

# RAMGRAM-III

- Sukra Sagar Shrestha

After four seasons digging inside the Stupa complex, many more evidential matters came to light. A mere mound of the brickbats turned to be nicely decorated stupa on multi tiered plinths of carved brick evolving through many phases which at last turned to be devastated both by natural agents and human vandalism. North and south part of the stupa is found to be more destructed in lower level and in contrary upper levels are destructed more in East and West part. In some part of the north the structure in trench 44Ac is almost rooted out to the last layer of foundation leaving only two complete bricks and three brickbats in-situ (pl-2, fig-III). The south extension (buttress) among four extension of cardinal direction of the stupa is completely rooted out before the great flood, occurred in the area (pl-3b). The whole area in south is completely covered with the thick flood deposit of Jharahi River.

Northeast and Northwest corners of the square platform of main stupa are detected and Southwest and Southeast corner is still waiting to be opened (fig-II, pl-11a). The evidence of circular structure was reconfirmed after cutting 23 and 27 cms horizontally from the square foundation in the trench 44Ak and 44Ba (fig-IV & V, pl-5).

The circular structure is thus detected in six trenches of 44 Aq, Ba, Ad, Bs, Bp and Dm. Among them the circular alignment of the structure seen in 44Bs, 44Bp and 44Bm are on top that could be drawn in plannum also (pl-10). It provided the point to be reconstructed again with the help of three points. The formula is simple. In geometrical principle any circle can pass through three points if they are not in straight line.

With the same formula, a circle is drawing and thus detected the circular alignment and once rechecked they are traced also in the trenches 44 Ba and 44 Ak by cutting 23 and 27 cms. horizontally from the lowest layer of bricks in square foundation of the stupa (Fig-IV and V, pl-5)

The structural parts described in Ramgram Excavation II in Ancient Nepal (no-148, p.48) are to be little revised now looking at the size of the bricks compared with Mayadevi temple of Lumbini, which is dated to be of Mouryan period by the archaeologists. The square platform was surmised as of Mouryan period that time. But after the detail scruntinization of the brick, they are found mixed with more of the bricks of latter period as well. The Mouryan bricks in this structure were found to be reused ones and majority of the bricks were of later date, the size of the majority of the bricks measures only 5/6x24/26x34/35 cms. The original ones of Mouryan period are of the size of 6/7x26/27x39/40 cms in average. The lower round structure below the square structure is found to be Mouryan period, which has the brick size of 7x26/27x40/41 cms. The circular structure is also traced from top in two more places in trench 44 Dm and 44 Bs as well. The foundation and one layer of circular alignment on top of that were traced. (Pls.-1&10). The square structure with buttresses in all four sides rests on the circular structure. The two structures are distinctively different in plan and elevation. The Mouryan structure was in round plan on top of which rests the square structure with buttresses. From overall picture, the phase of the stupa and plinths around it are found in following order of time.

- First phase - Circular stupa structure of Mouryan period (There could also be central mound as core of the mud stupa, inside the brick structure)
- Second phase - The stupa was brought with square plan with four extension.
- Third phase - Praying Platform was added in the west of the stupa
- Fourth phase - Building of plinths around and some renovations of the stupa
- Fifth phase - Erection of the Monastic Complex and building of second plinth of the stupa with entrance in NW corner.
- Sixth phase - Building the blockades to the stupa in order to save it from flood around the stupa and some pavements in eastern foreground of the stupa complex (PI-13, and 15b).

The period division is done with the help of the structural superimposition and available C14 results from three of the charcoal samples collected from the monastic complex, which gave the date of Gupta Period (3rd to 5th century AD). The bricks used during this period were of 4/5x18/19x26/27 cms in size (fig-XII to XV).

Similarly praying platform was constructed with the brick sizes of 4/5x19.5x34/35 cms. Slightly bigger than the Gupta phase bricks. The square structure of the stupa has two sizes of bricks similarly to praying platform and circular structure of the stupa. The lowest structure of the circular stupa has the largest bricks of 6/7x26/27x39/40 cms. Therefore the sizes of the bricks as accepted by majority of the scholars, are attributed to:

- Gupta period - 4/5x18/19x26/27 cms (Relatively confirmed by C14 dating)
- Sunga/Kushana period - 5/6x26/27x34/35 cms (Attributed to this period because of the structural superimposition and intermediate size and section of the bricks.)

- Mouryan period - 6/7x27/28x40/41 cms Well comparable to the size of fifteen-chamber structure and other Mouryan structures in bottommost layer at Lumbini

### PHASE

Around the square structure of the stupa, there are two distinctive phases seen, one on top of other. First phase was brick soling found below eight courses of bricks from roundels in south and east side and second phase is another soling done below third and second course from the same roundels. The first soling could be the working floor when the square structure was erected and second floor was created when the structure was renovated again (PI-6c).

In the same period the last structure of the monastery in unlucky field was built and the protection wall around the stupa with addition of decorative bricks in the east north and west buttresses of the square base was added.

### MODI'S FIELD

The remarkable find of the year 2002/03 is the two phases structures seen in the site to the far Northwest location of the stupa. The findings in the squares of 19 and 27 are remarkable, where the earlier phase of the settlement was discarded after a big earthquake. There are two distinctive wall structures superimposed. The latecomer came and settled on top of the devastated wall structure. (Fig-IX, pl-9)

The stupa structure was also not spared by this earthquake. The Northeast part of the square structure of the stupa also showed some sort of earthquake devastation (pl-14 and 15a). From the available evidence in squares 19 and 27, it shows that the earthquake occurred during or little after Sunga/Kushan period. The same period is shown by the crack in stupa also. The stupa is given retaining wall after that and Gupta bricks are found used then in the structure. The brick size of 5x22x35 cms is ascribed to the Sunga/Kushana period in Ramagrama. The praying platform to the west of the stupa is also contemporary to the lower phase of the square 19 and 27. The brick size in both the structures measures same dimension.



## T.C. HEADS

Three remarkable terracotta heads are retrieved from the excavation. Two of them were found from the trench 44 Ag and one from 36 Cv. All of them were collected from the disturbed layer of the stupa. No one of them is found from its original context and thus was not in-situ. No part of the body is found. They all have been buried under the brickbats concentration of the stupa. This concentration was the phase after the stupa was discarded and devastated. Fortunately the face portion of the heads is saved from breakage due to its facedown position while digging. The heads are not broken intentionally. But their polish is gone due to the acetic content of the deposit layer (pl-8).

The heads could be considered as the master pieces on the terracotta molding retrieved from Ramagram. No parallel to this style is traced from elsewhere. But from the sequences from which they were retrieved, we can assume them to be the art creation of Gupta period.

The relief of nose and lateral angle of the mouth depression and eyes are pronounced and the rotund faces are to be noticed specially. The lower lips are heavily protruding out and the hairstyle is remarkably curly and done in a prominent style and sweet design. The relief of the nose is noticeably high with flattop. The ears are pierced with big holes for heavy ornaments. Among the three figures, two are of female and one remaining belongs to male deity.

## CARVED STONE PIECES

Many pieces of carved stone have been retrieved from the eastern side of the stupa. They came from the layer below vandalized deposit of big brickbats. It is in average 200 cms below sloppy surface of the present level. No artistic carvings are met with. All the pieces have only line carvings totaling different numbers.

## SKELETAL REMAINS

Quite a number of human skeletons, two independent skulls few pieces of limb bones came out in different trenches (pl.-7, fig-I, II) The complete skeletons are always found buried in north south alignment and head towards the north. Exceptionally one skeleton was found buried head towards northeast and legs in southwest direction.

The trench 44 Dp turned to be almost a graveyard from which three skeletons and one lower jaw only was found. One skeleton showed the characteristics of a criminal death. The mouth of the skull was with wide opened and a brickbat was nicely inserted into the mouth. Even the left leg was broken (ancient Nepal-nr.148 p-7). In two of the skeletons, one was laid face up position and nicely rested where as the second one is laid in three bent position-lower limbs, head and neck bent in knee and groin. The knee position is resting comparatively on the higher and groins in deepest point. Thus this individual also noticed with an unnatural death because the burial activity seems hurriedly done. The latter burials are found below fifty centimeters from the one described first.

One piece of lower jaw and few bones were found in between those two skeletons in the same trench as well. The cause could not be fully understood. Anyway it shows the criminal tendency. No human bones would be found dissected like this.

The bones were much decomposed due to the acetic nature of the surrounding and thus leading it very much difficult to lift the bone pieces. Almost all the extremities were gone leaving only hard bones of ribs and other long bones.

Again in trench no. 44 Cc a nicely placed skeleton was found with one skull buried about a meter away in up right position. It is very unusual finding. The head is not buried side ways or face-up but found in directly up right position. We do not know if the body is till below the head because we could not go down further due to the lack of time and the climatic condition as well (pl-7, fig-1).

From the study of the skeletal remains, we can infer that the ground is found used by the people as burial ground and by the brigands to hide their crimes.

The deaths were never accompanied with any sort of burial goods like ornaments, pots, and arms showing as if too poor society, religious disbelief or bandit deaths. They were buried also in very shallow pits. All three skeletons in 44 Dp were found from 55 cms to 110 cms below the present surface. They were buried in last brickbats layer. Therefore prior sign of the buried chamber could not be detected in advance, which resulted in the smashing of skull in some times.

## C 14 DATES

Five samples collected from different contexts were sent to Cologne, Germany for C14 dating. The result of that sample showed interesting dates. The lab numbers and related layers and trench numbers are given with the result dates. (See-figs. XII to XV.)

Lab No.	Trench No.	Related Context	Result (in BP)
KN 5441	35 Ci	Working level of Monastic Complex	1670±35
KN 5442	35 Bn	On top of the brickbats Collected from above the ghost Wall (or after the abandonment Of monastic complex and before the flood.	1700±35
KN 5443	43 Bb	From a pit sealed by layer III	1740±35
KN 5444	35 Cp	Flood layer below the foundation	3514±40
KN 5445	35 cm	Below the foundation at the depth of 2.75 m from the surface. (The charcoal collected from the flood level)	

Out of these five samples, sample no 5445 proved to be too old to the occupation in this part of Terai region of Nepal and also doubted by the experts of the laboratory because of the amount of charcoal received for them to dating was too small. Another example of sample no 5444 is also found comparatively old. This was because of the content of the sample collection. The sample was collected from flood level expecting that it could give the flooding date. But in contrary it turned out to be flown down material by the river, which could have been produced by the Jungle fire, due to some other unknown reasons.

Other three samples gave quite reasonable dating related to the historical context and archaeological structures of the site.

The Department of Archaeology has been kindly assisted by Dr. Angela Simons by extending her cooperative hands in arrangement of conducting C14 laboratory testing in Cologne University. It gave a very nice parameter of dates, which totally fits to the date revealed by archaeological sequence and historical events. She has arranged for all free of cost. She was

the Director in Mustang cave excavation from German side. The test has been done in the laboratory of Cologne University. Therefore, the Department of Archaeology is grateful to Dr. Angela Simons and others in the university and thanks them all for their cooperation.

Context numbers of the samples and situation recorded:

**KN5441**

**Trench No. 35 Ci**

= Working level of Monastic complex

**Context:** (Act No. 3 of the trench note book)

135 cms below the present surface is the working level of the Monastic complex which is full of brick grits and charcoals plus the right darkis clay (गधीचा)

The wall thickness is 120 cms exact and expected date was assumed to be from 1200-1600 BP.



#### KN 5442

##### Trench No. 35 Cn

**Context:** (Act. No. 18 of the trench note book)

**Remarks:** Collected charcoal for C14 dating from the brickbats deposit on top of the inner wall. It may give the period of bricks-robbing and of the flood period. It was an important phenomena of the site.

Object-charcoal

Depth - 170 cms from top (surface level)

#### KN 5443

##### Trench No. 35 Bb

**Context:** (Act. No. 3 of the note book)

**Remarks:** Collected the charcoal from the depth of 235 cms but from the pit.

It may give antique date and may well be from 1600-2000 Yrs Bp.

- ◆ The pit is well covered by III layer
- ◆ The pit alone is well deep of more than 90 cms.
- ◆ The sample is collected from the bottom of the pit.
- ◆ The pit is after a layer of about 10-20 cms of organic plus grits mixed.
- ◆ Together with yellow clay which might have been penetrated from the Layer III.
- ◆ The diameter of the pit on top is more than two meters. Therefore It is worth dating.

#### KN 5444

##### Trench No. 35 Cp.

**Context:** (Act. no. 33 of the trench note book)

**Remarks:** Went down further dig in the east of the wall in order to reach the natural soil here as well. Found a big organic material to date. The organic material could be the buried timber of unknown tree but has enough quantity. Therefore collected it for C14 dating. The detail

of the specimen is as follows:

**C14 specimen:** The material is collected from the deposit of flood layer at the depth of 220 cms from the surface level.

Since the river could have flown it down, the date might go up. Anyway the date may be within the period around 1800-2000 Bp (flood date)

#### KN 5445

##### Trench No. 35 Cm

**Context:** (Act. no. 25 of the trench note book)

**Remarks:** Collected charcoal for C14 dating from lower yellow layer at the depth of 275 cms from the surface. which is even below the deep foundation wall. The date expected is at least 1800-2100 BP.

Collected Cord marked pottery and dark black ware from same level (280 cms below) Dug down further 10 cms (ie 290 cms from the surface) and found another pot smashed, therefore took the photograph of it as well.

The potsherds were coming down to 310 cms depth and then stopped. Went down further 25 cms (ie to 325 cms) but no potsherds and charcoal pieces were encountered. Therefore thought it to be natural layer and stopped going down further because the layer is found yellow in color and mixed with profuse quantity of Kanker.

### SIGN OF VANDALISM

The possibility of mass destruction or vandalism cannot be ruled out in Ramagrama stupa and surrounding area. There are two distinctive layer or composition or better described as stratigraphy overlain on top of the remaining wall structures of the area.

- ◆ Brickbats of bigger size of more than half and even bigger in size immediately cover the structures mixed with yellow earth, which was used as mortar while erecting the structure. The bricks are almost fresh and free of any moss growth and decay of organic plants with no content of eco-facts. They are found almost fresh. No sign of friction and long exposure is noticed. This is the result of the deposition within short period of time.

- ◆ On top of this concentration are found smaller brickbats often eroded and not in shape. This is covered with the growth of microorganism and thus blackening the surface and mixed with the clay profusely containing the organic decays showing long time to be collected and of deposition.

The erosion factors of the bricks show rain, wind, and mechanical effect of trampling and friction on the surface by the animals played and replayed with the brickbats, which turned them into small pieces and mixed with much eco-facts.

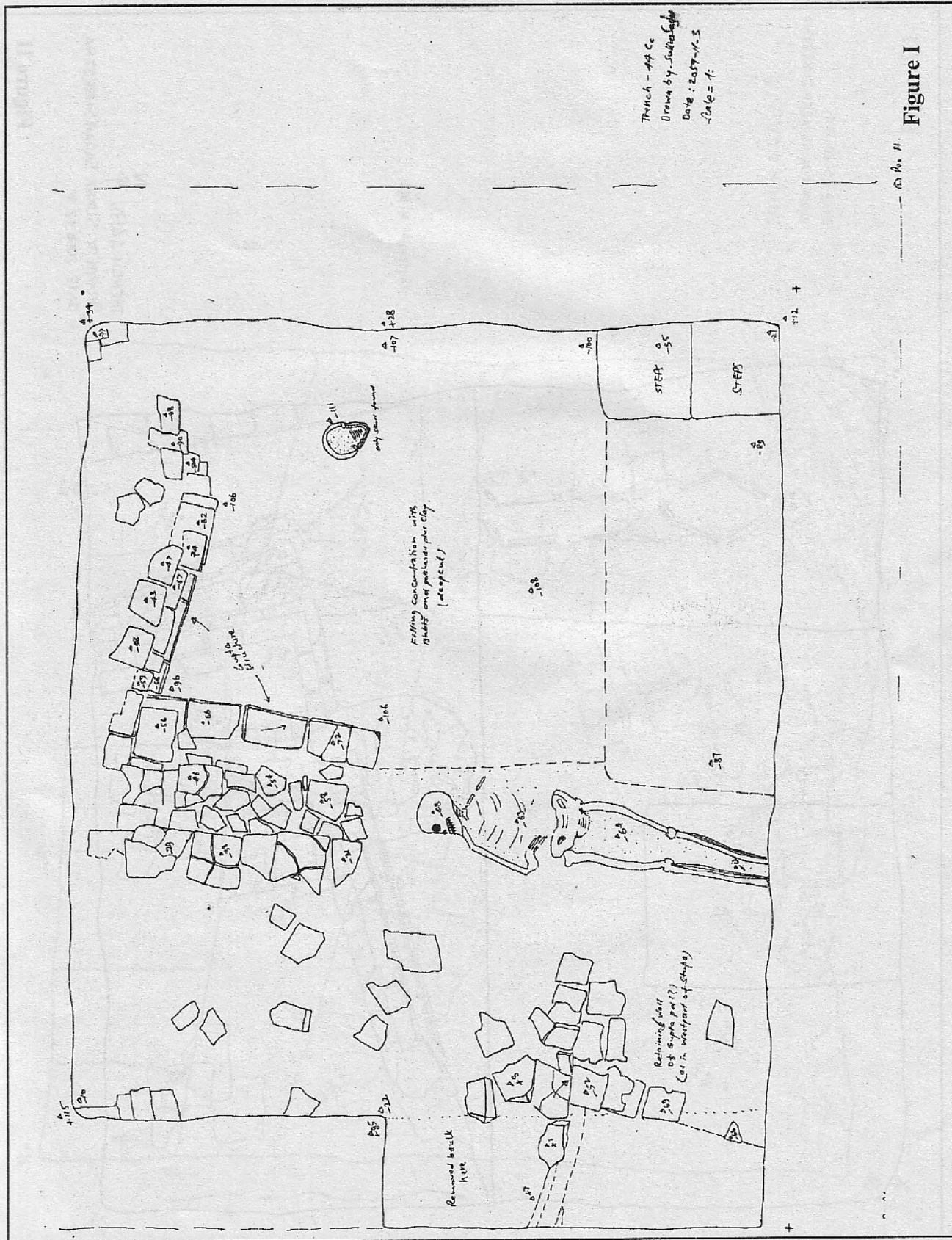
- ◆ The findings of three terra-cotta heads also show the probability of destruction. They are never vandalized by the idolatry people of faith on god, of what so ever creed or belief they belonging to. The bricks on this phase also are with distinctive shape of brickbats not eroded in edges and looked fresher destruction.

This phase of activities is noticed in Ramagram with two distinctive compositions of layers, as described above.

Once the stupa was finally abandoned, there were lots of diggings for perhaps, treasure hunting and brick robbing. The local villagers never did the brick robbing. The robbers and other agents could have done it for some unknown purpose. Such pits are noted in many trenches notably in trench 44 Ak and 44 Ac (PI-12).

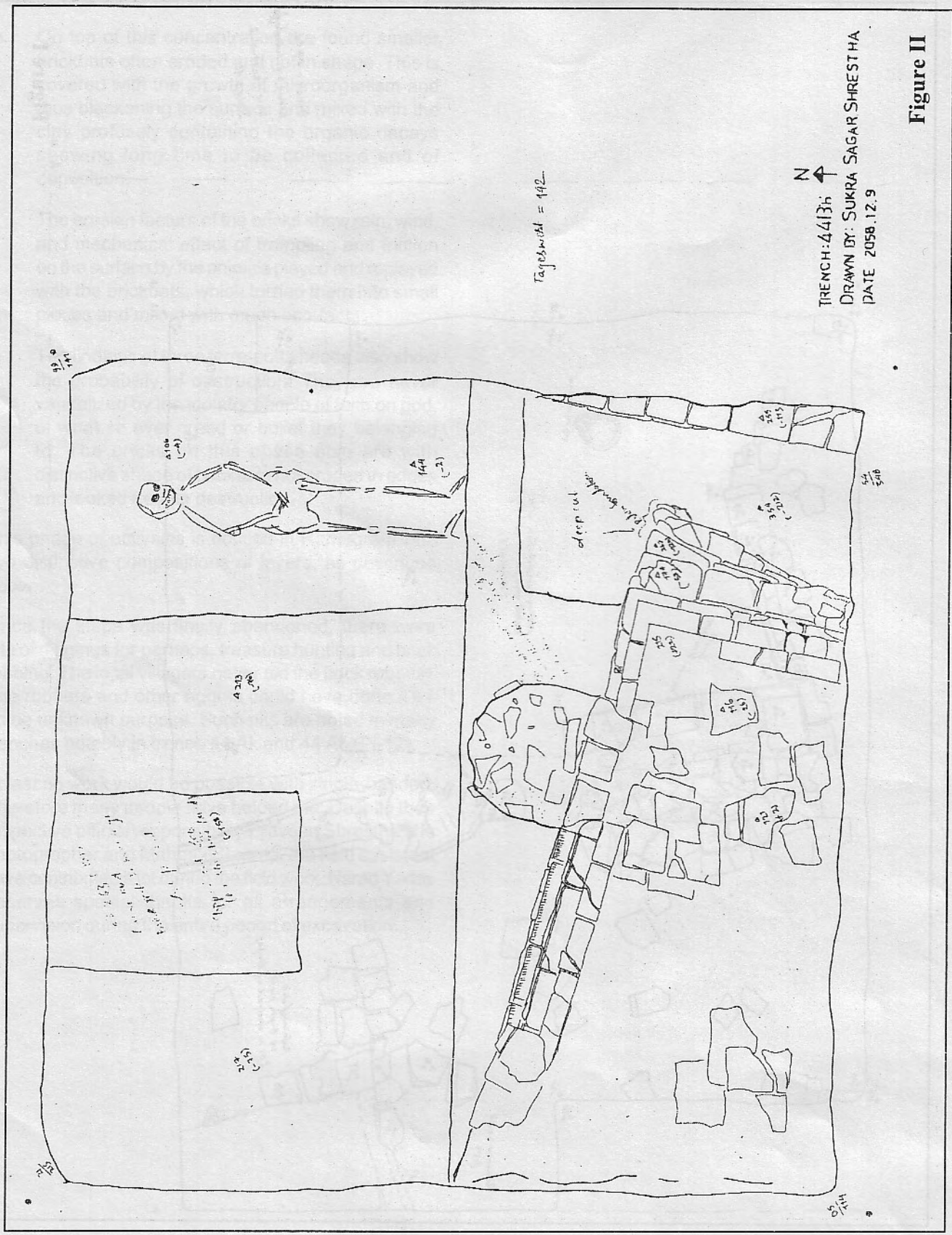
At last no work would be possible with single-handed. Therefore many people have helped me. Despite their respective official responsibility Praveen Shrestha, the photographer and Mahesh Sharma, the field assistant have contributed a lot during the field work. Narad Yadav deserves special thanks for all arrangements and supervision during the entire period of excavation.





Trench - 44 C  
 Drawn by Sullivan  
 Date: 20/1/53  
 Scale = 1:

Figure I



Tagesmittel = 142

TRENCH: 4413h  
 DRAWN BY: SUKRA SAGAR SHRESTHA  
 DATE 2058.12.9

Figure II





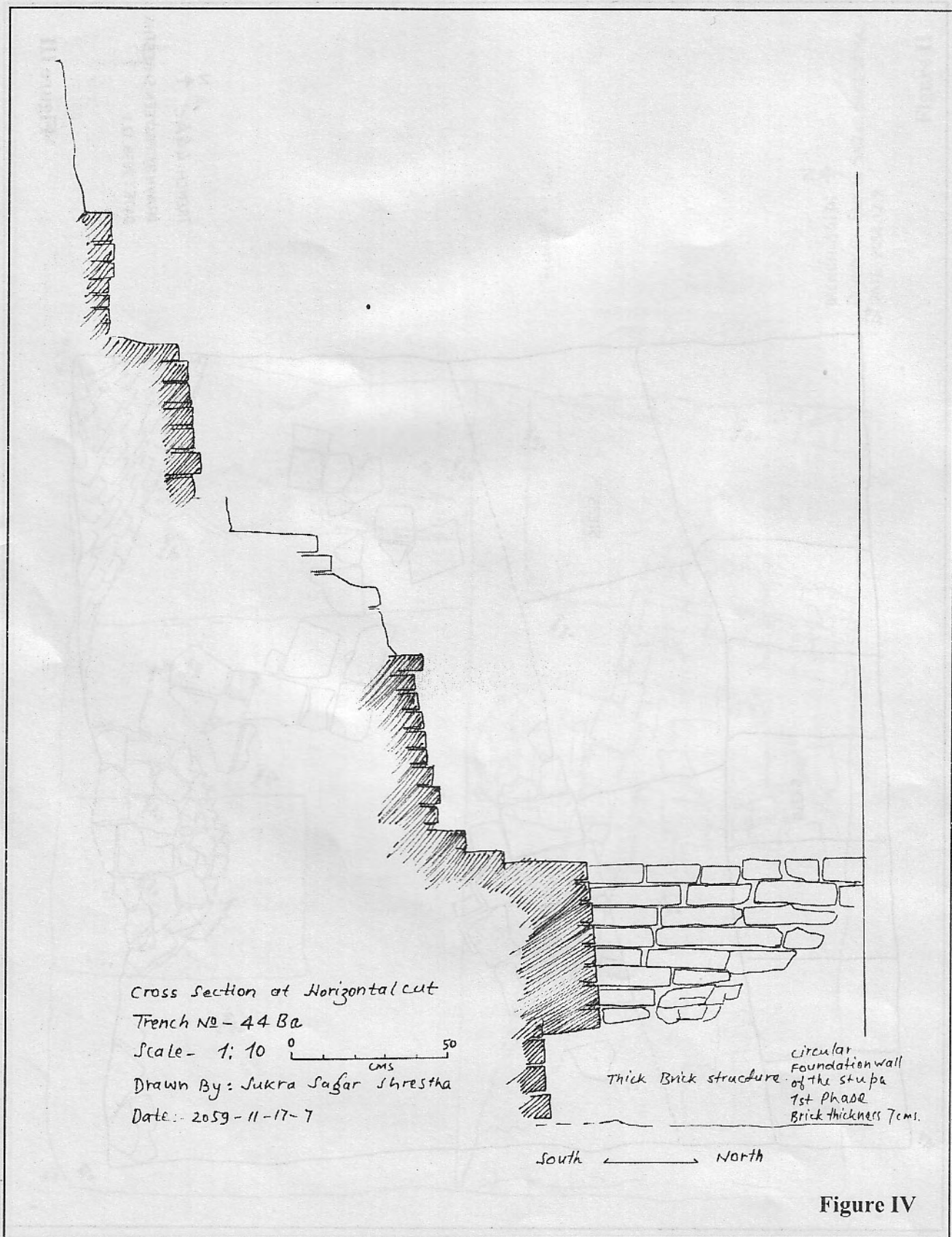


Figure IV



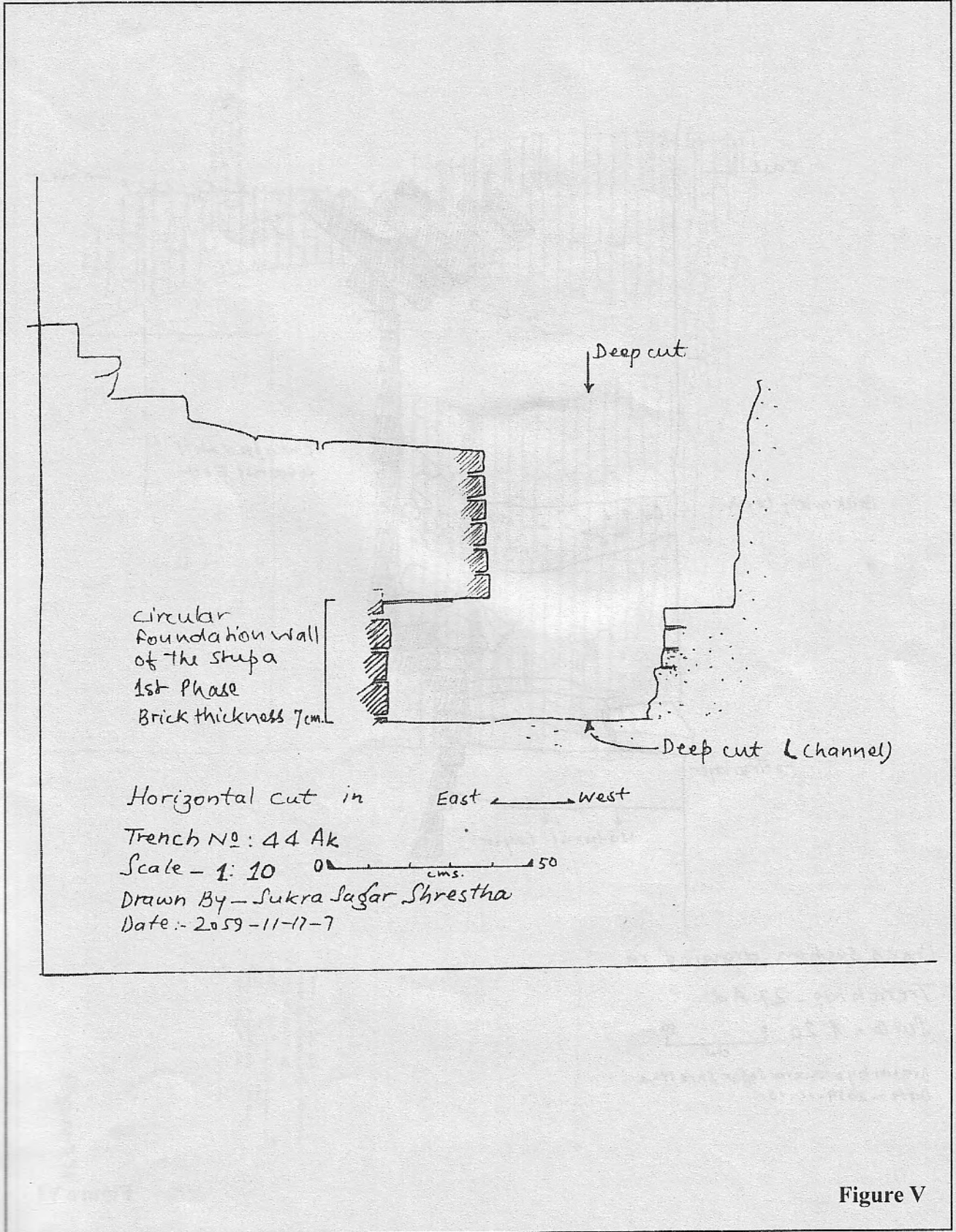


Figure V

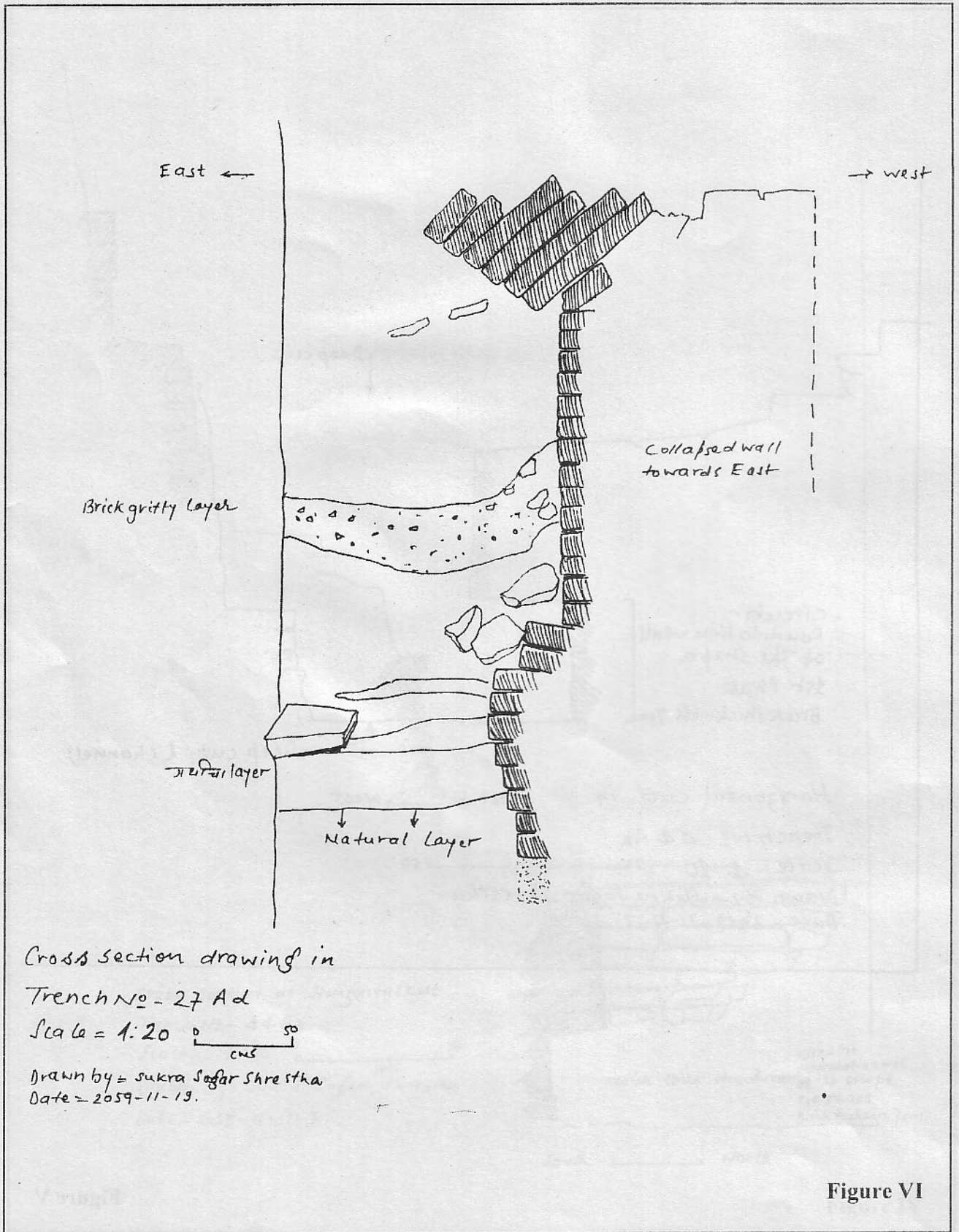


Figure VI



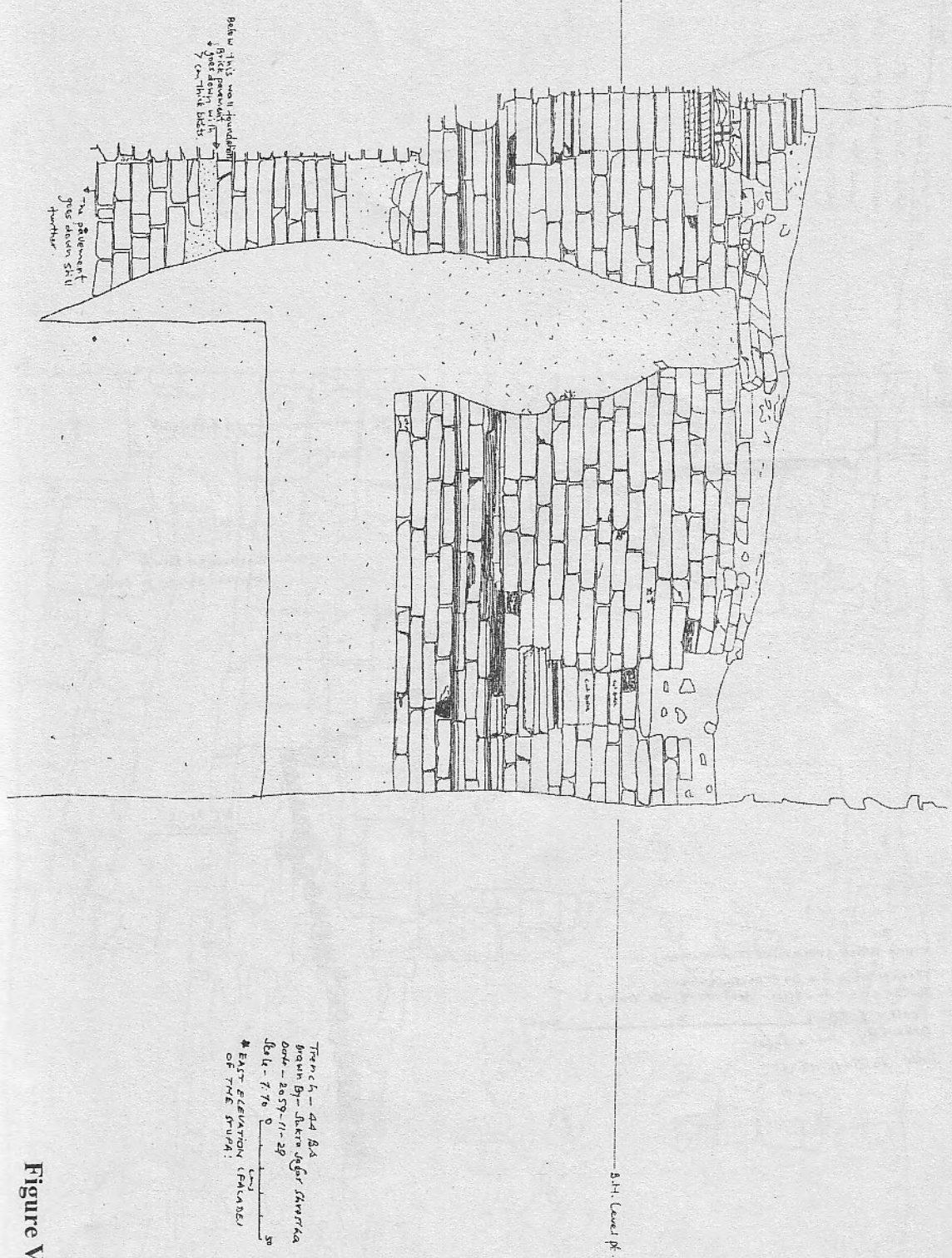
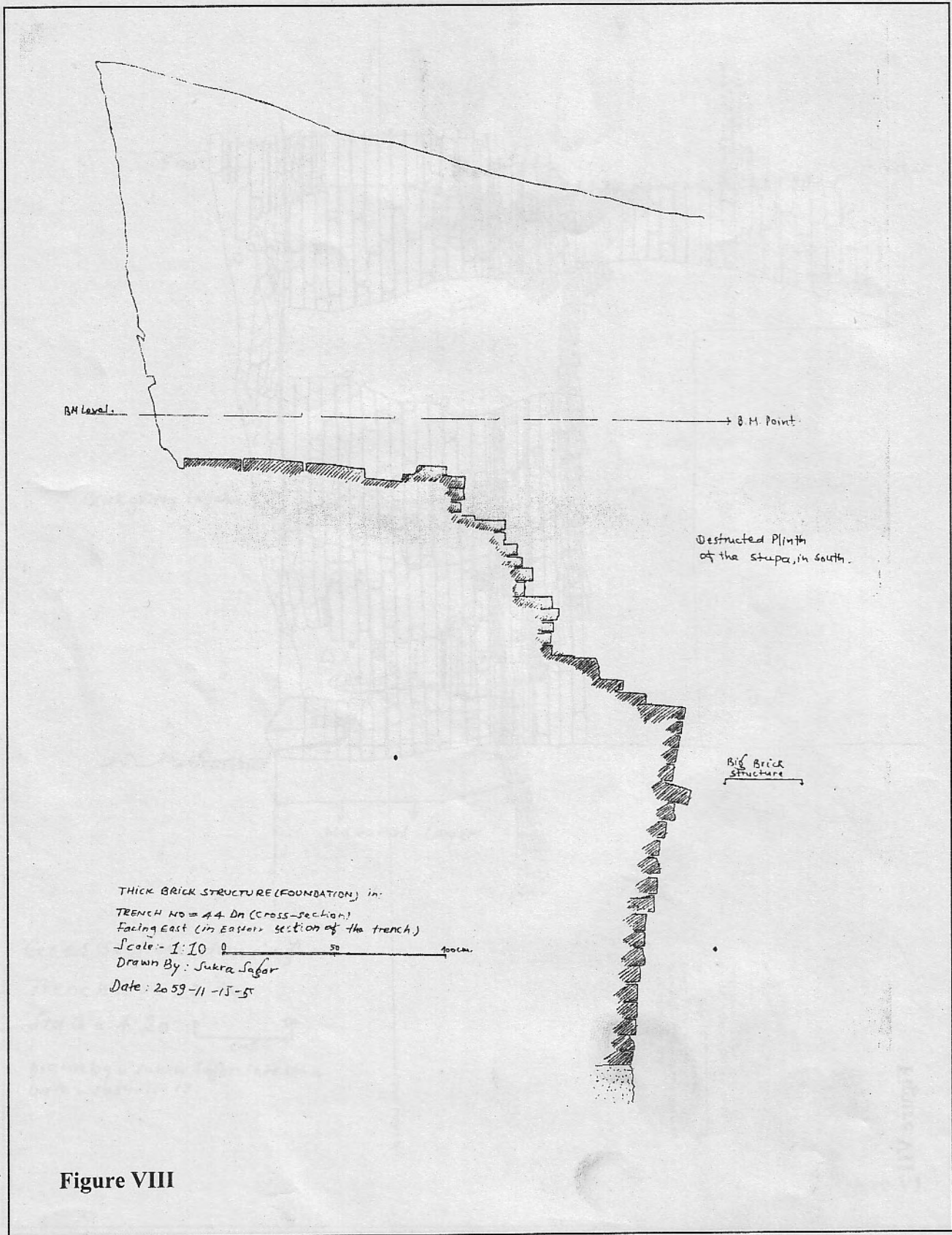
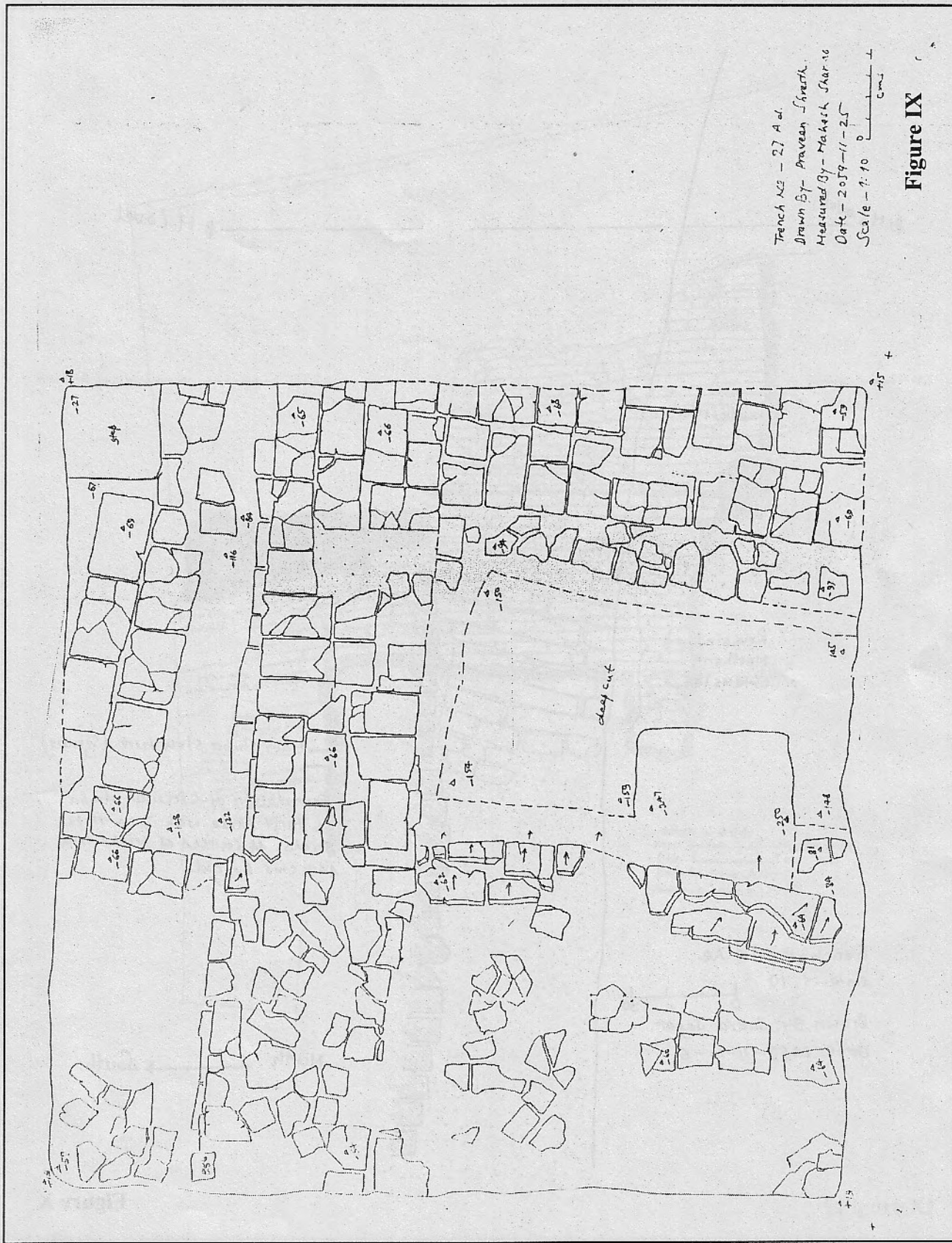


Figure VII



**Figure VIII**





Trench AE - 27 A d.  
 Drawn By - Praveen Srinath.  
 Measured By - Mahesh Srinath  
 Date - 20/9-11-25  
 Scale - 1:10

Figure IX

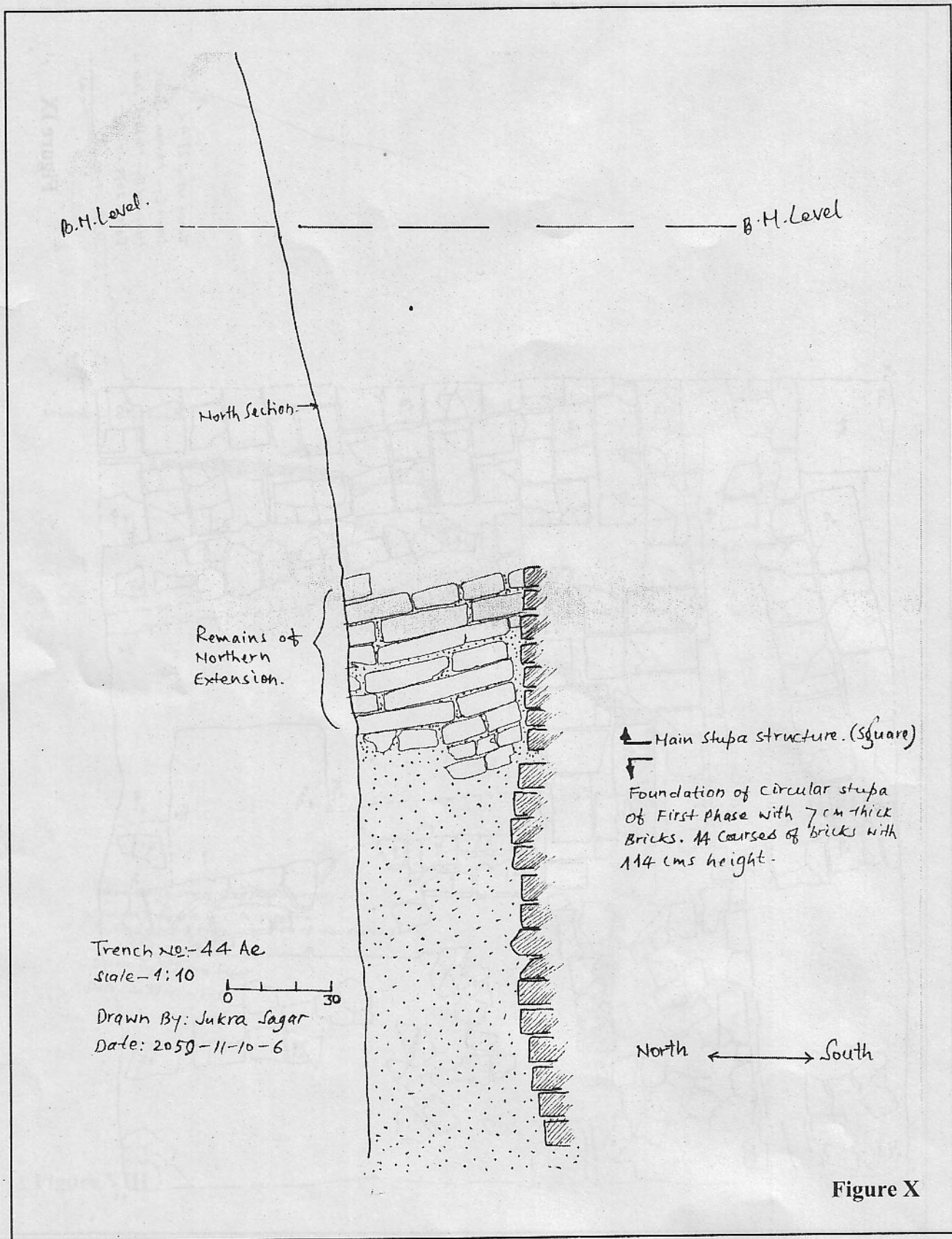


Figure X



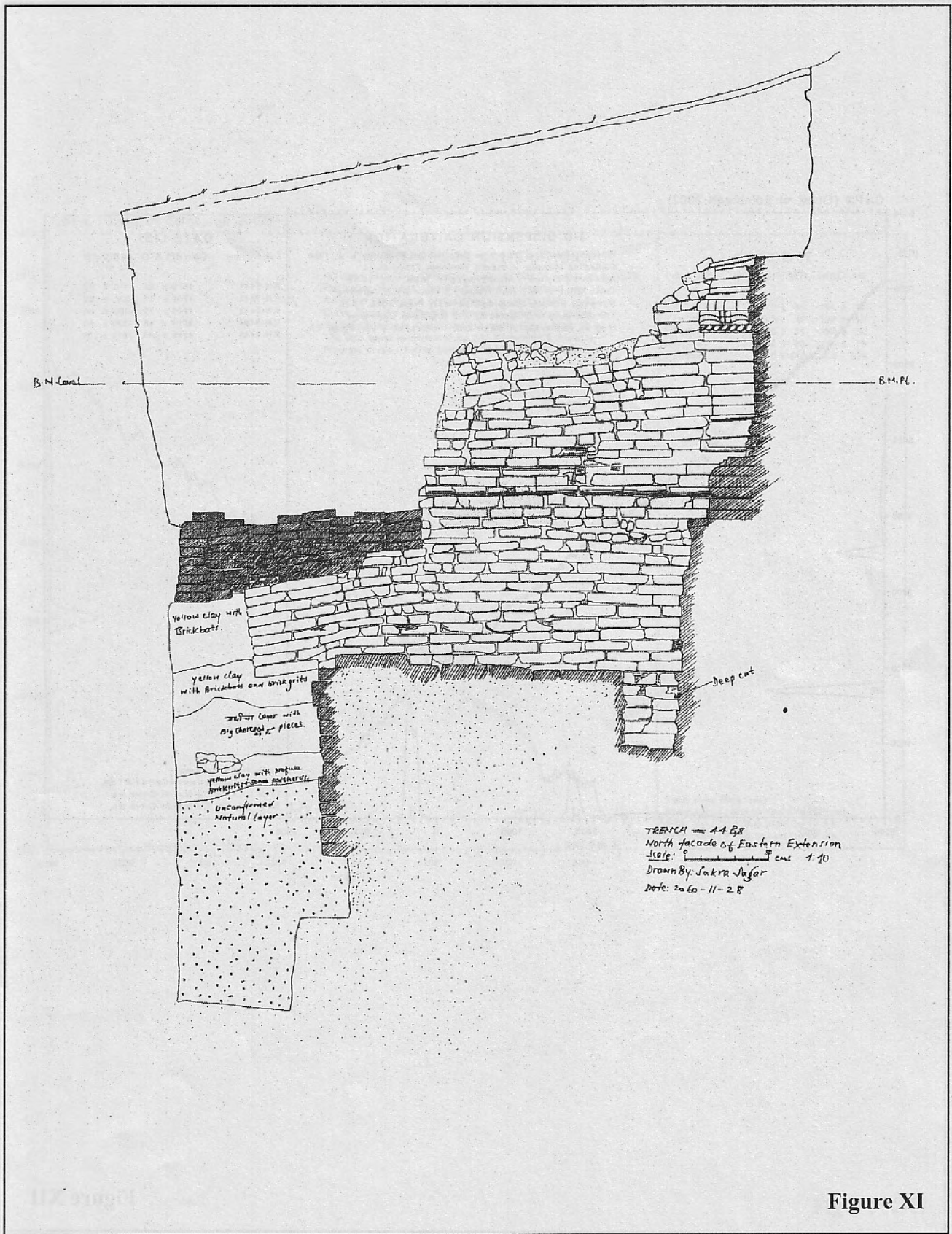


Figure XI

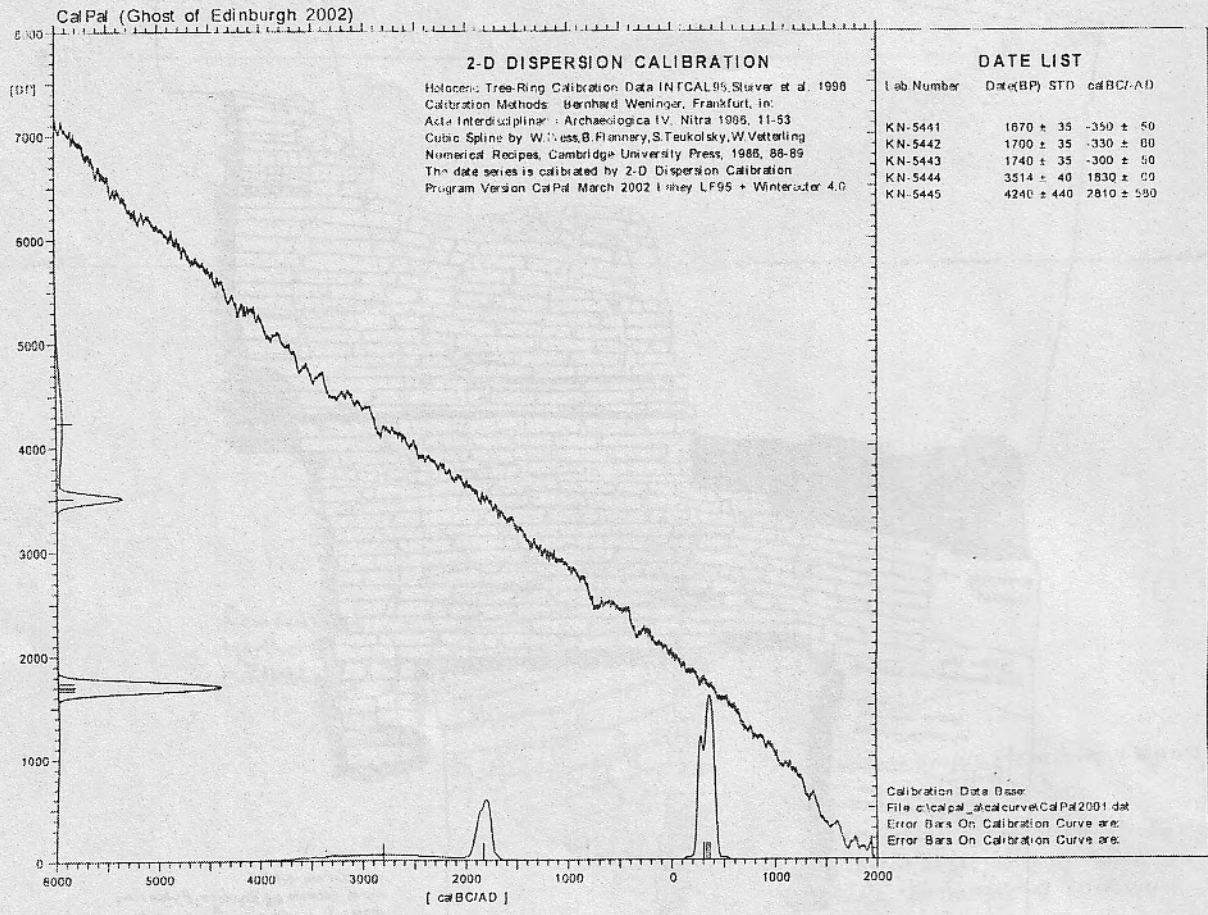


Figure XII



CalPal (Ghost of Edinburgh 2002)

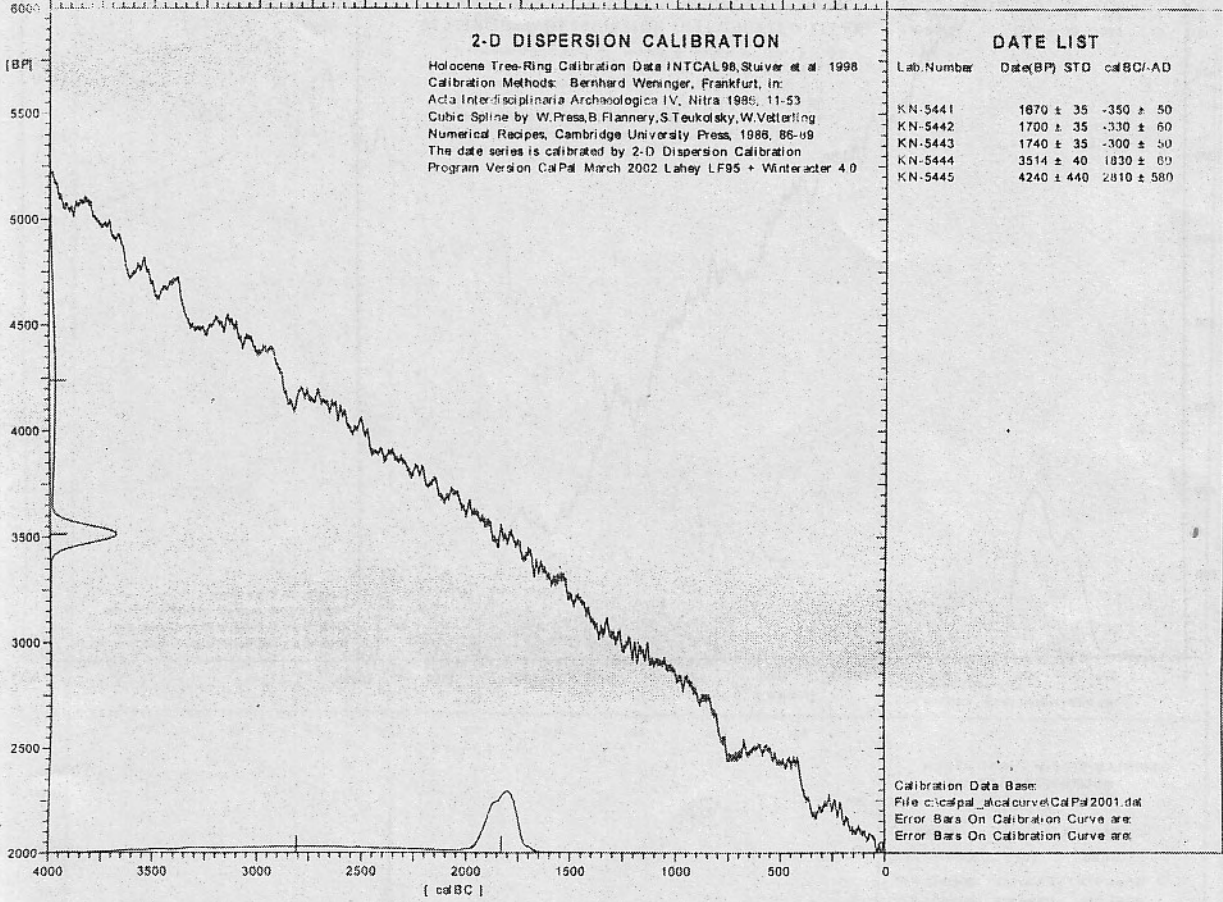


Figure XIII

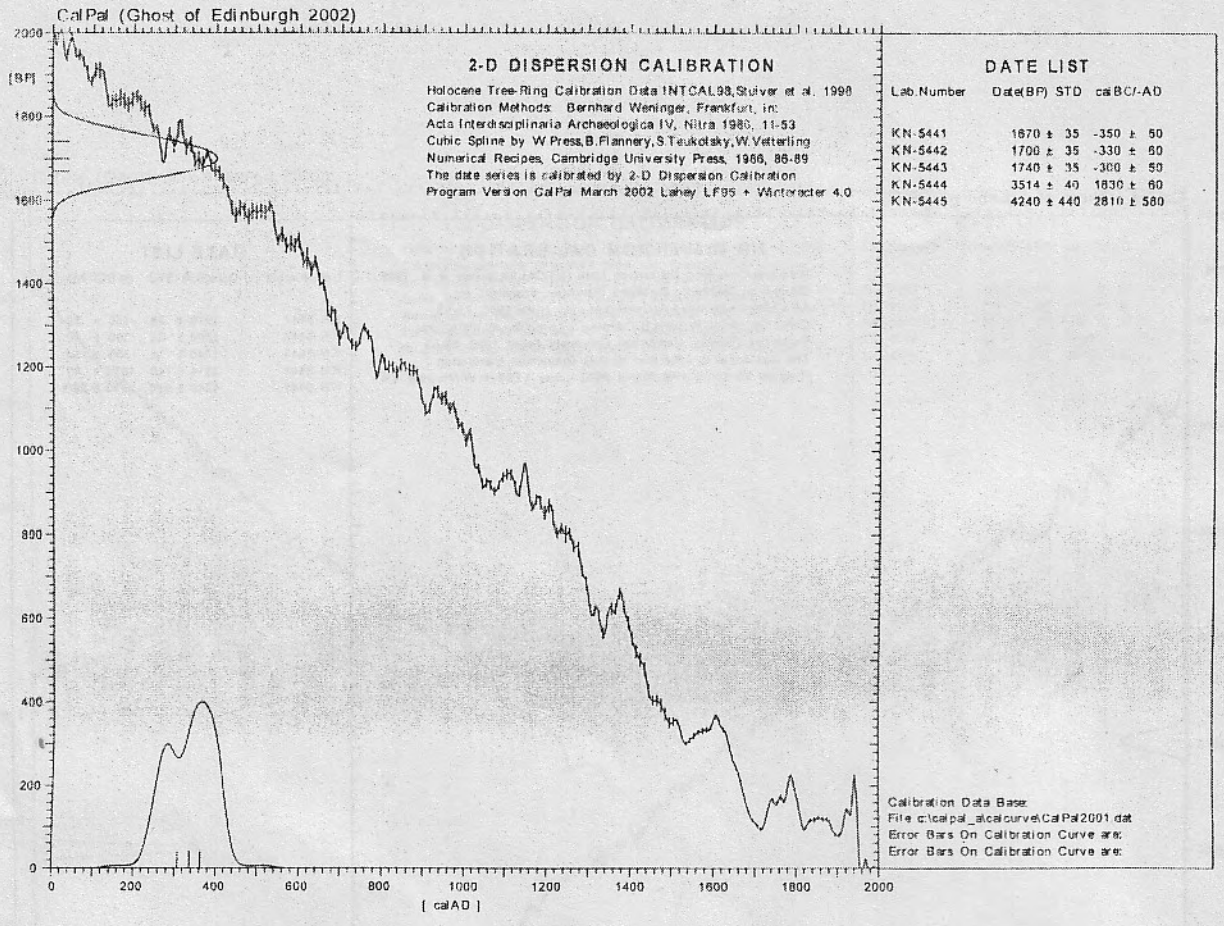


Figure XIV



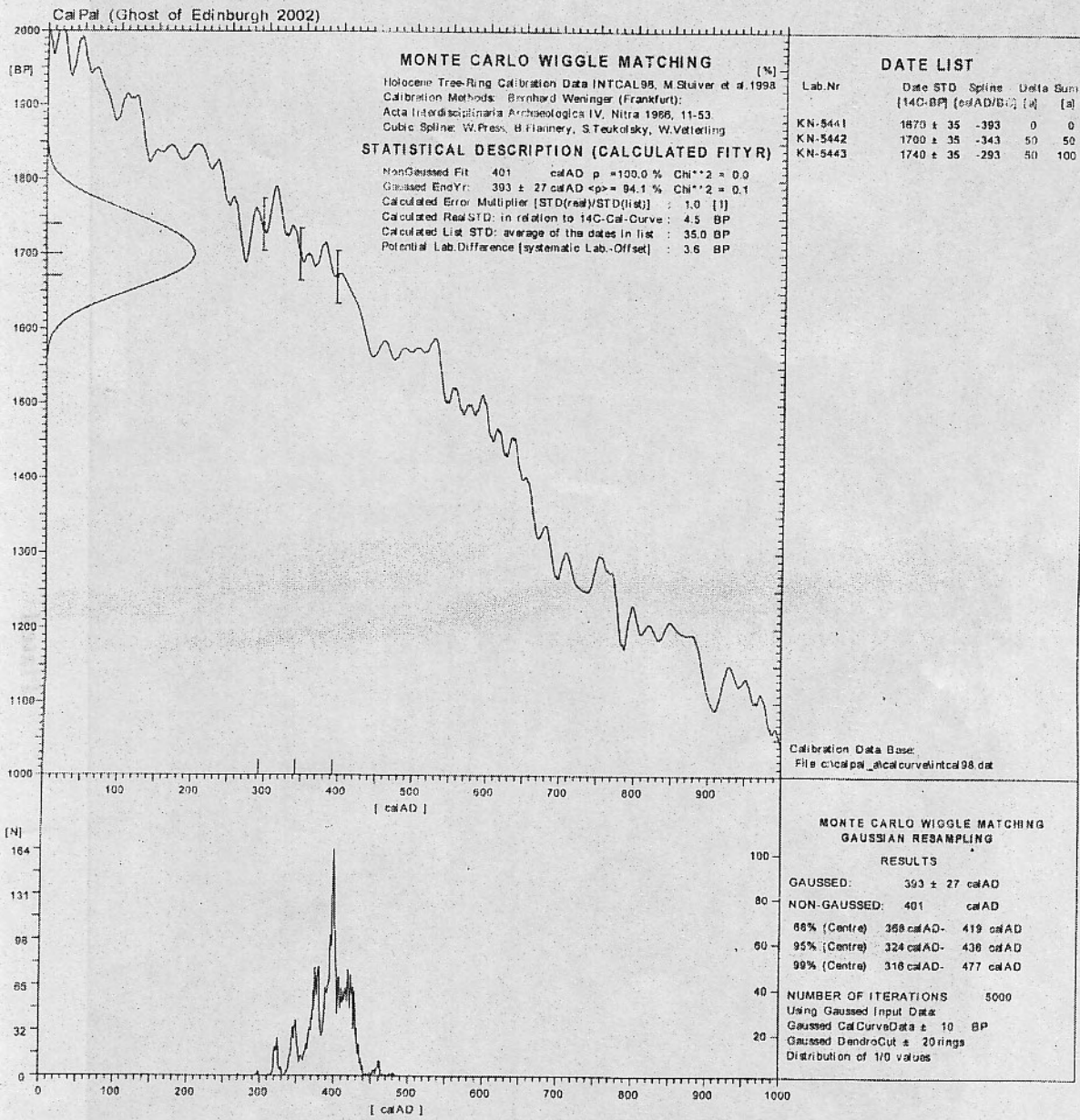


Figure XV

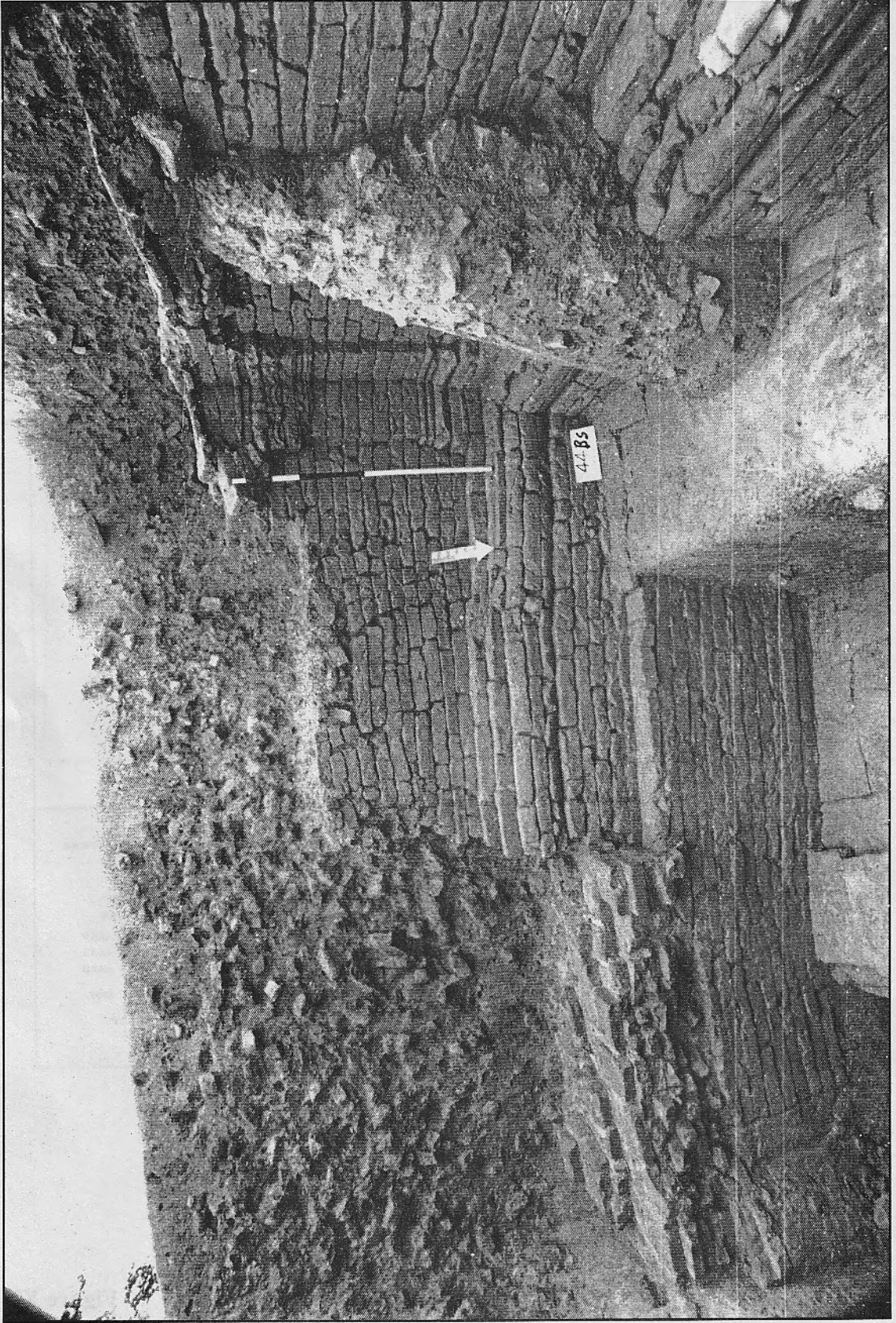


Plate 1



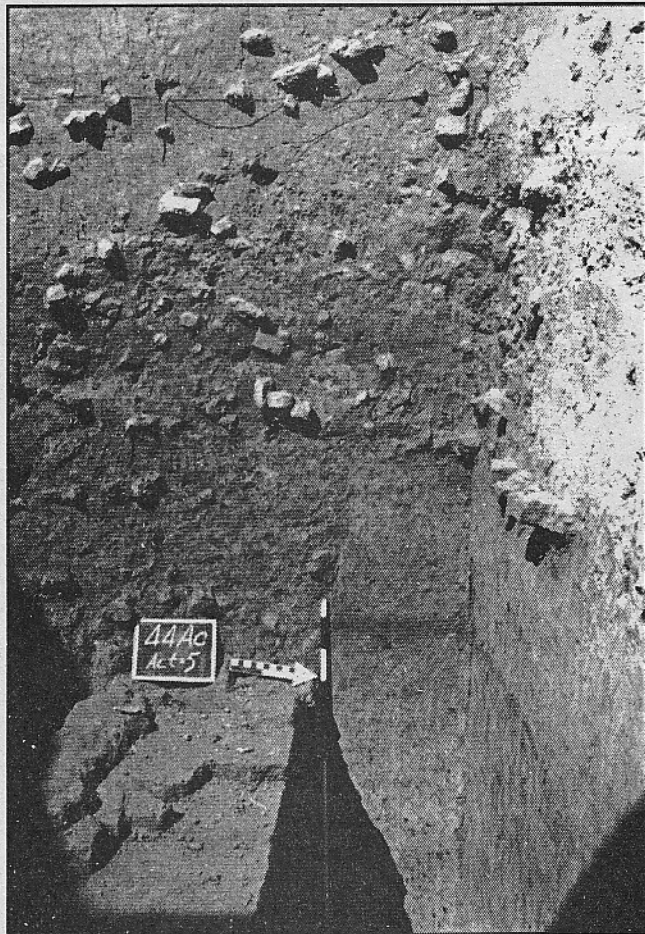
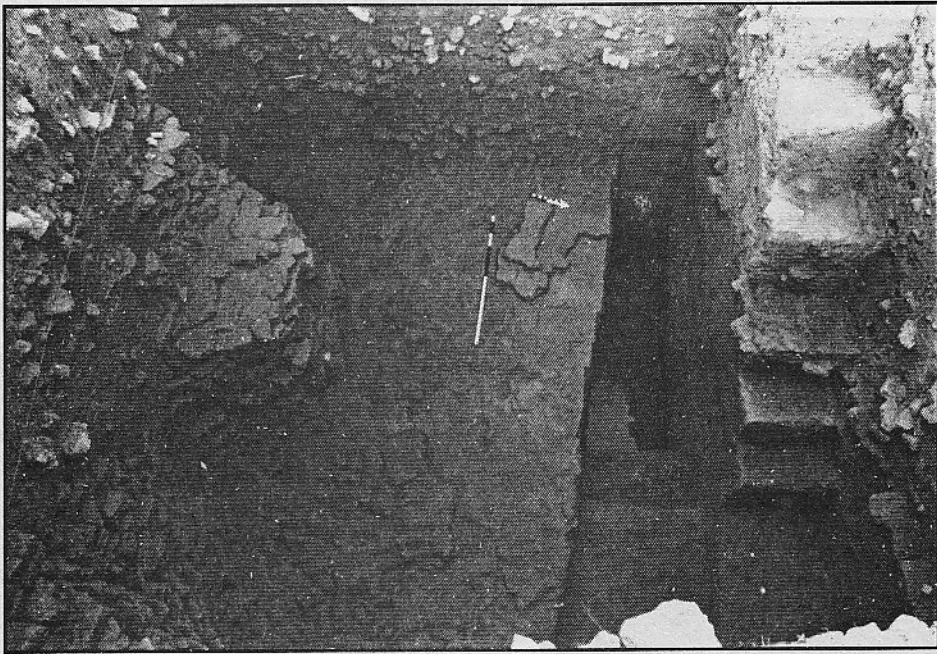


Plate 2



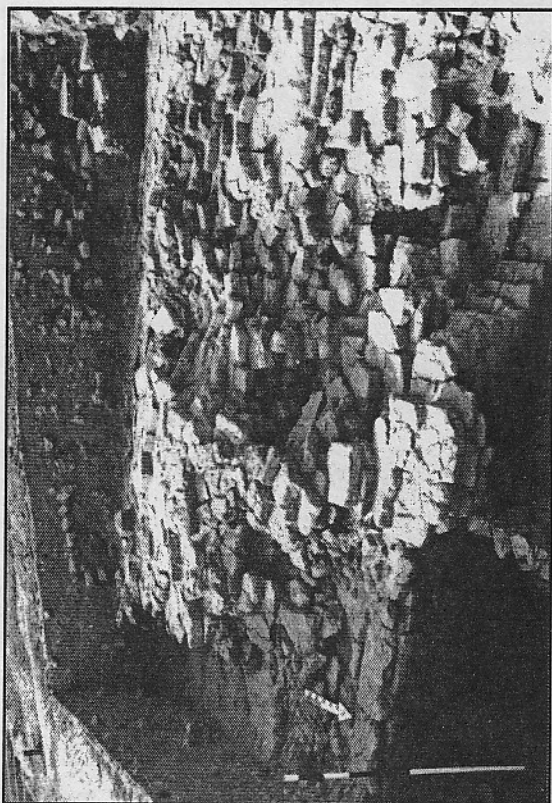
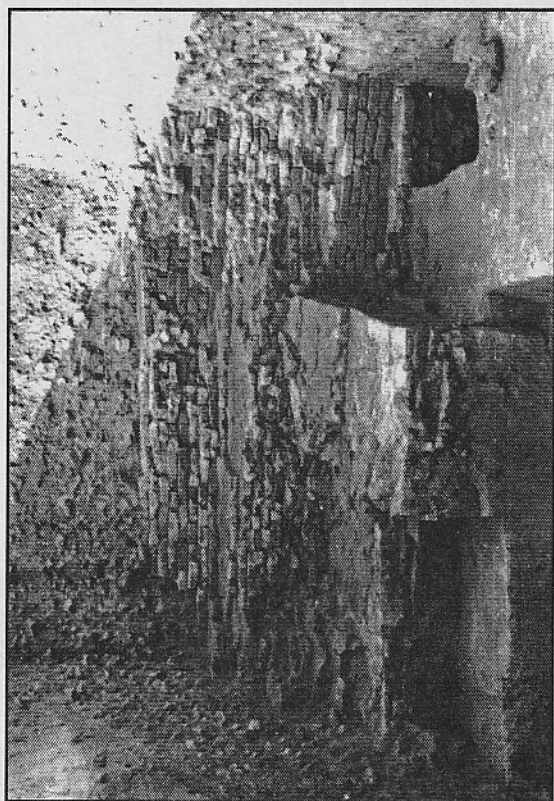
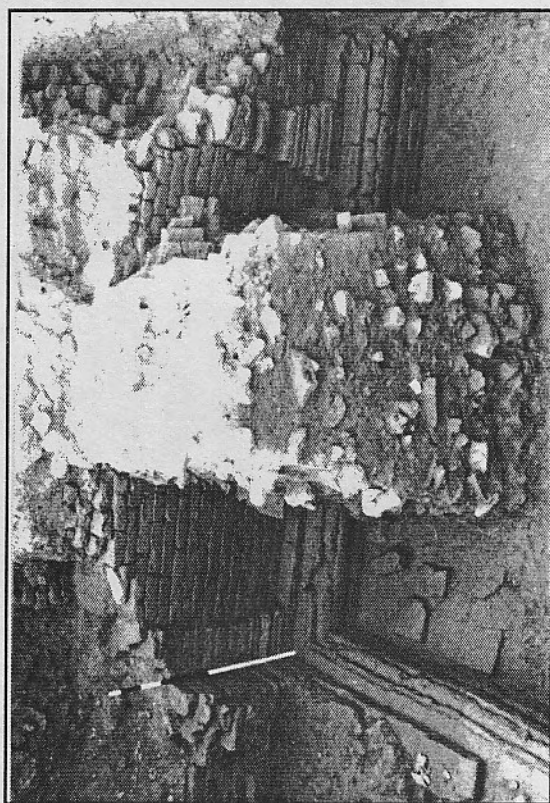


Plate 3





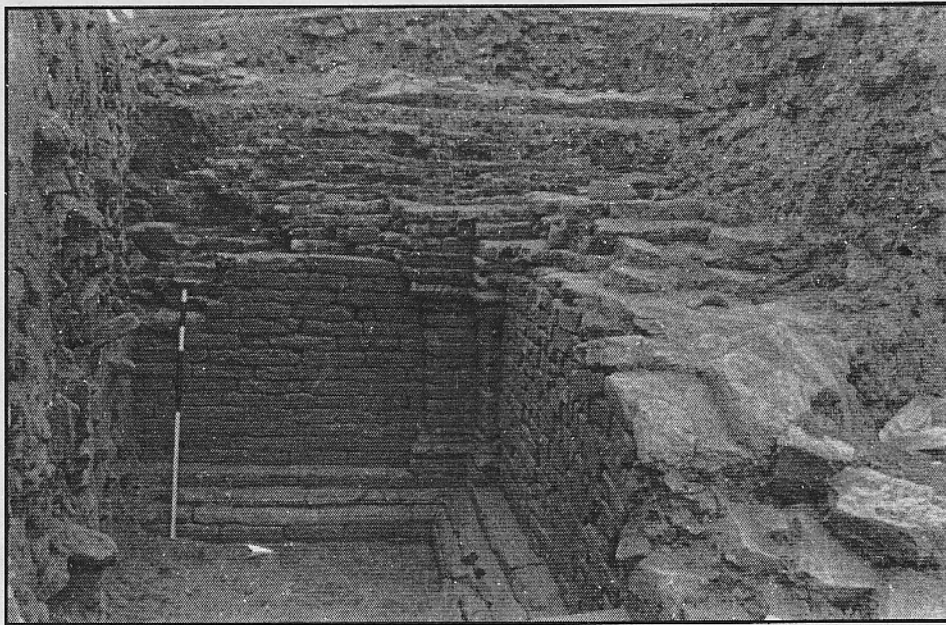
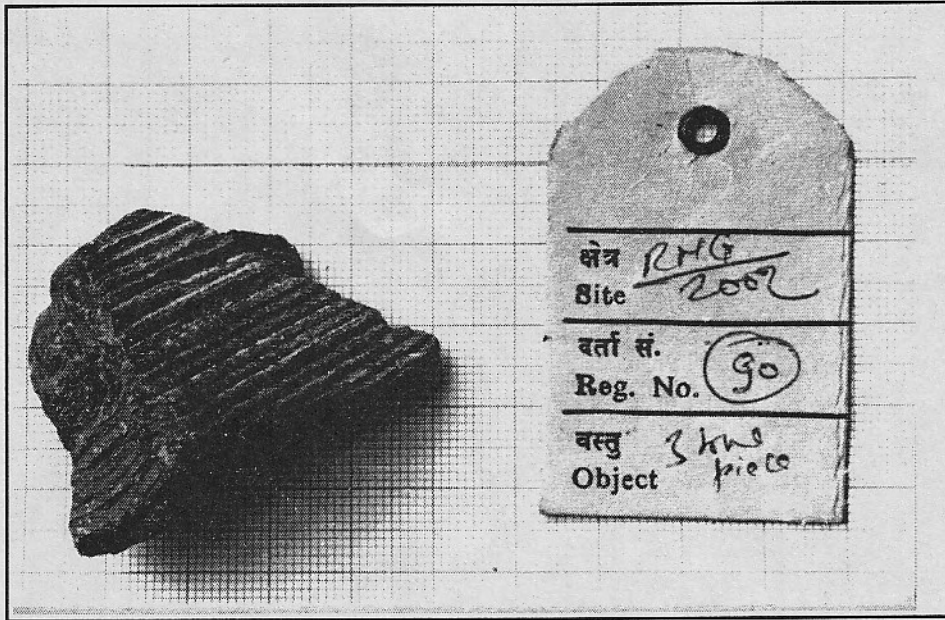


Plate 4

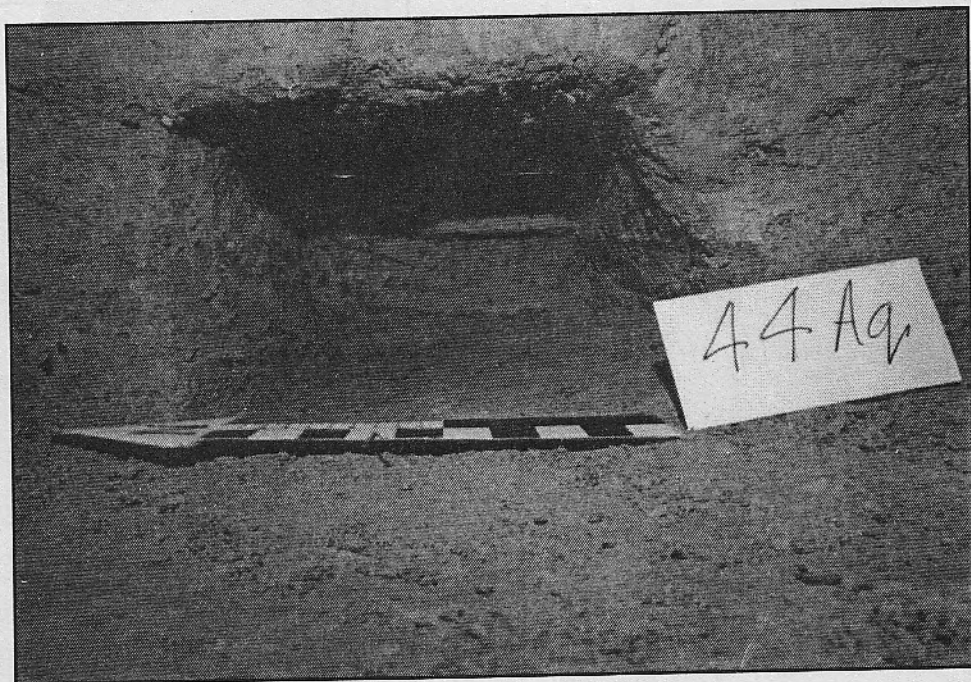


Plate 5



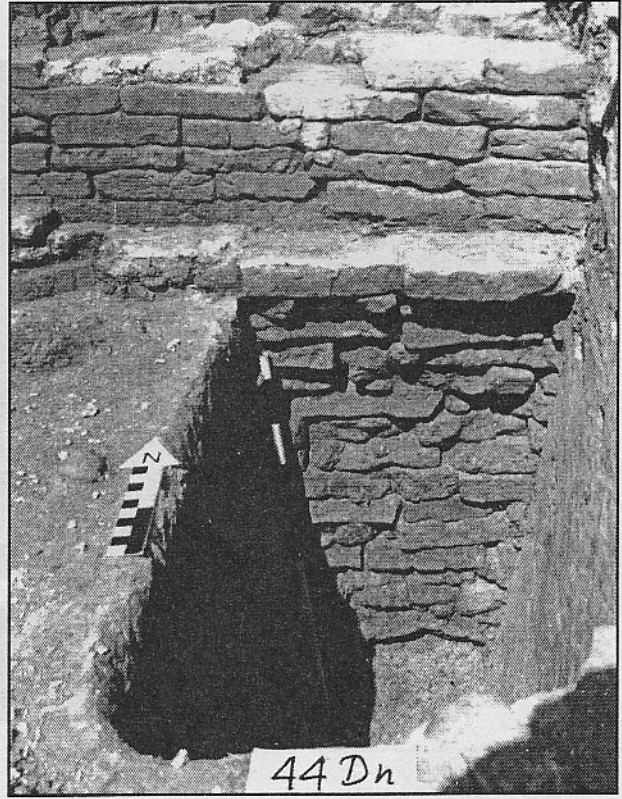
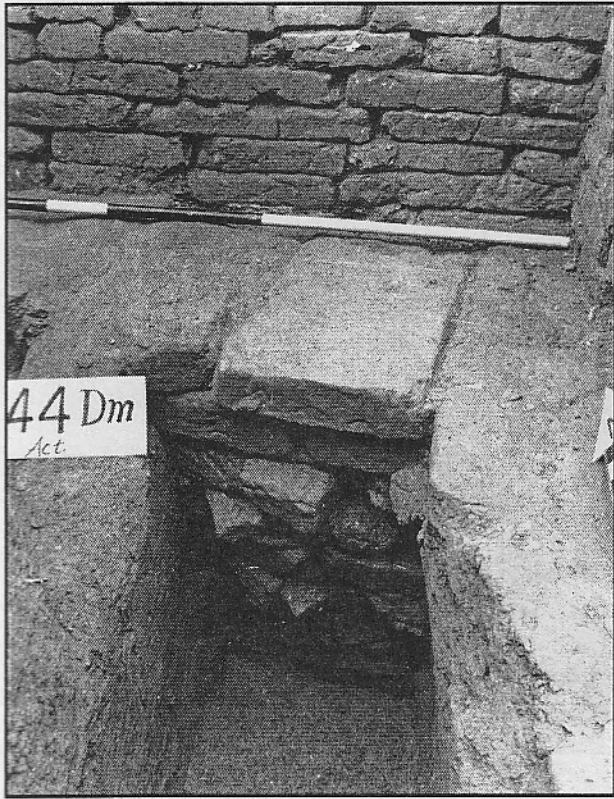
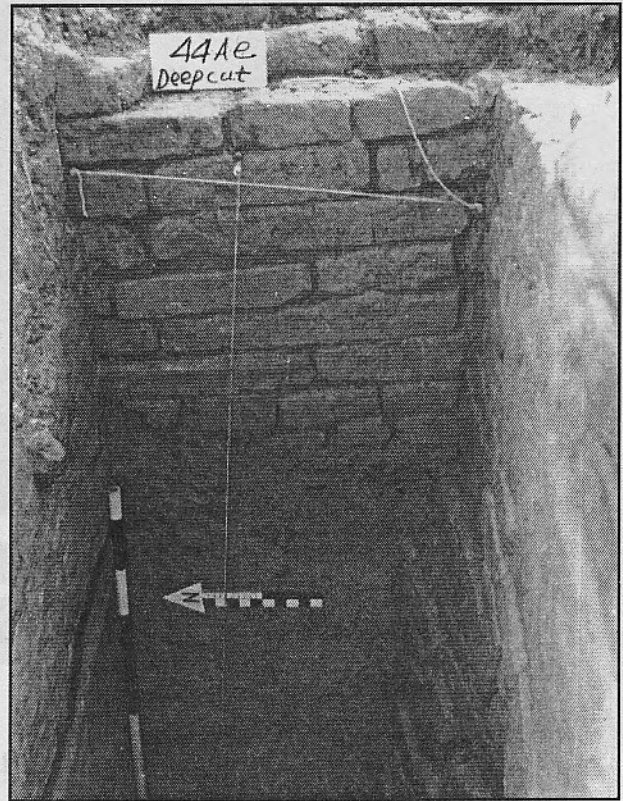


Plate 6





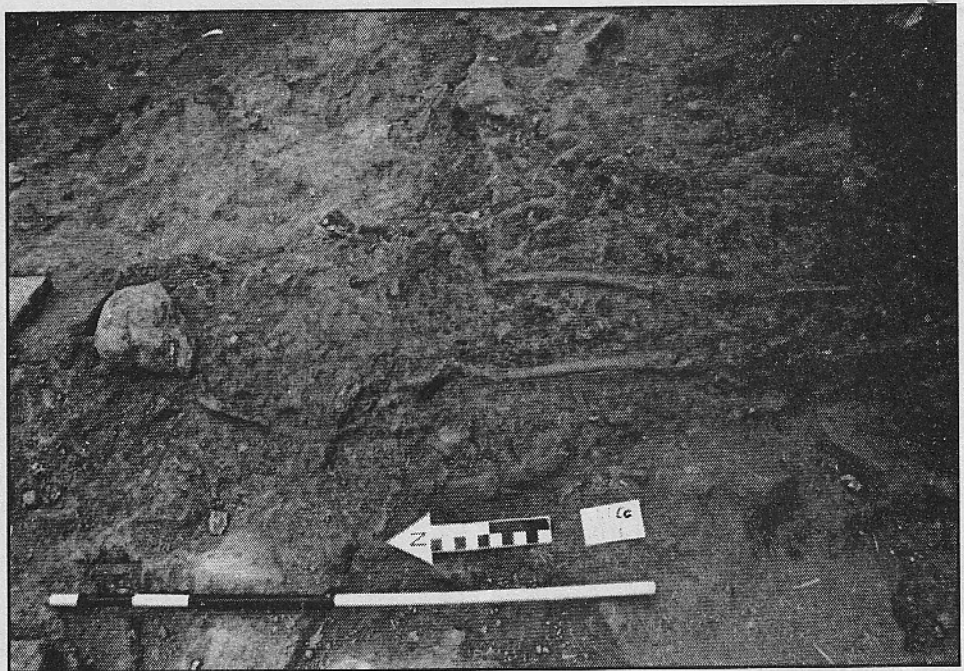


Plate 7



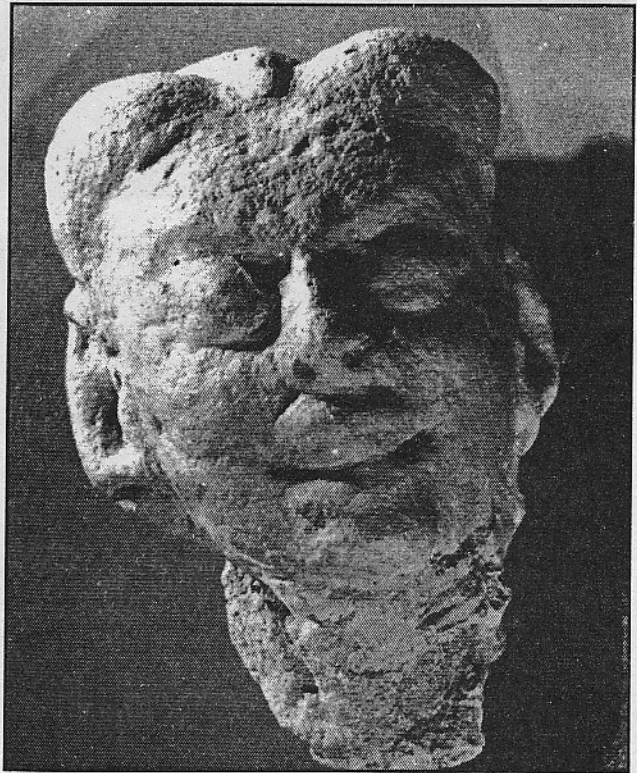
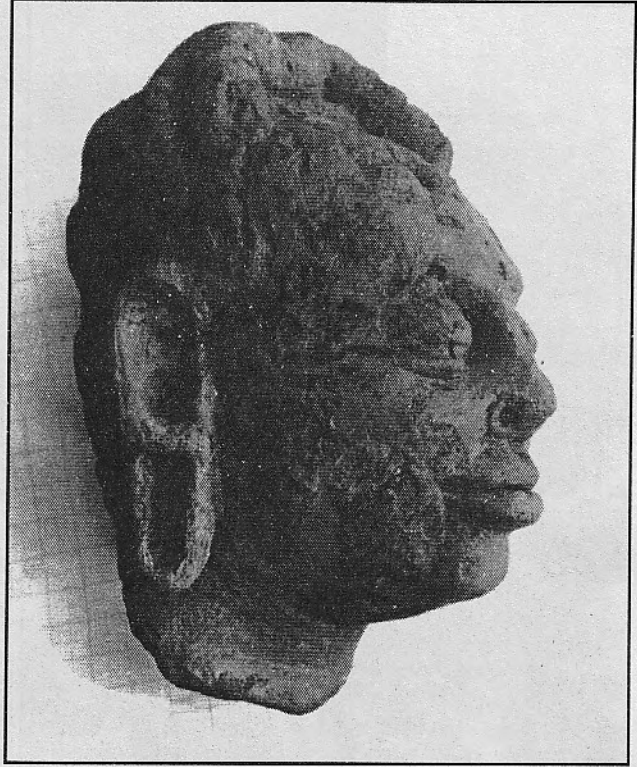


Plate 8

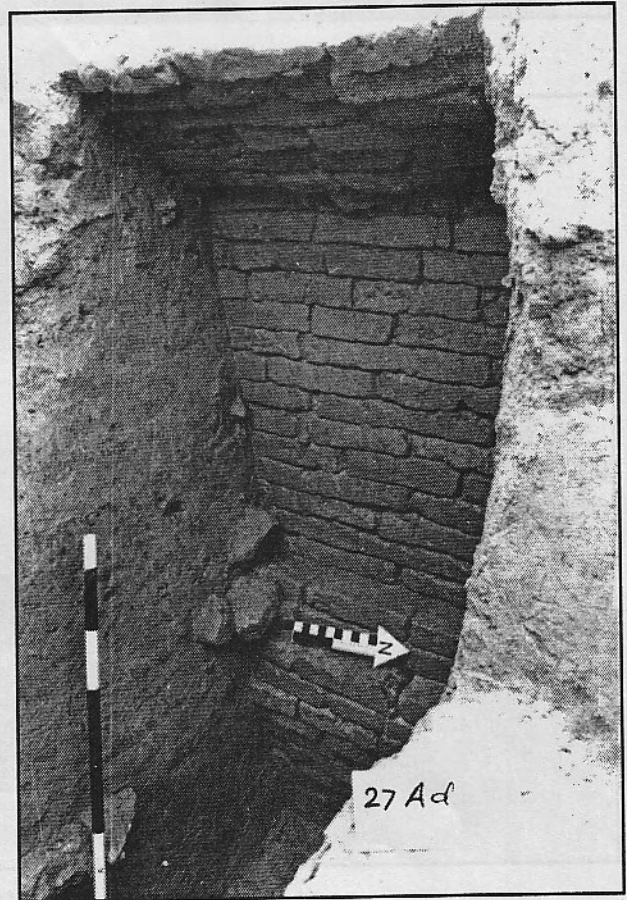
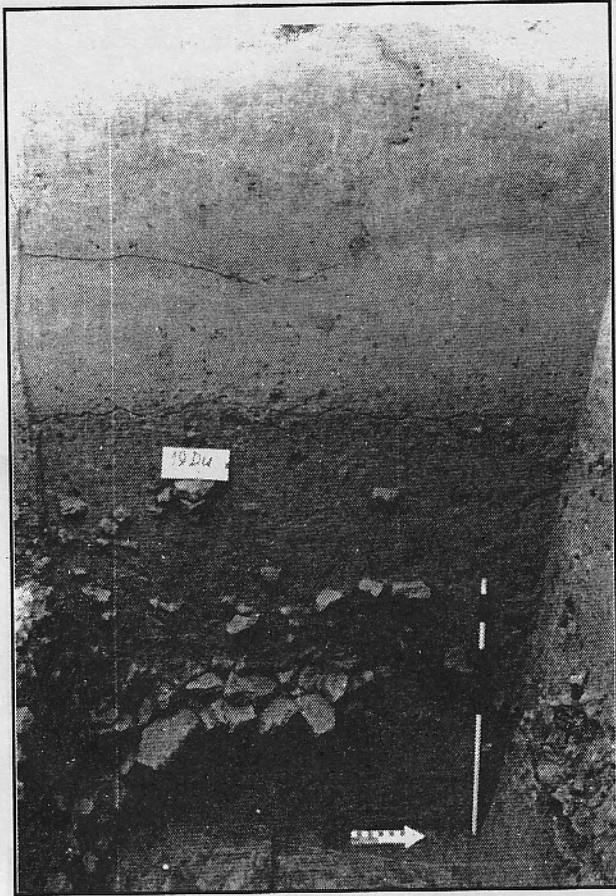


Plate 9



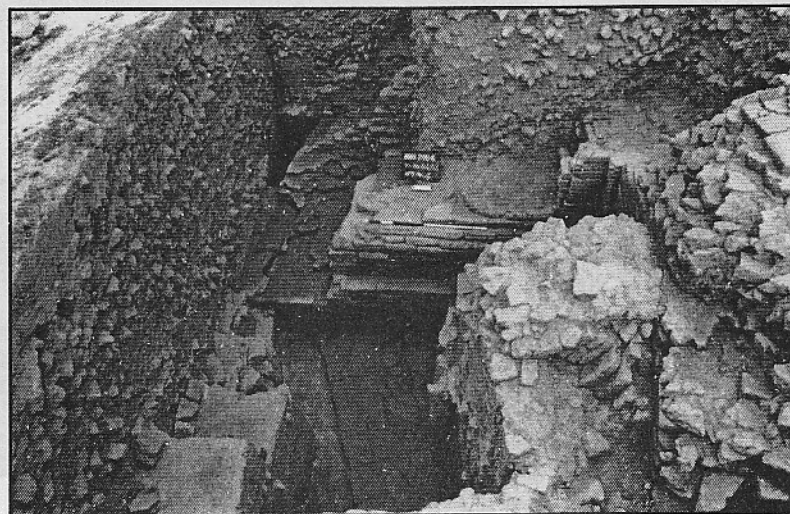
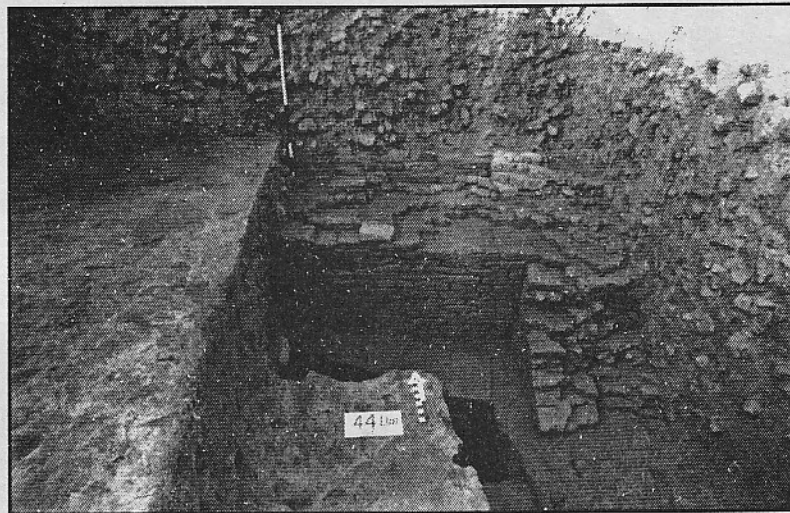


Plate 10

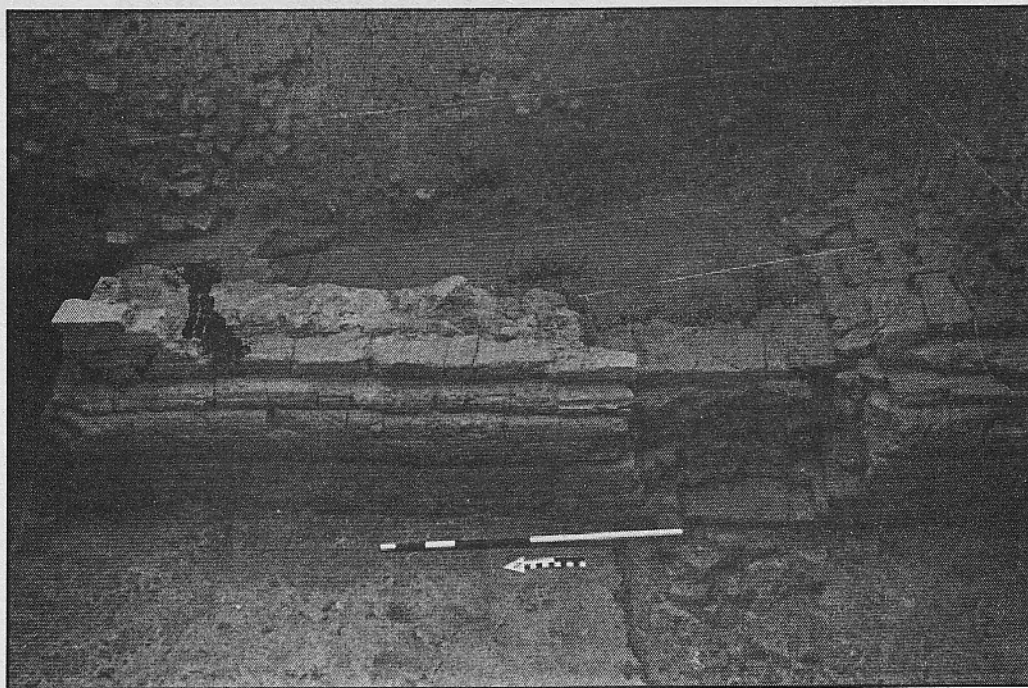
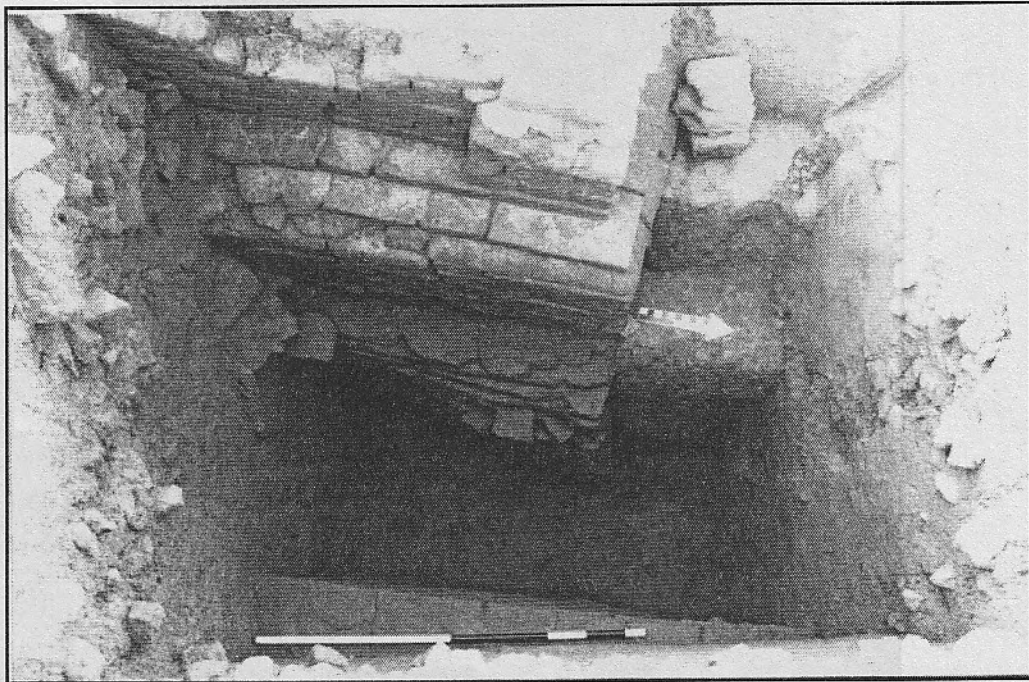


Plate 11



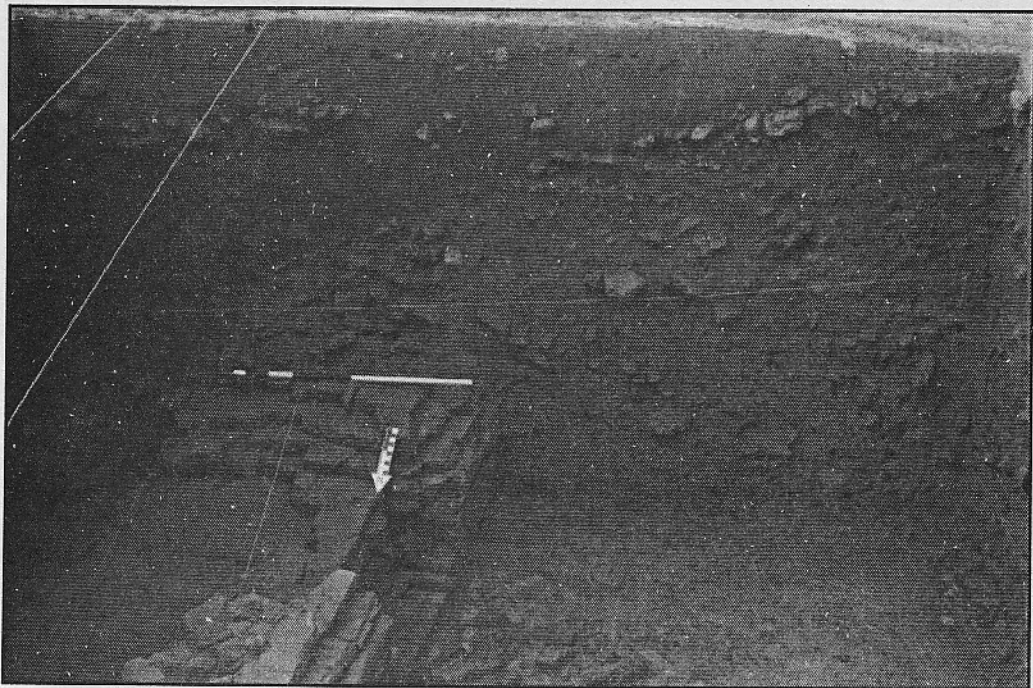
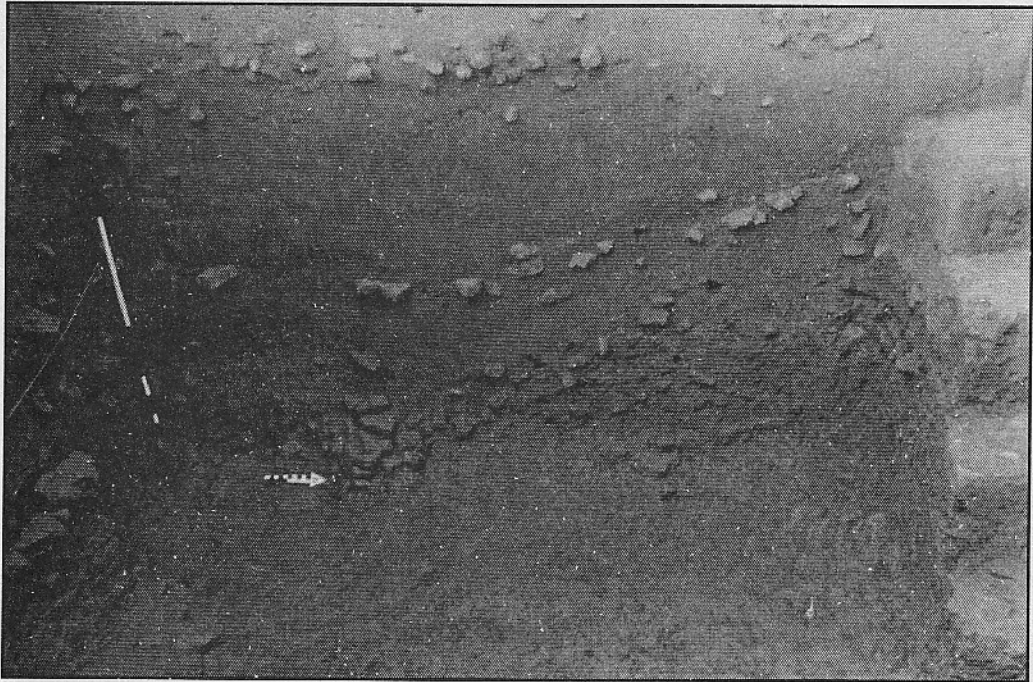


Plate 12

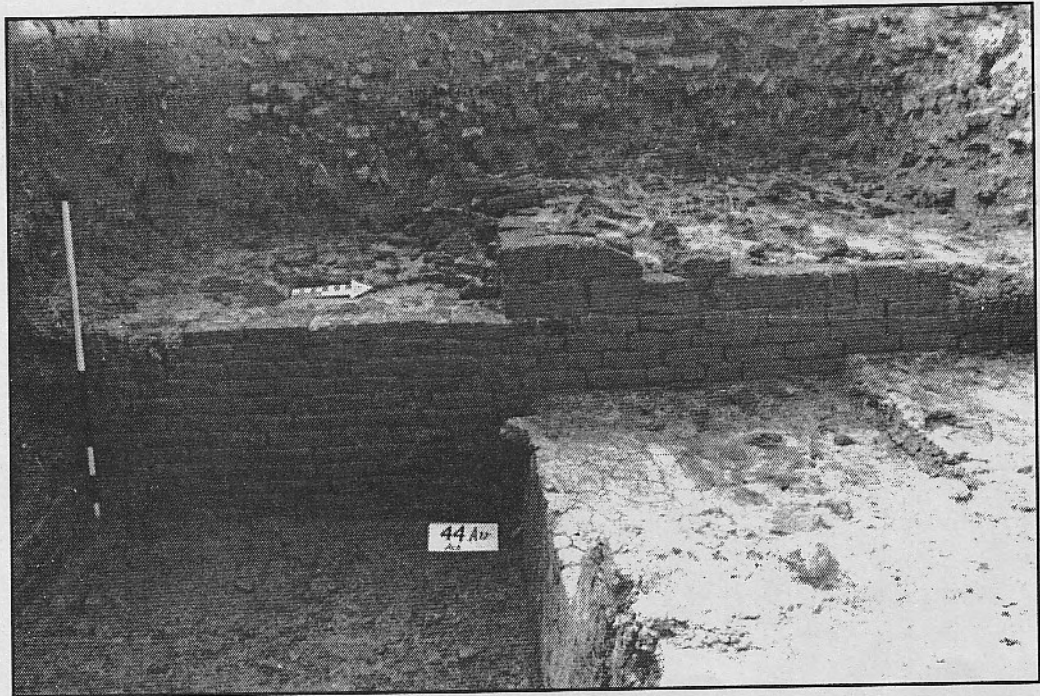
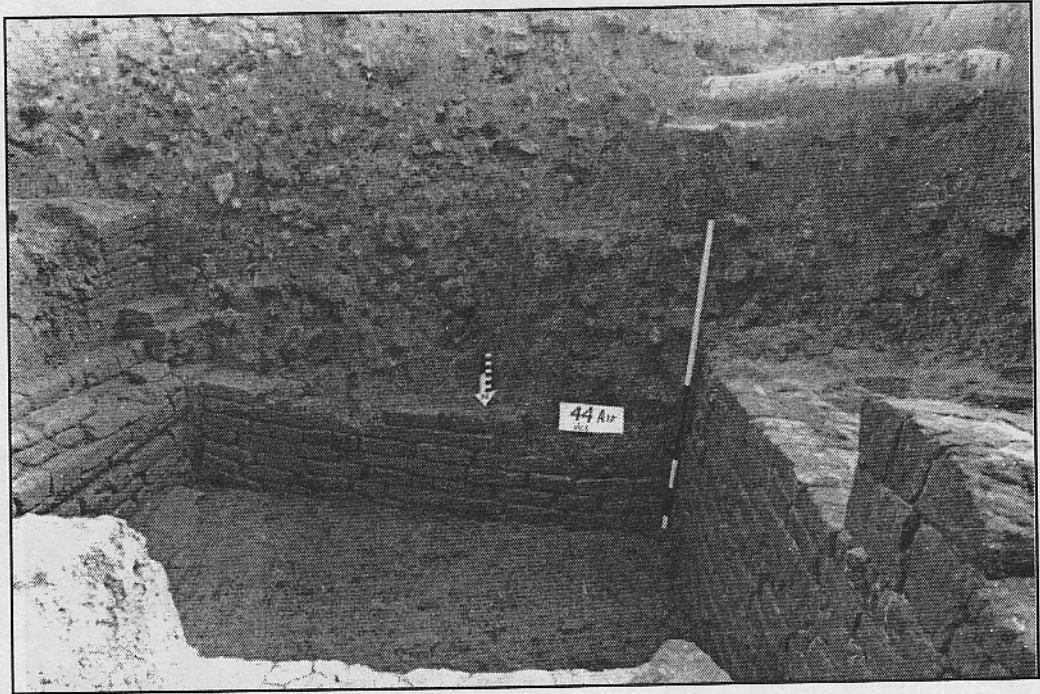


Plate 13



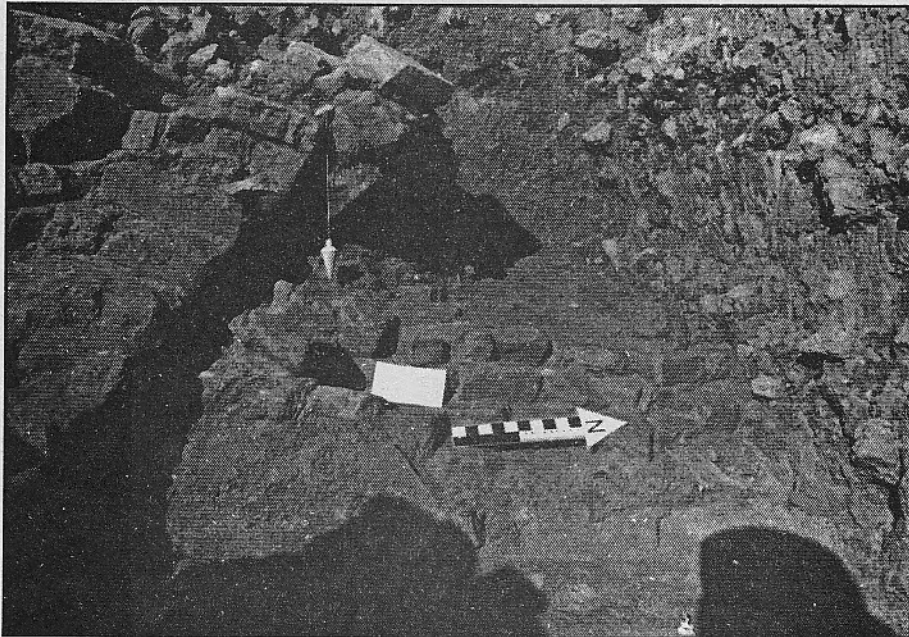
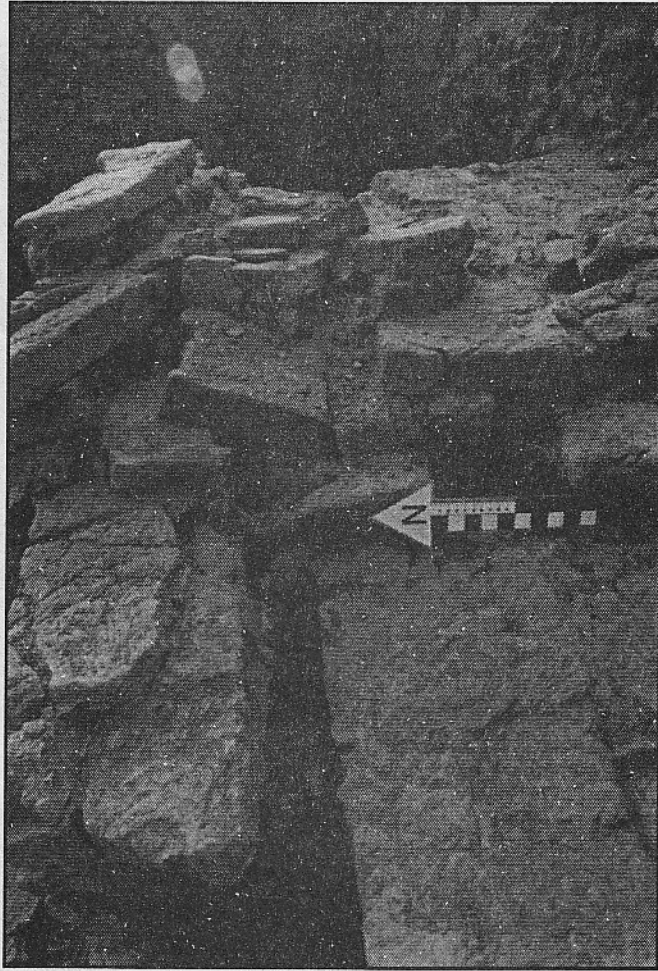


Plate 14

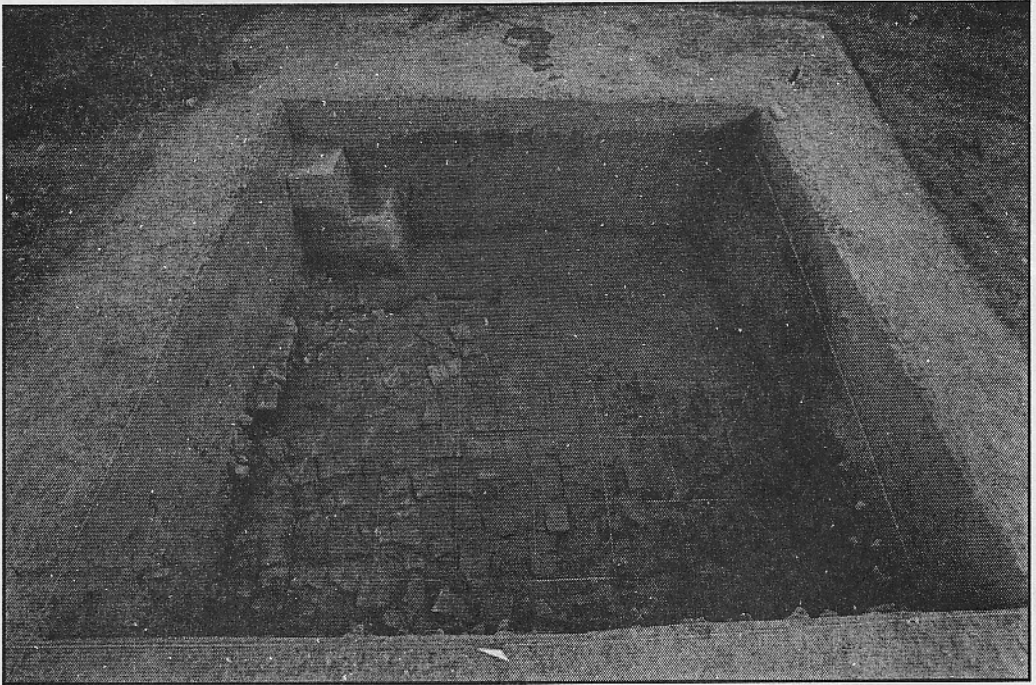
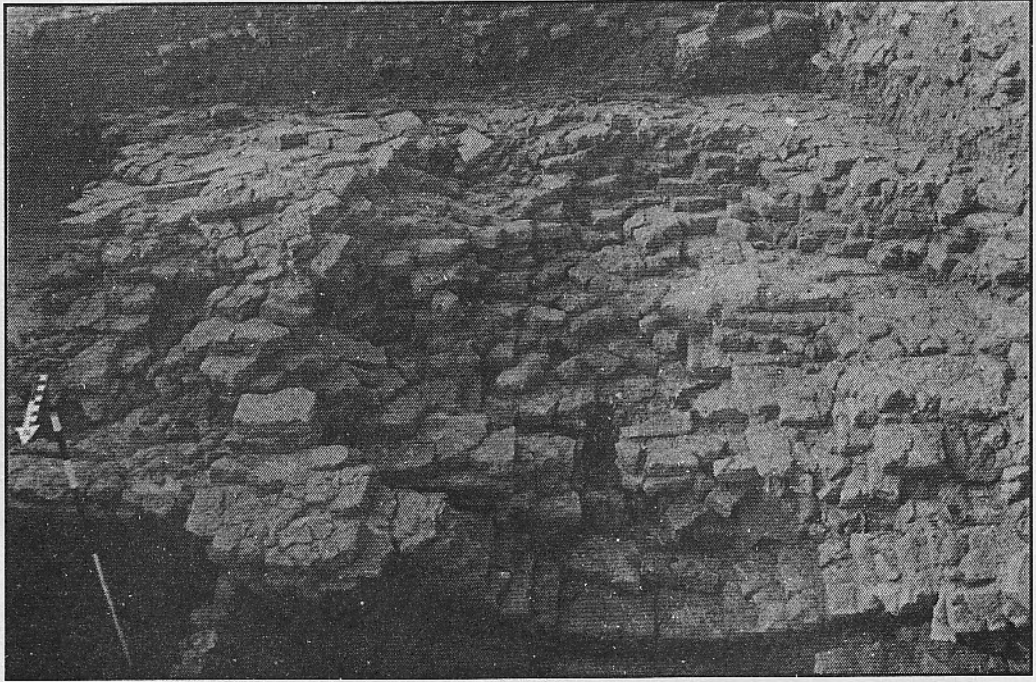


Plate 15