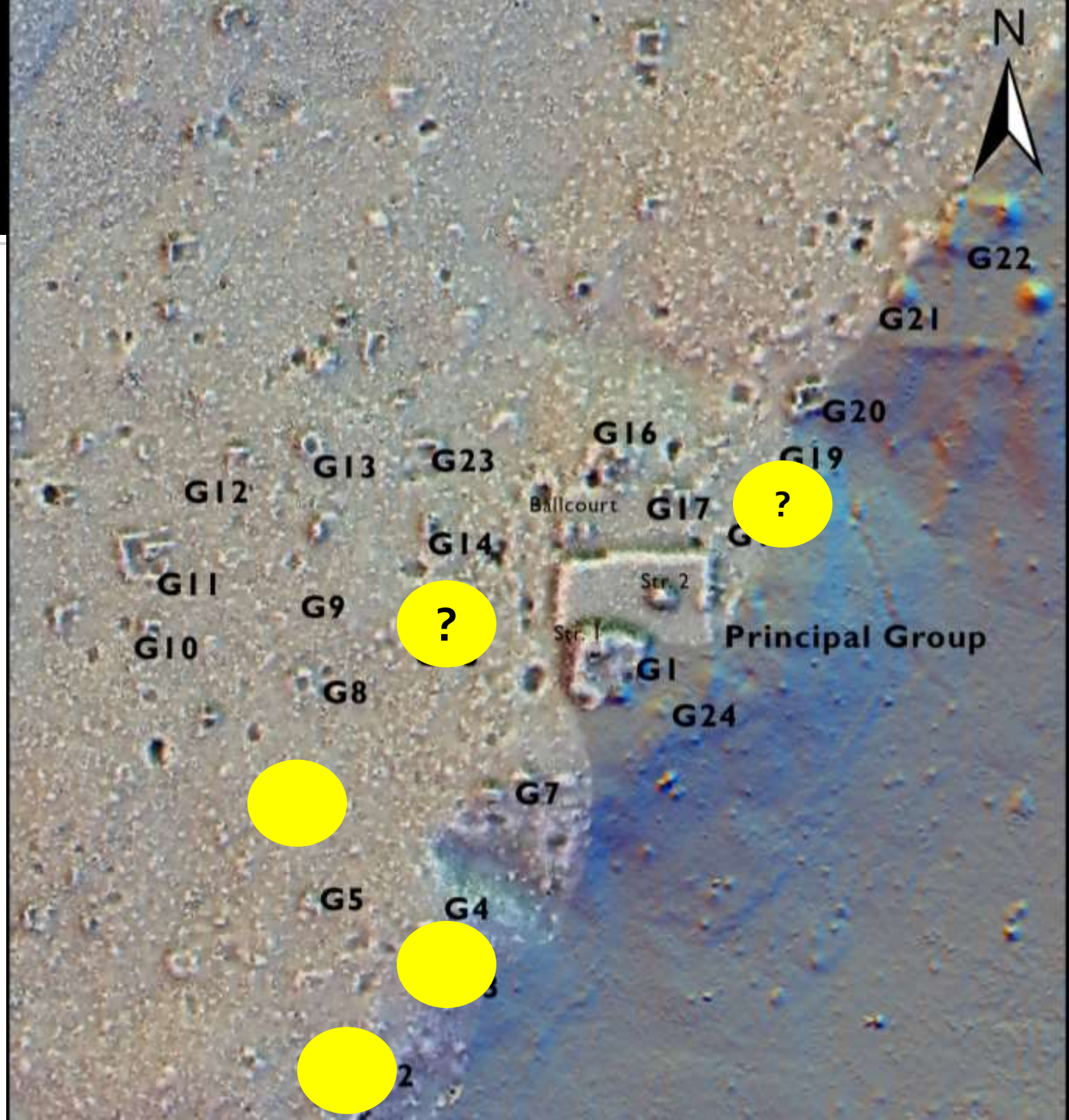
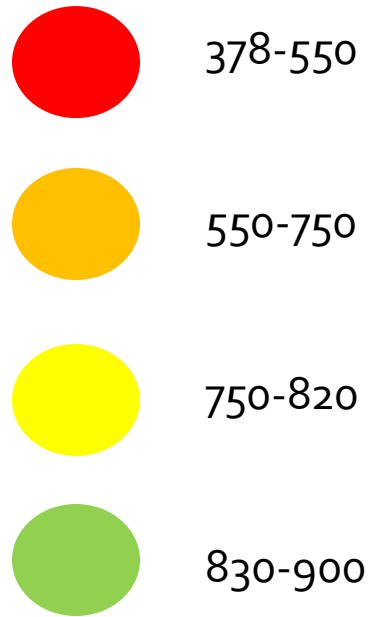
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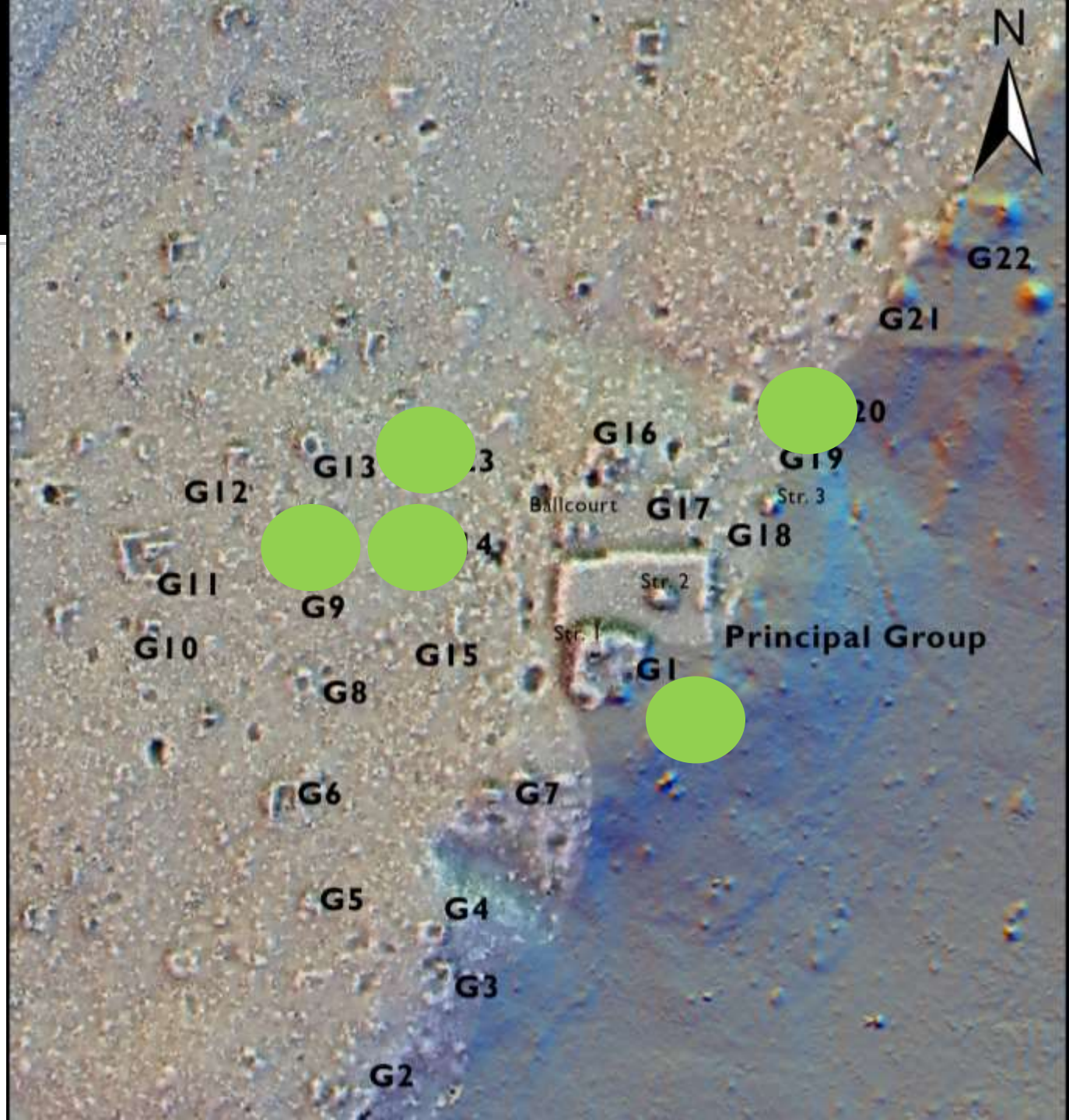
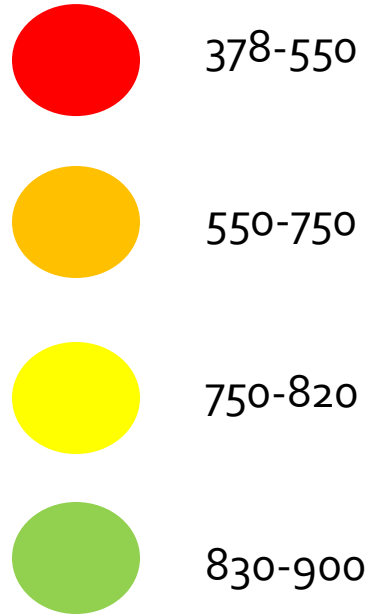
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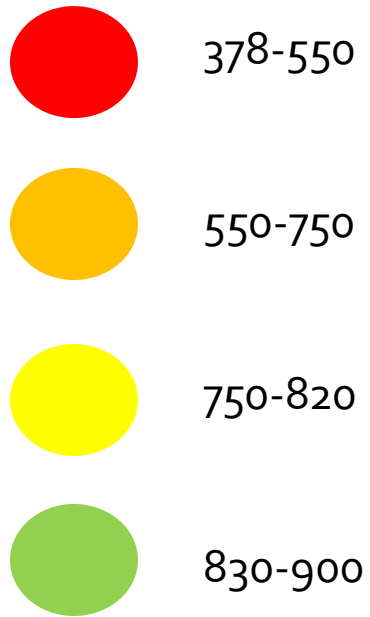
New data



New data



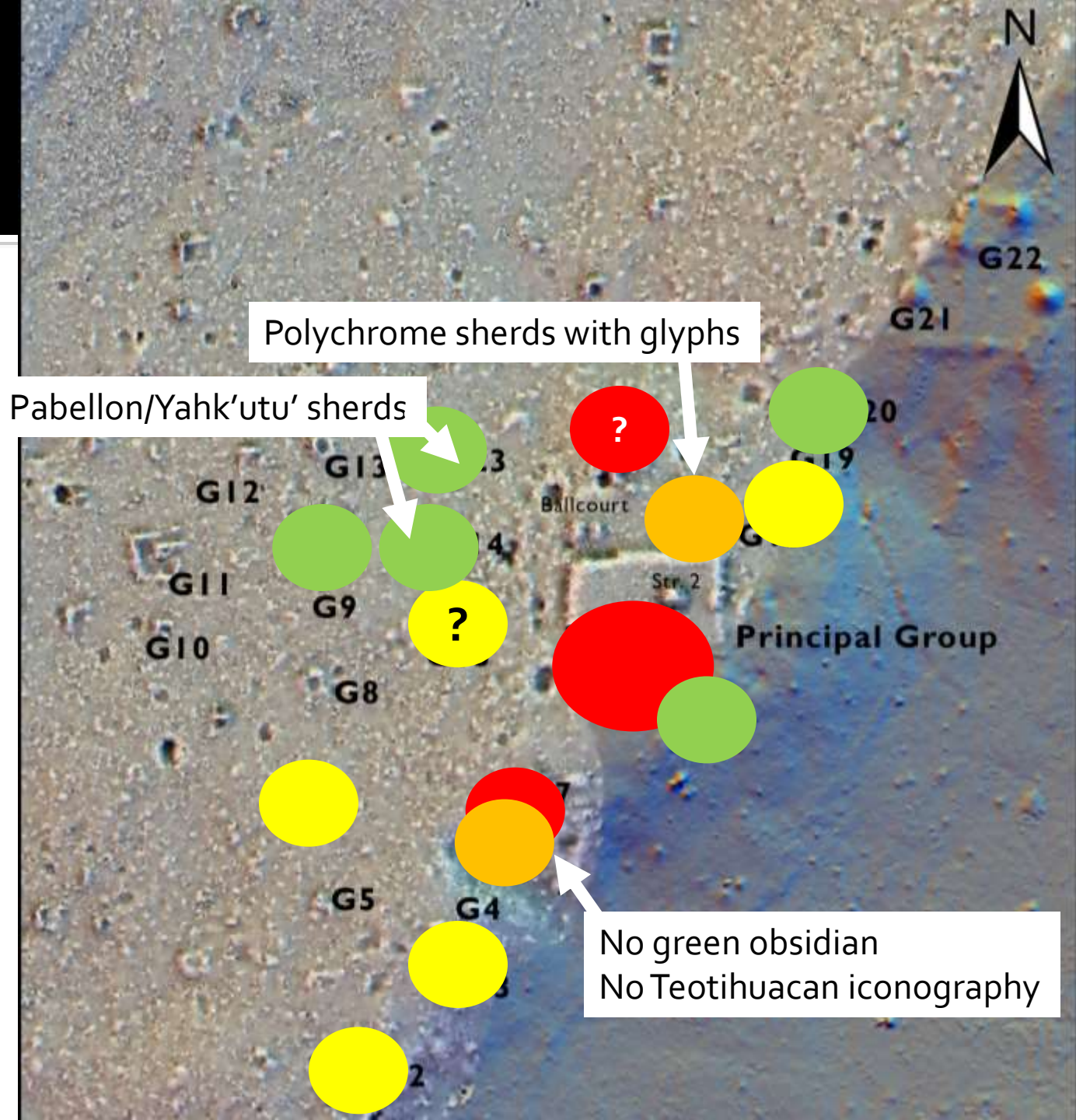
New data



Discreet occupations

Little overlap

Discontinuity



Questioning the model

- Sub-royal households are unstable
- Sub-royal houses are out of sync with the royal household
- Proximity to the royal household seems unimportant
- Sub-royal houses may not share the prestige goods economy with the royal household