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## 22 **HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY, THE LATE CLASSIC OCCUPATION, AND THE TERMINAL CLASSIC ABANDONMENT AT COURTYARD D-4, CHAN CHICH, BELIZE**

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*Since its inception in 1996, the Chan Chich Archaeological Project (CCAP) investigations of Chan Chich have yielded abundant information about the Late Classic monumental site core with little information about households and domestic life. During the 2017 field season, excavations at Courtyard D-4, a Late Classic residence near the site core, developed a deeper understanding of the nature of everyday life and the diverse lived experiences of people beyond the highest elite. Using architectural, artifactual, and geochemical data, this study examines the practical and social functions behind the daily production, consumption, and disposal of household objects associated with the final occupation of the household. In addition to standard domestic assemblages, excavations documented dense, above floor artifact deposits that are apparently related to the Terminal Classic abandonment of the courtyard. While the artifact deposits potentially blur information about domestic activity areas and the function of various spaces at the courtyard, the diverse material culture preserved in the deposits helps situate the residents of Courtyard D-4 in the complex network of social relationships at Chan Chich during the Late and Terminal Classic periods.*

### **Introduction**

Households represent a foundational element of society and highlight the heterogeneity within a population. The everyday activities that occur within domestic spaces construct and reinforce the social, economic, and political framework upon which societies are built. This article describes investigations of the final-phase domestic activity areas at Courtyard D-4, a Late Classic residential group located approximately 550 m east of the Main Plaza of the ancient Maya site of Chan Chich (Figure 1). The lead author's thesis presents more detail on the excavations and analysis of Courtyard D-4 (Kilgore 2018). Analysis of artifactual, architectural, and geochemical data revealed the practical and social functions behind the daily production, consumption, and disposal of household objects. The material culture illuminated the multifunctional nature of domestic space at the courtyard and provided data on the lower elite socioeconomic status of its occupants during the Late Classic period. In addition to standard domestic assemblages, excavations documented dense, above-floor artifact deposits that are apparently related to the abandonment of the courtyard. While the artifact deposits potentially obscure earlier activity areas, comparisons to similar assemblages found elsewhere at the site provide unexpected information about the diversity of wealth at Chan Chich around its Terminal Classic abandonment.

### **Overview of Courtyard D-4**

Courtyard D-4 is located approximately 550 m east-southeast of Chan Chich's Main Plaza and just beyond the terminus shrine structure for the Eastern Causeway. The group consists of three structures situated around a central courtyard on a common platform with openings at the northwestern and southeastern corners (Figure 2). The entire platform measures approximately 26 m by 23 m with a central courtyard surface of about 16 m by 14.5 m. The surface of the courtyard is 50 to 60 cm higher than the surrounding ground surface.

Structure D-41, an L-shaped, multi-roomed structure constructed of low masonry walls and plastered floors raised above the courtyard platform, creates the northeastern corner of the courtyard group. Rising 1.35 m above the courtyard surface, Structure D-41 is the largest structure in the courtyard group. Investigations of the western room of Structure D-41 uncovered the entire interior space of the room, measuring approximately 4 m by 2 m, that was dominated by a 0.4 m tall plastered c-shaped bench. Aside from the doorway in the southern, courtyard-facing wall, none of the walls were preserved above the first or second course.

The western boundary of Courtyard D-4 is formed by Structure D-42, a shorter rectangular structure also constructed of low masonry walls on an elevated platform. The final construction phase consisted of two rooms divided by a 40

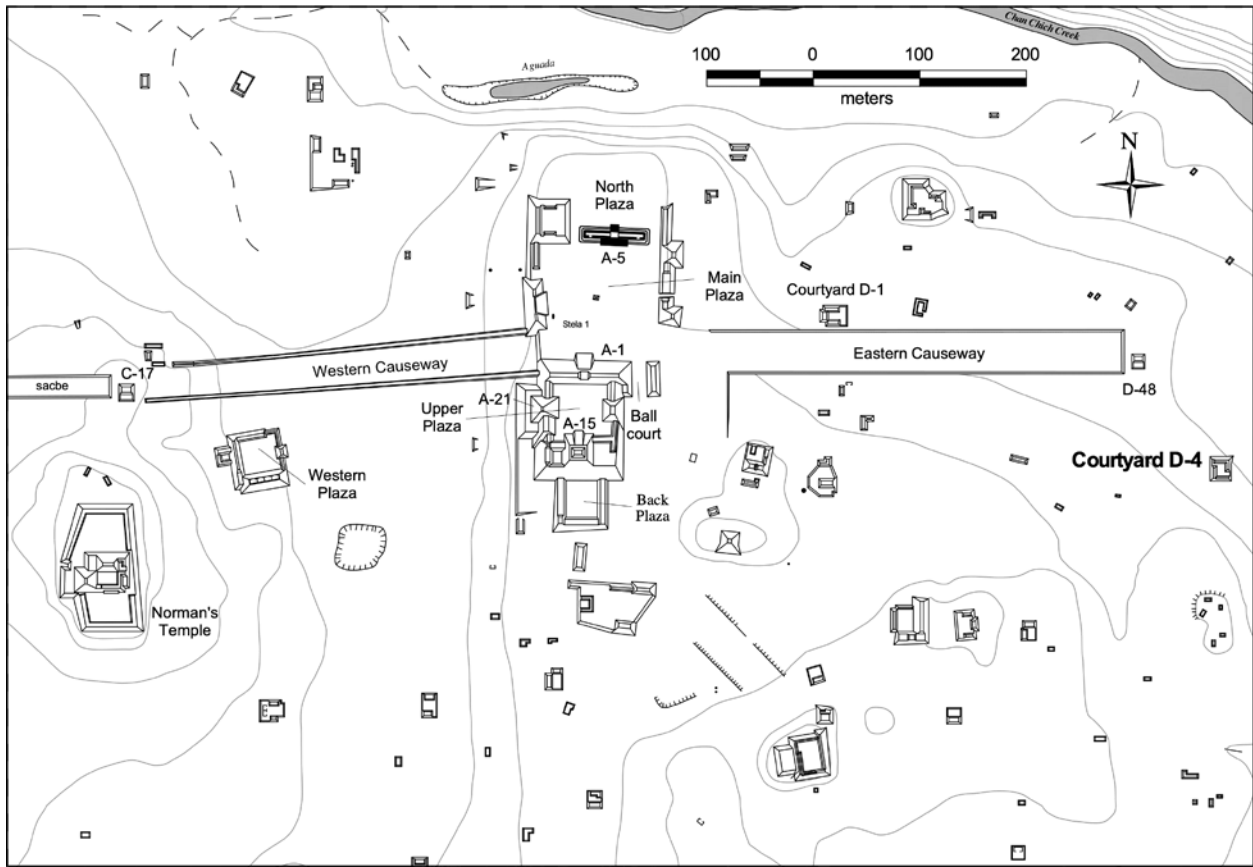


Figure 1. Map of Chan Chich with Courtyard D-4 indicated.

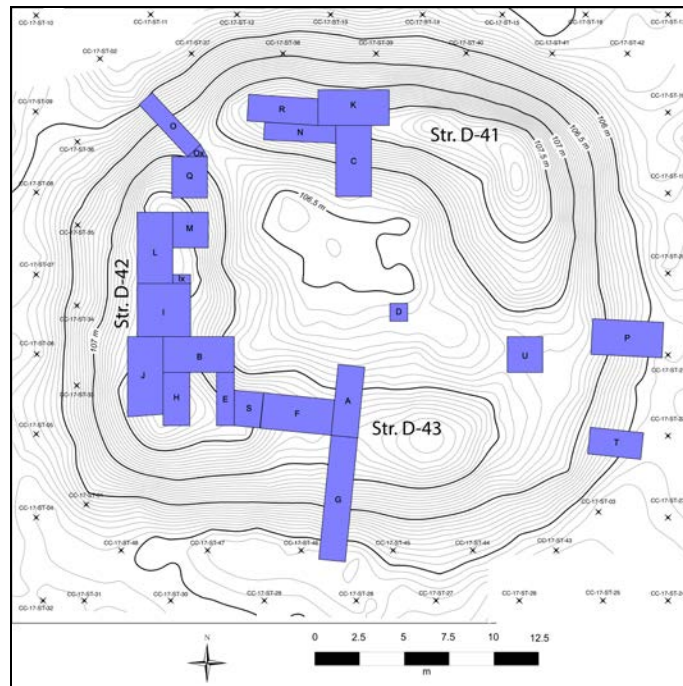


Figure 2. Topographic map of Courtyard D-4 with 2017 excavations (after Kilgore 2018:Figure 4.1).

cm thick partition wall running east-west. The northern room consisted of a large open space with a plastered floor but no benches. Excavations of the southern room exposed the exterior courtyard floor, the entrance to the room, and a large portion of the room's interior, which is dominated by a short, 20 cm high c-shaped bench measuring 2.3 m by 4.35 m. The entrance to the room opens to the courtyard area via a step on the eastern side of the structure, and the floor in the room is 45 cm higher than the courtyard surface. The c-shaped bench was constructed on top of the lower interior floor, which is poorly preserved underneath a thin layer of dry, small subfloor fill.

Structure D-43, a low rectangular platform, abuts Structure D-42 in the southwestern corner to form the southern edge of the courtyard. Measuring approximately 40 cm tall, the northern end consisted of a step down to the courtyard surface. The 1.3 m tall, two-tiered terrace of D-43's southern face also formed the southern extent of the larger courtyard platform constructed directly on top of bedrock. Excavations demonstrated that the platform did not have any masonry walls on its summit, and no postholes were found. Due to the shallow topsoil on the mound, no prepared surfaces were preserved on top of the platform. Ceramics and radiocarbon samples collected from different contexts across the courtyard date the final construction activity and occupation of this residential courtyard group to the Late Classic period (AD 600–800) with abandonment activity evident in the Terminal Classic period (AD 800–900).

### **Methodology**

Our research objectives principally focused on identifying domestic activity areas and establishing the function of the final occupation phase of the courtyard group. As daily life occurred in the interior rooms of the structures as well as the exterior courtyard spaces or terraces, explorations of the domestic functionality of Courtyard D-4 investigated architecturally defined spaces and extramural areas to understand the division (or lack thereof) of space for specific activities. In addition to studying the artifactual and architectural remains encountered in our excavations, excavators

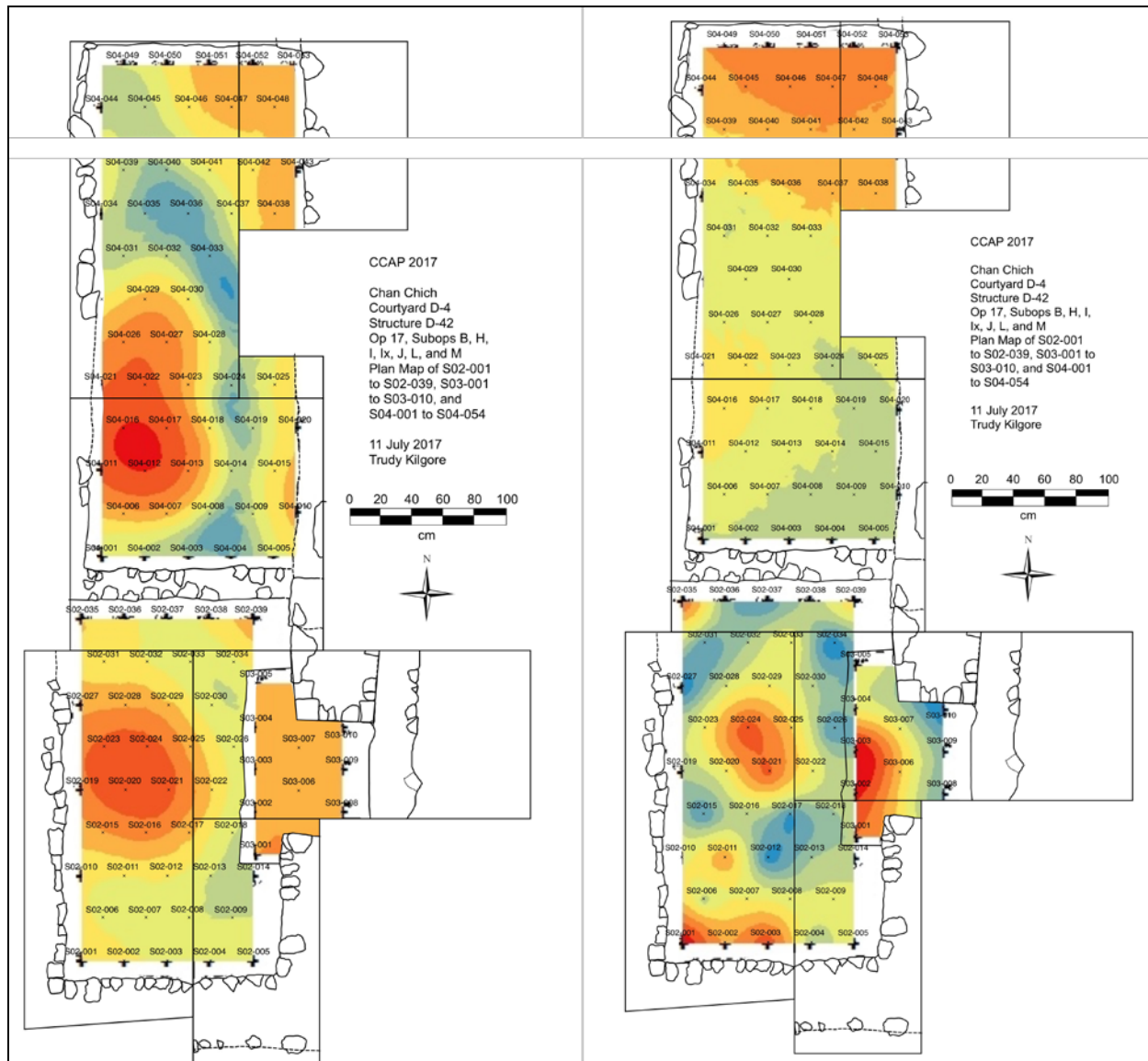
systematically collected point samples of the final plaster floors inside the two rooms of Structure D-42 and the western room of Structure D-41 to conduct multi-elemental analyses of the geochemical residues. When considered alongside the artifactual and architectural remains, analyses of the geochemical residues embedded into the plaster surfaces provide further lines of evidence to delineate different activity areas by studying the concentrations of elements resulting from repetitive activity. Analysis of the spatial relationship between activity and refuse areas alongside artifactual and mortuary evidence enables reconstructions of how daily routines contribute to constructions of status and memory (Robin 2013).

### **Functionality of Courtyard D-4**

Finite definitions of the functional use of space within the architectural, courtyard, and extramural spaces are difficult to extrapolate from the data in part because of above-floor terminal artifact deposits in the northwestern and southeastern corners of the courtyard, which represent abandonment activities and not the day-to-day activities that likely took place at Courtyard D-4. However, the evidence presents some possible scenarios. For clarity, we structure this discussion roughly around Hendon's (1991:900) five main categories of domestic activities – (1) food preparation and cooking, (2) food serving and consumption, (3) ritual observances, (4) manufacturing and production, and (5) storage – with the addition of a sixth category for sleeping.

#### *Food Preparation and Cooking*

No hearths were found, making designating a purpose-built kitchen in Courtyard D-4 problematic. However, excavations in the northern and southern rooms of Structure D-42 uncovered two complete metates lying face down. Due to the size and weight of the utilitarian metates, they were most likely stored near where the bulk of the grinding activity took place. When considered alongside the presence of several complementary manos found in proximity to the metates and the concentrations of phosphorus and potassium values in the adjacent plaster floors (Figure 3), Structure D-42



**Figure 3.** Kriged interpolation map showing trends in the concentration of phosphorus (left) and potassium (right) residues observed in the plaster surfaces of Structure D-42 (after Kilgore 2018:Figures 5.18 and 5.20).

seems to have housed at least some of the food preparation activities, namely grinding maize.

Though contextually and architecturally different than Courtyard D-4, excavations conducted on Structure A-23 in the Back Plaza, a proposed service area for the high elites residing in the Upper Plaza, currently offer the only comparative evidence for a kitchen at Chan Chich (Vazquez 2015). Despite the lack of hearths, artifact assemblages associated with Structure D-43 resemble the distribution of artifact categories recovered from a hearth identified at Structure A-23. However, the high

quantities of ground stone artifacts, including two complete metates, and high phosphorus and potassium levels in the plaster surfaces found in Structure D-42 cannot be discounted. Although no multi-elemental analysis was conducted from the surface of Structure D-43, the density of artifacts associated with kitchen contexts supports the conclusions that food preparation likely occurred on or near the structure around the time of abandonment. Therefore, some food preparation likely occurred at both structures.

### *Food Serving and Consumption*

In general, Structure D-43 possessed the densest artifact assemblages of the three structures. Abandonment cleaning patterns could obscure accurate analysis of the true function of Structure D-43, but the prevalence of food serving vessels suggests that it housed the majority of food consumption—or at least was where most food serving vessels were stored—for the inhabitants. Additionally, proportionally higher concentrations of faunal remains, specifically large mammals such as deer and peccary, associated with the excavated portion of Structure D-41 suggest that some food consumption occurred in at least part of the structure.

### *Ritual Observances*

The majority of the most diagnostic ritual objects were found in the northwestern above-floor artifact deposit. Censer fragments, musical instruments, figurines, and items of personal adornment were associated with a variety of ritual practices. Although they are not *in situ*, a Roaring Creek Red drum fragment, ocarinas, and a possible shell rasp from the northwestern artifact deposit (Figure 4) may suggest participation in ritual performances associated with public architecture at the site. Additionally, artifact forms and categories could have both ceremonial and more mundane uses.

Mortuary activity provides insight into the nature of ritual activity at Courtyard D-4. Excavators encountered Burial CC-B18 containing two individuals in the construction fill inside the southeastern corner of the c-shaped plaster bench in the western room of Structure D-41. Though lacking in grave goods and formal cist construction, the apparent removal of the skull from one of the two individuals in the burial may suggest that ancestor veneration was practiced at Courtyard D-4. As part of the suite of ritual activities essential to ancient Maya domestic life, the ancient Maya commonly practiced funerary rituals resulting in the interment of deceased family members beneath surfaces both in courtyards and inside household structures (McAnany 2013). This custom of keeping the dead close and within the household creates contextualized understandings of more long-



**Figure 4.** Special finds from northwestern dense, above floor artifact deposit (after Kilgore 2018:Figure 5.34). *Top Row (L-R):* Ceramic female figurine fragment; Fragments of a Molded-Carved Imitation Fine Orange vessel depicting a conference scene; Brazier fragments. *Bottom Row (L-R):* Painted female ocarina fragments, Bird ocarina, Carved fish shell pendant, Ground stone spindle whorls, Oval bark beater fragment.

term displays of identity through memory and ancestor veneration (McAnany 2013).

### *Manufacturing and Production*

Only a few artifacts found at Courtyard D-4 provide some insight into the nature of artifact manufacturing and production in the household. Four spindle whorls, one bark beater, and two sherds reworked as ceramic making tools represent the only objects representative of craft production. However, none of these artifact categories occur in large enough quantities to suggest weaving, paper making, or ceramic making beyond the needs of the household. Heavy metals are also traditionally associated

with craft production because of their use in pigments for painting or decoration (Parnell et al. 2002). Iron concentrations from Structure D-41 are closer to the center of the bench surface. Processing of metallic pigments may have occurred in the western room of Structure D-41 considering the higher levels and location of trace amounts of iron in the plaster surface alongside the non-utilitarian thin schist metate fragment from the room.

Although no evidence definitively indicates specialized craft production took place within the household, the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 were actively consuming tools made elsewhere. The amount of debitage found at Courtyard D-4 is relatively low in comparison to lithic tool counts (approximately three pieces of debitage per tool found), suggesting the inhabitants relied on the lithic workshops located in the North Plaza, Group B, or Group H to produce and repair their lithic tools.

#### *Storage*

Large utilitarian storage jar fragments represented the most common artifact category encountered in excavations at Courtyard D-4. With 98 percent and 95 percent respectively, the southern room of Structure D-42 and western room of Structure D-41 are good candidates for storage areas because they had higher percentages of jar fragments. Additionally, they are the only two excavated rooms with both raised bench surfaces and masonry wall bases, which would have also served to better protect the contents of the room. Finally, the interiors of both rooms measured approximately 4 m by 2 m, leaving plenty of space for housing the storage vessels and possibly other domestic activities.

Storage vessels are characterized by unslipped and striated jars (Sabloff 1975). The discovery of two small striated sherds with stucco lining on the interior provide a deeper look into the potential contents stored in jars at Courtyard D-4. Studies using ethnographic analogy and experimental methods suggest that a striated surface finish can aid in heat absorption, and stucco lining ceramic vessels can either reduce the permeability, facilitate vessel transport, or aid in heat absorption or liquid evaporation (Heidke and Elson 1988:279–280).

This suggests that the storage vessels may have contained smaller amounts of water, maize, or grain.

#### *Sleeping*

Ethnoarchaeological studies reveal that low phosphate levels can be expected of sleeping areas (Hutson and Terry 2006:395). Although none of the plaster samples lacked phosphorus altogether, the western room of Structure D-41 and the southern room of Structure D-42 exhibited the lowest mean phosphorus values. The western room of Structure D-41 may have functioned as one of the sleeping quarters due to the paucity of artifacts and relatively low levels of trace elements detected in the plaster samples. The similarly low elemental concentrations recorded in the plaster on the bench in the southern room of Structure D-42 suggest that it may have also served as a sleeping area at least part of the time. Raised benches in ancient Maya domestic structures are sometimes associated with sleeping quarters (Hendon 1991:902). However, the variability in bench height at Courtyard D-4 suggests they served a variety of functions, including ritual activities and food serving and preparation, beyond just sleeping.

#### **Multifunctional Domestic Spaces**

Overall, the architectural and artifactual evidence recovered from Courtyard D-4 do not definitively indicate any strict demarcation of domestic activity areas. Additionally, the variety of artifacts indicate a mix of quotidian activities, such as weaving textiles and grinding maize, and ceremonies of ritual and symbolic significance. This inextricable relationship between the mundane and the supernatural lay at the heart of everyday life for the ancient Maya. However, this is highly obscured by the biases in the record caused by the discovery of dense artifact deposits on the courtyard surface associated with abandonment. Approximately 67 percent of all artifacts found at Courtyard D-4 were from these deposits. This, coupled with the lack of extramural midden data (see Kilgore 2018), limited insight into the occupation activities to the interior spaces, only one of three key residential stages for daily life. Although they do not offer contextualized functional

information, the quantity and quality of artifacts recovered from these contexts offer abundant information about the status of the residents of Courtyard D-4 around the time of its abandonment.

#### **Abandonment of Courtyard D-4**

Though originally placed to understand architectural data, courtyard surface excavations uncovered two dense artifact deposits in the northwestern and southeastern corners of the courtyard platform. With approximately 1,500 artifacts per cubic meter and 1,700 artifacts per cubic meter respectively, most of the cultural material from the courtyard surface came from these two contexts. The two deposits were compositionally different, but they shared a lack of stratification suggesting that the depositional process occurred within a relatively short time span. Although the ceramic artifacts recovered from both deposits represent a mix of time periods, radiocarbon samples and the vast majority of the ceramics date firmly to the end of the Late Classic period and the beginning of the Terminal Classic period (Kilgore 2018).

The northwestern deposit yielded the highest counts and most varied artifacts. Stretching from the northernmost exterior wall of Structure D-42 to the edge of the courtyard platform, excavations produced 5,915 ceramic sherds, 289 pieces of debitage, 126 lithic tools, 23 ground stone artifacts, eight shell artifacts, 231 faunal bone fragments, and 12 obsidian blade fragments from this context. The types of artifacts found in this context represent a mix of high quality ceramic vessels, ritual items, articles of personal adornment, and utilitarian objects.

Although excavators did not encounter any steps or a preserved platform face, excavations in the southeastern corner of the courtyard platform yielded a dense, 20 cm thick artifact deposit consisting of 2,560 ceramic sherds, 115 pieces of debitage, 35 lithic tools, five pieces of ground stone, and one obsidian blade fragment draped down the platform face. With a density of artifacts was 1,697.5 artifacts per cubic meter, the southeastern deposit was denser than the northwestern deposit, even though it was not as deep. Though abundant, ceramic sherds found in this deposit were

generally from utilitarian vessels and more badly eroded than the other deposit.

Considering their central locations on the courtyard platform, relative paucity of faunal remains, prevalence of fine and exotic artifacts, and lack of chronological stratigraphy, these deposits do not fit the general definition of household middens, and both dense artifact deposits likely correlate to abandonment or post-abandonment activity at Courtyard D-4 (Stanton et al. 2008). The mix of high-quality ceramic vessels, ritual items, articles of personal adornment, and utilitarian objects suggest that both Courtyard D-4 deposits likely resulted from termination rituals or some other purposeful abandonment activity.

#### **Comparison of Problematic Deposits at Chan Chich**

In the absence of many comparable households at Chan Chich, the materials from the artifact deposits provide a useful data set for analyzing the degrees of socioeconomic diversity among the population of the site around its abandonment. Seven “problematic deposits” associated with abandonment activity have been found in monumental and non-monumental contexts across Chan Chich. They provide points of comparison that help situate the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 within the spectrum of socioeconomic status and illustrate the heterogeneity among the site’s population at the time of abandonment. Houk (2018) established 26 categories for comparing the presence or absence of certain recurrent and unique artifact types and contextual traits visible in the existing record of problematic deposits at Chan Chich (Table 1). The northwestern deposit at Courtyard D-4 contained 17 out of the 26 categories, making it the second richest problematic deposit (Figure 4).

#### **Discussion**

Ancient Maya society was divided into two broad groups: elites and the non-elites (or commoners), but neither of these groups was homogeneous. A gradient of socioeconomic status likely existed, and, as Inomata (2007:177) notes, there was not always “a clear division between elites and non-elites.” Examining the location of Courtyard D-4, architectural layout

**Table 1.** Comparison of above-floor dense artifact deposits at Courtyard D-4 and other areas of Chan Chich (after Houk 2018:Table 4).

Category	Material/Trait	Str. C-1	Str. C-2	Str. C-3	Str. C-6	Crt. D-4 NW	Crt. D-4 SE	Str. D-3	#
Description	"Dense Artifact Deposit"	X		X		X	X	X	4
	"Artifact Scatter"		X		X				2
Context	Monumental Context	X	X	X	X				3
	Residential Context	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	On Steps	X	X		X				2
	Against Platform/Wall			X		X	X	X	4
	Ashy Matrix/Burned Artifacts	X		X	X			X	3
Human Bone	Human bone		X		X			X	3
Battered Stone	Hammerstones			X		X			2
Ceramics	Ceramic sherds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Ceramic figurines/Pendants	X	X	X	X	X			4
	Modeled-carved sherds	X	X		X	X			2
	Ceramic musical instruments	X	X	X		X			3
Chipped Stone	Bifaces	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Spear points	?			X				1
	Unifaces/Utilized flakes	?	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Cores	?	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Debitage	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Obsidian blades	X	X	X	X	X		X	5
Faunal	Bone tools/Modified bone		X		X				2
	Faunal bones		X	X	X	X		X	5
	Shell		X	X	X	X			4
	Shell tinkler				X	X	X	X	4
	Modified shell/Shell ornament			X	X	X			3
	Shell trumpet							X	1
	<i>Jute</i>				X		X	X	3
Ground Stone	Manos		X	X		X	X		4
	Metates		X	X	X	X	X	X	6
	Ground stone spindle whorls				X	X			2
	Other ground stone					X	X		2
Polished Stone	Polished stone, incised marker				X				1
	Jade bead/mosaic				X				1
	Celts			X					1
<b>Richness (# of Categories Represented)</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	



and elaboration, burials, and raw material and quality of artifacts helps situate its inhabitants on this spectrum of socioeconomic status.

#### *Location*

Courtyard D-4 is located only 550 m east/southeast of the site core, just beyond the terminating shrine structure of the Eastern Causeway. Due to the economic, political, and religious importance of site core activities, residences located in or near the site core are often associated with elite and higher status individuals in society. In situating themselves in close proximity to the epicenter of ceremonial life at Chan Chich, the residents of Courtyard D-4 symbolically and geographically linked themselves closely to the core of religious, economic, and political activities. Courtyard D-4 is also conveniently located in proximity to Chan Chich Creek to the east and possible lithic workshops to the south, providing access to natural and fabricated resources.

#### *Architecture*

The overall surface area, height, quantity of structures, and presence of masonry walls offer general delimiting factors between elite and non-elite residences, but they are not finite definitions. Although there is significant variation between regions, generally speaking, mounds more than 1 m tall are usually elite (see Becker 2004 for a typological example from Tikal). Residences, like Courtyard D-4, comprising multiple, multi-room structures formally arranged around a large central courtyard demonstrate a level of organization and wealth associated with the planning and execution processes. Additionally, the construction of residences with masonry architecture, plastered surfaces, benches, and raised platforms demonstrate wealth through both the investment of resources and labor. Multi-room structures and large courtyard spaces, especially ones located in proximity to the site core, likely enabled residents to host politically beneficial social meetings (Inomata et al. 2002). The larger scale, complexity, and form associated with elite residences also allowed for more controlled access into and within the household during social gatherings.

#### *Artifacts*

Analyzing the quantities and quality of certain fineware ceramic types and ceramic figurines found in the terminal above-floor deposits contextualizes Courtyard D-4 socioeconomically by situating its residents within the patterns of continuity and change associated with the Terminal Classic transition. Many studies focus on the ways in which elite members of society exchange certain prestige ceramic objects to solidify their standing amidst the political upheaval associated with the Terminal Classic period (see Chase and Chase 2007).

Due to the staunch differences in distribution patterns of Terminal Classic finewares between elite and non-elite contexts, Chase and Chase (2007:18) refer to types such as Palmar Orange Polychrome and Imitation Fine Orange as “class-linked ceramics.” Molded-carved vessels largely replaced polychrome vessels in elite trade circles during the Terminal Classic period (Chase and Chase 2007) and became a symbol of elite response to Terminal Classic changes in the sociopolitical climate. This, in turn, created a demand for imitations, like the one discovered in the northwestern artifact deposit, by lesser elite and non-elite groups. Access to even an imitation of a key ceramic style and type suggests that the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 were of higher status within the Chan Chich social hierarchy. However, many true modeled-carved Fine Orange vessels were much more ornate than the example from Courtyard D-4, creating some socioeconomic distance the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 and the Terminal Classic high nobility.

Figurines and ocarinas similarly reflect the changing political and economic climate at the transition into the Terminal Classic period. Depictions of women wearing broad-brimmed hats appear in murals and in figurine form across the Maya region in the Late-to-Terminal Classic period, including Chan Chich, during the Classic period (Halperin 2017). However, Halperin (2017) notes that key stylistic changes occur in the figurine assemblages from the southern lowlands between the Late and Terminal Classic periods. Much like the Terminal Classic molded-carved vessel iconography, the shift

from Late to Terminal Classic is marked by less emphasis on elaborate clothing, adornment, and hairstyles depicted in figurines (Halperin 2017:519). The figurines from Courtyard D-4 demonstrate a mix of ornamental conservatism and stylistic continuity. The larger size of the female figurine head (see Figure 4) suggests that it was created in the Terminal Classic period (Halperin 2017:519). However, the ornate stepped hairstyle and large earspools are more akin to the elaboration associated with the Late Classic period. The size, stepped hairstyle, jewelry, and remnants of painted decoration on the *huipil* suggest a Late Classic date for the female ocarina (see Figure 4). The pose, however, continues into the Terminal Classic period (Halperin 2017:524).

### Conclusion

Evidence from Courtyard D-4 specifically provides insight into quotidian life, lower-level elite status, and Terminal Classic abandonment at Chan Chich through the ways that non-local and prestige items exemplify household-level involvement in inter-regional exchange; the comparison of abandonment experiences at different points along the socioeconomic spectrum based on the composition and context of dense artifact deposits; and the architectural features, such as benches, walls, and platforms, structured interpersonal interactions at both mundane and political levels.

Although the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 were lower-status elite, their geographical and socioeconomic proximity to generally defined elite groups offer parallels in their possible mimicry of high elite social strategies at the time of abandonment. The fineware ceramic objects from Courtyard D-4 demonstrate an example of a non-elite adaptation to the elite response to the Terminal Classic political and economic changes. However, many true modeled-carved Fine Orange were much more ornate than the example from Courtyard D-4, creating some socioeconomic distance the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 and the Terminal Classic nobility. Since the inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 had access to prestige goods and resources to construct and maintain more elaborate architectural forms, they likely were from a higher socioeconomic class. The artifactual and

geochemical evidence from Courtyard D-4 do not definitively indicate that the inhabitants were engaging in craft specialization at the household level. In fact, the debitage-to-lithic tool ratio suggests that they were more actively involved in the consumer side of economic life at Chan Chich.

Attempts to place the residents of Courtyard D-4 within this spectrum of socioeconomic diversity further amplifies the heterogeneous nature of social organization among the ancient Maya. The prevalence of ceramic finewares, nonlocal materials, and labor-intensive architecture suggest a classification closer to the elite end of the spectrum for the residents of Courtyard D-4. The inhabitants of Courtyard D-4 fit definitions of lower-status elite in the sense that they appear to have some wealth and status in society that affords them certain privileges, but they are far from the most “powerful” members of society.

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