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## **Palisades and Ditches: Defense and Development of Yaxchilan's Polity**

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**Research Year:** 2007

**Culture:** Maya

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**Sites:** El Kinel, Zancudero

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## **Abstract**

This report provides details and a synthesis of investigations completed during the 2007 field season of the Sierra del Lacandon Regional Archaeology Project (SLRAP). With the support of FAMSI and other organizations the researchers of the SLRAP focused on excavations and mapping of the sites of El Kinel and Zancudero, Guatemala and their defensive features. Field work was carried out between June 7 and 28, 2007. In 2006, the SLRAP began a program of excavations focused on sites in and around the modern community of La Técnica Agropecuaria. Of particular interest were two archaeological sites, the Preclassic center of La Técnica, located in the center of the modern community, and the Late Classic center of El Kinel, located in the communities agricultural fields. El Kinel was significant for two reasons: First, in 2000, a monument depicting Shield Jaguar III, ruler of Yaxchilán, was recovered by members of the local community during road construction. Second, a canal divides the site into a North and a South Sector. The form and size of the canal suggests that it was, in great part, an anthropogenic feature. The first impression of this feature is that it may have functioned in a defensive role for the people of El Kinel, an interpretation supported by excavations in 2006, which revealed a series of postmolds associated with the canal. Additionally, in 2006 the members of SLRAP documented for the first time a Preclassic center called Zancudero, situated along the southern limit of the Sierra del Lacandón National Park, just north of the boundaries of the modern community of La Técnica. The most notable feature of Zancudero is a defensive wall measuring approximately 800m in length, that encircles a series of low platforms and a massive hill that provides a sweeping view of the surrounding region. In those areas not protected by the wall, the site is surrounded by swampland and the Arroyo Yaxchilán.

## **Resumen**

Este reporte brinda los detalles y una síntesis de las investigaciones completadas durante las temporadas de campo 2007 del Proyecto Regional Arqueológico Sierra del Lacandon (PRASL). Con el apoyo de FAMSI y otras organizaciones los investigadores de PRASL enfocaron en las excavaciones y mapeo de los sitios de El Kinel y Zancudero, Guatemala y sus rasgos defensivos. Las investigaciones de campo se realizaron entre el 7 y 28 de junio de 2007. A partir de 2006, el PRASL inicio un programa de excavaciones más enfocadas en sitios en y alrededor de la comunidad moderna de La Técnica Agropecuaria. De esencial interés fueron dos sitios arqueológicos, el centro preclásico en La Técnica, localizado en el centro de la

comunidad moderna, y el cercano centro del Clásico Tardío de El Kinel, ubicado en los campos agrícolas de comunidad. El Kinel es relevante por dos razones: Primero, en el año 2000, un monumento mostrando a Escudo Jaguar III, un gobernante de Yaxchilán, fue recuperado por miembros de la comunidad local durante la construcción de un camino. Segundo, un canal divide el sitio en los Sectores Norte y Sur. La forma y el tamaño del canal sugiere que este es, en buena parte, un rasgo antropogénico. La primera impresión de este rasgo es que pudo haber servido como una forma defensiva para la gente de El Kinel, una interpretación sostenida por las excavaciones de 2006 que revelaron una serie de huellas de postes asociados con dicho canal. También, durante la temporada de 2006, el proyecto documentó, por primera vez, un sitio preclásico denominado Zancudero, situado a lo largo del límite sur del parque nacional, justo al norte de los límites de la comunidad moderna de La Técnica. El rasgo más notable de Zancudero, es la presencia de una muralla defensiva de aproximadamente 800m de largo, que encierra una serie de plataformas bajas, y un cerro grande que brinda una vista dominante sobre la región circundante. En lugares donde el sitio no está protegido por la muralla, se rodea de tierras pantanosas y por el Arroyo Yaxchilán.

### **Introduction to the Fifth Season (2007) of the Sierra del Lacandón National Park Regional Archaeological Project**

*By: Charles Golden, Andrew Scherer and Rosaura Vásquez*

#### **Introduction**

This report presents the details and a synthesis of the research carried out during the 2007 field seasons of the Sierra del Lacandón Regional Archaeological Project (SLRAP). Research in 2007 was supported by Famsi grant number 07043 ("Palisades and ditches: defense and development of Yaxchilan's polity"), as well as by National Science Foundation grant number 0715463 ("Defensive features and political frontier dynamics in a Maya kingdom"), awarded to Charles Golden and Andrew Scherer, as well as by internal grants by Brandeis University awarded to Charles Golden and Betsy Marzahn-Ramos. Field research was carried out between June 7 and 28, 2007, and lab work from September 1st to September 30th, 2007.

#### **The Sierra del Lacandón Regional Archaeological Project: A Brief Review**

The SLRAP has undertaken research in Guatemala's Sierra del Lacandón National Park since 2003, with most work done in 2005, a field season dedicated to survey. Some preliminary excavations were carried out in 2004 in the following sites: Tecolote, Esmeralda, Fideo, Ana, and Chichicua. In 2006 the SLRAP started an excavation program focused on the sites within and around the modern community of La Técnica Agropecuaria, in the municipality of La Libertad, Petén.

Two archaeological sites were of great interest: the Preclassic center of La Técnica, located in the center of the modern community, and the nearby Late Classic center of El Kinel, located in the agricultural fields of the same community ([Figure 1](#)).

The La Técnica site is important because of the size of its Preclassic architecture, as well as for the presence of an "E group", which identifies it as one of the most important Preclassic sites in this part of the Usumacinta basin. El Kinel is important for two reasons: first, in 2000 a monument showing Shield Jaguar III (an eighth-century ruler from Yaxchilan's polity) was found by members of the local community during the construction of a road (Morales 2001a, 2001b; Morales and Ramos 2002). Secondly, there is a canal dividing the site in north and south sectors. Although this canal initially may have been a natural feature of the river basin, its form and shape suggest that this is to a great extent a man-made feature. The first impression given by this feature is that it may have served as a defensive feature for the El Kinel population. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the 2006 excavations found a series of postholes associated with this canal.

During the 2006 season the project recorded for the first time a Preclassic site located along the southern boundary of the national park, just north of the limits of the modern community of La Técnica. Zancudero's most notable feature is the presence of a defensive wall of approximately 800 m in length, which encloses a series of low platforms, as well as a great hill which lends a dominant view over the surrounding region. In places where the site is not protected by the wall it is surrounded by marshy terrain and by the Yaxchilán stream.

### **Collaboration with the Community of La Técnica**

The fieldwork carried out in 2007 was possible thanks to the research permit granted by the Anthropology and History Institute and the Department of Prehispanic Monuments, as well as the collaboration of the La Técnica community. This collaboration allowed archaeologists and excavators of Santa Rita, Petén, to work alongside the members of the community during excavations and mapping. We made sure no work was carried out without the explicit knowledge of the members of the community ([Figure 2](#)).

Apart from the participation of the members of the community in excavation and other aspects of research, students from the local school visited the excavations on June 20 ([Figure 3](#) and [Figure 4](#)). Archaeologists answered the questions asked by the students about the research and the ancient Maya in general. The end result of this educational and research collaboration was a more successful research program, and we expect that the community of La Técnica will now have a better understanding of its cultural and historical legacy.

The community granted its permission to carry out research on the basis of two agreements reached for concluding the 2006 field season. First, the SLRAP archaeologists and the IDAEH inspector, Gustavo Amarra, agreed to give back to the community any vessel found in the course of research, after concluding its

archaeological analysis during the lab work period. Secondly, SLRAP archaeologists committed themselves to helping in the search for financial and institutional assistance for building the facility for a local museum. The goal of the community members in this enterprise was to provide a focal point for community education and future tourism activities.

On June 5th Rosaura Vásquez, Julián Ajú, Charles Golden, and Andrew Scherer returned complete vessels and figurines inside a plastic box to the community, to La Técnica's board of directors. An official document was drawn up to corroborate this ([Figure 5](#)). Before the start of the field season Fabiola Quiroa identified a possible gift of money for the construction of the community museum through Japan's embassy in Guatemala. Although the construction of the museum did not start before the end of the field season, project members were able to inform the community leaders that embassy representatives had started a development plan. Therefore, SLRAP fulfilled the obligations it acquired with La Técnica at the end of the 2006 field season, and by the end of the 2007 field season, on June 26th, another official document was signed in which this fact is recorded ([Figure 6](#)).

### **Synopsis of field research in the sites of El Kinel and Zancudero**

The 2007 field season involved excavations and mapping in the site of El Kinel ([Figure 7](#) and [Figure 8](#)), as well as the continuation of survey within the limits of the La Técnica cooperative, and preliminary excavation and mapping in Zancudero ([Figure 9](#) and [Figure 10](#)). Excavations in El Kinel focused on further refining our understanding of the site's historical settlement through the excavation of habitation groups located to the north and south of the canal, while research in Zancudero dealt with dating the wall and its associated settlement. This survey added several dozens of mound groups to the archaeological map of the zone comprised by the La Técnica cooperative and the adjoining parts of the Sierra de Lacandón National Park. Although further analysis is still pending, no archaeological center has been discovered so far.

The excavations carried out up to the end of the 2007 season are described in detail below. Although these findings and interpretations can in fact be modified by future field research, the authors of this report believe that five seasons of research in the study area have produced new insights on the growth and development of the Maya kingdoms of Yaxchilán and Piedras Negras.

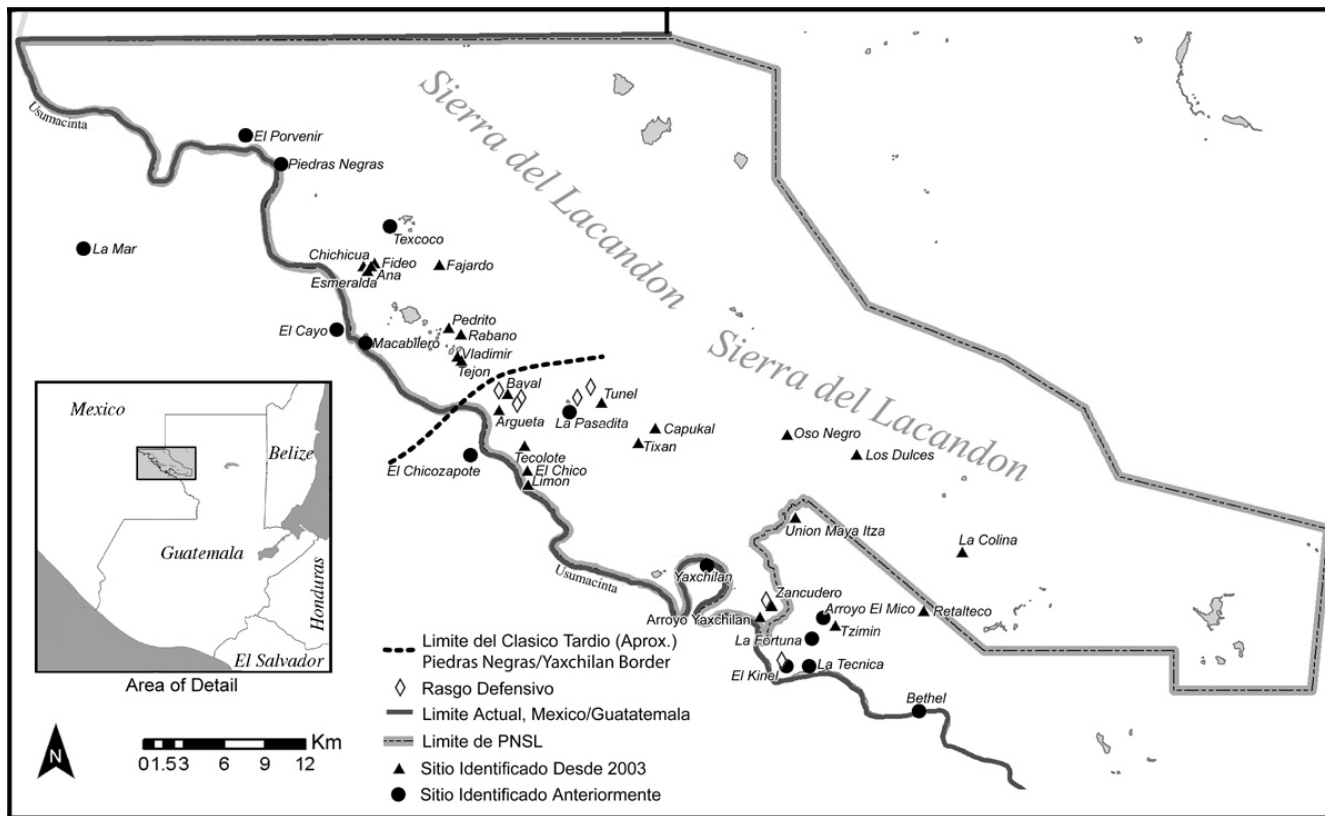


Figure 1. Regional map showing the archaeological sites.



Figure 2. Photo of the field team, 2007 season.



**Figure 3. Photo of archaeologists and students from the community during a visit to the excavations, in June of 2007.**



**Figure 4. Photo of archaeologists and students from the community during a visit to the excavations, in June of 2007.**



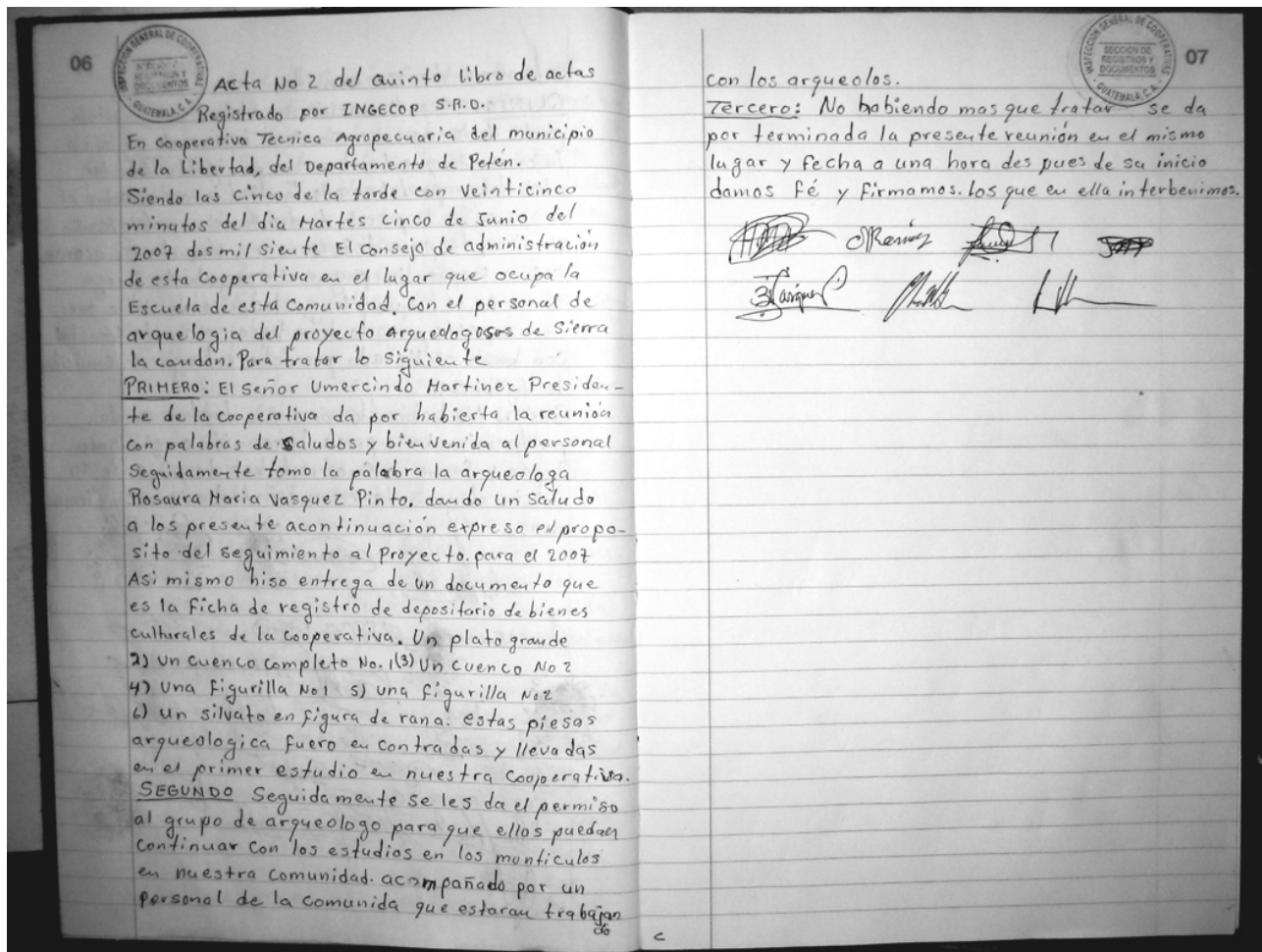
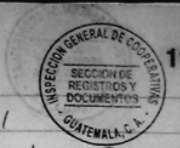


Figure 5. Certificate of delivery of archaeological objects to the La Técnica community, June 5th 2007.



Acta No 5

En Cooperativa Técnica Agropecuaria del municipio de la Libertad, departamento de Petén. Siendo los Seis de la Tarde del día Martes 26 de Junio de dos mil Siete. Reunidos en el lugar que ocupa la Escuela Oficial Rural Mixta. La Comisión de Vigilancia y don Victoriano Lorenzo como alcalde auxiliar de esta comunidad por la Junta Directiva el secretario Junta mente con los arqueólogos del proyecto Arqueológico Sierra de Lacandon, para dejar constancia de lo siguiente PRIMERO: Se da por habiéndose la reunión con palabras de saludos a los presente, seguidamente la Arqueóloga Rosaura Vasquez tomó la palabra para informar sobre el trabajo que realizaron, durante este segundo estudio que se realizó en nuestra comunidad. También presentaron el resumen de las escavaciones en los montículos en el Kinel y en los montículos el Zancudero en el arroyo de yaxchitan, de igual manera presentaron el mapeo de los sitios donde se hicieron los estudios por medio de fotografías en la computadora. Seguidamente se logró a través de los arqueólogos el contacto y aprobación del proyecto del museo. Al mismo tiempo informaron que las piezas arqueológicas que encontraron se realizarán el mismo proceso, de regresar a nuestra comunidad como lo hicieron con las piezas encontradas el año pasado SEGUNDO: No habiendo más que hacer constar se da por terminada la presente acta en el mismo lugar y fecha a una hora después de su inicio. damos fé. los que estuvimos presente.

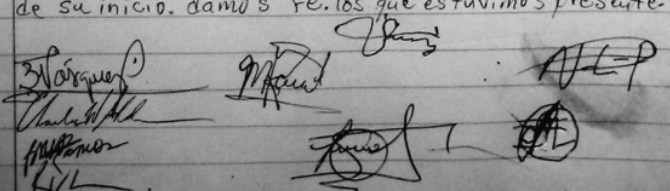
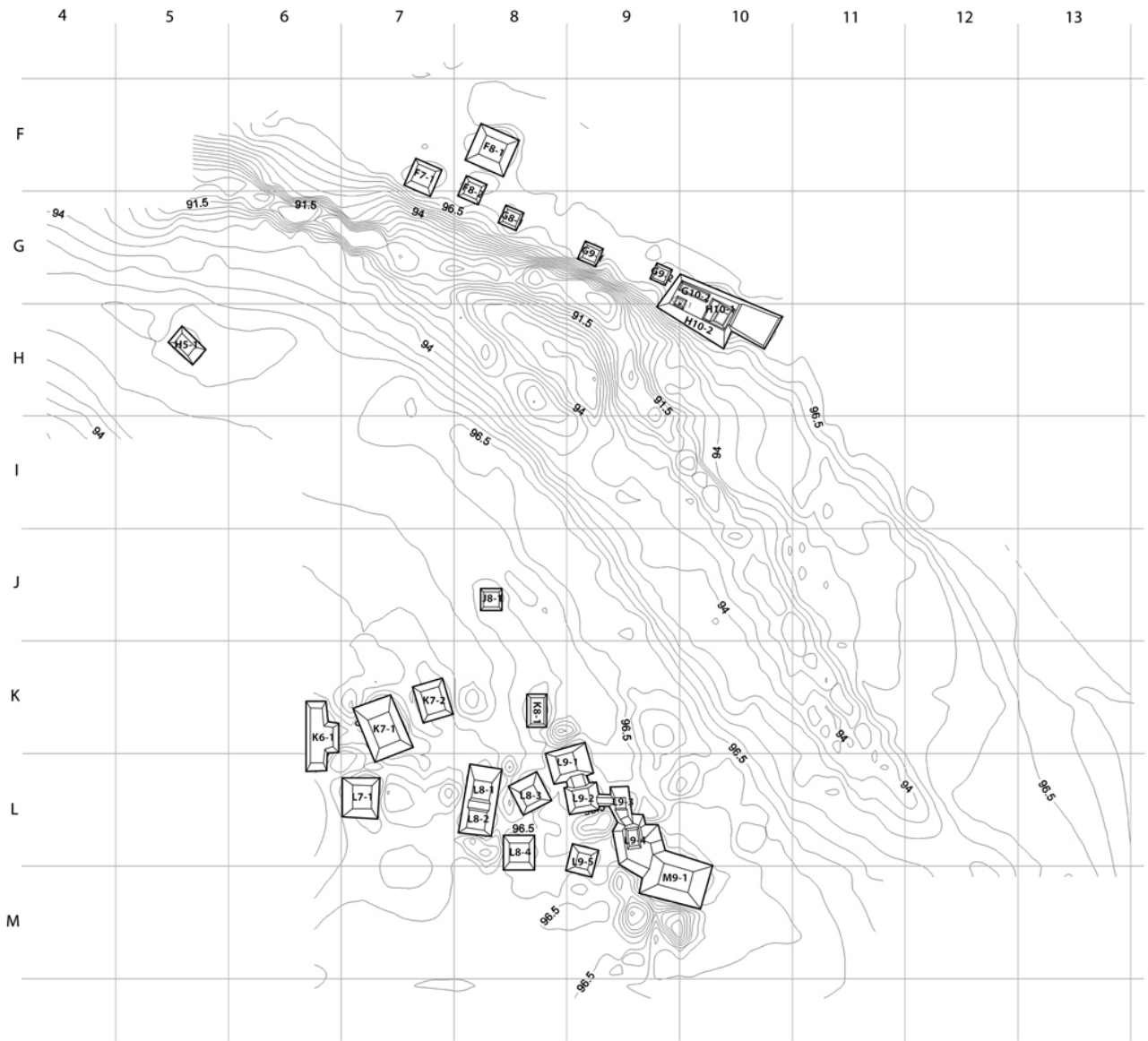


Figure 6. Certificate indicating that PRASL fulfilled the obligations agreed upon with La Técnica, 26th June 2007.



▲ Datum Principal del Sitio "El Kinel"  
(EK-D1 en Estr. D10-1)



Sitio Arqueológico "El Kinel"  
Cooperativa La Técnica Agropecuaria, La Libertad, Petén, Guatemala  
Proyecto Regional Arqueológico Sierra del Lacandón  
Junio 2007  
Mapa por: Betsy Ramos, Charles Golden y Juan Carlos Melendez

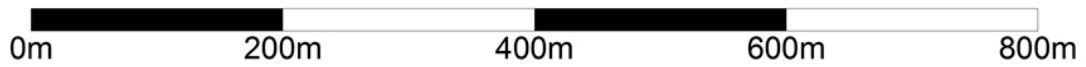


Figure 7. El Kinel map, 2007 season.

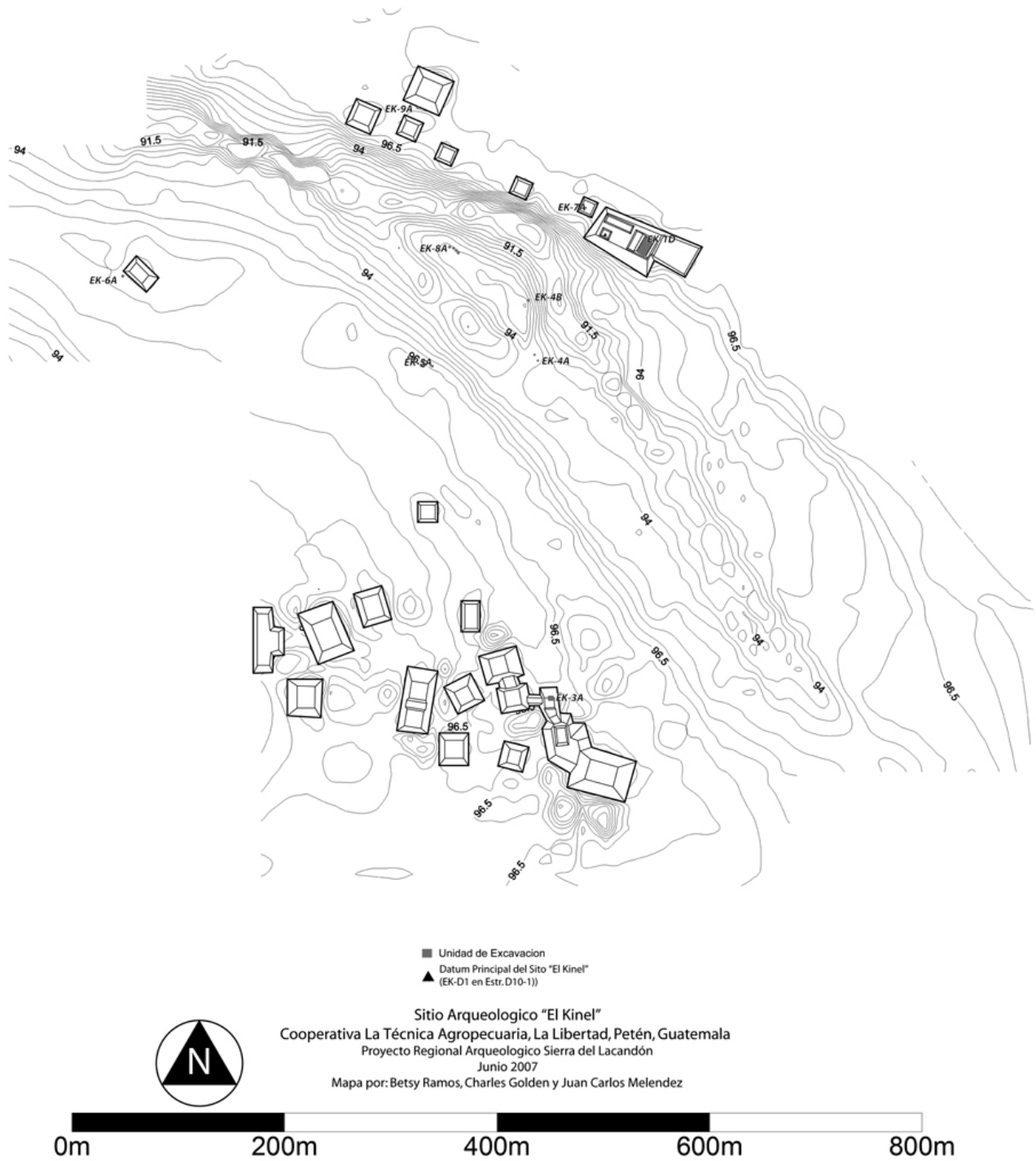
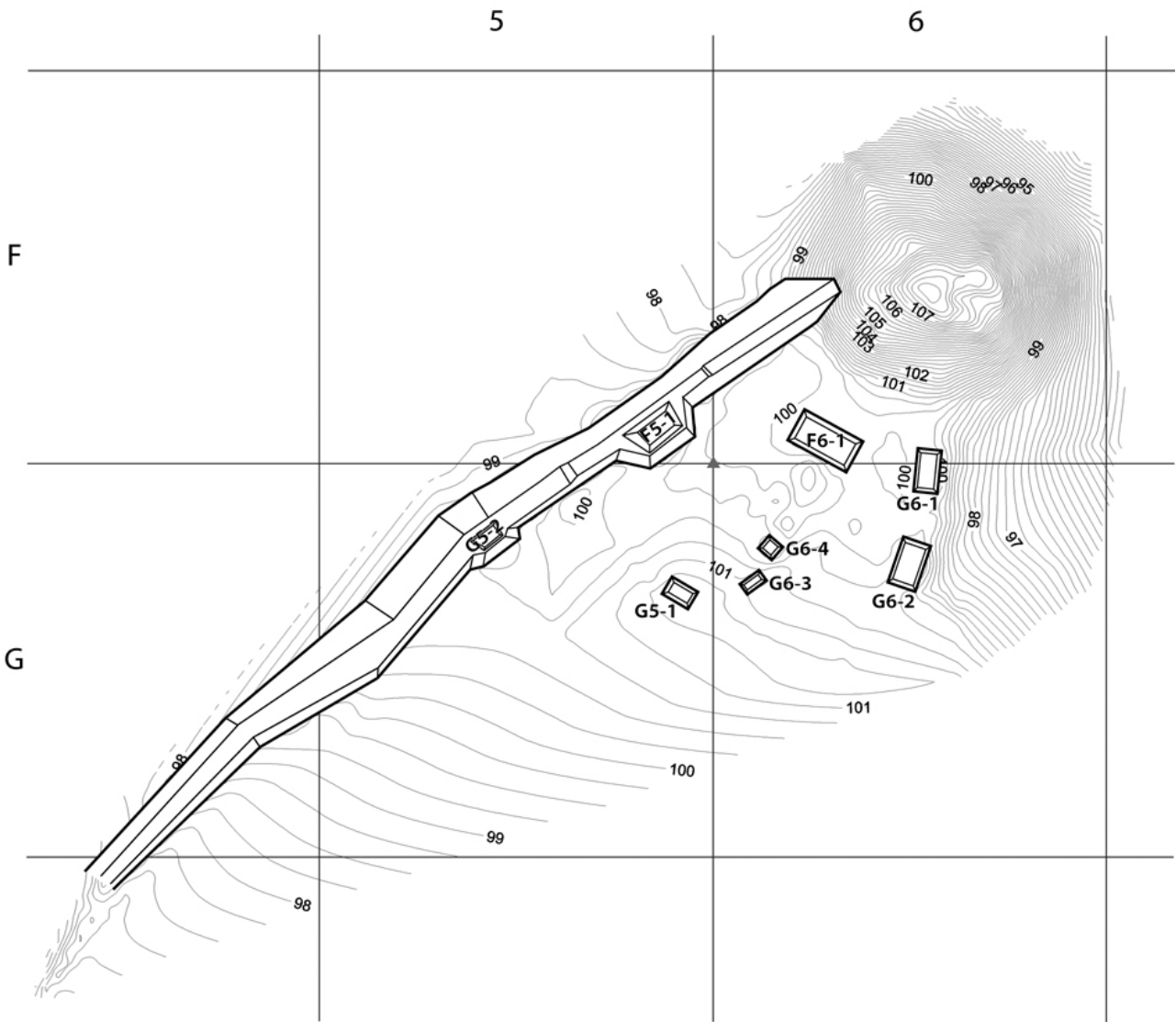


Figure 8. Location of excavations in El Kinel, 2007 season.



▲ Datum Principal del Sitio "Zancudero" (ZD-D1)

**Sitio Arqueológico "Zancudero"**  
 Parque Nacional Sierra del Lacandon, La Libertad, Petén, Guatemala  
 Proyecto Regional Arqueológico Sierra del Lacandón  
 Junio 2007  
 Mapa por: Betsy Ramos y Charles Golden

0m 50m 100m 150m 200m

**Figure 9. Zancudero map, 2007 season.**

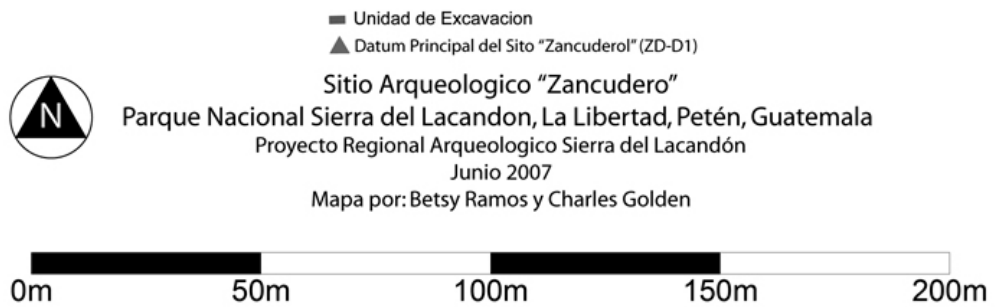
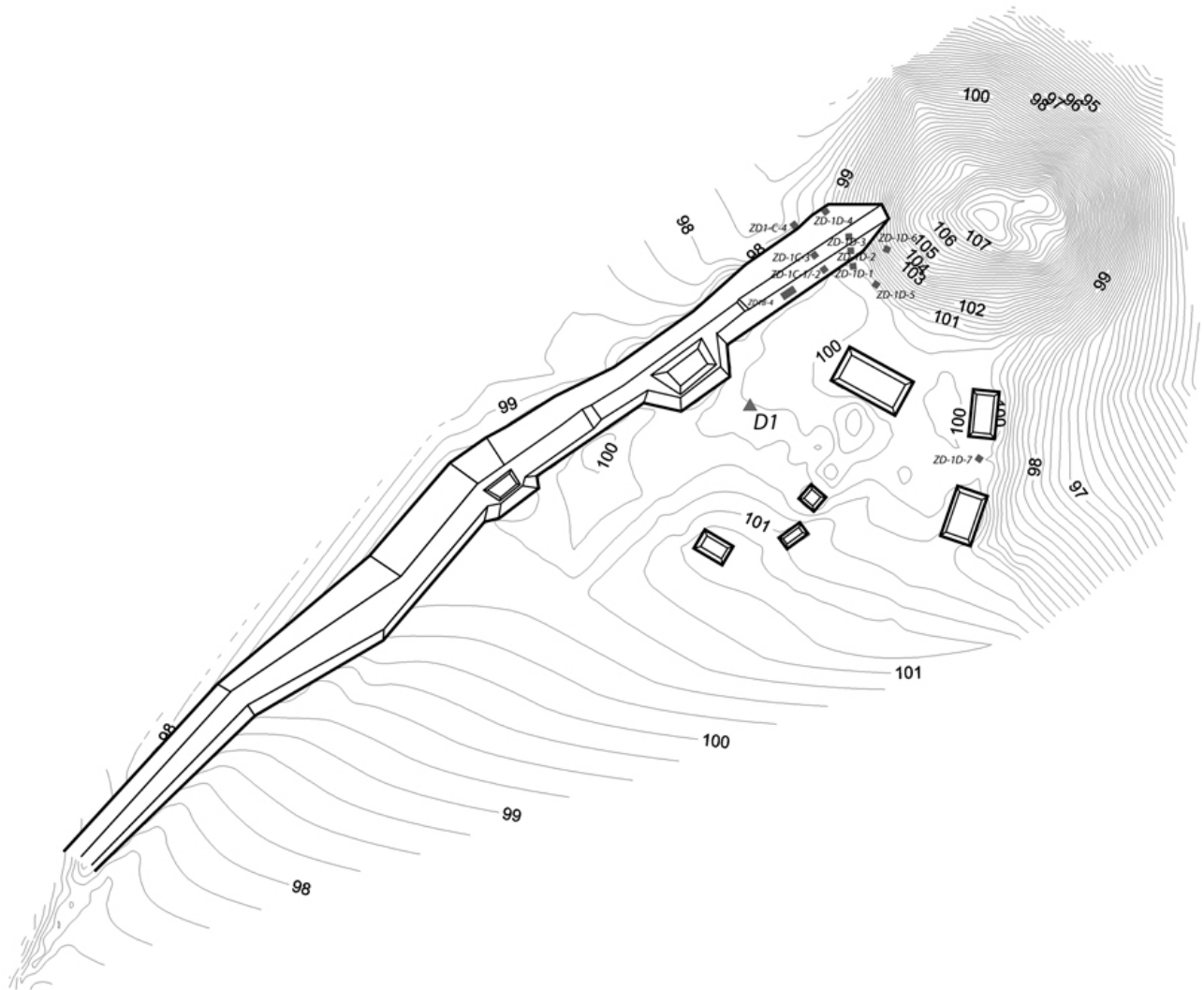


Figure 10. Location of excavations in Zancudero, 2007 season.

## **Excavations in the H10-1 Structure in El Kinel's North Sector**

*By: Charles Golden, Rosaura Vásquez and Betsy Marzahn-Ramos*

El Kinel is best known to archaeologists for its stela or lintel called Monument 1 of El Kinel, which was found by members of the community of La Técnica on or near Structure H10-1 ([Figure 11](#)). El Kinel's Monument 1 was discovered in 2000. It was found by chance during improvement work on a road that crosses H10-1 (Morales 2001a, 2001b; Morales and Ramos 2002). The monument shows Shield Jaguar III, the king of Yaxchilán, dressed as a warrior, performing a dance and showing a short-count date of 11 Ajaw 18 Mak, most likely the long-count date of 9.18.0.0.0, which corresponds to 7th October AD 790 of the Julian calendar ([Figure 12](#); Houston *et al.* 2006: 91).

This chapter gives an account of the excavations performed between June 8th and 25th, 2007, in Structure H10-1 of El Kinel's North sector. After the excavations, Structure H10-1 seems to be a platform on top of the basal platform H10-2, with an evident depression on the floor where the road goes over the structure ([Figure 13](#)). In addition to the road, the natural and cultural transformations after the occupation of H10-1 included its use in recent times as an agricultural field for growing several crops, including sweet potatoes, for which the vegetation was burned down during the agricultural cycle. Before the establishment of La Técnica as a community the area had abundant vegetation; it was covered by primary and secondary forest.

After the map was drawn in 2007 (as well as in part of 2006), the rectified site map produced by Golden, Marzahn-Ramos, and Meléndez, showed a single superstructure ([Figure 14](#) – showing the 2006 map). The depression was interpreted as resulting from modern activities, primarily the road. However, the original site report produced by Paulino Morales and his colleagues shows two superstructures ([Figure 15](#)). Excavations confirmed Morales' interpretations, revealing at least two superstructures ([Figure 11](#) and [Figure 16](#)).

The main interpretative goals in excavating H10-1 were to establish the temporal relationship of the architecture with Monument 1 (was the building contemporaneous or later than the monument?), as well as to better understand, if the case may be, the relationship of El Kinel with Yaxchilan's polity which was ruled by kings such as Bird Jaguar III. In order to better understand the building, its function or functions during its use and its occupation history, we decided to finish the work started by Morales and the sounding pits made by SLRAP members in 2006, by means of horizontal excavations.

In keeping with the designation of operation and sub-operation from 2006, the 2007 excavations were named Operation 1D. An excavation grid with 32 units was laid over Structure H10-1, in which each square measured 2 x 2 m, covering beyond the limits of what seemed to be the complete platform ([Figure 17](#)). Although not every grid square was excavated, when designating the units we kept the grid's original numbers. Therefore, there are units for which there are no data.

Within the limits established for these excavation goals, every effort was made to minimize excavations and to do as little damage as possible to Structure H10-1. The minute size of superstructures, the original building materials of the buildings (which were mostly of a perishable nature), and the poor state of preservation of the masonry, required a very careful excavation process, for fear that the original architecture could be inadvertently damaged or destroyed when mistaking it for rubble. Therefore, excavators were quite methodical with their work. Once the humus layer was removed from each unit, usually designated as Lot 1, the rubble which followed it was removed only if there was an indication (e.g. visible architecture on the surface, or architecture exposed in adjacent squares) to let the excavators distinguish between rubble and intact architectural features.

Furthermore, it was only necessary to excavate a minimum number of grid squares, all of them to a minimal depth, in order to reveal the building's shape and the history of its construction. The order in which the grid squares were excavated, as well as the fact that some of them were not excavated completely, was decided on the basis of the architecture visible on the surface and of the presence of vegetation. If the lines of walls or another configuration of cut stone were visible, an attempt was made within the limits of the available time in the field season to excavate those units. In the units where no obvious architectural remains were visible before excavation this was carried out on the basis of features discovered in the adjoining units. If there were big trees in the unit, excavations were avoided whenever possible.

As a result of this, probably not all habitation spaces of the superstructure were made explicit, nor were the precise limits of the building defined.

Nonetheless, we believe that the excavations revealed enough information to infer with a certain level of precision the shape of the buildings ([Figure 16](#) and [Figure 18](#)), which included a frontal superstructure on the northeast and another one on the southwest, both with a low interior bench. In the northernmost superstructure it would seem as if the walls were completely made of perishable materials, since there are no masonry bases for the walls, apart from the foundations of the superstructure itself. In the south, in the west façade of the building there were masonry bases for the walls. But judging by the amount of rubble stones apparently this did not extend up to the ceiling and the superstructure certainly was not built with a masonry vaulted roof. Below we describe the excavations lot by lot.

#### **EK-01-D**

On top of the base platform, where there are at least two structures, the whole area was covered by a grid made up of 32 squares of 2 m<sup>2</sup> each, of which 21 were excavated to define the occupation and the architecture.



#### *EK-01D-01*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located on the edges of the North Structure, basically it was used to define the building's northwest corner. In it we found a stone leveling.

Lot 1 was the only one excavated; it pertained to the humus layer, consisting of a very dark-brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. In the whole EK-1D operation the humus layer is approximately 10 cm thick. We found big and small flint flakes and very few sherds, including a very big sherd belonging to a dish. We also found shell remains.

#### *EK-01D-03*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located in the alley between the platforms, on the southwest corner of the northeast structure, on the route that once functioned as a modern road to the community of La Técnica. We only excavated the humus layer and the collapsed rubble from the architecture, which was mixed up by the movement of heavy vehicles and carts in recent years. In spite of the movement of such vehicles, the line of the northeast structure is still in situ, and we found an amount of mixed-up cultural materials including ceramics, animal bone, and flint flakes and cores.

The earth color would seem to be very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2), but the difference in color between EK-1D-3-1 and EK-1D-1-1 (10YR 2/2) is more likely a matter of difference between the archaeologists' perceptions than of an archaeological or anthropomorphic feature.

#### *EK-01D-04*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located at the southwest of unit 3. The humus layer and the collapsed architecture rubble were excavated as Lot 1. We found a mixture of cultural materials, including pottery, animal bone and flint. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). The collapsed rubble was defined as Lot 2 (dark brown color, 7.5 YR 3/3; depth between 5 and 10 cm).

#### *EK-01D-05*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located on the edge of the South Structure. It was used to define the building's southeast corner, but we only found collapsed rocks.

Lot 1 was the only one excavated, it is the humus layer consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, as well as pumice stone. We found flint flakes and very few sherds.

### *EK-01D-07*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was established in the edge of the South Structure, trying to locate another wall or to define the back side of this structure, but we only found collapsed rocks.

Lot 1 was the only one excavated, pertaining to the humus layer, which consisted of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. We found little ceramic and lithic material.

### *EK-01D-10*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located within the North Structure, on the southeast side of unit 18. The color of the soil is very dark gray-brown (10-YR/4-3), of fine texture. Approximately 10% of the matrix is thought to consist of burnt limestone, probably affected by the agricultural use given to this area to grow a *milpa* in the recent past. We found lithic material such as obsidian flakes, cores, and blades, as well as ceramic of fine paste.

In order to carry on with the excavations in unit 10 we decided to only excavate one half of the unit (1 x 2 m) along its northwest side, on the border with unit 18. This way we could further define the interior shape of the northeast structure without spending too much time in the last days of the field season. The level of approximately 5-10 cm below the humus and directly above the remains of architecture was excavated as two lots. Lot 2 is the exterior area of the structure (together with unit 9), and Lot 3 is the interior area. In both lots we found a variety of lithic and ceramic artifacts, but not in the same high amounts as in the alley between the buildings. The color of these lots is 7.5 YR 3/3, or dark brown.

### *EK-01D-11*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located in the alley between the platforms and on the southwest side of the northeast platform, immediately to the northwest of EK-1D-3. We only excavated the layer of humus and the rubble collapsed from the architecture. We found a mixture of cultural materials, including ceramics, animal bone, obsidian, and flint flakes and cores. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). We saw a greater amount inside the structure than in the alley, and the amount of flint flakes is higher in the west side of the unit. However, these observations are still preliminary, subject to the final analysis of the lithic materials.

Like Lots 2 and 3 in unit 10, we made a 1 m- wide test on the northwest side of unit 11 to define lot EK-1D-11-2. Lot 2 only included the level of earth below the humus and above the architecture within the building. It does not include the level under Lot 1 in the alley.

#### *EK-01D-12*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located in the alley between the platforms and on the northeast side of the southwest platform. We only excavated the layer of humus and the rubble from the collapsed architecture. We found a mixture of cultural materials, including ceramics, animal bone, and flint. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). It seems that the movement of vehicles in the recent past has destroyed the architectural line, and the shape of the architecture is not preserved in this unit, apart from the fill.

#### *EK-01D-13*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located inside the South Structure, where we found a line of big stones cut in rectangular shape, which is part of the building's east wall.

Lot 1 pertains to the humus layer, which consists of a very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. In this lot we found many collapsed stones and a line that was part of the building's east wall.

Lot 2 was made up of a matrix of soil of very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2), of mixed clay and sand with limestone gravel. All the collapsed stones were picked up in this lot, which allowed us to better define the wall. We recovered flint flakes, many potsherds, and several animal bones.

Lot 3 was defined by the search for a burial, since in operation EK-01-D-21-6 we found several human bones and a tooth. This operation followed the previous one, therefore all the stones from the fill were removed, and we saw at the bottom the stone lid of the cist of Burial 11 ([Figure 21](#), 2.12). In this lot the east wall of the South Structure was totally uncovered. It included two kinds of earth indicated in the following operations: EK-01-D-21-3 to 6.

Finally, Lot 4 contained Burial 11, which appeared within a cist made of limestone slabs, in a fill of very fine yellowish-brown earth (10YR 5/4). This burial will be described below ([Figure 23](#)).

#### *EK-01D-14*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located inside the South Structure, where the stone wall found in operation EK-01-D-13 continues.

Lot 1 was the only one we excavated and pertains to the humus layer, consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2), of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. There were many collapsed stones, but the continuation of the east wall can be observed quite well.

### *EK-01-D-17*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was executed inside the North Structure, one can see it carries on with the same stone level found in operation EK-01-D-1.

Lot 1 was the only one we excavated. It pertains to the humus layer, consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2), of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds.

### *EK-01D-18*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was executed inside the North Structure, we noted a line of stones, which may belong to the north wall of the North Structure.

Lot 1 pertains to the humus layer, consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. This lot showed a great amount of collapsed stones, but the wall could be seen quite well.

In lots 2 and 3 we made a test of 1 x 2 m (with the long axis on a northeast-southwest direction), alongside EK-1D-10. Both lots were located directly below Lot 1's humus level. Lot 2 is the level of rubble above the architecture within the structure, and Lot 3 consisted of rubble on the exterior area (this means that it was the opposite of EK-1D-10-2 and -10-3).

In Lot 2, on the interior edge of a stone alignment which formed a low bench or the interior floor of a room, we found remains of badly degraded stucco.

### *EK-01D-19*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located in the alley between the platforms and on the southwest side of the northeast platform, directly to the northwest of EK-1D-11. Lot 1 consisted of the humus layer and the collapsed rubble from the architecture. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). We found a huge amount of artifacts within the collapse, including a mix of cultural materials like pottery, animal bone, and obsidian, as well as flint flakes and cores. The collapse was designated as Lot 2 (dark brown color, 7.5 YR 3/3; depth between 5 and 10 cm). We saw that in the unit's west edge there was a higher amount of lithic material, such as flint flakes and cores. This could have been a lithic production of refuse area. In addition to this we found animal bone and bid potsherds of the Altar group, such as Poite Incised and Trapiche Incised. This alley seems to have functioned as a dump area.

Lot 3 consisted of rubble within the interior room, as an extension of EK-1D-18-2. We found what looked like worked-stone alignments, but it was not possible to ascertain the form or function of this possible architectonic feature. It is possible that it was not original, but a product of collapse.

During the excavation of EK-1D-19-2 in the alley the lot was left at the same level as lot EK-1D-20-2. During the excavation of EK-1D-20-3 we found high amounts of artifacts directly above the floor in the alley, then we excavated lot EK-19-4 in the alley, in order to clean the collapse down to the level of the floor.

### *EK-01D-20*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located in the alley between the platforms and above the northeast-southwest edge of the southwest platform, directly to the southwest of EK-1D-19. Lot 1 consisted of the humus layer and collapsed rubble from the architecture. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). We exposed the same line of stones found in EK-1D-19-1. Apart from the lithic and ceramic materials we found the bones of a big animal, possibly a tapir. We also found what seem to be six teeth of the same animal, and we suspect that the bones are those of the mandible.

Lot 2 was found below Lot 1, but only in the area of the alley. It consists of a level of trash mixed with collapse from the buildings. We found high amounts of artifacts, including pottery and lithics from every stage of the tool-making process, from unused cores to completed objects. We also found plenty of animal bone, including examples of turtle, armadillo, and clam shell. Among the bones in the southwest corner of the lot we found three pieces of needles made of animal bone in several stages of the production process. This level has a thickness of roughly 5 cm in the northwest corner of the unit, 18 cm in the southeast corner, and 14-15 cm in the northeast corner. The soil is brown (10YR 4/3), somewhat different from Lot 2 from other units, maybe because of all the organic material deposited by the Maya in this area. Lot 2 ends on top of a level of stone, gravel, and soil above the level of a floor.

Lot 3 was located under Lot 2 in a level of stone, gravel, and soil above the level of a floor, where instead of stucco we found gravel, sand and *sascab*. We found in Lot 2 many artifacts of all kinds, although this level is not so thick (roughly 7 cm in the northwest corner, 12 cm to the northeast, 10 cm to the southwest, and 15 cm to the southeast). Like in Lot 2, we found worked bone in the shape of needles, as well as a big part of a ray spine, all of this in the unit's southeast corner. The color is pale yellow (2.5Y 7/4).

Lot 4 was not found under Lot 3, but rather under Lot 1, in a small area of the unit which is within the southwest building. This way it was possible to keep the materials found inside the building apart from the ones found in the alley. This is a thin level of approximately 5 cm, above the level of the bench in the interior space of the southwest structure.

Lot 5 was found under Lot 3. It is a level of floor which was not preserved, consisting of gravel, *sascab* and sand. Not many artifacts were found, and the ones we found probably belong to the level of Lot 3. The lot is 10 cm thick in every corner. Its color is the same as Lot 3, pale yellow (2.5Y 7/4).

Lot 6 is the fill under the platform, consisting of a loose fill of big stones without any other matrix. Its color was defined as pale yellow, but the soil comes from the upper lots. This is the deepest lot, 55 cm at the northwest, 52 cm at the northeast, 62 cm at the southwest, and 42 cm at the southeast. We found no artifacts here. In order to avoid collapses the unit was smaller in Lot 6, and we made a test of 1.42 m (northwest-southeast) by 1.13 m (northeast-southwest).

Lot 7 seems to be the original soil under the platform. We only excavated the lot in the center of the unit in a test of roughly 35 x 40 cm because of the danger of collapse due to loose fill in Lot 6. The soil is quite clayey, its color is between brown and yellow (10YR 4/4) where it is mixed with soil from the upper levels, and very dark brown (10YR 2/2) where it is not mixed. We found no anthropogenic features or artifacts in this lot.

#### *EK-01D-21*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located inside the South Structure. We saw a line of big stones worked in a square shape, pertaining to the west wall of this structure.

Lot 1 pertains to the humus layer, consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, along with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. There were many collapsed stones in this lot, but the wall line could be seen.

Lot 2 was formed by a soil matrix of very dark grayish-brown color (10YR 3/2), and a mixture of clay and sand with limestone gravel. The collapsed stones were eliminated and this allowed us to better see the wall. We found flint flakes, many potsherds, and several animal bones.

Lot 3 is a brown-colored soil, of finer earth (10YR 4/3), with limestone gravel. In this lot we found three big quadrangular stones which were part of a bench. We also found a rather thin stucco floor, which was preserved mainly on the room's edges. We found the following material: lithics, pottery, animal bones and a lizard tooth. Likewise within this operation the space of the door was defined by the position of the stones.

Lot 4 was obtained when the floor and the stones of the bench were picked up, always with the care of marking the spot in order to return them to their place at the moment of filling in. This floor is integrated by a more compact matrix of brown soil (10YR 4/3), with limestone gravel. We found little ceramic and lithic material.

Lot 5 is made up of yellowish-brown earth (10YR 5/4) of clayey density, with mid-sized limestone gravel. This may be the fill before the stucco, that is to say the ballast (gravel bed). We did not find great amounts of ceramic or lithic material.

Lot 6 pertains to a fill of humid earth of dark yellowish-brown color (10YR 4/4) with a fill of big stones. At the bottom of this lot we found several human bones and a tooth, therefore we decided to pick up all the stones in order to locate a possible burial.

Lot 7 contained Burial 11, which will be described below. This burial was found within a rectangular cist in a fill of yellowish-brown soil (10YR 5/4), with very fine earth.

The upper part of the cist where Burial 11 was deposited was located at 0.76 m from the surface ([Figure 22](#)). The cist is made of four diamond-shaped slabs integrating the lid and a wall made of mid-sized square stones, which form the walls on which the lid rests.

Upon removing the slabs of the lid we found three broken vessels with all their pieces, two polychrome bowls, and a polychrome cylinder (of the Zacatel Cream Polychrome [crema policromo] type). Further inside we found a black whole dish (of the Zopilote Stained Black [negro manchado] type) with nubbin supports and a hole in the middle of the base, placed upside down over the skull of the individual ([Figure 23](#), 2.14). The skeleton was in a very poor state. Something remarkable about this burial is that among all the material there was a great amount of rodent bone (with a minimum number of 81 individuals), which we think lived inside the tomb for many years. Because of this several of the individual's bones were missing. Apart from the vessels we found a fragment of ray spine, probably part of the burial offerings.

#### *EK-01D-22*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located inside the South Structure. We could see a line of big stones cut in a square shape, which pertained to the west wall of this structure, a continuation of the one found in operation EK-01-D-21.

Lot 1 was the only one we excavated. It pertains to the humus layer, consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2) of organic consistency and coarse texture, together with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. In this lot there were many collapsed stones, but the position of the wall could be seen quite well.

#### *EK-01-D-23*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was located inside the South Structure. We only found big stones of an almost rectangular shape, which formed part of the possible south wall of this building, but they collapsed because of the tree roots.

Lot 1 was the only one we excavated, it pertains to the humus layer consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2), of organic consistency and coarse texture, along with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. We found several collapsed stones, and from the position of the bigger ones we could see where the collapsed wall was.

#### *EK-01-D-26*

This 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit was performed in the edges of the North Structure, and was used to define the building's northwest corner.

Lot 1 pertains to the humus layer, consisting of very dark brown earth (10YR 2/2), of organic consistency and coarse texture, along with pumice stone. We found flint flakes and potsherds. Here we defined part of the stairs of this structure, locating two rows of big stones cut in a square shape.

Lot 2 was formed by a matrix of very dark grayish-brown soil (10YR 3/2) and a mixture of clay and sand with limestone gravel. We could see much better the stairways, which consisted of three rows of big stones cut in a square shape. We found flint flakes, a grindstone, many potsherds, and several animal bones.

#### *EK-1D-28*

In this 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit Lot 1 consisted of the humus layer and the collapsed rubble from the architecture, the color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). This unit was located to the northwest of unit 20. We think it was on the northwest edge of the platform, but we did not find the architectural remains of the platform. The line of stones between both structures was cleaned, on the platform which closes the alley. We don't yet understand completely the function of this line of stones. It is possible that in the last phase of use of the platforms the Maya filled up the alley in order to join both structures.

In the southeast corner of the unit we found one of maybe five or six bifacial points which were found in the excavations of EK-1D. Most of them were in the area of units 20, 21, and 28. La [Figure 25](#) shows three examples.

#### *EK-1D-29*

In this 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit Lot 1 consisted of the humus layer and collapsed rubble from the architecture. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). This unit was located to the northwest of unit 21. Although we believe that this unit was over the northwest edge of the platform, we didn't find the in situ architectural remains within Lot 1, and we did not excavate in deeper levels for lack of time. Because of this in the drawing of the east-west profile ([Figure 20](#)) unit 26 (which shows the shape of the architecture) was substituted for unit 29.

#### *EK-1D-31*

In this 2 m<sup>2</sup> unit Lot 1 consisted of the humus layer and collapsed rubble from the architecture. The color of the earth is very dark gray-brown (10YR 3/2). This unit was located to the northwest of unit 23. We think this unit was over the northwest edge of the platform, but we did not find the architectural remains of the platform.

### **Conclusions**

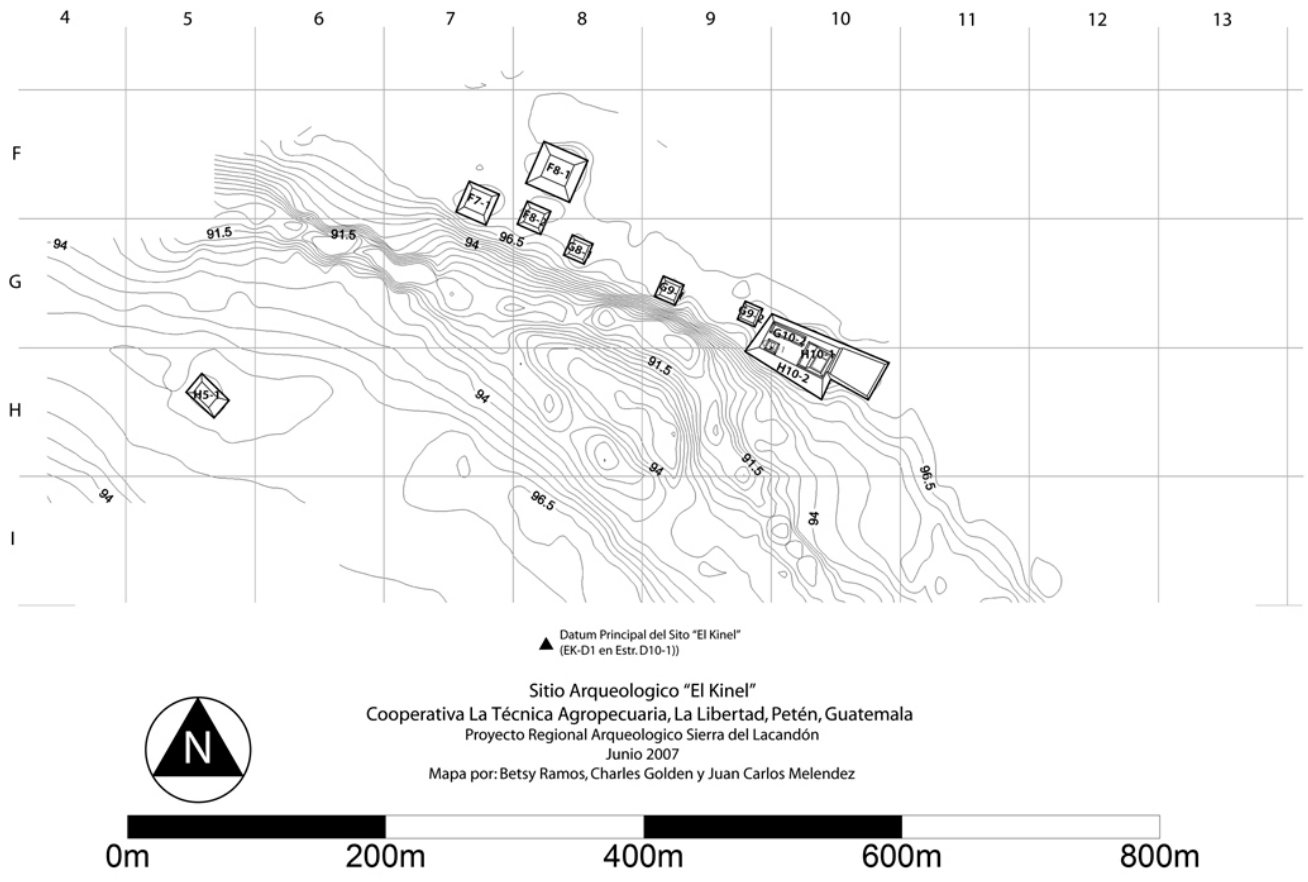
In conclusion, on the basis of recovered artifacts Structure H10-1 appears to have been a residential structure, where a significant amount of production activities were carried out, including lithic artifacts from flint cores and bone needles. Service wares dominated



the ceramic collection, while big unslipped storage vessels are curiously underrepresented when considered from the perspective of food production. The implication of this is that food was served in and around Structure H10-1, but it was probably stored and prepared elsewhere.

The production of lithic and bone tools took place in this structure, which does not suggest in any way that its residents were of low status. In fact, recent research in Aguateca (Emery and Aoyama 2007), among other sites, suggest that the so-called elites were typically engaged in artifact production. The abundance of exchange vessels such as Balancan Fine Orange, Altar Fine Orange, and Tres Naciones Fine Gray, indicates that the residents of Structure H10-1 participated in widespread trade networks. Zachary Hruby (personal communication) has identified obsidian from H10-1 which came from Mexico, another indication of participation in long-distance trade. Furthermore, the location and size of the platform on which H10-1 is located suggest its control over the rest of El Kinel, with an ample vision over the site and a great effort invested in the construction of the platform.

Lastly, the investment in Burial 11 in terms of its location (at the center of the structure), labor and materials, including four vessels and a ray spine, may suggest that this burial pertained to a high-status individual, although his or her identity is not clear. The skeleton's poor preservation makes it difficult to make statements about the individual's age, sex, or health. The nature of this burial as a founding event in the building's life history seems clear, since the burial seems to precede all other constructions. But it is impossible to say whether the individual was venerated as an ancestor.



**Figure 11. Map of El Kinel's north sector, 2007.**



Figure 12. Drawing of El Kinel's Monument 1 (by S. Houston).

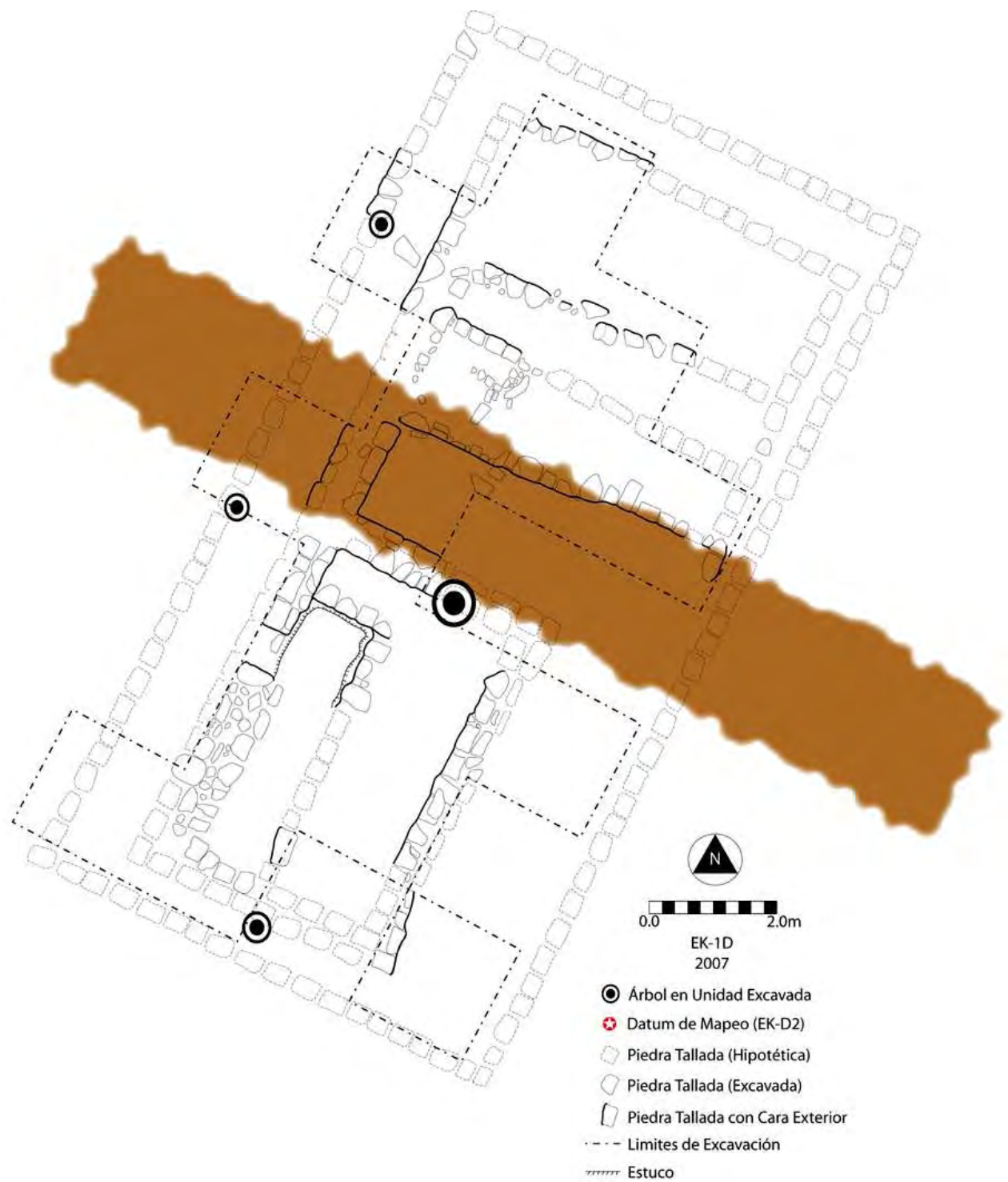


Figure 13. Plan of the operation showing the modern road, which until 2006 went over the mound.

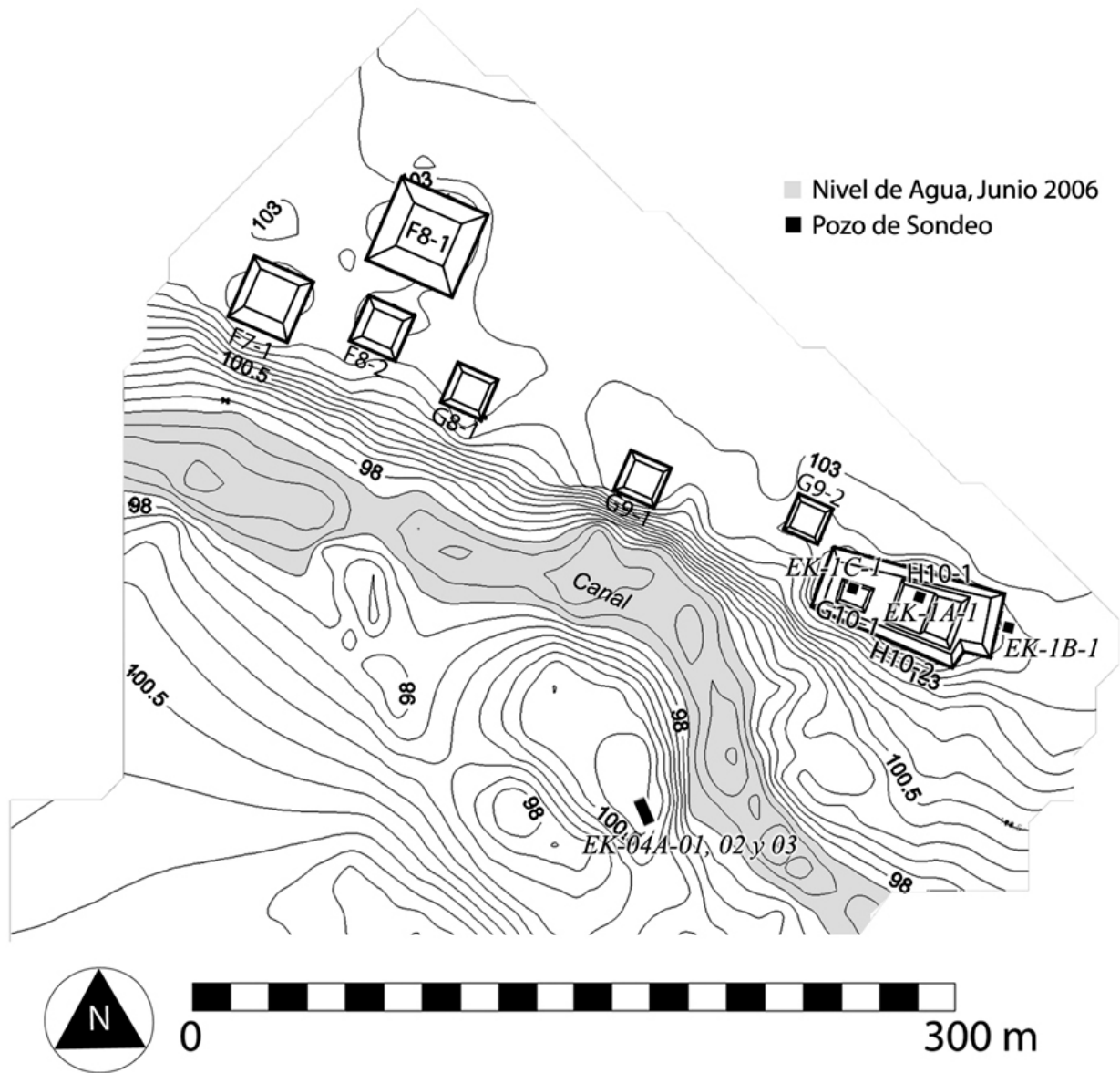
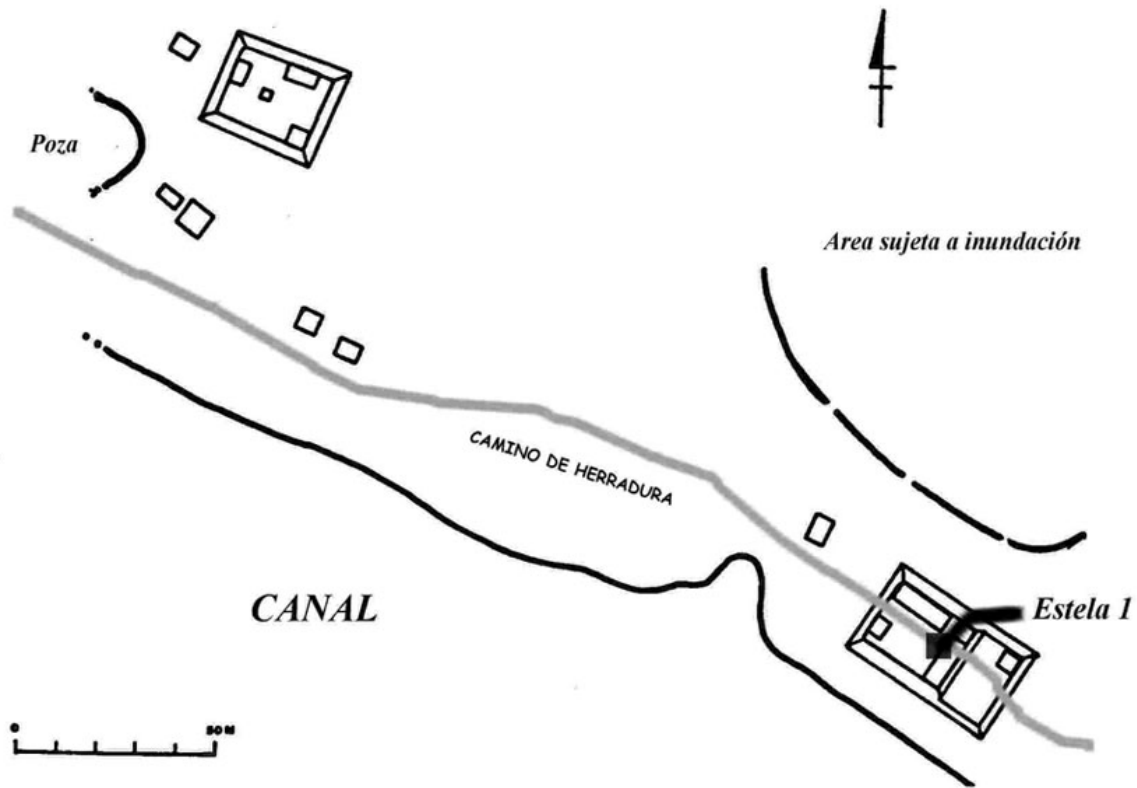


Figure 14. Map of the group made in 2006.



*Sitio El Kinel, Sector Norte  
Coop. Técnica Agropecuaria  
La Libertad, Petén*

**FIGURA 2**

Figure 15. Map of the group drawn by Morales and colleagues (Morales 2001b: 567).

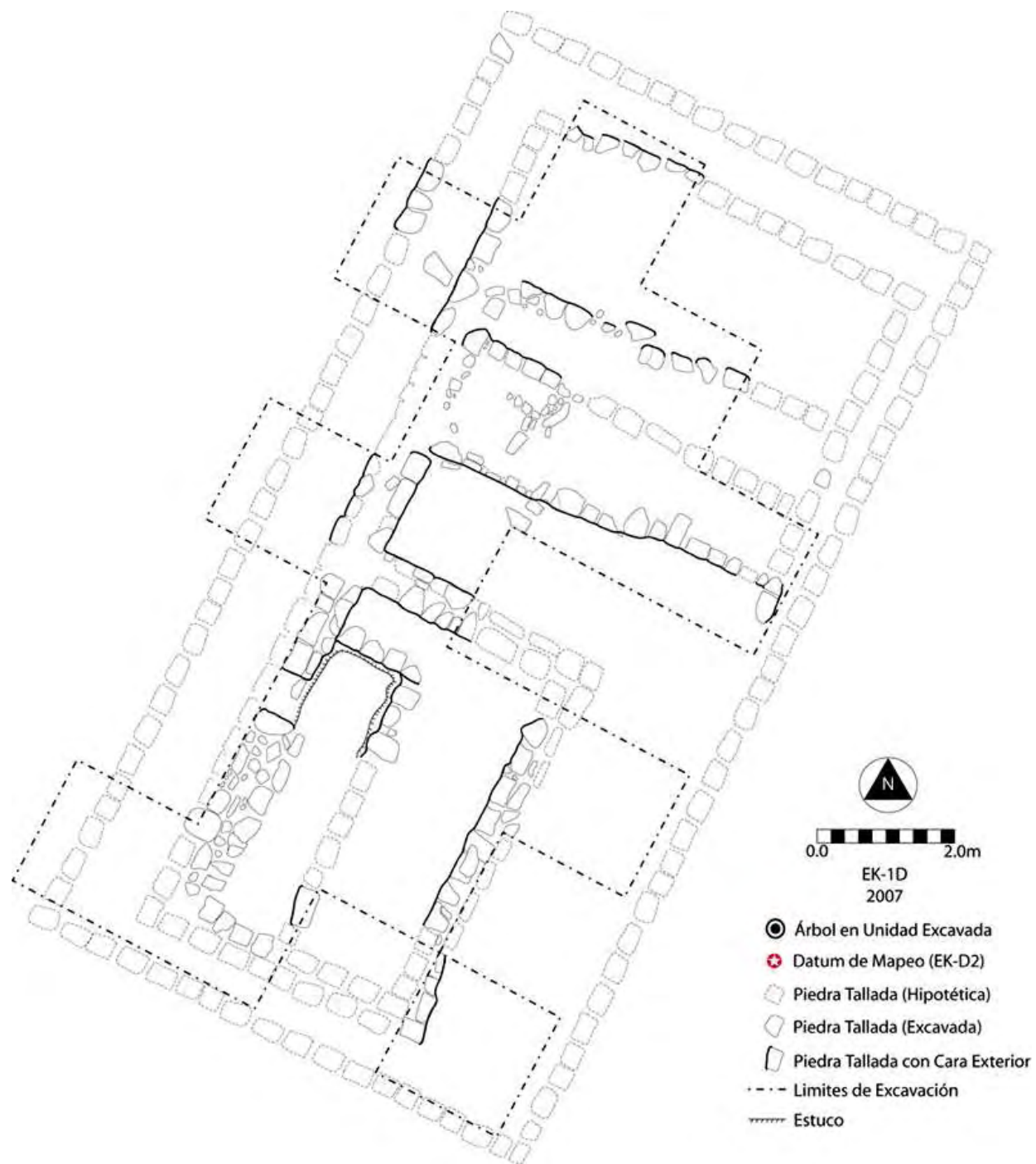


Figure 16. Plan of platforms on Structure H10-1.



Figure 17. Plan of the units in Operation EK-01D.



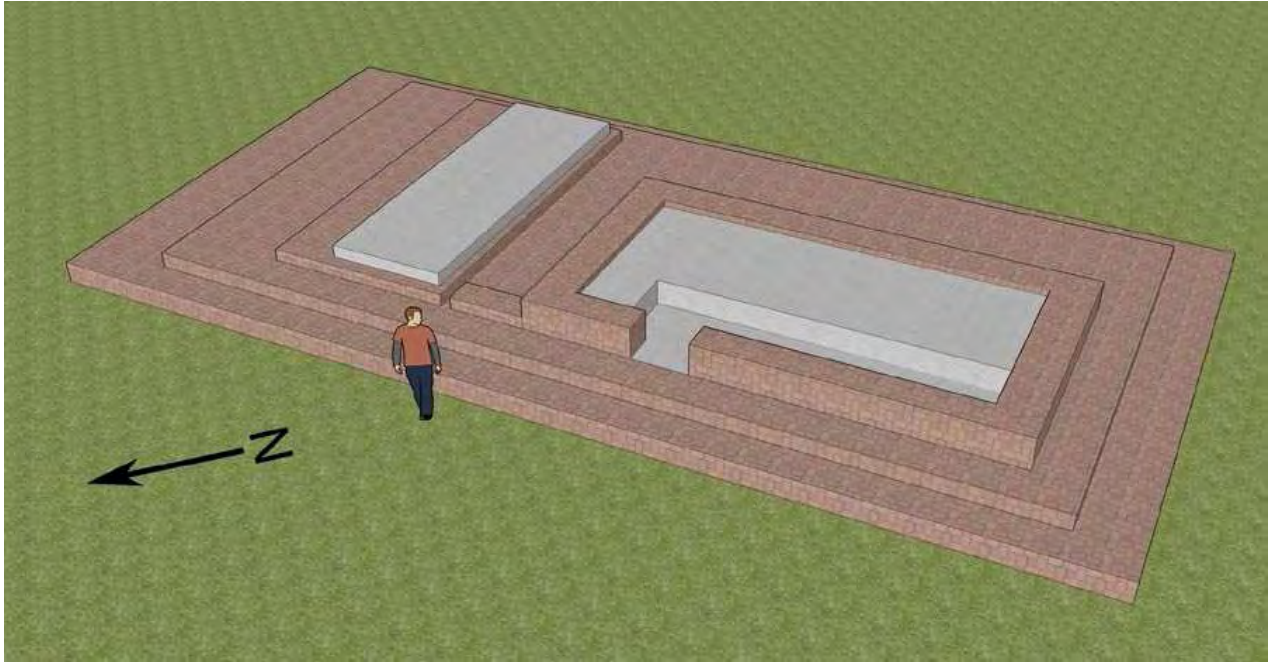
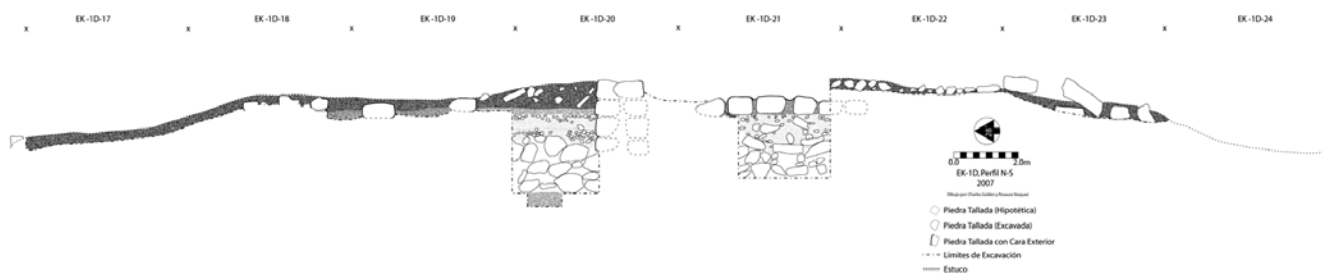
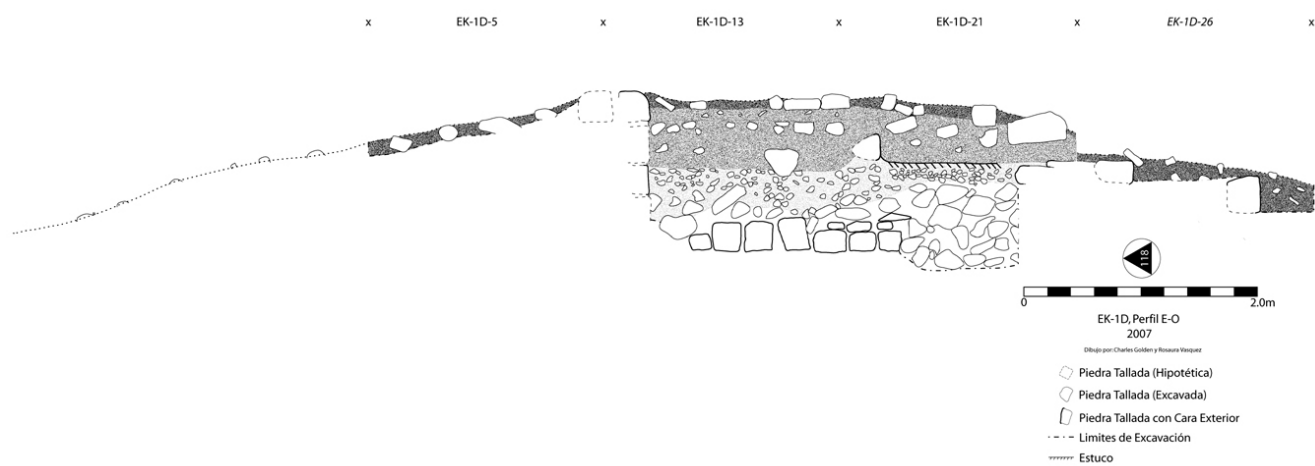


Figure 18. Digital reconstruction of the platforms on Structure H10-1.



**Figure 19. North-south profile of excavations in EK-1D.**



**Figure 20. East-west profile of excavations in EK-1D  
(note: the unit 26 was exchanged by the unit 29,  
see above in the discussion of the unit 29).**

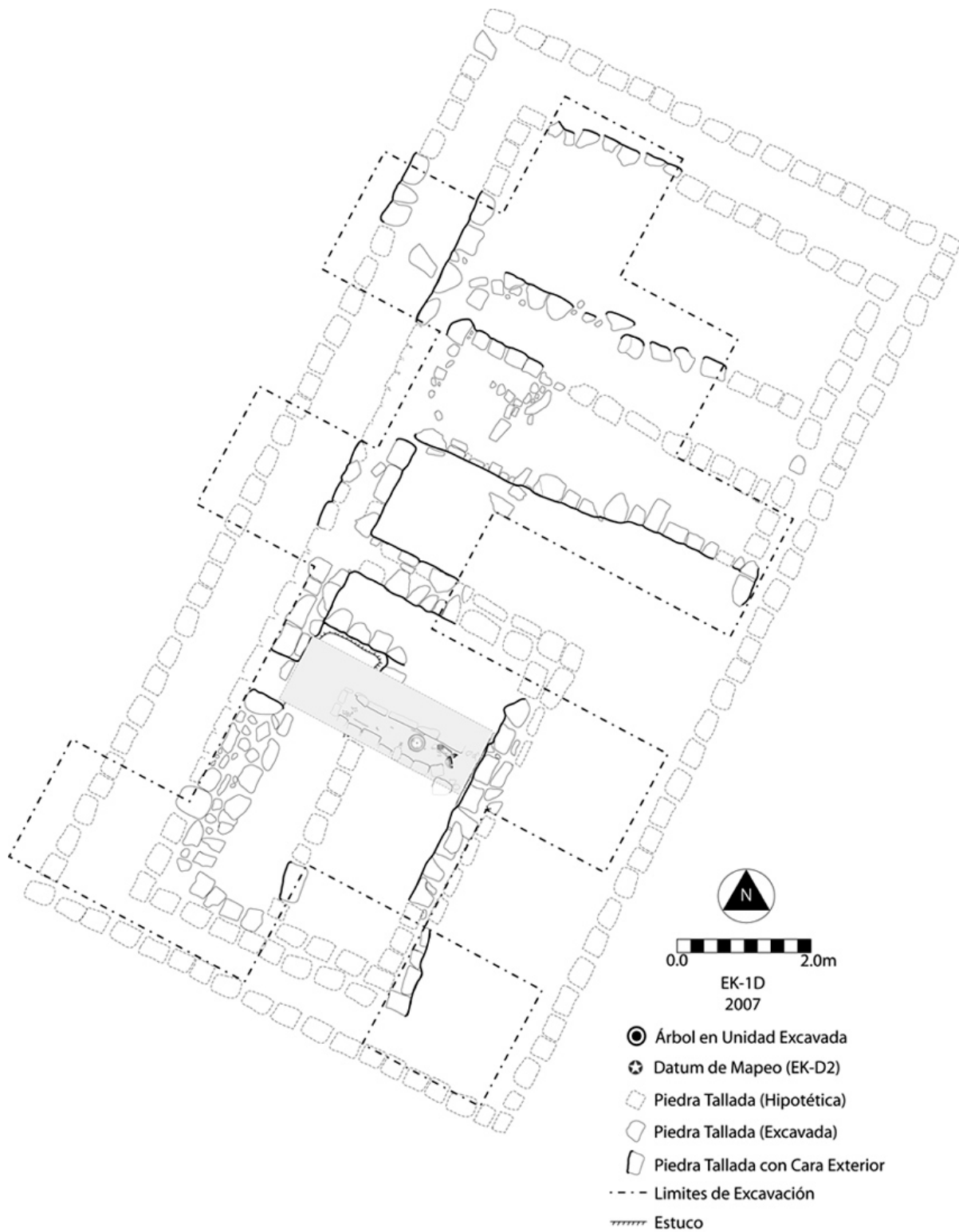


Figure 21. Plan of EK-1D showing the location of Burial 11.

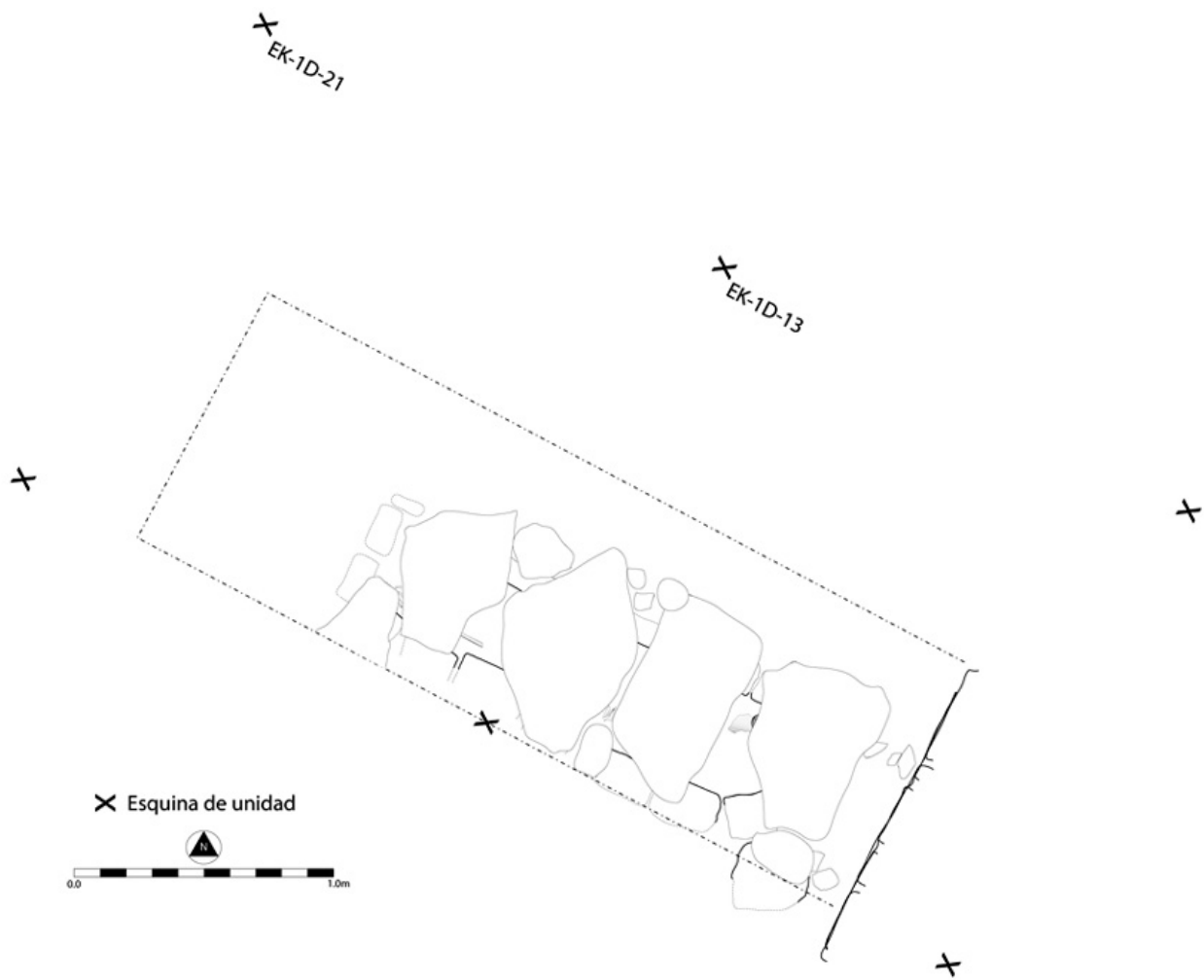


Figure 22. Plan of the slabs of Burial 11, at the base of EK-1D-13-3 and 1D-21-6.

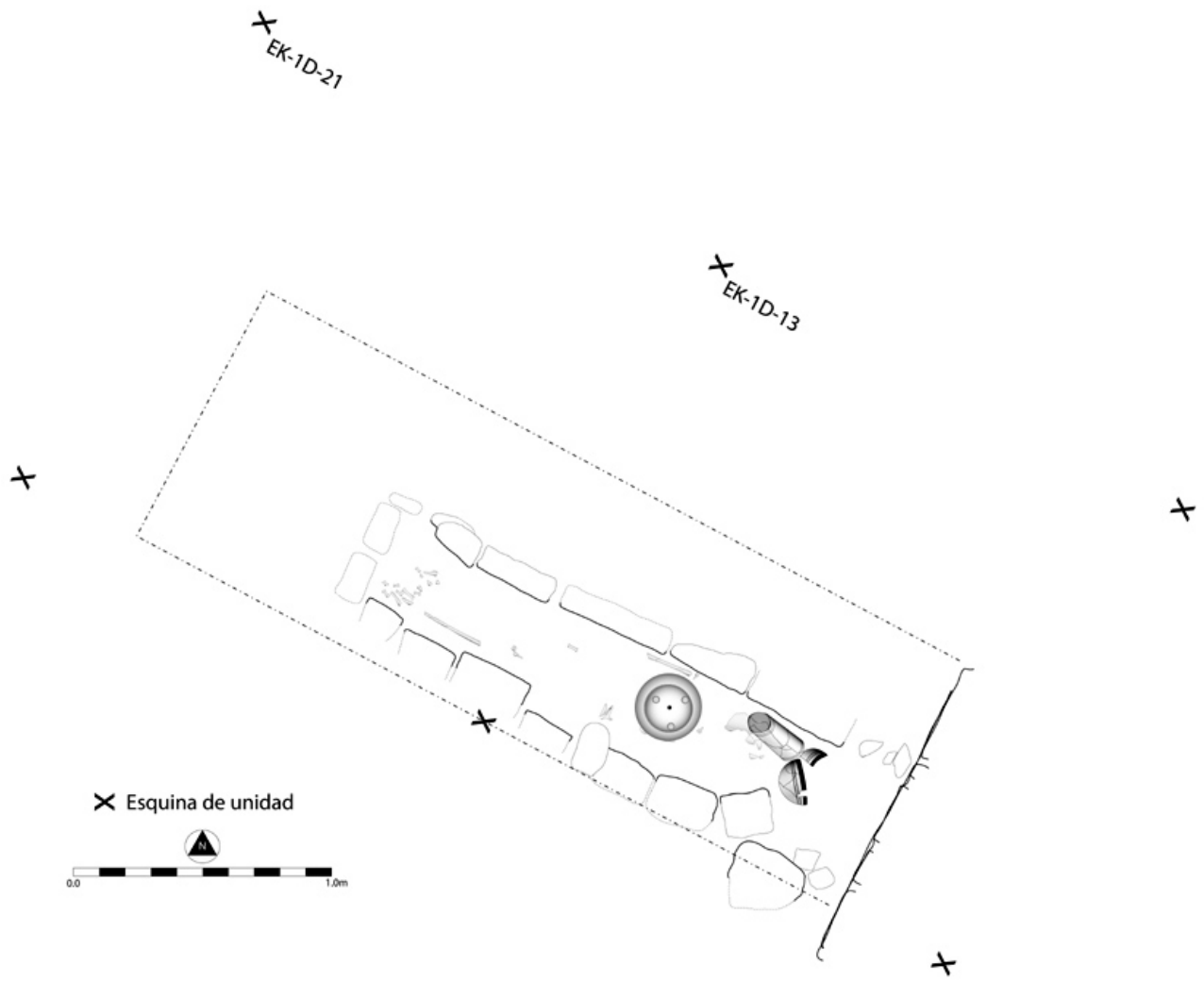


Figure 23. Plan of Burial 11, EK-1D-13-5 and 1D-21-7.



Figure 24. Four vessels found as part of Burial 11 (vessels belong to EK-1D-13-4).

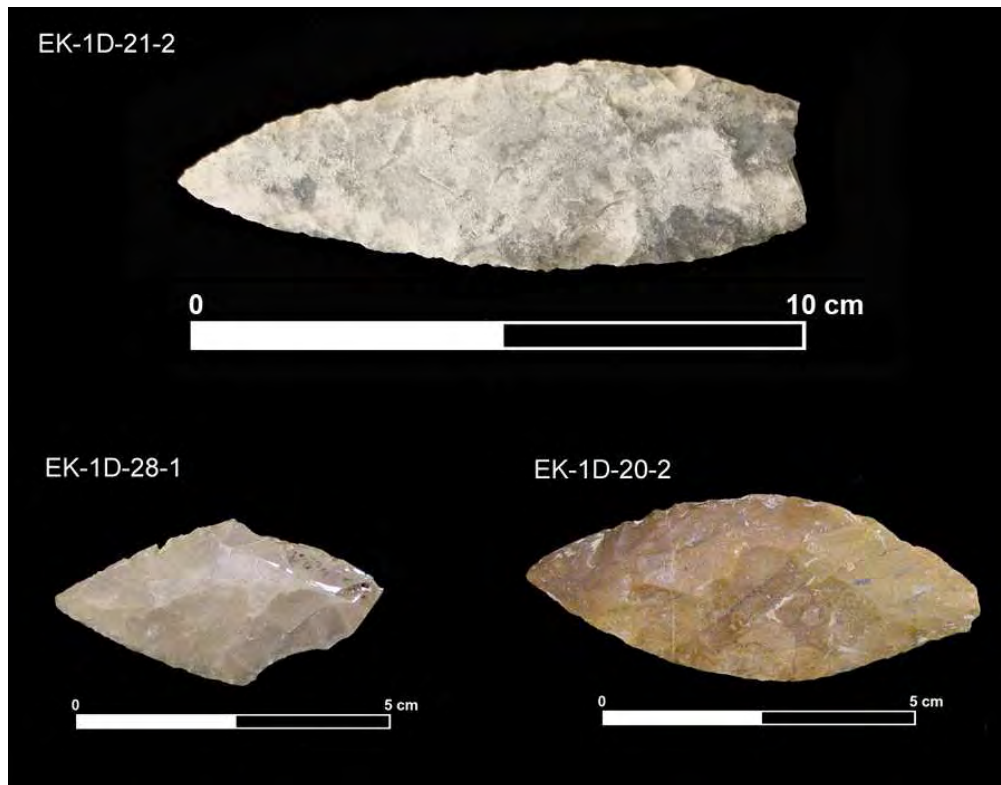


Figure 25. Three examples of flint points found in EK-1D.

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