

PLAIN BUT NOT SIMPLE:
MIDDLE PRECLASSIC STONE MONUMENTS OF NARANJO, GUATEMALA

By

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This work examines the role of plain stone monuments at Naranjo in relationship with the emergence of social differentiation, using phenomenological concepts drawn from the dwelling perspective proposed by Ingold (1995). The first objective of this study is to trace the life history of the site by investigating the physical changes that occurred throughout the whole Middle Preclassic occupation. Special attention is drawn to the erection of stone monuments by analyzing them in relation to other monumental constructions at the site. Instead of looking at the final layout of Naranjo as monolithic construction project, this study adopts the notion of landscape as a process, which entails the idea that people, places and things are shaped recursively through time.

The second objective of this study is to analyze the particular characteristics of each monument to avoid looking at them as homogeneous stones. Shapes and stone sources of the monuments are analyzed and discussed under the “nature versus culture” debate. The final conclusion of this study states that the ancient residents of Naranjo shaped, and were shaped back by the constant modifications and inhabitations of this place, which enabled the constitution of heterogeneous categories of spaces and persons.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the relationship between plain stone monuments and social differentiation at the Middle Preclassic site of Naranjo, Guatemala (Figure 1-1). It is during this period (Table 1-1) that the construction of monumental works such as stone monuments, mounds, and platforms became a widespread activity. This evidence is relevant because it highlights a new sense of public and organized space, but most importantly, it points to the emergence of social complexity in Mesoamerica (Joyce and Grove 1999:2-3).

The main thesis presented in this study is that by transforming the space in specific ways, such as the erection of stone monuments and the construction of mounds and platforms, the residents of Naranjo were able to create and transform the place they inhabited. Therefore, both the process and outcome of these modifications affected the way people interacted with each other, and in the long term, it facilitated social differentiation.

Landscape anthropology is responsible for the recent debate by scholars who are interested in understanding how human beings engage with the physical world around them, and thus the relationship between space and place (e.g., Bender 1993, 2002; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Thomas 2001). As a result, physical space is no longer seen as a background for human activities, but is conceived as an active participant in how humans shape and construct their world, and most importantly, in how humans interact with one another. Thus, space is now problematized in anthropology and has become an essential component of sociocultural theory (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:1). In archaeology, the study of spatial features has brought to attention the notion that space was actively inhabited in the past and that the social relations and spatial structures are linked recursively. This relationship is based in the

notion that as humans shape their buildings, the buildings shape humans back (Ashmore 2002:176).

Plain stone monuments are part of this corpus of monumental works and have been documented for the Middle and Late Preclassic periods at several locations throughout the Maya area of Mesoamerica¹, including some of the major sites occupied during those periods (Bove 2002; Shook 1952). Nonetheless their study has been neglected until recent times, which means that *plain* stone monuments have yet to be considered a relevant element within the framework of social complexity or monumentality in Mesoamerica (Bove 2005:104).

Recent research at the site of Naranjo, Guatemala (Arroyo 2006) has documented more than 20 plain stone monuments *in situ*. Naranjo is located in the Maya highlands, in the modern city of Guatemala (Figure 1-2). Despite the rapid urban expansion in the city, which has destroyed most of the archaeological sites in the area (Crasborn 2000), the site managed to stay undisturbed until the last years of the 20th century. Since then the area has undergone a rapid development. Currently there are more than a dozen construction projects in the area. In 2005, due to one of these construction projects, the Institute of Anthropology and History in Guatemala City² (IDAEH by its initials in Spanish) demanded an archaeological rescue project at the site. As a result, the Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project (NARP henceforth) directed by Bárbara Arroyo started operating in August 2005 (Arroyo et al. 2007:862). Three different excavation seasons were carried out, one each in 2005, 2006, and 2007, and currently the NARP team is still analyzing materials for the final publication.

¹ The Maya area is usually referred to the area encompassing Guatemala, the west portion of Honduras and some parts of Chiapas, Tabasco, and the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico (Evans 2004:61)

² IDAEH is the official institution in charged of every archaeological work at Guatemala.

Research at Naranjo included a systematic study and excavation of all the plain stone monuments, which represents a unique opportunity for the study of these monuments in a controlled archaeological context. I was involved in the NARP since its beginning, which has provided me with first-hand experience in the understanding and excavation of the plain stone monuments at this site.

Stone Monuments in the Maya Area

The main reason for the marginalization (or neglect) of the plain stone monuments in the Maya area is due to the fact that Maya studies have a long-standing tradition of investigating *carved* stone monuments (Parsons 1976; Spinden 1976). Research on stone monuments has led to an over-emphasis on the study of the images depicted on the stone, thus forgetting about the stones themselves (Clancy 1990; Newsome 2002:ix). Stones have been conceptualized as an empty canvas on which the carved message is the most relevant characteristic. In the case of the plain stone monuments, this represents a critical issue, since their lack of carving has led some scholars to believe that these monuments were a less elaborate version of the carved ones (Guernsey 2006:44).

Since the first reports about plain stone monuments appeared in the archaeological literature, these monuments were named “plain stela”. In the Maya area stelae are uniquely defined as “three-dimensional monuments in the format of carved stone slabs depicting human figures; often the depictions are accompanied by hieroglyphic texts.” (Christie 2005: 277). This definition matches the dictionary use of the term “stela” to refer to an upright erected monolith with inscriptions³. Carved stelae were a predominant form of stone monument in the Maya lowland area during the Classic period (Table 1-1), around one thousand years after the erection

³ According to the Oxford Dictionary (2008) a stela is an “upright stone slab or column bearing an inscription or design.”

of the first plain stone monuments in the Maya highlands and Pacific Coast of Guatemala (Figure 1-3). Thus, as will be explained in further detail in Chapter 2, plain stone monuments have previously been analyzed using the same parameters and biases as for the study of carved stone monuments.

This thesis thus avoids using the term “plain stela” because of the connotations mentioned above in which a stela, properly speaking, has a carved image on it. Instead the term “plain stone monuments” is preferred. This term is used in a rather loose manner to refer to any free-standing large stone that was erected in an upright position within an archaeological site. Thus, a stone monument is considered to be a broader category in which a stela, a column, or a plain slab can fit.

The study of carved stone monuments in the Maya area has brought about another bias that is inherited in the study of plain stone monuments: the lack of archaeological context. Since the main emphasis of the study of carved monuments is on the images, less attention has been drawn to the archaeological contexts that could provide further information about the life history of the monuments in relation to the rest of the archaeological site or the different practices associated with the monuments (Newsome 2002:2). Carved monuments are often analyzed as art pieces and as finished products that were commissioned to be displayed through messages on a stone as monuments. Plain stone monuments are likewise usually analyzed as finished products that were erected in specific locations of the sites with the ultimate purpose of displaying elite power and control over certain resources, such as the “count of the days”⁴.

Nonetheless, less information is known about the practices carried out in relation to the erection of stone monuments in general, plain or carved. Stone monuments are usually

⁴ The “Count of the Days” refers to the Long Count calendar tradition that was established in the Maya region during the Late Preclassic period and persisted during the Early and Late Classic periods (Sharer 2006:568).

visualized as a class of artifacts considered homogeneous or redundant in their qualities, and little to no attention is paid to the possible differences in the stone sources used, the shapes of the monuments, their location within the site, their chronology in comparison to one another and to other monumental works, or associated practices that might be visible through the study of the archaeological context. That is why the study of plain stone monuments introduces an interesting opportunity, because their lack of carvings demands a different approach than the one usually applied to the study of carved stone monuments in the Maya area. This different approach is guided by the objectives explained in the following section.

Study Objectives

The main goal of this research is to study the creation of “place” at Naranjo to understand how by transforming the landscape, the landscape transformed the residents of Naranjo as well. Such processes and practices are believed to enable social differentiation (Barrett 1999; Thomas 1993, 2001). This goal is accomplished by looking at the variability and the specific characteristics of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo and their relationships with the rest of the monumental works at the site. The study has two specific objectives.

The first objective is the study of the life history of the Middle Preclassic occupation at Naranjo to understand the chronology of the plain stone monuments and their main characteristics associated with the actions of their placement and thereafter. This objective includes the identification of the small- scale changes that occurred at the ceremonial center during the four hundred years of occupation in the Middle Preclassic period. It also includes detailed information about the temporality and spatial location of the monuments at Naranjo, in order to compare them with one another and to contrast them with the rest of monumental construction at the center of the site.

The second objective is the study of the stones used as monuments at Naranjo. This study discusses the differences and similarities between all the plain stone monuments at Naranjo in relationship to their final shape, modifications, and possible stone sources. It also encompasses the study of the geography and geology of Naranjo and its surroundings to understand other relevant elements of Naranjo's physical environment that could be associated with the plain stone monuments.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to bring more attention to the study of plain stone monuments in the Maya area, and specifically, it intends to present the data from the plain stone monuments of Naranjo in relation to the general occupation of the site, to use those data to reconstruct the significance of landscape changes and corresponding changes in social organization. This case study presents an example of the possibilities for the study of plain stone monuments when reliable and systematic data are available. Thus, besides adding data to the corpus of plain stone monuments of the Maya area, this study intends to apply a different methodology than the ones previously employed for the study of stone monuments. Furthermore, it aims to bring the attention of the study of stone monuments (carved or plain) using data from excavations and by looking at the material and physical properties of the stones.

Organization of the Study

In order to achieve the objectives outlined here this study is organized in six chapters. Chapter 2 summarizes the information available about plain stone monuments in the Maya area and the main interpretations previous authors have given to this type of monument. Besides providing a general background, this chapter discusses the main perspectives that have affected the way plain stone monuments have been interpreted. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical and methodological framework that guides this study. The major theory discussed is the “dwelling

perspective,” as it was presented by Ingold (1995). The methodological approach is discussed based on previous studies of plain stone monuments in Europe, the megaliths. Also, specific methods are presented as a means to pursue the two main objectives presented in this introduction. Chapter 4 presents the main data used for the discussion in this study. This chapter focuses mostly on the data obtained by the Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project, although additional geological and geographical information is also presented. These data are discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 is dedicated to the understanding of Naranjo as a landscape and how “place” was created there. This chapter explains the major stages of occupation at the site. It discusses the erection of plain stone monuments at Naranjo by explaining their location and temporality. Chapter 6 discusses the nature of the plain stone monuments of Naranjo by looking at their shape, texture, and possible stone sources. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the conclusion of this study based on the adoption of a dwelling perspective and the study of plain stone monuments. This chapter also presents possible future studies that can continue the understanding of plain stone monuments in the Maya area.

This study concludes that the erection of stone monuments at Naranjo was part of a complex set of arrangements between the ancient residents of the site and their surroundings. Rather than visualizing the final layout of Naranjo as the product of a master building plan executed by the ancient residents, this study reveals a series of continuous practices and modifications to the physical aspect of Naranjo throughout its entire 400 years of occupation during the Middle Preclassic period. During this time people were able to transform the material aspect of Naranjo which at the same time, was interrelated with the social changes occurred among its inhabitants. By the end of the Middle Preclassic period, Naranjo achieved a formalized and symmetrical arrangement in which three rows of monuments were erected, two

platforms were built, and three mounds were constructed. This final aspect of Naranjo enabled different spaces throughout the site that did not exist at the beginning of the occupation.

Therefore, I argue that by transforming the physical landscape the ancient residents of Naranjo were transformed into a more centralized organization.

The analysis of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo revealed that these monuments were erected at different stages of the occupation. Therefore the three rows of monuments that are evident in the final layout of Naranjo is the outcome of the final portion of the Middle Preclassic occupation, but the stones were not erected as a single event. This study also suggests that the stone sources from which the stone monuments were obtained were part of the network of relevant places that connected the monuments to their sources of origin, and possibly to other sites with similar stone monuments. This study shows that a great variety of plain stone monuments existed in Naranjo. This variety was the outcome of the use of different sources and of the different treatments to each stone. Although some monuments were left without alterations, others were completely modified by the ancient residents. In sum, the erection of plain stone monuments at Naranjo transformed the social and physical space in a manner that enabled a new web of connections between people and places. In a recursive way, as different types of spaces were created at Naranjo, social heterogeneity was also created, and thus, social differentiation was facilitated.

Table 1-1. Chronology for the Maya Area

POSTCLASSIC	LATE		AD 1350 – AD 1524
	EARLY		AD 900 – AD 1350
CLASSIC	LATE		AD 600 – AD 900
	EARLY		AD 200 – AD 600
	TERMINAL		100 BC – AD 200
	LATE		400 – 100 BC
PRECLASSIC	MIDDLE	LATE	600 – 400 BC
		EARLY	900 – 600 BC
		LATE	1100 – 900 BC
	EARLY	MIDDLE	1100 – 1250 BC
		EARLY	1250 – 1500 BC

(Source Bove 2005:Fig.8.2)



Figure 1-1. Map of Guatemala showing the location of Naranjo



Figure 1-2. Satellite Photo of Guatemala City showing Naranjo (Google Earth 2009)



Figure 1-3. Map of Guatemala showing three different ecological regions: Lowlands, Highlands, and Pacific Coast.

CHAPTER 2 PLAIN STONE MONUMENTS IN THE MAYA AREA

Plain stone monuments remain an under-investigated topic in Maya archaeology. The lack of detailed information affects both the knowledge that we have about plain stone monuments and the ways they have been interpreted. This chapter introduces the study of plain stone monuments in the Maya area, specifically the Pacific Coast and the Highlands during the Preclassic period. It is divided into two sections. The first section describes the main characteristics of plain stone monuments, their location, and chronology. The goal of this section is to provide a general background about plain stone monuments in the Southeastern Mesoamerican region, and to explain why such monuments have remained an understudied subject in archaeology. The purpose is not to provide a detailed description of every archaeological site with plain stone monuments, but to illuminate both the importance of a topic that needs to be addressed in archaeology, and the difficulties that any study of plain stone monuments confronts.

The second section of this chapter explores the different interpretations that have been stated about plain stone monuments. These interpretations have been based on two main ideas. The first idea relies on the broad comparisons that have been made between plain monuments and carved monuments, specifically the monuments called stelae (see Chapter 1). As will be explained in further detail, plain stone monuments have been studied by trying to interpret their lack of carvings, instead of treating them as a type of monuments on their own. The second idea focuses on the fact that Maya stone monuments in general have been analyzed as a final product, or an art piece, often lacking the archaeological context from which they were recovered. Therefore the ultimate goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the need for a different approach in

the study of plain stone monuments, one that treats them in their own social and historical contexts.

Preclassic Plain Stone Monuments in the Maya Area

Currently, the information about plain stone monument in the Maya area is fragmentary. Plain stone monuments are usually reported among the findings of larger survey projects (see Bove 1989; Shook 1952; Smith 1955) or as casual discoveries through excavation programs (see Hammond 1982; Robinson et al. 1999; Sharer and Sedat 1987; Sharer and Sheets 1978). Nonetheless, none of these investigations has undertaken the study of plain stone monuments as the principal objective; therefore, a systematic study of plain stone monuments is still lacking in Maya archaeology. As a direct result, most of the information about plain stone monuments in this study has been compiled using two types of spatial data.

The first type of spatial data points to which sites have plain stone monuments. With this information it is possible to say that plain stone monuments are found mostly in the southeastern portion of Mesoamerica, specifically in the highlands of Guatemala (Borhegyi 1965; Shook 1952; Smith 1955) and the Pacific Coast of Mexico (in Chiapas), Guatemala and El Salvador (Norman 1973; Bove 1989, 2005; Ichikawa 2006). Plain stone monuments have also been reported in the Maya lowlands (Hammond 1982), and other parts of Mesoamerica such as the Gulf Coast (Stirling 1943) and the state of Guerrero (Porcayo 2004; Pye and Gutiérrez 2007) (Figure 2-1). With these data it is also possible to state that plain stone monuments are present at sites catalogued by scholars as both primary and secondary centers (Bove 2002), which indicates that plain stone monuments are closely related to possible regional centers and are absent at smaller sites. In addition, several of these major primary centers with plain stone monuments also have evidence of carved stone monuments (here named stelae) (Table 2-1).

It was Edwin Shook (1952) who brought archaeological attention to these monuments during the 1940's and 1950's in his surveys of the central highlands of Guatemala and the Pacific Coast. Of the 38 Preclassic sites he documented for the central highlands of Guatemala, 13 sites located in the Valley of Guatemala and its vicinity had plain stone monuments, one of them being Naranjo (Borhegyi 1965:13) (Figure 2-2). Unfortunately, almost none of the monuments reported during that time remain standing today, which makes it difficult to study the monuments in the central highlands area. Even by that time, Shook (1952:12) mentioned that some of the monuments were already out of context, lying on the surface. As of today, plain stone monuments in the central highlands have been excavated only at the sites of Kaminaljuyu (Berlin 1952; Kidder 1961), Rosario Naranjo (Grignon and Jacobo 1991; Jacobo 1992), and Naranjo (Arroyo 2006; Arroyo et al. 2007), although only at Naranjo has the study of plain stone monuments been carried out systematically. Detailed information on Naranjo and its plain stone monuments is presented in Chapter 4 as the main data for this study.

The Pacific Coast is the other region where sites with plain stone monuments are known. Plain stone monuments have been reported from sites all over the Pacific Coast (Ferdón 1953; Norman 1973; Sharer and Sheets 1978; Lowe et al. 1982). However it is the work of Frederick Bove (1989; 2002; 2005; n.d.) that has brought the most attention to the topic. Bove (1989, 2002, n.d.) reported over 25 sites with plain stone monuments on the coast and in the piedmont region (Figure 2-3). He is currently preparing a publication in which he explains in detail the information available for each site (see Bove n.d.). Therefore his data will not be repeated here, and only specific sites of his investigations will be mentioned to highlight some of the challenges for the study of plain stone monuments.

The second type of spatial data that provides information about plain stone monuments focuses on a smaller scale since it shows the location of plain stone monuments in each site. Looking at these data, it is clear that plain stone monuments were erected in courts or plazas; at the base, on the frontal slope, or on top of the structures; and/or forming north to south alignments (Shook 1971:73). According to Bove (2005:99) a north to south alignment is a common characteristic during the Middle and early Late Preclassic periods and is also seen in the architecture of most of the regional centers. This monumental pattern comprises north-south plazas flanked by mounds and usually large temple mounds at the north-south extremities. In addition, a deviation of 20 degrees east of north is the average orientation among these constructions, including the rows of plain stone monuments (Shook 1952:3).

In spite of the works of Edwin Shook and Frederick Bove, most of the information about plain stone monuments is scattered throughout archaeological reports. However those reports often offer few insights about the plain stone monuments or their archaeological contexts. Specific information, such as the location of plain stone monuments within the site, their source of stone, or their general shape, is usually lacking. With a few exceptions (see Bove 1989; Estrada-Belli 1999; Shook 1952) it is difficult to determine whether the monuments had been excavated or not, since this information is not always stated in the archaeological reports.

An exception to this pattern is the recent study at Ujuxte by Estrada-Belli (1999). Ujuxte is a Late Preclassic site located in the eastern Pacific Coast of Guatemala (Figure 2-3). Even though the study of plain stone monuments was not the main goal of this investigation, Estrada-Belli (1999) excavated several test pits in the center of the site, including excavations of all the stone monuments (Figure 2-4). Nine plain monuments were found and excavated, and eight of them had an oval-shaped stone “altar” at its base. The excavations of the monuments did not

find any associated offerings. But in a few instances, such as the Stela 6-Altar 4 pair, several small stones were found beneath the altar. In terms of their spatial distribution within the site, the excavations revealed that all the monuments were situated in front of the main structures of the site (Estrada Belli 1999:45, 137-139).

The general lack of excavation of plain stone monuments creates another big problem for the understanding of plain stone monuments: their accurate dating. Even though Shook (1971:73) dated the plain stone monument tradition to the Middle and Late Preclassic periods, such dates have been corroborated by archaeological excavations at only a few sites. Thus, there are still doubts as to whether these monuments date to either the Middle or Late Preclassic. This information is harder to elucidate because most of the sites with plain stone monuments were occupied during both the Middle and Late Preclassic periods, and at the most of them, the exact date of erection of the monuments is still unknown (Table 2-1). Even at sites where excavations have been carried out, the fact that plain stone monuments are usually not excavated makes it difficult to assign them an accurate date (e.g., by stratigraphic association). In most cases the dating of plain stone monuments is provided by looking at surface ceramic collections of the sites, or when these are unavailable, the dating is provided by looking at the settlement pattern. Nonetheless, accurate dating by excavating the monuments and obtaining controlled material for ceramic seriation, or even carbon samples for C14 dating, is not the usual situation.

The cases of El Bálsamo and Monte Alto located on the Pacific Coast stress this problem. According to Bove (1989:62-4) both sites were major centers during the Middle and Late Preclassic periods, and both have evidence of plain stone monuments. Nonetheless, even though both sites have been excavated (Parsons 1976; Shook and Hatch 1978) and revealed occupations for both the Middle and Late Preclassic periods, the plain stone monuments were not excavated.

Thus, it is not certain whether the plain stone monuments were erected during the Middle or Late Preclassic periods. A more positive result was obtained from the recent excavation at the site of Urías in the central highlands of Guatemala. There, the research showed a small plain stone monument accompanied by a Middle Preclassic ceramic cache (Robinson et al. 1999:478).

Furthermore, most of the centers investigated in the Pacific Coast and the highlands of Guatemala also have carved monuments (Table 2-1), which highlights the fact that plain and carved monuments coexisted for some period of time. As already stated, plain stone monuments were erected starting in the Middle Preclassic period, but there is also evidence of plain stone monuments during the Late Preclassic period, and it is during this latter period that the erection of carved stones became a widespread practice among several regional centers in Southeastern Mesoamerica (Bove 2005:103).

This overlap in time between the erection of plain stone monuments and the erection of carved stone monuments has helped to hide the plain stone monument phenomenon, since scholars are usually more interested in the study of carved monuments. At sites with both carved stone monuments and plain monuments, the lack of interest in the latter monument class is further accentuated because it is common to see a vast corpus of descriptions of carved monuments in the archaeological literature, in contrast to the scarce information regarding plain stone monuments.

The cases of the centers of Izapa (see Norman 1973) and Takalik Abaj (see Orrego and Schieber 2001) highlight this problem. Takalik Abaj and Izapa (Figure 2-3) are considered to be two of the most important regional centers of the Pacific Coast during the Late Preclassic and Terminal Preclassic periods (Bove 2002; Lavarreda and Orrego 2001; Love 2007; Lowe et al. 1982; Miles 1965) (Table 2-2), and their carved stone monuments are well known in the

Preclassic corpus (see Guernsey 2006; Norman 1973; Orrego y Schieber 2001; Parsons 1986). Nonetheless, both sites have evidence of plain stone monuments, and this evidence represents a considerable amount of the total of stone monuments at these two centers (Bove n.d.; Lowe et al. 1982). At Takalik Abaj 57 of the 268 stone monuments are plain, and at Izapa more than half (51 of 89) of the stone monuments are plain (Lowe et al. 1982:92). In spite this information and the fact that at both sites some of the plain stone monuments have been excavated, there are no published data from these excavations, which is a big contrast when we observe the degree of published data concerning the carved monuments at both sites.

Finally, at a smaller scale, there is a lack of detailed descriptions about the characteristics of the monuments themselves. Information such as the general shape of the monument, possible sources of stone, or evidence of cultural modifications in the stone are usually absent in the literature of the sites with plain stone monuments, to the degree that most reports do not include drawings or pictures of them. The best information comes from Edwin Shook (1971:73) who stated that plain stone monuments could be “exceedingly rough unworked shafts of stone, unworked sections of columnar basalt, or partly well-shaped and dressed stones in the typical stela form.” Shook also called attention to the fact that a large quantity of the plain stone monuments from the highlands and the Pacific Coast of Guatemala were plain columnar basalt. According to him (1971:73), this type and shape of stone was widely used during the Middle and Late Preclassic periods, but was no longer being used in later periods.

Previous Interpretations of Plain Stone Monuments

The absence of images on plain stone monuments, and their apparent earlier date in the central highlands and the Pacific coast of Guatemala, has made them ideal candidates to explain the “origins” of carved stelae. Carved stelae were a predominant type of monument used widely during the Classic period in the lowland Maya region, although as noted above, their earliest

appearance dates to the late Middle Preclassic. Pursuant to an evolutionary approach, plain stone monuments, or “plain stelae” as they are often called (see Chapter 1), are considered to be the predecessors of carved stelae. Thus, the Classic Maya carved stela has served as the canon or template by which the earlier Preclassic plain stone monuments in the Maya area have been analyzed, catalogued, and evaluated.

Since the first reports of plain stone monuments were published, scholars have made a correlation between these plain monuments and carved stelae (Maler 1911; Norman 1976). This correlation has been based on several assumptions. The first assumption is that both carved stelae and plain stone monuments are the same type of monument (they belong to the same artifact class) because they are both free-standing stones that were vertically erected as monuments in several Maya centers. The way that scholars know that these stones were monuments is because both plain stone monuments and carved stelae are usually located in the civic-ceremonial centers within the archaeological sites, and because they were erected in front of the main buildings (i.e. low and pyramidal platforms). In this case their spatial distribution within each site as well as their material and general form/shape (usually rectangular), creates the analytical connection. Finally, some plain stone monuments have been found with an oval-shaped stone monument in “front” of them, which is usually interpreted as an altar (the altar side is assumed to be the front or main side of the monument). These oval-shaped stones are commonly found in front of the carved stelae as well, and their occurrence is widely known in the Mesoamerican literature as the “stela-altar cult” (Spinden 1976; Stirling 1943).

As a result of these similarities, plain stone monuments have been classified according to the same parameters that are used in classifying the Classic stone monuments called stelae. It was in the early reports that the name “plain stelae” was adopted to refer to the plain stone

monuments (see Maler 1911; Shook 1952; Smith 1955; Stirling 1943; Tozzer 1911), a term that still prevails today (see Bove 2002; Guernsey 2006; Pereira et al. 2007). The close classificatory link assumed between “plain stelae” and “carved stelae” has created a deep concern with explaining why these plain monuments, similar in shape and spatial distribution within the ancient cities, had not been carved but had been left “blank.” Thus, plain stone monuments have typically been analyzed in terms of what they lack: carved or painted images. This is also the reason why some of the interpretations about plain stone monuments in the archaeological literature were created to explain both plain and carved stelae in general, since stelae and plain stone monuments are typologically grouped together within the broad category of “stelae.”

This study was able to identify three main interpretations given to plain stone monuments and they are explained in the following sections. The first interpretation deals with the idea that stone monuments in general (plain or carved) are considered as symbols or media of expression of a ruling elite or power group in ancient cities. The second interpretation deals with the association of stone monuments with astronomical observations, as is the case at several ancient cities where stone monuments have been found forming north to south alignments. The last interpretation refers to the decoration of the plain stone monuments, which makes an explicit statement against the possibility that these monuments were plain stones left without carvings, paintings or other adornments. The final section exposes a different set of ideas that emerged from iconographic studies, which will be linked to some of the main ideas that this research presents for the study of plain stone monuments.

Rulership and Social Organization

The appearance of monumental buildings and stone monuments in the Preclassic period of Mesoamerica has led scholars to infer the type of social organization that would have existed in order for these constructions to be possible. It is often believed that the appearance of stone

monuments and large mounds was the result of an elite group who had taken charge of their construction (see Coe 1968; Reilly 1999). This approach considers monumental constructions as the consequences of a pre-existing ruling elite who was in charge of commissioning the constructions, mandating the labor inputs, and deciding where, and how the buildings were supposed to be erected. From this viewpoint, the placement of stelae in ceremonial centers during the Middle Preclassic period shows evidence of the adoption and manipulation of the stela format by the preexisting elite. Stone monuments are seen to have arisen in part as the propagandistic tool and response of elites at various political centers to external pressures and competition for political power (Guernsey 2006; Reilly 1994). Beyond a propagandistic tool, stelae are visualized also as a vehicle that disseminated potent messages concerning the foundations of rulership and its relationship to broader themes of religion and cosmology (Guernsey 2006:41).

Nevertheless, other scholars have argued for a different interpretation. Elizabeth Newsome (1996, 2001) goes against the view that stelae were simple tools the elite used to promote and authenticate their claims of power. She states that scholars often forget about the medium itself—the stone—and points out that stelae have never been the subject of a systematic study to examine them as a distinct class of ceremonial monument. She notes that discussions of stelae are often associated within broader iconographic and epigraphic studies; thus the interpretation of the monument itself (as a physical monument) has been taken for granted. Instead of visualizing the stone as a medium, or as billboards or political posters Newsome studied stelae or stela cycles, as a sequence of ritual actions performed over the course of the *k'atun* (the twenty-year cycle of the Maya Long Count calendar). She analyzed the Classic Period monuments of Copan, Honduras, in conjunction with the rest of the monumental constructions of the city rather than in isolation,

as is normally done. Thus the carved monuments were studied beyond pieces of sculpture and within their own political and historical context (Newsome 2001:182-189).

In the case of the plain stone monuments, Frederick Bove (2002) has also been interested in correlating the monuments with the political system. Nonetheless his investigative scope covers a larger scale by looking at all the Late Preclassic sites of the Pacific Coast of Guatemala. His study is based in the comparison between sites that have plain stone monuments with sites that have carved monuments and hieroglyphic inscriptions, and to contextualize this information with other information such as chronology and ceramic evidence. His main goal has been to suggest that variations in the plain stone monuments' spatial and temporal patterns correlate with differences among ethnic groups, including rulership, political, economic exchange, and ideological systems.

According to Bove (2002) there were at least two distinct cultural systems operating during the Preclassic period on the Guatemalan south coast. In his scheme the western region of the Pacific coast had an imposing centrally controlled political system, while the east coast had a more fragmented competitive political system. This difference he believes to be reflected in the patterns of stone monuments, because the west coast has several larger centers, such as Izapa and Takalik Abaj, with abundant carved monuments. On the other hand, the eastern coast has more mid-size sites of the same rank, and these are the sites where plain stone monuments are abundant (Bove 2005:106). In his scheme plain stone monuments are evidence of less political centralization correlated with other cultural and ethnic differences.

Astronomical Observatories

One of the most widespread interpretations of plain stone monuments is that they were positioned to facilitate certain astronomical observations by ancient inhabitants (e.g., Bove 2002; Norman 1973; Parsons 1986; Shook 1971;; Spinden 1976). This interpretation is based on the

spatial distribution of plain stone monuments within several sites. As explained in the previous section, plain stone monuments are usually found in front of the main structures at the center of the sites, or forming rows roughly aligned in a north to south fashion in the plazas. These rows of monuments have attracted the attention of scholars, and many believe that the erection of plain stone monuments in such alignments was for the direct purpose of astronomical observations. Thus, their main argument is that by erecting plain stone monuments to form north-south rows, the ancient residents of several sites were able to keep track of important astronomical events, such as equinoxes and solstices (Bove 2005:103; Norman 1976:4)

For example, at the site of Monte Alto, Shook (1971:72) reported an alignment of three plain stone monuments erected in a north-south row which he believed served astronomical purposes to record solar movements related to agricultural cycles (Figure 2-5). Shook noted that the azimuth from the principal structure (No. 10) to one of the monuments marked the winter solstice sunrise on December 21st. The alignment with the central stela was marked on February 19th, and the third monument pin-pointed March 15th. He believed that even though not all of them correlated with the solstices or equinoxes, the two latter dates were related to the agricultural cycle.

The astronomical interpretation for Monte Alto led Marion Popenoe de Hatch (2002) to develop a similar hypothesis for Structure 7 at Takalik Abaj (Figure 2-6). Structure 7 is a large platform with two superstructures, 7-A and 7-B on its north and west areas. Several carved and plain stone monuments have been identified on top of this structure, which Popenoe de Hatch (2002:436) has interpreted as three rows of stone monuments that “point” to Stela 13 located on the south side of Structure 7A. According to Popenoe de Hatch (2002:437), the three rows of monuments were erected simultaneously when Structure 7 was being built during the Middle

Preclassic. She also noted that not all the rows of monuments were perfectly aligned. The west and the central rows show a slight change in orientation, which could be due to a later modification in the construction plan, she believes (Popenoe de Hatch 2002:437). In addition, among the carved stone monuments the central row shows some images in what Popenoe de Hatch (2002:437) calls an “Olmec” style, and she refers to the rest of the sculptures in the other stone monuments as of “Maya” style (including Stela 13). Underlying this reconstruction is the idea that the stone monuments at Takalik Abaj were placed following a specific order, which in this case has been interpreted by Hatch (2002, 2003) as the product of a specific ethnic group or ideology.

Using her previous astronomical interpretations based on the site plan of La Venta, the major Olmec late Middle Preclassic regional center in Tabasco state near the Gulf coast, (Popenoe de Hatch 1971) and the Postclassic Maya Madrid Codex from Yucatan, Popenoe de Hatch (2002:240-241) interprets the three rows of stone monuments at Takalik Abaj as an astronomical device that was originally planned according to “Olmec standards” (i.e. as seen at La Venta) which, according to her, was oriented to follow the Big Dipper constellation. In later times, probably by the end of the Maya Middle Preclassic around 400 BC, the central row at Takalik Abaj was modified, and it was during that time when the Maya style carved monuments were added (Popenoe de Hatch 2002:238). The central row was then oriented to the position of the star Eta Draconis, in a constellation known to have been associated with prehispanic Maya astronomy. For Popenoe de Hatch (2002:442), this shift from an Olmec astronomical system to a Maya system is evidence of the ideological changes that she believes were happening at Takalik Abaj at the end of the Middle Preclassic period.

Decorated Stones

The second dominant interpretation regarding the meaning of plain stone monuments is that they had once been decorated, but that the passage of time has erased the evidence of potential elements such as cloth, paint, or stucco. However, there is yet no evidence of this lost decoration for any of the known plain stone monuments. For example, Herbert Spinden in his very early work, *A Study of Maya Art* ([1913]1976:130), said of plain stone monuments: “It seems possible that these may have been painted with figures instead of carved”. Or as even Norman (1976:4) suggested:

“There are a large number of plain, uncarved stelae at Izapa (...) which indicate that an erect stone itself was of symbolic significance, perhaps serving as an astronomical alignment. [see above] Most have a smoothed flat surface which may have been prepared for painted scenes, as many have suggested. Features might also have been depicted [in??] stucco relief as suggested by Andrews (1965:308, Fig. 15) for plain stelae at Dzibilchaltun. It is also possible that plain stelae were prepared for carvings that were never accomplished.”

Even though there is no evidence of painting on any of the plain stone monuments found so far, some scholars believe that other lines of indirect evidence might be helpful to prove this case. For example, in Tomb 1 at Kaminaljuyu, the large Middle and Late Preclassic regional center in the Valley of Guatemala, a stone slab decorated with stucco and red ochre was found. Julia Guernsey (2006:42) believes that this evidence is helpful to demonstrate that the use of stucco and paint was already being used by the Late Preclassic, which for her opens the possibility that plain stone monuments were similarly adorned during Preclassic times. She also believes (following Norman 1973) that the wide horizontal sections at the base of some of the monuments at Izapa (e.g., Stela 30) could have been shaped to bear decoration of some kind, since the rest of the stone where this feature appears has an un-smoothed surface.

Related to the idea that plain stone monuments had somehow been adorned is the hypothesis of “bundled stones.” This idea posits that plain stone monuments had been covered

or wrapped with cloth, and it is based on interpretations that have been made previously for carved stone monuments (Guernsey 2006:42). The main evidence used for these interpretations comes from iconographic and epigraphic studies made by several scholars (e.g. Reilly 2002; Stuart 1996) who believe that the act of bundling carved stone monuments was part of their ritual use which was connected to the act of demonstrating rulership (Guernsey 2006:42).

David Stuart (1996:154) argued that certain carved stelae could have been bundled or enclosed in bands of cloth during rituals that marked the conclusion of 360-day periods of time (called *tun*; see above on the *k'atun* as a period of 20 *tuns*). He suggested that the bundling of stelae was part of a ritual of royal accession that was in direct connection to the head bands or headdress worn by rulers. Stuart (1996:155) relied on epigraphic and iconographic evidence to demonstrate the connection between binding and rulership. According to him, the *k'altun* glyph, which represents an image of a “stone-over-hand,” is read as “stone-binding” and describes a special calendar ritual associated with stelae and other monuments. He also stated that stelae might have been bundled to contain the divine essence held within them, because stelae, just like rulers, possessed a divine soul-like quality and were in some way considered to be living things (Stuart 1996:157). Therefore, Stuart (1996) conceives stelae as both the extended royal “person” in space and the material evidence of rituals as eternal, never-ending events.

Furthermore, in an iconographic study Kent Reilly (2002:49-50) interpreted several carved motifs on stone monuments of the Gulf Coast, such as Monuments 25 and 26 at La Venta which are carved stelae, as stone monuments that show binding. The motifs he interpreted as bundles are shown in the carvings as a criss-cross pattern. The bundling action, Reilly (2002:57) stated, is closely connected to the construction and setting of the stone monument. For instance, Reilly believed the stone piece could have been covered with cloth to aid in the transport process and to

help cover and protect the stone before or after the carving actions. Reilly (2002) also interpreted the motifs on a carved stela (Monument 21) of Middle Formative Chalcatzingo in highland central Mexico as an explicit connection between bundling and erecting the monument. For him, this monument shows a scene where the single personage of the monument has her hands outstretched towards what may be a standing bundled stela, although other archaeologists do not identify that element as a stela (e.g., Grove 1987).

Stone Beyond the Image

As mentioned already, studies of stone monuments in the Maya area have been dominated by the study of their images and inscriptions, thereby ignoring the stone itself (Newsome 1993:1). In the hopes of recovering part of the essential meaning of stelae, Flora Clancy (1985) earlier focused on the material components of stelae, such as their structure, shape, color, line, and mass. She also considered how the manipulation and combination of such aspects might yield answers about the original function and the thematic intent of stelae. Clancy was interested in studying Maya sculpture beyond the images and icons by paying attention to the medium used for the carvings and their archaeological context. For this purpose she divided all sculpture—no matter its size or raw material—into three major types based on their ultimate disposition: plaza, architectural, and buried (Clancy 1985:58). According to Clancy (1985:58) during the Classic Maya period there was a major contrast between the plaza and architectural sculptures, considered by her as “public sculpture,” versus hidden sculptures inscribed in other type of materials such as clay, wood, and semi-precious stones.

While trying to explain the origins of stelae, Clancy (1990:25) states during the Middle Preclassic period people consistently used natural stone shapes with very little preparation of the form or surface before the addition of the relief carving. According to this idea the images carved on the natural surfaces did not obscure the previous form of the stone. She states that

when the “naturalness” of the medium (in this case the stone) is so intrusive it is easier to think that a particular image has been produced as much by revelation through the stone as by the intention of the sculptor. As Clancy (1990:25) states, “the stone empowers the image, and the image empowers the stone”. She believes that the constant manipulation of stone and these initial carvings gave way to a greater concern for the image, at which point the monument’s form became secondary, almost unnoticeable, whereas carvings became the central theme of stelae (Clancy 1985:59). Furthermore, Clancy (1990:27) states that since its beginnings, the stela – whether carved or plain – was conceived in conjunction with its architectural and natural environment. It was in this context that, she argues, stelae were used to delineate sacred space. Clancy’s ideas of early carving examples are of special interest for this study because it gives importance to the “natural” shape of the stone, and it also raises questions as to the role that the material of the carvings played in a particular landscape, both important aspects that will be outlined in following chapters.

In another interesting study, David Stuart (n.d.) explores the different ideas in relation to stone as a source of ritual objects and the material aspects of stones in terms of their physical properties. For instance, he mentioned that the fact that polished stones are capable of reflecting light is an important trait to be further investigated. In relation to plain stone monuments, Stuart (n.d.:2) believes that the fact that these monuments were purposely left without carvings or paintings is a strong evidence of the importance that the ancient Maya gave to stone. He believes that by studying the forms and materials of stone we will have a better understanding of why the use of stones as monuments prevailed in the form of stelae for over two millennia (Stuart n.d.:4). Similar to Clancy’s ideas about stones in a more “natural” state, Stuart highlights the possibility that the selection of some of these rough stones has to be considered a conscious selection.

Furthermore, it is probable that this selection was an important task within the set of processes necessary to acquire the stone material for the monument. The relation of the stone sources and the plain stone monuments will be explored in more detail in the rest of this study.

Conclusion

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, plain stone monuments have yet to be studied systematically. Apart from the recent work by Frederick Bove (2002, 2005), who is attempting to provide a macro-scale explanation for the plain stone monuments in the Pacific Coast of Guatemala, there are presently no other attempts to summarize the data on plain stone monuments. The major consequence of this lack of interest towards the study of plain stone monuments is that these monuments are omitted from any reconstruction of the social organization of the Preclassic period. In other words, the study of the formation and development of social complexity is explained without considering these relevant data.

Furthermore, detailed spatial and temporal contexts of plain stone monuments in relationship to the sites where they were erected are difficult to obtain in most of the archaeological reports. Even when plain stone monuments have been excavated, the information exposed is not well integrated with the interpretation of the rest of the site. Thus, there is a void concerning specific information on the monuments, such as shape and size, their chronology, or any other practice(s) associated with them.

The study of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo that forms this study attempts to bridge some of these gaps by providing an explanation of the plain stone monuments in their own archaeological contexts. Data from the excavations of the monuments and of the other structures and features at the site become the basis for understanding all the small-scale changes that brought about the final layout of the site of Naranjo. Particular attention is also given to the study of the stone sources used for the monuments. This is considered important to understand

the nature of the stones themselves apart from their quality as monuments. Nonetheless, to achieve these goals a different approach must be taken, one that considers the micro-scale nature of the data but also conceives the plain stone monuments in conjunction with the rest of the landscape of Naranjo and its changes through time. This approach is further explained in the following chapter, and it is based on the notion of a “dwelling perspective” following Ingold (1995).

Table 2-1. Preclassic Archaeological sites in Mesoamerica with plain stone monuments

No.	Site	Country	Region	Middle Preclassic	Late Preclassic	Plain Monument	Carved Monument	Excavated	Main References
1	Amatitlán	Guatemala	Highlands	--	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
2	Bran	Guatemala	Highlands	--	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
3	Brigada	Guatemala	Highlands	--	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
4	Cambote	Guatemala	Highlands	Y	Y	Y	--	Y	Smith 1955; Clark et al 2001
5	Casa Blanca	El Salvador	Pacific Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Sharer 1978; Ichikawa 2006
6	Cerrito	Guatemala	Highlands	--	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
8	Chacayá	Guatemala	Highlands	Y	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
9	Charcas	Guatemala	Highlands	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Borhegyi 1956
10	Chichén	Guatemala	Highlands	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Smith 1955
11	Chocolá	Guatemala	Piedmont	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Burkitt 1930; Bove 2005
12	Cieneguilla	Guatemala	Highlands	--	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
13	Cotzumalguapa	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Parsons 1969; Bove 1989
14	El Bálsamo	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Shook and Hatch 1978; Bove 1989
15	El Jardín	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	--	N	Bove 2005
16	El Obraje	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	N	N	Bove 1989
17	El Pilar	Guatemala	Coast	Y	Y	Y	--	N	Bove 1989
18	El Portón	Guatemala	Highlands	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Sharer and Sedat 1987
19	El Sitio	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Shook 1947; Bove 2005
20	El Trapiche	El Salvador	Pacific Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Sharer 1978
21	Giralda	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Bove 2005
22	Izapa	Mexico	Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Lowe et al 1982; Norman 1976

(data obtained from Bove 2005:table 8.1 and compiled by the author)

Table 2-1 (Cont.)

No.	Site	Country	Region	Middle	Late	Plain	Carved	Excavated	Main References
23	Kaminaljuyu	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Shook 1952; Kidder et al. 1977
24	La Morena	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	Y	Y	Y	--	Y	Bove 1989
25	La Nueva	Guatemala	Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Bove 1989; Estrada Belli 1999
26	La Venta	Mexico	Gulf Coast Pacific	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Drucker, Heizer and Squier 1959
27	Las Pilas	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	N	Y	Y	--	N	Bove 2005
28	Los Cerritos Sur	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Bove 1989
29	Monte Alto	Guatemala	Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Shook 1971; Bove 1989
30	Naranjo	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Arroyo 2006; Pereira et al. 2007
31	Nueve Cerros	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	Y	Y	Y	--	1	Bove 2005
32	Palo Gordo	Guatemala	Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Parsons 1969; Bove 2005
33	Piedra Parada	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Shook 1952; de Leon and Valdez 2002
34	Polanco	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	N	Y	Y	--	Y	Bove 2005
35	Reynosa	Guatemala	Coast	Y	Y	Y	--	N	Bove n.d.
36	Rosario-Naranjo	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Jacobo 1992
37	San Antonio	Guatemala	Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Bove n.d.
38	Santa Isabel	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	--	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
39	Santo Domingo	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	Y	--	Y	--	N	Bove 2005
40	Sintaña	Guatemala	Coast Pacific	--	--	Y	--	--	Bove 2005
41	Takalik Abaj	Guatemala	Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Schieber y Orrego 2001

(data obtained from Bove 2005:table 8.1 and compiled by the author)

Table 2-1 (Cont.)

No.	Site	Country	Region	Middle	Late	Plain	Carved	Excavated	Main References
42	Texas-Montana	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Bove 2002; Bove 2005
43	Tonalá	Mexico	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ferdon 1953
45	Ujuxte	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Bove 1989; Estrada Belli 1999
46	Urías	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Robinson et al. 1999
47	Vieja Santa Rita	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	--	N	Bove 2005
48	Virginia	Guatemala	Highlands Pacific	Y	--	Y	--	N	Shook 1952
49	Xula	Guatemala	Pacific Coast	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Bove 2005

(data obtained from Bove 2005:table 8.1 and compiled by the author)

Y = yes

N = no

-- = no information available



Figure 2-1. Map showing Preclassic sites with plain stone monuments in Mesoamerica (data obtained from Bove 2005, Shook 1952, and compiled by the author)

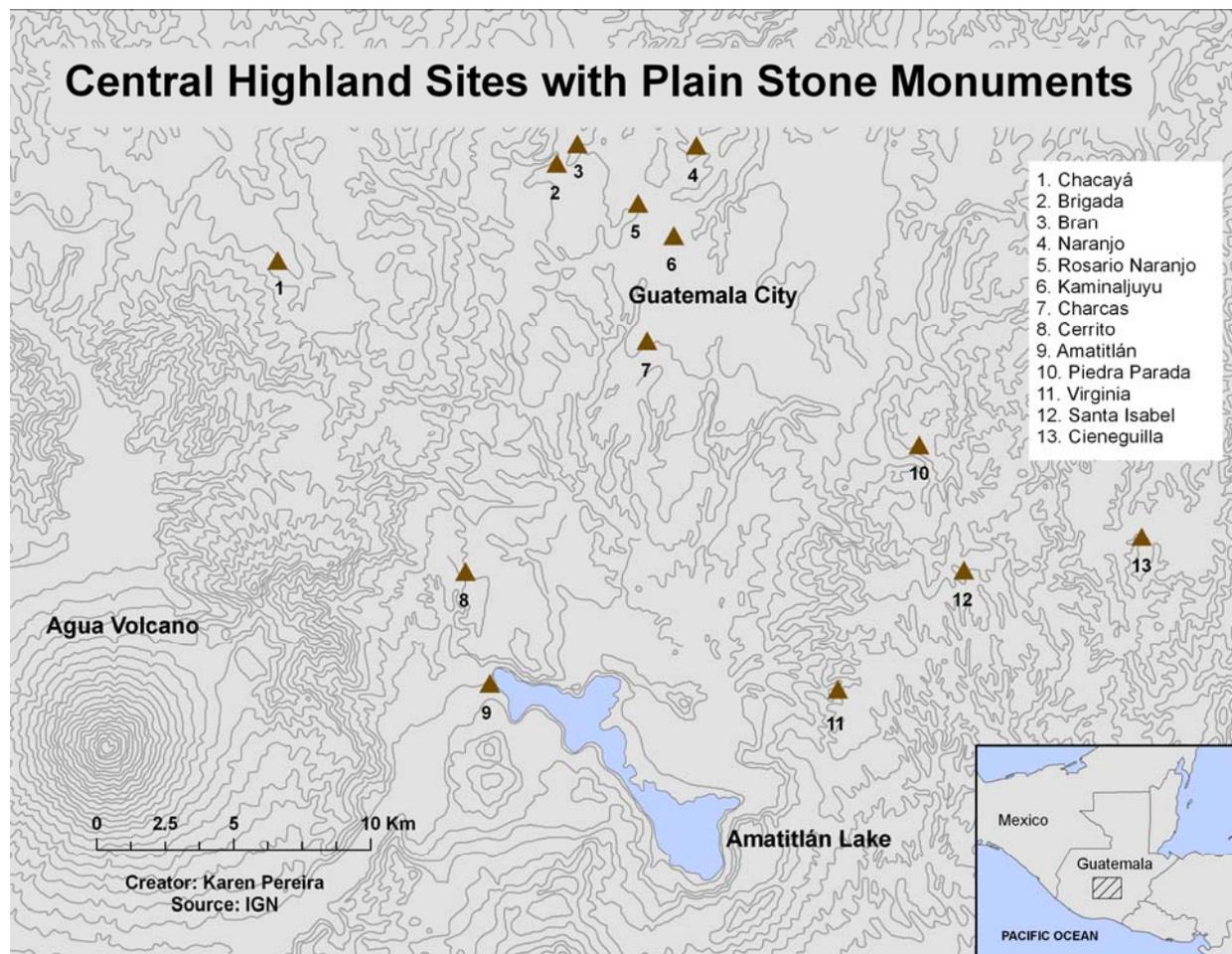


Figure 2-2. Map showing the archaeological sites with plain stone monuments in the central highlands of Guatemala (data obtained from Shook 1952)

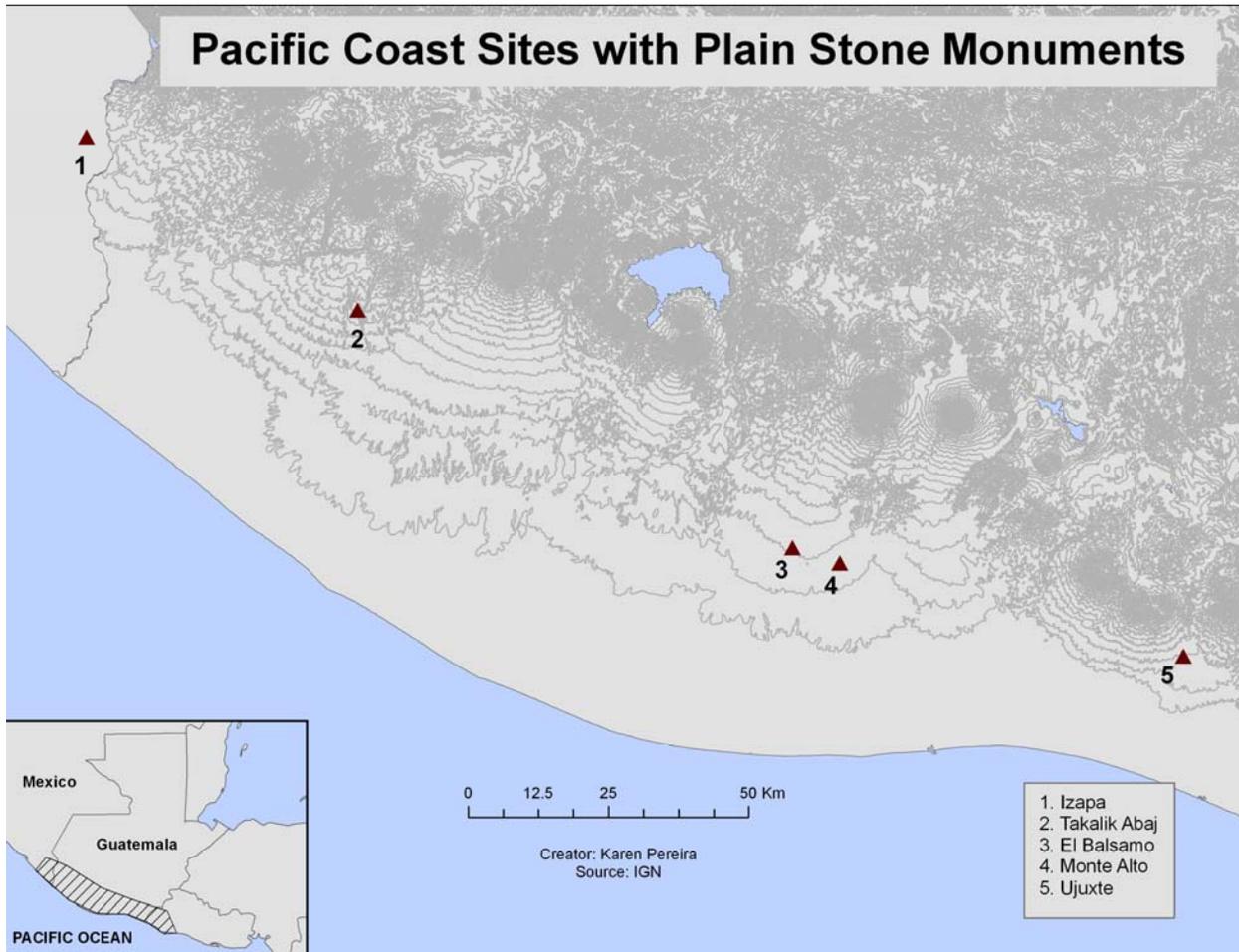


Figure 2-3. Map showing the archaeological sites with plain stone monuments in Pacific Coast of Mexico and Guatemala (data obtained from Bove 2005)

UJUXTE

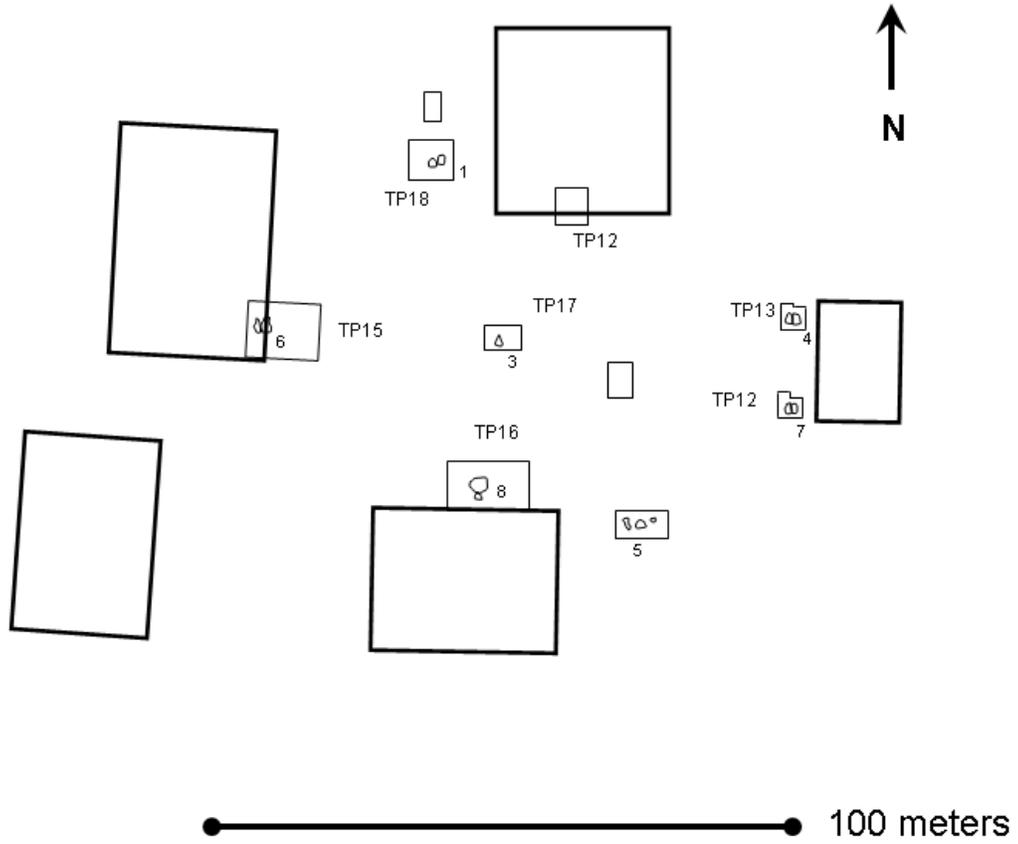


Figure 2-4. Ujuxte Map (redrawn after Estrada Belli 1999:Fig.3.22)

MONTE ALTO, ESCUINTLA

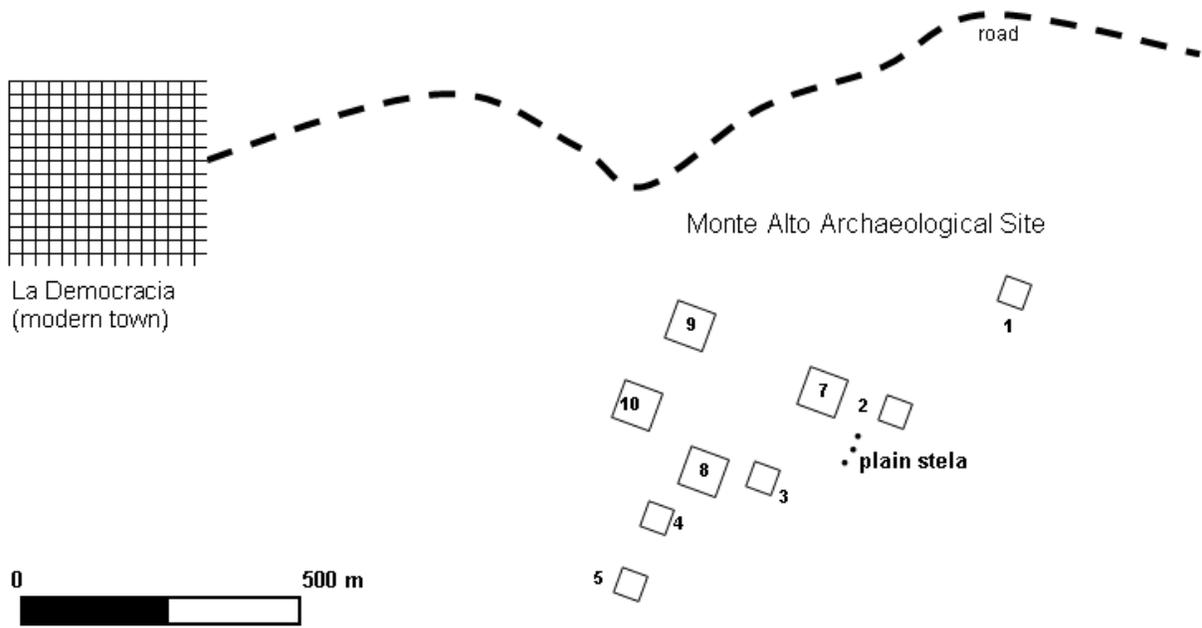


Figure 2-5. Monte Alto Map (redrawn after Parsons 1986:Map 6)

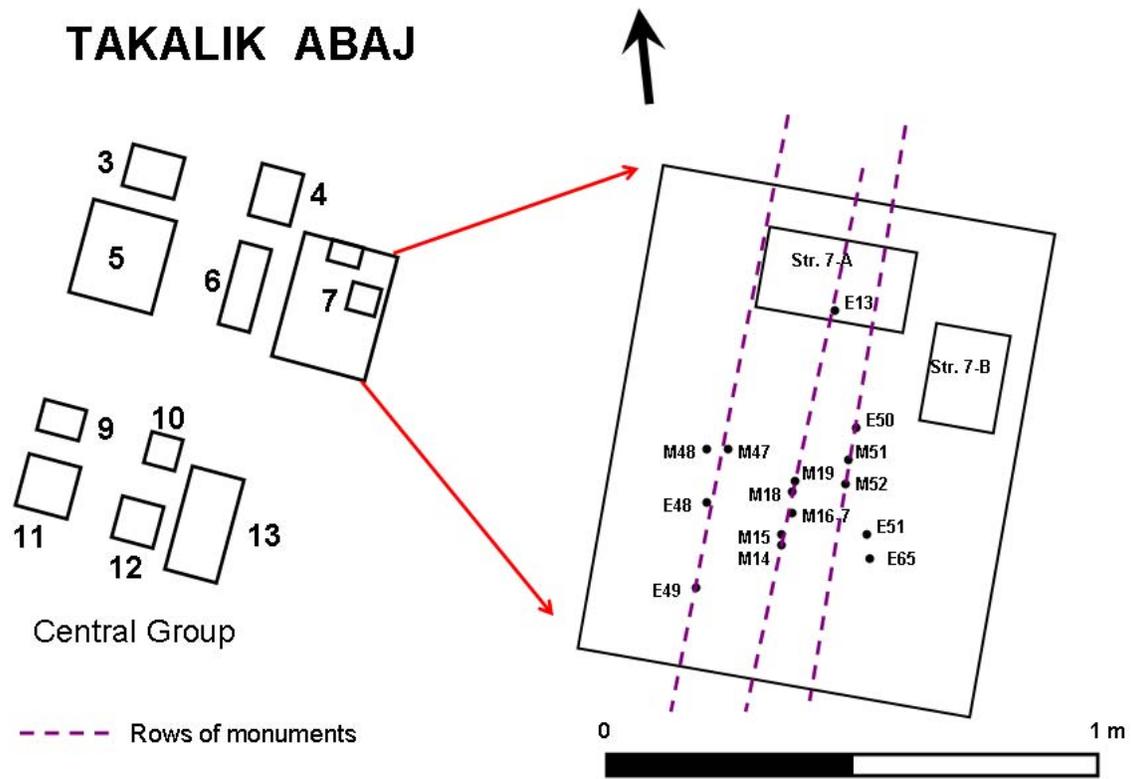


Figure 2-6. Map of Takalik Abaj showing Structure 7 and the three rows of stone monuments (redrawn after Popenoe de Hatch 2003:Fig.1 and Fig.2)

CHAPTER 3 THE DWELLING APPROACH: METHOD AND THEORY

This chapter explains the theory and methods used for this investigation. As was explained in Chapter 1, the main goal of this work is to incorporate the study of plain stone monuments of Naranjo into the life history of the site to specifically target explanations of social differentiation. The argument behind this statement is that spatial and social differentiation are recursively connected processes (Barrett 1990:179). The basis of this study is understanding how the landscape at Naranjo was being shaped and modified through time (in relation to the erection of plain stone monuments), and at the same time, how these changes to the landscape modified the way the ancient residents related to one another.

The main ideas presented in this study unfold from a critique of Cartesian philosophy. Rene Descartes (1596-1650) was a French philosopher and the leading figure who introduced a philosophy based in the mind-body dualism. Descartes' philosophy, or Cartesian philosophy, states that human beings have a mind separated from the body and that the act of thinking is separated from, and prior to, the form of being, as in Descartes' famous statement "I think, therefore I am." Under this premise, the body is visualized as an extension of the human mind, a medium by which cognizant human beings are able to perform their thought acts (Thomas 2001:171). This duality presented is commonly referred in the literature as mind/body, but it also intersects with others, namely space/place and nature/culture (Ingold 1992, 1993, 1995; Thomas 1996, 1999, 2001). Cartesian philosophy is central to the way the western sciences approach the world, which includes the discipline of archaeology (Thomas 1993). Such philosophy has permeated the study of ancient cities and monuments, and as is explained in this chapter, it presents pitfalls for the study of plain stone monuments.

Cartesian philosophy as applied in anthropology has been characterized by Ingold (1995:66) as “the building perspective.” Thus, the building perspective as developed by Ingold is presented as the first section of the chapter. The main goal of this section is to explain the conceptions behind the building perspective and their implications as applied to archaeological research, specifically Naranjo’s plain stone monuments.

The second section introduces the alternative perspective to the Cartesian model: “the dwelling approach.” This approach is explained using Ingold’s (1995) definitions and concepts, which unfold from broader theories of phenomenology (Heidegger 1977), practice theory (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984), and materiality (Meskell 2004; Miller 2005). The dwelling perspective challenges modern western conceptions of how human beings interrelate to their environment and to each other, and it rejects the mind/body, space/place, culture/nature dualities exposed under Cartesian philosophy. Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) introduced the notion of dwelling (Heidegger 1977), which embraces the notion that human beings cannot be considered detached from the world in which they live.

Besides presenting the general theoretical framework of the dwelling approach, the second section also introduces the reader to the key concepts that are central to the discussion of the plain stone monuments in Naranjo. Two specific subtopics of the dwelling approach are addressed: the concept of landscape as a process, and the nature/culture debate. Each subtopic specifically addresses the objectives presented in Chapter 1, which outlined concerns with a) the small-scale changes that occurred at Naranjo in relation to the erection of plain stone monuments; and b) the integration of land features at Naranjo and the use of specific stones as plain monuments. In this second section, the concept of landscape as a process becomes the centerpiece for understanding the first objective, which is further explored in Chapter 5. For the

second objective, the concept of built/unbuilt materials becomes the basis to understand how a stone becomes a monument, which ultimately has a stake in the critique of the nature versus culture dichotomy, which is further explored in Chapter 6.

These two subtopics are presented following the recent literature in landscape anthropology (e.g. Barrett 1999; Bender 2002; Bradley 1998; Casey 1996; Hirsch 1995; Ingold 1992, 1993; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Thomas 1993, 2001) with specific references towards its application to archaeology and the study of stone monuments. In addition, details of the ways to operationalize both concepts for the study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo are introduced. Therefore, each subsection presents the methodology that is followed in this study and explains the main bodies of data that are then described in Chapter 4.

Guidance for this methodology was obtained by looking at how archaeologists in Europe have recently dealt with the same issues of monumentality and the erection of large stones during the Neolithic period, which is equivalent to the Preclassic period in Mesoamerica. Despite the fact that the plain stone monuments in Mesoamerica and the megaliths of Europe have completely different cultural histories, both the Neolithic and the Preclassic period are characterized as periods with the first monumental works. These monuments have often been interpreted by scholars in terms of the emergence of social complexity, both in Mesoamerica (e.g., Joyce and Grove 1999:2) and in Europe (e.g., Thomas 2001:177). In Europe, most megaliths are actually plain stone monuments, which have led scholars to study this phenomenon in a different manner than in Mesoamerica. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, Mesoamerican archaeology has a long-standing tradition of studying carved stone monuments, which has posed a problem for the study of plain stone monuments. Therefore the case studies of megaliths in Europe present an interesting opportunity to apply a different methodology to the study of stone

monuments in Mesoamerica, and specifically at Naranjo. Each methodology is explained under each of the two subtopics of the dwelling approach: landscape as a process and the nature/culture debate.

The Building Perspective

The building perspective draws from the common notion that humans are divided into a tangible aspect, the body, and an intangible aspect, the mind the basis of subjectivity. Ingold (1995) explains this perspective by exploring how humans as subjects interact with their environment (objects). It is conventionally believed that human beings are different from other animals because they are capable of consciously building and transforming their environment. Even though both humans and other animals are capable of building things (e.g. beavers build lodges), the main difference between them is based on the crucial distinction between design and execution (Ingold 1995:59).

According to Ingold's building perspective, humans are distinguished by their capacity to design and plan what they are going to build. They are capable of organizing their space. Human beings are conceived as the "designers" of their world; it is this thinking ahead and planning that separates humans from other animals. Non-human animals, on the other hand, are conceived as part of the environment, and their modifications to the environment are explained as adaptations and as an inherent part of their biological functions. Again, this distinction is based on the Cartesian fundamentals that human beings have a mind and a body, but that animals, lacking such a "mind," are only capable of reacting to their environment (Thomas 2001:171).

Thus, it is believed that human beings build their environment by transforming raw materials into cultural forms. This ability to create things also reflects the assumption that humans are capable of creating a mental or cognitive web of significance that goes beyond a mere adaptation to the environment, since human beings are able to internalize/analyze/digest

their actions and inscribe meaning to them (Thomas 2001:171). In anthropology this web of significance is conceived as “culture” (Ingold 1995:63). The building perspective creates the sense that reality is an external “natural” world, and that humans are able to perceive and absorb this external world through their culture, which implies internal cognitive actions. Under these assumptions, the building perspective creates a sense of culture separated from nature, which also assumes that everything that humans manipulate or transform is no longer part of the “natural” realm (Ingold 1995:66-67).

Notions of a building perspective are embedded in archaeology in such a way that it is common to make distinctions between a natural environment and an artificial or man-made environment by searching to see whether or not there is evidence of human modification of a place (Ingold 1995:67). According to Ingold (1995:70-1) this idea is clearly stated in some studies about the origins of humankind. These studies concentrate on finding the first evidence of tool use and the first evidence of man-made houses, because it is believed that once human beings were capable of designing and building their projects, such as houses and tools, they separated themselves from the rest of animals. Thus, culture was born, or in other words, humans were able to have a mind with which to rationalize. The goal of archaeologists in this type of study is not only to identify the material remains of such constructions, but to try to determine the cultural motives and/or reasons behind the human actions. However, as Ingold (1995) explains, archaeologists encounter difficulties when it is not possible to determine whether a feature was modified by humans, or if it was “partially” modified.

Such built and unbuilt characteristics of the environment are also presented by Cartesian philosophy as the duality of space and place (Casey 1996:13-4). Space is considered as empty, infinite, measurable, and neutral (called “geometrical space” by Thomas [1996]). It is this

geometrical space that scientists are often willing to measure and study. On the other hand, place is seen as a derivative of space. A place is considered a space inhabited by human beings; thus place was previously space that through human occupation and modifications was transformed into a place. According to this extension of Cartesian philosophy, space exists first and place can only exist through the action of human beings (Casey 1996:14-15; Thomas 1996:84).

For archaeology, such concepts have been used by assuming that human beings build settlements (archaeological sites) which are a transformation of a space into a place. Nevertheless, as is explained in the next section, other archaeologists (see Barrett 1999; Bradley 1990; Thomas 1993) believe that this model needs to shift, taking into account the dwelling perspective. For instance, Julian Thomas (1993) critiques the intensive use of visual aids (e.g. maps) in the representation of ancient cultures and sites, and the use of such visual devices to interpret the past. According to Thomas (1993:32) maps have a “totalizing” effect which hides two important aspects of the ancient places under investigation. First, they hide the experiential aspects of being in a place versus the omnipresent view of a map, which is able to “see” several places simultaneously (usually from a “birds-eye” point of view), even though those places could only have been experienced one at a time by the ancient inhabitants. Second, maps tend to equate all that is shown in a specific map as contemporaneous, even though some of the features displayed never coexisted. This second aspect highlights the notion that time is always embedded in place a concept and notion that is developed in the following section. Instead, Thomas states, archaeologists should study the people in those landscapes, not the material features scattered around the ground. This position does not deny that there is a real world “out there” that is held together by a very complex and changing set of relationships. But it acknowledges that the world which human subjects achieve is always an imperfect and situated

one (Thomas 1993:28). Relevance should be given to the relationship between past people and the places which they inhabited and the nature of these everyday experiences (Thomas 1993:28).

In the Maya area, numerous archaeological studies follow several of the concepts common to a building perspective in relation to the study of ancient Maya cities. Studies investigating ancient Maya cities have focused on the meaning behind the city layout. Under this approach it is assumed that the ancient inhabitants of the cities planned their activities in order to create a sacred and symbolic place that followed certain rules common to their cosmology (see Ashmore 1991; Ashmore and Sabloff 2002; Freidel et al. 1993; Taube 1998). Therefore, the main goal of this type of study is to unveil the symbolism behind the man-made structures, or in other words the culture behind the material remains.

Elaborated arrays of ancient cities have been interpreted as the outcome of a complex system of beliefs, and Maya cities are considered to be three-dimensional replicas or a built “microcosmos” of an ancient world view. As Ashmore (1991:199) notes, “many societies use architecture for symbolic expression, and often buildings and other constructions constitute maps of a culture’s worldview.” With this approach the final goal of the researcher is to “uncover” the abstract model or mental template hidden in the material components of the cities (e.g. buildings, houses, monuments), which is supposed to reflect the pre-existing culture and symbolic systems of the ancient residents. In most cases finding this template means looking for specific symmetry in the buildings of the cities or astronomical alignments of buildings and monuments. It also implies comparing several city layouts to understand the common pattern in all of them. However, less attention is paid to the small changes that the city went through over time and to the possible discrepancies that might exist within these over-arching cultural templates and the archaeological context.

As described in Chapter 2, several ancient cities with plain stone monuments have shown a general alignment of 21° east to north, like the case of Ujuxte and Monte Alto, but this alignment is observed only by looking at the final stage of occupation of a site, dismissing the evidence of earlier stages of occupation at the sites. Also, possible alignments of stone monuments have been interpreted as the result of astronomical observations which correlate with specific world views, as was expressed for the case of Monte Alto and Takalik Abaj. With such type of studies it is difficult to know whether all monuments were placed at the same time, or if possible differences in their chronology might exist. Such small-scale information requires closer attention to the archaeological context of the monuments and its relationship to the rest of the site. As Thomas (1993:29) stated “[t]he structures we excavate have not simply been affected by discontinuous human actions, they are both the outcome and the site of generation of human projects, and are meaningless if divorced from the structure of dwelling.” Therefore, the dwelling perspective is presented below as an alternative for the study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo.

The Dwelling Perspective

The dwelling perspective assumes a different type of relationship between human beings and the environment, one which operates as a critique of the Cartesian philosophy. To deconstruct the notions of mind/body, nature/culture, and place/space, Ingold (1995) explores the similarities between humans and animals. According to Ingold (1995:75) both humans and animals follow similar ways of living in the environment because they both build and modify their surroundings as an activity embodied in such environment. What this means is that humans transform their environment, not because of a preconceived mental plan that is transplanted into the external world, like a building perspective would assume, but because they are living in such an environment and this environment enables such transformations. Furthermore, the dwelling

perspective rejects the concept of space (described previously) as being devoid of human meaning and considers place as the center of every human experience. It is this human experience that gives the key for understanding the world (Casey 1996; Thomas 1996).

From a dwelling perspective it is harder to differentiate what is commonly conceived as a “natural” environment from a “built/cultural” environment. As an example, Ingold (1995:77-8) draws the comparison of a house with a tree. The building perspective makes an explicit difference between the two, the former as part of the built/cultural environment and the latter as part of the natural environment, but what happens with the animals that live in the tree? According to Ingold (1995:78) the fact that animals live on the tree makes the tree no different than the house where humans live; they are both dwellings.

Under a dwelling perspective there is no distinction between mind and body. It assumes that the act of thinking, which is considered an internal or abstract process of human beings in the Cartesian model, is intrinsic to every lived experience. There is no separation between the “inner” person, referred to as the mind, and the “outer” person referred to as the body (Thomas 2001:171). Thinking is not an abstracted reasoning which takes place in a realm of pure consciousness; it is a practical aspect of our being in the world (Thomas 1999:4).

Ingold draws explicitly on philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1977) notion of dwelling. According to Heidegger (1977:143) humans tend to confuse what it means to dwell with what it means to build. Part of this misunderstanding derives from the notion that human beings believe that through their thinking and conscious manipulation of the environment, they have been mastering their building activities. It is believed that we build because we need a place to dwell, and to dwell is merely to inhabit a built place. Nonetheless, as Heidegger (1977:146) notes, building is not the antecedent for dwelling, but rather the other way around. He explains that in

order for human beings to be able to build, they first have to be in a place. It is the dwelling that makes humans build, and as Heidegger (1977:324) explains, “to build is in itself already to dwell.” As human beings we are always in place, since we are first and foremost dwellers and we cannot “be” detached from where we are. This idea was captured in the expression “being-in-the-world,” which implies that in order to “be” you have to “be somewhere” (Heidegger 1977:324,334-5).

Ingold (1995:76) summarizes the dwelling perspective as “the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, which arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational context of their practical engagement with their surroundings.” Therefore, even though Ingold does not deny human beings are capable of designing building projects, these designs are viewed as the specific product of living in a location; they are not external to the environment but part of it, and they are also part of human existence. Under the dwelling perspective, both humans and non-human animals live in the world under the same set of principles and relationships towards the environment and its modifications. This approach further assumes that human knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of people’s moving about it. The process involved consists of the engagement of the actors with their environment in active ways (Ingold 2000:230).

For archaeology, the adoption of a dwelling perspective provides a different way of thinking about material culture. As Thomas (1999:4) explains, western sciences (including archaeology), are consumed with the ways of human thinking. Under a building perspective, scholars encounter the difficulties that the material remains which they study are no more than bits and pieces of ancient cognitive worlds that are forever lost. As a solution, archaeologist John Barrett (1990) and others (e.g. Meskell 2004; Miller 2005; Thomas 2001) propose a

dwelling approach which combines phenomenology (following Heidegger 1977) and practice theory (following Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). This approach takes into account the idea that the material world also plays an important role in the constitution of society and individuals (Meskell 2003: 15-16; Miller 2005:3), thus avoiding the mind/body duality of Cartesian philosophy. What is important to explain in any archaeological inquiry is that immaterial ideologies, ideas and culture are not “materialized” through the actions of people, but instead, the materialization of them is simultaneous with the construction of such ideologies (Pauketat 2003:45). Barrett (1990:179) also explained this by saying that material culture is a set of resources that guide social action. According to him, material culture not only enables and constrains those actions (following Giddens 1984), but allows the archaeologist to monitor those actions and their effects in the world. Therefore, to study the past we have to look for the historical context of the practices within which such resources were drawn.

This perspective, called by some scholars “materiality” (Meskell 2004; Miller 2005), problematizes the role that material things have in human lives. It is believed that without material or physical things, human beings would not be able to reproduce their social relationships, since the interplay between material culture and human beings constitutes both societies and their physical world (Barrett 1990:179; Thomas 1993:29). These relations enable and constrain future practices; thus, objects have the power to influence human action (Meskell 2004:20). In short, it is stated that “we need to show how the things that people make, make people” (Miller 2005:38).

The Study of Landscape

Following a dwelling perspective which unfolds from phenomenology, the concept of landscape assumes that any given place is the product of human-human and human-environment interactions. Landscape takes into account not only the physical characteristics of a specific

location but it integrates the human aspect of it (Ingold 1993:152). By human aspect is understood the history of human occupation and the engagement of humans with a specific setting as well as with one another. Thus, a landscape cannot be translated into an environment or a specific location, but in its definition it encompasses the physical and social aspects of human beings living in groups and forming societies (Ingold 1995; Thomas 1993, 2001).

According to Ingold (1993), landscape is a process that encapsulates both place and time. Ingold and other authors (e.g. Bender 2002; Hirsch 1995; Morphy 1995; Thomas 1993) have noted that any given place is embedded with different temporalities which can be understood through the study of landscape. Landscape as a process means that time and places unfold from humans constantly engaging with one another and with their physical world. The integration of time and place into the concept of landscape means that past places and past actions of people/social groups are integrated into present actions and places, but it also means that the present actions and places are also projected into the future possibilities of a landscape. These dynamic aspects of the landscape have been explained in what Eric Hirsch (1995) calls “background” and “foreground.” Hirsch (1995:3) describes a landscape as a process, as “the relationship between the background and the foreground of social life.” By foreground he means the concrete actuality of everyday social life, what Hirsch calls the “way we now are.” On the other hand, background is the perceived potentiality outlined by our foreground existence, or as Hirsch says, “the way we might be.” In this definition, landscape as a process is a recursive interplay between past actions and present actions, but at the same time, the present actions have the possibility or potential to inform future actions. As anthropologists have started to point out, the social importance of material things in pre-literate societies is often that they are futural.

Artefacts assume a projection forward of social relationships, and often seek to influence the character of connectedness between the past and present (Thomas 1993:32)

What is important about the definition of landscape is that as a process, landscape is always under constant transformation, and that places unfold over time. Thus, landscape is always in relation to human beings and their actions; it enables and constrains their personal and social experiences (Barrett 1990:179). The major difference between landscape as a process under the dwelling perspective versus landscape in a building perspective, is that in the first one landscape is seen as a chain of actions that are constantly under transformation, whereas in the latter perspective, landscape is a synoptical view of the present.

Following the dwelling perspective, Ingold (2000:219) states that there is no mental map that determines the spatial relationship of man in a specific location, since “places do not have locations but histories.” With this statement Ingold opens the possibility of the study of landscape not as a location in space, but as a network of connections between places and human beings, a concept drawn from phenomenology and also favored by other scholars (e.g. Bender 2002; Jones 2001; Thomas 2001). Here, places have meaning only in relation to other places and to people. These networks are informed by both the past but also inform future actions, in a sequence that creates historicity. Landscapes have the ability to “gather” places, things and persons in a relational way, since locations are always drawn to our attention through what happens there or through the things which we expect to find there (Heidegger 1977; Thomas 2001:173).

Acknowledgely the materiality of landscapes is of prime importance for archaeology because it allows scholars to understand how social differences within human groups were being shaped and transformed by their own engagement in the physical and social world (Barrett

1999). Material things condense the social history of a community, the stories of individuals, and through their persistence and materiality project them forwards (Thomas 1993:32). In the case of Naranjo this can be studied by looking at the landscape process involved in the construction of mounds, the erection of stones, and the inhabitation of specific locations within the site. In the Naranjo study, the concept of landscape as a process and as a network can help to explain how what we call today the city of Naranjo was constructed over a period of 400 years, as will be detailed in Chapter 4, but also to understand how the material remains that have been excavated at Naranjo were part of the ancient population's everyday life.

Nevertheless a landscape approach is much more than making a "record" of the human modifications to a specific location. In this study, a landscape approach involves in its foundation the belief that social differentiation emerges and is transformed through human engagement with the physical environment and material aspects of life. Humans and "things" cannot be separated one from another in the sense that human beings socialize through the manipulation and creation of the material world. In the case of Naranjo, this would mean analyzing the processes by which the plain stone monuments were erected as part of the site and the outcome of the late Middle Preclassic society at Naranjo. For the study of Naranjo this means to understand how the ancient inhabitants of the site were socializing through their engagement with the environment, and specifically, through the erection of stone monuments and/or other monumental works.

Recent megalith studies in Europe use a dwelling approach as their basis, which, as explained above, implies a certain understanding of how ancient cities were created. As was already explained in the previous section, the dwelling perspective assumes that the environment always influences the way people perceive and interact with it; therefore, the Cartesian notion

that ancient inhabitants build cities according to mental maps is denied. On the other hand, the concept of landscape as a process underlines the relationship and networking between humans, places, and things in a way that it is understood that human socialization could only occur through their engagement in the material world (Thomas 2001:173).

In his study of the Neolithic landscapes of Avebury, England, Julian Thomas (1993:30-32) concentrated on looking beyond the archaeological maps of Avebury that identify the distribution of structures, monuments and features. Instead, he was interested in grasping the notion of “being-there” following a phenomenological approach, in the sense that the ancient inhabitants did not experience the site by looking at maps or from above, but they experienced the site by walking through, and living there. To accomplish this objective, Thomas engaged in a study of Avebury that implies looking at the spatial distribution of the site not as homogenous space or as a place built according to a master plan, but as space that was constantly changing, and one that was differential and graded. Using information from archaeological excavations, Thomas makes the distinction between the Mesolithic and the Neolithic occupations at Avebury in order to distinguish the changes occurred through that time. He paid special attention to the visual changes at the site, in terms of the erection of stone monuments, but most importantly, Thomas integrates the human habitations within the material transformations at Avebury. For instance, he was able to determine that the Neolithic monuments were always placed on top of Mesolithic occupations, which appeared to be hunting places. Several of the Neolithic monuments were used as burial places, but later on, some of the monuments were blocked off, and only exclusive burials were interred in them. These new structures were designed exclusively to be looked at from the outside. During the later stage of occupation three causewayed enclosures were built in the Avebury region, which were delimited by stone

monuments. Thomas interprets these causeways as the creation of a pathway or avenue which directed and restricted the bodily movement of the ancient residents of Avebury. Thus, by the end of the occupation there is a considerable restriction to certain places by the enclosure of monuments and this evidence is interpreted as practices performed by exclusive groups, i.e. a new social category (Thomas 1993:35-7). This study used stratigraphic data drawn from archaeological excavations, which contained small-scale details of the modifications taking place at Avebury. Furthermore, Thomas took into account the visual reconstruction of the site throughout the different stages of occupation. With these data he was able to understand how the “politics of vision” changed and constrained the later occupants of the site, meaning that social segmentation was the outcome of the physical changes at Avebury.

Another set of important studies of British megaliths conducted by John Barrett (1990, 1999, 2000) similarly dealt with details of social complexity. Even though it is widely accepted by scholars that megaliths in Europe occur in conjunction with a more complex social organization, Barrett (1990) investigated the processes by which monumentality changes social complexity and vice versa. In his research, Barrett (1999:263) analyzed how burials in the Neolithic period served as a point of departure for what became burial lineages during the later Iron Age. Barrett (1990:180) explained how the long mounds of the Neolithic often produced human remains with more than one individual and few artefacts associated. In these burial places the skeletal remains were often found mixed and disarticulated. On the other hand, the subsequent Bronze Age round mounds have primary graves with a single body. According to Barrett these differences in the interment of human remains are closely related to the emergence of burial lineages, which he believes, are closely related to the innovation of a linear notion of time and a stricter control from a section of the population, that goes hand in hand with a

restriction in access to the megalithic tombs. Similar to Thomas, Barrett took as the core of his data the stratigraphic evidence and the archaeological remains obtained from excavations, such as human burials, deposits, and structures.

Drawing upon these and other examples of how to employ a dwelling perspective, this study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo adopts a parallel approach while investigating how the ancient inhabitants created and constructed Naranjo. Four main lines of information are used which are key to reveal landscape as a process in Chapter 5. The first line of evidence examines the main geographical features, such as bodies of water, topography, and hills. The purpose of this evidence is to understand the main physical characteristics of the area where Naranjo is located, which is important to analyze the relevance of Naranjo. The second line of evidence, and probably the most important one for the study of Naranjo's landscape, is the stratigraphic data obtained from the excavations carried out at the site. These data inform and illustrate the different changes that occurred at Naranjo during its Middle Preclassic occupation. By looking at the stratigraphy it is possible to identify the first evidence of occupation at the site and its small-scale modifications, such as clay floors, earth fills, and earth structures (either mounds and/or platforms), or any other architectural features. Furthermore, the stratigraphic evidence is useful to understand the original physical conditions of the area prior to human modifications at the location. These bodies of data are crucial to the discussion of landscape as a process and to understand the recursive relationship of the "background" and "foreground" at Naranjo.

The third line of evidence is the archaeological remains obtained from the excavations at Naranjo. This material is used to understand specific practices, such as ritual deposits and burnt areas, which will be described in detail in Chapter 4. In addition, the ceramic material recovered from Naranjo provides a relative chronology of the site in relation to the rest of the Valley of

Guatemala and to Southeastern Mesoamerica more generally. The ceramic sequence is useful also to identify small chronological changes that are not possible to detect with radiocarbon dating. Nonetheless, several radiocarbon dates were used to calibrate the whole occupation at Naranjo.

The fourth line of evidence is composed of spatial information displayed through various maps. Both the topographic map and the archaeological map are used to understand the spatial distribution of features within the site. Nonetheless this evidence is used in conjunction with the stratigraphic data in order to avoid assuming that the final layout of Naranjo remained constant from the beginning of its occupation, a pitfall in archaeology already discussed. Furthermore, the map is used to understand possible symmetries and asymmetries at Naranjo that will need further explanations drawn from the other bodies of data outlined above. Finally, and to complement the rest of information, visual elements in the form of photographs and drawings are incorporated to aid the reader in the visual perception of Naranjo. These photographs and drawings illustrate key geographical features, the final disposition of Naranjo, the excavations, and the plain stone monuments. Further detail about the study of plain stone monuments *per se* is outlined in the following section.

Bridging the Nature/Culture Divide

The built versus unbuilt dichotomy is widely treated in anthropology and represents an important segment of studies that deal with concepts of nature and culture (see Dwyer 1996; Houston 1998; Kowalski 1999; McAnany 1998; van de Gutche 1999). According to Ingold (1996:120) a sharp distinction between nature and culture is not universal. Other contemporary non-western societies do not believe in such distinction between nature and culture and do not alienate themselves from their lived environment (Ingold 1996:120).

For archaeology, such a distinction between nature and culture is an important part of distinguishing and delimiting human occupation. Archaeology relies on looking at traits definitively used or modified by humans to address anthropological questions regarding past human existence. Nonetheless, confusion may arise by looking at specific features that are partially modified by humans. The case of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo represents such in-between objects because they usually represent partially modified natural stones placed in association with other monumental buildings.

To study the plain stone monuments as part of the human experience and practices in Naranjo, it is necessary to leave behind Cartesian divisions between nature and culture. Looking at how megaliths of Europe have been studied in relation to their environment, especially the work of Richard Bradley (1998, 2000), serves as a model for the Naranjo analysis. Bradley has studied megaliths and Neolithic sites using what he calls “an archaeology of natural places” (Bradley 2000).

The main premise behind this idea is that there is no sharp distinction between natural places and cultural places, something that follows from the dwelling perspective. As Bradley (2000:41) shows, the study of European megaliths allows scholars to think of different explanations beyond this dichotomy. Bradley’s (1998) main critique is that archaeologists often forget to integrate the natural features and landscape into their studies of ancient cities. As a consequence most archaeological studies have focused on definitive human-modified features, such as archaeological sites and obvious man-made alterations to the environment. On the contrary, Bradley argues, archaeologists need to look at other environmental features because they probably formed part of the ancient landscape as well.

Bradley (1998) presents an interesting case study of the stone monuments of Cornwall in south-west England. At Cornwall several tors, which are massive stacks of granite, often acquire a shape of massive piled stones, sometimes with a huge horizontal slab on the summit. In the same area, a series of megalithic tombs, have been identified. The shape of the megalithic tombs is strikingly similar to that of the tors, which has led several scholars to assume that the ancient residents of the area constructed the tombs to imitate the natural tors. Bradley (1998:19-20) critiques this idea, arguing that it was not until modern geology in the 19th century that archaeologists were able to classify tors as natural formation. Before that, even archaeologists had a difficult time distinguishing the tors from the tombs. Bradley's case is to point out that archaeologists often extrapolate their own notions of nature and culture to the ancient societies under study. In this case, they assumed that the ancient residents of Cornwall copied the natural tors to build their own cultural monuments, the megaliths. On the contrary, Bradley (1998:20-21) believes there might be other explanations to interpret the similarities between the megalith monuments and the natural tors. He explains the possibility that the ancient residents of Cornwall conceived the tors as ancient ruins of past peoples, i.e. "cultural: features, and because of their importance as ancestral places, the megalithic tombs were erected in a similar fashion.

The example presented by Bradley, concerning how archaeologists assume ancient peoples made a distinction between nature and culture, are of use in this study of the plain stone monuments of Naranjo. As outlined above, plain stone monuments appear to be in a limbo between "nature" and "culture." Therefore a different approach should be applied, similar to that of Bradley's.

The evidence to study the plain stone monuments at Naranjo, along the lines of a dwelling perspective, is comprised of two main bodies of data. The first body of data comes from the

physical characteristics of the monuments themselves. A detailed description of the monuments is presented with information about their shape, dimensions, stone sources when known, color, man-made modifications, and any other obvious visible features. This step includes a study comparing and contrasting the main characteristics of the monuments. Length, width, and height are recorded according to the visible stone, the base of the stone, and the complete stone. These data are complemented with photographs, drawings, and tables that summarize the information. This body of data is important to look at all the stone monuments of Naranjo and their unique characteristics. Contrary to previous studies of stone monuments in the Maya area that dismiss the medium as an important element of the site, the material conditions and characteristics of the stone monuments might provide insightful data to further explore the differences between modified and non-modified stones and their selection to be erected at Naranjo.

The second body of data provides information about the possible geological formations from which the stones of Naranjo were obtained, either locally or regionally. The data are based on surveys carried out in the surroundings areas of Naranjo, and by looking at geological maps of the central highlands area. The information is presented in maps. The data provide information such as possible nearby stone sources, and possible “natural” sites that were used by the inhabitants of Naranjo. These data, obtained from surveys and excavations in the field, are illustrated with photographs and traced on the map of Naranjo. The main goal of this second body of data is to provide information of the physical landscape at Naranjo and the stone sources used in the selection of the stone monuments. This information will be discussed in Chapter 6 following Bradley’s ideas about the relevance of the stone sources and the natural surroundings of archaeological sites.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the benefits of adopting a dwelling approach for the study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo. Ingold's (1995) dwelling perspective, which unfolds from phenomenology, presents a different understanding of the relations between humans and the environment than the notions presented in the building perspective section. According to a dwelling perspective, humans transform their environment, not because of pre-conceived notions or mental maps, but because of their constant engagement within this environment. Thus, there is no previous building without dwelling.

In this study, the dwelling approach is adopted through two main ideas: landscape as a process, and the rejection of a universal distinction between nature and culture. Landscape as a process entails the notion that human beings cannot be detached from the places they inhabited; thus, places, humans and things are recursively connected. In this study landscape as a process allows the investigation of Naranjo by looking at its life history, analyzing small-scale changes recorded in the stratigraphic data recovered from the excavations at the site. Furthermore, by adopting ideas from materiality it is possible to link the physical modifications at Naranjo with the social transformations that occurred from the beginning of the Middle Preclassic period until its end.

The nature versus culture debate is addressed in this study through the examination of the built vs. unbuilt characteristics of the plain stone monuments of Naranjo, to challenge modern western concepts of nature and culture. By looking at the plain stone monuments at Naranjo and their relationship to their natural surroundings and other geological data, this study adopts a different approach compared to other studies of monuments in the Maya area which have been reluctant to study the material conditions of the monuments, the stones themselves. As was presented in the methodology section, such an attempt involves recording and analyzing all the

possible details about the plain stone monuments to avoid treating at them as homogeneous stones.

Adopting a dwelling perspective in the study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo provides a different understanding of how the processes of constructing the site and erecting plain stone monuments are relevant to the development of social differentiation. By looking at the case studies from Europe presented in this chapter, it was possible to determine that the data for this study need to be as detailed as possible, with specific bodies of information drawn from the archaeological excavations and surveys carried out at Naranjo. These data are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 STONE MONUMENTS OF NARANJO, GUATEMALA

This chapter summarizes the data from Naranjo that are the principle evidence for the analyses presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The main goal is to provide a general understanding of the plain stone monuments of Naranjo and their relationship to the other monumental constructions as well as the rest of the archaeological evidence found through the excavations at the site. As was stated in the previous chapter, this study focuses on the creation of place and how this was accomplished through the small changes that occurred during the Middle Preclassic occupation at Naranjo. Most of the data presented here are derived from the research done by the Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project (NARP) (see Chapter 1), of which the author was a member, and the author is responsible for the summary and presentation of the data in this thesis.

The chapter is organized in four sections. The first section briefly describes the Middle Preclassic occupation in the Valley of Guatemala to provide a general framework for the location and temporality of Naranjo, its relationship with other sites nearby, and the relevance of the plain stone monuments in this context. The second section describes the geography of Naranjo, which includes a description of the relevant natural features of Naranjo. The main purpose is to describe the physical and visual landscape of Naranjo to provide the reader with a sense of the place under study. The third section presents information on the occupation of Naranjo during the Middle Preclassic period. This section includes an explanation of the main characteristics of Naranjo, that is, its stages of occupation with emphasis on the main buildings and stone monuments. The objective of this section is to present detailed information obtained from the excavations at the site that are relevant to understanding how the ancient city of Naranjo was created and inhabited during the Middle Preclassic period. The final section provides a study of the stones used for the monuments at Naranjo and the relevance of the stone sources. The goal is

to provide an understanding of the preferences for the use of certain stones and the possible locations from which these stones were obtained.

Middle Preclassic Occupation in the Valley of Guatemala

The Valley of Guatemala has a long history of occupation which began in the Middle Preclassic (ca. 900 BC) and extended until the Postclassic period. The names of the ceramic phases are provided in Table 4-1. Unlike other regions in Guatemala and the rest of Southeast Mesoamerica, there is still no evidence of Early Preclassic occupation in the Valley of Guatemala (Murdy 1990:351), which could be interpreted either as a lack of occupation or a sampling error. Therefore the first permanent settlements in the valley are dated to the Middle Preclassic period and are characterized as places with monumental constructions such as mounds, large platforms, and in some cases, plain stone monuments (Figure 4-1).

The Valley of Guatemala is often viewed by scholars as a strategic region due to its location on the continental divide between the Pacific Coast to the south and the Lowlands to the north, and between the western side of the Highlands and the Atlantic coast to the east (Shook and Hatch 1999). Since the 1950's the expansion of modern Guatemala City has brought about many changes that represented a challenge for archaeologists studying the archaeological sites in the valley (Crasborn 2000). For example, most of the excavations done at Kaminaljuyu, the most prominent regional center in the Valley, were part of rescue projects due to modern construction (Kidder 1961; Kidder et al. 1977). The same is true for other investigations in the valley, which include Naranjo (Arroyo 2006:1; De León and Valdés 2002; Jacobo 1992).

Despite an apparent lack of occupation in previous periods, there is sufficient information to conclude that most of the Valley of Guatemala was populated by the beginnings of the Middle Preclassic period. This period was first identified archaeologically by Edwin Shook during the excavations at the site of Kaminaljuyu in the 1940's and 1950's (Popenoe de Hatch 2002:278).

Later the Middle Preclassic was divided into two phases: Las Charcas (900-600 BC) and Providencia (600 – 400 BC) (Arroyo 2006:135; Popenoe de Hatch 2002b:278). This same chronology has been applied to the other archaeological sites in the valley. Las Charcas contexts are characterized by dense deposits that were placed in deep pits excavated into the sterile soil by the ancient residents of the area. Such deposits are referred in the literature as troncoconic formations or bottle-shaped pits (Marroquín 2006:1) and are distinctive features found in other regions of Mesoamerica in the Preclassic (or Formative) period (e.g., Flannery 1976). Most of the Las Charcas deposits found in the Valley of Guatemala have ceramic and lithic materials, and in some occasions, human remains (Borhegyi 1956:287). Nonetheless few architectural features have been identified during Las Charcas times (Shook and Hatch 1999). Most of the platforms found so far are low modified natural elevations (Velásquez 1993). In contrast, the subsequent Providencia phase is characterized by the construction of mounds and platforms using earthen fills that increased the level of the natural terrain (Román 1998).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the plain stone monuments of the central highlands were dated by Shook to the Middle Preclassic occupation, and one of the bases for this dating was the surface material collected at some of the sites with such monuments (Shook 1952). During his visit to Naranjo, Shook reported viewing several clay figurines dated to the Las Charcas phase (Shook 1943), and these pieces were important in the assignment of the plain stone monument tradition to the Middle Preclassic period at the site. As explained in this chapter, the excavations at Naranjo were able to confirm this dating (Pereira et al. 2007).

In spite of the evidence for the vast occupation of the Valley of Guatemala during the Middle Preclassic period, the archaeological literature on the history of the valley has been dominated by the occupation of the ancient city of Kaminaljuyu. Kaminaljuyu is considered the

most important site of the valley due to its long occupation and large spatial extent. This city was inhabited since the Middle Preclassic period (ca. 900 BC) and abandoned by the Late Classic period (ca. AD 900) (Popenoe de Hatch 1991:2). Nonetheless the Middle Preclassic occupation at Kaminaljuyu and the rest of the sites in the Valley of Guatemala is a topic that still needs further investigation. Even though Kaminaljuyu is posited as the dominant site of the valley for the Late Preclassic period (Shook and Hatch 1999), recent excavations at other Middle Preclassic sites (Arroyo et al. 2007; De León and Valdés 2002; Jacobo 1992) suggest that Kaminaljuyu was not the major center during the Middle Preclassic period (Arroyo 2006:137-8). Nonetheless, by the beginnings of the Late Preclassic period there is a change in the settlement pattern of the Valley of Guatemala because Kaminaljuyu emerged as the regional center in the area. This is inferred by the large amount of monumental constructions that were made by this time there (Popenoe de Hatch 1991:6). At the same time that Kaminaljuyu rose to dominance, several of the larger Middle Preclassic sites in the valley were abandoned, including Naranjo (Arroyo et al. 2007:871).

Geography of Naranjo

Naranjo is situated on a “peninsula” surrounded by ravines and rivers with its main access to the south (Figure 4-2). The most prominent feature that characterizes the area where Naranjo is located is a natural hill, the Cerro Naranjo. This hill runs from north to south, and it is located to the southwest of the Naranjo site (Figure 4-3). The Cerro Naranjo is an outstanding natural feature for the entire Valley of Guatemala because it is one of the highest elevations in the area, 1660 meters above sea level, whereas the average elevation for the valley is 1500 meters above sea level. In addition, its distinctive shape, composed of three major peaks, can be observed from great distances at several other locations in the valley, which makes it a good point of reference (Figure 4-4). Besides the Cerro Naranjo, and from a larger scale perspective, the Agua

Volcano also forms parts of the visual landscape of Naranjo. This volcano is situated more than 30 kilometers away in a straight line to the southwest of the site, on the outskirts of a neighboring valley. Nonetheless, its height of 1900 meters above sea level makes the volcano visible from the entire Valley of Guatemala (Figure 4-5).

At a smaller scale, and also forming part of the visual landscape of Naranjo, is another natural hill located within the site boundaries, in the east area (Figure 4-6). This natural hill has an elevation of approximately 30 meters from the modern surface and delimits the eastern border of Naranjo. In this area a ravine of 150 meters of depth creates a gap between the terrain of Naranjo and the neighboring areas. This ravine borders the northern and northwestern part of the site, although on the west side of the peninsula of Naranjo the ravines are shallower (Figure 4-7).

Several small rivers run at the bottom of the ravines surrounding Naranjo. Some of the smaller branches of these rivers come from natural water springs located within the boundaries of Naranjo. At least three permanent springs have been identified along the west ravine of the site, and many others are active only during the rainy season (Figure 4-8).

The center of the Naranjo covers an area of approximately 160,000 square meters, which includes three mounds and two platforms (Figure 4-9). The terrain of the site is characterized by a small gradient that makes the south area slightly higher in elevation than the north area; the difference is about 10 meters. Nonetheless this difference in elevation is mostly noticed in the southern portion where the slope is steepest. To the southwest this slope increases dramatically since there is a connection to the slopes of the Cerro Naranjo. Therefore it could be said that Naranjo is literally on the outskirts of the hill.

The northern area of Naranjo (north of Mound 2 and the Natural Hill) is characterized by a flat terrain which is interrupted only by the presence of Mound 3. This area has the best view of

the site. From here it is possible to observe the northern part of the Valley of Guatemala, the Agua Volcano, the entire Cerro Naranjo, and the natural hill of Naranjo. Both of these latter features are usually difficult to visualize completely from the center of the site (near Mound 1 or Mound 2) due to their proximity which reduces the panoramic view.

History of the Occupation at Naranjo

Naranjo was first occupied during the Middle Preclassic period around 900 BC and it was inhabited until 400 BC; its occupation spans the Las Charcas and Providencia phases (Arroyo 2006:9). The site was abandoned by the Late Preclassic period, and it was not until the Late Classic period that it was partially revisited and reoccupied (Paiz 2007) (Table 4-1). The main layout of the site was created throughout the Middle Preclassic occupation. By the end of this period Naranjo was composed of two platforms, three mounds, and more than 20 plain stone monuments (Figure 4-9). The surrounding areas of Naranjo were also occupied during this period of time and there is evidence of household occupation (Pereira and Arroyo 2008). Nonetheless the information presented on this thesis focuses on the information gathered from the ceremonial center of Naranjo.

The Northern Platform, Mound 1, and the Southern Platform are aligned north to south in the western portion of the site. These three buildings are connected to one another and they share the same foundation. Mound 1 stands out from both platforms since it has a height of 6 meters, whereas each platform is around 1.5 meters high (Arroyo 2006:11). The area between these constructions and the natural hill is composed of a fairly flat terrain of 200 meters by 200 meters. This is where most of the plain stone monuments of Naranjo were erected. Here, three possible rows of 16 monuments have been identified (Pereira et al. 2007). To the north of the area of the monuments and near the Northern Platform is Mound 2, with a height of approximately 4 meters. Finally, Mound 3 is located 250 meters north of what is considered the

center of the site. This mound was built on top of a natural elevation and it reached a total height of 4 meters (Arroyo 2006: 10).

Since the end of the 19th century, travelers visiting Naranjo felt attracted to the plain stone monuments of the site. As early as 1875, the photographer Eadweard Muybridge visited Naranjo and took the first published picture of Naranjo's Monument 1 (Burns 1986, cited in Arroyo 2006:3). One year later, the Minister of the United States for Central America, George Williamson, went to Naranjo as well (Arroyo 2006: 3-6). He was the first to publish a map of Naranjo as part of his archaeological report (Williamson 1877). In his map (Figure 4-10) and descriptions he named 15 stone monuments at the site, 13 of them distributed in three rows in the central area between the natural hill and Mound 1. He provided further details, stating that Row 3 had four columnar basalts, there were five big boulders in Row 2, and four stone monuments in Row 1, as well as another basalt column near the north end of Mound 1. The map and description made by Williamson have proven to be a valuable source of information, and the map has very accurate measurements. Decades later, Edwin M. Shook (1943) visited Naranjo and documented 21 monuments (Figure 4-11). He added five more monuments to Row 1 and several other monuments in the main area of the site. Nonetheless, Shook's sketch shows two of five columnar basalts in Row 3, which is confusing since Williamson reported only four columnar basalts in that row, not five.

The Naranjo Archaeological Project was able to locate more than 30 stone monuments at Naranjo, although not all of them were *in situ*⁵ or at the center of the site. At Naranjo, the main visual arrangement at the site is dominated by the three rows of monuments placed in the flat

⁵ The NARP numbered all the large stone found in the field seasons, whether or not these were in situ. Here I discuss only those monuments recorded in situ and dated for the Middle Preclassic period (Table 4-2).

plaza area between Mound 1-South Platform and the Natural Hill (Figure 4-9) (Pereira et al. 2007). In addition, recent findings have identified a possible fourth row of monuments placed to the west of Mound 1 and of the Northern Platform (Arroyo personal communication 2008).

It is possible that more stones were erected as part of row 1, since Shook noted in his sketch map ten spaces named as “missing stelae”. These missing monuments were not identified by Williamson in his map of 1877, which raises questions as to whether what Shook observed during his visit were in fact holes produced by removing some of the plain stone monuments (Pereira et al. 2007). Nonetheless, Shook was able to identify other stone monuments not recognized by Williamson, such as Monument 3 and 4 located in front of the Southern Platform.

First Occupation at Naranjo

In addition to the visible constructions at Naranjo, the excavations that the NARP carried out during the 2005-2007 seasons revealed that the ancient residents of Naranjo engaged in massive earthworks that are hidden to the naked eye today. Some of these activities were related to carving troncoconic pits in the sterile soil, and others were related to leveling some of the areas at Naranjo with large earth fillings.

The troncoconic pits were found in several areas of the center of the site, mostly in the western portion. Some were found in the surrounding areas of Mound 1 (to the west and north) (NJO8-1 and NJO 15-6, see Arroyo 2006⁶), below what later became the Northern Platform, and others in the southern area of the site (Operation 24, Arroyo 2006). These pits were carved within the sterile soil and were filled with a high concentration of fragmented vessels and incense vessels, broken clay figurines, pieces of obsidian blades and flakes, broken basalt

⁶ Each excavation unit at Naranjo was designated under a three-code number. The first three letters NJO refer to Naranjo, the following number indicates the operation number, and the third number refers to the number of unit excavated within the operation number.

grinding stones, green stone, pumice, mica, and sometimes human and animal bones. The materials were deposited as consecutive layers, and the evidence shows that they were burned *in situ*, since large quantities of ash, charcoal, and burnt chunks of clay were found. These deposits have been interpreted as evidence of ritual practices carried out in Naranjo (Arroyo 2006:29). None of the materials recovered was in one piece, and Arroyo suggests that purposeful breaking and scattering of the pieces was part of the ritual practices involved, as well as the burning activity. During the ceramic analysis several broken pieces coming from these pits were found to be parts of the same vessels. A similar situation was encountered in the analysis of figurines, where one head could fit one of the fragmented bodies found in adjacent excavation pits. Thus, this information indicates that pieces of the same ceramic vessels or figurines were scattered meters apart in the same pit or in a different pit by the ancient inhabitants of Naranjo.

All the deposits were found on top of the natural yellowish tephra soil locally called *talpetate*⁷, and in some instances pits were dug in this soil before placing the materials. The ceramics recovered from these pits were identified as Las Charcas materials. In addition to the ceramic seriation, carbon dating showed that these ritual practices were carried out during the time span of 830 – 750 BC calibrated. (Arroyo 2006:137).

The evidence for earth-filling activities was identified in the south portion of the center of Naranjo. Before excavation this area did not show evidence of modifications and it looked like a natural flat terrain. Nonetheless the test pits demonstrated that great amounts of earth fill were placed here. In some cases the filling represented an elevation of the natural surface by 2 meters. Thus, this evidence reveals that the original ground surface in this area was shallower than most of the rest of the center of the site. The first earth fill was composed of a mixture of brown clay

⁷ Talpetate is one of the layers recognized for the soil series “Guatemala” part of the central highlands soil types. Talpetate is a silty clay loam of brown yellow color and is of volcanic origin (Simmons et al. 1959:776)

and sand with other inclusions, such as pumice and chunks of burnt clay. The fill was topped with a layer of yellowish clay, presumably the same as the sterile soil or *talpetate*. This brown-yellowish clay with a thin sand layer on top was interpreted as the first clay floor built at Naranjo, and it was found only in this area (Figure 4-12). Few cultural materials were recovered from these excavations, mostly pieces of ceramics mixed in the earth fill. Therefore the dating of these activities was derived by correlating the stratigraphy of these excavations with the ones from the rest of the site.

Monumental Constructions at Naranjo

After the construction of the first clay floor, several other activities were carried out in the center that changed the original landscape of Naranjo. These modifications produced three major characteristics: the elevation of the terrain in the west portion of the site, the creation of a new clay floor (Clay Floor #2) on top of the first clay floor, and the erection of most of the plain stone monuments in the same area where the second clay floor was placed. Nonetheless not all of the changes occurred during the same time period. As is discussed here, some activities were carried out starting in the Las Charcas phase and continuing to the Providencia phase, while others did not begin until the Providencia phase (Arroyo 2006:51). The main division within this chronology is observed at a broader scale in the center of Naranjo. The majority of Las Charcas phase activities have been documented in the southern portion of the center of the site, which includes the South Platform, Mound 1, and some of the stone monuments, whereas most of the subsequent Providencia phase activities were documented in the northern portion where the North Platform and Mound 2 are located.

The western portion of the center of Naranjo where the South Platform, Mound 1, and the North Platform are found today was originally a natural elevation. In the southern portion of what later became the ceremonial center, the ancient residents of Naranjo engaged in a series of

practices very similar to the ritual depositions already discussed as part of the first occupation evidence. Here, the same pattern was observed through the excavations, which consisted of the creation of pits within the *talpetate*. Broken cultural materials were placed afterwards as layers of burnt material which formed dense deposits, presumably ritual in nature (Arroyo 2006). These deposits were sometimes combined with layers of mixed clays of different brown color tones (Figure 4-13).

The stratigraphic evidence thus reveals that the elevation of this terrain (which has been named by the NARP the South Platform) was not a product of an intentional construction project, but was instead the indirect result of the repetition of the practices of the placement of ritual deposits and layers of earth fill, which little by little elevated the area to around 1.5 meters above the surface. During the excavations the NARP was able to identify different heterogeneous layers of fills and cultural material deposits, although it was not possible to distinguish uniform construction fillings or building stages (Arroyo 2006:20). According to the ceramic analysis the South Platform represents the main area where ritual practices were carried out. Furthermore, several carbon dates confirmed that this area was in use from the Las Charcas phase around 790 BC until the end of the Providencia phase around 400 BC (Arroyo 2006:137).

In the area where Mound 1 lies today the excavations revealed a detailed sequence of soil layers that suggest at least six different episodes in the history of Naranjo (Arroyo 2006:18). Each episode is connected to marked charcoal layers, and the stratigraphy of the mound proved to be rather complex. It is probable that the first phases of activities carried out in this area were not related to the construction of a mound, since the stratigraphy shows the possibility of two elevated areas. Nonetheless by the last episode of use, the formal construction of Mound 1 was evident by its front clay staircase and a possible perishable structure on its top (Arroyo 2006:14).

The ceramic analysis and the carbon dating samples both show that the area where Mound 1 stands was a focus of activities since the Las Charcas phase that continued until the end of Providencia phase (Arroyo 2006:138).

The final set of modifications made in Mound 1 is contemporaneous with the creation of a second clay floor in the center of Naranjo (Figure 4-14). Before placing the second floor, they capped Clay Floor #1 and/or prepared the surface for Clay Floor #2 with brown clay fills. Thus, in the excavation profiles the brown clay was seen between the two floors. The area between the west constructions complex conformed by the South Platform-Mound1-North Platform and the natural hill to the east was covered completely with this floor. In this area the floor had characteristics similar to Clay Floor #1, which had been topped with excavated *talpetate* soil. Nonetheless the same floor found in the area west of Mound 1 and the South Platform did not have this yellowish color and was composed of brown clay without any final clay layer as the top surface. Thus, it has been interpreted that the area east of the constructions (South Platform-Mound 1-North Platform) and in between the natural hill, which did have the yellowish color, was a man-made surface that was under constant modification as is explained below (Arroyo 2006:29).

By looking at both figures 4-12 and 4-14 it is possible to observe that the Clay Floor #2 had an extended area to the north in comparison to the evidence of Clay Floor #1. The excavation evidence also shows that this extended area to the north suffered other permanent alterations such as the construction of the North Platform and Mound 2. According to Barbara Arroyo (2006:30) the northern structures of Naranjo, including Mound 3 were built at the later part of the Middle Preclassic period during the Providencia phase (Figure 4-9). Excavations of

these structures showed that they had fewer construction phases and that they were built more quickly than Mound 1 (Arroyo et al 2007:869).

With the evidence outlined above it is possible to interpret that the area where the center of Naranjo lies today started being used and modified by the beginning of the Middle Preclassic period, during the Las Charcas phase. By this time the southern portion of what later became the center of Naranjo had scattered ritual materials which with time became layered deposits on top of the sterile soil or *talpetate*. In some instances troncoconic pits were dug before placing the cultural materials. Most of these ritual deposits were later buried deeply by subsequent earth fillings and floors. Around the same time the area southeast to the natural hill started to be modified. Such modifications involved large quantities of earth fill composed of clay materials. These fills were topped with a thin yellowish layer of *talpetate* which has been interpreted as Floor #1. Evidence of human modifications was also visible in the western portion of the center of Naranjo. Here, repetition of ritual deposits combined with mixed clay layers over the years produced the South Platform (Arroyo 2006). In a similar fashion the area underneath Mound 1 was found to contain dense cultural material deposits. The area was later intentionally elevated to create Mound 1 with a nice front clay stairway and a perishable superstructure. This later construction was probably done at the same time as the placement of the second floor in the area between this mound and the natural hill. The second floor was placed on top of the first floor with a clay layer in between, although the ancient inhabitants of Naranjo extended its original surface to the north, where the new constructions of Mound 2 and the North Platform were also carried out by the late Middle Preclassic period. The following sections incorporate data from the plain stone monuments found at the center of Naranjo to complete the life history of the center of the site.

Monuments in Row 1

The existence of a plaza area as a defined space was first identified by Clay Floor #2 and was further confirmed by the evidence of the erection of the plain stone monuments. Most of the monuments found at Naranjo were placed in this area, and their placement suggests they form three different rows, as Williamson first observed and noted on his 1877 map (Figure 4-15). Row 1 was erected to the west and close to Mound 1 and the South Platform (Table 4-5). This row is composed of Monuments 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 (Figure 4-16). All the monuments in this row have different shapes (size and height) and are probably from different materials (Table 4-4 and Figure 4-17).

The NARP excavations of Row 1 monuments revealed that all of them were placed in Clay Floor #2, which means that the small portion of the stone used as the base or foundation was interred within that floor (Figure 4-18). Apparently, the floor was built at the same time as the erection of the monuments because there was no visible trace that the clay floor was cut into to place the monuments after the floor was created. This was especially evident during the excavation of Monument 3, where a stone altar was found on top of the clay floor, but a small portion of Monument 3 was interred within the floor to make it stable (Figure 4-19).

Even though all of the Row 1 monuments were placed in the same floor, several differences were found while comparing the stratigraphy of the excavations at each monument, which might indicate that not all the monuments were placed at the same moment. One difference observed was that not all the monuments were placed in an area where Clay Floor #1 was present (the southern portion of the plaza). Monuments 7, 8, and 9 were placed directly on top of the sterile soil, where a clay fill topped with the Clay Floor #2 was built at the same time (Table 4-3). Furthermore, the ceramic analysis of the excavation materials showed mixed ceramics from Las Charcas and Providencia phases (Arroyo 2006:63-7). In contrast Monuments

1, 2, 3, and 4 were placed in an area where the previous Clay Floor #1 existed; thus, the stratigraphy here was deeper and revealed the presence of both floors. Furthermore one carbon sample obtained from the floor immediately next to Monument 3 resulted in a calibrated date of 800-750 BC (Arroyo 2006:59). The C14 date was correlated with the ceramic and stratigraphic analyses, and creates an excellent precedent to corroborate the appearance of plain stone monuments by the beginning of the Middle Preclassic period in the highlands of Guatemala (Arroyo 2006; Pereira et al. 2007). Monuments 3 and 4 were found almost buried underneath the modern topsoil with only about 30 cm of the stone monument visible (Figure 4-20). They both had the same stratigraphic context, and they both had an altar to their west side, which means that their “front side” faced the Southern Platform. Thus it could be presumed that they were placed at relatively the same time (Table 4-4 and Figure 4-16).

Another difference found among Row 1 stones was the presence or absence of an accompanying stone altar. As mentioned, both Monuments 3 and 4 had stone altars in front of them, and the altars were wider than the monuments. In addition, during the excavations of Monument 8 a stone was found to its east side, but it was not considered a stone altar because it was relatively small in comparison to the two previous examples (Arroyo 2006:65). In the case of Monument 8 the “stone altar” was narrower than the size of the monument itself. Therefore the stone altars found in front of Monuments 3 and 4 represent the only examples of this category found so far at Naranjo (Pereira et al. 2007). It is also possible that the smaller stone with Monument 8 could be considered just another variation of an “altar.”

Among the common characteristic of the plain stone monuments of Row 1 was the fact that there were very few cultural materials associated with them, and what fragments were found were small (Arroyo 2006:55-92). The same characteristic is true for all the excavations made in

the plaza area, including the other rows of monuments discussed below. Even though this lack of good ceramic material for seriation has made it difficult to be more precise with the dates of the monuments and the plaza floor in general, it is clear evidence that this area was kept clean and devoid of at least non-perishable materials by the ancient residents of Naranjo.

Another characteristic that prevailed for all the monuments of Row 1 was the presence of small and medium size stones found at the bases of the monuments (Table 4-4). In some cases it is assumed that these stones helped to stabilize the monuments, but in other cases, such as Monument 9, the stones were too small to aid in the foundation of the monument. In this case three stones were aligned at the west base of the monument (Figure 4-17). Furthermore in some monuments, such as Monuments 3 and 7, several fragments of grinding stones were placed as part of these foundation stones. The excavations at Monument 7 also revealed a burnt clay surface with medium size stones below Clay Floor #2 and on top of the sterile soil (Arroyo 2006:63; Pereira et al. 2007).

Monuments in Row 2

Row 2 consists of big stone boulders with an average of 3.1 meters high (Table 4-2 and Figure 4-21). So far five monuments have been located in this row, the same number that Williamson (1887) and Shook (1952) reported during their visits at Naranjo (Monument 22, 27, 28, 29, and 44) (Figure 4-22). Unfortunately by the time the NARP began in 2005 both Row 2 and 3's monuments had been taken down on purpose and buried in their original location. Their massive size permitted the NARP to locate by accident one of the monuments (Monument 22) during the 2005 season. During the 2006 season three more monuments (Monuments 27, 28, and 29) were found using a Ground Penetrating Radar and a magnetometer survey. Both techniques were used with the aid of Williamson's descriptions of the location of such monuments. These activities were directed by Hector Neff and his team (Arroyo 2006: 53; Neff et al. 2007).

Nonetheless the fifth monument (Monument 44) could not be located, and it remained unknown until recently when the NARP team found it in the same area where the others were found, although it was not possible to excavate it since it was found already lying on top of the modern surface (Arroyo personal communication 2008).

According to the map of Naranjo (Figure 4-15) the monuments in Row 2 were placed approximately in the center of the plaza, and are closer to the monuments of Row 3 (Monuments 23-27 and 30-31) than to those of Row 1 (Table 4-5). The excavations of the four stone monuments in Row 2 demonstrated that all of them were placed within the same clay floor as the monuments in Row 1 (Clay Floor #2) (Table 4-3 and Table 4-4). Likewise, some of the Row 2 monuments were erected in an area where no previous Clay Floor #1 was placed. Such was the case for Monuments 22 and 29. At both excavations it was possible to identify that the stone monuments were placed directly on top of the sterile soil or *talpetate* and that the ancient inhabitants added a clay fill topped with the Clay Floor #2 surface. In the case of Monument 29 the *talpetate* was dug into so that it allowed the tip of the base of the monument to be interred within it. This was presumably done to add stability to such a big monument, since it was erected in an area where only a thin layer of around 60 cm of earth was placed to sustain the monument.

To aid in the stability of all the monuments of Row 2, several medium and small size stones were placed as wedges at the base of the monuments. This was observed in the excavations of the four monuments. In addition the location of these wedges helped the NARP team to determine the original place where the monuments had been erected before they were taken down in modern times, since the wedges apparently barely moved after the monuments were buried and recent disturbance did not displace them. During the excavations the wedges

were found within their original stratigraphic contexts. This information was corroborated by looking at the position of the wedges in all the excavation units of Row 2's monuments and comparing their alignment assuming they were forming a north-south alignment. Also, the distance from each other and from the other rows of monuments was also measured and compared. All the data obtained were consistent with what Williamson had in his description of Naranjo. Two important differences between the stone wedges found with these monuments and the small stones found at the base of all the monuments of the Row 1 is that the wedges of Row 2's monuments were bigger, and the stratigraphy showed that they were not always totally buried within the Clay Floor #2, as was the case for Monuments 28 (Figure 4-23) and 29.

In spite of the lack of a primary context in these excavations, it was rather easy to identify the modern intrusive soils in contrast to the ancient ones. Nonetheless all the ceramic and lithic materials recovered during the excavations were mixed, which excluded the possibility of a good ceramic sequence. During the excavation of Monument 22 a small carbon sample was obtained from the earth associated with the wedges, and it was dated to 750-500 BC calibrated (Arroyo 2006:137). Here there was also evidence of an extended area with burnt clay and small stones that has been interpreted as a possible perishable altar or an ancient surface for burning activities (Arroyo personal communication 2006). This feature was found adjacent to the monument in a northwest section of the excavation unit. No other cultural materials were recovered from this locus except for big chunks of burnt clay.

Monuments in Row 3

Close to the stone monuments in Row 2 are those of Row 3. According to Williamson (1877) this row consisted of four free-standing columnar basalts. Row 3's monuments are at a close distance from Row 2's monuments (Table 4-5) and, as in the case of Row 2, these monuments were found by the NARP out of their primary contexts, and had been buried a small

distance from their original locations (Figure 4-15). All of the columnar basalts were broken, so instead of recovering four whole pieces, as was the case in Row 2, there were nine fragments. Five fragments of columnar basalt were recovered in the 2005 season (Figure 4-24 and Table 4-4), and the other four fragments were located with the aid of the Ground Penetrating Radar and magnetometer surveys (Neff et al. 2007) (Figure 4-25a). Two different test pits were excavated to recover the nine pieces, but little information about their dating was obtained. After the excavations the NARP was able to reconstitute most of the monuments from the fragments, which formed three basalt columns (Figure 4-25b), which means that one columnar basalt is still missing according to Williamson's map (Arroyo personal communication 2007).

With the aid of the stratigraphy of the excavated pits it was possible to tell that the columnar basalts were placed in the same floor level (Clay Floor #2) as the other two rows of monuments (Pereira et al. 2007:845) (Figure 4-24). The two test pits excavated to discover the basalt column fragments also revealed that this area had been previously modified by the construction of Clay Floor #1. Thus, in both excavations the two floors, #1 and #2, were identified (Table 4-3 and 4-4).

Monuments in the Western Area

Even though the majority of plain stone monuments have been found to the east of the Mound 1 and the South Platform, four plain stone monuments have been identified in the area immediately west in relation to Mound 1 and the North Platform. Only Monument 17 out of the four monuments (Monument 41, 42, and 43) was found by the NARP and excavated while still in situ (Figure 4-15). The other three monuments were found recently by the modern construction project, and the NARP was able to locate only the area where they were found but no further excavations were carried out (Arroyo, personal communication 2007). In addition to these new three stone monuments, another interesting find was made: several small basalt

columns were found in the area west of Mound 1, farther west than the original location of Monument 17. Unfortunately the archaeological context of these small columns, like that of the other three monuments, is lost.

Monument 17 is located to the west of Mound 1, aligned with the midpoint of the mound's base. As with Monuments 3 and 4, only the tip of the monument could be seen before the excavation. During the excavation of this monument it was possible to determine that the stone was placed on top of sterile soil and was covered partially by a dark clay soil which comprised the clay floor of the area. In addition, several stones were found at its base and near the sterile soil.

The difference between this monument and the rest of the monuments found at Naranjo is that four small greenstone celts were found during the excavations of Monument 17. Three celts were complete pieces and one was fragmentary. One celt was found at each side of the four-sided monument, near its base (Figure 4-27). So far, this is the only stone monument of Naranjo where such types of artifacts were placed in the base of the stone (Pereira et. al 2007). Nonetheless, all the other monuments also had stones in their foundations, and in some instances these were fragments of grinding stones.

In sum, four possible rows of monuments were found in the center of Naranjo formed by 16 stone monuments and 9 fragments. Nonetheless it is important to consider that more monuments could have been standing during the Middle Preclassic period at Naranjo. If so, they could have been moved by the Late Classic inhabitants of Naranjo or by the modern people that lived in the Hacienda Naranjo. Also, it is necessary to consider any possible sampling errors in the fieldwork season of NARP since some of the monuments found (e.g. Monument 3, 4, and 17)

were almost buried. The possibility that more monuments remain in the ground must be left open to consideration.

All of the monuments excavated were found to be erected during the same time as the construction of what was named Floor #2 in the previous section. Nonetheless some of the monuments were placed in areas where the previous Floor #1 was found deeper in the excavation profile; the rest of the monuments were placed directly on top of the sterile soil. Row 1 was composed of 7 stone monuments all with different shapes and possible different types of stone. This is the only row that was actually excavated while the monuments were still in situ. By comparing the excavation profiles of all the monuments it was possible to discern that not all of them were placed forming a straight line, and possibly, not all of them were placed in a single event. Further details about their placement and the implication will be discussed in Chapter 5. Row 2 was composed of five massive stone boulders of similar shape and size. Even though this row was excavated when the monuments were already out of context, it was possible to identify their original location by looking at the excavation profiles. In addition, stone wedges were found in their surroundings indicating the aid of these stones to maintain the large monuments in place. Row 3 was composed of nine fragments of columnar basalts, which possibly comprise the four monuments that Williamson saw standing by in the 19th century. Although the excavation units provided good stratigraphic data to indicate that the stones were placed within Floor #2, the original location of two of the four original monuments was difficult to determine. The last possible row of monuments was located to the west of Mound 1 and the North Platform, although only Monument 17 was excavated in situ. The other three monuments were found out of context after the excavation seasons ended. The main characteristic that prevailed among all

of the monuments is their variation. This variation was observed in the placement of the stones, their artifacts associated, and the characteristics of the stone itself, as is discussed below.

Natural Stones at Naranjo

The excavation of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo provided valuable information regarding the practices associated with the placement of the stones and the chronology of this placement. However, additional information is required in order to understand the nature of these stones. This topic is discussed in this section through the study of the physical characteristics of the stones themselves. As indicated above, a wide variation was observed within the corpus of plain stone monuments found at Naranjo. This variation was largely informed by the stone sources selected for the monuments, as well as further modifications that the ancient inhabitants of Naranjo might have made to them. Furthermore, the natural landscape of Naranjo and its surroundings are considered important elements that played a role in the practices associated with the erection of the stone monuments, and for that reason, they also must be considered in relation to the monuments.

Stone Sources

The identification of the stone sources for the plain monuments at Naranjo was carried out with the aid of geologist Rodolfo Alvarado who collaborated with the NARP. He was able to identify the stone composition of most of the monuments, although this was a visual identification, and no petrographic analyses have been carried out yet. In addition, Alvarado examined the stone outcrops found at the natural hill and those in the southwest periphery of Naranjo. The discussion presented here is based on his identifications (Alvarado, personal communication 2005-2006).

Limestone source

At Naranjo at least 6 monuments were identified as possible limestones (Monument 7, 22, 27, 28, and 29: see Table 4-4). The stone outcrops located in the immediate surroundings of Naranjo have been identified as limestone (Arroyo 2006:11). The first limestone outcrops were located in the natural hill, which has stone outcrops in its eastern, northern and southern portions (Figure 4-28). The NARP carried out a large survey in the natural hill, and several test pits were excavated. Nonetheless these excavations had scant cultural material, and most of it was dated to the Late Classic period (Paiz 2007). Furthermore, test pits were purposely located next to the natural rock outcrops to try to determine if stone was extracted from here. However, the excavations found no evidence of such activities, or of any permanent modifications to the hill (Arroyo 2006:11). Thus, there is no direct evidence that the stone outcrops or the natural hill as a whole was the focus of intense or repetitive human extractive practices during the Middle Preclassic period, although this does not mean that they were not an important visual aspect of the landscape.

The second area with identified limestone outcrops is the southwestern periphery of Naranjo, where several natural springs have also been located (Figure 4-29). Unlike the outcrops at the natural hill, these had stone boulders laying in the surface. The investigations by the NARP also found several household areas near these stone outcrops and the springs, and the excavations showed that this area was occupied and modified during the Middle Preclassic period (Arroyo 2006:44; Pereira and Arroyo 2008). The excavations carried out near the stone outcrops did not find any relevant cultural materials that could help define specific practices carried out there, such as stone extraction. Nevertheless the fact that stone boulders exist in the area could indicate that extracting was not necessary and some of the boulders could have been used as monuments. For instance, Naranjo Monument 7 has the same physical characteristics as

most of the rock outcrops located in this area, and according to Alvarado, these outcrops could be the potential source for this monument.

Finally, during recent survey activities of the NARP, other stone outcrops have been found in the Cerro Naranjo (Figure 4-28). Some of the stone outcrops found in this area were rather large, which could indicate a possible source for the stone monuments used in Row 2 at Naranjo. Nonetheless, further research, including excavations, is needed in this area to assess whether there was a Middle Preclassic occupation or use of the area for quarrying.

Andesite stone

Andesite is a minority stone type for the monuments at Naranjo. Only Monument 1 and 2 were classified as andesite during the visual classification made by geologist Alvarado (Table 4-2 and 4-4). However, he mentioned the possibility that some of the monuments classified as basalt might be andesite instead. Andesite and basalt have similar configurations, and without a petrographic analysis it is sometimes difficult for the naked eye to observe the difference between them. According to Eggers (1972:17) the difference between basalt and andesite is their silica content. Usually basalt has a composition of 52% or less of silica, and andesite has more than 52%, although several geologists assign different parameters for this classification (Streckeisen 1967).

According to the Geological Map of Guatemala City and Amatitlán (IGN 1970:2059 I and II), several andesite sources occur near Naranjo. I located several possible stone sources by looking at this map. One of these sources is located approximately 10 km west of Naranjo (Figure 4-30). These sources have been identified as “chiefly dark gray andesite” and “light colored fine grained dacite, rhyodacite, and latite”⁸, and they run along the Río Pansalic, near El

⁸ Dacite and rhyodacite have similar petrographic compositions as andesite rocks (Streckseisen 1967)

Manzanillo town. Smaller outcrops are located to the southwest within a distance of 15 kilometers approximately. Larger andesite sources are located 20-30 kilometers to the south of Naranjo in the surroundings of Lake Amatitlán.

Columnar basalt stones

Columnar basalt or basalt joints are geological formations found in many parts of the world (Hyndman 1985). They are prismatic rock joints having polygonal cross-section with straight edges and parallel faces. Typical cross-sectional dimension varies from a few centimeters to meter size and typical height from 20-50 meters. The columnar basalt is produced during the period of the cooling of the thick lava flow, which forms contractional joints or fractures. The flow usually shrinks in vertically without fracturing, and cannot sink horizontally until the cracks are formed. In Hawaii, the formation of columnar basalt has been documented to form within minutes after the formation of fresh lava. “The columns are tensional features formed by shrinkage during solidification of the magma where the shrinkage stresses are relieved at nearly regular intervals perpendicular to the most prominent cooling surface, extending inwards as the body cools” (Hyndman 1985:66-67). This exclusive fracture networks results in the columnar formation. Basalt columns usually have six sides, although this number may vary, and in some cases there are columns with four to even eight sides instead.

Twelve of the stone monuments found at Naranjo were basalt columns (Table 4-2 and 4-4). As noted above, four of them were found out of context (Monuments 10, 18, 19, and 37), and seven of them were fragments of three possible columns erected as the monuments of the third row. This means that Naranjo had at least nine columnar basalt monuments. Of the monuments found in situ, it is possible to say that the average height of the columns was of 1.2 m, although some of the fragments of columnar basalt found in NJO16-4 and NJO29-1 were restored to their

original shape and they measured more than 2 m high. The columnar basalts of Naranjo have either five or six sides.

As already noted in Chapter 2, this type of stone was widely used at several sites of the highlands and Pacific Coast of Guatemala during the Middle and Late Preclassic periods (Borhegyi 1965; Shook 1952) (see Figure 4-30 and 4-31 for their distribution). At these sites the archaeological evidence shows that the columnar basalts were erected as free-standing plain monuments, although there is also evidence of carved columnar basalts such as the well-known examples of Stelae 9 from Kaminaljuyu (Shook and Hatch 1999) (Figure 4-32), and other examples from La Venta in the Gulf Coast (Monument 13) or the Alvarado Stela in Veracruz (Parsons 1968).

The columnar basalt sources have yet to be identified with precision. So far, there are four areas where these formations are known to occur, but a through study is needed to find if more sources exist. These sources are found along the Pacific Coast in the piedmont area of Guatemala and El Salvador (Figure 4-31 and 4-33). The nearest sources to the Valley of Guatemala are located near the Lake Amatitlán. This area represents an important source of basalt and andesite for the whole Valley of Guatemala, and is located nearly 30 km south of Naranjo in straight line. The Amatitlán Lake itself was created from volcanic activities in the area, related to the chain composed of the major volcanoes Agua-Fuego-Acatenango-Pacaya (Instituto Químico-Agrícola Nacional 1939:73-75). Among these sources, two columnar andesite-basalt outcrops have been identified in the western portions of the lake near the modern town of Amatitlán (Instituto Químico-Agrícola Nacional 1939:33,43). Most of these columnar jointings are well developed and were created because of thick flows that are predominately cliff

formers. The colors of these sources vary from dark grey to black (Eggers 1971:40-1). The relevance of the columnar basalts will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Stone Shapes

Besides assessing the possible stone sources of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo, in this study it is important to provide detailed descriptions of the shapes of the monuments. As already noted, the shape is largely informed by the material or stone source selected for each monument, but as is shown in this section, there is evidence that some of the monuments were modified in order to create a specific shape (see Table 4-4).

Even though the majority of the monuments of Naranjo were not modified, their surfaces had a smooth appearance, which might at first give the impression that they were modified. The most obvious example is the columnar basalts, which have usually six (or else five) sides and present an even shape. Another example is represented by Monument 2 (Figure 4-17). This monument is a stone slab with shaped edges that provide a general rectangular form, although its top part has an irregular shape. The NARP could not assess whether this was the original shape when the monument was erected or if the monument had been broken afterwards (Pereira et al 2007:852). Monument 7 is a good example of the use of a stone boulder, left with its original characteristics of naturally smoothed and curvy surfaces. As mentioned above, in the stone outcrops in the southwest area it was possible to identify several stones that were already on top of the surface and with the same features as Monument 7. Finally, all monuments in Row 2 presented a smoothed surface as well (Figure 4-22). In all cases it was observed that one side of the monument had a surface that appeared to be more even and flattened than the other side. It is assumed that this was the “front” side of the monument, although it is also believed that these stones were selected to have such characteristics but that they were not purposely smoothed (with the exception of Monument 22, see below).

Only Monuments 1, 4, 8, 9, 17, and 27 showed alterations (Table 4-4). Most of the modifications to the natural stone were related to providing a smoother or even surface on one or both sides of the monuments. This was the case for Monument 8, which has a rather rectangular shape in comparison to the rest of monuments of Naranjo (Figure 4-17). Monuments 4 and 17 presented a similar situation in which both sides of the stone were smoothed. Minor changes were also present on Monument 9, a cylindrical column which has its top part flattened (Arroyo 2006:67).

Modifications beyond smoothing were also found at Naranjo on Monuments 1 and 22, which indicate additional alterations to the stone. Both monuments presented distinctive features. Monument 1 has a purposely made hole in the upper central area of the stone (Figure 4-17). So far, this is the only plain stone monument reported for the Middle Preclassic period in southeastern Mesoamerica that possesses such an attribute (Pereira et al. 2007). In addition to this feature, Monument 1 was placed in Row 1 but it was not completely aligned with the other monuments in the row, which, in fact, makes it stand out even more. Further information about the stone alignments will be discussed in the following chapter.

An interesting characteristic of Row 1 is that each stone monument has a different shape and source of stone. The surface of some of the monuments in this row, such as Monuments 4 and 8, was intentionally smoothed, whereas the other monuments were left without visible alterations. Furthermore, the dimensions of the stones in Row 1 had a great variability (Figure 4-16 and 4-18). For instance Monuments 9 and 2 are overshadowed by the presence of other wider and taller monuments, such as Monuments 1, 4 and 8. The variations among the stones in Row 1 contrast greatly in relation to the uniformity presented among the stones of Rows 2 and 3. The monuments of Row 2 have an average of 3.1 meters of height (Figure 4-21); unfortunately,

similar measurements cannot be obtained with certainty for Row 3. Most of the differences between Row 1 in relation to Rows 2 and 3 is that in Row 1 all the stone monuments have a different shape and presumably a different stone source as well, whereas in the case of Row 2 all the monuments have a similar shape and they might have come from neighboring sources (Table 4-4). The same case is presented for the monuments in Row 3, because the columnar basalts found were similar in shape and size (Pereira et al. 2007).

Finally, Monument 27 represents an interesting case for the study of stone monuments at Naranjo. In 2007 Bárbara Arroyo identified a possible carved surface on this Row 2 monument. To corroborate the possibility, several night pictures were taken and a scan of the monument was carried out by Travis F. Doering from the University of South Florida with a three-dimensional laser scan (Arroyo 2007). These additional data corroborated the presence of a carved surface in the monument. It was very much eroded, and the shape of the depiction could not be ascertained, although some have suggested that it might be a leg and foot of a standing individual (Arroyo personal communication 2007). Nonetheless what is important to note for this study is the combination of a possible carved monument with other plain stone monuments that are similar in shape and dimensions, all placed in a Row 2. More discussion of plain vs. carved surfaces is presented in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

The excavations at Naranjo showed that the site was inhabited from the beginning of the Middle Preclassic period, the Las Charcas phase. During that time the first clay floor was placed in what became the center of the site, and later a second clay floor was laid atop the area of the first, but of greater northern extent. It was in this second clay floor that all the plain stone monuments of Naranjo were erected. The site was also the focus of several construction activities that resulted in the elevation of portions of the terrain. By the subsequent Providencia

phase, Mounds 1, 2, and 3, the Northern Platform, and the Southern Platform were constructed. Nonetheless the archaeological evidence showed that these activities were not a coordinated effort from the beginning of the occupation at the site.

Besides the information obtained from the excavations at Naranjo, the examination of the plain stone monuments also revealed valuable data. Three possible stone sources were identified as the places from which the ancient residents of Naranjo could have obtained the limestone: the Cerro Naranjo, andesite sources at other locations in the Valley of Guatemala, and columnar basalt in the Amatitlán Lake area. Furthermore, the use of specific types of stones affected the final shape that the plain stone monuments at Naranjo had. In most cases the stones were left without further modifications, but there is evidence that a minority of stones had surfaces that were smoothed, and in one case, the surface of the stone was carved. All this information is discussed in the following chapter which will analyze the relevance of raw materials to the creation of place.

Table 4-1. Chronology for the central highlands of Guatemala

Period	Duration	Ceramic phase	
Postclassic	Late	A.D. 1300 -1500	Chinautla
	Early	A.D. 900-1300	Ayampuc
Classic	Late	A.D. 800-900	Pamplona
		A.D. 550-800	Amatle
	Early	A.D. 400-550	Esperanza
		A.D. 200-400	Aurora
Preclassic	Terminal	A.D. 100-200	Santa Clara
	Late	200 B.C.-A.D. 100	Arenal
		400-200 B.C.	Santa Clara
	Middle	600-400 B.C.	Providencia
		900-600 B.C.	Las Charcas
Early	1100-900 B.C.	Arevalo	

(Redrawn after Popenoe de Hatch 2002b:280)

Table 4-2. Plain stone monuments of Naranjo

No.	Location	In Situ	Measurements (in meters)			Stone Source	Columnar Basalt	Excavation Number
			Height*	Length*	Width*			
1	Row 1	YES	1.6/2.52	0.12/0.5	2.00	Andesite	NO	NJO3-18
2	Row 1	YES	0.18/1.91	0.35/0.72	0.1/0.3	Andesite	NO	NJO6-1
3	Row 1	YES	0.12/1.6	0.46	0.28	Basalt	YES	NJO5-3
4	Row 1	YES	0.3/1.76	0.94/1.23	0.34/0.35	Basalt	NO	NJO5-1
5	In front S Platform	NO	----	----	----	----	NO	NJO2-12
6	On S. Platform	NO	0.67	0.94	1.47	Basalt	NO	NJO2-6
7	Row 1	YES	0.68/1.88	1.15/1.26	0.5	Limestone	NO	NJO6-4
8	Row 1	YES	2.25/2.52	0.75W/0.81E	0.47S/0.39N	Basalt	NO	NJO6-6
9	Row 1	YES	1.19	0.52	0.41	Basalt	NO	NJO6-6
10	In front N Platform	NO	1.5	0.4	0.37	Basalt	YES	Not excavated
11	In front N Platform	NO	0.7	0.56	0.22	----	NO	NJO9-5
12	In front N Platform	NO	1.1	1.35	0.4	-----	NO	NJO9-4
13	In front N Platform	NO	0.3	0.72	0.36	-----	NO	NJO9-1
14	In front N Platform	NO	0.35	0.5	0.55	-----	NO	NJO9-1
15	In front N Platform	NO	0.1	0.35	0.37	-----	NO	NJO9-3
16	On top N Platform	YES	0.71	0.54	0.47	Basalt	NO	NJO4-21
17	West of Mound 1	YES	0.09/1.52	0.58/0.86	0.2/0.39	-----	NO	NJO11-1
18	West ravine	NO	0.8	0.3	0.18	Basalt	YES	NJO11-2
19	North spring	NO	2.5			Basalt	YES	NJO32-32
20	In front N Platform	NO	0.86	0.54	0.21	-----	NO	NJO9-5
21	Northern Platform	YES	0.96	0.38	0.24	Basalt	YES	NJO4-25
22	Row 2	YES	3.5	1.7	1	-----	NO	NJO21-3
23	Row 3	NO	0.66	0.35	0.38	Basalt	YES	NJO16-4
24	Row 3	YES	2.4	0.52	0.38	Basalt	YES	NJO16-4
25	Row 3	YES	1.22	0.22	0.32	Basalt	YES	NJO16-4
26	Row 3	YES	0.7	0.31	0.2	Basalt	YES	NJO16-4

* before excavation/after excavation

(table created by the author compiling data from Arroyo 2006, Ch. 6)

Table 4-2. Cont.

No.	Location	In Situ	Measurements (in meters)			Stone Source	Columnar Basalt	Excavation Number
			Height*	Length*	Width*			
27	Row 2	YES	3.2	1.5/1.0	0.8/1.25	-----	NO	NJO21-7
28	Row 2	YES	2.6	1.3	0.8	-----	NO	NJO21-8
29	Row 2	YES	3.2	2	1.42	-----	NO	NJO21-9
30	Row 3	YES	1.18	0.32	0.28	Basalt	YES	NJO29-1
31	Row 3	YES	0.93	0.24	0.34	Basalt	YES	NJO29-1
32	SW area	NO	0.44	0.8	0.31		NO	NJO35-4
33	SW area	NO	-----	-----	-----	-----	NO	NJO35-4
34	SW area	NO	-----	-----	-----	-----	NO	NJO35-11
35	SW area	NO	1.13	0.8	0.27	-----	NO	NJO35-5
36	Natural Hill	NO	1.1	0.98	-----	-----	NO	NJO37-1
37	Natural Hill	NO	-----	-----	-----	Basalt	YES	NJO37-22
38								
39	Natural Hill	YES					NO	NJO37-44
40	Natural Hill	YES					NO	NJO37-45
41	W of N Platform	NO					NO	Not excavated
42	W of N Platform	NO					NO	Not excavated
43	W of N Platform	NO					NO	Not excavated
44	Row 2	NO					NO	Not excavated

* before excavation/after excavation

(table created by the author compiling data from Arroyo 2006, Ch. 6)

Table 4-3 Clay floors associated with the plain stone monuments of Naranjo

No.	Location	Excavation	Clay Floor #1*	Clay Floor #2*	Sterile Soil*
1	Row 1	NJO3-18	1491.1207	absent	1489.6207
2	Row 1	NJO6-1	1491.0871	1490.5871	1489.7871
3	Row 1	NJO5-3	1490.9544	1490.3544	1489.7544
4	Row 1	NJO5-1	1491.1208	1490.4208	1489.8208
7	Row 1	NJO6-4	1491.1729	absent	1490.7729
8	Row 1	NJO6-6	1491.3218	absent	1490.9218
9	Row 1	NJO6-6	1490.9607	absent	1489.7607
17	West of Mound 1	NJO11-1	1493.2180	absent	1492.6180
22	Row 2	NJO21-3	1490.2200	1489.8200	unknown
23	Row 3	NJO16-4	1490.5600	1490.1600	1489.4100
24	Row 3	NJO16-4	1490.5600	1490.1600	1489.4100
25	Row 3	NJO16-4	1490.5600	1490.1600	1489.4100
26	Row 3	NJO16-4	1490.5600	1490.1600	1489.4100
27	Row 2	NJO21-7	1490.9100	1490.2100	unknown
28	Row 2	NJO21-8	1491.0170	1490.5170	unknown
29	Row 2	NJO21-9	1490.2310	absent	1489.931
30	Row 3	NJO29-1	1490.4980	1490.098	unknown
31	Row 3	NJO29-1	1490.4980	1490.098	unknown
	AVERAGE		1490.7854	1490.2288	1490.0482

* Measurements in meters above sea level.

Table 4-4. Detailed information of plain stone monuments at Naranjo

Monument	Source	Shape	Modification	Facing	Associated Materials	Other
<i>Row 1</i>	<i>Each with a different source</i>	<i>Each with a different shape</i>	<i>Variably modified or not</i>			<i>Each with different shape and source; variable dimensions</i>
Row 1:1	Andesite	Irregular stone slab	Yes – hole in upper center	Unknown	Foundation stones to east and west sides	Not aligned with others in row, slightly inclined to east side
Row 1:2	Andesite	Rectangular, top irregular	No – stone slab	Possibly West	Foundation stones to east and west sides	
Row 1:3	Basalt	Columnar	No	Facing West to South Platform	Altar to west side (looking to South Platform); Fragments of grinding stones with foundation stones to west and east sides	Altar stone without modifications
Row 1:4	Basalt	Rectangular-four sides smoothed	Yes – intentionally smoothed	Facing West to South Platform	Altar to west side (looking to South Platform). Foundation stones to west and east sides. Burnt area to west side of stone	Altar is modified and has a circular depression on center
Row 1:7	Limestone, possibly from outcrops on Naranjo periphery	Retains original natural surfaces, smoothed and curvy	No –	Possibly East	Fragment of grinding stone with foundation stones on west side.	Burnt clay surface and med sized stones on east side
Row 1:8	Basalt	Rectangular shape –	Yes – four sides intentionally smoothed	Possibly East	Small stone possibly altar to east side. 3 stones on the west base of monument. Foundation stones on east side.	
Row 1:9	Basalt	Cylindrical column	Yes-flattened top	Possibly East	Small stone possibly altar to east side	
<i>Row 2</i>	<i>All possibly from Cerro Naranjo</i>	<i>All with at least one smoothed surface</i>	<i>No –only one carved</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Stone wedges at the base of monuments</i>	<i>Uniform sizes, all from neighboring sources, all the same source</i>
Row 2:22	Unknown source	Big boulder	No	Unknown	Stone wedges at base of monument	Burnt area to west side of stone
Row 2:27	Unknown source	Big boulder	Yes – carved surface	Unknown	Stone wedges at base of monument	
Row 2:28	Unknown source	Big boulder	No	Unknown	Stone wedges at base of monument	
Row 2:29	Unknown source	Big boulder	No	Unknown	Stone wedges at base of monument	

Table 4-4. Cont.

Monument	Source	Shape	Modification	Facing	Associated Materials	Other
Row 2:44	Unknown source	Big boulder	No	Unknown	Unknown	not excavated
Row 3	<i>All columnar basalt</i>	<i>All columnar</i>	<i>No- all natural stones</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>All columnar basalt, similar shapes, similar sizes</i>
Row 3:23	Basalt	Columnar	No	Unknown	None	Monument found on top of modern surface
Row 3:24	Basalt	Columnar	No	Unknown	None	
Row 3:25	Basalt	Columnar	No	Unknown	None	
Row 3:26	Basalt	Columnar	No	Unknown	None	
Row 3:30	Basalt	Columnar	No	Unknown	None	
Row 3:31	Basalt	Columnar	No	Unknown	None	
West Area	<i>All possibly from different sources</i>	<i>All different shapes</i>	<i>Yes-smoothed</i>	<i>Unknown</i>		<i>All columnar basalt, similar shapes, similar sizes</i>
W.A.:17	Limestone	Rectangular with rounded top	Yes- sides intentionally smoothed	Unknown	Four small green stone celts, one on each side. Stones to west and east side for foundation.	Burnt clay area at the west base of monument.
W.A.:41	Unknown source	Rectangular	Yes-sides intentionally smoothed	Unknown	Unknown	Not excavated
W.A.:42	Unknown source	Rectangular	No-natural stone slab	Unknown	Unknown	Not excavated
W.A.:43	Unknown source	Rectangular	Yes- sides intentionally smoothed	Unknown	Unknown	Not excavated

Table 4-5. Distances between rows of monuments and Mound 1 and the Natural Hill

	Mound 1	Natural Hill	Row 1	Row 2	Row 3
Row 1	35	215	0	100	115
Row 2	135	115	100	0	15
Row 3	150	100	115	15	0

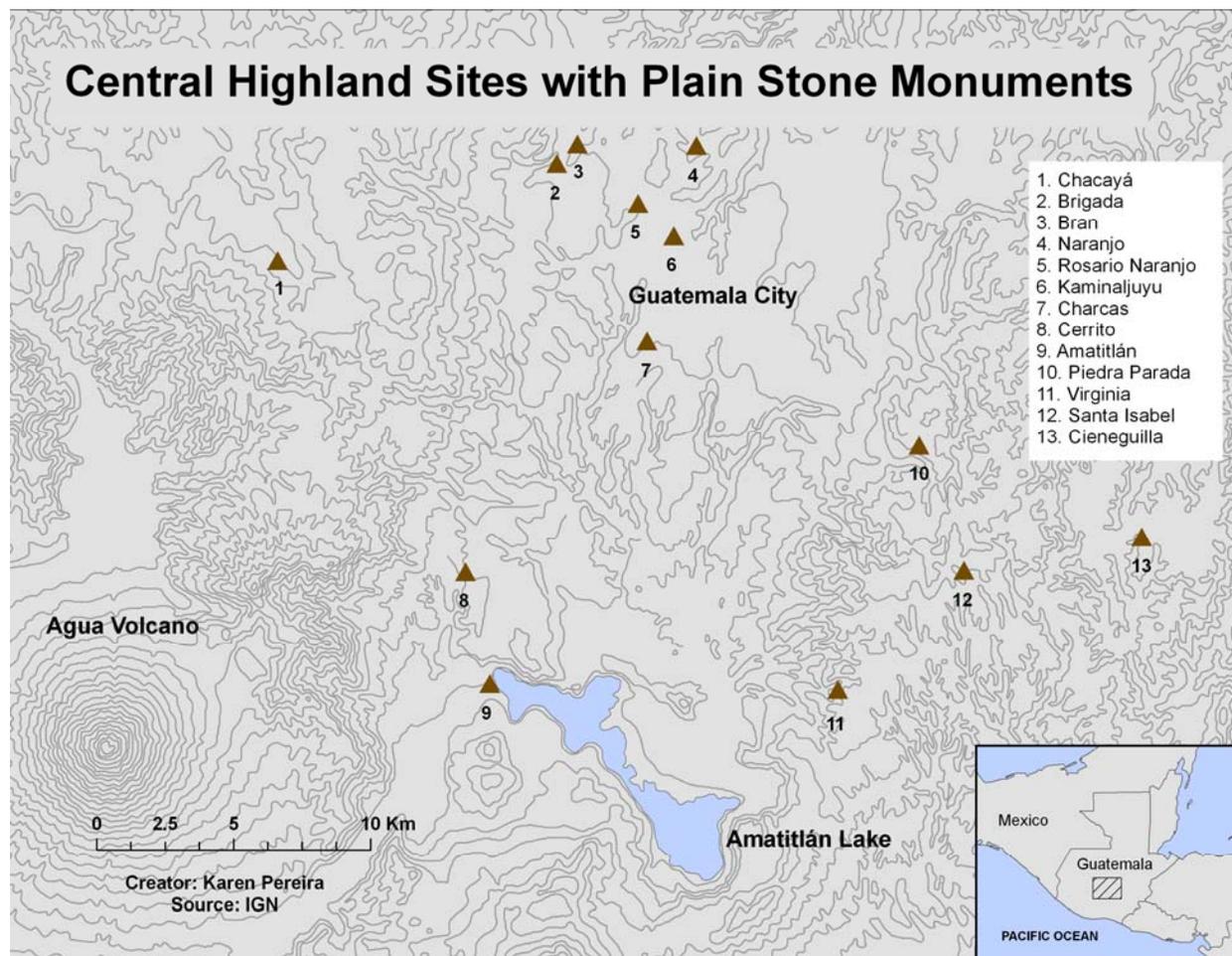


Figure 4-1. Map of the Valley of Guatemala showing Preclassic sites with plain stone monuments



Figure 4-2. Satellite photo of the Valley of Guatemala showing the location of Naranjo in relation to Guatemala City (Google Earth 2009)



Figure 4-3. View of the Cerro Naranjo from Naranjo (view east to west) (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic Archive, 2007)

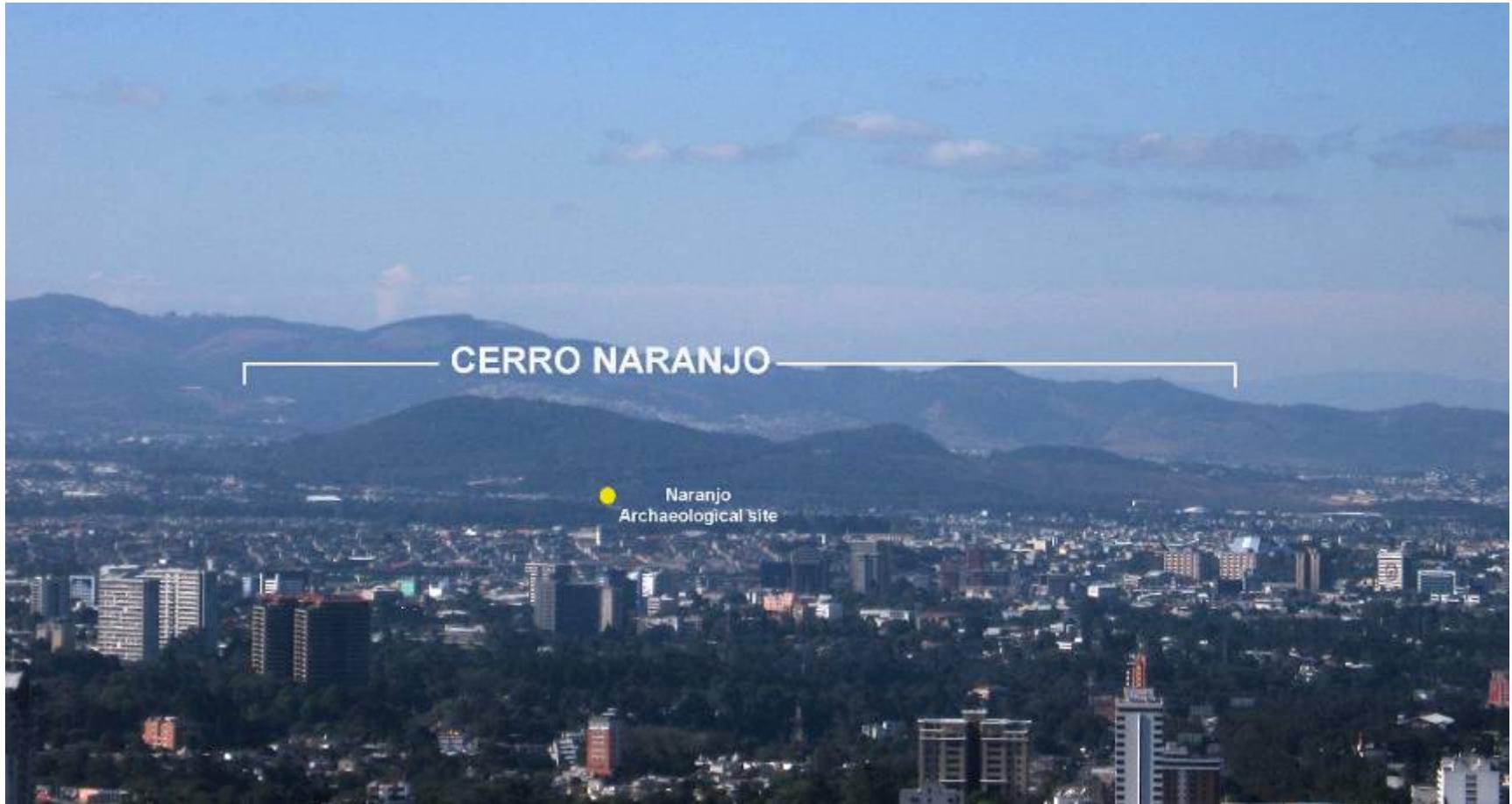


Figure 4-4. View of the Cerro Naranjo in Guatemala City, view southeast to northwest (Photo by the author)

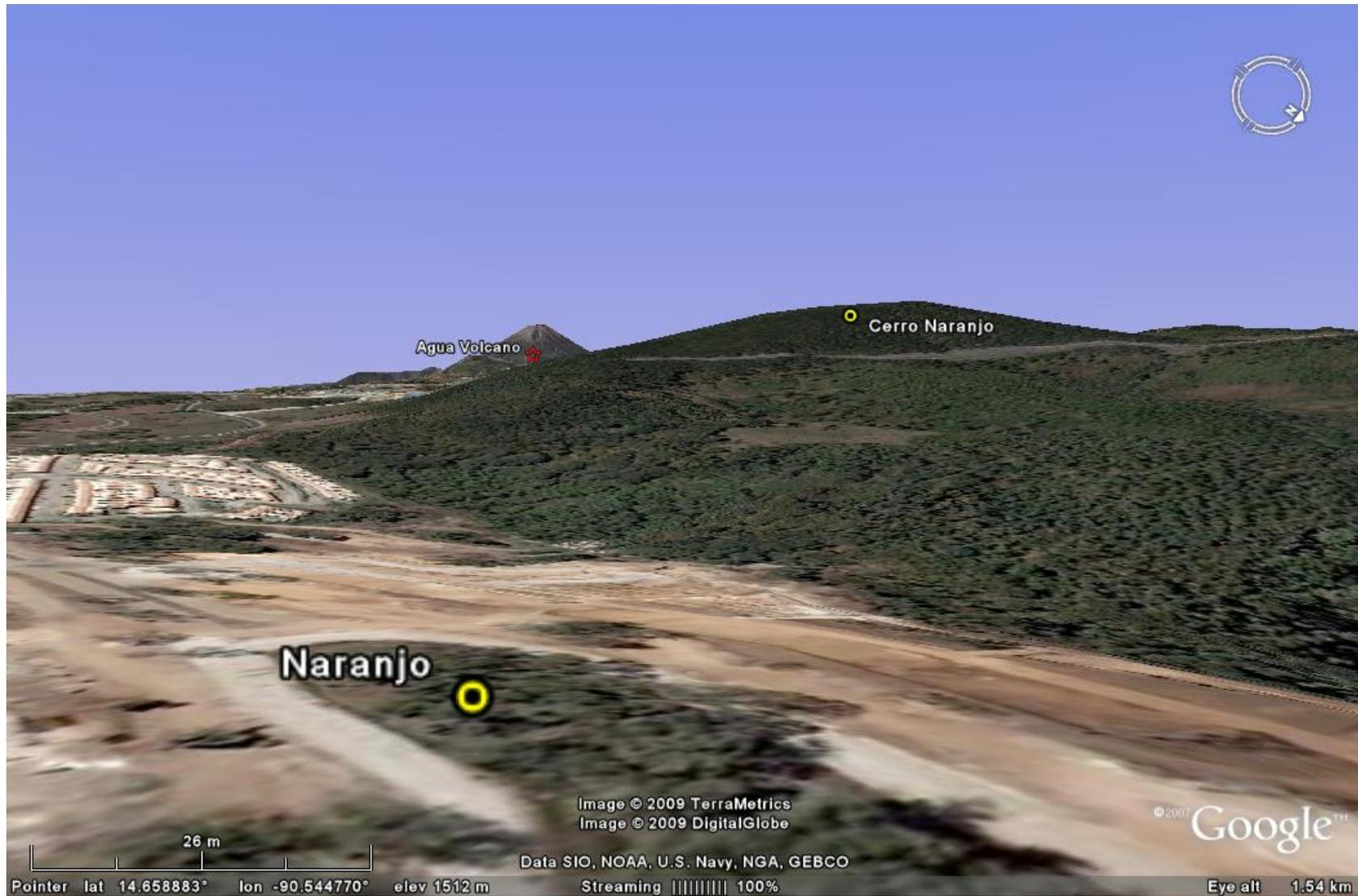


Figure 4-5. View from Naranjo to the Cerro Naranjo and Agua Volcano to the southwest (Google Earth 2009)



Figure 4-6. Natural Hill at Naranjo, view north to south (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic Archive, 2007)



Figure 4-7. Satellite photo of Guatemala City showing the location of Naranjo (Google Earth 2008)



Figure 4-8. Water spring in the southwestern periphery of Naranjo (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic Archive, 2005)

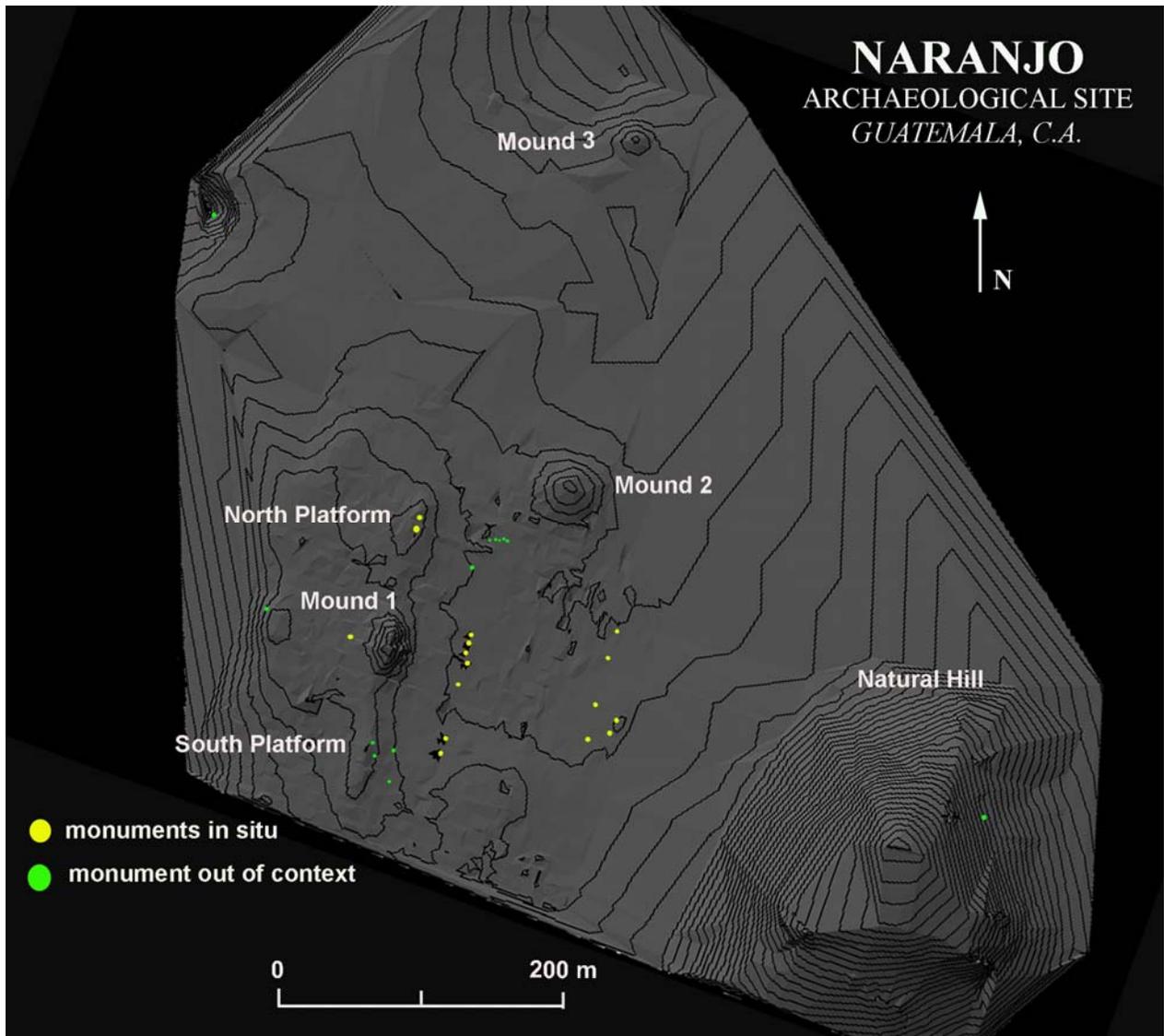


Figure 4-9. Topographic map of Naranjo, Guatemala (Arroyo et al. 2007:Fig.6)

Naranjo

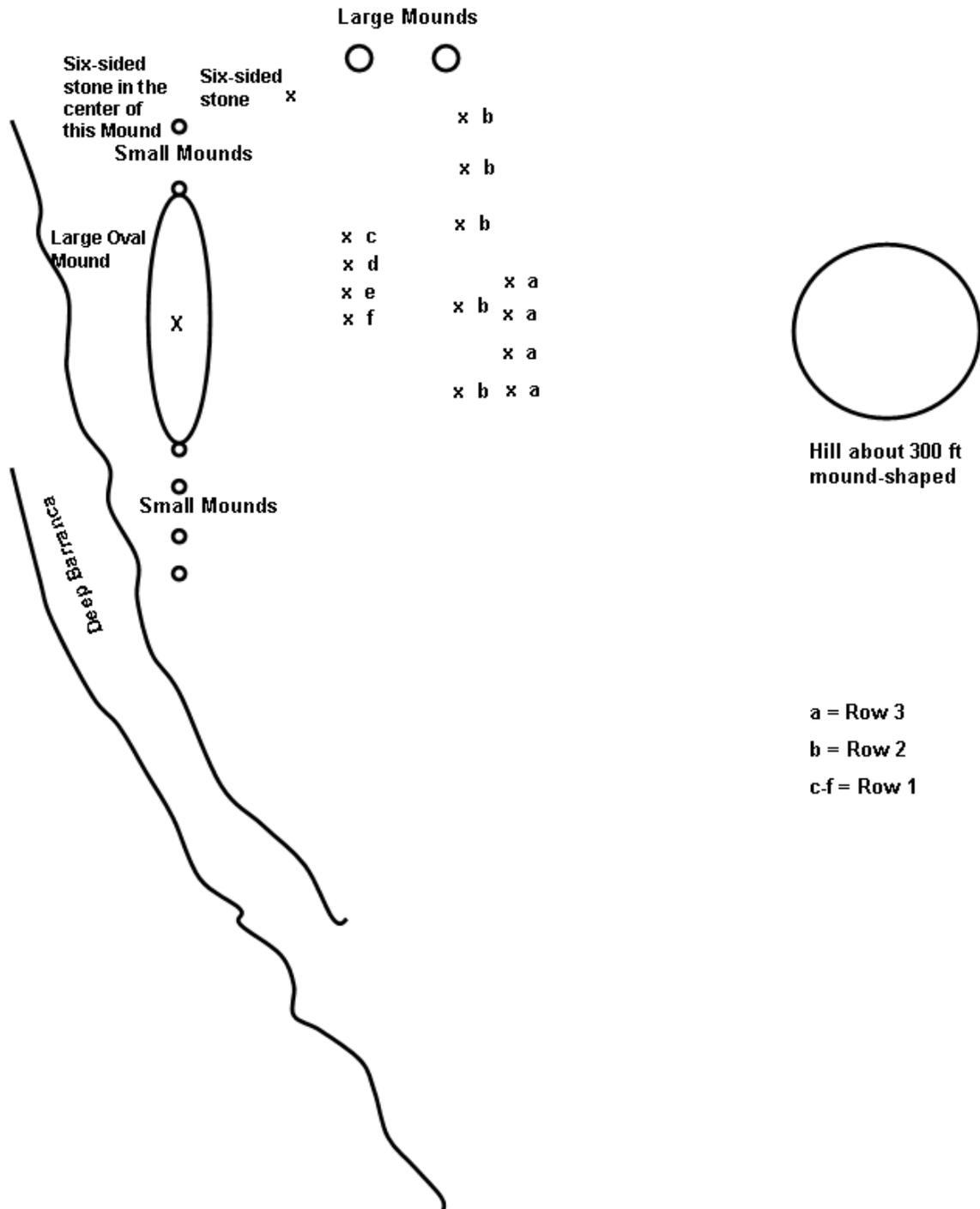


Figure 4-10. Map of Naranjo as drawn by Williamson (redrawn after Williamson 1877)

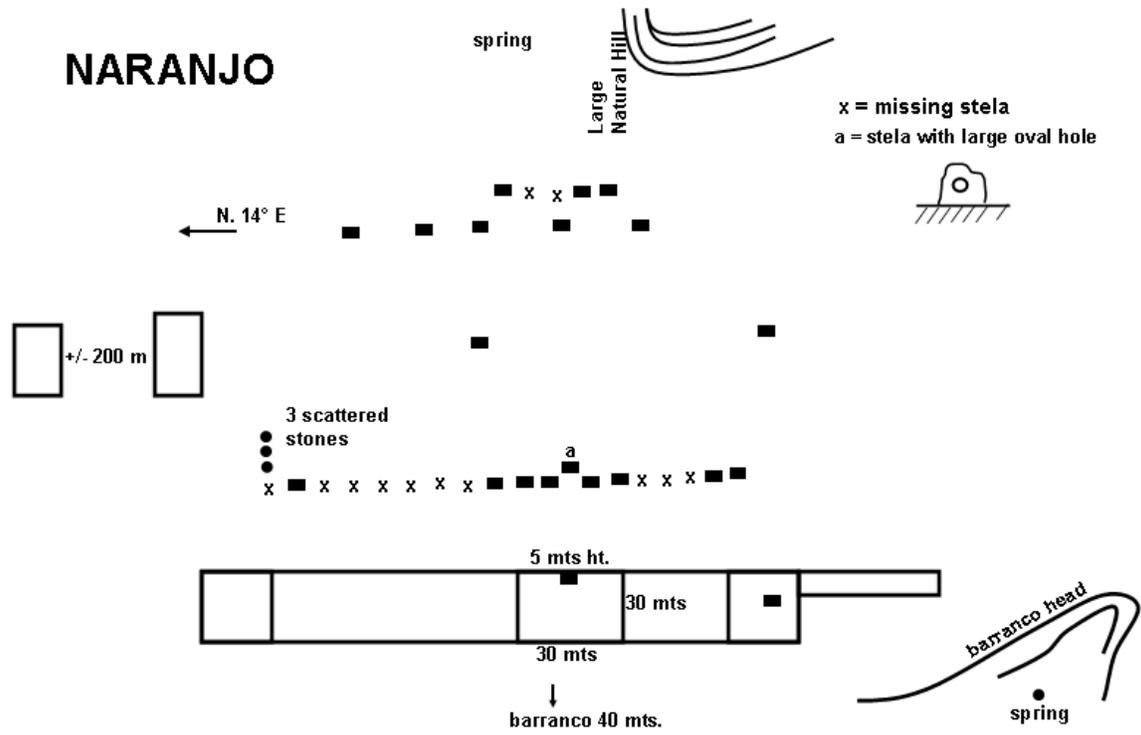


Figure 4-11. Map of Naranjo as drawn by Edwin M. Shook (redrawn after Shook n.d.)

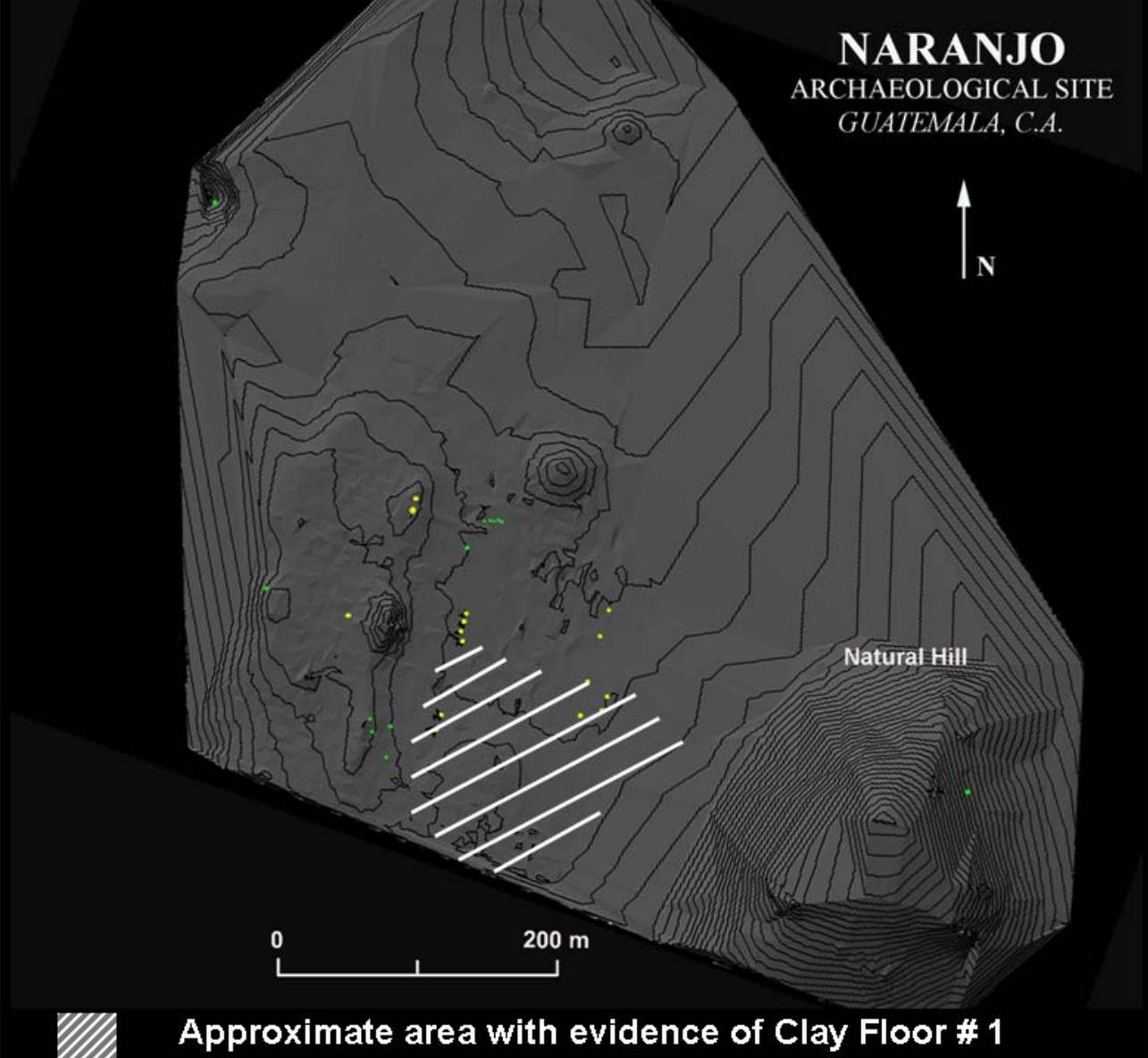


Figure 4-12. Map of Naranjo showing the location of Clay Floor #1

Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project 2006

Southern Platform, Northwest Corner, South Profile

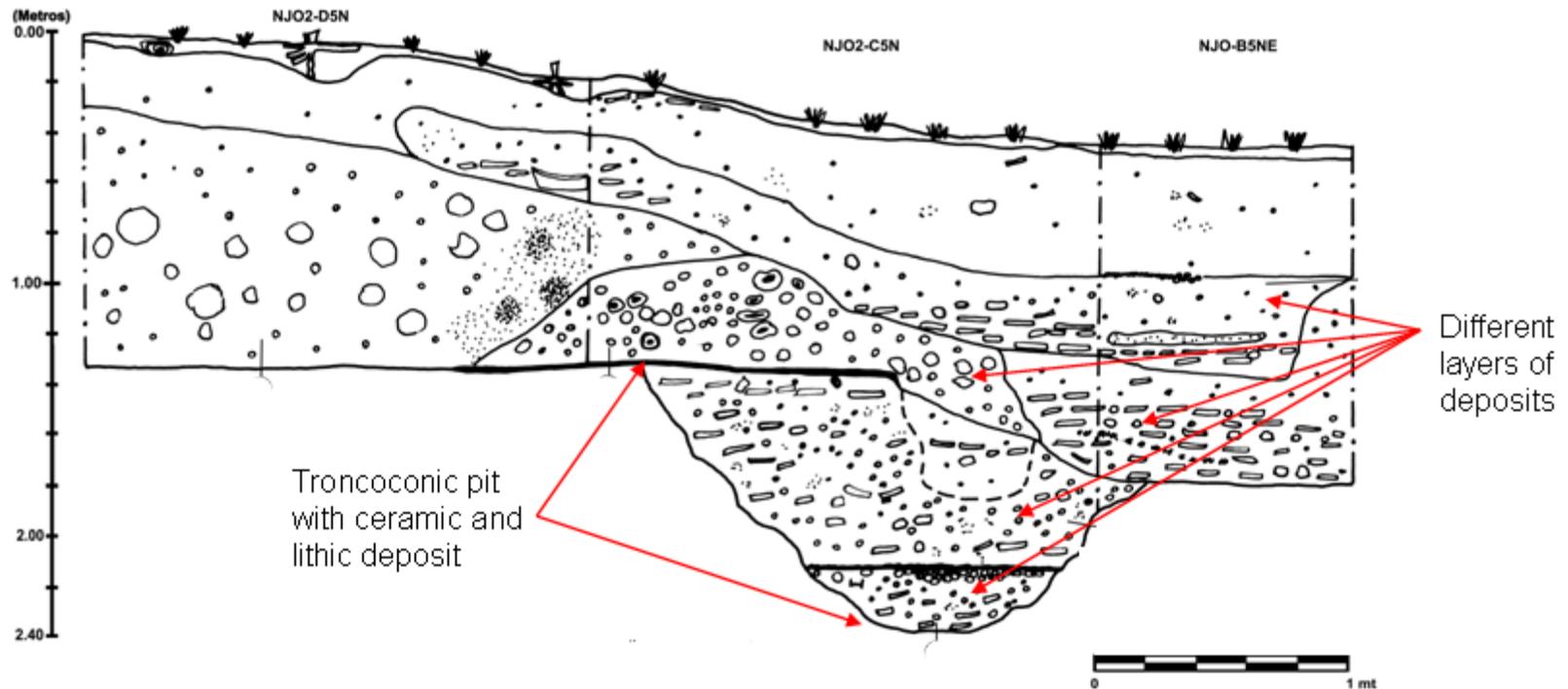


Figure 4-13. Southern Platform excavation (Arroyo 2006: Fig.4.12)

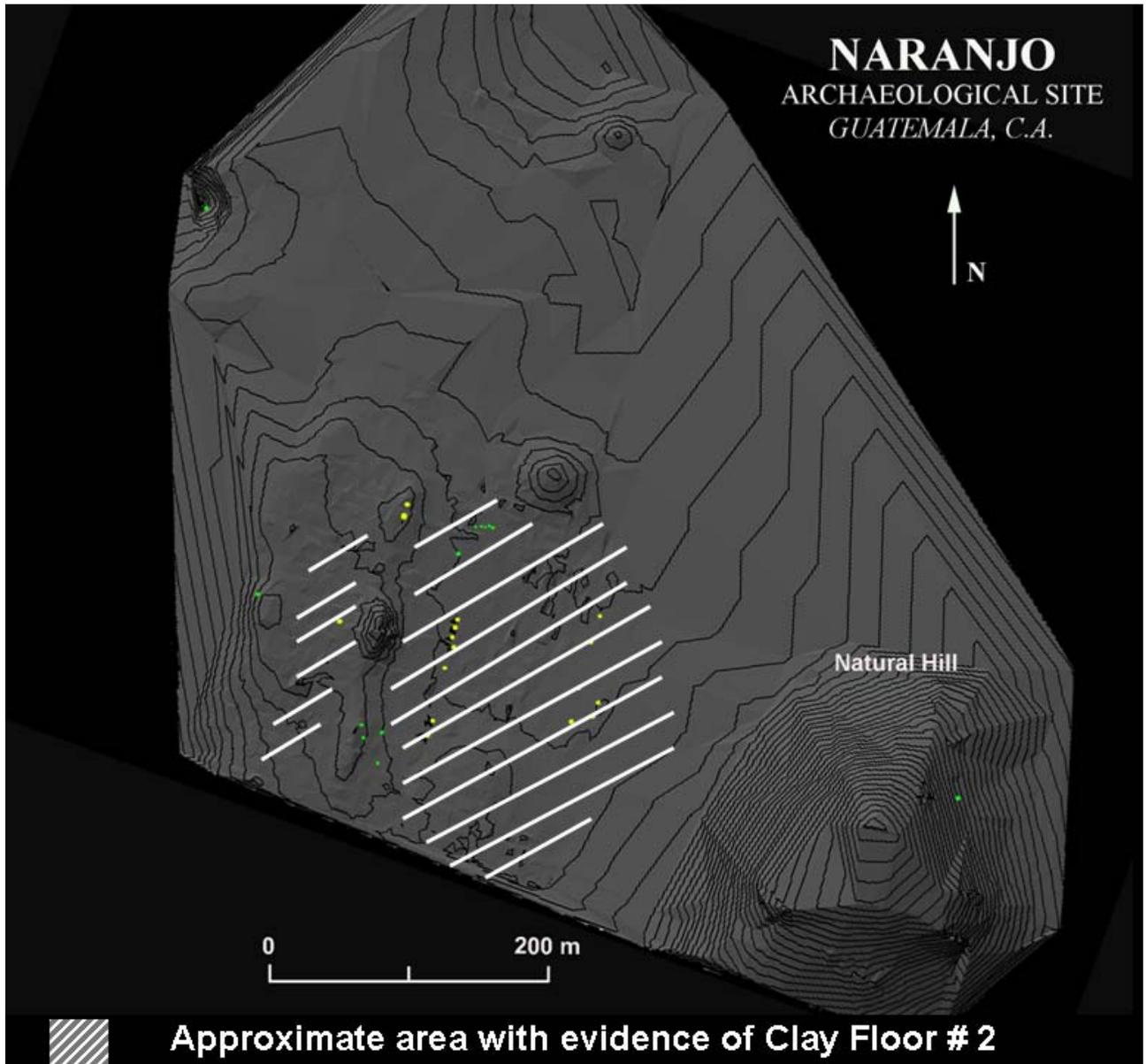


Figure 4-14. Map of Naranjo showing the location of Clay #2

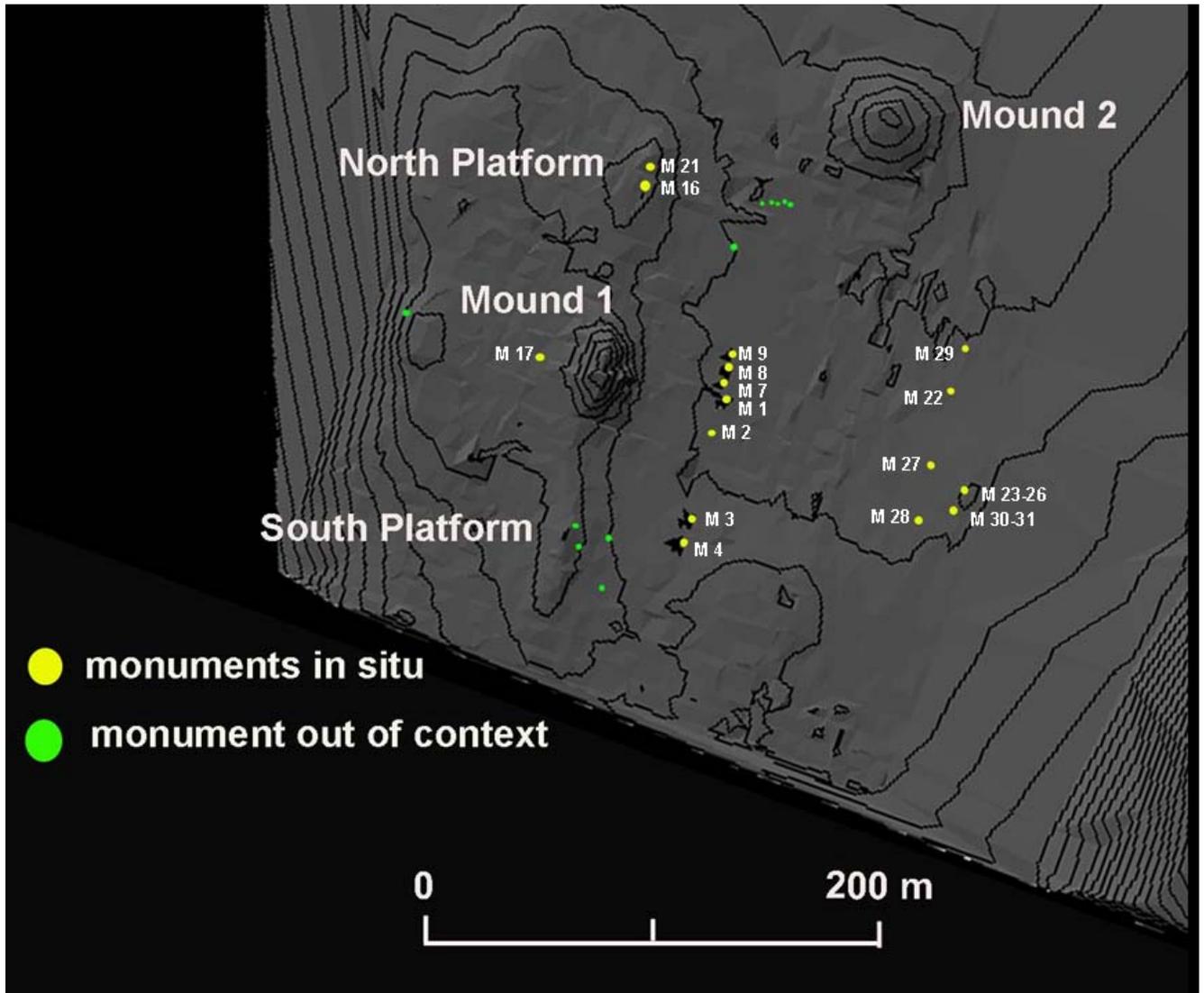


Figure 4-15. Close-up of the map of Naranjo showing the location of the plain stone monuments (Arroyo et al. 2007:Fig.6)

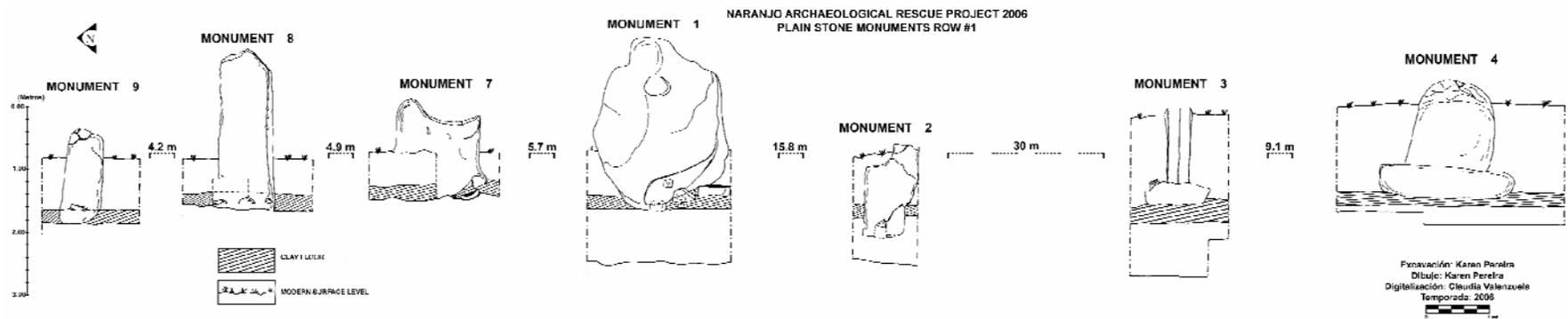


Figure 4-16. West profile drawing of the plain stone monuments in Row 1. Distance between monuments not at scale (Arroyo 2006:Fig.6.16)



Monument 1



Monument 2



**Monument 3
with Altar 2**



**Monument 4
with Altar 1**



Monument 7



Monument 8



Monument 9

Figure 4-17. Photographs of monuments in Row 1 (Arroyo 2006: Fig6.3, Fig. 6.5, Fig. 6.7, Fig.6.9, Fig.6.11, Fig. 6.13, Fig. 6.15)

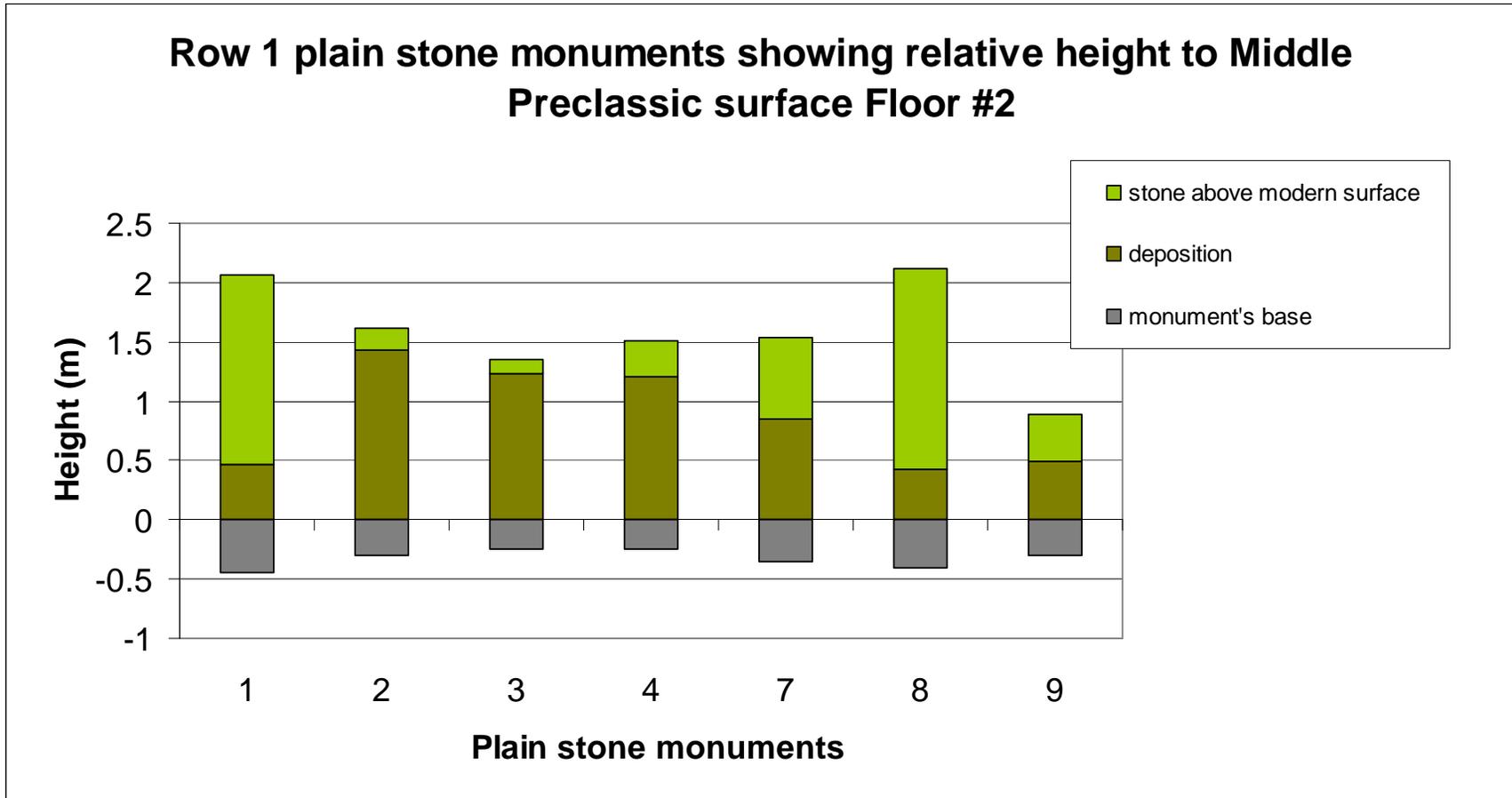


Figure 4-18. Row 1 Plain Stone Monuments showing relative height in relation to Floor #2

**Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project 2005
Monument 4 and Altar 2 (NJO5-3)**

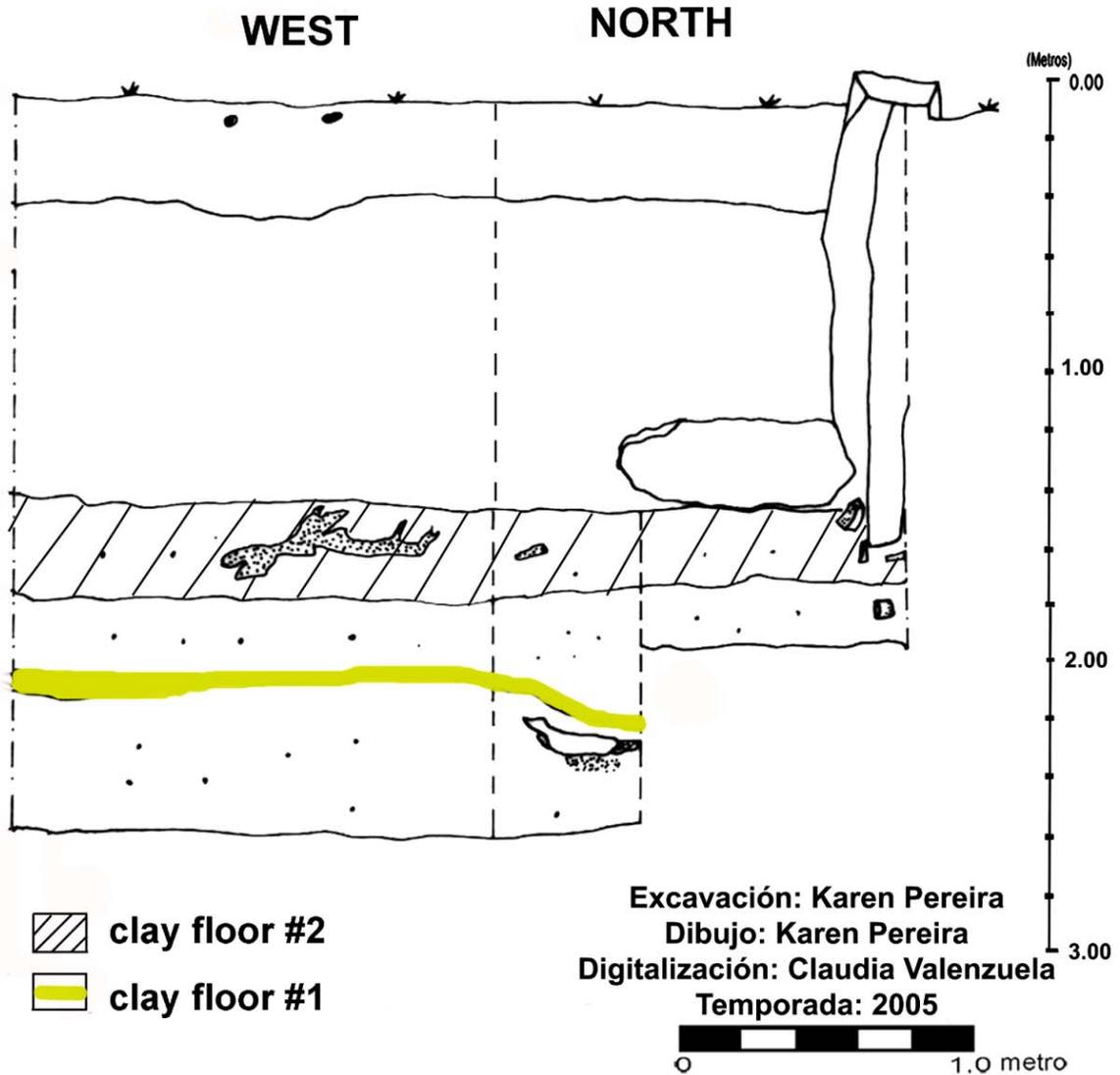


Figure 4-19 Profile drawing of Monument 3 and Altar 2 in NJO5-3 (Arroyo 2006)

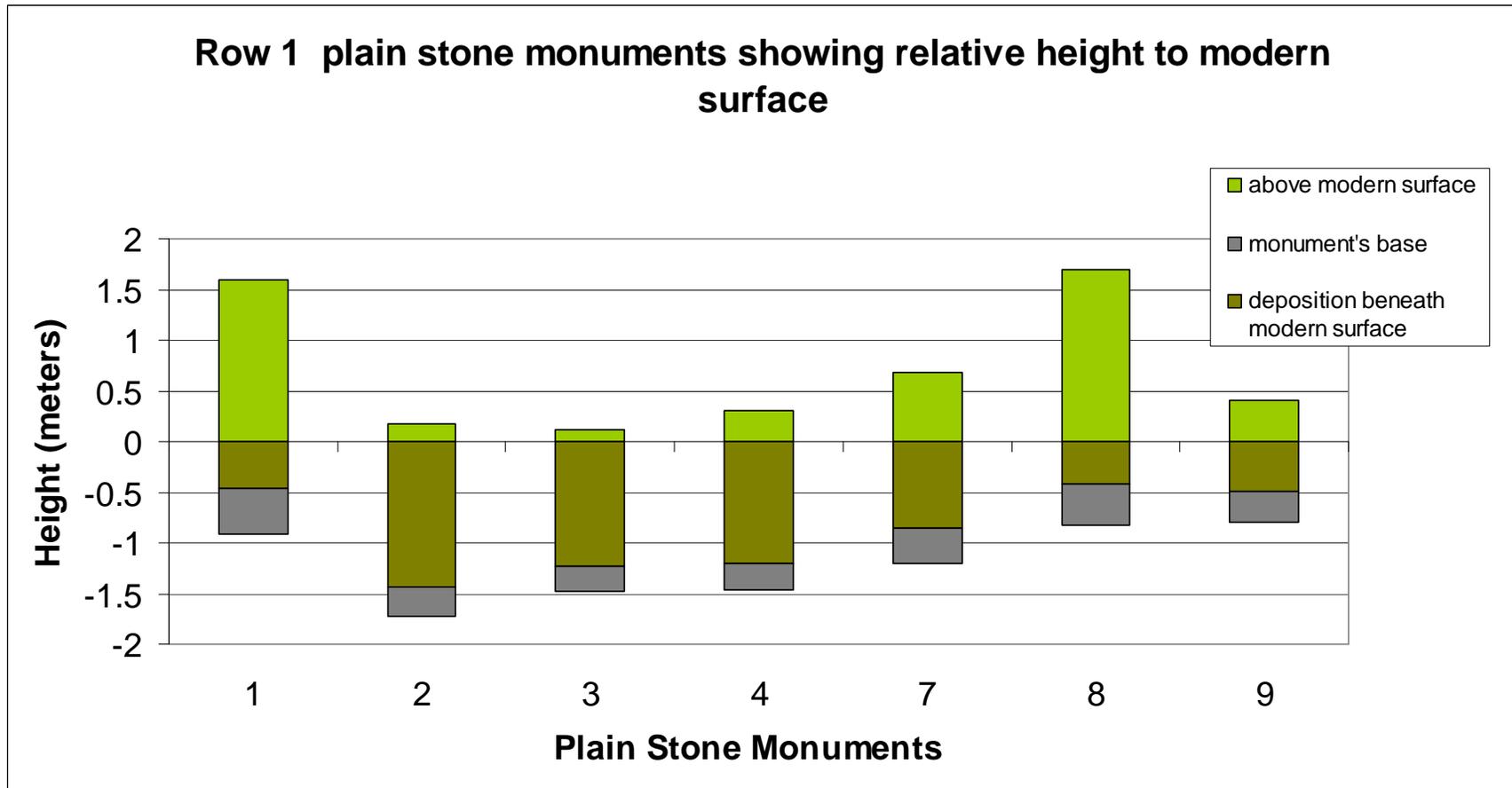


Figure 4-20. Row 1 Plain Stone Monuments showing relative height to modern surface



Figure 4-21. Row 2 Plain Stone Monuments showing absolute height

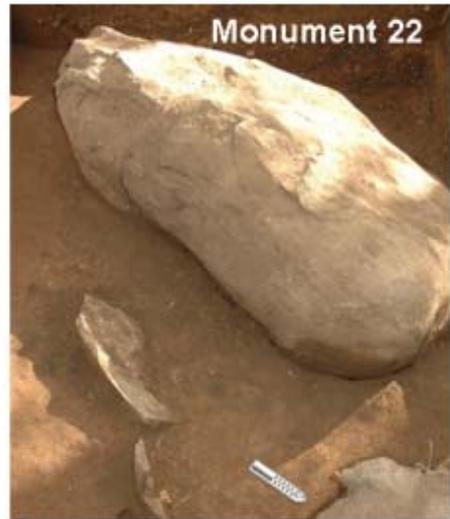
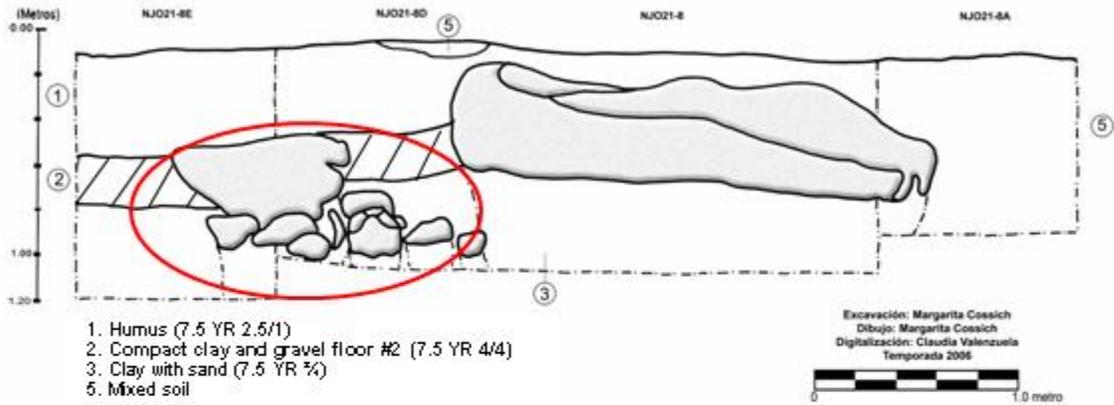


Figure 4-22. Photographs of monuments in Row 2 (Arroyo 2006: Fig6.19, Fig.6.21, Fig. 6, Fig. 6.15)

Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project
 Monument 28 (north profile)



- Stones at the base of Monument 28
- ▨ Clay Floor #2

Figure 4-23. Profile drawing and photograph of Monument 28 (Arroyo 2006:Fig.6.22 and 6.23)

Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project
Monument 23-26 (north profile)

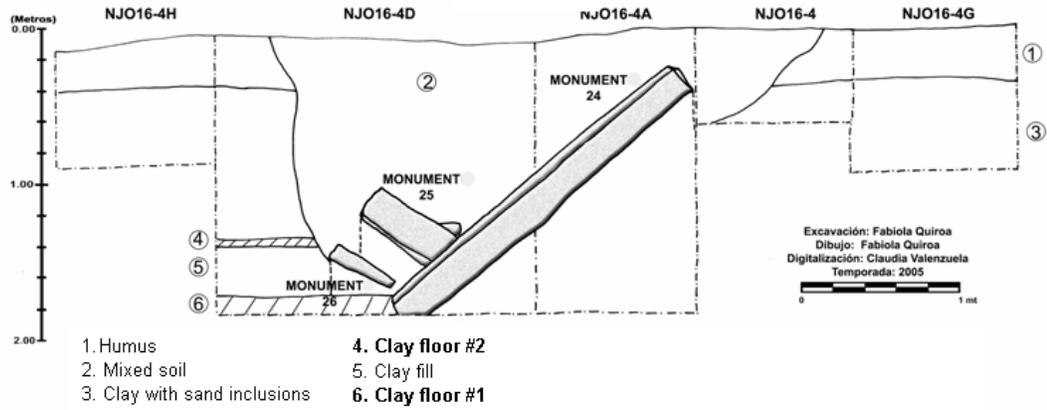


Figure 4-24. Profile drawing and photograph of Monuments 23 through 26 (Arroyo 2006:Fig.6.28, 6.29)



Figure 4-25. Columnar Basalts from Row 3 (a) Monument 30 and 31 (Arroyo 2006:Fig.6.30); (b) Monument 31 after reconstruction (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic archive, 2007)

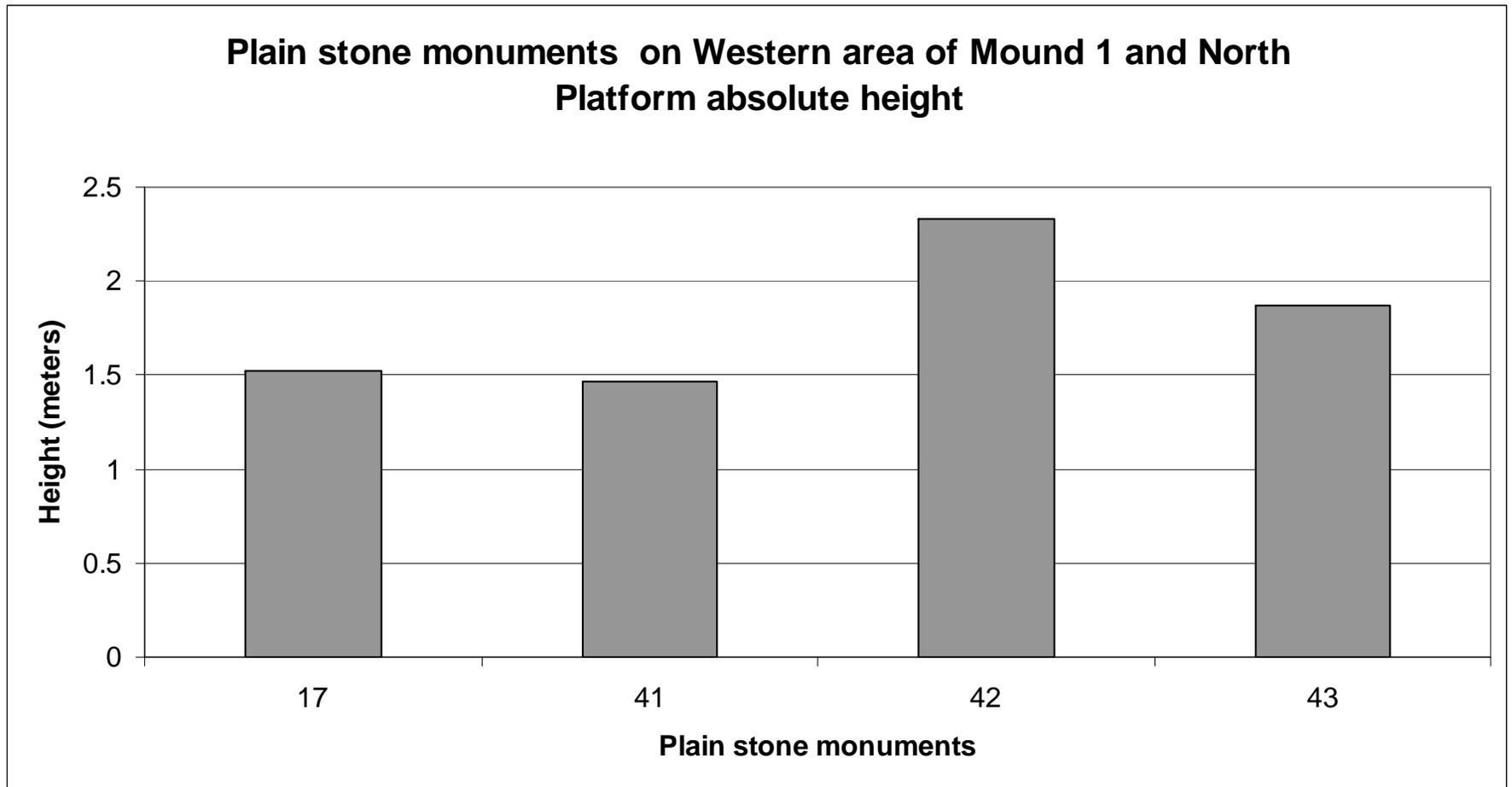


Figure 4-26. Plain Stone Monuments on Western Area of Mound 1 and North Platform showing absolute height



Monument 17



Greenstone celt in found in the west side of the monument's base.

Figure 4-27. Excavation photograph of Monument 17 (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic Archive, 2006)



Figure 4-28. Rock outcrop in the southwestern slope of the Natural Hill, Naranjo (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic Archive, 2006)



Figure 4-29. Rock outcrop located in the southwestern periphery of Naranjo (Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project Photographic Archive, 2006)

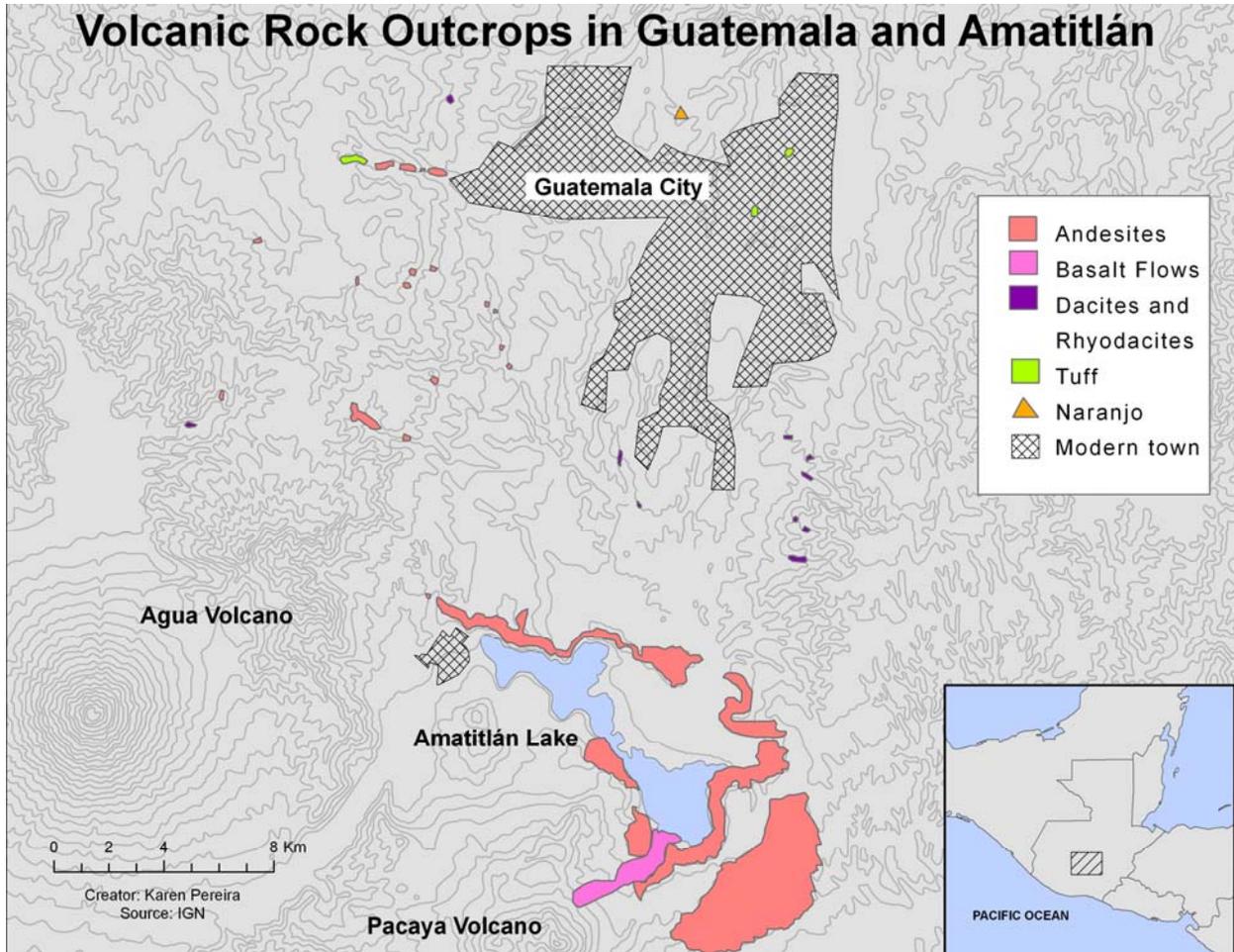


Figure 4-30. Map showing Andesite stone sources near Naranjo (data source: IGN 1977)

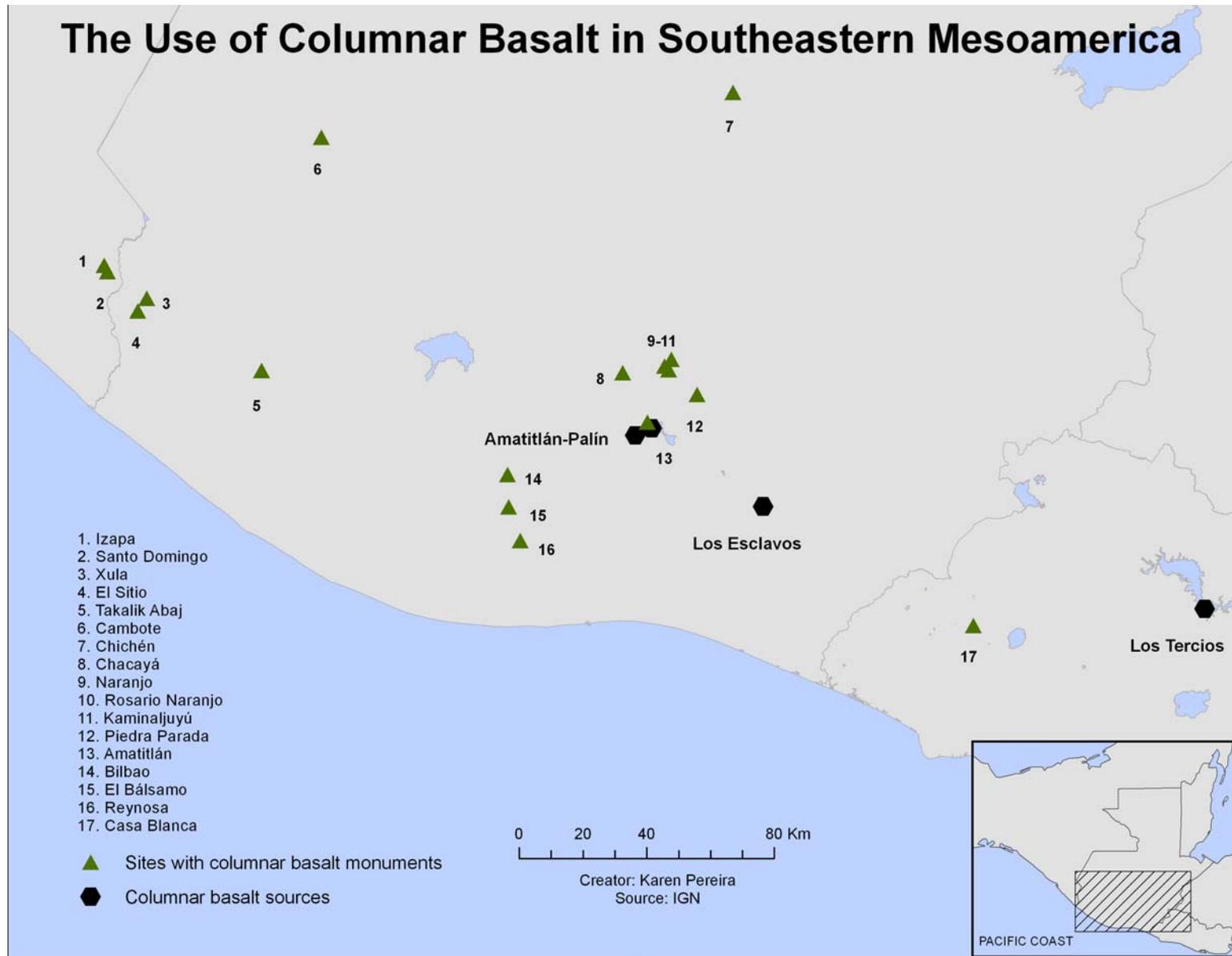


Figure 4-31. Map of sites in Southeastern Mesoamerica with columnar basalts and columnar basalt sources

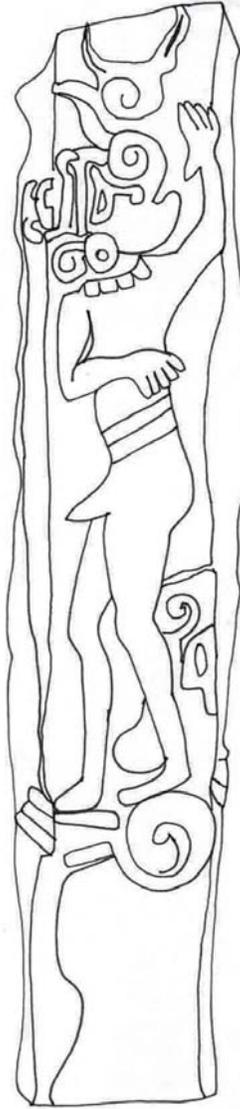


Figure 4-32. Stela 9 of Kaminaljuyu showing a carving on a columnar basalt (drawing by the author)



Figure 4-33. Columnar basalt source at Suchitoto, El Salvador

CHAPTER 5 LANDSCAPE AS A PROCESS

This chapter analyses the concept of landscape as a process using the data from Naranjo presented in the previous chapter. As was explained in Chapter 3, landscape as a process involves the relationship of people with things in the creation of place. The main goal of this chapter is to present how the final layout of Naranjo was the product of a 400-year process in which the ancient residents engaged in constant practices that changed the physical aspect of the site, and at the same time, these practices and material transformations changed the manner in which they related to each other. Thus, this chapter analyzes how the connection with different places and different categories people emerged in the creation of place at Naranjo.

The chapter is divided in two sections. The first section examines the evidence of the initial occupation at Naranjo, which includes the first modifications to the physical landscape. The main goal of this section is to analyze what was in place at this location before the erection of the stone monuments. It also discusses the evidence of the first practices carried out by the first residents of Naranjo. This section is important to set the social and material conditions that existed before the erection of the stone monuments which are considered here the “background” (following Hirsch 1995) that enabled the later erection of monuments at the site.

The second section of the chapter examines the placement of the monuments at Naranjo. The main goal of this section is to analyze the erection of the stone monuments in relation to the other monumental constructions, such as the South and North Platforms and the mounds. Also, differences in the placement of the monuments are discussed to understand their orientation and their association to one another. A detailed analysis of each “row” is presented to test if whether the stone monuments were actually placed to form rows or if a different arrangement might have existed. The last part of this section discusses the final construction episodes that occurred at the

end of the Middle Preclassic occupation of Naranjo. These data are analyzed to understand the final configuration of Naranjo as the map we see today.

Creating Place at Naranjo

The first evidence of modification to the physical aspect of Naranjo is scattered throughout the south and southwest portions of the site. This evidence is characterized by shallow and deep pit excavations into the sterile soil, a yellowish tephra of volcanic origins. What is prominent about these features is that most of them show an irregular shape, depth and size. Nonetheless all of them are characterized by cultural material deposited in several layers that filled the pits. The materials found in the pits were broken pieces of pottery and figurines, obsidian knives, and ground stones, and sometimes pieces of green stone and bones. All these materials were broken and scattered in the pits, and it was possible to refit several fragments from different excavation units. The evidence also pointed to burning activities on top of the fragments and throughout the pits. Thus this evidence has been interpreted as ritual activities that were carried out before any of the constructions was being taken place (Arroyo 2006).

Even though these practices could be interpreted as ritual activities that were “preparing” the soil for further constructions at Naranjo, as is explained in this section, the archaeological evidence suggest a different approach, similar to what has been found at the Mississippian site of Cahokia, Illinois (Pauketat 2000), and the Formative site of Los Naranjo in Honduras (Joyce 2004). Until recent times, large mounds in the Mississippi river valley system have been interpreted as constructions carried out around AD 1000 by a complex chiefdom-level social organization. At Cahokia, chiefdoms are believed to have consolidated at a rapid pace between AD 1000-1200. Here, mound and plaza constructions were most intensive in the earliest phase compared to other neighboring sites (Pauketat 2000:118). These data led Timothy Pauketat (2000) to investigate the process of this rapid change in the social organization at Cahokia, where

the final height of the largest earthen pyramid (Monk's Mound) reached 30 meters. According to Pauketat (2000:119) previous interpretations fail to explain the process by which giant Mississippian chiefdoms suddenly appeared out of what are usually described as minimally centralized precursors. Pauketat takes a different standpoint and, instead of assuming that a pre-existing elite group commanded the constructions at Cahokia, he proposes that it was through communal annual rituals that the ancient residents of Cahokia were able to accumulate large portions of earth and materials in discrete location which eventually increased the height of specific portions of land. Knowing that construction occurred in stages, as was visible in the stratigraphic record of Cahokia's mounds, Pauketat interpreted some of these stages as annual ritual construction cycles similar to those of the ancestors of contemporary Mississippians. The stratigraphic evidence showed that there are often nearly as many individual stages as there are thin layers. The central point of Pauketat's argument is that no Mississippian platforms and few other central features were constructed as one-time labor project. On the contrary, the mounds at Cahokia appear to have been incremental constructions (Pauketat 2000:119-120). Pauketat (2000:121) interprets the evidence as collective activities that were conducted as annual large-scale ritual held at central grounds. Pauketat states that what made the difference to escalate to another level was the scale of these practices, not necessarily their character.

This interpretation of Cahokia is interesting when thinking about the first evidence of practices at Naranjo. Even though Naranjo and Cahokia have different life histories and are not directly related, the first practices at Naranjo have also been identified as ritual activities. What is important to highlight about these practices is their scattered nature. Therefore, at the beginning of the occupation at Naranjo there was no one central place where all these rituals were occurring, possibly in accordance with the de-centralized nature of the social organization

at that time. The case of Cahokia comes into play at Naranjo's interpretations with the idea of repetition and sequence. According to Pauketat, it was the recurrent use of ritual spaces and the deposition of the materials which produced an elevation in the terrain which was not first intended but that brought consequences in relation to social stratification and conceptions of monumental constructions. This idea contrasts with what the normative approach has stated in Mesoamerican archaeology. According to Kowalski (1999) monumentality implies the existence of an elite group who controls and commands these constructions. But as Pauketat (2000:114) noted "[t]hose who become commoners were probably often unaware that their coordinated actions could restrict their own ability to coordinate action in the future", thus it was these communal activities which led to social differentiation.

Repetition and sequence is observed with the first ritual evidence at Naranjo. As it has been explained, most of the dug pits were found with several layers of broken materials and charcoal. Nonetheless since not all of them are found in one single place, it is hard to know which one was used first, or in other words, what was the horizontal/vertical sequence of use; all of them took place at specific locations before there were any formal constructions. Although it is difficult to know why this area in general was chosen for such activities, the surrounding physical landscape might provide a clue. As it is believed for other Preclassic sites in Mesoamerica, features such as hills were considered important and other archaeological sites have been found next to these landmarks (see Grove 1989). The ritual activities carried out in the Naranjo's terrain are located next to a small natural hill and also the Cerro Naranjo is located to the west of this area. It might have been possible that these features were considered by the ancient practitioners.

Vertical sequence plays an important role in the analysis of South Platform and Mound 1 stratigraphy. During the excavations it was possible to identify that the South Platform did not have a symmetric layout. The South Platform area was already a natural elevated terrain before any human modification took place. This natural elevation was also below Mound 1 and possibly the North Platform. On the South Platform excavations it was evident that the “construction” was not through a series of phases but through a series of ritual deposits sometimes alternated by earth fillings, in a rather, “disorganized” manner. At Los Naranjos, Honduras, Rosemary Joyce (2004) has identified Middle Preclassic platforms which she believes were places of gathering. Joyce explains how monumental constructions might be related to domestic platforms, since the ancient inhabitants of Los Naranjos were already familiarized with the construction and maintenance techniques of these structures during the Middle Preclassic period (Joyce 2004:16, 19), therefore, the monumental structures of the Middle Preclassic period are considered by her the “unintended consequences” of larger scale projects. Thus, in a similar manner than Pauketat (2000), Joyce (2004) gives an explanation about earth monuments, one that was based in previous familiar practices but that were applied to the physical terrain at a larger scale. For Joyce (2004) this transformation in the landscape was crucial to the development of different social categories.

At Naranjo, what appears to be the shift in pattern is that the ritual practices were concentrated in one area: the pre-South Platform and pre-Mound 1 area. Therefore, instead of scattering materials through a larger portion of the terrain, all the materials from ritual activities started to be accumulated in a concentrated area. In a similar manner to what Pauketat (2000) described for Cahokia, it was possible that the elevation of the terrain here enabled a new sense

of elevated places, which became an important aspect in the final layout of Naranjo, as will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

In addition to the pre-South Platform and pre-Mound 1 area changes, the other major change that occurred at a similar time was the construction of Floor 1. This modification involved placing an earth fill in the southern portion of the site, where there was a natural depression in the terrain. Earth was placed on top of the dug pits with ritual deposits, although some excavation units also showed the same earth fill on top of the sterile soil without previous modifications. After placing this layer of earth, Floor 1 was created by topping the earth fill with a small layer of yellowish tephra soil. This modification required not only intensive labor, but from a phenomenological perspective, it also changed the physical aspect of the landscape. Not only did Floor 1 flatten a large portion of terrain at Naranjo (possibly 150 x 100 m) but it also covered some of the first ritual deposits that were placed on top of sterile soil. With their enclosure, a different set of understanding about these practices became apparent, there were no longer “available” for further deposits or rituals, but they were also “closed” from the view of people. These first practices became part of their past instead of their actual present. Also, the creation of Floor 1 brought about a new even space suitable possibly for people to gather. Floor 1 also created a new identifiable area, a new space, between the natural hill and the ritual activities to its west in the pre-South Platform and pre-Mound 1 area. Therefore, the construction of Floor 1 and the activities in the pre-South Platform and pre-Mound 1 area created a different set of understandings since the unmodified terrain that existed by the beginning of the Middle Preclassic period changed to a large area covered by a clay layer (Floor 1) and a ritual activity area in the west portion of the site in the pre-South Platform and Mound 1 area.

Before the placement of the stone monuments at Naranjo took place, there was already in place a different landscape of references. First, the ritual practices were already taking place solely in concentrated areas, at the pre-South Platform and the pre-Mound 1 area. By this time the construction of the first floor also occurred, which was topped with the same yellowish tephra soil found in the sterile terrain. Thus, at the same time that the visual landscape was being transformed to give rise to some of the structures, other lower areas were being leveled to produce a flat surface. Significantly, all these changes informed the placement of stones at Naranjo, as is presented in the following section.

Placing Stones at Naranjo

Even though the final layout of Naranjo showed that three rows of stone monuments were placed in between the South Platform-Mound 1-North Platform complex, looking at all the monuments as a single event or construction project, as in the building perspective would, neglect relevant data that might indicate a sequence of their placement. This section instead examines the stratigraphic data to determine whether the monuments were placed forming such rows since the beginning, or if their chronology might indicate sequence of placement. The relationship between the monuments and the other key features of the physical landscape, either built or unbuilt, is also discussed here.

As Thomas (1999) mentioned for megalithic sites at Britain, the main point lies in considering monuments less as objects in themselves than as transformations of space through objects. Through their labor, people were creating new kinds of relationships with place and with material substances. These changes in the configuration of space would also have affected the ways in which places were experienced by human beings. Yet people do not come upon a world of shapes and forms and add meaning: the dwelling perspective assumes that their world is inherently meaningful. It is from within an existence which is already rich in meaning and

experience that people choose to think of objects as having relevance (Thomas 1999:35). These ideas align with the concept of landscape as a process in Chapter 3 following Ingold (1995) and Hirsch (1995), in which human practices are considered embedded in a previous social context, therefore any practice is attached to past practices and at the same time, have embedded the potentiality of future practices.

Following this train of thought, which agrees with the other authors mentioned in this section (e.g. Barrett 1990, 1994, 2000; Love 1999), is possible to establish the process by which the ancient residents of Naranjo erected the stones monuments as part of a web of connections that already was in place. This web of connections was enabled by the first practices carried out in the physical terrain of Naranjo by the beginning of the Middle Preclassic period. It is difficult to establish the place of origin of the peoples that gathered at this particular location to practice such rituals, since no previous Early Preclassic occupation has been identified at Naranjo or in the central highlands of Guatemala for that matter. However, these first rituals probably recreated previous practices already familiar to the first inhabitants of Naranjo. Through their repetition and sequence, people were able to establish a new set of relationships with the new physical landscape of Naranjo, namely the concentration of ritual activity in the South Platform and Mound 1 and the construction of Floor 1. It was the (re)creation of these places through constant ritual practices which started the permanent modifications to the physical terrain.

Contrary to a building perspective argument, the first monuments of Naranjo were not laid out as rows of monuments in a single building project, but were the product of a larger sequence. According to the excavations at Naranjo, Monuments 3 and 4 were among the first monuments to be erected. Both of these monuments had a round altar to their west side, which indicates that the monuments were directed toward the South Platform, which was already a center of ritual

activity. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the NARP obtained one radiocarbon date from Monument 3 which dated to ca. 800 BC, the first half of the Middle Preclassic Period, a date which coincides with the South Platform's initial occupation. These two monuments are distinctively different by their physical appearance, since one is a columnar basalt and the other one is a smoothed andesite stone, although they are both considered similar in the sense that they were the only two monuments found with large round altars. More details about the physical aspect of all the stone monuments of Naranjo will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The erection of the first stone monument at Naranjo is crucial for understanding all the remaining monuments. This plain stone monument was placed so as to be in a fixed position by the ancient inhabitants. Before its placement, a rather flat terrain, considered a plaza, existed between the South Platform-Mound 1 complex to the west and the natural hill to the east. This flat terrain was prepared with Clay Floor 1 and later a second floor was added in which the first stone monument was placed. Therefore, placing a stone monument on such open area it would attract the attention of people walking through the plaza. Especially since stone was not a material used in the other of the constructions at Naranjo, which were composed mixtures of clay. People living at Naranjo and its surroundings would have seen stone only at two other nearby locations: the natural hill and the southwest outcrops in the periphery.

In Europe, megalithic monuments have been discussed in terms of their durability and their relationship to the dead (e.g. Barrett 1990, 2000; Thomas 1993, 2000). Since stone was the material used to create them, several archaeologists have argued that the durability of stone also highlights the durability of the social landscape enabled during the Neolithic period. At several sites archaeologists have observed that the original monuments before the stones were erected, was a timber circle, and this might have been associated with extensive deposits of artifacts and

with the debris of feasting. In time, the circle of posts was rebuilt in stone, and this kind of monuments is associated with the remains of the dead. Stonehenge provides the best-known example of this sequence. Scholars suggest that the first structure was connected with the living and for that reason it was made out of wood, an organic material. These monuments were formed from a living substance which would eventually decay. When the site was recreated in stone, it was associated with the dead, and that is why it was now formed from a material which would last forever (Bradley 2002:123). Similar concepts relating wood with the living and stone with the dead have been interpreted for the Zafimaniry in Madagascar. Here, Maurice Bloch (1995:71-2) explains how megalithic stone monuments are erected to commemorate a deceased relative. He interprets this as the act of inscribing a person in the land, which is believed to be unchangeable. Therefore stone is chosen since it is more permanent than wood. The durability of materials is also an important characteristic noted by Joyce (2004) for the enlargement of public platforms at Los Naranjos, Honduras.

Even though at Naranjo, no traces of wood have been identified as previous monuments before the stone ones, differences in durability might be observed by comparing the ritual deposits in the South Platform, which went through constant change throughout the whole Middle Preclassic occupation. On the contrary, the stone monuments were not altered following their placement and remained in the same place. Also, the particularity of a visible standing stone would produce a set of relationships with the residents different from those created by the ritual activities carried out at the South Platform and Mound 1. The ritual deposits there were placed as layers of possibly different events, although it is hard to distinguish one from the other since all of them are concentrated in a single location. In a very different manner, a single stone set on a clear plaza surrounded by a clay floor recreates a singular event which I believe, calls

attention to the singularity of the group of people that erected it, or to the singularity of the event that produced it. This single erected stone would highlight all those characteristics and stand as witness for future practices or gatherings. As Tilley (2004) has noted for several megalithic sites in Europe, the presence of stone monuments as part of the visual landscape draws the attention and recalls the memory of visitors and residents. Also, as Andy Jones (2001:240) explains, objects have traces that embody retentions from previous objects, and at the same time, have the potential for future objects. In the case of Naranjo this would mean that the first stone monument erected at Naranjo likely made reference to a predecessor event/object/stone source, and it would become the potential for the erection of future monuments at the site. Thus, a connection between previous and following monuments would be created at the center of Naranjo.

The erection of Monument 3 and 4 established the first set of relationships between monuments and the rest of Naranjo. First they were oriented in relation to the South Platform, and second, they were oriented to one another in a disposition that initiated a north to south alignment, an arrangement further developed with the rest of the stone monument placed at Naranjo. According to the stratigraphic data, the occupation of the South Platform and Mound 1 continued to be formalized during the middle of the Middle Preclassic period. At Mound 1, several construction phases have been distinguished, and by the end of this period, this was the largest construction at the site. Therefore it is believed that the placement of Monument 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, was oriented in relation to the construction of Mound 1, instead of the South Platform, as in the case of Monument 3 and 4. Nonetheless these two first monuments were already a place of reference in the landscape which the ancient residents of Naranjo continue to validate by erecting the other monuments (1, 2, 7, 8, and 9) forming a rough alignment with those first two. The

placement of Monument 7, 8, and 9 extended the spatial field of the previous Floor 1 to the north since all of these monuments were erected on top of sterile soil where no previous Floor 1 existed. This extension to the north of Floor 2 was also visible through the excavation of Monument 29, the Row 2 monument placed farther to the north.

Evidently, the connections between these different structures were not the product of gradual evolution, but involved a conscious evocation of existing monuments. At Naranjo this would mean that the rest of the monuments after the placement of the first monuments would make reference to those first landmarks. Nonetheless, the other monuments erected after Monument 3 and 4, also created new relationships to the landscape. For instance, Monument 8 and 9 each had a small stone placed to their east side. Even though this stone was considered too small to be an altar, it might reveal the orientation of the monuments. If this is the case, Monument 8 and 9 would have their “front” side to the east, instead of the west side like Monument 3 and 4 had. During the Late Preclassic, stone monuments with altars at other sites have been reported to be placed in front of mounds and platforms with their front side “looking” in the opposite direction from the structures. At Naranjo, this would have meant that the residents were to look at the monuments (1, 2, 7, 8, and 9) in conjunction with Mound 1. By looking at the monuments from east to west Mound 1 would have been as a background, whereas Monument 3 and 4 were oriented towards the west, probably to be looked at from the South Platform area.

This change in orientation was part of the emergence of Mound 1 as the central structure at Naranjo. Even though the South Platform remained in use the rest of the occupation of Naranjo, after the second half of the Middle Preclassic period, Mound 1 achieved 6 meters in height and its construction was formalized as a pyramid with a frontal staircase and a superstructure. The

relevance of Mound 1 would remain throughout the rest of the occupation at Naranjo and, as it is discussed below, it was a point of reference for future monument erections and the other mound and platform constructions.

All the monuments that have been discussed above have been referred in Chapter 4 as Row 1, although this name was assigned before analyzing if all the stone monuments were possibly forming a row. Through the analysis here, it was possible to determine that Row 1 did not achieve the arrangement of a row until the end of the placement of all the monuments. Even at that time, all the monuments were not aligned perfectly as a row. By looking at the map of Naranjo (Figure 4-15) is possible to observe that monuments 2, 3, and 4 were placed forming a row, and, although monuments 7, 8, and 9, look like they were part of the same row, they were actually placed a few centimeters to the west. The case of Monument 1 is different, since this monument is clearly off the row and slightly to the east in relation to the rest of the monuments.

Despite all these differences observable only by taking exact measurements of the alignment of the stones in relation to each other, in the field, the experience one gets is of a row of monuments. Possibly the observer will only be able to distinguish the fact that Monument 1 is not totally aligned with the rest of the monuments. Designing a straight row of monuments would require minimum effort and technology with two poles and a rope. On the contrary, I interpret the slight differences observed of the monument placement, as differences in time since not all the monuments were placed during a single project. Therefore, under this analysis, Monuments 3 and 4 were among the first ones to be placed in relation to the South Platform, while the rest of the monuments: 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9, were probably placed at a later time and in relation to what was becoming Mound 1, the largest construction of Naranjo.

The other two rows of monuments at Naranjo present a different set of relationships with the landscape, than what Row 1 showed. The first difference is that Row 2 and 3 were placed farther away from the South Platform-Mound 1 constructions, but nearer the natural hill. By looking at the distances between each row it was possible to establish that Row 1 was placed 30 meters to the west from the South Platform-Mound 1 construction, and that Row 2 was placed 200 meters to the west of Row 1. Row 3 was placed 20 meters west of Row 1 and 200 meters east of the natural hill slope. Thus, Row 2 and 3 were placed in relationship to Mound 1, Row 1, and the natural hill. Their placement corroborates three important set of spatial relationships.

The first relationship is made between Row 1 and Row 2 and Row 3. Row 2 and 3 were erected in a north to south alignment in the same way than Row 1. By looking at their position and by looking at the previous maps published by Shook (1943) and Williamson (1877) it is possible to state that both rows were placed forming such alignments from the beginning. Unlike Row 1 which shows discontinuities in the placement of the stones in a straight line, Row 2 and 3 shows that they were symmetrically aligned. Therefore, it is possible that Row 1 served as a reference for the placement of Rows 2 and 3, which were set as rows from their beginning. Their symmetrical disposition is also shown specifically in Row 2, since all four stones found in the field were separated by a similar distance from one another, 25 meters approximately.

Williamson (1877) and Shook (1943) also mentioned that Row 3 monuments were placed equidistantly from one another. Thus, the erection of stone monuments in Row 1 enabled the disposition of Row 2 and 3.

The second relationship is made between Row 2 and 3 and Mound 1. Both rows were placed at a middle point between Mound 1 and the natural hill to the east, therefore by placing this monuments a wider plaza was created, one that encompassed the whole flat terrain between

Mound 1 and the natural hill. Before their placement, Floor 1 covered a smaller portion of this terrain. This terrain was also expanded towards the north with Floor 2, where there was no previous occupation. This expansion is visible by looking at Monument 29 which is placed on top of sterile soil, in a similar fashion to that found for Monuments 7, 8, and 9. With the placement of Row 2 and Row 3 in the center of the plaza, symmetry was also accomplished between Mound 1 and the natural hill. The final stage of Mound 1 was found to be aligned 90 degrees with the top of the natural hill. Even though both elevations are not symmetrical (the natural hill has a larger slope to the south) their summits coincide with this alignment. It is believed that this alignment was further reinforced with the placement of Monument 17 at a later time. Monument 17 was placed west of Mound 1 following the same alignment. This was the only monument with a greenstone celt in each side, although several other monuments had small and medium stones at their bases which I interpret here as possible offerings during the erection event (Table 4-4).

The third relationship related to Row 2 and 3 is related to the visual appearance. Row 2 was conformed by five stone monuments of similar materials and of similar shape and size, and Row 3 was conformed by columnar basalts. Each of these two rows shows homogeneity which is another characteristic that makes each group of stones a row. This homogeneity contrasts with the heterogeneity of the Row 1 monuments.

Row 1 has seven monuments with different stones and different treatments which result in a different visual aspect than Row 2 and 3. Even though the three rows show a continuation of north to south alignment preferences, their differences in chronology show that different relationships were being established as time passed by and as new monuments were erected. Therefore Row 1 of stone monuments stands in opposition to Row 2 and Row 3. Row 1 is

conformed by a wide variety of stone monuments; all seven monuments have a different shape and source and are located near the focus of ritual activities. Therefore, Row 1 of stone monuments is characterized in this study as a heterogeneity of events that could point to the heterogeneity of the social landscape at Naranjo as well, whereas the placement of Row 2 and Row 3 show a trend towards homogeneity and a preference towards symmetry. These arguments follow concepts of materiality because by placing different stones in a single row or alignment the ancient residents of Naranjo were (re)producing the social differentiation, in the sense that each stone represented a different social element of the landscape, and perhaps therefore a different social group. For Chalcatzingo, Grove and Gillespie (n.d.) noted that different social groups within the site were citing different places outside Chalcatzingo. Although we don't have detailed evidence for Naranjo, Row 1 presents interesting evidence to consider a heterogeneity in the social organization of that time, one that could have been challenged with the later placement of Row 2 and 3.

After the placement of Row 2 and Row 3 stone monuments, a new area would have emerged at Naranjo, one that was dominated by stone monuments in a flat terrain. This area would have been easily visible from several angles within Naranjo and even outside of Naranjo (from the slopes of Cerro Naranjo for instance). Rows of monuments have been interpreted at other sites as paths. At Chalcatzingo, David Grove (2005) proposed a processional pathway in relation to the stone monuments found at the center of the site. Likewise, Rice (2007:112-13) has proposed that some of Izapa's monuments were viewed as part of ritual processions. This idea is based on Suzanne Miles (1965:258) who proposes that Stelae 2, 21, 22, 7, 12, 18, and 5 at Izapa seem to be almost a sequence. Such ideas are based on the idea that processions could be the counterpart of festivals, and each monument could be a narration of a myth. Nonetheless,

even Rice (2007) states that hypothesizing which was the best route to approach the monuments is a difficult task. At Naranjo such concepts are difficult to establish, although the fact that the monuments were placed forming different rows could indicate that different sequences were intentionally created by the ancient residents, sequences that could be related to specific oral histories.

During the second half or the Middle Preclassic period, the residents of Naranjo engaged in several building constructions in an active way. During this time, the North Platform, Mound 2 and Mound 3 were built. The stratigraphic data from such constructions revealed specific techniques that helped to achieve these buildings in a rather rapid manner. Nonetheless the constructions were also integrated with the previous constructions; therefore the sense that they were all part of a single project is created. Not only were these constructions carried out faster, but in a manner that achieved a symmetrical layout of the site as well.

The arguments which have been put forward so far suggest that the monuments of Naranjo structured the social landscape largely through the influence that they exerted upon the experience and interpretation of space on the part of its ancient residents. The idea that a building plan was taking shape at Naranjo is interpreted in conjunction with the social differentiation process occurring at the site. As mentioned for the first practices at Naranjo, and even the erection of the monuments which later composed Row 1, there was no central plan governing the modifications to the physical landscape. Nonetheless, as the ancient residents created a differentiated space, by erecting more monuments, constructing mounds, and platforms, social differentiation also took place. Such modifications were part of the process that created the social differences, which by the end of the Middle Preclassic period were stable enough to produce a single vision of the site and a unique symmetric layout. At Naranjo, the

people who engaged in structuring a landscape through the building of monuments and mound, was actually involved in the “making” of human subjects, and thus in the making of different categories of human subjects. Thus, I interpret the first ritual practices at Naranjo as heterogenous and less centralized activities that were likely conducted by a diverse group of people each of similar social ranking. Nevertheless, through the constant manipulation of the environment and through the habilitation of different types of spaces, such as the platforms, mounds, and plaza area, I suggest that a rather unified vision and symmetric layout started to take place by the end of the Middle Preclassic period at Naranjo. The later construction projects at the site point to the possibility of exclusive groups coordinating such activities and enabling a new landscape.

The relationship between social differentiation and spatial differentiation has been widely documented in archaeology. For Neolithic Europe, Thomas (1993:35) and Barrett (1990) have argued that modifications to the first Neolithic monuments brought about secluded and private spaces which were only accessible to a small group of people. Therefore, spatial segmentation is interpreted in relation to social segmentation as well. According to Thomas (1999:38) architecture can be considered in terms of the mark it makes on the landscape, but at a micro spatial level it can actually constrain the body’s movement and attitudes. This means that the way the physical body acts in space may limit the way in which the space is experienced, and hence constrain interpretation. During the Neolithic period, monumental architecture can be interpreted as demonstrating increasing efforts to regulate the ways in which particular spaces were moved through, and thus experienced (Thomas 1999:48). At Naranjo, a similar interpretation is argued, because by the end of the Middle Preclassic period the site’s layout was

producing an enclosure of buildings that would seclude the space where the stone monuments were erected from the majority of the population. Therefore, a closed space was being created.

Visibility from far distances also played a role, and as Barrett (1994) has argued for many Neolithic monuments the construction of monuments in earlier Neolithic Britain introduced discontinuity into the landscape, by establishing boundaries around secluded and differentiated places. This has been established by his research of megaliths in England. Here Barrett (1999:259-260) explained how during the Neolithic period stone monuments were the foci of ritual activity but later these practices stopped and the monuments became distant elements of the past. Thomas (1993:38) also explains how Silbury Hill is a monument which was intended to attract the eye of the onlooker from a distance, as he or she passed up the valley. Thus by the end of the third millennium the monuments of the Avebury area were intended to be seen in sequence rather than simultaneously forming a kind of spatial narrative, each structure revealed in turn. Thomas (1993:32-33) also explains how the West Kennet monument at Avebury district changed from a stone chamber with burial remains was later elongated, and then the chambers were blocked off by the erection of three extremely large sarsens across the entrance. Therefore the monuments was more imposing when seen from a distance. The monument was to be seen from a distance. Thomas believes that access to the inner chamber produced intimate knowledge that was shared by a select group of people, a privilege social group. This issue of visibility could be applied at Naranjo by looking at how the center of the site, conformed by two platforms and two mounds were enclosing the open area with the stone monuments. At the same time, the site was getting larger and could be distinguished better from the distance.

In Mesoamerica, Love (1999) presents a similar case for La Blanca, an Early and Middle Preclassic site located in the Pacific Coast of Guatemala. Through an analysis of the

monumental constructions at La Blanca, Love argues that the construction of monumental mounds changed the social space and modified the daily routine of the ancient residents. Following theories of structuration (see Giddens 1984), Love (1999:143) says that the new monuments were able to occupy space and prevent previous daily routines. These monuments also became reference points for regionalization and the social categorization of space. In a similar tone to those of Pauketat (2000) and Joyce (2004), Love (1999:144) argues that the monument were different from earlier mound constructions in the zone because they were larger and durable, thus they were fixed in space. The construction of such mound would have created a larger concept of place, although as place was larger, space itself was more highly segregated. This highly differentiation in space was visible at Ujuxte, a later neighboring site, which according to Love had a very controlled and planned center. Here the ceremonial zones were tightly clustered and more enclosed spaces, such as ball courts were built in this place (Love 1999:146). According to Love, the Middle Preclassic sites were anchored on ceremonial architecture, but these social practices enabled the further regionalization of space beyond the ritual sphere. It was the creation of these types of space that had an effect in constructing non egalitarian forms of social interaction (Love 1999:147)

At Naranjo, the final outcome is three rows of monuments created throughout time, although probably not planned and executed from the beginning. These data highlights the concept of landscape as a process discussed in Chapter 3 because it takes into account that the monuments in each row were not placed as a single event or construction project, but that by looking at the chronological differences, is possible to observe a sequence in the placement and the creation of new references. It was these new references which brought about social differentiation into Naranjo's landscape.

Conclusion

At first sight, the present layout of Naranjo looks like other Middle Preclassic sites in the central highlands or the Pacific Coast of Guatemala. It could even be argued that Naranjo has a symmetrical arrangement with a north to south orientation in most of its major buildings, such as the arrangement South Platform-Mound 1-North Platform located in the west portion of the center of the site. Even the plain stone monuments are believed to be positioned in a north to south fashion, and have been described to be forming three rows (see Williamson 1877). A deviation of 21 degrees from north to east exist in all the major construction of Naranjo, a characteristic also common to many other Middle and Late Preclassic sites in the highlands of Guatemala (Shook 1952:3). Nonetheless, as was explained in this chapter, looking at the final stage of Naranjo hinders understanding the process by which the ancient residents created such a regional center.

Knowing this process is important, not only to know the different stages that the building might have had, but because from a dwelling perspective, it is believed that through the doing and building activities and other practices, people are able to relate to one another and to their physical environment. Landscape is not a fixed category in space; it involves the social aspects that are attached to the variety of practices performed by people in relation to place and to other people. Landscape is a system of references in which each human action performed is intelligible in the context of other past and future actions. Society is itself carried forward by such practices, involving human actions such as the erection of stone monuments, as in the case of Naranjo. What is important is that people reproduced the conditions of their own lives (Barrett 1990:182). In this case, the monuments of Naranjo do not reflect or reify the prior social organization, but they end up as a consequence of possible unintended institutionalized practices.

The study of landscape as a process at Naranjo revealed that the first residents or occupants engaged in ritual activities at several locations in the site. Nonetheless no specific synoptic pattern was observed. Later, these deposits were covered with a layer of clay and Floor 1 was built. As this floor was being constructed, the ritual activities concentrated in the pre-South Platform and Mound 1 area. It was during this time that the first stone monument was erected. Monument 3 or 4 was one of the first monuments erected and they were placed in front of the South Platform. Their placement enabled a new set of relationships with the landscape which became more visible through the erection of the monuments 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9. These new monuments formed Row 1 and highlighted the emergent importance of Mound 1 as the central construction of Naranjo. Rows 2 and 3 were erected within a new set of understandings in what became the middle of the plaza, which was also extended to the north. The plaza became the middle point between Mound 1 and the natural hill. These alterations to the landscape produced a more symmetrical layout at Naranjo, which continued to be constructed during the second half of the Middle Preclassic period. By that time, the North Platform and Mound 2 were built to produce a symmetrical center at Naranjo.

Naranjo's history started with a less formalized arrangement, which is interpreted as one that occurred in conjunction with a de-centralized organization. The heterogeneity of the Row 1 monuments points to the possibility of different groups of people interacting in the same terrain. Nonetheless by the end of the Middle Preclassic period there seemed to be a trend towards a unique direction of the site, which is evident by the rapid constructions and the desire to acquire a symmetrical layout. Therefore, the first practices of Naranjo and the first monuments erected at the site, although part of a heterogeneous group, enabled a new system of references that favored a centralized project at the site. As Joyce (2000:71) has noted in relation to practices of

exclusion: “Claims to exclusivity were likely made long before their inscription on the Formative landscape, but it was in the creation of permanent monumental architecture and art that these claims gained irrefutable force.” At Naranjo, this could be interpreted as a symmetrical center with stone monuments in its center and a focus towards a more enclosed space and a single building plan carried out by the end of the Middle Preclassic period.

CHAPTER 6 BRIDGING THE NATURE/CULTURE DICHOTMOMY

This chapter presents an analysis of the plain stone monuments at Naranjo. After reviewing landscape “as a process” in Chapter 5 this chapter asks the question How does a stone become a monument? The main goal is to analyze the use of specific stone sources and the final shape of the monuments when they were placed at Naranjo. This information is discussed under the nature vs. culture debate explained in Chapter 3. Instead of looking at the stone monuments of Naranjo as a homogeneous final product at the center of the site, as the building perspective would do, this chapter takes into account the life history of the stones, including their provenience and the later alterations made to them by the ancient inhabitants of Naranjo. The main idea is to look at what is usually considered the medium - the stone itself (Newsome 1993:1) - and consider its material characteristics as vital for understanding the plain stone monuments at Naranjo.

Most of the ideas presented in this chapter are based on the work of Richard Bradley (1998, 2000) who integrated the study of European megaliths with the natural environment. Under the dwelling approach, Richard Bradley (2000) presents a different view of stone sources. He is interested in contesting the notions that archaeologist have about nature and culture, and he wants to call our attention to what he calls “an archaeology of natural places”. With this approach the study of monuments at Naranjo could focus not only in what the monument might signify by itself, but on the relationships between the monuments, the stone sources, and other places. Therefore the materials, landscapes, and places could have acted as important landmarks for the people who erected these monuments (Bradley 2000-36-38).

This chapter is divided in two sections. The first section examines directly the nature of the stone monuments by looking at the possible stone sources used. The idea of this discussion

is not only to identify the stone source but also to discuss the relevance of the stone sources as places and their relationship with the residents of Naranjo. Therefore, the section analyzes the stone sources as part of the network of places that form the landscape at Naranjo. The second section of the chapter analyses the manipulation of stone to become monuments at Naranjo, discussing the evidence of alterations to the stones and their implications for the creation of place at Naranjo.

Stone Sources as Places

Most of the monuments found at Naranjo present a variety of shapes and possible stone sources. As was discussed in Chapter 4, further analyses must be carried out to positively identify some of the stone sources used by the ancient residents at the site. Nonetheless, this section attempts to provide further inferences central to the discussion of landscape as a network of places.

Maya archaeology has been interested in identifying some of the sources for several of the materials recovered in excavations, such as ceramics (Bishop et al. 1980) and obsidian (Braswell et al. 2000). These studies often focus on understanding technical aspects involved in the production of the pieces, such as the quarrying activities that took place at the source, and the production steps to achieve the final desired piece. Trade of raw materials and of the final pieces is also combined in this type of studies. Under this approach, the source of a specific material is seen solely as a place of procurement (e.g. a quarry).

Two different critiques are highlighted in this study in relation to the study of stone sources. The first one is the lack of petrographic analyses to identify the stone source of the monuments at several ancient Maya cities. Compared to the vast amount of information regarding obsidian sources used in Maya cities, there is scant interest to identify the stone sources used for monuments. The second critique is the treatment of the stone sources solely as

places of procurement. In this study, the perspectives presented by Bradley (1998, 2000) regarding natural formations as “places” are used to challenge this notion of stone sources.

According to Kempe (1983:80), until relatively recently the question of provenance of building stones at archaeological sites rarely arose. Because of the problems of transport, it was believed that the ancient residents of a site tended to use local stone rather than attempt large-scale, long-distance moving of massive blocks of rock. Two simple rules governed the choice of stone. One was ease of working, largely determined by the natural formation –sedimentary beddings, igneous jointing, or metamorphic foliations. The other was local availability in sufficiently large quantities. In the past, however, Kempe notes that there were instances of people laboring to transport a particular type of rock over considerable distances and difficult terrain. Examples of such cases are described by him in the case of Stonehenge, Britain.

Most of the megalithic works of Europe are built of local stone, commonly limestone, sandstone, granite, or gneiss. They incorporate both boulders and mason-dressed slabs and pillars. With the exception of Stonehenge little has been written concerning the petrology of the rocks employed. At Stonehenge petrographic analyses have revealed the use of different types of stones from very different locations. According to these, Stonehenge originally consisted of an outer circle of 60 sarsen stones; a bluestone circle of 60 stones; a sarsen horseshoe of five trilithons; and an inner horseshoe of 19 bluestones. The sarsen stones occur sporadically on the nearby area of Marlborough downs, regarded as local origin. Large tabular slabs of sarsen stones were also quarried locally. The bluestones, however, are of totally foreign nature unknown in southeast England. Wales, Shropshire, the Mendip Hills, Devon, and Cornwall have all been suggested as possible sources. Studies have been able to compare sections of the bluestones with rocks known from other parts of the country, and have established that the bluestones almost

certainly originated in the Preselau Hills of Pembrokeshire, a distance of some 280 kilometers away from Stonehenge (Kempe 1983:101).

In Mesoamerica, a similar pattern is observed, since the provenience of the stones used as monuments is usually not a priority for their study. As argued throughout this study, most of the relevance is given to the carvings that might appear on their surface rather than to the stone itself. Nonetheless few studies have dealt with issues of provenance and the production of stone monuments. One is a research carried out in the Gulf Coast of Mexico to account for the production of the Olmec colossal heads found at several sites in this area, such as San Lorenzo, Tres Zapotes, and Laguna de los Cerros. According to Heizer, Smith, and Williams (1965) some of the colossal heads from Tres Zapotes come from boulders of a distinctive picritic basalt occurring on the slopes of Cerro Cintepec, 8 kilometers from the Tres Zapotes locality. Williams and Heizer (1965:5) stated that the Cerro Cintepec basalt boulders on the slopes of the Tuxtla Mountains was the major source used for the Olmec colossal heads.

At Llano del Jícaro, near Laguna de los Cerros, evidence of quarrying activities was identified. This basalt source site is located in the Tuxtla Mountains, at a mid distance from the Olmec site of San Lorenzo. Investigations at Llano del Jícaro helped determined that the stone obtained for the monuments and carvings in the Preclassic period was pre-shaped on the site before removal to a regional center (Gillespie 1994:240). Another study concerned with quarrying activities and the extraction of stone for monuments is the study of at the Preclassic Maya site of Nakbe located in the lowlands of Guatemala. Here Woods and Titmus (1994) carried out an experiment to replicate the conditions of how and where the limestone extraction was done by the ancient inhabitants of Nakbe. Through surveys they were able to locate some of the limestone sources where stone was extracted. Cuts made into the natural limestone and tools

were found at these places (Woods and Titmus 1994:298). Nonetheless, this study was more concerned with efficiency models and the energy spent in the quarrying activities than to the significance of the stone source used.

At Naranjo, three possible stone sources were used to obtain the stones erected as monuments (see Chapter 4). These are located at different distances from the site, ranging from a few hundred meters away from the center of Naranjo to approximately 30 kilometers away to the south. The local source believed to be used for Row 2 monuments, comes from the vicinity of the Cerro Naranjo. During survey the NARP team was able to locate several boulders of similar shape and size in the slopes of Cerro Naranjo. Although there was no superficial evidence of quarrying, the dimensions and type of stone found there makes it a good candidate for the Row 2 monuments. Limestone outcrops were also identified in the southwest portion of the Naranjo periphery, and it is believed that Monument 7 was procured from that area.

What is interesting about the two nearby sources candidates for Row 2 monuments and Monument 7 is that both places had rock outcrops surfacing from the underground, but most importantly, stone boulders were identified lying on the ground. This would mean that in order to procure a stone the ancient residents of Naranjo did not have to quarry the stone outcrops, but were able to pick one of the stones on the surface. Evidence of human occupation or modification at these local stone outcrops was scant. With the exception of the southwestern slope of the natural hill, where small concave circles were identified on one of the natural stone outcrops (Figure 4-28), the other places did not have evidence of use (according to survey and excavations). This could further sustain the idea that there were no quarrying activities being taken place at the stone outcrops, but that stones were procured from the ground surface.

The visual aspects of these stone outcrops showed a group of stones, but in some instances, linear arrangements, or sequences of stones could be observed (Figure 4-28 and 4-29). Nonetheless, unlike the case of the megalithic stone tors and tombs discussed in Chapter 3, where both type of stone arrangements had prominent similarities (Bradley 1998), at Naranjo it is difficult to tell the grade of resemblance between these local natural outcrops and the stone rows at the center of the site. As well, the “sequences” observed by the author in the natural outcrops are composed of big prominent rocks very close to each other, but there is no definitive resemblance between these rocks and the monuments found at the center of the site.

At Middle Formative Chalcatzingo, Mexico similar characteristics between monuments found at the center of the site and natural stone outcrops in the natural hill have been discussed. Here, two sets of sculptures were found, one located within the buildings and the second set located in the natural hill that is situated in the south end of the site. According to Grove (1987) a major difference between both groups of monuments is the topics depicted on their carvings. In the natural hill area, the monuments portray natural elements such as lizards, squash plants, and mythical figures. On the contrary, the monuments erected at the center of the site are stone slabs, named stelae, portraying human figures in a standing position (Grove 1989). These distinctive sets of sculptures are related to their spatial context, maybe in a similar manner to the monuments at Naranjo. If we consider the stone outcrops in the natural hill and the southwest periphery as “monuments” as distinctive feature of the physical landscape, a sharp distinction is made between these, and the vertical monuments at the center of the site, which were erected one stone at a time as discrete monuments that have certain distance between stones.

The other source of stone used at Naranjo was andesite, which is very abundant in the central highlands of Guatemala (Figure 4-30). Several andesite sources are located south of

Naranjo, although no archaeological survey was carried out here, so there is little information regarding the nature of the source or its visual appearance. What seems to be a more intriguing source used at Naranjo is the columnar basalt, considered the third source. This source was widely used at Naranjo since 12 monuments both in situ and out of context were columnar basalts. Columnar basalts were widely used at other Middle Preclassic sites (Clancy 1990, Shook 1952) (Figure 4-31). This type of stone was apparently preferred by the Middle and Late Preclassic period and was not restricted for the use as plain stone monuments. As in the case of Kaminaljuyu's Stela 9 (Figure 4-32), there are other examples in the Gulf Coast where the basalt columns were erected as monuments as well (Parsons 1986). Furthermore at the site of La Venta the use of basalt columns was found in the context of monumental constructions. Such is the case of Tomb A, an entire structure built using columnar basalts. Tomb A had walls and a roof that consisted of this type of stones (Drucker et al. 1959). The Ceremonial Court and the Southwest and Southeast Platforms in Complex A are the other examples of the use of columnar basalts as architectural elements. This court was surrounded by a parapet of columnar basalts (Drucker et al. 1959).

What is interesting about the use of columnar basalts in Mesoamerica is their particular shape, which is also attestable by looking at the columnar basalt sources (Figure 4-33). The basalt columns give the same impression as the case study presented by Bradley (1998), where natural tors had a distinctive shape that was thought of as being man-made. The symmetry and smooth surface of the columnar basalts give the impression that these stones were man-made and not naturally formed. Following Bradley's (1998) explanation that the tors were not necessarily conceived as natural stone, we need not assume that the ancient inhabitants of Naranjo thought of the columnar basalts as "natural" stones as well. The basalt column formations are something

rather impressive to look at. In these sources all the columns are aligned vertically, forming long columns one next to the other. In most cases, the edges of one column are right next to the other column. Their vertical position make an interesting connection with the fact that most of the evidence from the Preclassic shows that the basalt columns were erected in a vertical position as well, although there are some exceptions such as La Venta's Tomb A.

At Naranjo one whole row of monuments, Row 3, was composed of this type of stone, and several other columns were found in the center of the site. Several basalt column sources are found throughout Mesoamerica, including one in the Hidalgo, one in the Gulf Coast area, another in the piedmont of Guatemala near Amatitlán (Figure 4-30 and 4-31), and in the piedmont of El Salvador as well (Marlon Escamilla personal communication 2006). Therefore this study proposes that the basalt columns were probably placed in a vertical manner at several of the sites of the Preclassic period to create a connection to these places of origin (the sources) and possibly, also in connection to a mythical past, or with the ancestors. Although no research has been done on the columnar basalt sources themselves, it seems that the physical aspects of these stone outcrops are important enough to consider them as places with meaning beyond the procurement of the stone. As other archaeologists have noted elsewhere, specific land features are often selected as meaningful places due to their unusual characteristics (van de Gutche 1999). Furthermore, as Bradley (1998) suggested for the megaliths of Britain, what we call "natural" formations might well have been considered man-made monuments by previous peoples in the past, of the time of the ancestors.

Bradley (1998) explains that conceptions of what is "culture" or culturally created and what is "nature" fails when a careful examination of some stone monuments do not follow the clear distinction as to what is culturally constructed and what is not. In his case study of south-

west England, he engages in a comparison between the natural stones and the built stone monuments. He realizes that both configurations are rather similar. Nonetheless he states that this is not because the ancient dwellers of England were trying to “copy” the “natural” rock formations, but that these rock formations were already part of their experience and local histories. Their familiarity with this landscape and rock formations is what informed the residents in building the monuments. Bradley (1998:18-19) also states that the particular shape of the natural formations of southwest England might have captured the ancient residents attention, and maybe they thought that those were ancient monuments created by ancestors. Bradley points that this idea is not that strange since even today it is hard to distinguish the “natural” stone formations from the “cultural” ones.

In spite of the importance that basalt columns had during the Middle and Late Preclassic periods, by the end of the Preclassic basalt columns were no longer being erected. Instead other forms of stone became more popular, such the shaped rectangular stone slab. Stone slabs were already being used during the Middle Preclassic period, as Monuments 2 and 8 of Naranjo show; nonetheless, the fact that the residents of some sites stopped erecting basalt columns remains a topic without explanation. At Kaminaljuyu, several plain basalt columns have been found. Unlike Naranjo or Rosario Naranjo, where the archaeological evidence demonstrates that the monuments were never taken down after the Middle Preclassic period, at Kaminaljuyu all the plain monuments found are columnar basalts, and all of them were found buried within structures of later periods, specially the Late Preclassic period (Berlin 1952, Shook 1952). This evidence show that not only did the residents of Kaminaljuyu stop erecting basalt columns, but they buried them within newer constructions of the mounds.

If we take into consideration the proposition that these basalt columns were related to a mythical past or identity, as this study argues, there is a possibility that changes occurred by the Late Preclassic period shifted these narratives, and thus excluded the meaningfulness of the basalt columns from the ancestral landscape. Using some of the notions that Dwyer (1996) discusses for his ethnographic research at Papua New Guinea might be of use for the case of basalt columns. Dwyer studied three different communities and their relation towards their environment. As he explains, the community that had a livelihood system connected with the forest and its extractions also had a stronger connection with what Dwyer names the “invisible” world. For them, the invisible world was all around and manifested itself through specific material things. On the other hand, the community with an intensive agricultural system had a distant relation with the invisible world. For them, that world was outside their own social field, and was relegated to the periphery. Dwyer interprets these findings as the result of what he calls the “invention of nature” which emerges when a livelihood system engages in a different manner with their environment and surroundings, in this case, agriculture.

Basalt columns may have been taken as traces of this invisible world that formed part of the Preclassic period landscape; nonetheless, it might have been the case that by the end of the Late Preclassic period, this invisible world was moved off to a periphery. If this was the case, basalt columns were no longer part of a familiar world. The archaeological evidence suggests that by the Late Preclassic period, people were engaging more in monumental works and inscribing the landscape through the construction of mounds and monuments (Joyce and Grove 1999). Thus, through the formalization and regionalization of space a greater differentiation between centers like Naranjo and stone sources like the columnar basalts was created. Clancy (1990) notes a similar difference in the carvings of Maya stone known as stelae. She mentions

that the Preclassic carved monuments show more interest in the “natural” form of the stone, whereas the Classic monuments are completely modified from the natural source and shaped into rectangular and symmetrical forms. In this later period, the manipulation of the stone is entirely up to the artist, who preferred a symmetrical and standardized shape.

The relevance of stone outcrops as places of meaning is also evident in modern Maya ceremonies. Linda Brown (2004) has studied several of the ceremonies performed on hilltops in association with stones or other natural features. Although at Naranjo, no evidence of ceremonial activities was found in association with the plain stone monuments or the stone outcrops in the vicinity, the fact that stone outcrops are often considered sacred places is relevant for the interpretations in this study.

Even though the archaeological studies using a building perspective tend to separate stone monuments from stone formations, in a way of separating “cultural” artifacts from “natural” formations, in this study the stone monuments of Naranjo are understood in relation to such “natural” formations. Using the concept of landscape as a web of connections, which was explained in Chapter 3, the stone monuments of Naranjo are seen as “gatherings” of all the stone sources from which they come from, which were presumably places of relevance to the ancient inhabitants of Naranjo. The stone monuments at Naranjo make reference to those other places, and possibly to other groups of people that were also connected to Naranjo through the stone sources, perhaps at other sites that also had plain stone monuments of similar sources. Thus, looking at the different source of stones at Naranjo makes it is possible to understand the network of places that constituted the social and physical landscape at this particular site. By looking at the monuments in terms of connections with their places of origins, the category of stone monument itself, no longer exists as a “cultural” category, since it has strings attached to

“natural” formations. Therefore, monuments cannot be considered merely “cultural” icons of Naranjo; they cannot be interpreted as cultural manifestations or appropriations of natural elements, since their meaning was imbued in relation to their stone sources of origin. Rather, the center of Naranjo, with so many different stone sources represented, was a gathering of places, a unique single vision of distant and near places all in one space: the plaza of Naranjo.

The Creation of Monuments at Naranjo

Besides stone sources, the final shape of Naranjo’s monuments was affected by modifications made by the ancient residents. One of the first striking characteristics about plain stone monuments at Naranjo is the wide diversity of stones used, and that their final appearances are different. As observed at Naranjo, stones erected in the center of the site varied from small monuments with 1 m of height such as Monument 9 in Row 1, to massive monuments with more than 3 m of height, such as Monument 22 in Row 2. In all the cases the shapes and forms of the monuments were largely informed by the type of stone used, although in some cases, additional modifications were made by the ancient residents. Textures and composition of stone determined the final appearance of the plain stone monuments.

From an ethnographic point of view Brown (2004:34) argues that the archaeologists should pay attention to the types of materials used for ritual activities and their transformations, as well as the different acts of deposition and their locations. Brown brings attention to the relevance and manipulation of the material. Her research demonstrates that the materials are transformed through the rituals and this transformation is recursively connected with how effective the ritual is.

In the case of Naranjo this could mean that the ancient residents selected the type of stone they used for the monuments, which includes a specific stone source and a specific shape, either “natural” or man-made. Even though there is no evidence of the contexts where the

modifications of stone monuments took place, what is important to highlight in this study, is that the final product achieved, the stone to be erected as a monument, had specific characteristics that made it unique and suitable to become a monument. At Naranjo the final shape of monuments varied from non-modified stones, as in the case of all the columnar basalt monuments and Monument 7, to the monuments that were modified almost entirely, like Monument 8, Monument 4, or even the case of Monument 27, which has evidence of carvings like a stela. The fact that some monuments were modified while others were not raises the question, why the ancient residents of Naranjo created distinct monuments?

Ethnographic studies in the Maya area have pointed out that stone is a powerful source in itself since people use it as mediators between this world and the world of the ancestors (Brown 2004:32). Brown was able to document a variety of rituals in the El Duende mountain located in highlands of Guatemala. According to her, mountains, mountaintops, and stone shrines are potent places to facilitate ritual activities (Brown 2004:31). Some of the stone shrines that are described in her study are unmodified natural stones with a special feature, such as a flat-topped boulder or alcove in a rock, although constructed features also exist, such as rock alignments and platforms (Brown 2004:36). Her study reveals that a single mountain had a variety of places used to perform different rituals, depending on the purpose of the ritual. The interesting information about Brown's study is that the ritual practitioners do not divide their shrines according to a "modified" vs. "unmodified" dichotomy, but that this variety of shrines exists because of the variety of ritual practices performed at El Duende. These ideas agree with what has been already argued by Bradley (1998, 2000) described in the previous section, in which the distinction between natural formation and cultural monuments is not universal. At Naranjo, the fact that different stone monuments, modified and unmodified, coexist in the same area and in

close proximity to one another could support the idea that the ancient residents did not make this distinction either.

Other interesting examples of the connection between what archaeologists consider “natural formations” and archaeological sites in the Maya area are related to cave use. Archaeological research has documented manipulation, movement and resetting, removal, and caching of speleothems (stalagmites, stalactites, and other formations). Speleothems appear in excavation contexts and at surface sites, such as Yaxchilan where a speleothem was erected in front of a stone building construction. At other places, such as Chichen Itza, stone monuments have been identified to which were made to resemble the basic shape of a speleothem (Brady et al. 1997:725-6).

As well, plain stone monuments have been also identified inside cave systems at Belize. Awe et al. (2005) documented three caves in western Belize that contain vertically standing megalithic monuments. Because these monuments resemble stelae found in Maya sites, the authors applied the term “stelae”, although they recognized that the cave examples in western Belize are shorter and bear no inscriptions. Unlike speleothems, which were sometimes placed in an upright position and rarely modified, the stelae in these caves were produced from either slate or limestone and generally display evidence of modifications. The monuments were also erected within recessed cave chambers and are accompanied by cultural materials associated with ritual activity (Awe et al. 2005:223). Some of the plain stelae depicted by Awe et al. (2005:227) have man-modified features. For instance, Stela 2 has the top carved to a point, which was interpreted by Awe et al. (2007) as mimicking the shape of an obsidian bloodletter. Also, the Tarantula Cave stela as well as the Tunichil Muknal monuments were produced from

slate and display clear evidence of having been cut and dressed along the sides (Awe et al. 2005:232-33).

Both case studies illuminate that it is difficult to make a sharp distinction between modified and unmodified features. The fact that unmodified speleothems were extracted from caves and erected several ancient Maya cities, and that on the other hand, modified stone slabs were placed within caves, is a good example to demonstrate that modified and unmodified objects commonly coexist in relation to human habitation.

Therefore a better suited approach for the study of stone monuments of Naranjo is to look beyond characteristics of modified versus unmodified surfaces, and focus on the final product that was erected at the site. What appears to be the most important factor among all the stone monuments of Naranjo, according to the present conditions of the stones, is that they all have a smooth surface. In the cases of the columnar basalts, Monuments 1, 2, 7 and 9, the natural stones already provided that characteristic. On the contrary, the surface of Monuments 4, 8, 9, 17, and 27 were purposely smoothed on at least one side of the monument. The altars found in association with Monument 3 and 4 show a similar pattern. Altar 2 paired with Monument 3 did not show signs of modification but its surface was naturally smooth. On the contrary, Altar 1, paired with Monument 4 was purposely modified to have a smooth surface on its top. There are only two examples that do not follow this rule: Monuments 1 and 27. Both monuments show additional modifications that do not appear on any of the other monuments. Monument 1 depicts a carved hole in the upper central part of the stone. This stone slab does not have any further modifications. Monument 27 also presents an intriguing case since it was discovered by the NARP that two sides of the monument (one face and one side) had what appears to be an eroded carved surface (Arroyo 2007). The carvings depict a standing figure, although only part of its

legs and feet are distinguishable (Bárbara Arroyo, personal communication 2007). Monument 27 was erected in the same row with four other monuments that had a shape, size, and surface, similar to Monument 27, except for the carving.

For an explanation of Monument 1 and 22 studies of Jones (2001), Clancy (1985,1990), and Stuart (n.d.) are useful. Jones (2001) examined the role and landscape of Bronze Age artifacts recovered in Britain. He (2001:339) critiqued the perspective that archaeologists often consider artifacts “mute” against their producers. In this view, the “culture” of the producer is what actually affects the morphology and the decorations of the artifact. However, Jones argues, this concept of culture is not examined within their own social practices.

Clancy (1990) and Stuart (n.d.) also discuss the relevance of the stone material when analyzing the types of carvings among Maya stone monuments. As explained in Chapter 2, both authors acknowledge the relevance of the stone material used as a monument. Clancy (1985, 1990) believes that during the Preclassic period the type of stone and the specific properties of a stone reinforced the final form of the monument. Stuart (n.d.) also explains, sometimes a small detail in the stone, like a difference in color, or an inclusion, can become powerful elements to distinguish a stone as more important than other homologous stones in the same outcrop. If these ideas are applied to the case of Monuments 1 and 27 it is possible to suggest that it was the specific social practices associated with these stones or a trait in their natural form that resulted in their very different characteristics compared to the monuments.

In sum, the stone monuments at Naranjo show a wide variety of shapes and treatments. However instead of looking at the alterations or modifications that some of the monuments suffered as the result of an imposition of cultural ideas upon a blank canvas, like the building perspective would do. On the contrary, I suggest, these modifications were affected by a desire

to have a smooth surface. In the case of Monument 1 and Monument 27 that were further modified, perhaps by special traits in the material stone itself or specific social practices performed at the site.

Conclusion

The plain stone monuments at Naranjo show a wide variation in terms of their final shape. This variation can be understood in terms of the stone sources used and the later modifications made at the stone. Even though not all the stone monuments were modified, the final shape was apparently directed towards having a smooth surface. The fact that some of them were purposely smooth and others were not seems to be the result of a decision made based on the previous conditions of the natural stones. In the case of the columnar basalts, for instance, their symmetrical shape and smooth surface was left unaltered.

Three possible stone sources were identified among the stone monuments at Naranjo, although further analyses are necessary to positively identify the stones with the sources. Using a dwelling approach, the stone sources related to Naranjo are treated as places of importance to the ancient residents. This view sharply contrasts with other studies that have treated stone sources of monuments as merely places of procurement. As important places, the stone sources of Naranjo were part of a web of interconnectedness that not only related the stone monuments with the stone sources, but that connected people with the significance of these places.

Thus, the erection of stones at Naranjo draws attention to these significant places in the landscape. By selecting different types of stones people produced monuments that were presenting places outside the immediate landscape at the center of Naranjo. Thus they engaged in a process of condensing the significance of other places through stone erection. Nonetheless, at the same time that the stone monuments made reference to their sources of origin, their removal from these rock outcrops and their positioning in the center of Naranjo, where they were

aligned on rough rows through the landscape, indicates how they were involved in the creation of a new visible sense of order. Stones are both part of, and other than, the landscape they come from, since by placing them at the center of Naranjo they encapsulated those places and created a new place.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions for this research and suggests topics for future investigations of plain stone monuments in the Maya area and Mesoamerica more generally. The main goal of the chapter is to evaluate the objectives outlined in Chapter 1 and to provide a concise conclusion to the study. The last section of this chapter discusses questions that emerged from this study and that could be addressed in future studies.

The main motivation for adopting the dwelling approach was to avoid looking at the plain stone monuments as art pieces or monuments in the same category as the later stelae, popular in the Classic Maya period. By providing a different explanation about plain stone monuments that was not centered on the fact that these monuments were plain or devoid of carvings, this study was able to incorporate the plain stone monument tradition into the discussion of social complexity and differentiation during the Middle Preclassic period in the Maya area.

This study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo adopted a dwelling perspective, based on phenomenology, in opposition to the building perspective, which follows Cartesian notions of a body detached from the mind. According to the dwelling perspective humans are an integral part of the environment. This perspective assumes that human beings are always contextualized in place and that any social experience is informed and transformed by the places that human beings inhabit. The dwelling perspective denies that the body is detached from the mind; on the contrary, it assumes that every act of thinking is embedded in the act of living-in-the-world (following Heidegger 1977). For the study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo, the adoption of a dwelling approach involved looking at a different set of data that was presented through the two main objectives of this study.

The first objective, outlined in Chapter 1, states the idea of looking at the stone monuments of Naranjo in relation to the rest of the monumental buildings at the site. This information was obtained by looking at the excavation data from the Naranjo Archaeological Rescue Project, which operated at the site from 2005 until 2007. This goal was meant to observe the monuments in relation to each other, in relation to the other constructions at the site, and in relation to their natural environment. The concept of landscape as a process was developed to analyze this objective. Landscape as a process derives from the dwelling approach, and assumes that human beings socialize through their relationships with places and material things. This concept also conveys notions of materiality, which state that it is through the construction and modification of the physical environment that human beings are able to reproduce and transform their society.

This study concludes that the erection of stone monuments at Naranjo was a process that did not occur all at once right at the beginning of the occupation at the site. The first evidence of occupation at Naranjo was scattered around the south and southwestern portion of what later became the center of Naranjo. The first practices in these scattered areas gave a ritual significance to Naranjo and became the base upon which the following modifications and constructions took place at the site. It was no coincidence that the first stone monuments were erected on top of material residue of these first ritual practices. Nonetheless, later in time the ancient residents of Naranjo were able to diversify their space by building two mounds and two platforms and by erecting more than 20 plain stone monuments in the center of the site. It was these modifications that reshaped the way the ancient residents related to one another, and likely, enabled social differentiation at Naranjo.

Following this research, no longer can the plain stone monuments of Naranjo be studied in isolation. This research has shown that the plain stone monuments were placed in relation to the

other landscape features at the site, such as the South Platform, Mound 1, and the natural hill. Stone monuments can only be understood in relation to one another, to the other monumental constructions and features, to the stone sources, and in relation to the other places with plain stone monuments.

The careful examination of plain stone monuments at Naranjo provides the basis for future research on plain stone monuments in the Maya area, and hopefully the rest of Mesoamerica. The study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo opens a new series of possibilities for future studies. This study posed questions only in relation to the occupation and modifications carried out in the center of the site. Therefore, the first question that would follow after this study would be, what was the relationship between the people living in the household areas identified by NARP and the erection of the stone monuments. If this study concludes that the erection of stone monuments at Naranjo enabled the possibility of new categories of people and new types of organizations at the site, we must also ask what other evidence besides the core area of Naranjo should be analyzed to prove this? To answer these questions more fieldwork needs to be done to compile information on the surrounding areas of Naranjo, specifically the Cerro Naranjo. Furthermore, the stone sources identified at Naranjo as well as the columnar basalt sources of Amatitlan call for a potential study of the stone sources and their importance as meaningful places in the Preclassic period.

Other possible topics derived from the study of plain stone monuments at Naranjo are related to the erection of plain stone monuments at other sites in the central highlands of Guatemala and their relationship with processes of social differentiation in the Preclassic period, for instance, the relationship between Naranjo and its close neighbor Rosario Naranjo. Excavations at Rosario Naranjo have revealed a possible row of stone monuments, but the

arrangement is different than at Naranjo, since the monuments are not aligned parallel to the mound constructions. One of the main differences is that Rosario Naranjo was not abandoned by the end of the Middle Preclassic period like Naranjo, but was occupied during the Late Preclassic period. Continuous occupation between the Middle and Late Preclassic period was also the case at Kaminaljuyu. Kaminaljuyu presents an interesting case since all the plain stone monuments discovered there were found in a secondary context, buried in later phases of occupation, apparently placed during the Middle to Late Preclassic transition (e.g. Berlin 1952, Shook 1952). Excavations of Mound C-III-6 at Kaminaljuyu showed six columnar basalts placed as part of a previous phase of the mound. One of the monuments was Stela 9, a carved columnar basalt (Shook 1952:240-44). This find was in association with an offering combining the stone monuments and several complete ceramic vessels. Edwin Shook (1952:240) dated this find to the beginning of the Late Preclassic period, but he also noted that the previous occupation when the offering was placed, was during the Las Charcas phase of the Middle Preclassic period. Similar practices might have occurred elsewhere at archaeological sites where plain stone monuments have been found buried inside earlier occupations of the earth mounds, as was the case at Chalchuapa, El Salvador (Sharer and Sheets 1978) and El Portón, Guatemala (Sharer and Sedat 1987). It raises the questions, What is the relationship between these buried plain stone monuments and the Late Preclassic occupation of the sites? What were the shifts that occurred during the Middle to Late Preclassic transition that led the inhabitants of Naranjo to abandon the site, but allowed the people living at Rosario Naranjo stay? How was Kaminaljuyu involved in these events? All these questions point to the need to integrate the information from the various sites in the central highlands, since Naranjo was not isolated.

The Middle to Late Preclassic transition is a topic that also needs to be discussed in relation to the erection of plain stone monuments and carved monuments. As explained in Chapter 2, there are several sites that have both types of monuments and were occupied during both periods. Sites such as Takalik Abaj, Guatemala need to be studied by considering both types of monuments, both plain and carved. Detailed information of the plain monuments still needs to be analyzed in conjunction with the carved monuments' analyses already published to complete the monumental history of the sites.

Finally, this study hopes to bring attention to the study of stone monuments in the Maya area, either carved or plain. As was mentioned throughout this study, the dominance of iconographic studies has hidden the relevance of the archaeological contexts of the monuments and of their material, and shapes. The study of monuments using a dwelling perspective can help eliminate this limitations, and opens possibilities for understanding the stone monuments at other places.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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