

[Supplementary material]

Defining the Preclassic ceramic economy at Cahal Pech, Belize using geochemical compositional analyses

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Our study examined Preclassic-period ceramic assemblages from the following radiocarbon-dated contexts at Cahal Pech, Belize. All radiocarbon dates discussed are reported at the 2σ calibrated date range.

Plaza B

Plaza B is the largest open courtyard in the Cahal Pech monumental site core, measuring approximately 50m north–south \times 60m east–west. Large scale horizontal exposures and test excavations have identified contexts representing the earliest village settlement in this location of the site (Awe 1992; Peniche May 2016; Ebert *et al.* 2017; Ebert 2018), associated with the Cunil ceramic complex (1200–1000/900 cal BC), earliest ceramics in the Belize River Valley during Early Preclassic (Figure S1; Sullivan & Awe 2013; Sullivan *et al.* 2018). Contexts located below floor 17 (construction phases Plaza B/first through Plaza B/fourth) have been directly dated to the Cunil complex (for radiocarbon dates, see Table S1). A second phase of construction occurred in Plaza B during the beginning of the Middle Preclassic (construction phases Plaza B/eighth—Plaza B/ninth). Construction phase Plaza B/ninth (floor 13) represents the first in a series of low rectangular platforms that may have served as higher-status residences. The next construction event, Plaza B/tenth (floor 12), enlarged the first rectangular platform, and a retaining wall composed of at least five courses of regularly cut limestone blocks was placed on the building. Plaza B/eleventh consisted of the construction of a specialised keyhole-shaped round structure. The last Middle Preclassic construction episode within Plaza B (Plaza B/twelfth,

floor 11) was an extensive cobble platform (~98m²) covering the keyhole-shaped structure that was placed between 765 and 535 cal BC.

A single radiocarbon date below floor 8 in Plaza B provides evidence for construction activity through at least the middle of the Late Preclassic Period between 105 cal BC and cal AD 15 (UCIAMS-169813). Relatively little Late Preclassic and Early Classic Period materials were recovered from the Plaza B excavations (Peniche May 2016), however, and archaeological data also indicate a hiatus in activity at Structure B4 until the Late Classic Period (Awe 1992; Healy *et al.* 2004).

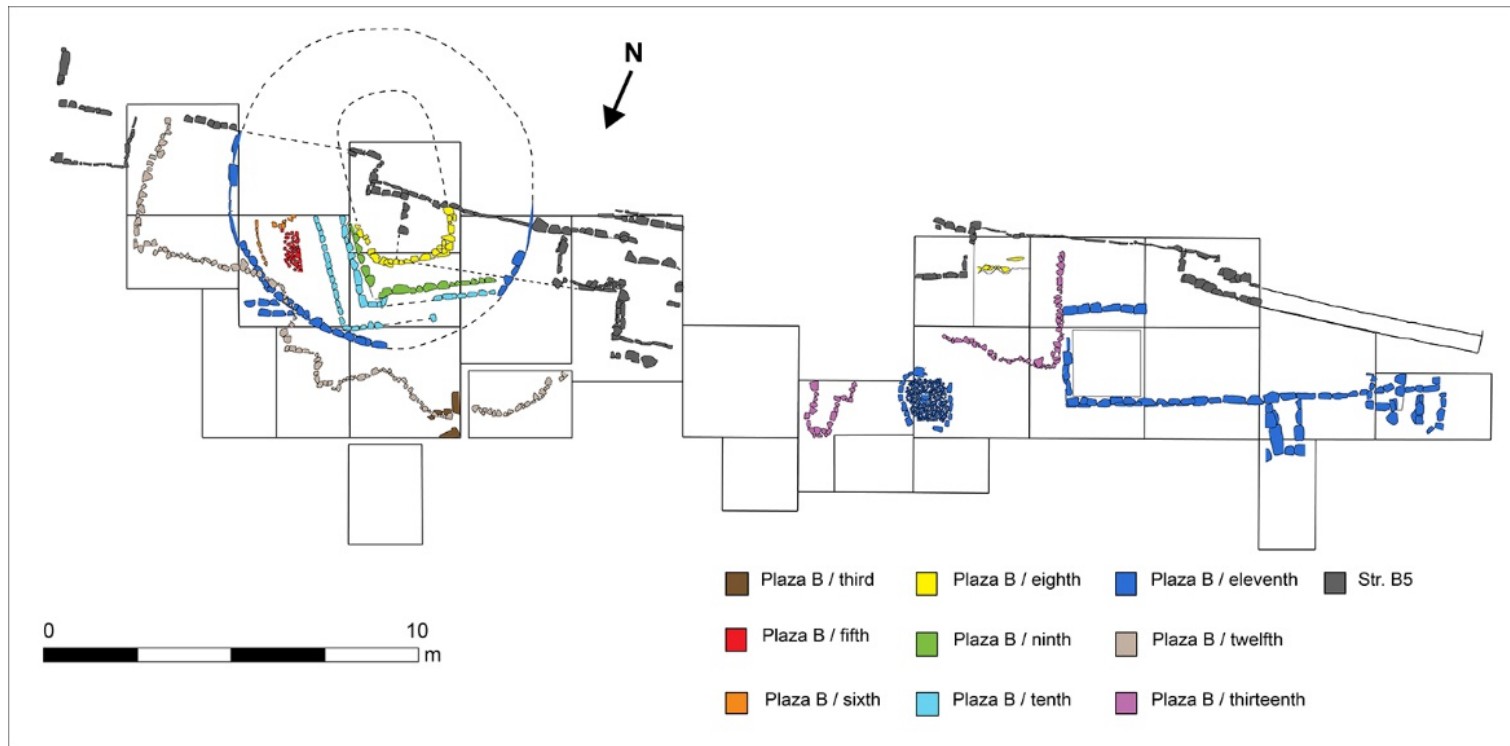


Figure S1. Plan of Plaza B, showing construction phases discussed in the main text (after Peniche May 2016: fig. 4.3; drawing and digitisation by N. Peniche May, J. Can & M. Méndez).

Table S1. Radiocarbon dates for the Cahal Pech site core and peripheral settlement. All dates are reported as conventional ^{14}C ages corrected for fractionation, with measured $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ following Stuiver and Polach (1977). Date calibrations were produced in OxCal v.4.3 (Bronk Ramsey 2009) using the IntCal13 Northern Hemisphere atmospheric curve (Reimer *et al.* 2013).

Context	Lab #	Provenience	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (BP)	2σ cal range (BC/AD)	Ceramic phase	References
<i>Structure B4</i>							
	UCIAMS-115021	EU10, lvl 4, above fl. 4	Charcoal	2225±15	375–205 BC	EF/LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	Beta-40863 ^a	EU5, fl. 7	Charcoal	2470±90	795–400 BC	LF Kanluk	Awe 1992
	UCIAMS-115022	EU10, lvl 6, surface fl. 6A	Charcoal	2705±15	900–815 BC	EF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-115023	EU10, lvl 7, surface fl. 7	Charcoal	2585±15	805–775 BC	EF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-115024	EU10, lvl 8, surface fl. 8	Charcoal	2735±20	920–825 BC	EF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-111159	EU10, lvl 8, in fl. 8	Charcoal	2505±15	775–545 BC	EF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	Beta-77206 ^{a,b}	EU5, fl. 8	Charcoal	1950±200	405 BC–AD 540	EF Kanluk	Healy & Awe 1995
	Beta-40864 ^a	EU5, fl. 9	Charcoal	2720±60	1000–795 BC	EF Kanluk	Awe 1992

Context	Lab #	Provenience	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (BP)	2σ cal range (BC/AD)	Ceramic phase	References
	UCIAMS-111160	EU10, lvl 10, fl. 10	Charcoal	2220 \pm 15	365–205 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	Beta-40865 ^a	EU5, fl. 10C	Charcoal	2740 \pm 70	1055–795 BC	Cunil	Awe 1992
	Beta-77205	EU5, fl. 10A	Charcoal	2800 \pm 50	1110–830 BC	Cunil	Healy & Awe 1995
	Beta-77204 ^a	EU5, fl. 11	Charcoal	2710 \pm 120	1215–540 BC	Cunil	Healy & Awe 1995
	Beta-56765 ^a	EU5, fl. 11	Charcoal	2730 \pm 140	1285–510 BC	Cunil	Awe 1992
	UCIAMS-111158	EU8, lvl 12/13, fl. 13	Charcoal	2830 \pm 15	1030–920 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-111162	EU10, lvl 21, fl. 13	Charcoal	2845 \pm 20	1075–920 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-111161	EU10, lvl 14, southern posthole	Charcoal	2435 \pm 20	745–405 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	Beta-253772	EU 8, lvl 13, fl. 13	Charcoal	2840 \pm 40	1125–900 BC	Cunil	Sullivan & Awe 2013
	Beta-77207	EU5, below fl. 13, on bedrock	Charcoal	2930 \pm 50	1280–980 BC	Cunil	Healy & Awe 1995

Context	Lab #	Provenience	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (BP)	2σ cal range (BC/AD)	Ceramic phase	References
<i>Plaza B</i>	Beta-253771	EU9, lvl 14, below fl. 13	Charcoal	2970 \pm 40	1375–1050 BC	Cunil	Sullivan & Awe 2013
	UCIAMS-169810	Lot PL-B-224, below fl. 4	Charcoal	180 \pm 15	AD 1665–1950	Xakal/Mount Hope	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-169811	Lot PL-B-263, below fl. 5	Charcoal	205 \pm 20	AD 1650–1950	EF/LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-169812	Lot PL-B-228, below fl. 6	Charcoal	155 \pm 15	AD 1665–1945	EF/LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-169813	Lot PL-B-24, below fl. 8	Charcoal	2035 \pm 15	95 BC–AD 20	EF/LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-172404	Plaza B/12 th , lot PL-B-146, below fl. 10	Faunal Bone	2500 \pm 20	775–540 BC	LF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-172405	Plaza B/10 th , lot PL-B-193, between feat. 21 & 26	Faunal Bone	2530 \pm 20	795–550 BC	LF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-174957	Plaza B/9 th , lot PL-B-180, below fl. 13	Faunal Bone	2545 \pm 20	800–560 BC	LF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-169814	Plaza B/8 th , lot PL-B-176, feat. 19	Charcoal	2525 \pm 15	790–550 BC	EF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017

Context	Lab #	Provenience	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (BP)	2σ cal range (BC/AD)	Ceramic phase	References
	UCIAMS-169815	Plaza B/5 th , lot PL-B-167, below fl. 16	Charcoal	2760±20	975–835 BC	EF Kanluk	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-172403	Plaza B/4 th , lot PL-B-168, below fl. 17	Faunal Bone	2835±20	1050–925 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-169816	Plaza B/4 th , lot PL-B-169, below fl. 17	Charcoal	2820±15	1015–920 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-169817	Plaza B/3 rd , lot PL-B-184, fill/Sascab	Charcoal	2800±20	1010–900 BC	Cunil	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	Beta-253773	Op. 1v, lvl 15	Charcoal	2940±40	1265–1015 BC	Cunil	Sullivan & Awe 2013
<i>Peripheral Settlement</i>							
	UCIAMS-123532	Tzutziy Kin Group Str. 2, terminal construction, fill	Charcoal	1255±15	AD 685–775	Spanish Lookout	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2016
	UCIAMS-121554	Tzutziy Kin Group Str. 2, fl. 3	Charcoal	1365±15	AD 645–675	Tiger Run	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2016
	UCIAMS-121553	Tzutziy Kin Group Str. 2, feat. 1, fill	Charcoal	1555±15	AD 425–550	Hermitage	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2016
	UCIAMS-164869	Tzutziy Kin Group Str. 2, below fl. 6	Charcoal	1880±15	AD 70–210	LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017

Context	Lab #	Provenience	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (BP)	2σ cal range (BC/AD)	Ceramic phase	References
	UCIAMS-164870	Tzutziiy Kin Group Str. 2, below fl. 7, paleosol	Charcoal	1865 \pm 15	AD 80–215	LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-164871	Tzutziiy Kin Group Str. 2, below fl. 7, paleosol	Charcoal	1890 \pm 15	AD 65–205	LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-164872	Tzutziiy Kin Group Str. 3, below fl. 2	Charcoal	1920 \pm 15	AD 50–130	LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-121552	Tzutziiy Kin Group Str. 3, below fl. 7, paleosol	Charcoal	2150 \pm 20	355–110 BC	EF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2016
	UCIAMS-169818	Zopilote Group Str. 1, tomb 1 burial, inside vessel 10	Charcoal	1320 \pm 15	AD 655–765	Hermitage/ Tiger Run	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-164876	Zopilote Group Str. 1, below fl. 8	Charcoal	1765 \pm 15	AD 230–335	LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-164877	Zopilote Group Str. 1, below fl. 8	Charcoal	1780 \pm 15	AD 170–330	LF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-164874	Zopilote Group Str. 1, below fl. 7	Charcoal	2070 \pm 15	165–40 BC	EF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017
	UCIAMS-164875	Zopilote Group Str. 1, below fl. 8	Charcoal	2070 \pm 15	165–40 BC	EF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017

Context	Lab #	Provenience	Material dated	Conventional radiocarbon age (BP)	2σ cal range (BC/AD)	Ceramic phase	References
	UCIAMS-164878	Zopilote Group Str. 1, fl. 5	Charcoal	2085±20	170–45 BC	EF Xakal	Ebert et al. 2017
	UCIAMS-164873	Zopilote Group Str. 1, fl. 1A	Charcoal	2175±15	355–175 BC	EF Xakal	Ebert <i>et al.</i> 2017

^a Denotes radiometric measurement.

^b Denotes date found unacceptable for context by original investigators.

Structure B4

Structure B4 is a 5.5m-high temple located at the south-eastern corner of Plaza B. This building has produced the longest radiocarbon-dated construction sequence at Cahal Pech. A series of excavations conducted from 1988–2012 documented at least 13 discrete construction episodes (Figure S2; Awe 1992; Ebert *et al.* 2017; Healy & Awe 1995; Healy *et al.* 2004; Ishihara-Brito & Awe 2013). The uppermost strata of the building are composed of Late and Terminal Classic materials (cal AD 300–900), including some intrusive burials, with context located below floor 3 (Structure B4/tenth) associated with Early through Late Preclassic occupation.

The earliest material at Structure B4 dates between 1205–990 cal BC (Beta-77207). A radiocarbon sample was recovered beneath floor 13 on the surface of bedrock, which was likely leveled prior to initial Cunil occupation at Cahal Pech. Domestic buildings located below floor 10 (construction phases B4/first through B4/fourth) also date to the Cunil phase (Ebert *et al.* 2017). Beginning after approximately 960 cal BC, during the Middle Preclassic (early facet Kanluk ceramic complex) Structure B4 underwent several modifications (B4/fifth through B4/seventh), terminating with the construction of a specialised round structure measuring approximately 1.5m in height and dating between 895–820 cal BC (Beta-40863; Healy & Awe 1995).

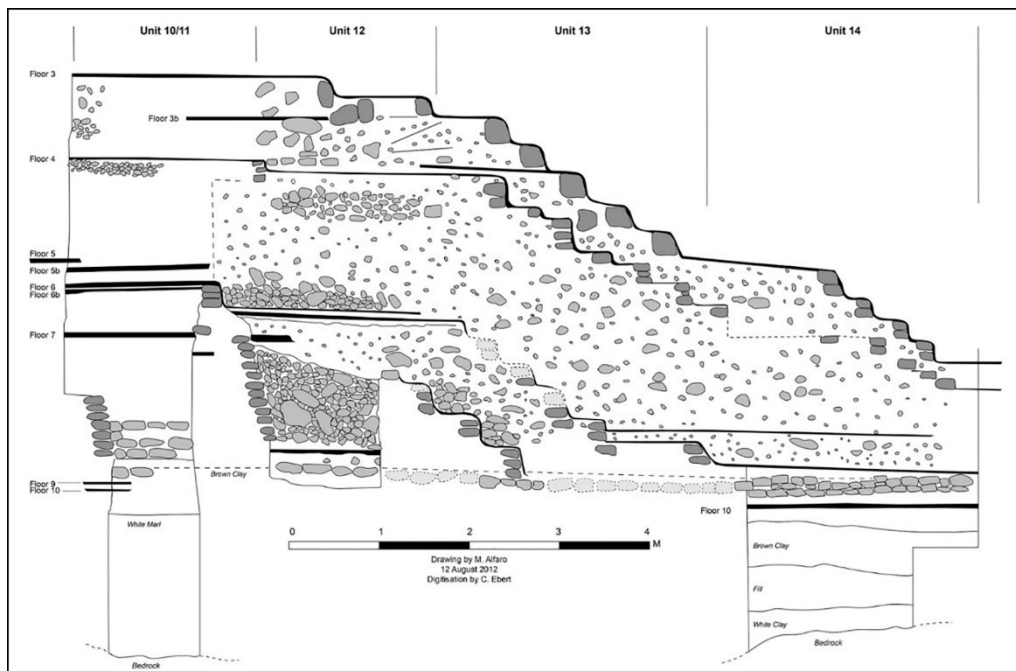


Figure S2. Profile of Cahal Pech Structure B4 (after Ebert *et al.* 2017: fig. 6).

Construction phases B4/eighth through B4/tenth occurred at the end of the Middle Preclassic and into the Late Preclassic, with remodeling of monumental buildings occurring at punctuated intervals between 600 and 200 cal BC (late facet Kanluk to early facet Xakal ceramic complexes). The building corresponding with Structure B4/eighth (floors 7A and 7B), which consisted of a 3m-tall circular platform made of cut limestone blocks. During the construction of structure B4/ninth, a plastered surface corresponding to floor 6 replaced floor 7. The subsequent placement of floor 5 (Structure B4/tenth) raised the building approximately 1.2m above the surface of Structure B4/eighth, and the plaza floor of the building itself was also raised 0.5m (Ishihara-Brito & Awe 2013: 127).

Tzutziiy K'in Group

The Tzutziiy K'in Group (roughly translating to 'sunset' in Yucatec Mayan) is a large domestic group located atop a small hill approximately 1.8km directly west of the Cahal Pech site core. The group was first documented through survey and excavations in 2012, with continued research in 2015 (Ebert & Dennehy 2015; Ebert & Fox 2016; Ebert *et al.* 2016). A total of seven structures surround the group's main plaza, many of which have been heavily looted in modern times (Figure S3).

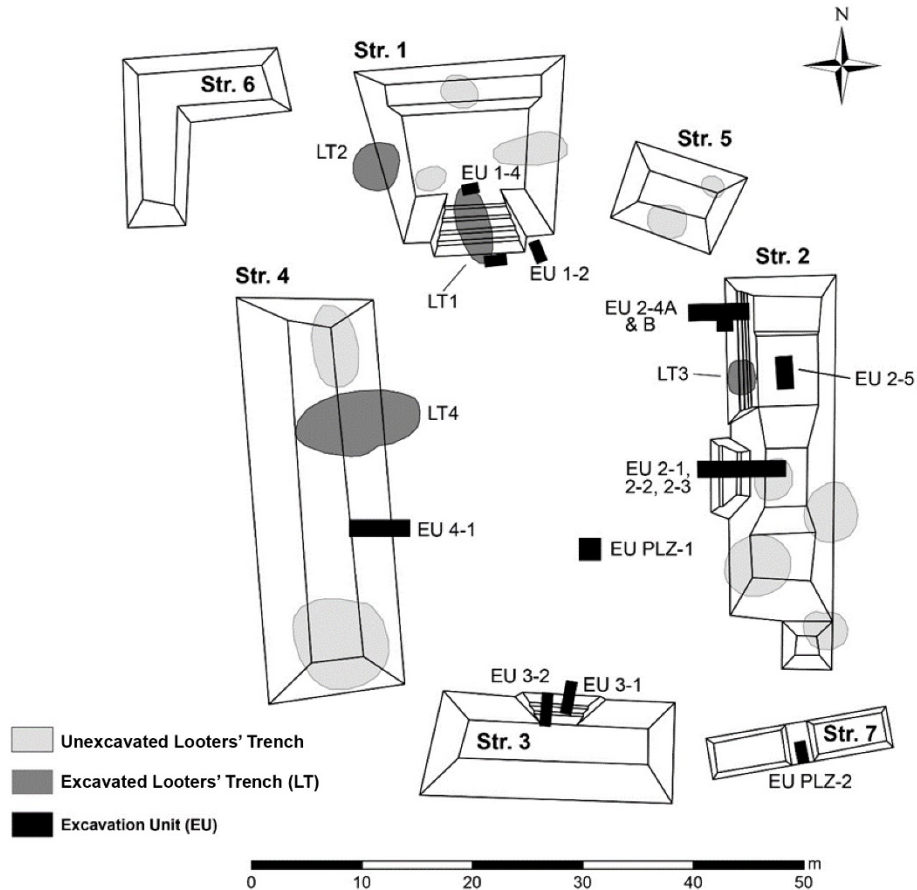


Figure S3. Map of Tzutziiy Ki'n showing locations of test excavations and excavated looters' trenches (after Ebert & Fox 2016: fig. 3).

Ceramic samples analysed in this study were derived from excavations at Structure 2 and Structure 3 conducted from 2012 through 2015 (Ebert 2017). The earliest radiocarbon date (UCIAMS-121552) from Tzutziiy K'in comes from the paleosol level beneath Structure 3 (Unit 3-1), and dates the initial settlement of the group by at least 350–110 cal BC, during the beginning of Late Preclassic (Figure S4; Ebert *et al.* 2016). The paleosol matrix deposit contained high concentrations of late Middle and Late Preclassic ceramics primarily dating to the Kanluk (Savanna Orange types) ceramic and Xakal (Sierra Red, Polvero Black types) ceramic phases, likely indication of domestic occupation as early at the end of the Middle Preclassic. Middle to Late Preclassic ceramics from the Kanluk and Xakal phases were found in strata below floor 3 in both units at Structure 3 sampled in this study. A charcoal sample from below

floor 2 produced at date of cal AD 50–130, during the late facet of the Xakal ceramic complex, suggesting continued domestic construction at this location through the end of the Preclassic.

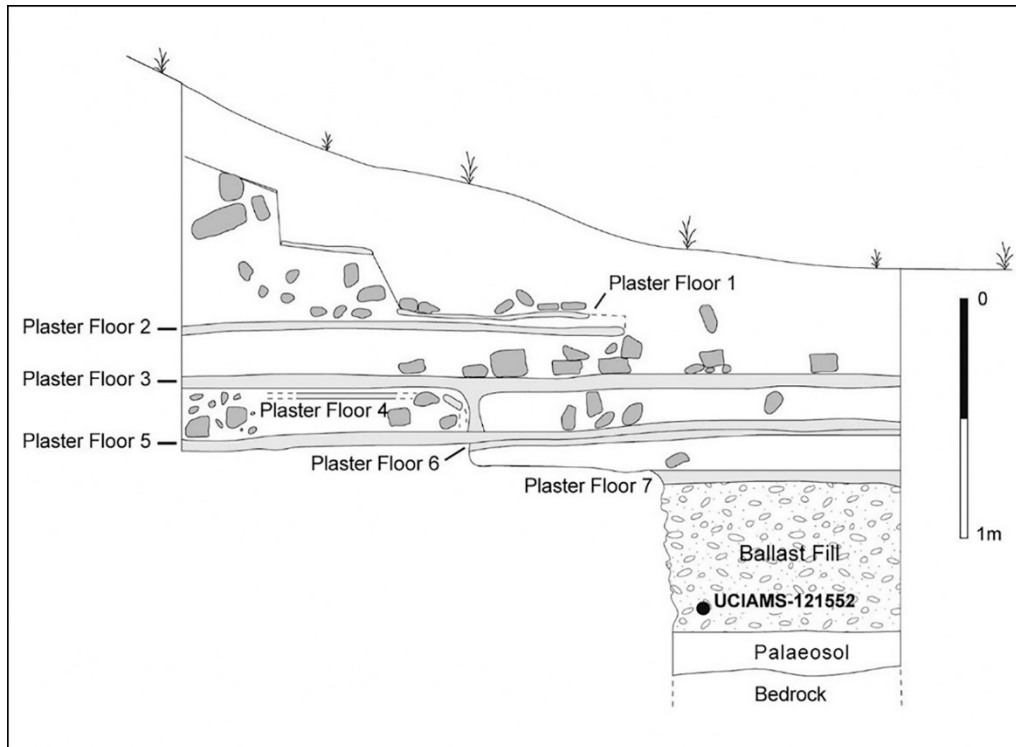


Figure S4: Profiles of Tzutziy K'in Structure 3, showing the location of the earliest radiocarbon sample for the group (after Ebert et al. 2016: fig. 5).

A total of five construction phases were recorded at Structure 2 (Figure S5). The first phase of construction at the building (phase TK-2 first) consisted of a soil layer placed on top of a paleosol layer, dating to the end of the Middle and beginning of the Late Preclassic period. The second phase (TK-2 second) of construction consisted of a masonry stone platform. This building runs at an angle across the unit, and is not part of the Classic period construction of Structure 2. Rather, it may represent an earlier Preclassic period component of the site. Floor 7, a thin plaster floor, abuts the interior portion of the masonry platform, and perhaps was located at the interior of this structure. The fill below floor 7 contained a few diagnostic sherds dating to the Kanluk and early facet Xakal ceramic complex. Three charcoal samples from this strata produced a date range of 65–215 cal BC. The third phase of construction (TK-2 third) consisted of a series of five plaster floors (floors 2–6). These floors were only exposed in the eastern

portion of the unit. Three of these floors were also recorded in the nearby units 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3. A radiocarbon sample collected directly from the surface of plaster floor 2 produced a date range of cal AD 650–670 (UCIAMS-121554), placing all subsequent construction activities at the structure within the Late Classic (Ebert *et al.* 2016).

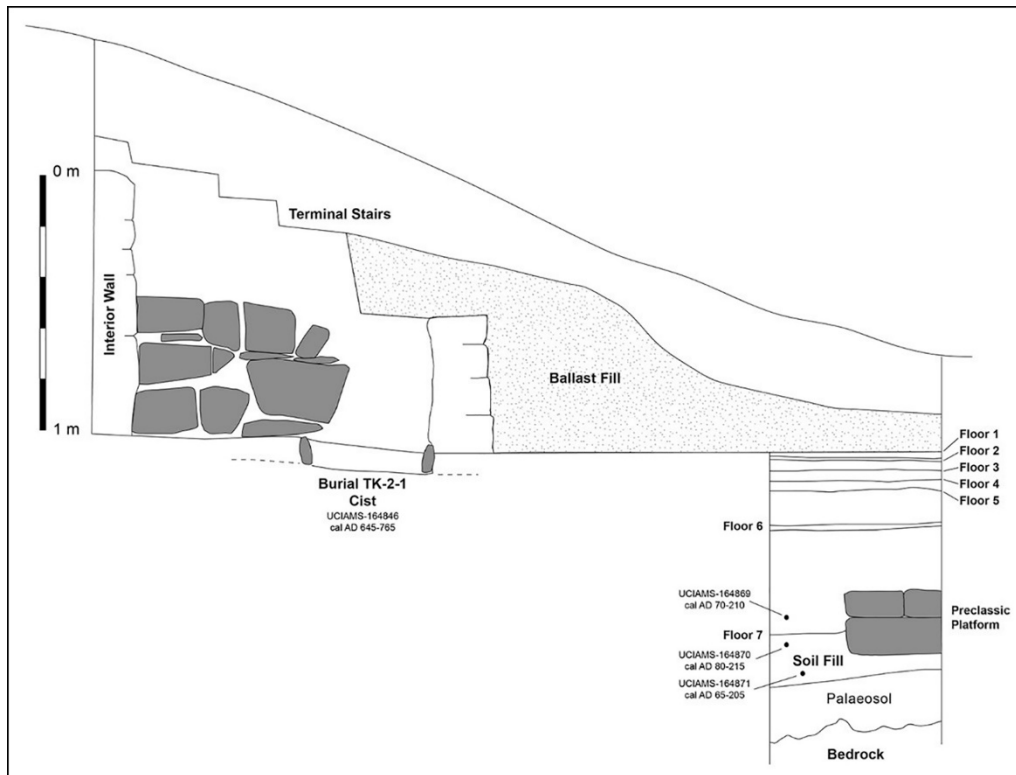


Figure S5. Tzutziy K'in Structure 2 profile (Ebert & Fox 2016: fig. 4).

Zopilote Group

The Zopilote Group is a large terminus group located approximately 0.75km south of the Cahal Pech monumental core at the end of the Martinez Sacbe (Figure S6). Excavations in 2015 uncovered a total of 11 construction phases (Figure S7), and targeted these contexts for direct dating and ceramic sampling. The earliest construction episodes (ZPL-1 first through ZPL-1 third) were associated with ceramics from the Cunil (1200–900 BC), Kanluk (900–350 BC), and Xakal (350 BC–AD 350) ceramic phases (Ebert & Fox 2016). Floor 1a represents the earliest construction activity at the group, and does not appear to be associated with temple platforms composing later construction episodes. The palaeosol layer contained high frequencies of freshwater shells, chert cores and flakes, and fragments of utilitarian ceramic vessels. This strata

probably represents the initial residential occupation at the site. The occupation of this surface is dated by the presence of Cunil and transitional Cunil/Kanluk ceramic materials (Sullivan & Awe 2013; Sullivan *et al.* 2018). This includes rim sherds of Uck Red and Coyol Cream vessels and a strap handle from a Sikaya Unslipped/Jocote vessel. Additionally, the assemblage contained one sherd with similar shape and surface treatment to Savana Orange (Savana variety, Kanluk phase) with ash temper typical of Cunil ceramics (Sullivan & Awe 2013), suggesting that perhaps the level represents a transitional Cunil/Early Facet Kanluk complex (*c.* 1000–650 cal BC).

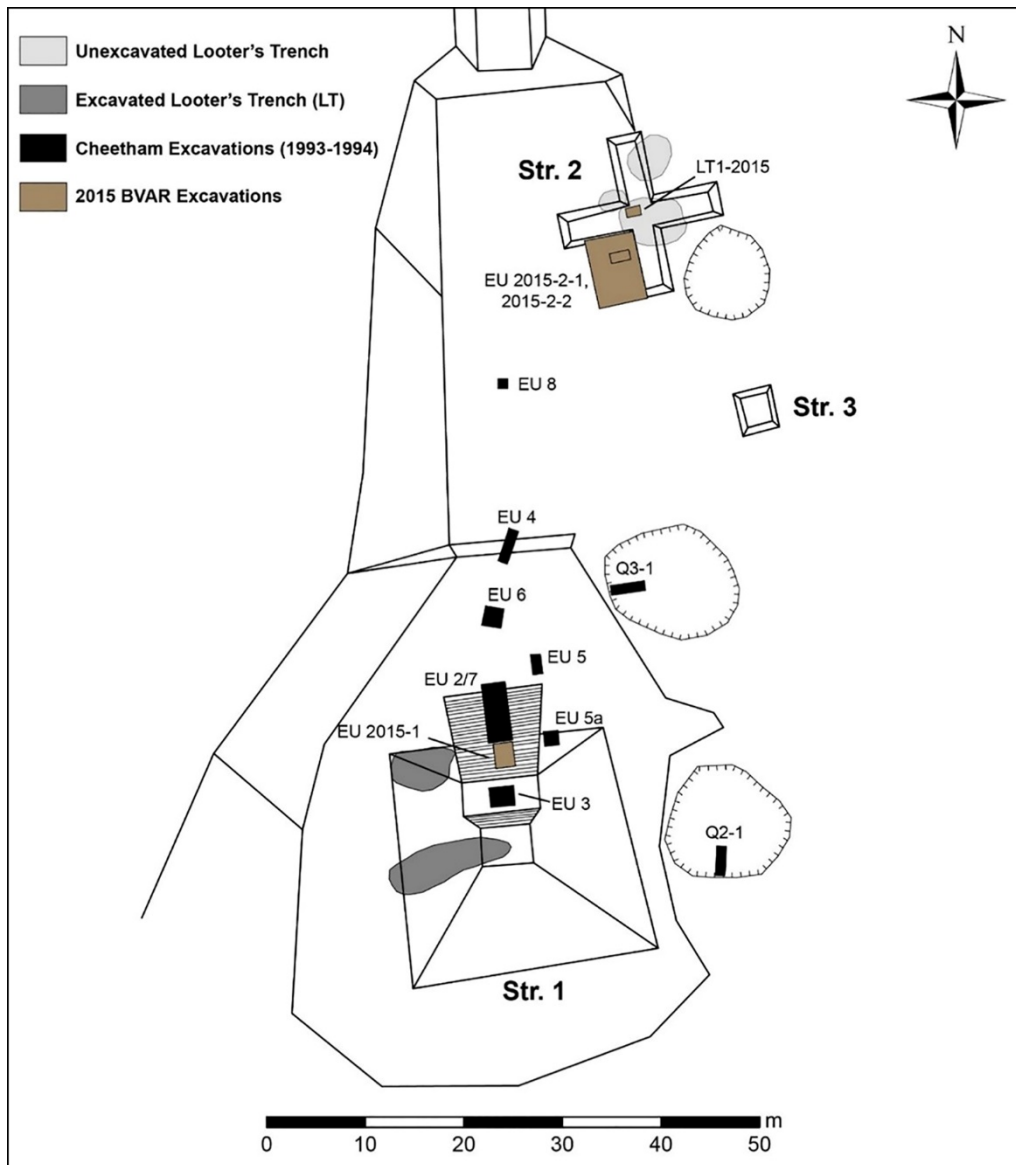


Figure S6. Map of the Zopilote Group showing BVAR excavations from 1993–1994 and 2015 (Ebert & Fox 2016: fig. 10).

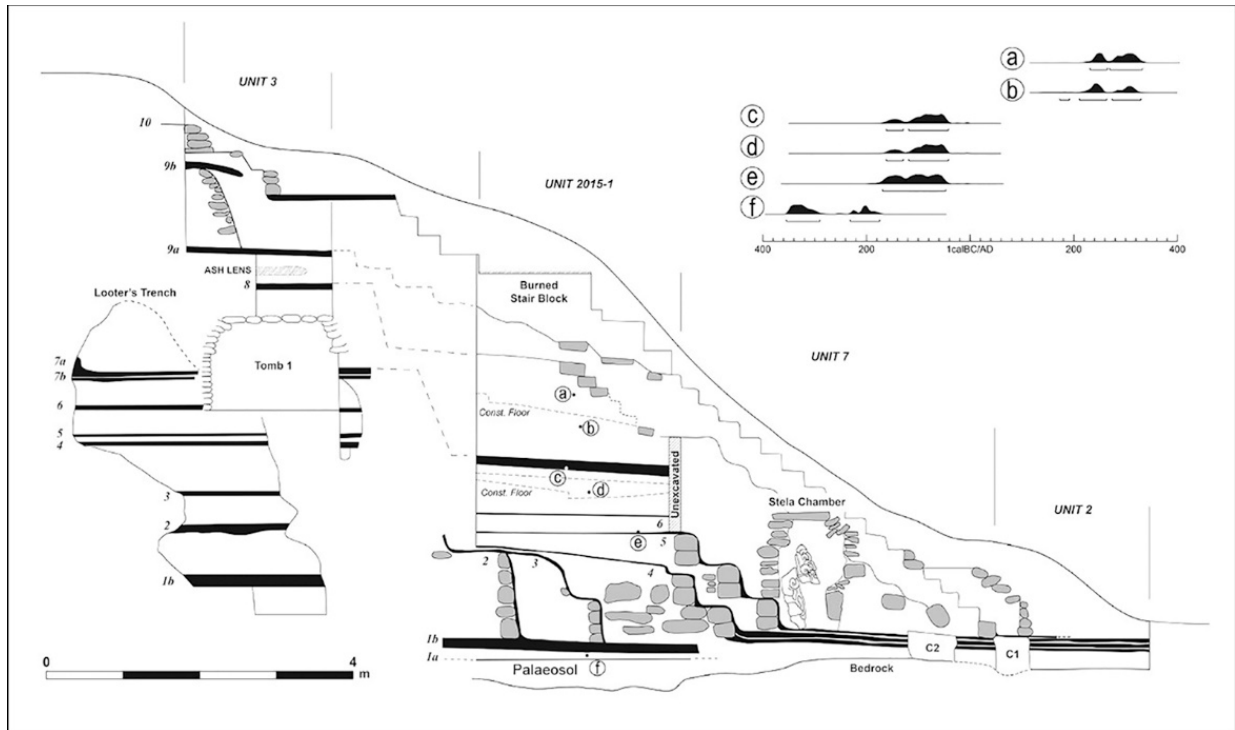


Figure S7. Profile of Zopilote Structure 1 construction phases. Radiocarbon samples collected from unit 2015-1 are lettered a–f and correspond to calibrated date ranges (after Ebert & Fox 2016: fig. 11).

The construction of several low masonry platforms at the Zopilote Group (ZPL-1 first through ZPL-1 sixth), which probably functioned as public temple buildings 170–40 cal BC. A charcoal sample from below floor 1b (ZPL-1 first) yielded a date 2σ range of 355–175 cal BC (UCIAMS-164873), suggesting that construction of platforms at Structure 1 began during the beginning of the Late Preclassic. The next burst of construction activity took during end of the Late Preclassic. A series of three AMS radiocarbon dates associated with the construction of ZPL-1 fifth through ZPL-1 seventh dated between 170 and 40 cal BC (UCIAMS-164878, UCIAMS-164875, UCIAMS-164874), suggesting that the construction of these temple platforms during the end of the Late Preclassic was fairly rapid (Ebert *et al.* 2017). Two charcoal samples from within the fill of ZPL-1 eighth date to cal AD 170–330 (UCIAMS-164877) and cal AD 230–335 (UCIAMS-164876), indicating and that this building was constructed during the beginning of the Early Classic (Ebert 2017).

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