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## **The Nakum Archaeological Project: Investigations on the Banks of the Holmul River, Guatemala**

*With contributions by: Wieslaw Koszkuł*



**Research Year:** 2006

**Culture:** Maya

**Chronology:** Preclassic, Classic

**Location:** Petén, Guatemala

**Site:** Nakum

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## Abstract

The Nakum Archaeological Project was established in order to better study the Maya site of Nakum, located in northeastern part of Guatemala. The main goals of the Project are to investigate the as yet uninvestigated North Sector of Nakum, mainly in search of Terminal Classic occupation, and to study *talud-tablero* style structures discovered during previous research of the Triangulo Project in the Southern Sector of the site. As such, the aim of the project is to further define the cultural and political connections between the Maya and Teotihuacán during the Early Classic period. Another goal is to understand and find reasons for the anomaly of Nakum's cultural growth and florescence during the turbulent times of the Terminal Classic period, a time when most cities located in the Southern Maya Lowlands collapsed.

During our investigations carried out in 2006 in the Northern Sector of the site, we found very dense traces of Terminal Classic occupation and construction activity, proving that this area was not abandoned as some archaeologists have assumed. On the contrary, like the South Sector of the site, the northern part of Nakum underwent important building programs.

Excavations realized in the South Sector (in the area of Patio 1) resulted in the discovery of *talud-tablero* style architecture. This research proved that during the Tzakol 3 phase, four platforms in the *talud-tablero* style were built around Patio 1. These platforms were joined at their internal corners, completely enclosing the area of Patio 1.

One of the most important finds of this season was the discovery of a Late Classic royal tomb (the first tomb excavated at Nakum) in the pyramid structure (Structure 15) which covers a *talud-tablero* platform located on the eastern side of Patio 1. Many adornments of the deceased, including the remnants of necklaces in the form of beads made of greenstone and caracol of various sizes were found. Three vessels (one of them painted with a representation of the dancing Maize God), greenstone ear spools, stone spindle whorls and a greenstone pectoral incised with a representation of a human face on one side and a short hieroglyphic text on the other side were found. Although the tomb is dated to the turn of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the greenstone pectoral dates from several centuries earlier (it can be stylistically dated between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century). It was probably kept by the royal family as an heirloom and finally deposited with the king when he was buried in the tomb. Above the tomb, a cache consisting of two vessels and broken greenstone tube, and an offering were discovered. The latter included a vessel that contained 3 stone rings (on which representations of human faces were incised), as well as 6 greenstone beads and fragmented bones. The offering is dated to the Terminal Classic while the cache to the Late Classic period. Most probably, they were deposited during rituals venerating the deceased king.

## Resumen

El Proyecto Arqueológico Nakum se estableció para investigar más detalladamente Nakum, un sitio de cultura Maya ubicado en la parte noreste de Guatemala.

Durante la primera temporada de las investigaciones del Proyecto fueron analizadas unas hipótesis propuestas con respecto al desarrollo del sitio en el Clásico Temprano y Clásico Terminal. Los objetivos principales del Proyecto fueron: examinar el Sector Norte del sitio que, con excepción del Grupo Este o Merwin, no había sido excavado detalladamente y en el Sector Sur de Nakum investigar los edificios de estilo talud-tablero descubiertos durante las excavaciones del Proyecto Triángulo.

Las investigaciones del Proyecto Arqueológico Nakum en 2006 han demostrado una intensa actividad constructiva en el Sector Norte del sitio desde el Preclásico. La actividad constructiva del Clásico Terminal se refleja prácticamente en todos los lugares del Grupo Norte y en el Edificio 96, ubicado en el centro de la Plaza Norte. Dicha actividad no es tan intensa como en la Acrópolis en el Sector Sur del sitio, pero confirma que el Sector Norte fue un lugar utilizado por los habitantes de Nakum durante el Clásico Terminal.

Las excavaciones realizadas en el Sector Sur de Nakum confirman la hipótesis que las plataformas de estilo talud-tablero que rodeaban el Patio 1 en el Clásico Temprano, se juntaban con sus esquinas cerrando totalmente el patio. Es el único ejemplo, descubierto hasta ahora, de arquitectura talud-tablero en las tierras Mayas, en el cual el patio está rodeado por cuatro edificios de este estilo y que además forman un área completamente encerrada. La analogía más cercana son sin duda los patios del mismo Teotihuacán, pero el patio de Nakum es un par de veces más grande que los de Teotihuacán. Eso sugiere también otro tipo de uso del patio de Nakum: su localización central en el área más importante de Nakum prueba que fue un lugar de actividades muy importantes no solo en el Clásico Temprano pero también en otros periodos.

Además, durante los trabajos en el año 2006 en el Sector Sur del sitio, en el Edificio 15 fue encontrada la primera tumba real en Nakum. Es muy grande, tiene aproximadamente 4.55 m de largo (norte-sur), 1.50 m de ancho (este-oeste) y 2.2 m de altura. La tumba contuvo los restos del un individuo en posición decubito dorsal extendido con la cabeza hacia norte, con una ofrenda consistente en tres vasijas cerámicas, orejeras, un collar de nefrita y jade, un pectoral de jade y centenares de cuentas circulares y tubulares de distintos tipos de piedra y conchas, que formaban varios collares. Los más importantes descubrimientos son sin duda la vasija Saxche Naranja Policromo con dios del maíz danzante y particularmente el pectoral de jade. La parte superior del lado cóncavo del pectoral está decorada con una representación antropomorfa incisa con un tocado elaborado. El estilo y carácter de esta representación sitúa la manufactura del artefacto para el Clásico Temprano. En la parte central del lado

convexo hay una serie glífica de cinco cartuchos incisos, los cuales podemos traducir como: “este es el pectoral del señor de Yaxha Ixim Chan”.

## **Introduction**

The first season of the Nakum Archaeological Project lasted from April through June, 2006. It included both field excavations and laboratory analysis at the Maya site of Nakum, located north of Lake Yaxhá in the northeastern part of Guatemala. The project is under the direction of Dr. Jaroslaw Zralka and Wieslaw Koszkuł (M.A.) from the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland and is possible thanks to an agreement with the Guatemalan Institute of Anthropology and History (IDAEH). Members of the Nakum Archaeological Project in 2006 were: Lic. Vinicio García (project co-director), Lic. Bernard Hermes (ceramist), Varinia Matute (archaeologist and physical anthropologist) and several students of archaeology.

The main goals of the project are to investigate the North Sector of Nakum (which has not been investigated before) in search of Terminal Classic occupation, and the study of *talud-tablero* structures detected in the South Sector of the site during previous Triangulo Project research by the IDAEH. As such, the aim of the project is to investigate the Teotihuacán contacts in Nakum during the Early Classic as well as to understand and find reasons for the anomaly of Nakum's cultural growth and florescence during the turbulent times of the Terminal Classic period, a time when most cities located in the Southern Maya Lowlands collapsed.

## **The Site of Nakum**

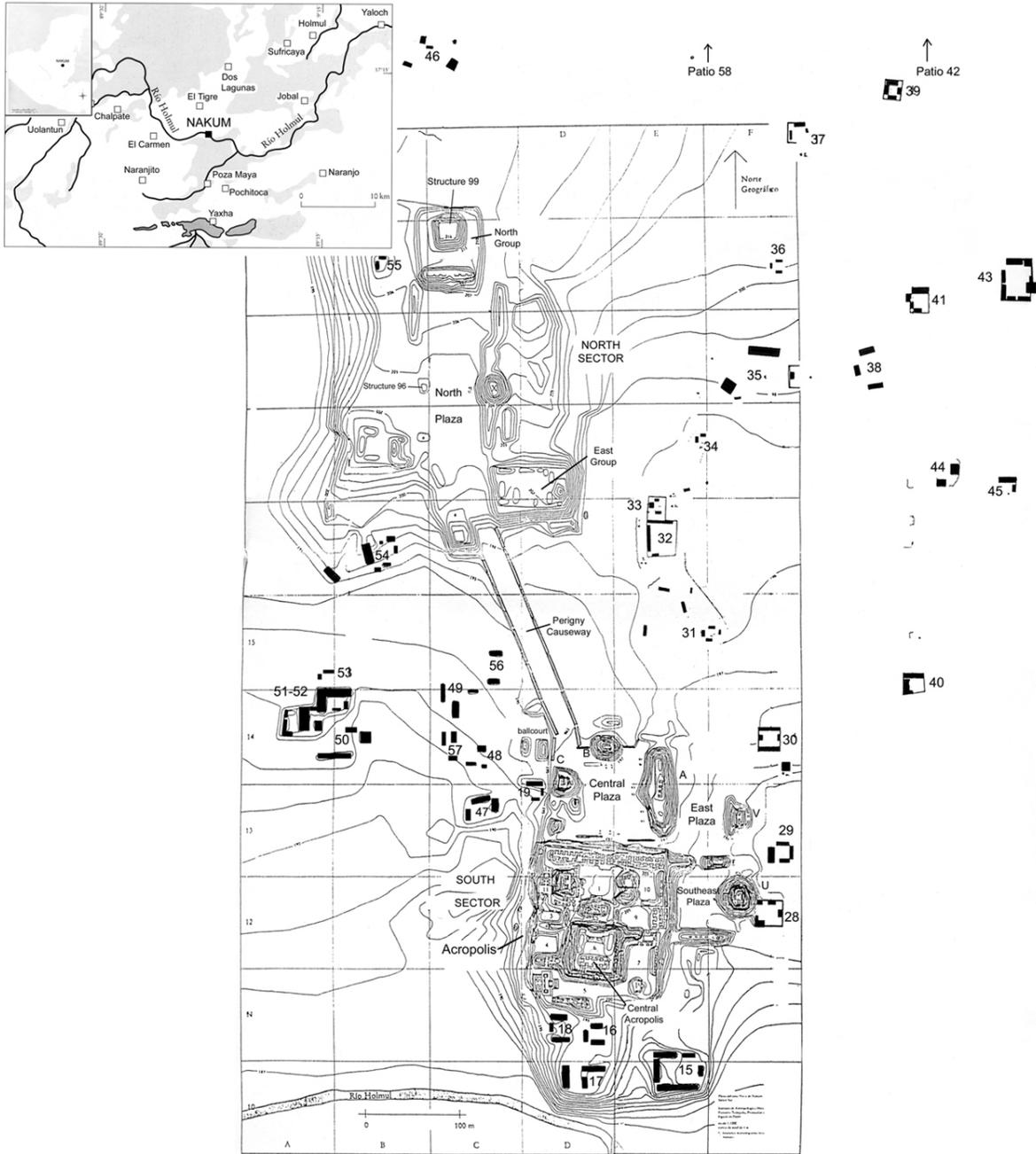
Nakum is located in the north-eastern part of Petén, Guatemala ([Figure 1](#)), at an elevation of ca. 200 m above sea level and is situated in the heart of the lowland area of Maya culture. The discovery of this site is attributed to Maurice de Périgny in 1905, who published the first plan of Nakum (Périgny 1908). Périgny returned to Nakum during his next expedition in 1909-1910 (Périgny 1910; 1911). Further reconnaissance was carried out by Alfred Tozzer and Raymond Merwin (Tozzer 1913) and subsequently by Sylvanus Morley (1938) and Nicholas Hellmuth (1975; 1992). In 1989, IDAEH initiated efforts to rescue and protect buildings in the core area as part of the Tikal National Project. Formal investigations were initiated in 1994 with the restoration of the most deteriorated monumental structures in the central and southern sectors of the site. In 1996, excavations of the most important structures located south of Calzada Périgny were started under the Triangulo Project and are ongoing. In addition, a vast test-pitting program was carried out in different parts of the site's core. In 2006, a new project known as the Nakum Archaeological Project was started in Nakum by the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland. The 2006 season of the Nakum Archaeological Project was financed by FAMSI (grant number: FAMSI 06022) and the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University.



**Figure 1. Map of Guatemala showing location of Nakum, after FAMSI.**

The core of Nakum is divided into two main sectors: North and South. The North Sector houses a large spacious plaza and several large complexes and buildings (North, West and East Groups as well as Temple X). The North and South Sectors of the site are connected by the elevated Perigny Causeway which is about 250 m long (Figure 2). A small ballcourt (Structures 7 and 8) is located at the southern end of the causeway. The South Sector houses several huge temple-pyramid structures (Structures A, B, C, V, U) as well as an enormous complex called the Acropolis and many other buildings. The Acropolis consists of a large architectural platform topped by palace-like structures grouped around 12 courtyards or patio groups.

Architectural compounds and buildings of the North and South sectors form a somewhat compact monumental core area. All structures and architectural groups located outside this central part are referred to as peripheral.



**Figure 2. Map of Nakum with location of the site, after Quintana and Wurster 2002 with corrections made by the authors.**

Previous Triangulo Project investigations at the site indicate that it was first settled during the Middle Preclassic. This period saw the construction of the first versions of several important complexes and buildings. The site saw significant development during the Late Preclassic when all existing structures were rebuilt

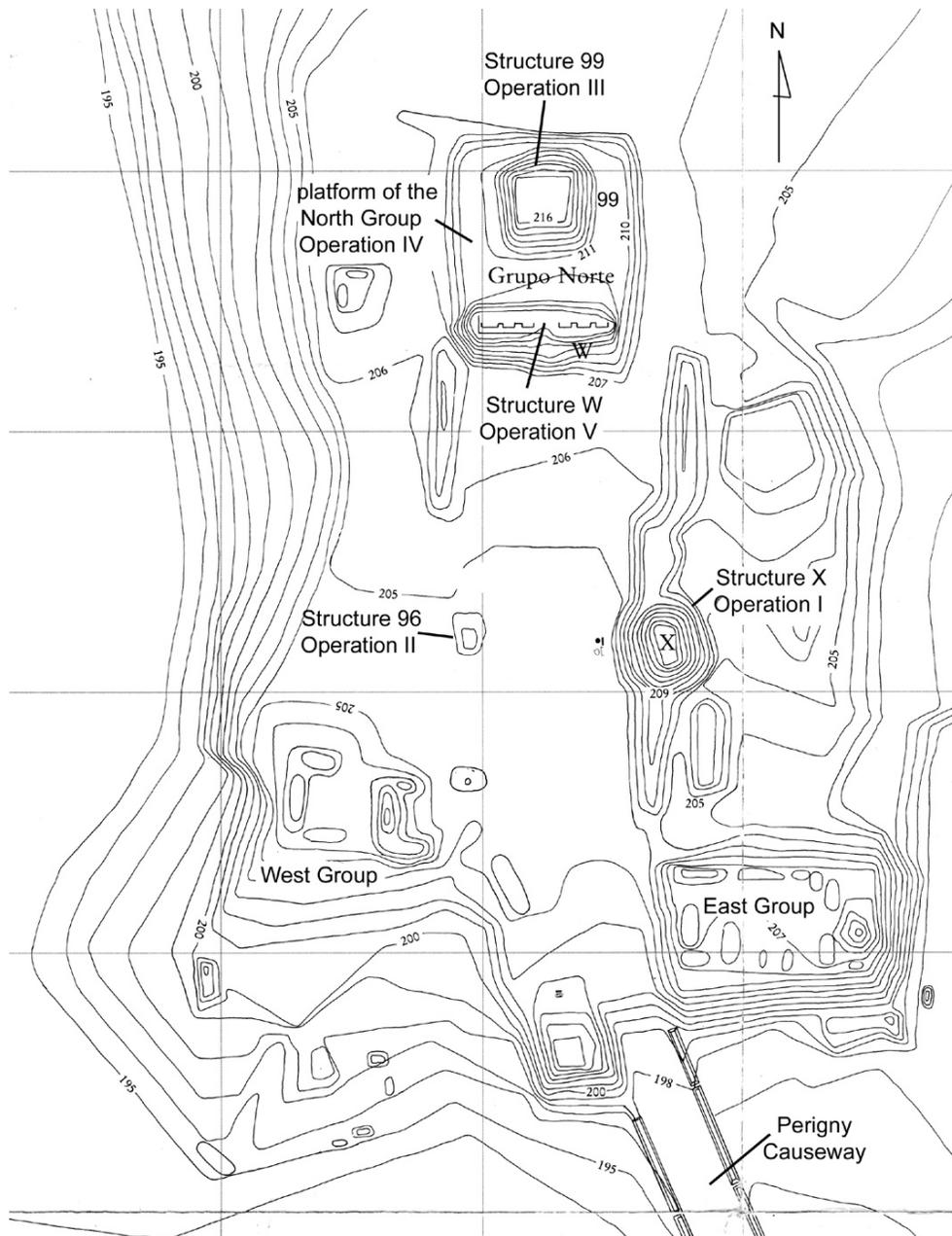
and new constructions were added. During the Early Classic architectural activity clearly diminishes at Nakum. Only four buildings dated to that period have been discovered so far and they are located in the Acropolis complex. Many structures visible at Nakum today were constructed in the Late Classic period. However, one of the most interesting and intriguing facts in the occupational history of Nakum is its vigorous development during the Terminal Classic period when most of the other Southern Lowland Maya centers were in decline. Archaeological investigations undertaken during the past several years in the South Sectors demonstrate quite convincingly that all the structures erected in the previous period were rebuilt during the Terminal Classic. Moreover, many new structures were constructed during this period (Calderón 2003, Calderón *et al.* 2004, Hermes 2002, Hermes and Calderón 2002, Koszkul *et al.* 2006a; Zralka 2005, Zralka *et al.* 2007).

## **Investigations of the North Sector**

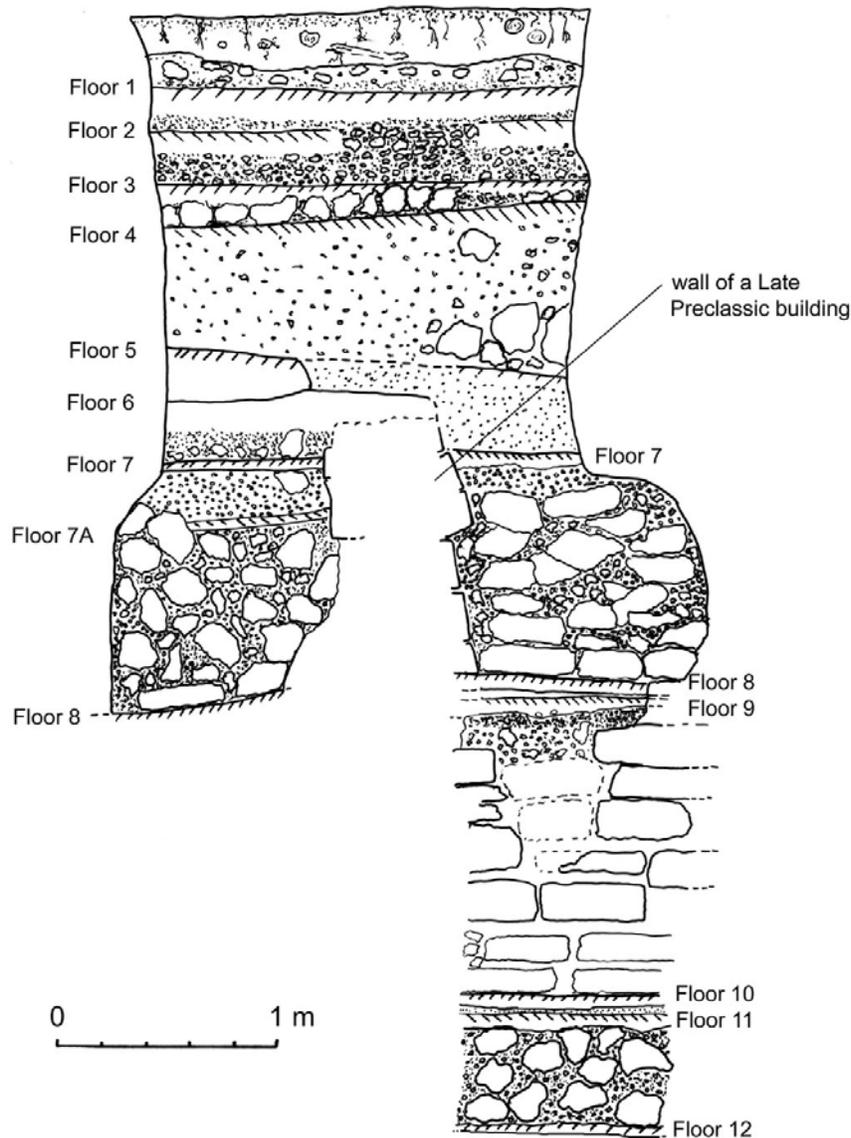
### ***Excavations in the North Group***

The North Sector is formed by a spacious North Plaza delimited from all sides by low platforms as well as by large complexes and one pyramid-temple structure (Structure X). The northern part of the plaza houses the North Group, the largest and the most important complex of the North Sector ([Figure 3](#)). The North Group consists of a huge platform which supports fourteen-chambered palace (Structure W—the second longest structure at Nakum), a high platform almost plain at the top (Structure 99) and at least two small mounds (Structures 98 and 100). The Merwin or East Group is another large complex of the North Sector. It is a massive platform topped by 14 possibly residential buildings and occupies the south-eastern corner of the North Plaza.

Previous investigations of the Triangulo Project proved that the South Sector of Nakum which houses the most important and impressive pyramid-temples and palace structures was extensively rebuilt and enlarged during the Terminal Classic period (Hermes 2002, Zralka 2005, Zralka *et al.* 2007). By investigating the North Sector of Nakum we wanted to check if, like the southern part of the site, this area was inhabited and underwent important building programs during the Tepeu 3 times. Moreover, we wanted to reconstruct the architectural history of this part of the site, from its initial settlement until its abandonment.



**Figure 3. Map of the North Sector of Nakum with structures and complexes investigated by the Nakum Archaeological Project (map after Quintana and Wurster 2002).**



**Figure 4. Operation IV, south profile of Suboperation 3 excavated in the platform of the North Group. Drawing by Aleksander Danecki.**

Prior to 2006, the North Sector (except the Merwin Group) was the subject of very limited investigations which included a test-pitting program (García 1998, Hermes *et al.* 1996). This research showed very scarce traces of Terminal Classic occupation. Two test-pits excavated in the courtyard of the North Group did not yield any materials from the Terminal Classic period. Thus, some scholars (Hermes 2002) supposed that the North Group and other parts of the North Sector were in large part abandoned during the Tepeu 3 times and that people moved from here to the southern part of the site. However, during the investigations of the Nakum Archaeological Project carried out in the North

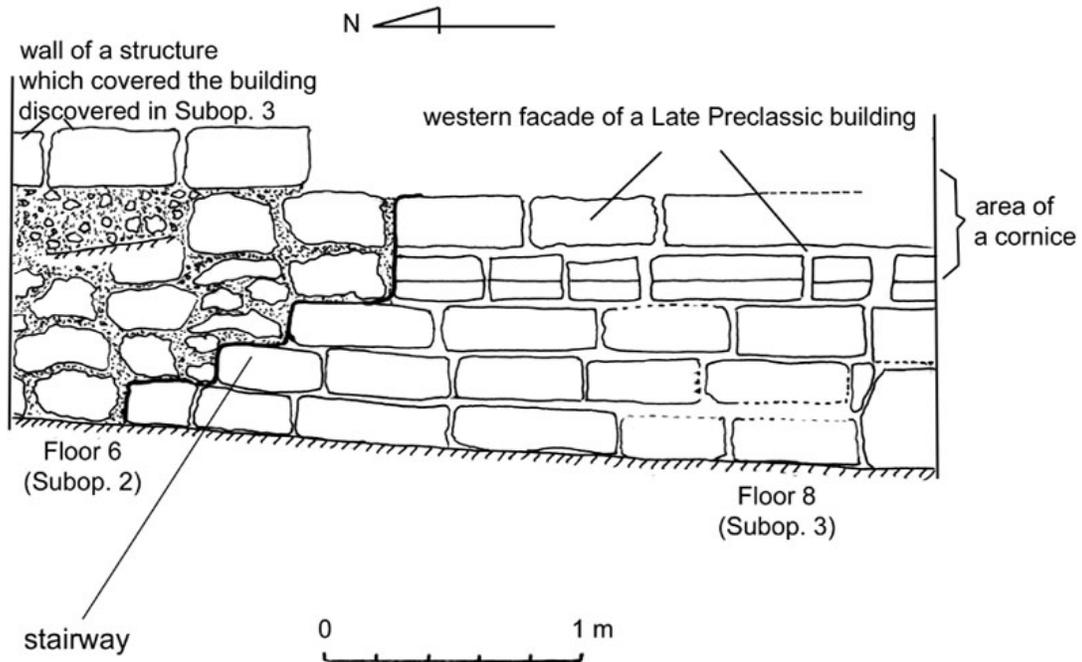
Group in 2006, numerous traces of Terminal Classic occupation were found. Two test-pits (Op. IV, Subop. 2 and 3) excavated in the courtyard of this complex yielded possible vestiges of stone paving from Tepeu 3 times along with abundant Terminal Classic material in the uppermost layers, up to a depth of 0.40 m below the surface. In the same test-pits, numerous floors from an earlier date and vestiges of two Late Preclassic substructures were found. The archaeological data collected during this excavation enriched our knowledge about the architectural history of the North Group platform. Of special importance is the complex stratigraphy of Suboperation 3 ([Figure 4](#)). The lowermost floor of this test-pit (Floor 12) was discovered 5.04 m below the surface and is related to the earliest or one of the earliest versions of the North Group platform dating to the Late Preclassic period<sup>1</sup>. Subsequently, the platform was raised up to the level of Floor 11, which was later covered by Floor 10. On the latter floor, a wall made from unworked stones laid along the E-W direction was discovered. Most probably, this is a retention wall that was constructed during the subsequent architectural stage of the North Group platform, during which, the height of the platform was increased by 1.35 m and a new floor (Floor 9) was paved, followed by Floor 8. On the level of Floor 8, a well-preserved Late Preclassic wall was detected. The wall is in talud style with a cornice in its upper part ([Figure 5](#)). The wall is 1.20 m high and it is part of the western façade of a Late Preclassic structure which once stood in the central part of the North Group platform. Fragments of the stairway of this structure were partly uncovered in Suboperation 2 which was connected by a small tunnel with Suboperation 3 in order to expose the above-mentioned construction as much as possible (see [Figure 6](#)). During the Late Preclassic period the above-mentioned construction remained sealed and was covered (in the area of its stairway) by a structure whose vestiges were found in Suboperation 2, and by a succession of several floors (Floors 7-3 of Suboperation 3). Lastly, the two uppermost floors of Suboperation 3 can be dated to the Classic period (Late and/or Terminal Classic).

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<sup>1</sup> Heavy rains, which had the potential to destroy profiles in Suboperation 3, made it impossible to continue excavating down to the bedrock.

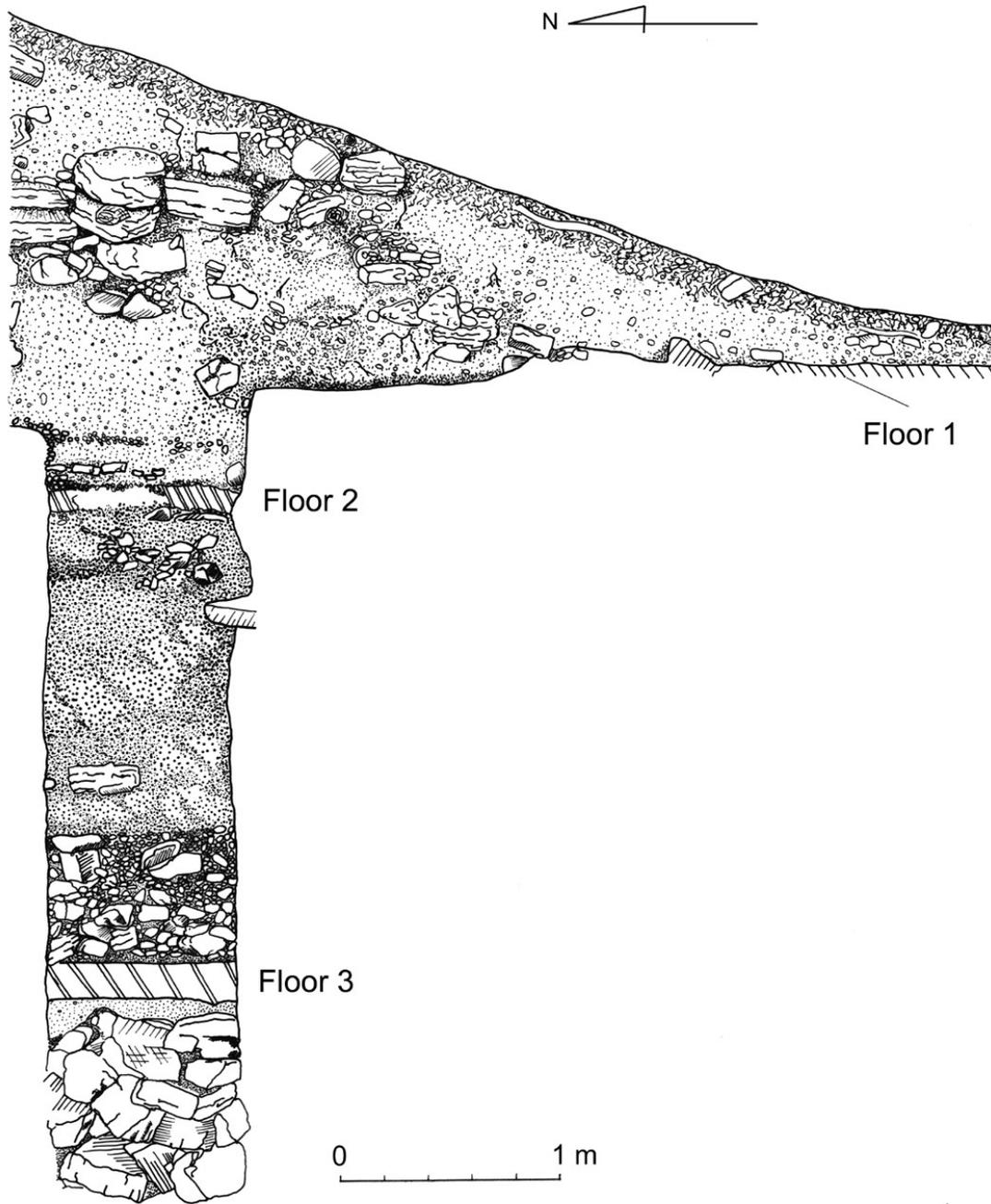


**Figure 5. Wall of a Late Preclassic structure discovered on Floor 8 (Op. IV, Subop. 3).**



**Figure 6. Western façade of the Late Preclassic structure discovered in Suboperations 3 and 2 of Operation IV along with a wall of construction which covered it. Drawing by Aleksander Danecki.**

In another test-pit (Suboperation 2 of Operation III) excavated in front of Structure 99, a Terminal Classic floor was discovered (Floor 1). Below it, a succession of Late Preclassic layers and floors relating to the leveling and enlargement of the North Group platform were found ([Figure 7](#)).

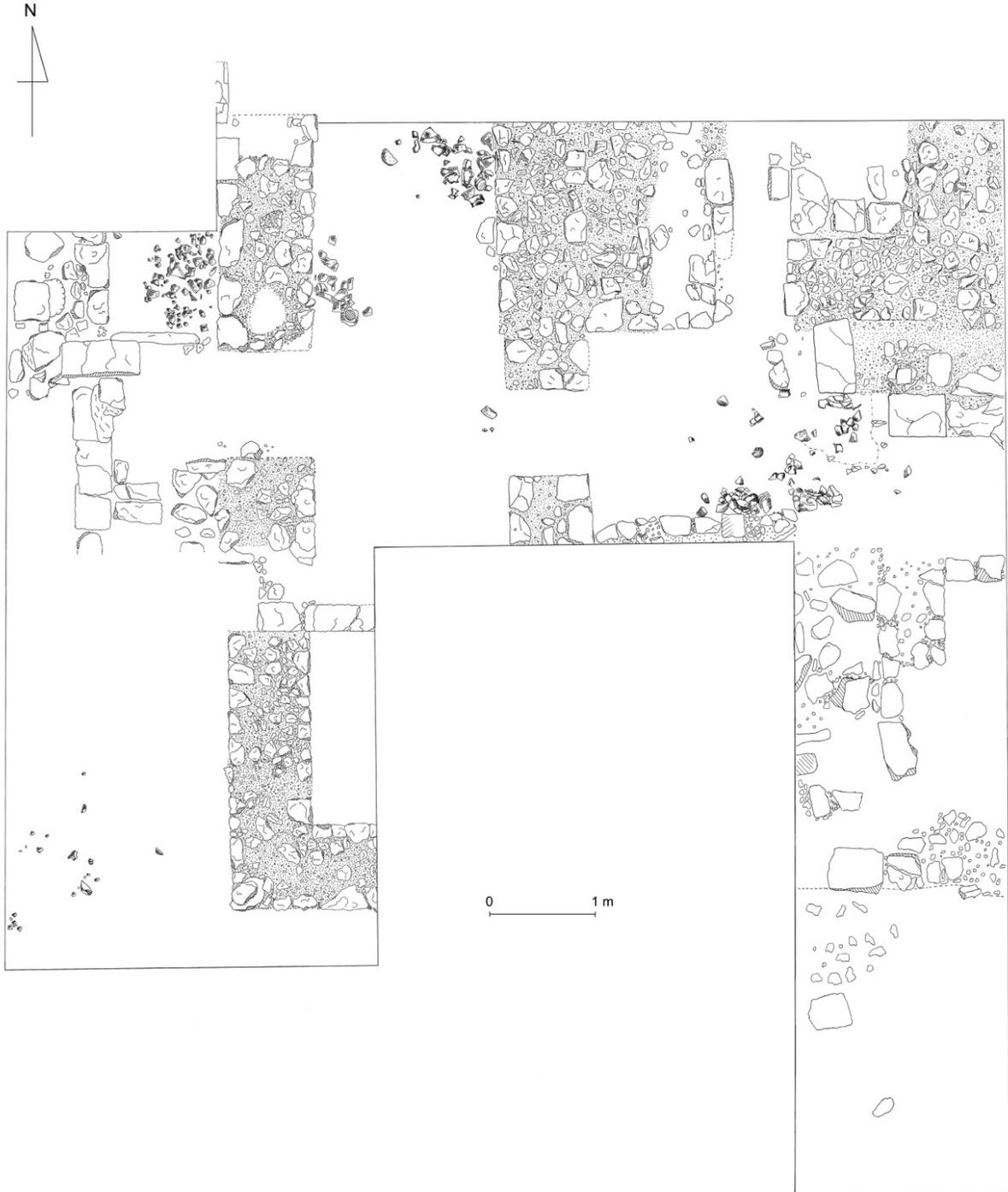


**Figure 7. Suboperation 2 of Operation III excavated at the base of Structure 99. Drawing by Bogumil Pilarski.**



**Figure 8. General view of Structure 99 during excavation.**

Important vestiges of Terminal Classic activity were discovered while investigating Structure 99, which is located in the northern part of the North Group. Structure 99 consists of a large platform which is almost quadrangular at the base ([Figure 8](#)). During investigations carried out at the top of this platform (western part) a superstructure of complex architectural pattern dating to the Terminal Classic period was discovered ([Figure 9](#)). The lower parts of the walls of the superstructure were constructed from small and medium size stones and its upper part as well as the roof were most probably made of perishable materials ([Figure 10](#)). The floor in the northern and north-western part of this superstructure was covered by many broken vessels, axes (fragments and whole artifacts), fragments of *manos*, figurines and two pieces of greenstone ([Figure 11](#)). The majority of the artifacts come from the Terminal Classic period although Late Preclassic ceramics were also found. It is possible that this is part of a termination ritual which took place during the Terminal Classic period, before the abandonment of this structure. Similar rituals were documented in many other Maya sites, especially in Terminal Classic contexts. They involved the destruction of various objects (mainly vessels) during the abandonment of associated buildings (see: Chase and Chase 2004, Straight and Marken 2006).



**Figure 9. Nakum, plan of superstructure discovered at the top of Structure 99 platform. Drawing by Pawel Kurzawa and Bogumil Pilarski.**



**Figure 10. Nakum, view of the northern part of the superstructure discovered at the top of Structure 99 platform.**



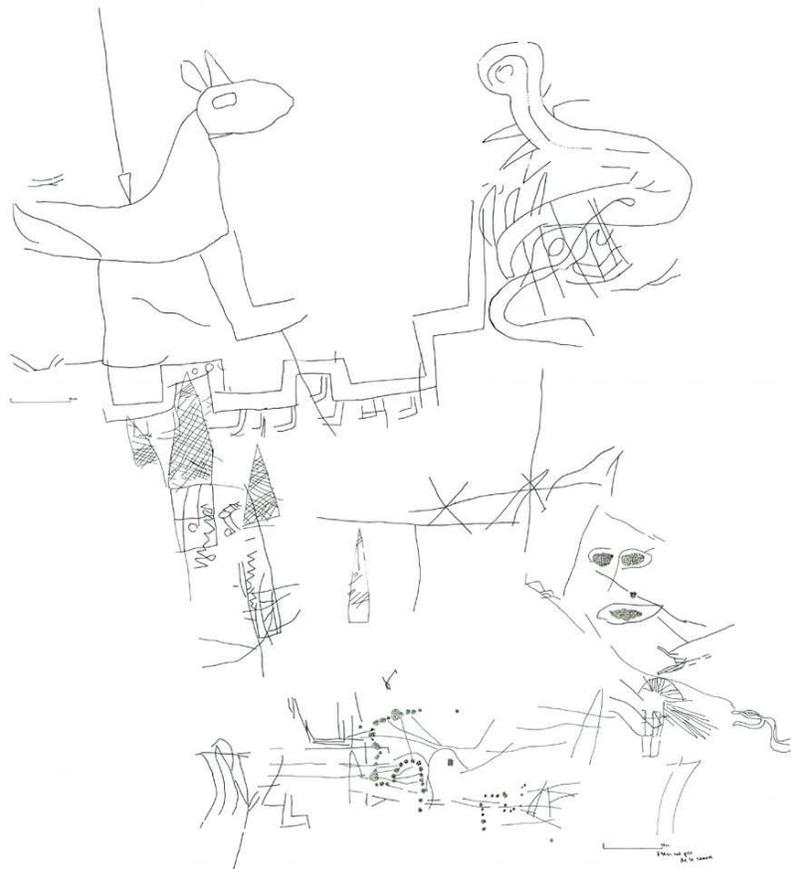
**Figure 11. Nakum, broken vessels found at the floor of the superstructure located at the summit of Structure 99 platform.**

Investigations indicate that the construction discovered on top of the platform of Structure 99 underwent extensive remodeling during the Terminal Classic period, including enlargement and architectural changes to its interior. Moreover, cursory investigations in the area of the platform of Structure 99 indicate that its last version can also be dated to the Terminal Classic period. However, it was found to be in a very poor state of preservation. The penultimate stage of Structure 99 platform was also detected. During excavations of the southern façade of this construction, we found a wall in talud style forming the lowermost body of the platform. The wall turns right, going 1.40 m in the southern direction and subsequently, it turns left where it adjoins the outset stairway which was only partly preserved ([Figure 12](#)). It seems that during the penultimate architectural stage, the platform of Structure 99 consisted of three superimposed terraces (in the form of taluds) with stairway on its southern façade.



**Figure 12. Two architectural stages of the platform of Structure 99 documented during excavations. Wall 1 is related with Floor 2 and the penultimate architectural stage meanwhile Wall 2 is related with Floor 1 and the last architectural stage. The stairway on the right-hand side can be related with Wall 1.**

During excavations of the Nakum Archaeological Project, one excavation unit was also opened in Structure W, which is a large rectangular palace located in the southern part of the North Group. The palace most probably had seven chambers on its northern façade and the same number on the southern façade. Although the stone vaults of all the chambers collapsed, one can still see walls separating them as well as the rear part of the vaults. Only one chamber located on the western extreme of the northern façade was partly excavated. In the debris from the fallen vault and upper parts of the walls, we found many vault stones mixed with archaeological material from various periods (Middle Preclassic to the Terminal Classic). We discovered the floor of the chamber 2.68 m below the surface. A shallow test-pit excavated in the floor yielded several Late Classic sherds. During our investigation, a small part of the rear wall of the chamber was exposed. It was well preserved and many graffiti incised on the stucco which covers the wall were documented. Among them we have representations of snakes, humans, buildings and others. One graffiti is especially interesting since it represents an undulating feathered serpent ([Figure 13](#)).

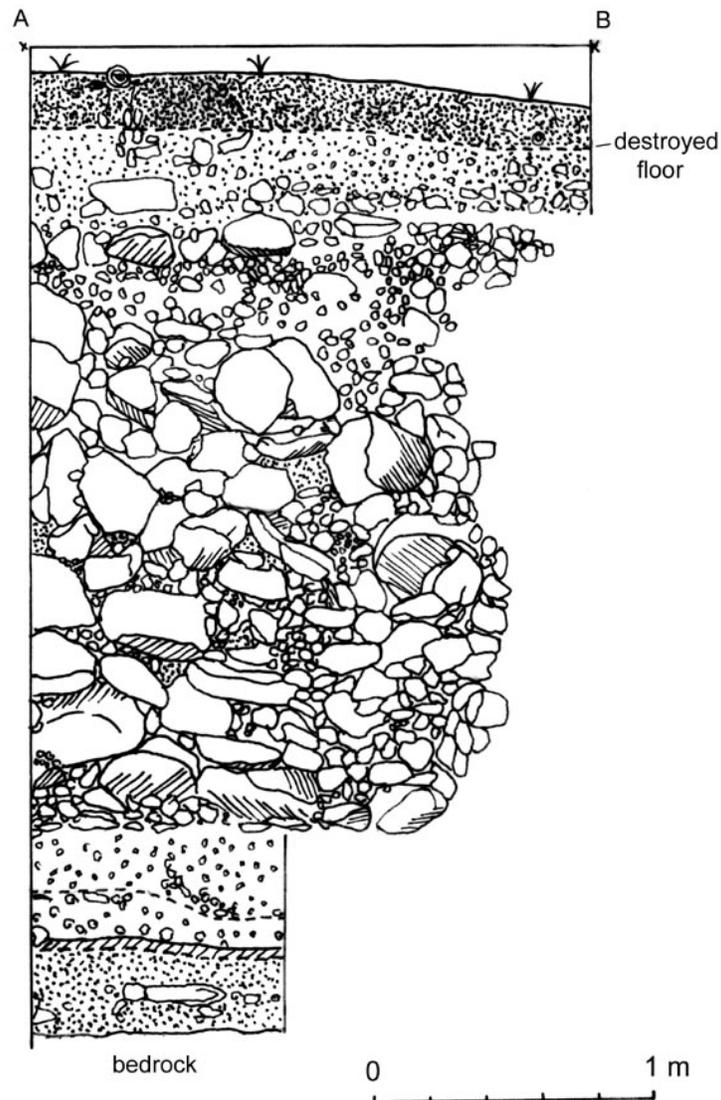


**Figure 13. Graffiti documented on the rear wall of the excavated chamber of Structure W. Drawing by Jaroslaw Zralka.**

Although one test-pit was excavated in Structure W, all archaeological material recovered from below the palace chamber floor indicates that this construction was most probably built during the Late Classic period.

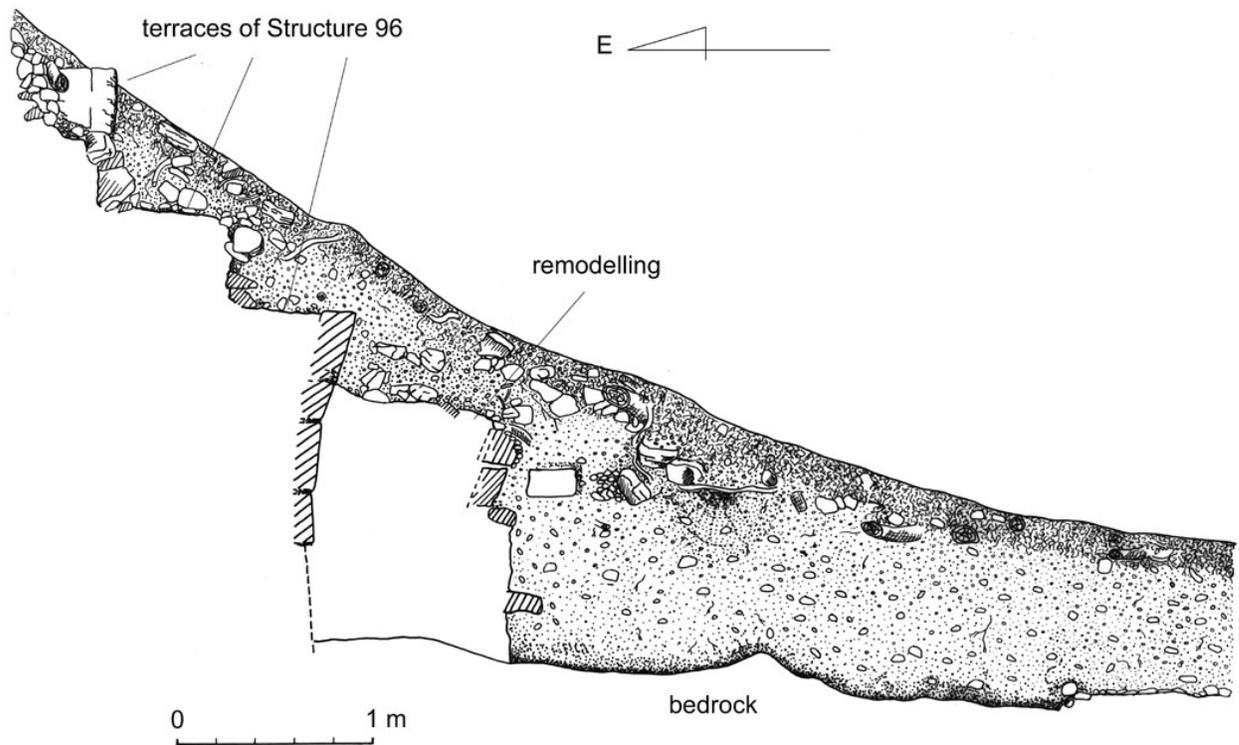
### ***Investigations in the Central Part of the North Plaza***

To the south of the North Group stretches the North Plaza. It was one of the few spots in Nakum where public ceremonies took place. Investigations of the Nakum Archaeological Project focused on excavations of two structures (Structure 96 and X) located in the area of the central part of the North Plaza.



**Figure 14. Northern profile of a test-pit excavated in Structure 96.  
Drawing by Bogumil Pilarski and Jaroslaw Zralka.**

Structure 96 is a low platform located in the center of the North Plaza. Extensive excavations units were opened at the top of this structure along with one test pit which reached the bedrock level. During this research no vestiges of a superstructure were discovered at the top of Structure 96 platform. It seems that Structure 96 was plain at the top or that it was topped by a superstructure made of perishable materials that did not survive. While excavating 18-19 cm below the surface, vestiges of the floor were detected (Figure 14). The layer below the floor as well as the construction fill of Structure 96 contained materials from various periods including Terminal Classic sherds, indicating that it was constructed during the Tepeu 3 times. However, this construction covered an earlier low platform below which layers with Middle Preclassic ceramics were found. Investigations in the western façade of this construction indicate that the platform of Structure 96 consisted of three or four terraces and that it underwent one remodeling, during the Terminal Classic. This remodeling included covering of the lower terrace of the platform with a new wall (Figure 15). Most probably other façades of Structure 96 platform also underwent the same architectural change.



**Figure 15. Profile of the western façade of Structure 96.  
Drawing by Bogumil Pilarski.**

Other excavations in the Central Part of the North Plaza were carried out in front of Structure X which is the largest single construction in the entire North Sector. It is a high pyramid topped by a building with three chambers arranged in a triadic pattern in a very similar manner as Structure E which is located in the southern part of the site. Extensive excavations were done at the foot of the pyramid, where two plain monuments, a stela and an altar, are located. Both monuments were first reported by Tozzer (1913: 188) and subsequently by Morley (1937-38, vol. 2: 11). Their descriptions indicate that when Tozzer and subsequently Morley visited Nakum, the stela was still at its original place<sup>2</sup>. It was standing south of the altar and it faced the north and not the west—opposite to the main façade of the pyramid (as is the case at most Maya sites). Today, both monuments are very eroded and fragmented. At the time of excavations, the stela was found broken with only a part of this monument protruded from the surface. In this spot we marked out an extensive excavation area of 16 m<sup>2</sup> and divided it into four units. We were able to clear and uncover the above-mentioned fragment of this monument. Examination proved that this fragment is the upper part of the stela, lying on loose soil, most probably a result of illicit excavations. In the vicinity of the stela as well as below this monument, we discovered a concentration of many eccentric flints which were part of a cache or other offering that had been looted. It appears that while the looters robbed some artifacts (probably vessels [?]), they left others such as eccentric flints. The eccentric flints were found at the level of humus, down to the depth of 1.10 m below the surface. They were formed into various shapes (scorpion, snakes, butterfly [?], discs, small scepter, tridents, etc.) ([Figure 16](#)). We also excavated three floors close to the stela. The floors were cut in the place where the upper part of stela protruded from the surface ([Figure 17](#)). Most probable, this is the place where the stela was originally erected although we did not find its base. In the area that was cut out in the floors, we found dispersed fragments of human bones which are probably part of a burial furnished with one stone bead. If the stela was placed in this place, it is possible that eccentric flints and bones were part of an offering deposited below or at the base of this monument, which was most probably looted in the past fifty years.

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<sup>2</sup> Alfred Tozzer mentions in his report that “the only unusual feature is the fact of the stela standing beside rather than behind the altar” (Tozzer 1913: 188). He does not mention the stela being broken or having collapsed as he does in the case of other Nakum monuments (ex. Stela D). Sylvanus Morley writes the following about the above-mentioned monument and Structure X: “Directly in front of the middle of this stairway, but facing to the north with a round altar just north of it, is the plain Stela E1...” (Morley 1937-38, vol. 2: 11).



**Figure 16. Some of the eccentric flints discovered close to the stela lying in front of pyramid Structure X.**



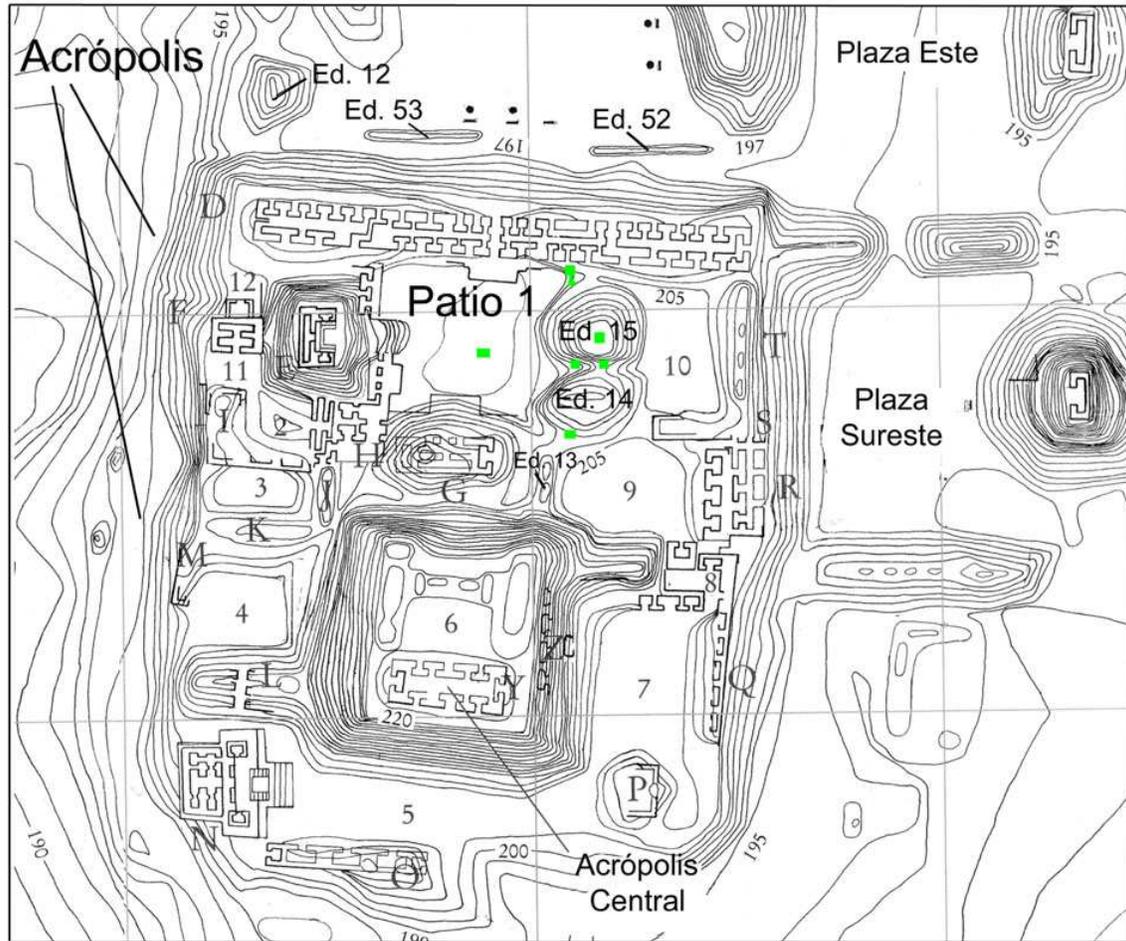
**Figure 17. A photo showing the upper fragment of the stela and the cut made in the floor.**

## Investigations in the South Sector of Nakum

### *Introduction*

The investigations of the Nakum Archaeological Project in the South Sector of Nakum were focused on excavations in the area of Patio 1 and structures situated to the east of this courtyard ([Figure 18](#)). The main purpose of this research was to acquire more data on the Early Classic period at Nakum and to verify a number of hypotheses put forward with regard to the character of Patio 1 in the Tzakol 3 phase (Hermes *et al.* 2006; Koszkuł 2005; Koszkuł *et al.* 2006a; 2006b;). Previous excavations of the Triangulo Project resulted in finding four large *talud-tablero* style platforms built around Patio 1 in the Tzakol 3 phase, artifacts made from Central México green obsidian as well as a locally made cylindrical tripod vessel (Hermes *et al.* 2006; Koszkuł *et al.* 2006a). These finds indicate that like some other sites in Petén, Nakum also experienced significant Teotihuacán contacts during the second part of the Early Classic period. Thus the NAP research in that area focused on examining these constructions at several points and on obtaining more data about Teotihuacán-Maya relationships. The location and size of the *talud-tablero* platforms indicated that they were fully adjoined to each other at their corners and encircled Patio 1 in between. The hypothesis that they were merged proved accurate; the excavations at the north-eastern corner of Patio 1 resulted in unearthing a well-preserved corner of the platforms which were joined at that point (cf. Koszkuł *et al.* 2007; Zralka *et al.* 2006).

The other important aims of the project were to investigate Structure 15 in order to study its dating and construction stages as well as to check if this construction contains tomb(s) (hypothesis proposed by Wiesław Koszkuł), like some pyramidal structures located on the eastern side of the plazas at sites such as Tikal or Caracol. It is known that in the so-called Plaza Plan 2 complexes, the dominant structure which is situated on the eastern side of a plaza is identified as a temple of the family that inhabited a given architectural group. Many excavated patio groups at Tikal had burials beneath the eastern structures and it is assumed that these internments may have belonged to the extended family founders and other important family/lineage members (see: Becker 1971; 1999). The same pattern was documented among others at Caracol where many eastern structures contained well furnished tombs (Chase and Chase 1987; D. Chase 1994). Unearthing such a tomb would contribute to extending the knowledge of the elites in Nakum and the Maya culture at that site and in the region in general. For that purpose, a test-pit was opened on the top of Structure 15 (Suboperation 3) where two offerings were found (Offering 3 and 4), along with the first tomb in Nakum (Tomb 1).



■ Test pits and trenches

**Figure 18. Nakum. Map of the Acropolis complex showing Patio 1 and location of excavated test-pits and trenches (map after Quintana and Wurster 2002).**

### ***Investigations Related to Teotihuacán Contacts at the Site***

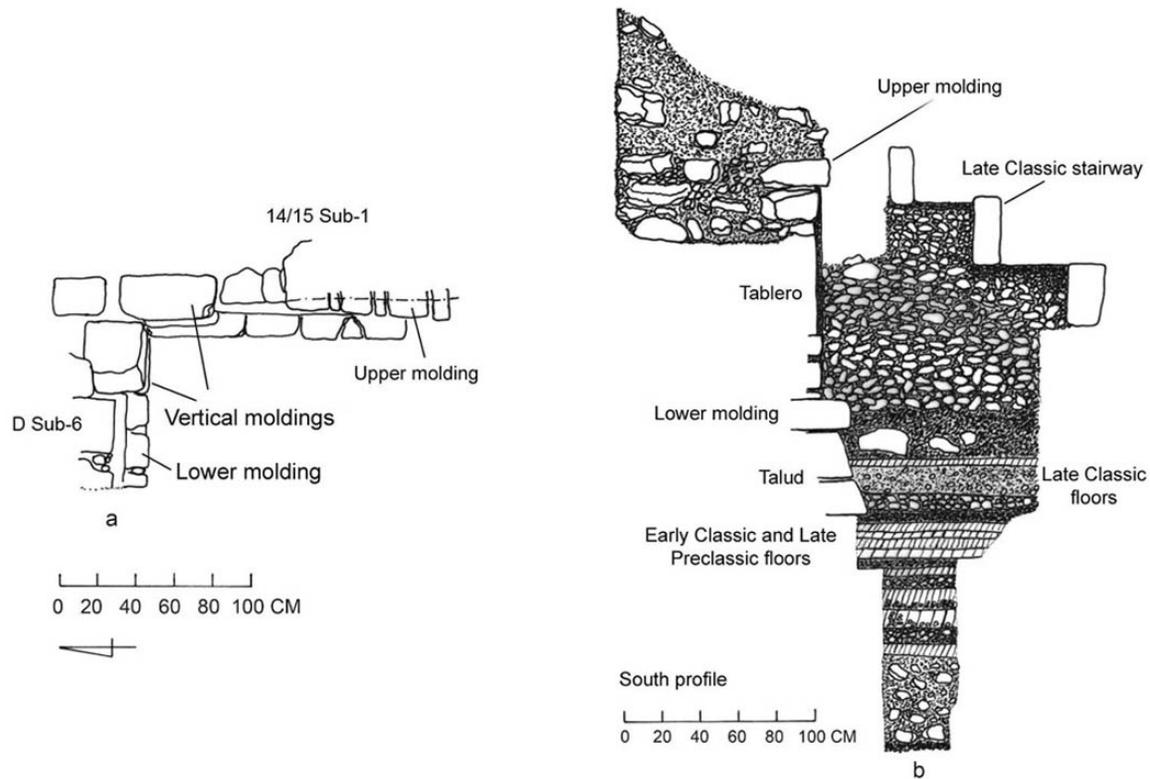
As already mentioned earlier, excavations of the Triangulo Project carried out in the area of Patio 1 between 2000 and 2003 resulted in the discovery of four *talud-tablero* structures (Structures 14/15 Sub-1, D Sub-6, E Sub-2 and G Sub-2) and green obsidian artifacts (Hermes *et al.* 2006; Koszkuł *et al.* 2006a). These structures are the only constructions dated to the Tzakol 3 phase found in Nakum so far, and their location around the centrally-located Patio 1 in the large complex of the Acropolis suggests that some very important events must have taken place there. Since the structures are dated to the Tzakol 3 phase, it may suggest that this style and the Teotihuacán contacts most probably appeared in Nakum as a result of the activity of Siyah K'ak' in Petén. Therefore the Nakum Archaeological Project was particularly concerned to study these structures and the area of Patio

1 very carefully in order to better understand the character of Teotihuacán contacts in Petén and at the site itself.

The façades of the *talud-tablero* structures faced Patio 1 from four sides, though since they are almost entirely covered by later constructions, previous research has not evidenced unambiguously that these structures are either individual constructions or a complex of buildings combined into one large platform with the sunken patio in the center. We only assumed that they did combine into a whole, and in order to check this supposition we opened a test-pit at the location where the *talud-tablero* platforms 14/15 Sub-1 and D Sub-6 should hypothetically join (Op. VI, Subop. 1). Several dozen centimeters below the surface, the stones which formed the upper molding of the *tablero* were found. It turned out that the upper part of the *tablero* was damaged at several spots, though the lower part and the *taludes* are well preserved. The stucco which covered the *tablero* has also survived at a number of spots. Interestingly, the *tableros* of the two platforms also have vertical moldings at the corner where they merge, and these moldings are topped with the projecting superior horizontal molding, as is the case for the rest of the *tablero* ([Figure 19](#) and [Figure 20](#)).



**Figure 19. Test-pit excavated in the northeastern corner of Patio 1 showing two merged *talud-tablero* platforms (Structures 14/15 Sub-1 and D Sub-6).**



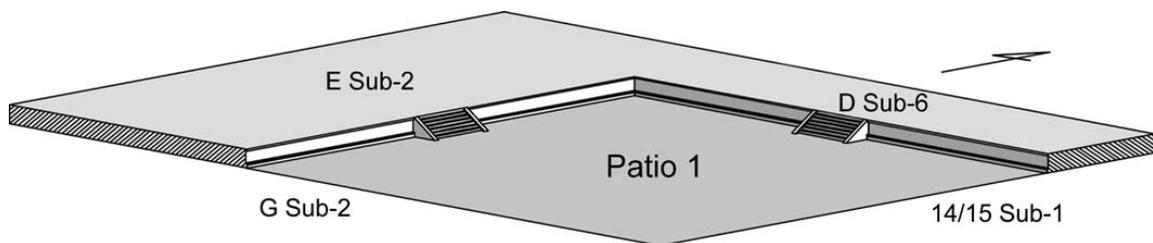
**Figure 20. a) plan of the northeastern corner of Patio 1 showing two merged *talud-tablero* platforms (Structures 14/15 Sub-1 and D Sub-6), b) profile of *talud-tablero* platform of Structure 14/15 Sub-1.  
Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkul and Bogumil Pilarski.**

The *talud-tablero* platforms were built on one of the uppermost floors of Patio 1, under which a series of earlier floors from the Early Classic and Late Preclassic periods were discovered (Figure 20). Most probably, the surface of Patio 1 was remodeled twice in the Late Classic, as evidenced by the remains of the two floors which partly covered the *taludes*. Some time later, probably also during the Late Classic period, the northern part of the western façade of Structure 14/15 Sub-1 was covered with a stairway that connected Patio 1 with Patio 10 (Figure 20).

Subsequently, in order to conduct a detailed study of the platform of Structure 14/15 Sub-1 and its orientation, a trench was marked along the *talud-tablero* wall. It ran from the north-eastern corner of Patio 1 to the southern direction (Op. VI, Subop. 5). These excavations revealed that the façade of the *talud-tablero* platform 14/15 Sub-1 was ca. 2 meters high, with *tablero* 1.54 m high and *talud* 0.56 m high (the ratio of the *talud* to the *tablero* is 1:3.45). The upper molding of the *tablero* is somewhat withdrawn as compared to the lower molding, probably in order to increase the stability of the *talud-tablero* façade (Koszkul *et al.* 2006a).

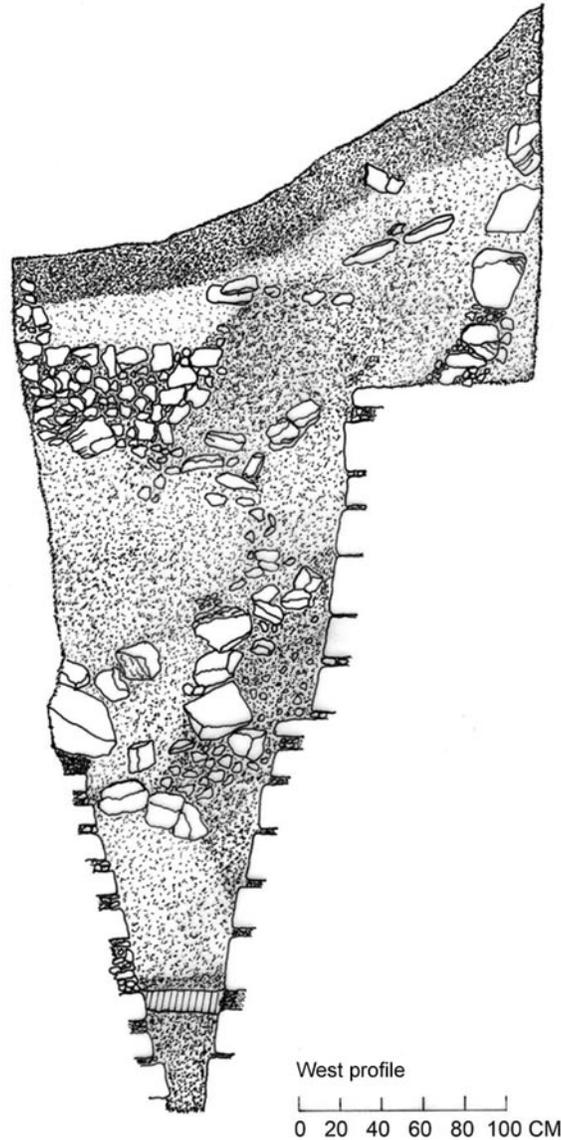
The lower molding was constructed using large cut stones, and the *talud* consisted of two layers of huge trapezoid-cut stones (in order to obtain a diagonal talud, [Figure 19](#)).

Excavations carried out in the north-eastern corner of Patio 1 suggest that it was fully enclosed by the *talud-tablero* platforms. In the entire Maya area, this is the only example of a patio being completely encircled by *talud-tablero* structures ([Figure 21](#)); the closest analogies are found in Teotihuacán, Central México. After excavations the corner of Patio 1 was restored and covered with a roof made of palm leaves to protect the place from rain and make it accessible to tourists.



**Figure 21. Reconstruction view of Patio 1 during the Tzakol 3 phase. Four *talud-tablero* platforms encircling the courtyard of Patio 1 are shown. Drawing by A. Witkowska.**

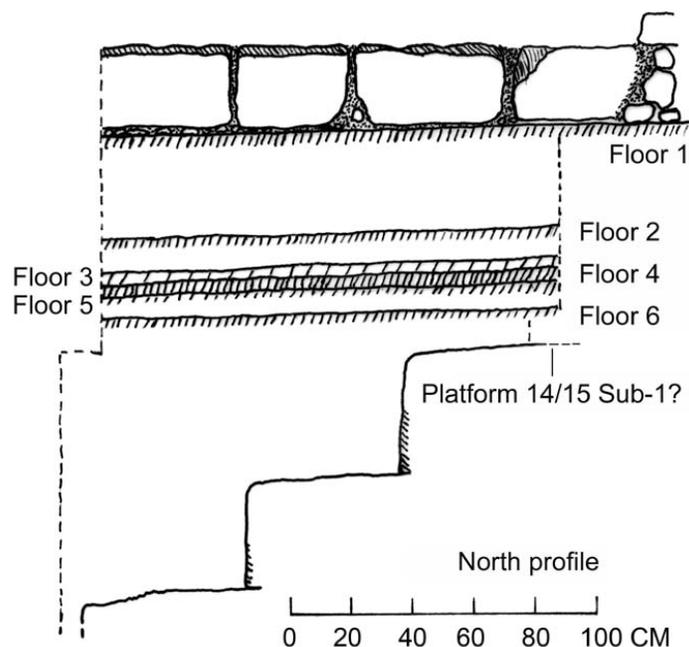
In order to examine platform 14/15 Sub-1 and the Early Classic period at Nakum in greater detail, we also opened two test-pits (ca. 2.5 m x 2.5 m) between the Structures 15 and 14 (Op. VI, Subop. 2 and 4) and one test-pit to the south of Structure 14 (Op. VI, Subop. 6). In Suboperation 2 and 4 we unearthed the lower terraces of the above-mentioned structures in their last architectural phase (cf. [Figure 22](#)). The passage-way between them (which was filled with soil and rubble from the upper parts of the structures) was originally very narrow, although at a later date, an additional floor was added above the passage, broadening it. In Suboperation 2, in a thick layer deposited on that floor, we found a human femur and close to it, a broken Tinaja Red bowl (Offering 2) from the Terminal Classic period. Data obtained from Suboperation 4 shows that the lower terraces of these structures were built on a structure oriented N-S (probably the *talud-tablero* platform 14/15 Sub-1). The western façade of this platform was also detected. This façade was later remodeled by adding a talud. During the 2007 season, we will continue excavating the two test-pits in order to reach the layers and structures dating to the Early Classic period.



**Figure 22. West profile of a test-pit excavated between Structures 14 and 15 (Op. VI, Subop. 2) showing the walls of the above-mentioned constructions and a narrow passageway between them. Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkuł and Bogumil Pilarski.**

The test-pit at the southern side of Structure 14 (Suboperation 6) was excavated above the hypothetical line of the façade of *talud-tablero* platform 14/15 Sub-1 in order to determine its range and architectural details. About 0.30 m below the surface, we found the remains of a stairway leading from Patio 9 to Structure 14. Approximately 1.2 m below the surface, an earlier version of this stairway was also discovered. Both phases of the stairway probably date back to either the Late or Terminal Classic periods, but further research is required to precisely establish their dating. Below the stairway, a series of floors probably dating to the

Late Classic were also found. Below one of these floors (Floor 6) we came across a N-S oriented stucco-covered wall, probably the façade of platform 14/15 Sub-1 or its later remodeled version. The top of the platform is linked to Patio 1 with a stucco-covered stairway. We uncovered two upper steps of the stairway, both of which are some 0.36-0.38 m high and ca. 0.50-0.52 m wide ([Figure 23](#)). The stucco is identical in its structure with the stucco on the façade of *talud-tablero* platform 14/15 Sub-1 in its northern part in Suboperation 1. However, since that façade was still visible in the Late Classic, it is likely that the stucco could be of a later date, instead of the Early Classic to which the structure itself is dated. Next year, we will also continue our investigation of this location, in particular to establish the dating of the stairways, their size, and the character of the structure to which they lead and which they cover.



**Figure 23 . North profile of Suboperation 6 showing stucco-covered stair and succession of floors above it. Drawing by Pawel Kurzawa and Aleksander Danecki.**

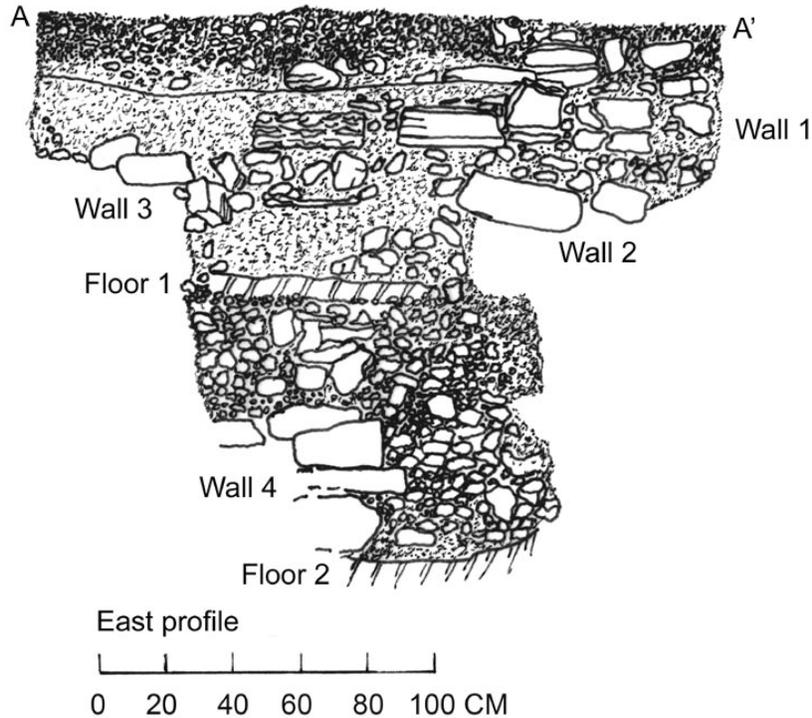
### ***Excavations on the Top of Structure 15 and the Discovery of a Royal Tomb***

Structure 15 located on the eastern side of Patio 1 is a large twelve-meters-high pyramid almost quadrangular at the base ([Figure 24](#)). It is one of the few constructions of the Acropolis complex that has not been investigated so far. On the eastern side of the pyramid a looters' trench was detected and subsequently sealed by the Triangulo Project; fortunately the looters missed the tomb. During the 2006 season, at the top of Structure 15, one test-pit (2x2 m) was excavated by the NAP (Op. VI, Subop. 3). The top of the pyramid is almost flat and as shown by the NAP research, it did not support any vaulted building in the final

phases other than stone foundations for a superstructure, probably a temple, built of perishable materials. Only several centimeters below the surface in the eastern part of the test-pit, we found the remains of a wall built as a single layer of stones and oriented southwards (Wall 1) with two parallel rows of stones below, probably the remains of the walls of an even older structure (Walls 2 and 3) ([Figure 25](#)). Moreover, in the eastern profile of the test-pit, ca. 0.17 m under the surface, we came across an offering (Offering 4) which consisted of an *olla* of the Cambio Unslipped type covered with a ceramic sherd. Inside the vessel three stone rings with carved representations of human faces on the outer surface ([Figure 26](#)), as well as six stone beads and the remains of bones were discovered.



**Figure 24. General view for Patio 1 and Structures 15 and 14 (in the background) from the west.**



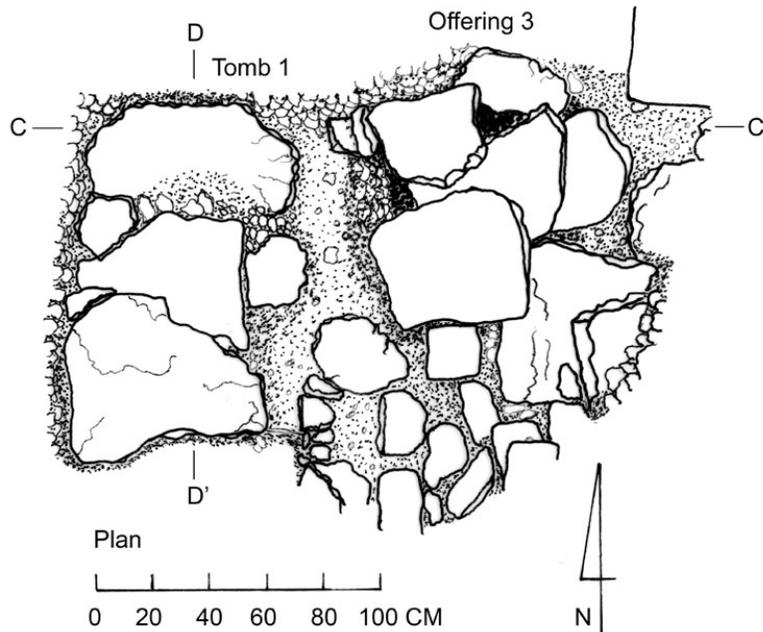
**Figure 25. Eastern profile of a test-pit excavated at the summit of Structure 15 (Suboperation 3 of Operation VI). Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkuł and Bogumil Pilarski.**



**Figure 26. Two of the three rings found in Offering 4.**

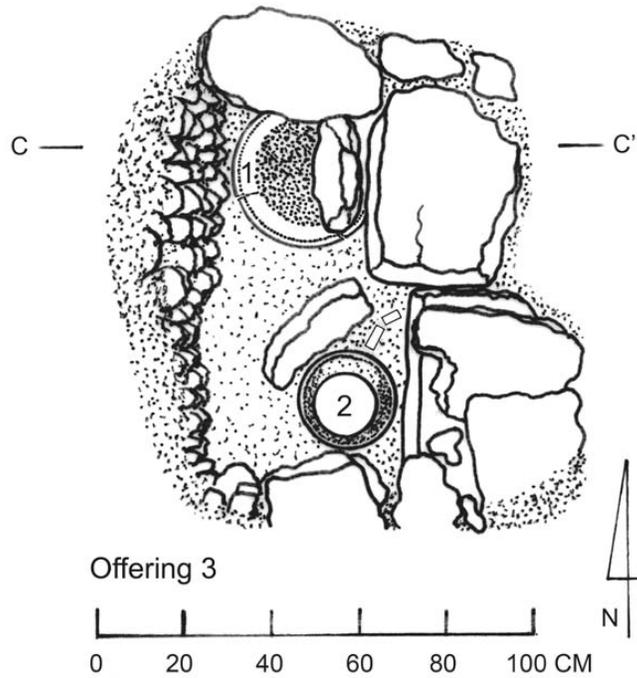
The excavations continued between Walls 2 and 3. At a depth of 0.72 m below the surface, a floor was discovered (Floor 1). It was preserved in the eastern and north-eastern part of the test-pit only. The material excavated between Walls 2 and 3 included among others, some ceramics from the Terminal Classic, implying that the construction of these walls can be dated to that period.

Below the level of Floor 1 there was a fill composed of small irregular stones and larger ones. In the central part of the test-pit, ca. 0.4 m below Floor 1, we found a wall built of three layers of stones and oriented E-W (Wall 4, cf. [Figure 25](#)). That wall was visible only in the center of the pit (it did not continue westwards or eastwards). It was constructed on Floor 2, situated some 1.63 m below the surface of the top of the pyramid. The material above Floor 2 contained ceramics from the Late Classic, and therefore that layer and the aforementioned wall may date to that period.



**Figure 27. Plan of Suboperation 3 showing capstones covering Tomb 1 along with stone slabs covering Offering 3. Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkuł.**

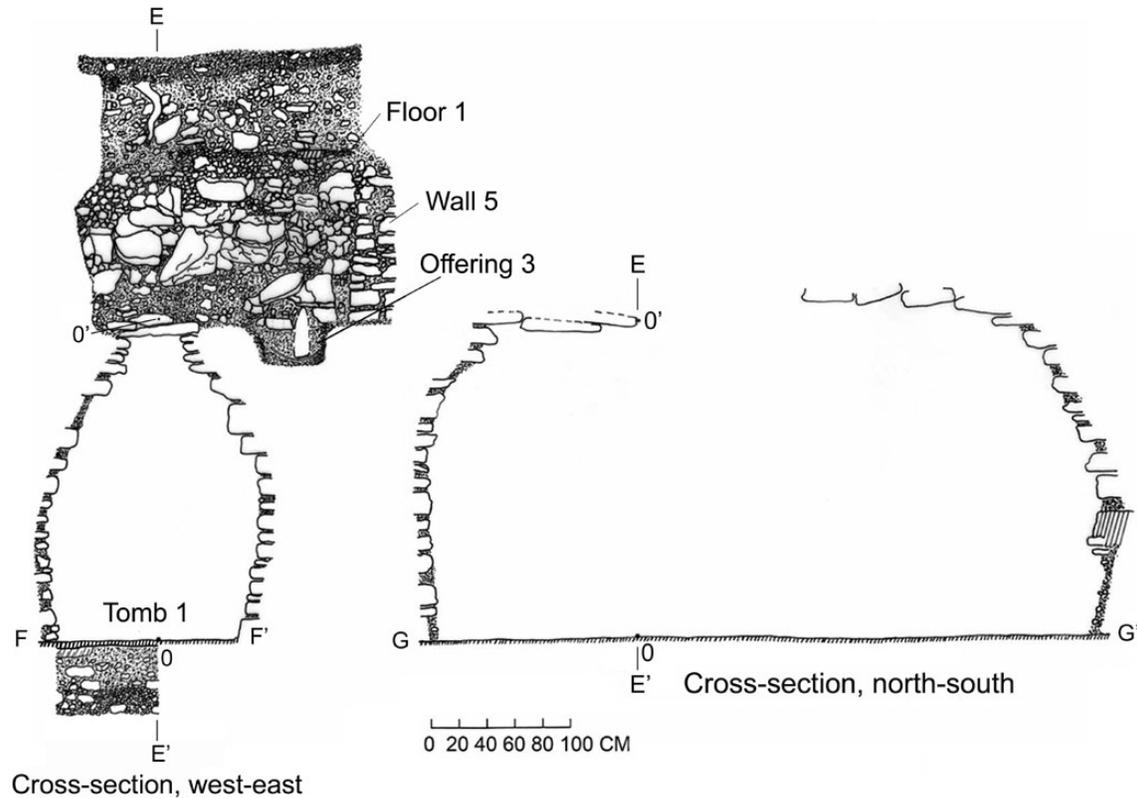
The research continued in the center of the test-pit, resulting in the unearthing of a row of large stone slabs covering a tomb which was ca. 1.75 m below the surface. While extending the pit northwards and eastwards in order to facilitate lifting the capstones, to the east of them we found three other slabs covering an offering ([Figure 27](#)). The offering is stratigraphically later than the tomb; a cist had been made in the fill which covered the tomb's eastern wall, and it was lined with cut stones at its northern, eastern and southern sides to make a space ca. 0.90 m N-S x 0.44 m E-W and ca. 0.40/0.50 m high. The offering included two vessels: a tripod plate of Saxche Orange Polychrome and a bowl of the Tinaja Red type ([Figure 28](#)). The first vessel was ritually smashed with a large cut stone which was found inside that vessel. A greenstone tube 12 cm long and 1.15 cm wide was found between the two vessels ([Figure 29](#)); it was broken into two pieces (probably also with a stone found lying diagonally next to the tube). The offering was dated ceramically to the Late Classic period.



**Figure 28. Plan of Offering 3 with location of two vessels and a broken greenstone tube. Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkuł.**



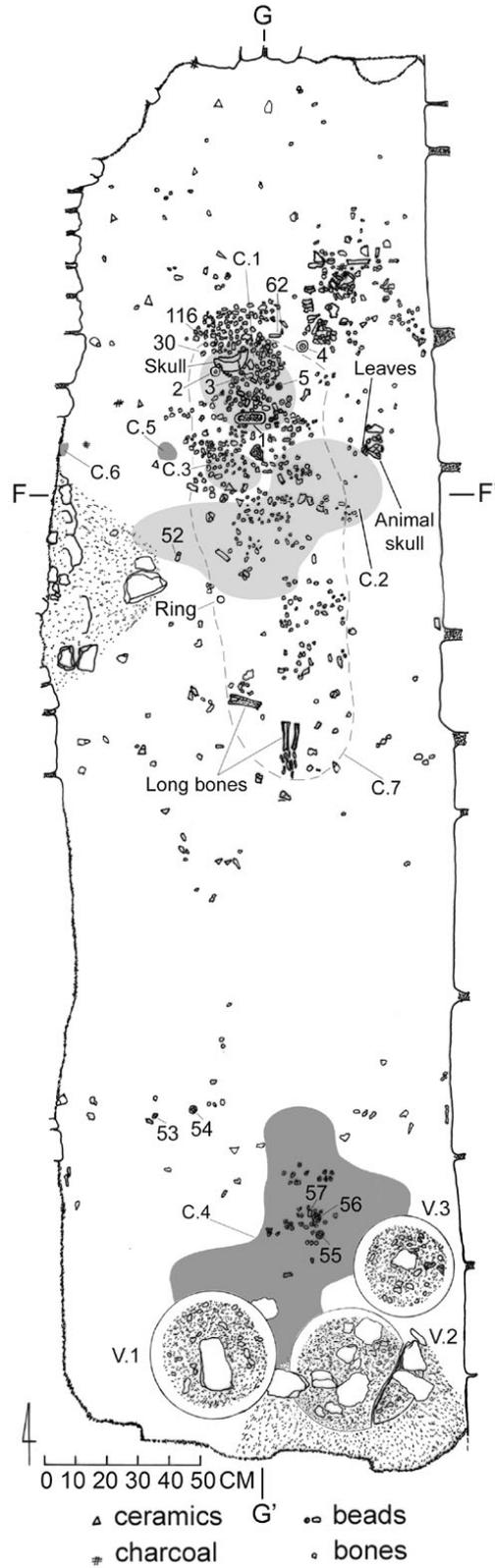
**Figure 29. Photo showing vessels and greenstone tube from Offering 3.**



**Figure 30. North-south and east-west section of Tomb 1.  
Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkuł.**

The tomb we found inside Structure 15 is the first that has been discovered at Nakum. It was constructed on the N-S axis and was a vaulted crypt 4.55 m long, 1.50 m wide and ca. 2.20 m high ([Figure 30](#)). To build the tomb, the Maya dug down to the previous floors and a wall built in the N-S direction. The eastern wall of the tomb was built on that wall, while the western and northern walls were constructed on the floor mentioned above. The erection of the southern wall began on another, somewhat higher floor, which must have been destroyed by the Maya during the construction of the tomb (cf. [Figure 30](#)). Below that floor, the southern wall of the tomb was reinforced with mortar mixed with small stones. A large rectangular hole was originally left in the middle of the western wall of the tomb through which the buried individual could be put inside the chamber. That hole was walled in after the deposition of the dead person.

Inside the tomb, the remains of a human skeleton with the head oriented to the north were found. The deceased was furnished with many offerings, including three ceramic vessels, greenstone ear-spools, a greenstone pectoral and more than four hundred greenstone and shell beads of different shapes which were from at least a few, if not a dozen or so necklaces and chains ([Figure 31](#), [Figure 32](#), and [Figure 33](#)).



**Figure 31. Plan of Tomb 1 showing location of grave goods and other findings. Drawing by Wieslaw Koszkul and Jaroslaw Zralka.**



**Figure 32. The interior of the tomb after it was opened.**



**Figure 33. Photo of the northern part of the tomb showing area of the skull and chest of the deceased person; greenstone pectoral is seen in the center. Photo was taken before exploration of the tomb.**

During excavations, the tomb was sectioned into 215 sectors for artifacts and 20 sectors for bones in order to enable a more accurate documentation of the fine beads and pieces of bones deposited in the layer of soil on the bottom of the burial chamber (ca. 3-7 cm thick). Unfortunately, almost the entire skeleton had been destroyed by rodents that had bitten the bones into small pieces and dragged them around ([Figure 33](#)). Very few bones were left *in situ*. The remains of the skeletons of these animals were found at several places inside the tomb.

The analysis of the bones carried out by Varinia Matute revealed that the person buried in the tomb might have been between 35 and 45 years old at the time of death. Due to the damage done to the bones by the rodents, the sex of the buried person could not be determined (Matute 2006).

As already mentioned, the lower part of the southern wall of the tomb had been reinforced only with mortar. In time, the mortar peeled off and fell into the vessels and broke one of them into two pieces (the one with the representation of the dancing Maize God). The exploration of the tomb evidenced that this must have happened before the animals dragged around the human bones, since the displaced pieces of bones were placed on the crumbled mortar inside the vessels.

In the northern part of the tomb, close to the fragments of a skull, ear-spools and dozens of greenstone beads belonging to the necklace hanging on the buried person's neck were found. Close to these beads a shell-shaped jade pectoral 10.6 cm long and 4.9 cm wide was found *in situ* ([Figure 34](#)). Its position indicates that it was part of a necklace containing the greenstone beads and was laid on the dead person's chest. The pectoral had been worn with the longer endings oriented horizontally, the concave side facing outwards, and the convex side turned inwards. In the upper part of the convex side there are two suspension holes which end on the side of the pectoral. The concave side of the pectoral is ornamented with an incision representing an anthropomorphic figure with elaborate headdress ([Figure 35](#) and [Figure 36](#)). The style and the character of this representation points to the Early Classic origin of the artifact, and it might have been passed down the generations as an important heirloom. A very similar representation of an ancestor-protector is seen among others on Stela 31 from Tikal (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: 51c).



Figure 34. Greenstone beads forming necklaces, pectoral and ear-spools found in the tomb.

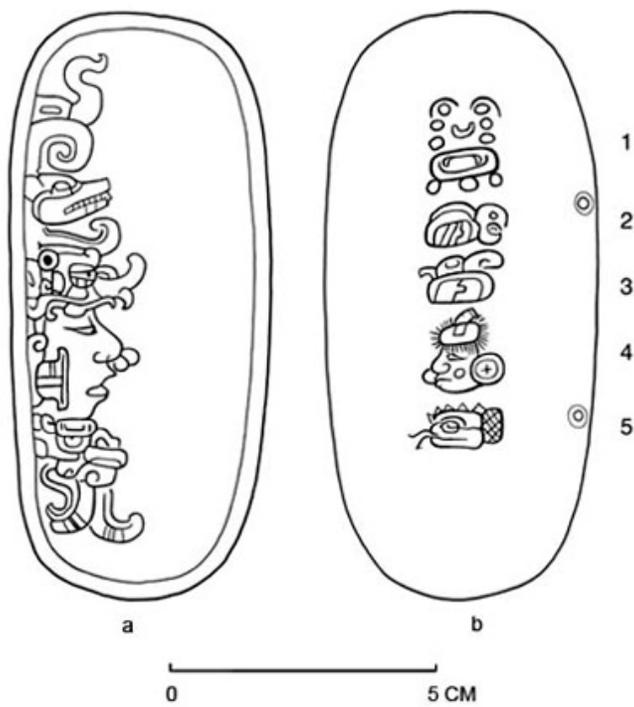


Figure 35. Pectoral from Tomb 1. Drawing by Simon Martin.



Figure 36. Greenstone pectoral from Tomb 1, concave side.



Figure 37. Greenstone pectoral from Tomb 1, convex side.

Moreover, a series of five glyphs was found incised in the center of the convex side of the pectoral ([Figure 35](#) and [Figure 37](#)). However, the character of that incision differs slightly from the incision on the concave side, suggesting that the incisions were probably made by different artists. They could have been made at different times, presumably within the Early Classic period.

The analysis of the inscription on the pectoral, carried out, among others, by Simon Martin (Martin 2006; Koszkuł *et al.* 2007), proves that the first glyph refers to the pectoral itself. The second and the third glyphs function as a pair: the second glyph is a toponym with the suffix *'-ha'* which usually stands for water, while the third one is the *ajaw* glyph. Combined together, the two glyphs constitute an emblem glyph meaning 'the ruler of the *?-ha*'. In this case, the emblem glyph precedes the ruler's name given at the end of the inscription. The fourth glyph is probably the head of some deity, and the fifth glyph presents the head of a serpent and it can be read as *chan* (Martin 2006). Recently, David Stuart has also suggested (Stuart, personal communication, 2006) that the second glyph may refer to Yaxhá. This gives rise to a number of additional questions concerning the relationships between the two centers and the origin of the pectoral. According to Stuart, the fourth glyph represents the head of the Maize God and thus the ruler's name can be read as Ixim Chan. Taking all these data into account, the inscription can be interpreted as follows: "This is the pectoral of the Yaxhá ruler Ixim Chan."

Somewhat below and eastwards of the necklace and the pectoral, in a layer of dirt and soil that had apparently fallen from the vault of the tomb, dozens of small greenstone and shell beads were found. A similar concentration of greenstone beads was discovered in the area of the western part of the skeleton, approximately around the supposed height of the hips. These could have been the chains on the hands of the buried person. Interestingly, in the western part of the tomb (Sector 129), approximately at the height of the right hand, we found a very narrow shell ring with an external diameter of 2.1 cm and an internal diameter of 1.7 cm. This narrow ring may imply that the person buried in the tomb was a female.

In the southern part of the tomb, three vessels were found (denominated Vases: 1, 2 and 3) ([Figure 38](#)). The first vessel is a flat-based bowl with a gradual incurved rim of the Azúcar Impressed type ([Figure 39](#)). The diameter of the vessel mouth is 37.5 cm; the lip is slightly thickened and 3 cm below it, the vessel bears an impressed flange. The interior and lip of the vessel are covered with light brown slip. The second vessel (Vessel no. 3) is a flat-based bowl with walls curving out slightly and is of the Chaquiste Impressed type ([Figure 40](#)). The diameter of the vessel mouth is 33.2 cm; the lip is slightly thickened. Below the lip, the vessel bears an impressed decoration. The interior and upper part of the exterior of the vessel is covered by a slip of reddish brown color.



**Figure 38. Vessels found in the southern part of the tomb.**



**Figure 39. A bowl of Azúcar Impressed type from Tomb 1 (Vessel no. 1).**



**Figure 40. A bowl of Chaquiste Impressed type from Tomb 1 (Vessel no. 3).**



**Figure 41. Tikal Dancer style plate from the Tomb 1 showing the dancing Maize God (Vessel no. 2).**

Of special significance is Vessel no. 2. It is a lateral-flange tripod plate with semi-cylindrical supports of the Saxche Orange Polychrome type ([Figure 41](#)). The diameter of the plate is 38.2 cm. During excavations in the interior of the vessel, a skeleton of a bird as well as pieces of charcoal were found. The vessel's flange was cut into a step-fret motif and covered with blue pigment ([Figure 42](#)). The background of the interior of the plate was painted with orange and red color with several circular black bands. A single dancing male figure was painted on the flat interior bottom of the plate. The figure represents the dancing Maize God and the dancing posture is represented by the figure's raised left leg with a slightly bent knee and an outflung left arm and flying loincloth ends. This vessel is a beautiful example of a Tikal Dancer style plate. In an essay, Erik Boot recently (2003) presented twenty-seven plates painted in the Tikal Dancer style. The majority of them were removed illegally from the original context and their provenance is unknown. Very few of them were excavated during archaeological investigations and they come from Tikal and the Uaxactún tombs. It seems that this kind of vessel was mainly produced for funerary purposes although the discovery of many Tikal Dancer plate sherds in non-funerary contexts was also documented. Moreover, some plates' interiors are eroded, indicating that they must have been used as service vessels (Reents-Budet 1994: 198). In the past, it was believed that these vessels were produced exclusively at Tikal or at Tikal and Uaxactún. However, their stylistic and chemical variability indicates that they were created in different workshops located in smaller subsidiary sites within the greater Tikal region (Reents-Budet 1994: 197-198, 339). Our discovery of a Tikal Dancer plate at Tomb 1 indicates that Nakum (which is located not far from Tikal) might have been one such site.



**Figure 42. Vessel 2 from Tomb 1 (Tikal Dancer style plate) with flange cut into a step-fret motif and covered with blue pigment.**

Analysis of all three vessels made by the project ceramist Bernard Hermes indicates that the tomb can be dated to the Late Classic period; more accurately to the transition between Tepeu 1 and Tepeu 2 phases.



**Figure 43. Four spindle whorls found in Tomb 1.**

Moreover, in the southern part of the tomb, to the north of the vessels, four stone spindle whorls ([Figure 43](#)) and dozens of small imperforated shells were also found to be deposited. Weaving was an important activity for Maya women and the discovery of spindle whorls as well as the narrow ring (for a fine hand) in the tomb may indicate that a royal woman was deposited in the tomb. In the central part of the tomb, close to its western wall we also found a small piece of dark substance (ca. 1 cm x 1 cm) with probably some fabric or a different object imprinted on it. Dots and lines are clearly visible on that piece, though more detailed information would need detailed laboratory analysis.

The deposition in the tomb of a large amount of greenstone jewelry as well as the Tikal Dancer plate with a representation of the dancing Maize God must have been an important symbolism of deep meaning to the Maya. We know that Maya rulers were interred in their tombs with jade jewelry, which indicated their high status and, as Miller and Martin write in their new book, it also “emulated the finery of the Maize God, whose splendid jewels were metaphors for the verdant green foliage of the sprouting cornstalks” (Miller and Martin 2004: 70). Maya kings believed that after death they would follow the path of the Maize God, defeat the lords of the Underworld and be reborn. In preparation for this resurrection they were dressed for their last journey in elaborate jewelry which they wore during life (Miller and Martin 2004: 57-58, 70). As mentioned above, the Tikal Dancer plate represents the dancing Maize God, most probably at the prime of his life. It is possible that such plates were used to present green corn or tamales (Miller and Martin 2004: 58), although in the Nakum vessel a water bird

was placed as the offering. This vessel may further confirm links of the dead person from Tomb 1 of Nakum with the Maize God and his resurrection.

Several clues point that Tomb 1 is a royal interment, the first being its location in the area of the Acropolis, which is the largest and the most impressive complex of the whole site. The tomb was deposited inside a pyramid structure located on the eastern side of Patio 1, the largest and the most important courtyard of the Acropolis. Structure E, which is located just opposite Structure 15 was most probably the residence of the royal family during the Late Classic. At that time it was the most prominent residential construction in the area of the Acropolis; the location of Structure E and Structure 15 on the same axis may not be coincidental. During the Terminal Classic the seat of the royal family most probably switched to the Central Acropolis (Structure Y).

Second clue lies in the fact that the deceased from Tomb 1 was deposited in a vaulted crypt of great size. This is one of the largest tomb crypts discovered in the Maya Lowlands. Moreover, the furniture of Tomb 1 is remarkable. More than 450 greenstone and shell beads were discovered inside. The deposition of a greenstone pectoral with the name of a ruler further confirms the royal status of the person from Tomb 1. This kind of jewelry must have been kept by the royal family as a special heirloom and it is possible that the person deposited in Tomb 1 was a descendant of a ruler mentioned in the pectoral inscription.

## **Summary**

In sum, excavations carried out in 2006 in the North Sector of Nakum show that the most important complex of this area, the North Group was in large part constructed and enlarged in the Late Preclassic period over several architectural stages. The 2006 excavations in the North Sector did not reveal any vestiges of Early Classic architectural activity. It is also interesting that the Late Classic period is probably represented by the construction of Structure W only, although the dating of this palace needs to be confirmed by additional excavations. Important traces of Terminal Classic architectural activity and occupation in the North Sector were also found. This period saw the construction of Structure 96, a new version of Structure 99 and some remodeling of the North Group platform. Our research shows that the northern part of Nakum was not abandoned in the Terminal Classic period and confirms that during this period, the epicenter as well as the periphery of the site saw a great architectural boom (for further information see: Hermes *et al.* 2005 and Zralka *et al.* 2006).

The growth and prosperity of Terminal Classic Nakum stands in contrast to the prevailing pattern of collapse and abandonment seen at many other lowland Maya sites during this turbulent period. Our recently completed research indicates that Nakum survived the collapse of other major cities such as Tikal or Naranjo by at least a century. Nakum's Terminal Classic success can be attributed to its role as a fluvial port that controlled commercial activities within its

region. Its advantageous location on the northern portion of the Holmul River, combined with weakened competition from formerly more powerful neighbors such as Tikal and Naranjo, apparently permitted Nakum's ruling elite to actively expand its trade relationships in spite of the broad economic and political crisis that profoundly affected the Southern Maya Lowlands. Its success was relatively brief, however, for by the end of the Terminal Classic period (ca. 950) Nakum apparently succumbed to the same forces that had caused the collapse and abandonment of most lowland Maya cities.

The investigations of the Nakum Archaeological Project in the Southern Sector of Nakum confirmed several hypotheses and also brought about the discovery of the first tomb at the site. Research in the northeastern corner of Patio 1 revealed that the *talud-tablero* platforms D Sub-6 and 14/15 Sub-1 were merged at this place, entirely enclosing the patio from that side. The location of the two remaining *talud-tablero* platforms around Patio 1 suggests that the four platforms were merged into one large platform with the sunken courtyard in the center. This is the only patio in the entire Maya area enclosed by four *talud-tablero* structures and the closest analogy to this pattern is at Teotihuacán itself (cf. Koszkuł *et al.* 2006a). The appearance of *talud-tablero* architecture in Nakum in Tzakol 3 times may be the result of the activity of Siyah K'ak' in Petén (cf. Koszkuł *et al.* 2006a). It is extremely likely that the constructions around Patio 1 may conceal copious valuable information concerning that period and therefore will be the subject of intense investigation in the near future.

In the tomb, many interesting offerings were found—the most interesting being a Saxche Orange Polychrome vessel with a representation of the Maize God and, of note, an incised jade pectoral. The dancing Maize God painted on the vessel may symbolize the revival of the ruler after his/her death as the god itself.

The inscription from the above-mentioned pectoral yields some very interesting information about Nakum. If the second glyph is indeed the toponym of Yaxhá (as David Stuart suggested), it probably indicates a deep relationship between these polities. However, since the data is not enough, the character and dating of these relations remains obscure. We speculate that the pectoral could have been received as a gift or could have been taken from Yaxhá as a trophy by a Nakum ruler in the Early or Late Classic periods. The presence of the Yaxhá emblem may also suggest that Nakum could have been ruled at some time by a dynasty from Yaxhá (for an example of these kinds of relationships between Maya polities, compare the relations between Tikal and Dos Pilas in the Late Classic period [Martin and Grube 2000]). The figure incised on the concave side of the Nakum pectoral could be a prominent ancestor of Ixim Chan and perhaps also an ancestor of the individual buried in the tomb. His spiritual presence, recalled in the form of the representation on the pectoral, might have been intended to support the person wearing the pectoral. However, it must be said that the current data allows only for speculation regarding the connections between the

ancestor figure, Ixim Chan and the buried person, as well as the character of the supposed relations between Yaxhá and Nakum.

## **Acknowledgments**

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