

Report on the Archaeological Excavation of the Spanish Period Colonial Ruins in Club Balai Isabel, Talisay, Batangas (28 February - 19 March 2011)

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the 20-day fieldwork (February 28 to March 19) in Club Balai Isabel resort in Talisay, Batangas wherein the team conducted an archaeological excavation of a Spanish colonial ruins within the property of the said resort. The site was first brought to the attention of the National Museum after Police Senior Inspector Manuel Maligaya, Chief of Police in Talisay, reported the accidental unearthing of human remains within the ruins while landscaping activities were being undertaken in the resort, which involved earthmoving operations. The report prompted the National Museum to send specialists from the Archaeology Division and the Cultural Properties Division to investigate the site (N. Cuevas and Vitales 2010). The initial inspection confirmed the presence of human remains, as well as 15th to 16th century blue-and-white porcelain ceramic fragments, which rendered the site significant enough for an archaeological investigation. In addition to that, the presence of Spanish ruins in the lakeshore Taal made the site interesting as well for a research in historical archaeology, considering the previous studies in Spanish colonial sites around the lakeshore (see Literature Review below).

Objectives

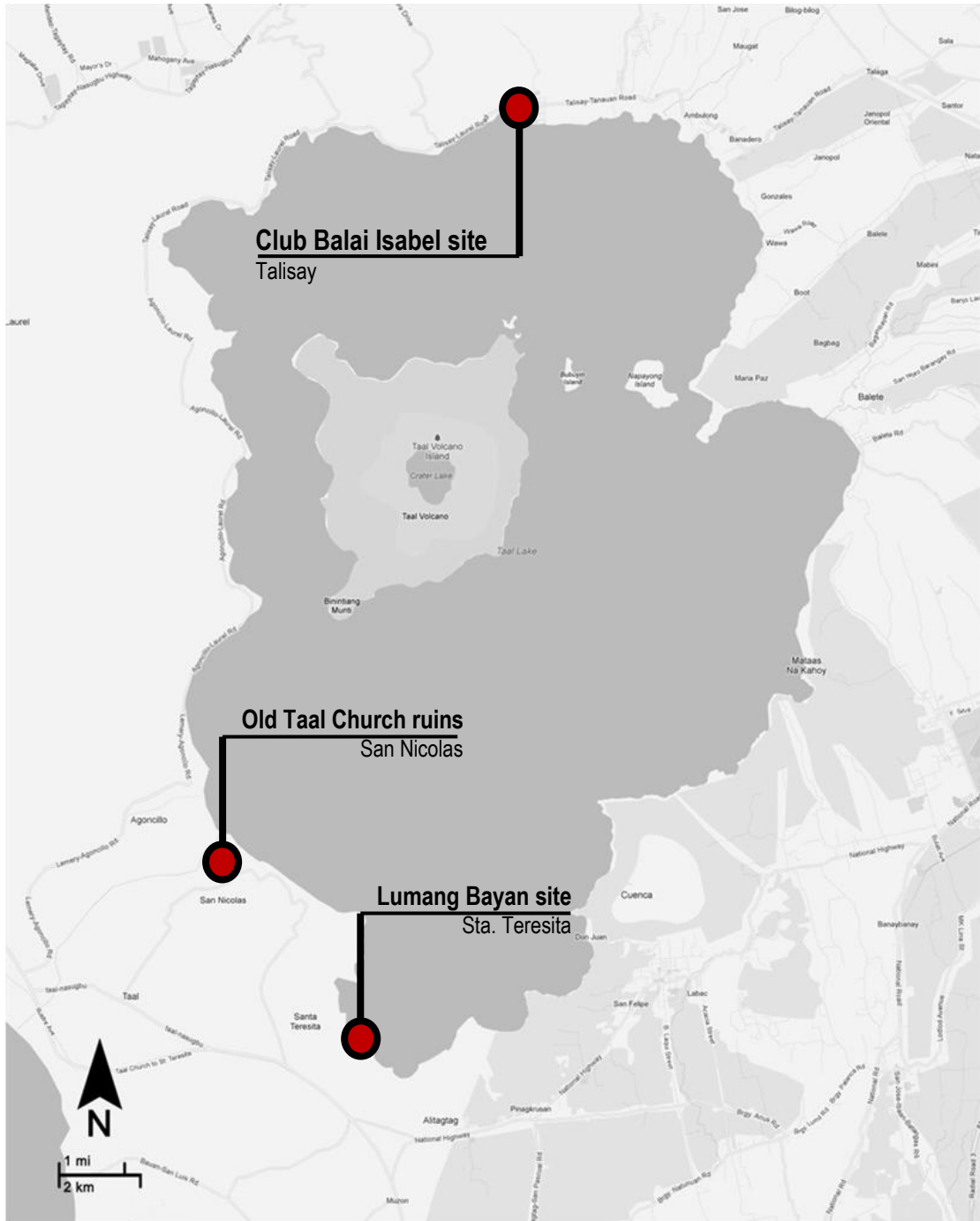
The initial archaeological research in the old stone ruins in Club Balai Isabel was guided by the following objectives:

- *Map the site ruins*
- *Understand the form and construction of the stone structure, as well as its destruction and abandonment*
- *Study the nature of the burials found inside the ruins*
- *Understand the chronology of the site*

Municipality of Talisay: A Brief Overview

Located at the north-central part of the province of Batangas, Talisay is among the northern lakeshore municipalities. It is bounded by Tagaytay city in the north, the municipality of Laurel in the west, Tanauan city in the east and the vast Taal lake in the south. Talisay is currently subdivided to twenty-one barangays, eight of which compose the town proper. A twenty-second barangay, however, was used to be located in the volcano island, called barangay Pulo; but because of the recent active volcanic activity on the island it was declared as a protected area or a “no man’s land”. The total population of the municipality as of 2007 is around 39,120 (Municipal Planning and Development Office 2010). The site investigated is located in Brgy. Banga, which is beside the town proper (see Map 1).

The location of Talisay below the Tagaytay ridge and near the lake with the majestic view of the Volcano island has been a very favorable spot for tourist destinations. It is for this reason that several tourist facilities have been established around Talisay that regularly attracts visitors. Trips to the volcano island has been done as well, although the recent volcanic activity temporarily prohibited any of these trips for safety purposes. A PHIVOLCS station was also established in Brgy. Baras to regularly monitor the volcanic and seismic activities of the island.



Map 1. Taal Lake showing the investigated site and other lakeshore colonial period sites mentioned in the report (modified from <http://maps.google.com.ph>)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before Talisay: The northern lakeshore according to historical records

Prior to its establishment as a municipality in 1869 (Galende 1996), the lakeshore town of Talisay was the original site of Tanauan at the advent of the Spanish colonization in the Philippine archipelago. Founded in 1584 (Galende 1996) Tanauan was established at the northern lakeshore near the foot of Tagaytay ridge; described by Fray Juan de Medina (1629-1630 in Blair and Robertson 1903) in his *Historia de los sucesos de la Orden de N. G. P. San Agustín de estas Islas Filipinas* as a 'truly frightful hill for more than one legua' as one descends from Manila (see also Hargrove 1991). It was among the earliest towns established by the Augustinians (together with Taal, Lipa, Bauan, and Sala) at the shore of Taal lake, which was formerly called Bonbon. Spanish maps up to mid-18th century attests to this lakeshore location of Tanauan (Map 2).

In *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas* by Gaspar de San Agustin O.S.A. (1975 in Galende 1996), Tanauan was known among the Tagalogs as *Songay* and was inhabited by natives who speak the language of *Comintan* (or *Kumintang*, the old name of the province of Batangas), which is *Comintano*. An interesting account, the name *Songay* or *Sungay* is still known among the locals as barangays in Tagaytay City (Sungay East and Sungay West), which was north of the main town of Talisay. In a Lake Taal map featured in Dean Worcester's (1912; see also Hargrove 1991) article in the *National Geographic Magazine*, he also labeled a 'Mt. Sungay' directly north of Talisay. It should be considered as well that Sungay is also known as a mountain range in one of the oral histories of Cabuyao in Laguna as formerly part of a larger town of Tabuko (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabuyao,_Laguna):

It can be said that the boundary of "Tabuko" reached the mountain range of **Sungay** at the west, Mt. Makiling at the south, the lake of Ba-i at the east and the large track of quicksand at Tunasan it the north. [emphasis mine]

Although the Spanish records recorded Songay/Sungay as the Tagalog name for Tanauan, its present location and the description from Cabuyao's oral history definitely points to the Tagaytay Ridge. Another important note to consider here is the naming of a bay at the northwest part of the lake as Tanauan Bay (or *Seno de Tanauan* according to 17th century Spanish maps (Hargrove 1991)), which was located in the Municipality of Laurel, Batangas. These place names tells us of a possible wider extent of Tanauan prior to the arrival of the Spanish, which reaches Tagaytay Ridge up north (as Sungay) and Laurel in the west (from the Tanauan Bay). However, this information should still require further historical and archaeological research, which will be of less priority in this report for the moment.



Map 2. The lake Taal in 1734 Murillo Velarde map of the Philippines. The old town of Tanauan as clearly shown here is located at the north of the lake where Talisay is presently located (from Hargrove 1991).

Together with the establishment of Tanauan in late 1500s was the building of its convent and church, which was primarily of wooden materials (Medina 1629-1630 in Blair and Robertson 1903; see also Galende 1996). In 1732 their wooden church was replaced by a much sturdier stone structure as implied in a Spanish historical document, stating that Tanauan was exempted from paying an annual contribution to the San Agustin monastery for it was being used for the construction of the church (Galende 1996). However, the stone church was short lived because 22 years later in 1754 the main crater of the volcano island erupted violently, which lasted for about six to seven months. It devastated the southern lakeshore including the old town of Taal (now San Nicolas) and blocking the mouth of the Pansipit river, which caused the water level of the lake to rise, submerging the old lakeshore towns of Tanauan and Sala in the northern shore and Lipa in the eastern shore (Anonymous 1755 in Hargrove 1991). Such devastation forced the inhabitants of Tanauan to abandon their lakeshore town on the same year and relocate to its present location. The continuous rising floodwaters were said to have reached the patio of Tanauan's stone church by 1755, although it eventually receded afterwards (Hargrove 1991).

Since the violent 1754 eruption nothing much was written on the abandoned lakeshore town of Tanauan. It was only nearly a hundred years later in 1851 when a new *barrio* was recorded to have been founded on the same location of the abandoned town. This new *barrio* of Talisay was established under the parish of the new Tanauan until it eventually separated in 1869 and became an independent parish and *municipio* (see Galende 1996). The first church of Talisay was built in 1873 out of light materials and eventually with masonry materials in 1892 (Galende 1996). However, the old stone church of Tanauan despite the span of more than three generations since its abandonment was still known by most people, particularly those outside Batangas. In an article published in a Spanish-language biweekly magazine in 1860 the abandoned church of Tanauan (and even its location) has been mentioned (H. 1860 in Hargrove 1991):

You can still find the walls of the old church of Tanauan close to the new town of Talisay;...

A quick review of these historical documents enable us to determine the existence of a stone church and also its location in the old town of Tanauan, which is within the present municipality of Talisay. Early Spanish maps show that the location of original Tanauan and its stone church indeed is in the northern lakeshore, contrary to the belief that it is located in Bañadero, Tanauan in the northeastern shore as claimed by the locals there, which is actually the original site of another old town called Sala (Hargrove 1991). The old stone church was also described to be close to the main town of Talisay, further confirming the identification of the stone ruins in Club Balai Isabel as the possible church ruins of old Tanauan.

Archaeology of Lakeshore Spanish Colonial Sites

As mentioned above, Tanauan was only one of the lakeshore towns in Taal or Bonbon that were founded by the Augustinians during their arrival in the Philippines and were destroyed and abandoned during violent volcanic eruptions. The tales of these old towns devastated by the eruptions, particularly in 1754, has sparked the interest of history enthusiasts such as Thomas Hargrove (1991) who even wrote a book, which includes his quest for these alleged sunken towns around the lake. The visible features of these abandoned towns such stone churches as mentioned in the historical documents were among the remains Hargrove was very interested in. His over-fascination with sunken-town stories led him to believe that the these old towns were still submerged underwater and that the stone formations known as *sapaw* among the Taal lake inhabitants were the architectural remnants of these sunken settlements. However, underwater archaeological investigation in one of the *sapaw* formations revealed the nature of these so-called human-made structures as mere geological formations and therefore dismissing Hargrove's interpretation (Faylona and Lacsina 2002).

Hargrove's reports and claims on the old lakeshore towns in Taal prompted the archaeological investigation of the area. In 2003 a collaborative effort of the Archaeology Division of the National Museum of the Philippines and the University of the Philippines - Archaeological Studies Program (UP-ASP) surveyed and excavated the stone ruins of Sta. Teresita in the southern lakeshore (Dizon *et al.* 2003; Paz 2003; see also UP-ASP 2006). Sta. Teresita was believed to be one of the earlier sites of Bauan, before transferring to its present location. The archaeological investigations in the site revealed a church complex, which includes the chapel and its passageways, the courtyard, the sacristy, and the waterways and cistern. Layers of volcanic debris and rubble were found on the interior and exterior of the church complex before hitting the original flooring, indicating episodes of destruction due to volcanic eruption and seismic activities. Volcanic deposits known as scoria identified with the 1754 volcanic event was among exposed in the site, although it was not the cause of the initial destruction and abandonment of the old church complex (Paz 2003). Burials dated to the 20th century were also uncovered, indicating the usage of the complex as a cemetery after the abandonment. The construction materials used for the church structure consist mainly of carved adobe (and coral) blocks and mortar with shells, tiles, and/or ceramics.

In 2004 another joint effort of the Archaeology Division of the National Museum and the UP-ASP conducted archaeological excavations on the stone church ruins of the

old town of Taal, which is located in the present municipality of San Nicolas (Dizon *et al.* 2004; UP-ASP 2006). The outer walls of the ruins were primarily made of hewn adobe and coral stones, with mortar fillings in-between made of soft coral stones, bricks, and ceramic sherds among others. The excavations revealed episodes of destruction (especially from the 1754 and the much recent 1911 eruptions) and possible reuse of the stone structure. Presence of roof beam endocasts indicate thatch roofing architecture. However, roof tiles were found on the lower levels of the excavation, suggesting that these bricks were used first for roofing before it was replaced by much lighter materials, which was probably after the 1754 eruption. Evidence of 20th century burials were also found, indicating that the site has been recently utilized as well as a burial ground, specially for infants and children. The lowest level of the excavation outside the walls revealed presence of a possible Metal period associated materials such as plain and decorated earthenware pottery fragments and shells.

Aside from San Nicolas, the joint team also explored the eastern lakeshore municipality of Balete where another ruins of an old church have been reported (UP-ASP 2006). This site is known to be one of the earlier locations of the town of Lipa (Hargrove 1991). Evidence of ruins made of cut stones and mortar covered with thick foliage confirmed the presence of a possible Spanish colonial structure that once stood. However, this site has not been investigated fully so far.

The archaeological investigation of the abandoned church ruins in Taal revealed the importance of archaeology in our further understanding of these Spanish colonial sites, which is not fully provided in the historical texts. Not only will it give us much detailed view of how these structures were built, used, destroyed, and deserted, it also gives us a peek of how they might have been reused post-abandonment (i.e. as a cemetery), indicating how communities living around the site perceive and value the place. Aside from the lakeshore sites, other Spanish colonial ruins have also been archaeologically investigated within the province of Batangas such as the ruins of a Spanish colonial period house (*bahay-na-bato*) in Brgy. Pinagbayanan, San Juan municipality (Barretto-Tesoro 2009).

Previous Archaeological Research in Talisay

Batangas province has been known archaeologically for its rich and significant archaeological sites and cultural materials ranging from the Palaeolithic (c. 500,000 to 150,000 years ago (see Beyer 1947)) to the much recent Protohistoric period (9th to mid-16th century AD) and the Spanish colonial period (1521-1898) (see Beyer 1947, 1948; Fox 1959; UP-ASP 2006; De la Torre 2008). Among the significant artefacts recovered from this region are the famous earthenware vessel with early Filipino script known as the Calatagan Pot and carved stone and coral effigies called *likha*. Both of these artifact types were declared as National Cultural Treasures (NCT) for their uniqueness. Archaeological exploration in Batangas was pioneered by H. Otley Beyer in the 1930s wherein he collected tremendous amounts of stone tools, tektites, nephrite artifacts, metal tools, and ceramics (earthenware and Asian tradeware) from systematic surveys (Beyer 1947, 1948). The profuse of archaeological materials recovered from these early surveys revealed the rich potential of the region for archaeological research. And such systematic research has been followed by archaeologists such as Janse (1941), Fox (1959), Dela Torre (see 2008), and Barretto-Tesoro (2007) among others.

The lakeshore municipality of Talisay has been initially explored and excavated archaeologically in 1984 by the National Museum after reports of human remains and associated earthenware and tradeware ceramics were uncovered in Brgy. Balas near the town proper (Cuevas 1984). A test pit was immediately opened in an undisturbed portion of the De Guia property, after the initial investigation confirmed the presence of archaeology in the area (surface finds were found in some disturbed areas brought about by pot hunting activities). The excavation has recovered two pieces of blue-and-white tradeware fragments on the upper levels and several pieces of earthenware pottery sherds with few metal slags and human bone fragments on the lower levels; totaling to 62 pieces collected. Although human remains were recovered in the test trench, no intact burials were found. A second systematic excavation on the site was followed a month later wherein two more excavation trenches were opened (Dela Ysla 1984). Like the first test trench, the upper level (surface to around 50 cms below) of the two excavation squares yielded fragments of porcelain ware ceramics as well as earthenware pottery sherds while the lower levels (around 50 to 130 cms below surface) yielded mainly earthenware pottery sherds, iron slags, human remains and also shell fragments. No intact burial features were found as well. Nevertheless, the presence of such artifacts indicate the usage of site as a possible burial ground during the Metal period (c. 200 BC to 1000 AD from the presence of iron slags and Metal period type earthenware ceramics in the lower levels of the excavation) and the Protohistoric period (c. 14th to 16th century AD from the blue-and-white ceramics on the upper levels). In 2003 another archaeological investigation was conducted in Talisay, but this time the exploration was done underwater. This was to confirm the alleged sunken human-made structures around Taal Lake that Thomas Hargrove (1991) was claiming in his book *The Mysteries of Taal*. These so-called 'structures' however were known by local inhabitants as *sapaw*. An underwater archaeology team from the National Museum of the Philippines and University of the Philippines-Archaeological Studies Program went in the lakeshore of Brgy. Caloocan to map and explore the alleged sites known as 'the fort' and 'the rock' (Faylona and Lacsina 2003). The underwater archaeological investigation revealed that the walls of 'the fort' seemed like it was mostly made of naturally piled rounded rocks. No cementing materials were found between these rocks. The contour of the wall was not uniformly leveled as well. 'The rock' on the other hand where supposedly postholes were found seems to be natural erosional features.

THE EXCAVATION PROPER

Clearing of the Site

The most conspicuous change in the site as of the last visit of the National Museum in 2009 is the growth of vegetation inside the structure. Removing the thick growth has been among the first activity done by the team to clear out the area. Large bolo and harvesting knives (*halabas*) were used to cut off tall grass and shrubs. Garden gloves were also used as protection from thorny weeds and grass during the clearing.

Mapping

The site is mapped using the basic alidade, plane table, 50-meter measuring tape, and a stadia rod. After the establishment of the primary reference point or the Datum Point (DP) in a *santol* tree (*Sandoricum koetjape*) near the large pool, the team set up the next reference station around 26 meters and 57.6° NE from the DP to cover most of the adjacent structures, including the old ruins. The north-south datum line was established 14 meters east of the DP and was marked every two meters.

Excavation

The excavation was initially done in 20-centimeter spits, although 30- to 40-centimeter spits were also implemented in some levels of the trenches. The exposed layers in the open pit has actually helped the team somehow in understanding the general stratigraphy of the site, which was used in determining the depth of the arbitrary layers that will be excavated. Shovels, mason trowels, brushes of various sizes, dust pans, and construction buckets were used in the removal of sediments. Exposure of burials and other features with human remains on the other hand used finer brushes and sharpened bamboo sticks.

The sediments excavated were sieved in a 6-millimeter mesh and the archaeological materials that were collected from it were placed in their corresponding net bags with proper labels. The burials were collected starting with the hands and feet bones all the way up to the appendages and ribs and then to the axial skeleton (vertebra and skull). The appendicular skeleton were properly labeled according to its location (right or left) and were wrapped separately with aluminum foil.

All of the archaeological materials except for the human remains were washed with clean water and air dried. The human remains on the other hand were not washed but cleaned only by brushing and removing the adhering sediments and then air dried.

Inventory and Accession

After drying the archaeological materials were sorted by type (ceramics, metal, mortar, zooarchaeological) and then counted. Each material were given accession numbers according to the assigned accession code (IV-2011-P) and were written on the artifacts and other archaeological materials. Each of the sorted and accessioned materials were then placed on separate plastic bags complete with labeled bagging slips. The inventory of the excavated artifacts were encoded on a electronic database designed through Microsoft Access 2007. The database has also automatically

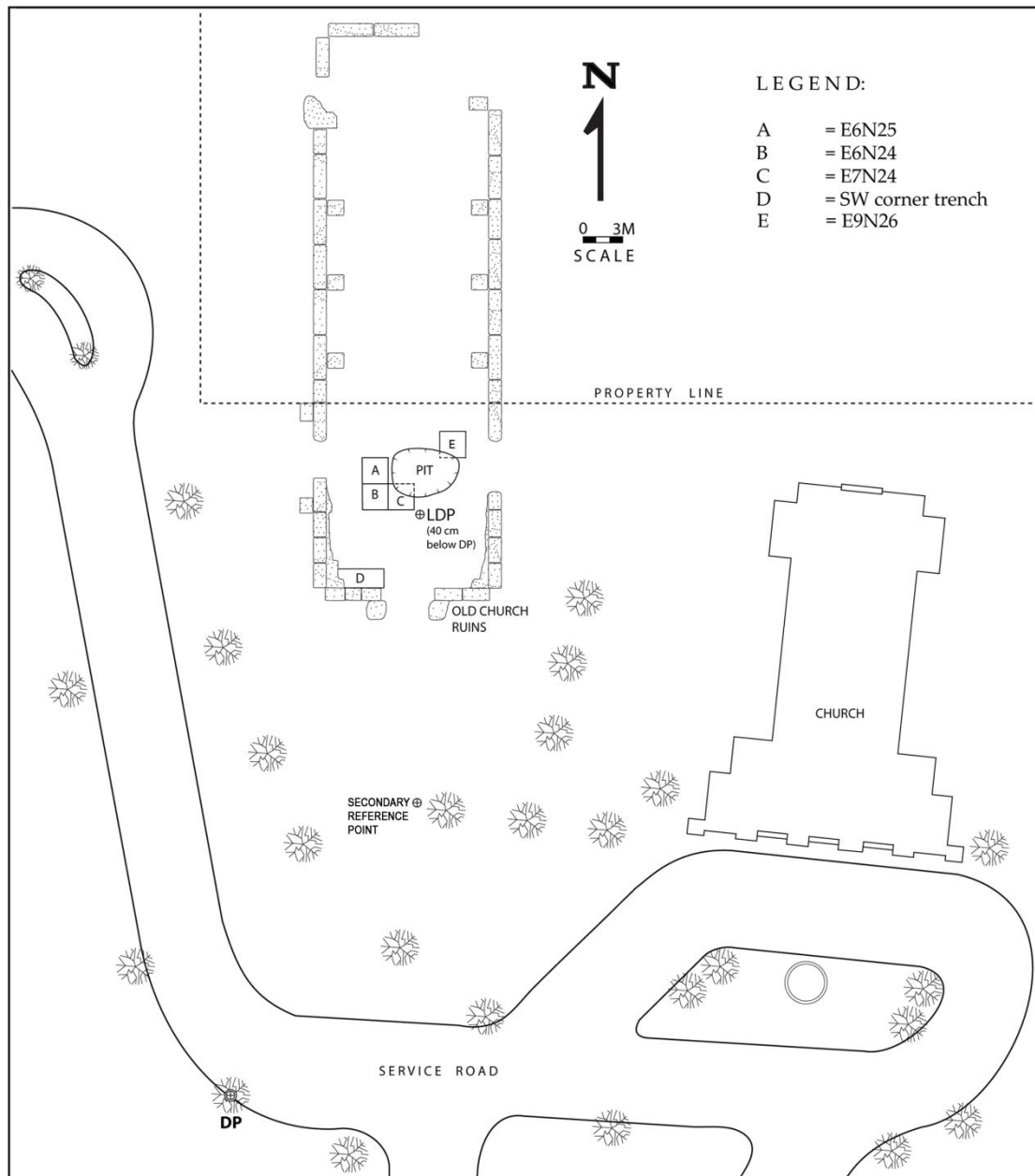
produced an inventory form and a bagging slip complete with the details and information of the accessioned materials.

Local Correspondence

It has been considered as well during the fieldwork to interview several locals in the area regarding the site. Questions regarding the history of the site were being asked to gain an historical background of the area and how people have known and value the area. It should be important as well to consider the local attitudes to historical sites such as these especially when we deal with heritage awareness and conservation of the area. Local knowledge can also be crucial in our understanding of the archaeology of area as it will give us additional information and insights of the site that may not be provided during the excavation and the material analyses.

RESULTS

Four 2x2 meter excavation squares and one 1.5x3 meter excavation trench were opened within the ruins. The four excavation squares were located beside the open pit for the purpose of finding and exposing articulated burials. These squares were all oriented to the north. The 1.5x3 meter excavation trench on the other hand was located at the southwest corner of the ruins for the purpose of finding the flooring of the structure, as well as its foundation. The trench was oriented to the walls of the ruins.



Map 3. The site map showing the whole structure and the excavated square trenches.

The Main Trench by the Pit: E₆N₂₅- E₆N₂₄-E₇N₂₄

The present surface inside the ruins is around 110 to 120 centimeters below the original surface (found outside the ruins) and around 55 to 60 centimeters below DP. The layer above the present surface inside the ruins were mostly sedimentary (mid to very coarse sand and pebbles), brought by water action. According to the locals this sedimentary layers were brought by the typhoon Rosing in 1995, which they believed further buried the ruins.

The first 20-centimeter excavation spit revealed a light olive brown (5/4 in 2.5Y from Munsell color chart), ashy layer of around 10 centimeters thick (see Appendix B Figures 3 and 4). Underneath it is a thick rubbly layer composed mainly of huge chunks of adobe blocks and other construction materials such as mortar fragments within a olive brown (4/3 in 2.5Y), fine to medium sandy matrix. The layer is around 30 to 35 centimeters thick. Contemporary materials from the recent to probably around early 20th century were found in the first layer and the upper levels of the second layer such as plastic materials and glass bottle fragments. At around 50 centimeters from the surface (100 to 105 centimeters below DP) is the second rubbly layer, about 20 centimeters thick. Construction materials such as shells, mortar fragments, tile fragments and ceramic sherds were found within its slightly darker olive brown (4/4 in 2.5Y) silty to fine sandy matrix. At around 70 to 80 centimeters (120 to 130 centimeters below DP) the sediments changed again to a lighter olive brown color (5/4 in 2.5Y) with silt to fine sandy grain-size. Human remains started to appear in scattered fragments, mostly represented by teeth and phalanges. As the excavation went deeper more scattered human remains were being recovered but with larger fragments such as long bones, ribs, and skull fragments. At 95 to 100 centimeters clusters of much complete but disarticulated human remains were uncovered first at the southern portion of E₆N₂₅. As the trench was extended to the south (by opening E₆N₂₄), more of these clusters were unearthed which are composed mainly of much recognizable complete parts such as crania, mandibles, long bones (humerus, ulna and radius for the arms; femur, tibia and fibula for the legs), and most of the ribs, piled in several places in the trench. Beneath these clusters (115 to 120 centimeters from the present surface or 165 to 170 centimeters below DP) were the articulated burials. Below is the list of the burials found in this trench.

<i>Burial no.</i>	<i>Depth (below DP)</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age cluster</i>
1	177 cm	female	adult
2	170 cm	male	adult
3	190 cm	male	adult
4	178 cm	male	adult (senile)
5	179 cm	female	adult

Five adult burials were exposed and recovered in the site; all in supine position and were oriented south-north (feet are pointing to the north). Burials 2 and 5, however, were only exposed and recovered from the pelvis down. The upper half of the skeletal remains are within the west wall of the trench, which cannot be further extended due to very limited time. Burial 1 on the other hand was found on top of Burial 3. At the recovery of Burial 1 it was found out that Burial 3 below it had a missing skull. It seems that the skull was accidentally removed while digging a pit

for the Burial 1. Several crania were found clustered with other skeletal parts on the foot area of Burial 1, and one of those might belong to the Burial 3. The arms of these both burials were flexed with the hands placed under the chin. Burial 4 on the other hand had his arms folded across the lower thoracic area. Few materials were recovered with the burials, among these were a thin copper wire rolled into a ring found in the pelvis of Burial 1, a fragment of an iron material found in Burial 4 and few tradeware ceramic sherds scattered in some of the burials. The associations of some materials recovered with the burials however are unclear.

Aside from the large amount of human remains in the trench, masonry structures were also found. Adobe blocks were found in all three squares but in varying depths. The largest structure found in this trench is between E₆N₂₄ and E₇N₂₄, which consists of adobe blocks, volcanic rocks and an outer layer of stucco locally known as *paletada*. The block structure roughly measured around 150 centimeters long, 145 centimeters wide, and 45 to 50 cm high (from the base, which was reached during the excavation). The orientation of the block, however, is not quite aligned with the walls of the ruins. The other adobe block structures that appear to be *in situ* are arranged in linear fashion. Thin stucco layers were also observed beside the huge block structure (in E₇N₂₄) at a lower level and at E₆N₂₅ on top of the adobe blocks, spread almost flat like some sort of 'flooring'. Beneath these *paletada* layers were the yellowish ashy matrix.

Southwest Corner Trench: E₆N₂₁-E₅N₂₁-E₄N₂₁

This 1.5x3 meter trench in the corner was excavated to reach the flooring of the structure, as well as its foundation, to understand the construction. The surface of this trench is sloping from the western wall towards the east due the major excavation in the interior of the ruins prior to this present archaeological undertaking. The sloped surface of the trench is mostly composed of loose volcanic rocks, which are most likely part of the walls that have crumbled through time, and coarse sand. This rocky layer reaches approximately 60 centimeters below DP, which is around 25 centimeters from the flat present surface. Due to the presence of loose rocks the removal of the rocky layer in the trench was extended 50 centimeters to the east to prevent these rocks from falling down the trench as it gets deeper. Shells (marine and land snail), ceramic sherds, mortar fragments, and a glass fragment were recovered from this dark olive brown (3/3 in 2.5Y) fine to medium sandy layer. The next layer is about 20 centimeters thick consisting of olive brown (4/3 in 2.5Y) silty to fine sand matrix. Remains of a ridged hanging ledge made of carved adobe blocks was exposed from this level. At around 45 centimeters below DP (c. 80 centimeters below DP) is the slightly lighter olive brown (4/4 in 2.5Y) layer of silty-to fine sandy-grained ashy sediments, which is somewhat similar to the fourth layer in the Main Trench. Except for the glass fragment, artifacts recovered here are also similar to the upper layers which are composed of ceramics sherds and materials used in construction such as shells, and other mortar fragments. Another ridged adobe ledge by the west wall was exposed on a lower level around 70 to 75 centimeters from the flat surface (c. 110 to 115 centimeters below DP). At the lowest level of this layer mortar structures were found, which are made up mostly of rocks of various sizes. It was first thought to be parts of the wall that collapsed. The base of the southern wall has also been reached in the excavation, revealing the huge round boulders beneath it, which are almost the same level as the mortar structures. Further exposure of these features and the rest of the trench revealed that these 'walls' and perhaps the large boulders might be in fact the foundation of the structure. However,

the mortar structures unearthed in this trench were already loose, crumbling and detached from the walls; their flat surfaces were also tilting in different directions and were not parallel with the plane orientation of the whole structure.

E₉N₂₆

Another 2x2 meter square trench was opened near the pit opposite the Main Trench. The objective for this trench is to find burials to study, in case the Main Trench does not reveal any of these human remains. However, the excavation of this trench was halted only up to 40 centimeters of depth from the surface due to very limited time (and also because of many human remains in the Main Trench have already been appearing). Only few shells of bivalves and landsnails, earthenware sherds, blue-and-white porcelain sherds, and tile fragments were recovered at this level. The layer from the surface is light olive brown ashy sediment, and surprisingly there are very few mortar fragments found in this square trench, compare to other trenches.

DISCUSSIONS

On the Construction of the Structure (with the visit to the rest of the ruins)

Identification of the structure as the church of Old Tanauan has not been definitely concluded due to lack of sufficient characteristics recognized in the excavation that would define a church structure (e.g. altar, chapel room side entrances, bell tower). Historical records and interviews with the locals around the area were the only basis we could infer for its identification as the stone church. Aside from the one mentioned in a Spanish-language biweekly magazine in 1860 (location of the Old Tanauan church), locals living around the site would know these ruins as 'Pinagsimbahanan' or 'where the church once stood'. How the locals remembered the site can be strong basis for its recognition as a church structure.

The preliminary investigation of the ruins on Club Balai Isabel site revealed a rather distinctive kind of construction of a Spanish colonial period stone structure. The most conspicuous here were the outer walls of the structure, which seemed to be constructed by surprisingly large mortar blocks; measuring 180 to 185 centimeters long, 80 to 90 centimeters wide, and 80 to 90 centimeters thick (Cuevas and Vitales 2010). The general form of the structure is also much simpler (rectangular shaped) compared to Sta. Teresita and San Nicolas church ruins, which is a basilica form (consists of a semicircular wall in the altar area). Such form is typical in the Spanish Colonial period, especially of the Augustinian churches. The possible main entrance is identified at the southern part facing the lake, which therefore would place the altar at the opposite side, which is in the north. Unfortunately the team cannot conduct an excavation on the other end because it belongs to another property. No other similar ruins were found adjacent to the structure such as a possible convent, which is usually attached to the church. So far, despite its simplistic forms the rectangular shape of the structure longitudinally arranged with the possible main entrance in one end can be comparable to a church structure. A square slot was found in the upper portion of one of the mortar blocks in the southwest corner of the walls, which could be for wooden beams.

The construction materials based on the observations on the remaining structure and archaeological excavation were composed of mortar mixture (lime, sand, and a binding agent), molluscan shells from marine and estuarine environments, various volcanic rocks, carved volcanic tuff or adobe, local earthenware and foreign tradeware ceramic sherds, and clay bricks and tiles. Stucco or *paletada* was used as a plaster coating in the walls, particularly the interior of the structure. Such coating is a standard material used in church walls during the Spanish colonial period. However, stucco coating was also observed on the ground, which seemed to be used as floor layering. Another distinct characteristic of this structure is the excessive usage of molluscan shells in its construction of the outer walls. Most of the shells come from marine and estuarine environments; the most abundant would be the marine sunset clam (*Gari occidens*) and mangrove mud clam (*Polymesoda erosa*), with quite few mangrove murex (*Chicoreus capucinus*). Although burnt and crushed shells were indeed used in making lime, these shells (particularly the bivalves) were not wholly crushed or pulverized and were actually mixed with the mortar mixture in producing the huge wall blocks. Clay tiles on the other hand were seemed to be used in filling the gaps (or perhaps for lining) between the wall blocks. However, other

clay tiles and bricks found in the site were probably used as well either for roofing or perhaps for flooring. Aside from the outer wall, another wall actually was constructed in the interior of the structure adjacent to the huge blocks. These 'inner' walls were composed of various chunks of volcanic rocks (among identified were scoria and pumice) and ceramics. This would explain the presence of earthenware and foreign tradeware ceramic sherds found in the excavation with traces of mortar adhering to it. However, this wall seem to crumble very easily as observed from the remaining ruins, which means it is not as stable or sturdy as the large mortar blocks of the outer wall. Small buttress-like structures on the other hand were also observed sticking to the outer walls in the site. These structures were made of smaller carved adobe blocks. Mortar was used to cement the blocks together.

The team opened the Southwest Corner Trench in hopes of finding the flooring at a deeper level. This is because the remaining stone walls observed in the ruins led us to assume that we are near the top or roof of the structure. However, it came to us by surprise that the base of the wall and the probable foundation is not as deep as expected. If we are to assume that the flooring is just a little above the base of the wall and that just above the remaining walls is already the roofing, we will be having a structure with the height of only nearly 3 meters high! Such height would be quite peculiar for a Spanish colonial period structure, especially if this is a church. Our visit with the rest of the ruins in the other property (with permissions) revealed that the remaining outer wall, which were thought of as the last level before the roofing, has actually another wall above it. However, this upper level above the huge blocks was made of much weaker materials similar to the interior walls. More of these remaining upper walls were observed around the ruins visited; one of the walls in fact still has remains of a window slot. If assumed that the window slot would be the highest level of the wall before the roofing. The height of the structure would be estimated nearly 5 or 6 meters high. Most of the upper walls were likely to have crumbled easier; either through time or due to natural catastrophic events, leaving behind the much sturdier mortar blocks beneath it.

Not much ornamentation were observed in the structure other than the carved adobe blocks with ridges by the wall on the southwest corner, which was exposed during the excavation. Such design was very common in Structure Colonial period structures. Similar ridged adobe structures were also found in abandoned church sites such as the Lumang Bayan site in Sta. Teresita, Batangas just south of Taal lake (Paz 2003). These designs found in were part of pillars or columns (as bases) placed near entrances of the ruins. Presence of square nails and possible metal ornament pieces reveal the construction materials used in the structure

On the Burials

The archaeological excavation at Club Balai Isabel site confirmed the presence of burials inside the ruins in its primary context. Burials in an archaeological site give us a glimpse of how people in the past view their world and structure it. It helps us understand how they treat their dead, according to their beliefs and also their socio-political structure.

Five articulated burials were exposed and recovered in the Main Trench. However, there are also considerable amount of disarticulated human remains found scattered throughout the fourth layer. Such evidence indicates a long period of reworking of the site in the past possibly from mortuary activities. It shows that the site has been

used as burial space, most likely after the abandonment of the structure. If this indeed is the old Tanauan church, this kind of practice would have been similar then to other abandoned church ruins around the Taal lake that were utilized as burial sites such as Sta. Teresita (Paz 2003) and San Nicolas (Dizon *et al.* 2004). This pattern would be interesting to explore as burial sites were among the sacred places many Philippine communities traditionally viewed prior the coming of the Spaniards. Filipino belief system in the past mostly centers on the relationship between the living and the dead (Barretto-Tesoro 2007); and such usage of church as 'sacred sites' for burial purposes reflect the persisting indigenous concept of sacredness among the Filipino communities despite the introduction of Western religious concepts through Christianity.

Clusters of larger human bones were found piled in particular areas above the articulated burials, mostly on top of the feet or around the lower legs. It evidently shows re-excavation of earlier grave fills during an interment, resulting to accidentally unearthing human remains already buried there. However, instead of placing it somewhere else, the disturbed remains of the earlier burial are piled and reburied together with the much recent deceased individual. This kind of arrangement reveals the community's practice and attitude towards human remains. Such behavior signifies respect and consideration for other's remains buried in the site. The placement of the pile of unearthed human bones in a specific area such as the feet area also indicates another of their cultural preferences when it comes to reburying the dead.

The five articulated burials and the clusters of disarticulated remains are mainly adults; so as the scattered human remains mostly collected from layer 4. There are some remains that belonged to younger individuals approximately around 15 to 20 years of age based on the relatively smaller bones and epiphyses collected, but no skeletal remains of children and infants were found. It might be possible that supposedly much fragile bones of infants and children might have been dissolved from the acidity volcanic sediments (which still needs to be confirmed through soil pH test). This acidity dissolution, however, should somehow be reflected as well on the other human remains collected. The deciduous teeth or 'milk teeth' should somehow have survived as well, which is not found in the excavation. An alternative interpretation would be that infants and children are probably not buried in the site, at least on the excavated areas. Distinction between adult and non-adult (infants and children) individuals in burial practices have been observed in the archaeological record (citation). In the Philippines, however, treatment of children and infants varies in each region and in different time periods (see Barretto-Tesoro 2008b). Earlier sites tend to incorporate younger burials with the adults although preference of placing them in burial vessels such as jars are observed in few sites. With the integration of Christian practices in Filipino culture in the 20th century distinction between adults and non-adults became more apparent such as designating separate burial place for baptized children and also the unbaptized ones. The absence of children and infants in the excavated areas in Club Balai Isabel definitely signifies differences in burial practices between age groups and further studies can be done to further explore this behavior.

Dating of the Burials

The dating of the burials posed quite a challenge because of its lack of datable associated materials. The burials found in other abandoned churches around the Taal

lake were dated 20th century CE, so it was assumed that these burials found in the site were contemporaneous as well. However, no identifiable 20th-century materials were found associated with the articulated burials. The latest datable material recovered in that level would be a glazed stoneware sherd, which is estimated to be around late 18th century CE.

Another possible date of the burials that can be considered is around mid 18th century to early 19th century. Looking closely at the historical records referring to Talisay, there seemed to be a historical gap between the destruction and abandonment of Old Tanauan from the 1754 eruption and the reappearance of the area in the records as Talisay in 1851, which spanned for nearly 100 years. Talisay back then was part Tanauan before it became an independent parish in 1869. The church was built around 1873 (Galende 1996) and the public cemetery was probably established much later, which means that the locals in Talisay should ideally bury their dead in the cemetery of the main town of Tanauan. Considering the location of Tanauan, its distance from Talisay (12 or 13 kilometers) and the rugged topography they will be passing during that time, it will be quite inconvenient for the locals of Talisay to travel efficiently just to bury their dead in a proper cemetery. This led to the possibility that the locals turned to the old church ruins to bury their dead. The community's perception of the church as sacred space should be considered as a factor for burying their dead there as observed in ruins in Sta. Teresita and San Nicolas; as well as the other Spanish Colonial churches around the Philippines (e.g. San Agustin church in Manila) that have cemeteries inside the church complex. Its location within Talisay itself is also a factor as it will be very convenient then for the locals in that area to bury their dead within the ruins, rather than travelling to Tanauan just to give them proper burial. It must be very possible then that around that historical hiatus, people of Talisay might have been burying their dead indeed in the ruins before a public cemetery has been established there later on.

Understanding the Sequence of the Site

Through excavation of the stone ruins in Club Balai Isabel site and preliminary analysis of the recovered materials, the team were able to reconstruct the sequence of the site. The construction of the church around 1732 and its eventual destruction and abandonment from the 1754 eruption is indicated in the historical records; however, the archaeological evidence of the destruction such as flooding is not reflected in the excavation. It could be possible that the evidence of flooding might be wiped out from the apparent reworking of the site. Nevertheless this report will outline the sequence of the site as seen in the stratigraphy and other archaeological evidence:

1. The site was reused as a cemetery, sometime after the 1754 eruption.
2. The burial activities in the site eventually stopped and two episodes of major crumbling of the wall structures occurred, probably sometime around the 19th to early 20th century.
3. One massive or series of flooding seemed to have happened in the area as indicated by the layers of rounded coarse sand and pebbles above the rubble layers and the corresponding local accounts on the flooding caused by the typhoon Rosing that happened in 1995, which according to them further buried the ruins.

Evidence of Earthquakes?

The stone church of Old Tanauan was among those greatly affected by the violent eruption of the main crater in the volcanic island in 1754. However, prior to the main eruption, series of seismic events (earthquakes) also from the earlier eruptions of the volcano island have already been felt in the area and were documented. One of the earthquakes according to the historical records were so strong that it has altered the landscape and caused the rivers to change its course (Worcester 1912 in Hargrove 1991). The odd orientation of the huge adobe block structure between E₆N₂₄ and E₇N₂₄ was thought of as a possible displacement caused by an earthquake. Similar observation was found in the excavated line of adobe blocks in E₆N₂₅, which were thought to be slightly displaced to the south. Uneven levels of plaster 'floorings' in E₆N₂₅ and E₇N₂₄ were also thought of as result of earth movements. However, evidence of such major displacements possibly caused by earthquakes were not found in the walls of the church. These peculiarities in the inner structures should therefore be explored more but nevertheless the possibilities of an earthquake should not be ruled out.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The initial excavation of the stone ruins in Club Balai Isabel site has given us a glimpse of the history of the area, particularly of Talisay. It has addressed some of our inquiries about the structure and the human remains found underneath it. Outlined here are the major points revealed in this research:

- Despite of the lack of evidence from its structural form, evidence from the construction materials and few stone designs revealed from the excavation, plus the historical records and local folklore, would suffice the identification of the ruins as church structure, most likely of Old Tanauan.
- Its construction is very distinctive because of its simplicity in form, the usage of massive mortar blocks, and the seemingly excessiveness of the utilization of certain materials in its construction such as whole and fragmented shells.
- The upper walls of the church seemed to be and totally made from different and less durable materials, which easily crumbled, leaving the larger mortar wall blocks beneath it.
- The ruins were definitely used as a burial space, most likely by the community living around the site after the 1754 eruption.
- The burials were mostly adults and few adolescents; no remains of infants and children were found.

The investigation has indeed shed light on the archaeology of the site; however, it also left more questions that need to be addressed to further understand the site:

- Explore the rest of the ruins on the other property. With the proper coordination with the owners of the other property we may able to investigate the other parts of the structure, enabling us to identify the rest of the structure. It might be possible that the altar is located at this area knowing that the entrance is in the Club Balai Isabel site. The ruins on other property also reveal the construction of the church so it would be important to excavate the area as well
- Find out other interior structures in the Club Balai Isabel site through further excavations in it. The 'displaced' large square adobe block structure in E₆₋₇N₂₄ might have a parallel structure going to the east wall. We may also uncover other structures that can further confirm the nature of the structure as a church.
- Determine the dating of the burials in the site. Since the date of the burials pose a challenge in the site, it would be important to further excavate and recover more articulated burials to know if there are associated materials that can be dated to determine its chronology.
- Excavate the structures to further understand its construction, particularly its foundation. The seemingly foundation found in the southwest corner trench still needs further investigation due to its deteriorated and seemingly disturbed nature.
- Verify the evidence of 1754 flooding. Since the interior of the structure has been reworked, it would be better to explore this evidence through excavating the outside of the ruins. However, it might still be possible to

find it in the interior, through further excavations in it. This would enhance our understanding of the chronology of the site.

- There have been reports of pre-Spanish archaeological materials found in the vicinity of the ruins, particularly burial features. It has been the interest as well of the archaeologists to explore older deposits in the site, knowing that there have already been reports of pre-Spanish archaeology in the area (see Cuevas 1984; Dela Ysla 1984; also Hargrove 1991).
- Develop a program promoting the cultural heritage of Talisay municipality, recognizing the significance of the ruins in the history of the region and the Philippines as well as its prehistory and protohistory. This might include establishing a local or site museum featuring the church ruins itself and the selected artifacts found in the site. This would then entail as well systematic conservation of the structure.

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<http://maps.google.com.ph>

APPENDIX A: Activities Conducted During the Fieldwork



Plate 1. Courtesy call to the municipal mayor, the police, and the land owners.



Plate 2. Clearing of the site



Plate 3. Mapping the area



Plate 4. Selecting and setting up the grid square to be excavated



Plate 5. Excavating the square trenches using trowels, brushes, and dust pans



Plate 6. Documentation of masonry structures



Plate 7. Doing the inventory and accession of the excavated materials



Plate 8. Backfilling the site

APPENDIX B: Excavation Profiles

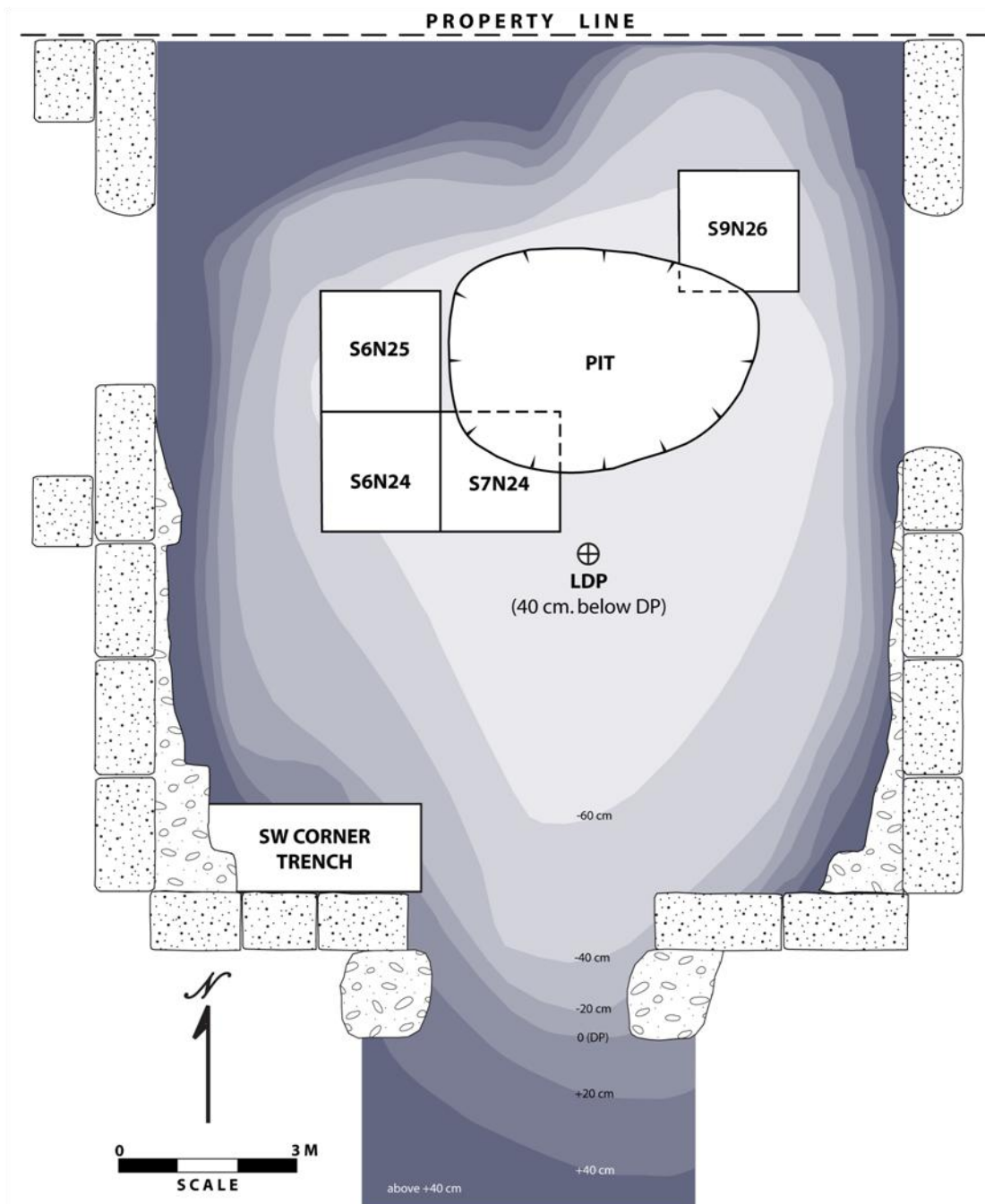


Figure 1. Contour map of the excavated site

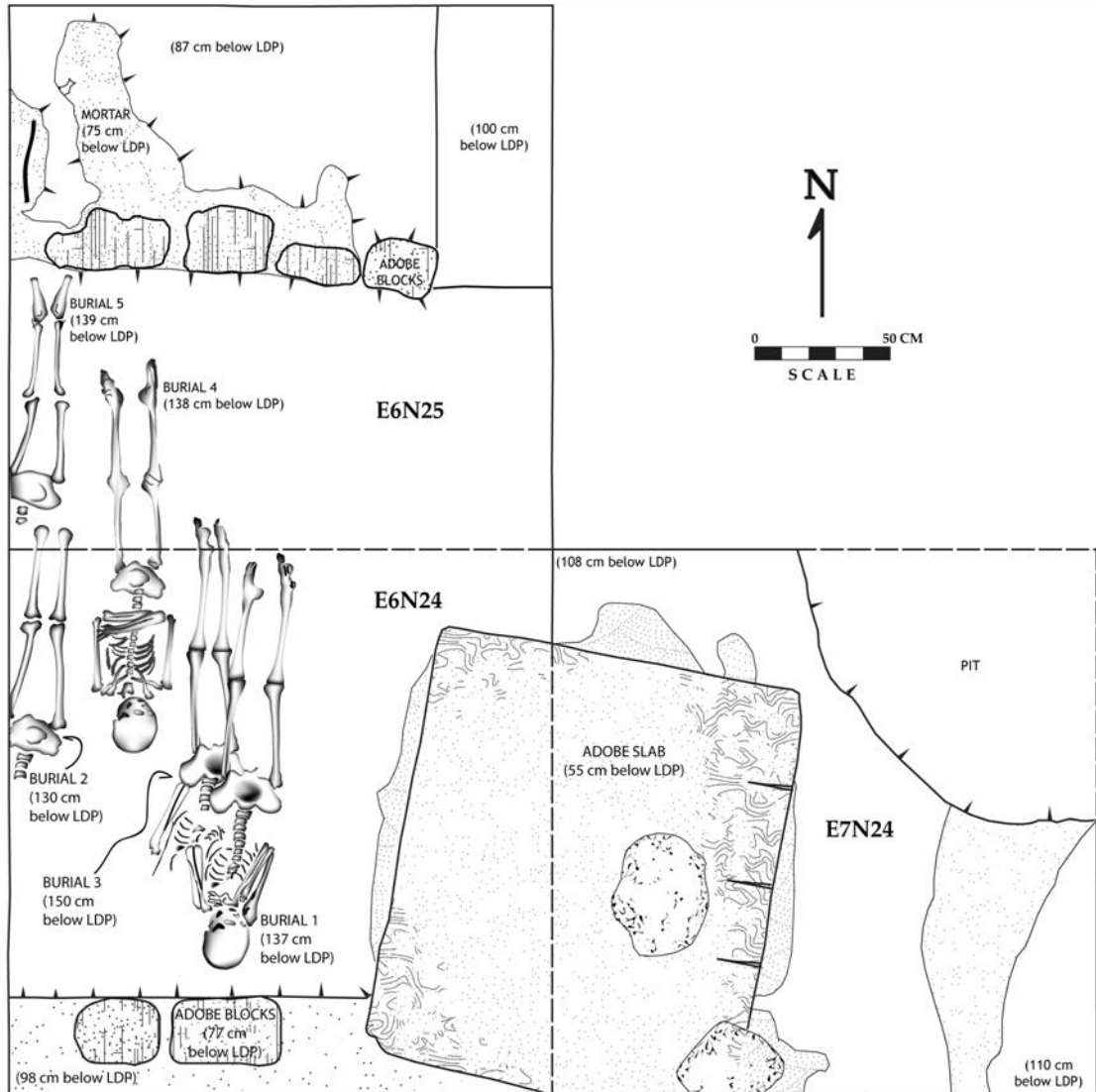


Figure 2. Excavation layout of the Main Trench by the Pit (E6N25- E6N24-E7N24) at around 90 cm below surface in E7N24 and c.140 cm below surface in E6N25- E6N24 at its deepest; showing the masonry structures and burials.

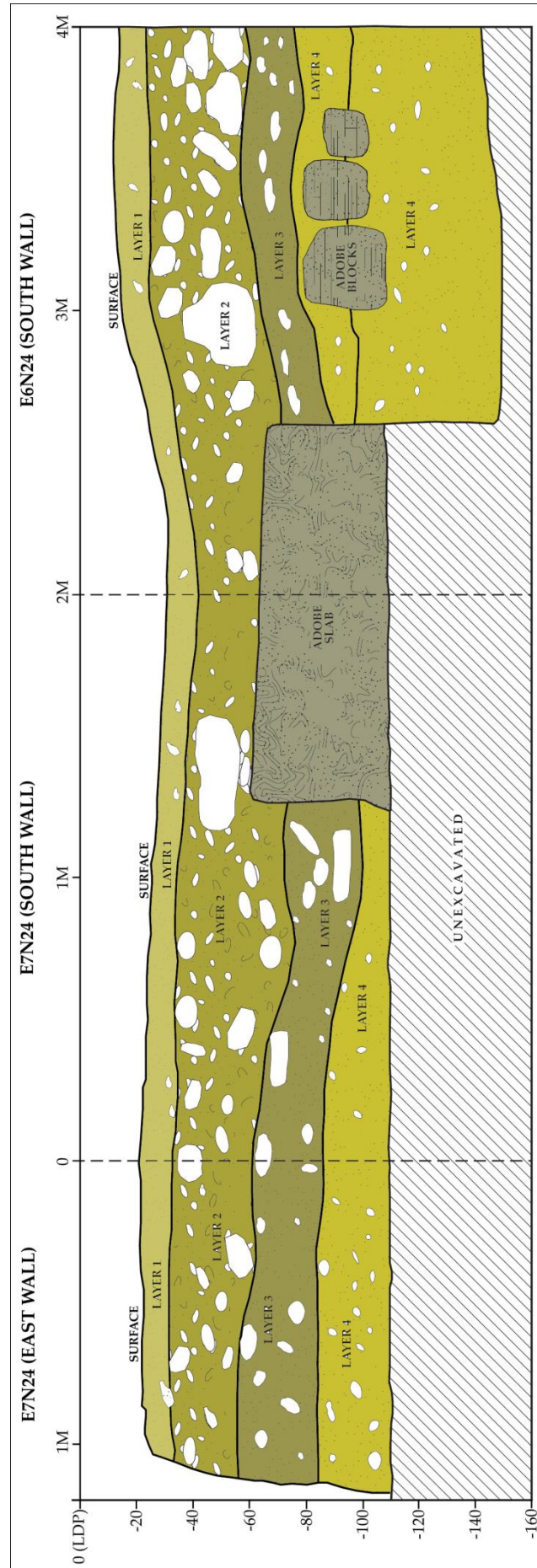


Figure 3. Stratigraphic profile of the south and east wall (E7N24) of the Main Trench.

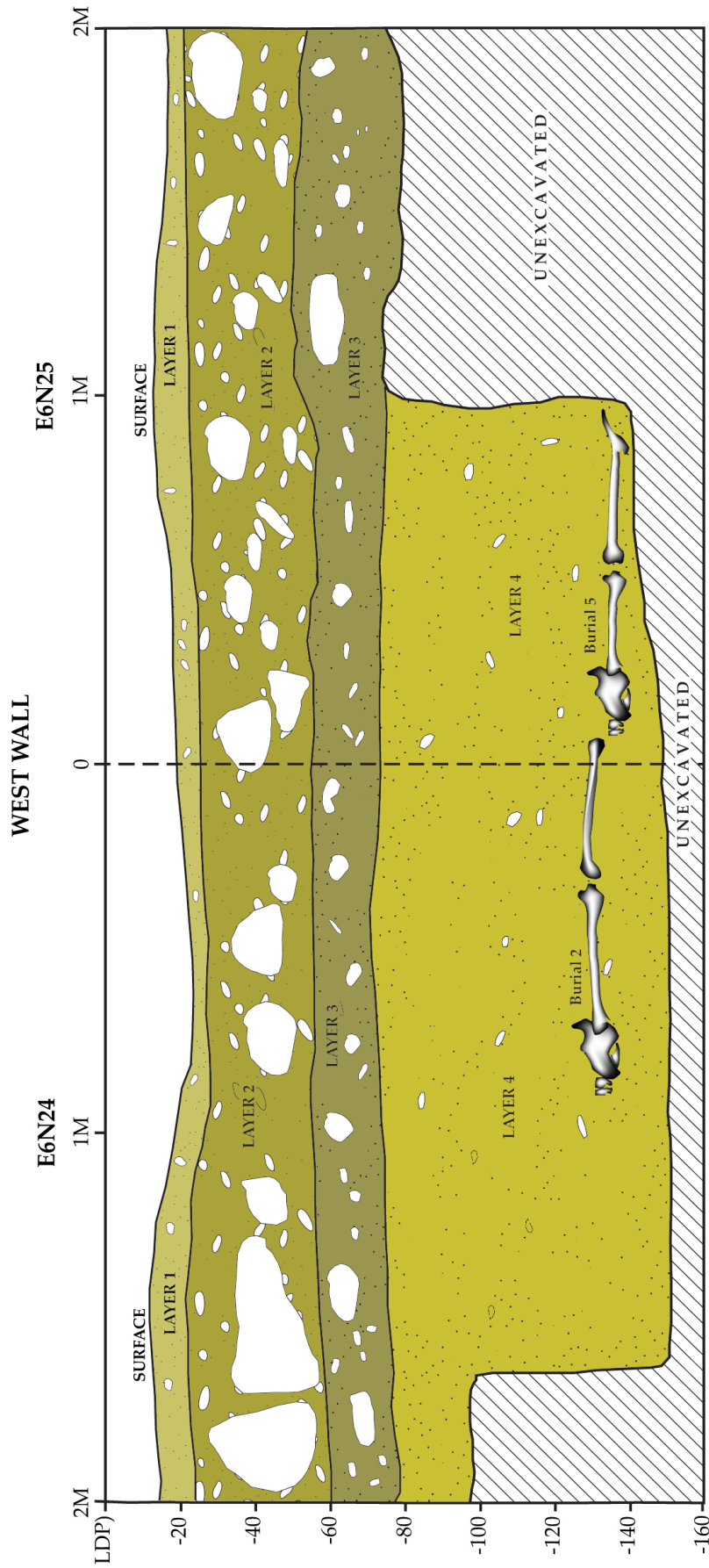


Figure 4. Stratigraphic profile of the west wall of the Main Trench.

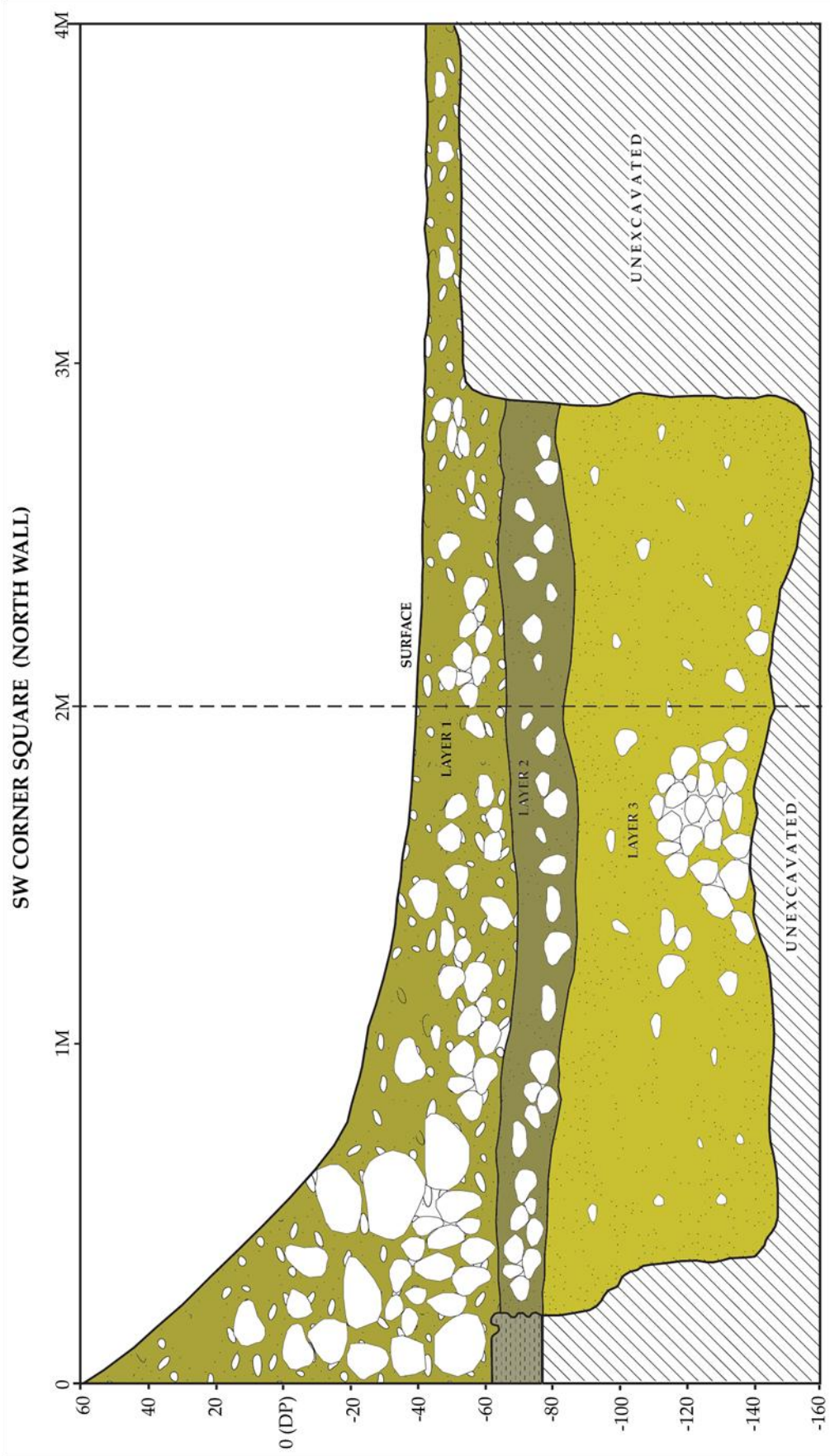


Figure 5. Stratigraphic profile of the north wall of the Southwest Corner Trench.

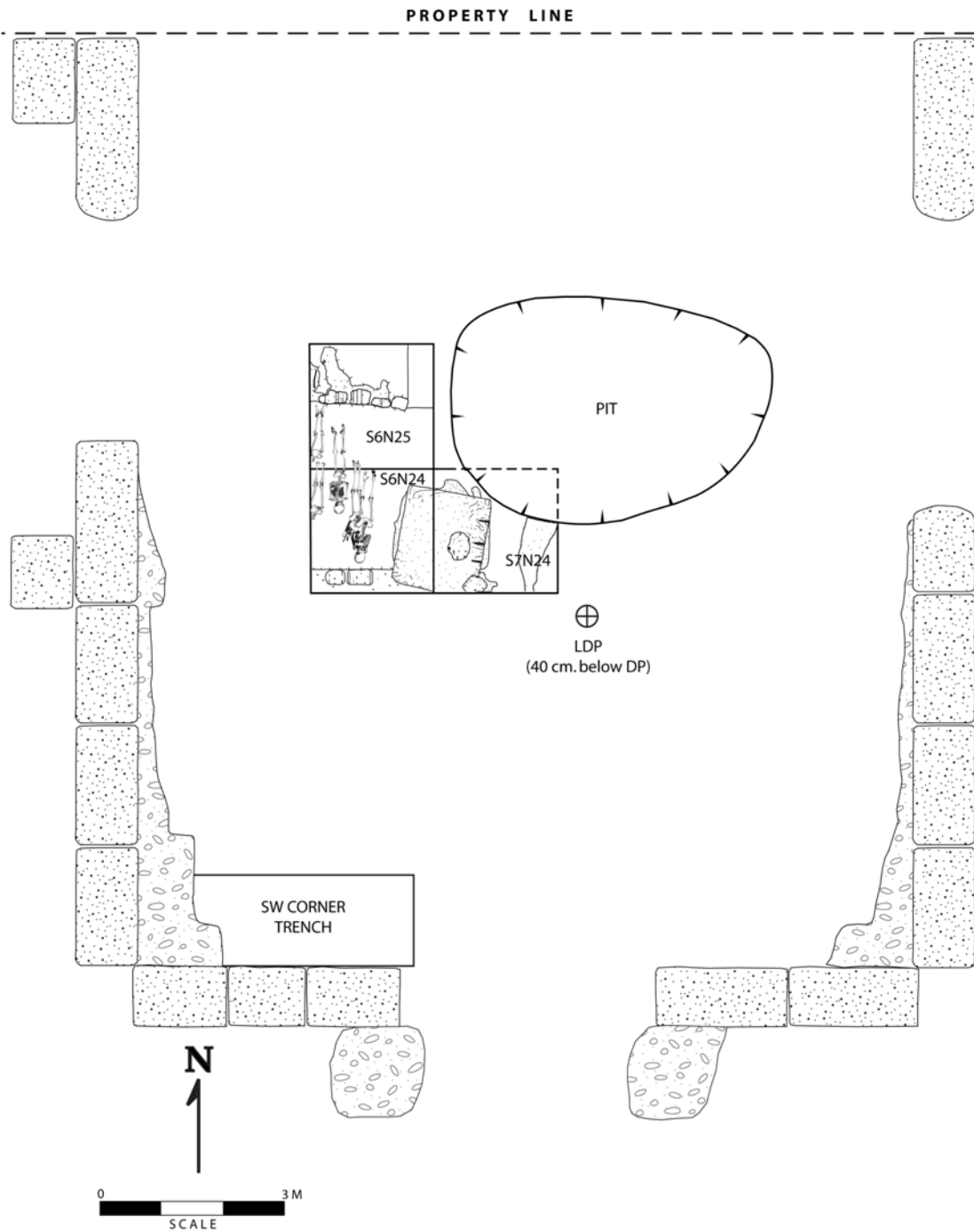


Figure 6. The excavation site showing the orientation of the burials and masonry structures in the Main Trench in relation to the wall structures.

APPENDIX C: Findings from the Excavation



Plate 1. Square trench E₆N₂₅ at around 80 cm below surface exposing an adobe structure and some plaster 'coating' or 'layering'.



Plate 2. South wall of E₆N₂₅ at around 80 to 100 cm spit below surface showing an exposed cluster of human long bones. Above it is a layer of rubble just below the present surface.



Plate 3. Square trench E₇N₂₄ at around 90 cm below surface showing an exposed adobe structure and a plaster 'layering' (possible flooring?).



Plate 4. E₆N₂₅₋₂₄ at around 130 cm below surface showing the burials and other adobe structures.



Plate 5. Burials 1, 2, 5 and the skull from Burial 4. Notice the cluster of crania in at the feet area of Burials 1 and 2.



Plate 6. Southwest corner trench showing the exposed adobe wall feature.



Plate 7. Southwest Corner trench at around 140 cm below Datum Point showing the exposed mortar and stone structure, which is possibly the foundation of the church ruins.



Plate 8. An adobe block recovered from E₆N₂₅ at around 10-20 cm below surface



Plate 9. Tile fragments used as part of the construction



Plate 10. Earthenware and tradeware ceramic sherds used as part of the construction.



Plate 11. Tradeware ceramic sherd found as part of the wall construction



Plate 12. Sunset clams (*Gari occidentis*) recovered from the site. These marine bivalves were used in the construction.



Plate 13. Fragment of a wall block showing the tremendous amounts of *Gari occidentis* used in its construction.



Plate 14. Mangrove mud clams (*Polymesoda erosa*) also used in the construction as part of mortar.



Plate 15. Mangrove murex (*Chicoreus capucinus*) also used in the construction as part of mortar.



Plate 16. *Chicoreus capucinus* as part of the wall construction.



Plate 17. Assorted fragments of human remains recovered from Layer 4 of the Main Trench.

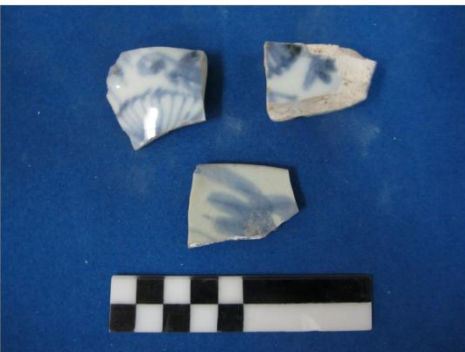


Plate 18. 18th century blue-and-white porcelain sherds. One of these was found on the same level as the burials.

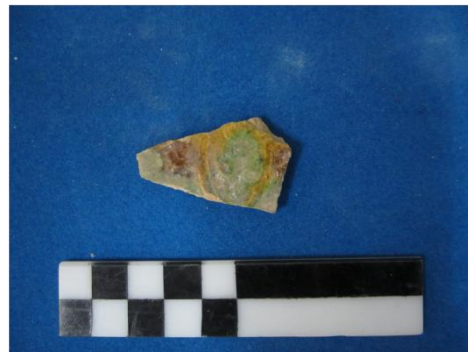


Plate 19. Glazed stoneware sherd, probably from a tradescant jar dating around 17th to 18th century.



Plate 20. Copper wire wound like a ring found at the pelvic area of Burial 1.



Plate 21. Iron fragments found in Burial 4.

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