



**THE *SECRETARIA DE CULTURA* AND *FUNDAR* ANNOUNCE
THE LAUNCH OF THE CIHUATÁN FIELD SEASON:
CONSERVATION AND INVESTIGATION**

December 2, 2010



Artist conception of Structure P-9 by Elmo Quintanilla.

The digital file of this drawing can be downloaded from www.fundar.org.sv/p9.jpg and may be reproduced under the condition that its source is cited as “Artist conception by Elmo Quintanilla, FUNDAR”.

A map of Cihuatán showing the location of Structure P-9 can be downloaded from www.fundar.org.sv/p9plano.jpg and may be reproduced citing its origin as “FUNDAR”.

The National Foundation of Archaeology of El Salvador, FUNDAR, in coordination with the Secretaría de Cultura, has launched its annual field season at the ancient city of Cihuatán.

A major concern of FUNDAR is the conservation of archaeological heritage. At Cihuatán, FUNDAR has undertaken the conservation of 7 ancient structures, 5 of which were left exposed decades ago by previous investigations.

The first activity of this season is the conservation and restoration of Structure P-9. This building is interpreted as a possible dance platform or *adoratorio* (offering platform).

The platform is situated in Cihuatán's main plaza. It is square, with a stairway on each of its four sides. It has a flat paved surface with no evidence of having supported a superstructure.

Although this platform is currently the only known example of its kind in El Salvador, they are common in the great cities of Mesoamerica, particularly during the last pre-conquest period, the Postclassic. They are generally identified as dance platforms or *adoratorios*, and of course it is possible that they had multiple functions. For the sake of comparison (and without implying a direct analogy) we know something of the use of similar platforms amongst the Aztecs. For example, as part of the festivities dedicated to the rain god Tláloc, a priest dressed with the vestments of this god would ascend a dance platform and, with a multitude gathered around, would present a kind of theatre by dancing and singing hymns proper to Tláloc.

Cihuatán's Structure P-9 was excavated in 1978-79 by William Fowler. We have no information about this investigation. No conservation was done. Since its stones are joined solely with earth, the impact of 30 rainy seasons has been severe and now this important structure is on the verge of losing the last evidence of its corners and stairways. Upon first impression, it appears to be a mere pile of stones. Additional damage was caused by the emplacement of a machine gun atop the structure in the 1980s during the civil war. Paving stones were ripped from its surface to improvise a defensive wall.

In this field season, FUNDAR will document the present condition of Structure P-9, and then proceed with its conservation to save this interesting platform from destruction, and to incorporate it as a new feature of the interpretative trail for visitors to Cihuatán.

These activities form part of the Cihuatán Project which is conducted by FUNDAR. The project directors are Karen Olsen Bruhns and Paul Amaroli. Archaeology students presently participating are Edgar Cabrera (Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador) and Alejandro Teba (Universidad de Sevilla, Spain). The President of FUNDAR is Rodrigo Brito.

For general information about Cihuatán, please consult www.fundar.org.sv and www.cihuatan.org