

2004 Archaeology at Cagayan de Oro City

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Introduction

The Archaeological Studies Program in cooperation with the National Museum of the Philippines, conducted archaeological explorations and excavations in Cagayan de Oro City from October to November, 2004. The project was mainly supported by the Historical and Cultural Commission of Cagayan de Oro City. This research project is a direct positive response of the city government to the unfortunate circumstances that befell the archaeological resource at the Huluga area, which is covered by this research project.

The general objective of the project is to expand what we already know about the history of Cagayan de Oro through archaeology. The specific objectives are:

- a) To undertake systematic test excavations at other sites in order to generate data to better understand the chronology of Cagayan de Oro's prehistory;
- b) To establish the regional archaeological chronology of the area;

- c) To conduct excavations around the Huluga Open Site and try to establish the nature and extent of the archaeological site;
- d) To determine whether a relationship exists between the obsidian artifacts at Huluga and the history of the site; and
- e) To assist the local government in its plans of establishing a local museum.

The archaeological exploration and excavation activities were focused on the Huluga area, primarily in Sitio Taguanao, Barangay Indahag, Cagayan de Oro City. Other contiguous barangays were also explored such as Macasandig and Balulang. All of the barangays explored showed potential for future archaeological investigation.

Cagayan de Oro City

The city of Cagayan de Oro, the capital of Misamis Oriental, is located along the central coast of northern Mindanao between the geographic coordinates $8^{\circ}14' 00''$ and $8^{\circ}31' 5''$ North latitudes and $124^{\circ}27' 00''$ and $124^{\circ}45' 00''$ East longitudes (CORDA 1998). Macajalar Bay borders the city on the north and the municipality of Tagoloan on the east. The southern part of the city is bordered by the provinces of Bukidnon and Lanao del Sur and in the west by the Municipality of Opol (Figure 1). The city has a total land area of 48,886 hectares. The general terrain of Cagayan de Oro City is hilly with narrow coastal lowlands. The lowland is relatively flat with an elevation of less than 10 meters above sea level (masl). The present landform of the city is a result of Upper Miocene to Quaternary uplift, volcanic activities, recent erosion, and sedimentation (Sajona *et al* 2000; DENR 1999).

Cagayan de Oro City plays a vital role in the history of Misamis Oriental and in the archaeology of the Philippines in general (Neri 2004; Bautista 1992). Before the coming of the Spaniards and even before the coming of Islam, there were already people dwelling in the northern coast of Mindanao mainly in Cagayan (Demetrio 1995) and its surrounding vicinities (Lao 1995; Madigan 1995). The early Recollect missionaries arrived at Cagayan de Oro in

1622 particularly in a settlement called Himologan. According to their accounts, Himologan was situated in the interior part of Cagayan southward from the main delta of the Cagayan River (Demetrio 1995; Lao 1995; Madigan 1995). Lao (1995), Demetrio (1995), and Madigan (1995) suggested that Himologan and Huluga are of the same etymology or may have referred to one location. They claim that they are both located inward from the delta and both are elevated like a fortress. Both place names also have a close linguistic similarity with the root word "hulug" which, in the Bisayan dialect, means, "to throw" or "cast down." According to Demetrio (1995), early Kagay-anons settling in the Taguanao area used to cut trees in the area and drop ("hulug") them into the Cagayan River. The particular place where they dropped the timber was called "huluga."

The present location of Cagayan de Oro City is considered to be the second settlement, which the Recollect missionaries transferred near the delta or mouth of the Cagayan River where the San Agustin Cathedral is now located. It was then known as Cagaiang (Lao 1995).

Archaeologically, the Huluga Complex incorporates an Open Site (National Museum Code X-91-Q) and Cave Sites (National Museum Code X-91-R). The sites are situated at the eastern bank of the Cagayan River, which is 8.5 km south from the poblacion area and 6.3 km away from the Cogon Market terminal. The sites are part of Sitio Taguanao, Barangay Indahag. The area is bounded in the north by Barangay Macasandig, in the east by Mt. Moloypoloy in Barangay Indahag, in the south by the Bukidnon Plateau, and in the west by Barangay Lumbia. The Huluga Open Site has geographic coordinates of 124°37' 57" East longitude and 8°25' 19" North latitude and has an elevation of 30 masl. It is located 200 meters north of the Huluga Cave Sites. The Huluga area is part of the Indahag Limestone Formation composed of Plio-Pleistocene sediments of both marine and terrestrial depositions (Sajona *et al* 2000; DENR 1999).

Israel Cabanilla of the National Museum conducted the first archaeological investigation at Huluga in 1970. Three test pits at the Huluga Open Site were excavated. Local pottery sherds, 70 pieces of obsidian materials (three were certainly utilized and others were waste flakes and chips), two

flint flakes, and a broken piece of a polished adze made from silicified sandstone were found. He also found ceramic sherds on the surface, which are attributed to the Sung and Ming Dynasties. The recovered materials from the test pits and surface finds indicate "that the area has been continuously used by man from as far back as the Late Neolithic or probably the early Metal Age about 500 BC" (Cabanilla 1970:2).

In 1975 Linda Burton of Xavier University conducted archaeological explorations and excavations at the Huluga Open Site. The excavation was a T-form trench located in the middle of the site. The excavation ceased at 25 cm. The materials recovered from the excavation included obsidian flakes, some of which were utilized, chert flakes, potsherds, and a glass bead. Burton (1975) believes that the Huluga Open Site was used as a settlement during pre-Hispanic times. She sent some of the bone samples recovered from the Huluga Cave Site to the University of California in San Diego for Aspartic Acid Racemization. The samples were dated to 1600 BP or a calendar date of AD 350.

The third archaeologist who conducted an archaeological excavation at the Huluga Complex was Angel Bautista, assisted by Melvyn Garcia, both from the National Museum. Bautista (1992:5) describes the Huluga Open Site's matrix as "eroded; exposed andesite cobbles and pebbles, limestone, chert and coral formation with a sandy-loam-clay type," and disturbed by agricultural activities of the locals. Recovered materials included coral, obsidian flakes, four pieces of chert flakes, local pottery rims, three andesite cobbles, stoneware sherds, and two pieces of blue-and-white porcelain sherds.

Aside from the Huluga Complex, Bautista also explored Barangays Macasandig, Balulang and Lumbia in Cagayan de Oro and Barangay Walas, Municipality of Imbatog, province of Bukidnon. A total of 21 archaeological sites were identified, composed of rockshelters, caves and open sites. Of these, Barangay Macasandig and Kros Rockshelter of Barangay Balulang had high archaeological potential for further explorations (Bautista 1992; Cuevas and Bautista 1991). Erosion, agricultural activities, guano collecting and treasure hunting activities have disturbed the other sites. Other archaeological materials recovered from these surveyed sites were human skeletal remains,

earthenware sherds, stoneware sherds, porcelain sherds, animal bone remains, metal and stone tools.

The most recent archaeological exploration at the Huluga area was conducted by Leee Neri (2003b) from the Archaeological Studies Program, University of the Philippines. Neri's master's thesis entitled "Obsidian Sourcing at Huluga Open Site: an Evidence of Exchange" posits that the recovery of natural glass from the area manifests an external exchange between a source community outside the islands of the Philippines with people from the Huluga area (Neri 2003b).

At present the Huluga Open Site has been traversed by a recently constructed road leading from the South Diversion Road and Cargo Bridge, otherwise known as the Pelaez Bridge, towards Barangay Macasandig. For easy identification of the site, the Huluga Open Site is divided into two areas. The first area is located within the Antonio Gales' property and will be called the Gales Property Site. The second area, which is opposite the Gales property in the east and is located with in the property of Edna M. Dahino, will be called Dahino Property Site (Figure 2).

Methodology

Review of Literature - Prior to the actual fieldwork, the team searched the National Museum Records Division and the library of the Archaeological Studies Program for relevant literature regarding the archaeology of Misamis Oriental and the general area of Cagayan De Oro City.

Survey - Ocular inspections at the Gales and Dahino properties were conducted to acquaint the members of the team with the area. Archaeological survey, otherwise known as land reconnaissance, was conducted at the contiguous vicinities from the Huluga area during the course of the research (Plate 1). These surveys determined the presence of cultural materials on the surface, thus guiding the team in deciding where to excavate. Interviews were also conducted among the local tenants of the area. Archaeological artifacts were shown to them as visual aids.

Mapping of the Sites - The sites were mapped using a Trimble Total Station 3305 DR, a Garmin12 CX GPS receiver, a pocket transit, and a 50-meter tape (Plate 2). In addition, wooden stakes and spray paint were used as temporary markers. All excavated and surveyed sites (including those from Bautista's 1992 exploration) were plotted in the NAMRIA 1:50,000 topographic map. This was then digitized and resized to fit the paper. Aerial photos of the Huluga area were also made available courtesy of the Geographic Information Systems, City Planning and Development Office, Cagayan de Oro City. The mapped sites were plotted on graphing paper and later digitized.

The site map for the Huluga Open Site (Figure 3), which includes the Dahino and Gales Properties, was plotted on graphing paper using a scale of 1:400. The datum point was situated at one of the lamp posts west of the road. The point has coordinates $8^{\circ} 25'21.8''$ North latitude and $124^{\circ} 37'51.1''$ East longitude (Luzon Datum). Based on the acquired aerial photographs with contour lines, the point has an elevation of 21.101 masl (Figure 4). All the archaeological excavations undertaken during this season as well as those of previous archaeological projects were plotted on the site map. Also plotted were approximate locations of some of the collected lithic artifacts. Contours for the Gales Property were sketched based on points taken from different parts of the hill as well as data acquired from the Geographic Information Systems, City Planning and Development Office, Cagayan de Oro City.

Map coordinates and elevations for Kros Rockshelter were recorded with the Garmin 12CX GPS receiver. No suitable permanent point was available so the datum point was chosen and placed in a location where it was most convenient to map the area. The contours were drawn based on points taken during the ocular inspection of the area.

The last site that was mapped was the property of Louie Echem located at the Melecia Homes Subdivision, Upper Macasandig. This property is located near the edge of a plateau. The datum point chosen was situated on a boulder and marked with paint. The edge of the plateau, the house of Francisco Magtortor, and a mango tree were included in the map for reference.

Excavation - A total of five trenches and a square were opened, namely: Trenches 1 and 2 at the Gales Site, Trenches 3 and 4 at the Dahino Site, a trench at the Kros Rockshelter and a square in Echem Property.

The excavation strategy at the Huluga area was guided by the general objective of generating as much data as possible, given that the site is known to be shallow and turbated. Another objective was to excavate the site in a manner that will possibly reveal evidence of past settlements. After clearing the surface of vegetation, mostly grass species (*Poaceae sp.*), the members of the team were assigned to open trenches. Excavation was done by spits of 10-20 cm initially for systematic and controlled processing of data, then later on by following natural layers (when these were observed). Long trenches were opened for two reasons: 1) previous excavations revealed a shallow upper cultural layer which was basically the plow zone and 2) the objective of exposing features such as postholes, middens, and hearths requires a considerable length. The length of the trenches were divided into 1-m squares, designated as A to G starting from the southern end.

Sieving with 0.5-cm mesh size was done only in the first four trenches where the matrix had a high density of very small earthenware sherds and obsidian flakes. In the Echem Site and at the Kros Rockshelter, the earthenware and tradeware sherds found were generally bigger in size, and so sieving was not employed at these sites.

Retrieving and Recording - The artifacts recovered were placed in plastic and brown paper bags, which were properly labeled with the trench number, context number, depth and the square within the trench or the quadrant.

The stratigraphic profile of the matrix of each trench was recorded. The different layers were assigned context numbers and the color and texture of each layer were described. Composite forms, graphing papers, a meter tape and a line level were used for recording. Photo documentation of all activities in the pits were done.

Accessioning - Except for the bones, all the artifacts recovered were cleaned with brush and water and then air-dried. The finds were then accessioned following the National Museum procedure. The following are the site codes:

Huluga Open Site	X-1991-Q2	Hipuna Property Site	X-2004-Q3
Gales Property Site	X-1991-Q2	Echem Property Site	X-2004-Z3
Dahino Property Site	X-1991-Q2	Kros Rockshelter	X-1991-S3

Backfilling - All the opened trenches were backfilled on the last two days of the excavation. The square opened at the Kros Rockshelter was already backfilled earlier. To serve as a marker for future excavations, the bottom of the trenches and the square were first lined with big plastic bags and sacks. A paper containing information of the excavation and a current Philippine Peso coin were also sealed in a small plastic bag and placed at the bottom of the pits for the same purpose.

Results

Archaeological Survey and Exploration

Dahino and Gales Properties

An ocular inspection at the Antonio Gales Property was conducted to orient the research team with the area where obsidian flakes and earthenware sherds were previously found. The said artifacts were, indeed, found again on the surface.

The hill across the road owned by Edna M. Dahino was likewise surveyed and explored. A number of obsidian flakes and pottery sherds were also collected. An interview with the local tenant of the property revealed that heavy rains washed away the soil and brought many more sherds and obsidian flakes/debitage to the surface. The tenants even collected a number of them and gave a plastic bag full of sherds to the team.

Five Palaeolithic-type stone tools (Plate 6) were also recovered at the Dahino Property at the slope of a hill cut by an unpaved road, an area slightly above the plowed area. They may have been eroded from higher up the hill.

Echem and Hipona Properties (Melecia Homes Subdivision)

The team conducted a survey of the site based on an account of our guide, Wilson Cabaluna. Years ago, he said a number of human burials were accidentally unearthed in some areas inside the boundaries of the Melecia Homes Subdivision, Upper Macasandig. The site is within the geographic coordinates of 8° 26'06.8" North latitudes and 124° 38'22.8" East longitudes with an elevation of 100 masl.

A combination of interviews with local tenants and surface survey at the plowed area showed that the lots owned by Louis Echem and Cesar Hipona Jr. are positive for archaeological artifacts. The two sites overlook the Cagayan River and is an ideal place for ancient habitation. Pottery sherds with incised designs (Plate 10) and tradeware ceramics are among the numerous artifacts collected during the survey.

Bacaro and Quililan Properties

The team conducted an archaeological survey at the property of Danillo Bacaro and Fernando Quililan in Sitio Taguanao, Barangay Indahag. Both areas are part of the Indahag Limestone Formation and are currently planted with corn (*Zea mays* L.). Based on the initial survey, no archaeological materials were encountered.

Sungkuya and Velez Properties

The team also conducted another survey at the properties of Torkwata Sungkuya and Mariano Velez Sr., both in Barangay Balulang. The sites' coordinates are 8° 26'13" North latitudes and 124° 37'47" East longitudes with an elevation of 50 masl. It is situated on a plateau and terrace deposits beside the western bank of the Cagayan River, with a scenic view of Indahag and Macasandig areas. The surveyed areas are planted with corn (*Zea mays* L. Poaceae), watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus* (Thunb.) Mansf. Cucurbitaceae), squash (*Cucurbita maxima* Duch), and papaya (*Carica papaya* L. Caricaceae). Locals call this place as "pinsa," a native word for "jail" or "secured area for the prisoners." Aside from this, according to Hobbs Sungkuya, son of the landowner of the

Sungkuya Property, a big spoon made of wood and huge plates were recovered in the plantation area while plowing. He believes that their property was full of buried treasures during the Japanese time, which Filipinos dug and hid during the war. However, based on the initial survey, no cultural materials were recovered except for broken glass bottles and other contemporary materials scattered along the plowed areas.

Roa Property

Another area that was surveyed was the property of Tatoy Roa near the Cagayan de Oro Convention Center, Sitio Taguanao, Barangay Indahag. The survey yielded negative results.

Kros Rockshelter

The Kros Rockshelter is situated in Sitio Balungis, Barangay Balulang, Cagayan de Oro, Misamis Oriental. It has geographic coordinates of $8^{\circ} 27'23.3''$ North latitude and $124^{\circ} 37'43''$ East longitude (Luzon Datum) taken from GPS reading, with an elevation of 60 masl. The site is located inside the property of Xavier University College of Agriculture (XUCA). There is a big cross a few meters above the rockshelter, from which the name of the site may have been derived.

Mr. Angel Bautista from the National Museum of the Philippines conducted the first archaeological survey of Kros Rockshelter in 1991 and gave it an accession code X-91-S3. In his survey, Bautista (1992) recovered a substantial number of pottery sherds and noted four sacks of human remains inside the rockshelter (Bautista pers. comm. 2004). However, according to Mr. Hernando Pacana, farm manager of XUCA who ordered the human remains to be placed in sacks, there were initially 20 sacks in all – far greater than the current number. A deep treasure hunter's pit was also observed on the east side of the rockshelter. A number of pottery sherds and human remains are still present on the surface (see Ragragio in this volume).

Excavations

Gales Property (Trench 1)

This trench is situated on top of the hill at the property of Anatolio Gales. The hill was formerly agricultural land where corn was cultivated in recent times. At present, cogon (J.S. Presl) *Ohwi poaceae*, hagonoy (*Chromolaena odorata* (L.) R.King & H. Robinson), and cansile ((Lour.) *Glochidion philippicum*) cover the area. However, some areas, including those excavated, were only covered with weeds (*Cassiatora* L.).

The trench was oriented in a northwest-southeast direction perpendicular to the slope of the hill. The local datum point (LDP) was 38.42 masl. Trench 1 measured 2 x 7 meters and was divided into seven 2 x 1 meter sections labeled A to G for recording purposes. Sections B to G were excavated to a depth of 40 cm from the LDP while section A was excavated to a depth of 100 cm.

The excavation began by inspecting and collecting surface finds by section. Only five earthenware sherds were collected from the surface. The trench was excavated by 10-cm spits using trowels and shovels. The topsoil is dark and compact, with lots of roots. White specks were also observed at certain portions. This layer was labeled as context 1. Numerous tiny sherds and flakes recovered from this layer, both from scraping and sieving. The sherds were tiny and highly weathered, indicating that they have undergone numerous post-depositional processes, presumably from repeated plowing and biologicalurbation. Finds were grouped and labeled by section. Each section was then weighed, so as to have a quantitative gauge for the amount and distribution of artifacts throughout the excavation area.

Below context 1 is an interface, with dark brown and orange mottling which starts at below 10 cm from the LDP. Artifacts here are scarce. The excavation quickly stripped this interface away to expose an orange-yellow layer, which was silty in texture and easier to scrape. There is also plenty of bioturbation caused by root activity. The team labeled this interface and this orange-yellow sediment as context 2. There are no negative features (such as postholes, midden pits, or other man-made cuts in the sediment) throughout all these layers. After exposing this layer, the team decided to concentrate the

excavation in section A. Using a shovel, the team carefully scraped section A down to a depth of one meter below the LDP. At the depth of one meter below the LDP, the matrix maintained its orange-yellow silty sediment. The white specks observed in context 1 also appeared in portions of context 2, although they are widely distributed and appear to have been deposited naturally. No further artifacts and features were found. Two prominent layers were observed: Layer 1 is reddish brown clay, compact, moderately to well sorted matrix and layer 2 is yellowish brown silty clay, semi-compact, and moderately to well sorted matrix (Figure 5).

Gales Property (Trench 2)

The second trench was excavated with the same rationale in mind as Trench 1. The excavation was a 2 m x 7 m trench about 15 m northeast from Trench 1. The excavation was also oriented perpendicular to the northern edge of the hill.

A local datum point (LDP) was set up 30 cm away from the center of the eastern wall of the trench. The LDP was 39.7 masl. Surface finds were plotted and recorded before excavation commenced. Shovel scraping was initially done for the first 5 cm from the surface to ascertain the most efficient and expedient methods for excavating. Crowbars and shovel were used to excavate the plow zone area to some 40 cm – 50 cm below LDP. From a transition of the first natural layer, trowel scraping commenced on the top portion of the second natural layer. Cultural materials were sparse and recovered as intrusions possibly from initial layers. Crowbars and shovels were again used to remove a portion of the second natural layer to check for more concentrations of cultural material. Very few cultural materials were recovered in the lower layer. There were no negative features identified either from the surface or below. The excavation was lowered to 1m below the surface at Section A to possibly identify any settlement remains or habitation features. Neither cultural material nor cultural features were encountered.

Excavation at Trench 2 during this season concluded at 1 m below surface, where it was noted and agreed upon that the bottom two layers were sterile when the layer of volcanic ash was reached. Three prominent layers

were observed: Layer 1 is the plow zone area with reddish brown clay, compact, and moderately to well sorted; Layer 2 is yellowish brown silty clay, semi compact, and moderately to well sorted; and Layer 3 is the volcanic ash with yellowish brown medium sand and well sorted (Figure 6).

No negative features that can be correlated to settlements were identified in this excavation. The generally sloping characteristic of the site hypothetically contributes to the erosional effect on the distribution of materials. There is an increasing density of materials concentration from the first meter to the second meter section. Materials are densely concentrated in the plow zone area where they are mixed. Materials recovered at this excavation are earthenware sherds, obsidian flakes and probabledebitage, and other lithics. No tradeware ceramics were recovered or recorded in this excavation.

Dahino Property (Trench 3)

The third trench is located at the Dahino Property across the Gales Property. This trench was originally planned to be a 1 m x 3 m excavation but the team decided to initially dig only a 2 meter section, due to time constraints. Its LDP was 38.03 masl.

As with the other trenches, we first examined the surface and collected one small potsherd and one chert flake. There was no obsidian found on the surface. The potsherds were also small and weathered, again indicating that they underwent a lot of post-depositional activities. The team decided to use arbitrary levels of 20 cm. Like in Trench 1, the top layer was dark, organic and compact, with lots of vegetation (grass and shrubs) and roots. This layer is only around 10 cm thick, while the second layer emerged starting at about 10 cm from LDP (Figure 7). This sediment is dry and silty. It is light brown in color, with dark brown to black mottling. The mottling here is thicker and occurs in wider swaths than the mottling in the trenches at the Gales Property. Approaching 40 cm below LDP, the matrix increasingly became more compact, though its color remained the same. The excavation stopped at a maximum depth of 40 cm below LDP. No artifacts were encountered from the surface down to the deepest level, and no features were noted at all.

Dahino Property (Trench 4)

A 2 m x 1 m trench was opened on a north-south axis at the same property with a distance of 120 m south from Trench 3. The LDP of Trench 4 was 44.52 masl. Surface finds were plotted and recorded before excavation commenced. Shovel scraping was initially done for the first 5 cm from LDP to ascertain the most efficient and expedient methods for excavating. Although the surface sediments were loose, the topsoil area, which is the plow zone, was very compact clay. Crowbars and shovels were used to excavate the plow zone area to some 40cm – 50cm below LDP with close supervision from a senior member of the excavation team. From a transition of the first natural layer trowel scraping commenced on the top portion of the second natural layer. Cultural materials were sparse and recovered as intrusions possibly from initial layers. Crowbars and shovels were again used to remove a portion of the second natural layer to check for more concentrations of cultural material. No more cultural materials were recovered in the lower layer.

There were no negative features identified either from the surface down. The excavation was lowered to 1m below LDP at the 1m x 1m portion from south to north to possibly identify any remains of settlement or habitation features. Neither cultural materials nor cultural features were encountered. Excavation at the southernmost quadrant concluded at a 1m below LDP where it was agreed that the layer was sterile and a layer of ash and adobe was reached. Excavation for the rest of the trench concluded earlier at 50 cm below LDP. Three stratigraphic layers were noted: Layer 1 plow zone with reddish brown clay, compact, and moderately to well sorted, layer 2 is the mottled interface with yellowish brown silty clay, semi compact, and moderately to well sorted, and layer 3 is the volcanic ash layer with light yellowish brown medium sand and well sorted (Figure 8).

No negative features that can be correlated to settlements were identified in this excavation. The generally sloping characteristic of the site contributes to the erosional effect on the distribution of materials. Increasing density of material concentration from the first meter to the second meter section. Mixed materials are densely concentrated in the plow zone area. Materials recovered at this excavation are earthenware sherds, obsidian flakes

and probable debitage, and other lithics. No tradeware ceramics were recovered or recorded in this excavation.

Kros Rockshelter

Two objectives were initially set to conduct this excavation. The first was to retrieve some sample for absolute dating and the second was to explore further the function of this rockshelter during ancient times.

The team's strategy was to excavate a pit on the portion underneath the landslide area. It is hoped that an undisturbed section of the rockshelter can be found under the debris from the landslide (Plate 3). An area at the southwest portion of the rockshelter was chosen for the test excavation because it was partially covered by the debris. After clearing, a 1 m x 2 m test pit oriented to the north was set. While placing the nails as grid corners, the team hit the surface of the rockshelter, which was volcanic tuff. The excavation pit was extended by another meter towards the east in order to ascertain the extent of this hard tuff surface. The team was still hoping that there was a surface to excavate and that the tuff exposed is only part of a collapsed rockshelter's ceiling. However, the tuff surface was also reached on the extension pit. Further cleaning of the surface revealed that the wall and the flooring are part of one massive tuff formation. The excavation stopped at this level and then documentation of the whole area followed (Figure 9).

The team recovered a polished stone adze on the surface of the rockshelter. The adze is made from basaltic material and measures around 5 cm x 6 cm. A number of pottery sherds of different thickness and designs were also recovered from the rockshelter. The diagnostic features of some of the sherds suggest that they are parts of a big jar that were most likely used for secondary human interment. The commingled human skeletal remains found associated with these broken jar pieces strengthened the claim of a jar burial practice in this site.

Based on the count of the recovered human mandibles collected from the surface of the rockshelter, there were at least 14 individuals interred in this site. One of the individuals was a juvenile.

Echem Property

A 2 m x 2 m square was excavated at the Echem Property, Melecia Homes Subdivision, Upper Macasandig (Plate 4). It was excavated to determine what cultural features lie underneath the surface since substantial surface finds of earthenware pottery sherds were found, some with diagnostic incised designs. It was also excavated to be able to investigate if this area was a settlement of early Kagay-anons. The excavation started by clearing the surface of vegetation and collecting the surface finds. Afterwards, spits of 20 cm were excavated. The northeast corner of the trench was assigned as the local datum point (Figure 10).

The surface soil is loose grayish brown silty sand. Earthenware sherds were found along with dried roots. The surface was severely disturbed due to the farming activities of occupant Francisco Magtortor for almost a year.

At the first 20 cm spit, there were abundant earthenware sherds. A few tradeware materials were also found. These were retrieved from a very loose matrix, which became compact at around 10 cm below the LDP. The color also changed from grayish brown to orange brown. Rounded cobbles and boulders were encountered (Figure 11). Three animal burrows were found at the center of the trench.

A medium concentration of earthenware sherds was found at the spit at 20 to 40 cm. A celadon tradeware sherd was also found at around 35 cm below the LDP. Cobbles were scattered at around 35 cm below LDP at the southeast quadrant.

During the excavation, an obsidian flake was found at 55 cm below the LDP at the northwest quadrant and on top of the pile of pebble- to boulder-sized rocks. These rounded rocks, which are mostly basaltic, are concentrated at the west side of the trench and mixed with reddish to purplish brown clayey sediment. The spit method was no longer followed after 60 cm below LDP. Only the northern half of the trench was further excavated to be able to see the cross section of the rock pile feature, expose its extent and confirm if it is culturally or naturally formed. The feature slopes downward towards the east side. The lowest rock exposed near the east wall is at 95 cm below LDP. A boulder was exposed at 72 cm below LDP in the northwest corner. Because no

other artifacts were found, and the rocks of differing sizes were randomly placed with no binding materials to consolidate them, the feature is unlikely to be man-made. The provenience of the obsidian flake was therefore questionable since it was the only cultural material recovered from this particular layer of naturally deposited gravels.

Three layers were recorded: a loose silty sand topsoil layer, a compact orangey brown silty sand layer, and a layer of sandy clay progressing to clayey silt. The roots on the north wall have the following diameters observed: 1 mm at 55 cm below local datum point, 10 mm at 14 cm and 2 mm at 95 cm. The bioturbation of the roots caused cracks in the soil. The obsidian found at 55 cm from the LDP may have been moved from the top by bioturbation.

Discussion and Recommendations

Huluga is a habitation site, but it is unlikely that it was once a settlement

Scholars and advocates from Cagayan de Oro City have placed much value on the Huluga Open Site. Received wisdom states that the site is where the precursor settlement of colonial Cagayan de Oro was located as inferred from Spanish chronicles. The landscape of Cagayan de Oro, however, with its deep gorges and pronounced river terraces, makes several locations along the river possible candidates for pre-colonial settlement. The discovery of archaeological materials through various surveys, and the confirmation of the existence of an archaeological site through test excavations, increased the likelihood that the Huluga area, especially the area called "Obsidian Hill" was the location of this settlement. An artist's rendition of what the settlement looked like, with its well-made log-wall fortification, is now imprinted in the minds of most people interested in the history of Cagayan de Oro. However, based on the findings of our excavation, no traces of structures or features to indicate the existence of a permanent prehistoric settlement were uncovered in the area, such as postholes, hearths, and middens. No doubt the Huluga Open Site is an archaeological site and at present it has been established that the area was a habitational site, which people used for camping and domestic activities. It is, however, difficult to support the existence of a permanent

settlement on top of the “Obsidian Hill”. More likely, the usage of the place may have been limited to production activities such as the making of obsidian-based implements and tools, which they left in these temporary camp-like sites.

The Implication of Finding Palaeolithic Stone Tools

The likely older artifacts made of andesitic rocks may be associated with the Palaeolithic Period (Plate 5). Finding these types of stone tools on the ground by trained archaeologists is very significant for the future advancement of knowledge of early human occupation in the Cagayan de Oro area. The stone implements that fit the category of tools made possibly by pre-modern humans is very intriguing, and informs us that there is very good potential of finding good context lower Palaeolithic-type sites. This is not difficult to accept especially if one considers the location of Cagayan de Oro as a possible pathway of modern humans, and possibly pre-modern humans, walking from the Sunda Shelf during the Pleistocene Period.

On Obsidian Artifacts

Obsidian, a natural glass produced from the extrusive action of volcanoes, was recovered in Gales, Dahino, and Echem properties. Obsidian materials were, therefore, scattered around the Huluga Open Site. These obsidian materials, based on the chemical trace elements (Neri 2003a), were imported from a source outside the Philippines by the early inhabitants dwelling in the Huluga Open Site. It is still a mystery how the people living in the vicinity of Huluga were acquiring obsidian raw material, which they clearly utilized.

Secondary Burial Jars

There is no absolute dating yet for the Kros Rockshelter. However, the strong evidence of a jar burial practice on the site can push its antiquity to around the first millennium AD. The team was not able to locate a suitable portion in the rockshelter to conduct a test excavation. Given more time and resources, Kros Rockshelter still holds potential for future work, perhaps

addressing further the issue of who were these people practicing jar burial, and when was this in the past.

In summary, a total of five trenches and one square were opened in the course of our archaeological research. Four trenches were located in Huluga Open Site: two trenches in the Gales property measuring 2 m x 7 m and another two trenches located in Dahino property measuring 1 m x 2 m. Another trench was opened in the Kros Rockshelter measuring 1 m x 2 m and a square measuring 2 m x 2 m located in Echem Property. A total of 2720 pieces or artifacts were recovered from the archaeological excavations and explorations.

The team has, in the short period of concentrated study, improved the resolution of our view of the past in the Cagayan de Oro area. There is high potential for very ancient human presence along the river, maybe even older than 50,000 years ago. We also know that there was a group of people that lived within the present city that practiced secondary jar burial associated perhaps with the time depth of 1500 years ago or more. There were habitation areas in the open, next to the river. The people there utilized obsidian for tools. Later in time people exchanged goods to get tradeware ceramics from Mainland Asia. At the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, at least one thriving population center was already in place.

Based on the recovered cultural materials and previous studies conducted by scholars, Cagayan de Oro City is very rich in archaeology. It is highly recommended that more archaeological surveys be conducted in the area, especially upstream and along the banks of the Cagayan River. The Echem Property, which is located beside the Cagayan River, was excavated mainly because of the reported human burials that were accidentally unearthed some years back, and because of the recovered surface finds of earthenware and tradeware sherds with designs. The area immediately on the northern side of this site is the Hipona Property, which also yielded the same surface finds (Plate 6).

Both sites have good prospects for further archaeological excavations since their location is almost on the edge of the hill overlooking the Cagayan River, a promontory located inward from the delta. These features match the

Spanish descriptions of the "Himologan" in 1622. Tradeware and local potteries are also present. Furthermore, the rock feature made of andesite pebbles and cobbles excavated in Echem is really interesting. Only a small sloping portion was exposed by the 2 m x 2 m square which so far suggests that it is a natural formation. The presence of the single obsidian flake at a depth of 55 cm is really intriguing and somewhat anomalous. This is where future excavations may help reveal a better understanding of the formation and the presence of the lone obsidian material. The Echem area is also a good candidate for the location of an ancient settlement if one considers the density of the artifacts found as a promising sign for a settlement.

In order to address the questions concerning much older sites, an extensive archaeological survey of other unexplored caves in the Cagayan de Oro City is also needed. The massive limestone formations along the Cagayan River are probable areas for undocumented cave sites. All cave sites in Cagayan de Oro City should also be the focus of future archaeological probes consistent with cultural resource preservation and public education. Given proper management, the sites may be converted into an archaeological site museum, which can be an excellent venue to promote archaeological awareness among the people of Cagayan de Oro.

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Abstract

Cagayan de Oro City was the subject of archaeological explorations and excavations last October 2004. A team from the UP Archaeological Studies Program, in cooperation with the National Museum and supported by the Cagayan de Oro Historical and Cultural Commission, endeavored to expand what is currently known about the city's history through archaeology. This paper reports the findings of the team: that the Huluga Open Site was unlikely an extensive permanent settlement and more probably a habitation site, the presence of Paleolithic stone tools in the area was confirmed, and a jar burial site in a rockshelter was identified.

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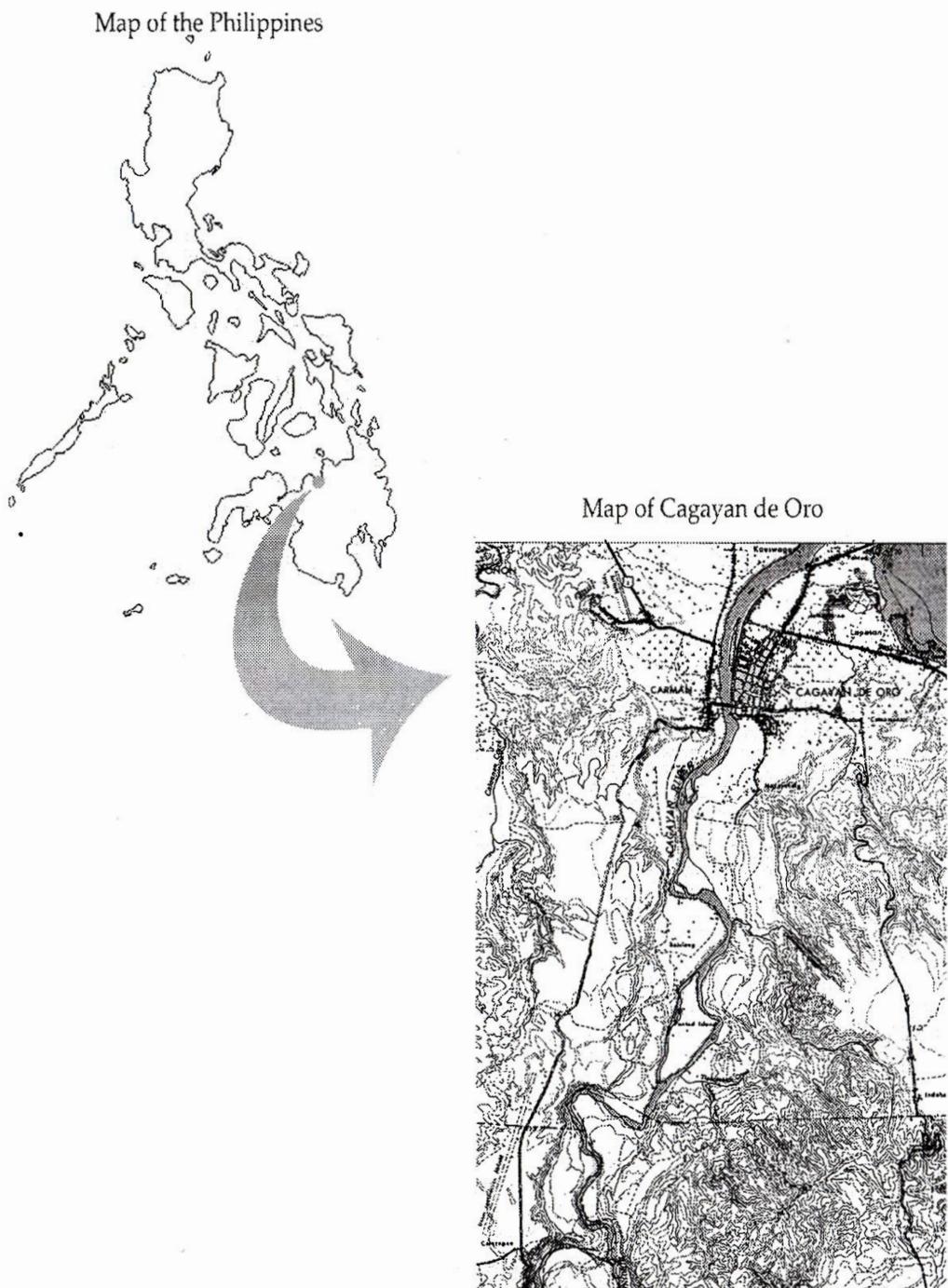


Figure 1
Cagayan de Oro location map

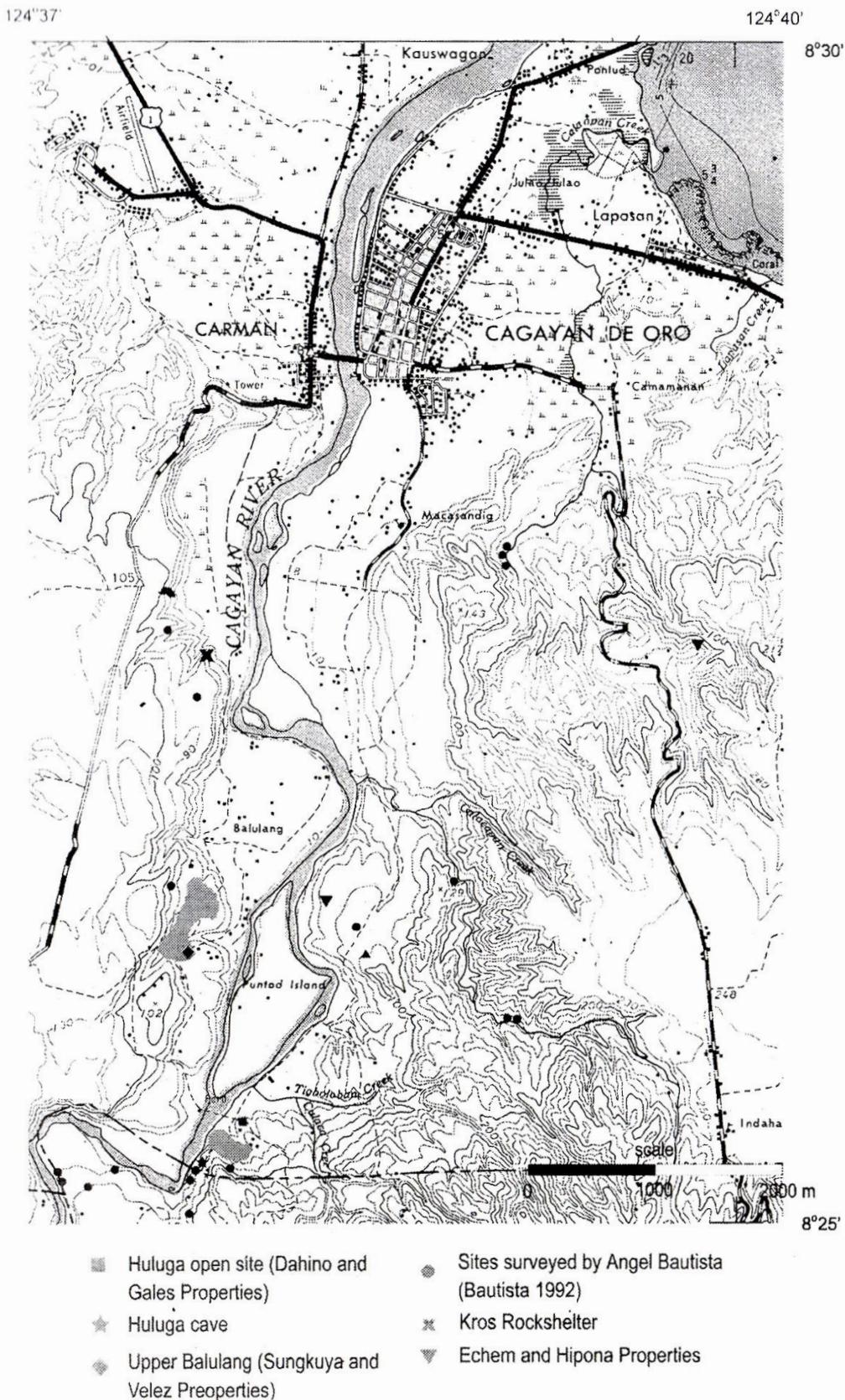


Figure 2
Map of the Cagayan de Oro Area showing surveyed
and excavated areas

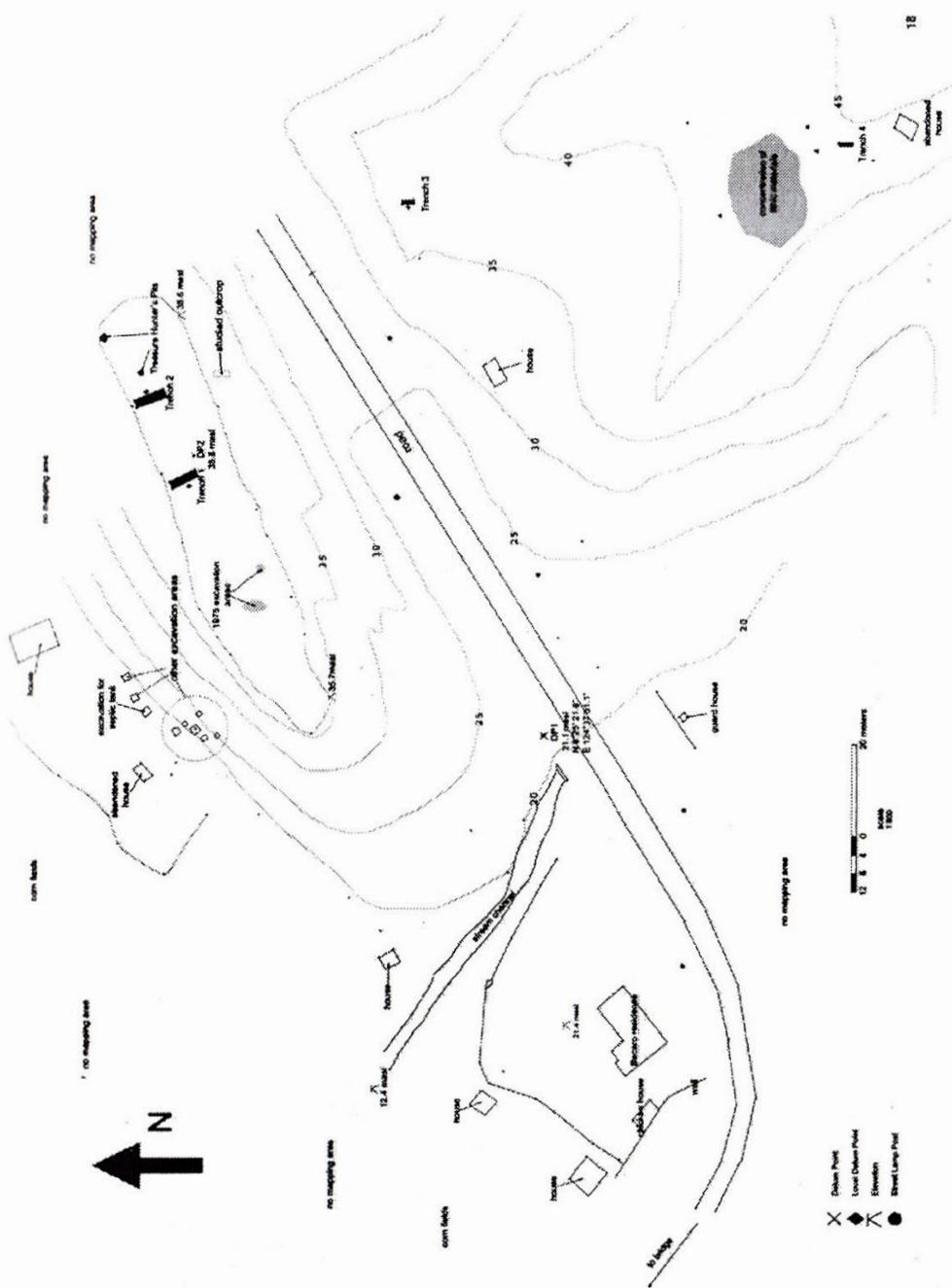


Figure 3
Huluga Open Site (Gales and Dahino Properties)



Figure 4
Aerial photograph showing Huluga Open Site and Huluga Cave

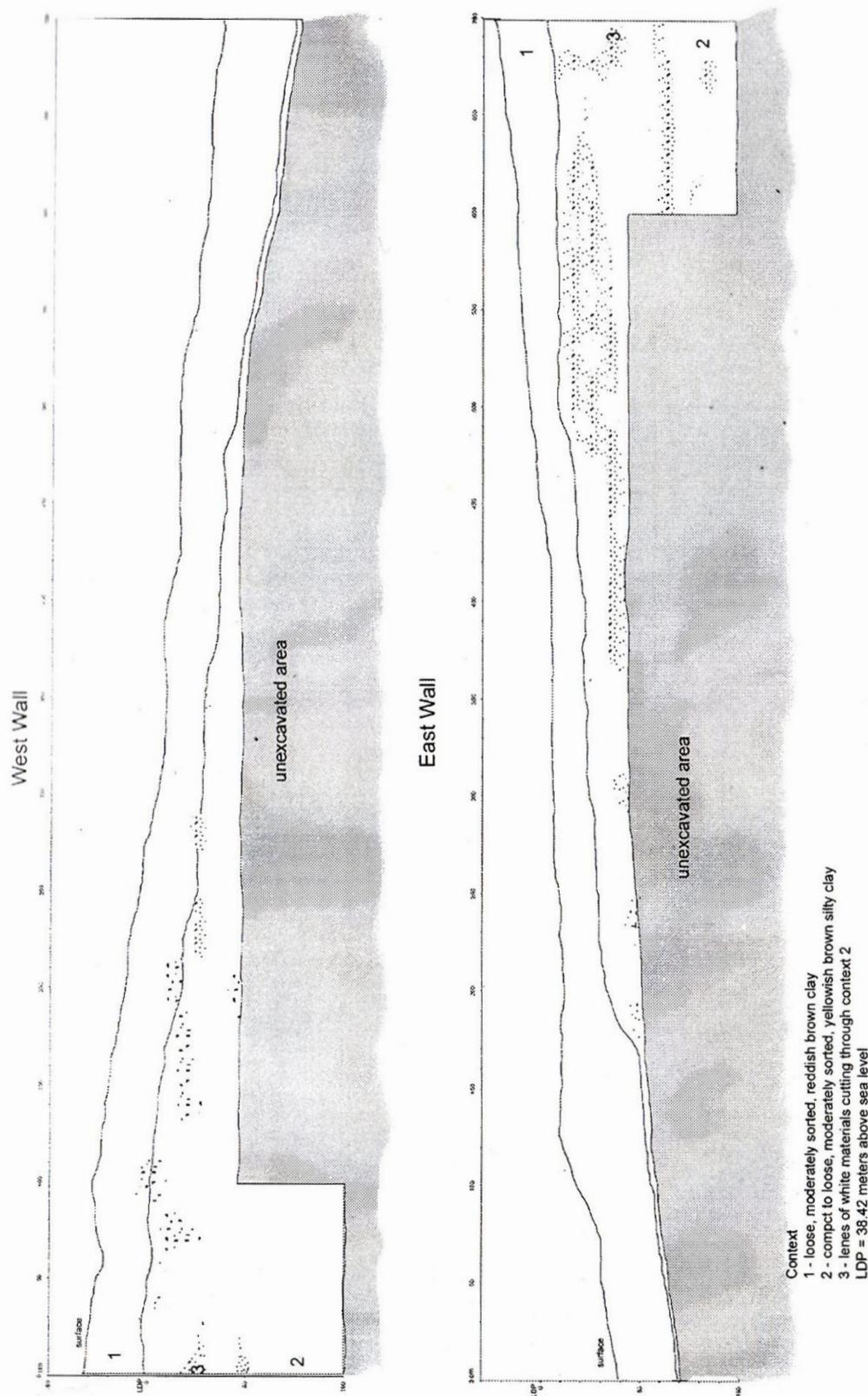


Figure 5
Trench 1 stratigraphic profile

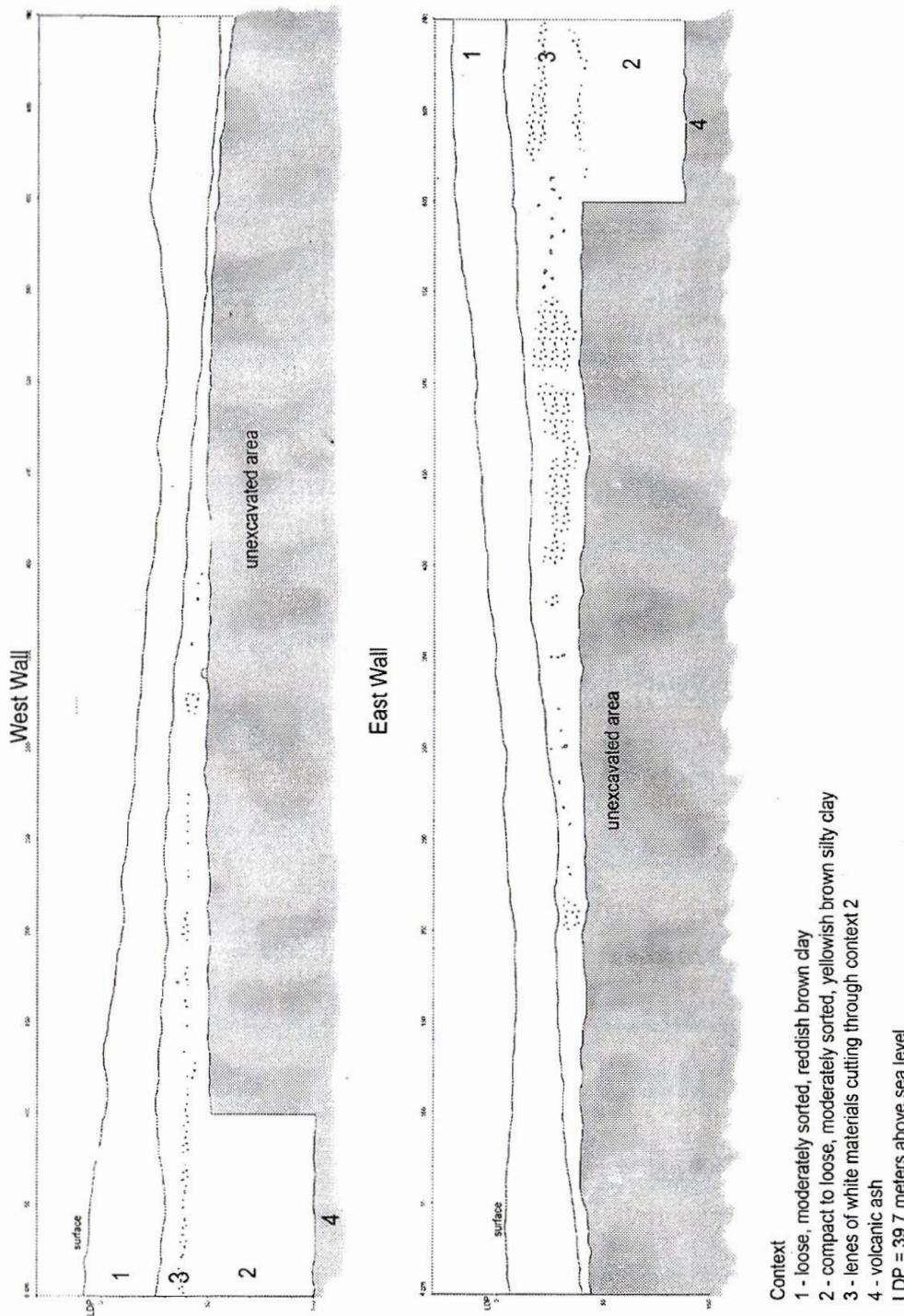


Figure 6
Trench 2 stratigraphic profile

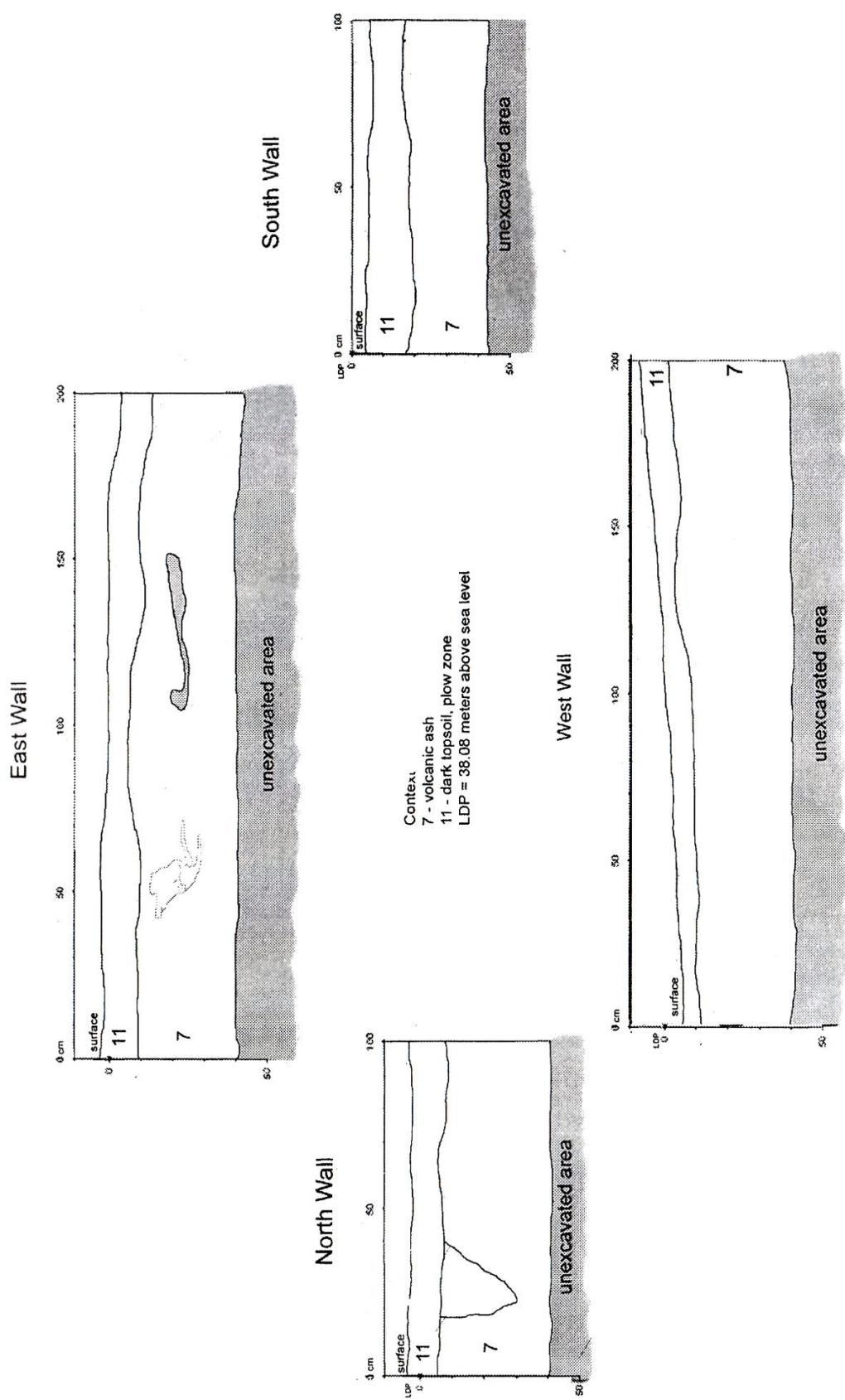


Figure 7
Trench 3 stratigraphic profile

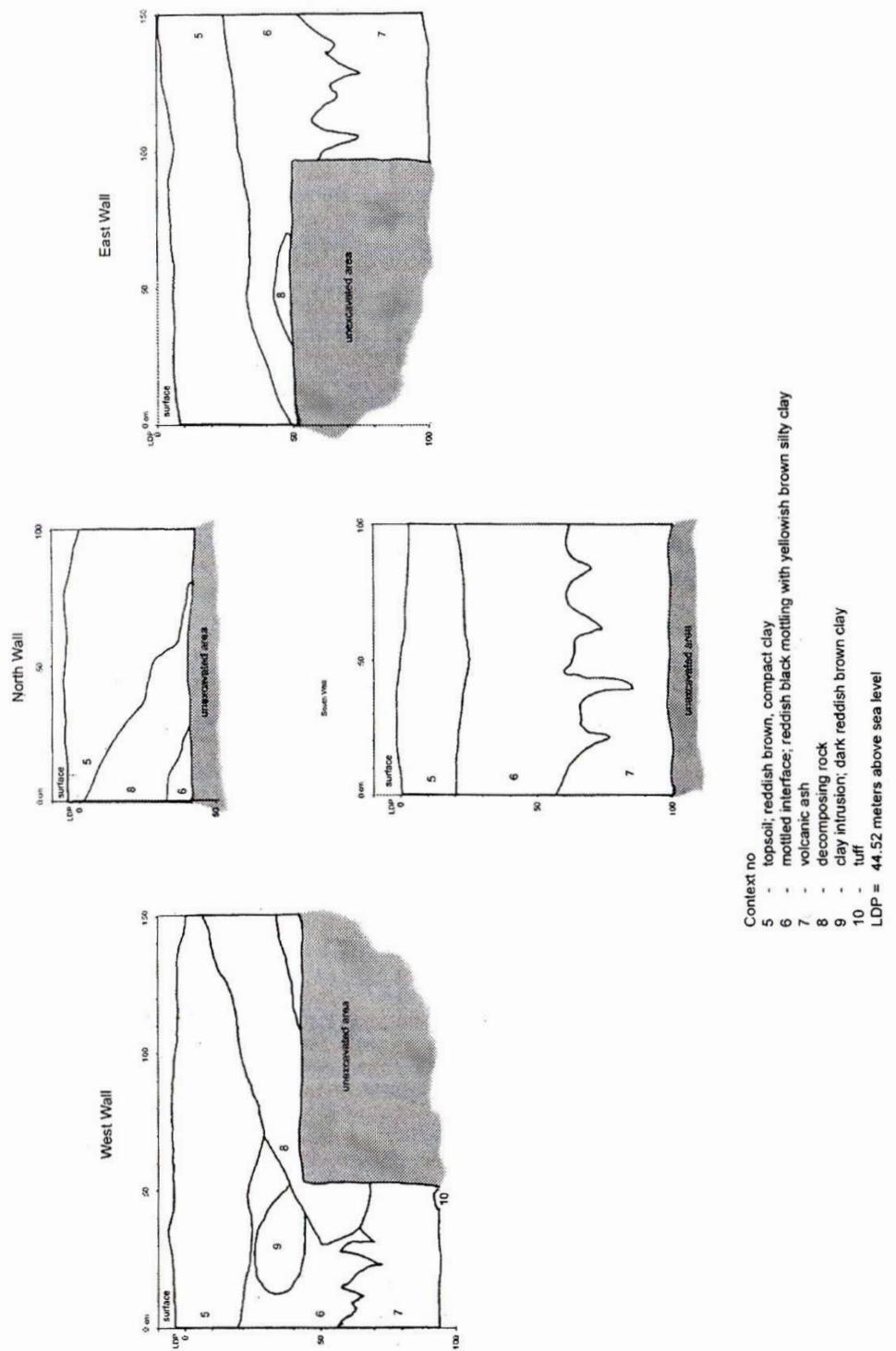


Figure 8
Trench 4 stratigraphic profile

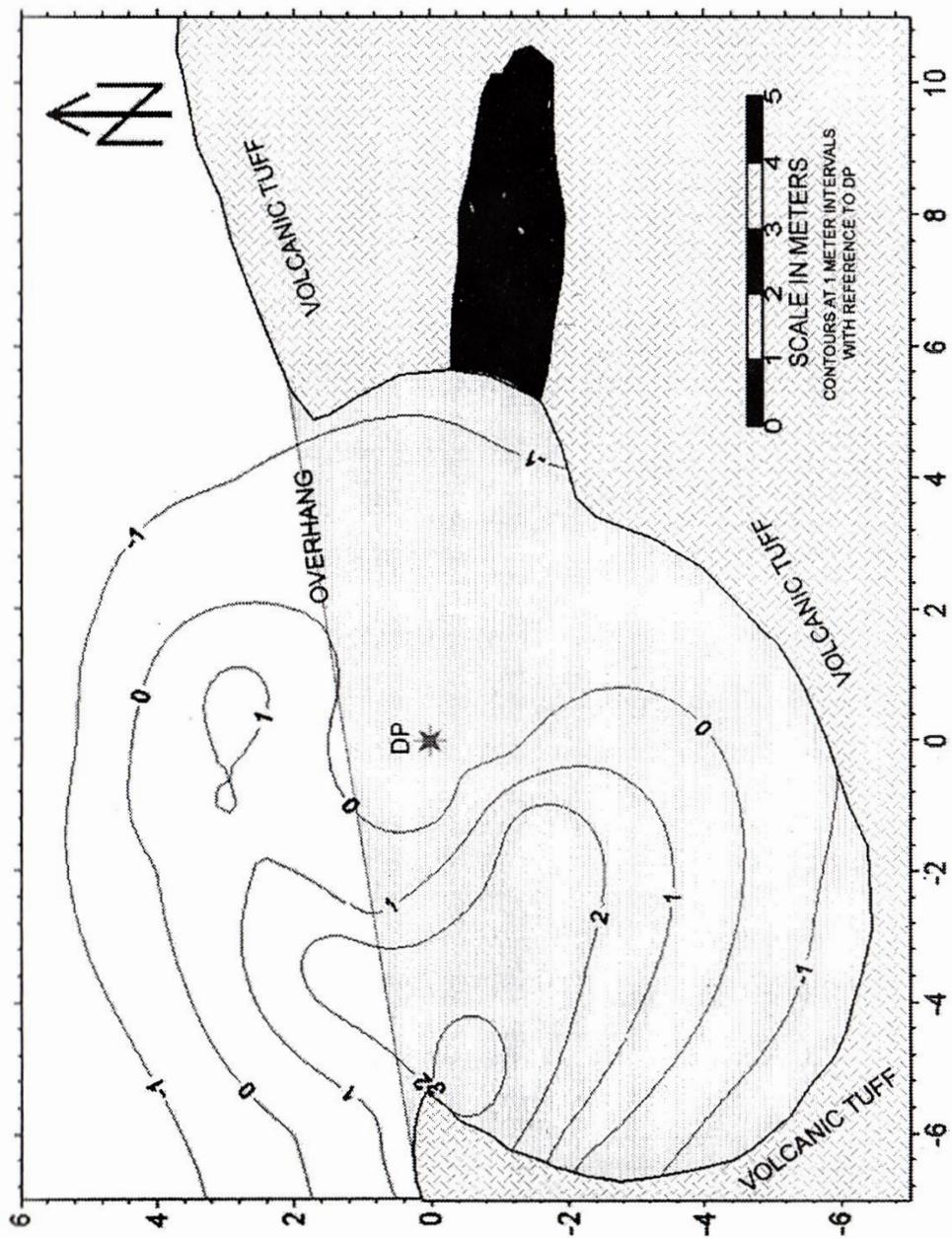


Figure 9

Kros Rockshelter site map

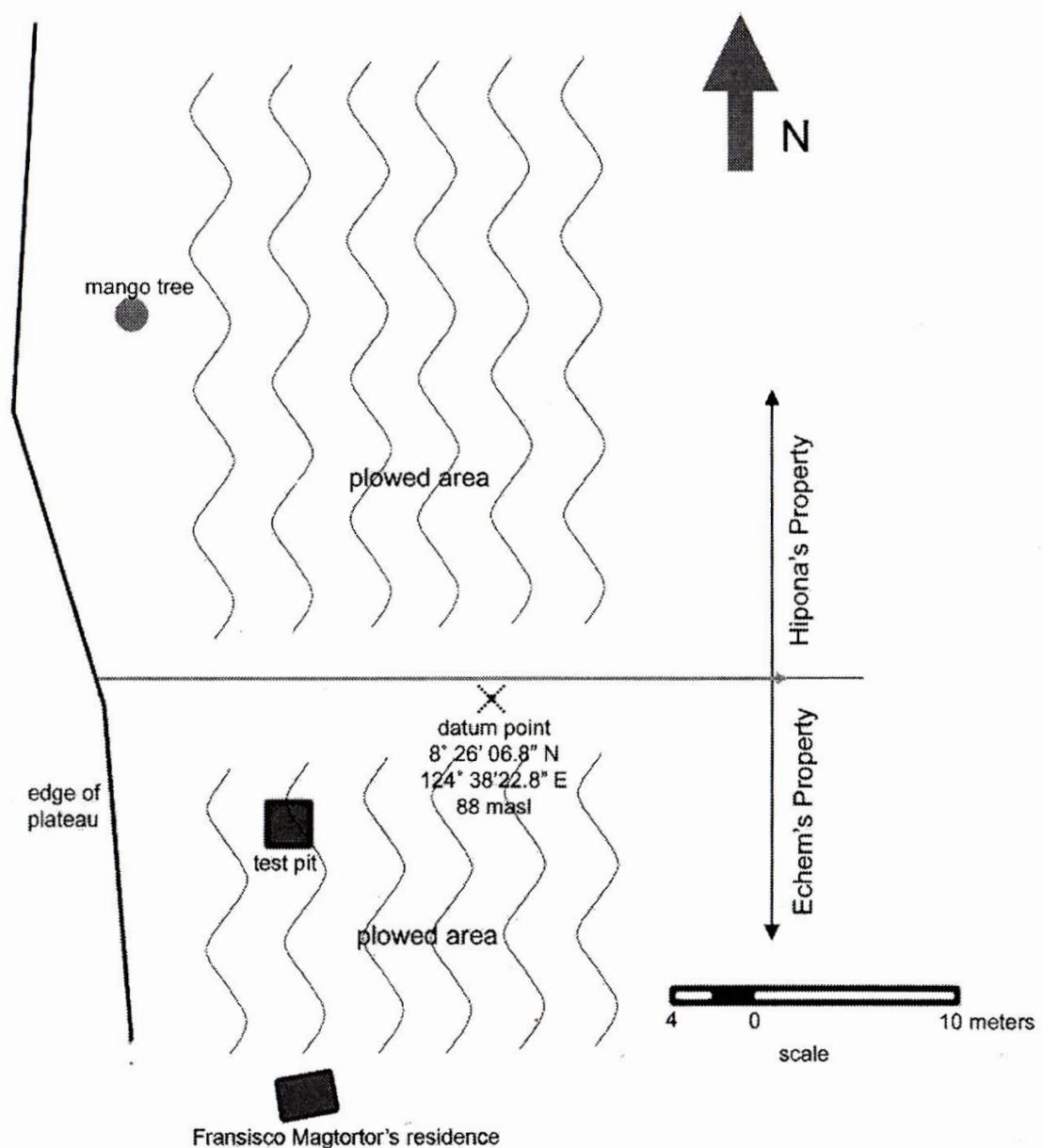


Figure 10
Echem Property site map

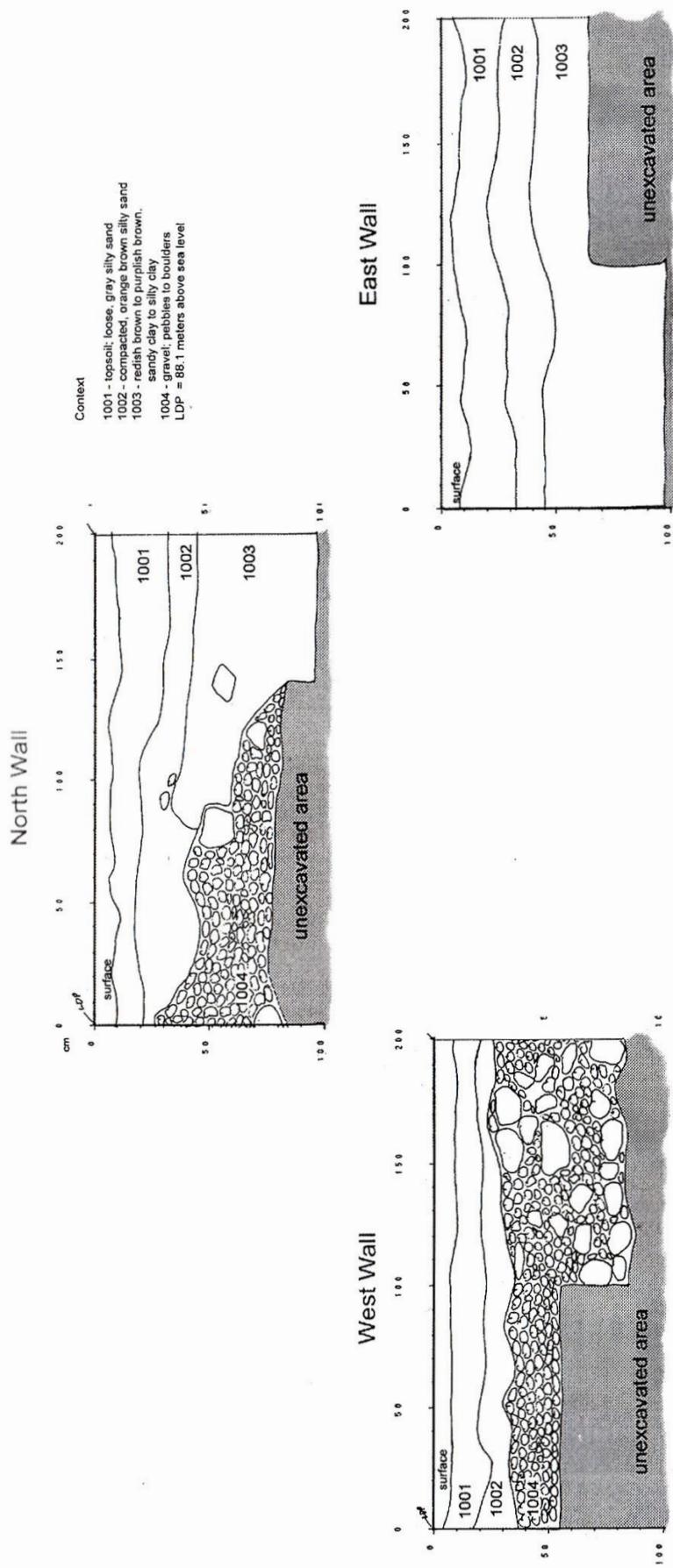


Figure 11
Echem's Property test pit stratigraphic profile



Plate 1
Huluga survey



Plate 2
Mapping of sites



Plate 3
Kros Rockshelter excavation

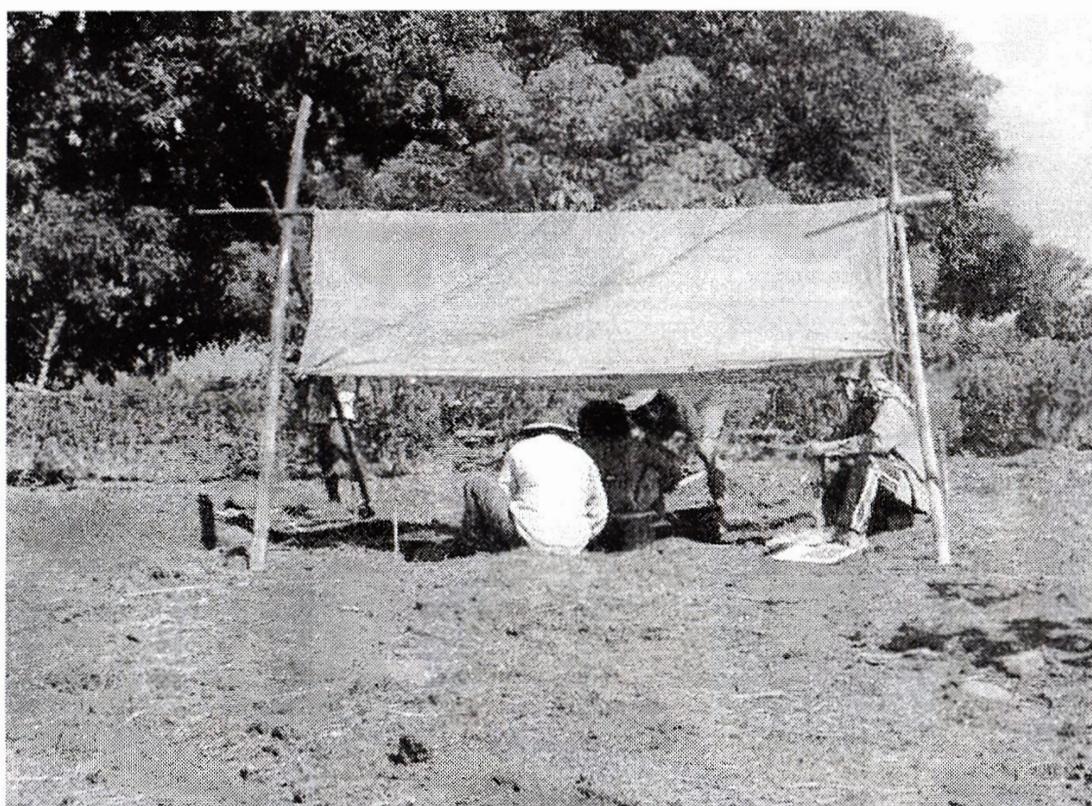
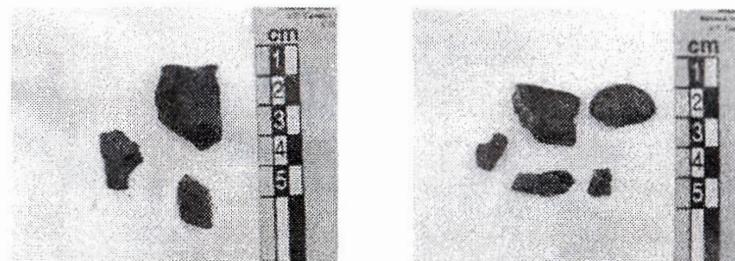


Plate 4
Echem's Property excavation



Plate 5
Paleolithic type stone tools recovered from Dahino Property Site

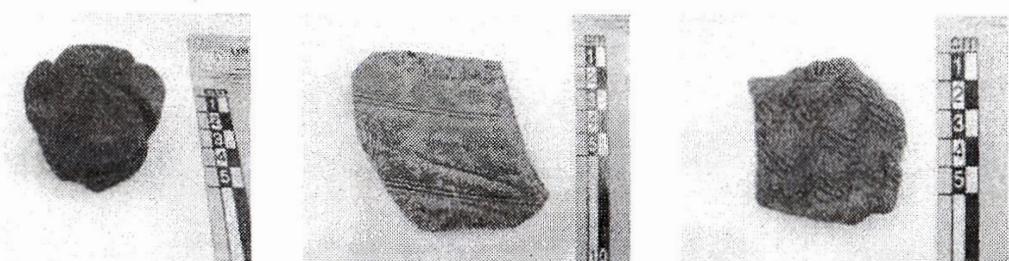
From Dahino and Gales Properties



obsidian flakes

chert flakes

From Echem Property Site

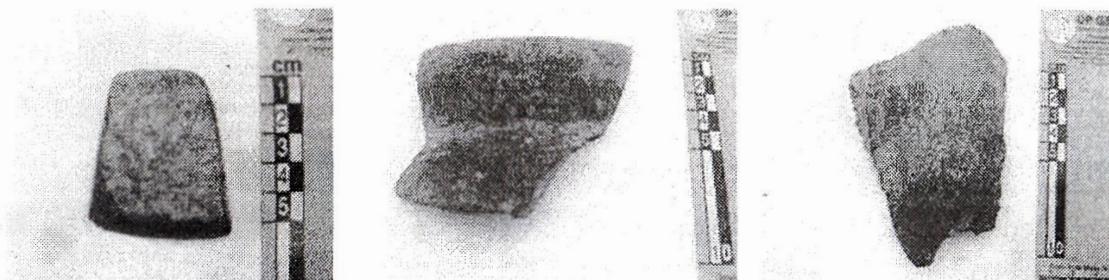


Earthenware lid

Celadon sherd

Earthenware sherd with
decoration

From Kros Rockshelter



Stone Adze

Rim of an earthenware jar

Large piece of
earthenware sherd

Plate 6
Archaeological finds

