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WK09: Addendum to 'Excavaciones in the Grupo Tolok'

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Introduction

In order to complete investigations begun the previous year, archaeologists conducted a single, intensive excavation into Structure N14-2 in the Grupo Tolok at the site of El Perú-Waka'. Excavations concerned themselves solely with the northwestern corner of the structure. In the previous 2005 field season, investigators uncovered a large midden deposit lying on a heavily deteriorated plaster floor in this area. Beneath this floor, excavators uncovered a pair of human burials, themselves atop a dense ceramic concentration (Eppich 2006). However, due to the lateness of the season, it was decided to remove only one of the interments, Burial 18, and leave the rest of the deposit for the succeeding year.

Accordingly, this report should be intended as an addendum to the informe of the 2005 field season and not necessarily as a complete excavation in its own right. The earlier report should be consulted for a general description of the Grupo Tolok as a whole and the extent of the excavations within it.

The 2006 excavations at Structure N14-2 uncovered a remarkable deposit of two complete human interments and a dense concentration of faunal bones, lithic fragments, figurines and hundreds of ceramic sherds.

Many of these sherds represent shattered, reconstructable vessels, including polychrome drinking cups, serving platters, and even smallish ceramic drums. The assemblage is strongly reminiscent of dedicatory deposits associated with rituals used to inaugurate the construction of new architecture (Coe 1959: 77-79; Kunen et al. 2002: 198). The two individuals associated with the assemblage are almost certainly human sacrifices, likely serving as the central part and final climax of the dedicatory ritual. In total, the 2006 excavations involved 12 excavation units comprising 45 individual lots. The most likely date for the material is at some point in the late 8th or early 9th century, being at, or during, the very end of the Late Classic period.

The current report will concern itself solely with a general description of the excavations themselves. A later report will have to be issued concerning the recovered cultural material. All assessments of the artifacts from Operation WK-09 are accordingly based solely on field observations and should be considered tentative, not definitive.

Objectives

Knowing that a large and complex deposit underlay the 2005 backfill necessitated a

series of precise goals in the excavations.

These goals were as follows:

- 1) To excavate, map, photograph and recover Burial 19.
- 2) To excavate, map, photograph and recover the materials of the artifact concentration.
- 3) To determine the relationship between Burial 18, Burial 19 and the artifact concentration.
- 4) To uncover the architecture in close proximity to the burials to determine the relationship between the deposit and surrounding architecture.
- 5) To excavate units to bedrock for a complete stratigraphic sequence from construction to abandonment.

Methodology

To best accomplish these goals, investigators implemented a series of specific steps. First, the brush that had grown up over the rainy season would have to be cleared and cut back. Secondly, the three-by-two meter grid from 2005 would have to be expanded into an excavation grid measuring four-by-three meters in order to encompass adjacent architecture. Given the reasons outlined in the previous year's report (Eppich 2006), a grid of excavation units of one-meter squares would be used. In this way, the dilapidated Terminal Classic architecture could be best recorded, especially considering its unknown association with a large ritual deposit. Third, the sterile backfill from 2005 would be removed in order to locate both Burial 19 and the artifact concentration and expand outward from there. In such a manner,

investigations into Structure N14-2 could be effectively conducted. In order to distinguish the 2006 excavations from those of the previous year, investigators denominated the first unit of 2006 to be Unit 130 and the first lot, Lot 300. The artifact concentration was given lot numbers beginning with Lot 600.

Description of the Area of Investigation

The Grupo Tolok sits atop an artificially created hillock, 10 meters above the surrounding terrain, 20 meters higher than Plaza 2, and 120 meters higher than the base camp datum. The group itself consists of five main structures, designated M14-15, M14-16, N14-1, N14-2, and N14-14 with possibly a number of smaller structures only currently visible as piles of cut-stone protruding from the ground surface (Fig. 1). These structures surround two distinct plazas, one public and one private. The 2005 excavations entailed units being placed in Structure M14-15 and in and around Structure N14-2. The middens uncovered around Structure N14-2 revealed substantial amounts of kitchen debris, identifying this structure as the group's main residence. As per the original excavation report, initial construction of the group most likely occurred during the site's Late-to-Terminal Transitional Morai Complex with abandonment following in the early portions of the Terminal Classic Rax Complex (Eppich 2004; 2006; Eppich *et al.* 2005). These complexes yield rough calendar dates of occupation, commencing in the late eighth

century and concluding in the mid-to-late tenth century, A.D.

N14-2 North Midden Excavations

Including the 2005 excavations, a total of twelve units were placed on the northwestern corner of Structure N14-2. The excavations consisted of Units 104, 105, 106, 115, 117, 130, 131, 132, 134, and 135, arranged in a four-by-three meter grid (Fig. 2). The excavations revealed a thick plaster floor, heavily deteriorated along the northern and western sides. Large amounts of rubble from the collapse of Structure N14-2 lay on top of the sections of well-preserved floor. The line of deterioration is not distinct and the floor fades quite gradually as one moves farther out from the structure. The boundary indicated on Figure 2 is only an estimation of where the preserved flooring ends.

Under the accumulated humus and rubble, excavators uncovered a small staircase, with three distinct sets of riser stones and one partially preserved plaster tread. The stair possessed three broad flat steps. The centerline for the stair is probably located along the boundary between Units 130 and 131. This would have made the steps about 2.2 meters wide, rising up 70cm from the plaza floor to the interior of N14-2. The stair was flanked on both sides by well-constructed *alfarda* balustrades. Such balustrades have, at other sites, served as the medium for the placement of dedicatory texts (Stuart 2005: 12-13, 17), although no texts were located here. A low rise in the rubble off the northern edge of the excavation grid revealed the position of the unexcavated

northern balustrade. Between the collapsed rubble and the top of the southern balustrade was a dense and highly localized concentration of large ceramic sherds (Fig. 2). Field analysis of these sherds indicated that this concentration holds the remains of at least two whole, reconstructable vessels. The two vessels consist of a squat roundish bowl, which was lying on its side when broken, and a tall, potentially cylindrical, vase, which was standing upright. The sherds were lying directly beneath piles of rubble from the N14-2 collapse, indicating that they were left in place during the final abandonment of the group and crushed when the building began to disintegrate. As such, they represent whole vessels from the final occupation of the Grupo Tolok. They have, at the time of this writing, neither been reconstructed nor analyzed in any great detail.

Excavators uncovered five distinct stratigraphic levels, an initial humic layer, a thick layer of mixed humic materials and collapsed rubble, a level of older humic materials dating prior to the collapse of the structure, the plastered plaza floor, the construction fill of packed earth and plaster floors, and, finally, the ritual fill with Burial 18 and 19 and the ceramic concentration beneath them.

The initial humic layer, lying beneath the unexcavated ground surface, is typical of that encountered across the Grupo Tolok (Fig. 3). It consists of a dry, ashy, brownish-grey sediment, powdery to the touch. The humic layer has been substantially turbated by nearby trees and low-lying shrub. The artifacts of this level show heavy degrees of erosion, indicating significant amount of redeposit from the plaza or the

interior construction fill of N14-2. As the excavations penetrated further into this layer, the amount of rubble and size of the rubble increased dramatically until the excavations consist solely of collapsed architecture (Fig. 3). There is no clear boundary between the initial humic layer and the succeeding layer of mixed humic material and rubble collapse. The stones themselves consist of large limestone blocks, some measuring more than 40cm across. Some of the stones are well-cut rectangular blocks and most of them are well weathered, indicating a lengthy post-abandonment collapse. The blocks themselves are suspended in a humic sediment very similar to the pure humic layer lying above. This layer consists of a light greyish-brown, slightly clayey and finely textured material. This argues for a gradual collapse of N14-2, the stones from the architecture falling amid humic soils and being gradually covered by humus in turn. There is little to no root action in this layer, but the recovered artifacts show substantial degrees of erosion and wear, indicating some degree of water activity.

The third layer encountered in the excavations consisted of a mix of older humic soils and material from the midden deposits to the north and west of Structure N14-2 (Fig. 3.). This humus possessed a light brown color and the sediment itself was fine and powdery to the touch, being virtually identical to the material encountered on the unexcavated ground surface. Shielded by the rubble above, the layer appears largely free from root turbation. The layer contained small fragments of plaster flooring material and minute pebbles, but is largely free of the large limestone blocks from

the architectural collapse. Midden materials are present in this layer, increasing in density and frequency as one moves away from the structure itself. The position of most of the midden material would indicate their placement slightly in front of and on the northern side of the excavated staircase (Fig. 2). The densest midden material occurs in the areas of heavily deteriorated plaster flooring, underlying the N14-2 rubble in turn, and indicating its placement prior to the collapse of the structure. The older humic layer is free of rubble, placing its formation between the abandonment of the group and N14-2's collapse. The recovered cultural materials should accordingly be associated with the final occupation and abandonment of the residence. This layer does not evenly cover the plaster floor, being particularly thick along the southern edge of the excavation grid and at the base of the balustrade. It covers only the first two steps of the excavated stair and terminates at the stone riser of the third step. In the northern portions of the excavation grid, where the plaster floor is no longer extant, this layer, especially when mixed with the darker midden material, fades imperceptibly into the layer of construction fill below. The midden material closely resembles that recovered from the previous excavation season, comprised of substantial amounts of ceramics, bone, shell fragments, and lithic flakes. Some of the recovered sherds possess significant degrees of erosion. For a more detailed description, the previous years' report is required, as the more recently recovered material has yet to be analyzed.

To get down to Burial 19 and the ceramic deposit, most of the exposed plaster floor and the central portion of the staircase were removed. For comparative purposes, a narrow 20cm shelf of flooring was left intact along the southern edge of Units 132, 133, 134, and 135. This intrusive cut revealed the construction fill of both the N14-2 stair and the plaza floor.

Inside the staircase, the construction fill consisted of largish, shaped stones and densely packed earthen fill. The matrix itself was a grey to brownish-grey material and finely textured, being slightly moist to the touch. The cut and shaped stones of the stair lie directly on top of the plaza floor, the stair's foundation stones possessing flattened bases in direct contact with the plastered surface. The cut stones of the stair are themselves smallish, well-cut limestone blocks with smoothed faces on their exterior side. On the whole, the N14-2 stair is well constructed, solid, and sturdy.

Beneath the plaza floor was a layered series of plaster floors and densely packed fill extending all the way to the undulating bedrock below. The relationship between these layers of floor and fill and the bedrock is difficult to describe using a series of two-dimensional illustrations. The bedrock itself bulges upwards in the southern portion of the excavation grid, in Units 132 to 135. In Unit 133, the plaster of the plaza floor rests directly on the bedrock itself. Moving slightly to the north, the bedrock slopes downward in a concave curve to vanish into the sterile material along the northern edge of the excavation grid. The layers of floor and fill attach directly to the sloping bedrock, creating

the somewhat puzzling situation in Figure 3 with layers of flooring directly superimposed upon the bedrock's profile. At the base of the bedrock's concave curve lay the main portion of the dedication deposit (Fig.4). The matrix of the densely packed construction fill consisted of a greyish-white to brown material with bits of degraded plaster mixed throughout. Flakes of carbon were evenly distributed through these sandwiched layers of fill and flooring. The material itself was finely textured, being thick and slightly moist. Directly above the deposit, this material changed composition, being less densely packed and losing its greyish coloration, changing to a fine brownish matrix. Large limestone chunks were scattered along the northern section of the excavation grid with smaller pebbles and patches of degraded limestone occurring throughout. Numerous flecks of carbon were evenly distributed. This fill certainly represents the material placed directly on top of the deposit during its initial interment. The numerous bits of carbon may have been a part of the depositional ritual itself. It would have been after this material that the ancient builders then went about the business of packing and filling the concave curvature of the bedrock. While somewhat unusual to construct a plaza floor in this manner, it certainly created a surface with very durable properties, one durable enough to leave the deposit below nicely preserved.

The deposit itself lies directly in the concave curvature of the bedrock. While such deposits at other sites have been excavated directly into the bedrock below associated architecture (Becker 1992: 189), it seems here

that the ancient Maya took advantage of the natural curve of the bedrock itself to place the deposit within the exposed concavity. Indeed, the deposit itself follows the downward slope of the bedrock as it descends in a generally south to north fashion. The southernmost ceramic sherds pictured in Figure 4 are actually some 30-40cm above the interment of Burial 19. The deposit itself consists of two interments, Burials 18 and 19, themselves lying above a thick concentration of ceramics, lithic, shell, bone and carbon (Fig. 4). In total, there were 12 obsidian flakes and biface fragments; 25 chert flakes, bifaces, and angular debris fragments; 10 fragmented pieces of shell; approximately five very fragmented faunal bones tentatively identified as turkey and deer; and 2,269 ceramic sherds, including a partial ceramic drum and polychrome vase. It is fully expected, once analyzed, numerous whole and partial vessels can be reconstructed from this mass of ceramics. The material seems highly indicative of feasting debris (Reents-Budet 2000: 1029; LeCount 2001: 944-946; see also Pendergast 1979: 127). The concentration was suspended in a matrix markedly different from the fill above it. This matrix possesses a dark, rich brown to grey-black color, is moist to the touch, and has a thick, clay-like quality to it. It seems very similar to the matrix from middens associated with kitchen debris, indicating a significant presence of organic material mixed in with the recovered artifacts.

The two interments lay directly above this deposit and no sherds are superimposed on top of human bone. Clearly then, the deposition of these individuals was the final portion of this

ritual activity. Burial 18 (Fig. 6) was recovered in the 2005 field season and is detailed in the excavation report of that year. Some additional bone material was recovered when that section was excavated, being especially small and fragmentary.

Burial 19

Only a small portion of Burial 19 was uncovered in the 2005 field season. In the initial excavations, it was reported that excavators exposed only the top of the femur before reburial (Eppich 2006: fig. 4). Upon exposure, the "femur" was discovered to be a tibia and the orientation of the interment extended underneath the uncovered stair. Burial 19 (Fig. 6) was interred in a partial cist beneath the stairs of N14-2, oriented roughly west-to-east. The partial cist itself was constructed into the architecture and was not intrusive. The cist was fully collapsed with no surviving, intact voids.

The bones themselves were not in good condition and could not be removed fully intact. Accordingly, Varina Matute and Jennifer Piehl made the following analysis while the remains were still *in situ*. As such, the observation presented here should be considered preliminary to a more complete report expected to follow. Any such report would supercede this section.

Burial 19 consists of a fully articulated female of middle adult age, being 25-45 years old (Fig. 6). She is in an extended supine position, with her head pushed against the western end of the partial cist, her chin resting directly on her chest. Her skull is elongated, possessing a tabular modeling of the cranium, a

trait sometimes considered characteristic of high status (Chase and Chase 1992: 8; Saul and Saul 1997: 44-45; Tiesler 1999: 3-4). The small bones of the hand are present, along with a deteriorated vertebral column and other small bones, indicating the burial as a primary interment. It is especially critical to note the placement of the deteriorated tarsals and metatarsals lie directly on the ceramic sherds of the deposit, indicating a direct and primary association with both the ceramic concentration and Burial 18.

A single shell bead was found in the vicinity of the upper chest and is potentially a remnant of her dress or piece of deteriorated jewelry.

Discussion

Ritual deposits among the Classic Maya occur along a continuum of cache, burial and offering (Becker 1992: 186-187; Kunen et al. 2002: 197-198). It remains very difficult to attempt to distinguish discrete categories of each, especially given the variability present in the archaeological record. Instead, each ritual deposit is perhaps best considered on its own terms with questions focusing on the ritual itself, rather than the material remnant of such activity. Although somewhat preliminary, an interpretation is presented here.

The N14-2 dedication deposit represents a series of depositional activities than can be reconstructed with some accuracy. As the investigation and analysis of the material proceeds, this degree of accuracy will increase correspondingly.

The placement of the material is strongly reminiscent of a dedicatory deposit (Coe 1959: 77-79; cf. Chase and Chase 1998:303). Epigraphic evidence places such dedicatory rituals on the fronting stair of newly constructed architecture (Schele 1990: 156; Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993: 244-245; Stuart 2005: 18-19). Such rituals even possess their own verb, **OCH-OTOT**, *och otot*, "enters house," with inscriptions placed on the balustrades flanking the staircase (Stuart 2005: 19). The material excavated here was placed along the centerline of the stair, exactly where such a ritual would have taken place. The depth of the deposit, as well, indicates its dedicatory function. The partial cist of Burial 19, as well as the underlying fill and the covering floor, indicate that both burials and the concentration were placed prior to the stair's construction. Indeed, the space for the deposit would have had to be preparatory to any construction on this part of N14-2. The partial cist walls, shown on Figure 4, do not extend further out from the first step. The scatter of smashed ceramics covers the area directly in front of the stair and does not extend into the area of the partial cist. Clearly then, the deposit and the stair are associated. Such placement fits precisely with the definition for dedicatory deposits as originally suggested by Coe (1959: 78; see also Becker 1992). The deposit can be seen as dedicatory to the fronting stair of Structure N14-2.

This raises an additional problem, however, in that the debris from the middens surrounding Structure N14-2 is clearly domestic trash (Eppich 2006). This much-later midden material generally suggests a residential

function for N14-2. However, dedication deposits are generally restricted to ceremonial, nonresidential architecture. Why, then, is there a dedicatory deposit on what appears to be a residential structure? One solution favors the view that the dedication deposit belongs to an earlier phase in the structure's history and there was a shift in use, from ceremonial to residential. Another is that the interpretation of the deposit as dedicatory is seriously mistaken. The reading considered most likely is that that this section of N14-2 was an addition to an existing structure. The stair leads up to a northern portion of N14-2 that neither looks out on the private residential courtyard, nor follows the general curve of the building platform (Fig. 1). It could be a later ceremonial addition to a residential structure. Finally, of course, it could simply be a dedication deposit in a residential structure. Such deposits are known, but only from the palaces of ruling elites Tikal (Haviland, cited in Becker 1992: 194). While the inhabitants of the Grupo Tolok inhabited a high social rank, it is difficult to conceptualize them as rulers. Still, in the transitional period from the Late to the Terminal Classic, high secondary elites may very well have usurped the behavior and prerogatives of the ruling family.

Furthermore, the placement and the nature of Burials 18 and 19 themselves deserve special attention. The inclusion of two whole individuals, a female and a child, is somewhat unusual for a dedicatory deposit. Welsh (1988: 169-170), in his study of Maya burials, determined that some human remains are associated with dedication caches. These he termed, "dedicatory cache burials." However,

the interments he describes are usually either infants or human body parts with complete adults occurring in only a few cases, and never a paired female and child (Welsh 1988: table 103). It is his opinion that in caches, human remains served the same purpose as other sacred, votive offering materials (see also Becker 1992: 186). People can themselves be offered in dedication. In ancestral veneration and ritual dedication, sacrificial materials are considered as a kind of "soul-stuff" fed to the otherworldly spirits (Freidel *et al.* 1993: 241-242). Ethnographically, Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993: 249) point out that modern Lacandon Maya, in dedication ceremonies, use both ceremonial tamales, referred to as human flesh, and sacrifice human figurines. Archaeologically, the individuals are laid on a prepared space and the complete nature of the skeletal material indicates primary interment of both individuals. Such paired adult female-child burials occur outside of dedicatory deposits, with some examples showing evidence of blunt trauma to the back of the cranium (Welsh 1988: 167-168; table 101). Not all sacrifices would have recorded such trauma, however, and one form of sacrifice recorded ethnohistorically involved the victims being buried alive (Schele 1984: 7). It is almost certain, then, that the individuals of Burial 18 and 19 were the objects of ritual human sacrifice.

This brings up a very interesting point about the inhabitants of the Grupo Tolok. From the excavations into Structure M14-15, investigators know that the inhabitants were of a high social rank (Eppich 2006). While not rulers themselves, they certainly met and knew the

ruling parties, inhabiting not the very heights of power, but nesting comfortably on a slightly lower plane. Burials 18 and 19 show that human sacrifice was not limited to either the state or the ruling family, but was practiced by the lesser elites and secondary nobility as part of their own private ceremonies. Human beings, like a piece of precious jade or exquisite obsidian blade, could just as easily be broken, buried, and given over to the otherworld.

The materials of the dedicatory deposit have yet to be thoroughly analyzed. They include a significant number of whole but shattered polychrome vessels, including tall cylindrical vases, drinking cups, large plates, and even a ceramic drum. The distribution of the sherds indicates that the vessels were not placed into the hollow intact and later smashed by normal taphonomic activity, but were instead, smashed and thrown into a pile. Such kratophanous deposits are usually associated less with the careful placement of preciosities found in caches and more with building termination or ceremonial refuse (Walker 1995; Kunen 2002: 200-201). Other materials from the deposit include broken animal bone, spindle whorls, broken chert bifaces, a figurine head, and frequent pieces of charcoal scattered throughout the deposit. The animal bones were tentatively identified in the field by the Q'echi' excavators as being butchered and cooked deer and turkey. Indeed, if such a deposit were excavated apart from the architecture and interments, the interpretation would clearly be the debris from a major feasting event. The polychrome servingware, the faunal remains, and the carbon all resemble those materials

predicted and known from Classic Maya feasting events (Reents-Budet 2000: 1029; LeCount 2001: 944-946). Also, as LeCount (2001: 941) points out, ritual food and drink is not merely consumed but also "sacrificed," showing that both feasting and sacrifice are intertwined ritual concepts. Regardless, the laboratory analysis, when complete, should be able to greatly illuminate the activity that took place at some point in the late 8th century.

The two burials and the artifact concentration were, then, dedicatory in nature and involved both ritual feasting and human sacrifice. Even at this early stage, the tentative narrative of depositional activity emerges. First, the construction area was prepared and the general platform fill removed to the level of bedrock. The natural concave slope of the bedrock would then serve to hold the dedicatory materials. The inhabitants of the Grupo Tolok then constructed the partial cist of Burial 19. A terrific party followed. This feast included deer and turkey, tamales (on the large serving platters) and chocolate drink (from the cylindrical vases). The material was consumed and the vessels smashed into the readied hollow. At the end of the feast, two people were brought out, dispatched, and placed on top of the smashed vessels. The Burial 19 female didn't quite fit into the partial cist and so she was tightly packed in, her head resting forward on her chest. Together, the material was covered in a soil quite different from that of the stair's foundation. Then the actual workers came forward, alternating well-made plaster floors with tightly packed construction fill, raising the area to the level of the plaza floor. Finally, the stair was

built on top and the structure, now properly dedicated, was ready for use. This is, of course, a rather speculative narrative, just another “just-so” story. But still, the sequence and purpose of events remain unlikely to greatly change with continued study, the continued study of such material being both desirable and necessary to understand the ritual and history of the Late Classic Maya.

Individual Unit descriptions

The descriptions that follow are concerned solely with those units excavated in the 2006 field season. For the descriptions of the 2005 units, the same section in the previous season’s report must be consulted (Eppich 2006). The artifact counts are all field observations and so must be considered accurate estimations instead of precise counts. As has been discovered in the past, field counts, especially those of ceramic material, can range wildly from operation to operation, often depending heavily on the skill of the supervising archaeologist, or, indeed, on the lack thereof. The counts given below should be considered generally accurate, although subject to some alteration as laboratory work commences.

WK09-A-104

This unit was mostly excavated in the 2005 field season, terminating at the level of the N14-2 dedication deposit. In order not to confuse the potential levels that may have been uncovered in the newly excavated areas, the level of the deposit was designated Level 10. In the 2006 excavations, then, Unit 104 commenced with Level 10. The deposit itself

was divided into smaller sections measuring 30 by 60 cm to facilitate excavation, mapping, and recovery. Six of the sections were located within Unit 104, being Lots 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, and 605. These sections were excavated to bedrock.

The matrix was a loosely packed mix of limestone and a fine powdery brownish fill, itself dark in places and moist to the touch. Large limestones are scattered along the northern side of the unit with patches of degraded, white and greyish-brown limestone. Numerous small flecks of carbon are evenly distributed throughout. Recovered material includes 768 ceramic sherds; a partially intact ceramic drum; four obsidian blade fragments; one small shell fragment; four large shell fragments; eight smallish chert flakes; a large chert biface fragment; three faunal bone shards; and a piece of human bone, being a newly uncovered portion of Burial 18. The carbon flecks were recovered into Carbon Samples #4 and #6.

WK09-A-105

Similar to Unit 104, this unit was mostly excavated in the 2005 field season and began its 2006 excavation at Level 10. It held two sections of the N14-2 deposit, Sections 612 and 614. The soil matrix was identical to that excavated in Unit 104. This unit was also excavated to bedrock.

The recovered materials included 364 ceramic sherds, two medial obsidian blade fragments, five small chert flakes, a medial chert biface fragment, a large intact faunal bone identified by José Luis Tzalam Caal as a cooked turkey leg bone, and a jaguar head figurine. The

carbon flakes were collected into Carbon Sample #13.

WK09-A-115

This unit was only partially excavated in the 2005 field season. Excavation was completed in 2006 and took place in eight levels, Level 1 being excavated in 2005. Of the levels identified in the 2005 report, the 2005 Level 2 represents a conflation of Levels 1 and 2 presented here. The 2005 Level 3 would then align to the 2006 Level 4 described below.

Level 2, Lot 308, consisted of a layer of humus and fallen masonry rubble from the collapse of N14-2, corresponding with Level 2 in Figure 3. This was made up of large limestone blocks, some of which measured more than 40cm across. Some of the blocks are cut and faced and most are well weathered with numerous pits and hollows. The sediment matrix surrounding them consists of a light greyish-brown material, being finely textured and slightly clayey to the touch. Due to the fallen rubble, there is little to no root intrusion present. Recovered material includes 32 ceramic sherds, a chert blade fragment, a medial chert biface fragment, three shell fragments, one small faunal bone, and two obsidian fragments.

Level 3, Lot 317, lies between the collapsed masonry and the final plaster floor, corresponding to the third layer in Figure 3. This layer is the humus accumulated between the group's abandonment and the building's structural collapse. The soil is a light brown material, fine and powdery to the touch. It contains small pieces of degraded plaster and very small pebbles, closely resembling the

humic soils located above it. Recovered materials consist of 12 ceramic sherds and one small obsidian flake.

Level 4, Lot 115, is located between the final plaster floor and the construction fill's plaster floors. At the time, investigators didn't know if it was just a filling technique or an earlier construction phase and so changed lot and level with each floor encountered. This layer was very thin, being less than 8cm in places, and being a densely packed sediment matrix. Recovered materials included 51 very small and eroded ceramic sherds, a piece of worked shell, 2 other shell fragments, and carbon flakes collected as Carbon Sample #1.

Level 5, Lot 332, is located between two additional plaster floors and is, in makeup and composition, identical to Level 4. The sediment is a densely packed greyish-white material with bits of degraded plaster and carbon flakes scattered throughout. Recovered materials include 50 small ceramic sherds, a small fragment of shell, and a small chert flake. The carbon flecks were collected into Carbon Sample #2.

Level 6, Lot 334, was a thin layer of fill between the third and fourth plaster floors encountered. The plaster floors, it should be noted, were extant only in scattered patches and did not cover the entire unit. The layer was quite thin, being less than 10cm thick in places. The compacted fill is identical to that of the previous level. Recovered materials included an obsidian blade fragment, two small chert angular debris fragments, and 141 small and eroded ceramic sherds. The flecks of carbon were collected into Carbon Sample #5.

Level 7, Lot 339, lay underneath the final patchy layer of plaster flooring and the top surface of the N14-2 deposit. As such, the composition of the sediment material was identical to that found in the layers above. The recovered materials included 45 ceramic sherds and a medial obsidian blade fragment.

Level 10 consists of the N14-2 deposit itself, being those sections of the deposit located inside this unit. There are no Levels 8 and 9. Two of the 30 x 60 cm sections occurred inside this unit, being sections 607 and 608. The sediment matrix of these sections is identical to that described in unit 104 above. The recovered material consists of 126 ceramic sherds, some of which lay directly on the underlying bedrock. Once this material was recovered, the bare surface of the bedrock lay exposed and excavation halted accordingly.

WK09-A-116

This unit was only partially unexcavated in the 2005 field season, the southern half of which held a small sapling, called, in Q'echi', a *tzulutay*. The limited plans of 2005 meant that excavations could be maneuvered to avoid this small tree. However, the discovery of the deposit necessitated the tree's removal and its re-planting to another part of the Grupo Tolok. This allowed the excavation of the southern portion of the unit, now located within the center of the excavation grid. The descriptions given here confine themselves to the unit's newly excavated southern half.

Level 1, Lot 300, is made up of the humic layer overlying the collapsed masonry of Structure N14-2. The soil matrix consists of a

dry, ashy, brownish-grey material, light and powdery to the touch. The small tree growing in the midden of the unit left substantial root turbation. Recovered materials included 23 eroded ceramic sherds and some 49 small snail shells.

Level 2, Lot 310, consists of the fallen masonry from the collapse of the north side of Structure N14-2. As such, it represents a loosely packed mass of limestones and humus, identical to that described in Lot 308 in Unit 115 above. There is no root action among the fallen masonry blocks. Recovered materials include 41 ceramic sherds, 40 small snail shells, two very small faunal bone fragments, and single small flake of obsidian.

Level 3, Lot 116, is made up of the pre-collapse humic layer lying on the plaster plaza floor. As such, it is identical to that described in Lot 317 in Unit 115 above. The humic matrix is a light brown material, fine and powdery to the touch. Collected materials were limited to 33 ceramic sherds.

Level 4, Lot 328, consisted of the thin layers of dense sediment and plaster floor that made up the layers of the plaza's construction fill. The plaster floors remain extant in only a few large patches. As such, it is identical to the material described in Lot 327 in Unit 115 above. The recovered material included 39 small and eroded ceramic sherds, one obsidian distal blade fragment, three small chert flakes, and an eccentric of dark black chert.

Level 5, Lot 333, consists of another layer of dense fill and large patches of plaster flooring. As such, it is identical to the layers of fill described above. The artifacts recovered

from this layer include 70 ceramic sherds, two small ferrous concretions, one obsidian blade fragment, and one small chert flake. A number of carbon specks were collected into Carbon Sample #3.

Level 6, Lot 335, consists of another layer of densely packed fill and patchy plaster flooring. As such, it remains identical to the other sections of fill described above. The recovered cultural materials are limited to 26 small and broken ceramic sherds.

Level 7, Lot 337, is made up of another layer of alternating sections of patchy plaster flooring and densely packed fill. The matrix is identical to that described above, being a fine grey-brown material, finely textured and powdery to the touch. Recovered cultural material includes some 269 ceramic sherds, two small chert flakes, and one medial obsidian blade fragment. The specks of carbon were collected into Carbon Sample #8.

Level 10 is the N14-2 deposit itself, divided into 30 x 60 cm strips running north-south and east-west. There are no Levels 8 and 9 for this unit. The sections of the deposit located in this unit consist of Lots 606, 609, 610, and 611. The sediment matrix itself is identical to that described in the Unit 104 description. Collectively, the recovered cultural materials consisted of 667 ceramic sherds, a partially intact polychrome ceramic bowl, four medial obsidian blade fragments, one proximal obsidian blade fragment, one small chert flake, four shell fragments, and one potential *pomacia* shell fragment. The carbon flecks were collected into Carbon Samples #10, #11, and #12.

WK09-A-117

This level was only partially excavated in the 2005 field season and only the uppermost level excavated in its entirety.

Level 2, Lot 312 was made up of a mix of the rubble from the collapse of N14-2 and the humic activity that occurred during that collapse. As such, it is virtually identical to that presented in Lot 308 in Unit 115 above. Recovered cultural materials include some 55 small and highly eroded ceramic sherds and 28 shells of small terrestrial snails.

Level 3, Lot 321, was comprised of a mix of the old humic soil layer and darker midden materials. The matrix itself was a dark, rich, brownish-black material, being somewhat soft to the touch, with occasional bits of limestone debris intermixed. The texture and coloration of the material remains slightly different from the material in the adjacent Unit 116 of the same level. The two fade into one another with no sharp division being evident in the sediment. The darker midden material found mixed among the pre-collapse humus is, most likely, the accumulation of garbage along the south edge of the stair or the erosion of midden materials into this level as the structure collapsed upon it. Recovered cultural materials were limited to a scant 13 ceramic sherds and a single piece of worked shell.

Level 4, Lot 329, consists of the material from immediately beneath the plastered plaza floor. It corresponds to the Level 3 described in the 2005 report for this same unit. The matrix proved to be identical to that of Lot 328 of Unit 115. The recovered artifacts included 23 small and broken ceramic sherds, a largish

rectangular chert angular debris fragment, and a ceramic figurine monkey head.

Level 5, Lot, 331, was sandwiched between the alternating plaster floors, being a dense construction fill. The material is identical to that of Lot 332 of Unit 115 above, but lacking the flecks of carbon scattered in the material. Recovered cultural materials consisted of 89 small and eroded ceramic sherds; a single very small, complete chert blade; and one shell fragment.

Level 6, Lot 336, consisted of another plaster floor with its associated layer of well-packed construction fill. As such, it is identical to Lot 334 of Unit 115. Recovered materials consisted of 16 ceramic sherds and a single small chert flake.

Level 7, Lot 338, is another of the alternating layers of plaster floor and well-packed construction fill. It is, itself, identical to Lot 336, described in Unit 116 above, complete with the scattered flecks of carbon in the sediment matrix. Recovered cultural materials consisted of 144 small, eroded ceramic sherds; five small chert flakes; an obsidian blade fragment; and one small faunal bone, identified by the Q'echi' as belonging to a small bird. The carbon flecks were collected into Carbon Sample #9.

Level 10 consists of the portions of the N14-2 deposit located in this unit. There are no Levels 8 or 9. This unit only contained a single one of the rectangular sections used to record and map the deposit, Section 613. The matrix and makeup of the sediment matrix are identical to that found in the rest of the deposit as described in Unit 104 above. Recovered

material consists of a large proximal obsidian blade fragment, three small and one large chert flakes, and 247 ceramic sherds. The carbon flecks were collected as part of Carbon Sample #14.

WK09-A-121

This unit consists of Burial 19 itself, Lot 251, designated as such in the 2005 field season. The Burial 19 individual was described adequately above. The matrix surrounding the bone material is identical to that for the rest of the deposit and in Burial 18 and is given above in the description for Unit 104. Material recovered with Burial 19 includes some 68 ceramic sherds, six small chert flakes, one small obsidian flake, a single shell bead, and other highly fragmentary shell fragments. Samples of the earth surrounding the bone material were collected with Sample #1 being from the area of the femurs; Sample #2 from the abdomen; Sample #3 from the area of the cranium; Sample #4 a piece of burned and scorched earth, and, finally, Sample #5, numerous small flecks of carbon.

WK09-A-130

The 2006 investigations into the area north of Structure N14-2 included the expansion of the excavation grid from one measuring two by three meters to one measuring three by four. Unit 130 was one of the first units excavated in this area. It was dug in five levels, down to the level of Burial 19 itself.

Level 1, Lot 307, consisted of the humic layer lying atop the collapsed masonry from Structure N14-2. As such, it is identical to Lot

300, described above in the Unit 116 section. This corresponds to the uppermost humic layer in Figure 3. The recovered cultural material included 23 ceramic sherds, three smallish chert flakes and 290 small shells from terrestrial snails.

Level 2, Lot 315, consists of the mass of collapsed masonry from the fall of Structure N14-2. It lies directly on top of the courses of stone of the stair. Once removed, excavators uncovered the upper portions of the stair, including the second riser and sections of the plaster tread of the first step. Visible in the eastern profile was the cut and faced stones of the risers of the third step. There were little or no pre-collapse humic layers lying atop these uncovered steps. Recovered artifacts consisted of some 62 ceramic sherds, one small chert flake, one obsidian blade fragment, and some 80 small terrestrial snail shells.

Because the humic layer does not extend over the steps in this unit, there is no Level 3.

Level 4, Lot 325, requires a piece of explanation. The level itself consists of the center part of the staircase removed to uncover the eastern sections of Burial 19. It does not directly underlie the portion of the map designated as Unit 130, but is the stair section directly above Burial 19 as shown in Figure 4. Once it was discovered that the extended position of Burial 19 placed much of the body directly beneath the stair, excavators dug out a narrow trench above the Burial itself. While not precisely underneath Unit 130, the excavated layers were designated "Unit 130" to maintain the sequential numbering of levels. The

material itself was the cut and shaped stones of the northern stair, being comprised of largish limestones and well-packed earthen fill. The sediment matrix itself is a light grey to brownish grey material, finely textured and slightly moist to the touch. The stones lie on the plaster floor shown in Figure 3; the stair's foundation stones themselves having smoothed, flattened bases in direct contact with the plaster surface.

Numerous small limestone chunks lie in the packed construction fill. Recovered cultural material from the fill consists of 112 smallish and fragmentary ceramic sherds, two obsidian blade fragments, seven shell fragments, and three small chert flakes.

Level 5, Lot 5, consists of the material lying directly above Burial 19. An earlier plaster floor was encountered and cut away to allow the preparation of the partial cist. The material is the same brownish-grey construction fill as seen in the alternating layers of fill and floor found across the N14-2 deposit. Between the stairs and Burial 19, however, there was only a single complete plaster floor extending over the deposit. The material was excavated down to a number of large flat stones, the *lajas*, placed over the partial cist. The recovered cultural materials consisted of 68 small, broken, and eroded ceramic sherds; four small chert flakes; and one fragment of mother-of-pearl.

WK09-A-131

Level 1, Lot 306, consisted of the initial humic layer lying atop the mass of limestone rubble. As such, it corresponds to the uppermost layer shown in Figure 4. The humic matrix is identical to that described in Lot 300, in

the Unit 116 section above. Excavators recovered some 24 ceramic sherds, two obsidian fragments, a fragment of quartzite, and 55 small terrestrial snail shells.

Level 2, Lot 313, consists of the fallen rubble from the collapse of Structure N14-2. It lies directly on the remaining portions of the staircase shown in Figure 2. The matrix itself is identical to Lot 308, described in the Unit 115 section above. Recovered cultural materials include 91 smallish, broken, and mostly eroded ceramic sherds; 6 chert flakes; 2 chert biface fragments; a point and a base; and 116 small terrestrial snail shells. There is no pre-collapse humic level in this unit.

While excavation continued in this area, especially of the material lying over Burial 19, such material was considered to be part of Unit 130, even though the material lay between Units 130 and 131.

WK09-A-132

Unit 132 was excavated solely in the 2006 field season and is comprised of three levels and four separate lots.

Level 1, Lot 305, is made up of the humic layer overlying the mass of collapsed masonry. It corresponds to the uppermost layer shown in Figure 3. The soil itself is identical to that described in Lot 300, found in the Unit 116 description. Recovered cultural materials include 16 ceramic sherds, two pieces of obsidian, and 322 small terrestrial snail shells.

Level 2, Lot 316, is itself the thick mass of collapsed rubble from N14-2, corresponding to the second layer of Figure 3. Much of the rubble lies directly on top of the stair's flanking

balustrade, directly on the smashed vessels shown in Figure 3. The rubble continues in front of the balustrade as well, leaving only a very thin layer below it. The excavated material is identical to that given for Lot 308 in the Unit 115 description. Excavators recovered some 150 ceramic sherds; five smallish chert flakes; one small, fragmentary bird bone; a proximal obsidian blade fragment, and the base of a hollow ceramic figurine of a kneeling female. Unrelated to the cultural materials were 365 small terrestrial snail shells. The smashed vessels were collected separately as part of Lot 324 and consisted of 142 ceramic sherds representing at least two whole, reconstructable vessels; two small chert flakes; and an obsidian blade fragment.

Level 3, Lot 323, is the pre-collapse humic level recorded across the top of the plaster floor. It is exceedingly thin in this unit, being, at times, less than 5cm in places. The material is identical to that described in Lot 317 of Unit 115. Recovered artifacts consist of five ceramic sherds, one large chert biface base fragment, and nine smallish shell fragments.

Excavation in this unit ended at the level of the plaster plaza floor.

WK09-A-133

Level 1, Lot 304, consists of a thin humic layer lying atop collapsed architecture, corresponding to the uppermost level in Figure 3. It is identical to the humic layer found across the N14-2 excavations, being described in the Lot 300 section of Unit 115. Recovered materials include a single ceramic sherd and 93 small terrestrial snail shells. On the southern

edge of the unit, the layer is thin enough that large pieces of rubble protrude from the unexcavated ground surface.

Level 2, Lot 314, is made up of the mass of collapsed rubble itself. The amount of collapsed rubble in this unit was discovered to be quite thick, measuring some 80cm in places. The lot is identical to Lot 308, located in the Unit 115 section. Excavators recovered some 114 small, eroded and broken ceramic sherds; three small chert flakes; three obsidian blade flakes; and six faunal bone fragments, identified by the Q'echi' excavators as burned and polished deer and bird.

Level 3, Lot 322, consisted of the thin layer of pre-collapse humus. As such, it is identical to that described in the Unit 115, Lot 317 section. This layer corresponds to the third layer on Figure 3. Recovered artifacts include some 32 ceramic sherds, a worked chert disc, two very small and fragmentary faunal bones, four shell fragments, and a single obsidian blade fragment.

This unit terminated at the level of the plaster floor.

WK09-A-134

Level 1, Lot 303, consists of the humic layer that covered Structure N14-2. It corresponds to the uppermost layer of Figure 3, being identical to that described for Lot 300 in the Unit 115 section. It consists of a light grey-brown material, being fine and powdery to the touch. Substantial root turbation permeates the entire layer. Recovered cultural material includes 20 ceramic sherds, a chert angular

debris fragment, two pieces of obsidian, and 91 small terrestrial snail shells.

Level 2, Lot 311, is made up of the mass of collapsed masonry from the fall of Structure N14-2. It is identical to that described in Lot 308 of Unit 115. Excavators recovered some 71 small, broken and eroded ceramic sherds; one small chert flake; one obsidian blade fragment; a heavily weathered figurine of a dog's head; and 83 small terrestrial snail shells.

Level 3, Lot 320, is the pre-collapse layer of humic material lying atop the plaster plaza floor. As such, it remains identical to that described for Lot 317, Unit 115. Recovered cultural materials include some 31 ceramic sherds, one smallish chert flake, one very small bird bone, and two obsidian blade fragments.

Once the plaza floor was removed, it was found to lie directly upon a bulge of bedrock as illustrated in Figure 3. Excavations, accordingly, ceased.

WK09-A-135

Level 1, Lot 302, is made up of the humic layer sitting atop the collapsed masonry from N14-2. As such, it is identical to that material described in Lot 300 of Unit 115. Recovered material consists of 25 ceramic sherds, one piece of material, and 55 small terrestrial snail shells.

Level 2, Lot 309, consists of the mass of collapsed masonry and fallen rubble from the fall of Structure N14-2. It is identical in makeup and composition to the rubble described for Lot 308 of Unit 115. Excavators recovered some 76 ceramic sherds, two small chert flakes, six small

bone fragments, and 37 small terrestrial snail shells.

Level 3, Lot 318, is the pre-collapse humic level lying between the fallen masonry rubble and the plaster plaza floor. It is identical to that described for Lot 317, Unit 115. The material recovered included some 18 ceramic sherds, a small chert flake, and two shell fragments.

Excavation ceased at the level of the plaza floor.

Future Plans and Recommendations

Currently, the archaeological investigations into the Grupo Tolok are considered to have concluded. If, however, future scholars desire to pursue subsequent excavations, the following recommendations are humbly offered. Future plans should consider include:

- clearing the humus and rubble from the remaining portions of the excavated staircase and to determine if the architecture adjacent to the stair is either an integral part of N14-2 or a northern addition;
- placing a series of deep excavations into the interior of the adjacent architecture in an attempt to recover any additional ritual deposits placed in the center, determining if this northern portion is purely residential or serves as a shrine or other manner of ritual architecture; and
- excavating a series of testpits into and around N14-2 itself to determine both

the construction history of the larger structure and its relation to subsequent modifications.

These recommendations should be considered additional to those suggested in the previous year's report (Eppich 2006).

Acknowledgments

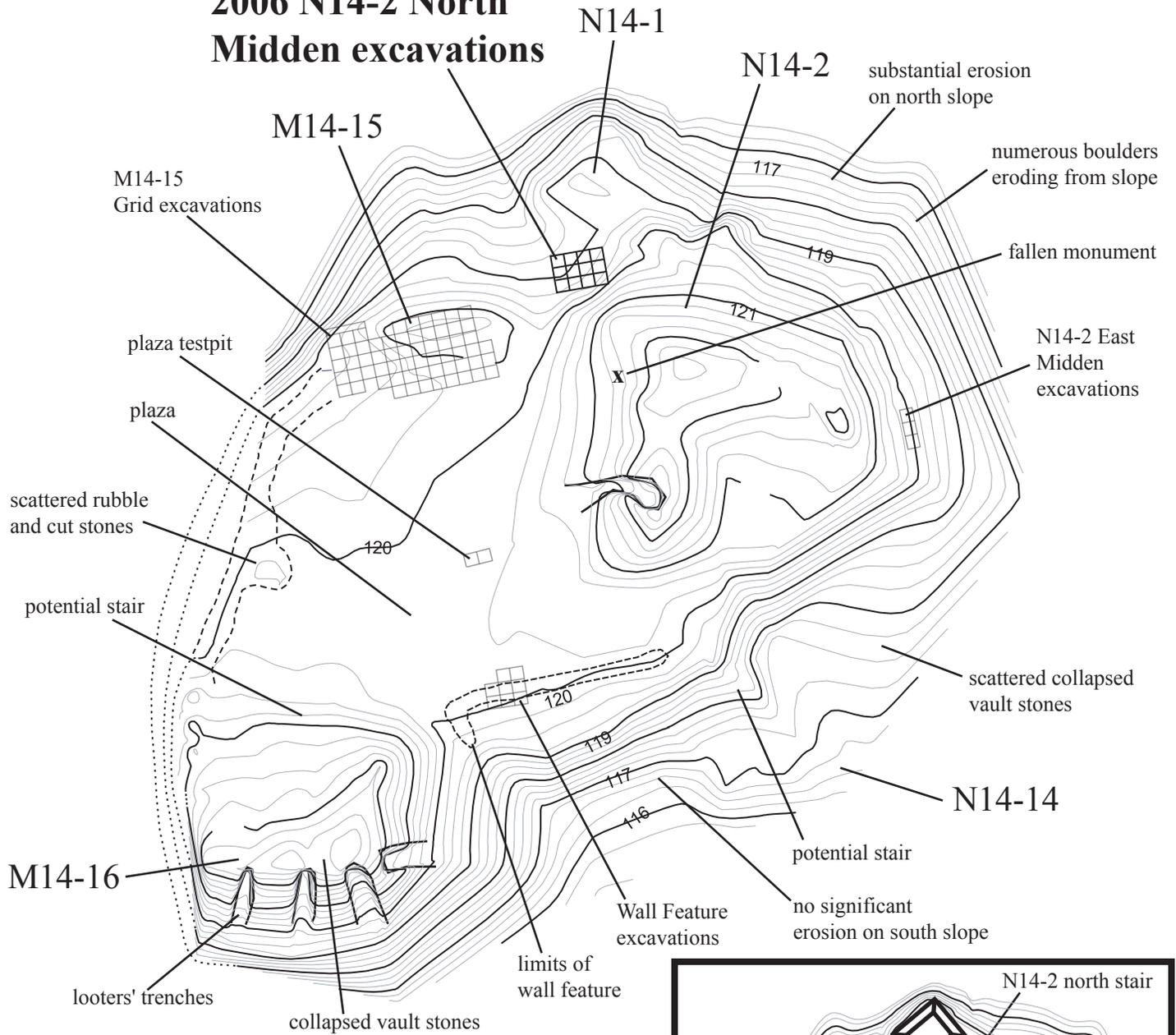
These investigations would not have been possible without the aid and cooperation of the skilled staff of the Proyecto Arqueológico El Perú-*Waka'*, the workers of Paso Caballos, Dolores, and the other communities surrounding the ruined Classic city. Specifically, this included the skilled excavation staff on Operation 9, being Quenaldo C. Lopez Rodríguez, Yovany Nájera Carrilla, José Luis Tzalam Caal, and Domingo Tut Pop. Special thanks goes out to Arturo Godoy for maintaining a camp and kitchen in a very difficult environment and to Fabiola Quiroa Flores and Héctor Escobedo for the translation of the manuscript from English to a slightly more civilized tongue. Inestimable help came from Lia Tsesmeli for the terrain maps featured so prominently in the excavation plan maps and profiles. Finally, it is with profound gratitude that we are allowed the opportunity of studying the cultural patrimony of the Republic of Guatemala. We can only hope the work presented here can make some attempt to repay the debt of gratitude owed to the people and nation of Guatemala.

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2006 N14-2 North Midden excavations



Grupo Tolok

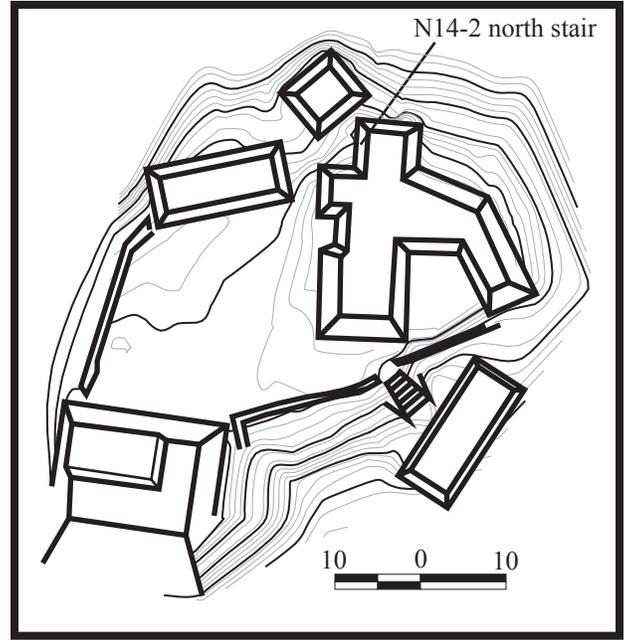
2005 / 2006 excavations
 El Perú-Waka'
 Operation 9

Legend

- elevation contours 0.25m
- elevation interval 2m
- extrapolated contour lines
- rubble concentrations
- looters' trenches



0 10 20 meters



10 0 10

reconstruction

Figure 1. Map of the Grupo Tolok



N14-2 north stair

2006 excavations
El Perú-Waka'
Operation 9



- Legend**
- elevation contours 0.25m
 - elevation interval 2m
 - ceramics
 - remaining architecture
 - plaster floors



Unit guide

104	105	106	130
115	116	117	131
135	134	133	132

Figure 2. N14-2 North Stair Excavations

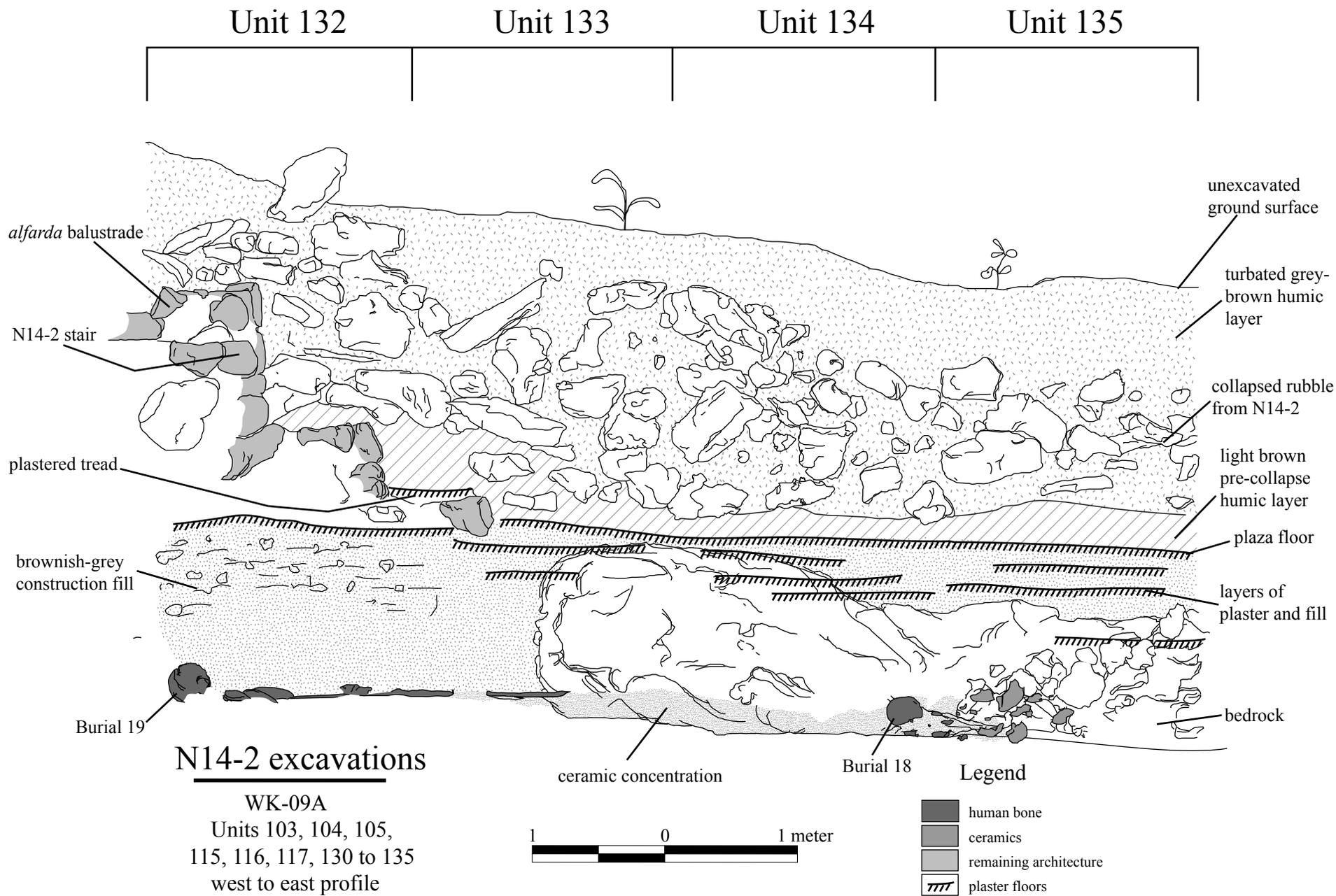


Figure 3. N14-2 North Stair Profile

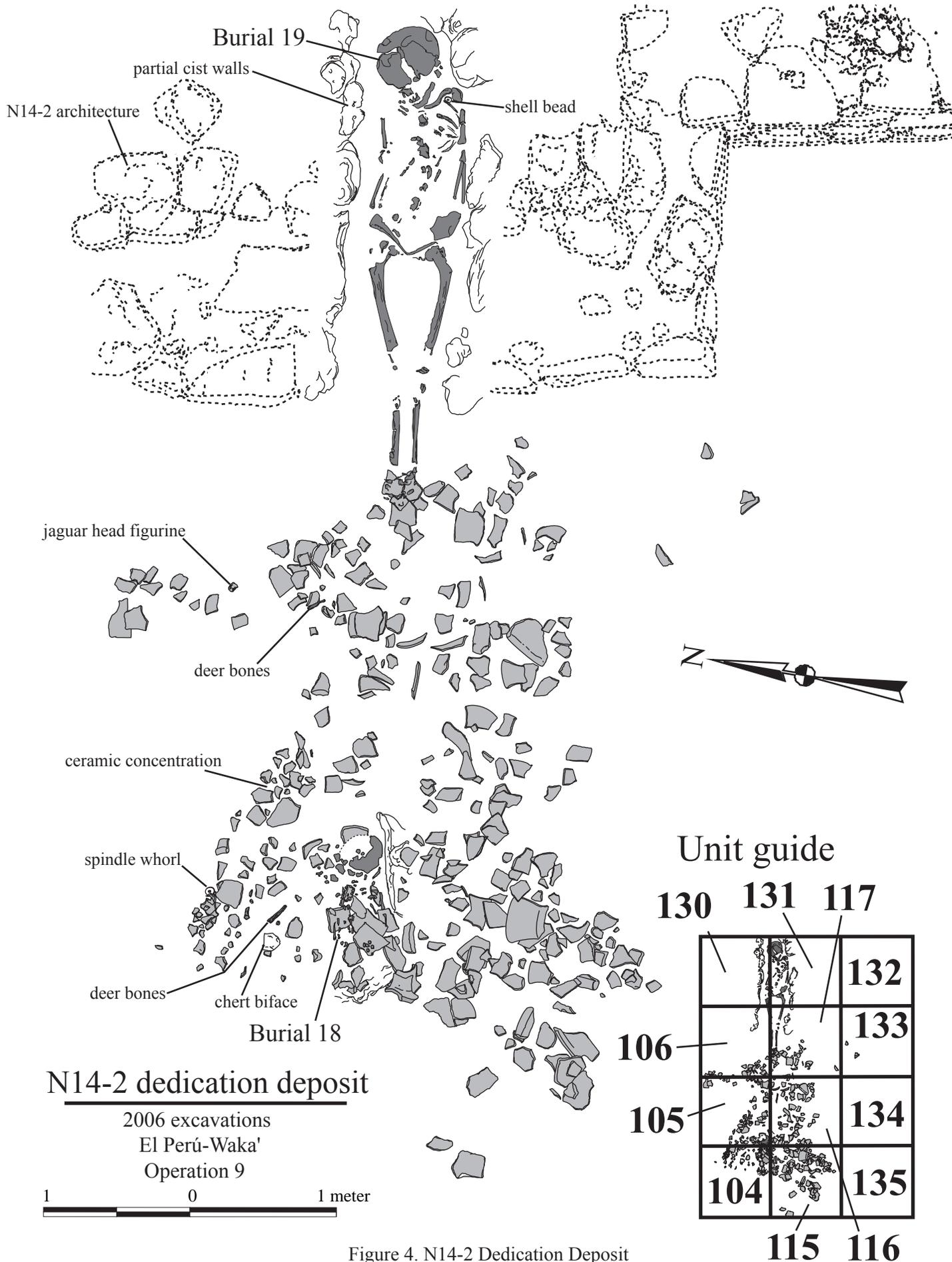
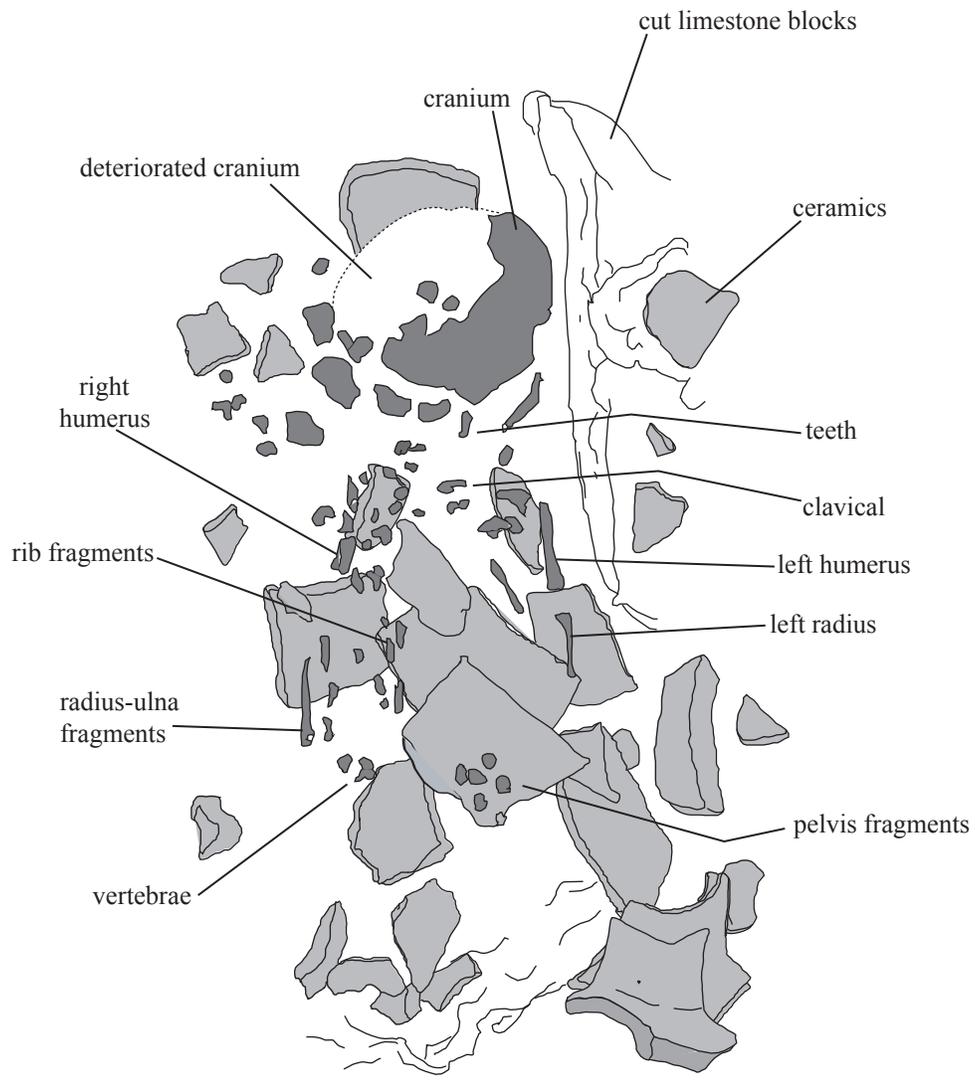


Figure 4. N14-2 Dedication Deposit



El Perú-*Waka'*
 Burial 18
 WK-09A
 N14-2 dedication deposit
 plan map



Figure 5. Burial 18

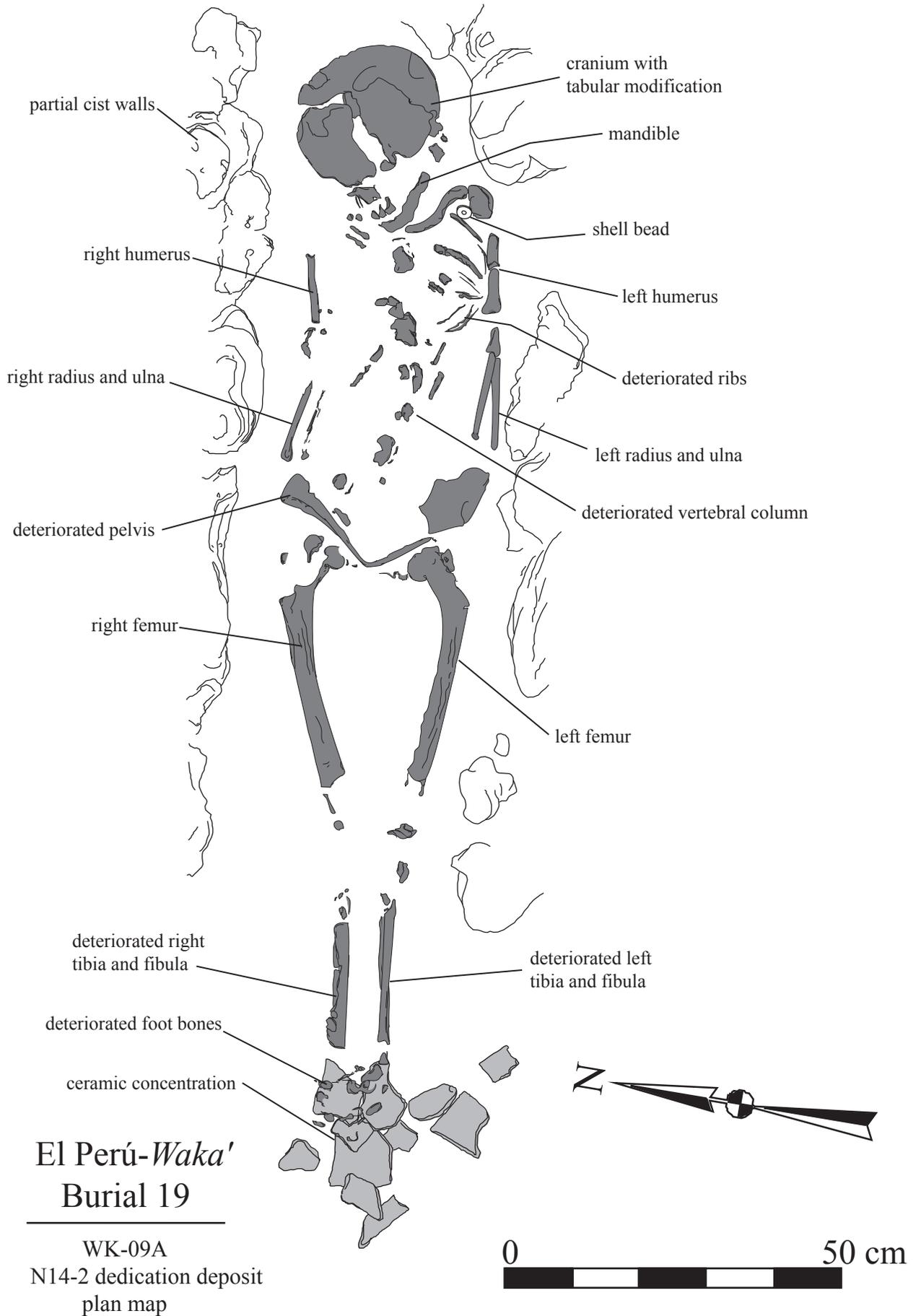


Figure 6. Burial 19