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1 author:

Christopher S. Beekman
University of Colorado

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CORPORATE POWER STRATEGIES IN THE LATE FORMATIVE TO EARLY CLASSIC TEQUILA VALLEYS OF CENTRAL JALISCO

Christopher S. Beekman

Corporate political strategies (Blanton et al. 1996) that privilege power-sharing over exclusionary tactics are recognized to be important yet understudied forms of political behavior in early complex polities. I present the case of the Tequila valleys of western Mexico to illustrate several points about this corporate system: that the component descent groups can be recognized through their different approaches to architectural construction and burial patterns; that they form groups of counterpoised lineages that shared power; that the relationships between these groups become more fixed and hierarchical across different scales of architecture; and that there are distinct strata within the burial patterns that separate power-sharing groups from the rest of the community. It may be easier to identify and trace aspects of political organization here than in complex and layered urban settings that have been the focus of similar research.

Estrategias políticas corporativas (Blanton y otros 1996) privilegian el compartimiento de poder en vez de las tácticas exclusivas, y se reconocen por su importancia en la política antigua, pero son pocos estudiados. Presento el estudio de caso para los valles de Tequila del occidente de México para ilustrar ciertos puntos sobre un sistema corporativa: que los grupos componentes pueden ser reconocidos por sus acercamientos a la construcción arquitectónica y patrones mortuorios; que forman grupos de linajes contrapuestos que compartieron el poder política; que las relaciones entre estos grupos se hacen mas fijas y jerárquicas a través de las escalas diferentes de la arquitectura; y que hay estratos distintos en los patrones de entierro que separan estos grupos del resto de la comunidad. Jalisco pueda tener más potential identificar y remontar aspectos de las estrategias políticas corporativas que en los contextos urbanos complejos y estratificados que han sido el foco de otras investigaciones de estrategias corporativas.

Corporate strategies are recognized as understudied, but important, means by which political power was obtained and controlled in New World polities.[1] Corporate strategies are defined by Blanton and colleagues (1996:2, 5–7) as those in which "power is shared across different groups and sectors of society in such a way as to inhibit exclusionary strategies." They go on to specify that this does not equate with egalitarianism; rather, those actively engaged in the competition for political power are limited by the "prevailing corporate cognitive code" (1996:2, 5–7) and are unable to establish exclusive control over sources of power. For Mesoamerica, the Classic period urban center of Teotihuacan has been presented by these researchers as the canonical example of the corporate strategy (Blanton et al. 1996:9–10; Feinman 2000:218–219) based on the lack of royal tombs, the visual anonymity of rulers in imagery, the reduced wealth differentials despite the evidence for social inequality, the ritual emphasis upon broad cosmological principles over elite ancestral lines, the codification of an inclusive ideology through iconography, and the replication of the state art style in those areas where Teotihuacan exercised political hegemony. The corporate strategy is analytically opposed to an equally idealized network or exclusionary strategy that emphasizes centralization of power in fewer hands, such as a single royal family (Blanton et al. 1996:4–5), and corresponds more closely to older theoretical conceptions of how political power is distributed. One or the other strategy is considered to predominate at any given time.

Cross-cultural analysis has added texture to the basic argument. S. McIntosh (1999) has considered the model from an African perspective, which privileges the importance of cross-cutting kin groups,

Christopher S. Beekman ■ Campus Box 103, P.O. Box 173364, Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, Denver, CO 80217. (christopher.beekman@cudenver.edu)

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age-grades, and sodalities in diffusing exclusionary power, the presence of multiple hierarchies with delimited tasks, control over ritual knowledge, and the role played by the shifting membership of formal positions of political power. Application in the American Southwest has singled out the role of control over ritual knowledge, coordinated labor, modularity of social groups, and inequalities between groups or communities rather than between individuals (Feinman 2000:219–220; Feinman et al. 2001; Mills 2000:6–10). Near Eastern specialists have simultaneously applied the corporate and network concepts to Early and Middle Bronze Age communities from the Euphrates valley, where assemblies of elders counterbalanced royal lineages, placing the two strategies side by side in dynamic tension (Cooper 2006; Fleming 2004; Porter 2002). Blanton (1998) has recognized this variability and has outlined several factors that distinguish different corporate systems, some of which will surface in this paper. Among them group assemblies (Blanton 1998:154–155), or what Crumley (1995) has referred to as heterarchy, can encompass various forms of more inclusive decision making groups. I also find useful Blanton's "ritual sanctification of the corporate cognitive code" (Blanton 1998:163–166), in which religious ideals or highly structured political interaction may enforce a kind of egalitarianism among those under its terms. These observations make it clear that we are not engaging in a typological exercise, but considering variations on a theme.

It is worth considering corporate strategies in more detail in the region where Blanton and colleagues proposed the model, particularly since they are defined at least partly by what they lack, e.g., royal imagery. One feature that may be common with Mesoamerican corporate strategies is the presence of multiple social groups existing in segmentary opposition to one another at the subcommunity level. These have been referred to by some Mesoamerican ethnographers and ethnohistorians as Customary Subdivisions, which are variously territorial or kin-based social groups that are the basis for the mobilization of labor, and often for other activities (Mulhare 1996; see also Brumfiel 1994). The most familiar example is the Postclassic *calpolli* of central Mexico (e.g., Van Zantwijk 1985). There are indications of this modular pattern still earlier at Classic period Teotihuacan, where most of the city's population was organized into apartment compounds occupied by the families of related males (Cowgill 2004; Manzanilla 1996; Millon 1981; Sempowski and Spence 1994). Nonetheless, stratification existed and elite lineages held privileged locations and competed with one another in the ceremonial core of the city (Headrick 1999). This underlines two points taken as a given in this study and already noted elsewhere (Blanton 1998; Feinman 2000)—that corporate systems are not devoid of competition between the constituent social groups, and corporate arrangements can be called egalitarian only in the sense that no one group maintains long-term dominance over the others.

The Late Formative to Early Classic period political system of the Tequila valleys of central Jalisco has previously been identified as a likely example of a corporate political strategy (Beekman 2000), and this paper aims to expand upon that claim. I propose here that the Tequila valley political landscape during this period was organized around similar yet counterpoised lineages arrayed in opposition to one another. Together they formed an elite social stratum that built and maintained dedicated ritual spaces within the ceremonial centers, and whose special treatment at death included interment beneath the public architecture. Nonelite lineages were buried in rural cemeteries. Finally, I outline how the relationships between these groups become more fixed and hierarchical as they are traced from small architectural arenas to large ones. Archaeological identification of the corporate groups in question necessarily forms a central element in this study, and current evidence suggests that details of political organization may be easier to trace here than in complex and layered urban settings like Teotihuacan.

The research discussed here combines a consideration of existing data on burial distribution with new construction evidence from public architecture, and not the patterning of group craft production (e.g., Manzanilla 1996) or epigenetic skeletal characteristics (e.g., Sempowski and Spence 1994) analyzed by other researchers for similar questions. This is due to the nature of the available evidence from the Tequila valleys rather than any conceptual biases, and future research should incorporate other lines of investigation for their relationships to the data discussed here. In fact,

Table 1. Chronological Chart Showing the General Sequence for the Tequila Valleys.[a]

	Tequila Valley wide phase name	Site Specific Sequences				
		Guachimonton	Huitzilapa	Navajas	Llano Grande	Tabachines
Calibrated Dates	Beekman and Weigand 2008	Weigand 2002, 2005, 2008	Ramos and López 1996	Beekman 2004	Beekman 2003e	Galván 1991, modified in Beekman and Weigand 2008
500						
400	Tequila IV	Ahualulco				Tabachines Tardio
300			Circulo A		Llano Grande	
200						
A.D. 100	Tequila III	El Arenal B	Tumba 1	Navajas		Tabachines Medio
0						
100 B.C.	Tequila II	El Arenal A				Tabachines Temprano
200						

[a]The Tabachines sequence was pivotal for establishing the ceramic sequence. The other four site specific sequences have been linked to Tabachines and one another by ceramic ties, and are supported by 95 radiocarbon dates. See Beekman and Weigand 2008 for details.

by establishing the relevance of specific contexts for these questions, I hope to make such future studies easier to pursue.

The Central Jalisco Setting

West Mexico's best-known archaeological features have been, first, the deep shaft and chamber tombs known for their accompanying offerings of realistic and charming hollow ceramic figures (e.g., Kan et al. 1970), and second, the distinctive Teuchitlan circular arrangements of public architecture known as *guachimontones* (Weigand 1996a). Both archaeological patterns have wide distributions across West Mexico, and have been used by scholars of different generations to define that region (e.g., Kan et al. 1970; Weigand 1985). The greatest time depth and most hierarchical expressions of each are found in the Tequila valleys of central Jalisco during the Late Formative through Middle Classic periods. Past culture-historical syntheses (Weigand 1985, 1996b) and theoretical interpretations (e.g., Beekman 2000) of the region have considered the two datasets separately, due to preliminary chronological alignments that considered them to be more sequential than contemporaneous. Recent improvements to our understanding of chronology have clarified that the overlap in the tomb and temple traditions is nearly total (Beekman and Weigand 2008) (see Table 1), hence freeing us to consider jointly the evidence for sociopolitical organization from these two datasets.

The Tequila valleys are closely linked highland lake basins and valleys ringing the Tequila volcano, in the central lakes district of modern Jalisco (Figure 1). The area is known today for its history of haciendas, the origins of tequila, and a major contribution to Mexican maize agriculture even in the modern era of declining national production. Shaft tombs, whether as isolates or in cemeteries, occur in surprising densities throughout the area, and most of the toponyms associated with the hollow shaft tomb figures in museum and private collections (Etzatlán, San Sebastián, Ameca, San Juanito, Tala, etc.) are found within these valleys (see Townsend 1998 for a modern discussion). The region also quite probably held the largest Late Formative to Classic period population concentration in western Mexico. Densely urbanized centers are not known from the periods in question, and population instead followed a dispersed and continuous distribution across the valley bottomlands (Weigand 1996b). Population density increased locally around ceremonial centers that included the circular temples of the Teuchitlan tradition, ballcourts, and residential buildings. The only population estimates made for the valley (Weigand 1996b:Figure 14) are qualified by aggregating the unpublished residential settlement from across the Late Formative through Middle Classic periods (300 B.C.–A.D. 500). Even so, the severe corrections employed by Weigand for contemporaneity mean that his peak population estimates of 40,000 for the valley should receive serious consideration.

It has been previously argued that the Tequila valley political system could be characterized as

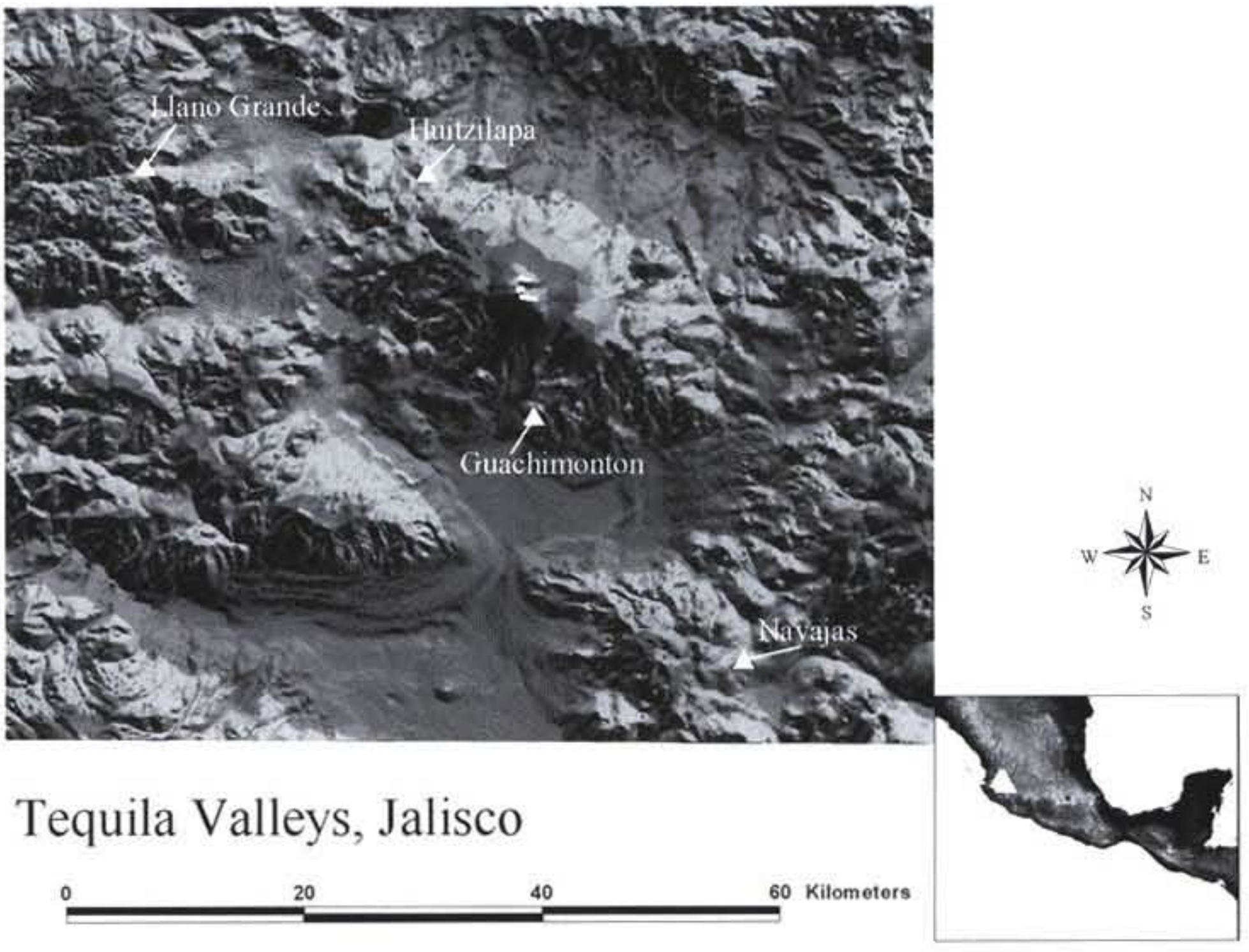


Figure 1. Map of the Tequila valleys, Jalisco, showing the locations of sites mentioned in the text.

a corporate strategy (Beekman 2000). There are no buildings that might be interpreted as palaces during the period under consideration (see Nelson 2004). Hollow ceramic human figures are known primarily from tomb contexts, and most represent daily or ritual activities by various social persona (see Townsend 1998; von Winning 1969; von Winning and Hammer 1972). While imagery of elites or even rulers may be present among them (Beekman 2003a:Figure 13; Graham 1998), they tend to be on the same order as those at Teotihuacan, in that the images are more abstract and without individualizing features or monikers. As at Teotihuacan (Headrick 2002; Pasztory 1997), the rituals carried out within public architectural spaces in the Tequila valleys reflect broad-based concerns of world renewal and agricultural success (Beekman 2003a, 2003b), topics of interest to commoner and elite alike. The performative aspects of ancestral ritual (Barrett 1996) remain unclear, but do seem less well-evidenced relative to the highly public rituals on the surface (Beekman 2000). Blanton et al.'s (1996) definition of corporate also underlines the importance of the visual codification of group-oriented ideology, most clearly demonstrated in this region through the formulaic reproduction of cosmological principles in both public architecture and ceramic design (Beekman 2003a, 2006).

But how did individuals and groups contribute to these broader patterns? I intend to use existing mortuary data as evidence for lineages or similar corporate descent groups in the Tequila valleys, and to illustrate that some of them held privileged access to sacred knowledge and privileged positions in the public arenas where political power was enacted. A consideration of new data on construction patterns in these public spaces follows, in which I argue that these elite lineages occur only in multiples and without a clear "royal lineage" holding exclusionary power. As the scale of these public architectural spaces increases, the relationships between the corporate groups alter in two major ways. First, fluid status relations give way to more fixed internal stratification into junior and senior lineages. Second, lineages within large architectural spaces command more labor or even the labor of multiple lineages.

Mortuary Data

Evidence for the role of lineages or similar social groups within this cultural milieu emerged first in the mortuary data.[2] Much early research relied upon the study of looted tombs (e.g., Corona Nuñez 1954, 1955; Furst 1965; Long 1966; Weigand 1985), and was only sufficient to conclude that the tombs were highly differentiated in terms of their depth and elaboration, often included multiple interments, and that many tombs probably remained open and in use for extended periods. The publication of the Tabachines cemetery of two dozen unlooted shaft tombs by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) provided an excavated body of data that supported these findings (Beekman and Galván 2006; Galván 1976, 1991). The presence of sequential interments even at this small rural cemetery (e.g., Galván 1991:see tombs 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11) drives home the point that the tomb size and wealth of offerings do not speak to the status of a single occupant, but that of their social group.

A major break for our understanding was the excavation by INAH investigators of a wealthy and intact first century A.D. shaft tomb within a settlement context at Huitzilapa (López and Ramos 2000; Ramos and López 1996). Apart from the unprecedented details of the excavation itself was the tomb's location beneath a platform from a simple architectural circle of the Teuchitlan tradition. The osteological analysis of the six individuals within the tomb found evidence for a close genetic relationship between five of them (Pickering and Cabrero 1998), and hence membership in a close breeding population. The suggestion here is that these individuals either come from a class-endogamous elite, or a smaller social unit defined by descent (cf. Christensen 1998 for similar data from Oaxaca). Several publications dating since this analysis have proposed a lineage basis for Late Formative social organization (e.g., Beekman 2000; López and Ramos 2000; Ramos and López 1996), a trend reaching its recent culmination with an art catalog seeking to reinterpret various well-known themes from the shaft tomb art tradition within this framework (Butterwick 2004). For example, Butterwick (2004:e.g., Items 13, 14, 33, 34, 35, 36) interprets paired male and female figures from the tombs as "lineage founders."

The tombs have much to offer those espousing the lineage interpretation, beginning with some well-known cross-cultural data on cemeteries. Some years previous, Saxe (1970) proposed a link between formal, demarcated areas for the burial of the dead (cemeteries, burial mounds), and corporate descent groups using those spaces. The act of burial and the associated attachment to place enabled the transmission of group property across generations. The correlation of formal burial spaces and corporate groups has been supported in cross-cultural analyses by O'Shea (1984) and Goldstein (1981), with the caveat that corporate groups answering this description may also legitimize rights to critical resources through means other than the use of cemeteries. The study has been critiqued (Barrett 1996; Morris 1991) as unhelpfully lumping ancestral ritual with mortuary ritual, the former defining corporate property ownership and the latter contesting it. Numerous authors continue to find support for the link between cemeteries, corporate groups, and group property (e.g., Buikstra and Charles 1999; Chapman 1995; McAnany 1995; Parker Pearson 1999:28–31), although subtlety of application may vary.

Formally defined burial spaces first emerge in western Mexico in the Early Formative, with the earliest precursors of repeated interment shaft and chamber tombs in northwestern Michoacán and central Jalisco (Oliveros 2004; Weigand 1985:61). Known examples occur in spatial and temporal proximity to one another and may have formed a cemetery, while one isolated example occurs beneath the remnants of a platform of unknown function (Weigand 1985:61). Middle Formative cemeteries of individual burials are known from Jalisco (Liot et al. 2006; Mountjoy 1989; Mountjoy, et al. 2004), Colima (Kelly 1980), and Guanajuato (Porter 1956). Occasionally they occur in conjunction with curation practices in which human remains receive special treatment and may be moved from place to place (e.g., Liot et al. 2006). In central Jalisco, Middle Formative burials could occur beneath small circular constructions in bottle-shaped tombs, and larger numbers of the dead could be interred in circular or oval burial mounds at San Felipe and other sites in the Tequila valleys (Weigand 1985:60–63). If the occurrence of numerous burials within formally defined spaces may be taken to indicate the presence of descent groups,

then lineages may have considerable time depth along the path of the Río Lerma.

The use of deep shaft and chamber tombs was widespread by the Late Formative period. Although shaft tombs are commonly thought of as distinctively West Mexican, it is understood today to be a much more internally diverse phenomenon than previously believed (Fowler et al. 2006), and even the cremation urn clusters at Loma Alta (Michoacán) share some characteristics (Carot 2001). I limit my discussion strictly to evidence from the Tequila and Atemajac valleys of central Jalisco, where the tombs take on the characteristics already introduced: repeated interments, wide variation in offerings and labor investment, and the presence of hollow ceramic figures and imported wealth among the offerings. Tombs in central Jalisco also present a number of additional patterns. First, shaft tombs occur in association with the circular public architecture in ceremonial centers, with isolated structures of uncertain function, and in rural cemeteries (Beekman and Galván V. 2006:68). Second, the deepest, wealthiest, and most labor-intensive shaft tombs are located directly beneath the satellite platforms of the circular *guachimontones* or other buildings, while the less-complex shaft tombs are associated with fewer offerings and are typically grouped into cemeteries away from the major settlements. Without presenting a full quantitative analysis (explored in Beekman 1999), we can use tombs such as those of El Arenal (Corona Núñez 1955:9–11; Long 1966:248–278, Figures 8–10) and Huitzilapa (Ramos and López 1996:126–129, Figures 3, 4, 12, Tables 1 and 2) as examples found beneath *guachimontones*, and the well-published tombs from Tabachines (Galván 1991) as an example of a rural cemetery. Groups that make greater use of movable wealth and labor are therefore associated with locations within the religious and political realm, while groups that use these resources less are found on the broader landscape.[3] Control over sacred knowledge likely separated these two groups, and formed the basis for stratification.

Shaft tombs from the Classic period are distinct and suggest a decline in the importance of lineages, at least among the farming populace. The only population of shaft tombs that has been excavated and can be examined for trends over time is that at Tabachines (Galván 1991). The Tequila IV (A.D. 200–500) shaft tombs at this rural cemetery are characterized by decreasing size of the tomb, decreasing number of occupants, and decreasing number of offerings. No shaft tombs associated with the public architecture are known from this period. A number of explanations are possible, but a decline in the importance of lineages seems to be a component (Beekman 2007).

Architectural Evidence

The lineage thesis has also been applied in recent years to the surface architecture. Weigand (1974) had early on postulated a relationship between the distinctive form of the *guachimontones* and social organization based on architectural morphology. The circles typically consist of eight rectangular platforms symmetrically arranged around a circular altar or pyramid (Figure 2), although examples exist that include four, or occasionally 10, 12, or even 16 platforms. A banquette, or low terrace, forms a ring around the patio in the larger and more formal examples, and links the surrounding platforms (Weigand 1996a). Weigand (1974:126–127) postulated on the basis of these repeated surface data that each platform might represent a lineage, and that a possible chronological trend toward a larger number of platforms thus spoke to changes in social organization. Any such trend has been discarded with the recent chronological realignment mentioned above, but a number of other researchers have also projected a lineage interpretation "upwards" from the tombs to the surface architecture (Beekman 2000; Butterwick 2004; Cabrero and López 1997, 2002; López and Ramos 2000; Ramos and López 1996), particularly as these are the built foci for political power. A discussion of new evidence for this interpretation forms this section.

The Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project (TVRAP) was formed in 2000 to examine the activities taking place within the circular complexes. I had proposed that lineage heads arrayed around the temple architecture competed through public performance for supporters and their labor (Beekman 2000). My expectations were that public spaces would retain evidence for the use of more elaborate material culture (highly decorated ceramics, imports, etc.) as part of competitive display. These expectations were not borne out, and my

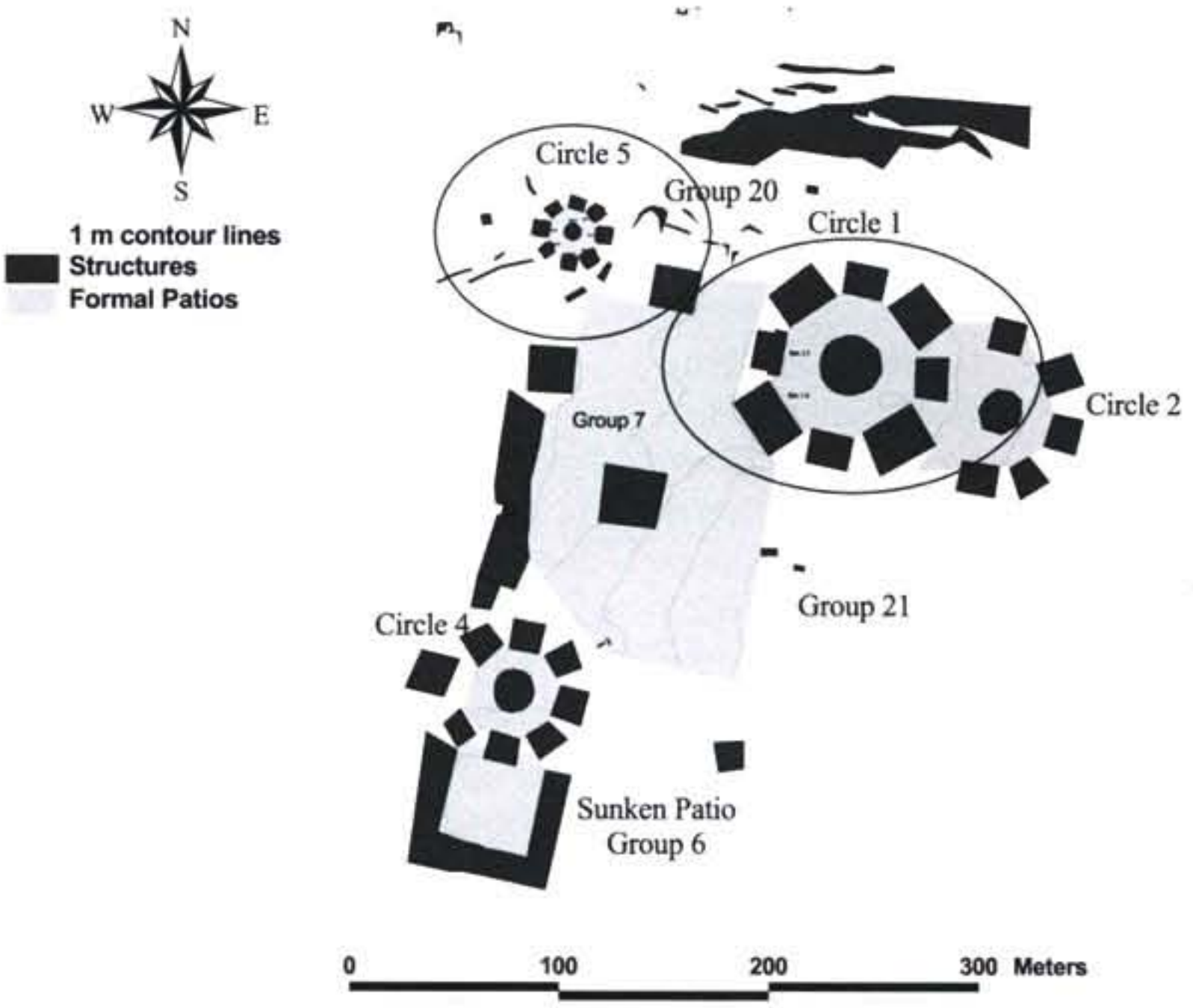


Figure 2. Map of the central portion of the site of Navajas, Jalisco, showing several rectified architectural circles, or *guachimontones*. 1 m contour intervals. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project.

attention instead became drawn to the evidence for asymmetries within the architecture. As already mentioned, one of the curious features of the circular complexes is their geometric symmetry, and surface studies of the *guachimontones* had tended to emphasize pattern at the expense of variation (e.g., Weigand 1996a, 1996b). While the project originally took an approach emphasizing the competitive aspects of individual aggrandizers (clearly indebted to the model in Clark and Blake 1994), field results have instead tended to stress the presence of multiple social groups and their separate contributions to architectural construction. No shaft tombs have been identified beneath these circles. The importance of lineages varies at the three sites recently excavated in the Tequila valleys—Llano Grande and Navajas, excavated by the TVRAP, and Guachimontón, excavated by the Proyecto Guachimontón (Weigand 2002, 2008). No chronological trends for the role of lineages have yet been discerned across these sites. Rather, it is the scale of the architectural group that is most significant for discerning differences in social interaction. Lineages have flexible relationships to one another at the small circles of Llano Grande and Navajas, they form a more rigid status hierarchy at a larger circle at Navajas, and have become embedded within wider social networks at Guachimontón.

Llano Grande Group 14

The TVRAP carried out fieldwork at Llano Grande in 2000 (Figure 3). The site is located on the western edge of the Tequila valleys, strategically blocking a pass leading through the mountains to southern Nayarit and the Pacific coast. A study of Teuchitlan tradition sites that compared the respective volumes of their public architecture (Ohnersorgen and Varien 1996) did not include Llano Grande as it fell outside the limits of their map, but its small circle would place it in their lowest site size category "D." This is thus a small center with one circle and an array of well-preserved residential buildings. Successive defensive walls crossing the pass from one side to the other are strongly oriented toward control over access from the west. Llano Grande has been interpreted as a modest, specialized boundary fortification tied to an overarching political authority (Beekman 1996, 2003c).

The 2000 fieldwork consisted of excavations in the single architectural circle (Figure 4), an adja-

Llano Grande, Jalisco

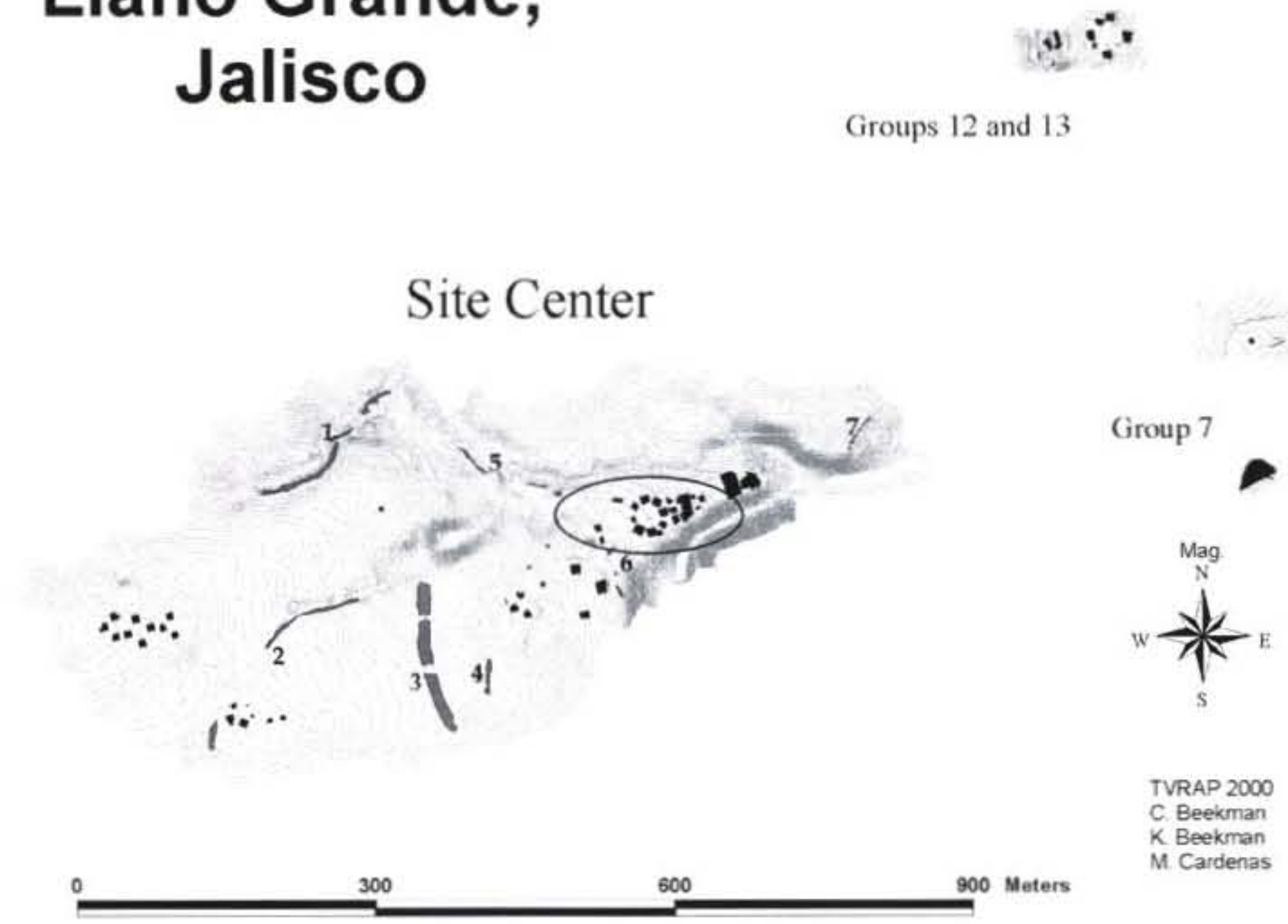


Figure 3. Llano Grande site map, with rectified structures. Group 14 is the circular arrangement of structures just right of center and marked by an ellipse. 1 m contour intervals. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project.

cent group, and the cleanup of a defensive wall damaged by modern roadcutting. An evaluation of the 38 calibrated AMS dates against the architectural stratigraphy places the entire sequence from construction to abandonment of the circle within the period A.D. 200–300 (Beekman 2003d, 2003e; Beekman and Weigand 2008), and the remainder of this small site probably falls within this brief time span as well. No tombs were encountered or even suggested within the settlement, but a badly looted cemetery lies on the valley floor below.

Some summary details on the circle are as follows. The diameter of the circular patio, measured from the face of opposing structures, was 25.9 m between partly excavated structures 14-2 and 14-6, and 24.8–27.0 m between the others. The diameter of the entire circle, measured to the rear walls of opposing structures, was 36.9–41.1 m. Emphasizing the excavation data, the shared patio would have had an area of approximately 527 m^2 for public ceremony. The patio was resurfaced once during the period of occupation with a poorly preserved puddled clay mixture. A small depression excavated in antiquity in an exposed prominence of bedrock in the center of the patio was most likely used for the pole climbing ceremony depicted in ceramic models from the region (e.g., Kan et al. 1970:Figure 35; Von Winning 1969:Figure 155) and is discussed elsewhere (Beekman 2003a). The artifact assemblage within the patio and the structures was relatively limited and disproportionately focused within Structure 14-5, but more striking was the variation in the structures themselves. Since excavation was targeting activity areas rather than construction details, data on the latter are less thorough, but are sufficient to make my point. Each structure displays evidence for distinct sizes, construction methods and histories, and probably activities.

Even prior to excavation it had become clear that the surrounding platforms were quite different from one another in size and elaboration, but excavations further highlighted this fact. Structure 14-2 (with an estimated 16–17 m^2 of floor area) was constructed atop a natural slope 50 cm above the level of the patio using little labor and little raw material (Figure 5). A floor made of a prepared clay mix was in poor condition, but one preserved patch sug-

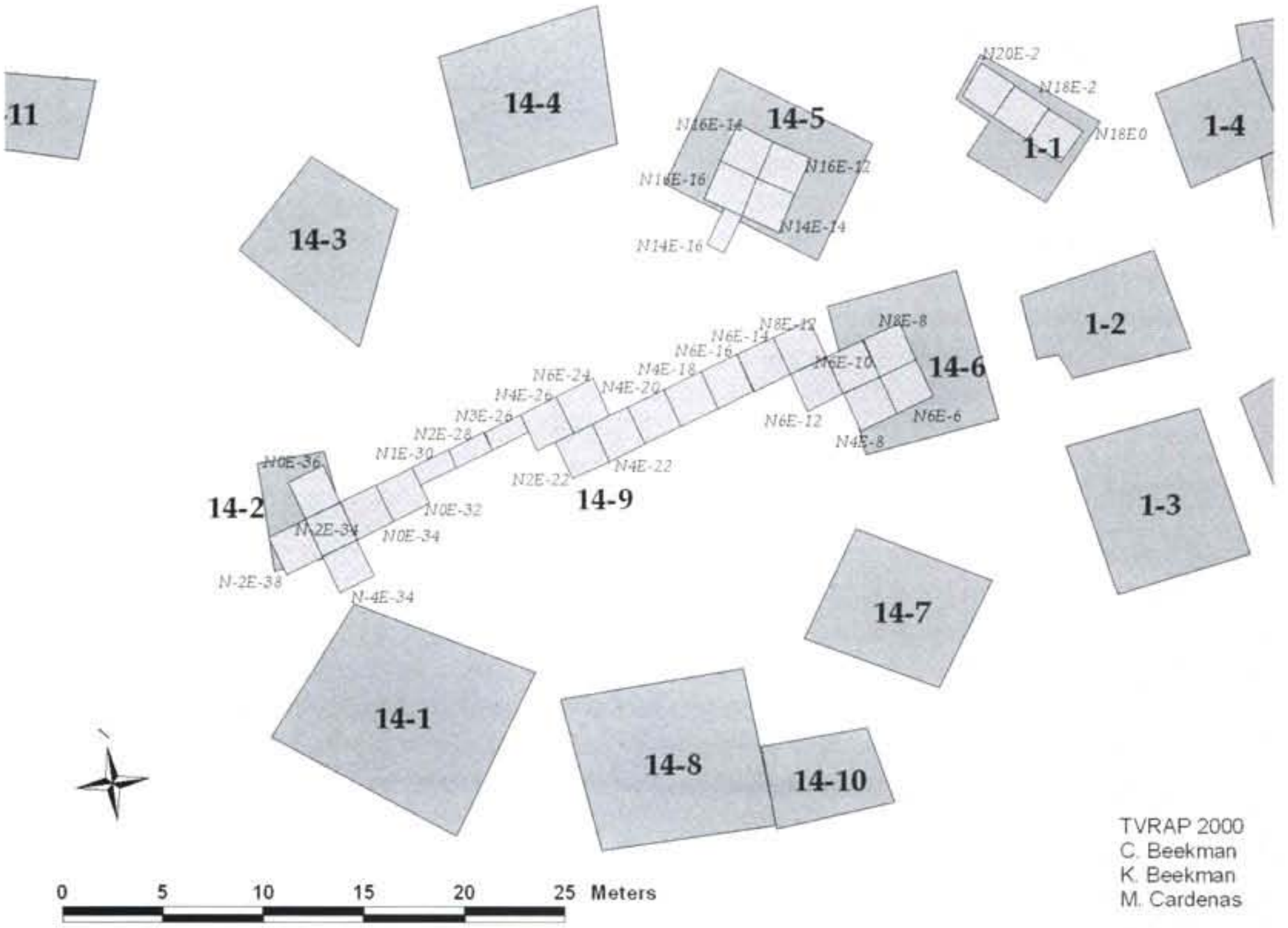


Figure 4. LG circle 14 map prior to excavation, with rectified structures and location of excavation units. 1 m contour intervals. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project.

gested that it had been several centimeters thick at one time. A single row of stones forms the front and side walls, and postholes indicate a perishable superstructure. The small quantities of fired daub (*bajareque*) suggest that only portions of the superstructure received this covering treatment, and the building may well have been open sided. There were very few artifacts present, namely undecorated ceramics and small quantities of obsidian debitage. Structure 14-2 would probably have been accessed from a level area behind the structure rather than from the central shared patio.

Structures 14-5 and 14-6 (each at least 25 m^2) were more substantial constructions, with stacked stone foundations encased in another artificial earth mix. Fired daub was more abundant, particularly in front of Structure 14-6. The floors were again of a well-prepared clay mix, and that within Structure 14-6 displayed variability in preservation that suggested a more finely finished front room. Structure 14-6 was remodeled on three occasions over the century of occupation, with flat stones flanking the entryway during the middle stages, while Structure 14-5 was not. At the time of Llano Grande's abandonment, Structure 14-5's floor would have been a significant step downwards from the patio level. Yet the daub collapse sloping out of Structure 14-6 indicate that this structure's interior floor had been built up to just above the level of the patio. Although few artifacts apart from lithic debitage were found in Structure 14-6, Structure 14-5 had several burned and shattered but largely complete fine and utilitarian bowls of *Tabachines Cream* and *Oconahua Red on White*, and jars of *Colorines Red on Cream* and *Pseudo-Cloisonne* (types defined in Beekman and Weigand 2000). While the prominence of Structure 14-5 may be overemphasized by the presence of the whole vessels, this same structure also contained the widest array of ceramic sherds that were not part of the complete vessels

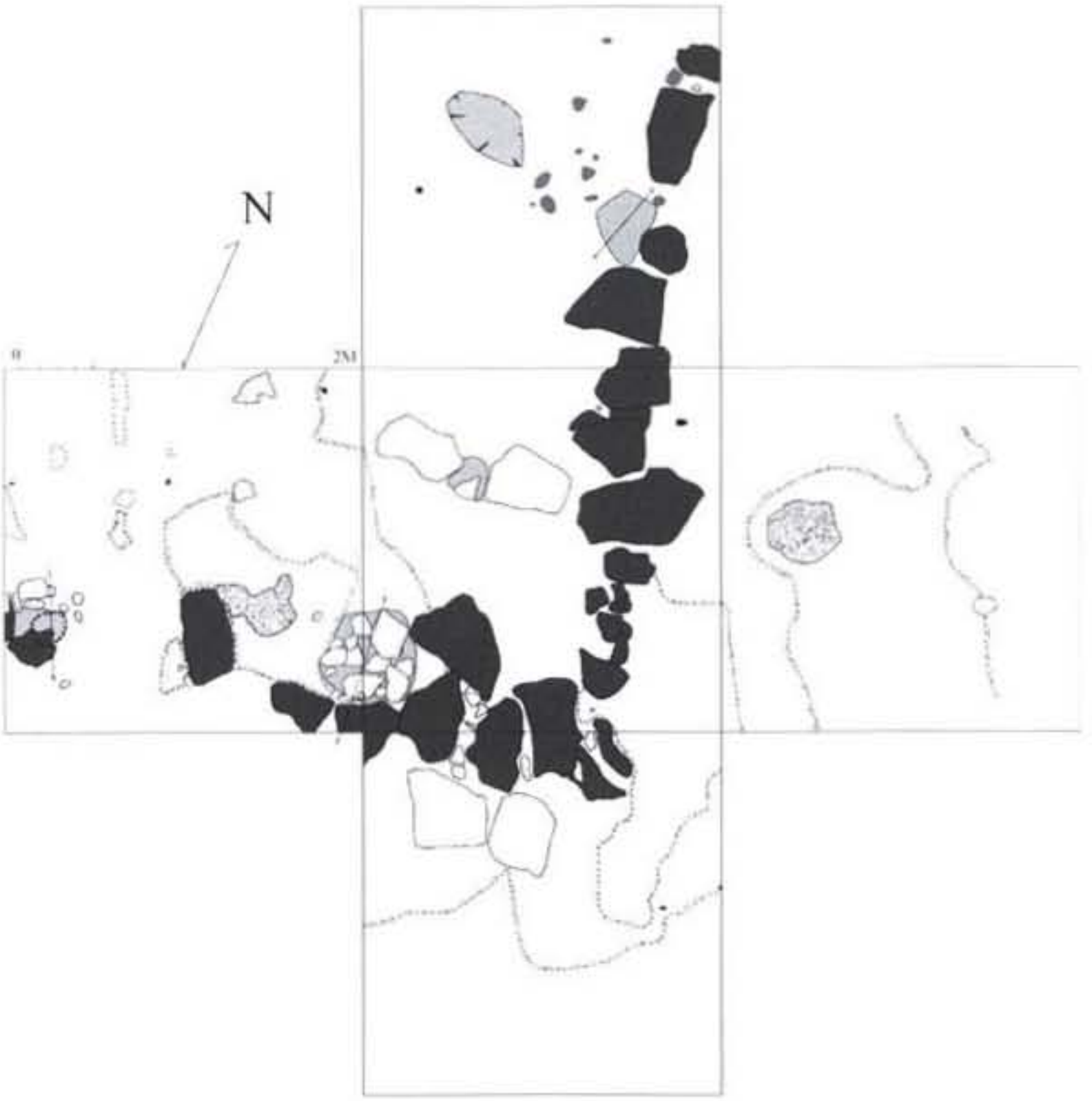


Figure 5. LG structure 14-2, after excavation. Dark areas indicate construction stone, shaded areas indicate pits and surviving patches of floor material. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project.

(Beekman 2003d). Thus, even its more gradually accumulated debris indicates a different pattern of use. A palynological sequence constructed from the excavations (Schoenwetter and Benz 2004) suggests that Structure 14-5 may have been added to the circle later than the other two.

The numerous maps of *guachimontones* from throughout the Tequila valleys and beyond vary in the exact number of structures and in other features (cf. Weigand 1975, 1985), but they are recognizably circles and do not occur as half-circles, crescents, pie-slices, or some other incomplete form that would suggest that they were constructed piecemeal over time. Their singularly symmetrical morphology strongly presupposes that the basic circular form was built as a single unit as a single event, the only exception perhaps being that circles with four structures might have later been expanded through the insertion of an additional four structures between the founding examples. The Llano Grande circle might represent an example of this if it can be substantiated that Structure 14-5 was indeed added in a later episode. But the disparity between Structures 14-2 and 14-6 (directly opposite one another and hence almost certainly built at the same time) makes it clear that significant structural variation existed from the circle's initial tracings. Thus variations between structures in a single circle are not solely chronological in nature.

The construction methods that distinguish each structure around the circle are most parsimoniously explained if each was built by different construction groups with different resources, skills, and practices. Distinct labor groups were working on their individual structures even as they were cooperating to create the wider circular template. Some of the variation may result from routine approaches to construction, but other evidence points to ongoing competition and active signaling of group membership. In contemporary ceramic architectural models from the region, the artisans of the period often depicted the perishable superstructures of *guachimontones* with varying roof forms and painted designs, even within a single circle (e.g.,

Beekman 2003a:Figure 4; Von Winning and Hammer 1972:Figures 39, 59, 86). These materials are lost to us archaeologically, but must have received significant attention from the builders and custodians of each building. After the initial investment in construction, the separate lineages each added to their respective buildings as a form of distinction, not between individuals, but between lineages.

Navajas Circles 1 and 5

In 2002 and 2003, the TVRAP shifted its attention to the site of Navajas. The site (Figure 2) is located just outside the Tequila valleys to the southeast and along the route leading to Laguna Chapala and the Río Lerma. Ohnersorgen and Varien's volumetric study (1996) ranked Navajas within site size category C based on an early map of just the central four circles. The site is now known to have at least ten circles, an 85 m long ballcourt, the usual scattered residential clusters, terraces, cemeteries, and additional satellite centers with their own circles, all within two kilometers of the main cluster of public architecture. Navajas is a significant center, especially considering its location, and it sits atop a mesa with a commanding view of the Chapala corridor and back into the Tequila valleys. The site is therefore considerably larger and more internally complex than Llano Grande.

Excavations here provided an opportunity to evaluate whether the lineage interpretation developed at Llano Grande would prove equally capable of clarifying the more diverse set of architectural remains. Horizontal excavations exposed a very small circle approximately the size of the one at Llano Grande, as well as two platforms from the largest circle. Twenty-seven calibrated AMS dates evaluated against the architectural stratigraphy place the construction and abandonment of both circles within the span from 50 B.C.–A.D. 200 (Beekman and Weigand 2008). The absolute dates place the larger Circle 1 as constructed ca. 50 B.C. and in use until A.D. 50. The smaller Circle 5 was built around A.D. 50 and continued in use to about A.D. 200. This has helped to establish a central part of the ceramic sequence, as the ongoing analysis of the ceramics from both circles has found an exclusively Tequila III assemblage. Refinements are anticipated.

Excavations within Circle 5 focused on the low flat central altar and six of the eight surrounding structures (Figure 6) (Beekman 2004). The patio diameter averages approximately 22.9 m, giving it a usable activity area of 368 m^2 after subtracting out the central altar. The circle as a whole has a diameter of 36.1–37.9 m when measured from the rear walls of the excavated structures. The area of each of the structures ranges from 33.7 m^2 for Structure 5-6 to 58.1 m^2 for Structure 5-3. The original floors of each structure lay at the height of the surrounding ground level. Substantial variability also exists in architectural details (some discussed in Jennings 2008). Structure 5-6 represents the smallest amount of invested labor, with discontinuous single rows of stones to delineate sidewalls about 30 cm in height. Most of the other structures were more solidly built, with multiple rows of flat stones encased in a prepared earth mix forming each side wall, each of which tended to be approximately 30 cm in height. Structures 5-2 and 5-7 incorporated large in situ boulders over one m in diameter into their construction, while Structures 5-3, 5-4, and 5-5 used more uniformly sized and selected stones. Structures 5-2, 5-4, 5-5, 5-7, and probably 5-6 had internal walls that divided them into front and back spaces, just as seen in Structure 14-6 in the circle at Llano Grande. Structure 5-2, owing to its location on a slope, had a front room at the level of the patio, and a rear room that dropped down with the slope. The rear room was later brought up to the height of the front room. The floor of Structure 5-4 was probably higher as of its initial construction. Structure 5-5 had a later floor formed by filling the structure interior up to the height of the external walls. The prepared earth floors so evident at Llano Grande were not noted here.

Other new features are evident. Structures 5-4 and 5-5 are joined by a poorly defined wall that corresponds to the encircling banquette often described for more formally constructed *guachimontones*, but it was less clearly identified between the other structures. Jennings (2008) suggests that this architectural element may reflect a closer relationship between the lineages or other groups associated with those structures. The map of the excavated circle clearly shows that the component structures are not precisely symmetrical, but are variously closer or more distant from one another, which may have made similar statements of social affiliation. These themes can be extended to the central altar, which appears to have been a cooperative effort, with dif-

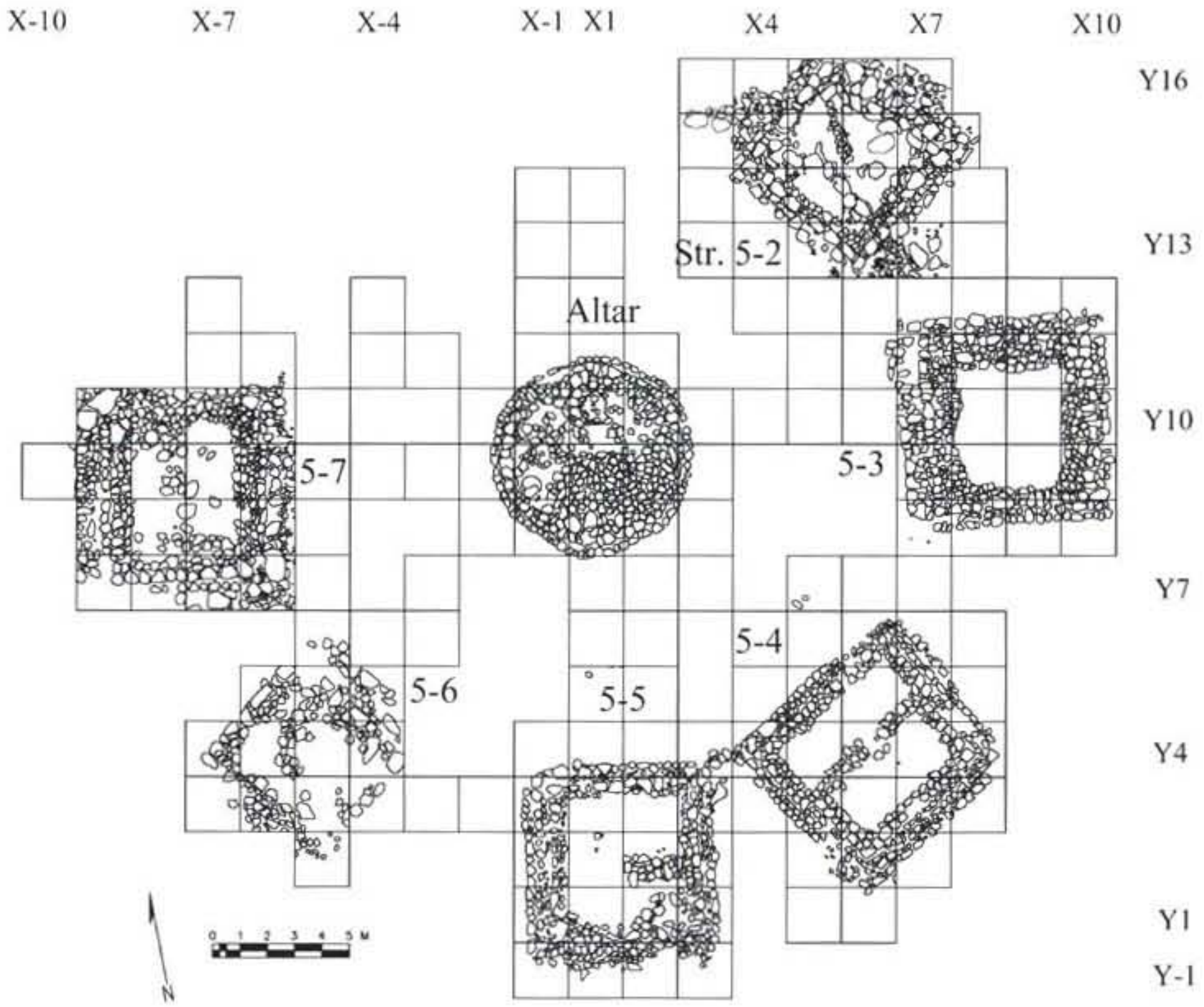
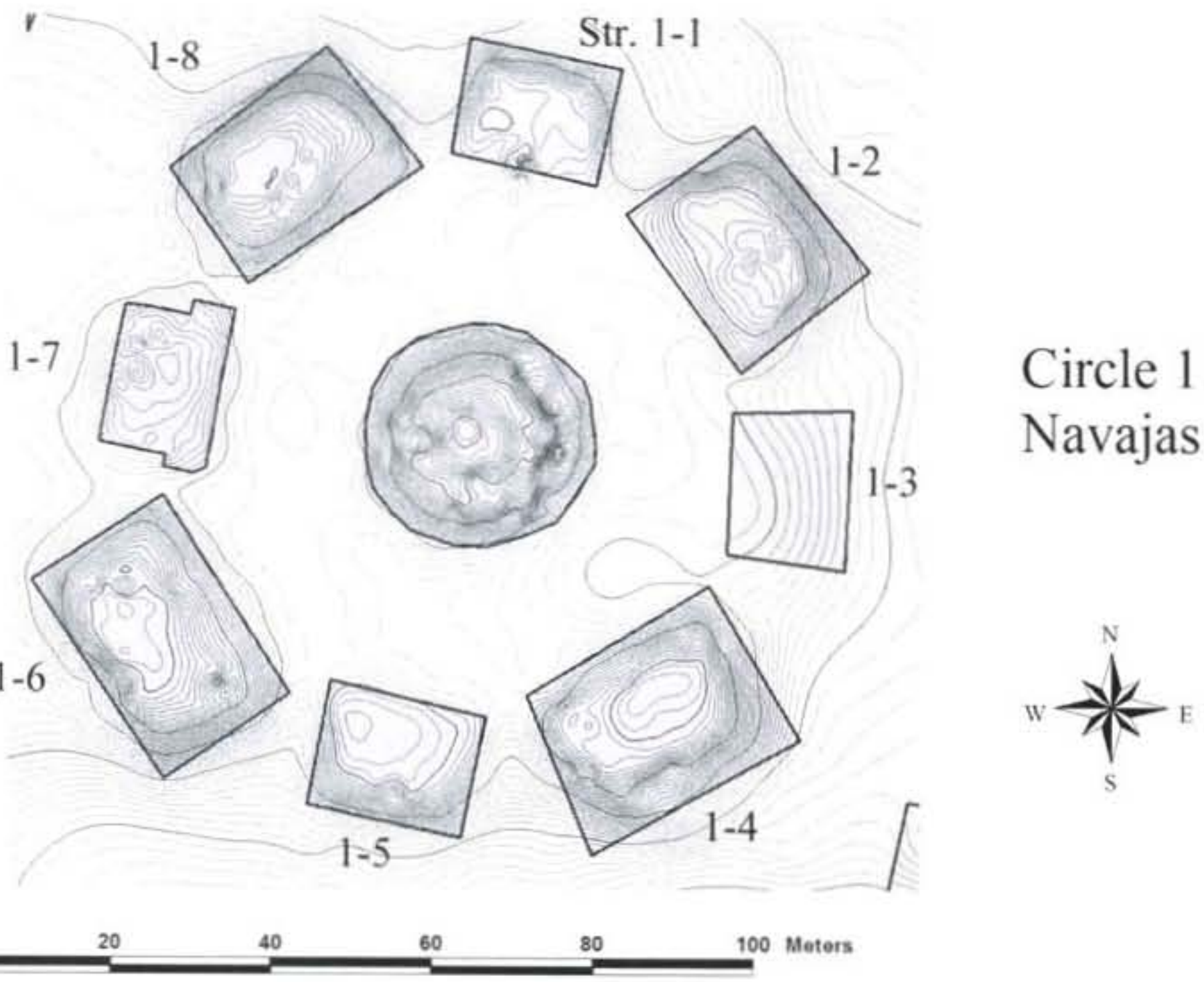


Figure 6. Navajas Circle 5, after excavation. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project and assembled by Melissa Logan.

ferent portions of the fill constructed using quite different techniques (visible in Figure 6). The northern half of the altar was filled with prepared clay and loose stones, while the southern half was filled by packing stones very carefully and closely, with comparatively little soil or clay. Removal of the packed stones in the southern half exposed a burnt patio surface, and likely ritual preparation of the location. No central posthole was present. Some artifact distinctions existed around the circle, although these analyses are in progress. For example, a disproportionate number of obsidian scrapers were found within Structure 5-7, while Structure 5-3 had fragments of solid figurines and hollow figures, artifacts that were rare to absent in the other structures.

The evidence from the small circle is thus reminiscent of that from the similarly sized circle at Llano Grande, in that each structure may have been built by a different group with different techniques or levels of experience in construction, with varying capacity to renovate after the initial construction. What is striking is that despite the evident freedom to add on or to elaborate a structure, the groups responsible did so within very real limits. There was little space for lateral expansion of the structures before they would have run into their neighbors. Vertical expansion would seem to have been perfectly feasible, yet little variation in that direction exists apart from raising the interior floor level, and expansion forwards into the patio or backwards out of the patio was not practiced, at least not here. Competition was constrained through the imposition of a corporate code that allowed expression of difference but not dominance.

If the small Circle 5 provides evidence for a flexible but partly constrained social field, in which separate groups were responsible for and could invest differentially in their own contribution to the larger circle, the situation appears quite different in Circle 1 (Beekman 2004). This circle has eight surrounding platforms, an outer diameter of approximately 95–104 m, a patio diameter aver-



Circle 1
Navajas

Figure 7. Navajas Circle 1, surface contour map prior to excavation. 10 cm contour intervals. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project.

aging 65.2 m, an open patio area of 2722 m^2, a much taller pyramidal altar of 3.5–4.0 m in height and 28 m in diameter (all based on surface data). The one completely excavated Structure 1–7 had a surface area of 259 m^2. Circle 1 has platforms of alternating tall (approx. two m) and short (approx. one m) heights all the way around the perimeter, and the areas of the platforms alternate large and small as well (Figure 7). This is a pattern that could potentially be created by starting with a circle of four platforms and adding another four at a later date, at which time the first four platforms are expanded and raised higher to maintain their superior profile. Suspecting this possibility, we sought to examine the construction sequence of two different structures. We exposed Structure 1–7 in its entirety and exposed the back wall of the taller Structure 1–6. Profiles into the two structures revealed that each shared the same construction technique of a solid clay core topped with layers of sand, except that the clay core extended to a much greater height in Structure 1–6 (Jennings 2008). In other words, each was built using the same construction methods but to different heights from their very inception. It appears that the different platforms were built at the same time and their unequal sizes were in fact designed as such for some other purpose.

If I may continue to relate construction practices with social groups, it appears that relations between the different lineages were being acted out quite differently in each circle. In Circle 5, the different lineages were able to compete with one another within certain social constraints and depending on their resources and/or rank. In Circle 1, differential status among lineages was institutionalized through the built landscape itself. The larger Structure 1–6 was not expanded after its original construction as far as our limited excavations could determine. But Structure 1–7 was tentatively expanded, primarily by small lateral additions that did not change its height (Figure 8), and with a single modest addition upwards of 30 cm. If the small circles at Llano Grande and Navajas suggest ranked lineages in shifting relation to one another, the larger and more formal Navajas circle suggests a more stratified relationship, with junior and senior lineages.

Guachimontón

Guachimontón sits among low hills in the center of the Tequila valleys, near the edge of Pre-

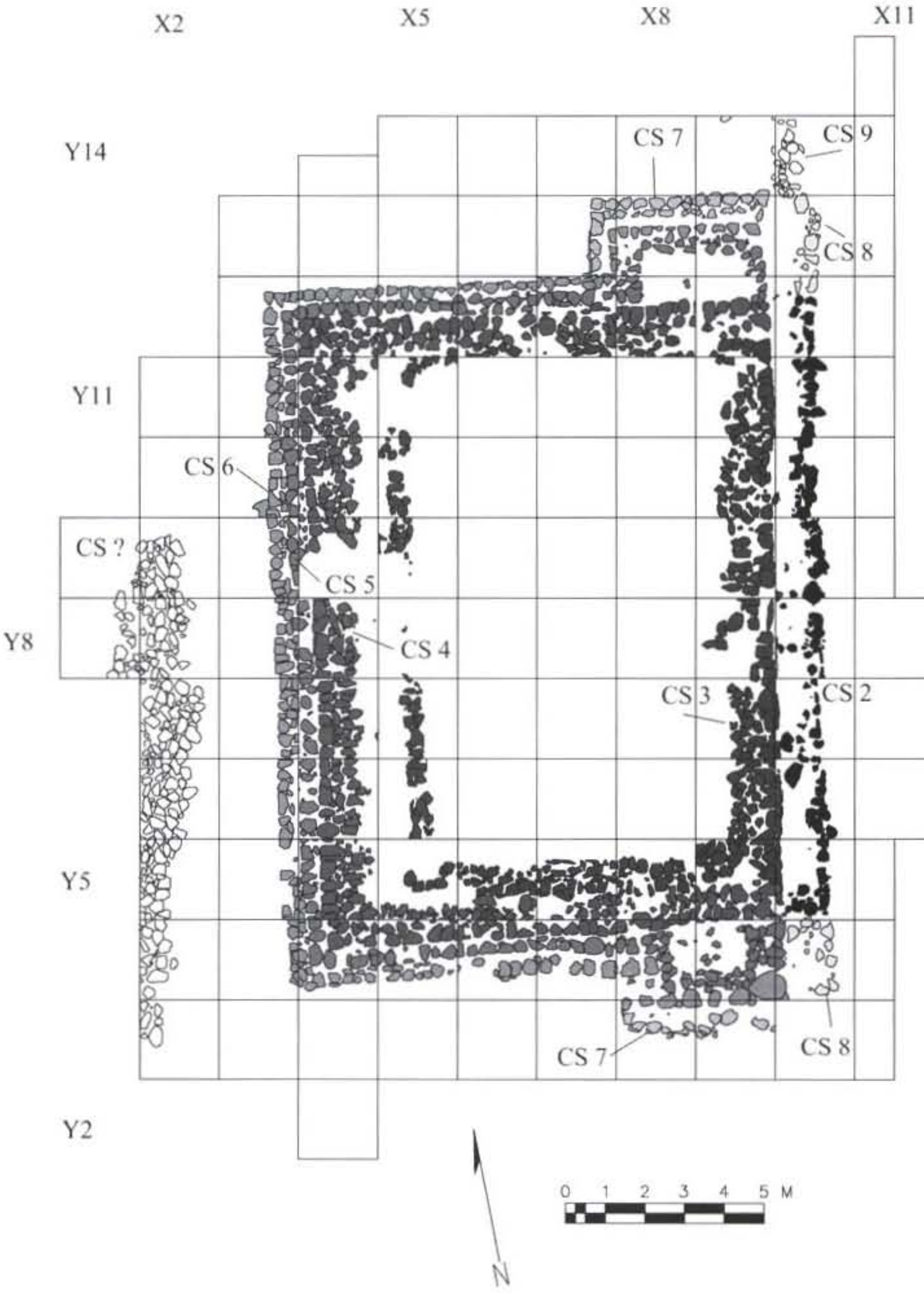


Figure 8. Navajas Structure 1-7 after excavation. CS # designates sequential construction stages. Map by the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project and assembled by Melissa Logan.

columbian wetlands and what is today the La Vega reservoir. It is the largest site in the region even if one excludes the related Loma Alta complex a half kilometer further up the slope. Guachimontón's public architecture includes two ballcourts and ten circles of various sizes (Figure 9), together representing by far the greatest investment in labor of any center in the region (Ohnersorgen and Varien 1996:Figure 2) and probably well beyond the region. While the number of units of public architecture is much like that of Navajas, and might suggest a similar structural complexity, Guachimontón's individual circles include the very largest in the Tequila valleys. Ohnersorgen and

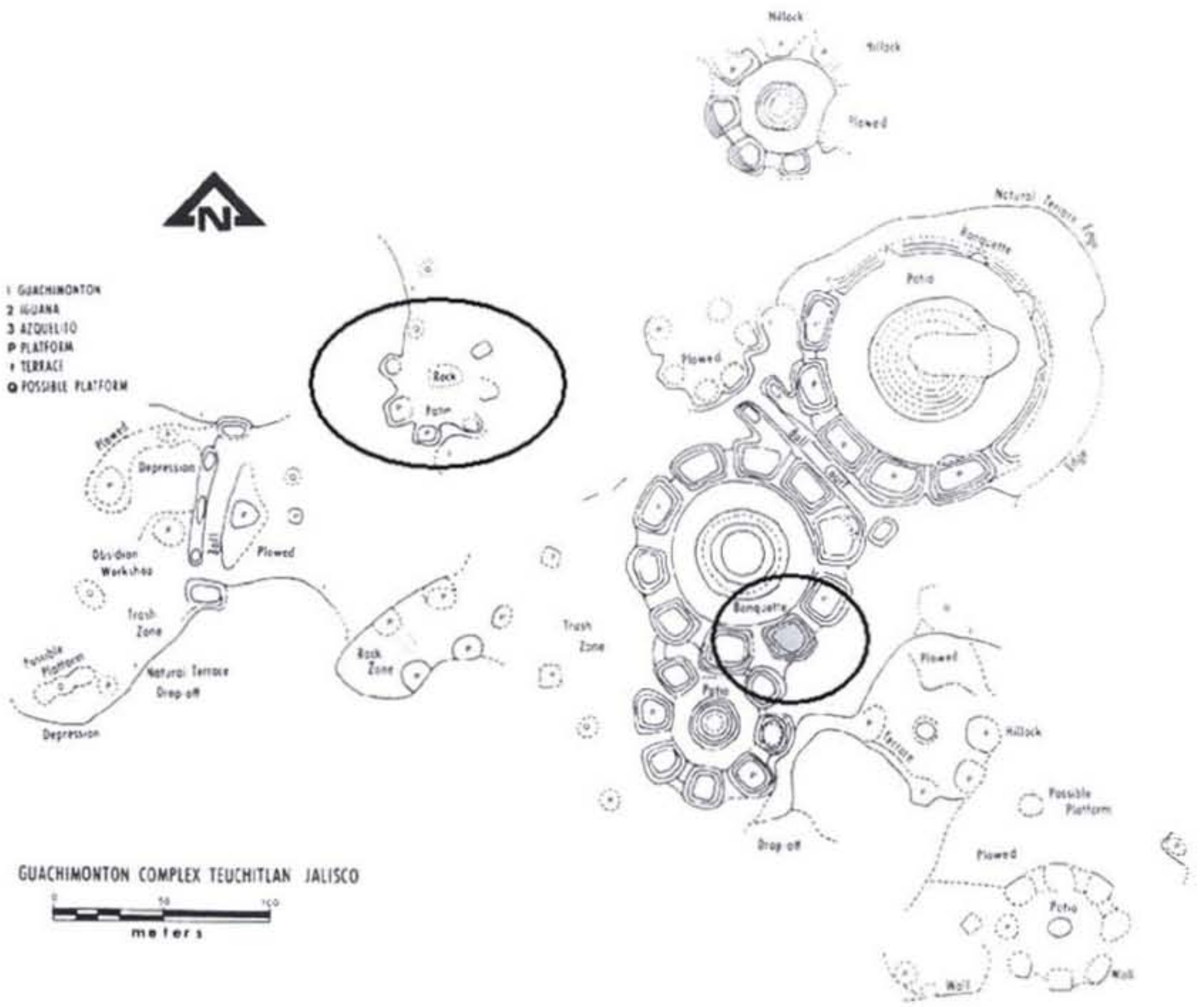


Figure 9. Map of Guachimontón, Jalisco. Platform 4 of Circle 2 is shaded in grey. Circle 6 lies just northwest of Circle 2. Both are indicated by ellipses. Courtesy of Phil C. Weigand and the Proyecto Guachimontón.

Varien (1996:Figure 9) found that Guachimontón had a small associated residential area relative to the quantity of public architecture, suggesting to them a qualitatively different role integrating a wider area and dominating a second tier of ceremonial centers.

The Proyecto Guachimontón has completely or partially excavated all of the site's circles and public architecture over the past seven years (Weigand 2002, 2007, 2008), and confirmed a chronological sequence spanning phases Tequila I–IV (Beekman and Weigand 2007). Few burials have been recovered and shaft and chamber tombs have not been identified either around or beneath the circular architecture. Circle 6 presents the exception. According to the published maps of the site (Weigand 2008), the circle is approximately 55 m in diameter, with a low central altar 12 m in diameter. Calibrated radiocarbon dates place Circle 6 at the transition to the Tequila III phase (Beekman and Weigand 2008). Excavations here focused primarily on the altar, composed of a stone containment wall enclosing a solid prepared clay fill. Cach (2005) describes five deposits of human remains associated with the initial phase of construction. A centrally placed deposit included the partial remains of seven individuals, with some groupings of bones retaining anatomical position. They marked the entrance to a miniature shaft and chamber tomb with human remains, pottery, bird bones, and shell jewelry. Another four deposits of older, more fragmentary human remains surrounded the central deposit and marked the cardinal directions. Cach's (2005:113–116) interpretation of this highly formalized series of deposits places lineages at the forefront, with the deposits as a foundation ritual associated with the rise to power of a particular lineage. The dating of the circle to the beginning of Tequila III does support this inter-

pretation, as this marks the beginning of not only the construction of Circle 6 but indeed all of the architecture at the site.

The architectural data are not yet completely described for Guachimontón. But Weigand's most recent summaries of the fieldwork there (2002, 2007, 2008) notes structure to structure variations like those I have described for Llano Grande and Navajas. These include different styles of stairways, different qualities of wall construction, and different forms of fill that parallel the discussion up to this point. Weigand describes several cases of different segments of construction in a single platform, for example external containment walls of qualitatively variable workmanship that meet to form the corner of a structure. The most interesting example is in Platform 2–4. According to the published map (Weigand 2007), Circle 2 has an outer diameter of approximately 115 m, a patio approximately 75 m in diameter and 2450 m^2 in area after subtracting out the very large pyramidal altar. The platforms average 195 m^2 in area and are approximately 1.5 m in height. In Platform 4 of this circle, the fill conceals a curious junction created by two internal containment walls. The walls do not run parallel to any external support walls or otherwise correspond to an expansion, but instead functioned purely to separate three different kinds of fill (Weigand 2008). One section is well constructed, with layers of prepared clay and minimal use of stone; one of the adjoining sections uses a mix of good clay and selected stone; and the third zone is of loose soil and unsorted stone without careful placement. Weigand interprets this primarily as evidence of distinct work gangs of corveé labor with different techniques and levels of skill. Drawn in from the site's hinterland, these groups were recruited to build the various platforms of the public architecture.

But in light of what we have discussed at other sites, this also may point to a shifting role for our lineages. Guachimontón was the politically preeminent center for the Tequila valleys in at least the Late Formative and Early Classic periods. It may arguably have politically unified the valleys under a single administration during the Tequila III and IV phases (Beekman 1996, 2003c). We must therefore acknowledge that at a site of this scale and complexity, the higher-ranking lineages may have been powerful enough to command the labor of secondary lineages, or alternatively multiple allied lineages shared the use of a structure around a circle. Either way, a qualitatively different social role is evident in which the neat relationship between groups and structures seen at Llano Grande has been superseded by wider or multiscalar forms of organization.

From Lineages to Collective Governance

The social groups discussed here would have been well defined through a myriad of mechanisms. Evidence for shared biological descent from the shaft tomb at Huitzilapa has been leaned upon heavily by those researchers emphasizing lineages, though this could also be interpreted as evidence for social barriers to reproduction between elites and nonelites more generally. Shared identity within a lineage would also have been reinforced through repeated group activities such as the building of the component structure in an architectural circle and its periodic refurbishment and expansion. Conscious expression of group identity in the form of visual distinctions between structures took place through the construction of distinct roof forms and decorative symbols on the exterior. These are the factors for which we possess evidence—lineages present on the rural landscape likely engaged in group labor activities that we cannot directly identify as yet. Mortuary-related behavior such as localized burial of the ancestral dead bound the group together through reaffirmation of social ties, but also built attachments to place, an emotional consequence that should not be ignored.

The evidence discussed points to strong group identities, but unlike other peoples of Mesoamerica whose lineage affiliation led to conflict with and hierarchy over other lineages, those here came together in group assemblies (Blanton 1998) composed of their relative peers. The absence of a clear primary lineage within any of the architectural complexes discussed evidences the inability of any one group to establish long-term dominance as a royal family. Even when the largest circles show indications of seniority among some lineages, there is still a parity maintained between several such groups.

While intergroup competition is likely, the component social groups associated with the circle were expected to cooperate at another level, namely the construction and maintenance of an acceptable

space for important ceremony. Significant maize symbolism is inherent in the *guachimontón* form, and there are iconographic representations of calendrical ceremonies related to harvest celebration (Beekman 2003a, 2003b). Carrying out rituals to ensure successful agricultural harvests might have been one way in which community well-being was pursued, and the presence of a known Mesoamerican calendrical ceremony (Beekman 2003a) suggests coordination or management of field labor at critical points in the agricultural cycle. Those social groups with a place within the public architecture were thus involved in public ritual in which agricultural success and community survival were a prominent theme. It is important, therefore, for these ceremonies to have an appropriate place for their enactment. *Guachimontones* embodied the classic Mesoamerican cosmological model of four cardinal directions, and three vertical layers representing an underworld (the tombs beneath some circles), this world (the patio), and the upperworld (the central altar and pole) (Beekman 2003b; Kelley 1974; Taube 1998; Witmore 1998). But only together do the components of the *guachimontón* represent the cosmos. The lineages' respective roles in maintaining the universe are partial and incomplete without the others, creating a form of social complementarity. The evocation of higher cosmological principles (Blanton's "ritual sanctification of the corporate cognitive code") thus required different intergroup relations at the scale of an entire circle that may not have been evident in other contexts. Unlike, for example, Maya monuments raised to glorify individual rulers or lineages (Freidel and Schele 1989), buildings associated with individual lineages in the Tequila valleys are without independent meaning. Their importance stems from their relational qualities (Beekman 2005), identifying them as contributors alongside their companion lineages.

If daily practices give form to social groups and reinforce them, "fetishize" them as Gillespie says (Gillespie 2000:8; cf. Beekman 2005), then the circle as a whole was just as much a social group as its component lineages. A far greater degree of size variation is apparent between circles (Weigand 1985, 1996a) than between individual temple structures, implying more open and perhaps more acceptable competition between groups of lineages than between individual lineages. In acting jointly in ritual, the lineages justified their class as mediators with the supernatural (see Beekman 2003a), and continually reinforced a stratified relationship that kept elites and non-elites apart. A kind of egalitarianism existed, but only for those social groups or representatives of social groups who were privileged enough to hold access to ritually potent places.

Political authority in Late Formative central Jalisco was thus based in a highly segmented collective governance. Lineage members built and maintained ritual spaces in the sacred landscape replicated in the architecture. They participated in agricultural and world renewal rituals with other privileged members of society for the benefit of the community, but laid claim to their position in these sacred spaces through the burial of ancestors beneath that location. Much competitive performance may have been limited to mortuary ritual, when tombs were opened and group wealth displayed. Most public ritual in the circles would have emphasized the community and its welfare, involving all of the group representatives in their respective roles.

There are hints of parallels to a better-known corporate society of the Mexican highlands. I have already made reference to the evidence for corporate strategies at Teotihuacan. Headrick (1999) has pointed to competition between the highest-ranking lineages at that city by showing that some of these social groups were publicly represented by mummy bundle oracles, displayed along the main street of Teotihuacan. The spatial focus is unmistakable, located as it is within the cosmologically structured center of the city among representations of sacred mountains and watery underworld (Sugiyama 1992). But unlike at Teotihuacan, which is *the* center of the cosmos for the city's inhabitants and the surrounding region, the cosmos is architecturally embodied in hundreds of *guachimontones* across dozens of ceremonial centers throughout the Tequila valleys. Power was highly diffused, and we have not yet begun to understand how it was articulated at wider scales.

Prior studies in the Tequila valleys focused on patterning at the regional scale, drawing upon segmentary state and core-periphery models (e.g., Beekman 1996, 2000; Weigand and Beekman 1998; Weigand 1985). There is a wide analytical expanse between these studies and the recent excavations detailed here; closing this gap is clearly the

next step. Principally, how did the lineages active at different circles within the same community contribute to broader power relations? Were those social groups comprising a small *guachimontón* (say, Circle 5 of Navajas) also represented in a large *guachimontón* within the same site (e.g., Circle 1)? Do only senior groups within a small circle participate in the ceremonies in a large circle? Or, are the groups represented within each circle completely exclusive? Are multiple circles within a given site contemporaneous with one another, or are they perhaps sequential? When one circle is in use, does that preclude the use of another circle at the same location? These are critical questions for moving beyond the reconstruction of local social relations and delineating more encompassing layers of political authority. Our understanding of the degree of centralization within the Tequila valley core region (i.e., was it under a single authority or several? Is that the wrong question?) will ultimately depend on how these local components fit together to form wider networks of interaction.

Conclusions

I have discussed the presence of an elite stratum of counterpoised corporate groups that defined themselves through descent, ties to place, and shared practices. They separately built and maintained dedicated architectural spaces where their ancestral dead were buried. They clearly held preferred access to sacred spaces, but no one group held exclusive control and indeed the collective nature of power was strongly codified in an ideologically charged built environment. It is only partially correct to characterize these groups as competitive factions (Beekman 2000), and their elite status was dependent upon their collective association with sacred principles. Non-elites buried their dead in formal cemeteries associated with rural settlement, and the less frequent reuse of tombs may indicate more fluid ties to place and more shallow tracing of genealogical depth.

Corporate groups in the form of lineages, houses, or voluntary associations have been identified in archaeology and ethnography across the New World, but true corporate *strategies* in which political power is diffused are harder to document. One of the best examples in the New World, and the example to which most Mesoamericanists turn, has been the urban center of Teotihuacan. But there have been debates over the relative contributions of corporate groups (Headrick 1999) and divine kingship (Sugiyama 2005) to the negotiation of power relations. For those pursuing theoretical questions on power-sharing groups, the case study in the Tequila valleys of central Jalisco may possess a degree of transparency difficult to find in complex and layered urban environments.

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Notes

1. "Corporate" is also traditionally used in anthropology to designate a social group that is reproduced over time and defines access to group property, e.g., a lineage, "house" (Gillespie 2003), or voluntary association. I will refer to these as "corporate groups" to distinguish them from the corporate strategy or system as defined by Blanton et al. 1996.

2. I will here refer to these groups as lineages as a convenient shorthand and in order to avoid excessive use of the term "corporate group,", as it is not the aim of this paper to categorize these groups by mechanisms of affiliation.

3. This was noted also by Weigand (2003), who found that 40 out of the 171 tombs he has studied are directly associated with public architecture. These are almost exclusively Weigand's Type 1 and 2 tombs, the largest and most structurally complex tombs. Beekman 1999 was a quantitative evaluation of this observation using published drawings of shaft tombs.

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