### Supplemental Text 2. Reconstructing Early Classic Tamarindito

The Late Classic overburden impedes reconstructing Tamarindito’s Early Classic extension. We discuss two issues that scholars raised about similar attempts elsewhere in the Maya lowlands. Excavation or survey biases as well as the continued use of Preclassic ceramics may undercount Early Classic constructions. We argue that these issues do not impact our results at Tamarindito.

The houses in Tamarindito’s non-elite residential groups are made of perishable materials that were built on low stone platforms and sometimes on stone wall foundations. Later sedimentation can bury them completely and make them archaeologically invisible (Johnston 2004). This possibility is especially high for houses without stone platforms (LeCount et al. 2019; Pyburn et al. 1998). Several observations suggest that this was not the case at Tamarindito. In the last decades, farmers cut down most of the site’s forest and converted it to agricultural fields. We conducted our surveys just before local farmers started to plant crops and during a time when soil cover is minimal and archaeological features most visible. All known residential groups are built on hilltops where soils are thin and bedrock often shows through. We conducted a survey between Groups 6BP-e and 6BP-f (Figure 3) and measured soil depths (Eberl et al. 2016:126–127). Soils are on average 0.13 m (± 0.06 m) deep and thus shallower than the average of 0.3–0.4 m in the Maya lowlands and the average of 0.22–0.31 m in comparable areas in the Petexbatun region (Johnston 2002:21–27). Shallow soils and widespread deforestation in Tamarindito’s built environment minimized the risk of overlooking buried archaeological features.

We also placed test pits in the toft of most residential groups and located no invisible structures. Depressions between residential groups contain deeper soils but they flood during the rainy season. Therefore, they are unsuitable for permanent residential use. Tamarindito’s topography is generally too steep and hilly to support a more clustered arrangement of residential groups. Its terraces are too narrow for house platforms. Lastly, the distribution of Jordan Tzakol ceramics coincides with known Early Classic constructions in the Plaza A area. We encountered Early Classic ceramics elsewhere at the site (see discussion in the main text) but only mixed into later contexts.

The second issue regards the simultaneous use of Preclassic and Early Classic ceramics. Early Classic glossy wares are assumed to replace Preclassic waxy wares at the beginning of the first millennium AD. Brady and colleagues (1998) have proposed an intermediary Protoclassic period between 75 BC to AD 420 (or AD 250–300 according to Inomata et al. 2014:397; also Foias and Bishop 2013:79–81; Źrałka et al. 2018). Waxy and glossy wares coexist in some contexts. In his reanalysis of Early Classic lowland ceramics, Charles Lincoln (1985) suggests that new elites introduced the Tzakol glossy wares while non-elites continued using Chicanel waxy wares. Juan Pedro Laporte (1995:610) found that Chicanel types and modes continued into the Early Classic in the southwestern Peten. He suggests that the abrupt transition from waxy to glossy wares occurred only in the central lowlands or that it only applies to elite contexts. This raises the possibility that residential groups with a waxy ceramic assemblage date to the Early Classic.

In the Petexbatun region, waxy and glossy wares overlap for roughly two centuries. Faisan Chicanel is assumed to continue until the fourth century AD with glossy Tzakol wares starting to appear after AD 150 next to waxy wares (Bachand 2010; Foias and Bishop 2013:81). Protoclassic markers like pseudo-Usulutan decoration and mammiform supports appear seldom in the Petexbatun region (Foias and Bishop 2013:79–81). Their prevalence in caves and caches indicates a primarily ritual nature.

At Tamarindito, Faisan Chicanel ceramics are rare (Table 1). We encountered no unequivocal Faisan Chicanel construction activity in Tamarindito’s non-elite groups (Eberl and Vela González 2016:162–163). The evidence for early constructions remains limited to Plaza A as well as Groups 6BO-b and 6BP-a. The first construction phase of Tamarindito Structure 6BP-5 is the only sealed context in which Faisan Chicanel and Jordan Tzakol ceramics mix (Supplemental Table 1). Flor Cream and Iberia Orange sherds occur together with Triunfo Striated, Balanza Black, and Dos Arroyos Orange Polychrome ones. The presence of Dos Arroyos is noteworthy because the definition of the Protoclassic calls for orange wares from the Aguacate and Águila ceramic groups (Brady et al. 1998:24–28). If Dos Arroyos continued at Tamarindito into Tzakol 2–3 times as elsewhere (Smith and Gifford 1966:157), Faisan Chicanel markers may have persisted even into the fifth century AD.

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