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## WK13: Investigations in the Grupo Chok

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### Introduction

In the course of the 2006 season, archaeologists conducted a series of investigations in Structure M13-12, the largest and tallest edifice located in the cluster of plazas and structures designated the Grupo Chok. These explorations would grow to entail 60 excavation units with a total of 89 individual lots. Excavations consisted of a large stripping excavation grid across the front of the structure and a penetrating centerline trench into the structure's interior. These excavations revealed M13-12 to be a large funerary structure of some antiquity. It is very similar to the type of funerary temples found at other Classic sites and described in Haviland (1981: 100-101) and Demarest *et al.* (2003: 128-131, 134-136). Excavators uncovered at least two separate construction phases for M13-12 and the small, intact tomb of a very high elite individual, Burial 38. Furthermore, the tomb shows evidence of a later re-entry event and ceremonial manipulation of human remains, burial goods, and tomb architecture.

The Grupo Chok is a set of ruined structures and plazas located on top of an artificially shaped hill with a fairly broad, flat

surface (Fig. 1). The group stands some 14 meters above the surrounding terrain and Plaza 2, itself some 100 meters above the main camp datum. The plaza possesses an artificial ramp both connecting it directly to, and restricting access from, Plaza 2. The residence group occupies most of quadrant N13 and expands into quadrant M13 of the Harvard Map, crafted by Ian Graham and Peter Mathews (see Tsesmeli 2004: figs 1, 2; Tsesmeli *et al.* 2005). Originally, it was thought two residential groups shared the elevated platform, groups Chok and Pec, but with the clearance of substantial undergrowth, investigators discovered the complex set of plazas and structures to be a single, very large group. It was decided that the Grupo Chok would be expanded to include the entirety of the previously listed Grupo Pec. In field notes, this enlarged group is sometimes referred to as "Grupo Chok-Pec." The map of the combined group is presented here in Figure 1.

It should be noted that, at the time of writing, very little of the necessary laboratory work has been carried out. For this reason, the current report will concern itself solely with a general description of the excavations. This requires a separate report

to be issued later concerning the artifacts of Operation 13, when the project laboratory is in a more functional state. All assessments of the cultural materials from these excavations are, accordingly, based solely on field observations and should be considered subject to change in the future.

Investigators revealed the size, wealth and degree of elaboration of the ancient inhabitants of the Grupo Chok. These ancient inhabitants could have only been one of the most potent of the secondary noble families at the site, instrumental in the politics and society of the period. As such, investigation of the structures reveals not only the group's occupation and development, but, by extension, the occupation and development of El Perú-*Waka'* and the Maya, both the ancients who built these structures and the modern Maya who excavated them.

## Objectives

The initial research goals for investigations into the Grupo Chok and Structure M13-12 included study of the shifting fortunes of the secondary elites for the site. Such vicissitudes should be codified in the group's structures, especially in the ceremonial architecture and the relative wealth of ritual deposits. By hint of M13-12's similarity to other structures in residential complexes and the reset stela fragment on the centerline, a high elite burial was considered likely. These guidelines translated directly into several distinct research objectives. They were as follows:

- 1) to clean and clear large sections of the Grupo Chok to order to add detail and accuracy to the maps already created by the El Perú-*Waka'* Mapping Project and to discover any features or structures covered by heavy brush,
- 2) to map and document to extent of the looting activities present in numerous structures within the Grupo Chok,
- 3) to clean and clear Structure M13-12, to discover the extent of both the damage caused by the deep looters' tunnel and the significant amounts of erosion occurring around the structure's sides,
- 4) to investigate the structure's construction sequence, function and extent, crafting an accurate reconstruction of the building and its associated area,
- 5) to locate and excavate any cache, burial, or other ritual deposit lying along the centerline stair to determine the structure's original construction,
- 6) and to determine the baseline occupational history to provide a guide to aid in further explorations of the Grupo Chok.

## Methodology

To best accomplish these goals, investigations employed a number of distinct, but related, research strategies. First, the brush and undergrowth were cleared from both M13-12 and the area around and in front of it, including most of the main plaza and Structure N13-6. This involved several days of cutting and clearing, including the chainsawing of two large fallen ramón trees that lay across the center of the main plaza. No cutting occurred of the trees or plants proscribed by CONAP regulations. The field excavators, recruited from local Q'echi' communities, proved able to easily identify the protected species. Great effort was made to avoid unnecessary cutting, and, if possible, excavations were made in such a way to accommodate extant trees. Several saplings were removed from the slopes of M13-12 and replanted elsewhere in the plaza using fine-screened soil. By the time the project departed the site, the replanted saplings, by any measure, were thriving in their new locations. The clearing of vegetation from around looters' tunnels and deep loot-holes revealed the damage from looting to be far more extensive than first thought. Indeed, Structure M13-10 has almost been totally destroyed by the effects of tree-fall, erosion, and looting. The deep, 7.2-meter tunnel into Structure M13-12 has grossly destabilized the western side of the pyramid; the building is now held up entirely by the great ramón trees sprouting from the structure's slopes and summit. M13-12 is

probably only two treefalls away from being completely destroyed.

Secondly, the deep looters' tunnel into M13-12 was cleaned, the undergrowth around the entrance removed and the depth plumbed. The expertise of the Q'echi' proved invaluable in chasing out the bats and small snakes. The heavy root growth across the roof of the tunnel proved that it was dug some time ago, the roots having grown up over the entrance. The tunnel was then mapped and photographed over a three-day period (Fig. 4).

Thirdly, given the dilapidated nature of Structure M13-12 and what appeared to be an extended frontal platform scattered with fallen monumental stones, a widespread stripping operation was carried out. Stripping operations had performed very well in the 2005 and 2006 operations in and around the Grupo Tolok (Eppich 2006) and performed equally well on Structure M13-12. The type of construction employed in the building's Terminal Classic construction phase involved heavy use of small brick-sized cut blocks of limestone fronting a stacked, dry-core construction fill. Only a widely applied stripping operation could have uncovered the complex design on platform step, staircase, and angled walls from M13-12. A one-square-meter excavation grid was extended over the building's fronting platform and was modified when necessary, expanding into a series of two-by-two meter units on the eastern side and a diagonal unit joining the stripping operation and centerline trench.

Finally, a centerline trench was excavated down the building's front and center to uncover the construction sequence and any possible dedicatory deposit or centerline cache. Special care had to be taken as the trench extended deep into the dry-core construction fill. Initially, it was hoped that the trench could be excavated to the depth of the "thick" plaster floor encountered in both the stripping operation and in the looters' tunnel. At a minimum, it was hoped that excavators would come across the thick ash-lenses visible in the tunnel profile. However, the dry-core fill in the trench's walls became visibly unstable and excavation ceased at a maximal depth of 2.5 meters.

Additional plans included extending the stripping operation to include many of the monumental stone fragments scattered across M13-12 fronting platform, clearing and mapping all the looters' holes in the various structures of the Grupo Chok, and an extensive testpitting operation to locate and excavate any potential middens. Such plans had to be scrapped given the time constraints of the 2006 field season, as well as additional attention paid to the complex burial and small tomb discovered in the centerline trench.

## **Description of the Investigated Area**

The Grupo Chok is a series of plazas and structures located on a large, level, artificially shaped hill (Fig. 1). Measuring some 13,500 square meters, the

Grupo Chok is one of the largest residence groups at El Perú-*Waka'*. The artificially shaped nature of the hillock can be seen in those areas with heavy erosion, as both construction fill and large limestone boulders spill down the eroded slope. The group consists of at least 28 ruined structures and 6 associated plazas. The entire group centers on a central plaza, itself framed by Structures M13-12, N13-6, and M13-10 on the south, east, and west, respectively (Fig. 1). Numerous platforms are scattered across the group and the exact extent and number of structures comprising the Grupo Chok will be unknown until clearly determined by direct excavation. For this reason, it remains best to take conservative estimates of these structures. The central plaza is connected directly to Plaza 2 by means of a large, artificial ramp. Investigators determined its artificial nature by noticing construction fill, upturned cut stone blocks and large limestone boulders eroding from both sides. The artificial ramp seems the logical entrance to the group and the flanking structures all face the ramp's terminus. The main plaza is itself a scene of heavy erosion with large sinkholes appearing in the middle and washing materials into the limestone hollows below. One such smaller sinkhole has been identified on some maps as a chultun to the northeast of M13-12. After careful examination, investigators determined that no such chultun existed. To the front of M13-11 rests a blank and toppled stele.

Erosion has long effaced any carving it might have had.

Extensive looting characterizes the group with deep trenches in Structures N13-2, N13-13, N13-6, N13-14, and N13-17. M13-11 has been so badly looted that the structure itself has been largely destroyed. The looters' tunnel burrows deep into the structure and the looters hit at least two intact large cist burials and at least three distinct construction episodes. The cists were demolished and enlarged, effectively hollowing out the interior of the building. Such burrowing cut the roots and killed a large ramón tree growing from the summit of M13-11. When the tree died and collapsed, it ripped off the entire top portion of the structure. Fragments of ceramic vessels are scattered in the building's hollow center and seem to indicate a Late Classic date for the lost interments. Any further investigations in the Grupo Chok should include the recording and consolidation of this very sad structure.

The long, low platform and placement of N13-6 would suggest a central importance. The large ruined structure and, potentially, the broad steps leading up to it, make N13-6 an edifice of some interest. Inspection of the rubble yielded no evidence of vault stones. N13-6 should be the main focus of further research at the Grupo Chok, particularly given its "palace-like" placement.

Much of the remainder of the group was only peripherally inspected and most of the structures remained covered with heavy vegetation. Given the size and complexity

of Structure M13-12, that structure became the main focus of attention during the 2006 field season.

### **Structure M13-12**

Structure M13-12 is the tallest and most impressive edifice located in the Grupo Chok (Fig. 2). Even in its distressed and ruined condition, the mound stands some 6 meters above the group's main plaza. Due to the amount of rubble around the excavated base, the original pyramid must have been taller and more slender than it appears today. As given above, the construction technique used for the final Terminal Classic building phase involved well-set, smallish cut stones fronting a dry core construction fill made up of large, irregular limestones. Once this construction begins to give way, one can easily see how it would spill out into a jumbled mass of fill and masonry. Large amounts of this material were removed from the excavated sections. Only a few intact wall bases remain, and only along the eastern slope are a few lines of masonry visible beneath the humus. The remainder of M13-12's slopes consists of a thin layer of humus lying atop this mass of collapsed construction fill. Often the collapsed rubble protrudes from the ground surface, especially in areas of significant erosion. The building is, on the whole, not well preserved. The southern slope is covered with fallen cut stone and construction fill, having tumbled down with significant amounts of rubble coming to rest near Structure M13-16 (Fig. 1). In all

probability, the entire southern third of M13-12 has slid down its own rear slope. A massive treefall marks the southeastern corner, crafting a solid “shelf” of massed rubble and humus. In addition, looters excavated a deep tunnel into the southwest side of the structure, forming an enormous spoil pile immediately below the tunnel entrance (Fig. 2). The tunnel extends some 7.2 meters into the center of the pyramid, gouging through several different construction layers and leaving a small hollow in the structure’s interior. Inspection of the spoil pile as well as the interior of the tunnel revealed that the looters encountered neither a rich burial nor a special deposit of any kind. At the bottom of the tunnel, there are a half-dozen arm-sized holes in the walls and at the terminus, where the looters dug into the walls and thrust their arms, prospecting for voids in the structure. A large ramón tree frames the tunnel entrance, indicating that much of the tree’s growth occurred after the tunnel’s excavation. This would mostly likely place the date of the tunnel to the initial round of looting of the site, known to have taken place in the late 1960s or early 1970s (Farr 2004). Six very large ramón trees crown the top and slopes of M13-12, the largest sitting atop the tunnel entrance. Most likely, these trees alone continue to hold structure together. As noted earlier, the Structure M13-12 is only a treefall or two away from major destruction.

Remaining on the summit and scattered down the southern slope were a number of vault-stones, indicating that the

superstructure, at some point, possessed some vaulted architecture. Nothing of this survives, of course.

The degree of collapse present in M13-12 prevented investigators from correctly assessing the building’s orientation. With the mass of collapse in front, the original orientation was assumed to be 37 or 38-degrees east of north, pointing the building towards Structure N13-6. Once the stripping operation on M13-12’s fronting platform was underway, however, excavators quickly realized that the platform step indicated a different orientation. M13-12 is, instead, oriented 18 degrees east of north and pointed at Structure M13-11, directly across the group’s main plaza. It is for this reason that the excavation grid of the stripping operation and the centerline trench possess a 20-degree displacement and, consequently, a diagonal relationship (Fig. 2). It makes for an odd-looking map, but doesn’t affect the recovered architectural data.

M13-12 has an expansive fronting platform, extending out some six meters from the pyramid’s base. Badly weathered monumental stone fragments litter this area. There appears to be little pattern to their placement, although most tend to cluster on the platform’s western side. Due to their poorly preserved condition, it is possible that some, if not most, of these stones are large and exceptionally weathered pieces of the structure’s dry-core construction fill. Certainly some of the stones noted from the tunnel and in the centerline trench are of

comparable size. A two-by-two meter excavation, Unit 60, was placed around the largest of these weathered monumental stones (Fig. 3). The humus was removed to see if there were any associated features or architecture or, potentially, any associated cache or surviving carved surface. The fragment itself was a large, round, altar-type stone, badly weathered with no discernable carved features of any kind, measuring 1.30 meters across. Enough material was removed to note that the underside was badly weathered as well, indicating that it is not in its original position. An associated cache was therefore unlikely. It seems that these fragments, like the stela fragment in Unit 38, were monuments, or pieces of monuments, probably reset in the Terminal Classic.

### **M13-12 Excavations**

A total of 60 excavation units were placed in and around Structure M13-12; 41 of these in an excavation grid that stripped away the humus and collapsed rubble from the fronting platform and the pyramid's base (Figs. 3). The remaining 19 units were located in the penetrating centerline trench.

Almost immediately, excavators encountered thick and dense midden-type materials piled on top of the steps and floor of the fronting platform. These included thousands of ceramic sherds and, in places, complete vessels, numerous examples of faunal bone and dozens of figurine fragments. The recovered material from the first 19 units of the excavation grid totaled

some 18,772 ceramic sherds, 80 fragments of ceramic figurines, 196 pieces of obsidian and 116 fragments of chert. This material had been well mixed with humic soils by plant and water action. The figurines, in particular, included dogs, deer, monkeys, and some fantastic zoomorphic creatures, but seemed to focus on human figurines. Several warrior-type figurines with large, plumed headdresses were uncovered and at least one or two figurines had a fine orange paste characteristic of the Terminal Classic. At least one figurine appeared to be a sacrificial victim with a flayed, skeletal face. It is tempting to associate the deposits on the fronting platform with evidence for the type of reverential ritual carried out with the central stair and Burial 38. Indeed, such a deposit would be consistent with M13-12's use in the Terminal Classic as a kind of ancestor-shrine (Freidel *et al.* 1993: 171-172; 188-189; Chase and Chase 1994: 57). Until the necessary laboratory analysis is complete, however, this reading of the material remains very difficult. It could just as easily be post-abandonment domestic rubbish with no ritual connection to either M13-12 or Burial 38. The midden-type material, or votive-style offering, was most heavily clustered on the plaza floor in front of M13-12's fronting platform. It was present in greatly diminishing quantities on the platform's step and greatly diminished on the floor of the fronting platform. Interestingly enough, in places, both the figurine fragments and ceramic sherds lay on top of blocks of collapsed rubble and if

eneration activities are suspected, this may suggest continued veneration after the building had begun to fall into ruin.

Once excavators removed the mix of humus and cultural material, they uncovered the surviving architecture of the fronting platform itself (Figs. 2 and 3). This platform occupies the space immediately to the front of M13-12 and underlies both the Terminal Classic centerline stair and much of M13-12 itself. It has a durable “thick” plaster floor that extends under much of the structure’s final construction phase and is visible in the looters’ tunnel (Fig. 4). The platform clearly predates the structure. The platform floor itself stands some 80-90 cm above the plaza floor with four fronting steps leading up to it. Each step has a riser of about 20 cm, although the battered condition of those steps makes a precise determination difficult. It is obvious that the steps possessed plaster treads, but the plaster has long eroded away, leaving only the floor’s cobblestone foundation. Indeed, foundational cobbles are all that remains of large sections of the fronting platform floor itself. The preserved sections of plaster floor were, in all likelihood, protected by the substantial mass of rubble from the collapse of M13-12. The rubble was up to 80 cm thick in places, lying directly on the plaster floor, thus indicating a short amount of time between abandonment and the structure’s collapse.

Excavators removed the rubble above the plaster floor of the fronting platform to uncover M13-12’s remaining

masonry walls (Fig. 3). The masonry walls stand only 88 cm at the highest point, where they connect to the centerline stair. The wall itself is made up of carefully stacked rows of small cut limestone blocks, being roughly similar in size and shape to modern bricks. The bottom row of the blocks extends 10 cm away from the wall in a lipping ornamentation. The wall has collapsed in parts, revealing the dry core fill immediately behind it. Excavations extended to the west in a series of units to map the extent of the remaining wall segments and to locate the building’s corner. These units were designated Units 57, 58, and 59. Rapidly locating the wall, these units turned into a long narrow trench following the few remaining courses of stone. Eventually even the basal course of stone vanished, but a number of cut stones were discovered that faced to the east. M13-12’s corner, then, while long-collapsed, had originally been located in the center of Unit 59. Once fully uncovered, investigators noted that it did not run east-west or intersect the centerline stair at 90-degrees. Rather, it was about a 110-degree angle to where the wall met the stair, giving Structure M13-12 a forward-angled north face.

The excavation grid uncovered the western side of the centerline stair and showed M13-12 to have a broad frontal stair, one that made up a full quarter of the fronting platform and most of the building’s entire front slope. Unit 27 was excavated down through the construction fill of the stair, eventually exposing the same “thick”



plaster floor of the fronting platform. The stair contracts oddly, narrowing midway across the fronting platform, then expanding by a single course of stone two meters away from M13-12 proper. This gives the stair a slight “zig-zag” in its course, easily discernible in Figures 2 and 3. Furthermore, the first step of the stair may actually be a curved line of stones, giving the stair a bowed, or cone-shaped, look (Fig. 3). Not enough of this first stair was excavated, however, and the curve of the stones may be a result of the deteriorating architecture and not an element of the original design. Excavators uncovered nine steps of the final stair, each rising some 20 cm from the tread of the previous step. However, a large depression, almost certainly caused by a past treefall, tore out the central portion of the stair and only fragments of the upper architecture remain.

The excavation grid was extended to the north, onto the middle and upper sections of M13-12 proper in an attempt to locate any surviving architecture in the upper portion of the building. The thin layer of humus and the mass of rubble was removed to find that there was no remaining architecture in this section. Investigators continued downward until it was determined that the excavators were simply entering the dry core construction fill itself. At this point, excavations were halted. Other than the badly deteriorated centerline stair, the “thick” plaster floor, and a section of masonry wall 80 cm high, no other portions of the architecture of Structure M13-12 survived.

In the grid, excavators continued in Unit 1, creating a pit to test the construction sequence of the main plaza floor. Directly beneath the remaining plaza floor, excavators encountered several replastering episodes. Beneath this were three earlier floors and their associated construction fill. The earliest floor possessed no foundation, being, in places, the plastered surface of the bedrock itself.

### **The Construction Sequence of M13-12**

The penetrating centerline excavations and the mapped tunnel profile provided an excellent perspective on the different construction phases of M13-12 (Fig. 4). There appear to be two main building phases with episodes of modification in between. Particularly critical is the continuity and placement of the “thick” plaster floor, which appears very distinctly in profiles as a durable plaster surface 8-10 cm thick. It is present in the looters’ tunnel, the centerline trench and on the excavation grid as the surface of the fronting platform. This floor represents the earliest known phase of architectural activity, underlying most, if not all, of Structure M13-12. In places, there is evidence for replastering, indicating its long duration of use. Indeed, it served as the surface of the fronting platform even in the structure’s Terminal Classic usage.

It should be noted that the centerline trench and the tunnel axis are not in a direct line, as it would seem from Figure 4. The tunnel enters the structure from its western

side, being oriented at 70-degrees east of north. The centerline trench follows the orientation of the building, being 18 degrees east of north. The angle formed by the centerline and tunnel axis is about 95 degrees. Placing the profiles in a line, as shown on figure 4, is purely for illustrative purposes.

Once excavators removed the mix of rubble and humus, the remaining portions of the centerline stair became evident. A total of nine steps survived, seven on the lower section and two on the upper portion of the building (Fig. 4). None of the steps in the central portion of the stair remained, excavators only uncovering a large round crater-like hole, identical to that formed by a large treefall. The riser stones are in place for many of the steps, each rise being about 20 cm. The grade of the stair is not large enough to reach to top of M13-12, so the stairs must have become much steeper in the missing central section. In the middle of the second step is a large reset stela fragment, now bent forward and pushing the riser stones of that step outward. The fragment is generally slab-shaped with a rounded, ovoid top. It measures roughly 90 cm wide and 97 cm long and has a worn and weathered surface, indicating long exposure to the elements. The stone itself is very hard and there is no trace of carving of any kind. The third and fourth step holds the remains of a poorly preserved plaster tread, but foundational cobbles for plaster surfaces are present on all the steps. Once penetrated, excavators found that this final

stair was built out over the fronting platform itself and the base of the stair rests directly on top of the "thick" plaster floor.

The exposed construction fill in the upper units of the excavation grid matched the fill noted from the tunnel profile. The fill itself was made of large, irregular limestones densely packed together with very little sediment matrix between them. In fact, sizable hollows and voids between the stones were very common. The final building phase simply piled in limestones behind masonry walls, providing a marked contrast to the most deliberate work noted in the building's earlier phase. The numerous hollows and gaps between the rocks resulting in the tunnel having a very slight, but steady, trickle of pebbles and dust constantly falling on the head of anyone working there. This made work in the looters' tunnel a decidedly unnerving experience.

Excavators removed what remained of the stair in the central and upper portion. The fill of the upper section matched that noted in the tunnel, being dry core fill with little to no interstitial sediment. However, the construction fill beneath the middle and lower portions of the stair revealed itself to be quite different. This material was a tightly packed jumble of stacked limestones and a fine and dense fill with numerous scattered chert and obsidian flakes and occasional human long bone fragments. This ritual construction fill occupies the space between the stair's treads and Burial 38. This material is associated with the reentry of the

tomb, the material used to both fill the chamber and build the Terminal Classic centerline stair.

Excavators also happened upon the remains of an earlier staircase, noticeable by the 15-25 cm wide plaster treads stacked at 40 cm high intervals and the remains of a plaster floor landing located at the midpoint of the stair (Figs. 3 and 4). These are the surviving portions of a partially demolished earlier stair, lacking both its upper and lower sections, with the dry-core construction fill resting directly on the plaster treads. Only four of these treads were uncovered and none with riser stones. The grade on this earlier stair would have been quite steep and indicates no great difference in height between the two construction phases.

The construction fill of the earlier building phase was very distinct, being a densely packed mix of irregular limestones with dense earthen fill in between. The fill shows a careful construction with small limestones on top and very large stonework towards the bottom. Indeed, some of the stones encountered towards the bottom of the excavations proved far too large to remove from the trench. This fill matches what was discovered in the looters' tunnel as well, the earlier fill backing a well-made masonry wall of rough-cut limestone blocks. Immediately below this fill in the tunnel was a foundation that consisted of alternating layers of packed earth and limestone blocks. These alternating layers lay directly on the "thick" plaster floor underlying all of M13-12.

Also visible in the tunnel, seemingly in between the two construction layers, were a pair of ashy lenses related to a badly deteriorated masonry support wall. It was hoped to encounter this ashy layer in the centerline trench, but no evidence of it was found. The support wall, held in place only by the roots of an arching ramón tree, appears related to the final construction phase. The ashy lens is then related to the partial demolition of the earlier phase, possible as some manner of ritual practice during either the demolition itself or during the new construction.

Excavations in the centerline trench were called to a halt at 2.5 meters. The dry core construction fill was unsteady and the large foundational rocks impossible to move. The walls of the trench began to visibly buckle and further excavation would have required them to be shored up and stabilized. With the profile from the looters' tunnel, it was thought that shoring up the centerline trench was simply not economical.

From the tunnel, then, it seems that there might be an even earlier construction phase evident in a mason's wall found towards the bottom. Made of rough-cut limestone blocks, it appears to even predate the "thick" plaster floor. At its base is a foundation of wide, flat limestones, stacked like pancakes atop one another. The wall is behind a series of floors and fill that seems quite similar to the layers encountered in the plaza testpit.

The earlier stair was missing its lower section altogether, ending abruptly at the dense fill containing numerous lithic fragments and human bone fragments. This was carefully removed and the fill found to occupy completely the space between the final stair, the “thick” plaster floor and the partially demolished earlier stair. When the lithic count exceeded several thousand pieces and human bones were encountered, it was obvious that the excavators were encountering some manner of ritual construction fill. At the level of the “thick” floor, there began to be found circular concentrations of flaked obsidian blades and exhausted core fragments. A floor cut in the “thick” floor was uncovered beneath the seventh step and ending at the base of the demolished earlier stair. Slightly above the level of the floor cut was an intact ceramic bowl with an unslipped surface and the outflaring sides generally considered characteristic of the Terminal Classic potting tradition. The bowl was beneath a pair of large, well cut limestone blocks, either one of which would have been sufficient to crush the bowl in any normal depositional context. It seems most likely that the bowl was placed there and the stones carefully stacked atop it. The dense fill began to include large limestone *lajas*, slabs generally stacked at angles to the “thick” floor. The fill continued down into area bounded by the floorcut. Smallish ceramic sherds in the fill included those with fine orange paste, affirming a Terminal Classic date for both the fill and the final construction phase for

M13-12. The floorcut itself was ovoid in shape, measuring 1.2m wide and 3.9m long.

Excavators removed the fill from the interior of the floorcut, encountering hundreds of flakes, blades, and broken core fragments of obsidian and chert. The lithics were scattered throughout the fill, at times clustered in above-mentioned circular concentrations. Beneath the floorcut, excavators uncovered well-made masonry walls of small, rough-cut limestone blocks tightly packed together. On the western edge of the floorcut, large limestone slabs remained in place, forming a roof of layered limestone slabs. There were no voids beneath this area, the fill extending all the way to the intact roof sections. Excavators eventually removed the entirety of the fill, encountering human remains and jade fragments, the first indications of Burial 38. It's worth noting that the same fill continues uninterrupted from the floor of Burial 38 to the bottom of the final stair.

### **Burial 38**

Burial 38 occupied a smallish tomb chamber, measuring 2.3 meters in length and 0.9 meters wide (Fig. 5). The chamber itself possesses a level plaster floor and well-made masonry walls, being of the kind described in Welsh (1988: 18, 351-352) as either a very elaborate “elaborate crypt” or small “stone-lined tomb.” From this small tomb, excavators recovered 11 whole ceramic vessels in addition to the offering vessel found above the floorcut; a deteriorated yellowed slate disc, possibly

being the remains of a mirror; a worked and polished core of a conch shell; 108 decorative spindle whorls of shell, alabaster, basalt, and stucco; 5 shell fragments; 2 solid jade beads; 2 large jade mosaic pieces; 92 small jade mosaic pieces, including a jade nosepiece; 6 burned faunal bones, identified by the Q'echi' excavators as deer; a rounded river stone, covered in painted blue stucco and placed inside Vessel 7; and a mass of heavily deteriorated and scattered human remains, inside of which was found a concentrated bundle of six stingray spines. As Figure 5 indicates, these artifacts were tightly patterned. The vessels and slate disc were arranged, as they would be around a supine human figure. Indeed, the various bone scatters located in this area suggest such a position for the initial interment. A more detailed analysis of the vessels will occur at a later date, but a quick summation is presented below in the ceramic contribution section. It is worth noting, however, that seven of these vessels are high-quality pictorial polychromes, five with distressed portions of dedicatory texts. Such ceramics have been associated with individuals and deposits of very high elite status (Reents-Budet *et al.* 2000:116-117). Two of the vessels, 9 and 10, are unslipped plates, placed in a lip-to-lip cache in the northwest corner. This cache contained no surviving material. Inside the gadrooned polychrome Vessel 7 was the blue-painted stucco-covered river stone. The most unusual of the vessels was Vessel 11, a black-slipped zoomorphic vessel, almost

certainly of a small dog scratching its ear. The face of the effigy vessel had been smashed off and the sherds that would fit in the broken sections not recovered from the vicinity of Vessel 11, nor from anywhere in the tomb, indicating that it was probably broken prior to interment.

The other artifacts are clustered closely together in three distinct concentrations (Fig. 5). Towards the western end of the chamber was a concentration of 108 decorative spindle whorls, including a large chert biface, the polished conch shell core and a scatter of obsidian flakes and broken core fragments. The whorls were highly individualized with only a few resembling one another, some being obviously carved to resemble flowers, others being smooth and other resembling the crowns of various chess-pieces. The whorls were mostly shell, but including a fair number of ones carved from alabaster, bone, stucco, and possibly basalt. Such whorls are virtually identical to those found at the site of Dzibilchaltun (Taschek 1994: 100-101, fig. 28). The orientation of the whorls is apparently quite random, and it seems unlikely they were strung together in a single thread or sewn onto a garment. They are, however, tightly concentrated, a key feature discussed below.

Excavators uncovered the jade mosaic pieces clustered in the southern portion of the chamber beside the bone concentration. It was comprised solely of a flat, dense mass of these small mosaic pieces, most lying roughly parallel to the

tomb floor, a jade nosepiece in the center. The two larger jade pieces lay slightly to the east of that. The concentration of mosaic pieces is strongly suggestive of a small jade mask. Jade masks are well known from the Maya region and are similar in composition, if not the small size, to the one described here (see Schmidt *et al.* 1998: 554-555; Miller and Martin 2004: 69). The assorted pieces themselves closely resemble a mask recovered from a Late Classic tomb at Dzibanché (López Bravo 2004: 58). The pieces lacked an obvious orientation and it is thought that the mask lay at an oblique angle to the tomb floor and, as the backing decayed, the mosaic pieces separated and piled atop one another. A reconstruction of the mask would be considered very difficult. Mixed into the jade concentration were a number of the near-ubiquitous obsidian flakes and broken core fragments.

The third concentration is the mass of heavily deteriorated human bone beside the jade (Fig. 5). The deteriorated state of the bone prevented many of them from being precisely identified, but Jennifer Piehl was able to determine the presence of a femur, a fibula, and a vertebral column. Age and gender, of course, were indeterminate. The mass of bone was 8-12 cm thick and contained pieces of long bones and ribs, obviously a concentration of remains that occurred long after the bones had been defleshed. Mixed in with the bones were numerous obsidian flakes, blades and broken core fragments. There was also a tight cluster of six stingray spines, all broken

but oriented in the same direction and placed very close together. Obviously, the stingray spines had been bundled together. Two thick jade beads were in or near the human remains.

Obsidian flakes, blades, and broken core fragments litter the floor of the chamber. The lithic fragments were distributed throughout the fill of the tomb and the ritual construction fill above. They extend from the floor of the tomb to beneath the risers of the stair above. They are mixed into and underneath the concentrations of shell, jade, and human bones. They are not, however, found beneath any of the eleven vessels or the slate disc. The distribution of the lithic material is uneven, and clusters occur irregularly. Such clusters are roughly circular in shape and are made up of small flakes and complete blades with exhausted core fragments. Microdebitage, minute flakes of obsidian too small to recover in the screen, were visible in these circular clusters. Such debitage is associated with the flaking process itself (Moholy-Nagy 1990: 271; Whittaker 1994: 69, 277-278). Thus, these circular obsidian lenses may represent the ritual flaking of obsidian and chert directly into the construction fill, during the depositional process (see Moholy-Nagy 1990: 272). One such cluster occurs directly beneath the remaining tread of the fifth step, in Unit 42. The absence of any manner of use-wear on the obsidian blades also supports the idea that these clusters are the results of flaking activity carried out during the filling of the tomb and the construction of

the final stair. A lithic analysis has noted that several obsidian core fragments refit perfectly (Hruby, personal communication). Chert artifacts are present as well. The largest cluster of chert fragments lies in the western section of the fill, on the line between units 55 and 56, in the fill directly over the remaining slabs covering the burial chamber. Excavators recovered a total of 2,527 obsidian artifacts and 445 chert artifacts. Other materials recovered from the fill include scattered human remains, occasional ceramic figurine heads, and intact chert bifaces. Artifacts from this ritual construction fill also contain sherds of fine orange paste.

The patterning of the lithic material is clearly not associated with the initial interment of Burial 38, but with a later re-entry, manipulation of the mortuary goods and heavy modification of the architecture. The obsidian flakes must then be related with the later re-entry and subsequent filling of the tomb, explaining why they are in and around the concentrations but underneath none of the original vessels. This model for the re-entry and manipulation of the tomb items is addressed in the discussion section, below.

## Discussion

Structure M13-12 possesses, then, at least two distinct construction phases with ritual activities associated with each. There is some evidence that earlier architecture may exist deeper within the structure, and such evidence includes the elevation of the

“thick” plaster floor in relation to the plaza, the numerous floors visible in the looters’ tunnel, and the lines of cut-stones exposed in Units 1 and 2. However, due to the crumbling nature of the structure itself, the amount of dry-core fill used in the final construction phase and the weight of the large ramón trees upon it, excavations to recover information about this phase were impossible to achieve, especially given the limited resources available. The knowledge of this smaller and even earlier construction phase will have to suffice for now.

The earlier of the two known construction stages for M13-12 consists of the partially demolished centerline stair, the change in construction fill and Burial 38 itself. It is very likely that the earlier staircase covered Burial 38. The earlier stair, and its connections to the plaster landing uncovered in units 52 and 55, would have covered the tomb chamber. The landing would have been situated directly above Burial 38. This earlier pyramid would have been a slightly smaller structure than the final phase of M13-12, but one with the same, or nearly the same, height. In this reconstruction, it would have been a very steep central stair with a flat landing located at the stair’s midpoint. This reconstruction would very similar to one created for Tikal Structure 5G-8-1<sup>st</sup> (Becker 1999: Fig. 58).

Burial 38 possesses a different relationship with each stage of construction. The early structure would have clearly extended over the tomb chamber, indicating a direct relationship with the initial interment.

Indeed, it is likely that the structure was fashioned because of the Burial 38 interment. Small pyramids of this type, especially when located in residential groups, have been identified as funerary architecture with high-status burials often located in their interior (Haviland 1981: 100-101; Welsh 1988: 188-189; Becker 1999: 2-3; 2003: 259). In particular, M13-12 closely resembles a pair of structures from Dos Pilas, N5-7 and N5-71 (Demarest *et al.* 2003: 128-129; Escobedo 1998) and Uaxactun Structure C-1 (A.L. Smith 1950: 62). These structures are located in residential groups, possessing a steep stair and fronting platform and a high-status interment.

The positioning of the vessels from Burial 38 strongly argues for the initial interment of a supine human figure. The scatter of fragmentary human remains in the area bounded by these eleven vessels supports this. Clearly, then, the vessels and the early construction phase from M13-12 are associated. The Burial 38 vessels, for reasons discussed below, belong to the site's undefined "Middle Classic" complex. Calendar dates, as best as can be determined at this stage, would place the earlier M13-12 at or after the mid-sixth century, A.D.. Furthermore, the association with the structure and burial may indicate the individual's gender. Although there have been some notable exceptions, most high-status individuals recovered from funerary architecture have been male (see Welsh 1988: table 98).

With the associated mortuary architecture and the quantity of high-quality mortuary goods, Burial 38 was clearly a high-status elite (see Haviland and Moholy-Nagy 1992: 52-54). But was Burial 38 a royal personage? The obvious answer is probably not, although he was of such a high status that the precise distinction might, in fact, cease to be relevant. The Burial 38 individual was not buried in a major piece of civic-ceremonial architecture along one of the site's main plazas, nor did the tomb contain obvious symbols of royal authority, such as *huunal* jewels or Jester God imagery (Freidel and Schele 1988: 552-558; Freidel 1993: 154-156). Certainly the tomb did not hold a ruler. There is, however, a jade mask lying beside the heaviest concentration of human remains. Upon excavation, David Freidel pointed out that such masks are usually associated with either rulers or members of the royal family. Jade masks themselves have been likened to the Maize God, making a direct analogy between the deceased and the Maize God's resurrection (Miller and Martin 2004: 69; López Bravo 2004: 84-85). Karl Taube (2005: 32) has argued that such masks serve to portray and preserve the vital breath of deceased kings. It's clearly a potent symbol, one connected to the highest levels of Maya society. While this includes Classic-period rulers, it also extends to their family. The Red Queen of Palenque, proposed as the wife of Jaanab' Pakal, possessed a jade (malachite) mask in her burial (González Cruz 2004: 81; Tiesler *et*



*al.* 2004: 74). Uaxactun Burial C1, located in a structure very similar to M13-12, held a jade mask in a somewhat modest interment (A.L. Smith 1950: 62, 102, Fig. 100, Fig. 140)). Jade masks at Dzibanché have been found in interments that Nalda (2004: 82) has interpreted as high, non-ruling, individuals. As he adroitly points out, such masks “are not necessarily symbols of authority” (*ibid.*). Masks indicate very high status, but not a kingly position. The Burial 38 individual then, is either a member of the royal family, or not far removed from it. He is unlikely to have been a ruler, but probably is a ruler’s brother, or son, or uncle, or a particularly close and powerful ally. At this level, the adjective “royal” becomes a matter of individual interpretation.

To further complicate matters, the jade mask may not be associated with the initial interment at all.

That the tomb was reentered is obvious through the architectural and artifactual evidence presented above. Preparatory to the final construction phase was the partial demolition of the earlier structure. The Maya pulled the riser stones off from the middle portion of the stair, leaving only a few of the plaster treads. The lower portion of the early stair was removed completely and most of the landing above the burial demolished, leaving only the portions visible in Units 52 and 55 (Fig. 3). The earlier construction fill was removed to the level of the “thick” floor, most of the roof slabs from Burial 33 removed, and the tomb opened.

From the field observation of the ceramic sherds recovered from the ritual construction fill, this renovation most likely occurred during the site’s Terminal Classic occupation. Sherds of fine orange and fine grey were noted in field notes at the time, placing the deposition at the Morai or Rax ceramic complexes (Eppich *et al.* 2005: 327-332). Fine paste wares, in general, only enter the Petén sites towards the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, at the very tail end of the Classic period (Foias and Bishop 2006: 33). This would place a tentative calendar date for the final construction phase of Structure M13-12 at, or after, the beginning of the ninth century. The Classic Maya reopened Burial 38 some two and a half centuries after interment.

David Stuart (1998: 396-399), in particular, has shown that such rituals appear in the epigraphic record. The *och k’ak’*, “fire-entering,” rite appears to be some manner of censuring, or burning, ceremony, usually associated with the dedication of new architecture. These **o-chi-K’AK’** glyphs can themselves be drawn as a skull positioned beneath a stair (Stuart 1989: Fig. 13). The “house” being dedicated, or re-dedicated in some cases, is the resting place of the deceased. Archaeological evidence for the re-entry of tombs is not uncommon across the Classic Lowlands. Examples of tombs being opened and materials manipulated or removed, include Burials 1 and 10 from Piedras Negras (Coe 1959: 121-122, 126-127, 131), Burial XXXVII-8 and the Margarita Tomb from

Copan (Stuart 1998: 399), and the Structure A34 Upper Tomb and Lower Tomb from Caracol (Chase and Chase 1996: 66-71), among others. At El Perú-*Waka'* as well, the royal tombs of Structure O14-4's Burial 39 (Rich *et al.*, this volume) and Structure L11-38's Burial 8 (Lee 2005) show evidence of re-entry and manipulation of mortuary items. In particular, it appears that choice skeletal materials are being removed. On Tikal Altar 5, the inscriptions there mention the reopening of a burial and the exhumation of remains (Stuart and Houston 1994; McAnany 1998: 288; see also Freidel *et al.* 1993: 278-279). Directly beneath the monument, skeletal material was found (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982), possibly the reburied material mentioned on Altar 5.

Patricia McAnany (1995: 60-63; 1998: 287-289), in particular, has focused on this subject, noting that the "bones of revered dead are generally part of a protracted series of rituals" (McAnany 1995: 60). In this manner, can the living commune with, and draw power from, their founding ancestors. She links this directly to the ethnographically known practice of bundling some of the bones of revered dead. Furthermore, Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993: 279-281, 292) link the rituals of bundling and ritual dance performance, noting in the story of the Hero-Twins, they exhumed the bones of their father, the Maize God, danced and so aided in his resurrection. This holds two distinct implications for Burial 38. One, that the actors who reentered the tomb and built the

final stair of M13-12 were, or saw themselves as, the descendants of this personage who had lived more than two centuries before them. This further suggests that the inhabitants of the Grupo Chok were generally related and that this group of people had inhabited this portion of El Perú-*Waka'* in the intervening years, placing great continuity on this residential compound.

Two, this argues that the concentrations of bone and beads in Burial 38 were reinterred ancestor bundles (see Freidel *et al.* 1993: 270-272). The tight clustering of the objects themselves strongly argues for some manner of perishable container, and a wrapped cloth seems the most likely. The gathering of these items into spiritually powerful concentrations is, again, a known practice for the Classic period. Such objects were imbued with "soul force," serving as a conduit by which the living Maya may communicate with the ancestors (*ibid.*: 270). The packed nature of the bones in Burial 38 shows that they were packed together already in a defleshed state. Direct archaeological evidence for bundled human remains can be found at Uaxactun, where tightly flexed skeletons were in direct association with charred rope fragments, or impressions of textiles and ropes in the grave matrix (A.L. Smith 1950: 89). It would be impossible to bind a fleshed adult into the 25 cm space of the Burial 38 bone concentration. Selected items appear to be missing, as well, for there is no evidence for a cranium and only a single

femur can be discerned in this mass of deteriorated bone.

And so, it is entirely possible that the jade mask is associated with the reinterment and not necessarily the initial burial. Bundled human remains are known to have had masks attached to them, even after exhumation (Headrick 1999: 73-74). Furthermore, these masks possessed some manner of perishable backing to them (Martínez del Campo Lanz and Folloy Nadal 2004: 78). It is thought that any such backing would have long-decayed in the period between the initial interment and the re-entry. The mask is made of quite small mosaic pieces, pieces that would have obviously fallen away if the Maya had moved or shifted the mask. With the sole concentration of the mosaic pieces in their current position, it is clear that the mask has not moved. If included in the original burial, it is in its original position. Its original position includes it lying in and among obsidian flakes and blade fragments, materials associated with the reentry event. While it is most likely that the mask is positioned just as it was in the initial burial, it is quite likely that when the human remains were removed and bundled, the mask was attached to this bundle, and redeposited in the chamber.

This adds certain complications concerning the status of the Burial 38 individual given above. Without the jade mask, the personage is a very high-ranking noble, but one several steps removed from the royal, ruling family. It has been noted

that deceased ancestors gain status over time, dead kings becoming heroes and, eventually, gods, with the simple passage of time and persistence of their offspring (Marcus 1992: 301;McAnany 1995: 127). What could have been simply a powerful lord in the sixth century could have deserved a jade mask by the ninth, at least in the eyes of those who considered themselves his grandchildren.

Regardless, the bones of the Burial 38 personage were removed, some of them bundled together, and returned to the tomb. As a final ritual act, individuals began to flake chert and obsidian into the tomb. The cores, once exhausted, were then snapped and tossed in as well. The tomb was then filled with the mix of stones and compacted sediment described above. Some of this material apparently included the limestone slabs and *lajas* that originally roofed the chamber. As the fill proceeded to build up, flakes and blades of obsidian and chert continued to enter the material. When a core neared exhaustion, the fill was halted as the specialists finished it off, creating the circular lenses of obsidian flakes, blades, core fragments and microdebitage. The flaking of obsidian and chert is found on top of both interments and reentry events, is known from other Maya sites (Chase and Chase 1996: 71), as well as from El Peru-*Waka'* itself (Lee. 2005). Once the fill has reached above the level of the floor cut, Vessel 12 was carefully placed beneath a pair of cut and faced stone blocks.

Once the fill was at the desired height, the Maya architects built the second and final stair along the front of the structure. The upper portion of a broken stela was reset on the third stair and a number of other monumental stones placed on the fronting platform. The final architectural stage would have been a smallish, rather tall structure, standing some 7-9 meters above the Grupo Chok's main plaza, with a large, wide and prominent stair stretching from the plaza to the summit of the small pyramid. It would have somewhat resembled Tikal Structure 5G-8 (Becker 1999: fig. 55) in height and basic configuration, but M13-12 has a larger base and much longer stair with a gentler grade. Indeed, the focus of the structure seems less the summit and more centered on the wide centerline staircase.

This seems supported by the array of materials found scattered along the steps of the fronting platform and on the neighboring portions of the plaza. These included multiple figurine fragments, thousands of ceramic sherds, with some reconstructable, whole vessels present, burned animal bone and scatters of shell, chert and obsidian fragments. It is possible that such materials may represent some manner of termination deposit, but the material was not patterned, being evenly distributed throughout the humic layers. Neither was the material associated with violently disturbed architecture or human remains. The material could also simply be garbage, a midden with some ceremonial

rubbish, banked up against some old building in an abandoned residential group. Continued investigation in the surrounding architecture could show whether similar piles of such material are banked there. The most likely, if somewhat speculative reading, is that the material represents the remains of votive offerings (Freidel *et al.* 1993: 171-172; 188-189). Such offerings would center on continued ancestor veneration, possibly even centered on the Burial 38 personage. These votive offering-type materials include sherds and even figurines of fine orange paste, assigning a position within the site's Terminal Classic Rax Complex (Eppich *et al.* 2005). Portions of this material overlay the rubble from the building's collapse, raising the possibility that such ritual veneration continued even as the architecture crumbled.

This would follow what is currently known about the very final occupation of the site, sometime between the years A.D. 900 and 1000. The settlement of the site appears somewhat patchy with pockets of abandoned groups appearing amid settled districts. Structure M13-12 appears to fit into this scenario, with the Terminal Classic Maya living in and venerating the architecture of the past, even as it had begun to collapse.

### **Contributions to the Ceramic Chronology of El Perú-Waka'**

In previous reports on the potting traditions of El Perú-Waka' (Eppich *et al.* 2005:324-325), investigators hypothesized a

transitional period between the site's Early Classic Saq Complex and its Late Classic Q'eq' Complex. The 2006 excavations have confirmed the presence of a distinct "Middle Classic" ceramic complex, similar to, and roughly contemporaneous with, Tikal's Ik Complex (Culbert 1993: figs. 39-52). The necessary laboratory work to define and classify this complex has not been done at this time. What can be done is to note its existence, the contexts where it seems to be located, and make a few comments as to its composition, however speculative they may be.

The 11 vessels associated with the initial interment of Burial 38 clearly fit into this complex, as well as those of the spectacular Burial 39 (Rich *et al.*, this volume). Robles Perez (personal communication) in her laboratory work of 2006, has suggested that ceramics from this period have been found in testpitting operations in the Grupo Encantado and throughout the expansive residential complexes across the northern part of the site core. This will also force a reassessment of some of the material recovered to date to see if any of it fits into this newly confirmed complex. The Burial 38 vessels have, mostly, been neither reconstructed nor closely analyzed and so a brief description follows here for illustrative purposes.

Vessel 1, located on the northern and western side of the Burial 38 chamber, was a broken, but whole and reconstructable, high-quality polychrome.

The bowl measured about 4.7 cm high, although its shattered condition prevented a precise measure of the rim diameter. The surface treatment is virtually identical to Vessel 4 and 5, below, being an elaborate exterior polychrome design executed in red and black slips on an orange-yellow baseslip. A creamy underslip is used as decorative motif around the wall panels and the hieroglyphic dedicatory text. Below the exterior rim is a dedicatory text executed in red on the baseslip. Vessel 1 is one of the least-distressed vessels from Burial 38 and the one most likely to hold the name and title of the Burial 38 individual.

Vessel 2 was located on the eastern wall of the burial chamber, being an elaborate polychrome dish/plate. The polychrome designs appeared on the vessel interior and were executed in red and black on a bright orange baseslip, with the creamy underslip used as a decorative element. The vessel interior is quite distressed and held an animorphic design on the interior base with a distressed dedicatory text circling below the rim on the interior. Very similar vessels have been noted from Burial 39 (Rich *et al.*, this volume). The vessel itself is broken, but whole and reconstructable, measuring about 5.0 cm high with a rim diameter of about 19.8 cm.

Vessel 3, to the south of Vessel 2, is a large monochrome red dish/plate. The vessel was too broken to allow precise measures, but its relative size is easily shown in Figure 5. The vessel surface is very distressed and heavily eroded.

Excavators uncovered Vessel 4 close by the northern wall (Fig. 5). It is a short, intact, cylindric vase, measuring 12.3 cm high with a diameter of 11.5 cm. The polychrome surface is highly glossy with a smoothed and slipped surface, although highly distressed in places. It has a bright orange-yellow baseslip with the creamy white baseslip used as a decorative element in places. The design elements are executed in red lines with heavy use of black slip to create negative design elements on the panels of the exterior surface. The elements themselves are difficult to make out, but seem to be plumes of feathers originating from a central structure. The structure itself has potentially Highland-style elements similar to one recovered from the ruins of Tikal (Culbert 1993: fig. 64c2). A partially intact dedicatory text is executed in red on the orange baseslip below the rim on the vessel exterior. The vessel's surface treatment is very similar to that photographed in Schmidt *et al.* (1998: 644) discovered from Uaxactun (Smith 1955: fig. 7f) and typed as Saxche Orange Polychrome (Smith and Gifford 1966: 132).

Vessel 5 is virtually identical to Vessel 4 in virtually every aspect, a black-slipped polychrome cylinder with designs executed in black and red on a orange-yellow baseslip with the creamy underslip used itself as a decorative element. It is slightly larger, measuring 13.0 cm high with a 12.4 cm diameter and is slightly less distressed. It also has a dedicatory text on the vessel exterior below the rim.

Vessel 6, located between Vessels 5 and 7, is a polychrome bowl, measuring 5.6 cm tall with a rim diameter of 17.9 cm. It holds a creamy baselip with designs executed in red and black. The interior of the vessel is highly distressed and the vessel itself is whole but broken.

Vessel 7, while broken into two sherds, is wholly reconstructable and very well preserved. It is the only museum-quality vessel from Burial 38, being in a near perfect state of preservation. It is a lustrous polychrome bowl with designs executed in a glossy red and black on a bright, "golden" yellow-orange baseslip. The lower portion of the vessel is gadrooned (Smith 1971: 35). The upper portion of the vessel has a pair of plumed cormorants, with prominent buckteeth, catching fish. In its broken state, the vessel couldn't be precisely measured but its size relative to the other vessels is apparent in Figure 5. There is some use-wear on the base. In the interior of the vessel, archaeologists found a blue-painted and stucco-covered river stone. Gadrooning is generally associated with the Terminal and Postclassic, especially in the Northern Lowlands (Smith 1971: table 28; Ball 1977: 91). Occurrences of gadrooning earlier in the Classic period, while very rare, are not, in fact, unknown (Smith 1955: 45). Clearly, Vessel 7 shares direct association with the other vessels and hence with the initial interment. Burial 38, Vessel 7, is, then, an extremely rare and intact example of Classic-period gadrooning.

Vessel 8, the largest vessel to be recovered from Burial 38, is a large dish/plate. It is identical in surface treatment and design to Vessel 2, and its placement, in line with Vessel 2, does not seem coincidental. The vessel is shattered but whole and reconstructable. Considerable wear and erosion have greatly effaced the vessel surface and the original design is not clear. It holds a dedicatory text, although most of the glyphs are quite effaced.

Vessels 9 and 10 form the lip-to-lip cache found in the southeast corner of the tomb chamber. Both vessels are wide-mouthed bowls, with outsloping walls and direct rims. The surfaces are unslipped and unsmoothed. Both vessels are cracked but whole. Vessel 9 forms the top of the cache, measuring 4.8 cm tall with a rim diameter of 20.2 cm. Vessel 10 forms the base of the cache, itself measuring 5.0 cm tall with a rim diameter of 19.8 cm.

Vessel 11, the highly unusual zoomorphic dog effigy, measures 11.2 cm tall and 15.8 cm wide. The slip itself is a low-luster black monochrome slip with pre-slipped incised designs for the facial expression and the tail, which is safely tucked between its legs. There is a hole in the vessel's "back," probably for a candle or burning taper. The interior of the vessel is weighted with stucco, giving the base weight enough to safely hold a tall and burning taper. The vessel itself is similar to dog-effigies executed in Thin Orange (Fields and Reents-Budet 2006: 228-229), although it

needs to be pointed out, Vessel 11 is not Thin Orange.

Vessel 12 was not located directly in association with the other tomb material, but was instead a votive offering placed in the construction fill above the tomb, slightly above the level of the floor cut. Therefore it is related to the re-entry of the tomb and not the initial interment. This would make sense, given its ceramic attributes seem generally indicative of the Terminal Classic. The vessel itself is an unslipped bowl with dramatically outflaring sides and a grey, chalky paste.

The confirmation of a distinct ceramic assemblage inhabiting, chronologically, the period between the Early Classic Saq and the Late Classic Q'eq' complexes provides a unique window on the shifting fortunes of El Perú-*Waka'*. Furthermore, the similarity of the execution of decorative elements and the high-quality of these elements on Vessels 4 and 5 and on very similar vessels from Burial 39 (Rich *et al.*, this volume) suggest that these ceramics are local and originating at a ceramic workshop probably within El Perú-*Waka'* itself (see Reents-Budet *et al.* 2000). The similarity of these vessels to those of Tikal's Ik phase (550-700) may suggest similar dates. The scale and depth of the Q'eq' Complex deposits would render a position within the later portion of this date unlikely, however. It is very tentatively suggested that this undefined "Middle Classic" would best fit the El Perú-*Waka'* sequence slightly narrower in scale and not

as late as Tikal's contemporary Ik Phase, potentially restricting it to the mid-sixth to mid-seventh centuries. A comparative examination of ceramic attributes also suggests that this period may also possess discernible early and late facets. Certainly, Vessel 11's similarity to the Thin Orange dog effigy vessels from the Early Classic hints at a chronological position closer to the fifth century. The best date that can be currently ascribed for Burial 38 would then be sometime at, or after, the mid-sixth century, A.D.

After fourteen centuries in the tomb, many of the glyphs are simply too ravished to be legible. Those that can be read appear to be unremarkable examples of the Primary Standard Sequence dedicatory texts known from such vessels. Stanley Guenter was able to discern a single name from the damaged glyphs, "Chak K'in (human head)-ta?". However, rarely can one be assured that names on a given vessel match the identity of interred individuals.

It is expected that the laboratory work to classify and define this complex will hopefully be conducted in the early to middle part of 2008.

## Individual Unit Descriptions

### WK13A-1

Unit 1 is located on the northern section of the excavation grid. As the plaza testpit, it was excavated down to bedrock. Unit 1 possesses four different excavation levels and is profiled in Figure 4. The first

level, Lot 2, consisted of the mix of humic soils and votive offering material piled in front of M13-12. The soils were a light grey-brown material, being somewhat ashy in consistency and even powdery to the touch. Unit 1 possessed no rubble from the collapse of M13-12 and little to no major root action. Level 1 terminated at a deteriorated plaster plaza floor and its exposed cobble foundations. This was the same level as the plaster plaza floor uncovered in other units. The recovered cultural material consisted of 30 obsidian objects, being a mix of blade fragments and flakes; six burned and polished bones, identified by the Q'echi' workers as a potential peccary; six possibly saltwater shellfish shell fragments; 124 other shell fragments; 15 figurine fragments; and some 2,110 ceramic sherds. The ceramics included some very large sherds and partial vessels, identified in the field as having Terminal Classic ceramic attributes.

Level 2, Lot 71, was the material removed from beneath the level of the plaza floor. The material consists almost entirely of a grey-white sediment. The material itself is very fine, dry, and powdery. There is substantial rootlet activity. Level 2 terminated after about 25 cm of material, ending at a fairly well preserved plaster floor. A line of cut stone, oriented at about 18-degrees east of north, was uncovered in the southeast corner, evidence of architecture earlier than that uncovered in the interior of M13-12. Excavators recovered some 210 ceramic sherds, three



obsidian blade fragments, one snail shell fragment, and one small chert flake.

Level 3, Lot 81, consists of the material beneath the second plaster floor. It was wholly made up of a material identical to that found in level 2. The level itself was not very thick, being less than 10 cm in places. There is slight rootlet activity. The removal of this layer uncovered a third plaster floor. Excavators recovered six small ceramic sherds and a single piece of obsidian.

Excavators removed the third plaster floor to find a fourth floor, Lot 85, immediately underneath, in places without any interstitial material separating them. Indeed, the third floor, in all likelihood, is best understood as a plastering event for the floor uncovered here. The fourth floor lay directly atop bedrock, lacking a foundation of small ballast-stones. The top of the bedrock is, itself, plastered. The recovered cultural material included 38 small ceramic sherds, one smallish chert flake and one shell fragment.

#### WK13A-2

This unit was located on the northern end of the excavation grid on the plaza in front of Structure M13-12 proper (Fig. 3). It was excavated in a single layer, Lot 3, down to the remaining portions of the plastered plaza floor. The material itself was the same mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic votive offering materials. As such, the sediment is identical to that described for Lot 2 in the Unit 1 above. Excavators

uncovered the top surface of a line of cut-stones that correspond to those excavated in the Level 2 of Unit 1, indicating some manner of earlier architecture beneath this part of the plaza. Recovered cultural materials include a some 1,400 ceramic sherds; 24 pieces of obsidian, made up of small flakes and blade fragments; two small chert flakes; one faunal bone, identified by the Q'echi' excavators as peccary; three other faunal bones; including two turtle shell bones; 71 shell fragments; and a large shell fragment that closely resembles oyster shell. Four ceramic figurine fragments were discovered in this unit, consisting of two heads, a foot, and a whistle.

#### WK13A-3

This unit was located on the northern end of the excavation grid on the plaza in front of Structure M13-12 proper (Fig. 5). It was excavated in a single level, Lot 4. It was dug down to the remaining portions of the plaster plaza floor. The matrix was a mix of the humic soils and the Terminal Classic votive offering identical to that described for Lot 2, Unit 1, given above. Excavators recovered 12 obsidian blade fragments, 11 shell fragments, 5 smallish chert flakes, 111 small snail shells, and one shell fragment that may be an oyster shell. The recovered ceramics included some 1,174 individual sherds. The ceramic figurines numbered 10 individual fragments, including a large chest area of a feathered figure, and the representation of a decapitated head with the flesh removed

from the face and the hair hanging straight down.

#### WK13A-4

This unit was located along the northern edge of the excavation grid on the plaza in front of Structure M13-12 proper (Fig. 3). It was dug in a single level, Lot 5, down to the remaining portions of the plastered plaza floor. The excavated matrix was the same mix of disturbed humic soils and Terminal Classic midden-style material described in Lot 2, Unit 1. Excavators recovered some 898 ceramic sherds and four ceramic figurine fragments, including a small and intact parrot figurine. Other materials included 9 obsidian blade fragments, two possible oyster shell fragments, 100 small snail shells, and eight pieces of chert, made up of small flakes and a large angular debris fragment.

#### WK13A-5

This unit was located on the northern section of the excavation grid, mostly on the plaza floor in front of Structure M13-12 proper (Fig. 3). Excavators removed the material down to plaster plaza floor in a single level, being Lot 6. The material itself was the same mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic votive offering as described for Lot 2, Unit 1, given above. To avoid cutting a small sapote tree, the southeast section was left unexcavated. Excavators exposed the front and tops of the riser stones for the first of platform steps for the fronting platform of M13-12.

Recovered cultural materials include an impressive 1,384 ceramic sherds and 12 ceramic figurine fragments, including a fine orange head of a fantastic plumed serpent and an intact pot-bellied dwarf. In addition, excavators recovered six small chert angular debris fragments and flakes; 15 obsidian angular debris fragments; flakes and blade fragments; and one shell fragment that could potentially be oyster.

#### WK13A-6

This unit was located in the northern portion of the excavation grid on the plaza floor in front of Structure M13-12. The material was excavated in a single level, being Lot 7. The sediment matrix itself consisted of the same mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic midden-type material as described for in Lot 2, Unit 1. Excavators removed this material down to the surface of the plaster plaza floor. The floor itself was largely intact, except for a section in the unit's center that held only the exposed cobble of the floor's foundations. Along the southern edge, excavators uncovered the riser stones of the first step of the fronting platform. Recovered cultural materials included some 1,491 ceramic sherds, and 18 obsidian artifacts consisting of broken blade sections, flakes, and angular debris fragments. One blade was an emerald green piece of Pachuca obsidian. In addition, excavators removed 14 pieces of chert flakes and angular debris fragments and 8 ceramic figurine fragments, including

a large male head with an elaborate "Toltec"-style plumed headdress.

#### WK13A-7

Located in the northern section of the excavation grid on the plaza floor in front of Structure M13-12, this unit was excavated in a single level, being Lot 8. The sediment matrix consisted of the same mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic midden-type material described in the Lot 2, Unit 1 section above. Excavators removed this material down to the level of the plaster plaza floor, uncovering the riser stones of the first step on the fronting platform. The stones in this section follow the southern edge of the unit and show that the initial step on the centerline stair had an outwardly curved shape or has been distorted into such a shape by the collapse of the architecture. In this unit, the plaster floor was wholly intact. Recovered cultural materials included 1,039 ceramic sherds and 10 ceramic figurine fragments, being an assortment of hands, legs, arms, and feet. Additional materials consisted of three shell fragments, five obsidian blade fragments, and five pieces of chert, being a mix of small flakes and angular debris fragments.

#### WK13A-8

In the northern section of the excavation grid, this unit consisted of a single layer, Lot 9, excavated down to the surface of the plaster plaza floor. The removed material consisted of a mix of humic soils and then Terminal-Classic

midden-type material as described in Lot 2, Unit 1 above. Additionally, mixed into the material were a few, scattered cut stones and limestone rubble from the collapse of Structure M13-12 itself. Once removed, excavators exposed the first steps of the centerline stair for M13-12, apparently bowed out as discussed in the Unit 7 description above. Excavators recovered some 1,129 ceramic sherds and some five ceramic figurine fragments. Additional materials included four seashell fragments, two burned and polished bird bones, 10 obsidian small flakes and blade sections, eight chert flakes and biface fragments, and an incised and ground carved shell earflare.

#### WK13A-9

This unit was located on the steps of M13-12's fronting platform in the northern half of the excavation grid. The excavated material consisted of the same mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic votive offering as described in Lot 2, Unit 1. Once removed, excavators exposed the second step of the fronting platform. The steps' plaster treads had long-eroded, leaving only a layer of the exposed cobblestone foundation. Recovered cultural materials included some 878 ceramic sherds and a small, intact figurine of a small parrot. Additional materials consisted of 14 obsidian flakes and small blades, two chert pieces, a flake and a biface fragments, and, finally, a single seashell fragment.

## WK13A-10

This unit, located towards the center of the excavation grid, lay atop the steps of the fronting platform and the centerline stair. It was excavated in a single layer, Lot 11, which consisted of the same mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic midden-type material described for Lot 2 in Unit 1. Excavators exposed the deteriorated plaster tread for the fronting platform's steps as well as the eastern edge of the centerline stair. Recovered cultural materials consisted of some 630 ceramic sherds, five small chert flakes, a burned faunal bone, and what could be flowstone from a cave.

## WK13A-11

The unit was located in the center of the excavation grid, placed atop the steps of the fronting platform. It was excavated in a single layer, Lot 13, which consisted of the mix of humic soils and Terminal Classic midden-type material as described in Lot 2, Unit 1. Additionally, excavators began to remove largish cut stones and limestone rubble from the collapse of the M13-12 architecture. Excavators exposed the remains of the cobblestone foundation for a plaster tread and portions of the fronting platform's third step. Recovered cultural materials included some 660 ceramic sherds, seven obsidian blade fragments, three small chert flakes, and a ceramic figurine head of a fanged lizard head, possibly representing some manner of iguana-creature.

## WK13A-12

This unit is located in the central portion on the excavation grid, lying atop the junction between the centerline staircase and the steps of the fronting platform. The material, removed in a single layer, Lot 14, consisted of the same mix of turbated humic soils and Terminal Classic votive offering, described in Lot 2 of Unit 1. As in the surrounding units, this mix contained frequent amounts of the collapsed cut-stone and construction fill from the collapse of M13-12. Excavators exposed the third step of the fronting platform and portions of the eastern edge of the centerline stair, revealing the same step as was exposed in Units 37 and 38. The recovered cultural materials included some 815 ceramic sherds, seven obsidian blade fragments, four smallish chert flakes, six burned and polished faunal bones, and ceramic figurine fragments of a hooded human figure.

## WK13A-13

Located in the center of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single layer, being Lot 15. The removed material consisted of a layer of humus and significant amounts of collapsed masonry. The layer of Terminal Classic midden-type material begins to thin considerably and does not continue much further up on the fronting platform. The excavators exposed the final step of the fronting platform and portions of the deteriorated plaster floor of the fronting platform itself. Excavators recovered some 283 ceramic sherds and

four pieces of chert, including a basal biface fragment.

#### WK13A-14

This unit was positioned in the central portion of the excavation grid, atop the eastern edge of the centerline staircase. Excavators removed the material in a single layer, Lot 16. The excavated material was the mix of humic soils and collapsed architecture given for Lot 15, in the Unit 13 description above. Once removed, the partially collapsed portions of the eastern centerline stair were exposed and were found to be, unfortunately, in a very poorly preserved state. Recovered cultural materials included some 154 ceramic sherds and a single small chert flake.

#### WK13A-15

Located on the central portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single layer, Lot 17. The material removed was the same mix of humic soils, collapsed masonry, and the edge of the Terminal Classic midden-type material as described for Lot 15, Unit 13 above. Once removed, the eastern portion of the centerline stair was revealed. All that remained of it was the tumbled and turbated construction fill and a single line of stones lying atop the plastered "thick" floor of the fronting platform. Excavators recovered some 267 ceramic sherds and a very small faunal bone. Two ceramic figurine fragments were recovered, one being a small whistle fragment and the other being a large human

head with elaborate "Toltec"-style plumed headdress.

#### WK13A-16

This unit was located in the northeast corner of the excavation grid. It was excavated in a single layer, being Lot 18. The material consisted of the mix of humic soils and the Terminal Classic votive offering as described for Lot 2, Unit 1, given above. Once removed, excavators exposed the intact section of the plaza floor and the first step of the fronting platform. Much of the plaster floor was quite well preserved. Excavators recovered some 1,291 ceramic sherds; 16 obsidian pieces of mixed flakes and blade fragments; four burned faunal bones; five shell fragments; and nine chert objects, including a basal biface fragment, large angular debris fragments, and smallish flakes.

#### WK13A-17

Located in the central portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single level, Lot 19. The removed material consists of a mix of humic soils, rubble from architectural collapse, and the edge of the deposit comprising the Terminal Classic midden-type material, identical to that described in Lot 15, Unit 13, above. Excavators uncovered the plaster floor for the fronting platform for M13-12. The floor was preserved only in patches with the exposed cobblestone foundation visible across much of the bottom of the unit. The recovered cultural materials consisted of

some 374 ceramic sherds, four obsidian blade fragments, six smallish chert flakes, a chert biface fragment, a shell fragment, a very small faunal bone fragment, and a ceramic figurine of a dwarf with monkey features.

#### WK13A-18

This unit was located along the eastern edge of the central portion of the excavation grid. Removed in a single layer, Lot 20, the material was the mix of humic material, rubble from the ruined architecture, and the Terminal Classic midden-type material as described in Lot 15, Unit 13 above. The removed material lay atop the second step of M13-12's fronting platform. The steps were in line and little disturbed, although the plaster treads had completely deteriorated. Excavators recovered some 641 ceramic sherds; six chert angular debris fragments and flakes; one wholly intact chert projectile point; ten obsidian blade sections, including one brilliant emerald green Pachuca fragment; and a small piece of quartzite.

#### WK13A-19

This unit was located along the eastern edge of the central portion of the excavation grid. Excavated in a single layer, Lot 21, the removed material consisted of the mix of humic soils, collapsed architecture, and Terminal Classic midden-style materials identical to that described in for Lot 15, Unit 13. The material lay atop the remains of the final step and the

deteriorated plaster floor of the fronting platform. The plaster from the floor was completely absent, leaving only the exposed foundational cobblestones. The cutstones of the step remained in line with smoothed faces along the front and rough-hewn sides on their rear sides. Recovered cultural materials included some 429 ceramic sherds, four obsidian blade fragments, three small chert flakes, and four ceramic figurine fragments. The figurine fragments included an old man's turbaned head and a head with pronounced ear flares.

#### WK13A-20

Located along the eastern edge of the central portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single layer, being Lot 22. The material itself consisted of the mix of humic soils and collapsed architecture as described for Lot 15, Unit 13, above. Excavators uncovered the tops of the final step. The riser stones were badly disturbed with smoothed and cut faces lying at odd angles to the front of the steps. Obviously the final step of the fronting platform has eroded badly. The plaster floor of the fronting platform was completely deteriorated in this unit, leaving the cobblestone foundation exposed. Recovered cultural materials were scant, consisting of some 180 ceramic sherds and one smallish chert flake.

#### WK13A-21

This unit was placed along the eastern edge of the central portion of the

excavation grid. The material was excavated in a single unit, Lot 23, and consisted solely of humic soils and the rubble from the collapse of the M13-12 architecture. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2, Unit 1. The material lay atop the wholly deteriorated plaster floor of the fronting platform. Only the level of the cobblestone foundation indicated the floor's former position. Recovered cultural materials included some 270 ceramic sherds, five small chert flakes, and three shell fragments.

#### WK13A-22

Located along the western edge of the central portion of the excavation grid, excavators removed this unit in a single layer, Lot 24. The excavated material consisted of a mix of humic material and the collapsed rubble from M13-12. There, as with all the humic materials excavated on M13-12, substantial erosion and root turbation were present. The humic soil matrix is identical to that described for Lot 2, Unit 1, given above. The material in this unit was an especially complex jumble of collapsed masonry from the centerline stair as well as its own heavily turbated construction fill. Excavations extended down into the ruined centerline stair to reach the "thick" plaster floor that lay beneath. The eastern edge of the stair was discernable, but the upper portions and riser stones of the stair had completely fallen away. Recovered cultural materials included some 607 ceramic sherds, two

obsidian blade fragments, three small chert flakes, and one carved bone earring. Additionally, excavators recovered a bone fragment identified by the Q'echi' excavators as belonging to a jagauli.

#### WK13A-23

Located in the central portion of the upper portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single level, being Lot 25. The material itself was a mix of humic soils and significant amounts of rubble from the collapsed architecture. The humic soils were identical to those described for Lot 2, Unit 1. Excavators exposed the remnants of the "thick" plaster floor of M13-12's fronting platform. The floor was only extant in portions, most of it having worn away to reveal its cobblestone foundation. No other architectural features were uncovered. Recovered cultural materials included some 295 ceramic sherds, four small obsidian blade fragments, and one small chert flake.

#### WK13A-24

This unit was placed along the eastern edge of the excavation unit in its central portion. It was excavated in a single layer, being Lot 26. The removed matrix consisted of a heavily turbated mix of humic soils and collapsed masonry from M13-12. The humic soils were identical to that described for Lot 2, Unit 1, given above. Once removed, excavators uncovered the remains of the "thick" plaster floor on the fronting platform. The floor was preserved

only along the southern and western sides, being absent from much of the area. The foundational cobbles were largely exposed beneath the rubble and humus. No other architectural features were uncovered. Excavators removed some 320 ceramic sherds, one piece of chert angular debris fragments, and one largish piece of ground stone.

#### WK13A-25

Located along the eastern edge of the central portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single level, being Lot 27. Excavators removed a heavily turbated mix of humic soils and substantial amounts of collapsed rubble from M13-12. The humic soils were identical to those described for Lot 2, Unit 1, given above. Once removed, excavators uncovered a well-preserved section of the "thick" plaster floor of the fronting platform. No other architectural features were present. Recovered materials included some 350 ceramic sherds, one largish piece of ground stone, a chert biface fragment, a small chert flake, a piece of chert angular debris fragment, and three obsidian blade fragments.

#### WK13A-26

Located in the central portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in two levels. The uppermost Level 1, Lot 28, consisted of the mix of humic soils and collapsed rubble. The humic soils themselves are identical to those described

in Lot 2, Unit 1, above. The size and frequency of the collapsed rubble increased dramatically as the humic soils thin out and disappear entirely. Excavators exposed portions of the "thick" plaster floor in northern and eastern corner of the unit, but the mass of solid packed rubble covering much of the unit was assigned to the unit's second level. The recovered cultural materials included some 511 ceramic sherds, four obsidian pieces consisting of blade fragments and a small Pachuca green flake, four chert flakes, one mother of pearl shell fragment, a small, well-polished bone fragment, a fragmented rib identified by the Q'echi' excavators as tepezcuintle, and a delicate carved shell earring.

Level 2, Lot 38, was the dense mass of collapsed rubble making up much of the unit, especially its southern and western sides. There is no humic material mixed into it. The collapsed rubble consists of fallen dry core construction fill from the interior of M13-12. Some of the fallen limestone blocks are quite large, measuring as much as 70 cm across and matching those found in the interior of the centerline trench. The sediment material is a loose greyish-yellow material inhabiting the numerous hollows and pockets of the fallen mass, being extremely fine and powdery to the touch. Embedded into this mass are several large ceramic sherds, almost certainly being whole and reconstructable vessels crushed as the building collapsed. Once removed, excavators uncovered the eastern edge of the deteriorated centerline stair, being a



remnant line of cut and faced stones, running north-to-south. Oddly enough, the stones were faced and smoothed on both the inward and outward sides. Some of the recovered cultural material, in particular, resembles that found in the midden-type deposit on the steps of the fronting platform. Excavators recovered some 488 ceramic sherds and two obsidian blade fragments.

#### WK13A-27

This unit is located on the western edge of the excavation unit, lying atop the eastern portion of the deteriorated centerline stair. The unit was excavated in a single level, Lot 29, and consisted of a mix of humic soils and collapsed dry core fill from the final construction phase of M13-12. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2, Unit 1. The collapsed limestone rubble spilled across the eastern portion of the collapsed stair and possessed elements of the Terminal Classic-style midden-type material mixed in. Particularly interesting were partial vessels and large ceramic sherds tumbled into the collapsed fill, probably indicating an original position of this material atop the pre-collapse staircase. Once removed, excavators uncovered the few remaining lines of stones that made up the stair's eastern edge. The fallen rubble extended all the way to the "thick" plaster floor of the fronting platform, indicating a near total collapse of this section of stair. The recovered cultural material consists of some 281 ceramic sherds, including the partial vessels, three obsidian blade

fragments, and one small chert biface fragment.

#### WK13A-28

Located on the northern section of the upper portion of the excavation grid, this unit was excavated in a single layer, being Lot 30. The layer itself consisted solely of a mix of humic material and collapsed rubble. The humic soils were quite thin, this unit being on the sloped portion of the fallen structure. They are identical to those described for Lot 2, Unit 1. The vegetation on the upper slopes of the structure was quite thin, being a few scrub-trees living beneath the very large ramón trees. The entire level was heavily turbated by roots from living and dead ramón trees. The level was excavated down to the dry core construction fill that made up the bulk of M13-12. When it was obvious that further excavation would reveal only more construction fill, excavation ceased. Excavators recovered some 40 ceramic sherds and one small obsidian flake.

#### WK13A-29

Located in the central portion of the excavation grid, this unit proved a complex mix of rubble, humus, cultural deposit, and ruined architecture. It was placed exactly on top of the junction of the remaining wall sections of M13-12 and the centerline stair. As such, it was excavated in three levels. Level 1, Lot 31, was made up the mix of humic materials and fallen rubble seen throughout this portion of the excavation

grid. The humic material is indistinguishable from that encountered in Lot 2 of Unit 1 and described above. Humic soils thin considerably in the mass of fallen architecture and the level was terminated when excavators stopped encountering them. Underneath, excavators encountered the solid mass of collapsed dry core construction fill identical to that described for Lot 30 in Unit 28 above. Cultural materials were quite scant, consisting only of some 16 ceramic sherds.

Level 2, Lot 40, was the removal of that dense mass of fallen and collapsed rubble. The stones of the collapse were quite large and were a mix of largish stones from the fill and cut and faced limestone blocks. Some of the flat, smoothed surfaces even possessed faint traces of stucco on a single face. Once removed, excavators uncovered the junction between the remaining walls of M13-12 and the eastern edge of the centerline stair. The uncovered wall stood, at its highest remaining point, seven courses of stones high, being 48 cm. It joins directly with the "thick" plaster floor of the fronting platform. A layer of rubble-free sediment lay wedged into the corner and along the base of the wall and so this level was terminated. This additional material was then designated the unit's third level. Recovered cultural material consisted solely of some 134 ceramic sherds.

Level 3, Lot 41, was a thick layer of fine loose sediment lying between the collapsed rubble and the "thick" plaster floor of the fronting platform. It runs along the

base of the remaining masonry wall and bunches in the corner where the wall joins with the centerline stair. The sediment matrix itself is a fine greyish-white material, loosely packed and powdery to the touch. Small, fist-sized limestones are present throughout. It was suggested that the material represents melt from the original stucco or mud facing of M13-12. Recovered cultural material limited itself to some 136 small ceramic sherds, one chert angular debris fragment, and one small shell fragment.

#### WK13A-30

This unit was placed along the eastern edge of the southern section of the excavation grid, on the upper slopes of M13-12. The unit was excavated on a single layer, being Lot 32. The material consisted of a mix of collapsed rubble and humic soils, the humic material being identical to that described for Lot 2, Unit 1. The layer was heavily turbated with significant root action. Excavation halted when excavators encountered no surviving architecture and had obviously excavated into the dry core construction fill of the structure itself. Recovered cultural materials included a scant 10 ceramic sherds, all of which were small, broken, and heavily eroded.

#### WK13A-31

Located on the western edge of the southern portions of the excavation grid, this unit was placed on the upper slopes of M13-12. It was excavated in a two layers, the

upper being Lot 33. The layer consisted of a heavily turbated mix of thin humic soils and collapsed architecture. The humic soils are identical to those described in Lot 2 of Unit 1. Once no surviving architecture was discovered and excavation began to extend into the dry core construction fill, activity ceased. Recovered cultural materials consisted of some 22 small, broken and eroded ceramic sherds, and one small chert biface fragment.

This dry core fill was removed to enable access to the eastern portion of the Burial 38 chamber. As such, it was comprised of the bulk construction fill identified in the looters' tunnel as belonging to the final construction phase of Structure M13-12 and includes material located beneath Unit 28 as well. This is the material placed on top of the reentered tomb and supporting the final stage of the centerline stair. The material from this layer, Lot 79, should be considered part of this ritual construction fill. Recovered cultural material includes some 90 ceramic sherds, five obsidian flakes and blade fragments, and a ceramic figurine of a grotesque dwarf's head.

#### WK13A-32

Located on the eastern edge of the southern portion of the excavation grid, this unit was placed on the upper slopes of M13-12 and was excavated in a single level, Lot 34. As such, the layer consists of a thin humic layer and rubble from the collapse of M13-12. The whole layer remains heavily

turbated by the numerous scrub and ramón trees growing on the slopes of M13-12. Once this material was removed and no surviving architecture uncovered on the upper slopes, excavation ceased rather than continue into the dry core construction fill. Recovered cultural materials consisted solely of 28 ceramic sherds.

#### WK13A-33

This unit was placed on the western edge of the southern portion of the excavation platform and extends slightly into the centerline trench. It was excavated in a single layer, being Lot 35. This material consisted of thin humic soils and collapsed masonry that extended into the dry core construction fill of M13-12 itself. It is identical to Lot 34 of Unit 32. Recovered cultural materials consisted of seven ceramic sherds and a ceramic figurine fragment of a foot.

#### WK13A-34

Located on the eastern edge of the southern portion of the excavation grid, this unit was placed on the upper slopes of Structure M13-12. It was excavated in a single level, being Lot 36. The material itself consisted of a mix of thin humic soils and collapsed rubble that extended into the dry core construction fill of M13-12, in a manner identical to that observed for Lot 34 of Unit 32. Excavations halted with the construction fill. Recovered cultural materials consisted of 30 small, eroded, and broken ceramic sherds and one small chert flake.

## WK13A-35

This unit was placed on eastern edge of the southern portion of the excavation grid with considerable overlap with Unit 46 of the centerline trench. It was excavated in a single level, being Lot 37. The removed material consisted of thin humic soils mixed with the rubble collapse of M13-12. This material is identical to that described for Lot 34, Unit 32. This material rests directly atop the dry core construction fill of M13-12 with no surviving architecture beneath. Recovered cultural materials were a scant ten small and eroded ceramic sherds.

## WK13A-36

Located at the southern edge of the excavation unit, this unit was placed on the upper slopes of M13-12. Excavated in a single level, Lot 39, consists of a mix of thin humic soils and rubble collapse from the ruin of M13-12. As such, it is identical to that material described for Lot 34 of Unit 32, given above. No surviving architectural features had survived in this unit. Recovered cultural materials included only three small, broken, and eroded ceramic sherds.

## WK13A-37

This unit was the first to be placed in the centerline trench excavations, being positioned in the middle of the lower portion of the centerline stair. The unit was excavated in a single level, being Lot 42.

The excavated material consisted of a mix of humic soils, some rubble collapse and the Terminal Classic midden-style deposit. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Once removed, excavators encountered the remains of a plastered tread and the crumbling stone risers for a partially intact step. The recovered cultural materials consisted of some 675 ceramic sherds; a ceramic figurine fragment; five chert objects, including a small biface fragment; one ground stone fragment; five burned faunal bones; one shell fragment; and two obsidian blade fragments.

## WK13A-38

The second unit was placed on top of the toppled stela fragment, in the centerline trench. This unit was excavated in a single level, being Lot 43. The removed material consisted of a mix of humic material and the Terminal Classic votive offering material with occasional pieces of rubble from the collapse of M13-12. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Once removed, excavators uncovered the remains of the step with fragments of a plaster tread as well as exposing the rest of the toppled stela fragment. The stela was tilted forward at about a 50-degree angle and had damaged the step below it significantly, pushing the stair's fill forward considerably. Excavators recovered some 530 ceramic shreds; five obsidian blade fragments; four shell fragments, including a potential oyster shell;

two small chert flakes; and one chert angular debris fragment.

#### WK13A-39

This was the third unit placed in the centerline trench excavations. While excavated in two different lots, both lots belong to the same level, being a mix of humic material, the Terminal Classic votive deposit, and some of the rubble from the collapsed architecture of M13-12. The humic material is identical to that described in Lot 2 of Unit 1. Much of the level was assigned to Lot 44. Excavators uncovered the largely intact plaster tread of a step and the deteriorated remains of the riser stones. In places where the plaster had deteriorated, excavators exposed the floor's foundational cobblestones. The recovered cultural materials consisted of some 752 ceramic sherds and three ceramic figurine fragments, including a ground disc and two intact male heads. Additional materials were made up on three burned faunal bones, including a fragment of burned turtle shell, four small chert flakes, one chert biface fragment, one shell fragment, one smooth river stone, and four obsidian blade fragments.

Lot 46 was located in the same level and consisted of a partially intact ceramic vessel. The vessel itself seems to be a shallow bowl with dramatically outflaring sides. The vessel appears smashed in place and lying in the middle of the unit. The vessel, it should be noted, lies on top of a large piece of limestone rubble, itself on

top of the surviving plaster tread. Hence, if one discounts a rather extensive degree of turbation, the vessel was placed as the architecture had begun to collapse.

#### WK13A-40

This was the fourth unit placed in the centerline trench and was excavated in a single level, being Lot 45. The material consisted of a mix of turbated humic soils and a scattering of limestone rubble from the collapsed architecture. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Once removed, excavators uncovered a largely intact plaster tread from the fifth step and the deteriorated riser stones from the sixth step. Recovered cultural materials consisted of some 480 ceramic sherds, two shell fragments, and two obsidian blade fragments.

#### WK13A-41

Unit 41 was the fifth unit placed in the centerline trench. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 47, corresponded to the mix of humic materials and scatter of collapsed rubble. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1, given above. It is not known if the Terminal Classic votive deposit extends this far up on the structure, but a large censer-base was found in the uppermost level of the unit. Once removed, the excavators uncovered the remains of the cobblestone foundation for a floor, but no intact section of the plaster tread itself. The unit also held the stone risers leading to the next step in

the stair. Recovered cultural material included two obsidian pieces and some 163 ceramic sherds, including a molded censer-base carved into ceramic “Ik” signs.

Level 2, Lot 55, occupied only the southern half of the unit. Excavators only removed the material from behind the stone risers, thus leaving the remains of that stair intact. The material itself was the ritual construction fill beneath the final stair of M13-12. The material itself consists of very large flat stones (*lajas*) stacked atop the “thick” plaster floor of the fronting platform. The stones are tightly packed together. Above this is a layer of smallish fist-sized limestone blocks packed together with a dense greyish-brown matrix. Some of the stones in the fill are cut and faced, potentially being scavenging from the earlier architectural phase of M13-12. The matrix itself is dry, compact and very fine to the touch. Numerous artifacts were packed into this ritual fill. Once this material was removed, excavators exposed the “thick” plaster floor that extends across the fronting platform and underneath the whole of Structure M13-12. Excavators recovered some 120 ceramic sherds, including some with thick, bolstered Terminal Classic rimsherds; an obsidian blade fragment; a small obsidian flake; and a single shell fragment.

#### WK13A-42

Unit 41 was the sixth unit placed in the centerline trench. It was excavated in two levels down to surface of the “thick”

plaster floor. Level 1, Lot 48, consisted of the thin humic material and fallen rubble mix as described above. The humic soils are identical to those of Lot 2 in Unit 1. As with most of the surface lots on the upper slopes of M13-12, there is substantial erosion. Once this surface material was removed, excavators exposed the turbated construction fill, any intact architecture of the centerline stair being missing entirely. In fact, excavators uncovered sections of a roughly circular crater in the construction fill of this unit, almost certainly the remains of a tree-crater, created when some large tree in the past collapsed and tore out this central portion of the stair. There are, needless to say, substantial amounts of turbation and rotten roots permeating much of the surface level. The roots did not seem to penetrate into the densely packed ritual construction fill below. Recovered cultural materials include some 110 ceramic sherds and a ground ceramic disc.

Level 2, Lot 56, consisted of the ritual construction fill supporting the final stair and resting, in turn, on top the “thick” plaster floor. It is identical to that described for Lot 55 in Unit 41, given above. Excavators removed this material down to the well-preserved surface of the “thick” plaster floor. Along the southern edge of the unit, they uncovered a cut in the plaster floor, the first indications of Burial 38. Excavators recovered some 198 ceramic sherds, four faunal bones, a shell fragment, two smallish chert flakes, and the first of the circular ceramic concentrations. This

concentration held 509 pieces of obsidian, including flakes, blades, and broken core fragments. The concentration itself was situated just to the north and slightly above the floorcut in the western section of the unit.

#### WK13A-43

This unit was the seventh to be placed in the centerline trench of Structure M13-12. It was excavated in two levels. The first, Lot 49, consisted of the mix of thin humic materials and fallen rubble found across the surface of M13-12. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. There was no surviving architecture in this unit, much of the space being occupied by the circular tree-crater described above. There was, of course, substantial root action on the surface. The root did not appear to have been able to penetrate the tightly packed ritual construction fill below. The recovered cultural materials consisted of a scant 38 ceramic sherds.

Level 2, Lot 59, consisted of the excavation down into the ritual construction fill down to level of the construction fill. The construction fill was a mix of packed earth and tumbled stones, identical to that described for Lot 55 in Unit 41, given above. Excavators uncovered an additional floorcut on the southern edge and, even though the fill continued down into the floorcut, excavation halted at that level and the material below the floor assigned a new unit designation, Unit 51. Directly over the

floorcut, carefully positioned between two cut limestone blocks was an intact ceramic vessel, later designated as Vessel 12 of Burial 38. Additional recovered cultural materials included five obsidian flakes and blade fragments, a ground stone fragment, and some 169 ceramic sherds.

#### WK13A-44

This unit was the eighth to be placed in the centerline trench of M13-12. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 50, consisted of the mix of thin humic soils and fallen rubble. The humic materials are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. The unit, as with all the units placed on the upper slopes of M13-12, evidence extensive erosion and root turbation. The unit was excavated to the level at which the humic soils ended and the excavators were down into the dry core construction fill of the final construction stage. This unit slightly overlaps Unit 33 of the excavation grid. Excavators recovered only some 14 small, broken, and eroded ceramic sherds. One of these sherds was an elaborate molded element most commonly found on large censer-vessels, indicating that votive offerings may be found farther up on the structure.

Level 2, Lot 60, consisted of the dry core construction fill of the Terminal Classic construction phase. As such, the excavated material was identical to that described in Lot 55 of Unit 41. Once removed, excavators came down on a series of staggered plaster treads, the remaining

portions of the earlier stair of M13-12. A total of three steps were uncovered in this unit, all of which were lacking their riser stones. The first two steps, from north to south, were separated by a 40 cm rise and a rise of 30 cm between the second and third step. Recovered cultural materials included three small shell fragments and 15 ceramic sherds, including one fine orange bodysherd.

#### WK13A-45

This unit was the ninth to be placed in the centerline trench and was excavated quite deeply, resulting in a 2.5 meter deep section of the trench. This occurred in three levels. Level 1, Lot 51, consisted of the mix of thin humic soils and fallen rubble that covers the entirety of the upper slopes of M13-12. The humic soils are identical to that described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Much of this level is actually located around and beneath a large ramón tree growing from the north slope of the structure. Once this material was removed, it was obvious that no architecture had survived and the layer itself fades into the turbated dry core construction fill of the Terminal Classic building phase of M13-12. Recovered cultural materials were scant and were limited to five fragmentary ceramic sherds and one small shell fragment.

Level 2, Lot 61, entailed the extension of the unit into this Terminal Classic construction phase. The fill itself consists of largish limestone blocks, loosely packed together. The stones themselves

vary greatly in size and appear to be neither cut, nor heavily weathered, nor scavenged from other structures. Some are quite large, measuring up to 60 cm across. They contain numerous small voids and hollows when not surrounded by a fine, loose sediment matrix. This material is itself chalky and dry, highly powdery in consistency. There is heavy turbation throughout the dry core fill with both living and dead tree roots penetrating deep into the fill. Some of the roots are as thick as a man's thigh and the fill is, in general, heavily disturbed by this root action. Once removed, excavators uncovered a solid masonry wall and additional plaster tread. Both architectural elements are assumed to be part of the partially demolished earlier construction of M13-12. The wall itself is made of rough-cut limestone blocks, lying on their side, probably built to hold the earlier construction fill, but the condition of this earlier phase makes precise determination of this quite difficult. The plaster tread resembles those of Unit 44, missing its riser stones and sitting atop the earlier fill. The tree roots did not penetrate into the wall of the plaster tread. Excavators recovered 20 small, broken, and highly fragmentary ceramic sherds, three small chert flakes, and one small shell fragment. Scattered flecks of carbon were collected into Carbon Sample #1.

Level 3, Lot 78, was the construction fill of the earlier phase of M13-12. The material itself is a solid and well-packed rubble fill of limestones and a dense



matrix packed around them. The fill is apparently held in place by a series of retaining walls as uncovered in the level above. The stones themselves are quite large and became impossible to fully remove from the excavation unit. The largest measured some 80 cm across. The stones were cut, but irregularly shaped and none possessed faced or smoothed surfaces. The matrix between them is a dark greyish black material with chips and flakes of limestone scattered throughout. The material is sandy and quite abrasive to the touch. Towards the bottom of the unit, excavators encountered thick layers of packed limestone blocks alternating with thick layers of loosely packed matrix and small, fist-sized limestone chunks. This matched the material found towards the bottom of the looters' tunnel. Excavation halted as the trench walls began to visibly bulge, and action in the deep trench dislodged the stones of the dry core fill above. Without scaffolding and wooden supports, continued excavation was not safe. Recovered cultural materials included only six small and eroded ceramic sherds. Scattered flecks of carbon were collected in Carbon Sample #4.

#### WK13A-47

This unit was the tenth to be placed in the centerline trench and was positioned on the uppermost section of M13-12. It was excavated in two layers. Level 1, Lot 53, represented the mix of thin humic soils and architectural collapse present across the

whole of the upper portion of M13-12. The humic soils are identical to that described for Lot 2 of Unit 1 and, though turbated, this layer is not as dramatically turbated as that particular lot. Once this material was removed, it was obvious that no surviving architecture remained in this section and the excavators were encountering the dry core construction fill of the final phase of M13-12. Recovered cultural materials consisted of eight small and heavily eroded ceramic sherds and four chert angular debris fragments.

Level 2, Lot 62 consisted of the dry core construction fill of the Terminal Classic construction stage of Structure M13-12. As such, it is identical to that described for Lot 61, given in Unit 46 above. Once removed, excavators revealed a series of capstones associated with the top of the rough-cut wall of masonry exposed in Unit 46. No plaster surface was visible, but this was the same elevation as the intact plaster surface exposed in Unit 48, indicating that this platform is an architectural element from the partially demolished earlier construction phase. Excavators recovered some 11 small and heavily eroded ceramic sherds and one small chert flake.

#### WK13A-48

This unit was the eleventh unit to be placed along the centerline trench and positioned towards the very summit of M13-12. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 54, corresponds to the mix of thin humic soils and architectural collapse that

characterizes much of the uppermost sections of the ruined structure. This layer has obviously seen a great deal of both root turbation from the ramón trees and significant erosion. The humic soils on these upper units are very thin, but what is present remains identical to that described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Once the dry core fill was exposed, this level was terminated. A line of faced stones was exposed, being the last remains of the upper portion of the final Terminal Classic stair. Recovered cultural materials were very scant and limited to 13 highly distressed ceramic sherds. Additionally, excavators recovered a large ground stone, probably being some utterly ruined architectural decorative element.

Level 2, Lot 64, consists of the turbated dry core construction fill of the final construction stage of M13-12. As such it is identical to that described for Lot 61, Unit 46 above. Once removed, excavators uncovered an intact plaster floor from the earlier phase of M13-12. It is unknown exactly how this section relates to the remains of the stair uncovered in the lower units, but it is likely that it represents the remains of either a room or performance platform placed high up on the structure. Certainly the plaster floor is directly associated with both masonry walls uncovered in Units 47 and 49. Recovered ceramic material includes some 24 ceramic sherds and three chert flakes and angular debris fragments.

#### WK13A-49

This unit was the twelfth unit placed in the centerline trench and positioned on the uppermost portion of M13-12. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 57, consisted of the mix of very thin humic soils and collapsed architecture. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. There is extensive root action across the whole of this surface unit. Once excavators removed the humic material and the dry core construction fill was exposed, the level was terminated. There are no surviving architectural features under this layer. Excavators recovered only five small, broken, and highly eroded ceramic sherds and one small rodent jawbone.

Level 2, Lot 65, was the heavily turbated dry core fill of the final construction fill of Structure M13-12. As such it is identical to that described for Lot 61 of Unit 46, given above. Once removed, excavators exposed a second wall of rough-cut masonry blocks similar to that uncovered in Unit 47. The wall is positioned directly behind and in obvious association with the intact plaster floor of Unit 48. The exact design of the intact portions of the upper section of this earlier architecture is difficult to determine given both the limited excavations and highly disturbed state of M13-12 in general. Still, it seems to represent either a wall or support structure of some sort. Atop this wall was another surface of some kind; clearly the material behind the wall was the construction fill of the earlier architecture. There is no trace of

a plastered surface. The recovered cultural material was limited to a single animal tooth.

#### WK13A-50

This unit was the thirteenth unit placed along the centerline trench and positioned on the summit of M13-12 itself. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 58, was made up of the heavily turbated and eroded mix of humic material and collapsed architecture found across much of the structure. The humic soils are identical to those described in Lot 2 of Unit 1 and given above. This was very thin level on top of the structure itself. Once removed, excavators exposed the dry core construction fill of the final stage of construction. It was obvious that no architecture has survived on the structure's summit. Cultural materials consisted of a small chert flake, a small partial chert biface, a shell fragment, and a tooth identified by the Q'echi' excavators as that of a tepezcuintle.

Level 2, Lot 66, consisted of heavily turbated and eroded dry core construction fill of the final construction phase. It is identical to that described in Lot 61 of Unit 46. This material extended down to the surface uncovered in Unit 49. While no plaster remained, the surface was made up of well-packed earth of quite a different composition from the dry core that lay atop it. The unit terminated at this surface. It is unknown what function this surface possessed as part of the earlier construction phase, but a summit structure would not be unexpected. Cultural materials were limited to a single

small shell fragment and eroded ceramic sherd.

#### WK13A-51

Unit 51 consists of the material located inside of the floorcut and filled chamber of Burial 38. It is not a square meter unit, but encompasses the whole of the small tomb chamber, located beneath Units 42, 43, 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56. In order to maintain continuity with those units, Unit 51 began with Level 3. It was excavated in three layers and ended at the plaster floor of the chamber itself. While in the field, Levels 3 and 4 were arbitrarily separated to maintain control over this complex deposit. On analysis, however, this distinction was shown to be meaningless, as both levels, as well as the second levels for all the above units, were found to be parts of the same ritual construction fill described for Lot 55 of Unit 41. These two levels are not separated in the description given here. Together, they make up Lots 63 and 67, Levels 3 and 4, respectively. Excavators recovered some 136 ceramic sherds; 11 faunal bones; 2527 obsidian blades, flakes and exhausted core fragments; 20 chert blades, flakes and angular debris fragments; 120 flakes of a creamy-white chert; 37 flakes of a jet-black chert; two large chert biface fragments; a worked shell fragment; five shell fragments; and deteriorated human long bone, possibly even a part of the Burial 38 individual. Collected flecks of carbon were gathered together into Carbon Samples #2, #3, and #5.

Level 5, Lot 89, was the remains found on the floor of the tomb chamber, being Burial 38 itself. The material has been discussed at length in its own section and doesn't require much additional discussion here. The recovered materials included 735 obsidian flakes, blades and broken core fragments; 140 chert flakes and blades; the eleven vessels of Burial 38; a slate disc, probably being the remains of a deteriorated slate disc; a smoothed and worked conch shell core; three other shell fragments; two jade beads; two large jade mosaic pieces, 92 small jade mosaic pieces; 106 decorative spindle whorls; six faunal bones, identified by the Q'echi' excavators as burned deer; 12 ceramic sherds, being fragments of the burial's eleven vessels; a blue-painted stucco covered river stone; a bundle of fragmentary stingray spines; and a concentration of deteriorated bone and bone fragments. It should be noted that some of this material represents those parts of the ritual construction fill that came to rest on the chamber floor and not all of it can precisely be said to be associated with the initial interment of the individual. Scattered flecks of carbon were collected into Carbon Sample #6. Other collected samples included the matrix from the interior of Vessel 7 and from the area of the bone concentration.

#### WK13A-52

This unit was placed along the western edge of the centerline trench in order to remove the overburden above the

Burial 38 chamber. As such, it was excavated in two levels. Level 1 consisted of the heavily turbated mix of humic soils, rubble from architectural collapse and the dry core construction fill of the final phase of M13-12. The humic soils were identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. The material was heavily turbated with no surviving architecture from the final construction phase remaining at all. The mix of humus, rubble, and fill was removed to the level of a plaster floor landing, itself associated with the earlier construction phase of M13-12. This level was itself as heavily impacted by the large treefall crater described above. Excavators recovered some 32 ceramic sherds, including some fine orange bodysherds, and a single obsidian flake.

Level 2, Lot 73, consisted of the ritual construction fill lying between Burial 38 and the final stair. As such, the material here is identical to that described in Lot 55 of Unit 41. Additionally, this material is mixed with portions of the partially demolished earlier stair landing removed to facilitate access to the tomb. The material was excavated to the level of the "thick" floor. Recovered material consisted of a scant 35 ceramic sherds.

#### WK13A-53

This unit was placed along the western edge of the centerline trench to facilitate access to the tomb chamber below. As such, it was excavated in two layers. Level 1, Lot 70, consisted of the heavily

turbated mix of humic materials and architectural collapse. The humic soils were identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Once this material was removed, excavators uncovered no surviving architectural elements, coming directly on top of the ritual construction fill lying beneath the final stair for Structure M13-12. At this point, a new level was designated. Excavators recovered eight ceramic sherds from this level.

Level 2, Lot 74, consisted of the ritual construction fill overlying the tomb chamber and supporting the final stair. As such, it is identical to that described for Lot 55 of Unit 41. This material was removed down to the level of the "thick" floor. Excavators recovered some 28 small and eroded ceramic sherds; 21 chert flakes, blades and angular debris fragments; 75 obsidian flakes, blades and exhausted core fragments; a small shell fragment; and a ceramic figurine of a jaguar head.

#### WK13A-54

Unlike most of the other units on the northern slope of M13-12, this unit was not a one-meter square but was, instead, a triangular unit positioned to join the excavation grid to the centerline trench. This material was removed to allow greater access to Burial 38. As such, it was excavated in two levels, the humic layer and the ritual construction fill of the centerline stair. Level 1, Lot 75, was this mix of humic material and collapsed masonry, identical to that which covers the surface of M13-12.

The humic material is identical to that described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. There were no surviving architectural features and excavators came down on top of the ritual construction fill underlying the final stair. The recovered cultural material included some 17 ceramic sherds, a small shell fragment, a fragmental faunal bone, and biface fragment of a dark black chert.

Level 2, Lot 76, consisted of the ritual construction fill that lay atop the Burial 38 chamber. It was identical to that described for Lot 55 in Unit 41. The material was removed to the level of the "thick" plaster floor and the floorcut above Burial 38. Excavators uncovered some 122 ceramic sherds, seven obsidian flakes and blade fragments, three small chert flakes, a chert biface fragment, and two shell fragments.

#### WK13A-55

This unit was placed along the western edge of the centerline trench to facilitate access to the Burial 38 chamber. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 77, was the mix of heavily turbated humic soils and architectural collapse. As such it is identical to those layers that cover the surface of M13-12. The humic soils are just like those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Excavators uncovered a plaster floor associated with the earlier construction phase. It represented the remaining portion of a landing positioned midway up the stair. The level was halted at this point. Excavators recovered some 17 small,

broken and eroded ceramic sherds and five smallish shell fragments.

Level 2, Lot 86 consisted of the ritual construction fill overlying Burial 38. This material actually extended beneath the floor in parts, indicating that in the reentry event, the excavations extended beneath portions of the earlier architecture. Underneath the other portions of floor was the by-now familiar fill of the earlier construction, being the densely packed limestone and matrix first observed in the looters' tunnel. Portion of the ritual fill extended beneath sections of Unit 56 as well, meaning this layer extends for 11 cm into this other unit. The material was removed to the level of the "thick" floor. Recovered cultural materials included some 69 obsidian flakes, blades, and exhausted core fragments; some 37 ceramic fragments; and a major concentration of chert. Of this chert, there were 145 pieces of angular debris fragments, flakes, macroflakes, and core fragments of a dark black chert, and 110 of the same type of fragments of a creamy yellowish-white chert.

#### WK13A-56

This unit was placed on the western edge of the centerline trench to facilitate access to the tomb chamber. It was excavated in two levels. Level 1, Lot 80, consisted of the heavily turbated mix of thin humic soils and architectural collapse that covers all of Structure M13-12. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. There were no architectural

elements uncovered beneath this material, only a mass of dry-core fill and collapsed rubble. Along the southern edge of the unit, excavators encountered the construction fill of the earlier phase, itself being the compacted limestone and fill noted above. This material was not excavated. Beneath the rubble was the ritual construction fill itself and the level was appropriately halted. Excavators recovered a scant six ceramic sherds.

Level 2, Lot 84, only occupied the northern two-thirds of the unit, the area occupied by the ritual construction fill overlying Burial 38. The material itself is identical to that described for Lot 55 of Unit 41 and identical to the material inside the floorcut itself. The unit was excavated to the level of the "thick" plaster floor and the unit terminated. Excavators recovered some 15 ceramic sherds, two chert angular debris fragments, and one obsidian blade fragment.

#### WK13A-57

This was placed along the eastern side of the excavation grid in order to follow the remaining wall eastwards. Originally staked out as a two-meter square excavation unit, in actuality only a narrow trench in front of the wall was excavated. On some maps, it still appears as a two-meter unit. Both the remaining portions of the wall were exposed down to the level of the "thick" plaster floor. The removed material itself consisted of the same heavily turbated mix of humic soils and collapsed

architecture present across the structure itself. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Recovered materials consist of four shell fragments, three obsidian blade fragments, five small chert flakes, one smallish chert biface fragment, and 612 ceramic sherds. Among the sherds was an intact candelaria and numerous censer fragments, probably making this unit part of the votive offering deposit noted across the front of M13-12.

#### WK13A-58

This unit was placed to the east of Unit 57 in an attempt to locate the corner of the structure and to map the remains of the wall originally uncovered in Unit 29. For mapping purposes, it was aligned to the original excavation grid. Although originally staked out as a two-meter square unit (and it appears as such on some maps) the unit was actually a narrow trench following the remaining wall. The wall itself grows more deteriorated as it gets further away from the centerline stair, dropping to a single line of stones by the time it exits the eastern side of the unit. Similarly, the "thick" plaster floor fades away towards the eastern side of the unit, being visibly only as occasional patches of the foundational cobblestone. The material excavated from this unit is the same heavily turbated mix of humic soils and collapsed masonry that is present across the whole of the structure. The humic soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Excavators recovered

only 27 eroded ceramic sherds and four shell fragments.

#### WK13A-59

This unit was placed just to the east of Unit 58 in an attempt to locate the corner of the structure. It was originally staked out as a two-meter square unit, although only a small section of it was actually excavated. Similar to Units 57 and 58, it was aligned to the original excavation grid to aid with the mapping of the structure's remaining architecture. The corner itself was found to have long-collapsed and is visible only as a tumble of faced and smoothed stones lying perpendicular to the line of stones uncovered in Unit 58. Excavators removed only the material above and to the front of these ruined architectural elements. The material itself consisted of the heavily turbated mix of humic soils and collapsed rubble present across the whole of the structure. The soils are identical to those described for Lot 2 of Unit 1. Collected cultural material consisted of some 187 ceramic sherds, three small obsidian blade fragments, and a single small biface fragment.

#### WK13A-60

This was the final unit placed in the 2006 field season at M13-12. It differed from the other units at M13-12 as it was a two-meter square placed around the largest of the monumental stones located on the fronting platform. It was aligned to the excavation grid for mapping purposes. The

stone itself was a large, round altar stone, heavily weathered and lacking any surviving decorative elements. The stone was tilted at an oblique angle to the ground surface and has been obviously moved somewhat from its original location. Excavations only extended to the depth of the base of the monumental stone, just the necessary depth to accurately determine its shape and map it in. The excavated material itself was the mix of turbated humic material and a thin scattering of the collapsed masonry from M13-12 itself. Excavators recovered some 250 ceramic sherds, three obsidian blade fragments, a chert flake and a chert angular debris fragment. It is not known whether this material is part of the Terminal Classic votive offering deposit that covers the platform steps and centerline stair to the front of the structure. The conclusion of excavation in Unit 60 ended the 2006 archaeological investigations at the Grupo Chok.

### **Future Plans and Recommendations**

The excavations into Structure M13-12 only represent the beginning of investigations in the Grupo Chok. The discovery of Burial 38 hints at the importance of the high-level elites that inhabited these structures during the Classic period. Whether any future explorations of the group includes the author or not, the following recommendations are offered here. These are:

- The cleaning, clearing and mapping of Structure M13-11 in order to recover additional data before the structure deteriorates further. Such investigations would include clearing the looters' hole and crafting a profile of what can be discerned from the looted burials and the structure's various construction episodes.
- The filling and consolidation of the looters' tunnel in Structure M13-12 in order to consolidate the structure and prevent most of the small pyramid from being destroyed when one or two of the ramón trees on the summit fall.
- Excavations should be placed into N13-6, especially given both its central position within the group and its "palace"-style layout. Such investigations should include an exploration of any potential center stair for dedicatory deposits or ritual caches to determine construction dates. N13-6 is also in a prime position to contain interments and the interior should be explored for such.
- Great attention should be paid to the ceramic attributes of the vessels and sherds belonging to the long-suspected but newly confirmed ceramic complex of the "Middle Classic" and any additional facets it may contain.



- Explorative testpits should be placed into the artificial ramp connecting the Grupo Chok to Plaza 2 and any connection between the Grupo Chok and Structure M13-1.
- Most of the group should be cut, cleared and cleaned to determine the precise outlines of the structures, the location of potential middens, and any additional monumental stones.
- Middens, located between and behind residential structures, should be excavated to recover artifact collections associated with the inhabitants and their diet and status.

It is hoped that these suggestions may aid any future exploration of the Grupo Chok.

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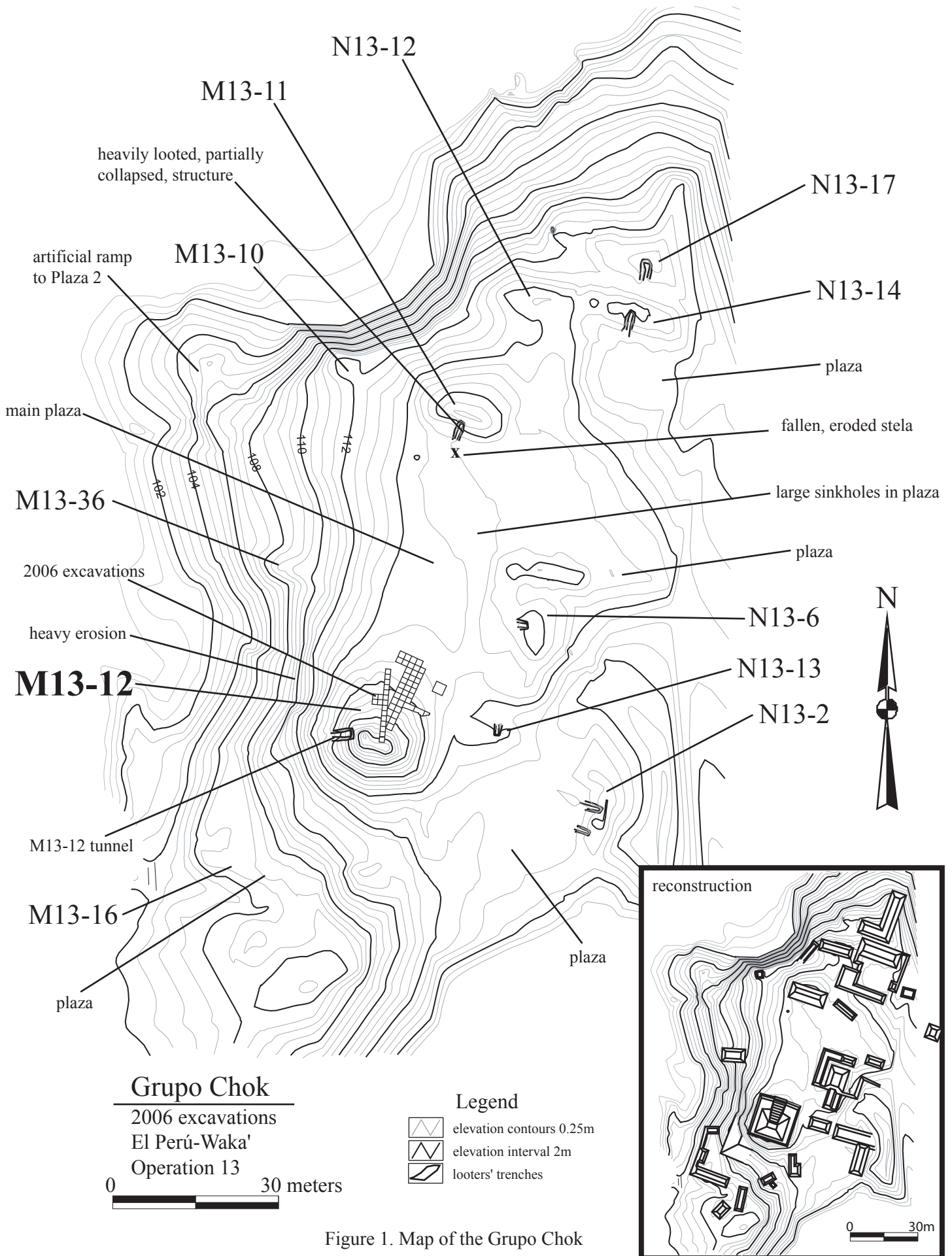
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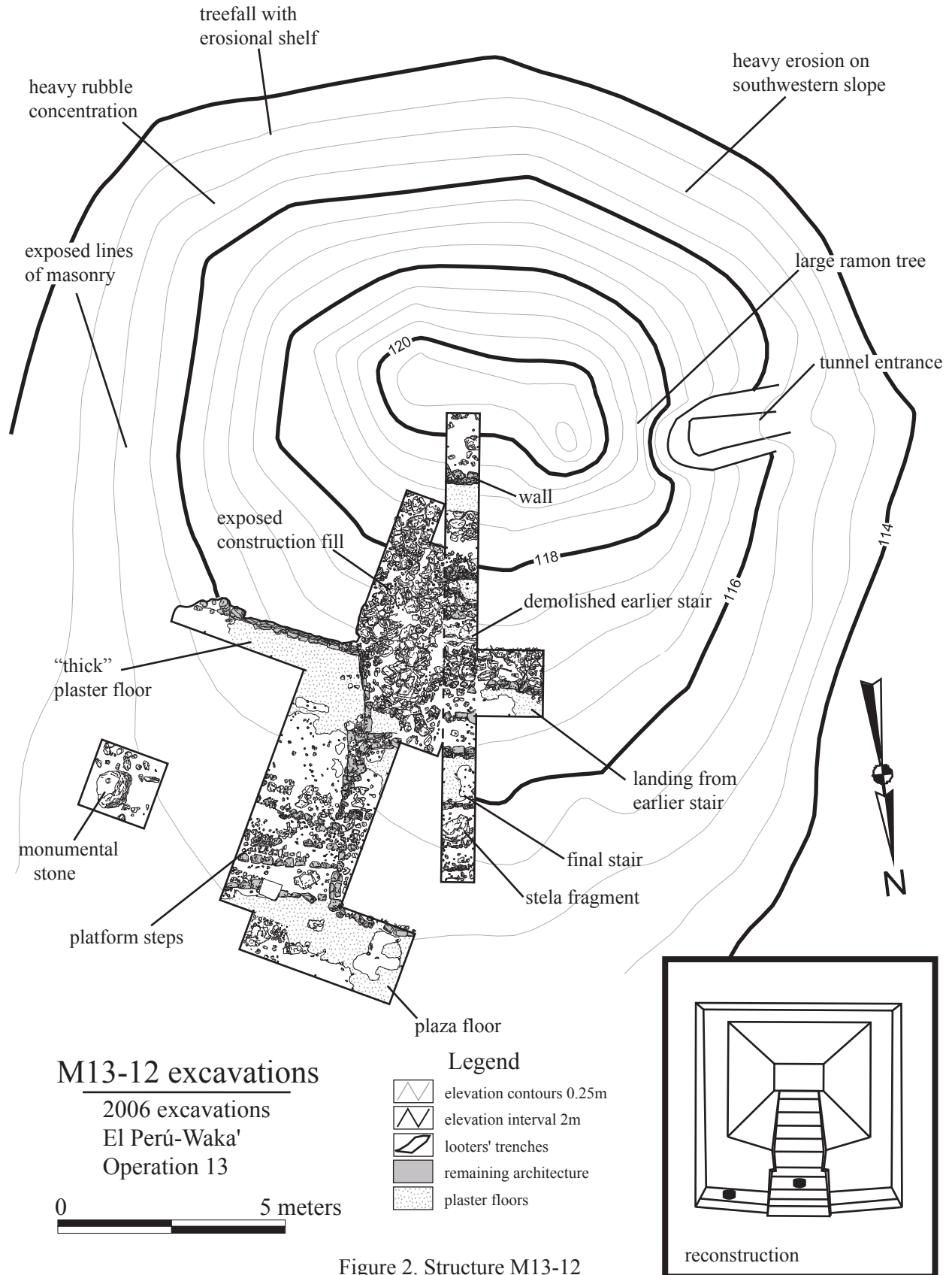
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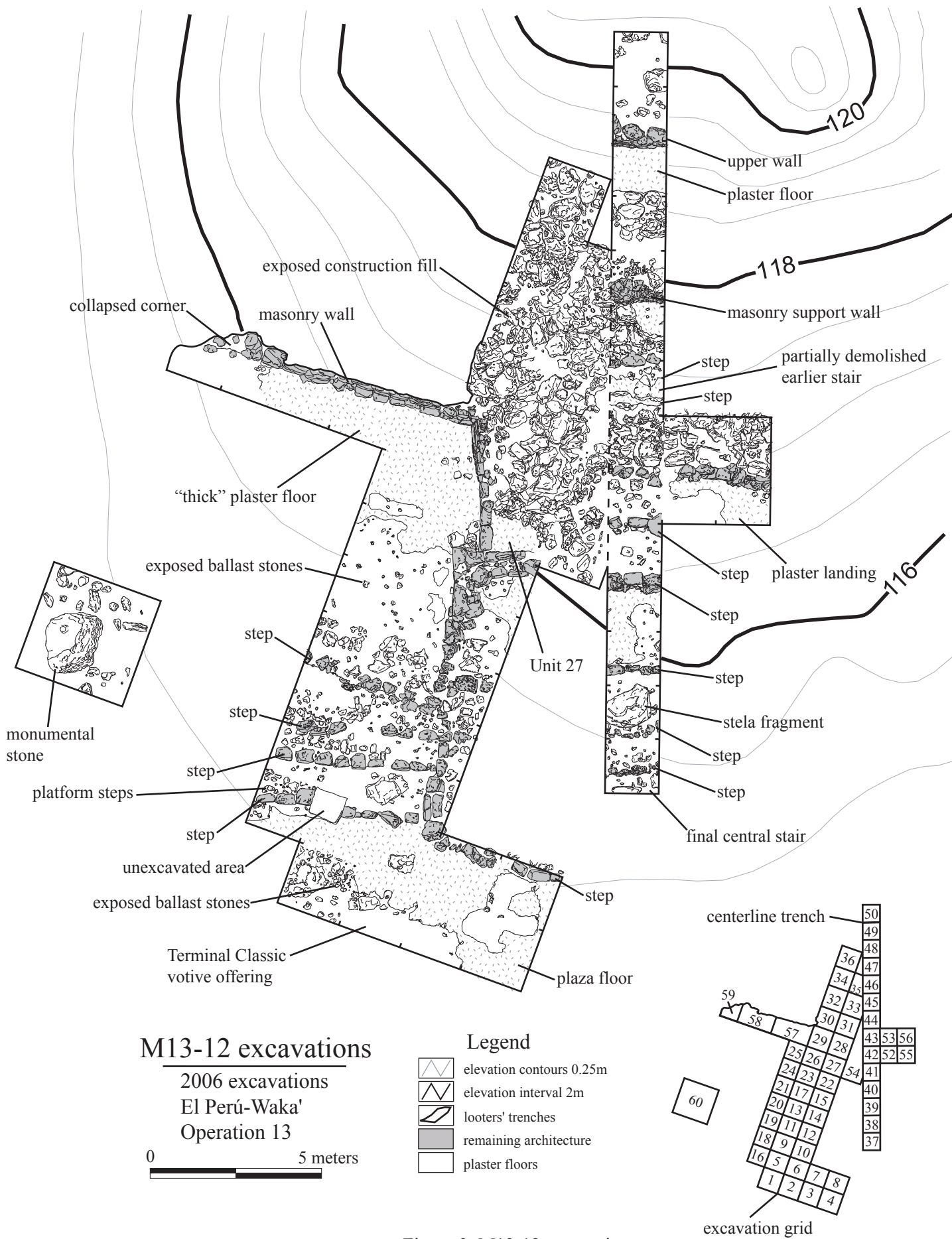
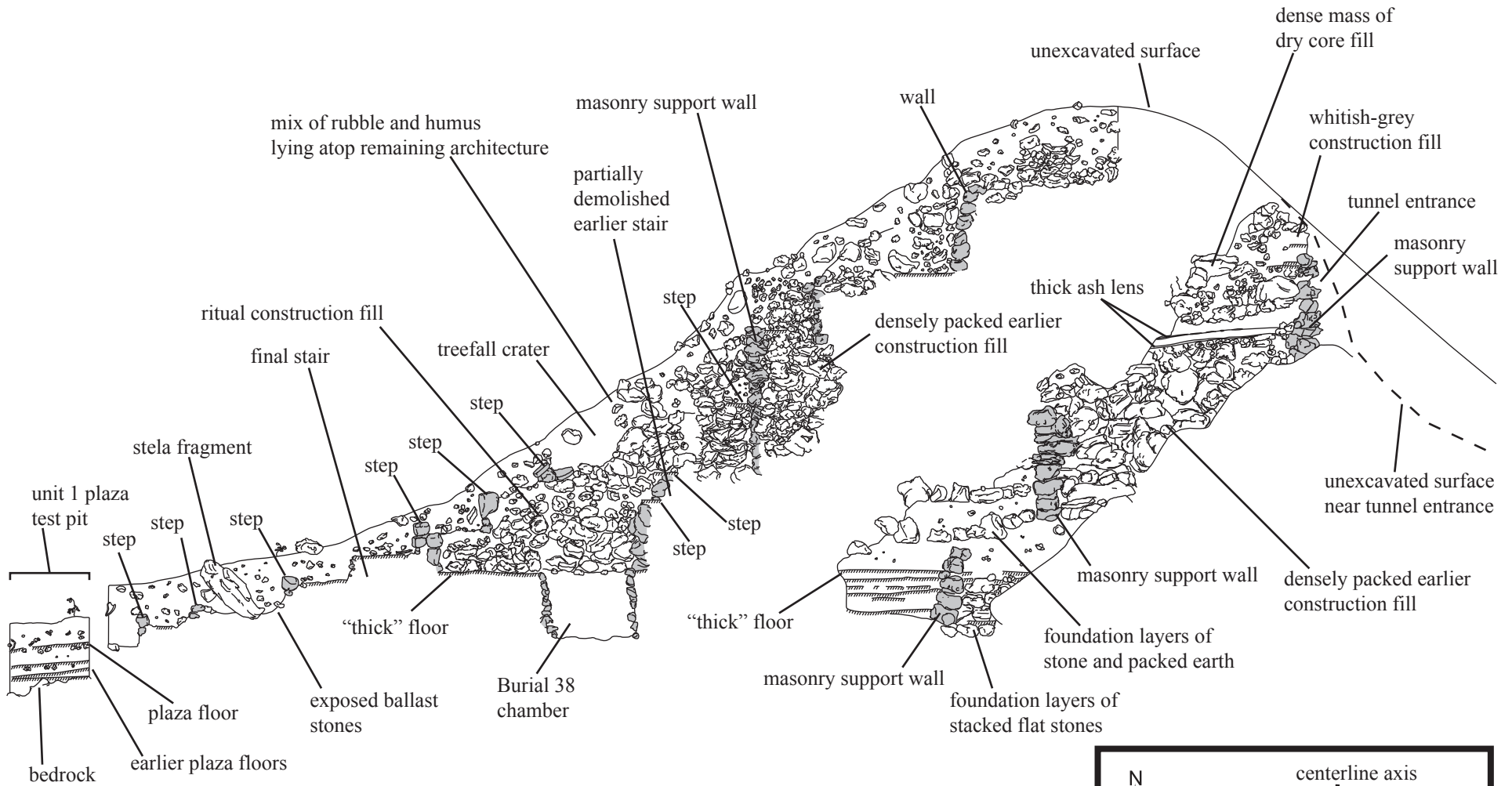


Figure 3. M13-12 excavations





**M13-12 excavations**

2006 excavations  
 centerline axis profile  
 tunnel axis profile  
 Operation 13

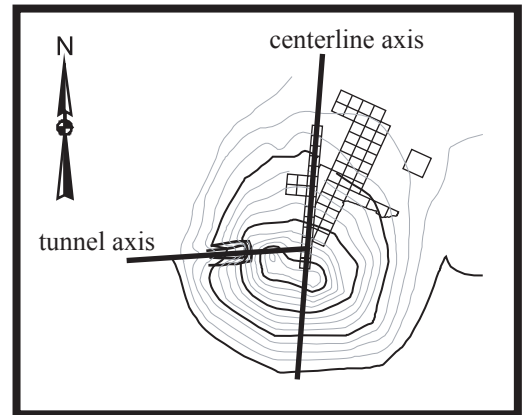
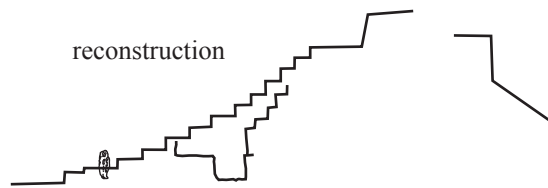
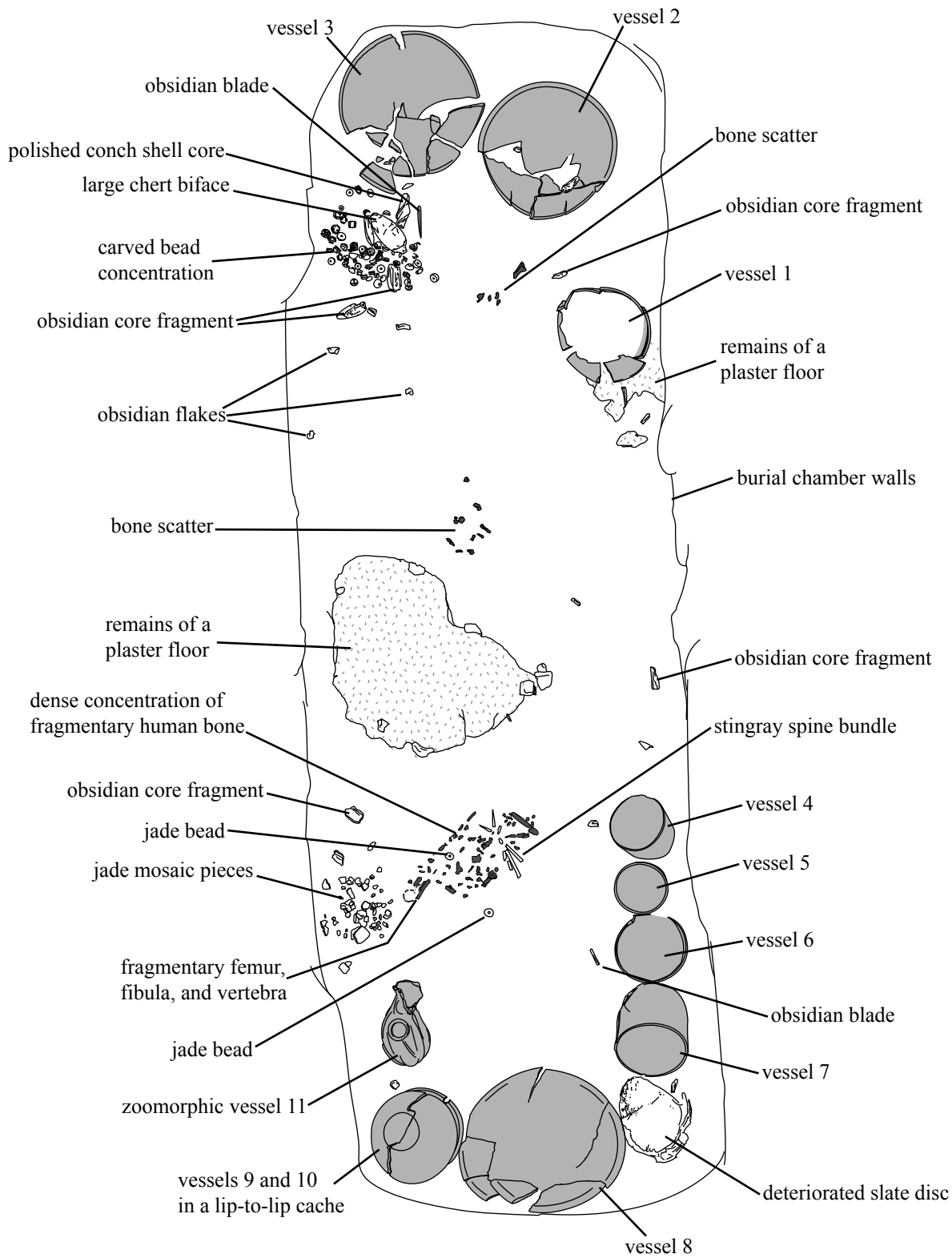


Figure 4. M13-12 profile



El Perú-*Waka'*

Burial 38

WK-13A

Structure M13-12

plan map



Figure 5. Burial 38