

**THE RESTORATION OF THE  
UMAYYAD MONUMENTAL  
CONSTRUCTIONS ON THE AMMAN  
CITADEL (1979- 1981)**

by  
A. Almagro

As a result of the collaboration between the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the Spanish Archaeological Mission in Jordan, a program of consolidation and restoration of the remains of the Umayyad Palace on the Citadel of Amman is being developed. This program, which is being conducted simultaneously with a Hispanic-Jordanian excavation program, has as its main goal the conservation of the many remains in this large monument complex, which have come to light in the excavations, thus ensuring their preservation for posterity and providing a better understanding of the remains to both scholars and laymen.

After a careful photogrammetric mapping of the whole citadel, studies and recommendations for the Umayyad restoration were submitted, not only for the vestibule or audience hall, but for all of the ruins which were part of the palace complex.

The basic criteria for these restorations were the following:

- 1) The work of restoration must proceed with the strictest respect for the remains as they are, such that the restoration does not go beyond the limit of historical certitude, avoiding imaginary or fantastic invention. This percept has been followed in all our work.
- 2) Our first priority is the consolidation of the archaeological remains so that we can guarantee that which is now in existence will be preserved.
- 3) The reconstruction of the archaeological remains should give a better understanding to the laymen about the ruins themselves both as to their original function and their structure.
- 4) Lastly, we have attempted to insure that the final result lives up to, and does not

contrast excessively with the original work to blend the reconstructed part with the original remains so that the eye is not presented with a striking contrast (for example we re-use old stones rather than cutting new ones). However, the scholar may distinguish the original from the reconstructed by consulting the records housed in the Department of Antiquities, to be published shortly.

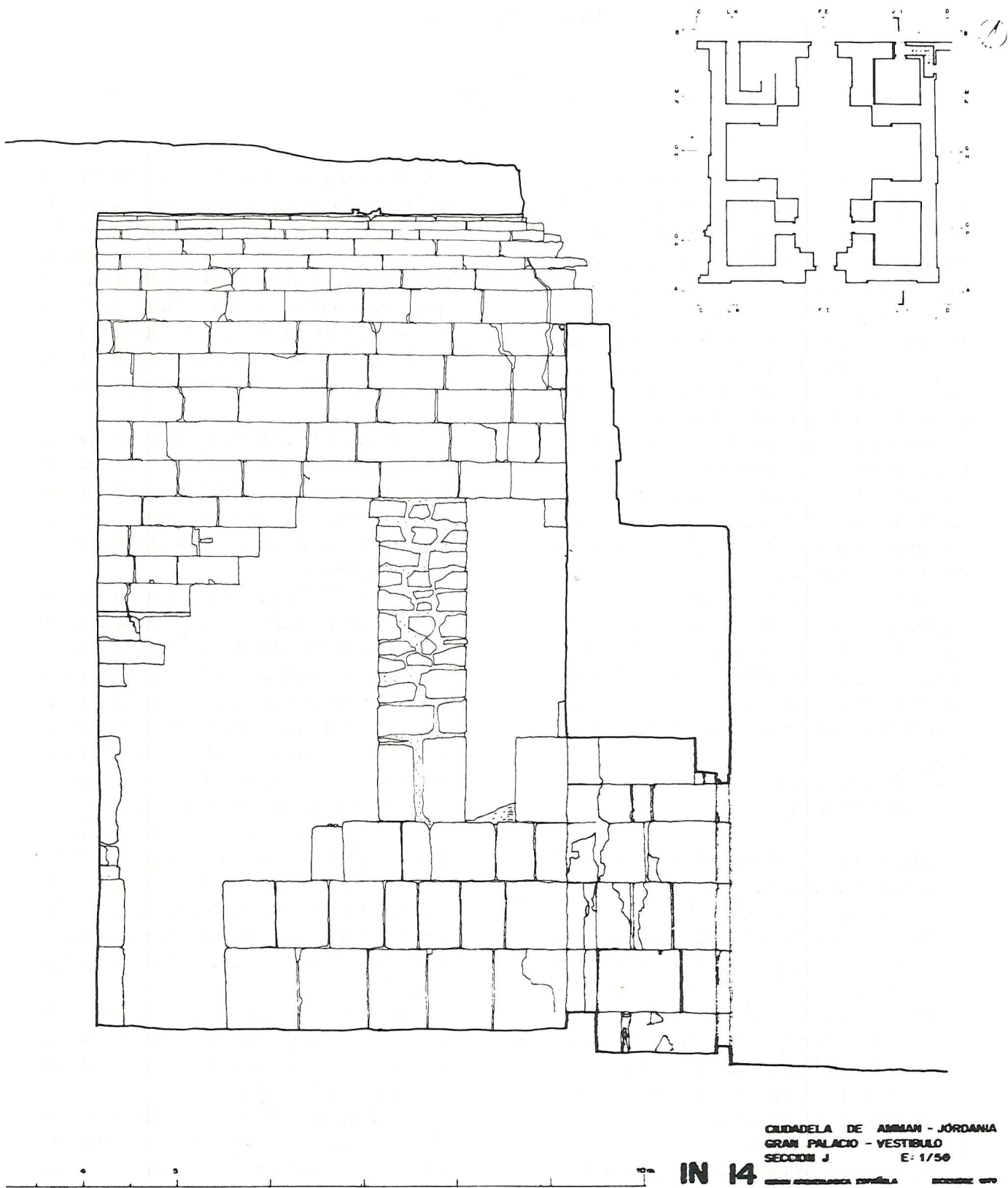
With these criteria in mind, we began consolidation of the vestibule in 1978. We first filled the gaps in the walls which had been opened by treasure hunters, since these gaps threatened the stability of the entire building.

In 1979, under the direction of architect Santiago Camacho, we began to clear the upper part of the stairway leading to the roof of the vestibule, which permitted the discovery of a loop hole opening to the north. In addition, we were able to re-erect some of the interior walls of the staircase. We also replaced some of the upper stones of the north facade. (pl. LXXVII, No. 1,2)

In 1980, architects Pedro Ponce de Leon, Santiago Camacho, and Jose Felix Mendez supervised the restoration of the interior walls of the northeast room of the vestibule, and the upper courses of the eastern half of the northern facade. (Figs. 1,2,3,4).

In 1981, architects Javier Poch, Alberto Campanero and Santiago Camacho worked on the restoration of the eastern facade of the vestibule.

The area of the antique Roman temenos, occupied during Umayyad times by various buildings which were probably residential, had been excavated in the eastern portion between 1927 and 1938 by an Italian team headed by R. Bartoccini. Various circumstances, which are not worth mentioning here, resulted in the disappearance



CIUDADELA DE AMMAN - JORDANIA  
 GRAN PALACIO - VESTIBULO  
 SECCION J E: 1/50  
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Fig. 1: The west wall of the northeast room of the vestibule before its restoration.

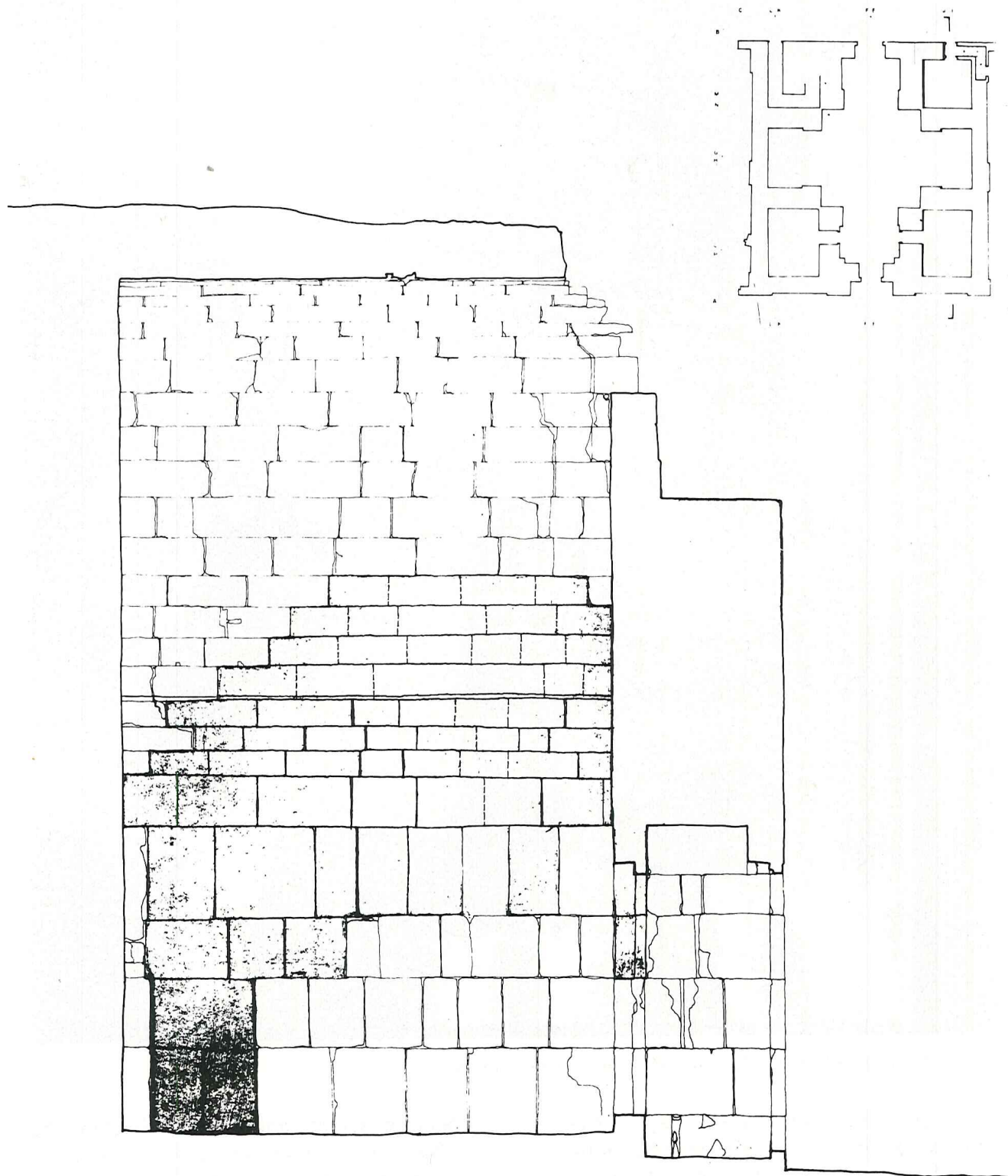


Fig. 2: The west wall of the northeast room of the vestibule after its restoration.





Fig 3: The west wall of the northeast room before the restoration.

of the great majority of the Umayyad structures, leaving in the area an enormous pile of stones—for the most part Roman—which had been reused in the Umayyad walls.

Conscious of the importance of these Umayyad structures as integral to the palace complex as a whole, we initiated a study and analysis of the documentation in order to try to reconstruct at least the plan of these structures. During 1980, we proceeded to consolidate the ruins which had

been preserved, and to carefully clean the whole area, which was at that moment a complete ruin. In 1981, we began a faithful reconstruction of the outline of Buildings A and B, whose structures we were able to discern, and transported the Roman elements to the area of Building C, which, because of the state of its destruction, was absolutely impossible to reconstruct. (Fig. 5).

In the northern zone of the Roman temenos we shall try to make the “ana-





Fig. 4: The west wall of the northeast room after the restoration.

stylosis" of some of the Roman ruins, currently in the planning stages.

In order to complete the reconstruction of the plan of the buildings, the walls were rebuilt to the height of one course of stone, using a mortar mixed with lime and cement and employing a similar technique to that used in the Umayyad period. When it was possible to identify the stones, we replaced them in their original positions. Several walls of later periods, of little historical value or artistic interest, which

obstructed the understanding of the original Umayyad structure, were removed, after fully documenting them.

Also during 1979 and 1981, we consolidated the excavated structures in the northern area, and we wait for successive years to be able to undertake an adequate restoration and "analysis" of several fallen elements.

With this work of restoration, brought to fruition by the cooperation between the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and



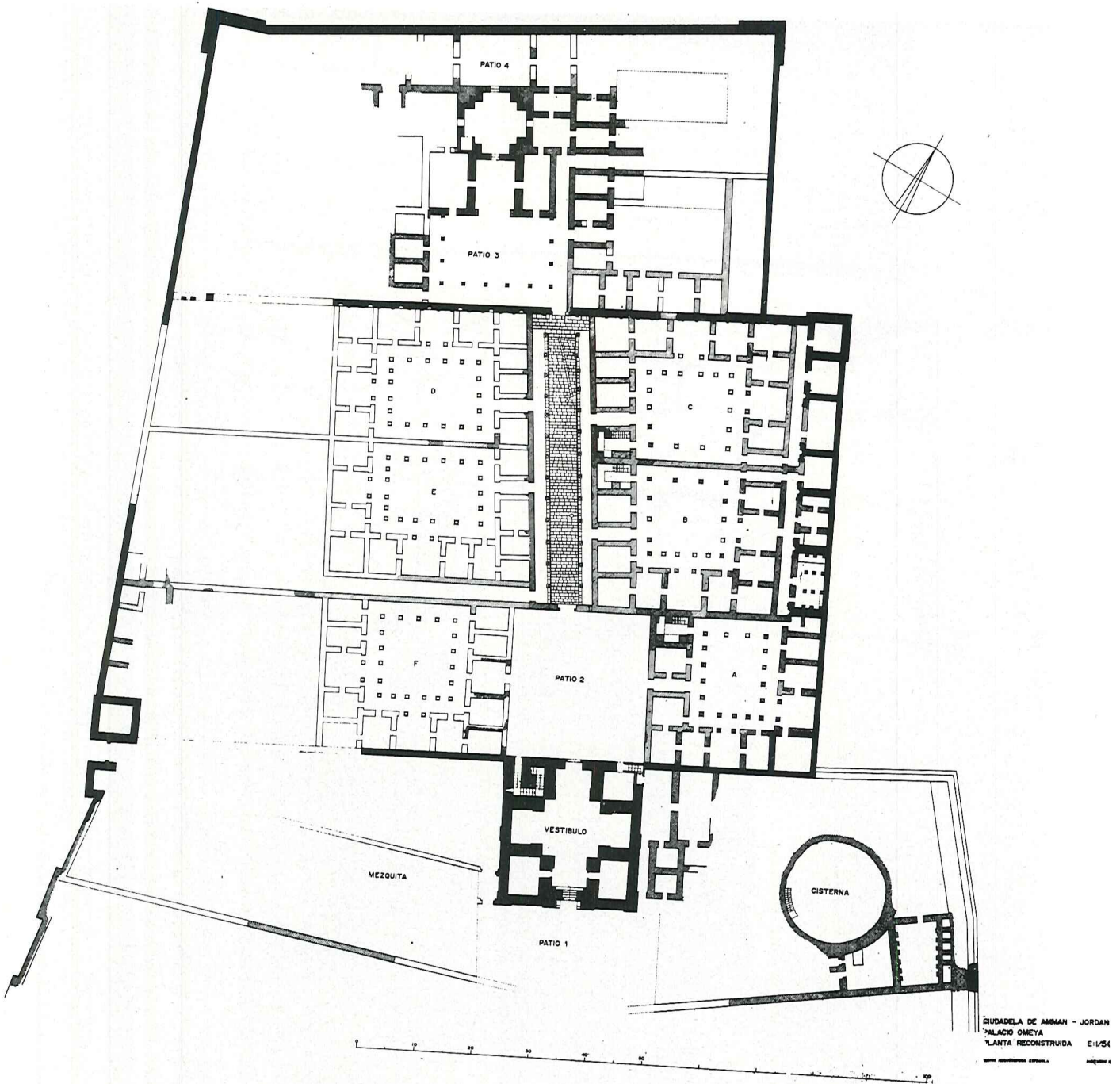


Fig. 5: The general plan of the Umayyad Palace with the reconstruction of the destroyed structures.

the Spanish Archaeological Mission in Jordan, we hope that this great Umayyad palace complex, of immense artistic and archaeological interest, will be valued, conserved, and made available to all of those persons interested in their past.

We would also like to take this opportunity to point out to archaeologists and to those responsible for antiquities the importance of consolidating all architectural remains immediately after an excavation, if one does not want to see in only a few years the transformation of a

coherent building into a pile of rubble-incomprehensible and unreconstructable.

This kind of labour requires a great deal of time and more money than the excavation itself. But if this not done, it is better not to excavate at all, or else to backfill these excavations with sterile soil. Only in this way we can preserve the legacy of our past, leaving it as a heritage for those who come after us.

Antonio Almagro