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Naachtún, Petén, Guatemala: First Analyses, Guatemala



Research Year: 2006

Culture: Maya

Chronology: Classic

Location: Petén, Guatemala

Site: Naachtún

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Abstract

This report documents findings of the Naachtun Archaeological Project (NAP), specifically detailing the ceramic data collected in 2004 and 2005. It also outlines the ceramic sequence tied to a series of radiocarbon dates run with FAMSI support. The report briefly addresses some preliminary results of recent Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) of sherds from several Naachtun contexts. Finally, information on a series of looted pots rescued by the site guardian is reported in the [Appendix](#).

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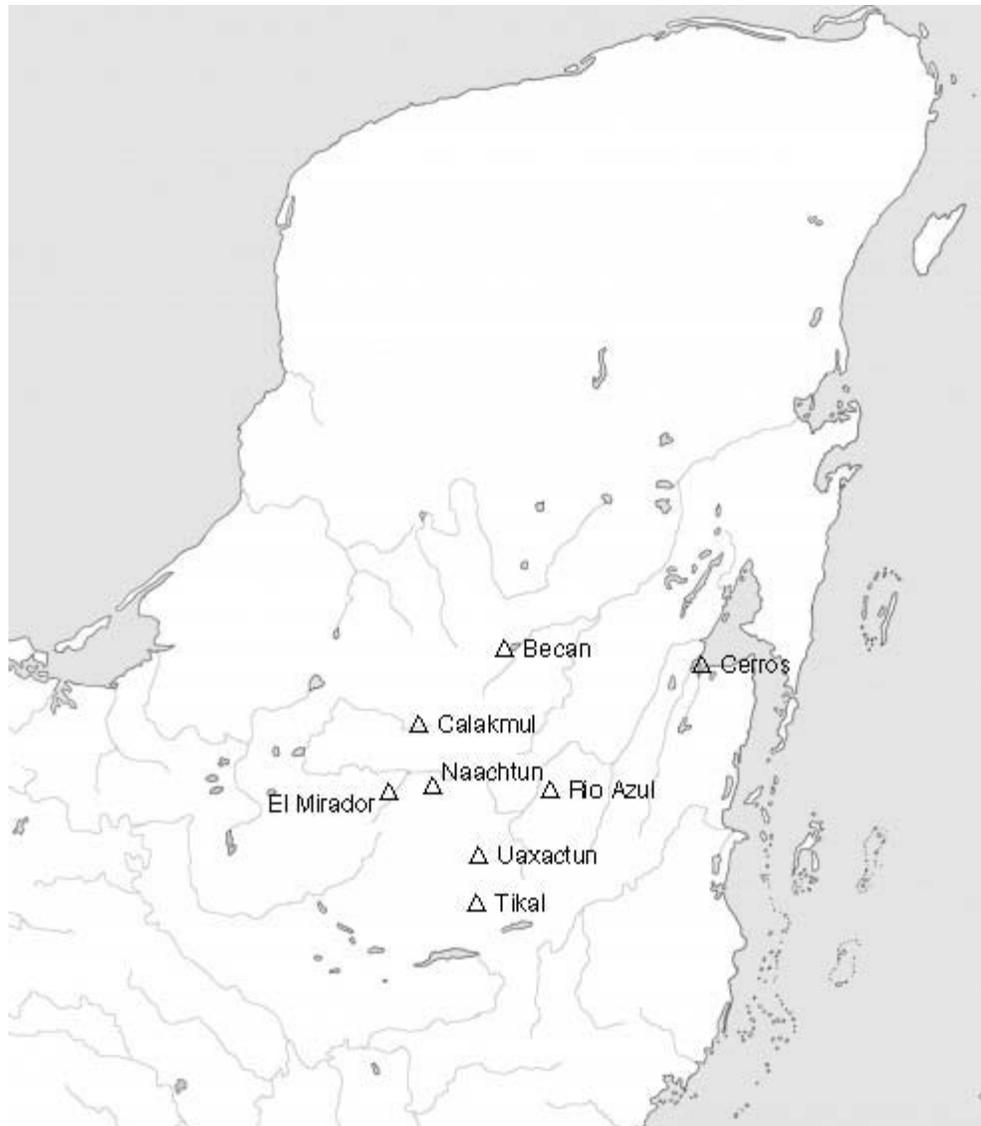


Figure 1. Map of Maya Lowlands locating Naachtun and sites mentioned in text.

Introduction

The Maya site of Naachtun is located in northern Peten, Guatemala just one kilometer south of the Mexican border ([Figure 1](#)). It sits on an upland feature known as the Central Karst Plateau (CKP; Reese-Taylor 2011). The NAP investigations documented nearly 1000 years of occupation at the site and revealed that, like today, Naachtun stood on a hotly contested frontier throughout the Classic era (Nondedeo *et al.* 2011; Reese-Taylor *et al.* 2009; Walker 2008; Rangel and Reese-Taylor 2005).

When work began in 2004, Naachtun was proposed to be the site known as Masul in the epigraphic record (Mathews *et al.* 2007, Mathews and Parmington 2005; Martin and

Grube 2000:39; 1995; [Figure 2](#)). Masul had a complex relationship with Classic superpowers Tikal and Calakmul. Both a conquest and an alliance are recorded on Tikal monuments, while an undated reference to a conquest of Masul is recorded on a Calakmul stair tread. By interpolation, Naachtun was thought to be a good candidate for that historic city because it lies directly between them and had stelae of the right dates. Situated on a sort of no man's land between the two powerful rivals, the site is merely a three day march from Calakmul and perhaps twice that from Tikal. To date, however, the Masul emblem glyph has not been specifically identified at the site. Despite the absence of an emblem glyph, Naachtun was clearly of strategic import throughout the Classic. The NAP research documented that Naachtun saw calamitous defeats and major victories in the Classic era. Clearly, controlling Naachtun was important to maintaining power on the plateau.

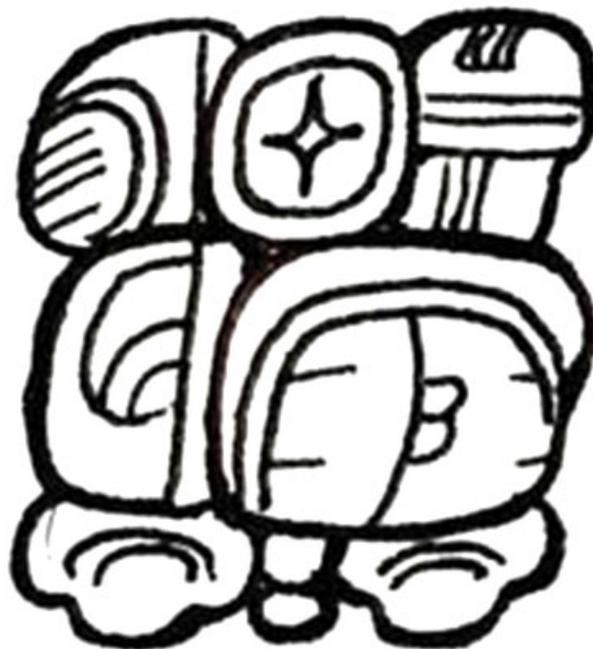


Figure 2. Masul emblem glyph (After Mathews and Parmington 2005:112, Fig. 42).

Prior Research

Thanks to early explorations on the CKP (Lundell 1932, 1933; Morley 1937-38) a good site map existed for the NAP work ([Figure 3](#)). Buildings were described in sufficient detail to infer Early and Late Classic occupation, furthermore, there were dated monuments confirming Late Classic activity (Mathews and Parmington 2005). Early photographs also document that Naachtun was virtually undisturbed when first visited by Morley.

Morley named the site Naachtun, Yucatec for distant stone, because it was so difficult to reach by mule train from Yucatan. Today it is still a remote site on the CKP, located

within the Biotopo Naachtun-Dos Lagunas on the northern fringe of one of the largest continuous tropical forest canopies in Central America. The mature tropical canopy sheltering the city is virtually pristine, having been uninhabited for nearly a millennium. Today the site is accessible only by a dry season road running north from Uaxactun through the Joventud Bajo and west up a steep escarpment to the CKP. The road was opened to Naachtun for the current project in 2004 after it was determined that mules were doing more damage to the bush eating their way to the site than truck traffic would produce.

The site core is just one km south of the Mexican border, making it an easy trek in from the North through a poorly defended international boundary. While inaccessibility has protected Naachtun in some ways, nearly all of its major structures and most small mounds, have been heavily looted since Morley's visit. Major illicit activity probably began in the late 70s or early 80s when other sites were heavily pillaged, such as Rio Azul about 50 km to the east. NAP researchers and staff confirmed that active looting was ongoing ([Appendix](#)). Naachtun guardians found abandoned camps on the site periphery, one with fresh provisions where a looted Late Classic tomb became a temporary storage facility for pots that could not be carried out immediately. During 2004-05, the guardians recovered 59 pots left by looters, one of which had been glued together in the looters' field camp ([Figure 4](#)). During survey of Group B, excavators also discovered whole pots in plain view, indicative of continuous looting at Naachtun proper.

Recent evidence for looting is evident throughout the CKP in both Campeche and Peten. Naachtun was, in fact, the first major site in the northeastern portion of the plateau to undergo controlled excavation. The NAP project collected enough information to begin to create a pottery profile for the region, including a chemical signature for locally produced vessels through NAA. Some Naachtun ceramics have been tied to vessels in private collections for which no match had been identified previously. That said, much of what the NAP excavations produced about Naachtun stems from cleaning loot holes and trenches, as well as limited systematic testing and stratigraphic excavation.



Figure 3. Morley's map of Naachtun (After Morley 1937-38).



Figure 4. Looted Palmar Orange Polychrome plate recovered by site guardian already glued by looters—Op 9000 collection.

Settlement Summary

Naachtun first rose to prominence in the uplands of northern Peten during Transitional Early Classic Kan Phase about 200 CE (Walker *et al.* 2007; [Figure 5](#)). Probes in the

ubiquitous saqueos dotting the site revealed no significant Preclassic occupation, although Late Preclassic settlements may have existed to the south and west of the site. Structure I marks the likely civic center for this early settlement. Immigrants from El Mirador may have accounted for some of the increase in population ca. 200 CE as Naachtun's rise coincided with Mirador's major decline (Hansen 1990:211-213). Regardless of their origin, Naachtun elites controlled access to sufficient labor to complete major constructions, including a substantial E Group built on bedrock in Kan Phase (Salazar 2005:113). The remnants of a rich tomb found looted in Temple XXIIIb, the central east building of the E Group, dated initial construction (Walker 2008). The site thrived during Early Classic Balam Phase, especially in the vicinity of Group A.

Naachtun saw a dramatic break in the ceramic sequence during Middle Classic Batz' Phase, shifting from Peten-related types to Calakmul-like materials. The ceramic break coincided with the construction of a defensive wall around six Early Classic buildings in Group A (Arredondo 2005). Other than the defensive wall, a pause in construction coincided with the shift in ceramic affiliation. A radiocarbon date on a hearth from Structure I isolated this short lived phase to 550-650 CE (Walker 2008). It correlates with Calakmul's first great expansion beyond the CKP after 550 CE. At this time the site core shifted east to Structure XXV, evidenced by a pair of stelae with surviving Batz' Phase dates which frame the central staircase of this low platform. Stela 1 dates to 9.9.10.0.0 (623 CE) and Stela 2 dates one *kat'un*¹ later to 9.10.10.0.0 (642 CE; Mathews and Parmington 2005:109 Table 2). The earlier date coincides with the erection of the first Late Classic stela pair at Calakmul, Stelae 28 and 29 (Martin and Grube 2000:106) but this text is eroded.

Naachtun's Late Classic Maax Phase settlement was the most extensive in the site's history. At this time the site center shifted further east to Group B. During Maax phase an intrasite processional route was completed from Structure I in the west to the base of Temple XXXVIII in the east (Morton 2007). The entire site core was bisected by this processional route which had clusters of stelae and stela altar pairs situated at important junctures, Structure I in the west, the central ballcourt (Structures XIII and XIV), Structure XXV and the Group B terminus. Some stelae and altars may have been relocated at this time, enhancing the processional experience through the city, and culminating on La Avenida de las Estelas in Group B ([Figure 6](#)). Major palaces and range structures built during Maax Phase clustered around this causeway terminus and the newly built temple pyramid.

The NAP excavations did not locate much Terminal Classic Late Maax material, although subsequent work documented at least some new construction and occupation (Nondedeo *et al.* 2011). Naachtun does not appear to have seen any significant settlement during the Postclassic or Colonial eras.

¹ Dates are reported here in terms of the Maya calendar. A *k'atun* is a unit of time, calculated as 20 X 360 days, or approximately 20 years. It can be translated loosely as a generation.

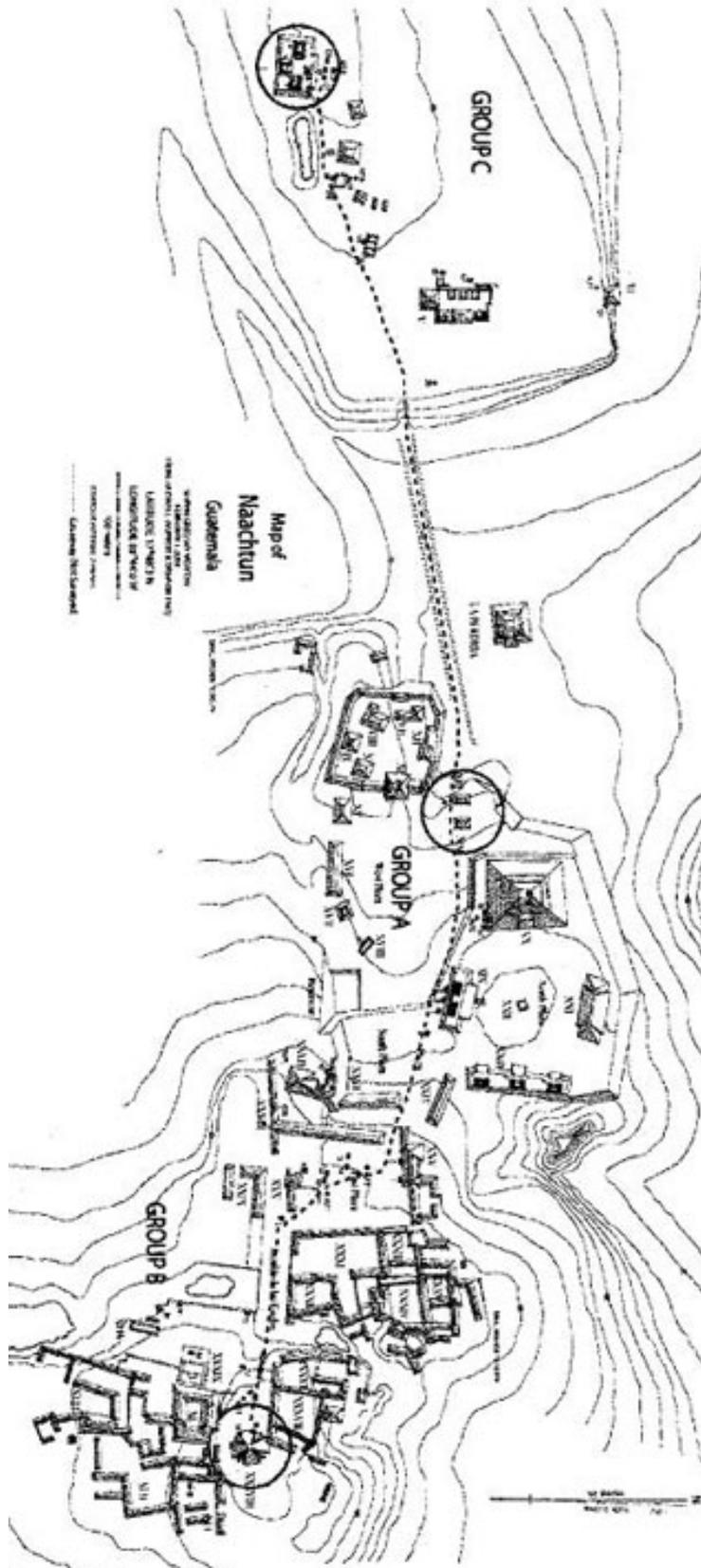


Figure 6. Avenida de las Estelas (After Morton 2007:157 Fig. 8.4).

Ceramic Analysis

Ceramic analysis of the Naachtun collections began on the Ides of March 2004 at the NAP Field Camp; excavations had begun a month earlier. As Naachtun had never been excavated professionally prior to 2004, there was no prior information on potential ceramic materials other than inferences made from known architecture. By the end of the first two-month season, there was enough information to construct a fairly complete chronology (Walker and Alvarado 2005:137 Table 7). After a second season (Walker and Patino 2007) and the results of 14C assays (Walker 2008) a well documented Naachtun ceramic sequence was completed for the Classic era. The Preclassic is less securely understood and the Postclassic appears to be absent. As sample sizes are small and were often retrieved from looted contexts, new types have not been created for this report. Future researchers (cf. Patino 2009) may complete this task when sufficient samples have been excavated.

Prior ceramic research in the CKP stems from work at two major sites, El Mirador in Peten, Guatemala and Calakmul in Campeche, Mexico. Forsyth's (2007, 2006, 1993, 1989) work on Mirador and Nakbe proved very useful in constructing a site chronology. Calakmul in particular was key to identifying Naachtun's Middle Classic Batz' Phase (Boucher and Dzul 1997, Dominguez-Carrasco 1994). Garcia Lopez' (2008) analysis of surface collections from several sites in southeastern Campeche provided comparative material from Ivan Sprajc's recent surveys (2008). These materials are closely tied to the Naachtun sequence, which is not surprising since these sites are close in proximity as well. Reents-Budet's (2010) NAA analysis of codex style materials was consulted although it does not specifically address the Naachtun samples.

Farther afield, a substantial corpus of ceramic research was available for comparative use. Smith's widely used Uaxactun report (1955; Smith and Gifford 1966) provided an anchor for comparison. Uaxactun's Tzakol II and Tepeu II/III Phases are near identities with Balam and Maax Phases at Naachtun. Brief type descriptions reported from Rio Azul (Adams 1999, 1986; Adams and Adams 2000) and ceramic reports from Tikal (Culbert 1993; Laporte and Fialko 1995) also proved useful. Other relevant ceramic reports consulted include Altar de Sacrificios (Adams 1971), Seibal (Sabloff 1975), Barton Ramie (Gifford 1976), Becan (Ball 1977) and Cuello (Kosakowsky and Pring 1998, Kosakowsky 1983). The author's familiarity with Terminal Classic and Postclassic ceramics from northern Belize (Walker 1990) also proved useful in dating the site's abandonment.

Methodology

In 2004, a testing program throughout the site (Op 1) provided initial data for the site's chronology and spatial organization through time (Rangel 2005). Several wider exposures (Ops 2, 3 and 4) revealed sufficient sealed stratigraphy as well as some

primary contexts. In particular, Op 3, a deep trench and column excavated into the edge of the large reservoir, revealed a complete sequence of broken jars and other ceramics, albeit in secondary context (Parry 2007, 2005).

The NAP research design focused on the Late Preclassic/Early Classic transition at Naachtun (Walker *et al.* 2007). As a result, excavations concentrated on likely Transitional Early Classic contexts. Based on the results of the 2004 testing program, Groups C and A became the focus in 2005 to amplify the Late Preclassic and Early Classic sample (Ops 12, 13, 14).

Op 2 was the only extensive investigation into a presumed Late Classic context (Seibert 2004). The lateral exposure of portions of a Maax Phase palace in Group B (Structure XL) produced a relatively small sample of sherds (n=520), many of which were poorly preserved in humus lots. As Maax Phase was the latest as well as the most extensive occupation at the site, it was readily accessible for investigation. Maax Phase deposits were located in the reservoir and in several test pits and looted contexts. These contexts expanded the NAP view of the Late Classic, allowing the identification of a greater portion of the eroded Op 2 ceramics for Seibert's research.

Ops 5, 6, 7, and 16 comprised an ongoing program of cleaning, consolidating and backfilling loot holes and trenches throughout the site. These produced more sherds from earlier phases than would have been anticipated at a pristine site. Indeed, much of what is understood about early Naachtun stems from the remains of illegal excavations, precluding definitive statements about construction sequence and direct association. These are by nature a selective sample, with the fine portable whole pots and other cached commodities already removed. Nonetheless, these illegal trenches in some cases confirmed that even massive buildings, such as Temple XX, were constructed in very few stages, and that buildings for the most part rest on bedrock and do not encase earlier structures (Salazar 2005:113). With the exception of the walled compound on the southwest corner of Group A (Arredondo 2005), test pitting confirmed this assessment. Rather, Naachtun exhibits horizontal stratigraphy from west to east, beginning in Late Preclassic Kutz Phase at Group C, moving to Group A in Early Classic Kan and Balam Phases, to the East Plaza of Group A in Middle Classic Batz' Phase, and culminating in a Late Classic Maax Phase site core in Group B. Significantly, even in excavated context, structural debris generally contained little earlier material as admix.

About 18,000 sherds and three whole vessels were collected in the NAP excavations and salvage operations. Two additional whole pots stem from surface collections in Group B, presumably left by looters. A sixth whole pot was collected on the road to a nearby freshwater source at El Espinero, but it is very likely from a looted tomb at Naachtun. During 2004-05, 59 additional pots were secured from active looters by the site guardians during their normal perimeter patrols in the region. These date exclusively to Batz' and Maax Phases ([Appendix](#)).

A brief summary of 2004 and 2005 sherd counts is reported in [Table 1](#). Sherd totals include counts of about 20 partly reconstructable vessels, most from looted tombs or

caches and trenches in major architecture. They were described and photographed but not reconstructed due to time constraints.

Naachtun ceramics were analyzed using Type:Variety/Mode analysis as described by Gifford (1960). Type names follow the standard convention in which those sites closest to Naachtun provide type names when applicable. Analysis was conducted in the field in 2004 and 2005, and in the lab house and storage facility in Guatemala City during 2005, 2007 and 2010.

Because of the relatively small sample size and looted contexts used, this analysis is preliminary. No new ceramic types have been established, although some provisional new types have been identified. These designations await better sample sizes and more sealed stratigraphic contexts for confirmation. Some Maax Phase polychromes appear to conform to written type descriptions elsewhere, but have not been visually compared. About 150 Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) samples have been taken; only preliminary results on a portion of the samples are available for this report. There is some variability in the assemblage that has not yet been quantified including sherds that cluster together but have no rims and/or form profiles or are represented by only a very small or single sample. The larger question of specifically distinguishing between Late Classic red wares, including Nanzal and Tinaja groups, is left for later researchers to sort out.

Table 1. Naachtun Sherd Counts by Operation

Op	Sherd Count	Location	Comments
1	3313	Testing Program	KUTZ through MAAX various locations across site
2	571	Group B, Str. XL	Virtually all MAAX to bedrock
3	9807	Group A, Reservoir	BALAM through MAAX constructions; prior usage as natural feature
4	2465	Group A, Walled Compound	Primarily BALAM with surface MAAX; perhaps KAN or earlier beneath excavation levels
5		A Few Surface Finds	Various Locations
6	95	Loot Hole Clearance	Various Locations
7	219	Loot Hole and Trench Clearance Group A	Various Locations
12	208	Group C, Str. ID	KUTZ to BATZ' includes Stela 26
13	718	Group A, Walled Compound	KAN through BATZ'
14	590	Group A, Walled Compound	KAN through BALAM
16	66	Loot Hole and Trench Clearance	BALAM through MAAX
	18,052	Total Sherds Counted 2004-2005	

Chronology

The Naachtun chronology was tentative at first due to the use of looted materials in unexcavated context. As a result, the NAP chronology used numbers rather than phase names in early publications. Cross-dating with known materials from other sites aided initial sorts. After two seasons of excavation there was sufficient information to delineate a complete Naachtun ceramic sequence ([Table 2](#)). Preliminary phase designations are included alongside new phase names as a cross reference for prior publications.

Table 2. Naachtun Ceramic Sequence

Maya Phase	Maya Date	Common Era Date	Naachtun Phase	Prior Name
Late Preclassic	? – 8.0.0.0.0	? – 41 CE	Early Facet KUTZ	NAA 1
Terminal Preclassic	8.0.0.0.0 – 8.6.0.0.0	41 – 159 CE	Late Facet KUTZ	NAA 2
Early Classic I or Transitional Early Classic	8.6.0.0.0 – 8.13.0.0.0	159 – 297 CE	KAN	NAA 3
Early Classic II	8.13.0.0.0 – 8.17.1.4.2	297 – 378 CE	Early Facet BALAM	NAA 4A
Early Classic III	8.17.1.4.2 – 9.6.0.0.0	378 – 554 CE	Late Facet BALAM	NAA 4B
Middle Classic or Late Classic I	9.6.0.0.0 – 9.11.0.0.0	554 – 652 CE	BATZ'	NAA 5
Late Classic II	9.11.0.0.0 – 9.18.0.0.0	652 – 791 CE	Early Facet MAAX	NAA 6A
Late Classic III	9.18.0.0.0 – 10.3.0.0.0	791 – 889 CE	Late Facet MAAX	NAA 6B
Postclassic	After 10.3.0.0.0	After 889 CE	K'UBUL	NAA 7

Cross-dating of known types was supplemented through 14C dating supported by FAMS I (Walker 2008). Five usable dates resulted from twelve samples collected in the field. Radiocarbon samples² were calculated using the newest calibration database (Struiver *et al.* 1998, Talma and Vogel 1993) and C13/C12 ratios were calculated. Results are reported in terms of conventional radiocarbon age, with single or multiple y-intercepts, and 1-sigma and 2-sigma ranges ([Table 3](#)).

Naachtun ceramic phases are defined using Maya dates rather than Common Era dates. As a consequence, phase beginnings and endings have odd CE dates associated with them. While this may be cumbersome for some ceramic researchers, working within the Maya system has its advantages at a site with dated monuments. Dates for the Middle and Late Classic Phases were drawn from monuments near Structure XXV for Batz' Phase and Temple XXXVIII for Maax Phase (Mathews and Parmington 2005). Fortunately, contemporary diagnostic pottery from those structures was recovered, primarily from looted contexts.

² Samples processed by Beta Analytic, Inc. www.radiocarbon.com.

Table 3. Naachtun Radiocarbon Dates

Sample	Provenience	Context	Y-Intercept	2-sigma Range
Beta 235437	Op 1G-4	Wall Exterior Floor	540 CE	420 – 610 CE
Beta 235439	Op 4C-13	Under floor 3 and above preparatory surface sitting on bedrock	90 CE	20 – 220 CE
Beta 235444	Op 12B-3	Hearth	610 CE	550-660 CE
Beta 235446	Op 12B-7	Matrix of niche under cache vessels	330 CE	230-410 CE
Beta 235448	Op 13A-18	Structure VIII/Floor 5	260, 290, 320 CE	220 – 400 CE

Although the Classic era phases are well anchored, both beginning and ending times are still very tentative. There is considerable uncertainty about Early Facet (EF) Kutz Phase in general and its beginning date in particular. Significantly, there is no evidence to date of any Middle Preclassic Mamom types or the so-called “Mamo-chic” transitional facet. No pure lots of what is essentially baseline Chicanel were encountered in excavation or salvage, although a few sherds do occur as admix. While this is due in part to limited controlled excavations, EF Kutz Phase is included here primarily for future researchers as well as to highlight the Terminal Facet.

The end date for EF Maax Phase is based on the latest dated monument at Naachtun. While NAP excavations produced little Terminal Classic data, subsequent work has improved the understanding of a rather vibrant LF Maax Phase (Nondedeo *et al.* 2011). There is still very little evidence for K’ubul Phase, consisting of minor Postclassic visitations at a few mounds.

Yucatec Maya Phase names were chosen from the set of animals frequenting the Naachtun camp during our tenure there. The site is located in a biosphere reserve and has not been logged or farmed in the known past. Animals are now protected from hunting as well. Much of the reserve has been undisturbed bush since the Maya left Naachtun over a thousand years ago. Phase names and their English equivalents are given in [Table 4](#).

Frazzled wild turkeys (KUTZ) raced across the road on the difficult ride into the site and visited us regularly in camp. A fer-de-lance (KAN) nest near the latrine made camp life interesting. There were several jaguar (BALAM) sightings over the course of our work including a set of jaguar prints found crossing through our camp one morning. A particular howler monkey (BATZ’) defended territory in the walled compound and had a strong dislike for our work there, particularly where an architectural bench was encountered in Op 4. Middle Classic sherds in that context provided the phase to which the howler would lend its name. Several images of spider monkeys on Late Classic pottery prompted the subsequent phase name. Spider monkeys (MAAX) entertained us frequently on our treks though the site, interspersed with the striking calls of the oropendula (K’UBUL).

Table 4. Source of Phase Names

Naachtun Phase	Animal Name
KUTZ	turkey
KAN	snake
BALAM	jaguar
BATZ'	howler monkey
MAAX	spider monkey
K'UBUL	oropendula

Phase Summaries

Below is a summary of ceramic information reported by phase. The format includes regional affiliation, methods of dating the phase, contexts in which these ceramics were retrieved and relevant comments on the Naachtun ceramic assemblage. Widely known types identified at Naachtun are mentioned but not detailed unless the Naachtun assemblage produced new information. An asterisk (*) preceding the name designates a provisional type, a cross of lorraine (#) indicates insufficient information to propose a new type or variety and a question mark (?) indicates a proposed but unverified type affiliation.

Table 5. Early Facet Kutz Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Sapote	Sapote Striated
Sierra	Sierra Red: Sierra Variety
Polvero	Polvero Black

Regional Affiliation: Late Preclassic Chicanel

Dating: With the proximity to Middle Preclassic cities El Mirador and Nakbe, the NAP research design anticipated earlier occupations would be present at Naachtun. None were located in excavation or salvage work. Reese-Taylor and Walker both have had considerable experience with Preclassic ceramics and concurred on this rather surprising result.

The beginning date for EF Kutz Phase is not known. Sherds were cross-correlated with El Mirador, Uaxactun and other sites in the region. Occupation may extend back further in time, but it was not documented in the limited NAP excavations, nor was there evidence for earlier occupation in looted deposits examined throughout the site.

Contexts: No discrete EF Kutz lots were identified in excavation, though there are consistent hints of its existence in the western portion of the site, and in a survey transect to the south. Limited distribution of a few sherds of Sierra Red: Sierra Variety is the principal reason EF Kutz Phase is proposed. Eroded EF Kutz sherds were excavated from base lots in the reservoir in mixed secondary contexts. EF Kutz sherds were found in some looted contexts in Group C (Structure I) but as admixture with Late Facet (LF) Kutz Phase or later ceramics.

Comments: EF Kutz sherds are few in number; they constitute what has been called “baseline Chicanel” in the literature. No contexts produced pure EF Kutz, indicating that monumental construction may not have commenced until the subsequent LF Kutz. Unlike other sites with which the author is familiar, there were very few earlier sherds in construction admix, indicating that older buildings and middens were not a primary source for building material. This may be the result of the tendency to move laterally to unoccupied ground for new constructions.

Table 6. Late Facet Kutz Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Sapote	Sapote Striated
Sierra	Society Hall Red
Cabro	*Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety
San Felipe	San Felipe Brown San Antonio Golden Brown * San Felipe Group Red-on-golden-brown
Matamore	Matamore Dichrome
Polvero	Polvero Black

Regional Affiliation: Terminal Preclassic cf. Cauac Phase Tikal (Culbert 1993) or Late Facet Pakluum Phase Becan (Ball 1977)

Dating: A radiocarbon date, Beta 235439, with a 2-sigma range of 20-220 CE dates the preparatory surface of the floor underlying the main wall in the walled compound. Immediately below this is bedrock. The wall was not built until Batz' Phase. The date range overlaps slightly with Kan Phase, but anchors the earliest activity at that portion of the compound. Ceramic change can happen much quicker than most 2-sigma date ranges, so ¹⁴C dates are of limited utility in some contexts. Cross-dating with other sites was also used. In many cases Kutz sherds are identities with Cauac Phase Tikal deposits, particularly vessel fragments from looted tombs in Group C, Structures I and V. The phase ends at 8.6.0.0.0 (159 CE) which correlates with the earliest historic date repeatedly referenced in the hieroglyphic corpus. The author has argued elsewhere that this should define the beginning of the Classic era (Reese-Taylor and Walker 2002:105). The date correlates well with the 150 CE end for both Cauac Phase Tikal and Late Facet Pakluum Phase Becan.

Contexts: LF Kutz deposits were identified in Group C and Group A excavations. Most sherds stem from looted contexts, especially looted tombs or caches. This is the earliest phase clearly associated with monumental architecture, but in a very restricted area in the western portion of the site. If a discrete LF Kutz occupation exists elsewhere, it was not encountered in excavation.

There is no evidence for LF Kutz occupations or constructions in the eastern portion of the site.

Comments:

Sierra Red: Sierra Variety was replaced in LF Kutz by the semi-glossy Cabro Red (Robertson-Freidel 1980:158-172). Cabro Red is clearly transitional between Late Preclassic and Early Classic reds. It has the harder glossy shine of Classic reds while retaining a thicker Preclassic slip, albeit produced sometimes by double slipping. Further excavation is needed to clarify the relationship between LF Kutz and Kan Phase reds at Naachtun. The evolution of Preclassic reds has been discussed widely in the literature but remains unsettled in the Terminal Facet (cf. Pring 2000, 1976; Robertson 1980; Kosakowsky and Pring 1998; Brady 1987, Brady *et al.* 1998).

San Felipe Group sherds are known primarily from reconstructable vessel fragments found in looters' trenches. These are well made vessels very close to the Classic technology of glossy slips, although these thicker slips are generally similar to Late Preclassic types. Early Classic Pucte Brown clearly relates to this group, analogous to development seen in the reds. A few examples have red rim bands, including one from a looted tomb in Structure I ([Figure 7](#)). These have been given a descriptive name San Felipe Group Red-on-golden-brown rather than establishing a new type. They are more frequent than specials, but the looted context does not permit adequate stratigraphic assessment. Such novel dichrome modes parallel the variability in Cauac Phase Tikal ceramics and presage the elaboration in forms and surface treatments characteristic of the Early Classic.

LF Kutz Phase modes present at Naachtun include z-angles, dichromes and good quality pastes. To date there is no indication of contemporary modes such as mammiform tetrapods, usulutans, polychrome design or other modes associated with the Protoclassic at other sites.



Figure 7. San Felipe Group Red-on-golden-brown bucket fragment—Op 16F-1.



Figure 8. Str. XXIIIb west face looted tomb.

Table 7. Kan Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Quintal	Quintal Unslipped
Triunfo	Triunfo Striated
Sierra	Society Hall Red Society Hall Red-on-red
Cabro	* Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety
San Felipe	San Felipe Brown San Antonio Golden Brown * San Felipe Group Red-on-golden-brown
Matamore	#Matamore Dichrome: Unspecified Var.
Iberia	? Iberia Orange
Actuncan	Actuncan Orange Polychrome
Aguila	Aguila Orange
Caldero	# Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety
Balanza	Balanza Black

Regional Affiliation: Early Classic Tzakol I and cf. Terminal Facet Pakluum Becan

Dating: Kan Phase is difficult to date accurately because this era is the least well understood in the Maya region, and because most of the Naachtun materials stem from salvage work. There is no carbon sample to date in these contexts. Kan Phase pottery has been compared to Tikal, Uaxactun and other sites with limited success. Some of the forms, varieties and modes are rare or poorly understood.

It is clear, however, that much of the early construction in Group A, including the massive E Group (Temples XX and XXIII), parts of walled compound before the wall was built and possibly La Perdida date to Kan Phase. This phase likely represents the earliest major architectural constructions at Naachtun.

Kan phase begins at the onset of the Early Classic, 8.6.0.0.0 (159 CE), which is within the range 150-200 CE Hansen (1990:211) proposed as the collapse date for El Mirador. Although extensive settlement archaeology has not been done in the region, it is likely that a primate city such as

Mirador must have seen substantial emigration with its demise. Naachtun likely benefited from that migration, making its early expansion less surprising. The proposed end date for Kan Phase at 8.13.0.0.0 (297 CE) is framed by the period ending after Tikal Stela 29 (8.12.14.13.15 or 292 CE), an early standard format royal text found in context. The date range corresponds to Manik I at Tikal as described by Laporte and Fialko (1995:45). Joe Ball ends Terminal Facet Pakluum at Becan in the same range at 250 CE.

Contexts: Kan ceramics were recovered during the cleaning of loot holes and tunnels in the principle structures in Group A. They revealed construction sequence profiles to which pottery could be correlated occasionally. The 30 meter high Temple XX, for example, was riddled with trenches at several elevations. A looted tomb on the west face of Temple XXIIIb, the central east building of the E-Group ([Figure 8](#)), was particularly important. Other Kan sherds stemmed from lower lots in the reservoir (Op 3). Substantial Kan Phase deposits evidencing occupation and construction were drawn from the walled compound (Ops 4, 13, and 14); these date to a time before the wall was constructed.

Comments: Some researchers might have included these ceramics in a Terminal Late Preclassic facet, calling the entire era Late Preclassic until the last Sierra Red sherd disappeared from any sample. In contrast, Kan Phase is defined by the first systematic appearance of functional gloss ware technologies which typify the bulk of the Classic era. Kan Phase is of short duration, and should be considered a transitional era when rapid change in technology followed the new stylistic imperatives of the market, especially polychrome painted design. Such changes are clearly evolutionary, that is, they are the result of the same potters retooling their work product for the new market. The Balam/Batz' Phase transition, in contrast, is characterized by an abrupt replacement rather than evolution, possibly the result of the new elite overlords' demands for conformity with Calakmul.

While some Terminal Preclassic types overlap with Kan Phase, the technological change associated with the shift to the production of polychromes was clearly affecting the production process. Cabro Group pastes, for example, seem to have degraded to the point that Cabro-like slips adhered poorly to the paste surface. Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety fills this slot until sufficient excavated samples are available to sort out the puzzle. Several very large reconstructable floreros collected from Structures I and V and Temple XX have been designated Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety ([Figure 9](#)). Other red buckets fall within the range of an unspecified variety of the streaky slipped Society Hall Red which has technical characteristics including a higher gloss that approaches Early Classic Dos Hermanos Red.

Poorly sorted pastes are apparent in early Aguila Group sherds and in Actuncan Orange Polychrome as originally defined at Uaxactun (Smith 1955:126-129). Actuncan is a rare early polychrome type restricted to Tzakol I at Uaxactun. Its slip is transitional in the sense that it is waxier than later Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome but not as thick or waxy as Late Preclassic slips. The substantially complete vessel described below is a true Early Classic vessel form with a raised ring base; it carries no Protoclassic modes. Actuncan Orange Polychrome has been recovered from several different contexts at Naachtun; it is not unique to the tomb contents described below.

Caldero Buff Polychrome and Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome are especially important components at Early Classic Naachtun, but in Kan Phase, they are represented by a series of overlapping stylistic modes on a single continuum rather than two distinct types. There may be a temporal component to this variation with Kan Phase exhibiting more of a continuum and Balam Phase evidencing a bimodal distribution. To date there is not sufficient evidence to systematically quantify the transition, but some clues exist on individual sherds, which fall into five units. At one extreme is Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome, with thin glossy orange slips on the interior and exterior of basal flange bowls and other vessel forms. This type is clearly established by Balam Phase. A second variation is a glossy reddish orange interior slip (2.5YR 4/8 red) with glossy buff exterior (7.5YR 7/1 light gray). Third is a glossy reddish orange interior with matte buff paste surface on the exterior. Fourth is a sample of small sherds with matte buff paste surface on both interior and exterior surfaces to which the painted design is directly applied, generally black with red accents. It is possible that other parts of these vessels carried some slip, but the evidence is ambiguous at present. Fifth is true Caldero Buff Polychrome with a thin glossy buff slip on the interior and exterior. Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety has been designated to reflect the greater variability in the application of buff slips that first appears in Kan Phase. The other two types are clearly present in Balam Phase, but it is uncertain how long Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety continues.



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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

Figure 9. Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety Florero.



Figure 10. Iberia Orange Z-angle bowl—Op 16F-1.

Kan Phase modes include sharp z-angles, high neck jars, and thin walled dishes. To date, Naachtun has failed to reveal any Protoclassic diagnostics. Only a handful of small Iberia Orange sherds have been identified ([Figure 10](#)) and z-angled bowls crosscut several types. The author has noted elsewhere that mammiform tetrapods and certain other modes generally were associated with a specific political phenomenon geographically restricted in the southern Maya lowlands to parts of Belize and eastern Peten (Walker *et al.* 2007:721 Fig. 3, Reese-Taylor and Walker 2002:102). Naachtun, like Becan (Ball 1977) and others, seems to have prospered at this time depth without inclusion in the Protoclassic sphere. This may be the case in much of the CKP, as the dissemination of Protoclassic traits seems to track sites on the river systems bordering the plateau.

The looted tomb at Temple XXIIIb produced fragments of nine reconstructable vessels, leaving the question open as to the quality and

preservation of pots removed from the tomb illicitly. Those remaining included an Actuncan Orange Polychrome basal flange bowl, a Balanza Black lid with handle, three Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety flaring walled bowls, three red buckets and a red flaring walled bowl. These vessels are uniquely transitional between established Late Preclassic and Early Classic types and their occurrence together, even in a looted context, is significant. Due to time constraints and provisions for transport, the vessels were documented and photographed but not reconstructed.

Vessel #1 is an Actuncan Orange Polychrome basal flange bowl which is 90% complete ([Figure 11](#)). It has a nascent basal flange, ring base and a simple step design repeated four times, similar to examples from Uaxactun (Smith 1955: Fig. 25a 3-5). NAA analysis links it to vessels from El Mirador and pots imported to Calakmul.

Vessel #2 is a 60% complete Balanza Black lid ([Figure 12](#)). It has a raised round handle and, at 26 cm in diameter, would have covered the basal flange bowl perfectly. NAA analysis links it to pottery sampled from Mirador and Tikal.

The three Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety vessel fragments are similar deep flaring bowls with a slight basal break and ring base. They have no known analogue at other sites, although similar sherds were recovered elsewhere at Naachtun. Each has a distinct design scheme. Vessel #3 is a 40% complete bowl with a triple chevron and water droplet motif along the interior rim ([Figure 13](#)). It also features a post-fire incised graffito on the interior base which may include an ahaw glyph ([Figure 14](#)). Vessel #4 is a 50% complete bowl with a repeating chevron motif on the interior rim ([Figure 15](#)) and an undecipherable eroded red painted element on the interior base. It also carries a graffito on the interior near the rim which may represent a corn stalk ([Figure 16](#)). Vessel # 5 is a 70% complete bowl with a triple red dot and handbell motif on the interior rim ([Figure 17](#)). The interior base has an eroded red and black element that probably takes the form of a quincunx pattern with a central image. Handbells and chevrons are motifs reported by Smith at Uaxactun (1955:64) for Tzakol II at the earliest, but not on this vessel form.



Figure 11. Actuncan Orange Polychrome bowl—Op7B-2 Vessel 1.



Figure 12. Balanza Black handled lid—Op 7B-2 Vessel 2.



Figure 13. Caldero Buff: Provisional bowl—Op 7B-2 Vessel 3

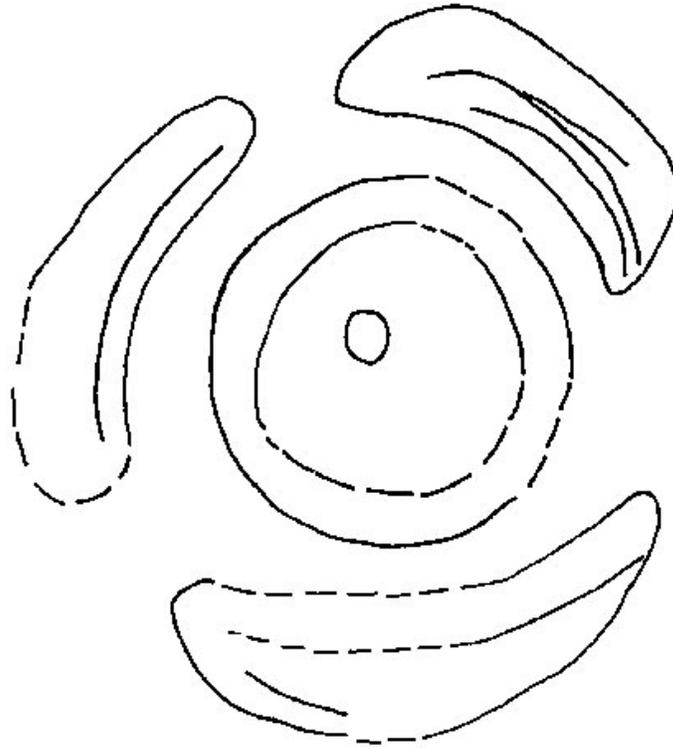


Figure 14. Line drawing of graffiti on interior base of Vessel 3.

NAA found no matches for these three bowls. Reents-Budet (2010: Fig. 8a) has noted that sets of vessels from a single tomb, despite differing surface treatments and vessel forms, may have been made from the same paste preparation. This is probably the case for the three Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety bowls described here. Odds are good that they were locally produced at the same time for inclusion in a specific tomb. More NAA sampling on Early Classic polychromes in the region may prove helpful in finding additional matches or developing a chemical signature for this early era.

Three of the red buckets are simple profile cache vessels but each is distinctive. Vessel #6 is a 70% complete Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety bucket with a hard slip surface exhibiting crazing ([Figure 18](#)). Vessel #7 is 90% complete and has a wider flaring profile, streaky red slip and an added red rim band. It has been tentatively designated Society Hall Red-on-red ([Figure 19](#)). Vessel #9 is a 20% complete Society Hall Red simple profile cache bucket ([Figure 20](#)). The fourth red vessel, #8, is a 30% complete shallow flaring walled bowl, also designated Society Hall Red-on-red ([Figure 21](#)).

There is clear symbolic behavior associated with the deposition of these fragmentary vessels despite their looted context. Although the original

number of pots and other artifacts in the tomb is not known, the trio of distinctively decorated Caldero Buff: Provisional Variety flaring wall bowls, two of which carry meaningful post-fire incised graffiti, support the case for purposeful inclusion in a special deposit. The number three itself may be meaningful, as the three-stone hearth of creation is an oft-repeated theme in caching contexts. Together with a lidded basal flange bowl and four other cache bowls or buckets, they comprise a standard Maya cache set.

Based on preliminary NAA analysis, vessels 6, 8 and 9 are closely associated with a pair of carved-incised black lidded bowls housed in the Denver Art Museum, MS1859, MS1861 and MS1863 (Fields and Reents-Budet 2005:128 Plate 31, 147 Plate 49). These vessels had not been linked previously to any other pottery production center. The Early Classic NAA database is smaller than that for Late Classic polychromes, and these results are preliminary, however, a 90% correlation is significant. It is not overstating the case to suggest that the Early Classic lidded Denver bowls were most likely produced at Naachtun and looted from there as well, more precisely, from somewhere in Group A, although probably from a later Balam Phase deposit. Thanks to NAA analysis, one is no longer compelled to wonder exactly what else may have been taken from similar contexts by looters.

While some Naachtun samples have not yet been analyzed, there is now a sufficient range of Naachtun sherds linked together by NAA to begin to identify a Naachtun chemical signature for local production. Despite the large corpus of pots looted from “Central Peten” in collections around the world, a clear understanding of the ceramic chemical signature specific to the Naachtun area was entirely unknown before the present research. In tandem with NAA analysis, Patino (2009) is now addressing other aspects of ceramic production at Naachtun, a topic that will improve the overall understanding of ceramic production and trade throughout the CKP.

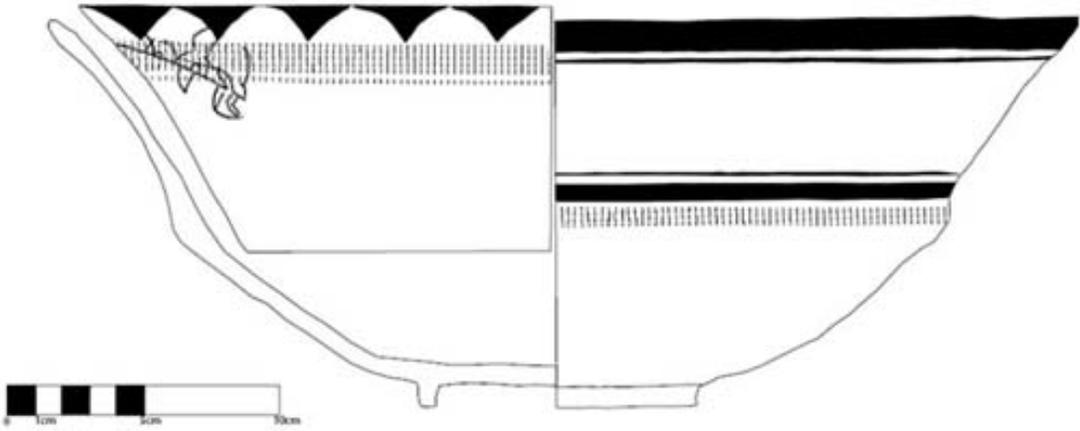


Figure 15. Caldero Buff: Provisional bowl—Op 7B-2 Vessel 4 (After Patino 2009 Fig. 3).



Figure 16. Close up of Graffito on rim sherd.



Figure 17. Caldero Buff: Provisional bowl—Op 7B-2 Vessel 5.



Figure 18. Cabro Red: Unnamed Variety bucket—Op 7B-2 Vessel 6.

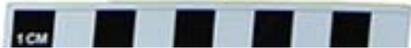


Figure 19. Society Hall Red-on-red bucket—Op 7B-2 Vessel 7.



Figure 20. Society Hall Red bucket—Op 7B-2 Vessel 9.



Figure 21. Society Hall Red-on-red bowl—Op 7B-2 Vessel 8.

Table 8. Early Facet Balam Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Quintal	Quintal Unslipped
Triunfo	Triunfo Striated
Aguila	Aguila Orange
	Pita Incised
Dos Hermanos	Dos Hermanos Red
Dos Arroyos	San Blas Red-on-orange Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome
Caldero	Caldero Buff Polychrome *Caldero Buff Polychrome: Provisional
Pucte	Pucte Brown
Balanza	Balanza Black Lucha Incised

Regional Affiliation: Early Classic Tzakol II

Dating: Two radiocarbon samples date to EF Balam Phase, Beta 235448 and Beta 235446. Both have 2-sigma ranges at 250-400 CE. The former dates a floor at Structure VIII, a palace like building within the compound that was subsequently enclosed by a defensive wall; the latter dates Structure Id, the building in which Stela 26 was interred (Walker 2008). More specifically, the latter carbon sample came from the matrix of a building niche which held a lip-to-lip cache of two Balam Phase vessels adjacent to Stela 26. While the stela was interred in a matrix filled with the subsequent Batz' Phase sherds (see below), this sample dates the latest renovation of the structure in which the stela was subsequently interred. The vessels may have been associated with the stela when it was first erected. They may have been moved to this location as heirlooms during the Batz' Phase interment of the stela. Cross-dating was also used for Balam Phase, as these types are consistent with widely known Early Classic types. Beginning and ending dates for EF Balam are consistent with other sites in the Tzakol II sphere.

Contexts: Balam Phase sherds were recovered from most excavations, reconnaissance and salvage operations in Groups A and C, with stratigraphic detail especially in Ops 3, 4, 13 and 14.

Comments: This is a well-attested, widely known Early Classic Tzakol II complex. A new phase name was defined rather than designating a facet of Kan Phase because of the total disappearance of Late Preclassic types. By this era, pottery production had stabilized on a small number of widely distributed types. There is more homogeneity the Tzakol II/III Sphere than in any other era, reflecting a true horizon style shared by potters throughout much of the lowland Maya world.

Naachtun has all the hallmarks of the era including glossy-slipped red and black wares, fine designs on orange and buff polychromes and incised as well as painted design ([Figure 22](#), [Figure 23](#)). One Caldero Buff basal flange bowl fragment exhibits an undeciphered graffito on the interior ([Figure 24](#), [Figure 25](#)). Stylistic modes are virtual identities with Uaxactun and Tikal. NAA analysis, however, links most Early Classic sherds sampled thus far to imports at El Mirador or to Calakmul, implying that locally made Naachtun pots moved north and west along trade routes during Balam Phase.

More work is needed on the Dos Hermanos Group of offset rim bowls and jars ([Figure 26](#)). There is a large sample of them from the reservoir as well as from other primary contexts in group A. While Forsyth (1989:66) originally designated Dos Hermanos as a variety of Aguila Orange, he has since changed his mind (pers. comm. 2005). His original rationale noted a continuum of reds to oranges such that the boundary could not be perceived in the somewhat eroded samples of the El Mirador collection. After viewing the Naachtun sherds, he concurred with a type-level designation for Dos Hermanos Red as vessel forms and color ranges are discrete from Aguila Orange ([Figure 27](#)). Part of the reason for the confusion is that Dos Hermanos Red vessels may have been double slipped, with an orange underslip covered by a red slip to create a thick bright glossy red surface. When eroded, the surface tends to look orange. This technique is found in Terminal Preclassic types such as Cabro Red, also a double slipped type. The offset rim form may have antecedents in LF Kutz and Kan Phase z-angle bowls, especially Iberia Orange.



Figure 22. Caldero Buff Polychrome—Op 7C-1.

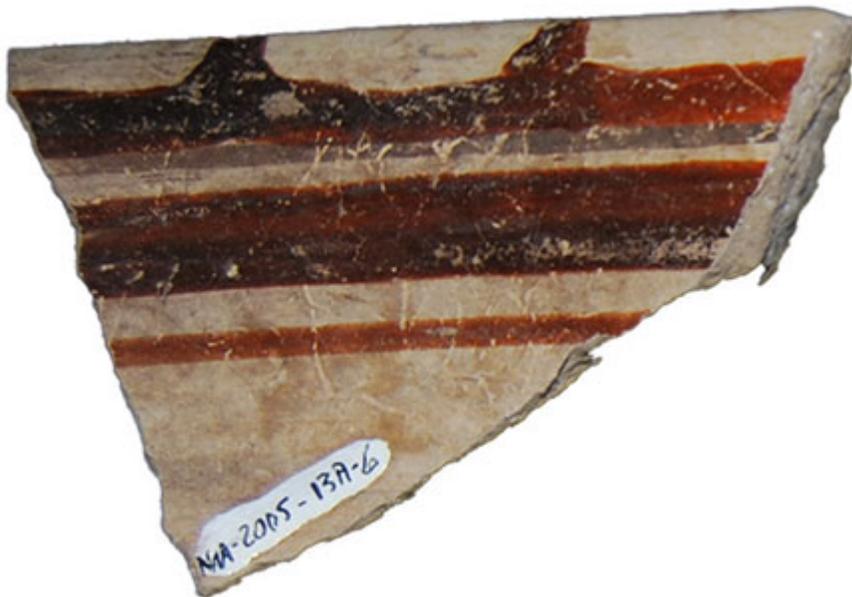


Figure 23. Caldero Buff Polychrome—OP 13A-6.



Figure 24. Caldero Buff sherd exterior.



Figure 25. Caldero Buff sherd interior with graffito.



Figure 26. Dos Hermanos Red Offset rim bowls—Op 4X-5.



Figure 27. Aguilá Orange jar—Op 4X-5.

Lucha Incised appears in EF Balam Phase ([Figure 28](#)). This particular black ware sherd exhibits a possible Chak eye. By comparison, a looted Lucha Incised vessel reported by Robicsek (1978:167 Fig. 181 and Pl. 196) is a similar lightly carved short necked black slipped olla illustrating a seated *Chak* figure with the same coil motif in his eye. This vessel carries a glyphic text naming the historic Masul as well as the regional title *Chatan Winik* that is probably restricted to the CKP (Mathews and Parmington 2005:107, 112 Fig. 43; Boot 2002). Although the Lucha Incised sample comprises only a few sherds at Naachtun, there are hints that EF Balam Lucha Incised may have thinner walls with finer incisions than LF Balam imports or perhaps that the Naachtun preference was for thinner local black wares.

Polychromes were significant components of elite contexts at Classic era Naachtun, and it is clear they were removed by looters in disproportionate amounts, so that the samples remaining reflect a higher percentage of monochromes. One Balam Phase Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome bowl that was probably removed from a Temple XXIII tomb or cache has been recovered, but others likely are on exhibit elsewhere as a part of unprovenanced collections in museums and private collections, such as the black ware vessels in the Denver Museum.

Five whole vessels in the Naachtun collections date to Balam Phase. A sixth is undated but is reported with these for convenience. Two relatively crudely made basal flange bowls were found cached lip-to-lip in a niche adjacent to Stela 26 (Op 12). An Aguila Orange basal flange bowl sat beneath an inverted Caldero Buff Polychrome bowl ([Figure 29](#), [Figure 30](#)). The lower Aguila Orange bowl held the remains of an infant. The two vessels in the cache appear similar enough that they could have been produced from the same paste preparation.

A Balanza Group miniature pot, only about 5 cm high, was recovered from Balam Phase deposits in the reservoir ([Figure 31](#)). A Balanza Black spouted bowl was recovered as a surface find, the product of continued looting at the site ([Figure 32](#)). It is a rare form identified at Becan in an Early Classic Chaksik context (Ball 1977:32 Fig. 12u). The Naachtun example probably constituted burial furniture before it was looted.

The fifth vessel is a large Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome basal flange bowl ([Figure 33](#), [Figure 34](#)) decorated with a repeated triple step and angular scroll motif in red and black (Smith 1955:97). It was recovered at the El Espinero aguada during the NAP search for fresh water, which must have been a prized resource in ancient times as it is today. The bowl probably came from Naachtun originally. An archaeologist who saw a photo of it indicated it had been found during a reconnaissance at Naachtun in the 80s or 90s (Ray Matheny, pers. comm. 2007). Apparently they discovered a pair of similar vessels near a fresh loot hole in the main plaza of Group A, likely in Temple XXIII, the E-Group. They initially removed one to preempt the looters, but were traveling by foot and eventually left it behind at the waterhole. Differential wear on one side of the bowl is consistent with a 10+ year exposure in the bush.

The sixth whole pot is an untyped small bottle found on the surface in Group B ([Figure 35](#)). It was likely discarded by looters fairly recently. It has a short neck and globular shape with a distinct medial carination. The bottle is somewhat eroded, but appears to have been originally half red slipped with either a black fire cloud or an intentional black slip on the other half. There is no comparable vessel for cross-dating. It is included in this phase for convenience of reporting only.



Figure 28. Lucha Incised with chak eye motif—Op4X-6.



Figure 29. Stela 26 cache vessels situated lip to lip as found in niche—Op 12B-8.

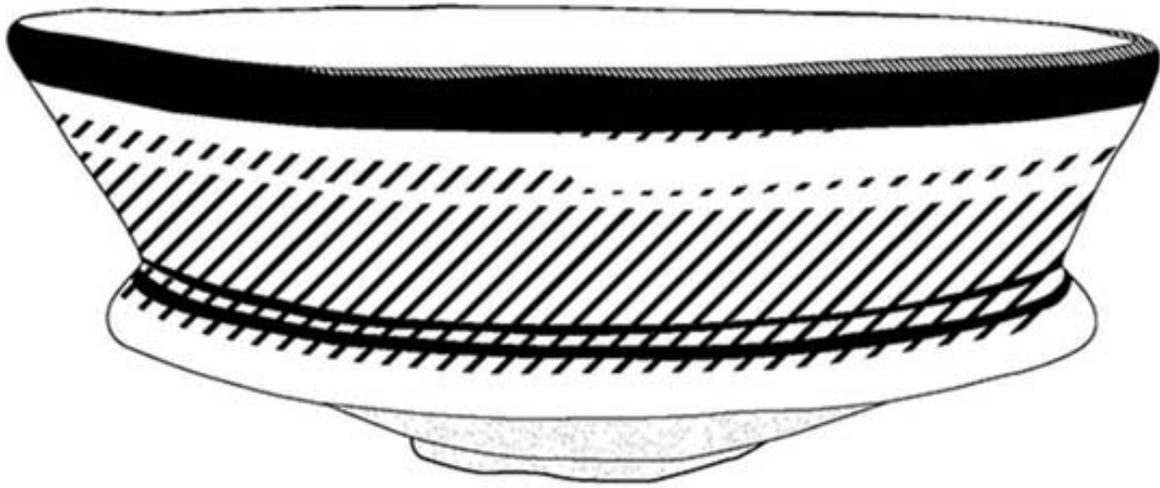


Figure 30. Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome upper cache vessel—Op 12B-8 Illustrated by Mary Jane Acuna.

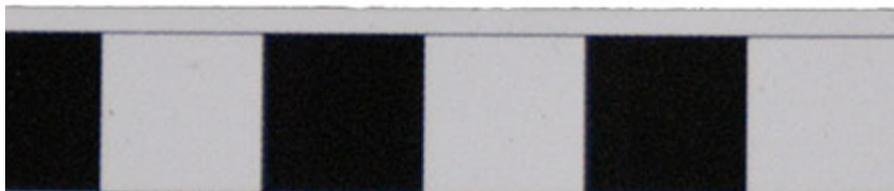


Figure 31. Balanza Group miniature jar—Op 3D-7.



Figure 32. Balanza Black pitcher—Op 5E-1.



Figure 33. Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome basal flange bowl top view—Op 5A-1.



Figure 34. Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome basal flange bowl profile view—Op 5A-1.



Figure 35. Untyped Miniature bottle—Op 5F-1.

Table 9. Late Facet Balam Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
To Early Facet Balam add:	
Dos Arroyos	# Dos Arroyos Composite: Appliqué Variety
Balanza	Urita Gougged-incised Paradero Fluted

Regional Affiliation: Early Classic Tzakol III

Dating: The beginning date for LF Balam stems from cross-dating at sites with accounts of *Spearthrower Owl* and *Sijah K'ak*, particularly Uaxactun and Tikal. The text on one of a pair of undated looted ear flares indicates a familial relationship between *Spearthrower Owl* and a *K'ul Chatan Winik* of Masul (Mathews and Parmington 2005:106). The other ear flare names a person who carries the Rio Azul title. Whether Naachtun is Masul or not, there is a clear indication of *Spearthrower Owl*'s presence in the region. That, in addition to green obsidian obtained from excavations in Group A, points to a Teotihuacan connection at Naachtun at this time depth.

The earliest dated text at Naachtun, Stela 23, fits within LF Balam Phase at 9.3.10.0.0 (505 CE). It is located at one end of the ritual causeway (Morton 2007) in Group C south of Structure III. Textual evidence for a war event with Tikal exists elsewhere at 9.2.11.7.8 (486 CE) on Tikal Stela 10, which references Masul (Martin and Grube 2000:46). Ceramics were dated by correlation with Uaxactun, Tikal and other sites. The end date for Tzakol III era LF Balam Phase is 9.6.0.0.0 which is fairly consistent throughout the southern Maya lowlands.

Contexts: Most excavations and reconnaissance in Groups A and C, especially Ops 1, 3, 4, 13 and 14. The area of the walled compound was a center of civic activity in Balam Phase, although the wall had not yet been constructed.

Comment: In addition to other Balam Phase types, the major addition in LF Balam is a proliferation of carved incisions on Urita Gougged-incised black wares as well as the introduction of tripod feet ([Figure 36](#)) associated with the Teotihuacan tradition.



Figure 36. Urita Gouged-incised foot—Op 3A-20.

Table 10. Batz' Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Cambio	Cambio Unslipped
Encanto	Encanto Striated
Nanzal	Nanzal Red # Unnamed Red-and-unslipped
Corona	Corona Red
Veracal	# Veracal Orange
Saxche	Saxche Orange Polychrome
Azcorra	Azcorra Ivory Polychrome: Unspecified Variety
Becanchen	Becanchen Brown
Infierno	Infierno Black
	*Infierno Black: Mottled Variety
Undesignated	# Unnamed Red-and-orange-on-buff

Regional Affiliation: Middle Classic Tepeu I

Dating: This phase is securely dated using a combination of carbon, texts and sealed stratigraphic contexts. Beta 235444 has a 2-sigma range of 550-660 CE, which dates a hearth associated with the interment of Early Classic Stela 26. The matrix is associated with an Infierno Black footed vessel and other Batz' diagnostics in fill burying the stela (Figure 37). At the base of the central stair on Structure XXV, Stela 1 (9.6.10.0.0-9.9.10.0.0) and Stela 2 (9.10.0.0.0) frame dates for the phase. The stelae sit adjacent to a building platform that yielded Batz' Phase ceramics in looted trenches. In the event that Naachtun is Masul, there is an undated text fragment from Calakmul Structure 4 describing a captive as a Masul lord which that might date to this era. Batz' Phase coincides with the reign of Calakmul ruler Yuknoom the Great, who systematically expanded the city's power. The end date for Batz' Phase matches the 2-sigma carbon date range, but also fits within the range of Tepeu I end dates throughout the southern Maya lowlands.

Contexts: Although in secondary context, the best stratigraphic evidence for this discrete intrusive phase is in the cut at the edge of the reservoir (Op 3). It is part of a continuous sequence of water jars and other vessels in this deep column, situated above Balam Phase and below Maax Phase

sherds. At most other locations, Batz' and Maax are mixed or spatially distinct. Only the reservoir delineates the entire sequence. Batz' sherds also predominate in looted contexts at Structure XXV, appropriately adjacent to the two Batz' Phase Stelae noted above. Batz' diagnostic type Infierno Black dates the matrix in which Stela 26 was buried ([Figure 37](#)). Arredondo (2005) dates the construction of the wall around the Group A compound to this era as well.

Comments: This disjunctive phase remains poorly understood, although there is clearly dramatic change throughout the region around 554 CE. At Naachtun there is a visible style shift away from Peten, toward the north, to Calakmul (Boucher and Dzul 1997; Dominguez-Carrasco 1994) and Becan (Ball 1977). As this is the time of Calakmul's greatest political expansion, it is not surprising Naachtun came under its influence. New types include Nanzal Red, Becanchen Brown, and Saxche Orange Polychrome. Batz' Phase forms include medial ridge bowls, hemispherical bowls, flaring neck jars and incurving rim bowls with exterior decoration. One significant diagnostic is Nanzal Group provisional type Unnamed Red-and-unslipped ([Figure 38](#)). These vessels are hemispherical bowls slipped on the interior and unslipped on the exterior. They may be related to Maax Phase diagnostics such as Chinja Impressed. Unfinished work for Batz' Phase includes teasing out distinctions between Nanzal and Tinaja Reds.



Figure 37. Infierno Black: Mottled Variety bowl—Op 12B-6, 9.



Figure 38. Unnamed Red-and-unslipped—various proveniences.

Table 11. Early Facet Maax Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Cambio	Cambio Unslipped
Encanto	Encanto Striated
Nanzal	Nanzal Red: Nanzal Variety # Subin Red Corozal Incised # Corozal Incised: Grooved-incised Variety # Corozal Incised: Applique Variety Chinja Impressed Pantano Impressed # Pantano Impressed: Stamped Variety
Tinaja	Tinaja Red
Infierno	Infierno Black * Infierno Black: Mottled Variety Carmelita Incised Tres Micos Impressed
Palmar	Palmar Orange Polychrome Desquite Red-on-orange Central Farm Composite
Zacatel	Zacatel Cream Polychrome * Zacatel Cream Polychrome (Codex style)
Undesignated	? Mataculebra Cream Polychrome ? Rio Azul Pink Polychrome ? Chacrio Red Polychrome ? Chimbote Cream Polychrome # UNID Buff Polychrome # UNID Cream Polychrome

Regional Affiliation: Late Classic Tepeu II

Dating:

There was no carbon sample available to test for Maax Phase. The only excavated contexts were poorly preserved surface deposits. Fortunately, Maax Phase has the most substantial textual record at Naachtun.

Masul reappears in the hieroglyphic corpus at this time on Tikal Altar 5 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: Fig. 23) paired with Stela 16 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: Fig. 22) and erected for the 9.14.0.0.0 (Dec. 5, 711) *k'atun* ending. The Altar 5 image shows Tikal king *Jasaw Chan K'awil* and Masul lord *Chan Sak Wayis* conducting a ceremony over the bones of a woman named *Ix Te' Tun Kaywak* (Grube and Schele 1994), thought to be related to the Masul lord. According to the dates recorded on the monument, *Ix Te' Tun Kaywak* was an important titled woman who died on 9.13.11.6.7 (May 28, 703). Eight years later, her tomb was opened on 9.13.19.16.6 (Nov. 1, 711) and her skull and bones retrieved. Three days later her bones were reburied by both the Tikal king and Masul lord on 9.13.19.16.9. It is the burial of her bones under the altar that is portrayed in the image on Altar 5. Most likely, her bones actually were buried under Stela 16 because a skull and long bones were retrieved below it in excavation (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:37).

Since the reburial of her bones in the company of the Masul lord is recorded as the peak event for the *k'atun* ceremony, it is clearly one of the Tikal king's most important actions of the *k'atun*, implying a strong alliance was forged between the two cities during the 13th *k'atun*. It was also during this *k'atun* that Calakmul king *Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ak'* was defeated by the Tikal king on 9.13.3.13.15 (Martin and Grube 2000:110), arguably *Jasaw Chan K'awil's* greatest achievement. While there is no direct mention of this important victory on the stela-altar pair, it was clearly implied. One cannot ignore the implication that an alliance with Masul aided Tikal in securing a decisive victory over long time rival Calakmul.

Despite the absence of an identified Masul emblem glyph at Naachtun, there is some archaeological evidence tying it to the historic Masul in Maax Phase. Stela 18, located west of Temple XXXVIII in Group B provided the beginning date to Maax Phase at 9.11.0.0.0. Stela 15 is situated nearby at the base of Structure XXXIX; it carries a partial date of 9.14. ?.3.?, shortly after the major Tikal event at 9.14.0.0.0. A series of Maax Phase stelae followed marking period endings for the next four *k'atuns*:

Stela 9	9.15.0.0.0
Stela 8	9.16.0.0.0
Stela 10	9.16.10.0.0
Stela 7	9.17.0.0.0
Stela 6	9.18.0.0.0

These stelae are now located south of Structure XIX lining the causeway; they are presumed to be in a secondary context (Morton 2007). Stela 6 provides an end date to EF Maax Phase.

The absence of monument dates from 9.11.0.0.0 to 9.14.0.0.0 at Naachtun could be explained by Calakmul's continued dominance of the region, or perhaps by the contested nature of the frontier between superpowers Tikal and Calakmul at that time depth. Based on monument dates at Naachtun, one might speculate that, as a trophy for his help in toppling Calakmul's dynasty, the Naachtun lord was given the right to erect monuments again and rule the region under Tikal's authority.

In addition to epigraphic evidence, Naachtun's pottery style became Peten-centric during this era and is easily cross-dated with Uaxactun and Tikal. More significantly, NAA studies link pottery from the summit of Temple XXXVIII directly to the court of Tikal during *Jasaw Chan K'awil's* reign (Walker *et al.* 2012), reinforcing the case for Naachtun being the historic Masul kingdom that created an alliance with Tikal.

Context: Group B in general has Maax Phase deposits, best investigated at the Structure XL palace (Op 2). It was found in surface lots of Ops 3, 4, 13 and 14 as well as in some test pits (Op 1). There is an important Maax Phase looted context at the summit of pyramidal Temple XXXVIII (Op 6a-1). Several of the reconstructable vessel fragments are identities with Uaxactun and Tikal types. NAA analysis documented that most were actual imports from central Tikal.

Comments: EF Maax material is easily correlated with Mirador Lac Na Phase (Forsyth 1989:79) and Uaxactun Tepeu II (Smith 1955), with additions, including impressed, incised and stamped design on reds and blacks, and incurved bowls with impressed design. Nanzal Red ([Figure 39](#)), Chinja Impressed ([Figure 40](#)) and Encanto Striated ([Figure 41](#)) are regional diagnostics. There is a profusion of local and imported polychromes, especially Palmar Orange Polychrome plates, codex-style vases, and Chimbote Cream Polychrome bowls. Evidence collected to date suggests that this is the most populous era. The initial settlement survey by Chris Morehart (2005) confirmed this assessment for the larger Naachtun region up to 6 km from the site core. Site guardians also identified active looting in the vicinity of Naachtun. Recovered looted materials date almost exclusively to Maax Phase ([Appendix](#)), indicating the regional population was substantial.

A looted tomb or cache was located within the summit structure of Temple XXXVIII during the first days of the 2004 season. Fragments of 11 vessels and a cache of over 50 pieces of obsidian were collected from that deposit. Eight of those vessel fragments were submitted for NAA analysis;

some preliminary results are reported here. None of the vessels were reconstructed due to time constraints.

Two jar fragments of particular interest were retrieved. Vessel #1 is likely a Mateculebra Cream Polychrome (Adams 1971:41 Fig. 55c) small jar with a short flaring neck, direct rim, small lug handles and rounded lip ([Figure 42](#)). It carries a black, red and orange striped and dotted motif on the exterior. Vessel #3 is a rather unique Central Farm Composite pumpkin-shaped jar ([Figure 43](#)). It has a short flaring neck with red rim and checkerboard decoration on the neck exterior (Smith 1955:62). The fragmentary jar body is bright orange with 8-10 gadroons evenly spaced around the vessel.

The same deposit yielded five significant bowl fragments. Vessel #2 is a Palmar Orange Polychrome small flat bottomed flaring wall bowl, with a red rim band and black design on the exterior ([Figure 44](#)). The design takes the form of a repeating pattern of the Mexican year sign (Smith 1955:72) and a *k'an* cross (Smith 1955:74). Vessel #5 is a similar Palmar Orange Polychrome bowl with a repeating Mexican year sign ([Figure 45](#)).

Vessel #4 has only a partial profile, but it is a Central Farm Composite bowl or vase ([Figure 46](#)) with red rim and black quatrefoil flower design (Smith 1955:69). Vessel #6 is the same type with the same design. Vessel #8 is a small Infierno Black flaring wall flat bottom bowl. It is undecorated.

Vessel #9 is a basal fragment of a Zacatel Cream Polychrome vase. Only the lowest segment of black and white design panels is present. Below that is a double red band and a thick black band.

Seven of the sherds from Op 6A-1 that have been sampled for NAA were determined to be imports from central Tikal, probably produced by the court of king *Jasaw Chan K'awil* (Walker *et al.* 2012; Reents-Budet 2010). The set of design motifs associated with them (Mexican year sign, *k'an* cross, checkerboard, quatrefoil flower) consistently occur with representations of *Tlaloc*³ in both Early and Late Classic settings (Bassie-Sweet *et al.* n.d., Taube 2000a, 2000b, Schele and Freidel 1990: 412). *Jasaw Chan K'awil* apparently commandeered Tlaloc imagery to decorate his personal serving vessels, the equivalent of the personalized White House china used by individual US presidents today. Masul emblem glyph or not, the fact that some of *Jasaw Chan K'awil's* court pottery made its way to a cache or tomb atop Naachtun Temple XXXVIII indicates an important Maax Phase alliance between the two cities.

³ *Tlaloc* is a Postclassic era Nahuatl word which is used to describe the iconographic complex; the actual Classic name for the goggle-eyed deity is uncertain, although it is associated with *Chak*, *K'awil* and other known deity images.



Figure 39. Nanzal Red bowl with kill hole found by site guardians. Probably from a tomb due to kill hole in base.



Figure 40. Chinja Impressed—Op 2B-4.



Figure 41. Encanto Striated—Op 14A-10.



Figure 42. Mataculebra Cream Polychrome—Op 6A-1 Vessel 1.



Figure 43. Central Farm Composite jar—Op 6A-1 Vessel 3.



Figure 44. Palmar Orange Polychrome bowl—Op 6A-1 Vessel 2.



Figure 45. Palmar Orange Polychrome bowl—Op 6A-1 Vessel 5.



Figure 46. Central Farm Composite bowl—Op 6A-1 Vessel 4.

Late Facet Maax

9.18.0.0.0 – 10.3.0.0.0

791 - 889 CE

Table 12. Late Facet Maax Phase Ceramic Type Names

Group	Type
To Early Facet Ma'ax add:	
Muna Group	Muna Slate Unid Red Trickle Unid Red Trickle-on-orange
Achote Group	Achote Black
Ticul Group	Ticul Thin Slate
Balancan Group	Provincia Plano-relief
Unnamed	UNID Micaceous

Regional Affiliation: Terminal Classic Tepeu III

Dating: Cross correlation of well established types with other sites.

Contexts: Only surface lots in Group A and B excavations produced Terminal Classic diagnostics; very few sherds in total. A research design focused on Early Classic contexts led to a lack of systematic excavations in Group B. Under sampling of potential Terminal Classic clearly resulted from this strategy as subsequent work has born out. The sample collected in 2004-05, including the Op 3 reservoir, constituted only a handful of small weathered sherds.

Comments: No primary contexts for LF Maax were encountered in the limited NAP excavations. There were no constructions, renovations or monuments documented for this facet. LF Maax sherds constitute only a scattering of evidence for Terminal Classic activity at Naachtun. The author has worked extensively with Terminal Classic types and specifically looked for them.

The presence of Muna Slate and Ticul Thin Slate indicate some interaction with northern cities, while Achote Black is present throughout Peten. Subsequent research has identified more material from this era (Patino 2009; Nondedeo *et al.* 2011).

K'UBUL Phase

10.3.0.0.0 - ?

after 889 CE

Table 13. K'ubul Phase Ceramic Type Names	
Group	Type
Chen Mul	Chen Mul Modeled Effigy Censer

Comments: A few sherds of Chen Mul Modeled Effigy Censer, or a local variant, have been located in surface collections and humus lots, but no evidence for Postclassic construction or occupation was revealed by the NAP research.

A Summary of Significant Findings

The site of Naachtun was inhabited for about 1000 years between the end of the Late Preclassic era and the beginning of the Postclassic. It saw substantial growth very early in the Classic era, was eclipsed somewhat by Calakmul in the Middle Classic, but came back strong with a Late Classic hegemony marked by consistent monument erection lasting four generations. While Naachtun survived the throws of collapse into the Terminal Classic, the site was abandoned during the Postclassic era and remained unoccupied until the present day. Only recently did looters disturb its ancient buildings and monuments.

The NAP excavations have documented that Naachtun exhibits clear horizontal stratigraphy. The site core literally moved through time from Group C (Kutz Phase) to Group A (Kan, Balam Phases), to the East Plaza of Group A (Batz' Phase), and finally to Group B (Maax Phase). Armed with this knowledge, future researchers targeting a specific era can isolate a specific section of the site for detailed investigation.

Pottery associated with the earliest major architecture dates to Kan Phase. The first significant rise in population and construction of the E-Group (Temples XX and XXIII) dates to this era sometime around 200 CE. While this remains a suggested hypothesis until more controlled excavation is undertaken, Naachtun seems to have had access to significant labor and materials to permit large scale construction contemporary with the demise of El Mirador. This is probably not coincidental. Naachtun is, in fact, one of a few sites in the southern Maya lowlands known to exhibit significant Tzakol I expansion. It should be noted Sprajc's (2008) work in southeastern Campeche has documented several other sites with early monuments that may reflect the same sort of precocious early development elsewhere on the CKP. It seems likely that the cluster of sites on the CKP may lack contemporary Protoclassic diagnostics; this is a clear hypothesis that can be tested.

Because Naachtun lacks a significant Chicanel Preclassic signature, Kutz and Kan Phase ceramics can be helpful in sorting out some of the lingering issues in the Late Preclassic – Early Classic transition. In particular, there should be sufficient samples to better understand production changes in the monochrome reds and browns as well as the polychrome oranges and buffs. The relationships between Kutz, Kan and Balam Phases indicate a single continuing tradition of pottery production by the same specialists. The evolutionary sequence of red/orange wares produced by Naachtun workshops includes Sierra, Iberia and Dos Hermanos groups. Similarly, there is significant information on the relationship between Actuncan and later polychromes. Significant variation within Caldero and Dos Arroyos polychromes is also available for study.

Balam Phase ceramics tie Naachtun to Peten, specifically Uaxactun and Tikal. Palace style buildings in the area of the walled compound saw considerable activity in Balam Phase although the wall was not constructed until the following Batz' Phase. Ceramics, green obsidian and an unprovenanced ear flare link Masul to the life and times of

Spearthrower Owl and the wider political and economic network linking Peten with Teotihuacan. If Naachtun is Masul, then this area of the site is where the interaction with *Spearthrower Owl* and his local representatives took place.

Naachtun shifted allegiances during Middle Classic Batz' Phase, sharing more ceramic identities with Calakmul during the time of that city's greatest political influence. There is a significant break in the ceramic tradition at this time as well, indicative of a shift in pottery production and perhaps a change in the actual potters themselves. While this shift may have been produced by virtue of alliance, the paucity of dated monuments from this era indicate the potential for a more forceful takeover.

During Maax Phase, Naachtun had a significant reversal of fortune, this time rekindling its association with major Peten centers during the 13th *k'atun*. Whether directly or indirectly associated through the Tikal-Masul alliance portrayed on Altar 5, a Maax Phase Naachtun lord received a gift of important royal pottery from the court of Tikal. This alliance likely led to Naachtun Late Classic revival that lasted four generations. Based on site guardian reports and limited survey, Naachtun harbored its greatest population in both the site core and on the periphery during Maax Phase. Maax Phase also saw a proliferation of pottery types and specialty polychromes probably made at many different workshops, indicative of complex trading relationships accompanying a successful local economy.

Naachtun is the first site on the eastern portion of the CKP to have produced NAA samples for testing. Preliminary NAA results have set a baseline for developing a Naachtun ceramic signature which may aid in sourcing looted pots in various private collections. As ceramics from the CKP are more systematically investigated in the future, NAA may also prove useful in addressing production and exchange throughout the plateau. More samples need to be processed, but if initial results are confirmed, Naachtun may be documented as an important production center for certain Classic trade pottery.

Unanswered Questions

Aside from the elusive Masul emblem glyph, many questions about Naachtun remain unanswered. In terms of chronology, there is little information on the Preclassic era. Doubtless it exists nearby, perhaps south and west of the site. A systematic survey and testing program would be most beneficial in this regard. Further research is also needed to identify more primary contexts including residential debris from small house mounds within the site core. Testing these will help quantify population growth through time. There is also a need for greater horizontal exposures for all phases. This may be somewhat difficult to manage due to loot holes and trenches, but significant primary contexts are still available for study.

NAA samples produced clear evidence for Late Classic polychrome pottery imports to Naachtun, but presumed local types were not tested systematically. Sampling of Late

Classic Batz' and Maax Phase Nanzal Red and Infierno Black should be done in future to broaden the local signature. Unsourced pots in museums and private collections may then be compared with this data base.

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