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EXCAVATION OF A COLONNADED HALL AT MAYAPAN

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In 1954, while an approach trench was being carried across the colonnaded hall Str. Q-81 (165 S, 260 W) toward the vaulted temple Str. Q-80 on the north side of the north court of the Castillo, the central shrine of the hall was encountered. Excavation of the shrine produced a very interesting group of effigy incensarios, pottery vessels, and sculpture.

The central portion of the hall was excavated in addition to the shrine. A small section of the passage between Strs. Q-81 and Q-80 was also excavated at the northeast corner of the former structure. The data from these excavations combined with those obtained by Proskouriakoff at the west end of Str. Q-81 in 1953 gave an adequate picture of the construction of the building.

Before excavation, the presence of the colonnaded hall was indicated only by a few column drums and an occasional bit of exposed wall. The debris covering the structure formed a continuous slope with the mound of Str. Q-80 behind it.

The plan of the building after excavation was found to differ little from that of other colonnaded halls at Mayapan (fig. 1). The structure, which faces directly on the plaza, is approached by a flight of steps leading up from the plaza to a front terrace. Neither of these architectural features was excavated. At the rear of the terrace is a low step in front of the plinth of the colonnaded gallery. Eight round columns are evenly spaced, very close to the edge of the plinth; six more widely spaced columns are at the rear of the gallery, close to the bench which runs around three sides of the structure. An enclosed shrine containing an altar is centrally located at the rear.

The gallery, including the bench, is 5.75 m. wide and 22.28 m. long. The rear wall of the structure today stands 3.33 m. above the plaza floor. Originally it may have been only 30 or 40 cm. higher, since presumably it would not have been much higher than the platform of Str. Q-80 to its rear.

The masonry of the building consists of roughly shaped slabs of limestone with occasional pieces of well cut, re-used stone, many of which are very similar to the Puuc type of dressed stone. The well cut stone was used mainly in the doorjambs, the altar molding, and the face of the bench, and as facing for the low step in front of the gallery. The columns are constructed of roughly shaped disks of stone. The gaps between the uneven surfaces of the disks were filled by chinking with small wedges of stone, and the whole surface was then covered with plaster.

The gallery is surfaced with four well preserved plaster floors 2 to 5 cm. thick, and plaster still adheres to the walls in spots. No trace of painted decoration was found.

Presumably the roof was of masonry supported by beams and lintels of wood. Concentrations of plaster from the roof were found throughout the excavation, often in direct contact with the floor.

CONSTRUCTION PHASES

Early Construction. A doorjamb belonging to an earlier structure was found in a trench cut through the center of the gallery and shrine (figs. 1; 2*f*). The jamb is under the doorway of the present shrine; the wall of which it is a part continues eastward, but was not excavated.

Floor 1 (fig. 1) under the building is contemporary with the early construction. The rear wall of the hall cuts through this early floor.

Little can be said about the nature of the early building. Two column drums were found in the fill overlying Floor 1, however, and if they belong to the early structure, the jamb may be part of an earlier colonnaded hall.

Floor 1 runs over a shallow pit dug into the limestone bedrock (fig. 1). Though the floor does not completely cover the pit, presumably it did so at one time, and was partly removed when the later hall was built. The pit underlies the central niche and altar of the present hall, but whether these structures were purposely placed over the pit cannot be determined. The contents of the pit were of little help in interpreting its significance, consisting of loose, dark soil, in which sherds of Mayapan Red, black-on-cream, porous gray, and slate wares were mingled with a few obsidian chips. A patch of fine gray ash was also present, and flecks of charcoal were randomly dispersed throughout the fill.

Phase I. After most of the earlier construction had been razed, the major portion of the colonnaded hall was built. The gallery, with its columns and walls, and the steps and terrace in front of the gallery are all assigned to this phase. Fill, consisting of fairly large stones and a small quantity of earth containing a few sherds, was placed over the earlier construction and the bedrock, which at some points comes almost up to the floors of the terrace and gallery.

Phase II. A bench with a central niche was built around the west, north, and east sides of the gallery. This conclusion is based on the fact that in the central niche the plaster on the rear wall runs behind, and Floor 2 (fig. 1) runs under, the bench on either side of the niche. An alternative interpretation would be that the central niche was originally much wider, and that it was later narrowed, so that a portion of the floor and wall plaster was covered. Such an addition was not observed, but may exist. If the addition does exist, Phase II would be eliminated.

Phase III. A wall was built across the central niche near its mid-point, and an altar was placed over the cist thus formed (figs. 1; 2,*d,e*). The altar rests on the earliest floor on the bench, and the later two floors of the bench turn up to it. A low step of plaster was placed in the niche in front of the altar. Floors 3 and 4 of the gallery (fig. 1) are continuous with this step and turn up to the altar.

Phase IV. A turtle effigy cache vessel was placed in a pocket formed by the removal of a stone from the wall under the altar and the excavation of a shallow depression in Floor 2 (figs. 1,*g*; 2*e*; 3,*q,r*). A small piece of white shell was found in the earth which filled the vessel. Beneath the vessel was a subspherical bluish stone bead (fig. 2,*b,2*).

An additional wall was then built across the niche, and the space between the new wall and

the altar wall was filled with stones and earth (fig. 1; 2,*d*). A small Mayapan Redware cache vessel (figs. 1,9; 2,*i*), covered with a circular lid of the same ware, was placed in the fill behind the new wall. Flat stones were laid across the front of the niches, raising the height of the step in front of the wall.

Phase V. Walls were erected around the altar area, forming a shrine room. The doorway of the room is directly in line with the niche and the altar (figs. 1; 2,*b,d*). The walls incorporate columns of the gallery at the southwest and southeast corners. Floor 5 (fig. 1) turns up to the shrine walls, but all other floors run under these walls.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SHRINE AND ITS CONTENTS

As indicated above, the shrine in its final form was a room with benches and an altar placed centrally and to the rear. A step in a shallow niche between the benches led up to the altar, which is made of well dressed stone, mostly of the Puuc type and definitely re-used, and which has a projecting molding around its three freestanding sides (fig. 2,*a,b*).

The top of the altar was badly disturbed, perhaps through looting. No cache vessels were found in the cist under the altar, where one might expect to find something of the sort. If looting took place, it occurred before the collapse of the roof, since roof debris lay undisturbed on top of the altar. Perhaps the fragments of two small greenish-blue tripod cylinder jars found on the west bench were once part of an altar cache. (For illustration of a similar jar see Shook, 1954, fig. 10,*s*. One of the tripod cylinders from the shrine is about 7.5 cm. high and has an outside diameter of 4.5 cm.) The cache vessels mentioned in the discussion of Phase IV, since they were not in the cist under the altar, may have been overlooked by the looters.

Among the more important objects in the shrine was a large limestone turtle (fig. 2,*j,k*). The turtle is portrayed with gaping jaws, from which a face having the toothless, sunken jaws of Itzamna looks out, and has human hands holding unidentified objects. Flecks of white plaster adhere to the stone. If any other colors were used, they are no longer preserved. The turtle was sitting on the floor of the shrine with its head pointing northeast (fig. 1,10). One might infer from its skewed position that the turtle had been removed from its original location. Perhaps it once was on the altar, and its removal was coincident with the disturbance of the altar top.

Fragments of a restorable jar of Mayapan Redware were found in the doorway of the shrine. When assembled, the jar was found to be a lidded cylinder on which was appliquéd a polychrome "diving god," modeled from porous gray ware (fig. 3,*o,p*). The face of the figure is painted orange, and the hands are red. The eyelids and a band around the mouth are green. The fact that no smudging was present on the inside of the jar suggests that it was not used as an incensario.

Perhaps the most notable artifacts in the shrine were the human effigy incensarios. Seven incensarios were restorable at least in part, and fragments of many others were found on the floor of the shrine and on the benches (figs. 1,1-7; 2,*c*; 3,*a-n*). The incensarios were crushed in place by roof and wall debris which lay over and around them. The color is well preserved on all of them.

Before proceeding to a description of the incensarios, one may note that similar human effigy censers have been found over a wide area from Chichen Itza to sites in British Honduras (see Gann, 1918, fig. 67, pl. 20; Gann and Gann, 1939, pl. 5; Lothrop, 1924, figs. 29c, 30, pl. 9; Morley, 1946, pl. 85; Salisbury, 1879, pp. 71-89; Sanders, 1955, p. 214; Thompson, 1897, pl. VIII).

Since Adams (1953, pp. 146-48) has already described the general appearance of the censers, we shall note only a few details which have been observed in the somewhat better specimens now

available.

As Adams has indicated, the censers consist of an effigy attached to a pedestal-based censer bowl. The effigies are usually portrayed standing erect, but in rare examples they are shown in a seated position. The effigies of our examples stand from 58 to 70 cm. high, including their headdresses. The censer bowls, with their pedestal bases, are from 40 to 56 cm. high, with an average of around 45 cm. The bowls have outside diameters of 17 to 20 cm., and the bases are around 15 cm. in diameter. The bowls are normally undecorated, but a few bowl sherds showed traces of some sort of design applied in white paint.

All the human effigy censers at Mayapan were decorated in a variety of colors, but it would seem that similar censers from the Corozal District of British Honduras are decorated only with blue paint applied over a white slip (Gann and Gann, 1939, p. 20). The censers from this district are considered to be late in the area, since the sherds from them occur as surface finds on top of earlier structures.

The slightly concave panel on either side of the effigy mentioned by Adams is part of the feather headdress represented in a highly stylized form. Adams' statement on the construction and appearance of the effigies has been verified, except that the hand and arm position shows some variation. The forearms generally form a 90° angle with the upper arms and the body, but may come together so that the fingers touch in front of the body (fig. 3,j,k). The hands may have the palm inward, upward, or downward. In the group from the shrine, the palm is usually up, with a ball of copal resting in it. The copal is sometimes shown flaming. In other examples the hands hold an atlatl, an ear of maize, or an unidentified conical object (fig. 3,e,f,j,k). Pouches are sometimes suspended from the arms (fig. 3,b-k). A shield is attached to the left arm of one effigy (fig. 3,g).

Some new details have been learned about dress from the shrine incensarios. The basic garments consist of an apron (*maxtli*), a sort of half skirt which covers the buttocks and sides of the thighs, an open coat, and a breastplate. Some effigies are shown with a wide, circular collar. The coats, half skirts, *maxtlis*, and shirts are painted in a variety of color combinations and designs, which probably represent the appearance of cloth. The only color not noted by Adams is white, which seems to be fugitive and is preserved only under ideal conditions. The breastplates are often elaborately ornamented with braid and appliquéd decoration. One breastplate consists of the Quetzalcoatl seashell motif with pendant bells (fig. 3,n). Each head has earplugs, the design of which varies somewhat, and bracelets of circular "jade" beads are sometimes worn around the wrists.

Three basic styles of headdress have been observed. One style consists basically of a cylindrical bonnet, another is in the form of a helmet modeled to portray a bird or other animal with gaping jaws, and a third form looks like a rectangular box. Though ornamentation varies considerably between and within the three styles, some elements are common to all. All headdresses observed have flaps which extend down to the shoulders and a funnel-shaped element at the top, and all are attached to elaborate featherwork. The featherwork usually varies only in color and minor details of pattern, but Incensario No. 4 has a strikingly different sort of feather headdress (fig. 3,g).

The bonnet type of headdress consists of a cylindrical cap from which the usual funnel-shaped element rises. The caps and "funnels" are decorated with panels and stripes in a variety of color combinations. Ornaments (*adornos*) such as spikes, rectangular panels, and triangles are appliquéd on the headdresses (fig. 3,c,j).

The helmet type of headdress consists of a representation of the head of a bird or other animal with an open mouth from which the face of the image looks out. In two examples the head is

that of a jaguar (fig. 3,*f,n*). In one instance the head is that of an unidentified bird (fig. 3,*b*), and another head (fig. 3,*l,m*) may be that of a bird, although the presence of human teeth makes its identification very much open to question. A variant form of the helmet headdress is found on Incensario No. 5 (fig. 3,*b,i*). The upper jaw of a serpent is attached to the headdress, but the effect is not that of the typical open-mouthed head of an animal.

The decoration of the helmets is relatively simple. Appliquéd decoration was not used on the helmet proper, and solid colors predominate. The two jaguar headdresses, which were on the two incensarios in the doorway of the shrine, were painted orange with red lips. The bird headdress on No. 1 was painted green with red eyes and mouth, and the "bird" helmet on No. 7 had a cream-colored background on which were painted small designs in red. The eyes were blue, and the mouth was red with white teeth.

Only fragments of the "box" type headdress were found in the shrine, so that its description must await the reporting of examples from other structures at Mayapan.

The identities of the effigies have not been thoroughly analyzed, but some suggestions can be made on the basis of preliminary observations.

Incensarios Nos. 1, 2, and 3 on the east side of the shrine have well modeled faces, very human in appearance and so alike in detail that one might suggest that they were made from a single mold (fig. 3,*a-d,n*). Incensario No. 3 has a breastplate in the form of a seashell, perhaps indicating some connection with Quetzalcoatl. Traces of paint on the face of No. 1 show that it was painted red and black, perhaps in a banded pattern. The face of No. 2 is orange with a curving red band; the eyelids, arms, and legs are painted red. The face of No. 3 is red and orange, and the feet were apparently black.

Little can be said about Incensario No. 4 (fig. 3,*f,g*). The presence of fangs might suggest Chac (God B, following the classification of Schellhas, 1904), but the protruding blue eyes and the sunken jaw seem to contradict such an identification. The last-mentioned element is more commonly associated with Itzamna (God D). The presence of a shield on the left arm and an ear of maize in the right hand does little to clarify the identity of the effigy. Perhaps one should note Morley's comment that "... the ancient Maya conceived of some of their deities not only as a single entity but at the same time as composite or multiple in character ..." (Morley, 1946, p. 231). Possibly we have here a combination of attributes conventionally assigned to separate deities. The face of this particular image has whitish skin, blue eyes, orange eyebrows, and red lips surrounded by an orange area. The arms and feet appear to be painted white.

The proboscislike nose and curving fangs of Incensario No. 5 (fig. 3,*b,i*) are suggestive of Chac, the rain god. Perhaps again a duality in the nature of a god is indicated by the painting of the body of this effigy, the flesh of the right side of the body being painted red, and that of the left side blue. The face has orange eyebrows and lids, red lips, and white tusks.

Incensario No. 6 (fig. 3,*j,k*) has the toothless, sunken jaws of Itzamna (God D), lord of the heavens. The hands hold an unidentified conical object, which was originally covered with rows of triangular spikes. Small red, white, and black designs under the eyes might be interpreted as tears. The face, hands, and feet are blue. The eyelids are orange, and the red lips are surrounded by an orange area.

The face of Incensario No. 7 (fig. 3,*l,m*), with its cutout eyes, may represent a mask. The mask has a very human appearance, and closely resembles Incensarios Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Fangs project from the lower corners of the mouth, and again we may be dealing with an effigy combining the attributes of more than one deity. The face is painted blue, with orange and green stripes on the cheeks.

In summary, the effigies on the east side of the shrine (fig. 1) have faces of quite human character, and one of them wears a Quetzalcoatl symbol as a breastplate. This group may be linked to Quetzalcoatl. The effigies on the west side of the shrine have combinations of attributes linked to Chac, Itzamna, and perhaps other deities. One of the effigies is probably a representation of Chac, and another, Itzamna.

TEMPORAL RELATIONS OF THE COLONNADED HALL

The fill under the floors produced no sherds from human effigy incensarios, a fact which indicates that the colonnaded hall was built before the introduction of this late form of incensario at Mayapan.

The building may be later than the substructure of Str. Q80 to the north. This conclusion is based on a very tenuous indication that the hall cuts into a layer of grouting in the passage between the two structures.

SUMMARY

A colonnaded hall of conventional plan was built over an earlier structure of which little trace remains. It is possible that the bench around the sides was added after the hall was built. Such a sequence was not definitely established, however, and in other colonnaded halls the bench was built at the same time as the gallery.

The bench contained a central niche, the rear half of which was later sealed off by the construction of a wall across the niche and the placing of an altar over the cist thus formed. Subsequently, another wall was placed across the niche, reducing it further in size. At the same time, two cache vessels were buried behind the new wall, one of them being placed in a pocket formed by the removal of a stone from the wall under the altar. The final phase of construction consisted in the erection of walls around the altar area to form a room or shrine.

The top of the altar had been broken into, possibly in an attempt at looting, before the collapse of the roof of the structure.

The shrine room contained seven partly restorable human effigy incensarios, a lidded jar decorated with a "diving god" figure, and a limestone turtle. Great quantities of incensario sherds were found on the floor and benches, and the restorable incensarios had been crushed in place by debris from the roof and walls.

MATERIALS RECORDED

The artifacts in the debris of the colonnaded hall would indicate that the building was a ceremonial structure. The sherds were preponderantly incensario fragments, and very few artifacts were found such as one would expect to be present in a structure primarily utilitarian in function.

Artifacts and pottery are listed below. Whole vessels are described in the legends to the photographs. The pottery was analyzed by E. M. Shook.

Lot C-70: fill over early construction (between Floors 1 and 2): pestle, probably fine-grained limestone (fig. 2,g); 66 small animal and bird bones; 5 fragments of obsidian flake blades; 2 flint chips; 2 fragments of unworked shell.

Total sherds: 765 — 76 Puuc period; 689 Mayapan period (unslipped 300, Mayapan Red 290, hard red 2, Fine Orange 4, black-on-cream 93).

Lot C-71: fill between Floors 2 and 3: 2 obsidian flake blades; 9 fragments of small animal and bird bones.

Total sherds: 47 — 7 Puuc period; 40 Mayapan period (unslipped 13, human effigy type censers 4, Mayapan Red 21, black-on-cream 2).

Lot C-71a: cache under altar: bluish stone bead, spherical, found under turtle effigy bowl (fig. 2,b,2). Two cache vessels (figs. 2,i; 3,q,r).

Lot C-72: general excavation in the colonnade and shrine: limestone “pot lid” (fig. 2,b,1); pink shell bead (Spondylus?), disk-shaped (fig. 2,b,3), found in disturbed fill in altar; limestone turtle (fig. 2,j,k); pottery “chile grinder,” cat. no. 54-84; 6 obsidian flake blades; 1 flint chip; 4 stalactites; 7 animal bones.

Total sherds: 3993 — 22 Puuc period; 3971 Mayapan period (unslipped 265, human effigy type censers 3472, Mayapan Red 221, red-on-cream 2, Fine Orange 4, black-on-cream 7)..

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Fig. 1 PLAN AND SECTION OF STR. Q-81

1-7: Incensarios Nos. 1-7, in order (fig. 3, *a-d, f-n*).

8: Turtle effigy cache vessel (figs. 2, *e; 3, q, r*).

9: Mayapan Redware cache vessel (fig. 2, *i*).

10: Limestone turtle (fig. 2, *j, k*).

Fig. 2 VIEWS OF STR. Q-81 AND MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS

a: Shrine and altar after excavation, from southwest.

b: Shrine and altar after excavation, from south.

c: Shrine doorway during excavation; effigy incensario *in situ*.

d: View of shrine from southeast after removal of altar and part of secondary construction; note secondary walls and steps in central niche.

e: Effigy cache vessel *in situ* in pocket in wall under altar (figs. 1, *8; 3, q, r*).

f: Detail of trench through shrine; earlier construction under colonnade shows just below center of picture.

g: Pestle, limestone, 7.7 cm. long, 5 cm. wide at bottom, cat. no. 54-91, Lot C-70.

h: 1, limestone "pot lid," 17 cm. in diameter, 2.5 cm. thick at center, cat. no. 54-82, Lot C-72; 2, bluish stone bead, 1.3 cm. in diameter, 0.7 cm. thick, cat. no. 54-92, Lot C-71a; 3, pink shell bead 0.6 cm. in diameter, 0.1 cm. thick, cat. no. 54-83, Lot C-72.

i: Cache vessel from fill behind late wall in central niche (fig. 1, *9*). Mayapan Redware, although slip is darker than normal; lid is typical Mayapan Redware. Bowl is 5.5 cm. high; orifice diameter 5 cm.; neck and loop handles were removed before vessel was placed in cache; lid has diameter of 5.5 cm. Lot C-71a.

j, k: Limestone turtle from floor of shrine (fig. 1, *10*). Length 42 cm., width 25 cm., height 17.5 cm.; cat. no. 54-81, Lot C-72.

Fig. 3 INCENSARIOS AND OTHER OBJECTS FROM SHRINE OF STR. Q-81

a, b: Incensario No. 1 (fig. 1, *1*). Polychrome decoration. Face 31 cm. high. Lot C-72.

c, d: Incensario No. 2 (fig. 1, *2*). Polychrome decoration. Effigy 58 cm. high; bowl 43.5 cm. high. Lot C-72.

e: Hand holding atlatl. Polychrome decoration; hand is painted blue. From west bench of shrine. Arm

and hand 17 cm. long. Lot C-72.

f,g: Incensario No. 4 (fig. 1,4). Polychrome decoration. Hand ca. 7.5 cm. long, holding maize; face ca. 16 cm. high; effigy 59 cm. high; bowl 40.5 cm. high; orifice diameter 17.6 cm. Lot C-72

h,i: Incensario No. 5 (fig. 1,5). Polychrome decoration. Effigy 55.5 cm. high; bowl 47 cm. high; orifice diameter 19 cm. Lot C-72.

j,k: Incensario No. 6 (fig. 1,6). Polychrome decoration. Effigy 62 cm. high; bowl 44.1 cm. high; orifice diameter 20.2 cm. Lot C-72.

l,m: Incensario No. 7 (fig. 1,7). Polychrome decoration. Face and panels ca. 46 cm. high; orifice diameter of bowl 21 cm. Lot C-72.

n: Incensario No. 3 (fig. 1,3). Polychrome decoration. Effigy ca. 68 cm. high. Lot C-72.

o,p: Lidded jar from doorway of shrine. Polished red and buff slip, with polychrome "diving god" figure of porous gray ware. Total height 24.5 cm.; jar 16 cm. high, orifice diameter 14 cm.; lid 10 cm. high, orifice diameter 14 cm. Lot C-72.

q,r: Cache vessel from pocket in wail under altar of shrine (figs. 1,8; 2,e). Porous gray ware painted bluish green. Bowl 22 cm. long, 17.5 cm. wide, 9 cm. high, orifice diameter 8 cm. Circular plug in bottom of bowl 2.5 cm. in diameter. Figure on turtle's head 13 cm. high. Human face looks out of turtle's mouth; object held by seated figure may be intended to represent flaming copal. Lot C-71a.

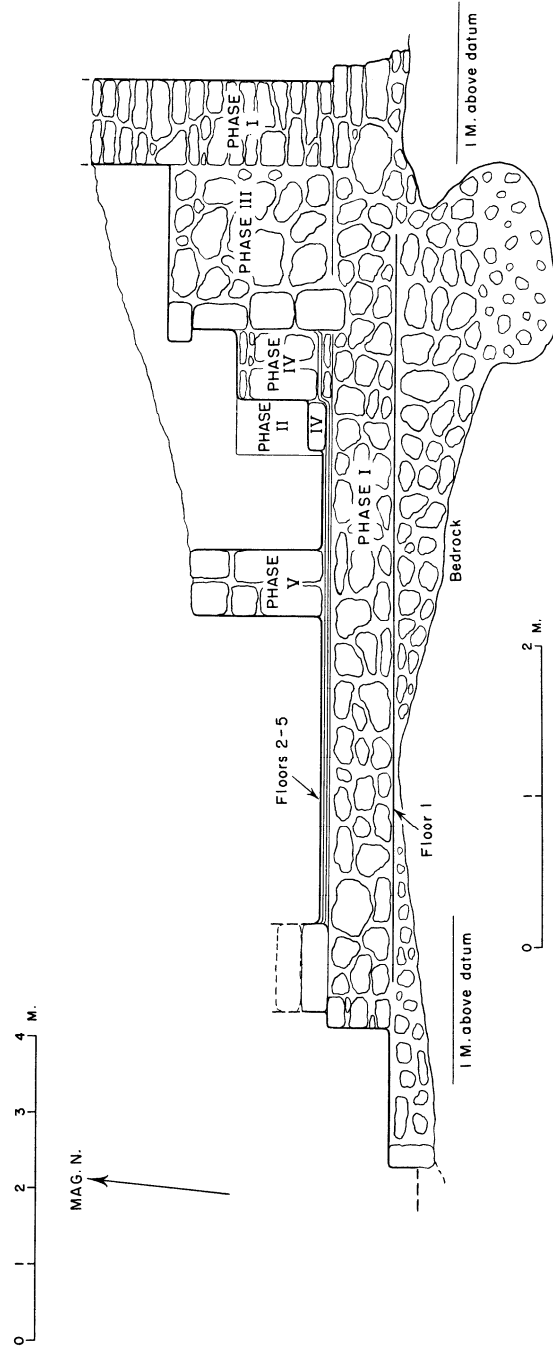
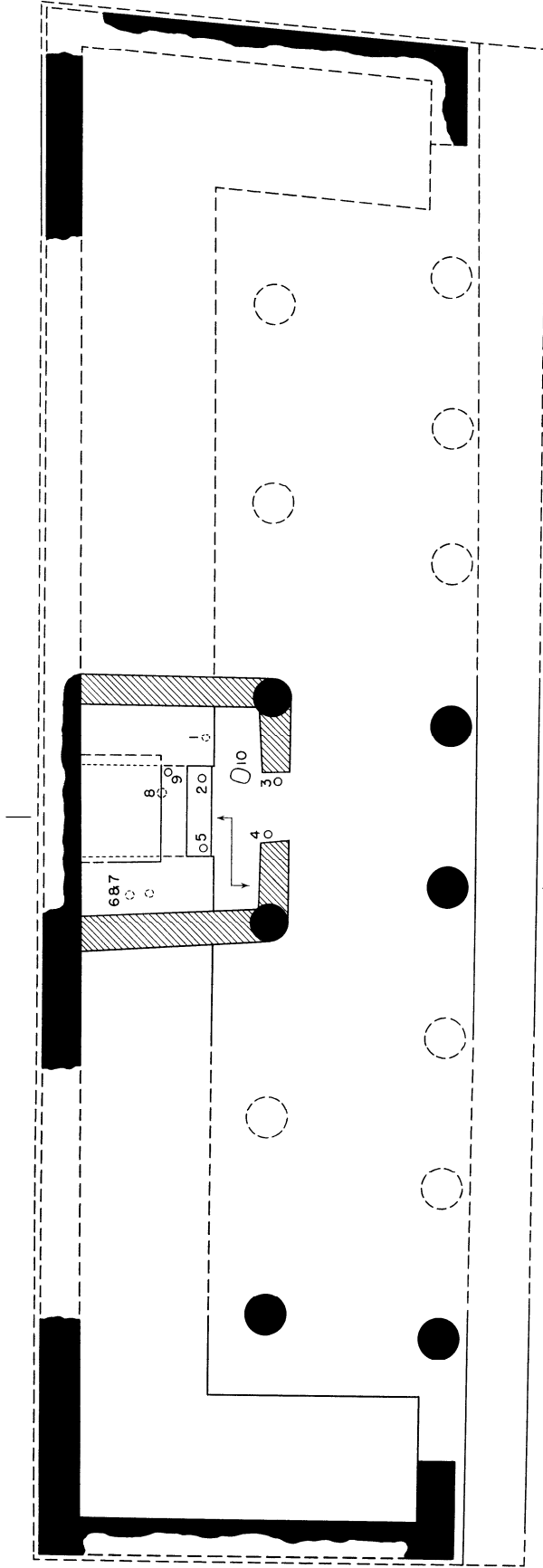


Fig. I



a



b



c



d



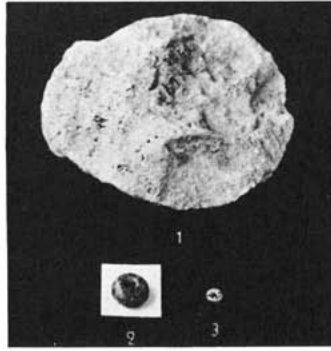
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k

Fig. 2

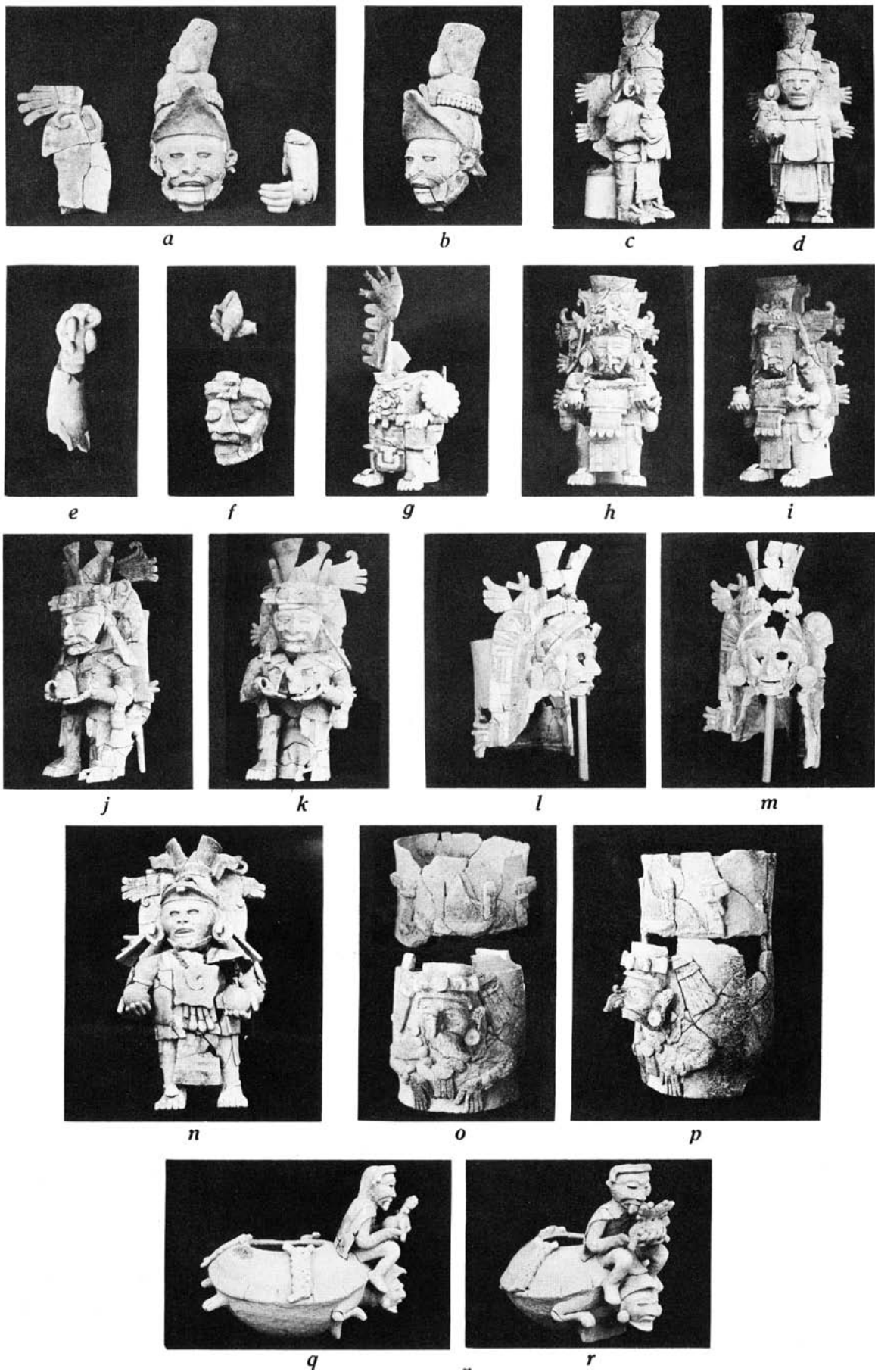


Fig. 3