

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 365

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Khami Ruins

Location : Matabeleland

State Party : Zimbabwe

Date : June 25, 1985

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria III and IV.

C) JUSTIFICATION

A 1970 study by P. Garlake lists some fifty archaeological sites between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers which were comparable in terms of the structure of their bonded stone walls and the use of domestic space to the Great Zimbabwe ruins (Journal of African History, XI, 1970, pp. 495-513). Some of these sites, such as Dhlo-Dhlo and Nalatale, are remarkable for the quality of their architecture. Nevertheless, the Zimbabwe government rightly chose to nominate the Khami Ruins, another outstanding site in the Bulawayo region, for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

The site is located to the west of the Khami River, after which it is named, and downstream from the dam built in 1928-1929. It is scattered over more than two kilometers, from Passage Ruin to North Ruin. The archaeological zone, which was protected against plundering thanks to its "Royal Reserve" status up until the death of King Lobengula in 1893, was not seriously disturbed by the rampant prospecting of the treasure hunters of the Rhodesia Ancient Ruins Company Ltd. It was explored in the 20th century by David Randall-MacIver, Gertrude Caton-Thompson and more recently by K.R. Robinson (Khami Ruins, Cambridge University Press, 1959), whose work has provided in-depth knowledge of the site's history.

Though the site is located in a zone where a fairly important human presence can be traced back roughly 100,000 years, it does not appear to have been inhabited continuously until the Iron Age. According to Carbon 14 dating methods the city grew between ca. 1450 and 1650, which fully confirms the study carried out on built up structures and small archaeological artifacts.

As is the case in Great Zimbabwe, here we can distinguish several

sectors which are clearly differentiated in terms of use. The chief's residence (Mambo) was located toward the north, on the Hill Ruins site, which is a hill created largely of alluvial land used to level the terraces, contained by bearing walls. In this sector some highly significant imported goods were found : 16th century Rhineland stoneware, Ming porcelaine pieces which date back to the reign of Wan-Li (1573-1619), Portuguese imitations of 17th-century Chinese porcelaine, 17th-century Spanish silverware, etc.

There is a possibility that Khami was visited by Portuguese merchants and even missionaries, because a monumental cross consisting of small blocks of granite can still be seen traced on the rocky ground of Cross Hill, a small hillock immediately north of the mambo residence.

The population of Khami was spread over several hectares and lived in huts made of cobwork (daga) surrounded by a series of granite walls. The typology of the fences and walls is similar to that of the latest constructions in Great Zimbabwe. Worthy of note are the many decorative friezes, having chevron and checkered patterns, and the great number of narrow passageways and deambulatory galleries, not all of which are covered.

ICOMOS considers that the Khami site, which still has a considerable archaeological potential, provides a testimony adding to that of Great Zimbabwe, developing, as it did, immediately afterward and perhaps leading to the abandonment of this capital.

Khami is worthy of inclusion on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria III and IV and should benefit, as is the case with Great Zimbabwe, from an effort to enhance protection on the part of the international community.

ICOMOS, April 1986.

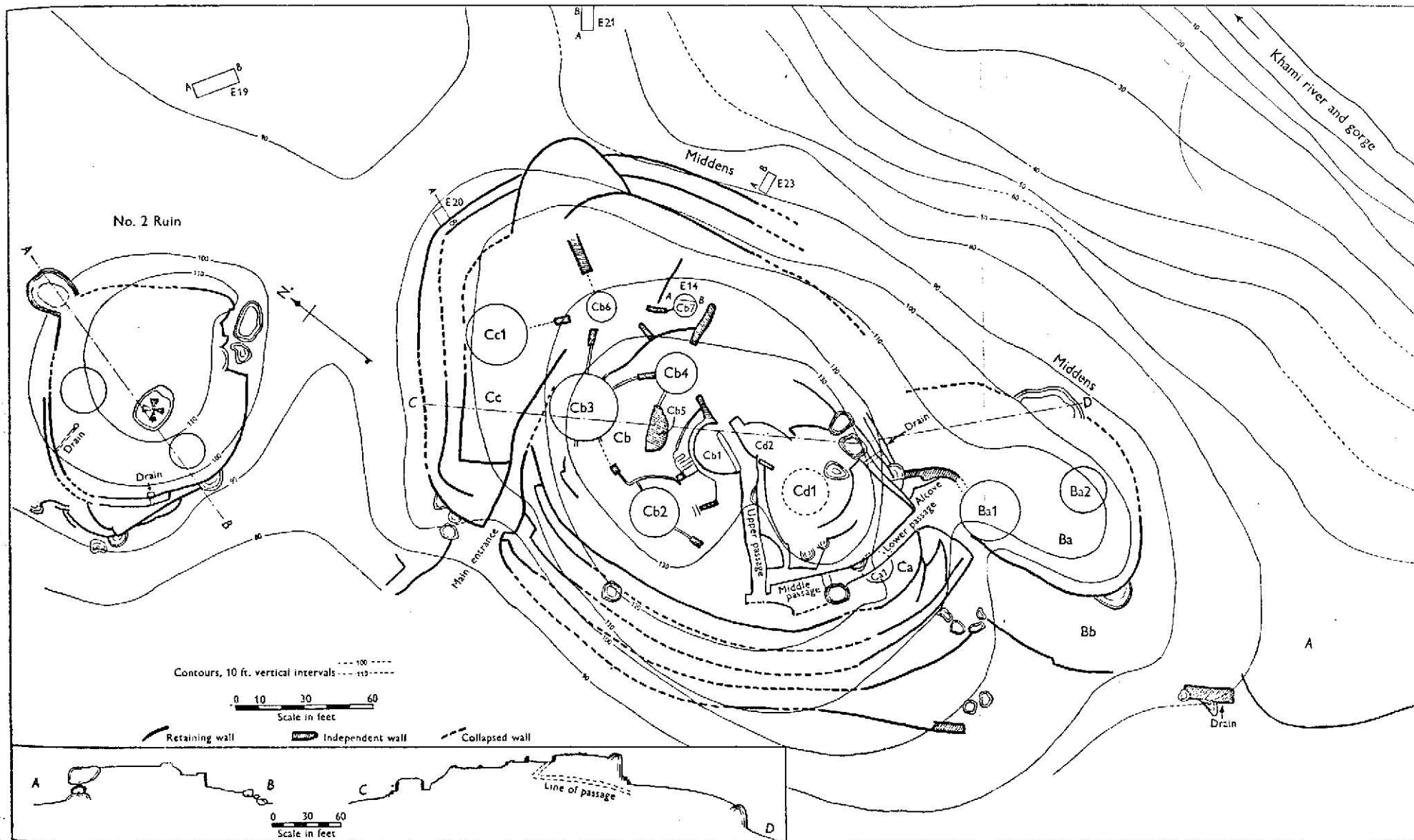


Fig. 3. Plan of Hill Ruin and Cross Ruin (No. 2), and the immediate surroundings. Excavation sections other than those marked in Fig. 13 are shown.

KHAMHI RUINS

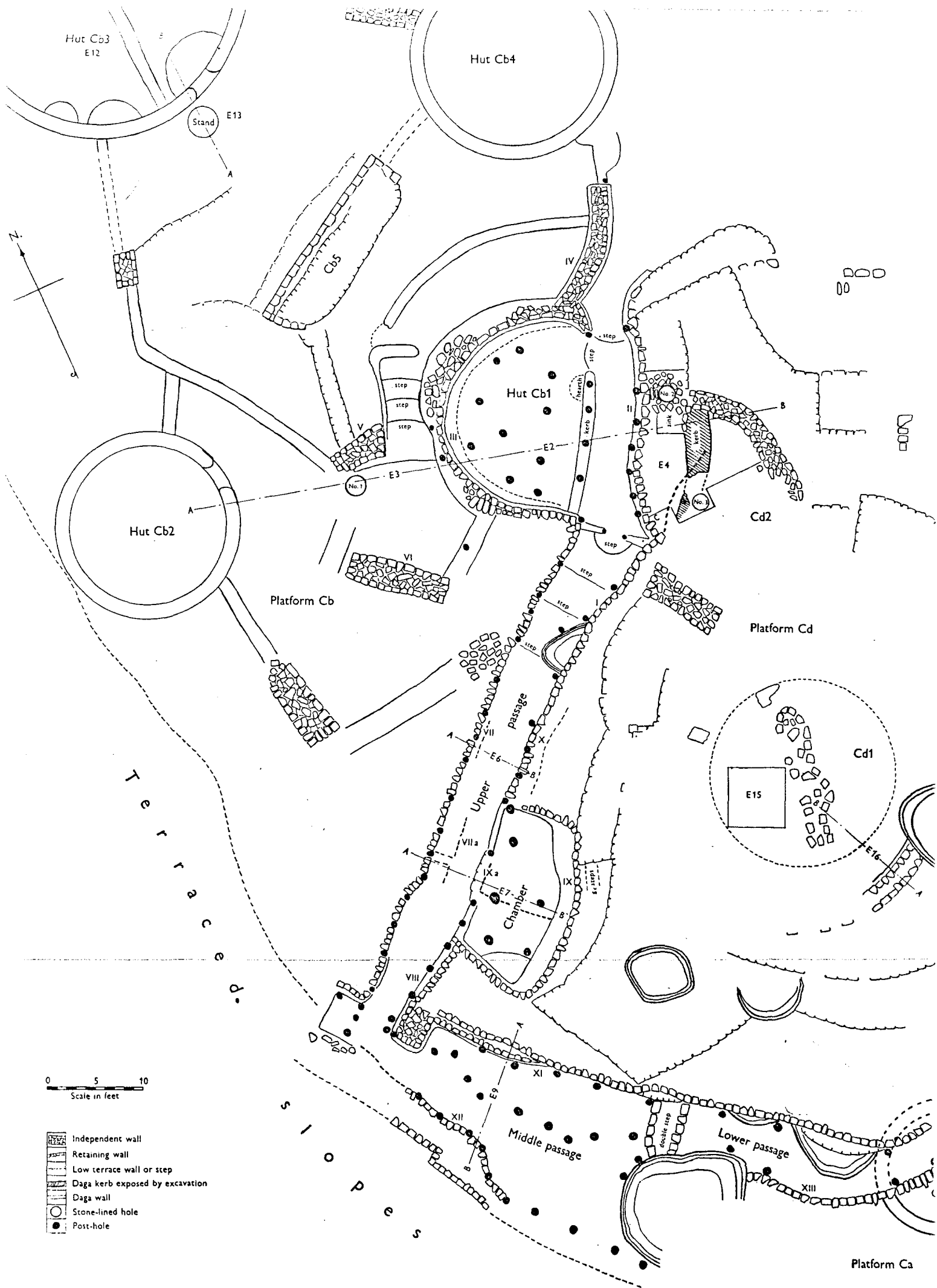


Fig. 70. Plan of the Hill Ruin summit, comprising platforms Ca, Cb and Cd. Excavation sections are marked.