

Review

Tikal Reports: the series continues

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WILLIAM A. HAVILAND. *Excavations in residential areas of Tikal: non-elite groups without shrines: the excavations* (Tikal Report 20A/University Museum Monograph 139). xxiv+431 pages, 183 b&w illustrations, 373 tables. 2014. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; 978-1-934536-70-4 hardback \$89.95.

WILLIAM A. HAVILAND. *Excavations in residential areas of Tikal: non-elite groups without shrines: analysis and conclusions* (Tikal Report 20B/University Museum Monograph 140). xi+167 pages, 16 b&w illustrations, 76 tables. 2014. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; 978-1-934536-73-5 hardback \$59.95.



The University of Pennsylvania Museum's Tikal Project of 1958–1968 was one of the great Maya investigations of the twentieth century. It was the most ambitious study of a Maya city so far undertaken, with scores of

staff, graduate students and local workers engaged in a range of activities from mapping the site core and its surrounding settlement, to stripping the tropical forest from the colossal temple-pyramids and restoring them, to establishing an occupation history that eventually showed an origin for Tikal in the mid-first millennium BC and abandonment more than sixteen centuries later at the end of the Classic period. The impact of the project's results, publications and cadre of trained Mayanists moving out into the academic world was substantial and led to several decades of a Tikal-centric view of ancient Maya civilisation.

The project was directed initially by Edwin M. Shook and, after he was displaced, by William R. Coe. The latter planned an ambitious series of Tikal Reports (TRs) to be published by the Museum and the first eleven of these came out while the fieldwork was still in progress. Many were intended to encapsulate doctoral dissertations, but the time these took to complete—and the subsequent movement of their authors out into teaching positions or other jobs—held back publication. For a number of years nothing else appeared (Coe discouraged his authors from publishing information elsewhere before their TR was published), until later directors of the Museum, beginning with Martin Biddle in the late 1970s, pushed to get things moving again, which they did in 1982 with TR 12, a succinct guide to the project and its intended publications (Coe & Haviland 1982). So far, some two dozen of an intended 39 TRs have appeared, some only in part; and their blue cloth bindings have become an invaluable presence on the bookshelves of Mesoamericanists. A number of the prospective authors have died without completing their volumes, and the admirable intentions of TR 12 (Coe & Haviland 1982: 55–63) may never be completely fulfilled.

This two-part monograph from William A. Haviland—one of the survivors (and principal movers in getting Tikal published)—documents excavations completed more than half a century ago, and is most welcome. It forms part of a sequence of TRs on excavations in the 16km² of settlement immediately surrounding Tikal's massive ceremonial precinct, and covered by the detailed maps in TR 11 (the survey transects beyond that area were reported in TR 13, with the excavations due in TR 24). TR 20A & B follow on from Haviland's TR 19 (1985) and TR 21 by Becker (1999); it should be noted that TRs are not cited in the normal Harvard fashion in these monographs, and in the bibliography in each is listed in a separate section following other references. TR 22 is still in preparation, and will complete this sequence of reports on the settlement archaeology of inner

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Tikal; Haviland makes it clear that they should be used together, and in fact much that is necessary for understanding TR 20 and following volumes is in TR 19 and not subsequently repeated.

TR 19 dealt with excavations in just two adjacent residential compounds, groups 4F-1 and 4F-2 (thus designated from their locations in square 4F of the alphanumeric grid of the TR 11 map), situated close to the Tikal Project camp; many of the protocols for dealing with Tikal's small structures were established here in the 1959–1960 investigations. TR 21 covered residential groups with eastern shrine structures (Becker's 'Plaza Plan 2', and arguably elite residences). The present report, with the detailed excavation data in TR 20A and the analyses and conclusions in TR 20B, embraces 'non-elite groups without shrines' scattered across the Tikal map from grid 2B in the north-west to 7G in the south-east. Haviland notes that the excavations were done in 1961 and 1963 and that TR 20 "deals with all investigations, of whatever sort, of small structures at Tikal, except for those discussed in TR 21" (20A: 1); "the present analysis was carried out in 1972, with some revisions in 2008" (20B: 1). "I have made no attempt to 'cover' [the] post-1972 literature [...] the intent has been to understand Tikal in its own terms" (20A: 1–2). While understandable, this means that Haviland was unable to bring in Gair Tourtellot's (1983, 1988) massive study of the settlement structure at Seibal, based on fieldwork from 1965–1968, which has influenced our understanding of Maya residential architecture for the past generation; inevitably, this gives a sense of *déjà vu* to much that Haviland says.

Perhaps admirably, he tests the common-sense presumption, current since Edward H. Thompson's work in the 1890s, that the thousands of small structures surrounding the civic-ceremonial core were in fact dwellings. The terms 'house mound' and 'house platform' have pervaded the literature for decades, but Haviland nonetheless examines each structure on its merits. Some he concludes were certainly houses, some residential adjuncts such as kitchens and stores; but in general he takes the Popperian view that the residential hypothesis has been tested and not disproved.

While many of the small structures were examined by means of a simple axial trench or test pit, yielding relatively few data, some groups were excavated more intensively. Those familiar with the Maya literature, and especially with Haviland's articles over the past 40 years or so, will be especially pleased

to find at last the detailed account of his work at group 2G-1. Its five platforms (2G56–60) enclose a small courtyard, and their successive enlargements, refloorings and interments have been repeatedly used to test a model of extended-family multi-generational residence. Haviland's proposal that such residence was patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal has influenced the interpretations of Mayanists ever since, and his visual reconstruction of the compound over time (reproduced as 20B: fig. 16, with an accompanying tabulation of generations at 20B: tab. 6.8) has illustrated successive editions of his textbook *Cultural anthropology* (1974 onwards) as well as being borrowed by colleagues (this reviewer included).

While group 2G-1 receives the detailed analysis one might expect in 20B, what is faintly surprising, and disappointing, is that in 20A there are rather few basic data presented to back it all up: ten excavation plans and sections (20A: figs 16–25; but no overall plan of the group), two pages of burial plans and two of photographs (20A: figs 162–63, 173–74), plus the lid and orifice of the one *chultun* storage chamber (20A: fig. 176a). Nevertheless, TR 20A & B is a substantial work, and I look forward to TR 22, in which Haviland will examine in detail group 7F-1, which, in contrast to the commoner houses he reports in TR 20A & B, seems to have been both a high elite residence and perhaps the dower house of a former queen of Tikal (cf. Haviland 1981). The Tikal Project and its onward-rolling publication programme will affect our thinking about and understanding of ancient Maya civilisation for years to come.

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