

## SQUIER'S "PALACE OF OLLANTAY" REVISITED

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## Introduction

In June, 1978, while conducting a University of British Columbia directed study of Inca architecture, Manuel Chávez Ballón and I decided to examine the "Palace of Ollantay" described by Ephraim George Squier (1877, pp. 514-515). Following his map (p. 492), we found the site occupying three terraces atop a promontory overlooking the river about halfway between the bridge and the railroad station (fig. 1). Its most easily identifiable feature, a two story structure illustrated by Squier (fig. 6), stands on the lowest terrace about 15 m. above and 50 m. north of the river bank. The ruins were densely overgrown, portions of many walls were tumbled and open areas had been altered by cultivation. Basically, however, the condition of the site appeared to have changed little since Squier's visit 115 years earlier.

A brief reconnaissance revealed that Squier's ground plan (fig. 4) and illustration cited above contained sufficient errors to warrant our making a new survey. Under Chávez's authority as Inspector of Monuments and with the assistance of students and local labor, we cleared away most of the overgrowth and spent about five days recording the site. The new ground plan and diagonal projections presented here (figs. 5, 13, 14) were drawn from our combined data checked against over 200 photographs taken of the site. I am satisfied that they are reasonably accurate though a number of problems of interpretation remain unresolved since we were unable to conduct excavations to clarify them.

## An Evaluation of Squier's Ground Plan and Illustration

While struggling to decipher the complexities of the badly damaged site, Chávez and I gained a profound respect for the pioneering explorations of Squier. The field notes upon which his ground plan was based must have been made in haste, yet his results are surprisingly accurate. The number, relative proportions and orientation of structures is nearly correct, though he wrongly assumed that structures F and G shared the rectilinear alignment of the rest. Most of his errors in the number and location of doors and niches and the alignment of structures occur in badly damaged portions of the complex. These discrepancies are minor in the context of his monumental contribution to Andean archaeology but they do make his plan unacceptable to the serious scholar.

In contrast to Squier's ground plans, the engraved illustrations of his volume are often very misleading because the engraver who worked from his field notes and photographs was permitted excessive artistic license. The "View of Palace of Ollantay" (fig. 6) is obviously based on a photograph of Structure F taken from the north (fig. 7) but

its relationship to Structure E is misrepresented (fig. 8). A nonexistent flight of stairs is shown leading to the second story of F which, in reality, was entered from the second story of E (fig. 9). Characteristically, the engraver introduced two Lilliputian figures that falsify the scale of the site. Finally, a niched wall in the foreground not only inverts the true relationship of levels but implies that Inca style fitted stone masonry is incorporated in the complex. Actually, it is constructed entirely of fieldstone set in clay mortar and, like all such construction at Ollantaytambo, was originally covered with yellow clay plaster.

Squier was obviously intrigued by the romantic legend of Ollantay and his love affair with the Inca princess, Joyful Star. He devotes much of his chapter on Ollantaytambo to the recounting of this story and implies that Ollantay's palace was "pointed out" to him (p. 115). We found no local tradition to support this identification. Residents of the town knew the site only as "Q'ellu Raqay" (yellow ruin).

#### Site Description

Q'ellu Raqay is situated within the elaborate system of agricultural terraces constructed at Ollantaytambo to create the maximum amount of level land possible from the natural contours of the broad valley floor north of the river (fig. 1). The orientation, size and configuration of the site was strongly influenced by the topography of its location. The promontory drops off steeply towards the river to the south and a deep draw to the west. The three terraces on its crest that are occupied by the ruins yield to these limitations. At the same time, unlike the agricultural terraces which surround them, these terraces were built or modified to conform to the strict rectilinear requirements of the carefully planned complex. All of the north-south retaining walls of the two upper terraces and the northern half of the lower one conform to the azimuth of 27° east of magnetic north. Except for the southern retaining wall of the lower level, all transverse walls lie at right angles to this azimuth (117°). The difference in level between terraces is, in each case, 2.5 m., the height of a single story at the site. Even the aberrant south wall of the lower terrace displays planning in the form of a cantilevered flight of steps which provided access to the southwestern corner of the complex.

#### The North Portal

The principal entrance to Q'ellu Raqay appears to have been a double jamb doorway in the center of the north wall of the upper level which opened to a corridor between Structures A and B leading to Plaza I. The doorway has been filled with stones but it is apparent that the field to the north is approximately .8 m. above the sill. Soil piled against the north wall by ploughing now supports a dense tangle of brush. Without excavation it was impossible to determine whether access to the door was by ramp or steps and what provisions were made for drainage to prevent the washing of soil into the complex.

### Structures A and B

The north walls of structures A and B constitute the north wall of the upper terrace, and the west wall of A and east wall of B establish its lateral dimension. Both structures have interiors that are approximately five meters square with four niches in their west, north and east walls and two flanking a doorway opening south to Plaza I. All their walls evidently stood to a height of 2.5 m. and there is no evidence in the form of fallen debris to indicate either a second story or gables. The twin, square, single room structures must therefore have had pyramidal roofs.

### Plaza I

Plaza I measures 13.8 x 14 m. (north-south dimensions precede east-west) with 2 m. high west and east walls aligned with the outside walls of structures A and B. The two walls are in mirror symmetry, each having five door-sized niches. Most of the niche lintels have fallen and the northernmost niche of each wall has been broken through to provide access for farmers who cultivate the plaza. The southern end of the east wall has also been demolished from the northern jamb of its final niche onwards. This fact probably accounts for Squier's postulated doorway opening to the east at this point (fig. 4), an interpretation for which no supporting evidence could be found. The south side of Plaza I was enclosed by the northern second story wall of Structure C of which only small remnants remain standing.

### Access from Plaza I to Plaza II-E

Structure C has the same west-east internal dimensions as Plaza I. To provide direct access from Plaza I to Plaza II-E the structure was shifted to the west creating a 1.4 m. wide passageway between its eastern end and a continuation of the east wall of the plaza. (This shift was made possible by constructing the western retaining wall of the central terrace 4.5 m. west of the one for the upper terrace.) The passageway is filled with debris fallen from the eastern second story wall and gable of Structure C but the minimum 33° incline created by the drop of 2.5 m. from Plaza I to II-E within 4 horizontal meters leads me to postulate that it was traversed by a flight of stone steps rather than an earthen ramp. Entrance to this stairway from Plaza II-E was through a doorway aligned with the south façade of Structure C. A similar doorway may have been constructed at the entrance from Plaza I but this cannot be established without excavation due to the lack of visible evidence.

### Structure C

There is ample evidence indicating the former existence of the second floor of Structure C in the form of fallen debris half-filling its first floor rooms and the low remnants of the north wall extending above the second floor level. The remnants are somewhat amorphous and densely overgrown but offer indications that there were two doorways opening to Plaza I. One was evidently located directly on the central

north-south axis of the plaza and the North Portal. The other entered the plaza's southwestern corner, mirroring the location of the entrance to the access passageway. This arrangement completed the bi-axial symmetry of features of Plaza I's four walls. Beyond this, the details of the structure's second floor cannot be reconstructed although excavation of the debris-filled first floor might give some indication of their character in the number and size of lintel stones recovered.

### Structure C-1

The first floor of Structure C is well preserved except for its badly collapsed and rubble-covered western end. It is divided into two sections of unequal length by a massive block of rubble-filled masonry that, again, falls directly on the central axis of Plaza I. A narrow passageway was left between this block and the inner face of the north wall to allow internal access between the two rooms. Three of the original four stone lintels are still in place forming the floor at the central second floor entrance from Plaza I. The remainder of the second floor was evidently supported by wooden poles which rested on ledges cut back into the north and south walls at a height of 2.35 m. above the first floor level. These cutbacks are intact in the walls of the eastern room (C1-E) and a significant portion of the western one (C1-W). They apparently weakened the second story walls and contributed to their collapse once the poles had rotted or (more likely) been removed for firewood by local residents.

Room C1-E has the modest interior dimensions of 2.2 x 3.9 m. and features seven wall niches and two doorways all with their lintels still intact. The doorways open to the south to Plaza II-E and are now filled with stones neatly stacked there by farmers who cleared the plaza for cultivation (fig. 10).

Room C1-W is the same width as C1-E but more than twice as long (8.1 m.). Six wall niches are projected for the north wall on the basis of the module established by the four which are intact and the sill and east jamb of a fifth (fig. 11). The ruined west wall probably had two niches like the corresponding east wall of C1-E. C1-W's east wall does not however have a niche corresponding to the one in the west wall of the smaller room.

A doorway opens to the center of the corridorlike Structure D from the east end of C1-W. Squier's plan (fig. 4) indicates it to be double jambed, an interpretation that appears reasonable by virtue of the width of the opening (2.35 m.), the thickness of the wall it passes through (1.2 m.), and the evident importance of Structure D. Our plan (fig. 5) shows a plain opening since the only indication of an inner jamb presently visible is a single rectangular stone projecting .2 m. into the opening from its west face at ground level. That level is raised above floor level at this point by fallen debris and excavation might reveal more adequate evidence of an inner jamb.

There are two wall niches on the interior of the 3.2 m. south wall between the entrance to Structure D and a more standard .96 m. wide

doorway opening into Plaza II-W. West of this doorway excavation of the rubble-covered foundation of the wall would be necessary to clarify its configuration. A second doorway in the southwest corner of C1-W opening to Plaza II-W is postulated on the basis of the treatment of the south wall of C1-E with its two doorways opening to Plaza II-E and interior and exterior niches between them.

#### Comment

Structure C has been shown in the above discussion to have had two probable second story doorways opening north to Plaza I and four certain and a possible fifth doorway opening south from the first floor. It should be noted that, while Niles states that all second story entrances at the site of Pumamarca near Ollantaytambo are located at right angles to the entrance on the first story (1981, p. 51), Moorehead indicates that in Inca structures at Pisac the entrance to second stories lies in the wall opposite the first floor entrance (1979, p. 83). We found no indications of a second story entrance on either the west or east ends of the narrow structure or any trace of an internal stairway. Indeed, the severely limited space available at these locations would appear to rule out such a possibility.

As may be seen from figs. 5, 13 and 14, Structure E of Q'ellu Raqay has two entrances to its second story on the north and two to its first floor on the south and an additional one to the west. Only Structure F is similar to the pattern observed by Niles. It would appear therefore, that the location of entrances to second stories within a multi-level complex at Ollantaytambo depended on the availability of contiguous levels rather than any fixed rule.

#### Structure D

The 1.9 m. thick west and east walls of Structure D are the most elaborately niched at Q'ellu Raqay. They are in mirror symmetry, with each featuring four tall niches on its interior side alternating with three windows that open to the inner face of large double jamb niches on the exterior (fig. 15). The elaborate structure may have been roofed over but there is no trace of the perishable materials of which a roof would have been made.

Structure D plays a pivotal role in the complex symmetry of the site. The center of its east wall falls directly on the axis of Plaza I and forms an extension of the block dividing C1-W from C1-E. As an architectural unit, Structure D establishes a new north-south axis directly at the center of Structure C's south façade.

#### Plaza II-E

Plaza II-E is bounded on the west by the east wall of Structure D with its three elaborate niches. On the north is the south façade of C1-E with two doorways and two wall niches, the adjoining doorway opening to the stairway, and a one meter continuation of the wall east of it that provided space for an additional wall niche. Thus, the

north wall was unified in a pattern of alternating doors and niches.

A small fragment of the east wall survives at the northeast corner of the plaza showing that it lay one meter east of Plaza I's east wall and its continuation along the access to Plaza II-E. Similarly, Plaza II-E's east wall continued along an access leading down to the next level. Except for the corner fragment, this entire wall has fallen. A long stone lintel lying atop its rubble suggests that the portion of the wall facing Plaza II-E featured at least one, and probably three, large niches mirroring the symmetry of the west wall.

West of the access to level III, Plaza II-E is bounded on the south by the eastern portion of the north second story wall of Structure E. This wall features a doorway located on the central north-south axis of the plaza and two niches in the wall between the niche in the 1.7 m. wall between the doorway and the entrance to the access stairway, though this section of wall is not preserved to a sufficient height to provide confirmation of the niche's existence.

#### Access from Plaza II-E to Level III-E

Debris from the fallen eastern second story wall and gable of Structure E obscures the access from Plaza II-E to Level III-E. An exterior niche at the center of E's eastern first story wall evidently centered on a 1.7 m. wide landing between the north wall of Structure F and the foot of a stairway leading up to Plaza II-E at an angle of 45°. It was impossible to determine whether or not there was a doorway at either the top or bottom of this access. Again, excavation might reveal positive indications.

#### Plaza II-W

The western plaza of level II is faced on the north by the first story southern façade of Structure C1-W. As mentioned earlier, this may have had two doorways with a wall niche between them, though visible evidence exists for the eastern doorway only. The plaza's west wall evidently fell long ago with most of its material tumbling down the steep series of narrow terraces supporting the plaza's western retaining wall. What foundations survived are obscured by rocks piled upon them by farmers clearing the plaza for cultivation. As in the case of the east wall of Plaza II-E, excavation may reveal whether or not this outer wall featured tall niches in symmetry with the three elaborate niches in the opposite wall shared with Structure D.

The south side of Plaza II-W has been so drastically altered that reconstruction with any degree of certainty is presently impossible. The west and east sides of the plaza are more or less level, but its center slopes downward in a plough-furrowed gully to merge with Level III-W. At the southwest corner of the plaza a fragment of the south retaining wall survives that aligns with the northwest corner of Structure E's first story walls. There is no way of knowing, short of excavation, how much of the foundation of the south wall remains under the furrowed gap between these two features.

The gully might suggest that access from Level III-W up to Plaza II-W was by means of a ramp or stairway ending in the center of the plaza. Such a feature would be inconsistent with the type of access constructed between levels on the eastern side of the complex. Two possibilities seem more feasible: one is that there was no access between the two levels, the other is that a rubble-filled stone stairway led down to Level III-W along the west wall of Structure E. The second alternative is tentatively proposed (fig. 14) on the slim logic that such a stairway would fall exactly in the center of Plaza II-W's south wall, a location consistent with the centrally placed doorways in the south walls of Structure D and Plaza II-E. If a stairway did once exist at this point, local farmers eradicated all traces of it in their labors to unite Plaza II-W and Level III-W into a continuous ploughed field. The reconstruction of this portion of the site remains an enigma.

### Structure E

Structure E is the largest building at Q'ellu Raqay, measuring 7.4 x 14.8 m. Its west wall is aligned with the west wall of Plaza I (fig. 12), while its eastern end lies 1.5 m. west of that plaza's east wall. Even so, its impressive two story mass must have visually reestablished the central axis of Plaza I.

Part of the second floor (E2) consisted of a bench a little over 2 m. wide along the structure's north wall. Setbacks at the top of the north and south first story walls held beams to support the remainder of the second floor. The section of the north wall between the doorways to Structure D and Plaza II-E still stands (fig. 16). It retains a fragment of a north-south wall that divided the bench (and perhaps the entire second floor) into two unequal sections, E2-W and E2-E (fig. 13). E2-W is symmetrical with the central axis of Structure C. The two well preserved wall niches east of the doorway were undoubtedly matched by two to the west. E2-E is symmetrical with the central axis of Plaza II-E and apparently served as a corridor leading to the second story entrance of Structure F. As may be seen in figs. 13 and 16, the second story wall to the north of this entrance is preserved to a height of half a meter. The dividing wall between E2-W and E2-E has been almost entirely destroyed and its foundations on the bench obscured by ploughing. It is therefore impossible to rule out a doorway connecting the two sections of the bench. If a doorway did exist, I feel it more likely that it was located in the center of a wall traversing the entire width of the second floor making it consistent with the principles of symmetry evident in the rest of the site.

The first story of Structure E is well preserved except for the central portion of the north wall which has slumped. Farmers cultivating its floor have filled all doorways and niches with stones fallen from the second floor walls. A tall niche in the center of the east wall has been broken through forming the only usable entrance to the structure. At the opposite end of the 3 m. wide, 12.6 m. long, room a doorway opened to the west. Along the north wall, six small wall niches alternate with five tall ones. The wall niches are repeated in the opposite south wall but the tall niches are replaced by three wall-niche sized windows



opening to tall niches on the exterior of the wall (fig. 17) alternating with two doorways. Thus, the spacing of features is the same for both walls, while their character varies. Their symmetry is independent of that of the upper two levels.

### Structure F

Structure F is 7.2 m. square and is the only building at Q'ellu Raqay with its second story still intact. Its walls are in rectangular conformity with an azimuth of 24° east of magnetic north, 3° north of the alignment of all other structures at the site except for the small guard station G. The aberrant orientation of F together with certain of its structural features suggests that it was originally built as a single story structure and later renovated to be incorporated in the plan of the complex.

The north wall of the first floor has a doorway, and a small window in an exterior wall niche. The west wall has three interior wall niches with a similar small window opening to the exterior from the central niche. The south wall features two wall niches. At the center of the interior east wall there is a single wall niche with a narrow inner niche extending halfway through the wall to the same plane as the inner surfaces of two large double jambed niches that ornament its exterior façade (fig. 18).

An examination of the north (fig. 7) and south exterior walls of Structure F indicates that the eastern façade was superimposed on an earlier wall at the same time the second story was added, utilizing the top of the original wall as a sill to support the second floor beams. At the same time, the west wall was thickened 20 cm. to allow for the setback which had to be made at the base of its second story to support the floor beams. The odd double niche in the east wall of the first floor appears to have originally been a windowed niche. Features of the interior second floor walls are symmetrically arranged with two windows in the north and south walls, a window flanked by two niches to the east and a central window on the west with a niche to the south and a doorway to the north providing access to the second floor of Structure E.

### Structure G

Structure G was evidently a guard post strategically placed to control access to the complex from the cantilevered steps in the south retaining wall of the lower terrace. It is a small single story structure measuring 4.4 x 1.5 m. with a deep double jambed niche in its south side with small lateral niches in each of its inner jambs. The central axis of the double niche falls on the azimuth of 11° east of magnetic north, which is 16° closer to magnetic north than the main axis of the site and 8° north of perpendicular with the alignment of the aberrant south wall.

### Level III

Unlike the two upper levels, the lower terrace does not feature



any rectangular, enclosed plazas. The area west of Structure E (III-W) approaches this configuration, but is open to the south. Low walls appear to have been built along the western edge of the terrace and one may have crowned the south retaining wall east of the cantilevered step entrance. No trace could be found of a second structure equal to G, east of Structure F, as indicated on Squier's plan (fig. 4). Guards may have been posted in the two large niches on the east façade of F, or additional walls, since destroyed, tightened the security of this part of the complex.

### Conclusions

The site of Q'ellu Raqay displays a highly developed use of symmetry, the sophistication of which was not apparent until our data were plotted, correcting errors in Squier's plan. The ingenuity and skill of its builders indicate that the complex was constructed to serve an important purpose. Its limited access and labyrinthine plan remind me of the ciudadelas of Chan Chan, and I suspect that it had a similar ceremonial-administrative function. This impression is reinforced by the unusual features of the draw that passes to the west of the complex and curves its way northward to the plaza of Ollantaytambo. (Here one's way is blocked by buildings that infringe on the southern and western limits of the original plaza.) Beginning to the west of Q'ellu Raqay's North Portal, long ramps ascend the west and east sides of each draw terrace to the level of the next to the north (fig. 1). From about 300 m. north of the North Portal onward, both sides of the draw are lined with complex structures with elaborately niched bays facing inward and regularly spaced tall niches on their shorter exterior elevation bordering adjacent fields. These extraordinary features of the draw merit detailed study for they suggest that it was a ceremonial way leading to Q'ellu Raqay and emphasize its importance. Similar but less pretentious niches may be seen lining the road into town from the East gateway at Ollantaytambo.

Q'ellu Raqay's construction style, of field stone, mortar and plaster with an elaborate use of niche forms, many having small windows in their inner recesses, is distinct from the Imperial Inca style. Its characteristics are shared by the structures in the nearby draw and many others in the Ollantaytambo area such as the "Templo de Agua" at Ollantaytambo (fig. 2) and are related to structures pointed out to me by Pedro Rojas Ponce at a checkpoint on the ancient highway traversing the northern side of the terraced valley near the town of Urubamba (fig. 3). Susan Niles (1981) has identified ruins at Pumamarca in the mountains north of Ollantaytambo as being in the same style as Q'ellu Raqay and has concluded that this style is regional, predating Inca domination of the area.

When I presented this material to the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Institute of Andean Studies in Berkeley in 1978, I related factors that had attracted me to the notion that this architectural style might have been influenced by that of the Titicaca Basin. Chávez had informed me that the Urubamba-Vilcanota area had been occupied by the

Collas, and there was a superficial resemblance to the architecture on the Island of Coati, etc. Moreover, in a recently excavated series of three portals at Písacllacta (Pisac) I had seen sliding door channels similar to ones I had encountered while excavating houses for Alfred Kidder II at Chiripa in 1955. These false leads are diverting but are not proffered seriously. My objective in writing this report is to make more accurate information available on an important but long neglected site. I gladly leave its proper identification and dating to highland specialists and applaud Niles' efforts to define and date the distinctive style of the Ollantaytambo area.

The site of Q'ellu Raqay is well worth further and more detailed study. Limited excavations should clarify many of the problem areas discussed in this paper and may help establish the dating of the site. Once overlying debris has been removed and floor levels determined, all walls should be consolidated. (The west wall of Structure F is badly cracked and may fall with the next earthquake if steps are not taken to strengthen it.) Ideally, walls should be reconstructed where their original height and features are supported by firm evidence. For example, the walls of Structure D could be reconstructed, those of the second floor of Structure C should not. I also share Chávez's concern for the damage that has been done to the site by its utilization for agricultural purposes, a practice that must be prohibited if the site is to be preserved.

August 14, 1980  
revised November 25, 1980

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1877 *Peru; incidents of travel and exploration in the land of the Incas.* Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York.

#### KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

All photos except fig. 1 are by the author. Figs. 5, 13 and 14 were redrawn by Margaret G. Maclean from plans provided by the author. For the sake of clarity, minor variations in the height, width and direction of walls, or the dimensions of niches within a series, have been omitted. In fig. 14, the profiles of fallen portions of walls have been simplified and the fenestration of second story walls of structures C and E omitted. Dimensions given in the text are based on average measurements.

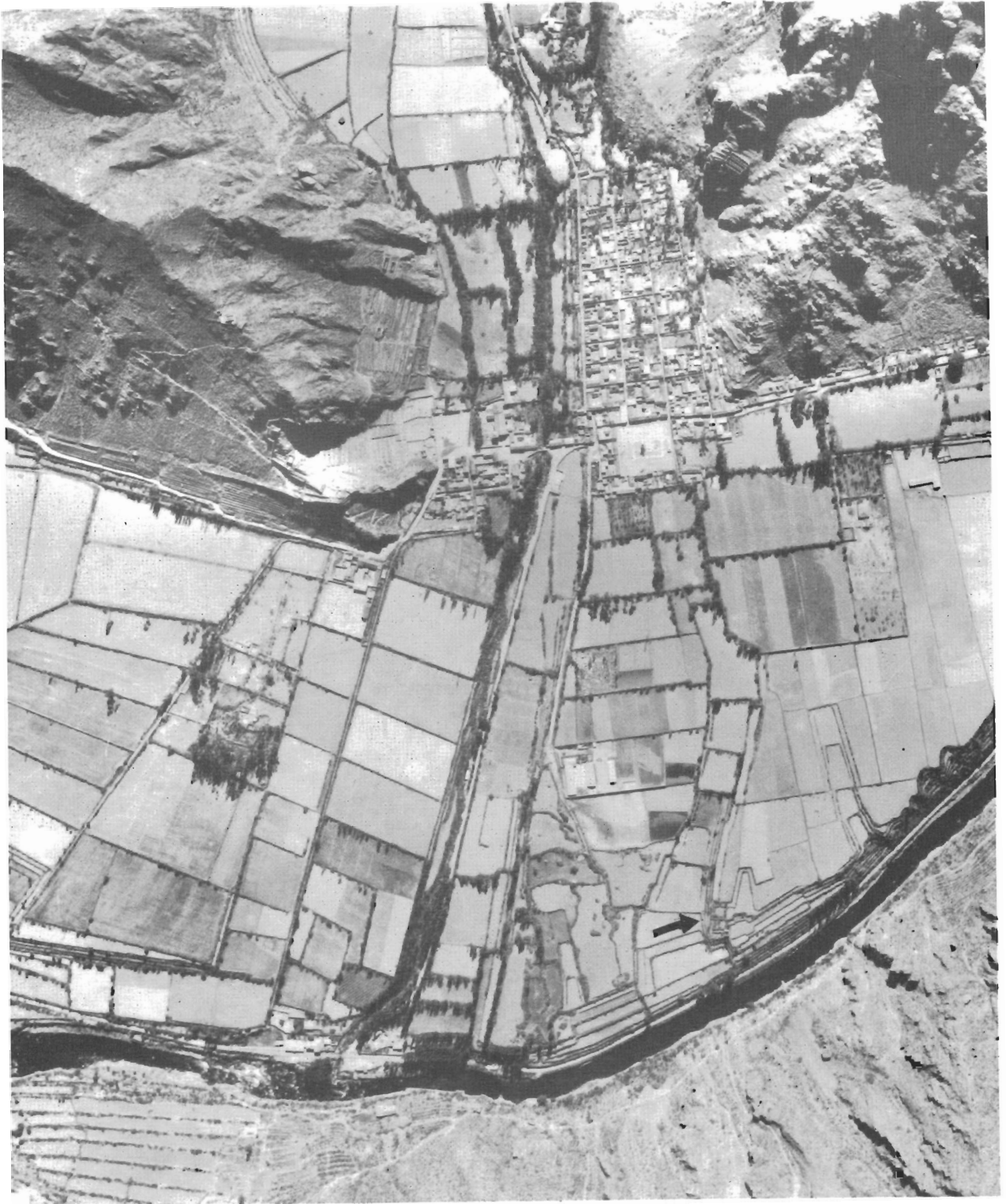
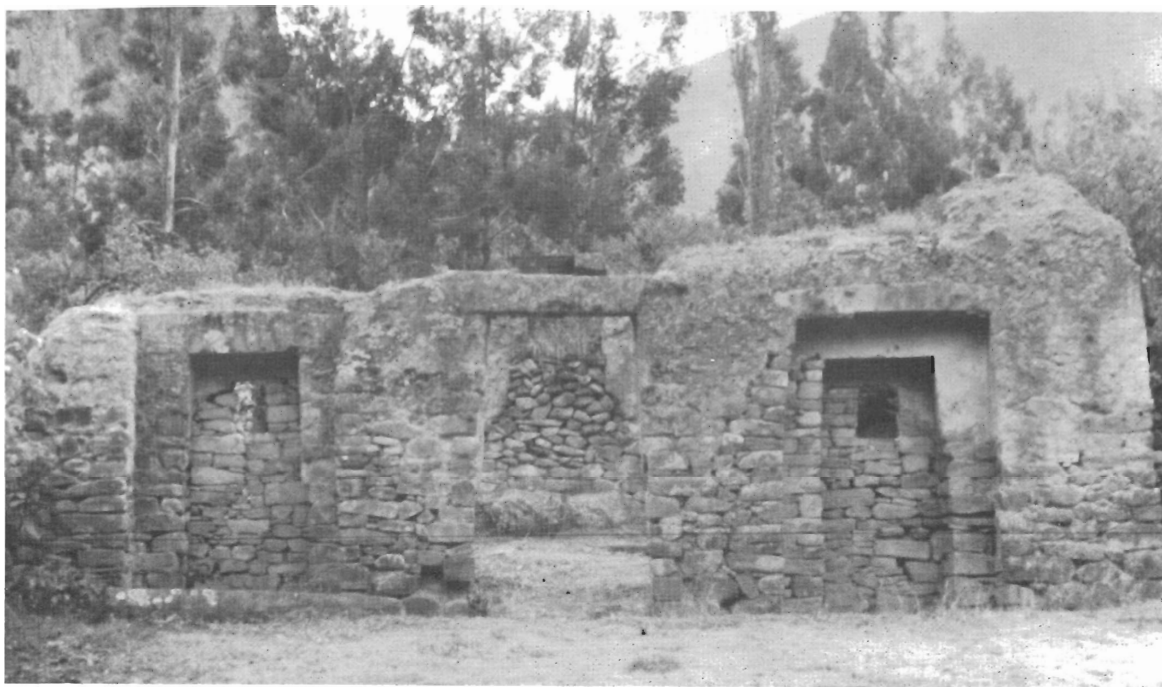


Plate VII. Fig. 1, aerial view showing the relationship between the site of Ollantaytambo and Q'ellu Raqay (indicated by arrow). Foto Servicio Aerofotográfico Nacional 499-78-B.

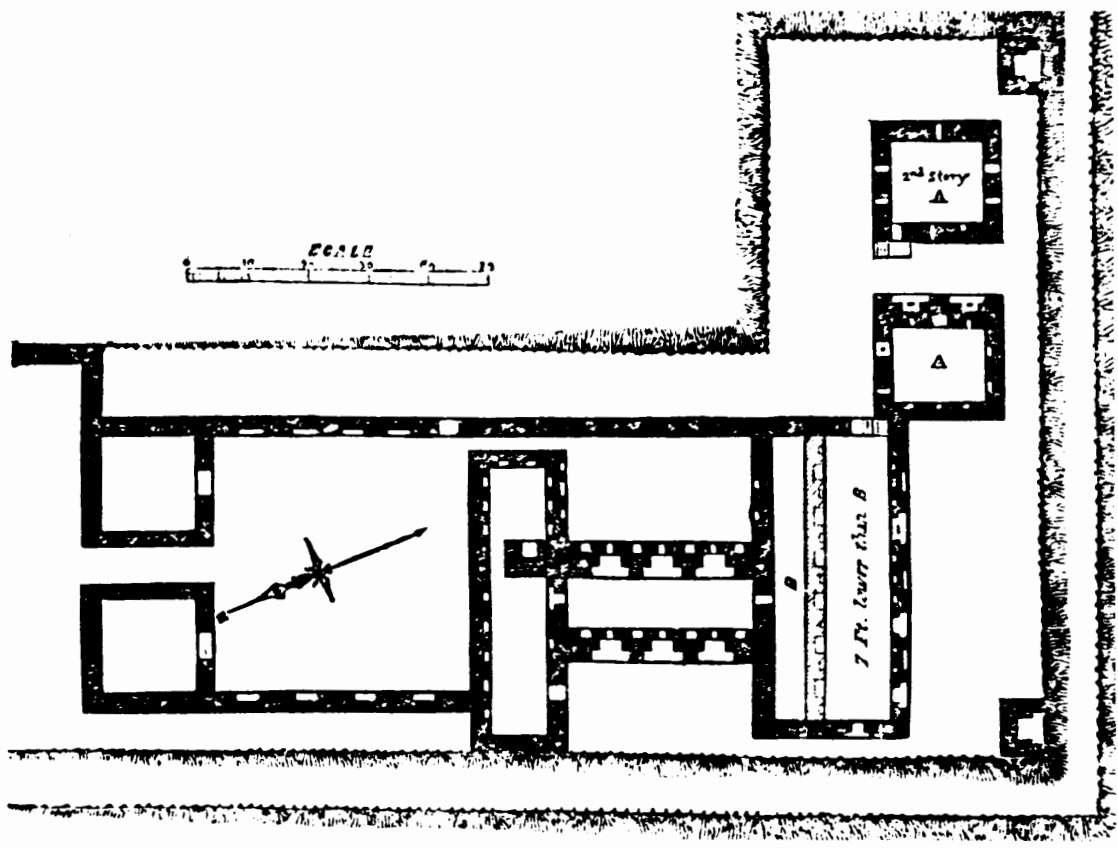


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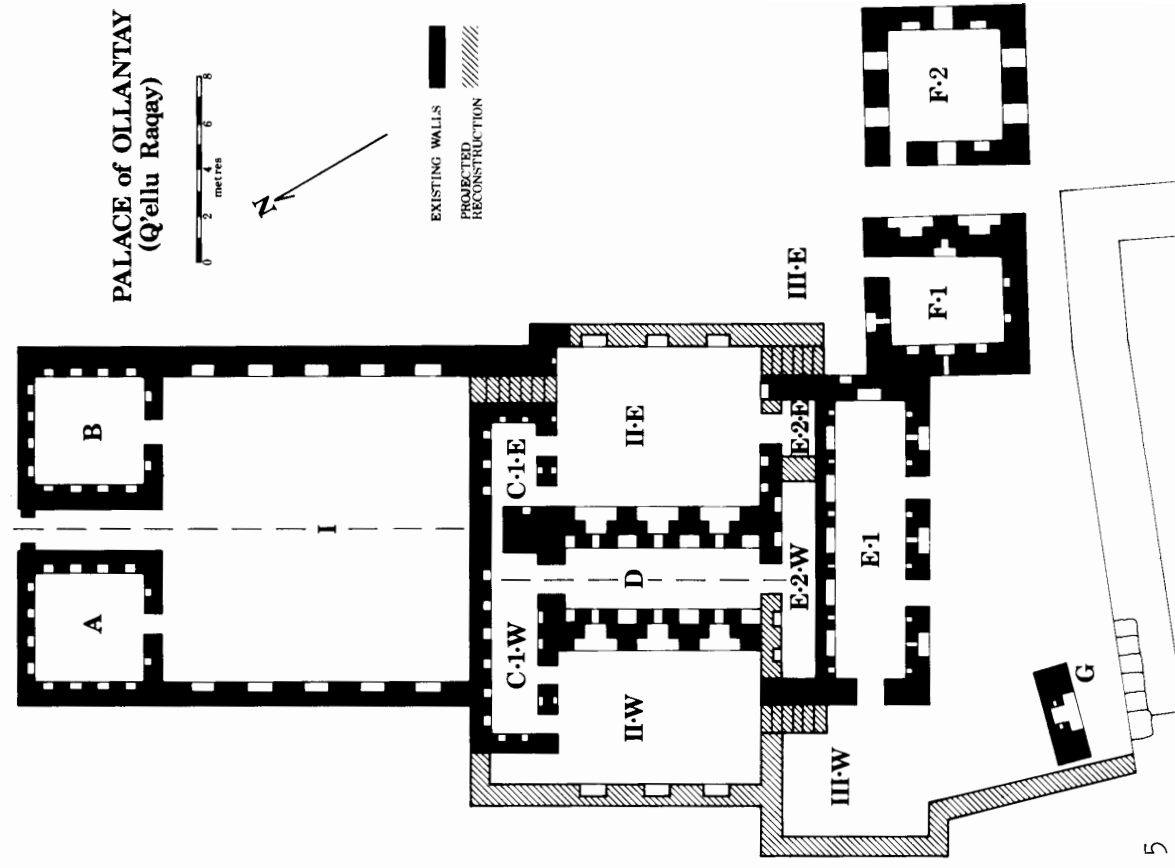


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Plate VIII. Fig. 2, "Templo de Agua" at Ollantaytambo; fig. 3, double jamb doorway surmounted by double jamb niche on ancient highway near the town of Urubamba.



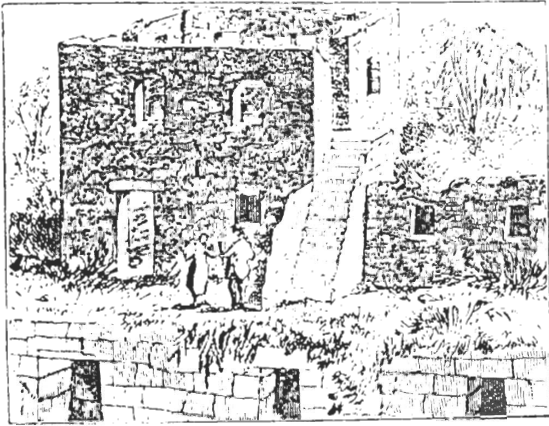
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Plate IX. Fig. 4, "Palace of Ollantay" after Squier, 1877, p. 515; fig. 5, Sawyer-Chávez ground plan of Q'ellu Raqay. F1 is first floor, F2 second floor of Structure F. See Key to Illustrations.





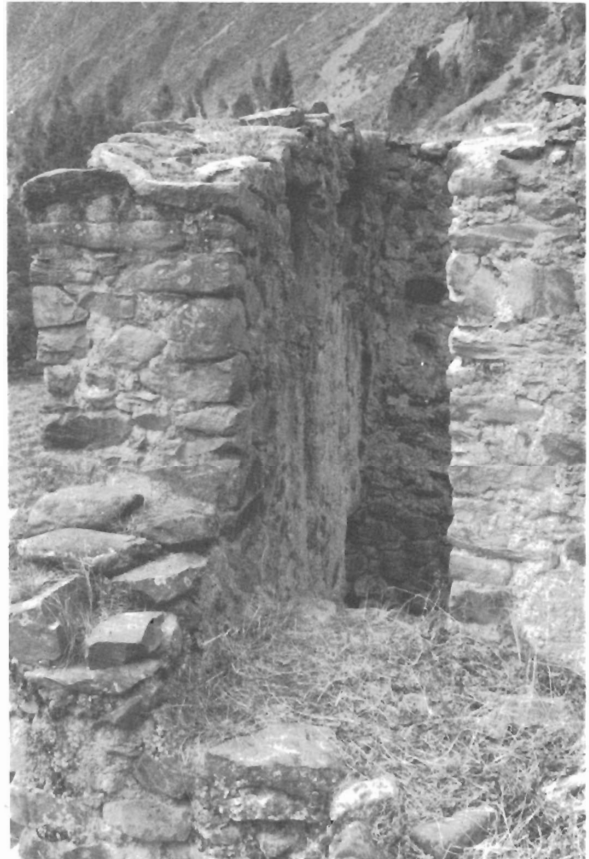
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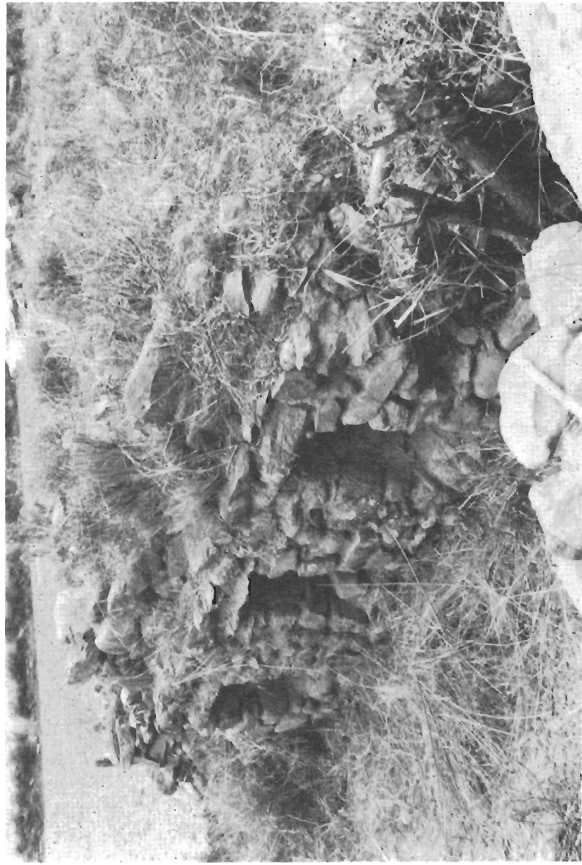
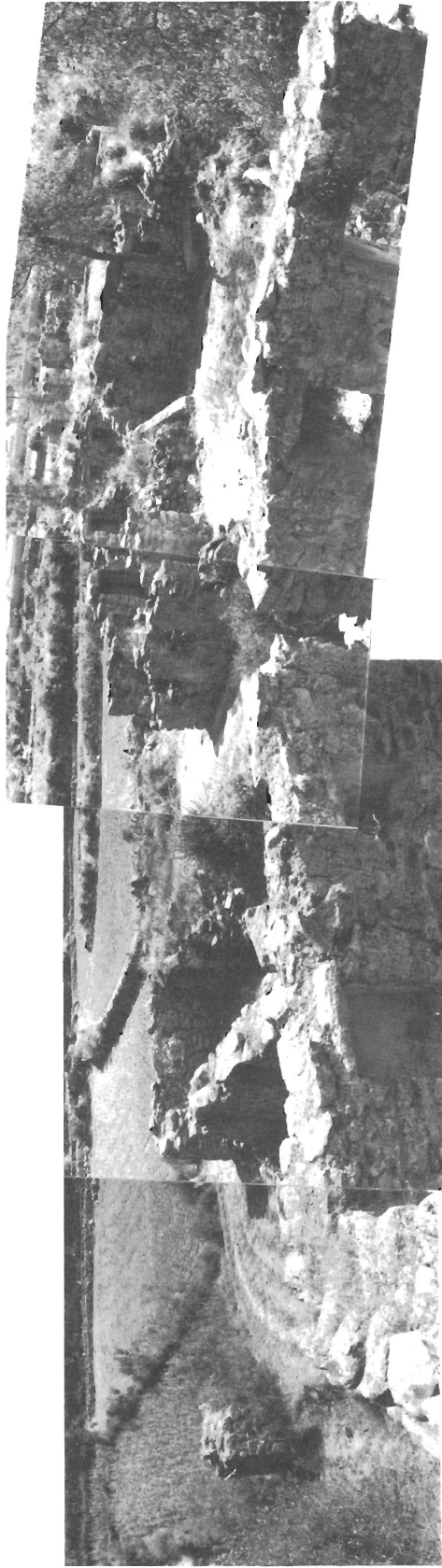


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Plate X. Fig. 6, "View of part of Palace of Ollantay" after Squier, 1877, p. 515; fig. 7, Structure F from north (Manuel Chávez Ballón on right, Daphne Kelgard in foreground); fig. 8, structures E and F from west wall of E; fig. 9, second story entrance of Structure F.



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Plate XI. Fig. 10, panoramic view of Q'ellu Raqay from top of Structure F; fig. 11, detail, north wall of Structure C1-W; fig. 12, view from west wall of Plaza I showing its alignment with west wall of Structure E.



PALACE OF OLLANTAY  
(Q'ellu Raqay)

PARTIAL RECONSTRUCTION  
OF SITE AS EXISTING

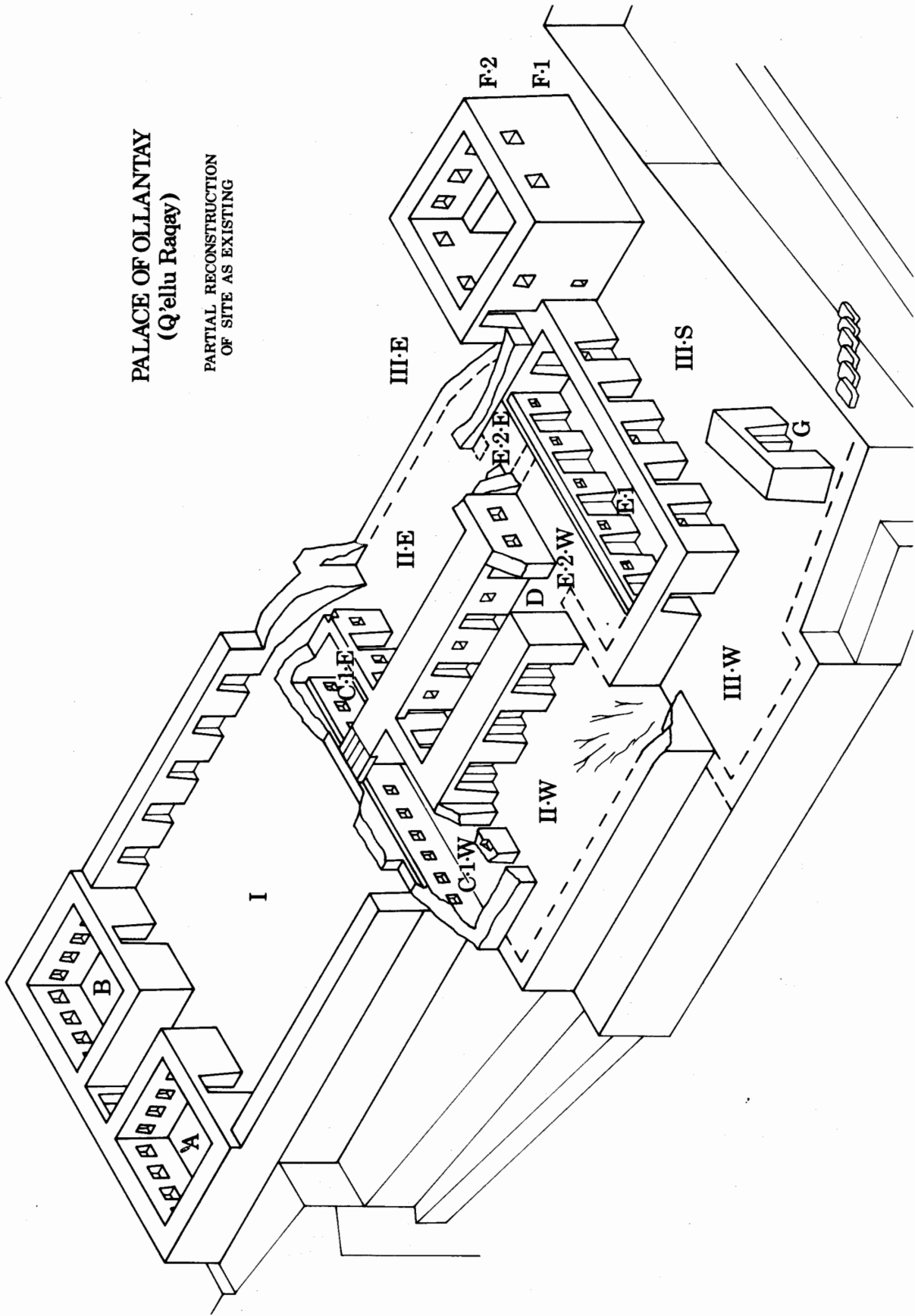


Plate XII. Fig. 13, walls reconstructed to maximum existing height, dashed lines indicate fallen walls.

PALACE OF OLLANTAY  
(Q'ellu Raqay)

A HYPOTHETICAL RECONSTRUCTION

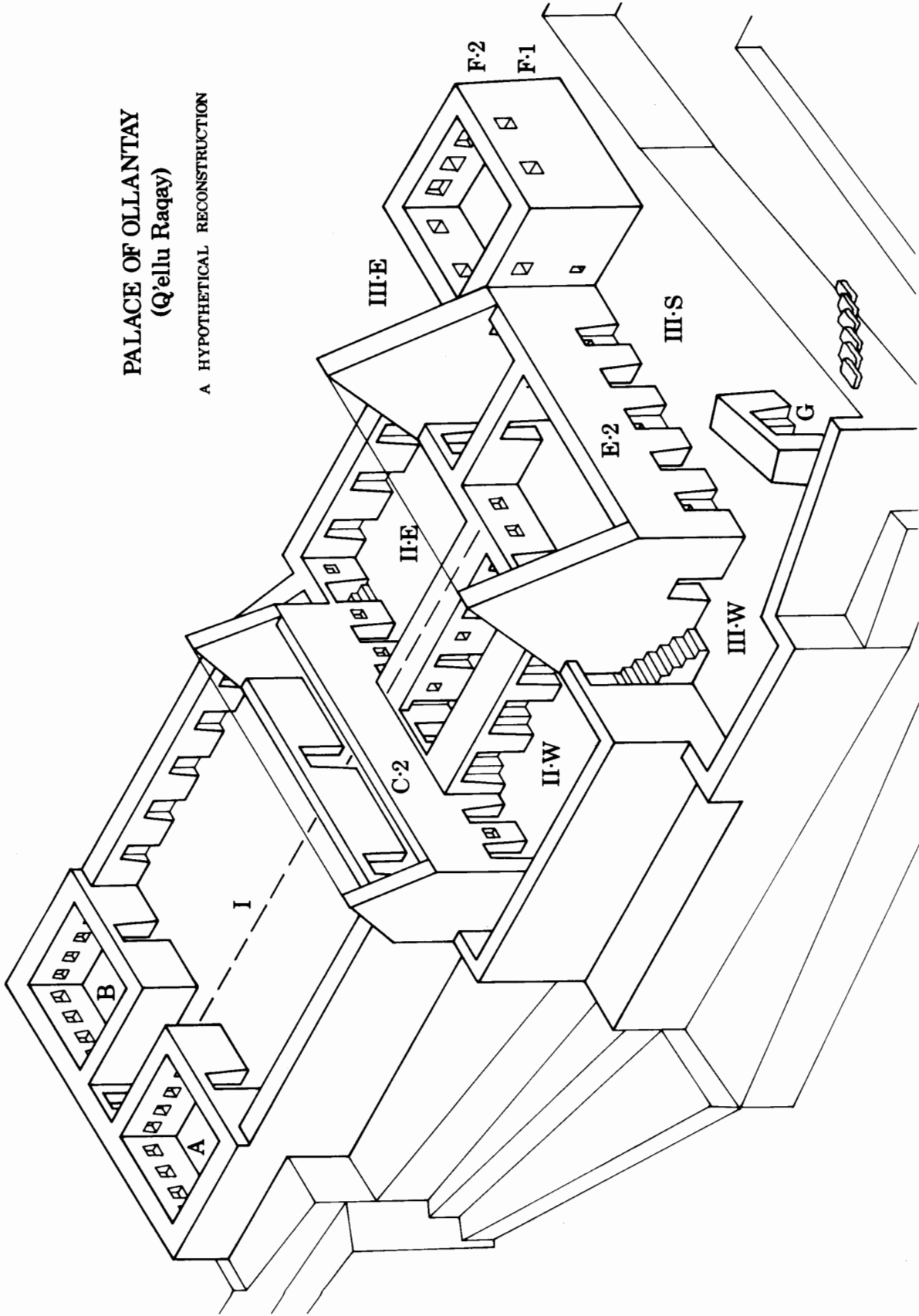


Plate XIII. Fig. 14, see Key to Illustrations.



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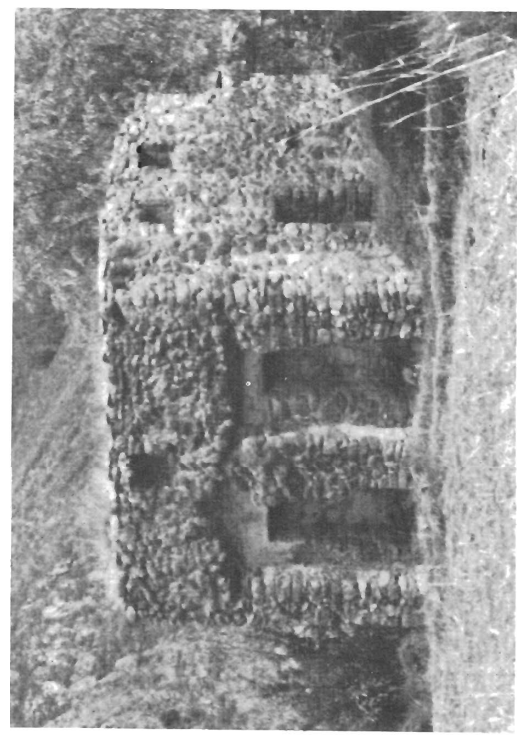


Plate XIV. Fig. 15, double jamb niche with window in west wall of Structure D; fig. 16, fragment of north second story wall of Structure E with Chávez on central axis; fig. 17, tall niche with window in south wall of Structure E; fig. 18, east façade of Structure F, traces of wooden lintels, now removed, in niches.